



Portage Post

Committed to the success of every student.

P

2nd Quarter 08-09

Volume 2, Issue 2

Pool at Rusch to remain open

Filtration systems nationwide targeted by federal mandate for repair

Despite recent media reports, Portage Community School District's Swimming Pool will remain open.

District Director of Business Operations Margaret Dolde said the design of the pool is different than those being directly targeted by recent federal legislation.

"We will continue to work towards compliance of the Virginia Graemer Baker Pool and Spa

Safety Act," Dolde said. "At this time, we feel user safety is not jeopardized. We have a multiple drain system, not just one drain, with minimal suction at the bottom of the 11-foot section of the pool."

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission has indicated the greatest risk of drain entrapment to children are in wading pools, pools designed specifically

for young children, and in-ground spas where they use flat drains grates and single main drain systems.

Dolde said the pool has been open since 1974 without incident in harming children.

"The swimming pool was just inspected by the state," Dolde said. "Therefore, we have determined safety risks are not any greater than before the Act was established."

Building Trades house taking shape

Open concept Grove Street home features 3 bedrooms, room for future expansion

Construction is an exact science. There is not a margin of error for the installation of windows, mechanicals, or other elements that can impact the soundness of a structure. But a group of Portage High School students enrolled in the Building Trades Class are learning quickly that certain aspects of their project are immeasurable to both themselves and the people who will live in the home.

The three-bedroom, two-bath home on Grove Street on Portage's far-east side is a departure from other Building Trades homes in recent years, from expansive homes on larger lots.

This year's house is designed to be efficient and manageable, and targeted with a price point meant to attract people who may not otherwise have the

opportunity to own a brand-new single family home at a reasonable cost.

The house features an open concept design with a kitchen, dining room and great room that flow together.

Teacher Mark Parrott said he's excited about the shift.



Austin Nelson cuts soffit to finish the eaves on the trades house.

(Continued on page 3)

SkillsUSA members become loggers for a day

Funds from country club wood go towards conference, contest expenses

On a recent cold and drizzly Saturday, 10 PHS SkillsUSA students went to work. And they worked all day in the less than desirable weather without complaint. They had a goal in mind and a job to do.

The chapter decided to hold a

firewood fundraising event at Portage Country Club golf course. Their goal was to double the seven truckloads of firewood sold last year in the same fundraiser. When the sawdust and bark settled, the students had split and loaded 15 truck-

loads of firewood.

Each year, dying trees are felled at the golf course. Often, many of the trees would be discarded. Through their community connections, they struck a deal with the Country Club to process the wood and sell it as a way

(Continued on page 5)

PCSD Job Openings

The Portage Community School District is always taking applications for various career opportunities.

Go to the district website, portage.k12.wi.us, and click on the employment link on the menu to the left. You can see what opportunities are available and apply directly on-line.



PHS Art Club

If you love to draw, paint, or do anything artistic, you should think about joining Art Club. Art Club is a great place to be, not just to practice more but a good opportunity to get experience designing logos for businesses in the community.

You can also network with other artists and get different points of view from them. It's also a relaxed atmosphere to channel your talent. The club also sponsors field trips to museums and other art events.

You can also meet great people with the same passions as you. Why not give Art Club a try? You can learn more about a future career or hobby. Even people who aren't born with artistic skills are encouraged to visit for more information.

Inside:

Bracelet Fundraiser	2
Bell Ringing	2
River Crossing Math	3
Referendum Schedule	5
Book Reviews	6

Bracelets show true meaning of friendship

Fort students fight cancer with making, selling handiwork in honor of teacher, her family

With each knot on every strand of thread, a group of Fort Winnebago students tied their way further towards helping the American Cancer Society and showing their support for their teacher.

Emily Kibby and members of the 5th and 6th grade classes got together on a Sunday to make friendship bracelets to sell in order to raise funds in memory of Criss Shaben's nephew and aunt, who both lost their battles against cancer in October. They raised over \$560 in less than a week in memory of Derek Bauer and Jacqueline Lynch.

Fueled by pizza and brownies made by Emily's mom, fellow teacher Sharon Kibby, the students cranked out all kinds of bracelets and then took to the streets for the cause, selling them to friends and family members.

Shaben appreciates the kindness shown by her students during a difficult time for her family, and commends their parents in raising such thoughtful and caring children.

Emily Kibby said it was easy to collect the money from family members and neighbors because of cancer's far-reaching affects on so many people.

"Everyone knows someone who has

had or has cancer," Kibby said. "I'm sort of surprised that they just trusted us not to be lying about our cause. You don't see people giving their money away so easily in these hard times lately."

School Secretary Debbie Bell said the staff at Fort is very proud of all of the classmates who participated in the project.

"These students not only care a lot about their teacher and what she went through, but it taught them a very valuable life lesson," Bell said.

Kibby, whose grandfather had kidney cancer, knows how difficult the disease can be on the patient's loved ones. So she and her classmates wanted to find a creative way to pay tribute to them.

"It was so sad to see Mrs. Shaben so upset with the loss of family members," Kibby said. "She is such a great teacher. I thought it would make a bigger statement than flowers or a card."

And the efforts aren't over for the Ft. Winnebago bracelet makers. Kibby said they may try to do something at the Relay for Life, perhaps having their own team or making more bracelets to sell.



Some of Fort Winnebago's bracelet-making students, front row L-R, Emma LaVigne, Karlie Korish, Julia Mohr, and center row L-R Sam Clemmons, Emily Kibby, Alexis Brauner, Shaianna Judd, Austin Kjorlie and Stevie La-Pointe were honored by the Portage Board of Education for their efforts. Also shown are Fort teachers Dawn Brauner, Criss Shaben and Sharon Kibby. Other bracelet makers who weren't able to attend the meeting are Leah Huser, Brock Kiefer, Jessica Kuhl, Mitchell Wolfergram, Paul Brockley, Mariah Dehn, Brandon Ellett, Casey Kopecky, Isaac Korish, Garrett Lauth, Isaac LaVigne, Michael Messer, Jenna Miles, Moriah Rataczak, Clayton Roberts, Kaycie Roche and Hunter Witt.

Bell-ringing gets PHS clubs, staff in true holiday spirit of giving

By Ciera Sugden

The holiday season is the season of giving. This is a concept that many Portage High School students and staff definitely understand.

All around town, PHS's students and staff have been seen standing next to the familiar red kettles of The Salvation Army. Working in shifts of anywhere from one hour to half a day, they have bundled up in winter apparel to ring the golden bells. Many organizations were involved, including the FBLA, Key Club, Portage Post, and girl's Golf Team. In addition to clubs, many individual teachers and staff members signed up to



ring bells.

PHS students and staff stood by these Salvation Army kettles at entrances to Culver's, K-Mart, Pierce's, WalMart, and other local businesses.

Surprisingly, many of the scheduled bell ringers didn't actually know much about the organization they were working with. The Salvation Army is a known name, but many people don't know a lot about the group itself.

The Salvation Army is a Christian-based organization. The group was started by William Booth in England in 1865, and didn't make its way over to the U.S., and specifically Wisconsin, until 1889. Now, The Salvation Army operates and helps in over 110 nations around the globe.

The organization helps all year long. One way they've helped locally was over the summer with the flood relief. However, Christmastime is the season that The Salvation Army is most associated with. The red kettles are one of the many important ways the organization raises money to help families in need.

The high-pitched ring of bells is filling the air around town. Along with the PHS students and staff, many other local citizens have rung the golden bells this year. If you are interested in helping out this holiday season, check out the local Salvation Army website, salvationarmyusa.org, and see how you can make a difference.

Building Trades continued...

(Continued from page 1)

"We went with a smaller house which we're hoping to get into a different market of prospective homebuyers," Parrott said. "The design is an effective utilization of space, yet it has a lot of nice amenities for a house of its size, including a first floor laundry room and a master bath."

The costs are kept down because of the cooperation of local vendors who have provided materials and labor at discounted rates, with the students doing the balance of the work, inside and out.

While they're learning essential trade skills, they're also building less quantifiable skills within themselves.

"We have a really hardworking group of students," Parrott said. "The kids are realizing it's okay to take risks and make little mistakes, and they're paying attention and learning how to improve. They're taking a lot of pride in this house; it's their house."

The home was chosen in one of the newer developments in town, on the last empty lot in the subdivision.

"It's an exceptionally nice neighborhood, and we've had a lot of positive feedback from the neighbors who have

visited the site," Parrott said.

The home was designed for a future vision and investment, not just present-day use. The basement features floor trusses that open up the space from obstructions. The egress windows would also allow finishing of the basement as livable space when the owners go to sell.

The basement also features a roughed in area for a third bathroom.

"The basement square footage allows the owners to enjoy an increase in value by finishing off that space," Parrott said. "The possibilities are endless; it's up to the homeowners' imaginations. It's exciting to be leaving them with a blank slate that will help them capitalize on their investment as they choose."

Applications are available at the district office in the Clough Building. The owner will most likely be selected in February. Prospective buyers must have a letter of pre-approval from a lender. The final cost of the house has yet to be finalized, as it reflects the actual cost of materials and supplies, but is targeted at approximately \$150,000-\$155,000.



Above, Sam Kelly and Jordan Moan cut the J-channel in the back of the home. Below, Jeff Strong and Austin Nelson install the soffit. Weather doesn't stop work on the house, unless the wind chill is below 0° F.



Charter school gets new math curriculum two years in making

By Rachel Jensen

In the average school, you would walk in and find the kids solving math problems from a textbook. That is not the case in River Crossing Environmental Charter School. Victoria Rydberg, teacher at River Crossing, has been working on this new curriculum for two years.

"We needed a project-based curriculum for our math. We had tried having a normal textbook-based math and the kids absolutely hated it. This math is similar to how they learn everything else in the school, they don't have to change their way of thinking," Rydberg said. "We also wanted to connect our environmental studies with the math we were presenting. This curriculum helps us teach both."

Along with Rydberg, several other people helped write and organize the curriculum. Mary Roberts, Ned Dorff, Noah Kieserman, Jeremy Solin, Mary Ann Kindschi, Erica Fuhry, and Rhea Trotman Martinez all wrote the nine

units in this curriculum.

"I was really happy when we started the new math because we didn't have a lot of math to work with last year," said Ben Vorpahl, a student at River Crossing. "Math is a very crucial thing in the 21st century."

The curriculum is separated into units. The first unit is Grasslands. The students have already started the first to lessons about the Fibonacci sequence and reviewed geometry. The curriculum continues on to Birds and Flight where they learn about how birds fly and how they migrate. The students use measuring, observation and prediction skills in the lessons.

Each unit works on different math skills that will help the students when they move on to high school. Financial Life teaches math and life skills. This unit has the students create a fake life where they have to find a job and a place to stay, pay bills and spread their income wisely.

"At the Junior High the math was

harder, but here the math is fun and different," said Mariah Colburn, also an 8th grader at River Crossing. "I find it is a lot easier for me to learn."

The math is 7th and 8th grade standards, what most middle school students are learning in Wisconsin. The math is the same, just the style of teaching it has been changed.

"I think others should learn this way because it's interesting, it's new, and most importantly it works with multiple intelligences," said Stormy Hefko, an 8th grader at River Crossing. "Though the traditional way works better for some, this way works better for others. So I guess I don't think everyone should have to learn this way but I think everyone should get the choice."

This is the first year for the new math. As the year unfolds the curriculum is being tested and the charter school will find out if this math will work.

New leadership group gains momentum at high school

By Daiva Sulas

Portage High School students have a new option for joining an organization to develop their leadership and critical thinking skills.

JSA, or Junior States of America, recently started a chapter in Portage, headed by chapter co-presidents Jena Daggett and Spencer Nett. The two aspiring senior go-getters are hoping that this affiliation will last once they have left Portage High School. To make their dream happen, JSA is hoping to gain more members who are willing to work through the hardships of starting a club.

"The Junior Statesmen mission is to strengthen American democracy by educating

and preparing high school students for life-long involvement and responsible leadership in a democratic society." - JSA Mission Statement from www.jsa.org

This means the club could help someone on their way to a political position, if that is their career choice. Objectives of the club are to teach members to be leaders, debate issues while still respecting a difference in opinion, and develop other types of public speaking skills. These skills are then put to the test during debates on controversial issues.

Recently, the Portage Chapter of JSA went to the 2008 Fall State Convention in Madison. Many of the main debates were held in the Capitol building. A

range of topics were debated, including whether the United States should annex Canada, if plants have equal rights, and whether the United States should consider a four-day school week. While members enjoyed some entertaining topics, there were also more serious issues such as those concerning gay rights and the economic downturn.

The next convention is Winter Congress. This will be held from February 13th-15th in Washington D.C. For those interested in how a bill is passed, debating, or just listening to people argue, then this may be an organization to consider. For more information, contact Jena Daggett or Spencer Nett.

PHS Vets Day program tribute combines past, present with soldiers young and old

By Luke Malkowski

On November 11th, Portage High School held its annual Veterans day ceremony in the high school's gymnasium. It was a day of remembrance, as the VFW and American Legion Posts' members who fought for their lives and their country from all the wars, and for those brave souls who could not be with us on that day.

We had the calling of the colors, the pledge of allegiance, remembrance speech, and guest speakers. Also, we had Matthew Rohrbeck, a senior at PHS, read the History of Veterans day. It was very meaningful, and very memorable.

Also with us was Sheriff Dennis Richards, to recite the pledge of allegiance. It was a very powerful time to recite our na-

tion's pledge and have a greater understanding of what the words truly mean.

We also had special guest speaker Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin, who spoke of the current efforts at the federal level to ensure benefits for soldiers returning from war.

Local leaders Rich and Cheryl Heimerl were presented with a folded flag to recognize them for their efforts in the community.

Bridging the past and the future were three young soldiers seated among the veterans with decades of service to America. Travis Summerfelt, Pvt. Reuben Kramar, and Kevin Turner are in training. These students are looking forward to doing their part to serve to their country. May God be

with them all.

The ceremony was organized by Ed Carlson, who has coordinated the program the last several years.



Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin visits with local veteran Jack McMahon and teacher and event coordinator Ed Carlson prior to the program at PHS.

Police department, Sheriff's office recognized for efforts to combat underage drinking

At the Portage Community Schools Board of Education's December meeting, Columbia County Sheriff Dennis Richards and Portage Police Chief Ken Manthey and their agencies received a letter of Commendation for their efforts to crack down on underage drinking.

The letters commended their cooperation and commitment to the Columbia County Connects Coalition's Alcohol Compliance Check Program in the Portage and Pardeeville school districts.

The Pardeeville School board also presented a letter to Sheriff Dennis Richards but could not have members attend

the meeting due to scheduling conflicts.

Columbia County Connects, in partnership with law enforcement, have completed over 180 checks with a successful compliance rating of over 78%.

The boards recognize compliance checks are the first line of defense in the prevention of underage alcohol use.

District officials also see that without the support of Ken Manthey and Dennis Richards, the Compliance Check Program would not exist. The boards stated their appreciation on the efforts of law enforcement to keep their students safe and alcohol-free.



Pictured left to Right, Charles Poches Portage School District Administrator, Rusty Schieber, Portage School Board Member and CCC member, Dennis Richards Columbia County Sheriff, Ken Manthey Portage Police Chief and CCC member, Tim Belleau CCC staff member, Bob Harm Portage School Psychologist and CCC member.

Firewood fundraiser continued...

to raise funds for the club's activities.

The students made sales flyers, promoted on the radio station, and took advanced orders.

By the end of the day each student earned the equivalent of \$14 per hour for each hour they worked. Plus, the students will have made many homes warm this winter.

Many of the students will use the funds to offset expenses to attend a leadership conference early in December. Others will hold their earnings in the school activity fund until the spring contest.

Pictured at the right are SkillsUSA members Clint Thompson and Tom Nicholson, top, and Gunnar Yeager and Spencer Davenport, below.



Free dental care comes to Portage Jan. 20th – Feb. 5th

The mobile dental van, also known as the Ronald McDonald Care Mobile, will be seeing patients who register ahead of time during a scheduled stop in Portage Jan. 20th– Feb. 5th.

If your child does not have dental insurance, or has Medicaid, or has Badger-Care Plus, please sign up.

For forms, stop in your child's school office, or call Darla at Renewal Unlim-

ited, 742-5329 or 800-344-7543. Qualified families are urged to set up an appointment in advance.

Children aged 18 years and younger may use this service. Other program rules may apply.

If your family is not able to utilize this service, please share with others who might benefit. It is a convenient way for families to receive needed services.

District referendum projects ahead of schedule

Rusch heat; roof, track replacements among accomplishments

I want to provide you with an update on the referendum approved last April and the progress on completing some of these projects.



Charles Poches, District Administrator

As you may remember, the majority of this referendum money was designated to complete badly needed roof replacement projects. Initially, these roof projects were to be spread out over a three-year period. Because of increasing costs associated with materials, the project timeline was shortened. This resulted in a very busy summer for our Buildings and Grounds staff.

Instead of completing the referendum's six roof replacement projects over a three-year period, the district made the decision to complete four

projects this last summer.

If that was not enough, the district also undertook and completed two other major projects: the resurfacing of the high school track and the heating system conversion at Rusch Elementary from steam to hot water.

In all, 10 of the 21 projects listed on the referendum were completed in one summer. Using the original cost estimates for each of these projects, the district has completed \$2 million of the approved \$2.3 million in referendum projects.

By completing these projects we have safer and more energy-efficient facilities for the district. It is important to remember that none of these projects could have been addressed by the district without the support of the community. On behalf of the district, thank you!!

FFA goes to Indy conference



By Caitlin Roberts

The city of Indianapolis was alive with electric blue corduroy recently during the 81st National FFA Convention.

Over 50,000 FFA members flooded into the city for the convention, including 16 Portage FFA members

"It was a blast!" Portage delegate Alex Harvey said.

FFA members who attended went to energetic sessions, a comprehensive career fair, and workshops ranging in topics from an intro to the career of a veterinary technician to becoming better leaders.

FFA Advisor Brad Gefvert said the convention allowed for a great deal of exposure to vocational opportunities while getting students to meet other FFA members from around the area and nation.

"Students saw career opportunities by visiting a four-acre career fair that has diverse areas from welding to equine science, and there were also over 50 universities that were there to give students information on career paths," Gefvert said. "The students also gained relationships and networked with FFA members from around the country, including the members from Fort Atkinson and Poynette that went down in the bus with us."

Gefvert said eight of the general sessions contained up to 30,000 FFA members at a time, as they listened to dynamic speakers, awards presentations and information on agriculture.

Members also attended a Taylor Swift concert and The World's Toughest Bulls and Broncs Rodeo.

The convention was a life-changing experience. The week was fun, yet educational.

"After we came back, the students were excited that they saw, firsthand, the diversity of agriculture and came back with ideas to help themselves personally and ideas to help the FFA grow," Gefvert said.

This year's National FFA theme is "Step up, Stand out." Throughout the week the message emphasized was that we, as FFA members must step out and take charge to make a difference in the world, and in time, we will stand out.

Hit the books– reading suggestions from students

By Bryan Plaster

The Five People You Meet in Heaven by: Mitch Albom

Are you tired of books that just drag on and on with seemingly no point, only to provide a “fulfilling conclusion” that is two pages long but took you 300 to get to? In Mitch Albom’s *The Five People You Meet in Heaven* this problem is a thing of the past. In just 200 small pages, you will get all that you ever need out of a story and more!

The meaningful plot and characters are complemented by the heartwarming story and touching moments. But never fear all you guys out there! Action abounds in this novel. It has car crashes, war, chases, and fires, anything you could ever want.

The novel begins with the main character, Eddie, who I’ll get to a little bit later, sacrificing himself to save a little girl from a rouge amusement park ride. This selfless sacrifice sets the entire story into motion for our friend, Eddie, who finds that he has ended up in heaven, where he has one question: what was his reason for living? Because I don’t want to give too much away, I’ll let you read the book yourself. Let’s just say that the story follows Eddie on five important events of his life, and the impact

they had on him. This story is all about life in general. What’s more important than finding our reason for existing?

Now Eddie, the protagonist in this roller coaster ride of a novel, and one likable guy. What’s greater than a person who sacrifices himself or herself to save the life of another? Eddie of course has flaws, but as far as novels go, he’s one of the best people you’ll ever read about. The other characters in this novel are entertaining as well. While they are not as vital to the story as Eddie, they are all necessary in their own way, and they help Eddie learn about who he is, and allow the reader an opportunity for self-reflection as well.

This is the can’t-miss novel of the year. Actually, it was published in 2003, but who’s counting? Follow Eddie on his journey of self-discovery and reconciliation. If you want an easily digestible book filled with meaning, action, and some humor now and then, this is definitely the book for you. It’s time for you to stop reading this and head down to your local library or bookstore to pick up a copy of *The Five People You Meet in Heaven* and experience it for yourself.

By Ciera Sugden

Airborn By Kenneth Oppel

Airborn is a great read for anyone interested in a little adventure. The book was published in 2004 and received many awards and recognitions, including the Michael L. Printz Award for Excellence in Young Adult Literature. Airborn includes all the adventures of a ship at sea, pirates, battles, and deserted islands. The author, Kenneth Oppel, incorporates these themes

in an entirely new way. He does an amazing job at portraying a newly created world of flying ships and mysterious, undiscovered species.

The main character is a 15-year-old boy, Matt, who is a cabin boy on an Airship which in Oppel’s world, has taken the place of ocean liners and airplanes. Matt is described as “lighter than air” and is uncomfortable any time he is not flying. He meets up with a clever girl named Kate, who is a

passenger aboard the ship, called Aurora. They soon become friends, and together they face pirates, murder, shipwreck, and discovery.

Oppel has a wonderful writing style. He used great imagery and painted colorful and vivid scenes in the reader’s mind. The author’s characters were realistic and dynamic, and easy to fall in love with. This book is for everyone; adults, teens; anyone with a sense of adventure.

By Angie Witte

Beige by

This book is about a girl named Katy who has to spend a whole summer with her dad. His name is Beau Ratner better known as Rat. She normally lives with her mother in Canada but her mom is making her live with her dad for the summer. She hasn’t seen her dad since she was little and has none of the same interests as him. Her dad

is the drummer of the band, Suck.

While spending time with her father she meets Lake. Lake is the daughter of Sam Suck, the lead singer of the band Suck. Lake also wants to be a singer like her dad. She has some problems with people though. In her band, she and her band mates have problems. Right before her biggest concert, all of her band mates quit on her. Now she’s alone and needs help. What will hap-

pen?

I enjoyed reading and learning about the LA punk scene. I like to read about people in music, fictional or not, and this book is all about music. The chapters are all titles of songs. This is also a book about a daughter discovering her father. Katy doesn’t like anything to do with music and by the end of the book she has a new appreciation for the LA punk scene.

Schools’ history comes to life in Downtown Portage’s Living Windows Celebration



This year’s Living Windows theme honored the school district’s 150-year anniversary, and featured actors from Rusch, John Muir, River Crossing, Fort Winnebago, and several other schools and local groups.