

Schools: Western Suffolk

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At Chaminade High School, the science of nature comes naturally to some students. A five-student team - Timothy Healy, Phillip Lettieri, Harry Liberman, Charles Mahoney and Louis Stokum - beat more than 40 teams last month to take top honors in the 2009 Long Island Regional Envirothon, an environmental education competition for high-schoolers held at the Old Bethpage Village Restoration. The teens from the Mineola school completed a series of challenges in aquatics, forestry, soil, wildlife and biodiversity and will compete at the state level in upstate Keuka Park on May 27. "These students are just really into science," said team adviser Brother Benjamin Knapp, noting each team member received a digital camera and a \$500 bond. "We were very confident going in after being the top team in Nassau the past two years." Teams used outdoor equipment, maps and video recorders. In aquatics, for example, they were required to pinpoint invertebrates in a local waterway using microscopes, and the forestry challenge required them to identify various trees. The Soil and Water Conservation Districts of Nassau and Suffolk coordinated the event.

BELLMORE Moon videoconference Fourth-graders at Winthrop Avenue Elementary School recently learned about the function and cycles of the moon during a videoconference with educators at the National Maritime Museum and Royal Observatory in England. The 22 students saw satellite photos of craters, eclipses and space phenomenon through a real-time feed linked to the museum. "The whole idea is to use technology to access a museum that we would never be able to see," said fourth-grader teacher Jody Leibowitz. Afterward the students created 3-D posters depicting the moon phases.

BETHPAGE U.S. Marine visit Central Boulevard Elementary School received an inspirational visit last month from an alumnus, U.S. Marine Joey Fasano, who thanked students for sending care packages to his platoon in Iraq last winter. Fasano was accompanied by 11 fellow Marines, who marched into the school auditorium to a school band performance of the "Marines' Hymn." "He said they had to build a new closet and empty another to make room for the things we sent," said fourth-grade teacher Deborah Deasy, who cited the project's character education benefits. "It's one thing to study positive character traits, but it's another to put them into action like our kids did." Each student was required to earn \$1.25 at home - the 25 cents for shipping - and purchase snacks and toiletries to deposit in a camouflaged-colored box in the school lobby. Students also created a "Joey Fasano Wall" of pictures he sent from overseas, Deasy said.

LEVITTOWN/PLAINVIEW Handwriting winners Three Nassau students - siblings Justin Espada and Tiana Espada of J. Fred Sparke Elementary School in Levittown and Gayatri Sriram of Kramer Lane Elementary School in Plainview - were among 13 students statewide named winners in the 18th Annual Handwriting Contest sponsored by Ohio-based educational publisher Zaner-Bloser. More than 200,000 students in grades 1-8 participated nationwide. The students will vie for national honors this spring with others in their grade level.



MASSAPEQUA Fitness fundraising Unqua Elementary School recently raised \$24,028 for the American Heart Association through Jump Rope for Heart, a nationwide program combining fitness and fundraising. For breaking last year's school total of \$23,832, physical education teacher Michael Dellicurti agreed to dye his hair. "It's going to be blond with pink highlights," said principal Diana Haanraadts, who called the amount raised "astonishing." "This is a very generous community - we always say it." To collect the funds - currently the highest total among Long Island schools participating in the program - students in grades K-6 solicited sponsorships from family members and then rotated between a series of workstations that included jump rope and hopscotch.

WESTBURY Career day Powell's Lane Elementary School students participated last month in the school's 20th annual Career Day, featuring talks by 31 local professionals such as a Nassau County police officer and a sports nutritionist. The speakers manned classrooms as students walked the halls to visit individuals that most appealed to them. Popular personalities included State Supreme Court Justice Joseph J. Spinola and a chef from California Pizza Kitchen in Westbury, according to school officials. "We're trying to plant the seeds for their futures," school counselor Beverly Reilly said of the pupils in grades three to five. "It's never too early to start them thinking about what's ahead."

COUNTYWIDE Odyssey winners Nassau County schools took 10 first-place spots last month at the regional level of Odyssey of the Mind, a national competition in solving problems ranging from the technical to the artistic. A total of 82 teams from Long Island, Manhattan and Westchester competed in five challenges - for example, in Earth Trek students designed and built small vehicles that visited four locations and changed in appearance - in each of three divisions. The schools: Farmingdale: Saltzman East Memorial School, two first places; Farmingdale High School; Franklin Square: H. Frank Carey High School and John Street School; Freeport: Freeport High School; Locust Valley: Locust Valley High School; Long Beach: Elementary and middle school students in the district's Learning Activities to Raise Creativity program; Plainview: Mattlin Middle School; Roslyn: Buckley Country Day School.

ISLANDWIDE Merit scholarships Six Long Island students were among some 1,000 high-schoolers nationwide to win a \$2,500 corporate-sponsored scholarship from the National Merit Scholarship Corp based on academic achievement, recommendations by school officials and an essay about personal interests and goals. Bethpage: Joseph R. Niczky of Bethpage High School; Huntington: Christopher A. Lau of Huntington High School; Levittown: Eunice Ji Hye Baek of MacArthur High School; Locust Valley: Alexander K. Eng of Friends Academy; Shoreham: Matthew D. Steski and Emily V. Throwe of Shoreham-Wading River High School. -- MICHAEL R. EBERT

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