



Scotch Plains-Fanwood Public Schools

A Community of Learners Seeking Excellence Together

June
2024

A Message From the Superintendent

Dear Scotch Plains–Fanwood
Community,

The end of the school year always brings a sense of accomplishment and pride as we celebrate the hard work and dedication of our entire school community. I especially want to recognize and congratulate the Class of 2024!

At Tuesday's graduation, the graduates marked the completion of their academic journeys in Scotch Plains–Fanwood Public Schools and became alumni, joining a special group of people who have also been shaped by SPF. I reminded them in my graduation speech to always remember and connect with that group, because this truly is an incredible, supportive family.



Also, as the school year wraps up, please remember that the district is switching to a new messaging system, **BrightArrow**, beginning July 1. On short notice, we were informed that our prior messaging system, SwiftK12, was being discontinued. The new system will continue to provide an easily accessible way for parents and staff to receive important updates and documents. We expect this to be a relatively seamless transition and encourage anyone with questions to email parents@ps.spfk12.org.

Thank you all for making this school year memorable. Enjoy the well-deserved summer break, and to our graduates, best of luck on your future path!

Sincerely,
Dr. Joan Mast
Superintendent of Schools

Welcome to the Heisey Highway

The Board of Education, administration, and SPFHS teachers and staff were thrilled to dedicate the "Heisey Highway" to Dr. David Heisey on June 17. Dr. Heisey has always believed that students should have a

voice in decisions that affect their education and school space. In 2001, students indicated that what they wanted most was a way to travel from the old section to the new section without having to travel downstairs. Dr. Heisey listened to those students, as he has to every student who walked Heisey Highway. Now, as students walk across the bridge, they honor Dr. Heisey's legacy as principal of SPFHS for 25 years.



77 SPFHS Students Earn New Jersey Seal of Biliteracy

Congratulations to the 77 members of the Class of 2024 who received the NJ Seal of Biliteracy, a distinction awarded to graduating seniors who have demonstrated proficiency in English and another language! The Department of World Languages hosted a recognition ceremony to officially congratulate them on May 23. Students qualified for this recognition by demonstrating a high-level proficiency in reading, writing, listening and speaking on a language proficiency test.

“Being multilingual and multicultural is a true example of love, empathy, and understanding for others. It's all about creating a world where every voice is heard, every story is celebrated, and every heart is touched,” said **Samuel Duque** '26, who hosted the ceremony with other students representing the World Language Honor Societies.



SPFHS Students Perform at The Paper Mill Playhouse Rising Star Awards

The Paper Mill Playhouse Rising Star Awards gives schools the opportunity to showcase their musical arts programs on a statewide level each year. On June 11, the SPFHS cast of *The Addams Family* performed as part of the Rising Star Awards Ceremony. Two of the students also won top acting awards at the state-wide ceremony:

- **Ashley Hoberman** won for Outstanding Performance in a Featured Role
- **David Gomez** won Best Actor in a Male-Identified Leading Role

"It's always exhilarating to witness our students shine on stage but seeing them not only embrace but command the renowned Papermill Playhouse stage takes our pride to new heights. Congratulations to Ashley and David for bringing us extra #SPFProud moments, and heartfelt appreciation to the directors, orchestra, and the entire company of *The Addams Family*!" – **Dr. Robert McGarry**, Assistant Superintendent



"It was an honor to win the Papermill Playhouse Rising Star award for Outstanding Performance in a Male-Identified Leading Role. Winning this award has solidified my decision to pursue acting in the future and inspired me to continue to work harder. This honor did not come without an incredibly supportive staff and cast. I am thankful to every individual that has supported me throughout this process. Having my fellow castmates and company of The Addams Family present during this honor made the night truly memorable. Thank you to SPF High School and the Repertory Theatre program for an amazing 4 years."

DAVID GOMEZ

Best Actor in a Male-Identified Leading Role

"Winning this award was a culmination of my 15 years of hard work, training, and passion for this incredible art form. I was thrilled to have been given this award because it proved to me that I can do anything. I can achieve my passion if I put in the hard work. What made me the absolute happiest was the support I received from my peers in the audience. When my name was called, I saw people standing, cheering, and crying tears of joy. In that moment, I felt so loved and appreciated. That moment was something I will never forget."

ASHLEY HOBERMAN

Outstanding Performance in a Featured Role

Evergreen Tricky Tray Gifts Two Students a Walk with Spiffy

Evergreen Elementary School siblings, Danny (1st grade) and Evie Petrone (2nd grade), were the winners of lunch and walk with Spiffy and Dr. Joan Mast. The students feasted on pizza, then were given their own leash to walk Spiffy through recess with all their friends and around the school. This is the first year this prize was offered at the Evergreen Tricky Tray and was a great success!

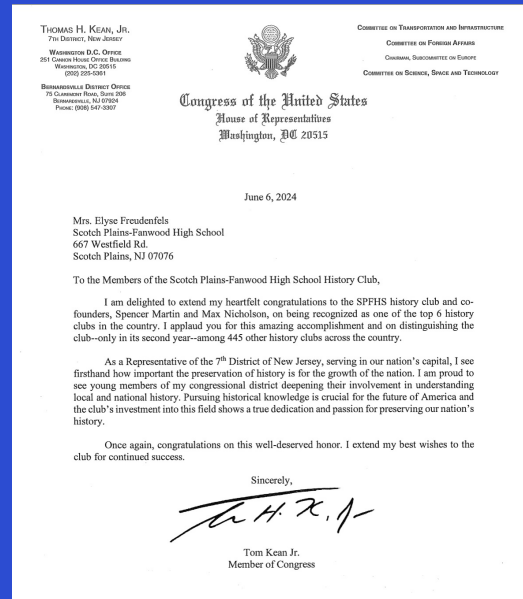


SPFHS History Club is one of the Top History Clubs in the United States

The National History Club recently recognized the SPFHS History Club

as one of the top 6 history clubs in the United States. The club, only in its second year, was recognized for its commitment to offering impactful programming for students and the Scotch Plains–Fanwood community. Congratulations!

“When Spencer and I first proposed the idea of the SPFHS History Club, we had the intention of exclaiming our love and interest in history to other students and members of the community through various events and multiple guest speakers. In the coming years our ultimate goal is to continue spreading awareness of the importance of Scotch Plains–Fanwood’s history and how much we can learn from our own community.” – **Max Nicholson**, club co-founder



“It is a great honor to have the Scotch Plains–Fanwood High School History Club be named one of the Top 6 History Clubs in the U.S. by the National History Club that represents more than 500 chapters with more than 16,000 members. When Max and I started the History Club last year, our goal was to bring our passion for history to other students and to our local community through a diverse program of educational and entertaining events. With a strong membership and the support of our advisor, Mrs. Elyse Freudenfels, we organized lectures with prominent historians, including the grandson of J. Robert Oppenheimer, and partnered with our local historical society to organize a very successful fundraiser to help preserve the history of the Scotch Plains–Fanwood community.” – **Spencer Martin**, club co-founder

Students Create Juneteenth Quilts to Represent Freedom

To commemorate Juneteenth, elementary students learned about the history of slavery in the Scotch Plains–Fanwood area during social studies lessons. The students read about how Juneteenth was the day in 1865 when more than two years after President Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, enslaved Americans in Galveston, Texas, finally received word that they were free from bondage.

Students in third and fourth grades participated in a special culminating Juneteenth project where they viewed examples of quilts and symbols used to represent different personal experiences. Then, students worked together to select ideas, design, and create unique Juneteenth quilt squares out of muslin, a historic fabric used for quilts.

Each third and fourth grade class in the district composed one quilt piece representing what freedom means to them. The quilt pieces will be sewn together to produce a SPF Juneteenth quilt for next year's recipient of the Social Justice Matters Juneteenth Festival honoree. Last year's quilt was presented to our honorees at the June 20 SPF Board of Education Meeting.



Junior at SPFHS Attends USA Brain Bee Championship in Florida

After claiming first place at the NJ Regional Brain Bee, Shaheryar Zeb, a Scotch Plains–Fanwood High School junior, traveled to Florida to compete against 53 scholars in the USA Brain Bee Championship. The three-day competition boasts rigorous challenges including a written exam, a patient diagnosis test, a sheep brain dissection, and identifying various brain structures of an MRI.

“It was exhilarating being in a live competition. I think my heart was beating 120 beats per minute,” said Shaheryar. “It allowed me to showcase my ability and knowledge. Having my family there in the crowd made the moment of finding out that I had won the NJ Regional Brain Bee even more surreal.”



Participating in this competition did not check off a graduation requirement but rather a personal goal that has now blossomed into a desired career pathway in neuroscience. Plenty of hard work and time management went into preparing for the national championship. He estimates he spent around 150–200 hours studying – and jokes that the experience was “a good return on that investment.”

At the NJ Regional Brain Bee, Shaheryar met Professor Steven Levison who organized the competition. He thanked Professor Levison for acting as a mentor in the process and providing college-level study materials leading up to the USA Brain Bee Championship.

The regional competition win not only secured him a spot at the national bee, but also a research grant with Rutgers University. This summer Shaheryar will intern with Professor Marc Tambini at the Rutgers Brain Institute, working on Alzheimer's research.

“I have always been interested in pursuing the medical field in the future,” Shaheryar said. “Preparing and participating in the Brain Bees taught me about related neuroscience fields and gave me perspective into what I’d be learning in college. They have boosted my fascination with neuroscience.”

More than competing in the USA Brain Bee Championship, Shaheryar is an International Biology Scholar. He received that designation after placing in the top five percent of test takers who reside outside of Canada and took the 2024 National Biology Competition. He placed 13 out of the 2488 students internationally that sat for the exam. He thanked Scotch Plains–Fanwood Public Schools for hosting the competition. Otherwise, he would not have been able to participate as no other school nearby was holding the competition.

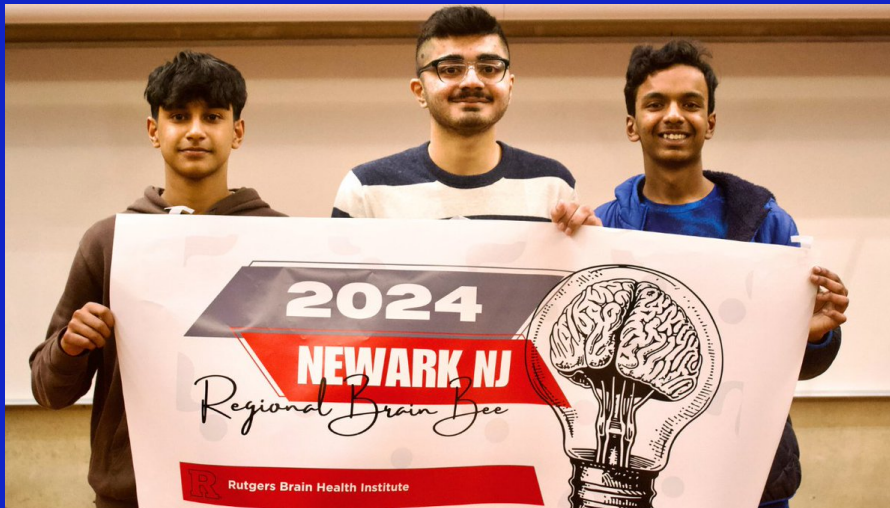
That’s where Guida Faria, Supervisor of Science, Engineering and Gifted & Talented K–12, met Shaheryar; She administered the National Biology Competition exam. After the exam, he casually told her he would be heading to the University of Central Florida to participate in the USA Brain Bee Championship that weekend.

“As the supervisor of science, Shaheryar's initiative makes me feel

immensely proud of our program,” said Faria. “It shows the dedication our teachers have in encouraging students to look for opportunities to practice skills and explore science outside of the classroom. We are proud to support our students in their pathways.”

Shaheryar credits these exams for perfecting soft skills like time management that he will need well into the future. Reflecting on the exams, he encourages his peers to “be diligent in opportunities available” and says that no matter the outcome, “what you get out of the competition, seeing your effort realized, that’s even more rewarding.”

In addition to these competitions, Shaheryar is looking forward to competing in the US Medicine and Disease Olympiad in July.



Shaheryar Zeb (middle) after taking first place in the NJ Regional Brain Bee, hosted at Rutgers University.

HAVE A GREAT SUMMER, SPF!



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