



THE WALLINGFORD-SWARTHMORE

DISTRICT NEWSLETTER

A Publication of the Wallingford-Swarthmore Public Schools

Fall 2010

WALLINGFORD-SWARTHMORE SCHOOLS WELCOME DR. RICHARD NOONAN

Dr. Richard Noonan assumed the role of Superintendent of Schools on September 15th, and he is quickly taking steps to familiarize himself with the students, staff, and parents across the school community.

Dr. Noonan comes to the district from the Madison School

District, in New Jersey, where he was Superintendent of Schools for six years. In his time at Madison, the district's schools achieved state and national recognition for excellence. The district also developed an ambitious strategic plan, and the K-12 curriculum was revitalized through a comprehensive review process that, among other benefits, yielded exciting new collaborations with area colleges and cultural institutions. All five district schools were successfully renovated and expanded during his tenure.

Richard Noonan is a graduate of Brown University, where he majored in American Studies. He received his Masters Degree in Teaching from Duke University and his Doctorate in Curriculum and Teaching from Teachers College, Columbia University. Since 1994 Dr. Noonan has been an Adjunct Professor of Education, teaching graduate students who aspire to be school and district leaders.

His wife Pam, also a Brown graduate, is a high school math teacher. The Noonans have two daughters: Kendra,



Dr. Richard Noonan

who is a senior at Bucknell, and Brooke, who is a freshman at the University of Michigan.

Dr. Noonan has spent a healthy number of days attending classes in all of the schools since his arrival. As he describes it, "There's no better way to understand the state of the schools than to experience it as a student

does." Initial impressions have been strong, and he notes, "I've been impressed with the range of curricular offerings, and the zeal with which our faculty members approach their classes. It's also been fun to speak with our students about the kind of work they're doing at each level — they're an inquisitive, candid, and personable group."

He has devoted his early days in the district to guiding the initiation of the Wallingford Elementary School renovation project, reviewing current program strengths and needs with district administrators, meeting with parent and community groups, and reaching out to neighboring colleges and cultural organizations to explore partnerships with the district's schools.

How has the new Superintendent adjusted to life in the Wallingford-Swarthmore area? "Having grown up in Boston, the hardest part has been acquiring a taste for National League baseball. The upside is that the Phillies, like my beloved Red Sox, are a team with soul — unlike the Yankees." An active marathoner, he

will be running in his fourth Philadelphia Marathon this fall.

Dr. Noonan has several top objectives in mind for the district, beginning with educational goals. "We have to regularly assess the quality of our curriculum at every level and make sure that our achievement and curricular practices benchmark well with other top schools," he states. A second educational priority is to keep the entire staff learning and growing through ongoing professional growth and development. He sees new collaborations with the University of Pennsylvania, Swarthmore College, and other area colleges as vital elements in achieving this goal.

The Superintendent also would like to see an Educational Foundation formed to offset some of the burden taxpayers assume for sustaining quality programs in our schools.

"Foundations are playing an increasingly larger role these days in the country's best public schools, and with expectations and expertise as high as they are here, there's no reason we can't achieve the same thing."

Another objective Dr. Noonan has put forward is to develop a long-range plan for strengthening and guiding the district's schools, one the entire school community will unite around. One initial step in this process will be to ask parents and community members to complete an online school satisfaction survey. More information will be forthcoming this winter.

STRATH HAVEN SENIORS RECOGNIZED AS NATIONAL MERIT RECIPIENTS

Thirty-four students at Strath Haven High School have been recognized by the 2010 National Merit Scholarship Program. Twelve Strath Haven students were named National Merit Semifinalists, a distinction reserved for one-percent of high school seniors nationwide. Twenty-two students were named National Merit Commended Students, based on their performance in the top three percent of students nationally who took the PSAT.

The recognition of these 34 students by the National Merit Scholarship Program constitutes the highest percentage of the senior class to receive this distinction in the history of Strath Haven High School.



National Merit Semifinalists, front, from left, Nicholas Cheung, Sam Perricone, Will Prince, and Max Shaw. Standing, from left, Ethan Graham, Hannah Meyer, Leah Malamut, Rachel Cohen, Bennett Sobel, and Marc Williamson. Not pictured, Andrew Powers and Brendan Whitelaw.

SHHS ROBOTICS TEAM WINS AT REGIONAL COMPETITION

As SHHS students arrived for school last March 5, they observed the Panther mascot surrounded by students loading boxes of tools, computer keyboards, joysticks, and even a button-making machine onto the back of a school bus. This was definitely not the band going off to march in a parade. It was the Positronic Panthers Robotics Team 486 heading off to test out their robot in the three-day FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) Robotics Regional Competition at the Sun National Bank Center in Trenton, New Jersey. Teams from all over the world compete in regional competitions, hoping to move on to the nationals.

Between the kickoff and shipping day, the teams have six frantic weeks to design, build, program, and test the robot. Construction must adhere exactly to FIRST specifications, and team members, mentors, and parents work long hours to achieve this goal.

Over the past ten years, Ted Jones, an engineering expert from Boeing, has volunteered his time to help our students understand the latest technological advances. Our team is also supported financially by Boeing, 3M Dyneon, Tancredi's



Strath Haven Positronic Panthers Team 486 members proudly display their Philadelphia Regional Championship Banner.

Automotive, and Strath Haven High School.

Competition really did get fierce on the field at regionals, and spectators saw many a robot "turtle" topple over or get turned upside down by a robot from another alliance. The Positronic Panthers performed well at Trenton, and while we were not picked for the final match sessions, the field experience enabled us to be better prepared for the Philadelphia Regional Competition at Drexel University on March 25-27.

At Drexel, after two and a half days of intense competition, the top eight teams each selected the two teams they wanted to join them for the final matches and ultimately the regional title. The top-seeded team, Wissahickon High School's Miss Daisy team, selected the MOE team

(sponsored by DuPont Engineering and Boeing), and the Positronic Panthers to be in their alliance. All the hard work of the past few months had paid off!

That afternoon, in front of a stadium full of spectators, the Positronic Panthers Team 486, along with Miss Daisy and MOE, won its second Philadelphia Regional Competition, and the Panthers were guaranteed a spot in the upcoming national competition from April 15-17 in Atlanta, Georgia. It was particularly gratifying when our lower-budget robot outperformed Miss Daisy and MOE at times, bringing victory to Strath Haven's alliance.

At nationals, Strath Haven's robot performed gallantly against opponents from all over the world. The venue was enormous, with both the Georgia Dome and an adjacent conference center filled with more than 340 teams. Between matches, eager participants could visit the many sponsors and institutes of higher education on site. FIRST offers scholarships in the amount of \$12.2 million from 136 different providers.

For more information, visit www.usfirst.org/scholarships, or contact Bruce Landolph at blandolph@wssd.org.

AN UPDATE ON THE WALLINGFORD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PROJECT

The Wallingford Elementary School building that stands at 20 South Providence Road was originally built in 1929-1930. Three additions were added in the 1940s, the 1950s, and the early 1970s. The building



does not meet the 21st century educational standards with regard to classroom sizes, availability, and suitability of classroom spaces. These conditions were confirmed in two feasibility studies conducted for the Wallingford-Swarthmore School District in 2004 and 2008.

Following the 2008 study, the district administration and the Board of School Directors determined that the Providence Road site was the most cost-effective and time-efficient location for the renovated school. The administration identified a projected cost of \$18 million. Of this amount, \$7 million is presently in a capital reserve fund and \$11 million will be realized through a bond issue. The district has prepared for the bond issue by placing \$800,000 as a debt service line item in the 2011-2012 budget.

In the spring of 2010, the district awarded contracts to Godshall Kane Architects, Cirilli Engineering Associates, and Reynolds Construction Management. Since that time, these firms have worked with the district administration, school staff, parents, and township officials

to develop plans to create a functional and attractive facility. It is anticipated that construction will begin in May 2011 and be completed in time for the start of the 2012-2013 school year. Pictured are the architect's renderings.

Construction of a new wing on the south side of the present building will be the first phase. Next, the 1970s section of the building will be renovated. When the new structure is complete and occupied, the old wing

of Wallingford Elementary School will be demolished. This phasing does not require that students be moved off-site during construction. However, it will require adjustments in how, when, and which outdoor play areas are used, and it will require vigilance with regard to safety and drop-off procedures. To that end, we are working with community officials such as the Fire Marshal and Chief of Police as well as school staff and volunteers.

The educational impact of the new building will be significant. Kindergarten will return to home schools. An adequate number of spaces will be designed to accommodate special needs students, English language learners, occupational therapy, speech and language therapy, and small group instruction. The gym, stage, and cafeteria will be of adequate

size to accommodate school activities and productions. Additionally, handicapped accessibility will be provided.

The site development team of architects, engineers, and district personnel are attending to issues of sustainability as we develop plans. Among the items being pursued for this project are roof products that reduce the heat island effect, constructional activity pollution prevention, low-emitting materials and mold prevention, interior and exterior lighting design and control, water use efficiency and reduction, efficient heat pumps and energy recovery systems, and high efficiency boilers.

Of most concern to the members of the school community is storm water management, which will use infiltration rather than retention. The storm water management plan has been designed in such a way that it will not feed back into the already heavily taxed watershed system.



In 2007, *Money Magazine* named Wallingford as one of the top 10 places to live in the United States of America. Among the positive attributes was the school system.

With an upgraded and renovated Wallingford Elementary School, we will create a building that can provide a facility, programs, and opportunities worthy of this tremendously involved and supportive community.

SHMS MEDALS AT NATIONAL SCIENCE OLYMPIAD

On March 1, 2010, the SHMS and SHHS Science Olympiad teams competed in the Southeastern Pennsylvania regional competition at Cabrini College. The SHHS team finished in fifth place in the high school division, while the SHMS team out-performed 38 other middle school teams and finished in first place.

On April 30, both teams competed at the Pennsylvania State Science Olympiad competition at Juniata College. The SHHS team finished fourth in the high school division. The SHMS team, competing against 35 other middle school teams, medaled in 14 of 23 events and finished second place in the state.

As a result of its outstanding performance, the SHMS team secured a berth at the National Science Olympiad competition at the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign, Illinois on May 20-22. At this event, the Strath Haven team faced 59 of the most competitive Science Olympiad teams from across the country. Once again the team demonstrated its strength, receiving medals in seven of the 23 events,



Strath Haven Middle School team members display the second-place medals that they earned at the Pennsylvania State Science Olympiad competition.

including two first-place medals. Overall, the team placed 19th in the country.

The middle school team of 24 students competed in events spanning the sciences: from chemistry, biology, and physics to engineering, computers, and astronomy. Applied science activities included the design, construction, and use of propelled gliders, bridges, catapults, and cars. Research and problem-solving activities involved a wide range of disci-

plines, including ornithology, paleontology, and meteorology.

The team began preparing for competition in November of last year and continued working until the National competition in May. Every day after school, various team members could be found working together in small teams to prepare for specific Olympiad events. The team's coaches attribute the students' successes to their dedicated efforts and passion for learning about, and applying, science.

SCHOOL BOARD

Administration

Dr. Richard Noonan,
Superintendent of Schools
Lorraine DeTurk,
Business Administrator

Region One

Blaise Santianni,
Assistant Board Secretary
Marylin Huff
Vincent J. Marriott III,
Vice President

Region Two

Michael P. Reilly
Michael J. Rinaldi
Robert Reiger

Region Three

Mary Gay Scanlon, *President*
Richard Sonntag
Sally Morbeck, *Treasurer*

MIDDLE SCHOOL RENOVATION DRAWS TO COMPLETION

The renovation of Strath Haven Middle School is nearing completion, and the improvements to the former Nether Providence High School facility are enjoyed by students and faculty alike. Pictured are the wonderful new art, science, and technology education classrooms in use.

