

‘Honored and blessed to have worked in the town of Monroe’

By Alison Cross | June 19, 2020

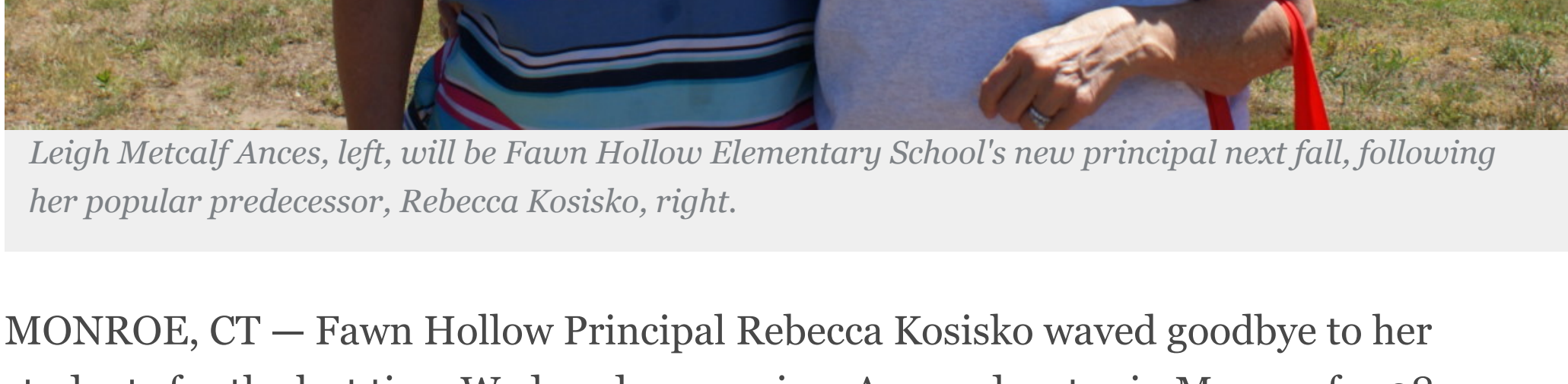
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Leigh Metcalf Ances, left, will be Fawn Hollow Elementary School's new principal next fall, following her popular predecessor, Rebecca Kosisko, right.

MONROE, CT — Fawn Hollow Principal Rebecca Kosisko waved goodbye to her students for the last time Wednesday morning. As an educator in Monroe for 28 years, Kosisko cultivated a culture of kindness and a legacy of learning that will last long after her retirement.

Students and their families drove through to Fawn Hollow and Chalk Hill parking lots to say thank you to their teachers, and “Honk out” the fifth-grade class. Students said special goodbyes to Kosisko, and retiring teachers Cindy Brooker and Jeanne Herring.

“This is just a very special school, and every day coming to work is joyful,” Kosisko said. “I am going to miss the joy that the school provides, the connection with the students and the teachers, and the fact that every day is different. Every day you learn something new. As I move into this next phase in my life’s journey, I certainly am going to be looking for things to take the place of that. I am really going to miss the students and the staff here and being part of the bigger educational picture in Monroe.”

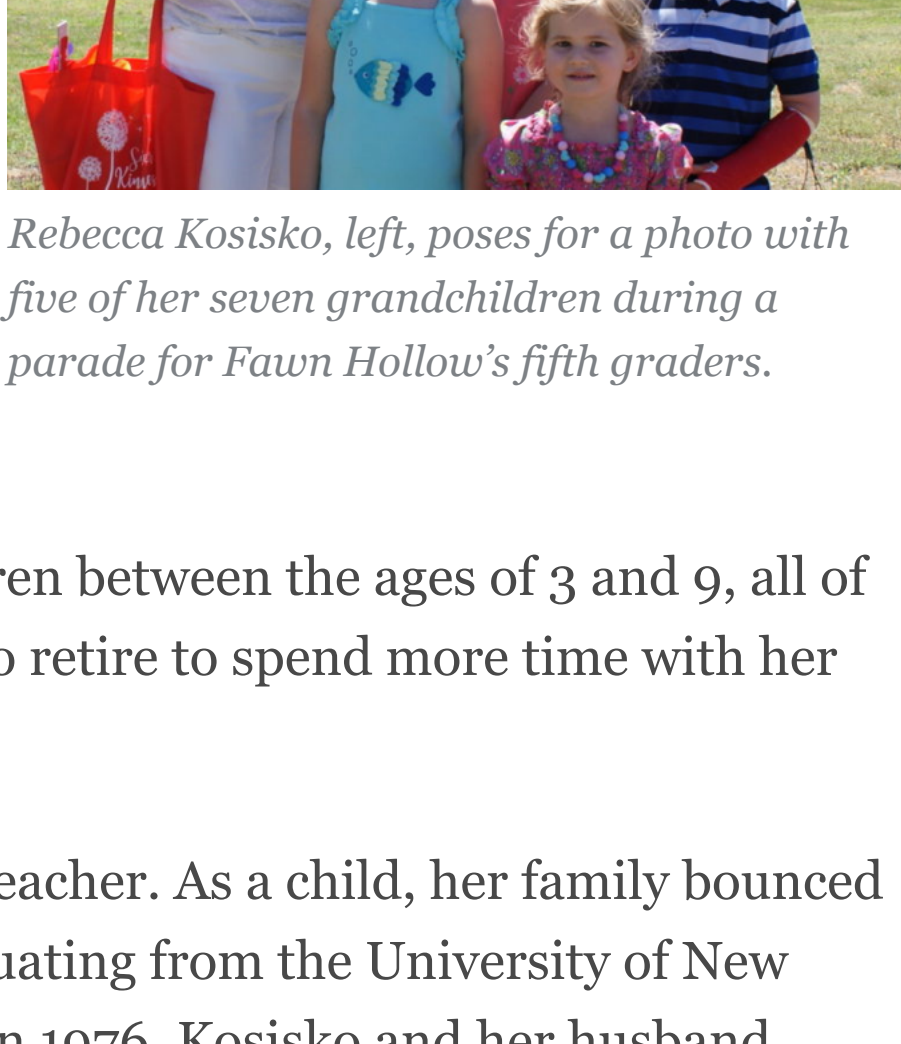
Leigh Metcalf Ances, who will take Kosisko’s place as principal, waved to her future students at the car parade. This fall marks Ances’ 25th year in the district. She started her career as a language arts teacher at Jockey Hollow before becoming the Chalk Hill dean of students and director of Jockey Hollow STEM Academy. Ances said she feels privileged.

“I am so excited to start at Fawn Hollow next year. It’s a beautiful school, with talented teachers, wonderful students, kind staff, it’s an excellent place to be a principal,” Ances said. “The parents and the staff have already welcomed me, and I think it’s going to be a great experience for everyone. I am looking forward to being able to meet the students.”

Ances’s salary was increased from \$150,766 to \$160,341 and her first first day as principal will be July 1.

‘A wonderfully, kind human being’

Acting Superintendent of Schools Joseph Kobza said he has gotten to know Kosisko well over the last few years and considers her a valued colleague.



Rebecca Kosisko, left, poses for a photo with five of her seven grandchildren during a parade for Fawn Hollow's fifth graders.

Kosisko has three children and seven grandchildren between the ages of 3 and 9, all of whom live in Connecticut. She said she decided to retire to spend more time with her family and friends and travel with her husband.

Kosisko said she always thought she would be a teacher. As a child, her family bounced from state to state for her father’s job. After graduating from the University of New Mexico, she followed her family to Connecticut. In 1976, Kosisko and her husband bought their first home in Monroe, and they have lived in town ever since.

“Having lived in a lot of different places around the country, ... I just feel really fortunate that this is where we chose to live and raise our family. I think it is a very supportive, caring community,” Kosisko said.

After raising her family and working several years in the private sector, Kosisko earned her Connecticut teacher certification and started teaching third grade at Stepney Elementary in 1992.

In 1999, Kosisko was the Monroe Teacher of the Year and a semifinalist in the Connecticut Teacher of the Year Program. She left Stepney in 2001 to become the assistant principal of Jockey Hollow. In 2009, she became the principal of Fawn Hollow.

Leaving her mark

Kosisko left her mark on Monroe education in a number of ways. As Fawn Hollow PTO president, she developed the Arts and Imagination program. What started as an effort 28 years ago to expand opportunities for after-school growth and learning, has spread to every elementary school in town.

When there was no art in schools, Kosisko volunteered with a group from the Women’s Club to make lesson plans, and introduce different artists to students. And as a teacher at Stepney, she started a community service group for third, fourth and fifth graders called the Caring Kids Club that continues under a different name.

Kosisko says she is thankful that the schools supported her ideas.

“I truly feel that I’ve been honored and blessed to have worked in the town of Monroe,” Kosisko said. “I’ve really been allowed to grow and be the best that I can be in this environment, and that’s what I really want to do for the students and the adults that I work with.”

As principal, Kosisko and a group of staff started the program At Fawn Hollow We C.A.R.E (choose responsibility, act safely, respect others, everywhere).

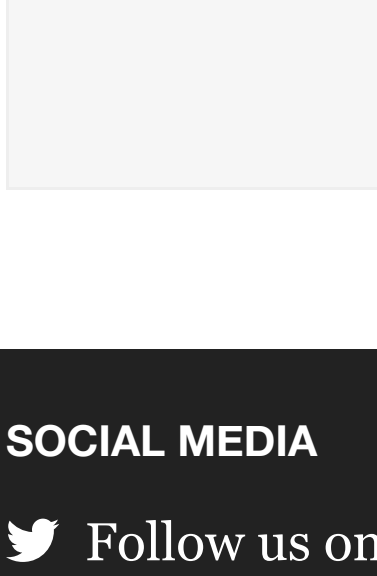
“I just feel that that has really contributed to our positive climate at Fawn Hollow. We put such a focus on caring and kindness, and I think if students can carry forward with those attributes that we’re going to be way ahead as we move into the future,” Kosisko said.

Kosisko expressed how proud she was of the hard work of Fawn Hollow’s staff during the switch to distance learning as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. She said she loved her job and felt truly blessed to serve her community.

“I hope that the people I have worked with, students and adults over the course of my career, will know that we all have the power to make a difference and through hard work and the choices that we make and taking advantage of opportunities that are presented to us,” Kosisko said.

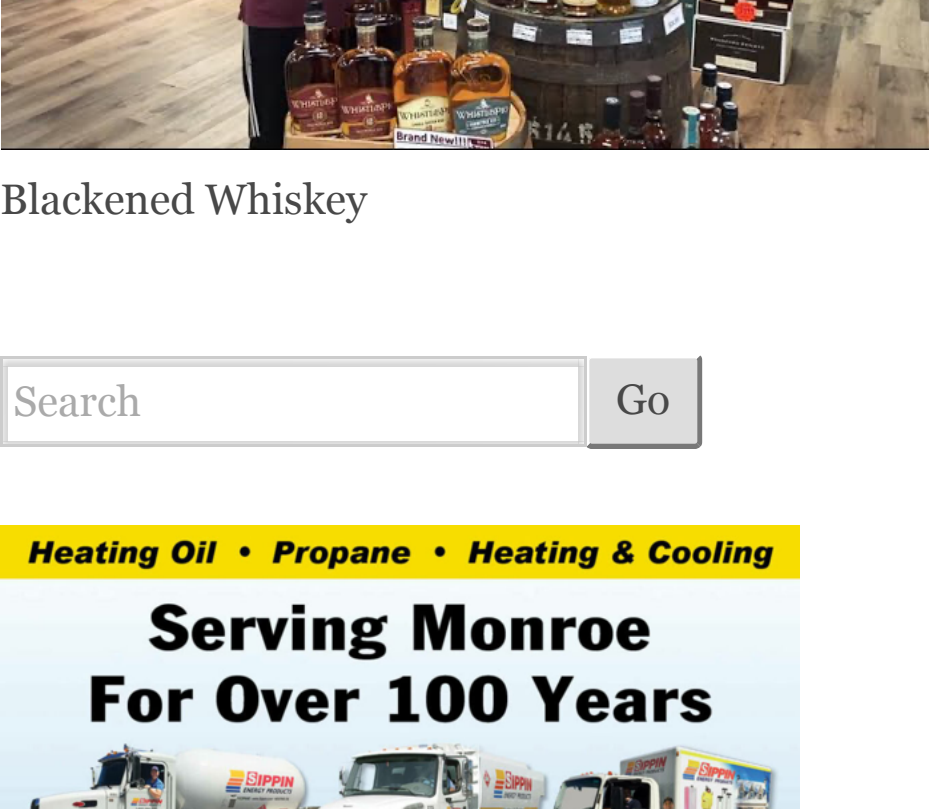
She added this final message to her students: “I want them to know that I love them, that I believe in them, and that I wish them all the best, and that if they work hard and be kind, that they will achieve their dreams.”

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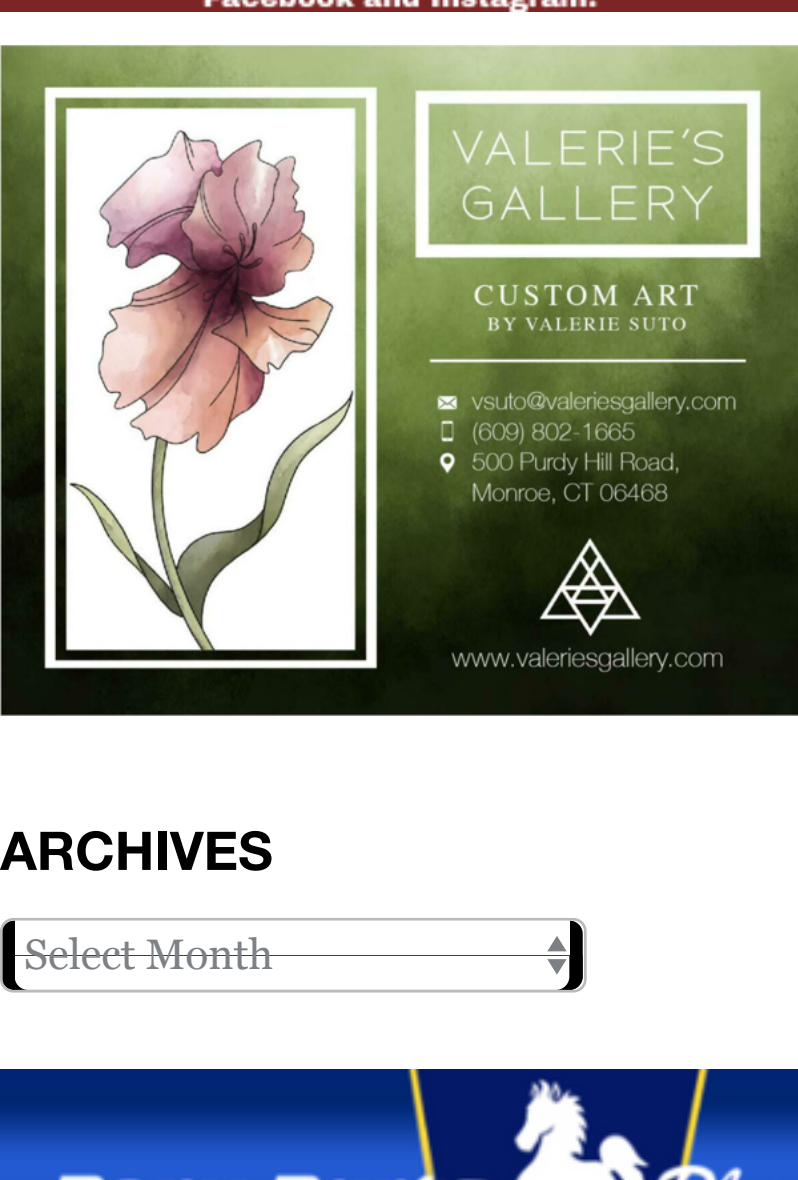
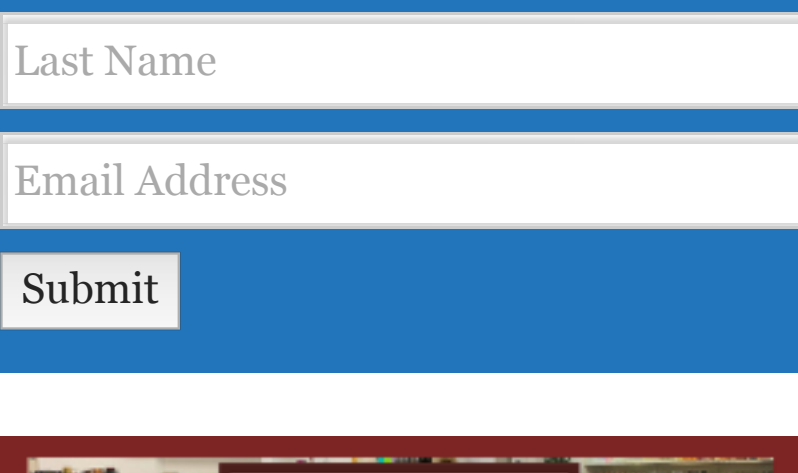
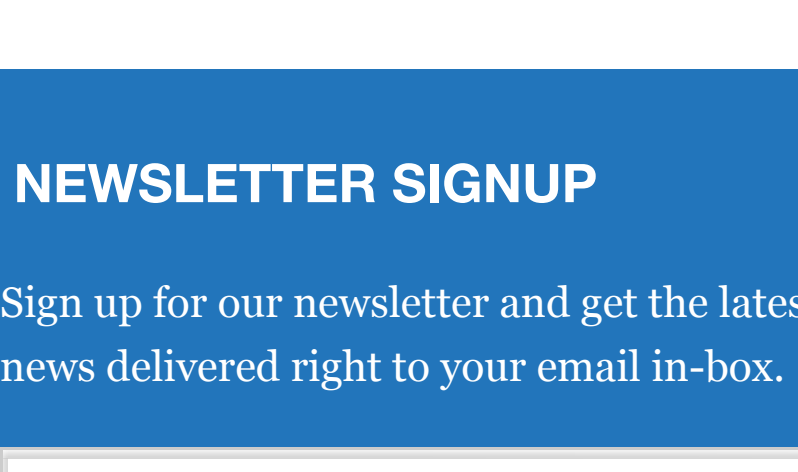
MONROE, CT — Acting Superintendent of Schools Joseph Kobza announced new appointments during Monday night’s Board of Education meeting. When Kobza was asked to leave his role as assistant superintendent to lead the district on a temporary basis following Jack Zamary’s paid suspension, one of the first calls he received was from Jockey Hollow Principal Jack Ceccolini, who offered to do anything he could to help.



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