

The Panther Press

Your Source for Point Pleasant Schools' News

VOLUME

11

Number 2
Winter 2011



Ocean Road's Dylan Kleinfeldt & Alex Morguess package food to send to the Foodbank

District Launches Virtual Backpack

If you're tired of searching the depths of your child's backpack looking for the latest forms, fliers and letters or if your child's inexplicable lack of school documentation has got you scratching your head, then the new Virtual Backpack feature of the district and school websites is for you!

On the Virtual Backpack pages of the school and district websites you will find information about upcoming events, forms, permission slips, newsletters, lunch menus, information from the PTO and more.

"Strong school-home communication is of vital importance to our students' success," said Superintendent of Schools Vincent S. Smith. "Dedicated teacher websites, the Parent Portal online grading system, eTask, and other general website content are all tools the district uses to achieve that goal and we are hoping that the new Virtual Backpack will further help foster the open lines of communication between home and school," he continued.

The Virtual Backpack is another step in the district's commitment to pursue paperless operations. The eco-friendly approach to distributing communications is expected to result in savings in printing costs, mailing fees and labor costs.

"With the integration of technology, especially mobile technology, into our daily lives, the ability to instantly access all district and school communications will be a tremendous benefit to parents," added Superintendent Smith.

The Virtual Backpacks are accessible on the homepage of each school website as well as from a link on the district Virtual Backpack. To visit the district's Virtual Backpack, log onto http://pointpleasant.k12.nj.us/District_VirtualBackpack.htm



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Debt Refinance Nets Huge Savings for District

Proving that timing can be everything, a strategic refinancing of existing debt has yielded over half a million dollars in future debt payments for Point Pleasant Borough Schools and ultimately, Point Pleasant Borough taxpayers.

Taking advantage of low interest rates, Point Pleasant Borough Schools' administration recently refinanced outstanding bonds that were issued in 1998 and 2003. The bonds funded vital additions to Ocean Road and Nellie Bennett Elementary Schools as well as improvements to Point Pleasant Borough High School and Memorial Middle School.

Originally issued at interest rates ranging from 3.5 percent to 4.6 percent, by refinancing, the district was able to achieve a savings of \$540,555 over the life of the bonds.

"Beginning in 2012, taxpayers will see an approximate 6 percent reduction in the debt service portion of the taxes that pertain to the refunded bonds," said Point Pleasant Borough Schools' School Business Administrator Steven W. Corso.

"The annual savings will range from between \$43,000 to \$45,000, and will carry through the year 2023, which is the original finance period," he added, explaining that the refinance would not extend the existing bond finance period.

According to Mr. Corso, the substantial savings are a result of several factors including low interest rates as well as the recent issuance by Standard & Poor's of an AA underlying rating to the Point Pleasant Borough School District. A rating shared with very few other school districts in the state, putting Point Pleasant borough Schools among the top of financially well-managed districts.

The AA underlying rating is a testament to Point Pleasant Borough School's ability to maintain a high level of fiscal responsibility and stability despite market volatility as well the district's record of consistent passage of the annual school budget.

"While market volatility and low interest rates were certainly an asset during the refinance process, it was the district's underlying bond rating that was instrumental in achieving such a favorable rate," he said. "The AA rating is an affirmation of the district's creditworthiness and fiscal responsibility, making the district attractive to investors."

Mr. Corso said that the district continually monitors available opportunities for refinancing of existing debt to achieve savings for taxpayers.

Continued on Page 3

Point Pleasant High School Inducts 44 into Honor Society

On Tuesday, November 29th, 67 of Point Pleasant Borough High School's best and brightest juniors and seniors and their families crowded the Loren Donley Center for Performing Arts at Point Pleasant Borough High School to attend the school's annual National Honor Society Induction Ceremony.

An astounding 44 inductees joined 23 existing National Honor Society members at the dramatic ceremony, a time-honored tradition at the school, that celebrates students who have demonstrated excellence in the areas that comprise the pillars of the National Honor Society: scholarship, leadership, service and character.

"Membership in the National Honor Society is indicative of high levels of achievement," said High School Principal Linda Rocco.



"The Induction Ceremony is the culmination of an extremely rigorous selection process that is available to only the very best students."

Ms. Rocco said that students are only offered the ability to pursue membership in the Society after the student has been deemed scholastically eligible.

Of the 180 juniors and seniors candidates who met the program's Scholarship-level threshold, 110 completed

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Puppet Shows Share Character Education Message with District Elementary Students

It's time to play the music. It's time to light the lights. It's time to meet the puppets at Point Pleasant Borough Elementary Schools. This season, students attending Nellie F. Bennett and Ocean Road Elementary Schools didn't have to trek out to the theaters to see charming and friendly puppets, they got to see them at their schools in two very different entertaining yet educational puppet shows.

Last October, puppeteers from Maryland's Blue Sky Puppet Theater traveled to Ocean Road Elementary School for two performances of their character education show *Building Bridges*. Tying into the statewide Week of Respect held from October 3rd-7th, "*Building Bridges*" presented an entertaining look at peaceful conflict resolution.

Although there were no banjo-playing frogs or blonde pigs in heels, the show featured a number of school-aged rabbits facing conflicts with their peers. At the opening, we meet Dysseus and Justine, who, although unrelated, are having similar issues with bullies in their school. As their school day unfolds, the audience gets a glimpse at the difficulties the main characters are facing, dealing with their peers, while their in-class lessons address tolerance by citing heroes of non-violence from Martin Luther King, Jr. to Rosa Parks and Gandhi. Throughout the performance, opportunities arose for the audience to participate in a sing along song with a message. The song? The titular "*Building Bridges*", from the plotline of a science project requiring students to create "an object that spans water."

The conclusion of the play finds two characters in

peer mediation and another two, after finding a source of common ground, establishing a friendship. As Dysseus and Justine demonstrate their science project, assembling a bridge from Dogville to Cat Town, they convey the story of cats and dogs learning to live together despite their inborn enmity. The scene concludes with a reprise of "*Building Bridges*".

"There's a land that you and I can live in, past the



mountains keeping us apart," the students and puppets sang in unison. "We can get there just by building bridges, from hand-to-hand and heart-to-heart."

Following the performance, the puppeteers addressed the students to further illustrate the message of the performance.

"Always seek the peaceful solution to conflicts you encounter," said Gina Campbell of Blue Sky Puppet Theater. "You can do this by telling the truth, listen-

ing to the other person before reacting, coming to an agreement and sticking to that agreement. If you say and do these things, you can help bring people together."

At Nellie F. Bennett Elementary School, the message was much different. Sadecky's puppets of Pennsylvania visited the school, recently, to perform *The Carousel*, an updated version of *A Christmas Carol*.

The *Carousel* told the story of Zach Potter, a self-professed crotchety old man who had forgotten the importance of family. A very special visit from one of Santa's elves, takes Zach on a magical journey to his Christmas' past, present and future, embarking from a carousel in a defunct amusement park.

Having the opportunity to revisit strategic periods throughout his life reaffirms Zach's sense of self-worth and reinvigorates his holiday spirit.

"The district is always looking for educational and entertaining assemblies to share with the students," said Superintendent of Schools Vincent S. Smith. "Both assemblies were thoroughly enjoyed by both students and staff and the messages in the performances were very clear. By using entertaining methods, like puppets, to convey educational messages, it really resonates with the students and becomes a memorable experience."

"I would like to thank both the Nellie Bennett and Ocean Road Elementary School Parent-Teacher Organizations for funding the assemblies and bringing these worthwhile messages to our students," he added.

National Honor Society Induction (continued from page 1)

candidate forms were submitted to National Honor Society co-advisors Point Pleasant Borough High School Teachers Laura Joyce and Stefania Kohler for consideration in the rigorous selection process.

"As advisors it is our duty to closely review each of the submitted candidate information sheets and then present them to a five-member faculty council," said Mrs. Joyce and Mrs. Kohler.

The advisors said the candidates' profiles are presented blindly, meaning the council does not know the identity of the students for whom they are voting and likewise, the identity of the faculty council is also a closely guarded secret.

"The faculty council is appointed by the Principal," said Principal Rocco. "This is done to preserve the integrity of the selection process."

As the candidate's profiles are presented, the faculty council assesses each applicant's experiences in the areas of service, leadership and character. This intense judging phase resulted in a dramatic reduction in the pool from 110 candidates to just 44 inductees.

At the end, 27 juniors and 17 seniors joined 23 existing senior members at the formal Induction Ceremony.

"Because membership in National Honor Society is among the highest levels of achievement for a high school student, the induction ceremony is held to high standards," said Mrs. Joyce indicating that students are required to dress to impress.

"In deference to the magnitude of this achievement, the ceremony is ritualistic, with each component reflecting our chapter's local traditions," said Mrs. Kohler.

"The induction of the 2011-12 NHS officers, as appointed during the previous year, is followed by the Candle Lighting and Recitation of NHS Qualities Ceremony where each officer lights a candle in recognition of the NHS pillars," Mrs. Kohler continued. "New inductees are then welcomed and presented with certificates and pins in recognition of their acceptance into NHS. All members then light individual candles from the ceremonial NHS pillars before retiring to the cafeteria for light refreshments."

And as the flames on the candles are extinguished, the members of the Point Pleasant Borough Chapter of the National Honor Society get down to the business of enhancing their leadership qualities through service projects and other activities that promote service and help develop character.

According to Mrs. Kohler and Mrs. Joyce, local chapters of the NHS have individual autonomy to design programs that fulfill these goals.

"National Honor Society regulations require individual chapters to conduct a service project for the school or community each year," said Mrs. Joyce. "Some of the service activities planned include a continuation of the NHS tutoring service whereby an NHS member volunteers to tutor other students in a subject for which they have a strong aptitude, we will once again host a technology outreach for the community to share technology skills with people who may have limited knowledge or access to newer technologies. We are also planning several fundraising events."

Since inducting its first members in 1965, the Point Pleasant Borough High School chapter of the National Honor Society has been recognizing outstanding Point Pleasant Borough students for their accomplishments, while promoting active involvement in school activities and community service.

"The prestige of being a member of the National Honor Society is a tremendous motivator for our students," said Principal Rocco. "Plus, membership encourages these outstanding students to continue engaging in positive behavior, as NHS members, students are obligated to maintain the standards of scholarship and behavior that initially resulted in their acceptance in the society."

"The benefits associated with being a member of the NHS are also a strong motivational tool," she continued, explaining that members are eligible for a number of scholarship opportunities from both the national and local chapter of the NHS.

"The National Honor Society as well as the pomp and circumstance associated with the Induction Ceremony positively emphasizes scholarship among NHS members' peers," said Superintendent of



Schools Vincent S. Smith. "By virtue of the recognition and celebration surrounding the induction, our inductees become prominent role models for their peers, inspiring them to participate in service to their school and community."

"The 44 inductees as well as the 23 existing members of the 2011-12 Point Pleasant Borough National Honor Society exude all of the qualities defined in the NHS charter. I am extremely proud of these students and I congratulate them on achieving this impressive distinction."

The following students were inducted to the Point Pleasant Borough National Honor Society at the NHS Induction Ceremony on November 29, 2011: Sofia Barba, Claudia Bennett, Courtney Bise, Sydney Brannick, Eric Bremer, Cory Brzycki, Ashley Buttino, Britney Connors, Jordan Coughlin, Robert Curcio, Brian Cuthbert, Emily Donahue, Colleen Engler, Nicholas Fecci, Ryan Gerrity, Alexis Giejda, Amy Hochheiser, Steven Krohn, Christopher Lagos, Amy Liantonio, Victoria Long, Alexander Lorenz, Nicole Luis, Christopher Lyons, Jessica Macchi, Andre Menzel, Christina Mildorf, Abigail Miller, Andrew Moore, Allison Moran, Erica Mullen, Sarah Mullaney, Elizabeth Palermo, Matthew Peled, Anthony Perello, Dana Petrillo, Matthew Piccolella, Jennifer Rice, Carly Riehl, Carly Roncin, Hope Roselle, Andrew Ruff, Geoffrey Thomulka and Kurt Van Benschoten. The new NHS officers are: President, Carly Martz; Vice-President, Tori Remondelli; Treasurer, Emily Macmillan; and Secretary, Justin Grace.

Bond Refinance (continued from Page 1)

“School districts in New Jersey are permitted to refinance their outstanding debt obligations if they can achieve a 3 percent present value savings,” he said. “When the district began this process in June, we were anticipating a savings of about 3.09 percent, the actual savings, however, was 6.20 percent!”

“While savings are generally predicated on the market at the time of the transaction, we were able to maximize savings because of the AA rating by Standard & Poor’s,” he continued.

According to Mr. Corso, the prime rate of the refinance can be attributed to the district’s strong history of meeting financial commitments, 14 years of clean financial audits, maintaining emergency reserve funds, and strong fiscal controls put in place by the business office and the Board of Education.

Other factors contributing to the district’s AA designation is its record of consistent passage of the annual school budget and the fact the district continually has one of the lowest costs per pupil.

But according to Board of Education President Sean Hagan the credit goes largely to Mr. Corso and his staff.

“It is thanks to the diligence of Steve Corso and his staff, working in concert with other district employees, that we are able to continue a sparkling record of sound financial practices,” said Mr. Hagan. “Their hard work has resulted in a tremendous benefit to the taxpayers of Point Pleasant.”

“I think it is also significant to note that these bonds are 8 and 13 years old,” added Mr. Hagan.



“As both a board member and a taxpayer of Point Pleasant, I find it profoundly reassuring that the district is constantly seeking ways to save money.”

Two Point Borough Schools Accepted to Positive Behavior Supports in Schools Program

As summer vacation was winding down for Point Pleasant Borough Schools’ students, district administrators were busy preparing the implementation of an exciting new initiative targeted at improving the school climate at Point Pleasant Borough High School and Memorial Middle School. In late August Memorial Middle School and Point Pleasant High School received notification from the New Jersey Department of Education, Office of Special Education of their acceptance into the Positive Behavior Supports in Schools (PBSIS) program.

Positive Behavior Supports in Schools is a collaborative effort between the NJDOE Office of Special Education Programs and the Boggs Center at UMDNJ. It is a data driven, tiered intervention system designed to create positive learning environments for all students.

“The purpose of the PBSIS initiative is to provide resources to facilitate an overall reduction of behavior and discipline problems school-wide,” said Rita Miller, District Supervisor of Pupil Personnel Services, noting that the schools were accepted after a rigorous and competitive application process.

Memorial Middle School and Point Pleasant Borough High School teams led by respective Principals Gary Floyd and Linda Rocco completed program applications for their schools early this summer.

Due to the diligence of the middle and high school application teams, district students will benefit from the PBSIS initiative and the resulting improved school climate.

“Positive Behavior Supports in Schools aims to reduce the number of students referred to special education and to increase the capacity to support students with disabilities in general education programs and settings,” said Ms. Miller.

“The three-tier system provides a process for intervention to accomplish the goals set forth by the initiative,” Miller explained. “PBSIS provides for universal, secondary, and individualized interventions. Although the tiers are interrelated and build upon one another, each has a unique focus and process for implementation.”

According to Ms. Miller, universal interventions are a proactive and instructive approach to behavior and discipline, and are appropriate for all school students and staff.

“The philosophy of universal interventions is that by clearly defining behavioral expectations, students are better able to make good behavioral choices,” she said. “The idea is to correct behavior before it becomes problematic.”

Secondary interventions are geared toward students that need additional support outside the

realm of the universal strategies.

“The need for secondary interventions arises from repeated disciplinary referrals over a short period of time,” explained Ms. Miller. “Students in need of secondary interventions benefit from additional structure, support, and instruction.”

The key components of secondary interventions include the establishment of a screening process and criteria for identifying students in need followed by an assessment of each identified student’s level of need. Appropriate instruction is then provided in an effort to correct any problem behaviors. A behavioral contract is then established to further identify appropriate behavior and expectations. The final component provides for ongoing mentoring for students as needed.

“Individualized interventions, for students requiring intensive support, address habitual patterns of behavioral difficulties,” said Ms. Miller.

The individualized intervention process consists of three phases, including an individualized behavioral assessment based, in part, from direct observation of the student in school settings; followed by the development of a thorough intervention plan that includes proactive strategies, replacement skill instruction, response and reinforcement strategies. The final provision calls for ongoing plan assessment and modification as needed.

“The potential benefits to the district by implementing the PBSIS initiative are extensive,” said Point Pleasant High School Principal Linda Rocco. “By addressing and potentially eliminating problem behaviors the school climate will improve immensely.”

“As incidents of bullying and intolerance decline, our students will enjoy a harassment-free learning environment conducive to learning, personal growth and achievement,” added Memorial Middle School Principal Gary Floyd.

Positive Behavior Supports in Schools is expected to be fully implemented at Point Pleasant Borough

High School and Memorial Middle School by September 2012.

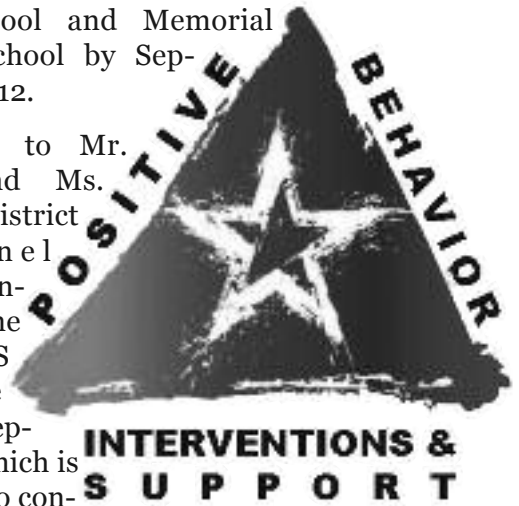
According to Mr. Floyd and Ms. Rocco, district personnel began training with the PBSIS State Team in September, which is expected to continue over a two-year period.

“The Positive Behavior Supports in Schools program is another tool our district will use to provide students with disabilities as well as youths with challenging behaviors with the tools they need to succeed while retaining them in a general education setting,” said Superintendent of Schools Vincent S. Smith.

Point Pleasant Borough High School’s and Memorial Middle School’s acceptance into this program has provided a tremendous opportunity for our students,” he said. “The application process was highly competitive and the fact that two district schools were selected for inclusion in the program is an outstanding honor for our district.”

“I would just like to express that in order to maximize the program’s success, active support of parents and guardians will be vital,” Superintendent Smith said. “I encourage all parents and guardians of students in the middle and high schools to learn about the program and participate in the parent surveys available on each school’s website.”

“Program tools are also available for parents to implement at home,” added Ms. Miller. “At-home reinforcement will bolster students’ utilization of the program skills and result in increased program success.”



What can parents do?

The support of parents and guardians is vital to the success of the Positive Behavior Supports in Schools program. By learning more about the program, and sharing your input through the Parent Surveys, you can have your voice heard and help to make the program more effective.

These simple steps will help strengthen the home - school link.

Get informed. Learn about the PBSIS initiative and the school-specific strategies.

Participate in the school-specific PBSIS Parent

Surveys. Survey links are available by visiting Point Pleasant Borough High School and Memorial Middle School’s websites and clicking on the PBSIS Survey link.

Incorporate the PBSIS strategies in the home and provide positive reinforcement for good behavior.

If you have questions or would like to learn more about PBSIS, please contact Principal Linda Rocco from Point Pleasant Borough High School or Principal Gary Floyd at Memorial Middle School.



SUPERINTENDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

The holidays are upon us once again, and as in years passed, we have much to be thankful for.

Here we are just three months into the school year and the district and our students and staff have already wracked up an impressive amount of achievements. So far we have recognized over 70 students for their achievements in academics, athletics and social activities, not to mention the 400 students that participated in the district's annual Summer Reading Program. Members of our staff have also earned well-deserved recognition for teaching excellence, in addition to endeavors like, earning grant money to fund educational initiatives and coordinating charitable efforts for those in need.

Our community continues to pledge unyielding support to the district and the children attending our schools. This support is visible in the generous donations bestowed on the district recently by members of the community. At the December Business Meeting of the Point Pleasant Borough Board of Education, the Board recognized two striking demonstrations of the community's stewardship on behalf of our schools, acknowledging Mr. Carl Lappke, of LandLink Traffic Systems, for the donation of iPads and software to the self-contained autism classes at Ocean Road Elementary School and Memorial Middle School, as well as Jersey Mike's Subs continued support through the Support Our Students partnership. Topping last year's \$15,000 donation, representatives from Jersey Mike's made an additional surprise donation of \$15,000 in support of district co-curricular programs, recognizing the positive impact athletic, academic and social activities among our youth.

The frenetic energy of the holiday season can distract us from the true purpose of this time of year. The holidays are a time to converge with friends and family and celebrate what is most important in our lives. I encourage you to slow down this holiday season and enjoy the moments that make life meaningful.

From the Point Pleasant Borough School District family to your family, I offer our best wishes for a wonderful holiday season and a safe and happy New Year!

Sincerely,



Vincent S. Smith
Superintendent of Schools



Superintendent of Schools
Vincent S. Smith

The Panther Press

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MISSION STATEMENT

To assure that all students are equipped with the essential skills necessary to acquire knowledge and understanding; to instill the desire to question and look for truth so that students may become critical thinkers and life-long learners; and, to assure that all students practice self-discipline, perseverance, fairness, and judicious decision making.

It is the expectation of this school district that all pupils achieve the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards at all grade levels.

Spirit of Giving Prevails in District Schools

The holidays were a whole lot happier this year thanks to the hard work and dedication of students of the Point Pleasant School District. For the fourth year in a row the district participated in the Foodbank of Monmouth and Ocean Counties Holiday Hunger Food Drive.



The Foodbank's Holiday Hunger Challenge is a competitive food drive held in schools throughout Monmouth and Ocean Counties. Participating schools "win" the challenge by donating the most pounds of food in relation to student enrollment. Recently, the Foodbank announced that three of the district's four schools were named recipients of awards of distinction for their food collection efforts.

For raising 1,056 pounds of food, Point Pleasant Borough High School was named the winning high school in Division Three.

For collecting a whopping 1,621 pounds of food, Memorial Middle School earned the Foodbank's Spirit of Giving Award, for the second year in a row.

And with 922 pounds of food collected, Ocean Road Elementary School joined Memorial in the list of schools to receive the Spirit of Giving Award, an award that recognizes schools that have demonstrated outstanding spirit, commitment and enthusiasm toward the cause of fighting hunger in their local communities.

The three schools were honored at an Awards Ceremony on December 5th at 3:00 p.m. at the Foodbank headquarters.

Nellie F. Bennett Elementary School additionally raised in excess of 320 pounds of food bringing the district total of food donated to 3,923 pounds, or almost two tons, for the 2011 Challenge!

"When students participate in altruistic activities like the Holiday Hunger Challenge, everybody wins," said Point Pleasant Borough High School Principal Linda Rocco who enthusiastically signed the high school on to participate again this year.

"The obvious benefit of the challenge is that more families in need will have food this holiday season," said Ms. Rocco. "Maybe not as tangible is the benefit our students realize by becoming more aware of social and economic issues."

According to the Foodbank, 91 schools throughout Monmouth and Ocean Counties participated in the challenge, raising over 66,000 pounds of food.

"Local need for food assistance is increasing daily," said Foodbank Representative Mary Hilscher. "Hunger is becoming more and more prevalent in our area, and in the last five years, demand for assistance has increased by over 80 percent. The Holiday Hunger Challenge has become a major food-raiser for the Foodbank and we are extremely

grateful to every participating school."

"I am so pleased that our students and staff, once again, embraced this Challenge so enthusiastically," said Superintendent of Schools Vincent S. Smith. "By participating in the Hunger Challenge our students not only raise substantial amounts of food for those in need, but they also learn a valuable lesson about the reality of hunger in our area. I would like to commend our students and staff for their participation in this year's Challenge."

This holiday season, district schools participated in various charitable endeavors including; collecting shoes for Soles4Souls, Inc., an organization that recycles used shoes for distribution to those in need. The district donated a nearly 600 pairs of shoes during the two-week drive. In addition, Nellie Bennett Elementary School, along with the school's PTO, collected pajamas and toys for the needy. Memorial Middle School's as well as Ocean Road Elementary School's PTO organizations utilized giving trees to collect holiday items for St. Gregory's Pantry as did Point Pleasant Borough High School.

