

LOCAL DO'S

THE WINTER EDITION



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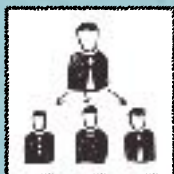
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“TOPICS OF CONVERSATION” ROB WALSH, BMUST PRESIDENT

I hope this edition of the Local Do's finds you and your families well and in good health. I cannot believe we have made it to the February Winter Break, a pretty remarkable feat. Thanks to each and every one of you for your hard work, dedication and for paying careful attention to our health and safety protocols. Although I am still in shock that the Governor allowed high-risk sports to begin on February 1st, I cannot tell you how happy I am that the District is requiring that all athletes be tested on a weekly basis. The results of the first round of testing shows that out of 500 student-athletes and coaches tested, just 2 positive cases were found. Amazing. Knowing that the rate of infection for our athletes was less than 1% helped ease my concern about coming into work every day. I hope it did the same for you.

Two additional topics of conversation have been the one-to-one computer initiative to be enacted next year and what the 2021-2022 school year will look like. Again, please continue to share thoughts, ideas and concerns about the one-to-one initiative with your chair/supervisor. The priority of our weekly meetings going forward will be focused on the reopening of schools in September. BMUST will remain in constant communication and continue to seek your input and participation in the planning for September.



**Rob Walsh,
President, BMUST**

“On March 12, in a sign of unity and to acknowledge the incredibly challenging year we have all endured, teachers across Long Island will be wearing “Red for Ed.”

I would like you to know that the Board of Trustees has continued to engage in weekly conversations with Central Administration. In addition to continually refining our health and safety protocols we have been discussing a couple of other important matters. Final exams have been a major topic of discussion. It is difficult to make a final decision regarding final exams because the Board of Regents has yet to make a determination about Regents Exams. Continue to share your feelings about Final Exams and the two weeks typically set aside for them with your chair/supervisor. If Regents Exams are canceled, the bucket for final exams will be reduced, and there will be a great deal of flexibility given to teachers about the form and format of the final exam. But know that there will be some sort of assessment given at the end of the year.

Finally, on March 12, in a sign of unity and to acknowledge the incredibly challenging year we have all endured, teachers across Long Island will be wearing “Red for Ed”. In addition to wearing “Red for Ed,” we will be collecting donations for the Community Cupboard to help those less fortunate within our school community. Meg will be sending more information upon our return from our Winter Break.

Please continue to take good care of yourselves and to look after one another.

In Solidarity,

Rob



"MEPHAM CARES"

BY LINU CHACKO (MEPHAM H.S.), LOCAL DO'S STAFF WRITER

It is pretty hard to believe we made it to the second semester of the unbelievable school year of 2020-21. Even though much has changed, one thing remains the same: Bellmore-Merrick continues to give generously, support our school family, and honor our heroes.

What a great way to kick off 2021! Friday, January 15, 2021, students participated in the District-wide Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. **Day of Service**. Mepham collected various items and monetary donations to support our community. Our Community Cupboard provides many families with food and other essential items, and students did their part by contributing masks, tissues, coffee and soup. Additionally, student leaders facilitated lessons in Social Studies classes about Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and his legacy. Classes got the opportunity to discuss Dr. King's life of service and the important implications in our world today.



Jackie Geller and the outstanding student leaders continued their work in the classrooms right out into the hallways! They created a **Kindness Wall** in the main lobby with compliments for all students and faculty on post-its. Now everyone who walks by can feel the love and hopefully pass some of the kindness on!

Let's also take a moment to honor **Anthony Cracco** for the distinction he received by appearing in the 2021 edition of **COACH & Athletic Director** magazine. He was recognized

for his accomplishments and 15 year service to Mepham athletics in "The Sports Under 40: Year in Review."

Last, but not least, we pause to honor our beloved, retired World Language teacher, **Betsy Siegelau**, who passed away on January 27. By the time she retired in 2016, the list of accolades was too long to list in a distinguished career that defined Betsy's contribution to our District. Betsy served as advisor to the French Honor Society and the Italian Honor Society, plus taught every level of French and Italian for 36 years, across the entire district. I think all of us agree that more than all the hard work and awards won, Betsy was just the sweetest person. The way she interacted with colleagues and students was unfailingly kind. You never saw her in a bad mood and she always put you in a good mood! What a testament to her big heart that even in retirement she joined 8th grade students in Richard Zawislak's French class at Grand Avenue Middle School to teach them about Chandeleur Day in Feb 2018. Betsy's legacy was certainly one of service and compassion. May her memory be a blessing to her family, friends and her Bellmore-Merrick family.



“CALHOUN REIMAGINES TRADITIONS AND ADAPTS TO THE NEW NORMAL”

BY BETH FINNERAN, (CALHOUN H.S.), LOCAL DO'S WRITER

Our Calhoun staff continues to adapt to the “new normal” of reimagining traditions, utilizing technology, and inspiring each other through arts and activism. Long standing traditions like the Thanksgiving Dinner, Winter concerts, dramatic performances, and sporting events needed to be reimagined given concerns about the Covid Pandemic. When the annual Thanksgiving Dinner, a fundraiser for the Community Cupboard had to be canceled, teachers and staff stepped up and had a Jeans Friday Fundraiser to raise money for the cause. Football Season began in February! **Sal Salerno** introduced a “Virtual Holiday Variety Night Improv,” before a virtual Rockefeller Center background after the improv show and plays were nixed. The virtual show opened with a creative song written by Salerno himself, called “The Ten Days of Hell Week.”

The Arts Continue to Inspire

The Arts have a wonderful way of keeping people inspired during a global pandemic and the art and music teachers have been doing their part to keep the inspiration going. The **art teachers** organized a display of student work in the main lobby before the holidays. **Sandy Sardo's** ON Tour performed a “Social DistanSing” version of “Every Time I feel the Spirit,” which lifted our spirits. English teachers helped organize Poetry Out Loud competitions in their classrooms with the help of Sal Salerno who provided the equipment and space. **Jason Elias and Irene Ritaccio's** students placed first and second, respectively.



Using Technology to Connect to the Outside World

Teachers continue to use technology creatively. They cooperatively share the chromebook carts, which are heavily used. **Dr. David Goldberg and Tanya Cestaro** used Google Meet to bring a guest speaker into their “Voices of the Past” class, Carl Wilkens, the only American to remain in Rwanda during the genocide in 1994. **Jennifer Pefanis and Christine Boyce** reached out to Dr. Noelle Cutter and had her zoom into their 10th grade ASR classes to talk about her experience working on the COVID-19 vaccine. **Sharissa Khan and Sean Formato** organized an in-school Model UN Conference joining together with Kennedy H.S. via google meet. **Beth Finneran** took her Model Congress students to Yale Model Congress virtually in early December, where students wrote bills and worked in virtual committees with students from other schools around the Northeast to get them passed out of committee and passed into law.

Working for Equity

Calhoun continues to encourage equity and kindness. **Social Studies teachers** taught lessons for Martin Luther King Day of Service focusing on how we can all honor Dr. King by committing to an act of service for his birthday. Students were encouraged throughout the month to bring in toiletries and sanitizers for families in need. Teachers also focused on King's work for racial and economic justice and asked students what work still needs to be done today. **Heather Glick's** Racial Equity Club together with Model Congress, Gender Equality Club, Activism Club, Environmental Club, International Buddy Club, Philosophy Club, and Genders & Sexualities Alliance organized its second “Open Forum on Race” where a cafeteria full of socially distanced students spoke out about wanting to learn more about African American and LGBTQ+ history. Glick's Racial Equity Club officers also visited Old Mill Road Elementary School and taught first and third grade classes, demonstrating how to celebrate differences and how to treat everyone respectfully.



Continued from previous page

Spreading Kindness

Brian Joyce's leadership classes organized drives to support nurses in Covid wards and people with Alzheimer's. One leadership class sold and hand delivered carnations for Valentine's Day with the proceeds to support nurses in Covid wards. The other leadership class collected arts & craft supplies, puzzles, yarn and knitting and crochet tools that could be used by the patients of the Long Island Alzheimer's and Dementia Care center in Westbury.

For the holidays, **Christine Boyce** and **Jennifer Pefanis** arranged that their ASR and Intro to research kids provide baked goods to the Community Cupboard and perform a "virtual" concert to local nursing homes. **Jamie Romito** also organized a Giving Tree where teachers take an ornament from a Christmas tree that described an item needed by a local family and then the teacher bought it, wrapped it, and delivered it to Ms. Romito who had the gifts delivered to the families for the holidays.

Documenting the Historic Moment

Jason Boland's student reporters continue to document these historic events in the award winning Calhoun newspaper Hoofbeats. Unable to call all the clubs to the auditorium for yearbook photos due to the pandemic, **Catherine Grover** and **Mike Lipari** have risen to the occasion and scurried around the school photographing faculty, clubs, and school wide events for the yearbook.

Calhoun staff has not only adapted to the "new normal," but gone above and beyond to make the school year meaningful for students.

(Some of the accolades in this piece can be attributed to Ms. Holling's Week in Review.)

Congratulations to....

Mary Reinhardt and **Sue Necroto** who will be honored this year by the PTA for Founders Day.

Ed and Jenna Tumminelli on the birth of Anna Rose (8 lbs 4 oz.)

Mr. and Mrs. Matt Kramer on the birth of Thomas on November 2nd.

Eileen Wimmer for the birth of her first Grandchild, Nora Emily!

Craig Celeste on the birth of baby Theo.



Theo Celeste



Anna Rose Tumminelli

“Art History in the Modern Age”

BY LAURA SHERIDAN (M.A.P.), LOCAL DO'S STAFF WRITER

A usual year at MAP includes a number of field trips on what we call Flexible Fridays. Obviously, COVID-19 has made that impossible right now. Our **AP Art History** class is in its sophomore year, and under normal circumstances, **Tiffany Rzempoluch** would have taken her AP students to the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Cloisters.

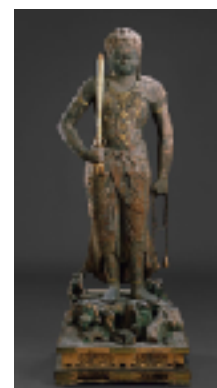


Marble sarcophagus with the contest between the Muses and the Sirens

Social distancing demanded an alternative. Tiffany's Art History students, joined by students from **Mike DiNucci's** Art class and my English 3 class, attended a virtual tour of the Met, thanks to the generosity of the Community Parent Center. Our docent shared and discussed the following pieces of art with us: Marble sarcophagus with the contest between the Muses and the Sirens; Plaque: Equestrian Oba and Attendants from the Benin Kingdom of Africa; Hayne Hudjihini, Eagle of Delight—a portrait of a Native-American diplomat; Georges de la Tour's *The Fortune-Teller*; and the Japanese sculpture Fudō Myōō.



Plaque: Equestrian Oba and Attendants from the Benin Kingdom of Africa



Japanese sculpture Fudō Myōō

It was an opportunity for our students to show what they have learned so far this year in regards to both Art history and Greco-Roman mythology. According to our docent, **Karene Infranco**, “It’s always fun to speak to students that recognize the works of art or that have an understanding of the context of the story within the art! The group today was delightful and observant!”



Hayne Hudjihini, Eagle of Delight
A portrait of a Native-American diplomat

Great job with your students, Tiffany, and thank you to the Community Parent Center for this wonderful opportunity!

*Best regards,
Laura*



Georges de la Tour's
The Fortune-Teller

"IDENTITY & REPRESENTATION"

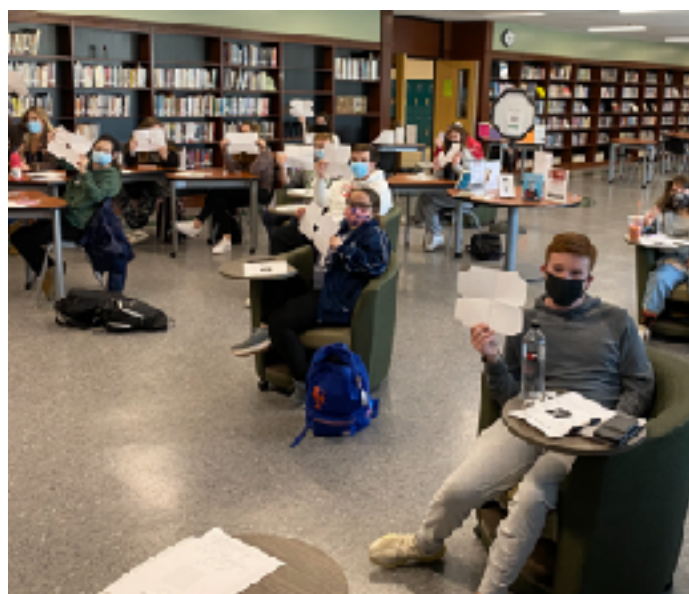
BY SPECIAL GUEST CONTRIBUTOR, VIVIAN DIGENNARO , (ENGLISH, JFK H.S.),

Identity & Representation Workshop



On January 29 and February 5, **Senior Experience** students participated in two different workshops that focused on identity and representation. The first workshop was a creative writing workshop led by writer and professor **Zaina Arafat**. Ms. Arafat's workshop focused on writing about memories and spaces that were significant in defining our identities. Students were challenged to think about,

reflect on, and write about the ways in which our environments are integral in the creation of the way we see ourselves and our place. Today, the Senior Experience classes were joined by **Board of Education and St. John's Faculty** member **Dr. Nancy Kaplan**. Dr. Kaplan's workshop focused on the idea that we are more than what we outwardly project. Through exercises that highlighted how multi-faceted each individual is and how those complex layers often times pose challenges to our identities and our self-perceptions, Dr. Kaplan was able to highlight the importance of celebrating our similarities and embracing our differences and



challenged students to not feel out of place or unsafe in situations and around people who are different, because it is through these differences that we become more empathetic, more understanding, and better human beings. Senior Experience would like to thank Ms. Mogavero for opening up the library and creating a space for our classes to engage in workshops that promote diversity and inclusion.



“EXCITING NEWS FROM GAMS”

BY STACI PEKUSIC (GRAND AVE M.S.),
LOCAL DO'S WRITER



This winter, while our classrooms have seemed emptier and our inboxes contain daily updates on positive cases and quarantined students, we do have some really good news to share this winter to lift our spirits.

Matthew and **Meg Billia** welcomed a new daughter on January 26th. Emma Maeve was born at 2:30pm, weighing 8 pounds!

Marisa Tzoumas married Eric Foster on January 17th. Congratulations to the newlyweds!

Allison DePalma and her husband welcomed their second child, Isabella Caterina, who was born on October 13th and weighed 6 pounds, 10 ounces.

Sean Doherty and husband Steven welcomed their second child as well. Grant Dragutin Braut-Doherty was born on December 14th, weighing 8 pounds, 10 ounces.

Sean and **Mallory Freely** welcomed their son Cooper Slade, 8 pounds, 4 ounces, on December 15th.

Congratulations to all our members!

We are so pleased to see our Grand Family expanded this year!



“PROFESSIONAL GROWTH AT MAMS”

BY LISA SHAPIRO, (MAMS M.S.), LOCAL DO'S WRITER

Deepak Chopra said “*All great changes are preceded by chaos.*”

I’m pretty sure we have the whole chaos thing covered and under control by now! For some of us, the chaos is internal. For others, it’s external. But for many, the external chaos has had a severe impact on how we are feeling inside. If you take a moment and picture yourself the first few weeks of school, and then compare that picture to how you see yourself right now, I would bet, or in the very least hope (not much of a betting woman), that you feel as though you have changed for the better, professionally.

We have been collectively sharing an experience we will never forget. And one of the positives that has come about, as professionals, is that we have risen to the occasion. Like it or not, we have evolved. The media is so focused on the schools that have not reopened; but what about us? Whatever your feelings or views regarding Covid, virtual teaching, vaccines, and everything in between, we are so fortunate to be able to do our jobs in the actual school building. We are true MVP’s. Our careers have been revamped overnight and over one hundred days into the year, we *have* made some great changes! Lemons to lemonade, right? So here are a few ways that Merrick Avenue has been making lemonade:

- The other day I walked by the gym and a virtual track meet was taking place. A virtual track meet. Soooo 2021! The Jetson’s missed the mark with those flying cars.
- Members of **Denise Schleith’s International Buddy Club** received thank you letters from the **Honor Flight Long Island Organization** in response to the cards her students sent to veterans.
- Zoom speakers have been a great compliment to the curriculum when available. **Jennifer Verwys’** Science class had an opportunity to have virtual visits by people with unique careers. Prior to their virtual meetings, the students researched the professions and formulated questions for the presenters. One of the professionals who paid a visit to her class was the brother of our very own **Amanda Myles-McAnally** (sometimes it's good to know “a guy”). Mr. McAnally is a chemical engineer currently working for Merck. Students inquired about the



coronavirus vaccine, what it was like to be a chemical engineer, as well as with some other fun facts. Did you know scientists have to harvest the venom from actual black widow spiders to create the anti-venom?



The Ramily keeps growing! Congrats to **Stephanie Richmond**, on the birth of her son! Welcome back and congratulations to **Christina Clark**, on the birth of her daughter! You’ll have to wait until the Spring to find if there are any other mini Rams on the way.

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&
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Jan./Feb. '21