



DIGEST

A COMMUNITY OF Giving

Recognizing the importance of helping those less fortunate, students and staff throughout Smithtown participated in numerous community service activities during the holiday season of giving.

At each of the elementary, middle and high schools, students and staff took active roles to ensure that those near and far felt the joy of the holiday season. Throughout the months of November and December, Smithtown students collected and donated hundreds of pounds of food, held toy drives, created personalized cards that were sent to local nursing homes and troops serving overseas, participated in the Macy's Believe Campaign and used their musical talents to spread holiday cheer to local seniors.

"We take great pride in ensuring our students are well-rounded individuals and active participants within their community," said Superintendent of Schools Dr. James Grossane. "Through the various community service activities our students participated in, they learned the value of helping others and the importance of community."

Among the busy weeks' activities were the following: Branch Brook students and staff collected 50-cent donations in honor of the school's 50th anniversary and used the money to buy holiday gift cards for needy families; Dogwood's Peanut Butter Gang made treat rolls and personalized 120 cards for local seniors, while its Leadership Club participated in Pay It Forward with Jackie, a holiday stocking-stuffing project; High Schools East and West purchased age-appropriate gifts and gift cards from local supermarkets for 24 local families; and Nesaquake Middle School students partook in the Adopt-a-Hero program, a service project that asks community members to put together care packages of requested items to send to service members.

"We take great pride in ensuring our students are well-rounded individuals and active participants within their community."

-Superintendent of Schools Dr. James Grossane



A Message from Your Superintendent

Dear Residents,

As winter progresses, our students are continuing their educational journeys. They are enthusiastic about delving into new topics and continuing to give back to their hometown.

Before the break, our students went above and beyond to ensure that community members in need didn't go without during the holiday season. Together, they held countless fundraisers, volunteered at soup kitchens and visited nursing homes. We can't express enough of the pride we have in our students. They work diligently and understand the true significance of a sense of community. We look forward to sharing their future accomplishments.

As a school district, we also recognize the importance of community and that without its full support, we can't achieve our goal of fully preparing students for the future through a rigorous education that provides real-world experiences.

With that, it is our intention to continue to involve the community in decisions regarding the education of our students. Most recently, we sought feedback from the community regarding the Board of Education's goals for the 2015-16 school year. The results of the survey will help lead the district as it moves the Board's efforts forward.

Already, the results prompted the district to create a Parent University and Wellness Fair that will focus on health, drug awareness, online responsibility and stress reduction (see page 5 for more information). It is our hope that all parents and community members will join us in being proactive to better understand and interact with the next generation.

As we journey forward, we will continue to seek input from parents and community members. By working together, we can not only make certain that we are providing the best possible education for our students, but also take the utmost pride in our schools.

Sincerely,
James J. Grossane, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools



WELCOME TO THE Wellness Corner



THE IMPORTANCE OF SLEEP

Does your child have trouble waking up for school in the morning? If so, you're not alone. The average U.S. adolescent is "chronically sleep deprived and pathologically sleepy," typically getting less than the 8-10 hours of sleep they need on school nights. (AAP)

What are some of the risks associated with sleep deprivation? The effects can be stark and include:

- increased physical illness
- irritability, nervousness and tension
- inattentiveness, impulsiveness and decreased memory
- depression, sadness
- decrease in academic performance
- acne and other skin problems
- unhealthy eating and obesity
- increase in car accidents

On a more positive note, adequate sleep leads to increases in academic performance, physical and mental health, and overall well-being. Yet given the demands on our adolescents' time, ranging from homework to after-school activities such as clubs, athletics, work and socializing, what can students and parents do?

Here are just a few suggestions to get you started. See the resources listed below for more.

- Make sleep a priority.
- Keep the bedroom cool, quiet and dark at night. The cold makes us tired and a dropping core body temperature can help us fall asleep faster.
- Set a media curfew! Avoid TV, computers and phones

for an hour before bedtime. Light-emitting devices suppress melatonin production and interfere with sleep.

- Stick to a consistent bed and wake-up time so your body becomes accustomed to the routine.
- Establish bedtime routines, such as reading (a hard-copy book) or taking a shower, to signal your body that it's time for bed. Scents like chamomile and lavender may help with evening relaxation routines.
- Avoid caffeine and sugar during the second half of the day. (Adults should avoid alcohol and nicotine at night.)
- Generally avoid eating, drinking and intense exercise close to bedtime.

Making these changes can be challenging, especially since teen body clocks don't cooperate. In adolescents, production of the hormone melatonin, which makes them sleepy, doesn't begin until 11 p.m. or later, so establishing routines that make sleep easier is critical.

For more tips on how to promote wellness in your child, stay tuned for our upcoming Parent University and Wellness Fair, featuring protective factors such as how to communicate with your child on topics like substance abuse, social media and online safety, and stress reduction. Save the date: March 21. Details coming soon.

Resources: American Academy of Pediatrics, BBC Science and Nature, Centers for Disease Control, National Sleep Foundation.

Register Your Child for Kindergarten Now

Children in the district who will turn 5 years of age on or before Dec. 1, 2016 are eligible to register for kindergarten in the 2016-2017 school year. Please visit the district's website at www.smithtown.k12.ny.us for more information and a kindergarten registration checklist.

Coding Catches On

Coding fever is spreading throughout the country, and many of Smithtown's students had the opportunity to try their hand as programmers during the Hour of Code in early December. The event is a global initiative, spearheaded by Code.org, to engage children as well as adults in the field of computer science.

At the elementary school level, students took part in a variety of coding activities with some of their favorite fictional characters — Anna and Elsa from "Frozen," R2-D2 from

"Star Wars," Angry Birds and Scrat from "Ice Age." The "Minecraft" coding course took participants through 14 levels of increasing difficulty. During their journey, brief videos featured tutorials to introduce new concepts and help students choose the best strategies for advancement.

Continuing the coding lessons, students received an introductory experience for two weeks during their library classes. Over the two weeks, the activities increased in complexity and allowed

students to progress at their own pace. At the conclusion of the program, students had learned how to use block language to create a game or design, and received a certificate of successful completion.

At the middle school, teachers celebrated Computer Science Education Week by introducing students to computer programming during their study hall periods

or math classes. The middle schoolers were highly engaged, and those who worked more quickly eagerly shared tips with their peers.



Makerspaces Transform Learning

Media centers and libraries throughout the district are getting a makeover, being transformed from ordinary, traditional spaces to those designed to spark students' creativity. These areas, known as Makerspaces, are creative DIY spaces where students can gather to create, invent and learn.

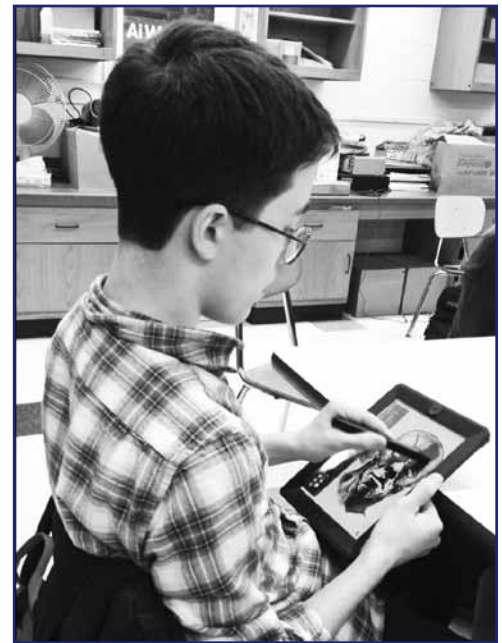
To help students develop transferable skills for success in the workplace and life, the library at High School West has started a learning commons. To promote the centers, library media specialists have organized student-led workshops and events such as "How to Do the Rubik's Cube," "Building Marble Runs" and the Hour of Code. The high school also purchased littleBits snap circuits and robotics equipment, which students are encouraged to use during their free periods to enhance their STEM skills. In addition, art supplies and digital media equipment are available to allow students to be creative in their free periods.

At High School East, Digital Media Art students are involved with Makerspace projects ranging from computer coding

to construction, including working with professionals via Skype to complete Hour of Code and video game design projects.

Using state-of-the-art technology, including FiftyThree's digital pencils, which synchronize to applications on the iPad, students are taking traditional art elements such as drawing and working with them to create digital comic books. Students are also learning architectural design and working on projects using 3-D printing technology to improve the school and community, such as with new, green courtyard designs complete with interactive sculptures. These multifunction design challenges place an emphasis on creativity and innovation to meet the needs of 21st-century learning.

Middle schoolers are also flocking to their respective media centers during their lunch breaks to use the equipment and supplies. The students are learning how to create circuits and control input and output using littleBits. They are then fitting inventions that they build out of Legos, K'nex or even cardboard with the circuits to make their projects mobile.



Another favorite of middle school students is Makey Makey, an invention kit that turns everyday objects into touchpads. Using the computer, an assortment of alligator clips and wires, their imaginations and random objects, students have made a workable piano keyboard out of Play Doh.

Connecting TO THE Community

Community Lends Its Voice for the Future

At the beginning of the school year, the district shared the Board of Education's goals for 2015-2016 with the community and asked community members for feedback on their own priorities related to those goals. The district, which gathered the feedback until mid-January, plans to use the survey results to form efforts moving forward.

The survey covered the three key areas of the Board of Education's goals: instructional program, educating the whole child and fiscal responsibility. All three areas have seen significant district efforts this school year, including staff development, curriculum assessment and budget planning.

The following results show the community's priorities. Highlighted below are areas identified by over 50 percent of respondents:

Instructional Program:

- 53 percent prioritized expanding technology integration. This will be a key priority as the district plans its expenditure of the Smart Schools Bond funds (\$3.9 million).
- 79 percent prioritized enhancing educational programs. Current district explorations include a range of STEM opportunities, from coding to Project Lead the Way to increased rigorous course offerings, such as additional AP classes and enrollment. The district's Reimagining Schools Think Tank regularly examines innovative and best practices, seeking cost-effective ways to integrate new programming and approaches into instruction.

Respondents showed a great deal of support for the current program of instruction. Areas they expressed a desire to expand offerings in include elementary enrichment, ELA, science and technology.

Whole-Child Instruction:

- All goal areas in this category received more than 60 percent of respondents' support. There is a high level of support for continued whole-child instruction.
- In particular, promoting personal growth, self-esteem, responsible behavior, youth development, character building and responsible citizenship received the greatest support, with 90 percent.
- The district's K-12 social and emotional learning teacher training will continue and expand next year to address these areas. The district also has a thriving Wellness Committee, increased interest in school gardens, rich character education programs, DASA training for all staff, and is updating its Wellness Policy and Plan.
- Nearly all areas of whole-child instruction received support for expansion. Digital citizenship, social media and online safety stood out as the highest. Efforts are being made at all levels in all buildings to support this expanded instruction. The Parent University on March 21 will additionally support parents in their ability to communicate effectively with their children on this topic.

Educating the Whole Community:

- Three topics stood out as the most important ones parents want at future district events. All three will be addressed at the upcoming Parent University and Wellness Fair: digital citizenship and online safety, drug awareness, and stress reduction.

Fiscal Responsibility:

- The highest priorities in the category of fiscal responsibility included: "Develop a clear, transparent and fiscally efficient budget" and "Develop a five-year building use/housing plan that maximizes efficiency and maintains or increases student programming" (see page 8 for more information about housing).

- The district has been working hard to negotiate contracts that reflect current revenue limitations this year. For a listing of upcoming budget work sessions, please see below or visit our website.
- The district has also been working with the Town of Smithtown on redevelopment plans and is developing a comprehensive, long-range facilities maintenance plan. It has also reviewed and updated emergency management plans (which are under regular review and will be reviewed yet again this year).

The district would like to thank all of the respondents. Please visit our website for the full survey results.

Proposed Budget Work Sessions All Meetings Held at 26 New York Avenue

March 1 at 7 p.m.
Instructional Budget Elementary & Secondary

March 15 at 7 p.m.
Employee Benefits, Tax Levy Limit Calculation

March 29 at 7 p.m.
Revenue, Use of Reserves and Fund Balance, Superintendent's Final Proposed Budget

April 12 at 8 p.m.
Regular Meeting of the BOE & Budget Adoption

May 10 at 8 p.m.
Regular Meeting of the BOE & Public Hearing on the Budget

May 17
Annual Meeting – Budget Vote

RISK FACTORS AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS

We hear a lot in society about "risk factors." These are conditions and experiences like poverty, abuse, lack of supervision, conflict/violence and other stressors that may put our children and ourselves at higher risk for depression, substance abuse and conduct disorders like violence. These outcomes are not inevitable, however. Everyone experiences stressors to one degree or another, and parents and schools have the power to intervene with protective factors all the time.

What are "protective factors?" These are the supports that students need to be successful in terms of mental and physical wellness. Much of this work happens at home, and we are fortunate to have a community rich in parental involvement.

Important protective home factors include self-control, parental monitoring, academic competence, and strong neighborhood and adult connections. Lax or harsh parenting is a risk factor, while consistent parental involvement, monitoring and clear expectations are protective factors. Other important protective family factors include communicating about students' problems, sharing time and activities together, and parents modeling constructive coping strategies and positive social interactions for their children.

Schools also play an important role in protective factors that prevent destructive behaviors like violence and drug abuse. A positive school environment will support social skill development, offer physical and psychological safety, set clear expectations for behavior, and offer

opportunities to engage with others within the school and community. Whole-child social and emotional learning efforts and character education programs are designed to provide a range of protective environmental factors in our schools.

Students aren't the only ones who need support! Parents undergo many stressful circumstances and need support as well. Stress factors for parents include everything ranging from moving to job stress, relationship problems to medical issues, and more. Their ability to cope and model is important to the resiliency of their children, but that is sometimes easier said than done.

Parents should not underestimate the value of taking the time to care for themselves. It's an important part of making sure they have the stamina to do the demanding job of parenting. It is critical to the resiliency of the whole family.

We can't make risk factors disappear altogether, but we can work as a community to tip the scales by building up as many protective factors as possible.

Additionally, parents and students can always reach out to school personnel, such as school counselors, social workers, teachers, psychologists and administrators, for support with concerns or questions.

Resources: *Youth.gov*, the Center for the Study of Social Policy, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)

Save the Date!

March 21

Parent University and Wellness Fair

Based on the community's response to the Board of Education's 2015-16 goals, the district has developed its spring Parent University to support proactive parental communication in the following three risk areas: drug awareness, social media and online safety, and stress reduction. Be sure to check out this March 21 event, which features a Wellness Fair with protective health activities, such as yoga, CPR, and health screenings, from 4-8 p.m. and Parent University workshops on communication and protective factors from 7-9 p.m. Location: Smithtown High School East. Both events are open to all Smithtown residents.

Fit for BUSINESS

Tasked with creating a monthlong marketing plan, more than 250 students from High Schools East and West gathered together in mid-November to compete in the district's annual Business Olympics. Themed "Get Fit: Corporate Fitness Challenge," the event was sponsored by the Career and Technical Education Department's School of Business and the Smithtown Industry Advisory Board. As part of their marketing plan, the 57 teams were required to promote a corporate fitness challenge, with proceeds donated to a charity of their choice. They were also tasked with creating a Google Slide presentation, a month of wellness events, a print ad, a public service announcement and a marketing plan.

"The Business Olympics is one of the most popular events in the department," said CTE Chairperson Christine LoFrese. "The project embodies all of the 21st-century skills, assists students in college and

career readiness, and enhances their critical thinking, collaboration and presentation skills."

More than 75 judges – including local businesspeople, Smithtown High School alumni, district office and administrative staff, and members of the Smithtown Industry Advisory Board – participated in the event and judged the students on their overall presentations.

This year's winning team, the Fitness Masters – consisting of Robert Grasso, Darian Kane-Stolz, Nicole Sancilio and Victoria Tiranno – focused their attention on conducting actual market research. The students created a monthlong fitness challenge for Citibank with daily activities and a culminating Office Olympics event. For Office Olympics, employees formed teams and competed in various wellness activities, with entrance fees donated to the Shape-Up America charity.

"The Business Olympics is one of the most popular events in the department.

The project embodies all of the 21st-century skills, assists students in college and career readiness, and enhances their critical thinking, collaboration and presentation skills."

- Christine LoFrese, CTE chairperson



Challenge by Choice

In support of Superintendent of Schools Dr. James Grossane's goal of inviting more students to participate in challenging courses, the district is introducing Challenge by Choice to parents and students at the secondary level.

This initiative was developed to assist our students in selecting courses that will help them reach their highest potential. Students will still receive departmental course recommendations based on their academic record and current progress. However, those interested in challenging their placement by enrolling in a related honors, college

or Advanced Placement course, and who have taken the prerequisite course(s), can speak with their counselors about initiating the Challenge by Choice Form during their scheduling sessions. As part of this process, students will discuss their interest in taking more challenging coursework with their current classroom teacher, parents/guardians and counselor, and a schedule will be created.

When deciding whether to challenge a course placement, students should keep the following in mind: "When work is easy, learners can do the work on their own without any help. It is their 'comfort zone.'

If all the work a learner is asked to do is always in the comfort zone, no learning will take place. In fact, a learner will eventually lose interest. When the work is too hard, on the other hand, the learner becomes frustrated. Even with help, learners in the 'frustration zone' are likely to give up.

"The area between the comfort zone and the frustration zone is the one where learning will take place. It is the area where a learner will need some help or will need to work hard to understand the concept or complete the task. This is the zone of proximal development. A learner is neither bored nor frustrated, but

appropriately challenged." (Carol Bainbridge, "Zone of Proximal Development," About Parenting.)

Encourage your child to speak with his or her teacher about placement decisions. Ask about potential changes in work difficulty, summer assignment requirements and the work habits necessary to succeed in a more challenging class. If you have questions, reach out to building personnel such as your child's school counselor or classroom teacher. We want all students to be appropriately challenged in an environment where they will grow.



ROBOTICS

Looking to build off of last year's success of winning three awards in two competitions, the Smithtown Robotics Team 810, the Mechanical Bulls, kicked off their competition season in early January against 30 Long Island teams at Stony Brook University. This early competition was a precursor to their upcoming regional competitions at the Finger Lakes Regional at Rochester Institute of Technology and the Long Island Regional at Hofstra University.

To prepare for regionals, where they will compete against hundreds of students throughout the state, the team will spend the next six and a half weeks designing, building, programming and testing a completely original robot.

The mission of the Mechanical Bulls is to let students explore all areas of education and to work with mentors to share and apply knowledge of engineering, business and leadership skills through a fun, hands-on experience. As a team, members work toward a common

goal of designing, building, marketing and operating a competitive robot in a business-like environment while supporting the ideals of FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology).

While the main goal of robotics is to explore students' interest in science, technology, math, engineering and the arts, the Mechanical Bulls are also very involved in their local community. The team marches in the East and West homecoming parades, drives VEX bots at Smithtown, St. James and Nesconset Day events, hands out candy at Spooky Hallways and demonstrates robotics at local events.

For more information, visit www.smithtownrobotics.com. You can also follow the team on Twitter: @Team810, or on Instagram: @smithtown_robotics.



Athletes Extend Helping Hands

Smithtown's student-athletes bring pride to their community not only through their athletic achievements on the field, but also their philanthropic undertakings in the community. Since the start of the 2015-16 school year, the Athletes Helping Athletes clubs at East and West have been making a difference throughout the community.

Athletes Helping Athletes provides high school student-athletes with an opportunity to act as peer leaders and mentors for middle school students. AHA participates in a variety of activities including workshops for middle school students on issues ranging from self-esteem and sportsmanship to bullying, teasing, and substance abuse. In these workshops, student leaders discuss making proper decisions concerning high school parties and other social settings, and they talk about the power and use of language in creating social status. The discussions are designed to be positive and proactive while raising awareness and providing options that would empower students to make right decisions.

In addition to working with the younger students, the AHA clubs at HSE and HSW are also involved in many community service activities. Throughout the months of November and December, the clubs held fundraisers and donated hundreds of pounds of food to local food banks. The members also traveled to area high schools to participate in various athletic-related activities designed to build camaraderie and team-building skills.



****ECRWSS****

SMITHTOWN POSTAL CARRIER

Emily McDermott

Named Intel Semifinalist

High School East senior Emily McDermott has been named a semifinalist in the 2016 Intel Science Talent Search. Emily has been recognized for her research in developing an experimental model for natural variation in genetic robustness. She will be awarded \$1,000 with an additional \$1,000 going to High School East to support STEM education.

Emily, a senior in the science research program, conducted her research in the lab of Dr. Joshua Rest, an associate professor in the Department of Ecology and Evolution at Stony Brook University. Also integral in the lab were Dr. Christopher Morales, a Post Doctoral associate, and Kash Bandaralage, a research support specialist. Her project, "Developing an Experimental Model for Natural Variation in Genetic Robustness," investigated the concepts of environmental and genetic robustness as reflected through complex network of molecular interactions. She sought to develop an experimental model to study the relationship of robustness in the natural world by using wild strains of *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*, budding yeast.

"The moment I found out about being a semifinalist was amazing, overwhelming, and unforgettable," Emily said. "Science is all about discovery and learning, and to be recognized for all my hard work is an honor beyond belief."

Emily has worked with High School East Research Coordinator Maria Zeitlin over the last three years to conduct her



research. According to Ms. Zeitlin, Emily's work was on par with graduate level study. In addition to performing all of the experimental bench work herself, Emily also wrote the computer code to do the analysis.

The district extends its congratulations to Emily!

Housing UPDATE

In the spring of 2014, the Board of Education approved the creation of the Citizens' Advisory Committee on Instruction and Housing. The CACIH was established to investigate the appropriate long-range housing patterns needed to support a quality instructional program while promoting fiscal responsibility in an era of declining enrollment.

Over the course of 11 meetings from August 2014 to March 2015, the committee systematically studied the many details of its charge and presented its findings to the Board of Education on March 24, 2015. Since that time, the Board has heard a public presentation from Superintendent of Schools Dr. James Grossane on Nov. 10, 2015, and held a public hearing on Jan. 6, 2016 and a working session on Jan. 19, 2016.

For detailed information, reports and upcoming meeting dates, including the history of the last two housing committees' work, visit www.smithtown.k12.ny.us and click on "Board of Education."

REMINDER: Transportation Request

All requests for transportation to private and parochial schools for the 2016-17 school year must be made in writing no later than April 1, 2016.

All new Private & Parochial students or anyone changing school or address must register in person at SCSD Central Registration Office at 26 New York Ave, Smithtown 11787. Returning Private & Parochial students, without any changes from

last year, may mail a completed application to 26 New York Ave, Smithtown 11787 (attn: Transportation).

If you have any questions or concerns regarding transportation, please call the Transportation Department at 631-382-4100. Should you have questions regarding registration, necessary documentation or any other concerns, please call the Central Registration Office at 631-382-2024.

SCHOOL COMMUNITY DIGEST

Published by the Smithtown Central School District

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SMITHTOWN CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

DIGEST

Smithtown Central School District does not discriminate on the basis of handicaps or on the basis of sex, race, or ethnic background in the educational programs or activities which it operates.