

ONTEORA

Summer 2018

LETTER FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

DEAR ONTEORA COMMUNITY,

Once again, the end of the school year came quickly, and we had many celebrations of student achievement at all levels of the District.

The culminating celebration was our High School graduation ceremony, which was a wonderful event. Our valedictorian, salutatorian, and senior class president all spoke eloquently and with grace and humor. It is always bittersweet to see the seniors crossing the stage. We are filled with pride for all they have accomplished, and for all that they will accomplish now that they are on their own paths. But at the same time, we will miss seeing them as they grow day to day.

We're happy to report that with the arrival of our new Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Dr. Jodi DeLucia, we now have a complete administrative team. Dr. DeLucia will be continuing and expanding upon the work that has been happening all around the District.

In collaboration with the administration and staff, we will be creating a long-term instructional plan that ensures that we are meeting the needs of each and every one of our students. We will be continuing to expand our focus on equity and inclusivity as an important aspect of this work.

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Onteora Grads March into the Future

NEARLY 100 ONTEORA SENIORS MARCHED ONTO THE FOOTBALL FIELD ON JUNE 22 FOR AN IMPORTANT RITE OF PASSAGE: the end of their high school careers, and the beginning of a brand-new chapter of their lives.

In addition to stellar performances by Onteora musicians, the event featured an inspiring address by Dr. Michael "Mykee" Fowlin, a psychologist, performer, and poet.

Three of the graduates — Valedictorian Pia Roels, Salutatorian Kira Daniels, and Class President Kathryn Fisher — shared their thoughts and some words of wisdom during the celebration.

"We are entering the adult world during a time of huge social and technological upheaval," Pia told her fellow graduates. This upheaval, she suggested, is an opportunity to bring about real change. "Already vocal about societal issues, we are lucky that society is at a point where we have realistic opportunities to exact change, as long as we fight for what we want reasonably, and don't listen to those who want us to stay behind," she declared.

Kira asked her classmates to stay open to people who may act, think, or perhaps dress differently than they do. "With no one forcing you to sit next to them during Earth Science, it will become easier and easier to tune out people who don't share your interests and beliefs," she remarked. "The world needs contact zones, places where instead of being yourself, you put yourself in someone else's shoes."

Kathryn looked to the movie *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* for inspiration. "Life moves pretty fast," she quoted. "If you don't stop and look around once in a while, you could miss it."



Tomas Pesko West and Ruby Price show off their diplomas during Onteora's graduation ceremony.





Woodstock's Grade 3 Students are Going Places!

OH, THE PLACES THEY WILL GO! Congratulations to Woodstock's Grade 3 students, who celebrated their upcoming move to Bennett School during a Dr. Seuss-themed ceremony on June 14. Highlights of the celebration included an inspiring performance of the "Woodstock Song" (the school's unofficial anthem), perfect and near-perfect attendance awards, and recognition of peer mediators and safety patrol members. After each student proudly marched across the stage to receive their moving-up certificates, the newly minted fourth graders received another reward for their hard work: delicious ice cream treats.



Woodstock's Grade 3 students (above) performed the "Woodstock Song," written by Music teacher Paul Schubert, during their moving-up ceremony. Below, Lily Spada receives a certificate and a handshake from Woodstock Principal Scott Richards as teacher Rachel Lim looks on.



Woodstock's "graduating" third graders included Dylan Pace and Justice Maize (above) as well as Erin Kothe and Mackenzie Gibbs (right).

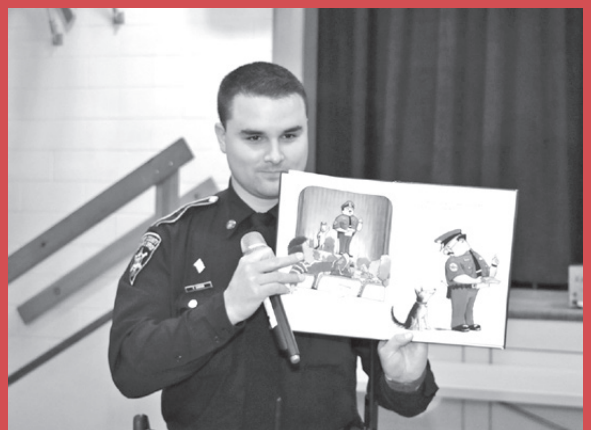


School Resource Officer Named Deputy Sheriff of the Year

KUDOS TO THOMAS SHARON, ONTEORA'S SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER (SRO), who has been named Ulster County's Deputy Sheriff of the Year. Deputy Sharon was recognized during the Ulster County Sheriff's Office's annual awards ceremony, which took place in Kingston on June 1.

As Onteora's SRO, Deputy Sharon's duties include: helping to mediate conflicts between students; advising the District on matters that involve law enforcement; assessing the safety and security of our school buildings; and reinforcing the importance of regular school attendance, including through home visits conducted with school personnel.

Deputy Sharon is also a familiar, friendly presence in our schools, trusted and beloved by students and staff alike. Congratulations on a well-deserved honor!



LETTER FROM THE
SUPERINTENDENT

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The Board has also begun to discuss the future of the District and how to address our declining enrollment, as expenses such as health insurance and retirement costs continue to increase each year. Over the past 14 years, our enrollment has declined by approximately 800 students. This is an important discussion, and one that needs to incorporate the instructional plan for the District.

The Board is hoping to find out what other districts have done to innovate or to mitigate expenses that continue to drive a large portion of the school budget. To that end, the Board has created a subcommittee that will be looking at best practices from other schools that have experienced declining enrollment.

There is something magical about the summer, and I hope that everyone is enjoying their time with family and friends. I always look forward to the change of pace here in the District that comes with summer, but I very quickly begin to anticipate the return of our staff and students and all of the excitement that comes with a new school year!

Sincerely,

Victoria McLaren
SUPERINTENDENT OF
SCHOOLS

WELCOME
BACK!

The first day of school
for students will be
Wednesday, September 5.
Let the learning begin!



Phoenicia's Grade 3 Students
Celebrate Accomplishments



Phoenicia's Grade 3 students belted out their school's theme song, "Phoenicia is Dynamite," before taking the stage to receive their certificates.

PHOENICIA IS DYNAMITE! That message, which happens to be the title of a song created by former Phoenicia student Anna Johnson, rang out loud and clear during the school's Grade 3 Moving-Up Ceremony on June 20. The students belted out their school's theme song before a capacity crowd of family members and well-wishers before taking the stage to receive their certificates and congratulatory handshakes.

Phoenicia Principal Linda Sella told the audience that the evening was not only an opportunity to acknowledge the children's accomplishments in academics, art, music, library science, physical education, and technology, but was also a celebration of their character. "At Phoenicia, we teach them to be responsible, caring, honest, and respectful, and they rise to the challenge," she said proudly. "We're celebrating their contributions to their families, their friends, and their school, and we're celebrating who they have become."



Phoenicia Principal Linda Sella shakes hands with Jake Slater as Samuel Bennett looks on.



Phoenicia teacher Robert Hallock congratulates Ezra DelValle after the school's moving-up ceremony.



Phoenicia Grade 3 students Ashley Campbell, Lola Schilling, Gabriella Pease, and Konnor Nace pose for a photo before their end-of-year celebration.

Bennett Students Move On to Middle School

CELEBRATING THEIR HARD-EARNED PROMOTIONS TO MIDDLE SCHOOL, nearly 90 Bennett Elementary School students proudly filed into Harry Simon Auditorium on June 21 to the regal sounds of “Pomp and Circumstance.”

Bennett Principal Gabriel Buono told the students that they were a reflection of the Onteora community as a whole. “You thinkers, doers, and builders are a representation of your parents’ hard work, dedication, and support as well as the influence of your teachers, coaches, peers, religious leaders, and other community connections,” he explained.

This year’s graduates, Principal Buono continued, have shown both passion and compassion as they have learned the power of their united voices and positive actions. He urged the youngsters to continue to grow, learn, and advocate for what they believe is important and just. He also urged them to ponder the words of Nelson Mandela, who said, “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”



Bennett Principal Gabriel Buono congratulates La'Myah Parker for her successful completion of elementary school.



Bennett students Neko Bostic, Nash Roberts, TyGabriel DeOrnelas Thomas, Beckett Ratcliff, and Jose Hernandez wait in the Band Room for their moving-up ceremony to begin.



Bennett Grade 6 teacher Jennifer Bruck (center) shares a farewell hug with students Meredith Grant and Seren Kravig.

Community Mentor Presentations Shine Spotlight on Students’ Interests, Passions, Career Explorations

CONGRATULATIONS TO THIS YEAR’S PARTICIPANTS IN ONTEORA’S COMMUNITY MENTOR PROGRAM, who shared what they had learned and accomplished during their mentorships at a May 31 event.

The program offers students in Grades 9-12 the opportunity to pursue their interests and passions—and in some cases their ‘dream’ careers—with the guidance of community-based professionals. This year’s program led to mentorships in a wide variety of fields, including veterinary medicine, sports broadcasting, interior design, acting, physical therapy, and film scoring.

According to Program Coordinator Kay Goldbeck, students are paired with community members who have expertise in the mentees’ respective areas of interest. In addition to meeting regularly with their mentors, the students carry out independent research.



“The program culminates in a celebration during which students present complex, polished projects to a public audience,” she explained.

Thank you to all the community mentors, who so generously shared their time, experience, and knowledge with our students!

Onteora senior Kira Daniels (center), who pursued a mentorship in theatrical directing with Phil Mansfield, poses with two actors from her production of *Pride and Prejudice*. Flanking her are Teague Stover of Gardiner (left), who played the role of Mr. Darcy, and Johnathan Rowan, a Saugerties resident who played the role of Mr. Bingley.



Archie Lewis-Harris (right) prepares to present a certificate of appreciation to David Torn, his mentor in film scoring. Mr. Torn is a film composer, recording artist, and producer.

Middle School Students Head to High School

“GRADUATING” GRADE 8 STUDENTS

marched into a packed auditorium the evening of June 18 to the sounds of Richard Wagner’s “Elsa’s Procession to the Cathedral.”

Before receiving their certificates, the students heard some parting advice from their principal, Jennifer O’Connor. “Remember to be kind, do your best, and be responsible for yourselves,” she said.

Highlights of the ceremony included a moving rendition of “The Star-Spangled Banner” by Clara Mead, a virtuoso performance by violinist Joey Driscoll, and some inspiring words of wisdom by High School Class of 2018 Valedictorian Pia Roels. The Middle School Percussion Ensemble also performed.

Among the many awards and honors announced this evening were the winners of SUNY Ulster’s President’s Challenge Scholarships: Eaman Hill, Citlalli Martinez Valentin, Abraham Umana Alarcon, Nya VanKleeck, and Irwin Walden. The Onteora Central School District is partnering with SUNY Ulster and the SUNY Ulster Foundation to offer these scholarships to first-generation, college-bound students. Upon successful graduation from High School, these students will be afforded the opportunity to attend SUNY Ulster, tuition free. The students will also receive guidance counseling and mentoring throughout their High School careers.

Continuing an Onteora tradition, each student was given two flowers—a red one to keep, and a white one to give away to someone who had helped them succeed in Middle School. Afterwards, the soon-to-be high schoolers celebrated by sharing cookies and punch with their families, friends, teachers, and mentors.



Clara Mead, Achaia-Lotus Horwitz Gindele, and Meadow Madera enjoy a quiet moment before the Grade 8 Moving-Up Ceremony.



Grade 8 students Amira Chefridi, Aaron Clayton, Joey Driscoll, Bernice DeLaurea, and Shayne Durkin wait in the hallway for the ceremony to begin.

NATIONAL HONOR SOCIETY INDUCTS NEW MEMBERS

EIGHTEEN ONTEORA HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WERE INDUCTED INTO THE NATIONAL HONOR SOCIETY (NHS) during a moving candlelight ceremony held on June 6. The students were recognized for embodying the four pillars of the NHS: scholarship, leadership, service, and character. The new NHS members are: Yasmin Chefridi, Erin Downs, Duncan Ebbecke, Grace Foster, Grace Hallinan, Ellery Loheide, Monroe Maki, Quinn Maloney, Brian McHugh, Hominy McMahon, Caleb McMenemy, Lucian McMenemy, Sophia Reynolds, Adrianna Roser, Emily Salem, Jazarah Shim, Jacob Stern, and Sabrina Storey. Congratulations!



The newest members of Onteora’s chapter of the National Honor Society (NHS) recite the NHS pledge.
Photo courtesy of Ted Ojarovsky

PHOENICIA SCHOOL CELEBRATES FLAG DAY

ON JUNE 14, THE STUDENTS OF PHOENICIA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL continued a decades-long tradition of celebrating Flag Day with rousing patriotic songs and poetry, inspiring history lessons, and special guests.

Students sang songs like “The Star-Spangled Banner,” “This Land is Your Land,” and “You’re a Grand Old Flag,” and shared flag-related facts. The program also featured a presentation honoring the military service of Thomas Nieves, the father of Phenicia employee Leana Nieves. Mr. Nieves, who was a captain in the Air Force during the Vietnam War, later served in the Army and the National Guard.



Phoenicia students Maria Marin, Julissa Lemus Carrillo, and Ailin Lovera Hernandez created patriotic headgear for their school’s Flag Day celebration.



Phoenicia students Gavin Baker, Violette Moran, Gillianna Griffin, and Leticia Marin are all decked out in red, white, and blue for their school’s Flag Day celebration.

Teaching assistant Tracy Quick, who organized the event, is happy to carry on Phenicia’s Flag Day tradition. “I am very passionate about our flag and the men and women who have served – and still do serve – our country,” she said. “It is important that children understand that the flag is the symbol representing our country’s freedom, and that this freedom came with a price. Many men and women have sacrificed so much for the freedoms we enjoy today.”



YOUNG LEARNERS SAY GOODBYE TO KINDERGARTEN

Thirty-five Woodstock students bade farewell to Kindergarten during a June 1 moving-up ceremony. During the music-filled program, the youngsters (below) showed off some of the many things they learned this year—everything from their ABC’s to how to say “hello” in various languages.

“Friends” was the theme of Phenicia’s Kindergarten celebration, which took place on June 8. In addition to singing odes to friendship like Randy Newman’s “You’ve Got a Friend in Me,” the children took turns at the microphone to share what they like to do with their pals—everything from reading books to doing yoga poses, playing tag to pulling pranks.

Good luck in first grade!



A FEW OF ONTEORA HIGH SCHOOL’S BEST AND BRIGHTEST WERE HONORED AT THE ANNUAL SCHOLASTIC ACHIEVEMENT BREAKFAST, HELD AT ULSTER BOCES IN NEW PALTZ. THE BREAKFAST RECOGNIZED THE VALEDICTORIANS, SALUTATORIANS, AND PRINCIPAL’S AWARD WINNERS FROM EIGHT ULSTER COUNTY DISTRICTS AND ULSTER BOCES. THIS YEAR’S HONOREES WERE KIRA DANIELS (SALUTATORIAN), BENJAMIN RAUSCHENDORFER (PRINCIPAL’S AWARD WINNER), AND PIA ROELS (VALEDICTORIAN). SUPERINTENDENT VICTORIA MCLAREN AND HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPAL LANCE EDELMAN WERE ON HAND TO CONGRATULATE THE HONOREES.



Bennett School’s “Book Boogie” Promotes Summer Reading

BENNETT STUDENTS “BOOGIED” INTO SUMMER with plenty of free reading material, courtesy of book lovers from the Onteora community and beyond.

During the Bennett Book Boogie, held in June, the school library rocked to the sounds of popular music, as children in Grades 4-6 excitedly perused hundreds of books that were theirs for the taking. Students had the opportunity to take home 10 books: five for their own reading pleasure, plus two “family” books to share with younger siblings, and three from a reference/informational book table.

The idea, according to Reading Specialists Julie Maille, Kristina Countryman, and Melanie Feldman, is to encourage year-round reading. According to Ms. Feldman, research has shown that children need to read at least 10 books over the summer to prevent the so-called “summer slide” — the loss of hard-earned literacy skills over the summer break.



Bennett students Autumn Benjamin, Neko Bostic, and Kelyn Umana Alarcon check out some of the books intended for younger siblings.

“Children who do not read in the summer can lose three to five reading levels,” she explained.

The reading material was donated or purchased with help from generous benefactors. The Middle School library donated many titles, as did Bennett students,

parents, and teachers. The PTA pitched in with \$500. First Book, a non-profit organization, donated thousands of dollars’ worth of books through its partnership with NYSUT (New York State United Teachers). Additional books were purchased by teachers who traveled to Danbury for the Scholastic Warehouse sale.

The event, Ms. Maille stresses, was a group effort. Among those pitching in were Principal

Gabriel Buono, ELA teachers Karen Hadley, Joan Mayone-Allison, and Doreen Erlwein, and Literacy Coach Linda Szakmary.

Thank you to all who helped make the Book Boogie a success!

Onteora Athletes Excel at State Track & Field Championships

KUDOS TO THE ONTEORA ATHLETES who excelled at the New York State Public High School Athletic Association’s 2018 Outdoor Track & Field Championships, held June 8-9 in Syracuse. Halle King, competing in the high jump, cleared 5 feet 4 inches on her final attempt—just ¼ inch away from a school record. She earned a fourth place medal in the Division 2 (small school) category and a sixth place medal in the Federation competition. Satch Sumner-Waldman, competing in the 3,000-meter steeplechase, earned a sixth place medal in Division 2 and placed 18th overall. He completed the course with a time of 9:56.23. In the 2,000-meter steeplechase, Clara Flores Reininger (below, fifth from left) placed 11th in Division 2 and 26th overall, with a time of 7:47.30—a personal record. The girls’ 3,200-meter relay team (Brooklyn Zeh, Lucciana Robertson, Erin Downs, and Clara Flores Reininger) finished 10th in Division 2 and 25th overall, with a time of 9:56.94. Congratulations on a great meet and a terrific season!



Photo courtesy of Ted Ojarovsky

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ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT
Sal DeStefano
CLASS OF 1985

AFTER GRADUATING FROM ONTEORA HIGH SCHOOL IN 1985, SAL DESTEFANO went on to Northeastern University, where he earned a Bachelor of Science in Economics. Today, he owns a thriving business that has played a key role in numerous high-profile projects, including a major league baseball stadium and a municipal tunnel project.

DeStefano’s impressive career began in 1990, when he moved from Boston to Florida. From 1991-1995 he was a project manager for a painting company in Naples, Florida, where he oversaw the company’s new construction projects. His myriad responsibilities included securing sales, creating estimates, managing contract negotiations, and coordinating new projects with general contractors. In 1995, he became project manager and chief estimator for a Boca Raton-based painting company.

In 2004, DeStefano realized his dream of starting his own business: S&S Painting and Waterproofing. Located in Pompano Beach, the company performs work at locations throughout southern Florida. Among its signature projects are the Miami Marlins Baseball Stadium, Brickell City Center in downtown Miami, the Four Seasons Hotel in Miami Beach, and the Port of Miami Tunnel Project.

As the owner of S&S, DeStefano manages more than 50 employees. In addition to overseeing his business, DeStefano gives back to his community. Every year, his company donates materials, equipment, and labor to help Habitat for Humanity revitalize its facility in Miami. S&S also sponsors the Douglas High School baseball team and the American Heritage School’s Dance Performance team.

DeStefano, who has two teenage daughters with his wife, Robin, has not forgotten his days at Onteora. He has particularly fond memories of Art teacher Paul Delora, Health teacher Robin Sears, and baseball coach Ron Valle.

“My time at Onteora was spent developing my educational skills, growing as a person, and establishing lifelong relationships,” he says.



“My time at Onteora was spent developing my educational skills, growing as a person, and establishing lifelong relationships.”

Sal DeStefano,
Class of 1985

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