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Spotlight on New Milford Schools

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The NMHS All-School Musical Through the Years

This year's All-School Musical, *Rodgers and Hammerstein's Cinderella*, will take place March 18 – 20 and April 1 and 2. We talked to long time director Mr. Robert Keck about the evolution of the musical through the years.



Origins

In 1981, the senior class of New Milford High School was presenting *Bye, Bye Birdie* as its Senior Play. The director, a teacher of Latin and English at NMHS, fell seriously ill and the students took over the show. Seniors Bart Geissinger directed and Sue Terry handled the music direction. Mr. Al Bayers, the band director at the time, directed the pit orchestra and Mr. Robert Keck, in his first year as the NMHS choral director, played bass in the pit.



The Sound of Music—1992

The show was such a hit that discussions were held with an eye to creating an annual event. It was decided to open it up to the whole school instead of just the seniors, and the All-School Musical was created in 1982. Mr. Keck stepped into the directing role that year, and has been there ever since. The show has grown over the years. Mr. Keck says "We started with three performances on a single week in 1982 and have expanded to the current six performances over two weekends."

Scenery, Lighting, and Sound

For the first couple of years, the scenery and lighting were pretty low key. Mr. Keck had some background in stage lighting, but the equipment for lighting in the old NMHS (currently SNIS) was pretty basic and rather old. He had some experience in carpentry, but very little in set design and construction. In 1987 the musical began using sets that were professionally designed. The blueprints came from a company in Pennsylvania called Sceno-graphics. Sets were built and



Grease—2000

painted according to their designs and specifications. Lighting improved a little as a newer light board was installed.



Guys and Dolls —2007

Mr. Keck says “Our productions took a gigantic leap forward when we moved into the new NMHS in 2001. We now had a fly system, an actual pit for the orchestra, a catwalk with excellent lighting positions, and an up-to-date computerized lighting control system. Over the years we have added many lighting instruments (following the current trend towards intelligent lighting and LED lighting). We began designing our own scenery in 2005 in order to make better use of our theater and its systems.” Currently

the show’s scenery is designed mostly by producer (and NMHS Math teacher) Mr. Steve Donahue, in consultation with Mr. Keck. Students frequently design and paint the backdrops and help build all of the scenery under Mr. Donahue’s direction. Mr. Keck designs the lighting, hangs the instruments and programs the board for students to operate.

Hearing the singers has always been a priority and a difficulty. Per Mr. Keck, “In the early shows we used to put microphones across the front of the stage and tell the singer to sing as loud as they could to be heard over the orchestra. Broadway began using wireless ‘head’ mics in the 1970’s but they were very expensive. We began to get into the technology in the late 1990’s by buying a few inexpensive units. After we moved into the new building we began investing in professional level equipment. We currently have 25 wireless microphones that we can put on our performers.” Students handle the placement of the equipment and run the sound board under Mr. Keck and Mr. Donahue’s guidance.

Money and legal

Mr. Keck selects the show by the beginning of the school year. He then has to secure the rights from whoever is holding them (usually one of three companies in New York: Music Theatre International, Rodgers and Hammerstein Theatricals, or Tams-Witmark). He contacts the company; they send a contract with the fees spelled out for the royalties and rental of materials. Depending on the show, this usually costs between \$8,000 - \$10,000! Mr. Keck says “The contract also will inform us as to what we must include in the program in terms of crediting the creators of the show. It will forbid making any changes in the show, and may have restrictions on our advertising. It usually forbids making any kind of recording of the show.”



Beauty and the Beast —
2009

Costs for building the scenery and securing costumes vary according to the show. Mr. Keck says they reuse a lot of material. “*Beauty and the Beast* was probably our most expensive show ever to produce. We had to build a castle which needed a lot of lumber. The main costumes were rented from a shop in Buffalo, NY and cost us \$11,000. The entire show cost around \$30,000 but we were mostly sold out and turned a profit in the end.” The profits from the shows are used to equip and maintain the theater.

Parent volunteers

Mr. Keck says “We have always had parents help with the show. In the beginning, the students had to find their own costumes. Moms helped find costumes for their kids and did make-up, and dads came in to help Mr. Keck build scenery. In 1998, Mrs. Laurie Thornton volunteered to costume the entire production which she continued to do until her daughter Kim graduated. Her place was taken by Mrs. Cindy Tyler who costumed even after her three kids graduated and also greatly expanded the number of volunteers who helped with the show. Our costume ladies currently rent, borrow and make costumes for casts of up to 65 students. Today the parents help in so many ways: costuming, make-up, photography, publicity, box office, scenery and props. They even coordinate an annual covered dish supper on dress rehearsal night.”



The Drowsy Chaperone — 2011

Staff positions

As you can see from the list below, the musical has had stability and commitment in its production teams. Mr. Keck has run the show for the entire 35 years it has been in action. Mrs. McGuire has been choreographing since 1994 (not counting the years she worked on the show as an NMHS student!). Mr. Donahue began helping with scenery in 2001 and took over as producer in 2004.

Director

Mr. Robert Keck: 1982-present

Producers

Mr. George Ferris: 1982-1992

Mrs. Terre Levin: 1993-1996

Mrs. Pat Howland: 1997, 1998

Ms. Beth Jenkins: 1999 - 2003

Mr. Steve Donahue: 2004-present

Assistant Producer

Mrs. Katie Gardner: 2006-present

Choreographers

Mrs. Cynthia Cover: 1982-1984

NMHS student Chris Devito: 1984

Mrs. Diane Toman: 1985-1986

Choreographers (continued)

Miss Peggy Tanner, NMHS student Wendy Bellion: 1987

NMHS students Meg Conn, Debbie Piper, Kerry Gallagher and Cindy Danish; Mr. Keck: 1988

NMHS students Kerry Gallagher and Pam Czajka: 1989

NMHS students Liz Bonnaiuto, Debbie Pearson and Kari Wentworth: 1990

Mrs. Judy Remson, Mrs. Toman, Mr. Keck, NMHS student Debbie Parsons: 1991

Mrs. Eileen Winkley: 1992, 1993

Mrs. Debbie McGuire: 1994-present

Conductors

Mr. Al Bayers: 1982-2000, 2002

Mrs. Cindy Iffland: 2001

Mr. Jon Grauer: 2003 -2010

Mr. Dave Syzdek: 2011-present

Student participation

Every year there are about 100 or more students involved in the musical in some way. The cast of actors, singers and dancers is usually about 60 students (chosen by audition from the 60-90 who usually try out). The pit orchestra is all student musicians and usually numbers from 15-20 depending on the show. In the early days, Mr. Keck played piano in the pit and some adults were frequently hired to help play, but lately it has been all students. Over 100 students come in to help build and paint the scenery, and about 12-20 students are chosen to be the running crew. Students also help in the box office and usher during the performances.



Cats –2014

Star Power

Most students enjoy the experience and go on to other careers, but there have even been some who went on to professional theater careers. Mr. Keck says that “Chris Devito who was in our shows from 1982-1984 went on to a Broadway career appearing in *Cats* and *Jerome Robbins’ Broadway*. Sean Dwyer, who was in just one show at NMHS – 1995’s *Brigadoon* went on to an acting career around the world and has appeared in movies and on television. More recently Jimmy Bain (our LeFou in *Beauty and the Beast* and the Cat in the Hat in *Seussical*) was recently seen on Broadway in *The Book of Mormon*. Billy Hicks (the Beast in *Beauty and the Beast*, and Horton in *Seussical*) has been singing and performing at Disney in Japan.”

New Milford High School All School Musicals Through The Years

1982 Once Upon A Mattress	1999 Fiddler on The Roof
1983 Anything Goes	2000 Grease
1984 The Pajama Game	2001 Hello Dolly
1985 Fiddler On The Roof	2002 Anything Goes
1986 A Funny Thing Happened On The Way To The Forum	2003 Bye, Bye Birdie
1987 The Music Man	2004 State Fair
1988 Once Upon A Mattress	2005 Once Upon A Mattress
1989 South Pacific	2006 Oklahoma!
1990 Carousel	2007 Guys and Dolls
1991 Bye, Bye Birdie	2008 Thoroughly Modern Millie
1992 The Sound of Music	2009 Beauty and The Beast
1993 Mame	2010 Seussical
1994 Anything Goes	2011 The Drowsy Chaperone
1995 Brigadoon	2012 42 nd Street
1996 West Side Story	2013 Carousel
1997 Guys and Dolls	2014 Cats
1998 The Music Man	2015 The Secret Garden
	2016 Rodgers and Hammerstein’s Cinderella

To order tickets to this year’s production, call the Box Office at (860) 350-6647 ext. 1552

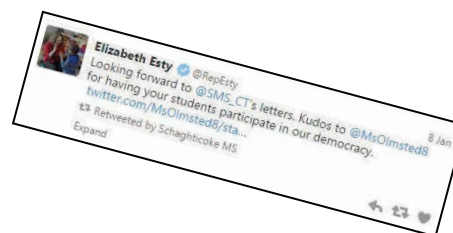
SMS Students Study How a Bill Becomes a Law



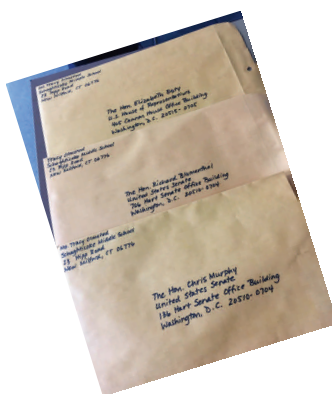
With the presidential election happening this year, the political arena has been forefront in the daily news. Ms. Olmsted's 8th grade Social Studies classes recently turned their focus to one aspect of government as students learned the legislative process of how a bill becomes a law, following a unit of study on the U.S. constitution. Students were given the opportunity to research legislation currently before the 114th Congress using digital resources, including Congress's own website.

Bills pending before Congress included a wide range of topics from Women on the Twenty Dollar Bill, Funding for Drought Relief in California, Enhancing Cybersecurity, Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act, Homeland Security Appropriations, and the Compassionate Access Act, just to name a few. Students researched several things about their bill including the topic itself, who introduced the bill, and where it was in the legislative process. Students then had to form a personal opinion on the legislation and write a letter to Representative Elizabeth Esty, Senator Chris Murphy, or Senator Richard Blumenthal to support or oppose the bill. Students applied their knowledge of how a bill becomes a law through instruction, collaborative analysis, and practical application - a complete hands-on learning experience. Ms. Olmsted says "Over 122 letters were sent in total. The icing on the cake was having

Representative Esty acknowledge our letters on Twitter, complimenting students for taking an active role in the democratic process."



Ms. Olmsted is confident that once students start to receive response letters from their legislators, they will always remember this learning experience, the legislative process, and how easy it can be to access our national representatives.



Extra! Extra! Read (and Watch) all about it!

Spotlight on New Milford Schools is not the only publication sharing news about our schools. Both SMS and NMHS have school newspapers. At SMS, students were very pleased to publish the first edition of [*The Surge Review*](#) in January of this year. The NMHS newspaper, [*The Wave Review*](#), has been actively publishing this year since the fall. And don't forget to follow Green Wave TV, a presentation by the NMHS Video Productions class, on [their YouTube channel](#).

Anatomy & Physiology Students Show Off Their Hard Work

Anatomy & Physiology is one of the elective classes offered to New Milford High School students. Enrolled students start the class with some review of basic biology followed by a study of tissues. Organs and organ systems are then covered, starting with the skin, skeletal, and muscular systems. Laboratory exercises that emphasize physiology are also carried out throughout the year such as microscopic tissue studies, circulatory and nervous system labs, etc. Recently, students proudly displayed some of their hard work in the NMHS LMC, showing off their histology notebooks and skeleton shirts, just two of the many projects designed to help students learn the course material.



Histology, as defined by Merriam Webster, is the branch of anatomy that deals with the minute structure of animal and plant tissues as discernible with the microscope. Science teacher Karen Terhaar says that each student's histology notebook is quite involved. "The books have four sections containing images of each of the major tissue types: epithelial, connective, muscle and nerve. Each section starts with a separate

introductory page where the tissues' general characteristics are described including the organ(s) where the tissue is found and the major functions of the tissue. Each project contains 35 required images drawn from several hundred microscope slides housed in the classroom. Students also locate a computer image from an approved site to place alongside their colored pencil drawing as a comparison; each image is labeled and on each page the specifics about each tissue are listed. The reports are graded on labeling and information accuracy as well as colors, artistic ability, neatness, planning, effort, creativity, and spelling."

The skeleton shirts are a voluntary project that students may choose to do as they review the skeleton section of the course. Mrs. Terhaar says she requires that the shirts be hand drawn and that the students must include a representation of bones above their bones, the sternum over the sternum and the radius over their radius and then they can put anything else they want on their shirt. The driving force behind this voluntary project is that the student can wear it on the day of the test as a cheat sheet, though ironically if they went to all the trouble to make the shirt they probably don't need a cheat sheet!

Mrs. Terhaar says she tries other fun projects from time to time as part of the instructional process. "In the past, we've done brain hats for the nervous system. We've done digestion aprons for digestion and muscle aprons too but the muscle aprons were very difficult to draw so that did not last. Charades is fun with muscles, we've tried that. We also used to make stuffed nerve cells and somatic system coloring books. A few years we've even had a Twister review. Whatever works to help the learning stick." Projects are still on display in the NMHS LMC if you have a chance to stop by...



Meet New Milford Public Schools New Substance Abuse Counselor



Mrs. Cornelia Edgeworth recently joined the New Milford Public Schools as the Substance Abuse Counselor for the school district. Mrs. Edgeworth has worked in the substance abuse field for over nine years.

She graduated from the University of Connecticut with a bachelor degree in Psychology, and a minor in Nursing and has her Master's Degree in Psychology from Grand Canyon University. Additionally, she is a State Certified Licensed Substance Abuse Counselor, Certified Addiction Counselor, Internationally Certified Alcohol and Drug Counselor and Medicated Assistant Treatment Specialist. One of her areas of expertise is in counseling adolescents and teens.

Regarding her role, Mrs. Edgeworth says:

I am thrilled to have the opportunity to serve the district and put my professional knowledge to use. A substance abuse counselor helps people learn to cope with problems and to deal with stress by learning strategies other than self-medicating with drugs or alcohol. One of my roles will be to meet with students, assess their readiness for treatment, develop a treatment plan, and set mutual goals with the student and their family or caregivers.

I will also be providing preventative education for students. Working collaboratively with the school staff, I plan to increase awareness by teaching about addictions and the physical and mental effects of drugs and alcohol. In other words, I will be working on ways to change behavior and ways to manage thoughts and emotions as well as provide resources such as support groups or health care services.

Mrs. Edgeworth is now working closely with the Guidance department at New Milford High School and will begin to branch out to students at Schaghticoke Middle School. She has also joined the New Milford Substance Abuse Council.

Mrs. Edgeworth can be contacted by email at edgeworthc@newmilfordps.org



New Milford Public Schools

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Leap Day!*
(February 29, 2016)

A “Leap” Day is an extra day on February 29 which is added nearly every 4 years to today’s Gregorian calendar. It’s every four years *except* for years ending with “00” that are not divisible by 400. The year in which Leap Day occurs, is called a Leap Year.

Why the fancy calculation? The earth rotates around the sun once every 365 and about 1/4 days. So, by adding an extra day every four years, we get mighty close to keeping the calendar consistent with the earth’s annual trip around the sun. And to be very precise, the earth orbits the sun every 365.242190 days. So, on years ending in “00”, (except those not divisible by 400) we skip Leap Year and Leap Day.

Did you know?

There are occasional “Leap Seconds” too which help to correct minor variations. On December 31, 2015, the folks who maintain the official time for the planet added an extra second to the day!

If your birthday is on Leap Day you are considered a “leapling”. Just how many of us are celebrating our birthday on Leap Day? Only about one in 1461 people. If you were born on this day, consider yourself very, very special.

Leap Year Folklore

- According to folklore, in a leap year, the weather always changes on Friday.
- Ages ago, Leap Day was known as Ladies’ Day, as it was the one day when women were free to propose to men.

Are Leap Years Bad Luck or Good Luck?

We’re not sure, but we do know that...

During leap years: Rome burned (64), George Armstrong Custer fought the Battle of the Little Bighorn (1876), and the Titanic sank (1912).

By the same token, also in leap years: the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth, MA (1620), Benjamin Franklin proved that lightning is electricity (1752), and gold was discovered in California (1848).

**Information taken from the websites
[Holiday Insights](#) and [The Old Farmer’s Almanac](#)*

February 29th

The mission of the New Milford Public Schools, a collaborative partnership of students, educators, family and community, is to prepare each and every student to compete and excel in an ever-changing world, embrace challenges with vigor, respect and appreciate the worth of every human being, and contribute to society by providing effective instruction and dynamic curriculum, offering a wide range of valuable experiences, and inspiring students to pursue their dreams and aspirations.