



Seniors and First-Graders Read Together

Like many students taking Children's Literature at Tamarac, senior Shannon Fitzpatrick was a little nervous the first time she visited the Elementary School to read with first graders.

But Shannon, like her classmates, quickly overcame her worries about how to talk with her first-grade "Reading Buddy" and looked forward to the time together each week. Now Shannon is considering a career as an elementary school teacher or a child psychologist.



"It's taught me a lot about being around children," Shannon said. "You can't get frustrated when they get frustrated or when it takes them time to read. They really look up to you. That's nice, having someone look up to you."

For nearly a decade, the high school's Children's Literature class has teamed up with Kay Akin's first-grade class to read together once a week. It's always an exciting time when seniors visit the classroom, with younger students clamoring to sit with their Reading Buddy.

"The partnership has proven to be a wonderful opportunity for older and younger children to bond through books," Akin explained. "The students, young and old, form a special relationship. The seniors reflect upon what it was like in their earlier stages of reading and my students practice their reading with their senior high partners."

Helen Parsons, who teaches Children's Literature, said the joy her students get from helping their younger schoolmates reminds her of the feeling she gets from teaching.

"It's an excellent program for the elementary students and seniors," Parsons said. "They form some strong bonds and the children love to be close to their older Reading Buddies. It's very heartwarming, very touching. They're role models to them."

Senior Marissa Urkevich said it's rewarding working with the young learners, helping them to find a book they'll like and working with them as they learn to read. The experience has helped her learn something as well.

"I want to have a career in early childhood education," said Marissa. "It's helped me realize what I want to do."

Proposed 2010-11 School Budget Presented to BOE

The proposed 2010-11 school budget was presented at the Board of Education's March 25 meeting, a budget that reduces spending by \$1.1 million and requires no layoffs of employees.

The proposed \$21,370,821 budget requires a 2.92 percent tax levy increase. The Board is scheduled to adopt a budget April 15. The statewide public vote is May 18.

"With so many area school districts forced to consider layoffs, we're fortunate to avoid that while also maintaining school programs and being mindful of the concerns of our taxpayers in these difficult economic times," said Superintendent Lou McIntosh.

McIntosh noted that Brunswick (Brittonkill) CSD faces similar financial challenges as other school districts, most notably state aid cuts.

Governor David Paterson's proposed state budget reduces state aid to the district by more than \$1 million; it is uncertain whether the state Legislature will restore funding as it has in past years.

Brunswick (Brittonkill) CSD, however, is fortunate to have 13 retirements this year, McIntosh explained. Last year, an additional 17 employees retired.

"These retirements provide us some much needed relief," McIntosh said. "I want to thank those employees who are retiring. Not only have they served our district incredibly well but their retirements have helped put our district in a much better financial position than other school districts."

A number of employees who will be retiring will not be replaced to further reduce spending.

Positions that will not be filled include a central office account clerk, an elementary teacher, two teaching assistants and a custodian.

The elementary counselor position will also be eliminated as Sue Grimmick moves to a middle school counselor position, which will be vacant due to a retirement. A school social worker will be assigned to the elementary school to provide support.

"I am excited to be 'moving up' to Middle School and look forward to seeing familiar students and their families," Grimmick said. "I can only hope to do as wonderful a job as Mrs. New has done over the years."

A budget newsletter will be sent to all homes in early May with more details about the budget. Information is also available on the school website, www.brittonkill.k12.ny.us.

Student Helps Promote Annual Telethon

With her smile lighting up billboards and televisions around the region, nine-year-old Kennedy Banks got a chance to be a bit of a media star this year.

Selected as the children representative for the Center for Disability Service's 50th annual telethon, Kennedy had a photo shoot, a video made about her and appeared on WXXA's daylong telethon January 31.

"I immediately cried when I heard she was chosen," recalled Kennedy's mother, Tina. "You never expect to see your child on a billboard. It's amazing and not just for Kennedy but for all these children."



Kennedy is a Brunswick (Brittonkill) CSD student who attends school at the Langan School in Albany due to multiple disabilities. Tina explained her daughter has some cerebral palsy and as a result cannot talk and has limited body movement.

But due to her work at the Langan School, Kennedy has made progress with the use of specialized equipment, including a computerized device that could help her talk.

Megan Malette, who has had Kennedy as a student for the last three years, said Kennedy was the perfect child representative for the telethon.

"Despite Kennedy's limitations, she's made a lot of progress. She's very quiet but a very hard worker and never complains. Her family is very involved too," Malette said. "I think she exemplifies what we do here."

Myles Goss, Brunswick (Brittonkill) CSD's Director of Special Education, explained ideally he would like all students with disabilities to attend school at Tamarac along with their classmates. But given the level of care that some students require, such as Kennedy, the school and parents sometimes decide other facilities such as the Langan School can provide better opportunities.

However, Goss stressed that while students such as Kennedy may not attend school at Tamarac, they are just as much a part of the community as anyone else.

"She's one of our students and I think it's important to celebrate her success just as we celebrate any other student's achievements," Goss said. "It's great to have an opportunity to celebrate a student with a disability."

Tina Banks couldn't agree more.

"We're so very proud of her. You don't realize what you take for granted until you see these children and the challenges they face," Tina said.

Brittonkill Educational Foundation News



The Brittonkill Educational Foundation is seeking candidates for its 2010 Alumni Achievement Award. The deadline to submit nominating applications is April 15.

The Alumni Achievement Award honors Tamarac graduates who have demonstrated the highest level of personal and professional accomplishments, devoted time and energy to their community and forged paths of leadership for others to follow. A nominating form is available on the school website, www.brittonkill.k12.ny.us.

The Brittonkill Educational Foundation is also organizing "A Taste of Brittonkill" this year, an event that features unique cuisine from local establishments, music performed by students and more.

This year's event will be held Sunday, May 2 from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m. at the Troy Country Club. The cost is \$20 for adults and \$10 for children ages 12 and under. The event is open to all with all proceeds benefiting programs for students in Tamarac schools not covered by the budget. For more information, please visit the school website, www.brittonkill.k12.ny.us, to download a flyer and registration form or call 279-4281.

Sign Up for eNewsletter

This year, Tamarac schools have started a monthly eNewsletter featuring school news and announcements.

The eNewsletter can be downloaded from the school website, www.brittonkill.k12.ny.us, or you can receive it automatically each month by subscribing to Brittonkill eNews, the district's e-mail notification system.

To sign up for eNews, visit the school website and click on the "eNews" logo on the right side of the screen.



Tamarac Senior Finishes in Top 1 Percent Nationally



Competing against 1.5 million students nationwide, Tamarac Senior Laura Colaneri is one of just 15,000 students to be named a finalist in the National Merit Scholarship program.

“This is the first finalist from our school that we can remember,” said High School Principal Richard Pogue. “I’m very proud of Laura, as I have been for the four years I’ve known her.”

Laura qualified as a finalist due to her outstanding test scores on the PSAT exam. A total of 1.5 million students take the exam and are eligible for the scholarship. Only the top 8,200 students receive the scholarship; Laura will learn if she is a scholarship winner in the upcoming months.

In her nominating letter, School Counselor Patricia Maloney praised Laura both as an academic scholar and a school leader. Laura has a cumulative GPA of 98.3, is president of the Student Senate, helped form the school’s Writing Club, and is captain of the Masterminds trivia team.

“Laura is an academic star. She has an unquenchable thirst for knowledge and is truly passionate about the process of learning and self improvement,” Maloney wrote. “Her energy, passion and innate intelligence make everything within her grasp. She is a winner in every sense of the word.”

Copies of Tax Bills Now Online

Homeowners who would like copies of their tax bills can now get them online.

Brunswick (Brittonkill) CSD has joined other area school districts in providing homeowners the convenience of viewing their tax bills at www.infotaxonline.com.

Homeowners can visit the website directly or through a link featured on the school website, www.brittonkill.k12.ny.us.

Please note www.infotaxonline.com is a secure website that only has copies of tax information. Original tax information is kept secure at the school district.

Homeowners who do not have internet access can continue to request copies of their tax bills by calling 279-4600 ext. 2802.

Proposed STAR Changes Would Impact District

Governor Paterson is proposing significant changes in the School Tax Relief Program (STAR) program. Enacted in 1997, STAR reduces taxes of New York State residents by exempting a portion of their home’s value from school taxes.

Under current law, every primary residence, regardless of how much it is worth, is eligible to receive a STAR exemption benefit. Under the Governor’s proposal, the Basic and Enhanced for Seniors exemption programs would remain in place. However, the way they are calculated would change and the value of these school property tax exemptions may be reduced.

As a result, residents in some towns or municipalities may see an increase in how much school taxes they pay even if

their school district does not increase its tax levy. Many taxpayers experienced a similar change when the state modified the calculation of the STAR exemption in April 2009.

While the Governor is once again proposing changes in the calculation, the changes are contingent upon legislative approval. As a result, the district will not know the full impact until the proposal is finalized and information becomes available from the State Office of Real Property Services, which sets equalization rates.

We will keep our community informed about this and other state proposals during our budget development process. Anyone who has questions about STAR should call their town assessor or go online to www.orps.state.ny.us.

Senior Citizens Concert & Luncheon



Senior citizens in our community are invited to attend the 15th Annual Senior Citizens Concert and Luncheon, which will be held Friday, April 23 starting at 10:30 a.m. in the district auditorium.

The event was originally scheduled for Nov. 13 but was postponed due to concerns at the time about the H1N1 flu virus.

The Senior Citizens Concert and Luncheon starts with a concert featuring the High School Jazz Ensemble, Chorales and Concert Band. After the concert, senior citizens are provided a free lunch prepared and served by members of the Key Club and Student Senate.

If you plan to attend, please call 279-4600 ext. 2207 so students know approximately how much food to prepare.

Students Selected for All County Music Festival

Fifteen Tamarac students were selected for this year's Rensselaer County Schools Music Association Spring Music Festival held at Berlin Central School District.

Each year, students from area schools are selected for a winter and spring music festival. The festivals offer students an opportunity to perform with students from other schools and enhance their music experience.

Eight students from Tamarac's sixth grade band were

selected, including Garrett Bartlett, Anthony Catricala, Shannon Doin, Rachel Doody, Nick Fisk, Ashley Gaunay, Carlee Lockrow, and Madeline St. John.

Seven students were selected for the Junior Chorus, including David Alderman, Kristin Connolly, Kayla Frasier, Brittney Glogowski, Chelsea Kreiger, Abbey McGrath and Deirdre Werner.

Congratulations to our students!



District Seeks BOE Candidates

Are you interested in running for the Brunswick (Brittonkill) CSD Board of Education?

Completed petitions are due Monday, April 19. Petitions and additional information are available on the school website, www.brittonkill.k12.ny.us, or by calling the district office at 279-4600 ext. 2602.

Residents will elect three Board members to three-year terms and one Board member to a one-year term, to fill a vacancy caused by a resignation. They are unpaid positions.

Produced by Questar III Communications Service

POSTAL CUSTOMER

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Troy, NY
Permit No. 800

Brunswick Central School District
3992 NY Route 2
Troy, New York 12180