

Schalmont News

CENTRAL SCHOOLS

Forensics Students Examine a Mystery, Discover a Mission

What would you do if a widow with three young sons was relying on you to make sure the people who murdered her husband were brought to justice? For retired FBI agent Jack Dillon, the choice was simple – focus on collecting as much trace evidence as possible. Dillon recently shared his experiences working the Enrique “Kiki” Camarena case with students in two forensics classes at Schalmont High School.

Camarena was a special agent with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency when he was abducted on February 7, 1985, near the U.S. Consulate in Guadalajara, Mexico. After the discovery of his remains a month later, the DEA enlisted Dillon and a fellow agent to recover trace evidence from Camarena and any related crime scenes. Dillon, who joined the FBI in 1970, worked in fire arms identification (i.e., ballistics) and

had previously dealt with organized crime in Chicago and New York City.

In Mexico, his task was complicated by the length of time since the crime, the relocation of remains from the original crime scene, obstruction and evidence tampering by certain Mexican officials, and crime scene contamination by members of the public. He was able to collect hair, fiber and soil samples from Camarena’s remains and the drop site. Though local authorities wouldn’t allow Dillon to take Camarena’s clothes, he still managed to take some small samples.

According to Dillon, this trace evidence “became the basis for testimonies later on for trials in [Los Angeles] on some of the subjects.” In 1988, those “subjects” were found responsible for Camarena’s death in large part thanks to forensic evidence collected by Dillon and other agents.

While talking with students about the case, Dillon shared that how he brought the evidence back to FBI headquarters for examination factored into the outcome of the case.

He said, “My testimony was crime scene related. They need everyone in the chain of custody to testify for evidence to be admissible.”

Evidence collection is a key component of forensics at Schalmont. Teacher Lynn Gemmiti likes



Forensics students organized several events to mark Red Ribbon Week, which promotes a drug-free lifestyle. One involved planting over 200 tulips in front of the high school.

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• GOLF TEAM MAKES HISTORY

When you think about high school sports, what comes first to mind? Soccer? Football, maybe? For 11 varsity team members at Schalmont High School, the answer is golf. They recently made history with Schalmont’s first Section II Class B win in the sport.

This October, five members of the Varsity Golf Team qualified for sectionals: Kevin Brown, Conor Hart, Scott Lindell, Nick Longo, and Dave Mastroianni. Hart’s score of 79 was second best out of 58

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HS Seeking Alumni Nominations

The **Schalmont High School Alumni Wall of Distinction** was established in 2007 to honor those alumni who have made significant contributions to their school, community and/or country.

The first five honorees were inducted last April during the Schalmont Central School District 50th Anniversary Celebration. Those honorees included: Alfred DeCarlo, class of 1961; Leonard Parker, class of 1971; Christine Patneau-Krahulik, class of 1983; Michael Piotrowski, class of 1970; and Michael Saccocio, class of 1979.

Nominations for this year's class of inductees will be accepted from now through March 13, 2008.

Wall of Distinction honorees serve as role models for our students and as symbols of the high caliber of graduates produced by our district. Their examples are intended to inspire and motivate students to excel, both in academics and in life. Those nominated:

- Must have graduated from Schalmont HS after 1957.
- Must have been out of secondary school for at least five years.
- Must have demonstrated significant contributions to their school, community and/or country in areas such as (but not limited to):
 - o Professional achievements (work-related accomplishments, publications),



Last year, Dr. Michael R. Piotrowski received several posthumous nominations for the Wall of Distinction. His sister, Virginia Newton, is pictured accepting a plaque on his behalf. Piotrowski inspired family, friends and colleagues with his dedication to using natural means to clean up the environment.

- o Community/civic involvement,
 - o Educational achievements,
 - o Honors or awards,
 - o Leadership positions,
 - o Ethical/humanitarian efforts, and
 - o Personal/family accomplishments.
- May be nominated posthumously.

To nominate someone for this honor, visit <http://www.schalmont.org/District/sawdnomination.pdf> to download a nomination form or call 355-9200, x4006, to receive one by mail. All nominations are due in the district office by March 13, 2008. Selected nominees, or their representatives if they were nominated posthumously, will be asked to attend an induction ceremony in May.

Grants in Action at Schalmont

Paul Tonko is now president and CEO of the New York Energy Research and Development Authority, but as an assemblyman, he helped secure grant money for a variety of enrichment projects in Schalmont Central School District.

Thanks to some of those grants:

- An **electronic sign** (pictured at left) was installed at the Schalmont High/Middle Schools complex this past

summer. It provides passers-by with reminders about upcoming school events as well as information about team and individual student achievements.

- This spring, **89 trees will be planted** around the HS/MS athletic fields to provide students and community members with shade, a wind buffer and an appealing athletic space. The trees are part of the overall athletic fields renovation plan. They will be strategically planted to maintain building safety, and require little maintenance for significant environmental returns.
- The **Math and Science Academy** was established last summer. This free program let incoming fourth- and fifth-grade students liven up their vacation by experimenting with the scientific method.



FOREIGN LANGUAGE HELPS IMPROVE ENGLISH LITERACY SKILLS

Mandarin Chinese is the latest addition to the list of foreign language classes available at Schalmont High School. Through the school's distance learning program, participating students have a chance to learn one of the languages most frequently used the world over.

The class format allows students to interact with a teacher and students from other schools by way of TV monitors, video cameras and computers in the distance learning lab. Teaching assistant Nora Sabatini oversees the Schalmont class, helping distribute classroom materials and administer tests. Students are able to raise their hands to ask the teacher a question no matter where they are located.

Sabatini said, "The students seem very interested in the class. There are so many intricacies to the language."

By intricacies, she means that a foreign language class is much more than symbols, letters and words. Students taking this course are discovering many facets of Chinese culture, such as social practices, government policies, and traditional myths. They even had the opportunity to see a Chinese dance troop perform at the University of Albany.

Schalmont administrators carefully reviewed the benefits of the new class before deciding to implement it.

Director of Curriculum Susan Cook said, "A foreign language program doesn't just build fluency. It also helps students develop literacy skills in their own language. Studying the rules and structure of a foreign language can actually help them with their English communication skills and word usage."

It seems that studying new languages can open doors not only to new career paths, but also to a better understanding of our native tongue.



Exchanging Ideas in Schalmont: Schalmont High School is hosting two foreign exchange students this year: Nuttakarn Kamkaew from Thailand and Matthias Lukas Ruethers from Germany. Both are enjoying the opportunity to develop their English skills and to experience life in the United States. Visit www.schalmont.org/HS/HSnews/exchangestudents.htm to learn what it's like to be an exchange student in our community.

Forensics at Schalmont HS

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to remind her students that the class is first and foremost about the facts.

Many people associate forensic science with flashy primetime dramas, but she said, "CSI has become a little too Hollywood, a little too glitzy. We need to focus on the science."

And there's a lot of science in forensics: soil samples require knowledge of earth science, DNA requires knowledge of biology, ballistics require knowledge of physics, etc. With that in mind, Gemmiti leads her forensics classes in exercises such as examining bite marks in food items or getting a first-hand perspective from people in the field. When she realized a fellow teacher's brother worked on the Camarena case – a topic covered in the class textbook – she jumped on the opportunity to have Dillon share his experiences.

For students, the Camarena case turned out to be much more than a learning experience. They also were inspired to take part in Red Ribbon Week, an annual event focused on drug prevention in memory of fallen DEA Agent Enrique "Kiki" Camarena. Students planted over 200 tulips in front of the high school, created over 600 red ribbons for students and teachers, and held several fundraisers to collect money for the DEA Survivors Benefit Fund.

The \$435 they raised will be sent to the DEA along with pictures and one student's poem, which ends:

*It's better to concentrate on more worthwhile important goals I'd wager
If you or loved ones are suffering, try a bit harder to break those chains.*

"Our students are very supportive of a drug free life," said Gemmiti. One can imagine that would make Camarena's widow, Mika, very proud.



School Board Calendar

Schalmont Board of Education public meetings are held at 7 p.m. unless otherwise noted.

Monday, Dec. 10
Schalmont MS LGI Room

Monday, Jan. 14
Jefferson Elementary School

Monday, Jan. 28
Schalmont MS LGI Room

Reunion Calendar

Planning a Schalmont High School class reunion? Once you have a date, visit www.schalmont.org/alumni/alumni.htm to share the details.

Committee Updates

Each year, community members serve on the **Schalmont Budget Advisory Committee**. Meetings are held beginning in January and throughout the months leading up to the school budget vote in May. Call 355-9200, x4001, to find out how you can get involved. You also can find budget information at school board meetings, in the district newsletter and online at www.schalmont.org.

Golfers Make History

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golfers, and Longo's score of 81 was in the top five. They both qualified for the Class A, B, C-D Intersectionals, in which Longo's two-day score of 150 came in sixth place. He earned a spot on the Section II Golf Team at the New York State tournament in June 2008.

Longo, who has played golf since age six, said it's a sport that requires a lot more talent than people think. According to him, "You have to put a lot of hard work in." That hard work earned him a position as a Colonial Council Second Team All-star and the title of Schalmont Most Valuable Player.

Teammate Conor Hart recently earned a Colonial Council First Team All-Star position, and was named the Schalmont Most Improved Player. He has played the sport for many years, and said, "It's a blast – the success you feel when you hit a good shot."

While he'd like to continue to play golf in college if possible, Hart is quick to point out that the sport is ageless. As he put it, "You can play golf the rest of your life. Football, you can't." A prime example is that when he first picked up a golf club, his grandfather was learning right by his side. At age 81.

Hart said he appreciates computer science teacher Anthony Cassale's coaching style. "Coach Cassale loves the game. It's all about having fun."

Others seem to be getting the same message. According to the National High School Golf Coaches Association, golf is the fifth most popular high school sport for boys and the eighth for girls. Longo is aware of at least 16 colleges that offer a golf major for students who want to become professionals. Some estimates suggest that those students could eventually earn anywhere from the mid-\$40K as a golf course manager to millions of dollars as a tournament champion.

Makes you want to take a whack, too, doesn't it?



Golf Champs! Pictured from left to right are junior Conor Hart, seniors Kevin Brown and Nick Longo, and Coach Anthony Cassale.



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Schalmont

CENTRAL SCHOOLS

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