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Copiague School District

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# COPIAGUE *Connections*

A GREAT PLACE TO LEARN



## QuestBridge Scholar Headed to DENISON UNIVERSITY

Klara Thelusma has been named a QuestBridge Scholar. QuestBridge's National College Match is a college scholarship application process that helps outstanding high school seniors gain admission and full four-year scholarships

to the nation's most selective colleges. Klara has matched with Denison University.

Out of more than 16,500 applicants, QuestBridge selected 6,312 finalists to be considered for the QuestBridge National College Match Scholarship. This year, QuestBridge's 45 college partners matched with 1,674 finalists. The Match Scholarship is offered as part of a financial aid package provided by the college that covers the full cost of attendance, including tuition, room and board, books and supplies, and travel expenses.

Klara is working towards her AP Capstone diploma. As a member of the National Honor Society, she has consistently maintained honor roll status throughout high school. Each year she selects the most difficult Advanced

Placement and honors courses offered. In ninth and 11th grades, Klara participated in the Farmingdale State College STEM Diversity Summit. She was a facilitator for the spring 2021 Rotary Youth Leadership Program. This past summer, she was a teacher's assistant for the Science Research Summer Academy. She also participated in the CURIE Academy through Cornell University's Diversity Programs in Engineering.

Klara is the treasurer for the National Honor Society and the Key Club, vice president of the Science Research Club and the One Mind Club, captain of the girls varsity tennis team and a Voice-to-Voice Women's Empowerment leader. She has been a member of the Global Ambassadors, Key Club, SOUL, Student Council and the Trash for Cash Club.



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## SOCIAL WORKERS *Team Up for Students*

Addressing the social-emotional needs of all students in the Copiague School District has always been a top priority. Since the pandemic, there has been an increased need for support at all levels. Using grant funds, the district hired three additional social workers as annual positions for three years.

In total, the district has 10 social workers spread across its six school buildings: five elementary, 2 at the middle school, 2 at the high school and one K-12 social worker. Each building has a dedicated

social worker and there are additional social workers assigned to support students and families at every level (elementary, middle and high school). Recognizing the important every social worker is bilingual.

They work closely with the building administrators to develop and provide intervention and education services to students and families in crisis. They also provide individual and group counseling, community resources to families, serve as a liaison between the

students, family, teacher, administration and the community and also help translating within our buildings when needed.

"We have added social workers throughout the district to continue to provide the social-emotional support our students need during these challenging times," said Sabina Meehan, the district's director of guidance. "The district's team of social workers is constantly working to support the needs of the students and families in the Copiague community."

# Supporting Students ON MANY LEVELS

The team of social workers strives to connect with students both in school and at home to ensure they are meeting all of their needs. Making that connection sometimes requires support from community organizations and working alongside families. Below is an example of some happenings this school year and some new initiatives in place to continue to make those connections.

The K-12 bilingual social worker ran a program in November via Zoom to provide the District's Spanish-speaking families an opportunity to learn about the schools, what is offered to students and families, and the connection between home and school. These presentations will continue throughout the school year, with two more scheduled for February, and the social worker works very closely with the director of ENL and world languages Michelle Passeggiata on the initiative.

If a student is in need of anything – whether it be food, clothing, school supplies or musical instruments – the social workers work with Copiague staff members, who often will purchase items for students as well as reach out to community organizations to assist them in obtaining what they need.

Elementary social workers push into classes to support social-emotional learning on a variety of topics, typically related to a theme that is being promoted within the school and is relevant to the times.

At the elementary level, a recent class lesson on kindness focused on "friendship recipes." These classroom discussions provided the students with an opportunity to name qualities they look for in a friendship and which they would like to omit (jealousy, gossip, etc.). Students also listened to stories and watched videos to help them identify kind and unkind actions. "We decided to focus on these topics because students currently have had limited opportunities to practice socialization skills," said Sabrina Meehan, director of guidance.

The K-12 social workers joined with local organizations to provide holiday gifts for students and families, and elementary social workers participated in a holiday sponsor program in which the social workers matched staff members to sponsor a student/family for the holidays.

The K-12 social work team works closely with central office and Island Harvest to ensure families in need have access to healthy food, and they connect students to food weekly through the program.

# TOP 10

## Students in the CLASS OF 2022



Walter G. O'Connell Copiague High School has announced the top 10 students for the Class of 2022. With a weighted GPA of 104.44, Joseph Falco Jr. has been named the valedictorian. Devonie Rhoden has been named salutatorian with a weighted GPA of 104.22.

The district congratulates the top 10 students in the graduating of Class of 2022: Joseph Falco Jr. (valedictorian), Devonie Rhoden (salutatorian), Sahil Parikh (third), Stephanie Cortes (fourth), Jillian McLaurin (fifth), Cathrine Sakin (sixth), Adriana Jimenez Bonilla (seventh), Asiatul Hoque (eighth), Deep Shah (ninth) and Roman Burrus (10th).



## An Inside Look AT THE Valedictorian and Salutatorian



Valedictorian Joseph Falco Jr. is constantly striving for excellence, pushing himself to achieve high grades while still maintaining a well-rounded life. Joseph has worked to make himself an excellent leader, whether it be from becoming president of clubs such as the Drama Club and the National Honor Society or even by creating the Civil Debate Club. His success has been recognized through a vast number of awards, such as the Superintendent's Award, Department of Defense Certifications, two gold medals in the Long Island Science Fair, and having the best opening statement by a prosecutor in the EDNY Justice Institute. Joseph wishes to work in cybersecurity and although he is still undecided on his college choice, he has been accepted into Fordham University.



No. 2-ranked Devonie Rhoden is the president of Key Club and the social media manager for One Mind Club and is involved with SOUL Club. Devonie has been a member of the Independent Science Research Club, serving as secretary during her senior year. Due to her interest in the sciences, Devonie has participated in programs at Brookhaven National Laboratory and completed an internship this past summer. Her involvement in research, community service and academics has led to her to being the recipient of the Farmingdale State College stipends, New York State Retired School Administrators & Supervisors Award and a Town of Babylon Scholarship. She has also been named an AP Scholar with Honor/Distinction and will be the part of the second class of students to graduate with an AP Capstone Diploma. Devonie plans to study medicine and become a pediatrician or forensic pathologist. She is interested in attending Columbia University, Hofstra University or Rutgers University but remains undecided.

