

# Education

[The Hammonton Gazette]

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## Local businesses support HHS athletic teams

by Brianna Mac Kay & Meloney Coulter

GAZETTE CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Hammonton High School is home to more than a dozen varsity, junior varsity and freshman athletic teams. From football to softball to bowling, sports are happening during all three seasons that school is in session.

The school's athletic programs are important to the student body but are also a vital part of the Hammonton community as a whole. That is why the small businesses in town are willing to help the school's athletic department when they can.

Ron Silipino is the owner of a sporting goods store, Showcase Sports, located in Hammonton. He explained how his business being local and accessible has been a key outlet for the athletic teams.

"When [teams] are in a jam and need something right away, because [we're] right here, a lot of times we have it in stock. For instance, at one point, I think it was the soccer team, they had called and needed socks right away for a particular game. And luckily we had them in stock and they were able to come right over and grab them. So having stuff, being local and being right here, things like that we have been able to help them quite a bit with," Silipino said.

Silipino is also willing to help in ways beyond having the right equipment in stock at the store.

"They have done a couple of other fundraising things for different things for the school. When something like that comes up, they want to do some sort of a fundraiser, if we are able to help them in any way, we always do," Silipino said.

Another local business that has done a few things for the athletics department is Fruta-Mex. The snack bar has sponsored cups that were given out at athletic events.

When it comes to why Fruta-Mex would be willing to do something like this for Hammonton High School, owner

Uriel Mendoza had a simple answer.

"We mainly did it to support. I went there my senior year and I know some of the kids that go there," Mendoza said.

Silipino also has personal connections to the school, which is another reason why he is always quick to help out the programs.

"There are a lot of different reasons why we would want to help the school of course. One, myself graduated there, my daughters graduated there, my daughter teaches there. Plus, we're a sporting goods store, they're our main customer, so we want to do everything we can to help them out," Silipino said.

It isn't just small businesses helping, though. The booster clubs are other outlets that help out the teams in town as well.

There is the GridIron Club that supports the football team and Blue Diamond that supports the baseball team. Showcase Sports has helped these booster clubs, donating a portion of the proceeds made when selling Hammonton High School football or baseball gear to their respective booster clubs.

Another booster club in town is the All Sports Booster Club, which helps out all the sports within Hammonton High School.

"[All Sports Boosters] run the concession stand at the high school football games and their whole goal is to help out any of the athletics in the school, any one of the sports. They're the main ones who help out with a lot of things, uniforms if the different teams need them, any type of equipment sometimes that they may need that's not in their normal budget, I know they go to All Sports Booster Club. All Sports Boosters have purchased uniforms for quite a few of the teams at the school through us," Silipino said.

With sports playing such an important part in any town's community, having people and businesses within the town willing to help the sports programs out will only make Hammonton's community even stronger.



THG/Joseph F. Berenato.

Anne Marie, Ron and Nicole Silipino of Showcase Sports. (Not pictured: Alyssa Silipino)

## Students offer insights from college tour experiences

by Andrei Simon & Samantha Irwin

GAZETTE CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

As the college application process inches closer and closer to the deadline, the seniors at Hammonton High School have some very important decisions to make on what they want to do after high school. This application process typically starts in early September and ends in January of the student's senior year.

While some students plan to go far away, others choose to stay close to home such as Hammonton High School senior Joey Zawrotny.

"I plan to go to Rowan University for music composition and production of music; I chose Rowan because it's nearby and not that expensive," Zawrotny said.

With Rowan's growing reputation in diverse fields and being one of the closest four year schools, Rowan seems to be the one of the more popular selections for students who don't want to go out of state, but also want a four-year degree.

It is very important at this age and stage of your life to not rush into any decisions too quickly and to really plan and think about the direction you want for your future.

Sophia Campanella, another senior at Hammonton High School, decided on attending a community college for two years and plans on following it up at a four-year college.

"It really is OK to not be ready to move out for college yet. I'm not entirely sure what I want to major in, but I want to go into something within the business of music because I really want to be involved with music while making my living," Campanella said.

Options like these are great for students like Campanella because it limits the amount of time and money you might waste if you impulsively jump into a four-year long program.

Before going out to college tours it's

important for high schoolers to understand for themselves what is important to them and their college experience. This could be as simple as ruling out colleges inside busy cities like Philadelphia and looking more rural if they can not see themselves comfortable in a certain setting.

"My advice for underclassmen is to know yourself especially when you are visiting schools. If you don't know yourself you can't differentiate the school that is best for you," Elyse Ryan, senior class president, said.

Ryan plans on majoring in nursing and wants to focus on ways to help and improve under-represented communities. She's gone on several college tours already, including The College of New Jersey, Widener, University of The Sciences and Rutgers University. She has been involved with many clubs in high school.

"The clubs the university had to offer were one of the deciding factors for me," Ryan said.

Depending on the desires and necessities of the student, students can find different things during a tour that could draw them towards that school. These include the location, the campus itself, clubs and organizations, and even faculty or other students.

"I prefer to be in D.C. because it is a beautiful city and politically active," said Olivia Falciani, another senior at Hammonton High School.

Falciani has already gone to multiple college visits as she is planning on going to college in Washington D.C.

"I visited colleges with my sister when she was looking, but this summer I took a tour of George Washington University, American University and University of Maryland. George Washington was my favorite because it was really beautiful and I got a good feel for the campus on the tour," Falciani said.

While this may be a stressful time for upperclassmen in high school, it is important for students to stay excited about these big changes ahead for them.



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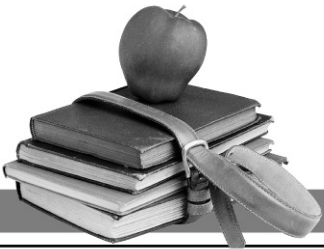
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## HHS students discuss benefits of peer mediation

by Kayla Rundstrom & Nick Salvati  
GAZETTE CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

For high school students, as they traverse their adolescence, it is easy to feel lost and overwhelmed when confronted with a conflict they may be having with a fellow student. Talking it over one-on-one might not be possible and going to an adult in administration might be uncomfortable.

The peer mediation program at Hammonton High School (HHS) provides students with a way to solve these kinds of problems with help from fellow students. The ‘peer mediators,’ juniors and seniors from the high school, apply the techniques they learned to help resolve any problems their peers might be having with one another.

Stacy Peretti, Honors English teacher at HHS, is currently in charge of the program at the school and leads the way in conflict resolution and training the next batch of peer mediators.

“It’s actually been a part of this school for many, many years. I took it over four years ago... I really tried to get the students very involved,” Peretti said.

One of the students who joined the program is junior Sam Mento, 17.

“I think it’s a really good thing to help other students and I want to be the person who can make someone’s life a little bit better,” Mento said on the importance of becoming a peer mediator.

Before the students could actually get out there and work, Peretti instructed them in



Courtesy Photos

half-day training sessions to get them better suited to become peer mediators. Those who took up the initiative to peer mediate trained by watching instructional videos and roleplaying possible conflict resolution scenarios.

What is next for the rest of the year is for the mediators on-call to be ready for any situation that might arise.

“If there’s a conflict, I will go into my peer mediation list and I’ll get two mediators and hopefully they’ll help solve the conflict,” Peretti said.

The main goal for peer mediation is to resolve any problems before they grow into something larger. If there are obvious signs of rifts between any two people, anyone who has taken notice of it can bring it to the peer mediation program. The mediators then use their skills to get to the bottom of the issue, and will walk the two parties through means to solve it.

Each meeting can have different resolutions, but what matters most is to learn what caused everything and to cease continuing problems.

“Through the years, it has helped with a lot of miscommunication. A lot of the time students have miscommunication with things, and you’ll see them, the light bulb

goes off, and it’s like, ‘Wow, I didn’t know you said, this, I thought you said this.’ They end up a lot of times being friends at the end, which is nice, and sometimes they decide ‘Hey, we’re going to agree to disagree, we’re just going to stay away from each other and respect each other and be civil,’” Peretti said.

It’s safe to say for Peretti that students working with students has been a much more efficient way in solving problems, rather than including an adult. While she is present at the meetings, Peretti takes a step back and lets the meeting play out between the students and mediators.

People of the same age can relate to each other and their experiences more than someone older than them, Peretti believes. Sometimes, the mediators have been in the exact same situation as one of the students.

“I really want teenagers to connect with teenagers,” Peretti said.

Being of around the same age, senior peer mediator Liz Cheeseboro, 18, knows how most other students would feel going to an adult.

“If I was having a problem, I would be a lot more open to talking to another student about it as opposed to a teacher. You don’t want to tell any teacher about that kind of stuff,” Cheeseboro said.

Communication in general has been



difficult for the past year and a half due to the pandemic. Learning institutions of every level have been shaping their lessons back around an in-person setting, and it has been difficult for some students to adjust to being face-to-face with people again.

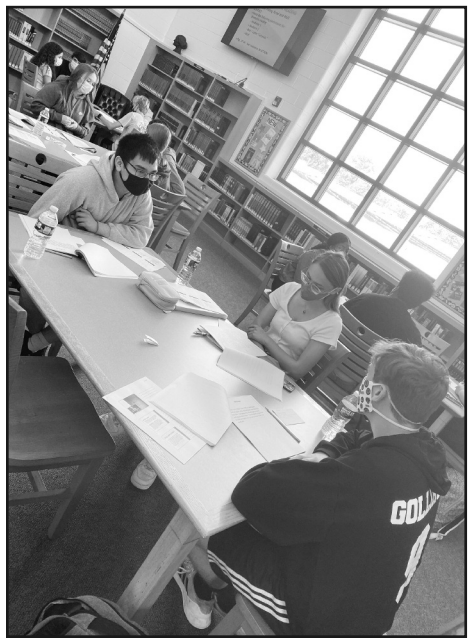
Peretti is also using the peer mediation program as a tool for HHS to learn how to connect with each other again, as their theme for the year is ‘Reconnecting at Hammonton High School.’

“It’s definitely an adjustment period. I’m seeing with students that they’re so used to being at home. We’re learning how to be together, learning to communicate again,” Peretti said.

All of the tools and skills the peer mediators learn during their time in the program has the potential to influence their goals in the future, including potential career choices. Peretti explained that one of her peer mediators in the past realized she had a knack for counseling and decided to study it beyond high school.

In truth, conflicts arise at any time, no matter the setting. What you learn from the program, Mento believes, is something you can carry with you forever.

“You see conflict for the rest of your life. And it’s a really good thing to know how to fix it,” Mento said.





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