



The number of Advance Placement (AP) courses offered at PCHS is growing. The number of students taking AP courses (above) is growing, too.



Maine School Administrative District #4, 25 Campus Drive, Guilford, ME 04443

February 2009

PCHS now offering 5 AP courses

Students at Piscataquis Community High School who want to impress college recruiters and possibly earn college credits now have five advanced placement (AP) courses from which to choose.

AP English Literature has been offered for a number of years by Ms. DiFrederico, and Mrs. Wilson started teaching AP American History last year.

This year, three new AP courses have been added:

- AP Studio Art, taught by Ms. Dyer.
- AP Physics, taught by Mr. Thompson.
- AP Biology, taught by Mrs. Doherty.

About 15 to 18 students are taking AP English Lit, AP American History, and AP Biology. Four students are taking AP Studio Art. Two students are currently taking AP Physics.

AP students will take an advanced placement exam for their course in May—or, in the case of AP Studio Art, (Please turn to page 10)

Life Skills students start café operation at PCHS

A new Life Skills program is helping students at Piscataquis Community High School learn how to do a number of useful things like make lunch, do household chores, and help the cafeteria make pizzas.

The program has a large room across from the gym that has a full kitchen and a washer and dryer. The instructor is Lenora Randall, who came to PCHS last fall from SAD 46 in Dexter.

Having a full kitchen has allowed the class to start a café operation that prepares food items that the students sell to the PCHS staff.

On Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, they make coffee, breakfast sandwiches, and bagels, which are offered with or without cream cheese.

On Wednesdays, they offer a lunch special, which is a sandwich selected by the student "Head Chef," who is in charge of planning the cooking for the week. On Fridays, they prepare chef and tossed salads and a sweet.

"Teachers can eat a salad—and then reward themselves for being good by buying themselves a treat," says Ms. Randall.

After Christmas, the class started planning a lunch for themselves on Tuesdays.

Ms. Randall says the students go through the IGA flyer on Mondays, see what's on sale, and make a shopping list of ingredients and other items that they need.

On Tuesdays, the class goes grocery shopping.

(Please turn to page 7)



Life Skills students prepare a meatball sub, which was the luncheon special when The Pirate's Treasure Chest visited PCHS on January 7. The sub was delicious!

Bill Thompson nominated for 'Teacher of the Year'

Bill Thompson, physics teacher extraordinaire at Piscataquis Community High School and Piscataquis Community Middle School for the past 42 years, has been nominated for Maine Teacher of the Year.

The nomination was prepared by PCHS Principal Jim Chasse. The reasons why the Department of Education should select Mr. Thompson are reprinted on page 8.

Mr. Thompson is a native of Guilford. He attended Guilford schools and graduated from PCHS in 1963, five years after SAD 4 was formed and six years before the present building was built.

Mr. Thompson received his bachelor's degree from Aroostook State College (now UM-Presque Isle), earned nine graduate credits at Michigan Tech, and then received his master's degree from the University of Idaho. He has

(Please turn to page 8)



Physics teacher extraordinaire Bill Thompson.

SAD 4 students in primary grades show impressive gains in reading scores

A federal grant that has changed the way reading is taught in SAD 4 elementary schools has proven to be money well spent.

The \$425,000 grant, which was first approved for the 2005-06 school year, has allowed the district to implement Reading First, a program designed to improve reading instruction in the primary grades and to

ensure that at least 90% of children are reading at grade level by the end of third grade.

When the program began in the fall of 2006, less than 30% of 3rd graders in SAD 4 were meeting the benchmarks for the Developmental Reading Assessment, a reading comprehension assessment that is done one-on-one with teacher and student.

By contrast, at the start of the current school year, 86% of the 3rd graders met or exceeded the benchmarks for the end their 3rd grade year.

"That's a tremendous improvement," says Shelly Snow, literacy coach at McKusick Elementary School and Guilford Primary School.

Mrs. Snow says the improvement goes beyond the test scores.

"We hear comments from teachers to the effect that students are not only able to read, but they're able to think, talk, and write about what they're reading," she says.

Because students are more successful at learning how to read, Mrs. Thomas says fewer students require Title I assistance in 2nd and 3rd grade.

(Please turn to page 4)

To the Citizens of MSAD #4

Voters say 'no'; many exciting things happening in our schools

On January 27th the voters of MSAD #4 turned down a plan to re-organize the school system by joining with the towns of MSAD #46 as well as Harmony and Willimantic. The results were 30 "for" and 592 "against" the measure.

We would like to extend a sincere thank you to the town officials, representatives of the public, and school board members who served on the Regional Planning Committee. These folks dedicated many, many hours over an 18-month period in an attempt to craft a plan that met the requirements of the law.

Our perception is that the vote was not against the notion of consolidation, but more because the plan did not show savings or gains in quality or quantity of educational programs. MSAD #4 has been a leader in Maine with consolidation and re-structuring. District school buildings have closed, departments re-organized and resources re-channeled into new programs. Increased opportunity for student achievement has been, and will be, the predominant factor behind every change.

* * *

While much attention has recently been paid to re-organization, many exciting things have been happening in our schools:

- We have added a special life skills program at PCHS that has been designed to meet the specific needs of students.
- We are in the early stages of implementing a Gifted and Talented program at PCMS.
- A recent comprehensive review of our special services yielded stellar results. To quote from one of the reports: "Your SAU's promising practices could promote state-

wide improvement, if shared with other SAU's."

- Our Learning-4-Life alternative program that is housed in the Abbie Fowler building in Sangerville meets another set of needs.

- Through our affiliation with the Tri-County Technical Center, we have been able to start a new "Pre-Technical Program" designed for at-risk students in grades 9-10.

- We have added four Advanced Placement classes at PCHS and expect one or two more courses to be added soon. These courses are planned and created by our own faculty and must meet the stringent criteria of The College Board.

- Our federal Reading First grant has been extended for another year, allowing our elementary teachers to continue their work in literacy. Data reveals that we have



George Nuite



Paul Stearns

made great strides in improving literacy skills in the younger grades, an investment that will pay dividends in the future.

Technology for the 21st century remains a very critical core thread to all we do. Representatives from our school system were invited to an International Educational Summit in San Francisco. It was a proud moment when former Governor Angus King told the story to an international audience of selected educational leaders of how "the little system in Maine" had led the way for the state and nation in the quest to place powerful technological tools into the hands of our students and staff.

Our contingent stood a bit taller that evening, as should our communities!

* * *

We are in our last year of our Community Learning Center Grant. This grant has allowed us to provide a wide range of after-school activities and programs. We hope to be able to continue with many of these programs in the future.

* * *

Hongli Yang, our guest teacher from China, has been working with students at the GPS, PCMS and PCHS teaching Mandarin and Chinese culture. It is great to have our students' global awareness increased. Changes in College Board regulations for this program will make it difficult to continue next year.

* * *

Our facilities and grounds are in excellent condition. We continue to take on projects based on safety, program needs, and improved energy efficiency. Two science labs have been partially re-furnished at PCHS, curtains have been replaced at PCMS and PCHS, and a major electrical project is complete. We

have engaged the services of James W. Sewall Co. of Old Town to conduct a structural analysis on the roof at PCHS. The building was constructed in 1968. The roof has been well maintained over the years, but has reached the point where it will need to be replaced and brought up to current code.

* * *

The next few years will prove to be extremely challenging for the district financially. State subsidy revenue is being reduced in the current year and will continue to decline the two years to follow. We are certainly not exempt from the economic hardship that the entire country is experiencing. Fewer subsidy dollars will mean a shift to local funds to meet the day-to-day increases that are inherent in operating good schools. More than ever, we will need to examine every facet of the organization to look for ways to economize. Restructuring of staffing, administration, and facilities will be required.

* * *

It is the community that makes our school system what it is. Our local citizens, municipal officials, contractors, agencies, businesses, and industries are always there with services and products in time of need. Oftentimes things are donated or provided at cost. There is a spirit of volunteerism, cooperation, and caring present that simply cannot be legislated in either Augusta or Washington. It is all greatly appreciated and is what makes MSAD #4 one of the very best places to live and learn.

Thank you for supporting your schools.

George Nuite,
Chairman of the Board

Paul Stearns, Superintendent

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* * *

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Moose REC CLC program in last year of 5-year grant

The after-school CLC program in SAD 4 is funded through a 21st Century Community Learning Center grant.

This grant is now in the last year of its five-year run, and many positive programs have been provided for students during that time.

MooseREC has offered a wide variety of enrichment and academic programs. The enrichment programs have included activities such as quilting, camping, chess, family literacy nights ("Supper with a Side of Reading"), kayaking, wrestling, and cooking to name but a few.

We have also worked hard at developing the Content Academy programming. Thanks to a very talented and hardworking group of teachers, our Content Academy has successfully helped students improve their math and reading skills through a variety of hands-on, project-based learning activities, including K'Nex Math, Food Frac-

tions and Fun, Cooking with GarageBand, Math Magic, Cup Stacking, Bridges: From Design to Destruction, and Sing me a Poem.

The Content Academy is unique to SAD 4's CLC program. The goal is to provide individualized instructional support and intervention to our at-risk students. We believe that if students are not experiencing success in the traditional academic approach offered during the regular school day, then it is our challenge to design a learning environment that will allow them to experience academic success.

Content Academy programming is staffed by highly trained professionals. Several teachers have their master's degrees, most are certified teachers, and the others have had specialized training in teaching reading and math. All teachers have participated in workshops to raise student aspirations, and

teachers focus on developing positive learning experiences based on each child's learning style.

Because of this unique approach to after-school programming, we were invited to present the Content Academy at last year's New England 21st Century Learning Conference in Boston. Linda Huber, one of the 21st Century program consultants for Maine, commented: "I want to thank you for organizing

blessed. Robyn and Jolane did an outstanding job at presenting their program and their love for the kids and what they do definitely came across."

Over the past five years, MooseREC CLC has offered over 425 different programs and activities for students, some were one day events, others continued for weeks or months. More than 1,925 students and parents have been in-

One student's comment about a Content Academy program:

"I really like it. It gives me a chance to slow down and concentrate on things without having to worry about having to ask questions in front of my friends. It also gives me confidence in my vocabulary and math abilities."

and sharing the Content Academy workshop at our conference. It is so good for other programs to see and hear about what their peers are doing. I have always admired your program and it was a pleasure to hear more about it. The success of our after-school programs is directly related to the staff who work in them and there you are truly

involved in CLC programs over the life of the grant, with many students returning year after year to participate in a variety of CLC programs. These after-school programs have become part of the daily life in SAD 4 and many programs will be missed when the grant funding ends this summer.



Mike Draper: 'a little here, a little there' keeps SAD 4 grounds looking great

Superintendent of Schools Paul Stearns is more than just a little proud when he talks about the excellent condition of the lawns, fields, and walkways around SAD 4 schools.

And he says most of the credit goes to groundskeeper Mike Draper.

"Mike does an absolutely fantastic job of making our little Class C campus look great," says Mr. Stearns. "He takes care of everything from snow removal to the athletic fields. He mows the lawns for all four buildings on three separate campuses, and he does it all himself. I've lived in Guilford for 32 years, and it looks the best it ever has."

Mike, a 1977 graduate of Piscataquis Community High School, has been groundskeeper for SAD 4 for the past three years.

Transportation Director Dave Cotta, Mike's supervisor, says Mike is a steady worker who gets the job done.

"He goes above and beyond," says Mr. Cotta. "When I ask him to do something, he usually tells me that he's already done it."

Mr. Stearns says Mike is very independent and is always looking ahead.

"Mike is the kind of guy who will adjust his schedule to meet the needs of the school," he says. "If he's got an 8-hour day, he might work seven hours, go home and eat, and then come back and spend an hour turning on the sprinklers so the fields will be pristine for the next day's game. The easy way out would be for him to work his eight hours and go home."

Mr. Cotta adds that the same thing is true with snow removal.

"When it snows, he comes in around 5 o'clock, because he knows what needs to be done for the kids and teachers," he said. "He takes great pride making things better for people. It's really noticeable."

Mike says there's no particular secret to groundskeeping, just persistence.

"A little here, a little there," Mike says. "Every day, keep at it. Don't

do anything too drastic. Try to use common sense, and usually things will work out for themselves."

He says his biggest challenge are the athletic fields—two field hockey fields, a soccer field, and the town baseball field.

"I usually have to keep my eye on them pretty close," he says. "The grass grows so much faster, and you have to keep at it."

He says the key is to mow the fields with a sharp blade and keep them aerated. He lets the grass grow to 4" during the off-season—spring for soccer and field hockey, fall for baseball—and then cuts it shorter as the season approaches.

The taller grass retains moisture and allows the morning dew to stay in.

During the fall, when games are scheduled, he keeps the field hockey field at 1½" and the soccer field at about 3". The field hockey grass is cut shorter because the taller grass affects the play of the game.

Mike says he picked up a lot of the basics of groundskeeping from his grandfather, who had a farm and supplemented his income by taking care of lawns for a living.

"He said have a sharp blade on your lawnmower," Mike said. "A lot of what he told me applies here."



Mike Draper and his faithful tractor.

Superintendent's Message

2009 Pirate's Treasure Chest

Welcome to the 2009 edition of the Pirate's Treasure Chest! These pages are filled with stories and photos that are representative of the fantastic things that are going on every day in each of our schools. I hope that you enjoy this publication, and will join me as we celebrate the efforts and accomplishments of our students and staff.

I am consistently amazed at the level of skill and commitment that our teachers, students, coaches, support staff, parents and volunteers show. The sacrifices that people make behind the scenes, out of the public eye, to make our schools great places to learn and grow is truly amazing. This culture of continuous improvement and true caring about children should never be taken for granted.

Many improvements have been made to our district website. We have been upgrading the site section by section in order to provide you with a great informational resource. Please log on to www.sad4.com and take a look.

—Paul A. Stearns, Superintendent of Schools, SAD 4



Paul Stearns

PCHS students cook, sell treats using ads created with 'GarageBand'

The CLC after-school program can offer students many different activities.

One group of students at Piscataquis Community High School has been operating its own business, called



Corey Page with a batch of "Cooking with GarageBand" treats.

"Cooking with GarageBand," cooking and selling after-school treats.

The students, who are advised by Mrs. Dyer and Mrs. Leavitt, cook their treats on Tuesday and sell them to students after school on Wednesday.

Of course, since they're operating a business, they have to do more than just cook and sell. They track the cost of their materials, set prices, and create advertising using GarageBand. The project not only helps the students understand about running a business, it also teaches them how to work together and how to cook a variety of foods.

The students are very enthusiastic about their project—and about their experiences in the MooseREC CLC program over the years.

Krickett Libby, who has participated in the after-school program for four years, says it's "a great way to find new friends and spend time with old friends."

"CLC has taught me many things including math, culinary aspects, and managerial skills as well," says Nick Larrabee.

Tosha Swisher says she likes coming to the CLC after-school program. "It's fun to stay after school to cook and have a good time with other people," she says. "The teachers are great and it's fun to cook together and then sell what we make. I think it's a great program and helps people learn

skills they will need in the future."

Corey Page adds, "CLC is fun for me because of all the group activities and the collaboration that happens among students." He says the program also removes barriers between students.



The Pirate's Treasure Chest is published by Maine School Administrative District #4 for the citizens of Abbot, Cambridge, Guilford, Parkman, Sangerville, and Wellington.

Paul A. Stearns, Superintendent of Schools

Jim Chasse, Principal, Piscataquis Community High School
Virginia Rebar, Principal, Piscataquis Community Middle School
Julie Orton, Principal, Guilford Primary School and McKusick Elementary School

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The Pirate's Treasure Chest banner was designed in 2007 by John Gillis and David Haskell, students in the Graphic Design & Communications program at Tri-County Technical Center.

SAD 4 special education program gets favorable review from DOE team

SAD 4's special education program received a very favorable review from a Department of Education monitoring team that visited the district for three days in December.

The team leader, Barbara Gunn, told the *Treasure Chest* that SAD 4 has implemented a lot of special education initiatives that are positive for students.

"I walked away feeling just absolutely wonderful about what they're doing" in special education, she said.

When asked for specific reasons she felt that way, Ms. Gunn cited the following:

- The new Life Skills program at Piscataquis Community High School, which she said "provides real strong support for students."

- SAD 4's use of technology district-wide to increase instructional learning opportunities, which Ms. Gunn described as "just amazing." She said it had "really increased instructional learning opportunities."

- The RTI (Response to Intervention) pre-referral process, which she said was "very thorough."

- The new advisor-advisee program at Piscataquis Community Middle School, which she said provides "strong support" for students

in grades 4-8.

- The coordination between education and special education, which she said is perceived as working very well.

Ms. Gunn also praised SAD 4's special education director, Tricia Kurt, as "very knowledgeable."

The monitoring team also reported that it was extremely impressed with the quality work of educational technicians, secretaries, classroom teachers, and administration in delivering a high quality program that meets the needs of children.

Superintendent of Schools Paul

Stearns said he was pleased by the report.

"Special education isn't a separate entity in SAD 4," he said. "It operates very closely with classroom instruction, which is the way it ought to be. It was very pleasing to hear this confirmed by an outside source."

Mr. Stearns said Ms. Gunn told him at the conclusion of the visit that SAD 4 didn't have any major areas where the district needed help. She said the special education monitoring teams almost never reach that conclusion after a verification visit.

30 SAD 4 students get summer experience at Camp Susan Curtis, Camp Postcard

Thirty youngsters from SAD 4 had an opportunity to spend two weeks at Camp Susan Curtis or one week at Camp Postcard last summer at no charge.

Camp Curtis, located on Trout Lake in Stoneham, ME, is named in memory of former Gov. Ken Curtis' daughter, who died of cystic fibrosis. The camp provides free camper-ships to 650 children ages 8 to 16, as well as employment and scholarship opportunities to older campers.

Camp Postcard (Police Officers Striving To Create And Reinforce Dreams) is held during the last week of school and has been held at the Maine State YMCA camp on Cobbosseecontee Lake in Winthrop. It is an offshoot of the DARE program and run by off-duty state troopers and DARE officers.

The invitation for SAD 4 students to attend Camp Curtis came when a camp official noticed that there weren't any Guilford area children on the camp rolls. She contacted Superintendent Paul Stearns, who invited her to make a presentation.

SAD 4 ended up nominating 15 children for the two week program, which is totally free. SAD 4 also provided transportation for the children.



SAD 4 students who attended Camp Susan Curtis—First row (l. to r): Katie Boutilier, Ethan Cooley, and Nikki Fillmore. Second row: Aaron Whitney, Matthew McKusick, McKenzie Landry, and Trevan Gray. Third row: Darren Schustz, Cole Edes, Josie Knowles, and Ashley Briggs. Not present for photo: Amaya White.

Camp Curtis is unique in that the children who attend the camp are normally invited to come back every year. Campers are eligible for a Leadership Program at ages 13-14 and for a Career (counselor-in-training and career-in-training) Program at ages 15-16. Many CITs advance to become counselors at the camp.

Sharon Foster, school nurse for SAD 4, said Camp Curtis prefers to have campers start as early as grade 2, but accepted a number of 4th and 5th graders from SAD 4, since this was their first opportunity to attend the camp.

"They were looking for kids who couldn't afford this type of camp and

showed leadership ability in one way or another," Mrs. Foster said. "We asked teachers for recommendations and then sat down with the principals and went through the list."

Some parents were skeptical, thinking that with a deal this good, there must be a catch.

"But there's no catch," she said. "Just two weeks free at summer camp."

Camp Postcard is also free. It's designed for children who are "at risk" and who wouldn't otherwise have an opportunity to attend a summer camp.

Most of the counselors at Camp Postcard are affiliated with law enforcement.

"It's a wonderful program," Mrs. Foster says. "A lot of the state troopers and other police officers don't get paid for the week. They use part of their vacation to give the kids a great week. The students see that policemen can be nice. The officers also serve as good role models for kids."

She says Alan Emerson, Piscataquis County Sheriff Deputy, participates every year.

Mrs. Foster has been camp nurse at Camp Postcard for the past seven years.

SAD 4 students in primary grades show impressive gains in reading scores

(Continued from page 1)

The number of students receiving Title services in grade 2 has been reduced from 26% to 13%; in grade 3, the number of students receiving Title I services has been reduced from 25% to 15%.

The Reading First grant has enabled the district to join the Maine Literacy Partnership through the University of Maine, which includes having Mrs. Snow as a literacy coach and Denise Thomas as an interventionist to collect data, look at data, and use the data to inform the instruction of all the teachers.

The partnership also allows the teachers to receive on-site graduate-level professional development as a community of learners and then apply that learning when working with students in the classroom.

The professional development instruction is provided by Mrs. Snow after school. During the school day, she helps the teachers take what they have learned and apply it in their classrooms.

Reading First is based on literacy research that has found five early reading skills that children need to

have to become successful readers—phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

Both Reading First and the Maine Literacy Partnership prescribe a fairly specific model for reading and writing workshops that start with whole-group teaching of basic reading and writing skills, supplemented by periods where students practice their reading and writing skills independently or in small groups.

When the students are working independently, the teacher is able to work one-on-one or in small groups with students who need help in specific areas.

"That's what has allowed us to make these gains," says Mrs. Snow. "Part of the workshop approach is the ability to move from spending a lot of time in whole-group teaching to spending more time in small-group and one-on-one teaching."

Julie Orton, Principal at McKusick and GPS, says the teachers have become much more comfortable with the Reading First model and with the

assessments that are used to inform instruction.

Mrs. Snow said the teachers are seeing what happens as a result of more small-group instruction time.

"The more they can meet with students individually or in small groups, the more student reading scores improve," she says. "Teachers have also seen that the students are more comfortable about writing and talking about books."

One first grader told Mrs. Snow

When students are working independently (during reading and writing workshops), the teacher is able to work one-on-one or in small groups with students who need help in specific areas.

that he wrote a seven-page book over Christmas vacation.

Mrs. Orton said that the framework of Reading First has led the elementary schools to develop a Response to Intervention (RTI) plan. (As part of No Child Left Behind and Maine legislation, all school districts will be expected to have an RTI

Initiative in place by July, 2010.)

Mrs. Thomas noted that as part of the RTI process, teachers and support staff have been getting together every four to six weeks for data meetings to discuss the progress of each student. That has allowed teachers to provide more support for students throughout the year.

"Before, a student would be identified as someone who needs help only at the beginning of the year," she said. "Now, we're able to do that as the school year progresses, and we can start helping students as soon as the need is identified."

Ms. Thomas said the Reading First data also indicated that student reading scores remained stable over the summer, and some students actually gained.

"Normally, when students take three months off from school [e.g., during summer vacation], they lose some of their reading skills," she said. "They didn't lose ground this summer. It was wonderful. It meant students were reading and writing at home."

SAD 4 seeks help in building Endowment Fund

Dear Friends Of SAD #4,

The SAD #4 Endowment Fund was started two years ago for the purpose of supporting projects for SAD #4 students and teachers that are beyond the limits of the regular budget.

The fund is managed by the Maine Community Foundation. Each year a portion of the interest is made available in the form of mini-grants that SAD #4 teachers may apply for.

During the last two years, the mini-grants have funded five great projects:

- Several of our advanced art students at PCHS, under the direction of Ms. Dyer, were able to have their work produced in a professionally done hardbound portfolio (2008). The results were both beautiful and impressive!

- The PCMS Parent Organization was able to bring a local musical group in to perform at the middle school (2008). The students loved the cultural experience!

- Mrs. Stearns in 2nd Grade requested reading books specifically chosen to meet the interest levels of boys in grade 2. Who doesn't enjoy a good novel about bulldozers or snakes!?

- Mrs. Leavitt's foreign language students at PCHS will be hosting an extravagant and authentic French meal as a culminating activity in a project designed to have our students interact with peers from other schools. Frog legs and snails...we will see!

- Mrs. Titcomb at PCMS successfully requested a classroom set of the centennial version of *Forest Trees of Maine*. These beautifully done field guides will be a valuable resource for years to come.

I realize that this is a very tough economic climate. I also know that there are many folks that believe, as I do, that it is imperative that we do everything in our power to plan and build for the future. While we have a good foundation, it is just a start. I would love to see us be able to dramatically increase our fund amount this year and continue to have the endowment grow over time. There is no better time to invest in a fund of this type than in the present depressed economy. The potential for future returns on investments is high.

I am asking that you consider a private or corporate donation to the SAD #4 Endowment Fund. If you represent a group or organization, I ask that you consider holding an annual fundraising event and dedicating the revenue to the cause.

Any contributions should be made out to: "MSAD #4 Endowment Fund" and sent to:

Superintendent of Schools
MSAD #4
25 Campus Drive Drop #2
Guilford, Maine 04443

On behalf of the students and teachers of SAD #4 for years to come, thank you for your time and consideration.

Paul Stearns
MSAD #4 Superintendent of Schools



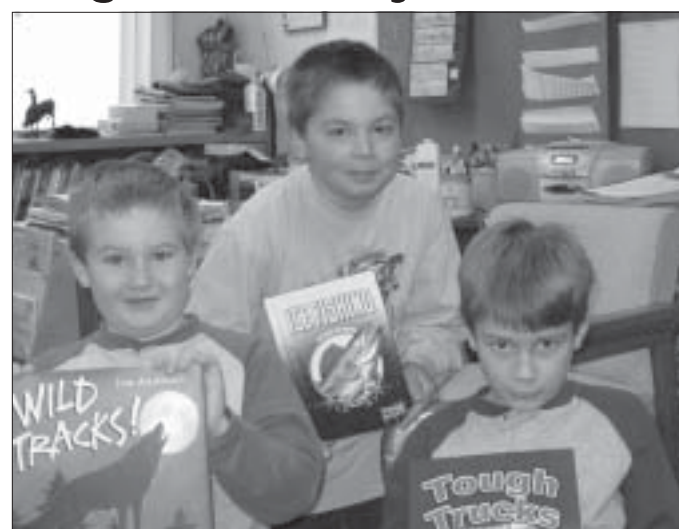
Second graders in Mrs. Stearns' class at Guilford Primary School hold some of the new "Books for Boys" that have been added to the classroom library. Standing (l. to r.): Kyle Lloyd, Owen Bennett, Ethan Worster, and Mason McLeish. Seated: Trevor Gustin, Noah Drew, Ethan Chadwick, and Collin Harrington.

Want to read about trucks, trains, fishing? Now they can

Students in Melissa Stearns' second grade class at Guilford Primary School will have a broader selection of books to read, thanks to a \$150 "Books for Boys" grant from the SAD 4 Endowment Fund.

The books aren't just for boys, of course, but they were selected because Mrs. Stearns felt she needed more books in her classroom with content that would appeal to young male readers.

Mrs. Stearns said she got the idea for the "Books For Boys" grant when she looked at the non-fiction books in her classroom and discovered that she didn't have many books on construction, construction equipment, logging equipment, skiing, fishing, snowmobiling, snowboarding, camping, ice fishing, tractors, and similar topics that appeal primarily to boys.



From left: Ryan Paradis, Nikolas White, and Eben Cooley

"I decided to do some research to see what was out there for books that would be of interest to second grade boys and would be on their reading levels," Mrs. Stearns said. "The boys, as well as some of the girls, were delighted to see the new collection of non-fiction books, as well as a few fiction books, added to our classroom library. Our class is very fortunate to have received the grant and to have this new collection of 'Books For Boys.'"

Safety is important consideration in SAD 4 decisions

Safety First.

That may not be the official motto of SAD 4, but Superintendent of Schools Paul Stearns says safety is a primary consideration in everything the district does.

An obvious example is the question of whether to cancel school in the event of a snowstorm.

"It's a question of safety," Mr. Stearns says. "We work with the town, the Sheriff's office, and other school districts to determine whether the roads are safe for travel. It's all based on whether or not the school buses can operate safely—not necessarily at normal speeds—but whether they can navigate the roads safely."

Another example is the need to protect students from incidents like the one in which a gunman held students hostage in Stockton Springs.

With that type of thing in mind, Mr. Stearns says the district has worked hard to ensure that emergency plans are up-to-date, and that everyone knows what they're supposed to do if the plan has to be ac-

tivated.

"We not only make sure that our policies and procedures are up to date, we also practice our plan," he says. "We've held emergency drills and run our buses in accordance with the plan [the buses would be used to evacuate students to a safer location]. It's one thing for the plan to say our buses will be there; it's something else to actually do a dry run. We've done that."

Mr. Stearns says the question of visitors is always a sensitive issue in small rural schools, because schools want to be perceived as friendly and welcoming to the community.

However, because of the need to protect students, SAD 4 requires visitors to sign in at the main office, where they are given a badge.

"We've gotten better and better at this," Mr. Stearns says. "It's always been the policy, but over the years it's hasn't always been strictly enforced. The more people hear about incidents like the gunman in

Stockton Springs, the more likely they are to say they know why safety policies are necessary."

The next step will be for SAD 4 to develop a system in which school doors are locked, and visitors are admitted using some sort of buzzer arrangement.

Mr. Stearns believes that type of system could be put in place at a reasonable cost by using SAD 4 people and technology.

"If we hire a security company to do it, it would be very costly," he says. "But if we use our own technology and ingenuity, we can get the job done much less expensively. Between Mike Dexter and Crystal Priest, I'm sure we can come up with a solution. We'll work on it."

Safety is also the primary reason for the system that SAD 4 has put in place to notify people in the event of an emergency.

The system, called "Call 'Em All," can call up to 3,000 people in a matter of seconds.

"We used it last year when the we had a bomb-scare situation," Mr.

Stearns said. "The beauty is that everybody got the same information very quickly, which quelled the rumor build-up. People heard it straight from my voice in a 40-second message, which said what had happened that day and what was being done about it. Later that evening, we resolved the situation, and everyone got a second call at 7:30 p.m. to say that we found out who did it, everything is safe, and school is on tomorrow. It worked wonderfully."

Mr. Stearns noted that most people are familiar with the system because the district uses it to notify parents and staff about snow days, but he says that's not why it was purchased.

"We still announce snow days on the radio, television, and via e-mail," he says. "Snow days give us a perfect opportunity to test our emergency telephone contact system, as well."

He said parents can opt out of the 5 a.m. snow day calls, but staff cannot.

Veteran teachers at PCHS share their struggles, successes

Almost one-third of the 31 teachers and educational technicians at Piscataquis Community High School have been teaching for 20 years or more.

PCHS Principal Jim Chasse and the *Treasure Chest* would like to celebrate their many contributions by reporting some of their struggles and successes in education.

The staff members are, in order of seniority: Bill Thompson, Physics, 42 years of teaching; Larry Holmquist, educational technician, 39 years; Les Tomlinson, Instrumental Music, 35 years; Beth Leavitt, French, 34 years; Jody DiFrederico, English, 31 years; Natalie Thompson, Special Education, 31 years; Lenora Randall, Special Education, 23 years; Beth Weymouth, Special Education, 23 years; and Margo Dyer, Art, 21 years.

The senior staff members provided the following recollections about their struggles and successes:

* * *

Beth Leavitt, French: 34 years in teaching, 26 years at PCHS.

Successes: In 1995, Ms. Leavitt received a \$10,000 grant to enable French III students to help teach French in elementary school.



Beth Leavitt

The following year, the district funded it for another \$10,000, with half of the funds coming from the state. The grant paid for Ms. Leavitt's work in developing the curriculum and preparing the books. It also provided secretarial assistance, because a secretary did all the typing, as well as workbooks.

Ms. Leavitt said her French III student loved teaching the younger students (the experience gave some of them an awareness of what teachers go through during the school day), and the elementary students loved learning French. In fact, the program continued for 12 years, until two years ago, when the elementary teachers reached the point where they no longer had time for French, as they had too many things in their day.

* * *

Bill Thompson, Science/Physics: 42 years in teaching, all of it at either PCHS or PCMS.

Struggles: "Attempting to motivate students in heterogeneous groups."

Mr. Thompson says most of the classes at PCHS are heterogeneous groups, and the challenge is to differentiate instruction in such a way that he can motivate students so that they want to learn and they understand the content that he's presenting.



Bill Thompson

He adds: "One of the biggest struggles is collectively pulling our bootstraps up."

Successes: "My successes have been to see students start at grade 10 and move on up through their senior level and then move onto some



Teachers at PCHS with 20 or more years of service reflect on their struggles and successes. From left: Les Tomlinson, Bill Thompson, Jody DiFrederico, Margo Dyer, Lenora Randall, Beth Leavitt, Beth Weymouth, Natalie Thompson, and Larry Holmquist.

type of training beyond high school, whether it's four-year college, two-year college, military service—whatever it might be—and become good, solid citizens."

Mr. Thompson says he's also been successful in getting labware for his classes, so that the students have the opportunity to do hands-on labs. He says most of the labware has come from grants that he's written. However, he's also secured labware through the SAD budget and from the University of Maine and Bowdoin College.

* * *

Natalie Thompson, Special Education: 31 years teaching, 28 in SAD 4 between the middle school, Cambridge K-2, and the high school.

Struggles: "Sometimes finding materials suitable for students who are at a variety of levels. 'I can have a student at the 2nd grade level and a student at the 6th grade level in the same class. Motivation isn't usually a problem—just working to overcome their learning difficulties can be a challenge.'"



Natalie Thompson

Successes: "Having students do the best they can do. Some go on to college and some don't. Also, having students find a position that works well with who they are. I love doing it."

* * *

Margo Dyer, Visual Arts: 24 years teaching, 21 in SAD 4.

Struggles: "My personal struggles have been trying to keep up with all the federal and state mandates that have been added to

the teaching profession since I started teaching. Dealing with budgets being cut year after year has made being shared with other schools in the district a necessary thing."

Successes:

"The biggest success has been seeing a student become aware of his or her own hidden talents. It's great watching a student who isn't successful in other subjects realize that art is a subject where they can be very successful while improving their own self-image. I have seen a big percentage of PCHS students going on to art careers over the years I've taught here! This is very exciting and encourages other students to see that it's possible to make a living in the art world. Another big success this year has been adding Advanced Placement 2D Design for high school students. This is a great chance for students to get college credit while still in high school! Other important successes have been the annual Spring art shows at McKusick School for Kindergarten and First Grade students and at PCHS. Students love sharing their work with their parents, friends, staff, and community!"

* * *

Larry Holmquist, Educational Technician: 38 years in teaching; 8 years at PCHS as athletic director, educational technician, and substitute teacher; currently serving as educational technician tutoring students who are struggling in math.

Successes: "I've had a great time. I enjoyed the 7th graders in

Auburn, especially seeing how much they changed from their 7th grade year until they were going on to high school.

"When I moved back to my folks' home in Monson, I realized that maybe I shouldn't have gotten out of teaching when I did. I came [to SAD 4] to apply as a substitute and ended up as athletic director. I enjoyed the change from middle school kids to high school."

* * *

Lenora Randall, Special Education: 23 years working with students with disabilities, first year at PCHS. Previous jobs have included 8 years at Perkins School for the Blind in Boston, 3 years at Overbrook School for the Blind in Philadelphia, and 11 years at SAD 46 in Dexter.

Successes: "My greatest success in working with disabilities is seeing them accomplish something independently that they never were able to do before. Sometimes it is communicating what they want, or doing a basic skill such as making a sandwich for themselves."

"Meeting the students where they are, and moving on from the starting point you are given toward where they want to go, gives me my greatest challenge, but it also fuels my desire to try and meet the challenge."

* * *



Margo Dyer



Larry Holmquist



Lenora Randall

Principal's Message

Tired of doom and gloom? Lots of good news at PCHS

Bob Dylan wrote, "The times they are a changin'." I am sure you have followed the news that education in Maine is changing. Is anyone else tired of the gloom and doom of the state budget problems?

Well, I have some local, good news. PCHS continues to work hard everyday and students continue to shine. They shine in the classroom, athletic field and community.

* * *

Did you know?

- We have students who play multiple musical instruments.

- We increased Advanced Placement (AP) courses 500%.

- We have a Key Club that is tireless in service.

- We have students receiving significant scholarships.
- Teachers have raised over \$10,000 in grant money for 2009.
- Athletic and music booster groups work tirelessly for PCHS.
- Every student has a globally connected laptop computer.
- We reached the state's adequate yearly progress benchmark.
- We continue to offer student clubs and a drama programs.
- We field a full wrestling team, four attended the state meet.
- We visit colleges as part of the high school experience.



Jim Chasse

- We are placing about 80% of our students in college or military.
- More students are making honor roll.

Phew.... now there is some good news!

* * *

The National Association of Secondary School Principals' Principal of the Year recently said, "Do all the good you can by all the means you can, and all the ways you can, and all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can." This is my approach for PCHS in 2009 and beyond.

* * *

Thanks for allowing me to serve the citizens of MSAD4.

—Jim Chasse, M.A. Ed., Principal



Piscataquis Community High School

Les Tomlinson, Instrumental Music, grades 5-12: 35 years in teaching, 8 in SAD 4.

Struggles: "When taking a teaching position, getting all parts of the band program (grades 5-12) and schools to work together, individual achievement, group success and musical growth. Being in three buildings daily provides its own challenges."



Les Tomlinson

Successes: "Remembering what the students sounded like when they began playing and what they sound like as seniors. Seeing and hearing the overall growth/quality of the total program, jazz band, pep band, concert band, marching band. I have several students who are in music now. Past students come back and tell of good times in music and that they are still doing music."

* * *

Beth Weymouth, Special Education: 23 years in teaching, 20 in SAD 4. "I am an alumni of PCHS. Here at SAD 4, I have taught in various positions, mostly in special education. I have taught kindergarten, adult education, and everything in between! This is my second year at PCHS. The biggest strength SAD 4 has is the professional staff. They are highly dedicated, committed, caring, and are in teaching for the students."



Beth Weymouth

Successes: "One success story I have had was with a student I had my first year teaching. This young man in the sixth grade was being main-streamed back into our school from a behavior school. The principal did not want this young man

back in the school. He told me to handle him on my own. So I did. When this student graduated from the eighth grade, the principal gave him a "Principal's Award" for most improved student! The whole student body stood up and cheered for him. It was a great moment."

Stuggles: "One struggle that we all share is the lack of funding. When I first started teaching, my classroom budget was around \$1,000. Now it is \$250 to teach all subjects to several grade spans. It is frustrating to want to teach something or do an experiment, but can't because you don't have the material, or enough of your own money to cover it. Students learn more when they can experience things first hand. Also through the years, we as teachers are expected to do more and more each time a position has been cut. The rest of us have to pick up the extra work left behind."

* * *

Jody DiFrederico, English: 31 years teaching, 29 years at PCHS.

Struggles: "My struggles have been dealing with all the changes in education over the years and also trying to motivate students to learn."

Successes: "Probably the biggest success for me has been when former students come back and tell me that they were prepared for the rigors of college and life because of my class. I feel that I have done my job when I hear how successful they are. To know that I have made a difference in a student's life is so rewarding to me."



Jody De Frederico

Life Skills students start café operation with breakfast, lunch specials for PCHS staff

(Continued from page 1)

On Thursdays, they go to the YMCA for adapted physical education activities.

Ms. Randall says a lot of the academic activities in the class are based on functional skills.

She says the class has a cash register; some students will use it make change for breakfast and lunch customers, while others will learn to identify coins, sort them, and put them in the register.

"We adapt the different things that we do to each skill level," she says.

Preparing breakfast and lunch items teaches such valuable life skills as being able to follow directions on a recipe, understanding measurements (e.g., volume measurements—cup, half cup, etc.), and understanding how they have to measure different things differently (e.g., pack the brown sugar, but not the flour).

The students also learn how to wash dishes, how to wash and dry clothes, and how to use a vacuum cleaner.

Some of the students also have jobs outside the classroom.

For example, a crew of five Life Skills students helps the janitor clean up the cafeteria after second lunch—washing tables and sweeping and mopping the floor. They have to work quickly, because there's only a 20-minute win-

dow before the space has to be used for something else.

Ms. Randall says she's seen a lot of progress in the students' cleaning skills.

"I have students who have never done anything like washing a table before," she says. "Now they understand how to do it. They watch their peers and correct themselves."

Three Life Skills students also help out in the cafeteria on Thursdays, which is pizza day for the entire school. The students make the pizza boxes, open up the sauce and put it in a bin, and open up the cheese. Lately, they've started brushing the crusts with oil.

"They're learning a lot of skills—real job skills—from the kitchen staff," says Ms. Randall.

The class not only prepares food, it will soon start growing some of its own produce.

Ms. Randall received a grant from the Oak Grove Foundation to purchase an indoor growing station, which the class plans to use to grow its own lettuce, sprouts, and herbs for salads.

"We're really excited about it," says Ms. Randall. "That will bring in science lessons where the students can observe the life cycle of plants."

She adds that lettuce is a significant expense for making salads, so the growing station will help the class save money, as well.



Life Skills students do their grocery shopping on Tuesdays.

PCHS science teacher Bill Thompson nominated for 'Teacher of the Year'

(Continued from page 1)

also taken courses at Tufts, Bowdoin, the University of Southern Maine, Boston University, and Boston College.

His teaching career started at the old high school. When the present high school was built, Mr. Thompson stayed in the old building, which became the middle school, and he taught middle school science for 10 years.

Mr. Thompson said the new high school only needed three science teachers instead of four because of declining enrollment.

* * *

Why does PCHS Principal Jim Chasse think Mr. Thompson should be Maine's Teacher of the Year? Here's how he answered the key questions on the Teacher of the Year nomination form:

1. What creative projects make this teacher's work in the school community outstanding?

Mr. Thompson's creative flare can be seen on a daily basis at Piscataquis Community High School. He has been, after all, implementing creativity at PCHS for 42 years! He has created a legacy at PCHS that can be seen throughout the science department and across the school. It is recognized in curriculum, teaching, and the community.

His longevity is commendable, but what is more impressive is his fresh approach to teaching after so many years in the classroom. Mr. Thompson has influenced four generations of learners. He has a unique understanding of the evolution of the adolescent learner and has made adjustments to reach students of the 60's, 70's, 80's, and 90's. He shows little sign of tiring in the year 2009! Bill provides a steady stream of differentiated instruction by using a teaching model that has a mixture of tradition, exploration, and scientific inquiry. Each area is coated with a rich use of technology.

Upon entering Mr. Thompson's room, you will see trinkets and gadgets that on the surface appear to have been assembled from a back-

yard junk pile or purchased from a science fiction book. Students are drawn to an entry table that is full of this "stuff." Magnets, pendulums, rope, optical illusions, electric machines, and other alluring devices are available for students to poke, prod, and play with before the start of class. Anyone who has entered his room has surely spent some time at THE TABLE.

His lessons usually move into a lecture format, but wait, as students take a seat they hear Mr. Thompson through a speaker system that is installed in the ceiling of his classroom, another enhancement for learning. The new-aged lecture begins with conversation. Questions begin to bounce throughout the room. Mr. Thompson complements the instruction through the use of a SmartBoard and a Bluetooth wireless tablet that can be shared around the room. Mr. Thompson was the first teacher at PCHS to implement this technology that brings traditional lecture to life by projecting multimedia onto an interactive white screen. The digital chalkboard can display a myriad of media. His virtual "talk chalk" is converted to electronic pdf files for use on each student's laptop—very impressive. He has mastered the SmartBoard as a learning station. Mr. Thompson has adapted to today's learner through what some call edu-tainment, a mixture of short but more powerful forms of media that make an explosive impact on the human brain. He is a 63-year-old excelling as a teacher to a digital generation, generation "Y".

Mr. Thompson provides a steady stream of differentiated instruction, using a teaching model with a mix of tradition, exploration, and scientific inquiry. Each area is coated with a rich use of technology.

Mr. Thompson has been awarded countless grants that have created a physics library of gadgets and technology.

Students move from the classroom discussion to the physics lab located directly behind the seating area. Experiments that are connected to the discussion and lecture take place in small groups. Students work with laptops and USB

digital probes to measure motion, speed, acceleration, sound and virtually anything in the physical world there is to measure. Exploration and experimentation with force, velocity, motion, sound, friction, thermodynamics, magnetism, electricity, optics, torque, or resistance are the order of the day. His creativity and teaching approach leave students with an intrinsic form of learning that pays a lifetime of dividends. Students end units with traditional lab reports and or student presentations that display their scientific findings. Mr. Thompson has a tremendous knack for marrying curiosity with learning and tradition with modern invention.

2. What has been this teacher's influence on students?

A forty-two year teaching career brings with it four generations of students. Mr. Thompson is now impacting the generation of "his children's children's children." Uh? Let's just say that he is teaching his fourth generation of physics to rural Maine students. Quantifying this feat results in an estimation of 4,500 students learning in his classroom. That is double the population of Guilford. How does teaching 4,500 students influence people? Mr. Thompson has played a key role in a large percentage of these students. His students have attended some of the state's top universities and colleges (too lengthy to mention) as well as out of state technical institutes. His students have also entered trade fields related to the physics, math, and other sciences learned at PCHS.

Mr. Thompson serves all students, Advanced Placement to Special Education. He believes that students who understand physics have a better understanding of life. It is the acquisition of knowledge that drives Mr. Thompson. His classes have absolutely no "busy work." He is an observer of students, he measures their demonstrated understanding of the material and makes classroom adjustments to ensure the acquisition of standards. His "science as life" approach brings daily living to the forefront of his classroom. His students discuss, debate, and test the science of matter, energy, and force. The classes are fun. His style is supported by the most current research on teaching and learning. His students are empowered, not controlled. His students are facilitated, not spoon-fed. His expectations are high.

Bill's certification in mathematics is a tremendous asset to the teaching of science. He has a keen understanding of the math principles needed to be successful in



Bill Thompson

each area of the sciences. He will frequently stop a lesson to review the mathematics found behind a scientific principle. He is less worried about the pace of content as he is with the individual student's demonstrated understanding of science. It is no wonder his students become intrinsic learners.

Mr. Thompson cares about students. He can be seen around town at various events speaking with former students, probing about their successes and challenges of their lives. He is available to alumni and they frequently contact him for advice. Recently a former student, who is now in his 40's, asked for some help in acquiring new physics knowledge that would help him in his profession. Mr. Thompson is a "life-r"; he has been, and continues to be, in education for a lifetime. He is himself a life-long learner. Bill could retire and live comfortably in the country, but rather chooses to teach our youth. He recently commented on the inquisitiveness of his grandchildren and his attempts to teach the toddlers age-appropriate science. Amazingly, he is now reaching a fifth generation of students!

Mr. Thompson sets a great example as an involved citizen. He has served 28 years on the Town Council of Guilford, 18 as Chairman. He has worked summers to help his daughter through medical school; she is now a doctor at a nearby hospital. He is an involved citizen. He is a great father to his children, his school, and his town.

3. Describe the ways this teacher demonstrates leadership and relates to his/her colleagues.

An old television commercial says, "When E.F. Hutton speaks, people listen." At Piscataquis Community High School, when Mr. Thompson speaks, *his colleagues listen*; as well they should, because he has earned an attentive ear through his exceptional work.

What is amazing about Mr. Thompson is that he is a man of few words, but one whose actions speak quite loudly. He is a thinker. His input is always in the context of placing students at the center of his work. Teachers show him tremendous respect. It is recognized during staff meetings that when Bill has something to say, people take notice. The same holds true in his



Bill Thompson with students.

position as Chairman of the Town Council of Guilford. His message is always short, concise, and timely. "Mr. Bill" as many of his co-workers call him, has served on accreditation committees, site visitation groups, laptop groups, and a plethora of grant committees. It would be a safe estimation that Mr. Thompson has helped the school access hundreds of thousands of dollars in supplies, equipment, and professional development that it otherwise could not have afforded. Mr. Thompson's service over the past years includes (a partial list):

- RJR Nabisco Grant Executive Committee
- Science writer, Maine's Curriculum Framework
- Heterogeneous Grouping - PCHS
- Chair of Accreditation Committee
- Member of NEASC Visiting Committee
- Member of State Standards Setting Process for Science
- Community Adult Education Director
- Department Chair

After 42 years of teaching, Mr. Thompson is still searching for new learning opportunities. (He frequents conferences and devotes parts of his summer to the study of his trade.) His longevity is legend, yet his approach to teaching remains fresh. Interestingly, when Bill became a science teacher at PCHS, it was somewhat by accident, yet remarkably he has remained in Piscataquis County and is the veteran member of MSAD 4.

As the head of the science department, he has a great working relationship with the other teachers. They are inspired by his longevity and learn from his approach to young people. His effect on teachers is tremendously positive; they are often interested in what strategies he is implementing in his classroom. The staff imitates his model. A good example of this can be seen in his pioneering in the implementation of a SmartBoard/Projector in every classroom.

Lastly, Mr. Thompson's teacher evaluations score the highest possible score and include added distinctions. His science program has been recognized at the national level. His character is genuine and his tenure is tried and true. He is measured as "above the standard" in the following teacher qualities: Caring, Fairness, Student Interaction, Enthusiasm, Motivation, Dedication, Reflection, Classroom Management, Organization, Discipline, Instruction, Planning, Engagement, and Differentiation. Bill is surrounded by new and veteran staff, all of whom show respect and admiration. He is a brilliant person who has remained a humble servant of his community.

"KUDOS TO MR. BILL!"

Mr. Thompson is a man of few words, but one whose actions speak quite loudly. He is a thinker. At PCHS, when he speaks, his colleagues listen.



Key Club at PCHS.

Key Club active at PCHS, in community

Key Club continues to be very active at Piscataquis Community High School, performing a variety of service projects to benefit both the school and the community.

"We get involved in whatever the community needs, whatever the school needs, and whatever we feel might make a difference to somebody," says Key Club advisor Cheryl Ladd, educational technician in the PCHS library. "They're doing a good job."

The club has 62 members, and 50 of them went shopping at Wal-Mart to buy presents for the Guilford Kiwanis Club's Christmas project.

Key Club members raised \$500 for the Christmas project and received two \$50 donations.

The Guilford Area Kiwanis Club gave the Key Club a list of children (e.g., boy, age 6; girl, age 8) and their Christmas wish lists. The Key Clubbers took the money they raised (plus the donations) and bought presents from the wish lists.

The Key Club meets every Thursday, and once a month they have a breakfast meeting where they cook pancakes, French toast, bacon, and sausage.

"We were making breakfast for the Guilford Area Kiwanis Club once a month," said Ms. Ladd. "When they changed their meeting place, we decided to keep that tradition and do it ourselves."

The club is currently fundraising to send 20 to 24 members to the Key Club District Convention in Springfield, MA, during the first weekend in April.

Other upcoming projects include:

- Staff appreciation week, when the students bring goodies to teachers every day and prepare a lunch for them on Friday.

- A walkathon for the March of Dimes.

- Breakfast with the Easter Bunny at the Mason's Hall in Guilford.

- A pajama party for children under 10 in support of the Pajama Program, which collects new pajamas and books for children who have lost their homes. Children come to the gym and gain admission by donating a new pair of PJs

to the Pajama Program. The program includes all kinds of games—ring toss, bowling pins, fortune telling, movies, story time corner—and the children get to make their own ice cream sundaes before they go home.

- Collecting crayons for the Kiwanis Pediatric Trauma Institute in Boston, which is one of the Key Club projects for New England. Last year, the club collected Play-Doh for KPTI.

- A car-smash fundraiser will be held in April or May. Participants will pay for the opportunity to take a whack at a junk car with a sledgehammer.

- A video game night, where students will pay a cover charge to play video games, and the Key Club will sell refreshments. This will be the second video game night of the year; the first one was a fundraiser for the Christmas project.

Earlier in the year, Key Club projects have included:

- Breakfast for Santa at the Mason's Hall in Guilford, where children are able to see Santa and tell him what they want for Christmas. A Key Club member, Garrett Artman, was a well-padded Santa.

- Participated in the Pink Tulip Project, cleaning up garden areas around town and helping the Garden Club plant pink tulip bulbs in the shape of the pink breast cancer awareness ribbon. Key Club members worked with the library on that project.

- Helped set up, bake, cook, and clean up for the WomanCare breakfast at the end of September.

- Raked leaves at the library in the fall and shoveled snow in the winter.

- Collected 25 coats, plus hats and mittens, in support of Coats for Kids.

- Held a homeless awareness night on October 25, sleeping out at the ballfield in shelters made of cardboard boxes. (The group stayed until 5 a.m., when it started raining and got too wet.)

- Did an activity every day during Key Club Week in November. The students also wore a different color every day to make people aware of different service groups that help people (pink for breast cancer awareness, purple for the March of Dimes, yellow for support the troops, red for Aids Awareness, and blue and gold for PCHS).

PCHS senior on panel at Maine Superintendents' Technology Conference

Travis Ellis, a senior at Piscataquis Community High School, was one of seven students who participated in a panel discussion on one-on-one laptops at the Maine Superintendents' Technology Conference in Auburn.

Crystal Priest, technology director for SAD 4, said Travis did a wonderful job explaining to the Commissioner of Education, superintendents, school board members, and other education leaders in Maine what they needed to do to implement a one-to-one laptop program in Maine high schools and why they should do it.

"Travis was there for the entire program, talking with keynote speakers and the commissioner," said Ms. Priest. "It was a great opportunity for Travis and great showcase for our program."

Travis spent last summer working as an intern for SAD 4, helping with technology repairs.

Check out the new SAD 4 website.

We've been renovating and updating the site for the past couple of months to make it more useful and user-friendly. Let us know what you think.

If you have comments, questions, or suggestions, please send an e-mail to webmaster@sad4.com.

PCHS offering 5 AP courses

(Continued from page 1)

will submit their portfolios to an AP panel comprised of college art professors. Students who receive a grade of 3, 4, or 5 will receive college credit from most colleges and universities. Even if they don't receive college credit, admissions officers tend to be impressed by a student's willingness to take an AP course.

* * *

PCHS has received help in its efforts to implement AP courses in the form of federal Advance Placement Incentive Program (APIP) grants totaling \$20,000 over two years. Next year, PCHS is considering adding AP Chemistry and AP Psychology.

The grants, which are coordinated by the Maine Department of Education, provided training and resources for teachers, as well as funds to help income-eligible students afford the program.

By Alicia Spack, sophomore, PCHS



First year of AP Studio Art class at PCHS going 'very well'

Ms. Dyer said her AP Studio Art is going very well.

"The students are very excited about having their portfolios evaluated by college-level professors," she said. "They've been working at home and on weekends. They brought in things that they worked on over vacation. They're really excited."

Ms. Dyer said the students' work

is also looking a lot more professional.

"They're putting in a lot more time, and paying more attention to detail," she says. "And they're researching more. I had one student draw a type of lizard. She would never have known how to draw the scales on the body without studying dozens of pictures of that lizard. She probably wouldn't have done that last year."

The AP Studio Art curriculum requires students to come up with 12 "breadth" assignments, 12 "concentration" assignments, and five "quality" assignments.

Ms. Dyer provides the basic lessons in the elements and principles of art—perspective or shading, etc. For the breadth assignment, the students can draw whatever they want, but they have to demonstrate the elements and principles of art in 12 separate and distinct media—pen

and ink, pencil, pastels, paint, chalk, collage, scratch board, etc.

The concentration assignment requires the students to create 12 pictures that are related in some way—e.g., having to do with birds, or rain-



Sophomores Alicia Spack (left) and Felicia Fortier are students in Ms. Dyer's AP Studio Art class.



By Leigh Gorey, junior, PCHS.



By Annie Agnew, senior, PCHS



By Alicia Spack, sophomore, PCHS

fall, or the ocean.

The five quality entries are chosen from the 24 breadth and concentration pieces. The entries are to be matted by the students and mailed to the College Board, which operates the AP program. The students take digital photos of the other 19 pieces and include them in

their portfolio, which they send to the College Board.

Ms. Dyer's AP Studio Art students include one senior, one junior, and two sophomores. She originally had six students, but two had to drop out because of schedule changes.



By Annie Agnew, senior, PCHS



FORMER GOVERNOR ANGUS KING of Maine and SAD 4 Technology Coordinator Crystal Priest met in San Francisco at The International Technology Summit in April. Gov. King was the keynote speaker before an audience of international educational leaders, and during his address recognized SAD 4 for its leadership in infusing technology into the classroom.



HONGLI YANG, SAD 4's visiting guest teacher from Beijing as part of the Hanban/College Board Guest Teacher Program, met Education Commissioner Susan Gendron at a reception at the Blaine House in August.



SAD 4 BOARD CHAIR GEORGE NUITE and Maine School Management Executive Director Dale Douglass discuss strategy prior to a school board training session in September at PCMS.



By Leigh Gorey, junior, PCHS

PCMS implements advisory program

Goal is to ensure that every student has daily contact with interested, caring adult staff member

Piscataquis Community Middle School has implemented an advisory program that brings small groups of 10 or 11 students from grades 4-8 together with an adult staff member for the first 20 minutes of every school day.

The advisory groups will keep the same students and advisors from year to year. Each year, a couple of students from each group will move up to the high school and will be replaced by a couple of 4th graders.

The goal is twofold: to create a stronger connection between students and the school and a sense of belonging for all students, and to ensure that every student has contact with an interested, caring adult on a daily basis.

By keeping the advisory groups together, Guidance Counselor Fred Andrews says the adult-student relationships will deepen and peer connections will strengthen. He says the

advisory groups will also give students the opportunity to interact with other students who are at different developmental levels, yet part of the same school.

"Initially, we talked with the 8th graders and told them that we expected them to assume responsibility commensurate with their age," Mr. Andrews said. "The idea is that older students will mentor younger students; and that the younger students will grow into a mentoring role as they become older."

He said the advisors are not counselors, but will keep track of their advisees' academic standing, successes, struggles, awards, and disciplinary issues.

He added that the advisory period is not an extended homeroom period or free time for the students. It is a place where students can "check in" every morning—where the advisor can ask them how their day went

yesterday.

"The advisory is a place where students belong, and where everyone knows everyone else," Mr. Andrews says. "In a sense, we hope it will provide students with a family-away-from-family situation."

He said there are no hard and fast rules about what happens during the advisory period. Some groups have done physical activities, while others have done community service. Some groups have combined for certain activities.

On Tuesdays and Thursdays, the advisory period is used for sustained silent reading.

"We want the program to last, so we're starting slow," Mr. Andrews said. "We'll build it up and make changes."

He says the real payoff will come a few years down the road as students become accustomed to the system and as teachers become more adept at planning what they can do during advisor-advisee time.



Student team provides 'TV Morning News' broadcast Tuesdays, Thursdays, at PCMS

To paraphrase 8th grader Samantha Dodge, it's not that Ms. Rebar doesn't do a good job on the morning announcements at Piscataquis Community Middle School.

But you should see how attentive the students are when the announcements are broadcast on Tuesday and Thursday mornings.

That's when Samantha and four other students team up to broadcast the PCMS Morning News over the school's in-house television broadcast system.

Samantha does the camera and sound work, 7th grader Kyla Demaris writes the script and serves as producer, and 8th grader Cheyanne Sandy and 7th graders Tiia Kand and Elaine Riitano are the anchors.

Every Tuesday and Thursday the girls arrive at the studio when school starts at 8 a.m. When the 8:30 bell rings announcing the end of advisory period, they're on the air.

The broadcast starts with a musical introduction and credits. Then the three anchors report all of the routine announcements, including the lunch menu, upcoming events, student reminders about such things as dance tickets, and the daily weather report.

They also include a "fun fact" about something in history that happened on that day, and they congratulate students who have done something



From left: TV News student Elaine Riitano, Tiia Flick, Cheyanne Sandy, Kyla Desmaris, Samantha Dodge

special.

Occasionally, the broadcast will include a guest appearance, such as the alcohol awareness skit that students put on during Red Ribbon Week.

PCMS Principal Virginia Rebar, who still does the announcements over the intercom on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, says she remembers when Samantha and another 8th grader first proposed a morning TV news broadcast.

She said the two girls came to the office and asked if they could talk. She said they started out very diplomatically:

"It's not that you're not doing a good job, Ms. Rebar," Samantha said, "but we have an idea that we'd like to do the announcements over the TV broadcast system."

Ms. Rebar replied that the girls would have to be serious and professional, and that the broadcast "would have to move along, so we weren't wasting people's time."

The girls agreed and asked Arnold Poland, the school's computer technician, if they could do some trial runs. The rest is history.

When Ms. Rebar asked the PCMS staff for their reaction to the TV News broadcast, they said, "You should see

how attentive the kids are!"

Ms. Rebar says the TV broadcasts have been good for both the students and the school.

"It's an example of how students can make a difference in their school," she says. "You can see how much they've grown. They're more confident with each broadcast. I hope it continues here at the middle school, and that they're able to get it started at the high school."

The girls get the entire broadcast ready in just 30 minutes.

"The first couple of times it took us a little longer," said Elaine (whose nickname is "Katie Couric"). "Now we get right up and get down to business."

Kyla goes to the office and gets the announcements and brings them to the studio. Samantha then reads off the announcements, while Kyla types them into a series of slides in Keynote. The Keynote slides are used as cue cards, which are projected onto a screen so that the anchors can read the announcements instead of having to memorize them.

While that's happening, the three anchors will get their lights and spots all set up and get ready to go on camera.

"It really runs very smoothly," Elaine says.

"We work very well together," Cheyanne adds.

Three 8th graders provide tips on alcohol 'refusal skills' during TV News appearance

Three 8th graders made a guest appearance on the TV News at Piscataquis Community Middle School to give their fellow students some tips on how to say no to alcohol.

The 8th graders—Brooke Morrill, Libby Kain, and Will Cartwright—performed a 5-minute skit that had been created in health class to show the student body how to resist peer pressure to drink alcohol.

The skit focused on the five-step refusal process:

Step 1—Ask questions. "Where did you get that?"

Step 2—Name the trouble. "That's underage drinking; we're not old enough to drink."

Step 3—Identify the consequences. "Alcohol can damage my liver," or "I have a big game tonight, and I won't be able to play very well if I've been drinking."

Step 4—Suggest an alternative. "Let's go shoot some baskets."

Step 5—Move it, sell it, leave the door open. "I'm going outside to play basketball. It'll be fun. I'll bet you can't beat me one-on-one."

The presentation was televised within the school building after the morning news announcements on Thursday, Dec. 4, as part of the school's response to Maine Alcohol Awareness Week, which was December 1-5.



From left: Brooke Morrill, Libby Kain, and Will Cartwright.



PCMS students with their political signs at the school's political assembly.



Guilford Town Clerks hand out ballots and check names off the voter registry at the PCMS mock election.

PCMS students support McCain, Collins, Frary in mock election

Students at Piscataquis Community Middle School joined 300 other schools in Maine in casting their ballots for President, Senator, and U.S. House of Representatives in a state-wide mock election on October 30.

The students used actual voting machines, which were set up in the PCMS gym for the day.

The middle school students gave the Republican candidate, John McCain, a two-vote margin over the Democratic winner, Barack Obama, 108-106, mirroring McCain's narrow victory in Piscataquis County.

The students also supported Sen. Susan Collins in her U.S. Senate race against Tom Allen, 148-63.

The most surprising result was in the U.S. House of Representatives Second District race, where the middle school students supported the unsuccessful Republican nominee, John Frary, 99-87.

On the three referendum questions, the students voted in favor of repealing the beverage tax (Question 1), against a casino in Oxford County (Question 2), and in favor of the bond issue (Question 3), all by margins of 61% or more.

In state legislative races, 7th and 8th graders at PCMS supported Democrat Sue Mackey Andrews over Doug Smith, 48-39, for Senate District 27; Republican Paul Davis over Jayson Allain, 74-10, for House District 26; and Republican Pete Johnson over Jim Glavine, 48-36, for House District 27.

Rex Webb, grade 7-8 social studies teacher at PCMS, said the middle school students attended a school-wide "Get Out the Vote" rally on October 28, at which the candidates were invited to speak.

Collins and Allen sent representatives, and Smith, Andrews, Glavine, and Johnson attended and told the students why they decided to run for office and why voting is important.

Mr. Webb said the students were encouraged to study election issues, including the referendum questions, so when they get into the voting booth, they know what the issues are and who they're going to vote for.

"We try to tell the students to think for themselves," he said.

The assembly was run by the PCMS Student Council.

Mr. Webb noted that the mock election results at PCMS differed from the results of a similar mock election that was held at the high school.

While the middle school students narrowly supported McCain, Obama won in a landslide at PCHS.

Frary won at the middle school, but his Democratic opponent, Mike

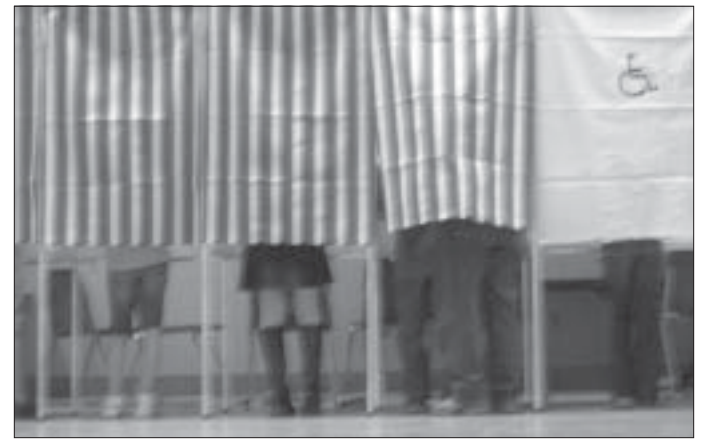


Guest speakers and area politicians who spoke at the PCMS "Get Out The Vote" rally.

Michaud of East Millinocket, won by a large margin at the high school.

Mr. Webb said the 7th and 8th graders didn't spend a lot of time on the Michaud-Frary race, but he noted that Frary's commercials could be heard on TV and radio. He said the Frary campaign was "very non-politically correct," with one ad saying, "Let's look in Mike Michaud's lunchbox. Mmmm. Just what I suspected: Baloney."

PCMS Principal Virginia Rebar



PCMS students used real voting booths, provided by the Town of Guilford, to cast their ballots.

said Frary's use of humor won the day among middle school voters.

"Middle school kids love humor," she said. "If you're funny, you're in."

Grade 5-6 writing class goal: to have students write more, and write better

One of the school-wide initiatives at Piscataquis Community Middle School this year is to improve student writing.

That's why Carol Poirier, who spent last year teaching English at the high school, has returned to PCMS to teach writing to students in grades 5 and 6.

"We wanted to have one person at PCMS teaching writing in grades 5 and 6," said Mrs. Poirier. "The goal is to start early and be consistent all the way through—to provide continuity with the writing process and the six traits of writing."

The six traits of writing are topic development, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and the surface features of writing, such as punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.

Mrs. Poirier has 111 students in

six classes, four of which have students from both grades 5 and 6.

She says mixed classes work great for teaching writing, because she's teaching the six traits of writing to both groups, and the students work at their best ability.

Ultimately, the idea is that students will write more and write better if they have a class where writing is the focus.

"We brought Mrs. Poirier back here to put an exclamation point after the word writing," says PCMS Principal Virginia Rebar. "We're telling students you are going to write, and you are going to write well."

Part of the reason for having a specific writing class is that writing is a process that involves a number of steps, including drafting, re-drafting, revising, editing, and publishing or presenting.

Mrs. Poirier says the idea is that students will write more and are more likely to follow the process, from initial draft through presentation, if one teacher is responsible.

However, she's quick to point out that not all writing goes through all of the steps in the process.

For example, she often has her classes write impromptu paragraphs—for example, putting a picture on the board and telling her students to write a paragraph about some aspect of the picture.

"We want students to get used to writing a paragraph," she says. "If you can write one good paragraph, you can write many. Paragraphs are the basis of essays. Students aren't going to learn to write unless they write. We're trying to get them to write more."

Mrs. Poirier and Ms. Rebar both say that writing in grades 5 and 6

isn't limited to Mrs. Poirier's classes. In fact, the goal is to encourage better writing throughout the curriculum.

When Mrs. Poirier created a poster for her classroom that lists a dozen things that writers do to polish their writing, she made copies for every 5th and 6th grade classroom and the library.

"Now, when students have to write something, such as a lab report in science, they can look at that poster," Mrs. Poirier says. "As they write in their other classrooms, they can follow the same procedure."

"Some students will say they don't have to write well, because it's not writing class. That's not the case. We want students to write their best everywhere."

SAD 4 implements first Gifted and Talented Program at PCMS

SAD 4 has taken the first step towards implementation of a formal Gifted and Talented Program for the district.

Thirteen students in grades 6-8 have been identified as gifted and talented and will have the opportunity to work on a series of enrichment activities related to their particular interests.

The program is being coordinated

by special education teachers Jolane Clawson and Susan Watson.

Each of the 13 students will have a personal learning plan (PLP), which will be designed to help them reach their full potential. The PLPs will spell out the projects that they will be working on and what aspects of the Maine Learning Results are involved.

Two other teachers will oversee

the activities of the gifted and talented students to ensure that they are making progress. The students will be graded by their regular classroom teachers.

The program was started at the middle school because gifted and talented students at the high school are being serviced in part through advanced placement (AP) courses.

Ms. Clawson explained that

there's a difference between gifted and talented students and high achievers.

"Some high achievers will be gifted and talented," she said, "but others will just be hard-working students who are going to go a long way because they're hard-working, dedicated, and bright—but that doesn't make them gifted."

She said several students who are not performing well in the classroom were nonetheless identified as gifted.

"We hope to get those students motivated in something that they like and move them forward so they can utilize their gifts," she said.

Ms. Watson noted that it's possible for a student to be gifted in mathematics, but have a learning disability in verbal areas.

Ms. Clawson and Ms. Watson went through a lengthy process to identify the 13 gifted students.

The first step was to have teachers evaluate their students, based on a checklist of 25 traits that could indicate giftedness, such as "is a rapid learner, who understands advanced topics easily," "constructs and handles high levels of abstraction," and "has exceptional curiosity and frequently wants to know the reason why."

Thirty-seven students received enough checkmarks on the list to identify them as potentially gifted, and their parents were contacted to get permission for further assessments.

The assessments included regular achievement tests, reading inventories, IQ tests, and the Renzulli Behavior Rating Scale for Gifted and Talented Students, which looks at learning, creativity, motivational, and leadership characteristics.

The gifted students were selected by a committee that included Ms. Clawson and Ms. Watson; Virginia Rebar, Principal; Brenda Post, 4th grade teacher; Diana Hobart, 6th grade teacher; Jane Daniels, art teacher; and Sheryl Allen, health teacher.

(Continued in next column)

Parents serve holiday meal at PCMS

On Wednesday, December 17, eleven parent volunteers provided table service for the annual holiday meal at Piscataquis Community Middle School.

The meal was prepared by SAD 4 cooks.

As the students entered the PCMS cafeteria, they were greeted by tables adorned with red and blue holiday tablecloths and decorative centerpieces.

Holiday music played as students were served a meal of ham, potatoes with gravy, carrots, and cake.

After-the-meal table bussing was also provided.

The table service was a project by a group of PCMS parents who have met regularly to explore ways in which they can be a more informed and visible presence in their youngsters' education.

As one parent put it: "It was great to set an example of parents working together with the school to provide something special and fun."

Right: Parent volunteer Wendy Northup serves some PCMS students.



PARENT VOLUNTEERS (photo at right)—Front row (l. to r.): Shelly Bennett, Kim Robinson, Heidi Dow, Nicole Santos, Debra Chapman, and Todd Fortier. Back row: Michelle Patterson, Joanne Lovell, Larna Marson, and Wendy Northup



Pink Tulip Project volunteers.



Pink Tulip Project volunteers planted 100 pink tulip bulbs in front of PCMS. If all goes well, the tulips will bloom this spring.



Students, volunteers plant 100 pink tulips at PCMS

One hundred pink tulips were planted in front of Piscataquis Community Middle School last fall, thanks to a retired teacher and a group of volunteers.

The tulip bulbs were provided by Ellen Haley, a former teacher at PCMS who retired in June. She had made a donation to the Maine Cancer Foundation's Pink Tulip Project; and the project, in turn, gave her 100 pink tulips to plant.

She thought it would be nice to plant them in front of the school, and health teacher Sheryl Allen agreed to help organize the planting.

The bulbs were planted by Ms. Allen, representatives of the Pink Tulip Project, and several student volunteers. The students received community service certificates for their efforts.

If all goes well, the tulips will bloom this spring.



Kyle Bagley



Isaac Meek



Theodore Taylor



Anna Fagan

Kindergarten students make gingerbread houses

Educational technician Paula Bailey and parent volunteer Blaire Fagan have started what they hope will be a new kindergarten tradition at McKusick Elementary School—making gingerbread houses just before Christmas.

All three kindergarten classes were brought together in the gym for the project.

The students made the houses using half-pint milk cartons, graham crackers, frosting, and candy.

Parents were asked to supply the graham crackers and the frosting and candy.

The students put the frosting on the graham crackers and stuck them to the milk cartons. The cartons



Guilford Primary School



McKusick Elementary School

acted as the framing for the houses; the frosting was the glue.

Frosting was also used to fill in the gaps between the graham crackers, and the students could use as much candy as they wanted for decoration.

Some students chose to decorate their houses more modestly and to

eat some of the candy instead.

Mrs. Bailey and Mrs. Fagan demonstrated how to put the houses together. Other volunteers, including Superintendent Paul Stearns and Principal Julie Orton, helped the children construct their candy houses.

The students were allowed to take

the gingerbread houses home with them that afternoon.

"Some houses got home in one piece, but some may have been nibbled on a bit," said Mrs. Bailey.

SAD 4 implements Gifted and Talented Program at PCMS

(Continued from preceding page)

The students who were selected scored high in either creativity or IQ or both.

Most of the projects for the gifted students will be generated by Renzulli Learning Systems, a computer program that profiles student abilities, interests, and learning styles, combined with a search engine and database that matches how students learn with thousands of enrichment activities.

The goal is to match students and enrichment activities so that students are doing something that they're passionate about, and they're able to apply their creativity and high intelligence to the project.

The students will work on the projects in lieu of regular coursework, because it will be a cut above the work that they would normally do in class.

The gifted and talented program at PCMS is being called LAUNCH, which stands for Learning, Aspiring, Understanding New and Challenging Horizons.

Ms. Clawson emphasizes that the program is still a work in progress.

"We're just at the infant stages," she says. "There are lots of possibilities, including field trips and speakers. We might have speakers come and speak to all students, and then provide occasions where the gifted students can work with the speakers at a different level."

Ms. Watson added that the school hopes that LAUNCH will provide more opportunities for all students through role modeling and exposure to a variety of enrichment activities.

"We don't want this to be an isolated program," she said.



Second graders Hunter Heizler, Nik White, Erika Merrill, and Ashley Nanney at the Bug Maine-ia exhibit at the Maine State Museum.

2nd graders visit 'Bug Maine-ia'

Second graders at Guilford Primary School traveled to Augusta on September 17 to see the Maine State Museum's "Bug-Maine-ia" exhibit.

Bug-Maine-ia transforms the museum into a place where students can see real bugs—lots of them. Student also followed trails of paper "ants" that were attached to the floor throughout the museum to find the various Bug-Maine-ia exhibits.

The lobby had displays with live insect specimens, ranging from tiny fleas to large cockroaches and huge tarantulas. Elsewhere in the museum, there were exhibits of water insects, jewelry made from insects, and rotted logs with insects.

In back of the museum, there was a big yard with different types of traps that were set up on the ground, in trees, and hanging from branches to catch various kinds of insects.

Second grade teacher Melissa Stearns said the students enjoyed trying to catch insects with nets or plastic cups behind the museum. In addition to checking the traps, they had to lift up rocks, look on the side of the building, inspect the bark on trees, walk along the

edge of the lawn and treeline to see what they could find for insects. They found grasshoppers, crickets, a spider, fire ants, a centipede, and a couple of insects that went unidentified. An entomologist was on hand to help students identify as many bugs as he could.

Students were also able to see bees in a hive, working and making honey. The hive was cross-sectioned and covered with a piece of glass so students could see what went on inside the hive. That was a big hit.

Mrs. Stearns said the 2nd graders' favorite exhibit was the tarantulas—especially when one of the museum guides took a tarantula out and held it in his hand. The students thought that was awesome!

The exhibit was free. The only cost was transportation, which was paid for by the elementary parent group, HUGS. Forty-eight students went, along with teachers and parent volunteers.

The trip to Bug-Maine-ia occurred while the 2nd graders were studying a unit on insects and creepy crawlers. The students learned about insects' bodies, what they eat, where they live, and whether they are helpful or harmful.

Students, volunteers enjoy Valley Grange Bookworm Program

Third grader Bryce Gilbert says he likes the Valley Grange Bookworm Program "because I get to spend more time with new people, read new books, and learn new words."

That's great news to a lot of people, because studies consistently show a direct correlation between a young student's reading experiences and his or her academic success. We know reading to children is important. The Bookworm Program demonstrates that letting the child read to an adult improves their skills and confidence and engages them in learning. Small wonder the teachers, the children, and all the volunteers love it!

Caleb Rolfe, a second grader, is another big fan of the program. "We learn things from books, and we get to spend more time with people," he said. "And if we spend time with some people, they can help us read."

Walter Boomsma of the Grange says he too finds the activity very rewarding and looks forward to his school visits. "What we're trying to do is to convey a sense of the enjoyment and create excitement for reading," he says. "We try to show that reading is a natural exercise, not just something you do at school."



Bryce Gilbert



Caleb Rolfe



Third grade student Eli Campbell reads to Susan Burleigh, a volunteer for the Valley Grange Bookworm Program.

The teachers pick the children who do the reading and it's no easy task. Just about everybody gets excited when a Bookworm appears in the classroom. "They all wiggle in their seats and stretch their hands high in the air to get the teacher's attention," Mr. Boomsma said. "They all really want to read, which is pretty neat. Some will even volunteer to skip recess!"

The children pick the books and some have very specific ideas about what they want to read to the Grange volunteers. Second grader Chloe Hamele said she usually picks a biography, "because I like to learn about new people, like Pocahontas and Abraham Lincoln."

Caleb, on the other hand, tries to make sure that the book he picks is at his reading level. "I check the words to see if they are too hard for me or too easy," he says.

Bailey Lemieux, a third grader, says she usually takes a Magic Tree House book, "because I really like the Magic Tree House books from the library." Both Bailey and Bryce said the Magic Tree House books were their favorites.

Chloe said her favorite book was



Bailey Lemieux

the encyclopedia.

"I close my eyes, pick a page, and sit down and read it," she says.

For the past five years, the Grange has provided dictionaries at no charge to every third grader at GPS. Last year, they started volunteering to listen to the students read because, as Mr. Boomsma described it, "These little information sponges just wiggled into our hearts with their enthusiasm for learning." The five or six volunteers from Valley Grange have been coming to Guilford Primary School for about an hour on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Although the Grange volunteers are mostly there to listen, sometimes there's more interaction with some "partnering." Mr. Boomsma — who loves to tell stories about his experiences — described one student who announced that she'd selected her book because she needed some help with it. "It was a book of poetry including one by Carl Sandburg. She read the poem to me and said, 'I don't get it.' I had to admit that I didn't either! But we agreed to work on it together and we figured it out. We had fun learning together!"

"I'm with Bryce," Mr. Boomsma said. "I love this program because I get to spend more time with new people, read new books, and learn new things!"

Maine-ly Nutrition grants help teachers teach children about nutrition

Several elementary school teachers in SAD 4 are receiving \$100 grants from the Maine-ly Nutrition program to help them teach children about nutrition.

The grants are for teaching materials and food that teachers use in lessons about nutrition.

Teachers are eligible for a \$100 Maine-ly Nutrition grant for every 25 hours of nutrition education in the classroom.

One of the common activities in teaching children about nutrition is to allow them to sample different foods from the various food groups, with emphasis on fruits and vegetables.

The program, which is funded

through the Maine Nutrition Network, is open to schools where at least 50% of the student population is eligible for free or reduced hot lunch.

Julie Orton, Principal at both schools, has supported nutrition education and the Maine-ly Nutrition grants.

The Maine-ly Nutrition themes are "More Matters" and "variety of colors."

"We want children to have veggies with a variety of colors," says Shelley Connolly, K-1 special education teacher. "The old theme was '5 a Day.' It was changed to 'More Matters' because we didn't want people to think that five fruits or vegetables in a day was sufficient."

Ms. Connolly says vitamin and nutrition content can vary with the color of the vegetable. Fruits and vegetables with darker colors tend to absorb more sunlight and create more photo-chemicals that are transformed into higher nutrient levels in the food.

"We want kids to have variety in their diet to help guide nutrition decision-making," she says. "The bolder the color in fruits and veggies, the more nutrients. Blue-

berries are a good example; their color is a robust blue, and they have a lot of antioxidants."

Ms. Connolly said the program is also trying to provide nutrition information about grains and bread.

"Just because there are a lot of seeds that you can see doesn't mean that it's whole grain bread," she says. "It may just mean there are a lot of seeds."

Parents should actively monitor the ingredients list and be wary of products that state "made with whole grains" as it is often misleading. We should seek out breads that confirm the product is 100% whole grain.

For more information, go to www.mainenutritionnetwork.org.

NUTRITION FOOD TIPS

Know your Ingredients:

Help your child eat better by knowing what's in the food you buy. Here are some easy ways to scan ingredient lists:

- Watch out for words you can't pronounce or items you've never heard of. They are likely to be chemicals or artificial ingredients.
- Know that added sugar goes by many names, including dextrose, fructose, glucose, and high-fructose corn syrup.
- Choose foods with the word "whole" before grains, such as whole wheat or whole oats.

Remember: Ingredients are listed according to amount, from most to least. So, if sugar is the first ingredient listed, that means the item has more sugar than anything else.



GIVING TREE PROJECT—More than 300 items were collected by students at McKusick Elementary School and Guilford Primary School last December and given to the food cupboard at the United Methodist Church of Guilford. This year's SAD 4 elementary newsletter said there would be no gift exchange among students. Instead, children were invited to bring in non-perishable food items to place under the Giving Tree in our front halls. Above, Kailee Ward, Zachary Page, and Alix Parades, 2nd graders at GPS, place items under the "Giving Tree."

Fairy tales an important part of library curriculum for grades K-3

Charlotte Violette, elementary librarian for SAD 4, has always read fairy tales to her students because a lot of them are very good stories.

Now, after taking a course in children's literature at the University of Maine at Augusta, she's made them part of her library curriculum.

"Fairy tales are the basis for many of the stories in our culture and in cultures throughout the world," Ms. Violette says. "I knew fairy tales were good stories; I just didn't realize how important they are to our society."

She explained that the most important unit of the course was the study of the eight basic fairy tales, which are found in many different cultures and languages.

"There are 500 variations of the Cinderella story alone," she says. "The oldest version, Yen-Shen, is from China."

Ms. Violette listed the eight basic fairy tales as:

- Cinderella
- Three Little Pigs
- Jack and the Beanstalk
- Sleeping Beauty
- Little Red Riding Hood
- Goldilocks and the Three Bears
- Hansel and Gretel
- Snow White and the Seven

Dwarfs

She says the fairy tales have different themes. Hansel and Gretel, for example, is about abandonment, while Goldilocks is about the little girl's sense of entitlement and the need to be held accountable if you do something wrong.

"Most are about basic survival needs, about ordinary people being able to make it in life," she says. "Life has a lot of evils in it, but if you do what's right—follow the moral code of your time (the moral code is different for different time periods)—things will come out okay."

Ms. Violette says she's planning to teach all of her classes one fairy tale each month.

"I have kids from Head Start through 3rd grade," she says. "I want to do a different variation each year, so that they're fun for the kids and they're not hearing the same story every year."

Ms. Violette says she uses the Hans Christian Andersen or Charles Perrault versions for many of the fairy tales; she avoids the Disney version.

"The Disney versions are too



Students show books based on fairy tales.

pretty," she says. "Disney sanitizes the stories—everybody's beautiful, and they all live happily ever after. That hasn't always been the case."

Some fairy tale variations are adaptations of the original, while others are fairy tales with the same story line that come out of an entirely different culture.

There are also some new variations. Jan Brett, a contemporary children's author, has written a new

version of the Goldilocks story called *The Three Snow Bears*, which has an Eskimo girl, three polar bears, and an igloo.

Ms. Violette says fairy tales are also beneficial in that they foster a child's imagination.

"Without the imagination, you do not have growth in intelligence," she says.

Ms. Violette says some people object to fairy tales because the story lines sometimes contain violence. She thinks these objections are misplaced.

"What I don't understand is that we'll let kids play violent video games, but we won't read them a fairy tale where a wolf dies," she says. "Adults today don't want to see the wolf in Little Red Riding Hood get hurt. But when children read the story, they want the wolf to die. They feel it is morally correct for the wolf to die, and then they don't have to worry about it—it's not lurking outside the door; it's gone. With kids, that's OK. Kids understand that this is make-believe. Fairy tales help children to deal with situations in a safe environment."

Foster Grandparents enjoy kids—and vice versa!

Several "Foster Grandparents" volunteer at SAD 4 elementary schools, helping the staff and reading with the students.

It's hard to tell who enjoys it more, the grammies or the kids.

Two of the Foster Grandparents, Pat Colbry and Prudy Turner, help out at Guilford Primary School, while Pearl Thackery volunteers at McKusick Elementary School. Grammy Pat has been helping at GPS for 15 years, while Grammy Prudy is in her first year there. Grammy Pearl has been helping at McKusick for 11 years.

Foster Grandparent Carmen DeCarlo, who used to be at McKusick, now helps out at Piscataquis Community Middle School.

The Foster Grandparents work about three-quarters of the day. They read to children, both one-on-one and in small groups, and they listen to children read to help them improve their reading ability and develop confidence.

The grammies also assist the teachers in their classroom activities and review and reinforce the concepts taught in the classroom.



Foster Grandparents (l. to r.): Pat Colbry, Pearl Thackery, Prudy Turner

"The Foster Grandparents are valued members of our staff," says Julie Orton, Principal at McKusick and GPS. "They fill a genuine need within our schools, giving individual attention to children as they read their familiar books. It is very beneficial for students to have an audience for their reading."

Grammy Pearl says she really enjoys being a Foster Grandparent.

"The kids make me feel so good, and I think the kids love having us here," she says. "Teachers appreciate the grandparents and they show it!"

Grammy Prudy says the program has been very beneficial to her. "I'm learning as much from the kids as they learn from me," she says. "I feel blessed to be a part of this program."

Grammy Pat says being a Foster Grandparent gives her a reason to get up in the morning.

"I enjoy listening to kids read and I enjoy their hugs," she says.

Mrs. Orton sums it up for SAD 4: "We love having the Foster Grandparents in our schools!"

About Foster Grandparents:

Foster Grandparents are income-eligible volunteers aged 60 and over who work 15 to 40 hours a week with disabled, disadvantaged, and developmentally-delayed children in one-on-one and small group settings. Foster Grandparents are placed in sites such as schools, hospitals and Head Start centers.

Benefits include a stipend for hours worked, paid holidays, earned time and assistance with transportation and meals. Penquis sponsors this program in 14 Maine counties (all but York and Cumberland).

For more information, call 207-973-3684 or 1-800-215-4942.

Charlie Bradford, Thomas College senior, awarded \$1,000 Education Association Scholarship

Charlie Bradford of Guilford, a senior at Thomas College majoring in elementary education, has been awarded a \$1,000 scholarship by the SAD 4 Education Association.

Charlie, who graduated from Piscataquis Community High School in 2005, has a GPA of 3.81. She is vice president of the Thomas College Education Club and a member of Alpha Chi National Honor Society.

The scholarship is awarded annually to a PCHS graduate who is studying in the education field. The application process is typical in that applicants provide academic transcripts, a letter of recommendation, a statement of their philosophy of education, and other general information to support their application. A team of association members evaluate applications and recommend a candidate to the general body of the association. Funds for the scholarship come from local dues.

Charlie is student teaching in the Waterville area and will graduate in May.



25 YEARS OF SERVICE—Superintendent of Schools Paul Stearns presents Pam Goulette of Guilford with a token of appreciation for her 25 years of service on the SAD 4 Board of Directors.

HUGS cookbook still on sale

HUGS, the parent-teacher group that supports SAD 4 elementary schools, has published another cookbook, which is on sale for \$10 each.

The cookbook has 300 recipes in 10 different recipe categories, including a new category for wild game and fish recipes.

The book also includes photos of each class at McKusick Elementary School and Guilford Primary School for 2008-09.

Two years ago, HUGS printed 300 copies of its cookbook and ran out. This year, the group ordered 500 copies, which were sold at Heart's Desire Florist, IGA, Hudson Avenue Florist, Clarks Restaurant, Holiday Barn (a new gift shop in Sangerville), and the McKusick School and Guilford Primary School offices.

Sales have gone very well, but cookbooks are still available at all five outlets and both school offices.

The cookbooks were printed by Morris Press in Nebraska. "They did a great job the first time, so we used them for the second edition," said Starre White, president of HUGS for 2008-09.

Mrs. White said HUGS is planning a spring fundraiser selling 6-packs and 4-packs of spring flowers. She says the flowers, all blooming and ready to plant, will be available in time for Mother's Day.

Last year, the group sold 10 varieties of plants, including petunias, impatiens, dahlias, two different kinds of vines, marigolds, pansies, and lobelia.

"We'll have at least that many varieties of plants this spring," she said.

HUGS provides funds for most of the field trips for students at McKusick and GPS. They have also provided books and other instructional materials to enhance classroom teaching in various content areas.

Santa, Education Assn. team up to give book to every K-4 student in SAD 4

The SAD 4 Education Association has a tradition of purchasing a book for every child in the district in grades K-4. The books are usually purchased around the middle of the year, and often, especially for the younger students, they are gift-wrapped and presented by Santa. Association members hope to help students experience the gift of reading.

Shelley Connolly, co-president of the SAD 4 Education Association, says the book program is a local initiative paid for out of local dues.

"We continue to fund it every year because we feel that reading is very important, and we want to make sure that all of our students have books at home," she says.

The books for each grade level are selected by classroom teachers, usually from one of the book clubs, such as Scholastic.



DISTRICT-WIDE TRIBUTE TO VETERANS—Area veterans were honored by SAD 4 students in ceremonies at the Piscataquis Community High School gym on Monday, November 10. This year, for the first time, 3rd graders participated as part of the reception line. Above, veterans walk through the reception line of third graders at the start of the tribute. The tradition of honoring area veterans on the school day closest to Veterans Day (November 11) was started four years ago at Piscataquis Community Middle School.

Maine author-illustrator spends day in SAD 4 elementary schools

Maine author and illustrator Matt Tavares spent the day in SAD 4 on October 6th.

He visited kindergarten and 1st grade classes at McKusick Elementary School in the morning, and then worked with grades 2 and 3 at Guilford Primary School in the afternoon.

Mr. Tavares, who lives in Ogunquit, talked about what he does as an author/illustrator and read aloud to the children. He also talked about his writing process, how he starts his pictures, and how he does his research.

Shelly Snow, literacy coach at McKusick and GPS, said it's important to have children's authors visit the schools.

"Research shows that kids need to see real writers so that they can see themselves as real writers," she says. "Students also see that what they're doing during the day in writer's workshop is similar to what a real writer does."

Funding for the author visits comes from HUGS, the elementary



Matt Tavares shows his illustrator's skills.

school parent group, and the SAD 4 Reading First grant.

Ms. Snow says she has been researching some Maine authors and illustrators who travel within the state.

Recent visiting authors have included poet and humorist Robert

Pottle, who came for two years, author-illustrator Cathryn Falwell, and author Lynn Plourde.

"The goal is to expose our students to as many authors and illustrators as possible, so that they can see how really close they live to us," Mrs. Snow says. "They live in Maine. They're not from far away."

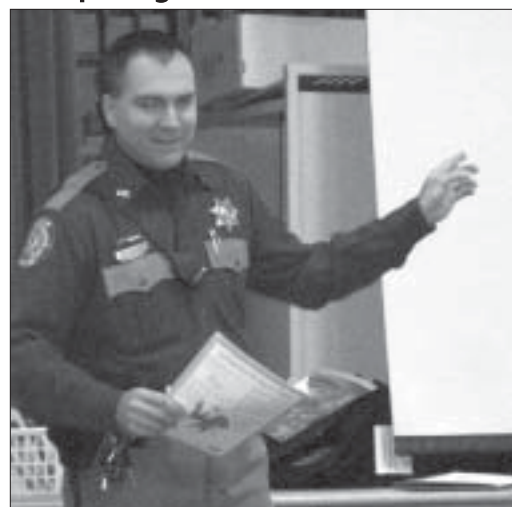
Mrs. Snow says she has found one author in Dover and one author in Parkman.

"They'd like to come to school, but they've never been asked," she said. "It would be neat to get them to share their stories with our children. They went to school just like these kids do."

Mrs. Snow says each year the school plans for one author visit in the fall and another author visit in the spring.

"Every time an author comes, the students are able to buy books at a discounted price and get their books autographed," she says. "Then they get to have their own conversation with the author."

Deputy Wilson talks to elementary students about gun safety



Sheriff Deputy Dave Wilson

What would your child do if he saw a gun?

If he is a student at McKusick Elementary School or Guilford Primary School, he'd probably heed the advice of Sheriff Deputy Dave Wilson:

"If you see a gun, stop, don't touch, leave the area, and tell an adult."

Deputy Wilson spoke to all four grades at the two schools using the National Rifle Association's "Eddie Eagle" program.

The program is non-political—not promoting guns, but talking about gun safety. The Piscataquis

County Sheriff's Office approached the district last year, but a schedule couldn't be worked out. The Sheriff's Office contacted the school again this year, and Deputy Wilson was invited to make his presentation early in November, just after the start of deer hunting season.

Principal Julie Orton said the program, which included the "Eddie Eagle" video, was "age appropriate, and Dave Wilson related to the students very well."

TCTC Building Trades students design, construct wood pellet sifters

The Building Trades students at Tri-County Technical Center have been busy with a variety of construction projects, both large and small.

The students have been working on a modular house, funded by a grant from Penquis CAP, which will replace a pre-1976 mobile home that is in the Milo area.

The roof will be hinged to reduce the height of the structure so that it can be transported on a low bed trailer from Dexter to Milo.

The height limit on the route between Dexter and Milo is 13' 6"; when the roof is in its normal position, the height of modular house is 13', not counting the height of the trailer.

The students have also designed

and constructed five wood pellet sifters, which remove the dust from the pellets so they can burn more efficiently.

The idea for the sifters came after TCTC truck driving instructor Dale Gerald complained about the dust that was generated when he loaded pellets into his new pellet stove.

Logan Hanscom of Piscataquis Community High School, along with fellow Building Trades student Chris Giles (Foxcroft Academy), brainstormed the problem and built a prototype. Mr. Gerald took it home for a trial and liked it—and the word got out.

As new "orders" came in, the students experimented with the design, with the result that each pellet sifter is a little bit different.

Other projects this fall and winter have included construction of an 8x12 storage building for Bill and Joyce Patterson of Dexter, and construction of a porch wood box, a trash box, and a Christmas manger display.



Building Trades students have constructed five wood pellet sifters, including this one. From left—Martin Flagg (Foxcroft), Logan Hanscom (PCHS), Chris Giles, (Foxcroft), Andrew Watson (DRHS), and Whitney Batchelder (Nokomis).



9th and 10th grade students get exposed to a variety of trades in the TCTC Pre-Tech program.

'Pre-Technical' program brings freshmen, sophomores to Tri-County Technical Center.

A new Pre-Technical Program for freshman and sophomore students who need more "hands on" activities is now being offered at the Tri-County Technical Center.

The program is part of a state-wide effort to identify "at risk" students and encourage them to complete their high school education and hopefully consider post-secondary opportunities.

The instructor is Steve Hughes, a former Bangor Hydro-Electric Co. employee with a background in heating/refrigeration and alternative energy programs. He is assisted by Steffan Duplessis, an educational technician with experience in counseling and a degree in English and history.

A total of 18 students are currently enrolled, including three from Dexter Regional High School, six from Nokomis Regional High, seven from Piscataquis Community High School, and two from Foxcroft Academy. Like students in other TCTC programs, they attend on an alternating day schedule.

Mr. Hughes says the program is designed for students who have difficulty working in the traditional academic world.

"The idea is that if these students have a curriculum where they could work with their hands, they would stand a better chance of staying in school," he said.

The theme of the Pre-Tech program is "green power" and the development of alternative energy sources in the community.

Mr. Hughes points out that most of the primary sources of renewable energy—geothermal, wind power, solar power, etc.—ultimately produce electricity, so a lot of the Pre-Tech curriculum involves hand-on activities that help students learn about basic electricity.

The new technologies also involve other trades, so the curriculum also includes some basic plumbing, heating, and refrigeration.

"By the time we're done, the students will have a whole year of basic experience," Mr. Hughes said. "This doesn't mean that the students will be certified in any of the trades, but they'll have a little taste of what is required in the trades field to participate in alternative energy technology.

"Our goal is that this experience will trigger something in the students so that they'll say they might like to be an electrician, or a plumber, or maybe work in the building trades—just so they'll stay in school and finish their high school career."

The curriculum also includes traditional subjects, such as math and English, but it does so by incorporating them into the students' everyday activities.

For example, literacy skills are addressed by having the students pick an article out of the newspaper that has something to do with alternative energies. The students read the article, discuss it as a class, and then make a journal entry answering four basic questions—what the



A Pre-Tech student works on a wiring project as instructor Steve Hughes observes.

article is about, how it is related to the class, why it is important, and what question the students would ask the author if they had the chance.

Similarly, the students practice their math skills when they study electrical circuits and use a volt/ohms meter.

The Pre-Tech course is designed to be three semesters in length. Students are eligible after the first semester of grade nine, but enrollment and completion dates are flexible to meet student needs. Students may be recommended for the program by a teacher, guidance counselor, parent, or any other person with an interest in the education of the student. Final placement decisions are made by the sending school and TCTC.

When students enter the program, they complete assessments of personal preferences, individual traits and academic status. Based on the results of the assessments, academic and personal goals are established and a written plan is developed for each student.

Mr. Hughes says the reaction of the Pre-Tech students has been positive.

He said a couple of students have been removed because of disciplinary action by the sending schools, but several students have said that Pre-Tech "is the best experience they've had in school."



The District V band in rehearsal.

PCHS hosts District V Music Festival January 30-31



The District V band performs at the Saturday night concert.



The District V chorus in rehearsal.

More than 200 high school musicians and about 30 music teachers converged on Piscataquis Community High School January 30-31 for the District V music festival.

Les Tomlinson, instrumental music teacher and band director at PCHS, said the festival went very smoothly, thanks to the efforts of many parent and student volunteers.

Mr. Tomlinson said he and Katie Plourde, vocal music teacher and choir director at PCHS, started planning for the festival in November.

"We knew we would need a small army to get everything set up and done properly," he said. "Our music students and parents responded outstandingly! We cannot say enough about how well everything came about because of our parents and students."

The festival included a band, an orchestra, and a chorus made up of students from all 21 high schools in District V, which extends from Searsport to Greenville. The groups practiced from 9 to 3 on Friday and from 9 to 2 on Saturday, and then performed on Saturday evening.

The students were nominated by their high school music teachers in November and selected a short time later. Typically, four or five musicians from each school are selected.

PCHS participants were Dan Lowery, Nick Oakes, Garrett Artman, and Travis Ellis for band, and Lisa-Marie McAlpine, Jessica Wilson, and Amber Mondoux for chorus. Lucas Bussell, Samara Hooper and Cassandra Pike were added to the band list on Friday morning to substitute for students who were unable to attend.

Mr. Tomlinson said the highlight of the festival was "seeing everything work smoothly and hearing a quality concert."

SAD 4 receives MELMAC grant; goal is improved college readiness

SAD 4 has received a MELMAC grant which will provide \$11,000 a year for four years to help improve college readiness of students in grades 8-12.

"We want to get students thinking about college and aspiring to go to college, says Guidance Director Kelly MacFayden.

Ms. MacFayden said one of the objectives is to expose the students to more cultural activities.

"We're a rural district, and kids have fewer cultural opportunities than kids in more urban districts,"

she said.

Last year, the grant funded a trips Foxborough, MA, to see the Revolution, a professional soccer team, and to the Penobscot Theatre in Bangor. Sophomores went on a day trip to the University of Maine where they toured the campus in Orono and ate lunch in the commons. Juniors and seniors went to the college fair at UMaine.

This year, the district has used funds from the grant to combine a college fair night with the annual parent conferences at PCHS.

"We felt that parents would come to parent conference night, but we also wanted to get them involved in the college process," said Ms. MacFayden. Parents and students were able to talk with representatives from UMaine, Husson, Eastern Maine Community College, UMaine Augusta, the military, the Finance Authority of Maine (FAME), and EMCC's Early College for ME program.

This spring, PCHS is planning an overnight college tour for sophomores and maybe juniors. The tour will include several colleges, but the itinerary has

not been determined yet.

"We don't know if we'll be visiting colleges in Maine, or if we'll include colleges in the Boston area," she said.

Seniors at PCHS also spent a day at UMaine's new fitness center.

KINDERGARTEN REGISTRATION

Kindergarten registration will be held on Thursday, March 5, 2009 from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the McKusick School in Parkman for all children who will be 5 years old on or before October 15, 2009. All registrations are by appointment only. Your child's state birth certificate, custody papers, and immunization record are required. Please call 876-4590 by March 3 to schedule an appointment.



ELLEN HALEY AND BILL SAVAGE retired last June after long and distinguished teaching careers at Piscataquis Community Middle School.