



A Message from Cheryl Nuciforo...

Superintendent of Schools

The school year has only recently begun, but it is already shaping up to be one of interesting and exciting opportunities. Already we are enjoying the benefits of improved facilities and the one-bell transportation system. As I walk through the buildings, I observe students engaged in motivating lessons and activities. Students are already proudly demonstrating projects and exhibits they have created. We are truly off to a good start.

As the year progresses, we are working to develop the best possible educational program we can offer our students. This will not be easy in face of the current economic challenges and declining enrollment, but with creative and innovative use of the resources we have, we are confident we will achieve our goal.

We invite you as parents and community members to be a part of this process. Whether it is through participating in one of the several active parents' organizations in the district or through serving on a district committee, even a seemingly minor contribution can make a big difference. We are working diligently to share information and solicit opinions, through our district website (www.chathamcentralschools.com), through public comment at Board of Education meetings, and at town meetings when there are major projects or decisions under consideration.

Since my arrival, I have found Chatham to be a supportive community, invested in the success of its schools and its young people. I look forward to working with you to provide the best learning experiences possible for our students.



School Buildings are Safer, Greener After Summer Construction

Summertime may be hammock-and-horseshoes time for some, but you wouldn't know it if you strolled through the district campus, where hammers and drills and welding torches were doing their thing from dawn to dusk and from school's June closing right up to its September start.

All the work necessary for school to open was completed on time, despite uncooperative weather throughout much of the summer, with "just a few finishing touches" left, said Business Administrator Diane Malecki. The \$6 million worth of projects, including structural and electrical work, paving, piping and roofing, was completed with no increase in property taxes.

"It's increased safety and energy efficiency through upgrading the electrical system at the high school and upgrading the alarm system at MED," she said. "The parking lot is much safer, both from the traffic quality and surface quality standpoints, the windows at the high school will be more energy efficient, and it's anticipated there will be savings in energy costs in both warm and cold weather."

The new doors in all the buildings are compliant with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements both with respect to hardware and fire safety, Malecki said.

"...it's anticipated there will be savings in energy costs in both warm and cold weather."

The entire roof of Mary E. Dardess Elementary School was redone. The new rubberized fabric-and-gravel roof will reduce costs in the long run by eliminating the need for patching and by being more energy-efficient. There was also a lot of work done inside MED. The building's electrical system was upgraded to make the alarms more efficient and code-appropriate.

Outside, a new walkway was put in from MED to the high school, where the elementary students get off the buses every morning and catch them every afternoon. The old ramp had a steeper

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Four-Legged Friend Swells MED Counseling Ranks

The Mary E. Dardess Elementary School has a fairly new counselor, who can often be glimpsed in the hallways or taking a break outside. She's about 18 months old, but seems to be adapting to her position quickly. She's white and furry and walks on four legs, and although her full name is Caring Canine, everyone calls her CC.

CC is a "golden doodle," a mix of golden retriever and poodle, and her job is to comfort students at MED. School Counselor Renee Morgan, who shares her home with CC, plans to invite students to write letters to her as a sort of canine Dear Abby. Children are willing to share things with a dog they might not with a human being, she said.

CC has already begun winning the children's trust in many ways in the more than a year she's worked at the school. If someone doesn't want to come to school, CC will often be enlisted to accompany the child from the bus. Petting a dog lowers stress levels, Mrs. Morgan said.

Students also learn self-control and responsibility from teaching CC how to behave. Some take CC for walks; students in Mrs. Hogencamp's third grade class (shown below) fill her water and food bowls every morning.

Mrs. Morgan said she often finds time during the day for outdoor counseling sessions in which she, a student and CC will walk on the nearby nature trails or over the fields. "It's amazing what they share," she said.

Dogs are also used for teaching reading. Students read to the dog because they trust her. "The dog won't criticize you if you make a mistake," the counselor said.

The golden retriever/poodle mix is considered a good one for school service because the retriever is a good, friendly dog, and the poodle is not only the smartest of all the breeds, it doesn't shed. "She's good for the kids to hug," Mrs. Morgan said. "She's big, but not scary looking. She's very gentle with the kids."



CC started coming to the school as a puppy of eight weeks.

"Last year she was much more of a pup," said the counselor. "This year, she's calmer." Over her stint at MED, CC has matured enough that she can act in skits in assemblies and keep her calm. "She didn't jump or get excited," Mrs. Morgan. "She did a good job."

Being a responsible educator, CC is going to night school to bring her certification up to snuff. She's passed her puppy lessons and her intermediate lessons; now she's working for her Good Canine Citizenship and Therapy Dog Citizenship diplomas.

CC is the first dog Mrs. Morgan has ever had. Although working with CC takes a bit more effort, she said, "it's worth it because of the response she gets from the children."





One-Bell System Up and Working

Though the new school year brings with it a lot of changes to Chatham's school buildings and grounds, one of the biggest changes students will see comes off the grounds, on their bus routes. The one-bell system is here, and it's working.

Buses are running on schedule and students seem to be happy and well-behaved. Older students have been identified to serve as bus mentors, offering an extra friendly face for the younger children.

It's called the one-bell system because the schedules for all three buildings are very similar, so all students will ride buses at the same time. The system was implemented due to declining student enrollments and the rising price of fuel. It no longer made sense for the district's taxpayers to pay for an expensive and energy-consuming two-tiered bus system. Throughout the spring and summer, the transportation staff and a task force of parents have worked with district administrators to plan the changes.

Throughout implementation of the one-bell system, safety has been a major focus. Cameras have been added to every bus for added security. Traffic patterns have been altered, and dropoff and pickup procedures revised, all with the intent of safeguarding the students. A road has been constructed behind Chatham Middle School, from Library Place to Woodbridge Avenue, to relieve congestion on Woodbridge and allow students to be dropped off behind the school. That also allows buses to drive directly across Woodbridge from the middle school to the elementary and high schools, shortening the routes and driving time.

For some of the students, the new schedule is a big change; for others, little change at all. Mary E. Dardess Elementary

School students are starting school an hour earlier than last year, at 8 a.m. instead of 9 a.m., which means they get out at 2:10 p.m. instead of 3 p.m. For middle and high school students, the day's schedule is virtually the same as last year's.

For Elementary Principal Kristen Reno, the schedule change is good. "What I've heard from teachers is that the kids are a lot more productive," she said. "In previous years, in that hour between 2 and 3 p.m. they've been kind of sleepy. The morning is usually the most productive time of day for this age."

Second grade teacher Sandy Lynn was one of those teachers. "I love one-bell," she said. The kids are much fresher when they come in, and by the time they get tired and their energy is waning, they're leaving. It's great." She said she hadn't heard one complaint about the older kids and younger kids riding on the same buses.

"I like it better," said high school special education teacher Mike Kullman. "If we're saving the district money, that's a good thing."

"I think it's going to work," said Teresa Hughes, a bus-driver for the past 26 years. "There are a few things to iron out – the traffic's a little heavy in the morning. But as far as children being on the bus together, it's working well."

Her bus isn't overcrowded, she said; there have been no behavior problems, and the cameras are there should anything happen.

"It's going to take time, but in the long run, this is going to work," she said. She's very happy with the improvement in traffic flow. Having the students who drive park on the far side of the lot, she said, away from the loading zones, is a great improvement in traffic safety.

“Buses are running on schedule and students seem happy and well-behaved.”

UNSUNG HEROES:



Richard Faulkner,
Bill Powell, and
Derick Ashley



Nick Baccaro, Devlin Dizacomo, Brian Navom, and Dominic Fiorillo

At an assembly of all Chatham Central School District staff and faculty the day before school started, many employees were honored and many praised, but there was just one standing ovation, an honor usually accorded to moving performances of great merit. This was for the district's custodial staff.

The custodians generally go about their work invisibly, doing the behind-the-scenes tasks that keep the schools running smoothly and make them appealing places to be, and their jobs are, more often than not, after-hours. They make it possible for plays and basketball games and open houses and meetings to happen at night, and they're the ones on the scene first when power equipment breaks down or vandalism is reported. And they're the schools' first line of defense against disease and contamination, keeping desks and door handles and bathrooms free of

germs, a task that has assumed much greater prominence with the advent of the H1N1 virus, or "swine flu."

Out-of-the-ordinary duties include snowplowing, plumbing, flood control. And they are also there for the students, to put a human face on the school's infrastructure.

"I think I have the greatest crew in the county," said Maintenance Director Bill Visscher. "These guys are phenomenal: They're flexible, willing to drop what they're doing when necessary. They work well together; everyone pitches in. They're a really good, conscientious group of people."

This summer and its various time-consuming construction projects have stretched the custodial staff in unusual ways. "Summer is by far the busiest time of year for them," said Matt Torrey, head custodian at Mary E. Dardess

Elementary School. During the school year, individuals have their own schedules and work pretty much by themselves. In the summertime, everyone works together as a group.

"You go to the summer with a plan in mind," he said. "Wax the floors, clean the walls, furniture... It takes three days to do a room. Construction throws you off, so you go to Plan B. You only have so many days in the summer."

The other full-time people at MED are Donald Faulkner, Dominick Fiorello, Antonio Justiniano and Brian Navom, who splits his time between the elementary and high schools.

Mr. Torrey said his crew has more than 60 rooms and common areas to take care of.

The elementary school has a lot more illnesses than the upper schools. "We use a lot more paper products," he said.

THE CUSTODIANS



Kathleen Patton
and Tim Mead

“When you’re dealing with little kids, safety’s the biggest thing,” Mr. Torrey said. “My involvement is with fire drills, safety procedures, evacuation procedures.” Sometimes fire alarms go off at 2 or 3 a.m. due to a malfunction or break-in, and it’s his job to deal with that. And during the day, custodians are on call everywhere all the time.

Patrick Curry is head custodian at the middle school. His full-time crew members are Christian Carr, Tim Mead, Edwin Taylor and Kathleen Patton. This summer, they stripped and waxed the floors, cleaned the windows, walls and furniture. They also kept the school clean and ready for the summer Kids’ Club and the special needs students.

Mr. Curry said one of the biggest things he faces as school starts up is helping the fifth graders learn to use their lockers. “Most get it quick, but some need some

help. They pull me aside.” He said this is just one of the various ways he helps fifth-graders get used to a new school.

The high school custodians take care of the district’s largest building, 88,000 square feet of space in about 50 rooms. “But it’s all on one floor,” Head Custodian Dave Wheeler noted, “so that makes it a little easier.”

During the school year, Mr. Wheeler and crew member Bill Powell work days, and the other crew members, Derick Ashley, Richard Faulkner and Navom pull the second shift, from 3 to 11 p.m. During the school recesses, all work day shifts.

The evening crew has lots to do outside its normal cleaning chores, what with sports events, plays and concerts and adult education classes. Mr. Wheeler said the busiest time of the school year for his crew is basketball season, because of all the cleanup afterwards.

There’s plenty of heavy lifting on this job, especially in the summer time. Everything comes out of every room. This summer, all the computers went into the cafeteria to be locked up, because all the building’s windows were being replaced.

On one hot August afternoon, Mr. Wheeler was going behind the contractors in the science and language wings, wiping surfaces down, working to get the rooms set up again after the window replacements. He was also taking lock cores out of old doors and labeling them to make sure the right lock was going in the right door. And there were bulletin boards to be hung in the hallways.

“You have to do a lot of prioritizing. Everybody thinks what’s going on in their area is a crisis. You have to have a sense of humor,” said Matt Torey.

District Welcomes New Teachers

The Chatham Central School District welcomed its new teachers with a two-day orientation Wednesday, Sept. 2 and Thursday, Sept. 3. On Tuesday, teachers were informed on building-specific issues and given a walking tour of Main Street. On Wednesday, they learned about instructional expectations, classroom management and teacher evaluation, got an overview of special education and technology training and were treated to a barbecue by district administrators.



Assistant Principal Larry Burud talks to new teachers about what to expect in the classroom while, in the background, Director of Pupil Services Jean Scheriff, High School Co-Principals Ron Davis and John Thorsen and Mary E. Dardess Principal Kristen Reno listen, Thursday morning at MED.



Mr. Burud tends to the grill at the new teachers barbecue noon Thursday, assisted by Middle School Principal Gordon Fitting, as two new teachers wait, in the MED courtyard.

THE DISTRICT'S FOURTEEN NEW TEACHERS THIS FALL ARE:

Mary E. Dardess:

Lindsay Anne Frament
Stephanie Gotham
Jessica Mullens
Sabrina Wadd

Chatham Middle School:

Jennifer Eckler
Michael Graves
Ashley Keegan
Cynthia Ogulnick
Celeste Sisson
Lauren Wheeler

Chatham High School:

Stephanie Cambell
Jaclyn Ippolito
Jessa Waterhouse

Shared between all three schools: Teresa Zema, Family and Consumer Science

School Buildings are Safer...

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incline. The new one has a more gradual slope and a railing, making it ADA-compliant, and much safer for students.

The ramp leads down to a brand-new high school parking lot, which has been reconfigured to promote student safety. In addition, the lot has numbered parking spaces for students.

First grade teacher Jessica Mullins said she liked the new heating system and storage space at MED, and fellow first grade teacher Sabrina Wadd said when she spent much of the summer preparing her room for the fall, the contractors were "very professional and conscious of me working."

Throughout the high school, doors and windows were replaced. A small corridor that once boasted portable partitions now has cement-block walls, as the 1970s philosophy of modular classrooms gives way to more contemporary ideas. The high

school windows and electrical panels are being replaced to make them more energy-efficient. The school also saw the replacement of the main switch gear, the large machine that controls the flow of electricity to the entire school district.

"I think the school looks great," said varsity cheerleading coach Carol Williams. "New doors, and windows you can open and close, with screens on them."

At the back of the high school, the team room, also used for storage in the off-season, had been deteriorating. It got a reinforced wall, a new roof, and an interior paint job and cleaning that will make it more useful for its intended functions.

"It turned out well," said Athletic Director Scott Steltz. "In the long run, it will be very valuable to us."

The middle school had less extensive renovations: a few door replacements, a

few electrical panels and four sections of roof replacement. A new access road has been created behind the school, from Library Place to Woodbridge Avenue, to alleviate bus congestion. The access road also provides an alternate exit route for buses in case of an emergency evacuation.

Also at the middle school, better lighting will afford greater sidewalk visibility to parents, students and staff entering the building, Malecki said. Meanwhile, the adjacent Chatham Public Library, built in 1914, had about two-thirds of its original roof replaced in a historically appropriate style.

"The construction went great," District Maintenance Director Bill Visscher said. "The contractors were very helpful, they did what they had to do, they went out of their way to accommodate us and help us get school open again."

MED Retirees Remembered, Step by Step

Guy Gamello taught fifth and sixth grades for 34 years in the Chatham Central School District. When he first started teaching, the middle school students were at Mary E. Dardess and what is now the middle school was the high school. Times have changed, a new high school was built, the middle school students moved across the road, and, eventually, Mr. Gamello retired.

These changes are easy to forget as time forges on and new generations of teachers and students replace the old. But Mr. Gamello got one rock-solid assurance his name would be remembered. The year he retired, 2002, middle school officials created a stone pathway in front of the school. The names of that year's retirees are carved into a single stone, and each succeeding year into the stone after that.

The stone for 2002 reads, "Mr. Gamello 34 years / Mr. Sahr 29 years / Mrs. Johanson 20 years."

"We were looking at a way of honoring our retirees," said Middle School Principal Gordon Fitting. "We thought of a wall of fame. We took pictures of them, but they didn't like them. Then we thought about making something more permanent."

There was a little serendipity in that students had been complaining that

when they walked from one front door to the other, the ground was often muddy. So the district put in a stone pathway, and every year the Keeler Monument Co. carves the names of the retired employees and their length of service into the bluestone.



The stone is placed in the ground in a ceremony on Arbor Day. In Chatham's own version of Grauman's Chinese Theatre, the retirees place their feet on the stone.

"They really enjoy it," Mr. Fitting said. "They truly were honored." He said the meandering route of the pathway also suits the ambience of its location.

So far, the stones have honored 20 retired employees, whose length of service ranged from one decade to four. One of them, teacher's aide Julia Tubbs, was 88 years old when she retired in 2008 after 25 years: Mrs. Tubbs began what many people would regard as a lifetime career at the age of 63.

"Part of you stays here," Mr. Gamello said. "It's nice to have future generations of students be able to see that. I'll have grandchildren going here, and they'll be able to see their grandfather's name. It honors people who spent a lot of years here. It's a good thing."

CHS Students Earn AP Honors

Chatham High School has been celebrating a significant increase in its number of College Board Advanced Placement Scholars. Eight students were named AP Scholars following the spring 2009 exams.

Seven of the honored students were from the class of 2009, and have all gone on to college, but one, Wade Okawa-Scannell, is in this year's senior class.

Ryan Nightingale was named an AP Scholar with Distinction, meaning he received an average grade of at least 3.5 on all AP exams taken, and grades of 3 or higher on four or more of these exams.

James Brinkerhoff, Andrew Knight and Pian Pian Xu were named AP Scholars with Honor, meaning they received average grades of at least 3.25 on all AP exams taken, and grades of 3 or higher on four or more of these exams.

In addition to Okawa-Scannell, three members of the class of 2009 were designated as AP Scholars, Hannah

Antonson, Madeleine Klingler, and Kevin Meyers. AP Scholars had to receive grades of 3 or higher on three or more AP exams.

"This is the first year we've had such a large number of students under the category of AP Scholar," said High School Co-Principal Ron Davis. "Particularly impressive were the results of calculus."

The AP Calculus teacher, Judi Matthews, "holds the students to a higher standard," Davis said. "When they enter her class, she tells them they have to commit to taking the test."

Davis said almost all the students who took exams did well, but calculus was particularly outstanding.

"She teaches at a very high level," he said. "Getting the commitment to take the exam is part of the trick."

AP classes were offered last year in world history, US history, European history, English literature, English composition, calculus and studio art.

ADMINISTRATORS

Cheryl Nuciforo <i>Superintendent</i>	392-1501
Diane Malecki <i>School Business Administrator</i>	392-1503
Dr. Jean Scheriff <i>Director of Pupil Services</i>	392-2417
Kristen Reno <i>Mary E. Dardess Elementary School Principal</i>	392-2255
Gordon Fitting <i>Chatham Middle School Principal</i>	392-1560
Ronald Davis <i>Chatham High School Co-Principal</i>	392-4142
John Thorsen <i>Chatham High School Co-Principal</i>	392-4142

BOARD MEMBERS

	Term Expires
John Wapner <i>President</i>	2009
Elizabeth Macfarlane <i>Vice President</i>	2011
Michael Clark	2012
Denise Dapice	2010
Fred Hutchinson	2013
Francis Iaconetti	2011
David O'Connor	2012
Melony Spock	2010
James Toteno	2011

Reno Takes Reins at MED

Kristen Reno, the new principal of Mary E. Dardess Elementary School, wants to give the students some ownership in what goes on at the school.

"I want them to want to come to school here," she said, "to have some projects that are led by students."

Mrs. Reno is a native of East Greenbush and now lives with her husband Jason and sons Nathaniel and Ethan in Voorheesville.

The boys have a special bond with Jason because he's a stay-at-home dad, she said.

After graduating from Columbia High School, Mrs. Reno earned a bachelors degree from the State University of New York at Cortland and a masters degree in literacy from the College of St. Rose in Albany.

She started her teaching career in Cairo-Durham, teaching fourth grade the first year and fifth grade the next under what was known as the "looping" system. She then stayed a few years with the fifth grade, but, feeling she wanted a change, was assigned to a kindergarten-first-grade loop.

"This wasn't fulfilling my need for change," she said. So she decided to go back to the College of St. Rose to study administration.

As her internship, she served as the assistant principal at Cairo-Durham. When Mrs. Reno finished her internship, the principal happened to resign. She applied for the vacancy, and became Cairo-Durham's principal, a position she held for the next five years.

Mrs. Reno is coming to a much larger school than the one she left. Cairo-Durham never had more than 180 students; Mary E. Dardess has 410.

"I love it so far," she said. "It's a great experience. The people are great; I love the area, the community feel. The teachers seem to be highly motivated: They want the kids to learn. I'm glad I can share in that process."

With her own background in literacy, Mrs. Reno said one of her goals is to make MED's literacy program even stronger than it already is. Another goal has to do with the physical lay-

out of the building: For the first time, all the students will be on one floor.

"This will strengthen the community feel of the building," she said. "This building has such a great reputation. I hope I can build on what we do that's so great. The big thing is for the kids to take a lot of ownership in what goes on."



Kristen Reno

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