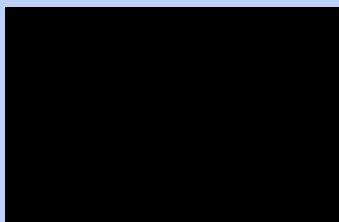




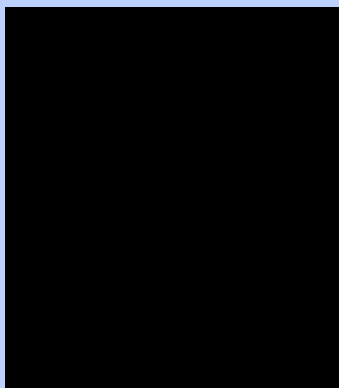
News Briefs



Fourth-grader Joshua Izenbart plays the title role of Pinocchio in Churchill's Spring Musical on May 7. The musical production shared the stage with the 4th-grade orchestra which played a few selections to show off the results of a year's worth of practice.



In a rite of passage for all of the district's 6th-graders, Anthony Swiatnicki prepares to launch his homemade rocket. Sixth-graders study and make rockets during their study of science.



School District and Teachers' Union Agree to New Contract

On May 13, District 153 and its teachers' union, the Homewood Education Association, finalized a labor agreement through the year 2012.

School board members and union representatives engaged in weeks of interest-based bargaining, a negotiation strategy in which parties collaborate to find win-win solutions to common concerns. While the negotiators tackled many topics, the primary issues were those of salary and health benefits.

The resulting four-year agreement provides District 153 staff with median salaries and benefits that are more in-line with comparable school districts in the region.

District Superintendent Dale Mitchell said the new agreement will help the district retain and attract high quality teachers.

“Under the new agreement our teachers won't be among the highest paid around, but we won't be at the low end, either,” Mitchell said. “District 153 has some of the best, most dedicated teachers around, and we do not want to lose them to higher paying school districts.”

Negotiations also included concerns about the work environment and strategies to improve student achievement.

“Student achievement is the district's bottom line,” said School Board President Shelly Marks. “We have the utmost respect for the professionalism of our union representation during this process.”



School Board President Shelly Marks (left) and Homewood Education Association President Yoka Ward (right) sign a new four-year labor agreement.

Trading Places at Millennium School

Millennium School's two top administrators will be trading job titles and responsibilities this summer. Effective July 1st, current Assistant Principal Shirley Watkins will take over as principal while current Principal Mary Kay Gardiner will assume the assistant principal role.

After the recent birth of her third child, Gardiner requested the change in order to better accommodate the needs of her young family.

“This district tries to help our staff balance their professional lives with their responsibilities to family whenever possible,” said District Superintendent Dale Mitchell. “In this case, we are incredibly fortunate to have someone of Shirley Watkins' caliber ready to step in and create a smooth transition for both staff and students.”

2007-08 Jerry Morin Educational Excellence Award Winners

Named in honor of retired school board member Jerry Morin, the Educational Excellence Award is presented each quarter to a teacher or other staff member who has shown outstanding commitment to student achievement. Congratulations to this year's winners!



James Hart 7th-grade science and language arts teacher Sharon White with Jerry Morin.



Millennium School special education teacher Jackie Demarco (left) and 5th-grade teacher Belinda Hovan (right) are congratulated by Millennium Assistant Principal Shirley Watkins (middle).



Churchill School EXCEL (gifted education) teacher Joanne Obszanski with Jerry Morin.



Willow School psychologist Dominic Balmaseda with Jerry Morin.

District Transitions

District Bids Farewell to 2008 Retirees

Eight outstanding staff members will not be returning to district classrooms or office next year. The school district is profoundly grateful for their collective 180+ years of hard work on behalf of our students. Their contributions will be sorely missed.

Carolyn Culver, assistant, Student Support Services, 12 years of service

Ann Druetzler, language arts teacher, James Hart School, 13 years of service

Diane Gregory, 4th-grade teacher, Churchill School, 37 years of service

Joan Rachowicz, music



Retirees at the District Retirement Dinner held on May 22 at Ravisloe Country Club (from L to R): Lizabeth Watman, Karen Schillings, Carol Shames, Marsha Weiner. Retirees Carolyn Culver, Ann Druetzler, Diane Gregory, and Joan Rachowicz were not in attendance.

teacher, Churchill School, 14 years of service

Karen Schillings, art teacher, Willow School, 14 years of service

Carol Shames, 1st-grade teacher, Willow School, 26

Lizabeth Watman, speech pathologist, Willow School, 34 years of service

Marsha Weiner, 2nd-grade teacher, Willow School, 34 years of service

James Hart Celebrates Graduation of 8th-Graders

Diplomas were awarded to 268 of James Hart 8th-graders in a ceremony at Homewood-Flossmoor High School on June 2.

In keeping with James Hart tradition, three students were chosen to speak on the topics of Past, Present, and Future. Kevin Noe on the Past, Josh Raggs on the Present, and Katherine Ciesla on the Future impressed the crowd with their public speaking

abilities.

Awards from the PTA, the Homewood Rotary Club and the American Legion also were given to exceptional students based on teacher recommendations. Miho Nakamura and Chris Brown won the PTA award for service. Katherine Ciesla and Mike Hurley were honored by the American Legion. The Rotary Club recognized Linda Kuerston and Marty Johnson.

The Betty Dillon Awards were presented to Katherine Ciesla, Emily Drwiega,



Josh Raggs, Kevin Noe and Katherine Ciesla address the audience at the 2008 graduation ceremony.

Michael Hurley, Morgan Lundblad, Sophia Sayeed, and Adam Wiggerhauser for earning straight A's in the most difficult classes.

Congratulations to all our 2008 graduates!

District Innovations

Willow School Students Map, Stash and Geocache Through Math, Reading and Geography Lessons

During the past school year, 1st-graders in Mrs. Johnson's class and 2nd-graders in Mrs. Boehm's class at Willow School explored mapping and all its numerous math and reading applications aided by some cool new technology.

The project, supported by a grant from the Homewood Foundation for Educational Excellence, taught students the compass rose, the use of a compass, and the use of a various internet mapping programs.

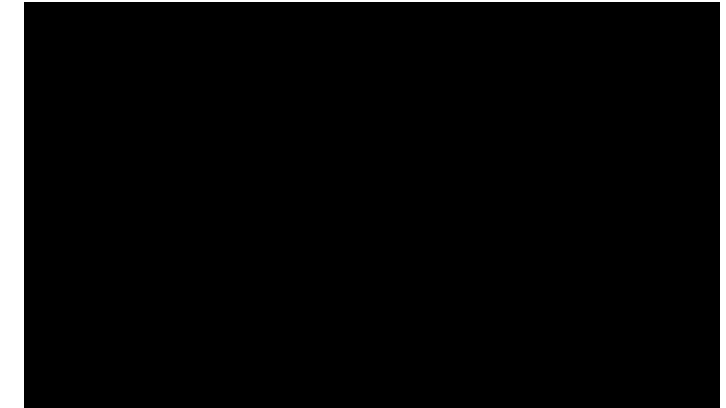
As part of their learning, students worked in small groups across grades to design simple maps of their classrooms, draw a map to scale of the playground, identify locations in Homewood using aerial photographs, and locate their homes and a variety of famous locations around the

world using Google Earth.

Patti Jo Boehm said that she and Connie Johnson had not anticipated how much the two classes would enjoy working together.

"Forty-three children in a small classroom on task for 45 minutes to an hour is a delightful thing to watch," she said.

To further expand the students' knowledge of geography, the classes also engaged in "geocaching," an internet-supported treasure hunt that uses Global Positioning Systems (GPS) devices to find and hide caches (usually small containers filled with a logbook and trinkets of little value). They also sent out and tracked the journeys of three "travel bugs." These travel bugs (small objects) are transported from cache to cache



Patti Jo Boehm helps students identify various Homewood landmarks on an aerial photograph.

by fellow geocachers who then log the bug's travels on a website.

The students charted their three bugs' routes on world maps.

"We thought the U.S. would be our limit, but two of our bugs crossed the Atlantic," said Johnson. "The children were so excited to receive

messages of their travels, often times in foreign languages."

Boehm, Johnson and Willow School staff members Wanda Gunter and Cathy Ward have been invited to present their geocaching unit at the National School Board Association Technology and Learning Convention in Seattle this October.

Churchill Test Drives District's New Virtual Field Trip Technology

On March 17th, Churchill School's 4th-grade students traveled to Connor Prairie Living History Museum located near Indianapolis to learn more about life in the 1800's. Except the students didn't leave Churchill School. Connor Prairie came to Churchill School by sending three presenters to Homewood and via a live webcast between the school and the museum.

This virtual field trip was the first test of the district's newly-acquired videoconfer-

encing equipment. Churchill Principal Cece Coffey said the experience was well-received by students and staff alike.

"It gave us a chance to really see what this kind of technology can do for us in the future," Coffey said. "I think it means we will be able to give our kids access to places and experiences they wouldn't be able to see or experience for themselves in a million years."

The students started their

field trip in the morning watching a dramatic presentation via teleconference called, "Follow the North Star," a depiction of the Underground Railroad. The powerful skit elicited a lively question-and-answer session between the students in Homewood and the reenactors in Connor Prairie.

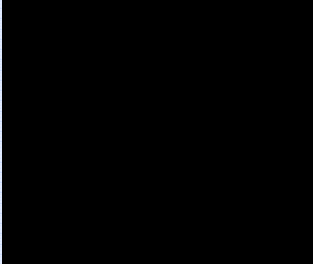
In the afternoon, the students attended live presentations by actor/historians reenacting roles of a Native



Above, Churchill 4th-graders have many questions about the life of Delaware Tribe Native Americans.

American trader, a one-room schoolhouse master, and a recent Irish immigrant to America.

Events Promote Learning and Sharing Between Grades

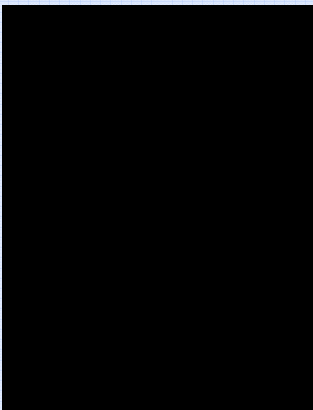


The month of April offered numerous opportunities for the older students in the district to interact with the younger ones.

Musicians and storytellers performed for younger students. Willow students traveled to Millennium School to read with older "buddies." Artists from James Hart School visited Churchill to help EXCEL students complete research projects and triaramas on animals.

Above, 2nd-grader Chris Sparks reads to his 6th-grade reading buddies from Millennium School, Alec Thrailkill and R. J. Howell.

Below, 8th-graders Kasey Reid and Toso Mohammed-Haruna lend a hand in finishing 3rd-grader Katie Carlton's presentation.



Homewood's Education Foundation Announces New Grants

The Homewood Foundation for Educational Excellence has awarded about \$9,500 in grants to support eleven new projects during the 2008-09 school year.

The Foundation was created in 2005 to raise money for special projects that often do not fit into the regular school district budget.

SEEDkids Book Walk. The District's SEEDkids program will acquire a library of multicultural books for the 3rd-grade Book Walk activity.

James Hart Environmental Courtyard. Support will be provided to purchase additional butterfly gardens, native plants, and to install a weather station.

Kids Can Cook Healthy. Willow School's Bee Healthy, Bee Smart Initiative will host a series of cooking classes in which parents and children will learn how to prepare easy and nutritional breakfasts and snacks.

Operation Read! Millennium School's Daily Living Skills class will receive support to purchase supplemental games and other materials to enhance student reading skills.

Author Cynthia DeFelice to Visit 6th-Grade. Author of many children's books, Cynthia DeFelice, will visit Millennium School to discuss her novel, *Weasel*, a book that all 6th-grade students read during the school year.

Newspaper Club Cameras. James Hart's Newspaper Club will receive support to

help purchase cameras necessary to the production of the Panther Paw Print.

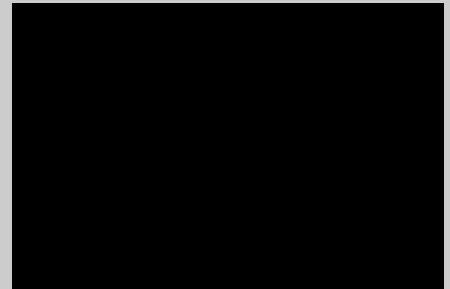
History Alive! Funds are provided to purchase *History Alive!*, an activities-based program that will help social studies teachers at James Hart and Millennium Schools relate present day situations to previous times in U.S. history for their students.

Willow Way Puppeteers. Second-grade students will participate in a program in which they perform a series of puppet shows for their fellow students to illustrate the behavior rules and expectations of the school.

Special Olympics Basketball Team Uniforms. Uniforms will be purchased for the district's Special Olympics basketball team (see related story in gray box).

Special Willow School Open House. Willow School will host a special back-to-school night so that parents can learn more about the Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS) being implemented by the district.

Congratulations Homewood Steamers



The Homewood Steamers, a basketball team consisting of students from Hart and Millennium Schools, placed 3rd at the Special Olympics State Championships on March 16.

The Steamers were undefeated during the regular season and won a gold medal at the District Championships. Students Christine Redmond and Gina Rotondi also won gold medals for individual basketball skills.

Members of the team are 8th-graders Chris Brown, Josh Collins-Craig, Andy Courington; 7th-graders Londyll Dabbs, Luis Garcia.; 6th-graders Brian Brownlee, Nick Falkner, Cody West; and 5th-graders Quewone Berry and Jalen Fair.

Steamers' coach Grant Sikkema was named Coach of the Year of Area 7 Special Olympics on May 3rd.

Someone Special: Just Like You. Through children's literature, guest speakers and other activities, Mrs. Boehm's 2nd-graders and Mrs. Johnson's 1st-graders will learn more about persons with disabilities. The project will culminate in a trip to a para-Olympic sporting event.

Night at Balmoral Raises Thousands for School Projects

Nearly 250 people turned out at Balmoral Park on March 15 for the Homewood Foundation for Educational Excellence's 3rd Annual Win, Place and Show Your

Support fundraiser.

Over \$16,000 were raised from ticket sales and the proceeds of a silent auction. Proceeds will be used to fund projects in the 2008-09 school year (see story left) and finish projects from previous years.

Save the Date: October 18, 2008



A benefit pasta dinner and student performances.

Come for the Pasta...stay for the Palooza!

Many Thanks to the Following Individuals, Groups and Businesses For Their Generous Donations and Continued Support of Our Schools

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Hungry Hill Sausage

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Rookies Family Sports Bar

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Jackie Rotondi, Mary Kay Cosmetics

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Mary Ann Savage

Savoia's T-Go Shop

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Willow School

Winestyles, Frankfurt

Sally Wolford

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Jacqui Parisi, Business Manager
Gail Huizinga, Coordinator for Teaching, Learning
and Accountability
Sue Mecozzi, Director of Student Support
Services
Eric Farmer, Network Administrator
Shelley Peck, Communications

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Cece Coffey, Principal
Tonya Morris, Asst. to the Principal

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District 153 Staff and Students Give Back to the Community

James Hart School Raises Over \$3,000 to Fight Children's Cancer

Six teachers, three students and one administrator had their heads shaved in front of gymnasium full of junior high students as part of a James Hart fundraiser for the St. Baldrick's Childhood Cancer Foundation.

Willow Students Have a Ball Raising Awareness of Diabetes

Students at Willow School raised over \$7,100 for the American Diabetes Association at its *Field Day for Diabetes* on May 16. Throughout the day, classes participated in a series of outdoor events to raise awareness of diabetes and to raise money for the fight against the disease.



Millennium and Hart Students Walk for a Reason: Special Olympics



Millennium Media Center Director Rita Stenning cools off student walkers with a spray bottle during the school's June 2nd Walk-a-Thon for Special Olympics. Millennium raised about \$3,100 during the event. James Hart students also raised over \$3,000 through a combination of a walk and a raffle to hit a teacher in the face with a pie.

The "After" Photo: Back (L to R): Superintendent Dale Mitchell, 8th-grade teacher Ric Druse, 8th-grade teacher Jack Gaham, physical education teacher Carey Sullivan, 7th-8th grade teacher Herb Ferguson. **Front (L to R):** 7th-grade teachers Jon Herron and Tom Jaminski, and 7th-grade students John Maxwell, Zach Sayeed, and Kenny Nye.

Ann Konecki's 1st-grade class was the school's top fund-raising classroom.