

## Senior Leads Change to Biodegradable Lunch Trays

Watching her classmates throw away Styrofoam cafeteria trays after each meal, Shauna Michel grew concerned about the impact it was having on the environment.

The Tamarac senior approached school officials, gathering facts and organizing a presentation for the Board of Education where she asked them to consider an alternative.

The Board was so impressed with Shauna's research the district switched this year to a tray made of a natural fiber that decomposes completely in 90 days.

"The environment is a big thing for me. This was kind of a personal project because I wasn't getting graded," Shauna explained. "But it's a good feeling because I know I did something to help."



While Shauna may not have earned a grade for class, she earned a great deal of appreciation from the district for raising her concerns.

"We were all very impressed by Ms. Michel's presentation and her dedication to improving Tamarac schools," said Board of Education President Paul Daley. "She clearly did a lot of research and made a great point. The entire Board agreed we needed to make a change."

Shauna's initial suggestion was to switch to washable trays. But Neil Haley, Director of Buildings and Grounds, explained the cost would be exorbitant. Purchasing and installing two commercial dishwashers would cost \$75,000 alone. There also were long-term costs such as labor and the heating of water to sanitizing temperatures.

But the environmental concerns Shauna raised resonated with Mr. Haley. The district used Styrofoam trays for years because of the low cost, Mr. Haley explained. The district tried a system that melted the trays but it was ineffective and the melted Styrofoam was a concern.

"The Styrofoam trays were one of the biggest trash items we couldn't recycle," Mr. Haley said. "They also took up a lot of room, almost half of the total volume of trash. It was like filling up dumpsters with balloons."

Seeking a solution, Cafeteria Supervisor Joy Wright contacted other school districts. She found some also used Styrofoam trays but one district had switched to a tray made of a natural fiber made from sugarcane and grass.

The district switched to the new cafeteria trays this school year. Shauna said she's pleased with the change, not only for environmental reasons.

"I think they're way better. Students like them better too because they're stronger than the Styrofoam trays," she said.

## Fire Departments Help Keep Students Safe

Local fire departments volunteered their time on October 8 to help keep Tamarac children safe in the event of a home fire.

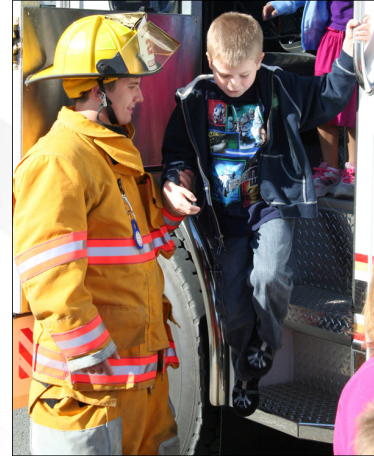
As part of the annual Fire Prevention Day, firefighters from local fire departments visited Tamarac Elementary School to remind students of proper safety procedures during a fire.

"We really appreciate all the fire departments coming to our school and talking with our students about fire safety," said Principal Karen Lederman. "It helps keep fire safety fresh for students all year."

Local firefighters volunteer their time each year to visit the school because it's critical for children to know things such as the family's fire escape plan and how to get help in an emergency, explained Mark Balistreri, Deputy Director of Public Safety for Rensselaer County and a Firefighter with the Brunswick 1 Fire Department.

"A fire doubles in size every minute," Mr. Balistreri said. "People get nervous in emergencies so it's important they know what to do before an emergency happens."

Read more and see photos at [www.brittonkill.k12.ny.us](http://www.brittonkill.k12.ny.us).



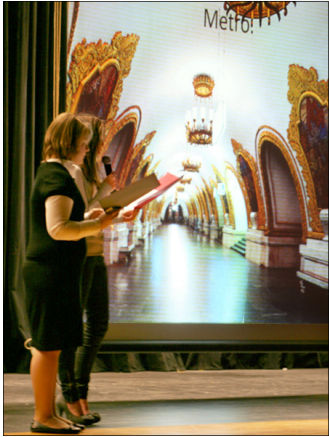
## Students Show Their Tamarac Pride

There was plenty of Tamarac pride on display October 15 when the Middle School and High School held pep rallies at the end of the school day.

Wearing face paint, coloring their hair or wearing oversized sunglasses, students got into the spirit as they gathered together in the high school gymnasium and multi-purpose gym to cheer on classmates as the school prepared for Homecoming Weekend.

See more photos at [www.brittonkill.k12.ny.us](http://www.brittonkill.k12.ny.us).

## Russian Exchange Students Visit Tamarac



Tamarac students learned first-hand about Russian culture on October 20 when students visiting from Russia presented a program featuring dance, music and photos of their home country.

The presentation was part of a two-week visit to the United States for 16 Russian students, part of the Tamarac-Moscow Russian Exchange Program.

"We are very impressed by your warm welcome. Thank you," said Irina Gogoleva, a teacher with Mos-

cow International Gymnasia. "Our exchange program is one of the most important ways to build friendship. It provides a unique educational and cultural experience."

Tamarac Russian Teacher Angelique Wright explained the exchange program began 22 years ago when the two countries encouraged such programs to improve relations.

"This is the oldest program in the state of New York," Ms. Wright said. "It's a very important part of education at Tamarac."

Students from Tamarac's sister school, Moscow International Gymnasia, stay with families of Tamarac students. They visit with students in classrooms and take trips to learn about the area. This year, students visited Albany, New York City and Hyde Park, Franklin D. Roosevelt's home.

Tamarac students plan to visit Russia next year as part of the exchange program, staying with Russian families and learning about the country.

During the October 20 presentation, Tamarac and Moscow International Gymnasia students stood side by side as they shared things they learned about each other.

Russian students performed for Tamarac students, including a traditional Russian dance and modern dance. They also showed slides of Russia, describing their home country.

Tamarac students also performed for Russian students, including the High School Jazz Ensemble and the High School and Middle School Choralaires.

At the end of the assembly, Ms. Gogoleva presented two books to Superintendent Lou McIntosh about Russia.

"It symbolizes our friendship and I hope you find it interesting and educational," Ms. Gogoleva said. "Thank you for being part of our lives."

Mr. McIntosh and High School Principal Rich Pogue presented two books about New York State to Ms. Gogoleva in return.

"You really are an extended part of our school community and family," Mr. McIntosh said. "We look forward to your visits. We hope you have a lot of fond memories to take back to Russia."

To see more photos visit [www.brittonkill.k12.ny.us](http://www.brittonkill.k12.ny.us).



## Character Education Expands to Middle School

The Character Education program that has helped students at Tamarac Elementary School is expanding to the Middle School this year.

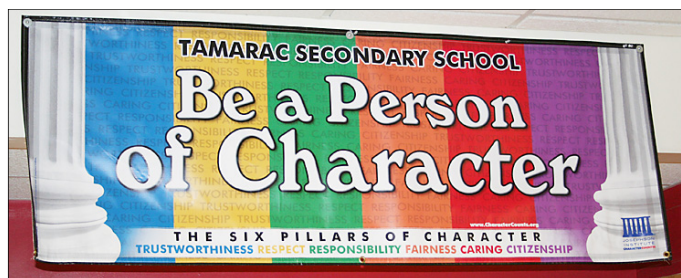
"We want students to realize that character is district-wide. No matter what building you're in, displaying good character is what we do at Tamarac," said Assistant Principal Chris Rockwell.

For years, the Elementary School has had a Character Education program in place. Monthly themes such as self control and respect are promoted through daily announcements and activities.

Students who show good character are recognized through events such as BEST (Building Esteem in Students Together) assemblies and a Tree of Character, where students who are "caught being good" have their names listed.

"It's certainly had a positive impact on our students," said Princi-

pal Karen Lederman. "It's always something the students are cognizant of. For example, we can walk into the cafeteria and say 'self-control' and the students immediately know what we're talking about."



Expanding the Character Education program to the Middle School was an initiative that was identified as a district priority for the 2010-11 school year, Mr. Rockwell noted.

"We want it to become a seamless transition for students when they get here," Mr. Rockwell explained.

The Middle School will utilize elements of the Elementary School program, such as using the same monthly themes. However, the Middle School program will also add other elements such as stressing community service.

"We'll be working with the National Junior Honor Society, RAPP (Reaching Academic and Personal Potential) program, Student Senate, Kids Care and other student groups that already are involved in a lot of great Character Education and service learning activities," Mr. Rockwell said.