

# Island Trees High School Newsletter

November, 2009

Edition 1

## Jillian Raines Volunteers at Panda Preserve!



**By Mr. Paul Weber**

Many students spend their summer vacations staying up late, going to the beach, and working part-time jobs.

Jillian decided to have a summer experience that was out of the ordinary before her senior year in high school. She spent 11 days in a rural mountainous region of China caring for Panda Bears.

As part of volunteer crew at the Ya'an Panda Preserve,

Jillian was responsible for cleaning panda enclosures, preparing food, collecting behavioral data, and carrying bamboo. Lots of bamboo!

In addition to her contact with pandas, she was also exposed to an exceptional cultural experience that cannot be taught in a classroom. Jillian's experience in China this summer is one example of the increasing desire of

many Island Trees students to volunteer in both their community as well as in the outside world.

Jillian intends to pursue Pre-Veterinary related studies in college next year.

She is currently applying to a variety of top colleges in New England and the Mid-Atlantic states.

We wish her luck in her endeavors!

## How Santiago Perez Spent His Summer Vacation!

**By Dr. Andrew Sass**

When Santiago Perez, then a junior at Island trees High School, got home from school one day this past April, he found his acceptance letter to MIT's rigorous 6-week summer program introducing selected students to science and engineering.

MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) is arguably the premier high tech college in the world and the target school for some of the best and brightest

students produced by high schools in the US and abroad. The MITES summer program is the Cadillac of a half-dozen summer programs around the country designed to familiarize students with careers in physical and life sciences. All expenses of the program are paid by the Institute. Admission to the program is extremely selective; this past year 60 students from a field of about 1000 were chosen following a lengthy evaluation process.

(continued on page 2)



## Bryan Verbitsky: Hofstra's Grand Slam!



**By Mr. Joe D'Auria**

Island Trees High School proudly announces the early signing commitment of senior baseball player Bryan Verbitsky to Hofstra University.

After being actively recruited by many top Division 1 baseball programs, Verbitsky decided to stay close to home and accept a full baseball scholarship to attend Hofstra and serve as Pride's left fielder and closer in 2011.

Bryan has had a storied career for the Island Trees baseball program over the past 3 seasons. The coaching staff recognized Bryan's passion and love for baseball in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade when he attended many camps and clinics held by the program and Little League. Bryan also served as the varsity team's bat boy while in elementary school. As a freshman, Bryan was brought up to the varsity team early

in the year and proved he belonged by hitting .418 with 4 homeruns and 26 RBI's. He became part of a magical season as the Bulldogs were League Champions as well as the 2007 Nassau County Class A Champions. Bryan was named All-League that season.

In his sophomore season, Bryan continued his success on the field hitting .417 with 6 homeruns and 30 RBI's while serving as the team's closer with his devastating fastball and slider. The Bulldogs were once again League Champions and made it to the Class A Semi-Finals in 2008 as Bryan was (continued on page 2).

### Santiago (Cont. from pg.1)

Santiago's acceptance letter promised a summer filled with a minimum of 12 hours a day of classes and homework; with this workload on weekends as well as week-days for 6 weeks. The letter pointedly said "...if you are not willing... please do not accept this offer..".

Santiago who is a well-rounded student at Island Trees with interests in science, robotics, language, art, and music, not only accepted the challenge but embraced it; he ignored the PHYSICS 1 and PHYSICS 2 class and instead applied for and gaining entry to the programs' fabled PHYSICS 3 course, the most advanced and impossibly difficult of the program. He also gained entry to the higher-level Calculus 2 instead of settling for Calculus 1. In addition he took Viral Biology, Digital Design, and Humanities 3.

His competition in these courses consisted of many students who had taken

corresponding AP courses in their junior year. Santiago had not yet taken these courses since Island Trees offers them as senior electives.

Santiago had a lot of ground to make up and only 6 weeks to do it. While the rest of us spent our summers relaxing, he spent it in classrooms, laboratories, and in his dorm room studying till 2 or 3 AM and sometimes even later. Work stretched to 20 hours a day.

Sleep became a precious commodity but as he tells it, doing well became an obsession that could not be denied. Santiago vividly recalls being given an assignment at 1 AM to write an essay about a late-night movie which had just ended. Since the essay was due that day, the only solution was to work all night. He spent another sleepless night preparing his Digital Design project presentation to an MIT faculty audience. It is interesting to note that those two nights were consecutive.

The finale to the frenzy of activity was the preparation for the legendary PHYSICS 3 FINAL. He and fellow students moved sleeping bags into the lobby of an MIT research building and studied together, all night.

Santiago explored the limits of his capabilities by going beyond them at the toughest academic boot camp of them all and in the process learned more about himself than he ever could have imagined.

Santiago registered the second highest final grade in PHYSICS 3, the highest grade in VIRAL BIOLOGY, well above average in CALCULUS 2 and a first place award in DIGITAL DESIGN for a video game application program he created for IPHONES. He earned the right to be proud of himself and looks forward, confidently, to a career in the sciences. He recommends a summer program experience to other Island Tees students who have the desire and perseverance.

### Bryan Verbitsky (Cont. from pg. 1)

selected as an All-County performer. That summer Bryan was selected to the Empire State team that represented both Nassau and Suffolk Counties in the Empire games.

As a junior, Bryan continued to elevate his game to even higher levels through dedicated off-season work. He hit an amazing .457 with 8 Homeruns and 34 RBI's. On the mound, he evolved into the Bulldog's staff ace, compiling an 8-1 record and 1.44 ERA with 80 strikeouts in 63 innings. The Bulldogs made it all the way to the County Finals in 2009 where they lost in the third and final game to Clarke H.S. by a score of 5-4. Bryan was recognized by the Nassau County.

County Baseball Coaches Association once again as an All-County and receiving the prestigious Diamond Award as the best position player in Nassau. It was the third time this decade an Island Trees player has received this award (Greg Thomson '02, Joe Vaskas '07). He also made 1st team All New York State as well as *Newsday* 1<sup>st</sup> team All Long Island. Entering his senior season this spring, Bryan is at the top of many Island Trees baseball career records. He is first in batting average at .432, second in hits (105), RBI's (90), homeruns (18), and runs (93). According to his coaches, Bryan is that rare five-tool player who can hit for average, hit for power, run, throw, and field at a very high level.

They also added that it is no coincidence that Bryan has been a member of teams that have won 64 games over the past 3 seasons.

His coach Joe D'Auria added that "you won't find a more humble, harder working student athlete than Bryan. I am fortunate that I still get to coach him one more season."

In the classroom Bryan also excels. He takes many honors courses while maintaining an A average.

Coaches and teachers at Island Trees H.S. recognize Bryan for his tireless work ethic and excellent attitude.

They also wish him much luck and success at Hofstra University and in all of his future endeavors.

### Humanities Classes Hold Debates to Determine the Tragic Hero!



Ms. Martingano's senior Humanities class took the discussion of classic literature to a whole new level when they planned and performed a formal debate as their culminating activity of their study of Greek tragedy.

Based on their analysis of the play *Antigone*, students developed an argument about which character, Antigone or Creon, was the tragic hero. Students were required to support their side of the

debate with text-based details from the play. In addition, they were to follow Aristotle's definition of the tragic man in the development of their argument.

Clearly, the topic was outstanding for debate, as Team Antigone was the winner in period 9, and Team Creon was the winner for period 2.

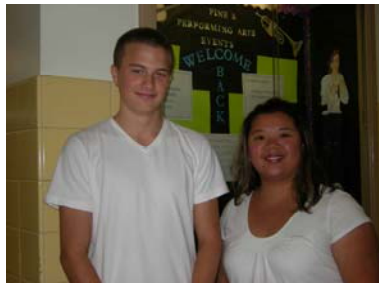
These students have certainly proven that intellectual pursuits can be stimulating, fun, and victorious!

## ITHS Musicians Take Center Stage!



Brian Watala, a student at Island Trees High School, has been selected to have his original music composition performed at the 2009 New York State School Music Association (NYSSMA) Conference in Rochester, New York.

Brian's music composition was selected as one of the best throughout New York State and it will be featured at the Electronic Music Composition Showcase.



Congratulations to Island Trees High School vocalist Daniel Dreyfus on the honor of being selected to the New York State School Music Association's All State Mixed Chorus Ensemble.

He will perform at the NYSSMA Winter Conference at the Eastman Theatre in Rochester in December.

Mr. Peter Gibbons, District Director of Fine & Performing Arts would also like to congratulate cellist Gregory Karbuczky on being selected as an alternate for the orchestra.



## Mrs. Donna Donahue "Displays" Island Trees Spirit!



It would be impossible to pass by the beautiful display case that livens up the Main Lobby without stopping to admire the boundless creativity in every detail.

Mrs. Donna Donahue is responsible for these glorious displays of school spirit, for the life-long devotion to all things "Island Trees" serves as the muse to her artistic designs. What many may not know is that Mrs. Donahue was a member of the Display Design Club when she was a student at Island Trees High School!

Clearly, she deserves an A+.

## Mr. Hedstrom Runs Lax Camp in the Balkans

Organized by The Federation of International Lacrosse (FIL) and The European Lacrosse Federation (ELF), from August 7th to August 9th, Mr. Karl Hedstrom was asked to run the biggest lacrosse camp on the Balkans. During the Clinic, Mr. Hedstrom (Asst Coach at NYIT) along with Jack Kaley (retired Head Coach at NYIT) Kyle Witt (CAN) - Welwyn Warriors, formerly Drexel; Henning Schmidt (GER) - E.L.F, all helped to create a Bulgarian Lacrosse National Team which will compete in the upcoming 2010 FIL **World Lacrosse** Championships that are being held at the Manchester University Sports grounds in ENGLAND.



## Guidance Department Updates!

College application season is in full swing. Last year, the graduating class submitted a total of 801 Applications to colleges. The Class of 2010 is well on their way to breaking this mark. Counselors are currently busy assisting students in navigating through the application process. Letters of recommendation are an important piece of the application, and counselors are carefully preparing letters that represent each student's unique qualities. The guidance department has been in constant contact with seniors since February of their junior year regarding college. If you have been procrastinating, it is time to get moving! See your counselor if you have not yet completed any applications.

The Guidance Department unveiled the first-ever College and Career Resource Center at the High School. This room, located across from the gymnasium, provides students and counselors with a separate space devoted solely to college and career counseling. Two computers as well as countless paper resources are available for students in planning their future.

The Island Trees High School Guidance Department is 1 of only 2 public high schools in Nassau County that is beginning to submit your academic information to colleges electronically. Submitting materials electronically helps fulfill our desire to "Go Green." Not only will this save money for postage, paper, and ink, but this will also save a tree or two in the meantime. Electronic submission also reduces the risk of human error in the processing of a student's information on the college side.

On-Site College Admissions - A flyer went out to all 12th grade homerooms in mid-October with all the details about this unique and beneficial program. Representatives from Hofstra, C.W. Post, Adelphi, Dowling, St. John's, Molloy, and NYIT will be at ITHS the week before Thanksgiving to review applications and make admission decisions "On-Site." All colleges participating in this program have agreed to waive their application fee. Since this program's inception, Island Trees families have saved a total of \$17,000 in application fees!

All high school counselors will be visiting colleges in early November. Princeton, The College of New Jersey, Sacred Heart, and Fairfield are on the list of schools that will be toured. Be sure to ask your counselor about their visit if you are interested in any of these schools.

## Award-Winning Authors Visit Island Trees Students

This fall, Island Trees High School students had the distinct pleasure of meeting two authors: Carol Plum-Ucci and Terry Trueman. Mrs. Susan Mendelson, Island Trees District Library Coordinator, arranged for the authors to come and speak to our students, affording them the special opportunity to meet and speak with "real" authors.

Our 9<sup>th</sup> grade students enjoyed an hour-long discussion with Carol Plum-Ucci, author of the award-winning novel *The Body of Christopher Creed*. The novel, although an open-ended mystery, centers on themes relevant to young people, including bullying and social acceptance.

In addition to answering questions about the novel, Plum-Ucci also regaled her audience with stories from her childhood, particularly those that influenced her writing.

Her insight into the mind of the young adult makes her novels appealing to teenagers, especially those students who enjoy

reading mysteries.

Our 11<sup>th</sup> grade students had the opportunity to speak to Terry Trueman, author the Printz Award winning novel *Stuck in Neutral*. The imaginative novel, providing an incredible perspective of a teenaged boy with Cerebral Palsy, offers students the chance to discuss real issues concerning families of those with special needs.

Eager to discuss the cliff-hanger ending, students were excited to ask the author to discover how the novel "would have" ended. Trueman captured the interest of his audience as he discussed not only the writing decisions he made during the crafting of the novel, but also his personal background as well. Students enjoyed his informal presentational style.

As a father to a child with CP, Trueman experienced much of what he has written about first-hand.

Both authors were well-received and will hopefully return for another visit next fall.



Above, 9th graders pose with Plum-Ucci. Below, Trueman shares a smile with Anthony Wrightington.



## Student Blood Drive a Tremendous Success!



The Senior Class, under the direction of Ms. Marie Timmons, hosted their annual Blood Drive. With 104 brave seniors, juniors, and staff members attempting to donate blood, 86 pints were collected. Volunteer activities such as these provide students with a wonderful opportunity to give back to the community! For one senior, Kathryn Bruno, this was not the first time she has given blood: "It was a wonderful experience to be able to help someone in need!" Students had an extremely positive experience!

## Spanish 4 Advanced Classes Enjoy a "Comidas Espanolas Festival"



Mrs. Melissa Iglío's Spanish 4 Advanced classes participated in a celebration of Spanish cuisine as part of their in-depth study of both the customs and culture of Spanish countries.

Advanced teacher Mrs. Iglío explains, "It is wonderful to reach this level with the students, so that they can truly enjoy the culture of all of the different countries we study."

Students eagerly sampled savory dishes and beverages, including sangria, flan, banana pancakes, Magdalena, chick peas with fresh greens, avocado with carpaccio, and gazpacho. All of the food was delicious to sample and interesting to learn about.

All students contributed their talents to make this cultural feast a tremendous educational and culinary success!

## Halloween Fun at Island Trees!



Tommy Ucaner reads *The Crucible* with Wolverine Claws!



Leah Nunez, Bianca Piedra, and Adrianna Martinez are Things 1, 2, and 3!



## History Comes Alive in Global Studies 9 Advanced!

Constitution Day did not go unnoticed at Island Trees. To celebrate the 222<sup>nd</sup> signing of the constitution in 1787, Social Studies teacher **Mr. Brian Higgins** had his 9 advanced students draw up their own constitution.

This experience was designed to bring to life the brave actions of our founding fathers, while providing students with a hands-on opportunity to participate in the excitement of the process.

Included in their own constitutions were creative ideas about the rights to have larger lockers, more privileges, and more say in the courses they take as ninth graders.

*The Island Trees High School Newsletter Needs You!*

Know a student who deserves recognition?

Know a teacher who has great lessons?

Planning something exciting for your students?

Have a story to share?

We are looking for stories about interesting events and people right here at ITHS! Don't Delay!

Contact Beth Roemer at [eroemer@islandtrees.org](mailto:eroemer@islandtrees.org)

*A special thanks to Mr. Paletta and Mrs. Christensen!*

16<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL  
**ISLAND TREES BASEBALL**  
*Holiday Sale*

*It's that time of the year again, and the Island Trees High School Baseball Club is busy spreading holiday cheer!*

<b>CITRUS FRUIT</b>	
NAVEL ORANGES (20-24 CT) HAMLIN ORANGES (32-36 CT) RUBY GRAPEFRUITS (20-24 CT)	<b>\$27</b>
<b>CHRISTMAS DECOR</b>	
CHRISTMAS WREATHS (16" Decorated) GARLAND ROPING (25')	<b>\$20</b>
<b>FAMILY APPAREL</b>	
<b>SWEATSHIRTS</b> • Crew or hooded • Red, gray, and black • Available in adult and child sizes	<b>\$25</b>
<b>SHORT-SLEEVE T-SHIRTS</b> • Red, gray, and black • Available in adult and child sizes	<b>\$12</b>
<b>LONG-SLEEVE T-SHIRTS</b> • Red, gray, and black • Available in adult and child sizes	<b>\$14</b>
<b>HATS</b> • Flexfit red "Bulldog" cap ***must know size (S/M, L/XL - runs big) • Knit skull cap	<b>\$25</b> <b>\$16</b>
<b>SHORTS</b> • Red or black • Available in adult and child sizes	<b>\$20</b>
<b>SWEATPANTS</b> • Either gray with red lettering or black with white lettering ("Island Trees Baseball") and pockets • Available in adult and child sizes	<b>\$25</b>



All proceeds go to the Island Trees Baseball Program and the Make-a-Wish Foundation  
 Please see Joe D'Auria or an Island Trees baseball player for more information

