



# focus

February/March 2015

Volume 20, Issue 4

Website: [www.fhps.net](http://www.fhps.net)



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## Meadow Brook's Project Unify: Not All Superheroes Wear Capes

All children have hopes, dreams and wishes. Children who have a disability are no different. They do not have to wear a tiara to feel like a princess or don a cape to feel like a superhero. At Meadow Brook Elementary, all that the students from the cognitively impaired program have to do is enter their school to instantly feel the love, support, pride, encouragement, and compassion their inclusive school culture exudes.

The school culture has been transformed this year as a result of a grant from the U.S. Department of Education and Special Olympics Michigan called Project Unify. This grant was awarded to Ginny Grit, social worker with Forest Hills Public Schools. The grant allows Grit, along with Barbara Sluiter, special education teacher, and Meadow Brook staff, to charter a new initiative and provides funds for students with cognitive impairments to work alongside their same-age general education peers. The grant supports four main areas: a unified sport, a school-wide campaign for diversity/acceptance for all, inclusive community service projects, and a Youth Activation Committee. Meadow Brook has the youngest population of students participating in Project Unify in Michigan. There are 70 students participating in Project Unify and LINKS at Meadow Brook this year.



Liam Reynolds rolls the bocce ball, while Gianna Jennett waits for her turn.

Unify, Grit worked with Sluiter to first implement the LINKS program—a peer-to-peer support program which exists in several Forest Hills schools. The LINKS program—which stands for loyal, interested, nurturing, kind, student—pairs a general education student with a special education peer.

With the LINKS students in place, Project Unify was implemented and a unified sports team was created. For these young students, bocce ball was selected. The grant helped provide multiple indoor and outdoor bocce ball sets, bocce ball ramps for students who

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## Thank You, School Board for All You Do!

Last month was national School Board Recognition Month. Our seven school board members play a crucial role in our communities and schools, and we greatly appreciate their dedication and hard work. They are extraordinary people who voluntarily tackle the enormous job of governing our school district and their actions and decisions affect the present and future lives of our children. School board positions in Forest Hills no longer come with an annual stipend, as this was unanimously decided upon five years ago by the board. They truly represent the best in public servants and

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Front row, left to right: Susan Lenhardt (Trustee), Douglas Josephson (President), and Dan Behm (Superintendent).  
Back row, left to right: Martha Atwater (Secretary), Dr. James Fahner (Trustee), Michael Seekell (Trustee), Mary Vonck (Vice President), and Walter Perschbacher III (Treasurer).

According to staff, before launching Project

# Not All Superheroes Wear Capes

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use wheelchairs for mobility, adaptive bocce sets, and bean-bag sets. Special Olympics Michigan also supplied three youth athlete kits which are designed for team-building activities with equipment to make obstacle courses and much more. T-shirts and wristbands for all participating students, support staff, and teachers also were designed and purchased.

"The feedback we've received within the first four months of the program from our general education parents has been very positive," said Grit. "Some of the things we have heard is that for the LINKS, their behavior is improving, and the LINKS' favorite part of their day at school is now their Project Unify day, or their favorite day of the week is their day to be a LINKS. Parents are very excited that their child has the opportunity to be a leader at such a young age."

As for feedback from the parents of special education students, Grit and Sluiter said it is hard to find words for the outpouring of thank-yous, hugs and tears. "Project Unify means the world to a parent of a child with special needs," they explained. "To see their son or daughter be genuinely accepted by their peers, and thought of as a friend and teammate, or to have inclusive play dates occurring ... to walk the halls of Meadow Brook and see students of all ability levels hand in hand or supporting one another, it's huge."

Although the unified sports team is a large component at Meadow Brook, the other three focus areas under Project Unify are also happening. Their Youth Activation Committee meets twice each month. Here, LINKS eat lunch in Sluiter's classroom with all her students. After lunch, all students play bocce ball, do another inclusive activity, or plan future events. Meadow Brook's school-wide campaign to foster diversity and respect coincides with their Global Learner's Initiative. GLI is a district-wide initiative which promotes cultural competency, equity, inclusiveness, and understanding. Their school-wide campaign officially kicked off this month. As for the community service projects that the Meadow Brook team will also implement this year, Grit and Sluiter reported that the details are still being worked out, and more information will be available in the spring.

So what's in store for Project Unify for the remainder of the school year? Yes, bocce ball



Fellow students cheer on Cameron Weatherford as he strategically positions and rolls his bocce ball.

tournaments, team-building activities, and a lot of fun. Meadow Brook will add bocce ball to their field day, and staff are planning an awards ceremony at the end of the year where all participating students will get certificates and medals. In fact, the program has garnered such momentum, and has had such a positive impact on children, that Michigan's lieutenant governor, Brian Calley, has taken notice. He is expected to tour the program at Meadow Brook next month and meet with all of the students and staff involved in the program.

Grit and Sluiter are very grateful for the buy-in and support of all the families, teachers, and support staff involved, as well as Meadow Brook principal, Tim Shaw and district administration.

"It's always heart-warming and encouraging when others take notice of something your school is doing that has a lasting effect on students," Grit concluded. "Education is much more than academics; it is about providing our students with inclusive opportunities to be leaders and role models."

"What we are accomplishing at Meadow Brook through Project Unify and LINKS fosters respect and dignity for all, and is helping students build lifelong friendships," Sluiter concluded. "It also is about teaching and learning how to embrace, respect, honor and accept people of all ability levels to find the joy that every person brings to this school and to celebrate diversity. By recognizing this, embracing this, and helping one other, we can all be superheroes—and we don't have to wear capes to prove it."

## Non-Homestead Renewal on May Ballot

On May 5, 2015, Forest Hills voters will be asked to renew the 18-mill non-homestead millage. Examples of non-homestead property include industrial, commercial, and some agricultural property, as well as second homes. It does not include a family's primary residence. The renewal is put before our voters once every 10 years and is critical to funding the operations of the district, as it provides approximately \$15 million in annual funding that the State of Michigan includes to generate the state's per pupil "foundation allowance." We currently have voter approval to levy the 18-mills on non-homestead property through December 2015. Additional information about the May election, including the exact ballot wording, will be posted on our website: [www.fhps.net](http://www.fhps.net). It also will be included in the April/May edition of the "Focus."

## Thank You, School Board

(continued from page 1)

give their time, talents and so much more to advocate for public education. They ensure that every decision made is in the best interests of our children.

The job of a school board member is tough, the hours long and the thanks few. So if you see one of our board members, please extend a handshake or a simple thank you. In Forest Hills, we truly are fortunate to be represented by seven selfless individuals who put education first and help make Forest Hills an exemplary school district.

Forest Hills  
Public Schools

Spring Break

April 3 - 10



# Upcoming District Events

## Calendar Listing of Community-Wide School Events

### February

- 18 Central Middle School Choral Performance, 7 p.m., FHC Auditorium
- 19 FHN Jazz Coffee House, 7 p.m., FHN Media Center
- 19 Knapp Forest 2nd Grade Musical, 7 p.m., Knapp Forest Gym
- 19-21 FHE presents "The Music Man," 7:30 p.m.; Matinee Feb. 21, 3 p.m., FAC
- 20 FHN Purple Paws Basketball Games, 5:30 p.m., FHN North Gym
- 23 Tom Woodruff Family Drawing Night, 6:30 p.m., Pine Ridge Elementary
- 24 Symphonic Orchestra Masterworks Clinic Concert, 7 p.m., FAC
- 24 Northern Trails 5/6 Chinese Immersion New Year Dinner, 5 p.m., Ming Ten
- 25 FHC/FHE/FHN Concert Orchestra Soiree, 7 p.m., FAC
- 26 Northern Trails/NHMS/NHS Band Concert, 7 p.m., FAC
- 27 Foundation Luncheon for PTO/Booster Group Leaders, 11:45 a.m. - 1:15 p.m., Watermark CC, RSVP
- 27 Collins Elementary Spirit Night at FHN Basketball Games, FHN Gym, 5:30 p.m.
- 27 Ada Elementary School Carnival, 6 p.m., Ada Elementary

### March

- 3 No School for Students in Grades 9-12, MME test day for 11th Grade Students
- 3 Ada Vista 4th Grade Recorder Performance, 6:15-7 p.m. and 7:15-8 p.m., Ada Vista Gym
- 3 CMS/EMS/NHMS 8th Grade Orchestra Night, 7 p.m., FAC
- 4 CMS/EMS/NHMS 7th Grade Orchestra Night, 7 p.m., FAC
- 4 Pine Ridge Camp Read-A-Lot, 6 p.m., Pine Ridge Elementary
- 5 CMS/EMS/NHMS 7th Grade Choral Gala, 6:30 p.m., FAC
- 5 CMS/EMS/NHMS 8th Grade Choral Gala, 7:45 p.m., FAC
- 7 Bands on the Grand, 7 a.m.-7 p.m., FHE
- 9 AAA Presents "Mindful Parenting in a Hectic, Stressful World," 7 p.m., FHC Auditorium
- 11 Knapp Forest Kindergarten Kick-Off Parent Meeting, 5:30 p.m., Knapp Forest Gym
- 12 Susan Rose & Robert Penning Artist Reception, 6 p.m., FAC
- 12 Ada Vista Elementary School, Kindergarten Kick-Off Parent Meeting, 6:30 pm, Ada Vista Gym
- 12 Pine Ridge Elementary School, Kindergarten Kick-Off Parent Meeting, 7 p.m., Pine Ridge Cafeteria
- 12-14 FHN Spring Play "Rumors," 7:30 p.m., FHN Auditorium
- 13 Knapp Forest Elementary Talent Show, 10 a.m. and 1 p.m., Knapp Forest Gym
- 14 FHE Variety Show, 7 p.m., FHE Auditorium
- 16 Board of Education Meeting, 7:30 p.m., Knapp Forest Elementary
- 18 Knapp Forest/Orchard View 6th Grade Choir/Orchestra Concert, 7 p.m., FHE Auditorium
- 18 Central Middle School 7th & 8th Grade Band Concert, 7 p.m., FHC Auditorium
- 19-21 FHC Presents "Once Upon a Mattress," 7:30 p.m., Matinee March 21, 3 p.m., FAC
- 19 Collins 4th Grade Musical, 6:30 p.m., FHN Auditorium
- 19 Central Middle School Play, 7 p.m., Central Middle School
- 20 FHN Senior Dinner, 7 p.m., Egypt Valley Country Club, RSVP Required
- 23 FHE Presents "ExtravaBandza," 7 p.m., FHE Gym
- 24 Ada Vista Kindergarten Music Program, 6:30 p.m., Ada Vista Gym
- 24 Orchard View 1st Grade Music Performance, FHE Auditorium, 7 p.m.
- 24 Spring String Fling, 7 p.m., FAC
- 25 FHN Presents "Northern's Got Talent," 7:30 p.m., FHN Auditorium
- 25 Ada Elementary 1st - 4th Grade Music Program, 7 p.m., FAC
- 26 Knapp Forest 4th Grade Musical, 7 p.m., Knapp Forest
- 26 Pine Ridge Spring Art Show, 6 p.m., Pine Ridge Elementary
- 27 Collins Elementary Silent Auction, 7-10 p.m., Uccello's Restaurant
- 27 FAC Presents "The Very Best of Celtic Thunder," 7:30 p.m., FAC
- 28 Solo Band Festival, Grades 6th-12th, All Day, FHE
- 30 Moxie Strings & Northern Trails/NHMS/FHN Orchestras, 7 p.m., FAC
- 31 FHE/FHC/FHN High School Choral Gala, 7 p.m., FAC
- 31 Central Middle School Variety Show, 7 p.m., Central Middle School Cafeteria

### April

- 2 No School for Students/K-12 Record Marking/Staff Professional Learning
- 3-10 No School for Students and Staff, Spring Recess
- 13 School Resumes, Two-Hour Delay for Students/Staff Professional Learning
- 15 Thornapple 4th Grade Musical, 7 p.m., FAC
- 16 Orchard View 5th Grade Musical, 7 p.m., FAC
- 16-5/13 FHPS Student Art Exhibit, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. FAC

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## FHE's "The Music Man"

February 19 - 21, 7:30 p.m.

February 21, 3 p.m.

Forest Hills Fine Arts Center

There's trouble in River City! "The Music Man" follows fast-talking traveling salesman Harold Hill as he cons the people of River City, Iowa, into buying instruments and uniforms for a boys' band he vows to organize—this despite the fact he doesn't know a trombone from a treble clef. His plans to skip town with the cash are foiled when he falls for Marian, the librarian. This lively and fun-filled musical is perfect for your entire family!

Advance tickets are \$9.50 for adults, \$7.50 for students 18 and younger. At the door, adult tickets are \$10 and student tickets are \$8. Visit the FHE theater website, [www.fhetheatre.com](http://www.fhetheatre.com) for more information.

► **More upcoming productions are listed on page 4.**

## ■ Cover Photo

Students in the Project Unify program at Meadow Brook Elementary School take a break following their lunch with their general education peers, or LINKS. After lunch, they routinely set up bocce ball courts in the hallways for some great physical activity and fun team-building time.

For the most up-to-date district and school calendars, visit our website: [www.fhps.net/district-calendar/](http://www.fhps.net/district-calendar/).

**FHN Theater Presents  
"Rumors"**

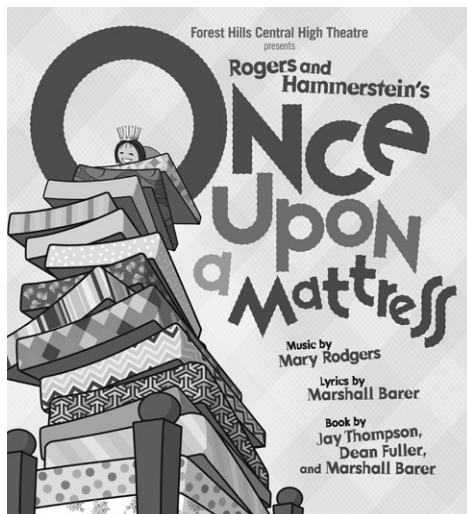
**March 12-14, 7:30 p.m.  
Forest Hills Northern Auditorium**

The Forest Hills Northern Theatre Arts Department will be producing the play "Rumors," by Neil Simon, March 12-14 at 7:30 p.m. in the Forest Hills Northern Auditorium. Tickets will be available at the door the nights of the show. Adult tickets are \$8 and student tickets (age 18 and under) are \$6.

Neil Simon, America's best known multi-award winning playwright, takes us on a high-stakes ride with this hilarious, laugh-until-you-cry comedy, as we see the lengths people will go to protect their friends. Four couples are invited to the elite townhouse of the deputy mayor of New York and his wife to celebrate their 10th anniversary. However, the guests discover there are no servants, the hostess is missing, and the host—the deputy mayor—is lying upstairs. Comic complications arise when they decide they need to do everything possible to conceal the evening's events from the local police and, more importantly, the press. This laugh-out-loud comedy is a show you do not want to miss!

**FHC Theater Presents  
"Once Upon a Mattress"**

**March 19-21, 7:30 p.m.  
March 21, 3 p.m.  
Forest Hills Fine Arts Center**



Tickets will be available at the Fine Arts Center Box Office (in-person sales only) and online at Showtix4u.com. Adult tickets are \$10 each and student tickets (age 18 and under) are \$8 each.

**Calendar Listing of Community-Wide School Events**

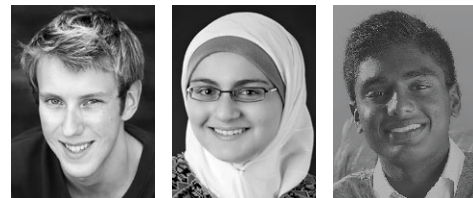
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**April**

- 20 FHC Evening of Percussion, 7 p.m., FAC
- 20 Board of Education Meeting, 7:30 p.m., Central Woodlands 5/6 School
- 21 FHPs K-12 Student Artist Reception/Fashion Show, 6 p.m., FAC
- 21 Meadow Brook Elementary Kindergarten Kick-Off Parent Meeting, 7 p.m., MB Gym
- 22 Pine Ridge 3rd Grade Musical, 7 p.m., Pine Ridge Elementary
- 22 FAC Presents "100 Years of Broadway," 7:30 p.m., FAC
- 23 Ada Elementary Kindergarten Kick-Off Parent Meeting, 6 p.m., Ada Elementary Gym
- 23 Collins Elementary Kindergarten Kick-Off Parent Meeting, 7 p.m., Collins Elementary Gym
- 23 Pine Ridge 2nd Grade Musical, 7 p.m., Pine Ridge Elementary
- 23 Northern Trails 5th Grade Musical, 7 p.m., FAC
- 24 Collins Elementary Global Learning Day -All Day
- 24 Knapp Forest and Orchard View 6th Grade Solo Orchestra Festival, 3 p.m., FHE
- 27 Northern Trails 5th Grade Musical, 7 p.m., FAC
- 28 Knapp Forest 5th Grade Finale Show, 7 p.m., FAC
- 28 Orchard View Elementary Kindergarten Kick-Off Parent Meeting, 6:30 p.m., OV MP Room
- 28 Thornapple Elementary Kindergarten Kick-Off Parent Meeting, 7 p.m., Thornapple Gym
- 29 Meadow Brook Elementary School 2nd Grade Concert, 7 p.m., FHN Auditorium
- 30 Collins Elementary 1st Grade Musical, 6:30 p.m., FH Northern Auditorium
- 30 FHE National Honor Society Blood Drive, 7 a.m., FHE Gym
- 30 Orchard View Celebrates 50 Years of Global Connections, 6:30 p.m - 8 p.m., OV Elementary

**Three High School Seniors Selected as Candidates for the United States Presidential Scholars Program**

Forest Hills Central High School seniors, Jared Richardson and Tasneem Sannah, along with Jonathan Thomas, senior at Forest Hills Eastern High School, have been selected as candidates for the United States Presidential Scholars Program. These students are in the running to become this year's semifinalists and even Presidential Scholars. The U.S. Presidential Scholars Program recognizes and honors some of our nation's most distinguished graduating seniors. Scholars are chosen on the basis of their accomplishments in many areas—academic and artistic success, leadership, and involvement in their school and community—and represent



Jared Richardson    Tasneem Sannah    Jonathan Thomas

excellence in education and the promise of greatness in America's youth. Annually, up to 141 students are chosen from among the candidates to become U.S. Presidential Scholars—one of the nation's highest honors for high school students. Semifinalists and Scholars will be notified in late spring.

**District's AAA Group Receives State Award for Mental Health Speaker Series**

Last month, Dan Behm, Forest Hills Public Schools superintendent, accepted the Michigan Association of School Administrators Winner's Circle Award on behalf of the FHPs group known as AAA—an advisory group of volunteers dedicated to the Awareness, Acceptance and Advocacy of Mental Health. Those who comprise the team include parents, school counselors and administrators, social workers, psychologists,

representatives from local health agencies, and a district liaison for mental health. The AAA group received this award for their ongoing district-wide speaker series titled, "Our Kids' Well-Being."

The group was founded during the 2012 school year under the direction of Behm, and Dr. Scott Korpak, assistant superintendent

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## Students' Families: Log into PowerSchool Today to Set Your Preferences

# Receive Urgent School District Info with SchoolMessenger

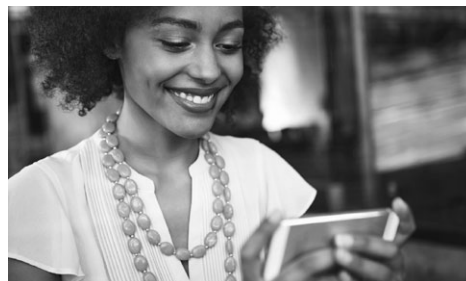
In December, Forest Hills Public Schools successfully tested an enhanced communication system called SchoolMessenger. The next step is for our students' families to customize how they would like to receive future important, urgent or emergency notifications from their school district—via text, phone or email notification(s). School families must set up their preferences or they will automatically receive phone call messages when the district begins to fully utilize SchoolMessenger. Please note, that when you update your preferences, it doesn't mean that you will immediately start receiving SchoolMessenger messages. We will allow FHPS families time in February to set up their preferences before sending out SchoolMessenger notifications.

Since the new communication system is linked to the Parent Portal section of PowerSchool, the district's computerized student records database, families in our district who do not have a child attending one of our FHPS schools won't receive SchoolMessenger alerts. The goal for SchoolMessenger is to become our primary notification and messaging system to notify students' families of important or urgent school matters, such as school closures or delays, important safety issues or other critical news items. Parents should always contact their child's school to update their phone number and email address, if or when a change occurs.

Here are the steps to set message preferences:

1. Go to [www.fhps.net](http://www.fhps.net).
2. Click on the "PowerSchool" button on the home page.
3. Log into PowerSchool with your username and password.
4. Click the "SchoolMessenger" icon.
5. Click on the "Contacts" tab and click the "edit" button.
6. Check the boxes next to the WHAT news and announcements you want to receive.
7. Check the boxes next to HOW you want to receive the messages: text, email or voice-recorded messages.
8. Click "Save," "Logout," and you're finished!

Please remember, if and when your phone numbers, cell numbers and/or email addresses change, call your child's school to update your contact information. If you have any questions about SchoolMessenger, please call Lori Cisler, FHPS technology department, 616-493-8809, or email: [schoolmessenger@fhps.net](mailto:schoolmessenger@fhps.net).



## Receive Text Messages from FHPS

Along with the new SchoolMessenger tool, families may also receive Short Message Service text messages from the district. In order to participate, you must first indicate your willingness to receive text messages. Text "YES" to 68453 to receive texts. If FHPS already has your cell phone number and you have not yet opted in, you will receive an automated text message. Text back "YES" to continue receiving texts. You'll know if you were successful if you receive a reply message. You'll want to repeat the opt-in process for any other wireless numbers that you wish to include. FHPS is not responsible for any text message charges you may incur by opting in to this service. Check with your wireless provider as rates may apply.

Opting in doesn't automatically mean that you will immediately start receiving text messages. It means you have indicated your willingness to receive messages from the service when our district tries to send a text message to your number from SchoolMessenger. If you have any questions about SchoolMessenger and/or the SMS text feature, please call Lori Cisler, FHPS technology department, 616-493-8809, or email: [schoolmessenger@fhps.net](mailto:schoolmessenger@fhps.net).

## New Easy-to-Access School Menus

The way we access our school menus has changed in an exciting new way. Forest Hills Public Schools, in partnership with Chartwells K12, is now using Nutrislice to publish the school menus to a new interactive website and a free smartphone app. Now our school community can access our menus anywhere, anytime.

New easy-to-use features include:

- See more information about menu items, including a photo and description.
- Filter food allergens like nuts and gluten.
- Translate your menus into a number of different languages.

- Access nutrition information like carb counts and calories.
- Print a PDF version of the menus directly from the website.

To access the FHPS online food service page, go to [www.fhps.net](http://www.fhps.net) and click on the small apple icon on the top of the home page. Links to download the apps can also be found on the FHPS food service page. If you have questions about this new interactive menu tool, please call Chris Nelson, director of food service, 616-493-8774, or email him at [cnelson@fhps.net](mailto:cnelson@fhps.net).

## 2014-2015 Board of Education Members

**Douglas Josephson**, President

**Mary Vonck**, Vice President

**Martha Atwater**, Secretary

**Walter F. Perschbacher III**, Treasurer

**Dr. James Fahner**, Trustee

**Susan Lenhardt**, Trustee

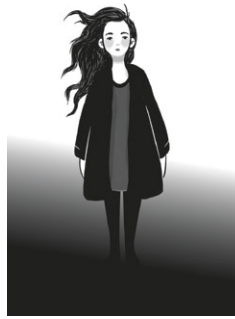
**Michael Seekell**, Trustee

**Daniel Behm**, Superintendent



# Three High School Students Recognized for Outstanding Artwork

Forest Hills Northern High School senior, Claire Heiney, and Forest Hills Central High School junior, Hannah Helmbrecht and senior, Jordyn Fishman, will be recognized later this month for their outstanding artwork in the 2015 Scholastic Art Awards Competition. The art awards competition is run by the Alliance for Young Artists & Writers, Inc. a not-for-profit organization that supports young artists and writers. Each year, the Alliance partners with more than 100 visual and literary-arts organizations across the country to bring the awards to local communities. Teens in grades seven through 12 apply in 28 categories of art and writing. Submissions are juried by luminaries in the visual and literary arts, some of whom are past award recipients. Panelists look for works that best exemplify originality, technical skill, and the emergence of a personal voice or vision. Graduating high school seniors who submit portfolios of their work have the opportunity to compete for more than \$1.5 million in scholarships



Artwork by Claire Heiney: *The Girl in the Mist, The Youngest Gnome, Moustached Man, and Girl in the Waves.*

from colleges and universities across the country. Artwork will be on display through the end of February at Kendall College of Art and Design. The following is a list of the students' work and the medium in which they used.

Claire Heiney, Silver Key Award for "Moustached Man," in the drawing and illustration category.

Claire Heiney, Gold Key Award for "Girl in the Mist," in the digital art category.

Claire Heiney, Honorable Mention Award for "Girl in the Waves," in the digital art category.

Claire Heiney, Gold Key Award for "The Youngest Gnome," in the digital art category.

Jordyn Fishman, Silver Key Award for "20 Liters," in the painting category.

Hannah Helmbrecht, Silver Key Award for "A Girl and a Cage," in the painting category.



Artwork by Jordyn Fishman: *20 Liters*

Artwork by Hannah Helmbrecht: *A Girl and a Cage*

## Top Spellers Move on in Spelling Bee

Congratulations to the following students who will represent their school in the Scripps Howard National Spelling Bee school competition. These students will compete in the regional bee in February, and one winner from each regional bee will compete in the Greater Grand Rapids Spelling Bee. Eventually one winner from the state spelling bee will represent Michigan and compete in Washington, D.C. in May. Listed below are the student winners and runners-up at their respective schools representing fifth- through eighth-grades.

- Orchard View Elementary: Nanda Murali (winner); Nikhil Maraboyina (runner-up)
- Northern Trails 5/6 School: Dinesh Ravikumar (winner); Mitra Bijoy (runner-up)
- Central Woodlands 5/6 School: Cameron Ojala (winner); David Aremu (runner-up)
- Central Middle School: Margaret Zorn (winner); Akansha Das (runner-up)
- Eastern Middle School: Brandon Pham (winner); Olivia Miller (runner-up)
- Northern Hills Middle School: Aiden Mischley (winner); Christie Vieux (runner-up)

## Students Lauded in Write Michigan Contest

Four Forest Hills students were semifinalists in this year's Write Michigan short story contest. In the teen category representing Forest Hills were Shelby Herschleb, a senior from Eastern High School, and her story "Dormant," and Evelyn Pae, a freshman from Central High School, for her story "We Spoke of Lonely Willows." In the youth category representing Forest Hills were Anika Deshpande, a fifth-grader from Knapp Forest Elementary School, and her story "The Christmas Buzz," and Ayesha Jeddy, a sixth-grader from Central Woodlands 5/6 School for her story "The Quest in Dreamland." Ten students throughout the state were selected as semifinalists in each category. To read their short stories, go online to: [www.writemichigan.org](http://www.writemichigan.org).

## FH Staff Contributes Over \$22,000 to United Way

School district staff members wrapped up their two-week campaign for Heart of West Michigan United Way with more than \$22,000 donated and pledged. For the ninth year, a major campaign incentive for staff was a raffle for a free Friday afternoon with Dan Behm, superintendent, as their "substitute." This year, the lucky winner was Patricia Richardson, science teacher at Central High School. Superintendent Behm thanked staff for their generosity and extended special appreciation to the staff members who serve as United Way campaign representatives in their schools and departments.





# FOREST HILLS

## PUBLIC SCHOOLS FOUNDATION

February / March 2015

### Thank You to Our Generous Community

## Foundation Funds Educational Projects

Because of the generosity of our community, the Foundation was recently able to distribute over \$127,000 to individual teachers and schools in the district. Thank you to everyone who supported the Foundation and made this happen!

- **2014 Fall Grants** – Grants totaling over \$69,000 were awarded in November.

- **2014 Gala** – All needs identified at the Gala through the Support Our School Initiative were fully funded. The total raised and distributed exceeded \$58,000.

For a complete list of grants and Support Our School items, please visit our website at [www.fhpsf.org](http://www.fhpsf.org).

## Destination: Innovation!

The Forest Hills Public Schools Foundation will be launching a fundraising campaign to raise funds for advanced training for teachers. This campaign is called Destination: Innovation and will fund exploration of new learning methods, structures and ideas. These funds will enrich teachers with essential resources—such as time, training and technology—so they can deliver a new type of learning in a new way. Information will be released soon. We hope all FHPS parents will consider a gift. More information is available online at: [www.fhpsf.org](http://www.fhpsf.org).

## Forest Hills Public Schools Foundation Board of Trustees

If you are interested in becoming a trustee of the Forest Hills Public Schools Foundation, please contact the Foundation office at 493-8954 or [jsiminski@fhps.net](mailto:jsiminski@fhps.net) to receive an application. The Foundation Board election will be held on April 16 at the Foundation Board meeting. All applications must be received by the Foundation office prior to March 15.

## Save the Dates

### ■ 2015 State of the District Luncheon

Thursday, May 7, 2015, 11:45 a.m. - 1 p.m.  
Watermark Country Club  
Chairperson: Allison Martin

### ■ Business Advisory Council

Wednesday, May 27, 2015, 4 p.m.  
Fine Arts Center  
Chairperson: Kathy White

### ■ Charlie Anderson Memorial Golf Tournament

Wednesday, June 17, 2015  
Thornapple Pointe Golf Club  
Event Chairperson: Brian Sandberg

### ■ The Gala

Wednesday, Nov. 18, 2015  
Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park  
Event Co-Chairpersons:  
Mark and Kellie Custer

**Forest Hills Public Schools Foundation**  
600 Forest Hills Avenue SE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49546  
616-493-8500

**Stephanie Taylor, Foundation Coordinator,**  
[staylor@fhps.net](mailto:staylor@fhps.net)

**Jana Siminski, Director of Philanthropy,**  
[jsiminski@fhps.net](mailto:jsiminski@fhps.net)

## A Special Thanks to Our 2014 Superintendent's Circle Members

Thank you for your continued support of the Forest Hills Public Schools Foundation!

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# Forest Hills Fine Arts Center

## A New Decade

Ten Years and Going Strong

Forest Hills Fine Arts Center 2014-2015 Season



### THE VERY BEST OF CELTIC THUNDER

Friday, March 27, 2015  
7:30 pm

\$44 • \$46 • \$50 • \$60

This tour features an eclectic collection of the group's best-loved and most popular songs from the past seven years, married with their huge signature sound, dramatic lighting and imposing set fans love.



### 100 YEARS OF BROADWAY

Wednesday, April 22, 2015  
7:30 pm

\$26 • \$30 • \$32 • \$40

Recreating greatest moments from the finest shows featuring actual stars of *The Phantom of the Opera*, *Les Miserables*, *CATS* and *Jesus Christ Superstar*.

## Upcoming Exhibits

Artists-in-Residence

Susan Rose | Robert Penning

Former and Present FHPS Art Teachers!

### Paintings

March 5 - 31, 2015

Artists' Reception: March 12, 6-7 p.m.

### FHPS Student Exhibit

April 16 - May 13, 2015

Artists' Reception: April 21, 6-7:30 p.m.

Presenting Sponsor:



Supporting Sponsors:



### Show Tickets

Tickets for both shows on sale now!

Tickets can be purchased in person only at the FHFAC Box Office, at any Ticketmaster outlet, by calling 800-745-3000 or at ticketmaster.com.

Fine Arts Center Box Office: 600 Forest Hill Ave. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49546. 616-493-8966

For additional information, visit the Forest Hills Fine Arts Center website at [www.fhfineartscenter.com](http://www.fhfineartscenter.com).

### Season Sponsors



## FHFAC Calendar

### March

- 12 Susan Rose and Robert Penning artists' reception, 6-7 p.m.
- 27 FHFAC presents *The Very Best of Celtic Thunder*, 7:30 p.m.

### April

- 21 FHPS Student Art Exhibit artists' reception, 6-7:30 p.m.
- 22 FHFAC presents *100 Years of Broadway*, 7:30 p.m.

Visit [fhfineartscenter.com](http://fhfineartscenter.com) for all events.

## Athletic Awards Update

### FHC

#### Boys' Tennis

Humzah Azeem (SC)  
Ryan Conner (SC)  
Andrew Fox (SC)  
Carson Schmidt (SC)

#### Girls' Golf

Emily DeVriese (AAS)  
Madeleine Lorenz (ASHM, AASHM)  
Evon Shay (AS, AAS)

#### Girls' Golf (continued)

**All-State Academic Team:** Evon Shay, Madeleine Lorenz, Emily DeVriese, Mackenzie Sobieck, Novreet Dosanjh (11)

#### Girls' Swim/Dive

Nicole Bailey (AS)  
Allison Fitzgerald (AS)  
Alexandra Horman (AS)

### FHN

#### Volleyball

Chloe Harrison (AAS)  
Olivia Mackraz (AAS)  
Kelsey Smith (AAS)

#### All-State Academic

**Team:** Quinn Batdorff, Ashley Boersma, Chloe Harrison, Meredith Howe, Olivia Mackraz, Margaret Mackraz,

#### Volleyball (continued)

Victoria Naum, Shelby Ostrander, Holly Reed, Alli Rozel, Alissa Sayers, Kelsey Smith, Madison Summerfield, and Emily Vermeulen.

### FHE

#### Football

Ethan Thomas (AAS)

#### Volleyball

Veronica O'Connor (ASHM)  
Lauren Trisch (AS)

### Key:

AS = All-State  
ASHM = All-State Honorable Mention  
AAS = Academic All-State  
AASHM = Academic All-State Honorable Mention  
SC = State Champion



# High School Students Advance in State Math Competition

Twenty-three Forest Hills high school students were among top finishers in Part I of the Michigan Mathematics Prize Competition. Their scores automatically qualified them to take Part II of the exam. Part I of the MMPC is open to all students in Michigan high schools. This exam consists of 40 multiple-choice questions involving topics from high school mathematics. From approximately 10,000 participants in Part I, the top 1,000 students are invited to take Part II of the MMPC exam. There, students work on five challenging problems and write their solutions providing full justification and one proof of their claims. The first exam results were released in late December, and the results of the second exam will be released later this spring. The MMPC is offered by the Michigan Section of the Mathematical Association of America to encourage students to develop their interests and abilities in mathematics. Congratulations to these Forest Hills mathematicians.

## Central Students Who Have Advanced:

Nicholas Ettinger	Joshua Kooistra
Scott Hadley	Joshua Lohrke
Cooper James	Kevin Wang
Katherine Knister	

## Eastern Students Who Have Advanced:

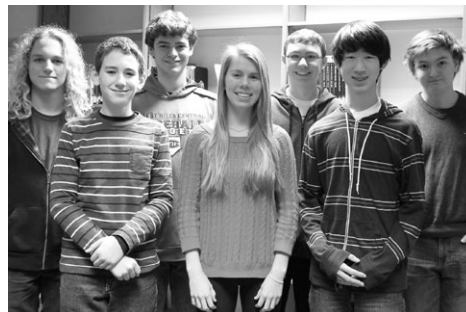
Jonathan Thomas	Thomas Westrick
Brendan Lenhardt	Tyler Dann
Rachel Westrick	

## Northern Students Who Have Advanced:

Andrew Dicks	Jaspreet Singh
Raymond Engle	Victoria Spiegel
Victor Hao	Nicholas Vanderlaan
Nathan Koo	Zeyun Wang
Maxwell Lu	Ian Woodruff
Samuel Schellenberg	



Eastern students who have advanced in the competition include, front from left: Rachel Westrick and Brendan Lenhardt; back from left: Thomas Westrick, Tyler Dann, and Jonathan Thomas.



Central students who have advanced in the competition include, front from left: Scott Hadley, Katherine Knister and Kevin Wang; back from left: Joshua Lohrke, Nicholas Ettinger, Cooper James and Joshua Kooistra.



Northern students who have advanced in the competition include, front from left: Jaspreet Singh, Victoria Hao, Nicholas Vanderlaan, Nathan Koo; back from left: Samuel Schellenberg, Andrew Dicks, Raymond Engle, Victor Hao, Maxwell Lu and Zeyun Wang. (Not pictured: Ian Woodruff)

## FHN Senior Attends Congress of Future Medical Leaders



Megan Brackmann, a senior at Forest Hills Northern High School, was selected to attend the Congress of Future Medical Leaders, held in Washington, DC. The Congress is an honors-only program

for high school students who want to become physicians or go into the medical research field. During the three-day Congress, Brackmann heard from Nobel Laureates and National Medal of Science winners talk about medical research and cutting-edge advancements in medicine and medical technology. The purpose of the event is to honor, inspire, motivate and direct the top students in the country who aspire to be physicians or medical scientists.

## FHE Orchestra Plays for Michigan Music Conference



Congratulations to the Eastern High School Symphony Orchestra for being among the top orchestras in the state of Michigan to play at the Michigan Music Conference held January 22-24, 2015. The FHE Symphony Orchestra performed at DeVos Performance Hall and received rave reviews. The purpose of the Michigan Music Conference is to provide relevant professional development and vibrant musical experiences that support music education for educators and their students.

# FHPS Preschools Now Enrolling for Fall

The Forest Hills Public Schools offers many options for preschoolers. FHPS offers tuition-based traditional and Spanish immersion preschool programs in addition to the Great Start Readiness Program, a 4-year-old preschool offered through the Kent Intermediate School District, which is free for qualifying families.

The two traditional tuition-based preschool programs are licensed by the State of Michigan and run by Forest Hills Public Schools. One is located at Ada Elementary, 731 Ada Drive SE, and the other one is located at Knapp Forest Elementary, 4243 Knapp Valley Drive NE. The Spanish immersion preschool is housed at Ada Vista Elementary, 7192 Bradfield SE. The preschools follow the Forest Hills district calendar, and transportation to and from the preschool programs is the responsibility of parents/guardians. For the traditional and the 4-year-old Spanish immersion programs, children must be independent bathroom users and 4-years-old by Sept. 1, 2015. Forest Hills has one preschool for 3-year-olds and this is a Spanish immersion preschool program also located at Ada Vista Elementary School. Children must also be independent bath-

room users and 3-years-old by Sept. 1, 2015. Whether you're choosing a program for a 3- or 4-year-old, all preschool programs offer a five-day program. Families can choose between a morning session or an afternoon session. There is only a morning session for the 3-year-old Spanish immersion preschool program.

In addition to our tuition-based preschools, the Forest Hills Public Schools offers the Great Start Readiness Program for qualifying families. This program is a tuition-free, state-grant funded preschool program and is located at Collins Elementary, 4386 Heather Lane SE. The program also requires children to be 4-years-old by Sept. 1, 2015. Kent Intermediate School District provides oversight for the GSRP classrooms in 18 school districts. Registration information can be found at the website listed below, or by calling the Great Start Preschool Intake line at 616-447-2409.

To register a child for preschool, you may do so online. Visit the child care and preschool website at [www.fhps.net/childcare/preschool-programs](http://www.fhps.net/childcare/preschool-programs). Families will receive enrollment confirmation when the child's



Ada Elementary preschool student, Luke Levering is proud to show off his math skills.

birth certificate and a \$50 non-refundable registration fee (check, cash or credit card) are received in the Child Care Services Office, located at 150 Alta Dale SE. Non-resident families may register after April 13, 2015. Registrations will continue until all classes are full. Please note that enrollment in the Spanish immersion preschool does not guarantee entrance in the Spanish immersion kindergarten program. If you'd like to tour any of our preschools, or would like additional information, please call the Child Care Services office at 493-8787, or email Nancy Bailey, [nbailey@fhps.net](mailto:nbailey@fhps.net).

## Young Fives Program Phased Out as State Kindergarten Age Requirements Change

Three years ago, in 2013, the State of Michigan passed Public Act 198. This changed the minimum age requirement for a child enrolling in kindergarten. The state required this change to be phased in over the course of three years, moving the eligibility date from Dec. 1 to Sept. 1. Based on this legislation, Forest Hills also developed a three-year plan to transition kindergarten and preschool programming to plan and prepare for this change. Now, with the new eligibility date of Sept. 1, 2015, Young Fives is no longer necessary since the Young Fives program was originally developed for children with fall birthdays (typically Sept. 1-Dec. 1). Additionally, as the age requirements gradually changed, enrollment also declined in the Young Fives program.

With the age for kindergarten now set for Sept. 1, it may leave many families wondering what other options exist. "In Forest Hills, we understand that parents are look-



From top left (clockwise), Rylan Young, Maya Bogerd, and Ethan Boland enjoy working with letters and words at Ada Elementary Preschool.

ing for programs that offer an extensive age-appropriate curriculum for children who don't meet the kindergarten eligibility requirements," said Julie Jewell, director, FHPS Child Care Services. "Parents are looking for a program that bridges the gap and prepares children for kindergarten in

the fall of 2016. Here in Forest Hills, we offer the preschool option for students who don't meet the kindergarten eligibility age requirements but wish to enroll in a high quality program. Our preschool programs have specially qualified staff who deliver a developmentally appropriate curriculum.

"Some students just need a bit more time to develop socially, emotionally, and academically, and that's perfectly normal," Jewell added. "We're here to help meet the needs of all of our young students, let them have a fun and exciting start to an educational environment, and help set them up for school readiness and be successful."

For additional information about the Forest Hills Public Schools preschool programs, review the article found also on this page, or go online to: [www.fhps.net/childcare/](http://www.fhps.net/childcare/). For program specific information, call Child Care Services, 493-8787, or email Nancy Bailey, [nbailey@fhps.net](mailto:nbailey@fhps.net).





## Kindergarten 2015-2016

### Join Us for These Kindergarten Kickoff Events

**Ada Elementary:** April 23; 6 p.m.  
731 Ada Dr. SE, Ada, MI 49301  
(616) 493-8940

**Ada Vista Elementary:** March 12; 6:30 p.m.  
7192 Bradfield SE, Ada, MI 49301  
(616) 493-8970

**Collins Elementary:** April 23; 7 p.m.  
4368 Heather Ln. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49546  
(616) 493-8900

**Knapp Forest Elementary:** March 11; 5:30 p.m.  
4243 Knapp Valley Dr. NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49525  
(616) 493-8980

**Meadow Brook Elementary:** April 21; 7 p.m.  
1450 Forest Hill SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49546  
(616) 493-8740

**Orchard View Elementary:** April 28; 6:30 p.m.  
2770 Leffingwell NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49525  
(616) 493-8930

**Pine Ridge Elementary:** March 12; 7 p.m.  
3250 Redford SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49546  
(616) 493-8910

**Thornapple Elementary:** April 28; 7 p.m.  
6932 Bridgewater SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49546  
(616) 493-8920

Kindergarten Kickoff events are meetings for parents and guardians to learn more about the kindergarten program, curriculum, and the enrollment process. Each school will host a Ready-Set-Go event in late summer prior to the start of school tailored for kindergartners.

Visit us online: [www.fhps.net](http://www.fhps.net) for enrollment and program information.

## AAA Wins State Award

(continued from page 4)

of instruction, who assembled interested parents, staff and community members to form a team dedicated to building and enhancing a healthy educational environment. More specifically, the team was, and still is, dedicated to stamping out the stigmas surrounding mental health issues and supporting the mental fitness of students and the community. To learn more about AAA and its programs, visit the district's site: [www.fhps.net/mental-health-information](http://www.fhps.net/mental-health-information).

## Counselors' Corner

# Helping Your Student Lessen Test-Taking Anxiety

Remember when you participated in class, did all the homework, studied hard for a test, only to feel "frozen" when the teacher handed you the test and you couldn't remember a thing? Believe it or not, it's pretty normal to feel a little nervous or stressed before taking a test or even delivering a presentation. A "touch" of the nerves can actually help by increasing some adrenaline and energy. Yet for some, the anxiety is more intense and it can hinder concentration and performance.

Parents often wonder if there's anything they can do to help their child with test taking. The Forest Hills Public Schools counselors have created some test taking tips. Here is what they recommend.

- Have a student prepare for a test in advance. Break up the studying over several days, rather than trying to "cram" all the material in one evening.
- Make sure the student gets plenty of sleep the night before the test.
- Make sure the student eats a good breakfast on test day.

Parents can also help reiterate the following test-taking strategies to their student. Remind students to:

- Take their time to answer the questions.
- If they don't know an answer, skip it and come back to it later.
- Answer every question.
- Double check their answers.

If a student gets stuck, remind them they can do some deep breathing exercises, as well as stretch their muscles. Breathing and stretching can help rid the body of built-up energy.

The FHPS counseling department has more resources for parents and students to help with study skills and test-taking anxiety. Remember, our counselors are all licensed professional school counselors who can assist with a variety of mental health, social and academic concerns, and they are excellent resources for outside referrals. They are here to help and offer assistance.

## Not March Madness, but March Mindfulness!

### Mindful Parenting in a Hectic, Stressful World

Monday, March 9, 2015 7 p.m.

FH Central High School Auditorium  
5901 Hall St. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49546

Featuring  
**April Hadley, MSW**

Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction Instructor  
Grand Rapids Center for Mindfulness

Sponsored by the  
Forest Hills Public Schools  
Parent Group  
**Awareness  
Acceptance  
Advocacy of Mental Health**

Underwritten by a grant from the Forest Hills Public Schools Foundation.

The program is geared toward all parents, guardians and adults who would like to learn useful techniques for reducing the stress of parenting in a hectic world. According to Forest Hills Public Schools counselors, Cheryl Blackington and Jackie Roberts, this is a timely topic and appeals to all of our district's parents regardless of their kids' ages or grade levels. During this session, adults will learn:

- How to respond to parenting stress (as opposed to react);
- How to handle conflict with children or partners;
- How to foster empathy and set limits;
- How to take responsibility for your behavior and teach your children to do the same;
- How to take the parenting journey one moment at a time; and
- How to start over when you feel like you blew it.

**Don't miss this last AAA event of the year!**





**Forest Hills Public Schools**

6590 Cascade Road SE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49546

Phone: 616-493-8800



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# Community Services Offers Exciting Classes/Sports in the Coming Months

## Aquatics Center

### American Red Cross Waterfront Lifeguarding, April 15 - May 20

This class meets Wednesdays and Mondays from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the CAC Pool. Students must attend all sessions to complete the class successfully.

The primary purpose of the American Red Cross Waterfront Lifeguarding course is to provide entry-level participants with the knowledge and skills to prevent, recognize, and respond to aquatic emergencies. American Red Cross Waterfront Lifeguarding is ideal for lifeguards working at non-surf, open-water environments such as lakes, rivers, camps, public parks, and campgrounds, as well as traditional pools. Students must be 15-years-old before the last day of class to enroll.

American Red Cross certifications awarded upon successful completion of this course are: Lifeguarding/Waterfront/First Aid and CPR/AED for the Professional Rescuer. Certifications are valid for two years.

## Youth Classes and Sports

Our Forest Hills Community Youth Program is excited to announce that we have partnered with Kendall College of Art and Design of Ferris State University to offer youth classes in drawing, clay sculpturing, painting and much more. Additionally, many wonderful enrichment classes and sports that are starting this spring include:

- Horse Camp Spring Break, begins April 6
- Nature Rangers, begins April 15
- Run for the Hills Track Club, begins April 16
- Art of Irish Dance, begins April 17
- Co-ed Lacrosse, begins April 22

Please visit our website, [enjoylearning.com](http://enjoylearning.com)

to view the complete list of youth classes starting in late winter and spring.

## Middle School Sports

### Girls' Water Polo, Begins March 17

Middle School Water Polo is an excellent opportunity for girls to gain polo experience before high school. Times and dates of practices will be determined. Tournaments will be played on Saturdays. A calendar will be available at the pre-session parent meeting. Players are responsible for transportation to tournaments. To register for Girls' Water Polo, you must call Community Services at 616-493-8950. Register by March 10 for early bird (lower) registraton fee.

### Co-ed Tennis, Begins March 23

Forest Hills middle school athletes participate in the West Michigan Middle School Conference Tennis program. Practices will take place at the high school courts in conjunction with your middle school. Practices and matches are weather permitting and at the coaches' discretion. A team t-shirt is included with the registration fee. To register for Co-ed Tennis, you must call Community Services at 616-493-8950. Register by March 16 for early bird (lower) registraton fee.

## Terrific Classes for Adults

This spring, adults can enhance their creative side with drawing, painting, photography or Zentangle classes. Looking to increase your strength or flexibility? Why not try a fitness class such as Yoga I, Pilates, Freestyle Strength, or Zumba? In the world of technology we can expand your knowledge through Microsoft Share Point, social media, Photoshop or how to set up shop on Etsy, plus so much more! See what's in store for you by browsing the adult enrichment and sports classes at [enjoylearning.com](http://enjoylearning.com).

## Senior Citizen Corner Learning Café

The following Learning Café program will be held at the Forest Hills Public Schools Community, Aquatic & Senior Center, 660 Forest Hill Ave. Lunch is at noon; program at 12:45 p.m. Cost: \$8 per person for lunch and program (\$9 for non-residents); \$2 for program only (\$3 for non-residents). Please register at 493-8950 or online on our website, [enjoylearning.com](http://enjoylearning.com), by the Friday prior to the event. For a full list of all Learning Café programs, held the second and fourth Tuesday of the month, please call our office and ask to be added to the "Encore Programs Guide" mailing list.

### Tuesday, March 10

## Navigating the Senior Care Maze

How do you decide for yourself or a loved one which option is best: staying home and using home care and other services, or moving to a senior community? In an unbiased presentation, Elizabeth Harrell will provide facts to help make sense of the many housing and funding options available. Elizabeth is with Crossroads Eldercare Planning.

### Publication information:

The Forest Hills Public Schools' "Focus" newsletter is published bimonthly during the school year by the FHPS Board of Education. It is mailed to all residents of the Forest Hills Public Schools district, and additional copies are sent to every district school for distribution to staff, new residents, and visitors. FHPS is committed to a policy of nondiscrimination of all its programs in relation to race, religion, sex, age, national origin, disability and genetic information.

