

Schools introduce free phone app

By Susan Misur
Special to the Voice

The West Haven Public School District has launched a new cell phone app that is now available for free download and will give school families and staff easy access to information they use on a daily basis.

The app is being funded by the University of New Haven as one of the college's community engagement projects.

"We're really excited to introduce this new tool for parents, students and staff, and it's yet another communication strategy in our district that will help fami-

lies stay better connected to their schools and informed on everything we have to offer," Superintendent of Schools Neil C. Cavallaro said. "We're also very grateful that UNH agreed to sponsor it and was supportive of us taking advantage of technology to better communicate with everyone in our school system."

The sponsorship serves as an expansion of the district's existing partnership with UNH, which currently allows for half-tuition scholarships for West Haven High School graduates who attend UNH in a program called Charge Into the Future and offers a free UNH class to WHHS juniors and seniors accepted into a program called Charging Ahead.

"UNH is committed to our continued partnership with the West Haven School District and pleased to be a sponsor for this project that will enhance com-

munications between the schools and their students and parents," UNH Associate Vice President Ronald Quagliani said.

Many school districts offer mobile apps as a way of keeping their communities up to date on academic programs, school events and news, and important schedule changes, and to give users an option for accessing school information on a mobile device. Using websites on a cell phone can be difficult because of the small screen and large amount of information contained in various areas on a website. Apps can provide the most sought-after information in a simple format and open with the push of one button on a mobile device.

The West Haven Public Schools app was created through SchoolMessenger, the company that provides the notification system already used in the district. It is available for iPhones, Android phones and tablets.

Those interested in downloading the West Haven Public Schools app can do so by opening their device's app store and typing in "West Haven Public Schools." Once downloaded and opened, the app will ask

users if they want to receive "push notifications." Clicking "yes" means a user will receive pop-up alerts for any notifications sent through the app regarding things like snow days, dismissals, delays, or power outages.

The app contains school menus, yearly calendars, upcoming events, news, sports schedules, school contact information, staff directories, links to teacher webpages, Edward L. Bennett Ice Rink schedules and program information, a "Quicktip" tipline for anyone with concerns of bullying, safety or other issues, School Climate Surveys, and direct links to the Naviance program used by high-schoolers and the Parent Portal system used by parents.

Users can customize the app

to their needs and choose which schools' news and calendar events they want to see by clicking a small image of a gear in the upper right-hand corner of the app.

"Parents today are busier than ever and rely on their mobile devices to connect them to the information that matters most," said Nate Brogan, vice president of Marketing, SchoolMessenger.

"SchoolMessenger allows schools and community members to stay connected through a robust mobile platform that will continue to evolve based on their needs."

The app's offerings will be updated throughout the year depending on programs or initiatives occurring in the school district.



Photo courtesy of Susan Misur

Superintendent of Schools Neil C. Cavallaro (right) accepts a check from University of New Haven Associate Vice-President Ronald Quagliani to fund the school district's new cell phone app, which is now available for free download in app stores on mobile devices.