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Preparing World Class Citizens

November, 2011

CCHS becomes learning center for Biology instruction

Colonie Central High School has become a satellite learning center for area educators to offer 21st century hands-on experiments in Molecular Biology to their students.

The teacher training is being provided by CCHS science teacher Jason Goldberg, who was one of only 19 teachers worldwide selected to attend a special institute at Princeton University in the summer of 2010.

The goal of that summer institute, offered through a partnership between the Molecular Biology Department at Princeton University and the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, was to help public high school teachers bring cutting-edge molecular Biology into their classrooms and better prepare students for college.

As a result of that summer institute, Goldberg shared that knowledge regionally at two weekend workshops he offered at CCHS in October.

"I am excited that our school (one of only three outside New Jersey) was chosen to be a Princeton University satellite center," Goldberg said. "I am hoping that as teachers from all over the Capital District participate in these workshops we can establish a network that will keep bringing



Students, like these at Veeder Elementary, dressed up for the traditional Halloween parades. View the Halloween photo galleries on the district website.

Stuff the Bus with Toys for Tots kicks off on 'Black Friday'

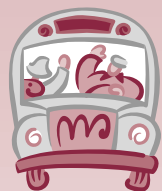
For the fifth straight year, Santa's sleigh will be colored yellow this holiday season, thanks to the efforts of the South Colonie Central School District family. District employees, students and their families are teaming up once again with the U.S. Marine Corps to continue its unique campaign to "Stuff the Bus" with Toys for Tots.



Toys For Tots, sponsored by the Marine Corps since 1947, annually provides some 60,000 Capital District children with toys for the holidays. New, unwrapped toys are collected at various locations in November and December, and distributed to needy youngsters in time for the holidays.

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'A Day Made Better' recognizes Forest Park School teacher

She didn't know it when she woke up that morning but orange would be the favorite color of Forest Park Elementary School teacher Kelli Budney.

That's because a giant surprise was awaiting her and her fourth grade students when the local Office Max store surprised her class with \$1,000 in school supplies in two big orange boxes. Budney was a winner of the 2011 national "A Day Made Better" educator recognition event.

She was one of 1,000 teachers across the country recognized in October for her dedication to her school, students and community. Representatives from Office Max secretly arrived at Forest Park in the morning and presented Budney with a bouquet of flowers and the supplies award.

"In a time when it is not hard to find negative attitudes towards teachers and schools, it is incredibly heartwarming to have Office Max run a program like this one," Budney said. "A Day Made Better not only acknowledges the value of what we do every day, but offers to help."

A Day Made Better is the office supply retailer's campaign to eliminate teacher-funded classrooms, especially in this time of extra economic burden on school districts across the nation. Studies show teachers spend nearly \$1,200 out of their own pockets each year for basic classroom supplies.



Representatives from Office Max (three on right) join Forest Park Elementary School Principal Patrick Gunner in recognizing teacher Kelli Budney this fall for "A Day Made Better."

Among the \$1,000 in supplies awarded to Forest Park was a digital camera and everything from sticky notes, scissors and pencils to glue sticks, notebooks and classroom organizers.

In a nomination letter submitted by her school, Budney was praised for engaging her students in the classroom with hands-on learning and the use of smart board technology to meet the diverse learning needs in a heterogeneous environment. "Her high expectations strongly encourage the students to strive to meet the core curriculum and core standards," the letter said.

Budney is also a contributing and participating member of the school's Character Education and Olweus Bully Prevention programs, and has led school-wide activities promoting positive character traits and bully prevention techniques.

Learning center

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cutting edge science to our classrooms."

As part of his connections with Princeton, CCHS has also been chosen as Molecular Biology "loaner center," enabling area educators to borrow equipment and free classroom kits (paid for by the university) to perform experiments with their students back at their home schools.

At the weekend workshops, area teachers delved into experiments and learned new teaching techniques in basic biotechnology lab skills, DNA fingerprinting and gel electrophoresis, forensic DNA labs and genetic engineering. Teachers also earn 10 professional development hours from Princeton University for participating.



Area teachers learn the Princeton University Molecular Biology curriculum during a fall workshop at Colonie Central High School.

NYSERDA school bus grant to help district save on costs, protect the environment

The South Colonie Central School District was awarded a near \$100,000 grant this fall that will be used to help save on fuel and utility costs, while protecting the environment.

The \$99,900 grant, awarded by New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA), will pay the cost of retrofitting 30 South Colonie school buses with diesel fuel-fired coolant heaters.

The heaters will provide energy for preheating the diesel school bus engines and passenger compartments, yielding both environmental and economical benefits. The new technology lessens the need for bus idling, reducing harmful emissions and saving on fuel. The district will also save on electricity costs as traditional bus "block" heaters will no longer be needed to warm the buses in cold weather.

"In a nutshell, this grant will make South Colonie more energy efficient and green," said Sherri Fisher, Assistant Superintendent for Business & Strategic Planning. "We hope to have them installed later in the school year."

There are many benefits to using the diesel fuel fired heaters, said District Energy Manager James Brown, who worked with the Transportation Depart-



ment to secure the grant.

The benefits include:

Reduced fuel consumption: Less fuel is used when running coolant heaters than when running engines to keep the passenger cabin warm. A typical diesel vehicle burns approximately one gallon of fuel for each hour it idles. By reducing its idling time, the district expects to save about \$228 per vehicle per heating season for an overall savings of \$6,831 a year for 30 buses.

Reduced electrical consumption: Electric block heaters traditionally used to warm diesel engines will no longer be needed. The new fuel-fired coolant heaters can be programmed to come on at certain times to have the buses ready to run. This is expected to save the district about \$65 per vehicle per heating season in utility costs for an overall savings of nearly \$1,955 a year for 30 buses.

Extended engine life: By reducing idling, the new technology will reduce wear and tear on the bus engines – saving on maintenance costs and increasing the engine lives.

Reduced pollution from idling: The new technology reduces the need for engine idling, in turn, reducing air pollutants that contribute to ozone smog and global warming. It also protects the health of drivers and passengers by reducing the harmful effects of diesel exhaust fumes. The district expects to reduce carbon dioxide emissions with the new technology by 51,300 pounds per heating season.

"This new technology is a win-win situation for everyone," Brown said, "and because it comes through a grant, the money is free to the district."

The grant will help the district supplement its longstanding, successful Energy Management program, which is celebrating its 10th year in 2011. First begun in 2001, to date, the energy conservation program has enabled South Colonie taxpayers to avoided nearly \$3.5 million in energy usage costs.

Stuff the Bus

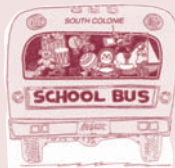
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There are two major phases to the Stuff The Bus campaign:

- **Public Phase – Friday, November 25:** "Black Friday" marks one of the major kickoffs to the campaign. South Colonie school buses will be parked at Northway Mall near the Jo-Ann Fabrics store, at Kohl's Plaza and K-Mart on Central Avenue and at Toys R Us on Wolf Road. Volunteers will be collecting new, unwrapped toys from 6 a.m. to 4 p.m.

- **School Phase – November 29 – December 7:** Each of the district's five elementary schools and two middle schools will designate one day during this week for students to celebrate the Stuff the Bus campaign during their Morning Programs or at other times. Collection boxes will also be stationed at Colonie High School during that time.

The celebration days are: **Tuesday, November 29** – Forest Park School, **Wednesday, November 30** – Saddlewood School, **Thursday, December 1** – Roessleville School, **Friday, December 2** – Veeder School, **Monday, December 5** – Shaker Road School, **Tuesday, December 6** – Lisha Kill School and **Wednesday, December 7** – Sand Creek School.





Veeder Elementary School children help Board of Education President Leonard Motto (left) and Vice President Tim Ryan sort through the supplies.

Supplies sent to help Schoharie County flood victims

South Colonie Schools delivered a truckload of supplies this fall to help Schoharie County flood victims.

"We can't thank everyone who participated in this important relief effort enough," said Superintendent of Schools, Jonathan Buhner. "Our community always steps up in times of need and I'm proud to be associated with it."

In the aftermath of both Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee, which devastated hundreds of families in Schoharie County with severe flooding, residents of the School District and the Village of Colonie donated non-perishable items and supplies to help out. The supplies filled the district book depository at Veeder Elementary School.

The supplies came from collection stations that were set up in September at the eight school buildings, the bus garage, the District Office, and the Village of Colonie Family Recreation Center and people really responded to the call.

They will help families in the Middleburgh and Schoharie school districts, many of which have lost everything, and disaster crews and volunteers in need of supplies to help in the clean-up efforts. Along with the supplies, South Colonie also donated computer equipment and stations it no longer needs to the school districts. Their computers were damaged beyond repair when flood waters filled the first floor of the schools

CCHS art teacher authors kid's book on understanding children with disabilities

When a child has a disability it can be tough on a family, especially for the young brothers and sisters who often struggle to understand the situation at home. That was the personal dilemma facing Colonie Central High School art teacher Lisa Benanto until she took matters into her own hands.



Benanto's 7-year-old son, Brandon, has PDD-NOS — a form of Autism. His 5-year-old sister, Katie, has many questions that aren't always easy to answer. To help Katie understand, Benanto spent a lot of time searching for children's books on the subject but she came up empty. So she decided to write and illustrate a children's book of her own.

"I Have a Brother" is a social story told from Katie's perspective. It is written for children ages 3-6 with the hopes of helping young minds and families understand what siblings with disabilities go through in life.

"The purpose of the book is to foster discussion within the nuclear family about these issues and strengthen family ties," Benanto said. "I hope my story is a help to others."

To accomplish this goal, the CCHS art teacher has been busy sharing her book with others. Copies have been handed out to many organizations like Helping Hands and Saratoga Bridges as well as to South Colonie elementary school teachers and other school personnel.

Athletics news now available on SNN

South Colonie SNN has added a new category to its offerings of district email news alerts. Now you can receive news and announcements related specifically to the Athletics Department. Simply sign into your SNN account and click Athletics from the list of offerings to receive these email alerts. If you haven't signed up for SNN why not do so today? Simply located the SNN logo on the district website under Quick Links (bottom right of page) and follow the instructions.



CCHS social studies teacher joins November delegation to China

Colonie Central High School social studies teacher will be part of a delegation of area educators traveling to China in November in an effort to further the educational and cultural ties between the two countries.

Erin Lasky will join 18 other educators from several area school district, as well as Capital Region BOCES and Questar III BOCES, on the trip to the Far East. Their goal is to build upon the memorandum of understanding that was reached between Tech Valley High School and Tianjin High School No. 41 in Tianjin, China.



“As a social studies teacher I am really looking forward to seeing the Great Wall, the Forbidden City in Beijing, and visiting the Terracotta Warriors in Xi’an,” said Lasky, who

teaches AP World History and Global History. “But I am most excited to meet and speak with Chinese high school students.”

This trip comes on the heels of last February when Colonie Central High School hosted a delegation of 32 students and four educators from Tianjin High School No. 41 in China, along with their hosts at Tech Valley High School, as part of a week-long visit to the Capital District. The visitors had an opportunity to attend the last class of day with CCHS students – some taking in a music class, others a technology class and still others history and computers classes.

This November will present an opportunity for Capital District educators, including Lasky, to reciprocate, traveling to China to witness that country’s educational system firsthand. While there, the American delegation will meet with educators in Tianjin, Guangzhou and other schools. Visits to the schools and observation of Chinese classes are on the agenda prior to the delegation’s return to the United States.

Joining Colonie Central High School and Tech Valley High School on the trip include educators from schools in Catskill, Schoharie, Schodack, Schalmont and Cobleskill-Richmondville.

The educational and cultural exchange with China also presents vast potential for things like videoconferencing, Chinese language study, and even teacher and student exchanges. Lasky’s students are excited about her upcoming trip as well. “They can’t wait to see pictures of the things they have been learning about for the past two years,” Lasky said.



‘Driving Skills For Life’ Comes to CCHS

Does driving while drunk or driving while distracted really change one’s abilities behind the wheel? Colonie Central High School students learned this firsthand by participating in simulations this fall, when the CCHS parking lot was the site of a national, award-winning teen safe driving program.

The Ford Motor Company brought its hands-on “Driving Skills for Life” training to CCHS this year as part of a 30-city national training tour.

“Getting a driver’s license, and the freedom that comes with it is an exciting milestone for our students,” said CCHS Principal Dave Wetzel. “Often, that excitement overshadows the reality that driving a car takes concentration and skill. Ford’s Driving Skills for Life gives them a hands-on experience that shows them the importance of driver safety and responsibility.”

In addition to a morning assembly for CCHS juniors and seniors, students who were already licensed drivers took part in outdoor training modules behind the wheel of three different Ford vehicles to improve their skills in four areas: hazard recognition, vehicle handling, space management, and speed management.

These hands-on training modules included:

- Evaluating their ability to drive around a number of traffic cones in a Ford Focus with and without distractions, similar to what occurs in driving while texting.
- Driving a Ford Fiesta with and without “fatal vision” goggles, which simulate driving drunk.
- Learning how to recover from a skid, such as occurs with black ice, behind the wheel of a Ford Mustang.
- A tent full of other exercises, such as one’s ability to walk a straight line while wearing the “fatal vision” goggles.

New York State Police were also on hand to simulate what a car rollover or crash as just 7 mph feels like. Quite a jolt!

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Lisha Kill remembers ...

The Lisha Kill Middle School community came together this fall for an emotional ceremony to remember one of its students who died tragically over the summer.

A ceremony was held in October for Sierra Berhaupt, a 13-year-old Lisha Kill student who passed away July 31 while swimming at her family pool on Thoroughbred Lane. She would have been in eighth grade this school year.

Sierra's friends, family and Lisha Kill staff gathered around an evergreen tree planted in her memory on the school grounds and listened to Sierra's favorite music. Crystal angels were hung on the tree, and messages from her friends were placed in pink helium balloons and released into the sky. Purple and green were Sierra's favorite colors, so purple and green balloons were released as well.



DFS fall phone-a-thon nets \$1,800 for scholarships

Thank you to everyone who supported South Colonie Dollars for Scholars' fall phone-a-thon, which raised \$1,821 in scholarship money for this year's Colonie Central High School graduates. Some 30 student volunteers from the CCHS Key Club and National Honor Society manned the phones at Metro Ford in October and received 100 in pledges.