



RONDOUT VALLEY

CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT



MES DRAMA CLUB COVERS CONTEMPORARY TO CLASSICS

From Shel Silverstein to Shakespeare, the Marbletown Elementary School's Third Grade Drama Club performance in March had something for everyone. The students were given the option to perform either a poem of their choice or to perform a scene from an adaptation of William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* or *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

In preparation for the performance, the students who chose poetry read a variety of pieces with the club's advisors, School Counselor Danielle Waldron and Teacher's Assistant Kathie Hikade. They then selected either their favorite poem, or one that featured a theme or topic they found interesting. Students spent hours in rehearsal memorizing and learning to perform their poetry with costumes and props. Selections included "How Not to Have to Dry the Dishes" by Shel Silverstein; "Riding a Rainbow" by Kenn Nesbitt; "Soccer Girl" by Marilyn Lott; and "I'm Glad I'm Me" by Jack Prelutsky, just to name a few.

The Shakespearean scenes were based on scripts adapted for young readers and actors by Lois Burdett, a renowned Shakespeare educator. Working with the young thespians were School Social Worker Colleen Mulready, Teacher's Assistant Maryanne Gates, and Teacher's Assistant Jennifer Wynkoop. Guest speaker Dr. Cyrus Mulready, an Associate Professor of English at SUNY New Paltz who specializes in Shakespeare studies, was invited to come to the school to talk with the students about the Bard. Each of the young actors had significant speaking roles in the scenes and were very excited about performing Shakespeare.



All Programs to Continue Under RVCSD Proposed 2023-2024 Budget

The Rondout Valley Central School District (RVCSD) Board of Education's proposed budget for 2023-2024 covers the continuation of all District programs, along with expansion in two areas, and falls below the tax levy cap allowed this year by the New York State Tax Levy Limit calculation. The \$75,058,323 total proposed budget carries a projected tax levy increase of 3.0%, below this year's allowable limit of 3.89%, thereby requiring a simple majority to pass. The levy is the total amount of tax monies raised from all property owners combined and does not reflect the actual tax rate property owners pay. Final tax rates are usually determined by late summer after the tax rolls are finalized and before tax bills are issued.

According to Chris Schoonmaker, Vice President of the RVCSD School Board and co-chair of the Audit/Budget/Facilities Committee, "Throughout the budget development process, the committee recognized the importance of balancing the financial landscape of the community while ensuring we are able to deliver a quality education model. With this budget we have been able to maintain and even expand programs without going to the maximum tax levy limit, which avoids putting an additional \$379,000 burden onto the taxpayers."

Voters go to the polls located in the District Office on Tuesday, May 16, to cast their ballots for the proposed budget and school board elections. Details on voting, absentee ballots, and school board candidates are published in this newsletter.

Enhancements Planned for Agriculture and Technology Programs

In addition to continuing all existing programs, the proposed budget includes expenditures for enhancements to the agricultural program at Rondout Valley High School (RVHS) and Rondout Valley Junior High School (RVJHS), and to the technology program at both Kerhonkson Elementary School (KES) and Marbletown Elementary School (MES).

With the overall goal to refine the District's offerings in agriculture education and make the program a true pathway to graduation, the proposed budget includes funding for one additional agriculture science teacher K-12. The new faculty member will be responsible for building and overseeing a Future Farmers of America program (FFA) in both the RVHS and JHS, along with researching both CTE

certification and the AGXplore CASE course. They will also update and replenish the agriculture kits already created for KES and MES. Funding for supplies and professional development is also in the proposed budget.

One of three components of the agricultural program, FFA focuses on developing leadership skills while reinforcing skills and knowledge gained through the other two components, classroom and laboratory instruction. Teachers of agriculture have always stressed the problem-solving and decision-making approach to teaching. "Through this approach, students are better equipped to cope with changes that are constantly occurring, not only in the agricultural industry, but also in life in general," notes Lisa Pacht, Assistant Superintendent of Schools and Operations.

"With this budget we have been able to maintain and even expand programs without going to the maximum tax levy limit."

-Chris Schoonmaker
Vice President of RVCSD School Board

In addition to this expansion of the agricultural program, the proposed budget also includes the addition of one technology teacher to be shared between MES and KES, along with enhancements to the STEAM (Science-Technology-Engineering-Arts-Mathematics) labs in each building. Created with grant funding from SUNY New Paltz's Science Lab Initiative, the labs include equipment and software for students to learn programming and coding. "Having a teacher trained specifically in these high-level skills will enable us to bring our program to exciting new levels," says Chris Frenza, RVCSD Director of Technology.

Students will now have the opportunity to learn about new innovations using KIBOs and Ozobots, small robotics students program with blocks and markers. Plans also include establishing a makerspace where students can use their ideas or collaborate with others to create something new and innovative. Enhanced instruction in keyboarding and 3-D printers will support the program. All of these initiatives comply with the NYS Computer Science and Digital Fluency Standards.

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Winter brought a record-breaking season for several Ganders and the Section 9, Class B, Indoor Track Championship title for the Rondout Valley Girls team. The Rondout Boys Indoor Track team won the OCIAA Division title and finished third in Sectionals with some new school records of their own. The Boys Swim team had a great season as well, with two student-athletes competing at the New York State Public High School Athletic Association (NYSPHSAA) Championship meet. "I'm proud of all the hard work our student-athletes put in both academically and athletically," said Athletic Director Jeff Panek. "Any time you win a Sectional title or qualify for a State tournament, you had a great season."

At the Sectional meet, the Girls Indoor Track team was led by Jacqueline Kennedy and Kayla Oakes, who scored a combined 54 points. Jacqueline broke the school record in the 300-Meter Dash with a time of 43.07 seconds for first place and also ran to a first place finish in the 55-Meter Dash. In addition, Jacqueline came in third in the Long Jump. Kayla took first in both the Long Jump and Triple Jump, and scored a second place finish in the High Jump. Kayla and Jacqueline both qualified for the New Balance Nationals Indoor meet and were joined by Olivia Waruch and Mackenzie Heyl on the record-breaking and Nationals-qualifying 4 x 200 Meter Relay team.

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All Programs to Continue Under RVCSD Proposed 2023-2024 Budget

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Tax Levy Contained by Increased State Aid and Other Cost-Saving Measures

In the proposed budget, RVCSD anticipates receiving \$2,931,762 additional funding through NY State Aid, an increase of 11.21% over last year's aid levels. "Since approximately 38% of the District's total revenue comes from State Aid, these additional funds allow the District to protect and enhance programs at a year-to-year budget increase of 5.0% while containing the tax levy increase to 3.0%," explains School Business Official Alyssa Hasbrouck.

Other cost-saving measures include the anticipated replacement of 10 retiring staff members with entry-level candidates, discontinuing contracting with Sullivan BOCES for accounts payable services and moving that work back into the District with existing staff, and extending the District's transportation contract with First Student Transportation for one more year. The Business Office also plans to use grant monies for some automated security upgrades and new playground equipment.

Capital Project Entering Final Phase Four

Approved by voters in 2018, Phase Three of the current Capital Project is near completion and plans are underway for starting Phase Four. Over this past fall and winter, Phase Three work included installation of full-building air-conditioning, replacement of ceiling systems, full-building conversion of lighting to LED with upgraded energy-saving controls, replacement of fire alarms building-wide, replacement of the boiler system, including the Building Management System, and replacement of electrical panels and distribution systems at the Intermediate/Junior High School.

The final phase, planned to begin this summer, includes new flooring and lockers at the school, and replacement of sidewalks, parking lots, driveways, bus loops, signage, and site lighting throughout all campus locations. "Overall, this project has moved on time and on budget. We are excited to see the improvements to our buildings, some of which have not been done since the buildings were built over 50 years ago," notes Dr. Joseph Morgan, Superintendent. "We especially look forward to the cost savings we will realize with the many energy efficiencies we were able to put into place," he adds.

Budget and Voting Information Available

Anyone with questions about the proposed budget can contact Dr. Morgan at 845-687-2400.

All eligible voters are encouraged to participate in this year's election on Tuesday, May 16. Polls are located in the District Office at 122 Kyserike Road in Accord and are open from 7 AM to 9 PM. Absentee ballots are also available and must be returned to the District office no later than 5 PM on May 16. For questions about voting, contact the District Clerk, Debra Barbiani, at 845-687-2400, ext. 4803, or at dbarbiani@rondout.k12.ny.us.

Voter Qualifications

To vote you must be at least 18 years old, a U.S. citizen, and have been a District resident for at least 30 days prior to the vote. Proof of residency will be required.

Absentee Ballots

- Applications for an Absentee Ballot are available through the District Office. Call 845-687-2400, ext. 4813.
- Applications must be received by May 8 for the ballots to be mailed to the voter, or May 15 for the ballots to be picked up by the voter.
- Absentee Ballots must be returned to the District Office by 5 PM on May 16.

Proof of Residency

- NYS Driver's License with Physical Address (not Post Office Box)
- Non-Driver Identification Card
- Voter Registration Card
- Board of Elections Notice of Voting Location
- State Income Tax Form Heading with School ID #543

Sample Ballot

"RESOLVED, that the Board of Education of the Rondout Valley Central School District be authorized to expend \$75,058,323 in the 2023-2024 school year to meet necessary estimated expenses and to levy the necessary tax."

YES _____

NO _____

2023-2024 Proposed Budget

The 2023-2024 budget provides a wide variety of programs for the District. The proposed budget is \$75,058,323, an increase of 5.0% from last year's budget. By law, school districts must divide their budget into three components, program, capital and administrative, and compare them to last year's amount.

Program Component

The program component of the budget is \$55,054,621 or 73.3% of the budget. This component includes salary and benefits for all instructional staff as well as interscholastic athletics, co-curricular activities and transportation.

Capital Component

The capital component totals \$11,785,911 or 15.7% of the budget. Included in this component is operation and maintenance costs including custodial staff salaries and benefits, court ordered costs, and the payment of principle and interest for outstanding debt.

Administrative Component

The administrative component is \$8,217,791 or 10.9% of the budget. This component consists of salaries and benefits for administrators, supervisors and support staff, Business operations, personnel, school board, insurance, and legal services.

	Adopted 2022-2023 Budget	Proposed 2023-2024 Budget
PROGRAM		
Instruction	\$32,674,229	\$ 33,334,342
Legal	\$92,675	\$92,675
Pupil Transportation	\$5,304,857	\$ 5,974,642
Other Transfers	\$250,000	\$50,000
Employee Benefits	\$15,371,165	\$15,602,962
Total Program	\$53,692,926	\$55,054,621
CAPITAL		
Operation & Maintenance	\$3,867,306	\$3,918,309
Principal/Interest Payments	\$5,028,231	\$6,757,980
Property Tax Refunds	\$10,000	\$10,000
Judgments & Claims	\$20,000	\$22,000
Employee Benefits	\$1,214,770	\$1,077,622
Total Capital	\$10,140,307	\$11,785,911
ADMINISTRATIVE		
Central Services	\$2,574,989	\$2,713,770
Instructional Supervision	\$2,383,771	\$2,665,016
Curriculum Development	\$409,947	\$394,192
Employee Benefits	\$2,279,956	\$2,444,813
Total Administrative	\$7,648,663	\$8,217,791
TOTAL BUDGET	\$71,481,896	\$75,058,323

LEARNING NEW SKILLS WITH THE OUTDOORS CLUB

Students at the Junior High School have been able to get out in the fresh air and learn a variety of new skills with the Outdoors Club. The club's activities have evolved based on the interests of its members, according to Zackary Enoksen, a Social Studies teacher and the club advisor.

"The club was originally geared to focus on hunting and fishing; however, a mixture of kids joined who just like to do things outside," he said. "So, we have been doing a lot of hikes in the backwoods of campus, cooking venison tacos, and working on our fishing poles."

In addition to enjoying time in nature, Enoksen explained, the club's mission is to help students become people who will respect people, wildlife, and nature; be safe, responsible, and ethical hunters and anglers; appreciate the role of humans as a part of nature; and support conservation.

To further these goals, the group had a visit with a Department of Environmental Conservation officer, who spoke to students about wildlife and the outdoors. "They loved it," Enoksen said. They have a fishing trip planned, and Enoksen is also helping out with an online hunter safety course for interested students.





Kerhonkson Elementary School Celebrates Abilities Awareness Week

This March, Kerhonkson Elementary School students in Grades 1, 2, and 3 learned about the challenges that someone living with a disability might face, as well as the contributions that someone with an impairment can offer despite those challenges.

Under the direction of School Counselor Kiersten Waruch, students participated in hands-on activities to give them a realistic idea of how people with disabilities navigate their daily routines. Many people with a disability, she noted, are capable of completing everyday tasks on their own, though doing so may be difficult. “To help students understand the challenges someone may face with a physical disability, students were asked to use their non-dominant hand to write, draw, and to button up a shirt while wearing socks on their hands,” explained Waruch.

In Debbie Eck’s Grade 1 class, students took turns trying the various tasks while their classmates quietly cheered them on with words of encouragement, including “I believe in you!” “You can do it!” and “Go, go, go!” One student summed up the exercise as “Super duper fun!”

According to Waruch, the lessons learned by the students were valuable in more ways than one. “Through awareness,” she said, “students develop empathy and a better understanding of perseverance.”



Intermediate School All-County Chorus members: Pictured in the back row, from left to right, are: Daniel Rice, Wyatt Baker, Arianna Kraft, Ryleigh Favreau, Lucia Negahbani, and Ella Moscovitz. In the front row, from left to right, are: Gloria Manas, Anya Smith, and Adelaide Harty.

Rondout Valley Students Make Beautiful Music

Thirty-one Rondout Valley students attended the annual All-County Choral festival hosted by the Ulster County Music Educators Association (UCMEA) on March 5. To be accepted, students audition for their music teacher, and the top performers are selected to participate in the festival. “It’s a beautiful experience for our gifted singers to come together with other gifted musicians from the County to create music together,” said Julianna McCarthy, Chorus teacher at the Junior High School. Throughout the month of March, 97 Rondout Valley students participated in the All-County Choral, Band, Orchestra, Jazz and the Young Elementary Music Symposium (YEMS) festivals hosted by UCMEA.

All-County Band principal players (from left to right) Ellis Picuri and Jackson Paley.



High School All-County Chorus members (from left to right): Freja Ermer, Hannah Heijink, Zi Qing Liu, and Veronica (Roxy) Kwiecinski.



Junior High All-County Chorus members pose for a group shoot. Pictured in the back row, (from left to right), are Graycie Walsh-Kompass, Madison Shanley, Vivian McGuinness, Mia Trumbore, Hayden Bauer, Owin Simmons, and Jude Kelly. In the front row, (from left to right), are Rowen Sickler Avery, Francesca Bueti, Grace Kizkiel, Ruby Focarino, Graham Palmentiero, and Laszlo Beke.

High School All-County Band students and their conductor (from left to right) Row 1: Grace Kizkiel, Hudson Paley, Vivian Gonzales, Dr. Paula Holcomb (Conductor) Matthew Peck, Jackson Paley, Freja Ermer. Row 2: Sam Lever, Kenneth Schade, Maven Flamhaft, Ellis Picuri.



Acclaimed Creators of Children’s Books Visit Rondout Valley Intermediate Students

Children’s historical author Lesa Cline-Ransome and her husband, illustrator James Ransome, met with Grade 4 students from Rondout Valley Intermediate School on March 27 to fill them in on the behind-the-scenes work involved in creating a book.

Cline-Ransome and Ransome, who live in Rhinebeck, spoke about the collaborative process behind their award-winning picture books. The couple is best known for their biographies of Black people who stood up to anti-black racism and/or slavery, like abolitionist Harriet Tubman, civil rights activist Claudette Colvin, and tennis stars Venus and Serena Williams.

Together, their work has received numerous honors, including the Scott O’Dell Award for Historical Fiction, a School Library Journal Best Book Award, a New York Public Library Best Book Award, ALA Notable Children’s Book Awards, and several more.

After their interactive presentation, Cline-Ransome explained that her best research method involves following her curiosity. She invited the students to do the same by asking questions. Hands shot up.

Intermediate School Principal Lee Cutler expressed his appreciation for the husband-and-wife literary team’s visit. “It was a pleasure to see how invested the students were in learning about the Ransomes,” he said. “They manage to capture the students’ interest every year they visit. One of the highlights of their interactive presentation is when James Ransome allows students to participate in the illustration process on an easel. It is my hope that the students will go on to remember these author visits into adulthood and find inspiration from what they learned.”



Four Candidates Vie for Three Seats in School Board Elections

Three seats on the Rondout Valley Central School District Board of Education are up for election, those currently held by Dean Rylewicz, Carolyn Peck and Megan Snair. Four candidates are running for the three seats. The three candidates with the highest number of votes will win the seat.

Learn about the candidates here in brief biographies submitted by each of them. (In the order they appear on the ballot)

DEAN RYLEWICZ

Dean Rylewicz is a lifetime resident of Ulster County and an eleven-year resident of Stone Ridge. Dean currently has two children in the Rondout Valley School District and has a vested interest in being a part of the Rondout Valley Board of Education. Dean has a BS from SUNY Plattsburgh and brings a wealth of experience as a leader, currently employed as the Deputy Commissioner of Public Works for Ulster County. Dean is committed to the youth of Rondout, having volunteered several years as a coach and also serving on the Board for the Rondout Valley Little League. As a board trustee, Dean would focus on ways to provide our children with quality education, diverse programs, continued athletic options, and guidance to become successful adults.

DAVID BENDELL

My name is David Bendell and I am running for the Rondout Valley Board of Education. I have been a lifelong resident of the district and both my children and I are graduates of Rondout Valley CSD.

I am a graduate of SUNY New Paltz and have been an educator for over 20 years, and I really love it.

I have also volunteered for the Kerhonkson Accord First Aid Squad for the past 10 years. My responsibilities include serving as the current Director of Personnel, Trustee, and a NYS certified EMT.

I look forward to the opportunity to further serve my community as a member of the Rondout Valley Board of Education.

PATRICIA MEOLI

I have spent much of my adult life (36+) in education; receiving my BA and MS from SUNY New Paltz allowed me to start my career at Ellenville Central School where I met my husband Peter; I left after two years to start a family. I returned to my alma mater, Rondout, and spent the next twenty years teaching high school English in the same school as my boys, my delight—not so much theirs. Upon retirement, I spent fourteen years as an adjunct at SUNY Ulster.

For 11 years, I volunteered for KAFAS as a driver and EMT, taught literacy at the public library, joined the Lions Club, and currently volunteer at the Rochester Food Pantry.

CAROLYN PECK

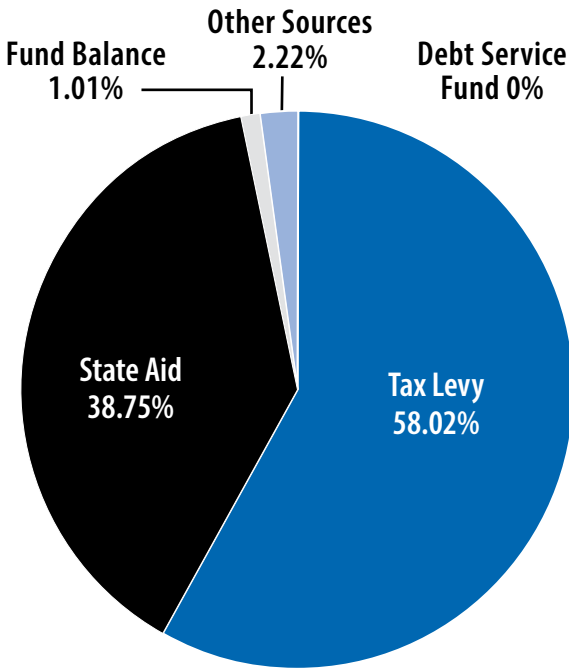
Carolyn has been a resident of Stone Ridge for seventeen years. She is the parent of a RV graduate ('22) and currently has two children in the district. Carolyn holds a B.A. in Mathematics from Marist College and an M.S. in Education with a concentration in Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment. She is currently a High School Math Teacher at an area district.

This is Carolyn's third year as a board member and would appreciate the opportunity to continue the work she has done as a Trustee. She has served on the Facilities Committee as well as the Athletic Committee. Currently, Carolyn serves on the Educational Delivery Committee where she also continues to work with district officials on Rondout Valley's current Strategic Plan.

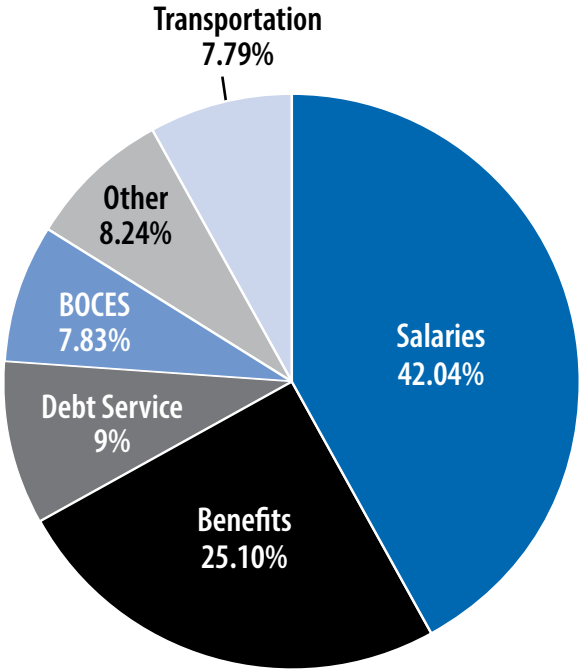
As a Board Trustee Carolyn looks forward to helping the district reach both their educational goals for our students as well as our fiscal goals for the community. It is important to Carolyn that Rondout Valley continue to move in a positive direction with diversity and inclusivity.

2023-2024 Budget

Where Does the Money Come From: Revenues



Where Does the Money Go: Expenses



Rondout Valley Central School District Budget Notice

OVERALL BUDGET PROPOSAL	Budget Adopted for the 2022-2023 School Year	Budget Proposed for the 2023-2024 School Year	Contingency Budget for the 2023-2024 School Year*
Total Budgeted Amount, Not Including Separate Propositions	\$71,481,896	\$75,058,323	\$74,641,062
Increase/Decrease for the 2023-24 School Year		\$3,576,426	\$3,159,166
Percentage Increase/Decrease in Proposed Budget		5.0%	4.42%
Change in the Consumer Price Index		8.0%	
A. Proposed Levy to Support the Total Budgeted Amount	\$42,279,111	\$43,545,882	
B. Levy to Support Library Debt, if Applicable	\$0	\$0	
C. Levy for Non-Excludable Propositions, if Applicable **	\$0	\$0	
D. Total Tax Cap Reserve Amount Used to Reduce Current Year Levy	\$0	\$0	
E. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy (A + B + C - D)	\$42,279,111	\$43,545,882	\$42,279,111
F. Total Permissible Exclusions	\$2,750,011	\$2,998,976	
G. School Tax Levy Limit, Excluding Levy for Permissible Exclusions	\$39,529,100	\$40,546,906	
H. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy, Excluding Levy to Support Library Debt and/or Permissible Exclusions (E – B – F + D)	\$39,529,100	\$40,546,906	
I. Difference: G – H (Negative Value Requires 60.0% Voter Approval – See Note Below Regarding Separate Propositions) **	\$0	\$0	
Administrative component	\$7,648,663	\$8,217,791	\$8,034,887
Program component	\$53,692,926	\$55,054,621	\$54,835,387
Capital component	\$10,140,307	\$11,785,911	\$11,770,789

Should the District need to adopt a contingency budget, the administrative component will stay within statutory limits. The Board of Education would determine the non-contingency items that would need to be removed from the contingency budget. The tax levy of the contingency budget would be equal to the prior year's tax levy

** List Separate Propositions that are not included in the Total Budgeted Amount: (Tax Levy associated with educational or transportation services propositions are not eligible for exclusion and may affect voter approval requirements)

Description	Amount
No Separate Propositions	

Under the Budget Proposed for the 2023-2024 School Year

Estimated Basic STAR Exemption Savings ¹	\$517
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¹ The basic school tax relief (STAR) exemption is authorized by section 425 of the Real Property Tax Law.

The annual budget vote for the fiscal year 2023-24 by the qualified voters of the Rondout Valley Central school district, Ulster County, New York, will be held at the District Office at 122 Kyserike Road in Accord in said district on Tuesday, May 16, 2023 between the hours of 7:00am and 9:00pm, prevailing time in the Rondout Valley Central school(s), at which time the polls will be opened to vote by voting ballot or machine.

Vote!

Tuesday, May 16
7 AM – 9 PM • District Office

NON-DISCRIMINATION NOTICE

The Rondout Valley Central School District prohibits and condemns all forms of discrimination and harassment on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, political affiliation, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, military status, veteran status, disability, use of a recognized guide dog, hearing dog or service dog, or domestic violence victim status by employees, school volunteers, students, and non-employees such as contractors and vendors as well as any third parties who are participating in, observing, or otherwise engaging in activities subject to the supervision and control of the District.

All inquiries regarding the Non-Discrimination policy and/or all complaints regarding violation(s) of these policies should be directed to the Compliance Officer, Executive Director of Curriculum and Instruction Lisa Pacht at 845-687-2400 or lpacht@rondout.k12.ny.us.



Rondout Valley High School Presents: *Mamma Mia!*

Rondout Valley High School students showed off their stellar theatrical and musical talents in late February, when the school presented a crowd-pleasing production of the hit Broadway musical *Mamma Mia!* The cast and crew spent weeks preparing for the show, which took place in the High School Auditorium.

The enchanting musical tells the story of Sophie, played by Sadie Heagney, who wants her father to give her away at her upcoming wedding. The only problem is that Sophie doesn't know who he is. Her mother, played by Nadja Welden, refuses to talk about the past, so Sophie decides to take matters into her own hands.

Sneaking a peek into her mother's old diaries, Sophie discovers three possible fathers: Sam Carmichael (played by Mica King), Bill Anderson (played by Miles Ouellette), and Harry Bright (played by G. Hart). Sophie secretly invites all three

to the wedding, convinced that she'll know her dad when she sees him. When all three turn up, it is not as clear as she thought!

The show, which had audience members tapping their toes and dancing in their seats, featured such popular hits such as "Gimmee, Gimmee, Gimmee," "Mamma Mia," "Dancing Queen," and "Waterloo." Overseeing the fun were Director Robin Baker, Assistant Director Ethan Martin, Conductor Randy Loder, Producers Kristine Jarvis and Peter Hauser, Choreographer Thomas Netter, Vocal Director Lucas Rau, and Builder Nick Bodnar.

"We couldn't be prouder of all of the hard work that so many students, faculty, and community members put into our production of *Mamma Mia!*" said



Loder. "This is a perfect example of the collaborative nature of the arts, bringing together over 50 students involved on stage and behind the scenes. It is amazing what these kids are able to achieve in just about two months. What I love most about the musical is that it is an opportunity for kids to find a sense of community and belonging here at Rondout Valley."

Mamma Mia! was written by British playwright Catherine Johnson, based on songs recorded by the Swedish group ABBA, and composed by band members Benny Andersson and Björn Ulvaeus.



Rondout Valley Students are Passionate about Going Green

Rondout Valley students would like to help make their schools, and their community, more environmentally friendly. Students throughout the District are finding ways to reduce waste, from composting to recycling.

The High School Environmental Club developed a Climate Action Plan, which they presented to the Board of Education at its March 21 meeting.

During the meeting, club members shared the results from a food waste audit they recently conducted in the High School's cafeteria. The goal of the audit, which was conducted over a period of five days during breakfast and lunch, was to collect data and information to help identify current waste practices and ways they could be improved.

The club calculated that, on average, the High School produced 54 pounds of food waste a day, which translated to 270 pounds per week and approximately 10,805 pounds per year. The club also determined that during a school year, nearly 11,000 pounds of the school cafeteria's waste could be composted rather than "carted."

The Environmental Club members made several recommendations that they would like to see implemented throughout the District. The recommendations included replacing disposable trays, cutlery, and dishware with reusable ones; implementing a composting program; reinstating a District-wide recycling program; and incorporating locally sourced food items into school menus (which the students believed would help reduce waste). In an effort to re-establish the District-wide recycling program, club members visited Marbletown Elementary School to talk about what happens to trash and ways to reuse, reduce, and recycle.

The club's advisor, RVHS Greenhouse technician Kate McPeck, worked with the club members to help guide their action plan. The club members, said McPeck, are taking an active role in their future. "They see and understand the bigger picture," she said. "They are not just talking about the change, they are making the change and I couldn't be more proud."

The Intermediate School and Junior High School Green team also presented their Green Team Goals to the Board of Education and explained ways they are working to reach them. This includes composting and making posters for the cafeteria to promote separating compost, recyclables, and trays from landfill trash.



Rondout Valley High School recently hosted its Wellness Wednesday, a school-wide event held twice a year to provide students and staff a break from their regular routine through opportunities to bond, relax, and recharge together.

The spring event provided students with a variety of fun, unique, and inclusive activities to choose from, including karaoke, baking mug cakes, making slime, playing soccer, solving Rubik's Cubes, and even tying flies and jigs for fishing, just to name a few.

"Our Wellness Wednesday events originated as one of our responses to the pandemic," explained Assistant Principal Ryan Judge. "Both the staff and the students look forward to the chance to bond and have fun with one another in ways they normally wouldn't have an opportunity to experience. The event aims to have something for everyone."

"Wellness Wednesdays also provide an opportunity to remind everyone of the value and importance of making time for positive well-being and fostering mental health," he added.



Rondout Valley Central School District Names Valedictorian and Salutatorian



The Rondout Valley Central School District is proud to announce that the Valedictorian for the Class of 2023 is Isabel Kinsella, and this year’s Salutatorian is Marley Pileggi. Both students excelled not only in academics, but also in a wide range of extracurricular activities.

Isabel, who achieved a grade point average (GPA) of 100.86, is the daughter of Kieran Kinsella and Giselle Potter of Rosendale. During her time at Rondout Valley High School (RVHS), Isabel participated in Mock Trial and Newcomers Uplifted, was a member of the Student Congress and the Math Team, and contributed articles and graphic art to the school newspaper, *ouRVoice*. Captain of the Varsity Cross-Country team during her senior year, Isabel earned trips to the New York State Cross Country Championship in 2021 and 2022. She also served as vice president of the National Honor Society. Isabel plans to study neuroscience at St. Lawrence University in Canton, New York.

Marley, the son of Morgan Pileggi and Megan Dwyer of Accord, achieved his salutatorian status by earning a GPA of 100.56.

Among Marley’s many accomplishments was being named a Commended Student in the 2022 National Merit Scholarship Program. He was honored for his strong academic promise, as demonstrated by his performance on the qualifying test used

“They are such hard workers, and they have a bright future ahead of them! They truly deserve to be recognized.”

-Jessica Torok
RVHS Principal

for program entry. Outside of the classroom, he was captain of the Varsity Soccer Team and the Math Team, president of the National Honor Society, a member of the Mock Trial Club, and a writer for *ouRVoice*, the High School newspaper. After graduation, Marley will be attending the University of Chicago, where he plans to major in linguistics with a view towards pursuing a career in law. Marley matched with the University of Chicago through QuestBridge, a program that welcomes applicants from high school seniors who have shown outstanding academic ability despite financial challenges. (More information on QuestBridge can be found at the following link: www.questbridge.org/high-school-students/national-college-match) RVHS Principal Jessica Torok has high praise for Isabel and Marley and their respective accomplishments. “I’m so proud of both of them,” she said. “They are such hard workers, and they have a bright future ahead of them! They truly deserve to be recognized.”



Rondout Valley Special Olympics Athletes Prepare for West Point Spring Games

The sweet sounds of competition echoed in Rondout Valley’s High School gymnasium recently as some of the District’s Special Olympic athletes prepared both physically and mentally for the Hudson Valley Region Spring Special Olympics at West Point on April 22. Ganders ages 8 and older are slated to compete.

Rondout Valley District-Wide Physical Therapist Carlos Perez says that this year’s training regimen has been especially significant. “For the first time ever, we are participating in three events–timed trials, Spring Games, as well as our local Special Olympics event,” Perez explained. “Based on the positive feedback we received from parents, athletes, and staff, we feel that participation in three events for the athletes to showcase their abilities has amazing physical and emotional benefits. The joy in these athletes’ faces when they train and compete is something that will carry over into the rest of their lives.”

Hats off to Infinite Care (Ten Broeck Center and Golden Hill), the Rondout Valley Teachers’ Association, and to all who participated in the apparel fundraiser, so that our athletes are able to continue participating in these milestone events!



Would you be interested in sharing your career with Rondout Valley students?

Let us know you’re interested here: <https://bit.ly/RVCSDCareerspeakers>



KES STUDENTS, STAFF, AND COMMUNITY CELEBRATE A LOVE OF READING

As part of VIP Reader Week at Kerhonkson Elementary School (KES), budding bibliophiles were treated to a visit by award-winning children’s book author and illustrator David Ezra Stein, who shared his books with the students, answered questions about his art and writing processes, and presented “Interrupting Chicken: The Puppet Show!”

The lively performance used marionettes and shadow puppets designed and built by hand by Stein and his wife, Miriam Kessler. It was an afternoon filled with delight and laughter!

The KES community’s commitment to fostering a love for reading didn’t stop there, though. In honor of Read Across America Week, March 2-6, the school celebrated by bringing in guest readers and staging “Drop Everything and Read Readathons” as well as “Drop Everything and Dance Danceathons.” In addition, the entire school united to read a whopping 2,023 books! All in all, VIP Reader Week/Read Across America Week at KES was a non-stop celebration.



Thank you to the following KES staff, administrators, and community members who volunteered their time as VIP Readers:

- | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| Samantha Baul | Joe Judge |
| Michael Kortright | Brianne Quigley |
| Jessica Konecny | Melissa Carlisle |
| Jane Kellar | Amy Latin |
| Jeremy Mirto | Jessica Swadosh |
| Mary Sprenger | Mike Meoli |
| Amanda Decker | Brian Shanley |
| Troy Mekulik | Kiersten Redding |
| John Kelder | Dr. Joseph Morgan |
| Beth Sprinston | Ashley Wightman |
| Cori Nichols | |



Tap, Tap! Grade 6 Students Make Maple Syrup

This winter, Rondout Valley Intermediate School Grade 6 students spent time learning about the maple sugaring process, which is used to make maple syrup. The project commenced in early February under the guidance of Science teacher Sara Hornbeck with the goal of entering New York Agriculture in the Classroom's Schoolyard Sugaring Maple Syrup Contest.

Before tapping six maple trees along the school's property line, the students spent time researching the process, studying everything from the history of making maple syrup to techniques and best practices. The budding sugarmakers explored what type of tree produces the sweetest sap, identified and tapped the maple trees, and collected the sap.

Once the sap collection was complete, the students boiled the sap, learning about density, an important component in the process that determines the quality of the syrup by using a unit of measurement known as the Brix scale. By the time the project was complete, the Intermediate School students had collected approximately 40 gallons of sap, which was enough to produce one gallon of maple syrup.

Hornbeck said that the students then enthusiastically began designing a label for their pint-sized syrup jug before submitting it to be judged by a panel of producers and maple syrup experts.

"I think it was really fun," said student Fahtima St. Fleur. "It was cool to learn how sap comes out of trees and how you can turn it into syrup."

Another Grade 6 student, Maxwell Bowers, agreed that the project was thoroughly enjoyable. "My favorite part was drilling a hole in the tree to put the tap in," he said.

As a "sweet" bonus, the students got to enjoy the fruits of their labor one morning by eating pancakes with the maple syrup they produced!



GANDERS CELEBRATE ATHLETIC ACHIEVEMENTS

Continued from page 1

Another school record was broken by Victoria DeGraw, who earned second place in Shot Put. Olivia Waruch finished third in the 600-Meter Dash and was also part of the second-place 4 x 400 Meter Relay team. Greta Sutherland-Roth, an eighth grader, also contributed to the championship win, earning points with a third place finish in the 3,000-Meter Run.

Records fell for the boys team too, with Chris Jordan breaking the school record for the 3,200-Meter Run by 13 seconds with a time of 10:23.58. In addition, Matt Peck placed fourth and broke the school Weight Throw record and earned a trip to Nationals with a distance of 51 feet, 2.5 inches. Another great performance came from Chris Kay, who won the 55 Hurdles. Ryan Britt scored points for the team with a second in Long Jump and a third in Triple Jump, while Morgan LeBlanc added with a third in the Long Jump, a fourth in the Triple Jump, and a third in the High Jump. High-flying Ganders Jackson Paley and Luke Kotsides placed third and fourth respectively in the Pole Vault, each clearing 10 feet.

Ganders not only fly, but swim, too. The Rondout Valley Boys Swim Team had an exciting season, with seniors Andrew Kassian and Jack Samko qualifying for the State championship meet. At the NYSPHSAA meet in Ithaca, Jack finished 38th (22.18 seconds) in the 50-Yard Freestyle, earning a personal best time, and 37th (53.05 seconds) in the 100-yard Butterfly. Andrew finished 26th (1:57.69 seconds) in the 200-Yard Individual Medley, with a personal best time and 12th (51.72 seconds) in the 100-Yard Butterfly. Coach Heather Crowley said, "Both of these boys were true leaders on the team, which practices and swims with the Kingston and Onteora swim teams."

Rondout Valley Students Learn About Internet Safety

The Rondout Valley Central School District (RVCSD) was pleased to welcome Internet Safety Expert and retired New York City Police Department Detective Thomas Grimes on March 6 to speak to students about internet safety.

During two assemblies, Grimes discussed the dangers of social media, online predators, cyberbullying, and more. He urged students to be cautious about who they interact with online, and what kind of information they share publicly. He also encouraged the Ganders to ask themselves when they are using social media questions like, "What are you trying to accomplish with this post?" and "Does it help or hurt people?" He asked students to reflect before they post and to always think about privacy, respect, compassion, decency, and civility.

Grimes discussed privacy settings and stressed the importance of being aware of the existence of online predators. He also shared a few real-life stories that sadly ended in tragedies for teens who became involved with the wrong people online.

"You decide who you interact with, and you control who you give access to your life," Grimes told his audience. "Make sure you choose wisely."

On the topic of cyberbullying—which he said is not a "technical" problem but rather a "people" problem—Grimes reiterated that words are powerful and should be used to build people up, not tear them down. He urged anyone in the audience who might be experiencing online bullying to not suffer in silence.

"Speaking up about bullying should not take an extra amount of courage; it should be the expectation," he said. "Tell someone, and don't stop telling them until you get the help you need."

Grimes encouraged the Middle School students to start curating their online presence now and to police themselves into making good choices when it comes to their digital words and behavior.

Rondout Valley Intermediate School Principal Lee Cutler, who attended the assembly, said that the information that was presented was powerful and relatable. "All student audiences were engaged since so much of Thomas Grimes' presentation was something they could relate to," Cutler said. "You could hear comments students were making during the presentation." The most powerful part of the presentation, he added, were the stories told during the Grade 6-8 assembly about children being lured into vans. "The impact of these scenes will have a lasting impression on students in the future as they hopefully make safer choices," Cutler concluded.

Lee Cutler, Rondout Valley Intermediate School Principal, and Thomas Grimes, a retired police officer, pose after an assembly for students regarding internet safety and cyberbullying.



Third Grade Peace Ambassadors Perform Mean Jean the Recess Queen

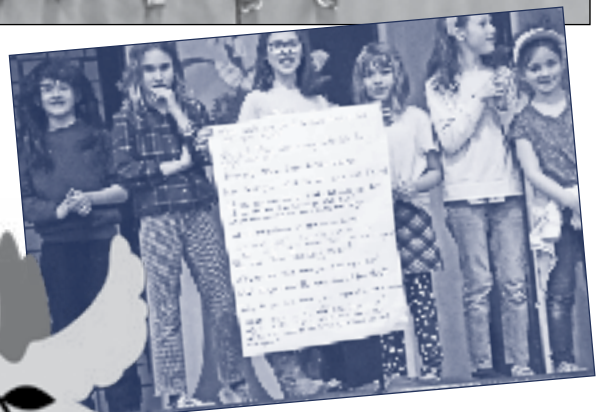
The No Place For Hate (NPFH) committee facilitated a school-wide event focusing on anti-bullying, with the Grade 3 Peace Ambassadors performing a skit based on the tale of Mean Jean the Recess Queen, the protagonist in a book by Alexis O'Neill and Laura Huliska-Beith.

The Peace Ambassadors are a group of Grade 3 students at Marbletown Elementary School that met during their recess time with the group's advisors, School Counselor Danielle Waldron, Instructional Coach Felice Digennaro, and School Psychologist Amanda Renner to prepare for this event. With multiple performances of the skit for different classes, the students were able to rotate roles, each having a turn as a narrator, a performer, and part of the

backstage crew.

Following the skit, the Peace Ambassadors led a discussion with the audience about bullying. This included tie-ins between the story of Mean Jean and Marbletown Elementary School's Zones of Regulation, the program used to help students identify and regulate their emotions. Discussion topics included questions like: What would you do in this situation? How would you respond? And why do you think Mean Jean is the way she is?

This is the second of three events the NPFH Committee has planned for this year. In September, they celebrated International Peace Day, and they are planning a diversity event later this year. Events like these are part of the process involved in becoming a No Place For Hate-accredited school.



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TO POSTAL CUSTOMER



Workshops Prepare Students for Success After Graduation

The College and Career Center at Rondout Valley High School (RVHS) is in full swing, presenting workshops on topics ranging from Scholarship Success and Resume Building to Career Portfolio Building and SAT Prep. Students are invited to attend educational sessions during their lunch periods to gain a better understanding of the topics and to prepare for what's ahead. The sessions are being hosted by College and Career Counselor Jessica Guerrieri.

The Scholarship Success Workshop taught students how to conduct an internet search for scholarships that they could qualify for and some of the basic requirements necessary to apply. Attendees left with a well-developed plan for completing applications to appropriate scholarships. During the Resume-Building Workshop, participants gained an understanding of the key elements of a resume and how they can be used in job and college searches. During the session, students used Naviance (a college and career readiness software) to create their own resumes.

Guerrieri is happy to be providing the various trainings to help prepare students to achieve their post-graduation goals. Upon signing up for a topic, students complete a pre-test to give Guerrieri an idea of their base-level knowledge on the subject. "After the workshop, I then have students complete a post-test. On those, the students are rating themselves as more confident, knowledgeable, and skilled in the topic," she said. "We hope to use this data to collect more information on student needs and questions." The hope is to offer workshops on a larger scale to interact with students District-wide.

The current workshop topics are useful for upperclassmen choosing a career or college route – and also resonate with underclassmen who are encouraged to get a headstart on planning their futures. Upcoming sessions for RVHS students to look forward to include College Search, Managing Stress, and College Essay.



Capital Project Update, The Final Phase

Phase 3 of the Capital Project is nearing completion, and Phase 4 is slated to begin this summer.

Updates at the High School include a new roof, heating, ventilation and cooling improvements, and ceiling and lighting replacements in the 500 Wing. In addition, the gymnasium floor was refinished and new wall pads installed.

At the Intermediate/Junior High School, renovations were completed to the lecture room, locker room, the A-Wing bathroom, and a stairwell. New doors, new ceilings, new lighting, new air-conditioning equipment, a new fire alarm system, new electrical service, a new roof, new windows, new boilers, and a new gymnasium floor were also completed. With the upgrades in lighting and HVAC systems, all of the buildings have become more energy efficient and a more comfortable learning environment.

Director of Facilities Gregory Kulp said, "The Rondout Valley Central School District is very excited

to get Phase 4 of our Capital Project underway. As a Rondout Valley alumnus myself, I've taken great pleasure in watching this transformation." Kulp notes that the District's construction management firm – the Palombo Group – and all the contractors involved in the project have dedicated many hours of hard work to move the project ahead to its current stage. "As a District, we have become a safer and more mechanically sound environment for our students and staff."

The final phase of the project will involve all four school campuses. The High School will see the repaving of First Street and select parking lots, as well as new exterior lighting and updates to the auditorium sound system controls. The Intermediate/Junior High School will have new flooring installed (including abatement), bathroom renovations, second floor locker refurbishment, new exterior lighting, and repaving of the bus loop and parking lot. At Marbletown Elementary School, in addition



to repaving the bus loop and parent drop off, there will be new exterior lighting and a new gymnasium curtain. New asphalt parking, new sidewalks and curb will be put in at Kerhonkson Elementary School.

"Rondout Valley would also like to thank our staff for their flexibility and understanding, as they have had to make many accommodations during this project," said Kulp. "The community at large came together to pass this Capital Project, and we would also like to thank them for their continued support."

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