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SCHODACK

CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT



NOVEMBER 2008

Residents Encouraged to Attend Community Forums

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

The Schodack Central School District is about to enter an important period of decision making. We know that the community is concerned about property taxes and the cost and quality of our schools. We also expect that as a result of the economic downturn, and the State's budget problems, we will see dramatic changes in State Aid.

Dealing with these factors will require community-wide decisions, grounded in a consensus on how we all see the future of our schools. Many of you recently expressed your thoughts on these matters by completing a Community Survey. But this was just the beginning of what must be an ongoing conversation that will help shape our future. We have set aside

three dates for Community Forums, (November 6, 12 and 19) when you can discuss your ideas with each other and members of your Board of Education. These Forums will set the stage for an ongoing process of community involvement and discussion.

At the first Forum, information from the Survey will be briefly shared and specific concerns explored. We want to

hear from as many people as possible – you will talk and we will listen. While each of the Forums will explore different issues, together they will begin to set expectations for future direction.

Your Board knows that it cannot successfully address the future without solid information from the community on your values and preferences about such topics as educational course offerings, sports and other non-academic programs, transportation services, and many other areas.

Please help shape the future for our children and our community by participating in these Forums.

Thank you,
The Board of Education

COMMUNITY FORUM DATES...

Thursday, November 6

Maple Hill High School Library, 7 p.m.

Tuesday, November 11

Castleton Ambulance, 7 p.m.

Tuesday, November 18

Castleton Public Library, 7 p.m.

Seniors Get Their Just Desserts at CES

A group of two dozen seniors from the community enjoyed an afternoon of home cooked treats on October 23 as Castleton Elementary School, in conjunction with the CES PTO, held its annual Senior Citizens Dessert Hour.

"This is a special day," Principal Jason Chevrier told the group that gathered in the cafeteria of the CES modular village. "Thank you for taking time to come here today. It's truly a pleasure to have you here."

As seniors munched on cookies, brownies, apple crisp and other treats baked by parents and teachers, each grade at Castleton Elementary came in to provide entertainment. Smiles abounded as the young students sang songs, danced, and gave away drawings they made for the school's guests.

The afternoon also provided an opportunity for the group of seniors to share stories with each other about attending Schodack schools, their grandchildren who currently attend, and even some who had taught at Schodack.

After Principal Chevrier noted that the school will be able to show off their new CES building at next year's dessert hour, many of the seniors mentioned how impressed they



were with how the school had made the modular trailers into a nice school environment.

In fact, the only complaint from the group seemed to be that there were too many tempting desserts to choose from. "We'll roll you out if we have to," Chevrier jokingly told the group.

At the end of the event, seniors thanked Principal Chevrier for inviting them.

"My husband was just saying as we watched the children, this is our future and it looks good," said Amelia Harter, who attended the event for the first time with her husband Paul.

Schodack Named One of Top Performing School Districts

Schodack Central School District was recently named one of the top performing school districts in the Capital Region by *The Business Review* of Albany.

Schodack placed 14th in the newspaper's annual rankings of 85 school districts in 11 Capital Region counties, according to the special report published in *The Business Review's* September 26th edition.

The ranking places Schodack in the top one-sixth of all

Capital Region schools and second in Rensselaer County. *The Business Review* based its rankings on performances of the New York State Report Card for 2006-07, released in August.

"This is great news for our district to be ranked so high by such a respected publication as *The Business Review*," said Superintendent Doug Hamlin. "I congratulate the great work that our faculty and staff do here at Schodack and for all the hard work our students put into their educations."



Surplus Equipment for Bid

Consistent with Board of Education policy, the following surplus items will be sold to the highest bidder. All items sold as is. Please contact Matt LaClair at 732-4982 with questions. For a bid sheet, please call the Business Office at 732-2124. All sealed bids must be received by December 4.

1. (5) Wooden desks
2. (1) Metal Desk
3. (1) Plastic food warmer
4. (2) Metal chair carts
5. (9) Overhead projectors
6. (3) 25" TV's
7. (9) Overhead projectors
8. (8) Filmstrip projectors
9. (1) Metal cabinet
10. (1) Wooden cabinet
11. (5) Octagon tables
12. (2) Reel to reel players
13. (4) VCR's
14. (1) Shredder

Raising Funds for New Playground

The Castleton Elementary School PTO has started a fundraising initiative to buy additional playground equipment for children at CES.

The initiative, which Schodack Central School District supports and is helping to promote, includes selling memorial bricks to be placed on the grounds of CES and a raffle with a grand prize of \$10,000.

"Our goal is to involve as many community members as possible and make their names a permanent part of the rich history of the beloved elementary school site," said PTO member Angie Beber. "By holding one large raffle, we hope not to overburden the community with many small scale events."

All fundraising proceeds will go directly towards the purchase and installation of playground equipment at CES. The existing playground equipment at CES modular village, which the school district purchased, will be moved to CES as well.

"Once again, our Parent Teacher Organizations have shown their tremendous commitment to our schools and our children," said Superintendent Doug Hamlin. "We truly appreciate this and all their tireless efforts to help us improve our schools."

For information about the fundraising efforts, visit the PTO's website at www.orgsites.com/ny/cespto or call Angie Beber at 732-0379.

District Limits Spending in Face of Uncertain Economy

Concerned that the downturn in the economy could result in a mid-year reduction of state aid, Schodack Central School District is reducing spending in a variety of areas for the remainder of the school year.

After consulting with building principals and other administrators, Superintendent Doug Hamlin explained at the October 16 Board of Education meeting how 2008-09 spending could be reduced by nearly \$300,000.

"New York State is in a severe financial crisis," Hamlin said. "We have to prepare for the possibility of a mid-year cut in state aid. Even if that does not happen, we need to prepare for the uncertainty of state support in the years ahead."

Hamlin explained the reductions would have an impact on programs and services but that given the ever-worsening economic climate, the district has little choice.

"There's no question these cuts will force us to do less," Hamlin said. "For the current year, the goal is to maintain the student programs we have begun. Then we will have to see what 2009-10 holds."

Hamlin noted that Governor David Patterson plans to announce the executive budget a month early this year, on December 16, which will be the first indication of what schools will face next year for state aid.

Concern about cuts to educational programs was a key worry voiced by

some attending the Oct. 16 Board of Education meeting. Hamlin assured that the district is doing everything it can to ensure that doesn't happen in 2008-09. The district plans to reduce spending in areas such as funding for staff to attend conferences, reducing overtime, and restraining equipment expenditures to emergency replacements.

"We're doing all this so we can avoid cutting programs already in progress," Hamlin said. "We will manage through this. We have a lot of great people working here. We'll do what can to ensure our children get the academic programs they require and our parents expect. At the same time, there are financial realities out there we will have to deal with here."

Excitement Builds for New CES

Faculty and staff at Castleton Elementary School modular village can hardly wait until February when their students will have new, larger classrooms that are perfect for group instruction.

"I'm really looking forward to it," said Karen Williams, a second grade teacher who has been with Schodack for 17 years. "This was a beautiful space, too. I liked it here. But it's temporary and we're all excited for the new building."

On February 25, after the mid-winter recess, Castleton Elementary School will officially open its doors to students, parents, faculty and staff as a new chapter for the historic school gets underway.

The construction project is currently ahead of schedule and on budget with time built in so parents and students can take tours of the building early next year before classes start. An open house for the community will also be scheduled.

"There's definitely a sense of excitement," said Principal Jason Chevrier. "Although, I can't say enough about how flexible our teachers and staff have been here at the modular village. It's not me that has made the temporary modular facility a success, it's been them doing what they do each and every day."

Chevrier rattled off numerous new features at the new CES, such as a full-size gymnasium, a larger, brighter library/media center, and separate drop off areas for buses and parents. But it's the larger classrooms that everyone seems most excited about, Chevrier said.

"When we designed the building, we thought a lot about



Date Set for Move to CES

Parents of children in grades K-3 will see their young ones return to Castleton Elementary School on Wednesday, February 25 as the building officially welcomes back students.

With the construction project ahead of schedule, maintenance crews will have plenty of time to ensure everything is ready for students to return, from waxing the floors to testing telephone and internet connections. The district also scheduled three conferences days around the mid-winter recess to give faculty and staff time to set up their classrooms.

As the February 25th date grows closer, parents of CES children will receive more information detailing the transition from CES modular village.

If parents have any questions, please call the CES main office at 732-7755.

making the classrooms big enough to support small group instruction, which is so important at the elementary level," Chevrier said. "And there are also small breakout rooms between classrooms, which gives us great flexibility."

Kindergarten teacher Kathy Malloy agreed the larger classrooms will be great for instruction but she said she's also excited to have fourth grade back at CES for the start of the 2009-2010 school year. Younger students enjoy learning from older students, Malloy said, who hopes to have a reading buddies program where fourth grade students read to kindergartners.

"The space itself is beautiful," Malloy said. "I can't wait." But do faculty and staff think the children will be excited?

"Are you kidding me? They're going to be more excited than us," enthused Williams. "It's going to be Candyland for them because it's all going to be new."

Wildcat Pride Is Alive and Growing

Now in its second year, Wildcat Pride is not only progressing well at Maple Hill Middle School but this year students are also being recognized for excellence outside of school.

"Our goal is not just to sustain Wildcat Pride but to grow it and involve things our students are doing in the community," said Principal Michael Bennett. "Wildcat Pride is about building the whole student. If we can recognize them for what they're doing outside school as well, that's great."

Wildcat Pride was started last year at Maple Hill Middle School as a way to encourage positive behavior. Students who exemplify the four components of Wildcat Pride – being safe, kind, respectful, and



responsible – are applauded at student assemblies and receive small prizes. Signs are posted throughout the Middle School to remind students while teachers and staff often talk about Wildcat Pride as well.

This year, students have also been recognized for excellence in the community, from participating in a cancer fundraiser to taking part in a horse show. Parents are encouraged to let teachers know about positive things their children are involved in.

"We've reached out to the community for good news that we can celebrate," Bennett said. "Our students, faculty and staff have really bought into this. It's been a real positive here."

District Seeks BOE Candidates

Schodack Central School Board of Education is seeking individuals to fill the seat of former Board of Education member Rik Cosgrave, who resigned in September, for the remainder of the school year.

The Board of Education decided to appoint an interested resident for the balance of the 2008-09 school year rather than commit to the expense of a special election. Mr. Cosgrave's vacated seat will be up for election on May 19, 2009.

Anyone interested in filling the seat is asked to mail a letter stating interest to Clerk, Board of Education, District Office, 1216 Maple Hill Road, Castleton, NY 12033. For questions, please call the District Office at 732-2297.

The deadline to apply is Nov. 12. Board members will interview candidates on Nov. 17 with an appointment at the November 20 Board of Education meeting. The new member assumes responsibility immediately upon appointment through June 30, 2009.



Congrats to Coaches for Milestones

Maple Hill High School's soccer coaches both reached milestones recently as Girls Soccer Coach Sheila Golden earned her 300th career victory and Boys Soccer Coach Dan Gillespie earned his 500th career victory. Coach Golden, pictured with her team after the win, reached the milestone with the team's Oct. 8 victory over Taconic Hills. Coach Gillespie reached the milestone with the team's win the next day with a victory over Taconic Hills as well. Congratulations to our coaches and players!

Receive School News in Your E-mail Inbox

The next time school closes early due to weather, would you like an e-mail instantly telling you? Want a reminder when school report cards are sent home? How about an announcement for an activity your child might be interested in?

Then sign up for Schodack eNews, the school district's new parental e-mail notification system. Visit the school website at www.schodack.k12.ny.us for information about Schodack eNews and an opportunity to sign up. Community members interested in receiving school news are also welcome to subscribe to the free service.

Once you subscribe, we'll e-mail you important information throughout the school year. All e-mail addresses are kept completely private and will not be released to anyone. You can unsubscribe at any time. Schodack eNews is an additional communication system and will not replace existing parental notification systems like automated phone calls.

More than 500 parents and community members have already signed up for Schodack eNews, which was launched this school year.

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