

AAPSNews

News, features, profiles and activities in The Ann Arbor Public Schools

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District summer projects under way

Pioneer High changes funded by 2004 bonds

From AAPSNews Service

As students and their families wind down from the rigors of a school year and look ahead to summer, the Ann Arbor Public Schools is gearing up for a summer loaded with projects.

The largest of these is a \$1.7 million project at Pioneer High School, where a city of portable classrooms will make way for a student courtyard green space, the cafeteria will be expanded and a large domed skylight added, the entry/office and corridors renovated and changes are planned to the culinary arts and business lab areas as well as roof and boiler repairs.

“It’s going to be quite dramatic,” said Randy Trent, executive director for physical properties. “It’s going to have a very different feel.”

The Pioneer project is the finale in the district’s Capital Improvement Project, funded by a 2004 bond issue, which allowed the district to complete a large variety of work including construction of Skyline High School. The construction manager for the Pioneer project is Lansing-based Granger Construction with bids awarded to nine contractors for the summer work.

The most substantial change at Pioneer will be removal of 15 portable classrooms on the south end of the building that have been in place for decades.

See *Summer Projects*, page 4

Preschool market assists families

Produce given out monthly, Chartwells does pre-cooked chicken dinners in June

From AAPSNews Service

The Ann Arbor Preschool & Family Center families have gone home with armloads of fresh, seasonal produce since last fall thanks to a wellness initiative that involves Chartwells, Food Gatherers and The Ann Arbor Public Schools’ Health and Wellness Committee.

The Farmers school’s Market has offered a fresh bounty as well as cooking demonstrations for healthy eating.

This month, Chartwells kicked it up a notch by providing reheatable chicken dinners; the food service provider’s regional staff cooked the dinners and offered reheating tips for families.

Chef Neil Murphy often gives



Staff from Chartwells hands out pre-cooked chicken dinners at the Ann Arbor Preschool & Family Center this month.

the cooking demonstrations. This month, he was giving sampler plates of honey-glazed chicken, mashed potatoes and vegetables – a taste of dinner to come.

“It’s something we like to do every month,” Murphy said. “Showing them healthy ideas of things they can do at home (with the food from the market) or things they have at home

Featured story
VIDEO online at news.a2schools.org

already.”
Tsighe Teclenmaria’s daughter attends the Preschool & Family Center and they were enjoying a sampling of the chicken dinner as he was picking her up at school.

See *Market Day*, page 4

Shoppers get bargains, support their schools

By Casey Hans
AAPSNews Service

What started as a community yard sale at Tappan Middle School in the spring of 1994 has taken root and become a substantial, nonprofit thrift shop with donations benefiting Ann Arbor Public Schools students.

Each year, thousands of dollars in proceeds from The Ann Arbor PTO Thrift Shop are given back to the schools for a variety of extracurricular programs.

Located in a rented 18,000-square-foot space in what is known as “Resale Row” along Industrial Highway in Ann Arbor, the shop offers everything from a full room of books and music to “departments” featuring furniture, clothing, jewelry, small appliances and housewares. The 501(c)(3) nonprofit is overseen by a volunteer board of directors.

At the heart of it all is store Manager Susan Soth and 16 mostly part-time staff. Soth started as a volunteer, working her way to assistant manager, then the top job.

“I just fell into it and really, really love the idea,” she said. “And I believe in recycling too, so this is a win-win for me.”

Soth can be found sorting and working alongside her staff, but she also keeps an eye on displays and tries to keep them as user-friendly as possible. “I set it up as if I were shopping here,” she said.

The staff gets the most money that they can for unique items, while keeping everything reasonably priced. She said they often price unique items on eBay to determine their value and sometimes sell there to make more money for the store – and ultimately the schools. About 15 Ann Arbor schools are involved with the thrift shop, volunteering time and doing donation drives there.

“We get new donations in every day. The treasures you find here are like no others,” Soth said. “Everything gets recycled. We are one of the cheapest as far as our merchandise (prices) go.”

Items are marked down weekly – sometimes up to 50 percent off – and

there are always specials posted on the Web site and alerts about specials are sent to members of the group’s Facebook fan page. If clothing goes unsold in the shop, it is bundled and sold in bulk to a textiles wholesaler. Nothing goes to waste, Soth said.

The shop’s mission is to bring money back into the Ann Arbor schools, said Ann Holz, a member of the nonprofit’s board and one of the founders of the shop. But, the shop also helps the community by offering good merchandise at reasonable prices.

“We’re helping people in this recession. That was part of our mission when we set this up: To be a service to the community.”

Shoppers from Ann Arbor frequent the store, such as Nana Yawson, who stops in a few times each month to find new treasures. Today, he has picked up a clipper ship model and is browsing the art books. “Today, I’m going for the art side. It depends on what mood I’m in,” he said.

But the store also draws from outside of the Ann Arbor area. Kim Hutton and Amy Pahl, sisters from Jackson, made a trip to Ann Arbor just to visit the shop. “My girlfriend lives in Grass Lake and she turned me onto it,” said Pahl who had picked out some household goods.

Lisa Marimpietri of Monroe was shopping with her son, Joshua, 5, and daughter, Jesica, 11. All had their heads in the book section. “When I’m out here (in Ann Arbor), I come by,” she said. “I home school, so I always look for books.”

And while items are going out the front door, more are coming in the back.

Spencer Robinson, a 2007 graduate of Huron High School, worked as a volunteer in the store while in school. Today, the Washtenaw Community College student works at the store, picking up large items for donation.

“Everyone’s doing their spring cleaning,” he said, unloading a collection of filing cabinets.

The PTO Thrift Shop offers free pickup of furniture and large items in



A customer browses in the handbag section of the Ann Arbor PTO Thrift Shop on Industrial Highway.

and around Ann Arbor,

The more that is sold, the more comes back to the schools. “That’s the name of the game: Get the money in and get it back out to the schools,” Soth said.

Because of its mission, the store is unique, she said. “I feel every child should have the opportunity to go on their school trips,” she added. And the PTO Thrift Shop helps many do just that, by groups fundraising for these trips and the funds earned getting distributed equally among the students in that group.

To receive money, schools must have a designated PTO representative. The more they volunteer and participate, the more money they can make. Money is distributed to PTOs in September, January and May.

The Ann Arbor model was based on one Holz saw in Chapel Hill, NC. The original yard sale at Tappan included donations from that school as well as the communities of Angell, Bryant-Pattengill and Burns Park and was a rousing success, she said. The May 26, 1994 sale raised \$4,882 and encouraged Holz and other organizers to move forward with plans for the store.

A more detailed version of this story can be found online.



The Ann Arbor PTO Thrift Shop

What: A 15-year-old nonprofit that supports The Ann Arbor Public Schools.

Where: 2280 S. Industrial Highway, between Eisenhower and Stadium, along the area known as “Resale Row.”

Shopping hours: 9 a.m.-7 p.m. Monday-Friday; 9 a.m.-6 p.m. Saturday and 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Sunday.

Donation hours: 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Monday-Friday; 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday. No donations taken on Sunday. Free pickup of large items is offered in Ann Arbor, Saline, Dexter and Ypsilanti areas; call to schedule.

Details: 734-996-9155
<http://a2ptothriftshop.org/>

Staff in the Spotlight

Jeff Bradley, teacher who heads up the Skyline Health and Medicine Magnet program. Bradley has taught science in the district for 25 years, at Slauson Middle School prior to his move to Skyline.



Bradley makes science come alive at Skyline

From AAPSNews Service

Jeff Bradley's "Guy In A Tie" moniker carries this long-time Ann Arbor science teacher through his day, his week, his school year.

With his philosophy of being kind, polite and thorough in the classroom, his guy-in-a-tie approach brings structure to his classroom which helps students learn in the technical fields of science and medicine.

"The tie shows that I'm ready, prepared to teach every day," he said. "It doesn't mean anything to anyone else, but it means something to me." Two of his Web pages carry the theme: GuyInATie.com where he podcasts and ScienceGuyInATie.com where he plans lessons and posts grades and other program information. A third site, SkylineHealthMagnet.com introduces students and parents to his program at Skyline.

Although serious in the classroom, Bradley has been known to cut loose while watching his Detroit Red Wings or playing his bagpipes – a practice he took up three years to honor his Scottish heritage.

Bradley came to Skyline High

School from Slauson Middle School to start the Science and Medicine Magnet, one of four magnet programs at Skyline. He had 60 students this year and will have 30 more when a new class of sophomores arrives in the fall. The magnet is designed to prepare students for medicine, biomedical research/science or bioengineering.

About 70 percent of his students are female, something he said reflects the makeup of programs such as area medical schools which are attracting many more women.

The program is enhanced by a week-long biomedical engineering summer camp at The University of Michigan.

While Skyline has "rigor, relevance and relationships" as its focus, Bradley said he always puts relationships first. "From start to finish, the kids know it," he said. "This school is about relationships. We really want them to succeed."

"I've always been pretty positive about kids," he added. "They can make mistakes, and I say 'it's just us here. Let's learn from them before you have to go

See Jeff Bradley, page 4

Jeff Bradley

Occupation: Lead teacher for the Skyline High School Health and Medicine Magnet program.

Residence: Ann Arbor resident and native.

Education: Undergraduate degree from The University of Michigan; graduate degrees from Eastern Michigan University and the University of Colorado.

Age: 46

Family: Married to Sarah, who is a teacher at Abbot Elementary School. They have two daughters: Maia, 11, and Emma, 9.

Pets: A Siberian husky named Kaya.

Hobbies: Plays the bagpipes, is a die-hard Detroit Red Wings fan and podcasts at GuyInATie.com. He loves to take family vacations with an Earth science theme.

Claim to fame: Was instrumental in helping to get the mastodon recognized as Michigan's state fossil.

Favorite meal: "Collard greens, turnip greens, mustard greens, anything with that strong flavor." He also loves the Scottish dish, haggis.

Favorite movies: "A River Runs Through It" and "Field of Dreams."

Favorite books: "The Giving Tree" by Shel Silverstein, "A River Runs Through It" by Norman Maclean and "Outbreak" by Robin Cook.

Life philosophy: "My philosophy would follow my expectations in class: Be kind, polite and thorough. I always tell the students to cross your 't's and dot your 'i's."



Atulya Shetty, who will be a freshman at Huron High School this fall, has played chess since the age of 4. He will represent the United States at the 2010 World Youth Chess Championship this fall in Greece.

14-year-old chess player to represent U.S.

From AAPSNews Service

When the teachers at Atulya Shetty's preschool played chess during recess, 4-year-old Atulya watched and learned to play the game.

"I was just playing for fun," said the 14-year-old who will be a freshman this fall at Huron High School. What he remembers now about those early years was "that I couldn't stop playing."

This year, Atulya is one of 57 students to qualify for the fall 2010 World Youth Chess Championship in Greece, where he will travel with his dad, Sharat Shetty, to participate in the U14 category representing the U.S. as a delegate for the United States Chess Federation. He is one of three Michigan youngsters who will participate.

He also represented the United States at the WYCC in 2006 in the Republic of Georgia and in 2008 traveling to Vietnam.

His first big chess win came in the 2002 National K-12 Chess Championships in Atlanta where he won first place in the first-grade section. In 2007 and 2008, he was named to the All-American Chess Team. In addition to his trip to Greece this fall, he is also among the top eight players in the country to be invited this July to the 2010 USCF Cadet Championship in Tennessee.

So, what does Atulya like about the game?

"It give me a challenge, always," he said. "It gives me something to learn." He studies his competitors, especially their opening chess moves. He said he plays with a "tactical style," allowing him to win chess pieces more readily.

"If you enjoy it, keep playing," he advised. "I pretty much do it because it's fun for me."

In school, he loves the subject of math and also has participated over the years in other activities including basketball, soccer and baseball. He also plays percussion in the school band.

(Ed. Note: The district received parental permission to write about this student and his achievement.)

Summer Projects, from page 1

In their place will be a large expanse of green space with lawn and trees, where students can study, play and spend time out-of-doors.

“We looked at how we could bring spaces and give more opportunities for students,” Trent explained. “They’ll use it. They’ll love it. It won’t be this portable village anymore.”

Preliminary work is set to begin today (June 21) with major demolition taking place the coming few weeks. Interior construction is scheduled for completion in mid-to-late August and student courtyard construction will be done by the end of October to allow the fall season for sodding. The courtyard will also include plenty of trees as part of the green space plan.

The change will also limit vehicle access to the south area, which is a safety improvement at Pioneer, Trent said. “All car entry (to the area) will be controlled now.” Also, Chartwells (the district’s food service provider) will work out of Skyline High School during the summer months.

The portables will be removed and some of the furniture will be reused and a movie company will pay the district to make use of old chalkboards and whiteboards as well as old desks, Trent said. He noted that a portable unit will be used south of the Community Education & Recreation Department for another school year while Pioneer continues its transition downward in size as Skyline High School gears up for a full four grades.

Other summer construction projects involve paving, roofing, required Americans With Disabilities Act changes and work to improve energy consumption in the district. All work is being paid for out of the 2010 district sinking fund.

These projects include:

- **Paving:** \$476,000 in work is scheduled for parking lots at Angell and Carpenter elementaries and Clague, Scarlett, Slauson and Tappan middle schools. At Thurston Elementary School, the parking lot has been redesigned and reconfigured in a major redo that

will cost \$200,000.

- **Roofing:** \$1.15 million in roof replacements are scheduled for sections of rooftops at Pioneer and Huron high schools; Forsythe, Slauson and Clague middle schools; and Mitchell and Northside elementaries. Trent noted that there are multiple roofs at every building. Of the 33 buildings in the district, he said, there are 200 different roof sections. A facilities assessment ranks the roof sections on a capital needs basis, as to when they need work, he said.

- **ADA site work:** \$73,800 worth of improvements will be done at Allen and Haisley elementary schools, Scarlett Middle School, Stone High School and the transportation building. Trent said the work includes making sidewalks and building entrances accessible and improving signs for classrooms. The district has already made ADA improvements in 22 buildings. A list of ADA-accessible walkways is available on the district Web page.

- **Energy Conservation:** Johnson

Controls, Inc. was selected from five bidders to work with the district on an energy-reduction program, guaranteeing the district \$273,000 in positive cash flow, according to a report to the school board. The program involves training staff and students to make behavioral changes in energy use to accomplish savings. In a recent report to the board, Trent said the company had helped the district save \$13 million since 1993. The company’s fee is \$256,000.

Trent noted that the current economy has allowed the district to get good pricing on projects when bidding. “We’re able to get a lot more for the money,” he said, thus allowing the district to do more with the projects. “Residents supported us in tough times and they’re getting the benefit for it now.”

In addition to hardscape projects, the district is also economizing by putting maintenance staff into teams this summer to clean school buildings. “This lets us be more efficient and schedule around construction,” he added.

Market Day, from page 1

“These potatoes are good,” he said, adding that he appreciates the Farmers Market and this month’s extra chicken dinners.

Principal Michelle Pogliano said the Farmers Market occurs on the second Thursday of the month and she said there would be two or three more markets in the summer, including one when the school does walk-in enrollment.

Pogliano said the school gets the word out to families before the market and this time, used the SchoolMessenger parent messaging system to remind them.

“This is for any family for any program in the building,” she said. “The pre-cooked dinners were a big hit.” She said Murphy’s cooking demonstrations also have been

popular with families showing them “how to use the food (from the market) and show them healthy alternatives.”

Sara Aeschbach is director of Community Education & Recreation and is also involved with district wellness initiatives. She said this month’s project is possible due to the collaboration of Food Gatherers, which supplied the food; Chartwells, which did the cooking and packaging; and the Pre-School & Family for distribution.

“There is a goal to encourage healthy eating and alternatives to fast, fatty foods,” she said. “Our initial goal is to encourage an at-home family dinner at least once per week.

“Hopefully, the chicken dinner project will be a nice start to that tradition among the families.”

Jeff Bradley, from page 3

out into the real world where it really counts.’ These kids are the future nurses, doctors, scientists.”

Bradley said the magnet program goes a long way toward encouraging students. “Even kids who don’t really like labs, they get into this magnet and build their confidence,” he said.

Pete Pasque, instructional technologist at Skyline, has worked with Bradley since the team was brought together to create the district’s newest high school. He has watched Bradley manage students across three classrooms. While he’s helping at one end of the magnet center, students at the other end are engaged and working on their own.

“That’s the sign of an excellent teacher,” Pasque said. “The thing about Jeff, is that everything he does is focused around the kids.”

Bradley grew up loving science, was an Eagle Scout and is naturally

curious, “a good blend for me,” he said. A number of mentors piqued his interest and got him going in the right direction, he said.

One of those was teacher Marilyn Williams, now deceased, whom he worked with as a student teacher at Slauson Middle School. While speaking with her one day, Williams’ daughter, Sarah, was on hand and Bradley was smitten. He eventually married Sarah and went on to assume Williams’ teaching post when she retired.

Those mentors helped him to focus his educational style.

“They taught me it’s not just about regurgitating facts,” he said. “Education is a pinnacle. Each student has his own path and has to find out ‘how am I going to get there?’”

Bradley is determined to help them find out.