

Bulldog

BULLETIN

February 2026

Message from the Superintendent

This latest edition of the Bulldog Bulletin features stories about our students engaged in active, hands-on learning in the classroom and the community. We have amazing students, teachers, and staff, and it is so gratifying to highlight these very enriching activities with the community. As always, thanks to the community for supporting this work!

—Matt Landahl

Rombout Italian Class Field Trip Enjoys L'Arte Moderna

Students in Erica Hughes' Italian Language and Culture class in Rombout Middle School regularly take trips to enhance what is taught in the classroom. This fall, they experienced art like no other at Magazzino Italian Art in Cold Spring.

The museum and research center is dedicated to advancing public appreciation of postwar and contemporary Italian art and culture, according to its website. Students saw much of the studio art and artwork that was white, but of different textures. They had to use Italian words to describe the various pieces.

their masterpieces using unconventional materials, especially one room filled entirely with fur. She also appreciated practicing vocabulary she learned in class with museum staff.



"Many people spoke Italian, so it was cool to actually have conversations," McMahon said. "Since we're the only Italian class, we get to go on more field trips and learn more."

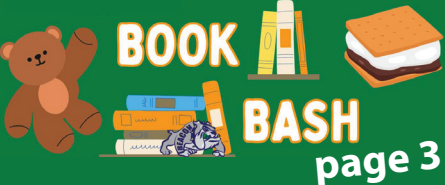


Eighth grader Mikayla McMahon had fun seeing how the artists created

Eight grader Charlie Jelliffe was excited to return to the museum and noted that the field trip enhances what they have learned because they completed a worksheet centered on art-related Italian words.

"We learned about textures and different types of materials that they used," Jelliffe said of the worksheet. "It was fun and I like the art there."

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CABARET at BHS



Beacon High School students showed off their musical talent and warmed hearts in the audience during the annual Winter Blues Cabaret held in the school cafeteria on a chilly evening in mid-January.

The lights were lowered in the cafeteria with blue lights on the tables to resemble a nightclub where attendees heard many performances including junior Dakota Barden's take on the pop standard "Danke Schoen" and a student led band called Trip Sitter who sang original



compositions and a grunge reworking of Talking Heads' "Once in a Lifetime." Legendary

Security Guard Rafael Figueroa, simply known as "Figs," tapped on the drums to accompany his beat poetry covering everything from love to Martin Luther King, Jr. While no one sang "Free Bird," the kids decided on the equally long "Purple Rain" to close out the show with a bang.

BHS Math Teacher Karen Hoben fell in love with open mic nights after seeing her daughter participate in some at the Newburgh Free Academy and approached Chorus Teacher Susan Fisher, as she always looks to expand opportunities for students. The teachers

agreed to make them non-competitive and they have been a hit for three years.



"Year after year a wide range of students perform for the first time, and many become repeat performers," Hoben said. "When we see students pushing beyond their comfort zones, trying and blossoming, our hearts feel fuller."

Hoben and Fisher also hold a Boo Bash event for Halloween and a Spring Fling Cabaret Night, which will be held May 14 at 6:30 p.m. at BHS. They encourage everyone to join them for one of these magical evenings.



Community Winter Coat Giveaway

It has been a frigid winter and everyone could use a warm coat.

Beacon High School's Student Council and the I AM Beacon organization helped the community meet that need.

Over 350 coats, of all sizes and types, were donated throughout the district until Dec. 19. Student council members sorted every coat into plastic bags that were then brought to St. Andrew/St. Luke Episcopal Church on Jan. 10 for them to distribute to those in need. Around 50 coats were given to the residents, while the rest were donated to Dutchess Outreach.

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Sophomore Braelyn Milligan was eager to get involved because any one could help with getting coats to people of all ages who needed them. "When we were sorting the coats, there were coats for younger kids, older kids, women and men," Milligan recalled. "I think it helps."

Sophomore Jacqueline Albra emphasized the importance of giving away coats that could still be worn, rather than throwing them away. "If we're not using something, why



not give it to someone else who needs it," Albra said.

Sophomore Lia Cosentino agreed, adding that the donations were of good quality. "I'm glad that we're giving back to the community with these coats," Cosentino said.

Assistant Superintendent of Pupil Personnel Services Dr. Heather

Chadwell Dennis had suggested to Student Council advisers Tim Newman and David Kotchie about partnering with I AM Beacon to help distribute the coats at the church, as doing so at BHS proved to be logistically impossible. Many were willing to clear out their closets to help, including Kotchie's own family members.

"My daughter donated six to seven of her coats that don't fit her anymore and she was very excited to know that's where they were going," Kotchie recalled. "My mother-in-law was very excited too and went through her closets and donated some coats."

Forrestal Learns By Doing



Engineering Lesson Helps Alleviate a Common Problem

This year, first graders in Daniel Reilly's class made blueprints designs of their very own backscratchers, which they used to make them.

The devices' handles were made with ice pop sticks covered in colorful pipe cleaners, while plastic forks and straws served as the scratching part. Reilly told students that their designs may not always work, but encouraged them to try out different methods to achieve their goals.

Each student showed off their design to the class and Principal Crystal Sessoms-Wiggins, who said that she enjoys seeing the wonderful work in the classrooms.

"I know already, just by looking at the board that there are some engineers in this classroom," Sessoms-Wiggins said. "I'm happy to get to see them here."

Maverick Armento's backscratcher used three forks so the user could reach itches on all spots of the body, which Reilly gave two thumbs up to. The young innovator was happy with his design and shared his favorite part of the activity.

"I enjoyed putting on the tape," Armento said. "I put rainbow colors on the popsicle stick."



Kindergarteners "Fly" for the Holidays



In a lesson titled "Holidays Around The World," students made their own passports and boarded an "airplane" made up of chairs and a flight simulator on a Promethean board to go to Kenya where they learned about Kwanzaa. They then traveled to Israel to learn about Hanukkah before coming back home to New York to celebrate Christmas.

"We took a nice long flight, I was a very excellent pilot," White said with a grin. "We went to these special countries so we could learn about the traditions and holidays."



Leah Del Bianco enjoyed participating in the trip, especially learning about the traditions surrounding Christmas and Kwanzaa.

"During Kwanzaa, we learned that there are seven candles," Del Bianco said. "My favorite part of Christmas is when Santa comes."



New Nursing Team Members Feel Right At Home

BHS Paulina Ndoci



Ndoci comes to Beacon High School after most recently working as nurse in the neonatal intensive care unit at New York Presbyterian Hospital, though nursing has been ingrained in her. Her first taste of

the medical field came when she volunteered at a hospital right out of high school, following in her sister's footsteps, a fellow nurse.

"I can't imagine doing anything else now ... nursing is a great career especially for kids who don't know what they're looking to do," Ndoci said. "I feel excited, this is a lot newer for me."

After her son Theo was born early last year, Ndoci decided that she wanted to stay closer to home. She was drawn to Beacon's small community where she believes she can give more individualized attention to students, adding that her goal is to get to know all of them and their needs.

"You think that school nursing is so broad, but it's very specific to each student because each one has a specific need," Ndoci said. "You can do a lot more with the students."

Ndoci graduated with a bachelors in nursing from Mercy University and outside of work enjoys spending time with her family, doing crafts and cooking. Her specialties including sourdough bread and burek, a phyllo dough pastry stuffed with meat, cheese and spinach.

Ndoci said with a laugh. "I love to cook and I love cooking for others."

Sargent Makes Learning Fun

Interactive Project Puts Kids in a New York State of Mind

To learn more about New York's geography earlier this school year, Sargent fourth graders drew their own maps of the Empire State complete with names of cities, bodies of waters and a compass point.



Teacher Nicole Winchell noted that the project was a fun way for her students to know geography, but it also gave them an opportunity to show off their creativity.

Naomi Peterson enjoyed researching for the project, particularly when she learned that New York was home to the first pizzeria in America. She also was drawn to one unusual aspect.

"Me and my friends like to look up what are the funny names in New York State and see if we can try and put them on the map," Peterson said. "I think there's a Butter Street or something like that."

Augie D'Aprino cited that his favorite part of the project was making the outlines for his map. "I made mine different by focusing on getting the perfect shape," D'Aprino said. "I really liked it a lot."

Rumble Ball Gets Music Kids Going

Fourth graders have worked on a new exercise with Music Teacher Maureen Stickney which helps them learn how to play and follow non-verbal cues from a conductor.



The activity, known as Rumble Ball, involves students playing various instruments, while two other students throw a ball back and forth to help dictate how the music they are playing should sound.

"If they bounce it and it's one bounce, it's one sound, if there's multiple bounces, there's multiple sounds ... if it doesn't touch the floor, there's no sound, which is equivalent to a rest," Stickney explained. "The idea is that the students are watching and interpreting something that's happening without verbal cues to manipulate their instrument and create sound."

Stickney found that her students enjoyed the activity as everyone got to play at being conductor and it appealed to different personality traits. "The more athletic students enjoy it because they get to toss around a ball," Stickney said. "I'm excited that I got to engage the students that way."

All Sargent is Saying is Give Peace a Chance

To honor the teachings of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Sargent fourth graders each contributed unique and colorful squares to form a Peace Quilt which went on digital display at the Empire State Concourse earlier this winter.



Ari Beckerman said that her teacher Nicole Winchell gave the class ideas of designs they could mimic along with quotes, but were also allowed to improvise and create unique borders around the squares. Her design featured a heart with wings with the quote "Let Your Heart Lead," which she noted is important when it comes to standing for what is right.

"If your heart is saying do something and then you should do it," Beckerman explained. "The story behind the project is to just do the right thing."



Conan O'Shea, in Gessica Stufano's class, made a design of a stem with a heart on top instead of a flower with the phrase "Love Depends On You," which means everyone should show love to each other. He has written essays in honor of King for the annual essay contest dedicated to the civil rights leader, so he latched on quickly to this project.

"I was thinking that we could give some really good messages to people who aren't for peace," O'Shea said. "It's a symbol of love and ending hate."

On March 12th, our elementary schools will come together at Rombout Middle School for our annual Bulldog Book Bash!

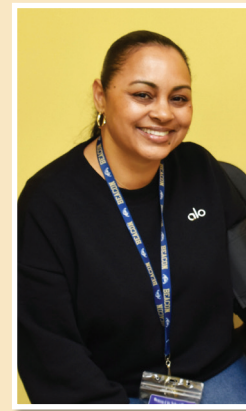
In celebration of National Reading Month, we are bringing our school community together for an evening filled with fun, literacy-themed activities.

This year's theme is Camping, so get ready to cozy up with a good book and enjoy some "campfire" reading adventures!

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New Nursing Team

continued...



Health Secretary Yinet McClendon

McClendon joins Beacon High School after previously working as a provisional assistant to one of Rombout's two assistant principals during the

2021-2022 school year. She wanted to come back to the district because of everyone's willingness to help each other and a successful civil service test allowed her to take on a permanent role.

"It's amazing how everyone comes together and I just love that," McClendon said. "Ever since I left, I've been trying to come back."

McClendon was a 911 operator in Westchester County for 21 years and was looking to transition into a less hectic field. She enjoys working with students who come into the office, which is good practice as she is working towards a master's in psychology from Capella University's online program. Her previous career has prepared her well too.

"I came across every kind of victim, domestic violence, people's children dying, everything you can think of," McClendon recalled. "They need that support ... Being patient and a good person is all you need and everything else falls into the basket."

Outside of work and school, McClendon hopes to rekindle her passion for making candles, with a goal of turning it into a business, and spends quality time with her rambunctious pit bull, Ace.

"Ace is a menace, but he's my baby," McClendon said. "When I get home he occupies a lot of my time."

BEACON CSD
ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS
BULLDOG
BOOK BASH
MYSTERY READERS - LITERACY THEMED ACTIVITIES
FACE PAINTING - TEDDY BEAR SLEEPOVER
ROMBOUT MIDDLE SCHOOL
THURSDAY, MARCH 12
5:30 - 7:00 PM

