

BELLMORE-MERRICK
UNITED SECONDARY TEACHERS

BMUST

DEDICATION • PROFESSIONALISM • SERVICE

Celebrating

60

Years

OF

SOLIDARITY

1961-2021

Bellmore-Merrick United Secondary Teachers

2019-2021

OFFICERS

President - Rob Walsh
1st Vice President - Peter Brideson
2nd Vice President - Bill Morris
Treasurer/Membership - Brad Seidman

HEAD BUILDING REPRESENTATIVES

Calhoun High School - Jason Elias
Grand Avenue Middle School - Carolyn Condenzio
Kennedy High School - Brian DeGaetano
Mephram High School - Heather Castellano
Merrick Avenue Middle School - Amanda Myles-McAnally

President, Paraprofessional Association - Susan Grippa
President, Retired Teachers Association - Sharon Wisla
MAP Building Representative - Geisha Kwiatkowski

DISTRICT COMMITTEE CO-CHAIRS

Curriculum - Deanne Junior
Joint Professional Practices Committee - Jennifer Landry
Professional Advisory Committee - Rob Walsh

BMUST COMMITTEES

BMUST Website Editor - Dan Stiglitz
Election Committee - Roland Skemer
Health and Safety - Brad Seidman
Local Do's BMUST Newsletter - Bruce Reed
Member Services - Peter Brideson
New Teachers/100 Hours - Lisa Shapiro
Professional Development Advisory Committee - David Goldberg
PTA Liaison - Carolyn Condenzio
Public Relations - Bruce Reed
Special Education - Lisa Gaeta
Union Secretary - Meg Hirsch
VOTE/COPE, Political Action - Dennis Urban
Women's Committee - Lauren Cress & Lisa Loonie

Welcome

"Welcome to the 38th annual Bellmore-Merrick United Secondary Teachers' Dinner Dance. Tonight we gather to celebrate the remarkable careers of our retirees and to congratulate our colleagues who go above and beyond." Oh, how desperately I wish I were saying these words to you in person rather than you having to read them on a printed page or on a computer screen. We have managed to survive, and occasionally thrive, during an incredibly challenging and difficult 15 months. The pandemic has been personally, professionally, emotionally, mentally and physically exhausting. I am optimistic, however, that in September we will be able to host our Welcome Back party in the usual fashion and that at this time next year we will be hosting this shindig in-person.

I am incredibly proud of the education that BMUST members have provided to the students of the Bellmore-Merrick Central High School District this year. There is not another school district on the planet that has done it better. This community is fortunate to have such a hardworking, dedicated and committed staff of professional educators working on their behalf. I thank each and every one of you for all that you have done to make this a successful school year. Things could have very easily gone in the other direction, and they did not, because of you.

There is not the space, nor do I have the words, to thank all those who deserve to be, but I do need to give thanks to a few. First and foremost I need to thank my family. Thanks to my wife, Rory, and sons, Parker and James for their extraordinary love, support and patience over the past 15 months. As our family attempted to navigate the pandemic and hold it all together, I was often off tending to phone calls, text messages and ZOOM meetings trying to help my BMUST family do the same.

I am lucky to have the counsel, support and friendship of the BMUST Executive Board - Vice Presidents Pete Brideson and Bill Morris along with Treasurer Brad Seidman. They have been remarkable and together have made a great team.

Head Building Representatives Heather Castellano, Carolyn Condenzio, Brian DeGaetano, Jason Elias, Geisha Kwiatkowski and Amanda Myles-McAnally have been so incredibly available and giving of their time and energy. I honestly have no way to thank them for their efforts. For 15 months now, they, along with Pete, Bill and Brad, have been part of weekly conversations with Central Administration helping to either reopen our schools in September 2020, to keep our schools open throughout the 2020-2021 school year, or to plan for opening of schools in September of 2021. Know that none of us make it to June 2021 without their collective effort and commitment.

Thanks to Sharon Wisla, the president of the Bellmore-Merrick Retired Teachers Association and Susan Grippa, president of the Paraprofessionals for the support and sage advice they give to BMUST and our members. I owe a debt of gratitude to both Mike Dolber and Mark Steinberg who, for some unknown reason, still take my phone calls and answer my text messages. Finally, a special thank you to Meg Hirsch, the BMUST secretary, for her efforts on our behalf. On many a night or weekend I have encroached upon her time with her family to ask some crazy question or to have her send an email to the membership that could not wait. We are truly lucky to have Meg on our team.

In my short time as president, I have been reminded of how important relationships are, and I am grateful for the relationship BMUST shares with Central Administration and the Board of Education. Without the trust and belief we have in one another, the remarkable feats we have pulled off this school year simply do not happen. The administrative team led by Superintendent John DeTommaso have risen to every challenge during the pandemic and have done so in a collaborative and inclusive fashion. I hope to never face a crisis such as this one again, but I am a better person and leader for having worked through this one with John. As we thank John for his outstanding leadership through these difficult times, the BMUST family wishes the DeTommaso family good health, peace and much happiness as John embarks on the next leg of his journey.

I would like to congratulate our many honorees - your dedication to BMUST and our school community is to be commended, and I am looking forward to the day when we can thank you and celebrate your accomplishments face to face.

In closing, I want to thank our retirees for their tireless work and dedication to both BMUST and the BMCHSD. Cathy, Sheila, Maureen, Sharon, Gregg and John - it has been our honor to have you as colleagues and to work alongside of you. We wish you much joy and happiness in your retirement. Please know that you'll be missed, but never forgotten.

My Union Brothers and Sisters, may your summer be full of laughter and joy. May it provide you with the opportunity to break bread with family and friends not seen for some time. Continue to look after yourselves. Continue to look after one another. Rest. Rejuvenate.

In Solidarity,

Rob

B M U S T

Award Winners

2020

2021

Outstanding Professional

Calhoun High School
 Grand Avenue Middle School
 Kennedy High School
 Meadowbrook Alternative Program
 Mepham High School
 Merrick Avenue Middle School

Elizabeth Separ
 Meg Billia
 Eric Maresca
 Michelle Battafarano
 Heather Bizewski
 Dan Stiglitz

Jamie Romito
 Meghan Dagger
 Bruce Reed
 Catrina Christensen
 Stu Stein
 Christina Corwin

**Lou DeFilippo Outstanding
 Union Service**

Lisa Shapiro

Dennis Urban

Para Special Service Award

Maria LoVerde

Deborah Slutsky

PTA Award

Lori Petraitis

Alyse Berke

President's Choice Award

Henry Dircks

2020-21
 Board of Trustees

**Patricia Christy Outstanding
 Retiree Award**

Patricia Riew

John Mazarella

Community Service Award

2020-21
 Women's Committee

Friend of Education Award

Dr. Joseph Rella

John DeTommaso

Outstanding Professionals 2020

MICHELLE BATAFARANO - MEADOWBROOK ALTERNATIVE PROGRAM

Michelle has been in the BMCHSD district since 2015 working predominantly at MAP, but has spent time at Calhoun and Mephram as well. Throughout the years, Michelle has also been involved in BMCHSD's summer school and Twilight programs. Michelle is a happily married military wife with a dog and two year-old son. When Michelle is not teaching or spending time with family, she is either baking or playing chess. During lunch each day at MAP, you can find Michelle hosting chess matches with her students and on the weekends, she is operating a small cake decorating business. Michelle is honored to receive this award and is eternally grateful to her MAP colleagues for this recognition!



DAN STIGLITZ - MERRICK AVENUE MIDDLE SCHOOL

Dan has been teaching in Bellmore-Merrick since 2008. He started his career as a science teacher in New York City and upon completing his Master's began his career as a Technology teacher. He has spent much of his time at Merrick Avenue helping to create new curricula for the Technology program, including the new coding curriculum in both 7th and, soon, 8th grade. Dan was also in the first group of tech mentors in the district to help facilitate rolling out new technology initiatives within the district.

When he is not playing on computers, Dan tries to spend as much time outside with his wife, daughter and dog. Skiing and biking are always high up on that list, as well as many other outdoor activities.



MEG BILLIA - GRAND AVENUE MIDDLE SCHOOL

Meg Billia has been in Bellmore-Merrick since 2005 and has been teaching 7th grade English at Grand Avenue since then. She has been a part of the New Teacher Committee for the last few years. Working with the students and alongside the staff at Grand, especially the members of the English department, has given Meg much joy and fulfillment. She is also grateful for the hard work and dedication of her fellow BMUST members, both past and present. On a personal note, Meg is married to her husband Matthew, and they welcomed a baby girl named Emma Maeve in January of 2021. Meg enjoys reading, traveling, running, playing golf with her husband, and spending time with family and friends.



HEATHER BIZEWSKI - MEPHAM HIGH SCHOOL

Heather Bizewski, a science teacher at Mephram High School, has been an educator in the district since 2004. Heather has been an active union member and currently serves as a rep for Mephram. Over the years, she has served as the Science Club Advisor, Science Olympiad coach, The Buccaneer newspaper advisor, and mentor through Mephram STRONG. Heather has a strong interest in meditation and began offering meditation sessions in her classroom to her colleagues. With the help of some other like-minded Mephram teachers, Meditation

Mondays were born! Encouraged by the response and interest, she successfully proposed and developed a new course in the district, The Scientific Basis of Mindfulness & Meditation, which she now teaches as well. Heather enjoys spending time with her husband of 9 years, David, and their foster-fail rescue dog Bogey. Her idea of a great weekend is spent hiking or taking long walks together. She has an extensive travel bucket list that she looks forward to working on again very soon.



ERIC MARESCA - KENNEDY HIGH SCHOOL

This year is Eric's twenty-first year with the Bellmore-Merrick Central High School District. It began in the 1999-2000 school year when he was an intern working with Peter Yelton. The timing was such that Peter's retirement in 2001 opened the door for Eric to step in as John F. Kennedy High School's social worker. As a young social worker, Eric found his niche working in group counseling settings, while also providing individual counseling to students in need. Eric is married to Nicole Maresca who is a 19-year veteran English teacher at Mephram High

School. They have three children - Emily, Nicholas, and Reese. Emily presently attends ninth grade at Calhoun High School and Nicholas will be attending 7th grade at Merrick Avenue Middle School next year. The Maresca's will then give the teachers of Bellmore-Merrick a little break to prepare themselves for Reese in six years!



ELIZABETH SEPAR - CALHOUN HIGH SCHOOL

Liz Separ has been teaching Social Studies for 22 years, 17 of those years at Calhoun High School. She is a key member of the Senior Experience program and has pioneered the AP Capstone course offering at Calhoun. Liz works as a mentor to new teachers and as the advisor for the Class of '22. At this time, she is working towards receiving her National Board Certification.

Outstanding Professionals 2020

LOU DEFILIPPO OUTSTANDING UNION SERVICE AWARDS



LISA SHAPIRO - MERRICK AVENUE MIDDLE SCHOOL

Lisa Shapiro has been teaching at Merrick Avenue Middle School for nineteen years. As a member of the Special Education department, she has taught resource room, alternate day support, a variety of self-contained classes, and all four content classes for the ICT program. For more than ten years, Lisa has spent her summers teaching the Extended School Year program. Lisa has co-supervised SADD and a real throwback, Odyssey of the Mind, where one year, the Merrick Avenue team made it to the regional competition in Binghamton. Last year, Lisa began co-supervising the MAMS PRIDE club. She has hosted many student teachers and been a participant in the mentor program. As an active member of BMUST, Lisa has been a building representative for eight years, served on the New Teacher/100 Hours Committee, and now chairs it. Lisa was a member of the Special Education Committee and is a contributor to Local-Do's.

Lisa resides in Wantagh with her daughter Emily (10) and her son Cameron (7). They keep her busy "momming" and being their activity chauffeur. When she has a spare minute, Lisa enjoys going to concerts, writing, spin class and Pilates. Lisa would like to thank the Trustees for this honor and is grateful to her RAMily for inspiring her to always show up and be the best she can be in any capacity: friend, colleague, or mentor.

PARA SPECIAL SERVICE AWARD



MARIA LO VERDE

Maria Lo Verde has been working at Bellmore-Merrick for 19 years. She started working at Wellington C. Mephram High School as part of the school grounds security in 2002. She worked there for five years. She transferred to Sanford H. Calhoun High School where she worked in the Language Department for seven years, assisting students and teachers as a Language Lab Aid. She then moved to the Special Ed. Department and has worked there until this present time. She enjoys working with students with special needs and she says: "Every student is a special person no matter who they are... When I'm here, you are my family." She is a resident of Merrick for over 22 years with her wonderful husband Steven of 41 years. They have one daughter, Mrs. Rachel Lo Verde-Lajara, who is currently the music teacher in the O North Merrick District and is married to Thomas Lajara. Mrs. Lo Verde's hobbies are reading and writing in Spanish and Italian, art, playing the piano, crocheting, gardening, cooking, church and family gatherings. She thanks God and the district for the opportunity given to work with such wonderful staff and students and feels very honored to be part of Bellmore-Merrick District for all these years!

PTA AWARD



LORI PETRAITIS

Lori has been involved with the PTA for 11 years. She has been involved with Saw Mill Road Elementary School, North Bellmore Coordinating Council, Grand Ave co-president, and Bellmore-Merrick council of PTAs co-president. She just finished another year as president at Grand Ave. and will most likely be involved again when her youngest gets there in a year.

When Lori isn't volunteering with the PTA, she is working in the Garden City Public School District as a teacher assistant or is with her three kids, Sean, Ashley and Derek. She can be found on the fields for cheer, football or lacrosse or driving them and their friends wherever they may need to go.

Outstanding Professionals 2020

P R E S I D E N T ' S C H O I C E A W A R D



HENRY DIRCKS - MEPHAM HIGH SCHOOL

Henry Dircks taught Social Studies at Mepham High School for 25 years, primarily U.S. History & Government. He participated in various school events and advised two clubs while untenured. He bookended his career by serving terms as a building rep for BMUST. Recipient: Outstanding Professional, Mepham H.S. (2004) and Outstanding Union Service (2012).

P A T R I C I A C H R I S T Y O U T S T A N D I N G R E T I R E E A W A R D



PATRICIA RIEW

Pat Riew taught at Calhoun from 1972 to 2004 in the science department. She moved to Westbury and travelled the world with husband Andy. She has now settled down and designed a garden for first grandson Teddy who likes raspberries. In the last year she welcomed granddaughter, Charlotte. Her son and daughter and their spouses keep her out of trouble.

F R I E N D O F E D U C A T I O N A W A R D



DR. JOSEPH RELLA

Dr. Joseph Rella was the former superintendent of Comsewogue School District who was at the forefront of protests against Common Core State Standards in 2013. Dr. Rella was a music teacher when he first came to the Comsewogue School District and eventually rose to take positions as principal, then assistant superintendent, and finally retired as superintendent in 2019 after a total of 25 years of service. He succumbed to his battle with cancer on February 21, 2020. Dr. Rella was predeceased by his wife, Jacqueline, and is survived by their four sons.

Outstanding Professionals 2021



CATRINA CHRISTENSEN - MEADOWBROOK ALTERNATIVE PROGRAM

Catrina Christensen is the Outstanding Professional for the Meadowbrook Alternative Program. She is both honored and humbled by this award. Catrina joined the CHSD in September 2015 as the school counselor at MAP, and in the winter of 2016, the school counselor of Twilight. Over the years, Catrina's positions in both programs have changed; she is now the principal of Twilight and the full time counselor at MAP. Additionally, she is the Key Club advisor and helps coordinate the Community Cupboard, a pursuit which brings her much satisfaction. Catrina also serves on the Women's Committee for BMUST.

On the first snowfall of 2020 (December 16th), Catrina exchanged wedding vows with husband, Michael, in front of family while myriad friends joined on Zoom. The date was symbolic as it would have been her Grammy's 70th wedding anniversary. Catrina and Mike enjoy spending time at the beach and taking walks with their dog, Rufus. She is also an Orangetheory enthusiast and loves outdoor activities.



CHRISTINA CORWIN - MERRICK AVENUE MIDDLE SCHOOL

Christina Corwin has been a science teacher at Merrick Avenue Middle School for 22 years. She has taught 7th and 8th grade for all academic levels. Mrs. Corwin has coached track and kickline and served as an advisor for the Ecology club. She is also a supervisor for the after-school RAP program.

When Christina is not at Merrick Avenue, she loves spending time with her family. Her husband James, daughter Olivia (18) and son Noah (15) enjoy traveling, boating, skiing and any outdoor activities.

MEGHAN DAGGER - GRAND AVENUE MIDDLE SCHOOL

Congratulations to Meghan Zambori, BMUST's Outstanding Professional at Grand Avenue for 2020-21! For nearly twenty years, Ms. Zambori has been a pillar of the Grand Avenue community. She has worked tirelessly to make our building a better place.

Meghan has run the award-winning newspaper, The Grandstander, for the last ten years with her husband, Denis Dagger. But we know who the real workhorse is in that arrangement!

Meghan's love of literature led her to co-found the Grand Avenue Book Club. Twice a month this club meets to discuss select works in small groups. Meetings are often catered by Ms. Zambori, with delectable treats from local merchants.

She has also been a member of Site Based Committee for nearly a decade, offering fantastic ideas to better Grand Avenue and the Bellmore-Merrick CHSD. Additionally, Meghan is a member of the Women's Committee, helping with community service projects geared towards helping women and families in the community. Meghan is also a member of the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Initiative, which is working on ways to make Bellmore-Merrick an equitable and diverse environment for students and staff.

Every year Meghan is the pronouncer and head judge at the Grand Avenue Spelling Bee, adding an air of gravitas to the event. She has been an eloquent speaker at Moving-Up Day on multiple occasions. Meghan also frequently volunteers at the Community Cupboard, which shows how truly selfless she is.

Meghan is a master of her subject. Her knowledge of the English language is second to none, and her love of the subject shows when she teaches. As a result, her students both respect and love Ms. Zambori.

With all of these clubs and committees on her resume, it is amazing that she is able to find the time to be such an amazing mother to her wonderful children, Will, Annabel, and Maddie. When she is not affecting positive change at work, Meghan likes to hike, crochet, and binge-watch Gossip Girl. Congratulations Ms. Zambori - this honor is well deserved!



STU STEIN - MEPHAM HIGH SCHOOL

Stu Stein began his teaching career as a Social Studies teacher at Benjamin Cardozo H.S. in Queens, NY. Stu moved to Bellmore-Merrick in 2002 primarily teaching Global History II at Mepham. In 2017 Stu switched from teaching social studies to help launch the Bellmore-Merrick Broadcasting program. In 2000, Stu met his wife Lisa working at Camp Tel Yehudah, where he still works during the summers as the Food Service Director. Stu and Lisa have two children: Gabriella, a sophomore at Farmingdale H.S., and Max, a 4th grader at Northside Elementary. Stu is appreciative and humbled to have been selected for this honor.

Outstanding Professionals 2021



BRUCE REED - KENNEDY HIGH SCHOOL

Bruce teaches Social Studies at JFK HS. Bruce has enjoyed teaching Global History Regents and Honors courses, as well as Economics, Crim I & II, and Sociology. Bruce appreciates the spontaneous and creative quality of the students at JFK, and works diligently to promote an environment where all students can find their voice and be heard. To that end, Bruce moderates the Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) Club and does his best to elevate student agency in that forum. Bruce has very much enjoyed mentoring his faculty peers as a Technology Integration Mentor. He is always on the lookout for emerging tech platforms that help educators plan and execute lessons. Unionism is at the heart of Bruce's profession. Bruce serves as a Representative Assembly member in his building and is editor of the BMUST Local Do's newsletter. Bruce appreciates the opportunities to collaborate and plan with his union brothers and sisters to improve the quality of our professional life.



JAMIE ROMITO - CALHOUN HIGH SCHOOL

Jamie has been teaching special education for eight years in the Bellmore-Merrick CHSD. She loves her role as the advisor for World of Difference along with being a Technology Integration Mentor. When she's not with her Calhoun family, she's spending time with her loved ones, which includes, and is not limited to, her two amazing dogs!

L O U D E F I L I P P O O U T S T A N D I N G U N I O N S E R V I C E A W A R D



DENNIS URBAN - KENNEDY HIGH SCHOOL

Dennis Urban has taught Social Studies at John F. Kennedy High School since 2003. During that time, he has served BMUST as an elected building representative, as a member of the Special Education and PDAC committees, and currently as chair of the Political Action/VOTE-COPE committee. Dennis lives in Massapequa Park with his wife, daughter, son and two dogs.

P A R A S P E C I A L S E R V I C E A W A R D



DEBORAH SLUTSKY

This year's Para Professional Award is presented to an extremely dedicated member of our Mephram family, Deborah Slutsky. Debi has been a part of the Bellmore-Merrick School District since 1998. She has worked as a technology para for 12 years. Debi is a dear friend and cherished colleague to all of us, always easy to talk to and a joy to be around. Her joys outside of Mephram are her beloved husband of 41 years, Richard, and her amazing family, especially her two grandchildren, Kennedy and Lincoln.

Debi works very hard to make sure all teacher requests are honored, which in turn enables interactive and engaging lessons to run smoothly every day. With over 100 staff members, Debi keeps a meticulous schedule so everyone is taken care of. She is often seen running behind a cart full of Chromebooks or iPads, making sure that teachers and students have the necessary equipment for their classes. Sometimes in the four minute passing time between classes, this process of moving equipment is repeated several times, but Debi manages to handle everything with a smile. Debi acts in a professional, expedient and friendly manner at all times and works tirelessly to make sure all equipment is where it needs to be at the appropriate time. Surely, Mephram teachers and students benefit greatly from her dedication and that is why she truly deserves this award.

Outstanding Professionals 2021

P T A A W A R D



ALYSE BERKE As a life-long resident of Bellmore, Alyse Berke is a fully dedicated district member. She is a Mepham H.S. class of 1985 graduate (Jerusalem Ave. JHS class of 1983) with son Jordan graduating from Kennedy (Class of 2020) and son Tyler attending Calhoun (class of 2022). She is currently the Co-President of the BMCHSD Council of PTAs having previously held the position of Treasurer and Kennedy PTA Representative, as well as serving on many committees including her most passionate: Curriculum. She served two years as Grand Ave. PTA President as well as Membership and Spirit Wear Chairs; was an active volunteer for the Kennedy Sport Boosters, and a current Board member for the Calhoun Music Boosters.

Alyse and her husband Adam are proud parents of two Boy Scouts who both did their Eagle Projects in conjunction with our own Community Cupboard, including a new to-be-installed greenhouse to be utilized by The Prep Academy. She held many volunteer positions within the troop including Merit Badge Counselor for her favorite hobbies: Winter Sports, Gardening, Golf, and Motor Boating to name a few.

P R E S I D E N T ' S C H O I C E A W A R D

2020-21 BOARD OF TRUSTEES

PETER BRIDESON

Peter Brideson was the Head Building Representative at Grand from 2009 - 2013. He served as 2nd Vice President for five years before becoming 1st Vice President in 2019. He is very fortunate to work with extremely dedicated people at BMUST who put a tremendous amount of energy into making BMUST the highly respected union that it is. Recipient: Outstanding Union Service (2010), Outstanding Professional, Grand Avenue MS (2011) and President's Choice (2013).

HEATHER CASTELLANO

Heather Castellano became a building representative for Mepham in 2009 and was appointed as Political Action and VOTE COPE chair (2014-2019). She also served on the New Teacher/100 Hours Committee for BMUST. Frequenting Albany to reach out to the powers that be, Heather also travels around Long Island to various NYSUT meetings, conferences, protests, and rallies. In 2019, she was elected Head Building Representative of Mepham High School. Recipient: Outstanding Professional, Mepham HS (2012), President's Choice (2016), and Lou DeFilippo Outstanding Union Service Award (2017).

CAROLYN CONDENZIO

Carolyn Condenzio has served as Grand Avenue's Head Building Representative since 2014. She serves as the BMUST representative on the PTA District Council. Recipient: Outstanding Professional, Grand Avenue MS (2005), Lou DeFilippo Outstanding Union Service Award (2015).

BRIAN DEGAETANO

Brian DeGaetano has been Kennedy's Head Building Representative since 2011 and was Kennedy's representative on the Health and Safety Committee for 10 years. Recipient: Outstanding Professional, Kennedy HS (2013) and President's Choice (2019).

JASON ELIAS

Jason Elias has worked for 19 years in Bellmore-Merrick CHSD at Calhoun High School. Jason has served as Head Building Rep since 2019, before that having served on the Representative Assembly since 2011. Recipient: Lou DeFilippo Outstanding Union Service, as a member of the Negotiating Team (2013), Outstanding Professional, Calhoun HS (2017).

SUSAN GRIPPA

Susan Grippa has worked for Bellmore-Merrick for 13 years. During her time she served as Treasurer of the Paraprofessional unit for about 10 years. She also held the position of Building Representative at Merrick Avenue M.S. until becoming President of the unit this school year. Susan has always been an advocate for children, beginning with her PTA days in her children's schools. She was also involved in the BMCHSD District Council of PTAs, holding many positions there and receiving all of PTA's awards throughout her tenure.

Recipient: PTA Award (2012) and Para Special Service Award (2018).

Outstanding Professionals 2021

P R E S I D E N T ' S C H O I C E A W A R D **2020-21 BOARD OF TRUSTEES (CONTINUED)**

BILL MORRIS

In 2003, Bill joined BMUST as a Mephram Building Representative. He is honored to have served as Mephram's Head Building Representative for six years, before becoming 2nd Vice President in 2019. He is excited to have been elected to the NYSUT Representative Assembly for the last six years. Recipient: Outstanding Professional, Mephram HS (2008) and Lou DeFilippo Outstanding Union Service (2016).

AMANDA MYLES-MCANALLY

Amanda has been an active member of BMUST for the last 18 years. She has served on the Curriculum Committee, the Collaborative Committee and chaired the Political Action and VOTE-COPE Committees. For eight years, she represented BMUST at NYSUT's annual Representative Assembly. Currently, Amanda serves as the Head Building Representative at Merrick Avenue Middle School. Recipient: Lou DeFilippo Outstanding Union Service (2009) and Outstanding Professional, Merrick Avenue MS (2014).

BRAD SEIDMAN

Brad Seidman currently serves as the Union Treasurer. He has been teaching Social Studies at Kennedy H.S. since 2004. Brad also serves as the union's Health & Safety chair. Recipient: Community Service Award (2014) and President's Choice (2018).

SHARON WISLA

Sharon Wisla taught 31 years in the district, and she served as a representative to the RA from Mephram and Calhoun for much of her career. Upon her retirement in 2005, Sharon continued her union service as a representative for the retirees. She has served as Treasurer and Vice President of the Bellmore-Merrick Retired Teachers Association, as well as President of the group for the past 13 years. She has been a member of NYSUT's Retired Council 17, serving as First VP for six of those years, as well as a delegate to the NYSUT RA for that time. Recipient: Outstanding Professional Award, Calhoun HS (1999), President's Choice Award (2011), Patricia Christy Outstanding Retiree Award (2014) and was one of the recipients, along with the Board of Trustees, of the Lou DeFilippo Union Service Award (2019). She is honored to be one of the recipients from the Board of Trustees for the President's Choice Award.

P A T R I C I A C H R I S T Y **O U T S T A N D I N G R E T I R E E A W A R D**



JOHN MAZZARELLA

John Mazzarella is a retired Mathematics Teacher from the Bellmore-Merrick school district. He taught for 34 years and currently is an adjunct professor at Molloy College. All three of his children and his wife, Roselynn, are educators. He loves spending time with his grandchildren. He also enjoys golfing as much as possible. He keeps himself busy by writing mathematics work books.

F R I E N D O F E D U C A T I O N A W A R D



JOHN DETOMMASO

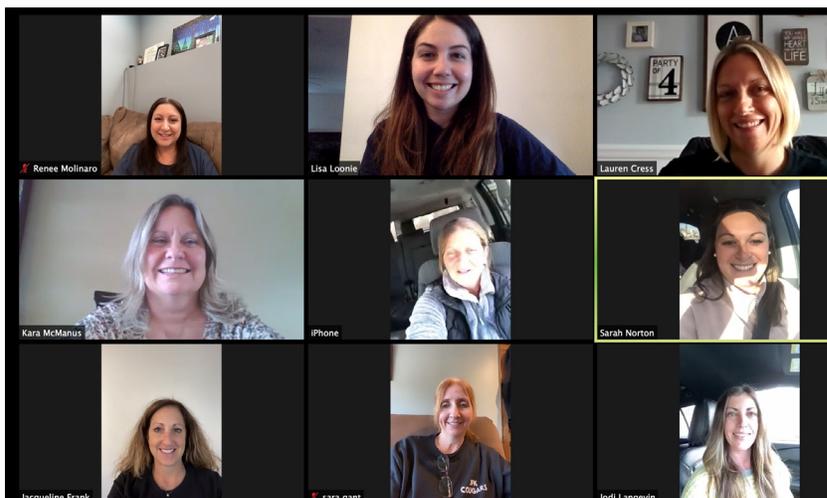
John DeTommaso began his career in Bellmore-Merrick in 1988 as a Social Studies teacher at Wellington C. Mephram High School. After teaching for six years, he served as Athletic Director for two years, and was then named Assistant Principal at Sanford H. Calhoun High School. In 2003, he left the district when he was appointed Principal of Bethpage High School, where he served for six years. He eventually became the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction in the Bethpage School District, a position he held for four years. In March 2013, Mr. DeTommaso returned to Bellmore-Merrick when he was named Superintendent.

Mr. DeTommaso has been married to his wife, Heather, a teacher in Uniondale, for 30 years. They have three children, Brendan (28), Briar Rose (25), and Ailis (21).

COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD WOMEN'S COMMITTEE

CATRINA CHRISTENSEN is the school counselor at the Meadowbrook Alternative Program. She joined the Women's Committee to become more involved in BMUST and to advocate for women's rights. She is proud of all the collaborative community service projects the group has done.

LAUREN CRESS teaches math at Merrick Avenue Middle School and joined the Women's Committee to make a difference in the lives of women. She is very proud of the fundraising efforts of the committee, helping the Community Cupboard and Bethany House. She is excited about the light that the committee is shedding on maternity rights and looks forward to any changes that come from being on the Women's Committee.



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MEGHAN DAGGER joined the Women's Committee so she could be involved in addressing some of the concerns that are unique to the women of BMCHSD.

JACKIE FRANK This is Jackie's 20th year in the special education department at Calhoun. She's excited to be part of the Women's Committee to focus on building awareness, improving working conditions and giving a voice for gender issues. She's honored to be acknowledged by BMUST for the Community Service Award because it means their efforts can make a difference for so many.

SARA GANT is a teacher at Kennedy H.S. She has been teaching math there for the past 26 years. She joined the Women's Committee to help carry out the NYSUT goals of educating women about the work of the union, addressing women specific issues, and preparing more union women for leadership roles.

JODI LANGEVIN is a Spanish teacher at Mephram. She joined the Women's Committee to explore issues impacting women and looks forward to continuing to make connections within the community.

LISA LOONIE is a Special Education teacher at Calhoun High School; this is her first year serving as co-chair of the Women's Committee. Lisa was inspired to join the Women's Committee after connecting with female coworkers about rising issues and concerns surrounding maternity leave. Lisa is proud of all of the accomplishments the Women's Committee has achieved this year such as bringing awareness to these conversations and fundraising for other women and organizations in need.

DOROTHY MARINO is a Physical Education teacher at Mephram High School. She joined the Women's Committee to give back to the community she has worked in for many years. Dorothy is proud of the various collections the committee accomplished during this school year. She is looking forward to planning different ideas with the committee for the next school year.

KARA MCMANUS teaches Social Studies at Kennedy High School. Kara, throughout her life, has been inspired and encouraged by many amazing women. Kara considers it an honor to serve on the BMUST Women's Committee as she hopes her knowledge and experience may provide guidance and support to her colleagues.

RENEE MOLINARO has been teaching English at Merrick Avenue Middle School for 20 years. She became a member of the Women's Committee this year after learning about the group's unique mission to advocate for women's issues throughout our district.

SARAH NORTON teaches Family & Consumer Science for Grand Avenue and Merrick Avenue middle schools. After seeing a need for improvement in the conditions for nursing moms in the district, Sarah started an initiative to improve the pumping rooms in each building including using Vote Cope money for new refrigerators at each building. When the Women's Committee was announced, Sarah was excited to join in and continue the journey to help the women of BMUST.

B M U S T H O N O R S O U R R E T I R E E S
AND RECOGNIZES ALL THEIR YEARS OF SERVICE AND DEDICATION

2020 Retirees



KENNETH ABBOTT - EARTH SCIENCE
GRAND AVENUE MIDDLE SCHOOL

Ken Abbott was a science teacher and coach in Bellmore-Merrick for thirty years. He started at Mepham High School teaching Earth Science and Physics in 1990, but transferred to Grand Avenue in 1997 when his wife Eleanor took a maternity leave from her Earth Science position at Grand. Ken coached wrestling and tennis at Grand and was the Honor Society advisor. He was actively involved in several professional organizations and was a Subject Area representative for STANYS for 15 years. He was a founding member and president of the New York Earth Science Teachers Association. He retired in June 2020.

Ken's family includes Eleanor, as well as two daughters, Allison and Miranda. They were all thrilled when Ken survived a heart transplant in December 1996. Since that experience he has been an active volunteer for several transplant organizations. Since his retirement, Ken has been zooming into schools (including Calhoun, Kennedy and Mepham) with LITRIO to present information about organ donation and transplantation. Since the transplant, Ken has become an avid cyclist. In 2020 he rode over 8,600 miles and hopes to break 10,000 miles in 2021.

MICHELE ACKERMAN - ENGLISH
WELLINGTON C. MEPHAM HIGH SCHOOL

ALANA BAARD - COSMETOLOGY
SANFORD H. CALHOUN HIGH SCHOOL

RICHARD DIODATI - SOCIAL STUDIES
SANFORD H. CALHOUN HIGH SCHOOL



HENRY DIRCKS - SOCIAL STUDIES
WELLINGTON C. MEPHAM HIGH SCHOOL

Henry retired as planned in June of 2020. COVID? He knows, great timing. In retirement, while his wife, Christina has reentered the education workforce, Henry has assumed the duties of facilities manager and executive chef for the Dircks household. In addition, he enjoys climbing mountains upstate, helping his kids Mia and Patrick navigate through the modern education system, wonders how long into retirement teacher dreams persist, and relishes those random moments when realizing that he "doesn't have to do that anymore".

HELEN DOVE - PARAPROFESSIONAL
MERRICK AVENUE MIDDLE SCHOOL



WILLIAM LEACOCK - SCIENCE
WELLINGTON C. MEPHAM HIGH SCHOOL

Bill Leacock was a Regents and AP Physics teacher at Mepham High School for 30 years and retired in June 2020. He was the Mepham Science Department Assistance, Chemical Inventory Specialist and coached the Mepham Physics Olympics Team. Bill was also the 2007 awardee of the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST). For 15 years Bill was the Science Teacher Association of New York State Nassau County Section Area Representative for Physics and is continues to be the Vice President of the Long Island Physics Teachers Association, a position he has held for 25 years.

Since retirement Bill has been enjoying taking hikes with his wife Lorraine, cooking, gardening and doing some home repairs as well as some virtual physics tutoring. He has also spent some time selling on eBay. Bill is looking forward to doing some traveling, riding his motorcycle and playing his saxophone once life gets back to normal.

CYNTHIA LEUNG - PARAPROFESSIONAL PRESIDENT - SANFORD H. CALHOUN H.S.

Cynthia began her career in the Bellmore Merrick Central High School District as a part-time secretary at Mephram High School. A year later she transferred to Calhoun High School and became a Special Education Paraprofessional until she retired in June of 2020.

Cynthia was a Building Representative at Calhoun High School for eight years. She also held the positions of Secretary and Vice-President and then went on to become the President of the Bellmore-Merrick Paraprofessional Association. Recipient: Paraprofessional Special Service Award (2012), Lou DeFilippo Outstanding Union Service Award (2019).

She and her husband have retired to the sunshine state of Florida to Latitude Margaritaville in Daytona Beach. They are having an amazing time enjoying their retirement filled with new experiences of fun, laughter and adventure!



PETER MAGNUSON - ENGLISH - SANFORD H. CALHOUN HS

Peter Magnuson spent 32 years in the Bellmore-Merrick CHSD teaching English at Calhoun. He started as a permanent sub at Kennedy H.S. in 1988. He was hired as an English teacher at MAMS in 1989. He worked at MAMS through 1992. At MAMS he met his future wife, Julie, in 1990. She was a student observer in his class. They were engaged in 1991 and married in 1992. They celebrated their 29th year of marriage this past April. Julie teaches English at Wantagh H.S. Pete and Julie have three children Erin, 26 (Yale 2015) who recently wed John Whitelaw (Yale 2014) in a small gathering in Montauk on July 11, 2020, and will celebrate with family and friends on Block Island July 10, 2021. James is 23 (SUNY New Paltz 2019) and Ryan (21) currently attends the US Naval Academy in Annapolis, MD. Pete is very proud that his three children were NCAA athletes. Erin played lacrosse at Yale, James played baseball at New Paltz, and Ryan is currently playing lacrosse at Navy. Pete graduated from SUNY Geneseo in 1987 and was a member of their lacrosse team.

Pete transferred to Calhoun in 1993. He started coaching JV lacrosse there and took over the Varsity lacrosse program in 1997. They were a perennial playoff team during the 12 years he was head coach and he was recognized as South Shore coach of the year in 2005. He was recognized by US lacrosse for the Century Club (100 victories). Pete is most proud that his lacrosse team initiated the St. Baldrick's fundraiser at Calhoun in 2005. Pete organized this fundraiser for 10 years and raised over \$500,000 for childhood cancer research in that time. Pete coached girls varsity cross-country (county champs 1997) and JV boys basketball at Calhoun. After taking a hiatus to coach his own kids and watch them play, Pete re-joined the coaching ranks at Calhoun coaching girls' varsity basketball and girls' varsity tennis. He enjoyed these seasons immensely. He has enjoyed all of the students he has taught and has had some of his most rewarding experiences in the classroom. He plans to sail, bike, and travel in retirement and perhaps start a boat charter business. He is thankful for all of the wonderful colleagues he has worked with during his 32 years in the Bellmore-Merrick CHSD.



PIA SANTODONATO-SCHNAUFER - HEALTH GRAND AVENUE MIDDLE SCHOOL

Pia Santodonato Schnauffer has worked in the Bellmore-Merrick CHSD for 30 years as Grand Ave Middle School's 7th grade Health Educator. Pia was Grand Ave's SADD Advisor for 29 years. SADD club accomplishments include raising money for the Association for Children with Down syndrome, The Make-A-Wish Foundation, and the Vet2Vet program. SADD also created The Mugs of Love Project which delivered 200 mugs filled with snacks to The Interfaith Nutrition Network's Freeport Site on Valentine's Day and The Baby Blanket Project which delivered Knitted Baby Blankets to the Neonatal Unit at Winthrop Hospital. She also coached cheerleading for 8 years and ran numerous intramural programs from aerobics in the 90's to Fitness Fridays. Pia was part of the After School Program, Homework Program, and Grand Connections. Pia was a Grand Ave BMUST Building Rep as well as BMUST Head Building Rep and sat on numerous committees such as Building and District Interviews, Grand Ave Site based, School Safety, and many others throughout her career in the Bellmore-Merrick CHSD. Pia received the PTA Founders Day Award, BMUST Outstanding Professional Award, Grand Ave's Extra Mile Award, and NYSAPERD Nassau Zone Middle School Health Teacher of the Year Award.

As a retiree, Pia is continuing to work part time as a lifeguard for the Town of North Hempstead where she teaches children and adult swim lessons, CPR/First Aid/AED, Lifeguard Training and is the first female Nassau County Lifeguard Examiner Grade I (Pool) and Grade II (Calm water beach). Pia has been enjoying Yoga, Walking, Hiking, Swimming, and her Book Club. She enjoys time at her 2nd home in Mattituck and experimenting with new recipes on her family. Her husband John (retired FDNY) and children Mackenzie, Johnny, Cassidy, and Anthony now get her full attention! Lucky Them!!!

CYNTHIA TELLEKAMP - GUIDANCE COUNSELOR - SANFORD H. CALHOUN HS

2021 Retirees



MAUREEN BERGE-DUNN - NURSE GRAND AVENUE MIDDLE SCHOOL

Maureen Berge Dunn has been the Grand Avenue School Registered Nurse for the past 6 years. She has thoroughly enjoyed her time with the Bellmore-Merrick Central High School District and will miss all the people she has worked with and come to know over these years. Most importantly, she will miss helping all the students that have come through her office. She hopes to work as a substitute nurse for the school district in the future.

Maureen has performed multiple times in the annual Faculty Follies, playing guitar and singing, having a “blast” participating with fellow staff from across the district.

As for retirement, Maureen plans on relaxing a bit and spending more time with her husband, George. She is looking forward to having more time to read and enjoy life – She is a voracious reader, typically reading a book every couple of weeks, and, of course, Maureen plans on singing and playing her guitar whenever and wherever she can.

Maureen would like to wish all the best to her BMCHSD extended family.

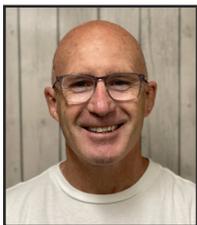


SHARON DEVENUTO - GUIDANCE COUNSELOR SANFORD H. CALHOUN HIGH SCHOOL

Sharon DeVenuto is a School Counselor with thirty years of experience in education. She began her career at Los Alamos Middle School in New Mexico. Upon returning to New York she was hired at St. John the Baptist High School, and two years later transitioned to Sanford H. Calhoun H.S. Her notable achievements include volunteer work at a summer camp for children with cancer, coaching track, training and establishing an Anti-Vaping program and summer youth employment program, serving as AP Coordinator and ACT Coordinator, Culinary Club advisor, Girl Scout Leader and Habitat for Humanity advisor. When she isn't running, reading, gardening or cooking, she loves to travel. Upon retirement, Sharon and her husband Frank plan to continue traveling and spending quality time with family and friends.

CATHY MARCHIOLI - PARAPROFESSIONAL MERRICK AVENUE MIDDLE SCHOOL

Cathy Marchioli worked for BMCHSD for 22 years. She started as a monitor and when the paraprofessional position became available, she jumped on it. Cathy worked in all different settings, the collaborative classroom, 1:1, classroom para, as well as working in the testing room. She made many longtime friends with teachers at Merrick Ave., and the children loved her. She also worked many supervisions, including band, orchestra and chorus concerts. Many of her past students would be performing and she was happy to be there for them! Sports were also part of Cathy's tenure at MAMS. She has enjoyed being a part of the RAMily so much that over the years she has been the go to dog sitter and babysitter for many. Her colleagues wish her well in her retirement in North Carolina, where she will join some of her family. She will return to New York to visit her two sons and pop in to say hello!



GREGG MUSCARELLA PHYS. ED. - SANFORD H. CALHOUN HIGH SCHOOL

Mr. Muscarella has worked for 30 wonderful years at Calhoun High School. He considers himself blessed to have had the opportunity to make a difference in kids' lives. Being an Example to his students has always been of the utmost importance. Walk the walk! Show up early, work hard and stay late. Work ethic and discipline will get you where you want to go. He believes physical education to be one of the most important jobs on the planet. Without your health, there is no happiness! You can have all the riches and success in the world, but if you do not have your health, you have nothing.

The riches in his life come from his family. His father, mother and two brothers provided him a loving and supportive upbringing. His son and wife have given him the greatest joy that anyone could ever ask for. He is forever grateful to his colleagues in the Physical Education/Health Department. Calhoun has been his home for 30 years and he is proud to be part of the Calhoun Family.

2021 Retirees

SHEILA RIGGIO - PARAPROFESSIONAL MERRICK AVENUE MIDDLE SCHOOL

Sheila Riggio has worked for the BMCHSD for over 27 years. Starting as a monitor, she eventually took on the role of paraprofessional. Sheila has worked in many settings over the years, including Collaborative, 15:1, and of course the 8:1 setting, where she has found her niche. She has a special way with children with special needs, comforting many over the years to get through to them. She has had some of the more challenging students, and they have all loved her.

Sheila has been an active union member, serving as the MAMS Building Representative for many years and helping with contract negotiations. In addition, Sheila has worked the Extended School Year Program since it began, as well as concerts and sports supervisions. Recipient: Para Special Service Award (2002).



JOHN ZUCCHERO - SPECIAL EDUCATION JOHN F. KENNEDY HIGH SCHOOL

John Zuccherro has spent 27 years teaching in Bellmore -Merrick as a Special Education teacher. He and his wife, Gail, will be married 40 years in August of 2021. They have three sons and a granddaughter that they enjoy very much. In his retirement, John will have more time to fish the beaches of Long Island and the lakes in the Poconos. John and Gail plan to travel the U.S and hopefully Europe at some point. He has enjoyed my career in Bellmore-Merrick immensely. Stay Well!

I N M E M O R I A M | 2 0 1 9 - 2 0 2 1

Louise Carol Alberts

Ted Blatchley

James Carter

Joyce Chinsky

Joseph Corea

Patricia Costigan

Ronald Dailey

Gladys Feldman

Norman Fidelman

Philip Fitz

Stephen Gold

Margaret Halton

Shula Hirsch

Peter Vaccino

Robert Knodt

Wayne Johnson

Joan Jungbluth

Janice Orbuch

Dorrit Ostberg

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Steven Pagliavlas

Robert Rush

Betsy Siegelraub

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Michael Sullivan

Maria Toulas

Milt Vavasseur

Jason Vitale

George Walsh

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Lindsay Roman

MEPHAM H.S.

Daniel O'Shea
Ryan Pittman

KENNEDY H.S.

Kira Polivou
Rebecca Schwartz

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Tyler O'Neill
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*The Long Island Teachers Benevolent Fund,
Len Motisi Memorial Scholarship*

2 0 2 0

Isabella Bonvincin, Child of Natalie Bonvincin/Grand Avenue Middle School

Mia Dircks, Child of Henry Dircks/Wellington C. Mepham High School

Spencer Mattes, Child of Lee Mattes/Wellington C. Mepham High School

Michael Silverman, Child of Colleen Conroy-Silverman/John F. Kennedy High School

2 0 2 1

Juliana Chillemi, Child of Angelo Chillemi/Wellington C. Mepham High School

Grace Cutrone, Child of Kathleen McCloat/Wellington C. Mepham High School

Sophia DeMato, Child of Patricia DeMato/Merrick Avenue Middle School

Kirsten Greene, Child of Cory Greene/Merrick Avenue Middle School

Alessandra Lella, Child of Russell Lella/John F. Kennedy High School

Kourtney & Korrine Levy, Children of Kelly (Grand M.S.) & Kevin Levy (Calhoun H.S.)

Daniella & Lindsay Segal, Children of Amy Segal/Wellington C. Mepham High School

Rebecca Sirof, Child of Melanie Sirof/Wellington C. Mepham High School



I N M E M O R I A M

Jason Vitale

Jason Vitale tragically passed away while on a skiing vacation with his family on December 28, 2019. Jason taught Earth Science at Mepham for 20 years, and his dedication and his heart will very much be missed. We extend our deepest condolences to his wife, Jennifer, and young daughter, Katherine, as well as extended family and friends.

Jason loved to travel with his family, loved his boat, and loved animals. He advised Mepham's Environmental Interest Club and posted pictures of pets needing homes on his class website.

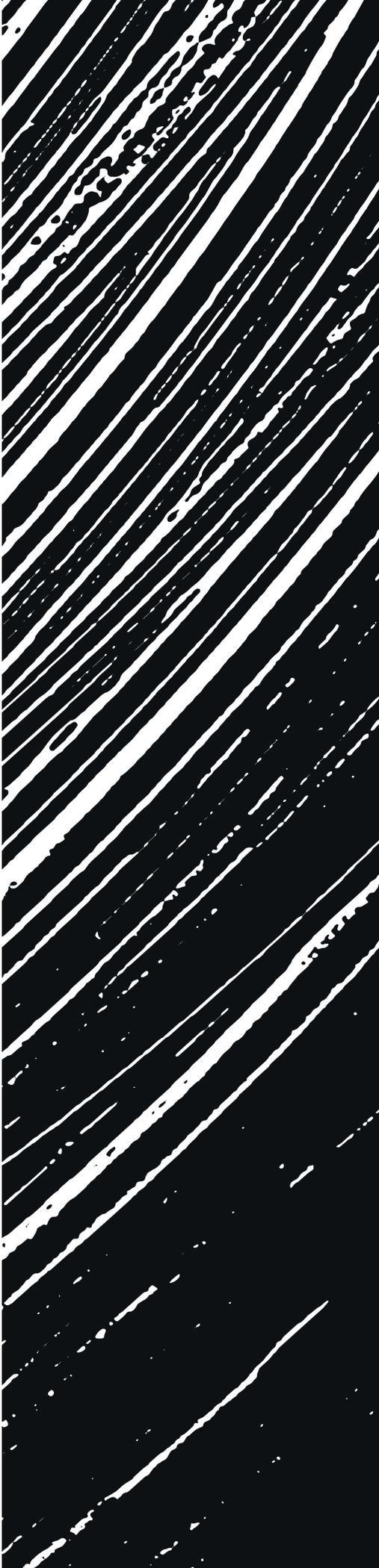
Born in Brooklyn, Jason soon moved to Merrick, finally settling in Baldwin. Jason was involved in coaching Baldwin Little League, as well as the Bellmore-Merrick Varsity Bulldogs. Baldwin Civic Association remembered Jason as a "one-man crusade for improving conditions in Baldwin." Jason was the longest standing Chair of the Quality of Life Committee, and his volunteerism for many events in Baldwin were remembered at his passing.

Faculty and staff at Mepham, as well as Jason's alma mater Calhoun, and the rest of the district were deeply saddened by the loss of Jason. His presence amongst us has been missed, we are thankful for the time we had together, and he'll not be forgotten.

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