



Board announces new scholarships



After receiving input from Poughkeepsie City School District juniors and seniors who represent the Superintendent's Student Advisory Committee, and district teachers, the Board of Education is pleased to announce an expanded opportunity for any graduating senior who has been accepted to an accredited post-

secondary educational institution to apply for Board of Education awarded scholarships.

After years of awarding one scholarship, the Board of Education revisited its support for Poughkeepsie High School seniors and decided to expand the opportunity for more students to be awarded scholarships. Over the last several months, members of the Board of Education discussed how the board should expand the awards so that a greater number of students representing the diversity of the school system's student population can have access to scholarships. The Board agreed that expanding from one to 12 awards would have a greater impact on supporting students interested in post-secondary education opportunities. Each scholarship award of \$750 is made possible by the George A. Strba Charitable Trust and through districtwide fundraising.

George A. Strba, a graduate of Syracuse University and World War II veteran was an athletic coach and teacher of many school districts in New York including Poughkeepsie. Serving 33 years as a basketball coach and teacher in the Poughkeepsie City School District, Mr. Strba transitioned to Marist College to become the college's first varsity basketball coach. Mr. Strba established a charitable trust to support the post-secondary advancement of graduating seniors.

Starting this year the Board will award the following scholarships (full criteria will be available online with application):

Pioneer Excellence Scholarship

Two academic scholarships will be available for any graduating senior who has maintained an exemplary academic record over four years.

Poughkeepsie Creator and Dreamer Scholarship

Two arts education scholarships will be available for any graduating senior who participates in a Poughkeepsie High School arts or music club or is a member of a PHS band, choral, or theatrical collective.

Poughkeepsie Champion Scholarship

Two athletic scholarships will be available for any graduating senior who participates on a Poughkeepsie High School athletic team.

Poughkeepsie Leaders of the Future Scholarship *

Two student leadership scholarships will be available for any graduating senior who has demonstrated school based or district level leadership responsibility while in high school. *The student liaison to the Board of Education will automatically receive this scholarship as long as they meet all criteria.

Poughkeepsie Dreamers Scholarship (1)

This scholarship will be available for any graduating senior who has arrived to the United States within the past two years.

The Tykeem Catts Scholarship

These two scholarships are intended to provide students with exceptionalities with additional opportunities to attend the postsecondary school of their choice. The scholarship is available to any graduating senior who is currently classified by the Poughkeepsie City School District Committee of Special Education as a student with an exceptionality or has a 504 plan.

It was named after a former Poughkeepsie City School District student and 2018 graduate who was beloved by those who supported his education and developmental school needs. His name was elevated as a possible name for students with exceptionalities by Poughkeepsie City School District teachers as part of the scholarship naming process. Tykeem's untimely passing on July 20, 2021, shocked the Poughkeepsie School community and others he connected with after graduating in 2018. What people say they remember most about Tykeem is his infectious smile and his memorable journey as a student in the Poughkeepsie City School District. In speaking with Tykeem's father, Douglas Herring Sr., about the district's consideration of naming a scholarship after his son, he expressed elation and appreciation of the board.

The Dr. Ronel E. Cook Scholarship



The Dr. Ronell Cook Jr. scholarship is available for any senior who has demonstrated civic engagement in the community.

This scholarship was named after the former teacher and administrator of the Poughkeepsie City School District. Dr. Cook served the Poughkeepsie City School District from the 1990's through 2017 before transitioning to lead the Catskill Central School District as superintendent. He was appointed in 2022 as the superintendent of the Englewood Public Schools before his untimely passing. Many remember Dr. Cook as "Being a Good Man" and his servitude of doing what was in the best interest of children. His Celebration of Life program stated that "Since Dr. Cook was young, he dedicated himself to enhancing the lives of children from all backgrounds through

education" and "Dr. Cook embodied the belief that children were at the center of his responsibility." In speaking with Dr. Cook's mother about the district's consideration of naming a scholarship after her soon, she expressed pure joy and is grateful to the Board of Education for honoring her only son in this way. She spoke to how Dr. Cook was fond of the school district and the people he worked with even after leaving to serve in other school districts. While the Board of Education initially had planned to award 11 scholarships annually, conversation among members led to Dr. Rosser recommending a twelfth scholarship to be awarded to a Poughkeepsie High School student who has grit (a characteristic associated with Dr. Cook) but may not have excelled academically. Given Dr. Cook's giving of himself in so many ways, as articulated by many throughout the school district, the scholarship recipient will have demonstrated civic engagement in the community. To read more about Dr. Cook click [here](#).

Application information

Students' ability to apply for the expanded Board of Education Scholarships will start March 10, 2023. All graduating high school seniors with drive, perseverance, and who want to pursue a post-secondary education opportunity or college education at an accredited institution are invited to apply. Applications will be sent to the schools and will also be available online – along with all the criteria for each scholarship. Presentation of scholarships to winners will be made at the Poughkeepsie High School Annual Awards Assembly in June.

PMS students discuss scholarship names



After listening to the Board's discussion on expanding Board Scholarships at the meeting on Feb. 1, Poughkeepsie Middle School sixth grade teachers, Heidi Murphy, Elizabeth Talarczyk, and Selina Barrington took the opportunity to engage their classes in a creative critical thinking process about the naming of two of the eight scholarships under discussion. The classes watched two videos, "[Overcoming Obstacles](#)" and "[Celebrating Immigrant Heritage](#)" as a starter to engaging in a

PMS students wait patiently to enjoy treats sent from the Board of Education.

process to recommend names for what would be scholarships for students with exceptionalities and students who have immigrated to the United States within the last two years. Through this process students shared their connections and thoughts and created their own brainstorming list of titles that were presented to the Board of Education during its deliberations. The Board of Education and Superintendent of Schools, impressed with the work of the sixth grade classes, discussed taking the recommendations of the students and creating a Board of Education issued award that would be presented to selected Poughkeepsie Middle School students as an acknowledgment of their in-school achievements this year. The new Board of Education awards would be presented to Poughkeepsie Middle School students at each grade level on an annual basis. Board Trustee Bob Creedon was so impressed with the work of the sixth graders that he purchased goodies as a form of appreciation on behalf of the Board of Education.

Take a trip to Oz with Krieger Elementary

Join Dorothy, Toto and all the “Wizard of Oz” characters March 8 at 6 p.m. for a public performance of this year’s spring musical at Krieger Elementary School, 265 Hooker Ave.

This elementary school production is the second installment of theatrical production at Krieger Elementary School (See Annie Jr. 2022 production [video](#) and [write up](#)).

Teacher/producer Nicole Schmitt said she chose this play because it is one of her favorites.

“I watch it every year and I wanted to do something that wasn’t as familiar to the kids,” she said, adding that it also has important lessons. “It teaches them about friendship and working together.”

This year’s production is large, featuring a cast and crew of about 50 students with 23 of them returning from last year’s production of “Annie.”

Students who were in supporting roles last year have moved up to leading roles, Schmitt said, adding that the munchkins cast features many third graders who are first-time participants.

Fourth grader Heaven Murphy plays the Tin Man, moving up from her supporting role of Cecile in last year’s show.

“This is a really big role I have to play,” Murphy said during the first dress rehearsal Wednesday. “She acts super confident and loves to love others.”

Murphy said she is like that in real life and likes to help people. The most difficult part of the play is her dance because the Scarecrow has a similar dance so she has to work on not confusing them.

Murphy isn’t a stranger to the stage, having acted at Rhinebeck Center for the Performing Arts in “Kinky Boots” and danced ballet. “I like to act because I can act like different people and 200 people see me and



Above, Dorothy (Harriet Luongo), The Tin Man (Heaven Murphy) and Cowardly Lion (Alexis Hernandez Lopez) start toward Oz during a dress rehearsal of the “Wizard of Oz” Wednesday, March 1, 2023. At right, the promotional flyer for the event.



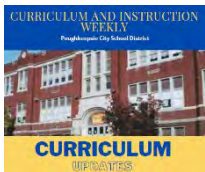


Dorothy and her friends are feeling sleepy in field of poppies.

I can be different people and do different expressions.” The Cowardly Lion is played by fifth grader Alexis Hernandez Lopez who played Burt Healy in last year’s play. “I auditioned for this role because I like lions and something about it made me want to be it. I’m amazed by the character,” he said. “I like having more stage time - it gives me a bigger chance to show what I can do.” The challenge for Hernandez Lopez comes in the scene when he has to lie down

in the costume. “I have to carefully lie down and fall,” he said, explaining that he has to avoid lying on top of the microphone. Together, he and the rest of the cast help Dorothy, played by Harriet Luongo, get to Oz and then back home. Schmitt said the show features sets built by her husband, Greg, and painted by him and the crew. She also received a lot of support from parents Ms. Luongo and Ms. Topaloglu who helped make the costumes and some of the set pieces. Thanks to a benefactor, Schmitt was able to add eight microphones (for a total of 16) and provide walkie-talkies for the crew. The cast will perform a total of three shows: two for students on the mornings of March 7 and 8, and then one for the public at 6 p.m. March 8. Admission is free and doors open at 5:45 p.m.

CI Weekly focuses on measures of success



The elementary education department is focusing this month on helping teachers with the instructional strategy, articulates measures of success. There is also an article on conceptual thinking and highlights featuring Poughkeepsie Middle School’s second Success Celebration and Universal pre-K’s singing lessons.

[Download CI Weekly for March 3, 2023.](#)

Upcoming events

Saturday, March 4: PPSTA Chipotle fundraiser. Help support the PPSTA Scholarship Fund by using code WEG7YAV online or by mentioning PPSTA at checkout. Chipotle, 15-55 Winslow Gate Road, Town of Poughkeepsie.

Wednesday, March 8: Chat Around support group for parents with Melyssa Gomez, Community Schools community liaison/family advocate, Clinton Elementary School, 100 Montgomery St., 8:30 a.m., or at Parent Empowerment Center, 55 College Ave., 5 p.m.

Wizard of Oz, 6 p.m., Krieger Elementary School, 265 Hooker Ave. Admission is free.

Thursday, March 9: Superintendent’s Conference Day, schools closed.