



# Tiger TRADITIONS

*Inspiring Excellence and Leadership in All!*

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## Bench Pays Tribute to Emily Parkhurst

When you walk into the lobby of the Mexico Elementary School, you may notice a bench in the waiting area. Its back consists of baseball bats on both sides, and the shape of clouds form the top; the craftsmanship of Andrew Butler, husband to first grade teacher Kathy Butler. Its feet are playfully displayed with rubber rain boots and superhero sneakers. The warm colors and subjects you see were painted on by Autumn E. Brown, mother of Emily Alecia Parkhurst.

Emily was born on July 15, 2010. In September of 2015, she became a student of Mexico Elementary, in Lindsey McCaw's kindergarten class. However, Emily tragically passed away on May 8, 2016, as a result of asphyxiation from a large piece of food. It was shortly before the end of her school year as an accomplished kindergartner.

Although Emily's time in school was brief, it does not lessen the lasting impact she has made as a student and friend. She loved her teacher and classmates, as well as others who taught and interacted with her. She was respectful and soft-spoken, but loved to be included in fun. Emily was a thoughtful girl, helpful and kind in her actions toward her peers. She was full of perseverance in her learning and had a strong sense of determination to do the very best she could, always.

The bench is a tribute to Emily, to keep a vivid memory of her in that school, and one of the many things done as a celebration of the time we were able to have her in our lives.

Emily's mother, Autumn E. Brown, would like to encourage everyone, if the opportunity is available, to take a First Aid, CPR and/or AED course. She would also like to stress the importance of open understanding, time, patience and most of all love, surrounding a conversation with a child, especially if they inquire about the loss of a loved one or peer.



*Mexico Elementary School features a vibrant bench in its lobby as a tribute to student Emily Parkhurst, who passed away in 2016. The bench features many of the things Emily enjoyed, including some of her favorite books, colors, toys and movies.*



## Mexico Elementary Students Collect Food for Pantry



For the 25th consecutive year, students at Mexico Elementary School collected food for those in need during the holiday season.

Each December, students collect food donations for a local food pantry. This year, students combined to collect hundreds of bags of food.

After collecting and storing the bags at the school, fourth-graders recently hand-delivered the donations to the food pantry, something Principal Bob Briggs sees as a critical part of the process.

"This is a great school-wide event," said Briggs. "And it's a great experience for the fourth-graders to hand-deliver the donations and see first-hand how important this food drive really is."

## High School Student to be Published in Book

Emily Thompson, a junior at Mexico High School, has received word that her short science-fiction story will be published in an upcoming book.

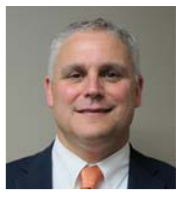
Thompson, who learned of and entered a competition through the school's Creative Writing Club, will see her 100-word story appear in a book produced by Young Writers titled "Stranger Sagas — New York Authors." The book is set for release March 31.



*...Continued on page 5*



# A Message From the Superintendent



In 2012, the New York State Education Department decided to test public school students in grades 3-8, prior to sharing the new English Language Arts (ELA) and Math Standards with public schools. In addition, the New York State Legislature passed a law that connected student achievement on these exams to the evaluations of principals and teachers. This ill-conceived plan was met with great resistance from parents and public educators and resulted in many parents opting their

student out of the 3-8 NYS English and Math exams. At the time, we were fully supportive of parents who chose to participate in the opt-out movement. The grass roots test boycott movement that followed was effective and sent a clear message to the New York State Education Department.

In fact, the opt-out movement was widespread and very effective. It led to many changes to the NYS 3-8 English Language Arts and Math testing plan including the following:

- The NYS Legislature does not currently allow principal and teacher evaluations to be tied to the NYS 3-8 Testing Program. It is believed by many that they will permanently decouple student test scores from principal and teacher evaluations.
- The first testing company that created the NYS Grades 3-8 English and Math Exams was Pearson. This company has been replaced by Questar, who believes in directly involving teachers in the process of creating fair and reasonable exams.
- The tests are shorter and limited to two days instead of the original three days of testing and there are fewer questions.
- Students with learning disabilities making it difficult to read are now allowed to have tests read to them when taking both the NYS 3-8 English Language Arts and Math exams.
- Originally if a student scored a 1 or 2 on the NYS ELA or Math exam the student was assigned to Academic Intervention Services (AIS). This is no longer true. Now schools use multiple measures including teacher input to determine whether AIS is needed.
- Most test questions are now released and shared with schools so teachers can see what questions were missed by a majority of their students and adapt their instruction accordingly.
- Teachers, students and parents can access questions missed by individual

students in order to know what areas they need to work on to improve as a student.

- Teachers are creating and reviewing more test questions to avoid trick questions and ensure the tests reflect the key skills and knowledge students must acquire at every grade level.

All of these changes have made the testing process more reasonable and fairer for students. Over the past seven years, we have provided trainings for teachers to update their instructional practices which provide our students with the skills and knowledge they need to be successful in college, a career or military service. It is important that teachers, parents and students have the opportunity to use state tests as a teaching tool designed to improve teaching and learning. When a student opts out of a 3-8 English or Math exam the teacher and parent do not receive a report describing the academic strengths and weaknesses of that student. It is a missed opportunity that could benefit every MACS student.

In addition to these changes, our Federal Government has passed the "Every Student Succeeds Act," which requires 95% of our students to participate in taking the English and Math New York State Exams.

If 95% of our students do not participate in taking the assessments, the Federal Government will require our District to develop specific plans of instruction to increase student participation on State tests. It will also require us to utilize some of our annual federal aid in accordance with the Federal Government's improvement plan as opposed to spending it on what we feel is most beneficial for our students. If our District fails to meet the expectations of the State and Federal Government, we could be designated for receivership. This is when the New York State Education Department comes in and takes over our schools at the cost of losing local control.

Let's band together and begin using state tests as a teaching and learning tool that allows us to use the data to improve instruction and learning. This benefits our students, teachers, principals and parents by providing them with the data to target the skills and knowledge they need to improve upon to be successful after graduation. Please contact your child's building principal with any questions regarding the NYS 3-8 Testing. You may also contact Mrs. Mary Beth Horn at (315) 963-8400 ext. 8406 or me at (315) 963-8400 ext. 5403.

Sincerely,

Sean C. Bruno

## Students Showcase the Meaning of 'True Beauty'

Hundreds of students from Mexico High School and Mexico Middle School took part in the district's eighth annual True Beauty Project recently.

The event, held Feb. 7, focused on the belief that beauty is more than just what someone looks like, and students took time to celebrate that fact with events during the day.

Many students had their photos taken with positive character traits written on whiteboards and a majority wore black T-shirts that read "Beauty is more than what I look like."

A video about this year's project can be viewed on the MACS website, [www.mexicocsd.org](http://www.mexicocsd.org).



Pictured are students and staff at Mexico High School who participated in this year's True Beauty Project.

## Proud to be MACS



### December Proud to be MACS Honoree

#### William Truax

William Truax, New Haven's school monitor, has been chosen as the December 2018 Proud to be MACS recipient.

Truax grew up in the Village of Mexico, graduating from MACS in 1988. Bill would receive his Bachelor of Arts degree with a major in political science from SUNY Oswego in 1993. Though his degree may not have prepared him for a specific job, it did, in his opinion, prepare him for whatever job and life challenges that would come his way.

Truax joined the MACS district in 1998 as a school monitor at Mexico High School at the suggestion of former high school English teacher and principal, Gary Smith. He would remain there until 2010 when he would move to New Haven Elementary as a school monitor for principals Cathy Caros and later Dan Packard.

"Bill is a tremendously dedicated employee at New Haven Elementary. His title is technically Recess Monitor, but Bill goes above and beyond the duties associated with this job," said teacher Alexandra Scorzelli, who nominated Truax for the Proud to be MACS honor.

"Another example of Bill's kindness was shown one day when a teacher was doing a project with her students that required brown paper bags. When she realized she was short two bags, she asked Bill if he knew where she might find some in the school. He immediately ran to his car and gave her two of his personal, reusable paper grocery bags. As you can see, Bill has a selfless heart!"

Truax said his favorite part of the job is working with the dedicated staff and, of course, the students. When asked what his favorite memories of work are, he said seeing the growth and development that occurs in the students from pre-K to fourth grade.



### January Proud to be MACS Honoree

#### Carolee McCoy

Carolee McCoy, Mexico Middle School nurse, has been recognized as the January 2019 Proud to be MACS recipient.

Carolee grew up in the Scriba area and is a member of the well-known and respected Fox family. Carolee attended New Haven Elementary, Mexico Middle School, and the Mexico High School graduating in 1998. Following graduation, Carolee attended Cayuga Community College obtaining her AA degree and Registered Nursing degree in 2001.

McCoy joined Mexico Middle School in 2012, replacing legendary nurse Sandy Hargrave. It is never easy to follow someone like that, but Lisa Brooks indicated that Carolee met the challenge and has established her own mark with staff and students.

"Carolee is extremely dedicated to her job. In my opinion, she has one of, if not the busiest offices in the school," said Brooks. "It is non-stop action all day long, even on her lunch time, but she never complains.

"I personally appreciate how she goes the extra mile for our coaches at the start of each sports season, making sure our athletes are approved and ready for tryouts even if it's at the very last minute, which it usually is! We are all very lucky to have her at our school!"

When asked about her favorite part of the job, McCoy said it was the realization that she was having a positive impact on a student when she did not think that she was having any.

Maybe the best way to sum up McCoy's nomination is to look back at what she wrote in her senior year book when asked about her most memorable high school moment. Her response was, "Every moment was special to me."

**"Let the beauty of what you love be what you do!"**

## High School Students Participate in Annual Operation Reindeer

Students at Mexico High School recently helped spread holiday cheer to hundreds of students from throughout the area.

Dozens of students volunteered their time to Operation Reindeer, an event hosted by the First Presbyterian Church in Mexico, which provides toys and presents to children during the holiday season.

The students packed 410 children's bags to help bring joy to 147 families this season.

We are so proud of the students of Mexico High School who volunteered their time after school for Operation Reindeer," said teacher Kimberly Harter. "Great job everyone!"



# Holiday Fun!



## Mexico Elementary UPK Students Dress for Success



Students in Miss Andrea Barry's Mexico Elementary a.m. and p.m. pre-K classes recently held a Community Helper Dress Up Day.

Students wore costumes that represent what they want to be when they grow up, and showcased tools and uniforms that help with the jobs.



## Senior Earns Music and Academic Scholarship to Saint Rose

With a smile on her face, a little fanfare and the flick of a pen, senior Victoria Harriger inked her letter of commitment to The College of Saint Rose's music program this week.

Harriger, who attends Mexico High School, will receive two large scholarships from the college for her academic prowess and musical talent to join the Golden Knight's ranks. She officially committed to the college in front of family, friends and mentors March 4 at Mexico High School.

Located in Albany, Saint Rose met all of Harriger's needs, she said, adding the whole arrangement and situation worked out "perfectly." To her, the university feels like home already.

"It reminds me of Mexico," said Harriger. "The people are incredibly nice and even the buildings look similar in a Victorian style."

Harriger, who plays bass for Mexico's band, began playing the instrument just three years ago as a freshman. Her overall determination and drive have helped her become such a strong bassist despite only recently picking up the instrument, High School Band Director Brian Carnes said.



# High School Student to be Published in Book

...From page 1

More than 13,500 entries were submitted for the contest, which presented entrants with just a few broad words to start their stories. Keeping the stories concise and utilizing editing skills was the true test, said Thompson.

To show the tough constraints Thompson and other entrants faced, the previous three paragraphs of this story add up to the 100-word limit.

Thompson's story began with "Ticking, the only thing heard worldwide was the ticking," and continues as a race against time to exit the planet. Her story is titled "Goodbye Earth."

Being published is humbling and "very cool," said Thompson, who may still receive a further award through Young Writers for her story when winners are announced in April. The publisher said a copy of the book will be sent to the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C.

for their records.

English teacher Anne Michaelis, a co-advisor of Mexico's Creative Writing Club, applauded the hard work and skill Thompson showed.

"I knew from the moment she entered this club that she was an outstanding writer who doesn't give herself enough credit," said Michaelis. "I'm so proud of her."



## Mexico Elementary, District Wish Mr. Briggs Well in New Endeavor

Although Mexico Elementary Principal Robert Briggs will be leaving the district after years of dedication, the impact he had on the lives of students and staff will be remembered fondly.



Briggs, who has served as principal of Mexico

Elementary since 2014 (as well as a stint from 2009-11), has accepted an administrative position at Liverpool Central Schools. While MACS will miss Briggs, the district is also happy to wish him well on the next chapter of his life.

"I have had the pleasure of being Bob's neighbor when we worked in Fulton and here in Mexico," said High School Principal Ryan Lanigan. "Bob is one of the most compassionate leaders I have ever had the privilege of working with. I will miss having him next door to bounce ideas off of. I wish him the best of luck in his new endeavor."

Superintendent Sean Bruno said Briggs has done an extraordinary job serving as principal at Mexico Elementary.

"He is an outstanding educator, colleague and friend. We will miss him more than words can express, and we wish him well in all his future endeavors," said Bruno.

Lou Chistolini will serve as the Mexico Elementary interim principal during the hiring process for a new principal.

Chistolini has recently served as an interim administrator for the Pulaski Central School District, Sandy Creek Central School District and Central Square School District. In addition to his interim experience and career administrative experience (at all three school building levels), Mr. Chistolini taught Physical Education in grades K-6 and served as school counselor for grades K-6.

**1st ANNUAL**



**COMMUNITY CONNECTION EVENT**

March 23 | Mexico High School | 9am-1pm

### WORKSHOPS INCLUDE:

- Representatives from Farnham
- Oswego Health/Child & Family Services
- Liberty Resources
- School Counselors Talking About College Opportunities, Scholarships & Financial Aid
- School Tool & Schoology Training
- Crisis Mobile Team
- School Attendance

**Workshop Sessions Begin Promptly at 9:45am**

**Free Breakfast & Lunch Served**

- Bounce Houses • Live Entertainment • Face Painting
- Raffles & Drawings • Rocket Launches • Robotics
- Various Activities • Supported By Our Own Students

**For More Information & To Register for Workshops**

Melissa Terzulli  
Home School Liaison  
mterzulli@mexicocsd.org

Ryan Lanigan  
Mexico High School Principal  
rlanigan@mexicocsd.org



## High School Students, Staff Dazzle During Showing of 'Polar Express'

Students from all three elementary schools in the Mexico Academy & Central School District were treated to an interactive viewing of the popular movie, "The Polar Express."

Students arrived at the high school with tickets in hand, and had their tickets punched before entering the auditorium. Once inside, the movie began and featured several live performances from high school students, including a performance from senior Josh Washer as the Conductor.

At the end of the movie, students were given jingle bells and greeted by Santa Claus (played by Principal Ryan Lanigan) and his elves (played by board of education members).

## New Haven Elementary Shows Valentine's Day Spirit



## JROTC Members Meet Mayor of Syracuse



*JROTC cadets from Mexico Academy's program volunteered in late December during the 2018 Christmas giveaway in Syracuse. While at the event, Syracuse Mayor Ben Walsh stopped and spoke to Cadet Capt. Jordan Hamilton about representing Mexico and the JROTC program.*



## Boys Swim Team Wins Class B Title

For the third year in a row, the Mexico Academy Boys Varsity swim team captured the NYSPHSAA Section III Class B title.

In the championship meet held at Nottingham High School, Mexico and Fulton tied in first place with 425.5 points.

Dylan Long was named co-swimmer of the meet after winning two individual events for the Tigers. Long was victorious in the 500-yard freestyle (5:04.07) and the 200-yard freestyle (1:49.86).

Coach Shawn Parkhurst was also named Coach of the Year at the meet after guiding the squad to three straight Class B titles.



## MACS Elementary Students Showcase Reading Abilities during Battle of the Books

Hours of hard work by MACS elementary students paid off with dozens of students competing in Battle of the Books recently. Students from New Haven, Mexico and Palermo read and studied 10 books since the fall, and they were challenged to recall information about the literature question-by-question at the competitions. The top two scoring teams, pictured below, from each school moved on to the districtwide competition at Mexico Middle School.

### PALERMO ELEMENTARY



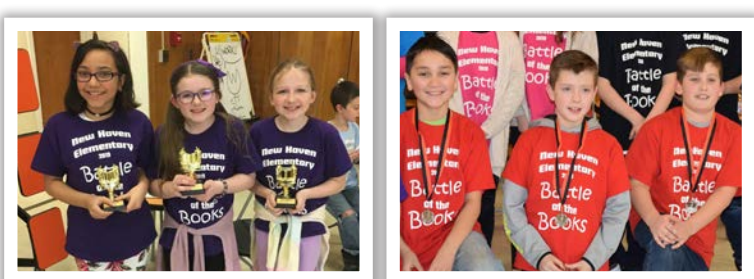
Pictured above at left, students Kassondra Nuzzo, Sampson Gillespy and Alice Truax were the winning team at Palermo Elementary. Pictured above at right, the team of Cadence Carpenter, Lilah Donath and Morgan Howard finished as runners up.

### MEXICO ELEMENTARY



Pictured above left, students Emma Belfield, Ian Bigelow and Jesse Marthia were the winning team at Mexico Elementary. Pictured above right, the team of Allie Poissant and Megan Eaton finished as runners up.

### NEW HAVEN ELEMENTARY



Pictured above left, students Kinzy Laffan, Allie Berg and Juliette Boots were the winning team at New Haven Elementary. Pictured above right, the team of Christopher Wood, Braydon Beasley and Ethan Workman finished as runners up.

## Palermo Lighthouse Team Leading the Way

Thanks to the Student Lighthouse Team, select students at Palermo Elementary School are helping to provide leadership skills throughout the program.



In total, 15 students are participating in the Lighthouse Team this year. While the team usually consists of third and fourth-graders only, the team was opened up to second-grade students this year.

The team, which meets twice per month, leads several activities throughout the school year, including student spotlight and other fun games during school assemblies.

Each student also comes up with individual goals for the year. Together, the team is also working on beautification efforts for the school.

## HS Presents 'Beauty and the Beast'



The Mexico High School Drama Department did a wonderful job presenting "Beauty and the Beast" before three sell-out crowds. The musical showcases the many talents of our drama department!

## BOARD OF EDUCATION

James Emery – President  
Darlene Upcraft – Vice President  
Chad Bigelow  
Dennis Brooks, Jr.  
Connie Douglas  
Amy Shaw  
Susan Teifke  
Sheila Wallis – Student Representative

## SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Sean Bruno  
16 Fravor Road  
Mexico, NY 13114  
963-8400 Ext. 5401  
www.mexicocsd.org



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## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- March 20** MIOSM Concert II MS Aud, 6:30pm
- March 21** HS Variety Show 7pm
- March 22** NH Spring Pictures; All-County Orchestra; HS Variety Show
- March 26** MIOSM Concert III MS Aud, 6:30pm
- March 28** NHS Blood Drive HS Gym 8-2:30pm
- March 29** ME PTA Carnival Night 5:30pm
- April 1-10** NYS ELA Assessment Window
- April 3** German Honor Society Inductions HS Aud 6:30pm
- April 4** NH Science Night 5:30pm
- April 5** 30 Week Marking Period Ends
- April 8-12** HS Spirit Week
- April 8** Art & Math Honor Society Inductions HS Aud 7pm
- April 10-11** Early Dismissal Parent/Teacher Conference
- April 11** Board of Education Meeting 6pm

## New Sensory Path at Palermo Helping Students Succeed

Looking to help students refocus and increase cognitive functioning, students at Palermo Elementary now have access to a sensory path.

The path, which is featured in a hallway in the heart of the building, is designed with a series of movements to help students refocus and work toward higher academic abilities.

According to educators Sarah Herrington and Erica Schipper, the path includes zig-zags, starts and stops, hopping and other movement patterns designed to help sensory abilities.

Many, if not all, Palermo students have utilized the path and have felt the benefits of following it. The path, which took about a month to create, takes students approximately one-and-a-half minutes to complete.

Another unique part of the path is that staff members have decided against instructing students on how to use the path, and instead allow the students to use their imaginations, thus allowing students to be their own leaders.



*Palermo Elementary students can refocus during the school day thanks to a new sensory path. The path, which is located centrally within the school, provides students with multiple movement patterns designed to help increase sensory abilities.*

## Congratulations



Congratulations to the amazing Kenny Ouder Kirk, who retired from MACS after 33 years of service as a custodian! Have a wonderful retirement Kenny. You will be missed!