

Echoes~Sentinel

echoes-sentinel.com

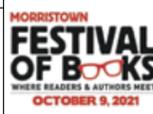
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2021

\$2.50

Another close one sends Warriors to 3rd defeat • 8



Fall Food Festival planned Sept. 25 • 3



Book festival returns Oct. 9 • Page 9 and Out & About

Long Hill teachers get contract

By NICOLE ZANCHELLI
STAFF WRITER

LONG HILL TWP. – Teachers' salaries will rise about three percent each year for the next five years under a new contract with the Long Hill Education Association (LHEA) that was approved by the grades K-8 Board of Education on Monday, Sept. 13.

The LHEA ratified the contract proposal on Aug. 30. It runs from July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2026.

For the 2021-22 academic year, the first covered in the new deal, Long Hill teachers will see their salaries increase 3 percent. In subsequent years, salaries will increase 2.85, 2.85 and 2.95 percent. The final year of the contract, 2025-26, will see teachers get a 3.1

percent increase.

Those at the first step of the salary guide, BA Step 1 teachers, will earn \$52,880 in the 2021-22 academic year under the new deal. By the final year, 2025-26, BA Step 1 staff will make \$60,485.

The top of the guide, MA plus 30 Credits Step 17 staff, will be paid \$95,395 in 2021-22. That same salary guide step will pay \$98,695 in the

contract's final year.

In the previous contract, BA Step 1 teachers made \$52,400 annually in 2020-21 and MA plus 30 Credits Step 17 teachers made \$94,595.

School Superintendent Anne Mucci explained that BA and MA indicate the employee's degree status, and that MA plus 30 signifies 30 credits beyond a master's degree.

"Each step equates to a year of service," Mucci said. "In Long Hill, the top or max of the guide is MA +30 with 17 years or more experience."

Teachers will not automatically receive a degree differential on their salary upon their achievement of degree or receipt of suffi-

PLEASE SEE CONTRACT, PAGE 13



ALL SAINTS RUMMAGE SALE

Members of All Saints' Episcopal Church in Millington get ready for the annual rummage sale on Saturday, Oct. 2. Pictured are, from left, Heather Ingram (Basking Ridge); Carol Berry (Basking Ridge), Kimberly Celeste, chairperson (Millington); Janice Lettieri (Millington); Barbara Erday (Warren); Lisa Webb (Green Brook); and Tim Erday (Warren)." Please see a related story on Page 13.

Pandemic takes a difficult toll on special ed

By NICOLE ZANCHELLI
STAFF WRITER

Adapting to distance learning brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic was taxing for most, if not all, Long Hill, Warren and Watchung grades K-8 students.

For special education students, whose services slowed or stopped when schools shut down in spring 2020, the transition was nearly detrimental.

Millington resident Rachel Cherry was far from impressed by the physical therapy lessons given over Zoom.

"It was just a lot of fun and games, it wasn't really true therapy. It was just keeping the kids busy, doing jumping jacks and some exercises," Cherry said.

Her five-year-old daughter Abigail was in the preschool disabled classroom at Gillette School, and now receives speech therapy, occupational therapy (OT) and physical therapy.

Cherry acknowledged that teachers did the best they could under the circumstances, but believes the ball was dropped when it came to speech therapy.

"What I was seeing when they were doing Zoom, 15 minutes of it were singing songs and I'm like, 'Why singing songs? Why are they listening to songs on zoom? How is this helping her form her words?'" Cherry said.

She reported that virtual speech therapy was "obviously a setback" for her daughter.

"With speech therapy, the teachers need to interact with the kids' mouths, like forming them to a certain position so they understand how to form the words," Cherry said.

Abigail's pronunciation of certain sounds and words has not improved, leading Cherry to pay out

of pocket to take her daughter to Creative Speech Solutions in Summit as a supplement.

"I have to go to an additional speech school twice a week to supplement what was not happening with the speech she was getting at the school. It's not enough," Cherry said.

She now pays \$160 a week for out-of-district speech services.

Receiving proper speech therapy over Zoom was also a major challenge for Millington resident Mackenzie Watson and her five-year-old son, Ciaran.

"There are certain letters that he can't say, and once speech goes virtual that's just watching someone over the screen. It's not even close to being the same," Watson said. "With a kid who has ADHD too, they don't have the attention span to focus looking at a screen for 30 to 45 minutes."

Ciaran is diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD), and receives speech therapy, OT and physical therapy. He has attended the preschool disabled classroom at Gillette School.

Watson working full-time only made things harder.

"There ended up being a lot of sessions for him that we weren't able to do because I had a project to get done or I had to be on a call," Watson said. "Those were the kind of sacrifices that we had to make for March through the end of the school year."

Also a working parent, Cherry couldn't dedicate the time to help Abigail with her specialties and particularly struggled in guiding her daughter through her physical therapy sessions.

"I work full-time, so having my nanny try to sit in on

PLEASE SEE TOLL, PAGE 13



Photo by Kelly Mazzocchi

STIRLING ELKS CORNHOLE TOURNAMENT WINNERS

Above Left: Warren Township residents Gregg Dollis and Mary Lou Hanlon landed in third place in the Social Division of a Cornhole Tournament sponsored by the Stirling Elks on Saturday, Sept. 18. Hanlon was one of the sponsors for the tournament. **Above Right:** Jimmy Youmans of Jackson Township, left, and Jay Jaiprashad of Manville pose with their first place trophies, after winning the Advanced division in the Stirling Elks Cornhole Tournament last Saturday. For a story on the event, please see page 5.

Watchung Hills urges sending districts to join it in regionalization study



ROBERT MORRISON

WARREN TWP. – A regionalization feasibility study will be conducted by the Watchung Hills High School Board of Education, with or without its sending districts.

Board member Robert Morrison, who is a member of the district's regionalization committee, said that group favored

the board moving ahead with the study. Morrison gave the committee's blessing during the board's Tuesday, Sept. 14 meeting.

Board Business Administrator Timothy Stys has to submit the board's letter of intent for the study to the state Department of Community Affairs.

In taking this step, the board is giving one last chance to Watchung Hills' sending districts to participate in the regionalization feasibility study process.

"The train is leaving, the study is going to be conducted, we want you to be a part of this process," Morrison said.

"I would hope that they would want to be at the table with us as partners."

The state intends to pay the \$150,000 cost of the Watchung Hills study.

"Given the fact that we are talking about ways that we can

PLEASE SEE STUDY, PAGE 13



NEW JERSEY HILLS MEDIA GROUP ©2021

One-year subscription in Morris County: \$130
Out-of-area subscription rates available upon request.

INSIDE

Editorial 4
Police News 3
Public Notices 8
Sports 7
VOL. 14 NO. 10

OUT & ABOUT

Books 4,5
Kids 8
Potpourri 11
Travel 6-7, 10

CALL US

News: (908) 766-3900 ext. 240
Classifieds: (800) 624-3684
Advertising: (908) 766-3900
To subscribe: (908) 766-6960
Publication USPS 024-925

SUBSCRIBE 908-766-6960