



Rocky Point Schools

# Soaring

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE ROCKY POINT UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT

## A MILESTONE EXPENDITURE REDUCTION

### *Initiatives Result in Recurring Savings of \$1 Million Annually for Taxpayers*

The District's Board of Education and administration have always made it a priority to reduce annual expenditures without adversely affecting programs for students. The District continues its proactive approach to seek out and implement cost-saving initiatives, in order to operate as efficiently as possible. Recently the Board announced that the District has reached the \$1 million mark in expense reductions without reducing or eliminating any instructional programs.

Prior to the beginning of the current fiscal year, the Board and District administrators identified key areas for expense reduction. This aggressiveness has led to significant savings in the areas of transportation, building lease and occupancy costs, debt service, energy consumption, overtime, supplies, and professional fees.

"While the savings have been realized within the

past five months, the process of identifying and executing the measures necessary to realize the savings has spanned the past year," observed Dr. Michael Ring, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations, explaining how the District has been able to achieve such significant savings in a relatively short period of time. "It was a tough process, extracting the largest portions of the realized savings. Months of review, planning, and negotiation went into this process, and the outcome represents the benefit of that forethought and effort."

According to the District, the \$1 million savings milestone was achieved through approximately \$561,000 in reduced contract transportation expenses, \$200,000 associated with the cost of operating the District Office in leased facilities (the District Office was recently relocated to District-owned facilities), \$140,000 in reduced debt-service

achieved through a refinancing of the District's outstanding bonds, \$76,000 in reduced energy-cost via the District's SPARE program and other energy initiatives, and the remainder from rebidding auditing contracts and various smaller expense eliminations.

Moreover, the biggest benefit these reductions hold for the District's taxpayers is that these savings are recurring, thus reducing operating costs by the same amount every year in the future.

While proud of reaching the \$1 million mark, the District does not plan to stop at this milestone. According to Dr. Ring, "The Board is committed to providing the best possible education within a budget that doesn't unnecessarily strain the District's already overburdened taxpayers. Our efforts to preserve programs while reducing expenditures will continue this year and for the foreseeable future."

## WRESTLERS MAKE HISTORY

### *NYS Championship capped by three 200-win milestones and LI Record*

The Rocky Point wrestling team's season was truly legendary, having captured the 2010 Division 1 State Team Championship for the first time in the program's history.

In addition to the State Championship title, three individual state championships were secured by defending state champion Stephen Dutton, and team members Anthony Volpe and Billy Coggins. All three wrestlers surpassed the 200-win career mark, joining only five other Long Island varsity wrestlers. Furthermore, Stephen's 227-career win record set the Long Island record.

Head coach Darren Goldstein explained that the young men's success lies in motivation and parent support. "These wrestlers knew that they had to work hard to be successful, and that they would sometimes trip up in the process," Coach Goldstein stated. "They always picked themselves up and refocused their efforts to achieve their goals. Part of their success is also due to the parents' efforts, having trucked them to all of the meets. It's not easy."



Stephen Dutton's (140 pounds) career record is 227 wins and 12 losses. He has achieved a record of three-time High School All-American, four-time All-State, as well as two-time State, four-time County, and four-time League Champion. After graduation he plans to pursue an education in engineering at Lehigh University in Pennsylvania.

Billy Coggins (171 pounds) finished with a career record of 219-21. He was the fifth ranked wrestler in the state last year and a State Champion this year. In addition, Billy has secured titles as a four-time League Champ and a two-time All-American wrestler. He will attend

the University of Virginia in the fall.

Anthony Volpe (160 pounds) has been awarded a scholarship to attend Rutgers University in New Jersey this fall. His career record is 221-19 and he is a three-time All-American, a six-time League Champion, as well as an All-State and State champion.

**LI Challenge Team Advances; Cheerleaders Ace Regionals: Stories on Page 2**

## A Message from Your Superintendent

DR. CARLA D'AMBROSIO

No matter how long the winter, spring is sure to follow!

This edition of *Soaring* exudes the onset of spring and the full schedule of activities and events in the district. The athletic and intramural season is well on its way with the students eagerly awaiting the chance to enjoy the outdoors. Even the little ones at FJC have been enjoying the playground and nice weather at recess.

With fourth quarter just around the bend, the spring testing season begins for grades 3-8. Please refer to the district website for the testing schedule that impacts your children. The students are well-prepared for these standardized tests so to ease any testing anxiety, please make sure your child gets a good night's sleep and starts the day off with a healthy breakfast. There is so much emphasis on proper nutrition and the importance for students and adults to eat well and exercise regularly, that "springing into healthy habits" is appropriate for everyone. Despite the busy months ahead, I hope you will take the time to enjoy the district's sports events and music programs during the spring season.

Lastly, I would like to take this opportunity to remind all residents that the district's budget hearing is scheduled for May 11th and the annual budget vote will take place on May 18th. The Board of Education and administration have worked diligently to prepare a budget that is educationally responsible and financially sound. Please attend the hearing to learn more about the proposed budget and make an informed decision. You can look for the budget edition of *Soaring* in your mail boxes shortly. Remember, every vote counts.

## 2010-2011 School Budget Update

|      |                          |  |
|------|--------------------------|--|
| 4/19 | Monday                   | Submission of petitions - Board of Education candidates  |
| 4/21 | Wednesday<br>(7:30 p.m.) | Adoption of the 2010-2011 Budget/BOE Meeting (Property Tax Report Card must be approved by the Board of Education) |
| 5/11 | Tuesday                  | Deadline to receive an absentee ballot application   |
| 5/11 | Tuesday                  | Public hearing on the school budget  |
| 5/12 | Wednesday                | School Budget Notice mailed to all qualified voters  |
| 5/18 | Tuesday                  | School budget vote and annual election   |

## Advancing in the Long Island Challenge

Congratulations to Rocky Point High School Long Island Challenge team members Peter Vivonetto, Tyler Bittner, Melinda Tascarelli, and Henry Best, who advanced to Round III in the Cablevision Power to Learn competition. These academic contest scholars recently defeated Easthampton in Round II.

The Long Island Challenge is a televised academic quiz show, which features the area's brightest high school students from Suffolk and Nassau Counties. The competition is designed to test students' knowledge of history, art, literature, science, and math. One school from each region is crowned champion and wins a \$2,500 cash prize for the school. Final winning teams from each region then go to the Challenge Championship to compete for a \$10,000 school prize.



## Cheer Squad Tops in Region



The Rocky Point Varsity Cheerleading team once again showed its dominance on Long Island, as well as the Northeast. The squad captured first-place in seven regional cheering competitions, including the Empire Regional Championship and the Long Island Championship.

The year culminated with an overall eighth-place finish at the Universal Cheerleaders Association (UCA) National Competition held in Orlando this spring.

Special congratulations to Rocky Point High School senior Shannon Young for being named this year's Long Island Cheerleading Coaches Association (LICCA) All-Star.

# 21<sup>st</sup> Century Classrooms Make the Grade

Rocky Point students are acquiring knowledge in new and exciting ways with the use of 21st Century technology and grants acquired by the District's innovative teachers.

During the 2008-2009 school year, the District entered into a five-year lease with Eastern Suffolk BOCES to acquire state-of-the-art technology equipment for K-12 classrooms. New teacher computers, student work centers, SMART and Mimio boards, LCD projectors, speakers, document cameras, and wireless slates enable teachers to infuse technology into the curriculum on a daily basis. In addition, the District purchased eight student response systems, a set of FLIP video cameras, and several online resources (Education City, BookFlix, and ExpertSpace).

"Rocky Point students are 'digital natives' who grew up with computers and are learning in new and exciting ways thanks to the 21st Century tools and out-of-the box thinking by their teachers," Rocky Point K-12 Technology Coordinator Susan Wilson explained. "Teachers have embraced the new technology and have created amazing projects for their students."

High school forensic science students in Ms. Baker's class worked collaboratively to create a crime scene reenactment video using a camcorder. Ms. Baker has incorporated the use of several 12-megapixel digital cameras gifted through a website called DonorsChoose.org, a website charity that provides students with supplies for innovative educational programs.

At Rocky Point Middle School, students in eighth-grade history teacher Erica Alemaghides' class recently created a short video about a reformer from the Progressive Era using digital images, royalty-free music, and MovieMaker/PhotoStory software. Ms. Alemaghides explained that students relished the opportunity to use leading-edge video equipment. "It also allowed students of all learning abilities to be creative in their own way," she stated. "In doing something that interests them, as well as what comes natural to them, they are motivated to learn new computer programs and the material."

At Frank J. Carasiti Elementary School, Mike Yannucci's students have been using iPods to improve their reading fluency. After practicing reading and making audio recordings using their iPod, they share their work with the teacher and their classmates. The students assess their own reading and look for areas to improve upon.

Additionally, second-grade teachers Emily Ferraro, Erin Ladani, and Stacy Iberger are in the process of implementing a MESTRACT technology initiative awarded in November. The students are engaged in every step of the writing process and are exploring a variety of writing genres (biographies, memoirs, research reports, etc.). After the students have drafted, revised, and edited their



work, they will publish their writing on a Web 2.0 website called [www.tikatok.com](http://www.tikatok.com). This website is a creative forum for children to write, illustrate, and share their stories online.

English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher Nicole Fernandez, Library/Media Specialist Bettina Tripp, and classroom teacher Danielle Youngs are also implementing an initiative entitled, "For the Love of Literacy." Students listen to books using electronic readers called Kindles and participate in literacy circles based on age-appropriate books of their choice. As a culminating event, parent volunteers are invited into the classroom and students interview them using the FLIP video cameras and digital cameras to create books and slideshows.

At Joseph A. Edgar Intermediate School, teachers utilize a variety of online resources including RealMath, ExpertSpace, BookFlix, and Education City to incorporate technology into classroom instruction. Fifth-grade teacher Tanya Meehan's class is also in the process of acting as video producers who write, direct, and produce a movie for a science magic trick that explains scientific principles using everyday household items. The students are using FLIP video cameras and movie-editing software.

Safety while using the Internet is also the focus of library media specialist Monica DiGiovanni, who teaches students not to reveal personal information on the Internet. She utilizes e-instruction CPS clickers for pre- and post-assessment questions to measure students' understanding of this important topic.

On April 16, 60 students and 19 teachers shared their technology practices with other districts at the Tenth Annual Celebration of Technology in Education hosted by the Model Schools Program of Eastern Suffolk BOCES.

## Think Before You Post



Assistant Principal James Moeller (left) and Suffolk County Police Detective Rory Forrestdal with middle school students (l-r) Craig Hamilton, Ashtyn Muzio, and Nikki Garguilo after an assembly about cyber safety.

While the District educates students to make the most of the technology resources available to them, they are also reminded to exercise caution while on the Internet. A recent visit to the middle school by Detective Rory Forrestdal of the Suffolk County Police Department Crimes Section gave students perspective into their actions in cyberspace.

Detective Forrestdal pointed out that cyberbullying, online inappropriate posting of photos, school threats, and computer hacking are illegal and can result in an arrest. He reminded students that once something is posted on the Internet, it cannot be taken back after being downloaded. He urged them to always utilize privacy settings, think before they post information about themselves, and always alert an adult when they suspect they may become the victim of illegal cyber activity.

## Giving Back with... Lunch Bags of Love



In an ongoing effort to reach out to veterans, second-grade students in Ms. Stacy Iberger's class at Frank J. Carasiti Elementary School decorated and filled care packages for the soldiers in Afghanistan and Iraq. The program is called Lunch Bags of Love, and students received help filling their care packages from local veterans, parents, and United States Congressman Timothy Bishop (pictured above).

Students were instructed to write a letter to the soldiers, thanking them for their service. The paper bags were decorated with hearts and patriotic themes and stuffed with valentine candy, pencils, soap, and other toiletries. Parents and students donated the items collected for the packages.

## All-County Musicians

Thirty-one talented student-musicians from the District were selected to participate in the Suffolk County Music Educators' Association (SCMEA) Division I, II, and III Chorus, Band, and Orchestra Festivals on March 13 and 14 at Sachem East High School. The students were chosen to participate in this prestigious forum based on teacher recommendations and New York State School Music Association (NYSSMA) evaluations.

The SCMEA Organization consists of professional music educators and music education advocates throughout Suffolk County and is an affiliate of NYSSMA, which is a state unit of the Music Educators' National Conference (MENC).

The Rocky Point School District administration extends its congratulations to the following participants:



### DIVISION I CHORUS Grades 5 and 6

Christian Cabrera  
Samantha Giacoia  
Brittany Iamele  
Nicholas Locastro  
Morganne Nofi  
Rosa Valente

Middle School  
Breanna Garske  
Julia Holmes  
Claire Johannesen  
Courtney Kelly  
Nicholas Lovaglio  
Mariah Mazzeo  
Cassandra Rando

### DIVISION I BAND Daniel Infranco

DIVISION II CHORUS  
Middle School  
Shannon Abernathy  
Nina Casey  
Erin Damers  
Elizabeth Healy  
Mariah Hepburn  
Amanda McDonald  
Angela Panetti  
Rachel Parker



### Casey Williamson

### DIVISION II BAND Max Myslinski

### DIVISION II ORCHESTRA Abigail Vogt

DIVISION III CHORUS  
Brittany Bua  
Zach Krase  
Zachary Riley  
Megan Viglione

### DIVISION III BAND Lauren Mattarella

### DIVISION III ORCHESTRA Mark Infranco

## MUCH APPLAUSE FOR *Les Misérables* Cast

Applause resonated through the halls of Rocky Point High School as a colossal 150-member cast and crew delivered multiple blockbuster performances of *Les Misérables* in the school auditorium. The performers (which consisted of middle and high schoolers) showed off their natural acting and singing talents as they reenacted the story written by Victor Hugo about the 1832 Parisian student uprising, replicating the original play's intertwining tale of characters struggling for redemption and revolution. The Rocky Point senior citizen community was even invited to a free advanced showing.



Rocky Point High School and Middle School students performed the high school's version of *Les Misérables* for the community.

## Literature Comes to Life

Literature came to life at Rocky Point Middle School with a visit by two well-known authors, Holocaust writer Marion Blumenthal Lazan and fantasy writer Sarah Beth Durst. Both guests discussed the writing process and encouraged student-writers to pursue their passion to write.

Marion Blumenthal Lazan, author of *Four Perfect Pebbles* (pictured at lower left with students and faculty), reflected on her harrowing childhood experiences in a concentration camp during World War II. There was not a sound in the auditorium as Ms. Lazan recounted the conditions of the camp. Ms. Lazan explained that the childhood game she concocted – finding four perfect and identically shaped pebbles of the same color – served as a coping strategy that gave her hope that her family would survive the war. Each pebble represented a member of her family. As long as she could find four perfect pebbles, every member of her family would be spared.

"There is no way that this history can be put accurately into words or pictures," Ms. Lazan told the students. "You are a privileged audience, the last generation to receive a firsthand account of this history."

Sarah Beth Durst, author of *Into the Wild*, *Out of the Wild*, and *Ice*, explained that her favorite part to writing a novel is when she can "re-dream it." She used a PowerPoint presentation to explain the process of creating her books, including research, outline, writing, and rewriting. She explained that fantasy is her favorite genre to read and that she loves working cats into her books to enhance the plots.

"You should always write what you love," Ms. Durst told the students. "The idea that keeps jumping out at you is usually the idea you should write about." Following the presentation, Ms. Durst signed copies of her book (pictured to the right).



## Preparing Students for the College Application Process

In order to make the college application process less challenging, the Rocky Point High School guidance department hosted its annual College Information Night for juniors and parents.

Suffolk County Community College Dean of Enrollment Management Kate Rowe and Stony Brook University Admissions Representative Robert Pertusati told students and their parents that the college admissions process is about finding the “right fit.” Ms. Rowe explained that students should ask themselves whether they are challenging themselves, about their curricular strengths, and what makes them unique. Mr. Pertusati, on the other hand, described colleges and universities as “living and breathing communities of scholars and community.” He stressed the importance of the school visit and showing a level of interest throughout the admissions process.

“Part of the admissions process is telling a story,” Ms. Rowe stated. “It is not a time to blend in. You must market yourself.”

In addition, College Information Night included testimonials from seniors who have recently been accepted to colleges. The students relayed their experiences with the music audition, sports interviews, decisions to take the ACT and the SAT, the college visit, and much more. Student Jenna Healy explained that setting a deadline helps students find time to work on applications and allays nervousness, while student Melinda Tascarella gave an amusing account about having to write an essay on Christmas Day, because she had procrastinated. Samantha Mazzeo was also recently accepted to her choice of university and cautioned juniors interested in college sports not to choose a team based on a coach, and that grades are just as important as physical skill and ability when being recruited.



Director of Guidance Annette Sclafani explained that the district promotes early college and university planning by facilitating more than 50 on-campus college visits, various workshops, and PSAT/SAT preparatory courses. This school year, the guidance department has processed more than 750 applications to colleges and universities nationwide, and seniors have been accepted to some of the top schools in the nation and region.

The following is a list of top colleges and universities that have accepted Rocky Point High School seniors for attendance this fall.

BOSTON UNIVERSITY  
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY  
HOFSTRA UNIVERSITY  
IONA COLLEGE  
MANHATTAN COLLEGE  
QUINNIPIAC UNIVERSITY  
ST. JOHN'S UNIVERSITY  
SUNY ALBANY  
SUNY BINGHAMTON  
SUNY BUFFALO  
SUNY CORTLAND  
SUNY NEW PALTZ  
SUNY ONEONTA  
SUNY PLATTSBURG  
SUNY STONY BROOK  
UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE

## Students Score in National

# WordMasters Challenge

Fourth-grade students in Ms. Donna Hepburn's class at Joseph A. Edgar Intermediate School tied for seventh place in their grade level and division in the year's first meet of the WordMasters Challenge, a national language arts competition entered annually by 220,000 students and 689 school teams. Additionally, students Connor Middleton and Nicole Taveras were two of 39 fourth graders nationwide who earned perfect scores in the Challenge.

In the second meet (Blue Division) of the Challenge held in February, Kyle Markland and Anna Lee were two of 134 students who both earned perfect scores out of the 35,470 students who were tested. Other students who received outstanding results in the meet include David Apperson, Sal Aprile, Abe Hannigan, Fiona Lambert, Connor Middleton, Ryan Maciaszek, and Jade Pinkenburg.

The students will participate in one more round of competition this spring and will receive medals and certificates for their achievements and progress over the course of the competition.



## Beauty in a Song

Joseph A. Edgar Intermediate School third grader Kayleigh Brown's submission of a musical composition won an Award of Merit in the Suffolk County PTA Reflections Program for students in grades 3-5. The song was written to reflect this year's Reflections theme, “Beauty Is...” and depicts the splendor of the clouds, sky, water, and beaches. It was also recorded on a CD with the help of Kayleigh's father.

Approximately 10 million students nationwide have participated in the National PTA Reflections arts recognition and achievement program, which provides opportunities for K-12 students to express themselves through original works of art in the areas of literature, musical composition, photography, visual arts, dance choreography, and film/video production. Another goal of the program is to increase community awareness of the importance of arts in education.



## Art Inspired by Friendship

Each year Long Island University at C.W. Post hosts an art exhibit entitled Advanced Visions - High School Artists of Excellence, recognizing young talent throughout Brooklyn, Queens, Nassau, and Suffolk Counties. Lauren Belcastro, pictured with art teacher Seth Meir, was presented with this year's Juror's award for Most Expressive Work of Art. Lauren's work, “Breaking Free,” was selected from among 80 submissions from 40 area schools for its eye-catching qualities. Inspired by her friend, Stefan, the piece has also been displayed at the Smithtown Township Arts Council exhibition at the Mills Pond House in St. James.



## Reading for a World Record



Rocky Point Middle School students joined students from around the world in the Scholastic Book of World Records 2010 "Read for the World Record Challenge." Rocky Point students helped to set a new record for summer reading: 35,846,094 collective minutes.

Of the total minutes tallied, spanning from May 1 to August 31, 2009, Rocky Point students charted 46,110 minutes. New York State was one of six states with the highest volume of participation, and Rocky Point Middle School ranked 10th out of the state's 646 participating schools. In total, 8,725 schools worldwide took the challenge.

# Sports Wrap-Up

The winter sports season concluded with many outstanding accomplishments and a number of regional, state, and national records. Here is a list of the athletes' many accomplishments.

### GIRLS BASKETBALL

Hope Heiselman – All-League  
Annie Kennedy – League Rookie of the Year

### BOYS BASKETBALL

Vinny Palumbo – All-League  
Scott Tumulty – Academic All-County

### GIRLS WINTER TRACK

Jessica Volpe – All-Division

### BOYS WINTER TRACK

Zach LeCates – All-Division  
Brandon Loomis – All-Division, All-County, Academic All-County  
Kevin Vasko – All-Division

### WRESTLING

NICK ACARDI – ALL-LEAGUE  
Stephen Dutton – All-League, All-County, League Champion  
Matt Clarke – All-League, League Champion  
Billy Coggins – All-League, All-County, League Champion  
Tommy Dutton – All-League, All-County, League Champion  
Miles Farrell – All-League  
Dkqwan Johnson – All-League  
Russ Pitito – All-League  
Matt Ross – All-League, League Champion  
Peter Vivonetto – All-League, All-County  
Anthony Volpe – All-League, All-County, League Champion

## Helping Hands for Haiti

The Joseph A. Edgar Intermediate School student council (pictured with advisor Mark Yashowitz) organized and raised \$2,200 in a schoolwide collection effort called "Helping Hands for Haiti" to benefit the country's earthquake victims. Wearing pajamas to class, students in grades 3-5, as well as staff, were encouraged to deposit a one-time cash or check donation into a designated box. The students then wrote their name on a paper cutout "hand" in the color of the Haitian flag (red, blue, and yellow) and displayed these hands in the school's front hallway. All donations were submitted to the American Red Cross for the relief effort.



At Frank J. Carasiti Elementary School, students sold sticker grams for Valentine's Day to help with the Haiti relief effort. The school raised \$860 in sales and donations.

## In the Zone



The New York State Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance recognized high school seniors Peter Vivonetto and Samantha Mazzeo as Suffolk County's Suffolk Zone winners based on academics, leadership, and physical performance throughout their school careers. The District's administration congratulates both students on their achievement.



### BOARD OF EDUCATION

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Annette Sclafani  
*Director of Student Services*

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## District Mission Statement

*The mission of the Rocky Point Union Free School District is to develop each child's full potential in a nurturing and supportive student-centered environment that will promote a foundation for lifelong learning.*