The Cutting Edge

**A community newsletter from Fair Lawn Public Schools,
An award-winning, nationally recognized school district**

www.fairlawnschools.org Winter 2022

DUAL PURPOSE TENTS INSTALLED AT ALL FAIR LAWN SCHOOLS

The Fair Lawn Public School District opened for the 2021-2022 school year with a creative solution to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19 during lunch by installing outdoor tents at all 10 schools. A total of 32 heavy duty fire-retardant tents were purchased for students to dine in and for teachers to use for outdoor classrooms.

Thomas Jefferson Middle School students during lunch on Sept. 3, 2021.

"Our goal with the tents and tables was to ensure that we keep our doors open," said Superintendent Nick Norcia. "If the tents and tables are going to help us by spreading students out, and keeping them outside, it was an investment worth taking."

The 40-by-20-foot canopy tents are each able to accommodate eight lunch tables. Schools with a larger student population – both middle schools and Henry B. Milnes Elementary – installed four tents that can accommodate 256 students, while Edison School's one tent can hold 43 students. Six tents were installed in the interior courtyard of the high school.

Accommodating indoor lunch during the 2019-2020 school year added to the list of obstacles many school districts faced. The district began troubleshooting a plan last spring with its architect to think outside the box to address lunch for 5,400 students.

"Every step we can take to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in schools and keep our students safe and our schools open is a step in the right direction," said Superintendent Nick Norcia.

DISTRICT AMENDS GOALS FOR 2021-2022 SCHOOL YEAR

After the district sent a survey to parents and staff in August asking them to provide input on the district's goals for the 2021-2022 school year, both groups sited mental health as the top priority for the school year.

More than 1,800 people responded to the survey, accounting for one-third of parents in the district.

The Fair Lawn Board of Education passed the following goals on Sept. 23, in order of importance based on the survey:

- Mental Health
- Social-Emotional Learning
- Addressing Learning Gaps
- College and Career Readiness
- Assessment to Guide Instruction
- Educational Technology

Social-Emotional Learning and Mental Health

Assistant Superintendent of Student Services Camille DeFranco said the district would increase mental health initiatives at all grade levels from K-12, as well as self-care for district staff, and more general mental health workshops for parents from Care Plus NJ (via Zoom). The

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NEW SUPERVISOR OF COUNSELING AND STUDENT WELLNESS JOINS FAIR LAWN'S SCHOOL DISTRICT

Brenda S. Gupta was appointed Supervisor of School Counseling and Student Wellness for the Fair Lawn Board of Education, effective July 1, 2021. Filling a new position within the district, Mrs. Gupta will create a comprehensive school counseling program for all students to receive and access counseling programs and supervise the district's school counselors and nurses. She will be reporting directly to Camille DeFranco, Assistant Superintendent of Student Services.

Prior to joining Fair Lawn Schools, Mrs. Gupta worked as a school counselor in Middlesex County and was employed at South Plainfield High School, Edison High School, and as Supervisor of Guidance and School Counseling, as well as the district Student Information Systems Administrator for the Metuchen Board of Education.

She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology and Sociology and a Master of Education in School Counseling, both from Rutgers University. Mrs. Gupta is currently a doctoral candidate in Counseling from Montclair State University. Her dissertation topic focuses on the current experiences of Indian parents who have autistic children and how those experiences influence the acquisition of services. She also holds certifications as a Director of School Counseling Services, Supervisor, and is trained in administering the Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule (ADOS-2) assessment.

Mrs. Gupta is married and resides in Middlesex County, N.J. In her spare time, she enjoys spending time with family and friends, baking and traveling.

> Mrs. Gupta is passionate about the field of school counseling and believes that every counselor's skillset is unique and is designed to help students develop positive self-concepts, effective decision-making skills, and accountability for their actions.

NEW SCHOOL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR/BOARD SECRETARY JOINS FAIR LAWN'S SCHOOL DISTRICT

John A. Serapiglia Jr. was appointed School Business Administrator/Board Secretary for the Fair Lawn Board of Education, effective Sept. 29. Mr. Serapiglia Jr. will manage the business affairs of the district. He will be reporting directly to Nicholas J. Norcia, Superintendent of Fair Lawn Schools.

Mr. Serapiglia Jr. brings more than 14 years of experience working as a School Business Administrator, most recently serving on the Passaic County Manchester Regional and Haledon Boards of Education since 2011. From 2007-2011, he served as the Business Administrator/Board Secretary for the Denville Board of Education. In 2000, he began his career working in the business office at Bergen County Technical Schools in Paramus, N.J., where he served as the Assistant to the Business Administrator/Operations Manager until 2007. He has served as an instructor, as well as mentor, for the New Jersey Association of School Business Officials and taught a finance class for the Business Administrator Certification since 2017. In 2020, he was an adjunct professor teaching school finance at Montclair State University.

He holds a Bachelor of Sciences/Business Management degree from Rutgers University, and a Masters of Business Administration from the University of Phoenix Online MBA program. He also holds a standard certificate/license as a school business Administrator.

Mr. Serapiglia Jr. is married to Rosalie Serapiglia and they have three children, twin girls and a boy; they reside in Westfield, N.J. In his spare time, he enjoys traveling, spending time at the Jersey shore, reading, and playing with his children.

> My goal is to assist in any way I can to make Fair Lawn the top ranked school district in New Jersey," said John Serapiglia Jr. "I plan on doing that by finding efficiencies within the budget to ensure money is effectively spent, that no dollar is wasted, while providing the best products and services to the students of Fair Lawn.

EMOTIONAL HOMECOMING FOR LYNCREST STUDENT

There was not a dry eye on 17th Street in Fair Lawn on Sept. 22.

Family, friends, and neighbors gathered at the D'Angelo home on 17th Street to welcome 9-year-old Aiden D'Angelo home after an injury and spending 3.5 months in the hospital and rehabilitation center.

Joining the welcome-home ceremony were Superintendent Nick Norcia and Lyncrest Principal Kelly Diee, along with dozens of Fair Lawn police cars, firetrucks, area police department vehicles (Elmwood Park, Emerson, and Garfield), who all paraded by in their cars. Aiden's classmates waved homemade signs and some handed presents to Aiden's mother, Jessica, as they drove by. Aiden and his friends cheered from the family's front yard.

"I want to thank the community. We're just overwhelmed. I can't express how grateful we are for everyone's support – police, fire, Superintendent Norcia – it goes down the line," said a tearful Joe D'Angelo, Aiden's father. "We couldn't be more together as a community. This is what we need."

The first thing Aiden did when he arrived home was open the hundreds of letters he received, as well as presents.

"I got lots of gifts, a basketball, sneakers and a Michael Jordan uniform," beamed Aiden.

He then played with his best friend, Alexander, who lives across the street.

"I am so happy he's home," said Alexander Bialy, 8, whose family moved to Fair Lawn last year. "Aiden was the first person I met when I moved in. He said 'hi,' and let's be friends."

Joe D'Angelo, Aiden D'Angelo, Luca D'Angelo, Jessica D'Angelo

Aiden hopes to return to Lyncrest School soon.

District Amends Goals Cont'd from page 1

district is working on creating a crisis response manual across all grade levels to increase fluidity in screening and identifying intervention for students. The district has partnered with the Graf Center for Integrative Medicine at Englewood Health Hospital to provide district staff with self-care training.

The mental health initiative will include bringing more clinicians and guidance counselors into the classroom to work with students on life skills and more specifically, coping skills, anger management, self-care, and responsible decision making. The district also hired more mental health clinicians for students who may need middle ground and intensive services.

Addressing Learning Gaps

To address concerns over last year's remote learning due to the pandemic, the district will be focused on identifying and addressing learning gaps. Assistant Superintendent of Education Dr. Natalie Lacatena said there will be assessments and constant progress monitoring to guide Fair Lawn students toward the mastery of The New Jersey Student Learning Standards.

To identify and address students' strengths and/or learning gaps, the district will be using LinkIt!, a K-12 assessment technology platform, to inform instruction and track data analysis trends at the beginning of the school year, in the winter, and at the end of the year. Furthermore, Start Strong assessments, which replaced the New Jersey Student Learning Assessment, were administered in October to benchmark students' literacy and math skills. These assessments will be used to help identify individual needs, grade level trends, and track growth.

After-school learning academies will begin in January.

College and Career Readiness & Educational Technology

The district is also looking to expand its college and career readiness programs that help students to identify and plan their future education and career goals. The district is in the process of expanding its Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs at the high school by looking to offer an accounting and finance sequence of courses. The district is also updating its personal financial literacy course by adding content that addresses the psychology behind finances, which is a new NJ Standard this year. Career readiness and life literacy skills will be incorporated across the curriculum to help students think globally, become critical thinkers, communicate in a technological world, and lastly, analyze the veracity of online sources.

An enhanced eighth-grade program will be developed for students to better understand all the opportunities, course offerings and electives that are available at the high school level, as well as graduation requirements. Naviance, a comprehensive K-12 college and career readiness software program that is available at the high school, will now be introduced to eighth-graders.

FAIR LAWN SCHOOL COMMUNITY TAKES PART IN WALK/BIKE TO SCHOOL DAY

Schools Debut New Bike Racks

All Fair Lawn elementary and middle schools participated in **National Walk/Bike to School Day**, which is celebrated nationally as National Walk to School Day on Oct. 6. This popular event is something the entire community looks forward to as they walk/bike to school with their families and friends.

Participants walked or biked to school to support the importance of creating safe routes to school and increasing physical activity among children and teens. Some gathered at various fire houses across town and walked to school as a group with their child's principal.

The event was not held last year due to COVID-19 restrictions. This year, there were bikes seen all over the district, as well as scooters and motorized electric bikes. Milnes, MMS, TJMS, Warren Point, and Westmoreland debuted several new bike racks.

The annual event is an initiative from The National Center for Safe Routes to School and is used to encourage families to celebrate the benefits of exercise, and also raise awareness of the importance of safer routes for walking and biking.

Fourth-grader Gianna Jerchower wearing her favorite bike helmet. Westmoreland had more than 125 students and families participate in National Walk and Bike to School Day. Westmoreland added one new bike rack.

More than 80 students, staff, and parents walked from Fire House #1 on George Street to Forrest School.

Lyncrest third-grade student Madison Dechiaro and Officer John Frasco pose for a photo on Walk/Bike to School Day. More than 64 students walked to school and seven rode their bikes.

TJMS ordered three new additional bike racks, located near the town's tennis courts, to accommodate the dozens of students who ride their bike to school each day.

More than 50 families gathered at Fire House 3 and walked with Principal Sue Gons. In photo from left: Principal Gons, fourth-grade student Nicholas Verheeck, and Officer Sean Talt. Warren Point added one new additional bike rack.

MMS added a new bike rack and had 35 bikers who participated in the Walk/Bike to School Day. In photo from left: eighth-grader Aiden Echeverria and sixth-grader Ayden Kolenovic. MMS had about 80 walkers across all grades.

Radburn School had more than 50 bicyclists and parents joined together for a spin around Radburn Park. Radburn added two new additional bike racks. Principal Jill Lindsay walked with a small group of children around the loop. The Radburn PTA collected donations (four boxes of food) for the Fair Lawn Pantry and sold coffee and donuts for a fourth-grade fundraiser.

WALK BIKE TO SCHOOL

Walk/Bike to School Day is a global event that involves communities from more than 40 countries walking and biking to school on the same day. It began in 1997 as a one-day event. Over time, this event has become part of a movement for year-round safe routes to school and a celebration – with record breaking participation – each October. Today, thousands of schools across America – from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico – participate every October.

BMX Performers Visit Lyncrest & Westmoreland to Promote Positive Messages and Showcase Bike Skills

On Thursday, Oct. 7, Lyncrest and Westmoreland schools enjoyed a special visit from the Dialed Action Sports Team, a provider of action sports performances and educational school assemblies.

Students and staff enjoyed the BMX bike show at an outdoor assembly as a unified learning community, and it was the perfect addition to the annual Week of Respect. The show incorporated the 3 R's to combat bullying: Report, React, and Refuse.

The music and cheering could be heard blocks away as students cheered on the stuntmen who showed off their interactive BMX bike stunts. A professional BMX rider even jumped over brave staff members.

The importance of bicycle safety was also addressed and incorporated into the assembly.

Each year during the first week in October, schools across the state engage in activities and learning opportunities to highlight the **Week of Respect**. Each year, students are immersed in a variety of fun and creative learning experiences which cause them to think critically about how we can show respect in our homes, schools and greater community.

From left, Principal Christy Dell'Aglio and teacher Yvonne Visocky, both at Westmoreland School, volunteer to sit on top of the bike ramp as an aerial stunt is performed.

Thank you to the Westmoreland and Lyncrest PTOs for bringing this fun and engaging learning experience to the Lyncrest and Westmoreland school communities.

NICHE RELEASES ITS 2022 SCHOOL RANKINGS

Fair Lawn Public Schools ranked 33rd best in the state for K-12 schools according to Niche, the ranking and review site based in Pittsburgh. The company released its eighth edition of rankings in September 2021 for K-12 public schools, private schools, and school districts nationwide.

Each New Jersey district received a letter grade in the following categories: Academics; Diversity; Teachers; College Prep; Clubs & Activities; Health & Safety; Administration; Sports; Food; and Resources & Facilities. Fair Lawn Schools received an overall Niche grade of an A+.

The Niche rankings combine user input, ratings from current students, alumni, and parents, and quantitative data from sources like the U.S. Department of Education to evaluate teachers, resources and facilities, extracurricular activity opportunities, and more, according to Niche.

Fair Lawn Schools Ranked 33rd in State!

2022 NICHE BEST SCHOOLS

www.niche.com

FIRE SAFETY

Grades K-1 students at Forrest received a visit from Fair Lawn's Fire and Rescue Squad #1 in October to learn about fire prevention and safety as part of National Fire Prevention Month.

Local firefighters taught kindergartners life-saving fire prevention and safety tips. They also displayed their truck and showcased a uniform while familiarizing the students with fire alarms and when to dial 911.

The theme for this year's Fire Prevention Week was Learn the Sounds of Fire Safety. Firefighters spoke to students about the important actions they can take to keep themselves safe when they hear a fire alarm in school, in their home, and in a car.

Firefighters presented their real-life safety knowledge in a fun and engaging atmosphere. Students had the opportunity to walk in the fire truck (big hit), touch a firefighter's gear, and listen as firefighters spoke to the students with their helmet and oxygen pack on.

The yearly program also extends the school's Community Helpers Unit in social studies and overall safety units in health.

FORREST STUDENTS LEARN ABOUT FIRE SAFETY

Thank You Fair Lawn's Fire and Rescue Squad #1

Kindergarten students from Mrs. Jodi Barry's, Miss Brittny DeCotiis' and Miss Jenn Leimbach's classes, along with volunteers from Fair Lawn Fire and Rescue Station #1 and Officer Gerard Graziano.

MMS Inducts New NJHS Members

Thirty students were inducted to Memorial Middle School's National Junior Honor Society (NJHS) on Oct. 28. An after-school ceremony was attended by inductees and their families, MMS administration, the NJHS advisor and faculty council.

"The Memorial Middle School chapter of the National Junior Honor Society is so excited for our 30 newly inducted members! It is no secret that the past year and a half has been a difficult time period for all of us, so seeing our students excel under such circumstances is impressive and worthy of praise. We look forward to all that they will accomplish this year as full members of our prestigious organization," said Danielle Do, faculty advisor for the NJHS at MMS, and math teacher.

From Left in 1st Row: Darren Hamilton, Caitlyn Bischak, Olivia Merriam, Jacob Laffman, Vivian Lin, Karanjit Singh, Chloe Quach, Howard Chu, Isabel Knapp, Ria Patel, Juhitha Redroutu, Mia Estrella, Ashley Tarazona, Svara Raut, Stephanie Orr, Asenath Arshynova, Arnav Adepu. From Right in 2nd Row: Mark Whritenour, Johan Ajoy, Nethra Palanisamy, Christian Kubis, Sofia Lockmeyer, Jenika Khatri, Paige Byrne, Alexandra Piela, Aleksandra Lekhanova, Francesca Polidoro, Sheyenne Gromek, Nathan Galitz. Not pictured: Raunak Singh

The NJHS seeks to elevate a school's commitment to the values of scholarship, service, leadership, character, and citizenship. As part of their service commitment, students assisted the Fair Lawn Police Department with their annual holiday toy drive in December.

Congratulations to the NJHS students and thank you to Mrs. Do and the MMS NJHS Faculty Council: Ryan Harrington (Math teacher), Marilyn Coats-Thomas (Social Studies teacher), Mary Pensallorto (Language Arts teacher), Steve Thompson (Social Studies teacher) and Jillian Garrett (Language Arts teacher).

NEW MASCOT MAKES DEBUT AT SASSO FIELD

The new Captain Cutter mascot made its debut at Senior Day at Sasso Field on Sept. 20. The updated modern design was long overdue and well received by students and families attending the Fair Lawn High School football game against Bergen Tech (Cutters won 14-7).

"The new mascot design is intended to promote Fair Lawn pride at our football games and other home sports games," said Cory Robinson, Director Fair Lawn Athletics. "It's also great for our future Cutters, the elementary and middle school students, who attend our games."

The mascot made appearances at all home football games, on Senior

Days, and will be at the various varsity sports games held at home throughout the year.

The previous Captain Cutter mascot was cleaned and restored, and will be displayed in the high school's athletic office.

Go Cutters!

MUSIC IN OUR SCHOOLS

The Fair Lawn Music Department is excited to announce its monthly Music Minute Movement to share insight on the variety of music programs in Fair Lawn Schools. Each month, the Music Minute will present the sights, sounds, and spirit of the district's music program in a highly visual format.

The inaugural videos have included an introduction to Fair Lawn's music teachers; the musical contributions and influence of Hispanic Americans; famous Salsa singers and learning lessons about Salsa music; and students at Forrest School dancing to Halloween songs.

"We want to highlight and promote our diverse music programs available from elementary school to high school. Our music programs include vocal, instrumental

band, instrumental orchestra, marching band, indoor percussion and American Musical Theatre. There is a music program for every type of student and even with COVID-19 constraints, our music programs are growing and adapting in order to provide amazing music experiences for our students and our community," said Liliana Lopez, supervisor of World Language, Music and ELL.

Take a music minute to watch our students in music making on the district's Facebook page (@FairLawnPublicSchoolDistrict) or search the hashtag #fairlawnmusicminute!

CONGRATULATIONS TO FAIR LAWN HIGH SCHOOL'S COMMENDED SCHOLARS IN THE 2022 NATIONAL MERIT SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Fair Lawn High School is proud to announce that 10 of its seniors of the Class of 2022 have been recognized for outstanding achievement in the **2022 National Merit Scholarship Program.**

These 10 students earned accolades as Commended Scholars. They scored within the top 50,000 of all students nationwide who took the PSAT exam in 2020.

The Commended Students from Fair Lawn High School are: Devin Baynes, Nicholas Della Pesca, Andy Granovski, Dania Jeon, Hannah Lu, Kasey Murray, Nafees Shaheed, Katerina Sorokin, Daniel Wilk, and Justin Zhai.

"Those being named Commended Students have demonstrated outstanding potential for academic success," commented a spokesperson for the National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC). "These students represent a valuable national resource; recognizing their accomplishments, as well as the key role their schools play in their academic development, is vital to the advancement of educational excellence in our nation. We hope that this recognition will help broaden their educational opportunities

Commended Scholars from left: Devin Baynes, Nicholas Della Pesca, Andy Granovski, Dania Jeon, Principal Paul Gorski, Hannah Lu, Kasey Murray, Nafees Shaheed, Katerina Sorokin, Daniel Wilk, and Justin Zhai.

and encourage them as they continue their pursuit of academic success."

Principal Paul Gorski observed, "Having so many students achieve this milestone demonstrates their commitment to achievement and the leadership they show within the academic environment at Fair Lawn High School. These members of the Class of 2022, and all their classmates, have bright futures ahead!"

American Musical Theatre Teacher Wins Statewide Theatre Award

Congratulations to John Giresi for winning the prestigious **2021 Paper Mill Playhouse Award for Outstanding Theatre Educator** for the state of New Jersey. John is the first recipient of this new award presented by Paper Mill Playhouse in Millburn, N.J., and has previously been awarded Outstanding Director three times by the regional theatre, as well as many other awards.

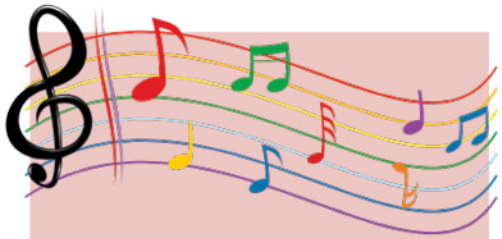
John has served as Fair Lawn High School's Director of Musical Theatre for the past 30 years, and also Director of Vocal Music (Chorus and Chamber Choir). On a yearly basis he produces and directs productions, events, theatre festivals, and concerts with students in American Musical Theatre (AMT) classes and Chorus (see full list and accompanying dates).

As he begins his 31st year working at FLHS, he explains some keys to his success as "instilling in all of my students a strong work ethic, professionalism, being true to yourself – we are all unique individuals and have a story to tell, and that art and family are the only two things in life that last forever." Giresi also encourages his students to be extremely versatile performing artists.

His real passion, in addition to AMT, is song writing, music and lyrics. Last year he had his "Mr. Holland's Opus" moment when students in the spring school musical performed an original film entitled "You Can Change the World," which included 16 original songs written by John.

Many of his former students have pursued careers in the Performing Arts as film/television actors, Broadway performers, screen writers, recording artists, theatre educators, and writers.

John Giresi holds his Outstanding Theatre Educator award – a plate inside the Tiffany box - outside the Paper Mill Playhouse in June 2021.



OCTOBER
Cabaret Night

OCTOBER, DECEMBER, FEBRUARY, & MAY
The Lunchtime Concert Series

Performances during Back To School Night & 8th Grade Parent Orientation

DECEMBER
Winter Concert

DECEMBER/FEBRUARY
Performance Tours at Memorial and TJ

JANUARY
Montclair University Theatre Festival

APRIL
The Bucks County Playhouse Theatre Festival

MARCH
The School Musical

Spring Cabaret Night

Spring Concert

MAY
Teen Arts

JUNE
The Paper Mill Playhouse Rising Star Program

The Metropolitan Theatre Awards

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