

AAPSNews

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

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Scarlett Middle School Band Director Deborah Katz is the first recipient of the E. Daniel Long Fund for Excellence in Music Education Award. For a story about Katz and background on the award, see **Page 3**

Issue No. 19, August 16, 2010

Rotary's STRIVE offers seniors a path to college

By Casey Hans
AAPSNews Service

Dylan Farr can't say enough good things about going to college.

Not only does he love his classes and teachers, he is learning a lot about the craft of writing and hopes to develop it into a career by earning his associate's degree in technical writing at Washtenaw Community College.

"It's going really well," said the 2009 Stone High School graduate. "I've been able to pass all of my classes and I've met really interesting people. I've made a lot of friends in college and I've learned a lot."

He's able to attend WCC thanks to a STRIVE scholarship – a 10-year partnership between the school and mentors from the Downtown Ann Arbor Rotary Club. Students Taking Renewed Interest in the Value of Education, or STRIVE, allows seniors to qualify for scholarships based on their academic improvement through their senior year.

Teaming students with adult mentors, the program is



Dylan Farr, 2009 Stone High School graduate, attends WCC thanks to a STRIVE scholarship.



Featured story

VIDEO: Stone Class of 2010 members talk about their future at news.a2schools.org

designed to encourage them to attend college and pursue a career path.

Farr has attended college for a year now, and despite a recent diagnosis of multiple sclerosis, he said he's determined to get that degree.

"I'm not going to let this get me down," he said. "It's not the end of the world."

Farr came back this spring to speak with graduating seniors and share his

story, encouraging them to continue their education. He not only takes classes, but has his own weekly radio show on Orchard Radio, the WCC internet broadcast station.

He is the son of Sharon Farr, who is a paraprofessional for the Ann Arbor district.

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■ Stone High School is the site for a new county cyber school project this fall, page 2

District to begin search for new superintendent

Todd Roberts announces resignation, says he plans to stay through fall transition as school board makes plans

Superintendent Todd Roberts will leave The Ann Arbor Public Schools as the district's top administrator. He told staff and families Friday in letters via e-mail that his decision was a difficult one and was based on the needs of family living in North Carolina.

He has agreed to stay through late fall as the school board seeks his replacement.

Roberts has accepted the position as Chancellor of the North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics, a 20-year-old nationally known public high school with a specialized curriculum.

The Board of Education will discuss how they will handle the major leadership change and announce a transition plan in the coming weeks. Members said they will begin discussions during a regular board meeting Wednesday night.

Roberts has served in the top Ann Arbor post for four years.

"As Superintendent I play a very small part in the

See Superintendent, page 2



Roberts will stay through fall to help with transition to new district leader.

Green Adventures Camp

Ann Arbor summer camp teaches children about gardening, the environment and the great outdoors

Dozens of children learned about the great outdoors this summer during the Ann Arbor Public Schools Rec & Ed Department's third annual "Green Adventures Camp." Morning sessions are spent in classroom, and afternoons in selected outdoor activities. Here, campers work in a community garden and learn about fish dissection.

(Photos courtesy, Ann Arbor Rec & Ed)



Foundation thanks donors

Officials from the Ann Arbor Public Schools Educational Foundation are offering a million thanks to the Ann Arbor community for its giving to the recent "One Million Reasons" fundraising campaign.

The campaign raised nearly \$327,000 in 500 donations and another \$50,000 in challenge gift funds are expected to be received, according to a note sent to supporters from Wendy Correll, executive director. The campaign continues through August.

Teacher grant applications are currently being accepted by the AAPSEF. Deadline for submitting applications is 4 p.m. Friday, Oct. 1. Visit www.aapsef.org for information or to donate.

5 file for board seats

Five current members of the Ann Arbor Board of Education have filed to run for the board in the Nov. 2 General Election. They will be the only names appearing on the ballot this fall.

Susan Baskett and Christine Stead are running for 4-year terms; Deb Mexicotte, the current board president, is running for a 2-year term; and, Simone Lightfoot and Andy Thomas are running for 1-year terms. All school board terms will begin Jan. 1, 2011. The deadline for filing for the open seats was 4 p.m. on Aug. 10.

The school board race joins other races on the General Election ballot. The district moved elections from May to November to save money.

Superintendent, from page 1

success of the school district," he said in his statement. "It is the work of our excellent staff, the leadership and the support of the Board of Education and the support and involvement of families and the community that makes the Ann Arbor Public Schools exceptional."

Board of Education President Deb Mexicotte also issued a statement, saying: "On behalf of the trustees we are both saddened for the district and pleased for Dr. Roberts and his family. We are happy that Dr. Roberts and his family have the opportunity to move closer to their families in North Carolina. But we are sad that this district will lose a leader who we have appreciated and respected during his tenure with us. We want to wish him and his family the very best and we appreciate that he will work with the district through the transition."

Visit <http://news.a2schools.org> for updates and information about the superintendent search and transition.

Staff in the Spotlight: Deborah Katz

Scarlett's Katz earns first E. Daniel Long Award honors

By Casey Hans
AAPSNews Service

Deborah Katz has worked in and around music for 33 years. Now, the Scarlett Middle School band teacher has hit a high note by earning the first E. Daniel Long Fund for Excellence in Music Education Award.

Katz, who has spent 22 years in the Ann Arbor Public Schools, encourages all students to discover the love of music – a philosophy that led her to plan a Scarlett Middle School Band Clinic Day this fall. In October, students will have an opportunity to work with experts for each individual band instrument. It is for this new event she earned the \$1,000 award.

The E. Daniel Long Fund for Excellence in Music Education is named after longtime Ann Arbor music teacher Dan Long, who is now retired and whose coworkers and colleagues around Washtenaw



Teacher Deborah Katz, who earned the first E. Daniel Long Fund for Excellence in Music Education award. She plans a Band Clinic Day for her students at Scarlett this fall.

County – as well as parents and friends – have contributed to the fund over the past eight years. It is administered by the Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation and can be given to any music educator in Washtenaw County.

“I was really pleased about it,” she said. “I expected the competition to be really stiff. I know Dan and Kay (Dan’s wife, Kay Long.) The relationship is important to me. It’s

nice to be the first one – and to say to Ann Arbor teachers ‘you can get this.’”

Katz said she is more than willing to help other teachers who have good ideas to apply for the grant. “It would be nice to see an Ann Arbor teacher get it in future years,” she added.

Robin Bailey, the district’s Fine Arts Coordinator, said she also was pleased that the award went to Katz.

About the award:

The E. Daniel Long Fund for Excellence in Music Education Award is named for longtime Ann Arbor music teacher Dan Long, who still lives in Ann Arbor with his wife, Kay. It is administered by the Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation and can be given to any music educator in Washtenaw County. For information about the award or to make a donation, visit www.aacaf.org or call 734-663-0401.

“Dan Long was such a cornerstone of the Ann Arbor Public Schools music department,” she said. “He was beloved by students, parents and staff, and so it is fitting that the first award go to Deb Katz for her incredible dedication to the students and Scarlett community.”

For the clinic day, Katz ap-

See Katz, page 4

Dan Long’s legacy: Leaving on a high note and giving back to students

Dan Long is remembered for his 35 years teaching students orchestra, as well as his legacy: The E. Daniel Long Fund for Excellence in Music Education – administered through the Ann Arbor Community Foundation.

Named for the beloved music educator, it received enough in donations this year to award its first grant. Friends, colleagues and many music parents from around the county have donated to the fund over the past eight years. Organizers hope to build it to \$100,000 so it will become self-sustaining. For now, the fund continues to accept donations.

“It’s going right to the students,” he said of the fund’s donations. “It’s terrific.

For me to see the recognition and students are continuing to benefit from the efforts of lots of people. Fifty years from now, I hope it’s still going.”

After Long retired, Lynda Berg, Ingrid Shultz, Amy Goodman, Margaret Guire started the fund and have continued to raise money in Long’s name. Many others have taken the fundraising baton. Dean Baxtresser, a former student and now an attorney, penned a fund-raising

letter saying of Long: “His commitment to education has helped countless students like me develop discipline, discover beauty and enjoy camaraderie – skills and experiences that last a lifetime.”



Long called Slau-son his home base. His philosophy has been to influence the many students whose lives he touched. “Students may not remember anything you taught them, but they will always remember how you treated them.” he said.

He was inspired to teach because of his own teacher in Nebraska, where Long was raised. “Mr. Thompson was

my high school teacher. He taught me the joy of music,” he said. “I came home one day and said ‘I want to be just like Mr. Thompson.’”

And so, he did. In addition to students he influenced at Slau-son, he also founded the Ann Arbor School for the Performing Arts and the Ann Arbor Youth Symphony Orchestra, a youth orchestra program that serves students at all grade levels.

His wife, Kay, also a retired Ann Arbor music teacher said they are thankful for their years working and living here. “Ann Arbor was a wonderful place for young teachers,” she said. “Our colleagues were our friends, our mentors. We both wouldn’t be the people we are if we didn’t live here and have this experience.”

A more detailed version of this story can be found online: <http://news.a2schools.org>

Exceptional Education

Katz earns 1st award named for retired, long-time Ann Arbor orchestra director Dan Long, from page 3

proached music professionals at both Eastern Michigan University and the University of Michigan. “We have a lot more students who can’t afford to study privately,” Katz explained, saying that is what gave her the idea. “And we have a wealth of musical talent in Ann Arbor.”

For the daylong event, students will get their own two-hour clinic by grade, with time in the middle of the day as an open drop-in time for students to interact with professionals. The 10 experts will host clinics

on flute, oboe, bassoon, clarinet, saxophone, trumpet, French horn, trombone, baritone/tuba and percussion.

Between 120 and 130 students are involved in the Scarlett band program and Katz said she would like to “grow the program and raise the bar at the same time.” She has been the band director there for three years.

In Ann Arbor, every student in the fifth-grade plays a instrument, which helps stimulate interest in music and the band program in

middle and high schools. Not only does Katz work with her middle school students, but also visits Scarlett’s feeder elementary schools to encourage fifth-graders to participate in band when they arrive in middle school.

Katz encourages fifth-graders to see what they like and most students continue playing the same instrument when they arrive at middle school.

Katz said although the award is only for this fall’s event, she would

like to see it continue. “For me, this is Clinic Day No. 1,” she said. “This is not a one-time deal. If one of our goals is to give the private lesson experience or to get them interested in private lessons, we need to continue this.”

She said introducing students to the Ann Arbor music community is also part of the plan. She hopes that Scarlett can forge a relationship that may continue over the years. “I hope it is something we can do once or twice a year,” she added.

STRIVE offers graduating Stone High School seniors a chance to attend college, from page 1

Encouraging scholarship use

Wendy Correll and Lois Jelneck co-chair the Rotary STRIVE committee. Correll said Rotary mentors talk with their charges about college, future careers and work through barriers they might have to using the scholarship money. “We’re not psychological counselors, but we’re there to help them set a path to get there,” explained Correll, who also heads up the AAPS Educational Foundation.

In the past, the scholarship money hasn’t always been used. This year, club members, school counselors and WCC staff worked together to encourage students to use them. Mentors started meeting with students earlier in the year to develop a deeper relationship and they met more often as a group, hosting “Subway” lunches at the school.

Correll said the lunches brought the mentors and students together in a comfortable setting – the school – and allowed a lot of give and take. “It gave us a formal setting to meet with students,” she said. “Most of the time, we’ve had a large crowd of students there.”

Jelneck, a longtime Rotarian, has been involved with the program since it started. She said the mentorships are instrumental to success. “You have to establish a relationship,” she said. “These kids really work hard to overcome a lot of obstacles.”

Having worked in different nursing roles and now as a home care consultant, Jelneck said she has often

Meetings scheduled

Meetings are scheduled to offer potential students information about Stone High School programs. Sessions are at 7 p.m. on the following Tues-

days: Aug. 24, Aug. 31 and Sept. 7. Stone High School is at 2800 Stone School Road, at the corner of Stone School and Packard roads. Call 734-997-1237 for more information.

been paired with students who want to go into her profession. “I tell them nursing allows them to do anything you want. You can work most any hours – it’s very flexible,” she added.

The STRIVE program has touched many lives, Jelneck added. “It’s important to never give up on these kids,” she said. “We need to really nurture them and encourage them to go on. Give them a sense of worth.”

Rotary mentors sign on for two years: The first to guide students through senior year to graduation and college enrollment; the second year to mentor them through their first year at WCC, Correll added.

Students sign contracts at the start of their senior year promising to maintain good attendance, stay drug- and alcohol-free and improve academically. Students with the most-improved GPAs receive the scholarships.

Scholarships are earmarked directly for WCC enrollment. Scholarship money is raised through major Rotary fundraisers.

Scholarship recipients for 2010 included: Stephen Armstead III, Bryanna Brandon, Alex DeHart, Nathaniel Graulich, Brittany Hayes,

Shakayla Lee, Johntya Lyons, Kiandra Madison, Ashley McElroy, Alycia Perry, Chris Roopchand, Larissa Sutton, Candice Thomas and Quin-Tez Tomlin.

STRIVE parallels school’s goals

At Stone, Principal Sheila Brown said the expanded STRIVE effort ties in nicely with the school’s push to set an expectation of achievement among students, something she calls a “culture of college.”

“Now, it’s not a matter of if they graduate,” Brown said. “Our focus is to transition to college and a career. We help them find ways to make that come true.”

Brown said the school has hosted parent workshops on finance to get them involved with the process and tracks student academic progress. For example: she personally reviews and signs each report card. “We want to have the kids understand we’re serious about their academic performance,” she said. “It’s a way to say ‘we believe in you.’”

Counselor Daphne Slater said Stone had a higher percentage of graduates this year that earned STRIVE scholarships. “And that’s

exciting. It really is. It’s about getting students into that mindset. ... I’d like to see more kids make it to the end (with scholarships.)”

English teacher Brittiyan Sanford took on the role of grad coach at Stone this year, helping students to find scholarships, filling out paperwork, bringing in college experts taking students on field trips to college campuses. Working closely with WCC, she took students there for prerequisite testing and got them enrolled.

She said the most rewarding part of working with STRIVE is seeing results. “It’s seeing the kids actually make it to the end,” she said.

Another way that students are encouraged about college and future careers is the STRIVE@Work program. Rotarian Rick Reid coordinates this part of the program, which takes students into the workplace for part of a day. There, they learn about corporate culture, available careers and talk with professionals.

“They really get a taste of what work is,” he said. “Most (employers) are more than willing to be part of this.”

He said encouraging students is one of the best gifts adults can give. “If you steal their hope in the future, then you’ve stolen everything,” he said. “The scholarship opportunity is the hope. I think it’s essential.”

Any business owner who would like to participate in STRIVE@Work can contact Reid at 734-904-1121 or via e-mail at Rick_Reid@hermanmiller.com.