

## **Superintendent's Column – Welcome Back to School Letter - September 6, 2016**

I hope that you and your family have had an enjoyable summer with many fun-filled, relaxing days. While I realize that for many of you this was true, there were some families in our community who experienced the loss of a loved one or perhaps a loved one who took seriously ill, and so our most sincere thoughts are with you and your family as we begin the new school year. My father, who will be 100 in December, fell and broke his hip and is experiencing a very slow recovery.

Certainly the summer of 2016 has been one of dramatically contrasting images. On the Cardillo home front, for the most part, it has been a great summer. On one (of many) hot and humid days and evenings when we had family and friends at the house, granddaughter Madison, now 19 months, was enjoying the pool for a long afternoon, complete with her swim floaties. As Madison “swam”, she wore a big smile and was laughing while she was picked up and brought down slowly into the water by family members, including me. Grandmother Debbie, who is making a very nice recovery from her open heart surgery and sepsis, beamed with grandmotherly joy and love as she watched Madison frolicking in the water. It’s fair to ask, “Isn’t this what life should be all about?” When we share family, love and good times, given today’s national and global uncertainty, such moments seem a throwback to a simpler world, one much less complicated than today’s world.

In contrast, outside the confines of the Cardillo household, and in many of your own homes, we have all been overwhelmed with horrific stories conveying stark images of death and brutality throughout our great country in Orlando, Dallas, Baton Rouge, Kansas City, and San Diego, as well as outside of our country in Munich, Stuttgart, Nice, and Saint-Etienne-du-Rouvray Church (Normandy). Speaking on the morning after the sniper attack on police officers, Dallas Police Chief David Brown spoke eloquently when he said, “We’re hurting. Our profession is hurting. Dallas officers are hurting. We are heartbroken. There are no words to describe the atrocity that occurred to our city. All I know is that this must stop, this divisiveness between our police and our citizens.” Chief Brown’s words certainly echo the feelings of many regarding the senseless violence that has taken place nationally and internationally this summer.

Nicolas Leslie, a twenty year-old student at the University of California, Berkeley, was one of eighty-four people killed in Nice. In a very moving interview with CNN, Nicolas’ father said that the only thing that keeps them (Mr. Leslie and his wife) going is that they had twenty incredible years with their son; Mr. Leslie said, “I would rather have twenty years with Nicolas that were quality, than fifty years, you know, that might have been not with Nicolas.” The atrocities even impacted young children as evidenced by the loss in Nice of eleven year-old, Brodie Copeland. Brodie’s baseball coach in Texas said, “Brodie was a bright light to us. He was an amazing kid. He was a promising baseball player.....” He would have started middle school this month. The superintendent of schools said Brodie was a “happy, eleven year-old boy who was a wonderful student beloved by all, a member of the honor choir, and a very active athlete.”

After Labor Day, our students return to school in a community they affectionately call the “Manhasset Bubble.” More than ever, this bubble has significance, particularly to the children of this district. Our students are blessed to return to school where the adults in their lives, both at

home and in school, display great compassion, love, support, care and encouragement on a consistent basis which contributes to Manhasset being one of the premier school districts in the United States, as most recently evidenced by the Class of 2016 having a 99.27% graduation rate and 95% of the students in this class attending a four year college.

Our students truly feel this and are appreciative of the daily efforts being made on their behalf. Incoming seventh grader, Theodora Matos said, "Shelter Rock is like a second home, you get attached. The school is calm, not too big, it's PERFECT." Incoming seventh grader Courtney Sheeran said that "Munsey Park is a great school, everyone comes together. The teachers and staff are really kind. We are like a good community." Finally, Class of 2016 grad, Elizabeth Boyle, who will be attending the University of Notre Dame, indicated that when she thinks of Manhasset, she thinks of family. "The connections I have made here are so strong; it is this family I will take with me wherever I go." Theodora, Courtney and Elizabeth's comments suggest great pride in our schools. This feeling is prevalent throughout our entire student body, thanks to the deeply held commitment our staff has made to each and every student's educational and emotional well-being, as well as the tremendous heartfelt support that is provided by their parents, grandparents and other loved ones.

We are all quite hopeful that the 2016-2017 school year will be another very special one for our entire student body. Take good care.

Charlie Cardillo