



# Principal's Newsletter

**Branford High School • Fall-Winter 2019**



*Please visit our website for important information and updates:*

**[www.branfordhigh.org](http://www.branfordhigh.org)**

## ***From the Principal:***



Dear Parents and Guardians,

Thanksgiving already? It feels like Halloween was just last week...

Before the thankful season passes, I'd like to share some of the ways your students have been thinking about gratitude here at school.

On Veterans' Day, students had an opportunity to express gratitude to over 40 Branford military veterans who visited our school for a ceremony of honor and remembrance and a day of classroom presentations, where students could listen to veterans' first-hand accounts and ask questions. I'm grateful to our Horizons program and all who participated for making this an important day of celebration and recognition.

During a recent SPIRIT activity, we asked students to recall someone who has changed their life for the better: someone who may have never received a proper thank-you and who might even be at your Thanksgiving table this week. Teachers asked their homeroom students to write a letter or email of thanks to this special person, explaining what they did and how much it meant to your child.

Students have also been involved in a three-way competition with Guilford and Madison to determine who can collect the greatest number of food items to donate to the Branford Food Pantry. During Homeroom last week, students wrote cheerful or inspirational messages to families in need on cards that will be included with the Thanksgiving food packages our students will help distribute on November 26.

This Thanksgiving Day, I hope you enjoy extra time with your wonderful kids. Thank you for sharing them with all of us at BHS.

Sincerely,

Lee Panagoulis, Jr

# Fall-Winter Calendar

## NOVEMBER

- 27 Early Release Day / Thanksgiving Recess  
28-29 Thanksgiving Recess

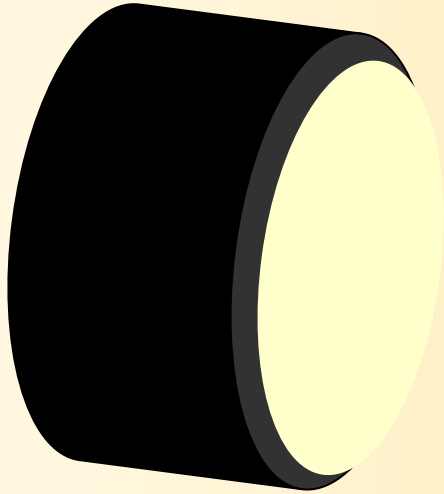
## DECEMBER

- 5-7 *Romeo and Juliet*, 7:30 PM  
7 SAT  
11 Early Release Day: Students released at 12:00 PM  
11 Winter Choral Concert 7:00 PM - 9:00 PM  
13 Winter Pep Rally  
14 ACT  
17 Winter Instrumental Concert 7:00 PM - 8:30 PM  
23-31 **NO SCHOOL** Holiday Recess

## JANUARY

- 1 **NO SCHOOL** New Year's Day  
15 Early Release Day: Students released at 12:00 PM  
16-17 Midterm Exams  
20 **NO SCHOOL** Martin Luther King, Jr. Day  
21-23 Midterm Exams  
22 BHS Choir Main Street Showcase 7:00 PM, Cathyann Roding Auditorium  
24 Quarter 3 begins

## Awards Spotlight



Connecticut High School Coaches Association  
Recognition

**Karly King and Aiden MacNeil**

Daughters of the American Revolution Award

**Luke Berner**

Prudential Spirit of Community Award

**Hailey Brunner**

Wendy Heisman Award

**Melanie Sachs**

## CIAC Recognizes BHS Class Act Committee



On Thursday, Nov. 21<sup>st</sup>, BHS Class Act Committee members were one of three Connecticut school groups invited to present at the CIAC 2019 Sportsmanship Conference. They were selected on the basis of their efforts to "change the game" for the annual BHS Girls' Flag Football event.

Class Act Committee members brainstormed ways they could improve the day by emphasizing sportsmanship and unity between the two grades. They set up practice times to ensure that players could be safe and knowledgeable about the game. They also set up a team bonding night with Mr. Briganti for the upperclassmen together instead of separate team building events.

At the Conference, Isabel Mannle and Melanie Sachs presented to a group of approximately 900 students and administrators with their fellow class act members Lily Moore-Markey, Mikayla Brown, Karly King, Rose Lockery, Brooke O'leary, Bennet Gentile, Sean Kelly, Minsok Lee and Ian McDonald (pictured above during their presentation and gathered for a group photo below).

Congratulations to our Class Act Committee!



BHS Class Act Committee at the CIAC 2019 Sportsmanship Conference 11/21/19

## Community Outreach News

### **Branford High School's First Monarch Butterfly Initiative is a Success!**

Branford High School working with Branford Garden Club released close to 100 Monarch Butterflies into the BHS Butterfly Pollinator Garden. The butterflies grew from caterpillars donated from Natureworks Garden Center in North Branford and from the University of Kansas. This project became a community building event involving both staff & students in a cross disciplinary nature. BHS students and staff raised the caterpillars in classrooms & offices from tiny caterpillars about the size of a tip of a pencil to their full-grown size of a pinky finger. At that point, the caterpillars morphed into chrysalides (cocoon like).





In about a week's time, butterflies emerged and from their cocoons and were released into the BHS Monarch Butterfly Pollinator Garden. The program was so successful that our goal next year is to increase the size of the BHS Butterfly Pollinator Garden, increase the number of classrooms involved, and incorporate more community organizations so that we can continue to raise Monarch Butterflies that benefit our global community and environment.

The BHS Unified Sports Class and BHS Horizons have continued to provide exceptional support to the Monarch Initiative. Unified Sports magnificently watered, weeded, & maintained the BHS Butterfly garden from spring until fall with the assistance of their teachers & paras. Ms. Vicki Climie assisted Horizon students in learning how to tag the butterflies with nationally sponsored kits that may be able to follow their migration patterns as well as help to support the rangers & communities that work with the butterflies.



## Departmental News

### *English Department*

11th and 12th grade English teachers have begun working with Bard College's Institute for Thinking and Writing. They have enjoyed this professional learning experience and they are excited to incorporate this work into their classrooms. The English Department has also been working hard to promote a more student-centered model of literacy by frequently offering students choices in what they read and implementing book club units. With this shift, students acquire opportunities to develop the lifelong skills of active listening and collaboration with peers.

On November 7, students from Mr. Hinrichs's Ancient and Medieval Western History ECE and Mr. Matthiessen's AP English classes visited Yale's Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. They met with Dr. Emily Thornbury, an expert in Old English and Anglo-Latin literature, who shared a variety of rare artifacts and also taught the students a few words of Old English.

Pictured at right:

Mr. Hinrichs (far left) and students (far right, l-r: Violet Smiarowski, Dan DeCerbo, Josh Josephy-Zack, 2 unidentified students, Dylan Campos, and Christian Bjork) listen attentively as Dr. Thornbury (center, left of screen) addresses the group.



## World Language Department

The World Language Department has been working with their new Instructional Coach, Kristin Mancini. Teachers are excited to bring some new comprehension-based readers into many World Language classrooms during the 2019-2020 school year. World Language teachers are also doing great work with using ACTFL (*American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages*) performance targets as a way to begin assessing student proficiency in the target language. This spring the department will again be offering the opportunity for 11th and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students to earn Connecticut's Seal of Biliteracy for proficiency in a second language on their diplomas (stay tuned for more details).

## Practical Arts Department

There are several cool happenings in **Personal Finance**. Students are preparing for life after BHS by studying "Paying for College." They are learning about completing the FAFSA, grants, scholarships and loans applications. Mrs. Montano was a guest speaker and excellent resource to assist students with local scholarships available on Naviance. Students also explored alternative post-high school options: military careers, entering the workforce, and trade schools.

The Tech Ed department has partnered with GCC in New Haven and now offers dual credit between BHS's **Advanced Power Tech** class and Auto 132 Gateway. This is a great opportunity to get a jump start on an Associates Degree in Automotive Technology. Students can also receive Gateway credits for Principles of Baking and Principles of Cooking through the CollegeCareer Pathways partnership.

In **Child Development**, Mrs. Harkins came to share her pregnancy experience. Students enjoyed listening to her (especially about her cookie craving) and asking questions. We also had a BHS student share his experience as a teen parent. Students learned a lot and increased their understanding of the demands of parenting.

The Practical Arts Department has hosted some special guests this semester. In **Principles of Baking**, a former Pepe's chef, Chris Healey, demonstrated pizza making. Students got to shape dough and make their own pizzas; they all turned out great.



Pictured at left:

Julianna Pegnataro forming dough during the pizza dough demonstration with guest instructor Chris Healey, formerly of Pepe's Pizza in New Haven.

Our **Culinary Arts and Principles of Cooking Classes** made apple crisp for the recent “Branford Gets Fresh” event at the Stony Creek Brewery. We helped raise close to \$8,000 for the Community Dining Room, The Food Pantry, and Feed Branford Kids.

BHS has a new **Culinary Arts Club “Cook for a Cause”** (see photo) which meets the first Wednesday of every month. This past month we made roasted tomato soup for the Community Dining Room.

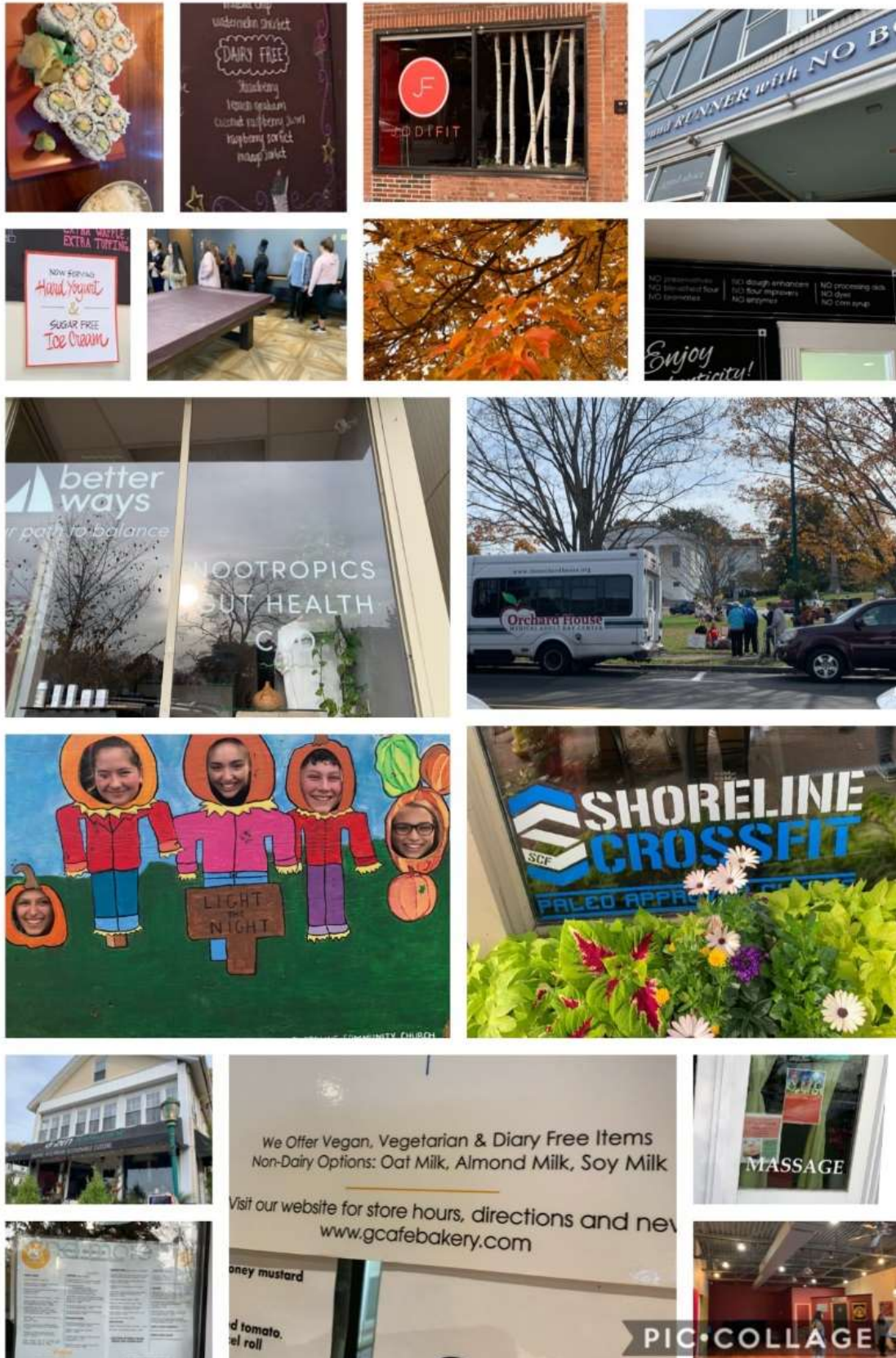


Culinary Arts Club: “Cook for a Cause” - front row, l-r: Aldin Aksamovic, Matt Cabahug, Aldina Aksamovic; middle row, l-r: Betul Aksu, Aubrey Weted, Gabby Tacneau, Priscilla Santiago, Julia Ferraiolo; back row, l-r: Sophia Warfield, Iziah Repollet, Casey Maymon, Layla Richmond, Puneet Benipal



## PE / Health Department

Some students in our Lifetime Fitness Classes took a field trip to Branford Center to explore the resources our community has to offer to help improve their wellness. They put together some picture collages, slideshows and Vlogs to highlight their findings. Students spent time exploring our community, took part in a 90-minute yoga class at Raven's Wing and toured our newly renovated "Community House" with Branford Recreation Director, Alex Palluzzi.





Pictured below: students visit with Branford Recreation Department Director Alex Palluzzi at the new Community



walking through town



walking through town with friends  
+ getting brunch



the new community center is  
gorgeous with lots of new equipment



places in town to eat + relax 🍷🍷



seeing the new community center!!



Ashley's has new dairy free options,  
don't forget to stay hydrated!!

*Lifetime field trip 10/25/19*

## *Science Department*

The Science department has been busy making strides to implement the newly adopted Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) into new and existing courses. Two new classes are running this year for the first time: Dealing with Natural Disasters and Investigating Life Beyond Earth. Both of these classes were written to embody the instructional shifts that accompany the new standards.

To help them see what these shifts look like in classrooms, the department attended a series of professional learning workshops on the NGSS Practices led by the Connecticut Science Center. Teachers are excited to implement modeling and phenomena to make science more relevant and engaging. Some members also attended a co-teaching workshop with their special education counterparts. They will be implementing various co-teaching strategies to make science accessible to all learners.

Teachers and students will soon start discussing the NGSS Summative Assessment, given to students in grade 11 in the Spring. More information will follow for students taking the assessment, but for now, you can visit this link: <https://www.nextgenscience.org/parentguides>. Here, you can view information on NGSS for grades 9-12 in both English and Spanish.

## *Mathematics Department*

The Mathematics Department has continued its implementation of a new resource in conjunction with a revised curriculum, one that places increased value on the freedom to choose between multiple strategies in order to arrive at a solution. Teachers are thrilled to see students making mathematical connections across the core subjects of Algebra 1, Geometry and Algebra 2, benefitting from the use of consistent mathematical vocabulary and strategies. Teachers have recently benefited from the opportunity to observe one another's classrooms, observing a variety of instructional strategies and reaping the benefits of increased collaboration.

## *Horizons Program*

September brings students and smiles and books to BHS. To start the year off with our embedded community service initiatives, Horizons students volunteered at the Friends of the James Blackstone Memorial Library Annual Book Fair. Horizons students are an integral part of the team that prepares over 70,000 books for sale each year. As a result of our participation, Horizons students donated over 80 books to Read To Grow.

In October, Horizon Student Ambassadors were critical to the success of the Annual BHS Career & College Fair as well. Ambassadors assisted the 80+ college representatives and always presented themselves professionally both in demeanor and attire. Many representatives commented on their mature and kind assistance.

In early November, students in the Horizons Program volunteered again as part of their commitment to the Branford community and, in particular, to our valued Veterans. At the Corcoran Sundquist American Legion Post 83, students dug into landscape and maintenance work to freshen up the facility inside and out to ready it for Veteran's Day and future functions and events. They deep cleaned inside and out. Another clear shine revealed hundreds of beloved historical photos. The outside crew focused on maintenance and debris removal first. After that, they filled the outside planters with seasonal annuals, generously donated by John and Yvette Chambers at Shelley's Garden Center, to complete the refresh.



Meanwhile, plans for Veteran's Day at the high school were well underway for 11/11/19. For 22 years, the Horizon's Program has honored this solemn day and since school is now in session on Veterans' Day, a program of remembrance and honor is in place. Veterans are invited to a morning reception, are individually honored in a schoolwide assembly, followed by focused small-group breakout sessions where students listen to first-hand accounts of soldiers' experiences. All students are encouraged to interact with the veterans and have an opportunity to attend at least 4 breakout sessions organized by branch of service, war theater, time period of active duty or specific conflict.

This year we were especially honored to have United States Representative Congresswoman Rosa Luisa DeLauro as our keynote speaker, introduced by Ms. Lia Coppola, who delivered a welcome speech to the veterans to reinforce our commitment to and appreciation of them. Over 40 veterans and active duty military personnel participated, including 2 Branford high school teachers and 2 Horizons alumni.

In the classroom, students worked hard as well. To align curriculum, social studies focused on WWII, current issues and global events involving the military. Geometry focused on problem solving and logical reasoning. A personal finance unit will follow as part of the Career Competencies Curriculum. In science, students focused on geology, and its relation to climate and climate change, directly related to Ms. Climie's recent Fund for Teachers Grant.



Pictured at left:

Lia Coppola speaking from the podium in the Student Center.

Veterans are seated at right; Horizons students are standing at rear.

Students are getting ready to participate again in the Trout in the Classroom Initiative. The program is a partnership between Trout Unlimited chapters and Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection with a mission to protect, reconnect, restore and sustain Connecticut's rivers and streams. Ms. Climie's classroom is equipped with specially designed trout rearing tanks. Students raise trout from eyed eggs to fry, releasing their trout into an area river towards the end of the school year. During the course of the year, students learn about the importance of healthy river ecosystems and how clean, cool water is a critical need for trout and other aquatic life.

<http://www.cttrout.org/troutintheclassroom.html>

Additionally, students generated interest and engaged in the Butterfly Project created by Ms. Pamela Castro and joined the Monarch Watch Tagging Program, a large-scale citizen science project that was initiated in 1992 to help understand the dynamics of the monarch's spectacular fall migration through mark and recapture.

<https://monarchwatch.org/tagging/>

In Language Arts, students focused on creative writing and crafted short stories with a situational irony twist. In a cross-disciplinary connection, students are reading *Farewell to Manzanar*, a memoir of how war and teenage years can collide.





Pictured above are 40 veterans who attended the BHS Veterans' Day program. Included in the photo are Superintendent Hamlet Hernandez (middle row, standing far left) and BHS instructors Dave Gruendel (back row, standing far right) and Andreas Wullaert (middle row, standing far right). Shown seated at right in the front row are Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) and Branford First Selectman James Cosgrove.

## ***Instrumental Music Department***

### **Jazz Band, Orchestra, and Marching Band Perform in the Community**

On November 15, the BHS Jazz Band, Orchestra, and Marching Band went on tour, performing at Artis Senior Living, Sliney Elementary School, and Walsh Intermediate School. Marching Band performed selections from their fall field show, and Jazz Band and Orchestra performed a preview of some of their winter concert music. The instrumental music winter concert is Tuesday, December 17 (snow date is December 18) at 7:00 p.m. in the Cathyann Roding Auditorium at BHS and will also feature students from the Concert Band class.



Pictured at left: Orchestra students wait to perform at WIS

EJ Madera (standing center with bass)

Seated, left to right:

Giancarlo Ramos (violin)

Kuitesa Balaj (violin)

Coleman Hicks (Violin)

Navelie Torres Colon (violin)

Maggie Devlin (violin)

Standing far left:

Alex Sweeney (bass) improvises with the Jazz Band.

## School Counseling Department

The year has been moving along quickly. As our Freshmen transition into their new surroundings, our Seniors are making post-secondary plans as they move on to a new chapter in their lives. It is a very exciting time of the year.

**Community Service Fair & Freshman Transition Workshop** was held on October 16th. The morning was filled with class officer election speeches, team building activities, transition workshops and an awesome community service fair representing over twenty organizations from Branford. The freshman class participated in a food and clothing drive and their generosity filled 8 boxes of canned and nonperishable food and two large bags of clothing for the Branford Food and Clothing Bank. The spirit of giving was heartwarming. ❤️

On that same day, Sophomores and Juniors were administered the **PSAT**. PSAT scores will be released in December. We have not received a specific date yet; however, once the scores are released, students can access them online by signing into their College Board account. The counselors will be meeting with the Sophomores in January to help them access their scores and help students understand the results of their test. Students will also connect their PSAT scores to Khan Academy. This will generate an individual study guide based on your child's score. It is a great resource as students prepare for the PSAT their Junior year. Juniors have an existing College Board Account. They can update their Khan Academy account with their new test scores.

The **College Fair** was held on October 18th. All grades were invited to the event. Over 80 colleges, Military Branches, banking institutions, Anthem Blue Cross and several trades were represented. Students had the opportunity to meet with college reps, future employers, tradespeople who could answer their questions and provide them with information they can use as they are thinking about their post secondary plans. It was a sight to see so many engaged and inquiring students thinking about their future.

**On Site Decision Day for the University of New Haven (December 3rd) and Southern Connecticut State University (December 10th).**

**On Site Decision Day** is an opportunity for Seniors to interview with the College Representative from SCSU or UNH for immediate admission. The School Counseling Department has been communicating with the Seniors since the beginning of November and have 15 students who are scheduled to participate in the program. Students must meet the GPA and SAT/ACT requirements and their Common Application must be submitted by **December 1st**. Students have already participated in the Information Session that was held on November 21st. If you have any questions about the program, please contact the School Counseling Department.

The Counseling Department wishes all of our students' families Happy Holidays.

