



In Grade Five, History Comes Alive

Fifth grade students at Tamarac Elementary don't just learn about American Revolutionary History. They live it.

Students this year performed "Colonies to Country: A Revolutionary Play," a play they researched and created including such historical events as the Battle of Bunker Hill, Paul Revere's fateful ride, and the Boston Massacre.

Students performed the play in the school library, sharing what they learned with an appreciative audience of classmates in grades two through five, who watched with rapt attention and applauded loudly at the end. Students portrayed such historical figures as George Washington, Betsy Ross, and King George III.

Teacher Janet Howard explained that the play was a fun way for her class and teacher Gary Morgan's class to work together to research American Revolutionary history. After learning about the historical events, students created costumes and recreated more than a dozen scenes from the settlement of Colonial Jamestown to the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

"Some young stars were born and the students will never forget what they learned from teaching others about the American Revolution," Howard said.

At the end of the performance, the students gathered together for an enthusiastic rendition of "You're a Grand Old Flag" as the young members of the audience joined in. Other faculty and staff helped out with the production as well, including music teacher Cailin O'Hara and librarian Janice Toomajian.



PROPOSED 2009-2010 BUDGET:

No Tax Levy Increase

The district's proposed 2009-2010 school year budget calls for a zero percent tax levy increase and no layoffs of full-time district employees.

While Brunswick Central School District is facing the same financial challenges all school districts are facing, a retirement incentive which 17 employees took advantage of helped the district reduce spending without a significant impact to classroom instruction.

"If it wasn't for those employees stepping forward and taking the modest retirement incentive we offered, we wouldn't be in the position we're in," said Superintendent Lou McIntosh. "The district offers its sincere thanks to those employees for helping us out of a difficult financial situation."

The proposed budget totals \$22.3 million, a 4.6 percent increase over the 2008-09 budget. However, if an additional \$1.5 million in debt service for the Capital Project is excluded, spending was cut by more than \$500,000.

McIntosh noted that additional money from the federal stimulus plan helped the district hold the line on taxes for next year. But he stressed admin-

istrators also took a hard look at spending in all areas to ensure the district is in a solid financial position in two years when that money will no longer be available.

Elementary Principal Karen Lederman and Secondary School Principal Richard Pogue both spoke favorably about the budget when it was presented to the Board of Education at its March 11 meeting. The Board is scheduled to adopt a budget on April 8.

"This budget is virtually unchanged from last year in terms of personnel," Lederman said. "I'm extremely confident we'll be able to offer as good a program next year as we have this year."

"Even in tough economic times, we have a responsibility to provide a quality education and I believe we'll do that next year," Pogue said. "We still meet or exceed all New York State requirements for course requirements."

A budget newsletter will be sent out in late April providing details of the budget. Additional information, including the proposed budget, is available on the school website, www.brittonkill.k12.ny.us.

Students Attend Leadership Conference

Tamarac High School students are attending a series of National Young Leaders Conferences in Washington, D.C. this spring, learning leadership skills and meeting with governmental leaders.

Ashley Delgiaccio, Lindsay Doyle, Zhaleh Laliberte-Lavasani, Megan Rooney and Chelsea Weber attended conferences this spring. Each year, outstanding Tamarac High School students are nominated to go based on their academic records.

Zhaleh said the experience was valuable, meetings students from across the country, attending leadership building seminars, and even forming their own Congress where they passed mock legislation.

"I learned a lot about organization, history and government," she said. "It helped me see what I might want to major in in college."

Teacher and Parent Receive Awards

A Tamarac teacher and a parent volunteer were recently honored with Character Education Leadership Awards for their “outstanding positive leadership” in working with students.

High School teacher Valerie Dechene and Vice President of the Brittonkill PTSA Gretchen Morton each received the awards at a March 18 ceremony organized by the Academy for Character Education at the Sage Colleges.



Each year, the Academy selects individuals who are “exemplary leaders in character education”. Tamarac teacher Suzanne Myers nominated Dechene and Morton for the awards.

In her nominating letter, Myers praised Dechene for her work as a Family and Consumer Science teacher and her work with student service learning clubs. Dechene’s students often use the skills they learn in the classroom in the community, cooking for seniors or knitting hats and mittens for those in need. Her Kids Care Club is one of the most active service groups in the school, helping out in the community and visiting local nursing homes.

“Valerie Dechene is one of the most caring people I know. Her dedication to her students and their needs is inspiring at so many levels,” Myers wrote in her nominating letter.

Morton, an active parent volunteer, was nominated for her work in making the Tamarac Elementary book fair more accessible to students and families. She also was recognized for her dedication to the Brittonkill Educational Enrichment Program, a popular elementary afterschool program that offers classes taught by older Tamarac students and community members.

“Gretchen Morton is a volunteer extraordinaire, with talents and abilities she’s willing to share willingly and with great passion,” Myers wrote in her nominating letter.

A Taste of Brunswick

The Brittonkill Educational Foundation will hold “A Taste of Brunswick” on Sunday, May 3 from 4 to 7 p.m. in the Carousel Ballroom of Sterup Square.

This event will feature unique cuisine from local establishments, music performances by Tamarac students, and the chance to win great prizes.

The 50th anniversary of Tamarac’s first graduation class will also be celebrated at the event.

Proceeds of the event will help fund creative and innovative programs for Tamarac students not covered by the school budget. For additional information, visit the Foundation website www.brittonkill.k12.ny.us/bef to download a flyer and registration form or call 279-4281.



WASTEWATER TREATMENT FACILITY:

System Upgrade Planned for 2010

After exploring numerous other options, Brunswick Central School District plans to make extensive modifications to its wastewater treatment facility at a cost of nearly \$700,000 to remedy an ongoing ammonia problem at Tamarac schools.

The project will not adversely impact taxpayers as the district will use funding that New York State provided the district in the last year after making adjustments to multiple years of state aid. Construction of the facility will take place in the summer of 2010.

“We’ve tried everything we can but this is the only solution that will solve our wastewater problem,” said Superintendent Lou McIntosh. “Fortunately, when the state alerted us that we were entitled to a significant refund for state aid adjustments, the district appropriated the money to address this problem.”

Over the last few years, the district has tried more than 10 operational changes to fix the problem and considered connecting to municipal sewer but costs were prohibitive as the nearest system is 3.5 miles from the school. The new treatment facility will utilize an aeration system, a system widely used with a long record of success. For additional information, please visit the school website www.brittonkill.k12.ny.us.

Community Honors Teachers and Staff

Dozens of faculty and staff members at Tamarac schools were honored by the community this year through the Brittonkill Educational Foundation's Teacher Tribute Program.

The program provides an opportunity for community members to make donations to the Foundation in honor of specific teachers or staff members. The Foundation uses the funds to support enriched learning experiences for all the students in the district.

On behalf of everyone at Brunswick Central School District, we would like to thank community members who honored our faculty and staff. To view a list of those who were honored through the Teacher Tribute Program, please visit the school website at www.brittonkill.k12.ny.us.

Seventh Grader Wins Tamarac Spelling Bee

Seventh grader Lee Vartigian won the Tamarac 2009 Spelling Bee on February 4, correctly spelling "bludgeon" to earn a place in the Regional Spelling Bee held at Proctor's Theater in Schenectady.

Lee edged out eighth grader Maddie Felgentreff, who won last year's Tamarac Spelling Bee. The competition lasted 14 rounds.

A total of 16 students competed in the Tamarac 2009 Spelling Bee, with four students representing each grade level from fifth to eighth grade. Students qualified to participate by winning class level Spelling Bees.

"They wouldn't be here if they weren't already winners," Superintendent Lou McIntosh announced at the beginning of the event, as audience members applauded the students.

The Spelling Bee was held in the district auditorium which was packed with students, parents, grandparents, and other family members.



LIBRARIES USE TECHNOLOGY TO ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO READ

When Tamarac Elementary students pick up "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory" in the school library, they don't have to wonder if it's a good book.

They can read a book review of it and dozens of others written by classmates on the school library website.

"I like this book better than the movie," wrote a Tamarac fifth grader. "Who will go to the chocolate factory? You will have to read the book to find out."

Integrating technology into library instruction has become a valuable way to get students interested in reading at Tamarac's school libraries.

"Technology has become such a part of children's lives," explained Elementary School Librarian Janice Toomajian. "We have to realize this is where kids are and we have to reach them where they are."



Toomajian stressed that doesn't mean librarians abandon their primary goals of developing a life long love of reading in children and helping them develop research skills. Technology simply helps them more effectively reach those goals.

Author visits, for example, are more common now because local authors can be easily found on the Internet. "Students make these connections with authors who have a real impact on them. It doesn't have to be J.K. Rowling to make an impression," she said.

Librarian Michelle Furlong also utilizes technology to reach students at the Secondary School, particularly Web 2.0 concepts that allow students to create and share content on the Internet. Students, for example, can record video reviews of books they've read or take a survey about what types of books they're interested in.

"Integrating the technology helps create enthusiasm, especially in reluctant readers," explained Furlong. "It helps to reach them in new ways because it interests them. Students get excited about coming to the library."

Students can also check if the library has a book from their home computer, access online encyclopedias with the most current information, or play a game that teaches library skills.

Students are also taught to evaluate the validity of information, particularly from Internet sources. Furlong explained students need to learn websites like blogs and wikis are not always reliable, particularly as students move on to college.

"We're no longer just the guardians of the books," Furlong said. "We work closely with students. We're still teaching them the traditional library skills; we're just using new techniques to reach them."

District Focuses on School Wellness



Tamarac students will soon be able to purchase organic snacks and natural foods from new vending machines at the elementary and high school.

Offering healthier options for students to choose from is just the type of idea the district's Wellness Committee is looking for, noted Shannon Fitzgerald, a school health teacher who chairs the committee.

"We just want to make sure there are healthy options for those who are looking for it," Fitzgerald explained. "We're not the food police. We don't want to tell people what to eat or judge what they eat, just offer alternatives."

In recent months, the district's Wellness Committee has become more active, enlisting new members and meeting regularly. The group's charge is to create a healthier school and community environment.

Currently, the committee is reviewing nutrition, physical education, and other areas of school wellness to find places to improve. The committee also created a webpage on the school website, www.brittonkill.k12.ny.us, offering tips and informational resources to help parents, students, staff, and the community stay healthy.

"At school, we teach students to make good decisions. Helping them make good food and health choices is a part of that," Fitzgerald said.

How to Run for Board of Education

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN RUNNING FOR THE BOARD OF EDUCATION?

Petitions are now available on the school website, www.brittonkill.k12.ny.us, or by calling 279-4600 ext. 2602. The deadline is April 20.

There will be three Board seats on the ballot this year. Board members serve three-year terms. These are unpaid positions.

Students Win Writing Contest

Two Tamarac High School students recently won awards after finishing in the top three of Russell Sage College's High School Women's History Month Writing Contest.

Junior Sheila Smith and Senior Kristina Krylova finished first and third respectively in the college's recent writing contest. Their essays discussed women and the environment.

Ms. Smith and Ms. Krylova were honored by Russell Sage College for their winning essays on March 5 at a Women's History Month event held at the college.

For earning first place in the writing contest, Ms. Smith's essay will appear in Russell Sage College's literary journal, "Laurel Leaves". Congratulations!



Brunswick Central School District
3992 NY Route 2
Troy, New York 12180

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Troy, NY
Permit No. 800

POSTAL CUSTOMER