

# Commentary

A Newsletter for the Residents of the Westlake City School District

## STEM units challenge students

It's been a semester of STEM at Lee Burneson Middle School. The seventh and eighth grades measured, researched, built and tested through different projects to provide real-world applications for science, technology, engineering and mathematics.



Seventh grade cafeteria winners

In May, the seventh grade was challenged to create a model of a common area, known as a cafeteria, for the school. Student teams worked for a week on their projects before presenting their design concepts to a panel of judges. The three winning teams were the Sky Team (Jesus Garcia, Kyle Genson, Gabby Matos, Marty Cunningham and Adam Zaved), Earth Team (Phillip Cooper, Madeline D'Amico, Yousef Mustafa, Anastasia Dines and Jason Fraley) and Sea Team (Carson Grego, Maria Kuhn, Dillon Renick, Katie Michelich and Nadia Lahham).

The eighth grade was challenged to develop an outdoor learning center for the middle school

that was environmentally friendly, fit within a 40-foot-by-60-foot area and did not exceed \$120,000. Design groups spent a week working on their design ideas, creating scale drawings,

taking photographs, downloading information from the Internet and building displays.

Projects were judged at a June 2 design fair.

In science teacher Sandy Vontroba's classes, students participated in Asteroid STEM labs focused on analyzing the position of the impact and what happens to the surroundings upon impact of an asteroid. Students used video, photography and hand-held radar units to measure the spread of debris and dirt after an "asteroid" rock was dropped from a specific height. Students were challenged to forecast asteroid and comet impact and explore the challenges of making such forecasts. They also learned what makes an asteroid and meteorite and how to make

Archaeological dig STEM lab



Asteroid STEM lab

comparisons between the two objects.

Vontroba also engaged students in an Archaeological dig STEM lab, which taught students to analyze the properties of fossils and

how rocks in the area were formed. Students staked out parcels behind the school and used archaeological digging protocols to find out how the land was shaped. They brainstormed about why they found what they did, learned how to excavate the artifacts and identified the artifacts. The artifacts provided important evidence of how life and environmental conditions have changed over time.



# McMasters recognized as state's top math teacher

Lee Burneson Middle School math teacher Judy McMasters is the winner of the 2009 George B. Chapman Jr. Teacher Award for Excellence in Mathematics Education.

The award is one of the highest the Martha Holden Jennings Foundation bestows on an educator and comes with a \$7,500 grant award. McMasters was chosen from among 10,000 eligible Ohio teachers.

McMasters has been with the Westlake Schools since 1999. She has participated in the district's STEM grant writing, served on the mathematics curriculum committee and developed enrichment activities. She is the advisor for FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) Lego League team, Academic Challenge team and the

Westlake Math Demons team.

She has earned the Edyth May Slythe Distinguished Mathematics award from MAA (Mathematical Association of America) and NCTM (National Council of Teachers of Mathematics) and the Best Buy Teach Award.

McMasters plans to use her grant award to provide a variety of "out of the box" experiences for her students, including a Geospatial Technology activity that will engage students in problem solving techniques, mathematics principles, environmental

issues and technology. The activity takes GPS to the next level by bringing Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to the middle school level. Geospatial technology addresses mathematics in geography, mapping, health sciences, transportation, distribution and logistics.



(L to R) Superintendent Dr. Daniel J. Keenan Jr., Director of Academic Services Pam Griebel, Judy McMasters, Gifted Coordinator Sue Forbes, Director of Pupil Services Stephanie Morgan and LBMS Principal Dave Newman

## \$134,500 EPA grant helps buses reduce emissions

The Westlake City School District was recently awarded a \$134,500 federal stimulus grant through the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency to retrofit 20 of the district's 55 school buses with pollution control technology.

Westlake resident Joe Koncelik alerted the district about the Ohio Diesel School Bus Retrofit Grant program, which he created while director of Ohio EPA. Transportation Director Gavin Berwald said the move will reduce emissions by up to 70% per bus. The district's local match is \$7,500 to retrofit one additional bus. Westlake's award was the second highest grant dollar amount.

"We will provide a cleaner, healthier ride for the students who ride these buses, as well as help to improve the general air quality in Westlake and Cuyahoga County," said Director of Business Affairs Dave Puffer. "We look forward to applying for similar Ohio EPA grant funds in the future as another step in this environmentally beneficial effort."

## Dover Elementary meets Pennies for Peace campaign goal

Dover Elementary School's Pennies for Peace campaign reached its goal of \$5,000 to support an existing school in the war-torn villages of Pakistan and Afghanistan. Dover families and friends contributed about \$1,000 toward the goal. Karen Huber's fourth grade class collected the most with \$1,450, and Caitlyn Simpson was the top fundraiser at \$307. The students' efforts were documented on Romona's Kids on Channel 3 News in April. The campaign also was featured on a Times Square billboard in New York City.

# Continuing examples of 'Excellence'

WHS health and physical education teacher Tim English is the recipient of the 2008-09 Bob Hersman "Coach of the Year" Award.

The award is given by Westlake head coaches who choose a peer who exemplifies the principles of professional integrity, commitment to excellence, leadership and service, and a deep sense of caring for others.

English, who has been an educator for 34 years, has been an assistant Varsity football coach for 22 years and assistant boys track coach for 19 years. He has also served as a game management assistant for boys' Varsity and JV

basketball games and coached middle school boys basketball.

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Several WHS students landed in the Top 10 in the state and the country for their scores on the annual National French Exam.

WHS national winners were Lynn Orfahli (1st in Ohio, 5th in U.S., Level 3), Amy Schmitz (3rd in Ohio, 7th in U.S., Level 3) and Marie-Noel Salem (4th in Ohio, 9th in U.S., Level 5).

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Sixth graders Alli Collins and

Regan Falin won Parkside Intermediate School's 6th annual junior Solar Sprint competition. Their "Green, Mean Solar Machine" completed the 20-meter course in 9.4 seconds.



## Save the Date: Aug. 18

The Westlake Council of PTAs will present a Westlake City Schools Parent Information Night on Tuesday, Aug. 18, 7 to 8:30 p.m., at the Westlake Schools Performing Arts Center.

Listen to a collection of speakers, including Westlake Council of PTAs President Cathy Axcell, Ohio PTA Director of Advocacy Melisa Yeoman, Board of Education President Andrea Rocco, Superintendent Dr. Daniel J. Keenan Jr., Director of Academic Services Pam Griebel, Mayor Dennis Clough and representatives from each of the school PTA units.

After, browse informational tables from all of the PTA units, Demons Club, Music Boosters, Parent 2 Parent Network and Westlake Education Foundation. Parents and children are welcome to attend. There will be light refreshments and door prizes.

Be informed and get involved in your schools. For more information contact Cathy Axcell at [axcellfamily@roadrunner.com](mailto:axcellfamily@roadrunner.com)

## Access facilities information at [www.wlake.org/facilities](http://www.wlake.org/facilities)

The Westlake City Schools educate for excellence, but failing and overcrowded facilities are jeopardizing that excellence.

A team of architects and engineers led by MKC Associates of Mansfield is reviewing the district's master plan options and creating a more detailed plan to eventually present to voters.

The Board also is looking into tapping federal stimulus money through the Qualified School Construction Bond program, which would provide federal tax credits in lieu of interest as a way to finance a portion of the construction costs at 0% interest.

For more information on our facilities and to learn more about the challenges our students and staff face on a daily basis by visiting our web site at [www.wlake.org/facilities](http://www.wlake.org/facilities). There you can review photos, architectural reports, news coverage and view an informational video. We will continually update the site as the facilities plan develops.

# Consider transportation needs

The Westlake Board of Education realizes that it may be necessary to provide an alternate transportation location for students that require childcare providers. The service must be practical, cost effective and meet the needs of both the parents and the school district.

Based on Board policy, transportation to and from a childcare provider will be provided based on the following criteria:

1. **For service to start at the beginning of the school year, the completed Custodial Care Form must be received by the Transportation Department prior to July 31.** Forms received after July 31 will not go into effect until Sept. 8. Forms received after Sept. 2 will take a minimum of 5 working days to go into effect.

2. **The service must be for 5 days per week.** Service is for the entire school year or until permanently changed in writing. This will reduce the possibility of your child being taken to the wrong destination.

3. The location of the childcare provider to/from which the student is to be transported must be located in an area designated by the Board as eligible for bus transportation to the school of attendance. Should the Superintendent place a student at a building other than their home school of attendance, transportation would

be provided to childcare providers to/from either the school of attendance or home school area.

4. The provisions of transportation for such students must not cause the district to incur any additional costs or require the establishment of new bus routes. Such transportation shall be provided only if there is sufficient space for pupils on the appropriate bus after space has been made available for all other students qualified for transportation.

5. All students must have a Custodial Care Form on file prior to transportation service to begin.

**Custodial Care Forms are effective for the current school year only and must be completed on a yearly basis.** Custodial Care Forms can be obtained from the Westlake Board of Education, 27200 Hilliard Blvd., between 8am and 3:30pm, Monday through Friday, at the Transportation Department or via mail.

Completed forms are to be returned to the Westlake City Schools Transportation Department, 1097 Bassett Road. Should you have any questions regarding this matter, please contact the Transportation Department at (440) 835-6313. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

The Westlake City School District is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action agency and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, national origin, age, political affiliation or disability.

Westlake City Schools

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The Westlake City School District is a member of the Westlake Chamber of Commerce.

Please forward comments to Kim Bonvissuto, communications coordinator, 27200 Hilliard Blvd., or call (440) 250-1258. Or email [bonvissuto@wlake.org](mailto:bonvissuto@wlake.org)

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