

# Schalmon<sup>t</sup> News

CENTRAL SCHOOLS

## It Takes a Village

Every day, numerous volunteers make a difference in the lives of Schalmont students. These generous women and men help out by serving in classrooms and libraries, helping run special events, supporting extracurricular clubs, joining booster organizations, and much more. So, what motivates these people to share their time and energy with our students?

For some, it's about knowing their school district better. Retiree Dot Ross is a library volunteer at Woestina Elementary School. After two years of service, she's learned that, "They have a wonderful program and

wonderful teachers there. I get to see the children and their artwork and projects."

For others, it's about having just a little more time to watch their children grow up. Jenn Dixon, a stay-at-home mom, has volunteered at Mariaville Elementary School for five years, and now serves as PTO president. She said, "I like the fact that my kids still enjoy me being involved in their school. I know there will come a point when they don't want me around, but for now they do."

Both Ross and Dixon have full personal lives, and it takes a certain amount of

*continued on page 2* ---->

### ➔ What's inside

pg.2 ■ **Middle Class STAR**  
*New tax relief program available*

pg.3 ■ **MS High Achievers**  
*Presidential Academic Awards continued*

### Vacation with Smarts

Schalmon students kept busy this summer



**SEE PAGE 3**

## Gateway to Technology at Schalmont Middle School

Sixth-grade students at Schalmont Middle School are discovering what it takes to be an engineer in a new program called "Gateway to Technology." This is the first year of the 10-week program, and over the next three years, it will be expanded to include all MS grade levels.

The field of engineering promises to offer some of the most in-demand jobs in the future. Schalmont High School instituted Project Lead the Way (PLTW), a pre-engineering

program, a little over two years ago to help students prepare for those job opportunities. Though Gateway to Technology (GTT) is not intended as an introduction to PLTW, it uses hands-on lessons incorporating math, science and technology to show students how each discipline is used in engineering to solve everyday problems.

Technology teacher Tom Borkowski currently instructs two sections of sixth-graders in the GTT program. "Our hope is to get more engineers out in the field," he said. "But even if they just develop an interest in drawing, computers and hands-on activities, it will help them in seventh grade."

This year, sixth graders are taking a design and modeling unit with lessons in solid modeling, sketching techniques, descriptive geometry, measurement, and computer modeling. They will learn how to create their own models – such as air racers and C02 cars – and use Autodesk Inventor software and various computer applications to solve problems. New units will be offered as the GTT program is rolled out to the remaining MS grades.

*continued on page 4* ---->

*The sixth-grade students pictured at right are participating in the first year of the Gateway to Technology program at Schalmont MS.*



## Beloncik Earns Top Honors



School board member Sandra Beloncik recently earned two significant honors from the New York State School Boards Association (NYSSBA): a Master of Boardmanship Award and a Leadership in Governance Certificate.

The NYSSBA Master of Boardmanship Award is currently the highest honor bestowed by the association's Leadership Development Recognition Program. To qualify for this award, Beloncik participated in NYSSBA training events totaling at least 200 credits, including completion of the School Board Institute (SBI). The SBI is a series of eight intensive courses that examine the key work of school boards in enhancing student achievement. Beloncik was one of only 17 school board members from across the state to graduate from the SBI and earn a Leadership in Governance Certificate this summer.

Carol Jesep, the NYSSBA Leadership Development Manager, says, "It is a credit to Sandra's dedication to children and advancing student achievement that she took time from her busy life to educate herself... True educational leaders like Sandra Beloncik become role models as continuous learners."

Beloncik currently is serving her fifth term on the school board, and previously served as board vice president for the 2004-05 and 2005-06 school years.

## ■ It Takes a Village

— continued from pg.1

scheduling to fit in time to volunteer. But Pat Vissat, a kindergarten teacher at Jefferson Elementary School, is quick to point out that people with full-time jobs can still be school volunteers.

"There are people out there with skills to share," she said, after mentioning a parent who, as a scuba diving instructor, was able to share with students his knowledge of the sport as well as exciting diving equipment. Vissat said even an hour here or there can make a difference in children's educational experience.

Sue Rudolphson is something of a prolific volunteer. In addition to raising three Schalmont graduates, she spent the last 18 years in various volunteer positions, including as a homeroom parent and a PTO president at both the Jefferson and Pine Grove elementary schools. Why does she continue to volunteer after all these years?



"Mothers have eyes in the back of their heads, but teachers have to have them all around," said Rudolphson (pictured above, left). As a volunteer, she helps with things like activity centers, writers' workshops, arts and crafts, and reading practice. "I help so Mrs. Vissat can focus on teaching."

Our volunteers are much appreciated, but working with children in any capacity requires a lot of responsibility. That's why all Schalmont schools follow safety procedures before accepting volunteers. Those with a genuine interest in children and their development are encouraged to contact school PTOs and/or teachers to learn more about volunteer opportunities throughout the school year.

## Tax Relief with New Middle Class STAR Rebate

All New Yorkers who own a home can significantly reduce their school property taxes through a School Tax Relief (STAR) exemption, but a Middle Class STAR Rebate is now available to homeowners who receive the basic STAR exemption or an enhanced STAR exemption (for those aged 65 years or older).

This new program will provide a further benefit to taxpayers, on a sliding income scale, through a rebate check. According to the New York State Department of Tax and Finance Web site, "This year's rebate check is based not only on your property tax burden, but also on your ability to pay, factoring in your income level."

The state sent letters to homeowners alerting them of this program and describing the steps necessary to apply for and receive rebates. Notifications were mailed on a county by county basis, staggered weekly through the middle of September. The application deadline is November 30, 2007, and homeowners can expect to receive their checks a few weeks after filing their applications.

Visit <http://www.tax.state.ny.us/star/2007/> to learn more about this program, calculate your rebate amount, and apply for your rebate (after receiving your notification letter). For more information, contact the NYS Department of Tax and Finance at 1-877-6-STAR-NY (1-877-678-2769).

# A Vacation with Smarts

Paul Dougall is concentrating very hard on the sketch in front of him. In careful detail, he and his partner, Justin Heller, have outlined the design for a snazzy new race car. Its clean lines and minimalist design should help make it fast and fairly inexpensive.

But the two must first tackle a very serious issue: Dougall asks, "How are we going to hold the steering wheel together?"

He and Heller aren't automobile engineers... yet. They're students participating in the Math and Science Academy at Jefferson Elementary School. Principal Joby Gifford and Michele Freeman, science coordinator at Schalmont High School, worked with elementary teachers Peter Guba, Nora Guzewich and Katherine Cathell to create a program that would expose students to math and science principles not normally covered during the school year. Just launched this summer, the

free program let incoming fourth- and fifth-grade students liven up their vacation by experimenting with the scientific method and exploring what it means to be a smart consumer.

Dougall and Heller were creating a race car out of various forms of pasta, one of five activities offered during two one-week sessions. Participants also put popular brands of paper towels to the test, created Super Balls out of common laundry detergent, made ice cream in a plastic bag, and learned how best to clean up an (vegetable) oil spill. Summer enrichment programs like this one help students stay mentally active and discover how 'hard subjects' can actually be a lot of fun to learn.

According to Freeman, it also can help them prepare for the academic rigors of middle school. "For example, next year, [the fifth-graders] will be ahead of the game because they'll already know what a graduated cylinder is."

Several Schalmont High School students took time to drop in on the elementary program and share what they've learned over the years.

Junior Madison Decerce said, "I like science, and I thought it was a good experience overall to be helping people." He hoped to pursue a medical degree someday, but for now, seemed content with helping fourth-grader Michael Lewis find a merger between pinwheel pasta and lasagna noodles that might lead to a car on Victory Lane.

The Math and Science Academy was made possible thanks to a state grant, and school officials hope to continue the program in the future. All fourth-

## '06-07 High Achievers Continued

Last spring, 57 eighth-grade students received **Presidential Academic Awards** in honor of their outstanding achievement in classes and on New York State standardized tests. The following students were mistakenly left off the list of awardees published in the district newsletter last June:

Bethany Biernat	Meredith Juers
Benjamin Bowman	Allison Kartner
Lori Caldara	Bree Koetzner
Kristina Cappuccitti	Rachel Lynch
Mia Caprara	Kara Marthy
Katherine Desmond	Brenden Munafo
Madison Deyo	Anthony Notar
Kevin Drislane	Zachary Saccocio
Rene Dufek	Korin Sichak
Haley Evenden	Amanda Symons
Bridget Frank	Alexis Umholtz
Dana Hallam	Maya White
Danielle Hayden	Corina Zarillo

Awardees must have maintained at least a 3.5 GPA throughout middle school, and scored a 4 on either of the NYS math or English language assessment (ELA) exams. Congratulations to all of these outstanding students!

and fifth-grade students in Schalmont were invited to participate, and over 90 students took advantage of the opportunity this summer. There was no cost to attend, but parents had to provide their children with transportation to and from the school.

Parents can look forward to receiving information about any summer 2008 programs sometime this spring.



*Schalmont High School junior Madison Decerce (right) helped Jefferson Elementary fourth-grader Michael Lewis (left) create a race car inspired by fine Italian dining.*



### School Board Calendar

Schalmont Board of Education public meetings are held at 7 p.m. unless otherwise noted.

**Monday, Oct. 22**

Schalmont MS LGI Room

**Tuesday, Nov. 13**

Mariaville Elementary School

**Monday, Nov. 26**

Schalmont MS LGI Room

### Reunion Calendar

All events are in Schenectady unless otherwise noted.

**Class of 1977**

**Friday, Nov. 23**

Stadium Golf Course Banquet Hall

333 Jackson Ave.

Information: (518) 374-5831

**Class of 1987**

**Saturday, Nov. 24, 6-10 p.m.**

Mallozzi's Restaurant

1930 Curry Rd.

schalmontclassof1987@yahoo.com

**Class of 1997**

**Saturday, Nov. 24, 7:30-10:30 p.m.**

Albany Pump Station

19 Quackenbush Sq., Albany

www.schalmontclassof97.com

schalmontclassof97@yahoo.com

## Gateway to Technology

— continued from pg.1

During a recent class, students were tasked with using computers to learn more about careers in engineering or those that incorporate elements of math, science and technology. Student Chris Janiga had several careers in mind to explore: 9-1-1 operator, fire fighter, paramedic, or marine. "Most of the room is full of computers," said Janiga when asked how police call centers incorporate technology. He also said that what he most liked about the GTT class was "that we get to go onto computers."

Student Kirstyn Galea, who said she most enjoyed all of the hands-on projects, chose to research cartoon animation. She said, "You get to make your own characters, mix the sound, choose voices, colors, and textures. Technology is in pretty much everything except for the beginning where you sketch."

These students' career choices show how diverse the job opportunities may be for someone with a background in science, technology, engineering, and/or math. Programs like GTT and PLTW give Schalmont students just such a background.



*Who wants some coleslaw? Jefferson Elementary School student Mary Morawski (right) participated in a cabbage-growing competition that began last spring, and this year brought a roughly 15 pound cabbage into her fourth-grade class. By participating in this competition, Morawski and other students learned about the life cycles of living things in a very hands-on way. She is pictured with her cabbage and Jefferson Principal Joby Gifford (left).*



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# Schalmont

CENTRAL SCHOOLS

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