



Scotch Plains-Fanwood Public Schools

A Community of Learners Seeking Excellence Together

June
2023

A Message From the Superintendent

Dear Scotch Plains–Fanwood
Community,

This has been an incredible year for Scotch Plains–Fanwood schools, and we ended just as strong as we started.

Our sports teams wrapped up competitive seasons, which included a state championship for boys volleyball! Environmentally conscious students and teachers collaborated to enhance the ecosystems around us. Our Class of 2023 tossed 357 caps – plus one from our four-legged friend, Spiffy – into the air at graduation to mark the completion of their academic journeys.



I began my SPF career as superintendent the same year the Class of 2023 entered high school. I saw these students accomplish much over the past four years. They have inspired me to keep learning as well and find new ways to support all students in attaining their goals.

I look forward to following this class as they move on to college and careers and grow our alumni network.

I recently had the chance to meet alumni from the classes of '62, '63, and '64. What I took away from that meeting is what I already knew – SPF is a special place. We have a tremendous legacy that keeps growing stronger with each graduating class.

Enjoy your summer and please stay connected to us at SPF!

Sincerely,
Dr. Joan Mast
Superintendent of Schools

Congratulations, Class of 2023!



In case you missed it: Check out this [Good Morning America](#) feature on our pet therapy program and some of our impressive graduates! Special shoutout to students Kristina D. and Patrick L., as well as Mr. Moskal, for helping to submit Spiffy's graduation story.

Over 60 Years Later, Alumni Return to the Halls of SPF Schools

About 70 alumni of then called Scotch Plains High School gathered for a combined reunion last month of the classes of '62, '63, and '64.

The alumni met at the Holiday Inn in Clark, N.J., for a cocktail party on Friday evening, May 19. On Saturday morning, they toured Nettingham Middle School, formerly known as Park Middle School, that was Scotch Plains High School during their student years. The fun continued Saturday evening when the group met again at the Holiday Inn for a well-attended dinner.



During their middle and high school years, the alumni from these classes attended school in split sessions to accommodate overcrowding while the new high school was built.

"I was in the second class to graduate from the new high school in 1959," said alumnus Mauro DiFrancesco. "During my freshman and sophomore years, I went to class only in the mornings so that middle school students could attend in the afternoons."

SPF Superintendent Dr. Joan Mast led the tour through Nettingham Middle School along with SPFHS teacher Kelly Robertson and her two sons, William and Aidan, who are also alumni. Everyone on the tour was delighted to see that the two entrances marked “Boys” and “Girls” still existed. They also were in awe of a skylight in the gym.

“None of us remembered the skylight or how bright the room looked,” said Herb Treger, an alumnus of the class of ’61. “We finally concluded that it may have been covered during World War II to comply with black-out rules.”

What they did remember were the lifelong friends they made and lessons learned.

When asked what advice the alumni might give to current high school graduates, Treger said, “Get out and see the world when you can because it’s changing so fast!”



SPFHS Students Make a Difference through their Environmental Studies

Scotch Plains–Fanwood High School students recently completed projects that will positively impact our environment. The students all worked under the guidance of Zachary Rittner, AP and academic environmental science teacher.

Creating a Garden for Pollinators

As a senior project, students Brigitte Priel, Reese Priel, and Ella Mauer created a pollinator garden at SPFHS. The students designed the new habitat using native pollinators such as Orange Butterfly Milkweed, Black-Eyed Susan, and Spotted Beebalm. Their goal is to attract and support the native pollinators around the school campus to enrich biodiversity, enhance ecosystem services, and support student connections to the natural world.



The students' hard work earned SPFHS recognition from the National Wildlife Federation for creating a Certified Schoolyard Habitat® through its Garden for Wildlife program.

"These students have labored to cultivate biodiversity in our school community and faithfully served as environmental stewards for the past two years," said Rittner, who served as the senior project advisor.

[Read more at TAPinto Scotch Plains-Fanwood](#)

Raising and Releasing Wildlife

Many of Rittner's students helped raise about 40 rainbow trout, five diamondback terrapins, and 21 bobwhite quail for release into the wild to support biodiversity and conservation efforts. They joined the Conservation in the Classroom initiative, which connects students with their local watersheds, ecosystems, and biodiversity to foster a new generation of wildlife advocates and environmental stewards.

Students released the quail on May 30 into the Caleb Smith State Park on Long Island. On June 1, the students released the terrapins at a state-approved location in Beach Haven. And on June 7, they released the rainbow trout into Seeley's Pond in the Watchung Reservation.

"Watching the wildlife hatch and grow right in their own classrooms and then releasing them back into their natural environment is an experience they will never forget, and one that will help shape their attitudes about environmental issues," said Rittner.



A Note of Thanks

Both endeavors by the environmental science students were supported by the Education Enrichment Foundation of Scotch Plains–Fanwood. Countless members of the Buildings and Ground Department also assisted, and Mr. Maccanico, the woodshop advisor at SPFHS, offered considerable time to help build the raised bed for the garden.

End-of-Year Athletic News

SPFHS Boys Volleyball is Number 1 in the State *Varsity Team Skyrockets to Success*

The SPFHS varsity boys volleyball team defeated the championship team from the South section (Colts Neck) 25–15, 25–14 to earn its first state championship this spring. This victory followed a win against Hackensack, when the team took the North section Group 3 title.

It has been an exciting journey for these young men and their coach, Brock Hor Jr. The team formed just a few years ago in 2016, competing at the junior varsity level. The first year for varsity volleyball was in 2018, but play paused in 2020 during the pandemic.

“Boys volleyball at SPF has grown exponentially over five years because of support from families, the student body, and the administration,” said Hor. “And, of course, the athletes have demonstrated dedication

and consistent effort year after year.”

Congratulations to the championship team!



Meet Barbara Joyner!

Barbara Joyner has been promoted to girls varsity tennis coach at SPFHS and looks forward to sharing her passion for the sport with even more student athletes.

A familiar face at William J. McGinn Elementary School where she has served as a paraprofessional in K to 4 for the last nine years, Joyner has been an important part of the high school tennis program during that same time period. She was originally the assistant coach for boys and girls tennis but assumed the boys varsity coaching role this spring. She'll continue in that role as she takes on new responsibilities coaching the girls team.



“I have a deep passion for tennis,” Joyner said. “I have been playing singles, doubles, and mixed doubles for the United States Tennis Association (USTA) for many years.”

Captain for six of those years, Joyner was initially self-taught but later pursued pros for lessons. Today she derives great pleasure from teaching others.

“I always wanted to coach tennis at the high school level when I decided to pursue a career in education,” she explained. “Seeing players improve their game and enjoying their tennis is very rewarding. Every day is different since I coach players of different ages, abilities, and personalities. It's great fun, and you can play

for life!”

Joyner has been teaching tennis – fitness, sportsmanship, teamwork, tennis etiquette, and everything that goes into being a great tennis player and coach – in community settings for a long time as well. She created and ran a tennis program at the Rahway YMCA, assisted running a Juniors tournament in Plainfield, and coached young people and adults in a variety of park programs.

Joyner’s path did not lead her straight to the field of education. She earned her bachelor’s degree in business administration from Mercy College and worked in finance and banking in New York City for a long time. But she was always interested in teaching and finally enrolled at Kean University to pursue a master’s in education.

“Working in the classroom brings me great joy,” she added. “I love to see the students learn and love to find ways to bring fun into the lessons. It’s satisfying to see children progress to become well-rounded citizens and kind, thoughtful, and contributing adults. I want to make a difference in kids’ lives.”

What’s next for Joyner? She holds a summer tennis camp for children ages three to ten, and she looks forward to running the whole SPFHS tennis program in the fall. Joyner will return to the classroom at McGinn in September and is determined to continue her education and get certified as a classroom teacher.



Reasons for SPF Pride Continue...

Sairah Llano is a 2023 [*NJ.com High School Game Changer Sports Award*](#) recipient for Mentorship!

Nathaniel Rayan is a 2023 NJ.com High School Game Changer Sports Award recipient for Male Breakthrough Athlete of the Year!

SCOTCH PLAINS- FANWOOD'S CREATIVE SUMMER WORKSHOPS

Join us for five weeks of summer programming,
including the SPF Summer Instrumental Music School.

Our talented professional staff will lead exciting and
challenging courses in an engaging atmosphere.

Where? Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School

When? June 26 - July 28, 2023; 8:30am - 1pm

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Scotch Plains and Fanwood, as well as all surrounding towns.

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