



# The Connection

WATERFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

FALL 2023

Bringing the accomplishments and initiatives of the Waterford Public Schools to the Town, Community and beyond to create a **Connection** that will reinforce a strong commitment to coming together to educate the whole child.

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## Pursue Optimism - Theme for 2023-2024 SY

At the 2023-2024 SY Convocation, Superintendent Giard encouraged staff to remain optimistic about the road ahead. Inspired by the quote, "Progress is fueled by the undying belief that the future is bright" @simonsinek, he urged staff to enter the school year with optimism noting that "we have the opportunity to write our own script to a great story...and we will!" Following that theme, the school year is off to a great start with numerous student achievements and staff accomplishments.

(see pg. 2 for first day photos and pg. 3 for great happenings in the district).



**"Pessimists see problems. They worry about what could go wrong in the future. Optimists see possibilities. They focus on what could go right in the future. Proactive people turn problems into possibilities. They give us reasons to be optimistic about the future."**

~ Adam Grant

Staff were also encouraged at Convocation by painter and inspirational speaker Tom Varano, Emotion into Art, whose theme of "Never give up hope and realize, your life matters!" resonated with staff that they make a difference each day in students' lives. Using speed painting and inspirational speaking, Varano unveiled portraits in minutes of famous people focusing on their story of perseverance and success. Varano also presented to the Waterford High School student population painting portraits of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Lady Liberty, and Malala Yousafzai encouraging students to "Be yourself, take risks and follow your dreams". Waterford Public Schools received two of the paintings, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Lady Liberty, which will be proudly displayed at Waterford High School and Clark Lane Middle School.



# WPS Opening for the 2023-2024 School Year

The 2023-2024 school year at Waterford Public Schools is off to a great start! All schools welcomed students on August 30<sup>th</sup> and have had positive experiences.



## Waterford Wonders

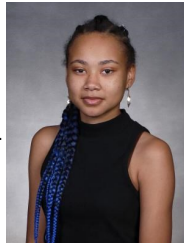
At the September 28, 2023 Board of Education meeting, the Board implemented a new student recognition program called Waterford Wonders. Waterford Wonders are students in the Waterford Public Schools deserving of special recognition; be it for academics, accomplishments, exemplary character, going above and beyond and sometimes, for just being a “good kid”. Students can also be recognized for a significant achievement, leadership, having overcome a significant challenge or obstacle, and positively impacting the life of others. Congratulations to Bonnie Silvestri, grade 5 student at Quaker Hill Elementary School, who received the first Waterford Wonders accolade at the September meeting. Bonnie was recognized for her service to her school community and for always going above and beyond to help all students feel included.



Congratulations to Waterford High School Seniors Alexa Collins and Marializ Diaz for earning academic honors from the College Board National Recognition Programs. These programs celebrate students' hard work in high school and showcase their strong academic performance. The academic honors for rural area, Black, Indigenous, and/or Latino students are an opportunity for students to share their strong academic achievements with colleges and scholarship programs that are seeking to recruit diverse talent.



Alexa Collins received the National African American Recognition Award (NAARA)



Marializ Diaz received the National Hispanic Recognition Award (NHRA)

Criteria required to earn these academic honors include:

- GPA of 3.5 or higher
- PSAT/NMSQT or PSAT 10 assessment scores that are within the top 10% of assessment takers in each state for each award program or earned a score of 3 or higher on 2 or more AP Exams in 9th and 10th grade



Students from Clark Lane Middle School attended the **Explore Manufacturing Expo** at Dodd stadium in Norwich on September 28th. With over 30 manufacturing companies from Eastern CT in attendance, students were able to explore different manufacturing opportunities across diverse fields. They were able to engage in hands on manufacturing processes such as making paper, laser welding and programming robotics, just to name a few. It was an excellent event and gave students an inside look into the many things made here in Eastern Connecticut as well as the career opportunities available in the manufacturing industry.

The Waterford High School ECE Physics and Marine Science students participated in the UCONN ECE Cardboard Boat Race at Eastern Point Beach. Students attended lectures by UCONN professors on shipwrecks, engineering and political science in the morning and races in the afternoon. Fifty WHS students entered six boats which all completed the course. WHS won the school spirit award and every one of the student boats placed first or second in their heats. Check out The Day article below for more photos from this exciting and educational event.

⇒ <https://www.theday.com/photo-galleries/20231006/uconn-ece-cardboard-boat-race/>



Photo courtesy of The Day

Go to pgs. 6 & 7 for more information on what's happening "In the Schools"

Waterford Public Schools, in collaboration with the Waterford Police Department, participates in the School Resource Officer Program that involves placement of law enforcement officers within the education environment. WPS currently has two officers, one at Waterford High School and one at Clark Lane Middle School, who serve as liaisons between the school community and the police department and support the school administration and staff in maintaining a safe and positive school environment. Read below for an inside look into the officers who fill the roles of SRO's in the Waterford Public Schools. Also on the following page, SRO FAQs are provided to answer questions and give a detailed look at the SRO program, including trainings, SRO roles, and contact information as well.

## Meet our SRO's

**SRO Dan Lane**



Officer Dan Lane has served as a police officer for 23 years. He served as a K9 handler for 18 years, handling three police K9's and is a Master Trainer for the NAPWDA (North American Police Work Dog Association) leading certification trainings for K9 teams throughout the state. Officer Lane has been an SRO since 2018 and has been a part of the Youth Services Advisory Board, School Safety Committee, and the Crisis Intervention Team. He has led Safety Trainings in the district on Professional Learning Days and has also conducted Social Media presentations and Youth Vaping seminars for parents/guardians and the community.

*"Being an SRO has been an extremely rewarding position for me throughout the years. Every day, waking up knowing that you will make a difference has been an incredibly fulfilling experience and I am grateful for this opportunity to connect with so many kids every day."*

**SRO Norm Malbaurn**



24 year veteran of the police force, Officer Norm Malbaurn, joined the SRO program at Waterford High School in 2022. Before becoming an SRO, Officer Malbaurn was a member of the Waterford Police Department's Patrol Division and Bike Patrol. In his role as an SRO, Officer Malbaurn is a member of the Crisis Intervention Team and the School Safety Committee. Prior to becoming a police officer, Officer Malbaurn graduated from Southern CT State University in 1996 with a degree in Sports Physiology and served with the US Air Force Reserves as a Security Specialist from 1990-1998.

*"I sincerely enjoy being an SRO and seeing the kids every day. As a father of 3 boys, 2 high school freshmen and 1 in college, I have seen the struggles teenagers can face during high school and in life. I want to be someone that the kids can look up to. I want them to know that they can come to me for anything, whether it's about life in general, school or an obstacle they are having trouble overcoming."*



## WPS/WPD School Safety Forum

**November 15, 2023 ~ 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM**

**WHS Auditorium ~ 20 Rope Ferry Road, Waterford**

*Please join us for an informational night surrounding school safety, the roles of School Resource Officers, definitions of emergency situations and the partnership between the WPD, WPS and home. Event details to follow.*

**Q: What is a School Resource Officer (SRO)?**

An SRO is a sworn police officer of the Waterford Police Department. SROs are employed by the police department and are supervised by a lieutenant, with feedback provided by the school district. School district administration is part of the selection process for the SRO positions in the schools. The SROs are Waterford police officers to serve as liaisons between the school community and the police department and to support the school administration and staff in maintaining a safe and positive school environment.

**Q: What are the roles and responsibilities of SROs?**

The primary responsibility of the SRO is to maintain the safety of students and faculty, provide a safe and positive learning environment and to promote mutual respect between law enforcement, school security staff, school administrative staff, students and their families. SROs assist school administrators in developing school crisis, emergency management and response plans. They work with school administrators in problem-solving to prevent crime and promote safety in the school environment. The SROs, in collaboration with school staff may provide educational opportunities in: law related education, violence diffusion, safety programs, alcohol and drug prevention, crime prevention and other pertinent subjects. SROs also act as a community liaison and role model interacting positively with the school community and general public.

**Q: How many SROs are there in the Waterford Schools?**

There are two fulltime SROs who work in the WPS.

**Q: Can I speak or meet with the SRO?**

Yes. Any parent can contact our SROs. The SRO is available during school hours. If the information requires immediate police response and is after hours you need to call 911.

Officer Lane can be reached by phone: 860-443-2837 or email: [dlane@waterfordschools.org](mailto:dlane@waterfordschools.org)

Officer Malbourn can be reached by phone: 860-437-6956 or email: [nmalbourn@waterfordschools.org](mailto:nmalbourn@waterfordschools.org)

**Q: Are SROs involved with student discipline?**

The Waterford Board of Education has a signed memorandum of Understanding with the Waterford Police Department that outlines and delineates the duties of an SRO. School administrators, to include school principals, teachers, and other staff are responsible for student discipline issues and enforcement of school rules. They have exclusive responsibility for school discipline.

In general, SROs are not involved in student discipline. If a student discipline situation begins to jeopardize the safety of students, SROs may become involved. Behaviors at this level must be violations of criminal law, but only after classroom, school administration and assessment and service interventions have been tried.

When there is a criminal reason for an SRO to become involved, having an SRO helps to mitigate the amount of juvenile arrests and this helps to keep students out of the court system. At times, the SRO can often help find better ways to remedy a situation than an arrest.

**Q. Do SROs have any special training?**

Yes. State Law in CT mandates that SROs complete specialized training before being placed in schools. CT General Statutes, section 17a-22bb states, in part: "Local law enforcement agencies and local and regional boards of education that employ or engage school resource officers shall, provided federal funds are available, train school resource officers in nationally recognized best practices to prevent students with mental health issues from being victimized or disproportionately referred to the juvenile justice system as a result of their mental health issues." Other training includes drug detection, gang identification, and training in other safety-related areas.

**Q: Who refers matters to SROs?**

Anyone can refer a matter to SROs to include students, staff, parents, and other community members. However, SROs only deal with criminal matters, not school discipline or administrative matters.

**Q: Do SROs help Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to find and arrest undocumented students?**

No, they do not. SROs have no role in this area. In fact, in 2013, Connecticut passed a law called the Trust Act which limits police involvement in ICE matters.

**Q: If I have any questions about the SRO model here in Waterford, who do I contact?**

Chief Balestracci, of the Waterford Police Department, can be reached at 860-442-9451. Superintendent of Schools, Thomas Giard, can be reached at 860-444-5852.

Sources: *MOU between WPD & WPS, CT General Statutes, National Association of State Boards of Education, National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments, National Association of School Resource Officers*

CLMS grade 8 students attended the WHS Lancer Fair and Tour where students took a student guided tour of the high school followed by a “Lancer Activity Fair” that showcased the phenomenal clubs and extracurricular activities available to high school students. The Lancer Fair provided an inside look at the many opportunities available to our upcoming high school students and demonstrated first hand the pride of our Waterford High School Lancers.



Students and staff at Quaker Hill Elementary School celebrated Down Syndrome Awareness Month in the month of October. Grade 5 students Delaney Jones and June Norton, both who have siblings with Down Syndrome, authored an article in the QH Newsletter of September 29, 2023, sharing information on Down Syndrome and introducing the audience to the special relationship that they have with their siblings, Lexie and January.

“We are all unique in our own special way. We are more alike than different. We are all people who want to have friends, be included, and be loved. Remember to be kind, be patient and be awesome!” Check out the full article at [“October is Down Syndrome Awareness Month!”](#)

Grade 5 Oswegatchie Elementary School teacher Lisa Mellon recently received a \$1,000 grant from the Connecticut Association of Schools. Ms. Mellon’s grant “STEM Buddies” will include Kindergarten, 3rd, and 5th grade students in a collaborative relationship to engage in inquiry-based learning. This is just another example of our amazing staff investing in our students and programs in the district.



Great Neck Elementary staff and students celebrated International World Peace Day on September 21, 2023. In recognition of the theme to “strengthen peace, oneness and unity”, the school community gathered to form the peace symbol and sing “Light a Candle for Peace” in commemoration of this important initiative.



A new and improved pollinator garden was added to the student garden at Great Neck Elementary School. WHS freshman Brennan Devine, as part of a Boy Scout project, moved the chicken coop and dug the area up for planting. Master gardener, Eileen Boyce, and Marcia Benvenuti weeded the existing area, planted new pollinators, and mulched the bed. Ms. Boyce designed and funded the project with a grant from the Master Gardener’s Association.

*Great Neck Garden Report 2023 - Provided by Board Member Marcia Benvenuti*

## WHS Commended by CSDE for Performance in FAFSA Challenge

Ajit Gopalakrishnan, Chief Performance Officer, recently recognized Waterford High School for achieving its **FAFSA Challenge** growth goal for the 2022-2023 school year! In September 2022, Governor Lamont and Education Commissioner Russell-Tucker charged high schools across the state with increasing their year-over-year FAFSA completion rate for the class of 2023. WHS started the year with a FAFSA completion goal of 68.9%. By the end of the year, the school had met/exceeded that goal and attained a FAFSA completion rate of 80.1%. WHS is commended for the terrific commitment displayed by the staff who ensured that the senior class students applied for and received the financial aid they deserve to pursue a post-secondary education. WHS exemplifies the theme set by the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) for the 2023-24 school year of "Infinite Possibilities." As a recognition of this impressive accomplishment, the CSDE will be granting WHS a \$1,000 prize, which the school can use towards innovative strategies for boosting FAFSA completion rates for the Class of 2024.



### TECH TIPS FOR PARENTS - We are excited to feature a new section in the District Newsletter called "Tech Tips



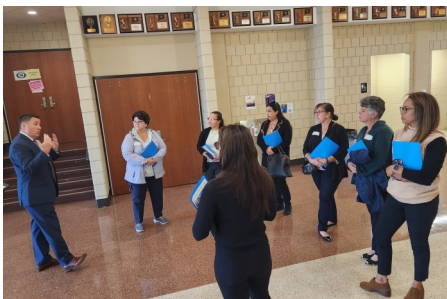
for Parents" that will bring attention to new and potentially concerning apps for parents/guardians to be aware of. The first app that we would like to feature is an app called Saturn. This scheduling app, initially implemented for students to keep track of their class schedules and to connect with other students, has some loopholes and security concerns that parents/guardians should take notice of and research to see if it is the best fit for their child(ren). More information on the Saturn app can be found at the following resources:

- ⇒ [Parents, schools issue warning about popular 'Saturn' app used by high school students](#)
- ⇒ <https://www.bark.us/app-reviews/apps/saturn-app-review/>

### WPS Real Estate Professionals Open House



Waterford Public Schools hosted the first Real Estate Professional's Tour on October 10th. Local Real Estate Professionals, who interface with the Waterford Real Estate Market, were invited to tour Waterford High School, Clark Lane Middle School and Great Neck Elementary School. Attendees had the opportunity to visit classrooms, technology and science labs, athletic facilities, arts/music classes and other innovative programs. With the influx of workers moving into the area for companies such as Electric Boat, these real estate professionals are now able to promote to their clients why Waterford is a great place to live and learn!



### Start with Hello

All elementary schools celebrated "Start with Hello" week in association with the Sandy Hook Promise foundation during the week of September 18-22. In an effort to make all students feel welcome and included in school, the Start with Hello program uses "lesson plans, educator practices, and project ideas that help students boost belonging, build empathy, and social awareness."



United Community and Family Services (UCFS) has had an exciting start to the school year! We have been very busy in our medical and behavioral health offices seeing all the happy faces returning. Staff have also been busy preparing for fall and flu season as it is quickly approaching us. We will have flu vaccines in stock as of October 1st, please call (860-822-2803) to schedule an appointment. A big thank you for welcoming us and allowing us to take part in your back to school functions. We have loved meeting everyone and look forward to growing in your community with you!



For those of you who are not aware we have offices located in the Waterford High School and Clark Lane Middle School which provide medical and behavioral health services during routine school hours. Any student enrolled in the Waterford School District is eligible to receive services at the High School or Middle School as long as an enrollment form is filled out and signed by a parent/guardian.

Each School Based Health Center (SBHC) is staffed by a medical provider (APRN or PA), a medical assistant and a licensed behavioral health clinician. Services available are wide and varied, and include sports physicals, routine well child visits, immunizations and sick visits as well as mental health counseling. These services are meant to support and augment a student's primary care provider, not take the place of the PCP. Contact and collaboration with the student's primary care provider is seen as an integral part of providing care within the school.

SBHC's are playing an important role in this country, providing care to students who otherwise would have difficulty accessing services. Parent work schedules, transportation and doctor's backlog of appointments are often barriers to care. Students enrolled in SBHC's can be seen during the school hours, reducing barriers to care.

Enrollment forms can be found online by typing <https://www.ucfs.org/services/school-based-health-centers/> and click the "[SBHC Enrollment Form](#)". We also have paper enrollment forms located at the schools. If you have any questions or would like to speak with our staff, please call 860-822-2803. We look forward to seeing you!

*Article submitted by Tiffany Cole, School Based Health Center, Practice Manager*

2023 – 2024  
Annual Notification Manual

The manual covered within this handbook is intended to communicate to parents and students general district information, laws and procedures and to serve as a guide to other resources and resources on Board policy, administrative regulations or negotiated agreements. School board policies and procedures are supported by each Board policy, administrative regulations or negotiated agreements. Please contact administration for a copy of specific Board policies or visit the district website at [www.waterfordschools.org](http://www.waterfordschools.org)

Annually school districts are required to notify parents and students of important policies and procedures in the district. At the beginning of the school year, WPS families received the Annual Notification Manual and School Handbooks either electronically or hard copy. The Waterford Public Schools would like to remind parents and students that the Annual Notification Manual and School Handbooks can be found online at the WPS website at:

⇒ [https://www.waterfordschools.org/parents\\_family/policies\\_procedures/AnnualNotificationManual](https://www.waterfordschools.org/parents_family/policies_procedures/AnnualNotificationManual)

⇒ [https://www.waterfordschools.org/parents\\_family/policies\\_procedures/SchoolHandbooks](https://www.waterfordschools.org/parents_family/policies_procedures/SchoolHandbooks).

Please refer to these manuals for pertinent information on District and School Policies and Procedures. All students and parents are asked to review these important documents. If parents/students would like a hard copy of either manual, please contact the school offices where the student attends. As a reminder all of the Board of Education Policies can also be found on the WPS website at: [https://www.waterfordschools.org/board\\_of\\_education/district\\_policies](https://www.waterfordschools.org/board_of_education/district_policies).

**Waterford Public Schools**  
**Pat Fedor, Board of Education Chairperson**  
**Thomas W. Giard III, Superintendent**  
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 Phone: 860-444-5852  
 Fax: 860-444-5870  
 Contact: Caroline Whittaker - Executive Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent  
 E-mail: [cwhittaker@waterfordschools.org](mailto:cwhittaker@waterfordschools.org)

*Waterford Public Schools is a community of learners that fosters and supports high aspirations, ensuring every student acquires the skills and knowledge necessary to be a responsible citizen, prepared to contribute and succeed in an ever-changing world.*

**Stay Connected...**

- ◆ **WPS Website - Visit**  
[www.waterfordschools.org](http://www.waterfordschools.org) for up to date BOE, school and event information.
- ◆ **BOE meetings are held on the 4th Thursday of each month. For the complete schedule of meetings, go to the [BOE section](#) of the WPS Website.**
- ◆ **Download the [WPS App](#) to 'stay abreast' of all the happenings at our schools.**
- ◆ **Follow us on [Twitter](#): [@WPS\\_CT](#) and [@WaterfordSuper](#)**