

# Community Letter

December 2007



Promote a challenging environment creating an extraordinary community of learners

## Message from the Board of Education

### In this issue...

- Message from the BOE ... 1
- PHS Talents ..... 1, 3
- The Long Range Plan .... 2
- Budget News ..... 2
- Let's Chat With ..... 2
- Student Spotlight ..... 3
- Adult Education ..... 4
- Good News ..... 4

Often, members of the Board of Education hear the concerns of parents and community members--one common concern is the proper maintenance of our facilities. Whether new or aging, citizens want to be sure that buildings are being properly maintained to maximize their usefulness and represent our community well. We share that concern and want the community to know about our proactive approach.

In 2002 the Board made a decision to change our building maintenance program from the use of an outside vendor to an in-house system. At that time, a Facilities Director was hired to lead our maintenance and custodial staff. In addition, a comprehensive evaluation and overhaul of our maintenance program was performed.

With the approval of several new school projects, the Facilities Director works closely with the Capital Projects Building Committee to monitor new construction and renovations of the school buildings. The Board is provided with a monthly report reflecting the work done at each school and the number of work orders generated and resolved during the previous month.

The Board is confident that our facilities are well maintained. The Facilities Department takes great pride in their work and it shows. We know the community is well served and that our investment in Plainville's school facilities are protected.

## PHS Construction Classes Share Their Talents



*Alexis Charbonneau seated in her adaptive chair*

The Plainville Community Schools Vision, to "promote a challenging environment creating an extraordinary community of learners" comes to life each day in Dean Esposti's construction classes at Plainville High School. Here, students engage in hands on learning, becoming equipped with both the knowledge and resources to prepare them for continued life-long, success. And while honing these critical skills, students are making meaningful and significant contributions to both the school district community and the greater Plainville community through a variety of special projects. Under the direction of Technology Education Instructor Dean Esposti, these projects address a wide range of student, faculty, and community needs, and examples are

many. Teachers at Wheeler Elementary School may now enjoy lunch at a picnic table built by construction class students. A portable concession stand directional sign for the Athletic Backer's Club now hangs during sporting events, thanks to the work of these high school students. In addition, students in Esposti's classes installed pencil sharpeners for teachers throughout the high school this year and will be building the set for an upcoming high school production.

According to Esposti, a teacher in the Plainville school system for nearly 30 years, a number of projects have been completed over the years for special needs students in the school district as well. "We recently finished a foot stool for a special needs student at Linden. To me, these are the types of projects I want my students to get involved with the most," he commented. Esposti's generosity extends beyond the school year as well. Over the summer he built a custom desk for a special needs student at the middle school. "I would have preferred that my students built the desk for the special needs student this school year, but we needed the desk in front of us to custom build it with the necessary modifications," he explained. "She would have had to go without a desk for the duration of the project this year, so I built it for her over the summer in my home workshop." According to School Psychologist Jeri Lynn Turkowitz, the support of Esposti and

*See Construction, Page 3*

# The Long Range Plan

*The Long Range Plan for the school district intends to improve the school buildings. There are a number of projects in progress.*

## HIGH SCHOOL RENOVATION

The Class S swim trials were held at the recently reopened and renovated pool. Swimmers and visitors were impressed with the vastly improved conditions and the competition ran smoothly. Phase 6 of the renovation process is now under way and the focus is on the 1970's wing of the building which includes the 300-400 corridors. Completion of this phase is expected before the end of December.

Connecticut OSHA received an employee complaint about conditions at the High School during the construction process. A CONN-OSHA inspector recently came into the building and ran air tests for carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, temperature and relative humidity in 15 different areas of the building. The test results showed that these indicators of air quality were very favorable with no carbon monoxide found in any area sampled. The school district has received the narrative for the inspection along with the numerical table showing the air sampling readings. We were pleased to see that the report closes with these lines: *No violations of CONN-OSHA standards were found at the time of inspection. The closing conference was held with Mr. Gregory Ziogas, Principal of Plainville High School.* Anyone interested in obtaining a copy of the report can contact the High School Principal's Office or the district Business Office. Phase 5 of the project is nearly complete but was slightly delayed by a problem with the floor in the Kegel Gym.

The leveling agent placed on the floor was very slow to dry causing a delay in the installation of the wood floor. This floor work should be completed by the end of December. There have been reports of ceiling leaks in the pool area. The new roof for this part of the building will be installed during the holiday recess. Many areas of the building are beginning to look attractive and we are anticipating more great results to come. The Building Committee and Turner Construction are doing a fine job keeping the project moving forward close to the planned time table and within the budget.

## TOFFOLON SCHOOL

The State Bureau of School Facilities approved the second phase of the like new renovation project at Toffolon School and the bids were sent out to construction companies. A walk through at the school was held on November 14th for the bidders and the bids will be opened in December. Construction is expected to begin shortly after the start of the new year.

The architect has submitted the plans and specifications for Phase 3 of the project. These materials are now under review by the state and approval should follow in the coming weeks. Once under way we believe that the work will progress quickly since the building is not occupied. Toffolon students and staff will return to the building when renovations are complete in 2009.

## Budget News

Each school and department in the district has begun to assemble its budget request for the 2008-2009 school year. A budget calendar was approved by the Board of Education at the November Board meeting and placed on the district web site. Important dates on the calendar will also be referenced in school newsletters.

Following is a brief outline of the budget preparation process: **1)** Schools and departments prepare budget requests and meetings to discuss these plans take place with the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent and Business Manager. **2)** In January, the Board meets on several occasions with school administrators to review and discuss the needs of the district. **3)** In February, the Board votes on a budget that goes to the Town Manager as the request for the education budget. **4)** In March, the Town Manager and Superintendent will present their budgets to the Town Council and citizens of Plainville. **5)** On April 29th, there will be an all day vote on the budget for the 2008-2009 fiscal year. Watch the news for these upcoming budget events and participate in the process.

## Let's Chat With...MATTHEW GUARINO



*Matthew Guarino  
Principal, MSP*

*What attracted you to the position of Middle School Principal?*

*It gives me the opportunity to have a significant impact on the lives of Plainville's youth at such a critical period in their development. As Principal, I can use my experience, understanding, and skills to lead the Middle School of Plainville.*

*What is your top priority as Principal?*

*To bring the Middle School's mission statement to life; to make it truly a "Great Place to Learn."*

*What are you most proud of as an educator?*

*When I hear from former students who tell me what a great and valuable impact I made on their lives. There is nothing more rewarding as an educator than to help shape lives in a positive way.*

## Student Spotlight: Morning News at the Middle School



*Pictured front to back:  
Michael Gervais, Mitchell Durkin,  
Katherine McLellan, and Zeke Wells*

As you may have heard, the morning announcements at the Middle School of Plainville are televised and digitally broadcast live every morning. We have televisions set up in every room in the building so that when it is time to broadcast everyone can hear and see the important announcements for the day.

The broadcasts can also be accessed by going to Mr. Helming's web page on the Middle School web site. How does this work get accomplished you might ask yourself. Well, the broadcasting is mostly produced by a group of Middle School students. There are two anchors. Their job is to announce what the

scriptwriters put on the script. Because there is no teleprompter, the anchors read from a paper.

The cameras are also controlled by students. They adjust the cameras so that the anchors can be seen clearly. Digital backgrounds and slides that appear during the announcements are controlled by another student. There is also the audio person. This person plays music before the announcements and controls the volume of the anchors' microphones. The video mixer has a really neat job. He or she switches the cameras between the two anchors when they are talking. The panel board that the video mixer operates has many buttons that control all kinds of fascinating video features. For example, the mixer can turn one person into 20 copies of that person all talking at the same time!

As the script writer, I see all of this happening every day. My job is an important one. When I get off the bus, I go directly upstairs to the MSP Library Information Center. The broadcast room is located in an office in the library. I log onto the computer,

and then go put my backpack away. When I return, I open the "Main Announcement" folder and the FirstClass program. I then copy and paste announcements that teachers or other school staff post to be announced to the entire school onto the anchors' script. In addition to the new news items, each day we include the lunch menu, birthdays, and a fun fact. You might think this is all very simple; the catch is that I only have five or six minutes to accomplish all these tasks. I arrive at approximately 7:45 a.m., and I need to be done by 7:50 so the anchors can preview the script. I then have to fill-in at another job if anyone happens to be absent.

After the announcements are completed, we shut everything down and head off to our homeroom classes. Of course, all this would never happen if it was not for a very special teacher, Mr. Helming! He is there each day and taught us all how to operate the equipment. So if you get a chance, log onto the MSP website and watch our morning news program. Maybe I'll be filling in as anchor for the day!

*Written by: Zeke Wells, Grade 7*

### *"Construction" Continued from Page 1*

his students has been invaluable. "Dean always responds to our requests immediately, and the modifications that he and his students have made to desks and equipment allow our special needs students to be in the classroom environment with their peers," noted Turkowitz. "The assistance that Dean and his students in the construction classes have provided has been tremendous." In addition to adapting furniture for special needs students, Esposti's students also modified and donated a number of bicycles to the Middle School's Developmental Program, equipping the bikes with oversized training wheels. "These modifications allow our special needs students to enjoy an experience that they may not otherwise be able to. In addition to being fun to use, these bikes provide an additional opportunity to strengthen students' motor and coordination skills," commented Turkowitz.

While examples of this support within the school district are many, contributions also extend to the greater Plainville community. Students in Esposti's construction classes continue their partnership with the Plainville Police

Department through a collaboration to recycle abandoned bicycles. The bikes are collected and stored at the Police Department throughout the year. Students sort through the bicycles and refurbish as many as possible for reuse, and the refurbished bikes are re-distributed to local youth in need. Additional community based projects in the works include building picnic tables for the Plainville Housing Authority and constructing benches and planters for the town's Downtown Beautification Project.



*From left to right: Brian Watson, Tyler Lachapelle, and Dave Cardinale*

## Adult Education

The Adult and Continuing Education Spring

Brochure will be mailed to all Plainville residents the last week of January.

It features mandated classes, such as: **Adult Basic Education Math and Reading and**

**Writing, Citizenship, English as a Second Language, GED**

**Preparation, Credit Diploma Program,**

**Enrichment classes,**

**Senior Citizen specials,**

**NYC Day Trip, The**

**Plainville Family**

**Resource Network and more!** Class registration

will be accepted through the mail or in person at the Adult Education

Center, 69 Linden Street.

## Good News!

*Great things are happening in our school district all the time.*

*Following are some of these good news highlights:*

THE PLAINVILLE BOARD OF EDUCATION received the 2007 CABE Leadership Award from the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education in recognition of leadership excellence...PLAINVILLE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS has earned four awards in the 32nd Annual Awards of Excellence for Educational Communications Contest held by the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE). Winning entries included the *Community Letter* newsletter, Plainville Adult and Continuing Education Brochure, Toffolon School Project Information Brochure, and Toffolon School Calendar and Handbook PHS SENIORS ALYSSA CHMURA, RYAN PELLETIER, AND JUSTIN WILDE have been named Commended Students in the '08 National Merit Scholarship Program PLAINVILLE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS STUDENTS OLIVIA BURNS, ALLESANDRA CAPONIGRO, TYLER CLEMENS, REBECCA CRAWFORD, DOMINIC CWALINSKI, PETER DALENA, EMILY DUDA, SARAH GROSSE, QUENTIN LUX, PATRYCJA MAJEWSKI, MELANIE NORTON, JONATHAN PLOURDE, JAMES ROSS, MEGHAN SISSON, AND DAVID SOLTIS received the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents' (CAPSS) Superintendent / Student Recognition Award and Certificate of Excellence at the 20th annual Superintendent's Award Presentation 30 PHS STUDENTS LED BY ADVISOR PAM GERVASIO participated in the first Connecticut YOUTH FORUM event for the 07- 08 school year PLAINVILLE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS welcomed two visiting educators from China as part of the Shandong Teaching Methods Delegation/Shandong Sister School project...MSP 8TH GRADER CARISSA SHANNON was selected to speak at the Hartford Youth Scholars Foundation Funders (HYSF) Breakfast for her hard work, enthusiasm, and dedication as a participant in the HYSF summer and after school sessions THE PHS FUTURE BUSINESS LEADERS OF AMERICA (FBLA) CLUB held a "Thanksgiving Jug" fundraiser, collecting spare change from students, faculty, and staff to benefit the Plainville Food Pantry PHS STUDENTS AND STAFF recently welcomed a group of 15 Italian students and their chaperones from Italy as part of the Tuscan-American High School Exchange Program LINDEN STREET SCHOOL STUDENT JALINNE IRIARTE AND MIDDLE SCHOOL OF PLAINVILLE STUDENT AUSTIN CRAY, TOGETHER WITH THEIR VOLUNTEER MENTORS JAY BRENNAN AND LINEL NOBLE, employees of Webster Bank, recently participated in a photo shoot with UCONN Huskies Basketball Coach Jim Calhoun for the production of a television commercial for National Mentoring Month...PHS STUDENTS MELANIE NORTON AND SARAH TANNER have been awarded the Farmington Valley Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents' (CAPSS) Superintendent / Student Recognition Award THE PHS ENVIRONMENTAL CLUB STUDENTS are cleaning the Quinnipiac River and grounds surrounding Plainville High School MSP FACULTY AND STAFF held two fundraisers in support of the Plainville Food Pantry. More than \$2,000 was raised through a "Jeans on Friday" program and approximately \$600 was collected through a Costumes for Charity Halloween event PHS JUNIOR DREW CIMINO recently discovered an alternate solution to a Math Club mathematics problem. The solution was published in the New England Mathematics League's November newsletter.

### PLAINVILLE BOARD OF EDUCATION

**Kathleen Binkowski, Ph.D.**  
*Superintendent of Schools*

**Board Members:**

**Jesse Gnazzo**  
**Anthony Goldberg**  
**Lorri Goldsmith**  
**Art Hoerle**  
**Keith A. LaCombe**  
**Patrick Ringrose**  
**Becky Tyrrell**  
**Thomas L. Wazorko**  
**Barbara A. Willard**



## Belief Statements

We believe:

- that a quality school system is the core of our community and increases the quality of our lives;
- in a shared responsibility among home, school and community that promotes achievement for all learners;
- in a safe, caring, learning environment that respects individual difference and rejects discrimination of any form;
- in holding all students, faculty, staff, and parents accountable to participate in and maintain a positive learning environment throughout the district;
- a high quality curriculum emphasizes the arts, literacy, and technology; and effective communication and collaboration builds trust and respect.