

Binghamton City School District

# TODAY

Winter 2019



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“

There is something worthwhile to be learned from every single person you encounter.

”

*Superintendent  
Tonia Thompson*

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*A letter from*



**Superintendent  
Tonia Thompson**

Dear Binghamton Families,

Educate. Empower. Challenge. This is the lasting mission of the Binghamton City School District. In this issue of BToday, we are pleased to bring you numerous examples of our students reaching new heights academically, athletically and personally.

You will find students being challenged to step out of their comfort zones and expand their educational horizons through new programs and activities, like Binghamton High School’s new Robotics Team. As Broome County’s largest school district, we pride ourselves on being leaders and offering an impressive selection of programs and opportunities to propel our students toward lifelong success.

We empower our students by embracing their diversity. We value and appreciate the unique and interesting backgrounds of each and every student and faculty member. It is essential that we take the time to truly know and learn from one another. By sharing experiences and meaningful conversations, we build trust, understanding and strong relationships.

Here, you will read about how we are building school communities through the use of Restorative Practices. We are proud that John Whalen, the district’s Restorative Practices Coordinator and a former East Middle School teacher, has recently authored a book that aims to help educators implement Restorative Practices in school environments. We are proud to be a progressive district that is in the forefront of implementing a practice we strongly believe in. I have experienced firsthand the tremendous and positive difference Restorative Practices have made here in Binghamton, and I am eager to see this approach become the standard in the education industry.

You will learn how we are educating, empowering and challenging students through our recently adopted PLAAY program. PLAAY, or Preventing Long Term Anger and Aggression in Youth, teaches coping skills that help children perform better both inside and outside the classroom. PLAAY strives to reduce trauma by teaching healthy habits such as stress management strategies, and steps to take toward resolving conflicts related to race or gender. The students aren’t the only ones learning and growing from their involvement in this program. Cultural literacy is a fundamental component of PLAAY, and the staff who serve as ‘coaches’ have gained an invaluable insight and understanding from the students they work with. In fact, these faculty offer professional learning opportunities to their colleagues.

Whether it is a student, teacher, colleague, or neighbor, take the time to learn about the people around you. There is something worthwhile to be learned from every single person you encounter. Ask questions about where they’ve been, where they are, and where they hope to go, and truly listen to the answers. Recognize the similarities in your personal journeys, and acknowledge and appreciate the differences.

It is an honor and a privilege to lead and work in an environment where educators have as much to learn from our students, as our students do from them. Thank you for your contributions and commitment to the Binghamton City School District community.

With Patriot Pride,

Dr. Tonia Thompson  
Superintendent of Schools

# Binghamton teacher named Health Teacher of the Year

Health Teacher, Kelly Breward was recently chosen as the Central South Zone Health Teacher of the Year for the 17-18 school year. The New York State Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance recognizes a health teacher each year for their excellence in teaching and advocacy for the profession. Breward is being recognized for her dedication to teaching Middle School and High School health education at the Binghamton City School District for the past 30 years. She has implemented many innovative teaching strategies in her classroom, from the use of Chromebooks, Google Classroom and digital breakouts. She has also developed and began teaching a new elective course focused on facilitating deliberations around health topics.



“Kelly is a wonderful example of a professional who is always looking for new strategies to reach her students.”

- Julie Dietrich, Central South Zone President of NYSAHPERD



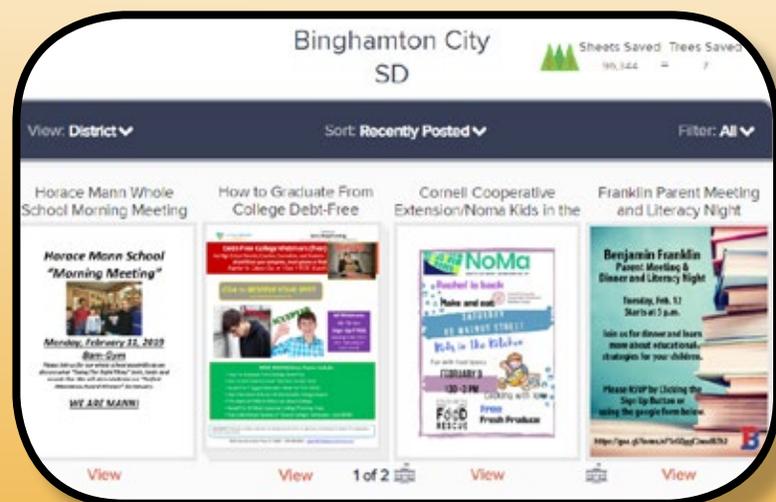
# BCSD steps up school-to-home Communications with Virtual Backpack

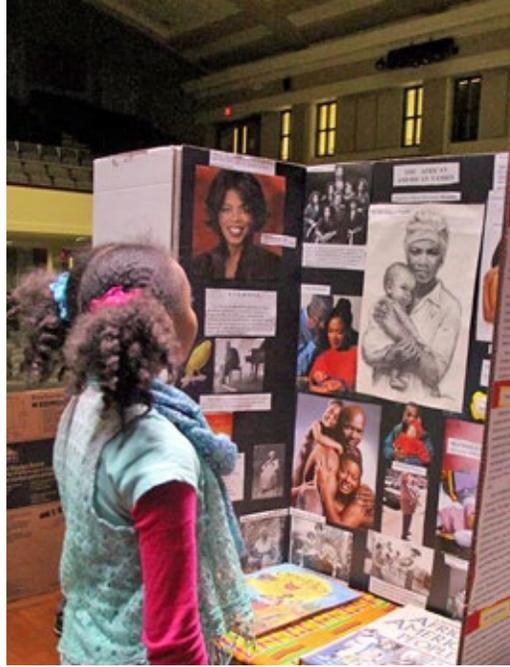


Gone are the days of important school notices getting lost in desks or backpacks, and never making it home to parents. The Binghamton City School District recently launched our new electronic flyer system, Virtual Backpack powered by Peachjar.

Parents now receive full-color, visually engaging newsletters and flyers straight to their emails. You can access flyers for a specific school through the Virtual Backpack button on the school's home page. You can also turn to the Virtual Backpack on the BCSD mobile app to view newsletters and flyers for the entire district.

Virtual Backpack saves time and resources by streamlining school-to-home communication. On average, each school that uses Peachjar saves 84,000 sheets of paper annually. In just the first two months of use, the Binghamton City School District has saved 90,345 sheets of paper. That's 11 whole trees!





# Black History Museum brings culture, education to Ben Franklin Elementary

An impressive collection of African-American history was on display at Benjamin Franklin Elementary School in recognition of Black History Month, courtesy of a Binghamton alumna with a passion for sharing her culture.

Students had an interactive learning experience when their school auditorium was temporarily transformed into an outstanding Black History Museum. Bonita Tarrant has been crafting the display over the last two decades, and it has grown by the year. Today, it includes poster boards, dolls, antiques, and more. Tarrant, a lifelong Binghamton resident and veteran employee of Lourdes Hospital, said she enjoys dedicating her free time to celebrating all the wonderful accomplishments of African-American

history, and sharing them with students. "I've been interested in black history -- my history -- for a long time. I've been collecting these things for about 20 years," Tarrant said. "I do this to make people aware of where we come from, and how far we've come, because we've come a long way."

The exhibit celebrates African-American culture, as well as black people who have made history, like President Barack Obama and Muhammad Ali. Guest speakers also came to celebrate Black History Month. The students even got to hear from a woman who marched with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

"I think it's a great way to know what our history is, and where we came

from," Nakiyah Bryant, a fifth grade student, said. "It's important not just for black people, but for everybody to know our history."

The Black History Museum has also been on display at Lourdes Hospital and the Endicott Visitor's Center. Tarrant said she hopes to bring the exhibit to other community venues, so it can provide education and enjoyment for more audiences.





# BHS senior picked for all-state football team

The high school football career of a standout student athlete is ending on a high note after he was named to the all-state team.

Senior Nick Zikuski was recently selected for Class AA all-state football team. The recognition came courtesy of the New York State Sportswriters Association, an organization of sportswriters from around the state that comes together annually to select the most promising players in high school football.

Zikuski, a key offensive player for the Patriots, was the top pick from Section 4 and earned a spot on the third all-state team. Zikuski said the all-state nod was a proud moment for both himself and Binghamton High School varsity football coach, Mike Ramil.

“It’s huge. Ever since 10th grade, it’s kind of been my dream to get the accolades, and go to the big schools,” he said. “The hard work has finally been paying off, and it’s been showing.”

Zikuski is one of the captains of the varsity team, which finished the 2018 season with a record of 6-4.

Zikuski is still weighing his collegiate options, considering schools such as Colgate University, Wagner College and the University of Buffalo. Zikuski plans on playing college football and pursuing a career in the medical field.

Congratulations, Nick! You’ve made us Patriot Proud!

**“The hard work has finally been paying off, and it’s been showing.”**

- Nick Zikuski

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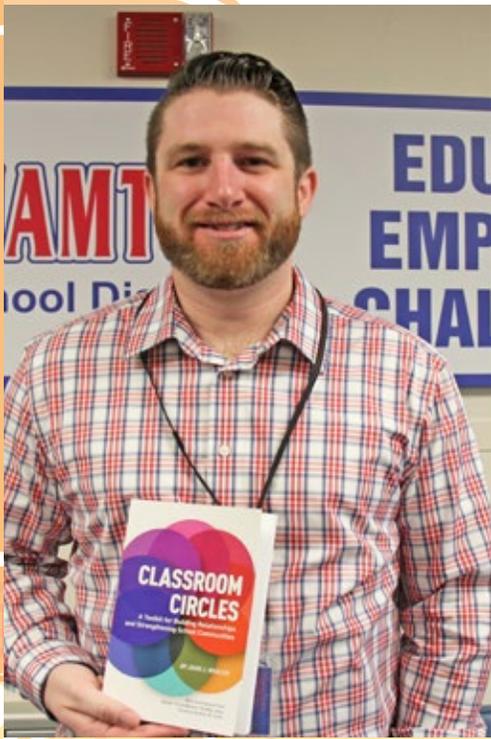
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## BCSD App provides important information at your fingertips

Last year, the Binghamton City School District rolled out its mobile app in order to provide quick access to schedules, events and announcements. This convenient app allows the user access to important school information from their Smartphones anywhere, anytime. You can turn to the app to read school news, view flyers, or even find out what’s for lunch. You can use it to find out about school closings and delays and find out about community alerts.

The Binghamton City School District is continually working to ensure our school-to-home communications are as effective as possible. We’re committed to providing accurate and reliable information every day. The mobile app is free available to download on the Apple App Store and on Google Play. All you have to do is search for Binghamton City School Dist. We encourage our families to take advantage of this great free tool so that you can stay connected and informed.

# BCSD educator pens new book on resolving classroom conflicts through Restorative Practices



structure intended to address conflict and challenging behavior. Members gather in a circle and a talking piece, an object of significance, is passed around as participants strive to define what happened in a particular situation. Rather than focusing on broken rules and assigning punishments, circles address what happened, who was affected, and what steps can be made toward resolution.

book, Whalen said there was not a guide written by educators to help colleagues facilitate circles in their classrooms. The book, which he began writing two years ago, addresses the purpose, components, and different types of classroom circles, and offers tips and strategies for facilitating circles.

John Whalen wears many hats. He's one of the Binghamton City School District's Restorative Practices Coordinators, a former East Middle School teacher, and now, he's added author to his resume.

In his book, Whalen suggests a more proactive approach: implementing circles as a relationship building tool before conflict arises. Circles promote shared experiences, strong relationships and a sense of community, which ultimately prevents and reduces conflict.

Whalen has not only taught Restorative Practices in Binghamton schools, but to educators around the country, facilitating over 700 classroom circles over the past four school years and introducing the concept of Restorative Practices to over 2,000 teachers.

Whalen's newly published book, "Classroom Circles," is a resource to help educators bring Restorative Practices into their classrooms. Restorative Practices offer a framework for building community within classrooms. This is done through the implementation of 'circles', a

Restorative Practices captured Whalen's interest as a member of the district's Diversity Task Force five years ago, and the concept, which is fairly new in the education field, has since captured his heart. Prior to the publishing of this

"I knew that this was an approach that would really be beneficial to the district," Whalen said. "It's been really exciting being on other community venues, so it can provide education and enjoyment for more audiences.

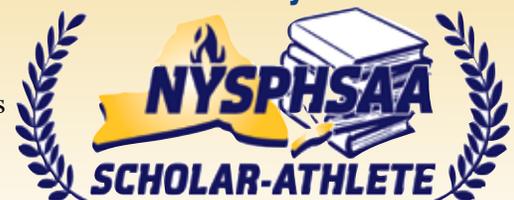
## Seven fall BHS teams named Scholar-Athlete Teams

This fall seven teams at BHS were named Scholar-Athlete teams. To qualify as a Scholar-Athlete team, 75 percent of a team's roster must have an average GPA of 90 or above. In New York NYSPHSAA recognized 3,444 Scholar-Athlete teams and 46,549 individuals. In total 632 schools across the state participated in the Scholar-Athlete program.

"We would like to congratulate our student-athletes and member schools," said Dr. Robert Zayas, NYSPHSAA Executive Director. "We are extremely proud of this program which recognizes the student-athletes who excel in the classroom. We continue to see what hard working and dedicated student-athletes we have in New York each season and this shows how much NYSPHSAA student-athletes are committed to their education."

*Congratulations to the following teams:*

- Boys Golf
- Boys Soccer
- Girls Cross Country
- Girls Soccer
- Girls Swimming and Diving
- Girls Tennis
- Girls Volleyball



# CHALLENGE

# Students at EMS create messages of cheer for fellow student injured in car accident

When East Middle School 6th grader Jariah Durgala was hit by a car in October, the prognosis was bleak. He was airlifted to Syracuse hospital and since then has been recovering and relearning abilities that no one thought he would ever regain. His fellow students at EMS have missed the 6th grader and have been keeping him in their thoughts. In November, they sent Thanksgiving cards and on Dec. 20 they made Christmas cards to send up to him at Syracuse. Staff members at EMS have also been raising funds to help Jariah's family with all of the expenses they have been incurring due to the accident. Jariah was transferred to Albany, where he began additional rehabilitation and the family is hopeful for his return to the area as soon as possible.



Jariah's family has also set up fundraisers through NBT bank, gofundme and by selling t-shirts.

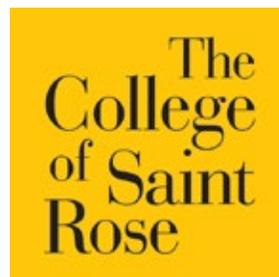
<https://www.gofundme.com/jariahstrong>



**CHALLENGE**

# BHS seniors sign letter of intent

Congratulations to BHS senior Eddie Baker. Baker signed his letter of intent on Monday, Jan. 14 and will be playing Division II lacrosse for the Golden Knights at The College of Saint Rose. Baker has been playing lacrosse since he was in elementary school, he also plays hockey and golf for the Patriots. He plans on majoring in business administration. Congratulations also to BHS senior Bailee Jones who signed her letter of intent to play volleyball at the College of Saint Rose on Feb. 28. Bailee intends on studying forensic psychology at school next year.



## Music + Movement = Fun!

Students at Horace Mann Elementary have been participating in aerobic drumming classes. Using simple objects like exercise balls, buckets and drum sticks, the students have been recognizing beats and patterns in songs. It's a great way for them to express themselves through music and movement while getting exercise.



EMPOWER

# New Robotics team sharpens BHS students STEM skills

Electrical engineering, computer engineering and mathematics; these are just a few skills that Binghamton High School students have been using as they create working robots for the school's new robotics team.

The idea of creating a robotics team came from a Binghamton University sophomore with a passion for STEM. Alison Garrity, who is originally from the Rochester area, is a computer science major at BU. When Garrity moved to Binghamton to attend college, she realized there were few local schools with robotics teams that offered students the chance to compete in large competitions, the way she did as a high school student. Garrity said her high school robotics team was fun, competitive and left her with valuable technical and teamwork skills. It inspired her to bring that same type of experience to local students.

“I knew that my end goal was to start a FIRST Tech Challenge team, and I decided on the BCSD because I want to help the community at its core and give as many students opportunity as I could,” Garrity said. “I reached out to the school, and they were happy to work with me to start a team.”

Garrity is mainly working with Upward Bound Math and Science (UBMS), a program through the university that provides STEM-based extracurricular programming and tutoring to students at BHS. So far, Garrity's team has hosted workshops to build interest among BHS students and get them more comfortable with the idea of tackling hands-on engineering projects. As part of a recent project, the students put together small robots and learned about how they work.

“The most rewarding part of this process has been seeing that the students at our events are having fun. Engineering

can seem like an intimidating field of study, but I want more students to know that anyone can be an engineer,” Garrity said. “My aim is to help students discover their interests and motivate their decisions regarding their futures. If I can make even one student want to pursue a career in STEM, then I will have succeeded in what I'm trying to do.”

The robotics team has been well received by Binghamton students, like junior Angelique Williams.

“I love the thrill of not only competition, but also of learning from new people,” Williams said. “I love anything to do with art, motors and electronics. It's really exciting.”

Next year, Garrity plans to take a team of 8-10 students to a large competition. To make sure the team is as prepared and successful for that as possible, they plan to enter at least one robot at SUNY Broome's Southern Tier Robotics Competition in April.



# Patriots Win!



# ter Concerts



# 2018 Patriot Scholarship Awarded

Binghamton High School senior Kaziah Ross was named the winner of the prestigious 2018 Patriot Scholarship. Ross' guidance counselor Jennifer Farrell nominated her for the award and said that she is a true representative of what Binghamton High School is all about.

"What sets Kaziah apart from others is her willingness to volunteer as a role model" Farrell said. "There is not a better candidate for this scholarship award."

The scholarship was established at BHS in the late 1980's by an anonymous donor who wanted to assist a graduating senior to further his/her education in

a way he/she might not financially be able to do. The recipient must be in the top 100 of the class and have exhibited good attendance, but more importantly the recipient must have made a positive contribution to the school community.

Ross is a Full International Baccalaureate Diploma candidate and is currently ranked within the top 30 in her class. She is a five-year member and captain of the varsity basketball team as well as the BHS outdoor track team. She has participated in cheerleading for two years and she is an active volunteer for various programs and organizations. She will graduate with an Advanced Regents diploma and a Rod Serling Fine Arts Minor.

She fully intends to participate in basketball at the collegiate level and wants to pursue a career in biomedical engineering. Ross is looking at a number of colleges including Buffalo University, the University of Maine and Lehigh University.

"Whenever I see her she is always smiling and spreading joy," BHS Associate Principal Miriam Purdy said. "She has a personality that makes the world a better place. She's the whole package."



## BHS student participates in moving PSA about gun violence

Binghamton High School student Trevor Terry is using his dance talents to send a powerful message about gun violence.

Last summer, Terry, a junior at BHS, appeared in an emotional video PSA that was directed and choreographed by Mia Michaels of “So You Think You Can Dance.” The PSA is a project of Z ARTISTS GROUP, a youth dance company that raises social awareness through the arts. The video was inspired by the 2018 mass shooting at a high school in Parkland, Florida, as one of the victims was a dancer.

Terry said the opportunity was presented when Michaels was seeking male dancers to participate in the video, and connected with the Perkins School of Dance, the Norwich studio where Terry is a student. Terry was chosen for the video, and traveled to New York City for

a two-day shoot.

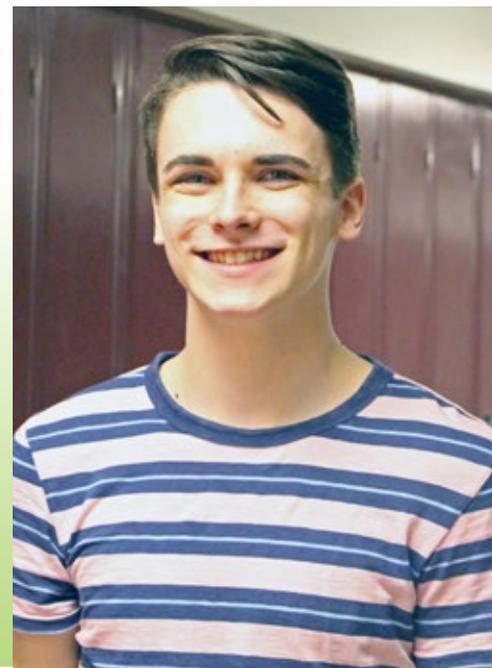
The compelling video begins with an intense depiction of a school shooting. The video then goes in reverse, as Terry and his peers perform contemporary dance to the harmonic sound of a children’s choir, singing Keane’s “Somewhere Only We Know.” Terry said the message struck a personal chord with him.

“[Gun violence] is a horrific thing,” Terry said. “It was very intense to step into their shoes and sort of feel what they felt.”

It was an emotional experience, but also an inspirational one.

“It was amazing. All the dancers that were part of it were incredibly talented,” he said. “We all felt such a passionate connection to what we were doing.”

Terry said he hopes to lobby against violence again in the future.



## Mann students celebrate African culture

An African dance-drumming ensemble brought an unforgettable cultural experience to Horace Mann Elementary School during Black History Month.

Nukporfe, an ensemble from Binghamton University, performed a selection of recreational dances from various ethnic groups in Ghana, a country located along the coast of West Africa. The show began with spectacular traditional songs and dances, some fast, some slow. Each piece featured specific instruments, costumes, songs,

and dance steps from the Ewe and Ga ethnic groups. The highlight of the show came at the end, when students and staff leapt to their feet to dance with the performers.

Samuel Elikem Nyamuame, an African Studies professor at the university, says it’s a fun way to educate students about different cultures.

“The idea is to have students do something they aren’t used to. They get a chance to get up and learn a song or learn a movement and understand the

context of that moment,” Nyamuame said. “Going home and teaching their own siblings and parents is part of the whole fun.”

The concert was directed by Nyamuame and James Burns, a Binghamton parent who serves as Chair of the university’s Music Department.



# Proud of our Patriots





# BHS students showcase musical talents at Area All-State Music Festival

The musical abilities of five Binghamton High School students were recently on display at the Area All-State music festival, which took place on February 1st and 2nd at Binghamton University.

Junior violinist Megan McNamara was a member of the Symphony Orchestra. The orchestra was comprised of nearly 100 students from NYSSMA Zone 3, which runs from Syracuse to Binghamton. For acceptance, Megan's score from her April 2018 New York State School Music Association (NYSSMA) adjudication was submitted for consideration.

Four choral students, Paige McNett, Jeannie Sebesta, AJ Massey and Trevor Terry, represented BHS at Area All-State. The singers had to perform a level 6 NYSSMA solo last spring and receive high marks to be chosen for the festival.

Another Binghamton student, senior violinist Sophia Klin, received a major recognition when she was selected for the All-State Festival. All-State is the highest honor offered to students who participate in the spring NYSSMA Solo Festivals around New York State. Sophia performed a level 6 violin solo and earned the score of 100. Currently, Sophia is a member of the Binghamton Youth Symphony, the Binghamton High School Orchestra and the school's string quartet.

Congratulations to these students on their hard work and dedication! You've made BCSD proud.



*Megan McNamara*



*AJ Massey, Trevor Terry, Paige McNett, Jeannine Sebesta*



*Sophia Klin*

# PLAAY program promotes coping skills and cultural awareness



One of the program's key components is mentorship. The mentors are high school students, and the mentees are students from East and West middle schools. Being an example for younger students motivates the mentors to improve their own behavior and academics, and their own personal experiences grant them the ability to relate to their mentees.

"We have an insight as to what they're going through, and we can help them through the process," mentor and senior Amya Ryan said. "We understand and we try to help them make a better decision than we might have made ourselves at their age."

PLAAY has made a tremendous difference in the lives of its participants, demonstrated by improved school attendance, reduced suspension rates and improved relationships among youth, their peers and teachers. According to SAMHSA, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, the Binghamton City School District has become a national model for school and community-based mental health care for youth at risk for academic failure and juvenile justice involvement.

The benefits of PLAAY, which enforces cultural pride and racial and cultural literacy in its interventions, extend beyond the students.

"A lot of people think it's just about the kids. It's more so about the adults who are working with the kids," Ramil said. "It's about us becoming better as we learn to help students who are dealing with long-term aggression and anger, and facing issues of culture and race."

The PLAAY program was developed by Dr. Howard C. Stevenson of the University of Philadelphia. Stevenson's research has demonstrated a dramatic decline in aggressive behavior among program participants.

A new program within the Binghamton City School District is making a positive impact in student lives by combining athletics with cultural awareness.

PLAAY, which stands for Preventing Long-term Anger and Aggression in Youth, aims to decrease aggressive behavior by teaching valuable coping skills and in-the-moment stress management strategies. Binghamton High School teacher and football coach Mike Ramil, who oversees the program, explains that sports offer a setting where conflicts naturally arise, and can be immediately addressed.

"We use the lessons learned in sports to emphasize becoming a better student, and basically, becoming a better citizen," Ramil said. "They use sports activities to help them learn to deal with stress and anxiety."



**CHALLENGE**

# 2019 Valedictorian & Salutatorian

Simon Joyner will be the valedictorian for the Binghamton High School class of 2019. Joyner plans to study civil engineering.

“The school I was attending didn’t offer as many programs and they didn’t have Project Lead the Way,” Joyner said. “I just thought I would have more opportunities in Binghamton especially toward the end of high school.”

Joyner has taken all of the Project Lead the Way pre-engineering classes offered at the high school and has earned college credit from RIT.

Joyner is involved in the National

Honor Society, Math Honor Society, Technology Club and he also is part of a competitive air-rifle team outside of school.

He is applying to prestigious colleges like Cornell, Clarkson, University of Buffalo, RPI and the University of Vermont but he has not made a decision yet about where he will be studying in the fall.

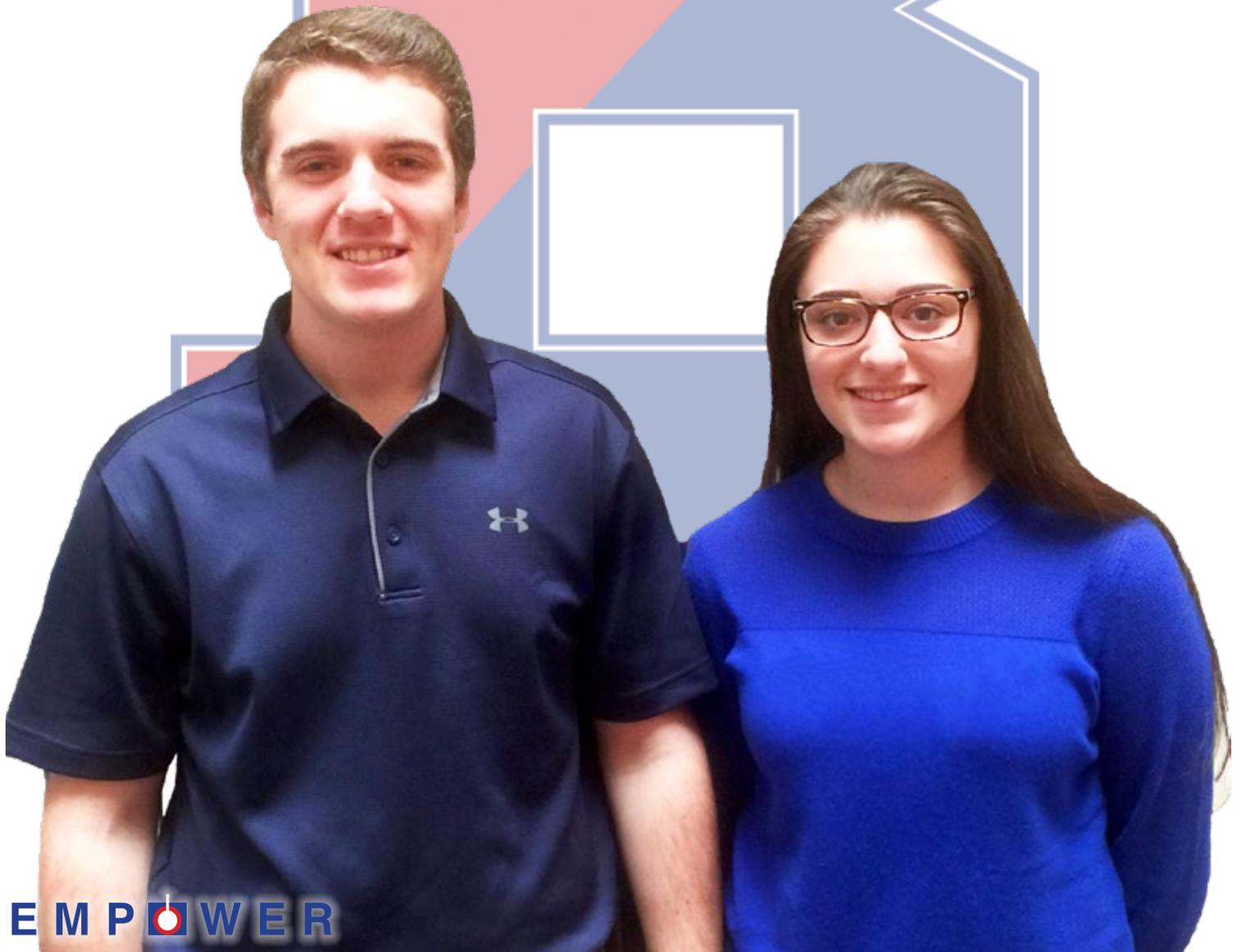
Samantha Tuberman has been named the salutatorian for the BHS class of 2019. Tuberman said she was very excited to learn that she would be the salutatorian.

“It feels nice to know that all of my hard

work has paid off, but it’s also nerve wracking thinking of giving a speech at graduation,” she said.

Tuberman has been involved in many clubs and activities in the school. She has played varsity tennis since she was in 8th grade. She is in the National Honor Society, Science Club, Student Council and is also a Full-IB student.

She plans on studying biology or biomedical engineering at school next year. She has applied to Northeastern and New York University but is still undecided about which she will choose.



# Binghamton students strut their stuff in formalwear at annual fashion show

It was satins and sequins galore at Binghamton High School's Sisterz 4 Sisters club's second annual Fashion Show.

The show, held in the Binghamton High School cafeteria on Feb. 8, featured prom dresses from Tom's Coffee, Cards, and Gifts in Binghamton, Ever After Bridal in Endicott, as well as dresses from the BHS donation closet. A dress donation drive held at the school in January brought in more than 300 dresses. Students also modeled tuxedos from Men's Warehouse, and Principal Kevin Richman's dog made an unforgettable runway walk in formalwear.

There was even more to love about this event than beautiful dresses. At the end of the show, students had the opportunity to select a dress from the donation closet, many of which were brand new with tags.

"The highlight of this fashion show is donating dresses afterward," Steve Giannini, a business teacher and co-advisor for Sisterz 4 Sisters, said. "It allows every girl the opportunity

to attend prom without worrying about the cost of the dress."

Sixteen students took home prom dresses after the show, and 30 dresses were donated to Ever After for the boutique's giveaway event. Additionally, dozens of dresses will be donated to Harpursville High School for its giveaway.

Students put a great deal of hard work into pulling the show together. Many of the desserts were created by culinary students at BHS, and models were beautified by the BOCES cosmetology department.





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