



Former League student, Connor Ellis, (pictured with his cousin, Grace Gilarde,) was the star of the evening's festivities.

Former Student, Connor Ellis, Stars at This Year's *Night of Champions Dinner*

There was lots to celebrate at this year's League School Night of Champions Gala: a lively auction, honorees who have devoted time and resources to the School, delicious food, sponsors and volunteers who made the event possible, and a packed house.

But the loudest and most sustained applause was for former League Student, Connor Ellis, who appeared by video to welcome everyone and to describe his 10-year experience as a League School student. He said he liked all of his friends and teachers at the school, and said that his League Transition Program work at the Vanderbilt Club and Meals on Wheels gave him skills that he uses at his job with Lifeworks Employment Services. With a terrific sense of humor, Connor described his favorite free time activities. Connor and his parents, Patricia and Geoff Ellis, chaired the successful Gala event.



Connor's parents, Patricia and Geoff Ellis, were the co-chairs for the Night of Champions event.

Over 235 people attended this year's Gala, held on May 2 at the Four Points by Sheraton Norwood. The event raised close to \$125K. These funds will help pay for a new state-of-the-art playground behind the school. Attendees were invited to purchase an engraved brick for the School's walkway to help complete this important project.

The Olen family received the Vetstein Award, in recognition of O'Lyn Roofing's support of the School. League Founder Dr. Arnold Vetstein, for whom along with his wife the award is named, said, "The League School is where my heart is, and I appreciate the many supporters who make our vision a reality."

Dana Neshe, Chief Operating Officer of Middlesex Savings Bank, recipient of the Community Service Award, noted how proud she was to work for an organization that supports students with autism spectrum disorder. League School Facility Manager, Michael Sullivan, received the Director's Award. "I've walked the hallways of the League School for over 6,000 days," he said. "Over that time, I've appreciated your generosity that has helped so many students grow and learn."



League's Facility Manager, Michael Sullivan, pictured with his wife, Melissa, and daughter, Kimberly, proudly displays the Director's Award he received.

The Gala would not have been possible without the tireless efforts of League School Executive Director, Frank Gagliardi; Director of Development, Tim McCabe; Special Events Coordinator, Michelle Melanson; and parent volunteers. Thank you to the many sponsors, attendees, and auction bidders who ensured the night's success!

Roger Lockwood, the Board Chair, said, "Tonight's event helps secure the future growth of a school that has a unique advantage: the program is customized to the way each student learns, which allows students to flourish." He noted some sobering statistics: autism's prevalence increased by 15% from 2014 to 2018 to one in 59 children, according to the Centers for Disease Control. With more students requiring excellence in autism education, the Night of Champions Gala and other fundraising events help the League School fulfill its mission. "Thank you for all of your help for making it possible for students like Connor Ellis to learn and thrive," he concluded.



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League students staff the shredder at Community Partner Mansfield Shredding



Preparing lunch is one of tasks League students work on at the Walpole High School cafeteria.



Sylvia Cucua and Maria Hall run the Nutritional Program at Walpole High that employs our students.

Community Partners Program Offers Students the Opportunity to Learn While They Work

As the Coordinator of Vocational and Career Services at League School, Amy Faraone is always looking to add local businesses and organizations to the school's ever-expanding Community Partners Program. Now in its 20th year of operation, the program provides opportunities for the school's students to work in supportive environments where they can refine their social interaction skills while providing employers with a reliable source of manpower.

This year, some 15 student crews are participating in the program. Currently, there are 24 different businesses and organizations that open their doors to host League School students in some capacity. Working closely with a team of educators at League School, students in the program indicate where they'd be interested in working. The program matches students with employers and coordinates their weekly work schedules. When students go to work at these organizations, they go as a crew accompanied by a Job Coach who directs their efforts while at the work site. And no matter where the students work, their employers are universal in their praise.

At Mansfield Shredding, Co-owner, Kathy Harney, was effusive with her praise. She finds the League students to be dedicated, attentive, and best of all, always smiling – "they are a true joy to work with." She also commented that the students really seem to enjoy the sorting and shredding tasks they're given. She also noted that the students who had been working there for a longer period of time were always ready to help train other students who had just started – that sort of employee cooperation is another hallmark of the participants in the program.

Similar words of praise were voiced by Maria Hall and Sylvia Cucua who run the nutritional program at Walpole High School. League School students working in the cafeteria there help with a number of tasks, including salad preparation, fruit cutting and and preparation, and refrigerator stocking. Sylvia praised her student workers for being very cognizant of sanitary measures (always washing their hands before touching the food and wearing hairnets when required) while Maria commented about how exceptionally polite dependable the League students are.

At Big Y, Dave Openshaw, head of the Big Y Bakery Department characterized the students as terrific workers. While there, they handle a variety of tasks at the store, including cake and cookie baking, helping with the fish service, and putting together pizza boxes. He has student crews working at the store every weekday at various times during the day. He said he wished that other Big Y stores at which he worked had similar feeder programs that featured workers as conscientious and dependable as his League School crews.

Amy Faraone is continuously striving to expand the program that her predecessor, Maureen Pratt, originated, working tirelessly to make sure that all the League Students who want to work have a place to work. One of the many benefits of participating in the program is that students are exposed to a variety of work environments and occupations. Amy appreciates each and every one of the school's community partners. The Community Partner Program is all about success – providing League School students with the opportunity to refine both their work and social interaction skills. Without the kindness and generosity of program participants in opening their doors to League's students, the observable growth in the students' self-esteem and confidence would assuredly be less pronounced. To be part of League School's Community Partners Program, please contact Amy Faraone at League School of Greater Boston via e-mail at afaraone@leagueschool.com.



Members of League School's new Advisory Board met for the first time earlier this month to formulate plans for the school.

Friends of League School Set to Advance School's Mission

League School's Board of Directors (BOD) recently created a *Friends of League School* group that already has eight members and had its first meeting on April 1st.

Tracey Robbins, Vice-President of the BOD, is liaison to the new group of business professionals which is intended to help the school

- By being ambassadors and help build relationships with leaders in surrounding communities;
- By assisting in current and future planning;
- By cultivating new candidates for the Board of Directors.

The first eight people who signed on include Peter Catanese II, President and CEO of Central Auto in Norwood; Daniel P. McCarthy, a partner at the law firm Manion, Gross, and Massenburg in Boston; Cindy McGrath, an employee benefits and marketing communications expert from Norwood; and Patrick Powers, a Senior Branch Manager for Liberty Mutual Insurance.

Other members include: Sammi Robertson of North Attleboro, Founder of Bailey's Team for Autism; Greg Susco of Sherborn, President and Chief Operating Officer of Amplified Insurance Partners; David Walsh of Medfield, Director of Community Relations for Direct Federal Credit Union; and Donny Wright of Sudbury, owner and operator of a number of McDonald's franchises in Massachusetts and southern New Hampshire.

Tim McCabe, League Head of Development, stated "League School will leverage the guidance that these talented individuals will provide to both refine our operations and increase awareness of the school within the state and beyond. We believe that they will prove to be an invaluable resource for us."



A framed copy of Caitlin Peterson's work of art was presented to Representative Aaron Michlewitz.

League Student Wins Prestigious Art Award

Danielle Pollard, League's art educator is pleased to announce that League senior Pathfinder student, Caitlin Peterson, has won the Public Service Award art prize in a recent art contest sponsored by the Massachusetts Association of 766 Approved Private Schools (maaps).

Contestants were asked to create their own rendition of one of three Boston based landmarks. Accepting the creative challenge from Ms. Pollard, Caitlin was immediately interested in working with the famous lighthouse, Boston Light. Working only with graphite, watercolor and sharpie marker, Caitlin carefully observed, sketched and then painted her image based on a photograph. Watercolor is one of the more difficult paint media to control but Caitlin persevered while problem solving through several techniques and adding emphasis lines to complete her masterpiece.

A framed copy of Catlain's art work was presented to Representative Aaron Michlewitz during the lunch portion of the maaps conference that was held on Friday, May 3rd at the Best Western in Marlborough, MA. At the conference, Caitlin was also recognized by all those in attendance for her exceptional artistic capabilities.

League students "Light It Up Blue" in celebration of April being Autism Awareness Month.





Runners and walkers of all ages came out in force to support the League School last weekend.

6th Annual Walk/Run for Autism Was a Record-Breaking Success With 248 Participants and \$21,000 Raised

League School of Greater Boston's 6th Annual 5K joint Road Race and Walk was held on Saturday, April 13th with a record field of 248 participants. All the money that was raised by race participants, \$21,000.00 (which was also a record), went towards the school's on-going efforts to fund and create a new outdoor space at the school that is accessible, exciting and engaging.

The race was once again held at the Old Post Elementary School in Walpole - but this year, in search of slightly more comfortable temperatures for runners and walkers alike, the race started an hour later than other years at 10:00. As it has always been, the event was more of a fun-raiser than a fundraiser as staffers, students, current parents, past parents, families, friends and community members joined together for another memorable morning.

Some of the companies who graciously committed to assisting us with sponsorships included Direct Federal Credit Union, the event sponsor, and O'lyn Roofing, the runner bag sponsor. Other sponsors include: Lockwood/McKinnon Taco Bell, AAFCPA's, Dedham Savings, W.P. Haney Company, Wegmans, Dempsey Insurance, Norwood Hospital, and the Vanderbilt Club.

This year's post-race reception was held at Napper Tandy's at in Walpole. Beginning in the late morning, the celebration carried well into the afternoon as participants and volunteers alike shared race-day tales and hearty laughs against a backdrop of aching muscles and smiling faces.

News From the Classroom - Starting Your Morning Off Right

By Amanda Bowlds, Middle School Teacher, Pathfinders Program, League School

In the Pathfinders' middle school classroom, we start every morning by connecting over a Morning Meeting. Morning Meeting is a gathering time to set the tone and pace for the day. Students and staff review what the day is going to look like and each person has the opportunity to share how they are feeling as they begin their day. It is also an opportunity for students to share their interests and thoughts with each other, allowing for supported social communication practice and opportunity for social connection.

Morning Meeting is the first 20-30 minutes in our busy day and starts off with each student and teacher greeting each other. After the greeting, we check the weather for the day, then go into reviewing each block in our schedule for the day. Students then get a chance to check-in with the group; how they are feeling, or what zone (Zones of Regulation) they are currently in. The next portion of Morning Meeting is decided by the students. We might engage in a discussion about a student-picked topic, solve brain teasers together, or tell jokes to get everyone's endorphins flowing.

Allowing students to share about how they are feeling allows the teacher, along with the other peers, to understand who we are going to be interacting with today. This gives us the opportunity to be a more supportive classroom. With autism, it is sometimes hard to think about how others might be feeling. This activity gives a good reference point for how we can best can engage with each other throughout the day.

Although we don't always feel like connecting with others, connection is an innate part of who we are as humans. It's important for students to know that they are part of a safe environment where their voice is listened to. Giving students a space to connect with each other helps that community to grow stronger.

Calendar of Upcoming Events

Falmouth Road Race - Saturday, August 18th

- Race starts at @ 8:00

2019 "Fore Autism" Golf Classic - Monday, September 30th

- 8:00 AM - 5:00 PM

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Chief Operating Officer - Lawrence E. Sauer

Principal - Patrick Fuller