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SOMERS CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NEWS

SHS Builders Brave the Cold

Winter's chill hasn't kept hardy members of Somers High School's Interact/Habitat for Humanity Club from doing their part toward building a two-story Habitat for Humanity house in Shenorock.

Even on some of the coldest days, a band of as many as 10 students joined community volunteers in nailing nails, putting up plywood, and installing insulation. "We've been freezing, but spirits are high," says high school math teacher Debbie Hendrie, co-advisor to the club with earth science teacher Brian Hugick. "As spring comes, we'll have more volunteers," she predicts. A good 30 to 40 students are involved in the club.



Interact, a year-old community-service group sponsored by the Somers Rotary, joined forces with the Habitat for Humanity club this year. Work on the Shenorock building

began last summer, with demolition of an existing structure, reframing, and expanding the foundation. Prior to that, the three-year-old Habitat group worked on fundraising and other projects, including landscaping at the Mt. Kisco Community Center. Interact also established an annual coat drive and adopted a needy local family for the holidays.



STUDENT CARPENTERS work on a local Habitat project.

Chinese Troupe Visits Somers



Musicians and dancers from the Experimental High School/Beijing Normal University performed a variety of authentic Chinese musical pieces before a sold-out audience recently at Somers High School.

The group, which performed in the opening ceremonies at the Beijing Olympics, made Somers one of two stops on its East Coast tour of the United States. The visit was the idea of school board member Dr. Ifay Chang. Anna Maggio, Director of Secondary Education, helped to organize the event.

The performance has been aired on Channel 18.



BEIJING OLYMPICS dancers perform in Somers.



WINGING IT: Holding a live Harris Hawk called "Machu" is Somers Middle School student Ben Goldberg, one of five Somers students who participated in the P/NW BOCES Falconry Academy course that took place over the winter break. With him is Lorrie Schumacher (right) from Talons! A Bird of Prey Experience, who taught the course, and Dorna Schroeter, coordinator of BOCES' Center for Environmental Education.

Photos courtesy of the North County News

8th Graders Work on ‘Changing the World’

I really liked this project because it gave me a chance to express my opinion...Rebecca. This project changed the way I think about the environment...Marisa. We’ve got to help Somers be a better place...Ryan.

These comments from Christine Velez’s eighth grade science class reflect students’ opinions about their work on a recent “We Can Change the World” project, sponsored by the Siemens Foundation, Discovery Education, and the National Science Teachers Association.

For the project, the students were empowered to identify, research, and help resolve environmental problems on the local level.

“The first thing the students had to do was to identify an issue or problem they were passionate about,” Ms. Velez said. Issues they chose included water pollution in Lake Shenorock, the

use of pesticides on local golf courses, littering in local parks, and the use of plastic bags in area businesses.

Once a topic was identified, teams of students spent weeks doing research, including interviewing and polling local citizens and business owners, and developed an action plan to address the issue in the community.

One group, for instance, distributed information to customers at Stop & Shop about the problems associated with plastic bags and then monitored the use of plastic versus paper. Their findings: “We did notice people switching from plastic to



CHANGE THE WORLD fans include 8th graders Joshua Silverman (left) and Joshua Pennacchio.

paper. Some even started using ‘go green’ reusable bags.”

Over all, teachers and students agreed, the project was a huge success.

Welcoming the Youngest

As that big yellow school bus rolls away on the first day of kindergarten, carrying its precious cargo, parents can be comforted to know of efforts made to make the children’s transition to school a smooth one.

Rest assured, by the time our littlest ones step off the bus at Primrose Elementary School, the teachers and administrators to whom their well-being is entrusted have spent substantial time making sure that their first school experience is successful.

Already this year, teams of teachers have been visiting the various pre-kindergarten programs in town to get a glimpse of their future students. Surveys, distributed to parents in the spring, will provide valuable information for kindergarten placement.

In May, parents of incoming kindergartners attend an orientation program to learn about Primrose in general, the curriculum, and a typical kindergarten day.

In June, kindergartners practice their first school bus ride, boarding the bus at the public library and traveling to Primrose. While on the bus, Assistant Principal Haidee Anaya speaks to the youngsters about bus safety. Then, during August, as summer begins to wane, a kindergarten classroom orientation lets students and parents

meet teachers and locate key landmarks around the school. “This is a chance for students to get really comfortable before school starts,” Ms. Anaya says. “It helps their transition on that exciting first day.”



Celebrated Poet to Visit SMS

Award-winning poet and educator Naomi Shihab Nye will visit Somers Middle School students March 15 and lead a poetry workshop for interested students.

The poet’s visit was arranged by Cathy Gelman, SMS Library Media Specialist, and the school’s Author Committee. “We brainstormed all sorts of possibilities for authors,” Ms. Gelman said. “When one committee member suggested Naomi Shihab Nye, we all froze, thinking that that would be amazing if we could get her.”

A heartfelt letter later – with a poem from middle school teacher Sue Compo – and the poet, whose work has been presented on National Public Radio and at the White House, was on her way to Somers.

“Naomi is an extraordinary promoter of peace and social justice, with poems about universal themes such as kindness, forgiveness, and honest communication,” Ms. Gelman said. “Her coming to SMS is HUGE.” The poet’s message ties in with the middle school’s emphasis on global awareness and respect and responsibility for all.

Thanks to Ms. Gelman, the committee, and the generosity and support of Kathy Cucchiarella and the PTA, the middle school will host a writer whose work has had an impact on people throughout the world.



POET Naomi Shihab Nye