

HOME PAGES

THE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE POCANTICO HILLS SCHOOL

WINTER 2010



Construction Begins: 'Life is Moving Forward' Winter is nearing its end, but along with snow, this winter brought beauty and change. Pocantico Hills School kicked off the construction project with an official groundbreaking in the library during the Board of Education meeting on Monday, Nov. 23. Wearing hard hats and construction vests, BOE members used crowbars to symbolically begin the process that will bring Pocantico Hills School into the 21st century. Interim Superintendent Jay Scotto-Friedman took part in the ceremony. "Life is moving forward," he said. "There is much to do; this is just the beginning."

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LETTERS HOME

HEARING FROM OUR COMMUNITY LEADERS

From the Interim Superintendent/Assistant Superintendent

Dear Residents:

On April 12, 2010, the Pocantico Hills Board of Education will be presented with the 2010-2011 school budget for their adoption.

The Administration and the Board of Education are committed to presenting the community with information about the budget and providing opportunities for the residents to have input into the budget development process before it is adopted by the Board of Education. The budget meeting scheduled for Saturday, April 10, will mark the seventh of eight scheduled budget workshops. The current draft of the 2010-2011 school budget and the PowerPoint presentation describing the budget are posted on the District's website. The front page of the budget document lists a special e-mail address that has been created to make it easier for residents to ask questions about the budget. That e-mail address is budgetinfo@pocanticohills.org.

The following presents some highlights about the draft 2010-2011 school budget:

- There will be an estimated \$5.5 million increase in the District's assessed valuation
- The present draft of the 2010-2011 school budget will produce an estimated tax rate decrease of 5.30% in Greenburgh, and a .87% increase in Mt. Pleasant
- The budget-to-budget increase is projected at 12.95% (\$3,047,768)
- New educational initiatives included in the 2010-2011 draft school budget include participation in the Tri-States Accreditation program
- Reinstatement of the bookmobile
- Funding of the ELO program

- Replacement of older instructional computers
- Increased funding for instructional supplies and textbooks
- Replacement of an unfilled elementary position with a new middle school academic intervention services teacher
- A new teaching assistant to support fifth and sixth grade students with special needs
- An allocation of \$10,000 for the equipment necessary to introduce a video conferencing program

The estimated \$5.5 million increase in the District's assessed valuation has resulted from the inclusion of the water treatment plant that is being constructed within the District onto the Pocantico Hills assessment rolls. Financially this will benefit the residents of Pocantico Hills because as the District's assessed valuation increases, it spreads rising costs among a larger pool of taxpayers, thus reducing the tax rate. As a result of this significant increase in the assessed valuation, there is an estimated tax rate decrease of 5.30% projected for Greenburgh, and a .87% increase projected for Mt. Pleasant.

The projection of a tax rate decrease has provided an opportunity for the school district to address the ongoing issue of tax certiorari refunds. The budget provides for a \$1,000,000 new line item in the budget to begin to formally address the approximately 70 outstanding tax certiorari claims already filed against the Pocantico Hills Central School District.

The Budget vote is scheduled for Tuesday, May 18, 2010, in our school library from 7:00 a.m. through 9:00 p.m. If you have any questions about the draft 2010-2011 school budget, please send your questions to budgetinfo@pocanticohills.org.

Sincerely,

Jay Scotto-Friedman

Interim Superintendent/Assistant Superintendent

LETTERS HOME

HEARING FROM OUR COMMUNITY LEADERS

Dear Parents and Friends,

We thank you for helping make “A Night at the Oscars” a tremendous success, raising over \$10,000 for the children of Pocantico Hills. As guests arrived, they were greeted by Pocantico’s own award-winning photographer, Margaret Fox, who captured the moment on film. Next, guests were treated to a cocktail hour during which all eagerly caught up with old friends, made new ones and scanned the enticing 52 items in the auction. The buffet dinner was delicious. The dance floor was hopping as The New Irrelevants played the night away. As always, the live auction was full of humor and fun. Other activities included an Oscar ballot for guests to showcase their Hollywood savvy, the Academy Wine Bar where guests could purchase a bottle of wine, and the paparazzi photo table with photos from the red carpet.

Huge thanks go out to event chairperson, Patty Butter Sabety, and the members of her committee: Lori Benson, Chrissy Conrad, Therese de Chaves, Alyssa



At the Foundation Dinner, the New Irrelevants were anything but! Here, the band members during a break.

Bottom row (l. to r.): Ted Sabety, Steve Poux, Charlie Sanders
Top row: (l. to r.): Neil Benson, Ivano Leoncavallo

Jacobs, Isabel Lao, Jennifer Poux, Nina Sanders, Emily Segal and Denise Willi, for their hours and hours of dedicated service. We thank Kitty Thorne and Kelly Lynch for creating our beautiful promotional materials, Margaret Fox for her photographic genius, Stephanie Bartel Zednik for her ever-ready expertise and amazing decorations, Spencer Disher, assisted by Fred Rickles, Anthony Santini and John Conrad, for so capably handling the financial matters, and Mary McIntyre, Olive Clarke and Gina Downes for their gracious help all year. A standing ovation goes to The New Irrelevants – Neil Benson, Ivano Leoncavallo, Steve Poux, Ted Sabety and Charlie Sanders – for their superb music. Thanks to Buttercup & Jake for the great swag!

We are pleased to report that the Foundation recently funded the purchase of video and recording equipment to help Hawk reporters investigate stories and broadcast on the school newspaper’s new online Wiki. Mr. Brown also plans to use the equipment for the English Language Arts and Guardians Angels in Training programs. Congratulations to Mr. Brown on the award of your grant request! The Foundation also awarded Mr. McVeigh with funds to support his college assistance program. Congratulations Mr. McVeigh and keep up the good work!

Each year, the Foundation awards scholarships to high school seniors who have demonstrated academic growth, community commitment and whose personal values promise continued strong contributions. To qualify, applicants must have attended at least three years of middle school at PHCS, be currently attending high school and be entering an accredited educational institution. Qualified seniors from this year’s graduating class will receive letters from the Scholarship Committee in April with detailed information on how to apply and will be invited to interview with the committee prior to graduation. We encourage all qualified students to apply.

Best wishes,

Shelly Marchese *Chairperson*

SCHOOL BOARD News

2010-2011 Proposed Budget – Important Budgetary Dates

Thursday	April 1	Mail First Budget Newsletter to Community
Saturday	April 10	Special Board Meeting: Budget Work Session
TBD		PTA Adopted Budget Presentation to Community
Monday	April 19	Final date for filing petitions for Nomination of Candidates to the Board of Education (5 p.m. – District Clerk)
Monday	May 3	Budget Statement Available – School Main Office
Wednesday	May 5	Mail Second Budget Newsletter to Community
Monday	May 10	Public Hearing on Proposed Budget
Tuesday	May 11	PTA Meet the Candidates Night – 8 p.m.
Tuesday	May 18	Vote on Budget, Election of Candidates and Propositions 7 a.m. – 9 p.m. School Library

Two BOE Seats Open

There are currently two seats open for the Board of Education. Petitions for the nomination of candidates are available through the District Clerk, Gina Downes. The final date for filing petitions is 5 p.m. on Monday, April 19, in the District Clerk's office.

Construction Underway!

During the Board of Education meeting on Monday, Nov. 23, the Board of Education members symbolically kicked off the construction process in the library. The library murals have been recorded through photographs (see page 10).



District Welcomes Nadine McDermott

Director of Curriculum and Instruction Hired

On Monday, Feb. 22, 2010, the Pocantico Hills Board of Education appointed an interim Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Nadine McDermott. Mrs. McDermott will be joining the Pocantico Hills educational team and will be working with the District's faculty through June 30, 2010. Pocantico Hills is very fortunate that the Briarcliff Manor Board of Education granted Nadine an unpaid leave of absence to provide Pocantico Hills the opportunity to work with Nadine through June.

Since 2004 Nadine has served the Briarcliff School District as a Middle School Assistant Principal, providing administrative leadership in a Blue Ribbon middle school serving 400 sixth through eighth grade students. Mrs. McDermott has provided leadership in the development of curriculum initiatives, and she has been instrumental in hiring, mentoring, inspiring, observing and evaluating 68 faculty members. Mrs. McDermott possesses a School District Leadership Certificate, a School Administrator and Supervisor Certificate, and Master's of Music degree in Vocal Performance from the University of Texas at Austin. Ms. McDermott is a contributing author of "An Artistic Application of the Habits of Mind" in the books "Activating and Engaging Habits of Mind" (ASCD 2000) as well as "Habits of Mind Across the Curriculum: Practical and Creative Strategies for Teachers" (ASCD 2009). She began her educational career in 1987 as a Choir Director and Music Teacher.

In her position here, Mrs. McDermott will work collaboratively with the faculty and administration to identify and prioritize short and long-term



educational goals, establish and monitor goals for instruction and student achievement, and assist with the development of educational goals for the 2010-2011 school year. She will also allocate resources to support instruction and student achievement, evaluate and make recommendations for continued improvements in curricular and instructional areas, review the Response to Intervention (RTI) plan and evaluate the success of the RTI recommendations

employed by the classroom teacher, evaluate curriculum coordination efforts, co-chair the math book selection committee, and assess and make recommendations for continued improvement of our curriculum.

Mrs. McDermott will also observe and evaluate all probationary teachers, evaluate professional development opportunities, as well as assess, support, inspire, and mentor all teachers.

She will also assist Pocantico Hills with the initiation of participation in the Tri State Consortium. The Tri-State Consortium is a learning organization devoted to assisting its member public school districts in New York, Connecticut, and New Jersey in using student performance data to develop a rigorous framework for systemic planning, assessment, accreditation, and continuous improvement. The Tri-State Consortium will provide Pocantico Hills with an opportunity to work with an organization that strives to advance teaching and learning and share best practices among member districts through the application of the Tri-State assessment model. Funds for participation in this Consortium have been included in the 2010-2011 draft school budget.

Robotnauts come to Pocantico School

Everyone has heard of astronauts, but robotnauts?

Thanks to a visit by a specialist from NASA's Aerospace Education Services Project, our fifth and sixth graders were able to learn all about robotnauts right

in their classrooms. In early January, "Robots on

the Road," a traveling robotics program, came to the Pocantico Hills School to give the students a hands-on robotic experience

that let them work with and understand the makings and functions of robots.



The program is available free through NASA. When science teacher Mario Suarez became aware of the program, he applied to NASA for the opportunity. "This is an outstanding program," said the science



teacher. "It shows students that NASA is much more than they might have thought, and it could spark the students' interest in many ways, including career opportunities."

Greg Selby, NASA representative, opened the class period with a short presentation about what robots are, how they help us and where you might find

them. He then directed the students on how to observe and conduct their research.

Generally, there were six robot

stations, one for each group of students. The robots were capable of several tasks, and the challenge for the students was to understand the purpose of the task. From Crater Explorer to Debris Remover, each robot had a function, and the students analyzed and reported on the workings of these robots.

The robots and tasks are all connected through the theme of "Lunar Exploration," which explains the use of the term robotnauts.



Senior Citizens Enjoy Concert

On Tuesday, Dec. 8, the Senior Citizens of our community enjoyed the sounds of the Pocantico Hills Middle School Chorus and Band. Their day began with a delicious breakfast prepared by Nina Suchy, Pocantico's Food Service Manager, and then moved on to a wonderful concert directed by both Sheila Stanton and Jerry Lucadamo. After the concert, the seniors enjoyed lunch, another wonderful meal of chicken marsala, penne ala vodka, salad and appetizing desserts. The seniors were served by student volunteers from the middle school working toward completing their community service hours. Both Madeline Misuraca and Kim Cognatello, PTA volunteers, deserve thanks for putting together such a magnificent event for the Senior Citizens, and we look forward to seeing what the next Senior Citizens event has to offer.

Students benefit from construction in several ways

The construction process at Pocantico Hills School has begun. The work promises to bring our school into the 21st century, and guide our students successfully into the future.

As the construction proceeds, it serves also as a great instructional tool for our teachers who are linking the construction to the curriculum in innovative ways. Interim Superintendent Jay Scotto-Friedman feels that involving the students in this way makes the process very hands-on and brings it to life.

Our fifth graders, for example, were treated to a presentation by Brian Ceislinski, the architect who



is working on the project. “This is your school,” he stated as he projected and discussed three-dimensional images of our school that were produced using computer-aided design (CAD). The software allowed him to zoom in to individual locations and even to “slice the building,” much to the amazement of the 43 students who were intrigued by the display. Mr. Ceislinski also showed the students blueprints of the building, and he explained how the planning and design of the construction process works. A Q&A session followed the presentation. Math teacher James Cioffi and science teacher Mario Suarez were pleased that the students asked pertinent and thoughtful questions that involved everything from the timetable for the swimming pool (It will be completed for summer 2011) to “Why are blueprints blue?” (It began with blue ink though now refers to any drawing of this kind).

“It is great to see students this age so involved and engaged in the process,” said Mr. Ceislinski.

Other projects also tie the construction to the curriculum. The eighth grade science class observed a concrete pour, followed by a sampling of the concrete. The lesson also took them to a lab where they watched the sample get tested for stability and strength. Students in the Photography Club (see related story on page 8) are working on a yearlong photographic chronicle of the construction. Other classroom lessons will be developed as the year unfolds. “By immersing our students in the construction process through various academic opportunities, we know they will feel ownership in the new building,” said Mr. Scotto-Friedman.



A Picture Perfect Evening

The evening of Oct. 18 proved to be a picture perfect occasion as more than 60 people attended the first show of the Photography Club. Twenty-one photographs were displayed as part the Fall Exhibit, mounted in the foyer just outside the library, one by each student in the club. Students, teachers, families, administrators and Board of Education members were all on hand to admire the work and honor these young photographers.

The enthusiasm at the reception was evident in the beaming faces of the artists and proud parents. There was a wide range of subject matter, from landscapes and architecture to leaves, animals and even sneakers. In every case, the works exhibited creativity, outstanding composition, and an understanding of light and shadow.

Teachers Laura Garrido and Amie Doane are advisors to the club that meets after school and is open to all students in grades 4-6. Both have been fascinated with photography since childhood, so it was natural to share their love of the hobby with the children.

The club initially began as an enrichment opportunity several years ago, but soon became so popular it had to be expanded into a year-round activity. There are now four sessions of the club; this show was the culmination of session one, and resulted



Photo Club members, all fourth and fifth grade students, pose on the other side of the camera during exhibit opening.

from photographs taken on several trips. The students went to Croton Gorge Park, River Walk at Croton Landing Park and Rockwood Hall on the Rockefeller Preserve.

Each student chose one photograph from their portfolios for the show, guided in their selection by the advisors. The digital Olympus cameras were first provided through a Foundation grant, and now are also made available by the District (if the students do not have their own).

The next project will involve chronicling the school construction project.

How do Ms. Garrido and Ms. Doane teach the youngsters how to take photographs?

We tell them, "Take a lot of pictures!"

Their mantra, from which anyone can benefit:

"Follow the Kodak Top Ten Tips!" For that information, visit <http://www.kodak.com/global/en/corp/top10tips/index.jhtml>.



Teachers Amie Doane (l.) and Laura Garrido are advisors to the club.

Around the School

There was much happening in February and March. Take a look.

Celebrating the Year of the Tiger

Pocantico Hills School celebrated Chinese culture as Board of Education President Katherine Yu and Interim Superintendent Jay Scotto-Friedman welcomed the Chinese New Year with the Kindergarten class. It is the Year of the Tiger.



Acclaimed author Janet Wong visits Pocantico Hills School

The Pocantico Hills PTA sponsored a visit by acclaimed author and poet Janet Wong on Thursday, March 4, for grades PreK – 4th. Ms. Wong is the author of 20 books, has been featured on “The Oprah Winfrey Show” and has read her books at the White House. The author’s work is distinctive in its range of topics, and delightfully celebrates her Korean and Chinese origins. You can find out more about her at www.janetwong.com

The recent Author Visit with Janet Wong for grades PreK - 4th grade gave our students a great opportunity to use technology in some exciting new ways. The week before Ms. Wong’s visit, several classes went to the Library for a Skype session

(teleconferencing) with Janet Wong. It was an informal session where the students asked Ms. Wong questions, and she introduced herself



and her work to them. The group used the Smart-Board to see Janet clearly, and she could see the students from her home office in New Jersey.

After the visit, the 2nd grade teachers, Mrs. Rollman and Mrs. Taverna, created an “Author Visit Blog” on their eChalk page. There the students could post their reactions to Ms. Wong's visit. Ms. Wong posted her own comments back to the students. “This generated a lot of excitement, and we hope this dialogue will continue,” said Anne Gordon, library media specialist, who organized the visit.

POCANTICO PRIDE

GREAT ACHIEVEMENTS AND NEWS FROM STUDENTS, ALUMNI AND TEACHERS

Pocantico Hills

WE'D LIKE YOU TO KNOW...

- The Pocantico Hills Student Government raised \$1,010 from snack money donations and a school dance to purchase a Shelter Box which will be sent to Haiti. On the first day of fund-raising, the Student Government collected \$34.74 from snack money alone. They have donated their money to the Rotary Club of Briarcliff Manor who will help to purchase the Shelter Box. If you are interested in donating, please address checks to "Briarcliff Manor Rotary Club" and send them to the Pocantico Hills Central School District in care of Patty Palombo.
- The Pocantico Hills Teachers Association collected over 1,500 items of food and toiletries to donate to the Food Bank of Westchester, along with \$200. The Student Government Representatives helped the teachers by spending their mornings collecting items from each classroom.

Briarcliff High School

Cross County All League: Alexandra Coffey

Football All League Honorable Mention:

Garret Lederman

Boys Soccer All League: Jose Montiel

Girls Soccer All League Honorable Mention:

Gabriela DeFrutos

New York State Math Honor Society:

Matthew Cember, Daniel Collins, Hao Hao

National Honor Society: Matthew Cember, Daniel

Cember, Hao Hao, Stephanie Contreras

Danielle Horecky was selected Distinguished Student of the Month for the month of January.

Pleasantville High School

Foreign Language Students of the Month were Michael Lanza, Bianca Muniz, Sara Powers, Helene Rached, Lloyd Brown.

Our College Students

Danielle Greco made the Dean's List for the Fall 2009 Semester at Iona College.

Chorus cheers Biotrust

Led by music teacher Sheila Stanton, the Middle School Chorus performed at the Biotrust (formerly Landmark) during the holiday season. Their stellar performance received accolades from the crowd.



upcoming dates



APRIL

- 1-5 Spring Recess (No School for Students)
- 5 Make Up Day (if needed)
- 6 Passover Ends
- 8 Foundation Meeting (8 p.m. – Teachers' Lounge)
- 10 School Board Meeting – Budget Work Session (9-11 a.m.)
- 12 School Board Business Meeting (8 p.m. – Cafeteria)
- 16 Report Cards Go Home
- 19 School Board Petitions Due – 5 p.m. District Clerk's Office
- 19-23 PTA TV Turnoff Week
- 23 11:30 a.m. Dismissal – Parent Teacher Conferences
(12:30 – 3 p.m.)
- 26 NYS ELA Exam Begins (Grades 3-8)
- 27 School Board Discussion Meeting (8 p.m. – Cafeteria)

MAY

- May 5 NYS Math Exam Begins (Grades 3-8)
- May 6 Foundation Meeting – 8 p.m. (Teachers' Lounge)
- May 10 Superintendent's Conference Day (No school for Students)
School Board Meeting – 8 p.m. - Public Hearing
on Proposed Budget
- May 11 Meet the Candidates Night – 8 p.m.
- May 12 Spring Concert
7:00 p.m. - Grades 1-2 7:45 p.m. - Grades 3-5
- May 13 National Jr. Honor Society – 1:30 p.m.
PreK - K Orientation – 7:30 p.m.
- May 14 8th Grade Art Show – 7 p.m - 8:30 p.m. (Landmark)
- May 17 PTA Senior Citizens' Event
Middle School Spring Concert – 7:30 p.m.
- May 18 **School Budget Vote and School Board Election
(Library) 7 a.m. – 9 p.m.**
- May 21 Middle School Awards Dinner (Double Tree Hotel)
- May 24 NYS Science Performance Exam (Grade 4)
- May 26-28 8th Grade Trip
- May 31 Memorial Day (No School)

POCANTICO HILLS CENTRAL SCHOOL

599 Bedford Road

Pocantico Hills

Sleepy Hollow, N.Y. 10591

Board of Education

Mrs. Katherine Yu, *President*

Mr. David Wilens, *Vice President*

Mr. Robert Balog, *Trustee*

Mr. John Conrad, *Trustee*

Mr. Maurice Curran, *Trustee*

Mr. Jay Scotto-Friedman, *Interim Superintendent*



LEARNING

ACHIEVEMENT

GROWTH

DIRECTION



For more information, please visit our website:

www.pocanticohills.org



Jump Rope for Heart 2010

PRE-K REGISTRATION:

If you have a child who will be turning 4 by December 1, 2010, they will be eligible for Pre-Kindergarten at Pocantico Hills Central School District beginning in September 2010. Please contact the School Registrar, Mrs. Mary McIntyre, at 914-631-2440 x101 to register your child in the program.