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Preparing World Class Citizens

September, 2011

Summer fun at the library!



Students enjoy arts and crafts during summer library hours at Veeder Elementary School. All of the district's libraries were open for limited summer hours to encourage reading, learning and socializing during the school break.

School buses earn high grades on state safety inspections

The South Colonie Transportation Department has earned a high rating on a recent New York State Department of Transportation school bus safety inspection report for the 2010-2011 school year.

Of the 164 district school transportation vehicles inspected by NYSDOT in June, 96.3 percent passed. All school buses are subject to a comprehensive inspection by NYSDOT at least every six months. Vehicles that do not pass are placed out of service until the problems are corrected.

NYSDOT performs semi-annual vehicle safety inspections on a wide variety of vehicles that are subject to inspections. Of approximately 154,000 inspections conducted each year, almost 80 percent are performed on vehicles used in school transportation service, either directly by a public or private school or by a contractor hired to provide that service.

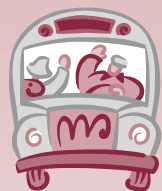
The remaining inspections are performed on vehicles used in other services regulated by NYSDOT: motor coach charter service, transit, ambulette, etc. According to NYSDOT, South Colonie had an inspection passing rate of 96.3 percent in 2009-2010, and 92 percent in 2008-2009.

Students 'making the grade' on new ELA and Math state assessments

South Colonie students, overall, are "making the grade" when it comes to achieving on the new annual New York State assessments in ELA and Math, according to data recently released by the New York State Education Department.

Test scores released in August from exams taken last May in grades 3-8 show that South Colonie students are above the state's "cut" score or the minimum number students must receive on an assessment to be classified as "proficient." Only on the Grade 5 ELA exam did South Colonie students, overall, finish below the cut score of 678, and that was by just one point (677). **Please visit the district's website to see a comparison of all test scores.**

Continued on page 2 ... **making the grade**



January Regents exam back on pg 2

Free Job Fair pg 3

New Athletic Director named pg 3



Summer in Germany for art students pg 3

Bus vote pg 3

Meal prices up pg 3

CCHS plays pg 4

CYC openings pg 4



January Regents to be reinstated this year

The New York State Education Department said it will reinstate the January Regents exams this school

year following the announcement by New York City Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg and Schools Chancellor Dennis M. Walcott that they have secured \$1.5 million in private funding to pay for their administration.

Previously, NYSED said that it would not offer the January exams for high school students beginning in 2012, after the Board of Regents voted to eliminate them due to budget cuts. But David Abrams, Assistant Commissioner, Office of Assessment Policy, Development and Administration, confirmed the exams will go on as they have in past years thanks to this new private financing.

"We are grateful for this financial support that will provide many students the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities in a variety of subjects and allow many to graduate from high school," Abrams said. "SED will be accepting this funding and we will be restoring the January 2012 Regents Exams; the exams will be administered from January 24-27. We will provide additional information in the near future."

The annual district calendar does not include these January 2012 Regent exam testing dates, but they have been added to the website calendar. More information and a Regents testing schedule will be posted on the Colonie Central High School web page and a notice sent out on SNN when information becomes available.



... making the grade

Continued from page 1

Considering the assessments administered in May were new and the cut scores were raised by the state to require public school students to be more proficient in the ELA and Math subject areas (explanation below), the district is very pleased with these results.

"The bar was raised and our students and teachers worked hard to meet this challenge," said Tim Backus, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction.



More about the test scoring

All New York State public school students in grades 3-8 are required to take annual state assessments in English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics, as well as science and social studies. In July 2010, the New York State Education Department and the Board of Regents announced a change in the "cut scores" for the grades 3-8 assessments in an effort to raise student achievement. Under the state's testing system, "cut scores" are used to classify students into one of four performance levels. Students at Level 1 are not meeting learning standards; those at Level 2 are partially meeting learning standards; pupils at Level 3 are meeting learning standards and those at Level 4 are meeting learning standards with distinction. New York State mandates that all public school districts offer Academic Intervention Services (AIS) to any student who is falling behind in meeting the state standards (those who do not reach the cut scores).

SED has now raised the cut scores for Level 3, meaning students must achieve at higher levels than ever before in order to be considered proficient. Why? In a report released by the Board of Regents in July 2010 entitled: "A New Standard for Proficiency: College Readiness," the Regents used a variety of academic performance statistics to justify this change, saying, "The Regents raised (academic) standards a decade ago. Now the Regents are embarking on a new era of reform to improve student achievement and better prepare graduates for college."

The assessments (exams) themselves have also been changed and made more difficult to further challenge students. In the August press release, NYSED officials commented about some of the changes noting that they were "significant" in nature and were designed to reflect the department's "commitment to the continuous development of a more robust testing system."

Students now have to answer more multiple choice questions on both the math and English exams. Doing so enables NYSED to test a greater range of performance indicators at varying degrees of difficulty. With a greater number of questions to answer, the length of time each test takes to complete has increased. Students at every grade level must now also write at least one full essay on the English exams.

Semo new Supervisor of Physical Ed and Athletics

Jason Semo is the new South Colonie Supervisor of Physical Education, Athletics and Intramurals. He was appointed by the Board of Education in August, and replaces David Foust, who held that position for 28 years before retiring. Semo was selected for the new position from a pool of about 40 candidates.



Semo had served as Director of Athletics, Physical Education and Health for the Liberty Central School District, Sullivan County, since July 2006. While there, he was also coordinator of the District Safety Committee, the Wall of Fame Committee, chairman of the NYS Section IX Basketball Committee, and a member of the Board of Directors of the Basketball Coaches Association of New York. He also helped facilitate a \$38 million athletic department upgrade. During the years prior to that, he was a Health teacher and Physical Education teacher at Tri-Valley (T-V) Intermediate School, Grahamsville, and an elementary teacher for Roscoe Central Schools.

He has coached a variety of sports over his career including Liberty varsity boys basketball, and was named 2011 Section IX, Class B, Boys Basketball Coach of the Year. He has also coached football and baseball in Sullivan County and in Arizona, has been involved in a variety of community athletic programs. He earned a bachelor's degree in Education from Arizona State University in 1998, and a master's degree and his administrative certificate, both in Educational Administration, from the SUNY-New Paltz in 2005 and 2006, respectively.

Summer in Germany for special needs students

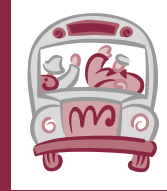


Wine bottles and clay pots painted by S.C. students.

South Colonie high school students in the district's summertime special needs program learned about Germany this year and the German immigrant community of Pennsylvania. They studied the immigrant population that eventually became known as Pennsylvania Dutch, which also includes the Amish. In addition to their traditional classroom time with special needs teachers Deirdre Locke, Keri Martinez and Cheryl Nunamacher, the students spent three days a week in art class with teacher Thomasa Nielsen. Summer art instruction focused on

creating traditional folk motifs and crafts of both communities. The students picked the designs that they were inspired by, drew them in pencil, used watercolor to paint them, and outlined the finished images in ink. They also painted glass wine bottles (to be used as vases), and clay pots that were planted with chives — a common herb used by the Pennsylvania Dutch.

Mark your calendars



South Colonie's annual school bus vote will be held:

**Wednesday, October 12th
11 a.m. to 9 p.m.
At the 5 elementary schools**

Check the next InFocus for complete information on the vote

School meal prices increase

The price of a school lunch will increase 10 cents in September, and the price of a breakfast is up 15 cents due to the rising cost of producing them. The Board of



Education approved the rate increase this summer to \$1.90 for an elementary school lunch and \$2.15 for a middle and high school lunch. The price of breakfast is now \$1.15 at the elementary schools and \$1.40 at the middle and high schools. Milk also went up a nickel to 55 cents. Families are encouraged to apply for free and reduced meals by filling out an application which can be found as an insert in the district calendar and online on the district website under Food Services.

South Colonie Job Fair

- **September 26**
- **6 - 7 p.m.**
- **West Wing Cafeteria**
- **Colonie High School**

Need a substitute job? Maybe you're retired or just looking for some occasional work. South Colonie is the place. Learn more about the duties associated with each position by attending this free one-hour seminar. Minimum qualifications will be covered, and employment applications are available. Training is provided for most positions including bus drivers.

Jonathan W. Buhner
Superintendent of Schools

Tim Backus
Assistant Superintendent for Instruction

Sherri Fisher
Assistant Superintendent/
Management Services/Strategic Planning

David Seaver
Director of Human Resources

Board of Education
Leonard Motto, President
James (Tim) Ryan, Vice President
Brian Casey
Robert Domenici
Rick Dunn
Shelle Jaquish
Neil Johanning
David Kiehle
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Asbestos notification

In accordance with the EPA Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act of 1987 (40 CFR Part 763), the South Colonie Central School District put in place a management plan to identify and manage asbestos building materials. Periodic surveillances are done every six months. In addition, abatement projects have been conducted in conjunction with the building construction. Specific notifications are posted in the buildings where projects are done prior to the start of the abatement work. Last spring the Triennial Reinspection was done, reviewing and updating the management plan for all of the district buildings.

The Asbestos Management Plan for the district is kept on file at the District Office. These records are available for review during regular business hours (8:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.) or by making a special appointment. For more information, contact Mike O'Neil at the District Office, 869-3576.

CYC before/after school openings

The Colonie Youth Center (CYC) still has openings in our after school and before school programs located throughout South Colonie and particularly in Roessleville, Forest Park and Saddlewood schools. For more information go to www.colonieyouthcenter.org or call our office at 438-9596. Mention where you saw this reminder and CYC will waive the required \$25 fee to register.

CCHS Line & Cue Announces 2011-2012 Fall and Spring Productions

The Colonie Central High School Line & Cue student theater group has announced it will stage two productions during the 2011-2012 school year. This fall, the group will perform Neil Simon's play "Fools," at 7 p.m., Friday and Saturday, November 18-19, in the Mark Cornell Auditorium. The traditional senior citizens dinner theater and dress rehearsal will be held at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, November 17. Fools is a light-hearted romantic comedy set in the small village of Kulyenchikov, Ukraine (Russian Territory), during the late 19th century.

In March, the Line & Cue will present its annual spring musical, "The Wedding Singer," at 7 p.m., Thursday, Friday and Saturday, March 22-24, in the Mark Cornell Auditorium. The traditional senior citizens dinner theater and dress rehearsal will be held at 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, March 21.

The Wedding Singer is a musical with music by Matthew Sklar, lyrics by Chad Beguelin, and a book by Chad Beguelin and Tim Herlihy. It is based on the 1998 film The Wedding Singer starring Adam Sandler and Drew Barrymore.

Both productions will be staged under Line & Cue Advisor/Producer Jaclyn Lupe.





***Now featuring...**

Parent Today

** Starting in the Fall*

Receive important information from South Colonie right in your e-mail inbox

PLUS, get the tools and support you need to help your children succeed in school with Parent Today!

South Colonie is pleased to offer School News Notifier (SNN), an electronic notification system designed to help keep parents and the community in touch with what is happening at South Colonie Schools. Receive information about upcoming school events, school closings and delays, and more — right in your e-mail inbox.

SNN is an **opt-in** e-mail alert system. You can choose to receive any or all of the following alerts, and you can unsubscribe at any time

- School closings & delays
(SMS text alerts also available!)
- District news
- Alumni News
- Colonie Central High School news
including the high school edition of Parent Today
- Lisha Kill and Sand Creek Middle School news
including the middle years edition of Parent Today
- Elementary School news (FP, RV, SR, SW, & VR)
including the elementary and Pre-k editions of Parent Today

To subscribe, simply visit our district Web site, www.southcolonieschools.org, click on the SNN icon under quick links, and follow the on-screen instructions to create a user profile today!

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Visit us online at southcolonieschools.org

SOUTH COLONIE PESTICIDE NOTIFICATION FORM

Initial Notification to Persons in Parental Relation and Staff Pursuant to

Section 409-h of the State Education Law and Commissioner's Regulation 155.24*

Dear Parent, Guardian and School Staff:

New York State Education Law Section 409-H and State Education Department Commissioner's Regulation 155.24, effective July 1, 2001, require all public and nonpublic elementary and secondary schools to provide written notification to all persons in parental relation, faculty, and staff regarding the potential use of pesticides periodically throughout the school year. The South Colonie Central School District is required to maintain a list of persons in parental relation, faculty, and staff who wish to receive 48 hour prior written notification of certain pesticide applications. The following pesticide applications are not subject to prior notification requirements:

- * a school remains unoccupied for a continuous 72 hours following application;
- * anti-microbial products;
- * nonvolatile rodenticides in tamper resistant bait stations in areas inaccessible to children;
- * silica gels and other nonvolatile ready-to-use pastes, foams, or gels in areas inaccessible to children;
- * boric acid and disodium octaborate tetrahydrate;
- * the application of EPA designated biopesticides;
- * the application of EPA designated exempt materials under 40CFR152.25;
- * the use of aerosol products with a directed spray in containers of 18 fluid ounces or less when used to protect the individuals from an imminent threat from stinging and biting insects including venomous spiders, bees, wasps, and hornets.

In the event of an emergency application necessary to protect against an imminent threat to human health, a good faith effort will be made to supply written notification to those on the 48-hour prior notification list. If you would like to receive 48-hour prior notification of pesticide applications that are scheduled to occur in your school, please complete the form below and return it to Stephen Benedict, Buildings and Grounds, 102 Loralee Drive, Albany, N.Y. 12205. Benedict, the school pesticide representative, can be reached by phone at (518) 869-3576, Ext. 2445, and by Fax at (518) 869-6481. He can be contacted for information on these requirements.

***NOTE: Please register again if you registered in response to any previous notifications.**

SOUTH COLONIE CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT Request for Pesticide Application Notification

If you are a person in parental relation list the school building(s) your child(ren) attend(s): _____

If you are a school employee list the school(s) or building(s) regularly worked in: _____

Name: _____ Address: _____

Day Phone: _____ Evening Phone: _____ E-Mail Address: _____

Written notification must be provided to all persons in parental relation and staff at the following intervals throughout the school year; at the beginning of the school year or the beginning of summer school; within 2 school days of the end of: the January break, spring recess and the end of summer school; and within 10 days of the end of the school year.

South Colonie Central School District uses an integrated pest management (IPM) approach to pests. IPM is recommended by the NYS Education Department and the US EPA.

Sincerely,

Michael O'Neil — School Pesticide Representative