

# SPECTRUM

A COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS COMMITTED TO EXCELLENCE

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*CAPTURE THE STATE TITLE*

## **THANK YOU, IRA SCHULMAN**

*FOR MORE THAN TWO DECADES OF SERVICE*





*Guidance Chairperson Kristina Wilson speaks with high school students before school.*

## SCHOOL COUNSELORS SUPPORT STUDENTS WITH AN INDIVIDUAL, WHOLE-CHILD APPROACH

With a focus on social and emotional learning, academic advising, and college and career readiness, the School Counseling Department's knowledgeable and compassionate school counselors play an important role in assisting students as they prepare for life and academics at Byram Hills and beyond.

The school counselors do it all through an individualized approach to help students plan and attain their goals and find their own success.

"We meet the emerging needs of our students through a comprehensive guidance plan that looks at the whole child," says Guidance Chairperson Kristina Wilson. "Our counselors assess the different needs and concerns of each student and offer support in a multitude of ways. There isn't a one-size-fits-all approach."

"We are here to support each child in whatever manner will bring them the most academic, personal and college and career success," Ms. Wilson added.

The personalized support is provided by three school counselors at H.C. Crittenden Middle School, where each works with students in a single grade, and six counselors at Byram Hills High School, where students work with a first-year counselor and then another dedicated counselor for their remaining years at Byram Hills. (There is also a school counselor at Wampus Elementary School this year, and a committed social worker at Coman Hill Elementary School.)

Superintendent Jen Lamia praised the department. "The counselors in the Byram Hills Counseling Department have a strong sense of student needs and the training to support students emotionally and academically," she said. "I am proud of their work and the direction that Kristina Wilson has forged with them."

### The Counseling Department's work at Byram Hills High School includes:

- **Academic advising:** Every student meets with their counselor for course selection. "Academic advising is the connection between what students are interested in and passionate about, where their aptitudes are and helping them choose courses that are aligned with those interests and career aspirations," Ms. Wilson says.
- **College and career readiness:** Counselors help students explore possible careers and determine the best steps they can take to reach their goals. College planning begins in ninth grade when counselors review the results of a personality and learning assessment. Extracurricular involvement is highlighted sophomore year, when students create a resume and look for opportunities to get involved. Juniors meet with school counselors individually and then again with their families to begin making a list of potential colleges, universities or career paths. Senior year focuses on finalizing the list, applying to colleges and advising students through the decision process.

- **Social and emotional learning:** Students receive individual support from their counselor for issues like anxiety or help with assignments.

### The Counseling Department's work at H.C. Crittenden Middle School includes:

- **Academic advising:** Counselors help students develop academic goals and prepare them for the transition to middle school and to high school. Eighth graders complete an interest inventory through Naviance in March to learn about their strengths and potential career interests. Counselors may advise students about choosing high school electives that are aligned with their interests and aptitudes.
- **College and career readiness:** Beginning this school year, all middle school students have access to Naviance, an online platform for college and career planning. Students can use this tool to help them understand what kind of learner they are and to search for potential colleges and career paths.
- **Social and emotional learning:** Counselors teach a social and emotional learning curriculum to sixth graders on topics including organization, coping skills, growth mindset, meditation and using Naviance. Throughout the year, counselors work with older students on soft skills like time management and organization. A highlight is the annual #Kindness Week, a schoolwide event encouraging students to be kind to themselves and others. Eighth graders can participate in Mindful Mondays during their SDL period and are learning about the physical effects of stress from the Counseling Department during Health. Counselors provide individual and small group counseling for students.

# COMAN HILL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS EMBRACE THE QUOTES OF THE MONTH

"Treat others how you want to be treated," three Coman Hill Elementary School second graders enthusiastically said in unison during the morning announcements on the final day of January.

They were reciting the school's quote of the month, part of Coman Hill's increased focus on social and emotional learning. This year, students learn a new character trait each month or two, like respect, and the topic is infused throughout the school community.

"We hope that students will internalize the words and their meanings and will use them in their everyday lives," Principal Karen Eldon said. "We want them to be mindful, thoughtful and caring citizens of our community."

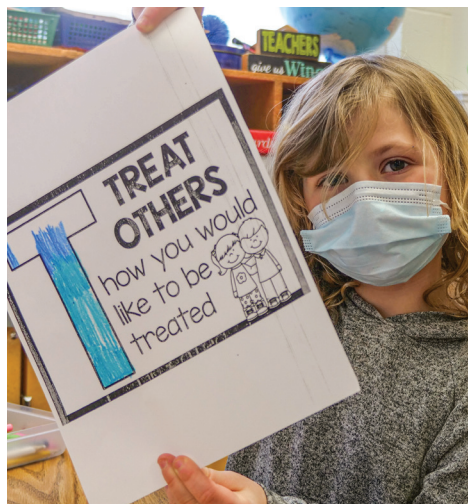
Each day begins with several second graders reading the quote over the public address system, reminding the entire school of these important words.

The quote is displayed throughout the school, on bulletin boards and in colorful slides displayed on hallway television monitors. Teachers can choose how to incorporate the theme in their classrooms, and it can be reinforced through books and everyday interactions.

First and second grade students participate in lessons with Student Assistance Counselor Bernice Pagan, who comes into the classrooms to help young learners understand the character traits. She asks students to define them and provide examples of how each can look in real life. She reads a story on the topic and students complete an activity.

Mrs. Pagan focused on kindness and gratitude in the fall. After respect came empathy in February. Traits for the spring will be honesty, cooperation and responsibility.

"We're teaching these social and emotional skills, giving students



*Student Assistance Counselor Bernice Pagan presents a completed character trait sequence. Students showcase their work on the character trait activity.*

opportunities to practice them and we hope they'll take them on as their own," Mrs. Pagan said. "When they can manage their feelings, they can be better learners and better members of society as they get older."

During a lesson on respect, Mrs. Pagan asked first graders for examples and they were full of great answers: By helping people, saying "please" and "I'm sorry." What's the opposite of respect? Bullying or hurting someone, the students answered.

"Do you interrupt someone when they are talking?" Mrs. Pagan asked, and they emphatically answered, "No!"

"We have to respect ourselves, others and everything around us," Mrs. Pagan reminded students.

First grader Cooper Accordino says Mrs. Pagan's lessons are important "because you have to be nice to everyone" and he likes them because "they're always fun." His classmate Mia May Lentz says she's learning a lot, adding: "I like that she reads

us a story every time."

Students are now recognizing the traits at school. Mrs. Eldon recalls a student who spontaneously remarked, "Yep, that's gratitude" during an interaction with a teacher.

"That says we're reaching them and we're defining those words for them so they can actually recognize them," she says. "The students are loving the lessons and they take pride in knowing the quote. It warms my heart, knowing they are taking ownership over the quotes and words."

The idea behind having students read the quote each day is twofold. It allows the second graders to serve as role models and get a taste of leadership, and it can be empowering for young students to hear these important words from older peers.

The second graders who recited the quote that January morning enjoyed the experience.

"I felt proud," Archit Sahu said.



# THE HALLS OF WAMPUS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ARE ALIVE WITH MUSIC

Students are shaking the maracas and striking the glockenspiels; they are singing from deep within themselves and carefully practicing notes on their instruments. And, they are learning how to sing and play in musical ensembles.

The beautiful sounds of music are ringing out at Wampus Elementary School and there's no doubt that students are excited to be making music together.

"Students are playing and singing and actively music-making in the halls of Wampus," said Pete Pauliks, the District's Director of Fine Arts. "We're providing an authentic experience for students, and we have so many teachers from throughout the District providing really great individualized instruction for our students at Wampus."

Students in third, fourth and fifth grades enjoy general music classes that provide a foundation of music education, and Encore classes that offer enrichment. The curriculum builds in fourth grade when students can take lessons in string, brass

or wind instruments, and again in fifth grade, when they can join the orchestra, band or chorus.

"Fifth grade is the beginning of making music collaboratively," Mr. Pauliks said. "Students learn how their individual part contributes to the beautiful sound of the entire composition. Everyone's part matters."

"We hope students learn about themselves and others, and gain a sense of musical independence and responsibility for doing their part to improve the greater good of an ensemble," he added.

Wampus students benefit from the opportunity to explore music in many different ways, including through movement, instruments and technology, noted music teacher Dana Celestino. "They are able to be creative in their own way in a variety of mediums," she said. "We are trying to create students who are lifelong music lovers and music learners."

Teacher David Wolfe, who teaches band, band lessons and other classes, said: "My aim is to get the kids to really love playing music on whatever instrument they're playing."

The skills students learn come together in fifth grade, and will serve them well in middle school and high school. "All of the various concepts that are taught in general music and some of the other music classes culminate in the ensemble experience," says Ken Pearson, another Wampus music teacher.

Their music education will help students beyond Wampus.



"Collaboration, active-listening, problem solving, and empathizing with others are all activities that take place in the music classroom," Mr. Pauliks said. "The skills they gain through music fuel self-confidence and help students achieve their goals in school and throughout their lives."





# H.C. CRITTENDEN MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS HELP STRENGTHEN SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Students at H.C. Crittenden Middle School are talking and listening to each other in two new programs aimed at building community and strengthening the school environment.

The first is a junior mentoring program held Wednesdays during X Pod. Seventh and eighth graders who are members of SAIL, or Students Acting in Leadership, lead sessions for sixth graders to help welcome them to the middle school and become part of the HCC community.

The second is the Vibe, where other members of SAIL lead Voice Circle discussions with seventh and eighth grade peers to solicit their opinions on school issues. The feedback from the meetings, held during the Student Directed Learning period, is shared with school leaders and used to guide decisions.

"Our students are all doing a fantastic job with these new initiatives," Principal Kim Lapple said. "The programs have been immensely helpful and our community has grown stronger as a result."

The mentoring with sixth graders is a mix of structured conversations and activities. The students discussed gratitude, participated in kindness activities and learned about the school's tradition of going all-out with costumes on Halloween.

"The mentoring allows important connections to be made between sixth

and eighth graders," Ms. Lapple said. "We know it is important for students to have role models in the building. Having eighth graders share our school traditions with the younger students makes them feel more comfortable, excited and invested in our school."

The Voice Circles are held regularly to gather information on how the seventh and eighth graders are feeling on topics like this year's new school schedule, the new Student Directed Learning period, called SDL, and technology usage in school. The topics are developed by school and student leaders, and the students' opinions are shared with the principal.

"This is a way for students to have their voices heard and provide us with insight into the work we are doing," said Ms. Lapple, adding that students may share their opinions more freely with peers than with adults. "It is important to have their input so we can determine the best way to support their learning."

The discussions have already resulted in change.

"As a result of the Vibe, we have made modifications to next year's school schedule," Ms. Lapple said.

"And we have incorporated student feedback into the types of activities that we offer during SDL," Assistant Principal Angelo Ancona said, along with adding new menu items at lunch.

During the Vibe in early February, students were sitting together to discuss technology.

Two student leaders led a discussion on the benefits and drawbacks of technology and asked about students' experiences with their cellphones and computers. They called on students and facilitated the discussion.

Drawbacks, the seventh graders said, included becoming too reliant on technology, and cyberbullying. "You might get worse at communication in real life, like face to face," Adam DiPietro answered.

The students liked that their perspective is being sought.

Zach Cohen, a seventh grade member of SAIL, has led several Voice Circles, including the one on technology.

"It's very helpful for the school to get feedback from the kids to see what they really need to do instead of assuming what we need," he said. "It feels good to know you're making an impact."

Andrew Delli Carpini, an eighth grader who is a mentor to sixth graders, said he enjoys serving as a resource for the younger students if they have questions.

"I like being able to interact with other people," said Andrew, who said his goal is to be a role model. "I like helping people."





Podcasting students in January with equipment generously donated by the Byram Hills Education Foundation.

## BYRAM HILLS HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS SPEAK WITH A PURPOSE IN NEW PODCASTING CLASS

If you could be an animal, what would it be? Where can bagel and pizza lovers find the best eats around? What's the difference between stunting and tumbling in the world of varsity cheerleading?

A group of Byram Hills High School seniors explored these topics, and many more, in a thoroughly 21st century and hugely popular way: through podcasting. They are the first students to enroll in the new English 12 humanities seminar called Podcasting: The Art of Multimedia Narrative.

The collaborative, student-driven class blends the traditional study of literature with the art of narration and podcast creation. The course, taught by Bryan Horn, was developed to give seniors more choice and to center their studies around their interests in a hands-on, practical way.

"The driving force is having students understand the way stories are told," says English Chairperson Duane Smith. "Human beings love stories, and they come in many different forms. This is one 21st century piece of technology that builds on the oral tradition of storytelling. This class gives them a crash course in how to express themselves for a purpose."

Students began the year by listening to an episodic podcast to learn the components of audio storytelling, like building suspense through narration, adding layers to a story and using music to set the mood, and they read a nonfiction book that similarly unfolds in chapters.

They completed assignments by making short podcasts, for example, sharing their reaction to several chapters.

They learned the technical skills of how to record and edit, and will use new recording equipment purchased through a generous BHEF grant. Students brainstorm ideas with each other, research topics, write interview questions and scripts, learn to speak off the cuff and captivate an audience. "There's a lot of creative thinking and skill that goes into that," Mr. Smith says.

Students love the class and the latitude they have to choose their podcast topics. They have created individual and group shows on fun top 10 lists, conspiracy theories, TV shows, video games, Marvel comics and sports.

"I love it," Kailyn Sawhny says. "There's so much creative freedom. I feel like podcasting is the future and there are so many opportunities. It's a great way to get your opinions out there. It's a nice skill to have. It's one of the most fun classes I've ever had."

Bobby Ziff wanted to try something new after years of traditional English classes. "Podcasting was attractive to me because I like creating my own content and being able to be creative in a collaborative environment, and that's exactly what we are able to do in this class," he said. "My favorite part is the ability to choose, almost every day, what I'm doing in this class. I'm talking about pizza and sports, which are basically my two favorite things, so it doesn't really get better than that."

The host of a podcast on conspiracy theories surrounding Area 51 and the assassination of John F. Kennedy, Michael Minutillo notes that the course is not a typical English class.

"You're not writing essays every week but you are doing a lot of things that require writing skills and speaking skills," he said.

Marissa Schachter appreciates that she has gained experience and useful skills, and said her speaking voice has improved. "It shows more confidence to be able to use your voice and publicly say your opinions, and it's made me more creative," she said.

The course joins two other humanities options for seminars that began last school year: Multimedia Journalism, and Race, Class and Culture in the United States; a fourth, Ethics in Literature, is due to start in the fall. The classes offer seniors new ways to engage in the humanities.

"To make sure our students are productive, responsible citizens of the 21st century, they have to have the opportunity to experience all the new ways that people communicate," Principal Christopher Walsh said. "We respect the world that our kids are growing up in and our courses are responsive to their needs and to what we know is being valued at college and in the workforce. Our students are on the ground floor of this growing way to communicate, and it's exciting for them to be involved in podcasting."



# FOUR BYRAM HILLS SENIORS NAMED TOP SCHOLARS IN REGENERON SCIENCE COMPETITION

Cheers broke out at Byram Hills High School in January when the news came that four seniors in the Authentic Science Research Program were selected as top scholars in the prestigious Regeneron Science Talent Search.

The students, Derek Araki-Kurdyla, Edith Bachmann, Sydney Levy and Emily Pizzorusso, were among the 300 top scholars chosen from about 1,800 students at 603 high schools in the United States and abroad. The students won \$2,000 each in the science and math competition. Byram Hills High School won \$8,000 for STEM-related work.

"We are so very proud of these four students," said Stephanie Greenwald, director of the Byram Hills science research program. "They have conducted exemplary original research, overcome obstacles and produced outstanding work."

Byram Hills Principal Christopher Walsh congratulated the students. "These individual achievements are supported by an amazing program, department, school, district and community," he said.



From left: Emily Pizzorusso, Sydney Levy, Derek Araki-Kurdyla and Edith Bachmann.

## A closer look at the scholars' work:

**Derek Araki-Kurdyla:** Through a field study, Derek explored the characteristics of the coastline soil where seagrass grows to identify the optimal environments for reducing carbon dioxide in the ocean. Identifying natural ways to reduce ocean CO<sub>2</sub> is essential as high levels are detrimental to ocean ecosystems.

**Edith Bachmann:** Edith investigated working memory and the sustained attention of fourth grade students. She compared students who practiced storytelling, the act of retelling a story from memory while maintaining eye contact, and students who practiced story reading, or reading from a book and showing the pictures as visual aids.

**Sydney Levy:** Sydney studied mitral valve prolapse, a heart valve disease. Through a lab investigation and sequencing data analysis, she explored the condition's relationship with scar tissue formation in the human heart. Her identification of an important cellular pathway could lead to therapies for preventing the scarring that results from the condition.

**Emily Pizzorusso:** Emily explored sex differences relating to synesthesia, a neurological condition in which the senses become intertwined, like for example, seeing colors when hearing music. Her research sheds light on this critically understudied condition.

# CAPTURING STATE TITLE, BYRAM HILLS GIRLS VARSITY TENNIS TEAM MAKES HISTORY



Players celebrate on their float in the downtown Armonk parade.

55-year history, and the third overall. And the team was crowned state champs after a remarkable 22-0 season, the school's best-ever record.

"Bringing home the first girls state title for Byram Hills and winning this first event of its kind is a tremendous accomplishment and the entire school community is so incredibly proud," said Rob Castagna, the Byram Hills Director of Health, Physical Education and Athletics.

Hard work was the key to the team's success.

"We had a group of players who were willing to work really hard and set high expectations for themselves," Coach Mike Racanelli said. "When you play with your heart and stick together, great things can happen."

In addition to the title, three players placed in the singles and doubles state championships in October. Alyssa Margolin, the Section 1 singles champ, won third in singles and Chloe Bernstein and Jenna Kleynerman captured third in the doubles event.

The team was celebrated with a parade through Armonk that concluded at the North Castle Town Hall, where the girls were congratulated by school and town officials. A new entry, reading "Girls Tennis 2021," was unveiled on the championship sign.

"Looking back on all our practices and matches, I am so proud of everything we were able to accomplish," said Alyssa, a captain. "Each member of the team came with a strength, but as the season progressed we were able to integrate all our strengths together, and I think our biggest accomplishment was bringing home the state title as one team and one family."



The Byram Hills High School Girls Varsity Tennis team completed a history-making season, in more ways than one.

In winning the inaugural New York State Public High School Athletic Association Division 2 team championship in November, the squad became the first girls team to capture a state title in Byram Hills'





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**Our Mission**

In an environment of mutual respect, the Byram Hills School District and its community will provide students with the means, the knowledge, and the opportunity to excel in order to become productive and responsible citizens of the twenty-first century.

*"A great place to learn."*

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## **THANK YOU, IRA SCHULMAN!**

### **BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBER COMPLETES MORE THAN TWO DECADES OF SERVICE**

With an outpouring of gratitude and praise, the Byram Hills school community honored Ira Schulman as he stepped down from the Board of Education after 23 years to become a North Castle town justice.

Board of Education President Scott Levy and Superintendent Dr. Jen Lamia lauded Mr. Schulman, the Board's longest serving member, at the December Board meeting.

Mr. Schulman, who served as Board president eight times, helped Byram Hills with many important issues. He assisted the District in the aftermath of Sept. 11, through budget challenges, changing enrollments, state mandates and most recently, the global pandemic.

"We were really blessed to have someone like Ira with so much experience and insight to help guide us along the way," Mr. Levy said.

Dr. Lamia praised Mr. Schulman for creating a culture of excellence.

"You've supported the most innovative programs, you've embraced community partners and other stakeholders and you continue to be a responsible and revered custodian of Byram Hills," she said. "The Byram Hills District and your Board of Education are so proud to celebrate you today. We're grateful to you, Ira, for your service to children and to public education."

Dr. Lamia credited Mr. Schulman with making sure that Byram Hills hired the very best teachers while remaining fiscally responsible, for creating expectations for a rigorous curriculum and for helping the District create an approach to cultural proficiency. She noted that he is a tremendous supporter of the Byram Hills athletics program and was honored by the Armonk Chamber of Commerce as its Citizen of the Year in 2019.

"Your level of passion 23 years ago as a Board member is exactly the same as it is today," she said. "You care about supporting public schools for the benefit of all children."



Mr. Schulman, who received a standing ovation, was touched by the tributes.

"The past 23 years have just meant the world to me," he said. "To serve this Board of Education, this school district as a Board member, eight terms as Board president, has just been one of the true joys of my life."