



# *The* Panther Press

SPRING 2025

MILLER PLACE UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT

*"Empowering excellence today, developing tomorrow's achievers, forever Miller Place proud."*

[www.millerplace.k12.ny.us](http://www.millerplace.k12.ny.us)

## **Congratulations to our Class of 2025 Valedictorian and Salutatorian!**

### **Valedictorian Diana Zarbanelian: *A Commitment to Excellence***



Miller Place High School's Class of 2025 valedictorian, Diana Zarbanelian, exemplifies dedication and perseverance through her outstanding academic achievements. Her commitment to education set her apart through all years of her high school career.

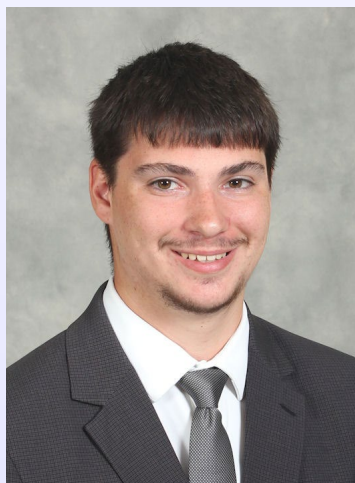
"My aim was to become the best, well-rounded student I could be because of my hunger for learning," shared Diana.

Her impressive accolades include multiple academic awards, the prestigious AP Capstone Diploma, the AP Scholar with Distinction title, and consistent placement on the High Honor Roll throughout high school. She attributes her success to her family's unwavering support.

"My only wish is that as valedictorian, I have fulfilled our school's motto—'Empowering excellence today, developing tomorrow's achievers'—even in the unconventional manner of prioritizing education, knowledge, learning, and independent thought," she said.

Through her tireless work ethic and passion for learning, Diana Zarbanelian leaves a lasting mark on Miller Place High School.

### **Salutatorian Matthew Cirrito: *Leading Through Innovation and Service***



Miller Place High School's Class of 2025 salutatorian, Matthew Cirrito, excelled both academically and in extracurricular activities, balancing leadership, athletics, and service.

"I strived to challenge myself in every way possible—academically, athletically, and in service to my community," Matthew shared.

As Electrical Team Captain of the FIRST Robotics team, he played a key role in designing and building competition-ready robots. On the court, he was a three-year starting forward for boys varsity basketball, also competing in off-season leagues and mentoring younger players at summer camps. His leadership extended to academics, where he served as Public Relations Officer for the National Honor Society, creating the group's website and social media presence. He also contributed to community initiatives through the Service Club, Foreign Language Honor Society, and Mathletes. Additionally, he competed in track and field, sprinting and long jumping for the varsity team.

Through his dedication and leadership, Matthew Cirrito made a lasting impact on Miller Place High School, embodying the values of excellence and service.



# *A Message from the Board of Education*

## *Looking Ahead: Reflections and Goals for the Second Half of the School Year*

As we enter the second half of the school year, it is a perfect time to reflect on our progress and set new goals for the future. Each year, we assess our achievements through the lens of our Strategic Plan, ensuring that we remain focused on delivering the best possible educational experience for our students. Our commitment to academic excellence is unwavering, and we continue to refine our practices to support student success.

We are proud to see growth across multiple areas, including Regents test scores, mastery levels, and AP performance. These accomplishments are the result of our Strategic Plan's initiatives, combined with the dedication and perseverance of our students, teachers, and administrators. While there is always more progress to be made, it is important to recognize and celebrate the growth happening along the way.

From Andrew Muller Primary School through high school, our students continue to excel both inside and outside the classroom. We are continually amazed by the creative and inspiring ways our teachers engage students in learning. With a wide range of academic, artistic, and athletic opportunities, students are able to explore their passions and showcase their talents. Whether through Science Olympiads, Robotics competitions, art exhibitions, music concerts, theater productions, athletic events, or the incredible learning happening in classrooms each day, our students make us proud.

Looking ahead, budget planning for the next school year is now underway. We encourage all community members to participate in the upcoming budget meetings and workshops—your feedback is essential in developing a budget that is both fiscally responsible and supports the academic excellence our students deserve. By working together, we can ensure that Miller Place schools continue to provide outstanding opportunities for all students.

On behalf of the Board of Education, we are excited for the second half of the school year and the many opportunities that lie ahead. We remain dedicated to upholding the high educational standards our community expects, and we thank you for your continued support.

It is truly a privilege to live and work in such a close-knit and supportive community.

Sincerely,

**Lisa Reitan**

President, Miller Place School District Board of Education

**REMEMBER TO VOTE!**

**TUESDAY, MAY 20, 2025**

**6 AM TO 9 PM**

**NORTH COUNTRY ROAD MIDDLE SCHOOL GYM**



# A Message from Superintendent Seth Lipshie

The arrival of spring and warmer weather indicates that our year-end activities are approaching. These events honor the milestones and achievements of our students and staff, featuring award ceremonies for our senior athletes, Academic Awards for both seniors and underclassmen, and moving-up ceremonies for the 2nd grade class at Andrew Muller Primary School, the 5th grade class at Laddie A. Decker Sound Beach School, and the 8th grade class at North Country Road Middle School, culminating in the graduation ceremony for our Miller Place High School seniors.

I want to continue to share our progress with the Miller Place UFSD Five-Year Strategic Plan focusing on Pillar 4 specifically facility improvements.



## ANDREW MULLER PRIMARY SCHOOL

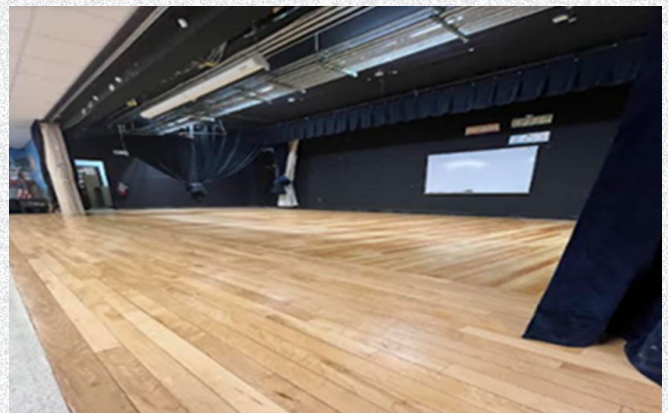
### Bond Projects

- Gymnasium
- Kindergarten Playground
- Ventilation

### Non-Bond Projects

- “Drop Off” sign for UPK and morning arrivals
- Conference room update
- Hot water heater replaced

- Refinished *cafégymnasium* floor
- Replaced pocket walls in four classrooms
- Updated four staff bathrooms



## LADDIE A. DECKER SOUND BEACH SCHOOL

### Bond Projects

- Art Room

### Non-Bond Projects

- Hot water heater replaced
- New main office tile flooring

- Refurbished Gymnasium
- Refurbished the cafeteria stage
- Removed containers



# A Message from Superintendent Seth Lipshie



## NORTH COUNTRY ROAD MIDDLE SCHOOL

### Bond Projects

- Family and consumer science classroom

### Non-Bond Projects

- Grass fields reseeded
- Hot water heater replaced
- Replaced walkways outside of building

- Speed bump

- Updated two faculty bathrooms
- Weathervane replacement



## MILLER PLACE HIGH SCHOOL

### Non-Bond Projects

- New Art display cases

- New Athletics display case
- New baseball mound

- Refurbished Auditorium stage

I look forward to seeing you at one of our many end of year celebrations. As always, I look forward to working with students, parents, guardians and staff to continue to improve on our student success and continue to make Miller Place the best possible District.

Sincerely,

Seth Lipshie, *Superintendent of Schools*



# AROUND OUR SCHOOLS

## DIVING INTO PARP WEEK: AN OCEAN OF LEARNING AT AMPS

The first week of March marked PARP week (Parents as Reading Partners) at Andrew Muller Primary School, when students embarked on an exciting “under the sea” adventure! Organized by a dedicated committee of teachers, the aquatic theme was woven into every subject area, making learning both fun and immersive. Each morning, students started their day with a sea-themed song and joke. Throughout the week, they engaged in crafts, mystery readers, and daily research on marine life, learning about dolphins, sharks, jellyfish, and more. Exciting activities included a school-wide ocean rocks assembly, a PARP evening with reading and games, and a daily “Drop Everything and Read” session. The week ended with a dress-up day, when students became pirates, sea turtles, mermaids, and captains, celebrating a fantastic week of learning.



## EXCITING EVENTS AT LADSBS!



Laddie A. Decker Sound Beach School has been buzzing with activity! From interactive learning experiences to creative celebrations, our students have been engaged in hands-on, enriching programs that make education exciting.

Fourth graders participated in a thrilling Escape Room Family Connect Night, solving math puzzles to rescue penguins, while also exploring Journeys into American Indian Territories, engaging with Native American culture through storytelling, music, and hands-on crafts. Third graders tackled a STEAM Super Bowl challenge, and in honor of Black History Month, students researched influential figures, while younger students explored historical contributions through biographies. February also marked Kindness Spirit Week, when the community embraced the message of positivity through themed activities. Academically, students dove into innovative science lessons, built wave-resistant structures, and explored multiplication with Ozobot technology. The 100th Day of School featured

creative math challenges and futuristic predictions. Meanwhile, our music programs continue to flourish, with orchestra and chorus students honing their skills for upcoming performances.

## NORTH COUNTRY ROAD MIDDLE SCHOOL SPREADS KINDNESS ON P.S. I LOVE YOU DAY

North Country Road Middle School was overflowing with love, kindness, and creativity as students and staff came together to celebrate P.S. I Love You Day in a truly special way.

The day kicked off with a Door Decorating Contest, and first-period classes transformed their classroom doors into powerful messages of kindness and positivity. Each design served as a beautiful reminder that compassion and empathy can brighten someone’s day.

In the afternoon, over 100 students gathered for a special screening of *Harold and the Purple Crayon*—a story about imagination, creativity, and the endless possibilities of kindness. The event, led by two inspiring sixth grade students, Kenzie Rubinetti and Nora Kelly, was made even sweeter with delicious purple slushies.



# AROUND OUR SCHOOLS

## MILLER PLACE STUDENTS COMPETE IN PRESTIGIOUS INVESTMENT CHALLENGE

Two Miller Place High School business students, Stephen Ye and Jordan Milette, recently participated in the highly competitive Wharton Global High School Investment Competition. Competing against 1,800 teams from 66 countries, they gained hands-on experience in investment strategy, risk management, and industry analysis. Hosted by the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton Global Youth Program, the competition challenged students to develop a business portfolio with \$100,000 in virtual cash. Using the Wharton Investment Simulator, they analyzed a case study, identified long-term investment goals, and built a diversified strategy over 10 weeks.

Miller Place was among the 1,800 teams to submit final reports this winter, showcasing the talent and dedication of its students.



## MUSIC NEWS

### Senior Pit Orchestra Members Take Their Final Bow

Miller Place High School recently celebrated the dedication and talent of four outstanding seniors from the Pit Orchestra, who played their final performance with the Panther Players on Tuesday, March 4, in the school's production of *Tuck Everlasting*. These musicians—Josie Attisano, Merena Bielenda, Nailah Rahman, and Jacob Huwer—have been integral members of the Pit Orchestra throughout their high school careers, contributing to countless productions with their skill and passion. As they move on to new adventures, the Miller Place community thanks them for their years of hard work and dedication!



### Miller Place Musicians Selected for Suffolk County Music Festival

Congratulations to the talented Miller Place High School musicians selected to perform in the Suffolk County Music Educators Association (SCMEA) Division 3 Festival! Representing grades 9 and 10, these students will showcase their musical abilities at the All-County concert on Saturday, March 8, at Comsewogue High School. Their selection is a testament to their dedication and talent, and we are proud to have them represent our school. Congratulations to all of our incredible student musicians!



*Pictured (front row): Fei Shi Zhong, Mia Caputo, Finn Horner, Lael Walcott, and Jett Jakahi. Back row: Allison Creighton, Violet Dalberg, Nicholas DiCaprio, Lukas Ryan, Andy Luo, and Andrew Lewonka.*



## ARTS NEWS:

### *Artists and Fashion Designers Take Center Stage in Recent Showcases*

#### Senior Artist Gavin Sanfilippo Earns Honorable Mention

Miller Place High School senior Gavin Sanfilippo is ending his high school art journey on a high note, earning an Honorable Mention at the Atelier at the Flowerfields Juried Art Show. Gavin impressed the judges with his unique rendition of the Mona Lisa, marking a standout moment in his senior year art show tour.

In addition, several talented MPHS art students had their work showcased at the Parrish Museum, highlighting the depth of creativity within the school. Congratulations to Amelia Avalos, Catherine Worcester, Diya Patel, Desiree Clasen, Asher Squires, Emily Campos, Megan Estelle, Sabrina Schafer, Keira Vogt, Josie Attisano, Samantha Selfridge, Mathilde Snijders, Katherine Byrnes, and Natalie Byrnes for representing MPHS Art with distinction!



#### LADSBS Fashion Club Explores Upcycled Handbag Design

Now in its second year, the LADSBS Fashion Club took on an exciting new challenge—handbag design! Using the sustainable concept of upcycling, students repurposed old jeans and fabric to create unique, one-of-a-kind bags. Throughout the project, they honed essential fashion skills, including sketching, measuring, pattern-making, fabric cutting, and sewing. This hands-on experience not only sparked creativity but also introduced students to the process of fashion design from start to finish. Kudos to all our talented artists and designers for their hard work and innovation!

## MILLER PLACE UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT

7 Memorial Drive, Miller Place, NY 11764

**Board of Education:** Lisa Reitan, *President* • Bryan Makarius, *Vice President* • John Galligan, *Trustee*  
Andrea Spaniolas, *Trustee* • Johanna Testa, *Trustee* • Lucy Chang, *Student Representative*

**Superintendent of Schools:** Seth A. Lipshie