



# The Pirate's

# Treasure Chest



Maine School Administrative District 4, 25 Campus Drive, Guilford, ME 04333 • February 2007

## SAD 4 welcomes Chinese teacher

No sooner had guest teacher Jin Yanbin arrived at Piscataquis Community High School last month than she was fielding questions about her native country.

"It pleased me that students were interested in the Chinese language and asked a lot about life back in China," said Ms. Jin who had spent the better part of her first morning at school talking with Jeanne Griffin's social studies classes.

A participant in the Chinese Guest Teacher Program sponsored by the Chinese government and the College Board to address the shortage of qualified Chinese teachers in the United States and meet the growing interest in Chinese among U.S. high school students, Ms. Jin is spending 18 months in SAD 4 helping Ms. Griffin teach an Asian Studies class. She also plans to teach "mini-classes" in Chinese reading, writing and speaking three days a week  
*(Please turn to page 8)*



Jin Yanbin, a Chinese teacher who will be working in SAD 4 for the next 18 months, is greeted by social studies teacher Jeanne Griffin upon her arrival at Bangor International Airport. on Jan. 26.

## Voters OK bond issue for renovation projects, roof repairs

Voters in the six SAD 4 communities have approved a \$608,000 bond issue for two renovation projects at Piscataquis Community High School and roof repair projects at the district's two elementary schools.

The vote was 135 for the bond issue and 37 against.

Because the projects have been approved through the Department of Education's Revolving Renovation Fund Program, SAD 4 will have to repay only 34.81% of the total, and the payments can be made at 0% interest over 10 years through the Maine Bond Bank.

The Revolving Renovation Fund has also approved a boiler replacement project at PCHS that has already been completed using SAD 4 capital reserve funds. As a result, the district will be reimbursed an additional \$85,000, which will be used to help pay down the bond issue.

As a result, SAD 4 will have to repay only \$127,000, or \$12,700 a year for 10 years. The exact amount of the repayment obligation will depend on the final actual cost of the projects.

Superintendent of Schools Paul Stearns said only 15 projects were approved for funding through the Revolving Renovation Fund in last year's funding cycle, and five of the projects were in SAD 4.

"We are very fortunate to have been in a position to utilize this popular program to offset the cost of some important capital  
*(Please turn to page 2)*

## PCMS 8th graders honor area veterans



Samantha Richins, 4th grade student at Piscataquis Community Middle School, greets Neal Williams during the school's Veterans' Day ceremonies.

The 8th graders at Piscataquis Community Middle School have made area veterans the focus of a unique community service initiative.

During the past two years, they have invited veterans to PCMS in November—on the school day closest to Veterans' Day—and honored them at a school assembly featuring songs and poems recited by PCMS students.

The veterans were asked to line up in the school's main hallway prior to the assembly, and the students greeted them and shook their hands as they walked into the gym.

"You could hear a pin drop in the gym," said 8th grade teacher Carol Poirier. "Then, when the veterans marched into the gym, the students gave them a standing ovation."

This year, Ralph Eastman, a Vietnam veteran and SAD 4 director, presented the school with a certificate of appreciation.

*(Please turn to page 12)*



**THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME**—About 25 percent of the staff at Piscataquis Community High School are PCHS alumni, including (from left) Paula Brown '70, Lisa Martell '84, Adam Brown '97, and Erick Murray '98. "The Treasure Chest" asked why. Story on p. 9

## 'Reading First' grant targets improved reading instruction in grades K-3

Two SAD 4 schools—McKusick Elementary School and Guilford Primary School—are in the second year of a three year, \$425,000 grant for Reading First, a program to improve reading instruction and ensure that all children are reading at grade level by the end of third grade.

As a result, all K-3 classes now

have a three-hour uninterrupted block of reading instruction every day, and all teachers in grades K-3 have agreed to take on-site professional development courses designed to improve reading instruction.

In addition, a literacy coach, Shelly Snow, has been hired to help the teachers bring what they've

learned into their classrooms.

Much of the professional development work has been related to assessments—how to measure students' progress in literacy, and how to use that data to inform instruction.

"We look at what the students are doing well, and where they are struggling, and then we adjust our

teaching strategies accordingly," says Trisha Kurt, special education director for SAD 4, who wrote the Reading First grant.

For example, if the data shows that students are struggling with initial sounds, the teacher will give them more instruction in that area, using a mixture of small-groups  
*(Please turn to page 4)*

# George Nuite: a closer look at school consolidation

To the SAD #4 community:

Our school system, and more importantly our local privilege to operate those schools, is under attack.

The governor's budget proposal, including his desire to create 26 mega-districts in the state, stands to change



George Nuite

the fabric of our communities and a method of operation, management and local financial accountability that defines the basic essence of what living in Maine is all about.

The Governor's simple sound bytes about "saving millions of dollars," "gaining more local control of schools," "no schools closing," "the schools are all spending over the EPS limits," and "a principal in every school" are nothing more than political rhetoric designed to appeal to the average Joe whose taxes are sky high and wants something done about it. These tactics are common in politics these days, and sadly, they are often effective. They are based on the presumption that the general public will not take the time to read the legislation that is being proposed.

I have read the proposed budget legislation, and I encourage each citizen to do so also. Let me take a moment to share just a few of the highlights:

- "We will save millions of dollars by reducing the number of superintendents"

In reality, the bill says that the new "region" will employ superintendents with multiple year contracts. The projected administrative savings come from cutting classroom teachers, raising the minimum class-size ratios in the EPS formula, and by cutting essential central office personnel (payroll, food service, business managers, human resources, IT, etc.) across the state. There is nothing in the budget proposal to show how this

work will be done, by whom, and at what cost. The rest of the projected savings come from "arbitrary" (DOE official's word – not mine) percentage decreases in special education, maintenance, and transportation that would provide "assumed" savings. We spend \$1.8 billion—yes *billion!*—a year on education in Maine. The governor's projected savings—if they were real—would result in a \$30 tax savings on a \$100,000 property. This is not the type of tax relief that you are led to believe would occur, and it would not take place at all in SAD #4 due to the EPS formula.

- "We will have more local control of schools"

The commissioner of education tells us that every school would have an "advisory board" to work with the principal in guiding the school. In reality, the new region, (ours would be region #10 and would consist of 40 towns) would have a governing board of directors of between 5 and 15 people that would make all of the policy and financial decisions. Make no mistake about it, "the Golden Rule" would be in effect—the people who have control of the gold would rule!

- "We would close no schools."

This is true – the state would not close any schools, but it is obvious that the new regional board would have to, because it simply would not have the dollars through the EPS ratios to justify keeping them open. Schools

*State leadership should not punish the children and staff of those systems that have managed to hold the line on costs*

would close—lots of them. To imply that they would not is misleading at best. How fair is this to the children and citizens of SAD #4—a district that already

made the tough decision to close several schools years ago—because it was the prudent thing to do?

- "The schools are spending over the EPS limits"

This general statement does not accurately portray what is hap-

*A full-time principal is simply not a wise use of tax dollars. Local folks will make far better decisions about the assignment and location of administrators.*

pening in SAD #4 and in many surrounding systems. SAD #4 actually is one of the 19% of school systems in the state that is under the EPS limit. SADs 46, 48, and 68 are also under. What is the reward for our school system for staying within our means? We have been able to watch other systems that were way over EPS

limits receive millions in dollars in "transition money" during the last couple of years so that they could continue to keep tiny schools open and operate in an inefficient manner. Local systems should be

able to keep their schools open if they wish, but not with state dollars used to subsidize their expensive habits. The wrong behavior is being rewarded, and systems like SAD #4, which made the tough decision to close several small schools, are being unduly punished for doing what was right. We will be expected, under the new proposal, to give our assets (buildings and land) over to the new region, but retain locally (each town) any debt that we have on those assets!

- "A Principal in every school."

Golly, this sounds great! But some small schools do quite nicely without a full-time principal. This

will simply not a wise use of tax dollars to arbitrarily assign a principal to every building. Local folks will make far better decisions about the assignment and location of administrators.

I could go on and on, as the issues are complex and require a great deal of time and study to analyze effectively; there simply is not room on this page to even mention all that is involved, but let me close with a couple of points:

The state is in financial trouble. The Department of Health and Human Services has enormous financial issues. Medicaid and health insurance programs are in disarray to say the least. The Department of Education is spending far more money, both local and state, than it was just four years ago and we have fewer students.

We have a tax problem in this state...not just a property tax problem. You cannot increase total spending and deliver tax relief...it is that simple. We need to demand that our leaders have the insight to peel back the financial layers and find exactly where the tax dollars are flowing, and the political courage to address it with those systems (in education and other areas of government) that are living extravagantly beyond their means. It has been very obvious that the effect of Regional Salary Cost Indexing has caused millions of new dollars to be pumped into education in the state in the past three years. A close look at the allocation rates created by the EPS formula will plainly reveal that most of these dollars—millions and millions—have been shifted to urban, affluent systems and towns, creating the educational and economical crisis that the state is in at this point.

State leadership should not punish the children and staff of those systems that have managed to hold the line on costs by forcing them into undesirable management schemes.

—George Nuite  
Board Chair, MSAD #4  
February 1, 2007

## Voters approve bond issue

(Continued from page 1)  
improvement work," he said.

The projects and their respective amounts include:

- Refurbishing the heating and ventilation system at PCHS, including installation of new univents in all classrooms, \$303,000.

- Electrical improvements at PCHS, including safety improvements around the transformer, balancing electrical loads within the building, and installation of additional outlets to accommodate projectors and to recharge laptops, \$78,600.

- Roofing project at Guilford

Primary School, \$102,000.

- Roofing project at McKusick School, \$124,000.

The boiler project, which was completed last summer, included installation of two Buderus boilers to replace the original boiler in the 38-year-old facility. Total cost of the boiler project was \$130,000.

"It is rather unique to have the state approve a project retroactively under the RRF program," said Mr. Stearns. "The fact that we had filed the application early allowed the project to be funded after completion. This worked out beautifully for the district."



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

Greg Bellemare, Principal, Piscataquis Community Middle School

Julie Orton, Principal, Guilford Primary School and McKusick Elementary School

**Edited by David C. Wollstadt, Schoolnewsletters.net**

MSAD #4, 25 Campus Dr., Guilford, ME 04333 • 207-924-5262 • www.sad4.com

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

## SAD 4 Endowment Fund established to enhance future opportunities

SAD 4 has established an endowment fund to enhance the educational opportunities of our students in the future.

The fund, which was started in 2005, had a balance of \$12,795, as of September 30, 2006.

The fund is overseen by the SAD #4 Endowment Fund Committee, which consists of Superintendent of Schools Paul Stearns and two community members, Norma White and Roberta Thomas.

The committee can use the interest earned each year, up to a maximum of 5 percent, to supplement existing funding for various academic and co-curricular projects.

When the committee met on December 1, the fund had \$650 available for projects. However, the group decided unanimously not to fund any projects at the time in order to allow the fund balance to grow.

The committee identified several growth strategies for the fund, including increased alumni awareness, expanding the database of alumni and corporate contacts, and the estab-



Endowment Committee members Norma White and Roberta Thomas, both of Guilford, review the status of the fund and develop growth strategies.

lishment of an annual fundraising event, such as a variety show.

The Endowment Fund Committee will meet annually to review the financial status of the endowment, to make decisions regarding the investment of the fund, to determine the level of funding for projects for the year (if any), to review applications for grants, and to determine

the level of funding for specific requests. The committee may meet at other times as necessary.

SAD 4 staff members who apply for grants from the fund must identify the educational need they wish to address and explain why it cannot be addressed through the regular school budget. Successful applicants will be required to file a brief report to the committee on the results of their funded project.

Grant applications will be reviewed by building principals, who must state in writing how the application meets the needs of the school.

Mr. Stearns said the establishment of an endowment fund was one of the first recommendations of the SAD 4 Comprehensive Strategic Plan.

"Before, the only ways to donate to the school district were scholarships or unrestricted gifts," he said. "We'll still take both."

The fund is managed by the Maine Community Foundation, which also manages the various student scholarship accounts for Piscataquis Community High School.



Board Chair George Nuite (left) and Superintendent of Schools Paul Stearns (right) present Larry Davis of Cambridge and Pam Goulette of Guilford with award certificates from the Maine School Board Association in recognition of 21 years of service for each of them.

## Lighting projects completed

SAD 4 is a brighter place, thanks to several lighting projects that have been completed recently.

New energy-efficient lighting fixtures have been installed in the multipurpose rooms at both elementary schools, the middle school gymnasium, and the bus garage.

The total cost of all four projects was \$9,000, but the district has received \$4,500 in rebates through the Energy Maine program, cutting the cost in half.

"We'll get more candlepower for half the electricity," says Superintendent of Schools Paul Stearns. "It's great lighting with a very short payback."

The new fixtures have two other advantages. They're very quiet, compared to the hum that used to come from the old lighting. They also come on instantaneously.

The old lights were metal halide, which would take 15-20 minutes to achieve full brightness.

### Superintendent's Message

## Pirate's Treasure Chest

Welcome to the very first edition of The Pirate's Treasure Chest! There are so many great stories involving the day-to-day and special activities that our students and staff participate in, that we felt compelled to share them with the entire SAD #4 community.

There is no question that the greatest asset of our school system is the people involved. Our parents, alumni, staff, volunteers and administrators all work hard to provide the very finest experiences possible for our students at every level. We have many different individuals that routinely go well above and beyond the call of duty to make "the little extras" happen.

So often today, we hear the negative stories about our educational systems and our youth, when, in fact, the vast majority of our young people are working, achieving and participating fully in their educational program.

One project that we are currently working on is improving the database of contact information of alumni. Eric Murray (class of '98) is spearheading this effort and would love to hear from any alums that would like to provide updated info or help with this project in any way. (emurray@sad4.com or 207-876-4625) We have so many talented and successful alumni of PCHS scattered about the globe that it is truly amazing, and we would love to be able to do a better job of keeping these folks up to date with the latest happenings in the district.

Enjoy the publication, and please feel free to contact me at pstearns@sad4.com with feedback, comments or suggestions for improvements that you would like to see.

Paul A. Stearns  
SAD #4 Superintendent of Schools



## Task force recommends no action to expand pre-school programming

The SAD 4 Pre-School Task Force has recommended that the district take no action to expand pre-school programming beyond what is currently offered by the district.

Current enrollments indicate that a majority of 4-year-olds are receiving pre-school programming, and the Task Force felt that it would be counterproductive to start a new program that would take children away from Little Miracles, an effective program that is well respected in the community.

However, the Task Force said its recommendation could change if the state requires school districts to offer pre-K programs or if the Methodist Church decides to close Little Miracles.

In that event, SAD 4 should offer a half-day program with morning and afternoon sessions in the

portable classroom now used by Head Start. The district should continue to offer Head Start programming in partnership with Penquis CAP, including the Head Start students in both the morning and afternoon sessions. The district should also continue to use current Head Start staff whenever possible.

The Task Force felt transportation of 4-year-olds could present a dilemma. The law requires school districts to provide school bus transportation to 4-year-olds in the same manner as for kindergarten students. That would be very expensive—special seat harnesses for students weighing less than 50 pounds and aides on every bus to supervise the four-year-olds, including going into the home both on pick-up and drop-off. However, of five area school districts that

recently started pre-school programs, none provide transportation.

The Task Force noted that the people at Head Start believe that the daily contact between school personnel and families that occurs when parents drop their children off and pick them up is a very important to the success of their program. It provides an opportunity for meaningful communication and allows for specific support and follow-up for a wide variety of academic, social, and medical issues.

Consequently, the Task Force recommended that any pre-school program offered by SAD 4 use the current transportation model, while making certain that no child is ever denied transportation to school.

Task force participants were Michelle Beaudry, day care provider; Cindy Brown, Director, CDS

Stepping Stones; Roxanne Chadwick, day care provider; Debbie Clukey, Penquis CAP/Head Start; Shelley Connolly, special education teacher, SAD #4; Jeanne Cookson, kindergarten teacher, SAD #4; Dave Cotta, Director of Transportation, SAD #4; Diane Deane, Director, Little Miracles Pre-School; Pam Daggett, day care provider; Cindy Hoak, SAD #4 School Board member; Kathy Kelly, kindergarten teacher, SAD #4; Trisha Kurt, Director of Special Services, SAD #4; Lorna Marshall, day care provider and SAD #4 School Board member; Julie Orton, Elementary Principal, SAD #4; Louise Ringle, Head Start teacher; Paul Stearns, Superintendent, SAD #4; Patty Smith, Penquis Cap/Head Start; and Sheila Thompson, teacher, Little Miracles Pre-School.

# Literacy coach helps teachers implement literacy framework

The Reading First program has identified the five central components of a balanced literacy program.

The Maine Literacy Partnership is based on a framework that calls for four different types of reading instruction and four different types of writing instruction every day.

Bringing those two programs together to improve literacy instruction in the classroom is the goal of the SAD 4 literacy coach, Shelly Snow.

Mrs. Snow teaches a graduate-level course during the evening on the literacy framework to the teachers in grades K-2, plus special education teachers. (Next year, 3rd grade teachers and other staff members will take the course.)

During the day, she works in various classrooms to help implement elements of the framework, and she helps the teachers apply what they learned in the graduate course in their classrooms.

It's this coaching aspect that makes the Maine Literacy Partnership such a powerful program for improving instruction.

In a traditional graduate class, a teacher goes to class, listens to a lecture, and then is on her own when it comes to applying the lesson in the classroom.

In the Maine Literacy Partnership, Mrs. Snow provides graduate instruction in the evening and then helps teachers apply what they've learned in their classrooms.

Mrs. Snow meets one-on-one with teachers for coaching on what they learned in her graduate course. A typical session will include a pre-conference with the teacher to talk about the focus of her teaching within a portion of the literacy block. Then, Mrs. Snow observes the teacher and her students during the lesson. After the lesson, she meets with the



**Reading First/Maine Literacy Partnership**—First grade teacher Cindy Quimby (left) and 2nd grade teacher Margaret Templet-Drummond, participate in "class night" in the graduate-level Reading First/Maine Literacy Partnership course taught by Shelly Snow.

teacher to discuss how it went and where the teacher can go next with that group of students.

"I can help a teacher see what she is doing very well, and then I can help her see where the newer

research is supporting different activities or different types of instruction," she says.

When she's not working with teachers, Mrs. Snow is in the classroom modeling elements of the literacy framework or co-teaching (professional partnering) with a teacher to help them implement the framework.

She also meets with each grade level team, where the focus is on the K-3 goal of improving the implementation of writers workshops.

For both reading and writing, the literacy framework provides different types of instruction that shift from a lot of teacher support to less teacher support to no teacher support (see story below). It also provides a variety of instructional settings, including whole-group, small-group, and independent instruction. The children are assessed on an ongoing basis, and the results from the assessments are used to figure out what they need next.

## The framework: 4 types of reading, writing instruction every day

The framework that forms the basis of the Literacy Partnership says that children need four kinds of reading instruction and four kinds of writing instruction every day.

The four types of reading instruction, which range from a lot of teacher support to no support, are:

- *Interactive read aloud*—the teacher reads to the students and discusses what she read.
- *Shared reading*—the teacher uses a big book or chart, and the teacher and students read together.
- *Guided reading*—the teacher meets with small groups of stu-

dents who are all at about the same reading level and does direct instruction to improve their reading, teaching each group what they need to learn next.

- *Independent reading*—children read on their own.

\* \* \*

The four types of writing instruction follow a similar pattern:

- *Shared writing*—the children come up with the ideas, but the teacher does all the actual writing on the paper.
- *Interactive writing*—the teacher and students write something together; the children come up to the chart, hold the pen, and

write with the teacher's help.

- *Writing workshop*—the children work on their own stories, but they have a lot of teacher support in crafting stories and making them the best they can be.
- *Independent writing*—the children work completely on their own.

The five basic components of a balance literacy program are woven through all of the exercises. Those components include phonemic awareness (auditory—recognizing the sounds that make up words), phonics (visual—connecting sounds with letters), fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

## 'Reading First' grant targets improved reading instruction in grades K-3

(Continued from page 1)

instruction in the classroom, the Title I teachers, or pull-out groups using an interventionist.

The district has hired a half-time interventionist to support the Reading First effort by tracking of all of the assessment data, helping teachers determine what the instructional needs are, and doing instruction in the classroom.

In order to apply for the grant, the district had to get 85% of the staff to sign a statement agreeing to attend 17 sessions of the Reading First course, take the Maine Literacy Partnership professional development course, and use research-based Reading First reading materials with their students.

At McKusick and GPS, 100 percent of the teachers signed on.

"The teachers saw the need and wanted to do it," said Mrs. Kurt.

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.

Last year, the professional development focused on the Read-

ing First core program.

The Reading First grant also enabled the district to join the Maine Literacy Partnership through the University of Maine.

Under the Maine Literacy Partnership, Mrs. Snow has been teaching an on-site graduate-level course on the literacy framework that forms the basis of the MLP.

This year, the course is being taken by all K-2 teachers, as well as special education teachers. Next year, 3rd grade teachers and other staff members will take the course.

During the school day, she helps her students take what they learn in the course and apply it in their classrooms.

The literacy framework says that

children need four kinds of reading instruction and four kinds of writing instruction every day.

"The teachers learn something new, such as shared reading, in every class," says Mrs. Kurt. "Then, after they've learned it in the class, Mrs. Snow coaches them in the classroom, helping them integrate the MLP into the core program."

Mrs. Kurt says preliminary data indicates that the students are making progress, but she says it's too early to draw definitive conclusions.

Mrs. Kurt says the combination of Reading First and the Maine Literacy Partnership is beneficial in several ways.

## The 5 central elements of a balanced reading program

- *Phonemic awareness*—the ability to hear, identify, and play with individual sounds, or phonemes, in spoken words.
- *Phonics*—the relationship between the letters of written language and the sounds of spoken language.
- *Fluency*—the capacity to read text accurately and quickly.
- *Vocabulary*—the words students must know to communicate effectively.
- *Comprehension*—the ability to understand and gain meaning from what has been read.

First, the two programs ensure that all teachers in the district are teaching all of the skills that children need in order to learn how to read and write.

Second, the teachers are using the same terminology, both when talking with each other and when talking with the children. As this continues from year to year, children will spend less time getting accustomed to different teaching methods and more time learning how to read and write.

Overall, Mrs. Kurt says the teachers at McKusick and GPS are very happy for the opportunity to work with a literacy coach, and very happy with all the professional development, which wouldn't have been available without the grant.

"Seeing the gains that the students are making makes it more real," she says. "It helps when you can see that the program is successful."

She adds that the Maine Literacy Partnership is much more than a professional development program.

"It's really a way of thinking about how students learn—and about the importance of literacy," she says.

## 'Content Academy' offers different ways of learning after school

"We believe that if students aren't 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."

That's the mission statement of the Content Academy, one of three "out-of-school" programs sponsored by the Moosehead Regional Educational Collaborative—MooseREC—and funded by a five-year 21st Century Community Learning Center Grant.

It is a mission that the Content Academy, MooseREC, and SAD 4 take seriously.

"We look at kids who are struggling in school and try to figure out why they're having trouble," says Crystal Priest, co-director for MooseREC and technology coordinator for SAD 4. "Then we find ways to help them, and we try to do it in a way that doesn't look like school."

MooseREC has developed a strong staff to oversee and provide the learning opportunities that are available during the Content Academy.

Robyn Rich and Jolane Clawson, both teachers at Piscataquis Community Middle School, serve as "academic officers" for Content Academy in SAD 4, and a trained cadre of professional "content specialists" serve students in SAD 4 who are at risk.

"We look at data, identify groups of kids, and develop after-school programs that run for four, five, or six weeks," says Ms. Priest. "We work with teachers who have training in project based learning, alternative programming, and brain research."

One of the program's goals is to get students to understand their learning styles—how they learn best and some strategies they can use to help them survive in the classroom.

"Some students are visual learners," Ms. Priest says. "Talk doesn't get through, but if they see something or draw a picture, they



"Food Fractions" at PCMS.

get it. Some students are tactile learners, who need to get their hands on things, and actually do things. Still others are auditory learners, while some learn best by reading. There's a whole body of research on learning styles that's just starting to get into schools. We've trained 12 to 15 teachers in how to work with this, and it's starting to bleed back into the regular school day.

"We try to give students the tools they need to tell a teacher, 'I'm not getting this, I'm really a visual

learner, can you draw me a picture of the way you want this laid out?'"

Content Academy has been very well received, and it keeps growing.

Last year, there were 41 Content Academy programs; this year, there are 57 different programs.

They include:

- Cup Stacking—breakfast stacks 1, 2, 3.
- Building Bridges from Design to Destruction. Students design, engineer, and build bridges using popsicle sticks and glue. Then they measure how much of a load their

bridges can carry before they break.

- Comic Strip Classics. Students use a new program on the MLTI laptops called Comic Life.
- Equine Equations Project (held during October vacation). Students went horseback riding, learned about the economics of having their own horse, how much space is required for the hay needed to feed a horse—many math applications to solve equine problems.
- Food Fractions. Helps students understand fractions by doing cooking activities—following recipes and adjusting batch sizes.
- Math Mania. 2nd and 3rd graders run around doing math problems—finding different ways of doing math that makes sense to them.

\* \* \*

MooseREC is a unique partnership between SAD 4 in Guilford, School Union 60 in Greenville, and the Evergreen Enrichment Collaborative in Greenville. In addition to the Content Academy, MooseREC offers a wide range of enrichment programs at schools in the participating communities. It also sponsors a series of monthly family literacy nights, called "Supper with a Side of Reading," for families with students in grades K-3 in SAD 4.

MooseREC is in the third year of the Community Learning Grant.

## 'Cup stacking' a fun way to improve brain connections

One of the more intriguing Content Academy programs is "cup stacking"—an activity where students stack cups in specific patterns. If they do it correctly, the cup-stacking action stimulates cross-connections in the brain—using both hemispheres of the brain at the same time.

Ms. Priest says cup stacking can help students who are having problems with reading, writing, coordination, sitting in one place.

"It builds those skills and makes connections in the brain that they didn't make as youngsters," she says. "It opens pathways so they can start focusing more and learning better. At the same time, it looks like a lot of fun, so kids get right into it."

In fact, cup stacking has become so popular that there's usually a waiting list of students to sign up for the cups.

Ms. Priest says she's found that when students do cup stacking and brain gym activities from 7:30 to 8 in the morning, they are more focused in the classroom, they pay better attention and learn better, and their grades go up. Unfortunately, when they stop doing the morning program, things go the other way.



A PCMS student demonstrates "cup stacking."

## How can families help their children? Read to them, or with them, every day

One of the most important things families can do for their children in grades K-6 is to read to them, or with them, every day.

Promoting that idea is the goal of SAD 4's popular family literacy nights, "Supper with a Side of Reading."

It's an opportunity for families with children in grades K-3 to enjoy a family supper, prepared by someone else, for free.

But it's also an opportunity to meet with literacy specialists and librarians and learn about "literacy strategies"—what parents and family members can do at home to improve a child's reading skills.

While parents and teachers are talking, the students have fun doing a reading activity with one of the librarians or literacy coaches—a read-aloud book, or create-your-own-story activity.

At a recent "Supper with a Side of Reading," students wrote their own recipes and illustrated them.



Students practice writing during family literacy night.

The family literacy nights are held once a month at all three schools—McKusick Elementary School for kindergarten and grade 1, Guilford Primary School for grades 2 and 3, and Piscataquis Community Middle School for grades 4-6.

Last year, the suppers were held at one of the elementary schools, and 80-90 people crowded into the school's multipurpose room each night.

This year, attendance is about 40 people per night at all three schools,

or about 120 people per month.

"Supper with a Side of Reading" is one of three "out-of-school" programs sponsored by the Moosehead Region Educational Collaborative (MooseREC), a partnership between SAD 4 in Guilford, School Union 60 in Greenville, and the Evergreen Enrichment Collaborative in Greenville.

Another benefit of the program is that families can sign out book bags with 20 or 30 books on a specific theme—all at different levels. The bag includes books children can read by themselves, some books that they can look at but which are above their reading level, and some books that parents will have to read to the children.

"The goal is to promote the idea of family literacy and the importance of reading every day," says Crystal Priest, co-director of MooseREC and technology coordinator for SAD 4.

# Community members help PCHS students raise aspirations

Piscataquis Community High School Principal Jim Chasse wants more students to go to college. But first, he wants to prepare them for a successful post-secondary education experience.

And SAD 4 residents are helping.

The collaboration came about through the Maine Readiness Campaign -- a statewide initiative that calls on parents, community leaders and educators to work together to ensure that students graduate ready to face the challenges of college, career and citizenship.

Advised by the district's eight-member Community Readiness Group, Mr. Chasse has put into place a number of activities designed to increase aspirations and opportunities for students and encourage them to take risks, make wise decisions, and develop a love for learning.

Each Monday, Tuesday and Thursday during period six, students choose from a variety of "mini-electives" such as dancing, fitness, fly-tying, knitting, self defense, sign language, karaoke, yoga, foreign film discussion, volleyball and character education. The half-hour classes are taught by community volunteers as well as by teachers.

On Wednesday mornings, students participate in a Community Read Program. They gather in groups to read and discuss "The Best Maine Stories," a compilation of short fiction by notable authors including Sarah Orne Jewett, Carolyn Chute and Ben Ames Williams. The idea is not only to



Norm Higgins, former PCHS administrator, with Principal Jim Chasse. Mr. Higgins serves on the state Readiness Grant team.

promote reading for pleasure, but to "create an atmosphere where the entire school is a team," Mr. Chasse said.

Then, every Friday afternoon, students are asked to respond via email to what Mr. Chasse calls a "Principal's Prompt." He poses a question that he says is designed to hone their critical thinking skills and "help them become more socially aware."

Students have written responses to such questions as "Why does music influence behavior?" and "What obstacles have you had to overcome in your life?"

During Monday morning assembly, Mr. Chasse either reads some of the student responses (without mentioning names) or presents a special activity. One time the kids were treated to a concert by a student rock band. Another day found them raising funds for a local food pantry. They even participated in a "milk-off" in which they competed to see how fast they could milk a cow brought to school by an area dairy farmer.

"It was a fun thing, but it also had a connection with the local community and it loosened the atmosphere so kids feel safe to take good risks and be a little silly," Mr. Chasse said.

Students never know what Mr. Chasse has in store for them each Monday, the principal said. "It makes them want to come to school because they have no idea what will happen."

The state organized the Maine Readiness Campaign -- funded in part through the National Governors Association -- because while 65 percent of Maine's high school graduates intend to enroll in college, only 53 percent actually do. And only 30 percent will earn a degree within six years. Meanwhile, only 37 percent of Maine adults have a college degree compared with 46% in New England. Workers in Maine without a college degree earn 43 percent less than their counterparts with a bachelor's degree.

"To give our children the best odds for a bright future, we must understand the connection between quality education and economic success," Education Commissioner Susan Gendron said last year in announcing that SAD 4 was among 25 school



Anything can happen at Monday Morning Assembly. One Monday, PCHS students participated in a "milk-off" to see how fast they could milk a cow brought in by a local dairy farmer.

districts in the state in which communities and high schools planned to work together to institute change.

Serving on the SAD 4 Community Readiness Group are: Kelsey Taylor, PCHS senior; Ken Proctor, director of human resources at Mayo Regional Hospital; Jan Ronco, town manager of Abbot; Michael Witick, PCHS chemistry teacher; Gary Nelson, a local realtor; Thelma Regan, director of Piscataquis Valley Adult Education Cooperative; Kelly MacFadyen, PCHS guidance counselor; and Stephen Madera, who teaches life skills at the Charlotte White Center.

"I want to try and make school more interesting," said Madera. "I'm definitely interested in helping young people understand that they're building their future when they're in school."

Meanwhile, the community volunteers who teach the period 6 classes said they enjoy interacting with students and demonstrating their expertise.

Donna Richins of Parkman enjoys coming into school once a week to teach volleyball. "It gets me out and it feels good to be here. It gives me a chance to meet some of the kids," she said one recent afternoon as she watched students compete in a spirited game of volleyball in the PCHS gym.

Anita Libby-Kain of Guilford, a nutrition specialist at the University of Maine Cooperative Extension Office in Piscataquis County, held sessions on preparing healthy snacks.

"The boys got into the cooking part as much as the girls," she said.

Woody Thompson of Guilford, a retired recreational and safety coordinator for the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, showed kids how to tie flies.

"Two students are still doing it on their own at home," he said.

More period 6 classes will be added down the road. Ken Proctor, who serves on the district's Community Readiness Group, said he plans to ask health care workers at Mayo Regional Hospital to speak to students about becoming nurses, x-ray technicians or ambulance drivers.

"We're trying to keep kids in the



Scapbooking: Elizabeth Owens and Kellie Martel with instructor Sherry Desmarais.



Cody Tracy ties a fly during Period 6.



Jessica Pratt in Period 6 Knitting class.

area as opposed to leaving the state," he said. "So we want to make sure they know how to make themselves marketable and demonstrate the health care jobs that are available."

The classes taught by community members not only enhance the curriculum and enrich the lives of students but "help create a culture where kids want to learn," Mr. Chasse said. The hope is that the adults will act as mentors and provide young people with "the inspiration to take good risks with their lives." In addition, offering students a variety of new and different activities can help them make a successful transition from high school -- where their time is structured -- to college where they have so much freedom.

"If they can make some choices at this age, they'll get a taste of what's beyond Guilford, Maine," he said.



"Mrs." Jarnecki leads Period 6 class in Healthy Habits.

## Principal's Message

### Great traditions, new horizons at PCHS

There have been many good leaders at the helm of the Pirate ship over the past 20 years; it is an honor to take the wheel for this season of a Pirate's journey. I am enjoying the sail and the hard work that it takes to make headway towards the land of academic success. There are both great traditions and new horizons for PCHS.

Who could sail without a competent crew? "Not I, mate." The teachers and support staff at PCHS are awesome! Many are seasoned sailors who are delighted to pass on their trade to new teachers and the student crew—after all, one quarter of the staff are alumni. They genuinely care about the academic lives of the students.

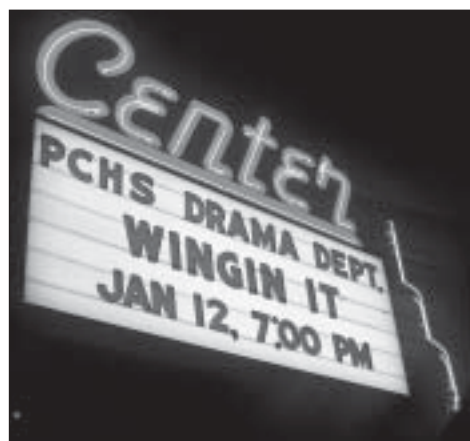
We have made great progress this year in the area of curriculum and instruction. English and Math departments are reviewing both PSAT and SAT results, searching for student weaknesses as a way to adjust their teaching. Students are



Jim Chasse

currently taking a Pre-SAT test that uses our technology and teachers to customize learning for students.

PCHS students are currently enrolled in, and more will be able to enroll in, Advanced Placement classes. We will add AP History and hopefully AP Biology for the 2007-2008 school year. We have implemented Learning Labs for struggling students. The teachers have teamed together to use a common Guiding Principle assessment that measures student attitude, habits and behaviors that correlate with



PCHS students were on the marquee at the Dover Theatre in January.

learning. PCHS is a member of the Great Maine Schools (GMS) project; the school is currently using the research of Promising Futures and the GMS improvement rubric as a means for continual improvement.

This year we began a program called Learning 4 Life, an alternative approach to a high school education. I am proud to say that we have several students involved who were formally not engaged in a high school

education. I believe that this will pay great dividends for the community in both the short and long term.

This summer we will continue our remedial summer school, but we will also offer some on-line courses and a prep course for students who show promise for Advanced Placement classes.

Students at PCHS are involved with drama, clubs, athletics, period 6, advisory groups and music. It is our goal that all students will gain a sense of "belonging" by being involved with such activities. This winter students performed a play entitled, "Wingin It," at the Center Theatre in Dover. This production was funded in part by a state Readiness grant aimed at preparing students for college, career and citizenship.

I am blessed to be surrounded by so many great students. I am thankful to be principal during a time when all fall and winter sports teams qualified for playoff games. It was so great to see our boy's team capture the Eastern Maine Soccer Champions in Class "C". This credit should go to the student-athletes and the coaches.

Lastly, for some students there can be some rough seas to maneuver while at PCHS. High School can be a very challenging time; broken homes, loss of work, poverty, homework demands and low aspirations can sometimes cause damage to the ship. It is during these times that we truly need the resources of the entire Pirate community; helping homes, churches, extended family, alumni, and friends can all make a contribution to the life of a young person.

I thank you for the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of the youth from Abbot, Cambridge, Guilford, Parkman, Sangerville and Wellington.

God Bless,

Jim Chasse, Principal, PCHS



## Booster Club finds many ways to support PCHS athletic programs

Scoreboards, the fence around the field hockey field, and jackets for members of the boys soccer team, who were Eastern Maine champions last fall.

Those are just some of the ways that the Piscataquis Community High School Booster Club supports the school's athletic programs.

"It's a very small group of people," says Larry Holmquist, athletic director at PCHS. "For the number of people involved, they do a tremendous amount of work."

Booster Club members run concessions at all the ball games at PCHS. In the fall, they often work two games at a time, setting up one table at the soccer field and a second table out back for field hockey.

The profits from concession sales are used to purchase items that the district can't afford to put in the budget.

For example:

- When Coca-Cola donated a new scoreboard for the field hockey field, the Booster Club provided the funds to pay for the installation.

- When the boys' soccer team won the Eastern Maine championship, the Booster Club helped the team buy jackets, donating \$40 for each jacket.

- The boosters provided \$2,500 for softball field improvements and the installation of a softball scoreboard.

- The boosters bought a scorer's table for the basketball court and a breakout hoop for cheerleaders that the players run through before games.



The Boosters Club helped provide jackets to the PCHS Eastern Maine champion boys' soccer team. . . .



. . . and provided funds for the installation of the new field hockey scoreboard.

- When the district purchased a water wheel to irrigate the fields, the boosters paid half of the \$8,000 cost. The wheel, which rolls out and automatically retracts, is

portable (on wheels), and is used to water all the fields at both the high school and the middle school.

- When PCHS hosted the Houlton boys' soccer team in the

Eastern Maine playoffs, the boosters provided pizza and soda for the Houlton team after the game.

Assistant Principal Sandy Emerson said the Boosters Club also provides help in less visible ways.

"The boosters do a lot of things that the community doesn't realize, she says. "For example, the school budget provides the bare minimum that is needed to run athletic programs. We'll go to the booster club and say we need five or six extra soccer balls. They've never turned us down."

The boosters have also provided funds for extra softball and baseball bats, knee pads for basketball teams, ski wax for ski team, and golf balls for the golf team, along with scholarships to athletic camps for the summer.

"They make a big impact," says Mr. Holmquist. "In the seven years that I've been here, they've raised and donated well over \$30,000."

In addition to food and snack items, the boosters sell t-shirts, hats, sweatshirts, and wristbands. They also hold raffles, including a mystery raffle last fall just before Christmas. Booster club members solicited donations from businesses, and the businesses, but not the items, were listed.

Ms. Emerson says the goal of the boosters is to work closely with the school to support the teams and the students.

"At the end of each year, they ask what do you need? What can we fund-raise for?"

## Learning 4 Life: When students need a different educational setting

Not all high school students thrive in the traditional classroom setting.

That's why SAD 4 is starting an "alternative education" program called Learning 4 Life, which can lead to a diploma from Piscataquis Community High School.

The program currently has seven students, four of whom weren't attending school at all. The program has a half-time director, Faye Booker, former English teacher and principal at Greenville High School, who was hired a week before school began.

"At that point, we had a bunch of names but no students," said Ms. Booker. "Jim Chasse [the principal at PCHS] and Paul Stearns [superintendent of schools] are big supporters. We envisioned starting to work with students after Christmas, but it happened much faster than that."

Learning 4 Life started off in a portable classroom on the PCHS campus. On January 26, Learning 4 Life moved into rented space in the old Abbie Fowler School in Sangerville, so the program is now completely off campus.

Ms. Booker says she's hoping to have as many as eight students by the end of the year.

"At this point, it looks like we may be surpassing that number sooner rather than later," she says.

Students who want to get their diploma through the Learning 4 Life program must submit an application, including two letters of reference. The student must write an essay explaining why he or she wants to attend the program.

Normally, requests to participate in Learning 4 Life will go through the PCHS Student Assistance Team, which tries to find ways within the PCHS framework to keep students in school. If the



Learning 4 Life takes a field trip to Elephant Mountain in Greenville, where a B-52 crashed in 1963.

Student Assistance Team can't find a solution within PCHS, it may direct students toward the Learning 4 Life program.

"Learning 4 Life isn't a dumping ground," Ms. Booker says. "It's a program for students who have found that school just doesn't work for them. We don't put up with behavior problems or absences."

Every student in Learning 4 Life has a personal learning plan, which includes a contract that outlines what is expected of the student, both academically and behaviorally.

"When we accept students into Learning 4 Life, we know they are totally capable of doing the work," Ms. Booker says. "The challenge is to take the work and maybe do it differently. That's what my job is—trying to find ways to create that alternative for them."

She says the students in Learning 4 Life and other alternative education programs aren't much different from students in regular high schools.

"The biggest difference is that we identify them as needing a different educational setting."

She says that when students enter an alternative program, the issues they had seem to melt away.

"I don't know if it's because they've made a decision that this is a last-ditch effort, or if the alternative program has taken them out of a situation where they were having a hard time. The students I've spoken to in other [alternative] programs are great kids."

Ms. Booker says she has visited a number of alternative programs throughout Maine, and every one of them is different.

"We can't take someone else's program and say it's going to work here," she says. "But we can take bits and pieces and put it all together—and find what works for us."

Ms. Booker says Learning 4 Life can take students up to age 20. Once students have reached their 21st birthday, they need to go through adult education or work

towards a GED.

She says Learning 4 Life has applications from several students who have been out of school for various reasons—pregnancy or a job, for example—but who still want to get their high school diploma.

"The beauty of our program is that we can work with those students, and if they succeed, they'll get a PCHS diploma with no designation that they've been in a different program," she says. "They can participate in school activities and graduate with their class. Academically, it may be their last lifeline, but they can participate in all the other programs that students are entitled to."

Ms. Booker says Learning 4 Life tries to be flexible, based on the needs of individual students. Every student has a personal learning plan (PLP) and can work on projects at their own pace. "Once they get started, I am here as a resource to help them learn; I don't do the learning for them," she says.

The current students come to the portable classroom at 11:30 a.m. and stay there for the afternoon. Some students come to school every other day, and some may need to come only once or twice a week, depending on what their needs are academically.

That doesn't mean that a student can dictate his school hours. Each student's schedule is developed as part of the personal learning plan.

Parents are also involved in the Learning 4 Life program, from the application process on through graduation.

"It's very important that parents buy into the program," says Ms. Booker. "We try to make sure that the student knows that we're all in this together, and that we're trying to help, and that he or she isn't in this alone."

## Jin Yanbin

(Continued from page 1)  
after school. Next year she may teach Chinese using distance technology so students throughout the district can participate.

"She's a door into a whole other world," said Ms. Griffin.

A soft-spoken young woman with a bright smile and shoulder length black hair, Ms. Jin seemed relaxed and happy during an interview on her first day of school on Jan. 28. She had been greeted that morning by students who presented her with a basket filled with jars of Maine maple syrup and jam as well as postcards with pictures of colorful fall foliage.

"I have heard that Maine is a beautiful state," she said. "People are friendly here. The teachers are all nice and I met a lot of lovely students."

Ms. Jin, who has a husband and five-year-old daughter back home, teaches English to university students in Harbin – a thriving metropolis with more than 9 million people located in northeast China. During her stint in SAD 4, she is staying with David and Kathy Kelly of Sangerville, who



Jin Yanbin goes skiing on Big Squaw Mountain in Greenville. Ms. Jin and Jeanne Griffin helped out during AFS weekend at the ski resort. Photo by Jeanne Griffin.

eagerly volunteered to open their home to the teacher.

"I wanted to see what it was like in America," Ms. Jin said. "Also, I enjoy teaching and I thought I might be interested in teaching people Chinese. It is a wonderful language."

Some say that Chinese is difficult to learn, said Ms. Jin who disagrees. "The right teaching and getting people interested will make it much easier."

PCHS students seemed to be interested in everything about China, according to Griffin, recall-

ing the provocative discussion that took place that morning as Ms. Jin talked about life in her country. Among other things, she told the young people that in China it's the teachers—not the students—who move from classroom to classroom. School lunch periods are longer—at

## PCHS staff members say there's no place like home

There's no place like home.

That could be the motto of Piscataquis Community High School, where one-quarter of the staff are former Pirates.

Of the school's 40 teachers, educational technicians, secretaries, and other professional staff, 10 are graduates of PCHS.

When the *Treasure Chest* talked with several PCHS staff members who are also alums, there was no great mystery as to why they came back.

"It was easy for me," said Lisa Martell '84, who teaches math. "My family's here. Family is important. I wanted my children to grow up around my family, so I came back to Guilford."

Mrs. Martell graduated from the University of Maine and went to Plymouth State in New Hampshire for two years. Her husband is also a graduate of PCHS, and his family is in the area.

Paula Brown '70, the guidance secretary, said her reasons were exactly the same.

"Just change the years a little bit," she said.

Mrs. Brown, who attended Husson College in Bangor, left the area but returned to Guilford 18 years ago. She started working as a cook at PCHS, and when an office position opened up, she applied and got the job.

Mrs. Brown's son, Adam, a 1997 graduate of PCHS, earned two degrees from the University of Maine, one in history and one in



Paula Brown '70

secondary education. He got a job at Maine Central Institute in Pittsfield, but after a year at MCI, he decided to pull up stakes and come back home.

For the past two years, he's been working as an educational technician at PCHS.

"My family is here," Mr. Brown says. "I like the area, I like having my kids grow up here, and I find the atmosphere here is a lot better than Pittsfield."

Erick Murray '98, who teaches digital arts and career prep, graduated from Liberty University in Lynchburg, Va., got married, and stayed in Virginia for a year after graduation. When they had a son, they decided to move back to Maine.

"We wanted to raise our kids around our families," he said.

He worked in SAD 50 in Skowhegan last year, but when the opportunity arose to come back to PCHS this year, he jumped on it.

"I like the area, and I know the people," he said.

The dean of the returning graduates is Bill Thompson '67, who graduated from the University of Maine in 1971 and came back to Guilford fully expecting to be drafted into the U.S. Army.

Bob McCreary, who was superintendent at the time, asked him if he wanted to teach for a year. Mr. Thompson accepted the job, and started teaching 8th and 9th grade science.



Lisa Martell '84

Then, to Mr. Thompson's delight, the draft board decided that it didn't need any more draftees from Piscataquis County. He received a deferment, and he's been at PCHS ever since. For the last 30 years,



Adam Brown '97

he's been teaching physics.

Mr. Thompson said he never felt out of place working as a colleague along side his former teachers.

"They were very, very helpful working with me," he said. "They didn't put me on a lower level."

Mr. Thompson's two daughters, who graduated from PCHS and Bowdoin College, have both remained in the area. Elisa, a doctor, works at Mayo Regional Hospital in Dover. Heidi is a computer programmer at Hardwood Products in Guilford.

\* \* \*

The younger graduates say working at their former high school has both advantages and disadvantages.

Mr. Murray says he's really enjoyed having some of his former teachers be his colleagues, but he says it's been "a little weird" calling them by their first names.

"I still haven't gotten used to it," says Mr. Brown. Even after two years, there are a couple of highly-respected older teachers who he still addresses as "Miss" or "Mr."

Mrs. Martell says that being from the area can help her in the classroom.

"Most of us have come to realize that when we teach in the area

where we live, you know the parents in a different way," she says. "The students can't go home and complain that their teacher is a nutcase, because mom and dad already know the teacher or her family. We have an advantage over the students, because we know their folks and their older siblings."

Mr. Murray says it can work the other way, too.

"Students like to see how many shades of red they can turn me—especially the younger brothers, sisters, and cousins of girls I dated in high school," he says. "That was fun to deal with for a while."

Another good thing about working at PCHS, they say, is the quality and overall demeanor of the students.

"Most of the time, the worst thing we have to deal with is students not taking their hats off in school," says Mr. Murray.

Mr. Brown agreed.

"When you step back and see



Erick Murray '98

what's going on in other schools across the country, and you see what our problems are here, you realize that we don't have many problems," he says.

"It's a good home town atmosphere. The kids know each other. Everyone knows each other. I've enjoyed coming back."

\* \* \*

Other PCHS staff members who are alums are Brian Gaw, Val Ripley, Cathy Kotsifas, Tracy Morin, and Sue Pulkkinen.

least one hour—and students all wear uniforms.

Ms. Jin said she found it strange to see students drive to school. In China many people – including herself – don't have licenses because of the country's well developed public transportation system.

"The kids were so full of questions," said Ms. Griffin. "They were like sponges. She's already keying into their natural curiosity. They'll go home and say to their parents, 'Guess what I learned today!' That's something you don't always get with high school students."

Ms. Griffin herself has an affinity for China. She has visited the country and is taking a Chinese language class at a school in Bangor. Until Ms. Jin arrived, "I knew more Chinese than anyone in the building," she said with a broad grin.

The guest teacher program is one way that SAD 4 can help students acquire the skills necessary to compete and cooperate in the global economy, said Superintendent Paul Stearns, noting that many companies in the area routinely do business with China. The opportunity to participate in the program was particularly attractive since the district's financial responsibility was minimal, he added. Ms. Jin's salary



Ms. Jin has started a Beginner's Chinese course during Period 6 at PCHS.

is paid through the program so the community only had to pay \$3,000 to cover her insurance and visa.

"Being able to actually speak with someone from a different culture will really assist in breaking down barriers," the superintendent said.

It's not only members of the school community who are gaining from the international experience.

David Kelly said he and his wife, Kathy, are making the most of the opportunity to host the teacher. David is a pastor at Grace Bible Church in Sangerville while Kathy is a kindergarten teacher at the McKusick School in Parkman.

"It's been fabulous. We've been enjoying the subtle cultural differences," said David Kelly, noting that Ms. Jin is "very polite and tries

hard not to offend anyone."

One night, he recalled, Ms. Jin had just finished clearing the dinner table when she turned around to see the dessert plates that Kathy had brought in. "In China when you eat a meal you only have one plate. So she thought, 'Oh, oh, what did I do wrong?'"

David Kelly himself has been getting an education. "I've already learned that the Chinese language uses four tones and that each one has a different meaning. If you're speaking in Chinese you need to make sure you have the right vowel and the right tone."

Meanwhile, Ms. Jin said that in addition to her academic activities, she plans to keep busy this winter cross country skiing. When school is out she is looking forward to spending time on Moosehead Lake in Ms. Griffin's 19-foot sailboat.

While Ms. Jin's experience in SAD 4 is bound to help her English-teaching skills when she returns home, the guest teacher program has broader implications, she said. If more people in the world can communicate with each other there will be fewer misunderstandings between nations.

"The world will be a better place," she said.



Taxi "cabs" and drivers in Shanghai—what a ride! Photo by Jeanne Griffin.



The humble beginnings of a new skyscraper in Beijing. Workers from the countryside live in the brick bunk houses and toil from sunup to sundown (often in flipflops) with simple tools. Photo by Jeanne Griffin.



Chinese Chess on the sidewalks of Beijing—very popular with the older men. Photo by Jeanne Griffin.



The Chinese are more than willing to give free language lessons. Jeanne Griffin (far left) is tutored while waiting for a bus.

## Jeanne Griffin

For the next 18 months, SAD 4 will play host to Jin Yanbin, a teacher from China who will provide SAD 4 students with a variety of opportunities to learn about the history, culture, and language of the world's most populous nation.

Prior to Ms. Jin's arrival, the district had already taken a couple of small but significant steps towards including Asia in the curriculum, primarily due to the efforts of Jeanne Griffin, social studies teacher at Piscataquis Community High School.

Ms. Griffin began studying about China a year ago through the National Consortium for Teaching about Asia, an initiative to encourage and facilitate teaching and learning about Asia in world history, geography, social studies, and literature courses in schools throughout the U.S.

In addition to attending workshops sponsored by the consortium, Ms. Griffin wrote a mini-grant for materials that would help her teach about Asia in the 9th grade social studies curriculum, which focuses on world cultures.

At the suggestion of Superintendent of Schools Paul Stearns, Ms. Griffin developed a one-semester course on Asian Studies, which she piloted during the fall semester. She and Ms. Jin are teaching the course to a second group of students, mostly juniors and seniors, during the second semester.

The NCTA workshops provide a limited degree of exposure to the Chinese language, which Ms. Griffin enjoyed to the point that she started taking Chinese lessons from a private teacher in Bangor in March 2006.

Last summer, when her teacher returned to Mongolia to see her family, she invited Ms. Griffin to meet her in Beijing. The result was a three-week tour of China that allowed her to see the country in a way that very few Americans experience.

"We weren't part of an American group," she said. "We flew underneath the government's radar. We were invited into professors' homes and did a lot of things that most Americans don't get to do on a government-sanctioned trip."

She said she bought a lot of things from the trip, particularly from an authentic cultural standpoint, that she uses to enrich both the world cultures curriculum and her Asian Studies course.

In addition to visiting the capital city of Beijing and climbing the Great Wall, Ms. Griffin and her teacher took a bus

# studies Chinese, tours China



A couple makes an incense offering at a Buddhist temple in Xian. Photo by Jeanne Griffin.



A cargo of new brooms is delivered in Shanghai. Photo by Jeanne Griffin.

tour of southern Xian, Suzhou, Hangzhou, Shanghai, and Nanjing. "We ended up on a regular



PCHS student Nina Rhodin does calligraphy in Asian Studies. Photo by Jeanne Griffin.

Chinese bus tour," she said. "We were the only Americans—the only Meigwaren (beautiful country people), so we were able to see much more the way people really are."

Ms. Griffin said she the trip helped her appreciate the core values of the Chinese people.

"I was impressed with how much the people know about their country—their history, their art, and their music. Maybe that's coming from a culture where family is so crucially important. [The Chinese] are just now opening up to capitalism, so people have some discretionary funds to spend—they haven't always. They've developed in other ways."

Ms. Griffin says that in the U.S. and the West, art and music are generally the province of people who are good at them. By contrast, in China and the East, art and music are, to a much greater degree, in-



One of Ms. Griffin's traveling companions, Meimei Tian, on the Great Wall, where both women gained "hero" status ("You are not a hero in China until you've climbed the Wall, and it was a CLIMB," says Ms. Griffin). Photo by Jeanne Griffin.



Worshippers attach prayer ribbons to a tree at a Buddhist temple in Suzhou. Photo by Jeanne Griffin.

grained the culture, so that everyone is exposed to and participates in them.

"The deeper cultural texture is

probably due to China's 4,000-year history, as well as the spirit of collectivism that is so evident in the people," she says.

## PCMS Principal's Message

# HERO (Honesty, Effort, Responsibility, helping Others)

It is my pleasure to write about Piscataquis Community Middle School which proudly serves children in grades four through eight from six area communities: Abbot, Cambridge, Guilford, Parkman, Sangerville and Wellington. We have a dedicated, experienced staff that strives on teamwork, cooperation and continuing professional growth. A number of teachers have earned their master's degrees, and currently, there are seven teachers enrolled in master's degree programs. Many others participate in professional "book talks" dealing with the latest research on current educational topics. District staff also offers numerous technical opportunities for each other in a workshop setting. All of this is accomplished after school hours. The students benefit from the hard work and dedication of the staff who stresses academics and citizenship while maintaining a healthy, caring environment.

When dealing with the intermediate to middle school student, exposure to many different academic experiences is beneficial to their intellectual and social development. Each student is offered core instruction in language arts, mathematics, science and social studies with a variety of unified arts such as art, music, physical education, technology and health. Classes are designed to perk their interests so that each child becomes a lifelong learner. A class in career preparation has been added at the seventh and eighth grades to start the older students thinking about life beyond high school while younger students receive ten hours of language arts and six hours and fifteen minutes of mathematics each week. We have achieved Annual Yearly Progress (AYP), which is a school rating determined by the federal government, for several years in a row. As most of you know, we were the first laptop school in the state, and the laptop movement has caught on in many areas of the country. Our goal is to give our students the best possible education utilizing technology. It offers all students from our diverse population equity on the technology front. All students have the same opportunities and are encouraged to take full advantage of all the instruction offered here. We have seen many gains in overall learning, including organization, collaboration, quality of work and improved writing skills. We believe the more students know about technology, the better they will be able to compete as they pursue advancement in education beyond high school and in the workplace.

Piscataquis Community Middle School is a school that cares about each other and the community. We have developed a basic philosophy



for character called HERO. We emphasize and recognize students for daily practice of the HERO qualities: Honesty, Effort, Responsibility, and helping Others. Each grade recognizes community service among the students as an integral part of social development. Throughout the school year various grades sponsor a community service project which fosters such growth. Everyone benefits in an environment that focuses on these positive attitudes and experiences. We receive positive feedback whenever we have groups leave the school for an activity whether it is a sports team or field trip. People will say that our students are well mannered and nice to be with. We also have had a high success rate among students who have moved to our community who were previously unsuccessful. The positive, caring atmosphere is what new students and parents point out as being most helpful in that regard.

As wonderful as we feel our school is, there are always ways we can improve. One is in the area of communication. We encourage parents to contact the school concerning any problems or questions that may arise. Teachers can be reached by telephone or email. The school number is 876-4301, and email addresses include the first initial of the teacher's first name, last name, @, sad4.com. My email address is [gbellemare@sad4.com](mailto:gbellemare@sad4.com). Another is our HERO program. We are always looking for help in rewarding the children for their efforts. If you would like to help as a sponsor, please contact me.

On behalf of the students and staff of Piscataquis Community Middle School, I thank you for your support of education in our district and invite you to make arrangements to come in for a visit at your convenience.

Sincerely,  
Greg Bellemare, Principal



Students greet the veterans as they go into the assembly.



Students salute the veterans.

## Veterans

(Continued from page 1)

He told the local newspaper that he was so moved by the previous year's assembly that he thought the students deserved some recognition of their own.

"I thought we should say thank you," he said.

Students from all five grades at PCMS participated in the assembly in various ways.

- The 6th graders recited a poem, "In Flanders Field," that was written by a Scottish doctor in response to the battlefield horrors he witnessed during World War I.

- The 8th graders recited a poetic verse, "Thank a Veteran." An 8th grader student, Jake Bailey, also narrated a slide show and dialogue about the special sense of duty shown by the guards at the



Veterans assemble after the ceremonies.

Tomb of the Unknowns at Arlington National Cemetery outside Washington, D.C.

- The 5th graders sang "You Are What Makes America Great."

- The 4th graders sang the George M. Cohan classic, "You're a Grand Old Flag," and created an acrostic poem about veterans.

- The 7th graders gave a pre-

sentation on the PCMS Honor Roll, which will honor veterans from the SAD 4 communities. The 7th graders are in the process of collecting the names of all area veterans for placement on the Honor Roll.

The PCMS band and chorus performed for the veterans.

All of the 8th grade students participated in the assembly as part

of their focus on community service.

The class was divided into committees, with different groups responsible for writing invitations, decorating, baking, greeting, and performing.

Following the assembly, the 8th graders served punch, coffee, cookies, and cupcakes in cafeteria.

The idea for the assembly came from Mrs. Poirier, who joined the staff after teaching in Eliot/South Berwick.

She said the school where she taught decided to honor veterans, policemen, and firemen after 9/11. She asked the other members of the 8th grade team—Ann Dall and Paul Draper—if this could be done at PCMS, and they suggested making it an 8th grade focus for community service.

Next year, the assembly will be opened up to the public, which will be invited to join the students at PCMS in honoring the veterans.



Fifth graders enjoy downhill skiing.



## 5th grade a special time at PCMS . . . for learning how to ski

Fifth grade is a special time for students at Piscataquis Community Middle School.

It's the year that most of them learn how to ski.

For the past eight years, all 5th graders have spent one afternoon a week for six weeks either downhill skiing at Squaw Mountain in Greenville or cross-country skiing at A Fierce Chase Touring Center in Monson.

This winter, the ski program started January 10 and will continue until February 14. The downhill skiing has been switched to Hermon Mountain in Hermon, because Squaw was unwilling to open on a weekday for the students.

Hermon also has snow-making capability, which Squaw lacks. Last year, the program was limited to cross-country skiing because Squaw didn't have enough snow for downhill skiing.

The program provides equipment (for either downhill or cross-country skiing), an hour of lessons, and then an hour or two of recreational skiing.

The students are accompanied by their teachers, principal Greg Bellemare, and adult volunteers, including several parents.

During the first year—when the current senior class at PCHS learned to ski—the program was voluntary. Since then, all 5th graders are required to participate in either downhill or cross-country skiing.

The ski program is beneficial to the school in several different ways, according to Mr. Bellemare.

First, it allows the students to learn a lifelong recreational skill that they'll be able to enjoy long



A beautiful day for skiing.



Down the chute.

after they leave school.

By the end of the six weeks, about 80 percent of the 5th graders are pretty confident about skiing down the mountain by themselves, and almost everyone is able to ski to some degree.

Second, the ski program provides a reason for more students to enjoy going to school, which can help them both academically and socially.

"Success in skiing can push over into academics," he says. "Behavior is better, too, because the students are connecting with school, and they're successful at something."

Third, the students really enjoy it.

"No one ever misses school on ski days," says 5th grade teacher Ellen Haley. "In fact, we've had some students come to school on ski days when they really shouldn't be here."

Mrs. Haley says the ski program provides a wonderful connection between teachers and students.

"It's the best chance we have to connect with kids on a different level," she says. "They get to see us in real life situations—falling down and getting back up, and sometimes excelling on the slopes."

Mrs. Haley adds that the bus ride to and from the slopes gives teachers an opportunity to sit with

students and talk with them.

"It's just nice," she says.

The program started with a federal drug- and alcohol-free grant to promote different things for students to do—and to have alternatives to drugs and alcohol as a form of recreation.

When the grant funds ran out, the district relied on donations from local people, organizations, and businesses.

"We have a very supportive community," says Mr. Bellemare.

Three men in particular—Jim French, Rob Haley, and Bob Zimmerman—have donated their time every year that the 5th graders have been skiing.

The three men help teach the students how to put on their skis, and how to walk with their skis. They also pick the students up when they fall, and help motivate them.

There's also a lot of parent involvement, especially from fathers.

"We don't usually see dads coming in to help with field trips," says Mrs. Haley. "We never lack for parents to help out with the ski program."

One difference in the ski program this year is that quite a few of this year's 5th graders already know how to ski, because they participated in an after-school ski program through the Community Learning Center in 2nd and 3rd grade.

In past years, only one or two 5th graders knew how to ski.

The ski program also fits in with a Maine Ski Association program called *winterkids.org*, which offers 5th, 6th, and 7th graders free or



Snowboards work, too.



Back up the lift for more skiing.



Off the trail.

reduce-priced skiing at 17 different mountains in Maine, as well as cross-country skiing and skating locations.

## 7th graders fly simulated space mission at Challenger Learning Center

For the past three years, 7th graders from Piscataquis Community Middle School have traveled to Bangor for a simulated space mission at the Challenger Learning Center of Maine.

Using the center's high-tech space flight simulator, the students embark on a critical mission to rendezvous with the comet Enke. Along the way, they learn a lot about science and the space program, while gaining experience in teamwork, problem solving, communication, and decision making.

"It's the best educational activity I've ever done," says 7th grade science teacher Robyn Rich. "The work is very hard, but the students really enjoy it. There are a few jobs they aren't excited about, because they're not as glamorous as building the probe, or being the communications officer, but everyone comes back very excited. It's a very well done program."

This year, the 7th grade homerooms attended on three consecutive days in October.

When students arrive at the Challenger Learning Center, a short briefing is held in which the students first hear what their mission is going to be. Then they are given their individual assignments in Mission Control and the International Space Station.

Half of each group take their stations in Mission Control, while the other half are "beamed up" to the Space Lab. Each student is assigned to one of the eight teams that comprise the crew: Medical, Life Support, Isolation, Remote, Probe, Navigation, Communication,



Seventh graders at the Challenger Learning Center in Bangor.

and Data. Halfway through the mission, the students exchange places so everyone has an opportunity to experience both Mission Control and the International Space Station.

Getting the two groups of students to work together can be a challenge.

The students on the space station have to complete a series of physical tasks and follow directions that are provided by their counterparts in mission control.

"It's just like Appollo 13 ('Houston, we've got a problem')," says Mrs. Moulton. "The students in mission control have to figure out what the problem is and tell the students on the space station what to do and how to do it."

Some of the students wear headsets to communicate with their counterparts, while others write out messages and send them to the communication officer, who forwards them to the appropriate team.

The students have a lot to do in a short period of time.

The teams have to locate and triangulate the comet Enke, but sometimes a mystery object shows up. Then the students have to decide whether they want to find the mystery object and identify it, or continue with their mission and rendezvous with the comet Enke.

If they go after the mystery object, they have to use spectral analysis to determine its chemical make up, and then determine its other characteristics, such as

density, eccentricity, and orbit.

Meanwhile, some students work in the space station's clean room to build a probe to launch into the tail of the comet and collect space dust, while others test plant and animal life, and test bodily functions (heart rate, vision, etc.) of the space station crew.

About six weeks prior to each simulated mission, the teachers had to attend a Saturday training session at the center.

Then as the mission countdown approaches, the 7th graders will practice their communication skills and spend an entire day on mission-activities—latitude and longitude, cometary orbits, pH, problem-solving skills, cooperation skills, and math.



## Donn Fendler recounts ordeal on Mt. Katahdin for 4th, 6th graders

Donn Fendler, who spent nine days lost in the wilderness on Mt. Katahdin 67 years ago when he was just 12 years old, visited with 4th and 6th graders at Piscataquis Community Middle School on September 14.

At the time of Mr. Fendler's visit, the 4th graders were studying Maine geography and were in the middle of reading *Lost on a Mountain in Maine*, Mr. Fendler's account of the ordeal as told to Joseph Egan in 1939.

The 6th graders also read *Lost on a Mountain in Maine* as part of a survival unit later that fall.

Mr. Fendler told both groups how he had been hiking on Mt. Katahdin with his father, two brothers, and family friends when a dark storm enveloped the mountain. He became separated from his family and wandered around the wilderness for nine long days and nights with no food, except for the berries he found in the woods, and no clothing or shelter.

Hundreds of people searched the mountain, but no one found him until he stumbled across a cabin in the woods near Stacyville. The couple who lived there spotted him across the pond, and having heard about the search effort on the radio, recognized who he was and rescued him.

At the start of the ordeal, he weighed 74 pounds; when he was found, he weighed 58 pounds. He had no shoes, pants, or shirt—just a



Donn Fendler and "Lost on a Mountain in Maine." From [www.donnfendler.com](http://www.donnfendler.com).

fleece-lined jacket that he brought with him on the hiking trip. Mr. Fendler brought the jacket with him and showed it to the 4th and 6th graders.

Mr. Fendler said he had no water and no survival gear when he got lost—just two handfuls of raisins, which were gone in no time. He told the students that if they go hiking, they should carry matches, water, bug spray, and a whistle. Bug spray made the list because his biggest struggle in the woods was with insects—when he was rescued, his legs and buttocks were raw because he had scratched so hard.

Mr. Fendler's presentation included a videotape copy of an 8 mm. movie that was shot the day after he was rescued. The film shows young Donn all bundled up and being carried down to a canoe

in the East Branch of the Penobscot River, so he could be taken to an ambulance, which would transport him to the hospital in Bangor.

The film was taken by Mr. Fendler's Uncle Artie and then stored in a trunk for many years. It was discovered by Mr. Fendler's brother, Tom, who had it converted to videotape.

Following his presentations, Mr. Fendler went to each of the 4th grade and 6th grade classrooms to chat with the students and sign copies of his book and a parchment map of his wanderings that had been photocopied by the PCMS office staff the day before he arrived.

"Each child ended up with a book or map that he signed," said 4th grade teacher Mrs. Smith. "He took the time to talk individually with

each student and write a brief note on the book or map."

Mr. Fendler, a retired Army lieutenant colonel, now lives in Tennessee and summers on Seabasticook Lake in Newport, which is where he lived during the summer of 1939. During the summer, he visits libraries and Scout camps; during September and the first half of October, he visits at least 20 schools in Maine.

Sixth grade teacher Mrs. Titcomb noted that Mr. Fendler doesn't charge for his school visits.

"This is his gift to the state of Maine," she said. "It's his way of saying thank you to all the people who searched for him and prayed for his survival."

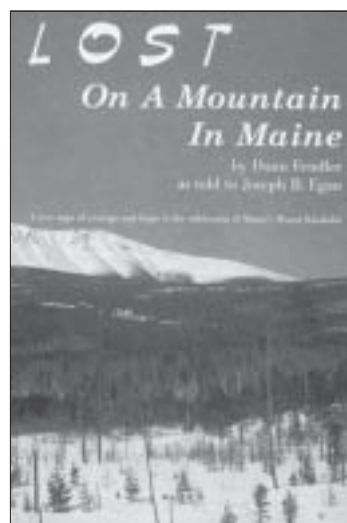
Mrs. Titcomb said Mr. Fendler is a great role model because of his positive attitude.

"He said his faith enabled him to get through the ordeal," she said. "He brought that up a number of times."

Mr. Fendler's presentation made a lasting impression on the 6th graders, according to Mrs. Titcomb.

A full six weeks after his visit, she said the students were still talking about Mr. Fendler as they wrapped up their survival unit.

"When the students were asked what qualities enabled a person to survive, they referred back to Mr. Fendler—how he stayed calm, relied on his faith, and kept his head about him. They said he thought his way out."



## Elementary Principal's Message

# Reading First, Maine Literacy Partnership

By Julie Orton

Serving in my second year as the Elementary Supervisor for McKusick Elementary School and Guilford Primary School, I feel fortunate to be a member of a learning community. Our staff is extremely dedicated to improving instruction for all students and we have been making a concerted effort to provide children with the experiences they need to be successful.

The implementation of the Reading First grant and our membership in the Maine Literacy Partnership has greatly impacted our instruction at the elementary level. Professional development is a big component of the grant and we have invested much time into examining not just what we are teaching, but how we are presenting the material.

Literacy impacts every other content area that we teach. At the elementary level, we have begun to find ways to bring math, social studies, science, and health lessons into the literacy block. Since a large percentage of what



Guilford Primary School



McKusick Elementary School



Julie Orton

we read as adults is non-fiction, we realize the importance of providing children with non-fiction reading materials throughout the day.

Another component of our literacy program is writing. One of our goals for this school year is the improvement of student writing. We routinely meet as a faculty to review samples of student writing. We collaboratively score writing

samples, discuss the traits of quality writing, and plan lessons to support young writers.

In the present climate, where accountability and attainment of learning standards is stressed, we try to maintain a healthy balance between academics and the social and emotional needs of children. We believe in the importance of knowing our students and we realize that all students come to us with individual strengths and needs. It is our mission to accept children as they are and help move them forward to become engaged learners who take pride in their own learning.

We feel privileged that the communities of SAD#4 are very

supportive of the schools. We have several volunteers that visit our schools during the course of the year. In addition, the HUGS group, our local parent-teacher organization, is extremely active in the elementary schools. Thanks to their support, we are able to offer enrichment programs to children that would not be financially possible within the regular school budget.

The community is always welcome to visit our schools. There are wonderful things happening at both the McKusick School and Guilford Primary School and we would love to share the good news!

## First graders get extra reading help through Reading Recovery

First graders at McKusick Elementary School who need extra help learning to read and write are receiving that help now through Reading Recovery.

Reading Recovery is an early literacy intervention program for first graders, where children with the lowest reading scores receive 12 to 20 weeks of intensive one-on-one instruction in reading.

The goal is to bring the students up to grade level or above in order to provide them with the skills they need for long-term success.

SAD 4 has two Reading Recovery teachers in training, Denise Thomas and Shelley Connolly, who provide students with individual 30-minute lessons. Mrs. Thomas can take four students at a time; Ms. Connolly, a special education teacher, can take two students at a time. Between them, they can provide intervention for 12 students a year, or about 25 percent of the first graders at McKusick.

Mrs. Thomas and Ms. Connolly travel to Benton Elementary School, near Waterville, for weekly training sessions with Reading Recovery teacher leader Whendy Smith.

At the beginning of each year, all first graders at McKusick are assessed for reading skills. The students with the lowest scores who aren't in a special education reading program get Reading Recovery help.

Reading Recovery lessons are 30 minutes long, because research shows that's the maximum amount of time that one-on-one teaching is effective.

The instructors are trained to take detailed notes about what the students do during the lessons, so they can make good decisions on what types of instruction they need to move them forward so that they

can catch up to their classmates.

A typical lesson starts with a warm-up activity of reading a book that the student has read before. Then, the student and instructor read another book that they have just read the day before. During the writing part of the lesson, the student will construct a one- or two-sentence story, and they'll work on strategies for learning how to spell, along with writing strategies. At the end of the lesson, the instructor will introduce a new book to familiarize the student with what the story is about—not reading the story, but talking about it so the student has a sense of what to anticipate. Then the student reads the new book with the instructor's help.

Reading Recovery also tries to enlist the assistance of the students' parents by assigning two short homework assignments every night. The students are given a book to take home to read with their parents. Also, during the writing lesson, the teacher writes a sentence out on a strip of paper, which is cut up so the student can reassemble it at home with his or her parents.

A study of Maine first



Reading Recovery session.

graders who received the full 20 weeks of Reading Recovery instruction in 2005 indicated that 71 percent of them were no longer

considered at-risk students.

Reading Recovery has been implemented in SAD 4 as a supplement to the Reading First program and the Maine Literacy Partnership.

"With our focus on literacy, it makes sense to provide interventions for students who aren't meeting the standard," says Mrs. Thomas. "Reading Recovery is the strongest intervention to help kids who, for whatever reason, aren't making the progress that they should be making in reading."

Mrs. Thomas says her first group of Reading Recovery students have done very well in improving their reading skills.

"They're not ready to go back to the classroom yet, but they've made incredible gains," she says.

Ms. Connolly adds: "We've gotten them on their feet at this point. Now, we have to get them running."



### SAD 4 Telephone Numbers

| School / Office                   | Telephone Number |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|
| Guilford Primary .....            | (207) 876-4590   |
| McKusick School .....             | (207) 876-2656   |
| PCMS .....                        | (207) 876-4301   |
| PCHS .....                        | (207) 876-4625   |
| High School Guidance .....        | (207) 876-4625   |
| Tri-County Technical Center ..... | (207) 924-7670   |
| Adult Education .....             | (207) 564-6525   |
| Maintenance .....                 | (207) 876-3132   |
| Nurse .....                       | (207) 876-4633   |
| Transportation .....              | (207) 876-4035   |
| Special Services .....            | (207) 876-4635   |
| Superintendent's Office .....     | (207) 876-3444   |

## McKusick, Guilford Primary students look forward to 'Arts Alive'

For children at McKusick Elementary School and Guilford Primary School, there's a day near the end of the school year that's really special.

It's different at each school—May 25 at McKusick and June 1 at GPS.

It's the day when "Arts Alive" transforms each building into a veritable artists' workshop, when each student gets to try three or four different ways of expressing themselves through art.

"A lot of kids would tell you that it's their favorite day of the year," says Margaret Templet-Drummond, who teaches 2nd grade at GPS.

"It's a community event to celebrate the arts."

Arts Alive originated at the Abbie Fowler School in Sangerville 25 years ago, thanks to the vision of Mrs. Templet-Drummond. When school consolidation resulted in the closure of Abbie Fowler five years ago, part of her vision was to share Arts Alive with all of the other children in SAD 4.

At GPS, Arts Alive followed the model that had been developed at Abbie Fowler, bringing volunteers from the community into the school to share their talents with the 2nd and 3rd graders.

At McKusick, Arts Alive was organized by kindergarten teacher Kathy Kelly, with many staff members and parents participating. Art teacher Margo Dyer, who splits her time between McKusick and Piscataquis Community High School, found that her high school art students were more than willing to volunteer at the McKusick Arts Alive celebration.

\* \* \*

At GPS, students get to choose from 16 different activities—ranging from dance and creative movement to cartooning, paper maché masks, drumming, puppetmaking, wire sculpture, bead making, woodworking, and painting.

The students have three hour-long sessions, separated by a half-hour break and an hour for a barbecue lunch. At the end of the day, there's a performance by a nationally acclaimed performer. This year, it's Michael Cooper, a puppeteer from southern Maine who takes up to 300 hours to make a single paper maché, cloth, or wooden mask.

"The really cool thing about Arts Alive at GPS is the number of people who come in and volunteer for the day," says Mrs. Templet-Drummond. "We get upwards of 40 volunteers to help with the workshops or the barbecue."

She says the volunteers include parents, grandparents, high school and middle school students, school board members, and community members.

"Many of the volunteers have no ties to the school other than Arts Alive," she says.

A different logo is designed for Arts Alive every year, and all of the volunteers wear logo t-shirts.

\* \* \*

At McKusick, the students are able to experience four different activities, with two 50-minute sessions, a break, and two more 50-

minute sessions. Then, the students are served a barbecue lunch, followed by a performance from the Frogtown Puppeteers.

The students are divided into rotating groups. The 1st graders get to choose their favorite activities, while the kindergarten students

*The really cool thing about Arts Alive at Guilford Primary School is the number of people who come in and volunteer for the day. We get upwards of 40 volunteers to help with the workshops and the barbecue.*

—Margaret Templet-Drummond,  
Arts Alive organizer at GPS

are assigned to the various workshops, based on their teacher's judgment as to where they would do the best. "The goal is to give all

the students a variety of artistic experiences," says Ms. Dyer.

Last year's workshops included rock buddies, Japanese sumi

painting, sponge painting, face painting, God's eye weaving, bean and seed collages, paper plate maracas, mosaics, gardening, woodworking, square dancing, parachute play, print-making on canvas totes, and bubble art.

Seven of the sessions were led by PCHS art students.

"The goal of the workshops is to bring the arts into the school and make them accessible to the students," says Ms. Dyer. "We also try to have something that the children can take home at the end of the day."



Quilter Lee Priest (right) with kindergarten students Noah Larry, Erika Sheperd, and Mason McLeish.

### Lee Priest's Arts Alive workshop yields "alphabet quilt"

One of the more interesting art workshops during Arts Alive day at McKusick Elementary School was led by volunteer Lee Priest, who is an expert quilt-maker.

The challenge was to work with the students during Arts Alive to make a quilt.

Mrs. Priest said she thought about one of the ladies in her quilting group, who does coloring on her quilt squares.

"I called her up and asked her what she thought about young children coloring the squares," Mrs. Priest said. "She thought it was a great idea."

Mrs. Priest decided to do an "ABC" quilt. Each child was assigned a letter and was asked to print the letter in both upper case and lower case. Then, they were asked to draw a picture to go with the letter.

"We brainstormed for each letter, and looked in the dictionary," she said. "X was a hard one. The kids came up with X-box."

After all the squares were colored, Mrs. Priest took them home and put them together.

"I added stars [at the corners of the squares] because each child is a star," she said. "And the stars are different, because each child is different."

## Wellness Carnival to be held April 27 in PCMS gym

Piscataquis Community Middle School will hold its third annual Wellness Carnival on Friday, April 27, from 5 to 8 p.m.

The carnival is organized by Joe Gallant, the physical education teacher and athletic director at PCMS. This year, he is being assisted by Cori Todd, along with 8th grade students who are volunteering their time for community service.

The carnival is open for chil-

dren age pre-K through 5th grade. It offers 13 different games in the PCMS gym, ranging from bean-bag toss to ball games to shooting games, to Plinko, a game where a golf ball passes down a board through a maze of golf tees into a series of win/lose slots.

Mr. Gallant said the carnival is based on a carnival that was held at Downeast Elementary School when he was a youngster growing up in Bangor.

"It's a time for children to come out and have fun with their families," he says. "I just wanted to give something back to the community."

The 13 games were built by Mr. Gallant and painted by two teachers who are no longer with the district.

The children (or their parents) buy tickets to play the games; the children can earn prizes in the games, and they can exchange

smaller prizes for bigger ones.

The wellness message is provided by Anita Kain from the Cooperative Extension Service in Dover, who sets up a healthy choices display in the lobby.

In past years, the carnival was held on Saturday mornings. Mr. Gallant said he made the switch so that students and families could have their weekend free.

## Forest Service retiree helps students plant, grow Christmas trees

A U.S. Forest Service retiree and his wife are pioneering a unique tree-planting program that will provide every student at Piscataquis Community High School with a Christmas tree during their senior year, starting in 2012.

The trees won't be just any old Christmas trees. They will be balsam fir trees grown from seeds planted by the students themselves when they were in kindergarten or first grade.

The program, aptly named "Kids and Trees Growing Together," was developed by Stephen and Elaine Law of Dover-Foxcroft to help students realize that the Maine forest is a renewable resource.

The program started in March of 2004, when the Laws brought some balsam fir seeds to McKusick Elementary School and helped the first graders plant them into peat pots. The peat pots were then taken to the Laws' farm, to be stored in the kitchen of the old farmhouse, which the Laws converted into a greenhouse.

Later that spring, all of the 3rd graders from Guilford Primary School were bused to the farm, where they planted two-year-old seedlings in a transplant bed.

Last spring, the students who planted the first batch of seedlings



Left photo: Students in Mrs. Quimby's class pose for a class picture before they go to work. Right photo: 1st graders get "down and dirty" with Mr. Law, filling peat pots with potting soil. Photos from [www.aforestenvironment.com](http://www.aforestenvironment.com).



returned to the Laws' farm as 5th graders and transplanted the seedlings in two neat rows in the field.

As the students move through 6th, 7th, and 8th grade and then into high school, they'll keep records of how fast the trees grow and how much it costs. When the students are seniors at PCHS in 2012-13, approximately 100 trees—more than enough for every senior—should be ready for harvest.

Similarly, the students who planted the first seeds in 2004, now in 3rd grade, were bused to the Laws' farm last spring to transplant their seedlings into a transplant bed. In the spring of 2008, they'll transplant the young trees out in the field. When they are seniors in 2014-15, they will harvest the program's first set of trees grown from seed.

Since 2004, the program has continued with each grade performing a different task:

- First graders plant seeds into peat pots.
- Second graders replant year-old seedlings into plastic containers.
- Third graders transplant 2-year-old seedlings in a transplant bed at the farm.
- Fourth graders travel to the Laws' farm to lay out the plantation grid where the trees will be planted the following year.
- Fifth graders complete the final transplant operation—from the transplant bed to the field where the seedlings will grow into Christmas trees.

Starting this year, the balsam fir seeds will be planted by the kindergarten classes, giving the seedlings an extra year in the transplant

beds. (First graders will also plant the seeds this year.)

Mr. Law kept a dairy herd alongside his father's beef cattle on his father's farm in Dover-Foxcroft. When Mr. Law started working for the U.S. Forest Service, his father started growing Christmas trees.

Mr. Law served in the Forest Service as a civil engineer in New Hampshire, Vermont,

California, Virginia, and Alaska. He and Mrs. Law moved back to the family farm when he retired from the Forest Service in 1978.

The Laws are also working with SAD 41 (Milo) and SAD 46 (Dexter) on the "Kids and Trees Growing Together" program.

Each district will grow about 100 trees per class, which will require about two acres of farmland per district to go through the seven-year growing cycle.

The Laws clearly enjoy helping the young students plant the seeds and tend the seedlings.

"We don't have any grandchildren," Mrs. Law says. "It's nice to have so many kids around."

For more information about "Trees and Kids Growing Together," go to Mr. Law's website, [www.aforestenvironment.com](http://www.aforestenvironment.com).

## HUGS brings programming to enrich the SAD 4 elementary curriculum

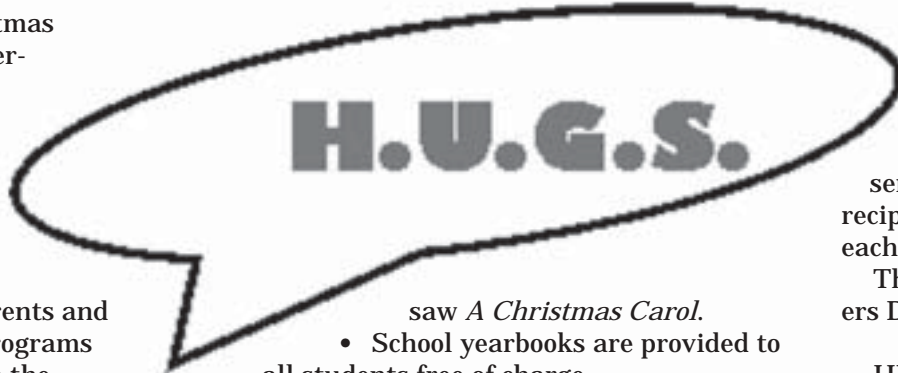
What do the planetarium, the Christmas field trip to the Center Theater in Dover-Foxcroft, and the end-of-the-year ice cream social have in common?

They're a few of the programs at McKusick Elementary School and Guilford Primary School that are funded by HUGS.

HUGS, which stands for Having United Goals, is an organization of parents and teachers who work together to bring programs to the two elementary schools to enrich the regular SAD 4 curriculum.

This year, HUGS-supported activities have included (or will include):

- Natural history presentations by the Chewonki Foundation of Wiscasset.
- Astronomy presentations by the Northern Stars Planetarium.
- Visits by two children's authors in April. Robert Pottle of Levant, author of *Moxie Day and Family*, will spend a day at McKusick, while Lynn Plourde of Waterville, author of *Pigs in the Mud in the Middle of the Rud*, will visit GPS.
- The Christmas field trip to the Center Theater in Dover-Foxcroft, where the students



saw *A Christmas Carol*.

- School yearbooks are provided to all students free of charge.
  - A celebration at both schools at the end of the year. Last year, the celebration was an ice cream social. On other occasions, it has featured a band and a fun house.
  - Pinnies were purchased for GPS, where students often play soccer at recess.
  - HUGS provides coffee, donuts, and lunch for the teachers on Teacher Appreciation Day.
- In past years, HUGS has raised funds for playground equipment at McKusick.

\* \* \*

HUGS' major fundraiser each fall is the sales of wrapping paper, magazines, and gift items from Meadow Farms. This year, the group also

sold a gift-size cookbook.

This spring, HUGS is planning an elementary school cookbook. Each classroom will have a category/theme—e.g., casseroles, beverages, snacks, desserts—and children will be asked to bring in recipes. A photo of the children and teacher in each class will appear on the theme pages.

The cookbook will be available prior to Mothers Day.

\* \* \*

HUGS meets once a month at 6 p.m., usually on the second Monday of the month. The meetings alternate between McKusick Elementary School and Guilford Primary School.

The remaining meetings for 2006-2007 are:

February 12th at GPS.  
March 12th at McKusick.  
April 9th at GPS.  
May 14th at McKusick.

Officers of the group are Vicki Kimball, president; Tammi Easler, vice president; April Carlberg, secretary; and Debbie Chapman, treasurer.

Both new members and ideas for programs and fundraisers are welcome.

## TCTC Building Trades students erect storage building at Nokomis

Building Trades students from the Tri-County Technical Center completed a 2,800-square-foot storage building for Nokomis Regional High and saved MSAD 48 \$20,000 in the process.

Work on the project began on September 18. Framing of the four walls was completed on October 13, and the roof trusses were lifted into place on October 23. The steel siding and roof for the storage building were completed before Christmas break.

Kelley Carter, business manager for MSAD 48, said the 40'x70' storage building will cost about \$50,000. He estimated that the district saved about \$20,000 by having the carpentry work done by the TCTC students.

Site preparation for the project was done by Ron Paradis & Son Construction, and David Bowden did the concrete work. Jeff Reynolds of St. Albans set the roof trusses with a crane from Bowman

Construction.

John Guay, building trades instructor at TCTC, said the contractors were very accommodating to the project, scheduling their crews so that the project could proceed on schedule. He noted that the roof trusses were put in place on the scheduled day even though it was raining.

Mr. Guay said his Building Trades students worked hard on the project and did an excellent job. "They're a wonderful bunch of students," he said. "They're the greatest asset we have. They're our future workers."

After the storage building was completed, the students start work on a "two-car-plus garage" for a private citizen in Dexter.

Eventually, his goal is to have the students build a modular home at TCTC and sell it.

The Building Trades program is one of nine programs offered at the Tri-County Technical Center. TCTC has 200 students. As a regional vocational center, TCTC also accepts students from Dexter Regional High School in Dexter, Penquis Valley High School in Milo,



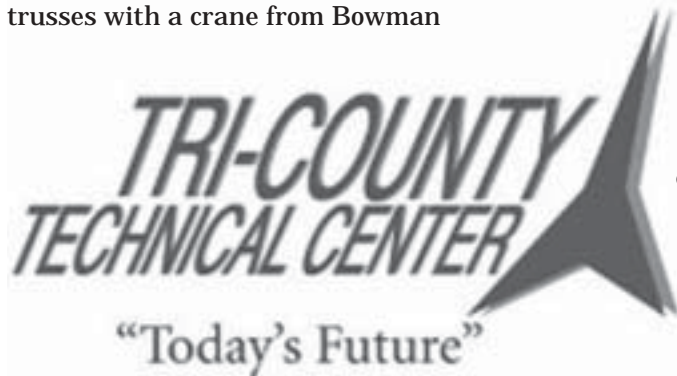
Building Trades crew—Front row (l to r): Jeremy Sawtell (Foxcroft Academy), Forrest Roats (Nokomis), Sean McCormick (Dexter), Dustin Small (Nokomis), Megan Johnson, Marcel Rasokat, and Brandon Crocker (Dexter). Back row: John Guay (instructor), Scott Martin (Nokomis), Luke Pomerleau (Piscataquis), Chris McAdoo (Nokomis), Charles Libby (Piscataquis), Kevin Wood (Milo), Ryan Cote, Jared Weaver (Nokomis), and Mark LeVasseur (Ed Tech III). The crew worked every other day on the Nokomis storage shed.

Piscataquis Community High School in Guilford, Foxcroft Academy in Dover-Foxcroft and Greenville High School in Greenville.

The Tech Center also has programs in Automotive Technology, Commercial Truck Driving, Computer Systems Repair, Criminal Justice, Culinary Arts, Graphic Design and Communications,

Health Occupations, and Metals Manufacturing. All are two-year programs except Health Occupations and Commercial Truck Driving, which are one-year programs.

Students attend classes at TCTC every other day and are bused to and from the Center by their respective school districts.



## Commercial Truck Driving students gain experience through community projects

Tri-County Technical Center's Commercial Truck Driving students were involved in several community projects this fall, including transporting skate ramps for the town of Monson's summer/winter skate park.

The students gained experience in safety, loading and unloading a load, tying down a load, and highway driving, and transporting an oversize load.

Dale Gerald, instructor in the truck driving program, said the project continued the program's tradition of learning by helping others.

Other community service projects undertaken by the student truck drivers included:

- Transporting a glass display bookcase from the Dexter Library to the Guilford Library.
- Transporting the taxidermy exhibit from Nokomis High School in Newport to the Maine Discovery Museum in Bangor last spring and taking it back to Newport in the fall.
- Transporting Christmas trees, lumber, and pieces of equipment for area businesses.

\* \* \*

SAD 46 has used a federal grant to purchase a 2003 Freightliner Columbia Truck/Tractor for the Commercial Truck Driving Program at TCTC. This will be another excellent learning tool for the students.

The truck driving program also has a Freightliner truck/tractor, a GMC truck/tractor, a detachable trailer, a step deck trailer, and two box trailers.

Mr. Gerald says TCTC is the only vocational program in Maine with a detachable trailer, which detaches from the front to allow a piece of equipment to be driven on and off the trailer.

\* \* \*

TCTC will host the annual Maine Vocational Truck Driving Competition on May 10 and 11 in Dexter.

Class A and B Truck Driving students from the Westbrook Regional Vocational Center, Region 3 (Lincoln), Region 9 (Mexico), the St. Croix Regional Vocational Center, and TCTC will be participating. The competition includes a safety inspection, a written exam, and a skills demonstration. Individual and team trophies will be awarded. The competition is a two-day learning experience, as well as a fun time for the students.

Truck Driving Students from SAD #4 include: Michael Olmstead, Thomas Douglass, Tobey Cleaves, Jake Laweryson, Edsel Brown, and D. Ryan Martell.



From left: Jordan Decker (Penquis), Tobey Cleaves (Piscataquis), Dustin Herbest (Penquis), Elden Chase (Penquis), Alex London (Penquis).



Mr. Gerald demonstrates the operation of the drop deck trailer.

# TCTC computer repair class teaches more than repairing computers

David Giles' computer repair class at Tri-County Technical Center does more than just teach students how to repair computers.

It also offers them the opportunity to earn worldwide certification through the Computer Technology Industry Association, or CompTIA, for short.

The goal for most students in Mr. Giles' class is CompTIA's A+ certification, which is widely regarded as the equivalent of 500 hours of on-the-job training in a computer repair shop.

However, students who complete the CompTIA A+ certification ahead of schedule can work on the CompTIA Network+ certification.

CompTIA A+ certification is accepted by computer shops throughout the world as evidence that the certificate holder possesses the latest skills needed by today's computer support professionals. It is an international, vendor-neutral certification recognized by major hardware and software vendors, distributors and resellers.



David Giles teaches one of his computer repair classes at TCTC.

CompTIA A+ certification confirms a technician's ability to perform tasks such as installation, configuration, diagnosing, preventive maintenance and basic networking.

Some colleges will also award college credit for students who have passed the CompTIA A+ exam.

Students in Mr. Giles' class spend the first half of the year

studying operating systems—primarily Microsoft—and the second half working on hardware issues. This includes troubleshooting computers, taking them apart, and building a new computer from scratch.

Last year, two students in Mr. Giles' class completed the CompTIA A+ certification and one completed the CompTIA Network+ certifica-

tion. The latter student, Mike McLaughlin of Nokomis Regional High, is now a studying engineering at the University of Maine.

This year, several students are working on their A+ or their Network+ certification.

- Troy Pomerleau, a senior from Guilford who is being home-schooled, is working on his Network+ certification. He plans to attend college in New York.

- Jeremy Blackburn completed his A+ certification last year; he says his goal is to establish his own computer repair business.

- Philip Walls of Orneville, a junior at Penquis Valley High School in Milo, said he expects to complete his A+ certification this year and work on his Network+ certification next year, probably in Bangor.

Mr. Giles says he is trying to create a website so that the entire curriculum will be available to students anywhere they have access to the internet.

## Kristin Rogers elected HOSA V.P. for Maine

Kristin Rogers, a senior at Piscataquis Community High School who is enrolled in the Health Occupations program at Tri-County Technical Center, was elected vice president of the Maine affiliate of the Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA).



Kristin Rogers

Kristin was one of seven TCTC students who ran for office at the Maine HOSA leadership convention on November 3. All were elected.

In addition to Kristin, the successful candidates were Chris Eastman,

Treasurer; Tricia Cossar, Secretary; Amy Ferry, Social and Recreation Chair; Melinda Johndro, HOSA Point Keeper; Lynn Corson, HOSA Historian; and Sarah Driscoll, HOSA Reporter.

Last June, eight Health Occupations students from TCTC attended the HOSA national competition in California and brought back a gold medal for the Outstanding HOSA Chapter.

In addition, TCTC instructor Beth Weatherbee was named HOSA Advisor of the Year for the State of Maine and was presented with a life membership to HOSA. There are 28 HOSA programs in Maine.

The Outstanding Chapter award was based on the scrapbook that TCTC Health Occupations students compiled during the 2005-2006 school year and the educational and community service programs that it described.

Health Occupations students at TCTC participate in a variety of community service activities.




This year, the students have:

- Participated in the Race for the Cure in Brewer, the Ending Domestic Violence campaign, and the Heartwise Walk.

- Entertained residents at Hibbard Nursing Home in Dover Foxcroft and Dexter Health Care.

- Held a Veterans' Day sing-along at Dexter Health Care.

Spring 2007 Call Today! 564-6525

The Piscataquis Valley Adult Education Cooperative (PVAEC) is governed by a Board of Directors comprised of seven individuals:

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><i>MSAD #4</i></p> <p>Paul Stearns, Superintendent<br/>Anita Kain, School Board Member</p>       | <p><i>MSAD #41</i></p> <p>Shirley Wright, Superintendent<br/>Vaughn Clapp, School Board Member</p> |
| <p><i>MSAD #68</i></p> <p>John Dirnbauer, Superintendent<br/>Rick Johnston, School Board Member</p> | <p><i>PVAEC</i></p> <p>Thelma M. Regan, Director</p>   |

### SPRING SEMESTER SCHEDULE

|             | <u>DOVER-FOXCROFT</u>  | <u>GUILFORD</u>   | <u>MILO</u>  |
|-------------|--|---|--|
| <b>MON</b>  | Algebra<br>CDL<br>Ed Tech  | Money Matters<br>Poetry   | Quilting<br>Real Estate Broker                             |
| <b>TUE</b>  | Advanced Drawing<br>CNA<br>Landscape Painting                                      | Learning Center<br>MS Office<br>Rivers Bend Band                      | Drawing<br>English<br>GED<br>Quilting<br>Scrapbooking      |
| <b>WED</b>  | Children's Literature<br>College Algebra<br>Defensive Driving<br>Designing Shrines | Fly-Tying<br>Quilting<br>Real Estate Sales Agent<br>Wildlife Tracking | Guitar<br>Quilting   |
| <b>THUR</b> | GED<br>Learning Center<br>Graphic Art<br>Pastels                                   | Pencil Drawing<br>Tole Painting<br>Vernal Pools<br>Watercolors        | Algebra<br>Collectors<br>Computer Savvy<br>CPR<br>Write-On |
| <b>FRI</b>  | MS Office  | T'ai Chi Chih   | Learning Center  |



**PCHS DRAMA GOES ON THE ROAD**—This winter, students from Piscataquis Community High School took their production of “Wingin It” on the road with a Friday night performance the Center Theatre in Dover. This production was funded in part by a state Readiness grant aimed at preparing students for college, career and citizenship. For more information on the grant, see story on page 6.

## For kindergarten students, 2006-07 is year of the ‘tree hunt’

Kindergarten students at McKusick Elementary School are going on a “tree hunt” during the 2006-2007 school year, thanks to a Fast Track Grant from the Perloff Family Foundation.

The grant will allow the students to take four trips—two to the Wellington Arboretum in Wellington and one each to Hall’s Tree Farm in Sangerville and to Breakneck Farm in Blanchard.

The students explored the Wellington Arboretum in October. While there, they collected leaves and investigated root systems, bark, branches, and other tree parts. They also selected a tree to look at in the fall and watch how it changes when they return in the spring.

The second trip, in November, was to Hall’s Tree Farm. The students saw how trees progress from seeds, to seedlings, to harvest (their visit came during the first day of Christmas tree harvesting), and they also saw how wreaths are produced. When the students went to the shop at the end of their visit, they discovered that the elves had made cookies, which were served with cider.

In the spring, the kindergarten students will go on the two remaining trips. They will see the sugaring process in action at Breakneck Farm. They will also return to the Wellington Arboretum for a guided tour.

The Fast Track Grants are on a competitive basis to encourage teachers to be educational innovators. Dave and Sandy Perloff live in California but have a home in Maine.

The Perloffs believe it is important for them to visit the schools that receive Fast Track Grants and offer encouragement and support to the teachers and students.

In November, a representative of the Maine Community Foundation came to the school on behalf of the Perloffs. The Perloffs visited the school in January to talk with the staff and students and learn more about the “tree hunt” project.



The kindergartners had a beautiful November day to visit Hall’s Tree Farm.



Mrs. Perloff talks with Chancelor Knowlton about his tree portfolio while Kailee Ward looks on.



Mr. Perloff looks at Owen Bennett’s and Noah Drew’s tree.



Kindergarten students at Wellington Arboretum.



Alison Quimby stands next to a 5-year-old tree.