



Infant and toddler specialist Kathleen Harland of the Capital District Child Care Council and toddler Zanovia Evans explored musical instruments during the first Play, Learn, Soar on Sept. 25 at Arbor Hill Elementary School.

Playgroup focused on tiny learners

The youngest future Falcons in the City School District of Albany enrolled in their first ever class Sept. 25. It's called "Play, Learn, Soar," a brand-new early education program offered to infants and children up to age 3 at Arbor Hill Elementary School.

"I want them to make friends and be comfortable with other people," said Elaine Evans, who attended with her 8- and 19-month-olds. "Then they won't be nervous when they start school."

The monthly playdate allows caregivers and their children to participate in activities together and separately. The goal is to promote healthy parent-child relationships and early literacy, and the program stresses the importance of a strong school-home partnership.

"It will empower parents and encourage them to recognize the role they play in

their child's development," said Shanae Lawrence, Arbor Hill Elementary's community school site coordinator who implemented the first-of-its-kind program in the district. "Through this approach, we hope that it will assist with improving future student academic success."

The district has offered more than 1,000 prekindergarten seats for 3- and 4-year-old students for many years at all 12 elementary schools and at several community locations in partnership with local agencies. "Play, Learn, Soar" aims to engage students at even younger ages, another way the district is working to close the achievement gap.

During the first playdate in September, the five little ones who attended played together, read stories, danced, sang and enjoyed a healthy snack.

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School board approves new middle school location

The City School District of Albany Board of Education on Nov. 1 approved converting North Albany Academy to a middle school to open in September 2023, paving the way for a May 2019 public referendum on a plan that would not raise school property taxes.

The board's action followed a three-year planning process that included input from families, community members and district staff. The resulting project will be financed entirely with savings in the district's Capital Reserve Fund and New York State building aid.

If approved by voters, the facilities plan would allow the district to move all sixth-graders to middle school. Currently, there are 255 sixth-graders (about 38 percent of the district's total sixth-grade enrollment) in elementary schools due to space limitations.

The three current middle schools – Edmund J. O'Neal Middle School of

Excellence, Stephen and Harriet Myers Middle School and William S. Hackett Middle School – aren't big enough to fit all students in grades 6-8.

Albany was the fourth fastest-growing school district in upstate New York from 2012-17, according to the State Education Department.

Under the proposal that will go before voters next May, North Albany would be converted to a 650-student middle school that would open for the 2023-24 school year. Elementary students at North Albany – currently about 275 – would relocate to Arbor Hill Elementary School beginning with the 2022-23 school year.

Albany International Center, an optional transition program serving refugee and immigrant students, would remain at North Albany until 2023-24.

The board plans to update the enrollment forecast in 2020. If anticipated enrollment

Student achievement Senior gains confidence at Girls State

Irene Nelson took some giant steps out of her comfort zone last summer.

She was finishing her junior year at Albany High School and a shining star in the school's Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) program when her instructors recommended that she represent Albany County in the prestigious Empire Girls State summer leadership program. She was selected and supported by members of The Joseph E. Zaloga Post 1520.

Sponsored by the New York State American Legion Auxiliary, Empire Girls State is a hands-on, week-long educational workshop focusing on the traditions, institutions and ideals of America and the political process.

First step: leaving home.

"I'm a very family oriented person, and I had never been away from home for a week," Nelson said.

She put her nerves aside and journeyed to Brockport, where she lived in a dorm and met hundreds of motivated young women from throughout the state.

Their support encouraged Nelson, who tends to shy away from speaking in public. She found herself more comfortable talking in groups – another big step.

"Everyone wanted to build each other up and support each other," she said.



Albany High School's Irene Nelson.

She was energized after five days of intensive instruction on parliamentary procedures, the workings of U.S. government and ways to improve democracy as active citizens.

"I would highly recommend this to anyone who gets the opportunity," she said. "It's the best thing you can do over the summer, and it's a great investment of your time."

Nelson was an exemplary cadet at the camp, something the Zaloga American Legion post has come to expect from Albany High students.

"They're coming back to us every year because they like the quality of the candidates from Albany High School," said JROTC instructor and retired Army Major Dave Erickson.



William S. Hackett Middle School students posed in front of their building on Sept. 6 – the first day of classes. Hackett is one of the district's three current middle schools along with Myers and O'Neal.

allows, the district will operate three 650-student middle schools at Hackett, Myers and North Albany. Albany International Center would relocate to

the O'Neal building, which no longer would operate as a middle school.

(continued on page 6)

From the superintendent #allinforalbany



In case you haven't heard, we are "All in for Albany!"

This statement is part of our comprehensive effort to hold ourselves accountable for the success of every child. We acknowledge and embrace our commitment to our students. It is a mantra that embraces our past, supports our present and inspires our future.

Central to the endeavor are the premises that each job in our organization plays a role in student achievement; that all of us believe in the potential and possibilities of all our students all the time; and that this work belongs to all of us: parents, students, teachers, support staff, community members and business partners.

With these philosophies in mind, the district has built an instructional framework that guides faculty and staff interactions with students from the cafeteria to the classroom.

It is our goal to build the best possible learning environment using a holistic approach that will meet all students' academic, social and emotional needs. The approach involves implementing "high-leverage" practices – research-based strategies that work across a broad range of subjects and classrooms.

One such practice is culturally relevant education. We engage faculty and staff members across the district to understand how a student's background and culture can affect his or her learning and interactions with others. We also urge teachers and staff to use examples that are relevant to their students' daily lives and encourage positive participation in school.

In addition, we strive to tailor our learning environment in a way that meets our students' academic, social and emotional needs. In the classroom, we call this differentiation. Our faculty and staff have participated in professional development whereby these practices may be embedded in our everyday work. We make every effort to give the students what they need so they can master the work directly before them and be prepared go onto more challenging classes and opportunities.

All district employees are connected to each other in the work we do. Every division and every department strives to support the delivery of quality education, in all aspects of our educational design.

Together, we are committed to building positive relationships with students and families from the moment they walk into a district school or office. It takes all of us working on behalf of each of us to ensure that every one of us is successful.

We are truly, "All in for Albany."



**CAPITAL
education**

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Please direct comments about the newsletter, story ideas and questions to Ron Lesko at (518) 475-6065 or rlesko@albany.k12.ny.us, or Lisa Angerame at (518) 475-6066 or langerame@albany.k12.ny.us.
City School District of Albany
1 Academy Park
Albany, New York 12207

Voices | Q: What motivates you to work hard in school?



What motivates me to be a good student is believing in myself and never giving up. I always keep a mindset that anything is possible. I know that all things I do now contribute to my life in the future so I focus in school and strive to do the best in all subject areas. Doing this will hopefully allow me to achieve my goals of going to college and becoming a pediatric oncologist.

– Amy Aboki, eighth grade
William S. Hackett Middle School



My goal is to make the world better with technology, and education is the way that I will achieve this goal. So I study hard, do extracurricular activities and prepare myself for the future. There will be challenges in school, but I cannot achieve my goals and dreams if I don't learn now.

– Kevin Deng, eighth grade
Stephen and Harriet Myers Middle School



My family is what drives me the most: my mom, grandma and my sister. I want to do something more with my life and the amount of support and encouragement is the best thing they could give me. The more they support me, the more it drives me to do better. They expect good things from me.

– Lamont Hill, senior
Albany High School



What motivates me to work hard in school is that I'm preparing for my future. Having good grades will follow you all your life. You need to work hard to get what you want. Grades are an indication of your potential. Most programs will look at your candidature holistically, but grades play a huge role. I am motivated by my goals and hope to become successful in the future.

– KayLeisha Lopez, senior
Albany High School



What motivates me to work hard in school is the way it makes me feel. For example, I'm pretty sure it's kind of impossible not to smile just a little bit when your parent or anyone, really, is talking about how good you did in school. Another reason is because of the future. If I get amazing grades, I can get into a really good high school and college, not only that but for completely free if I get a scholarship.

– Nareem Turner Thompson, sixth grade
Thomas O'Brien Academy of Science and Technology (TOAST)



I work hard in school so I can learn many things. I like to learn my times tables in math. It makes me feel good when I learn new stuff every day. My mom teaches me at home, too. We have math flash cards at home, and sometimes Ms. O'Brien gives me extra flash cards to practice. When I get a good grade on my tests, my mom feels proud of me.

– Nur Yusof, third grade
Philip Schuyler Achievement Academy

Our vision, mission and goals

In the fall of 2017, the City School District of Albany developed the following vision statement, mission statement and goals under the leadership of Superintendent Kaweeda G. Adams. These values guide the district's work in all areas as we work together to raise achievement for each of our approximately 9,500 students.

Our vision

The City School District of Albany will be a district of excellence with caring relationships and engaging learning experiences that provide equitable opportunities for all students to reach their potential.

Our mission

The mission of the City School District of Albany is to work in partnership with our diverse community to engage every learner in a robust educational program designed to provide the knowledge and skills necessary for success.

Our goals

- Increase student achievement in early literacy, close the achievement gaps and increase graduation rate by focusing on the unique factors that impact student success
- Enhance the delivery of quality instruction by providing our teachers and staff with high-level, meaningful professional development to promote student growth and proficiency
- Build our leadership capacity and increase accountability through ongoing professional growth opportunities designed to improve effective leadership in our organization
- Empower families to support the success of their children through relationships of mutual respect and clear and effective communication
- Partner with our diverse community, including local businesses and community leaders, to engage and empower stakeholders in the wrap-around services needed to support our students



A look inside our community schools

State funding to transform six City School District of Albany schools into community schools has resulted in an array of innovative programs tailored to meet the specific needs of each school and its families.

A community school acts as a neighborhood hub that provides assistance to students and their families during and beyond the regular school day. Services are provided either directly or via partnership with an existing community organization; each school consulted with its families to determine what unique programs to provide.

Boosting student achievement by helping students and their families together is a hallmark of district community schools, which received a total of \$9.9 million from the state during the last three years.

Here's a snapshot of one activity among many provided at each of the district's community schools.

Arbor Hill Elementary School

Elementary-aged students aren't the only ones learning this year at Arbor Hill Elementary. Fifth-grade teacher Rich Gargiula and University at Albany School of Education Professor Matt LaFave have formed a partnership that's led to a special bond between their two groups of students. Every Tuesday and Thursday, LaFave's college class runs an after-school enrichment program for 35 Arbor Hill students in first through fifth grades. It starts with a snack and ice-breaker activity, then there's a science project started by UAlbany students and completed by Arbor Hill students. The afternoon ends with character development and homework help. After the elementary school students leave at 6 p.m., LaFave holds a graduate-level college class for his students in an Arbor Hill classroom.

Giffen Memorial Elementary School

Twice a month, 25 Giffen Memorial Elementary School students attend school six days a week instead of the typical five. The Saturday Morning Enrichment Program, led by Giffen teachers and staff, allows for small-group project instruction that might not be possible during the regular school day. While the focus is math, science, social studies and English language arts, students are engaged in fun and unique ways with a goal of increasing proficiency on the state exams. Lunch is provided by the South End Children's Café and the half-day programming allows students and staff to create positive relationships in a more informal setting.

Philip Schuyler Achievement Academy

A first-of-its kind program at Philip Schuyler Achievement Academy kicked off in October. The organization 4th Family provides after-school enrichment for up to 60 students and aims to improve science success in the classroom. The group harnesses students' interest in sports by teaching them the science behind athletics. The intended outcome? Young people will have real-life technology and engineering experience. Additionally, the program's goal is to address attendance and behavior needs via direct mentoring for students who are difficult to reach in a typical school setting.

Sheridan Preparatory Academy

From nutritious meal planning to exercise classes and annual screenings, Sheridan Preparatory Academy has its students *and* their families covered. The intent of new health-focused educational opportunities for parents and guardians is to improve the physical and mental conditions of caregivers, which will ultimately benefit the children. It's hoped that expertise and resources provided by community partners like St. Peter's Health Partners, Capital Roots, Whitney M. Young Health Center and Cornell Cooperative Extension will decrease absenteeism due to illness and create a truly fit school filled with students who make positive choices and are ready to learn.

Thomas O'Brien Academy of Science and Technology (TOAST)

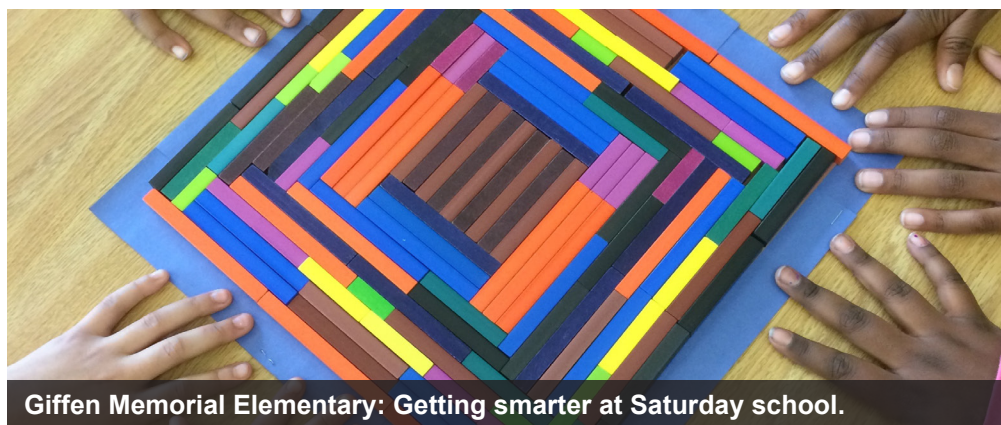
A new partnership in the 2018-19 school year at TOAST is taking students to new heights. Literally. After a school needs assessment was completed, St. Peter's Health Partners provided the funding for a 56-by-8-foot rock wall recently installed to cover an entire wall in the gymnasium. The climbing wall gives students additional exercise choices during physical education class and instills in them the importance of a healthy lifestyle. Since exercise also increases learning in school, the wall helps students to thrive academically through activity.

Tony Clement Center for Education

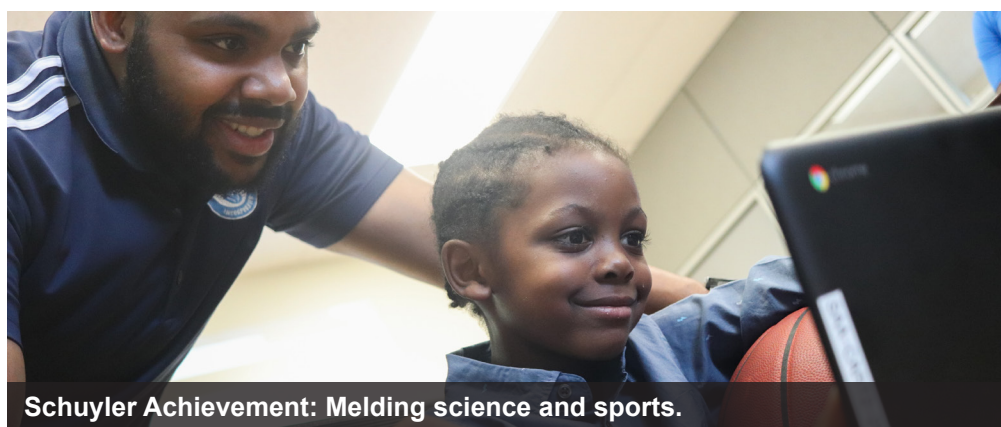
Every Friday in September and October, students at Tony Clement Center for Education traveled 20 miles west into the Helderbergs and, tentatively at first but boldly by the end, hopped on minibikes. The National Youth Project Using Minibikes (NYPUM) is a joint effort between the Albany County District Attorney's Office, Camp Pinnacle and Clement Center. NYPUM aims to develop students' self-esteem and sense of belonging. Staff use the minibike skill sessions to motivate students to continually work on self-improvement; students who meet their goals are eligible to participate every week.



Arbor Hill Elementary: Exploring science with college students.



Giffen Memorial Elementary: Getting smarter at Saturday school.



Schuyler Achievement: Melding science and sports.



Sheridan Prep: Zumba-ing to good health.



TOAST: Climbing walls for good health.



Clement Center: Motivating with minibikes.



Falcon Pride was on full display during Albany High School's 2018 homecoming weekend! On Sept. 22, Superintendent Kaweeda G. Adams (*third from right*) and Albany High Principal Jodi Commerford (*third from left*) joined football players (*from left*) William Traynor, Jaden Gary, Caleb John and Ali Jihad on the field prior to the kickoff against Schenectady High School. The excitement at the parade, game and dance proved that students and staff are, most definitely, "All in for Albany!"



Sheridan Preparatory Academy was one of 5,000 schools across that country to participate in Walk to School Day on Oct. 10. The annual event encourages families to walk or bike to school instead of driving or taking the bus. Community partners provided students with important safety tips and information about pedestrian and bicycle rules.



The 20-year reunion for members of the Albany High School Class of 1998 coincided with Homecoming. The group of alumni pictured here returned to their alma mater on Sept. 28 to take part in festivities at the Homecoming football game.



Albany School of Humanities celebrated the wonders of reading this fall with a harvest-themed Literacy Night on Oct. 17. Students completed educational crafts and many went home with free books to enjoy with their families. Above, second-grader Bezyn Capezza (*left*) and third-grader Elijah Kirkland (*right*) posed for a picture with Principal Marie Culihan (*left*) and Assistant Principal Amy Irwin (*right*).



William S. Hackett Middle School seventh-grader Anna Flanders, a varsity diver for Albany High School, qualified for states Nov. 1 with a ninth-place finish in Section 2 and a score of 411. At press time, she was ranked 39th in the state. Additionally, during the regular season, Flanders set an Albany High pool diving record.



The sixth annual Albany Booster Club Falcon 5K in Washington Park fell on another gorgeous day Sept. 23. Hundreds laced up their running shoes to support extracurricular activities throughout the City School District of Albany. Athletes, musicians, volunteers and sponsors joined together on race day to prove they were All in for Albany!



Delaware Community School celebrated its rich cultural diversity Oct. 12 during Hispanic Heritage Month. Students and their families paraded around the school's neighborhood waving signs and flags representing Spanish-speaking countries from around the world. Pictured above are students from Jennifer Topping's third-grade class.



Eagle Point Elementary School scholar-athletes were soaring at the fall Just Run meet at Tawasentha Park in Guilderland on Oct. 26. Eagle Point was one of three City School District of Albany elementary schools to compete in the cross-country style race. Students (including, top row from left, Chloe McCray, Ariana Barreto, Natalie Velasquez, Kiana Mullin, Celia Diefendorf, Julia Morgan, and bottom row from left, Christian Edwards and Gregory Milgo) demonstrated athleticism on the course and sportsmanship while cheering on friends and fellow runners.



New Scotland Elementary School students have been utilizing the WeatherBug program in class to learn not just about climate conditions, but math, geography, map-reading and more. Seeing how interested the students were in the subject, teaching assistant Marcia Greenberg (at right) reached out to WNYT meteorologist Paul Caiano (center), inviting him to meet with students to share a first-hand look into the world of meteorology. Also pictured are (from left) teacher Kristen Clancy and her students Tahmere Tarver and Landon Hulse.



During the first several weeks of school, "clap-ins" were held throughout the district to welcome back students and get them excited about the year ahead. Staff at Edmund J. O'Neal Middle School of Excellence increased the energy and made their "clap-in" a "drum-in" instead. Signs with motivational phrases and encouraging words also welcomed students during the event, like the one held above by O'Neal sixth-grade teacher Bridget Smith.



If you've ever wondered how long it takes to build a new playground, Giffen Memorial Elementary School has the answer: two days! The project was completed Oct. 25-26 thanks to help from St. Peter's Health Partners, hard-working staff and, most importantly, the students who will enjoy the play structures for years to come. Giffen sixth-grader Juan Padua was one of many students who helped with the heavy lifting Oct. 26.



Montessori Magnet School students became "scientists for the day" Oct. 16 at the Corning Preserve. The 16th annual "Day in the Life of the Hudson River Estuary" enlists thousands of fourth-graders from all over the state to test water, measure and investigate aquatic life, observe tides and analyze river-bottom mud. The research is then combined and can later be accessed by teachers for environmental lesson plans.

Dads all in for education

City School District of Albany fathers and father figures proved Sept. 18 that they are “All in for Albany!” About 1,500 men accompanied students to school district-wide that morning in recognition of the annual “Dads Take Your Child to School Day.”

“Dads Day,” as the event has become known, is a national initiative that began in Chicago in 2004. The district celebrated its 10th year of participation this year.

Dads Day is intended to encourage parent participation but also highlights the important part men play in their children’s lives and academic success. All of the district’s 15 elementary and middle schools as well as the Tony Clement Center for Education held events to honor the male role models in students’ lives.

District schools recognized father and father figures in a variety of ways: breakfast for dads and their kids, speakers, photo ops, school tours and more.



Stephen and Harriet Myers Middle School seventh-grader Jasiah Ruyol-Carrington and her father Davion Carrington on Dads Day.

Kids who have a father or father figure involved in their schooling are more likely to get good grades, feel better about themselves and make good choices, research shows.

Our thanks to all the parents and guardians who support their children’s education every day!

Great employees celebrated

With music and fanfare, the City School District of Albany literally rolled out the red carpet Sept. 7 to honor employees of excellence and staff members who have reached significant anniversary milestones in their district careers.

The ceremony – the Employee Recognition Celebration – was the first of its kind hosted by the school district. It was held at the majestic Palace Theatre.

Top employees for 2018 were recognized with a series of “apple” awards: Golden Apples for teachers and other professional staff, Ruby Apples for support staff and Emerald Apples for administrators. A single Crystal Award recipient was selected from each of those groups.

Crystal Apple winners were Kimberly Baker, Albany High School guidance counselor; Mark Pryor, Albany High School hall monitor (*read more about him on page 8*); and Jennifer Houlihan, district secondary humanities instructional supervisor.

In addition to the apple awards, the district also recognized employees who reached anniversary milestones of 25 years or more. They included Frazell Cunningham, who is celebrating her 52nd year with the district in 2018!

The district celebrated more than 90 employees. Learn more about them at albanyschools.org.



Albany High School guidance counselor and Crystal Apple winner Kimberly Baker.

Middle school *(continued from page 1)*

If the enrollment forecast predicts more middle school students than can be accommodated in three schools, the district will operate four middle schools: Hackett, Myers, North Albany and O’Neal. Albany International Center will move either to Abrookin Career and Technical Center or Harriet Gibbons Student Services Center. This will require a second referendum in May 2021 to renovate one of those buildings.

Once the board reviews the 2020 demographic study and determines the number of middle schools, it will create a committee of community members and district staff to help determine how the schools should be enrolled. The board plans to continue to use a feeder pattern, meaning students attending each elementary school will attend a specific middle school. The new feeder pattern will go into effect during the 2023-24 school year, when current first-graders will enter sixth grade.

If the May 2019 referendum is approved, construction would begin

with renovations to expand Arbor Hill Elementary School in the spring of 2021. Arbor Hill would remain open throughout the renovation process. North Albany also would remain open for Albany International Center students during renovations through June 2024.

The total cost of the proposed renovation projects at North Albany and Arbor Hill is estimated at \$26.5 to \$28.5 million.

An additional \$3.65 million would be needed if it becomes necessary to convert Abrookin or Harriet Gibbons for the Albany International Center. That decision will come after the 2020 enrollment forecast update. Project costs will be covered from savings held in the district’s capital reserve fund and from state building aid; no increase in property taxes is required.

Learn more about the project and the planning process at albanyschools.org.

Super season for boys’ soccer



The Albany High School boys’ soccer team’s tremendous season came to a jolting end Oct. 20 against Niskayuna when the Silver Warriors scored with 8 seconds left in the second overtime for a 3-2 win in the Section 2 Class AA quarterfinals.

In spite of the heartbreaking loss, it was an incredible season for Coach Dave Weiss and his 12-3-1 senior-led team. The Falcons won the Suburban Council Gray Division and rose as high as No. 11 in the state, the highest ranking ever for an Albany High soccer team.

Six join Hall of Fame



Hall of Fame Class of 2018: (seated) Jackson-Peace, Stewart, Lewis, Silverman; (standing) Markham, Dr. Lawrence Linnett and Jill Peterson – son and daughter of the late Henry Linnett, accepting on his behalf.

An assistant U.S. attorney, the first African-American registered independent lobbyist in the state and one of Albany High School’s most accomplished basketball standouts are among the six people who joined the City School District of Albany Hall of Fame this fall.

- **Joseph Markham**, teacher and longtime administrator
- **Marc H. Silverman**, Albany High School Class of ’99
- **L. Lloyd Stewart**, Albany High School Class of ’68

Hall of Fame inductions were held as part of Albany High School’s Homecoming festivities.

The new inductees also were recognized at Albany High during halftime at the Sept. 22 Homecoming football game.

The new members, inducted at the Hall of Fame’s 10th anniversary celebration on Sept. 21, are:

The district established the Hall of Fame in 2009 to recognize accomplished graduates, exceptional district staff people and community members whose efforts support Albany’s public schools.

- **Gertrude “Betsy” Jackson-Peace**, Albany High Class of ’80
- **Elander Lewis**, Albany High Class of ’86
- The late **Henry Linnett**, Albany High Class of ’36

Visit albanyschools.org to learn more about each 2018 Hall of Famer as well as the first nine classes of inductees. You also can download a nomination form for the Class of 2019; nominations are welcome through Feb. 1.

Playgroup *(continued from page 1)*

District staff and community partners, including the Child Care Council and Albany Barn, provided tips to the moms on how to best engage their children in their early years and offer fun activities that double as learning activities.

Academy and Thomas O’Brien Academy of Science and Technology (TOAST) are also community schools (*see page 3 for more about community schools*).

“I want her to experience something good for her so she can bond with me and other babies,” said Lashay Morris, who attended with her 9-month-old.

Community-school goals include providing services for students, parents and guardians such as mental health, social, legal, career, English-language, parenting and adult educational services.

The program is made possible through the annual community schools funding the district receives from the state (\$3.9 million for the 2018-19 school year district-wide). In addition to Arbor Hill Elementary, Tony Clement Center for Education, Giffen Memorial Elementary School, Philip J. Schuyler Achievement Academy, Sheridan Preparatory

The next “Play, Learn, Soar” playdate at Arbor Hill Elementary is scheduled for Nov. 27 at 9:30 a.m. The program is free and open to anyone in Albany but registration is required.

If you have questions or would like to sign up, please contact Shanae Lawrence at slawrence@albany.k12.ny.us or (518) 475-6628.

Sports Illustrated Kids recognizes Albany High boxer

Albany High School freshman Kasir Goldston has won 110 of his past 117 fights, making him the nation's number one boxer in his weight group and weight class.

Goldston's nickname is "Mazzi" because he's fast like a Maserati sports car. His dominance in the ring recently caught the attention of *Sports Illustrated Kids*. In October, the magazine featured the 15-year-old in its "On Our Radar" segment.

Goldston's matches take him all over the country and the world. This summer he competed in Serbia and Ireland, and at the end of November he heads back to Ireland for the Monkstown International Boxing Cup.

Goldston insists neither the boxing nor the travel interfere with his academics.

"They (teachers) give me my work and expect it to be done when I get back," he said.

Goldston was also a running back for the Albany High freshman football team this fall. It wasn't unusual for him to get up at 5 a.m. to train before school, hit the gym before football practice and then complete a third workout before starting or after finishing homework. Goldston credits his family – he's a third-generation boxer – and the City School District of Albany for much of his success.

"They support me in a lot of ways. Keep me on track. And school always comes before boxing," he said.

The scholar-athlete began competitive fighting at 6 and earned three Junior Olympic titles in 2015, 2016 and 2017.



Albany High School's Kasir Goldston (photo provided courtesy of "Sports Illustrated Kids").



Albany High senior and third-year Abrookin Cosmetology student Ne'icis Tillery perfects her wig-making skills in order to help local breast-cancer survivors.

Abrookin students help fight breast cancer

The love in teacher LaQuita Love's Cosmetology class at Albany High School's Abrookin Career and Technical Center was more evident than ever in October.

During Breast Cancer Awareness Month, Love's students raised money and created wigs that they then donated to women who lost their hair while undergoing chemotherapy.

"Just for them to have that compassion at such a young age, to want to give their best and want to make another woman beautiful, it's overwhelming. It's an act of love," said Fern Miller, a Stage 3 breast-cancer patient and wig recipient.

The wig-making was required work for the students, who are practicing for cosmetology licensure in New York. However, the process proved to be much more than an assignment,

especially for students who have loved ones with cancer.

"They can look in the mirror and be more comfortable with themselves. They don't have to look in the mirror and see no hair," said senior Vanessa Cossart, who has a relative living with cancer.

The public and Beauty Supply Warehouse on Central Avenue donated the supplies – about \$500 worth – to make the 12 wigs. Patients typically spend close to \$1,200 on custom wigs.

"Watching the students embrace the project, as a teacher, is really rewarding," added Love.

During November and December, services at Abrookin's Cosmetology program are free. Call (518) 475-6412 to make an appointment.

District offers free test prep

The City School District of Albany has a free program to help students who didn't finish high school prepare for the state's high-school equivalency exam.

Test prep classes are held from 4:30-6:30 p.m. every Tuesday and Thursday at Tony Clement Center for Education, 395 Elk St. Enrollment is ongoing throughout the school year.

Each student receives personalized instruction that is tailored to meet his or her individual needs. Instruction is done by a certified teacher who works with students to overcome their challenges so they can successfully pass the exam and earn a high-school equivalency diploma.

Class size is limited to 15. You must take the test-prep class in order to take the test. A student's level of preparedness will determine when he or she can take the test. Tentative exam dates are scheduled in December and June.

About the test

The exam, called the Test Assessing Secondary Completion (TASC), replaced the GED in 2002 as the only free exam leading to a high-school equivalency diploma from the state.

The exam tests student skills in reading, writing, math, science and social studies.

Students who pass all sections of the test will earn a high-school equivalency degree from New York.

How do I sign up?

Classes are open to Albany residents. You will need to take a placement test before classes begin to determine your level of understanding in reading, writing, math, science and social studies.

You can sign up for the placement exam and get more information by contacting Tiffany Jones at (518) 475-6526 or tjones-johnson@albany.k12.ny.us.

Volunteer spotlight

Name: Dorothy Thomas

Age: 72

Hometown: Albany

Occupation: Retired (after a career as a technician in Albany Medical Center's labor and delivery unit)

Volunteers at: Giffen Memorial Elementary School. In addition to being a foster grandparent to a Giffen student, Thomas spends four days a

week at the school helping out in one of the kindergarten classrooms. She reads with students, helps escort them around the building, assists them in their daily activities and brightens everyone's day.

Why she volunteers: "I love the kids. It means a lot to be able to help them, especially to learn to read and write. It's also good for me, because it gets me out of the house and keeps me involved in something that matters."



Volunteer Dorothy Thomas in action with two of the many Giffen kindergarten students she helps, Ma'Kaiah Curry and Harlem Russell.

Check us out online!



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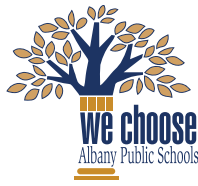
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Leading the way Meet Mark Pryor '86 Hall monitor, Crystal Apple recipient

Mark Pryor is truly all about Albany. He was born here, went through Albany public schools and graduated from Albany High School in 1986. Except for a four-year Navy stint overseas, he has lived and worked here his whole life.

Pryor is a hall monitor at Albany High. His job is to assure the safety of staff and students in the building. He also is a mentor and a role model, building relationships that help lead to student success. He was a 2018 recipient of a City School District of Albany Crystal Apple, an annual award given to the very best of a select group of district leaders who received Ruby Apples (*learn more on page 6*).



Mark Pryor

Q: In what ways do you interact with students?

I meet and greet them in the halls, encourage them, and try to help them solve problems in and out of the classroom.

Q: What do you like best about your job?

I enjoy working with students and the camaraderie with Albany High staff. I especially enjoy working with the staff here. There's not a person in the building I don't get along with. They all help me and we support each other.

Q: As a role model, what kinds of advice do you give to students?

No matter what you do, continue your education until you figure out what you want to do in life. Also, travel! The world is a lot bigger than Albany High.

Q: What's a typical day like for you at Albany High?

There is no typical day! Every day is different. Most days I first ensure that security is ready to support our students, greet students in the morning with positive (usually rhyming) messages, walk around the building for security purposes and see what the day brings me. Every day, I try to have fun.

Q: You encourage students to see the world. What's your favorite spot outside Albany?

I enjoy traveling, and every summer my wife and I travel either across the country or outside the country. My favorite places are our national parks, the kinds of places that are so amazing that no picture or words can describe how they really are.

Q: What's the best thing Albany High School has to offer its students?

Whether it's AP classes, the IB program, all the programs at Abrookin [Career and Technical Center], or sports or clubs, there's something for everyone at Albany High.

I've watched so many people – students, people I went to school with – who got their start at Albany High and went on to be successful. If you're someone who wants to succeed, Albany High has everything to get you there.

Alumni achievement



Musa Kanneh '14

Despite a rough start – or perhaps because of one – Musa Kanneh's outlook serves him well at his job at a local architecture and design firm.

Kanneh (*pictured above*) spent his early years in a refugee camp in Sierra Leone. He took note of the optimism in the adults around him. It made a lasting impression.

"You had all these people who went through so much, but everyone always saw the bright side of things. It was a great experience for me and helped develop me into who I am today," said Kanneh, a 2014 Albany High School graduate.

Kanneh arrived in Albany at age 11. He enrolled in Albany schools and thrived, attending the former School 19 (now new Scotland Elementary School) and Stephen and Harriet Myers Middle School. At Albany High, he took several Construction Technology classes at Abrookin Career and Technical Center because he liked working with his hands and wanted to build things.

But an internship senior year at the firm CSArch opened the world of architecture to him.

"I was like, whoa, I really enjoy this. I can do this," he said.

The internship morphed into a summer job that lasted until he went away to SUNY Delhi. He'd originally planned to study construction management but switched to architecture after a semester, never looking back.

He worked summers and holiday breaks at CSArch. His real-world experience gave him a leg up in college classes, and he turned to his coworkers at CSArch for advice on relevant classes.

"They mentored me. They took me in and helped me make decisions in my college career," he said.

Kanneh graduated from Delhi in May 2018 with a bachelor's in architecture. A job as building designer at CSArch awaited him, and he immediately started logging hours required to fulfill architecture license requirements. He hopes within the year to start taking the battery of exams that will lead to his license.

"His passion for the profession and his dedication to his work has quickly made him an integral part of project teams as well as a pleasant addition to the office," said Rich Peckham, executive principal at CSArch. "CSArch looks forward to being part of Musa's tremendous growth potential in the profession."

He's also paying it forward in Abrookin's Architecture, Construction and Engineering (ACE) Program, where volunteer professionals in those fields mentor students.

"Education is a big thing for me," Kanneh said. "I always preach it, and being able to work for a company that has that same love of education is important to me."