



COHOES HIGH SCHOOL ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

Summer 2021

Volume 21 Issue 1

Officers and Board

Newsletter published annually by:

Cohoes High School Alumni Association
P.O. Box 115
Cohoes, New York 12047

Website:

cohoeshighschoolalumniassociation.org

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Treasurer: Margaret Santoro Claflin
Immediate past president:
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Sharon Mitchell-Editor
Elizabeth Duma
Fran Santoro Kellogg
Jude Sweeney Pingelski

Mission Statement: The Cohoes High School Alumni Association strives to promote and to foster fellowship and loyalty among the alumni and to provide financial assistance, through its scholarships and awards, to graduating seniors of Cohoes High School to encourage them to pursue their personal goals.

What's New.... "What's new since the last issue of the newsletter, Summer 2019? Where would we begin! We will skip any mention of election, national, or global news, new features in our lives such as masks, vaccinations, "social-distancing", surviving shortages of essential paper products, etc.; let's just focus on what is "new" for our Alumni Association.

First, we have a new slate of officers and Board of Directors. Jude Sweeney Pingelski is our new president, Arianna Grego Hirschman is vice-president, Elizabeth Duma is secretary, and Margaret Santoro Claflin is treasurer. Fran Santoro Kellogg, Sharon Mitchell, and Kathy Kawka Santoro comprise the rest of the Board. Since taking over the reins about eighteen months ago, this group has met frequently through both in-person, socially-distanced tailgate meetings and virtual, Zoom meetings, with extensive use of email, text, and phone communication to get the work done.

Next, you have probably noticed already that we have given the newsletter a fashion makeover too, with a new layout, regular feature columns, and an exciting new logo for the banner. The logo is the work of our own talented artist alumnus Sue Maxwell Eagle; some of you may remember Sue's outstanding artwork contribution to her Class of '76 yearbook. Thank you so much to Sue for sharing her talent with us again!

We have also conducted our first post card outreach campaign, and we were thrilled by the response. We received hundreds of responses from alumni in all parts of the country, and your financial support was tremendous. We think that the postcard campaign may well become a regular feature of Alumni communication.

We have also been working to update and upgrade our Association website to make it more informative and user-friendly.

The site, cohoeshighschoolalumniassociation.org, is also now equipped with Venmo for easier payment of annual dues and donations. We also have a new mailing address at P.O. Box 115, Cohoes, NY 12047.

We worked to make the virtual scholarship and awards ceremony a success in Spring 2020, continuing our annual tradition of assistance to CHS seniors. We distributed the highest dollar amount of awards to date.

Now that the 2021 newsletter and awards ceremony are complete, we can turn our attention to future projects. We are discussing plans for an annual meeting of alumni in 2021. Obviously, we need to consider the feasibility of location, capacity of venue, etc. as effected by the situation with the COVID-19 pandemic at the time. Please check our website often for information and status reports regarding the meeting and other news from the officers and Board members.

If you have any alumni news (class reunions, contact persons, etc.) that you would like us to share through the website or newsletter, please let us know.

From the desk of....The President

Our first newsletter is finally here! I view this as a big step ahead and a major accomplishment--all made possible by the wonderful people I get to work with. Everything we have accomplished to this point has been done together, in good cooperation. Elizabeth has been keeping our meetings and minutes in order; Margaret has been getting our financial "house" in order and understandable to the rest of us. Fran has been our liaison to the printer for post cards and the newsletter and has been the maker of a million phone calls. Kathy is our "techy" advisor and magician who literally makes the words "fit", while Arianna organizes and tracks the scholarship and awards data and details. The newsletter came together easily under Sharon's guidance. She helped us to clearly communicate our message and goals, and to create a framework for the newsletter that is easy to read and full of interesting articles and a few fun facts too.

Now that this year's awards are finalized and the newsletter is out to alumni, it is time for us to look ahead. The first challenge that we would like to address is to find better ways to communicate with alumni more efficiently and with more frequency. With a very large mailing list of 2420 members in 34 states, regular mail is not the most cost-effective way to do this. Also, we are finding it extremely difficult to communicate with our younger alumni since we don't have any contact information for so many of them. Without the ability to communicate efficiently, any future projects or activities would be difficult to accomplish. We would also like to offer a means for class members to communicate with their classmates as well as with members of other classes. Another challenge before us is to plan for the annual member meeting and social gathering, like the picnics. Obviously, we were not able to plan for these in 2020 or 2021 because of the fluid situation with the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions.

We will certainly keep you informed as details are available. If you have any ideas or suggestions to address these issues, or any others, please let us know; you can always reach us by using the "contact us" tab on the website. We are committed to finding ways to maintain and to grow this organization so that it will serve our students for many years. With your help, this should be easy to do. I hope that you enjoy reading our newsletter; never hesitate to contact us or to send a donation at any time.

From the desk of.....The Treasurer

The period from June 2019 to now, July 2021, has been challenging for our Association, especially in terms of our annual scholarships and awards. Many of our ideas and plans to increase funding had to be "put on hold" because of the global pandemic, with its regulations and limitations and fears. Also, some of the scholarships/awards are funded by gifts or bequests to be disbursed for a specific period of time (ie. \$1,000 per year for only 10 years). Each year some of those term limits are reached, the money has been expended, and the scholarship/award "expires". Despite all of these obstacles, however, because of the incredible generosity of our outstanding CHS alumni, we were able to distribute \$36,000 on June 27, 2019 and \$47,000 on June 25, 2020 (an increase of \$11,000 over 2019). On June 22, 2021 our scholarships and awards totaled \$51,550 (an increase of \$4,550 over 2020).

As treasurer of the Association, I would like to extend my sincere "thank you" to all of you who have sent us your dues or other funding to help us continue this proud CHS tradition. For more information on the funding of our scholarships and awards and ways that you can help, please read the article below "How is the Association Funded?" or contact us through the website.

A Sad Passing...

We are truly saddened by the death of William "Bill" Reu on April 7, 2021 at the age of 84. Bill was a proud alumnus of the CHS Class of 1955. Although he lived in Waterford for much of his adult life, his love for CHS never waned. Bill worked tirelessly for this Alumni Association, serving as its treasurer and as the editor-in-chief of the newsletter for many years. On behalf of all of the alumni of Cohoes High School, the officers and the members of the Board of Directors wish to convey to his family our deepest, sincere condolences on the loss of their beloved Bill. We want to express our profound gratitude for all that Bill did for the Association. As we take his legacy into the future, we hope that we can "do him proud".

Did you know.....our CHS Yearbook name history?

In this regular feature of the newsletter, we hope to share some little-known, but very interesting, facts (some might say "trivia") related to our beloved Cohoes High School. During one of our work meetings, we learned that some alumni don't know that our yearbook's name, COHISEAN, is an acronym for COhoes HIgh SENior ANnual. So, we then let our curiosity lead us on a quest to learn when that name first came to be used.

Did you know that since 1929 to present, the yearbook has had at least twenty different names? The name Co-Hi-Se-An was first used in 1946, but dropped again until 1954; since 1957 the name has been printed as one word, without hyphens.

Our research team also discovered that the yearbook's other names ran a wide range from the not-so-imaginative "The Cohoes High Yearbook" (1929) to the interesting 1947 "The Principium" to honor/mark Madelon K. Hickey's first year, of twenty, as principal of CHS. Other names include The Spindle (1930), The Halfmoon (1936), The Mohawk (1937), The Treasure (1939), The Liberator (1943), The 1945 Tattler (1945), The 49er (1949), and The Mohawk Log (1951). If you want to know more of these, let us know; we can put the full list on the website. "Thank you" to Karen Lackmann at the High School for her help with our research!

How is the Association Funded?

Decades ago, the Cohoes High School Alumni Association was founded by several teachers, both active and retired, who were also proud alumni of CHS. Their express purpose was to establish this organization to provide financial assistance to graduating students of their alma mater, to provide scholarship funds to young Cohoesiers to help them to achieve their goals and dreams. Alumni such as Madelon K. Hickey, Dorothy Gilchrest, and others bequeathed money to the Association for a scholarship fund. Over the years, Miriam Biskin, Sara Lees, Agnes Holleran, Bea Poinset, and many others have served as the stewards of that fund. Several years ago, the money was put into an interest-bearing investment account in an effort to increase the Fund's longevity. Last June, the Association gave more than forty thousand dollars to the graduating class of 2020.

You may wonder, "Where does the fund money come from?" and "How long will the fund last?" The money comes from us, all of us CHS alumni. Some alumni send donations to the fund each year, along with a dues payment. Sometimes the donation is sent in memory or in honor of a specified individual; a list of these donations is published each year as a part of the newsletter. Some alumni or their families, friends or former students choose to establish a scholarship in honor of an individual alumnus. They may choose to fund this annually or for a specified number of years. All of these donations to the Fund are tax deductible; the IRS has recognized the Association as a 501(C)3 organization. Donations may be sent to us at any time during the year.

At the current ratio of scholarship donations to awards dispensed, the fund will be depleted in just a few years. We need the help of our alumni, of you, to keep the Association alive, to continue to honor the noble ideals and purpose of our founders, our predecessors. Some of you were helped by this fund when you graduated; this is an opportunity for you to insure similar help for others. Please give serious consideration to donating whatever you are able to give to this scholarship fund. If you have any questions or would like some assistance with establishing an honorarium scholarship, please contact us.

In Memoriam--Miriam Newell Biskin

Miriam Newell Biskin was born on March 17, 1920 and died on April 2, 2018 at the age of 98. She was born and raised in Cohoes, New York, graduated from Cohoes High School and earned Bachelors' and Masters' degrees in both English and History from the State University of New York at Albany (then the New York State Teachers' College). Miriam was a member of the faculty of the English Department of Cohoes High School for more than 37 years; she served as English Department chairperson for many of those years. As Department Chair, Miriam worked tirelessly to maintain innovative curriculum and standards and instituted a Reading Laboratory program to provide special help and tutoring for students who needed to improve their reading skills.

Miriam was a woman of many talents, including skilled pianist and published author. In addition to many articles and essays, Miriam authored two books: "My Life Among the Gentiles", which chronicles her experiences as a young Jewish girl growing up in Cohoes, and "Pattern for a Heroine". In her final years, she was working on "Letters from My Love", a compilation with commentary of the letters sent to her by Irving, her beloved husband of sixty years, while he served in the military during World War II.

Miriam was one of the original leaders of the Cohoes High School Alumni Association, serving as its first president. We are proud and pleased to announce that the first annual Miriam Newell Biskin Alumni Memorial Scholarship will be awarded in June of 2022 in her memory and honor.

Class News Column...

We would like to use this space in each issue of the newsletter to share news relating to the many graduating classes of CHS. We could share news of class reunions in various stages of planning, class-sponsored fundraisers or charitable activities/events, meetings of snow birds out-of-state, brainstorming sessions for any class activities, etc.. We would especially like to begin by compiling a list of the key contact people for the various classes. If you are that person, or if you know the best contact person for your graduating class, please give us this information by using the "contact us" tab on the Association website.



P.O. Box 115
Cohoes, NY
12047

Cohoes High School Alumni Association Dues/Donations 2021

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Address--Street: _____

City: _____ **State:** _____ **Zip:** _____

Phone: _____ **Email:** _____

Donation in memory/honor of: _____

Send checks to:
CHS Alumni Association
P.O.Box 115
Cohoes, New York 12047

Dues paid (\$10) _____
Donation: _____
Total enclosed: _____

Payments/donations may also be paid via: Venmo@CHS Alumni

Website: cohoeshighschoolalumniassociation.org

The Alumni Association is non-profit; all contributions are tax deductible.

The newsletter will be available to read on our website. Would you also like to continue to receive a paper copy of the newsletter in the mail? Yes _____ No _____