

# Hillside Elementary School

*Thank you to all the past and present contributors to this history, including: Margie Amerling, Nan Kuntz, Don Launer, David Orcutt, Jean Bundy, Laurie Cooper and Ray Pressman*

September 2003 marked the 40th anniversary of the opening of Hillside Elementary School.

Authorized by a referendum on December 11, 1961, Hillside opened its doors to students in September 1963 for children in grades K-5 who had been attending the Van Antwerp Elementary School. Hillside was the product of a surge in population, characteristic of that period in the District's history. The two-story building is on land whose history can be traced back to days before the American Revolution.



**Hillside Elementary School, 1965**

## Tracing Hillside's property roots

The property on which Hillside School is built was part of the "Niskayuna Patent" or the "Glen-Bradt" Patent under the terms of which the Dutch Reformed Church of Schenectady was granted 2,540 acres of land in 1738.

King George of England, the "Grantor," charged the Church an annual "Quitrent" of two shillings and six pence for each hundred acres (or 20 cents per 100 acres at today's rate). The land on which Hillside is located was first granted by the Church to Simon A. Vedder, who sold it to Jacob Van Vranken in 1927. The Van Vranken family farmed the land until the end of the 19th century, and then, after the death of Aaron Van Vranken, sold it to a developer. The last private owner was Dr. Reid, who lived in the white house located at the top of Grand Boulevard, facing what

is now Hillside's playground.

Dr. Reid gave the land as a gift to the Van Antwerp School District, which used it for many years as a playground. Known as Reid's Field, its hill, field, woods and pond made it a popular recreation spot for the neighborhood children year-round.

## Hillside administration

Hugh J. Diamond was Hillside's first principal until his appointment as assistant superintendent of the district in 1970. He was succeeded by Dr. Raymond Pressman until he was also named assistant superintendent, in fall 1989. Martin Davis, retired principal from Glencliff Elementary, served as interim principal until July 1990 when Frank Tedesco was appointed principal. In July 2002, Mr. Tedesco accepted a position as

the District's administrator for human resources and K-12 counseling services, and was succeeded by Dr. Shireen Yadegari.

## Building changes

After the major addition of three classrooms and a computer lab in 1989, there was a major reconfiguration of the media center/computer center, art room and classrooms for the 1996 school year. This space shift has allowed for the expansion of technology in the computer lab, which has been accompanied by a parallel expansion of computer opportunities in the classroom. The new art room construction, which replaced a traveling art room — "art on a cart," — included the addition of a kiln for clay projects.



The New York State Education Department named Hillside "A School of Excellence" in 1987.

**The Hillside Community**

Hillside children have fostered the community image of the school. Begun in 1963, the annual Halloween parade through the neighborhood has delighted students and adults. Student contributions have also included community outreach projects such as gifts for residents of the Northeast Parent and Child Center, YWCA Battered Women's Project, and Ellis Hospital; donations for the Toys for Tots, Save the Manatee, Pennies for Pandas, Thanksgiving food drive, Valentines for Vets, pen pals for servicemen and women, and clothes for the homeless. Primary age students have shared their time and talents with the Senior Citizens at the Recreation Center in town. Through the combined efforts of the staff and PTO at the annual Ziti Dinner, over the last decade thousands of dollars have been raised and shared with community organizations and disaster relief programs. The PTO continues to take

the lead in school initiatives and helps make learning fun through programs such as the 1,000 Book Club, PARP (Parents As Reading Partners), and Learning Fair, in addition to good old-fashioned family fun at the Pancake Breakfast, Ice Cream Social, Fall Frolic, Family Boogie Night and

leadership, parental commitment to student goals and expectations, positive teacher-student interactions, and instruction that is rigorous yet sensitive to the changing needs of the students. Parents and staff have been key contributors to the academic development of Hillside and to its overall growth and safety.

**Hillside PTO**

The Parent-Teacher Organization has provided outdoor equipment, musical instruments, audio-visual and computer equipment and other items. It sponsors a variety of activities, including assemblies, artists and poets in the classrooms, and an after-school enrichment program. The after-school program, started in 1981, provides worthwhile activities that enhance academic learning or leisure time hobbies and skills for children. Additionally, the PTO and staff offer a mentoring program and a mid-winter weekly small group study program for students in grades 3-5.

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**An effective school program**

Over the years Hillside has successfully developed the characteristics required for an effective school program. These include: clearly defined goals and expectations for classroom instruction, supportive school climate, strong school



Volunteers Hilary Porter (left) and Sue Forman work at Hillside PTO's Scholastic Book Sale in this spring 2002 photo.

**Staff activities**

The staff has created opportunities for professional growth through studies of cooperative learning, guided reading, character education, and recent learning research, using the book *A Mind at a Time* by Mel Levine as the vehicle. The staff created a safety patrol in 2003 to give fifth-graders the opportunity to be role models for younger students. Hillside continues its tradition of welcoming high school/college interns and student teachers to our classrooms.

**A proud community**

The Hillside community is just that — a community of parents, children, and staff committed to working cooperatively to ensure the highest quality educational experience. Recognized as “A School of Excellence” in May 1987, we are proud of the traditions, programs, and people who have made Hillside the special school that it is.

**Hillside Principals:**

- Hugh J. Diamond, 1963-70
- Raymond Pressman, 1970-89
- Martin Davis, 1989-90
- Frank Tedesco, 1990-2002
- Shireen Yadegari, 2002-present



**Hillside Psychologist Vic Greco checks on the pasta during preparations for the school’s 10th Annual Ziti Dinner in this 2003 photo. The dinner, which is sponsored by the staff and PTO, raises money for charity.**



**Hillside student Maarja Paul stands by her display at the school’s 2002 Learning Fair. Students created about 100 booths for the event.**