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John K. Noetzel
 Editor/Communications/Web
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Preparing World Class Citizens

June/July, 2016

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Business First ranks South Colonie No. 11 among 83 area school districts

The South Colonie Central School District once again has been ranked high in academic performance, administrative efficiency, and cost effectiveness by the Buffalo First Business Review publication.

South Colonie finished 11th out of 83 schools in the Capital Region, according to Upstate School rankings through the Buffalo Business Review. The district was also ranked 39th out of 431 Upstate Districts for Administrative Efficiency or in the top 10 percent, and 84th out of 431 Upstate Districts for Cost Effectiveness or within the top 20 percent.

The annual rankings reflect the collective performance of each district's public schools from K-12 over a period of four years. In total, 83 districts from throughout Albany, Columbia, Fulton, Greene, Montgomery, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Schenectady, Schoharie, Warren and Washington counties were included in the rankings.

"We are proud of our overall academic performance, and we thank our dedicated staff members, community members, and parents for supporting our schools" said South Colonie Superintendent Jonathan Buhner.

Good Luck Colonie High Class of 2016!



Colonie Central High School held its 62nd annual June commencement ceremonies for the Class of 2016 at the Empire State Plaza. For a photo gallery of this event visit the district website.

Three new alumni inducted into CCHS Hall of Fame

Colonie Central High School is proud to announce the induction of three new alumni into the Hall of Fame this June with the Class of 2016. This year's inductees are Claudia Marks (Adams Kanne) (1966), James (Tim) Ryan (1966) and Meaghan Nichols Sammons (1993).

The purpose of the Hall of Fame is to identify role models for CCHS students and to illustrate to them that South Colonie Schools provide the educational foundation necessary to build a successful life. Since 1994, more than 60 graduates have been honored in the Hall of Fame, representing a variety of classes and accomplishments.

Please turn to page 2-3 for more on this year's inductees. Complete bios are available on the CCHS website/Hall of Fame ...

Colonie Mayor Leak honored as 'Friend to Education'

Village of Colonie Mayor Frank Leak was honored this spring with the 2016 Friends of Education Award at the CASDA Capital Region awards dinner. The award recognizes ongoing efforts by the Village of Colonie Board, and Mayor Leak to provide safe learning and recreational settings for South Colonie students.

"Numerous students would not have graduated from high school without these focused learning environments," said South Colonie Superintendent Jonathan Buhner. "These opportunities were made possible because of leadership, understanding, commitment, and kindness."

Fisher earns NYSASBO award

South Colonie administrator Sherri Fisher was presented this spring with the 2016 George A. Perry Volunteer Service Award at the New York State School Association of School Business Officials Conference. This award recognizes a member of NYSASBO each year who has demonstrated outstanding volunteer service and commitment to the organization. Fisher is South Colonie's Assistant Superintendent for Management Services and Strategic Planning, and Continuing Education Supervisor.

Bus driver honored for safety

Congratulations to South Colonie bus driver Dominick Ragone, who was honored by the Hudson Valley chapter of the American Automobile Association this spring with a 2016 Safe School Bus Driver Award for his superior dedication to the district during his 8-year career. Ragone was nominated for the AAA award by the South Colonie Transportation Department for his exceptional work ethic, reliability, accident and safety record, job performance, and interaction skills with students and staff.

District appoints new School Lunch Director

South Colonie Schools welcomes Annette Chamberlain as the district's new School Lunch Director. She replaces Renee Hanks, who retired June 30 after overseeing South Colonie's breakfast, lunch and school nutrition programs the last 15 years.

Chamberlain worked the last four years at the Hadley Luzerne Central School District as Food Service Manager (2008-09 and 2013 to present). She was also Shared School Food Manager from 2009-13 for the WSWHE BOCES.

Prior to that, she worked in the private sector as a Dietetic Technician with Sodexo Food Corp, and Evergreen Commons. She also worked as Food Service Director and Dietetic Technician for the Stanton Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in Glens Falls.

She earned an Associates of Applied Science degree in Food Service Administration, Diet Technology and Nutritional Care from the SUNY College of Agriculture and Technology in Morrisville, and is a member of the New York School Nutrition Association.



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infocus '16 CCHS Hall of Fame inductees

Claudia Marks (Adams-Kanne) – Class of 1966

Claudia Marks is part of an Emmy-winning television writing team, movie actress, and award-winning playwright and documentary writer/producer, who has used her tragic life experiences to work as an advocate for change.



After graduating from CCHS in 1966, she attended Hudson Valley Community College and the State University at Plattsburgh. She moved to California, and got a position as a flight attendant on Military Air Command missions that brought U.S. soldiers to Vietnam. During one flight she helped save 252 military families from a burning aircraft, and earned an award from the airline.

Marks' dream was to be in the movies ever since she had landed the leading role in the CCHS school play, *Gramercy Ghost*. So she went to Hollywood, but soon discovered there were few roles for women at the time so she tried to change that by writing for television entertainment.

Her first scripts were for the long-running TV dramas *Knots Landing* and *Cagney & Lacey*, where she collaborated with other writers on the "Who Said It's Fair" episode that won an Emmy Award and an NAACP Image Award for Excellence in Television. She was invited to

become a member of the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, and is a member of the Writers Guild of America.

As a playwright, her production, "POW-Police Officers' Wives/Prisoners of War" about her life married to a police officer exposed spousal abuse on the police force and was nominated for two NAACP Excellence in Theatre Awards and won one. She also wrote the play, "My Client's a Lunatic" based on the transcripts of her trial when she was beaten and sexually assaulted by a security guard. That play won several awards.

Marks later turned to documentary writing. Her first in 2010, which she produced, co-directed and wrote, "A Far Off Cry," was filmed in Pakistan and was accepted into 17 film festivals. It won awards at six, including the Columbia Gorge International Film Festival and the Walt Ratterman Humanitarian Award.

Her dream to become an actress came true when she landed a principal role as Madam of the Tortuga Cantina in *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest* with Johnny Depp and later, scoring a role in *The Lone Ranger*.

James (Tim) Ryan – Class of 1966

As a longtime member/officer of the South Colonie Board of Education and as an activist in local youth organizations, James (Tim) Ryan has spent countless hours dedicated to the children of Colonie.

First elected to the Board of Education in 1994, Ryan continues in that role today after more than two decades in the governance of South Colonie's approximately 5,000 public school children. He served as school board President for 12 years (1998-2001), (2005-2009), and (2013-2015), has been chair and/or member of numerous school board committees.



These committees include Academic Achievement, Accountability and Board Operations, Audit and Finance, Communications, Facilities, Graduation/Hall of Fame, Information Technology, Policy, Strategic Planning, and Transportation.

He has also served as school board liaison for Town of Colonie Planning and Labor Management. He has made numerous presentations at the New York State School Boards Association (NYSSBA) and National School Board Association (NSBA) conventions.

Ryan has also been involved in a variety of activities as a member of the greater Colonie community. This includes serving as an usher, lector and Eucharist Minister (1990-present) at Christ Our Light (St. Francis de Sales) Church, Little League and Babe Ruth coach (1989-1993), coach, manager, and Financial Director of the West Albany Athletic Association (1980s-1990s), Scoutmaster (1988-1990) for Cub Scout Pack 90, Colonie Central High School Basketball Booster Club President (1993-1996), member and Booster Club President of Albany-Colonie Diamond Dogs (2002), and the Albany-Colonie Yankees (1994), and Booster Club member of the Albany River Rats (1994-2000).

Ryan is a 1970 graduate of Siena College with bachelor's degree in Business Administration. He worked in New York State government for 35 years, starting

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with the Commission for the Blind and Visual Handicapped, teaching visually impaired individuals business and independent life skills. He went on to manage and administer several statewide programs to help low income families and the aged, including Food Stamp Outreach, HEAP (Home Energy Assistance Program), and EITC (Earned Income Tax Credit Program). He retired from state government in 2005.

Meaghan Nichols Sammons – Class of 1993

The late Meaghan Nichols Sammons leaves a long legacy as a community humanitarian and as a strong role model for young women. A three-sport student athlete and team leader while at CCHS, Sammons earned an associate's degree in Human Services from Schenectady County Community College and attended the State University at Albany.

She started her career as an intern in 1996 at Girls Inc. of the Greater Capital Region, a free after school/summer camp program that inspires at-risk girls in grade K-12 to be strong, smart and bold. She rose through the ranks during her 18-year career at Girls Inc., being named Director of Programs in Albany and Schenectady from 2008-2015.

Through her work at Girls Inc. she influenced many young ladies' lives and provided them with a positive role model and constant support. In 2007 she was awarded the YWCA Women of Achievement and Reach Award for impacting young women's lives.

In 2004, Sammons joined the Midway Fire Department. She quickly rose to Lieutenant, then Captain, and then Assistant Chief. Ten years after joining the department she became the first female Fire Chief in the Town of Colonie. Sammons was known there as a teacher and mentor for new members, and she was always one of the top responders each year. During her tenure at Midway, she received many honors. This included being named Midway Firefighter of the Year in 2007, and earning the Law & Order Community Service Award from the Joseph E. Zaloga Post 1520 American Legion in 2011.

In the summer of 2014 she was diagnosed with cancer, but still carried out her duties as Fire Chief during her treatment. She would not let the illness define her, and at the end of 2014 she was still one of the fire department's top responders.

Sammons passed away in 2015. A year later she was posthumously awarded the Everyday Hero for the 2016 Community Impact Awards given by The Stakeholders, Inc. – an organization whose mission is to inspire and equip people to take action in their communities. She will always be remembered as a humanitarian who dedicated her life to assisting others.



Sullivan named new Veeder School Principal

South Colonie Schools has named Nora Sullivan as new Veeder Elementary School principal effective July 1 with the retirement of Kathleen K.C. Gottschalk.



"We are thrilled to have her join our elementary school community at Veeder, and we look forward to working with her in her new role," said Superintendent Jonathan Buhner. "We wish K.C. Gottschalk well in her future endeavors."

Sullivan has been a part of the South Colonie Central School District since 1986. During the that time she has served as a high school and middle school Spanish teacher, and as a third grade teacher. In her administrative career, Sullivan has experience as a district-wide Supervisor of Foreign Language, Art, Music and ENL. Additionally, she served as an Associate Principal at Colonie Central High School and graduated the Class of 2016 in June.

Sullivan earned a bachelor's degree from SUNY Oswego in Elementary Education with a minor in Spanish. She also holds two master's degrees from the University at Albany, one in Literacy and a second in Educational Administration and Policy Studies. Sullivan has three children. Her son Jack is a student at SUNY Cortland, and her two daughters Caroline and Emme are students at Guilderland Central High School.

"I am excited for the opportunity to once again work with elementary students," Sullivan said. "I look forward to being a part of the Veeder school community by working with a dedicated staff and getting to know all of the students, parents and families."