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★ THE BMUST AWARDS ★

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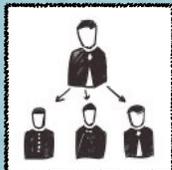
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**“EXPRESSING GRATITUDE”
ROB WALSH, BMUST PRESIDENT**

We have done it!!! Holy cow! Thinking back to September of 2020, I honestly was not sure that we would. I am incredibly proud of the work we have done together. We have provided for the students of the Bellmores and the Merricks in ways that few, if any other, educational communities have. We have done an amazing job tending to the social and emotional needs of our students while at the same time providing the best possible educational experience considering the

is hoping that the 2021 - 2022 school year brings us all a sense of normalcy.



**Rob Walsh,
President, BMUST**

In closing, I want to thank our four retirees for their tireless work and dedication to both BMUST and the BMCHSD.

Maureen, Sharon, Gregg and John - please know

At the May 5th meeting of the Board of Education, BMUST helped celebrate the granting of tenure to an immensely talented group of teachers. Talk about a baptism by fire, eh? When the opportunity presents itself, please take a moment to congratulate the following outstanding educators:

- | | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| Jamie Ackerman | Michelle Gray | Jacqueline Lever |
| Kathryn Beleckas | Bridget Gumersell | Nicole Levesque |
| Michelle Biancardo | Helen Han | Lisa Marino |
| Anthony Brandofino | Alexander Harrison | Meredith Ober |
| Amanda Engel | Charlotte Hayes | Kenneth Richards |
| Carly Falk | Caitlin King | Mary Theodoros |

circumstances. I am at a loss for words when trying to express my gratitude to you all for your hard work and dedication. You have been remarkable and you should be proud of what you have accomplished.

that it has been our honor to work alongside you all these years and we wish you much joy, and happiness as you embark on the next leg of your journey. You'll be missed, but not forgotten.

Know that BMUST continues to advocate on your behalf as we discuss the opening of schools in September. Much will depend on the missives of the Governor and of the New York State Department of Health, but we are working hard to make the start of the 2021 - 2022 school year look as normal as possible while making sure the staff and students are in a safe and healthy environment. The CDC's approval for vaccinating individuals 12 years and older will go a long way towards ensuring that we no longer need to live stream our classes. With cameras off and barriers remaining down in most, if not all, classrooms and learning environments - here

I hope the summer provides us all the much needed time to rest, recuperate and rejuvenate. May your summer be full of laughter and joy and good times spent with family and friends. Continue to do the things that bring you some measure of happiness and that feed your soul. Continue to look after one another. Thank you for all that you have done this year. Now, please take time for yourselves and your families. Stay well.

In Solidarity,

Rob

BMUST OUTSTANDING PROFESSIONAL AWARDS

M.A.P. RECIPIENT: CATRINA CHRISTENSEN
REFLECTION BY: LAURA SHERIDAN (M.A.P.)

I think we can agree that 2020 was a wild and crazy year for everyone. For **Catrina Christensen**, it was a wild and crazy year with a bunch of extras. In addition to coordinating Twilight from quarantine and doing all the things that guidance counselors had to do this past Spring (scheduling for the Fall, wrangling Seniors into wrapping up their high school careers, graduation prep, helping interview new entrants, etc.), Catrina received the Founder's Day Special Education Award, was granted tenure in the BMCHSD, and...oh, yeah, she got married!

For Catrina, 2021 continues to be an adventure. This year, she has been chosen to receive MAP's Outstanding Professional Award. When asked to contribute to this article, Geisha Kwiatkowski, Union Rep for MAP, had these eloquent words to say about Catrina:

“ “ When I think about what it takes to be considered an outstanding professional, there are some necessary qualities on my checklist. Your competency and ability to perform your job well are obvious ones. But when you work at MAP, your job title goes beyond the job description written in the contract. I was Catrina's mentor when she first started here at MAP. I was honored to help start her on her journey. At the time, she was also the counselor for Twilight and our meetings often revolved around the typical first year teacher commentary. It was clear from those discussions that working with students was her passion. She is always willing to work with our students to find a path to graduation, whether it is guiding them toward the electrical program, finding a class that sparks their interest, or suggesting that finishing their high school career can be accomplished through TASC. Year after year, through career days, taking on the Key Club, and now being the Twilight Coordinator for the district, it is evident that Catrina deserves to be MAP's Outstanding Professional for the 2020-2021 school year.”

So, in a quiet and gentle way, without our characteristic hooting and hollering, MAP would like to wish congratulations to Catrina Christensen for her hard work and dedication and for being our Outstanding Professional for 2020-2021! Congratulations, Catrina!

GRAND AVE. RECIPIENT: MEGAN ZAMBORI
REFLECTION BY: SEAN ARRESTO (GRAND AVE.)

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 implementing positive change at work, Meghan likes to hike, crochet, and binge-watch Gossip Girl. Congratulations Ms. Zambori! This honor is well deserved!

BMUST OUTSTANDING PROFESSIONAL AWARDS, CONTINUED

MEPHAM RECIPIENT: STU STEIN REFLECTION BY: LINU CHACKO (MEPHAM H.S.)

This year's **Outstanding Professional Award** is being presented to the one and only **Stu Stein**.

Stu got his start in the Bellmore-Merrick School District as a Social Studies teacher in 2002. From the moment he started, he has worked hard to create a positive and fun learning environment for his students. From dressing up, to creating games, to telling stories, Stu has always been able to captivate both his students and his colleagues. Although Stu planned to complete his career as a Social Studies teacher, things took an unexpected turn a few years ago, when the Bellmore-Merrick School District decided to develop a broadcasting program.

Prior to becoming an educator, Stu got his degree in film and worked in television production for many years. When he later became a teacher and took the job at Mepham, he had no idea that he would end up back in the world of broadcast journalism. Whether coincidence or destiny, the BMB Studio would not be the same without Stu. He works tirelessly to ensure that his students are getting the best education possible when it comes to the concepts of broadcasting. He is constantly creating and re-creating lessons in an effort to keep up with the growing technology, but also to keep the students engaged.

Stu forges relationships with students that create a feeling of family in the classroom. Throughout the day, students are constantly stopping by the studio to find out about an upcoming shoot or just to check in with him. The feeling of enthusiasm is evident at the start of each class as students anxiously await to find out what they will be doing each day, they know that, whatever it is, Mr. Stein will make it exciting. Stu helps students gain self confidence as he follows the "I do, we do, you do" approach to his lessons. At the end of each unit, students have a sense of pride when they can successfully complete a shoot on their own. Stu can be seen quietly sitting at his desk with a glimmer in his eye and a smile, beaming with pride to himself.

Stu works best under pressure. When a shoot is going awry, Stu can be seen smiling knowing that this is learning at its best and he demonstrates effective problem solving with confidence. This past year brought a new level of challenges to teachers everywhere; Stu did not miss a beat. When the shutdown initially happened, he jumped at the chance to keep students active and involved with the program, promoting the situation as an opportunity. Students remained committed to broadcasting and they also knew that their teacher, Mr. Stein, was there for them, no matter what. When students needed a break from the overwhelming world, Stu was there to give them a much needed outlet. Stu was consistently looking for ways to continue to produce BMB content and still teach new skills.

In the most basic terms, a lifelong learner is someone who keeps acquiring new skills and capabilities well past their formal education years. It involves not only studying new topics but also developing an open-minded, positive attitude about the dynamic nature of the world. Stu is the epitome of a lifelong learner.

Stu is one of the first people in the building in the morning and might very well be the last one out each day. He dedicates every moment to the program. He is, without a doubt, the most deserving candidate for this year's Outstanding Professional Award.



BMUST OUTSTANDING PROFESSIONAL AWARDS, CONTINUED

JFK RECIPIENT: BRUCE REED
REFLECTION BY: LISA SHERER (JFK H.S.)

It is my privilege to present the **Outstanding Professional Award to Bruce Reed**. Bruce teaches Social Studies at John F. Kennedy H.S. and is beloved by the staff and students alike!

Over the years, Bruce has expertly taught Global History Regents and Honors courses, as well as Economics, Crim I & II and Sociology. As one of our buildings' highly talented Technology Integration Mentors, Bruce's in-depth knowledge of current and emerging tech platforms is highlighted in his visually stimulating and engaging lessons. As a member of Kennedy's Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Initiative, Bruce collaborates with his peers to ensure that Kennedy is an open and welcoming community for both staff and students alike.

Yes, he brings all of that expertise into the classroom each day, but it is his personality that shines brightest in each lesson. Bruce has a fabulous sense of humor into which he sprinkles witty comments to keep you laughing throughout the day. He never lets his student's or colleagues know if he is having a bad day, instead he is a constant reminder of the professionalism we should all aspire to as educators.

The students are extremely lucky to have such a generous and caring teacher to lean on and look up to. As moderator of the Gay Straight Alliance club he is a role model and advocate for its members. On Friday when every teacher has left the building, Bruce is still at school with his students at their weekly Friday meeting, as they engage in educational presentations and activism. Most of all, these students empower each other to stand in their truth in justice and dignity.

Lastly, you cannot speak of Bruce without showing gratitude for his dedication to our union. Bruce has been active in service with our union most of his career. Unionism is at the heart of Bruce's profession and it is evident in his series of terms as a member of the Representative Assembly, the Public Relations Chair and the amazing job he does as our editor of the BMUST Local Do's newsletter. Bruce derives great satisfaction from his unionism BMUST and considers it an honor to serve in this capacity.

There is no one more worthy than Bruce Reed as this year's recipient of the BMUST Outstanding Professional Award! Congratulations, Bruce!!

MAMS AVE. RECIPIENT: CHRISTINA CORWIN
REFLECTION BY: KRISTIN BISHOP,
CHRISTINE MAHONEY & AMANDA MYLES-MCANALLY

We are delighted to present **Christina Corwin** as Merrick Avenue Middle School's **BMUST Outstanding Professional** for the 2020-2021 school year. Over the past 22 years, Chris has been a leader of the Merrick Avenue science department. She has gone above and beyond to create real-world science experiences for her students and her common sense approach to problem solving was invaluable in preserving Merrick Avenue's science lab for the benefit of all its students.

Chris' efforts have never stopped at the classroom door. Over the past two decades, she has coached Kickline and both the Winter and Spring track teams. She has advised the Ecology Club, served as cafeteria supervisor, and has been consistently involved in Merrick Avenue's after-school academic program. Inside the classroom and out, Chris' love of science and willingness to *go the extra mile* for the Merrick Avenue students and staff have positively impacted the lives of the hundreds of children that have been lucky enough to get to know Mrs. Corwin.

Beyond teaching, Chris has been a friend, mentor, and advocate for her coworkers. She has been an active member of the Sunshine Committee multiple times. She is always willing to help her fellow teachers in need, find creative solutions to day-to-day challenges, and has the well-earned respect of the Merrick Avenue administration.

Outside of school, Chris enjoys spending time with her husband Jimmy and her children, Olivia and Noah. She spends time with family at her home in Vermont, skiing, making cheese, and goat herding, while enjoying the great outdoors. She is a fitness enthusiast, and a recent recipient of an award at the "Strong is Beautiful" competition.

We are proud to call Christina Corwin our co-worker, our friend, and Merrick Avenue's BMUST Outstanding Professional for the 2020-2021 school year.



BMUST OUTSTANDING PROFESSIONAL AWARDS, CONTINUED

CALHOUN RECIPIENT: JAMIE ROMITO (CALHOUN H.S.) REFLECTION BY: THE SPECIAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT, (CALHOUN H.S.)

If you are a staff member at Calhoun High School, you most likely have a funny memory or story involving **Jamie Romito**. When thinking of Jamie and her role in the Special Education department, her colleagues were not surprised to learn that she received the honor of **BMUST Outstanding Professional**, as she is often looked at as a leader of our department. She is kind-hearted, thoughtful, a friend to all, and always willing to lend a helping hand. It is a guarantee that you will leave her company with a smile on your face. She's the heart and soul of our department-the perfect combination of sincerity and comedy.

Jamie is a solution seeker and an advocate for not only her students, but for her colleagues. Jamie stands up for what she believes in and will work tirelessly to make a positive impact in the lives of everyone she possibly can. When she is not assisting her fellow BMUST members, Jamie also serves as a tech mentor, and played a crucial role in getting us all adapted to remote/hybrid/virtual teaching this year. We would not have made it through teaching during a pandemic if it were not for her tech skills.

Jamie's impact extends beyond her relationships with her colleagues to where it truly matters: to her teaching. Jamie is adored by all of her students and always gives them 100 percent of her attention and time. Jamie is fully present in each moment with her students, whether it be assisting with an assignment, coaching a sport, leading the World Of Difference club, or simply being her most enthusiastic self during a tractor ride on a field trip. For those who have never been on a hayride with Jamie, it is a memorable experience. For anyone who knows Jamie, she will dance anywhere she can. A hayride is no different, especially when it comes to creating extra entertainment. The students loved it, and so did everyone else (even the people who were just there for a family day). It was quite the sight to see. Everyone had great laughs that only Jamie could provide. She truly makes the most of each moment.

We could not write about Jamie and not describe her Calhoun Spirit. Whether she is running down the hall with her rollie backpack, or shouting a holiday song decked out in full gear, Jamie is always able to bring the right mix of chaos and positivity into everyone's lives at Calhoun. If none of these examples ring a bell, you might recognize her from her starring role and directorial debut of "Calpool Karaoke," which has now become the most anticipated part of the annual faculty follies.

Jamie's upbeat personality is supported at home by her loving husband Frank, her stepson, Hunter, and her dogs, Franklin and Lulu. Jamie is not only the world's greatest step-mom, but also the world's greatest aunt to her nephews Roy and Deke. Frank, Hunter, Roy and Deke are also victims of her enthusiasm and over-the-top antics. Jamie is one of a kind and to know her is to love her!

We could go on and on about the impact that Jamie has made on Calhoun, specifically her impact within the special education department. However, we wish to leave on a heartfelt expression of our gratitude to the organizer of our chaos, our ringleader, and our dear friend! Congratulations, Jamie Romito on this wonderful and well-deserved award!



LOU DEFILIPPO OUTSTANDING**RECIPIENT: DENNIS URBAN (JFK)****REFLECTION BY: BRAD SEIDMAN (JFK)**

I am thrilled that my good friend **Dennis Urban** is being recognized this year with **BMUST's Louis DeFillippo Union Service Award**. Two years ago, when the political action chair position was vacant, Brian DeGaetano and I immediately recommended Dennis for the position to our fellow trustees. We knew that Dennis's passion for politics and engagement would make him the ideal person for the position. And of course, he proved us right.

Dennis has been an active member of BMUST for most of his career in Bellmore-Merrick. Long before serving in this current position, Dennis participated in political activities along with fellow BMUST members. For example, during the 2014 Democratic Convention, Dennis along with fellow teachers staged a protest alongside Rte 110 to oppose Governor Cuomo's APPR plan. Prior to that, in 2010, Dennis participated in the One Nation Working Together rally in Washington, DC. There, on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, Dennis joined with NYSUT and other major labor organizations demanding better jobs, immigration policy changes, and educational reforms.

Not surprisingly, Dennis has served BMUST well as the political action chairperson. He has continued to demonstrate a passion for labor rights, equality, and a progressive agenda that protects the rights of all workers. Dennis has organized BMUST's Vote Cope drive the last two years and has been a part of the Committee of 100 where he has met with local politicians like Senator Brooks to argue for increased revenue from the corporations and the super-rich to help fund public education.

In his personal life, as well, Dennis has been politically active. In 2012, he was an active political campaigner promoting the election of Liuba Grechen Shirley in CD2. He has also been an active member of NY02 Democrats, now known as NY02 Indivisible, where he has worked to elect politicians who represent the needs of the middle and working class.

The fabled American activist and civil rights leader Dolores Huerta tells us, *"Every moment is an organizing opportunity, every person a potential activist, every minute a chance to change the world."* That philosophy, that belief, that goal lives in our own Dennis Urban who indeed works to better our world.

PARA SPECIAL SERVICE AWARD**RECIPIENT: DEBORAH SLUTSKY (MEPHAM)****REFLECTION BY: LINU CHACKO (MEPHAM)**

This year's **Para Professional Award** is presented to an extremely dedicated member of our Mepham 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 Mepham are her beloved husband of 41 years, Richard, and her amazing family, especially 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.

She is very efficient and diligent about checking that carts are all charged up and ready to use. Debi prides herself on accuracy and promptness and the teachers are very appreciative of how she accommodates last minute requests with ease. This year has been especially challenging since, as we all know, the use of technology is more important than ever. Debi is always ready with suggestions if resources are unavailable or being repaired or an alternate has to be switched in.

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, Mepham teachers and students benefit greatly from her dedication and that is why she truly deserves this award.



P.T.A. AWARD**RECIPIENT: ALYSE BERKE,****P.T.A. COORDINATING COUNCIL CO-PRESIDENT****REFLECTION BY:****CAROLYN CONDENZIO (GRAND AVE)**

Alyse Berke, BMUST's PTA Award winner, has been an integral part of the Bellmore-Merrick Central High School District for many years. Besides being a BMCHSD graduate herself, she has been actively involved in numerous PTA and other committees while her children have attended schools in the district. Besides serving as the current Co-President of the Bellmore-Merrick PTA District Council, Alyse has served as Grand Avenue's PTA President, chaired Membership and Spirit Wear committees, as Treasurer and Representative for Kennedy's PTA, was an active volunteer for Kennedy's Sports Boosters Committee, and serves on the current Executive Board for the Calhoun Music Boosters Committee.

Alyse generously donates her time and effort wherever she's needed, and always makes herself available to the members she serves alongside. Her deep connections to this community are evident as she helps facilitate and plan events for the many committees she works with. Alyse also volunteers her time with her children's Boy Scout troops, and she and Adam's sons have completed Eagle Scout projects in conjunction with our Community Cupboard. BMUST thanks Alyse for her commitment and dedication to the parents, students, and staff in the Bellmore-Merrick Central High School District.

**PATRICIA CHRISTY OUTSTANDING****RETIREE AWARD****RECIPIENT: JOHN MAZARRELA****REFLECTION BY: SHARON WISLA**

It is my privilege to present the **Patricia Christy Outstanding Retiree Award** to **John Mazzarella** for this year. John is well deserving of this honor. This award is named for Pat Christy, who helped form the Bellmore-Merrick Retired Teachers Association and was its first President for 15 years.

John spent 34 years in the Bellmore-Merrick CHSD teaching Math at Calhoun and Mephram High Schools from 1970 -2004. When I asked John about his teaching career, he said, *"Truly blessed to something I loved for so many years."*

Beginning retirement in 2004, John has been anything but "retired." He has served as our IT person for the past 18 years. John has connected 300+ members via emails from relevant retiree news, upcoming BMRTA events, and sadly bereavement notices. He has even sent emails while on vacation, finding a nearby computer to use. He is an asset to our BMRTA organization.

On a personal note, John's wife Roselynn and all 3 children are educators. John is currently an adjunct professor at Molloy College. He loves spending time with his grandkids, playing lots of golf, and writing math workbooks.

John's contribution to the Bellmore-Merrick Retired Teachers Association is quite extensive.

I am proud to present John Mazzarella with this prestigious award.



COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD

RECIPIENT: BMUST WOMEN'S COMMITTEE

REFLECTION BY: LISA SHAPIRO (MAMS)

In 2017, the NYSUT Representative Assembly created the **Women's Committee**. Four main goals were established; encourage locals to institute their own committee, provide education to female members about the work of unions, emphasize women-specific issues such as inequity in pay, and promote the involvement of women in union leadership roles.

BMUST representatives returned from the 2017 RA and began discussing the formation of our own committee as well as some potential goal related ideas that would best suit the needs of our members. At the same time, **Sarah Norton** delivered an impressive presentation about the need for private space and access to refrigeration for nursing moms back at work following maternity leave. This resulted in the purchase of new mini-fridges for each building and peace of mind for women who needed and continue to require access to privacy during their work day.

In the Spring of 2019, Bill Morris sent out the email that would eventually culminate in the women who make up our current committee. By 2020, they officially began regular meetings and have been hard at work, with the interests of every member in mind. This committee is one of 30 NYSUT Women's Committee chapters that meets regularly across New York State. This group is composed of working moms and moms to be. To ensure each building has a representative present for each meeting, each school has two representatives in the event one is unable to attend because "momming" has to come first and it is impossible to be in two places at once. This accommodation alleviates the 'mom guilt' that is a natural side effect of our jobs.

The true mission of the BMUST Women's Committee is to provide a platform for women to voice their successes and concerns. Lauren Cress, co-chair of the committee said, "We are dedicated to helping women, their families, and the community at large. Our goal is to create a supportive and equitable workplace for our members." This year, the Committee organized a district-wide fundraiser to keep our Community Cupboard well stocked and provided donations of non-perishables to Bethany House of Long Island. Currently, the group is working to organize "Push Ups to Push Out Homelessness" which will launch in September during physical education classes as another fundraiser for Bethany House of Long Island.

As a nation, it is no secret that the United States falls short in its maternity and paternity leave policy. Our Women's Committee looks toward the future, with a hopeful eye on improving our local response to family care. There is no doubt the impetus of the Women's Committee has been helpful to the Bellmore-Merrick community at large as well as to our members.

Thank you to **Caterina Christensen, Lauren Cress, Meghan Dagger, Jackie Frank, Sara Gant, Jodi Langevin, Lisa Loonie, Dorothy Marino, Kara McManus, Renee Molinaro and Sarah Norton** for stepping up and embracing this necessary role to ensure the best possible conditions for all workers.



PRESIDENT'S CHOICE AWARD

RECIPIENT: THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

REFLECTION BY: ROB WALSH (BMUST PRESIDENT)

The winner of the **2021 BMUST President's Choice Award is the BMUST Board of Trustees**. I have been blessed to work with an amazing collection of union leaders as we have tried to navigate the 2020 - 2021 school year. The Board of Trustees (BOT) is made-up of a couple different groups. First, the Executive Board, which is made up of **Vice Presidents Pete Brideson and Bill Morris and Treasurer, Brad Seidman**. I am lucky to have their counsel, support and friendship.

The second group is made up of the **Head Building Representatives: Heather Castellano (Mephram), Carolyn Condenzio (Grand Avenue), Brian DeGaetano (JFK), Jason Elias (Calhoun), Geisha Kwiatkowski (MAP) and Amanda Myles-McAnally (MAMS)**. Without a doubt, these individuals have the toughest job in the union. Throughout the year they have been incredibly available and giving of their time and energy. I honestly have no way to thank them for their efforts.

The third piece of the BOT puzzle is made up of the dynamic duo **Susan Grippa, the President of the Paraprofessional Unit and Sharon Wisla, the President of the Bellmore-Merrick Retired Teacher Association**. I thank both of them for their time, energy, perspective and wisdom.

For the entirety of the 2020 - 2021 school year the BOT has 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. To put it simply, the BMCHSD did not open for full in-person instruction in September of 2020 and remain open the entire school year without the time, energy and effort of this incredible team. It is with the deepest gratitude that I thank them for their professionalism and ongoing and consistent dedication.



FRIEND OF EDUCATION AWARD

RECIPIENT: JOHN DeTOMMASO

REFLECTION BY: ROB WALSH (BMUST PRESIDENT)

The 2021 winner of the **BMUST Friend of Education Award is Mr. John DeTommaso, the retiring Superintendent of the Bellmore-Merrick Central High School District.** Mr. DeTommaso began his illustrious career in education in 1988, as a member of BMUST, teaching Social Studies and coaching lacrosse at Mepham High School. While a member of the BMCHSD family, Mr. DeTommaso served as the district's Athletic Coordinator and as an Assistant Principal at Calhoun High School. After spending some time away, Mr. DeTommaso returned home in 2013 to lead the district through an incredible eight years.



Mr. DeTommaso's leadership throughout this difficult 2020 - 2021 school year would be enough to earn the BMUST Friend of Education award. What has happened in the BMCHSD this year has been nothing short of remarkable. However, Mr. DeTommaso's contribution to the BMCHSD runs much deeper than the successful navigation of a global pandemic. Let us not forget that in his first year as Superintendent, Mr. DeTommaso spearheaded the passage of a 50 million dollar bond to improve the physical plant of the district. With the physical plant tended to, Mr. DeTommaso turned his attention to increasing academic rigor for all students across all disciplines. Finally, in 2018, Mr. DeTommaso was instrumental in bringing a Wellness Center to each of our buildings in an acknowledgement of the importance of the emotional and mental wellness of our students and their families.

I have always tried to abide by the motto of "leaving a place better than you found it." Mr. DeTommaso has most definitely left the BMCHSD in a better place than he found it and in doing so is the deserving recipient of the 2021 BMUST Friend of Education Award.

B M U S T R E T I R E E S 2 0 2 0 - 2 0 2 1**CALHOUN H.S.****RETIREE: SHARON DEVENUTO****REFLECTION BY: BETH FINNERAN****Sharon DeVenuto: A Role Model of Counseling and Wellness**

Sharon DeVenuto modeled the principles of compassionate counseling and community wellness long before the Sanford H. Calhoun Counseling and Wellness Center had its name. Known for her empathetic listening and caring heart, Sharon has been a mentor, supportive colleague, and true advocate for students.

Ricky Posner, a Calhoun alumni and school counselor himself, credits Sharon with being the one who inspired him to become a school counselor: "It has been an honor and a pleasure to learn from Sharon. It all started when Sharon was my brother's school counselor her first year at Calhoun and two years later I was lucky enough to have this warm, loving, patient and extraordinarily kind woman as my counselor. She helped lead me through the college search and application process and ultimately was the inspiration for me to want to become a school counselor myself. I was fortunate that I was able to do two separate internships with Sharon as I was pursuing my master's degree in school counseling. Working with Sharon taught me so much about the importance of getting to know your students, spending time with them, listening to anything and everything they have to say and ultimately what it means to be the student's best advocate. Sharon has developed incredible relationships with her students, she sees them for who they are, she works closely with families regardless of the situation and will always go above and beyond to give her attention and support. Interning with Sharon also taught me about the importance of working as a counseling team and building strong relationships with fellow staff, administrators, secretaries and all members of the school community. Having now worked the past thirteen years with Sharon I have seen what a master counselor is. I have been fortunate enough to become colleagues and friends with a genuinely kind soul. Sharon embraces all the positive aspects that we hope to aspire to as a school counselor. She has been an outstanding counselor, mentor, colleague and friend and it is a huge loss for the Calhoun community but a wonderful new journey for Sharon!"

Brian Resnick expressed gratitude for the support Sharon gave him after he transferred to Calhoun from Merrick Avenue: "I would like to thank Sharon for being a kind and supportive colleague throughout the years I've worked with her. She and I collaborated for a few years on the Senior Awards program, and I could always rely on her to be willing to do whatever it took to complete the job for our students. She is always smiling and greets everyone in the office with her positivity daily. I am sure she is excited to be home with her husband, Frank, as they embark on what I hope is many, many years of retirement bliss together."

Kiera McNally, a Calhoun School Social Worker and newer member of the Calhoun PPS team, has been really impressed at the degree to which Sharon goes out of her way for students: "I always admired how patient and thoughtful Sharon is with her students. There is one student in particular that she went above and beyond for, even after they graduated. The gratitude that this student has for Sharon is something I won't forget. She will be missed in the PPS department, but I am excited to see where retirement takes her!"

Amanda Engel really appreciated Sharon's positive energy, especially on the more challenging days: "We are so happy for Sharon but will miss her so dearly. Her kindhearted spirit was such a breath of fresh air in the Counseling Department. On good and bad days, I can always count on a smile from Sharon to brighten my day. Her commitment to the students and families at Calhoun has been unwavering throughout the years. She cares so deeply about the wellbeing of the students here and it really shows. I hope that Sharon will remember her time at Calhoun fondly. Sharon will leave a void in the Counseling Department that will be impossible to fill. Sharon, may your future be filled with lots of fun travels, smiles, laughter and the creation of amazing memories with your family. We will miss you very much!"

Sharon and her colleague, Kathryn Alexander, not only advocate self-care, they model it, too, briskly walking around the building on their off periods to get a little fitness and mindfulness in. Kathy's message to Sharon, "Thank you for friendship, collegial friendship, and for being my walking buddy!"

The Calhoun Family wishes Sharon DeVenuto many years of continued and well earned wellness long after retirement!

B M U S T R E T I R E E S 2 0 2 0 - 2 0 2 1**CALHOUN H.S.****RETIREE: GREGG MUSCAARELLA****REFLECTION BY: BETH FINNERAN****Coach Muscarella Inspired Calhoun to be Its Best**

Gregg Muscarella has inspired the Calhoun Physical Education department, students, and staff alike, to push themselves to be both fit and kind.

June Spruyt reflected on the impact he had on the building:

“ *When you think of Calhoun Physical Education, you automatically think of Gregg Muscarella, a.k.a. Coach Musc or The General! During his 30 years of teaching at Calhoun High School, he has touched and inspired many generations of families. Whether you knew Coach Musc from the gymnasium, in the wrestling room, outside on the fields, in the weight room, lunch room or the hallways, Coach Musc was always there to encourage and motivate you to be a better person. His strong passion for physical fitness and physical education was portrayed in all his lessons. His unique style of teaching was firm, but supportive and encouraging. He wanted all his students to strive for their best and he accepted nothing less. Coach Musc led by example and enjoyed challenging students and staff to reach their full potential. He was known for his motivational quotes and sayings, as many were printed on his vast selection of T-shirts. The Calhoun Colts were blessed to have Coach Muscarella as a teacher, coach, colleague and friend. We thank him for his guidance and inspiration throughout the years. We wish Coach Musc the best as he begins his next adventure in retirement hiking the mountainous trails of Utah.*”

James Raucci remembered being a substitute for Musc over twenty years ago, when his son, Ryan, was being born. It was clear to him from the beginning that Musc’s positive expectations were contagious: “He was full of pride and loaded with expectations. He could not wait to see what his son would accomplish. Fast forward to this year, he was going down to Flagler College to attend Ryan’s graduation. He went there with the same pride, admiration and expectations that he had when he was born. Muscarella is always excited for what comes next, whether it’s his son, his students and now for himself in retirement. He represents the profession of physical education with that same approach. Despite his Boston accent, which students have mastered over the years, his lofty mile run expectations, his countless ways to motivate students. (Self titled Muscarella award) or his motivational speeches that centered on birds and waterfalls, he truly believed PE was the most important subject. As Gregg would always say, “Your happiness is directly related to your health.” Trust me, he loved quotes! He had a million of them but he stressed that particular one more than any. He instilled a sense of dedication to uphold the discipline of health and physical fitness. We wish him the best in Utah and look forward to all the pictures of waterfalls and hikes he will undoubtable enjoy.”

BMUST RETIREES 2020 - 2021**GRAND AVE M.S.****RETIREE: MAUREEN BERGE-DUNN****REFLECTION BY: MAURA ROHAN-BEDNAR**

As the 2020-21 school year comes to a close, Grand Ave prepares to say goodbye to our treasured school nurse, **Maureen Berge-Dunn**. When Maureen comes to mind, many conjure up images of her perched atop her step stool testing the AED or whisking an injured student through the halls, pushing a wheelchair. However, Maureen's role here at Grand encompasses a much greater scope. Not only is she a knowledgeable resource for students, parents, faculty and staff, she is also compassionate and dedicated to helping those around her.

Maureen began her career as a registered nurse some 40 years ago, working as a bedside nurse and, later, nurse manager at the old Hempstead Hospital. She took time to raise her daughters and returned to the workforce as a school nurse. She has been the nurse at Grand Ave for the last six years.

Maureen works tirelessly to ensure that our students are safe, have access to their medications and that their health needs are met every day. She affords every student her time and attention, often having to read between the lines to decipher the true nature of the problem. Whether helping a student manage a chronic illness or acute anxiety, Maureen uses sound clinical judgement and strives for the best outcome for them.

We will miss her not only for her professional talents, but also for her musical abilities. A talented guitarist with a voice reminiscent of a young Joan Baez, Maureen has shared her gifts with the District. She has performed annually at the Faculty Follies, one of the major fundraisers for Community Cupboard.

After a truly exhausting year addressing the challenges of the Covid 19 Pandemic, we thank Maureen for her many contributions to our District. Please take some well-deserved time to rest and enjoy time with your husband, George, and daughters, Taylor and Emma. We will miss you!



happy Retirement

JOHN F KENNEDY H.S.**RETIREE: JOHN ZUCCHERO****REFLECTION BY: DENNIS URBAN**

In 2005, I learned that I'd be co-teaching the U.S. History course with **John Zucchero**. At the time, I'd been at Kennedy High School for only two years, and I knew John as the mustachioed Special Education teacher who supervised the hell out of school sporting events. But, over the next 16 years of teaching alongside John, I'd come to know him as a caring, compassionate, hard-working teacher, an educational partner, a family man, and a friend.

John Zucchero is a lifelong member of the Bellmore-Merrick community. Graduating from the district in the 1970s, John taught at Grand Avenue Middle School for several years before moving to the private sector in the mid-1980s. In 2001, when John returned to the district as a Special Education teacher at Kennedy, he quickly established himself as a positive presence in the classroom, in the hallways, and at intramural High School sporting competitions.

In the 16 years that John and I taught together, I learned a lot from him. Through our collaboration, John and I built on each other's strengths, and he helped me adapt my lessons for all learners. Our rapport with each other and with the students allowed us to create a caring community of learners in the classroom each year. John is also a lifelong learner, and he often introduced new ideas into our lessons based on his independent historical research as well as his viewing of recent historical documentaries. Moreover, he brought a personal touch to our U.S. history lessons when he discussed his family's experiences with immigration and the Great Depression, or when he recounted life during the 1960s and 1970s, particularly related to the Vietnam War. Outside our classroom, John has had positive relationships with his other co-teachers, and he's widely respected throughout the building and community as a seasoned educator.

When John told me he was retiring this year, I had mixed feelings. After a decades-long career in the district, no one was more deserving of retirement than Mr. Zucchero. It'll be a new chapter in my teaching career, but, more importantly, it's a new stage in John's life, and I couldn't be happier for him. I wish him a healthy and enjoyable retirement, spending time with family, friends, and loved ones. I'm sure we'll still see John around the building at sports competitions, concerts, and community events. Maybe he'll even grow back his signature mustache for old times' sake.

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