

# Paterson Post

Paterson — A Promising Tomorrow

Together We Can

October 30, 2020

## LOCAL CONTROL CLOSER

*NJDOE reports Paterson Public Schools making “significant progress”*



Superintendent Shafer before the NJBOE in 2019  
*PPS File Photo*

The district is another step closer to restoring local control after state officials gave the district high marks for improvements made during the two-year transition. “The district is making significant progress,” interim State Education Commissioner Kevin Dehmer was quoted as saying during an Oct. 7th meeting of the State Board of Education. The N.J. Department of Education’s Chris Huber reported at that same meeting that the district received perfect scores in 17 areas and “substantially met” goals in the remaining 11 areas. The district is being evaluated in areas including instruction and program, fiscal management, and personnel.

Superintendent of Schools Eileen Shafer credited many people for the headway made by the district, which was taken over by the state in 1991. “It took the will of many parents, teachers, principals, vice-principals, supervisors, directors, administrators, the Superintendent’s Cabinet, the leadership team, Central Office staff, secretaries, instructional assistants, facilities staff, all district staff, community stakeholders, the Highly Skilled Professionals, and many others to bring the district to this point.” Shafer made a point to express her appreciation of the Board of Education’s efforts. “The Paterson Board of Education members worked extremely hard on governance, and I thank them for their unfailing support of the district administration, which has been a great help in moving us closer to becoming a locally-controlled district,” she said. The final report on the district’s progress will be issued in the coming months.

## RPHS Seniors Score High On AP Exam

Two seniors Rosa L. Parks School of the Fine & Performing Arts (RPHS) earned high scores on the Advanced Placement (AP) Language and Composition exam and are eligible for college credit. Michelle DePena earned a score of five, the highest score on the exam’s five-point scale. The College Board reports that only 13 percent of the 548,307 test takers worldwide earned a score of five. Dayanara Calderon earned a score of three. The students were among 183 students districtwide to score three or higher on AP exams last spring, which was more than double the number in 2019.

# SFLS, School 15 Get 21st Century Boost



Superintendent Eileen Shafer Photo by Daniel Juan



Commissioner Vincent Arrington Photo by Daniel Juan

A \$2 million federal grant awarded to the Paterson Education Fund (PEF) will benefit students at the Senator Frank Lautenberg School (SFLS) and Public School No. 15. The announcement was made at a news conference on Oct. 15th at the Senator Frank Lautenberg School where Superintendent of Schools Eileen F. Shafer welcomed U.S. Rep. Bill Pascrell, Jr. (NJ-9) and representatives of the Paterson Education Fund, the Paterson Alliance, the New Destiny Family Success Center, and St. Paul's Community Development Corporation.

The funding has been provided through the U.S. Department of Education's 21st Century Community Learning Center grant program, which supports the creation of community learning centers that provide academic enrichment opportunities during non-school hours for children, particularly students in low-income school districts. PEF will receive \$424,981 per year for five years for the benefit of students at SFLS and School 15.

The bulk of the funding will be used to provide academic support services, youth recreation activities, and counseling services for students. The implementation of the initiatives funded by the grant will be aided by The Paterson Alliance, New Destiny Family Success Center, and the St. Paul's Community Development Corporation. "This has been

a collaborative effort from the very start. It's wonderful that this first fruit of our labor will benefit the children and families of the Senator Frank Lautenberg School and School 15," said PEF Executive Director Rosie Grant.

## Superintendent Shafer Honored By WAFAA

Superintendent of Schools Eileen F. Shafer was honored by the Women and Families Ascending Association (WAFAA) at the organization's annual event, which was held virtually on Oct. 16th due to the pandemic. Shafer was honored for being a strong supporter of the organization whose mission is to strengthen families and the community through education in order to reduce isolation, build connections within and between families, and throughout the community.

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# In The Court Of A Local Hero



Supporters at the ceremony naming the Public School No. 13 basketball court after Robert “Tootie” Harrell. *Photo courtesy of Eileen Shafer*

The basketball court at Public School No. 13 now bears the name of one of district’s greatest athletes who was also a beloved member of the community. In a ceremony held on the basketball court on Oct. 24th, a plaque was unveiled that declared the location is now named the Robert “Tootie” Harrell Court. Members of Harrell’s family were joined by education leaders, community leaders, elected officials, and clergy for the dedication of the basketball court in honor of the Eastside Hall of Fame athlete and longtime district official who died in 2018 at the age of 82. Many of Harrell’s friends, now known as the “Legends of the School 13 Court,” were on hand for the ceremony.

“Today we honor a great man who truly was a pillar of the Paterson community. Robert “Tootie” Harrell taught the children of Paterson, including his own children, by his own example. He showed us all the great rewards that can be reaped by demanding the best from yourself. And he demonstrated to us that when you raise other people up, you will never be forgotten. That’s why we commemorate this basketball court at School 13 in his honor, to remember Tootie Harrell’s greatness and to be inspired to help others achieve their greatness,” said Paterson Board of Education President Kenneth L. Simmons.

“The student-athletes in Paterson today stand on the shoulders of Robert “Tootie” Harrell. Tootie Harrell was a man of integrity and honor, but those qualities did not only reflect on himself but on the City of Paterson as well. He literally made Paterson a better place through the life he lived, and that should inspire us to do the same. And so today we dedicate the School 13 basketball court to Tootie Harrell’s legacy. It is a piece of our community, a community that he made better for all of us,” said Paterson Board of Education Commissioner Vincent Arrington.

“When young student-athletes walk onto this basketball court, and they see the plaque that bears the name of Robert “Tootie” Harrell, and they ask, ‘Who was he?’; it will be up to us to tell them that he was a great student-athlete who drew crowds to this basketball court with his stunning ability, who

## Hero's Court

*Continued from page 3*

faithfully served his community by encouraging young people to be all that they could be, who was a devoted family man, and who has been remembered by his family, friends and the great City of Paterson as the perfect example of a life well-lived many days after he passed away," said Superintendent of Schools Eileen F. Shafer.



BOE President Kenneth L. Simmons

*Photo courtesy of Eileen Shafer*

Robert "Tootie" Harrell, a native Patersonian, was an exemplary athlete, a true competitor, a record-breaking football player, a track star, and a leading scorer in basketball at Eastside High School. During all four years of high school, Harrell was a three varsity letter man. Harrell's athleticism, sportsmanship and sense of community all started on the School 13 basketball court. On most days when he was growing up, Harrell could be found on the court at 10 a.m. and he would often stay there until long after dark with only the few area streetlights to light the court.

Harrell played alongside and against other players from the neighborhood like Ray Lyde, Arnold Kuykendall, Andrew Muckle, Colbert Currin, Walt Lee Rembert, and Albert Farrell – all of whom were from families who continue to be prominent in Paterson. One player, Frederick "Rick" Criscitelli grew up and was elected mayor of Hawthorne. Another one, Charles Riccobono, became a doctor.

When Harrell and his friends played, the School 13 court became a basketball proving ground. The players were of different ethnic backgrounds and ages. They bested each other on the court with seasoned players teaching the younger ones, and the younger players showing off what they had learned for the seasoned stars. The games

became events that drew people from all over the city, making for a crowd that was as integrated as the players on the court.

For 30 years, Harrell worked for the Paterson Board of Education as a truancy officer. Harrell is survived by his wife, Constance, whom he married in 1969, and sons Robert Jr., Terrance and Justin, as well as five grandchildren, two nieces, two grandnieces and a host of relatives and friends.

## School 21 Third-Graders Win National Math Contest

Imagine Learning, a national nonprofit organization dedicated to strengthening students' language skills in order to succeed in all subjects, named a group of third-graders at Public School No. 21 winners of its "Ready, Set...SOLVE!" math contest. "We are very proud of the third-graders at Public School No. 21 who worked hard on their math studies and won this national recognition," said Superintendent of Schools Eileen Shafer. "I greatly appreciate their efforts, as well as the efforts of their teacher, Ashley Ligouri, and their principal, JoAnne Riviello. Our students and our educators are continuing to achieve success during this time of remote learning, and that is an inspiration to us all." The third-graders have won a \$50 e-gift card from the online retail business or restaurant of their choice.





# They Took Time To Think Before They Took A Knee

*EHS Football Ghosts make decision after local counselor's informative talk*



EHS players before their season opener. Photo by Paul Brubaker

EHS Football Head Coach James Magazine wanted his team to be prepared for everything that could happen on the gridiron before their season opener against Passaic – even the parts that happen before the game begins. In a year that has been marked by social injustice and demonstrations against institutionalized racism, high school student-athletes – particularly those on a predominantly African-American football team – have had to decide whether to stand during the National Anthem or take a stand against the injustices in America.

That is why at the team's last practice before the opening game, Magazine brought local social worker William Raheem Smallwood to speak to the players. "Before you take a position to speak out against social injustice, police brutality, or anything else that you're feeling in your heart, you have to understand why you are taking that position," Smallwood told the players who were grouped together on one knee in the middle of Bauerle Field.

In the roughly 15 minutes he spoke, Smallwood called to mind the death of George Floyd after a police officer had knelt on his neck for eight minutes and 46 seconds. He mentioned NFL free agent quarterback Colin Kaepernick and the reasons why he took a knee during the anthem. He also spoke of the Black Power salute given at the 1968 Summer Olympics by Tommie Smith and John Carlos when the anthem played after they had been awarded the gold and bronze medals, respectively.

Smallwood also referred to the achievements of Eastside High School alums including Rory Sparrow, who played in the NBA for the Atlanta Hawks and the New York Knicks, and Franklin Jacobs, who he called "one of the world's greatest track stars" who set records in high jumping.

Superintendent of Schools Eileen Shafer, who was with the team during the talk, told the players she would wholeheartedly support them in their decision about the anthem. "The young men on this team are hardworking student-athletes who we are already proud of even before the first game of the season," Shafer said. "I commend Coach Magazine and Assistant Superintendent David Cozart for guiding these young men in making a very important decision. It was their hope that the players would make their own decision based on their own thoughts, reasoning, and integrity. They did everything they could to help the players do exactly that, and I am grateful to them. As for the players' decision, I support them 100 percent."

Before breaking for a team supper, Coach Magazine told the players to text him a simple "yes" or "no" message on the question of whether to kneel during the anthem that night between 8:30 p.m. and 9:30 p.m.

As they sat down to eat, many of the players said they were inspired by Smallwood's talk.



EHS football player Jonathan Gonzalez talks with a reporter. Photo by Paul Brubaker

## Take A Knee

*Continued from page 5*

"It really makes you think about how our society is," said Matthew Johnson, a junior who plays left guard. "It needs to get way better than it is now, and it starts with us young men."

Defensive tackle Arthur Evans, a junior, said he had not decided whether to take a knee until he heard Smallwood speak. "His talk actually had me thinking about what goes on in the world," Evans said.

For offensive tackle Malachi Bethea, a ninth-grader, his decision to take a knee came down to a single name. "George Floyd," said Bethea. "He was begging for his life that

whole entire time telling them, 'I can't breathe,' and they refused to get up. It really opened my eyes as a freshman that it's bigger than me. It's bigger than Paterson."

Freshman Shakeem Senior, who plays guard and tackle, said he would be emulating Kaepernick by taking a knee. "He didn't just do it because he thought it was cool," Senior said. "There was a meaning behind him doing it. And there's a meaning behind it for me."

Sophomore Aneuris Munoz, wide receiver, said his taking a knee would be in solidarity with his teammates, who he regards as family. "I understand why people take a knee," Munoz said. "I'm okay with taking a knee. As long as we, as family, make the decision."

Messiah Muckle, a senior who plays wide receiver and outside linebacker, said he would take a knee. "I'm choosing to show what I really believe," he said.

But Muckle added that not everyone needs to take a knee to fight racism. "There's so much you can do," Muckle said. "You can just be verbal about your beliefs, but in a respectful way. You can honestly just go out and live your life with your personal mindset, and that will be enough to influence a lot – just to go out through your day thinking that, 'my life matters.' That will honestly affect other people watching you, being around you, it'll affect the people you talk to every day."

Players also gave high marks to Shafer for showing her support of the team and her respect for the players as young men. "As our Superintendent, that means she's going to ride for us," said Evans, the junior defensive tackle. "Whatever we choose, she's got our backs."

"She said that she is behind us. That gave us a boost not only for our season but for the rest of our lives," said Bethea, freshman offensive tackle. "Her being a part of Eastside's community, everything that we built this year, everything that we're going to keep building after this year, she came out here and told us that she was behind us and that meant a lot to everybody here."

Later that night, the Eastside Ghosts players and coaches unanimously decided to take a knee during the National Anthem before every game they played this season. The next evening, the Ghosts defeated Passaic, 9-7 at Passaic's Boverini Stadium.



## Greater Food Security Coming To School 15 Families

Public School No. 15 will benefit from an \$85,000 Cigna Foundation grant that was awarded to the St. Paul's Community Development Corporation (SPCDC) to help maintain students' food security. Public School No. 15 is one of the district's seven Full Service Community Schools, and each of these schools partners with a lead agency to help fulfill the needs of families within each school community. The SPCDC is the lead agency for Public School No. 15.

The grant will be used for opportunities to increase access to fresh and nutritious food for Public School No. 15's students and families. Those opportunities will include developing a food pantry at Public School No. 15, establishing a family cooking and nutrition program to encourage healthy eating habits at home, strengthen family bonds through healthy food and active lifestyles, and distributing food to families every week on a rotating basis.

"Making sure our students and families have access to nutritious food has become all the more critical as the pandemic continues, job losses mount and people become more vulnerable to food insecurity," said Superintendent of Schools Eileen F. Shafer, who thanked the Cigna Foundation, the St. Paul's Community Development Corporation, and the district's Director of Full Service Community Schools Jenna Goodreau.

"We are pleased to continue this work with the support of the Cigna Foundation. This grant award will allow SPCDC to increase the number of families receiving food and nutrition assistance while decreasing the number of families struggling with food insecurity," said Richard C. Williams, Executive Director of the St. Paul's Community Development Corporation.

"Cigna and the Cigna Foundation are proud to support St. Paul's Community Development Corporation and their efforts to positively impact the health and well-being of children," said Dave Kobus, Cigna's SVP, of U.S. markets and market president for New York and New Jersey.



Richard C. Williams  
Photo by Daniel Juan

## Donation Helps Keep District Away From Digital Divide

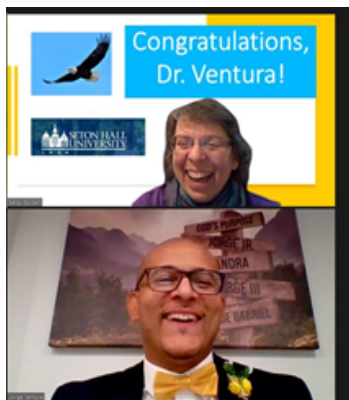


Deputy Superintendent Susana Perón  
Photo by Daniel Juan

The POWER Foundation, an affiliate of the POWER Engineers Inc. national firm that has an office in Oradell, donated \$3,750 to the district to be used to purchase 12 Chromebooks for students. The donation is one of approximately 40 grants the POWER Foundation plans to award in the next few months. Recipients are nominated by local POWER employees.

Deputy Superintendent of Schools Susana Perón said the donation will help keep Chromebooks in the hands of students. "We overcame many obstacles to close the digital divide in our district, but we still need the support this funding provides. It is our goal to have all of our students working on the same type of device. By purchasing Chromebooks for all of our students, we can close that equity gap and make sure they get the quality education they deserve. This funding brings us closer to meeting that goal."

## School 29 Principal Becomes A Doctor



Public School No. 29 Principal Jorge Ventura earned his doctorate in educational leadership from Seton Hall University in September, which culminated his nearly four years of hard work in the program. Dr. Ventura's research focused upon the higher-order thinking requirements of an online program aimed at elementary school students. William Paterson University Professor in Residence Dr. Betsy Golden served on his doctoral committee.

At left, a screenshot from the virtual graduation ceremony. *Photo courtesy of Betsy Golden*

## STARS Academy Student's Award-Winning Artwork To Be Featured In National Publication

A poster created by Bryan Torres-Tavarez, a S.T.A.R.S. Academy senior, will be featured as the cover of a publication issued by the National Association for Pupil Transportation (NAPT). Last year, Torres-Tavarez won first place and a \$500 prize in a contest held by the NAPT. Officials believed it was the first time a New Jersey student had been the overall winner of the contest. Now NAPT officials have said the poster, which promotes school bus safety, will be used as the front cover of the organization's newsletter. It was also recently featured on the NAPT's Facebook feed.



Bryan Torres-Tavarez's award-winning artwork.  
*PPS File Photo*

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# Boys Soccer Season Begins With Glisson Tribute



Dr. Gerald Glisson's family and friends pose with the trophy for the Dr. Gerald Glisson Sportsmanship Cup. *Photo by Paul Brubaker*

The John F. Kennedy and Eastside boys soccer teams put their rivalry aside before their game on October 1st to pay tribute to the late Dr. Gerald Glisson. Glisson was the beloved principal of operations of the Eastside Educational Campus until he died in May after testing positive for the COVID-19 virus. At a ceremony before the game, many of the participants wore t-shirts with the slogan, "We Fight As One" as well as Glisson's immortal motivational quote, "All. Us. We." Glisson's widow, Michelle, and his daughters, Syndey and Skylar, were among the people who attended the ceremony that declared the game between the two teams the first, "Dr. Gerald Glisson Sportsmanship Cup."



## Vision To Learn Helps Students See Clearly

Many Paterson Public Schools students from kindergarten through third grade now have access to the eye care they need thanks to a program led by the national nonprofit, Vision To Learn. With the help of a \$50,000 grant from the Terry and Joe McGrath Foundation and a \$10,000 grant from the PSEG Foundation, Vision To Learn completed vision screenings of more than 3,000 students in February. As a result, 500 students have been receiving vision exams, and approximately 400 will receive new prescription glasses. Vision To Learn's trained eye care professionals help students using a mobile eye clinic that travels to school sites and community organizations.

## Vision

*Continued from page 9*

Vision To Learn began providing exams to students on September 21st at Public School No. 18. Since then, exams were provided to students at the Dr. Frank Napier, Jr. School of Technology and Public School No. 28. During the next few months, students at Public Schools No. 5 and 8, and the Senator Frank Lautenberg School will be provided exams. “The generosity of the Vision To Learn program has had a positive impact on many of our families who otherwise would not have the means to purchase or replace lost glasses,” said Public School No. 18 Principal Deyanira Pagan-Cartagena. “Providing glasses without cost through in-school screenings has eliminated many obstacles to providing them for many students.”

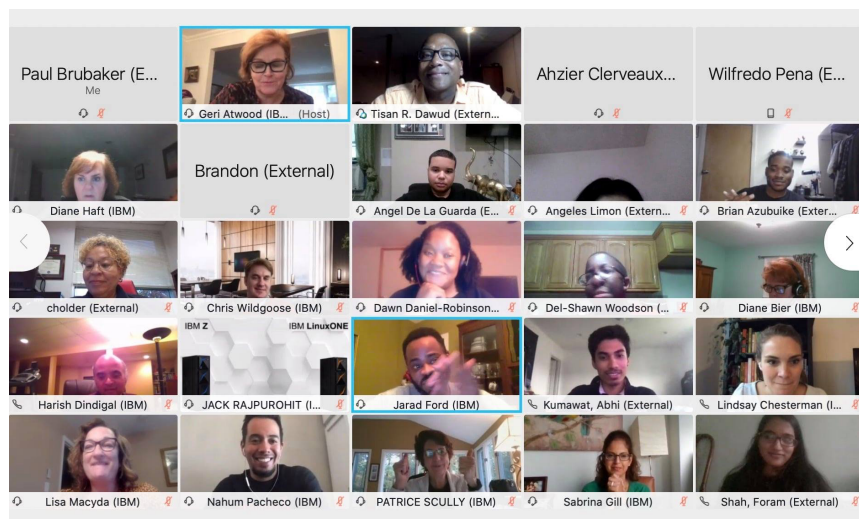


## P-TECH Students, IBM & ADP Mentors Design Mobile Applications

Students at P-TECH (Pathways in Technology Early College High School) at PANTHER Academy worked with volunteering tech sector professionals from the IBM Corporation and ADP (Automatic Data Processing) to design mobile applications.

With only an hour to work together, the 60 students worked with 30 tech professionals broke into five teams in separate breakout rooms. In their limited time, each team needed to decide a topic for their app, then define the problem the app would solve as well as its characteristics and the characteristics of its users. When time was called, everyone rejoined where each team presented a storyboard representing their app’s design.

One team created an app that would track spending to help the user make smarter purchases. A number



Screenshot of the P-TECH app designing session with IBM & ADP mentors *Photo by Paul Brubaker*

of teams developed apps to help students with time management. Others aimed to increase users’ financial literacy through educational apps that would provide resources such as articles and strategies to become financially successful.

During the course of the session, many participants commented that their ideas would have benefitted from having more time.

Patrice Sully, one of the IBM mentors, concurred with Ford in her own words to the students.

“You just experienced what we do at IBM and ADP every day when we brainstorm about new products,” she said. “Great job!”



## ***Upcoming Events***

- Nov. 3:** Election Day – District Closed
- Nov. 4:** Board of Education Special Meeting\*  
5:00 p.m.
- Nov. 5 & 6:** NJEA Convention – District Closed
- Nov. 11:** Veterans' Day – District Closed
- Nov. 12:** Board of Education Workshop Meeting\*  
6:00 p.m.
- Nov. 19:** Report Card Parent Conferences, grades nine to 12  
5:30 – 7:30 p.m.
- Nov. 18:** Board of Education Regular Meeting\*  
6:00 p.m.
- Nov. 23:** Report Card Parent Conferences  
Public School No. 7, Don Bosco Technology Academy &  
New Roberto Clemente School  
5:30 – 7:30 p.m.
- Nov. 24:** Report Card Parent Conferences, grades pre-K to eight  
5:30 – 7:30 p.m.
- Nov. 25:** Early dismissal
- Nov. 26 & 27:** Thanksgiving Break – District Closed

\*All Board of Education meetings are live-streamed at [pps.eduvision.tv/LiveEvents](https://pps.eduvision.tv/LiveEvents). Those who want to give public comment should register in advance by emailing [public@paterson.k12.nj.us](mailto:public@paterson.k12.nj.us) by 4:00 p.m. on November 4th, 5:00 p.m. on November 12th, and 5:00 p.m. on November 18th. Participants are asked to provide their name, address, and the phone number from which they will be calling.

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