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CITY SCHOOL  
DISTRICT OF  
**New  
Rochelle**

December 19, 2024

## NRHS Robotics Team Triumphs in Season Opener, Takes Innovate Award



The New Rochelle High School Robotics Club kicked off its competition season with an impressive showing at the regional robotics event last Saturday at Mount Academy in Esopus, NY. Out of 40 participating teams, five represented New Rochelle, with two advancing to the quarterfinals and one earning the prestigious *Innovate Award*.

Team A, comprising sophomores Valeria Bances Sanches, Marisol Figueroa, Alan Verghese, Samuel Gall, Sophia Fuentes, and Bryan Mesajil, captured the *Innovate Award* for their creativity and engineering design while also qualifying for the quarterfinals.

Joining them in the quarterfinals was Team C, which included senior Dylan Rittenberg and sophomores Nick Ensuncho, Talia Koff, and Luna Diaz Raitz.

Team D also delivered a strong debut performance, securing seventh place in the qualification round. Team members sophomore Cristian Lopez and seniors Andrés Morales and Giovany Velasquez impressed judges despite this being their first competition.

"Robotics competitions like this are a culmination of months of planning, collaboration, and hard work on the part of these students," said Zachariah Biondo, science teacher and Robotics Club advisor, who oversees the group alongside Advanced Robotics teacher Maria Walsh. "All five teams made a strong showing and will use this experience to redesign and improve their robots for the next competition."

The teams now set their sights on their next challenge, scheduled for January 18th in Fallsburg.

The Robotics Club, which meets on Tuesdays and Thursdays, continues to foster innovation and teamwork among students who are passionate about STEM.



**NRHS Celebrates Computer Science Education Week with Interactive Activities and Alumni Insights**



The New Rochelle High School library embraced Computer Science Education Week last week, involving students in multiple disciplines with a variety of activities.

Events included Hour of Code programming through Code.org, Robotics Lab tours and demonstrations, offline programming activities using Rubik's Cubes, drop-in AP Computer Science classes, and Zoom sessions with NRHS graduates involved in computer science.

The week's highlights were Zoom Q&A sessions between AP Computer Scientists and two recent NRHS graduates, Alexa Rockwell and Nick Krichevsky, currently working for Apple's AR/VR team and Discord's Real Time Infrastructure team respectively.

Computer Science Education Week is a national event designed to introduce as many new students to Computer Science as possible.

Students also learned about how computers are built on stacks of algorithms by learning how to solve Rubik's cubes. Joseph Renda's Foundation's Program class completed an Hour of Code activity where students learned the foundational concepts of programming by building a song from recorded samples.

Even the high school's Marketing program got involved with a Q&A session with Paul Swiderski, a Senior Portfolio Manager for 2K Games, one of the top video game developers in the world, best known for their NBA 2K series of games.

Library media specialist Ryan Paulsen was well positioned to stage computer science activities in the library, having taught AP Computer Science Principles and Introduction to Computer Science for several years.

"I saw this as a natural opportunity to develop learning sessions for our students," he said, noting that the library worked with AP Computer Science and Robotics teachers to highlight the official programs available to students.

He was impressed with the depth of student interest. "In all of our Q&A sessions, our students asked incredibly thoughtful questions that demonstrated both an understanding of the potential careers ahead of them, as well as the considerations they will balance as they set out on their lifelong journeys of personal independence and responsibility as adults in our society."





## NR Fund announces NRHS Class of 2025 scholarship winners



L to R: Anderson (Andy) Krasner, Julian Belfast, NRHS Principal Dagoberto Artiles, Myles Hoffman, Maison Smith

Each year, the New Rochelle High School Guidance Department partners with the New Rochelle Fund for Educational Excellence to select four outstanding seniors based on their extraordinary achievements. At the Fund's Foundation Awards Gala, these remarkable students are awarded \$1,000 scholarships for their exceptional contributions to Arts and Culture, Citizenship, Sports Leadership, and Technology. The 2025 Gala will be held on Wednesday, February 5. Tickets and more details about this inspiring event are available at [www.nredfund.org](http://www.nredfund.org).



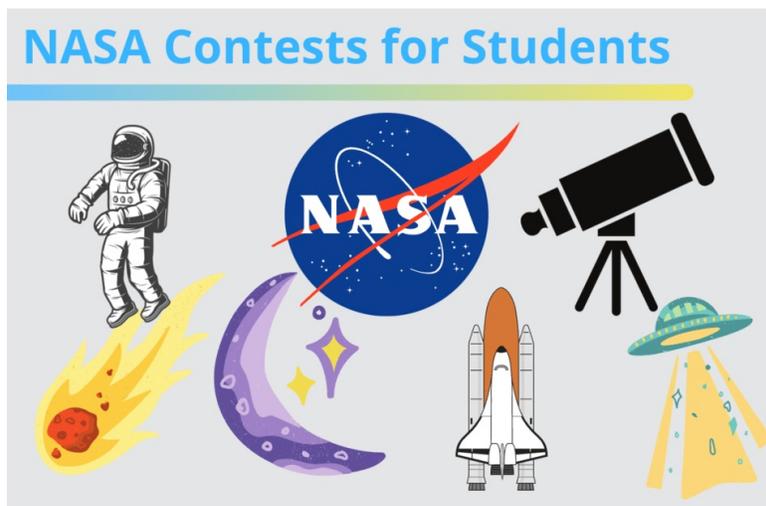
The Fund's Class of 2025 Student Achievement Awards will go to:

- **Arts and Culture Award: Myles Hoffman**  
This award recognizes a student whose extraordinary artistry contributes to the creative, intellectual, and cultural vitality of the New Rochelle public schools. Myles is a talented vocalist in the NRHS PAVE Choral program who excels in many genres, including opera. He has been a member of the Bennett Academy for Performing Arts since 2017. He has sung the national anthem at events and many other community performances since 2018, mainly as a soloist. He also auditioned for the selective preparatory program at the Music Conservatory of Westchester and Conference All-State.
- **David A. Garfinkel Citizenship Award: Maison Smith**  
This award recognizes a student whose remarkable record of community service enriches our city and inspires their fellow students to participate in civic life, named in memory of NR Fund Board member and community leader David A. Garfinkel. Maison runs a thriving DJ business but also finds time to be a

co-host and interviewer for the My Brother's Keeper YouTube series, where he has been named one of its ambassadors. Maison serves on New York Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins' Youth Council and holds leadership roles, including Teen President of Jack and Jill of America, Inc., Co-President of the Young Achievers Club, and founder of the NRHS DJ Club.

- **Eric Tutera Sports Leadership Award: Anderson (Andy) Krasner**  
This award recognizes a student whose athletic talent and discipline encourage his or her fellow students to excel in both academic and extracurricular activities, named in memory of NRHS graduate and athlete Eric Tutera. Andy is an elite athlete with a strong work ethic. He balances an extremely rigorous course load with PAVE Band, the Science Research Program, the NRHS Future Health Professionals Club, and Cross Country and Track Varsity Teams. He also mentors middle school students who are interested in participating in science research.
- **Technology Award: Julian Belfast**  
This award recognizes a student whose mastery of cutting-edge technology demonstrates the power of scientific innovation to encourage learning and improve our lives. Julian has conducted award-winning research on using math in machine learning applications for education, with notable achievements such as a silver medal at the NAACP ACT-SO national competition and first place in the Quaker Ridge Fellows Research Competition. Julian is a National Merit Commended Scholar, a certified peer tutor for Khan Academy, a 5-time medalist for the NRHS Debate Team, plays JV soccer, and interns at Quaker Ridge Golf Club.

## IEYMS STEM Students Reach for the Sky



Isaac E. Young Middle School is one of just a handful of sites in New York State selected for the 2025 NASA Engineering Design Challenge, a STEM program modeled on NASA's scientific process.

The opportunity is the result of the school district's close relationship with the Boys & Girls Club of New Rochelle, which operates free 21st Century Community Learning Center Programs after school at both middle schools and the high school.

"We applied for this project and are one of ten 21st Century Programs in New York State that were selected to participate," said William Ianuzzi, Chief Programming Officer of the Boys & Girls Club of New Rochelle and school board president. New York State is one of nine states selected to participate in the program.

The design challenge begins in February and will involve up to 18 students who will meet for one 90-minute session weekly after school.

"It's a commitment and will involve highly motivated students," said IEYMS STEM teacher Jason Corbett, who begins training for the program next month. Students will be recommended to the program by teachers. Because of the nature of the challenge, Mr. Corbett anticipates that students in grades 7 and 8 will participate, "although we certainly will consider any 6th graders who meet the criteria," he said.

The project will have four steps that mimic those that a NASA ground launch team would have to complete to build and successfully launch a rocket. "This is much more than building a rocket," said Mr. Corbett. "As engineers, we have to consider every single process along the way, right down to creating a search and rescue plan for recovery of rocket pieces returning to earth."

# Jefferson Elementary Parents Empowered at Spanish-Language Conference on Education and Advocacy

A dozen Spanish-speaking parents from Jefferson Elementary School earlier this month attended a daylong conference designed to empower Spanish-speaking families and help them advocate for their children.

The conference ¡Adelante!: Rumbo al Futuro, Realizando Nuestras Meta (Forward! Heading to the Future, Realizing Our Goals) was hosted by the Hudson Valley Regional Bilingual Education Resource Center (RBERN) at Manhattanville College and co-hosted by Manhattanville's The Changing Suburbs Institute® (CSI). It featured workshops conducted entirely in Spanish covering topics such as preparing children for college, understanding educational rights, and exploring the role of technology, including AI, in education.

"It is important for parents to have a chance to learn about their rights and participate in conferences that speak their language," said Jefferson English as a New Language (ENL) teacher Alexandra Terry, who organized the participation of the parents.

It was clearly appreciated. "It is wonderful to attend because I have kids in Jefferson, Isaac, and New Rochelle High School, said one parent Cirila Miranda. "They give advice on how I can help my children and what resources are available for me."

Another parent attendee, Esperanza Trejo, said, "I like to be informed about all the things happening in the school and the community. I want to be involved in any capacity with what is going on with my children and how I can best support them."

ENL teacher Monica Argentina, who accompanied the group, commented on the meaningful connections fostered among parents during the event: "Parents became close and had heartfelt conversations about our shared experiences."



ENL teachers (wearing Jefferson sweatshirts) Lucia Brea, Monica Argentina, and Alexandra Terry, with parents who attended the conference

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## Congratulations to the Winners of Our School District Holiday Art Contest!

Wishing you and your family  
 a peaceful and joyous  
 holiday season.



Corey W. Reynolds

Dr. Corey W. Reynolds,  
 Superintendent



CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT OF  
**New Rochelle**

TOP LEFT ARTWORK BY:  
**Lilia Vanlare**, Grade 1  
 Henry Barnard School

TOP LEFT ARTWORK BY:  
**Zaylia Rivera**, Grade 7  
 Isaac E. Young Middle School

TOP LEFT ARTWORK BY:  
**Cheyenne Stephens**, Grade 10  
 New Rochelle High School

BOTTOM LEFT ARTWORK BY:  
**Alexa Lopez**, Grade 7  
 Albert Leonard Middle School

BOTTOM LEFT ARTWORK BY:  
**Alyssa Nask**, Grade 7  
 Albert Leonard Middle School

BOTTOM LEFT ARTWORK BY:  
**Adele Scardova-Mournier**, Grade 5  
 Daniel Webster Elementary School

The winning students' artwork will be featured on the School District's holiday greeting to the community.

- Lilia Vanlare, Grade 1, Barnard
- Adele Scardovi-Mournier, Grade 5, Webster
- Alexa Lopez, Grade 7, ALMS
- Alyssa Nask, Grade 7, ALMS
- Zaylia Rivera, Grade 7, IEYMS
- Cheyenne Stephens, Grade 10, NRHS



## Students Deliver Impressive Performances at BOE Meetings



The Webster Singers, directed by Heidi Jaye, and Dancers under the direction of Amanda Bradshaw, wowed audience members at the December 10 BOE meeting



The ALMS chorus, under the direction of Archie Manning, performed for the BOE at its December 17 meeting



## Davis Performing Arts Students Experience "The Magic Flute" at Metropolitan Opera House



Nearly 50 Davis Elementary 5th grade band, orchestra, and All-County Chorus students were treated to a holiday performance of Mozart's "The Magic Flute" on December 10 at the Metropolitan Opera House. The trip was made possible through funds provided by the BOCES Arts in Education Fund, and participation in the Access Opera program which provides resources for students that draw connections across literature, foreign language, social studies, and the arts. Davis Vocal/General Music Teacher Regina Talbot and Band Director Dr. Eva Egolf organized the trip.

"We have been participating in this program since 2018," said Ms. Talbot. "Access Opera gives students the experience of watching a dress rehearsal as well as meeting and speaking with cast members after the show. One of the principal performers told them about how he became involved in music as an elementary school student and how classical music inspired his career. It was an enthralling and exciting day for our young performers."

The students were fascinated with the entire experience, from hearing the live orchestra play to seeing the set pieces and enjoying the performers' incredible voices.

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## NYANG Band Performs at ALMS



Albert Leonard Middle School band teacher Steven Foti, who also directs the New York Air National Guard's (NYANG) 42nd Infantry Division Band, brought members of the NYANG band to perform at ALMS earlier this month alongside members of his 7th and 8th grade bands. The soldiers performed selections from their own musical repertoire and also helped students improve their technical and musical skills. To see them in action, [click here](#).

"It was a great experience for all involved!" said Mr. Foti.

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## Church Gives the Gift of a Warm Winter



Thanks to the generosity of the Ladies Philoptochos Society of Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church in New Rochelle, about 25 students at Trinity Elementary School have brand new coats for the winter in a gifting program that began in 2019.

“The president of the Ladies Philoptochos Society of Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church, who is a retired teacher, contacted me in November 2019 asking how her organization could support our school community,” said school social worker Nelsie Febles, and an enduring relationship began.

“Undaunted by the many challenges presented by the pandemic, the Greek Church never wavered in their efforts to help our community. Whatever logistical difficulties they faced, they always overcame them for the sake of our students.”

Photo: Principal Michael Hilderbrand with members of the Trinity PPS team who accepted the donation for the children. From left, Brittany Anderson, School Psychologist; Josefina Cherry, School Social Worker; Nicole Venditto, School Psychologist; Kathy Tzortzidis, Holy Trinity Greek Church; Agathy Gerkis, Holy Trinity Greek Church; Nelsie Febles, School Social Worker. Not pictured, Melissa Kelly, School Counselor.

## NRHS Library Transforms Old Books into Festive Holiday Trees

Stop by the high school library to see a small forest of paper trees. Library media specialist Suzanne Tecza is working this week with students on a Holiday Book Tree crafting project, where students are turning books that were removed from the collection due to extreme aging and damage into decorative "trees." So far, about 40 trees are completed.



# Webster Elementary and Albert Leonard Middle School Celebrate Teacher Tenure

Two Webster Elementary School kindergarten teachers were recognized at the December 10 Board of Education (BOE) meeting at the school: Jill Friedman, who joined the school district in 2020, and Patricia Perykasz, who has been teaching at Webster since 2021.

“Mrs. Friedman is a dedicated and compassionate educator. Her calm and caring demeanor contributes to the calm and positive learning environment she creates for her students,” said Principal Passarelli. “Working with our youngest learners, Mrs. Friedman supports her students in taking risks. She empowers them to make contributions during whole class and small group activities and she gives them choices that allow them to pursue their interests. They love being in her class.”

Principal Passarelli described Mrs. Perykasz as a highly skilled, passionate teacher with a strong pedagogy.

“Mrs. Perykasz effectively differentiates for all children in a student-centered classroom where there is a strong culture for learning. As the general education teacher assigned to a co-teaching class, Mrs. Perykasz sees each child as an individual, focusing on strength-based instruction. This allows her students to flourish academically, socially, and behaviorally. She truly gives every child what they need.”

At the BOE December 17 meeting, three Albert Leonard Middle School teachers were honored for earning tenure: Spanish teacher Lina Arboleda, an NRHS alumna; school psychologist Alison Guiney; and Dr. Vijayalakshimi Montgomery-Giles, a teacher in the technology department.

Principal Dr. Camille Edwards-Thomas said, “Miss Arboleda is a dedicated and highly skilled educator who brings a deep understanding of her subject area to the classroom. Her instructional planning is thoughtful, responsive, and student-centered, reflecting her commitment to meeting the diverse needs of her learners.”

She commended Dr. Montgomery-Giles, saying, “Dr. Giles is an innovative and collaborative educator whose lessons provide students with opportunities to make meaningful cross-curricular connections, such as linking the scientific method to the engineering design process. Her hands-on projects allow students to explore STEM concepts in ways that are both accessible and inspiring.”

CSDNR Pupil Personnel Services Director Millicent Lee congratulated Ms. Guiney on earning tenure.

“Ms. Guiney has been an invaluable asset to our school community, demonstrating exceptional expertise, professionalism, and a deep commitment to supporting our students, families, and staff. Her ability to approach each student with empathy and precision ensures that they receive the academic, social, and emotional care necessary to thrive.”

Congratulations to all of our newly tenured staff!



From left, Webster's Jill Friedman, Principal Passarelli, Patricia Perykasz, and Assistant Principal Gregory Middleton



ALMS tenure recipients, from left Alison Guiney, Vijayalakshimi Montgomery-Giles, Lina Adebola, Principal Edwards-Thomas

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## Dr. Nicolas Cracco Honored for Championing Early Childhood Education in

# New Rochelle



In recognition of his advocacy for early childhood education, the school district's Executive Director for Educational Leadership and Early Learning Dr. Nicolas Cracco was honored by the Westchester Community Opportunity Program earlier this month, receiving its Community Partnership Award.

The award for Dr. Cracco's leadership over Early Childhood Education for the City School District of New Rochelle was announced at the program's 59th annual Winter Blue Carpet Mixer. WestCOP is a community collaborator that partners with the district to provide 72 students with full-day (5-hour) Universal Prekindergarten (UPK).

Westchester Community Opportunity Program is a private, not-for-profit, multi-purpose social services organization, having proudly operated community programs combating poverty and its adverse effects in the Hudson Valley for more than 50 years. Its mission is to mobilize and efficiently manage resources through partnerships and collaborations to help the low-income and at-risk populations in the Hudson Valley region to achieve greater self-sufficiency.

## New Venue Announced for Class of 2025 Graduation Ceremony

The City School District of New Rochelle's (CSDNR) Board of Education voted last week to hold the graduation ceremony for the Class of 2025 at the Westchester County Center in White Plains.

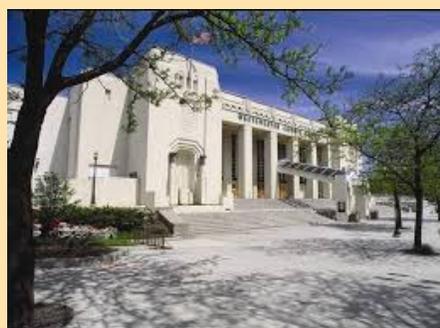
The annual graduation ceremony has traditionally been held at the high school's McKenna Field, but the open-air venue exposes the event to weather extremes and hazards. The school district requires a venue large enough to accommodate 700-750 graduates and their guests.

"The change came about as a desire to accommodate the most guests for the high school's large ceremony while providing a safe, climate-controlled environment to celebrate our graduates without distraction," the high school administration stated in a communication to families.

The decision came after reviewing the results of a survey that drew more than 800 participants and a second survey conducted by the senior class.

"Though both surveys yielded mixed results, the survey process and resulting conversations about graduation remain invaluable as we plan for the years ahead," the statement said.

The Class of 2025 graduation will be held on June 25, 2025, at 1:00 pm. Updates regarding the logistics for the ceremony, transportation, tickets, etc. will be shared in the coming months. CSDNR is committed to ensuring transportation is provided for any graduate and/or staff member who requires it.



## ATHLETICS



### Varsity Hockey

New Rochelle 6, North Rockland 5  
New Rochelle RCDS  
New Rochelle 8, ETBE 1  
New Rochelle 9, Fox Lane 2  
New Rochelle 6, North Rockland 4

### Modified Ice Hockey

New Rochelle 6, White Plains 5  
New Rochelle 2, White Plains 6



Athletics photos courtesy of Isaiah Apprey, NRHS Senior

#### Girls Varsity Basketball

New Rochelle 37, Clarkstown South 52

#### Swimming

New Rochelle 81, Eastchester 77

New Rochelle 90, White Plains 94

#### Boys Varsity Basketball

New Rochelle 86, Achievement First 67

#### JV Basketball

New Rochelle 55, Eagle Academy 42

New Rochelle 44, Arlington 29



**Check out all the great community events happening now!**

**Community Events**

# Air of Truth Exhibit

EXPLORE LOCAL AIR POLLUTION AND ITS IMPACT  
ON YOUR COMMUNITY



**AIR OF  
TRUTH**

UNMASKING POOR AIR QUALITY  
FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

OPENING RECEPTION, WEDNESDAY JANUARY 8TH 2025

5-7PM AT THE MUSEUM OF ARTS AND CULTURE

COLLABORATION BETWEEN NRHS AIR OF TRUTH INTERNS,  
NRHS TEACHER-CARMEN GLENN AND  
THE ENERGY JUSTICE LAW AND POLICY CENTER



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