



# BRENTWOOD BULLETIN

PUBLISHED BY THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

FALL 2025

## DISTRICT HOSTS GRAND OPENING FOR RENOVATED HISTORIC SCHOOLHOUSE



Brentwood's oldest schoolhouse officially opened on Oct. 10, completing a decades-long restoration that preserves a unique piece of the community's history.

"I can't say enough about the support and generosity shown by the current school district Board and administration," said Ellen Edelstein, president of the Brentwood Historical Society, at the ribbon cutting. "Through their vision and partnership with the Historical Society, this stubborn little building is now restored. It will be available to the children of Brentwood so that they may learn and appreciate the history of Modern Times, the Utopian community that created the basis for the diverse and welcoming hamlet of Brentwood. Hopefully, it will be a beacon to others to come and learn about us, appreciate us and recognize us for all we have to offer."

The octagonal Modern Times Schoolhouse, built in 1857 by members of the utopian Modern Times settlement, had fallen into disrepair over more than a century. The settlement, home to roughly 150 residents on 90 acres of what is now Brentwood, was known for its egalitarian values, including women's suffrage and the absence of a formal justice system, taxes or money.

The building served as a school until 1907 and later as a private residence. It was donated to the Brentwood Union Free School District by the private owners and moved to district property near the administration building in 1989. Restoration efforts began in the



1990s, led by the Brentwood Historical Society after it was chartered in 1992.

Now fully restored, the schoolhouse will serve as both an educational resource and a museum. Students from Brentwood will have opportunities to explore the history of Modern Times and the evolution of education in the area. The building also provides a destination for community members and visitors to connect with local history.

The Modern Times Schoolhouse is listed on both the State and National Registers of Historic Places and is expected to become a centerpiece for learning and cultural enrichment in the Brentwood community.

"We take pride in being among the very few districts with its historic schoolhouse preserved on its own ground, a powerful symbol of pride, perseverance and a deep respect for history," Superintendent Wanda Ortiz-Rivera said. "Like this schoolhouse, Brentwood stands strong, resilient, rooted and always rising."



*This publication is designed to inform residents of the Brentwood School District community of news about your schools. For further information, call (631) 434-2334.*

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# NEW ASSISTANT SUP FOR ELEMENTARY LOOKS AHEAD

Brentwood alumna Stacey Brdey, principal of Southeast Elementary School and soon-to-be assistant superintendent for elementary education, has a habit of talking to herself. She keeps a running list of her stream of consciousness on her phone – a parking lot for her ideas, fleeting thoughts and lingering questions.

For example, one day, she jotted down this directive: “Nurture relationships across the district.” Another day, she wrote, “Relationships rooted in trust, respect and compassion can take a good school and make it extraordinary.”

She said this reflective streak shapes how she communicates with the Brentwood community – something she’ll be doing much more of soon. On Sept. 25, Brdey was appointed to succeed Ann Palmer – also a Brentwood graduate – who will retire in December.

“Brentwood made me who I am today,” Brdey said. “I don’t doubt that for a single second.”

Brdey has dedicated her career to the district that helped shape her. She began as a special education teacher in 1998 and quickly became known for her student-centered approach and her ability to build strong partnerships with families. Her expertise in individualized instruction and student support led her to serve as a Committee on Special Education chairperson, then as assistant principal at Southwest Elementary School, and later as

principal of Southeast Elementary School.

In addition to her district service, she shared her knowledge with future educators as an adjunct professor and literacy center supervisor at Dowling College, where she also completed her own studies. She earned a bachelor’s degree in special education, a master’s degree in literacy, and professional diplomas in school building and district leadership. Each step of her professional journey has been guided by a deep belief in equity, collaboration and the power of education to change lives.

“I have to realize that it’s not goodbye – it really isn’t,” she said.

Outside of work, her main hobby, she said, is reading. She has her head in two books at any given time, and ever since she was a little girl, she’s loved to enjoy a story by the sea. A speedy reader as a child, Brdey said she used to place a Post-it note inside the book to stop her from reading too much in one sitting.

“I wouldn’t allow myself to read because I didn’t want the story to be over,” she said with a laugh. As it turns out, Brdey’s story with Brentwood schools is far from over – it’s entering an exciting new chapter.



## Green Machine TAKES FIRST PLACE

The streets of Brentwood were filled with cheers, flashing lights and community pride on Oct. 27 as the Brentwood High School Green Machine Marching Band returned home from Syracuse after capturing first place in the New York State Field Band Conference Championships.

“It’s been such an awesome season with a bunch of great kids, and a great staff to work with,” said Director Joseph Sitler. “This is it for me – I’ll be retiring at the end of the school year, and I’m sure we have the people in place that will continue the excellence of the Green Machine.”

The band’s performance, titled “Toil and Transcendence,” marked the culmination of a season that inspired the community and cemented the



Green Machine’s reputation as one of the state’s premier marching bands. cemented the Green Machine’s reputation as one of the state’s premier marching bands.

## JALLINE GUEVARA - EX OFFICIO STUDENT BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBER

Serving in this role is a privilege, and I am committed to using it to advocate for positive change, foster inclusivity and strengthen our community.

My goal is to share with the Board the true needs and priorities of our student body by providing them with a fresh perspective on what daily life is like for a Brentwood student.



The Graduation PLUS+ initiative holds a special place in my heart because it has allowed me to take college courses while still in high school, which gives me both an academic and financial advantage when I enter college.

I hope to develop greater leadership skills and personal growth through this role, but most importantly, I want to make a lasting difference in my beloved school district – a district that has opened so many doors for me and countless other students.

# District Announces Class of '26



## TOP 10 SCHOLARS

The district is proud to announce its top 10 academic students for the 2025-26 school year. These students are a testament to dedication, hard work and a passion for learning, exemplifying the opportunities provided through the district's Graduation PLUS+ initiative. Through this program, students explore pathways for postsecondary success – whether in college, career training or other meaningful pursuits – while developing the skills and habits that help them thrive.

No matter which path they choose, the district remains committed to equipping every student with the tools, support and guidance they need to succeed.

### ROSS

- 1 Melanie Ruiz
- 2 Alexa Chaparro
- 3 Luis Guevara
- 4 Bryan Morales
- 5 Cynae Harris
- 6 Karen Torres
- 7 Franklin Menjivar Portillo
- 8 Williams Mendoza
- 9 Jaslene Vizcaino
- 10 Mia Mootoo

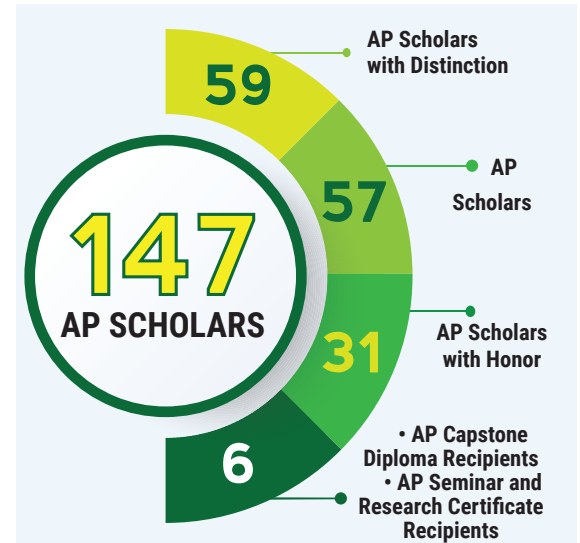
### SONDERLING

- 1 Mauricio Meza
- 2 Luis Romero
- 3 Rafael Estrada
- 4 Darwin Gonzalez
- 5 Justin Blanco
- 6 Chelsea Guevara
- 7 Jason Gutierrez
- 8 Knoe'le Pettus
- 9 Jeremiah Itwaru
- 10 Karla Lopez



## 147 STUDENTS ACHIEVE TOP COLLEGE BOARD HONORS

One hundred forty-seven current students and members of the Class of 2025 qualified as Advanced Placement Scholars by the College Board for their exceptional achievement on the college-level AP program exams. The College Board's Advanced Placement program offers students the opportunity to take challenging college-level courses while still in high school and to earn college credit, advanced placement or both for successful performance on the AP exams.



*The district congratulates these students on a standout academic achievement.*

## HONORING EXCELLENCE IN PERFORMANCE: NYSCAME All-County and NYSSMA All-State Musicians

Each year, top student musicians from across New York earn spots in the NYSCAME All-County and NYSSMA All-State ensembles – two of the highest honors a school musician can achieve.

Selections are based on NYSSMA solo scores from the previous school year. Students perform for adjudicators, who rate them on a 100-point scale for tone, technique, interpretation and overall musicianship. Those with the top scores are considered for county and state recognition.

All-County musicians rehearse and perform with their peers each fall in concerts that highlight the county's best young talent. All-State musicians travel to Rochester in December for NYSSMA's Winter Conference, where they join elite students from across the state to perform at the Eastman School of Music.

Earning a place in these ensembles reflects talent, discipline and the strength of our district's music program.

### ALL-STATE:

- Crystal Campos-Torres
- Elias Gonzalez
- Adrian Cepeda (Alternate)
- Brenda Morales (Alternate)

### ALL-COUNTY:

- |                       |                      |
|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Christopher Argueto   | Brenda Morales       |
| Claros                | Kervin Osorio        |
| Crystal Campos-Torres | Ayleen Reyes         |
| Adrian Cepeda         | Arnoldo Romero       |
| Sebastian Feliciano   | Michael Ruiz         |
| Elias Gonzalez        | Andres Santana       |
| Sophia Jimenez Ponce  | Noah Springer-Floriz |
| Denise Leon           | Melanie Vargas       |
| Miguel Leon           | Adonya White         |
| Karla Lopez           |                      |



# BUILDING BRIDGES THROUGH FAMILY AND COMMUNITY

Dedicated staff and volunteer teacher liaisons help families learn, connect, and thrive together in our wonderful district.

At the heart of the Family Community Center is a team devoted to supporting every family. The Center is staffed with a full-time social worker and a parent coordinator liaison, both of whom provide daily assistance to families seeking guidance, resources, and support. Working alongside them are the Plaza Comunitaria Liaisons – a group of passionate teachers who volunteer their time to lead workshops, answer questions, and help parents navigate school life.

Together, this team ensures that every family who walks through the door feels welcomed, informed, and cared for. Their shared goal is simple yet powerful: to strengthen the partnership between families, schools, and the community.

The name Plaza Comunitaria, meaning “Community Plaza,” was inspired by Superintendent Wanda Ortiz-Rivera’s visit to her father in San Juan, Puerto Rico. While there, she stopped by the Placita de San Juan and was deeply moved by what she saw – families gathered together, children



playing, and even people who didn’t know each other sharing laughter, conversation, and kindness.

“I wanted to bring that same feeling to our wonderful district,” said Ortiz-Rivera. “A place where families could come together, support one another, and feel that same sense of belonging.”

Today, the Family Community Center and Plaza Comunitaria Liaisons bring that vision to life every day. Families gather to learn about educational programs, technology, and community resources in a warm, supportive environment. Their work reflects the heart of Brentwood – a district that believes when families and schools come together, every child thrives.

## QUESTIONS & ANSWER

# A Place For Every Family

### What is the mission of the Family Community Center, and how does it serve Brentwood families?

Guided by Brentwood’s Graduation PLUS+ vision, the Family Community Center serves as a hub for families. Its mission is to connect families with the tools and information they need to help every student succeed. Located at the Anthony F. Felicio Administration Building, the Center brings together departments such as registration, bilingual and ENL, funded programs and guidance to make it easier for families to navigate school life.

### What services and programs are offered?

The center provides help with:

- Enrollment and registration: Forms, documentation and school placement.
- Technology and communication: Using ParentSquare, Parent Portal and the “Where’s the Bus” app.

- Family engagement: Welcome orientations, parent workshops and family field trips.
- Essential needs: School supplies, clothing, hygiene kits and food.
- Community connections: Referrals to trusted local partners such as Pronto of Long Island, the Economic Opportunity Council (EOC), Youth Enrichment Services (YES), CARECEN and area libraries that offer educational, employment and health-related support.

### What might surprise families about the center?

Many are surprised by how much is offered. Beyond school registration, families can find help with clothing, backpacks, mental health referrals and social-emotional support. It’s a place for both practical help and personal guidance.

### How can families access the center?

Families can stop by or make an appointment. The center is located at 52 Third Avenue in the Anthony F. Felicio Administration Building and is open on school days from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Appointments outside regular hours can be made by calling (631) 339-0599.

### What impact has the center had?

Families often share that the center helps them feel more connected to the district and confident in supporting their children. Many leave feeling valued, informed and part of a caring community.

### What’s next for the Family Community Center?

The goal is to keep growing as a welcoming space where every family can find what they need. Staff plan to expand programs, deepen partnerships and continue building connections that help Brentwood families thrive.



## BRENTWOOD CELEBRATES NEW 9/11 MEMORIAL, CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS ACROSS DISTRICT

This fall, the Brentwood School District marked a milestone as construction wrapped on a sweeping slate of capital projects. At the heart of the district's upgrades is the full renovation of the Brentwood High School 9/11 Memorial Courtyard, unveiled during a rededication on the 24th anniversary of Sept. 11.

Under clear skies, students, staff, Board members, veterans, first responders and community members gathered in the renewed courtyard. The Board of Education cut a ceremonial ribbon to officially open the space. Air Force Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (AFJROTC) cadets led the presentation of colors while the American flag drifted overhead.

Superintendent Wanda Ortiz-Rivera said the memorial serves not only as a tribute to lives lost but also as a source of inspiration: "A space ... for reflection, to honor and to draw inspiration for the values that emerge in the darkest of times."

The renovated courtyard features curved brick-lined walkways, manicured turf and new landscaping. Two steel beams from the

World Trade Center – installed in Brentwood in 2002 – still rise from the center of a circular brick foundation, now framed by the updated design to create a dignified space for remembrance and reflection.

As the district moves into Phase 2 of its districtwide capital improvements, one of the most exciting additions will be the construction of a new culinary building at Brentwood High School. This state-of-the-art facility will support the district's growing culinary arts program, giving students hands-on experience in a professional-grade kitchen and expanding opportunities for career readiness. Also included in Phase 2 of construction is a turf football field, renovated track and a ticket booth near the culinary building. Pending State approval, a turf softball infield and lights for the soccer field are also on the way. Groundbreaking for the culinary building is expected to take place this winter, marking another major step forward in enhancing student learning spaces across Brentwood.

## Board of Education Marks Hispanic Heritage Month



To close out Hispanic Heritage Month, the district's COPA Club – short for Community, Obligation, Professionalism and Achievement – treated attendees to a lively dance performance that celebrated Brentwood's rich cultural diversity.



# Homecoming Weekend Brings Cheers, Cartoons and a *Big Win*



Brentwood kicked off homecoming weekend Friday, Oct. 3, with an outdoor pep rally that shook the field. The marching band blared, cheerleaders flew through the air and students waved green and white banners like tiny tornadoes of school pride. Laughter, chants and drumbeats filled the space as everyone got hyped for a weekend of fun.



Saturday, Oct. 4, turned Third Avenue into a cartoon wonderland. Floats rolled by, bursting with color and imagination – superheroes, classic cartoons and wacky creations from students and local groups made the parade feel alive. Families lined the sidewalks, snapping photos, waving and laughing as the floats danced down the street.



The grand finale came under sunny skies at the football field.



Brentwood's players didn't just play – they roared. The team trounced Riverhead 42-7, sending the crowd into cheers that echoed across the stands. Cris Peralta carried the day with 263 rushing yards, four touchdowns and two catches for 24 yards plus a two-point conversion. Malachi Baker added 58 yards and a touchdown while Herson Flores and Justin Rivera each turned the tide with big turnovers. Every touchdown sparked cheers, high-fives and plenty of green-and-white banners waving.

From the pep rally to the cartoon parade to the dominating win on the field, Brentwood homecoming was pure energy, creativity and community spirit. Smiles were contagious, school pride was on full display and memories were made that will last long after the confetti cleared.

