

Syosset Pride

A Publication of the Syosset Central School District

www.syossetschools.org

BEYOND *the Core*

At Syosset, English and Math are a Powerful Beginning!

The difficulties of implementing the Common Core in English and mathematics have understandably occupied much of the spotlight over the past several years. While Syosset's educators and students have gotten well-deserved attention for having risen to this challenge admirably, the rest of the program has not been sitting still. So many of the things that make a Syosset education singularly excellent and unique are alive, well and growing.

"It's about being proactive with the program we provide and ensuring that there are significant and meaningful extensions and enrichments to the classroom," said Superintendent of Schools Dr. Thomas Rogers. "We are of course proud of how well-prepared our students are in the core academic disciplines – they are the foundations for all else – but so often, the most memorable and even life-changing experiences are traced back to those extra opportunities that help us discover what we love and who we want to become."

Engaging activities that cultivate diverse experiences for students are taking place throughout the Syosset

schools on an ongoing basis. The emphasis is not just on factual recall, but on teaching critical thinking skills at all levels and across the disciplines.

At the elementary level, a new part-time STEM teacher works in all of the schools, using an interdisciplinary applied approach to make real-world connections to science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Tasks are designed to relate to the youngest students, such as helping Mother Goose character Humpty Dumpty get down from the wall safely or finding the proper method to have the "cow jump over the moon." Additionally, the Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory provides on-site DNA workshops for every fifth-grade class, supplemented by a visit to the lab, where students conduct hands-on experiments, breaking down cells, organisms and DNA.

Clubs at the middle school level teach computer animation, computer coding and other emerging technologies. Raspberry Pi devices are now being used, enabling students to design games, explore animation and write programs using compact computer boards that are



Fifth-graders are learning about DNA from Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory.

both convenient and affordable. Mathematics enrichment is also supported at the elementary level through an engaging program called Versatiles, which allows students to take ownership of their problem-solving through small-group learning. These lessons are complemented by handheld answer key devices that promote greater participation and depth of understanding of math concepts. Teachers are also using Google Apps for Education to engage students with new and interesting projects.

Other clubs such as High School Robotics, Lego Robotics and Rocketry are popular as well. At this year's homecoming carnival, the Syosset High School Robotics team performed demonstrations showing the capabilities of two robots they built. The team is preparing for the competitive season, when they will be tasked with building a robot to perform various "rescue" missions.

An extensive architectural program at the high school is sparking students'

interest to shape their communities by teaching design and planning concepts. This includes a yearly competition in which a model town, comprised of residential and commercial buildings, open space parkland and transportation systems, is built in the student lobby. Professional architects are invited to judge and provide feedback on student work and discuss careers in architecture with students.

"The architecture courses provided at Syosset High School are not found in many schools, and I am so glad it was an option for me at the time," said alumna Patricia Tiglias, who went on to study at Pratt Institute and now works at MGN Architects in Manhattan. "I was able to explore a field that I found interesting during my high school years, and for me, that was a big deal."

Knowing that literacy is the basic foundation for all education, the district offers numerous opportunities to refine oral and

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A Message from Your *Superintendent*



To the Syosset Community,

The multi-state adoption of the Common Core Learning Standards has commanded much of the attention of parents and policy-makers alike over the last several years. To be sure, we want all of our students to be capable and comfortable in the worlds of numbers and words, and to be able to use both to achieve their goals in life. However, there is a danger in becoming so preoccupied with the challenges of the Common Core transition that we overlook the breadth of curriculum that makes a Syosset education so special, and a Syosset graduate so unique.

The new State Education Commissioner, Mary Ellen Elia, has announced an initiative to re-examine the rigor and appropriateness of New York's Common Core Learning Standards, as has Governor Cuomo. By the spring, it appears likely that both will make recommendations that would recalibrate New York's implementation – a result that would be consistent with Syosset's own

Common Core Committee's observation that the curriculum itself could use refinement.

I've been impressed with how Syosset's educators and students have risen to the challenge of the Common Core, and I've also heard from parents and educators about some of its limitations and difficulties. Much more work remains to be done, both in Albany (to be sure that our students are being held to high expectations, not unreasonable ones), and in Syosset (to make sure our teachers, students and parents have the support they need to reach them).

By its nature, that work will never be complete; because of its importance, it will inevitably command our attention. But that effort mustn't overshadow the rich opportunities and ongoing work across the rest of the curriculum. So in this issue, we turn our attention to everything that is "beyond the core" – the opportunities that make Syosset unique and the reason why our graduates are so successful not just in the core subjects, but across the breadth of their interests.

Whether as part of the formal program or

through Syosset's extensive network of clubs and extracurricular activities, students have the opportunity to explore the environment, take on ambitious research projects, build robots, act, dance, paint and sing.

Whether Albany declares the Common Core fixed or finished, Syosset will continue to innovate and iterate. On the horizon are new standards in science (the Next Generation Science Standards) and social studies (the new Social Studies Frameworks). Changing standards have been a part of education for as long as public schools have existed. Syosset's success has come from keeping up with those changes without losing what makes us unique and special.

Regards,
Dr. Tom Rogers
Superintendent of Schools

A Message from Your *Board of Education*

Dear Syosset Community,

We are already well into the 2015-16 year, and wonderful things are happening throughout the district.

As you will read in this edition of *The Pride*, our district provides a myriad of student opportunities that go well beyond the Common Core requirements. These include our science research program at the high school, which has produced five semifinalists and two regional finalists in the prestigious Siemens Competition in Math, Science and Technology. Two of only 15 finalists from Long Island are from our district, just one of our many accomplishments to be proud of. Syosset also has several National Merit Scholarship semifinalists, and two student-musicians received national recognition this fall.

Several initiatives are being piloted in our schools this year, many with an emphasis on teaching our students how to master leading-edge technology. Our goal is to provide them with the tools to develop higher-level projects, prepare them for the type of applications they will be expected to use in college and the workforce, and hopefully spark new interests that will guide them as they pave their career paths.

We also have numerous activities taking place that teach students social and emotional skills to

shape them as productive and caring citizens in society.

Homecoming celebration was another resounding success, as community members attended the student government-organized carnival and filled the stands to cheer on our defending Long Island champion varsity Braves football team.

The Board has also begun the process of evaluating our facilities around the district. Board members have participated in several small maintenance tours this fall that included visits to school buildings, school grounds and athletic fields. We will be working in the coming months to ensure that our buildings continue to be a safe and positive learning environment for our students.

This summer, we streamlined the Board Meeting Notes, a summarization of our meetings that can be accessed via the "Board of Education" tab on the district website, www.syossetschools.org. These notes allow community members who are unable to be present at the public meetings to stay apprised of our progress and important issues. If you ever need to contact us, you can refer to our email addresses online or in the district calendar. We are also continuing the online form for community members. To access the form on the website, click on "Board of Education," then "Audience to the Public."



As your elected representatives, we will continue to provide a high quality, diverse educational program that not only promotes high achievement, but also cultivates character, citizenship and tolerance, celebrating our children and providing ongoing outlets of expression so they never lose sight of where they came from as they move forward in life. In doing so, we remain mindful of our responsibility to ensure resources are used wisely and effectively for the maximum benefit of our entire community.

We look forward to seeing you at our meetings.

Warm Regards,
The Syosset School District Board of Education

Michael Cohen	Rob Gershon
April Neuendorf	Josh Lafazan
Chris Di Filippo	Susan Parker
Andrew Feldman	Laura Schlesinger
Tracy Frankel	

BEYOND *the Core*

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written communication skills. The Forensics Debate Society at the high school continues to gain national recognition, and groups such as Model Congress, Model UN, Mock Trial and the student council nurture high-order public speaking skills and promote civic-minded attitudes among young people at all levels.

Opportunities to advance writing and journalistic skills through school newspapers and literary magazines are offered as well. A Reader's Theatre club allows students to develop their own characters by analyzing theatrical scripts, leading to a group performance that promotes creative expression at a young age. Behind-the-scenes creativity is promoted through Stage Scenery and Stage Design and Construction clubs, and the technical aspects of producing a show are also covered in the Theatre Technology Club at the middle school level. In every instance, students behind the stage work collaboratively with the talented thespians who appear in the district's many dramatic and musical performances. Artists-in-residence work with students in the classroom to impart their advanced wisdom, inspire confidence, and cultivate creativity through murals, sculptures and other visual media projects, complementing the ongoing instruction delivered by art teachers.

Along with promoting creativity and building literacy and numeric aptitude, character education and social-emotional development are at the heart of day-to-day education from the moment the children enter the buildings. Every elementary school is immersed with character education. The PRIDE program emphasizes Patience, Respect, Integrity, Dignity and Empathy and advocates doing the right thing when no one is looking, in and outside of the classroom. Fundraisers,

ongoing mentoring between the upper and lower grade levels, and other unifying activities drive this effort throughout the year.

The high school's Child Study Program is yet another example of mentoring that brings prekindergarten children together with high school Developmental Psychology students three times per week to work on theme-based projects in a one-to-one setting. The high school students use their knowledge from the classroom to carry out fun, differentiated activities that prepare the youngsters for kindergarten.

The Serendipity Club and Mentor/Mentee program at Thompson Middle School are two examples of peer mentoring at the middle school level. Under the direction of teachers and support staff, older students participate in various activities with their younger peers, serving as big brothers and sisters. They also meet regularly outside of normal school hours to attend a variety of events. These programs further support students' adjustment to middle school life by allowing them to work with faculty in informal settings such as common lunch periods, after school, etc. Schoolwide beautification projects are just one of the outcomes that bring the participants closer together in a constructive manner.

"It's an amazing opportunity to hang out and work with the students. Being there really makes me smile," said Serendipity student volunteer Sophie Breslow. "I try to devote my time to help kids with disabilities, and I can't wait to see what happens next in their journey in our school and outside of school."

Other examples of students stepping outside of the familiar confines of their school are the off-site outdoor education programs provided by

Nassau BOCES. Students break away from the classroom and into an environment where they get to know one another in a different manner in nontraditional surroundings. Exercises emphasize teamwork and teach students to trust one another in order to fulfill a task critical to the group at large. Something as simple as climbing a wall, while physically exerting, may seem rudimentary on the surface, but may not be achievable without the support on the ground needed to reach the top or ensure a safe landing. It's a basic principle of delegation and collaboration that can be carried out in life and work, but not necessarily learned unless practiced in the simplest of forms.

A Crayola recycling campaign at Robbins Lane Elementary School, the Earthkeepers club at Village Elementary School and brown bag seminars on wind energy are just a few examples of the environmental awareness education that promotes civic-minded involvement and understanding of an issue of global importance. Foreign language at the elementary schools prepares students to communicate effectively in the global society (and workforce) by giving them a head start on fluency in alternative languages.

"An overall emphasis on putting the knowledge into 'practical' practice is present in all facets of instruction through every opportunity afforded in our schools," said Dr. Rogers. "In some cases, it's placing the right resource or tool into the child's hand. In other instances, it's providing the forum. In every case, it involves the cooperation of our faculty and staff to capitalize on every resource and a supportive school community, overall, to ensure that a wide breadth of opportunities is available. In this district, we are doing all of these things to educate the whole child and give them advantageous life experiences."



An architectural program at SHS allows students with an interest in architecture to collaborate on a model city.



The Serendipity Club at Thompson MS offers a unique mentoring program beneficial to all who participate.

AROUND THE SCHOOLS

The Beginnings of a PRIDE-ful Year

Berry Hill and Robbins Lane elementary schools kicked off this year's PRIDE campaigns in grand fashion. PRIDE is an acronym for Patience, Respect, Integrity, Dignity and Empathy, all traits students are pledging to demonstrate. Both schools welcomed the NED Show, centered on a lovable cartoon character whose name is an acronym for Never give up, Encourage others and Do your best.

NED encourages students to help others and pay it forward any way they can. Following the NED program at Berry Hill, the school held a pep rally, where children from every class displayed colorful posters with important messages while pledging to do nice things for others, especially when no one is looking. In the spirit of the classic milk campaign, students and staff are donning "Got PRIDE?" T-shirts every Friday to keep the spirit of the effort on everyone's mind.

Robbins Lane School is paying it forward to another elementary school – P.S. 346 in Brooklyn.

Berry Hill PRIDE illustrated



Students are raising money through the sale of yo-yos and will be donating the proceeds to their Brooklyn friends so the school can host their own NED assembly.

Do Unto Others...or Otters

"Do Unto Others" was the theme of this year's Parents as Reading Partners celebration at Baylis School. The weeklong event included a teacher read-aloud of

the book "Do Unto Otters" by Laurie Keller, which highlights the importance of being a good friend and practicing good manners by working with at least one friend. The latter aligns with the school's charge to have each student work closely with at least one "buddy."

Other activities included a "stop and read" period in which faculty, staff and students all stopped what they were doing to read silently for 15 minutes. Everyone in the building was invited to wear a readable shirt. Some popular shirts included "Let's Go Mets" and "Syosset PRIDE." Students were also encouraged to bring in gently used books to be donated to the Book Fairies Charity.

HBTv: Keeping You Informed

The Harry B. Thompson Middle School television studio – home to HBTv, which broadcasts over closed-circuit Channel Six – continues to grow in popularity. Each day, students produce a five-minute

morning announcement segment that features club news, sports updates, school highlights and academic activities. Two students anchor the news, honing their public speaking and theatrical skills. Teachers and administrators also have been making surprise appearances. Students from the school's Audio-Visual Squad run the sound production, studio lighting, teleprompting and video mixing, and a green screen and chroma-key software are used to simulate various studio and on-location environments. According to teacher Scott Eckers, who is an adviser for the program, the squad hopes to bring more interactive and exciting segments to the news each day. Stay tuned!

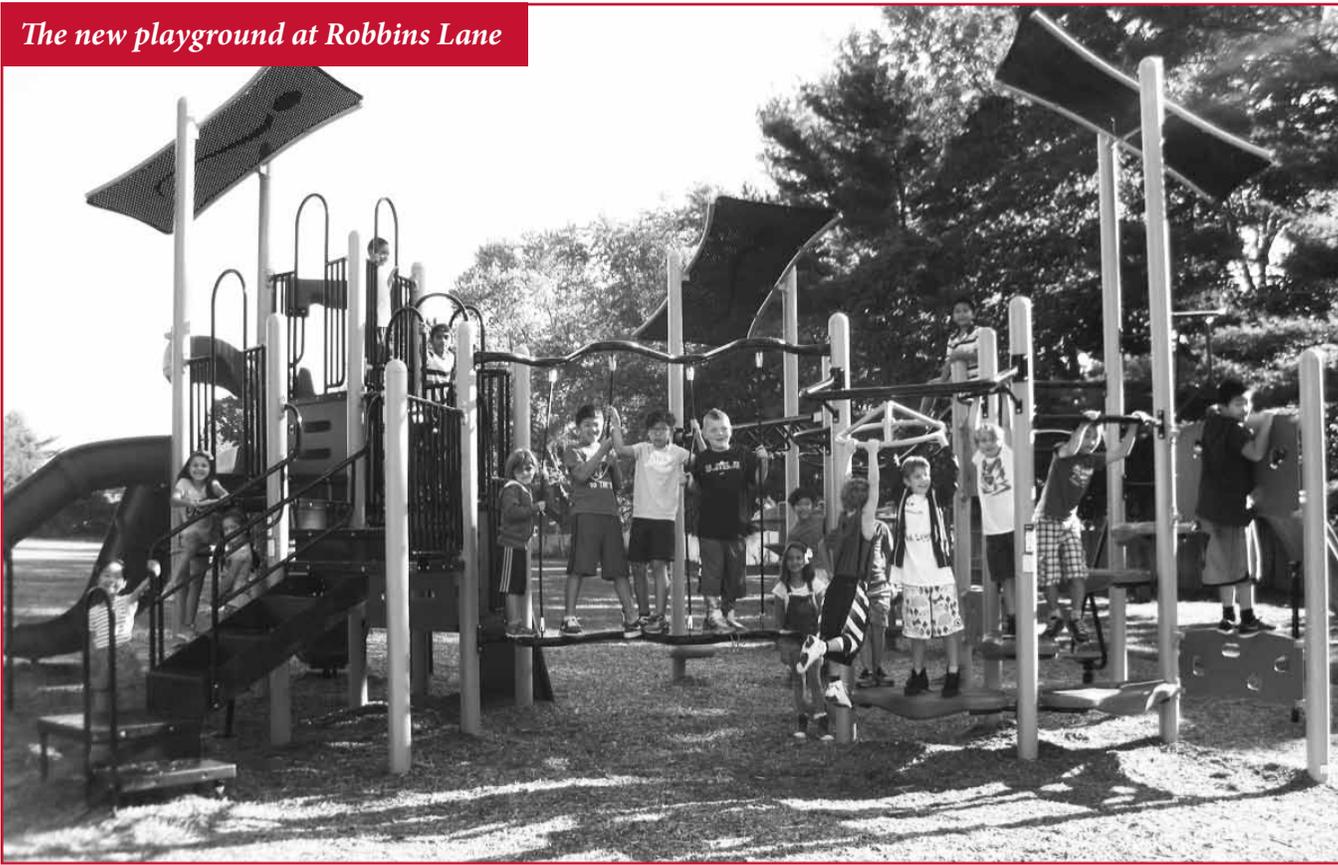
Kindergartners Key in on Reading

As a culmination to their unit on foundational reading strategies, students in Jill Mulherin's and Kate Cervone's kindergarten classes at A.P. Willits School participated in a "key ceremony" reading celebration. Gathered

Baylis reads for PARP



The new playground at Robbins Lane



in the library in front of their classmates, teachers and mock photographers, they received certificates from Principal James Connolly in recognition of their dedication to reading. The ceremony was held to acknowledge that the children had unlocked the power of reading.

Berry Hill School also held a special key presentation in the school library in recognition of its kindergartners' reading accomplishments.

Knowing Your DNA

Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory has been conducting DNA workshops with fifth-graders throughout the district. During a recent visit to South Grove Elementary School, CSHL educator Gregory Reilly taught students about the structure of a DNA molecule using a double helix model before leading them in the construction of their own models. Students reviewed the six parts that make up a DNA molecule and used worksheets to identify the components of an animal cell.

CSHL visits every fifth-grade classroom at Syosset three times per year. Students also take a field trip to the lab, where they have the opportunity to look

under the scientists' microscopes and perform other DNA-related activities.

New Playgrounds

In between their studies, students at Robbins Lane and South Grove elementary schools have been enjoying the schools' new playground equipment, installed over the summer.

The new playgrounds provide opportunities to climb, swing and slide on state-of-the-art equipment, giving students a great recreational outlet while contributing to their physical development. The surfaces are layered with refined softened wood chips to ensure a safe and easy landing.

Top Debaters, Nationally

Syosset High School's Forensics Society has once again been ranked in the National Speech and Debate Association's top 1 percent of schools nationwide. The honor is based on points and degrees earned in competitive and service-based activities.

Comprised of 175 students and 18 divisions, the society has been one of the most consistently successful co-curricular, interscholastic activity clubs at Syosset High School,

with Long Island and New York State championships among their successes.

"I am proud that our group has a consistent national reputation for excellence," said adviser Lydia Esslinger, whose 2015 team was recognized in the top 20 of 7,935 participating schools nationwide.

A Sweet Spot for Others

As a way to help others, Village School launched its annual Operation Sweet Tooth campaign. Students brought in unused Halloween candy and packaged it to be sent to a number of different charities for children, as well as for troops overseas. They also practiced counting, graphing and other math-related activities using the candy.

Teamwork and Trust

Communication, trust and problem-solving are some of the skills seventh-graders at South Woods Middle School learned during this year's Project Adventure excursion to the Brookville Outdoor and Environmental Education Center. Students were guided through various activities designed to encourage leadership and collaboration, such as climbing over a wall, balancing on a seesaw and maneuvering through obstacles. They learned many valuable lessons, including trusting and respecting one another.

A 'Thriller' of a Time

Walt Whitman School's kickoff to its Parents as Reading Partners program was a thriller — literally. Principal Chad Snyder called all of the students into the school's all-purpose room to review the school's code of conduct with them. Little did the students know that they were in store for a big surprise when their principal was called away, and a few moments later, curtains opened and their teachers performed a flash mob-style dance to Michael Jackson's "Thriller." Donning masks created by art enrichment students, the faculty recreated the classic "Thriller" dance from the 1980s, much to the delight of the young students. Second-grade teacher Lisa Steinberg provided choreographic support.

Inside the HBTV studio



STUDENTS IN THE



Syosset school officials congratulate the district's finalists and semifinalists in the Siemens Competition for Math, Science and Technology.

Students Honored in **SIEMENS COMPETITION**

Syosset High School seniors Sarah Lee and Kunal Shah have been named regional finalists in the Siemens Competition in Math, Science and Technology. Sarah and Kunal are among the school's five student researchers who achieved semifinalist status in the nation's premier science research competition for high school students. As finalists, they will present their research to a Siemens panel of judges via electronic conferencing on Nov. 21 to determine whether they advance to the national finals in Washington, D.C., in December.

Sarah and Kunal both conducted their research at Stony Brook University. They are among just 15 finalists from Long Island who will vie for one of five individual finalist spots and five team finalist spots in the nation.

National finalists will compete in December at George Washington University in Washington, D.C. Six individuals and six teams will win scholarship

awards ranging from \$10,000 to \$100,000. There were 1,781 applicants in this year's competition.

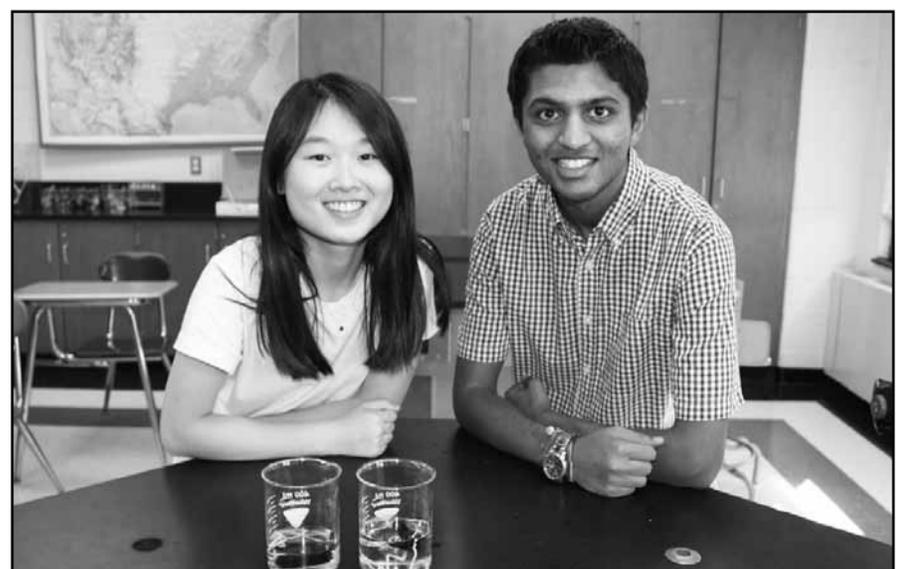
Sarah researched alternative ways to block pain receptors in the body. She studied the chemistry of natural pain blockers and their attachment to various cell receptors and found that there were several compounds that could block cell receptors as a novel and effective way to relieve pain while avoiding many of the side effects and consequences associated with over-the-counter medications.

Kunal, who worked as part of a team with two students from different high schools, discovered a method to make fuel cells more efficient by modifying current hydrogen fuel cells with the addition of graphene oxide nanoparticles. His research partners are Brian Rhee of Half Hollow Hills East and Roshan Patel from Ward Melville. Sarah worked independently.

Along with Sarah and Kunal, Syosset High School senior Robert Klyner and juniors Rahul Chaudhry and Sahil Chaudhry made it to the regional semifinalist round. Rahul and Sahil tackled the problem of overactive platelets and excessive blood clotting by creating an algorithm to determine platelet shape, and based upon that information could predict the best medication for doctors to prescribe. This algorithm is more effective than current methods, which typically

take two to three months to complete. Robert analyzed the DNA of three patients with epilepsy. Specifically, he looked at de novo mutations, which are spontaneous mutations not affecting other members of a family. He not only found a way of identifying the mutations, but also discovered a potential link in the DNA sequence to the disease.

All of the students studied under the tutelage of Syosset High School research facilitator Veronica Ade.



Sarah Lee and Kunal Shah advanced to the regional finalists round in the Siemens Competition.

SPOTLIGHT

Meritorious Students

Sixteen Syosset High School seniors have been named National Merit Semifinalists, chosen from a pool of approximately 16,000 high school students nationwide by the National Merit Scholarship Corporation by scoring in the top 1% nationally on the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test.

Congratulations to Demi Ajao, Joshua Bassin, Alyssa Chvasta, Michael Collet, Daniel Hirsch, Allison Hung, Rachel Kang, William Long, Andrea Ruggiero, Brian Schultheis, Benjamin Senzer, Jourdan Smithwick, Michael Yang, Faisal Younus, Ilya Yurchenko and Alice Zhao.

Semifinalists have qualified to compete for approximately 7,400 National Merit scholarships worth more than \$32 million. Finalists will be announced in February, with the winners to be named in the spring.

"The Syosset High School community is extremely proud of our 2016 National Merit Semifinalists," said Principal Dr. Giovanni Durante. "I congratulate them on their hard work and wish them the best of luck in the



The 16 Syosset High School seniors named National Merit Semifinalists were honored at the September Board of Education meeting.

"The Syosset High School community is extremely proud of our 2016 National Merit Semifinalists."

next stage of the competition."

The Board of Education, Superintendent of Schools Dr. Thomas Rogers and members of central administration congratulated the semifinalists at the September Board meeting (pictured above).

In addition, 33 Syosset High School students were recognized as Commended Students in the program by scoring in the top 5% on the PSAT/NMSQT. They too were congratulated for their dedication to academic excellence.

All-Star Sound

Congratulations to Syosset High School's Jakob Finkelstein and Ross Kliegman, who performed in the National Association for Music Education's All-National Concert Band at the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville, Tennessee, this fall.

Jakob (trumpet) and Ross (oboe) were among 120 elite student-musicians selected from schools throughout the country to perform under the direction of Eugene Migliaro Corporon, renowned conductor of the Wind Symphony and regents professor of music at the University of North Texas College of Music. More than 670 students representing schools in 49 states and overseas military bases were selected to perform in four

All-National Honor Ensembles – Concert Band, Jazz Ensemble, Symphony Orchestra and Mixed Choir – at this year's NAFME conference.

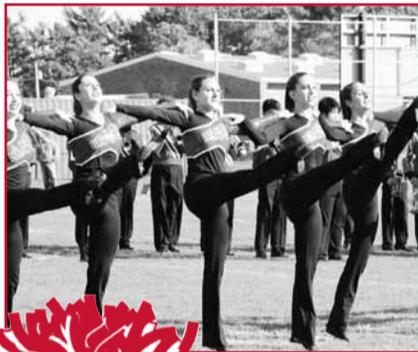
Additionally, 24 outstanding musicians from the high school were selected as performers or alternates for the New York State School Music Association's All-State ensembles, which will take the stage at the Rochester Convention Center for the 2015 NYSSMA Winter Conference this December. Once again, Syosset High School has the highest number of All-State musicians in New York State, including two jazz musicians who were chosen for more than one instrument.



Coordinator of Fine and Performing Arts, K-12 Michael Salzman, music teacher Larry Ballereau and Superintendent of Schools Dr. Thomas Rogers congratulate Jakob Finkelstein and Ross Kliegman on their All-National honors in band.

Homecoming Caps Off

A SPIRITED WEEK OF ACTIVITIES



Syosset High School culminated a week of spirited activities with its annual homecoming celebration on Oct. 17, where community members enjoyed a carnival, some wonderful halftime performances and cheering their Long Island champion varsity Braves football team.

Dubbed "Spirit Week," many students showed their Syosset pride by sporting the school colors of red and black throughout the week. The annual walkathon along the campus grounds started things off, resulting in students and staff raising more than \$2,600 for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. Later in the week, a health fair was hosted in the high school's gymnasium, where more than 50 stations, many operated by students, provided guests with tips on leading a healthy lifestyle.

On Friday, the high school football field took center stage for the annual pep rally. This year's event brought a new twist, with relay races complementing

the traditional introductions and fanfare. Later that afternoon, the annual carnival kicked off. The student government organized the carnival, and various student clubs and organizations manned booths to raise funds for student activities at the high school. The carnival was open to the public through Sunday.

On Saturday, the Braves took to the football field again, taking on the East Meadow High School Jets. The visitors led 21-7 at the half before the hosts came storming back with three consecutive touchdowns in the third and fourth quarters. Christian Skorka caught a 30-yard pass from quarterback Will Hogan with just over two minutes left in the game to put the Braves ahead 28-21, before East Meadow rallied for a late touchdown to pull off the victory.

Halftime included performances by the Syosset varsity and junior varsity cheerleaders, band, color guard and kickline, prompting more cheers from the Syosset faithful.

KYLIE MARLOW: NEWS 12 SCHOLAR-ATHLETE

The district congratulates high school senior Kylie Marlow on being named a News 12 Scholar-Athlete of the Week in October. She is the first of 30 student-athletes to be recognized this year.

As captain of the 2015 varsity softball squad, Kylie hit for a .500 batting average on her way to All-County status and the Coaches Award for Excellence. She also achieved All-County Honorable Mention in 2014 and All-Conference status in 2013. In addition, she captains the varsity volleyball team and received the 2015 Coaches Award for Excellence for this sport.

Academically, Kylie holds a 3.9 GPA, has nine AP classes to her credit, scored a 2,280 on her SAT, and is a peer leader and member of the National Honor Society. When not excelling on the field or in the classroom, Kylie finds time to help others, serving as a peer educator, a chairperson for Relay for Life, and a counselor at Sunrise Day Camp, working with children with cancer. She also teaches students with disabilities how to play softball.



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