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NORTHJERSEY.COM NEWS EDUCATION

Fishbein: An important partnership

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COLUMNIST

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It's the half-way point of the school year and the district is bursting as usual with good news. College acceptances are beginning to pour in, accolades in academics, the arts and athletics are accruing, and our teachers and students are working hard to accomplish their learning goals in the classroom.

In the central offices and at the board table, it's also that time when we begin to finalize our budget for next year. This process can be a moody task, but there's always one set of figures that, although outside of the budget, never fails to bring a smile to my face and a sense of renewed optimism.

I'm referring to the extraordinary contributions that our parents and the larger community make to [Ridgewood Public Schools](#). Over and above the tax revenue with which we operate our schools, each year we are blessed by an uncommon generosity from so many in our community who make sure that through monetary donations, gifts in kind and personal time and talent, our students have the educational extras that don't appear as line items. These resources are an integral brick in our foundation and in no small measure help us to fulfill our mission of excellence.

It's not just about the money. Such largess points to something greater than the bottom line, however, and that is the unique partnership between [Ridgewood Public Schools](#) and the



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Ridgewood High School's Jamboree is among the many events and organizations that help supplement the Ridgewood school district budget.

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community. The community's big-heartedness reflects an understanding that a quality education is a fundamental value, and that to achieve excellence, a collaborative working commitment is required.

Over the decades, [Ridgewood](#) has worked out a model of community partnership and educational excellence that is neither random nor capricious. In fact, the belief that the community is a critical component to learning is even articulated in our longstanding mission statement: The [Ridgewood](#) Public Schools, committed to a tradition of excellence and innovation, in partnership with the community, provide a rich and challenging learning environment, enabling students to maximize their unique potentials to become life-long learners and productive, responsible citizens.

In partnership with the community. Space does not permit the listing of all the district-community partnerships we enjoy in [Ridgewood](#), but this small sampling highlights the breadth and depth of our numerous joint endeavors: the relationship of our parents and schools with the HSAs and the Federated HSA; the village-wide effort to fund the RHS Learning Commons project; the collaboration of The Valley Hospital and [Ridgewood](#) Public Schools through the nationally recognized [Ridgewood](#) Academy for the Health Professions (RAHP) program, as well as a significant singular donation and other classroom services; the work of the [Ridgewood](#) Education Foundation to fund classroom grants and other programs; the connection with [Bergen](#) Community College through the dual-enrollment program for high school students; even the collaboration with PSE&G to realize energy-related cost savings.

Last year, nearly half a million dollars in money or gifts in kind was donated to the district. To date this school year, donations of over \$225,000 in cash and nearly \$86,000 in gifts have been received that directly enhance the quality of a [Ridgewood](#) education. That's nearly \$311,000 for beyond-the-budget field trips, library books, athletic and afterschool clubs, Super Science Saturday programming, classroom grants and more. Additional funds raised for scholarships, most recently an impressive \$103,000 through the collaboration of village parents to produce the 67th annual Jamboree show, help assure that our college-bound seniors will meet with success after graduation.

Since February is Heart Month, it happens to be a perfect time to publicly express my heartfelt gratitude for the precious partnership that exists between our school district and the larger community. Especially at this outset of the budget season, I want to thank each and every one of you for all the support, both through your taxes and your contributions, to the [Ridgewood](#) Public Schools.

In the upcoming weeks you will be hearing more about next year's school budget and there will be several opportunities for you to become informed prior to the school budget vote on Tuesday, April 16. Budget presentations begin around the district on March 12.

And since the groundhog has declared an early spring, I hope you'll take advantage of the nice weather and turn out.

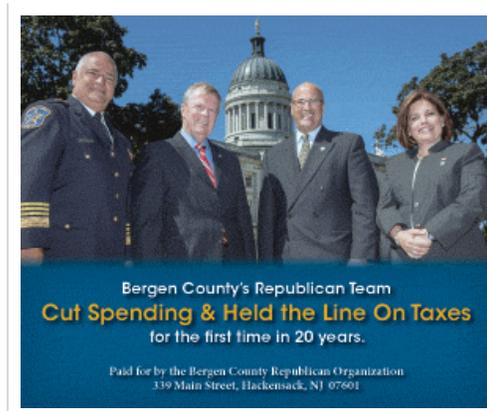
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