

DIGEST

AGiving



Recognizing the importance of helping those less fortunate, students and staff throughout Smithtown participated in numerous community service activities during the holiday season of giving.

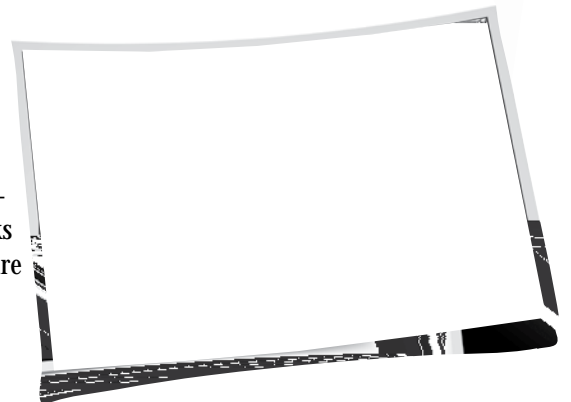
At each of the elementary, middle and high schools, students and staff took active roles to ensure that those near and far felt the joy of the holiday season. Throughout the months of November and December, Smithtown students collected and donated hundreds of pounds of food, held toy drives, created personalized cards that were sent to local nursing homes and troops serving overseas, participated in the Macy's Believe Campaign and used their musical talents to spread holiday cheer to local seniors.

"We take great pride in ensuring our students are well-rounded individuals and active participants within their community," said Superintendent of Schools Dr. James Grossane. "Through the various community service activities our students participated in, they learned the value of helping others and the importance of community."

Among the busy weeks' activities were the following: Branch Brook students and staff collected 50-cent donations in honor of the school's 50th anniversary and used the money to buy holiday gift cards for needy families; Dogwood's Peanut Butter Gang made treat rolls and personalized 120 cards for local seniors, while its Leadership Club participated in Pay It Forward with Jackie, a holiday stocking-stuffing project; High Schools East and West purchased age-appropriate gifts and gift cards from local supermarkets for 24 local families; and Nesaquake Middle School students partook in the Adopt-a-Hero program, a service project that asks community members to put together care packages of requested items to send to service members.

"We take great pride in ensuring our students are well-rounded individuals and active participants within their community."

-Superintendent of Schools Dr. James Grossane



Community Lends Its Voice for the Future

At the beginning of the school year, the district shared the Board of Education's goals for 2015-2016 with the community and asked community members for feedback on their own priorities related to those goals. The district, which gathered the feedback until mid-January, plans to use the survey results to form efforts moving forward.

The survey covered the three key areas of the Board of Education's goals: instructional program, educating the whole child and fiscal responsibility. All three areas have seen significant district efforts this school year, including staff development, curriculum assessment and budget planning.

The following results show the community's priorities. Highlighted below are areas identified by over 50 percent of respondents:

Instructional Program:

- 53 percent prioritized expanding technology integration. This will be a key priority as the district plans its expenditure of the Smart Schools Bond funds (\$3.9 million).
- 79 percent prioritized enhancing educational programs. Current district explorations include a range of STEM opportunities, from coding to Project Lead the Way to increased rigorous course offerings, such as additional AP classes and enrollment. The district's Reimagining Schools Think Tank regularly examines innovative and best practices, seeking cost-effective ways to integrate new programming and approaches into instruction.

Respondents showed a great deal of support for technology integration and enhancing educational programs.

Tasked with creating a monthlong marketing plan, more than 250 students from High Schools East and West gathered together in mid-November to compete in the district's annual Business Olympics. Themed "Get Fit: Corporate Fitness Challenge," the event was sponsored by the Career and Technical Education Department's School of Business and the Smithtown Industry Advisory Board. As part of their marketing plan, the 57 teams

Looking to build off of last year's success of winning three awards in two competitions, the Smithtown Robotics Team 810, the Mechanical Bulls, kicked off their competition season in early January against 30 Long Island teams at Stony Brook University. This early competition was a precursor to their upcoming regional competitions at the Finger Lakes Regional at Rochester Institute of Technology and the Long Island Regional at Hofstra University.

To prepare for regionals, where they will compete against hundreds of students throughout the state, the team will spend the next six and a half weeks designing, building, programming and testing a completely original robot.

The mission of the Mechanical Bulls is to let students explore all areas of education and to work with mentors to share and apply knowledge of engineering, business and leadership skills through a fun, hands-on experience. As a team, members work toward a common

goal of designing, building, marketing and operating a competitive robot in a business-like environment while supporting the ideals of FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology).

While the main goal of robotics is to explore students' interest in science, technology, math, engineering and the arts, the Mechanical Bulls are also very involved in their local community. The team marches in the East and West homecoming parades, drives VEX bots at Smithtown, St. James and Nesconset Day events, hands out candy at Spooky Hallways and demonstrates robotics at local events.

Smithtown's student-athletes bring pride to their community not only through their athletic achievements on the field, but also their philanthropic undertakings in the community. Since the start of the 2015-16 school year, the Athletes Helping Athletes clubs at East and West have been making a difference throughout the community.

Athletes Helping Athletes provides high school student-athletes with an opportunity to act as peer leaders and mentors for middle school students. AHA participates in a variety of activities including workshops for middle school students on issues ranging from self-esteem and sportsmanship to bullying, teasing, and substance abuse. In these workshops, student leaders discuss making proper decisions concerning high school parties and other social settings, and they talk about the power and use of language in creating social status. The discussions are designed to be positive and proactive while raising awareness and providing options that would empower students to make right decisions.

In addition to working with the younger students, the AHA clubs at HSE and HSW are also involved in many community service activities. Throughout the months of November and December, the clubs held fundraisers and donated hundreds of pounds of food to local food banks. The members also traveled to area high schools to participate in various athletic-related activities designed to build camaraderie and team-building skills.

In the spring of 2014, the Board of Education approved the creation of the Citizens' Advisory Committee on Instruction and Housing. The CACIH was established to investigate the appropriate long-range housing patterns needed to support a quality instructional program while promoting fiscal responsibility in an era of declining enrollment.

Over the course of 11 meetings from August 2014 to March 2015, the committee systematically studied the many details of its charge and presented its findings to the Board of Education on March 24, 2015. Since that time, the Board has heard a public presentation from Superintendent of Schools Dr. James Grossane on Nov. 10, 2015, and held a public hearing on Jan. 6, 2016 and a working session on Jan. 19, 2016.

For detailed information, reports and upcoming meeting dates, including the history of the last two housing committees' work,