



# Monthly Wellness Newsletters Keep Schools and Community Informed

Three years ago, the Wyandanch Wellness Committee decided to launch a monthly newsletter. Its initial purpose was to inform school staff, students and families about the District Wellness Policy and how specific elements were being implemented. It has since evolved into a much broader and more comprehensive overview and celebration of local wellness initiatives and accomplishments that promote health and wellness in the schools and community. Through widespread distribution at the school level and throughout Wyandanch, the newsletter has gained a degree of recognition.

## Wyandanch Wellness Warriors Newsletter Gains Traction

The early issues of the newsletter featured specific topics that related to the District Wellness Policy such as classroom celebrations, fundraisers, and physical activity events. Each edition of the newsletter was translated into Spanish and Haitian Creole and once approved, was sent electronically to school staff and Wellness Committee members, and posted on the District website. As the year went on, the content of the lead stories evolved to highlight a specific best practice, success and/or monthly theme. For example, during National Nutrition Month in March, a Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary School (MLK) teacher wrote about how she used a Tower Garden to teach 2<sup>nd</sup> grade students science and nutrition through growing, harvesting and tasting. In the April issue, Every Kid Healthy Week, an annual campaign created by Action for Healthy Kids, was acknowledged with a list of scheduled events and programs. The

remaining spring issues in the first year of publication featured a walking initiative launched at Milton L. Olive Middle School (MLO) and several indoor and outdoor garden initiatives, with special attention to the successful MLO garden. To close out Year 1, two positive steps were taken: 1) assignment of a district clerical staff person to design and distribute the newsletter, and 2) dissemination of a newsletter survey to district staff to gauge readership and usefulness.



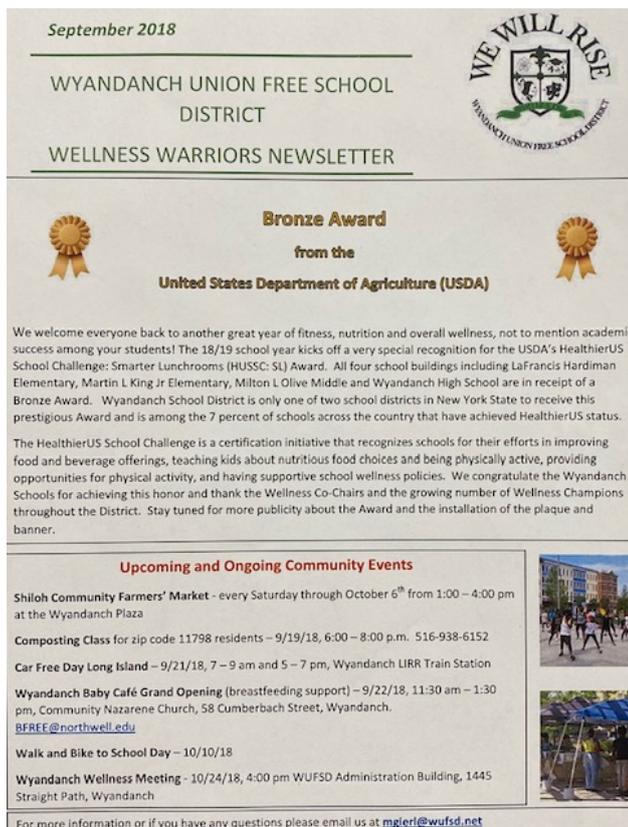
First Issue, Year 1, September 2017

## Positive Feedback is Encouraging

Overall, results of the staff survey were extremely positive, and allowed for open-ended suggestions

## CHSC | Success Story

for future topics. One challenge that was revealed was that not everyone was seeing or reading the newsletter. In response to the statement “I read this newsletter”, 27 % responded “always”; 56% “sometimes”; and 17% “never”. Upon further inquiry, it was found that unless one knew about it and looked for it, the newsletter could easily get lost in an already full inbox. A majority of responses suggested that the newsletter was informative, that readers learned something new, and found the list of upcoming events and resources to be helpful. Open-ended responses from recipients provided additional feedback. One such reply came from a high school teacher, “*The newsletter looks great and conveys a poignant message in a friendly manner.*” Survey results and suggestions were considered to provide ideas for new themes and topics to explore in Year 2.



### First Issue, Year 2, September 2018

Year 2 began with positive news that all four school buildings had received Bronze Awards from the United States Department of

Agriculture's HealthierUS School Challenge: Smarter Lunchrooms (HUSSC: SL). This uplifting news was appropriately covered in the first newsletter edition of the new school year. As more Comprehensive School Physical Activity Program (CSPAP) strategies were implemented in the district, their stories were highlighted: MLO's morning walking initiative and Yoga4Classrooms; monthly fitness challenges at LaFrancis Hardiman Elementary School (LFH); Math and Movement at MLK; and High School Leaders of the Future members' creative 25 Steps to Fitmas. There was no lack of topics and successes to broadcast to the district and the larger community. Anecdotal feedback continued to be positive and consensus at the District Wellness Committee determined that the newsletter should continue through the summer months. In addition to social media, the newsletter provided a wonderful platform to publicize the physical activity and nutrition opportunities taking place in July and August, such as the Summer Saturdays at Delano Stewart Plaza featuring free yoga, Zumba and dance classes, and a farmers' market where summer meals were provided.

## Celebrating and Communicating Accomplishments

At the beginning of Year 3 of publication, a revised questionnaire was distributed with an additional question about behavior change. Seventy-three percent of respondents indicated that they were either walking more, choosing more healthy snacks or drinking more water. Similar to the first survey, 79% believed that they had learned something new from the newsletter. One individual commented, “I like seeing what other schools are doing.” The newsletter has served as a source for celebrating health promotion strategies and informing those from different classrooms, hallways, buildings and throughout the community of positive efforts underway.

**“The Wellness Warrior Newsletter is an important chronicle of what we’re doing and how we’re doing it. Newsletters can be a roadmap, archive and a message board. Through the newsletter we celebrate achievement, communicate accomplishments and establish recognition for all things wellness. In Wyandanch, to most people, the newsletter IS the Wellness Committee. Photos and personal stories enhance the attractiveness and value of the newsletter. We hope to always bring what’s going on to a broader audience, but we want to do so in a way that people can say we brought some value to their lives.”** Monty Granger, Assistant Administrator for Operations & Physical Education and Wellness Committee Co-Chair

## Looking Forward

January 2019 WYANDANCH UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT WELLNESS WARRIORS NEWSLETTER

**Yoga in the Classroom**



Yoga 4 Classrooms is an evidence based yoga and mindfulness program for teachers to use with their students to promote a positive, peaceful, learning ready classroom. The mission is to transform educational environments through yoga-based wellness training and support. The program uses 67 yoga and mindfulness cards with pictures, instructions and educational tie-ins for teachers.

The activities range from simple breathing exercises to meditation and stretches. The cards are quick and easy to use and get only a little more advanced as you go on. The cards can be used for both the students and the teachers.

There are so many benefits of yoga poses and mindfulness in general for students. It relaxes the body, helps them sleep better, improves balance and posture, improves digestion, improves memory, clears the mind, relieves tension and stress, increases concentration, helps develop discipline and control, and improves overall well-being and connectedness.

The purpose of the program is to offer students a healthy way to balance their emotions and to empower students to focus on their own well-being. The program allows students and teachers to be creative with the cards and use them in your own way. The goal is to create a school culture where everyone shares a common language of wellness, and a culture that promotes respect for others and oneself.

This month, MLO staff members are being given an overview of the program in order to become familiar with the cards. Teachers who attend the introductory meetings are each given a deck of Yoga 4 Classrooms cards to begin using with their students. The intent is to continue to familiarize students and staff with mindfulness based education that can be beneficial to learning.

For more information, please visit [www.yoga4classrooms.com](http://www.yoga4classrooms.com)



**Upcoming and Ongoing Community Events:**

- Wyandanch Wellness Meeting- 1/16/19, 4pm Wyandanch Administration Building
- 30 Day Straw Free Challenge - 1/7/19 – 2/5/19
- Next Wyandanch Wellness Meeting- 4/10/19, 4pm Wyandanch Administration Building
- Every Kid Healthy Week – 4/15/19 – 4/18/19

**January 2019 issue featuring Yoga4Classroom at MLO Middle School**

The Wellness Warriors Newsletter will continue to expand its readership and value. Western Suffolk BOCES will provide the necessary technical assistance to sustain it, and, hopefully, find a permanent place for it at the district level.

November 2019 WYANDANCH UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT WELLNESS WARRIORS NEWSLETTER

**Fall Harvest Tasting at Milton L Olive Middle School**



Delicious and nourishing, roasted butternut squash was prepared and served during lunch at MLO, thanks to School Lunch Manager Deborah Rhodes and Earth Ranger Advisor Laurie Farber. Butternut squash is one of many vegetables grown at the MLO School Garden throughout the summer and into the fall. Many students tried the vegetable for the very first time and were surprised how delicious it was. Some of the comments included: “Yumminess,” said Khaliyah; “It’s good,” said Jiovani. Even Social Studies Teacher, Francisco Mederos remarked, “It’s very good. It has a delicious texture like potato.” All in all, it was a successful first tasting for Ms. Rhodes who plans to hold more of these activities. This effort is part of a larger plan to expose students to more nourishing foods. There is a greater likelihood that students will choose a healthy snack if they have an opportunity to taste it; even more so if they know that it is grown locally. Additional pictures can be found at [www.facebook.com/HSNYWSBOCES](https://www.facebook.com/HSNYWSBOCES).

**2020 Census – Make Wyandanch Count!**

The data gathered from the Census every 10 years helps direct billions of dollars in funding toward schools and programs like SNAP, WIC, Head Start, Child Health Plus, National School Lunch Program, child care subsidies, road construction and park improvements. When community members do not fill out the Census, it directly affects and reduces funding all over the Country, including right here in Wyandanch. An accurate count of how many people, including toddlers and infants, living here, can make a huge difference! Your voice matters, so please fill out the Census and encourage every person in Wyandanch to be counted. There are no strings attached and you should not fear your private information being used against you, when completing the Census. So, do not forget to look for the notice in the mail in March 2020, explaining how to complete the 10 simple questions. If you have any concerns, please contact Beverly Theodore, Director of the Wyandanch Community Resource Center at [btheodore@townofbabylon.com](mailto:btheodore@townofbabylon.com) or 631/643-1960. The link to the Census is: <https://census.gov/>

Walking Audit led by Vision Long Island: Nov 1, 10:00 am – Delano Stewart Plaza at Wyandanch Village

For more information or if you have any questions please email us at [mgranger@wufsd.net](mailto:mgranger@wufsd.net)

**November 2019 issue featuring Vegetable Tasting from the Garden**

There are many school and community wellness champions who have emerged who can contribute their stories. Western Suffolk BOCES will continue to support these leaders, engage new ones, strengthen the District Wellness Committee and building-level Wellness Teams, and maximize resources and partnerships to sustain the newsletter.

**To learn more about our work: Visit:**  
[www.facebook.com/HSNYWSBOCES](https://www.facebook.com/HSNYWSBOCES)

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