



# Your Public Schools



December 2018

MSA  
CESS Empire State Advantage Gold Level Awardee  
Community Newsletter

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## Niagara Falls City School District, NY GO Debt Rating Raised To 'A-' From 'BBB+'

In October, Standard & Poor's (S & P) Global Ratings raised its

rating on the Niagara Falls City School District general obligation debt outstanding one notch to 'A-' from 'BBB+'.

Contemporaneously, S&P

Global Ratings raised its rating on the District's certificates of participation (COPs) outstanding to 'BBB+' from 'BBB'. S&P Global Ratings assigned its 'BBB+' rating to the COPs based on the application of its "Issue Credit Ratings Linked To U.S. Public Finance Obligors' Creditworthiness" criteria, published Jan. 22, 2018. According to S & P, the outlook is stable. S&P Global Ratings withdrew its rating on the District's 1998 COPs, as these bonds are no longer outstanding.

"The upgrades reflect several factors; however, the most compelling is the recent growth in fund balance," said S&P Global Ratings credit analyst Lauren Freire.

"We have worked hard and have never in the last 30 years had a

bond rating of A -," said Superintendent of Schools Mark Laurrie.

We believe that the active management team and its prudent budgetary practices have improved the district's financial position over

**"Management has successfully managed rising costs, with a limited tax base, while experiencing enrollment growth and the early termination of an expected revenue stream from the Seneca Nation."**

**S & P statement**

the past few years.

The 'A-' rating reflects our view of:

- A history of positive year-end operating results, that are expected to continue into 2018;
- Strong total fund balance levels and budgetary flexibility; and
- A moderate debt level, however, with rapidly amortizing debt.

The above-mentioned factors are offset by the district's:

- High level of exposure to state aid; and
- Limited local economy with low-to-adequate wealth levels.

The stable outlook reflects our expectation that the rating will not change during the outlook period. The stability and growth in state aid further stabilize the rating. The district's proactive and conservative management team

**Cataract City Classics!**  
Basketball December 7 & 8 in the  
Wolvarena!  
Hockey December 14 & 15 at the  
Hyde Park Ice Pavilion  
Brought to you by the  
Niagara Falls Education Foundation  
story page 4

provides necessary confidence that the district will continue to manage ongoing expenses with corresponding revenues despite a weaker economy."

"I am proud of the work our administrative team does to achieve this rating, along with the continued support of my fellow board members," said Board of Education President Robert Restaino.

If the district's financial performance were to remain positive, resulting in higher reserves, coupled with an improving tax base and economic indicators, the rating could rise; if the district were to draw on its fund balance and maintain reserves at a level considered low, the rating could be lowered.

S & P notation:

Certain terms used in this report, particularly certain adjectives used to express our view on rating relevant factors, have specific meanings ascribed to them in our criteria, and should therefore be read in conjunction with such criteria. Please see Ratings Criteria at [www.standardandpoors.com](http://www.standardandpoors.com) for further information. Complete ratings information is available to subscribers of RatingsDirect at [www.capitaliq.com](http://www.capitaliq.com). All ratings affected by this rating action can be found on S&P Global Ratings' public

## Cataract Playground Officially Opened

NYS Senator Robert Ortt joined District officials and Board members Robert Restaino and Nicholas Vilardo to cut the ribbon and open the new playground at Cataract Elementary School in October.

Students from every grade took part and the whole school joined in the celebration, as did Anne Dafchik, architect at Clark Patterson Lee (CPL), and CPL Principal and Vice President, Mike Mistriner, AIA.

Sen. Ortt provided \$165,000 of State and Municipal Funding toward the project, which had a total cost of \$191,000.

Meeting the basic requirements for accessibility wasn't good enough for the Cataract Elementary playground committee; they wanted the playground design to provide opportunities for children of all abilities. They discussed their vision with Ben Frasier, a project manager with Parkitects, Inc. and Landscape Structures playground equipment, and Ben provided several events that would make the new play

area more inclusive and challenging for all children. The playground committee selected the following events to help create a more complete play environment that would be inclusive and challenging for the children at Cataract Elementary.

We saw

The We-saw™ is a new take on our traditional seesaw. Its unique design and gentle rocking motion invites kids and families of all ages and abilities to participate in the fun. The We-saw is wheelchair accessible. Like all our seesaws, the We-saw provides opportunities for collaborative play and teamwork. Walk-in seating ensures easy access or transfer into seat.

Kaleidospin Panel

The Sensory Development Kaleidospin Panel® provides an engaging experience that indulges the senses and has great visual stimulation. The 2-sided panel allows children to view the world from either side or look at each other in



creative ways while promoting exploration and discovery.

Marble Panel

The unique Marble Panel® offers a sensory-rich visual, auditory and tactile experience with its brilliant wall of marbles.

Climbing Wall

The Climbing Wall gives everyone a leg up on agility and coordination on the playground. Lots of kids can climb for interactive fun!

Escalator Climber

The Escalator Climber mimics a real, perpendicular rock wall for a challenging climbing experience while including a twist. The Handgrips are large enough for confident climbing and the subtle motion of the belt material that creates the wall provides more challenge and sensory input.

**From the Superintendent**



**Mark Laurrie**

Many employees join us or retire each and every year. While all are appreciated, once in a while someone retires whose career has spanned decades. One such person retires early next year. District Clerk Ruthel Dumas will attend her last Board of Education meeting on December 20, after 38 years in her position. We calculate, conservatively, a minimum of 800 Board meetings are behind her. I know I speak for former Superintendents as well as current and former Board of Education members when I wish her all the best and convey thanks for a job well done.

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The holidays are fast upon us and by the time we break, 16 weeks of the academic year will have elapsed.

How's it going?

We have tried so far this year to provide new resources for District families and, in some cases, the community at large, through our Speakers Series, mental health initiatives, and after school programming.

We continue to seek out every possibility to fund these programs, and are grateful to be able to offer after school opportunities through the Extended Day Program, 21st Century Elementary and 21st Century Prep, as well as the Empire State After-School Program. Student participation in these programs grows daily.

The Family Community Engagement Grant allows us to establish programs designed to increase family engagement in student education. Mentoring programs also will take place that will focus on minority males and their specific needs within the district.

All elementary schools now offer fresh fruits and/or vegetables to all students, daily, outside of breakfast and lunch time via a Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Cart. Staffed by NFCSD Food Service staff, this program aims to increase fruit and vegetable consumption for our children.

At Niagara Falls High School, students are taking college bearing classes at Niagara University. Coordination, including student registration and scheduling has already occurred. Meanwhile, Reading Recovery is in full swing at Kalfas Magnet School. At the prep level, students are enjoying a new program called F-Bites. (See story on page 5).

These are just some of the things staff has been implementing to increase student achievement and promote good health.

What about you? Have you joined us in our Community-wide Read of Beautiful Boy by David Sheff? Your free book is waiting for you at Central Office. Winter break may be a great time to read it! We also encourage you to take advantage of the Winter Break to find time to read to or with your children. Why not have your own, age appropriate Family-wide Read during these chilly days?

Then after the break is over, please remember that student attendance, every day and on time, is the single biggest predictor of academic success.

**From the Board**



**Ron Barstys**

**HAPPY HOLIDAYS!** I hope this article finds you well after an enjoyable Thanksgiving with family and friends. I also hope for a blessed Christmas to come to all the Our Schools readers out there. I want to take this time to highlight some of the wonderful initiatives the District has embarked upon. I believe these initiatives are vital to helping to develop a greater sense of community here in Niagara Falls where I continually hear, "There's nothing to do around here!"

First and foremost, if you haven't taken advantage of the inaugural and FREE Speaker Series at the Performing Arts Center at Niagara Falls High School, I sincerely hope you catch the next event. After the highly acclaimed speaker event on October 30th with Kevin Hines on the topic of suicide, our focus shifted to the November 14th event titled, What is an American: Perspectives. Indeed, another very thought provoking and engaging evening. Check out the District's website for more upcoming events like the must-see Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Celebration on January 17th. We always have an impressive and moving speaker with a powerful message for this event.

If anything, come to see the Niagara Falls Housing Authority Youth Choir who consistently steal the show with their incredible talents! You won't regret it!

Sticking with the "things to do around here" theme, you may have caught the Niagara Proscenium Players presentation of Steel Magnolias in the Performing Arts Center back in October or the Harlem Wizards basketball extravaganza in the Wolverina. In an effort to keep the good times rolling, the District is expanding drama opportunities and entertaining performances to the middle school level with Lion King, Jr. Be on the lookout for this inaugural prep-level event coming to you in April.

This is just a sampling of District initiatives designed to enhance our community by adding more things to do, places to go, and people to see in a free or very low cost way, and I can almost guarantee that our concession stand prices are just a fraction of those found at other entertainment venues. I encourage you to take advantage of these opportunities and many more throughout the new year ahead. As I alluded to in my introduction, these activities bring our community together in a way that fosters the growth, and enhances the potential, of this city's most valuable resource- our children!

**REMINDER**

A Medical Mobile Unit visits each school during the school year; a Portable Dental Clinic visits elementary schools. Dates will be published in this publication and in your child's school newsletters. For more information, call Brenda Wyrosdick at 286-0788. The necessary paper work will be available in each school's Health Office.

**Principal's Corner by GPS principal Sheila Smith**



Prep school for most students can be overwhelming...new building, new friends, class schedules, multiple teachers and yes .....what is this -----a locker with a combination? A 7:35 a.m. start to the day; 8 class periods per day; no fewer than 6 individual teachers; and a 3 minute transition time to classes coupled with understanding grade requirements. Prep School is different. Prep school is complex is what students have told me.

To add to this, our students are starting to develop a sense of who they are, accompanied with independence, notwithstanding the physical changes caused by puberty, while still trying to fit in with their classmates. Students can also face additional social and emotional distractions shaped by

external influences specific to their own environment, as they embark on their journey to adulthood.

At Gaskill, we focus on providing a safe and supportive learning environment where continuous academic growth is our key and foremost charge. It is our belief and conviction that every child should feel welcomed, excited about learning, and grow academically, socially, and emotionally. Academically, when you walk in classrooms on a daily basis, you will see all of our students utilizing technology in their classrooms, participating in skill-based lessons which include a component where students individually self-assess their own learning. Every student has the ability to tell you what they are learning on that particular day and why they are learning the topic. In addition, at the end of the class, students self-check their understanding of the lesson,

inform the teacher, and receive additional support from teachers if they have not clearly understood the lesson. This allows the student to 'own' their own learning and partner with their teacher on a daily basis and helps them to possess skills which will allow them throughout their lifetime to self-monitor. When talking to students, I have found that students not only possess a better understanding of the learning process, but are also cognizant of teaching practices. We want our students to 'think deeply and understand deeply.' Our teachers consistently use research base practices, analyze data to meet students' needs, while setting goals for students' individual growth and improvement. In addition, a unique instructional feature at the middle school level is the first period of the day is dedicated to providing all students with academic support whether they are Grade 8 honor students working on school projects as part of their Algebra I, Living

Environment, or Global I studies or students who are not at grade level needing additional support.

Research shows middle school is a pivotal time in a student's life. During this time students can either be placed successfully on the trajectory to high school, college and career—or descend on a downward pathway. Without extra support, students are more likely to get in trouble and fall behind. Access to enrichment opportunities makes the difference in school success for most prep school students. It is for that reason, the Niagara Falls City School District provides multiple afterschool programs for our students to extend their school day. Afterschool programming is very popular at GPS.

Last year, approximately 80% of our student body participated in one or more of our afterschool programs. Some (Continued page 3)

Maple Avenue School: Fresh Produce, Science, and Song



At left: All elementary schools now offer fresh fruits and/or vegetables to all students, daily, outside of breakfast and lunch time, via a Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Cart.

The goal of the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) is to provide healthy snack option for students. The FFVP takes place following breakfast and is available 10 a.m. - 1 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Following breakfast, the fruit or vegetable of the day is displayed on a cart so students wanting an additional healthy snack can take an item to consume at that time or during an appropriate snack time later in the day.

The cart with fresh fruits and vegetables will be set up in the cafeteria area where a staff member from the school will wheel the cart to a foyer area or a high traffic area for students.

Snacks are available to all students from 10 a.m. - 1 p.m. The program is grant-funded.

Above and at right: Students in Maria Martin's class were critiquing their own work and making improvements before turning in a science project, while students in Roscetti's class were singing about Halloween.



Principal's Column (cont.d)

of the afterschool enrichment programs our teachers provide are:

- Math and ELA Clubs - To allow re-teaching and pre-teaching of math concepts and provide individualized instruction; support students in reading - writing development, understand key ideas, details, craft, and structure text.
- The Robotics Club allows students the opportunity to design robots which complete a specific task while competing for points against another team. Each team prepares for an interschool scrimmage and also a tournament.
- Beauty & Brains Club allows students to learn the chemistry behind beauty products. Students create products including bath bombs and lip balms, and learn about STEM careers in the multi-billion dollar beauty industry.
- Performing Arts Club - Students at both prep schools have the opportunity to participate in multiple performing art activities throughout the school year.
- Gaskill Fantasy Basketball Club enhances student engagement and increases mathematical understanding. Students create their own rosters, while establishing a point system that dictates standings. Students monitor points, set rosters, and explore analytics.
- Anime Club - Students read anime novels, view animation from the genre, and learn to draw anime or manga.

It is common for students during their first few months of prep school to feel overwhelmed, but for students who need additional time to adjust, school counselors are available for students as well as various community partners who provide support.

- Living Wellness of Niagara focuses on a variety of needs, including academic, behavioral and social emotional. Small group, individual, or family counseling sessions are provided.
- Girls Circle, facilitated by Community Missions of Niagara Frontier, Inc., is designed to foster self-esteem, maintain authentic connection with peers and women, counter trends of self-doubt, and allow for genuine self-expression through verbal sharing and creative activity. The group specifically addresses the growing issue within schools of how to best address problem behaviors among female students.
- Winning Because I Tried, facilitated by Modie Cox, teaches students that it is not about the win or the loss, but believing in their own abilities.

Lastly, an important part of our school commitment involves developing key relationships with our parents. The first quarter of the school year has ended. Parent communication is extremely important to ensure students continue to be successful. Therefore we encourage parents to read our school newsletter, log on to our website, join us on Facebook, to register and utilize the district's parent portal where parents will be able to view their child's up-to-date course grades as well as daily attendance, or call our school to set-up an appointment to discuss your child's progress. If we successfully educate and empower our middle school children, they hopefully will transfer their 'habits of mind' into high school and beyond, but it takes all of us to do so.

F-BITES

The District is partnering with F-BITES, or Food Based Interventions with Technology Energy & Science, a culinary program designed by celebrity Chef Bobby Anderson. Chef Bobby received national attention from his TV appearance on "Hell's Kitchen," and has been working with youth in Niagara Falls and Buffalo for some time. He melds his life experiences growing up under difficult circumstances with his passion for gourmet food.

The focus, he explained in a recent Board of Education Review Session, is to provide transferable life skills to all participating students. Being accountable, collaborating, and gaining an understanding that, in performing one's job properly, one enables others to complete group projects on time and in an acceptable manner.

According to his program literature, "Culinary educations serve diverse individual interests while accommodating students with different learning methods and providing students with opportunities to execute essential skills through practical applications."

"F BITES seeks to create pipelines to careers through

our long-established relationships between schools and employers to target students who live in poverty and require educational and vocational training" that leads to employment and college study opportunities.

Prep students are participating at LaSalle Prep School now, and the plan is for the program to expand to Gaskill Prep School as well.

Objectives for the course work include general hospitality knowledge, culinary skill, soft skills, career planning and management, and mentoring. Baking, meat preparation, an introduction to sauces, baking and desserts and restaurant/banquet facilitation are on the curriculum.

Thirty students in grades seven and eight are currently taking the program at LPS. Said Principal James Spanbauer, F BITES helps students "by increasing their skill level, school interest, and mentoring services. These and other protective factors create the foundation for a youth to have incentive to succeed in completing school and gaining prospective employment."

## Niagara Falls Education Foundation

The Niagara Falls Education Foundation is a separate entity from the school district, but one that devotes itself to benefiting our students and alumni. Its mission is “to provide resources to recognize the current accomplishments and promote the future success of the students in the Niagara Falls City School District.”

Throughout the year, the Niagara Falls Education Foundation raises funds by hosting the Cataract City Classic Basketball and Hockey Tournaments, and by hosting an Alumni Recognition and Scholarship Dinner. With those funds, they award scholarships to graduating seniors. They also help provide extras to students that the school district, by law, cannot fund.

The Directors of the Foundation include familiar names from the community, who serve in a volunteer capacity on the Foundation. The president is Bob Kazeangin.

This year’s Cataract City Classic Basketball Tournament, taking place at the Wolvarena December 7 and 8, will feature your Niagara Falls High School Basketball Wolverines and others. Here is the schedule:

Friday, December 7  
5 p.m. Williamsville North vs. Akron

6:30 p.m. Grand Island High vs. Newfane

8 p.m. Park School vs. NFHS

Saturday, December 8  
Noon Nichols vs. Kenmore East

1:30 p.m. Depew vs. Wilson

3 p.m. Sweet Home vs. Lewiston-Porter

4:30 p.m. Franklinville vs. Medina

6 p.m. Bishop Kearney vs. Williamsville South

7:30 p.m. Bishop Timon vs. NFHS

This year’s Cataract City Classic Hockey Tournament, taking place at the Hyde Park Ice Pavilion December 14 and 15, features your Niagara Falls High School Hockey Wolverines and others. Here is that schedule:

Friday December 14  
5:30 p.m. Sweet Home vs. Starpoint

7:30 p.m. Niagara Falls/Lockport vs. Lewiston-Porter

Saturday, December 15  
5:30 p.m. Consolation

7:30 p.m. Championship

The annual Alumni Recognition and Scholarship Dinner is being held at Antonio’s Restaurant May 2. Sponsorship opportunities are available; email [jglaserpr@gmail.com](mailto:jglaserpr@gmail.com) for more information.

To nominate individuals to be recognized as Outstanding Alumni, email [rjk20@aol.com](mailto:rjk20@aol.com) or mail submission to NFEF, PO Box 595, Niagara Falls, 14302.

The Niagara Falls Education Foundation, Inc. in collaboration with the Niagara Falls School District and Harris-Connect are also working together to compile an Alumni Directory of the three former high schools in Niagara Falls. Harris-Connect is in the process of verifying alumni information of those who care to participate.

All three high schools, NFHS, Trott, & LaSalle, are going to be researched as far back as 1941. A hard copy print & an electronic version of the updated alumni directory are going to be available for purchase. The projected release will be Fall 2013.

Neither the District nor the Foundation benefit financially from the sales of these directories. Contact Art Jocoy ( [artjocoyjr@nfschools.net](mailto:artjocoyjr@nfschools.net) ) or Jim Cancemi ( [vcancemi@nfschools.net](mailto:vcancemi@nfschools.net) ) with any questions or contact Harris-Connect directly at 1-800-877-6554 with any comments, questions or concerns.

## Outstanding Alumni Poster Presentations



Superintendent Mark Laurrie presented Outstanding Alumni posters to family and friends of honorees at the Board meeting in October. Clockwise from top left: Dan Oliverio, Chair Emeritus, Hodgson Russ, LLC; federal trial lawyer, LaSalle 1974; Ellen Latham, founder, Orange Theory, NFHS 1975; Angela Mutasik, nationally recognized digital media executive, LaSalle, 1985; Gretchen Rowe Clements, Senior Production Coordinator, Elan Artists, LaSalle, 1990. Also recognized that evening was the LaSalle Alumni Association’s Joann King Simon, who spearheaded the recent LaSalle Junior-Senior High School alumni luncheon and has been instrumental in opening the District’s first Schoolseum at LaSalle Prep School. The Schoolseum contains archival materials and photographs from closed LaSalle schools.

**Safety Corner  
Winter Safety Tips from  
Health Services:**

At this time of year, it is a good idea to talk with your children about cold weather safety. Extra care is needed especially in younger children to be sure that frostbite does not occur. Make sure all children including teenagers have appropriate outerwear every day. Warm jackets, hats, scarves, boots, and an extra pair of gloves in their pockets will protect them during extremely cold temperatures.

Develop an emergency plan and review it with your children in case you are not home either before or after school. If a bus is delayed, they need to know where, when, and how to get help. Tell your child that if you are not home while they are waiting outside for the bus, how long they may wait outside, where to go in the event the bus is delayed, and what the dangers and risks of extreme weather are.

**Advise your child to ask for help if they have:**

Wet clothing boots or gloves, snow or ice next to bare skin which cannot be removed.

Pain or numbness or burning anywhere on their skin (especially hands, feet, ears, or nose).

Teach your child:

- ✓ When to ask for help.
- ✓ Where to find safe shelter in an emergency
- ✓ Who the designated adult is to go to in your neighborhood if the bus does not show.

How to protect themselves with proper winter clothing.

This resource is located at [www.schoolhealthny.com](http://www.schoolhealthny.com).

**You Can Prevent Carbon Monoxide Exposure**

✓ Do have your heating system, water heater and any other gas, oil, or coal burning appliances serviced by a qualified technician every year.

✓ Do install a battery-operated or battery back-up CO detector in your home and check or replace the battery when you change the time on your clocks each spring and fall. If the detector sounds leave your home immediately and call 911.

✓ Do seek prompt medical attention if you suspect CO poisoning and are feeling dizzy, light-headed, or nauseated.

⊗ Don't use a generator, charcoal grill, camp stove, or other gasoline or charcoal-burning device inside your home, basement, or garage or near a window.

⊗ Don't run a car or truck inside a garage attached to your house, even if you leave the door open.

⊗ Don't burn anything in a stove or fireplace that isn't vented.

⊗ Don't heat your house with a gas oven.

⊗ Don't use a generator, pressure washer, or any gasoline-powered engine less than 20 feet from any window, door, or vent.

This resource is located at <https://www.cdc.gov/co/guidelines.htm>

Have a safe winter!!  
Dr. Jo Silvaroli DNP

**Mandated Physical Exam Notice**

Dear Parent/Guardian:

New York State Law Section 903, Article 19, mandates that all students who are in Pre-Kindergarten or Kindergarten, and those in grades 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, and 11, or who are new entrants, have a physical exam. If your child had a physical exam completed by his/her own Health Care Provider on or after September 5, 2017, please send a copy of the physical to your child's school nurse.

The Community Health Center of Buffalo is scheduled to rotate to all schools throughout our District this year. You may choose this option for your child's mandated physical exam or working paper physical exam only; all sport physical exams must be completed by the District Nurse Practitioner. In addition, our District Nurse Practitioner will be available to complete a mandated physical exam for all students who have not otherwise opted out. Please see below and choose the option that you are most comfortable with. Understand that if you choose the Community Health Center of Buffalo your child will become a patient of this practice.

We would also like to let you know that all students in grades Pre-Kindergarten or Kindergarten, and those in grades 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, and 11, or who are newly entered, who have not yet presented a physical by their Health Care Provider, or have indicating their preferred option, will receive a physical exam by the District Nurse Practitioners. If your child has a pending appointment for a physical exam with his/her Health Care Provider, please provide us with the date below.

Thank You,  
Health Services

*Please return this form to your child's school nurse, to let us know which option you would like for your child's mandated exam.*

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_

My child's Health Care Provider will complete an exam on \_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

\_\_\_\_\_ The School District Nurse Practitioner may provide my child's physical exam.  
(For the Physical exam to be thorough and of real value, it will be necessary for the student to remove some clothing, modesty will always be maintained.)

\_\_\_\_\_ Send me information on the Community Health Center of Buffalo Mobile Van.  
(I understand if I choose this option my child will become a patient of the center.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian Signature

## Speaker Series: A Powerful Message to Students, Community



The District was proud to welcome author, speaker, film-maker, and suicide survivor Kevin Hines to the community in October. Mr. Hines survived a jump off the Golden Gate Bridge at the age of 19, one of only five people ever to do so. An act precipitated by mental illness including auditory and visual hallucinations, Mr. Hines has learned to manage his illness through routine, proper medication, and supports. He travels the world sharing his story and his mission to eradicate the stigma around

issues, what he calls “lethal, emotional pain” or “brain pain.”

He was also active in a group which lobbied for years, and ultimately successfully, to have suicide nets installed on the famous bridge, which was the site of more suicides than any other in the world.

In speaking with 160 Niagara Falls High School students during the academic day, Mr. Hines encouraged those who struggle with emotional pain, addictive tendencies, or experience abuse to reach out for help, and called

others to be aware that a kind word or expression of concern can make an enormous difference to those who are struggling.

The community event in the evening was well-attended, and partner agencies led by the Niagara County Department of Mental Health were in attendance with resource materials and contact information, and to provide immediate support to anyone who may have felt in need.

Mr. Hines spoke to the community for almost an hour before screening his film,

*Suicide: The Ripple Effect.*

The Niagara County Department of Mental Health has a 24-hour crisis service line that can be reached at 285-3515. This confidential resource can assist with many crisis situations, including thoughts of suicide, and help for those experiencing depression, anxiety, or domestic violence, or struggling with addiction, grief, and more.

## An Evening with the Harlem Wizards

*Submitted by Becky Hedgepeth*

The Harlem Wizards bounced into town in October for a spectacular day in the Falls. With the Abate Parent Group acting as host and community partners sponsoring the event\*, the city welcomed seven Wizards to Niagara Falls: Swoop, Sarge, Kasper, Miles High, Road Runner, Skywalker and DJ the Emcee.

The Wizards started their day at Channel 4 WIVB, inviting the community out to their evening event.

They visited all elementary and both prep schools, where they surprised students with assemblies and cafeteria visits displaying their basketball skills, cracking jokes and encouraging the students to develop character qualities and make good choices.

More than 1,300 people attended the game, with families, grandparents, district employees, city officials and even newborn babies entering into an atmosphere electrically charged with excitement, music, colors and anticipation! In the moments before the game began, it felt like a grand reunion was taking place, with people seeing friends, teachers and colleagues from all the other schools they had attended or

worked at. There was much hugging, high fiving and catching up, and this was before the game even started!

The gymnasium was packed with excited fans of all ages. After announcements and a brief background on the Wizards’ team and mission to help schools and charitable cause raise money, they brought out the home team, the Niagara Falls All-Stars. With much fanfare and cheering, principals and teachers from each school came running onto the court in matching blue and gold T-shirts. The Chief of Police Bryan Dalporto, Firefighter J.P. Stephenson and City Official Anthony Vilaro joined the team representing the city of Niagara Falls.

A moment of silence followed as NFHS Principal Cynthia Jones sang a powerful gospel-style version of the National Anthem, bringing down the house.

Then the craziness began! Music, tricks, gags, skits, comedy, audience participation and of course basketball followed for the next two hours as the Wizards, dressed in pink and white jerseys in honor of breast cancer awareness month, dazzled the crowds! The frequent transitions from game to gag, all enveloped in family-friendly



music, kept fans entertained.

The home team, along with volunteer Coach and NFHS teacher Mike Esposito, referees and NFHS staff members Matt Leo and Sal Constantino, and Athletic Trainer Tony Surace, was a group of very good sports who, in spite of their lack of experience, tried their best and played along with excellent attitudes, for the sake of making the students happy. And that they happy they did! Everywhere one turned, people were enthusiastically recapping all that had just taken place.

The show ended with an on-court for a dance party. Many thanks to the Harlem Wizards, the home team, the volunteers, the planning Falls

team, and everyone who attended, bringing the Niagara community for an unforgettable evening of fun, excitement and joy!

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*\*Sponsors included Fidelis Care, the Holiday Inn and Anchor Bar, Niagara University, Niagara Falls City Council, Town of Niagara Lions Club, Manente Orthodontics, Washington Mills Electro-mineral Plant, the Law Office of Clayton & Bergevin, Joe Cecconi’s Chrysler Complex, Project Lee and the Reverend Coplin, Wegman’s, Sam’s Club, Trinity Church, the Niagara Falls Educational Foundation, and Sertoma.*

## Dads and Donuts at Kalfas



Niagara County Legislator and Kalfas Owen Steed approached Kalfas Magnet School administration a few years ago with the idea of hosting Dads and Donuts at the school. Here, men - and some women - enjoy both while getting information on resources in the community.

Above left, Natasha Almonte from Family & Children's of Niagara asks the parents what they need. Above right, Suzanne Shear from NIACAP tells parents about resources to assist them.

## Capital Projects Update

Capital Projects are running on schedule in the District, with a bid currently out for all aspects of the following projects:

New parking lot and site remediation at Niagara Falls High School;

New roofing systems at NFHS, Maple Avenue School, Cataract Elementary School, Hyde Park School;

A brand new, full service kitchen at 79th Street School, eliminating the last heat-and-serve kitchen in the District.

Work is anticipated to begin mid to late winter.

## NFT to the Rescue!

Niagara Falls Teachers Union Local 801 (NFT) has a long tradition of giving back to the community. This year, as in years past, NFT has identified organizations with whom it is working.

Throughout the school year, NFT is collecting recyclable cans and bottles and donating 100% of the profits being donated to the Diamonds in the Ruff Animal Rescue of WNY, a volunteer-based animal rescue organization in Niagara and Erie counties.

NFT has also teamed up with Empower's Pre-Vocational "Empties for Empower" Job Training program, where individuals with dis-

job skills and earn money. They also greet customers, sort bottles, and help run the facility.

Residents may also choose to join NFT's effort by taking cans and bottles to Empower facility located at:

4701 Military Road, Niagara Falls, NY 14304 / (716) 545-0023 to schedule a pickup  
M-F 8:30-3:00, Sat 9:00-12:45

Please state "ACCOUNT #57" when bringing in cans/bottles on your own, or label your bags "ACCOUNT #57" when putting them in the 24/7 drop-off bins.

## Cornell Co-operative Extension: Have a Balanced Holiday Season

By Jennifer O'Connor/School Coordinator

The holiday season is a time for celebrating with family and friends...which means food, food, and more food! As a parent one of our roles in to use mindful eating techniques to help children self-select healthier foods. A simple way to do this is to teach your child about GO, SLOW, and WHOA foods. The overall message is that all foods can fit into a healthful diet, which consists of more GO foods than SLOW foods, and more SLOW foods than WHOA foods.

Basically, Go foods are generally the least processed. These are the healthiest for your body and can be eaten anytime. Examples of these are fresh or frozen fruits and

vegetables. Foods that are OK to eat sometimes are SLOW foods. Cheese and crackers are examples of SLOW foods. WHOA foods are the least healthy and should be eaten only once in awhile. They are most likely to cause weight problems. These are foods that can be common temptations at a holiday celebration such as cookies and candy.

Keeping up with healthy habits has benefits for your whole body - like helping to avoid holiday weight gain, helping to fend off holiday stress and fatigue, and helping to keep your immune system strong. With a little thought and planning, you can still enjoy the holidays, while keeping food nutrition and physical activity in mind.

Tips for healthy holiday eating:

- Feed your children - and yourself - a light meal or snack before going to a holiday party. It's harder to avoid overeating when you're overly hungry.
- Set a good example for children by eating fruits, vegetables, and whole grains with meals or as snacks.
- Offer to bring a healthy, low-calorie dish to holiday parties so you'll know that at least one healthy item will be available.
- Teach your children to eat smaller portions of food to control their calorie intake.
- Choose water or bubbly water mixed with 100% fruit juice. Drinks that are high in added sugars have calories, but no beneficial nutrients.
- During this busy season it might be tempting to save time by eating fast food - it may be handy, but is often high in fat and low in nutrition, and definite WHOA foods.

Spotlight on Healthy Behaviors:

Thanks to the 21st Century Grant and supply funds from Creating Healthy Schools and Communities, 79th Street School started an after-school Yoga and Mindfulness Club. At the first meeting the students made calming jars. The club will focus on mindfulness activities, breathing, and yoga poses for relaxation.

**Looking Ahead**

**January 3**  
Classes Resume

**January 10**  
**Board of Education**  
Review Session 5:30 p.m.  
Dental Clinic at Abate

**January 15**  
Mobile Health Van at  
Abate

**January 17**  
Rev. Dr. Martin Luther  
King Jr. Community Cele-  
bration at NFHS 6 p.m.

**January 22 - 25**  
Regents Week

**January 24**  
Board of Education  
Regular Meeting  
Dental Health Van at  
79th Street

**January 25**  
NFHS No School

**January 29**  
Mobile Health Van at  
79th Street



Students in Andrea Fortin Nossavage's class hopped aboard the Discover Niagara Shuttle to learn about history in their own back yard in October.

Stops included the Old Stone Chimney, Niagara Falls, a Daredevil Tour at Oakwood Cemetery, and the Underground Railroad Heritage Area.

The following students took part: Dashawn Allen, Trinity Davis, Angelina Dobbs, Dominic Geracitano Jr., Aza'h Hunley, My'Shea Lewis, Rodi Matewa, Magic Mayfield, Shakyla Moore, Javion Morris, Daisanaria Palmer, Justus Palmer, Krishna Patel, Capri Peay, Avianna Peterson, Jacob Phillips, Vincent Printup, Narissa Renford, Charletta Sanders, Jayvion Srigh

Bagley, Dayona Shackelford, Alanna Shipley, Joachim Sylvester Jr., Amajah Williams, and Joshua Zawacki.

**Archives**



A certificate from the State of New York officially recognizing Niagara Falls High School as a high school, issued 1898.

**2018-2019**  
**Board of Education**  
[www.nfschools.net](http://www.nfschools.net)

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THE PUBLIC IS WELCOME at  
all Board of Education  
Meetings.

**D e c e m b e r**

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 NF Firefighters Toy Telethon
2	3 79th Street PEG 6:30 p.m.	4 Hyde Park Mobile Health Clinic 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.	5 NFHS UNYTS Blood Drive	6 Board of Education Rev. Mtg. 5:30 p.m. Hyde Park Pic- ture Retake	7 Cataract City Classic Basketball at Wolvarena	8
9	10 79th St. through 12/12, Santa's Ssecret Shop	11	12 CES PEG 6 p.m. STEM Lab	13 LaSalle Winter Concert 7 p.m. Kalfas Mobile Dental Clinic 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Children's Holiday Fest; Hyde Park PEG 6 p.m.	14 Cataract City Classic Hockey at Hyde Park Ice Pavilion	15
16	17	18 Kalfas Mobile Health Clinic 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Gaskill Winter Concert 7 p.m.	19 CES Winter Concert NFHS Winter Concert 7 p.m.	20 Board of Education Reg. Mtg. 7 p.m.	21 Winter Begins!	22
23	24	25 Christmas Day	26 Kwanzaa begins	27	28	29
30	31 New Year's Eve	<b>Winter Recess</b>				