

# SCHOOLS

WHAT'S NEWS IN AND OUT OF THE CLASSROOM



Courtesy Syntax Communications

**ATTENDING THE HEART SCREENING PROGRAM** were seated, from left, Susan Gruen Helsinger, founder of the Jason F. Gruen Foundation, City Council member Denise Tangney and district nurse Barbara Young. Standing, from left, are Dr. Fred Bierman, chairman of the department of pediatrics at Schneider Children's Hospital, Assemblyman Harvey Weisenberg, Neil Sterrer, co-chairman of the Long Beach/Island Park Broker's Council, school board President Patrick Gallagher and Arnold Epstein, district director of athletics, physical education and health.

## Middle School jocks get free heart screens

Fifty-two eighth graders at Long Beach Middle School took advantage of a free heart screening for students participating in district sports programs. The program was brought to their school through a cooperative arrangement with the Jason F. Gruen Research Foundation and Schneider Children's Hospital. The purpose of the screening is to identify cardiac abnormalities that can be picked up by means of an echocardiogram. The financial obligations for the screenings will be borne by the Foundation. The Long Beach is one of only two school districts in Nassau County selected to participate in this pilot program.

The program was introduced to Long Beach Middle School through the efforts of Neil Sterrer, co-chairman of the Long Beach Island Park Broker's Council and director of the Long Island Board of Realtors, as part of its "We're More than Realtors" community outreach program. Joe Sinnona, chairman

of public relations for the Long Island Board of Realtors, assisted Sterrer. Arnold Epstein, district director of athletics, physical education and health, coordinated the program with Barbara Young, the district's nurse coordinator. School nurses Mary Beth Thurston, Lori Field and Liz Lebowitz assisted Young.

Susan Gruen Helsinger founded the Jason F. Gruen Research Foundation in honor of her son Jason, who died from an undiagnosed heart condition when he was a sophomore at Manhasset High School. Since that tragic event, Helsinger has worked with cardiac specialists at Schneider Children's Hospital to help diagnose life-threatening heart conditions in other children. The program, which was first introduced in the Bellmore-Merrick Central High School District, has screened over 500 students so far, and has identified 17 students with some form of cardiac abnormality.