

AAPSNews

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One Million Reasons

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Aiming for the opera

Senior nominated for European music festival, page 10



Issue No. 31, March 14, 2011

Pioneer seniors blaze a path to success for young students

7 elementary schools benefit from Trailblazers partnership

By Carlina Duan
AAPSNews Service

For high school seniors involved in the Pioneer Trailblazers program, it's a bittersweet moment of reflection: Finding themselves upon the steps of the elementary schools that ignited their 12-year journey through the Ann Arbor Public Schools.

These seniors have mentored students at elementary schools throughout the year and will leave behind a legacy not only within the hallways of Pioneer, but also at Bach, Dicken, Eberwhite, Haisley, Lawton, Lakewood, and Pattengill elementary schools.



PHOTO SLIDE SHOW
of Pioneer Trailblazers at Bach & Pattengill: news.a2schools.org

The Trailblazers program is a unique opportunity for these students to tutor their mentees in academic subjects and engage them in social and scholarly livelihood. The program's mission is to spark a rich passion for education among the younger students and to create role models and friends for elementary schoolers, so that they can

See Trailblazers, page 6

K-12 student artwork on display downtown throughout March

March Youth Art and Music Month is being celebrated throughout downtown Ann Arbor, with student works from grades K-12 on exhibit.

The district partners with the Ann Arbor Main Street Area Association for the month-long

event. Student works are on display at the downtown branch of the Ann Arbor District Library and in businesses along Main Street and around downtown.

"I feel it's a great collaboration between our businesses and our students," said Maura Thomson

of the Main Street Association. Community High art students are participating and have their work at the WSG Gallery and at Underground Printing, both on Main Street. Visit <http://mainstreetannarbor.org/> for a full list of participating businesses.

Patricia Green chosen as new superintendent for Ann Arbor

By Casey Hans
AAPSNews Service

Patricia Green, superintendent of North Allegheny School District in Pennsylvania, has been selected to lead the Ann Arbor Public Schools.

Ann Arbor Board of Education trustees met on March 5 following final interviews that morning and a community forum the previous evening, in which the community was able to hear the candidates and submit questions to hear their responses. Following several hours of afternoon deliberation, the board voted 6-1 to offer the superintendent's position to Green; Trustee Susan Baskett voted no on the measure.

The other finalist considered during the final two-day process was Michael Muñoz, chief ac-

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Dr. Patricia Green

Small world

Ann Arbor physician Eric Straker recalls his time in Pat Green's sixth-grade class in Maryland. "She was the best teacher I ever had," the local internist said after hearing of Green's appointment, **Story on p. 8**

Poetry slams bring original writing, performing talent to stage

By Carlina Duan
AAPSNews Service

Calling all Ann Arborites: this is an invitation to listen.

As springtime hits the air, the month of March is primed to bring a rich array of high school voices into the mix. Slam season in Ann Arbor is about to hit the stage, and this year, the city's youth poetry slams carry additional promise of vibrancy, zest and literary adrenaline.

The Ann Arbor Youth Poetry Slams feature high school poets from around the school district throughout March. They were created 13 years ago by Pioneer High School Creative Writing teacher Jeff Kass who describes them as "five nights of unfiltered verbal fuel excavated by some of the most imaginative and creative young people in the country." The slams consist of four "preliminary" semi-final rounds – held at Community, Huron, Pioneer, and Skyline high schools – and a final round at the Neutral Zone.

Participating high school poets will perform original works for the audience; top poets in preliminary rounds move to the final round and the top six poets in the final round will earn a spot on Ann Arbor's Poetry Slam Team, which will go on to perform in the Brave New Voices International Poetry Festival in San Francisco this summer.

"It was really striking to me to see kids so passionate about language, and so excited about it," said Kass, discussing his reasons for starting the slams. "I realized that I'd never been able to engage students to that level of commitment in their writing, so I started thinking that I need to bring poetry in my classrooms."

Kass said the poetry slams offer growth for many young writers. "Because so many young people are involved, there's no doubt that it motivates more people to be more involved and take their writing seriously," he said. "Over the 13 years that we've done this,

Ann Arbor Youth Poetry Slam

Preliminary rounds continue:

■ Thursday, March 17, 7 p.m., Little Theater at Pioneer High School;

■ Friday, March 18, 7 p.m. in the Black Box Theater at Skyline High School.

All Preliminary rounds are free and open to the public.

■ **Finals:** Thursday, March 24, 6:30 p.m. at the Ann Arbor Neutral Zone. Tickets for Finals are \$5 for students and \$7 for the general public.

I can think of probably 100 writers that I think the slams have had a significant impact on them and their lives.

"A lot of them have gone on to become teachers, literary organizers, prominent leaders in their community... I think all of them got their start in terms of putting their work out for public consumption in the slams."

Participating poets can choose their own subjects to write about; they are not limited by any form of censorship. The judging panel consists of Ann Arbor Wordworks members, former slam participants and former team members. Poets are judged on a decimal scale of zero to 10 for each poem, with the highest and lowest scores being eliminated. The top score any poet can receive is a 30.

Kass said although the scoring system can be an obstacle deterring some students from pursuit of literary passion, he lauds the slams for the opportunities they provide.

"I love that right before the slams, a lot of kids want to work so hard on their pieces," he said. "Watching people read on stage with so much passion is really fun and exciting to watch. Ultimately what's really exciting is watching these writers progress – the ones who make the slams their starting point, and turn it into something

else entirely."

The power the poetry slams hold helps to cultivate a lifelong love of verse. "For a lot of people, once the bug bites them, they just want to keep writing," he added.

For many young poets, participating in the slams is not only thrilling, but also a valuable learning experience. Pioneer High School senior Sara Ryan, in her second consecutive year of performing in the slams, said they make her think about presentation.

"Performing in front of a lot of people gives me a lot of confidence and it's a fun atmosphere to be around – you hear funny poems, you hear sad poems, and you kind of get to know people through their poetry," she said.

Kass likes the variety of the slams. "I think what's great about the Ann Arbor Poetry Slams is that there's no one kind of aesthetic driving the process, so you have all kinds of different poems on all kinds of different subjects," he said. "You have kids who have really experienced the slams, and are in (them) for their second or third year, and you have other kids who've never read a poem in public.

"Everyone gets the same chance. Everyone gets the same love and respect from the audience. It's a really great opportunity for young people in Ann Arbor to speak in a way that they're not normally given to speak."

This year, the event promises to be one of the most invigorating slams yet. Kass said many of the young poets graduated last year, "so this year, it's really a wide open field."

As for competing poets, Kass shares a bit of advice. "I would say you need two really strong poems to get out of the preliminary slams. Work as hard as you can to get your two best poems. Don't be afraid to get help. Practice your poems, but it's also really important to write well," he suggests. "Our judges really care about fresh language and good writing. Don't

rely on clichés; don't think you can get by with saying something really loud and quickly. You really need to have some insight and some skill with language, so work as hard as you can with your writing, and just go out there and have a good time. Write what you believe in."

The top six competing poets in the school district will comprise Ann Arbor's Poetry Slam Team in the Brave New Voices International Poetry Slam Festival. The Festival consists of four to five days of poetry slams, readings, performances, workshops, and community building activities for participating writers.

Approximately 50 teams compete in the festival from around the world.

Pioneer senior Allison Kennedy, a 2010 Ann Arbor Slam Team member and a participating poet in this year's competition, recounts her time at Brave New Voices as "my happiest moment."

"I was surrounded by all of these extremely articulate poets who were very ready to start a revolution," she said. "(There were) 500 excited and motivated young people who (were) completely convinced that they can influence the world."

Kennedy said the poetry slams add flavor to the high school routine. "I think when I'm just going through the sometimes dull hallways in our school, it's easy to get sucked up in the apathy, but when I hear someone pour all of their creativity and imagination into something I can't just say I'm 'over that' too easily," she said.

"It really makes me like and appreciate people. Slam. Get heard. Hear. Be happy. That's the general conclusion I've drawn."

Kass concludes, "I'm looking forward to an exciting slam season. I think we're going to have a great team this year, and I just love the energy we're going to have throughout the month of March – young people just putting their pens to the page and creating magic."

Wines 4th-grader builds sense of community with Habitat donation

By Casey Hans
AAPSNews Service

Wines Elementary fourth-grader Ben Rinvelt celebrated his 10th birthday in a special way this year: He asked friends and family to donate to Habitat for Humanity of Huron Valley instead of giving him birthday gifts.

He raised about \$100, which he and his dad, Jeff Rinvelt, dropped off during a surprise visit to the Habitat ReStore on a recent snowy Saturday.

Megan Rodgers, a development associate with Habitat for Humanity of Huron Valley, said the staff was pleased with Ben's initiative and that he chose their nonprofit. They contacted the AAPSNews to share Ben's story.

"We just think it's amazing what Ben did," she said. "That he supported his community in this way, involving his family and friends. It's a selfless act on his part. He's a role model for other kids."

The staff sent along a thank-you note to Ben with lots of kudos for his selfless effort, as well as a Habitat T-shirt and a book called "Doorway to the World" which, coincidentally, features a boy named Ben. In the

story, Ben leaves his home and friends and moves to another country, where he realizes the importance of the work he and his parents do for Habitat for Humanity.

Rodgers said that Habitat is involved with several youth programs in area schools, but that this is the first time she can recall an individual student doing this sort of fundraising and donation.

Ben turned 10 in January and said he felt Habitat was an organization worthy of his efforts. Last year for his birthday, he asked for donations for the Humane Society of Huron Valley, which serves Washtenaw County. Most of those donations were for shelter supplies and needs, unlike this year's effort for cash donations.

"This year, I wanted to do something for people," said the fourth-grader. "When we sent out birthday invitations, we told people we didn't want presents – I told my relatives too."

Ben explained that his weekly allowance is put into a bank that has three parts: spend, college fund and "Make the World a Better Place." He said the "spend" part usually goes into the college fund or into the third category of giving.

"We're very proud of him," said



Pat, Ben and Jeff Rinvelt at their northwest Ann Arbor home. Ten-year-old Ben surprised Habitat for Humanity of Huron Valley by dropping off donations he collected in lieu of birthday gifts this winter. Ben is a fourth-grader at Wines Elementary School.

Ben's mom, Pat Rinvelt. "We're fortunate and pleased that Ben wanted to help other folks who need it."

Jeff Rinvelt said he is especially proud that Ben is thinking of others.

Ben has a younger sister, Anna, whom he has inspired to consider what she might do on her birthday in June, the family said.

Ben is already thinking about next year, when he is considering giving to the Strong Kids Campaign at the Ann Arbor YMCA, which helps fund weeklong trips for kids to summer camp among other programs that promote positive behaviors.

"When you think about it, you can be one of the luckiest people in the world and not know it," Ben

added. He suggests that others consider donating to a local nonprofit to help others who "don't have the luck you have."

Established in 1989, Habitat for Humanity of Huron Valley has built or renovated more than 85 homes in Washtenaw County. Habitat homeowners qualify for an interest-free mortgage from Habitat, make a modest down payment and each adult puts in at least 300 hours of "sweat equity" building their home. Habitat also has the 15,000-square-foot ReStore that sells donated building materials with proceeds going back into the program.

For more on Habitat for Humanity of Huron Valley visit www.h4h.org.

WISD to narrow field in search for a new superintendent

The Washtenaw Intermediate School District Board of Education has scheduled a special meeting at 5:30 p.m. Tuesday, March 15 to select superintendent candidates to be called for an interview.

The public meeting will be in the Board Room of WISD's Teaching and Learning Center,

1819 S. Wagner Road, Scio Township.

After all selected candidates have been contacted, the Board will set a public interview schedule.

A new superintendent will succeed Dr. William C. Miller who retired in December of 2010 after more than 22 years of ser-

vice to the district, 12 of them as superintendent.

Applications for the position closed on March 10 at noon.

Michael Emlaw, consultant for the Michigan Association of School Boards, is assisting the WISD Board with its search. He can be reached at (734) 657.2425 or emlaw@comcast.net.

Student mural adds color splash to Skyline

From AAPSNews Service

Skyline High School's first floor has undergone a colorful transformation thanks to the school's wall mural project funded by the school's PTSO and the Dahlmann Grant from the AAPS Educational Foundation.

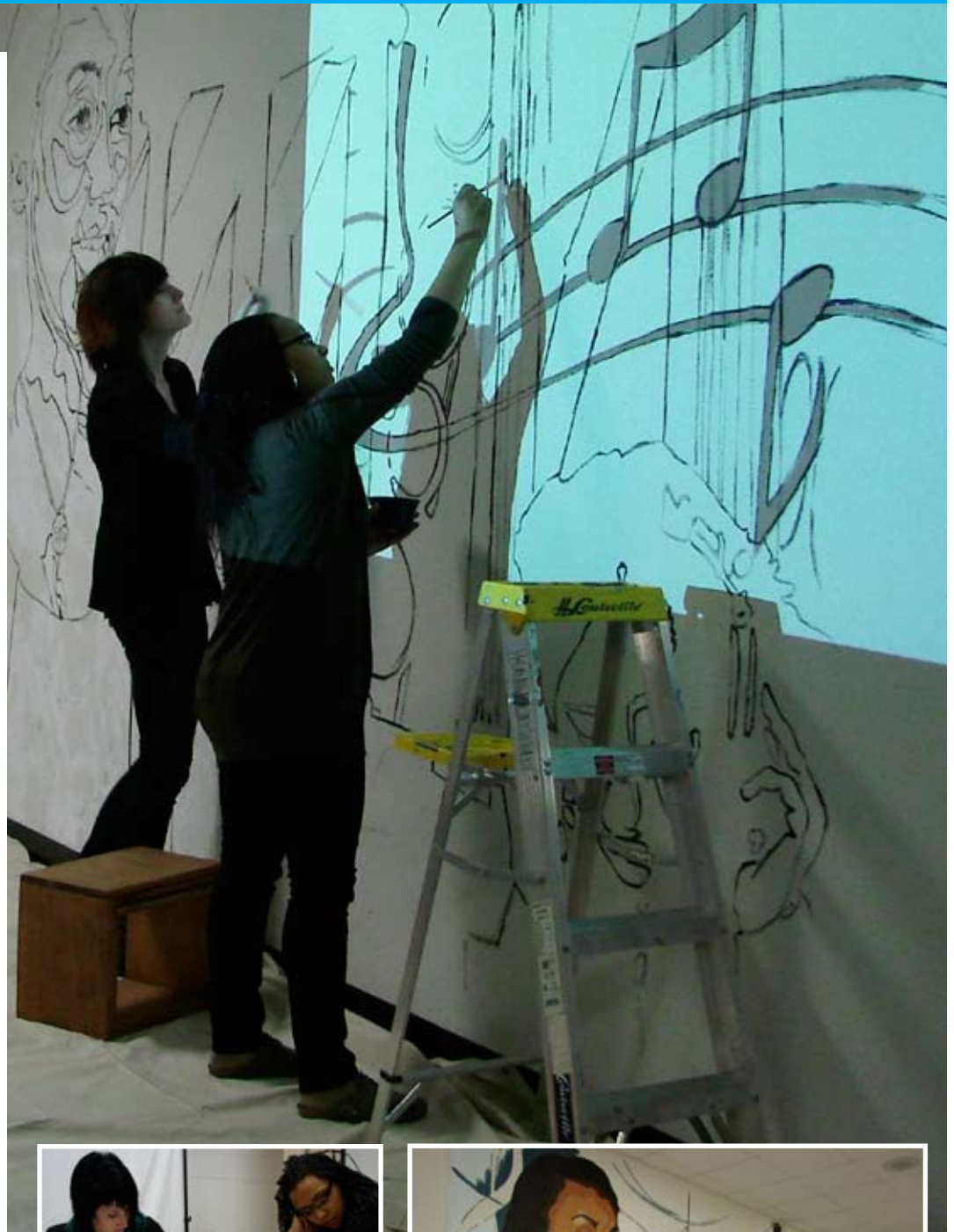
Student artists Kalee Murphy and Leah Canneart worked with mural artist Mary Thiefels of TreeTown Murals in Ann Arbor for several weeks to paint the first mural next to the choir room on the school's first floor.

"The long white wall called us to action and we began a community mural that will part of Skyline's history," said Ann Hendrick, Skyline visual arts teacher. "Our plan is add a section or two every year until the long white wall is covered with our students' ideas about their school."

Students worked on the mural during fifth hour, and said they enjoyed the project, which they did as an independent study. "We want to take this all the way down the hall," said Canneart, who said she wants to be an art director. "I love all kinds of art," she added.

Canneart said the plan is to have a variety of different murals featuring different element of Skyline adorning the walls. Each mural will highlight a core curriculum class, school activity or club including music (the first mural's theme), foreign language, theater, football, science and U.S. history, among others. Each mural will feature a Skyline student passionate about the subject being

See Mural, page 7



Skyline High School student artists Kalee Murphy and Leah Canneart worked with mural artist Mary Thiefels of TreeTown Murals in Ann Arbor for several weeks to paint the first mural next to the choir room on the school's first floor. It is the first of several murals planned. (Photos courtesy, Ann Hendrick)

School Bells

Lakewood auction slated for March 18

Lakewood Elementary School hosts its largest fundraiser on Friday, March 18 from 6-11 p.m. at Weber's Inn Grand Ballroom, 3050 Jackson Ave., Ann Arbor.

A social hour with cocktails and hors d'oeuvres and yoga classes of the auction items will take place from 6-7 p.m. with bidding starting at 7 p.m.

The event features more than 70 bidding lots with items including everything from soccer camps and yoga classes to a Detroit Tigers VIP package, Disney Park Hopper tickets and dinner at the Chop House. Click here for a full list of available bid items and list of sponsors.

"This is our largest fundraiser of the year and all of the proceeds go towards funding all of the field trips for all of our students throughout the entire school year," said Principal Michael Johnson.

For more information, contact Leslie Rybicki at leslie@rybicki.org or Sara Arsenaault searsen@gmail.com with questions or contact Kelly Wang kwang500@hotmail.com to order tickets.

Robotics teams to compete March 25-26

The First Robotics competition season is under way and Skyline High School will host a district event on March 25-26.

The goal of teams registered for the competition is to qualify

for the Michigan State Championship April 7-9 at Eastern Michigan University's Convocation in Ypsilanti.

From there, 18 teams will be eligible to advance to the international First Championship in St. Louis, April 27-30.

The 2011 Ann Arbor FIRST Robotics District Competition (aka Logo Motion) (<http://www.firstinmichigan.org>) has 40 teams registered, including teams from all three comprehensive high schools in the Ann Arbor Public Schools:

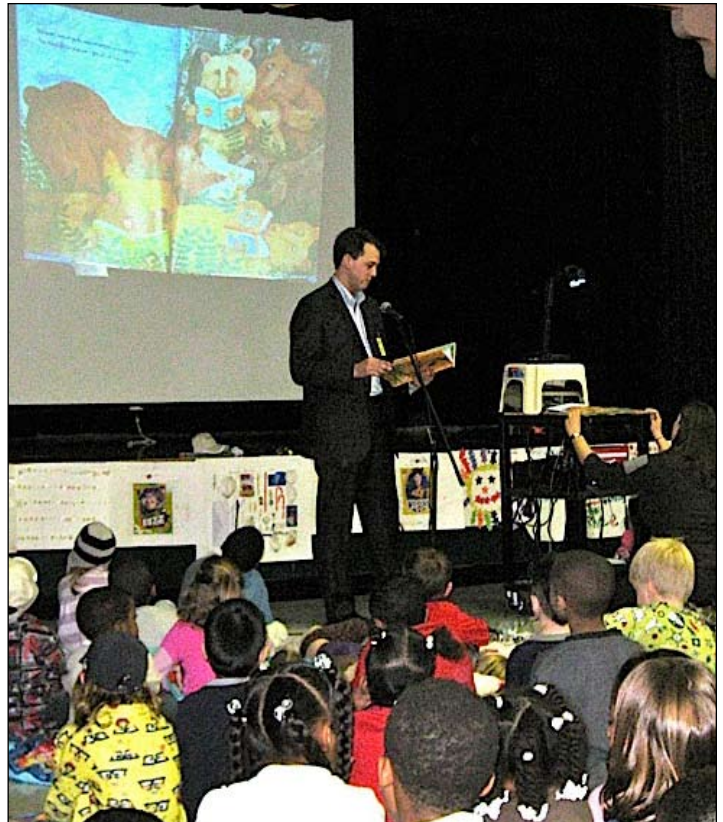
- SRT & Ann Arbor Pioneer High School, Team No. 1076 (Pi Hi Samurai.)
- SRT / Barton Malow Company / Aastrom Biosciences / D. Loius Weir Law Firm & Skyline High School, Team No. 3322 (Eagle Imperium.) (skylinerobotics.org)
- Washtenaw Community College/University of Michigan/Toyota Technical Center/BAE Systems & Ann Arbor Huron High School, Team No. 830 (Rat Pack) (<https://sites.google.com/site/frcratpack830/home>)

All FIRST Robotics Competition regionals and tournaments are free and open to the public.

WISD-PAC hosts IEP goals discussion

The Washtenaw Intermediate School District Parent Advisory Committee hosts its next meeting from 6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. Tuesday, March 15, where Kelly Orginski of Michigan Alliance for Families will speak about "Developing the Present Level of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP) Statement, and Developing Individual Education Program (IEP) Goals and Objectives."

Parents of students receiving special education supports and



Pittsfield hosts read-in, special guest reader

On March 4, Pittsfield Elementary School kicked off March Is Reading Month with a visit from a special guest reader, State Rep. Jeff Irwin. The whole school gathered in the multi-purpose room to hear Irwin answer questions about his job in government and listen as he read "Wild About Books," written by Judy Sierra and illustrated by Marc Brown. Afterwards students relaxed on blankets, munched on popcorn and read their own books for an all-school read-in. The Pittsfield Penguins have an active student council with representatives from every grade, including kindergarten, so a visit from a state legislator was an especially meaningful way to reinforce the lessons of our system of elected government. For the remainder of the month students will read to earn colorful stars which will decorate Pittsfield's school halls. To cap off a successful month in pursuit of literature, Ann Arbor storyteller Barbara Schutzgruber will bring words to life during a school-wide assembly program on March 30.

services are especially encouraged to attend. The workshop is designed to help parents understand the importance of the PLAAFP statement and how it affects the writing of measurable IEP Goals and Objectives and how to help children get the services they need to be successful in school.

The meeting will be at the Washtenaw Intermediate School District Teaching and Learning Center, 1819 S. Wagner Road, between Liberty and Scio

Church roads in Scio Township. To RSVP or for information contact Jeanne Brakhage at 734-994-8100, x1514 or jbrakhag@wash.k12.mi.us

Visit online for directions: <http://www.wash.k12.mi.us/about/wisddirections.cfm>

Michigan Alliance for Families (www.michiganallianceforfamilies.org) workshops are free and open to the public. MAF is funded by the Michigan Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Education.

Exceptional Education

Trailblazers, from page 1

achieve academic success.

Trailblazers originally started in 1996 as a pilot program between Pioneer High School and Lawton Elementary School by faculty member Jenni Zimmer, then a school psychologist.

Zimmer said she recognized the power behind allowing youth to work directly with youth, and took advantage of Pioneer's proximity to Lawton. "I realized that there's something special about an older student as opposed to an adult working with a younger student and serving as a mentor," she said. "There's a closeness there that can't be replicated between a full adult and a child. I thought it had the potential to be quite powerful."

The program has evolved into something much larger. Trailblazers 2011 incorporates seven participating elementary schools and involves approximately 150 high school seniors. The program receives funding from the Ann Arbor Public Schools Educational Foundation.

During second semester of their junior year, students interested in Trailblazers undergo an application process, which consists of an essay, recommendation letters, and a one-on-one interview with Trailblazers coordinators Don Packard and Jon Stern. An important requisite is that students show a consistent attendance record, indicating dedication and responsibility to their classes.

Senior Samuelina Wright, a Trailblazer at Lakewood, said she enjoys educating others. "I've always loved helping people, teaching people," she said. "For a while in middle school I actually wanted to become a teacher." Although her career aspirations have now changed, Wright says her passion for teaching is still a constant, and when presented with the opportunity to make use of it, "I figured, why not?"

Packard said the program broadens school students' experiences. "Trailblazers is an opportunity for seniors to give back to their community, to extend responsibility, to give them some closure in their public school experience, to give them



Members of the Pioneer High School Trailblazers visit Ann Arbor elementary schools weekly during the school year, helping students and building relationships. About 150 Pioneers participate in the program. Photos with this story were taken at Bach and Pattengill elementary schools.

(Photos courtesy, Don Packard)



insight to the public school system," he said, "It really opens their eyes and illuminates how hard elementary (students) have to work."

Selected Trailblazers receive a two-week intensive training period at the start of the school year, where they are taught the necessary skills of "consistency, creativity, pa-

tiency..." and other problem-solving tools, according to Packard.

The mentors are then assigned to mentees by the adult coordinators, who match based on such factors as gender and ethnicity.

Oftentimes, mentors are assigned to an elementary school they attended – working in classrooms

with their own elementary school teachers. Packard describes the situation as "a full circle. Those are the moments when it's great for the teacher and for the (high school) student."

Mentor and mentee work together throughout the entire school year, meeting during the school week for half-hour sessions to tutor and provide additional academic and social support. Each elementary school has a designated adult site supervisor who oversees progress and handles any problems.

Despite the organized system, mentors still face challenges. "I think some days, it's a real test of patience," said Wright, "It's hard finding the line between being a friend to (my mentee) and being sort of almost a second teacher."

Packard cites another obstacle mentors generally face. "The hardest part of being a Trailblazer is that the (mentors) don't see immediate results. They are oftentimes working for something intangible. They have to be able to explain things over

See Trailblazers, next page

Exceptional Education

Trailblazers, from previous page

again many different times and in many different ways. They have to be firm and resilient,” he said.

“The most common challenge for the mentors is keeping their kids on track, and sustaining work. It’s not about a power struggle. It’s about inspiring and instilling the desire to work.”

Zimmer noted that mentors also gain keener insight on how to appreciate their own public education experiences. “The mentors learn and appreciate that learning is not so easy for some children,” she said. “They also learn that many of their lives are quite privileged and that not everyone has a parent at home who takes a keen interest in their homework ... who works into the wee hours with them on a science fair project and the like.

“I think the experience enlightens them on many fronts. And of course the impact on the mentees is immense – academically and psychologically. I think it promotes self-confidence and motivation to learn in a big way.”

Yet throughout the challenges, Trailblazers are frequently rewarded with the experiences and skills that pave future roads for exploration. Packard says, “We get Pioneer students that come back after graduating, and they’re now involved in social work. And they’re really enjoying it. They got that start at



Trailblazers.”

Packard describes Trailblazers as a mutually beneficial relationship. “The true value of the program really comes from the fact that both the high school and the elementary school students learn a lot about themselves,” he said. “High schoolers learn about the education process, and elementary schoolers learn through that process.”

Packard explained that some of the mentors went on fifth-grade Winter Survival trips and enjoyed other things they did as young students. “They get a different perspective, and it’s a powerful perspective,” he said. “Oftentimes, it’s easy for a (high school) student to be selfish. You’re worried about your grades, your learning. But when you’re doing things for someone else, it takes

true commitment and responsibility.”

This responsibility resonates beyond the classroom. “I get feedback from the parents of the mentees,” said Packard. “Trailblazers really adds to the culture of the elementary school. For their kids, school matters now. They’re getting the support that they need. They look forward to seeing their Trailblazers every single day of the week.”

Packard views Trailblazers as a powerful model for student interaction. “I’ve really learned the value of relationships over the last few years,” he said. “When I see 18-year-olds working with 6-year-olds, it really melts my heart. I’ve learned the power of encouraging my students to work with their mentees, and I’ve been able to see that when I get out of the way and let them work, they

do some really amazing things.”

Zimmer agrees. “I think the program brings out the giving, generous, kind, compassionate side of young adults that may not have been cultivated as much before. I hear later that these same students become volunteers in their communities and at college, seeking to replicate the goodness they felt in their hearts from the Trailblazer experience.”

For Wright, the calm atmosphere of the program contributes to her day.

“Sometimes, Trailblazers can be the highlight of my day because the kids will just say the funniest things,” she said, “Instead of a bunch of teenagers all budding around trying to do a physics lab or take a test, it’s so nice to be in a classroom that’s much more mellow and slower-paced. It’s a really nice contrast to the stress of high school.”

After 12 years of public high school – a journey that, for some, began as a step into the elementary school they now serve – Pioneer Trailblazers will graduate this June with diplomas in hand, memories in hearts and their mentees moving into the future with optimism.

Carlina Duan is a Pioneer High School senior and editor of The Optimist, Pioneer’s student newspaper. She is a frequent contributor to the AAPSNews.

Mural, from page 4

displayed.

Thiefels, who worked side-by-side with the art students through the process, said murals are great community builders. “Murals become a source of pride, share stories, evoke and stimulate thought, and bring communities together by sharing commonalities and creating celebration,” she said.

Thiefels said students develop leadership skills and learn creative problem-solving techniques. “It’s been an opportunity for them to share their talents and skills, to be role models and set a standard of achievement among their peers, to paint and have fun, and make a positive and lasting impression on their school,” she

added.

Students first spent several weeks using Photoshop putting together the design for the wall, which included musical notes, a photo of student listening to music on headphones and a Skyline choir student. They used a projector to trace the design onto the wall, and then began painting.

The project is designed to reflect Skyline’s diverse students population and it’s motto of “Agile Minds, Big Hearts, Deep Question,” the student artists said.

Murphy, who wants to be a graphic designer, said she had never before worked on a piece of mural art, but has enjoyed it. “I definitely like doing the computer art,” she said.

“They have done all the work on the mural. I just wrote the grant, introduced Mary to some talented students, and watched the creativity

unfold,” added Hendrick.

Thiefels, an Ann Arbor native, was introduced to the Skyline project through a longtime family friendship with math teacher Dan Neaton. Thiefels had just completed a 12’ by 40’ paint-by-number mural with third- and fourth-graders at Mitchell Elementary School with friend and colleague, Sarah Winter. “The project was such a huge success that I knew that had to be more opportunities out there like this one,” she said.

She studied art at Eastern Michigan, is active in the Southeastern Michigan arts community and has taught drawing and painting and led mural workshops with teens. “I believe mural art can teach us to be proud of so many things: our youth, our ability to express our creative ideas freely, to collaborate, problem solve, educate, tell stories and voice our opinions,” she added.

New superintendent , from page 1

democratic officer of Des Moines Public Schools in Iowa. Another finalist, Shelley Redinger, withdrew as a candidate after accepting another position.

During the March 4 session, Green answered submitted questions from the public, which were asked by officials from Ray & Associates, the firm that assisted the board in its search and selection process. She spoke about parent involvement, leadership, diversity and her philosophy on education.

Green said she advocates strong parent involvement and said, in her current role, she hosts a series of superintendent-parent committee meetings. "They set the agenda," she said. "We've changed things based on the passion of the community. Sometimes as leaders we have to sit down and listen."

She notes that a good superintendent needs input from a variety of sources to be successful. "You don't do things in isolation," she added. "You reach out for partnerships." Green said in her current role, she has a variety of advisory committees in place, including ones with local police and ministerial groups. She also hosts a regular dinner for student leaders.

In the area of equity, diversity and global awareness, Green said a school district must celebrate each student and community member and what they bring to the system and must prepare students to be citizens of the world. "It has to come from the leadership of the school district and it has to be valued," she said. "We must celebrate what you are, what you bring to the table. And we have to prepare students for their world of the future – not our world of the past."

She said good leaders should have "kaleidoscopic vision," including many opinions and viewpoints. They also need to know when to step forward and when to step back and allow others to take the lead, she said. "Some pieces look different depending on how you turn the lens," Green said of her philosophy. "It looks different with new information."

When asked for her definition of an exemplary school, Green said it is one that is "child-centered and has a high expectation for success" and one that brings arts, athletics and academics together for a well-rounded experience. "I've always focused on what's best for the child with academics to match," she said.

In terms of budget, she said those are the toughest things to tackle. "It's a challenge across America," she said. Green noted that she always puts academics and children first and advocates "using a scalpel, not a machete" in making cuts. She also said she advocates cutting, not eliminating programs, because "once you eliminate good programs, they rarely, if ever, come back."

Green has served in her current post in the North Allegheny School District since May 2002. She has experience on national, state and local levels in the areas of instructional leadership, administrative and organizational management, labor/management, governance issues, accountability issues, instructional improvement, social and emotional learning, and issues of diversity and multiculturalism. A main focus in North Allegheny has been work on the district's Strategic Plan.

She holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education from the University of Maryland, a Master of Education degree in Human Development Education from the University of Maryland's Institute for Child Study, and a doctorate in Education Policy, Planning, and Administration from the University of Maryland.

Prior to her time in North Allegheny, she served as Acting Deputy Superintendent for Instruction for the Prince George's County Public Schools, a large district in Maryland. She has worked as a teacher, principal, elementary administrator, assistant superintendent and served an administrative role in special education and pupil services during her educational career. She has been married for 35 years to Dr. Stephen I. Green, a periodontist.

New school chief and former student find Ann Arbor link

From AAPSNews Service

It is a small world, indeed, for Ann Arbor physician Dr. Eric Straka. He was pleased to hear the news about Dr. Patricia Green, the new superintendent for the Ann



Eric Straka

Arbor Public Schools, as he was a sixth-grade student of Green's in Maryland – and she was his favorite teacher.

"She was the best teacher I ever had," said

Straka, an internist who practices in Washtenaw and western Wayne counties. "She was really serious about teaching and really cared about the students' learning. I still have vivid memories of her class."

Green was hired by the district on Saturday, March 5, following finalist interviews by the Ann Arbor Board of Education. The community also heard the incoming superintendent and another finalist candidate at a Friday night forum the evening before the decision.

After Green's appointment was announced and reported upon in local media, Straka posted in a thread after an AnnArbor.com story, sending a brief note of welcome, and noting the teacher-student connection: "... I think the board made a GREAT decision to hire you and I hope you enjoy living here. I look forward to seeing you around town," he said in his post.

Straka was in Green's class at Buckingham Elementary School in Bowie, Maryland during the 1977-78 school year, where he recalls astronomy and space as a big focus of her science teaching. He recalls "a lot of reading, book reports and quite a bit of artwork. She was such an energetic teacher."

Straka is with the primary care physicians practice Partners in Internal Medicine and has been practicing medicine since 1996.

Green said she remembers Straka well and did not realize that he had landed in Ann Arbor and was practicing medicine here. "Eric was such a terrific student who always wanted to do his best ... I knew he had a tremendous future ahead of him," Green said. She recalled the sixth-grade space science projects the year when Straka and his classmates incorporated research, scientific theories and artistic expression.

"Eric's work stood out and was so excellent that I asked him if I could keep some of it as a 'sample' to share with future sixth-grade classes and with other teachers during professional development days," she said.

Fifteen years after having Green as a teacher, Straka was doing his residency at the University of California, San Francisco when his mother saw an item in The Washington Post about one of Green's career promotions and sent it to her son. He sent Green a note of congratulations and within two weeks "I got this huge package in the mail with all of my old artwork in it – and it was in pristine condition."

Green recalled the time equally well. "Eric sent me an announcement that he had graduated medical school and told me that his love of science went all the way back to our sixth-grade class," Green said. "For a teacher, there is nothing better than that kind of compliment. I was so excited, I packed up all the projects he had made and shipped them off to him as I felt it was time they were reunited with their creator.

"Little did I know our paths would cross again someday here in Ann Arbor. I am thrilled," she added. Straka said this special teacher touched his life. "She made me a better student," he recalled. "She was challenging and tough, but she really cared about the kids. I think Ann Arbor is lucky to have her."

Straka is married to Gianna Lete and they have a child who attends Tappan Middle School and two at Burns Park Elementary.



Ed Foundation launches 2011 'One Million Reasons' campaign

From AAPSNews Service

The Ann Arbor Public Schools Educational Foundation kicked off its 2011 One Million Reasons Campaign this month to raise money for programs impacting AAPS students.

For a second year, the AAPSEF is working to raise \$1 million to help fund programs that could be cut because of anticipated state budget reductions and a lack of educational resources.

"The prospect of a \$15 million budget reduction for the next academic year – and limited options for improving revenues – will have significant impact on programs for students in our schools," said AAPSEF Executive Director Wendy Correll. She noted that the AAPS Educational Foundation and its One Million Reasons campaign offer the community a way

to continue these vital programs.

The inaugural 2010 campaign was a great success, with several hundred supporters donating more than \$335,000, according to Correll. This represents more than the Foundation has ever raised in any annual period. The board of AAPSEF anticipates conducting this campaign annually until funding meets the needs of all students, Correll added.

Historically, the foundation funded new, innovative programs in schools. But recent and persistent budget reductions in education have prompted the foundation to consider funding existing programs that have advanced student achievement and development, Correll said.

The launch of this year's fundraising campaign took place at an evening event March 8 at the Ann Arbor PTO Thrift Shop, where the

thrift shop Board of Directors made an initial substantial gift of \$10,000 to help launch this year's campaign. Another \$3,000 was pledged by the Ann Arbor Dykema law practice and \$8,000 was received from individual donors at the kickoff event.

Last year, the PTO Thrift Shop donated \$100,000, IMRA America gave \$50,000 to support math and science programs and another \$25,000 donation was made in memory of Dr. James A. Norton Jr. to match AAPS employee donations to the campaign.

Proceeds from the 2011 campaign will go to the AAPS 2011-12 academic year. Donate online by visiting the AAPS Educational Foundation website (www.aapfef.org) or by sending a check payable to AAPSEF at 2555 S. State Street, Ann Arbor, MI, 48104.

Staff well-represented at MACUL this week

From AAPANews Service

The Ann Arbor Public Schools will be well represented at the annual MACUL Conference "Essentials for 21st Century Teaching and Learning." The Michigan Association for Computer Users in Learning event takes place March 16-18 at Cobo Center in downtown Detroit.

Ann Arbor Public Schools presenters and their topics include:

■ **"Learning Our W-A-Y: Piloting a Collaborative County-Wide Cyberschool"** – AAPS Director of Instructional Technology Monique Uzelac will present with Washtenaw Intermediate School District Director of School Services Sarena Shivers and WISD Director of Assessment Naomi Norman. They will discuss the new Washtenaw County online learning program being hosted at Stone High School starting with the 2010-11 school year.

■ **"We're Going to Japan! Let's Record and Share Our Trip"** – Ann Marie Borders, a first-grade teacher at Logan Elementary School, will share how she used Moodle, language translators, digital photos, and the web to learn about, record, and share experiences while preparing for and traveling to Japan. She will also share how she implemented a Japanese culture unit with elementary students.

■ **"Online Learning for Everyone: One District's Approach"** – AAPS District Webmaster Alexandra Van Doren, Director of Instructional Technology Monique Uzelac and Instructional Technology Coach Anne Reader discuss how Ann Arbor Public Schools uses Moodle to support its approach to online and blended options for both student and professional learning, central systems to organize those offerings and materials and the systematic approach the district uses to put it all together.



■ **"Avoid Pitfalls When Sharing Curriculum and Student Portfolios Online Via Google Tools"** – Skyline High School teachers Peter Pasque and Kristal Jaaskelainen offer a practical road map to efficient and effective methods of collaborating online. They will share how they have implemented common curricular sites and student portfolios utilizing Google tools.

■ **"Using the iPod Touch to Enhance Literacy Learning in the First Grade Classroom"** – Logan Elementary's Ann Marie Borders will show how to improve student literacy skills using the iPod Touch. She will present applications and practices for educators working with special-needs students, bilingual and non-English speakers and pre-readers and readers – both at home and at school.

Visit <http://www.macul.org/conferences/2011/maculconference/>

3 Pioneer juniors get documentary honors

Three Pioneer High School juniors were awarded an honorable mention in the C-SPAN 2011 StudentCam Competition. Rosanna Neuhausler, Ryan Murphy and John Wissman, produced a piece called "Stadium Bridges."

C-SPAN's StudentCam Competition is an annual national video documentary contest that encourages students to think seriously about issues that affect communities and the nation. A total of 1,069 videos from 40 states and Washington, D.C. were entered this year.

Students were required to produce a piece 5-8 minutes in length, to fully explore their documentary's topic, include C-SPAN programming relating to the topic, offer various opinions about the topic and put credits or citation list at the end of the documentary. Students were also allowed to include interviews, video pertaining to their topic, copyright-free music, graphics, diagrams, still images and narration using an original, student-written script.

View the video at this link: <http://studentcam.viddler.com/videos/watch.php?id=5f46c64c>

Huron vocalist aims for career in opera

From AAPSNews Service

Darren Fedewa's dream is to perform in European venues as a professional singer. The Huron High School senior baritone has held onto that dream since he began singing with a serious mission in middle school.

Fedewa, 17, is likely to get his chance, as he was nominated by an Indiana University professor for the opportunity to attend the Saarburg Festival (<http://www.saarburgfestival.de/>) in Saarburg, Germany this summer. He has begun his fundraising drive to make his dream a reality.

The Saarburg program is geared for high school, college and young professionals and offers an advanced training program for singers, pianists, composers and instrumentalists who desire careers in European countries. It has an emphasis on individual music enrichment and advancement.

Fedewa's childhood was filled with music, as his mother is a pianist and piano teacher and obtained her music degree after he was born. "I've been around music my whole life," said Fedewa. "Singing just seems to click with me naturally."

He joined the middle school choir at St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church, where he is a member, and also has served as cantor at their Masses. "As I did that more often, it was another catalyst for me," he explained.

Fedewa has been involved with high school musicals with the Huron Players, has done solo performances at regional, state and national competitions and is involved with a variety of chorale experiences, including Huron's A Cappella Choir and at summer choir camps at Interlochen and a variety of festivals here and overseas in Austria and Germany. At St. Francis of Assisi, he also is a member of the church's Contemporary Group.

He also had the experience of performing with a chorale and as a soloist for all opening, closing and liturgical events during the National Catholic Youth Conference of 26,000 youth and adults from throughout the United States.

"For me, I think that wherever you can perform and enjoy doing it is what's important," he said.

Fedewa also is looking ahead to college

and has a number of auditions pending at music programs here in Michigan and out of state. He has been involved with Huron's German language program since he was a freshman, he said, which is one of the reasons that a career in Europe appeals to him.

He said singing opera is appealing because of the challenge it offers. "I like that in opera you have to project – the sheer amount of power opera singers have to have in their voices," he added.

Carlos Montane, a professor of music/voice at the Jacobs Music School at Indiana University-Bloomington nominated Fedewa for this honor. The Huron senior was invited to audition at Indiana U and got an e-mail afterwards from Montane, suggesting he consider it.

Montane congratulated Fedewa on a wonderful audition at IU. "The committee as well as myself were very impressed with your voice and your singing," he wrote.

"For his age, he was excellent," Montane told the AAPSNews. "I thought it would be a good idea for him to take

some kind of festival before entering college. I don't do that just for anybody." Montane said of the 400-500 music students who audition before IU committees, he only recommends two or three for a summer festival.

Montane said he appreciated Fedewa's talent. "The quality of his voice – quality is something that you can't learn," he said. "He was excellent."

Fedewa said that he hit a bump in life's road last year when his father passed away – something that hit him hard and is part of the reason he must do a lot of fundraising for the upcoming trip. He estimates it will take about \$4,000 for him to get to the festival.

Ray Digby, an Ann Arbor resident, knows Fedewa from attending the same church and from being active with Boy Scout Troop 27 and also lives near the Fedewa family.

He said he is one of a number of people who have encouraged Fedewa to follow his dream and raise money to attend the festival this summer.

"I've known Darren for six years and I guess I'm very pleased to see how he's developed as a person and as a developing opera singer," Digby said. "He's been a pretty quick study of which roads to follow. At age 17, he's making the effort and there's a lot involved with that.

'The quality of his voice – quality is something that you can't learn. He was excellent.'

Professor Carlos Montane of Indiana University, who recommended Huron High School's Darren Fedewa to the Saarburg Festival this summer



Darren Fedewa performs a solo with Huron High School's A Cappella Choir in Salzburg, Austria. (Courtesy, Darren Fedewa)

Saarburg Festival Fundraiser

What: Darren Fedewa's senior recital will raise money for this Huron High School senior and his trip to the Saarburg Festival in Germany.

When: 8 p.m., Friday, April 15

Where: Huron High School, 2727 Fuller Road, Ann Arbor

Donations: Donations may be made on the day of the senior recital, or donations are welcome via mail. Make checks out to "Darren Fedewa Festival Fundraising" and mail them to: 3298 Turnberry Lane, Ann Arbor, MI 48108.

Details: For more about the festival, visit: <http://www.saarburgfestival.de/>

"I told him that when he's a world-famous opera singer, I would like a box seat," he added.

What advice would Fedewa offer to other young singers?

"It always has to be something you think about," he said of his musical goal. "It's important. If you feel you are called to do something – music or any other career – follow your dream."