



# EAST ISLIP

UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT

SPRING NEWSLETTER 2026



## Inspiring Future **Innovators**

The East Islip School Business Partnership hosted its annual STEAM Night and STEAM Day in the East Islip High School gymnasium, offering students hands-on opportunities to explore future careers in science, technology, engineering, art and math.

STEAM Night welcomed students and community members from across the district, while STEAM Day brought second, fourth and eighth graders from the middle school and elementary schools to experience the interactive exhibits. Organized by East Islip School Business Partnership Coordinator Bridget Lopiccolo, the events featured engaging demonstrations and activities highlighting the district's STEAM-related classes, clubs and career pathways.

High school students volunteered from a variety of programs, helping guide younger learners through activities, while professionals from across Long Island – including representatives from Allstate, Haugland Group and Stony Brook Medicine – shared insights into their fields and connected with students.

“Connecting with our community and future health care leaders is always inspiring,” said Lynne Alba, talent acquisition director at Stony Brook Medicine. “Opportunities like East Islip’s STEAM event allow us to showcase the many possibilities within a career in health care.”

Allstate owner Stephen Foray, a member of the School Business Partnership, emphasized the event’s impact across all grade levels. “This year’s STEAM event was an incredible experience, both as a business partner and as a parent of a student at the high school,” he said. “I saw firsthand the excitement, curiosity and collaboration among students, staff and the community. Events like this are so valuable because they introduce students – from kindergarten through high school – to real-world careers and help strengthen the connection between schools and local businesses.”

With growing participation each year, the district’s STEAM events continue to build connections and inspire the next generation of innovators.

# Languages, Culture and Creativity

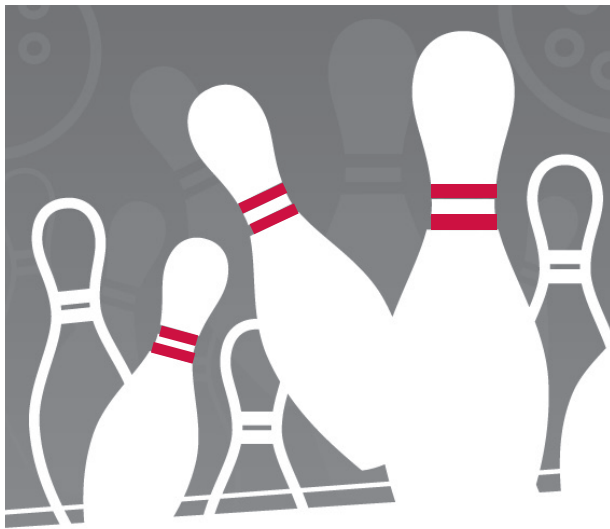
## HIGHLIGHT WORLD LANGUAGE WEEK

East Islip's World Language Week was celebrated at both the middle and high schools in March, bringing students together to explore this year's theme, "Discover Languages, Discover the World." Each day highlighted one of the languages offered in the district's program: Monday was American Sign Language Day, Tuesday celebrated French, Wednesday focused on Italian and Thursday featured Spanish, including a lively flamenco performance from the Sol y Sombra dance ensemble. Poster contests at both schools – hosted on Instagram at the middle school and schoolwide at the high school – gave students a chance to showcase their creativity, and even the lunch menus joined the celebration with internationally inspired selections.

Students also had opportunities to take an active role, with one student presenter sharing that participating in World Language Week was "good preparation for those of us that want to be teachers." Jovina Bratta's junior and senior ASL classes spread deaf awareness on Monday's kickoff by leading various activities including signing songs and teaching signs. Friday brought a new addition to the tradition with the first-ever World Languages Olympics, adding a competitive yet fun close to the week.

This year's World Language Week activities were coordinated by World Language National Honor Society advisers Katherine Paules and Rita Pinzon, with the poster contests organized by Marina Poulis at the middle school and Lisa Rapiejko at the high school.





## THIRD TIME'S THE CHARM

# *for East Islip's Girls Varsity Bowlers*

East Islip High School's girls varsity bowling team delivered a truly unforgettable season this year. Under rookie head coach Genesis Dawson, the program continued its tradition of excellence, proving that talent, heart and teamwork can elevate a team to new heights. Stepping into the role, Dawson knew she had a special group. With back-to-back county championships already behind them, the team entered the season determined to finish what they started. The focus was clear: Strengthen teamwork while continuing to push individual performance. That approach paid off.

The team captured their league title, supported by outstanding individual performances across the board. With a dominant regular season behind them, East Islip then claimed its third consecutive county title in commanding fashion, adding another chapter to an already remarkable run. The team rolled over 1,000 pins in five of six games, showcasing the consistency, depth and focus that define the program. From start to finish, they led the field, fueled by an electric atmosphere from both teammates and supporters.

With the county title secured, the team set its sights on the state championship in Syracuse. East Islip stayed within striking distance early, trailing by a narrow margin. Then

everything clicked, and by the end of Game 4, the team found its rhythm. Makayla Boyd ignited the momentum with eight consecutive strikes, energizing both her teammates and the crowd. The team went on to knock down an incredible 5,637 pins over six games. They were the only team to surpass 1,000 pins in a single game that day, turning a 90-pin deficit into a 136-pin victory. Brooke Andresen and Boyd both finished among the top 10 bowlers of the tournament. In individual competition, Andresen placed second in New York State for the individual competition, while Meeya Leaderman earned sixth in Division I.

The win marked East Islip's first state championship since 2014, when the program was led by late coach Harold Cooley Jr., whose influence helped establish East Islip as a perennial contender. This made the moment even more meaningful not just for East Islip, but for Andresen, Boyd and Crowe, who were also members of the final team he coached.

"Like diamonds formed under pressure, this team rose to the occasion," said Dawson, who earned recognition as Newsday's Coach of the Year in her debut season. "Each athlete proved strong, unique, and essential. Together, they didn't just meet expectations, they exceeded them."

# EXPLORING History and Culture



During spring break, East Islip High School students expanded their learning beyond the classroom through two immersive international trips, exploring history, culture and global connections across Europe.

Thirty-nine students and six chaperones participated in a World War II-focused tour, visiting significant sites including the Churchill War Rooms in London, the beaches of Normandy, Bastogne – the focal point of the Battle of the Bulge – and Berlin, where they saw the Berlin Wall, the Brandenburg Gate and Checkpoint Charlie. Students also experienced local culture across Belgium, England, France and Germany, with additional stops in Cologne, Paris and Rouen to visit landmarks such as the site of Joan of Arc’s execution, the Eiffel Tower, the Arc de Triomphe and Cologne Cathedral.

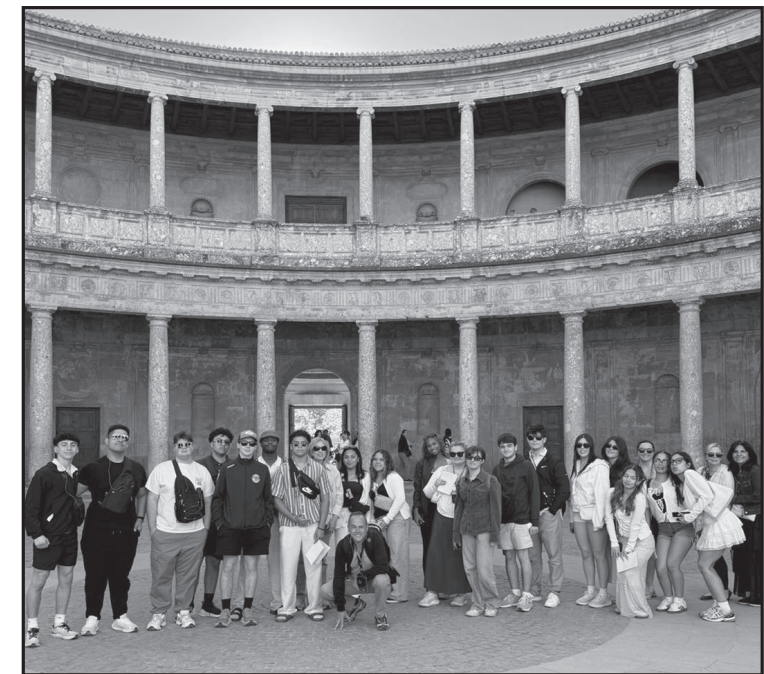
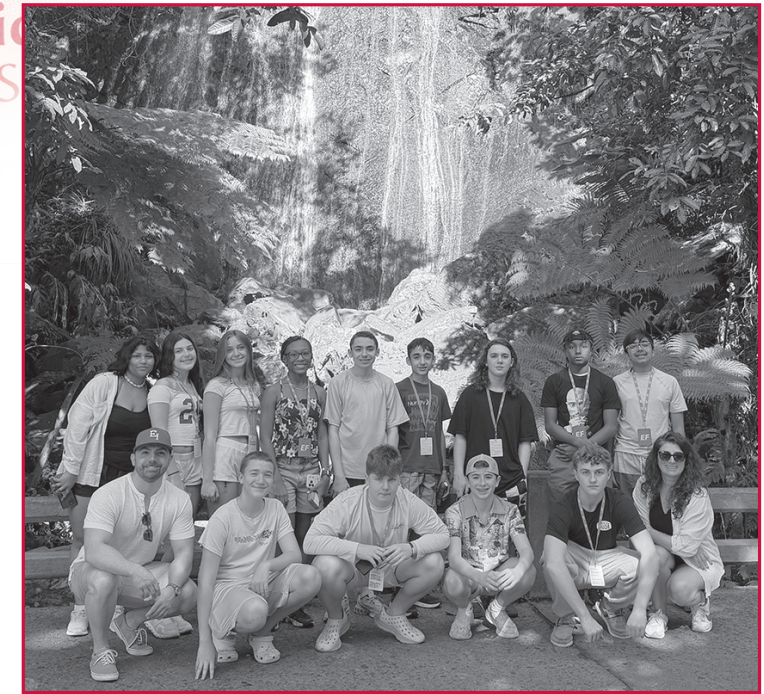
“The itinerary was fast-paced and demanding, but the students gained valuable and memorable experiences through this trip,” said Class of 2026 adviser Kate Boucher, who organized the tour along with Victor Davis.

Meanwhile, Spanish language students traveled to Spain,

immersing themselves in the language and culture through real-world experiences and meaningful interactions. The group visited iconic destinations including Barcelona’s Sagrada Familia, the Alhambra and Arab Baths, the Costa del Sol, and the Rock of Gibraltar, where they explored caves and observed Barbary macaques. In Seville, students viewed the resting place of Christopher Columbus, toured the Prado Museum in Madrid, visited the royal palace, and explored the unique mosque-cathedral in Cordoba. A “City Challenge” scavenger hunt encouraged teamwork and communication with local residents.

“The trip played a key role in helping our students develop as globally minded individuals,” teacher Lisa Rapijeko said. “They returned with broadened perspectives, greater independence and a stronger sense of connection to each other and to Spanish culture.”

These experiences are part of an ongoing series of educational travel opportunities offered through the school’s partnership with EF Tours, which also included a trip to San Juan, Puerto Rico, during the February break.



“It was a wonderful experience to be immersed in a different culture than my own and learn about the Spanish lifestyles.”

– student Sanaa Lee

“Studying abroad is the best way to learn a language.”

– students Malia Jablonski and Arianna Rodriguez

# Partnering to Make Global Impact

East Islip High School's Interact Club continues to make a meaningful difference through its strong and longstanding partnership with the Rotary Club of Islip, engaging students in service projects that benefit both the local and global community.

Interact is a student-led service organization sponsored by Rotary, bringing together high school students to develop leadership skills while embracing the Rotary motto of "Service Above Self." Through mentorship by Rotary members, students take the lead in organizing projects that support their school and community while also promoting international understanding.

"The Interact Club students and our Rotary Club have a long history of collaborating on community projects," Rotary Club of Islip President-Elect Merri Ciano said. "We are extremely proud of our partnership and look forward to continuing to work together in the future."

One of Rotary's signature initiatives is its support of Rotary Gift of Life International, which provides life-saving heart surgeries for children around the world. Interact students play a key role in fundraising through the "Saving a Heart" project. Their efforts will help support Sheyla, a 13-year-old from Honduras, who will travel to the district this April to receive heart surgery.

"The Interact students held fundraisers to aid Rotary, making Sheyla's heart surgery possible," Ciano said. "That is the power these students have."

In addition to global initiatives,



(RYLA), a district program that selects students to attend leadership workshops and team-building experiences.

"The Interact Club is a student-led service organization sponsored by our local Rotary club," adviser Lisa Rapiejko said. "Through this partnership, students gain mentorship and guidance while developing leadership skills and organizing meaningful service projects. My role is to empower members to take initiative and lead their own work. Through these experiences, students develop a strong sense of responsibility, global awareness and a lasting commitment to service."

Students say the experience is both impactful and rewarding.

"Interact Club is a really inspiring club to be a part of," sophomore Annelise Eichler said. "It's empowering to know that we're bettering our community with student-led service projects, and it's fun collaborating with other members on new and creative ideas. It's definitely one of my favorite clubs at the high school."

Looking ahead, Rotary District 7255 will host its first Interact Summit, bringing together students from across

the region to build leadership and networking skills while continuing their commitment to service.

Through their work with Rotary, East Islip High School Interact students are not only supporting important causes but also developing the skills and values that will guide them as future leaders.



Interact members contribute to local service projects, including organizing a winter coat drive that collected more than 50 coats, participating in recycling education and awareness programs, and designing entries for a Long Island-wide recycling contest sponsored by Rotary. Students also can participate in the Rotary Youth Leadership Awards

# NYPD Jazz Band Visits Connetquot

To kick off Music in Our Schools Month, students and staff at Connetquot Elementary School welcomed the NYPD Jazz Band, invited by music teacher Christina Sangeniti for a special morning of music and learning. Made up entirely of active-duty police officers who are also talented musicians, the ensemble introduced students to a wide variety of instruments and musical styles, from jazz to upbeat swing and even pop. As the performance unfolded, students were encouraged to join in with clapping, singing and even dancing along with the musicians. Laughter and excitement spread throughout the room as the music brought everyone together in a shared experience.



## JFK Drama Club Delights With 'The Reluctant Dragon'



Fifth graders in JFK's Drama Club recently performed "The Reluctant Dragon," directed by Michael Fernandez. The charming production was featured in two shows, one for third graders in the morning and another for families in the evening. Adapted from Kenneth Grahame's 1898 story, "The Reluctant Dragon" tells the story of a peaceful, poetry-loving dragon who refuses to fight, highlighting themes of friendship, kindness and challenging stereotypes.

"These students undertook such a challenging play with many lines and 'Old English,' and went above and beyond to memorize their lines with emotion and detail," Fernandez said. "From the stage crew to the cast, they demonstrated terrific teamwork and truly made this story come alive."

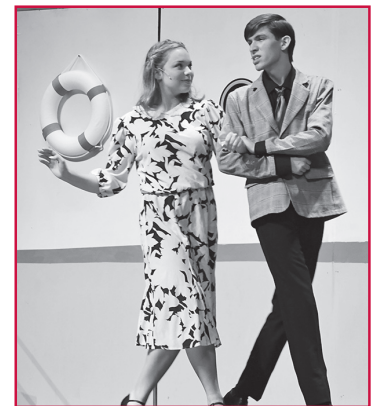
## Hearts Get Healthier at Timber Point



Students at Timber Point Elementary School participated in a week of fun physical education challenges designed to strengthen and work out their heart muscles. First, they learned about how the cardiovascular system works and how to make healthy food choices from the five food groups. Guided by teacher Diane Wahrenburg, the students then put their knowledge to the test at six different stations, including hopscotch, jump rope, gymnastics, hula hooping and an actual simulation of the heart and blood vessels delivering oxygen to the body.

## 'ANYTHING GOES'

East Islip High School's talented theater students stunned audiences with their vivacious acting, singing and tap-dancing performances in this year's spring musical, Cole Porter's 1934 classic "Anything Goes." Set on a ship bound from New York to London, the madcap production showcased jazz standards such as "All Through the Night," "I Get a Kick Out of You" and "You're the Top."



Bethany Affelt served as the musical's director, with junior Sienna Graber and sophomore Peyton Zusmer as student assistants. The dedicated cast included Kerry-Ann Montout as Reno Sweeney, Ethan Jensen as Billy Crocker, Paige Mathers as Hope Harcourt, Josue Murillo as Moonface Martin, Anderson Ross as Lord Evelyn Oakleigh, Lauren Winiarski as Erma Latour, Kylan Curry as Elisha Whitney, Eva Joan Daugherty as Mrs. Evangeline Harcourt, Gavin Timmers as the Captain and Wyatt Casdia as the Purser.

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# BREAKFAST OF CHAMPIONS CEREMONIES



The district recently recognized outstanding secondary students at its annual Breakfast of Champions ceremonies, celebrating character, leadership and positive contributions at both the middle and high school levels.

During the high school's event, 22 students – Caroline Antunes, Michael Benowitz, Emily Bentrewicz, Anthony Castilletti, Lia Ciampi, Delaney Crowe, Annelise Eichler, Luke Fitzpatrick, Ryan Geraghty, Cristian Hernandez Vasquez, Skylar Herrle, Makayla Howard, Soraya Joseph, Olivia Kanzler, Aubrey Kellam, Flor Martinez Romero, Molly Montalbano, Nora Mooney, Jordyn Palagi, Joseph Smith, Maggie Tricoukes and Aiden Ulceus – were recognized for their excellent character and for serving as exemplary role models within the school community.

At the middle school, a total of 33 seventh grade

students – William Ballato, Gabriella Belsito, Morgan Bisulca, Liliana Blore, Carly Carrillo, Braelynn Cook, Ethan Costa, Nico Costarelli, Ryan Dorgan, Jayne Elliot, Makayla Green, Evan Henry, Kylee Johnson, Magdalena Junior, Kaitlyn Kalachik, Emma Krivitsky, Alexa Leek, Katherine Li, Gwyneth Ludwig, Hadley Madden, Kimberly Masaya, Mohammad Mohsin, Aubrey Parrish, Rebecca Pechin, Bethany Ramirez, Hunter Reingold, Aaliylastar Samuel, Aiden Schmidt, Logan Simeone, Alyssa Toala, Daniella Velasquez, Logan Wagner and Lucy Womack – were honored, each selected by a staff member for consistently demonstrating outstanding character and conduct throughout the school year.

Together, the ceremonies highlighted East Islip's commitment to recognizing students who make a positive impact on their peers and school community.

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