

SUPERINTENDENT'S BRIEF

Together, We are the Champions for Children in Poughkeepsie City School District

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Recognizing student achievement

89 inducted into honor societies



Above: Poughkeepsie High School inductees take the National Honor Society Pledge. Below, Serenity Barcelona lights her electric candle during the ceremony Tuesday at the high school.

'I finally made it:' PHS NHS adds 47

Katie Livermore encountered a problem preparing the program for Tuesday's National Honor Society induction ceremony: There were too many names.

"I had to shrink the font to fit them into the program," she laughed.

The Poughkeepsie High School chapter of the National Honor Society inducted 47 new members in a ceremony at the school. It was the largest class in the five years Livermore and fellow math teacher Laura Tietz have served as advisers.

Najiah Davis, a junior, said induction is a symbol for "all of her hard work" bearing fruit.

"I finally made it," she said. "I'm succeeding in life. I'm happy and I'm proud of myself."

After chapter president Amiyah Wood welcomed the inductees and families to the ceremony, other members of chapter leadership discussed the four pillars of the National Honor Society: Scholarship, Service, Leadership and Character.





Najiah Davis was among many of the inductees who took their photo in front of a National Honor Society backdrop set up in the lobby for the post-ceremony reception.

As they were announced one-by-one, the inductees picked up and lit an electric candle. Once the full group was assembled, they recited the National Honor Society Pledge.

Principal Dr. Phee Simpson closed the ceremony with congratulatory remarks focusing on the organization's pillars. "These aren't just words on a certificate. They are values that you have chosen to live by," she said. "You challenge yourself to go beyond what is required, whether in your studies, your service to the community or your leadership in and out of school. You've shown us what it means to be a student of integrity and purpose. That deserves recognition and, even more, it deserves appreciation."

The most prestigious student organization in

the country, the National Honor Society stresses not only excellence in the classroom but also community leadership.

Tietz and Livemore said the inductees spent hundreds of hours volunteering at the district's elementary schools, mainly assisting at special events and after-school programs.

"They loved working with the little ones," Tietz said. "And it's good for the young students to see."

Tyrone Dubose, a junior standout on the boys basketball team, said his induction was the product of not only good grades but also the guidance he received from his coaches, the Marist Liberty Partnerships Program and My Brother's Keeper. Effort in the classroom has become part of the basketball team's culture, he said.

"When you look at our grades now, we're like high-80s, all of us," Dubose said. "We're all student-athletes."

Valedictorian Jhanae Stewart was among the chapter leaders who spoke, discussing the pillar of Scholarship. She said being part of the National Honor Society taught her to be more involved in the community.

"Before this, you could say I was sort of individualistic," she said. "Now, whenever I'm needed, I'm there and I'm always present. They put out service opportunities daily. It started as a requirement, but then I realized I was doing it for my own enjoyment, as well. I'll go to my soup kitchen at the church, or babysit for free. It kind of immersed me in that outside of the school."

NJHS class booms at PMS

When Poughkeepsie Middle School held its second quarter honors breakfast in March, a group of five of the school's students were among those who took the microphone to speak.

Wearing blue shirts bearing the words "PMS National Junior Honor Society Ambassador," the students explained what the organization is and implored their schoolmates to join them.

"I thought it was important to get the word out," said eighth grade student Liliana Guido, the Poughkeepsie chapter president.

They did. Friday, the chapter inducted 42 members to the National Junior Honor Society, the largest group since before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.



Interim Principal Felicia Schinella congratulates a National Junior Honor Society inductee Friday.



The Poughkeepsie club advisers, Jennifer Burke and Joyette Walton, said raising awareness of NJHS was a focus this year.

"We always have great kids," Burke said. "This year we had a lot of communication and messaging going out." She credited, also, a high level of community involvement evident in this year's seventh grade class.

Students who may meet the academic criteria to join are sent messages letting them know of the requirements should they decide to apply, such as obtaining two letters of recommendation from teachers. The organization focuses on the five pillars of scholarship, service, leadership, character, and citizenship.

"The application process is lengthy and these kids took the time to do that," Burke said. Like the National Honor Society, NJHS has a community service component for inductees. "What we do, as advisers, is we provide as many opportunities in-house, as we can. They'll come for open house nights. They'll come for parent conferences. They do peer tutoring, we set that program up here. Whenever we have an event here, they'll help." Seeing the students in those service settings wearing those blue shirts, Walton said, added to awareness of the organization, too.

Guido led Friday's ceremony in the school auditorium, offering an introduction and closing, while fellow members Jackson Rodriguez and Santhiago Carrillo Sanchez presented the society's five pillars. Interim Principal Felicia Schinella also offered remarks and congratulated inductees on stage.

Guido said being a part of NJHS is helping prepare her for the future, pointing to the ceremony as an example.

"I get to practice speaking in front of a lot of people. Before I wasn't used to any of that," she said. As a member, she's tutored sixth grade students, handed out flowers for the school Valentine's Day sales, and directed family members during parent-teacher conference nights.

Of being a member, she said, "It shows I worked hard."



Poughkeepsie Middle School NJHS inductees and President Liliana Guido pose after the ceremony.



Assistant Superintendent for Secondary Education Dr. Charles Gallo introduces, from left, Jhane Stewart and Salome Vergara as Principal Dr. Phee Simpson looks on.

PHS students honored at BOCES breakfast

Two Poughkeepsie High School seniors were celebrated, along with students from 12 other Dutchess County school districts, during the annual Dutchess BOCES Distinguished Graduate Breakfast on June 6 at the Villa Borghese in Wappingers Falls.

Valedictorian Jhane Stewart and Salutatorian Salome Vergara were honored for their academic and extracurricular achievements.

The ceremony started with students from Poughkeepsie High School's Air Force Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (AFJROTC) presenting the American flag and a rendition of the national anthem.

Stewart, who plans to study political science so she can become a lawyer, has shown a strong commitment to both academics and leadership at school. She completed a plethora of college courses in subjects such as pre-calculus and English, is a member of the National Honor Society, wrote for the Pioneer Post newspaper and a guest spot in The Miscellany News at Vassar College, and serves as student liaison to the Board of Education. She plans to attend Vassar in the fall. Vergara, who will study neuroscience in college to become a researcher, was part of the AFJROTC from freshman year, where she received the highest rank of colonel, to senior year, where she was named squadron commander. Additionally,



The Poughkeepsie High School AFJROTC presented the flag and performed the national anthem at the breakfast.

she is part of the National Honor Society, where she completed more than 200 community service hours and started a tutoring program for English language learners. She plans to attend SUNY New Paltz.

Both joined the district before their freshman years, with Stewart coming from Jamaica and Vergara from Colombia. Assistant Superintendent for Secondary Education Dr. Charles Gallo praised his students and the efforts of the other attendees, noting it is moving to see students evolve throughout the years.

"I'm sure everyone in this room has certain memories of students that come in like a lamb and go out like a lion," Gallo said. "Each one of them has unique qualities that separates them from the rest."

Dutchess BOCES District Superintendent Jodi DeLucia and Dutchess County Executive Sue Serino welcomed guests before everyone enjoyed a hearty buffet breakfast.

This year's keynote speaker was L'Quette Taylor, a 2005 Poughkeepsie High School graduate and founder and CEO of Community Matters 2. He recalled a time when he asked his mother for \$20 when he was 23. She told him he had to do something with his life.

"My mother cared about me, so she gave me the best advice that she could ... understand there are people here today that care about you," Taylor said. "Every choice that you make matters. Actually think about how you're moving forward and how you're going to do this."

Taylor also advised students to be themselves, not to procrastinate and to not let failure hold them back.

"Failure is not a threat that you're going to fail, it's a gift, it's a lesson," Taylor said. "Do not follow the crowd and understand why you're here ... be impactful."

Graduation, moving up ceremonies set for June 17-27

Hundreds of Poughkeepsie City School District students and families this month will take part in ceremonies commemorating their achievements, be it graduating high school or completing pre-K, kindergarten, the fifth grade or eighth. The kindergarten ceremonies will be held in three parts; consult with your student's teacher to see in which they will be featured. Take a look at the schedule:

- **Pre-Kindergarten:** Friday, June 20 at 9 a.m. at Poughkeepsie Middle School's auditorium.
- **Kindergarten:** Tuesday, June 17 at 9 a.m.; Wednesday June 18 at 9 a.m. and noon; all at Poughkeepsie Middle School's auditorium.
- **Fifth Grade:**
 - Krieger: Friday, June 20 at 9 a.m. at the school's cafeteria and gym.
 - Warring: Friday, June 20 at 9 a.m. at the school's gym.
 - Morse: Monday, June 23 at 9 a.m. at Poughkeepsie Middle School's auditorium.
 - Clinton: Monday, June 23 at noon at Poughkeepsie Middle School's auditorium.
- **Eighth Grade:** Tuesday, June 24 at 11 a.m. at Poughkeepsie Middle School's auditorium.
- **Poughkeepsie High School commencement:** Friday, June 27 at 6 p.m. at the school's football field, with the auditorium serving as the backup site in the event of inclement weather.