

AAPSNews

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

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

Inside:

- China trip, 2
- Burns Park Players, 3
- Top principal, 5
- Abbot fundraiser, 4
- Sustainability lesson at Lawton, 7
- Stone name change, 7
- UMS school, teacher, 8

Issue No. 29, February 7, 2011



U.S. Department of Education Assistant Secretary Peter Cunningham shares some thoughts and takes questions from Ann Arbor teachers and staff during a Jan. 21 visit to Pioneer High School.

U.S. ed official visits Pioneer

Asst. Secretary Peter Cunningham meets with teachers, government students, shares administration view on education

By Casey Hans
AAPSNews Service

Teachers, students and Ann Arbor administrators got a chance to hear and offer their thoughts last month to Peter Cunningham, the assistant secretary for communications and outreach at the U.S. Dept. of Education.

Cunningham met with a round table of teachers, a group of government students and heard a presentation about some of the district's top issues. He visited Pioneer High School on Jan. 21, after spending the morning in the Detroit Public Schools. Pioneer teacher Tracey Van Dusen, who is serving as a classroom fellow in the department's Teaching Ambassador Fellowship program, accompanied him throughout his day.

"We're the small player here," he told staff,

VIDEO news.a2schools.org Meeting with Pioneer students

noting that the U.S. Dept. of Education's role is to spearhead initiatives, such as the Race to the Top, to encourage change within public schools.

He said that although the RTTT funded projects in only 11 states and the District of Columbia, that the initiative prompted 40 states to adopt new standards to improve education. "It forced people to come together to do some things they never would have done," he said.

Cunningham said the department is trying to amend No Child Left Behind use the department's visibility to create change, but that large pots of

See Pioneer visit, page 6

Lakewood celebrates 50-year anniversary

VIDEO of school celebration
online: news.a2schools.org

From AAPSNews Service

Lakewood Elementary students stepped back in time last month, celebrating the school's 50th anniversary as a building, 10th year of reopening as an elementary school, and looking at area history, including a nearby one-room schoolhouse.

A culminating assembly on Jan. 28 included songs of the era when Lakewood first opened – Jan. 31, 1961 – and other patriotic tunes that were popular in the late 1800s when the one-room schoolhouse on Liberty Road was in operation.

Lakewood operated as an elementary school through 1985, when it closed and was used for a variety of school district programs and storage. It was reopened as an elementary school in 2001.

Original teachers and staff and students, as well as school neighbors, were all special guests for the day, enjoying a program that included some student time travel back to 1874 when the one-room schoolhouse opened. Students in all grades did research for the program, said Media Specialist Eileen Thomas.

She said a former student contacted her for some school history and "he got me really interested in this school's history," she said.

See Lakewood birthday, page 8

Chinese language, culture a focus of principal's trip

Staff in the Spotlight: Joan Fitzgibbon

From AAPSNews Service

Joan Fitzgibbon hopes to be a resource for the Ann Arbor Public Schools as the district looks ahead to possibly expand its foreign language offerings in the future.

The Allen Elementary School principal recently returned from a trip to China, where she visited a variety of schools in different parts of the country as part of a cultural exchange through the Confucius Institute at Michigan State University – a Chinese language and culture education program.

In December, Fitzgibbon traveled with 15 other principals and administrators from Michigan and 400 from around the country and has been sharing her experiences with Allen students since she returned. She said she hopes to be a resource as the district moves ahead to consider teaching other languages.

"It was the best experience I have had in 23 years as an educator," she said. "It was so enriching. This was great for a lot of reasons ... but also to recognize that we have a really good education system."

On a recent visit to Andrew Sargent's third-grade class, she told students that Mandarin Chinese is one of the languages being considered as part of the district's World Language initiative – a partnership with the University of Michigan School of Education.

"From the time they enter third grade, they learn English," she said, speaking about the Allen students' counterparts in China. "Wouldn't that be something – for you to learn Mandarin Chinese?"

Ann Arbor launched the World Language initiative as part of the district's Strategic Plan in the third grade last year, expanding it to the fourth-grade this year with plans to expand into the fifth grade in 2011-12. Spanish is currently being taught, but school officials in Ann Arbor and at U-M have said they would like to expand it to other languages in the future.

On that topic, Fitzgibbon said she hopes to have a discussion sharing her experience in China. Because others on the trip were farther along in getting Chinese immersion programs in their schools and districts, Fitzgibbon said she is pleased to have the professional contacts and networks to call upon for Ann Arbor.

Fitzgibbon told Allen students their delegation was welcomed enthusiastically. "We felt like we were rock stars – everybody was so nice and



Allen Elementary Principal Joan Fitzgibbon visits a third-grade class to talk about her recent visit to China.

happy to see us," she said.

One of the schools visited was in the Chongqing Province where she toured a new secondary school campus with 6,000 students where 70 percent of the students stay overnight in dormitories through the week.

Chinese children go to school from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. each day, Fitzgibbon said, getting a two hour lunch when they are encouraged to "get outside and get some fresh air."

The average student-teacher ratio in China was 50-to-1, she said. Showing students a photo of an 11th grade class in one school, she noted that the total class had 1,000 students compared with the 60 in the third-grade at Allen.

Also, each school she visited had a specialty. For example, she said one was known for their calligraphy, another did paper cutting. Middle and high school students focus on science and technology.

She challenged Allen students to ask themselves "what makes Allen different?" and said she'd like to develop a theme for their school.

In a blog post about her trip, Fitzgibbon said: "We received warm welcomes lots of hugs, were shown well

See *China trip*, page 8



Suzanne Ross paints shadows on a prop desk that is being used in the Burns Park Players production "How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying." The production continues this weekend.



Setting the scene for the Burns Park Players

By Casey Hans
AAPSNews Service

For those who live in the Burns Park neighborhood, the community musical produced each winter is a labor of love and a great way for neighbors to get to know one another.

The Burns Park Players has put on this annual extravaganza since 1984, after it morphed from a school talent show fundraiser at Burns Park Elementary into a community endeavor and nonprofit theater company. All involved are either Burns Park neighborhood residents or were so in the past, said Alan Dengiz, one of a dozen parents who helped to start the annual tradition.

It was the popular 1978 film adaptation of the Broadway musical "Grease" that launched the effort

and was the first musical production. Dengiz said the group had so much fun, they continued it with "Bye Bye Birdie" the following year.

And so it has continued, to much acclaim.

"We got the point where we were raising more money than the camp fund we needed," Dengiz said. "So we put the money toward Burns Park auditorium improvements. The show just continued to be bigger and bigger. More and more parents got involved."

By the end of the 1980s, the group outgrew Burns Park and moved over to Tappan, now a middle school, where they still perform each year. The performance always features dozens of Burns Park Elementary students; this year there are 100 in the cast.

See Burns Park Players, page 4



Burns Park parents Jamie Phillips, above, and Jennifer Monk-Reising, right, work on props before the Burns Park Players production. Teams search out props and work with the set during rehearsals.



Top: Volunteers work on the set two weekends before the opening of this year's production.

Burns Park Players, from page 3

Dengiz, a physician with the University of Michigan Health System, was originally a theater major in college, but pursuing his medical degree did not deter his interest or passion for the stage. This year, he's part of the chorus and has been a cast member on and off over the past 10 years. His children also took part when they were in school.

"There's a great camaraderie. I make a lot of friends," Dengiz said. "It's a huge group effort where everybody is equally important."

The Burns Park Players annual production that took the stage last week and finishes up at Tappan Middle School this weekend is "How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying."

A total of 170 people are taking part in the 27th annual musical, with proceeds benefiting the Ann Arbor Public Schools and its students. To date, the theater troupe has raised more than \$245,000 to benefit Ann Arbor students with money given through the AAPS Educational Foundation, Rec & Ed scholarships and for private instrumental music lessons for students who cannot afford them.

Jeri Rosenberg and Mark Tucker tag team each year to coordinate the set design for Burns Park Players. Rosenberg has been doing it since 1996 and Tucker came aboard about 11 years ago.

The sets are built in Tucker's Ann Arbor studio starting in November and are trucked over to Tappan Middle School a couple of weeks before the production where volunteer crews come in and set things up over a weekend.

On a recent Sunday, the crew was literally learning the ropes: A variety of set items were being installed on bars where they could be lifted or lowered depending on the scene. Some last-minute painting, adjusting and manipulating of the set was taking place.

"All the bones (of the set) will be up," said Tucker. "And we'll spend two weeks refining it." Once dress rehearsals start, the set, lighting and props are all adjusted to ensure the production has just the right impact.

Tucker is the Lloyd Hall Scholars Program art director at the University of Michigan, known to many as Mr. FestiFools; his students make the life-size puppets that are the centerpiece of the annual street theater event in downtown Ann Arbor each spring. Some of his Lloyd Hall students – all non-art majors – also help with the set-design for the Burns Park Players.



Burns Park Elementary students rehearse for the Burns Park Players production of "How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying," which continues this weekend. (Photo courtesy, Myra Klarman - more photos online at <http://news.a2schools.org>.)

'How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying'

Who: The Burns Park Players

Where: Tappan Middle School Auditorium, 2251 E. Stadium Blvd.

When: Performances continue at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 10, Friday, Feb. 11 and at 4 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 12.

Tickets: \$15 at Morgan and York Market, 1928 Packard, Ann Arbor, or at the door. Proceeds benefit AAPS students.

Details: www.burnsparkplayers.org.

Kyle Shoepfner, a U-M freshman, is one of those students. He was at Tappan learning about the set process and lending a hand with the setup. He said he got involved as part of his class, but didn't have much experience with power tools.

Experience is helpful, but not critical, said Rosenberg. "In theory, this is community theater and everybody should be doing it," she said. "Anyone should feel they can do this."

The Burns Park production is huge, involving dozens of people both on stage and behind the scenes. Lighting, producers and directors, costumes and props – all play their role to get the production ready.

But even the best-laid plans will need adjusting. Rosenberg recalled a few years ago, a lead actress showed up in a costume that was the exact same color as the backdrop. "She just disappeared (onstage)," she said. "Obviously, we needed to make some changes."

For this year's show, a backdrop of New York City is used with an office building and

elevator center stage. Although Tucker created the life-size backdrop, many volunteers helped to paint it, kind of a paint-by-numbers work, Rosenberg said.

Burns Park parent and volunteer Suzanne Ross has a second-grade daughter in this year's show. Any parent with a child in the production must volunteer time in some way. Last year she was part of the house crew, helping to seat patrons and clean up the theater; this year, she chose to help with the set.

"It's a blast," she said. "They make it a lot of fun. There are parents who come back who don't even have kids in school anymore. It's a really talented community."

Back in the prop room, Jamie Phillips is polishing up old typewriters and adding machines, and Jennifer

Monk-Reising is working on a janitor's cart that will be used in the production. Both have kindergarteners at Burns Park this year.

Monk-Reising is new to the Burns Park community, but has background in graphic design, theater and art and was recruited as props mistress. She said her volunteers are either "hunters and gatherers" or "dressers" who set the stage.

"Props is the fun part," she said. "if you don't have it, you build it."

Phillips said she enjoyed theater in high school, so decided to take part in the Burns Park production. "I volunteered myself for pretty much anywhere there was a need," she said. "It's been a great experience."

Dengiz said the Burns Park Players also spawned the Tappan Players, which involves middle school students who had so much fun with Burns Park productions that they wanted to continue the experience. The Tappan production begins rehearsals shortly after the Burns Park Players production is done.

He said it's tough to know the exact impact the theater company has had, but he believes it has had one on many students. "I have no statistics, but know an awful lot of kids who came up through the Burns Park Players and have chosen a related profession," Dengiz added.

The fall-winter preparation for the Burns Park production has become a great way for families and neighbors to spend time together. "The whole point was to be doing something into the winter with the kids," Dengiz said. "It seemed to be a great idea."

Tucker added: "The winters are long here. This takes a bite out of the winter doldrums."

Skyline's Jackson named top high school principal for state

The Michigan Association of Secondary Principals has named Skyline High School Principal Sulura Jackson the group's 2010-11 High School Principal of the Year.

Jackson is dedicated to furthering education and maintaining the "Skyline Difference," said information from the MASSP about the award, which is also sponsored by MetLife.

Jackson came to Ann Arbor in 2005 to serve as principal and help design the program for Skyline, the district's newest high school which opened in 2008. The new 1,600-student high school of the future features a traditional comprehensive program as well as four magnet components.

During her time at Skyline, Jackson has diligently worked to foster relationships among teachers, parents and students alike and helped to launch the PTSO and further both staff and student development.

"Skyline's vibrant PTSO was promoted and developed by Ms. Jackson's effective communication with parents from long before the school opened its doors," said Sara Duvall, Lead for Media and Technology at Skyline who nominated her. "She is simply the most accomplished and dedicated principal with whom any of us have had the privilege to work."

In addition to being honored as the state's High School Principal of the Year, Jackson will also represent Michigan at the 2011 MetLife/National Association of Secondary School Principals National Principal of the Year program in Washington, D.C.

"Sulura has a vision for her school and community and works to deliver it," said Ron Reed,



Sulura Jackson, principal at Skyline High School, who was named High School Principal of the Year by the Michigan Association of Secondary Principals.

MASSP President and Milan High School Principal. "She has built Skyline from the ground up, and has brought new ideas to the Ann Arbor community. It is a school of promise, and Sulura is the architect."

Scarnecchia named partnership liaison

Mitchell Elementary School Principal Kathy Scarnecchia is the new interim administrative liaison for the a proposed partnership between Mitchell, Scarlett Middle School and the University of Michigan School of Education. She took on the role beginning second semester.

She will be the key contact to work with U-M education students and staffs at Mitchell and Scarlett Middle School and U-M School of Education in preparing logistics and planning for the new K-8 Mitchell-Scarlett campus project that is proposed to begin next fall.

Organizers of the plan had pro-

posed a balanced school calendar year, but that portion of the proposal will not be implemented in 2011-12 so it can receive further study.

Documents involving the Mitchell-Scarlett partnership can be found on the district's website here: http://www.a2schools.org/ins.academics/mitchell-scarlett-um_proposal

Scarlett Assistant Principal Edward Broom will take over as interim Principal at Mitchell and Scarlett teacher Jaye Peterson will serve in Broom's role at Scarlett.

Pioneer juniors host service fund-raiser

Juniors from Pioneer High School are selling Cookie-Grams for Valentine's Day, as a fundraiser to support the class's community service efforts. Order a Valentine's Cookie-Gram for a favorite Pioneer student, faculty or staff person for \$4. A festively wrapped package of heart-shaped cookies (from Great Harvest Bread), along with a card will be delivered on Valentines Day. Mail orders to: Jane Burton, Pioneer High School, 601 W. Stadium Blvd, AA 48103 or call 734-994-2128.

Free jazz workshop offered to students

The Sandy Maconochie Tribute Fund of the Ann Arbor Public Schools Educational Foundation is sponsoring a Jazz Mentoring Workshop on Tuesday, Feb. 15 from 3:30-5:30 p.m. at Community High School's Craft Auditorium, 401 N. Division St., Ann Arbor.

All Ann Arbor Public Schools middle school and high school



Interim appointments: Edward Broom is Interim Principal at Mitchell Elementary and Kathy Scarnecchia moves into an interim administration liaison for the Mitchell-Scarlett-U-M Partnership, a K-8 campus approach for the eastside schools.

musicians are invited to participate in this free event, either for the full two hours or for part of the session.

Featured will be local professional jazz musicians Ben Jansson on saxophone, Ingrid Racine on trumpet, Duncan McMillian on piano, Paul Keller on bass and Sean Dobbins on drums. The group will share their talents and experiences in a hands-on experience for students.

Maconochie, who did many of these workshops when she was the Tappan Middle School Jazz Band director, said students can come by; no RSVP is needed. "The bigger the crowd, the more fun and good energy," she said.

Students should bring their instruments and parents are welcome to stay, she said.

Maconochie, a co-band director at Tappan Middle School since 1984, retired from the Ann Arbor Public Schools in June 2010. "But I haven't lost my passion to enjoy and share jazz with others, especially young musicians," she added.

For more information about the Sandy Maconochie Tribute fund and the AAPS Educational Foundation, visit http://www.aapsef.org/tribute_funds.html. Questions about the event may be directed to Maconochie via e-mail at sandramaconochie@comcast.net.

Pioneer visit, from page 1

money for education are not likely coming.

“There’s no big, bold new agenda here,” he told teachers. “Title III – we’re trying to get a little more money for it. But the state and local bailouts are over. We’re not going to do a whole lot more. But what we can do is identify promising programs” and promote them, he said.

During the discussion with teachers, some talked with Cunningham promoting teaching as a profession. Some said they did not think young people were choosing teaching because technology firms and other private sector companies are wooing them and they see how difficult the job is.

“We’re in a box and there’s a lot of pressure building,” said Brit Satchwell, a sixth-grade math teacher who currently serves as president of the Ann Arbor Education Association. “At the same time, we have to expand the box and be open to change.” Satchwell called for “sensible accountability measures” to help move change forward.

Burns Park fourth-grade teacher Carrie Chester told Cunningham that the U.S. Dept. of Ed plays a critical role in creating change and advocating for education. “I get that at significant portion of money doesn’t come from you, but the bully pulpit is a big thing,” she said. “That’s important.”

Cunningham agreed, and said that the department tracks big picture trends and works to influence those. Of the 3.2 million teachers, half will retire in the coming decade and “we will be transforming the teaching force,” he said.

To that end, the federal government has undertaken a campaign to encourage more young people to study to become teachers. Its www.teach.gov website offers information such as certification and licensing, financial aid incentives, teacher preparation programs and job listings.

There are other, non-government initiatives playing a role. Pat Jenkins, lead teacher for the Communication, Media and Public Policy Magnet at

‘The thing we need to compete with foreign countries is creativity. You should have a well-rounded curriculum. You ought to learn to bang on a piano, strum a guiar, You would be able to write a poem, and do an expressive dance.’

**– Peter Cunningham,
U.S. Dept. of Ed**

Skyline High School, said her daughter is part of the Teach for America initiative (www.teachforamerica.org), a nonprofit that has put more than 20,000 teachers in 39 urban and rural regions around the country using a Peace Corps-type approach.

“It makes them think differently about issues of class and . . . gives them a different world view,” Jenkins said. “For the schools, it’s where the rubber meets the road.”

Cunningham said his department is looking at the program with interest. “Teach for America has somehow made teaching cool,” he said. “We’re looking at it to see how we can take it to scale.”

Cunningham also spent time with Pioneer government students, who had many questions for the education leader. They raised concerns about the Michigan Merit Curriculum, which requires higher graduation standards and, for some students, has pushed aside creative classes and the arts, which Cunningham said could be problematic.

“I think it’s a risk, especially in low-performing schools,” Cunningham said. “The thing we need to compete with foreign countries is creativity. You should have a well-rounded curriculum. You ought to learn to bang on a piano, strum a guiar, You should be able to write a poem, and do an expressive dance.”

Doing the math: Abbot 4-graders raise \$720 for St. Jude’s Hospital

**Submitted by
Abbot Elementary School**

Abbot Elementary fourth-graders are making a difference in the lives of children suffering from cancer and other catastrophic diseases.

Fourth-grade teachers, Annette Stojcevich and Cynthia Heusel, offered their students the opportunity to participate in the annual Math-a-Thon fundraiser for St. Jude’s Children’s Research Hospital.

Twenty three students participated and raised \$720 total for St. Jude’s.

To kick off the fundraiser, Stojcevich’s read the students a story about a small hummingbird that was going to hold up the falling sky with its tiny feet. The moral of the story was that no matter how small you are, you can contribute to the solution. And then the fourth-graders did just that.

“Our class gets the chance to do our part to help others,” she said. “I have worked with St. Jude’s in the past, and it is an organization that I try to support every year. I am so proud of our fourth graders for working so hard to make a difference.”

Each participating student was challenged to complete 200 math problems in a St. Jude’s Math-a-Thon Funbook over winter break. Students asked family and friends for sponsorships (a flat dollar amount donation) and pledges (a donation per math problem completed.)

All fourth-graders had the opportunity to participate in the

Math-a-Thon, even if they were unable to obtain sponsorships and pledges. An anonymous parent pledged five cents per completed math problem (\$10 if all 200 math problems were completed) for students wanting to participate but who did not receive pledges.

The Math-A-Thon Funbook supplemented the existing fourth-grade curriculum, so participation helped students improve their math and comprehension skills while learning the importance of helping others.

Fourth-graders really felt the significance of participating in this fundraiser.

“I feel that this is a good time for the fourth graders to do something good for a hospital, and help save lives. This is just a huge responsibility and I think it is great to be doing it,” said Drew, a student participant. Classmate Henry added, “I really liked the Math-a-Thon. I got to do some math and help kids feel better.”

Funds raised by the Math-A-Thon program help make it possible for St. Jude to treat patients regardless of a family’s inability to pay. For more than 30 years, Math-A-Thon has been America’s largest education-based fundraiser.

Funds raised by Abbot’s fourth-grade students and other participants benefit St. Jude, where doctors and scientists work to eradicate childhood cancer and other catastrophic childhood diseases.

For more information on St. Jude and the Math-a-Thon program, visit www.stjude.org.

Name change is suggested for Stone High School

Ann Arbor Technical High name picked by staff and students; school board will consider proposal

The Ann Arbor Public Schools Board of Education is considering a proposal to change the name of Stone High School to Ann Arbor Technical High School.

Assistant Superintendent for Secondary Schools Joyce Hunter and Principal Sheila Brown introduced the new name as a way to better define the technology driven curriculum at the school.

If approved by the Board of Education, students and staff will begin the planning process to implement the new school name for the 2011-12 school year. This will include a community open house unveiling of the new name.

Last spring, students and staff at Stone began discussing ways to improve the image of the school to reflect the type of learning occurring there. Because of the many technological learning opportunities, students and staff voted for Ann Arbor Technical High School – A2 Tech High – as the new school name.

In addition to face-to-face classes, Stone offers opportunities for students to complete academic credit through state curriculum-aligned on-line courses allowing students to work from

a web-based computer 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Computers and staff are available to students during the school day, after school, and two evenings a week through the Options Magnet program. Widening Advancement for Youth, the Washtenaw County cyber school program, is another alternative to the traditional day program and is housed at Stone.

The proposed name change is a source of pride with current Stone students including student Olivia Fisher. “Stone changing its name means that other schools will stop looking down on the school and its students,” she said. “It means that we will no longer be looked at as an escape for the expelled, but a technological opportunity for those with more challenges in their lives.”

At Lawton, a lesson in sustainability and entrepreneurship

From AAPSNews Service

Media Specialist Tahani Othman takes students around the world and home again as part of the humanities class she teaches to third-graders at Lawton Elementary School.

Their study of sustainability and world cultures this year included a recent visit from Itzik Henig, the founder and owner of SPII – Solar Power for Information and Independence. Henig’s contribution: A mobile, solar-powered device for areas around the world that do not have modern amenities such as running water and power.

He brought his invention to Lawton recently to demonstrate for students. His hope is to put the unit into production to help millions of people who have no access to potable water and electricity. The device produces sufficient low-load electricity for lighting, radio and cell phone charging.

“This device meets the basic needs for a single household,” explained Henig, an entrepreneur and automotive engineering technical specialist. “And, more importantly, it purifies water.”



Itzik Henig, a local inventor, shows his solar-powered device to Lawton Elementary third-graders. His visit was part of a humanities unit taught by Media Specialist Tahani Othman.

Henig developed his prototype four years ago and has developed a second unit that he hopes to market across the world to people who are earning just \$2 per day, on average. Eventually, he hopes to market the units on wheels for \$120 each and help to create village-level economies.

“The need is pressing; it’s worldwide,” Henig told students.

“Instead of making two to four dollars a day, they can make four to eight dollars – they could have a sewing operation or make a pump to bring water from the river.

“Things will be a little brighter – we can only imagine what could happen.”

Answering student questions, Henig said the battery should last about three years and will power

many items, including charging cell phones and other basic things a typical household uses. It has only 12 components and each unit takes him about one week to make. It is on wheels, so “every morning you wheel it out and wait for the sun,” he said.

The lesson included showing students how a simple solar panel, battery and tank for water purification could work on a small scale to help so many and transform parts of the world.

“It was nice to make a real world connection for the students, said Othman. “The draw for me is it wasn’t a money-making idea. It’s helping people.”

Henig said this is a “life project” for him and that is working with the local Ann Arbor SPARK, Michigan State University and professors at the University of Michigan, the Michigan Economic Development Corporation and other professionals to get his idea launched. He hopes to have it in production soon as he continues to seek partners in the venture.

For more information, visit <http://spiiinc.com> or email Henig at lhenig@yahoo.com.

China trip, from page 2

rehearsed and beautiful performances, and excellent students creating their specialized craft. At the first primary school this was paper cutting! We then saw a performance by kindergarteners, third-graders and the dance troupe. We truly were treated like royalty. Overall, the students were like any students. Full of excitement, eager to meet us and kids.”

In addition to Chinese schools, the group visited the Lama Temple, the Confucius Temple, saw a museum in Beijing that had the Olympic Torch on display and spent time at the Great Wall, Tiananmen

Square and the Forbidden City.

She told students that the Forbidden City has 980 buildings and 8,700 rooms, allowing the Chinese emperor to move about. “The enemy never knew where he was staying,” she said. Another fun fact: The Forbidden City also has a 15-foot deep concrete floor, laid in a crisscross pattern, so that the enemy could not tunnel from below and gain access.

Fitzgibbon has created an Allen school blog that also has a link to her Fitz’s China Adventure blog. Visit <http://www.blogger.com/profile/01153677485714689176>

Lakewood birthday, from page 1

“This fall ... we explored our school’s history.”

Fifth-graders found some “fun facts” including that John Fitzgerald Kennedy had just been inaugurated when the school opened in 1961 and that a chimpanzee named “Ham” returned safely after a test flight into space on the day the school opened.

Third-graders took a walking tour to the nearby one-room schoolhouse as part of their research, she said. Students attended the school – known at various times as School District No. 5, Liberty Road School and Arabelle Wagner School – before Lakewood was built.

“At Arabelle Wagner, kids walked to school, brought their lunch in a pail or a bag, there wasn’t a kitchen and a hot lunch, just one room for the whole school,” Thomas told the group. “There was a playground behind the school.”

Herm Steinman was principal when Lakewood opened in 1961. He recalled all of the trees that were planted over the years around the school, including third- and fourth-graders who planted saplings and large fir trees in front of which were originally Christmas trees donated to the school.

Nearby Lakewood Woods

was once vacant property and there was concern in the neighborhood about whether it might be developed. He said Bill Stapp, the author and founder of the district’s environmental education program, played a huge role in saving the woods. “Bill Stapp was all energy,” Steinman recalled. “He got together with the school board, city council and some parents and got a government grant to buy that property so its been professionally saved for you guys. That was one of those things that somebody took care of.”

Rick O’Neill, principal from when Lakewood reopened in 2001 until last year when he retired, recalled when staff and students were moved to this “new” school and had to do any variety of painting and cleaning up before it could be reopened.

“All of our students said they liked Lakewood better than any of their other schools. Here we are 10 years later, 50 years after the school was built and ... we’re still a great school because of all of the wonderful children, students, families and staff that make it that way.”

Also attending the event was Florence Gasdick, who served as Lakewood principal until 1985.



Kenneth C. Fischer, UMS President; Joan Singer and Gary Court, accepting the School of the Year award on behalf of Angell Elementary School; Renée Fleming, recipient of the 2011 UMS Distinguished Artists Award; and Joey Parins, DTE Educator of the Year with Fred Shell, President of the DTE Energy Foundation.

Angell Elementary, Clemente teacher earn top UMS awards

The University Musical Society has named Ann Arbor’s Angell Elementary School as its 2010-11 DTE Energy Foundation School of the Year and Roberto Clemente of the Year and Roberto Clemente music instructor Joey Parins the 2010-11 DTE Energy Foundation Educator of the Year.

The awards were formally presented at the 16th Annual Ford Honors Gala benefiting UMS Youth Education Programs on Jan. 16. DTE Energy Foundation sponsors the award through a financial commitment to UMS Youth Education Programs.

Angell Elementary was honored for its dedication and commitment to arts education and for its commitment to engaging in the arts, both in the classroom and beyond, said a statement from the UMS.

The Angell Elementary community has participated in UMS Youth programs since the early 1990s, when it was part of the UMS first “Opera for 4h Graders” and as recently as the Carolina Chocolate Drops December 2010 Youth Performance.

Parins was honored for her passionate commitment to arts education at both Clague Middle School and at the Roberto Clemente Student Development Center, where she currently teaches. She has been a model educator, demonstrating a commitment to UMS programs and

making arts education a priority for all students, the UMS said.

Parins is known for her history of participation in UMS workshops for educators and her involvement connecting her students to the arts community at large. Recently, Parins worked with the UMS Education team to arrange pre-performance drumming events featuring her students prior to UMS youth performances.

“It’s important to recognize the tremendous difference educators like Joey Parins and schools like Angell Elementary can make in young people’s lives,” said Fred Shell, DTE Energy vice president of corporate and government affairs and president of the DTE Energy Foundation. He said helping students develop an appreciation for the performing arts is “something that can enrich their lives forever.”

UMS President Ken Fischer called Angell Elementary a “cherished partner” with the UMS and noted that Parins’s history with UMS educator workshops is “just one way she enhances student lives.”

UMS is in its 132nd season, offering a program of music, dance, and theater with 60-75 performances and more than 100 free activities each season. The UMS Education Program reaches up to 25,000 children and adults each year.