



Allamuchy Township School

# THE BOARD REPORT



Mountain Villa School

Volume 9, Issue 1

August 2013

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Citizenship. The word evokes patriotism, visions of the Stars and Stripes perhaps amid bombs - or fireworks - bursting in mid-air, and maybe even pride in being from New Jersey. Citizenship has evolved into a national and state concept. We tend to lose focus on the local citizenship which we enjoy, for us, Allamuchy citizenship. Yet our status as citizens of Allamuchy is a very fundamental and perhaps the most accessible civic and social relationship we have. It is the bond that unites our community. The recent fireworks event at Allamuchy Farms (the Mountain Villa School) served as the setting for our community to come together for an evening, relax, meet new neighbors, enjoy music, visit the museum at Rutherford Hall, and enjoy each other's company. It demonstrated how the many facets of our community can come together for a common purpose.

The Board of Education, through its staff, organized the event. The Volunteer Fire Department and its Auxiliary, the Friends of Rutherford Hall, the First Aid Squad and the Township administration all played a role in the operation. Those that attended reflected our community: senior citizens, youngsters of all ages, young adults, families who have lived in Allamuchy for generations, newcomers to Allamuchy and those in the middle of that spectrum. The success of the event is a tribute to our citizens, the organizations that serve our citizens and the power of working together to serve a common goal. The success was a product of effective citizenship.

This display of effective citizenship is one in a continuing series. From the Board of Education's perspective, we have seen our citizens coming together, whether individually or through our civic organizations, for the benefit of our community. The Key Communicator's Committee which the Board commissioned was instrumental in solving the problem of a rising school population. That collaboration with the Board brought us the Allamuchy Farms Campus which includes the Mountain Villa School and Rutherford Hall. A strong and effective relationship exists between the Township's Recreation Commission and the school district to afford our children facilities for recreation programs. The PTO has provided valuable support for education through their grant programs. Rutherford Hall is evolving into a cultural center for all our residents and an educational resource for our students through the support of the Allamuchy Township Education Foundation and the Friends of Rutherford Hall. The Education Foundation is supporting the district's technology plan. Our Mayor and Township Council have acted as the named applicant and administrator for the Board's recent grant award (\$400,000) and a pending grant application to the Warren County Municipal and Charitable Conservancy Trust (\$135,000). The Board continues to work with the Mayor and Council to share services, especially in the area of economical purchase of fuel for vehicles. Many parents of our school children have participated in our new program to increase the scope and effectiveness of parental involvement in the education of their children. But most importantly, all these programs and initiatives, indeed, the school district itself, succeed only with the support of the citizens of our Township.



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE, *continued*

A typical school district operates in isolation through the dynamic between students and teachers as reflected by narrowly focused standardized test results. Our district sees education from a broader perspective. Certainly the classroom learning by students with the guidance of teachers is a significant aspect of the district's mission. However, as we have stated many times in previous editions of this report, we seek a more rounded development of our children. Aspects of growth in character, responsibility, resilience and empathy, all not susceptible to standardized tests, are important. We seek to develop in our children a curiosity for who we and they are, in Allamuchy, in rural Warren County, now and in relation to history. We have taken the STEM movement (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) and expanded it to our own STEAM movement (the A stands for Arts).

But we also believe that education doesn't end with formal schooling. All citizens continue to learn. This precept underpins our efforts with Rutherford Hall. Our cultural programming, such as Harry Potter and Hunger Games summer camps, is important not only for the children but also for the adults. The lecture series, museum exhibits and music events all benefit not only the students but also the adults in our community. We strive to make the lives of all the citizens of Allamuchy richer through our programs.

The programs and the philosophy generating them succeed because of the support of the community. The organizations such as the ATEF, PTO and the Friends are important pillars of support for these programs. Our community has supported our philosophy. But ongoing dialogue, reflection and planning are essential.

Citizenship is participatory. In Allamuchy, we still vote on the school tax levy. Last April, 137 voters cast ballots in the school election. That represents 3.77% of the eligible voters. The cost of the election to all of the Allamuchy taxpayers equates to approximately \$70 per vote. Our Board meetings rarely include more than one or two members of the public. Effective government requires an educated populace, hence this periodic Board Report. But effective government also needs effective participation of the citizenry. Please vote in the annual election. Everyone is welcome to a Board meeting. Reach out to a Board member. Share your thoughts. The organizations that support the mission of the school district, the education of all residents of the Township, such as the PTO, the Education Foundation, and Friends of Rutherford Hall thrive because of participation. Volunteer. For as Margaret Meade once said: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, that's the only thing that ever has." Let's focus on Allamuchy; let's participate. Let's continue to make our community a special place.



*Fireworks on the Great Lawn!*

### 2012-2013 A Year of Achievement!

During the 2012-2013 school year our students were engaged both in and out of the classroom. Our Volleyball team won the Greater Morris County Coed Volleyball Tournament. Our fifth grade Battle of the Minds team took first place in the Warren County Consortium for Student Enrichment (WCCSE) tournament. Our fourth grade Battle of the Books team placed second in Warren County. The Allamuchy Township School Band was awarded the title of Excellent at the High Note Music Festival, and the Chorus received a rating of Superior!

### The Allamuchy School Class of 2009...Where are they now?

- Duke University
- University of Alabama
- West Virginia University
- The College of New Jersey
- The United States Military Academy
- Rutgers
- Washington College
- Drew University

## What's New at Rutherford Hall??

### Not by Chance Nor Fate- (by hard work and volunteers)!

Rutherford Hall and the BOE are pleased to announce that our work has been funded by the NJ Historic Commission/Department of State for the next two years. These funds underwrite general operational costs like heat and salaries, and are considered the hardest money in the field to raise. We are thrilled by the news that our-one-and-a-half-year-old project is competitive with sites like the NJ State Museum and Ellis Island! No one else in Warren County received this funding. Thank you to all the volunteers, donors, and audience goers for showing your support, and to all who worked to ready this grant.

The first annual Fireworks celebration, called Live on the Lawn, was a real success. We estimate over 1800 people were onsite for live music, food, games, and a unique fireworks display over Allamuchy Pond. This event, underwritten by a number of local sponsors, was also successful for the cultural center where over 325 people visited to learn more about Allamuchy and Rutherford family histories. We are excited to report that this event will continue next year, so be sure to join the Rutherford Hall eblast list to receive monthly postings that keep you in the loop about what is happening.

Summer camps have met with rave reviews again this year. A majority of our camps use literature as the jumping off point for fun and games; reinforcing that reading is important, unlocks amazing worlds, and can in fact come to life with the right ingredients and setting. We recently learned that Indiana University is using our camps as an example of literary education innovation in their Education Department. Art camp, where students go back and forth between making art and visiting museums, has also encouraged students to think of cultural organizations as places of experimentation and learning; the lessons are boundless!

Want to get involved? The Friends of Rutherford Hall meet every first Thursday of the month, at 7 p.m. at the Hall. Our next meeting is September 5 at 7 p.m. In order to join, you fill out a membership form and pay \$15 dues. These dues go to both the Friends, and our fiscal sponsor the Allamuchy Historical Society, a non-profit formed decades ago to help preserve Allamuchy's landmarks. Rutherford Hall is open every Wednesday afternoon from 1-4 p.m. for a suggested donation of \$5 per person. Visit us the next time you have friends or family in town! Also, we have group tours available for groups of 12 or more (\$10 each) and the Hall is available for rental, check the website to learn more.

Up Next: Visit the website to learn more!

September 18, 7-9 p.m. Live in the Living Room: Bourbon Claude, Medieval & Spanish Blues; Claude joins us from Europe, \$5

October 13, Harvestfest, Free

October 25 & 26 (on-going until midnight) Hall of Haunts; Rutherford Hall converts into a haunted house that uses history and architecture and spooks of all sorts. A completely new show! \$7 per person

November 10, 3-5 p.m. Tea & Talk Lecture Series, History of Medicine in NJ 1900-1930, Free

December 6-8, Making Merry Holiday Weekend at Rutherford Hall (including an Open House and Formal Tea, all with the mansion decorated by a remarkable team for the holidays)



*Students climb trees during the Hunger Games camp on the grounds of Rutherford Hall*

## CURRICULUM CORNER

In January, we realized that we needed to look into a new English Language Arts program to meet the needs of the students and the standards. We narrowed the search down to three programs and the staff helped decide by looking at sample materials, as well as attending after school meetings to discuss the pros and cons of all three. In the end, we, as a staff, decided on the McGraw-Hill Reading Wonders program. It is very student friendly and teacher friendly while meeting the needs of students in today's world with the Common Core in New Jersey.

Reading Wonders is completely aligned with the Common Core and has all the components we need and were looking for in a complete program. It contains the Readers/Writers Workshop method, a literature anthology, leveled readers, foundational skills-lessons to reach all learners, connection between reading and writing throughout the program, fantastic assessments, an amazing online component (similar to our My Math!), and flexibility. We look forward to using the program this upcoming year, and for years to come.

The Allamuchy Township District believes that one must constantly strive to enrich one's life experiences in order to truly grow. This driving principle is demonstrated in many ways, including the commitment to lifelong learning and service education. The summer of 2013 marked the end of a 3-year partnership between the James Madison Program in American Ideals and Institutions at Princeton University, the National Association of Scholars, and the Allamuchy Township School District that enabled over 40 educators from northwestern New Jersey to broaden their content knowledge and cultural awareness. These history teachers, including those from our own staff, participated in graduate level courses conducted by renowned experts on constitutional issues from our founding era to the modern day. Students in many districts will now have a deeper foundation in our American principles because of the support of Allamuchy.

New math books meet the updated middle school standards have been discussed and the teachers' recommendation has been made. The new series will address the unique needs of the accelerated program with combined grade level standards achieved at a faster pace.



*Students participate in the annual seventh grade school beautification project*

## MEET OUR NEW STAFF!

### **Michelle McElwee Grade 4**

Michelle McElwee graduated Salutatorian from Centenary College this past May. She obtained a BA in Liberal Arts Elementary Education/Special Education Certification. Michelle was honored in June as a NJ State Distinguished Student Teacher of the Year. Along with being a substitute teacher in Chester, she completed her student teaching at Allamuchy Township School under Mrs. Sabol and Ms. Chickey. She is excited and honored to be apart of the Allamuchy community!

### **Robin Samiljan Grade 2**

Robin Samiljan graduated Magna Cum Laude with a BS from Montclair University in 1997. After taking some personal time to raise her own children, she has spent the last few years pursuing her Teacher Certification in Elementary Education K-5 through Seton Hall University, graduating on the Dean's List in May 2013. She is also on track to complete her Masters of Special Education through Seton Hall University in May 2014.

### **Clare Saalfield Special Education**

Clare Saalfield graduated from Loyola of Maryland in 1986 with a BA in Elementary Education. She worked as a primary general education teacher for several years, before entering the Special Education program at William Patterson College. She has taught all subjects in the field of Special Education in many grade levels, with 15 total years of teaching experience, most of them in private schools for the handicapped with children of varying disabilities.

### **Christine Domanico Grade 5**

Christine Domanico graduated Salisbury State University with a BA in Elementary Education. She obtained her Masters in Education from Seton Hall University with a Supervisor's Certification. Christine taught ten years in Roxbury as a third grade teacher and most recently two years as a special education teaching assistant in Allamuchy Township.

### **Adriana Shonk Spanish K-8**

Adrianna Shonk graduated from Montclair State University with a BS in Spanish Language and Culture. She has worked in James Caldwell High School, Harrison High School and Seton Hall Preparatory School. Adrianna developed a Spanish immersion program for private and home-schooled students.

## PTO NEWS

To paraphrase an oft-quoted African proverb, it takes a whole community to support education opportunities -- and this year our township has certainly come up with some winning combinations working together for the sake of our schools and our children's educational experiences.

### PTO PRIDE

Co-Presidents Venita Prudenti and Kara Fragale kept the PTO strong last school year by collaborating with the ATEF to host a new major fundraiser as part of the Skylands Region Taste of the Town. The PTO sponsored a Silent Auction at the food and beverage tasting spectacular and realized exceptional profit. Their plan is to combine this profit with funds set aside to purchase a new *portable* stage to be used for concerts, drama performances, graduations, award ceremonies, etc. Even with this major purchase and funds spent last year in excess of \$10,000 (teacher grants, programs, assemblies, field trips, and enrichment), the PTO is pleased to announce that they can start off the new school year with agendas for students and a Welcome Back breakfast for the staff.

The PTO also worked with Rutherford Hall program director Amy Hufnagel and ATS teacher Deb DeAngelis to present to all the students Voices from the Land, an innovative art-in-nature program conducted by the Educational Information and Resource Center from Rowan University. Students created sculptures on the grounds of MVS and Rutherford Hall, took photographs of their art, and wrote poetry about their creations. Professional artists were also on site, and the "exhibits" were open to the public. The PTO was able to obtain funding from the NJ State Council on the Arts through a re-grant program with the Warren County Cultural and Heritage Commission.

Looking ahead, the PTO is encouraged by community cooperation and plans to continue its partnership with the ATEF on a major fundraiser, but the organization also needs more "people power." Increased participation in events, fundraisers, and meetings will bring renewed enthusiasm to such a vital component of school involvement. Back-to-School Nights take place the first week in October, and the PTO invites parents to stop at their table to see the many ways they can be active in the school life of their children. After all, the best reason for getting involved is the Allamuchy PTO's own reason-for-being: the children.

Check the school website and the PTO drop-down for meeting dates and fundraising announcements. Also, under "Collectibles and Special Programs" is the complete list of the easy, ongoing fundraisers with links to those specific sites. The TerraCycle list has been updated, too.

Meet the PTO Officers:

Co-Presidents -- Venita Prudenti and Kara Fragale  
 Co-VicePresidents -- Paige Schmiedeke and Paula Waeschle  
 Secretary -- Gina Reardon  
 Treasurer -- Tiffany Ulch  
 Advisor -- Lisa Strutin



*Select members of the Drama Club perform for the Allamuchy Township Senior Citizens at the spring event that our eighth grader students host.*

## Important Dates

Tuesday-Wednesday September 3-4

Thursday September 5

Monday September 23

Tuesday October 1

Wednesday October 2

Thursday October 3

Monday October 14

7:30 p.m.

7:00 p.m.

7:00 p.m.

7:00 p.m.

All Staff Report

First Day for Students

Board of Education Meeting

Grades K -1 Back to School Night

Grades 2-5 Back to School Night

Grades 6-8 Back to School Night

Columbus Day-No School for Students

Allamuchy Township School

Mountain Villa School

Allamuchy Township School

Allamuchy Township School



*If you would like to receive this newsletter in electronic format, please send an email to [scohen@aes.k12.nj.us](mailto:scohen@aes.k12.nj.us) with your request. Do you have a talent, skill or hobby that you would like to share? Please contact [scohen@aes.k12.nj.us](mailto:scohen@aes.k12.nj.us) to discuss.*

**Allamuchy Township School District**  
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Allamuchy, NJ 07820

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Permit No. 12

ALLAMUCHY TOWNSHIP  
SCHOOL DISTRICT  
20 JOHNSONBURG ROAD  
ALLAMUCHY, NJ 07820

Allamuchy Township School  
Grades 2-8  
Mountain Villa School  
Grades PK-1  
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DR. SETH COHEN  
Chief School Administrator  
JENNIFER CHICKEY  
Principal  
JANET MARTIN  
Director of Special Services  
JULIE MUMAW  
Business Administrator

## **ALLAMUCHY TOWNSHIP EDUCATION FOUNDATION (ATEF)**

### **ATEF Presents Autumn Events**

Energized by the success of the ATEF/PTO April Taste of the Town and Silent Auction that "changed up" the PTO's annual Tricky Tray fundraiser and expanded the popularity of the Foundation's food and beverage fundraiser, the ATEF and Skylands Region Taste of the



*Thank you for our new computers!*

Town present:

### **TASTES OF AUTUMN: Martinis and Margaritas**

Saturday, September 28, Rutherford Hall  
7:00 p.m. – 11 p.m. (Must be 21 and over)

Say adios to summer and welcome autumn to Allamuchy with many variations of these two favorite adult beverages. Other samplings will also be available for those who prefer other types of spirits. Passed hors d'oeuvres will be catered by a local dining establishment. Tickets are \$40 per person and include a commemorative martini glass. Find online ticket ordering

information at [www.atefoundation.com](http://www.atefoundation.com) (link to [www.foodandwinetasting.net](http://www.foodandwinetasting.net)). Proceeds from this event will be earmarked for education enrichment in science.

Then, on Monday, September 30, the ATEF will hold **Tastes of Autumn: 4th Annual Golf Classic** at Hawk Pointe Golf Club. Entry fees are \$175 per golfer for cart, lunch (11:00-noon), dinner (6:30), snacks, and non-alcoholic beverages. The scramble-format outing begins at 12:30. A cash bar cocktail hour begins at 5:30. Tickets for dinner are \$50. Register and pay online at [www.atefoundation.com](http://www.atefoundation.com). Payment by check for these events can be payable to ATEF, P.O. Box 398, Allamuchy, NJ 07820 (please indicate "Autumn" or "Golf" in the memo). Contact Golf Chair Mike Virgil for additional information (908) 850-4502. Proceeds from the outing will be used for school district needs, including Rutherford Hall.

The ATEF meets on the 2nd Tuesday of the month, 7:15 p.m. in Room 149 at ATS. Please consider being part of the current group of six Trustees. Besides planning the next Skylands Region Taste of the Town, the Foundation has plans to work on making an outdoor classroom possible on the Allamuchy Farms campus and hosting a major cultural event. Anyone with expertise and interest in any of these potential projects is encouraged to come to the October 8 meeting.

Visit the ATEF's new website at [www.atefoundation.com](http://www.atefoundation.com) for more information as the year goes on, and thank you to all who support ATEF events!