

## **WVCSD EdTalk: April 13, 2022**

### **Dr. David Leach, Superintendent of Schools**

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The **Warwick Valley Prevention Coalition (WVPC)** formed more than a decade ago as a joint effort between our district, the Warwick Valley Community Center, and the Town of Warwick Police Department. The WVPC and its programs have grown in the years since, and in September 2018, it won a Drug-Free Communities (DFC) grant for \$600,000 over five years. The organization has become a well-known and trusted resource for parents, students, community members, and the media looking for guidance on the issues of drugs and alcohol. Its WVPC Youth Task Force Coalition is also a great way for students to learn leadership, and be empowered.

This partnership has been a great one for Warwick Valley Schools. We are proud to always be working toward the WVPC mission of informing our neighbors on the dangers of substance misuse, advocating for intervention and support, pushing for legislation, promoting healthy lifestyle choices, and creating leadership opportunities for youth, right here in our community. Our very own Warwick Valley Middle School Principal, Georgianna Diopoulos, serves the WVPC as a Sector Representative for all schools. The district's involvement with the WVPC also inspired students, faculty, and administrators at Warwick Valley Middle School and High School to create their own internal coalitions based on the successful WVPC model. Students who feel drawn to this cause may also participate in **Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD)** in high school.

District Attorney David Hoover and the Police Chiefs' Association of Orange County released a joint statement in mid-March in response to an alarming rise in the number of high school students needing medical attention after taking a wide range of substances. "Medical emergencies because of the ingestion of high concentrations of THC and other substances through vaping or ingesting edibles are becoming an unfortunate trend in our schools and communities," said Chief Blasko. "These alarming numbers of THC-related medical emergencies should be a wake-up call for parents to educate themselves further and have a blunt discussion with young people about these dangerous and unregulated substances." You can read the entire joint statement on our website.

The district and the WVPC meet monthly to discuss how we can continue to best serve the community. This year, the district and the WVPC have collaborated on some key events and programs, and there are more to come:

#### **COMING UP:**

##### **The Blunt Facts: Marijuana & Our Kids**

Tuesday, April 19, 2022 | 6:30 pm | WVMS Cafetorium

An informative discussion on cannabis and our kids. Experts will be on hand to help the community understand many different facets of marijuana use and misuse.

## **EARLIER THIS YEAR:**

### **Trunk or Treat**

In October, the district utilized its parking lot between the Middle School and High School for students to trick or treat in an open and safe environment.

### **Red Ribbon Week**

Also in October, schools participated in a nationwide week of drug awareness featuring themed days and programs and events designed to inform about, and open up the discussion around, drug and alcohol issues.

### **Hidden Mischief**

In January, participants tried to identify hiding places for drugs and drug paraphernalia in a “teen’s bedroom” staged by experts. An eye-opening virtual experience for many parents and community members about the hidden dangers of drug misuse.

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*This week’s highlights from our schools are as follows:*

### **Pine Island Elementary School**

Kindergarteners and teachers were thrilled to see parents arrive at Pine Island to set up an in-person Scholastic Book Fair! Many students knew about this popular event from an older brother or sister, but few had experienced the book fair. Students met up with their parents to go shopping. There were huge smiles, laughter, and lots of oohs and ahs as students selected books to buy and take home. Some comments expressed as everyone browsed the book shelves were, “it is great to be in person,” “this feels so normal,” and “it’s been a long time.” It was great to see the youngsters so excited about buying books. Many of them sat down immediately and began to read news books with teachers and parents. Is there a better sight: kids reading from a real book, parents listening, and teachers smiling?

### **Park Avenue Elementary School**

Every fourth grade student received a dictionary as a gift from the Warwick Valley Rotary Club. This annual event promotes language skills, literacy, spelling, and confidence in writing. This year, the Rotary Club has added something exciting and new: a spelling bee for both of our elementary schools! A classroom-based spelling bee will take place on April 20, and a school-wide event will follow on May 5. A panel of three judges, including local Rotarians, will decide the winners and distribute awards. All fourth grade students are welcome and encouraged to participate.

### **Sanfordville Elementary School**

Mrs. Mednick’s first-grade art classes learn about lines and how to properly use their paint brushes in art class. They are working together in teams to create large table murals, which they will turn into smaller collages. The project encourages students to solve problems, get up, and move in art class. Fourth-grade students are creating Lego self-portraits depicting who they

want to be when they grow up. This fun project allows the students to use their imagination and practice their drawing skills. Adding details will enable them to communicate a clear message through their art.

Our fourth-grade students say "thank you" to the Warwick Valley Rotary Club for the generous gift of brand new dictionaries. They are looking forward to the grade-level spelling bee at Sanfordville on May 3! The second-grade students were also excited to receive activity packets about Rotary and learn about the organization's generous actions taken for our community. They are now looking forward to joining the Interact Club in high school one day.

Students and staff wore red to rally for Autism Acceptance Day. Several classes read the book "Uniquely Wired: A Story About Autism and Its Gifts" by author Julia Cook. Readers learn that Zak, who has autism, responds to the world around him differently. Zak's narrative point of view helps young readers develop a better understanding of his behaviors and learn valuable lessons about patience, tolerance, and compassion.

### **Warwick Valley Middle School**

Sixth-grade English language arts students recently completed argumentative writing pieces. They persuade the reader that the writer's point of view is valid and worthy of consideration as a different point of view. Argumentative writing is taught to students in high school and college as well. However, teaching middle school students to write argumentative essays now lays the groundwork for even better writing later in life. Students learned that making an argument requires more than just an opinion.

The Warwick Valley Central School District held the third of five public work sessions as part of its overview of its instructional program on Thursday, April 7, 2022. Each work session explains the district's curriculum in detail and promotes understanding by demonstrating the rationale for curriculum decisions, how they are implemented, and how they benefit students. This year, work sessions for each program level are being held. The Warwick Valley Middle School (WVMS) program was the focus of last night's presentation. Early this year, the elementary program was shown. In May, the Warwick Valley High School program will be shown.

### **Warwick Valley High School**

Artwork by WVHS artists has been selected and posted on the Lower Hudson Media Arts Show Website. The artists are Adella Kurosz, Arianna Foutch-Mann, Casey Paterson, Claudia Harris, Connor LaBar, Elliot Ambers, Faith Call, Hanna Ali, Ian Gillings, Lalita Krishnamoorthy, Mackenzie Rodas, Madeline Balsamo, Marcus Langone, Mayleen Perez, Meghan Broking, Nicole Kellan, Skye Fernandez, Taylor Lipnicky, and Zachary Nagamatsu. Artists Erin Eicher, Patrick Gardiner, and Wyatt Tomaselli received additional recognition, and their work is posted on the "Presidents' Award" page. Awards were given to students whose entire bodies of work show noteworthy content, a creative approach, attention to composition, a command of craft, are visually and technically outstanding, or a video or film that was considered "visually or technically outstanding."

Five members of the Youth In Government team won mock election positions in this election year. They participated in Orange County Service Day, escorted by an elected official who corresponds to their elected position. The five winners of the election were:

- Orange County Family Court Judge: Abigail Gatdula
- Orange County Sheriff: Theodore Fernandez
- NYS Assembly: Lena Jodry
- NYS AG: Jonah Campbell
- NYS Congressman: Sean Moroney

Naa Korkoi "Kookie" Aryeetey was the unanimous high school winner of the Jewish Federation of Greater Orange County's Stop Hate Contest. Kookie was asked to choose a group or person who has stood for civil rights throughout history and describe it in an essay, poem, or song. These historical circumstances led to hate speech and how the group/person responded to it. Her work had to discuss, among other requirements, how the group/person's actions led to positive change for their community. Kookie will be awarded \$200 for her work at the Stop Hate Symposium on April 26 at Washingtonville High School.

Paxton Honerkamp was selected to be a Senator Skoufis Youth Advisory Council member. Since seventh grade, Paxton has been passionate about politics, US history, and government. As the current President of the Youth in Government club, he hopes that this experience will provide additional insight into governmental workings that he can share with other club members.