

Notes

Niskayuna named a Best Community for Music for Third Consecutive Year

The Niskayuna School District has been recognized by the National Association of Music Merchants (NAMM) for its outstanding commitment to music education with a Best Communities for Music Education designation in 2016. The district has now received this prestigious award for three consecutive years; this year, Niskayuna joins 476 districts across the country earning this honor.

“This validates the hard work and efforts made to provide the best music education possible to the students of Niskayuna and shows how community support elevates a music program to be truly outstanding,” said Director of Music Education, **Chad Shippee**.

The Best Communities for Music Education designation is awarded to districts that demonstrate outstanding achievement in their efforts to provide music access and education to all students.



To qualify for the Best Communities designation, the Niskayuna music department answered detailed questions about funding, graduation requirements, music class participation, instruction time, facilities, support for the music program and community music-making programs. Responses were verified with school officials and reviewed by The Music Research Institute at the University of Kansas.

Community music programs have been drawing increased attention in recent years because of a landmark study by Northwestern University brain scientists. These researchers found new links...

See Best Community for Music, page 2

We Want YOU - to have fun with FOM!

A few months ago, I took on the role of president within the Friends of Music organization. Since then, it has been a whirlwind of getting up to speed on my new role, and tackling the details of our biggest event of the year, the District Music Festival; this year's being the Choral Festival. In addition, and unrelated to the duties of FOM president, I had already committed to chair the cast party for the high school musical. To be honest, I was a bit overwhelmed. Two big events within 2 weeks of each other would certainly take a lot of time and attention. I considered that in light of my new responsibilities, no one would blame me for getting a replacement as cast party chair. But I really wanted to do it and I preferred not to walk away from a commitment, especially one made to my daughter.

So I forged ahead, and along the way I learned, or perhaps re-learned something very important. Volunteering is fun! It brings a great sense of satisfaction. You get to meet new people and reconnect with folks you don't run into as much as you would like. You get to experience the generosity of the wonderful people of this community.

See Fun with FOM, page 2

BEST COMMUNITY FOR MUSIC

Best Community for Music (cont.)

...between students in community music programs and academic success in subjects such as reading.

Beyond the Northwestern study, other reports indicate that learning to play music can boost academic and social skills, such as processing math and learning to cooperate in group settings.

“The Niskayuna music department prides itself on offering a deep and meaningful music education program that offers plenty of opportunity for our students,” Shippee said.

About The NAMM Foundation:

The NAMM Foundation is a nonprofit supported in part by the National Association of Music Merchants and its approximately 10,300 members around the world. The foundation advances active participation in music making across the lifespan by supporting scientific research, philanthropic giving and public service programs. For more information about the NAMM Foundation, please visit www.nammfoundation.org.

Chad Shippee

Fun with FOM (cont.)

From my partner at the musical, **Lisa O'Connor**, who was in charge of cast snacks and dinner and did more than her fair share of the work; to **Chris Feeney**, who made and donated a beautiful cake for the cast party; to **Guy** and **Pola Sementilli** of Scotti's Restaurant, who worked with us to provide great food to all those involved in the production; to all the parents who volunteered to help; as well as to all the student cast, crew, and musicians, who were so polite and appreciative, it was a wonderful experience. Despite a super busy week and several late nights, I was energized for days!

The Choral Festival proved to be another wonderful volunteer experience. Both the festival and reception for **Dr. Gordon** were fantastic. So many people stepped up to help. Every music faculty member as well as numerous volunteers were on hand to assist in making everything run smoothly and ensure a fabulous evening. I was proud to be part of such an amazing event! Over 500 students sang in nine ensembles at the beautiful Proctors Theatre. This year, in addition to funding both the rental of Proctors and the stipend for our guest artist, FOM also provided a grant for the choreography, performed by the Concert Chorale. Our students would not be able to enjoy the same level of opportunity without the generous support of our Friends of Music volunteers and donors. Thank you for all that you do!

There are many volunteer opportunities within the FOM organization. These positions range from helping at a single event, to chairing a committee, to serving as an FOM officer. I hope some of you will consider enriching your life by volunteering with us soon. Currently, we are seeking a membership chair. In this position, we are looking for an enthusiastic FOM supporter who is skilled in Excel and Word. We will train you and get you up to speed well in advance of the new membership season, which begins in the summer. In the more immediate future, we are looking for volunteers to register students, who are auditioning for FOM Summer Scholarships on May 13 and 14. This year, we will give away up to 50 scholarships in the amount of \$125 each for our young musicians to pursue summer music lessons, camps, or other musical enrichment experiences. Anyone who wishes to volunteer for this event can contact **Mary Staudinger** (mstaudin@nycap.rr.com), our summer scholarship chair. To volunteer for any position within the FOM organization, you can contact **myself** (jburgess5@nycap.rr.com) or **Jodi Rossman** (jodir@nycap.rr.com), our vice president and current membership chair. Many thanks to those of you who have already volunteered. Your help is so appreciated!

Barbara Burgess,
FOM President

DIRECTOR'S DESK

As this year comes to a close, and we present our final concert series, I cannot help but be blown away by the incredible talent of our music students and teachers! After coming to Niskayuna in January, I immediately saw nothing but incredible work done by our students, staff, and volunteers. I would like to take a minute to say thank you and a huge congratulations on a successful year of making beautiful music! As they say, the proof is in the pudding and once again we were awarded the NAMM Best Community for Music Education award, for the third year in a row! Please see the write up in this edition of NOTES for more information on this accomplishment.

I would like to thank the music department staff for welcoming me and supporting me as I transitioned into the director job. Their dedication, professionalism and unwavering expectation of excellence from our students make our music program second to none! Of special mention, I would like to thank my administrative assistant, **Tracy Koste**. Mrs. Koste does an amazing job keeping our department on the up and up, always staying one step ahead of us with planning department events. Her work is crucial to the success of our program, especially with regards to the many unique opportunities we are able to offer our students.

This year's concerts could not have been so successful and smooth without the help of our staff, Friends of Music, and student volunteers. I would like to personally thank you all for your help this year! I would also like to give a big thank you to **Elias Assimakopoulos** for organizing and orchestrating the student concert logistics team.

Lastly, thank you to all of the parents and community members for all of your support this year. Without support at home, the strength of our music program would be seriously diminished. From encouraging your students to practice, to getting them to rehearsals on time, we know your efforts positively impact your student's music education.

We hope you enjoy our final concert series and have a smooth and successful end of the school year. Have a safe and enjoyable summer! We will see you all next school year for more growth and success as a music department!

Sincerely,



Chad Shippee: Director of Music Education, K-12



Choral Fest 2016 - A Beautiful Evening at Proctors Theatre

This year's Choral Festival was a huge success. The concert brought together over 500 vocal students in grades 6 through 12 to make beautiful music. The event, sponsored by Niskayuna Friends of Music, took place at the historic Proctors Theatre in downtown Schenectady. This year's festival featured guest conductor, **Dr. Daniel Gordon**, from Southeastern University. Dr. Gordon worked with our choral ensembles for three days in rehearsal and workshops to prepare students for the culminating concert. Our students and ensemble directors worked tirelessly to prepare for the festival, and those efforts were evident in the beautiful music that was shared that night. We would like to thank the many volunteers who made the event run smoothly. Their efforts are greatly appreciated and the night would not have been possible without them. The music department would like to give a huge thank you to Friends of Music and its members for their generosity in sponsoring the cost of the event. It was a truly remarkable opportunity for our students.



Choral Staff with Dr. Gordon

MORE FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

Jazz Fest 2016

The annual Niskayuna Jazz Festival was held at the high school in late April. The festival featured the MS Stage Band, MS Jazz Band, HS Stage Band, Jazz Ensemble and Studio Singers. This year, we were happy to welcome back **Mr. Matt Cremisio** as our guest artist. **Mr. Cremisio** is the immediate past director of music at Niskayuna and is an active jazz artist and drummer. Mr. Cremisio spent three days working and playing with our jazz ensembles in rehearsals with the culminating concert on April 20. Many community members were present to enjoy the concert. The music department would like to thank Friends of Music for organizing the Java Jazz Cafe at the High School Crossroads, following the concert.

Elementary Instrumental Recruitment Night

Please join us for a special parent night and informational meeting on June 1 at 7 p.m. in the High School Auditorium. Students currently in grade 3 (with an interest in orchestra) and students in grade 4 (with an interest in band), along with their parents, are invited to attend.

This is an opportunity to meet our elementary instrumental faculty and learn more about our program, including expectations and the numerous benefits our program offers your student musician. An informational handbook will be provided at the meeting for your review. This handbook will be a valuable resource for you and your student musician for years to come.

Additionally, parents may sign-up for their individual student/parent/teacher conference following the evening presentation. Please bring your calendars! Again, this is for all those interested joining our elementary instrumental program in September. Orchestra is currently offered for students beginning in grade 4. Band is offered for students beginning in grade 5.

Summer Sonata Program July 18-28, 2016

The Nisky "Summer Sonata" music program is a fun, two-week music program designed for upper elementary and middle school students who are already members of the NCS D Band, Choir, or Orchestra. Eligible students will be entering grades **5 - 8 for orchestra**, grades **6 - 8 for band**, and grades **6-9 for choir**. This exciting opportunity is for students who enjoy music and wish to continue developing their music skills during the summer with Nisky Music Faculty!

Students will further their musical aptitude and performing skills in both large ensemble and small group settings. Also, students will further their music appreciation and knowledge through conversation and "hands-on" projects in: Musical Theatre, Music History, Music Theory, Music/Jazz Improvisation, Opera, "Music Around Us", World Drumming, and Music Technology.

Classes and ensemble rehearsals will be conducted Monday - Thursday from 9 a.m. to 12 Noon, beginning July 18. Upon completion of the two-week program, students will present a culminating afternoon showcase for their family, friends, and community on July 28 at 12:00 Noon in the High School Auditorium. All are invited to a light afternoon luncheon provided by Niskayuna Friends of Music immediately following the afternoon showcase. The program registration fee is \$225.

Those students who are currently enrolled in more than one school ensemble (ie: combination of band, choir, or orchestra) must select one ensemble they wish to perform with. Students involved in multiple ensembles should list their order of preference on the application form.

Application forms are available to all students in the District Music Office or at www.niskyschools.org. The forms should be returned to your school music teacher or to the District Music Office at the high school.

Registration deadline is June 10.

THE CHORAL FESTIVAL

Thanks to the following
parent volunteers:

Mary Beth Aldous
Alison Allen
Ed Bein
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Paulette Doudoukjian
Erin Eldaye
Tashua Ferguson
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Lori Fletcher
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Deb Orminski
Amanda Potter
Bill Potter



parent volunteers cont.

Jodi Rossman
Mary Schmidt
Sandra Schujman
Sue Wheeler
Kelly Whitley
Liddy Zierer
Lora Zilberman

Thank you also to all the staff
that helped at the festival:

Melinda Barnes
Felicia Campo
Chris Feeney
Matt Hogan
Casey Horner
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NYSBDA HONORS

Each year, the New York State Band Directors Association (NYSBDA) holds a symposium in Liverpool, NY. At this meeting, a select number of students from across the state are chosen to perform in the elite MS and HS Honor Bands. The students' selection is based on a **number of factors** including: achievement on their NYSSMA solos from the previous spring, musical experience, and teacher recommendations. See below for information on Niskayuna MS and HS students selected.



NYSBDA HS Honors

Congratulations to the following high school students selected to represent Niskayuna in the annual New York State Band Directors Association Symposium in Liverpool, NY: **Johanne Friedman** (HS Concert Band), **Noah Wilkerson** (HS Concert Band), and **Elias Assimakopoulos** (Jazz Ensemble).

Chad Shippee

NYSBDA MS Honors

Five middle school band students from Iroquois (Ir) and Van Antwerp (VA) participated in the New York State Band Directors Association Statewide Middle School Honor Band on March 4 and 5 in Liverpool, NY. The 7th and 8th graders were part of an elite group of 108 MS band students selected from across the state. Congratulations to **Aiden Hughes** (Tuba, VA), **Alex Dunne** (Clarinet, Ir), **Calvin Wetzal** (Trombone, Ir), **Risa Fromowitz** (Trombone, Ir), and **William Zheng** (Trombone, Ir)! (*See photo - pictured from left to right*)



Mr. Pandori



Thank you to all the parents who volunteered at the Jazz Festival.

MaryBeth Aldous
Barbara Burgess
Katie Chao
Joyce Choi
Michelle Dunham

Nicki Foley
Lynell Engelmyer
Jennifer Henson
Dede Hildreth
Priti Irani
Greta Jansson

Marica Lawton
Sue Learner
Coleen LeCours
Jeanmarie Quinn
Ellen Wolfe

HIGH SCHOOL NOTES

Choral Corner

Congratulations on what has been an amazing year of choral music, growth, development, and new musical experiences. Please consider supporting the plethora of local arts organizations that flourish during the summer months. Many of our students are participating in summer lessons, camps, classes, and other musical opportunities. We wish these students luck and congratulate them on their desire for extended study.

Congratulations to **Zoe Lynds** who participated in the Mendelssohn Club of Albany's Vocal Competition on April 2.

In August, **Catie LeCours** will be performing with Glimmerglass Opera's Youth Production, *Wilde Tales* in August. Please visit www.glimmerglass.org for ticket information.

CONCERT CHORALE AND LADIES FIRST have been invited to join the Schenectady Symphony Orchestra on January 22, 2017. Students will collaborate in a presentation of John Rutter's Mass of the Children with a full orchestral accompaniment at Proctors Theatre. This event will be a monumental and once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for our choral groups. Additional rehearsal details will be announced at the start of the 2016-2017 school year.

Choral Uniforms:

All students and parents should receive their form about ordering choral uniforms for the 2016-2017 school year by May 20. Order forms and payment are due on Friday, June 17.

ALL USED UNIFORMS MUST BE DRY CLEANED AND TURNED IN BY FRIDAY, JUNE 10. Any uniform that is damaged or in poor condition will not be accepted for resale and will be discarded. Proceeds from any uniform turned in for resale that does not have the correct paperwork attached (in order to contact the seller) will be donated to FOM. Older uniforms from Ladies First (blue skirt and velvet top) may not be sold, but may be donated for the "Caroling for CA\$H" fundraiser.

Outside Performances:

~Look for **Studio Singers** on their Niska Day float, so generously provided by the town, on May 21. In addition to their performance on the float, please join us at noon in the entertainment tent, where this group will kick off the event on the Craig School grounds.

~On May 26 at 7:10 p.m., **Bel Canto Voices** will present their final examination quartets in Crossroads, before the concert. Students have been collaborating on madrigals and motets in Italian, French, German, Latin, and English.

~**Bel Canto Voices** will once again provide music for the Memorial Day Ceremony at the high school on May 27 at 10:30 a.m..

~**Studio Singers** will present their final examination Cabaret Concert on June 8 at 10:45 a.m. in the Choir room. Students will present solos and duets from standard jazz and musical theatre repertoire. All families, friends, faculty, staff, and community members are welcome to attend. All visitors from outside of the school should sign-in at the front entrance to receive a visitor badge. After the performance, we will share in a potluck lunch.

MORE HIGH SCHOOL NOTES

I cannot say it enough times, but **THANK YOU** to Friends of Music for their continued commitment to our school music program in helping us further music education by providing enriching experiences for our music students. I would like to express appreciation to my ever-supportive music colleagues and to thank **Mr. Shippee** for his seamless transition into the role of music department director. Also, I am very thankful for the support of our parents, faculty, staff, administration, and community members. Please know how much your attendance and encouragement means to the children and to me.

Finally, and most importantly, my life would not be the same without the phenomenal students who continue to push this music program (and me) to reach new heights and to find additional creative opportunities to help us grow and develop together. You inspire me to be a better teacher and musician and to work harder! I learn from each of you every single day.

Have a wonderful and restful summer break! Graduating seniors: it has been a pleasure and privilege to work with you and I am proud of your many accomplishments, both musical and beyond. May you always keep music as part of your lives in some way, shape, or form. I can't wait to come back refreshed, renewed, and to make more great music together with our returning students when pumpkin spice lattes are back in style!

C. M. Pizzino-Catalano
Christina Pizzino-Catalano



HS students perform at Choral Fest

Masterclass with Lisa Albrecht

Three Niskayuna trombone students had the opportunity to perform in a masterclass at Schenectady County Community College with world renowned trombonist, **Lisa Albrecht**. Congratulations to **Risa Fromowitz** (Grade 8, Iroquois), **Kristina Handy** (Grade 9, NHS), and **Elias Assimakopolous** (Grade 12, NHS)! (*See picture – from left to right: Fromowitz, Albrecht, Handy, and Assimakopolous*).

Albrecht currently serves as second trombonist with the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra. A graduate of the Eastman School of Music, she has held seats with Minnesota Orchestra, San Antonio Symphony, Honolulu Symphony, and served as Assistant Principal Trombonist of the New York Philharmonic for several years. Albrecht has toured the world as a freelance trombonist and played in over 20 Broadway productions. It was an exceptional and unique experience for our students to have the opportunity to work with her. The students played wonderfully and gained great insight from Ms. Albrecht's instruction.



MIDDLE SCHOOL NOTES

Middle School Jazz

FOM provided MS jazz students with three great opportunities in March and April. On March 16, **Mike Christy** visited the Niskayuna Schools to work with our MS Jazz Ensemble. The band director from Schalmont High School lent his expertise in percussion and piano, as he worked with the group's rhythm section. (See photo right)



Christy with students in MS Jazz Ensemble

The MS Jazz Ensemble was treated to another guest when local celebrity, **Tony Gambaro**, visited on March 30. Mr. Gambaro, who currently plays trumpet with New York Players and has previously performed with Bon Jovi and Tower of Power, was a tremendous inspiration for the young jazz musicians. (See photo below)



Just two days later on April 1, both the MS Jazz Ensemble and Jazz Band traveled to Clifton Park for the annual Shen Jazz Fest, where both groups had the opportunity to work with professional jazz trombonist, **Michael Dease**. (See photo below) At the festival, the group also took part in a masterclass with local jazz educators, **Lee Russo, Mike Lawrence, Bob Hallick,** and **Rick Hambright**. The day culminated with a Shen High School Jazz Ensemble performance with Michael Dease. It was a rewarding and fun filled day of jazz music.

We thank Friends of Music for these three wonderful opportunities! We look forward to our own Niskayuna Jazz Festival on April 20, when former Music Director, **Matt Cremisio**, will return as our guest clinician for the week!

Mr. Pandori



MS jazz students pose with Michael Dease

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL NOTES

Birchwood News

Birchwood news features our fourth and fifth graders, as they work hard to prepare for their May 4 Spring Concert. There has been excitement, as choral members brainstorm ideas to make this concert special. Also, as part of our preparation, 50-60 chorus students tried out for a solos both in practice groups and as individuals in front of the group. As it was a first time experience for many, students who tried out received a Special Recognition Certificate for their poise and achievement. The chorus members demonstrated respectful behavior, as they clapped for each other and remained quiet while students performed. (See photo right: Birchwood 5th graders rehearsing proper vocal techniques.)



The orchestra and band are preparing for their portion of the concert as well. As a result of a number of factors such as dismissals, vacations, and other events, these groups are meeting at all times of the day with less time than usual to prepare. Hats off to those students and directors who are working hard with the time they have together. We also thank our classroom teachers for their support of rehearsal times for all three ensembles.

Mrs. Johnston

Craig News

Grades 4 and 5 at **Craig** started 2016 with a wonderful Winter Concert at the high school. Three music groups performed that evening: the chorus with all fourth and fifth graders participating this year, the band under the direction of **Mr. Pandori**, and the orchestra under the direction of **Mrs. McClenon**. The audience delighted in the performances of these young musicians.

This year, **Craig** has taken initiative to combine grades 4 and 5 choral students together in a large class setting. Once a week, over 135 students come together to sing and lift each other up to greater accomplishments. They fill each of us with pride.

On April 6, after preparing for several weeks learning songs and staging choreography, the second grade students presented a themed musical entitled, "Let's Hear It for America!" What an enthusiastic performance! Congratulations second grade!!

As they wandered through the snowless winter in flipflops, the **Craig** fifth graders got busy "drumming and shaking." Craig's Drum Circle is once again up and running! This group, open to all interested fifth graders, meets during recess. During this activity, the students have the opportunity to play songs from African and Latin American cultures on different drums and other instruments. The students perform on the Tubano, Ashieko, and Djembe drums (many of which were purchased through the generosity of FOM). The young musicians also perform with the Shekere, Agogo, Agongkui, and Nygoti rattles.

MORE ELEMENTARY NOTES

Craig students are once again gearing up for the annual Talent Show to be held in June! Staff and students alike join together to present their unique talents during a morning of fun!

Much more will be happening at Craig as the days unfold...we look forward to every opportunity to create memories to hold in our hearts.

Mrs. Fitzmaurice



Glenclyff News

The fourth and fifth grade students at **Glenclyff** once again fill my mornings with joy and wonder! The students are enthusiastic and talented. They are watching and listening to each other as they begin string and band instruments, all while singing together in a large vocal ensemble. These classes have an energy and excitement all their own.

Thanks to Friends of Music enrichment grants for the wonderful World Drums. We recently had the opportunity to begin the first Drum Circle at **Glenclyff**. This club activity, offered to interested fifth graders, meets during recess. It gives the students an incredible "hands on" opportunity, as they explore and experiment with world drumming. Thank you Friends of Music!!

What a great place **Glenclyff** is! We'll continue to make great music and wonderful memories as we move into spring months with warm smiles and hearts, filled with song.

Mrs. Fitzmaurice

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MORE ELEMENTARY NOTES

Hillside News

There is a lot of music happening at Hillside, as we prepare for our spring concerts and assemblies.

“Hello Hillside,” our monthly school assembly, provides an opportunity to share what we are learning in the music class as well as in our classrooms. Each month we look forward to performing a school song together and celebrating birthdays and other special occasions. As we sing and share together, we are building school community.

The general music classes have been working hard to learn important music concepts through fun music activities. Students are learning about composition and music reading through the use of recorders, singing, listening activities and smart board technology.

Spring is always a special time, as we prepare for our musical plays that take place at the end of the year.

Michelle Sausa-Gatta, NBCT

Rosendale News

At Rosendale, Friends of Music provided an elementary enrichment grant for third graders, studying world communities. This grant supported a special online interactive “assembly” involving music, stories, and instruments from all over the world. In this online event, Dave Ruch's performance involved both teaching songs and playing traditional instruments from a number of different countries, including Ghana, Ireland, and Russia to name a few. The students were riveted by his performance! The co-curricular project was initiated by third grade teachers, **Mary Neufeld, Glenn Motto, and Susan O'Connell**, and music teacher, **Mrs. Johnston**. The funding from FOM allowed us to watch the presentation multiple times over a five-day period. Special thank you to the Friends of Music for awarding this grant and making it all possible.

Mrs. Johnston



“All creative souls do not express themselves in the written word: some sculpt, some build, and some challenge the depths of human understanding through the sounds of music. No education is complete without awareness of music; music is an essential expression of the character of a society.”

William Bennett, former U.S. Secretary of Education

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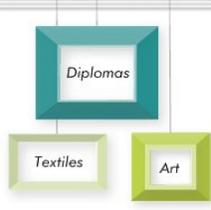
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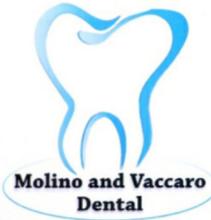
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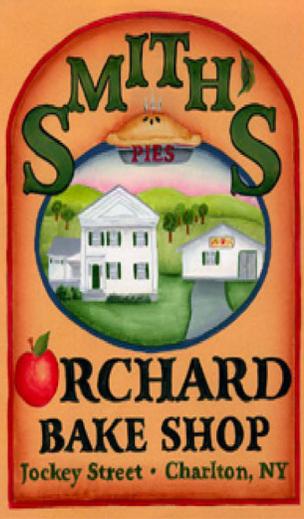
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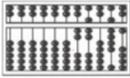


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NHS Music Department

SENIOR BANQUET



Our annual Senior Banquet will be held Wednesday, June 8th, 5:30 – 7:30 at the MOHAWK RIVER COUNTRY CLUB. Seniors and their parents are invited to a special evening that includes great food, great friends and a fond farewell.

Please join us as we celebrate your many years of hard work and terrific music-making by completing the form below. Cost is \$20 per student or adult. Feel free to contact **Eric Hughes** (ehughes@niskyschools.org) with any questions or concerns.

WHAT: Senior Banquet
WHERE: Mohawk River CC
WHEN: Wednesday, June 8
5:30-7:30

NHS Music Department

SENIOR BANQUET

Student Name _____

Number Attending: @ \$20 each:

Total: # _____ \$ _____

Please make checks payable to: Niskayuna Friends of Music
Due Date: Wednesday, June 1st