

SUPERINTENDENT'S BRIEF

Together, We are the Champions for Children in Poughkeepsie City School District

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Class of '23 scholarships exceed \$100K



Soon to be graduating Poughkeepsie High School seniors can ease some of the financial burden of college thanks to the generosity of many local benefactors.

During a ceremony on June 9, over 50 students received 75 local scholarships worth more than \$100,000 some of which were created specifically for PHS students, including [Board of Education scholarships](#). The amount does not include [QuestBridge](#) or [Gates Scholars](#) previously announced. They include the Lorraine M. Petty Roberts Collegiate Scholarship, awarded to a student who demonstrates a commitment to community service

and the recently created Franky Perez Appletree Scholarship, for a student who demonstrates the same passion and determination toward education as the beloved PHS counselor, after whom it was named.

Rick VanScoyk, PHS math teacher and graduation chair, presented many of the awards to students, commending them for the amount of work they put into earning the awards and district staff for helping write

recommendation letters and being a reference.

"They deserve all of the accolades that come with it," VanScoyk said. "Congratulations to all of the award winners."

VanScoyk encouraged the seniors to pursue their dreams, try nearly everything once and never hesitate to ask for help.

"Most people want you to succeed and you can do it," VanScoyk said. "The world is ready for you to explore it, are you ready for it?"

Noell Jones received over five scholarships, including the Officer Falcone Memorial Award, which fits in nicely with her pursuit of a criminal justice degree at



PHOTOS ON THIS PAGE: Clockwise from top, PHS School Counselor Franky Perez takes a photo of students who won Science Awards with teachers Katie Livermore (far left), Laura Tietz (center) and Rick VanScoyk (right); Noell Jones receives the Kerry Chapman Award from PHS Social Studies Department Chair Tiffany Ward; PHS Seniors Amira Ibrahim, Pierre Miranda, Mary Prindle, Marvin Juarez-Espinoza, and Gabrianna Jones proudly hold up their Scholarship for Academic Excellence certificates; Aida Hernandez holds the Franky Perez Appletree Scholarship with its namesake as Graduation Chair Rick VanScoyk looks on.

Lincoln University in Pennsylvania. She was happy and proud to receive these distinctions. "College is very important to me and it's a huge priority," Jones said. "I never expected to make it this far."

Jones thanked her teachers for all of their support and guidance over the years.

"They've been so important to me," Jones said. "I don't think I would be here without them." Tanaireo Nelson was one of three students to receive the Kappa Alpha Psi Foundation Achievement Scholarship which will help him pay for his tuition to St. Thomas Aquinas College where he plans to major in finance and business administration. He thanked the people who helped him get a scholarship. "They've got a good heart and believe in students," Nelson said of the benefactors. "It's a real blessing."

Honor Society adds nearly 50 members

The Poughkeepsie High School chapter of the National Honor Society (NHS) welcomed 47 new members during an induction ceremony and candle lighting June 9 at the PHS auditorium. National Honor Society adviser and math teacher Laura Tietz described this year's inductees of sophomores and juniors as a special group of kids who are excellent leaders that are always looking for ways to give back to the community.

"One of our pillars is service and they really take that very seriously," Tietz said. "They all have such good hearts."

Throughout the year, NHS students participate in a number of initiatives including running a recycling program, assisting with blood drives and volunteering with Teen Closet, which provides personal hygiene products and undergarments to fellow students in need.

Tietz and her fellow adviser and math teacher Katie Livermore are noticing more students want to be involved in NHS because of their older classmates' participation.

"The kids are starting to strive for excellence to make sure that they get there," Tietz said. "We'll have a whole new group next year that will be taking charge of some of our events."

While sophomore Otania Brown was happy to be recognized for her academic achievements, she most enjoys helping out her community during numerous events and in different shelters as part of NHS. She was inspired to join because of her sister Otavia's involvement.

"That's the type of person I am, I love to help others," Brown said. "I thought this would be a great organization to be a part of."



Some of the 47 new PHS National Honor Society inductees: Kimberly Garcia and Yaquelin Antonio-Lopez (above) pose with their certificates. At left Pierre Simon Miranda with his family.



PHS Principal Phee Simpson recognizes last year's and this year's inductees.

In middle school, Jazylo Alexis-Taylor, now a junior, never thought that he would have good enough grades to achieve an honor like being inducted into NHS. Now his grades are in the 90s and he got involved with NHS because he likes volunteering his time by cleaning up Poughkeepsie's streets. "Since I have good grades and since I like helping out my community, I might as well do something in school that involves that," Alexis-Taylor said. "You don't just want to sit around and waste your time in high school, when you can do something amazing in the National Honor Society." A reception was held in the lobby afterward.

ELC kicks off district moving up ceremonies

Kindergartners from the Early Learning Center filled the Poughkeepsie Middle School stage Wednesday for the first in a series of moving up ceremonies from Poughkeepsie City School District schools. Principal Nadine Dargan moved things along with precision, recognizing 71 students in four classes (Grant, Runza, Faircloth, Willis) who will move on to first grade at Clinton, Krieger, Morse or Warring elementary schools next year in less than 45 minutes.

The ceremony began with a processional to "Pomp and Circumstance" followed by the Pledge of Allegiance, and then time - by class - for parents to capture photos of their child.

"We prepped the kids to look at you so you can take photos. Smile, hold those tears back because we don't want our babies crying," Dargan said. "We want them excited about this opportunity." Parents and relatives who attended were treated to student performances of three songs. Then, each teacher read their students' names.

Separate celebrations were held at 9 a.m. and noon Wednesday and Thursday to accommodate all the classes. The pre-K moving up ceremonies were held today.

The Celebration of Learning took place in two sessions a morning session at 10 a.m. and another at 12:30 p.m., each with two classes.

Before students broke into songs that demonstrated what they learned during their time in pre-kindergarten: ABCs; 1, 2, 3s; days of the week, colors, letter sounds and motor skills, teacher Kelly Faulk praised them. "Our children teach us so many things with their questions. We are so proud of each and every one of them," she said.

Dargan told parents, "There are so many personalities. I encourage you to pour into them as their first teacher," before presenting the students to the audience as the Poughkeepsie High School Class of 2036. There were 72 pre-K students in four classes and 242 kindergarten students in 14 classes, Dargan said. The following moving up ceremonies are scheduled:

- Warring Elementary 5th grade, June 16, 9 a.m.
- Morse Elementary 5th grade, June 20, 10 a.m. at PMS
- Krieger Elementary 5th grade, June 21, 9 a.m.
- Clinton Elementary 5th grade, June 21, 1 p.m. at PMS
- PMS 8th grade, June 22, 4 p.m.



Students in four ELC kindergarten classes sing and dance as part of the first in a series of moving up ceremonies in the district.

[SEE MORE PHOTOS ONLINE](#)

Grant, student involvement help PHS garden grow

Students are learning about gardening and creating food that will be used in the Poughkeepsie High School cafeteria as part of a U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Farm to School grant awarded prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Work on the new Poughkeepsie High School garden began this school year as students returned in-person and school counselor Franky Perez was appointed to oversee the project. Students built raised beds from kits, filled them with dirt, helped tend to plants growing in the PHS grow room and then replanted them outside in the garden area located by the gym.

"I wanted a space where kids could come to without school being open," Perez said, pointing to the beds behind a partially completed fence. "This weekend a couple of kids came in and filled beds with soil and watered the plants."



PHS counselor and gardener Franky Perez recognizes students for their efforts at the Monday, June 12 ribbon cutting.

The \$34,500 grant pays for materials and supplies to create a food garden and seed room near the cafeteria, which will benefit as some of what is grown will be provided to the cafeteria for use in recipes.

"The idea is to buy seeds and teach the kids about growing - they helped plant, water and maintain the garden," Perez said. But it isn't just about growing the food. Perez said the grant was written to include elements of teaching students how to eat healthier. So, hot plates were purchased to teach students how to cook food such as collard greens, okra and cilantro.

Most of the work (75 hours thus far) has happened after school and on some Saturdays and involves students in a variety of clubs as well as students seeking volunteer hours.

Plantings include potatoes, peppers, tomatoes, cucumbers, lettuce, eggplant, peas, squash and broccoli.

The three-year grant has the potential for future funding, which Perez is already looking at.

Dutchess County Regional Chamber of Commerce members joined Perez, district staff and students for the official ribbon cutting Monday, June 12, 2023.

Students enjoy visit to aquarium

Morse Elementary School first graders joined their fifth grade buddy classes Tuesday to resume a Morse Elementary tradition of visiting the Maritime Aquarium in Norwalk, Connecticut. This trip was especially welcomed by the fifth grade students as they were the last class to visit the aquarium as 1st graders.

This trip comes on the heels of Morse Elementary first grade students' mural presentation to the Board of Education the previous Wednesday ([see story](#)) that displays aquatic life in its natural habitat.

The all day trip provided both grade levels the opportunity to interact firsthand with aquatic species and their habitats, teacher Cheryl Haines said.

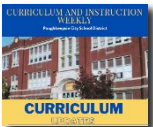
Community partners Hudson Valley Credit Union, Poughkeepsie Public Schools Foundation, Temple Beth El and the Jewish Coalition who helped make the trip possible and Dr. Felicia Watson, board of education member, Dr. Eric Jay Rosser, superintendent of schools, Gregory Mott, assistant superintendent of elementary schools, and Janet Bisti, director of elementary education, were present to send the classes of students and staff off.

Students wrote thank you notes to show their appreciation for the partners' support of the experience and provided it to the group before boarding the bus.

"By now it goes without saying that it never ceases to amaze me how the community continues to support Poughkeepsie City School District students and staff. What makes Poughkeepsie unique is the level in which our community understands the value in investing in our youngest residents so as they transition into adulthood they are prepared to be contributing citizens in our community." Rosser said.



Morse Elementary students interact with rays at the aquarium.



CI Weekly: A glimpse at next year, play photos

Looking to 2023-24, we'll add more manipulatives to support Ready Classroom, pilot Magnetic Reading in Warring and Morse for grades 3-5 and more. Plus photos from "Aladdin" at Krieger and "Zero Tolerance" from Culture Shock at PMS. Learn more in the [June 16, 2023 edition](#).

Upcoming events

- Monday, June 19: Juneteenth, schools and offices closed
- Wednesday, June 21: Board of Education meeting, 6:30 p.m., 18 S. Perry St.
- Friday, June 23: PHS graduation, 6 p.m., Poughkeepsie High School Athletic Complex, Forbus St.