



# The Communicator

Simsbury Public Schools—Continuously Improving Teaching & Learning • Spring 2019



Dear Neighbor,

*It is an exciting time as we prepare to break ground on the HJMS renovation project that was approved in last year's budget referendum. Once again, with the approval of this year's budget, our goals for the 2019-20 school year remain steady. The approved 2.5% budget increase allows us to retain talented staff, continue to improve school security, and keep class sizes within our guidelines.*

*The Board of Education (BOE) 2019-20 budget was presented to the Board of Finance (BOF) on March 12th. Staffing priorities included in the budget consist of a social worker at SHS, an elementary World Language teacher, a computer technician at HJMS, and a districtwide Director of School Safety. Additional health insurance costs threatened to increase the budget to 2.89%. We were able to pare it back down to 2.5%, which went to referendum on May 14th.*

*Thank you for your unwavering support of our schools. We invite you to read this newsletter to find out our plans for our school buildings and read the news about our amazing faculty and students.*

Respectfully,

Matthew T. Curtis, Superintendent  
Tara Donohue Willerup, BOE Chair

## Watch Email for Your Snapcode!

**To All Parents/Guardians:** Our annual online student information verification system will open in late July. **PowerSchool Enrollment** (formerly called InfoSnap) is used to verify demographic, emergency, and medical information for your child. In late July an email from your child's school will contain instructions and a secure "snapcode" for your child's information. Please monitor your In Box (and check your spam folder) so you don't miss this important communication.

## Facilities Master Plan and Reconfiguration Study

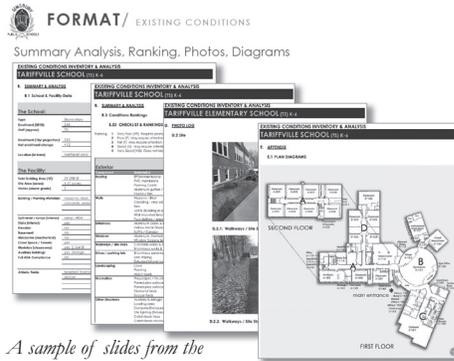
This past fall, \$200,000 was approved by the BOF to develop a School Facilities Master Plan and Reconfiguration Study to assess whether or not we are making the best use of our school buildings.

The plan consists of: 1) preparing a detailed inventory of all buildings; 2) identifying capital improvement and maintenance needs over the next 10 years; and 3) using this information to assist in the preparation of the BOE's 6-year capital improvement program.

The inventory phase is now complete. On April 23rd Tecton Architects made a presentation to the BOE with their findings. Tecton has been meeting on a monthly basis with district leadership to compile data and record their observations. This School Facilities Master Plan will help the district prioritize a multitude of projects, large and small, short- and long-term, thus ensuring that our buildings serve our students and teachers well into the future.

Besides preparing a highly detailed inventory of all seven school buildings, Tecton

also completed the phase of identifying potential capital improvements and maintenance needs over the next 10 years. The team agreed that Simsbury schools are "well maintained."



A sample of slides from the highly detailed presentation.

### EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT

- Alignment with core beliefs
- Strategic goals and vision for curriculum
- Interviews & Assessment
  - Physical constraints that affect education
  - What works well now?
  - What doesn't work?
  - Goals and vision
  - Average class size
  - Site logistics—concerns, challenges, etc.
  - Trends in education that are missing
  - Biggest areas of concern
  - Existing space vs. new space
  - Priorities

Some of the considerations taken into account during the study.

Some suggestions for improvements included updating some of our more "vintage" plumbing and mechanical systems, creating perimeter fencing to further increase our already comprehensive efforts to increase student safety, resolving classroom storage inefficiencies, improving flexibility of physical classroom spaces to enhance student learning, and removing outdated modular classrooms that still exist at Tariffville School.

In addition, the engineering firm of Milone & MacBroom presented their analysis of population projection, residential development, and geographic information about our existing student population, predicting how the population of the town is likely to ebb and flow over the next 10 years.

In mid-May the district's Facilities &

Master Plan—Cont. on page 2

**There will be a public forum and workshop on the topic of the Facilities Master Plan on June 5 at 7PM in the Program Room at the Simsbury Public Library.**

Enrollment Task Force convened to review the completed phases thus far in the process, and a public forum and workshop is scheduled for June 5 at 7PM. All citizens are welcome to attend the public forum.

The work accomplished by the architect and engineering firms sets the stage for the most involved phase of this study, reviewing alternate school configuration concepts, scheduled to happen this fall. This information will assist the district in planning for changing demographics, developing strategies to align facilities with enrollment needs, and determining how to best position resources. A status report will be provided to the BOE regarding initial findings and recommendations relative to immediate needs. Next fall a public input session will be held for the community to consider potential school configuration options.

### Squadron Line PTO Raises Funds to Improve Library Media Center

Thanks to the generosity of Squadron Line Elementary School's Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO), the school's library media center (LMC) is about to be revitalized to become a flexible, modern space ideal for project-based learning.

The PTO raised more than \$65,000 to fund new furniture, shelving, and a circulation desk and to create a new maker-space area.

Not only will new furniture make the space more visually appealing, but it will make it easier to accommodate multiple classes when the space was previously too small to easily seat more than one class at a time.

The existing computer lab space is no longer needed, as students rely on Chromebooks, which are much more portable. So that structure will be razed to make way for a station ideal for how the contemporary student does research.

Said Squadron Line Principal Meg Evans, "The carpet was on the docket to be replaced, and we will be doing some repainting. But these new portable tables able to be placed into different configurations allow students to work on bigger projects and be more collaborative."

She added, "A modern library media space is where our 'Vision of a Graduate' can come alive!"

## Public Educator of the Year

HJMS Family & Consumer Sciences Department Coordinator **Janet Black** has been selected by the BOE as the Simsbury Chamber of Commerce 2019 Public Educator of the Year. Black taught at HJMS from 1981 until her retirement in 2019. She is well known for being a truly involved and dedicated member of the HJMS school community, including serving as a member of the HJMS Cheer Committee and as an advisor to the Community Service club.

## Paraeducator of the Year

HJMS behavior coach **Jacqueline Santiago** has been selected as Simsbury's Paraeducator of the Year. Working alongside students with and without special needs, Santiago helps middle-schoolers develop more effective coping, decision-making, and interpersonal skills that are vital to their success in college, the workplace, and beyond. She has nearly 20 years of combined experience as a career counselor, a program specialist for students with disabilities at the college level, and as a behavior coach paraeducator in New York State and at the University of Connecticut.

## Simsbury Students Caring for the World

### Kindergarten Classes Raise Environmental Awareness

Earth Day was established in 1970 in San Francisco, CA, and since 2008 Simsbury kindergartners and teachers have been reminding residents to reduce, reuse, and recycle in honor of Earth Day. This year Earth Day was April 22nd. Each year leading up to the event, Fitzgerald's Foods donates stacks of grocery bags for children to decorate with images intended to heighten awareness about the planet. If you shopped at Fitzgerald's at the end of April, chances are you received one of these visual reminders about Earth Day—and hopefully recycled that bag!

Joanne Lukowicz, a Central School kindergarten teacher of more than 20 years, noted the increase in environmental awareness in her students over the years. She

observed, "They think about recycling. They know where things should go, and they are concerned with not just recycling paper they use in the classroom, but containers and everything else."

### Elementary Schools Raise over \$6,000 to Alleviate Hunger

The Take Action Clubs from Tootin' Hills, Latimer Lane, and Squadron Line Elementary Schools focused their social justice efforts this spring on learning about the causes of and solutions to food insecurity around the world. To this end, they collaborated with Rise Against Hunger, an international hunger relief organization that distributes food and life-changing aid to the world's most vulnerable, mobilizing the necessary resources to end hunger by 2030.

The three clubs decided to work together to raise \$3,500, although they would only have a few weeks to do it. Students held neighborhood bake sales and lemonade stands, returned recyclable bottles, conducted benefit concerts, did extra chores and babysitting, and asked friends and family for donations. Together they exceeded the \$3,500 goal and raised \$6,055.97!

*Below: Central School kindergartners create Earth Day bags.*



## Achievements



SHS students Katy Hitson and Josh Picoult and their French teacher are headed to France for a unique community service project.

● SHS students **Katherine (Katy) Hitson** and **Josh Picoult** have been selected to travel with French teacher **Kate Christolini** to the village of

Seicheprey in France for three weeks in July. They will participate in a unique community service project called "Digging Into History." Christolini will serve as the French-speaking liaison and 1 of 3 chaperones for a group of 15 French students from Connecticut who will clear vegetation from, re-dig sections of, and restore the trenches that Connecticut soldiers from the 102nd Infantry Regiment occupied during World War I.

● SHS architecture students competed in the CT Home Show Student Design competition at the CT Home Show: 1st Place **Angelina Alesandrini** (Grade 11); 2nd Place **Madison Goldfarb** (Grade 12); 4th Place **Evelyn Neagoy** (Grade 11); Hon. Mention **Katie Winkleblack** (Grade 10); Hon. Mention **Amoya Francis** (Grade 11); Creative Site Design **Helen Tran** (Grade 12).

● Once again, at this year's Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) State Leadership Competition, the SHS FBLA Chapter received the Outstanding Gold Chapter Award. These students were recognized for their achievements at the state level:

Who's Who in Connecticut FBLA **Michael Gundersen**; Richard W. Dyer Award **Michael Gundersen**; State President 2019-20 **Harry van Dyke**

**First Place:** Community Service **Michael Gundersen** and **Zachary Calnan**; Emerging Business Issues **Caroline Cordani**; Introduction to Public Speaking **Jiovanni Kissi**; Social Media Campaign **Julia Feeney** and **Isabella Harrington**



SHS's FBLA Chapter

**Second Place:** Accounting I **Clara Williams**; Introduction to Business Presentation **Mary Kate Stewart** and **Melissa Gallagher**; Personal Finance **Chris Cestone**

**Third Place:** Health Care Administration **Jackson Ayers**; Publication Design **Sarah Ackels**, **Ryan Penney**, and **Ashika Dyapa**

**Fifth Place:** Impromptu Speaking **Harry van Dyke**; Introduction to Business **Aidan Brugnetti**

Students placing first through third qualify to compete in their events at the National FBLA Conference in San Antonio, Texas, in June 2019.

● On March 11 chess players from SHS and HJMS competed in the Connecticut State Scholastic Chess Championship, which consisted of 160 total players. At the end of the competition, both schools earned State Championship trophies. Coaches Gert Hilhorst and Scott Behringer were proud of the individual performances of SHS students **Tim Houghton**, **Samantha Fong**, **Sharvil Trifale**, and **Tanner Eustace** and HJMS students **Kiara Polidura**, **Dibo Cai**, **Nakul Ramaswamy**, **Givanni Marchetti**, **Adita Chopra**, and **Yifan Jiang**.

● Congratulations to senior **Lucas Watson** who was recently recognized as one of the top 10 finalists in the World Affairs Councils of America Qatar Essay/Video Contest. His 800-word memorandum advised the Secretary of State on measures to strengthen the U.S. Qatar strategic partnership. This has earned him an all-expense-paid Doha Study Tour in June, and he is also eligible for scholarships to attend the WACA 2019 National Conference in Washington, D.C. in November.

● Student finalists in grades K-12 from throughout the state competed at the Connecticut Invention Convention on May 4th at the University of Connecticut-Storrs campus. Over 1,200 students advanced from 300 local school invention convention competitions conducted throughout CT. As a result of their performance, Tootin' Hills 6th grader **William Sudnick** and 4th grader **Samantha White** have been invited to Nationals on May 29-31 at the Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn, Michigan.

● HJMS eighth grader **Kate Martin's** entry into the Lions Club International Peace Poster Contest has been selected as the regional winner. There are three regions in the state, and Martin's winning entry was for the central Connecticut region. The theme of the poster contest was "Kindness Matters."

## Athletics Spotlight

### Simsbury Rugby Plays Ireland

The SHS Rugby Team traveled to Ireland over the spring recess in April. While there the boys played in the Gaelic Games and won the final match against premier top side Ashbourne from Dublin. This marked the first time any athletic team or club from SHS had played overseas.



SHS Rugby Team in Ireland

### Unified Basketball Wins CCC Conference

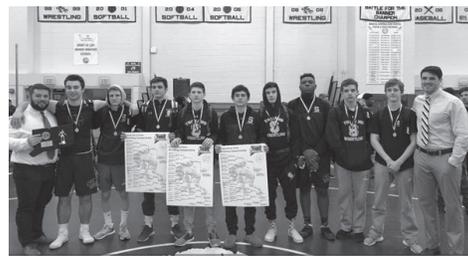
For the first time, SHS Unified Basketball won the CCC Conference by defeating East Hartford. The team was invited to play during halftime at the CIAC championships at the Mohegan Sun, in Uncasville. The team is coached by SHS Special Education teacher **Matt Spector**, with assistant coaches para-educators **Peter Borla** and **Lana Bell**.



Unified Basketball

### Wrestling Has Winning Record

The SHS Wrestling Team had an impressive 15-1 final record this season, coached by **TJ Silva** with assistant coach **Matt Braddock**. The team won the CCC West Conference Championship, placed second (by a half-point!) in the Class L State Championship, and placed 7th in the State Open.



SHS Wrestling Team



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### By the Numbers

- Central School raised over **\$5,000** during its school-wide Read-a-Thon. Some of the charities selected to donate the money to were the CT Children's Medical Center, Roaring Brook Nature Center, Make a Wish Foundation, and the World Wildlife Fund.

- For PJ Day, Latimer Lane raised **\$2,539**, the most of the **350** schools who participated, wearing pajamas to school in support of pediatric patients at Connecticut Children's Medical Center.

### SHS Makes List of Top 10 Public High Schools

On April 30th, *U.S. News & World Report* released its annual rankings of the best public high schools in the nation. Of the **206** Connecticut schools that made the list, Simsbury High School was ranked **#8**, and **#404** in the nation, with a **99%** graduation rate and with **84%** of students who took an AP exam passing at least one.

- At Simsbury Friends for Music and Performing Arts' first fundraiser, the Simsbury community showed its commitment to the Music & Performing Arts by donating **\$16,400** to fund teacher grant requests for student enrichment and needs-based scholarship.

- SPS faculty prove every day how well qualified they are for their jobs as educators:
  - **13%** of SPS faculty has 0-5 years of experience
  - **15%** of SPS faculty has 6-10 years of experience
  - **36%** of SPS faculty has 11-19 years of experience
  - **36%** of SPS faculty has 20+ years of experience
  - **33%** of SPS faculty achieved BA
  - **52%** of SPS faculty achieved MA
  - **10%** of SPS faculty achieved 6th Year
  - **5%** of SPS faculty achieved 7th Year

### Keep in Touch

#### BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETINGS

The BOE meets on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month at 7PM. Visit our website for upcoming dates and locations.

**IT'S ON THE SPS WEBSITE** Wondering if chicken tenders are on the lunch menu next week? Looking for information on a board policy? Seeking the latest news on topics in education? Looking for a link to the PTO website? Want to find your child's English teacher in the faculty directory? It's all there on our website at [www.simsbury.k12.ct.us](http://www.simsbury.k12.ct.us) so bookmark the page and check back often!

**IN CASE OF EMERGENCY...** For weather-related or other emergency announcements, go to [www.simsbury.k12.ct.us](http://www.simsbury.k12.ct.us) and click on the Emergency link located at the top of the page.