

# Schalmont News

CENTRAL SCHOOLS

## Unique Factors, Cost-saving Measures Key to Budget Plans

The Schalmont Board of Education and administrators must consider a variety of factors before proposing a budget for the coming school year.

For the 2008-2009 school budget, those factors include students' education needs; non-instructional factors such as unsettled tax certiorari cases, employee contract negotiations, and rising diesel fuel costs; and significant changes in state funding. The final budget also will reflect cost-saving measures designed to help address the economic concerns of local taxpayers.

### Budget Factors

Given the demands of 21st century employers, school districts must work harder than ever to improve and expand educational offerings for students. Districts also must improve students' capabilities in core curriculum areas, in accordance with No Child Left Behind regulations.

The proposed 2008-2009 school budget will not create new educational programs, but it will enhance existing programs. For example, Project Lead the Way will be offered to all four grade levels at Schalmont

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## REMEMBERING A COACH AND HIS LEGACY



Step inside Schalmont High School, turn to the right, and you'll find a display case filled with cherished trophies, championship baseballs and a proudly-worn uniform. Stare at the silent photos, and you just might hear the crack of a baseball bat on a warm day in May.

That sound was a big part of Bruce Bouck's life. In Schalmont, that sound

and his memory live on every spring with the Bruce A. Bouck Memorial Baseball Tournament.

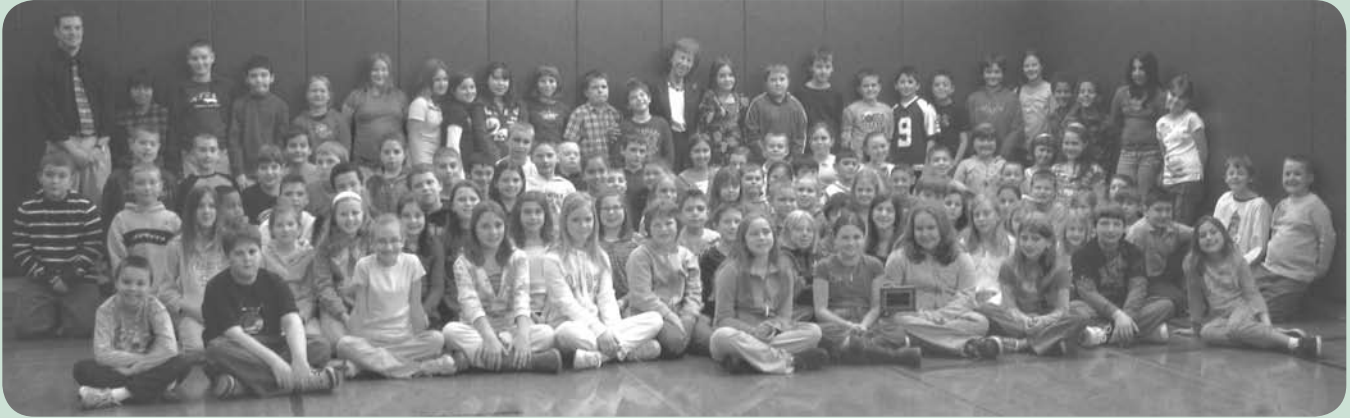
Bouck was a Schalmont physical education teacher and coach for over 25 years. As his widow, Cindy, remembers, "He liked teaching, but he loved coaching."

Bouck coached football from 1963-1974 and basketball from 1963-1982, but his most enduring passion was baseball, which he coached from 1963-1989. His career as a baseball coach earned him 300 victories, a sectional championship, and the title of Capital District Baseball Coach of the Year in 1977. His sudden death in 1989 – just before his HS varsity baseball team took the field – was shocking for many.

Craig Sargent, a retired Schalmont Middle School teacher, became very close with Bouck because they carpooled to work for several years. "He was a wonderful coach, teacher and father," said Sargent, who described him as someone with "old-school" values who believed in the value of sacrifice on the athletic field as well as at home. "He was a true professional in all regards."

In 1989, Sargent and other members of the Schalmont community formed the Bruce Bouck Memorial Committee. They established the previously mentioned memorial dis-

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**Jefferson Students Get Out the Vote:** Thanks go out to all of the students and parents who helped Jefferson Elementary earn a special plaque for being the Schenectady County school with the highest number of students who participated in this year's "Take Me to Vote Day." The event encourages parents to bring their children with them when they vote so the young observers can become more aware of the voting process. Town Clerk Eunice Esposito (back row, center) presented the award to Principal Joby Gifford (back row, left).

## ■ Unique Factors Key to Budget Plan

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High School, Gateway to Technology will be offered in sixth and seventh grade at Schalmont Middle School, and the Everyday Mathematics program already a part of the K-2 curriculum will be expanded to third grade.

According to Superintendent Valerie Kelsey, "We'll take advantage of grant opportunities to introduce new things, such as math and science clubs at the elementary level, but the general budget will be directed to the continuation of established, successful programs."

In any school district, non-instructional factors also play a role in the cost of education. Several unique ones affect Schalmont Central School District:

- **The district is subject to over \$17 million in tax certiorari claims**, which are court cases brought by businesses or property owners seeking a reduction in their property tax assessments. Should the claimants win their cases, the district will have to pay them using savings in a certiorari reserve fund and/or by borrowing money. (For more information, see the article "Planning for a Healthy Financial Future" on page 5.)
- **Most district employees are represented by one of three bargaining units.** The district must cover contracts with the bargaining units whether or not the school budget passes, so school board members try to negotiate contracts that are fair for local taxpayers as well as for current and future employees.

- **The district covers over 75 square miles, and Schalmont must provide students with transportation from home to school and back again.** This means rising prices for diesel fuel play a significant role in the annual school budget.

## Revenue Sources

Schalmont looks to all other available revenue sources – state and federal aid, interest earnings, facility rental fees, etc. – before it turns to local taxpayers to help pay for education.

The state aid portion would see significant changes with the governor's current stage budget proposal. If it passes, the 3 percent increase in Foundation Aid promised to Schalmont will drop down to 2.19 percent. This loss would shift more of the responsibility for funding education to local taxpayers.

**"The general budget will be directed to the continuation of established, successful programs."**

School board members and administrators are concerned about the financial challenges facing Schalmont residents. Many were affected by last year's Town of Rotterdam property reassessment – the first one in 50 years. **The reassessment did not change the total amount of money that the school district collected from local**

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## ■ Cost-saving Measures Key to Budget Plan

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taxpayers (i.e., school tax levy), but it did change how the school tax levy was distributed among local taxpayers.

“Some residents saw a significant increase in their taxes and thought it meant the district received extra money,” said Michael DellaVilla, president of the school board. “While that is not the case – in fact, other residents saw a decrease in their taxes – we know taxpayers rely on us to represent their interests at the same time as we ensure a sound, safe education for their children and grandchildren.”

### Cost-saving Measures

The 2008-2009 school budget proposal will include several measures designed to lower the cost of education:

- Continue to work with the Schenectady County schools buying-consortium, which provides savings in areas such as cafeteria food/supplies, computer supplies, paper, and trash removal
- Continue to participate in a BOCES energy consortium to buy natural gas and electricity
- Continue an energy savings plan at all Schalmont buildings to help lower energy costs
- Cut several instructional and non-instructional positions

These measures are intended to help the school board achieve its goal of delivering a sound and reasonable budget. They also will help the district continue the downward trend in the increase in the school tax levy. Over the last four years, it has steadily fallen from an 8.65 percent increase in the school tax levy in the 2004-2005 school year to a 4.5 percent increase in 2007-2008. This reflects board members’ desire to limit spending while still maintaining a quality educational system.

### Get to Know Your School Budget

District residents can learn more about the 2008-2009 school budget proposal during the **budget forums on March 26 and April 7**. They will be held at 7 p.m. in the Schalmont Middle School LGI Room, 2 Sabre Dr. The budget proposal will be formally adopted on April 7 and further discussed during a public hearing on May 12.

Residents unable to attend are invited to share their thoughts on the budget by e-mailing [superintendent@sabrenet.net](mailto:superintendent@sabrenet.net). Budget information also will be posted at [www.schalmont.org](http://www.schalmont.org) and presented in greater detail in the next issue of this district newsletter.

**The official vote on next year’s school budget will take place on Tuesday, May 20, from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. in the Schalmont High School New Gym Foyer, 1 Sabre Dr.**



## MS ENGINEERING CLUB WINS FUTURE CITY AWARD

Congratulations to Schalmont Middle School Engineering Club members on winning an award for “Best Air Transportation Design” at the Future City Competition this January.

They joined other seventh- and eighth-grade students from around the Capital District in writing essays, designing computer models and building 3-D models of their ideal future city. Competition participants had to use their creativity to relate engineering concepts, such as nanotechnology and infrastructure, to the world around them.

The Schalmont MS club’s imagined future city, “City of Zion,” is an agricultural city located on a planet named Gliese. Zion has a university, dorms, shopping malls, rail systems, and makes use of solar power.

Club advisors Andrea Bryson and Don Brandt, both MS science teachers, encourage students to participate in the competition because it helps them become more interested in math, science and engineering.

“They get to see all of the other school districts in the competition, and it kind of inspires them,” said Bryson. “They meet kids their own age who are also excited about math and science, and they know they’re not alone.”

This is the club’s third year in the Future City Competition and second year to receive an award for air transportation design. Last year, they earned an award for “Most Innovative Moving Parts.”

This year’s club members include Annette Brown, Victoria Candida, Nicole Gentile, Liza Miller, Jennifer Morawski, and Ariana Schrader.

## ■ Remembering Coach Bouck

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play case with a donation from Lee's Trophies, a memorial scholarship fund to help Schalmont student-athletes pay for college, and a memorial baseball tournament in his honor.

**The 17th Annual Bruce Bouck Memorial Tournament will be held on Saturday, May 10, beginning at 10 a.m. at Schalmont High School, 1 Sabre Dr.**

MS teacher Robert Anderson once played for Bouck, and he now coaches the Varsity Baseball Team. "With the renovation of our athletic fields, it's the perfect time to rededicate the baseball diamond in Bruce's honor," said Anderson, who organized this year's tournament.

It will include two rounds of baseball games between the four participating high schools (Schalmont, Bishop Gibbons, Cobleskill-Richmondville, and Scotia-Glenville); a field rededication ceremony with members of the Bouck family and the sectional champion 1978 Varsity Baseball Team; and activities to help raise funds for a new backstop.

Chris Amorosi was a member of the Section II Class B Champion 1978 Varsity Baseball Team. He remembers Bruce Bouck as a fair coach who demanded respect.

"We practiced very hard, but when it was time to have fun, we had fun," said Amorosi.

His son, Joe Amorosi, is in 10th grade at Schalmont High School. Last year, Joe joined the Varsity Baseball Team as a pitcher and took part in the 2007 sectional competitions.



**A Lasting Impact:** Now a member of the Schalmont High School Varsity Baseball team, Joe Amorosi (top left) was encouraged to play as a child by his father, Chris Amorosi (top right). Chris Amorosi was a member of Coach Bruce Bouck's 1978 Section II Class B Champion Varsity Baseball Team.

The elder Amorosi, who also was a pitcher in high school, said, "I've worked with Joey and his brother, Christopher, since they were little kids starting out with a wiffle ball. Probably a lot of things that I was teaching them came from my experiences. I'm sure a lot of Bruce Bouck's wisdom came out."

Joe likes that he and his dad have faced similar challenges in baseball and have also found success. He said, "It really shows that all the work – preseason, postseason and in practices – pays off."

It's been a long time since Coach Bouck walked the halls and fields of Schalmont, but his memory lives on in the hardworking, winning spirit he still inspires.

## Parents, did you take the technology survey?

Last summer, the Schalmont Technology Committee invited Schalmont parents to complete a short, anonymous survey designed to better assess their technology needs and interests.

The invitation was extended in the district newsletter and on the district website. Almost 100 people completed the survey. Their responses revealed that:

- The majority would like online access to information about students' homework (89.5 percent), curriculum (81.9 percent) and grades (79 percent).
- 85.5 percent would like schools to extend computer lab hours in the afternoon.

- 87.8 percent believe it would be beneficial to have online access to podcasts of teachers' lessons.
- 95.7 percent would like more information on new technology available for students' use at Schalmont.

This is just a sampling of the survey results. Parents' feedback will be used by committee members as they develop a multi-year plan for enhancing technology and technology instruction in the district. It also may inspire future articles in this newsletter and/or on the Schalmont website, [www.schalmont.org](http://www.schalmont.org).

This effort is intended to help Schalmont continue to prepare students for the demands of 21st century employment.



# Planning for a Healthy Financial Future

*Schalmont makes use of reserve funds, fund balance*

School budget planning isn't just about looking at the current cost to operate the district and making projections for the coming year. Schalmont board members and administrators also must plan for anticipated, long-range expenses and the possibility of unexpected emergencies.

The Tax Certiorari Reserve Fund is one example of funds set aside (i.e., reserved) by Schalmont for an anticipated, long-range expense. This fund was set up because the district is subject to \$17 million in tax certiorari claims, which are court cases brought by businesses or property owners seeking a reduction in their property tax assessments. It contains approximately \$3 million at this time.

Tax certiorari cases are not new to Schalmont. Michael DellaVilla, president of the Schalmont Board of Education, said, "This district has a history of setting aside funds to minimize the impact of tax certiorari claims, such as GE's claim in 2002." In that case, the district used the \$4.7 million in a certiorari reserve fund and borrowed another \$6.15 million to pay the claim.

Because tax certiorari cases can go on for years, Schalmont financial planning strategies include setting aside money in preparation for a verdict against the district. One benefit of this strategy is that it lowers the amount of money that the district must borrow – and pay interest on – to cover any future settlements.

These types of funds "are not 'rainy day' funds; they are funds for specific, known obligations coming down the line," said DellaVilla. "It would be irresponsible of us not to set aside money while we have the opportunity to do so, and in doing so, to prevent future interest expenses from being passed on to taxpayers."

Schools do have something of a rainy day fund elsewhere. New York State law allows school districts to keep up to 3 percent of their budget in a fund balance that can be used when emergencies arise related to health, safety and the preservation of property. For example, fund balance money was used to provide an emergency solution when problems with the ventilation system in the old Woestina building affected the school's indoor air quality.

Fund balance money also may be moved into funds set up in anticipation of future, known expenses, such as the previously mentioned Tax Certiorari Reserve Fund.

"The settlement of tax certioraris, from a financial planning perspective, is probable," said school board

member Kevin Thompson. He has been in the financial industry for over 20 years and is a licensed New York State Certified Public Accountant. "Accountants use the terms remote, possible or probable. When something is probable, you take care of it."

As they build the 2008-2009 school budget, board members and administrators will continue to use reserve funds and the fund balance to plan for the ongoing financial health of Schalmont Central School District.

**"[Reserve funds] are funds for specific, known obligations coming down the line."**

## A Medley of Classic Movies

- The Schalmont High School Drama Club will perform **Scenes from Classic Movies** April 9 – 10, at 6:30 p.m. in the HS Auditorium, 1 Sabre Dr. Their medley performance will showcase scenes from movies such as *Casablanca*, *Gone With the Wind*, *A Few Good Men*, *The Godfather*, *Flashdance*, *A League of Their Own*, *Grease*, and *On the Waterfront*. Tickets are \$7 for adults and \$5 for students. They will be sold at the door and for one week prior to the show in the auditorium during lunch.



## IT'S DOLLARS FOR SCHOLARS!

The Schalmont Chapter of Dollars for Scholars will conduct its annual fundraising campaign **April 2 – 3** from 5 – 8 p.m. each night.

Schalmont High School students will call local residents and businesses to ask for **tax-deductible contributions to student**

**scholarships.** Each year, Dollars for Scholars gives out six \$500 scholarships to deserving seniors bound for higher education.

Those who don't receive a call and would like to make a donation can mail it to: Schalmont Dollars for Scholars, 93 West Campbell Rd., PO Box 6119, Schenectady, NY 12306.

Thank you for your support!



### School Board Calendar

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

**Tuesday, March 25**  
Middle School LGI Room  
2 Sabre Dr.

**Monday, April 7**  
Middle School LGI Room  
2 Sabre Dr.

**Monday, April 28**  
Middle School LGI Room  
2 Sabre Dr.

### First Budget Forum

**Wednesday, March 26**  
Middle School LGI Room  
2 Sabre Dr.

### Reunion Calendar

**Class of 1988**  
**Saturday, Nov. 29**  
Mallozzi's Clubhouse  
2354 Western Ave., Guilderland  
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SHSreunion1988/members>

## Not Your Parents' Style of Reporting

Gone are the days when doing a book report meant standing at the front of class with a few sheets of loose-leaf paper. Students at Jefferson Elementary School are using modern technology to amp up the old learning tool.

Third-grade teacher Kristin Reilly assigns book reports because it helps students build their reading skills and allows them to connect their thoughts, ideas and opinions in a creative way. This year, she took that creativity a step further by building into the assignment the use of computers and PowerPoint software.

"For third graders, they took off like rockets," said Reilly. "I now have students going home and showing their parents and siblings how to create a PowerPoint. The learning is contagious!"

She worked with another Jefferson teacher, Carol Walker, to pair each third grader up with a fifth-grade buddy. After third graders identified main characters, settings, major events, and conclusions in their books, they worked with their buddy to put the information into an interactive presentation with background images, slide

transitions, pictures, and sounds. The buddy system allowed fifth-grade students to put into practice recent lessons about descriptive adjectives and editing.

This was the first time that Reilly and Walker paired up their students. Reilly said, "The benefit is that we all learn from each other. It's sometimes easier for children to relate to other children, but most importantly, it teaches leadership and cooperation."

The book report project may be over, but her third graders still have the new friendships forged, improved reading skills, and an increased aptitude for modern technology.



**Book Report with a Twist:** Elementary students Shugufa Majid (left) and Alexis Zeh (right) worked together to create an interactive book report on the computer.



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# Schalmont

CENTRAL SCHOOLS

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