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47 COMPUTER SCIENCE STUDENTS OF ALL AGES ATTRACTED TO 2020 WHRHS HILLSHACKS HACKATHON

Submitted by Denis Kelly

Forty-seven students, some as young as 4th grade, and some from as far away as East Brunswick Township and Middlesex Borough in Middlesex County, and Bethlehem Township in Hunterdon County, participated in the 2020 HillsHacks hackathon on Sunday, February 23, 2020, at Watchung Hills Regional High School (WHRHS).

Coordinating the event for the second year were WHRHS Seniors Jagdeep Bhatia and Mayur Sharma. These WHRHS Computer Science (CS) leaders were assisted by a cadre of WHRHS CS students, who greeted and registered participants. They also assisted in directing participants to classrooms for workshop sessions and to the South Auditorium and Atrium for speaking programs and lunch and dinner breaks.

These and other WHRHS CS students acted as leaders in the session workshops, themselves. They shared with participants their expertise in various computer science languages. They showed participants where to find pertinent web sites on the internet to delve into various subjects, from Artificial Intelligence, introduction to Java, and video game design to Music in Coding, to name just a few.

They also sponsored CS discussions about the very real need to attract more and more girls and women into Computer Science. Of particular interest is tackling the notion of helping girls navigate through their middle school years when many girls feel the social pressure that embracing CS will label them as "nerdy" and "very uncool" in their peer groups.

The WHRHS CS students also shared helpful hints on how to broaden their ability to use computer tools to tackle and solve more problems both now and in the future.



(above, l-r) 2020 HillsHacks Student Organizers Jagdeep Bhatia, left, and Mayur Sharma, right, congratulated Second Place, presentation titled,
"Disquinetext," by participant Alec Doyle, a Junior at Ridge High School, Permanda Township, First Place, "Anticapatingto," presented by two

Bernards Township; First Place, "Anticrastinate," presented by two WHRHS Juniors, Sanjay Kethineni of Green Brook Township, and Frank Liu of Warren Township; and Third Place, "Door Security," presented by a trio of 4th, 5th, and 6th Graders. They are: Charan Alampally, 6th grade at Grades 6-8 William Annin Middle School, Bernards Township; Rohin Kudeti, 5th grade at grades K-5 Chattick Elementary School, East Promovick Township; and Krichna Sinch. 4th grade, at grades K-5 Mount

Brunswick Township; and Krishna Singh, 4th grade, at grades K-5 Mount Horeb School, Warren Township. Photo by WHRHS

Faculty and volunteers supporting the 2020 HillsHacks hackathon were: Supervisor of Mathematics and Business Dan Twisler; Director of Curriculum and Instruction Mary Ellen Phelan; and community volunteer and former teacher of the Gifted and Talented Program at Watchung Public Schools, Elaine Chesebro.

There was also a panel of speakers who started the day sharing their expertise and their personal stories about how they got into computer science, how they have learned and practiced the use of various computer science languages, and how they became more comfortable at mastering and using new computer science skills. The speakers included Mathematics and Business Supervisor Twisler, WHRHS Computer Science Teacher Daniel Lamson, and 2012 WHRHS graduate Matthew Carbone, who is a graduate of the University of Rochester. Also on the panel was 2018 WHRHS graduate Jared Pincus, who has completed his second year as a CS student at Stevens Institute of Technology, Hoboken. WHRHS Senior and co-organizer of this year's Hills Hackathon, Mayur Sharma, sat in on the speaker's panel, sharing what he already learned.

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WHRHS NATIONAL MERIT FINALISTS

All four Watchung Hills Regional High School (WHRHS) students, who in September were named National Merit Semi-Finalists, have now qualified as 2020 Finalists. This year's WHRHS National Merit Finalists are: Phillip Ding, Dave Ki, Jessica Young and Vivian Zhang.

"Congratulations to Phillip, Dave, Jessica and Vivian, and to their families and teachers for this important and well-deserved honor," said WHRHS Principal William J. Librera. "Students who receive this distinction have a chance to compete for scholarship prizes. Phillip, Dave, Jessica, and Vivian have outstanding academic records, participate in diverse school and community activities, demonstrate leadership ability and inspire their classmates and teachers."

Being considered for this year's National Merit designation is initially based on scores by more than 1.5 million students who sat for the 2018 PSAT (Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test)/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (NMSQT).

WHRHS'S four National Merit Semifinalists this year had been the latest of the 52 WHRHS students who had qualified as National Merit Semifinalists during the most recent six school years. The year-to-year totals have been: Class of 2015 - 11; Class of 2016 - 6; Class of 2017 - 10; Class of 2018 - 15; Class of 2019 - 6; and Class of 2020 - 4.

Many, although not necessarily all, of the semifinalists tend to go onto to qualify as finalists. This is the second year in a row when all of the WHRHS Semifinalists went on to be named Finalists.

Every year, in addition to the naming of the Semifinalists and Finalists, National Merit also names a list of commended students. This year's WHRHS students named to the 2020 Commended List, which is the category immediately following Semifinalist, are: Laura Baeyens, Jagdeep Bhatia, Catherine Cai, Nyna Chacko, Tina Chen, Tamara Hadzic, Jenna Hansen, Nicole Harris, Roopa Irakam, Niharika Iyer, Apurva Joshi, Stephanie Ju, Abigail Kotar, Sana Mamtaney, Aaron Marmolejos, Manthan Naik, James Narayanan, Annabell Pu, Julia Rubin, Cristina Sarrico, Julia M. Schink, Mayur Sharma, Katie Tan, Sarah Young, Maya Zhang, and Kevin Zu.

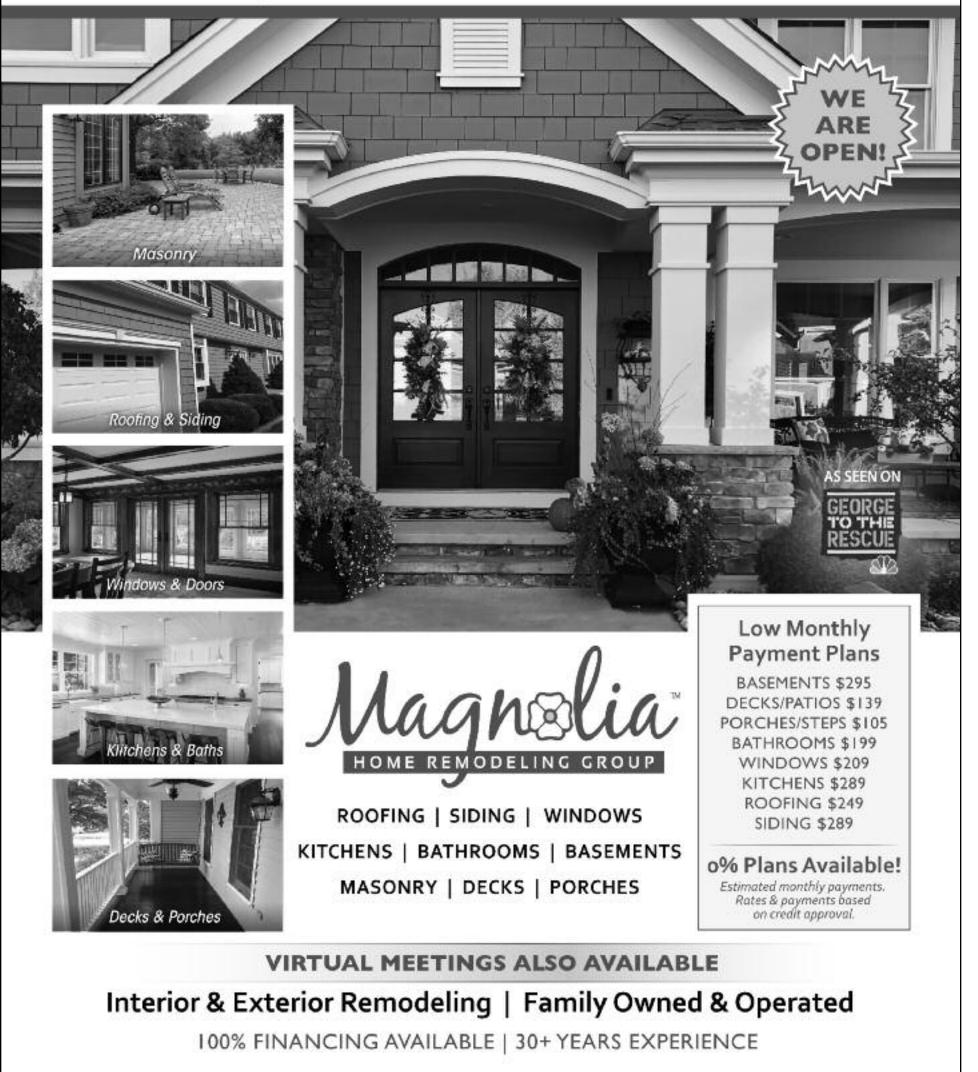


(above, l-r) WHRHS Principal William J. Librera, center, congratulates the school's four Class of 2020 National Merit Finalists: Jessica Young, Dave Ki, Vivian Zhang, and Phillip Ding.

Photo by WHRHS



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SCLSNJ CELEBRATES 90 YEARS OF SERVICE EXCELLENCE

Submitted by Tracy Carney

Over the past nine decades, the Somerset County Library System of New Jersey (SCLSNJ) has evolved from a small book truck, known as the bookmobile, to a Library System consisting of 10 full service branches across Somerset County. This year, SCLSNJ will celebrate 90 years of service to the Somerset County community by making enhancements throughout the system including additions to the collection, new resources and services, and more.

"Since 1930, SCLSNJ has striven to maintain our vision to work together to enrich lives, to expand knowledge, and to strengthen communities," said Brian Auger, county library administrator. "The Library System is, and always has been, a cornerstone of our community. We are consistently responsive to the needs of our customers and are planning a number of exciting releases and events for our 90th year."

THEN AND NOW

In the 1930s, Somerset County residents would have access to explore the bookmobile only once per month, when it made its rounds to their local community. Fast forward 90 years to 2020, and customers can browse the Library's collection in the comfort of their own homes, through the internet, or even on the go through the Library's cell phone app.

In the 1930s, there were just 100 stops a month on the bookmobile's route that consisted of 37 centers and 63 schools. In 2019, the Library



(above) The original SCLSNJ Bookmobile.



(above) Shirley Todoroff, lifelong Somerset County resident and SCLSNJ operations supervisor of processing in technical services, who is celebrating 50 years of employment with the Library System in 2020.

System branch visitors totaled over 1.1 million.

Nine decades ago, SCLSNJ's collection consisted of just 500 print books. Now the Library System has a growing collection of over 702,000 books while also offering newspapers and magazines; media including music CDs, DVDs, and videogames; and audiobooks and ebooks. While the bookmobile lent out an average of 300 print books a day, the current Library System circulates an average of 3,700 physical materials and almost 700 e-books daily.

Today, in addition to books, the Library System is so much more. SCLSNJ offers hundreds of programs a month for patrons of all ages; a cultural adventure pass, which allows Library customers to explore local museums, parks, and more; dozens of digital resources; and a number of services including foreign language learning, notary services, and passports.

WHAT'S NEW IN 2020 AND BEYOND

SCLSNJ continues to evolve by enhancing current services, adding to the ever-expanding collection, and by offering new resources to the community.

In 2020, the Library System launched Internet

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On the Go, free mobile hotspots available for checkout; appointment-based notary services; and new digital resources including BrianHQ and Gale courses.

In future years, the Library System will continue to evolve and grow to meet the needs of the dynamic community by offering relevant resources, programs, and services to Library customers.

Explore everything your Library has to offer: SCLSNJ.org.

ABOUT SOMERSET COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM OF NEW JERSEY

Somerset County Library System of New Jersey (SCLSNJ) partners with you to connect, to explore, to share and to discover. Together we enrich lives, expand knowledge and strengthen communities. SCLSNJ branches can be found in Bridgewater, Bound Brook, Hillsborough, Manville, North Plainfield, Peapack & Gladstone, Rocky Hill at Mary Jacobs Memorial Library, Somerville, Warren Township, and Watchung. Additionally, there are two SCLSNJ reading stations in Branchburg and Washington Valley. Visit SCLSNJ.org.

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HICKORY TREE CHORUS ANNOUNCES ANNUAL \$1,000 MUSIC SCHOLARSHIP



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(above) The Hickory Tree Chorus, a chapter of Sweet Adelines International, is now accepting applications for their annual \$1,000 music scholarship.

Are you a high school senior woman who has applied for a college music program? Hickory Tree Chorus, a chapter of Sweet Adelines International, is pleased to offer the \$1,000 Diane Cecala Memorial Scholarship to a musically talented high school senior woman interested in pursuing a career in vocal music. Rehearsing in Stirling, New Jersey, we are dedicated to teaching, singing, and performing four-part, acappella harmony. Hickory Tree Chorus has awarded an annual scholarship for over 20 years to students from areas in which its members reside.

Qualified high school senior girls with good academic records and exceptional talent in vocal music are encouraged to apply. Students should also have applied for acceptance into a music program at a college or university. Completed applications and recordings of at least two vocal performances must be received by April 30, 2020.

Details and applications are available on the chorus web site at hickorytreechorus.org.



DON'T FALL FOR SCAM CALLS AND EMAILS IMPERSONATING IRS

The IRS is urging the public to be aware of • Contact the Treasury Inspector General for suspicious individuals claiming to be from the IRS.

Thousands of people have lost millions of dollars and their personal information to tax scams. Scammers use the regular mail, telephone, or email to set up individuals, businesses, payroll, and tax professionals.

Scammers and cyberthieves continue to use the IRS as bait. The most common tax scams are phone calls and emails from thieves who pretend to be from the IRS. Scammers use the IRS name, logo, fake employee names and badge numbers to try to steal money and identities from taxpayers.

Taxpayers need to be wary of phone calls or automated messages from someone who claims to be from the IRS. Often, these criminals will say taxpayers owe money and demand payment right away. Other times, scammers will lie to taxpayers and say they're due a refund. The thieves ask for bank account information over the phone. The IRS warns taxpayers not to fall for these scams.

Below are several tips that will help filers avoid becoming a scam victim.

IRS EMPLOYEES WILL NOT:

- Call demanding an immediate payment. The IRS won't call taxpayers if they owe taxes without first sending a bill in the mail.
- Demand payment without allowing taxpayers to question or appeal the amount owed.
- Demand that taxpayers pay their taxes in a specific way, such as with a prepaid debit card.
- Ask for credit or debit card numbers over the phone.
- Threaten to contact local police or similar agencies to arrest taxpayers for non-payment of taxes.

• Threaten legal action, such as a lawsuit.

If taxpayers don't owe or don't think they owe any tax, and they receive an inquiry like this, they should:



- Tax Administration. Use TIGTA's "IRS Impersonation Scam Reporting" web page to report the incident.
- Report the incident to the Federal Trade Commission. Use the "FTC Complaint Assistant" on FTC.gov. Add "IRS Telephone Scam" to the comments of your report.

In most cases, an IRS phishing scam is an unsolicited, fake email that claims to come from the IRS. Some emails link to sham websites that look real. The scammers' goal is to lure victims to give up their personal and financial information. If the thieves get what they're after,

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they use it to steal a victim's money and identity. For those taxpayers who get a phishing email,

- the IRS offers this advice: • Don't reply to the message.
- Don't give out your personal or financial information.
- Forward the email to phishing@irs.gov. Then delete it.
- Don't open any attachments or click on any links. They may have malicious code that will infect your computer.

For more information visit www.irs.gov or call your local police department non-emergency number.



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GREEN BROOK RESIDENT ED WRIGHT TAKES 1ST PLACE IN TRIATHLON CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

Green Brook resident Ed Wright, age 73, won his age group (70-74 year-old) for the third year in a row in the 2020 La Habana Caribbean Sprint Triathlon Championship event held in Havana, Cuba on February 22, 2020.







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Like Us On Facebook: "Green Brook Real Estate" Join Your Neighbors on Facebook "Green Brook Neighbors" Dear Neighbors,

I understand you may have questions about the state of the real estate market during these unprecedented times. Perhaps you were considering a real estate transaction this year but are unsure what to do at this point in time. Everyone has different needs and I am here for a conversation to answer any questions you may have. Reach out anytime to have a call or video chat. I am happy to answer any questions or address your concerns.

If you are on Facebook, now may be a good time to consider joining the "Green Brook Neighbors" group. This is a great place to share local information and to ask for help from the community if you are in need.

Wishing you all the best of health and safety,

Roseann



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