

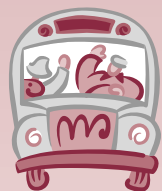
in

south
colonie
central
schools

focus

Preparing World Class Citizens

March, 2008



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From South America to South Colonie

District says 'hola' to teachers from Uruguay

The two Americas melded as one in South Colonie this school year as a pair of teachers from Uruguay, South America, spent part of its summer vacation here with the Fulbright Exchange Program.

February is summer for Blanca Rocio Rodriguez and Maria Luisa Mendez, who live and teach below the equator near the Uruguayan capital of Montevideo. While their students were on summer break that month, the women spent two weeks in the district meeting with educators, visiting classes and learning firsthand about our educational system.

Rodriguez has been an elementary school teacher for 20 years, and used the Fulbright experience to improve her English skills. Mendez, on the other hand, is an English teacher who spent time here practicing English in a variety of educational settings

As the two arrived in the district for a get-to-know-you reception they were made to feel welcome immediately with a Spanish presentation from the students at Sand Creek Middle School. A large Uruguayan flag

Continued on page 2 ... Uruguay teachers



Math is a family affair at Shaker Road School

Shaker Road Elementary School recently held its PTA-sponsored Math Night, an evening for students and their families to hone their math skills, while experiencing math in a different and fun way. Under this year's theme the Wizard of Oz, students followed the Yellow Brick Road through a dozen activities to reach Oz and earn their "diplomas." Helping out were 20 Colonie Central High School student volunteers.

Jon Buhner selected next Superintendent of South Colonie Schools

After a five-month search, the South Colonie Board of Education has selected Jonathan Buhner as its new Superintendent of Schools. The decision was announced at a special school board meeting in February.

Buhner, 43, has served as Superintendent of the Walton Central School District since 2004. He receives a three-year contract and will replace Superintendent Michael Marcelle when he retires on August 1.

Continued on page 3 ... new Superintendent



Sand Creek Middle School students greet their South American visitors — Uruguayan teachers (photo right) Blanca Rocio Rodriguez (left) and Maria Luisa Mendez.



Did you know?

Full time schools in Uruguay were established in the early 1990s. There are 109 full time schools attended by 25,800 students who represent 20 percent of the poorest Uruguayan households.



shirts or blouses and blue bow ties with long strings. Even the teachers wear uniforms.

Uruguayan students attend school from the first Monday in March through mid-December, and many don't have access to computers and technology in the classroom. Their school days are extended from four to eight hours.

"For our students, this was a unique opportunity for them to get to know someone from a Spanish-speaking country," Ogren explained. "They loved talking with the teachers and wished they could have spent more time with us."

... Uruguay teachers

Continued from page 1

draped a wall behind the proceedings, and Spanish signs were sprinkled about the classrooms. Mendez said she was impressed with her young host's skills. "They spoke Spanish very well," she said.

While the Fulbright program helps to increase understanding between the two countries, the main focus of the exchange is to help Uruguayan teachers and administrators strengthen their local school systems when they return home. They do this by observing American classes, administration, curriculum development, active learning, technology, school relations, parent involvement and more.

Hosting the Fulbright teachers were Sand Creek grade 5/6 Spanish teachers Lynne Ogren and Leigh Ann Gilson.

"It was a lot of fun to host the teachers from Uruguay," Ogren said. "When you see your own life and culture through someone else's perspective, it helps you to appreciate what you have around you."

"I feel this experience allowed me to connect with another culture and bring that culture directly to the classroom and to my students," Gilson added. "They were really excited to be a part of this experience. As for our visiting teachers, they were truly wonderful and I hope to continue communications with them for years to come."

South Colonie students learned much from their guests, as well, which helped to enhance their Spanish studies. For example, they learned their South American, public school counterparts wear uniforms to school — white





South Colonie Superintendent of Schools, Michael Marcelle, (right) congratulates Jonathan Buhner on being named his replacement when Marcelle retires August 1.

... new Superintendent

Continued from page 1

"I'm honored to have been chosen as the new Superintendent, and I am thrilled to have the opportunity to serve the school district and the South Colonie community," Buhner said of his appointment. "From the time I've already spent in the district, a long tradition of thoughtful governance and a widespread dedication towards excellence is evident by all stakeholders."

Prior to leading the 1,200-student Walton Central School District, Buhner was Director of Secondary and Campus Based Programs for the Madison-Oneida BOCES from 2002-2004. Before that, he was a secondary principal at Waterville Junior-Senior High School (1998-2001) and High School Dean of Students at Sauquoit Valley High School (1997-1998). He began his educational career as a technology teacher, teaching eight years in all at Sanquoit Valley, New Hartford, Charlotte-Mecklenburg and Ogdensburg schools.

Buhner is a U.S. Army veteran and earned an Army Commendation Medal for Meritorious Service in 1985. He is a graduate of the New York State College at Cortland with a Certificate of Advanced Study (CAS) in Educational Administration in 1998. He earned a master's degree in Technology Education in 1994 and a bachelor's degree in Technology Education in 1989 from the State University of New York College at Oswego.

He has been involved in school athletics, coaching football, wrestling and soccer. He holds numerous academic awards. He and his wife, Merci, are the parents of a 14-year-old boy, Jonathan, and a 10-year-old girl, Mercita.

The South Colonie Board of Education began a search for a new Superintendent of Schools in the fall after Superintendent Marcelle announced his intentions to retire. Marcelle will officially step down on August 1 after heading the school district for more than three years.

District makes improvements to technology

Major upgrades to South Colonie's technological infrastructure is saving the district money, while making the system more reliable and secure.

Under a 10-month consolidation plan, the district has replaced seven servers with one. The new server is performing the same duties but taking up much less space. This consolidation was made possible after the district switched to fiber optic cable, speeding up how information is transmitted through the network. The district is also now using virtualization software, which enables multiple operating systems and applications to be stored on one server instead of needing several.

"The benefits of virtualization," said Jack Adams, Director of Information Technology "are lower costs, greater reliability, maximum utilization of software, and ease of administration."

But perhaps the greatest benefit is system security. At periodic times, information is automatically transferred from the server and its storage device to a secondary backup device at an offsite location. Should the original server, applications and data become unavailable, the district can quickly switch to the backup device to keep the district Information Technology system up and running.

To help conduct the search, the district contracted with search consultant Dr. Vincent Coppola from the Western New York Educational Service Council — an arm of the State University at Buffalo. Dr. Coppola worked with South Colonie on the previous superintendent search in 2004.

Aiding Dr. Coppola and the Board of Education were focus groups made up of various district stakeholders such as administrators, teachers, support staff, students, board members, parents and community residents. The focus groups met for the first time in October to define the superintendent's position and discuss the attributes they would like in a new superintendent. The deadline for applications was December 20. In January, seven superintendent candidates from a pool of 20 applicants were interviewed by the Board of Education and district focus groups before two finalists were chosen. Buhner was offered and accepted the position in February.

South Colonie News & Notes

Forest Park Elementary holds fourth grade winter concert

The fourth grade orchestra at Forest Park Elementary School held its first concert in February, with an outstanding performance under the direction of Michelle Williams.



Colonie High School Auto Club takes on major project

The Colonie Central High School Auto Club has taken on a major project this year – the restoration of a 1969 Pontiac Firebird.

“This bird is in rough shape,” said Advisor David Norkun, whose Auto Club has been active for eight years promoting interest and learning towards the automotive profession. “The bird was outside in the elements for almost 40 years, 20 of them sitting idle. We need to rebuild the floors, interior, steering, suspension, brakes, powertrain and put on a new coat of paint for the finish.”

Due to the high cost of a restoration, the club is looking for community members of the automotive profession for all the help it can get. The club is documenting every step of the restoration and posting pictures on its new club web page on the CCHS website. When completed, the club would like to raffle off the final product at the high school’s annual car show in the spring. After that they’ll be ready for the next project car.



South Colonie Board of Education recognizes Stuff The Bus with Toys for Tots campaign

The South Colonie Board of Education and President James Tim Ryan presented members of the district’s first “Stuff The Bus” Committee with a special President’s Spotlight Award in February for its efforts in aiding the U.S. Marine Corps during the annual Toys for Tots holiday campaign.

Throughout November and December, the district’s yellow buses were set up outside shopping malls, at area businesses and at the schools for students, families and shoppers to drop off new toys to help needy children. Some 10,000 toys were collected filling several school buses.

Honored were committee members Kathy Ogborn, Dick Gilligan, Sam Martino, Helen Herbst, Micki McAllister, Mary King, Wayne Dragon, Steve Garry, Mark Delaney and school board Vice President Brian Casey.



Joe Guardino named new Principal of Lisha Kill Middle School

Associate Principal promoted to position in March



Joseph Guardino is the new Principal of Lisha Kill Middle School. He was appointed by the Board of Education in February and began his new position in March.

Guardino has worked for South Colonie Schools for more than 12 years, hired as a Lisha Kill Physical Education teacher in 1995, and serving as Associate Principal since August, 2005.

Guardino replaces Francis Coccozza, who had been Principal of the grade 5-8 middle school since the 2005-06 school year, before leaving in December to become new Principal of Lake George Junior-Senior High School. Former Guilderland Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Gregory J. Aidala, had been serving as Lisha Kill Interim Principal since that time.

In addition to his work in teaching and administration, Guardino has been involved in athletics at Colonie Central High School and in the community for many years. He was CCHS Physical Education Department Coordinator from 2002-05, head varsity wrestling coach from 2001-05, and head freshman football coach from 1996-99. He has also served over the years as assistant varsity wrestling and baseball coach, and Pee Wee Wrestling Club Director at the Colonie Youth Center.

Before coming to South Colonie, Guardino was a Physical Education teacher from 1991-95 at Watertown High School, and from 1989-1991 at Wiley Intermediate School in Watertown. He has also held several coaching positions in Watertown. Guardino holds a School District Administrator Certificate from the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts. He earned his master's degree and bachelor's degree in Physical Education at the State University at Cortland.

Ketrick Taitt, a sixth grader at Sand Creek Middle School, is a winner in the Citizens Bank Black History Month essay contest. Students were asked to write about an African American hero of theirs and he wrote about Jackie Robinson.



News & Notes

Requests for non-public school transportation due by April 1

South Colonie Central School District residents who want transportation for their children to non-public schools during the 2008-2009 school year must file written requests with the district by April. Written requests for transportation are to be made every year.

Request forms are required for all actual and anticipatory (students on waiting lists) non-public school enrollments. Request forms are available from the district's Transportation Department, located at 2 Winston Place, Albany, New York 12205. Forms can also be requested by calling 869-8527 between 7 a.m. and 4 a.m.

Sand Creek actors to stage Annie musical April 3-5

Sand Creek Middle School's cast and crew will present the musical,



Annie, April 3-5 in the auditorium. Performances are at 7 p.m. with a special 1 p.m. showing on Saturday, April 5. All tickets are \$6 and are available presale in the main office or at the door.

'Look at Lisha Kill' event April 2

Lisha Kill Middle School will hold its annual "Look at Lisha Kill" night on Wednesday, April 2, from 7-8 p.m. The evening showcases student work from the school year for parents, families and members of the community.

Absentee ballots are online

An absentee ballot application for the annual budget vote and Board of Education elections is available for download on the South Colonie web site. To locate the application, click on the Administration tab at the top of the page, then Budget.

The application must be filled out and delivered or mailed to the District Clerk, 102 Loralee Drive, Albany 12205, no later than May 13. Voting on the 2008-09 district budget and school board elections will be held on Tuesday, May 20. Polls are open from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. at the five elementary school buildings.

Roessleville ‘Communteers’ study needs of the Capital District at school roundtable

The Student Leaders at Roessleville Elementary School have agreed on a name for their Penny Harvest Roundtable, the 16 Communteers.

The students are participating in a philanthropy roundtable to discuss how the funds from this year's Penny Harvest campaign will be used to help various organizations that help to serve the Capital District and the needs of our community.

The students have been learning about the different types of communities around them, and will be learning more about their community by interviewing classmates and adults who live and work in Colonie. These interviews, along with the school-created Wall of Caring, will help the 16 Communteers learn the specific needs and interests of our community.

Loomis and Fargo arrived at Roessleville Elementary in December to collect the 28 sacks of pennies collected by fourth graders during

this year's Penny Harvest. They exceeded their goal this year of collecting 25 sacks of pennies.

The entire school community — students, staff, friends, families and neighbors — took part in harvesting (donating) these pennies during the campaign, which kicked off with a school-wide assembly in October.



The “Communteers” of Roessleville Elementary School.

Michael Marcelle
Superintendent of Schools

Anthony DeBlois
Assistant Superintendent for Instruction

Beverly Miller
Assistant Superintendent/
Management Services

David Seaver
Director of Human Resources

Board of Education
James (Tim) Ryan, President
Brian Casey, Vice President
Robert Domenici
Rick Dunn
Vernon Fonda
Paul Gordon
Shelle Jaquish
Neil Johanning
Leonard Motto

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