

# SUNSET RIDGE

## School District 29 Board Newsletter

www.sunsetridge29.net

July 2010



Dr. Linda Vieth

**Dear District 29  
Community  
Members,**

I hope you are having a wonderful summer! Sunset Ridge continues to be a busy place, even during the summer. In addition to routine summer cleaning and maintenance, teachers are attending workshops and participating in committee work. Office staff and administrators are preparing for the new school year, enrolling new students, and finalizing schedules. For many of us, the new school year began on June 4!

The summer is a great time to reflect on the previous school year and look forward to the next. The 2009-2010 school year was a busy and productive year for our staff and students! We are proud of our students and their hard work. It was a year of growth and learning for all of them. Some of their accomplishments are highlighted later in this newsletter. We are especially proud of our eighth grade graduates, who were honored at our graduation ceremony on June 2.

In addition to the wonderful achievements of our students,

*Continued on page 6*



### **Congratulations to the Class of 2010!**

Fifty-seven students comprising the class of 2010 received their diplomas in an evening ceremony on Wednesday, June 2. Chief of Police Bill Lustig began the program by leading students and guests in the Pledge of Allegiance. Dr. Linda Vieth congratulated the students, their families and teachers and encouraged the graduates to ask themselves two questions at the end of each day: *Did I do my best today? Was I a good person?*

Students selected by their classmates to be speakers in the ceremony included: Kevin Blair and Jane de Loys, Welcome; Kelly Bonds and Charlotte McGuire, Class History; Tori Conran and Nicole Phillips, Class Gift; Julia Hagen and Molly Fischer, Farewell.



*Diplomas in hand, students were all smiles during the recessional.*

The students commissioned a sculpture to be placed in the Learning Center as their class gift. Principal Bryan Albro presented the graduates as Mrs. Phoebe Raymond, President, awarded their diplomas on behalf of the Board of Education. The ceremony concluded with the 2010 class video.

Following the ceremony, guests offered congratulations to the graduates at a reception in the small gym. Students then adjourned to the beautifully decorated cafeteria for their celebration party.

## School Board Decides to Phase Facilities Improvements Using Current Revenues

Over the past 18 months District 29 has been engaged in a comprehensive facility study with BLDD Architects. The initial part of the process involved staff and parent surveys, interviews, and a thorough analysis of both Middlefork and Sunset Ridge School buildings. This detailed review resulted in the decision to continue on with a more extensive planning process. Priorities, based on educational objectives and program needs, were established and various plans were developed, each illustrating how these priorities could be met. Six Community Engagement meetings were held, during which staff, administration, Board of Education members, parents, and residents analyzed the drawings and options presented by BLDD.

At a Special Board Meeting/Community Engagement Meeting on June 29, 2010, the Board continued its discussion regarding the facility study. Superintendent Linda Vieth and BLDD Architects presented the list of facility priorities in “costed menu” format. This format allowed the Board to consider projects that were smaller in scale and free standing, as opposed to the consideration of larger, more comprehensive drawings. This analysis gave the Board the tools it needed to zero in on high priority projects, review their benefits and associated costs, and consider budgetary implications. By considering high priority items as singular, lower cost projects, the Board determined it could phase in various smaller projects over time, using current revenues and eliminating the need for alternate funding for a larger project in the near future.

### Facilities Committee to Develop Plan

The Board has now charged the Facilities Study Committee with preparing a facilities plan, which will include specific short term and long-term projects, refined costs, and a general time frame for project completion. The air conditioning of both schools, considered by the Board for several years, was identified as a high priority and may be part of the short-term list. The top programmatic projects under consideration for the near future include breakout rooms and multipurpose space at both



*Fourth graders helped Village officials plant a tree in Willow Park on Arbor Day.*

schools. Expanded space for the Sunset Ridge strings program, relocation of the 4th-5th-6th grade science lab, and new student washrooms might also be addressed in conjunction with these undertakings. Projects on the long-term list may include improvement of ingress/egress, new water piping, improved ventilation, a new music suite, and a new or restructured gymnasium at Sunset Ridge School.

### Board Will Consider Plan on August 24

The Committee’s plan will be presented to the Board of Education for review and possible approval at its August 24, 2010 regular meeting. The plan, while containing specific recommendations for future facilities work, will continue to be regarded as a “living document,” and can be modified as economic conditions, budgetary factors, educational program requirements, and facility needs change in the future. Projects on the priority list could be phased in over time as the budget permits.

The process leading up to this point has been long and intensive. It included the initial study and facility review, Community Engagement Meetings, and many conversations with staff, parents, community members, and representatives of community organizations. The Board appreciates and values the input it received from these various stakeholders, and looks forward to their continued involvement as the process moves forward.

## Awards Recognize Outstanding Student Efforts and Achievements

Academic, athletic and fine and performing arts awards were presented to District students for the 2009-2010 school year. Honors were awarded to:

### Outstanding Achievement

*for scholarship, leadership and citizenship*

Julia Hagen—8th Grade  
 Danny Elfman—8th Grade  
 Molly Fischer—8th Grade  
 Alexandra Karahalios—8th Grade

Lily Hines—7th Grade  
 Julia Rotunno—7th Grade

### Jim Clarkson Award

*for outstanding effort*

Tori Conran—8th Grade  
 Sammie Jacob—8th Grade  
 Adam Khan—8th Grade  
 Katie Miller—7th Grade  
 Maddie Sacks—7th Grade

### Sportsmanship

*for exemplary conduct on and off the field*

Andrew Blechman—7th Grade  
 Maddy Sacks—7th Grade  
 Lily Hines—7th Grade  
 Jane Totaro—6th Grade  
 Paige Phillips—6th Grade  
 Peter Hindsley—6th Grade  
 Joe Lewis—6th Grade

### Outstanding Athletic Achievement

Mick Donohue—8th Grade  
 Danny Elfman—8th Grade  
 Julia Hagen—8th Grade  
 Ricky Samuelson—8th Grade

### Band Director's Award

Paul Song—8th Grade

### Renaissance Award

Kevin Crowley—8th Grade

### Music Man Award

Kevin Blair—8th Grade  
 Derek Hawley—8th Grade  
 Adam Khan—8th Grade



*Award recipients were honored at end-of-year assemblies. Their names will be added to plaques hanging in the foyer at Sunset Ridge.*

## Congratulations to Emily Reich Recipient of the 2010 Dr. B. Scholarship

The scholarship is awarded to a high school senior who exemplifies the qualities of academic excellence, character, and service to others that honor his or her education at Sunset Ridge School.

## Strategic Planning Update

Through the dedicated efforts of teachers, administrators, school board and community members, fourteen action plan committees have made significant progress in actualizing the goals of the District 29 Strategic Plan. A summary of the recently completed Implementation Year Two follows. The District will continue to address the themes and goals identified in the Plan, along with curricular reviews of Science, Physical Education and Health in the 2010-11 school year. The school board extends its deep appreciation to all who have devoted their energy, intellect and creativity to “*cultivating a learning community that engages the hearts and minds of students, one child at a time.*”

### Theme 1: Academic Growth through an Engaging Curriculum

Implement the Measures of Academic Progress student achievement testing system and analyze the results to strengthen curriculum and instruction.

Pilot new reading program (Treasures) in grades 2-5.

Completed second year of test administration in the fall and spring; disseminated test results to staff and parents; reported to Board and staff regarding student data analysis; conducted staff development relative to using MAP data for instructional planning. Next steps: in-service training to more fully utilize data.

Conducted fall in-service with publisher and grade level articulations throughout the year; implemented Treasures; gathered student and teacher feedback and performance data. Program is well received. Next steps: Introduce Jolly Phonics in grades K-1.

### Theme 2: Meeting the Unique Needs of Learners

Implement recommendations regarding workload and transitions in grades 4-8.

Continue to plan for staff development in the area of engagement in student learning.

Grade level guidelines published and posted on website; grades 7-8 homework calendars posted on website; ongoing monitoring of recommendations at monthly faculty meetings; guidelines will be included in next Sunset Ridge Handbook.

15 staff members participated in Sunny Ridge University (SRU) book study and seminar series.

### Theme 3: Developing the Whole Child

Implement recommendations of the instrumental music study.

Develop and begin implementation of a comprehensive, multi-year plan for addressing the social and emotional educational needs of students.

Develop a committee to analyze student behavior and address areas of concern.

Hired additional teacher; introduced new schedule, curriculum, integration with core curriculum, handbook, web page; expanded performance opportunities and exposure to outside musicians; conducted meeting for 3rd grade parents. Next steps: complete curriculum map, long-term facilities solution, ongoing professional growth.

Developed leadership team and acquired expert consultation; developed and conducted needs assessment with staff, students and parents; implemented direct instruction sequence and targeted activities at Sunset Ridge; implemented professional development. In progress: research and identify SEL curricula to pilot in 2010-11; develop schoolwide SEL activities.

Established discipline committee; analyzed and researched behavior patterns and best practice; developed Code of Conduct and solicited feedback from staff, parents and students. Next steps: finalize Code of Conduct and implementation plan for 2010-2011.

#### Theme 4: Connecting with the Global Community

Integrate technology to enhance student learning and communication.

Continued implementation and monitoring of 1-1 laptop program in grades 3-8, laptop take-home in grades 7-8; continued Internet Safety instruction; conducted staff development regarding web skills and Promethean board use. Next steps: analyze 2010 laptop survey data, monitor Promethean use, revise staff Acceptable Use Policy, explore “Cloud computing” and iPad use.

Recommend enhancements to the District’s foreign language program.

Recommendations presented to the school board were approved in May. Recruited and hired an additional Spanish teacher for 2010-2011 to instruct grades 1-5.

#### Theme 5: Communication and Collaboration

Recommend improvements regarding communication vehicles including but not limited to: student performance feedback procedures, reporting/grading protocols, and parent conferences

Completed Middlefork communications philosophy, mission, home-school communication goal, and communications belief statements and communications guidelines for staff. Planning deferred at Sunset Ridge to permit adequate staffing of other action committees.

#### Theme 6: Building a Legacy

Study facility needs including but not limited to the effective use of space and safety issues.

Updated long-range facilities plan; completed comprehensive facilities study with recommendations to school board on June 29. (See article on page 2.)

Maintain fiscal responsibility and monitor school funding issues.

Maintained Illinois State Board of Education Financial Recognition Status. Analyzed current financial status; researched ways to reduce expenditures in 2010-11 budget. Next steps: continue to closely monitor revenues and expenditures.

Attract hire, and retain the highest quality staff.

Developed and implemented summative evaluation process for teachers; conducted rigorous interviews and reference checks in the hiring of new staff. Next steps: refine evaluation document.

Work with the Sunset Ridge Foundation to establish its role in the school community.

Deferred while the Foundation reorganizes and establishes its goals and priorities.

#### School Days, School Days

School resumes for the 2010-2011 school year with a morning session on Wednesday, August 25. The schedule for the day is:

<b>Kindergarten</b>	<b>8:30-10:30 a.m.</b>
<b>Grades 1-3</b>	<b>8:30-10:40 a.m.</b>
<b>Grades 4-5</b>	<b>8:20-10:30 a.m.</b>
<b>Grades 6-8</b>	<b>8:20-10:30 a.m.</b>

On Thursday, August 26, students will attend a full day of school. **Please note:** Kindergarten dismissal through the end of September is 11:50 a.m. First grade will dismiss at 1:50 p.m. during the first week of school and will extend to the regular dismissal time of 3:00 p.m. thereafter.

*VIETH, continued*

many District or school-based goals were accomplished. Middlefork celebrated its 50th anniversary in grand style! The students had fun experiencing the music, dance and clothing of the 1950's! Sunset Ridge School implemented various changes in its instrumental music program and offered a string program, jazz band, and bucket band. We implemented the new Treasures reading program in grades 2-5 and provided students with many opportunities to show off their technology skills at a District Board of Education meeting and at various technology conferences throughout the state. We confronted and dealt with H1N1, raised funds for Haitian earthquake relief and added twenty minutes to the school day to better accomplish all this.

The Board continued its facilities study with Community Engagement meetings (see page 2 for more information). A District committee researched the possibility of expanding our foreign language program beyond grades 5-8, and the decision was recently made to add Spanish instruction to 1st through 4th grades next year. We conducted student and parent focus groups regarding school climate, and a committee

worked on a new Sunset Ridge Code of Conduct. It was a very busy and productive year!

Preparations are well underway for the new school year. The 2010-2011 school year also promises to be one of growth and learning for all. In addition to the introduction of Spanish instruction at the lower grades, we will implement a new phonics program in kindergarten and first grade. Our new Code of Conduct will be in place at Sunset Ridge, a new social/emotional learning curriculum will be selected, and schoolwide activities will be considered. We also plan to begin reviews of our science, physical education and health programs. Sunset Ridge School will be led by our new principal, Dr. Shelley Carey, and we will provide many opportunities for parents and community members to get to know her. We are looking forward to another positive and fruitful year!

In the meantime, I hope all of our families and community members have a safe, happy and healthy summer! I look forward to seeing our students on August 25!

Sincerely,  
*Dr. Linda J. Vieth*  
Superintendent of Schools

### Vocabulary Rocks at Middlefork

Powered! Evidence! Confectionary! These are just some of the words that echoed through the halls of Middlefork School as staff excited children about language and helped them develop a large, rich vocabulary along with the skills for using those words.

Throughout the school year, teachers engaged students in activities that enhance and expand vocabulary. Consistent with Middlefork's anniversary celebration, the theme of this year's vocabulary initiative was Vocabulary Rocks!



*Mrs. Rosenberg's first graders displayed their costumes for the vocabulary parade.*

The year's focus on vocabulary awareness culminated with a schoolwide "vocabuparade" in which students dressed as their favorite words.

### District is Fully Recognized for Finance

District 29 achieved Full Recognition in 2009-2010 for excellence in finance. This is the highest category awarded by the Illinois State Board of Education for a School District Financial Profile.

In his letter to the District announcing this recognition, Christopher Koch, State Superintendent of Education, stated, "Given the economic difficulties school districts are facing, the State Board realizes this is a significant accomplishment...Congratulations on a job well done!"

## “Seussical” Hits All the Right Notes

Nearly 100 students participated on stage and behind the scenes during the four performances of the Sunset Ridge musical, “Seussical, Jr.” Leading roles were played by two different casts, allowing all students who wanted a major part to enjoy the limelight. Students who preferred participating behind the scenes were involved in stage crew, set design, and make-up.

Music teacher Jesse Nolan directed the show with the support of his wife Amy, assistant director; art teacher Lynn Horne, set design director; facilities manager Mike Arnold, technical director; and teacher associate Ashley Jahraus, assistant technical director. “This was really a student-driven show,” Mr. Nolan noted. “But it couldn’t have happened without the incredible support of the entire school: administration, faculty, facilities staff and parents. The way everyone worked together truly demonstrated the message of the play that each individual matters, no matter how big or small.”



*The cast and crew of “Seussical, Jr.”*

Photo by Lois Neustadt

## Service Learning Activities Promote Civic Responsibility

Service learning integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience and promote civic responsibility. Two such activities took place at Sunset Ridge this spring.



*Seventh grade students made and displayed posters announcing the Misericordia Candy Day sale.*

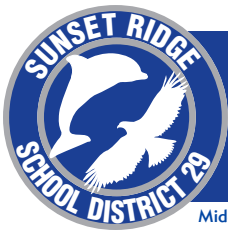
In conjunction with a language arts unit on disabilities, seventh grade students visited Misericordia, a non-sectarian home in Chicago that supports 550 children and adults with mild to profound developmental disabilities. They learned about the wide range of programs and experienced the friendliness and sense of pride of the hard-working residents. The students decided to support Misericordia’s annual fundraiser with a Candy Day sale at Sunset Ridge and collected over \$700 for the home.

Fifth grade girl scouts in troop #608 brainstormed ideas for improving Northfield as part of a leadership program to make a difference in their community. The



*Girl scouts display their newly planted shrubs at Sunset Ridge School.*

girls decided to enhance the driveway entrance to Sunset Ridge with a tree and shrubbery and raised \$900 for the plants. The girls and troop leaders met Facilities Manager Mike Arnold at the school on a Sunday afternoon to complete their project.



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**District 29 website**  
[www.sunsetridge29.net](http://www.sunsetridge29.net)

*The faculty and students  
at Middlefork  
and Sunset Ridge Schools  
extend a heartfelt  
thank-you to our parent  
and community volunteers  
for the many ways you  
contribute to our schools.  
Whether in the classrooms,  
lunchrooms, or libraries,  
helping with projects,  
sharing a special talent,  
participating in the PTO  
or on a committee, we  
value all you do on behalf  
of our schools.*



*Kindergarten classes took advantage of a warm, sunny day in May to enjoy their splash party, a favorite annual event.*