



# Watchung Hills Regional High School District

## Newsletter

November 2016

### From the desk of the Superintendent



It seems like yesterday that we opened the school year, and just this past week they were cutting down the Rockefeller Center tree in Oneonta, New York. I want to be one of the first people to wish you and your families a wonderful Thanksgiving and a joyous holiday season ahead. This is one of my favorite times of year in our school community. In addition to getting to see our students showcase their talents via our holiday concerts and the commencement of our winter sports season, my heart also fills with pride as I consider the remarkable gifts our students will provide this holiday season to those most in need – a testament to their community service. Ronald Reagan once said, “We can’t help everyone, but everyone can help someone.” Our students are the true embodiment of this statement as they eagerly participate in activities to brighten the world around them, including collecting food for those in need, bringing teddy bears to children with terminal illnesses, and singing for residents of nursing homes.

*“We can’t help everyone, but everyone can help someone.”*

***Ronald Regan***

As we all know from our own personal experience, it is often the person doing the giving who receives the greatest reward. According to the University of Michigan, community service can “increase students’ personal, interpersonal, and social development; increase motivation, student engagement, and school attendance; and lead to new perspectives and more positive lifestyle choices and behavior.” Thus, we should encourage our students to participate in community service endeavors for the enrichment of their own lives as well as the lives of others. Our students remind us all that we should consider how we can give more of ourselves to others during the holidays and throughout the year – nothing is more valuable than the gift of oneself and one’s time and talents.

To a great 2017 and beyond!

Regards,

Superintendent

## NJ Monthly's Top 100 Public High Schools List

We have moved up to number 11 in the 2016 rankings which were released in August! Watchung Hills Regional High School has been ranked No. 11 on *New Jersey Monthly's* list of top 100 public high schools in the state published in the September issue. The last time the list came out, in 2014, WHRHS was ranked No. 50. The ranking is nice validation of the commitment of our students, staff, parents, and Board of Education to continuous improvement. While advancing in the rankings is not our ultimate goal, it is an indication that the Watchung Hills culture of putting students first in all decisions we make has positively impacted student learning.



## 2016 Extended School Year Program

Reporting out from last summer's WHRHS Extended School Year (E.S.Y.) program, WHRHS Special Services teacher Amita Lluveres says the response from 20 to 25 students to the proverbial start-of-school-year question, "What did you do over the summer?" is: An enviable list of memorable living/learning experiences, both inside and outside the classroom.

"Every day, our students were greeted by our wonderful summer staff," Lluveres said. "Each day of the week had something special to offer. Our students looked forward to our daily lessons in a variety of subject areas such as Language Arts, Mathematics, Meal Planning, and Career Exploration. Students were given the chance to work collaboratively with a variety of peers throughout the summer days in the E.S.Y. program."

On Mondays, students had the opportunity to learn and practice skills in the classroom.

"They continued to develop their computational skills, including in personal budgeting, and were given the task to read and discuss the selected summer reading book. The book was, 'The BFG,' by Roald Dahl," she said. "We wanted to show our students the connection between print and electronic media simultaneous with the release in July of the feature film, 'The BFG,' directed by the legendary Steven Spielberg."

Tuesdays were devoted to going to the local ShopRite Supermarket in Stirling, where the students learned about and developed skills in going to the market. They experienced what it is like to purchase the necessary ingredients and food items to then cook meals on Thursdays in the program's kitchen.

"Meal planning is a major life lesson that we want our students to be prepared to do as they continue to grow into adulthood," Lluveres said. "By engaging in this activity every week, students gained the knowledge and skills to help them make smart choices when food shopping. Students not only located items on their list, but also compared prices and made decisions on which items were best to fit into a weekly budget."

On Wednesdays, the program focused on educational trips to local businesses such as the Prestige Diner in New Providence and Norz Hill Farm and Market in Hillsborough Township.

"Other trips included Menlo Park Mall in Edison Township, as well as to Red Mill Historical Museum in Clinton, and the Somerset Patriots Stadium in Bridgewater Township," she said. "We wanted to give our students a summer full of great memories and a wide-

variety of learning experiences."

"All the while," Lluveres said, "we were also working on communication skills, on skills necessary to build confidence in being independent, to better understand the value and the worth of things, and just to have an enjoyable summer."

On Fridays, the program went on recreational trips throughout the local community.

"We visited sites of interest such as Bowlmor in Green Brook Township and Bowcraft Amusement Park in Scotch Plains," said Lluveres. "We also had the opportunity to visit the Turtle Back Zoo in West Orange, an all-time favorite trip we all look forward to in the summer."

The E.S.Y Program is meant to help bridge the gap between the end of one school year in June and the start of the next school year in September. The half-day program is offered five days a week, for six weeks, from July 1 to Aug. 12.

***"The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character - that is the goal of true education."***

***Martin Luther King, Jr.***

## Newsweek's 2016 Top Public High Schools List

WHRHS is number 131!! Newsweek's annual rankings were released in August. A total of 51 New Jersey schools made the 2016 list, which ranked the 500 best high schools in the country. Watchung Hills was ranked 131 out of 500 (24 of 51 NJ high schools)! We were ranked 212 in 2014 and 142 in 2015.

## New Teachers for 2016—2017 School Year

Eighteen new staff and teachers joined the Watchung Hills Regional High School team for the 2016-2017 school year which opened for students on Tuesday, Sept. 6.

Among the new staff are a new Instrumental Music Teacher and Band Director, Paul McCullen and the new Supervisor of the English Department, James Aquavia.

The other new teachers include: English Teacher, Christine Kirby, Physics Teacher, Jordan Back, Math Teacher Barbara Stauber, French Teacher Maria Tombalakian, Italian Teacher Tyana Truong, Spanish Teacher Lisa Scherzer, Dance Teacher Annanda Carmody, LDT-C Teacher Linda Zawisha, Special Education Teacher James Huff. Additional new staff this year include: Media Center Specialist Scott Keele, School Nurse Angela Valerio, R.N., Athletic Trainer Michelle Armonda.

There are also four new Instructional Aides on staff this year.



## Back To School Night

Parents of the more than 2,000 WHRHS students experienced a micro-version of a day in the life of their son's or daughter's school day during the 2016 Back to School Night, Thursday, Oct. 6, at the school.

For the convenience of parents who could not attend Thursday night's Back to School Night, from 7 to 9 p.m., an identical Back To School Day was offered on Monday morning, Oct. 10 from 7:30 to 9:30 a.m.

Following their child's typical school day, parents scurried through the school's sprawling educational plant, to meet the teachers and hear short presentations about a course's syllabus and expectations for the semester.

The school's Art Department posted student artwork throughout the school's entrance atrium. School sports teams and extracurricular activities presented information on bulletin boards. And school administrators, and teachers and

student volunteers roamed hallways to answer questions about how to best get from one part of the school to another.

The South Cafeteria included student and parent booster club representatives from a variety of sports and activities. They displayed information about their team or activity, and some sold school spirit apparel as fundraisers.



Out in the entrance atrium, the Watchung Hills Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) had information about the PTO monthly meeting dates, a membership form, and a welcome letter from the PTO officers. This year's PTO officers are: President Danielle Heise, Vice Presidents Aparna Virmani and Barbara Boschen, Corresponding Secretary Jennie

Renzo, Treasurers Emily Peng and Marjorie Lee, and Teacher Liaison Sean DiGiovanna.

## Welcome Back Teachers and Staff Luncheon BBQ

Members of the WHRHS Warrior Football Team volunteered at the Welcome Back Teachers and Staff Luncheon BBQ, Friday, Sept. 2, at the school. Helping to flip burgers and hot dogs are seniors, from left: Michael Montecalvo of Green Brook Township, who plays on the offensive and defensive line; Lamar Evans of Warren Township, a receiver and cornerback; Matthew Cardoso of Warren Township, a cornerback; Nadir Beyah of Warren Township, a running back and safety; Nick Ugarte of Warren Township, a wide receiver and cornerback; Matt Lampert of Warren Township, a tight end and outside linebacker; and Josh Lontai of Warren Township, a fullback and middle linebacker. The staff BBQ was made possible by generous donations of food, beverages, paper goods, desserts, and gift cards toward the purchase of food, from the Touchdown Club, Costco in North Plainfield, Target and Stop & Shop in Watchung, Kings Food Market in Gillette, Shoprite, Blimpie and Primavera Regency in Stirling, Ciro's Pizza & Deli and Country Squire Restaurant in Warren, and Pomptonian Food Service of Fairfield.



## 2016 National Merit Semifinalists

Watchung Hills Regional High School continued its record of exceptional achievement by students in the National Merit Scholarship Program, seeing 10 students in the Class of 2017 named Semifinalists.

"The National Merit results are wonderful achievements for our students and the entire school community," said WHRHS Principal George Alexis. "With a sustained focus on inquiry and high expectations, we remain committed to helping all students actualize their potential."

Looking back over the previous two years, six WHRHS students earned the Semifinalist recognition in the Class of 2016, and 11 in the Class of 2015. All six Semifinalists in the Class of 2016 went on to be named Finalists, and in 2015 nine of the Semifinalists were subsequently named Finalists.

This year's nationwide 16,000 National Merit Semifinalists were named on Wednesday, Sept. 14, by the National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC). The students had achieved the honor based on their scores on the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT) taken by 1.6 million juniors last Fall.

This year's PSAT/NMSQT will be administered to sophomores and juniors on Wednesday, Oct. 19.

In addition to Semifinalists, National Merit also named 36 WHRHS students in a category just before semifinalist, recognized as "Commended."

The Class of 2017 WHRHS National Merit Semifinalists are: Karthik Irakam, Natalie Kim, Daniel Lee, Jonathan Rich, Caroline Rucker, Michelle Shui, Gavin Van Skiver, Nicole Wang, Jenny Yan, and Joyce Zhou.



The Class of 2017 Commended students are: Amrutha Ajarapu, Alison M. Burman, Emily H. Chen, Sahil N. Deo, Jonathan Dong, Nicole M. Freire, Haley G. Frey, Rachel M. Han, Ang-Ting Ho, Amy X. Holz, Katrina N. Howard, Sonali A. Howe, Tea Kingley, Nicholas Kong, Annabel Koppell, Ryan M. Krakower, Kevin L. Lu, Lindsay C. Muller, Arielle E. Ostry, Vineet A.

Parikh, Rachel S. Printz, Mary V. Rall, Thomas C. Ronan, Sarah M. Rosa, Sydney Roth, Rachel P. Sabnani, Joshua N. Schmidt, Kinnary H. Shah, Jeremiah I. Sullivan, Raymond S. Tang, Ethan Tu, Cidney L. Weng, Alexander B. Wu, Emily Yan, Brian H. Zeng, and Andrew H. Zheng.

According to NMSC, about 90 percent of this year's Semifinalists are expected to be eventually named Finalists. The competition continues for this year's Semifinalists, with students required to submit a detailed application including academic record, records of school and community activity participation, employment records, lists of other honors and awards won, and indications of leadership skills. They must also take the SAT.

Finalists are vying for about 2,500 National Merit Scholarships, as well as about 1,000 scholarships awarded by businesses and corporations and some 4,000 scholarships from colleges and universities to students attending their colleges and universities.

## National Art Honor Society Induction

Some 57 WHRHS students were inducted into the National Art Honor Society at a ceremony Tuesday, Oct. 25, at the school.

Students, parents, faculty, staff and guests filled the South Auditorium to see the students receive their certificates, and to hear the remarks of guest speakers.

Veteran New York commercial, travel and fine art photographer Michael Grimaldi was guest speaker, urging students to pursue a career in the arts, if that is their passion, and sharing with the students a slide show of photographs he has taken over the years.

The Inducted students are: Milagros Alvarez, Sarie Berman, Rebecca Bintley, Edward Cai, Eugene Chang, Burcak Coskun, Martina Cruz Mora, Lindsay Fogel, Sa-

mantha Fonseca, and Nicholas Francis-

co; and Also, Julia Gaffney, Gemma Gallucci, Emily Graf, Rachel Han, Alyssa Inacio, Aditi Joshi, Alexa Kelleher, Kathleen Lee, Lucy Longobardi, Megan Ma, Devin Malko, Kelly McKenna, and Darian Napodano; and

Also, Abigail Pedroso, Brigita Przybylski, Natalie Przybylski, Arianna Rahimi, Micaela Rebelo, Emma Reedman, Alyssa Sabik, Rachel Sabnani, Shefali Sahay, Hannah Salkowski, McKenzie Schuyler, Samantha Shannon, Kellie Silva, Rachel Simons, Sydnie Singh, Julia Skrobacz, Amanda Soliman, Jesse Song, Jash Soni, Anthony Speros, Samantha Spurr, and Brooke Stanicki; and

Also Kayla Thomas, Brianna Titus, Carissa Tsien, Amreeta Verma, Bridgette Wahlers, Jordan Wilen, Emily Yan, Jenny Yan, Michelle Yang, Jaimie Yue, Carrie Zhang, and Vivian Zhang.



Oil on Canvas by Senior Gemma



Acrylic by Senior Jesse Song

## Drama Department Fall Cabaret

Watchung Hills Regional High School drama students had an opportunity to stretch their theatrical talents on the mini-stage at the school's Performing Arts Center (PAC) with 14 animating performance at the Annual Fall Cabaret, sponsored by the school's Script and Cue student drama program.

Under low house lighting and stark blue-light stage lighting, a "Cabaret" space was created on stage, as an audience sat in a few rows of folding chairs and clustered around about a dozen small round tables. Light refreshments, such as baked goods and coffee, were available to cabaret-goers on side tables. A spotlight trained on the performers provided the only white light in the theater.



Many of the acts were performed by student cast members of the Script and Cue's fall drama production of "Peter Pan," Nov. 16-19 at the school.

The opening and closing acts were presented as bookends to the evening by Mariella Zijdel, Amelia Stapperfenne, Chris Oaks, Ben Algor, Francesca-Infante Meehan, Allison Horvath, Anthony Speros, and Victoria Magli. The opening act was titled, "Saturday Night Live's High School Theatre Show, Act 1, and the closing act was titled, "High School Theatre Show Act II."



## National Honor Society Induction

Nine-three students at Watchung Hills Regional High School were inducted into the National Honor Society (NHS) at a ceremony attended by parents, students and staff on Thursday, Oct. 27, at the school.

New student members Justin Bardy, Brooke Stanicki, Minhee Han and Cidney Weng were named by their fellow students as this year's chapter president, vice president, secretary and treasurer, respectively.

Inducted into the NHS this year, are seniors: Amrutha Ajarapu, Justin Bardy, Christopher Barry, Sydney Buck, Emily Carrieri, Eugene Chang, Emily Chen, Alessandro Conte, Allison Conway, Meghana Dantuluri, Timothy DaSilva, Alyssa deCavaignac, Sahil Deo, Jonathan Dong, Christopher Draikiwicz, Erik Elbrecht, Natalie Farrell, Nicole Freire, Haley Frey, and Vrinda Goel; and

Also, Nicole Goldstein, Suchir Govindarajan, Rachel Han, Ang-Ting Ho, Allison Horvath, Sonali Howe, Karthik Irakam,



Aditi Joshi, Natalie Kim, Danielle Koslow, Ryan Krakower, Daniel Lee, Stephen Lee, Kira Leinwand, Bradley Levin, Julia Liaw, Kevin Lu, Arjun Mahal, Adam Manspeizer, and Zoha Masood; and

Also, Matthew Mauricio, Ryan McHugh, Hannah Melillo, Amy Narakornpichit, Arielle Ostry, Alexander Overzat, Vineet Parikh, Nicole Pila, Morgan Pravato, Rachel Printz, Natalie Przybylski, Matthew Renzo, Jonathan Rich, Jaclyn Romankow,

Sarah Rosa, Sydney Roth, David Roushdy, Caroline Rucker, Rachel Sabnani, Jordan Scheiner, David Schlingloff, Joshua Schmidt, McKenzie Schuyler, Chelsea Semper, Kinnary Shah, Jessica Shapiro, and Michelle Shui; and

Also, Michael Snyder, Amanda Soliman, Jesse Song, Anthony Speros, Brooke Stanicki, Kathleen Stavole, Emmaline Stoddard, Julia Stomber, Raymond Tang, Joshua Tankel, Ethan Tu, Emma Tuberty-Vaughan, Sarah Wagman, David Walker, Nicole Wang, Cidney Weng, Sydney Wilcenski, Jordan Wilen, Susan Wong, Emily Yan, Jenny Yan, Samuel Zelnick, Brian Zeng, Andrew Zheng, Joyce Zhou, and Christina Zoppi.



NHS Teacher of the Year

Social Studies Teacher Rebecca Brown (second left)

## Homecoming Court King and Queen

Seniors Gavin Van Skiver and Carrie Rucker were named the 2016 King and Queen of the Homecoming Court at the WHRHS Homecoming Game, Friday, Oct. 21, at the Warriors' Tozier Football Stadium.

In addition to Van Skiver and Rucker, the Homecoming Court includes: Maegan Wood, Rachel Simons, Mia Kweit and Katie Napell, and Suchir Govindarajan, Kevin Fitzhenry, Jordon Reynolds and Chris Barry.

The WHRHS Warriors traded scores with guest team, the Linden High School Tigers, throughout the game. The game was tied 7-7 at the half, and at one point the score was 14-14, but in the end, the Tigers won the game, 21-14.



Both teams sported pink accents, including the football players on both teams, who wore pink socks, the Marching Band's Drum Majors, who replaced their regular hat plumes with pink hat plumes, and Watchung Hills Cheerleaders, who wore pink socks and used pink pom poms, all to show support for "October, Breast Cancer Awareness Month." Many in the crowd followed suit, included a spirited student section. Audience members sported pink socks, pink tops, and pink sweat-shirts.



## Division One Signing

Five graduating student athletes at WHRHS declared on College Signing Day, Wednesday, Nov. 9, that they have committed to playing sports at Division 1 colleges next year.

In soccer, forward Alexa Ferreira of Warren Township intends to play for Rutgers University, New Brunswick, and midfielder Sarah Strehle of Green Brook Township intends to play for Sacred Heart University, Fairfield, Conn.

In baseball, pitcher Kevin Sylvestri of Long Hill Township plans to play for

George Washington University, Washington, D.C.



In volleyball, middle/opposite hitter Sydney Wilcenski of Warren Township intends to play for Loyola University, Baltimore, Md.

And in swimming, middle distance freestyle and individual medley specialist Kevin Flynn of Watchung intends to compete for Bucknell University, Lewisburg, Pa.

Congratulations to these athletes and their families, and best of luck to them as they continue their athletics career in college next year.



WHRHS Girls Soccer Team  
SCIAA 2016 Champions &  
2016 Skyland Conference Champions



WHRHS Gymnastics Team  
2016 Skyland Conference Champions

## The Hills Roundup

- ◆ We are pleased to report that Karthik Irakam, Natalie Kim, Daniel Lee, Jonathan Rich, Caroline Rucker, Michelle Shui, Gavin Van Skiver, Nicole Wang, Jenny Yan, and Joyce Zhou are Semifinalists in the 2017 National Merit Scholarship Competition. There are 36 Commended Students in the 2017 National Merit Program in addition to the named semi-finalists for a total of 46 recognized students.
- ◆ This past summer, marching Band students Andrew Morrison and Craig Mandelbaum participated for the first time with the Drum Corp. Andrew served as a drum major with Cadets 2 and Craig with Fusion as a percussionist in their pit. Because of their hard work, they were able to participate in the DCA (Drum Corp Associates) World Championship on September 4 in Rochester, New York. This is the first time both students participated in Drum Corp.
- ◆ Marching Band placed 3rd in the US Bands competition in Somerville on October 1. The following Saturday, October 8, they placed 4th at the competition held in Hillsborough where they also received the Drum Major award. The Drum Majors for band are senior Andrew Morrison and juniors Carl Peterson and Emma Marszalek. The band will be participating in the Yamaha Cup competition which will be held at the Met-Life Stadium in East Rutherford on October 15.
- ◆ Congratulations to Ruchi Biswas (sophomore) for placing first in the high school division of the 2016 Mahatma Gandhi Art and Writing contest. She received the award at Princeton University on October 9.



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