

# FROM YOUR SUPERINTENDENT

# JANUARY 2010

*We will open the book. Its pages are blank. We are going to put words on them ourselves. The book is called Opportunity and its first chapter is New Year's Day. ~Edith Lovejoy Pierce*

New Year's Eve was a night to celebrate the end of a decade and our hopes for a better future. New Year's Eve was a night when we reflect on the past. It was a night when we should give thanks for all that is good in our lives and renew our commitment to make the next year, the next decade, even better. As a school district, South Huntington has much for which to be thankful and proud. Consider the following:

Walt Whitman High School, voted one of America's Best High Schools by Newsweek magazine, continues to set new heights in delivering educational excellence and posts graduation rates nearing 100%. South Huntington continues to be a showcase for music and the arts and this year alone has 43 students named to the SCMEA All-County Music festival. Musical groups at every level in the district distinguish themselves, exemplified by our middle school Show Stoppers, who performed a Christmas concert with jazz great David Benoit. Whitman's marching band continues its collection of gold medal performances, and the district is once again a Grammy signature finalist school district and one of the American Music Conference's 100 best communities in America for Music Education. The dance program at Whitman is second to none, helping to ensure our students continued success beyond their high school years. Our young artists continue to win local and regional awards, and our students who excel in targeted courses at Wilson Tech have earned top awards year after year in studies as diversified as horticulture and graphic arts.

And even when the music stops or the brushes and pencils are put aside, South Huntington students continue to excel in other academic areas. The Forensic Debate, DECA, and Mathletes clubs have won many, many competitions. And this past winter saw Whitman seniors in a gold-awarded WISE financial literacy course highlighted in a feature segment on ABC's "Nightline." The district also had a very strong showing at this year's Young Professionals Chamber of Commerce Business Leadership Competition. Whitman students were involved in several regional science programs, as was highlighted in the recent legislation banning BPA in plastic baby bottles. Students continually cite the many and varied science programs, as well as the enthusiasm of their teachers, as helping them to pursue their post-academia dreams in the fields they love.

South Huntington has enjoyed a welcome spotlight from outside organizations as well. The NYS Education Department (NYSED) recognized all of South Huntington's schools as High-Performing Gap Closing. The NYSED also recently conducted a review of nutritional programs in both the high school and middle school and noted that the district's food service programs should be commended for their efforts to present a wide variety of hot and cold entries, fresh fruits, vegetables, and salads in a pleasant and nurturing atmosphere. Expansion Management, a national consulting group that advises companies about how best to evaluate and compare communities best suited for their future growth, rated our district in the top 16% nationally. On the financial front, Moody's has again recognized our fiscal conservatism by awarding the district a highly favorable Aa3 rating.

Clearly, South Huntington is an outstanding district, and there is much from the past year to be proud of and much to continue to build upon. As part of that pride, we also give thanks for the hard work and dedication that made these achievements possible. As your superintendent, I thank you on behalf of the Board of Education, the staff, and the students for the interest, support, commentary, and involvement that help to make South Huntington the exceptional community it is. As the New Year and the new decade begin, I ask that you join me in rededicating ourselves to developing the dreams and aspirations of our children and to providing them with an education that will enable them to think for themselves for the rest of their lives, regardless of the paths they take, so that they can contribute meaningfully to society and achieve personal satisfaction and happiness.

Sincerely,  
Tom Shea  
Superintendent of Schools