

STUDENTS HONOR FORMER SECRETARY

RIVER VALE STUDENTS RECENTLY HONORED former Woodside secretary Peggy Phillips with a special award recognizing her courage and heroism.

Ms. Phillips worked for over 20 years as a secretary at Woodside School, until the onset of macular degeneration, a rare disease causing the gradual loss of sight.

Frustrated by her efforts to find support within the medical community, she eventually formed her own patient support group.

The story impressed students at Woodside and Roberge. The students study the characteristics that make heroes of everyday people through the Giraffe Program. The program honors people who aren't afraid to "stick their necks out."

Ms. Phillips was presented with special awards at both Woodside and Roberge over the PA system so the entire school could share in the honor. Students Daniel Wang (Woodside) and Karim Kabbara (Roberge) wrote essays about Ms. Phillips and read them as part of the ceremony.

"The children saw that we had a real life hero right here at Woodside," said Principal Allen Spatola. "Peggy



*Peggy Phillips displays her award at Woodside.
L-R Principal Allen Spatola, Guidance Counselor
Laura Barnett, Ms. Phillips and fifth grader Daniel Wang.*

was an outstanding member of our school community, and is clearly an outstanding human being as well."



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HOLDRUM MOBILE LAPTOPS BRING TECHNOLOGY RIGHT TO STUDENTS

TECHNOLOGY HAS TAKEN ITS ACT ON THE ROAD at Holdrum, thanks to the new mobile laptop cart introduced this year.

"It's like having a great store and opening up an unlimited number of branches," said Media Specialist Diane Klein. "It brings technology into the student's everyday workplace. It comes right to them."

The cart and its 25 laptops are rolled into the classroom, plugged into the network and the students work wirelessly at their desks. The completely self-contained unit also includes a printer.

"The cart is booked weeks in advance," said Network Manager Greg Topf. "Everybody wants it. It was an experiment but it's just taken off."

The Holdrum faculty, a "technologically savvy group of teachers," according to Ms. Klein, has embraced the idea of using technology in the familiar surroundings of their classroom.

"The students are excited the moment they see them (the laptops)," said teacher Cathy Rittereiser. "They provide a stimulating motivational tool that creates more active learning."

Ms. Rittereiser allowed the class to perform research on cell structure and to build models of cells using the laptops in class rather than assigning it for homework. It triggered a greater sharing of knowledge and more active



Students Brandon Dinetz and Stefan Phelan at work on mobile laptops.

participation than the at home assignment would have initiated.

Math teacher Rita Fasano presented a lesson on graphing allowing students to transfer information from their texts to the laptop and create graphs right on the screen.

"They input their information and then with one click they have their graph," she said. "It's fast and it's fun. They couldn't get enough of it."

In World Language classes headphones plug right into the laptops. Students then access built in software that brings a new level of awareness to the subject. Teachers report that students become consumed with their assignments when using the

laptops. All they wish to know is when they will be using them again.

There is also a great deal of student respect in evidence for the entire process. They appear to admire the power of the equipment and all that it can do for them.

"It's so high tech and easy to use," said eighth grader Shirlee Spitzer. "We don't have to go to the library, but work right at our desks. I like learning this way. It feels so important."

"Our goal was to broaden the use of technology in the classroom," said Mr. Topf. "We've succeeded beyond our dreams. Now we'd like to get this into our elementary schools."

WOODSIDE PLANS ANNUAL HERITAGE FOOD FESTIVAL

THERE ARE KOREAN DUMPLINGS, Israeli salad, Swedish meatballs, sushi and a host of other international delicacies. In addition, handmade flags from over a dozen countries will adorn the walls.

This February, Woodside's entire fourth grade will once again celebrate their family heritage with the class's annual Heritage Food Festival.

The event is the culminating activity of the fourth grade's Immigration Unit. Over the years the festival has become one of the most eagerly anticipated events of the school year. Woodside has been holding the event for 15 years, and teacher Kristin Boyce has been organizing it for the last four.

"You can just feel their energy," said Ms. Boyce. "It's always a wonderful event and we challenge ourselves to expand on it each year."

Preliminary to festival day, students will be graphing Woodside's many diverse cultures, and turning them into

life size bar, pictograph and circle graphs. They will also do a good deal of research on their own family ancestry and culture. The festival will be held in the gym, and will run for almost three hours. The entire fourth grade and invited guests will attend.



*Students create country of origin flags for Heritage Food Festival.
L-R front: Deanna Lomaglio and Caylin Iannotta.
L-R rear: Adam McElrath and Alex Mauro.*

In addition to the huge international buffet, new "cultural centers" have been added this year. These will include Italian mosaic tile making, Japanese Origami, exotic games from Tibet and matzoh dipping from Israel.

Besides the fun and excitement, the two-month project presents "a rich opportunity for learning," according to Ms. Boyce.

"It's a real eye-opener for our students," she said. "They experience the rich diversity that's all around them, and

come away with a new appreciation of their community's amazing cultural wealth."

DID YOU KNOW?

We congratulate the following teachers and administrators on their recent accomplishments.

- Superintendent of Schools Dr. Frank Alvarez was appointed to the New Jersey Performing Arts Center Education Advisory Council.
- Learning Disabilities Consultant Carol Beierle served on the Columbia University Family Weekend Transitional Panel. The panel discussed the three major transitions students face when attending college: academic, emotional/psychological and residential.
- Physical education teacher Sara Cerrato had an original lesson plan/activity, "Fitness Turkeys," appear on PE Central, a highly-acclaimed national website for physical education professionals.
- First grade teacher Cathe Della Torre had her bulletin board idea, "Abuzz With Memories" published in the June/July 2002 issue of The Mailbox-The Idea Magazine For Teachers.
- Music teacher Ed Moderacki has written a history of River Vale. Profits from the book, *River Vale*, will go to the town's Centennial Committee.
- Teachers Maria Sommer and Kathy Meroni presented and assisted respectively in a workshop entitled "WebQuests Made Easy" during the recent Pascack Valley Regional Schools Professional Development Day.
- Woodside Principal Allen Spatola had an article "A Twist of Fate," published in *Leadership in Crisis-20 Reflections on 9/11*, a publication of the Principals' Center for the Garden State.

MONDAY MORNING MEANS "FITNESS FOR LIFE" AT ROBERGE

IN 1987, ROBERGE PHYSICAL EDUCATION TEACHER RON VAN BUREN WAS DISSATISFIED

with student scores on the President's Physical Fitness Test. To improve scores he began the "Fitness For Life Club." And on every Monday morning, for the last 15 years, students have met in the gym for good health and a whole lot of fun.

"We're here to make fitness fun," said Mr. Van Buren better known as Mr. V. "How we do that involves a great deal of creativity."

Mr. V's lighthearted personality has much to do with the fact that the strictly volunteer program regularly attracts over 100 students. He treats his Fitness Club students like family, firmly believing that "every child is a winner and all children can be winners."

"I come here to get more energy in my body," said student Kaitlyn Wagner. "I'm really tired afterwards, but

I feel really good too."

Jogging, jump rope, aerobics, rope climbing and exercise games, plus the fun innovations Mr. V constantly contributes make up the morning routine. Mr. V also runs an after-school intramural fitness program, which in conjunction with the Fitness Club provides students with five times the gym time they receive in the regularly scheduled program.

"Test scores have risen steadily over the years," he said. "That's terrific, but now that my goal has been achieved we're still having lots of healthy fun."



Fitness Club members work out under "Mr. V's" watchful eye (center rear) at Roberge.

Student Charlie Liao who likes to "exercise as soon as I wake up" certainly agrees.

"I enjoy being active in the morning," he said. "It makes me feel more strong for the whole day."

Thanks, Mr. V!

BOARD HOSTS FIRST "MEET AND GREET"



Chatting informally at Board "Meet and Greet" are L-R Board Member Oliver Fuchs Social Worker Ricki Parrillo-Dooley, Special Education teacher Tara Kinsella and Child Study Team Coordinator Joelle Tabaka.

THIS PAST FALL, THE BOARD OF EDUCATION sponsored its first "Meet and Greet" for new teachers at the Holdrum School Media Center. The occasion offered an opportunity for Board members, administrators and new teachers to meet and chat informally.

"I think it's important

for both groups to become acquainted, learn each others expectations and experience being a part of the River Vale community," said Superintendent of Schools Dr. Frank Alvarez. "Our first gathering was extremely successful, and we look forward to making it an annual event."

STUDENTS AND GRANDPARENTS SHARE MEMORIES

GRANDPARENTS SHARED MEMORIES with grandchildren and their classmates recently through an innovative cross-generational activity during Family Heritage Month at Roberge.

Second graders interviewed grandparents, made family quilt squares, wrote memory books and, along with their parents, wrote autobiographies about themselves and their families. They also created "grandparent puppets." Stories, poems, memories and "family snacks" were shared by the second graders and their invited guests in a Thanksgiving week celebration in the school gym.

"Students developed a new appreciation for their families," said teacher Kathleen Waytowich who, along with colleagues Kim Ullrich and June Cafarella, organized the activity. "It was an opportunity to learn about the many things that make their family so unique."