

AAPSNews

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

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Walk on at Haisley

Annual event brings community together and raises money, **page 3 and video online**

Carpenter innovation

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Project Healthy Schools

Partnership encourages good eating and lifestyle choices, **page 6**

Issue No. 35, May 16, 2011

Members of the Angell Elementary Ecology Club show off the school's new compost bin, created this year. The club meets each Wednesday during recess where fifth-graders look at sustainability in their school, including energy use, recycling and other ways to keep the school green. Teacher Tom Yaeger is the group's adviser.



Initiatives teach students to honor the Earth

From AAPSNews Service

Fifth-graders in Tom Yaeger's Ecology Club at Angell Elementary are aiming to lessen their carbon footprint.

The 23 club members have the right idea: Finding ways to encourage sustainability, recycling and using fewer resources and spreading the word throughout their elementary school community.

It is one of many grass-roots sustainability programs going

**Lawton Elementary
recycles the lunchroom:
<http://a2schools.org>**

on in and around the Ann Arbor Public Schools. Although individual teachers create their own programs, they all tie nicely into a districtwide initiative: the EASE initiative – Environmental Awareness and Sustainability

See Sustainability, page 2

**EASE: Energy awareness in
the Ann Arbor Public Schools**

What: Environmental Awareness and Sustainability Education began this school year. The four-year program is designed to audit energy use in all buildings and decrease district energy expenditures by \$324,000 per year. **Details:** Visit online at: www.a2schools.org/EASE to see how your school is doing with energy use.

Trustees push ideas on school funding

Forum gives officials chance to voice ideas for change in Lansing

From AAPSNews Service

Ann Arbor school officials have given state lawmakers a laundry list of ideas for specific action to assist public schools and the way they are funded.

And they have made it clear how angry they are about the state proposal to shift \$900 million from the School Aid Fund to higher education. The School Aid Fund has always been used solely for K-12 schools funding, but proposals this year would change that.

When Proposal A was passed in 1994, "we were assured there would be a continuing and reliable form of funding," said Ann Arbor trustee Andy Thomas during a roundtable discussion May 6 at Pioneer High School. "This is a

See Funding, page 8

Student actors in the Roberto Clemente Center's production of August Wilson's "Fences."



'Fences' is inaugural play at Clemente

New high school drama program chooses award-winning August Wilson classic for stage production. **Page 3**

**VIDEO clip of 'Fences' online
at <http://news.a2schools.org>**

Sustainability, from page 1

Education, which began this year.

EASE conducted audits of all buildings in the fall and offers ongoing information about sustainability efforts by individual school (www.a2schools.org/EASE.)

At Angell, the Ecology Club meets each Wednesday, members giving up their recess time to meet and about energy saving ideas, recycle used milk cartons from around the school and take cafeteria vegetable clippings out to a newly created compost pile.

"It starts training the whole school – It's pretty cool," said fifth-grade teacher Tom Yaeger, who has taught at Angell for 23 years and organized the club four years ago. About half of fifth-graders take part in the volunteer effort and Yaeger said most members come weekly. "A big part is empowering kids to know they can do something about it. That small steps do matter. It's a powerful feeling they get."

Students call it the "EcoClub" and this year, they have tackled three independent projects: Food improvement, energy and recycling/composting, which started this year. "They fill a 96-gallon (recycling) cart," Yaeger said. "It fills up in four days, they do so much recycling."

EcoClub member Tony explained about an energy contest held at the school this year. They made presentations to each classroom about energy consumption and where we get our energy. "We tried to teach the kids in the school to save energy," he explained. After two weeks of the "Lights Out" campaign, the first-graders won. Winners got "reward bags:" recycled notebooks they made from reused paper and decorated covers in a padding press, and recycled pencils.

Addy is on the Food Improvement Committee. She explained that members did a silent survey in the cafeteria, seeing what types of foods students were selecting and what was thrown away. "Our goal is to have 50 percent of the kids make healthy choices," she said.

Angell fifth-graders got involved with the club for a variety of reasons, from following the lead of friends and

thinking it sounded like fun, to taking environmental issues seriously. "I've always been really interested in helping the environment," Zoe said. "That's why I joined the energy group."

Teacher's passion for sustainability transfers to students

At Burns Park Elementary, fifth-grade science teacher Sandy Kreger is passionate about the environment – so much so that she spent two years putting a green addition on her home.

She took a green high school unit she got at a workshop and modified it for her elementary students. The Burns Park fifth-graders learned where things are made, what is green and what they can do to be green. They took part in a life-size timeline of biodegradability of all types of items, learned about recycling and composting and did a poster project using old recycled sheets and natural materials – such as ketchup, mustard and berries – as paints.

They took green pledges as part of the



process. "This year, I thought it would be really nice for them to take some responsibility," Kreger said of the pledges. "This is a way they can make a difference."

"It was wonderful – I could teach it all year," she said of the unit, which enhanced the students' regular, required lessons. "Students felt like they had a voice – like they could do something about it. I try to concentrate on things they can really help to change."

Kreger uses the Be Green retail store for materials – and used many items from the store when she did her own home-improvement project.

During her home project, she considered what she could do to involve students. She had a green builder come into her classroom to speak to and, when her project was completed, she invited her students and their families to her home at Halloween to see the addition.

The biggest lesson I've learned is how I still have things to learn," she noted. "I'm still learning how to reuse people's stuff."



Burns Park Elementary fifth-graders with teacher Sandy Kreger, who has taken her passion for green living and brought it into her science teaching. Posted on the wall are copies of "green pledges" each student completed this school year – detailing ways they plan to make the planet a better place to live. Several boards around the school feature these pledges. Above is a detail of the some of the creative ways students participated in the project.

New Clemente drama program takes stage in spring production

Students learn acting, handle set design, coordinate lighting and technical with help of drama coach



From AAPSNews Service

A proud Roberto Clemente community offered its first student drama performance this month with August Wilson's award-winning play "Fences." The new student group took to the stage on May 11-12, offering public performances of the acclaimed production.

A number of Clemente students starred in the production, representing African-American students from all attendance areas of the Ann Arbor Public Schools. Students also took part in set creation, production and lighting for the school's inaugural production.

"This adaptation is a moving story and intensely performed by our students," said Principal Ben Edmondson in a note about the performance sent to school staff. "We are particularly proud to bring this play to you, as it is a great demonstration of our understanding of what equity work looks like within our building."

Wilson's play is set in the 1950s, and chronicles one African-American family's experiences living in the Hill District in the city of Pittsburgh, where playwright Wilson grew up. "Fences" is one of series of plays that he wrote chronicling the African-American experience in the 20th Century.

"I have learned more in this first year than I think I have in all my

11 years with the Ann Arbor Public Schools so far," said teacher and play director Joey Parins, who came to Clemente last fall after teaching at Clague Middle School. "The students you are about to see have gone through a great transformation. Everybody – from our lights to our backstage to our set design."

Parins, who began the drama program this year at Clemente, told the audience that she shared a special connection with playwright Wilson, spending time with him years ago when she worked at a restaurant named Esteban's in St. Paul, Minnesota.

"He used to come in and he used to sit there at the bar every afternoon," she said. "It was quiet and nobody was there and he would come in and write. And he'd have a cup of coffee and I would sit there and visit with August."

Parins noted that the play "has been a natural fit for our students" and said she would love to do another of Wilson's plays, "Joe Turner's Come and Gone" or another of his through-the-decades plays next year.

Clemente student actors included: Marcus Buggs playing the lead role of Troy Maxson; David Wren as Corey; Courtney Tubbs and Serena Johnson as Rose Maxson; DaVonn Harding as Bono; James Kelly as Gabriel; Bria Galloway and Mica Sims as Raynell; and Arquise Patterson as Lyons.

On the crew were Tyler Sheldon and Anthony Hugan on lights and Chris Coghlan, YaJaira Marin, Denejah Drumright and Raven Hinton in the technical area.

Technology teacher Mike Fransten and his students handled set design and English teacher Jonathan Royce wrote the grant for the production. It was funded with grant money from the Ann Arbor Public Schools Educational Foundation and with proceeds and donations taken at the door. Lowes donated fencing for the set and Uncle Ed's Oil Shoppe allowed the use of its jumpsuits for the play's wardrobe.

A number of school staff saw a preliminary performance of Clemente's "Fences" the previous week. Fine Arts Coordinator Robin Bailey said staff and students did "a marvelous job" on the production. Slauson Middle School Principal Chris Curtis was quoted as saying: "If I were to sum up my reaction in two words, they would be 'spine tingling. It was awesome.'" Assistant Superintendent Joyce Hunter said, "the students at Clemente should also receive a Tony Award."

"Fences" won four Tony Awards including an award for best play and also won the Pulitzer Prize and several other prestigious awards. The original Broadway version starring James Earl Jones set a record for a nonmusical when it grossed \$11 million in a single year.



Walkathon unites Haisley

The annual Haisley Walkathon began with overcast skies, but the enthusiasm of students at the Ann Arbor elementary school brightened the day.

May 13 was the day for the annual event, which raises money for the school, gets students pumped up with pride and encourages healthy activity among students.

"We've really gotten them to walk more," said Nancy Ketola, a Haisley parent who has organized the annual event for the past five years. "It's fitness, fundraising and it's really a good community thing."

Students get pledges for laps walked and the event is a major fundraiser for the school. "They get so excited," she added.

Most students walk about one eighth of a mile – about 60 laps around the school's outdoor track out back.

"Every kid gets a chance to walk and gets to wear a number," Ketola said. Prizes for the day are donated by major sponsors which include Absopure, Lowes, and Meijer stores and Dairy Queen (every student gets an ice cream cone), among others. Parent volunteers count laps and help keep the event on track.

The day included a DJ, kids' activities, and is the favorite of the school year, said Principal Mary Anne Jaeger.

"It is an amazing community builder."

Carpenter teacher gets creative using low-cost interactive whiteboard

By Casey Hans
AAPSNews Service

Carpenter Elementary third-grade teacher Bethany Tabaka said she's always been a good user of technology, but she's never considered herself "super tech savvy."

Her curiosity about information she found in a graduate-level education technology class last winter led her to the Internet where she found details about creating an interactive whiteboard for next to nothing.

One trip to the electronics store – and sharing some ideas with her tech-loving dad – and she was off and running.

Just a few months later, nearly all of the classrooms at Carpenter are outfitted with the inexpensive technology which includes a Wii remote mounted to the ceiling, an infrared pen that one can buy or make, a Bluetooth-enabled laptop computer and a couple of pieces of free or low-cost software. It provides teachers with an interactive platform to teach all subjects.

This inexpensive approach – found under an Internet search for Wiimote whiteboard – has transformed her classroom with new technology and a new learning environment.

"I've always had a love of gadgets," Tabaka said. "But this was

a whole new ballgame for me," said Tabaka, who for two years divided her time between Spanish at Pittsfield Elementary and Title I classes at Carpenter and, this year, has her own classroom of third-graders.

On this day, students were learning the Geometry concepts of area and perimeter and all were clamoring to go the board with their answers.

She can control the technology from her iPod (an iPad or smart phone will also work with a free downloadable application) from anywhere around her classroom once it is synchronized.

Tabaka blends the technology with traditional, paper-and-pencil problems and said the new tool has engaged students who otherwise would never come to the board to do a problem in front of the class. "Most hands go up to answer when the Wiimote whiteboard is being used," she said.

Even when the screen is just being used for graphic elements and students are writing on the whiteboard with a marker, it is a highly effective tool, she said. "Students like it better." For writing, Tabaka sometimes scans in student works so they can be highlighted or edited on the screen. She also uses it for Social Studies and reading lessons.

Ann Arbor Public Schools



Carpenter Elementary School third-grade teacher Bethany Tabaka works with students, combining traditional teaching methods with use of a Wiimote whiteboard that she created in her classroom during a recent math lesson on geometry concepts.

Director of Instructional Technology Monique Uzelac praised Tabaka's initiative.

"This is being driven by teachers who really want to try the technology," she said, adding that the district fully supports these innovative efforts by teachers. "Part of our role is to support teachers finding innovative ways to integrate technologies into their classrooms."

Tabaka said she was also asked to share her experience with Pittsfield Elementary where the technology is also being considered. "It wasn't intended to be as big as it is – I was like a kid in a candy store," she added.

Despite the localized success at Carpenter, there is a downside to this technology that will not allow

it to become a district classroom standard, Uzelac said. The interactive Wiimote interferes with use of the soundfield audio enhancement systems installed in each classroom, which uses the same infrared technology. The soundfield systems were installed with dollars from the 2004 bond issue.

Tabaka has a bachelor's degree with a double major in Elementary Education and Spanish from Western Michigan University and is working on a master's degree in Education Media and Technology from Eastern Michigan University.

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National SpeakUp tech survey draws 875 responses from Ann Arbor Public Schools households

A total of 875 Ann Arbor Public Schools parents responded to a national survey on educational technology – the largest group of Ann Arbor parents to ever participate, according to Monique Uzelac, Director of Instructional Technology for the district.

The SpeakUp National Research Project surveys K-12 students,

teachers, parents and school administrators. It is conducted through Project Tomorrow, and responses were accepted from mid-October to mid-January.

Uzelac said that the district's new outreach tool, School Messenger, allowed the district to reach even more parents and encourage participation.

Respondents represented students equally distributed throughout grade levels. About half considered themselves average technology users, with 38 percent considering themselves an advanced user of technology.

Of respondents, 99 percent have a computer with high-speed internet. Parents feel teaching of digital

citizenship and online safety is the responsibility of the school and family. Awareness of online safety and digital citizenship is best as a joint effort between family and schools. Half support using online textbooks and most support their students' pursuit of STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) careers.

Concert celebrates Pioneer GRAMMY

Ann Arbor program is first to receive National GRAMMY Signature Award twice

From AAPSNews Service

Ann Arbor Pioneer High School has earned its second National GRAMMY Signature School Award from The GRAMMY Foundation – the first time any school has been given the top award twice, according to Pioneer Performing Arts Department Chairman David Leach.

“We have a community that really embraces the arts and arts education,” said Leach, who also serves as Pioneer’s band director. “One of the reasons we’re in the GRAMMYs is that we have such a rich program.” He noted that arts education gets strong support from the Ann Arbor Public Schools leadership and that being in the University of Michigan’s back yard is also a huge asset.

Leach said he is exceptionally proud of Pioneer and its music program, especially as it was considered for this year’s award. “All of the schools competing, they’re really fine programs,” he said. “To see these great programs for years and to know we’re right up there with them is humbling.”

A special, free concert for the community to celebrate the 2011 National GRAMMY Signature School Award honor will take place at 8 p.m., Thursday, May 26 at Hill Auditorium on the University of Michigan campus. Pioneer’s music students will perform and the GRAMMY award will be presented that evening.

Leach said he is hopeful many from the community will come to hear the free concert and is hoping to get upwards of 1,500 attending to help the Ann Arbor Public Schools and the Pioneer community celebrate.

Pioneer will receive a prize of \$15,000 to enhance its music program. Leach said individual programs at the school will share in the prize, but that it also will support a new Theory AP class and the music program’s Theory and Technology class.

Created in 1998, the GRAMMY Signature Schools program recognizes top U.S. public high schools that are making an outstanding commitment to music education during an academic school year. A total of 36 schools were named 2011 GRAMMY Signature Schools. The top seven schools were designated Gold recipients and the best of the Gold recipients is named the National GRAMMY Signature School; this year that honor went to Pioneer. The first time the



Michael Daugherty, award-winning contemporary classical composer and father of a Pioneer music student will present the school with its second national GRAMMY on May 26.

GRAMMY Presentation Concert

What: A free concert of the Pioneer Music Department to celebrate Pioneer’s 2011 National GRAMMY Signature School Award.

When: 8 p.m., Thursday, May 26.

Where: Hill Auditorium on the University of Michigan Campus, 825 N. University Ave., Ann Arbor.

Who: The award to Pioneer will be presented by these two special guests:

- Michael Daugherty, GRAMMY-winning contemporary classical composer, University of Michigan professor and father of a Pioneer music student.
- Local entertainment attorney Howard Hertz, a member of the Chicago chapter of the National Academy of Recording Arts & Sciences (Grammy Awards) Board of Governors and adjunct professor of law at U-M and Wayne State University.

school received the honor was in 2006.

“We are proud of these very dedicated student musicians and their excellent music instructors,” said AAPS Fine Arts Coordinator Robin Bailey. In addition to Leach, instructors include: Jonathan Glawe, Orchestra; Steve Lorenz, Choir; Nancy Waring, Band/Music Theory and Technology; and Rochelle Martinez, Piano and Guitar.

Parent David Baum is co-vice president of the Pioneer Band Association. His son, Alex, is a senior who plays clarinet in the Pioneer Symphony Band and was drum major in the

2010 Pioneer Marching Band. Son Aaron, a sophomore, is a trumpet player in the Pioneer Symphony Band.

“My own two boys have benefited immensely from their years playing in the Pioneer High School bands,” Baum said. “That Pioneer’s music program was selected as the very best one in the entire country underscores what I’ve said countless time to friends with children coming up through schools in Ann Arbor: The Pioneer music program is reason enough, by itself, to send their children to school there.”

Leach said one of the reasons Pioneer is often at or near the top of the GRAMMY awards list is that an original student composition is featured as part of the school’s submission. This year, that composition will be performed at the celebratory concert.

“It’s a work of passion when we’re all together,” Leach said of Pioneer’s program. “We try to keep the passion and mold it into something of a high caliber. We want our kids to strive to be great musicians.”

When Pioneer won the 2006 National GRAMMY Signature School Award, local rock musician and Pioneer alum Bob Seger was on hand to present the award. This year, award-winning composer and U-M professor Michael Daugherty – also a Pioneer parent – and entertainment attorney Howard Hertz will do the honors, Leach said.

Since 2002, Pioneer has been named a GRAMMY Signature School six times. Of those, the school received GRAMMY Gold Signature School status five times and, of those, has earned the coveted top prize twice. Pioneer has received \$31,500 in GRAMMY awards, not counting this year’s \$15,000 prize.

Leach noted that despite two major directorship changes in Pioneer’s music program since 2006, it continues to shine. “We have great clay,” he said. “Our kids come up with excellent skills. It’s a continuation of a journey they began in elementary school here.”

In addition to the GRAMMY announcement, the Ann Arbor Public Schools is among 172 districts in the country selected this month as one of the best in music education by the nonprofit National Association of Music Makers Foundation in its 12th annual “Best Communities for Music Education” survey.

Getting healthy

U-M partnership helps 6th graders make good choices

By Casey Hans
AAPSNews Service

Walk it off. Run for fitness. Walk away the pounds. Get healthy. Have fun with family and friends.

All are messages Skyline High School Health and Medicine Magnet students are advocating as they aim to raise money for Project Healthy Schools, a University of Michigan Health System Cardiovascular Center initiative that targets sixth-graders in Ann Arbor and other districts with a healthy lifestyle message.

Skyline students will host a 5K/1M walk-run "Ready, Set, Fly" on May 21 starting at 9 a.m. at the high school, located off of North Maple Road just north of the M-14 interchange.

"It can be a start to a better example and better living," explained Kelsy Lee, a Skyline junior who is involved with organizing the walk-run.

"It's a healthy hobby and a healthy lifestyle, added junior Madison Chadwick, another organizer. The walk-run is aiming to "fight the obesity epidemic. We're looking at this as a project to aid with that. It's about creating awareness," she said.

Project Healthy Schools was launched at Clague Middle School in 2004 and has spread to 16 schools and 10,000 students in Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti, Detroit, and Shiawassee County. This year, more than 1,300 Ann Arbor sixth-graders are taking part in the program.

With the help of PHS wellness



During a recent Project Healthy Schools class at Slauson, health ambassador Ashley Hill, a junior public policy major at U-M, was stressing the five PHS goals through some hands-on activities. She also encouraged students to get up and get moving.

coordinators from U-M and U-M student health ambassadors, the program's basic concepts through a program of 10 hands-on activities. The concepts include:

- Eat more fruits and vegetables
- Make better beverage choices
- Perform at least 150 minutes of physical activity per week
- Eat less fast and fatty foods
- Spent less mindless time in front of the TV and computer

Each school also has a Health Advisory Team that focuses on health throughout the building. PHS has a variety of structured programs and activities, works to promote wellness and good food choices and has a research component that has tracked some of the students and a variety of health risk markers including cholesterol, weight and glucose levels.

The program is the brainchild of Dr. Kim Eagle, director of the UMHS Cardiovascular Center. He is scheduled to present some of the program's screening and research findings to the Ann Arbor Board of Education this spring.

Sara Aeschbach, director of the Ann Arbor Public Schools Community Education and Recreation Department, chairs the Wellness Policy Committee which oversees the district's wellness

initiatives. "This program has greatly enhanced the wellness efforts in our district," she said. "It's such a great program."

She said this year, the Ann Arbor Public Schools Educational Foundation bought PHS kits for each Ann Arbor middle school that help PHS staff and the health ambassadors teach classes. The AAPSEF donated \$8,400 for the 12 kits needed to accomplish the program's goals.

Aeschbach said PHS has led the district to get rid of candy and junk foods at lunch and eliminate sugared soda sales and has helped to increase the consumption of vegetables and fruits in the cafeteria settings.

She said as the district has become more comfortable with the PHS program and made it part of the day-to-day approach, she expects that individual schools will begin to take more ownership of it. Next year, seniors from the Skyline Health and Medicine Magnet program will begin volunteering as Health Ambassadors, similar to what is being done by U-M students this year. Jeff Bradley, lead teacher in the magnet, is looking forward to that, saying that the experience will add to students' opportunities to learn and maybe new career paths for students.

At Slauson Middle School,

'Ready, Set, Fly'

What: A 5K/1M walk-run to benefit Project Healthy Schools, sponsored by students in Skyline High School's Health and Medicine Magnet program. When: 9 a.m. Saturday, May 21 for the 5K event; 10:30 a.m. for the 1K portion.

Where: Skyline High School, 2552 N. Maple Road, just north of the M-14 interchange.

Registration: Run, walk, wheel or stroll at the event. Register online at www.readysetfly5K.com, or at the event. On-site registration begins at 7:30 a.m. All registrants will receive an event T-shirt and shoes will be awarded to overall winners in the male and female categories. Age group awards will also be given.

Details: Call 734-213-1033 or e-mail eventsww@champsforcharity.com.

teacher Lori McNutt is the school's Wellness Champion and has been part of the school's Health Advisory Team for the past four years. "I wanted to join, because it's an interest of mine," she said. "It's a good example for others."

McNutt said her school has cut out bake sales as fundraisers and that PHS has had a huge impact on the general approach to food and nutrition with its healthy message throughout the school. "Kids are trying to make better choices in the lunchroom," she added.

Cathy Fitzgerald is a registered dietitian and wellness coordinator for Project Healthy Schools at Slauson and Forsythe middle schools. She said that although the PHS goals are ones that most everyone can embrace, they target sixth-graders because it is a pivotal time for children in making healthy choices.

"We feel that habits they form now will stick with them through life," she said. "This is a window of opportunity for us to teach them." For more about Project Healthy Schools, including tips on healthy eating, visit www.projecthealthyschools.org.

School Bells

K-12 art exhibition opening Tuesday

Dozens of student artworks will be on display starting this week at the Jean Paul Slusser Gallery located in the U-M School of Art and Design, 2000 Bonisteel, on the University of Michigan's North Campus. Works from students in all grades from the Ann Arbor Public Schools will be represented.

A public reception for the Ann Arbor Public Schools K-12 Art Exhibition will be from 7-8:30 p.m. on Tuesday, May 17 at the gallery. Everything from multi-media productions, pottery, paintings, jewelry and mixed media is represented in the district's largest student art show of the year, which runs through June 11. Exhibit hours are daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

In addition to the student show, the Ann Arbor Art Teachers Spring 2011 exhibition will run from May 17 through June 10 at Work•Ann Arbor, 306 S. State St. An opening reception for this event will be Friday, May 20 from 5-9 p.m.

Picnic Pops May 21

A day of popular music is scheduled for the front lawn of Pioneer High School. Music, food and fun will take place from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on May 21.

Huron: 12th at state Science Olympiad

Huron High School's Science Olympiad team took 12th place overall in the Michigan Science Olympiad competition at Michigan State University on April 30. Huron was among 48 teams competing. Teams competed in various fields from Chemistry to Robotics to Forensics and a music competition called Sounds of Music, where competitors play homemade instruments.

The last time Huron went



RECYCLED T-SHIRTS – Teacher Sue Beech of Pattengill Elementary School has had an up-cycling T-shirt project funded through donorschoose.org. The site purchased paint, beads, glue, scissors and Beech purchased T-shirts from Salvation Army. Her students took the used t-shirts and decorated them and they now wear their new glitzy shirts to school, Beech said.



Members of the award-winning Huron High School Science Olympiad team, which placed 12th at the state competition.

to the state competition was in 2007 when the River Rats placed 10th overall. Russell said that about 30 students each year take part in the after-school voluntary club, with 15 students competing. Co-captains put together practice tests and the students work as a team.

"These kids do great – they're just going above and beyond," he added. "It's a really impressive group of kids."

This year, the Huron team took

second place at regional competition to qualify for the states. The top two teams for every region go to the Michigan Science Olympiad.

2 receive Celebration of Excellence awards

Two staff members have received 2010-11 Celebration of Excellence Awards.

Jennifer Kleber, a teacher assistant at Carpenter Elementary

School, was nominated by Michelle Bobiney and Jason Treec, a teacher at Huron High School was nominated by Phyllis and Rich Coleman, both for Outstanding Customer Service

Kleber was awarded for the care that she gives to Bobiney's 7-year-old first-grader, who has gone through two kidney transplants and related medical treatments. "Our family has had a difficult, but well-worth-it path on our journey of health," her mother said in her nomination. "I would not risk her hard-earned health with just anyone. When she started first grade, I was hesitant to let go, but I knew it was best for her overall development to separate myself a bit and let her become more independent. For the first time in her life, I was allowing myself to trust someone else to care for her and commit to learning how to take care of her many medical needs.

"I was impressed and relieved. I truly know I can trust her. Bobiney said Kleber is also helping Rachel in positive ways, giving her confidence in her abilities and helping her to become more independent physically and socially."

Treec "motivates and inspires his students," said his nominator "He has an open-door policy to work with students who want or need extra help. He volunteered to be our son's academic coach this year. We and our son are most grateful."

Skyline hosts TED event this fall

Skyline High School hosts the "TEDxSkylineHS" conference on Oct. 15 with a theme of "Can't Wait Around for Politics."

The conference is designed to bring teachers together to share cutting-edge teaching innovation.

Visit <http://skyline2.aaps.k12.mi.us/TEDxSkylineHS> for more information, to join to attend, to nominate a speaker, or to volunteer. E-mail Sara Duvall at shsduvall@gmail.com.

gross violation of the public trust.”

During an interview Friday on Michigan Public Radio, Snyder said that the action is “constitutionally allowed” and that he is proposing the use of the School Aid Fund in this manner for at least the next two years. He also said “we’ll have to address that,” when talking about school districts that have already taken action to consolidate services and cap costs and are still struggling.

Trustee Christine Stead represented the school board at the roundtable at Pioneer High School in asking state officials to:

■ **Address the structural deficit** – in Ann Arbor’s case that represents about several million dollars each budget year. Retirement costs can only be addressed at the state level; the increase this year will cost the district \$5 million. “We get handed a percentage that we can do nothing about,” noted Stead. “Something has to be done and it can only be done at the state level.”

■ **Reduce budget cuts for districts that have demonstrated cost-effective resource management** – Ann Arbor has capped health care costs and consolidated many services with the Washtenaw Intermediate School District including substitute teaching, busing, an International Baccalaureate program, and software. It is also implementing performance-based teacher and administrator compensation, Stead said.

■ **Allow local districts authority to levy local property taxes for schools** – Districts have not been allowed to do that since the passage of Proposal A, which moved the state from a local property tax-based system of funding schools to the State Aid Fund which distributes taxes back to local districts. Stead noted that Ann Arbor is a “donor district” meaning that Ann Arbor district residents pay more property tax money to the state than is returned to Ann Arbor Public Schools each year.

■ **Revise rules for Sinking Fund dollars to give districts more flexibility in spending** – Currently, rules allow Sinking Fund dollars to be used only for purchasing, completing, remodeling or repairing facilities, site acquisition of improvement and technology infrastructure.

■ **Allocate any additional funding available to the School Aid Fund to offset proposed reductions** – Stead said surplus money should come to public schools instead of being put in a state “rainy day” fund. “We are not able to raise tuition (as universities and colleges can),” she noted.

■ **Implement performance-based funding and student count day adjustments for public charter schools** – Stead said many charter schools encourage students attendance for student count days (allowing them to get state funding) and then send students back to their home districts that do not get compensated. “Please look at that, hold them accountable and help us out here,” she said.

■ **Implement a value-based budgeting approach for school districts that make progress in closing the achievement gap and have high-performing students based on graduation rates and student testing scores.**

State legislators representing the AAPS area including state Sen. Rebekah Warren and state Reps David Rutledge of the 54th District, Mark Ouimet of the 52nd District, Jeff Irwin of the 53rd District and Rick Olson of the 55th District all attended and took part in the discussion.

The Legislative Roundtable session was taped by CTN Channel 18 and is scheduled to be rebroadcast on Monday, May 16 at 10 p.m., Tuesday, May 17 at 1 p.m. and 8 p.m. and Wednesday, May 18 at noon.

Trustee Simone Lightfoot told parents and community members to continue the fight. “If we don’t do something different, we’re

going to have structural changes,” she said. “Keep the letters coming, keep the e-mails coming, keep the protesting coming. We’ve got a lot of work to do.” Added board Vice President Susan Baskett: “Make noise. We are in a dire strait here.”

The roundtable agenda included a budget history of Ann Arbor schools, what Gov. Rick Snyder’s budget and legislative action means for the district, a discussion of reforms and time for public comment.

Snyder has proposed decreasing state school spending by at least \$470 per student, while the Senate plan would drop that to \$340 per student and the House per-pupil decreases would range from \$426 to \$467. The final education budget must be worked out between legislative committees of both chambers and the governor.

Irwin and Rutledge voted against the state House measure that passed on May 5; Olson and Ouimet voted in favor of the cuts. Rutledge called the measure a “divide and conquer plan” during the roundtable and said it was a strategic decision. “I think it was by design – to pit you (K-12 public education and higher education) against each other,” he told Ann Arbor officials. “It is a betrayal of trust.”

Last month, Ann Arbor officials revealed cost-cutting measures to fill a \$15.1 million budget deficit for next year, including the elimination of 70 teaching positions and the elimination of high school transportation. A proposal to combine the principals of four elementary schools was taken off the table by the board at its May 11 meeting after concerns were raised by elementary parents; officials said they would need to find the money elsewhere.

“We’re looking at overall increased class sizes,” noted Interim Superintendent Robert Allen. “We’re no longer able to keep the cuts out of the classroom.”

The district has cut \$34.4

million from its general operating budget in the past five years. Allen said under Proposal A, 70 percent of revenue raised in the Ann Arbor community funnels through the state to other districts, yielding a reduction of \$52 million in general fund dollars since 1994.

Brit Satchwell, an AAPS middle school math teacher and president of the Ann Arbor Education Association, the district’s teachers union, made an impassioned plea to state legislators. “We have no need to be pitted one interest against the other,” he said. “It’s time the legislature paid attention to us and got us out of this structural deficit.”

Steve Norton, an Ann Arbor parent and president of the Michigan Parents for Schools, called the state action raiding the School Aid Fund “shameful.”

“The funds for the School Aid Fund have not been adequate to fund K-12 education,” he said. “They have fallen for a decade. We have believed that prosperity must come before good schools rather than the other way around.”

Parent Scott Ellsworth, who teaches History at the University of Michigan, noted “a good school system is how we define ourselves as a society. Every great society . . . had a good, solid school system. That’s where it begins.” He encouraged state legislators to give local districts the power to raise money and the “tools to do the job.”

Olson said a May 16 state revenue estimating conference will put a more realistic face on tax revenue numbers and allow the state to move forward with final education budget decisions.

Note: Michigan Parents for Schools has set up an action alert to allow residents from throughout Michigan to send messages to the governor, state senator and their state representative all in one step. Visit <http://capwiz.com/mi-parentsforschools/issues/alert/?alertid=42931501> for an alert and message form.