



Watchung Hills Regional High School District

Newsletter

June 2016



From the desk of the Superintendent

Watchung Hills Regional High School had an amazing year, and while 554 recent graduates are planning for college and beyond, I want to remind them and all of the Watchung Hills community to take time to relax and (re)create. Keeping balance in one's life is often a struggle, and I am amazed at how our students and staff skillfully balance so many responsibilities. I also want to remind us all that we need to celebrate our accomplishments, and that is my goal of this newsletter.

It was wonderful to see the excited faces of our students and their families at graduation as well as at other end of the year ceremonies. I was honored to be able to articulate my appreciation and congratulations to the Class of 2016 during their commencement ceremony. I would now like to take a moment and welcome the incoming Class of 2020 to our world class learning community.

During his speech to this year's graduates, our Board of Education President, Dr. Gregory Przybylski, encouraged the members of the Class of 2016 to find and pursue their passion. This is advice that can certainly be echoed to our incoming Class of 2020 as they begin to navigate the next four years at Watchung Hills. I have learned from my years as an educator that two key components result in success:

1. Kids being involved in their school.
2. Parents being involved in their kids' school.

Every member of the staff and Board of Education at Watchung Hills is committed to ensuring **every** student is provided with the opportunity to reach his or her potential. I encourage all of our incoming 9th grade students and parents to peruse the pages that follow filled with the accomplishments of your 10th, 11th, and 12th grade classmates and begin a conversation around the opportunities that interest you at Watchung Hills next year. My number one piece of advice for all members of the Class of 2020 is: **Get involved!** Join a club, sport, musical ensemble, academic team, etc. - there is something for everyone at Watchung Hills. I would also like to offer a few additional recommendations to the Class of 2020 to assist you on the path to success at Watchung Hills:

- School is important; but so is your social and emotional development. Keep balance in your life.
- Eat breakfast and lunch. Keep your body well-fueled throughout the day.
- Get enough sleep. The average teenager needs between 7-9 hours of sleep at night.
- Do not worry about fitting in. Worry about being true to yourself and your value system.
- Never give up. The only failure is when we stop trying.

To the Watchung Hills Regional High School Class of 2020 - stay the course as the best is yet to come!

Regards,

Superintendent

Graduation 2016

Some 554 students from Warren Township, Watchung, Long Hill Township and Green Brook Township, received diplomas on Thursday morning, June 23, at the 59th Annual Commencement at Watchung Hills Regional High School (WHRHS).



Henry Zhu
Valedictorian

Students were congratulated by speakers on their achievements, and urged to pursue their passions with energy and determination in the future. The graduates were advised to not be surprised when, in the years to come, they look back on their times at WHRHS as having been transformative experiences in their lives.

The school's Concert Band, under the direction of Instrumental Music Director Minesh Shah, played "Pomp & Circumstance." The Senior Choral Group, under the direction of Music teacher Angela DiIorio Bird, herself a graduate of Watchung Hills, sang the National Anthem.

The student speakers were: Camryn Goldstein, the president of the All Student Council, who also led the Salute to the Flag; Aristoteles, president of the Class of 2016; Indeevar Beeram, who presented the Salutatory address; and Henry Zhu, who presented the Valedictory address.

When Goldstein came to the podium, she promptly called to the stage, student Skyler Weisberg, to lead the Pledge of Allegiance, something he had done over the school's intercom every day for the past year. Weisberg had been called the Voice of WHRHS.

Also speaking at the graduation were: Principal George Alexis; Superintendent Elizabeth Jewett; and Watchung Hills

Regional High School Board of Education President Dr. Gregory Przybylski. They echoed the sentiments of the student speakers.

In his remarks, Alexis made reference to the iconic novel, "The Great Gatsby," by F. Scott Fitzgerald. In particular, Alexis referenced the scene in the book when the novel's narrator, Nick Carroway, comes to the realization that his own high school experience had been a defining moment in his life, the transformative experience in his life.



Indeevar Beeram
Salutatorian

Przybylski told the graduates that were they to look back at how different they are now from how they were when they first arrived at WHRHS four years ago as new freshman, they should now expect that by the time they complete college, for many four years from now, they should expect to have experienced as much change, growth and development. As they approach their new experiences now after high school, in college, and beyond, he said, there are three keys they

should keep in mind: Find their

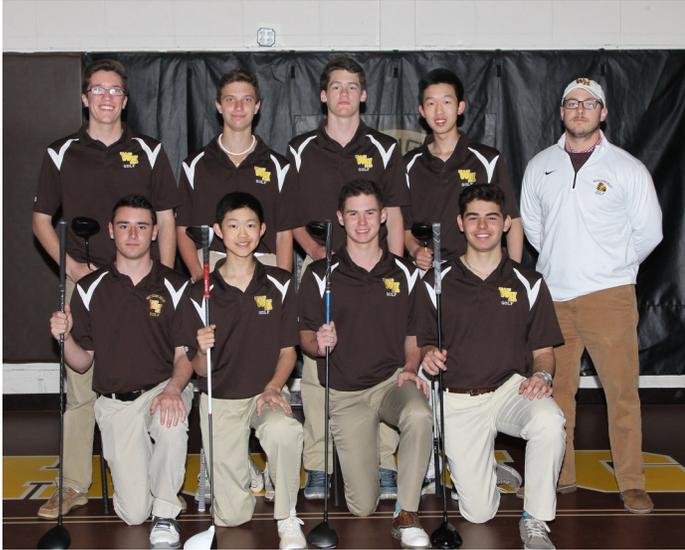


passion, and pursue it; expect that pursuing their passion will take a full measure of exploration, as well as their energy; and remember, to honor and thank your parents.

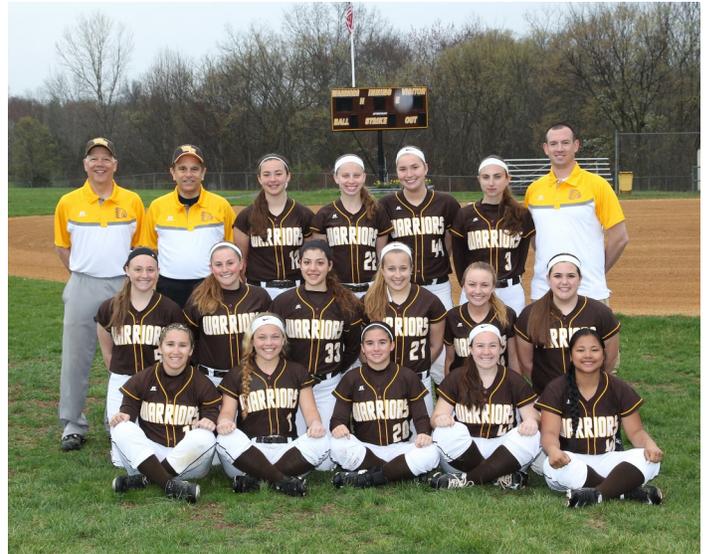
Jewett said that every parent can be proud of their children. "Each and every class has a distinctive personality," she said, "and for this class the adjectives that come to mind for them are great humanity and compassion."

She congratulated the students on their achievements, but assured them, "The best is yet to come."





WHRHS Golf Team
Somerset County Champions
Group 4 State Champions



WHRHS Softball Team
Somerset County Champions
Group 4 State Champions

2016 Teacher of the Year—Jamie Lott-Jones

History teacher Jamie Lott-Jones, who has been on faculty at WHRHS for 18 years has been selected by a committee of her peers as the 2016 Teacher of the Year.

The plaque presented to Lott-Jones by Principal George Alexis included the words, “for encouraging students to think independently, for promoting a culture of acceptance, and for inspiring students to embrace empathy, kindness, and responsibility.”

In a letter of thanks to her fellow teachers, Lott-Jones wrote, “What an honor it is to be selected as teacher of the year. I feel an even greater sense of pride because I was picked by you to represent our amazing staff. I was totally shocked.”

She continued, “I have had the privilege of teaching at WHRHS for a span of 18 years, and I know, without a doubt, that I work with the very best team of educators and professionals in the state. I have always felt that my co-workers were my extended family, and as such, you advise me, encourage me, and even tease me.

Teaching takes a lot of exhausting work,

she said, but when she gets down, she is re-invigorated when she receives encouragement from her fellow teachers.

“I have been guided and nudged and mentored by all of you to try again,” she said. “You invest countless hours and give so much energy to our kids and our school. Your passion, creativity and determination to tackle the next obstacle in the interest of our kids is what encourages me to do the same. It can be emotionally draining, but it is also the most rewarding job in the world, made even more special because of the people I work with.”

Lott-Jones was born in South Dakota, and when very young, she lived in North Dakota with her parents, a public health doctor and a social worker, who were providing services to Native American residents. They returned to New Jersey, and lived in Plainfield from ages 3 to 8.

She graduated from The Pingry School in Bernards Township, and received her bachelor’s degree from Dickinson College in Carlyle, Pa. During her junior year at Dickinson, she completed a semester establishing a pre-school on the Cheyenne River-Sioux Reservation in South Dakota.



Lott-Jones said the pre-school was funded through a government grant.

Lott-Jones earned her master’s degree in education from Rutgers University, and has taken additional classes at Kean University. She has also completed a one semester fellowship at Columbia University, New York City, in Genocide Studies.

Robotics FIRST World National Championship

The Watchung Hills Regional High School Robotics Team 41 finished its 2015-2016 competition year on an alliance of four teams in the quarterfinals of the championship round at what was the national championships for high school Robotics, April 27-30, in St. Louis, Mo.,

Coming off St. Louis, the team is energized, thrilled and looking forward to next year.

The actual name for the national contest is the “For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology (FIRST) World Championship.” The Robotics World Championship brought together more than 20,000 students and 600 teams, including teams from all over the United States and from countries as far as Brazil, China, and Turkey, and as close as Mexico and Canada. Team 41, which includes about 50 students, including boys and girls from all four years, and four faculty advisors, was on an alliance of four teams that took first place in their preliminary-round division of 75 teams. That is what qualified them for inclusion in the championship round.

This success followed a season that saw the WHRHS team reach the quarterfinals at the Robotics Mid-Atlantic Regional Competition, April 15-17, at

Lehigh University, Bethlehem, Pa. Earlier, during district competition, Team 41 finished first on April 9, at Montgomery High School, Montgomery Township, and second on April 2, at Mount Olive

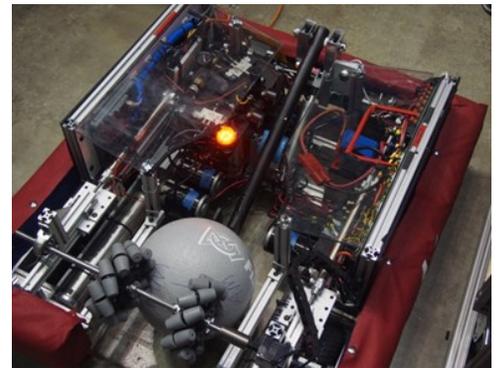


High School, Mount Olive Township. At The World Championships, Team 41 faced the typical ups and downs of the highly charged, stressful and timed Robotics tournament. And at St. Louis, everything was more magnified because this was the World Championship, Ponzio.

The qualification matches went really well on Thursday, the team went 4-0 and was ranked 4th in our subdivision. Friday was a little more of a challenge, having to deal with a broken gear box during one of the matches and being paired with some weaker alliances. We still ended the day strong, ranking 15 out of the 75 teams in the subdivision.

“We were confident we would be picked during the first round,” Ponzio said. “Unfortunately, to our surprise, we were not picked until the 4th round, leaving us as an alternate robot for that alliance. We aren't really sure why this happened, but it is completely out of our control. Our alliance was very strong however, and won the subdivision. They were later knocked out of the quarterfinals for the final elimination rounds between the winners of all subdivisions.”

Despite the other teams' disappointing choices for alliances, Ponzio said, the Team 41 students were thrilled with their success this year and ecstatic about earning their way to Lehigh and St. Louis.



World Languages Honor Societies Inductions

Some 249 students studying one of six World Languages at WHRHS were inducted into those languages' academic honor societies at a ceremony on Thursday, April 14, at the school.

According to World Languages Supervisor Brad Commerford, the numbers of students honored this year for superior academic excellence of the six languages are: 123 in Spanish, 41 in Italian; 35 in French; 18 in Chinese; 17 in German; and 15 in Latin. The numbers of students repeating in those languages are: 39 in Spanish; 19 in Italian; 12 in French; 7 in German; 6 in Chinese; and 5 in Latin.

One student, junior Sonali Howe of Green Brook Township, qualified for induction into two language honor societies, in Spanish and Latin.



All State Orchestra and All State All Eastern Chorus

Four students at WHRHS have been selected for All State Orchestra: Junior Brian Zheng, Viola; sophomore Eris Ulaj, violin; sophomore Ethan Marmolejos; and freshman Jeremy Chui, oboe.



They will join other selected students from around the state at rehearsals next fall, and then are expected to perform twice in November: On Friday, Nov. 11, in the Atlantic City Convention Center, and on Sunday, Nov. 20, at NJPAC (New Jersey Performing Arts Center), Newark.

Six of our students have been selected for All State Orchestra, and two of the six have also earned selection to the All Eastern Honors Chorus. Students selected for All State Chorus are: Kira Leinwand, Sarah Kelly, Veronica Mu, Allison Horvath, Nikhil Bhat, and Will Broder. Students in All State Chorus will rehearse in early fall next school year, and perform in concert late fall or early winter. Veronica Mu and Alli-



Spring Instrumental and Vocal Concerts

Fans of the WHRHS instrumental and choral music programs came out in record numbers on Wednesday, June 1, and Friday, June 3, and ended up giving standing ovations for the performances of the students and staff who put together memorable Spring Concerts.

The students demonstrated their mastery of the pieces, while also entertaining the audiences, both when the pieces required loud, dramatic, sudden and dynamic crescendos – and there were many of them, particularly during the Instrumental Concert, where a full range of percussion instruments were used early and often, and practically every family of instruments on stage were at one point or another given prominence -- as well as when the compositions painted pastel-colored, sometimes water-colored, moods with poignant and tender tones and meters.

Both the instrumental and the vocal concerts featured contributions from groups of musicians and singers of differing levels of proficiency, that is to say introductory level to advanced level. However, every student participant seemed to have come to the concert well-rehearsed, spirited, and eager to please.



Spring Dance Concert

Thirty-six students in Dance Ensemble, an extra-curricular activity at WHRHS, performed at the annual Spring Dance Concert, Thursday, May 12, to Saturday, May 14, in the school's Performing Arts Center.

The students performed 20 pieces in total, including 15 pieces that were choreographed by the students themselves. Many of the students performed in multiple pieces during the three nights of the concert.

Dancers performed a large variety of styles during the concert, including modern, contemporary, jazz and ballet.



Fusion Club

Fisher Hall at Wilson Memorial Church was transformed on Saturday, May 7, into a Saturday night "Open Mike" performance space as the WHRHS Fusion Club sponsored the "State of the Heart" Concert to benefit the American Heart Association.

The benefit raised some \$370, which the Fusion Club donated to the American heart Association,.

Ten performers or groups of performers took the stage, mostly singers, musicians, as well as one dancer and one poet. Performers and guests sat at some 10 round tables, cabaret-style.



Dancing with the Teachers

An enthusiastic crowd of students, teachers and parents filled the Performing Arts Center on Wednesday, May 25, at Watchung Hills Regional High School to witness and participate in "Dancing With the Teachers."

Dancing With the Teachers is one of a year-long series of fundraising and awareness raising events sponsored by student groups in support of Project ALS (Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, also called Lou Gehrig's Disease). Project ALS is the non-profit organization started by the late Jenifer Estess and her family to seek out and support leading edge research to find treatment and a cure for ALS.



Athletic Signings



Thirty-eight graduating seniors at WHRHS plan to play sports in NCAA Division I, II, or III college sports.



Marissa Butrico, a WHRHS Cheerleader, plans to continue her interests in Cheerleading in the Fall as a student and member of the Cheerleading Squad at the University of Delaware, Newark, Del.

The Hills Final Roundup

- ◆ The following WHRHS students have been recognized for their achievement on the National Latin Exam in 2016: Latin II - Silver Maxima Cum Laude: Sean Coleman, Latin II - Cum Laude: Jessica Yan, Timothy Zhang, Latin III - Gold Summa Cum Laude: Sophia Su, Latin III - Silver Maxima Cum Laude: Daniel Lee, Sonali Howe, Kinnary shah, Nina Goliyad, Latin III - Magna cum Laude: Demetra Chang, Prose III - Silver Maxima Cum Laude: Daniel Lee, Prose III - Cum Laude: Kinnary Shah, Prose IV - Gold Summa Cum Laude: Michelle Shui, Poetry III - Silver Maxima Cum Laude: Daniel Lee. In addition, Michelle Shui is the recipient of the Maureen O'Donnell Oxford Classical Dictionary Award. This award is presented to anyone who wins four gold medals over the course of their studies. This is a unique award and one of great accomplishment.
- ◆ Six of our seniors were finalists in the 2016 National Merit Scholarship Competition. They are Claire Chen, Emily Kim, Kunwoo Park, Isis Zhang, Eric Zhu and Henry Zhu.
- ◆ We are pleased to congratulate our students Claire Chen and Isis Zhang who were selected as candidates for the prestigious Presidential Scholars program.
- ◆ Catlin Iannella was nominated and selected for the Somerset County Association of Directors of Special Services Scholarship. Caitlin was one of three recipients of this scholarship in the county. She plans to attend college and study the field of music education.
- ◆ On April 16, the New Jersey Chinese Cultural Studies Foundation (NJCCSF) and Asian studies program of Seton Hall University co-hosted the 10th Chinese Cultural Project Contest. The topic this year was "Differences in Culture of Sports and Athletic Activities in America and China." An-Ting Ho, Megan Ma, Jenny Yan and Emily Yan won third place.
- ◆ Two students from our Italian 4 Honors class, Keshav Muralitharan and Stephanie Chavanne, competed in an Italian poetry contest at New York University sponsored by the Association of Italian Teachers of New York. Both students recited a dramatic poem. Keshav won the 2nd place prize and Stefanie was awarded 3rd place.
- ◆ Henry Zhu was selected as one of eleven MyCentralJersey.com, Academic All Stars for 2016. A salute of Henry's accomplishments was published in the Courier News and Home New Tribune in a feature story on the program in both papers on June 12, 2016.
- ◆ Shaila Humane represented WHRHS at the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF), the world's largest international pre-college science competition. She presented her research project: "PHYS024 - Electrically-Induced Acoustic Oscillations of Gas Bubbles" for which she was awarded 2nd prize in the Physics and Astronomy Division of the Competition.
- ◆ In the U.S. National Chemistry Olympiad (USNCO) program, Juniors Michelle Shui and Daniel Lee placed in the top 1,000 students in the nation and were asked to take the national exam. In the national exam, Michelle Shui was placed in the top 150 students in the nation and made the U.S. National Chemistry Olympiad Honors list for 2016.



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