Dear Members of the Clark Schools Community,

The months of May and June have been extremely rewarding ones for our schools. Amidst the busyness of closing the school year, we have gotten to see a great number of our students receive awards and scholarships. These honors are obviously a result of their superior work in the classroom and on the field or stage. The generosity of this great community of ours is what makes all of this possible. This outpouring that we are most appreciative of was beyond evident at the Senior Awards Ceremony on the evening of June 4. I must say that this event is one of my personal favorites of the entire school year due to the warmth and joy that can be clearly felt throughout the room.

ALJ Valedictorian Erin Heaning and Salutatorian Ivy Lin are deserving of a special acknowledgment for their extraordinary academic achievements. Although these honors are noteworthy in and of themselves, they give our students a definitive advantage as they embark on their post-secondary careers. Some of our noteworthy ALJ alumni were honored at the sixth annual Hall of Fame induction ceremony in May. This honor is a most prestigious one that connects the rich history of ALJ with its future in the sense that the alumni association’s scholarship recipients who were also honored that evening will be beginning their collegiate studies in the fall.

The student bodies of our district’s schools displayed their facility in the field of fine and performing arts in a variety of ways this spring. For instance, our school plays and musicals were of the highest quality. In addition, the school concerts and district-wide Band Bonanza proved to be highly effective means of showcasing our students’ musical talents, while the various art shows were equally impressive. We also had the honor of hosting the TIA Chapter 10 Jazz Championships at the end of April. Our athletic teams showed an equal level of greatness. The ALJ boys’ varsity baseball team, for example, received the honor of being named Union County Conference Mountain Division Champions. Our student athletes helped facilitate our preschool’s Autism Awareness Day at the beginning of April, and getting to see these students interact with each other is always a highlight of the year.

Our staff members were equally impressive. A number of our middle school teachers presented at the annual New Jersey Association for Middle Level Education (NJAMLE) Conference in March at Kean University. At the high school level, several individuals attended the State Schools of Character Awards Ceremony at Rider University as a result of ALJ having earned this prestigious title. Moreover, our Teachers of the Year, i.e., Jessica Case (ALJ), Richard Hoos (CHK), Nina Conner (FKH), and Bryan Lowe (VRS), were recognized at Kean University through a breakfast ceremony. They, along with our Educational Services Professionals of the Year, i.e., Gordon Glose (ALJ), Lauren Camera (CHK), Lisa Giandana (FKH), Nicole Arpino (VRS), and Lauren Baldeon (CPA), deserve an extra special thanks for all of their good, hard work with our students. I am thrilled to report that we are a recipient of the New Jersey Tiered System of Supports – Early Reading (NJTSS-ER) grant opportunity for cohort 3 through the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE), Division of Student Services and the Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology, Rutgers University. This grant will enable Kristen Waters, our literacy coach, to receive intensive support on improving reading achievement in kindergarten through grade three. A very special thanks goes to Kristen for all of her good, hard work with preparing this application.

With the school year closing and summer break on the horizon, I would like to send my sincere thanks to all of you for your support of our district’s schools and programs. Speaking of summer, this most enjoyable season was informally introduced through the Memorial Day programs at FKH and VRS. At the VRS assembly, the announcement that the roadway in the back of the school would be named “Kastner Way” in memory of Mr. Robert Kastner, veteran and ALJ hall of fame member who passed last year, was made. We have an immense gratitude towards all of our veterans; due to them, we are able to enjoy our freedom as Americans. In these summer weeks that lie ahead, please make certain to take the time needed to recharge with family and friends. I hope to get to see many of you around and about and am looking forward to us all reconnecting in the fall.

Yours sincerely,
Edward Grande
AL Johnson High School Signing Day

On Friday, May 03, 2019, various staff members and administration at Arthur L. Johnson High School participated in a signing day ceremony to honor Cecilia Puentes (Soccer) and Natalya Torres (Track and Field) for their years of service to Crusader Athletics and commemorate their signing of Nation Letters of Intent to play NCAA Collegiate Athletics. Arthur L. Johnson's senior student athlete Cecilia Puentes signed her letter of intent to continue her athletic and academic career, playing soccer at Pace University for the Setters. Natalya Torres signed her letter of intent and will continue competing in track and field at Monmouth University for the Division 1 Hawks. Pictured are Puentes and Torres with their coaches and Superintendent Grande.

Johnson Student-Athletes Honored at NJSIAA and Union County Dinners

On Sunday, May 19, 2019, one student athlete from Arthur L. Johnson High School was designated as the recipient of the New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association’s Scholar Athlete Award. The NJSIAA is an organization run by the state of New Jersey, who has a great tradition of honoring student athletes at a statewide function called the Scholar Athlete Luncheon. These awards, which are presented to one student athlete from each school in the state, celebrate not only the athletic successes of our high school athletes on the fields, courts, and mats, but honors the countless hours that they spend in the classroom as well. Arthur L. Johnson Senior Student Athlete Victoria Zatko was honored as the recipient from Arthur L. Johnson High School in Clark. Victoria had a stellar career at Arthur L. Johnson High School participating in softball all four years of her high school career. As a senior, Victoria accomplished many milestones, including attaining her 100th career hit for the Crusaders, as well as being a stellar student throughout her time at Arthur L. Johnson High School. She will continue playing softball next spring at LaSalle University.

On Wednesday, May 22, 2019, two student athletes from Arthur L. Johnson High School were designated as the recipients of the Union County Interscholastic Athletic Conference’s Scholar Athlete Award. The UCIAC is an organization run by Executive Director Tom Lewis, who has continued the great tradition of the Scholar Athlete Dinner from the late Frank J. Cicarell. Frank J. Cicarell was a teacher, coach, administrator, BOE member, and President of the Union County Athletic Conference. Arthur L. Johnson Senior Student Athletes Brandon Hund and Bailey Rosenmeier were honored as the recipients from Arthur L. Johnson High School in Clark. Brandon Hund had a stellar career at Arthur L. Johnson High School participating in basketball and lacrosse. As a senior, Brandon was named captain of both teams he played for as well as breaking both the 1,000 point and 100 goal barriers in each respective sport. He will continue his education at Towson University. Bailey Rosenmeier participated in basketball and softball throughout her career at Arthur L. Johnson High School. She helped both Lady Crusaders’ programs compete for County and Sectional State Titles throughout her years of participation with the programs.
Arthur L. Johnson’s ASL Class Visits Gallaudet University

46 Arthur L. Johnson American Sign Language students recently had the opportunity to visit Gallaudet University in Washington DC, the only university for the Deaf. They toured the campus and ate in the dining hall all without using their voices, signing only. The students learned about Deaf culture and Deaf history while practicing their ASL skills.

Crusader Softball Team Assist New Jersey Hawks

Members of the Arthur L. Johnson High School Crusader Softball Team assisted with practice and preparation for the New Jersey Hawks Special Olympics Softball Team. The Crusaders assisted the Hawks as they prepared for their Championship Tournament, to be held at the College of New Jersey on June 08th-10th. According to head coach Christopher DiNucci, “The softball program was thrilled to be able to assist with the daily routines and practice with the New Jersey Hawks. It was fun watching the High School Student Athletes as they interacted with the team, and I think both groups not only enjoyed the experience, but learned a lot while doing it.”
FKH Earth Day Celebration

To celebrate Earth Day, Frank K Hehnly Elementary School students, parents, teachers, administrators, and Superintendent Mr. Grande met in the wee hours of Tuesday, April 23rd to prepare for their yearly march to save the planet. By walking or riding bikes to school on this first day back from Spring Break, the group cut down on the greenhouse gases typically emitted during the morning’s school rush. Even this small effort, if replicated elsewhere and repeated, would have a profound impact on our community’s air quality. Ms. Nina Conner, Hehnly teacher, stated, “A special thanks goes to the Clark Police Department for keeping everyone safe on the roads and FKH teacher, Mrs. Anne Marie Estevez for organizing the event.”

Hehnly Fifth Graders tour The Sterling Hill Mine

Hehnly School fifth graders visited The Sterling Hill Mine in Ogdensburg, NJ. Students participated in an underground mine tour where they watched a drilling and blasting demonstration and viewed over 700 fluorescent minerals. Students visited an onsite museum and saw exhibits of minerals from China, Russia, and Africa, mining equipment and machinery, and an interactive representation of the Periodic Table of Elements. From an above ground quarry, each student found six specific minerals to keep in their own souvenir mineral collection box.

Lax Milestones

Two Arthur L. Johnson Lacrosse players achieved one hundred goal milestones this season. Junior Evan Parenti scored his 100th career goal on April 17 against Columbia High School and senior Brandon Hund recorded his hundredth goal on May 11 against Jonathan Dayton. Hund will continue his career next year at lacrosse powerhouse Towson University and Parenti will return for his final season as a Crusader next spring.

Pictured are Hund with the ALJ Lacrosse coaching staff and Parenti with his parents.
Arthur L. Johnson Students Participate in Hidden Child Workshop

Arthur L. Johnson High School students, teachers, and administrators had an opportunity to participate in the “Hidden Child” workshop hosted by Frank Stebbins, ALJ Holocaust and Genocide Studies Teacher. The workshop was created to use an individual’s life story to discuss the impact being isolated or hidden may have on an individual. The workshop included administrators, staff, and students and allowed them to discuss the school’s climate and culture through a variety of activities. Special guests included: Adara Goldberg, Director, Holocaust Resource Center at Kean University, Marissa Hedges, Program Associate for Facing History and Ourselves, Albert Hepner, Hidden Child, author, and Kean Professor, and Dr. Susan Onaitis, Accompanied Albert, Counseling Specialist Mercer County Community College.

The day began with a look at student identities both in and outside of school. Attendees participated in a silent graffiti activity about an individual’s actual identity versus the perceived identity society places upon them. Hepner spoke about his experience as a hidden child of the Holocaust bringing history to life for those that attended. The third session focused on the perceived and actual identity of ALJ. The day culminated in a discussion about incorporating inclusivity and empathy into the everyday aspect of school activities.

Idioms are so much a part of our everyday language that students who are native English speakers may not even notice that phrases like break a leg do not make literal sense. An idiom is an expression whose meaning is different from the literal meaning, such as It’s raining cats and dogs. The idioms came to life in these incredible costumes created by 2nd graders at Valley Road School.
Frank Stebbins, Arthur L. Johnson High School Teacher, recently received the Dr. Hank Kaplowitz Outstanding Human Rights Educator Award presented by The Human Rights Institute at Kean University. The award was given as part of the 12th Annual International Conference on Human Rights entitled, Hunger: The Politics of Food on Friday, March 22.

Stebbins received the award as a result of his work as an outstanding human rights activist and his work with Holocaust education in the state. The award is named after Kean University educator and career human rights activist Dr. Hank Kaplowitz who was influential in expanding the scope of Holocaust education on campus and beyond.

“To be the recipient of an award named after an educator who has had such a tremendous impact on the local and global communities is a terrific honor,” commented Stebbins.

Stebbins has been an educator in the Clark Public School District for the past 17 years. In addition to teaching Holocaust and Genocide Studies, he serves as a special education teacher and leads the Tomorrow’s Teachers’ Program.

“Frank is an outstanding educator who is so very deserving of this award. He is constantly looking for new programs focused around human rights to enrich the educational experience of our students and ultimately facilitate the process of them becoming more informed citizens,” stated Superintendent of Schools Edward Grande.
For their service project, a group of National Junior Honor Society students at Carl H. Kumpf Middle School recently ran a book drive. Makenzie Grewe, Matthew Lordi, and Robert Rooney researched ways that they could donate the gift of education and found themselves at Bridge for Books out of Rumson, New Jersey. Bridge for Books is an organization that seeks to support the development of literacy skills for underserved children. Since Bridge for Books was founded back in 2000, the organization has been able to distribute nearly half a million books to youth groups and schools across the state of New Jersey.

Makenzie, Matthew, and Robert collected, sorted and donated a remarkable total of 680 books that will contribute to the future success of many children. NJHS Advisor Suzanne Hamilton stated, “As an English teacher and lover of literature, this group service project made me happy from the very start. As their book collection got underway, I noticed more and more bags and boxes being donated to the front entrance of the school. I never imagined that they’d be able to collect so many! I’m proud of their efforts and pleased to see that they, as students, place such a high value on education.”

### Hehnly’s K-Kids Present Quilts of Valor

Frank K. Hehnly Elementary School’s K-Kids, a community service group, and the Quilts of Valor Foundation recently presented quilts to three veterans at a meeting to show the students’ appreciation for the service of military men and women. Last year, members of K-Kids (grades 3-5) created the squares with personal messages of gratitude for the quilt. The Quilts of Valor Foundation then assembled these squares into quilts. Hehnly K-Kids paid for the quilt from their funds.

In addition to having the opportunity to view the quilts, students listened to the three veterans share their experiences being in the military. Mary Arrowood, Hehnly teacher, discussed her pride for our country and also thanked her former teacher in the crowd. She also recognized Michael Brattole, her former student who was also receiving a quilt. Brattole discussed with the students the importance of doing well in school and always trying their best. Clark Police Chief Pedro Matos was also honored with a quilt. He encouraged the students to appreciate the opportunities afforded them and do their very best at every task they meet. Students then had a chance to ask the veterans questions and personally thank them for their service.

K-Kids Advisor and School Nurse Donna Kircher stated, “In addition to learning the art of quilt making, students were able to thank our ‘Veteran Guests’ in person. We are extremely grateful to the Quilts of Valor organization for making and presenting our quilts.”

According to the Quilts of Valor Foundation, the group’s mission is “To cover service members and veterans touched by war with comforting and healing Quilts of Valor. Quilts of Valor are tokens of appreciation that unequivocally say, ‘Thank you for your service, sacrifice, and valor.’”
The Frank K. Hehnly Recycling Crusaders participated in a spring upcycle project. Students worked very hard every Tuesday and Thursday morning to create plastic bottle planters for lettuce, eggplant, cucumbers, and butterfly flowers. Each FKH classroom received 3-4 planters to nurture as they sprout. The Crusaders also plan to help the kindergarten classes clean up their garden. Mrs. Estevez and Mrs. Conner, the club’s advisors, were excited to see the students’ enthusiasm translate into action.

The picture shows the grade 5 Recycling Crusaders at work!

Clark Board of Education’s Showcase of Success

The Clark Board of Education celebrated the achievements of students and teachers at its Showcase of Success on Monday, April 8th.

This year’s Governor’s Educators of the Year were recognized for educational excellence and their commitment to student learning. The Governor’s Educators of the Year Program recognizes “educational innovation, student achievement, the rewards of teaching, and important services outside the classroom environment that lead to student success.”

Several students were also recognized for earning perfect PARCC (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers) scores on the 2018 Spring Assessment. Three students, Maria Acosta-Lopez, Breanna Patino and Caroline Dymek, also received the State Seal of Biliteracy which recognizes students who demonstrate they can speak, read, listen, and write two or more languages at high levels of proficiency.

Superintendent Edward Grande commented, “This evening is always a wonderful way to recognize some of our outstanding students and staff members for their superior work. This is an event that I look forward to each year.”

Governor’s Educators of the Year Bryan Lowe – VRS, Lisa Giandana - FKH, Jessica Case - ALJ, Gordon Glose - ALJ, Rick Hoos - CHK, Nina Conner - FKH, Lauren Baldeon - CPA, Nicole Arpino - VRS, Lauren Camera - CHK
Spring Athletic Awards

On Monday, May 13, 2019, the Arthur L. Johnson Athletic Department held their 2019 Spring Athletic Awards. The evening, sponsored by the Crusader Athletic Booster Club, was held in the Arthur L. Johnson High School auditorium.

The 2019 Spring Student Athlete award recipient was Joshua Hill, 4.2411 G.P.A.

The 2019 Spring Seasonal G.P.A. Challenge recipients were the Girls’ Spring Track & Field Team and the Boys’ Tennis Team. Members of the Girls’ Spring Track & Field Team: Sarah Sceptowski, Gianna Caldiero, Gia Colicchio, Carly Tarentino, Julia Kalynchuk, Shailynn Rapp, America Renteria, Gina Rizzuto, Taylor Turek, Jenna Wiese, Paige Kelly, Kayla Kowalenko, and Natalya Torres; Boys’ Tennis Team: Matthew Cassidy, Seth Guzman, John Juzefyk, Jacob Mallik, Anthony Neyra, Kyle Perednia, Christopher Warnick, Brandon Costa, Raymond Torres, Kyle Briscese, Robert Lukasiewicz, Andy Zheng, Anthony Bogash, Cody Downing, Toan Le, and Ethan Nobre.

The evening continued with the announcement of the Best Teammate Award winners. The BTAs were: Baseball – Patrick Grady, Golf – Daniel Burns, Lacrosse – Christian Ferrao, Softball – Bailey Rosenmeier, Tennis – Andy Zheng, Boys’ Spring Track & Field – Matthew Kowalenko, Girls’ Spring Track & Field – Gina Rizzuto.

The evening culminated with the announcement of the Team Most Valuable Players. The MVPs were: Baseball – Stephen Harrington, Golf – Joseph Bencivenga, Lacrosse – Brandon Hurd, Softball – Victoria Zatko, Tennis – Robert Lukasiewicz, Boys’ Spring Track & Field – Jack Delaney, Girls’ Spring Track & Field – Carly Tarentino.

Valley Road Field Day

The Valley Road School held its annual Field Day on May 31st. The PTA sets up a day with various stations of fun activities, some outside and some inside. The students meet for an opening Pledge to the Flag and then the action begins. The students have a blast. There are many parents assisting. There were all types of games and activities The day is held until the lunches are over. Then the PTA presents an assembly that was to see a clown acrobat who once performed for the Ringling Brothers circus.
Valley Road School Memorial Day Service

At the Valley Road School’s Memorial Day service, veterans were welcomed with the song *The Hero* and loud applause. The student council executive board read two poems, and two other students read original poems in honor of this most important holiday. One student recognized his grandfather, Mr. Dubrowski, for winning his second Jefferson Award for making railroads safer. Superintendent Grande then presented an acknowledgment in memorial of Mr. Kastner, a former Coast Guard member. Mr. Cordasco presented poppies to all the students and teachers on behalf of the local American Legion. Each veteran was then acknowledged. Several veterans addressed the students. The service culminated with the veterans marching the halls parade style to the patriotic songs of our country, allowing the children of Clark the opportunity to pay honor to those who have served.

Carl H. Kumpf Middle School Student’s Painting Chosen for the Union County Teen Arts Touring Exhibit

Eighth grader, Jenna Grandal, along with twenty other students from Carl H. Kumpf Middle School, recently had their artwork displayed at the 2019 Union County Teen Arts Festival. Grandal’s painting was noted as “outstanding” and was selected to be part of the 2019 Union County Teen Arts Touring Exhibit. The select works will tour at libraries, galleries, corporations, and public buildings throughout Union County from May to February 2020.
What’s New at the Clark Preschool

The Clark Preschool opened the third quarter celebrating Autism Awareness Month. Autism affects 1 in 68 children nationally with New Jersey having the highest rate, 1 in 41 children. Autism Awareness Day highlights the growing need to educate about autism and issues within the Autism community. On April 2nd, Miss Gergich class and Mrs. Koepfler’s class from Valley Road School, as well as, Miss Martucci’s and Mrs. Berkowitz’s class from Franklin K. Hehnly School and both the VRS and FKH Mentor Link students joined the preschool in numerous events throughout the morning to raise awareness for autism.

On April 26th, the district “Lit it up BLUE” by wearing blue to raise funds for Autism NJ, a nonprofit agency.

Later in the spring, the children learned about the role of the librarian, Deidre Morley on a bus field trip to the Clark Public Library. The children were engrossed in Ms. Morley’s animated storytelling and borrowed two books each with their first library card. The preschoolers also welcomed Jammin’ Jenn for her series of half-hour music therapy sessions with each classroom. The medium of music as therapy helps develop non-musical skills by promoting specific cognitive, motor, perceptual, communicative, and behavioral goals. The students were enlivened with the magic of music, a key that opens a door to a special needs child!

Throughout the school year, the children hosted classroom visits from a “therapy” dog to support the student’s learning goals. This volunteer program gave students the opportunity to interact with a trained and registered therapy dog while at school. Research has shown that therapy dogs support psychological and academic growth, while increasing social skills and self-esteem in children. Mrs. Lipari, a handler, and her dog worked with small groups of students for one to three hours per month.

In May, the special people in our lives are honored. The preschoolers invite one “special person” for tea. Celebrating and honoring our families serves as an important learning experience and opportunity to acknowledge and appreciate the many caring adults who are in our lives. Mothers, fathers, grandparents, aunts and uncles joined their preschooler for refreshments. It was a time for the children, to let a special person in their life know that they are loved and always appreciated!

The Valley Road Parent Teacher Association held a plant sale prior to Mother’s Day. Students had the opportunity to choose from many beautiful flowers and all proceeds directly benefit the students of Valley Road School.
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