

WILDCAT CONNECTION

A Mattawan Consolidated School Publication

December 2016

Every child has a right to be connected. Every child has a right to intellect.

Vol. 2 No.2

Mattawan Students Honor and Celebrate Local Veterans



A patriotically decorated band room provided the backdrop for a reception and luncheon at Mattawan High School as Lori Fulton's Technical Reading and Writing students honored 30 invited United States military veterans on November 10. The following day, the middle school cafeteria took on a similar theme as the entire eighth grade welcomed and honored their relatives, both currently serving in the military, and retired, during the annual Mattawan Middle School Veterans Day luncheon and celebration.

Fulton received a grant last year from the Voya Foundation, making it possible for her students to create living history websites and a book about veterans' experiences and service to the country.



Top to bottom: Phylicia Dykstra speaks with Navy veteran Florence Finkey; Matthew Sugden interviews 94 year-old Willis Bousma, who served during World War II.

Fulton said, "This year's luncheon was also supported by the Mattawan Public Education Foundation Brainstrong Award, donations from the Mattawan High School Parent Association, Tina Cole, my students' parents, and Subway (the Fox Family). We were honored to host these wonderful men and women who served our country so well."

"One of our vets we've learned is 91 and fought in the Battle of Midway!"

During the luncheon, Fulton's students needed no prompting when it came time to greet and visit with their guests. At each table, engaged conversation took place, regardless of age difference that at times spanned more than 70 years. Fulton noted, "One of our vets, Garth Prindle, we've learned is 91 and fought in the Battle of Midway!" The invited veterans chatted effortlessly and were proud to share their stories, photos and memories with their young hosts.

An invited group of veterans enjoyed a buffet style breakfast and the company of students during the annual Mattawan Middle School Veterans Day celebration on November 11. As an eighth grader, students are encouraged each year to invite a relative or special friend to the event in honor of their United States military service.

Led by teachers Kyle Karsen and Tiffany Stommen, the celebration marked the culmination of weeks of planning and preparation by students, staff and parents. Students decorated the cafeteria with handmade posters to go with the red, white and blue theme, and families contributed an abundance of mouth watering foods and beverages.

The hour-long celebration came to an end when each student presented his or her guest with a specially designed Mattawan Middle School commemorative coin to show their appreciation of each veteran. The honored guests were clearly moved throughout the entire morning and this final token of appreciation prompted further hugs, smiles and even some tears.



Top to bottom: Alexis Miller presents her grandpa William Miller with a special commemorative coin; Seth Thomas, Colin DeBoer, Mitchell Gunnett, and Yamar Lyons welcome veterans with posters; Zana Wallace and Ziad Wallace share the celebration with their dad Nathan Wallace.

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Full STEAM Ahead!

From the Desk of the Superintendent



Superintendent Dr. Robin Buchler

It seems like just yesterday when I took a team of three teachers, a board member, and a science advisor to Washington to the Smithsonian Science Institute to study and create a five year strategic plan for our STEAM initiative. Sandy Glasser, Brian Newman, Julie Brazeau, Tim Mitchell, Susan Disch, and I came back full of excitement and a strong, rich plan to enhance the learning

of our students from kindergarten to 12th grade! Since that summer of 2014, the staff and students of Mattawan Consolidated have begun to look at instruction and learning through a STEAM lens. In the elementary schools, STEAM moments and Maker Spaces have popped up challenging even our youngest learners to think deeply and explore various possibilities. "What if..." is a common phrase heard in the halls and classrooms in Mattawan.

During the 2015-2016 school year, we added two different Project Lead the Way (PLTW) classes at the high school. Heather Reeves taught three full classes of Principals of Biomedical Science and Jarrod DeGroff took on three classes of Introduction to Engineering. This year, we increased to three PLTW classes: three Introductions to Engineering, two Principals of Engineering, three Principals of Biomedical Science, and two Human Body Systems, the latter taught by Katie McKinley. Each of the ten sections is full!

We also brought these opportunities down to the middle school to the 6th

grade. Nick Goetzinger, who previously taught social studies, took on the challenge of teaching an exciting class called "Automation and Robotics." Early Friday morning, December 2, the Fox 17 news team showed up to a gym full of excited 6th graders to join in the celebration of Nick's classroom being chosen to be the featured "Classroom of the Week," much to Nick's surprise! Goetzinger was nominated by Analena Roach, one of his sixth grade students.

When visiting these classrooms, the students are quick to share how much they love these



Teacher Nick Goetzinger (left) was nominated by student Analena Roach for Fox 17's Classroom of the Week.

classes. The hands-on activities and rich discussions of real life events and issues grab their attention and engage their curiosity. One of the important tools to teach our students is persistence...to keep learning, allow for mistakes, and make new plans from those mistakes. To learn just for the sake of learning with a desire to improve the quality of lives is a great gift to give our future.

This spring, we will begin planning next year's Project Lead the Way offerings at the middle school, while maintaining the offerings at the high school. It is our goal to keep increasing these opportunities and classes for our students, as the budget allows, and to bring in college credits for their high school work in the Project Lead the Way classes. We want to ignite their passion for deep learning and problem solving. We want to increase our students' confidence to pursue careers in STEAM fields. We want to provide purpose and drive in their learning! Full STEAM ahead!

*Superintendent, Dr. Robin Buchler
Mattawan Consolidated School*

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Elementary Schools Construction Update

Mild weather has allowed for construction of Mattawan's new elementary schools to progress steadily, however, securing plumbing permits from the State of Michigan was delayed this fall. Construction workers continued to labor on other aspects of the project despite the delay of those permits.

Director of Buildings and Grounds Russ Young visits the building site regularly and said, "It is changing daily, I make many visits to the site and I am amazed at how quickly walls are going up.

Everyone is working very hard to get as much closed in as possible before bad weather does hit. At this time I feel confident that the buildings will open their doors on time. Mild weather has certainly helped."



Construction on Mattawan's new elementary schools is progressing. The photo at left shows one wing of the future Later Elementary School building, and the photo at right shows the cafeteria.



Dr. Mark Noffsinger Elected to Board of Education

Mattawan's Board of Education is comprised of seven members and this fall, one seat needed to be filled after it was vacated by trustee Tim Mitchell. The November 8 election ballot gave voters the chance to elect a new trustee and they chose Dr. Mark Noffsinger, MD.

Noffsinger is a long-time resident of the Mattawan School District and no stranger to the school community. In November, Superintendent Robin Buchler sent out this message to staff to introduce Dr. Noffsinger:

"Congratulations to Dr. Noffsinger on his election to the Mattawan School Board! Dr. Noffsinger has lived in Mattawan for 24 years and has had 3 children graduate from Mattawan. He now has 4 grandchildren just beginning their journey with MCS. Dr. Noffsinger served as the team physician for MHS for 20 years. He was the assistant JV and Varsity football coach for eight years, sat on the Health and Sex Education Curriculum Development Committee, chaperoned choir trips to New York and Chicago, and was the "prop maker" for musical productions. We are delighted to have Dr. Noffsinger working alongside us to bring the very best to our Mattawan families and students!"



Dr. Mark Noffsinger is the newest elected member of Mattawan's Board of Education.

When asked about his decision to run for the board trustee position, Noffsinger responded, "I had thought about running for school board at some point, when time from my profession allowed. But when trustee Tim Mitchell moved from the district and vacated his board seat, I was contacted by several community members urging me that now was the right time. They shared concerns about challenges facing the board, schools, our community and most importantly our students. So, like many board members, I figured that I'd make time because it's that important."

Noffsinger sees the value in a Mattawan education, not only as a community member, but as a father, noting, "My kids' experiences at Mattawan were great and varied. They enjoyed opportunities to participate in sports, musicals, cheerleading, PALs, student government, and they got a solid education that has served them well."

The Mattawan Board of Education sets general direction and establishes policy for the school system. Noffsinger said he hopes to offer a new perspective and ways to succeed by thinking outside the box to meet the challenges facing students, staff and administration. But he also noted that Mattawan is in a good place. "Mattawan is well positioned to be one of the top school districts in the state. We've got a supportive community, involved businesses, dedicated staff and great kids. We need to work to allow each of those resources to be maximized," Noffsinger said.

That work, said Noffsinger, includes, "Supporting well performing teachers with fair pay, offering top technology support, and continuing to offer extra-curricular activities to enhance our students education. We need a great working relationship between community, students, board, and staff to be able to identify and then solve these challenges. That starts with open, honest, frequent communication."

Supplies for Success Makes a Difference in Students' Lives

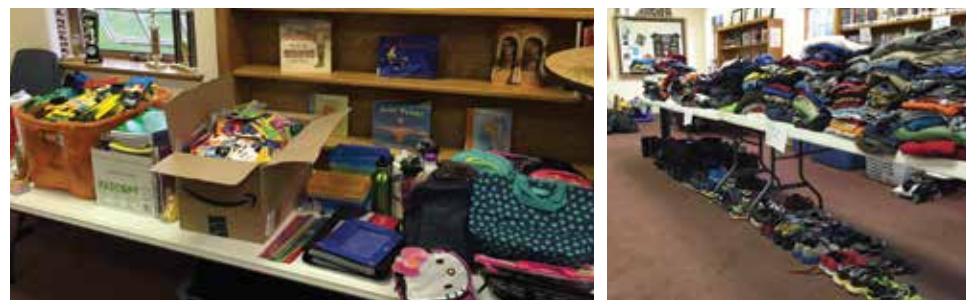
Student success begins at home and sometimes families need a little help to ensure a child's basic needs are met. Supplies for Success, a non-profit organization, was established in the fall of 2013 and is a volunteer organization dedicated to helping the children at all of Mattawan's schools by providing appropriate school clothing and supplies. As Supplies for Success founder and president Andrea Lippert explains, "We encourage self-esteem and promote academic success. Our goal is to give these children the confidence they need to succeed and to relieve economic stress on their parents."

Supplies for Success determines all needs through school staff. If a staff member sees a need, and has permission from the parent/family/guardian, an

email is sent to Supplies For Success with the specific request. Lippert is assisted by Betsie Crotty and a host of other volunteers in fulfilling all requests.

The program is vital for several reasons. By providing clean and weather appropriate clothing, shoes that fit, backpacks and school supplies, recipients of the program can attain a sense of confidence and preparedness regardless of what their families may or may not be able to provide.

Clothing, supplies and monetary donations - which may be safely made via www.supplies-for-success.org - are welcomed. Collection bins are located at the Later Elementary School office, and the Edward Jones Investment office in Woodbridge Hills. Donations will also be picked up upon request.



Supplies for Success relies on donations to help children at all of Mattawan's schools.

Continuing An October Tradition

What would October be without pumpkin carving? The Mattawan Early Elementary School carried on the annual pumpkin carving tradition this past October as pumpkins were turned into jack-o-lanterns by eager

second grade students. The pumpkins were provided by the Mattawan Early Elementary Parent Association and for many children, this was their first attempt at carving a pumpkin. Teacher Deborah Milka said, "The goal is that the children do the majority of carving on their own. It's an amazing event."



Left to right are pumpkin carvers Emmilyn and Taylor, both from Mrs. Milka's class.

Students Write Letters and Cards to Military Members

Support the Troops “Operation Holiday Cheer” is an annual fall event hosted by the Blue Star Mothers of America, Inc. Southwest MI Chapter #179 located in Paw Paw. Leading up to the event each year, volunteers collect items, cards and letters for care packages that will be mailed this holiday



Cards and letters were written by Mattawan High School students for “Operation Holiday Cheer.”

season to troops deployed overseas.

In October, Blue Star Mothers representative Laura Nash contacted Mattawan High School Principal Tim Eastman seeking support of their efforts. Eastman and many interested teachers then extended the request to students and before long, hundreds of cards and letters were produced.

Blue Star Mothers is a non-profit organization made up of local area moms who all have or had children serving in the United States military. Their focus is to support America’s military, both past and present, as well as their families. The group is also comprised of individuals who support the mission, but do not have a child in the service. The Southwest Mi Chapter #179 originated in November 2006 in memory of Sgt. Gabriel G. De Roo who gave his life in service to the United States on August 20, 2006.

RoboKats Robotics Teams Wrap Up Season

The 2016 FIRST Lego League (FLL) Robotics team and the 2016 FIRST Tech Challenge (FTC) Robotics team will wrap up their season this December after months of preparation and final tournaments. The RoboKats 2016 teams were formed last April and continued to meet regularly throughout the summer months right on into fall.

The FLL and FTC Robotics teams are coached by the founder and organizer John Hulsebus and assisted by parents who serve as mentors and assistant coaches. Organized in 2015, the RoboKats provide opportunities for Mattawan’s 5th through 8th graders to learn Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) related team-work, marketing, and time/project management skills via the building and programming of a robot.

Students get the chance to explore the field of robotics on a competitive level via this extracurricular activity.

Mattawan’s FLL RoboKats robotics

team participated in a robotics tournament at Lakeshore Middle School in Stevensville on November 19. Competing against 18 other robotic teams from various schools throughout southwest Michigan, the RoboKats excelled in all phases of the competition and earned an advancement to the state robotics competition on December 10 at Flint Carman-Ainsworth Middle School. There, the RoboKats competed against 49 other teams and achieved their highest robot game score of the season. Coach Hulsebus reported, “The team earned the Core Values - Inspiration Award. Needless to say, the state-level recognition is a testimony to everything the team accomplished throughout the season.”

The Mattawan FTC RoboKats kicked off their 2016 season in Coloma on December 3 and came away qualifying for the FTC state tournament on December 17. Of the 24 teams that participated, the RoboKats were final-

ists for four of the tournament’s major awards: finishing 3rd in the Connect Award and second in the PTC Design Award, the Rockwell Collins Innovate Award and the Think Award. Possibly most impressive was the RoboKats earning the Inspire Award which is the most prestigious award that FIRST bestows upon a team.

The FTC RoboKats traveled to Concord Middle School on December 10 for their second tournament of the season. Competing against 32 other teams, the RoboKats were awarded the Promote Award.

According to Hulsebus, “Much of the recognition both teams have received this year is due to their promotion of STEM and robotics throughout their school and local community.” The RoboKats participated in the Mattawan Homecoming Parade, Lego Days at Antwerp Sunshine Library, and the Mattawan Later Elementary School Science Fair, just to name a few. A complete list of outreach events and photos may be found at <http://robokats.org/outreach.htm>.

RoboKats operates as a 501c3 organization and secures funding from parent registration fees, sponsorships, grants, and fundraising events. To learn more about Mattawan’s RoboKats and to find results of the December 17 FTC state championship tournament, readers are encouraged to visit their website at <http://robokats.org>.



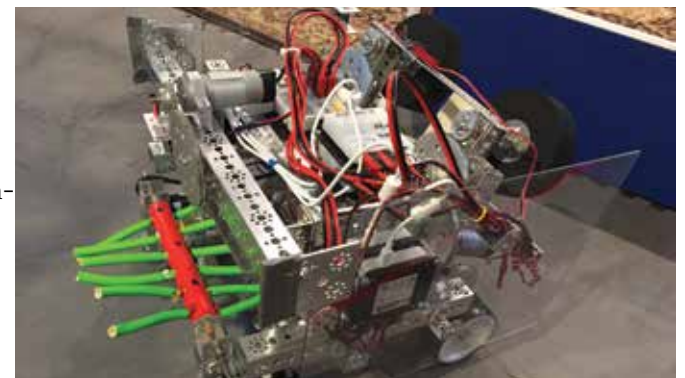
FTC front row (left to right): Ayla Cross and Natalie Toner
Back Row (left to right): Drew Seiser, Cooper Betzler, Luke Hulsebus, Quintin Wanink, Jared Yetter, and Charley Isham



FLL front row (left to right): Leo Port, Sidney Kreis, Laura Hulsebus, and Jack Kuch; Back Row (left to right): Brian Weaver, Gabby Esch, Madison Pratt, Maddy Sutton, and Owen Gorter



The 2016 FIRST Lego League robot is pictured above.



The 2016 FIRST Tech Challenge robot is pictured above.

Reading Skills are Enhanced with Reading Buddy Puppets

Growing Readers is an early literacy program for the Young 5s students at Mattawan Early Elementary School that began last year with a grant request made by retired teacher Mary Jo Cobb. Designed to target Young 5 literacy goals through creative play, the project was continued this year by Mattawan Middle School teacher Ann Pierluissi and her 8th grade Life Management

class students.

The Young 5s students visited Mattawan Middle School in November and spent time with Pierluissi's students making puppets together. Pierluissi turned her classroom into an arts and crafts studio full of felt, glitter, glue, buttons and more. The 8th graders helped their younger peers design and create reading buddy puppets.

Pierluissi felt compelled to continue

the project this year because, she said, "It is so important for their reading skills. The kids created stories around their puppets." And the 8th graders see merit in the project as well. As 8th grade student Jacob Hakala explained, "We get to do a nice thing with the little kids and help them with their reading skills. They'll be more advanced when they get older."

Eighth grader Grace Roberts was

paired with Jack and together they created a lion puppet. Roberts noted, "It's good to help the kids interact with older kids and communicate and know that they have older friends. I had a lot of fun."

The three Young 5s classes who participated in the project are taught by Katie Malone, Casey Hessler and Anne Bailey.



Photos left to right: Chase Kelley and his younger counterpart Bentley proudly display their puppet; Grace Roberts helps Jack create a lion puppet; Reece looks to his older partner Jacob Hakala for help with designing his reading buddy; Finished reading buddy puppets are displayed.

From High School Stage Crew to Chicago Theater; How Mattawan Consolidated School Prepared a Graduate for Her Future

Figuring out what to do after high school can be a daunting proposition for many students. But with a well-rounded education from which to launch, this 2009 graduate of Mattawan High School believes anything is possible. Meet Angie McMahon, who now holds her Bachelor of Arts in Theatre with an emphasis in Design and Technical Production from Western Michigan University and her Master of Fine Arts in Technical Direction from the University of Arizona.

Where has this accumulation of education led her? To her current post as the Assistant Technical Director at Chicago Shakespeare Theater on Navy Pier where she engineers the scenery to be built for productions.

McMahon described how her Mattawan education experience prepared her for her career choice by saying, "I was active in many varied activities while at Mattawan. I played the clarinet in concert band, was a drum major in marching band, I played volleyball, took Advanced Placement and honors classes, was active in National Honor Society, and spent a

lot of time on the tech crew for the plays and musicals. After high school, I always knew that I wanted to go to college, but I didn't know where I wanted to go or what I wanted to do, so maintaining my grades and trying different activities in school allowed me to keep my options open." McMahon also noted that the senior project she completed for Senior Seminar showed her that it was actually possible to make a career in theatre.

McMahon's current job requires a strong work ethic, which she said, "Was instilled in me by my high school teachers and stayed with me through college, where I was able to be active in the theatre department, work part time as a student-employee in the scene shop, participate in the Bronco Marching Band, and graduate early thanks to AP classes from Mattawan."

Passionate about her Mattawan education, McMahon recalled a few experiences that still stand out in her mind today. "The highlight of my education at Mattawan was definitely high school marching band. My strong work ethic,

favorite memories, and best friends come from marching band. A few other favorite memories from school are: decorating the halls for the Africa unit in 7th grade, Later Elementary track and field day, and writing and recording songs in my 5th grade language arts class—I still have the CD."

McMahon believes in the value of a well-rounded K-12 education. She stated, "Students need to be encouraged to participate in as many different activities as possible while in school. Academics, sports, social activities, fine and performing arts—I think they are all so important in shaping students to be individuals."

And as for keeping fine and performing arts alive and well in public school, McMahon didn't hesitate to say, "People don't learn

to love the fine and performing arts as adults—it's a love that's developed as a child and teenager, and it's a love that can be shot down very quickly if not given the opportunity to grow."



Angie McMahon poses on the set of *Rent*, where she acted as technical director for her Master of Fine Arts thesis.

Vocal Music Students Showcase Talents During Annual Jazz Club

Backed by a professional jazz combo, vocal music students took to the stage in November to present Jazz Club. The annual event is under the direction of vocal music director David Hook and this year he was assisted by artist in residence Zack Meyers. Leading up to the November 19 and 20 performances, Meyers worked with the students on style and interpretation, as the jazz genre was new to many of them.

Audience members in attendance could choose to sit and listen right on stage, all the while being served desserts and beverages at dining tables. The student performers acted as servers before and between numbers. The house offered additional seating to others who opted to take it all in, concert style.

In addition to individual soloists, the Ladies Chorus, Concert Choir, Womens Ensemble and Master Singers sang renditions of jazz standards such as, *You Make Me Feel So Young*, *You'd Be So Nice To Come Home To*, *All the Things You Are*, and *Ev'ry Time We Say Goodbye*.

The Zack Meyers (piano) combo included guitarists Matt LoRusso and Andrew Sibila, bassist Sam Coperman and drummer Jordan Otto.



Top to Bottom are Lou Chibende, Rachel Lohrberg, Colton Janecke and members of the Grand Chorus. Photos are courtesy of Amy Widenhofer.

Ballots Cast, Voices Heard, for Favorite School Lunch

On Election Day, this past November, Mattawan students in grades three through twelve were invited to cast their ballot for their favorite school lunch at their respective cafeterias.

After all of the ballots were tabulated, the overall favorite for Mattawan Later Elementary School was "Taco Tuesday." As a result, each Tuesday for the Month of December, Director of Dining Services David Rose said his staff will feature favorite "Taco Tuesday" menu items.



Left to right: Dining Service Employees, Kim Dragicevich, Melisa Allen, Shelly Currier and Jan Dragicevich



Left to right: Middle school lunch voters included Clara Palmer, Payge Watson, Taylor Berens and Carson Wood.

Both the middle and high school students were more into comfort food, and voted for the "Popcorn Chicken and Mashed Potato Bowl." In turn, for the month of December, The Popcorn Chicken Bowl will be the featured menu item at both cafeterias. As Rose stated in the *Food Service Thymes Newsletter*, "You Voted and Your Voice Matters."

Holiday Cheer: Mattawan Area Pantry Receives Donations

The Mattawan Area Pantry (MAP) relies on donations and volunteers to keep the operation running. During the holiday season, the Mattawan school community does its part in fulfilling the needs of so many.

At Mattawan Middle School, the tradition of collecting change continued. Students and staff rounded up just

over \$2,000.00 in loose change this December for the MAP. The money will be used to purchase much needed food items for families in need in the Mattawan community.

Students and staff at Mattawan Later Elementary School carried on their annual food

drive tradition once again by collecting non-perishable food items for the MAP. On December 8, members of the fourth grade leadership group known as the Bucketfillers Bunch gathered and helped load up the food for delivery. All students and grade levels of the LES participated in the food drive.



The Bucketfillers Bunch assists with special school projects throughout the year, including the annual food drive.

Business Association Awards Outstanding Employees

The Mattawan Business Association (MBA) recognized three outstanding employees of Mattawan Consolidated School at their annual Fall Appreciation Dinner on November 10, 2016.



Left to right: Mike Dudley (retired 2016), Outstanding Educator of the Year; Kim Kondor, Outstanding School Employee of the Year; Brandon Bear, Outstanding Teacher of the Year.

Retired high school administrator Mike Dudley, middle school head secretary Kim Kondor and third grade teacher Brandon Bear were each nominated by a different community member and then reviewed by the MBA board. Collectively, the board determined that all three have made a significant impact on the Mattawan community and were deserving of the awards.

The dinner has occurred for multiple years and according to MBA President Amelia Barker-King, "We would love to continue to recognize administrators, teachers, coaches, and other outstanding school involved people in the future." Barker-King invites readers to visit Mattawan Business Association on Facebook for more details, to make a nomination, or to become more involved.

Soccer Team Wins State Title

The Mattawan Varsity Soccer team took to the field on November 5 in their quest to bring home their first State Championship title and they did so by defeating Dearborn Divine Child in a 1-0 shootout. The Wildcats finished their season with a record of 22-4-2. Head Coach Kirt Brown said, "Winning a state title is awesome! It forever links the guys involved and is a source of community pride. It is the stuff that dreams are made of. The memories will last the guys a lifetime!"

The 2016 Mattawan Varsity Soccer Team was comprised of members Dylan Burkett, Jake Chalenko, Lwamba Chibende, Sebastian Defant,

Joe Economos, Lukas Grivins, Nolan Hadder, Dalton Hageman, Jarret Hageman, Nick Hare, Casey Kirkbride, Jalen Kraushaar, Corey Laws, Evan Marquess, Connor Omo, Anders Palarz, Ben Rand, Tate Rosenhagen, Danny Simon, Adam Smith, and Jacob Tyler. Head Coach Kirt Brown was assisted by coaches Bobby Poveda and Kip Brown.



Team members pose for the camera during a recognition ceremony at Mattawan High School following their state championship win.

Michigan eLibrary Offers Resources to Students and Parents

Did you know that your student has the ability to access professionally reviewed articles, photos, videos and news from anywhere in Michigan? In addition they can locate homework help and the Britannica Encyclopedia with any internet connection in the State of Michigan. High school students can access scholarship and career information and if you are a parent seeking a job, the Michigan eLibrary is a taxpayer supported website that is available to you. You can simply log on to Mel.org from anywhere in Michigan and you are good to go.

As stated on the MeL website, "MeL is the Michigan eLibrary, a service of the Library of Michigan and part of the Michigan Department of Education. It is funded by federal and state dollars and is easily accessible 24/7. For students there are no logins required (except for LearningExpress); all of the prepaid subscription resources are geo-authenticated, which means if your IP address is located in Michigan, you will have free access."

For students in K-12, MeL of-

fers portals to grade level appropriate resources through MeL Kids and MeL Teens. Each of these portals offer age and grade level appropriate links. The MeL Kids portal includes Storytime,



Fun and Games, Homework Help and About Michigan Links. The MeL Teens portal, in addition to Homework Help, offers links relating to Life Happens, The Reading Zone and College Bound.

Homework Help links to the Britannica School of age and grade leveled encyclopedias as well as Info Bits and World Book for Kids. Also included are links to Khan Academy for online tutorials; Research in Context and Opposing

Viewpoints databases for articles and information on commonly researched school and age appropriate topics; and Encyclopedia Estudiantil Haliagzos, a Spanish language encyclopedia.

In the MeL Kids portal, Storytime includes links to websites and databases with full text PDFs and interactive books, like Scholastic Bookflix and Novelist K8, that can be read online and offer book suggestions by grade level, reading level and subject area. In addition, there are direct links to age appropriate stories, audio books and digital libraries that are free to use.

In the MeL Teens portal, College Bound links to resources for financial



aid, scholarships, and information on choosing colleges as well as articles specific to affording college in Michigan. This is a valuable resource for any high school student who is thinking about going to college. Additionally, Life Happens offers links to resources in health, social issues and careers and jobs, including information on the military, vocational training, jobs for teens and links to Learning Express which offers free tutorials and practice for employment tests like ASVAB, medical assistance certifications, CDL, and Technical and Vocational certifications.

For the community in general, MeL.org offers Links for Business, which includes business and demographic information, business plans and links to legal forms and documents. The Jobs portal has links to job fairs, job training information, and specialized information for Vets, High School Equivalency Exam and rehabilitation services.

Submitted by Middle School Media Specialist Barb Berry and High School Media Specialist Sandie McGehee

Making Progress with STEAM

STEAM Programs Start in EES

Students in Jolene Davey's kindergarten class not only know where Dubai is on the world map, but they are also familiar with some of the city's buildings. After searching for ideas on the internet, the youngsters set about building their own structures during one of Davey's Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math (STEAM) days this fall. Davey noted, "It was interesting to hear their talk and the use of some words we had discussed such as "structure," "reinforce it," and "strengthen it."

Davey explained, "STEAM has been a great way to incorporate several curriculum pieces and to give the students

a chance to integrate their learning in the various areas. The children are always asking me, 'When are we doing another STEAM day?' And after one STEAM Friday, a student mentioned that the Three Little Pigs should have been better planners."

Second grade teacher Andrea Eash implements the STEAM approach into her teaching methods. Last year Eash was granted a Mattawan Public Education Foundation award for the purchase of Legos. Legos are used as a tool for teaching both math and STEAM challenges, and as Eash put it, "I find the challenges are engaging ways for students to plan, problem solve and use teamwork. They are challenges because they are open-ended and include a time limit." Leadership qualities arise from students who may

have lacked confidence in other subjects. "It was amazing to watch them take that engineering spark and pass it on to others," Eash said.

This year, Eash was awarded another grant that allowed her to purchase hands-on math games which are used in the classroom to practice a new concept or to reinforce one previously taught.



Students in Andrea Eash's second grade class partner to use Legos during a STEAM challenge.

Middle School Jumps on Board with Project Lead The Way

Project Lead The Way (PLTW) is a leading provider of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) programs in the K-12 curriculum. New to Mattawan Middle School this year, sixth grade students will experience the Design, Automation, and Robotics class for one semester, with more offerings coming for 7th and 8th grade in the next two years. The eventual goal is to offer off PLTW courses for all three MS grades.

Director of Curriculum & Instructional Technology

Ben Rimes coordinates the PLTW program for the entire district and said, "There's a national need for students to be better prepared to work in collaborative groups and work with content in an embedded context; in other words, students need to be able to work with math and science concepts in similar ways that their parents might at work. PLTW courses allow students to work in small groups to build robots, explore human body systems, and tackle everything from alternative energy problems to coding."

Rimes went on to add, "The middle school curriculum will allow students to explore more topics and potential career choices than ever before, and get a better sense of the options that are available to them at the high school level."

The current middle school classes are a compliment to existing science and technology offerings. Over the next two years some traditional Technology Literacy offerings will be replaced or enhanced with PLTW offerings as



Left to right: Ryan Glinka, Jaiden Bradfield and Maya Dorland participate in Design, Automation, and Robotics class.

MPEF Supports The Sound of Music

Each year, Mattawan Public Education Foundation (MPEF) provides brain strong grants to help students learn and grow, including through STEAM - Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math - programs. Many grants support the "A" in STEAM through music programs, including these examples from the past two years:

- Middle School and High School Bands: New conga drums allow students to gain a stronger sense of rhythm and groove as they hear the drums accompany their own instruments.

- Middle School Choir: The Middle School choir received funds for a professional recording microphone, giving students the ability to hear the full sound, timbre, and frequencies of their performances.

- Later Elementary: Music teachers requested a grant to add instruments and also repair existing tone chimes and mallets. New xylophones are used by all students and promote individual music success. Ukuleles now provide a new curriculum for fifth grade students to continue to build musical skills.

- Early Elementary: Kindergarteners are celebrating enhanced learning with songs and spelling thanks to an MPEF grant for a guitar. The guitar also provides rhythm for fitness and art activities, teaching children the joy of music through motion, painting, and song.

Thanks to community support, MPEF has granted more than 425 Creative Instruction / Brain Strong awards since 1993 for all types of classroom programs and innovative learning ideas. Donation to MPEF, a 501c3 foundation, are gladly accepted. Learn more at www.mpef.org or donate directly through RevTrak.

Teacher and grant recipient Jason DeLille (pictured) penned this note of thanks to MPEF:

Dear MPEF,

Thanks so much for the guitar. We are already using it and it's awesome. Here we are singing along to a choo choo train song. The kids are keeping the rhythm with rhythm sticks, playing harmony on xylophones, and singing the melody while I strum. Thanks again!

Jason DeLille

Kindergarten Integrated Arts, Mattawan Early Elementary



Students use newly acquired instruments in Jason DeLille's class.

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