

# FLORAL PARK DISPATCH

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## Bond Referendum A Bold Move

Sewanhaka looking to revamp each high school

BY RICH FORESTANO

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The Sewanhaka Central High School District will put up a \$99.5 million bond referendum for voter approval on Wednesday, Dec. 4. If approved, all five district high school buildings would see considerable renovations, including technology, security, roofing and athletic field upgrades. Roughly 40 percent of the bond would come from state aid.

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Right: Floral Park Memorial High School will also get new turf fields.



## Common Core Sound Off

BY CHRIS BOYLE

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New York classrooms have been reeling from the radical changes introduced with the advanced Common Core Learning Standards mandated by the state last year, in conjunction with regular assessment testing to gauge teacher and school effectiveness in meeting those standards.

Many parents are expressing frustration and anger over the perceived "one size fits all" style of learning where near-constant test preparation has all but replaced a creative, individualized approach to teaching. Classrooms in New York State have become an altogether different beast, and it's the kids who are suffering, many parents are saying.

Diane Colbert has lived in Floral Park since she was three years old; she herself attended the very same school system that her own children are currently going through.

"When I was there, I loved it...I loved going to school, and I remember it being so much fun," she said. "My husband and I now have three children in the same school district — an eighth grader, a sixth-grader, and a third-grader — and I see the changes. They're doing far more work now and the curriculum is changing far more quickly, and there's a lot more homework in the younger grades."

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## Rotary President Runs NYC Marathon

BY MARILOU GIAMMONA

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Rotary Club of Floral Park-Bellerose President Shane Parouse was among the 50,304 finishers of this year's ING New York City Marathon, which was held on Sunday, Nov. 3. Keeping stride with the club's mission "to serve those in need locally, nationally and internationally," Parouse ran for charity and raised \$4,000.

"One of the great things about the marathon is the amount of goodwill that surrounds it," Parouse said. "Millions are raised every year by people like me, supported by friends and family and strangers who urge us on throughout the 26.2 miles. It's really a beautiful event."

The New York City Marathon boasts 317 organizations as nonprofit partners, a 74 percent increase from just three years ago. Runners who opt to run for a charity and raise the requisite funds are guaranteed entry into the race. The NYC Marathon issues 8,200 charity bibs annually.

Parouse ran for the New York Rotary and supported three specific causes: Gift of Life International, which provides life-saving heart surgery to children around the world; Ronald McDonald House, which cares for the families of very ill children; and PolioPlus, which is a Rotary International project to eradicate polio from the face of the Earth.

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Shane Parouse

Inside: Senior Style

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## NEWS BRIEF

### Floral Student Wins Astoria Essay Contest

Astoria Federal Savings held its 8th annual essay contest for children, ages 5-12, asking them to complete the statement: "If I save a lot today, in the future I could..." Nearly 550 essays were received from neighborhood branches throughout Nassau, Suffolk, Queens, Brooklyn and Westchester. Astoria Federal Savings judges selected one winner from each branch, and 8-year-old Brianna Hutson submitted the winning entry at the Floral Park branch. She visited the Astoria Federal Floral Park branch to receive her award including a \$25 American Express Gift Card, a Teach Children to Save Certificate, and an Education First medal from branch manager and vice president Banking Division Rajan Shah.

### MARATHON from page 1

An athlete his whole life, Parouse is always up for a challenge but admittedly never enjoyed running much. "I've run two or three miles a million times, but when you're talking 8, 10, 12 or 15 miles at a clip, you're in a whole new world. Aches, pains, boredom. It's tough."

Parouse watched the race all his life, but made the transition from spectator to participant this year "because first, my sister wanted to do it with me, and second, I got guaranteed entry because I was willing to commit to raise money. ... Shortly after I committed to run, the Boston Marathon bombings happened. I was deeply moved by what happened there. Such a positive, good event, turned into a tragedy. All those innocent people who lost limbs and must recover. Families who lost loved ones and what they must be going through. That's what went through my head as I trained and thought I wanted to quit. I

thought about the emotional and physical struggle the people learning to walk again were going through. That drove me."

Indeed, the tragedy in Boston last April will not soon be forgotten by the running community. Marathon race director and New York Road Runners president and CEO Mary Wittenberg, flanked by Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Boston Athletic Association executive director Tom Grilk, paid tribute to Boston at the start of the race. "Today we are honored to run for New York, to run for Boston," she said.

While the victims in Boston drove Parouse to conquer his physical training, Parouse maintained his fundraising focus by acknowledging those less fortunate than himself. "I live in the richest nation in the world. I know lots of people, and I had the capability to do some good for less fortunate people. I remember one day I was dressing for a training run. My daughter, having seen this routine many times,

wrapped herself around my leg, begging me not to go. I paused, and I thought about it. How much time was I spending away from my kids so I could train? What for? Was it worth it? Then I realized that there was a father somewhere, with a daughter just like me, struggling to survive. In Pakistan, Afghanistan, the Eastern Bloc countries. Places where the charities I was supporting go to help. I could do something to help that father, and if the tables were reversed, I would hope that some guy in some rich country somewhere would help me," he said.

Parouse's physical and emotional drive made him a part of marathon history. This year marked the 43rd running of the NYC Marathon and the event's largest showing to date, topping 2011's finishers by more than 3,000 — the 2012 marathon was cancelled in the wake of Superstorm Sandy. Only 436 of the 50,740 runners who started on Staten Island did not make it to the finish line in Central Park.

### COMMON from page 1

"My sixth-grader has had his math curriculum changed for the third time since the Common Core was adopted," Colbert added. "I think the kids in fifth, sixth, and seventh-grade have been hit the most with the changes."

Soon after the Common Core was adopted, Colbert said she started noticing changes to her children; this was especially true for her sixth-grader, who started perpetually worrying about his grades, she said.

Colbert's son set a goal for himself: to make the honor roll every marking period so that he qualifies for the Presidential Academic Fitness Awards when he graduates from sixth-grade, but it's an uphill battle.

"The work he is presented with recently is getting harder," Colbert said. "He's still getting good grades, but he's really working hard and he's really stressing and having anxiety. He recently got a 70 on a test, and got

very upset and started apologizing to me for getting a 70 on a test that had a question about Mesopotamia of all things."

Her youngest child is also feeling the effects of the changes in the educational landscape, Colbert said; her daughter's lessons have become so complex in such a short span of time that Colbert finds it difficult to even help her with her homework.

"My third grader's math homework...nobody knows how to do her math homework," she said. "I've tried to have her brothers help her, but they do it differently. I do think she's learning — don't totally disagree with the curriculum — but I just think it goes too fast, and we can't help her because we don't know how to do the multiplication like she does it."

However, another new development in the New York education system is even more troubling to Colbert — the sharing of confidential student information with private

corporations, and it's something that she says seems outright Orwellian in its implications.

"I object the most to the data mining," she said. "I understand the need for data, but my concern is that they do with this data. Will they share it or sell it? Why would some outside agency need to know a child's score on a third grade math assessment test, or their attendance records? This reminds me of books I read in high school...*Brave New World* and *1984*. New York State must just see profit as the goal."

State Education Commissioner John King said at a common core talk in Mineola on Nov. 13 that the data being used will not reveal names publicly.

"The only use of data that is allowed is data that is being used to provide a service," King said. "Now, aggregate data will be available through the portal. A district will be able to see the performance of other students

in other districts, but not students' names."

But while she Colbert become an active participant in local parent movements to address the concerns posed by the Common Core and data mining, she has found it necessary for the good of her children to re-assess her parenting methods...at least, until the broken system they're being forced to deal with is finally fixed, she said.

"Honestly, since the Common Core has started, I've had to do a complete 180 on my parenting philosophy," she said. "I want good grades, and I really push them to get good grades, but now when I see my kids get a 70 on the Mesopotamia test, and he's apologizing to me, I tell him not to worry about it...he tried."

"But it bothers me that I have to tell them now that these things aren't important," Colbert added. "It's more for them to be kids, and to be happy than beat the new grading system."



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