Dear Spackenkill Community,

One of the hardest parts of writing the introduction for this newsletter is deciding what to comment on. There are so many good stories that resonate with me as I review all of happenings in the school district. I ask your forgiveness if I don’t mention some of the events in the district. It’s only because of time constraints, and I like to keep my thoughts relatively brief.

The first story that jumps off the page is the recognition ceremony of the Boys Basketball Team. Teachers work very hard, and a major factor that motivates them is when students appreciate their efforts. So shout-out to the Boys Basketball Team for taking the time to recognize several of our district teachers: John Latino, Jennifer Maloney, Andrew Mosca, Kristin Oakley, Chris Rawls, and Norma Vazquez, who retired last year.

I had the good fortune of dropping in on at least one of the Valentine’s Day celebrations in kindergarten this past week. It was heartwarming to see the smiles on the faces of the children as they expressed their positive feelings to their family members. Seems like yesterday that my two were that age — primary-school-age children are remarkable. Thank you, family members, for taking the time to come to the program and be a part of the Valentine’s Day celebrations. Thank you, teachers, for planning them.
Attached to this newsletter is information on our crew program. High school crew isn’t as well known as other sports. Because our student athletes compete off campus, they don’t always get the attention of their classmates. As a former guidance counselor at FDR in Hyde Park, I was amazed at the edge participating in group crew provided for some of my students who aspired to attend some very competitive college programs. In addition, it’s a fantastic sport. Even if I haven’t encouraged more of you to look into the program, do attend a crew competition on the river at Marist. I guarantee you, you’ll enjoy it.

The last item I’d like to bring attention to is the message to veterans. The law allows for veterans to receive a high school diploma if their service to this country interrupted their educational plans. Our high school principal, Mr. Malkischer, would really enjoy acknowledging a veteran who did not receive a diploma as a result of personal sacrifice in the Armed Forces. If you know of any veteran who qualifies, please encourage him or her to contact Principal Malkischer.

This weekend, we celebrate Presidents Day in observance of two of the greatest presidents who served this country, Washington and Lincoln. They are heroes to all Americans, and their leadership inspires my patriotism to our country. Because of the holiday, there is no school on Monday.

My best,

Mark Villanti, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

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**Senior Athletes Honor Teachers, Parents**

As part of Boys Basketball Senior Night on Friday, February 7th, students recognized teachers who had a big impact on their lives. Students presented their teachers with t-shirts as tokens of remembrance. The seniors also gave flowers to their parents for supporting them throughout their academic and athletic careers here at Spackenkill. Thank you to Coach Bill Murin for organizing this event.
Above, top row: Jayden Bennermon with Mrs. Vazquez (retired at the end of the 2018-2019 school year). Above, bottom row: Connor Boyce with Mr. Rawls.

Above, top row: Nick Ristic with Mrs. Maloney. Above, bottom row: Jaylen Rouse with Mrs. Oakley.
Valentine Fun at Elementary Schools

Kindergarten classes at Nassau celebrated Valentine's Day early this week by inviting in family and friends to see them perform in shows. The students presented parents with cards that they wrote themselves. Thank you to the parents who kindly brought in a variety of treats to share in the classrooms of Mrs. Lombardi, Mrs. Ravas, and Mrs. West.

Mrs. Strape's second graders used Chromebooks to work with Google Docs and type fun Valentine-themed sentences. They then learned how to insert emojis to replace some of their words. They had a great time.

The class also had a Valentine's Day party. Thank you to all of the parents who donated treats for the party. A special thank you goes out to Mrs. Sandop for bringing in a fun craft for the students to assemble. They loved making the ornaments! Mrs. Strape and her students wish everyone a lovely Valentine's Day!

Over at Hagan, Mrs Darcy's fourth grade class made monster bags to hold valentines! Thank you to room parent Tina Tarquinio for helping the students create their bags.
Above: Mrs. Lombardi's class sang for parents. Students introduced the selections. Click here to watch a short video of Mrs. Lombardi's class singing for their guests.

Above: Mrs. West's class delighted parents with their show. Afterward, they enjoyed all kinds of treats.
Above: Kindergartners read their cards aloud to parents in Mrs. Ravas' classroom.

Above: Mrs. Strapec's second graders created Valentine's Day-themed rebus.
Above: Mrs. Darcy’s class made monster valentine holder bags.

**Shrek The Musical Jr. Is Coming Soon!**

You won’t want to miss *Shrek the Musical Jr.* at Todd. Take a look at the images below: Students have been busy rehearsing away with Mr. Shanks and Mr. K. Set crew has created some amazing scenery. There is still time to get your tickets!

**The show runs February 28th and 29th at 7 pm and March 1 at 2 pm.**
Behind the Scenes:
Meet the People Who Make the District Work

District Treasurer Valerie Murphy has been with Spackenkill for nine years and previously worked for the Wappingers district. In 1994, she moved to the Hudson Valley with her family from New York City where she earned her undergraduate degree in Accounting from Fordham and her Masters in Information Technology from New York University. You’ll often spot Valerie at Board meetings. Though her job is in the numbers, it also positively intertwined with student outcome. Here’s why:

What are you working on right now?

This is one of the busiest times of the year for me. Right now, I’m crafting the budget as I receive feedback from the school buildings and different departments. I’m also calculating the tax rate and the tax levy, which is one of the factors in the tax bill that residents receive.

Please tell us about some of your other year-round duties.

I’m responsible for maintaining financial and accounting records for the district, for instance monthly treasurer’s reports that you’ll see on the Board agenda. I do the new state and federal ESSA reporting requirements. I also do state reporting for what the district spends — and how the money is spent — for all the federal grants. Over the past three years, I’ve worked with tuition families. And there are always other projects requested by the Board or administration.

Are summers easier then?

In June and July, I close out the year with our auditors and have to prepare and submit year-end reports for the federal grants, so it’s pretty busy then, too. There is always something that needs my attention.

What do you like to do in your free time?
I'm a newly elected board member for the Children's Home of Poughkeepsie. It's a private not-for-profit that helps at-risk children. There are on average 75 to 90 children in their care daily — and well over 300 annually. I got involved through my activities with my sorority, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., which organizes an annual Easter egg hunt as a community service project for the Children's Home. For the last five years, I've been the chairman of that program. Pink and green are the official colors of my sorority, hence the theme of my office!

Are your daughters following in your footsteps, career-wise?

Neither daughter has inherited my comfort with numbers. My oldest, Samantha, my artistic child, is a graphic designer. The younger one, Veronica, comes a little closer: she is a middle school science teacher.

Young Engineers Build Mint Mobiles

Mrs. Zanca's and Mrs. Wilcox's second graders joined forces on a STEM project this week. Their mission was to create a car that could roll down a ramp. The cars could only be constructed from a limited amount of materials: straws, tape, index cards, Life Saver mints, and Popsicle sticks.

They had 10 minutes to plan a design individually and an additional 15 minutes to work together as a team. Students tested their mint mobiles on the ramp with the help of their teachers, who measured the distance each car traveled. After the first round, the teams had a chance to fine-tune their designs. For the first time in the years that the teachers have conducted this experiment, every single mint mobile actually rolled successfully down the ramp. The farthest distance was 58 inches!

Afterward, the students reflected on what affected the distances their mobiles traveled. Weight distribution seemed to be a key factor. “When scientists and engineers are working, they do a lot of trial and error,” Mrs. Zanca told the students. “You have to test a lot of times. Scientists never just do things once.”
Vaping Awareness

At this week’s District Safety Committee meeting, Todd Principal Dan Doherty spoke about anti-vaping education efforts at the middle school. The school has hosted Cristine Groenewegen, a community educator with The Council on Addiction Prevention & Education of Dutchess County (CAPE). Youth survey results show that the number of teens vaping skyrocketed to epidemic proportions from 2018 to 2019, from 3.5 million to 5 million nationwide.

A Message to Veterans

A program for veterans to receive high school diplomas became a law November 11, 2019, with the approval of the Governor. Under the law, the Commissioner of Education will develop a program whereby any veteran of the Armed Forces who has served on active duty in the United States Armed Forces and who was unable, for any reason, to complete a secondary
education, may be awarded a high school diploma based on knowledge and experience gained while in service. If you are a veteran who fits these criteria or know of someone who does, please contact Spackenkill High School Principal Steve Malkischer: 845-463-7810.

Transportation Notice

Parents and guardians must have requests for private providers to the Spackenkill UFSD Transportation Department by April 1. Requests must be filed every year. For more information, please call Doreen Wright, Director of Transportation: 463-7800.

- Print a Request for Private/Parochial School Transportation
- Print a Request for Daycare Transportation

Kindergarten Registration

Kindergarten Registration for the 2020-2021 school year will take place at Nassau School on Wednesday, February 19th and Thursday, February 20th, between the hours of 9:30 am to 2 pm.

Please click here to read a letter from Principal Erik Lynch to incoming families regarding the registration process.

Please click here to read a letter from Principal Erik Lynch highlighting important dates.

Please click here to download and print the registration packet.

The Harlem Wizards are coming to town! Save the Date: March 13th, 7 pm SHS Gym. This fundraiser is sponsored by the Elementary PTA.

Click here to get your tickets!
PARP Finale Goes Country

The Elementary PTA sponsored a Pick A Reading Partner (PARP) finale event at Hagan last week. Many students, parents, and teachers came out to celebrate the students’ reading successes by learning country line dancing. Texas Roadhouse even sent over Andy the Armadillo to cheer everyone on! Some scenes are left and below:

15 Croft Road, Poughkeepsie, NY

(845) 463-7800
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