New York State Service Learning Newsletter

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Director's Notes:

Hi everyone. It's the end of the year and we would like to thank you ,your students, teachers, administrators, parents and community partners for all of your hard work and efforts in making this another successful service learning year. Your program should have received your FY 08-09 reapplication procedures and FY07-08 final evaluation directions. **Please make sure that you complete the LASSIE reports by June 30, 2008**, **your other online evaluations by July 10, 2008 and submission of your reapplication package by July 10, 2008**. I'm sorry to say that Lisa Dryzmala will be leaving Learn and Serve as of the end of June but happy to say that she is being promoted to a new job in the VESID office. She has been a great resource and advocate for all of our students and programs and she will be missed by all. Please drop her an email at ldryzmal@mail.nysed.gov and wish her well.

We continue to make strides in building our P-16 collaborative efforts and to expand service learning professional development activities and are working with colleges and universities, teacher centers statewide, statewide teacher and other professional associations, community based Organizations, businesses and BOCES to make this happen. We will keep you informed as to how this develops and how your programs students and teachers may become involved and support these efforts.

Enjoy this issue and have a great summer!!

ALBION SCHOOL: Wind Energy Debate

By Nicole Coleman

The Journal-Register

The Albion Central School District's first ever "World Cafe" on Thursday evening presented information about wind energy issues in an entirely new way.

Middle and high school students have been collaborating on the service learning project for more than two months. The information they gathered will be used to aid the towns of Albion and Gaines as they move forward with wind energy regulations.

The work was divided among the students as part of their academic curriculum, under the direction of grants manager Sue Starkweather. The project let students take an active role in a real issue facing towns in the county, she said.

Adam Krenning's environmental science class conducted the bulk of the research using a variety of resources. The class was broken into two "pro" and "con" wind energy research teams. The information they collected was then compiled into fact sheets for use by community members.

"For every pro we found a con, and for every con we found a pro," Starkweather said. "We're not taking a stand either way. ... It's important for us to show both sides."

Jonathan Sanford's sixth-grade Multi-Media Club took the fact sheets compiled by Krenning's class and created a PowerPoint slide show set to music. Toni Plummer's high school Leadership Club used the information to prepare questions for use at the World Cafe.

Wayne Wadhams' high school Computer Aided Drafting class produced a size comparison diagram based on a 410-foot wind turbine.

High school students had the opportunity to speak with attorney Dan Spitzer, who specializes in wind energy regulations. They also took a field trip in late March to visit 10 wind turbines located less than two hours away in Wethersfield.

Krenning said the students were still impressed by the turbines' size, although they were slightly smaller than those proposed by wind companies for the Albion and Gaines.

Unfortunately, the turbines were not spinning that day because of low wind speeds, making it difficult for students to accurately judge the noise level, he said.

"They loved looking at them," Krenning said. "They were amazed by them."

"My first impression was 'Wow — they're really big,' " said senior Amanda Deegan, a member of the Leadership Club. "It was kind of overwhelming to see how big they were."

Four representatives from Krenning's class presented their findings to the Albion Rotary Club at lunch Thursday as a practice run before the evening's community forum.

A modest, but interested, crowd in support of the students' efforts watched the PowerPoint presentation before the roundtable discussions began. Groups of four answered questions posed by the Leadership Club as a way to spark intelligent discussion about the positive and negative impact of wind energy locally.

Among the participants were Albion Supervisor Judy Koehler and Albion councilmen Doug Bloom and Timothy Neilans. High School Principal Mickey Edwards and Superintendent Ada Grabowski also participated.

The questions forced community members to discuss their thoughts about the potential environmental impacts of wind turbines.

"It's a very different way of presenting information and sharing information," Starkweather said. "We're all stakeholders."

For seniors Amber O'Kussick, Brandi Froman and William Phillips, the experience brought the real world into the classroom. They were completely unfamiliar with wind energy at the start of the project — now they are on their way to becoming experts.

The energy produced by 1.5 megawatt turbines is enough to power 500 homes, Phillips said. At 5 cents per kilowatt, it is cost effective, as well, he said.

Additional students who participated in the research phase were Dominic Bennett, Gary Ettinger, Eric Hering, Crystal Jones, Daniel Marx, Eliseo Rodriguez, Donna Snook, Michael Warren, Jessica Burgio, Stephenie Hill, Allanah Lamere, Brittany Rosario and Morgan Tinkous.

"It was pretty fun and interesting — trying to get the community involved," said junior Bobby Steeves, a member of the Leadership Club.

"We know a lot, but there's still a lot to cover," said sophomore Richard Messmer, an environmental science student. "We just scratched the surface."

Averill Park High School Students Earn Funds for Food Bank

This March, students from Averill Park High School's ceramics class created original bowls as well as decorated donated bowls as part of an "Empty Bowls" fundraiser. In this nation-wide program potters and ceramic artists create bowls to be filled with soup and offered to the public for a donation to feed the hungry. Happy customers enjoy the meal and go home with the beautiful bowls.

A local professional artist volunteered her time and talents to teach the students her art of underglaze paint decoration. In addition she generously donated over 100 bowls for our art students to paint. Students from Key Club also participated by obtaining donations of soup from local restaurants as well as helping out at the very popular event.

Margot, a student, wrote, "I attended the fundraiser myself eager for a bowl of soup and to see the outcome of our hard work… As an artist, I was delighted when someone recognized my initials on the bowl and came over to show me they had chosen the bowl I made. To enjoy making the bowls and know that someone could potentially receive a meal from the profits it made was very gratifying."

Over $1800.00 was made for the Regional Food Bank as a result of the successful fundraiser.

ALGONQUIN STUDENTS ENJOY "CULTURAL CONNECTIONS

This school year, some Algonquin Middle School students have been enjoying a variety of activities with elementary students at an after-school program for at-risk children who happen to be from the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico. On March 14, 2008 they visited the after-school and made bunny baskets, dyed eggs, and decorated cookies in pretty spring colors. They then ate pizza and had fun playing Twister and other games. The supervising teachers were Sharon Johnson, Carol Winkley, and Kelly Marrufo. Everyone is looking forward to the arrival of warmer weather when they can invite the children to Algonquin for a barbecue.

"Cultural Connections" is a part of our district's Service Learning Program which is federally funded through the State Education Department.

Bridging the Generation Gap, One Conversation at a Time
Mineola High School Senior Citizen Outreach

Over the years, Learn and Serve grants have made possible some wonderful programs for Mineola students and senior citizens and this spring was no exception!
Every month, senior citizens from our community join students in our high school for a program called "Lunch Bunch" For over twenty years, seniors and students have come together (students give up a lunch or free period or get permission from a teacher to miss class) to eat lunch and learn from one another. As part of the program, we try to focus on different programs or projects to keep the senior citizens aware of the many positive activities in our building. For example, musical groups from our Fine Arts department perform, art classes display and discuss their work, our Living Environment classes have talked about their service learning tree planting project etc. But one of our most well received initiatives was an emergency preparedness presentation done by members of our Red Cross Club at our last Lunch Bunch for this school year. Members of the club researched information to share about emergency preparedness for seniors that would be appropriate and applicable for those living in our area. The students shopped and filled "Grab and Go" bags: bright red backpacks, filled with some of the important articles to have in case of evacuation such as First Aid Kits, medicine holders, blankets, high energy food, bottled water etc. Senior citizens were thrilled with the informative PowerPoint presentation given by the students and really ecstatic when they realized that everyone was getting his or her own backpack to take home! It was a terrific way to end the year and both seniors and students learned a great deal. We were thrilled that Newsday, Long Island's newspaper, chose to highlight the program as part of their FutureCorps feature.

Another terrific service learning project which brought together senior citizens and highs school students was a memoir project done in one our ESL classes. High school students wrote and published memoirs and then shared these stories with residents of a local nursing home. Students then interviewed the residents about their lives and presented the seniors with the biographies and posters they created with this information. For many of our ESL students this was an experience they will remember forever. They heard stories of those who like themselves were once newcomers in our country and they found "grandparents" who encouraged and celebrated their unique accomplishments.

Submitted by Eileen Burke

ALBION SCHOOLS: Students Break the Generational Gap

By Nicole Coleman

The Journal-Register

ALBION — Memories and music from the Big Band era filled the Albion High School gym Wednesday as part of a day-long event celebrating senior citizens.

Students worked to make the prom-like "Golden Gala" possible as part of a multi-class service learning project, said grants manager Sue Starkweather.

More than 100 senior citizens arrived at the school bright and early to take tours of the school. Toni Plummer's health classes, with the help of professionals from Community Partners, a division of the Medina Memorial Health Care System, arranged an educational health fair.

Senior Kailey Winans staffed a table with information about cancer prevention, reminding attendees about the importance of annual mammograms and colonoscopies. At the table next door, students distributed pamphlets outlining home exercises to ease arthritis pain.

Additional screening booths allowed seniors to check their blood pressure and diabetes risk. Student-made recipe books containing heart healthy recipes were almost as popular as the low calorie, low sugar strawberry smoothies.

The chance to bowl or pl ay sports with the Nintendo Wii gaming system was also a hit.

"They loved it," Winans said. "They had so much fun with it."

To document the day, students in Kathy Winans special education class took digital photos of all of the attendees. The high school photography class spent some time giving them a few tips, said senior Amber O'Kussick.

Athena Nichol's art class gave seniors the chance to relax and paint their own souvenir bookmark or note card. Gary Condoluci provided on-the-spot neck and shoulder massages.

Lunch was a tasty spread with turkey croissant sandwiches. Afterward, the seniors enjoyed — and often danced to — Big Band songs performed by the jazz band and select chorus.

Among the soloists were senior Beka Degnan, singing "Moon River," and vocal director Gary Simboli, singing "Moonlight Serenade." Senior Megan O'Hearn sang "Bewitched, Bothered and Bewildered" to the delight of her mom, Wendy O'Hearn, and her great-grandmother, Virginia Gemberling.

"They didn't tell me she was going to sing," Gemberling said in between dances with members of the Leadership Club. "It was supposed to be a surprise."

In preparation for the gala, students learned how to ballroom dance in their physical education

classes, Starkweather said. The Police Explorers Club dressed in uniforms and helped direct parking.

Near the end of the school day, theme baskets donated by students and faculty were awarded as the door prizes. One prize was two wooden chairs made by the Technology Club; they will be completed, painted and delivered to the recipient by Mother's Day, said Student Council adviser Todd Eick.

What would a prom be without a royal court? Gemberling was named princess and Bill Staub was named prince. Bill and Joan Hudson were named king and queen.

"It's nice to see the community getting involved," said senior Justin Ward. As a member of Student Council, he volunteered his time escorting senior citizens to their tables. More than a few wouldn't let go, calling him their boyfriend. "It's something for them to do, have some fun and meet up with people they haven't seen in a while."

"It shows that our school can connect with the older generations," said senior Amanda Deegan, a member of Leadership Club and select chorus. "We really want to see it keep going."

Superintendent Ada Grabowski thanked those in attendance for their participation, inviting them to visit the school at any time.

A special day just for senior citizens has been a district initiative for over 20 years.

"It's an awesome event," Gemberling said. "If you're a senior and you don't attend this, you're missing out on a wonderful time."

Recycling Becoming A Routine at WSL

By: Jacob Henricks and Nick Scanu
Typed By: Jenna Hull

"It's not that easy being green." That is the motto of students and staff at West Sand Lake elementary School. It may not be easy, but we are working together and trying to do our best. Jacob Henrick says, "We like to say that no one has to do all of it, but all of us have to do some of it." That seems to be the formula for success at WSLE.

The people trying to make all this recycling happen call themselves "The Green Team." Some are morning care students, some are kitchen staff and custodians, and many are fifth grade students. Every Thursday, fifth grade students who are not in band and orchestra, gather in Mr. Linden-Darrow's room. Other students, who do not participate in Chorus meet in Mr. L-D's room on Friday. They bring four large green garbage cans on wheels from the Kids' News broadcast studio.

During the day, students and staff members deposit recyclable waste, such as mixed paper, cardboard and commingled plastic, tin and glass into the marked containers. The students check to see that the waste is sorted correctly and then they weigh it. After the "Green Team" weighs the recyclables, they record the weights in a green binder. Nick says, "We want to be able to report to the school how much waste we have kept out of the garbage."

Outside, next to the school's dumpster for garbage, is a special locked green dumpster for mixed paper, which includes cardboard. It is kept locked so that people in the neighborhood do not throw any garbage into it. Ryan reminds us that "used paper is only a resource if it is kept uncontaminated." The commingled plastic, tin and glass containers go into four large 90 gallon blue recycling bins. County Waste empties the paper dumpster every Monday, and empties the blue commingled containers every other Wednesday.

Once the four green garbage cans on wheels are weighed and emptied, the students use them as they go around the school and collect everything from the small green containers that stay outside each of the classrooms and next to each photocopier in the office. "Fourth grade has a huge part in recycling," says Billy. "But, we're trying to help kindergarten, first grade, second grade, and third grade recycle more." Mrs. Bubie's kindergarten class brought in recyclable plastic bottles to give the "Green Team" on the one hundredth day of school. They brought in even more than the one hundred they wanted to collect.

A pretty typical day at West Sand Lake Elementary School begins with Morning care for many students. In the kitchen, Mrs. Lopez, Mrs. Coonradt and Mrs. Sheeren prepare breakfast and then begin preparing lunch for the ### students who buy lunch every day at West Sand Lake. Allie, Courtney and Amy are fifth grade students at Morning Care. They said, "In the morning, Mrs. Coonradt does all of the fruit and vegetables for lunch. Once she empties the cans, she rinses them and lets us take them away." The girls also collect the cardboard boxes, peel the tape off of them and flatten them. After lunch, Mrs. Coonradt sometimes brings left over vegetables to Mr. L-D's room for the worms in the worm bin.
Ryan, who is one of the regular "Green Team" members says, "It is decent work." He also feels good because he knows he's doing something to save the Earth. He really likes that. Jacob, Jarid., Jordan, Zack, Shane, Gavin, Jackie, Morgan, Dominick, Victoria, and Jenna are also among the regular recyclers at West Sand Lake. One thing is for certain. It is more than any of us can do alone. But, when we all do at least some of the work, Jacob says, "We can get a lot of recycling done."

What Service Learning Means to Me

I have been teaching Spanish language and culture to elementary students at Miller Hill/Sand Lake School for three years now. I enjoy this experience immensely because I see my students improvement both educationally as well as morally. The students see my time with them as a both as a rewarding break from the school day and a time to learn about a new culture in a fun and laid-back way. I love this program because I feel my students truly see me as a mentor, someone they can relate to on their age level and someone to come to with questions. I have taught some students for multiple years and have really built a bond with them. I have collaborated with two other girls, Alyx Raffo and Tessa Laiacona throughout my entire service learning experience. These girls are also members of my Girl Scout Troop and we work together. We know the importance of giving back to our community and having a good time while doing it! I am thankful that my school offers this program because it gives us the opportunity to do something well worth our time. For me, it is not about the volunteer hours, but the impression I leave on the upcoming generation. Knowing that my influence will positively affect their futures is a great honor

"Education is not the filing of a pail, but the lighting of a fire." – William Butler Yeats

What's Happening in the Service Learning Program

at Yorkshire Pioneer C.SD.

On April 24th 10 students from the Pioneer High School's Environmental Science class Celebrated Arbor day in style. They packaged 750 pine trees to give to every elementary student in the district. The Environmental Science students also put together a 30 minute lesson about the importance of Arbor Day and Earth day. Not only did they explain about the importance of these days but also how to plant the trees they received. A great time was celebrated by all the students.

The first week of October members of the Environmental Science class met with Mrs. Jeannine Wagner Principal of the Delevan Elementary School. The students proposed building a Nature trail behind the Elementary school in a wilderness area. Mrs. Wagner and the School district approved of this plan and the students started to build. Since October students have cleared a .75 mile trail through the wilderness. The 1st step was getting it approved. Secondly they surveyed the area using GPS technology. After that they examined the soil and water maps to be sure of wetlands issues. Next they started clearing the trail after completing a chainsaw safety course. They started to build walkways with lumber that they have produced from the Agricultural Department's band mill. Students have donated many hours of hard work and dedication to the success of this trail. The purpose of this nature trail is to develop environmental stewardship to not just the Environmental science students but to the entire town of Delevan. This nature trail will be open to the public as Delevan has no such nature center. Many thanks goes out to the Delevan staff, and the High school staff for their help in this process. The trail is due to open the 1st week of June. Sponsorship for this project is made possible by Learn and Serve America Program.

March 28th brought quite an exciting adventure to the Pioneers Environmental Science Class. After visiting with the Wyoming County Department of Environmental Conservation 13 student assisted with stocking the Cattaraugus County Creek. Students were involved with sorting fish from the tanks and releasing 500 Brook and Rainbow trout into the Creek. It was a wet and wild adventure as many of the students found out.

May 29th 2007 Students from the Landscaping class at Pioneer Central School set up a community garden for the summer of 07. The student's roto-tilled and prepared soil for a ½ acre plot. After the ground was worked up the students build a mesh fence around the garden plot to avoid pests from entering. Next the students set up 10 plots for residents of the town of Arcade to enjoy. This brought the students and community members closer by offering free fertilized garden plot. The community members also received 2 flats of vegetables free for signing up. The plants and fencing were sponsored by Learn and Serve for America.

THE KEY TO KEEPING TEENS IN SCHOOL

Service learning tackles high dropout rates and civic disengagement.

By John Bridgeland

from the April 15, 2008 edition Christian Science Monitor

WASHINGTON - Every day 7 thousand high school students drop out of school – and the American high school graduation rate hasn't budged for almost three decades. In an effort to jump-start those rates, General Colin Powell recently announced the development of 100 dropout prevention summits across the US.

On the heels of that step comes even more hope for reducing the number of dropouts and it includes the needed spawning of more civic engagement among young people.

Service learning is an educational technique that combines classroom learning with community service. What's critical is that it is not only key to getting more students engaged in their communities, but, according to a report released last week by Civic Enterprises, it is also a powerful tool to keep students on track to graduate from high school.

A nationally representative survey of high school students, including at-risk students, paints a hopeful picture. Eighty-two percent of all service-learning students said their view of school improved because of their service-learning classes, and 77 percent said that service learning had a big effect on motivating them to work hard. Furthermore, 64 percent of service-learning students claimed that service learning would have a fairly or very big effect on keeping them from dropping out of school.

Dropout crisis reforms combat a number of barriers – they must increase attendance, student motivation, engagement, academic performance, and create learning environments free of disruptive behavior. Research shows that service learning accomplishes each of these.

Although high-quality service-learning programs are cropping up across the nation, such programs are still unjustifiably rare. Eighty-three percent of students said that if their school offered it, they would enroll in a service-learning program. Yet only 16 percent of all students, and only 8 percent of students at low-performing schools, reported that their school offered service learning. All too often students do not have access to, or do not even know about, such programs offered by their schools.

This latest survey builds on two ground-breaking 2006 reports that jolted the nation to act on educational and civic challenges. One report showed that nearly one-third of all high school students fail to graduate with their class and almost half of all minority students drop out before graduation. Meanwhile, America's Civic Health Index showed that high school dropouts hardly participated in civic duties – declining to vote, volunteer, or advocate for reforming schools that were failing them. Addressing these twin challenges of high school dropout and civic disengagement requires comprehensive reform aimed at making school more rigorous, relevant, and engaging.

Enter service learning. As school districts, states, and the federal government debate how to best address the US dropout crisis, service-learning should be at the forefront of strategies used to raise graduation rates.

Learn and Serve America, the federal program that annually provides from $34- to $43 million in grants to K-12 schools, should target the dropout problem. All AmeriCorps volunteers who serve in disadvantaged public schools with high dropout rates should be trained as service-learning coordinators and help teachers implement high quality programs. The White House coordinating council for national and community service should charge programs across government with making service learning in schools a priority for their programs.

It wouldn't be a stretch for programs such as the National Park Service to take up that task. After all, it has 200,000 volunteers and federally supported mentoring programs at the Departments of Education and Health and Human Services.

Dropouts want to see the connection between classroom learning and a career. Communities suffer from an absence of their civic talents. Service learning can bridge the divide between these two issues. It is an essential tool to address our nation's dropout challenge, keep students engaged in school, and prepare them for the duties of citizenship.

As Sen. Edward Kennedy put it, "We need students who graduate from high school prepared to succeed in today's global economy. We also need students who understand the value of service and of helping others – whether in their own communities or across the world."

Imagine a movement in America that focuses on turning potential dropouts into model citizens. Service learning is that movement.

• John M. Bridgeland, CEO of Civic Enterprises, is coauthor of the new report, "Engaged for Success." He also is coauthor of "The Silent Epidemic: Perspectives of High School Dropouts" and "America's Civic Health Index."

Global Youth Service Day

Tom Gallant
Scotia-Glenville High School Grade 12

The Global Youth Service Day 2008 hosted at the Empire State Plaza provided both a wealth of knowledge and a great deal of inspiration to those in attendance. It was amazing to be able to walk through the different exhibits set up by the multiple schools in attendance. It was also beneficial to the multiple pedestrians who flooded the concourse during lunch and were able to glance at the multiple service learning opportunities that are available to the students. The exhibits were enhanced by the presence of different volunteers who had first hand knowledge of the program they were showing. People seemed very interested when they came to the stand that I was working; they would ask many different questions and actually picked up some information so that they could start a similar program at their home schools. Many business men and women walked by and discussed starting some of these programs in their offices.

The day then turned to a presentation by Anwarul Chowdhury, former Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations. His eloquent speech about how our volunteerism is used in today's really spoke to me and inspired me to continue my work of giving back to the community that has given so much to me as an adolescent. We were also reminded that even though we have done a lot of beneficial work, it is not okay to accept what we have done, we must continue to push to make this world a better place for everyone to live.

The Global Youth Service Day was a great success due to the meticulous work done by the volunteers who set up the area and by the volunteers who took time to present their ideas.