

SOMERVILLE SCHOOL DISTRICT *Review*

Reaching for Excellence

51 WEST CLIFF STREET • SOMERVILLE, NJ 08876 • (908) 218-4101 • FAX (908) 526-9668 • www.somervillenjk12.org

SMS HOSTS PENNIES FOR PATIENTS DRIVE

The Somerville Middle School's National Junior Honor Society (NJHS) Chapter will be sponsoring their annual "Pennies for Patients" Drive. This effort will benefit leukemia/lymphoma cancer research. The NJHS organization has undertaken this activity over the last several years and has raised and donated over \$3,000 to this cause.

As we give our students the opportunities to learn about positive character traits, such as caring, charity, and perseverance (the character education themes for December and January respectively), we also afford them the opportunities to practice applying these themes through everyday experiences. "Pennies for Patients" is a great endeavor that helps our students live the good character they discuss throughout the school year. Make this a family effort. Give your children special responsibilities at home to earn the donation that they will be making to "Pennies for Patients." Discuss how charity and caring strengthen an individual's personal moral

character. Take this effort as an opportunity for family discussions and reflections. Most of us have seen a loved one battle the disease of cancer. Cancer not only impacts the person who is ill but also leaves a lasting impression on family and friends. Your support of the NJHS's charitable efforts will make a difference and will be greatly appreciated. For more information, you may contact Mrs. Eckardt or Mrs. Miele, SMS NJHS Advisors. ■



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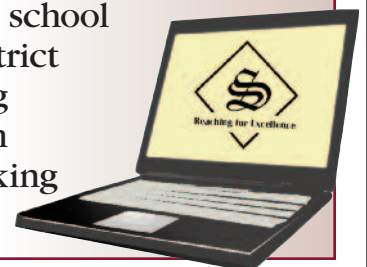


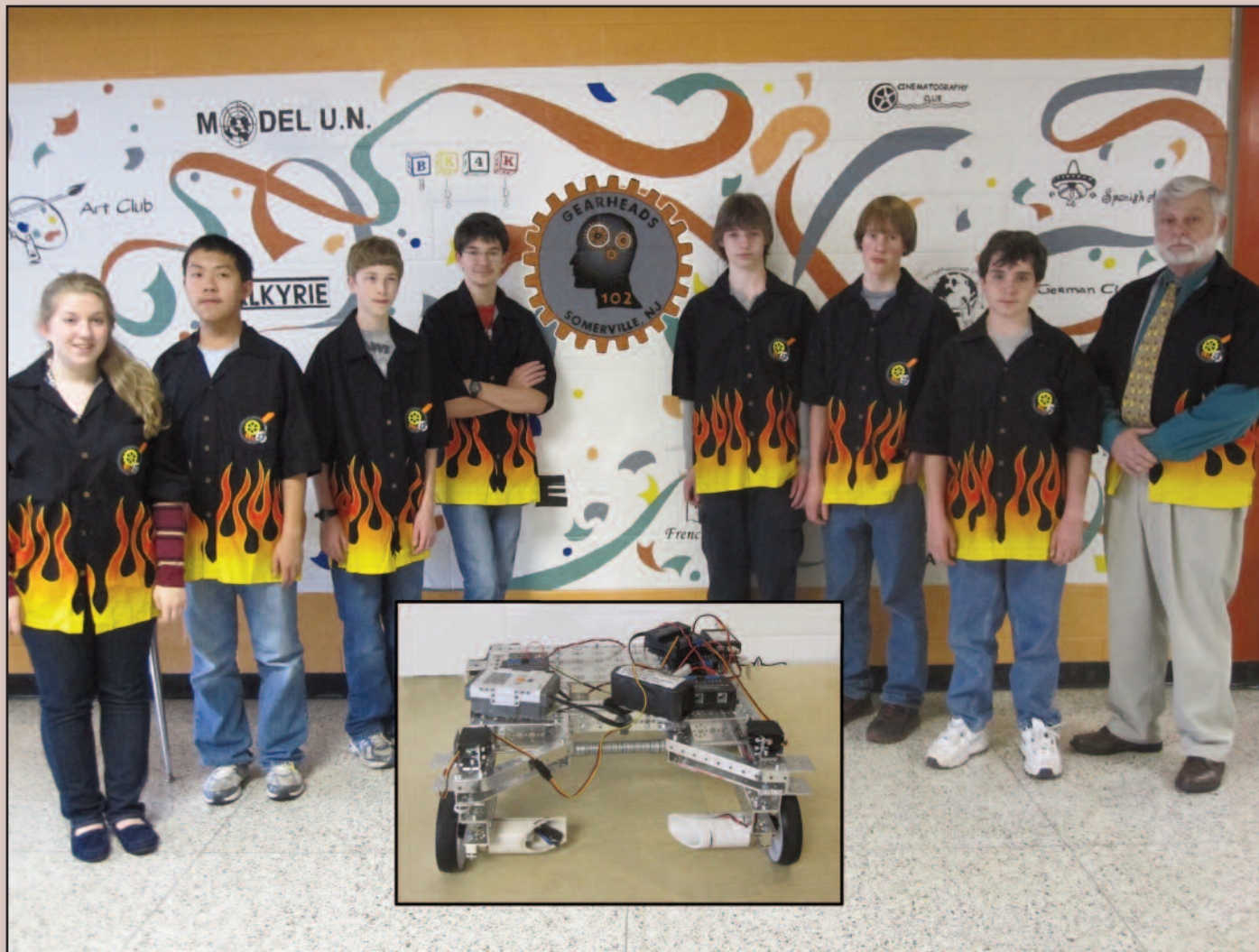
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WELCOME TO THE WEB
www.somervillenjk12.org

The Somerville Public School district is eager to share information with the community.

Visit us on the web for student and parent programs, school activity calendars, district events, board meeting schedules, curriculum documents, and breaking news. ■





Pictured L-R Ally Sorge, Anthony Keung, Andrew Evans, Mike Swet, Ben Parker, Coleman Merchant, Ryan Mahoney, and Mr. George Mellors.

INNOVATORS OF "THE VILLE" CONTINUE TO BUILD A LEGACY

The Somerville High School community continues a legacy of producing exceptional thinkers and innovators who were on full display at the First Tech Challenge for robotics at Columbia High School during the month of November. Sebastian Espinosa, one of the team members, summarized the team's experience. "Team 4923, the Microgears, is the rookie robotics team at Somerville High School, not to be confused with the older team, Team 102, the Gearheads (FRC). On Sunday, November 6, 2011, the Microgears came in with a robot that

could not even move around. With the help of another robotics team, the Landroids, the team was able to get the robot running. Out of the individual teams that were there, the Microgears came in 5th place. When alliance selections came for the elimination rounds, the Landroids, who were ranked 2nd, picked us to be in their alliance. With the Landroids, we were able to make it to the final round. The Microgears took 2nd place after the final match. They went into the competition with nothing and came out with 2nd place." Congratulations to the SHS Robotics Team! ■

YOUNG SCIENCE ACHIEVERS PROGRAM SELECTS STUDENT PROPOSAL



A group of three Somerville High School students were chosen to receive a \$500 grant for a project proposal that was submitted to the Young Science Achievers Program (YSAP). The proposal was submitted by SHS chemistry teacher, Mrs. Denise Lang, who will supervise and assist the group throughout the process of developing the project. The group members, Stephanie Baginski, Gabrielle Laut, and Joel Marlin, proposed an idea of creating a waterwheel system for landscaping pools that is powered by hydro-electric and solar energy. The students will participate in YSAP events, which include Science Day at Princeton, final report presentations in May, and a celebration event that will take place in June. Yet another example of staff members and students demonstrating the Somerville brand of excellence! ■



Pictured L-R Gabrielle Laut, Joel Marlin, Stephanie Baginski, and Mrs. Denise Lang.

STATE SENATOR KIP BATEMAN VISITS SHS

Somerville High School hosted a visit by New Jersey State Senator Kip Bateman as a part of the NJ

Legislator's Back to School Program on Wednesday, November 30, 2011. Senator Bateman spoke to a group of approximately 75 SHS students who are currently studying the legislative processes of government in a US History course. Students were given the opportunity to ask questions following Senator Bateman's presentation. The event was coordinated by Mr. Michael Skomba, Social Studies Teacher

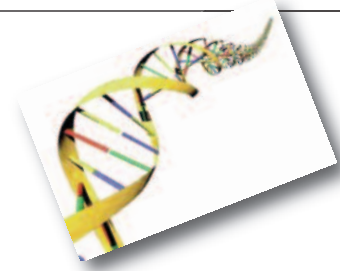
(and SHS graduate of the class of 2005), who provided a brief summary of the event.



Picture L-R Mr. Michael Skomba, Dr. Timothy Purnell, Emily Tomasko, and Senator Kip Bateman.

“Somerville students were given an exclusive look into the legislative process during New Jersey Senator Kip Bateman's visit to ‘The Ville’. Senator Bateman (R-16th District) spent ninth period speaking with students about public service and providing insights into the New Jersey State Senate. He spoke on topics ranging from his typical day to how the districts are determined. The senator spent the majority of the time answering student questions.” ■

DNA CLUB FORMED AT SOMERVILLE HIGH SCHOOL



Somerville High School has participated in the Waksman Student Scholars molecular biology Research Group over the past ten years. At long last, the SHS researchers have banded together to form an official club, the DNA Club. Taryn Pochon, Ann Smith, and Shivani Shah, the founding members of the newly-created club, presented the posters reflecting their scientific research in molecular biology both during the summer training session at the Waksman Student Scholars Program at Rutgers University, New Brunswick campus, as well as the research, continued during the school year. Taryn and Ann attended the summer training program this past summer and Shivani attended the training two years ago and has been involved in the research ever since.

Taryn likes performing the bio-informatics analysis and the laboratory work makes her feel like a real scientist, connected to other researchers in the Waksman project, as well as researchers around the world. The best part for Taryn is the 3-D modeling of the protein sequences (coded for by DNA) seeking homology among organisms.

Ann, who wants to become a lawyer, said she

likes the laboratory work because it feels as if she is on CSI and realizes that as a lawyer, she must have the DNA evidence for prosecuting criminals.

Shivani also likes the laboratory work and the computer searches for both homology and sequences already in the database. She prefers hands-on learning and finds the

computer blast searches interesting. Although performing pure research, Shivani realizes that sequences that the group identifies might help medicine and science later on.

Shivani has had two of the sequences she determined published from last year and an additional two sequences are in the review process. Ann and Taryn are awaiting the review of their sequence which codes for the protein polyubiquitin. The most studied polyubiquitin chains target proteins for destruction, a process known as proteolysis. When asked, Shivani said that she wants to study an area similar to this type of

research; it is fun, educational, and helpful. ■



Pictured L-R Ann Smith, Taryn Pochon, and Shivani Shah.



Pictured L-R Ann Smith, Sean Cass, Anthony Keung, Taryn Pochon, Aatin Dhanda, Shivani Shah, Katie Bryden, and Mr. George Mellors.

MCVDV NIGHT

On November 30, 2011, Susan Haynes, VDV Principal, Nicholas Diaz, VDV Assistant Principal, and many Van Derveer teachers served the families of Somerville with a smile at the 2nd annual McVDV Night. Working alongside the McDonald's employees, the Van Derveer teachers waited on the hundreds of people who arrived between 5:00 and 7:00 p.m. The line snaked through the restaurant while the stream of cars stopped traffic on Route 22 as people waited patiently for dinner. McVDV Night is wonderful fun and it serves so many purposes. The high school students who work at the Somerville McDonald's taught the teachers how to strategically fill an order in less than a minute, the best technique to fill the French fry containers (Mrs. Haynes's job all night), take the drive-thru orders on the computerized screen (Mr. Diaz's task), and do it all with a smile. The teachers were in fast mode all night! Needless to say, there were many laughs behind the counter as



the VDV teachers learned their new job. VDV students were able to witness their school administrators and teachers learning new things and not being perfect with each attempt but still trying. Parents emailed Mrs. Haynes and said that McVDV Night was "clearly the place to be on Wednesday night." A regular customer (a non-VDV customer that is) said he couldn't

believe the amazing energy, enthusiasm, and fun in the restaurant. That is our community spirit at its finest! Van Derveer's hard work and effort raised \$230 for a worthy cause; the money was used to supplement the Staff Angel Tree where families in need were provided with gifts for the holidays. This hard-earned money could not have

been put to better use.

The founder of McDonald's, Ray Kroc, said, "None of us is as good as all of us." This quote captures the spirit of the VDV community. Maybe that is another reason it was such a spectacular night! ■

VDV STUDENT COUNCIL SENATORS INDUCTED

On November 23, 2011, the Student Council Senators of Van Derveer Elementary

School were inducted. In attendance were the proud parents and members of the Van Derveer staff. In order to become elected to this position the students presented a speech to their classmates detailing the qualities they possess which would make them leaders, positive role models, and superior representatives of the Van Derveer students. The senators were elected by their classroom peers.

The duties of a senator include representing

the student body, assisting in the organization of school-wide programs, greeting visitors to the



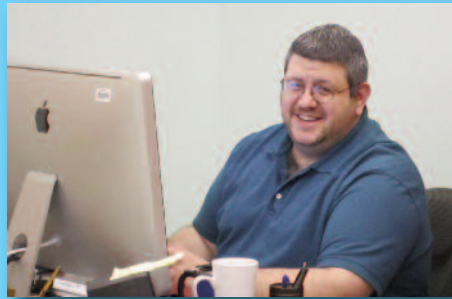
school and providing them with a tour of the facilities, and assisting with events, such as the Read Across America celebration. It is with pride that Van Derveer School congratulates Jessica DeSarno, Kira Edgar, Aya Farj, Tamia Freeman, Devin Hack, Imani Jackson, Kristen Tomasso, Bettina Tomale, Prescilla Trinidad, Robert

Wortman, and Walter Zeiser as our 2011-2012 Student Council Senators. ■

In November, the Department of Technology welcomed aboard Mr. Ron Bommarito.

Mr. Bommarito will be serving as the district's Coordinator of Technical Services.

Mr. Bommarito will be bringing his extensive expertise in technical support to the district to help teachers and staff have a great technical experience. Ron comes from the corporate world with an extensive skill set



and over fifteen years of experience supporting multi-national corporations. Ron's goal for his position is to make technical support a "seamless experience that is invisible to the end user" and to make the technology "just work".

Please join in welcoming Mr. Bommarito to the Somerville family! ■



ROCKIN' IN THE PRESCHOOL

Preschool students twirled and spun to the sounds of professional musicians during a "dance" concert in the SMS gymnasium before their winter break. Erben Perez, father of Tristan, a preschool student in Mrs. Barbara Andreotta's class, headlined the concert during both the morning and afternoon sessions. Mr. Perez brought along three other musicians, all of whom have performed with him on tour with Marc Anthony and Jennifer Lopez. Preschool students could not stay in their seats as the rock and roll beat of holiday songs rang out in the gym. Soon they were dancing and singing along. The highlight of the concert was the performance of our own Tristan, who showed every sign of being the next professional musician in the family! Our thanks to the Perez family for an experience that will be long remembered by the preschool students and staff. ■





VDV WALKING SCHOOL BUS

On Saturday, November 5, 2011, Susan Haynes, VDV Principal, had the honor of presenting at the Central Regional Best Practices Sustainability Conference at Duke Farms on the Van Derveer School Walking School Bus Program. As the expert presenter in a Transportation Learning Circle, Mrs. Haynes proudly shared Van Derveer Elementary School's successful walking program. In 2004, VDV launched a walking school bus program through a partnership with RideWise TMA of Somerset County. The five safest routes to the school were delineated for the students and families to use following an analysis of the town's crosswalks, posts of crossing guards, and quality of sidewalks. This has been a success due in large part to the strong partnerships among Van Derveer School and the Somerville community, especially the Somerville Police Department.

The walking school bus has been in full swing ever since the 2004 launch. Walking Wednesday and Foot-It Friday (added two years into the walking program) continue to be high points of the week for the students. They are provided with a ticket for walking and entered into a raffle to win a prize while the ticket tally provides data to the number of walkers and analysis of the program. Over the years, many organizations have joined in the walk, including McGruff (Somerset County Crime Stoppers' mascot), the Somerville Fire Department whose trucks led the bus, the Somerset Patriots' Sparkee mascot, and many more! Ms. Lindsay Frevert, Second Grade

Teacher, walks every Wednesday with the students. In addition to arriving at school invigorated by their walk, the students have learned about making decisions, pedestrian safety, and stranger danger. The students' learning also extends into the neighborhoods as they are reminded to be respectful citizens. In 2006, all Van Derveer students and staff received pedometers through a grant from United Way to raise the awareness of how many steps are taken each day. The Somerville Borough received a 2007 Safe Routes to School grant in the amount of \$250,000. Data from the school's

walking program was utilized in the successful grant application.

The Van Derveer School walking program has been highlighted over the years. Al Roker Productions on The Food Network showcased the school's commitment to healthy decision making in the spring of 2006. Newsweek magazine wrote an article in September 2007

outlining the benefits of the program. Raheema Ellis, NBC Nightly News Correspondent, joined the walking school bus and highlighted the program on NBC Nightly News on October 5, 2008.

All students, families, and friends are invited to walk to school each and every day! On Wednesdays, a group leaves from the Cornell Skate Park at 8:00 a.m. Join in on the fun when the group passes your neighborhood. Copies of the safe routes from your neighborhood can be found in the VDV Main Office. ■



We even walk in the rain!





SOMERVILLE HIGH SCHOOL BAND AND COLOR GUARD PERFORM AT SMS

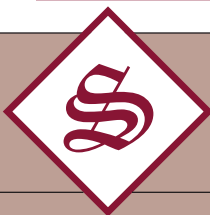
The SHS marching band and color guard took their show on the road to present a promotional performance at Somerville Middle School on Friday, November 18, 2011. The visit provided SMS students with a preview of what many of them will experience when they join the SHS community in the near future. The half-hour performance included testimonials from members of both the marching band and color guard who were former SMS students. We are very appreciative of Ms. Georgette Boulegeris, Somerville Middle School Principal, and SMS staff and students for being such gracious hosts for this event. ■



District Policies Available On Website

Parents/guardians can access district policies on the district website at www.somervillenk12.org.

Amendments to the district's policies are subject to periodic changes required by the State of New Jersey and will be posted on the district's website.



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- Van Derveer Elementary School.....218-4105
Grades K-5 – Susan Haynes, Principal
- Somerville Middle School.....218-4107
Grades 6-8 – Georgette Boulegeris, Principal
- Somerville High School.....218-4108
Grades 9-12 – Corey J. Jones, Principal
- Dr. Timothy J. Purnell, *Superintendent of Schools*.....218-4101

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- Mrs. Linda Olson, *Vice President*
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- Mr. Norman Chin
- Mr. Kenneth Cornell
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- Mr. John Prudente
- *Mrs. Melissa Looby

Questions? Suggestions?

Call the Somerville Schools HOTLINE at 908 243-1598.

Guaranteed Response Within 24 Hours.

* Branchburg Board of Education Representative