

School News

One-on-One Cultural Exchange for SHS Students



Souhegan students with McLaughlin Middle School students & teacher Tina Proulx are Rachel Gagliuso, Sarah Kolpovsky, Rhiannon King, Brad Wall, Callie Cinque, Gabrielle Sellers, Lauren McCormick, Jack Kane and Olivia Cerra.

By LAUREN MCCORMICK,
CLASS OF 2015

Late in December a group of students from the McLaughlin Middle School in Manchester visited Souhegan High School. Manchester is home to one of the nation's highest populations of refugees. This visit was part of the on-going program between Souhegan juniors and seniors with the McLaughlin students in English as a Secondary Language classes. Last year, Souhegan's World Literature teacher, Adam Theriault, began taking some of his students to the classrooms of these young refugees for volunteer work that focused on helping the students become more accustomed to the American culture and language. This opportunity of service

was made possible by McLaughlin Middle School teachers Tina Proulx and Anne McQuaide. Ms. Proulx and Ms. McQuaide dedicate much of their time outside of the class helping their students get involved in programs that assist refugees and immigrants in adjusting to their new homes. This year, the interaction between the Souhegan students and the Manchester Middle School students has become more personal. In early October, Adam Theriault brought his students to McLaughlin to start a project that would continue through the rest of the year. On that first day, each Souhegan student was paired with one of Ms. Proulx's students. Since that meeting, Mr. Theriault's students have been pen pals by email with the Manchester students. Af-

ter a few months of writing back and forth to each other weekly, the students had a concluding event at SHS. In late December, Ms. Proulx's students came to Souhegan for the day, and Souhegan High School students gave their partners a tour and an inside look at our high school. This experience was educational as well as an opportunity for bonding. Each pen pal pair created a poster about their conversations from the previous months. The Souhegan students were eager to learn about the cultures in countries like Iraq, Nepal, and Vietnam, and the ESL students were eager to work with their high school partner. All of the students are excited to continue this experience as the year continues.

Souhegan Launches CONNECT Youth Suicide Prevention Program

By JEANNE STURGES

When it comes to stemming at-risk behaviors, the research is clear: kids listen to kids. While it certainly "takes a village" to provide for the needs of our youth, young people themselves play a critical role. "The safety of our students is most important, and we are excited to bring a program to Souhegan in which students can teach other students about suicide prevention," says Dina Karlon, Souhegan guidance counselor. Connect Program co-coordinators, Karlon and Sheelu Joshi Flegal, Souhegan's social worker, recently launched the suicide prevention program at Souhegan.

Friends of youth at risk are typically the ones who see warning signs or know that a friend is suicidal before adults are ever aware. Because youth may not know what to do about a friend at risk, or may feel an obligation to keep a suicidal plan a "secret," it is important for young people to understand what their role is in recognizing a friend at risk and seeking out an adult for help. As Connect Team member Paris Dzen says, "It's all about the name - how do you connect people who need help to people who can help?"

The Connect Program is a research based program created by the New Hampshire National Alliance of Mental Illness. Souhegan launched Connect this year to provide students with skills and information about preventing youth suicide and to encourage them to involve adults if they think someone is at risk. The program trains student leaders to make classroom presentations with adult co-presenters. "It's not just a bunch of adults rambling off rhetoric about suicide like a 90s help video," Dzen says. "It's about students connecting with other students to get the message across in a way that's beneficial to them," he adds.

"We want to emphasize that the role of our youth participants is to seek help from an adult whenever there is a concern, not to take on the role of a counselor," says Flegal. The program teaches young people what and how to share information about suicide prevention. "Suicide is not something people like to talk about," Flegal explains. The topic is scary and there is a stigma to it as with many mental health issues. "Some also believe that talking about suicide will provoke or encourage thoughts of suicide. This is one of the myths Connect seeks to debunk," Flegal adds. Both Karlon and Flegal explain that the program demystifies talking about suicide in order to raise awareness. "The more people talk about it, the more the risk factors decrease. Keeping it a secret makes the issue more difficult to deal with," Flegal explains.

While youth at risk surveys show Amherst and Mont Vernon to be fairly consistent with other communities in New Hampshire, New Hampshire's at risk behaviors are higher than the national average. This is likely because it is a rural



Connect program coordinators, Dina Karlon and Sheelu Joshi Flegal

state, and as we have certainly seen this year, has long harsh winters. These factors typically lead to increased isolation, less physical activity and fewer social services.

Souhegan recognizes these realities so initiated the Connect program in order to create more of a safety net for its students. "Students are on social media; they see things we don't see. They need to know where to go and who to come to, rather than just sit on it," Flegal says. One key point in the training is to help students know what to do when someone says, "I want to hurt myself but you can't tell anyone." Karlon explains that the program teaches students how not to make promises and how to get friends the help they need. One student on the Connect team put it this way, "I had a friend who told me she wanted to hurt herself, and I didn't know what to do. Now I know what to do."

This is the definition of a leader, says Karlon. Connect Team students intuitively know "it is not always about making friends," Flegal adds. "We interviewed a lot of students for the program and we asked each applicant what they would do if a student came to them and said they wanted to hurt themselves but not to tell anyone. Every student in the program said they would tell an adult because it's that important. They said, 'It's ok if my friend got mad at me, because they got mad at

me for saving their life."

This year Souhegan has 25 trained youth, nominated by teachers, and 10 faculty - from the School Resource Officer to classroom teachers and guidance counselors. Connect team members are trained in key aspects of suicide prevention: Debunking myths about the causes of suicide, recognizing the risk factors, and knowing how to connect youth with trusted adults. Students are trained to share this information with other students in Souhegan's health, wellness and psychology classes. The hope is that the outreach will be extended to include community trainings in middle schools and with community youth groups. "Suicide is a public health issue that cuts across one's lifespan. It's not just something that happens to adolescents," Karlon says.

Parents of those nominated were also invited to an informational session. With a very high turn-out rate among parents, Karlon says, "the parents were wonderful - so supportive, so excited about the program. I am so proud to be a part of a community that isn't afraid to talk about suicide." Perhaps Connect Team member Alex Mendola captures the essence of the program saying, "Souhegan cares about the students and we are working hard to make sure everyone's happy and safe."

Support Souhegan Project Graduation 2015!

AMHERST - It is only February but plans are in full swing for our 10th Souhegan High School Project Graduation. Enjoy fabulous pies from the Pie Guy and support Project Graduation at the same time! These wonderful 8" pies are \$10, come in a variety of flavors and will be a big hit with your family and friends. Orders must be placed by Sunday, March 15th. Orders are accepted on our Facebook page www.facebook.com/SouheganHSProjectGraduation or by contacting Nancy Protzmann, 672-6206, uvmcats84@gmail.com. We will also host a table and have some pies on hand at Souhegan High School on March 10th, Election Day from 6:00-9:30am and 2:30-8:00pm. Pie pick-up is at Souhegan High School in the Life Skills room (room #115) on Tuesday March 31st between 2:00-5:30pm.

WHAT is Project Graduation? This is an all-night event that provides a safe, substance-free, fun environment for our graduating seniors. Working together, parents and community businesses help fund and host this special event. The evening is chaperoned primarily by parents of current juniors and other community volunteers. Graduates are provided bus transportation from SHS in the evening and must commit to remaining at Project Graduation for the entire event, returning by bus to SHS in the early morning for parent pick up. A school nurse is on-site during the entire event.

WHEN is Project Graduation? Friday June 5th 2015, 10:30PM - 5:00AM at the Nashua Sports Academy.

HOW CAN I HELP make Project Graduation a success? This celebration takes months of planning and its success depends on community involvement. There are many ways you can help:

- **VOLUNTEER** your time, energy and ideas! We will need many volunteers to make this a success. **PAY IT FORWARD!** Senior parents are not allowed to attend this event - we rely on parents and community members for chaperoning.
- **CONTRIBUTE FUNDS:** We rely solely on donations to fund this event and are actively seeking corporate and small business sponsors, in addition to private donations and grants. We are grateful for any amount! Our goal is to make this event affordable for every senior. Please send donations to:

Project Graduation
c/o Bonez Dupre
48 Ponemah Road Unit A1
Amherst, NH 03031

- **DONATE PRIZES:** We have so many fun activities planned for our new graduates - please consider donating prizes such as gift cards, electronics, college prep / dorm items, etc. We are very flexible and appreciative of your generosity!

WHO do I contact?

- General Questions / Information: Michelle Caraccio mdcaraccio@gmail.com

Lisa Maresco lamarresco@yahoo.com

- Sponsorships / Donations / Prizes: Patty Casey caseyamherst@comcast.net

Peg Bennett peg.bennett@comcast.net

Krista Hanks hanks.krista@gmail.com

- Volunteers: Lynne Maloney lmpt2005@yahoo.com

HOPE For GUS Team Headed to Mt. Everest!

By CHRIS BALCH

From September 14th to October 19th, my two dogs and I hiked Vermont's Long Trail. During those 36 days we walked 270 miles and raised a total of \$22,000 in funds for research into a cure for Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy (DMD).

DMD is a debilitating genetic disorder that affects about 16,000 children in the United States today. Children with DMD are usually in a wheelchair by the ages of 10-12, and have a life expectancy of somewhere into their early to mid-20's.

Gus Dreher, son of current and former Souhegan English teachers Steve Dreher and Tonya Dreher, has DMD.

As you can imagine, Gus' diagnosis was horrific news to Steve and Tonya. However, instead of despairing, they pushed forward to create the Hope for Gus Foundation. A year later, they were primarily responsible for organizing the Duchenne Alliance, an international coalition of 40 DMD non-profits united to coordinate funding and research into a cure.

This year, my fund-raising efforts will not be solitary. A team of approximately ten folks, including Tonya Dreher and others with a direct connection to children with DMD, is gearing up to undertake a signif-

icant challenge. The team will trek the Himalaya highlands from Lukla to the Mt. Everest basecamp in Nepal!

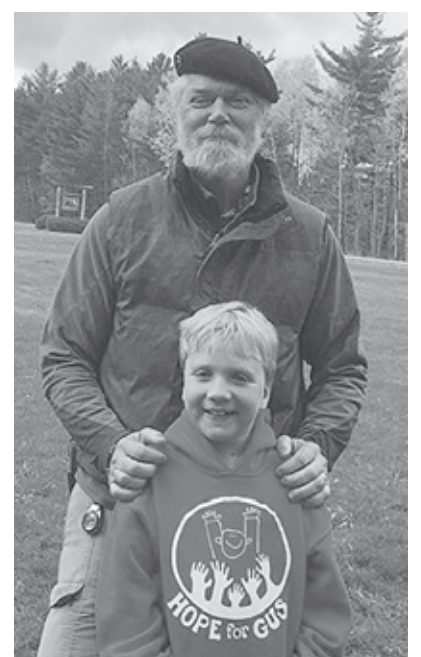
The trek is a total of 17 days, 80 miles, and climbs to elevations over 18,000'. Daytime temperatures will be in the 40's-60's, while nights will fall into the teens, and possibly lower.

Members of the team are responsible for their trip costs and are raising funds for Hope for Gus. Tonya Dreher and I are committed to raising \$5,000 each.

All of the monies raised will be used to fund a trial of a new therapy for children with DMD. The new therapy shows promise beyond anything previously explored. This therapy causes the body to produce Follistatin protein, which reverses the muscular wasting that characterizes DMD. In addition, it rebuilds muscle tissue throughout the body. The therapy was developed at Nationwide Children's Hospital in Columbus, Ohio.

Tonya and I are going to make this happen. Gus is a real little boy. He is 10 years old. He dreams, hopes, laughs, cries, and loves. He lives here, in New Hampshire. He is in a real life and death struggle with DMD.

Gus deserves to live. As do the 16,000 other children with DMD;



Gus with Chris Balch

children waiting for people to step up and help science find the cure that will save their lives.

Please consider supporting this effort. You can make a secure, online contribution at: <https://life.indiegogo.com/fundraisers/hope-for-gus-mt-everest-basecamp-trek/x/7773819>

Thank you!

Students in the News

D'Anthony Makes Dean's List

Freshman Katherine D'Anthony of Amherst was awarded the Dean's List at High Point University for the Fall 2014 semester. Dean's List students are those who have attained a 3.5 or higher GPA for the previous semester based on a 4.0 scale.

D'Anthony is the founder and owner of a local Amherst business, No More Lonely Pets, which cares for pets for over 50 different Amherst families. She has also collected for the Wounded Warrior Project at the village festivities for Halloween and Fourth of July.

Brandeis University Announces Fall Dean's List

Susan Birren, Dean of Arts and Sciences at Brandeis University announces the Fall 2014 Dean's List. Ceara McNamara of Amherst was placed on the list for superior performance that builds on the tradition of excellence at Brandeis University.

Area Students Make the Dean's List at RIT

ROCHESTER, NY - The following local residents made the Dean's List for fall 2014-2015 semester at Rochester Institute of Technology:

Jacky Lim of Amherst is a second-year student in the chemistry program in RIT's College of Science.

Brian Ringenwald of Amherst is a second-year student in the civil engineering technology program in RIT's College of Applied Science and Technology.

Madeleine Daigneau of Amherst is a fifth-year student in the computer engineering program in RIT's Kate Gleason College of Engineering.

Katelyn Fiebke of Amherst is a second-year student in the medical illustration program in RIT's College of Imaging Arts and Sciences.

Robert Sears of Mont Vernon is a fifth-year student in the electrical mechanical engineering technology program in RIT's College of Applied Science and Technology.

Local Students Named to Curry College Dean's List

MILTON, MA. - Curry College is proud to announce that the following student has been named to the

Dean's List for the Fall 2014 semester: Madelyne Bergeron of Amherst. To qualify for the Dean's List, students must earn a 3.30 GPA, have no incompletes, and have no grade lower than a "C" for the semester.

Students Named to Dean's List at Lafayette College

EASTON, PA -- The following Lafayette College students were named to the Dean's List for outstanding academic achievement during the fall 2014 semester. Each student achieved at least a 3.60 semester grade point average on a 4.0 scale.

Jenna Gowell of Amherst. Gowell is a graduate of Souhegan High School.

University of Maine announces fall 2014 Dean's List

ORONO, ME - The University of Maine recognized 2,114 students for achieving Dean's List honors in the fall 2014 semester. Of the students who made the Dean's List, 1,622 are from Maine, 394 are from 32 other states and 98 are from 27 countries other than the U.S.

Students from Amherst: Ian Gowell, Zachery Ladd, Emily Stauble received Dean's List honors for fall 2014, completing 12 or more credit hours earning a grade point average of 3.5 or higher.

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