



PLYMOUTH VOYAGER

SPRING/
SUMMER

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14



College & Career Readiness Edition:

How the Plymouth Public Schools weaves college and career readiness into the curriculum from kindergarten through senior year

Valuable Financial Aid Guidelines

GUIDANCE:

Helping Students Align Their Career Goals

"What Do You Want to Be?"

SPRING/SUMMER 2014

1 Superintendent's Message

2 Student Spotlight

Max Bassett

3 Faculty Spotlight

Chris Campbell

5 Curriculum

Project Growth, AP Honor Roll

8 College and Career Readiness

Guidance, Financial Aid,
One Family's Path to Career Readiness

12 Community

Credit for Life Fair

15 News & Noteworthy

Credit Union

18 Inspiration Awards

Summer Ivan, Sarah Brown

20 Alumni Spotlight

Emmett Cosgrove,
Nick Stephen,
Tina Saunders



*"I want to be an inventor.
I want to invent something
better than gasoline to help
the environment. I want
to help people with my
inventions."*

CADE McLAUGHLIN



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Dr. Gary Maestas

Superintendent of Plymouth Public Schools



**"College and career readiness
is essential to assure our
students' success."**

Members of the Plymouth School Community,

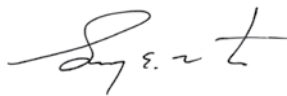
Student preparedness for life after high school can be worrisome. This edition of the Voyager is devoted to providing information to our parents, families and community on college and career readiness. Just last week I had the pleasure of witnessing hundreds of our seniors graduate. I could only imagine how all their parents navigated the college process, or how they provided guidance to their children as they help them choose their path to their prospective careers.

My hope is this edition provides you with some insight on what is involved in the process of assisting your child, grandchild or family member on their road ahead and information on how to navigate what's ahead.

College and career readiness is essential to assure our students' success.

Please take a moment to page through this magazine to see if there is something that can assist you in helping our youth become better prepared for their futures.

Sincerely,



Gary E. Maestas, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

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Publication Information

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Max Bassett

Plymouth South High School Senior Max Bassett is headed to the United States Military Academy at West Point. He proudly reports for duty on July 2nd. "I've wanted to be in the Army since I was ten. The more I learned about West Point, the more I've fallen in love with it," said Max. After graduating from West Point, he will commission into the Army as a Second Lieutenant. "It's what I've always wanted to do. It's not for everybody. Everybody does their part somehow. This is how I want to do mine," Max said.

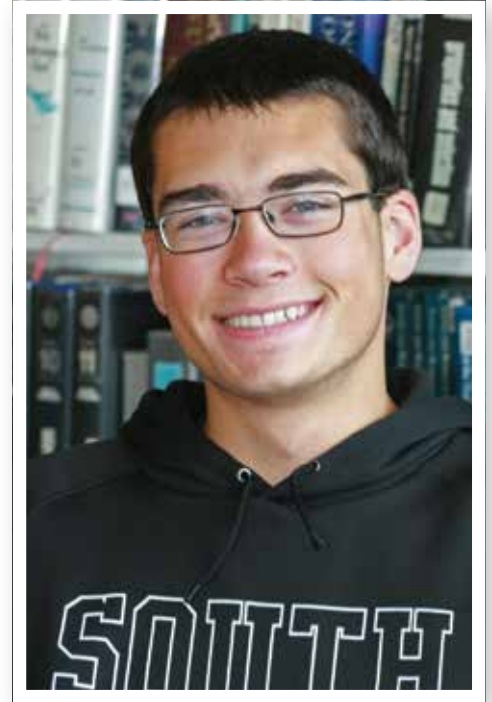
During his years at South, Max has been an academic superstar, taking Advanced Placement classes in Chemistry, English, and U.S. History during his Junior year and then tackling five Advanced Placement classes – European History, Spanish, Calculus, Physics, and English – as a Senior. "Plymouth South has prepared me well for the college workload. Some of my friends who are juniors and seniors in college said my classes this year were tougher than their Freshman year in college. All four years have been very well-rounded. I've gotten all the academic support I've needed. Between the teachers, students, and coaches, it feels like a family," he said.

Max listed 24 Plymouth teachers and coaches who have greatly influenced his life: Mrs. Hess, Mrs. Auld, Mrs. Fry, Mrs. Baird, Mr. Weiss, Mrs. Wolf, Mrs. Zachary, Mrs. Diaz, Mr. Yaeger, Ms. Ivan, Ms. Stevens, Mr. Lippa, Ms. Slattery, Ms. Brown, Mr. Strohschneider, Mr. Carpenito, Mr. Tracey, Mr. Clifford, Mr. Peila, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Walker, Ms. Infascelli, Mr. Sheridan, and Mr. Byrne.

Max fondly recalled time spent in class with Ms. Brown and Mr. Strohschneider at PCIS in seventh grade. "I really liked their classes, not just the content. They were great people to be around," said Max. He also praised Coach Meg Slattery who was his cross country and distance coach. Despite a brief stint as a youth soccer player, Max was not an athlete until freshman year in high school. He participated in winter track, spring track, and cross country for 12 seasons at South. "I ran mainly to get in shape for the Army," he said. "Coach Slattery is a great coach, and a great person. She's one of the reasons that I enjoy running. She's helped me a lot over the years," said Max. He also spoke of the high caliber of teaching shown by his Spanish teacher, Mr. Carpenito. "He's one of the best teachers I've ever had," said Max.

Hiking is another of Max's hobbies, and can boast of exploring Acadia National Park in Maine, the White Mountains in New Hampshire, and Myles Standish State Forest right here in Plymouth. He also loves to read, and credits his AP English teacher, Mr. Lippa, with introducing him to his favorite authors. "Mr. Lippa taught me a lot. He taught me a lot about philosophy, and exposed me to my favorite authors. I love Hemingway and Fitzgerald. I love classic literature. I'm that kid who likes the books we read in English class," declared Max.

Max said he will miss his best friends on the cross country team and the camaraderie they share. Max will especially miss his family. "We are very close. It's definitely going to be one of the toughest parts," he said. Max plans to have a lifelong career in the military, and the opportunity to lead motivates him. "I think I'll be a good leader



because I think it is about taking care of those appointed under me. It just feels like what I'm supposed to do. I love my country. I've been given great opportunities since I was born," said Max.

As he reflected on his last few weeks as a high school student, Max praised Plymouth's schools and its people. "They have prepared me very well academically, athletically, and socially. I'll miss my family the most, but I'm also going to miss everything I'm used to – friends, school, teachers, classes, and having the same schedule for eighteen years. I'll miss the people," envisioned Max.



"I want to be a teacher because I can help people learn. It would be fun."

JANELLE CLANCY

Chris Campbell

One of the main goals of the Plymouth Public Schools is to weave college and career readiness into the curriculum from kindergarten through senior year. Whether it's through a kindergarten career day, a senior project on food sustainability, a plumbing internship, the Robotics Club, a virtual course in Mandarin Chinese, an AP course in European History, a program in TV Production, or the opportunity to explore career options in middle school, Plymouth pupils are offered numerous opportunities to prepare for life beyond high school.

Students have access to Senior Projects, expanded academic programs, virtual courses, career fairs, after school clubs, increased AP course offerings, Naviance, and co-ops and internships for vocational and technical students. *"Our goal is to prepare all students to be college and career ready with options and opportunity. College and career readiness demands that our students not only have a rich and rigorous content knowledge, but can also demonstrate that they know how to learn and build upon that content knowledge to solve problems,"* assured Assistant Superintendent Chris Campbell.

One of the ways this is accomplished at the high school level is through Senior Projects. "The Senior Project program is very valuable because it provides students with such soft skills as organization, time management, and learning how to work independently. The mentoring piece is an extremely valuable part of it. Students learn what their career path is and what they want to focus on," said Chris. Students have to find a mentor, create a project or a product, and complete a research paper.

Nancy Rozak, a teacher at North and the Senior Project facilitator, said, "We are

trying to make students more independent. Students are given deadlines, and then we say, 'Go do it.' They are lost initially, but we push them to do it. On their own, they have to call somebody and find a mentor. Sometimes a mentor moves, and we tell them to go find another one. They learn problem-solving skills, and it helps with their socialization. They have to make two presentations to their classmates and then a final presentation to judges, who they might not know," said Nancy.

In a real-world lesson, Nancy said that students at North recently learned the hard way about the precariousness of project presentations. "Most students use Prezi, which is like a beefed up PowerPoint. The site was down when some had to present, and they were getting anxious. We told them that stuff like this happens, and just go in and present. It made them extra nervous, but when it was all done, they felt great. I wouldn't wish that on them, but it was the best lesson they could ever learn."

Nancy explained that some students change their course of study and their choice of a college major based on their senior project experiences. "Many students are able to determine if they want to do something as a career or as a passion. Sometimes they are the same, and sometimes they are different. One student changed his major before he paid a dime for college tuition," said Nancy.

Senior Isabel Mallon (class of 2014) examined food production for her Senior Project. She helped organize a farmer's market, interviewed a chef in Boston, and created a film about it. Dasmine Jones created a project on disruptive behavior disorders. She conducted research, worked with a mentor, and presented her findings.

Students at South High create Senior Projects and participate in a Senior Showcase where students present their findings and share the outcomes of their projects.



Students at all schools are able to take advantage of recently expanded academic programs such as engineering, Spanish, French, algebra, the performing arts, the integration of arts technology with engineering, and Lego Robotics.

Advanced middle school students are invited to participate in a Virtual High School which allows them to take high school level classes while still in middle school. The district continues to increase its AP course offerings. Students can take advanced math classes at the high school level such as Discrete Math and Calculus BC. Latin is available at South High, and some students take a virtual Mandarin Chinese course. Students can similarly take any other foreign language course not offered at either high school in a virtual classroom setting.

"The virtual opportunity really prepares them for college. It is a full-fledged opportunity for students to integrate technology into their classes in middle school and high school. It gets students ready for college," said Chris. In that the Plymouth Public Schools offers students different ways in which to start visualizing a career path for themselves, Chris went on to explain, "We provide a lot of opportunities for students to know what they are interested in and to get a diverse perspective on different career paths."

In Plymouth, this can start as early as kindergarten. At Manomet Elementary

continued on page 4

Chris Campbell

continued from page 3

School, kindergarten students are exposed to project-based learning which culminates in a career fair. At Federal Furnace Elementary School, students attend presentations by different authors in order to learn about their careers. Federal Furnace students also participate in a health fair where they learn about a variety of careers in the healthcare industry. Robotics students have the opportunity to meet with an engineer through their Advanced Readiness Learners program. Students are able to visit the Office of Emergency Management in Cedarville to learn about careers in disaster preparedness.

At Cold Spring Elementary School, students can participate in numerous after school clubs throughout the school year which might pique an interest in a future career path. Students can choose from clubs in Minecraft, robotics, science and gardening, theater, and quilting. *"We do so much for career readiness. Lots of activities are going on in the classrooms on a daily basis. We emphasize collaboration, problem solving, and critical thinking—all 21st century domains,"* emphasized Cold Spring Principal Laura Dolloff.

At PCIS, seventh grade students participate in Career Day. "Volunteers from the community come in and prepare presentations about their specific jobs. There are about 20 different presentations by community members such as police officers, a K-9 officer, social workers, lawyers, and environmental engineers. Seventh grade teachers follow up with an academic exercise and ask the students what they have learned," explained PCIS Guidance Counselor Michele Maguire.

Guidance Counselor Mona High runs a March Madness College Awareness Program at PCIS. Students complete a research sheet about a college of their choice, including admission requirements, tuition and housing costs, and programs available at the college. Students are awarded gifts that are sent in by 50 colleges from around the country. This

year's rewards included banners, pencils, T-shirts, hats, water bottles, and pennants – all bearing different logos from colleges across the country. "The kids get excited to receive gifts. My belief is to give students an awareness of what is out there for their future," said Mona.

Another mechanism for immersing PCIS students in a college preparedness mindset is to go on college field trips with their guidance counselors to Bridgewater State University and Massachusetts Maritime Academy. Students are versed on such college concepts as declaring a major and the difference between a bachelor's degree and a master's degree before the trips.

Through Naviance, eighth grade students at PCIS are able to explore different career options. "Students can learn about job descriptions, wages, and different regional salaries. They learn about the level of training and education they will need and which college offers this as a major," said Michele. She said this career exploration gets students thinking about "what might I want my life to look like in six, seven, or ten years. We want them to think about the qualities that are needed to be a successful student, career person, and friend. We are asking students to be mindful of what they bring to the table. What are their strengths, and also where is there room for growth? We want them to be positive and productive and make contributions in a positive way. It's so much more than, 'Do you possess the capacity to balance this company's assets?' It's so much more than that. It's being part of something bigger than yourself and contributing in a meaningful way. We are always bringing it back to growth and development as a student, learner, and a contributing member of a community," illuminated Michele.

Students at Plymouth South Middle School also attend a Career Day at school where community members come in and discuss their jobs with students.

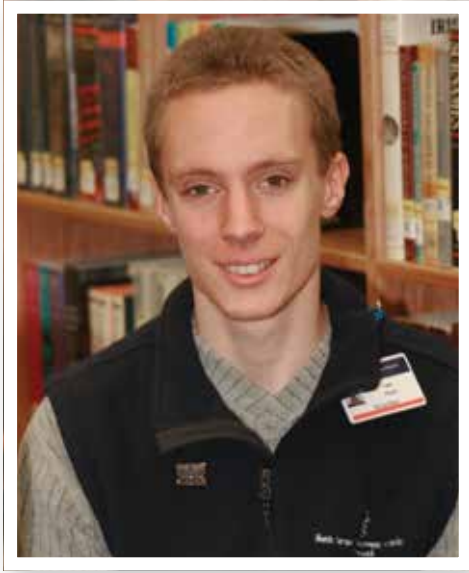
North students are invited to participate in the American Legion Student Trooper

program at the Massachusetts State Police Academy in Braintree, where students between the ages of 15-17 can take part in a one week residential training experience in order to see if a career as a state trooper is in their future.

Students in the vocational and technical education programs at North and South high schools spend time all year training on job sites, in businesses, and right at school in their respective hands-on restaurant, salon, automotive repair center, preschool, and graphic design center, to name a few. "We have a strong career readiness program. We provide different pathways to work and college, such as a student who works as a CNA (certified nurse assistant) during high school and then attends Quincy College to work towards their nursing degree," said VTE Principal Jim Hanna. Students in the vocational and technical program also benefit from the implementation of new technology into their fields of study which guarantees that their skills are cutting edge when it comes time to applying for jobs. "We've added a solar power curriculum piece to our electrical program. There is a high demand for skilled labor for electricians and auto technicians, as well. Many of our co-op employers are prepared to offer positions to our students after high school," said Jim. North and South VTE students are ready to "hit the ground running" after graduation.

Assistant Superintendent Chris Campbell summed up the district's goal for college and career readiness. "We must work with our students and families to build a college-going culture and provide the necessary supports along the way. We must ensure equitable exposure to a wide range of extracurricular and enrichment opportunities. Equally important is supporting college and career exploration and assessment. Although some students will not choose college as an option, of critical importance to us is that they are prepared to be successful no matter what choice they make."

Project Growth



Special Needs students at Plymouth North High School who are between the ages of 18-22 have access to a great program called Project Growth. "It is a community-based vocational education program that focuses on self-determination, functional academics, and transition skills," said Special Needs teacher Christine Belmonte.

In the program, students learn to increase their vocational skills so that they can either get jobs or volunteer at different organizations in Plymouth. They also learn how to conduct job searches, fill out job applications, and prepare for job interviews. Some students obtain internships or job shadow, and some students take classes at Cape Cod Community College. Ian Huer, a Project Growth student, was recently hired at Beth Israel Deaconess Hospital in Plymouth as a Dietary Aide. "He's very independent, and very capable. It's amazing, the things he does. He's at the most independent level possible at a job site. He will even take Gatra to and from work," said Christine. Ian snagged a job at the hospital after volunteering there for a year. "My responsibility is to deliver food to the right patient in the right room. I'm going to be a Food Service Aide," said Ian.

Through Project Growth, Ian has learned how to write a resume, improve his communication skills, handle phone conversations, handle money, and purchase groceries. He has also memorized the

entire Gatra bus schedule. He had to assemble a portfolio which he said contains "a letter of introduction, proof of employability, and work-based learning samples and assessments."

Ian aced his interview, and his new job begins in June. He is looking forward to interacting with the patients, and he easily memorized the names of returning patients during his year as a volunteer. His future is as bright as his smile. "I might be nervous at first, but then I'll be o.k. I'm a hard worker, and I learn quickly," he said.

Christine said the level of pride the students have in their abilities is "something to see." "It's their bank account, their job. It really improves their social skills. It's very meaningful," said Christine.



"I want to be an orthodontist because my dentist told me that her job was fun, and a lot of people in my family are doctors and nurses."

RACHEL MOTYKA

"I want to be a veterinarian because I love animals, and I want to help them be healthier."

ANJOLIQUE SANTIAGO



AP Honor Roll

Both Plymouth South High School and Plymouth North High School recently earned placement on the College Board's 4th Annual AP (Advanced Placement) District Honor Roll. Only 477 school districts from the United States and Canada earned the award this year. "These outcomes are a powerful testament to educators' belief that a more diverse population of students is ready for the sort of rigor that will prepare them for success in college," said Trevor Packer, who serves as the College Board's senior vice president of AP and Instruction.

South Principal Patty Fry is a tireless advocate of AP expansion at South. "What I love about the program is that the skills they learn will help them in their college courses. For example, in AP English students have to debate and defend their ideas. There is value in this at the college level. Two of our teachers are national readers. They have been selected to read AP tests across the country. Our teachers are completely behind it," said Patty.

One way that South has increased its AP offerings is to run courses even if few students enroll. "I run it no matter what.

The students know we value it," said Patty. South also invites some of its graduates to speak at the annual AP Breakfast.

"They explain what it did for them at the college level. Our population used to be 1650 students, and 106 would take the AP tests. Now we have 1100 students, and 327 students are taking AP tests," said Fry.

South also holds an AP t-shirt design contest, and students all wear their t-shirts to school on the same day.

"We want to build a culture of it so that it is the norm. We want eighth graders thinking about the AP program," said Patty. This year at South, 70 students took AP Psychology, and 100 took AP English. There are also students with Individualized Education Plans who take AP courses at South.

"I would love for every student to be exposed to at least one AP course. It's not about the exam. It's about the journey in the classroom," said Patty. She also said that AP courses prepare students for the "independent nature of classes in college."

Most students at South take between one and five AP courses per year. Students also

have the option to take AP courses online. South recognizes students who score a perfect score of five on an AP exam with engraved plaques which hang near their school library. Between ten and twelve South students per year earn this award. The students also receive a certificate and a balloon with the number five on it at their Class Day assembly.

"We applaud the extraordinary efforts of the devoted teachers and administrators in this district who are offering more students the opportunity to engage in rigorous college-level course work," said Trevor.

Patty summed up the inclusive philosophy behind South's AP class expansion, "The kids embrace the content of the class and the skills they learn. The teachers make it accessible. It's a lot of work, but it's not just the best and the brightest students. It's a commitment to all types of students."



"I would love for every student to be exposed to at least one AP course. It's not about the exam. It's about the journey in the classroom."



"I want to be a CEO because I like to be in charge. I want to run a business the right way."

GEOVANE DeMEIRELES



Guidance

Plymouth North High School Guidance Counselor and Department Head Jo-Anne Gretemeyer remembers way back when typewriters were the norm. Then assistant principal John Siever used to hand deliver student updates to her. Long gone are the days when John had to sprint back and forth between the main office and the guidance department. Now both North and South High Schools utilize Naviance, a highly organized and streamlined college and career readiness computer program. Jo-Anne calls Naviance “one-stop shopping for college and career readiness. It’s a more connected process. There is less stress for everyone.” Jo-Anne explained Naviance is a tool that helps students, parents, guidance counselors, and colleges stay connected.

Naviance enables students to visualize themselves as college students, formulate college and career goals, and plan for a smooth college application process. The process begins in sixth grade when students learn organizational skills and set short-term and long-term goals. In seventh grade, students start to explore careers that match their personality type. They also complete a survey asking them what their hopes are for college. In eighth grade, students start to explore colleges and discover which schools offer programs of study that align with their career goals. Students also complete a survey about their transition from middle school to high school. They are asked to think about what their biggest fear is about high school.

Freshman year, students develop skills in “establishing positive relationships, effective studying, time management, and goal setting.” Sophomore year, students learn that hard work can overcome many obstacles. They also learn about different types of intelligences, how to create effective resumes, and the “importance of work, volunteer, and extracurricular experiences.” Students also begin to research college websites and to start thinking about what kinds of colleges interest them. Junior year, students



take a personality survey and see what types of careers match their personality type. They also work on their resumes, plan college visits, and learn important information about their college choices. Senior year, students apply to schools, apply for scholarships, and apply for financial aid.

Both high schools also offer numerous ways to encourage college outreach and college familiarity with students. Sophomores and juniors from North and South High attend a College Planning Night with expert panelists who discuss community college options, the Massachusetts system of Public Higher Education, the selective admissions process, and the financial aid process. An excellent college fair with loads of college representatives is an annual event. In addition to opportunities during the school year for students to get assistance in completing scholarship applications, they can also bring their financial aid award letters to school for help in deciphering their best college options.

South High connects early with parents in order to raise their comfort level with their new role as parents of high schoolers. Parents of ninth graders are invited to a barbeque to set the right tone for family engagement at school. “It’s very important to future success for students to feel happy and comfortable at school. Outcomes are so much better,” said South High’s head of guidance, Emily Nugent.

Faculty at South High produced a video of teachers and staff members dressed in their college sweatshirts in order to make the college landscape feel more personal to students. About 25 representatives from different colleges such as the University of Vermont, Johnson & Wales, and Stonehill, plus representatives from all branches of the military visit South High during lunches throughout the fall to share information with students about their programs. Guidance Counselors staff a beautiful college kiosk during lunches. Students can stop by to inquire about college applications, scholarships, or advice about the college process in general.

Cape Cod Community College sends an admissions officer who enrolls students on the spot. The University of Massachusetts Dartmouth also sends an admissions representative who admits some students that day and encourages other students to finish compiling their applications.

North High displays brightly colored college pennants in the gymnasium foyer. Listed beneath each pennant are the names of seniors who will matriculate at the particular college in the fall.

There is also a Compass Program for those students who are struggling academically. Outreach is made to these students and their families through a spaghetti dinner, individual meetings with teachers, letters, and phone calls.

Financial Aid

Both high schools have done a great job of creating a college-going culture for their students. Something will connect with students, whether it's Naviance, a college planning evening, a college fair, a family barbeque, visits from admissions officers, a display of college pennants, or a handy college information kiosk. Students have tons of resources available to them in order to make college a reality and to help in the process of transforming their vision of themselves from that of a high school student to a successful college student.

"It's about students trying to be comfortable in their own shoes and accepting themselves for who they are. It's great to help students match their interests with a career. One student was an artist and loved science and became a science textbook illustrator. The most rewarding part is to see students successful and happy," affirmed Jo-Anne.

Worth mentioning as Jo-Anne has helped open many doors for many students, she will close the door on this chapter of her journey as she concludes almost 34 years at North High with her retirement in June.

Sooner or later, most families are faced with the reality of the college dream, "How are we going to pay for it?" Jodi Conway, former Financial Aid Director at Pine Manor and Newbury Colleges, and an expert on walking families through the financial aid process, has some words of wisdom about college costs. "Families would benefit tremendously if they would just force themselves to become educated about this. They should try to get some familiarity with the process and get a grasp on it no later than middle school," said Jodi. She said the number one goal for families is to try to save money for college.

"If anyone tells you not to save for college, then they don't understand how assets are looked at. By not saving, you could limit your child's choice of schools instead of offering them every opportunity," said Jodi. She suggests that families take advantage of financial calculator programs that colleges have on their websites. Five or six years before college begins is not too soon. "If you look at the Expected Family Contribution calculator every year, then you have a benchmark to plan for. Middle school is not too late to save. Even 50 dollars a month, or whatever it is that you save, is money that you don't have to borrow," said Jodi.

She also suggests that families take advantage of a program called UPromise. It is a college savings program that has been around for almost 20 years. Families can register online at UPromise.com, and a percentage of credit card purchases at hundreds of different retailers will be saved in an account that your child can access when college rolls around. "It's not a huge amount, but it adds up. It's free money, so why wouldn't you do it," asked Jodi. When she purchased a pair of name brand boots online for her daughter, a \$25.00 credit was deposited into her UPromise account.

Jodi also suggests having the perhaps difficult conversation with your child early on in the college search process about the realities of your family's financial situation. "It is very important to have that discussion. If your child wants to go to a higher cost school, then it might be a way for them to think about earning some merit money," she said. Jodi describes merit money as a "financial incentive to sweeten the pot, and an incentive to enroll really capable students."

The first official step that families take in the financial aid process is to fill out the FAFSA (the Free Application for Federal Student Aid). With this form, parents learn whether
continued on page 10



Financial Aid

continued from page 9

or not they qualify for federal and state financial aid. Some selective colleges also require parents to complete the CSS Profile (short for College Scholarship Service Profile) which is another tool that colleges use to determine how much a family is capable of contributing toward the cost of college. Jodi advises families who need a lot of financial assistance to make sure their child applies to a wide range of schools. "If somebody needs a lot of financial aid, it is important that they apply to a good cross section of schools—low cost to high tuition—because sometimes schools with high tuition have more aid to offer," she said.

Jodi also stresses the importance of choosing at least one financial safety school. Similar to choosing an academic safety school at which a student is likely to gain acceptance, choosing a financial safety school is a way to assure that at least one affordable option is available. Community college is also another excellent way for families to save on college costs. "It's a great option. For students who want to get away from home it might be a tough sell, but it's a fabulous option for people who just can't afford other colleges," said Jodi.

She recommended that students borrow no more than the standard amount of student loans offered through the Stafford Loan program. The amount loaned currently is a total of \$27,000 for all four

years of college. "I would say to be very cognizant and not go too far over this amount. When students graduate from college, a \$500 or \$600 a month student loan payment would make it very difficult for them to live on their own," said Jodi.

Some families wonder if the financial aid packages are negotiable. Jodi said needs-based aid, a calculation of what your family is supposed to be able to pay toward college costs, is not negotiable. "The process has to adhere to federal guidelines. The only time it would be negotiable is if there was a major change in a family, such as a divorce or a parent loses a job and your income drops," said Jodi.

Merit aid, which colleges award in order to lure preferred applicants, can be negotiated, but there is still no guarantee the college will increase the award. "Depending on how badly the school wants that student, they might increase the offer," said Jodi.

She had sincere praise for the way Sean Halpin, Director of Student Support Services, and his guidance staffs at both North and South High help families with the entire financial aid process. "Plymouth does a fabulous job with this. Sean Halpin does a great job of making sure that freshmen and sophomores are introduced to the process," said Jodi.

The Guidance Department at South High offers a FAFSA workshop for parents and an "after the acceptance night" where families can bring their financial award letters and have the differences between them explained. North High and South High have a College Planning Night every year for families. It is aimed at sophomores and juniors, and the financial aid process is thoroughly explained to parents and students. Both schools also encourage and assist students in the scholarship application process.

Paul and Laura Vickery of Plymouth, who have put four children through college, know full well the fear involved in the college cost equation. "We saw it as this monstrous obligation. We were terrified of it. We used to ask ourselves if we were really going to be able to pull it off. We just finished writing our last tuition check in late December. It's the best feeling," said Paul. Their journey came full circle this spring when they and their four children all gathered at their youngest child's college graduation. "Each understood how important it was, and they all made the trip. It was the perfect ending for all of them, and it was like they were all celebrating their accomplishments together," said Laura.

With some planning, frugality, wise decisions, and hard work, college can be a reality for anyone willing to put in the time and effort.

"I want to be a professional soccer player. I want to write a biography about my sports career. I like writing because you get people's attention by writing detailed stuff. I could write some tips for kids."

JOHN LAM

One Family's Path to Career Readiness

For Brian, Michelle, Angela, and Daniel Vickery of Plymouth, growing up in their household meant that going to college was as much of an expectation in life as brushing their teeth and eating their vegetables. Their parents, Laura and Paul, raised them with the attitude that college was part of their path. The Vickerys shared some of the ins and outs of the college admission process they have learned along the way. "Our expectation of them has always been that college is an extension of high school. We ingrained it in all of them as a natural course of life that they would get four year degrees," said Paul.

All graduates of Plymouth South High School, Brian went on to graduate from Middlebury College and Harvard Business School, Michelle from Connecticut College and the University of Connecticut School of Social Work, Angela from the University of Connecticut and then the University of Connecticut School of Law, and Daniel graduated from Dickinson College.

"Our thought was always not 'if' you would study, but 'where.' They had dreams," said Paul. One of the ways in which the Vickerys made college a reality for their children was dinner-table discussions starting in elementary and middle school. "If one of them said even way back in elementary school that they wanted to be a doctor, we would explain that you have to go to college to do that. The college piece is already in there. The thought became I know I'm going to college even if I don't know what for," said Paul.

The Vickerys took their children on college campus tours during their sophomore years in high school in order to expose them to different campus environments. "In the beginning, they were very unrealistic. They wanted California and warm weather schools. We wanted them to get a taste of size and the feel of a campus. We wanted them to get a feel for the ambiance of a campus. They had their own visions of

college, and that kind of changed for each of them as we marched from school to school," said Paul.

The reality of the competitive college admission process surfaced early when Brian, who was third in his class, got rejected from five of the ten colleges to which he applied. "That was very eye-opening. He did very well on his SATs. He was captain of two sports teams in high school. He had a lot of leadership experience," said Paul. The Vickerys learned that in addition to a very strong academic record, college admissions officers want to see a strong commitment to a few extracurricular activities. "They want to see a sustained interest. If a student is a Class Officer, they want to see that for four years. They like to see work experience – they want to see that the student has held a job. They want to see students volunteer. They want to know how a student will enhance the campus," said Paul.

Marlyn E. McGrath, Director of Admissions at Harvard College, said they look for whether or not a student has taken advantage of the opportunities that are available during their high school years. "We don't admit schools or programs. We admit students. What's important is what the student has done with their particular opportunities. SATs certainly can't make or break a student. We like to see how students perform over time," said Marlyn.

She also said that students should submit any exceptional academic work accomplished during high school. Marlyn elaborated that, "If the student is a great pianist or writer, we want to see that. We submit any unusual academic work to our faculty for evaluations. This information should be very helpful to their candidacy. Also, if the student is invited for an interview – go!"



Chris O'Brien, Associate Director of Undergraduate Admissions at Boston College, stressed the importance of a well-written essay in the application. "Students should choose a small episode in their life that shows growth, maturity, and worldliness outside of themselves. We want to see how a little moment has changed their perspective. They don't have to sound heroic. They don't have to contrive a story to make themselves look great. Their story doesn't have to show a perfect ending. We want to see growth, change, flexibility, adaptability, and the humanity of a student. Most students haven't won a Nobel Prize – we aren't looking for that. We want to see someone who is a solid citizen and a thoughtful person," observed Chris. He also said that Boston College looks for students to have engagement in their community through "student government, leadership, becoming an Eagle Scout, athletics, fine arts, performing arts, or work."

Michael Lynch, Director of Undergraduate Admissions at University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, said students should reach out to colleges early and often. Mike suggests doing this early in the college search process through each college's website and social media. "There are certain applicants we like to call stealth applicants. These are students we don't know of until we see their application. We like to see that students are interested in us. They should do their research early. During their sophomore summer, they can start vetting their interests. They can start self-reflection and start the research," said Mike. He also suggested that students assemble an Excel spreadsheet listing all of the colleges in which they have interest. By doing this, students can track each school's requirements and deadlines.

continued on page 12

One Family's Path to Career Readiness

continued from page 11

Mike also stressed the importance of writing a strong essay. "All of the other parts of the application are stats. The essay is an opportunity for students to use their own voice to say this is who I am, and this is what is important to me. Sometimes students write about their grandmother and how great she is. Sometimes this makes us want to admit grandma! Students should relate things back to how it has influenced them. They need to tie it back into themselves," advised Mike.

Paul said one of the most enjoyable parts of putting four children through college was watching them develop their own particular interests and fields of study. Angela entered UConn as a Business major, but fell in love with Law after she took some college courses and worked as a paralegal. She ended up in law school and became an attorney. Daniel started at Dickinson as an Economics major, but after taking a few science courses during his junior year, he focused his studies on Environmental Science. Now he works for a consulting firm where he researches alternative forms of energy sources.

Paul praised the options that a liberal arts education provide, saying, "it can kick open a bunch of doors." The Vickerys said that college not only expanded career options and encouraged postgraduate study, but it also became a home away from home for their children. "School became home. They made fantastic friends. We almost had to get them out of there with a shoehorn. We always told them that school would become home if you let it," emphasized Paul.

As the Vickerys enter this new phase of their lives and the undergraduate education of their children draws to a close, they thought back on the role college has played in their lives. "College was a part of their journey to becoming successful, productive, contributing members of society," reflected Laura.

Credit for Life Fair

Plymouth South High School students recently attended the first annual Credit For Life Fair, held at the Radisson in Plymouth. The idea was the brainchild of local financial advisor and parent Mike Rothberg, and Tech Studies Marketing Instructor Nicole Kierstead.

The purpose of the fair was to simulate real-life financial situations, planning, and decisions. Students were asked to select a career, and based on the authentic salary of their chosen field, they had to walk through what an actual day in the real world would be like, with all of its real-world expenses.

"The students were exposed to the realities of the financial world that await them, and I am very impressed with how seriously they took the experience," said Nicole.

Mike said the purpose of the fair was to increase financial literacy in students and to learn how to apply it in the real world.

At the fair, students had to visit 16 booths and figure out how to balance their financial expenditures with their salary. The booths included career counseling, clothing, communications, community service, credit and lending, education and training/student loans, furniture, health and fitness, insurance, luxury, a night on the town, nutrition, personal care, a reality check, savings and retirement, and transportation.

A credit counseling center was also available for advice and financial guidance. At the education and training/student loan booth, students had to "register" for college courses and decide whether to pay for college with savings or a student loan.

Tyler Glennon, a junior at South, said "I learned a lot. It was really cool to see all



of the things that add up. It was kind of a shocker, a real wake-up call. You have to be dedicated independently to live within your means and not to spend foolishly."

South senior Joshua Azar had similar thoughts about the impact of the fair. "It's important to cut down on your expenses, and to avoid credit cards and loans with a high annual percentage rate. It's important to keep your credit score high."

The fair was sponsored by Cabby Shack, Cape Cod Community College, Coldwell Banker, Eastern Bank, Great Dental Plans, Mass Maritime Academy, Men's Warehouse, MetLife, Nolan Insurance, Old Colony YMCA, Plymouth Career Center, Plymouth Fitness, Plymouth Public Schools, Rockland Trust, Salon Evolution, Setting the Space, South Shore Bank, Southern Mass Credit Union, Stop & Shop, Town Barber Shop, Tracy Chevrolet, Verizon Wireless, and Weymouth Bank.



Credit Union

Plymouth North High School now has a full-service bank and an ATM that accepts deposits. Southern Mass Credit Union opened the branch at North in January, and the ATM was installed in May.

"It's very student friendly – a great resource. We're here to help them out," said President and CEO of Southern Mass Credit Union, Daniel Waltz.

Students, teachers, and staff members can deposit and withdraw money, open checking and savings accounts, and ask for financial planning advice in between classes or at lunchtime. Any student who opens an account is given \$5 in seed money. The only string attached is that students are required to leave this free money in their account for a year (and hopefully add to the initial deposit) and watch it grow.

"Any little bit adds up," said Daniel.

So far almost 50 students and staff members have opened accounts. The goals of the credit union are to increase financial literacy and to encourage students to start saving at an early age. Daniel has plans to add similar services at South High. SMCU has a passbook program in place for elementary school students in Fairhaven, and he hopes this program will eventually start in Plymouth. Students in the early grades – even as soon as kindergarten – would be able to make bank deposits right at school, and start learning how to save money.

"We want them to see how money grows," said Daniel.

Several North students also work at the credit union, and there are opportunities for them to learn about careers in a financial institution from behind the scenes with job shadowing and internship opportunities.

"This is a career-learning opportunity. They can see what goes on behind the scenes with different careers such as an accountant, member service reps, file clerks, human resource managers, collectors, and vice presidents," said Daniel.

The credit union will also give away one \$1,000 college scholarship to a North student who fills out an application and signs up to be a member of the credit union.

North students also have the opportunity to attend a CU4 Reality Fair sponsored by the credit union which is similar to South High's Credit for Life Fair.

"Our mission is to help educate students so that they learn how to save and understand the entire financial picture. We want them to learn how to borrow wisely and to learn to save for retirement as soon as they graduate from college," said Daniel.



"I want to be a food critic because I've always liked to taste different foods. I want to write about them. My favorite food is octopus."

HUNTER OLIVEIRA

Inspiration Awards

The Inspiration Award was created to recognize and honor the extraordinary and inspiring commitment of educators within the Plymouth Public Schools. There are four recipients annually, nominated by faculty members, students or parents. Awards are presented every August at Opening Day.

Plymouth

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Making dreams come true

Summer Ivan

Summer Ivan is a Math teacher at Plymouth South High School. She is also the Varsity Girls' Volleyball Coach and a Senior Class Co-Advisor. Nominated by Director of Student Support Services Sean Halpin, Summer received a 2014 Inspiration Award in acknowledgment of her ability to inspire her students to accomplish much more than they believe possible. Summer truly believes in the world of Math, and shares this with every learner. Both students and staff see her as a selfless role model. Summer spoke at last year's Advanced Placement Breakfast, providing students the opportunity to see her not only as an educator, but as an example of achievement through her own academic success.



Sarah Brown

Plymouth North High School English teacher Sarah Brown was nominated by Senior Will DiGravio for her special talent of engaging each and every student she teaches. Tremendously respected by faculty, Sarah takes the time to truly understand her students, and incorporates her own life lessons to make her teaching more relevant. "Sarah gets the power of community, and the power of teaching the whole child. She critically understands how to encourage passion for writing and reading, and is a team player," said PNHS Principal Kathleen McSweeney.



Emmett Cosgrove



Emmett Cosgrove, having completed his high school career at Plymouth North High School in 2008, went on to graduate from the United States Military Academy at West Point in 2012 with a degree in Systems Engineering Management. Emmett then commissioned into the U.S. Army Aviation Branch as an officer. Upon earning his Aviator Wings, he is now qualified on the UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter.

Emmett currently serves as the Executive Officer of Bravo Company 127th ASB 1st Armored Division Combat Aviation Brigade at Fort Bliss, Texas.

"I will forever be grateful for all of my time spent in the Plymouth Public Schools. Not only did my education prepare me for the challenges I have faced thus far, but it also developed in me a strong work ethic and problem-solving abilities that I will carry with me for the rest of my life. There is a lot more I want to accomplish throughout my career in the military and beyond; much of what these accomplishments may amount to should be attributed to my family of course but also to the teachers I had throughout my years in Plymouth schools. These teachers served not just as educators but also as mentors and role models. The Plymouth school system offers a variety of opportunities that will challenge students in all of the pillars that will make them successful in life," said Emmett.

"I would like to name a few teachers that I will never forget: Mrs. Key, Dr. Swanson, Mrs. Humberd, Mr. Bastoni, Mr. Laverty, Mr. Shea, Mr. Hales, Ms. Cavicci, and Mr. Scheufele. Thank you all. Athletics played a huge role in my development as well. Many of the coaches I had the privilege of learning from taught me how to be a competitor and a leader. They instilled in me resilience. Thank you to Coach Burkhead, Coach Follette, Coach Green, and Coach Todd Zackary."



"I want to go into the Coast Guard because I want to serve the community."

ALEK MIKULIC

Nick Stephen

Nicholas Stephen, a 2010 graduate of Plymouth North High School, will receive his Bachelor's Degree from Bridgewater State University in 2015 with a concentration in New Media. Nick has a form of high functioning autism with semantic pragmatic language disorder, a condition that makes social use of language and understanding words and phrases, particularly expressions and abstract concepts, difficult.

"Art is my way of communicating," said Nicholas, whose hobbies are drawing, anime, manga, and piano. He also joined the Anime Club at Bridgewater.

Although Nick said the workload at college is hefty, his time spent attending school in Plymouth prepared him well for the challenge. "I learned to study independently. My paraprofessionals in high school gently gave me some advice about how to study. I got straight A's in high school," said Nick. At Bridgewater,

he would not only record, but also memorize many of his professor's lectures.

Nick, being a huge Disney fan, confided that one of his goals upon graduation is to snag a paid internship at Disney Studios in Burbank, California. "I love the animation and how it has evolved. I love to see the evolving of the animatronics. It ignites my imagination to modernize animation," he said.

Nicholas praises Sheldon Daly, who was one of his teachers at North. "He was my friend," Nick said. He also thanks Dianale Hurt, Kayla Groezinger, Cam Groezinger, Kelsey Lawson, Michael Sousa, and Bryan Bjorklund for their wonderful friendship, support, and guidance throughout high school and college.

Nicholas received the Doug Flutie Jr. Award for 2010 from the Doug Flutie Jr. Foundation for Autism, awarded to a person who has shown great commitment and dedication to raising awareness of autism spectrum disorder or who has made a significant



impact in the lives of individuals with autism. He was also awarded The ARC of Greater Plymouth Most Accomplished Individual of the Year in 2001 for his musical abilities on the piano. Nicholas has accomplished a great deal at such a young age, and there is no doubt he will go on to achieve his dreams. "I love to learn. I love to boost my knowledge," revealed Nicholas.

Tina Saunders

Tina Saunders is a sixth generation graduate of Plymouth schools. She graduated from Plymouth North High School in 2010, and went on to earn her B.S. in Small Business Management from Southern New Hampshire University this past May. She plans to spend her life working in West Plymouth on a beautiful piece of property that is the lifeblood of her family.

"Pinewood Lodge Campground has been in my family for 60 years. It's very important to me to keep it in the family. I want to use my education to help the campground grow. I want to keep it in the family, and I want my children to have the same experiences that I had growing up at the campground. It's been the world to me. It shaped the way I grew up. It taught me a hard work ethic, and it connected me to nature. Instead of technology, I can appreciate the environment," announced Tina proudly.

She credits Mrs. Norton, her guidance counselor at North, with helping her choose a college offering a course of study aligned with her dream. Many of her teachers influenced her as a student. "My seventh grade teachers at PCIS loved our class, and they had so much faith in us. They really wanted us to succeed. It felt good to have them backing us up. Mr. Strohschneider, Ms. Brown, and Mr. Martin were so cool, and they helped me feel comfortable moving into such a big school," said Tina.

She fondly recalled two other teachers who meant a great deal to her. "I loved Mrs. Collins at West. Mr. Crosby at North was very easygoing. He was so easy to approach, and he connected very well with students," explained Tina.

Well on her way to continuing her family's legacy amid the white pines of West Plymouth, she gave high praise for the



education she received while attending school in Plymouth. "I think the Plymouth school district definitely helped me prepare for college. A lot of teachers at North made sure that we were prepared for a heavy workload in college. Going to college gave me the knowledge to further Pinewood as a tourist destination, which in turn will help Plymouth. I think Plymouth is a beautiful place, and I don't want to be anywhere else," said Tina spiritedly.

DID YOU GRADUATE OR ATTEND THE PLYMOUTH PUBLIC SCHOOLS?

The Plymouth Public Schools Alumni Association is a subcommittee of the Plymouth Education Foundation. The newly formed organization is still shaping itself and growing with each meeting. The mission of the Plymouth Public Schools Alumni Association (MA) is to create a lifelong and global community of alumni through increased opportunities for meaningful engagement with each other and the students, teachers, staff, and administrators of the Plymouth Public Schools community. The association's activities are meant to increase awareness, pride, participation, volunteerism, networking, and philanthropic commitment to education in Plymouth.

As a member of the Alumni Association you will have access to news, upcoming events, activities, and other benefits. If you are someone who attends the Plymouth Public School system you are a member, but you need to register. To register please go to www.plymouthalumni.net. Also, be sure to like us on Facebook or join our group on LinkedIn to stay connected with the Association and the Plymouth Public Schools. If you have questions you can also email plymouthalumniassociation@gmail.com.

We Need Your Help

Are you interested in being a part of forming and shaping the Association, then make sure to come to our next meeting. We need board members, volunteers, people to help write the bi-laws, and plan events to name a few things. So make sure to register, find us on social media, or email us. We look forward to seeing you at the next meeting!

What is the Plymouth Education Foundation?

The Plymouth Education Foundation, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization governed by a Board of Directors representing a cross-section of citizens who are dedicated to education and share a vision for excellence in the Plymouth Schools. The foundation was created primarily to support and enhance the education of all students in the Plymouth School District.



The Association needed a logo to use on our social media sites, website, and other publications and Plymouth South High School's principal Patty Fry told us about a very impressive young man named

Kyle Richards, a senior at South. Kyle has designed logos and for the Run for One and many other things at PSHS. When asked what it felt like to see his work all over town Kyle said, "I am still not over how weird it is to see my designs being worn or used by real people and real organizations." Kyle seems to have his hand in everything at school, he is President of the Student Council Executive Board, a member of the Executive Board of the Drama Club, and a member of NHS. Outside of School he works at G&G Silkscreen and Embroidery as a graphic designer and dances at Center Stage Dance Academy. He dreams of moving to New York and attending New York University in the fall and then working for a branding agency.

When we asked him how he got involved with graphic design he told us, "I used to hate graphic design! Going into shop at PSHS, I was more interested in studying photography, and was dead-set on that being my career path. Being exposed to graphic design as a prerequisite for photography changed my perspective on everything."

The Association would like to publicly thank Kyle Richards for creating the logo of the Plymouth Public Schools Alumni Association!



Photo courtesy Sally Bowen

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