

SCHOOL

A Special Supplement to the Sullivan County Democrat

SCENE



A look at
activities
in the
Fallsburg
Central
School
District

A SPECIAL SECTION OF
**THE SULLIVAN COUNTY
DEMOCRAT**

JANUARY 2022
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Saving the world one student at a time

After-school activities are known to have a positive impact on self-confidence and decision-making at the same time as they encourage overall health and improved behavior. At Benjamin Cosor Elementary School (BCES), one can add on the importance of making an impact on the earth and its people.

Take the Ecology Club, open to students in grade 3-to-6.

The club encourages a positive attitude about the area in which the children live and promotes understanding that it is everyone's job to keep the community healthy. Soon, Ecology Club students will participate in a litter pluck. They will also go on to research an animal that lives in the region as they create a poster and learning about the ecology of living things.

Another after-school club for Grades 3-6 is K-Kids.

There, students are offered opportunities to work together in service to school and community; to develop leadership potential; to foster the development of strong moral character; and to encourage loyalty to school, community and nation.

For example, members of K-Kids are selling dog-bone cut-outs to raise funds for Rock Hill SPCA, CARE in Liberty and Rocky's Rescues in Liberty, which is a spay/neuter program. The goal is to raise \$3,000 by the end of the school year so that each animal rescue can receive \$1,000 for the good work they do.

In addition, K-Kids are collecting tangible donations to donate to the three animal rescues, fund-raisers that will be ongoing until the end of the school year.

Most recently, the K-Kids participated in the Warm Socks for Warriors drive. Students collected over 220 pairs of socks. These socks were sent to VA Hospitals and military personnel.

Then there's BCES' Newspaper Club, made up of sixth graders. The

goal is to promote school news and events while improving the writing skills of the club members. The first edition featured a spotlight on the Warm Socks for Warriors drive; introduced new staff members; and highlighted the fall school events with photos and write-ups.

Finally, there's the BCES Student Government Association (Grades 4-6), for which the goal is to have as many students as possible participating in activities that promote citizenship and help make the school an even more enjoyable place to learn and grow.

Student Government members have participated in the Safe Trick or Treat, hid pumpkins and turkeys for students to search for, co-sponsored the Thanksgiving Food Drive with the high school, for which they collected 13 boxes of non-perishable goods, and opened the school store. During December, the SGA offered "Presents for Pre-K" and then in January planned to sponsor the Souper Bowl, a canned-food drive for the local food pantries.

School Scene

A Look Inside the Fallsburg Central School District

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A focus on homework and music making

All students in Kindergarten through 6th Grade are invited to participate in the Extended Day program at Benjamin Cosor Elementary School. There, they brush up on their skills and receive support with their daily homework assignments.

Here are a few samples of their learning after the school day.

- Kindergartners work on letter and number recognition and on how to use scissors and other fine motor skills. They also have the unique opportunity to work with Heidi Camacho, the art teacher, on art projects for the first six weeks of the program.

- First graders are working on cutting, tracing, letter and number recognition as well as sight words. They have also completed activities related to autumn leaves as well as an apple observation project.

- Second graders have learned

about spiders and about turkeys. They have researched, read about, and completed crafts about them. In their leaf activities, they have learned math facts and how to write collaborative descriptions. Veterans' Day was a point for learning and discussing, and the students wrote about why they are thankful for our veterans.

- Fifth graders work on various project-based learning activities after homework is complete. They enjoyed a Halloween costume contest, learned about the Day of the Dead, and created their own Veterans memorials.

- The grade 4-6 beginner ENL (English as a New Language) group worked on research and writing about Thanksgiving traditions.

Reading, writing and research, along with other art projects, will be incorporated into the program throughout the year, offering not



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

In music teacher Rachel Kleinman's class, first graders use rhythm sticks on a unit about Italy, learning to play 'pizza rhythms' and the Italian tarantella-napoletana dance.

only engaging programs but also opportunities to practice these important skills.

THE SOUND OF MUSIC

Although the primary focus on after-school learning is on homework, the students also participate in other hands-on experiences so valuable for those who worked remotely for much of the time since March of 2020.

In Grades 4 through 6, children are offered opportunities in a number of musical programs. Beginning in 4th grade, all students are invited to participate in the Bell Choir, Recorder and Chorus Ensembles. They enjoy performing together, making

beautiful music, learning about other cultures, and having fun.

Fifth and 6th graders are invited to participate in the Concert Band. Students learn to play as a group ensemble, working on furthering the skills they learn in their band lessons as well as promoting teamwork, listening and ensemble musical skills.

"These ensembles are an essential part of our music program at BCES," said music teacher Rachel Kleinman. "Students are interacting and engaging with their peers both musically and socially in a positive environment in which the teacher and students are able to establish a relationship on a personal level so that they feel connected, supported and valued."

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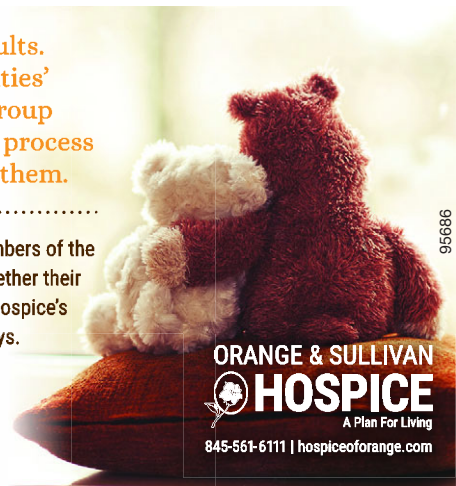
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Students explore college computer science through Siena College

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The launch of a new computer science program links Fallsburg with Siena College. 'Discovering Computer Science,' a high school credit class, jumpstarts next year's Intro to Computer Science, a college course held through Siena but located at the high school. Students can graduate from high school with 10 college credits and the ability to be computer programmers. From left to right are technology teacher Don Thomas; students Gage Pittalga, Justin Parsons, Edwin Morales Jr., and Kai Odell; and co-technology teacher Megan Kappes.



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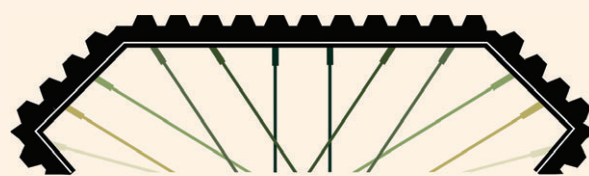


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"Giving students an opportunity to build foundational technology skills," says Principal Kyle Roddey, "will give students the confidence to take higher level computer science courses in the future."

That's just what's happening at the Junior-Senior High School, where teacher Megan Kappes is teaching Discovering Computer Science, a high school credit class created by Siena College.

"This is an introductory course for students who may have little to none experience with computer science," explained Kappes. "The class utilizes hands-on-labs and projects where students learn the basics of computer science using a block-based language. They will also learn how to design and create their own website by writing their own code using HTML language."

Then, towards the end of the year, students will learn about animation and problem-solving using Python, which is another programming language.

"The history of computer science as well as current events are also incorporated throughout the year," Kappes said.

The course is open to students in grades 9 through 12, and no prior technology experience is required.

"This year we have 15 students (10th through 12th grade), most of whom are expected to continue on to the next class next school year," said Kappes. "As of now, we're expecting full classes next year – about 22 students for each class/group."

Next year, the school will offer Introduction to Computer Science, allowing students to earn college credits through Siena and to begin a computer science pathway.

Co-technology teacher Don Thomas will teach that class, which will focus on diving deeper into Python programming and the impor-

'Giving students an opportunity to build foundational technology skills will give students the confidence to take higher level computer science courses in the future.'

Kyle Roddey
Principal |

tance of data representation, computer organization, historical and societal impacts and artificial intelligence.

"Students in this pathway will follow with Siena College courses on Software Development and Computer Programming," added Principal Kyle Roddey. "In senior year, these students will be able to sign up for a Cybersecurity Course from Syracuse University."

Siena College, which is in Loudonville near Albany began the high school/college program some three years ago. A grant allows Siena professors to create the curriculum as well as hold yearly training for teachers around New York State.

"Last August, I joined them at Siena College for four days in order to receive training," said Kappes. "Each month, they also hold remote meetings where all teachers in the program can come together and discuss the curriculum and its positive outcomes, as well as ask for advice if needed. It's a great support system."

Thank you to

Principals Kyle Roddey and Mary Kate Stinehour;
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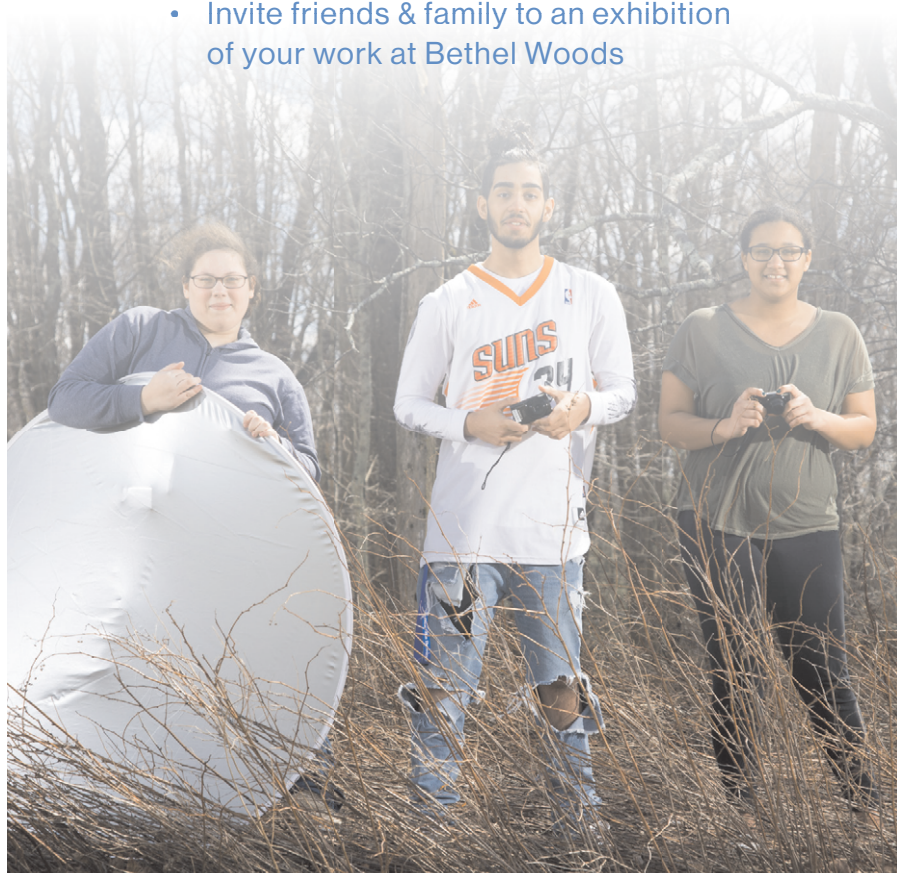
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Lights, camera, action!

TV studio planned for students

The Fallsburg Junior Senior High School will soon construct its own television production studio, the brainchild of English teacher Jonathan Gose and special education teacher Evan Mullen.

State-of-the-art video cameras and top-notch recording and professional-level editing equipment are part of the exciting package. A back section of the school library will be transformed into the studio. "We are in the process of bidding



Special Education teacher Evan Mullen, on left, and English teacher Jonathan Gose are thrilled that their dream for a TV production studio at Fallsburg Junior-Senior High School will get underway soon.

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and ordering the equipment," said Gose. "We hope to get it set-up and functional by February."

Digital information, accessible through our computers and smartphones, has become a huge component in students' daily lives, said Gose.

"We wanted to teach students the (broadcast-related) skills and how to use quality equipment – to create original work that can be shared within the school and the larger digital community," he said.

Studio construction is being funded by federal grants that support students' social and emotional needs as the District continues to endure and adapt to the constraints of the pandemic.

Once the studio is up and run-

ning, the plan is to make it a student-centric platform for celebrating and uniting Fallsburg's diverse student population.

The teachers plan to use the space for a Broadcasting and Journalism class, where students will be able to create their own news clips, shows, skits, musical performances and more.

"This broadcast studio will allow students to participate in hands-on training with camera, editing videos, newscasting, graphic design, and more," added Mullen. "And other classes will have the option to sign up to use the space for student projects and other programs."

PLEASE SEE **STUDIO**, 11F

It's Bon Appetit! At the Junior-Senior High School Cafeteria

The COVID-19 pandemic has undoubtedly led to various changes in how schools operate – with one of the largest impacts felt in school cafeterias.

In order to limit the spread of the virus, cafeterias moved to giving out single-serve and “grab and go” items for lunch. Fewer eating options were available in cafeterias, including at Fallsburg Junior-Senior High School.

Then, when this school year began, Student Government Association President Emily Colura reported to the Board of Education that students wanted to see changes in the food available to students. Responding to the concerns, Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Ivan Katz, formed a cafeteria committee aimed at improving food offerings.

The committee convened various student focus groups and then researched options. They put out surveys and developed a plan.

“Having student voices as an integral part of the process is a key element in creating meaningful change,” noted Assistant Principal Shana Bruestle, who attended one of the student focus groups.

“It was wonderful for our students to have an opportunity to speak directly with administrators, the school board members, and the cafeteria director,” Bruestle said. “Students felt heard, and their questions and suggestions were taken seriously. I could tell

they were appreciative of the chance to sit at the table and be a part of the process.”

With the assistance of Sullivan County BOCES Food Service Director and new School Lunch Manager, Anthony Rollins, numerous changes have been made in the Junior-Senior High School cafeteria.

There's now a daily salad bar along with a new “Spice Station” that invites students to try various herbs and spices as desired.

Lunch offerings, including new hot lunches, include: chicken and waffles, homemade beef chili with a baked potato and breadstick; pineapple ham with a baked potato and corn muffin; chicken fajitas with peppers and onions; and taco pasta casserole.

As breakfast, too, is a critical meal, the District wants to maximize students eating before their classes begin. Lunch Manager Rollins is working on providing new options for breakfast such as fruit and yogurt parfaits and breakfast pizza.

Student feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, and the District will continue to gauge student enjoyment in their meals.

Says Dr. Katz: “I’m exceptionally proud of students, staff and the Fallsburg Board of Education for coming together as a team to address the cafeteria concerns brought forward by student leaders. The changes are a direct result of a team approach to addressing and successfully resolving issues.”



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Working on tasty food for breakfast and lunch at Fallsburg Junior-Senior High School are cafeteria staff members, back row from left, Frances Garcia; new school lunch manager Anthony Rollins; and Rose Froehlich. In front row is cafeteria staff member Pat Ulatoski.

Fallsburg Jr/Sr High School Ecology Club received a Beautification Grant to landscape the school's entry, 2021

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Staying warm at Fallsburg Central

For as far back as anyone can remember, Fallsburg Central School District (FCSD) has been distributing warm coats and other clothing during the very cold Catskill winters. With the support of the school nurses, administrators and social workers in both school buildings, families with special needs benefit from the donations of school staff, local service agencies such as Kiwanis and Elks, and, especially, from Assemblywoman Aileen Gunther's office. The actual donations are handled by the Social Workers in both buildings. Picture above, left to right, are BCES School Counselor Gayle Raskin, Social Workers Jillian Guerra, Nicolette Capocciamo, Kylee Cortes and Francine LaDonna.

STUDIO: Lights, Camera, Action!

CONTINUED FROM 8F

"The kids spend so much time watching and creating their own social media," Mullen said, "but not many were aware that digital production could be a potential career, and not just for online content. The skills and techniques they will learn will also apply to television, broadcasting, and film jobs, to name a few."

"Next time you watch a Marvel movie," Mullen tells the kids, "look at all the names listed in the closing credits. Those are good jobs for creative people."

The school is also investigating the creation of an after-school club related to media production. This will ultimately lead to students creating video morning announcements and media coverage of school athletic contests.

Both Mullen and Gose hope to see the program grow over the coming years and become a critical component to students' high school experience, whether as a participant or

audience member.

Junior-Senior High School Principal Kyle Roddey points out that the school seeks to provide students with various opportunities for exploring career paths.

"We are delighted that our building will now be home to this state-of-the-art facility," Roddey said. "This will unlock new opportunities for students to participate in future-ready learning while having fun. These engaging hands-on activities will help our students explore new careers all while making their school a better place."

"We are so grateful to Mr. Gose and Mr. Mullen for developing this concept," Roddey said. "I can't wait to see what our students create."

Assistant Principal Shana Bruestle is thrilled too.

"It has been wonderful to watch this program grow from an idea in a meeting to a brand new opportunity for our students," Bruestle said. "This will be an amazing experience for our students and faculty."

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