

**Weekly Column: EdTalk**  
**Superintendent of Schools: Dr. David Leach**  
**June 12, 2024**

At the Warwick Valley Board of Education meeting on June 6, we celebrated and acknowledged the extraordinary individuals who have committed their professional lives to serving our students in the Warwick Valley Central School District.

The success of our students depends on the caliber of the people in our District, each profoundly impacting our children. Here is a concise version of the words I shared at the Board meeting. Please join us in recognizing the individuals who embody the heart and spirit of Warwick Valley Central School District.

**Barbara Ripley-Brown, 26 years**

Barbara has been an indispensable member of the payroll office. Throughout her tenure, she has achieved two significant promotions: in 2009, she advanced to Senior Payroll Clerk, and in 2016, she was further promoted to Senior Payroll Clerk Confidential. Barbara has seen the Payroll Department evolve significantly, transitioning from electronic paper to fully functioning databases.

**Nancy Colgan, 29 years**

Nancy has been dedicated to teaching in and nurturing the high school agriculture program, transforming it from offering just two agriculture classes when she arrived to a robust curriculum supported by two full-time teachers. Her active involvement with the FFA, including working with the parliamentary procedure team, leadership programs, Apple Fest, and the farmers' market, has provided students with valuable networking experiences. Most recently, she led an initiative to designate Warwick as a Monarch Butterfly town, mentoring high school and elementary students in the process.

**Alix Casimir, 18 years**

Alix has dedicated 18 years of exemplary service as a custodian. He initially served at the high school before transferring to Sanfordville Elementary. He consistently demonstrated an exceptional work ethic and was promoted to Lead Custodian in 2016, where he excelled in his duties. During his tenure at Sanfordville, Alix took great pride in maintaining the building, establishing himself as a respected leader, and fostering excellent rapport with teachers, staff, and students.

**Scott Caswell, 22 years**

Scott Caswell has dedicated 22 years of service as a custodian at Warwick. He has worked at Kings Elementary, Park Avenue Elementary, Sanfordville Elementary, and the high school, demonstrating exceptional flexibility and adaptability. He consistently gave his best effort each day, working well with others and fostering a positive and enjoyable work environment with his upbeat personality.

**Patricia DuBois, 35 years**

Patricia has served as a dedicated school psychologist for the past 35 years. Her significant contributions to the emotional well-being and success of countless students have made her an invaluable asset to the district. Beyond her professional role, she is a compassionate advocate and steadfast supporter of students, parents, and colleagues. She is particularly proud of the relationships she has formed with parents and families, including working with the children of former students.

**Jilleen Flynn, 23 years**

Jilleen has been tirelessly serving as an elementary teacher, leaving a lasting impact on generations of students through her dedication and passion for education. She has made significant contributions at Kings Elementary, Sanfordville Elementary, Park Avenue Elementary, and the middle school. Most recently, she brought her expertise and warmth to the middle school, nurturing the minds and hearts of fifth and sixth graders. Her classroom was a haven of learning, creativity, and compassion, where every child felt valued and inspired to reach their full potential.

**Carrie Ann Greiner, 32 years**

Aside from a brief leave replacement in Pine Bush, Carrie Ann's entire career has been with Warwick Valley. She spent 24 years at Park Avenue Elementary and the last eight at Sanfordville Elementary, teaching special education to grades one through five. Inspired by her own third- and sixth-grade teachers, Carrie Ann knew from a young age she wanted to teach. This drove her to profoundly impact her students, always striving to make the best decisions for their benefit.

**Denise Kipp, 29 years**

Denise's dedication and passion for teaching have left an indelible mark on so many students. She initially worked at Kings Elementary before transitioning to Park Avenue Elementary in 2014. Denise has taught a variety of grades, including Kindergarten, second grade special education, and grades one and two general education.

**Madelyn Layng, 28 years**

Madelyn's students have always enjoyed her great sense of humor, which made learning an enjoyable experience. Throughout her tenure, Madelyn has been a steadfast supporter of students with various abilities, demonstrating unwavering commitment to their growth and success. Beyond the classroom, she also served as a coach for basketball and track, imparting valuable lessons of teamwork and perseverance to her athletes.

**James Maguire, 15 years**

James worked for 15 years in security, working most Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays since 2008, keeping our buildings safe as our Watchguard. He knows our facilities very well, and he loved the job so much that after retiring in January 2024, he returned part-time to work in the same position. He was proud to work in the Warwick schools, performing building security checks while his children attended school here.

**Mary Murphy, 17 years**

Mary began her association with Sanfordville as a substitute teacher while also serving as the owner and director of the Fun-Time Workshop before and after school program. Subsequently, Mary worked as a lunch monitor at Park Avenue Elementary and the high school, where she served as an instructional aide. Six years ago, Mary transitioned to a full-time instructional aide position at Sanfordville. Her education and experience have been instrumental in assisting teachers and working closely with special needs students.

**Rick Ronzoni, 31 years**

Rick has been an earth science teacher at the middle school, and has had a profound impact on countless students. Rick has been a steadfast presence, dedicating himself wholeheartedly to the education and inspiration of young minds. His passion for science has ignited a spark in generations of students, fostering a love for learning and exploration that will endure far beyond the classroom walls. Rick has shown genuine care for each student, forever leaving a mark on the fabric of our school community.

**Lenora Shoock, 26 years**

Lenora has epitomized passion and dedication in the classroom, tirelessly championing the academic and personal growth of her students. Her innovative teaching methods and strong commitment have consistently inspired those around her. She has served at Kings Elementary, Park Avenue Elementary, and the middle school. Lenora's warmth, kindness, and genuine care for her students have created a nurturing environment where each child feels valued and

supported. She especially enjoyed her involvement with Odyssey of the Mind and drama club productions.

### **Lori Sirico, 30 Years**

Lori began her teaching journey in Maryland, spent some time in the East Ramapo School District, and then joined Warwick Valley. Her career in Warwick began at Kings Elementary before she moved to Sanfordville in 2013. Throughout her years in Warwick, Lori taught both third and fourth grades. She seemed destined for the educational profession, inspired by her parents' involvement in her own school district and their participation in various athletic and community activities.

### **Julie Valenti, 15 years**

Julie has been an invaluable member of the payroll office. Hired as a payroll clerk in 2009, she consistently demonstrated dedication, thoughtfulness, and consideration. Her very careful attention to detail ensured accuracy in all payroll processes. In 2015, she was promoted to Senior Payroll Clerk, where she continued to excel and make significant contributions.

### ***PTA Awards Presented at Board of Education Meeting***

In addition to honoring the retirees at the June 6 meeting, the PTAs honored a few individuals.

#### **Jodi Denmead Outstanding Parent Volunteer Award –**

The Jodi Denmead Outstanding Parent Volunteer Award has been presented since 2008-09 to deserving volunteers, in honor and memory of Jodi Denmead, a very active parent volunteer in our school PTAs. This year's award was given to Amy Buliung, who has served in many capacities and is also the Park Avenue Student Council Advisor and an instructional aide.

She has served on the Park Avenue PTA Board as secretary, vice president and co-president for two terms. She established the Wildcat Warrior Course and the Read-a-thon, raising more than \$19,000. She helped start the Park Avenue Drama Club and volunteers for the club. She has chaired numerous fundraisers at Park Avenue. She has also chaired the 2019, 2022 and 2024 Eighth Grade Formal and volunteered her time to help with costumes at both the fall play and the musical at the high school.

#### **Shining Star PTA Parent Volunteer Award –**

The annual Shining Star Awards are given to exceptional PTA volunteers at each school:

- Park Avenue: Theresa Maybeck

- Sanfordville: Kara Lashuay
- Middle School: Stacey Cordero
- High School: Beth Purta

*Here are some highlights from our schools this week:*

### **Park Avenue Elementary School**

Thank you to the Warwick Historical Society for a very informative walking tour of historic sites in downtown Warwick. Students were provided with a connection to the history of the Town of Warwick. Sites visited included Baird's Tavern, Hasbrouck Carriage Barn, Shingle House, Lehigh & Hudson River Railway Caboose, Sly Barn, and an archaeological dig site behind the Sly Barn.

Students walked through the Shingle House and viewed its craftsmanship, learned about railroading and explored the caboose, watched archaeologists sift for artifacts, and saw tools used over 100 years ago. At Baird's Tavern, students saw where Martha Washington slept, where the militia trained, and the ballroom. At the Carriage Barn, students visited the doctor's office, saw the doctor's carriage, and spun the corn sheller to make feed for the animals. Special thanks to our tour guides for providing us with an amazing experience, and to our chaperones and the Warwick Police Department for keeping us safe as we traveled.

After learning about the Revolutionary War in social studies class, students saw locations where soldiers slept, tools that were used during the time, and clothing common to the period. They enjoyed a tour of the building graced with the presence of George Washington himself. It was a fantastic tour, and students even participated in an archaeological dig where they discovered pieces of plates, glass, and coal.

### **Sanfordville Elementary School**

Second graders departed for their field trip to Turtle Back Zoo, where they had a wonderful time learning about animals and their habitats. The smiles on their faces when they returned to Sanfordville said it all. Students saw penguins, giraffes, and bison, among other animals. Before visiting Turtle Back Zoo, the students learned about the animals and their habitats to better understand what to expect during their visit.

Our third-grade classes traveled to the Hudson Highlands Wildlife Education Center. There, they learned about local ecosystems, animal adaptations, and life cycles, closely related to the third-grade science curriculum. Students participated in a live animal presentation, learning about the similarities and differences between amphibians and reptiles. They closely studied a toad, salamander, eastern box turtle, and black rat snake, even getting a chance to touch the snake.

After the presentation, students went on a guided hike, learning about the importance of deciduous trees as producers and how glaciers carved the landscape thousands of years ago. The trip concluded with a visit to the live museum, where students saw an opossum and a crow named Edgar who could say "Hello!"

Fourth-grade students showcased their musical talents at the high school. Congratulations to all our students and their teachers, Ms. Keely Blaikner, Mr. Ryan Muehlbauer, and Ms. Alison Echevarria, for their hard work this school year and for putting together such an amazing performance. Guests were treated to the following performances: "We Have Grown," "Salamander Samba," "Golden Grove," "March of the Rookies," "Theme from Beethoven," "We Will Rock You," "Pizza Hut Canon," and "Summer Fantasy." Bravo to our young musicians!

### **Warwick Valley Middle School**

Throughout the week, our seventh-grade students visited the Bronx Zoo as part of their grade-level field trips. Students eagerly explored the vast array of animal exhibits and immersive habitats, learning about the zoo's biodiversity. They visited the giraffes, watched them gracefully roam the savannah, and witnessed the big cats prowling through their enclosures. All of our students seemed sparked with wonder and fascination.

The weather turned out to be beautiful as our middle school students navigated the Bronx Zoo's winding pathways, encountering wildlife at every turn. A highlight for all was the Asia Monorail ride, where they observed the playful antics of monkeys, marveled at the majestic elephants, and learned about the delicate balance of ecosystems from the knowledgeable conductors. After these trips, many students expressed their desire to help with the zoo's goals of conservation and environmental stewardship. The zoo visits align with our Portrait of a Graduate by helping students become informed and compassionate global citizens.

For the past few weeks, the fifth-grade students on our Blue 5 team have been studying ancient civilizations in their social studies curriculum. They have learned briefly about Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, and beyond, absorbing knowledge about the key characteristics that defined these ancient cultures. Students learned basic overviews of government structures, unraveled the mysteries of religious beliefs, and explored societal norms.

In their ELA and social studies sessions, students took their learning a step further by crafting their own imaginative civilizations. They meticulously designed the cultural, political, and economic frameworks of their fictional societies. Students created elaborate mini-books detailing the customs, traditions, and innovations of their civilizations, bringing their vibrant worlds to life on the page. To further display their understanding, students constructed dioramas depicting the landscapes and daily life of their civilizations. Their hard work culminated in a captivating gallery walk where they proudly showcased their final projects to their peers. All of the fifth-

grade teams were invited into Mrs. Flynn's and Mr. Putnam's rooms for presentations and peer learning.

### **Warwick Valley High School**

Decision Day at Warwick Valley High School is a highly anticipated event celebrating the accomplishments and future plans of its graduating seniors. This festive day, held on June 5th this year, marks the culmination of years of hard work, dedication, and perseverance. Students proudly donned their college gear, military uniforms, or other attire representing their post-graduation paths, creating a vibrant tapestry of aspirations and dreams. The event not only acknowledges academic achievements but also highlights diverse career goals and life choices, fostering a sense of unity and pride within the school community.

Teachers and students gathered in the main lobby during lunch to honor the seniors as they shared their post-high school decisions, whether they are heading to prestigious universities, joining the workforce, or enlisting in the armed forces. Decision Day at Warwick Valley High School is more than just a celebration of the future; it is a testament to the collective efforts of the entire school community in nurturing and guiding the next generation toward their dreams.

The enthusiasm and support from faculty and peers create an empowering atmosphere, reinforcing the importance of each student's journey. The event serves as an inspiring reminder of the potential within every student and the collaborative spirit that defines Warwick Valley High School. As the seniors embark on their new adventures, the school community's shared pride and encouragement underscore the enduring impact of a supportive educational environment.

Meanwhile, the learning continues for our students as we close in on another great year. On Wednesday, students from the Sanfordville PIE 3 & 4 classes visited a "STEM Museum" set up in the WVHS library. The museum was created and curated by students in WVHS math teacher Lisa Howard's AP Calculus class. After taking their AP Calculus BC exam on Monday, May 13, which covers the challenging material from Calc 1 and Calc 2, the high school students took a few days to unwind and celebrate. They then began working on their end-of-year project: designing and putting together a STEM museum for the Sanfordville PIE 3rd/4th grade classes.

The Sanfordville students toured the museum, spending about 10 minutes at each of the six stations. At each station, the high school students explained the science behind the topic and then led the younger students through a fun, related activity. The stations included The Calculus Behind Roller Coasters, Making Slime, Magnet Maze, Lava Lamps, DNA-Modeled Bead Bracelets, and Buoyancy & Boats. A very special thank you to the WVHS Student Senate for generously purchasing the supplies that made this event so successful and memorable!

Additionally, it is the time of year when we honor our scholars and celebrate their successes. Melina Garby and Conrad Wendell have been recognized by the Orange County Interscholastic Athletic Association (OCIAA) as Warwick Valley High School's 2024 Senior Scholar Athletes of the Year. They were celebrated for their exceptional achievements in both academics and athletics during a breakfast ceremony. For a detailed list of their accomplishments, please visit our website.