

FOCUS Joel Barlow High School PTSA Newsletter



JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2010

PRESIDENT'S CORNER Happy New Year to All!

Happy New Year to all!

I'd like to highlight events from the past two months and make note of some upcoming events.

At our PTSA meeting in December, Gina Pin, Assistant Principal, gave a presentation on the Search Institute's "40 Developmental Assets of Adolescents". Ms. Pin discussed positive personal attributes and positive environmental conditions. The more of these assets an adolescent has, the less likely that person is to be involved in risk-taking behavior, and as the number of assets increase, positive behavior increases. Various assets and how to promote them in our children were discussed. A copy of the PowerPoint presentation is available online on the PTSA page of the Barlow website.

Also at the December meeting, the board voted to fund **THREE MINI-GRANT** proposals submitted by faculty members. Dr. Nuzzo's Science Team is receiving \$250 to be used for expenses associated with participation in the Connecticut Science Fair. The Model United Nations Team, mentored by Ms. Desmarais, is receiving \$250 for student travel expenses. \$211 will go for the Guidance Department's purchase of a documentary entitled "In 500 Words or Less", about the college application process.

In early January, Colleen Joyce, past president of the PTSA, presented a program at the Mark Twain Library on the topic of "**GAP YEAR**" opportunities. Several Barlow graduates and a speaker from a local community college spoke about the many possibilities available to young adults who wish to explore avenues besides attending a four-year college immediately after graduation from high school. Jen Wastrom has written an article about the presentation in this issue of *Focus*.

Our January PTSA meeting featured a "**MEET AND GREET**" with two of the new Region 9 Board of Education members, Mr. Leon Karvelis and Dr. William Baker, who spoke of their backgrounds and goals for Barlow. Later in the meeting, Tom McMorrان introduced our new district superintendent, Dr. Michael Cicchetti, who shared his background and past experiences. All of the gentlemen were very receptive to

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FROM THE PRINCIPAL ... M. Butterfly and the Students

A few years back, my wife and I attended a Broadway performance of the drama, *M. Butterfly*. This adaptation of the famous opera was a terrific evening's entertainment. One point in the play sticks with me. A world-weary British diplomat confides to another character, "Nothing prepares you for failure in life like success in high school." Although my memory of the play is fuzzy, that line stays with me in sharp relief for two reasons: First, because it is not true. Second, because it is!

Our notions of success have wandered from the traditional Yankee New England notion that hard work and perseverance will lead to prosperity and satisfaction. Our Yankee forefathers and mothers lived in a farming community and knew that if you want a bountiful harvest, you must clear the tree stumps, dig up the rocks, plant and protect the seedlings and over a long time wait for the crops to grow to fruition. In farming, the harvest will only be successful if the weather and an entire growing season cooperate, and one needs patience to see projects through to the end.

Ask children today where vegetables, milk, and produce come from and they would be correct to say the refrigerator or the supermarket. We have transformed ourselves into a service and consumer economy. In this economy, we can enjoy the bounty of the harvest without having to put in the long days of weeding the garden. The internet can provide a student with the same amount of data in a few nanoseconds that a graduate student would have needed a month in the library to find only a few decades ago. There is a product, a service, or a person who can provide for us in minutes what used to take days. Advertising, business cycles, and education are all picking up speed; perhaps one side-effect of this busy lifestyle is our need to address the attentional issues of so many of our children. Believe me, I have worked closely with students who wanted to concentrate but couldn't, and I know first-hand how frustrating that can be.

So, to return to the play, I think that if we define success in high school as easily earning grades and popularity without having to develop perseverance, study skills, and the ability to

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audience questions, concerns, and ideas.

Always enjoyable, for staff and volunteers alike, is the winter **STAFF LUNCHEON**, this year held on January 20. Co-Chairs Steph Belleveau and Candy Wood McAdam organized this wonderful event, and many thanks go out to them and the many volunteers who joined them to help set-up, clean-up, and serve lunch to the Barlow staff. The twice-yearly staff luncheons are held in honor of all of our devoted staff members who work so hard to support our Barlow community of students.

LOOKING AHEAD. In addition to our monthly PTSA meetings on the second Tuesday of each month, and the interesting programs that are presented then, we look forward to several events. We hope to sponsor a PTSA evening meeting and event featuring Barlow graduates who are pursuing life goals that don't include a four-year college degree. The PTSA will be sponsoring a **SPRING CLEAN-UP** and planting in the Sanctuary Courtyard. We also hope to spend a spring Saturday painting the **ATHLETIC** outbuildings, with the help of some of the **BOOSTER CLUBS**.

I welcome any feedback from Barlow parents concerning any events that have been of special interest to you, and any ideas on how the PTSA can better serve our Barlow community. Feel free to contact me at sbreda@optonline.net.

Kim Breda, *President of PTSA*



Black & Gold Now Online

The latest issue of the *Black & Gold*, Barlow's fall sports roundup, is now available by following the link below. This publication is co-authored by the student-editors of *The Mosaic*, our school newspaper, and the athletic department. All articles were written by members of our fall sports teams.

www.joelbarlowps.org/athletics/BlackAndGold.pdf

REMINDER TO PARENTS:

Please subscribe to the Joel Barlow High School Listserv. By following the link below and filling in the proper information, you will receive updates and pertinent information regarding school events and other newsworthy items via email. The direct link to the subscription page for the Listserv is:

<http://phplist.fandotech.com/>

The link is also available through the Barlow website, <http://joelbarlowps.org>, click on "click here to enter site", highlight the "School" drop-down menu and click on "Join our Listserv".

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to delay gratification, then the playwright was correct. The real world of adults demands genuine performance, stick-to-it-iveness, accuracy, and results. A child who has been successful because we have made the path too smooth or because we have never fully challenged her or him to grow will find adulthood trying, to say the least. I conclude, therefore, that we should let our kids struggle. We should have a high-schooler attempt to resolve a difference of opinion with a teacher before the parent and the administrator get involved. We should expect them to struggle with concepts before we bring in the tutor or offer extra help. The self-esteem that comes as the product of having asserted some old-fashioned "Yankee elbow grease" is far more satisfying than a grade that comes as a debased coin because we have compromised our standards for a child.

On the other hand, if success in high school is the product of perseverance, resilience, the willingness to put in the long hours or practice, and a determination to succeed in spite of the odds, then the playwright is wrong. "Nothing prepares one for failure in life like success in high school" is merely cynical if we mean that high school is a waste of time and no matter what we do we won't be ready to move forward in life.

At Barlow, we aspire to help our students achieve rigorous performance standards based on a collaborative approach to teaching and learning. We want to see all of our students realize that potential is as often a concept that holds one back as one that propels a student forward. Further, we know that our partners in the community want the same thing. Ultimately, we want our students and your children to have the knowledge, skills, and confidence to choose their future careers. We want them to be happy. We want a person well-grounded in the old Yankee virtues of patience, personal commitment, and perseverance who can apply those attributes to a fast-paced world. We want our students to believe that nothing prepared them for success in life as the right kind of success in high school.

Tom McMorran, *Head of School, JBHS*



Need PTSA Information?

Past minutes of the JBHS PTSA meetings can be found on the Joel Barlow website, under the PTSA link. Other items of interest listed under the PTSA link are:

- Membership Forms
- The *Focus*, our informational newsletter
- PTSA Survey Results
- 2009-2010 Meeting Dates
- Past Presentation Information

Click here for more information:

www.joelbarlowps.org/Communications/PTSA/PTSA.html

Annual Convocation Held for Barlow Students and Staff

December 16 was the date for Barlow's most recent annual convocation, held for staff and students of Joel Barlow High School. In the past, convocations have been held annually to discuss Barlow and its issues, and try to come up with solutions for these issues. Essentially, what would happen is students would be assigned to classrooms, where they would discuss a specific topic chosen by the Student Council. The discussion would be led by a facilitator who was there to prompt students and take notes of the ideas caused by the dialogue.

Several years ago, when Barlow was searching for a new principal, the convocation centered on what students would like in a principal. From these deliberations and subsequent interviews, we assisted in the selection of Mr. McMorrان as our current principal. Other topics in the past have included beautification process of Barlow, the high school in general and a student feedback form.

This year, the Student Council really wanted to do something that students would enjoy so that we could get the convocations back to good, reputable, information sessions for all involved. The recent convocation was scheduled as a day to enhance student-teacher relationships. We had teachers choose topics or activities that they enjoy outside of school. Some of these included cookie decorating, floor hockey, Friends fanatics and more. The list of topics, with teachers' names excluded from the list, was handed out to students who were then assigned to one of their three choices. The hope for the outcome of the hour and a half long convocation was for students to see their teachers in a different light and to foster a different relationship with their teachers.

Overall, the day went well and the general reaction has been good. The students seem to now see their teachers through a different "set of glasses" and have more faith in the idea of convocation. Several Student Council members walked throughout the school during the event overseeing the groups, and discovered that students not only learned more about the teachers they had been assigned, but also other teachers by word of mouth. A few examples of teacher "subjects" were Mrs. Horton and vegetarian cuisine and Mrs. Huminski and cookie decorating (word has it they were very professional-looking).

The Student Council hopes next year's convocation will be as successful as the 2009-2010 event.

Hailey Murphy, *Class of 2010*

The Cacophonous Clamor of Chlorinated Camradery

Led by the fearless Eileen Earl and Suzy Hatch, the members of the Barlow Girls' Swimming and Diving Team confidently and tearfully brought yet another successful season to a close. The team, known for its unity, team spirit, and flashy swimsuits, bravely stuck out a season riddled with injuries, swine flu, and inconvenient fire drills. Despite overwhelming odds due to their underwhelming numbers, they managed to pull off a record of 4-7, with gleaming smiles the whole way through.

2009's new members showed strong potential. Freshman Caroline Warren blew her opponents — and often her teammates — out of the water by beating out the 500m and 200m, awing everyone with her gorgeous backstroke, and supporting her team in both the medley and 400m free relays. Olivia Fracassini, affectionately known as "The Frac," showing strong potential in her premier season, and following in the footsteps of Cieri, swam the 200m and 400m free relays, as well as the medley relay and the 50m and 100m free. Emily Spak also showed herself to be a steady swimmer in the 200m free and breaststroke, as well as various relays. Nor can one ignore junior newcomer Molly McQuade's relentless commitment to her newfound team in her 100m free and relays.

The sophomore swimmers, though few, hold their own without question. Carolina Boffa's constant backstroke and T.J. Deen's impressive medley strike fear into the hearts of their opponents, and inspire strong cheers from their teammates.

And, of course, the team will be greatly depleted without its vast senior membership. The leadership of captains Morgan Christy, Brittany Coppinger and Katie Cieri will be sorely missed. The team will never forget Morgan's fierce breaststroke, BCopp's unshakable 500m,



or Cieri's powerful sprint. Brittany Calzone's gorgeous form as Barlow's best, and only, diver, may never be matched. Ally Colonna and Erin Baker, inseparable as always, will be missed for their joint antics, as well as their free-style and breaststroke, respectively. Sarah Woodbyrne consistently had her team's back, never failing to amaze in the medley relay and 100m backstroke. Moreover, the distance freestyle of both Kate Tschudi and Marissa Smith insured that Barlow never came up short. The team mourned the absence of Juliana Werfelman, who, due to a knee injury, was unable to make a star appearance in any meets this season.

The upcoming seniors have what it takes to fill these immense shoes, however. Along with the aforementioned McQuade, Clair Belleveau, Shana Sims, Kyana Powers, and Jillian Ahluwalia all show strong leadership potential, as well as an infectious love for their sport and teammates. Clair, Kyana, and Shana are all prized for their beautiful butterflys, and they shall continue to make waves in the future. And Ahluwalia, valued not only for her incredible last name, but for her steadfast performance in the 50m and 100m free as well as consistent relays.

Barlow swimmers Christy, McQuade, Tschudi, Belleveau, Warren, Baker, Woodbyrne, Powers and Cieri make a strong showing in both individual events and relays at SWCs. And Christy, Cieri, Tschudi, Powers, Woodbyrne, Warren, and Belleveau followed up this performance with a greatly spirited appearance at State Finals. To the very last event, they radiated the enthusiasm, character and love for their team that has always optimized Barlow Girls' Swim.

Katie Cieri, *Class of 2010*

“Journey Through Spain” at Mark Twain Library

On February 21 at 3 pm, Alesandra Greco, daughter of famed flamenco dancer Jose Greco, along with other dancers, singers and instrumentalists, will be performing a lecture/performance entitled “A Journey Through Spain, Its Dance and Music.” Fandangos, flamenco, guitars, castanets, tango — you name it and it will probably be featured. This event will be a

lively time and a learning experience as Ms. Greco describes and performs a variety of dance and music from throughout Spain.

Refreshments will be served. There is no charge for admission, but reservations are required. Sign up sheets for the event will be available at the library the first week in February, or you can call the library at 203-938-2545.



Barlow Students Among Winners at Connecticut Art Education Association

The Connecticut Art Education Association announced the winners of the Scholastic Art Show, which is being held at the University of Hartford. Congratulations to each Barlow artist represented in the following list of outstanding awards:

Elizabeth Truscott, Painting 2 - Honorable Mention

Lincoln Hill, Sculpture 2 - Silver

Beth Bailey, teacher

Erica Loder, Jewelry 2 - Gold

Caroline Caglioni, Jewelry 2 - Silver

Lorna Schenck, Jewelry 2 - Honorable Mention

Lee Skalkos, teacher

Madelina Breda, Art Portfolio 2 - Gold

Kelsey McKissick, Drawing 2 - Honorable Mention

Isabel von Jena, Painting 2 - Honorable Mention

Daniel Spinner, teacher

Taylor Eden, Drawing 2 - Honorable Mention

Anna Naser, Sculpture 2 - Honorable Mention

Debra Taubner, teacher

The awards were presented on January 31 at the Lincoln Theater, University of Hartford. The guest speaker was Carol Padburg, painter and instructor at the Hartford Art School. The exhibit is open daily through February 11. For more information, visit <http://tinyurl.com/ybtjz4> Below is a piece submitted from the portfolio of the Class of 2010 student Madeline Breda:



Joel Barlow High School Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA)

2009 - 2010 Volunteer Opportunities

Parent involvement is key to the success of your student's school experience. Your involvement in the PTSA will make a difference and is greatly appreciated. **Please indicate your areas of interest.** The Volunteer Coordinator will contact you.

Please check those items that interest you.

- Media Center/Library (shelving, cataloging, computer work, general assistance)
- Academic Departments (administrative and clerical help, copying)
- Theater/Music/Art (ticket sales, production, promotion, special events, guest artists)
- Capstone Student Projects (typically 2nd semester)
- Main Office (copying, mailings, clerical)
- School Store
- Buzz Book (make phone calls to confirm information, need 10-12 volunteers)
- Survey Liaison (coordinate parent surveys via internet)
- Transition Advisory Committee (assist parents new to the school with basic questions)
- Open House (Membership sign-up, Buzz Book distributions, refreshments)
- Newsletter (writing copy)
- Teacher/Staff Lunches in January and June (cook/bake, decorate, hospitality)
- Post Prom (planning, fund-raising, hospitality, decorating, chaperone)
- Senior Graduation Event (planning, hospitality)
- Hospitality (refreshments for PTSA or school sponsored events)
- Public Relations (publish student, faculty and school achievements)
- Barlow Beautification (assist with plantings, painting and sprucing up the campus)
- Other area of interest _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone Numbers: _____ E-mail: _____

Please return to: **Lisa Weggeman, lweggeman@aol.com**
PTSA Volunteer Coordinator
15 Sidecut Road, Redding 06896

You may access this form on the JBHS website: www.er9.org/jbhs, PTSA, Forms.

Second Annual Trivia Bee Around the Corner!

The Easton Learning Foundation has announced the date for the Annual Trivia Bee and it will be held on Thursday, May 20 from 7:00-9:00 pm.



Mark your calendars, recruit friends and/or family members as teammates and “bee” creative with your team name. If you’re not brave enough to take the stage, then join the Easton and Redding communities to root your favorite team on. Proceeds

from the event will benefit the Easton Learning Foundation.

Once again, Samuel Staples Elementary School will be the location for the fundraiser, and our own very witty and entertaining Head of School, Tom McMorran, will emcee the function. Watch for more information and registration form in a future issue of the *Focus* newsletter.



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Got Questions?

The Joel Barlow High School Transition Team is a readily available source of information to make the transition to Barlow a smooth one — for both student and parent.

Feel free to contact any of the **Transition Team Ambassadors** for help and advice:

Colleen Joyce	ctjoyce1@gmail.com	938-0569
Lauren Ashton.....	Lashton2000@optonline.net	938-8333
Patsy King	pking62@optonline.net	938-2775
Suzanne Kramer ...	suzannek@optonline.net	938-8429
Allison Murphy	mbmamm@aol.com	938-3213
Paula Schwear	pschwear@yahoo.com	938-9349
Jill Young	jillyoung@sbcglobal.net	445-1543
Jen Wastrom	jwastrom@optonline.net	938-0601
Rowena Powers	thepowers1@optonline.net	664-1031
Margot Abrams	Margot184@optonline.net	459-4759

JBHS Guidance Advisor

Henry Del Angelo hdelangelo@region9ps.org938-2508

Sign Up At Stop & Shop

Due to a program sponsored by Stop & Shop, a portion of the cost of your groceries can be assigned to Joel Barlow High School.

All you have to do is the following: Log on to www.stopandshop.com/aplus to register online and click on “Register your card” **or** Dial 1-877-275-2758 to register your card over the phone.

After you register, each shopping trip at Stop & Shop using your Stop & Shop card will earn cash for JBHS. Each month, the amount of cash awarded will be updated on the Stop & Shop website. You can track the amount of points you earn for our school by checking your grocery receipt and online when you create an account at stopandshop.com. Our school will receive a check at the end of the program. The money can be used for educational needs.

You must register your card every year. In order for JBHS to benefit, please take note that you will need ID# 08289.

Also, do not forget to encourage your friends and relatives to do the same. It could mean the world to our children.

We appreciate the community outreach of Stop & Shop.

Students Participate in Western Regional Festival

On January 15 and 16, the following student participated in the Western Regional Festival, sponsored by the Connecticut Music Educators’ Association:

Orchestra: Cormac Cummiskey, Jason Fenwick, Charlotte Ullman, Glen Ullman

Band: Stephanie Erspamer

Jazz Ensemble: Brittany Williams (also qualified for Band, but can only perform with one group)

The students were selected, based on an audition piece they performed in November. The festival was held at New Canaan High School and included students from all the high schools in Fairfield County.

Navigate the JBHS Website

Here are directions to some of the recent additions on the JBHS website:

College Visits: From the home page, click “enter site”, put cursor over “Counseling/Guidance” and click on “eBoard which includes College & Scholarship Information”. Here, you’ll find College Rep Visits under “Notices”

College Scholarships: Follow instructions above, including “eBoard” link. Click on “Scholarships” tab to review individual information.

Sports Calendar: From the home page, click “enter site”, put cursor over “Athletics” and click on “Calendar”, or click on “Calendar”, then “Athletics’ Calendar”. Sort by 2-Day, Week, Month, Season, etc.

Barlow Students Reach Out to Others in Need

In response to the tragic events in Haiti, students are currently in the process of planning ideas to help those individuals whose lives have been changed forever by the recent earthquake. In the meantime, below are ways students have supported or are in the process of reaching out to others:

- Several members of the Boys' Lacrosse team sought donations from the community to support the Wounded Warrior Project this past Veterans' Day. As a result of the efforts of the following students, \$1,545 was recently donated to the organization: Jesse Beatty, Zach Cordelli, Conn Curry, Nick Granfors, Doug Indelicato, Dominic Lee, Michael Mattson, Mike McGowan, Corey van Oostendorp, Jackson Sennett, Wyatt Tompkins, Drew and Ian Zangrillo.
- The X-Period Group REACT (Redding Easton Association for Counseling on Transition), formerly known as TLMA (Transitional Learning Management Association) will kickoff three important activities at the beginning of the second semester:
 - "Holiday Cards for Heroes" campaign: REACT will supply materials for Valentine's cards, which our students and staff can use to create cards and write messages to our servicemen and women. The cards will be sent, along with care packages, to a Marine base in Afghanistan, where the friend of a REACT member's parents is stationed.
 - Wrist bracelets with the words "Barlow Supports the Wounded Warriors" will be sold to students and staff for \$1.00 each. All proceeds will be sent to the Wounded Warriors Project.
 - "JBHS - Hope for Haiti" plastic bracelets will be sold for \$1.00 per bracelet with all of the proceeds to be sent to the Hope for Haiti Foundation, which is sponsored by NBC.

Winter Staff Luncheon Held January 20

The PTSA sponsored the annual winter Staff Luncheon to all staff members of Joel Barlow High School. Co-Chairs Steph Belleveau and Candy Wood McAdam organized this event. The delicious hot food was made by O'Neill's of Bethel, and the scrumptious homemade desserts were made by parents. Our many wonderful volunteers served the food and provided a welcoming atmosphere. We appreciated all of the kind feedback, and look forward to the spring luncheon!



Upcoming JBHS Events ...

FEBRUARY 3, 2010: FACILITIES & FIELDS COMMITTEE MEETING, 7:00 pm, Room B109

FEBRUARY 5-6, 2010: WINTER SHOW, 8:00–9:00 pm, Auditorium

FEBRUARY 9, 2010: AMERICAN MATHEMATICS COMPETITION, 9:30 am

FEBRUARY 11, 2010: COFFEE HOUSE, 7:00–9:00 pm, Room A109

FEBRUARY 15, 2010: NO SCHOOL, Presidents' Day

FEBRUARY 16–19, 2010: NO SCHOOL, Winter Recess

FEBRUARY 23, 2010: REGION 9 BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING, 7:00–9:30 pm, Room B109

FEBRUARY 25, 2010: SPRING SPORTS ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING, 7:00–9:00 pm, Lower Gym

FEBRUARY 26, 2010: FILM FESTIVAL, 7:00–10:00 pm, Auditorium

The next meeting of the 2009–2010 PTSA will be held on

**February 9, 2010
from 9:30 am - 11:00 am**

**in Room B109 at Joel Barlow High School
Please join us!**

FEATURED TOPIC:

Coffee With The Principal

Join us for an informal get-together with Barlow Head of School Tom McMorrان for a discussion of topics of interest to parents. Feel free to bring your questions. Issues concerning individual students will not be addressed during this format.

Post Prom Planning Has Need for Volunteers

For parents new to Barlow, Post Prom is a yearly tradition at our school. Its sole purpose is to provide Joel Barlow juniors, seniors, and their guests with a fun, safe, chaperoned and alcohol-free destination after they leave the formal prom. The event can only happen if we receive financial support from junior and senior families, and volunteer help from as many parents as possible.

This year the Post Prom will get underway on May 16th at about 12:30 am. This is later than the usual time as the prom is being held in Stamford this year. The theme is currently being decided upon by the senior Student Council. If you are a parent of a junior or senior, please look for the first mailing the last week of February. We are in need of parent volunteers from all grade levels to help with decorating, chaperoning, serving food, etc. Our first meeting was held on January 27, but this is the first of many organizational meetings needed to make this year's Post Prom a success. If you can help out in any capacity, please contact Wanda Augustyn at 203-938-3859 or email at acesaces@msn.com

Open Mic Night is Back!

Open Mic Night is back! Rock bands, classical musicians, singers, comedians, and dancers ... talents of all kinds! If you like to perform, the "Save The Date" for Friday, March 12, 2010 from 7-9 pm at the Mark Twain Library.



Registrations are due no later than March 3.

This is a teen event for grades 7-9. Performer registration forms will be available at the library, the JBHS music department and on the library website:

www.marktwainlibrary.org

Talk to your friends about this fun event! Please call Lauren Ambler at 938-8405 with help to register your performance or to answer any questions you may have regarding this night of fun. Audience sign-up sheets will be available at the library soon!

New Members Featured at PTSA Meeting

The new Region 9 District Superintendent, Dr. Michael Cicchetti, was introduced to the JBHS PTSA at the January meeting. Pictured below are a few of the attendees (l. to r., front row: Head of School Tom McMorrان, Superintendent Dr. Michael Cicchetti and PTSA President Kim Breda; back row: former PTSA president Colleen Joyce, Al-



ice Smith, Candy Wood McAdam and PTSA Vice President Pam Robey).

Mr. McMorrان introduced Dr. Cicchetti saying, "He will challenge us to grow." Dr. Cicchetti then spoke to the group about his immediate attraction to the beauty of the area, his dedication to the "emotional well-being of the students" and the importance of "connecting the school to the community." When asked about his hour-long drive to work each day, Dr. Cicchetti replied, "You don't mind the commute when you love the place you go."



Staff Member Appointed to State Committee

In the fall, Jonathan Budd, English teacher and Co-Director of the Writing Center, served as an appointed member of the Connecticut Academic Performance Test Modified Assessment System standard-setting committee for the Connecticut State Department of Education.



Jazz Ensemble Performs with Masuk High School

On January 13, the Jazz Ensemble performed a joint concert with Masuk High School in the Joel Barlow cafeteria. Also performing that evening was the JBHS A Capella group, X-Minute Break. A unique highlight of the concert was the collaborative performance of both Jazz Ensembles performing together. They learned and rehearsed an entire arrangement beginning at 4:30 pm that afternoon, shared a pizza dinner, then performed to a packed cafeteria.

PTSA Hosts Gap Year Discussion

On January 7, the PTSA presented a discussion on “Gap Year” possibilities — work, volunteer service, study and travel opportunities for graduating high school seniors as an alternative to college. The program included two college students who shared their post-high school experiences, along with Mr. Mitch Holmes, Academic Dean at Naugatuck Community College.

The term ‘gap year’ describes a period of time post-high school for young adults to spend a year away from the academic treadmill. Though the concept may be new to many in the USA, it’s an established tradition elsewhere. In the UK, about 11% of the 300,000 college-bound seniors take a gap year before enrolling. But according to *USA Today*, guidance counselors and college admissions officers say they’re seeing a surge of interest on this side of the pond as well. “Counselors are recognizing that there are many pathways to college,” says David Hawkins, director of public policy and research at the National Association for College Admission Counseling. “They see that, if properly vetted, these opportunities could actually help students succeed in college.”

Mr. Holmes explained the variety of Associate Degrees and Certificates along with hundreds of continuing education opportunities offered by Naugatuck Valley Community College in Waterbury as an alternative to students who may want to learn more about a particular field before making a decision as to what to focus on in a four-year college course of study. He also spoke of his own gap year experience, saying it had changed his life.

“With the ever-increasing costs of a college education and the pressure on students to *get into college*, many parents might want to step back and reassess whether the goal is simply “access to college” or “success in college,” said former Barlow PTSA President and organizer of this event, Colleen Joyce. “Studies show that students who take a year off to work, volunteer or attend community college are very successful in their college careers. In fact, Harvard and Princeton require that some of their accepted applicants pursue a GAP year experience before entering their college.”

For more information on Gap Year programs, Colleen suggests the following two websites: www.hotchkiss.org/Academics/GapYear.asp and http://shs.ssdvt.org/pages/SpringVT_SHSGuidance/career/gap. Colleen will

assist parents and students in structuring meaningful GAP year experiences and can be reached at ctjoyce1@gmail.com for more information. Over 50 people attended the event, which was held at the Mark Twain Library. It was also covered by NewsChannel 12.



The photo at left shows recent Barlow graduate, Matthew Hanczor, at one of his three internships during his Gap Year program. He started his job at Mac’s Brewery in New Zealand at 5 am and had to clean the vats (Matthew is pictured entering one of the brewery vats) thoroughly before the company would fill them with hops and barley for brewing.