

# Neshaminy UPDATE

March 2016



Neshaminy School District  
Langhorne, PA

[www.neshaminy.org](http://www.neshaminy.org)

## Genre reading engages students, teachers

In this age of mobile devices, Snapchat and the sound bite, building solid reading skills can be a challenge for students used to communicating in 140 characters or less.

9th-grade students at Neshaminy High School have been involved in a pilot program to expand the scope of their reading and comprehension by participating in a program from the American Reading Company (ARC) that uses the concept of 'genre theory', which involves reading texts from such teen-friendly genres as dystopian fiction (think 'Hunger Games') and realistic non-fiction of their own choosing to learn how to respond to literature and respond to literature in writing.



According to Neshaminy School District Supervisor of English Language Arts and Literacy Robert Boffa, this method differs from traditional reading programs by individually meeting students readiness and interest levels. During

the pilot program, which began in the 2014-2015 school year, students were not only reading significantly more than they were before the program was implemented, >> *Continued on page 2*

## STEAM Expo, Health Fair on tap

The next month promises to be an exciting one for Neshaminy families as the District is sponsoring two big events for elementary and middle school students.

The first is the first annual Neshaminy Health Fair, sponsored by the Neshaminy Certified School Nurses. A number of exhibitors will be on hand with games, activities, health screenings



**Thurs. April 7**  
**Neshaminy HS**  
**6:30 - 8:30**

and prizes for kids and parents. Kids can explore a fire truck and ambulance, get health screenings, and see demonstrations.

The second is the second annual STEAM Expo at Neshaminy High School April 7. Last year's debut was a huge hit with hundreds of students attending with their families. This year promises

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**Wed. March 30**  
**Hoover ES**  
**6:00 - 8:00**

### MARCH MEETINGS

**Monday March 7**

*Action Board Meeting and Public Work Session, 7 pm*

**Tuesday March 22**

*Board Public Meeting, 7 pm*

**Tuesday March 29**

*Board Educational Development Committee, 6:30 pm*

*All meetings held at the Maple Point District Board Room unless otherwise indicated.*

*Please consult the Neshaminy district web site for any updates and/or additions.*

### BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS

	Region
Scott Congdon, President	1
Tina Hollenbach	1
Stephen Pirritano	1
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Mike Morris	2
Robert Sanna	2
Irene Boyle, Vice-President	3
Ron Rudy	3
Marty Sullivan	3

### ADMINISTRATION

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*Director of Administration*

## Genre Reading

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but were also providing more sophisticated responses to their reading while working within the program.

According to ARC, the program works by having each student take on an extended research project, taking a final written product in the selected genre through the entire writing process from note-making to publication. Teachers use a novel or a set of short stories in the selected genre to teach students to read literature and write literary analysis essays. Students research a companion topic to gain the expertise necessary to create their own narratives in the selected genre.

The success of the program led to its expansion to the entire 9th grade during the current school year, and plans to expand to other grades are under way. That success went noticed by representatives from ARC, who asked the District if they would agree to showcase the Neshaminy implementation for other Districts interested in modifying their own reading programs.

On March 1, Neshaminy hosted a Literacy Genre Workshop which was attended by educators from Bucks County and throughout the Philadelphia region. The workshop was held in the Media Center at Neshaminy High School, and featured a seminar presented by internationally-known teacher, author and literacy expert Dr. Jeffrey Wilhelm. His presentation was titled, 'Inquiring Minds Learn to Read and Write.'

Dr. Wilhelm argued that students are more likely to read and respond to texts in school that they are actually interested in. This method aligns well with the Pennsylvania Common Core so it can be easily integrated into the English Language Arts program. Following Dr. Wilhelm's presentation, the educators attending the



workshop spent time observing 9th-grade classes actively engaged with the Genre Reading program both reading and writing. They also learned about the framework used to individually assess these students and tailor the program for their needs.

Several of the participants from other districts are planning to return with more members of their own teaching staff to further observe the Neshaminy implementation of the Genre labs so they can bring this success back to their own classrooms.

## STEAM Expo

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to be even more exciting with an exciting night of hands-on activities & demonstrations with the S.T.E.M. subject teachers in the Neshaminy School District and some outside groups including Bucks County Community College, Mad Science, NASTAR Center, Silver Lake Nature Center and others. Among the many hands-on exhibits will be robotics, 3D printing, food science, screen printing, videography, a lab in the biotechnology of strawberry DNA, digital art design, STARLAB, computer clubs, biology, physics, chemistry and environmental science demonstrations.

The name of the Expo was altered slightly this year (STEM to STEAM) to honor the contributions of the art program at Neshaminy High School. Art students and faculty will once again be offering demonstrations of digital graphic arts, game design and traditional art during the Expo.

Various technology-related community organizations will also be attending, including Bucks County Community College, the NASTAR Center, Silver Lake Nature Center, Mad Science, the James Michener Art Museum and more.

## FYI

### Kindergarten Registration Night

Thursday March 10, 6:30-8:30 pm  
Maple Point Middle School

For families that have not yet registered for the 2016-2017 school year and would like assistance with the online registration process or more information about the full-day kindergarten program.

### 1:1 iPad Mid-Year Information Night

Monday March 14, 6:30 pm  
Maple Point Middle School auditorium

For parents of 5th and 6th grade students who would like more information about the implementation of the 1:1 iPad program.

### PSSA ADMINISTRATION

The following is the range of dates that the 2016 Pennsylvania System of School Assessment tests can be administered. Please consult the individual school web sites for their testing schedule.

**English/Language Arts test window**  
April 11 - 15, 2016 - Grades 3 - 8

**Mathematics test window**  
April 18 - 22, 2016 - Grades 3 - 8

**Science test window**  
April 25 - 29, 2016 - Grades 4 and 8

**Make-up window**  
May 2 - 6, 2016

### KEYSTONE EXAM ADMINISTRATION

Spring 2016 - Algebra I, Biology, Literature  
May 16 - 27, 2016

## CURRICULUM NEWS

### Teachers study the brain at the Franklin Institute

During the winter break in February, approximately 120 Neshaminy teachers from all grades embarked on a journey to the Franklin Institute in Center City Philadelphia to view the “Your Brain” exhibit and attend a companion seminar. This professional development session provided our teachers with some insight into



the world of brain science which is advancing rapidly. During this visit, the lead designer of the exhibit, Dr. Jayatri Das, and her staff provided a presentation of how the brain processes images, sounds, and feelings.

After the presentation, teachers experienced the new exhibit that has over 70 interactive activities demonstrating how differently we interpret signals through visual, auditory, and kinesthetic processes. One of the exhibits includes the exploration of a city street filled with illusions that shows how our brain interprets conflicting information. Another uses speech to show how the brain can learn to process distorted audio messages such as the muffled sounds of a speaker on a SEPTA bus. One demonstrates the interaction between body and mind as a visitor touches two protruding things with his or her fingers and feels them both but when touched with the palm only feels one.

The purpose of this exhibit is to allow museum visitors to get a glimpse of how the brain works and reacts to stimuli. However, it is made clear that as much as scientists have learned about the brain, we still do not fully understand the full potential of how the brain functions—yet.

### 5th grade focuses on keyboarding skills

This year, 5th grade students are receiving keyboarding instruction as part of the BCIT 21st Century Technology Tools Course. Currently students are learning touch typing, which is typing without using the sense of sight to find the keys. The middle school BCIT teachers have stated that the students are performing wonderfully. They are very engaged, working hard, and using correct technique while learning the skill of typing.

A touch typist will know their location on the keyboard through muscle memory. The increased speed and accuracy of touch typing and employing this efficient method will help students in their overall academic goals. Such successes include utilizing



the computer as a bridge to the flow of ideas and writing. When students can type as fast as they can think the writing process is enhanced. In addition students will be learning digital literacy and digital citizenship will be introduced to drop and drag programming. All of these mentioned areas will prepare students with the tools to be 21st century learners.

### 7th grade AE program reaches for the stars

At the beginning of the second semester, under the direction of Kristi Messenlenher, Jen Howie, and Kate Roode, the 7th grade Academic Enrichment program at Maple Point and Poquessing Middle Schools began piloting a Virtual High School (VHS) program titled “Middle School Space Station Academy.”

Kristi and Kate serve as the site coordinators for this program and work closely with the VHS teachers by maintaining an open field for communication that includes students’ progress each week and any questions or concerns they might have for the AE students participating in the pilot. Because of the number of experiments and amount of supplies that were needed, they took the initiative to find outside resources to support their students’ learning goals.

The students participating in this pilot are engaged with hands-on activities while creating and experimenting with astronauts as they explore the many avenues of space. Students taking this course perform weekly experiments to simulate concepts such as floating in space or observing the gravitational pull on an object.

### NSD welcomes a new STEM supervisor

The Department of Curriculum & Instruction is pleased to welcome Margaret ‘Peg’ Monahan as the new Supervisor of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math, K-12. Peg comes to Neshaminy from the Philadelphia School District and has an extensive background in both science and math.

David Geanette is now serving as the Supervisor of Arts, Humanities, and Business Development, K-12. In addition, Colleen Stahl has returned as the Academic Coach, K-5 Reading and Language Arts.

# NEWS FROM OUR SCHOOLS

## Pearl S. Buck Elementary



### Buck celebrates Dr. Seuss

Red and white stovepipe hats, Thing One and Thing Two shirts and many other Dr. Seuss-inspired costumes and hair styles were to be found around school on March 2 as both students and staff celebrated the late author's birthday. Various activities highlighted the day, including a visit by parents to one first-grade class where they were entertained with a poem dedicated to the late author and the children read a page from their favorite Dr. Seuss book to the entire class.

### Science Fair takes center stage

The annual PTO Science Fair was held Thursday evening, February 25 in the cafeteria. Over 80 students participated this year, creating about 60 displays. The young scientists also had the opportunity to share their displays with classmates the following day.

### Students count 100 days in many ways

Mrs. Arner's Kindergarten class celebrated the 100th day of school by popping balloons throughout the day to reveal 100th day activities! Activities included counting to 100 by ones, fives, and tens, making 100 rhymes, writing and reading 100 words, doing 100 jumping jacks, filling in 10 ten frames to equal 100, finding 100 shapes throughout the classroom, saying 100 kind words to each other throughout the school day, and more!

In addition to dressing 'old' and donning "100" glasses, Mrs. Kuriger's first-grade students counted sets of 100 of different items, such as paper clips, pencils and snap cubes. Working in groups of 2 or 3, students needed to decide the best way to count up to 100. Through observation and awesome thinking, students figured out that making groups of 10 was the most efficient strategy. Next, the students went to our gym and laid 10 of their items in a row and then estimated how far 100 would go. After laying out another set of ten, students were able to adjust their estimate.

## Joseph Ferderbar Elementary

### Globetrotters deliver a winning message

Two Harlem Globetrotters visited Poquessing Middle School and performed some of their signature moves for Ferderbar

students in grades 3 and 4 as well as 5th grade students from Poquessing. Their performance was part of a community outreach to present an anti-bullying program. Designed by the Globetrotters in coordination with the National Campaign to Stop Violence (NCSV), the program focuses on Action, Bravery, and Compassion, comprising the ABCs.

### Playwickian staff helps Ferderbar newspaper

A group of editors from the Neshaminy High School student newspaper, Playwickian, spent an afternoon at Ferderbar in February to help them launch their own newspaper, Pawpower Press. The new publication will be produced by a group of students as a club under the guidance of fourth-grade teacher Denise Brand and Learning Support Teacher Janice Meizinger.

The Playwickian editors and their adviser Tara Huber worked with students in small groups to brainstorm ideas, and once the Ferderbar reporters have written their stories and submitted photos the Playwickian staff will help them assemble their content into an electronic PDF form that can be distributed to the entire Ferderbar community.

### Ferderbar celebrates reading



The entire school celebrated the birthday of Dr. Seuss on March 2 with a variety of activities, culminating in an all-school reading assembly. Each student brought their favorite Dr. Seuss book with them and some even got to read their favorite page in front of the entire school.

## Oliver Heckman Elementary



### Stuffed animals collected for local police

Police officers Melissa Robison and Robert Weber from the Middletown Township Police Department

visited Oliver Heckman Elementary School March 4 to gather hundreds of stuffed animals donated by students and their families, which filled a police cruiser front and back. The stuffed animals will be used by officers to give to children during police emergencies.

### First grade presents a book showcase

What may have looked like a science fair from a distance was actually a tribute to some of the favorite books chosen by first-grade students on February 25. The students filled the cafeteria - gymnasium with tri-fold displays devoted to their favorite books, which was viewed by classmates during the day and their families later in the afternoon.

### Kindergarten, 4th grade buddies visit Attleboro

Students in Mrs. Neff's kindergarten class joined Mrs. Beck's fourth-grade 'buddy' class for a visit to the Attleboro Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in Langhorne in February. The students sang several songs for the residents there, including 'This Land is Your Land' and 'You are My Sunshine.' Following their performance, they broke into smaller groups and worked with the residents on creating Valentines Day crafts.

## Herbert Hoover Elementary

### Fourth-graders sing for Globetrotters fans

A group of approximately 50 Hoover 4th-grade singers performed for the crowd at a Harlem Globetrotters game March 6.



## Lower Southampton Elementary

### Dr. Seuss birthday celebrated

Lower South joined schools across the country celebrating the birthday of the late Dr. Seuss with a variety of activities throughout the school. The second grade all joined together for a special Read to Self time in the hallway, then shared some of their books with kindergarten students.

Kimberly Maurizi, a reading specialist at Lower South, wrote, "This year each Lower Southampton Elementary School Title 1 student received a Dr. Seuss book for Read Across America Day! Read Across America, an annual project of the National Education



Association (NEA), began in 1997. Its purpose is to motivate kids to read and to spotlight the importance of reading."

## Walter Miller Elementary

### 100 days celebrated with 100 good deeds

Not only are the 2nd graders at Walter Miller 100 days smarter, but they're also 100 ways kinder. All of the second grade students in Mrs. Alford's, Mrs. Baker's, Mrs. Ritchie's, and Mrs. Stanley's class set a goal to perform 100 acts of kindness by the 100th day of school. Each act of kindness was written on a heart, and all of the hearts were hung on a hallway display. Some of the acts of kindness were done in school, while others were done at home.

First grade students dressed up like 100-year-olds, and participated in a variety of reading, language and math activities related to the number 100.

Kindergarten teacher Lisa Bailey wrote about the 100-day activities in her class:

"For starters, each child made a 100th Day crown. The boys and girls also brought in 100 of a secret item for which they had previously written three clues. Part of the morning was spent with students trying to guess what their classmates had brought in based on the clues that were shared. Afterwards, the students made predictions as to whether their 100 items were heavier or lighter than others' and tested these predictions with the help of balance scales. In the afternoon, my students also decorated place mats by drawing ten specified objects in each of the ten sections of the place mat. When the students finished, they counted by tens to make sure that they had 100 items all together. As a culminating activity, the boys and girls worked with a partner to fill 10 math ten frames with Mini M&Ms. Once the students completed their ten frames and counted by tens to 100, they were able to eat this special snack!"

## Albert Schweitzer Elementary

### Shelter pets get reading buddies

Students from Albert Schweitzer have been visiting the Women's Humane Society to participate in the new Story Tails Reading Program, where they can read books of their own choosing to

the animals residing in the shelter. Studies have shown that some children benefit from reading in front of dogs and cats, which offers them the chance to practice their reading skills in a low-pressure, non-threatening environment. The animals may also benefit from the low-key interaction, which can increase socialization and make them more adoptable.



Mandy Dollar, Director of Marketing and Community Relations at the shelter said, "I can say that it is very fitting that a school named Albert Schweitzer would be the first in line for a

program that helps shelter animals and promotes reading...thank you and the students of Albert Schweitzer Elementary School for being such dedicated and passionate advocates for our community's animals. We can't do what we do without your support."

## Maple Point Middle School

### Coaches vs. Cancer fundraiser nets \$7500

A sellout crowd watched a double-header basketball tournament between Maple Point and Carl Sandburg middle schools at Maple Point Friday March 4 and helped a great cause at the same time.

The 3rd annual Coaches vs. Cancer tournament is part of a national campaign to raise money that supports the American Cancer Society. Last year the Maple Point tournament raised \$4,500, making it one of the top Coaches vs. Cancer events in the Philadelphia region, including high schools. Through ticket sales, a host of valuable raffle prizes such as big-name concert tickets and gift cards to local businesses and restaurants, the Maple Point community was able to raise the bar by approximately \$3,000 this year. The tournament was dedicated to 1991 Neshaminy High School graduate Chris Rogers, who passed away on March 1.

### 'Beauty and the Beast' a musical hit

Maple Point presented its annual musical in February, this year taking on a Disney theme with the classic 'Beauty and the Beast.'



## Poquessing Middle School

### 'The Lion King' roars to life

Another Disney classic took to the stage at Poquessing Middle School in February as students presented 'The Lion King' for their classmates and the community. The show featured elaborate costumes and extensive make-up.



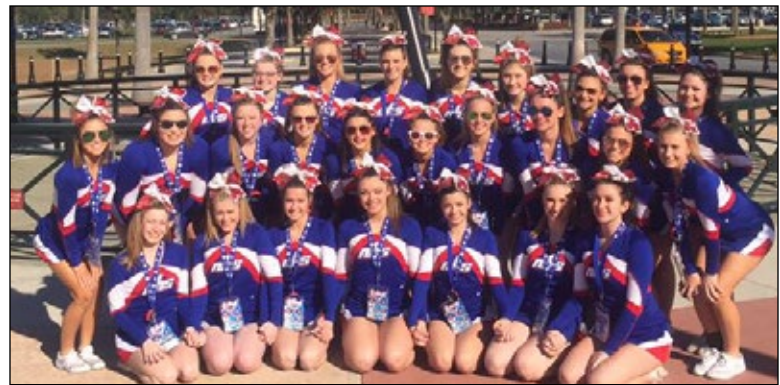
## Carl Sandburg Middle School

### Positive behavior program gets a perfect score

Carl Sandburg Middle School has been recognized by the Pennsylvania Positive Behavior Support Network for scoring a perfect 100/100 points in an independent assessment of their S.P.I.R.I.T. program. The school will receive a banner marking this achievement, and will be recognized at a state-wide convention in Hershey in May.

Attaining this banner was a complete team effort from every staff member and student at Sandburg, especially the S.P.I.R.I.T. team for all of their hard work and commitment to this building-wide goal.

## Neshaminy High School



### Varsity cheerleaders are undefeated champions

Congratulations to the 2015-2016 Neshaminy High School varsity cheerleading team, coached by Michelle Mazur, who finished

their season undefeated in competition.

On February 13 the team competed at the Battle at the Boardwalk National in Atlantic City, where they won first-place and a paid bid to the US Finals.

At the High School International Competition held at the ESPN Wide World of Sports in Florida, the team completed their undefeated season with a first-place finish.

**LifeSmarts team places second in state competition**

Congratulations to the Neshaminy High School LifeSmarts Team, who placed second in the state of Pennsylvania out of 318 teams in the recent National Consumers League Competition! Neshaminy progressed through two rounds of competition, including a 100-question final round. Neshaminy’s team is comprised of five Business, Computer and Information Technology students who have or are currently taking the BCIT Finance and Investment course: seniors Ryan Doyle, Blake Lyons, James Merz, Tim Odgers and junior Alex Schettino.

LifeSmarts is a program of the National Consumers League. The competition focused on five key topic areas: consumer rights and responsibilities, the environment, health and safety, personal finance, and technology. It complements school curriculum already in place and also aligns with national business education standards.

**Mary Poppins delights audiences**

The elaborate dance numbers and excellent performances by both casts of the Neshaminy HS production of the family classic Mary Poppins proved to be a big hit with audiences in February.

A second Sunday matinee was added for February 14 to



accommodate families who wanted to see the show, and it was a sold-out show.

**NHS junior wins leadership award**

Rachel Sufrin, a junior at Neshaminy High School, was chosen as one of the recipients of the annual Widener University / NBC10 High School Leadership Award in February. According to a letter from the organizers, “This awards program is designed to recognize high school students like Rachel in the region who embody the

university’s commitment to develop and inspire leaders to affect positive change. With this award, the Widener University High School Leadership Awards Committee recognizes Rachel’s ability to demonstrate courage by standing up for what is right, finding a way to address a wrong, or making a difference in a significant way.”

The award entitles Rachel to attend a special awards ceremony at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia on March 23, 2016 followed by a ‘unique leadership experience in fall 2016 where all the 2016 student award winners will convene on Widener’s campus for an exciting day of leadership training.’ In addition, if Rachel chooses to attend Widener University, she is eligible for a \$20,000 scholarship over four years.

Rachel was nominated for this award by Neshaminy High School Assistant Principal Lynn Knotts, who cited Rachel’s leadership role as a Gym Night captain, which is a very competitive elected position that requires a number of skills to bring students together to design and perform their routine. Rachel is also the Class of 2017 Historian and a National Honor Society member.

**Playwickian journalists win awards**

Congratulations to Playwickian editors Natalie Pietrowski, Gauri Mangala and Ashley Reiss for winning the Pennsylvania News Media Association – Student Keystone Press Awards.

They captured awards in the following categories:

- Editorial Category - Honorable Mention
- Layout and Design Category - Second Place

In addition, Playwickian Editor-in-Chief Tim Cho picked up a first-place award for Editorial Writing at the Pennsylvania School Press Association state competition at Penn State on March 4.

**Coach Wilmot honored by the Eagles**

Congratulations to NHS Football Coach Wilmot who was chosen as a 2015 Coach of the Week Honoree by the Philadelphia Eagles. The Eagles wrote, “In an effort to thank these coaches for their dedication and year-round contributions, the Philadelphia Eagles are proud to recognize 10 high school football coaches in the tri-state area as 2015 Coach of the Week honorees. These individuals demonstrate a steadfast commitment to their high school programs, serve as influential role models for their teams and continue to encourage personal and academic growth.” The honor comes with a \$1000 award to help support the athletic program at NHS.



**Band director honored by Bucks County official**

Bucks County Recorder of Deeds Joseph Szafran, Jr. attended a Neshaminy School Board Public Work Session in February to present a plaque to Neshaminy HS Band Director Donna Burmylo-Magrann. The plaque was in recognition of the band’s performance for veterans

when they returned from an Honor Tour to Washington DC in October.

## District

### NSD hosts Bucks County Music Festival

Neshaminy was the proud host of the Bucks County Music Education Association (BCMEA) 2016 Music Festival on February 18-20. Some of the best student musicians in the county came together at Maple Point Middle School and Neshaminy High School to perform in five groups, two middle school and three high school.

According to Wendy Robson, Lead Music Teacher for the District, the BCMEA was organized in the 1950's by public school teachers to spotlight musical talent in Bucks County schools. The Music Festival is an annual event for students in grades 7-12 which is only open by audition. At the middle school level, for example, over 800 students applied for 184 available seats at the festival.



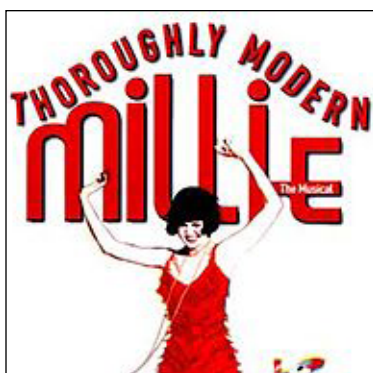
Five highly-respected guest conductors worked with the student musicians at the festival this year:

- High School Band – Darryl Bott (Rutgers University)
- High School Orchestra – Robert Gardner (Penn State University)
- High School Choir – Amanda Quist (Westminster Choir College)
- Middle School Choir – John Leonard (College of New Jersey)
- Middle School Band – Beth Sokolowski (University of the Arts)

The finale for the festival was a series of concerts for each group starting Friday evening into Saturday.

### Summer Stock registration under way

The Neshaminy Summer Fine Arts program has announced its shows for the 2016 season. This theater program has been operated continuously for over 50 years, drawing students from not only Neshaminy but also other districts in Bucks County.



The younger students, entering grades 3-5, will be performing the musical, 'Dear Edwina.' Students entering grades 6-12 will be performing 'Thoroughly Modern Millie,' a stage musical based on the 1967 film starring Julie Andrews and Mary Tyler Moore.

The workshop begins July 5 at Neshaminy High School and wraps up with public performances the weekend of July 30. Information and registration forms can be found at the District web site, [www.neshaminy.org](http://www.neshaminy.org).

## Neshaminy Education Foundation

### NEF Night at the Flyers

The Philadelphia Flyers has partnered with the NEF to offer discount tickets for a great night of pro hockey on Wednesday, March 30 as the Flyers take on the Washington Capitals. Neshaminy community members can take advantage



of group discount rates of \$45 for upper level seats and \$80 for lower level seats. \$10 of each ticket sold goes directly to the NEF! Tickets can be ordered online at [www.neshaminy.org/nef](http://www.neshaminy.org/nef).

### Dining Out Night at Bertucci's

The Bertucci's location at Oxford Valley Mall once again is hosting a fundraising night for the Foundation. 15% of all orders - takeout or dine-in on Monday and Tuesday, March 14 and 15, will be donated to the NEF. Join the NEF for a post Gym Night dinner with your Neshaminy neighbors and friends!

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