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Preparing World Class Citizens

January, 2012



Some of the recipients of Cuddles for Cause stuffed animal collection.

Cuddles for Cause collects 1,000 stuffed animals for flood victims

The compassion of two little girls in the South Colonie Central School District led to a stuffed animal collection that is helping Schalmont Central School District students in a big way. Flood victims and families in need received a new or gently loved stuffed animal this holiday season, which was donated by Lisha Kill Middle School and Veeder Elementary School students.

The collection, dubbed "Cuddles for Cause," was initiated by sisters Jamie and Laura Matthews, fifth- and sixth-graders, respectively, at Lisha Kill Middle School.

"They were worried about all of the families who lost everything following this summer's

Continued on page 3 ... Cuddles

District teachers and administrators move forward on APPR regulations

Workshops on new evaluation process

While Governor Cuomo makes the headlines by criticizing school districts for failing to make adequate progress on developing a new system for evaluating teacher/principal performance, South Colonie continues to move forward on the plan within the timeframe of the law.

New York was one of two states cited by the U.S. Education Department this week at risk of losing million of dollars in Race to the Top grants because of delays in implementing the evaluation system known as APPR (Annual Professional Performance Review).

That led to the governor, in his State of the State address and weekly radio show, to call New York State's 2010 law enacting the APPR requirements for school districts a "failure." Cuomo promised education reform in 2012, saying he will appoint a new education commission to oversee changes and keep APPR on track.

Meanwhile, South Colonie continues to make strides in the APPR process and is "on schedule" for meeting the terms of the state's APPR regulations, said Tim Backus, the district's Assistant Superintendent for Instruction. According to the legislation, school districts that already have a collective bargaining agreement in place with its teachers union have until a new agreement is approved to negotiate exact terms of the APPR process. The South Colonie Teachers Association and district have a contract in place until June 30, 2013.

"So we will be working for the remainder of this school year and next to meet the APPR regulations," Backus said.

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South Colonie teachers and administrators attend a January workshop introducing them to the “Danielson’s Frameworks.”

... APPR

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In September, the South Colonie Board of Education approved an extensive APPR Plan to guide the district through the process. Part of this plan includes holding a series of workshops in January on the new classroom observation process it will use to evaluate teacher instruction. Known as the “Danielson’s Framework For Teaching For Classroom Observation,” 85 teachers and administrators attended the first workshop on this evaluation process at Lisha Kill Middle School on January 4. A second session is being planned for later in the month.

This training will be an Introduction to the Frameworks and is a one day training. The training is designed for those unfamiliar with the framework, the session provides background and the research foundation for using the Framework to enhance professional practice in different applications: teacher preparation, mentoring and induction, professional development, and teacher evaluation. Participants explore the themes within the framework and become familiar with the components, their organizational structure, and are introduced to the rubrics that guide improving professional practice.

STEM

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING AND MATH

This is the second in a series of articles involving the progress of South Colonie Schools on the advancement of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM). In this series we hope to capture your attention by informing you of both the new and traditional means of educational advancement in STEM. This month, we feature the Technology Department’s course offerings for students – one of the most diverse selection in New York State. Between now and 2018, the industries harboring the greatest projected job growth are primarily those with some sort of connection to Technology or require technological literacy. It is important that all students entering grade 9, or currently in grades 10-11, consider taking some Technology courses to help ensure future success.

Most of our Technology courses are available for college credit and are among the most popular classes offered at the high school. Any student who is potentially interested in taking them will need to sign up quickly to assure a seat.

To make it easier for both students and parents to make the best choices, the Technology Department has an online course catalogue available via the school website. It has photographs and other information not included in the printed curriculum guide. You will also find other interesting articles and information about STEM careers and more. To access it, go to: www.southcolonieschools.org. Navigate to “Colonie Central High School” via the top menu. On the left, go to ACADEMICS and look for “Technology Curriculum) Guide” at the very bottom of the drop down menu.



U.S. Rep. Paul Tonko gets a firsthand look last school year at the diverse selection of courses offered by the Colonie Central High School Technology Department — preparing graduates for careers in the highly-employable STEM fields.

The Lisha Kill Middle School Grade 7-8 Chamber Orchestra under the direction of Mark Lewis performed holiday tunes at a variety of locations this year. The group traveled around the area entertaining senior citizens at the Glen Eddy, Bishop Broderick and the Atria of Crossgates Senior Living Center.



CCHS students compete at winter Robotics event

Students from Colonie Central and other local high schools converged on RPI in January to participate in the 2012 FIRST Robotics competition. As part of the program, several local teams built robots and competed in an assigned game challenge against other teams from the Northeast.



Under strict rules, limited resources, and time limits, teams of 25 students or more are challenged to raise funds, design a team "brand," hone teamwork skills, and build and program robots to perform prescribed tasks against a field of competitors. It's as close to "real-world engineering" as a student can get. Volunteer professional mentors lent their time and talents to guide each team.



Sixth graders from Sand Creek Middle School visited the Bright Horizons Program at the Pine Grove Methodist Church to participate and help out at the holiday party. Students joined in a holiday sing-along, helped hand out gifts, played Bingo, distributed juice and cookies, and shared in great conversations with the members.

... Cuddles

Continued from page 1

storms," said Mary Beth Matthews, the girls' mother, who was instrumental in organizing the collection. "They wanted to give students the comfort of a stuffed animal to help them feel like they had something and show other children they care."

Since Jamie has a hard time going to bed without a stuffed animal she wondered how children affected by the floods were coping without theirs. To that end, she and her sister decided to start collecting animals at home, which eventually led to a school-wide drive. Ultimately, around 1,000 animals were collected and donated to Jefferson Elementary School — much more than originally expected.

The animals were distributed as part of the school's annual giving tree, which helps reduce the stress of the holidays by providing for families who have dire financial needs. Families also received a food basket complete with a frozen turkey for a holiday dinner and items needed to keep children safe and warm throughout the winter season.

Jefferson Elementary School social worker Eileen Rings uses stuffed animals regularly as part of her counseling efforts with children. The donation will help add to her collection, which benefits all students, she said.



Celina Horbat was recently named the winner of the Daughters of the American Revolution Good Citizen Award for Colonie Central High School. The photo was taken at the reception held at the Pruyn House with her mother, Eve Horbat, and her social studies teacher, Bryan Dailey.

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Upcoming 2012-2013 Budget Calendar

DATE/TIME	TOPIC
Tuesday, February 7, 7 p.m.	<i>Support Services</i> — Board of Education and Central Office expenses, Public Information/Printing/Postage, Legal Expenses, Insurance, Debt Service, Interfund Transfers, Continuing Ed, and Interscholastic Athletics
Thursday, February 9, 7 p.m.	Special Budget Meeting — Open discussion with Q & A Session held at Veeder Elementary School Cafetorium
Tuesday, March 6, 7:30 p.m.	Regular Board Meeting — <i>Topics</i> — Special Ed and Pupil Personnel Services
Tuesday, March 13, 7 p.m.	Special Budget Meeting — Open discussion with Q & A Session held at Shaker Road Elementary Library
Thursday, March 15, 7 p.m.	<i>Fringe Benefits & Instructional Program</i> — Enrollment Projections, Instructional Staffing, Support Staffing, Textbooks, Curriculum Development, Staff Development, Library & Media Technology, Building Budgets, Summer School, Central Avenue Learning Center (CALC) and Information Technology
Tuesday, March 20, 7:30 p.m.	Regular Board Meeting (1st draft of the Budget)
Thursday, March 29, 7 p.m.	Budget Meeting/Work Session/Budget Adjustments
Tuesday, April 3, 7:30 p.m.	Regular Board Meeting — Budget Review — Second budget draft presented
Monday, April 16	Last day to file petition for School Board elections
Tuesday, April 17, 7:30 p.m.	Regular Board Meeting — Budget Adoption
Tuesday, May 1, 7 p.m.	Public Hearing on recommended Budget – Saddlewood Elementary School Cafetorium — Regular Board Meeting — 7:30 p.m.
Tuesday, May 15 11:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m.	District Budget Vote & School Board Elections Voting at all five district elementary schools ONLY

