



PARENT UPDATE FROM DR. STELLA SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Woodbridge School District

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Stella F. Stella

May 31, 2013

I hope you had an enjoyable Memorial Day weekend. I was inspired by several events over the weekend that involved BRS students, including:

- The Color Guard and the BRS Marching Band stole the show at the Orange Memorial Day parade on Sunday, May 26th. People lining the streets cheered them on every inch of the way. Kudos to Mr. Letsch, the Color Guard and the Beecher Marching Owls!



Brandon plays Taps at grandfather's grave.

- My heart was touched when I saw a video of Brandon, a 5th grade member of the Marching Band, who, in full uniform, went off on his own after the parade to kneel and play taps at the grave site (Orange Cemetery) of his grandfather, a veteran. The episode was caught on film by Channel 8 news.

- On my way home after the parade on Sunday, I stopped by a nursing home in Woodbridge to see and hear two of our students --- 5th grader, Noah and 1st grader, Rebecca --- and their mother and father playing for and entertaining dementia and Alzheimer patients with classical music and spiritual hymns. The children played the violin for the seniors. In addition, Rebecca sang a dynamic solo of "Tomorrow" from Annie. The solo stirred the entire assembly. Their mother accompanied the children on the piano. Their father played the guitar and sang. This family is one of the many new families that moved to Woodbridge and BRS this past year. The family members visit the nursing homes in Woodbridge on a regular basis as a way of giving something to their new community. Noah and Rebecca's father spoke at last week's school board meeting to publicly acknowledge the wonderful year that their children are having at BRS.

- A boy scout company, consisting of BRS students, played an important role in presenting the flag at Monday's Memorial Day celebration in Woodbridge.
- Over the weekend, I had a chance to take a look at the new Eagle Scout project focused on sprucing up the LOOP. The Eagle Scout in charge of this project, James Letis, is a former BRS student who wanted to give something back to his school. Mr. Anthony Taddie, a physical education teacher at BRS, has been volunteering his time to assist with a project that enhances the beauty of our campus and saves the taxpayers money. *(continued next column)*



BRS Students from Boy Scout Troop 907 prepare to march in Memorial Day Parade.

These are only some of the things that I saw during one long weekend. There are many other acts of compassion, good citizenship and generosity that BRS students and families perform on a daily basis. This is another reason why BRS is so unique - a strong focus by school and family in promoting volunteerism, citizenship and character. ☺



Noah, grade 6, and Rebecca, grade 1 play for residents of a local nursing home on Memorial Day.

Thank you, Woodbridge

The Woodbridge Boards of Selectmen and Finance recently set the budgets for all Town departments, including the Board of Education. Our thanks to those Boards and the citizens of Woodbridge for their ongoing support of our educational mission to continually improve the quality of education for Woodbridge children.

Plan Ahead: Important Dates

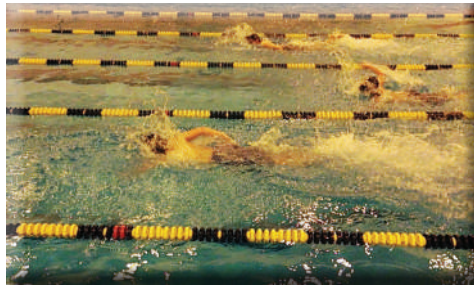
- Artsweek 6: June 3 – 7. Evening programs June 6.
- Sixth grade graduation: June 19, AHS 1 PM
- Last day of school: June 21 (1:10 dismissal)
- Summer Enrichment Pgm: July 1- Aug 2
- Extended Day & Town Rec: July 1- Aug 9
- First day of school: September 3



At the Orange Memorial Day Parade, BRS Marching Owls ready for the cue to start from Mr. Letsch, Director.

BRS Swimming Olympics

At BRS, the intermediate swimming program ended for the year on May 3rd, with a fifth grade and a sixth grade *Swimming Olympics*. These spectacular events are celebrations of the swimming unit of study, an important component of the physical education curriculum. Students had the opportunity to practice good sportsmanship, cheering for their teammates and encouraging every swimmer to do their best, no matter how well-developed their skills. Everyone participated. No student was left out. We are proud of the fact that every child leaves Beecher Road School with an appreciation and respect for



5th and 6th graders participate in Swimming Olympics

the aquatics environment. BRS's swimming program adds to the uniqueness of BRS. Thanks are extended to Ms. Simowitz, Mr. Hocking, Mr. Taddei and the many faculty and staff volunteers who helped with the *Swimming Olympics*. 🐶

DARE Graduation: An Important Transition for 6th Graders

The annual DARE graduation took place on Friday, May 24th. Officer Lynch did a magnificent job as usual, with the support of administration and staff, in organizing the event. The south gym area was packed with excited and supportive BRS families.

Dr. Stella spoke of the importance of this national program. Among his remarks he posed serious questions: Why are so many people here today? Why is there so much time and effort put into this ceremony? Why is the DARE program so important?

Speaking directly to the 6th graders, he said "You will face difficult challenges as you grow into young adults; DARE has taught you strategies on how to make the right decisions when facing peer pressure; You will always have the support of your family and school, but it's up to you as you move forward to make wise decisions – knowing how to say no to bad choices and yes to good choices. We believe in you."

Speaking directly to the adults, he said: "On the Monday after the December 14th tragedy at Sandy Hook, I met with First Selectman, Ed Sheehy, Chief Marcucci and Deputy Chief Ray Stewart. I asked for a full time *Community Officer*, and I asked that Vinny Lynch be that officer. Without blinking an eye, First Selectmen Sheehy said yes."

As of Monday, December 17, Officer Lynch, formerly our DARE Officer, became Officer Vincent Lynch our Community Officer in addition to being our DARE Officer.



Officer Lynch presents DARE Award to 6th grader

Officer Lynch is an excellent role model for our students. It's wonderful seeing him every morning outside the North Building, directing traffic, protecting our children, greeting and conversing with parents, children and staff. Besides teaching the DARE program, he visits classrooms, has lunch with children, serves on the school's safety committee. He does perimeter checks constantly. He is not here to discipline our children or to catch them doing something wrong. He is here to protect them and to help guide and instruct them. He is a visible presence that everyone can count on. Thank you Officer Lynch.

We are grateful to former First Selectman Sheehy, now deceased, for his constant support for our children and community. His initial action and support on Monday, December 17th, made our Community Officer possible. In gratitude for his support, his picture will hang in our school in a place of honor. We also thank Chief Marcucci and Deputy Chief Ray Sturart for supporting DARE at BRS and for providing us with a Community Officer. We thank the members of our Boards of Education, Selectmen and Finance for their support.

A special thanks to the **Rotary Club** and **Subway** for the service you provide to our community and for supporting this event. 🐶

Saying Goodbye and Thank You

- Brenda Knudsen left us as of April 1 to relocate to Massachusetts. She had been a Psychologist with Beecher since September 2003. She will also be getting married over the summer. We extend our best wishes for much happiness.
- Deb Carpenter left us on March 22 to relocate to New Jersey with her family. Deb has been at Beecher since September of 2008 as a Teacher Assistant in the Special Services area.
- Carol Offenbach will be retiring upon completion of the 2012/13 school year. Carol has been a Special Education Resource Teacher serving the primary grades for 21 years since August of 1992. She is looking forward to spending quality time with her grandchildren.
- Steve Katzen leaves us after 20 years as an intermediate grade teacher. His unique perspective and sense of humor will be missed by his students and colleagues.
- Ellen Regan leaves a team teaching legacy after 19 years in Grade 1 with Ms. Piascyk. Her enthusiasm, dedication and inspiration to her students as well as her distinguished leadership among her peers will be difficult to replace.

As part of the Beecher Road community, we will miss them and wish each of them much success in their future endeavors.

Sadly, we also said farewell to Clorinda Dzikas, a TA with Beecher for 28 years and the honorable First Selectman, Edward Maum Sheehy, after 34 years of service to Woodbridge. 🐶

Snow White on stage

Our BRS Drama Club was formed this year under the auspices of the Extended Day Program. The culminating event of the club was a production of *Snow White and the 7 Dwarfs*, presented to SRO audiences this month. It seemed as if there was a cast of thousands – children of all ages. The production was delightful. The children proved to be superb actors. Special thanks to staff members Jennifer Cooper and Teresa Ramia and the children of the BRS Drama Club.



Through a grant provided by the Jamie A. Hulley Arts Foundation, the Drama Club welcomed visiting artist Ashley Wagner. Under Ms. Wagner's direction, the children created beautiful sets and costumes that rivaled Broadway. Our appreciation is also extended to Kathy Salinardi, teacher and director of the Extended Day Program. 🐶