

A Message from the Spackenkill Superintendent



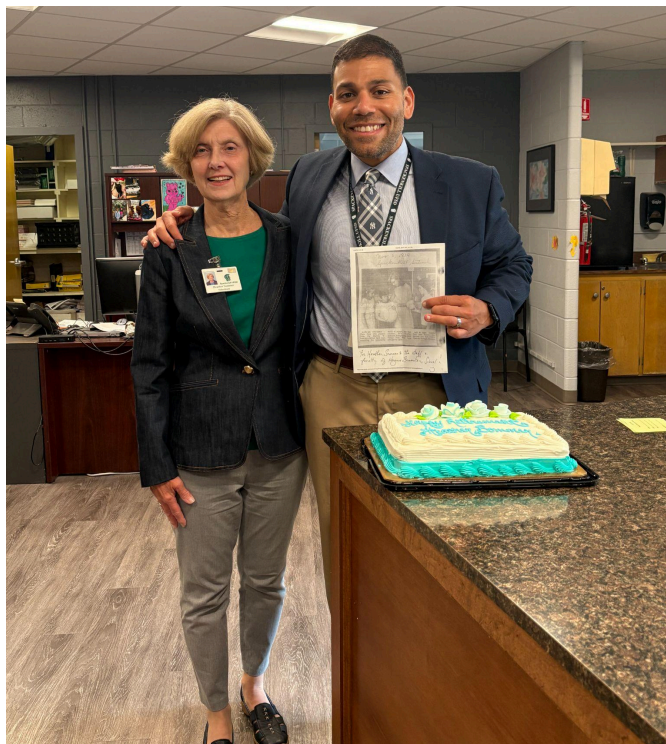
One District, Multiple Paths to Excellence

June 13, 2025

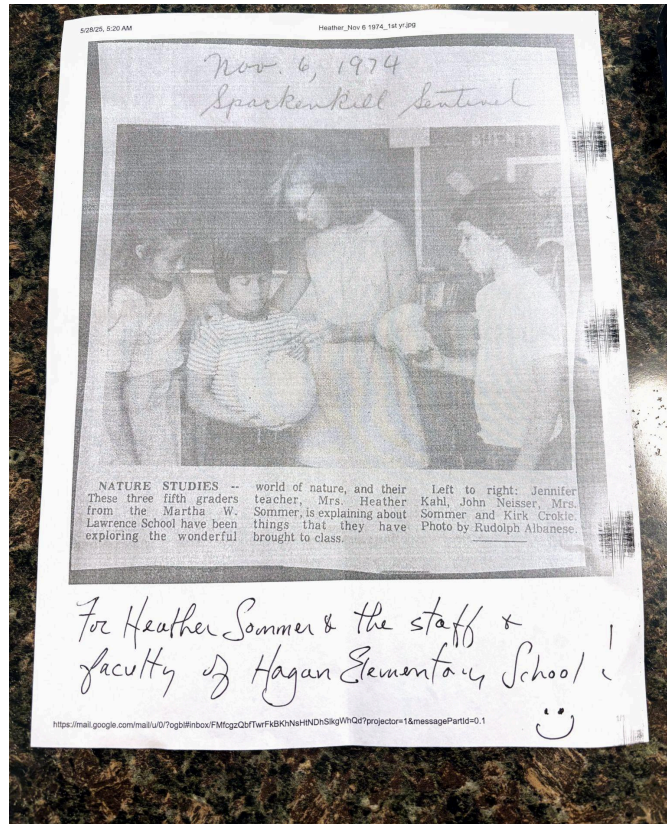
Dear Spackenkill Community,

As an unexpected finale to our 160th year, we had a special visitor come to Hagan Elementary School last week. Heather Sommer is a former student and teacher. She attended Martha Lawrence from kindergarten through grade four, Nassau Elementary for fifth grade (the year it opened), then grades six through nine at Croft Road Junior High. She taught in Spackenkill for a total of three years, 1974-1977, with her first year at Martha Lawrence and the next two years at Nassau. Mrs. Sommer's father, H. Quimby Heotzler, was on the Spackenkill Board of Education for 10 years and was president twice. He was instrumental in Spackenkill getting its own high school. There is an Athletics Award in his name, H. Quimby Heotzler Boys Track and Field Award, which was just presented last week.

Please read a reflection below by Mrs. Sommer.



Above: Heather Sommer with Hagan Principal Clinton DeSouza. Her husband dropped off a cake and a vintage newspaper article from *The Spackenkill Sentinel* for staff to enjoy.



Above: An article about Mrs. Sommer from 1974, her first year of teaching.

In Her Own Words...Heather Sommer

Fifty-one years ago, I entered the classroom for the first time at Martha Lawrence Elementary School as a new, and incredibly naïve, teacher. Now, all these years later, there I was again, returning to the Spackenkill School District as a one-day substitute teacher at Hagan Elementary

School to fulfill a needed requirement to officially retire from the New York State Teachers Retirement System. Maybe you can go home, after all.

I should mention that my teaching career spans over 37 years, and I have lived and worked as a teacher for over 21 years in Kansas, but Poughkeepsie and the Spackenkill School District are my first home. Martha Lawrence, Nassau Elementary, Croft Road Junior High, and Poughkeepsie High School were my schools.

Returning to teach here has evoked memories of my own teachers and later colleagues, like Angelo Verven, my fourth grade teacher, who was still teaching in the District when I began my career at Martha Lawrence. A long-kept bookworm pin memento from 6th grade memorializes a librarian who awarded it to students for reading achievement—a tradition I wish I had executed in my own career. There was Mr. Bender, the Croft principal, who tutored a group of struggling students for two weeks before the Regents Math test. I scored 88 percent! My ninth grade English teacher challenged us to read classic literature that has stayed with me to this day. These were talented, caring, dedicated teachers. There were so many more, like Mr. King (science) and Mr. Lou Mosconi (social studies)—too many to name, or even remember.

Both Mr. Rudy Albanese, the principal of Martha Lawrence, and Mr. Sanford Howard, principal at Nassau under whom I taught during my three years, set a leadership standard with which I compared all my future principals. I did not relish Mr. Albanese's requirement that teachers have their next week's lesson plans on his desk each Friday morning, but the discipline benefited me for the rest of my career.

Returning to the District on May 28th to teach Mrs. Moren's math class at Hagan Elementary was dramatic for me. I traveled here from Kansas with my husband and daughter—and I was nervous. Would I have to teach an unfamiliar subject, encounter a challenging student? But Mr. Clinton DeSouza, the principal at Hagan, and all of his staff welcomed me as if it were a great homecoming. And, indeed, it was!



Parents/guardians should have received a test communication from our new ParentSquare communication platform on Monday evening, June 9th. Depending on your phone type and settings, you should have received either:

An email and a text message

OR

An email and a phone call

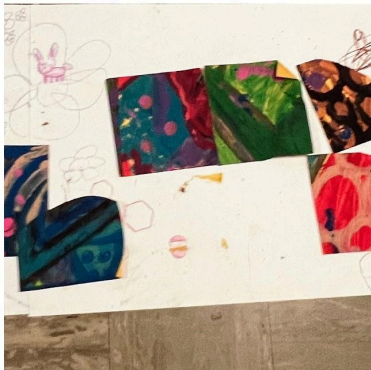
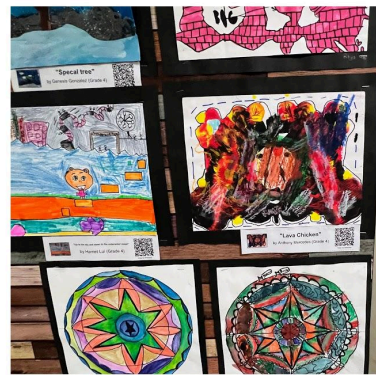
If you think you did not accurately receive our test message, please contact your school office to make sure we have the correct contact information on file. Please also check your contact settings in ParentSquare. Click [here](#) to visit our ParentSquare webpage, where you can install the app and check your contact settings.

The most timely way to receive our communications is by installing the app on your mobile device and allowing push notifications.

District Art Show

Despite pouring rain and an emergency flash flood alert, the community turned out in large numbers for this year's District Art Show. Art teacher Sharon Ciccone outdid herself with a sculptural mobile, created with her fifth grade students, that hung in the Hagan Elementary lobby. Visitors also enjoyed viewing a collaborative project created by the Hagan community on a long paper roll of mixed media art. The art room had plenty of hands-on activities, and many beautiful creations were

on display in the gymnasium. Students also enjoyed a scavenger hunt. Like last year, visitors could leave an admiring comment on a student's artwork using a QR code. It was a wonderful evening!







Photos above: This year's District Art Show was fun and impressive, with plenty of art appreciation and hands-on creating.

Senior and Athletics Awards

At the Senior and Athletics Awards on June 4th, coaches and teachers praised Spackenkill athletes and scholars for their hard work this year and throughout their high school careers. There were many entertaining anecdotes that highlighted the warm bonds between members of the Spackenkill community. Students received scholarships, PTA Recognition Awards, Music Awards, Citizenship & Community Service Awards, and Academic Excellence Awards. Athletes were celebrated for outstanding accomplishments in their sport as well as with sportsmanship and memorial awards. Afterward, families enjoyed refreshments in the lobby. Congratulations to our seniors!

Read the [Senior Athletics Awards Program](#)

Read the [Senior Recognition & Awards Program](#)







Photos above: Congratulations to the recipients of Athletics Awards.





Photos above: Congratulations to the recipients of Senior Awards.

Chamber Foundation Scholarship Winners



The Chamber Foundation has announced winners of their scholarship program. Congratulations to Nathaniel Ruiz for receiving the Jeffrey B. Senft Memorial Scholarship and Jonnathon Guallpa for receiving the Linda and Steven Lant Family Scholarship. This recognition reflects their exceptional academic achievements, leadership qualities, and commitment to excellence



WELCOME
BACK



to Nassau
Peter Bi

Todd Middle School student Peter Bi visited Mrs. Albers's kindergarten students to give back and inspire the next generation. For his ELA project in Mr. Shanks's class at the middle school, Peter created a mock non-profit business plan to support English Language Learners in his community. He attributes his success to the support he received at Nassau during his time as an ENL student. Peter is grateful for the guidance and encouragement he received from his teachers when he entered first grade as an Entering-level ENL student. Peter decided to pay it forward by sharing his journey and encouraging younger students to work hard and believe in themselves. He was a natural in the classroom, enthusiastically teaching action words to our students and engaging them with energy and confidence. We are so proud of you, Peter!



Hagan Field Day

With the theme 2025 Salute to Our Heroes, Hagan's field day featured activity stations that honored those who serve, from EMTs to hospital workers and the Armed Forces. A special feature this year was a water spray that doused students as they danced together. A big thank you to the volunteers

and our PTA!



Above: Relay races and water slides were part of the fun.



Click [here](#) or on the video above to watch scenes from Hagan Field Day, including a race in costume. The runners are Bill Murin, Tim Molon, Abbey Kennedy, Brian Alnwick, Clinton De Souza, Stephen Merrill, and student runner Katie Darcy. Dinosaur Tim Molon came in first!

Math Team News

Dr. Japheth Wood, Lead Coach for the Upstate New York Math Team and math professor at Bard College, has announced that Spackenkill students competed with strong results in a national-level math competition. Only seven students in total were selected from the Hudson Valley for the

upstate team, four of them from Spackenkill. Congratulations to seniors Daniel Johnson and Max Victor, junior Sayeed Hossain, and sophomore Yuan (Max) Yin.



Above: The Upstate New York Math Team at ARML (Penn State) with coaches Dr. Matthew Babbitt (Fort Edward) and Dr. Anthony Villani (Rochester).

A Big Thank You from Nassau

Throughout the month of May, Nassau staff took on the Staff May Walking Challenge. Participants earned a chance to win items in a raffle. Thank you to the Nassau families and businesses who generously donated to the raffle!



May is Mental Health Awareness Month

Thank you to our local businesses for sponsoring our
Mental Health Walking Challenge!



Be kind to your mind



**1572 US-9, Wappingers Falls
(945) 632-2336**



1 Spackenkill Road

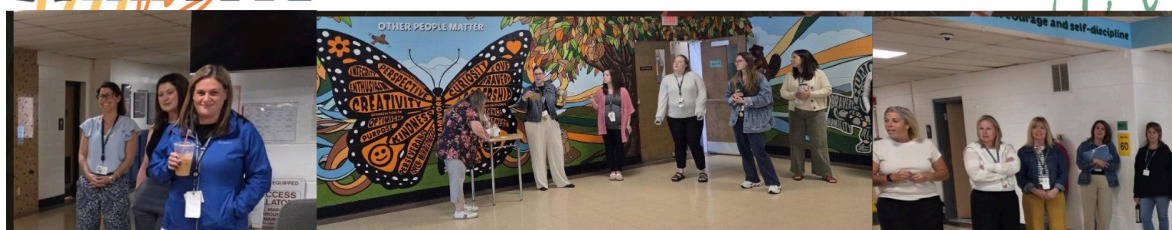
CLASS OF 2020



**35 Main Street
Poughkeepsie, NY 12601
TEL: 845-471-1773**



**404 Manchester Rd
845-204-9621**



Above: Thank you to these local businesses! Our May Walking Challenge participants are shown at the raffle.

A Very International YAR Picnic

YAR (Youth Against Racism) held its end-of-year culture picnic last week, and it was a hit, despite the hot temperatures! Club members sampled many different appetizers and desserts from countries all over the world. The club looks forward to more great events next year!



Two photos above: YAR Club enjoyed a delicious picnic with a wide range of foods.

Disney Magic

The Spackenkill High School Chorus, Orchestra, and Bands recently went on a once-in-a-lifetime adventure to Walt Disney World in Orlando, Florida. The four-day trip was a magical experience for all students and faculty involved. The groups had to submit audition videos, then were selected to perform for the public at the Waterside Stage in Disney Springs. Following their performance, students had the opportunity to enjoy Magic Kingdom and Hollywood Studios. Their performances were very well received, and the students had a phenomenal time in the parks.







Photos above: The music department Disney trip was truly magical.

Just a reminder that next Thursday, June 19th, is the Juneteenth holiday and the District will be closed. Happy Father's Day!

Sincerely,

Paul M. Fanuele, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools



Please see flyer(s) that may be of interest:

[Art Effect Summer and Junior Art Institute](#)

[Art Effect Summer Arts Camp at Oakwood Friends](#)

Spackenkill Union Free School District

15 Croft Road, Poughkeepsie, NY 12603; 845.463.7800

Established 1865