

# Education Update

June 2019

## District and CCM sign agreement

*Program will allow Mount Olive students to take CCM courses at MOHS and earn college credit*

**T**HE Mount Olive School District and County College of Morris reached an agreement on the college's first dual enrollment program, providing Mount Olive

students with the opportunity to take CCM courses and earn college credit. Mount Olive High School teachers, working in close contact with CCM professors, will teach the courses at MOHS during the regular school day.

The program will begin this fall with four courses offered initially: audio engineering, music theory, industrial design, and advanced art. The courses will be identical in content to the courses taught

Olive. I look at this as two organizations in the landscape of education that keep pushing for innovation. If we're really going to talk about college and career readiness, if we're really going to talk about future-ready, these types of partnerships are incredibly important."

The dual enrollment program is expected to grow as the relationship between CCM and the district evolves.

"Our goal is not what we have today, we haven't reached the finish line," said Dr. Iacono. "We have built one heck of a starting place. Mount Olive has long been an exceptional school district and CCM has had 50 years of extraordinary success, but I think this is going to make the district and the college even stronger. We're going to change a lot of lives in the process."

The new partnership with CCM will start this summer with a pre-calculus course to be taught at MOHS by a CCM professor. High school students and several middle school students will participate and earn college credit.

Mount Olive Board of Education President Liz Ouimet was a driving force behind the dual enrollment initiative. Susan

Breton, district director of social emotional learning, and BOE members Dr. Asunta Beardsley and Dr. Antoine Gayles, professional educators who serve on the BOE's curriculum committee, were also instrumental in making the program a reality.

**“If we're really going to talk about college and career readiness, if we're really going to talk about future-ready, these types of partnerships are incredibly important.”**

**Dr. Robert Zywicki**  
Superintendent of schools

at CCM. Through the program, participating students also will have access to CCM resources including the college library, tutoring services, and academic advisement. The regular in-county CCM tuition rate will be discounted for Mount Olive students.

Dr. Robert Zywicki, superintendent of schools, and Dr. Anthony Iacono, CCM president, signed the agreement at a ceremony on the college campus on June 12.

"This has been a long effort over many years," said Dr. Zywicki at the ceremony. "Whenever there is an opportunity for kids, we find a way to make it happen. I think that's the legacy and reputation of Mount



**CONSTRUCTING COMMUNITIES:** Avi Bawa, a kindergartener at Chester M. Stephens Elementary School, paints a building he made as part of a grade-level project. Each student chose a community helper profession to study and then made a structure associated with it. Each class combined its buildings into a single giant community with roads and spaces for recreational use.

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## ARTISTS AT WORK

**Sensory wall  
adds color and  
texture**

*Back page*



# Experiencing the grownup world

**S**ECOND-GRADERS at Chester M. Stephens went to work every day in May. They collected paychecks at the end of each week, cashed them at the bank, and even paid taxes.

Life in the simulated community of Kidsville wasn't so different from the real world – and that's exactly the point. The four week-long experience gave students a taste of daily adult life, teaching them about a variety of careers and providing insight into common tasks such as money management. It also provided the opportunity for kids to apply the math and language arts skills they've mastered, doing so in a setting that connects their learning to the world outside the classroom.

Students were assigned different occupations each week. For 30-40 minutes per day, they engaged in activities typically performed by their grownup counterparts. Kidsville teachers planned lessons and then taught younger students in other classes. Architects drew blueprints and built their structures. Mail carriers connected CMS staff members to each other by sorting and delivering mail throughout the building. Reporters went on interviews, worked with photographers, wrote stories, and created newspapers for the Kidsville community. Each job had its own personality and skills to

be used.

The excitement in Kidsville was palpable. The experience ran for just a small portion of the school day but delivered a powerful dose of energy.

"The enthusiasm that they came into school with was incredible," said teacher Ann Scotland of the second-graders. "They talked about Kidsville when they walked in every morning and they were still talking about it when they left."

Working for a living, of course, means getting paid. Kidsville bankers wrote out checks for each student every week. After the checks were issued, the workers went to the bank to endorse them, cash them, and pay the 25% income tax. (Yup, even in second grade taxes were a cold reality.) The students could either save their money or shop at the Kidsville store where a variety of handmade crafts (made by Kidsville workers) and items donated by parents were available for purchase.

For some students, the experience of managing money made them keenly aware of the same financial juggling act that their parents do every month and the number of household expenses that add up. It fueled some very real financial discussions between



Rylee Zabriskie receives her change after paying the tax man, Dominic Moscatello

kids and parents.

Kidsville had been run in the past, most recently about a dozen years ago. Teachers updated the program before rebooting it.



Zoya Vaidya and Armaan Shankar work on a book trailer for "El Deafo"

## Book trailers open annual battle

**S**ANDSHORE Elementary School's annual Battle of the Books began with video book trailers which summarized the books that were the subject of the game show-styled event. All fifth-graders created trailers and the best for each of the battle's five books were shown so that visiting parents could better understand the competition.

Over the course of six weekly library classes, the students scripted and produced two-minute trailers using WeVideo, an internet-based video editing program. Working individually or in pairs, the fifth-graders incorporated video clips, music, graphics, and

still into their trailers to describe the plots of the books and interest viewers in wanting to know more.

Roberta Giusto, Sandshore's library media specialist who ran the battle, showed several sample trailers on YouTube and provided students with a checklist of items to include in their own.

"Each student chose their favorite book, one they felt connected to," said Mrs. Giusto. "Creating the trailers made them dig deep into the books and really know them inside and out."

The battle was held on June 13.



Alexis Thorward waters her class's plants

## It's growing season!

Third-graders at Mountain View Elementary School recently grew perennials, annuals, pepper plants, and tomato plants. For many of the third-graders, this experience was the first time they had grown anything from seed.

"The children were amazed at the amount of time that plants take to grow," said teacher Melissa Ezro. "My hope is that the students gain an appreciation for the work and care it takes to produce fruits and vegetables. It's a long road to go from seeds to ShopRite."

The students brought home their plants for repotting and replanting.



# TOP OF THE CLASS

★ ★ ★ ★ OF ★ ★ ★ ★

# 2019

## Meet MOHS' valedictorian & salutatorians



Maya Shah, valedictorian

The **Maya Shah** that graduates as valedictorian of the Class of 2019 is not the same Maya Shah who first walked into Mount Olive High School four years ago.

“Freshman year I was just concerned with academics,” she said. “I didn’t let myself have time to have friends. I didn’t let myself have time to go out and do things for myself. I was very shy and I didn’t know how to make friends or how to talk to people at all.”

Maya Shah has transformed. The introverted girl with her face buried in her schoolbooks has lifted her head and found balance, blossoming into a charming and friendly young adult. The girl who once knew only schoolwork now wants to experience every-

thing in the world. Maya wants to discuss big stimulating ideas, travel the globe (she’ll take on Europe this summer), and meet sincere people with different interests and life experiences.

At MOHS, Maya became actively involved in the school community which helped her shed her shyness. Her list of activities, volunteer work, and leadership roles is too lengthy to print (president of the National Honor Society, executive board member of the World Language Honor Society, and member of the Science National Honor Society, girls tennis team, and robotics team are just some).

Organization (and a perpetual lack of sleep) helped Maya juggle her schoolwork with all her activities and commitments. She has lists for everything – probably even a list of lists – and still keeps her dresser drawers labeled with their contents, something she did in middle school.

“Maya was beyond organized and always had all of her i’s dotted in class,” said math teacher James West. “She’s an absolute perfectionist and wanted to get every aspect of every problem correct every time. She’s extremely hard on herself. If she didn’t understand something, she internalized it and thought there was something wrong with her.”

Maya knows that she pressures herself too much to excel academically. Part of that stems from what social studies teacher Dan Grzywacz calls her “über competitive” nature. There’s another reason, though, which strikes closer to the heart.

“My mom is from the Philippines and my dad is from India,” said Maya. “Both came here when they were teenagers and they didn’t have an easy time. Just seeing how hard they’ve worked and how much they’ve done to give me the life I have is a huge reason why I work so hard. I feel I owe it to them. I need to show them that what they did, all they went through, actually paid off. And once I’m older I want to be able to take care of them in the way that they took care of me.”

With all her activities and schoolwork, the horror movie fan somehow also found the time to indulge her musical side and occasionally sing with her friend Alfonso Carandang at Mama’s Café Baci in Hackettstown. Summer travel and college mean giving up those gigs,

but you can check out her work on her YouTube Channel at <https://youtu.be/wGR9UOS0D8w>.

In the fall, Maya will attend Yale to study applied mathematics.

What did you do the summer between ninth and tenth grade? **John Bigger** taught himself pre-calculus in preparation for taking Calculus I, a senior level class, as a sophomore.

“The first week he was getting help from everyone,” remembers math teacher James West. “The second week they were all working together. The third week, he was helping them. The kids completely respected him. John’s one of the brightest, naturally gifted students I’ve taught in 20 years.”

John’s nothing like you’d expect a math whiz to be. (Get “The Big Bang Theory” out of your head.) He’s friendly with an uncommon confidence and wry sense of humor. He’s a regular guy whose school uniform is a tee-shirt and jeans.

“John was a beloved figure in class,” said Dan Grzywacz, social studies teacher. “He’s funny and warm-hearted. He was obsessed with maps and anytime we had to draw a map on the board, we’d have John do it and explain it, despite his lack of artistic ability. It was a fun running gag.”

There’s an interesting duality about John. He’s got a core group of friends and enjoys going to dinner with them and just hanging out, but he’s equally comfortable sitting alone at his computer. John, who in the fall will major in computer science at the Georgia Institute of Technology, loves coding.



John Bigger, salutatorian

“You’ve got the mouse, you’ve got the keyboard, and the amount of power that is at your fingertips with those two things is so immense. It fascinates me,” John said.

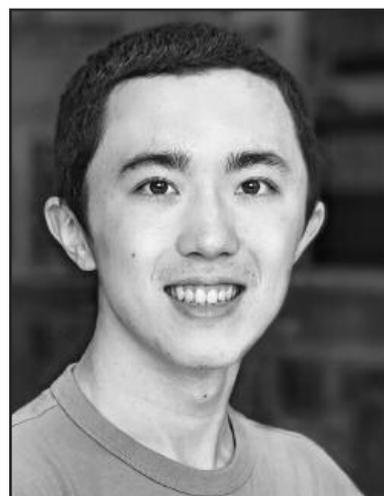
His gateway to coding was video games – programming them and not necessarily playing them, although he now has a growing collection of vintage video games and video game systems. Nowadays, his future plan is to perhaps be involved in cybersecurity. That’s far removed from his father’s

businesses of underwriting insurance and owning and running the Jersey Girl brewery. But John’s father, Michael, has taught the co-salutatorian so much about the elements of success.

“His hard work and personality have gotten him so far in life,” John said. “Just the amount of stuff that he knows in his field is amazing. I really look up to him every day.”

John is extremely involved in the Boy Scouts, earning the rank of Eagle and serving as patrol leader and den chief. He was also co-president of the school’s drone club and the chief financial officer of DECA.

In the next two months, you’ll find John enjoying his last summer before college and perhaps playing the occasional game of Mega Man. Certainly no samples of Jersey Girl will be involved.



Colin McCutcheon, salutatorian

**Colin McCutcheon** wants to learn everything.

Japanese and Russian make the list, which he keeps on his phone. Maybe even Latin. He’s also got a list of books he wants to tackle. And programming languages, too.

Colin, who will study chemical engineering (with an eye on moving to physics) at UCLA in September, has interests wide and varied. It’s something that defines him. Just a glance at his MOHS activities will

*continued on back*

## ...Colin McCutcheon continued from page 3

show you he's anything but one-dimensional. He's president of the Science National Honor Society, treasurer of the Class of 2019, and a member of DECA, Mu Alpha Theta (math honor society), the National English Honor Society, and the World Language Honor Society. That's science, math, language arts, foreign language, business, and government. (He also played tennis for three years.)

"At first I didn't know how smart Colin was," remembers fellow co-salutatorian John Bigger. But then you hear all these things about him. He doesn't show off or brag."

Colin likes to describe himself as "lazy," which of course must mean something different to him than the rest of the world. In addition to the activities listed above, he also found the time this year to take some college courses, including Calculus III at County College of Morris. And there are stories of Colin spending half a day solving a single math problem with an obsessive resolve. That's definitely not laziness.

"I would not be surprised to read in the future that Colin made some great breakthrough in science or physics," said David Silverstein, business teacher. "He's that talented and inquisitive."

There are perhaps two qualities for which Colin is noted: his analytical thinking that stems both from his wide knowledge base and natural disposition, and his easy-going personality.

"He's just always smiling," said Maya Shah, class valedictorian, who would often spend hours with Colin at Starbucks working on homework. "He's fun to be around and is always cracking jokes. I've never seen him stressed out. He's always willing to help anyone."

Just like valedictorian Maya Shah and co-salutatorian John, Colin has a high degree of self-awareness and can recognize the life lessons that his parents have taught him.

"The thing my mother has drilled into my head is to be empathetic," Colin said. "Don't ignore the human aspect of things. She's kind of pounded that into me that you need empathy in life to get anywhere."

Now just when you think you know Colin, here's the big left turn: He collects vinyl and loves hip hop, much to the dismay of his parents who at times just hear a lot of "screaming" coming from his bedroom. Kendrick Lamar and Tyler, the Creator are two of his favorite artists, and he'll listen for hours a day. Colin's tastes also include R&B, some punk, some rock and metal, and a lot of experimental and mixed genre. His music collection is as multi-dimensional as he is.

**Right,** art teacher Melissa Silvestri at work on the wall's initial image; **below,** Alesia Rryci paints while standing on a ladder



## Sensory wall comes to life

**A**FTER six months of planning and production, the sprawling sensory wall at the end of the center corridor at Mount Olive Middle School has been completed.

The wall was designed to provide students with special needs an opportunity to touch, play, and explore. Incorporated into the vibrant artwork are textures such as artificial turf, carpeting, fake fur, sequins, rocks and seashells, and fake leaves that make the mural come alive, adding a 3D tactile dimension.

After meeting with special education teacher Michelle Corazza, seventh- and eighth-graders in the G&T art program sketched out ideas. Art teacher Melissa Silvestri combined them into a cohesive design and supervised the work of about 80 students who took part in the painting and production.

An 8-foot-long dragon and a scene of the

solar system cupped by bright green hands are two of the wall's most powerful vignettes.

Unlike the work in a museum, this art is meant for hands. The interactive components are some of the most innovative features. An old door from the Budd Lake School/former administration building was repurposed for the wall. On the front is an interpretation of Van Gogh's "The Starry Night." When the door is swung open, a chalkboard is revealed that students can write on. And an eye-catching 4-foot-tall profile of a human head, made from wood and cut by a district carpenter, has working plastic gears and an abacus that were printed on the school's 3D printers.

Last year, Ms. Silvestri coordinated the creation of an 80-foot-long mural in the art department hallway that celebrated the greatest artworks and art movements in history.



## Murals painted at Tinc Road

Students, parents, and staff members painted murals along both walls of Tinc Road Elementary School's center hallway. The vibrant artwork features tableaus of the community, learning, and popular Tinc Road activities. Caren Olmsted Frost, an area artist, designed the murals and supervised the painting. The project was made possible through a grant from the Education Association of Mount Olive.

Michael Cravotta - editor

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