



# Community Letter

Spring 2012

*Promote a challenging environment creating an extraordinary community of learners*

## Message from the Board of Education

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Starting on March 1, Plainville Community Schools began implementing a new energy conservation program with a company called "Energy Education." The goal is to help our schools reduce the consumption of electricity, allowing the financial savings to be invested in our students. On average, Energy Education typically saves its clients 20-30% off of their utility bills. Many save even more. But to achieve these kinds of savings it requires more than just a few cost saving ideas. First, Energy Education will offer us hundreds of recommendations specific to our environment and the expertise to implement them. Second, they will offer a powerful implementation methodology involving four components: Assessment & Planning, Coordination & Communication, Leadership & Focus and Measurement & Verification. And the best part is that the cost of funding this program will come from the savings generated.

So by redirecting a small percentage of the district's current utility budget for this energy initiative, a greater share of the utility budget is recaptured and available to be reinvested in teachers, books, curriculum, facilities improvements and other more important priorities.

## Community Connections: Volunteers

Community involvement is an important component of a successful school district. The Plainville Community Schools' Volunteer Program serves as a catalyst, bridging the school community and the greater community. Volunteers from the community and local businesses provide a wealth of support, expertise, and resources to Plainville students. Volunteers serve in a variety of capacities--as mentors, tutors, classroom volunteers, and more. A new partnership with AXA Equitable paired AXA employees with students in Marketing classes at Plainville High School for a session on job interviews, which included one on one interviews and tips on how to prepare for the interview process. AXA employees also serve as volunteer mentors in the school district, and hope to expand collaboration with high school students in the areas of job readiness skills and career exploration. A number of employees from the Plainville Liberty Bank branch also serve as volunteer mentors to students across the school district. These individuals, together with volunteers from Webster Bank, General Electric, the UBI Federal Credit Union, the Plainville Police Department, parents and members of the local community make up the many individuals who support Plainville students

through volunteerism.

During the month of April, Plainville Community Schools celebrates National Volunteer Week, recognizing the critical role volunteers play in the district. "National Volunteer Week is an opportunity to pause and say thank you to our many volunteers who share their time and talent with our students and staff throughout the year," said Volunteer Coordinator Sue Bradley. For more information about the Plainville Community Schools' Volunteer Program, please contact: Sue Bradley, (860) 793-3210 ext. 212 or via email at: [bradleys@plainvilleschools.org](mailto:bradleys@plainvilleschools.org).



*Mentor Program participants gather at the "Minute to Win It" event held at the Louis Toffolon School in January.*

# Budget News

The Board of Education approved a 2012-13 budget of \$33,267,104 at its February meeting. This budget represented an increase of \$577,309 or 1.77% over the current fiscal year. The Board also passed a capital budget that included items totaling \$80,000. The Board of Education's budget contained funding sufficient to maintain existing services. On March 5, the Town Manager and Superintendent presented the town and Board of Education bud-

gets to the Town Council. On the town side of the budget, one of the main points made by the town manager was that in the past 20 years, the combined expenditure increases for the past three years have been far lower than the increase in any single year, except for 1993. Also, the Town Manager pointed out that due to property re-evaluation, 72% of all residential taxpayers would actually see a tax decrease. Overall, the general government budget was scheduled to

increase by 3.36% under the proposal outlined by the Town Manager on March 5. On March 8, a public hearing was held on the Town Manager's proposed budget. At that public hearing, there was near unanimous support of the Board of Education budget with many residents urging the Town Council not to make cuts to the budget.

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## Where do you find inspiration for your work?

**Mr. Richters:** The urban streets I drive along. I live in the city and have found the street art to be an inspiration. I also have found inspiration from the contemporary art galleries in New York.

**Mrs. Pietri:** I'm mostly inspired by nature and my ancestry and ancient times and civilizations.

**Mr. Pires:** I am constantly inspired by things around me and things that people say.

## What do you enjoy about teaching art to students?

**Mr. Richters:** Besides their creativity, I enjoy the students' sense of humor.

**Mrs. Pietri:** I love when students get excited and they get an idea, run with it, and push the limit.

**Mr. Pires:** I like when they can pick up techniques and use them to explain their own ideas.

## How does art support Plainville High School's Mission Statement?

**Mr. Richters:** We use technology along with having students use creative and artistic expression. We expect everyone to be able to be unique and exchange ideas.

**Mrs. Pietri:** We utilize problem solving and reasoning strategies along with having students demonstrate competence in and/or an understanding of artistic and creative expression. When we display the artwork, it contributes to the school and community.

**Mr. Pires:** Art supports many parts of the school's Mission, but especially that students will demonstrate competence in and/or an understanding of artistic and creative expression. Students are also exposed to new technology and problem solving strategies.



Laurel Underwood



Cameron Bard



Jenna Florence



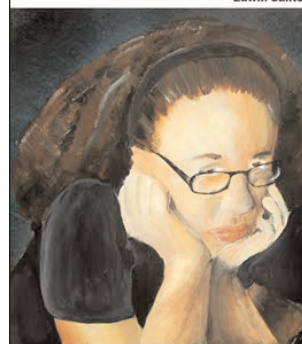
Holly Freeman



Edwin Santos



Nicole Hogan



Trisha Sunderland



Kaylyn Nelson

The Plainville High School Art Department has created an online art gallery that displays students' work. Please visit:

<https://sites.google.com/a/plainvilleschools.org/phs-art-gallery/>

*Don't miss the Town-wide Art Show in May!*





**Kevin Ross, Director of Information Technology**

### What are your responsibilities as Director of Information Technology?

I oversee all aspects of technology from design, installation, maintenance and support of all computer systems in the district. I also manage the technology staff that includes three technicians and one database specialist.

### What is your top priority?

Making sure that students and staff have access to technology that supports learning in a timely and meaningful way.

### How has technology in the school district changed over the past several years?

Over the last five years, educational technology changed significantly.

It has become more complex with multiple data systems that need to work in conjunction with one another. Access has also changed; it used to be that systems were accessed during school hours. Now many of our systems are accessed from home 24 hours a day.

### Where is district technology headed going forward?

Technology is becoming increasingly more mobile. With the use of smart phones and tablets like the iPad, people are using and accessing technology more frequently. I think, in the not so distant future, we will be replacing our textbooks with tablets that open up a world of possibilities in education.

## Good News!

Great things are happening in our school district.

### LINDEN STREET SCHOOL

Students at Linden made more than 80 Valentine's Day cards for residents of the Plainville Apple Valley Rehabilitation Facility. The students enjoyed creating different cards to send a message of caring and love as they learned the importance of giving back to the community...

The Linden Student Council attended *The Connecticut Association of Schools Elementary Level Student Leadership Training Conference* where they participated in numerous activities centered on the themes of decision making, communication and problem solving.

### LOUIS TOFFOLON SCHOOL

The Toffolon School Select Choir, under the direction of music instructor **Greg Wilfrid**, sang *God Bless America* during the second intermission of the CT Whale versus the Portland Pirates hockey game on March 23...Toffolon instrumental instructor **Michael Boncimino** was selected to conduct at the *New York State Band Director's Association Winter Conference* in March.

### FRANK T. WHEELER SCHOOL

Wheeler fifth grader **Peter Bienasz** is a Hartford County winner of the 28th Annual Connecticut Fire Prevention Poster Contest...Wheeler held its first "Walk the School" event on March 30 as part of the Healthy Plainville Coalition's "Walk To School" days. Wheeler students walked laps around the school grounds prior to the start of the school day.

### MIDDLE SCHOOL OF PLAINVILLE

The Middle School of Plainville's **Kid's Lit Quiz Teams**, coached by Library Information Instructor **Joyce Lynch** competed with 29 teams from across Connecticut on February 3 at Central Connecticut State University. Both Plainville teams excelled, placing fourth and fifth overall. Each team also had the highest score within a category, winning each team member a book...Sharon Valley, Outreach Coordinator for Bob's Discount Furniture, recently visited faculty and students at the Middle School of Plainville to present a \$1,000 donation...the Middle School held its annual Students versus Staff Basketball game on March 30, raising \$5,000. Proceeds from the event will go to the Make A Wish Foundation, in memory of Joe Spagna.

### PLAINVILLE HIGH SCHOOL

Seniors **Kate Willard** and **Nick Giuliani** are coordinating the *Soles for Souls* initiative, collecting and redistributing new and gently used shoes and sneakers in the U.S. and to more than 127 countries worldwide. Collection boxes have been set up at all 5 Plainville schools and other locations in town...The **DECA** (Distributive Education Clubs of America) group recently competed in the State Conference with schools from across Connecticut. **Alle Caponigro**, **Matthew Ettore**, **Lilly Bosco**, and **Nicholas Evangelista** were state finalists and became eligible to compete nationally...Senior wrestler **Doreen Barbagallo** recently won the New England USGWA Girls Wrestling Championship in Nashua, New Hampshire and sophomore swimmer **Andrew Rottier** set a new school record in the 200 yard Individual Medley at the class "S" state trials held at PHS.

## Did You Know?

Students in David Gagnard's Communication 3 class at Plainville High School recently collaborated with the Plainville Chamber of Commerce on redesigning the Chamber's logo. The logo is used for advertisements, web-layouts, letterhead, business cards, and more. Through the collaboration, one of the Plainville High School student designs was selected to be used as the new logo!

## Budget News (continued from page 2)

On March 20, Superintendent Kitching, Director of Finance and Operations, Rich Carmelich and Board of Education Chair, Andrea Saunders appeared before the Town Council to answer questions on several budget related topics and to discuss the details of the budget document that the Board of Education had furnished the Town Council in advance of these meetings. At these sessions, examples of the questions posed by the Town Council include questions about budget drivers, grants and staffing levels.

On March 26, the Town Council voted to reduce the Board of Education's budget to \$33,067,104 -- or an increase of 1.15%. This reduction will reduce the Board's approved budget by \$200,000. This reduction will have an impact on services contained in the Board of Education approved budget. A public hearing on the Town Council's budget was held on April 2. At that

public hearing, 35 residents spoke about the budget with 24 indicating that they wanted funds added back to the Board of Education budget. The Town Council also received 11 emails, 10 of which supported adding money back to the Board budget. However, despite this support for the Board of Education approved budget, the Town Council voted to maintain the \$200,000 reduction and not add those funds back to the budget. Instead, the Town Council decided to add an advisory question to the ballot. Residents will vote "Yes" to approve the budget as proposed, or "No" to reject the budget. The advisory question will then ask only those who vote "No" to indicate whether they did so because they feel the proposed budget is too high or too low.

The Board of Education will meet before the all-day vote this month to discuss the impact and make decisions on where adjustments

will be made to accommodate the cut. The first all-day vote on the 2012-13 budget will be held on April 24. If the budget fails at the first vote, there will be another public hearing held on April 26, followed by a second all-day vote on May 8. If the budget fails at the second vote, there will be another public hearing held on May 10, followed by a third and final all-day vote on May 22. As the budget process continues, the Town Council will continue to make adjustments to the budget until the budget either passes at the all-day vote or becomes enacted after a failed third all day vote. Throughout the process and once the budget is approved, district administration will work with the Board of Education to discuss impacts of any adjustments to their approved budget and the Board will hold budget work sessions, open to the public, to make any necessary changes.

### PLAINVILLE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Jeffrey C. Kitching  
*Superintendent of Schools*

Robert Anderson  
 Lisa Buckley  
 Michael Giuliano  
 Deborah Hardy  
 Charlotte Koskoff  
 Cheryl Provost  
 Andrea Saunders  
 Becky Tyrrell  
 Barbara 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 and sciences, with a focus on literacy, mathematics and technology
- effective communication and collaboration builds trust and respect