

# Merrick Messenger

## MERRICK LAUNCHES UPK PROGRAM

Merrick will be welcoming prekindergarten students to the school district in the 2022-23 school year for its inaugural Universal Prekindergarten program.

After receiving targeted funding from New York State, Merrick will be able to provide this program without any impact to local taxpayers. Eligible households were notified in the spring about the lottery and application deadlines.

Ninety-seven students will be served in district classrooms and at the Barry and Florence Friedberg Jewish Community Center in Merrick.

Three prekindergarten classes will be housed at Chatterton and two at Birch.

“The additional funds from New York State will allow us to educate more of our community, while maintaining all the staffing and services we currently have for our K-6 students,” explained Dr. Jill Karp, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction and Educational Services.

SCOPE Education Services will be running and staffing the program, along with collaboration by our school district officials. SCOPE already runs UPK programs in approximately 30 other Long Island districts. Its goal is to provide “opportunities for learning through exploration, play and discovery that build on children’s social, emotional, cognitive and physical growth.”

While this is a full-day program, arrival and dismissal for the pre-K program will be outside of the regular school hours so there will be no impact to our current arrival or dismissal procedures.

We look forward to greeting these 4-year-old faces in the fall!



See inside for moving-up highlights!

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# MERRICK GRADUATES CLASS OF 2022

In ceremonies filled with pomp and circumstance, celebration and song, Birch, Chatterton and Lakeside schools graduated their sixth grade Classes of 2022.



## BIRCH

Student Council co-presidents Jacob Ben-Dayan and Ryan Wexler greeted guests on June 22 and recalled some special moments from their time at Birch.

“Spirit Days were some of the most special and memorable days at Birch,” began Ben-Dayan. “We learned to make many friends and form relationships that we will never forget.”

“These small, but meaningful memories are just a glimpse into the amazing years we enjoyed here,” added Wexler. “Birch School has taught us to work together and put our greatest effort into everything and to never give up.”

Merrick School Board trustee Nicole Venditti said celebrating students’ educational achievements is her favorite part of being on the Board of Education.

“Never before had students had to learn through so many precautions, quarantines and uncertainty and still you succeeded and achieved your goals,” she added.

Principal Kerri Galante mentioned the 2022 yearbook and its theme,

“Leaving Our Mark.”

“The mark our graduates have left on us will be tremendous,” she said. “Our goal at Birch School is to always have the same impact on you.”

PTA co-president Lauren Siegel offered well wishes to the graduates.

“Through seven years of hard work, perseverance and, hopefully, amazing memories here at Birch, we wish for you a feeling of home and a true sense of pride and accomplishment when you think of your elementary school days,” she said.

Kelley Merkle, the Merrick Faculty Association’s building representative for Birch, said they donated to Warrior’s Odyssey on behalf of the graduating class. Warrior’s Odyssey provides resources and social-emotional support for families affected by pediatric cancer.

“It was a pleasure watching all of you become the learners you are today,” she noted. “You are motivated, curious and dedicated and have learned all of the things needed to be successful in middle school.”

## CHATTERTON

Chatterton Principal Dana Bermas discussed the class’ collective growth at the June 16 ceremony, held at the school.

“From everyday lessons to big life lessons, it was our goal to help you grow into competent, intelligent and compassionate individuals,” she said. “Be willing to keep on learning and growing from teachers, coaches, family and friends.”

Board trustee Linda Wilk offered a wish for graduates.

“May each and every one of you find a way to make the world a more beautiful place,” she said. “Keep searching for the things that bring you joy and then share those gifts with your friends, family and community.”

PTA President Christine Alonso noted how charismatic and sparkling the students in the Class of 2022 are and added, “They are as cohesive as they are free spirited.”

Sixth grade teacher James Keenan addressed the crowd and noted that the Merrick Faculty Association donated to Warrior’s

Odyssey on behalf of the graduating class. Warrior’s Odyssey provides resources and social-emotional support for families affected by pediatric cancer.

“After the year we’ve had of overcoming obstacles and working together to keep ourselves safe it seems fitting,” he said. “You are going to experience challenges and opportunities that will certainly lead you to much more growth.”

Student Council member Gia Cuomo presented the video montage and reflected on her work in the school’s club.

“The feeling of helping others was the greatest gift,” she said.

Dr. Richard Nasto led the entire graduating class in three choral selections, The Chatterton Song; a parody on “Party in the USA” where students adapted lyrics to their continuing education at Merrick Avenue Middle School and “We’re All in this Together” from “High School Musical.”

## LAKESIDE

Principal Libby Trencheny told graduates on June 17 that the path that they’re about to embark upon is not only challenging and beautiful, but all their own to create.

“We know you are prepared to begin this journey,” she said. “As a Lakeside student, you were provided with educational experiences that allowed you to develop an appreciation of your own worth and led to a discovery of your unique talents and abilities.”

Board trustee Gina Piskin noted how fortunate Merrick Avenue Middle School will be to have these incoming seventh graders.

“Think of all of the exciting adventures that lie ahead of you,” she said. “Your future is bright. Believe in yourself and the education you have received at Lakeside where you have set the foundation to do anything you want in life.”

PTA co-president Melissa Warshaw mentioned knowing most of the sixth grade class since kindergarten and how, while the last few years at Lakeside were not as planned, the students were able to close out their time there with regular activity and celebrations.

“We hope you remember your time at Lakeside with happiness,” she added. “These memories will always bring a smile to your face.”

Teacher Jennifer Meschkow addressed the crowd and noted that the Merrick Faculty Association donated to Warrior’s Odyssey on behalf of the graduating class. Warrior’s Odyssey provides resources and social-emotional support for families affected by pediatric cancer.

“Over the years we have watched you grow and learn,” she said. “We have witnessed your resiliency during the past few years, and we celebrate all of your hard work and all that you have done to get you to this moment.”

Students Rija Hashmi and Samuel Schwed offered the graduation speech.

“We will take with us the ROARS spirit and continue to be respectful, open-minded, accepting and responsible students,” Hashmi said.

Jeff Glemboski played the piano and led the entire graduating class in choral selections, including the “Smile with Lakeside Pride” school song, a parody of “A OK” in which students adapted the lyrics to reflect their time at Lakeside.

# Peace & Friendship Days

## Shine at Schools



Schools celebrated their annual Friendship Days in June, marking a celebration of peace and happiness across the Merrick School District.

Thanks to the support of each school's PTA and the district's physical education teachers, the gymnasiums and outdoor fields were transformed into various stations of summer fun, including gaga ball, volleyball, corn hole, kan jam, and ring toss, among others.

Friendship Day started in 2001 after the attacks of Sept. 11. It is celebrated as a day of school unity and community at each respective building.

"The idea was to have a day that kids can play and have fun with their friends," explained Julie Gilliam, a Birch teacher who helped organize the day along with Heather O'Toole and Robb Normandeau. "We play lots of different games, dance with the DJ and celebrate with ices. It is a day everyone looks forward to every year."



## Facilities UPDATE

To address an ongoing flooding issue at Lakeside, a new drainage system is slated to be installed this summer, which should handle the heaviest downpour.

Summer work orders include painting classrooms in all three schools, installing new ceilings at Birch and Lakeside, asbestos abatement and updating an office at Chatterton.

The playground at Lakeside for which the PTA donated \$90,000 is scheduled to be installed mid-September. The units that were just approved in the 2022-23 budget vote will be slated for next summer.



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