



*What's Right with
Spackenkill!*

March 2, 2018

*A tradition of excellence
with a vision for
tomorrow*

Dear Spackenkill Community,

Last weekend, I attended STEAM Day at Todd MS. What an incredible variety of presentations and projects! The three-hour time block was almost not enough time to investigate the work of students, teachers, and community members. We can't thank the volunteers enough who were involved in making this a great day. If you did not attend this year, I highly recommend that you do next year!

Jazz Night, sponsored by our music parents, was also held at Todd, with more of a cabaret feel. It was a great time to enjoy jazz and a featured jazz soloist. Thank you, Music Boosters, for all that you do to support our students and teachers!

This week, members of the administrative team and I attended two PTA / PTSA meetings at Hagan and the high school. It was a chance to share ideas and current practices in the district. I felt that there was good communication about the current safety climate impacting our schools. I am also impressed with our high school students, who like the teens at Parkland, want to be part of the change that makes all schools across the country safe for them.

I hope that you are enjoying the spotlights on our alumni like the one on Laura Yang. If you know an alumnus who has an interesting story to tell, please pass it on to us. And don't forget we are still in the formative stages of creating a Spackenkill Alumni page. You can find the link to join right here at <https://www.facebook.com/spackalumni>.

Finally, read the story about our Nassau students and what life would look like at 100. Come over to the District Office and I can give you a glimpse into the future ... and I don't need to use the AgingBooth app, unfortunately!

Sincerely,



Mark Villanti, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

HS Senior Signs Letter of Intent

On February 23rd, Caitlin Speranza signed her National Letter of Intent to play soccer at Division II St. Thomas Aquinas College. She will receive a partial athletic scholarship. Family and friends were in the Spackenkill library to celebrate this achievement. Congratulations to Caitlin and her parents!



STEAM Day Blends Art and Science



Last Saturday, STEAM Day filled Todd Middle School with fascinating exhibits and creative ventures that kept visitors entertained for hours. STEAM stands for Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics, and every discipline was out in full force. In the dining hall, there were exhibits on robotics, recycling, historic bridges, microgreens, and ecosystems (as they pertain to the Hudson River). Mr. Burgess taught ropes, knots, and lashings, and even allowed students to take rides.

In the gym, the Mid-Hudson Technology and Engineering Educators' Association (MHTEEA), a professional organization for technology education teachers, launched their t-shirt cannon on the hour and explained the workings of a trebuchet (a siege engine with ancient roots that uses a swinging arm to throw a projectile). Mr. Latino and high school students intrigued onlookers with ice cream making, while Mrs. Prisco and the high school science club demonstrated the science of slime. There was also a High School Science Olympiad showcase,

Ms. Cunningham and Todd students presented a building design challenge and Makey-Makey electronic snap circuits capable of playing music through fruits and vegetables! Mrs. Joy's students used hundreds of Rubiks cubes to replicate a computer pattern that generates the face of beloved Bill Nye the Science Guy, as well as the Mona Lisa and Anne Frank. Mrs. Joy's MST students were busy with exhibits throughout the school, including paper airplanes and forensic crime lab.

Mrs. Stong, Mr. Romani, and high school students explored a number of topics, including 3D art and drawing with light. There were also presentations in Structural Engineering by

Mr. Hill, CO2 Car Launches in the Science Wing, and a lobby demo of structures by the Todd OM Team, not to mention Edison Sung and Jeet Shahani taking on Towers & Structures in the lobby. What a day!

Jazz Night Showcases Talent

On February 21st, Jazz Night took place at Todd Middle School before a packed house! High school and middle school performers made this an event to remember!



Todd Jazz Band



HS Women's Choir

National Merit Scholars

We are proud to announce that Jeana Chun, Adele Long, Alexander Ristic, and Andrew Wu have been named Finalists in the 2018 Competition for the National Merit Scholarship Awards. They are among the 16,000 Semifinalists named in September 2017 who met the National Merit Scholarship Program requirements to advance to finalist standing. High school students enter the program by taking the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT®) and by meeting published program entry and participation requirements. The finalists are in the running for corporate, National Merit, and college-sponsored scholarships that will be awarded this spring and summer.

Spotlight on Alumni:

LAURA YANG, CLASS OF 2016



Class of 2016 graduate and valedictorian Laura Yang (pictured at left) recently had her globally groundbreaking research in the area of infectious tick-borne diseases published in *BMC Ecology*, a scientific journal. She conducted the research with Dr. Barbara Han while still a student at Spackenkill

High School and she credits teachers Amy Matts, Jennifer Maloney, and Kristine Chen in her acknowledgments. During her tenure at Spackenkill High School, Laura was a key member of the Science Olympiad team and consistently won regional and state medals. Remarkably, though born in the United States, Laura returned here from South Korea as a ninth grade student and took on the challenges of learning English. Laura is currently a sophomore at Georgia Institute of Technology, where she is majoring in environmental engineering. [Please click here for the link to the publication.](#) Kudos to Laura and the science department!

Read a Q&A with Laura Yang:

Q: When did you start working on this research with Dr. Han and how did the two of you meet?

A: I started working with Dr. Han in my second semester of junior year (winter of 2015). I contacted her through an email after reading journal articles on her works. Her papers engaged my interest and I thought it would be wonderful to have her as my mentor. She is my mentor as well as a role model now.

Q: Was it a summer research project?

A: Yes, I planned out the project from that winter by reading journal articles and learning Dr. Han's methodologies. Sometimes I visited her at Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies to have a meeting with her. I also had a biweekly meeting with Ms. Matts and Ms. Maloney for my science research course to update them on my progress. Then I started actively working on the tick project using machine learning during the summer of 2015.

Q: How were Mrs. Matts and Ms. Maloney involved?

A: They were my co-advisors for a science research class. They frequently provided me with feedback and helped me to continuously work hard instead of getting behind. They encouraged me and helped me a lot, from proofreading the paper to providing me with spaces to improve when I presented my research to them. Without them, it would have been impossible to have such an opportunity in the first place.

Q: Could you say a few words about how Spackenkill has shaped your scientific aspirations?

A: Spackenkill had so many opportunities for me to satisfy scientific

inquiries I had. The classes were always challenging yet doable and there were classes like science research that provided me with a chance to taste the academic region. Moreover, clubs like Science Olympiad allowed me to pursue various fields of science that are not usually taught in the classroom (i.e., disease ecology, statistics, epidemiology, invasive species, and more). Also, teachers we have at Spackenkill are always there for students and want the students to succeed. They helped me so much both academically and mentally when I first came to the U.S. They were like family to me.

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Mission: Inspired by a tradition of excellence and a spirit of continuous improvement, the Spackenkill School District will provide all of our students with the academic and social skills necessary to pursue their goals and become responsible citizens in an interdependent global community.

Vision: All Spackenkill graduates will be lifelong learners who are inspired to pursue their dreams and contribute to the global society.

[Please submit story ideas to mary.forsell@sufsdny.org](mailto:mary.forsell@sufsdny.org)

Issues of the newsletter are available on the [Spackenkill website:](http://www.spackenkillschools.org/district_newsletter_archive)
www.spackenkillschools.org/district_newsletter_archive

