Oyster River Cooperative
School District
SAU No. 5
Superintendent James Morse
36 Coe Drive
Durham, NH 03824

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Tuesday, May 1, 2018

Media Contact: John Guilfoil
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Oyster River Elementary Students Visit Durham Solar Array

Left to right: Dr. Clayton Mitchell from UNH and Henry Herndon from the New Hampshire Sustainable Energy Association talking to Oyster River 4th graders about carbon footprints and the impact and effects of their daily actions on the atmosphere.

(Courtesy Photo)
DURHAM -- Mast Way School Principal Carrie Vaich and Moharimet Elementary School Principal David Goldsmith are pleased to report that Oyster River Cooperative School District fourth graders were recently treated to a day of environmental and technological wonder with a field trip experience to the Town of Durham solar array.

On Friday, April 6, 4th graders from the Mast Way and Moharimet elementary schools visited the Town of Durham's vast and innovative solar array. The visit was part of the fourth grade science unit on renewable and non-renewable energy. Before the visit, students participated in a series of science experiments, learning about different components of solar energy. Leading these experiments was Brian Betournay from the New Hampshire Energy Education Project.

While at the array, students visited education stations led by volunteers from ReVision Energy, the New Hampshire Sustainability Association, EV LaunchPad, the Oyster River Sustainability Advisory Committee, and the University of New Hampshire.

Students learned about renewable and non-renewable energy resources, how energy is derived and the impacts of on the environment. The highlight of the trip for many was exploring the Tesla cars on display.

The solar array, erected on town-owned land, provides 100 percent of the power needed by all of the Town of Durham's municipal facilities except the wastewater treatment plant. It is also credited with providing some of the energy needed to power the Oyster River Cooperative School District's buildings. When it opened in 2016, the array was the second largest solar power generation facility in New Hampshire.

In addition to learning about the solar array, students were provided with educational lessons on electric vehicles and electric charging stations from the EV LaunchPad team.

The visit was coordinated by Maggie Morrison, Oyster River's Sustainability Coordinator.

"The Solar Array offers a unique blend of technology and environmental science lessons to our students. It is a marvel of cooperation and progress, providing sustainable, green, and inexpensive energy to the Town of Durham, and it is important for our young people to learn about this vital and still emerging technology," Morrison said. "I want to extend my gratitude to all of the government, business, and non-profit partners who teamed up to teach our students this month."
Fourth grader Laura Boughton (left) looking at a map of Durham’s solar array. The adult wearing the lime green shirt in the picture is Dylan Lucas from ReVision Energy. (Courtesy Photo)

Durham’s municipal 640 kW dc solar array (2100 panels) is located in the former gravel pit off of Packers Falls Road. (Town of Durham/Courtesy Photo)

A message from the Oyster River Cooperative School District

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Oyster River High School’s Best Buddies Chapter to Participate in Friendship Walk at State House
Oyster River High School 10th grader Tinuifeoluwa Afolayan and ORHS Best Buddies Chapter President Joe Morrell at the Best Buddies Spread the Word to End the Word Rally in Concord (Courtesy Photo Joe Morrell)

DURHAM -- Oyster River High School's Best Buddies Student President Joe Morrell is very pleased to announce that the Oyster River High School Best Buddies Chapter will be participating in the 2018 Best Buddies Friendship Walk at the State House in Concord later this month.

The newly-formed ORHS chapter, which is comprised of more than 25 high school students, helps to build a more inclusive school environment and foster friendships between students both with and without intellectual or developmental disabilities (IDD).

The ORHS chapter will participate in a statewide Best Buddies Friendship Walk on Saturday, May 12, in celebration of those relationships and the effort to include students of all backgrounds and abilities.

Best Buddies is an international nonprofit organization founded in 1989, by Anthony Shriver, to provide opportunities for the more than 200 million people with IDD. Starting at Georgetown University, Best Buddies today has more than 2,300 chapters worldwide. Oyster River High School started its chapter in the fall of 2017 and is led by student president Joe Morrell as well as four faculty advisers: Kim Wolph, Ryan Long, Misty Lowe and Amanda Mcleod.

"Oyster River High School is leading the Best Buddies mission of friendship and inclusion with a force!" said New Hampshire Best Buddies State Director Sarra Dennehy. "We are so impressed with their dedication and teamwork, from the advisers and the students alike."

Despite its short existence, the Oyster River High School chapter has already organized numerous initiatives, such as the implementation of a campaign at their school to end the use of the 'R-word,' as well as creating 'buddy matches' that pair students with and without an IDD.

As part of Oyster River's chapter, involved students are paired with students with IDD and meet twice a month outside of school, attending group activities like pizza making and flower pot decorating. The buddy matches allow for friendships to be built between
students with and without IDD and also help improve students' quality of life and level of inclusion.

"The early successes our chapter has been truly inspiring," President Morrell said. "I'm so excited by the positive response all of my classmates have had to this initiative, and I'm looking forward to celebrating the Best Buddies program at the State House with students from all over New Hampshire."

The annual walk celebrates the accomplishments of the state's chapters, highlights the special abilities of people with IDD and raises funds for the organization. Currently the ORHS Chapter is leading all New Hampshire chapters by raising more than $2,000.

Anyone interested in donating to the walk can do so by clicking here.

In addition to the committed work of all the students involved, the ORHS chapter is supported by staff advisers, School Nurse Kimberly Wolph, School Psychologist Ryan Long and Director of Special Education Misty Lowe.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, April 20, 2018

Media Contact: John Guilfoil
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Mast Way School Cafe Manager Earns School Nutrition Association's New Hampshire Manager of the Year Award

From left: SNA of NH President Doris Demers, Mast Way School Cafe Manager Lori Buckley, SNA of NH Vice President Donna Reynolds and President Elect Deb Riso
(Courtesy Photo Oyster River Cooperative School District)
DURHAM -- Superintendent James Morse is pleased to announce that Mast Way Elementary School's cafe manager was recognized as the Manager of the Year by the School Nutrition Association of New Hampshire.

Cafe Manager Lori Buckley, who has worked in school food service for 18 years -- including eight years with the Oyster River Schools -- was honored at the organization's annual spring conference in Manchester on Saturday, April 14.

The Manager of the Year Award is given to the person who does the most to go above and beyond in their roles as school nutrition supervisors by keeping customers happy and remaining engaged with the School Nutrition Association in order to keep up on industry trends.

Buckley earned the honor as a result of her openness to trying new recipes and introducing new menu items, her dedication to Mast Way students and staff, her creativity in enticing young children to try new foods and her commitment to educating herself about school meals.

"Lori genuinely cares for each child who enters her cafeteria and goes out of her way to make sure all of their needs are met," Superintendent Morse said. "Her creativity and diverse abilities make her a truly deserving recipient of this award."

Buckley is an active SNA member and holds level 1 certification in school nutrition from the organization. She is the second Oyster River manager to win the award. By winning, she is now entered into the SNA national organization's northeast regional competition.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Monday, April 16, 2018

Oyster River Launches "Take 5 for Balance" Challenge to Encourage Healthy Workplace Environment
DURHAM -- To encourage healthy lifestyles among staff, Oyster River Cooperative School District launched the "Take 5 for Balance" challenge this month.

The voluntary eight-week program, created by Taylor O'Connor at HealthTrust, is part of Oyster River's ongoing effort to prioritize overall wellness for its employees.

In the week since the challenge began on April 2, 236 staff have already signed up, forming 26 teams that compete in weekly exercise challenges during their work day. Each person and group records their workouts and accumulates points.

To maintain the energy and momentum of the program, participation prizes will be given out weekly by the "Prize Patrol" and a grand prize will be awarded to the winning team at the end of the challenge.

"Overall wellness is a priority for the district and health initiatives like this encourage collaboration and team building and assist in creating an Oyster River community environment," Superintendent Morse said. "Employees who are committed to their health are also happier in their daily lives and better able to meet the Oyster River mission of engaging every student."

While individual schools compete in wellness challenges multiple times a year, in the spring of 2014, Oyster River held its first district-wide competition: "7 Simple Moves." The program called for participants to complete seven simple exercises every day that had been determined to reduce the occurrence of common injuries. At the end of the challenge, staff praised the community environment it fostered.

"We hope to capture that same excitement with our 'Take 5 for Balance' challenge," Superintendent Morse said. "So far, staff are really embracing this, so we're excited to see the end results in a couple of months."

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Oyster River Middle School Retains Spotlight School Status

DURHAM – Principal Jay Richard is pleased to announce that Oyster River Middle School has once again been recognized as one of 30 Spotlight Schools in New England.
The designation is awarded by the New England League of Middle Schools and acknowledges schools that are committed to effective instruction, collaboration and a solid understanding of students’ needs.

"We are extremely pleased and honored to have earned this designation from the New England League of Middle Schools," Principal Richard said. "At ORMS we strive to provide our students with a variety of opportunities to learn and excel across the spectrum."

As NELMS Spotlight School, Oyster River Middle School was recognized for the following:

- Each grade level features a collaborative community atmosphere.
- Students are encouraged to develop responsible practices with personal technology, and technology use is present not only in teacher driven instruction, but in student led activities.
- Daily planning time, team time and intervention time is part of the daily schedule in order to promote positive outcomes.
- Students are engaged in project-based learning and hands-on tasks.
- Expectations are clearly posted and positive messages of encouragement and motivation are visible throughout the school.
- Oyster River is a leader in competency-based instruction practices.

To continue improving, NELMS recommended that Oyster River Middle School add an additional guidance counselor and examine solutions to overcome instructional space limitations, structural inefficiencies and traffic flow during dismissal.

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Monday, April 9, 2018

Media Contact: John Guilfoil
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Oyster River High School Teacher and Student to be Honored by Mental Health Organization
ORHS sophomore Grace Smith and teacher Meredith Freeman-Caple will be honored for their contributions to mental health awareness. (Courtesy Photo Oyster River Cooperative School District)

DURHAM -- Superintendent James Morse is pleased to announce that an Oyster River High School student and faculty member will both be recognized by the National Alliance on Mental Illness New Hampshire (NAMI).

Each year NAMI New Hampshire recognizes individuals, groups or organizations that have made outstanding contributions to improving the lives of people affected by mental illness and suicide.

This year, NAMI will honor ORHS teacher Meredith Freeman-Caple with its Educator award and ORHS sophomore Grace Smith will receive the organization's Unsung Hero award.

Last fall, Oyster River High School students performed the drama "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest." As the students worked to master their lines, Scott Caple -- Meredith's husband, who works as a psychiatric nurse -- met with students to help them better understand their characters' illnesses and symptoms.

While the performance by a group of dedicated teens could have stood on its own as a reflection of the challenges of mental illness and the shortcomings of treatment and care, Freeman-Caple elevated the experience by following each performance with a "talk back" session that helped audiences develop a stronger perspective about the realities of mental illness.

Smith and her family directly addressed the impact that mental illness has had on their family by describing their experience with a close family member who lives with mental illness. By doing so, they gave students and community members a deeply personal glimpse into how mental illness impacts individuals and families.

"The Smiths showed immense courage through their willingness to share their story of confronting mental illness as a family," Superintendent Morse said. "Their efforts, along with the commitment of Mrs. Freeman-Caple to turning this performance into a meaningful learning opportunity, are absolutely worthy of recognition."
Smith and Freeman-Caple will be honored on Saturday, April 21, at 3 p.m. during the
NAMI New Hampshire Annual Awards Ceremony at the Grappone Center in Concord.
There is no cost to attend the ceremony, but anyone planning to go should RSVP to
Kimberly Somarriba at ksomarriba@naminh.org.

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Media Contact: John Guilfoil
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Cowasuck Band of the Pennacook-Abenaki People Visit ORCSD Elementary Schools
Students Learn about Cultural Inaccuracies in Versions of "Peter Pan" Ahead of Their Productions of "Peter Pan Jr."

Chief Paul Pouliot of the Cowasuck Band of the Pennacook-Abenaki People teaches students at Moharimet Elementary School how to play a drum. (Courtesy Photo Oyster River Cooperative School District)

DURHAM -- As Oyster River elementary school students prepare for their productions of "Peter Pan Jr.," they received a visit from the Cowasuck Band of the Pennacook-Abenaki People, who spoke about cultural inaccuracies in the play.

While third and fourth grade students at Mast Way and Moharimet elementary schools began rehearsing for the play, music teachers initiated a conversation about changing the portrayal of Indians to campers.

"We want our students to understand that there were stereotypes used in versions of 'Peter Pan' that are offensive to Indigenous people," said Mast Way Principal Carrie Vaich. "Because of this, music teachers felt it was more appropriate to alter that part of the production and speak to students about cultural differences."

To help guide the conversation, Chief Paul Pouliot and Denise Pouliot of the Cowasuck Band of the Pennacook-Abenaki People, and students from the University of New Hampshire's department of anthropology, visited Mast Way students on March 19 and Moharimet students on April 2.

During presentations at Mast Way and Moharimet, students were able to see period clothing, hear historical stories, ask questions and play percussion instruments while singing a greeting song.

"We cannot thank Chief Pouliot, Denise Pouliot and the UNH anthropology students enough for visiting our schools to speak to students," Moharimet Principal David Goldsmith said. "Their presentation was extremely informative and really gave students great perspective on a different culture."

The Moharimet production of "Peter Pan, Jr." will take place on Tuesday, April 17 at 6:30 p.m. at Oyster River High School. The show is free of charge and is led by music teacher Beth Struthers.

Mast Way’s performance of "Peter Pan, Jr." will take place on Wednesday, April 18 at 6:30 p.m. at Oyster River High School. The production is free of charge and led by music teacher Pam Felber.
Chief Paul Pouliot and Denise Pouliot of the Cowasuck Band of the Pennacook-Abenaki People shared historical stories with students at Mast Way Elementary School while wearing period clothing. (Courtesy Photo Oyster River Cooperative School District)

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Oyster River Revises Bus Driver Contract to Offer More Competitive Rates and Benefits

DURHAM -- Superintendent James Morse is pleased to report that the Oyster River Cooperative School District is offering a competitive pay model to bus drivers in an effort to attract qualified candidates despite a statewide shortage.
In September, Oyster River began the school year with six drivers fewer than needed to run the bus routes effectively.

To rectify the situation, the Oyster River School Board researched the pay and benefits of school bus drivers across the region and, working with Local 877 of the International Union of Operating Engineers representing the drivers, negotiated a revised contract that would go into effect on July 1, 2018.

The new three-year contract was approved by voters in March. Highlights include six additional pay steps, moving from a 10-step model to a 16-step model.

Starting pay for bus drivers in the first year of the new contract jumped 35 cents per hour, moving the rate from $15.25 to $15.60. Depending on experience, drivers on the top step will see an increase of $2.45 per hour -- from $18.40 to $20.85. It is also now possible for drivers to earn a bonus of up to $1,000 per year for perfect attendance.

Drivers will receive health insurance and dental insurance, along with 11 paid holidays per year. An added contract feature now offers drivers a guaranteed work week of 20 – 30 hours, depending on how many hours a driver wishes to work.

"We feel this new contract greatly improves the working conditions for Oyster River drivers," Superintendent Morse said. "With these changes, we are in a more competitive spot in the southeast corner of New Hampshire to attract qualified and quality drivers."

Those who wish to apply for a bus driver position can do so here.

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