GARDEN CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

On The Line

WINTER 2015

www.gardencity.k12.ny.us

Vol. 16 • No. 1

Giving Back
In The Season Of Peace And Joy

Boxes of donations destined for a myriad of causes were evident in each school building across the district this holiday season. From Toys for Tots to supplies and messages of hope bound for our troops serving in Afghanistan, students, parents, staff, and community members joined together to make others’ holiday a joyful one.

The primary schools collected an amazing amount of beautiful new toys to benefit hundreds of children. Our thanks to Garden City’s generous parents and the local Marine Corps for their assistance in picking up and delivering the donations (above).

Homestead’s first graders (left and below) filled 16 boxes with art supplies sent to the pediatric wing of Winthrop Hospital.

Working in collaboration with the PTA, students each earned $3 for the arts and crafts supplies by doing extra chores at home. They decorated the boxes, added the supplies, and wrote letters of empathy to the patients, reinforcing the Bucket Filler tenet: “When you fill someone else’s bucket, your bucket gets filled, too.”

As part of FOCUS, the fifth grades’ service learning project (left), (continued on page 2)

Savings Realized:
Bond/EPC Presentation Highlights
Millions In Savings

December’s Board of Education Work Session included a comprehensive review of the district’s major facilities renovation over the past five years - a myriad of projects outlined in a Power Point presentation and illustrated in “before” and “after” photo display boards. Superintendent Dr. Robert Feirsen also touched on the projects at the Regular Session on December 16th (above). Referring to the photos, he commented, “It is really a remarkable journey we have taken over the past five years. Anywhere you go in the school district, you can see the impact of the bond and the Energy Performance Contract. Our students, staff, and community members are enjoying the benefits of district-wide improvements. Our educational standards are the highest, and now our physical plant - our buildings and classrooms - more closely reflect that high standard. We are delighted with the progress we have made, and we acknowledge and appreciate the efforts of everyone involved.”

The improvements were accomplished under the 2009 School Investment Bond and the district’s Energy Performance Contract (EPC). Highlighted at the meeting was not only the impressive scope and quality of the work that daily impacts the learning environment of Garden City’s students, but also the millions of dollars in savings realized over the course of the construction and bond financing.

On October 27, 2009, the community approved $36.5 million to accomplish much needed renovations in the district’s nine buildings, including three program-driven additions: music and practice rooms at the high school, a new gymnasium, locker rooms, and a fitness center at the middle school, and Homestead’s library/media center and art/music room.

The Board’s ad hoc Facilities Committee organized a prioritized list to be accomplished beginning with health and safety and ADA compliance projects, but also including improvements designed to increase instructional opportunities, green initiatives, and those that secure or “future-proof” our facilities, such as drainage regrading around buildings and upgraded electrical panels and phone systems.

In the midst of the Great Depression, bidding was very competitive, and many projects were completed under the allotted budget amounts. Because of this, the total amount borrowed was reduced by $2,145,416. Further, due to careful financial planning and falling interest rates (4.5% to a blended 3.04%), an additional $5,996,000 will be realized in interest savings over the life of the three bonds (borrowing was timed to align with project needs).

Concurrent with the Bond projects, the district embarked on a $12.5 million EPC, at no additional cost to taxpayers. EPCs are (continued on page 2)
Early Dismissal
Garden City Public Schools has posted an early dismissal notice for parents on the district website under the Parents drop-down. Please review the policy in case of circumstances requiring an early dismissal.

Snow Removal Reminder
Local law mandates that a property owner must clear his/her sidewalk within 24 hours after the end of a snowfall. Property owners whose property abuts a school bus stop must clear the area to ensure student safety.

2015 Winter Program for Kids
The District’s Winter Program for Kids is offering exciting classes such as Lego Robotics, yoga, martial arts, Zumba, and woodworking. Classes meet on Saturday mornings at the middle school for students in grades K - 6. Meeting dates are as follows: January 24, 31, February 7, 14, 28, and March 7, 14, and 21 (no class on February 21st; snow make-up 3/28). The catalog was sent home last month with each K-6 student and is also available online. Registration by mail is underway, or interested parents can register in-person from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. in the Continuing Education Office, 56 Cathedral Avenue.

Kindergarten Registration
Registration for kindergarten-aged students entering school in September 2015, will be held at Hemlock School during Registration Week: January 20 - 23, 2014, 8:45 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. & 1:00 p.m. to 2:45 p.m.
Please check the district website to access all the needed forms: www.gardencity.k12.ny.us, click on Parents, Registration Resources.

2015-2016 Budget Calendar
All meetings will be held at Garden City High School, 8:15 p.m.
February 10: Budget Work Session #1: Overview of Superintendent’s Budget and Revenues
February 24: Regular Board Meeting; Budget Work Session #2: All Non-Instructional Areas/Administrative and Capital Components
March 10: Budget Work Session #3: Instructional Components I
March 18: Regular Board Meeting; Budget Work Session #4: Instructional Components II
April 15: Work Session #5: Additional Budget Review (if needed)
April 21: Regular Board Meeting; District Budget Adoption and BOCES Vote
May 12: Work Session; Budget Hearing
May 19, 6 a.m. - 10 p.m.: Budget Vote and Election

Giving Back (continued from page 1)
Mrs. Ruane’s class from Stewart and Mrs. DiMartino’s class from Stratford visited with senior citizens at a local nursing home. The elders sang along as the students caroled holiday songs. Afterwards, the students had the opportunity to mingle. “It was fun hearing their stories,” said one fifth-grader. “I was most surprised to hear that the price of a movie when they were our age was five cents!” The students also presented the elders with hand-made gingerbread ornaments and others made from cellophane that stream colors when hung in a sunny window. “It was a treat for all to see the faces light up, both young and old!” said Mrs. Ruane.
At the middle school, sixth grade math students (top, right) continued their tradition of participating in the St. Jude Math-A-Thon, solving math problems to raise funds for the children’s cancer research hospital. Throughout the past decade, the middle school’s sixth-graders have raised and donated over $350,000, ranking it as one of the highest Math-A-Thon schools in U.S. and #1 in 2014.

At the high school, Peer AIDS Educators (above) collected toys to donate to LIAAC (Long Island Association for AIDS Care) for the organization’s annual Holiday Party for children infected with or affected by HIV/AIDS.

Savings Realized (continued from page 1)
financed through energy savings realized and guaranteed by the contract. The EPC enabled the district to accomplish a host of projects including upgrading heating systems from oil to natural gas, replacing energy-guzzling boilers and water heaters, and installing an automated building management system to monitor and regulate temperature, room-by-room, throughout the district’s nine buildings.
Under the EPC, the annual estimated savings across the district exceed $850,000. The energy savings, distributed over the lifetime of the 15-year contract, is guaranteed to pay for the $12.5+ million in upgrades the district currently enjoys.
By implementing the EPC, the district dramatically reduced its annual carbon footprint by an estimated 2,821 tons of CO₂, or the greenhouse gas equivalent of 491 passenger cars not driven, or 862 tons of recycled waste, or 19.6 acres of forest preserved. The upgrades save the district 1,424,456 kwh of electricity, and nearly a quarter of a million gallons of oil.
“All together we’ve put $45 to $50 million dollars into our physical plant,” commented Dr. Feirsen, “and you can see the results everywhere you look across the district.” Assistant Superintendent for Business Ms. Dina DiCapua added more good news at the Regular Meeting, sharing that by refunding the 2006 bond for the middle school field to a lower interest rate of 1.9%, the district will realize an additional $475,000 in savings over the life of the bond.
To view the entire Bond and EPC work summary presented at the Work Session, visit the “Board News” tab, “Presentations,” on the district website.

The French Honor Society held a bake sale to benefit the Mary Brennan Inn, and the Heart to Heart club went to the Madonna Heights shelter in Dix Hills on December 6th to volunteer at its annual holiday party.
Pictured below, high school art students created over 140 holiday greeting cards to send to service members, veterans in homes and hospitals, and military families through the American Red Cross.

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Committee Update

Members of the Board of Education’s Legislative Affairs Committee (LAC) met with New York State Assemblyman Edward Ra (above) in mid-December to express concerns about the unprecedented educational pressures placed on public school districts, including high-achieving districts like Garden City, by the state and federal government. With a new education commissioner on the horizon - former commissioner John King resigned to take a new post in Washington on January 1st - it is critical that the new state education leader has a deep level of experience in public education. “Assemblyman Ra expressed hope that the next Commissioner would be more sympathetic to the burden placed on schools,” said LAC member and Trustee Robert Martin in his report at the December Board Meeting. “We began our meeting with a brief discussion of the Committee’s three focus areas: the elimination of the Gap Elimination Adjustment [GEA], addressing the challenges of the tax levy cap, and mandate relief. Assemblyman Ra was given a copy of Garden City’s GEA reduction information [see below - also posted to the district website*]. He stated that the GEA will be a key topic of extensive discussion this spring as the state budget is developed.” Regarding the tax levy cap, Ra expects it to be renewed, and suggested that efforts be directed at revising the components within the formula that determine a district’s levy limit. About unfunded mandates, “Assemblyman Ra believes that mandate relief is the best way to reduce the financial burden school districts are experiencing. He was particularly critical of the APPR [Annual Professional Performance Review] program.” The committee thanks Assemblyman Ra for his time and advocacy efforts, and looks forward to continued conversations toward achieving the LAC’s goals.

* To view an informative GEA video, visit: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Coxxw99Q2088

Curriculum-Wise

Full S.T.E.A.M. (& S.T.E.M.) Ahead

“As a team of educators dedicated to increasing exposure and opportunities in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) and STEAM (the addition of Art), our goals include enabling our students and staff to be comfortable and proficient working within the STEM/STEAM framework,” explained Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum & Instruction Dr. Teresa Prendergast. “Just as important is our emphasis on creative problem solving.” To that end, several programs have and are occurring across the district: Stewart and Stratford students participated in “An Hour of Code” (top) learning how to code to move digital characters, Stratford students used art, math, and engineering principles to build bridges (center - see page 4 for more), and the district is again sponsoring two robotics teams that will compete on January 31st in the LEGO FIRST Long Island Tournament at Mineola High School (bottom).

Review of World Languages

As per district practice, each department in turn implements a comprehensive curriculum review to effectively address the needs of Garden City’s students in the ever-changing educational landscape. As the Social Studies Department implements its action plan, the next phase of its review, the World Languages Department is beginning the process. “We will be looking over a wide range of topics,” explained the district’s 6-12 world language coordinator, Mr. Peter Giacalone, pictured above teaching a College Spanish class. “In department meetings, we will evaluate our philosophy, review our curriculum goals to develop an action plan, conduct a basic review of how the new ELA [English Language Arts] Common Core standards continue to mesh with our content and pedagogy, research new developments in best teaching practices for language learning, including how best to utilize and maximize technology, study language enrollment trends and course offerings, explore the importance of language proficiency versus fluency, and discuss language opportunities for students to increase paths to success.” Mr. Giacalone and members of the department will be presenting their findings to the Board of Education at the June 9, 2015 meeting.

Honor Flight Reunion

On Saturday, December 6th, Stewart School fifth graders (top, right) and members of Garden City High School’s Chamber Choir (center) took part in the Honor Flight Reunion at the Museum of American Armor in Old Bethpage. Stewart’s students were an integral part of the September 21st flight of veterans to the WWII Memorial in Washington, D.C. They wrote letters of thanks and appreciation the veterans read during “Mail Call” on the flight. Photos were taken of the trip and assembled into journals distributed at the reunion. The Chamber Choir sang the National Anthem to open the event as Garden City’s 1st Marine Corps Reserve presented the colors. During the ceremony, Stewart’s “Mail Call” writers handed each veteran their own personalized photo journal like the one being presented to Garden City’s Emil Kesselman (bottom). As the students presented the journals, each veteran’s military history was read. The Choir closed the show with patriotic songs, including a salute to all the military branches. Stewart has been involved with the Honor Flight for the past three years, helping to support six flights, including sponsoring three veterans for the upcoming spring flight. Thanks to our students for representing the school district so well at this salute to our WWII heroes.
High School: Owen Lucano (11), colored pencil. Loreen McMahon’s Art 3 students created still life pencil “paintings” on black paper for a dramatic gouache-like effect.

High School: Chloe Stapleford (11), silver gelatin print. Students in Jason Karp’s Photography class were asked to demonstrate an interpretation of hands through the vessel of photography. “Chloe cleverly incorporated a hand creating a giant soap bubble,” said Mr. Karp. “Who doesn’t love bubbles?” commented Chloe.

Middle School: Yuexuan Ban (7), colored pencil, marker. Students in Mrs. Lori Biondi’s 8th grade art class combined abstract and realistic elements in one work of art. Students chose a central image then added “zentangle” designs. A zentangle is a free form shape with structured patterns within. “Students’ artwork displayed a deep understanding of the process,” said Mrs. Biondi.

High School: Kyle Pletcher (9), colored pencil, sharpie. “Students learned various approaches to typography,” commented teacher Denise Holz. “We discussed the differences between vandalism and graffiti as art. Students took inspiration from various graffiti art and applied it to their own name design.”

Middle School: Albert Severini (8), kiln-fired clay. “The students [below] loved working with clay to create unique face pots, and their hard work and enthusiasm was evident throughout the process,” said art teacher Joe Wilkonski.

Stratford: Fifth grade artists/engineers turned an art/math/STEM lesson based on parabolic curves (inset drawing by Jason Li) into 3D architectural bridge models working with art teacher George Lucas (above left). The students presented multiple model designs at the November 12th Board of Education held at Stratford School, explaining their designs to board members, assistant superintendents Dr. Fino Celano and Dr. Teresa Prendergast (above), and meeting attendees. The bridge-builder groups are pictured left and right with Senator Kemp Hannon, who secured grant money to purchase the bridge-building materials and many of the math manipulatives demonstrated during the meeting.

Middle School: Sonia Cherpeelia (4), marker. “I thought it was interesting learning about the culture of the Aboriginals,” said Sonia. Art teacher Melissa Pashayan explained, “The students studied the Aboriginal art of Australia and were inspired to make their own detailed X-Ray drawings of animals.”

Stewart: Peyton Eller (7), pastels. “The drawing was created using the grid system which allows a complex image to be broken down into smaller, easier to decipher sections,” commented teacher Dennis Fediw. “Peyton’s pastel painting was inspired by the ancient art works found in the caves of Lascaux, France.”
All-State & NYSBDA Musicians

Pictured above are Garden City’s 2014 All-State musicians with (left to right) Board President Barbara Trapasso - juniors Jack Casler (alternate), Andreas Petrides, Lindsay Grippo (Symphony Orchestra), and Michael Snyder (alternate), Coordinator of Music & the Arts Dr. Nina Prasso, and Assistant Superintendent Dr. Teresa Prendergast (absent: senior Andrew Andron - alternate). At right are high school juniors Jack Casler (left) and Michael Snyder (right) selected to the 2015 NYSBDA Honor Band. They are pictured with music teacher Mr. James McCrann.

All-County & Long Island String Festival Association

This year, Garden City had a record 81 All-County music students with another 12 selected to Long Island String Festival Association concerts.


Stratford (right): Corinne Lafont, Emily Bradley, Nicholas Deleso, Timothy Krieg, Audrey Lau*, Naia Sampieri, Elena Severini, and Mark Vitle*.

Middle School:
Abby Brita, Lara Abruzzo, Andrew Burns, Francesca Ciccone, Sarah DeCicco, Alexandra Davidson, Simon Ferris, Elizabeth Fetherston, Kathryn Kopcak, Alexandra Kucich, Nathanael Lau, Katie Lew, Molly Madigan, Jenna Matarazzo, Benjamin Woo, Sarah Wu, and James Zheng*.

High School:
Ann Ambach, Liam Byrnes, Jack Casler, Andrea Choi*, Olivia Coffey, Cristin Crowley, Liam Dougherty, Emily Economos, Nicole Gemmity, Brandon Gong, Emma Gong*, Lindsay Grippo, Maxwell Guarnieri, Olivia Guarnieri, Sarah Heinez, Morgan Herrmann*, Stephen Iovino, Rumsey James, Rose Kelly, Morgan Lafont, Annalise LoBiondo, Elizabeth Malaszczuk, Bobby Menges, Gabriella Montanaro, James Murphy, Mairin Naegele, Andreas Petrides*, Cate Schick, Cristina Sclafani, Bridget Shea, Michael Snyder, Cole Sonner, Erik Thorstenn, Lauren Treanor, Megan Walsh, Leslie Wann*, Madeleine Weisburg, and Seungmin Woo*.

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Making the News

International Flame Challenge
By popular vote, the question—“What is sleep?”—submitted by middle school teacher Ellen Wohlberg’s 6A science classes won this year’s Flame Challenge. Scientists around the world are working to answer the question, which carries a $1,000 prize.

Nat’l Merit Scholarship Semifinalists
Michael Crapotta (center, left) and Ryan Smith (center, right), Garden City’s National Merit Scholarship Semifinalists, are pictured with (left to right) Director of Guidance Gina Christel, guidance counselor Patrick Doyle, guidance counselor Jim Malone, and high school Principal Nanine McLaughlin.

GRAMMY Semi-finalist 4x!
Garden City High School was recently named a 2015 GRAMMY Signature Schools Semifinalist - for the fourth consecutive year. Pictured above at Homecoming is just one group in the district’s award-winning music program: the high school marching band, named 2014 U.S. Bands 2A State Champions.

National Science Semifinalist
As a middle school researcher, Brandon Gong (right), worked with teacher Dr. Steven Gordon to develop the project for which he was named a semifinalist in the 2014 Broadcom MASTERS (Math, Applied Science, Technology & Engineering for Rising Stars) competition.

Nat’l Merit Commended Students
Pictured here (left to right) are guidance counselors Jim Malone and Patrick Doyle with Commended Students Brandon Choi, Alexis Leighton, Danielle Heavey, Leslie Wann, Matthew Mage, guidance counselors Jeanne Kennedy and Karen Whiston, and Principal McLaughlin.

Cultural Diversity Essay
Once again, a Garden City High School student has placed among the top winners in the annual Hofstra University’s Cultural Diversity Essay Contest. Junior Howie Miller (left), pictured here with his teacher Ms. Marie Nuzzi, won third prize and $1,000 in this year’s Island-wide competition. Howie received his award at a special banquet held in November.

National Top 100 Schools
For the fourth year in a row, Garden City High School was recognized as one of the “Top 100” schools in the nation for financial literacy by WISE (Working in Support of Education).

NHRP Scholars
Congratulations to two high school seniors who were recently named as Scholars in the National Hispanic Recognition Program. Scholars Michael Mage (center) and Kyle Beckman are pictured here with Principal Nanine McLaughlin. Nationally, Michael and Kyle were among the highest scoring juniors.

Adelphi Leadership Prize
Nine high school seniors were awarded the Adelphi Prize for Leadership. Pictured here with Principal Nanine McLaughlin are (back, left to right): Anne Ostrowski, Alison Hoge, Lucas Hildreth, Bobby Clarke, and Michael Crapotta; (front) Annemarie Kane, Shannon Tierney, Bobby Menges, and Bridget Bingham.

Top Prizes in Business Competition
On December 3rd, four high school students captured top prizes in the Young Professionals Annual Business Leadership Competition. Pictured here are (left to right) Connor Brown (3rd place-job interview), Jenna Cammarata and Larissa Izzo (2nd place-not-for-profit fundraising), Kelly Curran (1st place-job interview), and teachers Mary Ferrera and Dr. Erin McKinstry.

Prudential Spirit of Community
Congratulations to this year’s Prudential Spirit of Community Award winners. Pictured are (back, left to right): Gabriel Ragusa, Jennifer Beihoff, Shannon Tierney, Rachel Cara, Chris Moscatiello, Robert Brooks, Christophe Koester, Caroline Munn, with Principal Nanine McLaughlin; (front) Elizabeth Butler, Elisa Pittella, and Delaney Sugrue (absent: Patrick Hosford).

Fall Champions
Pictured with Assistant Principal Dave Perrotta (left) and Principal Nanine McLaughlin (right), are the high school’s Fall Champions. Congratulations to (left to right) Nicole Tariche, Claudia Caracciolo, Stephen Pisano, Michael DeSimone, Daniel Kammer, Vedant Trivedi, Austin Quinn, Jason Knap, Mackenzie Bostrom, and Jennifer Beihoff.
Capturing first place in the Class II county finals, junior Tim Josephs is pictured here at the New York State Finals on November 8th in Wappinger’s Falls. Tim finished an amazing 8th in the state with a time of 16:21.8. He was recently named to the All-County Cross Country team.

Girls Swimming captured its 16th consecutive Nassau County Team Championship, retaining the longest team winning streak in the county. The 200m free relay team also captured the county title. Pictured here (left to right) are the All-County swimmers: Haley Sheridan, Caroline Germano, Julia Hall (Section 8 Sportsmanship Award), Gabby Clarkson (named to the 2014 All-Long Island Second Team), Kerri Heuser, Nicole Crilly, Carolyn Bianchi, and Veronica Trzeciak.

For the ninth time, members of the high school’s 32 Scholar/Athlete varsity teams earned the Scholar Athlete School of Distinction award. Presenting the award was Todd Nelson, NYSPHAA’s Assistant Director. Pictured above are (left to right): Mr. Nelson, Garden City’s Athletic Director Ms. Dawn Cerrone, Principal Nanine McLaughlin and Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Robert Feirsen.

Boys Varsity Golf won their Conference title and will compete this spring in the Nassau County Championships.

Emily Sauchelli and Colin DeAngelo were named the Nassau Zone NYS AHPERD Physical Education Students of the Year.

Congratulations to Garden City High School senior James Sullivan III for being named Garden City’s most recent News 12 Scholar Athlete. James is pictured with Dawn Cerrone, Director of Physical Education, Health and Athletics (left) and Principal Nanine McLaughlin. The Scholar Athlete segment featuring James was aired multiple times on News 12 on Tuesday, October 21st.

Congratulating the 17 Garden City High School senior athletes who recently committed to Division 1 colleges. Pictured below are (left, left to right) Kristen Adams (University of Pennsylvania), Morgayne Rix (Johns Hopkins), Isabel McKeown (Lehigh), Margot McTiernan (University of Richmond), Samantha Auricchio (Cornell), Alexis Leighton (Holy Cross); (right) Brian Colamussi (St. Joseph’s), Matt Borges (Ohio State), James Sullivan (Harvard), Thomas Wright (Penn State), Erin Rode (Bryant); Delaney Hall (Dartmouth), Kyle Brattan (Army), Victor Danza (University of Maine), Ryan Smith (Princeton), Connor Brown (Notre Dame), Jennifer Gerland (Duquesne).
Masquers Present “Rumors”

On November 21st and 22nd, Garden City High School’s Masquers presented Neil Simon’s comedy “Rumors” before an audience of 570 – a 42% increase in attendance over last year. Simon’s play follows four couples at a dinner party for their friends Charlie and Myra’s 10th wedding anniversary. The comedic twists and turns culminated in an outrageous ending monologue that delighted audiences (and the presiding police officers) with its (almost) plausible explanation of the evening’s mishaps, misunderstandings, and mistaken identities. Congratulations to the entire cast and crew, director Angela McLaughlin, producer Stephen Mayo, and production assistant Katie Sckalor.

By Paulina Zaferiou

Continuing Education Spring 2015

Residents can look forward to receiving the District’s Spring 2015 Continuing Education catalog. The brochure will be mailed in mid-February with classes beginning in mid-March. Students will find helpful SAT and ACT review classes. Adults will find a variety of learning experiences from day trips to yoga. For more information, call 478-1070.

Target Grant

Congratulations to Mrs. Millie Joyce and Locust School for receiving a $600 field trip grant from Target. This is the fifth consecutive year Mrs. Joyce has been awarded the grant for the school. The funds will pay for all of Locust’s first grades to participate in an educational program at the Queens Zoo this spring.