



# Scotch Plains-Fanwood Public Schools

A Community of Learners Seeking Excellence Together

Oct.  
2023

## A Message From the Superintendent

Dear Scotch Plains–Fanwood  
Community,

Welcome back! The start of school is always my favorite time of year. After the quieter summer months, I always appreciate it when the halls and classrooms once again come to life with our students, teachers, and staff. They are what makes SPF a special place!

I hope you'll continue reading this newsletter throughout the year to learn about the accomplishments of our community. You can also follow the district on Facebook @Scotch Plains–Fanwood Public Schools and X (formerly Twitter) @SPFProud.

Let's make the 2023–24 school year the best year possible!

Sincerely,  
Dr. Joan Mast  
Superintendent of Schools



## A Strong Start to the School Year

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Welcome back to the beginning of what is certainly going to be a wonderful school year!



## Meet SPF's New Human Resources Manager

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*Adina Williamson was selected to serve as Scotch Plains–Fanwood Public Schools' new Human Resources Manager this September. The role holds special meaning for this Scotch Plains resident and SPF parent.*

**“I love seeing the teachers my kids have had and knowing they are where they are in life because of the excellent teachers they have had. It really is a great district.”**



**What role did you have before becoming HR manager?** I have worked in the Scotch Plains–Fanwood Public Schools for six years as the confidential executive secretary to the Director Human Resources. This September, I moved into the position of HR manager.

**What attracted you to SPF?** I previously worked in HR in the private industry and then took some time off to raise my three children. As they got older, I went back to work as a classroom aide in another district and saw this job opportunity in Scotch Plains–Fanwood, and here I am. It is the perfect fit since I live in Scotch Plains and have a truly vested interest in seeing everyone succeed. Two of my children have graduated and the other is currently a junior at SPFHS.

**What do you enjoy about your job?** I'm excited to continue to work with

my HR team, Kathy Dow and Trevor Dougherty, who bring many years of experience and expertise to the department. I love human resources and having those personal interactions. I love having one-on-one conversations with the staff and helping them navigate everything. I like being the person they can come to and bounce ideas off and if I can't be the one to help them, I will point them in the right direction.

**What do you hope to accomplish as the new HR manager?** I hope to grow more in this position and learn all facets of HR. I want to be a valuable resource for all staff – someone that everyone feels comfortable to come talk to.

## Donation Helps SPFHS Students Be Environmental Stewards

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Thanks to a generous donation from Wild Birds Unlimited, Scotch Plains–Fanwood High School students are learning firsthand about native species of birds in the school's courtyard. The local company in Scotch Plains donated a bird feeding station and bird food to continue efforts by the students and staff to turn the courtyard into an ideal habitat for pollinators.

“This is a great opportunity to empower the students to be environmental stewards,” said Zachary Rittner, an AP and academic environmental science teacher at SPFHS. “Here is a chance for them to learn not only about animals in the classroom but to provide habitat in their own school courtyard – to help wildlife right here in Scotch Plains.”

Rich Elliot, owner of Wild Birds Unlimited in Scotch Plains, met with Rittner to tour the high school's courtyard over the summer. The area is designated as a Certified Schoolyard Habitat® through the National Wildlife Federation's Garden for Wildlife program.

Elliot left the tour inspired by the conservation work to help create a natural ecosystem in that space and donated a new bird feeding station, including new feeders and a squirrel baffle. He met with students from the SPFHS Environmental Club to install the stations and is offering discounts to SPFHS on the store's premium bird food.



[Read more on TAPinto Scotch Plains/Fanwood](#)



# Featured Events

Oct. 2 – 6 – Week of Respect, Health & Wellness Week

Oct. 4 – National Walk & Bike to School Day

Oct. 4 – McGinn Building Character Through Hip Hop Assembly

Oct. 5 – Coles School Spirit Day

Oct. 6 – School One Color Run

Oct. 9 – School Closed for Students; Columbus Day/Indigenous People's Day

Oct. 13 – McGinn Color Run

Oct. 16 – 20 – Violence Prevention Awareness Week

Oct. 18, 7:30 am – School One Donuts & Grown Ups

Oct. 19, 6:30 pm – Tenure Celebration/Board of Education Meeting in SPFHS Auditorium

Oct. 20, 3:30 – 5 pm – Coles Color Run

Oct. 27, 6 – 7:30 pm – School One Fall Festival

Oct. 27, 7 pm – Evergreen – EverScream

Full calendar of events: [Scotch Plains–Fanwood Public Schools / Calendar \(spfk12.org\)](https://www.spfk12.org)

## A Student Voice on the Board of Education

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*SPFHS Senior Sairah Llano joined the Board of Education as a student representative in January.*

**Activities:** Varsity softball, winter track, Model UN, National Honor Society, Spanish National Honor Society, Youth softball coach

### **Why did you want to be a student representative on the Board of Education?**

The student representative position was a way for me to be more involved in the community and learn about the school district. Now that I'm on the Board of Education, it has been awesome to see how the board sets policies and goals and is a voice for what is happening in our towns.



### **What do you enjoy about your position on the Board?**

One of the things I do as student representative is relay to the Board the student perspective on different issues. I bring things that are happening in schools or events to their attention. I have enjoyed getting to be that voice for myself and my classmates. I also have enjoyed making connections with the Board members and Dr. Mast. They all play an important and interesting role in the district.

### **What are you looking forward to in the 2023–24 school year on the Board?**

We are currently in the process of interviewing for a junior student representative. This will be a student who I will work with closely to prepare to take on the role when I graduate. I'm excited to help out that next representative and pass on what I've learned.

**Fun Fact:** Sairah has three younger siblings, and they all attend different schools! She has a brother at Brunner Elementary, a brother at Nettingham Middle School, and a sister in her freshman year at SPFHS.

To learn more about Board of Education meetings in New Jersey, [read this guide](#).

# Scotch Plains Alum Makes His Mark as Doctor and Wrestling Hall of Famer

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Long before Walter Grote became a doctor or an inductee in the New Jersey Chapter of the National Wrestling Hall of Fame, he was a standout wrestler at Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School.

The 1970 graduate spent his high school days in biology classes and at wrestling matches, helping him become the person he is today. This September, he was inducted into the NJ Chapter of the National Wrestling Hall of Fame with six other honorees.

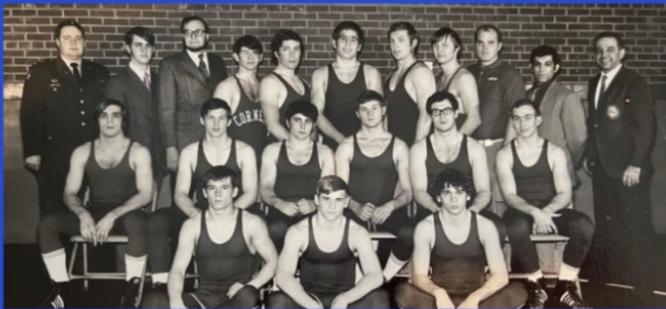
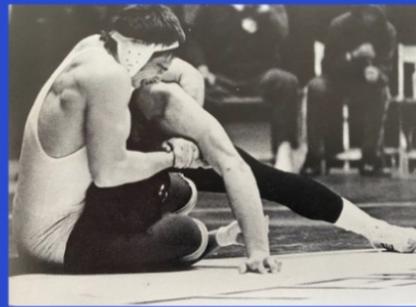


He initially became interested in wrestling through his cousin who wrestled for Jefferson (now Elizabeth High School). As a sophomore, Dr. Grote was captain of the JV team and then went on to be undefeated as a senior captain.

Dr. Grote remembers his high school wrestling days vividly and fondly. During his three years wrestling for SPFHS, the team had a stunning 33-1-1 streak, with that one loss teaching him a lifelong lesson of perseverance.

At the time, Coach Dom Deo was leading the team's tradition of excellence. During one match, a controversial call led to one of SPF's best wrestlers being thrown out for a supposed slam. That led to a surprising loss against St. Benedict's.

"Coach Dom was upset about it, but he said, 'we just have to work hard and win the rest of the matches this season,'" Dr. Grote remembered. "He and the other coaches were honest guys, and they always taught us how to work hard for what we wanted to achieve."



The next season, SPF came back to beat St. Benedict's. Coach Deo and Dr. Grote stayed lifelong friends until the coach's passing in 2008. After graduating from SPFHS, Dr. Grote went to Cornell, where he was a three-time captain and held the record for most pins in a season and a career for 37 years. He continued to make his mark as a four-time AAU All-American, alternate on the 1976 U.S. Olympic Freestyle team and a four-time New Jersey Senior AAU champion. He won the national title in the 1978 United States Wrestling Federation Tournament.

His wrestling career coincided with his path in medicine. Today, he is an internist affiliated with Newton Medical Center and St. Clare's Hospital.

In 2019, he was recognized by NJ Healthy Living Magazine as one of NJ's Top Docs (in internal medicine).

He also practices internal medicine with Premier Health Associates and regenerative/sports medicine with Prolotherapy and Integrated Medicine. His athletic background has sparked his interest in regenerative medicine. He regularly treats athletes suffering from injuries that once would have ended their seasons or careers by helping use their own body's ability to self-heal.

Dr. Grote continues to volunteer as a coach and lives in Branchville with his wife. They have seven children and nine grandchildren, including a daughter who is currently training for the 2024 Olympic wrestling team.

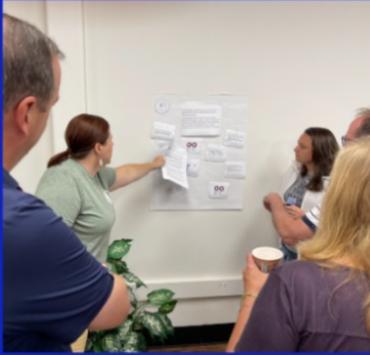
## Summer Builds Success

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Summer was a time to shine and prepare for the 2023-24 school year.

*Administrative Council Summer Retreat*

The retreat included goal setting, designing a Dynamic Care Response Team, and an inspirational talk by educator and speaker Marlon Styles.



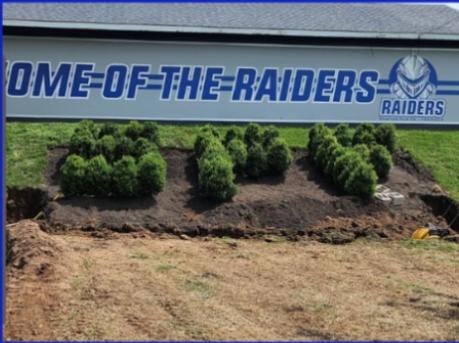
### *Creative Summer Workshops*

Five weeks of summer programming, including the SPF Summer Instrumental Music School, were both fun and enriching for students in Scotch Plains, Fanwood and neighboring communities.



### *Upgrading our Facilities*

Our schools underwent construction this summer to make big improvements, including enhanced security, safety, and technology features in all our buildings. You may also notice other improvements to our school entrances, football field, and HVAC systems, to name a few!



### *New Staff Orientation*

We welcomed 35 new teachers/certified staff, as well as 13 support staff, one administrator, and six coaches to Scotch Plains–Fanwood Public Schools. We’re glad they joined our learning community!



### *Curriculum Initiatives and Professional Development*

From designing new courses to teacher planning, the summer was a time for staff to strategize for how best to serve students in the coming school year.



## Five Scotch Students Recognized in National Merit Scholarship Program

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Five SPFHS seniors have been named Commended Students in the 2024 National Merit Scholarship Program. The students are Alexander Allegra, Emily Juckes, Diti Nainwal, Benjamin Nathan, and Emily Park.

They are among the 34,000 Commended Students throughout the nation recognized for their exceptional academic promise.

“Congratulations to Alexander, Emily, Diti, Benjamin, and Emily for excelling academically and making all of us at Scotch Plains–Fanwood Public Schools proud,” said Superintendent Dr. Joan Mast. “I’m confident that their academic success will take them far in life, and we’ll be here to celebrate and cheer them on!”

Students entered the National Merit Scholarship Program, a nationwide competition for recognition and awards conducted by National Merit Scholarship Program, by taking the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT) last October. In April, NMSC identified the 50,000 highest scorers and notified their high schools.

Although these five students will not continue in the 2024 competition for National Merit Scholarship awards, they are recognized for placing among the nation’s top scorers.



# WE'RE HIRING!

Interested in joining the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Public Schools? Please check our website regularly to see current vacancies.

[CLICK HERE TO  
LEARN MORE](#)



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Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education | 512 Cedar St, Scotch Plains, NJ 07076

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