

# AAPSNews

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

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

### Finalists chosen

Finalists for the post of AAPS Superintendent include: Patricia Green of the North Allegheny School District, Shelley Redinger of the Oregon Trail School District, and Michael Munoz of the Des Moines Public Schools. A public forum is being scheduled. Watch the district website at [www.a2schools.org](http://www.a2schools.org) for details.

Issue No. 30, February 28, 2011

## Disability awareness a focus in 18 schools

Program shares lesson of life with challenges

**VIDEO from Eberwhite event online:** [news.a2schools.org](http://news.a2schools.org)

By Casey Hans  
AAPSNews Service

A group of Eberwhite Elementary fourth-graders were a bit shy – perhaps even uncomfortable – as they approached a table in the school's media center.

At the table, sat a volunteer with a speech disability who was

showing students how he communicates – with cards and various devices. Teaching them to read his lips was one of the exercises that finally encouraged students to make eye contact – and relax.

The students were on their way to a better understanding, which is what Disability Aware-

ness Workshop Days in the Ann Arbor Public Schools are all about.

They are being hosted in 18 elementary schools this winter and spring, which is a record number, said organizers. The event is sponsored by individual

*See Eberwhite, page 6*



## Pilot effort links Scarlett, Huron, U-M's Young People's Project

From AAPSNews Service

An after-school math program is under way between Scarlett Middle School and Huron High School through the Young People's Project, a national nonprofit based regionally at the University of Michigan College of Literature, Science and the Arts.

The multi-week pilot program is all about math and preparing middle school students for high school and higher-level courses they will need to graduate.

Between 10-15 Huron students have been trained to work with 40-50 middle school students at Scarlett. The pilot will run through May and is funded through the district and the Ann Arbor Education Association.

*See Young People's Project, page 8*

## Huron senior takes 1st place in regional carpentry competition

Brian Ziemia of Huron High School won top honors in the high school division of the 2011 Washtenaw Community College Construction Institute SkillsUSA regional carpentry competition Feb. 18 at Washtenaw Community College. He will go on to compete at the state USA Skills competition in April in Lansing.

Ziemia won a two-semester scholarship to

Washtenaw Community College as his award.

Also competing at regionals were Huron's Dillon Davis and José Tavarez and Pioneer High School's Ahmad Abu-Shtayyah. All are seniors.

The all-day competition included a written component and then a hands-on project where students worked off of blueprints and were tested on their ability to do a variety of carpentry skills.



## Life with 1 lung: Teacher assistant's story involves donating to son

### Staff in the Spotlight: Lori Estermyer

By Casey Hans  
AAPSN News Service

Looking at teacher assistant Lori Estermyer, you wouldn't know that she functions with just one lung, and why.

Her daily routine at Scarlett Middle School involves working with a student who has a disability, taking her throughout the building for class, visits to the media center and lunch.

She stays upbeat and has faith that God guides her life.

Like everyone else, she goes to work each day, spends quality time with her family and muddles and slogs through the winter weather.

But, occasionally, the winter cold causes Estermyer to get short of breath. She attributes some of it to getting older and some to having just one lung. It's just something she lives with. "It's like having a bad back," she says.

In the fall of 1995, Estermyer and her husband, Richard, each donated one lung to their 12-year-old son, Nathen, who had cystic fibrosis. Nathen lived only a short time after the transplant, dying in January 1996 but the Estermyers and their other two grown children and extended families carry on with their memories.

As organ donors, memories for the couple are nestled next deep in their chests, next to their hearts.

"Once we got the transplant, we thought the worst was over," she said. But, Nathen developed two different strains of cytomegalovirus, or CMV infection, that caused complications.

For years after Nathen's death, the couple did advocacy work for transplants. Lori Estermyer taught a unit on organ donation for sixth-grade health units in area schools and spoke with groups about transplants and organ donations.

For the past five years, the

#### Lori Estermyer

**Occupation:** Teacher assistant at Scarlett Middle School in Pittsfield Township.

**Residence:** Ypsilanti Township

**Family:** Married 33 years to Richard; son Nikolis, 30 (he and his family live with them); daughter Bethany, 26, attends nursing school in Washington state; and Nathen who had cystic fibrosis and died in 1996 (and would have been 27); three grandchildren.

**Community service:**

Worked for many years with pet therapy dogs in area schools and apartments and taught dog safety class for the Humane Society, advocated for the transplant movement and did fundraising surrounding her son's needed lung transplant.

**Hobbies:** Loves to be outside, enjoys her pets and walking in the outdoors. "I spend a lot of time doing that," she says.

couple hasn't done as much advocacy, because, as she explains, "life goes on and it was time to pass that work onto others. It was great. It was the final healing process for us."

Where Richard Estermyer got full lung capacity back after the lung donation, Lori did not. But that does not deter her from enjoying a life full of friends, family and promise.

Son Nikolis, daughter-in-law Tasha and grandchildren Haley, 10, Noah, 5 and Wyatt, 3 all live in the same house with the couple in Ypsilanti Township. They decided it made sense financially to buy a house and all move in together as a family, she said. Grown daughter Bethany lives in Washington State where she attends nursing school.

Nathen's journey enveloped the family, as they lived with his disease throughout his early life, to the time



Lori Estermyer in the halls of Scarlett Middle School. Estermyer and her husband, Richard, each donated a lung to son, Nathen. The couple has advocated over the years for organ donation.

he was put on the transplant list and the subsequent fundraising and surgery.

The surgery was done at the University of North Carolina Hospitals. Nathen's surgery made news at the time and was the second surgery of its kind to be conducted on a child, she said. Many community groups assisted raising money for the family and their travel and living expenses, as they adjusted to a two-state mode of living.

When it was first determined he needed the transplant, the estimated cost of the surgery – experimental at the time – was \$150,000 to 300,000 but with complications, that rose to \$646,000. The family paid only \$400 thanks to their insurance company's eventual approval, she said.

Estermyer remains upbeat, often with a smile on her face, sharing her thoughts and memories with others. Others who have lost young family members and want her advice occasionally approach her.

For them, she says that time can be a healer, but that it is a process and a path they must travel. There is no shortcut.

Estermyer is, and has always been, an animal lover, especially dogs – something that can be attested to by visiting her house. The family now has Daisy, a two-year-old golden Retriever, a 12-year-old Cocker Spaniel named Tyler and cats Ella and Kara.

But the memory of three special dogs remains with the family, all with ties to son and brother Nathen. Shiloh, a mixed-breed shelter dog owned by the family and Willie, a golden Retriever owned by another family and who visited Nathen in the hospital, are both now gone.

Because of Nathen's love for Willie, after his death the family brought home Denver, another golden Retriever named after the Nathen's favorite singer, John Denver. Denver passed last year at age 13 and a John Denver song verse, as well as a carving of a golden Retriever, can be found on Nathen's headstone in Belleville.

"The life expectancy for cystic fibrosis is now in the (age of) 30s," she explained. "We knew he would die in our lifetime. But we had 10 really, really good years with Nathen."

# INTERNATIONAL NIGHT

## King Elementary School puts culture front and center



King Elementary School students share dance and music from around the world during the school's annual event. Some 350 students took part and 1,000 attended the evening.



VIDEO online: Vignettes of King student performances at [news.a2schools.org](http://news.a2schools.org)



From AAPSNews Service

**H**undreds braved the bitter cold this month to attend King International Night – the seventh year the Ann Arbor elementary school has offered a multi-cultural extravaganza. This year, it featured 29 performances by 350 students and served potluck dinner to more than 1,000.

The event is organized by a multitude of many, led by Frances Kai-Hwa Wang, a King parent and multi-cultural writer.

Wang was emcee for the event, which featured a program of authentic dance and song in performances that stretched well into the evening.

International Night is an evening of



pride and celebration for the King School community. It begins with an International Potluck of dishes from around the world followed by the Showcase of Student Performances including: Arabic Debkeh Dance, Israeli folk dance, Korean fan dance, Bolivian Dance, Dutch song, Greek folkdance, American Hip-Hop, Indian Bollywood dance, Beijing opera, Chinese martial arts, Taiwanese ribbon dance, Japanese Okinawan dance, Gospel music and more. Due to the overflow crowd, performances were simulcast in the school's gymnasium.

The school is also decorated with displays from different countries and art projects. More information about the annual event can be found at Wang's blog at <http://kinginternationalnight.blogspot.com>

# Advantage Sports to handle spirit wear



Geoff Blow of Advantage Sports sharpens skate blades at the store's service desk. The new store is located on West Stadium Boulevard.

From AAPSN News Service

The Ann Arbor Public Schools has contracted with Advantage Sports LLC, a new Ann Arbor business, for licensing and use of all high school logos and graphics in the production and sale of high school spirit wear.

Located at 2019 W. Stadium Blvd., Ann Arbor, in the former Big George's Appliance site, Advantage Sports will be the exclusive provider of AAPS sports logo apparel that is sold to the public, returning a percentage of sales to the district and its sports teams. The store opened on

Jan. 3, 2011.

AAPS Director of Communications Liz Margolis said the two-year agreement will help both the school district and high school teams by controlling the use of the district's trademarked items and bringing additional revenue to the district that it did not have before. The agreement runs through Feb. 11, 2013.

"They came to us and asked to have a dedicated area, like a varsity shop," Margolis said. "These will be priority items for the store. They want to give back to the community."

Advantage Sports will provide

a quarterly sales report to the district and pay the district 10 percent of proceeds from logo items sold in the store. Orders from sports teams, booster clubs or projects on which the company bids are not included.

The owners of Advantage Sports are brothers Scott and Jamie Schmunk and partner Mike Charles. "We really want to be part of the area," said Scott Schmunk, who grew up in Ann Arbor and attended Thurston Elementary, Clague Middle School and graduated from Huron

*See Advantage Sports, page 8*

## Clague students win 1st place in Show Green TV Film Challenge

From Clague Middle School

A team of Clague Middle School technology students won first place in the Energyworks Michigan ShowGreenTV Student Film Challenge and were honored during a ceremony in January at The Michigan Theater.

Technology teacher Michael Harris said he was invited to the program by Clague students Karina, Zoe, Christina, Jasmine and Annika who won for the 13-and-Under Category in the second round of competition which asked the question: "What is global climate change and what's your solution?"

The event was part of Energy Works Michigan's Michigan Renewable Schools program. It challenged students around the state to create a short video outlining small solutions to global climate change, encouraging them to research and think about what they could do to help.

Students in grades K-12 created video projects of under two



Clague technology teacher Michael Harris with members of the winning student team. Students donated part of their prize, a Flip video camera, to their school.

minutes and competed in categories of 13-and-under and ages 14-19. First prize was \$200 and a new Flip Video Camcorder; the students donated the camera to the school for use in technology class.

"I would like to be able to say that their winning video was my idea, that I told them what to do and so on and so forth ... but this would not be true," Harris said. Although Harris said he helped students with technology, gave them examples, encouraged out-of-the-box thinking, led them through the development process and helped them troubleshoot, "the idea was theirs

and theirs alone, and in my humble, somewhat biased opinion, a worthy winner," he added.

Harris said he feels fortunate to work in a school and a district that encourages him to teach the "how to" of technology and take it one step further to help students apply it. "Nowhere is this better illustrated than in the student film that won the award," he said.

The Clague winning entry is titled "Earth." View it and other winning student entries at the Energy Works Michigan website: <http://www.energyworksmichigan.org/show-green-tv/index.aspx>.

## District website redesigned and improved

From AAPSN News Service

The Ann Arbor Public Schools has launched a new look and feel to the district website. Rolled out during last week's winter break, the change includes updated navigation tools to better help the public find information.

The website address [www.a2schools.org](http://www.a2schools.org), will remain the same, said AAPS Director of Communications Liz Margolis. "Our website is a key tool for communicating with our families and the public," Margolis said. "This change is designed to freshen the site and put important information at their fingertips."

District Webmaster Ali Van Doren has worked on the updates throughout the first semester and into the new year. Although the site will be organized in a familiar way, she said, "the navigation will be different and it will be more user-friendly."

The district's website was last redesigned and updated in 2004.

New features on the site include a drop-down menu of "How Do I?" questions and a navigation bar with Google Translate. Following the change, Van Doren will work with individual school webmasters to change school sites to a similar look.

# Nia a joyful calling for Rec & Ed fitness instructor



## Fit & Fun



Featured classes and activities in AAPS Community Education and Recreation

*Teresa Myers, right, works with a Community Education and Recreation Nia class in the dance studio at Community High School. Myers got involved with Nia as she was recovering from illness and seeking something that would be kind to her body and her spirit. "It's really about being in tune with your own body and what your body can do," she says.*

**By Casey Hans**  
**AAPSNews Service**

When Teresa Myers started her journey with Nia nine years ago, she found it to be the only type of fitness activity that she could handle.

Myers had just recovered from surgery from a rare form of muscle cancer in her back and found that other forms of exercise – including yoga, aerobic classes and even Tai Chi – weren't helping. "I could do Tai Chi, but my body needed more than that," she said.

Then she discovered Nia, where she learned to tune her body, mind and spirit and found a path to healing. Not only did her body heal from its cancer and subsequent surgery, but Myers also toned up, lost 85 pounds and has found a calling that brings her joy.

A human resources professional by day, Myers said she is happy to embrace a practice that offers her – and her students – a chance to tune out the everyday world and spend time for themselves.

Today, Myers teaches Nia classes around the community,

including a Monday night session at Community High School through the Ann Arbor Public Schools Community Education and Recreation Department. This is her second year teaching the class for Rec & Ed.

"It's really about being in tune with your own body and what your body can do," she said. "We're a well-kept secret, but slowly getting out there."

Nia uses 52 moves combined in a variety of routines set to music and is a combination of dance, healing arts and martial arts. It is recommended that students do the routines barefoot and they are encouraged to do them at their own pace – which Myers said might be different from one session to the next. Students range in age from very young to older and, although anyone is welcome, Myers said her classes are mostly made up of women.

Myers said Nia might sound like a low-key exercise routine. But, she said although it is not a muscle-burning cardio class, it elevates heart rates and gives a good workout.

The class has seven cycles, which takes students through a

warm-up, movement and cool down. While most classes are 60 minutes, there are some Nia classes that are up to 90 minutes in length. The Rec & Ed offering is a 60-minute routine.

"This hour really is for you, it's about you," Myers said. "Nobody's looking at you, nobody cares." She said that because of the 52 basic movements, once a student has started Nia, getting used to new routine is simple. And, she added, new students can feel comfortable starting a Nia class anytime.

Nia can also develop a sense of community for its participants. Wendy Felgner, an Ann Arbor resident, has been taking the class from Myers since she started teaching it in fall of 2009. Felgner had done other fitness classes around the community and has settled on Nia.

"I like walking and being outdoors gardening, but we have a limited window (of time) for that," she said. "This was a good fit. My exercise has changed as I've gotten older. I haven't done as much of the demanding repetition as I used to do."

She said she also appreciates

Myers' leadership in the classes, which she said is a "work at your own pace" model. "It's not competitive at all," she added.

Another student, Anita McKay, also of Ann Arbor, said she appreciates the class too. "It's nice for me," she said. "It's easy to get yourself moving. It's quite a workout and the music's really good."

Myers said her cancer is in remission and with the help of Nia, she has been virtually pain free. She said Nia has strengthened her body's core, allowing her to sit for longer periods of time without support and has given her a quality life. Many of her close friends are ones she made through her Nia practice.

Her healing took time. "Now, I realize there was a haze there," she said of her life shortly after her surgery. "There was something there that was lifted and I know it was through the Nia."

*Rec & Ed Nia sessions run fall, winter and spring and more details can be found at the Rec & Ed website: [www.aareced.com](http://www.aareced.com) or call 734-994-2300 for more information.*

## College & Career Fair slated for March 30

Ann Arbor Public Schools has scheduled its 26th Annual College & Career Fair at Pioneer High School from 6-8 p.m. on Wednesday, March 30.

Colleges and businesses will

have tables in the cafeteria, which is located near the clock-tower entrance to Pioneer High School.

This night will provide families with up-to-date information and enable them to make a person-

to-person contact with national and local college and business representatives who will be available to meet with families, answer questions and offer pertinent literature.

# Exceptional Education

## Eberwhite, from page 1

schools through the Ann Arbor Parent Advisory Committee for Special Education, or AAPAC

"We simulate these disabilities," explained parent Erica Melnykowycz, who chairs Eberwhite's Disability Awareness Workshop Day. "It's OK if they feel some frustration. The hope is that they have some empathy for people with disabilities."

At Eberwhite, multiple stations were set up around the school to give students the proper experience. Among the many activities, students had to get out of the gym using a wheelchair without assistance, in another they used a walker with their legs tied together and in the media center they learned how to find their way around while blindfolded. Teams of student "detectives" made their way around the school to measure for accessibility at windows, in doorways and between desks.

At one station, parent Felicia Garcia was showing students how to balance on a special board while trying to read, simulating how it feels for people who have had a stroke. Garcia's daughter, now a sixth-grader, was impacted strongly by her Disability Awareness Workshop several years ago. "She had a lot of questions that night," Garcia said. "Since then, I've tried to volunteer. I'd glad to do it. I think it's really important."

U-M medical student Anirban Sahu was working a station that had students simulating walking with a prosthetic device. "They love it," he said of the students. "They're very surprised at how difficult it is. I think this gives them an appreciation for it."

The event was started several years ago at Logan Elementary School by parent Steve Schwartz, who continues to stay involved by manning tables at the awareness days and by doing hour-long presentations about his own disability at some of the workshops. Schwartz did his 50th disability workshop presentation at Eberwhite (see related video), where he shared his story about becoming severely ill due to a lung infection 21 years ago and losing his fingers, toes on one leg and a portion of his

other leg due to the lack of oxygen circulation.

"Can you imagine what it would be like to push a wheelchair through the snow outside? Terrible. You couldn't do it. The world isn't flat ... it isn't hard. I remember getting stranded in the middle of somebody's back yard," he told students, sharing the seriousness of the situation, but using a touch of humor.

"It's something I want you guys to remember. Welcome to my world."

Schwartz, who worked as an attorney before his illness, told students to never give up on their dreams. Once a champion Ping-Pong player who also loved to play the piano, Schwartz told students that he decided to play both again. He now not only plays the piano, but also composes music.

"I don't put limits on myself, and that's what I have learned," he told students. "I say I'm just going to keep trying – you never know what you can do. I don't think you can come up with something I can't do ... I can do the impossible and so can you."

Melnykowycz said Schwartz's presentation "is the highlight of the day and generally what students talk about long after Disability Awareness Workshop is over."

Students from the Dance Marathon at the University of Michigan – a fundraising group for pediatric rehabilitation – also did a presentation to explain why and how they help. This year's event (<http://dmum.org>) will run from 10 a.m. March 26 to 4 p.m. March 27 at the U-M Indoor Track and Field Building. And Linda Briggs, a volunteer from the Ann Arbor Center for Independent Living, spoke with students about what is like to be legally blind and live with a variety of disabilities and also shared information about CIL.

Until two years ago, AAPAC had to borrow a kit with materials for the workshops; they now have their own kit and, this year, have a trailer in which to store everything. Melany Raubolt, an Eberwhite parent and member of the AAPAC board, said the change has allowed more schools to be involved.



Michael White has returned to his post as principal at Pioneer High School. White was away for the past year, being called to serve at Ft. Benning, Ga. as part of his Army National Guard service.

## Staff in the Spotlight: Michael White

By Carlina Duan  
AAPSN News Service

As second semester unfurls a fresh start for students across the district, another new start has taken place at Pioneer High School: Principal Michael White has returned from his year-long deployment in Fort Benning, Georgia.

White, principal of Pioneer since 2007, was unexpectedly called to Fort Benning, Ga. in January 2010 to serve as a drill sergeant for the U.S. Army Reserves. He spent the past year training U.S. infantry soldiers and preparing them for deployment overseas. White described his time in Fort Benning as "intense."

"My responsibility was to train combat soldiers to go overseas and fight and survive and come back," he explained. "That training is a little bit different than (working in a) high school. You have to take them and turn them into a group from individuals in 14 weeks. When you're training these folks, you're training them for a specific set of strategies and a lot of emotions are tested because they're at extreme risks. I have to come back (to Pioneer) and take it way down," he added.

White has high expectations for the remainder of the school year and is already planning several large-scale projects. "A couple goals are to continue with the renovations," he says, referring to the future upgrading of electronic equipment and shelving at the

school. "We're getting a new sound board and sound system. We're also building a new building at Holloway Stadium for locker rooms – one for the visiting team."

Furthermore, White plans to establish a new practice turf field to the left of the football field, where there is now grass.

Academically, White is discussing professional development changes for staff. "We're having the teachers do some workshops to learn how to teach in different ways to different kids," he said.

White said he is working hard to reacclimate himself for the rest of the semester. "I want to get to know and get back in touch with the student body in the same way I did before I left," he said. "It's important to me to know all the students in my school."

He said he knows about 65 percent of the student body personally and notes that the transition of students moving to Skyline High School is making it easier. "Now that we have less and less students, I think I will know everyone, and that's great," he added.

The transition from Fort Benning back to Pioneer High School has not been easy, but White expresses gratitude for returning home.

"I'm just glad to be back," he said. "It was a good experience, but you work 18 to 21 hours a day, Monday through Sunday. Drill sergeant is the highest-stress job in the service. It wasn't a vacation experience for me (but) I don't regret it at all."

# Exceptional Education

## School Bells

### Schools celebrate NAAPID with events

Buildings throughout the Ann Arbor Public Schools and other county districts celebrated National African American Parent Involvement Day, OR NAAPID, on Feb. 14. "I want to recognize and thank all of our schools for inviting all parents to visit their child at school and participate in special activities," said Interim Superintendent Robert Allen.

NAAPID was founded in 1996 by Joseph Dulin, the now retired principal of Roberto Clemente Student Development Center, who was inspired to start the special day by his participation in the Million Man March on Washington D.C. in 1995. Many Ann Arbor schools celebrated this year with special events and by inviting parents into the schools for the day.

Northside Elementary School reported that they started their day with a parent breakfast and then hosted an all-school assembly with special guest and poet/author Dr. Gloria Burgess, founder of The History Makers, which chronicles life stories of African Americans.

At Clague Middle School (photo below), parents visited classrooms with their children and a special lunch/potluck was offered. Guest speaker Heaster Wheeler, president of the Detroit

Chapter of the NAACP and uncle to a Clague student, was the school's honored guest. He spoke about how to educate and empower youth.

The eighth annual NAAPID at Night was also held on Feb. 14, featuring a showcase of student talent. This collaboration of the Washtenaw County school districts took place this year at Saline High School's Center for Performing Arts.

### Pattengill: Blankets for Safe House

Twenty five students from Susan Beech's third-grade class at Pattengill Elementary (photo at right) did a service project this year instead of spending their money on valentines for each other. Students and parents collected \$102 to purchase fleece fabric and made blankets for families at Safe House, a shelter for homeless families and victims of domestic violence. Every student in the class assisted in tying the blankets on Valentines Day and the seven blankets made will be donated to Safe House.

### 14 nominated for scholars program

The Ann Arbor Public Schools has 14 candidates nominated for the Presidential Scholars Program

for 2011. The 10 candidates from Huron are: Pelham Barron, Joshua Cheng, John Han, Heemyung Hwang, Jong Hwan Koo, Sussy Pan, Jasmine Powell, Alisha Qiu, Philip Tsao and Derek Wu and the four Pioneer candidates are: Simmon Kim, Andrea Kriz, Anna Ronen and



Pattengill students work on fleece blankets that were made for Safe House.

Eli Schultz.

The United States Presidential Scholars Program was established in 1964.

### Pittsfield fundraiser and art display

A Youth in Art Month display of Pittsfield Elementary School students will be featured at Barnes & Noble bookstore Friday and Saturday, March 18-19. Art teacher Robin Mendenhal shares works of art created by students.

A special art exhibit of eReaders will be featured throughout March honoring Youth Art Month and purchases will benefit Pittsfield Elementary when mentioning the



Pierre Dulaine at Burns Park.

school at check out. Benefit days are March 18-20.

Barnes & Noble is at 3235 Washenaw Avenue, Ann Arbor, MI 48104. Details: 734-973-0846.

### Dance expert visits Burns Park students

Pierre Dulaine, ballroom dancer and inventor of the Dulaine method of teaching, visited Burns Park Elementary on Friday, Feb 4 at the invitation of music teacher Cynthia Page-Bogen.

Dulaine visited the area as part of a University of Michigan Med-Start Child Advocacy Seminar earlier this month, where he was the keynote on "Dancing Classrooms – Transforming Lives One Step at a Time."

Dulaine, a famous ballroom dancer, is the inventor of the Dulaine method of teaching, and founder of Dancing Classrooms.

He has used ballroom dancing as a way to reinforce social values such as respect, compassion and control and helps to build children's self-confidence as they move into adolescence.



Ann Arbor Public Schools Trustee Simone Lightfoot meets with Clague parents, students and staff during NAAPID Day.

# Exceptional Education

## Young People's Project , from page 1

"It's making math meaningful," said Scarlett Principal Gerald Vazquez. "There's a lot that can happen with group dynamics. I'm excited about the possibilities."

The Young People's Project is an outgrowth of a national literacy effort, The Algebra Project. YPP uses math literacy as a tool to develop young leaders and organizers to change the quality of education and life in their communities. Algebra Project graduates founded YPP in 1996; it is based in Mississippi and has hubs around the country including Chicago, Virginia, Atlanta, New Orleans, Ohio and the one at U-M's Ann Arbor campus.

YPP was started with seed money and effort from U-M staff, but students have helped to fuel its success, said Alexandra Tracy, interim program director for the Young People's Project in Ann Arbor. "The faculty put together funds (for YPP), but it took the college students to help it thrive here."

The Ann Arbor hub works with students at the U as well as those from Eastern Michigan University, Washtenaw Community College and other area colleges. These College Math Literacy Workers train high school students, like those who are working at Scarlett. "The way we train our college students is very important to what we do," Tracy added.

Staffing is funded through U-M's LS&A, and student fund-raising. Districts that participate fund their specific programs; in Ann Arbor, the district is funding \$20,000 and the AAEA is funding the remaining \$5,000.

Brit Satchwell, a sixth-grade mathematics teacher in the Ann Arbor Public Schools serves as president of the AAEA. He said he has thought about a similar concept for several years: Involving students at multiple levels, not in place of any district initiatives, but in addition to them. "I thought, let's forge a link with the community," he said.

Things began to come together with a connection to the local Young People's Project, he said. Satchwell and Michelle Madden,



Huron High School students prepare an activity for Scarlett students during the after-school YPP program.

former math and science curriculum coordinator for the district, pushed for the program and in 2009-10, former Superintendent Todd Roberts met Robert Moses, founder of the Algebra Project, and Roberts got Ann Arbor Public Schools involved.

"It's all about algebra readiness," Satchwell said, noting that middle school students are at a prime age for the program. "Cognitively, they're right at the edge of going from concrete to abstract thinking," he added.

The program seeks systemic change and ties into the Ann Arbor Public Schools' Strategic Plan, which calls for higher-level math skills to prepare students for more intense high school classes.

During the program's first after-school session at Scarlett this month, YPP College Math Literacy Workers were on site overseeing the Huron-Scarlett teams. After some ice-breaking exercises, teams moved right into the math.

U-M senior Natalie Erb got involved with YPP through the Project Community class at U-M. Erb started working with students in the Lincoln school district and, this year, is assigned to Huron and Scarlett.

She said the program makes a difference in students' confidence and their ability to do math and algebra. "If nothing else, they have a new appreciation for it," she said. "It's a new way of thinking."



## Dicken Winter Walk popular in community

The Friends of Dicken Woods and the Dicken Elementary School community celebrated the seventh Dicken Winter Walk on Feb. 15 through trails illuminated by 300 hand-made luminarias created by students. The Friends group helps to care for the woods by clearing trails, planting trees and wildflowers and other gardens. Above is a collage of student luminarias, provided courtesy of Dicken Elementary School Principal Mike Madison.

## Advantage Sports, from page 4

High School. "We want to know you when you come in. There's always someone to talk sports with. We want people to feel free to come by."

Margolis said the owners have already met with school athletic directors and are meeting with coaches and booster groups, as well. The company could bid on items such as team uniforms and shirts, but have the exclusive right to produce and sell items to the public with any Ann Arbor Public Schools logo from Pioneer, Huron or Skyline high schools, she said.

The store has an area in the front that will serve as the varsity shop area for high school spirit wear, which will include everything from t-shirts and golf-style shirts to sweatshirts and hats. Schmunk said

he is working with his printer on artwork designs and hopes to have spirit wear inventory stocked in the coming weeks.

The 13,000-square-foot store sells sports apparel, sporting goods and equipment and at the rear of the store has a synthetic ice rink and turf area, batting cages, and leases space to a power skating instructor who does training on site. The store also has a skate sharpening and athletic equipment repair area staffed by Pat Brown, formerly of College Shoe Repair, and Geoff Blow of GB Sportz both well known in the area, Schmunk said.

The owners have had a soft opening in the first quarter and hope to plan an official grand opening event this spring.