

FROM FRIENDS TO FRIENDS

Good News from School of the Arts

Applause Committee Recognizes Outstanding Staff

Each month, the Applause Committee awards recognition to staff and teachers to acknowledge their hard work, dedication and support to the School of the Arts. The most recent winners are as follows:

February

Kelly Nicastro, Assistant Principal

Erin Carey, per diem substitute teacher

Patrick Griffin, head custodian

Rosemary Ortiz, paraprofessional

Matt Fusco, English teacher

March

Daryl Smith, accompanist

Vanessa Grisafe, Special Education substitute teacher

Linda Gutzmer, secretary



Students pose for a photo during a thier trip to San Salvador Island in the Bahamas to study marine biology.

Swimming with Sea Turtles by Alannah Scardino, grade 11

This spring, ten students from School of the Arts, World of Inquiry School No. 58, and Pittsford Mendon High School were lucky enough to have the opportunity to travel to the Gerace Research Center on San Salvador Island of the Bahamas for a marine biology field study. Every morning after breakfast, the students, accompanied by Richard Hendricks, Debra Ortenzi, and Joseph Zuniga, drove to different dive sites around the island to snorkel and experience the tropical ecosystems. We would return to the Research Center before 12:00 for a quick lunch then hustle to get ready for a second dive. Like many islands, San Salvador is capable of maintaining many different types of aquatic ecosystems despite geographical location. We were enabled to swim out to different kinds of coral reefs, such as Telephone Pole reef and Snapshot reef, with many different varieties of fish varying based on the types of coral, including parrot fish, grouper, and even a giant sting ray. We also swam through grassy aquatic areas, which were home to sea turtles, barracudas, and starfish. After the second dive of the day, the

Rose Mary Verno, secretary

Patty Pierce, secretary

April

Brian Chandler, Assistant Principal

Susan Woodhams, English teacher

Breanna Eng, Science teacher

Kate Mestnik, interpreter

MaryLee Miller, Dance teacher

May

Alan Tirre, Assistant Principal

Janice Kriegel, Speech/Language teacher

Timothy Downs, Science teacher

Natalia Douda, accompanist

Ray Diaz, substitute teacher

Congratulations to our talented young writers!

At Rochester's 2nd Annual Black Author Expo Contest in May, ninth grader **Shaddai Simmons** won the Free-form Poetry category for grades 7-9, and seventh grader **Elexana Cabrera** was chosen as one of the winners of the Marsha Jones Youth Writing Award.

To commemorate their 35th anniversary, Writers & Books (University Ave., Rochester) ran a 35-word short story contest. They received over 1,200 entries and two SOTA students were selected to the top 35. Readings of the stories were performed on June 7th at Nox, and Writers & Books will be publishing the entries from the top 35 writers in a chapbook. Kudos to **Aleah Adams** and **Mathilda Guizzardi** for this achievement!

SOTA Senior Wins Local Talent Hunt Competition

students returned to Gerace Research Center to shower (with rainwater sterilized by the Gerace researchers and kept in tanks for safe use of the Center's residents) and eat dinner at 5:30. Each meal was served to the entire Center, which included other schools on their field studies, the organizers of the Center, and the graduate students.

Along with diving twice a day, there were many other opportunities for enrichment on the island besides studying marine ecosystems. A third dive—a night dive—was added to one of our few days on San Salvador Island. Different wildlife can be seen at night, as some species are nocturnal. One of the less aquatic activities on the island included a search throughout one of cave systems on the island. San Salvador Island is an island structured completely on coral. The coral, continuously growing (though at a very slow rate), forms stalagmites and stalactites. The cave is home to many bats, meaning decades worth—maybe centuries-- of bat droppings is mixed in with the neck-high water which sits at the bottom of the cave. Despite the unappealing circumstances of the cave, all of us were excited to explore the structure.

One of the most interesting parts of San Salvador Island is the historical significance which the island has. San Salvador is the location where Christopher Columbus landed in the fifteenth century, opening European influence to the Western Hemisphere. We were able to see the multiple international monuments placed south of the island's most urban settlement, Cockburn Town (pronounced Coh-burn Town). The United States, Japan, and Spain all have unique monuments as tributes to Columbus' success and contribution to history. Understanding the island's significance in history was another part of recognizing all of what San Salvador has to offer.

No matter what our day had in store, we were always fortunate enough to spend our evening back at our base, the Gerace Research Center. The Center houses graduate students, high school students, and even some employees, in several small one-floor complexes. The Center is right across from the oceanfront, so we often had the opportunity to walk along the beach after dinner. The sky at night is full of more stars than any of us had ever seen, and we truly bonded as a group under that sky. Every single experience on the island brought all of us students closer than we ever thought we'd get.

The trip was initiated by the School of the Arts Physics and Chemistry teacher Richard Hendricks, who has taken this particular field trip with students many times in the past. Mr. Hendricks teamed up with colleagues from the district, including Mr. Zuniga, and Mrs. Ortenzi, an AP Biology teacher from World of Inquiry School who had accompanied Mr. Hendricks on one of the trips when she was a high school student. Friends of SOTA helped to fund the trip with a gift from the Farash Foundation. It is because of Friends of SOTA that many of us were able to go on the trip.

After the trip, the class met with the Friends of SOTA Board to describe their experience, although it is hard to explain all of our experiences in only a few simple quotes. "The ocean looks so vast and empty but there's so much stuff under there," said JP Zuniga, a student from Pittsford Mendon High School. Indeed, when you look at the beautiful blue ocean it appears flat and still. However, when observing the marine wildlife, the ocean is anything but still. Fish and beautiful sea turtles are constantly moving. The world which we knew nothing about, or had only seen through films or documentaries, was actually becoming a reality while we were in that ocean. "It means so much to me and I thank [the Friends of SOTA]...it was something that you never thought could have happened and it was happening in front of your eyes. That was the best experience I have ever had," said Claire Foster, a junior at SOTA. Xavier Anderson added, "This was a life changing experience".

Mr. Hendricks hopes the success of this trip will draw more interest so he can expand the program next year, and all of us students hope that we have given you reason to want to go to San Salvador Island. San Salvador Island is unique, beautiful, and absolutely astounding to people of any age, but specifically students who deserve the opportunity to gain knowledge about a world they barely know exists.

Zahra Rivera-Bellucci took first place in the classical instrumental category and placed second overall in the talent hunt conducted by Rochester's Theta Omicron chapter of the Omega Psi Phi fraternity. She went on to compete in the District Talent Hunt Demonstration in Bethesda, MD on April 30, 2016.

Our Student Athletes Shine!

Kenny Cruz has earned a Division 1 athletic scholarship for baseball at Rutgers University.

In boys basketball, seniors **James Clark** and **Damare Hanks** were selected to the Exceptional Senior All-Star game which was played in March, along with the Ronald McDonald All-Star game, for which senior **Christian Simmons** was selected. Simmons also was selected as a first team All-Star for the RCAC.

SOTA's cheerleaders placed 5th in sectionals, the highest they have ever placed.

Our bowling teams placed 5th (boys) and 3rd (girls) in the City Catholic League. **Brittnee Johnson** had the highest scoring game for the season and was voted first team All-County. Other students who were selected for All-County were **Brennen Johnson, Carrington Hayward** and **Alyssa Steger**.

Two students were State qualifiers for Track & Field: **Shana Spinks** (long jump) and **Zion Ponder** (high jump).

At our Sports Awards Banquet, the following teams and individuals were recognized:

Scholar Athlete Awards:

Individual Awards:

Owen Siebert – RCAC Swimmer of the Year; SOTA/East 500 freestyle record holder; qualified for Golf Sectionals and RCAC Golf Championship; National Honor



Pictured left to right: David Harrison, Board member; W. McDonough, C. Lopata-Linn, A. Adams, A. Velocci, E. Mryglod, A. Streeter, S.E. Ryland-Buntley, G. Lineham, J. Wrona; Danelle Giannini, Board member

Scholarship Award Winners

Friends of SOTA Board members Danelle Giannini and David Harrison had the privilege of handing out the awards to our scholarship winners at SOTA's Awards Night ceremony. The winners are:

William McDonough – Allen Memorial Performing Arts Scholarship

Casimer Lopata-Linn – Bellas Artes Dance Scholarship

Aleah Adams – Creative Writing Scholarship

Aniela Velocci – Margarete Douyon STEM Scholarship

Emma Mryglod – Academic Distinction Award

Adrianna Streeter – Humanistic Distinction Award

Starr Elise Ryland-Buntley – Alumni Scholarship

Grace Lineham – Alumni Scholarship

Jessie Wrona – Friends of SOTA Board Service Award

Congratulations to all!

Society member, Honor Roll student.

Emma Mryglod – Earned a Division 1 athletic scholarship for lacrosse at Conisius College; 3-sport athlete excelling in soccer, lacrosse and softball; News 10 Scholar Athlete of the Week; National Honor Society member, High Honor Roll student.

Dan'nae Palmer won the Invest in Yourself Award in remembrance of beloved former teacher and coach, Mr. Walters. The recipient of this award exemplifies a commitment to give your best every day, both in school and in extracurricular activities reliability to others, and to keep an open mind and compassionate heart.

Team Awards:

Girls Softball – Won the City Championship Title in the RCAC for the last 3 consecutive seasons, with a 44-0 record. The #1 seed for Class A-2, they also have a team GPA of 90.36.

Sportsmanship Awards:

The Central/Western NY Girls Basketball Officials Award went to SOTA's **Girls Varsity Basketball** this year, and for Class A-2, the **Girls Varsity Volleyball** team received the sportsmanship award.



Ties that Bind

Several members of the Class of 2007 reunited for the wedding of classmate **Ben Cutelle** (not pictured) on May 7, 2016. Thanks to Helene Scott for submitting this photo!



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