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STAFF

South COLONIE Winter 2008

NEWSLETTER



▶ The South Colonie Board of Education presents the President's Spotlight Award to the district's Stuff The Bus with Toys for Tots committee. This was the district's first campaign to help the U.S. Marine Corps collect toys for needy children during the holidays. More than 10,000 toys were donated in South Colonie filling several school buses. The Marines also presented Stuff The Bus originator Kathy Ogborn with a special service award.

## Walton's John Buhner appointed South Colonie's next Superintendent of Schools

### ▶ TO REPLACE RETIRING MICHAEL MARCELLE ON AUGUST 1

Jonathan Buhner is South Colonie's new Superintendent of Schools. The appointment was made at a special Board of Education meeting in February.

Buhner, 43, has served as Superintendent of the Walton Central School District since 2004. He received a three-year contract in South Colonie, and will begin his new position on August 1 when Superintendent Michael Marcelle retires.

"I am honored to have been chosen as your 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 that I have already spent in the district, a long tradition of thoughtful governance and a widespread dedication towards excellence is evident by all stakeholders."

Buhner added that he is looking forward to meeting staff, students, parents and guardians, and community members during the upcoming summer and fall. "Most importantly, I really look forward to becoming part of a learning community which focuses on continuous improvement, achievement, and success for all South Colonie students," he said.

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

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## Board honors Stuff The Bus

▶ 10,000 TOYS COLLECTED FOR NEEDY CHILDREN

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 Brian Casey.



*"I am honored to have been chosen as your new Superintendent. We (myself and my family) are all looking forward to becoming part of the South Colonie community."*

**FUTURE SUPERINTENDENT JOHN BUHNER**

## ... Buhner next Superintendent

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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 over the years, coaching football, wrestling and soccer. He holds numerous academic awards.

On a personal note, Buhner said he enjoys spending time with his family whenever possible. "My wife, Merci, and I like to support our children, Jon (14), and Mercita (10), in all of their academic, athletic, and extracurricular activities. As a family, we find ourselves very busy with community events, school activities, church, and traveling to visit additional family members. We are all looking forward to becoming part of the South Colonie community."

In making the appointment, Board of Education President James Tim Ryan said he was pleased to have someone as dedicated as Mr. Buhner to join the South Colonie family, and is confident he will provide the type of leadership that the district needs to continue to excel academically.

Buhner's appointment ends a five-month search for a new Superintendent, which drew some 30 applicants.

## ► 'DISTINGUISHED TEACHER' FOR BROWN

South Creek Middle School teacher James Brown has earned the 2008 Distinguished Teacher Award from the National Science Teachers Association. The award will be presented during the March NSTA National Conference in Boston.

## South Colonie welcomes South American teachers with open arms



South Colonie Schools had a unique opportunity this winter

to host two Spanish educators from Uruguay, South America, as part of the Fulbright Teacher Exchange. The purpose of their visit was to increase understanding between the two countries as the visitors observed a variety of educational settings and spent time with district staff and students. Hosting them were Sand Creek Middle School Spanish teachers Lynne Ogren and Leigh Ann Gilson, who had this to say:

### ► LYNNE OGREN

"It was a lot of fun hosting the teachers from Uruguay. When you see your own life and culture through someone else's perspective, it helps you to appreciate what you have around you. For example, we often complain about the snow, but Rocio was so fascinated by it, she stared out the window.

I was also impressed and touched by how welcoming our district, students, friends and families were to these teachers. They felt very honored by everyone's kindness."

### ► LEIGH ANN GILSON

"I feel this experience allowed me to connect with another culture and bring that culture directly to the classroom and to my students. 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."



► Sand Creek Middle School teacher Lynne Ogren (center) introduces her students to Blanca Rocio Rodriguez (left) and Maria Luisa Mendez, two teachers who visited South Colonie in February from Uruguay, South America.



## Guardino new Lisha Kill Middle School Principal

**J**oseph Guardino is the new Principal of Lisha Kill Middle School. He 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.

"I am very excited about this new opportunity," Guardino said, "and I look forward to working with an outstanding staff and student body. I feel very fortunate to be a principal in such a great district as South Colonie."

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.

Prior to 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.



*Sand Creek Middle School teacher Jane Albanese (with flowers) and her students with their "A Day Made Better" award from the Office Max store on Wolf Road.*

## Sand Creek teacher recognized by Office Max

**S**and Creek Middle School teacher Jane Albanese was honored by Office Max this year as part of its "A Day Made Better" Teacher Appreciation Program. She was nominated by Principal David Perry. Albanese was presented with \$500 in office supplies for her school by the Office Max from 79 Wolf Road.

Albanese has been a Sand Creek Middle School math/computer educator for more than 20 years. She has also taught at Colonie Central High School. While at Sand Creek, she developed the Computer Education program geared toward ensuring success in computing for all students. With an emphasis on real world, hands-on, computing skills, Albanese maintains the highest standards for all of her students and is the driving force behind the creation of the graphic design club.

Albanese's impact on her students has been tangible. Before her computer education program was developed, it was difficult to get students interested in writing and statistics, and students lacked computer research knowledge. Today, the vast majority of her students are passing with good grades and great enthusiasm for science, math and English Language Arts.

### ▶ JENSEN SPEAKS AT CONVENTION

**P**eegen Jensen, first grade teacher at Saddlewood Elementary School, was guest speaker at the 2007 National Council of Teachers of English annual convention. Jensen presented during a panel session on "Writing Ourselves Into the 21st Century."

### South Colonie staff

**PLEASE MARK YOUR CALENDARS AND DON'T FORGET TO VOTE ON THE 2008-09 SOUTH COLONIE DISTRICT BUDGET**

**Tuesday, May 20th**

**11 a.m. - 9 p.m.**

**Any elementary school**

**REMEMBER ... EVERY VOTE COUNTS!**



*Laura Yerou (center), eighth grade ELA teacher at Lisha Kill Middle School, receives the Cindi Zagorski Memorial Teacher of the Year Award from Northeast Region PTA Director Bev Cotrell and Cindy Zagorski's husband, Bud.*

## Lisha Kill educator named Northeast Region PTA Teacher of the Year

**C**ongratulations to Laura Yerou, eighth grade English Language Arts teacher at Lisha Kill Middle School, who was presented this school year with the Cindi Zagorski Memorial Teacher of the Year Award.

The award is given annually by the Northeast Region PTA to a teacher in the Northeast region who exemplifies a dedication to students, school, community and PTA. Yerou has been working at Lisha Kill for 14 years.

## May open enrollment

**M**ay is Open Enrollment for health, dental and prescription insurance. The district offers the following health plans to all eligible employees: Capital District Physicians' Health Plan, Blue Shield of Northeastern New York-Traditional Blue 907 and Traditional Blue POS 211, Delta and Blue Shield of Northeastern New York dental insurance, Blue Shield of Northeastern New York Prescriptions Plan. Benefits become effective July 1, 2008. For more information and rates regarding these insurance plans, please contact the Insurance Department at the District Office, 869-3576, ext. 2450.

## The Energy Educator

**▶ WATCH THE BIG YELLOW SCHOOL BUS BY DISTRICT ENERGY MANAGER JAMES BROWN**

**W**hat does a big yellow school bus have to do with our energy conservation program? The answer may surprise you.



Recently, I told the Board of Education that our district has avoided more than 1.9 million dollars in utility expenses over the last six years. A board member jokingly asked "What can we do about the fuel costs for our buses?" Actually, did you know our drivers conserve a considerable amount of energy each day by shutting down their buses when they are not needed?

This may seem like common sense, but it has not always been the case. From the time a bus pulls into a school parking lot and parks to wait for students, several minutes may pass by. Years ago, many buses would leave their engines idling — and why not — they would be leaving shortly, right? This is no different than someone walking out of the classroom and leaving the classroom lights on because they would be "right back."

Turning out lights and shutting down buses is saving money for our district, while reducing the amount of pollution entering the air. This is especially important as the price of fuel, electricity and natural gas continues to go up. Did you know that if we consumed the same amount of electricity this school year as we did six years ago, we would have spent \$252,000 more than we already did?

By changing the way we use equipment, we can save money immediately without laying out money. Our energy conservation program is committed to conserving energy without spending money, but there are times when items (small and large) are purchased because of funding we have received and/or the payback is so incredibly quick, it is a "no brainer."

An excellent example of this is the Vending Misers that most of our vending machines are plugged into. When we first began installing these items, there were many puzzled looks. However, these devices keep the beverages 1-2 degrees cooler, are endorsed by Coke and Pepsi, and reduce costs by an average of 50 percent. That is considerable given the fact that we have over 50 beverage machines district-wide, which cost over \$400 (each) per year to run without a Vending Miser. With the funding we were able to secure for these devices, the payback period was six weeks! We have also purchased more devices to help our buses run more efficiently.

So, the next time you see a big yellow bus, think, "What have I done lately to conserve energy, save money, and reduce pollution?" It can be as simple as flipping a switch, pushing a button, or turning a key.