

# AAPSNews

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

**Inside:** • Ann Arbor high schools welcome exchange students with new group, page 2  
• Adult Education and ESL programs host winter registration, page 3 • School briefs, page 4

**Detailed stories online at [news.a2schools.org](http://news.a2schools.org) • Visit and subscribe**

*Note: Due to the December school break, the next edition of the AAPSNews will be published on Jan. 4, 2010*

## CHS grad Ulaby visits

Community High School graduate Neda Ulaby, now an arts and culture reporter for National Public Radio, visited her alma mater this month, speaking to English and Journalism students. See Page 2 inside and visit [the-communicator.org](http://the-communicator.org) for student coverage of the event.



*NPR photo*

**Issue No. 4, December 14, 2009**

## Allen Creek project helps stormwater, improves Pioneer school grounds

### Featured story

**By Casey Hans**  
AAPSNews Service

A stormwater improvement project on the northeast corner of the Pioneer High School property should help alleviate flooding in the Allen Creek Watershed and improve water discharged into the Huron River.

It also will spruce up the school grounds, level the land to create a usable recreation area and add about 130 new trees and a decorative plaza as well as interpretive signs explaining Allen Creek, which now runs as an underground drain at the site.

The \$3.1 million project will be paid for

through federal stimulus funds and state monies as well as a loan to be paid back through the city of Ann Arbor's water and sewer fund. The project is on Ann Arbor Public Schools land, but the district is paying no part of the construction, officials said.

The project at the corner of Main Street and Stadium Boulevard encompasses just under five acres. Two large detention tanks will be placed 25 feet underground to hold and slowly discharge water into Allen Creek, keeping excess phosphorus from the river.

*See Pioneer project, page 4*



*A chain link fence protects the multiple-acre work site at Pioneer High School, where Washtenaw County is coordinating a project to help flooding in the Allen Creek Watershed. Two underground tanks are being installed to filter and control storm water. Although The Ann Arbor Public Schools is a project partner, allowing the work on its property, no school money is being spent on it.*

## 4 community budget meetings are scheduled around the district in January

Ann Arbor school officials are hosting public information sessions in January where discussion and budget cut suggestions will be encouraged.

The forums will present current budget information and options for addressing the district's budget deficit. Participants will be asked to work in small groups to assess the options and to offer their thoughts and other possible ideas and suggestions. The district is examining the current school year budget and the 2010-11

budget for needed reductions and any revenue options. It is anticipated that \$20 million in reductions will need to be made for the 2010-11 school year.

Budget information will be posted on The Ann Arbor Public Schools Web page (<http://a2schools.org>) the week of Dec. 14 as well as an online opportunity to contribute ideas and suggestions related to the AAPS budget. Look for the district budget box on the right side of the site.

### Attend a meeting:

Meetings begin at 6:30 p.m. and are scheduled for:

- Thursday, Jan. 7, Huron High School, 2727 Fuller Road.
- Tuesday, Jan. 12, Skyline High School, 2552 N. Maple.
- Thursday, Jan. 14, Scarlett Middle School, 3300 Lorraine.
- Tuesday, Jan. 19, Pioneer High School, 601 W. Stadium.

**Visit online for more information: [a2schools.org](http://a2schools.org)**

## A2ties group welcomes exchange students

By Carlina Duan  
AAPSNews Service

With approximately 60 foreign exchange students across the district this year, Ann Arbor's high schools are packed with a variety of exotic culture and language.

Yet, uniting the American teen lifestyle with the overseas heritage has proven, in the past, to be difficult.

This year, there is a solution: A2ties – Ann Arbor Together for International Exchange Students – a student-founded group that reaches out to foreign exchange students with branches at Pioneer, Huron, Community and Skyline high schools.

It has helped exchange students adjust to American society throughout the school year.

"The exchange student community is very segregated, and it's segregated between American students and exchange students," said Pioneer junior Amelia Brinkerhoff, one of the group's founders.

"The (exchange student's) goal is to come to America and learn our culture, and if the German kids sit with the German kids, they're not learning that culture.

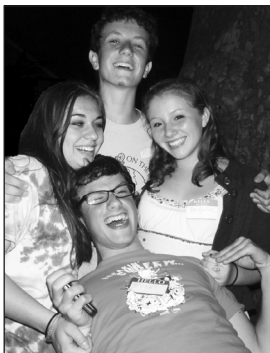
"Our goal is to have these students meet new people, to welcome these international citizens into our school, and to improve the quality of the relationship between the American students and exchange students."

Weekly and monthly events are being planned by the group, which launched the program with an exchange student welcome party in the fall.

"We're going to have weekly Ultimate Frisbee games, soccer games, a tie-



Above, members of A2ties, a student-founded group in the Ann Arbor high schools, celebrate Halloween in costume. At left, juniors enjoy themselves at an student welcome party earlier this fall. A2ties is designed to help exchange students acclimate to their time visiting in the United States.



Above: Photo by David Torres  
Left: Photo by Amelia Brinkerhoff

dye party, and a Zingerman's lunch, so we can experience new things together, have fun, and just meet other people," said Brinkerhoff. The group also is planning a camping trip for later in the school year, as well as several movie outings and other sporting events.

On Oct. 31, the group hosted a Halloween party for students from around the district. On Nov. 29, they visited the University of Michigan Museum of Art to view exhibits and gain "an enjoyable end to Thanksgiving break, as well as one that does not involve food!" Brinkerhoff said. David Torres, another group founder, has planned a Christmas Cookie Party on Dec. 21 from 4-7 p.m. (for location and information, e-mail a2ties@gmail.com.)

"We want these exchange students to have connections all over the place in Ann Arbor. (We want) for them to go out with their host family and see people that they know; because when you have that much pressure and responsibility on you, the littlest things a smile, a wave – can make a huge difference," Brinkerhoff added.

The group's founders consist of Ann Arbor students who

have returned from one-year exchange student programs.

Founder Michaela Carnein, Community High School junior, said those who have traveled know what is needed. "When [all of us] went abroad, we wished we could've had some sort of resource like this," she said.

"When I got to Argentina last year for my year abroad, I was totally lost. I didn't know anybody for the first month. Instead of exchange students hanging out by themselves, they should hang out with us. That way, they'll be integrated with our society and culture."

Organizers hope to promote awareness of such challenges exchange students face during their months away from home, and help create connections by spreading their message to the American students.

"The problem with us American students is that we get caught up with the high school experience. We don't think things like, 'Who is that girl in the corner?' But we need to," added Brinkerhoff.

Carlina Duan is News Editor of *The Optimist*, the student newspaper at Pioneer High School.

For student journalists' coverage of Neda Ulaby's visit to Community High School, visit the-communicator.org online and click on school news.



## NPR reporter speaks at Community High Graduate Neda Ulaby says school shaped vision, career

From AAPSNews Service

Neda Ulaby's memories of Community High School involve mornings at the school library reading the New York Times before class. Time spent with the arts section helped mold her interest in the arts.

She eventually was led her to a reporting career at National Public Radio in Washington, D.C., where the 1989 CHS graduate now works, covering the arts and culture beat where she profiles authors, musicians and reports on news about arts.

She returned to her alma mater earlier this month, speaking to groups of English and journalism classes. "It was in that library – now the gym," she told the students. "that I began to have a sense of what arts journalism was, what it could be."

While working on a doctorate in English aiming to be a university professor, she had to move to Topeka, Kansas to care for an ill relative. While there, she freelanced for a local newspaper and became "addicted to the instant gratification of writing a story and getting it published," she told students. Ulaby found her way to NPR in 2000, eventually landing a full-time job covering the arts beat.

Ulaby told students that sometimes people are led in unexpected directions, which is not necessarily bad, and that she is happy to have found her way to public radio. "There are advantages for not being the first out of the gate," she said. "If you treat it as an adventure ... you'll be OK. You'll have a good time."

She told students to embrace their time learning, not just inside of class, but outside of the school walls. She also recommended that students spend time developing relationships with mentors who can help them discover what they want to do with their lives.

Ulaby was born in Jordan and grew up in the Midwest, coming to Community High School as a sophomore and graduating in 1989. She attended and graduated from Bryn Mawr College. She currently lives in Washington, D.C.



## Bagels & Bottles for Kids

# Program raises money for books

Visit Carpenter on Friday mornings for a bit of community breakfast

By Casey Hans  
AAPSNews Service

There are lessons in math, customer service and good eating at Carpenter Elementary each Friday morning.

The Ann Arbor school's cafeteria is full of students and families for the weekly Bagels & Bottles for Kids, a program run by third- and fourth-graders that is still going strong in its 10th year. Bagels are offered for \$1 each, with proceeds going to school programs.

Coordinated by teachers Marilyn Freeman and Sandra Luce, the program shows students how to manage money, deal with the public and run a small business. Third-graders work all year to earn the right to be "cashiers" and handle money when they enter the fourth grade, the teachers said. All third- and fourth-graders get a chance to work during the school year. And, the students vote on how the money raised will be spent.

"We started it initially because times were tough," said Freeman. "We felt field trips gave students a different kind of learning experience and, because some kids couldn't afford to go, teachers were spending \$20 to \$50 out of their pocket."

Luce said it's a weekly event that students, parents and teachers look forward to. "It becomes this whole community thing," she said, adding that students also learn. "They learn about supply and demand and how we should change our order for next week."

Bagels & Bottles helps with field trip costs and buys books. Students also consider requests from teachers for other programs. It raises some \$3,000 each year, of which \$1,000 goes to the Reading is Fundamental program, which is now funded with private donations after federal funding stopped a few



Students enjoy and serve bagels every Friday at Carpenter Elementary School. On this Friday, it was also Crazy Hair Day at the school.



years ago.

PTO Vice President and RIF coordinator Pam Powell said the program is the only way the school has kept RIF alive, giving at least three books to every student and donating other books to the school library.

Over the years, Bagels & Bottles for Kids has expanded to include a table for fifth-graders who sell juice to raise money for their field trips, and a PTO table that sells school

spirit wear and scrip cards to benefit the school.

Although students now just sell bagels (they used to collect returnable bottles too), it has maintained its popularity and often parents arrive to have breakfast with their kids before heading for work.

Parent Jeff Vicars was at school on a recent Friday with son Aaron, who was working behind the bagel table, and daughter Abby with whom he was sharing a bagel. "I think it's great seeing the families interacting," he said, adding that the students learn a lot of life and business skills. "Everyone who does well (in life) learns to do good customer service."

Casey Hans edits this newsletter for The Ann Arbor Public Schools. Reach her at [hansc@aaps.k12.mi.us](mailto:hansc@aaps.k12.mi.us) or at 734-994-2090 ext 51228.

## Winter registration information

■ English as a Second Language: Jan. 4-6 information meetings. Registration is Jan. 6-12. Call 734-997-1250.

■ Adult Education/GED: 6-8:30 p.m. Thursdays through Jan. 28. Classes begin the week of Feb. 1. Call 734-997-1250.

More detailed registration information is online at [news.a2schools.org](http://news.a2schools.org)

## Adult Ed, ESL serve many around Ann Arbor district

• A more detailed version of this story can be found online at [news.a2schools.org](http://news.a2schools.org)

### From AAPSNews Service

Although much of a public school system's focus is on traditional students in grades K-12, many others are getting schooling in the Ann Arbor district.

The district offers English as a Second Language and, for those who never finished high school, there are Adult Education GED classes.

Director of Adult Education Sharman Spieser said her non-traditional programs often tie in because parents of K-12 pupils sometimes become students themselves – whether learning the English language or getting a GED certificate.

One of those students is Quinn McGuinness who is on a fast track to finish his GED tests this month so that he can enroll at Washtenaw Community College in January. He attends a GED Prep class at the Mallett's Creek branch of The Ann Arbor Public Library during the week.

"I think a lot of the GED is looking into the questions and finding a logical way to answer them," he said. McGuinness, who previously attended Washtenaw Technical Middle College, said he wanted to finish high school and study music production.

The program requires students to work through an 800-page book and become proficient in reading, writing, science, social studies and mathematics in order to pass the GED test.

Creative thinking and grant money have helped Spieser continue to keep programs viable and expand their reach.

The districts of Ann Arbor, Milan, Chelsea and Willow Run have collaborated with Washtenaw Community College to increase access to adult learning in the county with a federal No Worker Left Behind grant. Ann Arbor offered ESL and GED classes last summer and partnered with Washtenaw Literacy to provide small group tutoring. The NWLB also funds the pilot "Bridges to Success" which helps Adult Ed students create resumes, explore career possibilities, set goals and use technology to apply online for jobs, college admission and financial aid.

Other grants and contracts provide support for programs at the University of Michigan Hospital and the Washtenaw County Jail.

## School Bells



### Forsythe team places 2nd in Knowledge Master Open

A team of 35 Forsythe Middle School sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-graders placed second out of 10 teams in Michigan in the Knowledge Master Open on Dec. 2. On the national level, Forsythe scored in the top 5 percent of all teams, ranking 28th out of 577 middle school teams nationwide.

Forsythe scored 1,461 out of a perfect 2,000 points, above the average Michigan score of 1,292 and the national average of 1,138. A team from Tappan Middle School also competed Dec. 2, placing third in Michigan and 45th in the nation, with a score of 1,410.

The KMO is a nationwide knowledge contest that tests students' ability to answer questions in all the subject areas, quickly and accurately. Students compete in the KMO without leaving their own schools; teams receive curriculum-based contest questions on a CD-ROM and compete using a computer at their own schools. The KMO

began in 1983 with 72 schools; it now annually attracts over 3,000 schools and 45,000 participants from the U.S. and several foreign countries.

**Members of the Forsythe team included:** **sixth-graders** Elaine Chamberlain, Tara Dorje, Joshua Nacht and Maurits Sier; **seventh-graders** Andrew Ames, Veronika Beyer, Morgan Borjigin-Wang, Sophia Camp, Nathan Ceely, Marianne Cowherd, Jason Dean, Matthew Epperson, Betty Hu, Derick McIntyre, David Morrow, Lawrence Mullen, Kevin Pawitranon, Stephen Nurusev, Sorbie Richner, Sehej Sawhney, Daniel Tarasev, Noah Thornton and Kevin Zhang; and **eighth-graders** Dylan Aikens, Noah Chen, Chris Chou, Sam Ellison, John Houghton, Julia Kerst, Mohan Kothari, Chris Nicholson, Prashant Puttagunta, Lillie Schneyer, Tim Wolfe and Michael Zhang.

The KMO is a Forsythe student club coached by teacher Dan Ezekiel. There are three more KMO competition dates in 2010. Details: [www.greatauk.com](http://www.greatauk.com).

### Bach music teacher travels in China

Kristi Bishop, a music teacher at Bach Elementary, is traveling this month with the organization People to People as a music education delegate and Citizen Ambassador. to mainland China. Her trip runs from Dec. 11-21, which she will spend with 50 other music educators from around the United States.

During her trip, she will be part of round-table discussions, panels, seminars and site visits allowing her to gain an in-depth understanding of the common interests and challenges she shares with those overseas. She also will have a chance to experience the culture and history of China.

### Authors visit, share with Clague students

Clague Middle School had exciting week of author visits Nov. 18-20, according to media specialist Michelle Rodriguez:



• On Nov. 18, author James Dashner treated students to an imaginative visual presentation about writing that kept us laughing. His latest book, "The Maze Runner," was named one of the best young adult books of 2009 by Kirkus Reviews.

• On Thursday, international New York Times bestselling author



Ann Arbor school nurse Laurelle Brennan is featured on the cover of this month's MEA Voice magazine.



Anthony Horowitz entertained with a hilarious monologue. His books include the popular Alex Rider series and the Diamond

Brothers books.

• On Friday, local University of Michigan librarian and comic writer Jim Ottaviani inspired the entire eighth-grade with his presentation on scientific graphic

novels and comics. His books include "Dignifying Science" and "Two-Fisted Science." Students researched scientists and are incorporating that into a graphic novel of their own.

### Clague students receives social studies award

Clague Middle School eighth-grader León Pescador received the Middle School Student of the Year Award from the Michigan Council for the Social Studies. He received his award Nov. 2 at the Council's annual state conference on Nov. 2. His school will receive \$250 from MEEMIC Insurance.

### Pioneer project, from page 1

Construction should be completed in the spring of 2010, with seeding and hydrating of the site starting next summer in time to park cars this fall for U-M football games, which is a money-maker for the district.

A one-acre portion of the site, where the tanks are installed, will be covered with stone for one year to allow the site to settle. It should not affect football parking and will eventually be seeded once the ground has settled, officials said.

"There were three government agencies working together to make it better for the citizens," notes Randy Trent, executive director of physical properties for The Ann Arbor Public Schools. "People worked really quickly and really well together. This is, by far, the biggest project we've done (together)."

The Ann Arbor Public Schools, the Office of the Washtenaw County Water Resources Commis-

sioner and city of Ann Arbor have collaborated on the west side project, said Harry Sheehan, environmental manager for the Washtenaw County Water Resources Commissioner's office.

The state's Department of Environmental Quality and the federal EPA also have had a hand in it, due to federal regulations that require agencies to reduce phosphorus levels in the river.

The Pioneer site will handle water filtering for about 300 acres of property upstream and "make a big difference in water quality downstream and into downtown," said Sheehan.

He said that the Pioneer site was a good one for the project because two storm sewers come together at that point. Upstream, there will be filters to catch any solid materials before they reach the tanks and those filters will be cleaned out regularly.

Funding is broken down into federal stimulus money (40 percent), the Michigan Department of

Transportation (4 percent) and a loan for the drainage district (56 percent) that will be paid back from the city of Ann Arbor's water and sewer fund over 20 years, Sheehan said.

Trent said Pioneer High School science teacher Ronald Robinson has been consulting with county officials about using the site for student instruction.

He added that the nearby sports field will be "minimally impacted" by the project and that the new level area created in the graded area of the tank sites will likely be used as a small field for the district's Rec & Ed Department to use with the community.

Also, the entire sidewalk along Main Street and Stadium Boulevard will be repaired as part of the project. And, additional trees are planned along the Pioneer fence line when municipal roadway work is done in 2013.