



Chisago Lakes

SCHOOL DISTRICT 2144

Teacher Awards

Two Chisago Lakes Educators Receive Special Recognition

Congratulations to Cindy Howard from the Chisago Lakes Middle School and Mickelle Pohlman from the Chisago Lakes Primary School on receiving special recognition from the Minnesota Council for Exceptional Children at their annual 2009 "Tools for Tomorrow Conference" on Thursday, February 5, 2009, at the Mayo Civic Center in Rochester, MN. Cindy Howard and Mickelle Pohlman were recognized as two "Rookie Teachers of the Year" and were honored at a special awards luncheon. The Minnesota Council for Exceptional Children (MNCEC) was founded in 1922, and is a 700 member organization which is part of a larger international association chartered to assist students in public schools.



Cindy Howard



Mickelle Pohlman

Drive for Education Grant

Congratulations to Industrial Tech teacher Ryan Dewey on receiving one of twenty \$2,500 Drive for Education



Grants sponsored by KSTC-TV Channel 45 and Minnesota Toyota Dealers. Mr. Dewey and six first semester students wrote the grant with a goal of using the funds for a new automotive hoist (car lift) for the High School Auto Shop. This second hoist will give students a chance to work safer and be more productive in the shop. Presentation of the award took place at center ice during the MN Boys State Hockey Tournament on March 13, 2009.

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Letter from the Superintendent:



While it is important to remember that readers will be looking at this issue of the School Review in April, I am writing this column on the last day of what will go down in history as a very cold month of January. Can spring possibly be that close to arriving? I certainly hope so.

This past January saw some morning temperatures on the 16th and 17th that caused many school districts around the state to consider closing or to close for the day. While cold winter temperatures are a cause for concern, they do not necessarily mean schools must be closed. There is no

minimum air temperature that dictates a school closing. Schools close when school busses cannot safely deliver students to and from school. Parents are always urged to exercise their own judgment regarding whether the conditions may pose a hazard for their student when waiting for a school bus or walking to school. The school district tries to do the safest thing when deciding to hold or cancel school realizing that closing school can also cause a real hardship and unsafe conditions for some families when children are left unattended or left to fend for themselves in severe weather. We appreciate your consideration when these decisions need to be made.

In other news, the school district, along with most other state agencies, is preparing a budget for the coming school year that has been “right-sized” for the anticipated revenues we expect to receive from the state. That has involved looking for places in the current budget where costs can be contained and where savings

can be found. The school district tries to maintain a “no frills” budget, so when it comes to cutting a position or program it is painful because the position or program has been currently deemed as essential to operating the schools in a safe and quality manner.

The district instituted a hiring freeze and purchasing freeze of all non-essential items in early January and hopes to recoup some funds from approved budget items that were not spent. As we await final word from the state and federal government as to what resources are to be made available and when, we share the concern of all of the members of our communities about the financial picture for the future.

We intend to do the very best job we can with the resources that are made available to the school district and thank all in our school community for their continued support of Chisago Lakes public schools.

Mike McLoughlin
Superintendent

Former Special Education Director Receives Statewide Recognition

Congratulations to Dr. Kim Gibbons, former Chisago Lakes Director of Special Education and current Executive Director of the St. Croix River Education District (SCRED) on being named the Minnesota Association of School Administrators and Special Education Administrators (MASA/MASE) Outstanding Special Education Administrator of the Year. Dr. Gibbons served in the Chisago Lakes Schools for many years through our partnership with SCRED before being named the current SCRED executive Director. MASA is the statewide organization serving school superintendents and special education directors and honors one special education administrator and one superintendent annually for outstanding service.



Lakeside Principal Warren Retzlaff Gets Leadership Achievement Award



Warren Retzlaff accepted the Minnesota Elementary School Principal's Association Central Division Leadership Achievement Award at the recent State Institute. Throughout his career in education, putting others in the limelight and celebrating their achievements has been Mr. Retzlaff's focus.

For ten years, in Goodhue, MN, Mr. Retzlaff taught 5th grade and coached basketball, baseball, and softball. He recalls fondly that as a coach, one boys and three girls (a program he began) basketball teams won district championships. In 1984 he applied for and was hired as Lakeside Principal for Chisago Lakes Schools. At the time Mr. Retzlaff thought that he would stay three to five years and then move onto a superintendent's position somewhere. However, he, his wife Diane, and their sons Nick and Nate, all liked it here too much to leave.

As a college student, Warren raced stock cars at tracks in

Morris and Alexandria. He has worked on twenty five classic cars and names the '55 Chevy as his favorite. During Mr. Retzlaff's tenure in Chisago Lakes he has seen the district grow from 1800 to 3600 students. Many of his former students now return to Lakeside as parents. He spoke so highly of the wonderful parent

support he has experienced. The PTO (Parent Teacher Organization) has been a tireless and wonderful asset to the schools throughout the years. He is proud of the staff that he has assembled over the years at Lakeside, having brought all but two of the current employees to the district.

Over his career Warren Retzlaff has served his fellow principals as President of East Central and Central Divisions, the statewide Negotiations Committee, the selection committee for the MESPA Executive Director and an informal mentor to dozens of principals all over the state. He has earned the respect and admiration of the Chisago Lakes students, staff, fellow principals and community by his day in and day out dedication to making education effective and meaningful for all learners.

Lakeside Enrichment Day



Trista Dietrich—*Sign Language*



Erika Huffman—*Boston Scientific*



Scott Swensen—*St. Paul Firefighter*



Pam Pottz—*Pleasant Valley Cloggers*

Chisago Lakes School Endowment Fund

The Chisago Lakes School Endowment Fund was created in 2008 to support school district programs in the arts, academics, athletics and activities with financial assistance that might otherwise not be supported by the school district operating funds. We are designed to serve pre-K through grade 12 student programs through annual awards to deserving programs that apply and qualify.

The Chisago Lakes School Endowment Fund is a subsidiary of the Chisago Lakes Area Community Foundation which was founded to do philanthropic work in the greater Chisago Lakes area and for a multitude of causes. The Community Foundation is a member of the larger St. Croix Valley Community Foundation.

The St. Croix Valley Community Foundation is a unique institution available to assist anyone who lives, works, or has roots in the St. Croix Valley and wants to make charitable contributions that will benefit this area. This greater foundation serves residents in Chisago, Washington, Pierce, St. Croix and Polk counties in Minnesota and Wisconsin.

Endowment Fund Board members currently include Lori Berg, Michael McLoughlin, Dianne Halfen, Tom Dickhudt and Chip Cravaack. This group is looking for additional interested members to help grow the School Endowment Fund.

Contributors are allowed to take a tax deduction for providing a charitable gift to the Endowment Fund. Those gifts are invested and with the interest that accrues from those investments, grants are dispersed in the form of awards to programs that have a need and apply.

Any school program that currently serves students enrolled in the Chisago Lakes School District may apply to the Board for consideration. Financial awards will be made annually in the fall of the year to selected programs and activities.

Contributions may take the form of gifts, memorials or donations and may be made to the Chisago Lakes School Endowment Fund. More information is available by calling Mike McLoughlin at 651-213-2096 or e-mailing to mmcloughlin@chisagolakes.k12.mn.us.

Primary School Wins State Education Award

Congratulations to the students, staff and administration of the Chisago Lakes Primary School on being selected for a 2008 Minnesota Academic Excellence Foundation School Spotlight Award. The Primary School was one of 23 schools selected statewide for this honor and the award “spotlights” the excellent work that has been done by everyone at the Primary School.

The Minnesota Academic Excellence Foundation’s School Spotlight Award credits schools for their work in curriculum development, student assessment, instruction and staff development and also honors the school for addressing individual student needs as well as working so that all students find success at school.

Chisago Lakes Primary School serves over 600 students in grades kindergarten through three who live in the western portion of the Chisago Lakes School District. Congratulations to Principal Brenda Schell and her staff and students for being the recipient of this honor. We are proud of your efforts.





New Spanish Program at the Middle School

The Chisago Lakes Middle School is very excited to share a new educational opportunity. Beginning in the fall of 2009-2010, Chisago Lakes Middle School will offer a class called *Spanish Core Connect* to foster the maintenance of Spanish language proficiency.

Core Connect, a building-wide advisement program held for all middle school students during the first twenty-three minutes of each day, allows teachers and students the opportunity to make personal

connections and receive academic and social support. Through the development of the new *Spanish Core Connect* class, students who have mastered Spanish will be given the opportunity to maintain their Spanish skills through the daily practice of reading, writing, speaking and listening during the regularly scheduled Core Connect time. Research indicates that the daily practice of these skills is the key to second language acquisition. Core Connect helps to create a positive school environment at the Middle School where

each student learns to develop and display the character traits of respect, responsibility, compassion, commitment and integrity.

We are hopeful that this will be a great opportunity for your student if they have had previous intensive study of the Spanish language. Please review our website at www.chisagolakes.k12.mn.us for more details. If you have questions, please feel free to contact John Menard or Jodi Otte at the Chisago Lakes Middle School.

District Spelling Bee

A large crowd of parents, friends, and teachers gathered at the Chisago Lakes High School Performing Arts Center for the 2009 District Spelling Bee. Bob Jennissen was the pronouncer and Dani Strenke, Joan Carlson, and Kathy Kirvida were the judges. The top spellers from the 5th-8th grades in the district were present to compete for the top three spots to go to the regional spelling bee.



Words like *anchovy*, *etymology*, and *alderman* were a few early round words that challenged the competitors, but in the end,

it was the word *lederhosen* that distinguished Ali Fuller as the Chisago Lakes School District Spelling Champion. Congratulations also go to Ali Saueressig and Marcus Peterson for their second and third place finishes. Evan Heinonen, a fifth grade student, placed fourth and was an alternate for the regional bee that took place March 2nd at St. John's University in Collegeville.

State Finances Challenge Schools to Tighten Budgets

The Minnesota State Legislature is currently in session and is grappling with serious financial questions and revenue shortfalls. The federal government financial outlook is bleak as well and as recipients of both state and federal funding. Minnesota schools are preparing budgets that reflect large revenue shortfalls from both the state and federal government and no promise of relief in sight.

Chisago Lakes Schools have been preparing budgets for the 2009-2010 school year since last December, and while our financial picture is not quite as difficult as some of our neighbors, our school district will experience budget right-sizing and difficult cuts in spending as well. The Board of Education will make final

financial decisions during the month of March and it is expected that they will need to approve budget reductions approaching one million dollars for the coming school year.

Operating Referendum Helps Minimize Reductions

Chisago Lakes Schools continues to benefit from the operating referendum that was approved by voters eight years ago. That referendum allows for additional per pupil spending to help reduce class sizes, maintain programs and student activities, as well as protect the district from more difficult cuts. Only a handful of Minnesota school districts operate without the benefit of a voter approved operating referendum. The referendum was approved for a ten-year

span and the district will begin planning to ask the local citizens for approval to renew the referendum in the near future.

In light of the current troubling financial times that lie ahead, it is critical to the financial health of the district that an operating referendum is able to be renewed. A formal information campaign is expected to begin this September with the district actively trying to inform residents of the need to renew this referendum and to show the school community how our students benefit from having a referendum in place. The Board of Education will decide in the coming year when to hold the election for the renewal of the operating referendum.

Middle School Health Fair

Chisago Lakes Middle School opened up the small gymnasium and half of the big gym last week to accommodate the annual Health Fair. This has grown over the years into a multi-station educational opportunity offered to students in grade 8.

Students rotate through the stations and after participating, or being instructed on the theme of the station, the



personnel sign-off on students' participation documents.

Fairview Health Services, Chisago County Public Health, St. Croix Valley Medical Center, local police officers, EMTs, the Youth and Family Community Partnership and many other area organizations give their time and materials to make this a successful, fun and unique learning experience.



School Finance Committee Involves Community Members

Since the spring of 2007 the Chisago Lakes Schools has offered members of the greater school community an opportunity to learn more about the school district budget and finances through their participation in the School Finance Committee.

This committee, led by Director of Business Services Heide Miller and Superintendent Mike McLoughlin, meets quarterly throughout the year to share information and discuss topics of interest regarding the financial planning of the school district as well as other topics pertinent to school district operations and finances. In addition to bringing a fresh perspective from the community by their participation, all of the members of the committee are business or governmental finance advisors in their own right, and the discussions that occur are always insightful for both the school district staff in attendance as well as the committee members.

The committee was formed with the intent of sharing more school finance information with interested community members but also as a way for school district personnel to receive feedback from community members on the direction the school district is headed in areas of planning, finance and budget, as well as general school operations. Committee members have agreed to serve specific terms on the committee and for the most part are parents of students enrolled in the school district.

Currently serving on the committee are community members Dianne Halfen, Greg Hickcox, Bob Barrett, Joe Bjelland, Jennifer Penzenstadler, Greg Crowe, and Chris Eng. They are joined by school board members Wade Carlson and Noel Stensrud.

Thanks to all of the committee members for volunteering their time to serve on the School Finance Committee.



Books and Breakfast



Build a Book



Exchange City

Save the Date

March 30	No School/Staff Development
April 2	LS 4th Grade Science Fair
April 2	PS Volunteer Breakfast
April 3	MS Talent Show PAC 7 pm
April 10	No School
April 13	No School
April 15	PS Kindergarten Round Up
April 17	TF Kindergarten Round Up
April 22 & 23	PS 2nd Grade Music Program
April 28	TF 3rd Grade Music Program at 7 pm
April 30	LS 5th Grade Choir Concert
April 30	TF Grades 1 & 2 Music Program
May 7	TF 4th Grade Science Fair
May 7	HS Spring Choir Concert PAC 7pm
May 11	HS Senior Scholarship/Awards PAC 7 pm
May 15	PS Kindergarten Field Day
May 18	HS Spring Band Concert PAC 7pm
May 19	MS Band Concert PAC

Free/Reduced Meal Applications

Many households are suffering due to the current state of the economy. If you have suffered a job loss or decrease in wages or other income, assistance may be available to pay for student meals through the free/reduced meal program.

All you need to do is complete the Application for Educational Benefits form to see if you qualify. The form is easy to complete and is processed as soon as it is received in the food services office. You may apply at any time during the school year.

If you completed an application for this school year and were denied, please call the food services office if your income has decreased. You may currently qualify and you do not have to complete a new application.

Students who qualify for reduced price meals pay 40 cents for lunch. Their breakfast is free. Breakfast is available at all of the schools in the district.

The Application for Educational Benefits with income guidelines is available in every school office and cafeteria, on the school district's website under the Food Services tab, or you may call the Department of Food Services at (651) 213-2066 and request that one be mailed to you. Please call if you have questions or need assistance.

Kindergarten Round-Up



Kindergarten Round-up will be held Wednesday, April 15 at Chisago Lakes Primary School and Friday, April 17 at Taylors Falls Elementary School. If you have a child old enough to start kindergarten in the fall, you should receive an invitation in the mail toward the end of March. If you do not think your child is on the school district census or you know someone who is new to the area, please call the Primary School at 213-2200 or Taylors Falls Elementary at 213-2100. If your child has not been to Early Childhood Screening, call the Family Center at 213-6865 to set up an appointment.

We look forward to seeing you in April!

Correction:

Our December 2008 School District Review should have stated that the company who completed the athletic field at the high school was Peterson Companies.