

WINNERS

MICHELLE PISKULICH
Provost

Michelle Piskulich, of South Hempstead, has received the inaugural Nadia Rubaii Distinguished Service Award from the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs and Administration in recognition of her service to the organization. Piskulich is provost and vice president for academic affairs for Molloy University in Rockville Centre, where she has served since 2021. Before that she held positions ranging from chairwoman of the political science department to associate dean in the College of Arts and Sciences at Oakland University in Michigan. She also chaired the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs and Administration's Commission on Peer Review and Accreditation.



ED COLLIER

ANDREW BUDRIS
Educator

Andrew Budris, of Bellport, has received the 2023-24 Secondary Teacher of the Year Award, which comes with \$2,500, from the National Council for the Social Studies. Budris is a social studies teacher at Bellport High School, which he joined 26 years ago, and has served as the lead teacher for the department for seven years. He plans to use the award money to sponsor a scholarship at Bellport High School that will be open to the members of the Class of 2024 who will be first-generation college students and are interested in a career in education.

**EVE ARMSTRONG**
Physics researcher

Eve Armstrong, of Manhattan, has received a three-year, \$360,000 grant from the National Science Foundation to research how the universe formed from stardust. Armstrong is an assistant professor of physics at the New York Institute of Technology in Old Westbury. She is also co-creator and co-artistic director of Reality Aside Theatre, a nonprofit organization that produces science-themed sketch comedy for tristate area schools, and is a research associate in the Department of Astrophysics at the American Museum of Natural History.



NOMINATE A WINNER Email information about the accomplishment or honor to winners@newsday.com. Include photo in JPEG format; color is preferred.

MAKING THE GRADE

Team wins grant to study tick mitigation

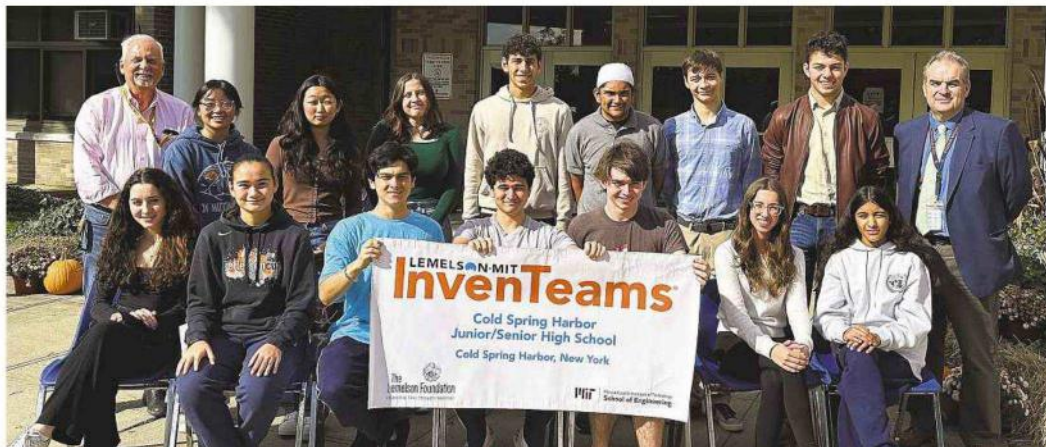
BY MICHAEL R. EBERT
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A team from Cold Spring Harbor Jr./Sr. High School is one of eight nationwide to win a prestigious grant to solve a problem impacting their community.

The 14-student team has received a \$7,500 grant and was named an "InvenTeam" by the Lemelson-MIT Program, which awards several prizes annually to inventors in the United States. InvenTeams consist of high schoolers who devise technological solutions to real-world problems.

The school's invention will focus on active and passive tick mitigation strategies that do not require pesticides. The team, which is under the direction of research teacher Jaak Raudsepp, is comprised of students Adais Arora, Kelly Callaghan, Keira Chan, Michelle Coles, Dhanya Dhariwal, Katie Engel, Isabella Garra, Milan Lustig, Desmond Mehta, Sebastian Monteroso, Charlie Neri, Ryan Smith, Julia Wang and Lucas Wolf.

"We are honored to receive this national grant, which recognizes the outstanding research skills and dedication of our students and the district's commitment to providing our students with state-of-the-art STEM research opportunities," said Cold Spring Harbor school district Superin-



Cold Spring Harbor Jr./Sr. High School is one of eight schools in the country selected to receive Lemelson-MIT InvenTeam grants, which aim to get young problem solvers working on local issues.

tendent Jill M. Gierasch. STEM stands for science, technology, engineering and math.

InvenTeams were selected by a panel that included university professors, industry professionals and college students — some of whom were members of previous InvenTeams. The teams' prototypes will be showcased at a technical review within their home communities in February, followed by a final prototype showcase next summer at EurekaFest, which is a celebration at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

"These high school students are not just problem solvers of tomorrow, they are problem solvers today, helping to make our world more equitable,

healthier and safer," Lemelson-MIT's invention education officer, Leigh Estabrooks, said.

FLORAL PARK SENSORY GYM

The Floral Park-Bellerose elementary school recently held a ribbon-cutting ceremony to unveil a new sensory gym.

The room was designed to be a "supportive space full of welcoming activities" for students in need of quiet time, to participate in creative tasks that explore their senses of sight and touch, school officials said. It features bright colors and items like a trampoline, crawling tube and hammock swing.

"The space will help stu-

dents build self-esteem and social skills while providing all the tools needed for sensory regulation," Liza Ruiz, the Floral Park-Bellerose school district's superintendent, said.

FRANKLIN SQUARE NEW PRINCIPAL

Cindy Gervasi is the new principal of Willow Road Elementary School in Valley Stream School District 13. She replaced Rosalie Ambrosio, who retired.

Gervasi was previously the school's acting principal, as well as a summer school principal and pre-K coordinator for the district, which she joined as a reading teacher at Howell Road Elementary

School in 2006.

"I am honored to have the opportunity to lead Willow Road," Gervasi said. "I look forward to working with the dedicated staff, students and parents of Willow Road to ensure that every child receives the best possible education."

ISLANDWIDE SCIENCE FAIR WINNERS

Nine Long Island students were among 14 winners nationwide in a science fair coordinated by the Association of Chinese American Physicians. Their topics ranged from exploring the neuroprotective potential of farnesol and solanesol against Alzheimer's disease pathology, to the effect of willow extract on azolla growth for improving the phytoremediation of zinc.

Local winners and their high schools were: Sophia Zhu, Jericho, Outstanding Research Award; Samantha Stoneking and Kristina Theodosopoulos, Manhasset, Outstanding Research Award; Edward Huang, Manhasset, Excellent Research Award; Alexander Xu, Great Neck South, Excellent Research Award; Alena Tsai, Manhasset, Honorable Research Award; Christian Kim and Grace Punzalan, Manhasset, Honorable Research Award; and Judy Zhao, Ward Melville, Honorable Research Award.