



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Pleasantdale Elementary School in West Orange to be Renamed in Honor of Astronauts Mark and Scott Kelly

WEST ORANGE, NJ – Pleasantdale Elementary School, located at 555 Pleasant Valley Way in West Orange, will be officially renamed in honor of West Orange's hometown heroes and astronauts, Mark and Scott Kelly. The renaming was unanimously approved on March 14, 2016 by the West Orange Board of Education.

Over the next few weeks, Pleasantdale teachers and students will work together to create a new name for the school. Dr. Pollara, Principal of Pleasantdale Elementary School, will propose five names to the West Orange Board of Education, who will choose the new name. A ceremony will be held on May 19, 2016, at Pleasantdale Elementary School to honor Mark and Scott Kelly and celebrate the renaming of the school.

"It is not often that a community is able to recognize and honor native sons who both fit the definitions of Hero and Pioneer in perpetuity so that generations to come will know where such accomplished individuals had their beginnings," said Board of Education President Laura Lab. "Those beginnings helped mold them into the adults they have grown to be and at the same time offer our current students role models who can literally guide our children that they too can reach for the stars. It is with great pride and conviction that I announce that the Board of Education has unanimously agreed to rename Pleasantdale Elementary School in honor of West Orange natives and alums, Captains Scott and Mark Kelly," she added.

While growing up in West Orange, the Kelly brothers attended Pleasantdale Elementary School, Lincoln Junior High School and Mountain High School, graduating in 1982. Pleasantdale holds a special place in the hearts of Mark and Scott Kelly. Most recently, Mark Kelly visited Pleasantdale in October, 2015, and Scott Kelly video chatted with students while aboard the International Space Station in January, 2016.

"Renaming the elementary school where it all began will personify how proud we are as a school district and community. The Kelly brothers' achievements remind our children of the importance of passion, hard work, and dedication. My hope is that many students are inspired by Mark and Scott's accomplishments," said West Orange Superintendent Jeffrey Rutzky.

About Mark and Scott Kelly

Following their graduation from Mountain High School in 1982, Mark Kelly received a Bachelor's degree in marine engineering and transportation from the United States Merchant Marine Academy at Kings Point, New York, in 1986. Scott Kelly received a Bachelor's degree in electrical engineering from the State University of the New York Maritime College at Throggs Neck, New York, in 1987. Scott and Mark became pilots in the U.S. Navy in 1987 and 1989 respectively, and in 1994 both brothers graduated from the U.S. Navy Test Pilot School in Patuxent River, Maryland. That year, Mark also received a Master's degree in aeronautical engineering from the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California. Scott received a Master's degree in aviation systems from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, in 1996. In August of 1996, the Kelly Brothers began their astronaut training at NASA.

Captain Mark Kelly (Ret.) is one of our country's most experienced pilots with 6,000 flight hours in more than 50 different aircraft, 375 aircraft carrier landings, 39 combat missions and more than 50 days in space. He retired in 2011.

Captain Scott Kelly has logged over 8,000 flight hours in more than 40 different aircraft and spacecraft and has over 250 carrier landings. Additionally, Captain Scott Kelly just returned after logging 340 consecutive days on the International Space Station, and now holds the American record for the longest unbroken stay in space. He announced his retirement as of April 1, 2016.

"Mark and Scott Kelly are excellent role models for our children. Renaming our school in their honor will be a daily reminder for our students that with persistence, hard work, collaboration and limitless imagination, they can reach their own stars," said Principal Dr. Joanne Pollara. "We are thrilled to be a part of this moment in the history of West Orange."

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