

Support for Hillary Clinton for President in 2016

To the editor:

According to the Institute for College Access and Success, New Hampshire ranks #1 in Average Student Debt carried by students attending public and private nonprofit colleges, at \$32,795. New Hampshire also ranks #1 in Proportion of Students who carry college debt, at 76%. Our student debt burden is a national security crisis. How will carrying crushing student debt inhibit a graduate's ability to open a small business, pursue an advanced degree, buy a home, or take on other financial risks that help make communities stronger? Our economy will suffer if young people are mired in debt for many years to come. Hillary Clinton's past legislative record on this issue is clear. As a Senator, she was a vocal advocate for the College Cost and Reduction Act which expanded Pell Grants, reduced student interest rates, and introduced student loan forgiveness plans. She sponsored legislation that aimed to improve access to higher education for nontraditional students. Currently, she advocates for free community college for all who are willing to work hard for it. America's prosperity in the 20th century directly paralleled our nation's rising enrollment in public high school. Our prosperity in the 21st century will require the same at the college level. I'm supporting Hillary Clinton because I believe she is the candidate who recognizes the seriousness of our student debt crisis, and has the knowledge and determination to do something about it. Please join me in supporting Hillary Clinton for President in 2016.

Lisa Petrie
Amherst

What Have I Gotten Myself Into?

To the editor:

With the 2014-2015 school year now behind us, my attention has shifted to the 2015-2016 school year ahead. I am extremely excited about my new role as a community representative on the Souhegan High School (SHS) Community Council and have been learning all I can in preparation.

A recent round of letters to the editor and Facebook chatter regarding SHS dimmed my enthusiasm a bit as I wondered if I had been sold a bill of goods. Was I ratcheting up my involvement in a fiscally irresponsible institution coasting on faded glory and outdated dreams? In other words, what have I gotten myself into?

With lots of numbers and opinions swirling around regarding what the Souhegan School Board and administration were (or were not) doing regarding SHS, I realized I needed to put my journalism degree to work and directly ferret out some facts. Just like all of you, I pay my taxes and deserve to know what I'm getting for them!

Good news. The sky is not actually falling. We've got some very dedicated people working to serve our community and students. Contrary to recent allegations, both the school board and district indeed have a long-term plan for improvement in many areas. All of my questions were thoughtfully answered in a timely manner and backed up with appropriate details. Here are some highlights:

- SHS administration has focused on hiring dual-certified teachers that fulfill more responsibilities, eliminating the need for hiring multiple teachers in some cases.
- SHS administration has also devoted a lot of time to the new Teacher/Leader Effectiveness program that is not only concentrated on evaluations, but mentoring and sharing of best practices.
- The SHS Ethics Forum--a student-led philosophy forum started by Souhegan students and supported by the University of NH--won the Granite State award this year.
- A business partnership initiative instituted at SHS has given students access to internships, job shadowing, interview experience, and scholarship opportunities.
- SHS is as one of four schools in the nation creating a common student assessment, which is the PACE initiative. SHS was chosen due to the quality work the administration had done on Common Performance Assessments for teachers, and because of the respect our teachers have in the state for creating student assessments.

• PACE is one measure that will replace the NECAPs, which will no longer be administered and by all accounts was deeply flawed. That said, charges that SHS has never performed better than Hollis or Bedford on standardized testing is simply untrue. The latest NECAP scores on the DOE show that Amherst outperformed Bedford in writing, outperformed Hollis in reading, and was significantly better in all categories compared to state averages. Math had already been identified as an area needing improvement and a new math program was recently introduced.

• SHS has reduced their Cost Per Pupil (CPP) over the last couple of years, at a time when it was difficult for schools across the state to do so given the pressure of downshifted pension costs and skyrocketing health insurance premiums. At the same time, SHS enrollments actually went up by 4% and the overall SHS budget had a net decrease. Yes, lower costs and higher enrollment. Some would call that a win win.

• SHS increased teacher facing ratio (the number of students a teacher sees in any given trimester) from 67:1 to 82:1 since FY13. Student/teacher ratio increased from 9:1 to 10:7 during the same time period; 10:7 is the average student/teacher ratio for high school only districts, of which there are only three. I would hate to see these ratios go much higher.

• The Souhegan School Board has been meeting for more than two years to review their budget on a year-round basis. This year, they met every two weeks to review and analyze every aspect of their budget, how it compares to other districts, and whether/which other district's strategies would help SHS to reduce costs.

Recently, the board had a work session to make recommendations to the administration, based on this in-depth research. They brought forth creative ideas for 15 different areas that could represent short and long-term reductions to the overall budget, including a number of plans for future negotiations. This effort is not a direct knee jerk reaction to recent criticisms, but rather a measured response to continual community feedback and needs.

I know my eagerness and faith have been renewed by speaking directly with the parties entrusted with using our money to best educate our kids. There are numerous positive things in the works and more on the way. I'm happy to devote time now to ensure our high school retains the unique approach that originally inspired me to move to Amherst so my current 4th grader can eventually attend SHS.

If you have questions, ask. Attend school board meetings. Get involved. Just don't lose sleep thinking our stewards are asleep at the wheel or clinging to the status quo. SHS is not spending without thought and has not lost the innovative spirit and passion on which it was founded.

Terri Behm
Amherst

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People in the News



Amherst Middle School student Shannon Hargreaves, 11 years old, met presidential candidate Rand Paul on Saturday at Joey's Diner. "He is nice" shared Hargreaves. "It is exciting to meet someone who is running for president."



70th Wedding Anniversary – Ice Cream Social
Chris and Vern Trudo will celebrate their 70th wedding anniversary on Sunday, July 12 at an old-fashioned ice cream social at the Congregational Church of Amherst. Friends they have made during the past 46 years in the community, in the church, through Vern's insurance business and Chris's years at Clark School are cordially invited to join in this special occasion between 2:00 and 4:00 pm in the community room.



Former Amherst Resident Promoted
J.L. Burris, formerly of Amherst and a 2009 graduate of Brewster Academy in Wolfeboro was promoted to Gunner's Mate Petty Officer Third Class in ceremonies recently held as part of the U.S. Navy's Pacific Fleet Operations in California. Pictured with the Petty Officer is his wife and one year old son. Burris attended Nashua Catholic Junior High prior to attending Brewster Academy. He is the son of William (and the late) Kay Burris, also former Amherst residents.



2015 Bruce Tarpley Scholarship
The 2015 Bruce Tarpley Scholarship was presented at the Amherst Sunset Memorial Day Celebration Parade on May 29th. This year's scholarship was presented by Amherst Fire Captain Gerry Beland to Amherst Firefighter/EMT John Bowler, who will be attending Lakes Region Community College to pursue his Fire Science degree.

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Amherst Resident Receives Good Neighbor Award

Congrats Theresa Grella!
BEDFORD— The Greater Manchester/Nashua Board of REALTORS® (GMNBR) is proud to announce Theresa Grella of Amherst, as the 2015 Good Neighbor Award recipient. The announcement was made Thursday, May 21st at an awards banquet held at the Derryfield Country Club in Manchester.

Established in 2002, the Good Neighbor Award recognizes one REALTOR® member that has made an extraordinary commitment to improving the quality of life in their communities through volunteerism. Nominees are judged on their level of personal contribution to the community as well as their impact as a role model for other REALTORS®.

In her 29+ years as a REALTOR® Grella has volunteered extensively at the Board of REALTORS® and in her community through the Amherst Junior Women's Club and the Community Business Members Cares organization. She is also an Educational Surrogate parent to children in local schools.

The Amherst Junior Women's Club began 50 years ago as a resource for Amherst Housewives to get involved in the community. The club's mission is to enhance the community through volunteering their combined time, energy, and talent. The focus of their efforts is educational advancement, civic needs, and those less fortunate.

"My volunteer experience has taught me to cherish everything I have; especially the people in my life," said Grella upon receiving the award. "Some of the organizations we donate to exist due to the lack of meaningful relationships experienced by the recipients."

Community Business Members Cares (CBM Cares) is a not-for-profit organization, dedicated to supporting and sustaining the needs of other not-for-profits. The organization, run by business leaders and professionals in Southern New Hampshire, plans fundraisers and events to educate people and contribute to other organizations.

Recipients of the Good Neighbor Award receive a \$1,000 donation from GMNBR to be given to a charity of their choice on their behalf. Grella was thrilled to present the \$1000 donation to CBM Cares Citizen of the Year program on Friday, June 5th.

"I feel it is important to volunteer to make the world a better place. The world is being run by people who show up and I want to be there as a participant; not a bystander," said Grella.

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Wednesday, July 22, 6:00 p.m.

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The Derryfield School is a coed, independent, college-preparatory day school in Manchester, NH, for students in grades 6-12.

