



Bulldog

BULLETIN

Apri/May 2025

Message from the Superintendent

This is an absolutely packed issue of the Bulldog Bulletin! There is a lot of leadership and collaboration on display in this issue, from our students to our community members.

Our students accomplish amazing things when we can work together to support them. Thank you for all of your support and I hope you enjoy reading about our district community!

—Matt Landahl

2025



BHS students score big at National Scholastic Art & Writing Awards

Congratulations are in order to three Beacon High School students who received National Scholastic Art Awards for their impressive work.

All three were previously given Regional Scholastic Art Awards and were just some of the

110,000 teens who entered 310,000 works of art and writing. Nationally and regionally, first-place winners receive gold keys and second-place receive silver.

Junior Alina Joseph



Joseph earned her second American Vision Award and first Gold Key for her printmaking piece “Dawn of Dissonance,” which was

inspired by nature and shapes. She added, “Art is a way to commit what I imagine to paper.”

“I really wanted to represent the fluidity of things and how things aren’t separate from each other,” Joseph explained. “I tried to focus on shape for this one, rather than depicting it realistically.”

The second win came as a surprise to Joseph, who was happy to see her worked recognized. She plans to enter the contest again next school year and gave this advice to aspiring artists:

“Explore different mediums and see what works best for you,” Joseph said. “Whenever you feel the urge to do art, do it because you may not feel that way all the time.”

Senior Scooter Zeoli

Winning the Silver Key award was unexpected for Zeoli, who forgot about the awards until he checked his school email and learned that his digital art piece “Delicate Little Bat” won. The picture depicts Zeoli putting a bat skeleton into place, adding that he finds working with animal skeletons and dabbling in taxidermy comforting.

“I thought it would be cool to do it as a comfort-related piece, because it’s kind of contradictory ... I thought it’d be a fun visual,” Zeoli explained. “It’s my zone, they fascinate me.”

Zeoli plans to pursue taxidermy in the future and hopes to enter competitions in that field, adding that he was happy to know that art professionals thought his work was worth highlighting. “I’m really happy and proud that I was able to do this,” Zeoli said. “It was a pleasant surprise.”

Junior Carlos Lampon



Lampon’s piece “Autopilot” featured a self-portrait on canvas with a cutout of himself falling from the canvas attached by

strings. He prefers doing multimedia work that helps tell a bigger story.

“Keeping your painting within the confines of a square or rectangle is limiting,” Lampon explained. “Breaking that mold that almost every artist uses is important.”

While Lampon was happy to win the Silver Key award for his piece, he hopes to achieve the Gold Key for next year’s awards.

“It’s a start, but I want to keep going on,” Lampon said. “Seeing that my efforts are paying off is refreshing.”



Congratulations -well done!



ANIMAL PROJECTS ARE A ROARING SUCCESS

Forrestal's first grade students shared with their classmates, teachers and families about the wonders of animals

in unique and creative dioramas, paintings and in some cases life size replicas of the creatures they studied during their Animal Expo.



Held in the school's cafeteria, visitors listened to the students share the comprehensive research they compiled about animals that included pandas, anacondas, red foxes, king cobras and many more. Proud families took pictures of the displays to be remembered for years to come.

Bus Driver Appreciation

BEACON CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT



Anyone can drive a car, but it takes someone special to **DRIVE a SCHOOL BUS!** Thanks for keeping our children safe.

Reading is Center Stage in the BCSD

South Avenue Pick a Reading Partner initiative



The South Ave PTA helped organize efforts as part of the statewide PTA initiative

Pick A Reading Partner (PARP), where a partner (including parents, grandparents or older siblings, among others) reads with a child for at least 20 minutes daily.

South Avenue PTA President Helen Ehmann noted that what makes Beacon's efforts stand out include learning what is working about PARP as it's the first year it has been in South Avenue.

"This is our pilot year," Ehmann said. "We have a lot of fun things going on." Those fun activities included students filling out reading logs to see how many minutes each class read, with the winning class receiving a pizza party for its efforts, Principal Kelly Amendola reading to students on a Saturday at the Howland Memorial Library and accumulating ice cream social points.

Bulldog Book Bash

Beacon's four elementary schools, along with local bookseller Stanza Books, came together to host the 2nd Annual Bulldog Book Bash, a night to celebrate literacy in the district and motivate students to continue reading.

Students and their families partook in fun reading-themed activities, crafts and storytelling sessions. Local authors were also invited to promote their books. Sargent Principal Cathryn Biordi said a big part of the bash's success was owed to numerous Beacon High School student volunteers working with the younger students.

"What specifically stood out was how responsible and amazing the high school students were," Biordi recalled. "They were running their own activities without adult help."

The bash ended with a teddy bear sleepover where students brought over 55 teddy bears to spend the night at Rombout's library where they tucked their friends in before bed. The bears did not go to sleep right away, however, and parents could keep up with the shenanigans on the district's Instagram. "It was a nice way to bring outside groups in to engage with our families," Biordi said.

Ehmann finds that elementary students are very excited to get a book and are eager to share about it when she volunteers at the school's Scholastic Book Fairs. She encouraged families to continue to read to their children.



"We're lucky in that there are still a lot of very open minds to thinking books are fun and cool," Ehmann said. "Reading is important and can be fun and a way to be social and cement relationships."

Third grader Alec Kirchmeier has enjoyed the PARP reading challenge, where he's read "The Wings of Fire" series with his mother.

"It does help me learn new words and find out certain types of authors and what their style is," Kirchmeier said.

DINO EGG HUNT IS A PREHISTORIC HIT

In anticipation of Easter, South Avenue's Student Council organized a fun activity called "Dino Egg Hunt", where students searched for colorful eggs on the school's front lawn.

The eggs were hidden in different parts of the lawn with a little help from Principal Kelly Amendola, who wore dinosaur overalls to match the event's theme.

The older students did an excellent job of explaining the rules to younger students,



which included each student taking only four eggs so everyone had a chance to get some and letting another person take an egg if two students spotted the same one.



THE POSITIVITY PROJECT

Spreads Around District

Principals of Forrestal, Glenham and South Avenue have introduced to their students the Positivity Project. The principals were inspired by Sargent's embrace of the curriculum designed to improve relationships between people.

Forrestal Principal Crystal Sessoms-Wiggins, Glenham Principal Cassandra Orser and South Avenue Principal Kelly Amendola met last summer to discuss the curriculum and all agreed it would be beneficial for their respective schools. Each school launched it in early January.

Sessoms-Wiggins has desired to have a social and emotional curriculum and implemented the Positivity Project as it addressed the topic through character traits and positive relationships. She added that a different trait is highlighted every week and becomes a vocabulary lesson for students.

Character Strengths

Appreciation of Beauty & Excellence You notice and value the world's beauty and people's skills. You don't take things for granted.	Bravery You act with mental, moral, or physical strength even when you know things are difficult or scary.	Creativity You act with mental, moral, or physical strength even when you know things are difficult or scary.	Curiosity You like exploration and discovery. You ask lots of questions because you want to learn more about anything and everything.
Enthusiasm You approach life with excitement and energy. You energize people around you.	Fairness You believe that all people have value. You approach situations with an unbiased mindset and treat everyone with respect.	Forgiveness You forgive those who have done wrong. You accept that people make mistakes.	Gratitude You are aware of and thankful for good things that happen.
Humility You do not seek the spotlight. You let your actions speak for themselves.	Humor You like to laugh and bring smiles to other people.	Integrity You are honest and speak the truth. You present yourself genuinely and sincerely.	Kindness You are generous to others, and you are never too busy to help out. You enjoy doing good deeds for other people.

"This really just seemed to be a natural fit," Sessoms-Wiggins said. "We're also encouraging modeling and recognition of the traits when we see it in action between students and staff."

Orser agreed with Sessoms-Wiggins and liked the idea of each elementary school using the same curriculum that will not overwhelm the teachers. She noted that building empathy and social skills is crucial to the curriculum.

"It's a great program, it's research based and it's really what you make of it," Orser said. "You can make it what you want as a classroom teacher day to day."

Amendola liked the opportunity for all four schools to collaborate on Positivity Project-themed events and was eager to see how the curriculum would work at South Avenue.

We're proud of the athletic accomplishments of our current Beacon High School students and alumni, who continue to make strides.

Here's two stories highlighting their success.

WRESTLING



photo courtesy The Highlands Current



Betancourt ascends to statewide wrestling competition.

Senior Jude Betancourt was BHS' first ever Section IX state qualifier in wrestling and placed second at the wrestling sectionals before qualifying to represent Beacon at the New York State Public High School Athletic Association Boys Wrestling Championships in late February.

He had a sense of both nervousness and excitement before heading to the competition.



Good Luck Jude Betancourt at the NYS Boys Wrestling Championship Tournament!

"I jumped in my coach's arms, screaming 'We're going to Albany' and I was ecstatic," Betancourt recalled. "It was a new experience and I'm glad I got to go through it."

Betancourt eventually made it to the "Blood Round," where the 12 best wrestlers across the state fight it out. While he did

not proceed further, Betancourt was not discouraged and plans to continue with wrestling in college. He appreciates the support from his family, coaches and teammates.

When he started wrestling in freshman year, Betancourt admitted that it was tough at first, but learned plenty of lessons that helped him succeed.

One tip he gave to aspiring athletes was not to be afraid. "You've got to make the hard choices for an easier life in the future," he said. "Wrestling's helped me become a better person."

Sports Roundup cont'd on next pg...

South Ave.

South Avenue's cafeteria was filled with the delicious smells of foods from all over the world during the annual Cultural Feast, a special afternoon in Kelley Bender's third grade class.

Families prepared everything from Polish pierogis to Thai mangoes with sticky rice before hearing the students' presentations about countries spanning the globe from Russia to Mexico. The benefits of this project include students practicing their writing and public speaking skills and being adventurous by tasting new foods.

"We don't want to 'yuck' someone else's 'yum,'" Bender told students when trying the different dishes.

Cultural Feast

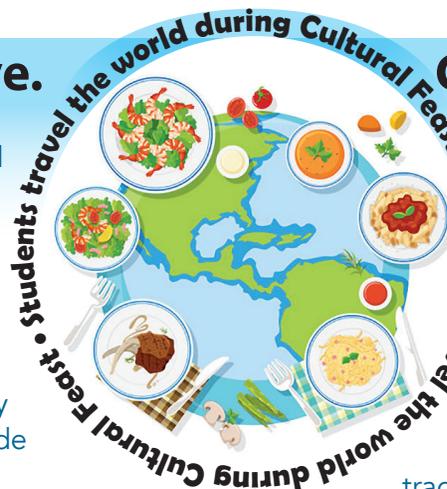
"We're very understanding of other people's cultures and how different foods can taste."

Dahlia Kozlik enhanced her presentation about France by wearing a traditional french outfit and spoke about the country's foods, animals and horticulture, the latter of which held a special place in her heart.

"They have dahlias there and that's my name," Kozlik said.

Anna Brown, who presented about Italy, enjoyed eating the pasta and lasagna brought in and found that when she did her research she already knew about some of Italy's most recognizable dishes.

"My favorite part of the project was the food of Italy," Brown said. "I chose Italy because I'm kind of Italian."



SPORTS ROUNDUP

BHS ALUM GOES TO SPECIAL OLYMPICS

Ryan Chin, a level six figure skater, competed in the Special Olympics World Winter Games in Turin, Italy in mid-March, where he earned a silver medal. District Registrar Deirdre Bonanno has known Chin for years and was one of his coaches who helped him achieve his goals.

"It's been quite a privilege to see him grow like this," Bonanno said of Chin. "He has the support of a village."

Once Chin was selected for the games, he underwent a tryout process with Special Olympic coaches in Utah which he completed flawlessly.

Bonanno noted that Chin understood that his longtime coaches would not be coaching him at the games and embraced the Olympic ones with open arms.



"That is quite an undertaking for some one like Ryan and he did it like he was born to do it," Bonanno said. "He showed us how much he has matured."

Even though Bonanno did not coach Chin in Italy, she attended the games to watch him perform to music in a four-minute short program and a six-minute freeskate program where he faced strong competition, but ultimately succeeded.

CONGRATULATIONS!

BHS Student is a True CTI Leader



When Beacon High School sophomores visited Dutchess BOCES' Career & Technical Institute (CTI) to learn about the varied trade

programs they may want to attend next school year, they ran into some familiar faces serving as student ambassadors.

Second year nursing student and senior A'Jah Bradshaw-Washington was one of those ambassadors who informed visitors what her program entails. She was eager to volunteer because she has much to share and appreciates BOCES giving her the skills she can use to succeed, as well as Beacon's guidance counselors for helping her get there.

We Love You Beacon Players, a Bushel and a Peck



The Beacon Players brought the flair and New York attitude of Depression-era Times Square to its production of "Guys and Dolls," which ran from April 25 to 27 and melted hearts faster than a slice of Lindy's cheesecake on a warm day.



Directed by Anthony Scaronne, the musical revolves around the lives of high-roller Sky Masterson (played by Charlie Klein), who falls in love with mission worker Sarah Brown (played by Molly Lyons), and the loveable rascal Nathan Detroit (played by Jonah Espinosa), whose looking for a safe place to run a floating craps game, while his fiancé Miss Adelaide (played by Giana Rodriguez) continually convinces him to marry her after 14 years.



Rodriguez, a freshman, was more than familiar with the show as her mother Kimberly, the show's choreographer, has performed in it numerous times.

"It's always been in my life," Rodriguez said. "It's a really good show."

What Rodriguez most loved about her character is her sense of style and the opportunity to do lots of dancing in a show filled with spunky music.



Senior Mehr Sagri was on the sound and prop crew where she plays a more quiet, but vital role to the production.

"Doing props is really fulfilling because it brings a lot into scenes and sound is how you hear the show," Sagri said. "It's great helping put the show together."



"BOCES has honestly been one of the best experiences I've ever had," Bradshaw-Washington said. "I'm so happy I had the opportunity to come here."



Softball Team Delivers Eggs in Time for Easter



Egg prices are up, but that did not stop BHS' varsity softball athletes from wanting to brighten up local families' Easter celebrations.

This marked the second year that coach Catie Oriani and her athletes dropped off colorful eggs filled with candy on Easter morning for local families as part of the "Egg My Yard Fundraiser". This year they raised about \$600, which will go toward new equipment for the modified softball team.



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Forrestal Students Embrace Nature and the Environment

ENVIRONMENTAL CLUB INTRODUCES COMPOSTING

To help prevent waste, a composting bin was brought to the cafeteria during breakfast and lunch, an idea that came from clever students in Forrestal's Environmental Club.

Fourth grader Rosie Cumming, appreciates that school administration took her club's idea seriously to help bring change.



"It makes me feel good because we can make a difference, instead of just talking about it," Cumming explained. "It's a new way of getting rid of waste, but having it reproduced into something new and something that can be helpful for your garden."

Fourth grader Edith Lieberman enjoyed working on the composting initiative so much that she hopes to replicate the experience at home. She proposed another idea to keep Forrestal environmentally friendly to Principal Crystal Sessoms-Wiggins – bringing back reusable trays and utensils. Sessoms-Wiggins liked the idea and talked with cafeteria staff about piloting it.

"There's paper trays and plastic utensils in the cafeteria and they're super bad for the environment because we're wasting a lot of products per year," Lieberman explained. "I feel like I'm actually making a difference."

Club adviser MeriAnne Keogh enjoyed seeing students embrace composting with even her expressing interest in doing so at home. Some next steps the club considered included making posters, or holding an assembly, explaining what items can and cannot be composted with the goal of educating students.

"They get so into it, that they'll carry it home, have conversations and go from there," Keogh said of students. "I didn't know how to sort things and I was surprised by some of the things you can sort."



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Softball Team Delivers Eggs in Time for Easter



The experience is enjoyable for the athletes and families who ordered eggs, with 80% of them being "repeat customers"

from last year. Oriani gave her girls kudos for meeting her at 7 am at BHS to deliver the eggs, as well as see them bond and exude positive energy.

"We love finding ways to connect with the community that leaves a lasting impression," Oriani said. "I am proud of the girls."



Senior Bella Baffuto came back to deliver eggs this year because she had a blast participating the first time and shared why she volunteered her time.

"It's important to me because as a kid I loved doing egg hunts, so it's fun to be on the other end of it making kids happy," Baffuto said.



ASSEMBLY GETS KIDS' BRAINS THINKING



Engineers from IBM visited Sargent during National Engineers Week to give students a chance to try their hand at the job by building a launching device.

Students had to work in teams to create the device out of straws, notecards, rubber bands, a spoon and some tape to launch a toy duck to the target bucket. Once completed, the students had to launch the duck by only moving up to two fingers without flicking.

Once students tested their devices, engineer Keegan Lane asked them about what worked and did not work.

When one group shared about how it did not want its device to be too big or too small, Lane gave this insight.

"With engineering you're not trying to make the biggest thing or the littlest thing, usually you're trying to build to a specific application," Lane said. "You want something that is consistent and does exactly what you want, the same way over and over again."

Students shared how much fun they had, with Lane noting that he and his fellow engineers will bring another fun experiment next school year.