

# Schalmont News

CENTRAL SCHOOLS

## Safety Committee Keeps Your Child in Mind

Protection is and should be the first instinct of parents towards their children. When your child is away from you for at least eight hours of the day, don't you want to know that he or she still will be protected? The Schalmont Central School District Safety Committee is focused on doing just that: ensuring your child is safe at school.

### Tackling the Problem

The Safety Committee (SC) came about in response to the New York State Safe Schools Against Violence in Education (SAVE) law enacted in 2000. It required districts to develop a district-wide school safety plan. The goal was to help districts prevent or minimize the effects of serious violent incidents and emergencies and to facilitate the coordination of district, local and county resources during such events.

SC members were and still are charged with developing and maintaining certain elements of the Schalmont District-wide School Safety Plan. The 18 current members include local safety professionals from the police and fire departments, Schalmont parents, a student, a board member, and school personnel.



Chairperson Michael Kondratowicz, principal of Schalmont Middle School, has over 35 years of experience in education. He said, "We've tried to develop the best plans we can that make schools safer. In Schalmont, we've acted on laws and even exceeded some recommendations."

Actions taken to improve school safety run the gamut from simple fixes – such as improving signage in parking areas – to advanced technology – such as installing security cameras in the Schalmont High School-Middle School complex.

The creation and evaluation of such safety measures must be an ongoing process. That's why certain committee members regularly meet with staff from other Schenectady

County schools and the county health department. They also make use of recommendations given by the NYS health and education departments.

According to Kondratowicz, one of the many benefits of this collaborative effort is, "We'll all know each other in the event of an emergency."

### ➔ What's inside

pg.2 ■ **Student Diversity**  
*Schalmont student helps lead county discussions*

pg.3 ■ **Audit Results Informative**  
*Improvements welcomed*

### Inspired Artwork

Knowledge of science, math and more aids students with art projects



**SEE PAGE 3**

### • HS Students Have a Voice on the Board

When determining a community's education needs, adults with the wisdom of years can still benefit from the insight of youth.

Students' embedded-in-it experience has obvious value for groups like Student Council. Perhaps less well known is that a student also can inform policy-making bodies such as the Schalmont Board of Education. That is the case for Brittany Keller, a Schalmont High School senior and student representative on the school board.

continued on page 2 ---->

continued on page 4 ---->

## ■ Safety Committee

– continued from pg. 1

### Health Safety

Schalmont janitorial staff and nurses work in tandem to prevent, identify and deal with cold and flu bugs that crop up. Their efforts are part of an overall district mission to prevent the spread of disease in this, the most public of settings. SC members also play a role in preventing and reacting to health threats in schools, by helping plan district responses to major health crises, such as a flu pandemic.

The word pandemic refers to something that is widespread. The sporadic cases of Community-Associated Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (CA-MRSA), a bacterial infection, in area schools this fall were taken seriously, but they did not rise to the level of a pandemic.

Schalmont schools work proactively to prevent the spread of infections such as MRSA. Measures taken include having custodial staff regularly disinfect

bathrooms, locker rooms, gym showers, water fountains, lunch tables, athletic equipment, and other such facilities. School nurses are well informed about infections, and students are encouraged to engage in proper hygiene practices, such as frequent hand washing.

## “School safety is ever-evolving.”

A pandemic flu would have ramifications in all aspects of community life, leading to a halt in normal business, retail, civic, school, and entertainment operations. Representatives from the SC and other area school districts are working together with local and state officials to determine how best to maintain the educational process during such a health crisis. Community members can view state-level pandemic flu plans at <http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/states/newyork.html>.

### School Security

Incidents such as those at Columbine High School and Virginia Tech have shown how important security is in the educational setting. Districts now must balance the desire for schools that are open, friendly places to learn with the need to provide students a safe learning environment. The SC is tasked with helping strike that balance in Schalmont.

School Resource Officer Rich Kranick, a Rotterdam police officer, has served Schalmont for almost nine years. This fall, he helped organize two

security-related faculty training sessions, one of which involved a mock lockdown with a sweep by SWAT officers. The goal of such realism was to minimize the fear that could result in a true emergency situation.

Both trainings came as a result of recommendations from the SC, whose members have helped create numerous security policies over the years. Recommendations that impact the annual school budget must be approved by the Schalmont Board of Education. Examples\* of current policies include:

- Fingerprinting all school personnel and requiring them to wear IDs;
- Employing security/hall monitors;
- Holding lockout, lockdown and fire drills several times a year; and
- Having visitor sign-in desks and/or designing entrances so visitors must first go through a main office.

Information from outside sources helps SC members stay abreast of changing security needs. Safety assessments, such as the ones conducted in Schalmont with the assistance of state police in 2005, help pinpoint strengths and weaknesses in school security. State recommendations, such as the recently released NYS School Safety Guide, can be used to improve the District-wide School Safety Plan.

As Officer Kranick said, “School safety is ever-evolving.”

### When a Safety Concern Comes Up

In Schalmont, there are a lot of people working to ensure the safety of students and school personnel. Those same people still can benefit from the input of concerned citizens.

Schalmont community members



**Student Diversity:**  
This fall, Gabriella Marsh (left) joined 16 of her peers in representing Schalmont High School at the Schenectady County

Embraces Diversity (SCED) workshop. The 10th-grade student also completed a rigorous three-day training session to become the first SCED Study Circles facilitator from Schalmont. This year’s workshop drew 100 Study Circle participants from schools across the county. They came to discuss their differences, similarities and opinions on diversity.

\* Visit <http://www.schalmont.org/District/schoolsafetyatschalmont.htm> to learn about other steps taken to protect students and school personnel. Readers should be aware that some details are left off to prevent the misuse of school security information.

should inform administrators of any school-related safety concerns as soon as possible. Administrators can provide guidance, and if not able to resolve the situation themselves, can put into play elements of the District-wide School Safety Plan.

Officer Kranick maintains an open-door policy for all students, parents and faculty. Though he doesn't wear a uniform most days, he said, "Everybody in the building knows I'm the police officer." People with school-related or even general, community-related concerns are encouraged to speak with him, whether in his office, somewhere on school grounds or after-hours on the phone.

Students and parents also can turn to their school's handbook for guidance on how to handle a safety concern. A copy of each school's Code of Conduct is included in the handbooks, which are passed out at the start of every school year.

Principal Kondratowicz said, "The Code of Conduct is kind of like the Constitution. It doesn't have every single law or rule, but it's the basis for them." For more information, visit [www.schalmont.org](http://www.schalmont.org) and click on "District Policies" or visit an individual school's homepage.

In the event of an emergency situation, school administrators try to provide parents with accurate information as promptly as possible. This information is provided through a variety of mediums, including the:

- District website ([www.schalmont.org](http://www.schalmont.org)),
- Schalmont School News Notifier e-mail service ([www.schalmont.org/District/SNN/snnhome.htm](http://www.schalmont.org/District/SNN/snnhome.htm))
- Emergency phone call system, and
- Letters sent home to parents.

Parents may have a variety of safety concerns, but the existence of the SC should be a source of comfort.

"It can make you nervous, looking at all the things to worry about. But it also makes you think more and plan," said Kondratowicz. "In some ways, schools are safer than 10 years ago because of the planning that came out of crises."

*The following people were appointed to the Schalmont Central School District Safety Committee for the 2007-2008 school year:*

<i>Sandra Beloncik</i>	<i>Michael Kondratowicz</i>
<i>Thomas Borkowski</i>	<i>Richard Kranick</i>
<i>Mellissa Braham</i>	<i>Katie LeRoy</i>
<i>Dawn Campochiaro</i>	<i>Shari Lontrato</i>
<i>Jamie DeLorenzo</i>	<i>Kevin Mercoglan</i>
<i>Danielle Freeman</i>	<i>Fred Orlando</i>
<i>Ben Gerardo</i>	<i>David Pizzino</i>
<i>Christine Hyde</i>	<i>Sandy VanEtten</i>
<i>Marie Jankowski</i>	<i>Aimee Yankowski</i>

- **Inspired Artwork:** Schalmont High School students in Day Pinkham's advanced sculpture classes don't just learn how to mold, cast and paint. Multidisciplinary projects, such as Stephanie Geiselman's recreation of a skull (below), require knowledge and skills from across the educational spectrum.



## Audit Results Minor, But Informative

After a lengthy review, the Office of the State Comptroller issued an audit report on Schalmont Central School District that found **no instances of misuse of tax dollars.** The report included recommendations to help the district improve existing practices, and Schalmont quickly took action on them.

In 2006, a team of auditors conducted an in-depth, six-month review of Schalmont practices in accordance with a New York State law requiring all school districts to undergo a comptroller audit by 2010. Their report was released this fall.

Schalmont Board of Education members were pleased that the audit revealed ways in which the district could tighten controls on its practices. In response to the report, they authorized several improvements:

- ✓ The district's Internal Claims Auditor (ICA) was provided with additional, specific guidance in relation to the review of checks, bank statements/reconciliations and monthly reports.
- ✓ All claims (i.e. invoices) are approved by the ICA prior to payment.
- ✓ All schedules of claims are approved by the ICA in advance.
- ✓ The treasurer directly supervises the placement of her signature on checks.
- ✓ The district Technology Plan will include a formal disaster recovery plan.
- ✓ BOCES is providing the district with a secure, off-site location to store back-up copies of school data.

These improvements to existing practices will help ensure that the community's investment in Schalmont schools continues to be safely and efficiently managed.



### School Board Calendar

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

#### Monday, Feb. 11

Woestina Elementary  
1292 Main St.  
Rotterdam Junction

#### Monday, Feb. 25

Middle School LGI Room  
2 Sabre Dr.

#### Monday, March 10

Mariaville Elementary  
9210 Mariaville Rd.  
Pattersonville

#### Tuesday, March 25

Middle School LGI Room  
2 Sabre Dr.

### Reunion Calendar

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

## HS Students Have a Voice

— continued from pg. 1

Over the last 15 years, HS principals and Student Council members have worked together to review applications and select students to serve on the school board.

Current HS Principal Terence Nash said, "A good candidate is someone who can represent the student body, not just themselves. They share information with the board, so it has to be someone who can talk to adults and present themselves appropriately in a public forum."

Representatives serve on the board during their senior year, but often begin observing meetings during the latter half of their junior year. Though student members do not have a weight-carrying vote on board matters, they do provide a valuable perspective on school issues. For example, Keller has a designated speaking time at each board meeting – listed as the "Student Representative Report" item on every agenda.

Keller wishes more students would take time to observe board meetings. "It's been a good experience, emotionally. I've learned how people can react to things and how one person can change an entire school district,"



Brittany Keller (right and above on far left) represents students on the school board.

she said. "The people there are so funny. They're really nice."

The most exciting part for her is being able to speak as the student representative. "I hope, in a sense, that it inspires them," said Keller of her fellow board members.

Adult community members who serve on a school board perform a civic duty on behalf of their family, friends and neighbors. They also take part in a governmental process that involves: establishing district policies; developing annual budgets; reviewing school curriculum, supplies and facilities; and approving personnel matters and contracts.

Students like Keller are able to observe and sometimes play a role in this process. As Principal Nash said, "They're right there at the table."



Produced in cooperation with the Capital Region BOCES Communications Service.

# Schalmont

CENTRAL SCHOOLS

401 Duanesburg Road, Schenectady, NY 12306

Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Permit No. 203  
Albany, NY

#### Board of Education

Michael DellaVilla  
President

Robert Sheehan  
Vice President

Sandra Beloncik  
Albert Falcone  
Denise Pendt  
Carl Strang  
Kevin Thompson

#### Superintendent of Schools

Dr. Valerie Kelsey

#### School Business Administrator

Mark F. Kellett

#### Communications Specialist

Melissa Braham

## Postal Customer