



The Connection

WATERFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

FALL/WINTER 2023

*Bringing the accomplishments and initiatives of the Waterford Public Schools to the Town, Community and beyond to create a **Connection** that will reinforce a strong commitment to coming together to educate the whole child.*

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Update from the Waterford Board of Education

At the October 26, 2023 Board of Education Meeting, the Waterford Board of Education voted unanimously in favor of naming the Waterford High School Softball Field in honor of former Selectwoman and Board of Education member Jody Marie Nazarchyk. After receiving a proposal and petition with signatures from the community, the Board of Education created a Waterford High School Softball Field Naming Committee to review the proposal and documentation in accordance with Policy #7012, *Naming of New and Existing Schools, Facilities and Fields*. Members of the community submitted recommendation letters in support of Ms. Nazarchyk highlighting her numerous contributions to Waterford Public Schools and the Town of Waterford.



Jody Marie Nazarchyk began her service on the Waterford Board of Education in November of 1995. She served with distinction on the Board for 25 years through November 2019, filling roles of Board of Education Chair from 2014 through 2016 and Board of Education Secretary for 10 years from 2000 through 2006 and 2011 through 2013. Ms. Nazarchyk was remembered as a community leader and advocate for students and staff throughout her time on the board. Ms. Nazarchyk was awarded the Waterford Citizen of the Year in 1992, the Youth and Family Services Champion of Children Award in 2014, and was inducted into the Waterford Athletic Hall of Fame in 2018. She was also elected to the Board of Selectman in November 2019.

Letters from state and town officials as well as community members, noted wonderful stories, memories and various ways that Ms. Nazarchyk impacted the community and school district.

"[Jody], who became known as both the "conscience of Waterford" and "Waterford's Mom" always stood up for her community...for 25 years she served as a member of the Waterford Board of Education, where she was a tireless advocate for the wellbeing of students, teacher, and parents." Rep. Joseph Courtney

"Jody was the most active and strongest advocate on the Board of Education for Waterford's athletic programs and athletes...She was the leading voice in securing a girls softball field and safeguarding all sports in Waterford. Additionally, Jody attended every sports event where she worked the concession stands over many decades. It is not surprising that Jody was the first non-athlete to be inducted into the Waterford Athletic Hall of Fame." Rep. Kathleen McCarty

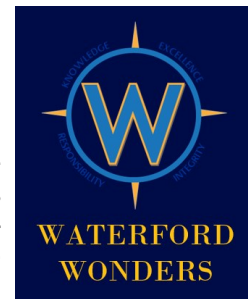
"Jody's commitment and devotion to Waterford have inspired generations of citizens whose lives she touched to step forward to serve our great community". First Selectman Robert Brule

"[Jody] provided endless service because it was the right thing to do, "for the kids". She looked for neither recognition or reward. Yet she attained local prominences because of her constant presence in our community, able to make things happen, toward the betterment of all who live here. She truly was a leading light, inspiring others toward public service." Maureen Davis

Waterford High School Administration and District personnel are currently working to plan the unveiling ceremony for the naming of the Softball Turf Field in the spring of 2024 to honor this incredible woman who was a community leader and advocate and one who made an amazing difference in the lives of Waterford Public Schools' students, staff, and the community.

Waterford Wonders

The Waterford Board of Education recognized students from Clark Lane Middle School, Great Neck Elementary School, and Waterford High School at the Board of Education meetings in the months of October, November, and December respectively as Waterford Wonders. The Waterford Board of Education began Waterford Wonders this year as a program to honor students deserving of special recognition for academics, accomplishments, exemplary character, going above and beyond and sometimes, for just being a "good kid". Congratulations to the following students who have been selected as Waterford Wonders.



CLARK LANE MIDDLE SCHOOL



Alexis
Cooley-DeGrasse



Tayna
Veras

Alexis Cooley-DeGrasse - "Lexi is a kind, enthusiastic, sincere, hard-working student who is always willing to lend a hand. She was a standout peer mentor at our 6th grade orientation this summer, as well as our new student luncheon for grade 7 & 8 students. She goes out of her way to make her peers feel welcome and included. Some initiatives she has helped lead this year include a welcome back cart for CLMS staff, daily birthday "shout outs" on our morning announcements, and a breakfast to thank and recognize our school bus drivers." Stephanie DiNatalie, School Counselor

Tayna Veras - "I am nominating Tayna to highlight her commitment to making other students feel welcome at CLMS... I had two new students and their first language was Portuguese...Tayna took both of these students under her wing without hesitation. She took time to get to know them and speak to them in Portuguese. She invited them to sit with her at lunch and she introduced them to her friends. Tayna went above and beyond to help these students feel welcome at Clark Lane and to ease their transition to our school and our country." Bree Dolce, School Counselor

Elise Cavalieri - "Elise consistently demonstrates exemplary character... She always takes the time to inquire how others are doing and shows genuine interest and caring for everyone...She is empathetic to others and when she notices someone is struggling, she takes the time to lend support, kind words and a friendly smile. Elise gets involved in many after school activities, is a member of Great Neck's Kindness Council and is a stand out as a peer mentor. Elise is the person that others gravitate towards because of her genuine kindness and positivity." Janelle Rei, Grade 5 Teacher

Giavanna Cavalieri - "Giavanna is a hard-working, excellent student who puts 100% into all that she does. She is caring and compassionate towards others and will always take the time to help someone in need, consistently demonstrating genuine interest in them as a person. Her kind and humble nature is an inspiration to all of us at Great Neck, students and adults alike. We are fortunate that she serves her school community as a peer mentor because she certainly has a lot to teach and model for her younger peers." Doug Parulis, Grade 5 Teacher

GREAT NECK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



Elise
Cavalieri



Giavanna
Cavalieri

Darren Guppy - "Darren has blossomed into a young man who is noted by staff and students as being "an all around awesome person." Darren shows genuine interest and care for those around him. He consistently looks out for the well being of his peers. He is always willing to lend a helping hand and most notably assists staff and students with their technology struggles." Kirk Samuelson, Principal

Alyson Lewis - Ally is described by her teachers as someone who is articulate, hard-working, respectful, loves to help others, and is always willing to participate and actively engage in class discussions and activities. She works hard to include all students and goes out of her way to be kind to everyone. Most recently, Ally has been chosen to be the WHS student representative on the ECC Diversity Council. This regional alliance was formed to bring student leaders together from local area high schools to engage in thought-provoking conversations around the difficult topics we are all facing within our school communities. Ally was one of the few names that came up repeatedly by staff to serve in this role and it is clear that she is the right person for this task." Kirk Samuelson, Principal

WATERFORD HIGH SCHOOL



Darren
Guppy



Alyson
Lewis

WHS Senior Receives Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Scholarship



*Coach opened his hand
Closed it into a fist
And opened it again, he said
“We must not be a hand of fingers
We must be a fist”*

*According to Spike Lee:
“Right hand, left hand
A tale of good and evil
One hand always fighting the other”*

In one hand

Love

In the other

Hate

Two fists

A battle controlling the world

Love versus hate

We must form a fist, a society

We are blessed with differences

Races, Religions, Roots

Rudiments of who we are

We cannot see people as fingers

We must become one fist of love

Dr. King reminds us

“Hate cannot drive out hate

Only love can do that”

Spike Lee, Dr. King:

“Do The Right Thing”

Speech by Alexa Collins, 42nd Annual Dinner and Awards Ceremony, October 19, 2023

The Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Scholarship Trust Fund annually recognizes high school scholars through a rigorous process that “measures their dedication to learning, their understanding of Dr. King’s mission, the content of their character, and their financial need” Waterford High School Senior Alexa Collins submitted an application and essay and was selected as a 2023 scholarship winner.

In her essay, Alexa highlighted Dr. King’s legacy and discussed the importance of how he prepared the way for many to accomplish “firsts” and not be held back by gender or race. She emphasized the first of Kamala Harris as the First African American woman Vice President, the first of her grandmother being the first Black Head Nurse of the Operating Room at L&M Hospital, and the first of her mother as the first Black female Associate Principal at the ISAAC School.

“The world needs more firsts; more people with the courage to speak their mind and the bravery to start real change. In society today, it is a lot easier to support the bravery of another than to encourage the bravery of oneself. A “first” seems impossible before one has the courage to start a movement, become Vice- President, or even apply for a new job. As a proud Black woman, I aspire to create real change for the world and inspire others to do the same. Kamala’s mother told her, ‘You may be the first to do many things, but make sure you are not the last.’ This means that, while we are fighting to be “firsts”, we must not forget Dr. King’s legacy of empowerment lives in all of us so that we do not just focus on helping ourselves, we focus on helping others as well.” *Adapted from essay submitted by Alexa Collins*

Through this scholarship, Alexa will receive \$25,000 to be used over four years of her college career. We are very proud of Alexa and all that she has accomplished and we look forward to the many firsts that she will have in the future.

Thank you to the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Scholarship Trust Fund for “empowering students of color to pursue higher education and advance the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.”

Adapted from <https://www.mlktrustfund.org/>

Waterford Public Schools Gives Back

Throughout the school year and especially during the holiday season, students and staff participate in wonderful initiatives, providing care and support for the Waterford community and many outside charitable organizations. Waterford Public Schools is proud of our staff and students who strive to give back to the community and work together with organizations whose mission reflects our own.



All schools participated in PJ Day for Kids, an initiative to raise money for juvenile cancer treatment at Connecticut Children's Medical Center. Schools raised over \$3500 for this wonderful program.



In partnership with the Waterford Youth and Family Services, students and staff collected nonperishable foods items during the holidays for Waterford families in need.



Schools partnered with Safe Futures, an emergency shelter and transitional living program for families working to rebuild lives shattered by domestic violence or sexual assault. Shoebox Santa Gifts, filled with personal items, pens and paper, small toys and gift cards, were collected for families at Safe Futures. The Happy Feet program was also organized that collected socks, slippers, as well as mittens and gloves for men, women and children.

Waterford High School used a portion of proceeds raised from the Homecoming Dance to give back to the community. WHS adopted two families through WYFSB and one from Safe Futures through the holiday assistance programs.

The Quaker Hill Elementary School 5th grade club "Let's Make a Difference" visited Bayview Health Center on December 15 to sing Christmas carols and spend time visiting with the residents.

Honoring our Veterans

A favorite event in Waterford Public Schools has always been honoring the Veterans in the Waterford community. This year was no different. Great Neck, Oswegatchie, and Quaker Hill Elementary Schools planned wonderful celebrations to not only educate students on Veterans Day but to also honor the important men and women who served and continue to serve our country.

- ⇒ Oswegatchie Elementary School hosted a Veterans breakfast on November 8th. Veterans were introduced and announced to the OSW community followed by a speech from Principal Macrino and several songs from the OSW students.
- ⇒ Quaker Hill Elementary School hosted their annual Veterans Day Parade and Ceremony on November 9th. Over 70 veterans, active duty military members, and their families attended this wonderful event. After the parade, students sang songs and provided guests with special artwork and breakfast. One of the highlights of the ceremony was the singing of the National Anthem by 2nd Grader Lucy Nelson, accompanied on the piano by her father Chief Petty Officer Sean Nelson.
- ⇒ The Great Neck Elementary School Chorus performed for community Veterans at the Veterans Day Breakfast at Filomena's and presented 81 snack bags and gratitude cards as small tokens of appreciation for their service. Click on the photos below to view the videos from the Veterans Day Events.



Click on the links below to hear the wonderful performance by the Great Neck Elementary Chorus at the Veterans Breakfast.

CLICK
HERE

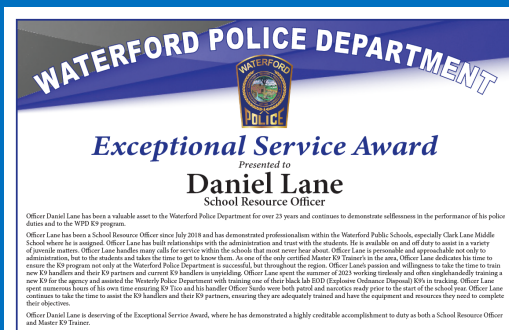
[America the Beautiful](#)

CLICK
HERE

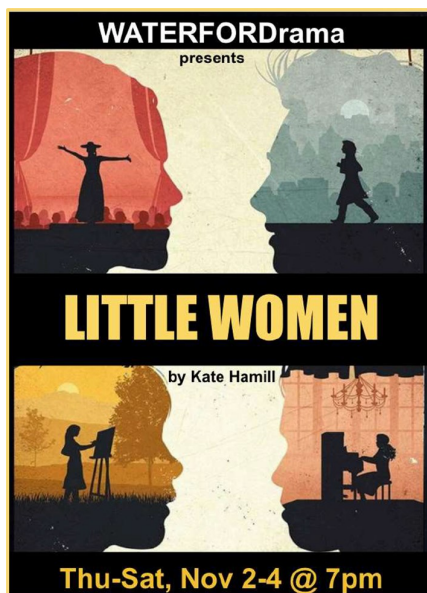
[This Land is Your Land](#)

SRO Lane Receives Exceptional Service Award

On December 12, 2023, School Resource Officer Daniel Lane was awarded the Waterford Police Department's Exceptional Service Award for his work as a School Resource Officer and a Master K-9 Trainer. Officer Lane's award noted that [he] "has been a School Resource Officer since July 2018 and has demonstrated professionalism within the Waterford Public Schools, especially Clark Lane Middle School where he is assigned. Officer Lane has built relationships with the administration and trust with the students. He is available on and off duty to assist in a variety of juvenile matters. Officer Lane handles many calls for service within the schools that most never hear about. Officer Lane is personable and approachable not only to administration, but to the students and takes the time to get to know them." We congratulate Officer Lane on this well-deserved award and we are thankful that he is such a valuable part of the Waterford Public Schools Team.



WATERFORDrama Production of LITTLE WOMEN



WATERFORDrama proudly performed their first play of the year, *Little Women*, on November 2 through November 4 in the WHS Auditorium. The play by Kate Hamill, adapted from the classic novel by Louise May Alcott, entertained audience members and was a great way to kickoff the 2023-2024 drama season. Set during the Civil War, *Little Women* tells the story of Jo March and her sisters as they struggle with what it means to grow up with their father away at war. Gender roles, political beliefs, poverty, and even love itself threaten to break family ties, as the March sisters tried to reconcile their identities with society's demands. Directed by David Conaway & Monique Nee, the show featured 13 cast members and a crew of 20.

WATERFORDrama is currently preparing for their next production, *Mean Girls*, which is set to come out in the winter/spring of 2024.



Music News

Congratulations to the following WHS music students who auditioned and were selected to perform in the 2024 Connecticut Eastern Region Honor Ensemble Festival to be held at the University of Connecticut in January.

- ♦ Band - Lauren Gerboth (Band Member chosen for Region Orchestra), Caleb Nichols (Jazz Band), Michelle Liu
- ♦ Choir - Sofia Fioravanti, Yana Abramova, Suhana Sharma
- ♦ Orchestra - Valerie Cheng, Boden Fagan, Cole Kempke, Emma Kidd, Maple Siu, Justin Wang, Ethan Wang, Ian Li, Alexander Seltzer, Alexander Startz

Young Artists

Each month artwork is displayed on a rotating school schedule at central office and in the Board of Education conference room to showcase the amazing artists that we have in Waterford Public Schools. All of the elementary schools exhibited student artwork in the month of December and many families have visited Town Hall to view their child's artwork on display.



Hudson Saad, grade 3 student at GN, proudly shows his chalk drawing of dolphins.

CHRIS GHIGLIA



Congratulations to Waterford High School Girls Soccer Coach Chris Ghiglia for being named Eastern CT Conference Girls Soccer Coach of the Year and Waterford High School Senior Allison Cioci for receiving the honor of being selected as Eastern CT Conference Girls Soccer Player of the Year.

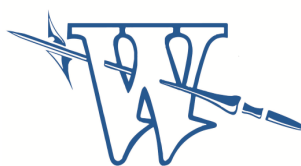
ALLISON CIOCI



National Letter of Intent Signing Day

November 8, 2023 was the first official day for Senior Student-Athletes to officially commit to a Division 1 or 2 program by signing a commitment letter to their chosen institution. On that day, Waterford High School celebrated four Waterford Student-Athletes who signed their commitment letters.

- ♦ **Amarys (AJ) Jimenez** Soccer at University of Rhode Island
- ♦ **Emilia Podeszwa** Softball at Binghamton University
- ♦ **Grace Muti** Softball at Saint Peters University
- ♦ **Melanie Martin** Softball at University of Bridgeport



CLMS
Athletics

EASTERN CONNECTICUT
MIDDLE SCHOOL CONFERENCE
**GIRLS SOCCER
CHAMPIONS
2023-2024**

EASTERN CONNECTICUT
MIDDLE SCHOOL CONFERENCE
**GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY
CHAMPIONS
2023-2024**

Congratulations

School Safety Forum



On November 15, 2023, the Waterford Public Schools in collaboration with the Waterford Police Department hosted a School Safety Forum for parents/guardians and the community. The School Safety Forum was an informational night that highlighted the roles and training of School Resource Officers, definitions of emergency situations, communication preparations and information for reporting safety concerns. Waterford Public Schools is proud of the partnership with the Waterford Police Department and our combined commitment to ensure the safety and well-being of our students and staff.

View the School Safety Presentation at <https://youtu.be/FBR4SaZE0PI?si=gFgGPgZwlXpXCbiU>

**SPEAK
UP** FOR SAFETY

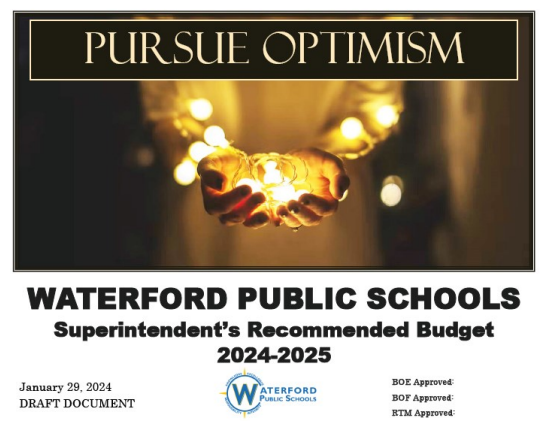
Attendees at the School Safety Forum were reminded of the Speak Up for Safety Tip-line that is monitored 24/7/365 and can be used to report concerns regarding school safety, bullying, students in crisis etc. Students and parents/guardians can report concerns via email at speakup@my.waterfordschools.org, or call/text 860-909-4004. Scan the QR code to upload the SpeakUp for Safety contact information.



FY25 Budget Information

To assist with the budget development for FY25, the Board of Education Finance Committee and District Administration have scheduled three (3) Finance Committee meetings to analyze line items prior to the Special Budget meetings and to promote earnest discussion on the budget on an earlier timeline. The Board of Education Finance Committee meetings are scheduled for December 13th, January 8th and January 17th at 5:00 PM in the Board of Education Conference Room. All BOE Finance Committee Meetings will also be livestreamed on the BOE YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC7hhqBh6eoFpZjYCtoSxsTA/videos>.

The Waterford Board of Education is committed to ensuring a budget that focuses on both our commitment to maintain a high quality education for our students and our responsibility of careful consideration of fiscal resources. Superintendent Giard will present the recommended budget to the board and the community at two budget workshops on February 1st and 8th. The budget will go for final approval by the Board at the February 22, 2024 regularly scheduled Board of Education meeting.



Waterford Public Schools

Pat Fedor, Board of Education Chairperson

Thomas W. Giard III, Superintendent

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Waterford Public Schools is a community of learners that fosters and supports high aspirations, ensuring every student acquires the skills and knowledge necessary to be a responsible citizen, prepared to contribute and succeed in an ever-changing world.

Stay Connected...

- ♦ **WPS Website - Visit**
www.waterfordschools.org for up to date BOE, school and event information.
- ♦ **BOE meetings are held on the 4th Thursday of each month. For the complete schedule of meetings, go to the [BOE section](#) of the WPS Website.**
- ♦ **Download the [WPS App](#) to 'stay abreast' of all the happenings at our schools.**
- ♦ **Follow us on [Twitter](#) : [@WPS_CT](#) and [@WaterfordSuper](#)**