

Plainville Board of Education's

Community Letter

Summer 2008



Promote a challenging environment creating an extraordinary community of learners

Message from the Board of Education

In this issue...

- Message from the BOE . . . 1
- Let's Chat With1
- The Long Range Plan 2
- Budget News2
- Student Spotlight3
- Adult Education3
- Good News!4

As we approach the end of the school year, we proudly reflect on the many accomplishments achieved and congratulate the Plainville High School Class of 2008, as our seniors look forward to the next steps on their educational journeys. We have much to celebrate, including the near completion of the Plainville High School renovation and the progress taking place at Toffolon School. We celebrate our volunteers, mentors, faculty, and staff who make the difference in the lives of students every day. We celebrate the privilege of serving as board members, working together with administrators, staff, community members, parents, and students to maximize educational opportunities for Plainville's youth. Finally, with our district-wide focus on student achievement, we are pleased that Plainville students continue to show improvement in reading, writing, and math.

This year, Plainville Community Schools have increased the focus on community service and its benefits. Plainville students have certainly shown their commitment to helping others. Students have worked with the United Way, Special Olympics and the Relay For Life, they have served as mentors and tutors to younger students, they have worked at the Food Pantry, in their churches and with countless community groups. We commend all the students who have given their time and talent to help others, and urge everyone, students and adults alike, to reflect on the value of community service.

We look forward to our future successes and the start of the next school year. On behalf of the Plainville Board of Education, have a safe and restful summer.

Let's Chat With...Dr. Beth Strathy



Assistant Principal,
Middle School of
Plainville

What have you enjoyed most in your role as Assistant Principal? The kids! The students at the middle school are a joy to work with. They keep me connected to why we are all here--to help kids be successful.

What is your leadership style? Collaborative. I think building strong, caring relationships with students, parents, staff, and the community is important. I value the wisdom and ideas others have.

What professional accomplishment are you most proud of?

Achieving my doctorate in Educational Leadership. My dissertation title: *Teachers as Leaders: A Case Study of Practices That Encourage the Hearts of Students.*

What is your top priority? My top priority is to continue working with our principal to promote a child-centered middle school where staff works hard to help every student achieve academically by providing student centered curriculum, instruction, and assessment. I want all students to enjoy school so they are motivated to reach the high standards we know they are capable of.

STATE CHAMPS!

The Plainville High School baseball team won the CIAC Class M State Championship with a 5-4 victory over Holy Cross at Palmer Field in Middletown on June 7, 2008. The team was named #1 in the state by the Connecticut High School Coaches Association and the Hartford Courant.



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

On May 20, Emily Czarnecki from JCJ Architecture presented the building committee with the winning bidders for the final Furniture, Fixtures and Equipment (FF&E) needs of the project. The FF&E came in under budget by approximately \$40,000. The items that went out to bid or will be purchased through the state contract include administrative furniture, student furniture, furniture for the Library Information Center, music and health areas, fitness equipment, art and science equipment, storage files, and shelving, among other items. This order will complete the furniture needs of the school. Many student desks and chairs have already been purchased through earlier FF&E phases.

Through the summer, the final phases of the high school project will begin and be completed. The Library Information Center, which is currently under construction, will be completed, as will the work on the ramp outside the center leading to the second floor. This ramp will be removed and stairs built next to where the ramp currently exists. Early this summer, work will also begin on the cafeteria, main office area and Wood Gym. This work is scheduled to be completed before the beginning of the next school year. Outside, work has been done on the sidewalks in the back of the building and the building committee has officially turned over the lawns to the town so that the Public Works Department can maintain these areas. The committee is still considering irrigation for the lawn areas, but has put this system on hold until it is determined if funds will be available. The committee also plans to see if re-seeding will be needed once construction is completed.

TOFFOLON SCHOOL RENOVATION

Similar to the high school project, Toffolon architects at AM Design Architects, Inc., are working hard on getting the FF&E designs and bid specifications in place.

In other developments, the Town Council voted to recommend to the building committee that solar panels be placed on the roof of the school. After much discussion at a subsequent meeting, the building committee voted to hold off on the panels, but to put the needed infrastructure in place so that they may be added later. This included changing the roof to a Sarnafil system and installing conduit in the roof areas to facilitate solar wiring.

AM Design is also in the process of creating a design for the playscape at Toffolon School. This will include not only the playscape itself, but also the fencing and drainage needs of the area.

Inside the building, the demolition is nearly complete. Construction has begun on the new Library Information Center in the front of the building and work on the art and band rooms in the back is progressing. At the last building committee meeting, the committee voted to install VCT flooring on the stage instead of wood flooring. The VCT is less expensive and easier to maintain than wood. The committee also approved partial funding for a change order that would change all of the curbs from asphalt or granite to concrete.

Budget News

On April 29, the town budget failed at the first referendum for residents to consider the spending plan for 2008-09. Before the first vote, the Town Council had reduced the Board of Education (BOE) approved budget by \$1,234,500--from a 7.3% increase to a 3.4% increase. Following the first vote, the Town Council voted to reduce the BOE budget by an additional \$300,000--making the total cut to the BOE approved budget \$1,534,500. At the time, this was an increase of 2.45% compared to the current year. This budget was part of the larger town budget package that was sent to residents for a second vote on May 13. Like the first vote, the budget failed. After the second failed referendum, the Town Council voted to reduce the BOE budget by an additional \$150,000. This reduction sets the 2008-09 BOE budget of \$32,271,879--a 1.98% increase compared to 2007-08. This budget will go into effect on July 1, 2008 even though the budget failed for the third time on May 28. The BOE budget represents an increase of \$625,958 compared to Fiscal Year 2007-08, but a decrease of \$1,684,500 compared to the 2008-09 budget that was approved by the BOE. The BOE met on June 5th to discuss options for reducing \$1.68 million from the budget approved by the Board in February, and finalized the budget at the regularly scheduled Board meeting on June 9th.

Student Spotlight: Linden Street School



SLAVE'S JOURNEY

By:
Chris Theriault

Students in grade 5 explore life during Colonial Times. This assignment was done during the study of the Southern Colonies. Students were learning about the 3 parts of a slave's journey--first, middle, and final passage. They were asked to create a journal entry using the facts that they had learned, and their five senses. What would the slave see? smell? taste? feel? touch? Each child created their own vivid picture of the slave's capture and voyage to the Southern Colonies to be sold at auction.

I was walking in the forest when I heard a sudden sound coming from the nearby bushes. As I continue to walk along and ignore the bush, someone pushed me down and put me into chains. As I turn my face around to see his face, I noticed that he was an English man. He then led me to a fort, and then shoved me inside. I could taste the

dry air inside the messy fort, then I spied a sign that said, "Slave Center." As I started to fall asleep inside the little fort, someone barged into the room with a rich boat captain. They both grabbed me and led me down the streets. I felt scared, wondering what he was going to do with me. I then saw a huge boat and I stopped walking. The white men whipped me, forcing me to go in the boat. Once I was inside the boat, I noticed other Africans chained against the walls of the boat. As an English man put chains on my legs and feet I couldn't help but notice an English captain saying, "America, here we come." In that sentence I knew we were being imported to America! When the doors closed, we were on our way to America. I heard the crying of people saying, "I want to go home!" I stared at the chains on my legs and hands and noticed blood dripping from underneath them. The chains were squeezing my legs and hands so hard they started bleeding. I found one of my old friends from Africa on the ship and saw that his head

was down against his shoulder and his face was as white as the clouds. I figured out that he was dead. The sounds of crying and moaning filled the boat until it started rocking and salt water poured in. An African by the window got salt water in his eyes, and started screaming. Many people said they wanted to die and cried. A prisoner escaped from his chains screaming in enjoyment, "I'm free!" and jumped out of the window. I peered out the window and heard a gunshot. Floating on the surface of the water was his dead body, surrounding his body was blood. The boat came to a fast stop and I ran out falling on the ground from getting whipped. I was one of the people who survived the scary boat ride. Next were the auctions. I was next. They asked me questions like what are you best at, and what are you worst at. I answered the questions honestly. A plantation owner paid 100 American dollars. He picked me up and said, "You are now my slave." From that day on I was a slave for the rest of my life!

Adult Education

Jodi Lemeris, Business Development Manager of Plainville's branch of the Farmington Savings Bank (FSB), secured scholarship monies with the Farmington Savings Bank Foundation, Inc.--a charitable foundation operated by FSB--for Plainville Adult Education. This year's scholarship recipient is Brunilda "Bruni" Ruiz, a 2008 graduate of the Plainville Adult Education's Adult High School Credit Diploma Program.

Robbie Mills, Program Facilitator of the Credit Diploma Program, commented, "When choosing a scholarship recipient, many factors come into play such as attendance, effort, grades, financial need, attitude, and a well written essay. Many students apply for the scholarship and although it would be nice to give one to every student who plans on furthering his/her education, there is usually one that stands out."

Melissa Desjardins, Guidance Counselor for Plainville Adult Education said, "Bruni is planning on furthering her education at Tunxis Community College. She plans on majoring in accounting. Once she receives her associates degree she would like to attend Central Connecticut State University for her bachelors degree. She is a very pleasant, hardworking student and I am sure she will be very successful in her college career."

Good News!

TOFFOLON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS JOEY SLIVINSKY, KYLE SMITH, AND JARED BOUCHER auditioned and were selected to participate in the Connecticut Children's Chorus...**LINDEN STREET SCHOOL STAFF MEMBERS MELISSA DODENHOFF, RACHEL VALENTINE, AND TAHLYA FARRINGTON,** with the **LINDEN PTO,** organized a carnival that included a dunk tank, food, fun, and games, raising over \$800 in support of the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life...**MIDDLE SCHOOL OF PLAINVILLE SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER AND PROFESSIONAL DUCKPIN BOWLER AMY BISSON,** was featured as the #1 female duckpin bowler in the country, in **DUCKPIN,** a documentary film about the history of duckpin bowling...**LINDEN STREET SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST SUZANNE SCHWEITZER** won the "*Distinguished Service Award*" from the Connecticut Association of School Psychologists...**PHS STUDENTS IN TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION TEACHER LAURA KULPA'S ARCHITECTURAL DRAWING CLASS** won one of two "*CT Awards*" at the annual Connecticut "Canstruction" Convention...**WHEELER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL 5TH GRADER MICHAEL DEPASCALE** received the *American Red Cross Hero Award* for performing the Heimlich Maneuver on a fellow Cub Scout who was choking...Nine Plainville High School Advance Placement Java students competed in a Java Computer Science Contest at General Electric Corporate Headquarters in Fairfield, CT, where Junior **ROSS CARROLL** placed in the top 20 to receive a free computer science course at Fairfield University...The Plainville Community Schools Reading Partners Program received a State Farm Good Neighbor Grant designated for the purchase of books for the program...**PHS STUDENTS DAN HERMANOWSKI AND NOELLE CORRIVEAU** under the direction of **TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION INSTRUCTOR DAVID GAIGNARD,** created a narrated video of Plainville Community Schools for use at recruitment events and college fairs...**WHEELER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL 4TH GRADERS NINA CATANZARO, RYAN GORHAM, MARYAN SARGIZIAN, TIM SULLIVAN, MADISON RICHARDSON, AND TIM DIXON** participated in the Connecticut Invention Convention at the University of Connecticut...**PLAINVILLE HIGH SCHOOL SENIOR SARAH TANNER** received the *Connecticut Association of Boards of Education Student Leadership Award*...**MIDDLE SCHOOL OF PLAINVILLE TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION TEACHER CAMILLE WESTFALL** received an *Outstanding Service Award* for ten years of service as Treasurer for the Technology Education Executive Board and **PLAINVILLE HIGH SCHOOL TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION INSTRUCTOR DAVID GAIGNARD** received a *Technology Education Recognition Award* for overall achievement in the field of technology education...**PLAINVILLE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS KASEY OLSEN, KRISTEN CARROCCIA, SARAH BROWN, RACHEL WISK, KEVIN BYRNE, BRITTANY DAY, SARAH TANNER, LIZ SISSON, TAYLOR PERUN, MATTHEW TANNER, LEXI MCCUSKER, AND QUINTIN WELLS** participated in the United Way Day of Caring, assisting with a number of community service projects in Plainville, Bristol and Terryville...**MIDDLE SCHOOL OF PLAINVILLE STUDENTS ALLESANDRA CAPONIGRO AND TOM DINDA** were selected to receive the *Scholar-Leader Award* from the Connecticut Association of Schools in recognition of scholarship and leadership in school and in the community...**BILL CALDER** has been named the 2007-2008 Plainville Community Schools Mentor of the Year and **SANDY KUFTA** has been selected as the 2007-2008 Plainville Community Schools Volunteer of the Year for their volunteer service to the school district...**TOFFOLON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL 4TH GRADER EMILY EISENHAUER** was honored at the CT Student Writers' Recognition Night at the University of Connecticut...**PHS STUDENTS MATTHEW WILDE, MATT AU, MELANIE NORTON, LUCY BROWN, ALAN MULLIN, ALEX PETIT, SPENCER WATKINS, AND GARY YORK** competed in the UCONN Physics Olympics winning two first place honors and a third place honor amongst 18 teams from throughout Connecticut.

PLAINVILLE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Kathleen Binkowski, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools

Board Members:
Jesse Gnazzo
Anthony Goldberg
Lorri Goldsmith
Art Hoerle
Keith A. LaCombe
Tabitha Manafort
Patrick Ringrose
Becky Tyrrell
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 safe, caring learning environment that respects individual difference and rejects discrimination of any form
- that optimal achievement for all learners is a responsibility shared by home, school and community
- that all students, faculty, staff, and parents are accountable to participate and maintain a positive learning environment throughout the district
- a high quality curriculum emphasizes the arts, literacy, and technology
- effective communication and collaboration builds trust and respect