

AAPSNews

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

More news and features online at <http://news.a2schools.org>

Inside:

The Washtenaw Intermediate School District Board of Education will ask voters to approve a Special Education Millage renewal this spring, Page 4

Issue No. 27, January 3, 2011

Bright halls

'Paint for Kids' project beautifies Carpenter and Mitchell schools

By Casey Hans
AAPSNews Service

Two local painting contractors volunteered their time to the Ann Arbor Public Schools, pulling together community members to paint hallways at Mitchell and Carpenter elementary schools over the December school break.

Both schools participated in the first "Paint for Kids" days, put together by painting contractors Gene Firm and Bill Champion. Firm supervised volunteers at Mitchell Elementary and Champion did the same at Carpenter.

In a pilot effort that they hope will develop into a volunteer program in other Ann Arbor schools, the two coordinated painting at both Mitchell and Carpenter on Dec. 28-29, working on the school's entry hallways and beyond.

At Mitchell on Tuesday, a volunteer crew of about 10 was moving along quickly on their allotted project on – prepping and painting the main entry hall and another along a wing of classrooms.



Parent Jane Sierra, bottom, and Jullie Walstra, an AAPS employee, volunteer their time painting at Carpenter Elementary School over the December break. Volunteers painted at Carpenter and Mitchell elementaries.

Bethany Villarreal was busy rolling. The 2006 Huron High School graduate and neighborhood resident said she came by to help after getting a link on her Facebook feed. "I heard about it and came over," she said.

Parents John and Sarah McCallum came as a

See 'Paint for Kids,' page 6

County's 1st 'Safe Routes' funding goes to Thurston

Elementary neighborhood to get improved crossings, education programs

From AAPSNews Service

Ann Arbor's Thurston Elementary School is one of 11 schools around the state to be awarded federal Safe Routes to School funding through the Michigan Department of Transportation for safety improvements and education programs.

The project has been fully funded at \$160,840, according to information from state and county officials. SRTS funding is 100 percent federal, with no local match required.

Thurston is the first school in Washt-

See Safe Routes, page 4

Participants are sought to update 3 Strategic Plan Action Teams this winter

From AAPSNews Service

Ann Arbor Public Schools is beginning a process to update its 2007 Strategic Plan and is asking for community involvement in groups that will meet to update portions of the plan.

Three Strategic Plan Action Teams will begin meeting this month to amend Action Steps for three of the district's Strategies. The teams will

meet from January through March; how often and when the teams meet will be determined at the first meeting, said Director of Communications Liz Margolis.

After the teams have met, they will make recommendations for plan adjustments to the AAPS Strategic Planning Team in late March. If approved by the Strategic Planning Team, they will be presented to the AAPS Board of Education

for final approval in April.

Margolis said this is an opportunity for residents to help shape the future of the district and how it serves students. The AAPS Strategic Plan has eight strategies that provide the district with a framework in the areas of budget and resource allocation, decision making on curriculum and

See Strategic Plan, page 4

Grant efforts are centralized for district

Chris Barry will tap new resources, coordinate volunteer program

By Casey Hans
AAPSNews Service

For the first time, the Ann Arbor Public Schools will centrally coordinate its efforts to secure grants for the district and individual schools.

Chris Barry has been hired as the district's Grants and Volunteer Coordinator, tapping grant resources and assisting teachers and other staff members who are pursuing individual grants.

Staff in the Spotlight

Although she will devote most of her time to creating and running the grants office, she will also coordinate the district's volunteer program, previously handled by Norma McCuiston who retired in 2010. McCuiston's job duties were restructured and divided among several people.

"We have never had a designated grants person," explained Director of Communications

See Barry, page 8



Chris Barry will coordinate efforts to secure more grants for the Ann Arbor Public Schools.

Forsythe launches new Robotics Club to encourage curiosity, love of science

From AAPSNews Service

Twenty one Forsythe Middle School students looking for an extra challenge got just that this fall as members of the school's first Robotics Club.

The club is co-coached by Forsythe teachers Ami Snapke and Mikell Eiler and Snapke said she is looking forward to the club's second year. It includes students in all grades.

Snapke said she was approached about starting the club by Skyline High School Robotics Club coach David Coupland. She had a table at fall school registration and signed up the school's first team.

"It seemed like such a positive, fun thing to do," she said. "I'm really proud of the kids – they did so well."

The \$700 cost of the club – including purchasing robots – came from the school's PTSO and a General Motors grant.

The club participated in its first competition on Nov. 20 in Monroe, with a focus on the topic of "biomedical engineering." They moved red blood cells as one of their missions and also researched color blindness and lung cancer and created presentations about them.

Viking Bots team No. 9452 won an award for "Gracious Profession-



alism" at the competition and team No. 2257 placed fifth place for highest points earned in robot-to-robot competition at the table. Skyline Robotics Club mentors were on hand to assist.

Although some students might be good in either robotics or research, Snapke said she tries to mix

it up. "I try to get everyone to do everything – get out of their comfort zone," she said.

Snapke said she had not worked with robots before, but said the programs are not complicated. "It's nice to see the program is icon-based," she said. "You don't need to know computer code to write a program."



Science teacher and Robotics Club co-coach Ami Snapke, left, works with club members researching information. Above, members test a hypothesis. Below, students show how the robots from this year's competition in Monroe worked.



The club has begun researching "food contamination" for next fall when Snapke hopes to bring in real-life speakers. Anyone interested in being part of the club may contact her at snapkea@aaps.k12.mi.us.

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

Monthly yoga class blends fitness with giving

Proceeds from Saturday sessions benefit local and international nonprofits

Chelsea Cendrowski teaches a yoga class at Community High School. She and her mom, Victoria, donate their time each month to teach Karma Yoga. Victoria Cendrowski is the fitness supervisor with AAPS Community Education and Recreation; Chelsea is a senior at Community High School.



By Casey Hans
AAPSNews Service

A mother-daughter team in Ann Arbor has taken the peaceful, stress-relieving practice of yoga and enhanced it to help causes both locally and internationally.

Karma Yoga was started eight months ago, the brainchild of Community High School senior Chelsea Cendrowski, who co-teaches the class with her mom, Victoria Cendrowski, fitness supervisor for Ann Arbor Public Schools Community Education and Recreation Department. Both teach fitness yoga classes for the Rec & Ed Department, as well.

The two donate their time one Saturday each month to teach the class. A \$10 donation is suggested, but those attending can pay whatever they can afford – no one is turned away.

“It’s bringing the (good) karma back on ourselves,” Chelsea Cendrowski said. “We want as many people to come as possible.” The group usually draws between 15-20 people and anyone is welcome. The facilities in which they host classes can handle up to about 30 people, she said.

After reading “Mountains Beyond Mountains” by Tracy Kidder – a book which chronicles the quest of Dr. Paul Farmer and his Partners in Health organization – Cendrowski said “It made me think ‘what can I do to help others?’”

Since there were no longer Saturday Rec & Ed yoga classes, she got the idea for the donation-funded yoga class to benefit nonprofits. “Some are just groups I know about, my parents know about or what I hear from others. I welcome suggestions too,” she said.

To date, the class has raised \$1,500 for causes both local and international. Donations have been made to Doctors Without Borders, the One Million Reasons campaign for the Ann Arbor Public Schools Educational Foundation, Cambodian Children’s Fund for Education, American Red Cross Disaster Relief, Ann Arbor’s Food Gatherers and The Smile Train

Fit & Fun



Featured classes and activities in AAPS Community Education and Recreation

which does free cleft surgeries for children.

“I like to think it’s helping the local community as well as reaching out to others outside of our community,” Cendrowski said. “I feel lucky to have this opportunity. It’s more than I expected. I feel honored that so many people show up to support the cause.”

It’s Cendrowski’s way of “taking yoga off the mat” and extending the practice out into the world, she said.

Yoga is a mind-body practice, Cendrowski explained. “There are studies that show that yoga changes your brain chemistry,” she said. “You think more clearly. It’s a great stress reliever and a great workout. It’s your time to focus on your body and allow it to relax.”

It also teaches patience and strength and allows participants to apply it in their life, she said. The Karma Yoga sessions are a mix of yoga with Pilates.

Cendrowski hopes to study in a health field upon graduation from Community High School and, if she attends college locally, will continue leading the Karma Yoga into her college years, she said.

Victoria Cendrowski said she is extremely proud of her daughter and the Karma Yoga effort. “It just warms our hearts that we’re able to do this and it goes to a good cause,” she said. “It’s a win-win situation for everybody.”

She noted that the classes include all age and ability levels and “is always a nice group.”

It’s a mother-daughter bonding,” she added. “Coming from a mother’s standpoint, that’s my favorite part.”

Casey Hans writes and edits this newsletter for the Ann Arbor Public Schools. Reach her at hansc@aaps.k12.mi.us or call 734-994-2090.

Karma Yoga

What: A monthly, 90-minute yoga class in Ann Arbor to benefit a selected nonprofit which changes each month.

Who benefits? December’s collection went to Doctors Without Borders; January’s will be for the local Habitat for Humanity of Huron Valley chapter. The nonprofit has built more than 90 homes in Washtenaw County since 1990.

When: The next class will be from 9-10:30 a.m. Jan. 15, 2011 at the Eberbach Cultural Arts Building, 1220 S. Forest St., at the corner of Wells Street, Ann Arbor. (When the weather warms, the classes will move to the dance studio at Community High School.)

Cost: Suggested donation of \$10 or whatever you can afford. Some participants pay more, some less.

Teachers: The mother-daughter team of Victoria and Chelsea Cendrowski donate their teaching time. Victoria is the fitness supervisor with Ann Arbor Public Schools Community Education and Recreation Department (Rec & Ed) and Chelsea is a senior at Community High School.)

Details: E-mail Chelsea Cendrowski at chelseacendrowski@yahoo.com to RSVP for class or to be put on an e-mail list for future classes.

Rec & Ed Yoga classes: There are many yoga offerings through the district’s Rec & Ed Department Visit online at www.aaps.k12.mi.us/reced.home (classes can be found under both fitness and yoga sections of the website) or by calling 734-994-2300.

Safe Routes, from page 1

enaw County to receive Safe Routes to School funds, according to Lily Guzman, health educator with the Washtenaw Department of Public Health who has served as the school's SRTS coordinator.

Carpenter Elementary School and Clague Middle School are also actively working on submitting applications by the end of this school year and other schools in the county are working on safe routes planning and programming, she said.

The Thurston SRTS committee worked closely with the Washtenaw County Department of Public Health on this project. "Many thanks to Lily Guzman, our SRTS coordinator, for keeping us on track and not giving up," said Thurston Principal Pat Manley. "Our parent participants Bret Springgay, Aimee Lahann and Nikole Bonevich worked many hours to map out, write and rewrite the proposal. I am so proud of our Thurston community."

Thurston Elementary, in partnership with the city of Ann Arbor, will implement safety improvements and educational programming. Project components include:

- Upgrading crosswalk pavement markings at five intersections and upgrading advance school warning signs at 33 locations within the Thurston neighborhood.
- Building two new mid-block crosswalks with pedestrian refuge islands on Green Road north of Sugarbush Park and completing a 4- to 3-lane conversion.
- Installing rectangular rapid flashing beacons at 2 locations on Green Road: One at Burbank/Burbank and one at new mid-block crosswalk north of Georgetown sidewalk extension.
- Improving intersection sight distances on Green Road at Gettysburg, installing advance flasher treatment and separating sidewalk from road surface.
- Hosting "Walk-to-School Days" and "Bike Rodeo" events.
- Implementing a Mileage Club.
- Delivering pedestrian and bicycle safety lessons in fall and spring.

"The Wellness Committee is thrilled to have AAPS as a leader

'The Wellness Committee is thrilled to have AAPS as a leader in encouraging kids walking to school.'

– Sara Aeschbach, Community Education & Recreation director and facilitator of the district's Wellness Policy Committee

in encouraging kids walking to school," said Sara Aeschbach, director of Community Education & Recreation for the Ann Arbor Public Schools, who is also the facilitator of the district's Wellness Policy Committee.

State Transportation Director Kirk T. Steudle said funding will enable schools to offer activities and make improvements that encourage students to walk and bicycle safely between home and school.

Safe Routes to School benefits children and communities by encouraging local partners to identify barriers and solutions to walking, bicycling and rolling to school, according to Candace (Lee) Kokinakis, SRTS senior director for the Michigan Fitness Foundation.

"When the distance is reasonable and the routes are safe, a physically active commute to school makes it easy for students to get regular exercise for good health," she said.

MDOT's role is to administer the federally legislated SRTS program. A total of \$1.4 million in SRTS funding was awarded through MDOT, which partners with the Michigan Fitness Foundation to work with schools, communities, students, teachers and parents.

More information is available at online at: www.saferoutesmichigan.org

WISD board to seek renewal of special ed millage

County asked to put issue on May ballot

From the Washtenaw Intermediate School District

The Washtenaw Intermediate School District Board of Education will seek renewal of a .9850 mill for seven years next May to support special education services for students in the 10 school districts in Washtenaw County including Ann Arbor. The millage – first approved by voters in September 2004 – expired in December.

The board voted on Dec. 15 to seek the renewal; the district will submit its request to the Board of County Election Commissioners for approval. If the election is scheduled, registered voters residing within the WISD service area would vote on the issue during the May 3, 2011 election.

"The funds will be used to continue to reimburse local school districts for special

education programs and to help maintain quality services for all students in Washtenaw County's public schools," said WISD Interim Superintendent Richard Leyschok.

Today, nearly 7,000, one in seven —students in Washtenaw County receive some kind of special education service.

"Seven years ago voters approved this millage," Leyschok explained. "We're seeking the renewal because the demand for special education continues. And, without adequate special education millage, local districts will be required to take increasing dollar amounts from their general operating funds to provide special education programs that are required by state and federal law."

For more information, call (734) 994-8100 or visit www.wash.k12.mi.us

Strategic Plan, from page 1

accountability.

The Action Teams that will reconvene in January include:

- **Strategy No. 1** – We will create a complete educational program featuring personalized learning that realizes student aspirations and meets international standards.
- **Strategy No. 5** – We will implement a system to ensure continuous development of staff capacity.

- **Strategy No. 6** – We will engage and inform our constituents to engender trust and support to accomplish our mission and objectives.

Contact Liz Margolis by Jan. 7, 2011 if you would like to be a member of one of the Action Teams listed above.

E-mail her at margolis@aaps.k12.mi.us or leave a message at 734-994-2236.

Spring event spurs interest in science

Annual WESO encourages school teamwork

By Casey Hans
AAPSNews Service

Junior scientists, volunteer coaches and science lovers are already gearing up for the 2011 Washtenaw Elementary Science Olympiad, which takes place each spring.

This is the time of year when events are planned for the annual, team-powered Olympiad so that students, their families and coaches can begin meeting and working on their strategies for this end-of-year tradition.

“It’s all volunteers,” explained WESO board member and retired Ann Arbor science teacher Jane Levy. “It’s for the kids to have fun doing science. It pushes the envelope on the grade level content expectations.”

An eight-person volunteer board coordinates the mega-event with the help of dozens of volunteer parents and staff members. This year’s event is slated for Saturday, June 11 at Skyline High School.

Organizers say it is the largest event of its kind in the country and involves hundreds of young scientists who work in teams of 2-5 students to compete in such events as Straw Tower, where teams build a tower using up to 50 drinking straws; Barge Building, where second-graders construct a barge of aluminum foil that is judged by how much weight it can carry in pennies; or Rock Hunters which tests students’ skills in identifying samples and how they react with various compounds. Students in grades 2-5 compete.

“Some (schools) that are really with it start in the fall – they meet at lunchtime or as an after-school club,” Levy said. As the teams move toward the June event, a typical

SLIDE SHOW of past WESO events online at news.a2schools.org

team meets once per week with their volunteer coaches. Schools are allowed up to 100 students per building – 50 second- and third-graders and 50 fourth- and fifth-graders – to take part.

Who makes WESO go?

Those volunteering can range from parents who have little direct knowledge of science and can manage a planned event to those such as Dr. Mary-Anne Purtill, medical director of surgical critical care at St. Joseph Mercy Hospital, who creates a study guide for her anatomy event, where students have to identify body parts and can create their own EKG.

Some events are paper-and-pencil, while others use building skills. All, Levy said, help enforce the knowledge and skills needed for standard assessment tests such as the Michigan Educational Assessment Program, or MEAP.

Last year was the event’s eighth year and nearly 1,200 students in grades 2-5 took part in the daylong event representing 19 schools from around the county. Most represent the Ann Arbor Public Schools, but several local private schools also participate, organizers said. Information on each event is available on the WESO website, where coaches can download information sheets on each event.

In addition, there are a number of “open” events on the day of the Olympiad where anyone can participate in some fun, hands-on science. The event runs from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., with second- and third-graders competing in the morning and fourth- and fifth-graders in the



Ann Arbor students at a recent Washtenaw Elementary Science Olympiad. This year’s event will be June 11, 2011 at Skyline High School.

afternoon.

WESO organizers say an important feature of the program is teaching students to give back to society. Former WESO participants – middle and high school students – volunteer throughout the day as runners, guides, supervisors, coaches and open event demonstrators.

Many others participate in the daylong event. Parents and community experts serve as coaches and event coordinators and Ann Arbor teachers help with material for events and help to recruit volunteers.

WESO gets start at Pattengill

Retired Ann Arbor teacher Dee Vayda launched WESO in Ann Arbor. She got involved with the movement 12 years ago with her own children in Lenawee County where she lives. Next, she took her children to a large Olympiad in Macomb County, and then expanded that by taking her students.

The next step was to approach Bob Galardi, her then-interim princi-

pal at Pattengill Elementary School, who supported her effort to launch a similar science event here in Ann Arbor. The Pattengill PTO donated \$1,100 to launch WESO and, from there, other schools joined and it grew from there.

Vayda said she took the best of Lenawee and Macomb events and created the Ann Arbor model, which has students compete against students of the same grade levels and rotates new challenges through the event each year. “WESO was a great pet project of mine and I am still thrilled it is still alive and well in Ann Arbor,” Vayda said.

She said it was the parent volunteer effort that grew the event. It is still operated by an eight-member volunteer board and all-volunteer coaching group. Parents also participate on the day of the event, running each challenge.

“It’s pretty impressive,” Vayda

See WESO page 8

There's no napping at Logan

Elementary school partners with Scholastic, donates 134 pairs of pajamas and new books to those in need

From AAPSNews Service

Logan Elementary School came out in force with its first "Great Bedtime Story Pajama Drive," bringing in 134 pairs of new pajamas that were paired with a children's book and donated to the Community Action Network.

The best part: Students and staff got to come to school in their favorite pajamas.

Some families and staff donated pajamas, while others donated money that was used to purchase the new pajamas. The program was done in conjunction with Scholastic Book Clubs and the nonprofit Pajama Program.

This is the first time the Pajama Program has come to the Ann Arbor Public Schools, said Logan Principal Terra Webster. "It's so nice that the pajamas are staying here – in our community," she added.

Community Action Network was founded to address the specific needs of the neighborhoods located in the Southeast section of Ann Arbor

Featured story VIDEO online at a2schools.org

and focuses on advocating for the community, economic development, community improvement and providing services for families.

Second-grade teacher Kristi Krile read bedtime stories to Logan students as part of the event and the school's PTSO provided milk and cookies.

Krile said she found the Scholastic program when she placed her book order a month before; the company said it would pair a new book with a new pair of donated pajamas, and she challenged the school to do just that.

Deidre Todd is the Michigan Chapter president of the Pajama Program who was on hand to accept the pajama donation. She told the story of the founder of the nonprofit, who



Logan second-grade teacher Kristi Krile, right, stands with Diedre Todd, Michigan Chapter President of the Pajama Program. Logan students and staff collected 134 pairs of new pajamas and paired them with new Scholastic books to donate to the Community Action Network.

was moved to create the program after visiting a homeless shelter to read to children. On her second visit, she and took pajamas for the children.

"One little girl didn't know what pajamas were. They were a luxury item," Todd told Logan students. "So she started the Pajama Program. What started out as a small dream for her has grown."

Paint for Kids, from page 1

team, with Sarah saying she had long thought the school needed sprucing up. They bought and donated pizza for the team. "When I saw this project, I thought 'put your money where your mouth is,'" said the PTO co-vice president. "It will be fresh when the kids come back."

Mitchell PTO President Nancy Neff said the project was "long overdue. I wish we had the opportunity to do this a couple of years ago. This is a good start."

Mitchell Principal Kathy Scarnecchia said she was pleased with the effort. "People have called their friends and said 'get out here,'" she said. "There's a lot of energy. It's wonderful. I love the teamwork."

A similar-sized crew could be found at Carpenter, where Principal Ron Collins wielded a paintbrush along with volunteers. "It's great fun to see all of these people come out and share their time and talent with us," Collins said, adding that he would welcome another volunteer painting effort at winter break.

Gilbert Vaknin, whose son is in the first grade, came for the second workday on Wednesday. He said his older daughter, now at Community High,



Gene Firm works with volunteers painting at Mitchell Elementary School.

also attended school at Carpenter, so the family is connected. "We feel a part of the community," he said.

Annette Ferguson, the school district's business partnership coordinator and also a Carpenter parent, was caulking and priming the walls in preparation for paint. "It's a wonderful way to build community, to bring businesses, families and schools together," she said.

Firm said he and Champion hope to continue the pilot program during both the winter and spring breaks and may expand next year to include more schools if there is interest. "How many (schools) will depend on how many painting contractors we can recruit to each take on a particular school," Firm said.

The school district provided the paint and Anderson Paint Co., Home Depot and Lowes provided discounts. Anderson Paint also has agreed to recruit other contractors for future projects, Firm said. The professionals shared painting techniques with participants as part of the project.

The idea for Paint for Kids came to Firm after he began teaching a "Do-It-Yourself Painting Instructors" class through the Community Education and Recreation Department this year. Mitchell volunteered a couple of class walls as a teaching area. Firm, who lives in the neighborhood nearby, got the idea to start the volunteer program and he approached Mitchell Principal Kathy Scarnecchia.

They met with Randy Trent, executive director of physical properties for the Ann Arbor district, to discuss the pilot. District maintenance staff washed and prepped the walls for the crews. "We thought we'd start with the hallway," Firm said. "It has a normal-sized ceiling and it's a visible area for the school."

Champion said he hoped that volunteers viewed the event as a fun, community day that "will be a blast for them and help them take care of their school."

Reach Gene Firm at genefirm@yahoo.com or visit his website at www.genefirncustompainting.com

Partnerships expand learning opportunities for area adults

Classes and tutoring now offered in workplaces, libraries and at county jail

From AAPSNews Service

There is a new face to adult education around Washtenaw County. Not only can adult learners take classes in a neighborhood school, but programs are coming to workplaces and locations such as the Mallets Creek branch of the Ann Arbor District Library.

Students can earn a GED, get tutoring in English as a Second Language and find resources for taking college-level classes and transition to job training and employment. The Ann Arbor Public Schools, the University of Michigan Hospitals and Health Centers, Washtenaw Community College, the Washtenaw County Jail and Washtenaw Literacy are all players in this effort.

AAPS Adult Education Director Sharman Spieser said the collaboration has expanded opportunities throughout the county. "It allows us to offer a deeper and broader range of resources," she said. "It allows us to personalize it and make it more accessible – to really respect the adult learner's individual needs."

Bonnie Truhn, adult transitions manager for Washtenaw Community College, said the partnership solidified with a federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Grant two years ago, allowing her to serve as a point person to help adults navigate resources such as college, adult ed programs and Washtenaw Literacy. Although the grant was not renewed, she is now in a permanent position at WCC and has kept the regional network in place.

Truhn emphasized the importance of having a countywide presence, since 80 percent of adults served change their addresses during the course of their schooling. They often move from one program to another, depending on their life situation, she said.

Spieser said the collaboration connects the lines between agencies to get adult students the best education possible. She said everyone works together to "do more with less," including Spieser's role at AAPS, which was moved to part-time this year. The partnerships have helped to keep needed services in place, she said.

Washtenaw Literacy and its tutors play an important



Representatives of the University of Michigan Hospitals and Health Centers, Ann Arbor Public Schools Adult Education at a graduation ceremony at UMHC last spring.

role in this effort. Executive Director Amy Goodman said the federal grant "was a catalyst for a lot of good things. It really kicked off the partnership and got us a step ahead."

But the needs continue to grow, Goodman said. For example, the waiting list for one-on-one ESL tutoring at WL is 6-9 months and for basic literacy tutoring 3-4 months.

Washtenaw Literacy volunteers work with

AAPS Adult Ed staff to reinforce instruction and provide small group help with English language and literacy skills at the UMHC and the county jail. New grants obtained last year by AAPS Adult Education, along with support from U-M Hospital and the Washtenaw County Sheriff Department, enable the AAPS program and Washtenaw Literacy to improve education in the county.

Steve Raymond is Director for Leadership & Staff Development in the Operations & Support Services Department at UMHC. "I knew there was a need there," he said. They started by offering employees an opportunity to get a GED then added ESL classes. They eventually expanded to the work skills initiative.

Last year, Spieser obtained funding for a Targeted Work Skills program she and Raymond developed based on a request from the Patient Food and Nutrition Services Department. It targets patient service, communication and cultural competency for those on the front lines including food delivery and patient transport.

Several years ago, the Adult Ed programs were opened to all hospital employees and now touch upwards of 16 departments, Raymond said. At any point in time, there are about 200 employees taking part, he said.

"If you give people opportunities, they'll be more loyal to the organization, more productive, more engaged," he said. "The bottom line is if it adds value, it's worthwhile."

At another teaching site, the Washtenaw County Jail, Washtenaw Literacy tutors and AAPS Adult Education teachers help inmates with reading, math and computer literacy. WCC coordinates GED testing for students.

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

ESL & Adult Ed enrollment

Ann Arbor Public Schools residency is not required to take AAPS Adult Education classes. Details: 734-997-1250 or visit www.aaps.k12.mi.us/adulted.home/home

■ **Registration for the Adult Ed ESL (English As A Second Language) program** is scheduled for 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Jan. 3, Jan. 4 and Jan. 5 in Room 206 at Stone High School, 2800 Stone School Road (at the southwest intersection of Packard and Stone School Road.) There are a limited number of spaces and registration is on a first-come, first-served basis. Registrants must be 19 years old and have a passport with a visa, green card or Social Security card. Do not bring children; there is no childcare available. Visit the district's ESL website for details: <http://www.aaps.k12.mi.us/ins.academics/esl>

■ **AAPS Adult Education's GED (General Educational Development) Preparation program** has ongoing open enrollment and registration from 4-6 p.m. Mondays in Room 206 at Stone School when school is in session. The registration process includes assessment and takes two full hours. Classes are free but registrants must be at least 18 years old to enroll.

Tutors sought

Washtenaw Literacy seeks volunteers to work with adults who need help learning to read. Volunteers are asked to attend a one-hour "ABCs of Washtenaw Literacy" information session. Upcoming sessions are scheduled for Jan. 6, Jan. 10 and Jan. 27 in the evening. Washtenaw Literacy is located in the Ypsilanti District Library at 5577 Whittaker Road. Register for sessions online at www.washtenawliteracy.org or call 734-879-1320.

Barry, from page 2

Liz Margolis, who oversees the grants function. “Having a person to do districtwide grants and be a point person for staff and teachers will be a huge benefit for us.”

Margolis said one of the goals in filling the position is to eventually have it be self-funded with grants. The position is a one-year contract post.

Barry most recently served as the communications and programs director for the Ann Arbor Public Schools Educational Foundation and as executive director for the Wild Swan Theater in Ann Arbor. She has experience with grant writing and administration at a number of other theater venues in the Chicago area and also held a secondary teaching certificate and has taught high school English.

She grew up in Ann Arbor, is married and has two children who have attended the Ann Arbor Public Schools.

“I’m really excited and honored to be part of this district,” Barry said. “I really respect the teachers here and I hope to help them with their important work. It’s a fun kind of job to start – meeting with people and seeing the possibilities of serving our district.”

Barry said she will actively seek out grant opportunities, write some of the grants herself, and work with staff members to get large numbers of grant applications into the pipeline. “I want to get as many ‘asks’ out there as possible,” she said. “It’s like auditioning: The more you do, the better you get at it.”

Her role will include ensuring that grant requests are clearly focused and articulated. To

Teacher Grant-Writing Workshop

What: A how-to workshop on applying for the spring cycle of grants through the AAPS Educational Foundation.

When: Thursday, Jan. 13, 4:15-5:15 p.m. at the Balas Administration Bldg., 2555 S. State St.

Details: E-mail Chris Barry by Monday, Jan. 10 at barryc@aaps.k12.mi.us.

that end, she plans to centralize a clearinghouse of information including a history and mission of the district, a grant writing tips booklet and other pertinent information that can be used to help secure grants.

She will create sample grant funding letters, requests for proposals and other information that will be available at her office in the Balas Administration Building and online. Her plan is to have a website linked to the district site for staff to access online resources to streamline the process.

“I need to be the big eye of the district to see what grants are being written,” she said. “I will get a handle on what is out there and who is pursuing grants so that we don’t duplicate efforts. I can confirm there are a lot of resources we have not pursued.”

She will help staff in reviewing their grants and assist with their timely application, but will also do direct grant writing, especially for larger, district grants. Her role, she explained, is to match a funder with a teacher’s needs: “I liken it to being a librarian: Putting the right book in the right person’s hand at the right time.”

In her new post, Barry will work closely with AAPS Educational Foundation Executive

Director Wendy Correll and with newly appointed Business Partnership Coordinator Annette Ferguson to assess needs and match those with grant opportunities – both in direct dollars and in kind. An online staff resource assessment survey will be conducted this month to determine district needs, where grants might be sought, how many teachers and staff members are already actively seeking grants and to begin the process of tracking applications and opportunities.

A teacher grant-writing seminar is scheduled for Thursday, Jan. 13 at 4:15 p.m. at the Balas Administration Building to instruct teachers specifically about applying for grants through the AAPSEF for the spring teacher grant cycle. Barry said she plans to host other workshops through the grants office.

Barry has begun looking into grant opportunities and is also researching how school districts similar in size to Ann Arbor are handling their grants offices. She said that, although institutions of higher learning have pursued grants for years, grants offices for K-12 school districts are still in their infancy.

In the volunteer area, Barry is expecting to spend about one-quarter of her time with that part of her job. She is catching up with individuals and volunteer groups since McCuiston’s retirement and is reviewing that program to determine what changes she will recommend.

Between the two programs, she sees unlimited opportunities in her new role. “I’m trying to meet a lot of people in the district and get an idea of the vision and where we want to be in 10 to 20 years,” she added.

Reach Chris Barry at barryc@aaps.k12.mi.us or by calling 734-994-7702 (internal ext. 51288.)

WESO, from page 5

said. “Science and teamwork – put the two together and any kid interested in science can get in there. Ann Arbor should be really proud. It grew because Ann Arbor wanted it and needed it.”

The event grew steadily from 50 students to 200 and then 600 students before reaching today’s level, Levy said. The Olympiad was first hosted in a wing at Pattengill, then moved to Forsythe Middle and Wines Elementary schools, and then to Huron High School as it grew. For the past two years, it has taken place at Skyline High School.

A history with WESO

Ann Nicklas, a co-head coach for the WESO team at Lawton

Elementary School, said that Lawton has strong parent and student participation, which has made the activity a success there.

“We are able to field a team in every event – the kids here are very enthusiastic and love learning,” she said. “It’s a lot of fun and the kids feel a tremendous amount of pride and a sense of camaraderie.”

Nicklas, in her fourth year of coaching, said WESO offers students a chance to learn while having fun. “This has been a phenomenal opportunity for the kids,” she said. “To have that big of a gathering involving science – you just don’t see that every day.”

At King Elementary, the WESO team has most of its coaches in place and are just looking to fill a few slots, so will be ready to go when

training begins in 2011. “We’re very lucky – we have a very active set of parents,” said co-head coach Vivian Lin. “We feel very fortunate.”

Lin said each Ann Arbor school handles the training for WESO differently. At King, any student may participate in training though not all compete; teams are selected shortly before the June competition. King students can also train for multiple events.

Other schools choose teams and train those students for a specific event. Some schools train over the lunch hour or after school, while others do training on weekends.

Lin said WESO teaches students problem-solving skills in a different way. “It can drive home some of the things they learn in school,” she said. “They’re get-

ting practical, hands-on things to complement that.”

As teams begin forming and start their push to June, Levy said many parent volunteers will be needed for the 2011 program. In addition to coaches, parents help run events on the day of the Olympiad. She said knowledge of science is not necessary, and typically a parent will work with about eight students at any given time during an event. Volunteers will receive training.

Parents interested in participating in this year’s Washtenaw Elementary Science Olympiad can check with their individual schools or email weso.science@gmail.com. Visit www.aaps.k12.mi.us/wesowizards.home/home