



# Bulldog

## BULLETIN

January 2024

### Message from the Superintendent

Happy 2024!! This Bulldog Bulletin is filled with stories of our amazing students and staff members. The Beacon City School District is a very caring community and we are always striving to do more. This edition has stories of individuals and classes in our learning community going above and beyond for each other and their community!

I hope you enjoy this edition and have a great month!

—Matt Landahl

## Winter Concerts Wow and Warm Hearts!

Beacon City School District students filled the buildings and community with holiday cheer as they performed in various band and choral concerts throughout December, all taking place at Beacon High School's Pete and Toshi Seeger Theatre.

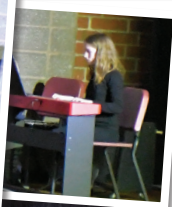
During the BHS Chorus' concert on Dec 5, the students sang a diverse selection of tunes from the classic "Carol of the Bells" to the more recent "Glow" which was originally performed at Disneyland's World of Color Winter Dreams show. However, the music did not end with the concert.

The chorus spent two days during the week of Dec 18 performing Christmas tunes at the four district elementary schools to cheers from students and staff. Even a bus driver was treated to their rendition of Mariah Carey's "All I Want for Christmas Is You" as seen in a video on the chorus' Instagram page.

J.V. Forrestal's chorus put on quite a show on Dec 12 with performances of "Siyahamba," "Still Still Still," "Over the River and Through the Woods" and "Shalom Chaverim" that were well received by the audience. Music teacher John Keener found that students enjoyed performing in the show.

At Glenham's December 14 show, the chorus sang "Sleigh Ride," "Hanukkah Fun" and "The Elf Theme" the latter of which featured students pulling out kazooos and playing them. This garnered huge laughs from the audience. Music teacher Julian Donaghey picked a mixture of songs that would put both his students and the audience in the holiday spirit.

*We hope you enjoyed the performances, and had a great winter break!*





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All Glenham kindergartner Hudson Walker wanted this Christmas was to see his father again and his wish came true on Dec 8.

Christopher Walker is a Technical Sargent in the Air Force who started a yearlong deployment to South Korea during Christmas 2022 and since then Hudson longed to see his father. Hudson made a wish to an Elf on the Shelf to bring him home. When the Elf left a note stating a big surprise was awaiting him, he was not expecting one so monumental.

Glenham Principal Cassandra Orser and Hudson's teachers worked some magic of their own to arrange for Christopher to visit his son's classroom. It happened upon return from a class field trip.



"He just opened his arms and said 'Daddy,'" Candice recalled. "He kept looking at him thinking 'I can't believe it's real.'"

Christopher and Hudson lovingly embraced for over three minutes leaving Christopher happy. "It's the best feeling," Christopher said. "Hopefully for now we'll be together." The Walkers hope they can stay together for more time during Christopher's next assignment.

## South Avenue Students Connect with Senior Citizens

Third to fifth grade students from South Avenue spent time between Dec 18 and 20 brightening the day of residents at the Taconic Nursing Home and Rehabilitation Center.



Rombout special education teacher Dena Marro, who is on special assignment at South Avenue for social emotional learning practices, led the expeditions where students engaged in meaningful conversations with the residents, and spent time coloring, drawing, reading and playing games with them. On top of this, students also sang holiday songs to the residents and younger kids created holiday cards to spread festive cheer.

"It was extremely heartwarming to see the interactions between the students and the residents," South Avenue Principal Kelly Amendola said. "This was only the beginning of our partnership between South Avenue and Taconic."



South Avenue Elementary students and staff spent the Friday before Christmas 2023 on a mission that was not quite impossible, but filled with holiday cheer.



Word spread school wide that a mischievous little elf was running around South Avenue finding its way into all of the classrooms and making a mess. It was seen eating spaghetti with maple syrup, just like Buddy from the Will Ferrell movie "Elf" and was even spotted on the roof.

## South Avenue Spots an Elf Off the Shelf

Some reported even seeing it wandering around the Administrative offices and on Main Street.

The elf was played by none other than South Avenue's own Principal Kelly Amendola, who seemed to relish the chance to be a master of chaos, judging by the pictures posted on the [South Avenue's Instagram page](#).

However, the winter fun did not end with the holidays. Following the massive snow-storm over the weekend of Jan 6, kids got outside to sleigh down a big hill near school.



## SARGENT YOUNGSTERS GET A FLAVOR OF COLLEGE

Fifth graders from Sargent took a tour of Dutchess Community College (DCC) on December 1 along with seniors from BHS to explain all the details in-between.



BHS calculus teacher Theresa Lucarini initially contacted Sargent's Principal Cathryn Biordi because she was looking for students from one of Beacon's elementary schools to come along on the trip for a good reason.

"Research shows that early exposure to college campuses can change the trajectory of a student's future," Biordi explained.



"As a part of the BCSD strategic plan, it was a goal to begin getting collaborative trips like this off the ground."

Each student had a high school "buddy" and they visited different classrooms and departments across campus learning about college life.

Biordi thanked DCC for being an accommodating host and noted that her students enjoyed spending time with their buddies.

Lucarini could not agree more and hopes to see more collaborative situations like this. "We had a few seniors literally fall in love with their buddy," Lucarini said. "They were hoping to see them again with maybe a high school visit."

## DUTCHESS BOCES STUDENT OF DISTINCTION

Beacon's own Anthony Talbot, an eighth grader at Dutchess BOCES' Salt Point Center (SPC), was named December's Student of Distinction.

During a December 11 Board of Education meeting, SPC Principal Melissa Murphy shared the remarkable circumstance Talbot overcame in order to get to where he is now.

"This kid is amazing," Murphy said. "Anthony Talbot is living proof of the official definition of 'resilience.'"



Talbot suffered second and third degree burns on his right arm, stomach, back and chest following a kitchen fire on Sep 1 and was airlifted to Westchester Medical Center where he spent a month receiving surgery and skin grafts.

Despite the pain he was in, Talbot remained upbeat and continues to make learning a priority, so he can return to BCSD next year. "He's been working diligently to start ninth grade here at Beacon High School," Murphy said.





## KJ Denhert inspires students

Internationally acclaimed singer, songwriter and guitarist KJ Denhert stopped by BHS Music Teacher Susan Wright's music class on Dec 14 for a melodic workshop that students loved.



Denhert's career spans 40 years with 10 albums and legions of devoted fans from around the world. She cites musicians as diverse as Stevie Wonder and Steely Dan as major influences, according to her website.

Denhert, accompanied by her guitar, performed for students, told stories and answered all of their questions about songwriting, singing and performing.



"She inspired them," Wright recalled.

One of those students was freshman Miguel Herrera. "One person can make something magical," Herrera said.

Some like freshman Tamirnes Bernstien aspire to be like her. "I want to be her when I grow up," Bernstien said.

Senior Kimora Henry described Denhert as "the embodiment of what you can do with passion and a dream."

## Holiday wreaths teach year-round skills

Students in BHS' Activities of Daily Living (ADL) class put everyone in the holiday mood by selling beautiful handmade wreaths, a project where they utilize valuable life skills.

The idea to sell wreaths, which are typically offered only within BCSD, started as a way to raise money, but also to teach students fine motor skills. The ability for them to create something in class and have pride in it has motivated them to learn how to budget, among other skills.

"The students really enjoy making it and seeing the excitement when someone comes in and says, 'Oh, I love that,'" special education teacher Rebecca

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## DUTCHESS BOCES STUDENT OF DISTINCTION



"He has made tremendous progress." Murphy recalled a humorous story when Talbot brought his cat Emily to school in his backpack without notice until a bus monitor heard meowing.

"It was a very interesting call to Amanda, Anthony's mom, but we can laugh about it," Murphy said. "When Anthony wants something, he will find a way to make it happen."

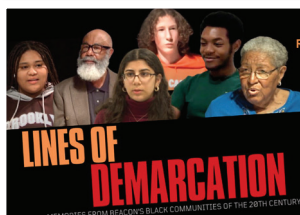
While Talbot was surprised to receive the award, he considers it a great accomplishment. "I didn't expect it at all," Talbot said. "I feel really good."

Board President Meredith Heuer congratulated Talbot, noting it was great to see him doing well. "Everybody's been rooting for you," Heuer said. "It's wonderful to meet you in person."

## BCSD Students Participate in

### FILMS MAKING HISTORY

#### Lines of Demarcation: An Oral History of Beacon's Black Communities



The film, which premiered on December 6, features interviews with seven senior

residents talking about Beacon's African American neighborhoods that no longer exist. It is the product of collaboration between the Rise Up Project of St. Andrew's Church, Beacon High School, and the Foundation for Beacon Schools..

The idea came from members of the Rise Up Project at St. Andrew and St. Luke Episcopal Church who wanted to combat racism after reading Ibram X. Kendi's "How to Be an Antiracist." They thought it would benefit students in many ways.

"This was something to combat racism and hopefully provide students with other career paths," volunteer Andrea Barrow-Williams said. "We considered this to be a pilot for future collaborations."

For 10 months, Barrow-Williams worked with six students to do research, conduct interviews and edit. The students provided different perspectives and insight, which Barrow-Williams appreciated.

"There were a lot of stories that were never documented," she said. "It's important to show and tell as many

different voices and not try to slant it one way or another."

Barrow-Williams is looking to arrange future film screenings at BHS, the Beacon Historical Society and the Howland Library and is hopeful to see it posted online for teachers to use in class.

#### History of the Bell

For Forrestal students, the subject of their film hit closer to home – it centered on the history of the school bell whose home has been at Forrestal since 1953, but its history goes back even farther.

With guidance from teacher Jennifer Fisher, students worked with local filmmaker Ana Joanes on how to make a film, as well as tell a story from the research they conducted on a field trip to the Beacon Historical Society.

Additionally, students learned about selecting archival material to include in the finished product, conducting interviews and developing a narrative. The project was funded in part by a City of Beacon Community Funding Grant and was uploaded to Vimeo in October.



[You can watch the film for yourself here.](#)

Cady said. "We're kind of famous for our wreaths districtwide."



Some of Cady's former students have even continued to make wreaths at home and sell their creations. "It doesn't always end here in the classroom," Cady said. "They feel pride in what they do."



The students also operate a small store selling snacks and drinks to teachers where they greet staff and restock the fridge

and counter when needed.

Like in any other business, the students have come to know the customers and their orders well. It gets them introduced to other staff members that they're not really exposed to," Cady said.