



## Unique program, top-notch classes

*By Lisa Braverman, parent*

School Nova is a unique school that offers outstanding opportunities for enrichment for students aged elementary through high school on the campus of SUNY Stony Brook on Long Island on Sundays.

School Nova offers leading-edge classes in math, sciences (chemistry, physics, computer programming), foreign languages, art, theater and culture, and other topics in small, intimate classes taught by scientists, mathematicians and educators who are for the most part Stony Brook professors, Simons Center scholars, Brookhaven National Laboratory physicists, and other world-class educators. *(Continued on page 8)*

## Importance of Learning Languages

*By Marleine Chiofallo, French Teacher*

SchoolNova has the unique position of being the one of the very few programs to offer foreign languages to Early Childhood students. French language became a part of the school curriculum in 2006. When it comes to ease of learning and proficiency in a foreign language, earlier is better. Our youngest language students are 5 years old. We try to incorporate different methods of teaching: students sing songs and act out humorous poems; play games along with learning grammar and vocabulary, watching videos and reading books. Since 2006 older students participate in the National French Contest – **Le Grand Concours** – annual competition for students of grades 6 –12.

We hope that the love of French language will grow on Long Island. Recently, a few districts in Suffolk and Nassau counties chose to close their French language department. In contrast, in New York City there is an expansion for the development of French studies in elementary and secondary schools. If we will be able to bring the enthusiasm for learning French to Long Island, I would feel more accomplished.

## SchoolNova' graduates are back to school ... to teach

*By Tatiana Tcherevik, Junior TA program coordinator*

From the first day, SchoolNova has been improving our community by satisfying our youth's desire to learn. With the growing enrollment rates each passing year, SchoolNova has extended its invitation to more than three hundred-thirty kids. Every year, the school offers and develops new programs and courses. To address its growing needs, the school is constantly attracting new teachers and staff. This year, in addition to our usual efforts, we decided to try a new approach. We brought back twelve SchoolNova alumni to help us out in our classrooms.

Junior Teaching Assistants do a large array of tasks. Their duties include, but are not limited to, grading homework, helping set-up the classroom, helping the teacher during the lesson, and leading small groups of students during class. Some teaching assistants also provide one-on-one lessons with students who require additional attention. Some TAs help with after-school activities, such as the Math Club. This year, our New Year's festivities were a huge success, with a huge thanks going out to the teaching assistants who helped run the event.

TAs have a choice of either working as an employee, being compensated on an hourly basis, or as volunteers, receiving community service hours.

We asked our TAs how they viewed their job and received very positive feedback. *(Continued on page 2)*

## Surprising Connections

*By Andrei Antonenko, Math Teacher*

If one takes a brief glance at the SchoolNova schedule, it becomes obvious that there are two main disciplines which are taught from elementary school all the way to high school: mathematics and languages (including various levels of English, French, and Russian). Mathematics is universally recognized as the most precise and rigorous subject: if you're good at math, you must be a "real" scientist (or at least a future scientist!). *(Continued on page 5)*

*(By Tcherevik, continued from page 1)*

“This job is pretty interesting, and this is a new experience for me,” says TA Nikita, “I am working with fairly advanced math, so compiling the materials is helping me refresh some of the things I learned and forgot.” “The task of getting kids excited about math is one that I find especially enjoyable,” states TA Ilya. “It’s fun grading homework and seeing unique solutions that students come up with,” chips in TA David.

We also asked teachers to provide their opinions about the change in their classrooms. “This year I am amazed with the level of help I am receiving,” says Oksana, Math 5 teacher. “Sophia completely took the homework business off my shoulders.” “Andrew is a great TA,” says Helmut, the Math 7 Teacher. “He helps me a lot during the class. Without him, I would not be able to teach as effectively.” “I am totally happy with my TA [Nestor],” says Alexei, the Physics Teacher.

SchoolNova is planning to expand this program after a very successful year. We would like to invite students who are graduating this year to provide assistance and to play an even bigger role in our school’s community.

## **Teachers: Junior TA Program**

*By Oksana Ivashkevich, Math Teacher*

I think having Junior TAs is a wonderful initiative. When older students are teaching the younger students it delivers a very strong statement that "Everything is possible!" In my class, kids look forward to the last 10 minutes when they play a math game with enthusiastic TA. Even if right now young children don't explicitly think that the day can come when they might become a Teacher’s Assistant themselves, they will definitely remember this positive experience when this thought visits them in the near future.

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*By Janna Gabinoff, Math Teacher*

I find the SchoolNova Teacher Assistant program to be very beneficial. I have 8-9 children in each one of my classes, all 5-6 years old, so they need extra attention and some of them need individual help. Since my students are very young, it’s sometimes urgent to go out of the class during the lesson and thus they need supervision. That’s where a TA’s help comes in handy. Also, having a young helper in a class, especially one who already went through the same program, can be inspiring for the younger ones to learn because of the example of role model in front of them. My TA is always very friendly and likes to participate in reasoning games with the kids. The students love to play with older kids and really enjoy it. I can see that my students' parents favor having a helper in the class. Parents always like to have an extra someone who can help their child in a very friendly environment. I am very thankful for this program.

## **The Impact of School Nova**

*By Kathryn Zhao, Junior TA*

After attending School Nova for six years, I believe the instruction I have received has been a worthwhile experience, and it will continue to help me embark on my own academic journey. What I have learned from School Nova is not just the knowledge, but also the need for commitment and ambition when tackling tasks. An important aspect I took away from School Nova was not being given the solution, but instead trying to find it myself. This is how learning should be done, not through a series of predetermined steps. Just as evident in school, attending School Nova has helped me comprehend quicker, because I have learned more advanced topics and explored beyond what is taught in school -- giving me a stronger basis to build upon. This year, I became a Junior TA for Math 6 and it has also taught me many things. Most importantly, it taught me how to help other students by giving them helpful feedback. Similar to my experience, I try to give the students suggestions on how to improve their solutions and questions to think about. Being a TA gives a better perspective on how to help others and I have also grown to appreciate the help from teachers and students even more. Here at School Nova, curiosity is stimulated, not stalled; there are no tests, no grades, and no boundaries. Everyone is able to take their own road and use their fullest potential. What is taught at School Nova surpasses merely skimming the surface, but in turn challenges the student to think deeper. School Nova is a community where everyone is enriched, and given the experience and skills to successfully learn.

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*By Rita Abanov, Junior TA*

I graduated SchoolNova last year after being a part of this school for 11 years. Over the years I took a variety of different classes such as math, Russian, art, French, and Italian. School Nova was a great experience for me ever since I was a child. It gave me a chance to learn with other methods of teaching and it gave me the chance to meet some great friends, one of which is still one of my best. School Nova also helped me a lot in regular school. The math classes helped me further understand mathematics and be able to solve problems that would otherwise be confusing. The language classes did not just help me to learn the language itself but also to keep up the languages that I was already speaking. The teachers at School Nova are amazing people. They are not only very intelligent but also understanding and kind. Now, as a graduate I am participating in the junior TA program. Every Sunday I come into school like I have since I was 4. But now, I have the great opportunity to help teaching small children in math level 0 – math classes with children ages 4 and 5. It is amazing to watch how so eager those kids are to learn math.

## American Math Contest

*By Alexander Kirillov, Math Teacher*

American Mathematics Competitions is the oldest (began in 1950) and most prestigious mathematics competition for high schools and middle schools in the US. SchoolNova participates in the competition since 2005.

On Feb 17, SchoolNova and the Stony Brook Math Department hosted American Math Contest (AMC) competitions AMC 10B and AMC 12B. This contest is the first level of nationwide mathematical Olympiads, organized by the Mathematical Association of America; more than 300,000 students take it annually. Students who perform well can then advance onto the next level, and eventually to the USA Math Olympiad. This year, we had over 60 students, coming from all over Suffolk County. Some of them were current or past SchoolNova students, but the contest was open to all students, and many participants have no affiliation with SchoolNova.

We had a record number of winners: based on the results of the contest, 9 students qualified for the next level, American Invitational Math Examination (AIME). The best score achieved on AMC 12 by our participants was 141 points out of 150 - close to perfect! These students have taken AIME, but results are not yet available, so we do not know how many of them qualified for the USA Math Olympiad. But we are hoping to see some of them there - and maybe at the US team at the International Math Olympiad!



## SchoolNova at Stony Brook Hosts Math Kangaroo Competition for Community

*By Marina Polonskaia, Principal*

Math Kangaroo is an annual International Math competition for school children in grades 1 to 12.

This year marked the 11th competition sponsored by SchoolNova, which became an official center for Math Kangaroo in 2006. Back then only 800 students around the country participated in the contest. Last year there were nearly 17,000 participants in the United States. More than 6 million students from more than 50 countries participate in Math Kangaroo worldwide.

Math Kangaroo is held every year on the third Thursday in March to encourage students to master their mathematical skills. Any student in grades 1 through 12 qualifies if he or she can work independently reading the questions and marking answers. The competition questions, chosen by the International Math Kangaroo Committee, are age-appropriate, interesting and in the format of word problems. The exam lasts 75 minutes and consists of 24 questions for grades 1 to 4 and 30 questions for grades 5 to 12.

In May the winners are awarded at national and state levels, and a full list of winners and is published on the [Math Kangaroo website](#).

## PhysicsBowl 2016 at SchoolNova

SchoolNova is hosting few National and International math and language competitions for many years. In 2016 for the first time the school has registered to become a center for this year's PhysicsBowl contest. Links to these and other activities recommended by SchoolNova can be found on the SchoolNova web page: <http://schoolnova.org/nova/activities>

## Read. Be Inspired. Write back.

By Kara DeClemente, *Advanced English teacher*

This year in Advanced English A and AI, the students were asked to take part in a letter writing contest. The contest, "Letters About Literature," asked that the students read a book, speech, or poem and write a letter to the author about how their literature inspired them. More than 1 million students have participated in the Library of Congress Letters About Literature Contest.

Students learned how to use model texts to frame their letters. They also learned how to write about their personal experience with a piece of literature, as opposed to simply summarizing it. Their letters will be judged on a state and national level by the Library of Congress. In a generation of technology, it moved me to read the students' letters and see that the faculty of imagining has not died out.

Last year our students competed in The Legacy Project. The contest was called "Listen to a Life." They had to interview a grandparent or "grand friend," someone over 50 years old. It couldn't be their parents.

The students in Advanced English B started the year out by reading and analyzing F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel *The Great Gatsby*. They are now working on their persuasive writing skills. The objective for this unit is that students learn how to use proper rhetorical strategies in which to persuade their audience to agree with their perspective. After completing their persuasive writing piece, they will be presenting their work to the class (parents are welcome).

## Divergent Series

Dear Veronica Roth,

12/13/15

I thought I was the only one who could love someone who kept making mistakes. After reading your book I realized I was the one who made the mistakes.

In the book *Insurgent*, Tris' brother Caleb chose Erudite over Candor and Tris became very angry at him, especially because Erudite was the enemy at the time. Not only was Tris angry, but plenty of other Dauntless soldiers were angry too. It took many weeks for Tris to get over this life-changing event. (You even had to write another book, *Allegiant*, for Tris to get over this.)

My brother is a disabled person who is both mentally and physically challenged. In his lifetime I have seen him make some mistakes and anger some people even though he didn't know what was right thing to do. Usually he would step on someone's foot or pull someone's hair but those are minor issues that go away after 10 minutes. One time he broke my laptop, which was a major issue and I got very angry at him.

In both situations, my brother and Tris' brother, someone made a horrible mistake. Your book helped me realize forgiveness can be achieved even after a dreadful mistake. Tris had forgiven Caleb and took the risk of dying so she could save her brother. This shows that a family does make mistakes but it can be fixed with some effort.

So I realized that my brother did not know what he was doing and the thought of forgiving him came to mind. And in the end, I forgave my brother and everything went back to normal, except for the fact that I needed a new laptop.

Thank you for creating a book that may teach young minds, like me, to forgive.

Sincerely,

*Mili Das, SchoolNova student*

(one of the letters submitted to "Letter about Literature" contest)

### Students are welcome to the following events hosted by Stony Brook University:

- Public lectures at the Simons Center for Geometry and Physics are given by leading scientists coming to the campus. The lectures are announced on the Center's web site <http://www.scgp.stonybrook.edu/> and also by posters. In particular, public lectures in the Della Pietra lecture series are described on the Center's web site: <http://scgp.stonybrook.edu/scientific/public-lectures/della-pietra-lecture-series>. The next public event is the screening of the new film by E. Eremenko "The Discrete Charm of Geometry" on March 18, 2016 <http://scgp.stonybrook.edu/archives/17937>.
- Lectures on Astronomy, Physics, Geosciences, Ecology and Evolution are given almost every Friday night during school year. These lectures are targeted to the general audience and are given by faculty of the University on topics related to their research. Schedules and information can be found at: <http://www.astro.sunysb.edu/openight/opennite.html>

(By Antonenko, continued from page 1)

Students who study languages, on the other hand, are often viewed as people of humanities and literature, together with art, theater, and culture. But are these two disciplines --- mathematics and languages --- really on the opposite sides of spectrum? Are they as incompatible as one would think? We are all familiar with common statements such as “He is bad at math, but good at writing and literature,” or an opposite version of it.

I am a linguist who, in SchoolNova, is teaching mathematics. How can those two things be related? To answer this question, we have to look at what linguistics is, and how it is different from teaching language (and by the way, it is not true that all linguists *speak* many languages or even that they *learn* many languages!). Let us think of some examples we learn in English classes in school. English teachers tell us things like “Do not use double negatives!” or “Do not split infinitives!” or even “Use *whom* instead of *who* when you ask about the object!” and “Never use *ain't*!” Teachers feel the need to use these rules because they are often violated by English speakers. But is there anything objectively bad about not obeying these rules? Let’s look at a few examples, starting with double negatives. It is often claimed that using two negative makes a sentence positive. If you are a speaker of Russian, or Italian, or Spanish, you would immediately notice that using two negative words in one sentence is not only allowed, but it is necessary -- in these languages you literally say, “*Nobody saw nothing*” or “*I didn’t do nothing*.” So, double negative is not *universally* illogical -- Russian and Spanish speakers never think of the sentences above as positive, and the logic that minus times minus is always a plus does not work in linguistics. What is more interesting is that even Shakespeare used double negatives -- they were perfectly fine at the earlier stages of English. What about splitting infinitives, like in “*I have to quickly run to the store*”? People keep using such constructions colloquially regardless of their teachers’ rules. This rule was invented by Latin scholars who wanted to make English be like Latin. Compare English *to run* and Latin *currere*. Of course, it was impossible to split infinitive in Latin because it was just one word, while in English it consists of two words: *to* and *run*! Similar stories can be told about other rules, which are so commonly violated in

spoken speech, but are so cherished by English teachers. Linguists look at what people *actually say*, as opposed to what people are *supposed to say* according to rules.

All of us have grammar of our languages represented somewhere in our brains. And somehow, our internal grammar, which we learn way before we take classes in school, allows a lot of various things and allows us to produce and interpret sentences we have never heard of before. Let me give three more examples. Think of a sentence “*Bruce hit the dog with the fish*.” Think of it. Which picture do you have in your mind? Is it a dog holding a fish, and Bruce is hitting it? Or is it Bruce who is using a fish to smack a poor dog? Or take a sentence “*Some boy read every book*.” Was there one boy who read everything or was it a different boy for every book? Now, what about the sentence, “*Olga is a beautiful dancer*.” Does she dance beautifully, while being not so pretty in real life, or is she beautiful, but a mediocre dancer? Our brain allows us to judge these sentences and see ambiguities in them, even though we were never taught about them *explicitly*. That is what linguistics is about: what exactly do we know when we know the language? How do we know it, even though we were never taught these things? We are trying to come up with answers to these questions, which could be very complicated and often rely on mathematics and logic: describing and finding patterns in the language system, revealing rules hidden in our brain, and trying to explain how our brain processes new sentences.

These connections between logic and linguistics are surprising at first: analyzing sentences at this level is not something we do when we learn a new language or go to English classes. But these connections were what sparked my interest in linguistics after spending many years doing mathematics. These connections between seemingly unrelated fields are not unique in the world: one can find fascinating connections between such fields as math and art, language and music and many others. Don’t be afraid of exploring them and don’t dismiss other subjects because they are not directly related to what you are interested in -- there might be some amazing connections waiting to be revealed, and you might be the one who finds them!

### How Can I Help SchoolNova?

SchoolNova at Stony Brook is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization and is qualified to receive tax-deductible bequests, devises, transfers or gifts. Contributions from individuals, foundations and corporations are welcome. You can donate through the PayPal Giving Fund (no fee), using PayPal Donate Button (fee is charged), by sending us a check or through Fidelity Investments.(School’s account # Z47924238).

If you would like to make a charitable donation to the Russian Theater studio “Dragonfly” or to Islandbots Robotics team, please, specify by writing us an email [info@schoolnova.org](mailto:info@schoolnova.org)

## Russian Theater-Studio "Dragonfly"

2015 – 2016 season.

*By Nadya Shavarina, Studio Director*

Last year we have crossed the 10-year mark of our existence, celebrating by eating a huge cake – a gift from SchoolNova at a picnic at the end of the 2015 school year. This year is a very important year for our studio: we have a completely renewed cast – in just one year, our artists have gotten a lot younger, and we no longer have any artists over 14 years old. The average age of the actors is under 10 years old! But even young we have already discovered some new stars (in the last Festival for Russian Children's Theaters, Lea Nekrasov received the best supporting actress award). We have just released a full-scale premiere of Pyotr Yershov's "The Little Humpbacked Horse", and we are planning to show it on the festival in Washington, D.C. in June 2016.

We go to those Festivals for the 4<sup>th</sup> year. For us, these trips are very important: it is an opportunity to show ourselves and to see the plays performed by other Russian theater studios from many countries! The theater is communication and interaction, and in our case, it's in Russian. The level of the festival has greatly increased in recent years. There are a lot of new categories where young artists can compete. We don't expect to win the first place this year, our actors are mostly beginners and will be performing on the big stage for the first time.

In each play we're trying to stay true to our style: respect for the text, choosing only the best Russian literature for children (and not only for children), and displaying dramatic style of performance. "The Little Humpbacked Horse" is a Russian fairytale that won over the hearts of both the artists and their parents due to its dynamism, timeless tale, and humor. Original songs were written for the play by Larisa Pokryvaylo. Music was written by Rodion Shchedrin for the ballet of the same name. The beautiful stage setup and costumes were made by Tanya Tchoubar and by all parents of our actors. Cheer for us and come to our theater – the good audience is very important for young artists!



## Islandbots Robotics

*By Alexander Kirillov, team coach, Math teacher*

Each year thousands of high school students compete in various robotics competitions. One such competition is First Tech Challenge, in which the teams have to build and program a medium-size (up to 18 inches) robot to perform a variety of tasks, from picking up blocks from the floor and depositing them into baskets raised high above the ground to doing pull-ups, hooking themselves to a horizontal bar and lifting off the ground. More than 4500 teams from all over the world took part in this competition last year; 128 best teams were invited to the World Championship, which took place in St Louis, MO in April.

Among the teams competing was team Islandbots, from a robotics club created by SchoolNova teachers Alexander Kirillov and Corina Mata in 2008. The club is open to everyone; most club members are SchoolNova students or former students. They meet once a week (or more frequently) in the basement of one of the parents house to build robots, eat pizza, and have "the hardest fun ever". Last season was a successful one for the team Islandbots: they have advanced all the way to World Championship, becoming one of the top 128 teams in the world. This year, the team is again hard at work on their new robot. After passing several qualifying championships, the team is now getting ready for East SuperRegional competition, to be held in Pennsylvania on March 18-20. Wish them luck!



## How we teach Russian language.

*By Tatiana Kuvshinova, Russian Language teacher*

The learning process is always beneficial when there are groups of people involved, especially with the process of learning a language. Teachers can interact with kids in many different ways by asking them questions, discussing different topics and completing different projects together. The students get to interact and learn more with each other. During a lesson, discussions are very important for kids to present their ideas to the class, which helps them learn different topics easily. It is very important to include game elements during lessons to stimulate the young kids' interest and encourage them to do their best. During our lessons students are also enjoying to share their stories with each other, and have some laughs with one another. Every student has a chance to speak up during the lesson. Reading is a very important part of the language learning process, that is why every Russian lesson includes class reading material and a homework reading packet that we discuss throughout the following lessons. A 45 minute lesson must be proactive and memorable for students so they can remember material they've learned and complete their home assignments without any challenge; however it's not enough to accomplish this task. This is why we are asking parents to step in to help us get better results and help their child achieve greater goals. Because of School Nova, young students get the opportunity to interact with new students and have the ability to learn more through each and every lesson.

### "Problem of the Month" (PoM)

is a competition that is open to everyone who is in 10th grade or younger, regardless of what state/country they live in. The goal of the PoM contest is to stimulate inquisitive minds and cultivate interest in science and math. There are two levels of participation: grade 8 and younger and grades 9-10. 2015 – 2016 PoM contest is over, and we congratulate all winners and participants.

We thank everyone for a great season of Problem of the Month, and we are looking forward for the next exciting year – the new contest will begin in the fall 2016. To learn more about the contest, to see the problems and solutions from the previous years, and to register for the next season – please, visit us at <http://sigmacamp.org/pom>

## SigmaCamp is celebrating its 5th year!

*By Elena Yakubovskaya, Sigma Camp Director*

This year we celebrate the 5th year of the SigmaCamp - a one-week residential summer program that brings together students who are eager to learn and professional scientists who are eager to share their skills and knowledge. We had started Sigma as a part of the SchoolNova five years ago, and since then the program has grown up from 43 to 110 students and now we can't accept all students who apply. The geography of our students has expanded to 10 US states and 5 countries and becomes more diverse each year. Many SchoolNova students have attended SigmaCamp in past years, and many SchoolNova teachers are instructors at SigmaCamp. This year many of our counselors are alumni who came first to Sigma as campers several years ago.

Our academic program consists of lectures, each on a different topic, and a wide selection of SemiLabs (week-long experiment-based intensive courses), and an inexhaustible variety of workshops, from Origami to Vortex Theory to Glassblowing! At Sigma, there is no such thing as "beyond the scope of this class." In our free time, we play sports, make music, go swimming... it is summer, isn't it? At the end of the day, we break out to play board games and trivia, learn ballroom dance, have milk and cookies by the campfire, or just chat - there is so much to talk about!

This all creates the unique SigmaSpirit - the atmosphere where everyone has something to learn, and something to share; someone to relate to, and someone to admire. Together, we make Sigma a place we want to return to, summer after summer.

If you feel that Sigma is a right place for you – apply! This year SigmaCamp will take place from August 14 to August 21 at Silver Lake Camp and Conference Center in Connecticut. The application deadline is April 18, and you can find all the information at <http://sigmacamp.org/2016>



*(By Braverman, continued from page 1)*

Uniquely devoted to enriching the skills and minds of kids, SchoolNova holds science fairs, drama shows, math competitions, art exhibitions and holiday celebrations throughout the year, which emphasize the multicultural environment in which we live. In addition, it sponsors a one-week STEM camp in summers, known as SigmaCamp, with teachers from MIT, Harvard and Brookhaven that is unparalleled in its STEM intensity, creativity and fun.

The school's classes are top-notch, and students who attend SchoolNova have a unique advantage over other students. Study at the School helps enhance performance in their public school classes, their college preparation and their competitiveness in regional and national competitions and STEM Olympiads. Several of these students have gone on to win gold medals and finish highly competitively in such contests. Mostly, though, students are exposed to deeper ways of thinking about the academic disciplines that cannot be found in the public schools. In the case of my son, we were advised by his fourth grade teacher to find activities and experiences to supplement his public school education, which, she advised, was not going to be able to meet his intellectual needs. After enrolling him at nearby gifted and “college-for-kids” programs at local colleges, he began asking for a deeper learning experience in physics, his favorite subject. We couldn't find it anywhere, until I did a Google search and discovered that SchoolNova offers physics as a multi-year enrichment experience for kids.

We signed my son up for physics, math and computer science, optimizing our engagement with the School. He is now in his third year with SchoolNova and attends both advanced math and physics classes, where he has learned more from his teachers than nearly from any other learning experience he has had. The teachers are most often serious researchers and practitioners who are supportive, engaged and involved with our children. They care about the quality of their learning and are patient and didactic. The lessons my son has had in both of these subjects have provided an incredibly strong base for him as he develops both a high school and college student. He is way ahead of his peers in his high school, and was accelerated in math and science as a middle school student, due to the eagerness he showed about learning and the advanced nature of his thought processes and knowledge that he gained mostly at School Nova.

He never complained about the discipline needed or the sacrifice of giving up every Sunday for three years in a row. He never likes to miss School Nova when other obligations come up, and always wants to keep apace of his homework assignments, because at SchoolNova, he tells me, he really learns.

## **Our alumni giving back to the community**

*By Natalia Zaliznyak, SchoolNova '13, Earl L. Vandermeulen High School '15, Yale College '19*

I, along with some of my closest friends, had the honor of being one of the first students to attend this school. We had been here from the start — collectively, my class frequented the original BNL-based enrichment classes and moved to the program at Stony Brook in 2004. After graduating from SchoolNova in 2013, my classmates and I all returned to the school as either teachers or volunteer classroom assistants. I worked for one year as a teacher's assistant in three second-grade math classes, and then for another year in one third-grade math class. I remembered how fascinated I, as a student, had been by the plethora of concepts — mathematical, scientific, linguistic, and artistic — that were introduced to me in this program. Once I became a teaching assistant, seeing it all from the other side for the first time, I felt as though I was truly working to help my students learn and grow, cultivating their skills and inspiring them to pursue their interests. Now, as a freshman in college, I look back on being a teaching assistant and I remember how lucky I felt to be an aid in that very same educational process that has brought me to where I am today. It's good to see that this idea still prospers in the form of the Junior TAs program, with 11 Class of 2015 SchoolNova graduates now working in classrooms the same way I had the chance to back when I was in high school.

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<https://www.facebook.com/schoolnova>

**Thank you for your support!**

We would like to thank everyone who was generous enough to donate time, money and corporate stocks to SchoolNova! We sincerely appreciate your support and help!

Special thanks to the Simons Center for Geometry and Physics and to the Departments of Physics & Astronomy and Mathematics for providing space for SchoolNova's competitions and special events.