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WHRHS CLASS OF 2020 COLLEGE SIGNING DAY

Submitted by Denis Kelly

Five student athletes in the Class of 2020 who play for the Warriors of Watchung Hills Regional High School (WHRHS) announced their intentions to matriculate and play intercollegiate sports at Division I colleges on November College Signing Day, Wednesday, November 13, 2019. As part of the same ceremony, two additional Warrior Student Athletes announced their intentions to matriculate and play intercollegiate sports at Division II colleges.

There are three College Signing Days throughout the high school academic year: November, February and May.

The students signing to matriculate and play at Division I colleges are: Chloe Ferreira, Monmouth University (Hawks), West Long Branch, Metro Atlantic Conference, Soccer; Laura Baeyens, University of Pennsylvania (Quakers), Philadelphia, Pa., Ivy League Conference, Cross Country/Track & Field; Bradley Jelmert, Arkansas State University (Red Wolves), Jonesboro, Ark., Sun Belt

Conference, Track & Field; Mahogany Jenkins, University of Indiana (Hoosiers), Bloomington, Ind., Big Ten Conference, Track & Field; and Christopher Salkowski, Coastal Carolina University (Chanticleers), Conway, S.C., Sun Belt Conference, Track & Field.

The students signing to matriculate and play at Division II Colleges are: Kaitlyn Gully, Bentley University (Falcons), Waltham, Mass., Northeast10 Conference, Field Hockey; and Sophia Cicchetti, Adelphi University (Panthers), Garden City, N.Y., Northeast-10 Conference, Softball.

Both Bentley and Adelphi play in the Northeast-10 Conference, although the Warrior student athletes, Gully and Cicchetti, will play in different sports when they put on their new colleges' uniforms for Field Hockey and Softball, respectively.

And, among the Track and Field athletes, both Jelmert and Salkowski will play on Sun Belt Conference rivals, Arkansas State and Coastal Carolina, respectively, although they specialize in different Field events, Pole Vault and Javelin.



(above, l-r) Seated: Kaitlyn Gully, Bentley University, Field Hockey; Sophia Cicchetti, Adelphi University, Softball; Laura Baeyens, University of Pennsylvania, Cross Country/Track & Field; Chloe Ferreira, Monmouth University, Soccer; standing: Bradley Jelmert, Arkansas State University, Track & Field; Christopher Salkowski, Coastal Carolina University, Track & Field; and Mahogany Jenkins, University of Indiana, Track & Field.

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WATCHUNG HILLS SENIOR DEEPA IRAKAM EARNS GOLD AWARD

Submitted by Anitha Irakam

Watchung Post

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in submitting
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Deepa Irakam, a member of Girl Scout Troop 65512, recently earned the prestigious Gold Award.

Through her Gold Award, Empower Your Future, Deepa Irakam worked over 80 hours to address the issue of sexual harassment. She educated students, ages ranging from middle school to high school, as many of them have heard about sexual harassment but are still not quite sure what it is, and gave them an opportunity to learn more so that they understood what they can do to make sure it doesn't continue. In addition to working with students in group activities, teaching lessons, and creating discussions, she created a resource guide that included more information on sexual harassment and who to reach out to for help.

The resource guides were distributed to local community centers and schools as a way to spread awareness for sexual harassment education and empower students to speak out

when they see something that isn't right.

She also created a website with more information to help continue her education platform which includes a printable version of her resource guide. You can find her website deepairakam.wixsite.com/empoweryourfuture.

Through the #MeToo Movement and the Time's Up Movement, it's clear that these platforms have started to create positive change to prevent sexual harassment from continuing. However, there is still work to be done. Deepa's project aims to educate students early on about sexual harassment affecting schools, communities, and the workplace, because education is what starts conversations and can serve as a force for meaningful change.

Her Gold Award, Empower Your Future, would not have been possible without the support of her advisor Dr. Susan Cooper, her Girl Scout Troop Leader Sonia Estevez, her Girl Scout Troop, and her Gold Award Team.



(above) Deepa Irakam of Troop 65512 received a Gold Award for her work on "Empower Your Future."

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BANJO VIRTUOSO TONY TRISCHKA AT THE WATCHUNG ART CENTER

The Watchung Arts Center proudly presents Tony Trischka, the man who made the banjo bigger, jazzier and more worldly! Some musicians open up whole new realms. In the world of the banjo, the music that marked the change came from Tony. Up out of bluegrass and country and then all over. To roots in Africa. To heights of jazz. Banjo, unbound. Trischka set it free. Embracing all manner of possibilities, while keeping one foot firmly planted in the traditional bluegrass roots that first inspired him to make music. The performance will be on Saturday, January 18, 2020, at 8 p.m. and is followed by a



(above) The Watchung Arts Center proudly presents Tony Trischka on Saturday, January 18 at 8 p.m.

dessert reception and an opportunity to meet Mr. Trischka.

Now 70, Tony Trischka has over the past half-century garnered a reputation as one of the most influential figures in roots music. “[I]n fiddle- and fret-conscious circles from Nashville to Groton, Mass.,” the New York Times wrote in 2006, “[Trischka] is known as the father of modern bluegrass.” As a banjoist he set new standards for genre-bending virtuosity, inspiring legions of younger players, among them Béla Fleck. Through his tireless efforts as an educator and such divergent projects as his collaborations with his friend and fellow banjoist Steve Martin, he’s helped to elevate and transform his chosen instrument’s profile within American culture. His forthcoming album, *This Favored Land*, is a visionary exploration of Civil War history featuring an all-star cast.

Born in 1949 in Syracuse and raised in a home filled with music, he fell in love with the banjo through the Kingston Trio’s 1963 recording of “M.T.A.” Trischka moved to New York City in the early ’70s and released his landmark solo debut, *Bluegrass Light*, on the Rounder label in 1974, synthesizing everything from bluegrass and country to psychedelic pop, modal and free jazz and fusion. Many other milestone albums followed, including 1983’s *A Robot Plane Flies Over Arkansas*, which refined the eclecticism of *Bluegrass Light*; and 1993’s *World Turning*, a global history of the banjo that ignited Marc Fields’ comprehensive 2011 documentary, *Give Me the Banjo*, which Steve Martin narrated and

for which Trischka acted as musical director and co-producer.

Trischka’s Grammy-nominated album *Double Banjo Bluegrass Spectacular*, released in 2007, and *Great Big World*, from 2014, feature Martin within a mix of veterans and up-and-coming luminaries. He produced Martin’s Grammy-nominated *Rounder* album from 2011, *Rare Bird Alert*, which touts performances by the Steep Canyon Rangers, Paul McCartney and the Dixie Chicks. Through his theme song for *Books on the Air* and performances on *A Prairie Home Companion*, *Mountain Stage*, *From Our Front Porch* and other programs, Trischka has been a frequent presence on NPR. In addition to his Grammy nominations, he’s earned a number of honors, including the International Bluegrass Music Award for Banjo Player of the Year, 2007. In 2012 he was named a United States Artists Friends Fellow.

Tickets are \$20 in advance, \$25 (\$22 WAC members) at the door, or online at watchungartscenter.eventbrite.com, or in person at the Watchung Arts Center office or by mail. Include an email address or phone number with mail orders.

The Watchung Arts Center, located at 18 Stirling Road in Watchung on the Watchung Circle, is a multi-disciplinary arts facility serving Watchung, the surrounding communities and the Tri-State Area. To obtain more information about upcoming performances, classes and workshops, and monthly art exhibitions, please visit WatchungArts.org or call 908-753-0190.



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FALLEN OFFICERS HONORED AT VETERANS MEMORIAL PLAZA

Twelve Somerset County officers were recently honored at the new Law Enforcement Memorial at the Veterans Memorial Plaza located on Grove Street.

Gathered at the ceremony were Somerset County Sheriff Frank J. Provenzano, Sen. Christopher Bateman, New Jersey Attorney General Gurbir Singh Grewal, Somerset County Prosecutor Michael Robertson and New Jersey State Police Colonel Patrick Callahan.

The engraved names of the fallen heroes are forever etched in black marble. Sheriff

Provenzano read the name of each officer in the presence of their families, local law enforcement agencies, Sheriff's office staff and members of the community. A rose was placed at the memorial for each fallen officer by family members, police officers and other dignitaries.

Thirteen-year-old Jake Whitenight, son of Correction Officer Paul Whitenight, sang the National Anthem and the Rev. John Rozembajgier of Mary Mother of God Church in Hillsborough, offered the invocation and benediction.

Other participants included the Somerset County Pipes and Drums, Sheriff's Office Honor Guard, Bridgewater Police Department Honor Guard, New Jersey State Police riderless horse, New Jersey State Police aircraft flypast, and taps performed by Nate Kimmick of Somerville High School.

"It is my great honor to bring together families and friends of Somerset County. The heroes on the memorial will be remembered for what they loved to do, protecting us from harm, willing to sacrifice their lives for the security and wellbeing of our citizens," said Sheriff Provenzano.

The following fallen Somerset County law enforcement officers were honored:

- Police Officer Manning T. Crow**
Somerville - 1/18/1899
- Police Officer Julius Sauter**
Somerville - 2/3/1917
- State Trooper Robert E. Coyle**
State Police - 12/8/1924
- Chief of Police Charles Brendon Cavanaugh**
Bernardsville - 9/8/1931
- Police Officer Samuel J. Kriney**
Bound Brook - 10/29/1931
- State Trooper Michael J. Beylon**
State Police - 2/22/1932
- State Trooper Vincent C. Vosbein**
State Police - 6/19/1938
- Patrolman George Dunham**
Franklin Township - 7/10/1960
- Patrolman John Lebed**
Franklin Township - 7/10/1960
- State Trooper Thomas J. Hanratty**
State Police - 4/2/1992
- Sheriff's Officer Ron Yeager**
Somerset County - 7/10/2000
- Police Officer Matthew J. Melchionda**



(above) Somerset County Law Enforcement Memorial located in Veterans Plaza in

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WATCHUNG HILLS PROJECT GRADUATION 2020

Submitted by Gina Strong

Watchung Hills Regional High School will be celebrating its 29th year of Project Graduation. Project Graduation is a series of year long, small events for the senior class, culminating in a safe, drug and alcohol free celebration on the night of Graduation.

WHRHS kicked off this year's Project Graduation 2020 on October 16. The Class of 2020 was presented their "Senior shirts" as the official Senior class yearbook photo was taken. The year's events will conclude with the final celebration held on June 21, 2020 at Dave and

Buster's in Woodbridge. The Project Graduation committee, composed of parent volunteers, has planned school day activities for the entire year, plus this unforgettable night of fun for all members of the graduating class. The committee arranges for the venue, transportation, security and chaperones. The night will be filled with food, video and arcade games, and entertainment.

In order for every student to participate, the committee is reaching out to the community for support through a direct fundraising appeal. We need your assistance to continue this worthwhile

program.

Please consider making a tax deductible donation today, to sponsor senior students. Checks should be made payable to WHRHS Project Graduation and sent to the school.

WHRHS

Attention: Project Graduation,
108 Stirling Road, Warren, NJ 07059
or via Venmo @WHRHS-Projectgrad

On behalf of the volunteer committee and the students who will benefit from your generosity, thank you for your support, from Project Graduation 2020 Executive Board.



(above) The Class of 2020 on their Senior shirts.

Photos by WHRHS

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WATCHUNG HILLS JUNIOR RANKS 9TH IN OLYMPICS ARCHERY TRIALS

In September, Watchung Hills Regional High School junior Valerie Wang shot at a tournament in College Station, Texas and took one large step towards her goal: to represent the United States of America in Tokyo as a Recurve Archer.

Her journey started four years ago at a local archery range, where she trained casually year-round and enjoyed modest success. She struggled heavily in 2018, though, and found herself losing confidence in her abilities. The Wang family looked for a solution. Similar to the way golfers and tennis players have a coach to help develop their swing or stroke, archers have a coach to develop their shot and to overcome the intense mental battles inherent in the sport. Wang transitioned coaches and began training under Zach Garrett, a silver medalist at the Rio 2016 Olympics. Though the range she trains at is an hour away, she still finds the time to commute

and practice there nearly every day.

This change and the hard work that ensued helped her trajectory take off. In May 2019, Wang won the Gator Cup in Newberry, FL, her first major victory at an outdoor tournament, where cadets, who are archers between the ages of 14 to 17, shoot at a 122cm target from 60 meters away. That weekend, 78 out of her 138 arrows were good enough to find the center of the target - the equivalent of hitting a volleyball positioned three-quarters of a football field away. In the one-on-one tournament-style elimination matches, she defeated five opponents, winning 32 set points and losing only 13, on her way to the top of the podium. She had her goal of making the United States Female Cadet Archery Team, a recognition given to the top five female cadet archers, solidly in her sights.

Later, in August 2019, she shot her first tournament in Ohio as a Senior, the archery term for archers over 21 years old. Now shooting at a target 70 meters away and facing both strong winds and higher level competitors, Wang finished in 13th place nationally. This put her in the running to make the Olympic Shadow Squad, which takes the top 16 athletes at the conclusion of the Olympic Trial Stage 2. At this point she had a difficult decision to make: maintain her Top 16 ranking for the Senior Olympic Trials or to defend her spot on the Cadet USAT.

When asked about her decision process, Wang said: "This choice was very difficult for me and took nearly a full month of intense deliberation before I could finally decide." If she chose to continue to compete in the Trials, she was likely

to lose her position on the Cadet USAT to one of the many girls vying for the spot she held. On the other hand, if she chose to forgo the trials, she would be giving up this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Recognizing that dreams don't become reality without sacrifices, Wang decided to compete in the Olympic Trials in the adult division.

Her decision was very much worth the risk; she was officially knocked out of contention to make the Cadet USAT but qualified for the Top 16 Women in the Trials. Currently, she is ranked 9th out of all competitors, which include a five-time Olympian (Bronze in 1992), athletes training full time at the Olympic Training Center ("OTC"), collegiate athletes, as well as four other high school student-athletes just like herself. Her goal is to qualify for one of the top three spots in order to make the Olympic Team. "I know that it will be extremely difficult for me, but I still want to put as much effort as I can into making the team," Wang remarked.

The third stage of the Olympic Trials will be held in Chula Vista, California on April 8-11, 2020. She will need to advance at least one rank in order to join the top 8 athletes who will advance to the fourth and final stage in May 2020, where the Olympic team will be selected.

She recognizes that many of her competitors are training full time at the OTC and will thus pursue more intensive training throughout 2020 in order to challenge them. "I want to serve as a role model for other young athletes across the country, even WHRHS, who wish to pursue their Olympic dreams."



Photos by WHRHS



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TREE OF LIGHTS DEDICATED TO RESCUE SQUAD AND FIRE DEPT. VOLUNTEERS



(above, l-r) Six of the dedicated life member volunteers at the closing of the ceremony: Robert Winston, Ralph Bohnenberger, Donald Monetti, Gary Greves, Paul Ost, Robert Pittenger Jr.

The Watchung Rescue Squad 2019 Tree of Lights honored active members of the Fire Department and Rescue Squad that have served their respective organizations for a designated period of time and who have achieved the status of "Life Member". They are all current members of their organizations, and have actively participated and dedicated over 15 years of service. They are integral members that have helped shape these organizations for decades, and have made the departments what they are today.

In today's society it is difficult to dedicate time and show commitment to volunteer agencies, but these individuals have gone above and beyond. They have all held multiple leadership positions and now serve as role models for many. They have regular jobs and full time families, but are

able to balance their home lives while donating time to helping others in their community. These Life Members are an inspiration to current members and an aspiration to future members and to all residents of Watchung. They are your neighbors, your friends, your first responders, and truly deserve recognition for their efforts. It's an honor to dedicate this year's Tree of Lights to these eleven outstanding individuals.



(above, l-r) Watchung Rescue Squad members who participated in the 2019 Tree of Lights event.



(above, l-r) President Lysandra Plotkin and Captain Angel Quiros

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Our Town Rahway	12,400	Yes	07065
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JANUARY PROGRAMS AT SCLSNJ'S WATCHUNG LIBRARY BRANCH

Somerset County Library System New Jersey's (SCLSNJ) Watchung Branch • 12 Stirling Road, Watchung, New Jersey.
All programs listed are free. Registration is required unless otherwise indicated and programs are subject to change;
visit SCLSNJ.org or call the library at 908-458-8455 for more information and to register.

CHILDREN, TWEEN, AND TEEN PROGRAMS

Teen Advisory Board (grades 6-12):

Thursday, January 2, 7 - 8 p.m.

Baby/Toddler Storytime - Tiny Tots (ages birth - 3 years):

Tuesday, January 7, 10:30 - 11 a.m.

Fairy Village (families with children)

Scavenger Hunt:

January 6, 7, 8, 9, 13, 14, 15, 16;

9:30 a.m. - 9 p.m.

Scavenger Hunt:

January 10, 11, 17, 18;

9:30 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Celebration:

Wednesday, January 22, 4 - 5 p.m.

Family Storytime - Twilight Tales

(families with children):

Wednesday, January 8, 7 - 7:30 p.m.

Preschool Storytime - Miss June's Room (ages 3-5):

Thursday, January 9, 4 - 4:30 p.m.

Bingo With Miss June (ages 4 and up):

Friday, January 10, 4 - 4:30 p.m.

Mini-Maker Art Space (families with children):

Mondays, January 13, 27;

9:30 a.m. - 9 p.m.

LEGO® Club (grades K-5):

Tuesday, January 14, 4 - 5 p.m.

Maple Sugaring (grades K-4):

Wednesday, January 15, 4 - 5 p.m.

STEAM - Flextangles (grades K-5):

Thursday, January 23, 4 - 5 p.m.

ADULT PROGRAMS

Watchung Writers Group:

Thursdays, January 2, 9, 16, 23, 30;

10:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Canasta:

Thursdays, January 2, 9, 16, 23, 30;

1 - 4 p.m.

Mah Jong:

January 6, 7, 13, 14, 21, 27, 28; 1 - 4 p.m.

Game Night:

Mondays, January 6, 13, 27;

6:30 - 8:45 p.m.

Book Discussion - "Our Man in Havana" by Graham Greene:

Thursday, January 9, 7:30 - 8:45 p.m.

Special Needs Social Hour:

Wednesday, January 15, 2 - 3 p.m.

Please note the Library will be closed on
January 1 and 20.

DISCOVERING THE LIBRARY THROUGH STORYTIME



Families connected during a special twilight storytime at the Somerset County Library System of New Jersey's (SCLSNJ) Watchung Library branch on December 4. Attendees listened to stories with a goodnight theme while dressed in pajamas. Pictured is Christian Amani Spinosa, 11 months, of North Plainfield, during the program. Explore storytimes and more at SCLSNJ: sclsj.libnet.info/events.

BENEFITS OF READING TO A THERAPY DOG

According to research from Tufts University, reading to a therapy dog can enforce positive attitudes in children about literacy. On December 11, children in grades K-4 and their caregivers discovered the benefits of reading aloud to a therapy dog at the Somerset County Library System of New Jersey's (SCLSNJ) Watchung Library branch. Library customers took turns reading to Zoe the Therapy Dog, in the Library's children's department.

SCLSNJ offers the opportunity to read to a therapy dog multiple times a month at various branches across the system. Explore the calendar for upcoming sessions: sclsj.libnet.info/events.



(above) Pictured are Petra Sharkey and her daughter Petra Sharkey, 5, of Watchung, reading to Zoe and her owner Valerie Pena, of Colonia.

CASA SHAW ANNOUNCES INFORMATION SESSIONS FOR JANUARY 2020

CASA of Somerset, Hunterdon, and Warren Counties is part of a statewide network of community-based, non-profit programs that recruit, screen, train and supervise volunteers to "Speak Up for a Child" removed from home due to abuse or neglect. CASA is the only program in New Jersey that uses trained volunteers to work one-on-one with children, ensuring that each one gets the services needed and achieves permanency in a safe, nurturing home.

"Attending an information session is the first step in becoming a CASA volunteer advocate for a foster child who has been abused and neglected. This is where individuals learn about what it takes to become volunteer," said Tracey Heisler, Executive Director of CASA SHaW. Attending an Information Session is required for anyone interested in applying to become a CASA.

Below are the dates, times and locations for the upcoming CASA SHaW information sessions scheduled for January:

Tuesday, January 7 - 5:30 p.m. at the PeopleCare Center in Bridgewater, NJ (120 FINDERNE AVENUE, BRIDGEWATER, NJ 08807)

Wednesday, January 15 - 5:30 p.m. at the CASA SHaW office in Washington, NJ (150 BOULEVARD, WASHINGTON, NJ 07882)

Wednesday, January 22 - Noon at the PeopleCare Center in Bridgewater, NJ (120 FINDERNE AVENUE, BRIDGEWATER, NJ 08807)

If you are interested in attending one of these information sessions, registration is required. Please contact Volunteer Trainer, Karen Cassano, at karen@casashaw.org or by phone at 908-689-5515 if you plan to attend on either date.

For more info about CASA visit casafnj.org.

RESCUE SQUAD SEEKING MEMBERS

We are students, nurses, contractors, realtors, engineers, social workers, coaches, business owners, scientists, doctors, teachers - the list goes on. But we're not just a job title.

We are daughters, sons, moms, dads, sisters, brothers, friends, coffee addicts, foodies,

mentors, bookworms, busy bees - and so much more.

We're all unique. And we are all volunteers. We are the Watchung Rescue Squad. Challenge yourself today and become more than just a job title. Visit watchungems.org to learn more.



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