Students from Shoreham-Wading River High School have traditionally placed great value on service to their community. Whether it’s through the annual Holiday Project that collects items for needy families or fundraising for a variety of initiatives, Shoreham-Wading River students are always willing to lend a hand. For a special group of students, however, their desire to help others has extended across the globe to help orphans in Kenya.

For the sixth straight year, select members of the high school’s Global Awareness Club traveled to Kenya for two weeks during February, as part of an outreach initiative through the Hope Children’s Fund. Led by high school teacher Kevin Mann, an active member of the Hope Children’s Fund, the 11 students traveled to Kenya to assist at the Jerusha Mwiraria Hope Children’s Home. The home is a haven for 79 orphans, ranging from ages 4 to 19. All children come from families that have been directly or indirectly affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

While there, the students had the opportunity to help paint the orphanage’s technical training center, which older students of the orphanage attend to learn trade skills. The students also delivered a donation of 19 laptops for the center, built and donated by students of Bellport BOCES. In addition to helping with the training site, the Shoreham-Wading River students worked on a farm and visited a local hospital.

The highlight of the trip for many students, however, was a special party they hosted for the orphans, sponsored by the Matovich family. Centered on a Valentine’s Day theme, the party included pizza and various games for the children such as football, soccer and kickball. Student Leighanne Reinhardt said, “The party was so special because the kids got to do things they hadn’t had a chance to do before.”

Traveling to Kenya and interacting with the orphans provided the Shoreham-Wading River students with a new perspective on life. According to student Julie Lindell, who travelled to Kenya for the third time, “We form so many bonds with the children and learn a lot from one another. They have more of an effect on us than we do them. The trips have taught me to appreciate what I have. The orphans have so little but are always smiling.” Fellow student Anya Uzo added, “To say I was ‘shell-shocked’ coming back home is an understatement. It can be difficult, upsetting and frustrating to see how materialistic some people can be after spending time with kids who have so little.”

Senior Victorya Hernandez summed up her thoughts on the trip by saying, “It was an amazing experience overall. Last year’s trip was great, but this year’s was even better.”

Remember to Vote!

SCHOOL BUDGET AND TRUSTEE ELECTION
Tuesday, May 21, 2013
High School Gymnasium
7 a.m. - 9 p.m.

BUDGET HEARING
Tuesday, May 7, 2013
High School Library
8 p.m.

Comprehensive Budget information is available on the District’s website at www.swrschools.org.
With the budget vote just around the corner, our Board of Education and administration have been working diligently to prepare a 2013-14 budget that meets the needs of our students while being mindful of taxpayers’ concerns. The Board-adopted 2013-14 budget that will be presented to voters on Tuesday, May 21 will fall within the district’s tax levy limit, while continuing to provide all the programs and services vital to our students’ development that currently exist. SWR remains committed to educating the “whole child” – this means we support those programs and services that aid in students’ intellectual, emotional and moral development. I am happy to report that the Board has found a way to preserve the substance of a SWR education while keeping the tax increase within the tax levy limit.

The proposed budget for 2013-14 will reflect a number of budget reductions from the current school year, as well as a number of enhancements. For example, we anticipate reducing several budget lines that do not affect programs by removing contingencies for which we have budgeted in the past. Additional funds will be allotted for security upgrades across the district, including the installation of additional cameras and fencing. We anticipate adding funds to provide security guard coverage for all buildings from the time they open until the time they close, including weekends.

In addition to the proposed budget, a second proposition will appear on the ballot that asks the community to use a portion of Prior Year State Aid to address critical roof issues at the high school, renovate science labs at the high school and fix various code violations. Significantly, this proposition, which is detailed in the newsletter article below, carries no additional tax impact for our residents.

In early May, community residents will receive the next issue of the district newsletter, which will detail the proposed budget. I encourage all community residents to thoroughly review this information and to attend a budget workshop or Board of Education meeting (dates can be found on the district’s website, www.swrschools.org).

Thank you for your participation and ongoing involvement in our schools.

Sincerely,

Dr. Steven Cohen
Superintendent of Schools

Voters to Decide on High School Improvements

On May 21, a second proposition will appear on the ballot along with the proposed budget for 2013-14. Proposition #2 addresses a number of improvements to be made at Shoreham-Wading River High School, totaling approximately $4,985 million. Taxes for community residents will not increase if Proposition #2 is approved, as the improvements will be funded through prior years’ state aid. Passage of the proposition would allow the district to correct code violations at the high school, items that must be remedied per the New York State Education Department. Improvements include installing fire-rated doors, fixing dead-end hallways and making bathrooms compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Proposition #2 calls for an additional improvements, including the repair or replacement of the high school roof above the music suite. The current roof leaks in a number of areas, creating damage to the ceilings, walls and floors. Science labs at the high school would also be renovated, reconfigured and repaired through this proposition, as the district looks to further emphasize the important of science, technology, engineering and mathematics. The current labs and equipment are simply outdated and do not provide students with the resources they need to compete.

More detailed information about Proposition #2 will be included in the budget newsletter, to be sent to all residents next month.

Security Update

The Board of Education and administration are continuing to update the district’s security protocols, as the district’s top priority is the safety of its students. Since the last community update in February, the district has met with a number of security consultants and health and safety personnel who have each conducted a needs assessment. They presented the Board of Education with a number of recommendations, some of which have been implemented.

With the goal of maintaining a safe, educational atmosphere for all students, all emergency plans have been reviewed and updated. In addition, entrances to all school buildings remain locked during school hours, and visitors must present photo identification to gain access. This rule is strictly enforced, so the district asks for cooperation and patience from parents and community members. Schools throughout the district are conducting more emergency practice drills than required (these include fire, lockdown, lockdown and shelter-in-place drills). The district has also hired additional security guards, all of whom have undergone a background check.

Currently, the district is planning for security vestibules, additional locks and security cameras. The district will continue to keep the community updated on its progress. Should you have any questions, please contact Superintendent of Schools Dr. Steven Cohen at scohen@swrk12.ny.us.

NOW is the time to ADVOCATE for our Children!

As cited from the New York State PTA and Eastern Suffolk BOCES websites:

Become Informed: The governor proposes an increase of $889 million for education, yet Long Island schools are getting shortchanged again! The difference this year can be attributed to a cut in high tax aid. This type of financial support is designed to support schools in communities where the cost of living is higher – namely, Nassau and Suffolk counties! Gary Bixhorn, the chief operating officer of Eastern Suffolk BOCES and Suffolk County Schools Superintendents Association legislative chairperson, gave a very informative presentation at the regional legislative breakfast on Feb. 25: “Advocating for Sustainability While Preparing for an Emergency.” Get the facts at http://www.2boces.org/pub_programs.cfm.

Identify Challenges for Our Schools: Our Board of Education is right in the middle of making difficult budgetary decisions. Get a sense of the crucial issues that impact our students and our schools in the 2013-14 school year.

Attend School Board Meetings: This is hard since the meetings aren’t always convenient given our other commitments, but keep in mind that others will be there. If your voice isn’t at the table, others’ will be. This is a critical time and time well spent.

Ask Questions/Add Your Voice to the Chorus: Take action with NYS PTA CapWiz, an electronic advocacy system: http://capwiz.com/npta2/ny/home/. Don’t hesitate to talk to your school board members or email them at boe@swr.k12.ny.us. Email us at swrsptacouncil@gmail.com or contact us on Facebook (Shoreham Wading River Council of PTAs) and we’ll field your questions. Join us at our upcoming meetings:

On April 24 at 7 p.m., we will have a Joint PTA/PTO Council Meeting at the Wading River Elementary School to discuss the adopted 2013-14 proposed budget.

On May 9 at 6:30 p.m., we will have a brief meeting, followed by Meet the Candidates Night at 7:30 p.m. in the high school library, where you can meet and listen to who is vying for a trustee position on our Board of Education.

On May 21 from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m., the budget proposition and BOE trustee vote will be held at the high school auxiliary gym.

On June 10 at 7 p.m. in the high school library there will be a Council Curriculum Committee presentation that will address how our district has aligned its ELA and math curricula to the Common Core State Standards.

This is a critical year, but it’s also a time of opportunity. Use the resources that the NYS PTA and your local PTA offers and insist on being informed and engaged in the process that directly impacts our children. Our children depend on us and nobody is in a better position to represent them.

Together we are a powerful voice for children.

Please join us in supporting them!
A Celebration of Black History

Students at Prodell Middle School recognized Black History Month in February with a special interdisciplinary celebration. Through the district’s new professional development initiative implemented this year (see article above), teachers at the middle school united to create this stunning celebration for all students.

To kick off the festive assembly, three members of Hofstra University’s Imani Dance Ensemble shared their talents with the middle school students, demonstrating the art of African dance. Earlier in the day, the dancers had met with students during physical education classes to teach them some traditional dance moves.

A number of Prodell students then continued the celebration by reading portions of their original essays on the theme of “I Have a Dream,” which they had written in English class. Then they participated in discussions with a variety of teaching professionals such as Principal Dr. Linda Anthony and Assistant Principal Dan Ackerman. The overall goal is to foster higher-level thinking amongst students and to expose them to a vast range of literature. According to Ms. Kalin, “Reading enthusiasm and support has grown as evidenced by the increase in circulation at our school library.”

Since the inception of the professional development initiative, district administrators have received positive feedback from teachers. Second-grade teachers Lisa McEvoy and Kristen Gironda from Miller Avenue Elementary School said, “The initiative has transformed our classrooms and provided us with tangible evidence to meet the high standards of the Common Core curriculum in both literacy and mathematics.” Wading River Elementary School speech pathologist Corinne Milmore has also benefited from the initiative. “Using this year’s professional development time to work with another speech pathologist is allowing both of us to accomplish many things at once. We are exploring and expanding on what we have learned during previous workshops and conferences and are able to provide peer mentoring to each other about how to best support students’ needs.”

As detailed in the winter newsletter, the Shoreham-Wading River Central School District implemented a new professional development initiative at the start of this school year. Through the initiative, teachers at all levels in the district participate in a series of 19, one-hour workshops throughout the year. The sessions are geared at providing teachers with time to collaborate with colleagues, develop new strategies for classroom instruction and receive training relevant to their practice.

According to Alan Meinster, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment, “The beauty in this initiative is that teachers identify the areas they want to investigate, as long as the areas compliment their overall instructional goals. It provides an opportunity for our teachers to share their ideas on topics of common interest and create strategies for adapting instruction to motivate and inspire deeper student reflection on their learning.”

Teachers within each building have been using this time to collaborate with those colleagues, sharing a common area of focus related to their practice. For example, during a recent session, high school teachers from a variety of disciplines learned about engaging students through Socratic seminars, a tool that encourages open discussion and critical thinking amongst students. Through another professional development session, second-grade teachers gathered to discuss literacy instruction to enhance the reading and writing workshop program.

As a result of the initiative, teachers are providing students with new, interactive lessons that inspire a deeper level of understanding. At the middle school, for example, librarian Ann Marie Kalin, in conjunction with the sixth-grade English department teaching staff, revived the Booktalk program, originally started at Prodell in 1976. Through Booktalk, sixth-graders read a selected book and then participate in discussions with a variety of teaching professionals such as Principal Dr. Linda Anthony and Assistant Principal Dan Ackerman. The overall goal is to foster higher-level thinking amongst students and to expose them to a vast range of literature. According to Ms. Kalin, “Reading enthusiasm and support has grown as evidenced by the increase in circulation at our school library.”

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Sparking Imaginative Learning

In an effort to bring science to life in a fun way for elementary students throughout the district, all elementary schools recently hosted “Mad Science” assemblies. Mad Science is an organization whose mission is to spark imaginative learning by transforming laboratory science into fun, interactive learning experiences for kids. At Wading River Elementary School, students volunteered to assist a scientist, also known as Professor Will, with his experiments, learning how science plays a vital role in everyday life. For one particular test, a few lucky volunteers were able to float on the Mad Science hovercraft (pictured at left, top), learning about the science behind the technology. For another experiment, Professor Will demonstrated airlift by using a leaf blower and several rolls of toilet paper. Needless to say, the audience was showered with streams of paper, to the delight of the students. Meanwhile, at Miller Avenue Elementary School, children jumped into learning about “sound” with live demonstrations and hands-on activities that revealed the science behind sound.

At Briarcliff Elementary School, “Mike the Caveman” led the sessions for the young students, demonstrating age-appropriate experiments. For kindergartners in Kelly Ford’s class, students first learned about the three types of matter: solids, liquids and gas. Mike performed a variety of experiments using dry ice, including one in which he blew up a balloon using the gas emitted from the dry ice (pictured at left, bottom). In another experiment, Mike turned boiling water into ice in a mere 20 seconds by exposing it to the dry ice. The kindergartners were engaged throughout the entire session. By actively participating in the presentation, students learned important lessons while having fun at the same time.
Math Labs Provide Needed Support

This school year, the Shoreham-Wading River Central School District continues to realign its curriculum to meet the new Common Core Standards—standards used by school districts across the state that provide a consistent understanding of what students are expected to learn. Due to new curriculum shifts, classroom content and material can be a bit more challenging than in the past. To support students, the district has created math labs at Prodell Middle School to provide students with extra support they may need in understanding of the material.

The labs were created for math students who struggle with concepts, but who do not need the remedial level of support also offered by the school. According to Principal Dr. Linda Anthony, “The idea of the math labs came about when we noticed that good math students were needing a boost of support.” While remedial support offered at Prodell reinforces concepts that have already been presented in class, the math labs present material to students before they are taught it in their regular class. This way, students become familiar with the vocabulary and concepts so that they enter their regular math class one step ahead.

Students can opt to attend math lab by themselves, or a parent or teacher can recommend their participation. The labs are fluid, meaning that students come and go as needed. They attend the labs during their specials already scheduled into their day.

According to Dr. Anthony, “The response to the math labs has been overwhelmingly positive. The students tell us that it is helpful to their understanding and gives them the added support they need. Our math teachers are also seeing the benefits.”

Engaging Students in Math

Understanding Math Through Movement

Students in Danielle Algiere’s fourth-grade class at Miller Avenue Elementary School put math in motion with a recent lesson. During their unit of study on geometry, the students worked in groups to demonstrate specific geometric terms using their bodies. They creatively arranged themselves to demonstrate the concepts of points, lines, rays, line segments, right angles, obtuse angles, parallel lines and intersecting lines. According to Ms. Algiere, “The lesson contributed to student learning because it made abstract concepts become more concrete.” Pictured from top to bottom, students Caitlin Thrash, Blythe Wing, Cody Langenhahn and Ryan Mann form a geometric line with their arms.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

The district congratulates Prodell Middle School seventh-grade student Jordan McClintock who was named the grand prize winner in Cablevision’s Hispanic Heritage Month Essay contest. Jordan was chosen from approximately 250 other submissions spanning the entire tri-state area, as well as Montana, Wyoming and Colorado (other Cablevision territories).

The contest asked students to write on the topic of “Who Is a Latino You Admire and Why?” For her winning entry titled "Lighting and Leading the Way," Jordan wrote about family friend Luz Cabrera, a volunteer and community activist who is completely blind. “I marvel at her courage,” Jordan stated. Jordan was honored at school with a special assembly in her honor, where she read her winning essay for her fellow students.

Congratulations to Wading River second-grader Olivia Beirne and fourth-grader Aaron McClintock, for their winning entries in the PTA Reflections Program. The theme of this year’s Reflections contest was “The Magic of the Moment.” For her entry, Olivia choreographed a dance “flapper” routine. Olivia’s entry was chosen for the regional competition and has now progressed to the state level of judging. Aaron entered the literature portion of the contest with his essay titled, “The Magic of a Brother.” Aaron’s entry was also chosen for the regional competition. Residents of Leisure Village and librarians from North Shore Public Library graciously donated their expertise and time to judge all of the student entries from Wading River, which spanned the categories of dance, literature, photography and visual arts.
Students

‘STOMP OUT BULLYING’

Shoreham-Wading River High School administrators have continued their efforts to emphasize the harmful and tragic effects that bullying can have on young adults. In early February, students throughout the school participated in the second annual “Stomp Out Bullying Day,” geared at empowering them to speak up in a variety of situations.

To begin the day, ninth and tenth-grade students participated in a session run by Alisty Keneth, president of AJK Diversified, a firm whose motto is “Silence Is Acceptance. Speak Loudly.” Ms. Keneth discussed a variety of topics with the students, including bullying and Internet safety, as well as the consequences of making poor choices. Following this, Ms. Keneth met with a group of 20 students to engage in further discussion. She encouraged the students to carry on her message with their peers and to stand up for themselves and others.

The junior and senior classes also participated in the day’s activities by taking part in “Stories of Substance.” This local theatre troupe (pictured above) uses drama, humor and music in a creative, powerful and efficient way to educate students about making healthy choices. Throughout the morning, the group presented a variety of real-life scenarios that dealt with a range of topics such as the improper use of social media, drinking, drug use and depression.

In his address to students to kick off the day, Shoreham-Wading River High School Principal Daniel Holtzman said, “As you all are aware, bullying is a problem that needs to be addressed collectively. You as the student body are the first line of defense; it all starts and stops with you. This is a societal issue that will stop when you say so. Most of us in this room believe that time has come.”

P.S. I Love You Day

Students throughout Shoreham-Wading River High School celebrated “P.S. I Love You Day,” a day dedicated to the fight against depression and suicide. Spearheaded by junior Giavanna Verdi, the day served as an outlet to let others know they are never alone and that someone is always there to help.

In recognition of the day, SWR students and staff were encouraged to wear purple to school. In addition, Giavanna collected donations for the Long Island Crisis Center and distributed purple ribbons to those who donated. High school students also had the opportunity to write down positive thoughts on purple index cards, which were then hung on the wall for all to see. One card read, “Be the best version of yourself that you can be,” while another proclaimed, “The more you celebrate your life, the more there is to celebrate.”

Giavanna learned about P.S. I Love You Day through her participation in the Hugh O’Brian Youth Leadership Foundation. While attending a HOBY seminar, Giavanna heard from and met West Islip student Brooke DiPalma, the person responsible for starting P.S. I Love You Day throughout the region. “I feel like our community needs to be a little bit brighter and wanted to bring some happiness to our school,” stated Giavanna on her decision to bring the awareness campaign to the high school.

Keeping Up with “Character Counts”

At the beginning of the school year, Wading River Elementary School students were introduced to a new character education program, titled “Character Counts.” Since September, the students have participated in a variety of programs and activities designed to reinforce the school’s “six pillars of character.” To emphasize these pillars of trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship, the school recently added six special street signs around the hallways to model each of the pillars. From “Caring Street” to “Responsibility Road,” the pillars are continually reinforced as students navigate the hallways.

In addition, every student at Wading River contributed to the school’s “Caring Quilt,” now on display by the school’s all-purpose room. Each student was asked to decorate a quilt square and complete the sentence, “I am caring when…” The students responded with a wide variety of answers, including “I am caring when I help my mom set the table,” “I am caring when I share,” and “I am caring when I don’t pollute and do my chores.”

Junior Girl Scout Troop 763, led by parents Honore Cavaco and Alisa McMorris, donated their time to piece together the quilt and laminate it. Ms. Cavaco said, “The troop logs approximately 100 hours of community service a year, so the girls were very excited to help with this effort. They truly were touched by what their fellow students wrote on the quilt.”

A special thank you is extended to Troop 763, as well as the members of the Character Education Team from Wading River: Doreen Armstrong, Priscilla Hartman, Stefanie Margliano, Tracy O’Lear, Carolyn Stein, Kelly Toole and Christina Warnken.
Seventh-grade students at Prodell Middle School have forged a special bond with their peers in China through a special pen pal program, now in its third year. Dr. Linda Anthony, the middle school principal, traveled to China with the College Board in 2010 to speak about education and the importance of children learning world languages. While there, Dr. Anthony developed a partnership with a middle school in Shandong Province. Since that time, she has communicated with the Chinese principal and English teacher regularly. The relationship evolved into a full-fledged pen pal program for the students of both schools, beginning in 2010 with sixth-grade students.

Prior to the holiday break in December, students in both Diana Richardson’s and Linda Mohabir’s English classes studied China. They read articles, looked at pictures and held discussions on Chinese culture. Following the break, the students wrote their first letter to their pen pals. They wrote about themselves and then asked their pen pals questions about their own lives. The pen pal exchange will continue throughout the school year as a way for the students to learn about each other’s cultures.

Discussing the importance of this program, Dr. Anthony said, “This program is a wonderful opportunity for us to bridge an understanding of Chinese education, their system and their culture.” Ms. Mohabir added, “Through the pen pal project, the students learn empathy. They learn to not make assumptions and to respect other cultures.”

Students at Shoreham-Wading River High School recently had the opportunity to explore options for life after they graduate during a mini college fair held in the school’s gym. During the fair, representatives from 90 colleges, universities and post-graduate institutions shared information about admissions, programs offered and student life.

According to Andrew Bunting, admissions counselor from George Mason University who was part of the fair, “These events provide students with the inside scoop about the institutions being represented. They also give students the opportunity to speak to admissions counselors face-to-face.” Junior Aimee Manfredo explored her options at the fair and found it to be beneficial. “I discovered some different schools today that I didn't even know existed and they seem to be a good fit for me,” she said.
All the World's a Stage

Fifth-grade students from Miller Avenue and Wading River elementary schools recently showcased their artistic talents during the schools’ annual plays. The fifth-grade class at Wading River Elementary School presented “The Musical Adventures of Flat Stanley Jr.” (pictured top, right) which told the tale of popular book character Stanley Lambchop and his travels around the world. The fifth-graders rehearsed for weeks to prepare for the play, which featured a special cameo by principal Stephen Donohue.

Meanwhile, Miller Avenue Elementary School fifth-graders brought the story of “School House Rock Live Jr.” (pictured bottom, right) to life. Based on the popular educational cartoon, the play told the story of new teacher Tom Mizer and his preparations for teaching. The Miller Avenue students wowed the audience with their musical numbers, showcasing their hard work and dedication in preparing for the play.