

Another Reason to Celebrate What's Right in Hopatcong, NJ

Charles Maranzano, Jr., Superintendent of Schools for Hopatcong Borough

As a school superintendent I am asked to do many things during the week and occasionally on weekends. Recently my wife and I were invited to the annual Hopatcong Warriors annual awards dinner along with our mayor and her husband. The Hopatcong Warriors is a town sponsored football and cheerleading football program for elementary and middle school youngsters in our community. It is an organization that has been serving the needs of our youth for many decades and is indicative of the deep support that the families in this town place upon the young people who live here.

Being a new superintendent here in Hopatcong, New Jersey, means that I have a lot of learning to do and first impressions speak volumes. To say I was favorably impressed with the event is clearly an understatement. I was *overwhelmed* by the awards banquet and the number of children and young people honored at this event. The outpouring of parent and community support for this program was nothing short of amazing. For approximately four hours the guests and parents in attendance were treated to testimonials from coaches and assistant coaches, executive board members, volunteers, and others regarding the accomplishments of individual children throughout the current season.

President Dan Titus and his wife Debbie were gracious hosts and thirty-year contributor John Young (also a member of the Borough Town Council) was honored for his three decades of dedication as a Warriors volunteer. Clearly, the reward for all of the hard work that drives such a successful organization is total selflessness-everyone connected to the program stated a common philosophy and motivation for contributing: *building value in our youth*. This is exactly what we are attempting to accomplish in Hopatcong's public schools and to witness the efforts of the community to parallel our efforts was thrilling for this superintendent.

Athletics has a prominent place in and out of our schools in the critical development of values and character in our youth. It is part of a balanced equation that includes the Arts, Activities and Academics: what we refer to as the **Four A's of Education**. Many of the speakers at the Warrior's banquet eluded to the growth and successes of the participants this season- not in terms of wins or losses but in terms of developmental maturation. Simply stated, the youth gained in many ways from their participation: persistence, trust, hard-work, character growth, dependability, respect for others, fortitude, decision-making, teamwork, etc., and the list goes on and on.

The collective efforts of parents involved in the Warriors program is clearly indicative of an investment this community makes in its young people. The payback is enormous: *Human Capital*. The community, by supporting such vigorous programs for the young people, is investing in the very future of Hopatcong and by extension the future of American society itself.

As superintendent of schools I am compelled to articulate a theme that we appropriately began to use this year: "CELEBRATE WHAT'S RIGHT WITH HOPATCONG." I can think of no greater example of what connects the schools to the community than the programs Hopatcong has in place for the young people in our town. The people here in Hopatcong are the driving force in this effort to invest all their energy into the success of the children. I can assure them that the same level of energy and commitment is present in our schools throughout the school year. Together we form a bond of support when it comes to what Hopatcong Borough values most: our children.

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