



## Meditation boosts Charlotte Avenue students' well-being

*"Brain break" brings soothing breather to the school day*

Cotton balls that they held in their hand were the prompt that took third graders to a cloud of calm and relaxation on a recent day at Charlotte Avenue Elementary

School. During a meditation session with school counselor Andrea Czerwinski, these students in Marilyn Reardon's class were learning how to focus on what they were feeling, to release bodily tension and to mentally soothe themselves.

Mrs. Czerwinski has been visiting this classroom twice a week for a 10-15 minute session with each cohort to teach students coping skills that they can use not only now, during the stress of a pandemic, but throughout life. About 11 teachers schoolwide take advantage of the meditation sessions for their students. It's voluntary and they choose the number of visits. The content of the session is tailored to the grade level, K-5.

The meditation at Charlotte reflects the district's commitment to students'

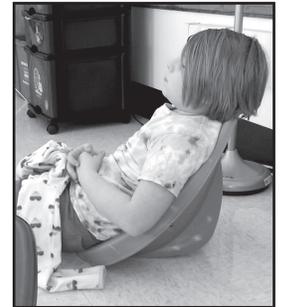
mental and emotional health and well-being.

"It's such a different year. We wanted to give students strategies to use when they're not feeling calm and that they could use on their own," Mrs. Czerwinski said. "They seem to love it. They settle in. They really get relaxed."

Mrs. Reardon said her students have benefited from the sessions, especially given the pandemic-related challenges of this school year, such as *(Please turn to page six)*



School counselor Andrea Czerwinski leads meditation in a third grade classroom.



Calm time for student Jainee Dotegowski

## Students raise their voice in High School/Middle School civic engagement clubs



Layla Lewis, a freshman and club co-founder, spearheaded the Black History Month poster campaign.

Learn more about the issue, participate in respectful discussion, take action. This could be considered the playbook for two new civic engagement clubs that are providing Hamburg High School and Hamburg Middle School students with a way to be heard on social justice issues and to make the world a better place.

Formed last November, the Hamburg High School Coalition for Equity & Inclusion (HCEI) is the student chapter of a community organization in the Town of Hamburg. The student members are working to educate themselves and external audiences on a variety of societal issues. As an organization for change, they want to keep the conversation going and move it forward; to channel concern into action.

The 23 or so students attending a virtual meeting on a Wednesday in February, for example, used their time together to learn more about sexism and racism, share resources, give an update on projects accomplished and plan for upcoming initiatives.

This meeting started with students Sofia Weissflach and Abigail Cornelius pre- *(Please turn to page four)*



Junior Sofia Weissflach had a hand in making the poster project a success.



Kathy Battin, *right*, and Elaine Barkowski of the Zonta Club.

## School counselor lauded by Zonta

Hamburg High School counselor Kathy Battin received a Yellow Rose Award from the Zonta Club of Hamburg-Orchard Park in March in honor of her service to the community. Mrs. Battin has organized the school's annual holiday food drive for many years. She was cited for setting an example of caring and compassion for students as they share with the less fortunate, and for her counseling work in guiding students on life paths and careers.

The award was presented on International Women's Day, a day on which Zonta Clubs honor women who have made extraordinary contributions to their communities.

## View Middle School musical performances online in April

After rehearsals with masks and social distancing, the cast of this year's musical at Hamburg Middle School will come together on stage thanks to filming and video editing for performances of "Guys and Dolls, Jr." in April. The pay-for-view recorded performances will be streamed April 15-17 at 7 p.m. and April 18 at 1 p.m.

Tickets are available for online purchase at <https://www.showtix4u.com/event-details/48228>

Students are under the direction of Rhonda Wieder and Lindsay DiBartolomeo. Jeremy Cooper served as technical director.

Cast leads are: Margaret Graffius as Sarah Brown; William Streicher as Sky Master-son; Adrian Grey as Nathan Detroit; Elise Boettcher as Adelaide; Liam Davis as Nicely, Nicely Johnson; Sean Flynn as Rusty Charlie; Abigail Veatch as Benny Southstreet.



# Superintendent's Column

## Schools ready to pivot as circumstances allow

I want to start by thanking everyone for all they have done to help us keep the Hamburg Central Schools open and safe, and for their contributions to making sure that the school experience still inspires and empowers despite the challenging circumstances. It is impossible to overstate the importance of the professionalism and expertise of every one of our employees. They have been critical to ensuring that our children continue to

learn and grow in school in the midst of a global pandemic. We are also incredibly grateful for our families, who, as their child's first teachers, have sometimes been called upon to reprise that role during the past year.

Much has been said in the media about the revised U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) updated guidance for schools, and what impact that it may have on the direction that school districts receive from the New York State Department of Health returning students to in-person learning five days a week. The Erie-Niagara School Superintendents Association recently wrote a letter to Governor Cuomo, asking him to direct his state agencies to update guidance to schools. Despite our efforts, and their statements of assurance that they are reviewing their guidance, we still have the same rules we've had since July of 2020.

While we can't control the pace of New York State's review process, we can control our ability to be ready when change happens. You may recall that in the summer of 2020, we convened Operations, Social and Emotional Learning, and Instructional Services working groups in advance of the issuance of the initial state re-opening guidance in an effort to be as prepared as possible to comply with those rules. We have done the same in

this instance, convening the exact same working groups recently so that we can discuss the challenges and opportunities that would most likely be presented to us in the event that state guidance to school districts changes. Our building-based shared decision-making groups also took up that exact same conversation.

Importantly, the Hamburg Central School District will be sure to give students, families and staff as much notice as possible regarding any changes because we know that everyone will need time to adjust.

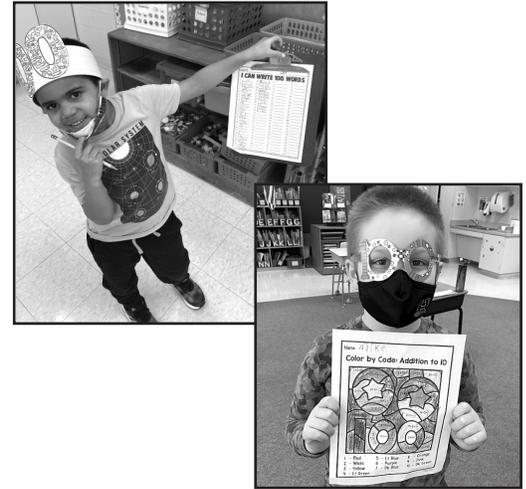
Thank you for your continued partnership in the learning and growth of your children. I will continue to keep you updated as events require. The last 12 months has been very hard on us all, bringing hardships and anxiety in all forms upon our families and friends. I know we all hope that better days lie ahead.



**Michael Cornell**  
Superintendent



**HEADED FOR STATE SCIENCE OLYMPIAD** — It's on to state competition in April for the Hamburg Central Science Olympiad Division B Team after taking first place in the virtual regional meet in March. The Olympiad challenges students in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) through competitive events. At that regional qualifier, Hamburg's first place events included Crime Busters, Dynamic Planet, Food Science, Fossils, Meteorology and Reach for the Stars. Eighth grade team members, *top row from left*, are Ben Herbst, Michael Lewandowski, Darren Stry and Jack Watkins. *In the bottom row* are ninth graders Sage Malloy, Michael Manning and Nick Zona, with advisers Mary Ann Dates (science teacher) and Nicholas Zona (technology teacher).



**100 DAYS & COUNTING** — The primary classes at Boston Valley Elementary marked 100 days of school in February. Torren Ferguson, *top*, a first grader in Bethany Vay's class, worked on writing 100 words. The class also rolled dice to "race to 100" on a game board, used paper cut-outs of the number 100 to make a drawing and made 100-day headbands. Numbers were also the focus for Michael Fox, a first grader in Jacquelyn Rasulo's class.



**Quidditch Queens:** Kiya Lawson, Claire Maginnis, Ellie Russo, Leela Mascia. *Not pictured:* Evelyn Hess (remote)

## Students, staff team up for Harry Potter Trivia

### *Competition ends in tie*

Fourteen teams composed of students and staff worked their magic in hopes of winning Hamburg Middle School LMC's 4th annual Harry Potter Trivia Competition in February. There was a new twist this year as students were able to participate from home or in-person, and each team had its own room and judge for the contest. Extra "house points" were also given for clever team names and themed clothes and accessories.

The competition ended in a tie for first place between Quidditch Queens (Leela Mascia, Ellie Russo, Evelyn Hess, Claire Maginnis and Kiya Lawson) and the Remembralls (Maddie Tothero, Anya Moelbert, Gwyn Huson, Ben Reagan and Tegan Smith). Winners received Harry Potter prizes.



**Remembralls:** Ben Reagan, Tegan Smith, Maddie Tothero, Anya Moelbert, Gwyn Huson (remote)

senting on sexism: common terms, types of sexism and misogyny, and such issues as the “pink tax” and gender wage gap.

The club has six subcommittees — Black, Indigenous, People of Color; LGBTQIA+; Jewish; Mental Health; Women’s; Communications — ensuring a clear focus on issues of importance to the students and spreading the leadership among club participants.

“One of the reasons that we’ve been so successful is that we work together as a group,” emphasized club President Ella Pascucci, a senior. Senior Tyler Herman serves as the group’s Vice President. English teacher Lori Raybold, known for her dedication to teaching about the Holocaust and other human rights issues, is the club’s adviser.

Among HCEI’s accomplishments:

- Worked with High School administration to raise awareness with staff and students about the use of preferred pronouns that differ from cisgender pronouns
- Advocated for providing feminine hygiene products in school bathrooms
- Ran a supply drive to collect backpacks, personal care items and clothing for adults in need
- Hosted conversations on celebrating Thanksgiving in a manner respectful to indigenous people, talking about racism with family members, sexual harassment and life as a Jewish teen
- Marked Black History Month through “Figure of the Day” announcements and posters; also celebrated Women’s History Month and Pride Month

At the mid-point of the school year they were working on:



**HATS FOR THE HOMELESS** — Students in Hamburg Middle School’s Family & Consumer Sciences (FACS) Service Club made winter fleece hats for the homeless when they recently had their first in-person meeting. The hats were donated to Friends of the Night People.

- Arranging a question and answer session with a police officer(s) to build common understanding
- Supply drive for school children in need
- T-shirt fundraiser to benefit the club’s events and projects

A request from parents and students was the impetus for the Middle School’s (HMS) new Civic Engagement Club, which is not affiliated with the town HCEI. About 35 HMS students signed up for the club, which started meeting in February with Social Studies teacher Justine Springborn as adviser.

Principal Tom Adams said the group is a “safe space” for students to talk about what’s going on around them, whether locally or globally.

“It’s part of our continuing effort to have spaces for all kids to feel heard and to have a sense of belonging,” he said.

The students are in the early stages of defining their focus but there are already two guiding beliefs: It’s important to listen respectfully to others, even if there’s disagreement, and everybody can do something to help others.

“The kids want to have an active part in making the world a better place. This is a great example of how they can be active and engaged citizens now, not just in the future,” Mr. Adams said.



At the “selfie station” are Civic Engagement Club members, from left, Grace O’Brien, Lidia Neff and Olive Luniewski.

## Middle School students inspire for Women’s History Month

At Hamburg Middle School, eighth grader Lidia Neff spearheaded the Civic Engagement Club’s Women’s History Month activities in March. Club members researched biographies to read on the announcements and helped create posters of inspiring women. A “selfie photo station” was also set up using the theme “picture yourself here” to promote the idea that anyone can strive to make a difference. The display and announcements highlighted accomplished women from many professions and time periods.

# Armor marches through month with movement, reading, kindness

**A**rmor Elementary School marched into and out of March with five weeks of themed activities that got students up and moving, promoted a culture of kindness, ramped up reading and added a dose of fun to learning. Activities were provided twice during each week so that both cohorts had an opportunity to participate.

Nature cooperated for an on-campus Snow Day the last week of February that featured indoor and outdoor winter-themed activities. Fourth and fifth graders went snowshoeing in physical education and younger grades sledged. Students made snowmen and snow angels, built snow forts and launched snowballs at a target. Indoors, they enjoyed snow-themed crafts and games.

“We just wanted them to have good, old-fashioned fun,” said Principal Leslie Bennett.

Next came Seuss Week, during which students learned about

the noted children’s author, read his books and dressed to celebrate such favorites as “The Cat in the Hat” and “Fox in Socks.” Instead of the usual Read Across America, students socially distanced in the hallways with a favorite book for Spot Your Dot & Read.

Creating kindness chain reactions was the theme for another week, in which staff members participated as well.



The physical activity on Snow Day included snowshoeing.

They were randomly assigned a colleague to whom they anonymously sent positive notes and treats, later revealing their identity. Staff members were also invited to write details of a colleague’s exemplary actions and post it on a “Lucky Charms” board in the employee lounge.

During this week, the message for students was that a small act of kindness can have a ripple effect. The culmination was a school-wide “chain reaction” using boxes of cereal set up in a long line through the hallways as if they were dominos. Fifth graders calculated how far apart the boxes should be placed for the best effect so that each box would knock down the next. Afterward, the cereal was donated to help others.

Individual classrooms created their own activities for St. Paddy’s Week, then the month wrapped up with a week revolving around the “March of the Penguins” documentary. In addition to learning about penguins, students trekked around the school to “March out of March.”



Spot Your Dot & Read brought students together while socially distanced for quality book time.

## Can’t make it to the game? See Bulldog sports on YouTube

Spectators are limited at interscholastic sports for the time being due to pandemic restrictions but now there’s the next best way to watch Hamburg Bulldogs sports. The district in February began live streaming basketball and ice hockey games on YouTube. It’s just a start for what’s to come. The offerings will be expanded, such as adding volleyball, as the district moves into upcoming sports seasons.

The video-audio was made possible with installation of a camera in the High School gym. Games occurring in the Middle School gym are streamed by students from the TV Club using iPads. Ice hockey assistants also use iPads for streaming from rinks. Due to overlapping game schedules, the matches are streamed live on one of three YouTube channels within Hamburg Athletic Dept. The games are also recorded so they can be viewed later.



The pandemic will end but it’s just the start for the live streaming, which is seen as a convenience for those who can’t attend in-person. The district is exploring live streaming from Howe Field, as well as play-by-play announcing.

Access the streaming/recordings through the district website ([hamburgschools.org](http://hamburgschools.org)). Choose Departments —> Athletics —> Watch the Bulldogs Live. Or search YouTube for Hamburg Athletic Dept.

Beyond athletics, pay-for-view streaming will be used for the first time for the High School musical in May and the Drama Club play in June. Details are being worked out for the streaming of the musical “Songs for a New World,” a collection of songs and dance without dialogue, as well as the play “Pride & Prejudice.”



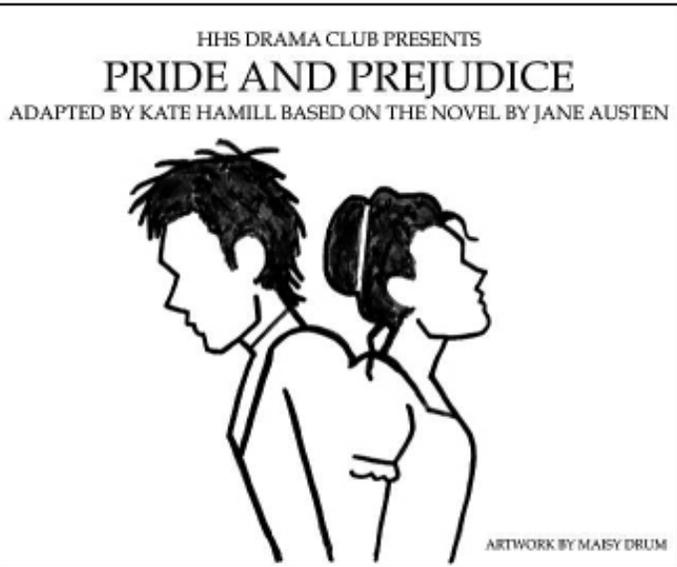
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## Drama Club performance to be streamed in June

This isn't your grandmother's Austen. If you're familiar with the book first published in 1813 or the most recent movie from 2005, the stage adaptation of "Pride and Prejudice" to be performed by the Hamburg High School Drama Club is the same story but more bold and timely, exploring the absurdities and thrills of finding your perfect (or imperfect) match in life. The outspoken Lizzy Bennet is determined to never marry, despite mounting pressure from society (and her mother). But, can she resist love, especially when that vaguely handsome, mildly amusing and impossibly aggravating Mr. Darcy keeps popping up at every turn?

"Pride and Prejudice" will be available for streaming on June 17, 18 & 19 at 7:30 p.m. More details on this pay-for-view performance will be announced when available.

## Meditation *(Continued from page one)*

disruptions to routines. She's also pleased that they're building a connection with another adult in the school.

"It's a break for them," Mrs. Reardon said. "They get to turn off school work and relax."

She notices a positive difference in the students immediately after the sessions.

"They are refreshed. It increases their attention and focus."

On this particular day, Mrs. Czerwinski started by asking students to do "Fist to Five" — holding up one to five fingers to show how they were feeling. She repeated this at the end of the session to gauge if their moods had improved. Most had.

During their time together, she led the students through peaceful breathing, then had them visualize moving from hot to cold on the thermometer and, finally, pretend to sink deeply into a fluffy cloud, high in the sky on a beautiful day.

"Remember that you can return to your very own cloud whenever you feel like you need to calm down and relax," she told the students in a steady, measured voice.

Depending on the grade level, Mrs. Czerwinski's session might lead students through a jungle and encourage them to place their worries on the back of a cheetah who carries the thoughts away. Another session uses the virtual warmth of hot cocoa to bring students to a relaxed state. Rainbow meditation, which focuses on breathing-in colors and positive thoughts, is another of the experiences.

Mrs. Reardon's students appreciate taking a breather.

"It's a brain break," said Kalyssa Cass.

"It allows me to close my eyes and shut off the busy day," commented Eli Gilmour.

"You get to relax to the point of almost falling asleep," agreed Brigid Kearns. "It's so nice to have peace and quiet during our school day."

During a recent session, a student also mentioned that he used the meditation techniques to help fall asleep at night.

"Our kids are resilient and they've coped exceptionally well," Mrs. Czerwinski noted. "It's good for them to have this in their toolbox because it's something they can use forever."

As another plus, she said the regular interaction was a great way for her to bond with students so they could reach out in the future if needed.