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Titan Herald

TACONIC HILLS CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

www.taconichills.k12.ny.us

JANUARY 2021

Greetings Taconic Hills Community:

It certainly has been an eventful start to the year. I am very pleased with how well students, staff, and parents have adjusted to the changes that we implemented and continue to implement during the Coronavirus Pandemic. Each day is different. We have made every effort to keep most of our kids in school, while also providing for remote instruction for families that wish to keep their students home.

Thank you to all the families who have adjusted routines and expectations so that as many students as possible can be in school. We are also thankful for the work of our staff and the support of the community in reopening for this school year. We continue to work with students and families while following guidance on distancing, personal protective equipment, and cleaning and disinfection throughout the facility.

As the school year progresses, we are also trying to safely integrate more activities for students during and

after school. We also have guidance from the state on an updated Athletics calendar for the Winter and Spring seasons which includes completed guidance from NYSPHSAA.

We are making plans for how best to manage our reserves through a difficult fiscal climate. Our Board of Education is studying our anticipated state aid revenues, reserves, and existing budget and our administration and staff are teaming up and stepping up to do all they can to improve and expand programming. We are planning for the future but still taking everything one day at a time. I am proud to see, and thankful for, the support and investment our staff and community make in our school.

Sincerely,
Dr. Neil L. Howard, Jr.
Superintendent of Schools
Taconic Hills Central School District

Real People, Real Stories

5th & 6th Graders from Taconic Hills signed up to be featured in REAL PEOPLE REAL STORIES, a storytelling workshop led by Ancram Opera House Co-Director Paul Ricciardi. Since October, Ancram Opera House has been working with 145 students, helping each to develop and tell a story about a memorable event in their life. Through the program, the students were able to figure out what story they wanted to tell and, in fact, that they had LOTS of stories to tell. After the students found their story, they organized it to become clearer on what they thought

was the main event of the story and what they might have learned as a result of that experience. The stories range from discovering how guinea pigs swim, enduring (several) broken arms, getting lost in the Bahamas, and more.

A special thanks to Beth Flores at Taconic Hills Elementary for her help making this collaboration. AOH's storytelling initiative at Taconic Hills CSD has been made possible through a grant from the Fund for Columbia County.



Visual Arts During the Pandemic

With the first quarter of the academic year officially complete, students and faculty alike have faced challenges—but one of the most difficult has been in the Arts. Visual Arts teachers and the students enrolled in their classes are finding the need to apply their creativity to more than just their artistic creations. Remote sections of Art have adapted by looking for ways to encourage students' creativity and engagement using basic household materials that are available in the home and projects that incorporate nature.



Students in the Elementary and High School art classes recently worked on a Disguise Tom Turkey project in celebration of Thanksgiving.

First Grade student Julian Foshay completed an independent art project at home as a remote learner in Mrs. Kipniss' class. Julian painted this entire tapestry using themes from books he's been reading with Mrs. Nelson, as well as showing off his fabulous art skills.



NEWS & NOTES



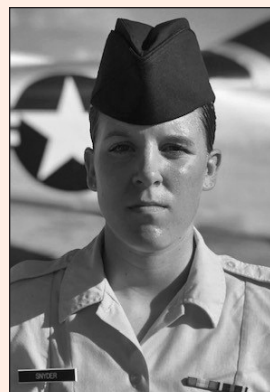
TH Golf Caps Off Undefeated Season

The Taconic Hills Varsity Golf Team finished its 2020 season undefeated and as Patroon Conference Champions for the 3rd time since 2017. The Team has won 7 Conference Championships since 2010. The Varsity Golf team has no seniors on the roster, so the future looks bright!



Gardner Wins FFA Star in Agriscience

Congratulations to Hunter Gardner (TH '20) who was selected as the winner in the Eastern Regional FFA Star in Agriscience. The Eastern Regional Star Awards recognize FFA members who have developed outstanding agricultural skills and competencies through the completion of a supervised agricultural experience program.



Snyder Named Air Force Arctic Warrior

Andrea Snyder (TH '19) was recently named Arctic Warrior of the Week and was coined by the 673 ABW Commander and Chief. Andrea is stationed at JBER AIR Force Base in Anchorage, Alaska.

Food Services on the Move

COVID has certainly changed things for us! In order to keep students and staff safe, we no longer serve meals from our serving lines. There are breakfast carts that are set up in the morning at four different entrances for students to “grab & go” a bagged breakfast. We have purchased hot boxes and coolers to keep entrees’ hot and milk cold.

The younger elementary students place their lunch orders in the morning. Meals are then delivered to the classrooms by the Food Service Staff. Fourth, fifth and sixth grade students, at different times, are able to visit a mobile lunch cart with a variety of choices.



For our high school students, there are four carts set up throughout the building for students to visit from 11:00 am until 12:45 pm. In order to help the possible spread of germs, students no longer need to enter their ID numbers on a pin pad. The USDA has relaxed some of its regulations in order for us to be able to feed students in a timely manner. And our Transportation Department contin-

ues to deliver meals to our remote families.

Every day is a new adventure, and everyone is working hard to make sure no one goes hungry.

— Pam Strompf, Food Services Director

Creating a More Inclusive Learning Environment

The district provides a continuum of special education services through the Committee on Special Education (CSE) which allow for the placement of preschool and school-age students in the least restrictive environment consistent with their needs. Several staff members, including school psychologists, social workers, special education teachers, speech pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, and counselors, provide services to special education students. Program offerings change from year to year, based upon the individual needs of students.

The CSE Department is led by Stella Ritter, Director of Pupil Personnel Services. The department is pleased to welcome new staff to help our school population.

Melissa Layman transitioned this year from the role of District Clerk and Secretary and is working with CPSE on preschool and 504 to help students with disabilities remove barriers to learning.

Veronica Burley is a new School Psychologist. Prior to Taconic Hills, she worked for many years working with and advocating for children. Veronica is passionate about supporting students’ social-emotional learning to help them grow and succeed academically, socially, and behaviorally.

Megan Kraiza is a new School Psychologist. Megan has spent many years working with children and providing mental health services, providing play therapy to children in foster care, while working to develop trauma-sensitive practice through research and program development. She has strong interests in multiculturalism, trauma-informed practice, and social emotional learning and works to incor-

porate these interests into her work with students.

Julieann Jennings joined the CSE team this year as a Special Education Teacher. She has taken the role of 7th Grade Co-Teacher for this school year. Julieann is excited to apply her long-standing practice of using education applications and technology in her everyday teaching.

Betsy Manzi also joined Taconic Hills this year as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW). Betsy has children that attend Taconic Hills, which helps her understand the challenges that parents face each day. She looks forward to creating safe spaces for students and helping families improve the school experience and build relationships with the school community.



Congratulations to Pam Keeler on her retirement from Taconic Hill after almost 50 years. Pam attended Roeliff Jansen school, and in 1969 after graduation, began working in the district. She has dedicated her time at Taconic Hills serving the students, staff, faculty and administration with kindness and professionalism shining through. From L to R: Stella Ritter, Pam Keeler, Melissa Layman.

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BEFORE & AFTER

The Taconic Hills Before and After School Activity Program offers recreation and entertainment for your child before and after school. Colleen Miller, Program Coordinator for Before and After, believes it is essential to provide care for our children for parents in our district. Each child is unique, and the program works to nurture individual wellness; physically, emotionally and socially. The Before and After program offers enrichment opportunities during non-school hours to help working families and families with additional needs. Children experience fun and exciting activities with the opportunity to meet new friends. Before and After is open to children in grades Kindergarten through Grade 6.

— Colleen W. Miller, *TH K-2 Teachers' Assistant*

Intermediate School

This year, Taconic Hills moved to a three-school structure, adding an Intermediate School for Grades 5-8. Ms. Mary D'Amico has worked for the district for 6 years, the last two as the Assistant Principal in the Elementary School and previously worked as the Assistant Principal in the Jr/Sr High School.

This school year has been challenging as we have had to shift resources to accommodate in-person and remote instruction. We want to thank families for supporting us during this time.

Reorganizing the school provides students with the support they need as they transition from Elementary to High School. The Intermediate Team is made up of Ms. D'Amico, School Counselor Ms. Delfs, Licensed Clinical Social Worker Ms. Duncan and Ms. Riscavage as the School Secretary.

The new Intermediate Office is located in the center of the school on the second floor near the PAC.