

# Trumbull High celebrates academics

## ACE Foundation awards students

**By Sue Berescik**  
*Correspondent*

The Trumbull Academic Challenge for Excellence (ACE) Foundation welcomed more than 600 students, parents, siblings, and friends, as well as civic leaders and school administrators, to the Trumbull High School auditorium on Monday evening, May 16, for the seventh annual ACE Recognition Celebration. Designed to honor the students and advisers of Trumbull middle school and high school competitive academic and civic engagement groups and identify elementary school organizations,

the evening named participants and highlighted accomplishments of the 52 teams and groups to which ACE offers its support.

ACE, a local nonprofit organization, founded through the foresight and energy of Trumbull parent Dan Neumann and Assistant School Superintendent Gary Cialfi, offers donations of time, talent and treasures by current and past ACE team parents, alumni and benefactors so academic and civic teams in the Trumbull schools can survive, compete and thrive. The foundation has provided more than \$95,000 to Trumbull teams since its inception in 2004. While

school district funding for sports teams and performing arts groups has long been supplemented by booster organizations to provide additional support, the ACE Foundation offers similar support for competitive academic and civic engagement groups to encourage academic excellence and active citizenship. Neumann said, "We don't like to say no. We would like to help every group that applies for support."

Principal Robert Tremaglio welcomed guests and introduced members of the ACE board of directors:

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# ACE —

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Cialfi, president; Neumann, secretary/treasurer; Jennifer Bourque; Carolyn Collins; Kate Hampford-Donahue; Tony Pijar; Mary Beth Thornton; and Monica Welch. Tremaglio said, “We thank you for being the impetus behind our students.”

First Selectman Timothy Herbst said, “With the support of ACE, each year these teams become better and better and better. Our kids are engaging in practical applications so they can become better students when they go on to higher education.”

Acting Board of Finance chairman Andrew Palo, who attended St. Joseph High School and had no ACE Foundation to support extracurricular activities, urged students to continue to take advantage of all the “extracurriculars” available to them.

Town Council Chairman Carl Massaro thanked Neumann for establishing a most creative and productive organization to bring adults

into the educational process. He said, “I am a practicing attorney. I see that the future of the profession is in good hands.”

Looking over the mass of students, Edward Lovely, chairman of the Board of Education, said, “This is what the essence of education is all about. The out-of-class experiences put you closer to some real-life experiences. And with difficult budget decisions, the opportunities offered by the ACE Foundation are even more important and appreciated this year.”

Cialfi concluded the opening remarks. He said, “When we initiated ACE in 2004, with a focus on seven high school competitive teams, and people asked what it was all about, I said, ‘ACE is to academics what the booster club is to sports.’ Tonight, almost eight years later, ACE is a strong connection with what our 21st-Century colleges and our 21st-Century employers are looking for. The Trumbull schools allow the teams to exist, and ACE enables the teams to thrive.”

The director of curriculum, Linda Paslov, introduced the

37 programs with 52 teams from the different Trumbull schools and acknowledged the participation of 670 students in supplementary academic activities outside the classroom. The program honored the following teams:

Elementary schools: Continental Math League at Frenchtown (adviser Judy Atwood), Knowledge Masters at Tashua (Stephanie Vaughn and Fran Kuczmariski), National Geography Challenge at Frenchtown (Margaret Hull), National Language Arts League at Frenchtown (Carol St. John), National Science League at Frenchtown (Brenda Windsor), Noetic National Math Contest at Tashua (Jennifer Neumeyer), Odyssey of the Mind at Booth Hill and Tashua (Debbie Zabin and parent coaches).

Hillcrest Middle School: Math Counts (Malathi Muralidharan and Petrina Gunsolley), National Geographic Bee (Laura Alford), Odyssey of the Mind (Debbie Zabin and parent coaches), We the People — first place in state (Charles Callahan and Laura Alford).

Madison Middle School:

ASA Statistical Poster Competition — first place in state (Gina Zuk), KARE Club (Liz Doherty and Jeanne Malgioglio), Math Counts (Liz Giamportone and Gina Zuk), Knowledge Masters — first place in state, invited to compete in nationals (Roberta Weiner), Odyssey of the Mind (Debbie Zabin and parent coaches), We the People — second place in state (Jen Bourque, Roberta Weiner and Jeff Vance).

Trumbull High School: Academic WorldQuest — second in state (Katie Boland), Academic Decathlon — state champions, participants in nationals in North Carolina (Dean Pelligra, Steffanie Elkins, Lou Monaco and Vincent Artese), buildOn Club (Jennifer Payne), COLT Poetry Recitation — four medalists (Maria Manso-Garcia and Candy Perusi), Classics Competitions including Connecticut Latin Exam, International Medusa Mythology Exam, National Latin Exam, National Roman Civilization Exam (Laura Guadagnoli), Cultural Diversity Club (Samar Sakakini), Debate Team (Libbi

Intemann), DECA Marketing — 10 Top Six category finishes, attended nationals in Orlando (Todd Manuel), The Eagle’s Eye — first place American Scholastic Press Association (Lisa Acerbo and Jim McCaffrey), FBLA Business Team (Todd Manuel and Debra Owen), Fed Challenge (Gregg Basbagill), FFA Agriscience — horse judging team first place in state (Paula Berlekovic and Nicole Decker), Interact Club (Todd Manuel and John Evans), Knowledge Masters — Connecticut state title, national top 17% (Colin Neenan), Math Team (Harold Darak and Martha Turtoro), Mock Trial — first place districts (Eric August), Model United Nations — outstanding delegate awards (Katie Boland), National French Contest — scored in top 10% nationally (Candy Perusi), Odyssey of the Mind — first place in state, invited to world finals (Debbie Zabin and parent coaches), Red Cross Club (Nancy Conroy), Robotics Club (Hans Drenkard), SADD Club (Bonnie Rumilly and Emma Balter), STAND Club (Joe Odoardi), Trillium year-

book — best book All New England from New England Scholastic Press Association, first-place awards from American Scholastic Press Association and National Scholastic Press Association (Susan Berescik, Jordan Miller and Matt Bracksieck), UConn Globalization Conference — Connecticut state champions (Gregg Basbagill), Web Team (Jennifer Pacelli), We the People — second in state (Michael Margonis and Eric August), Yale Physics Olympiad (Hans Drenkard).

Superintendent of Schools Ralph Iassogna offered closing remarks. He said, “I want to emphasize how important these ancillary programs are for students. We have one great, talented student body. As the superintendent I was so proud of them, the depth and the breadth and the magnitude of their activities. We thank you for making Trumbull High School the wonderful institution that it is.”

A dessert reception followed in the senior lounge.