District connects students, staff, and family with teacher in Kuwait

It was one of those moments when the impact a teacher has on his or her students was obvious. “I talked to Mr. Aponte. Mr. Aponte is on TV,” a tearful, but happy, student said to everyone she met in the Central High School library media center (LMC). It was as if she had come face to face with her personal hero - and perhaps, she had done just that.

For this student, being able to see and talk with David Aponte, a Central High School special education teacher serving with the Wisconsin Army National Guard in Kuwait, was talking to a hero.

The Internet connection with Aponte on December 21 included his family, who gathered in the LMC. His students and colleagues at Central enjoyed the opportunity to speak with him as well. “I can’t believe what they’ve done for us,” said Aponte’s wife, Joan. “I love it. There is just so much joy in my heart to be able to see him and see him smile and move and to talk to him. It’s just something that I can hardly comprehend it’s so wonderful.”

“It’s just really good to see him,” said Aponte’s daughter, Kristen Hohlfeld. “It was kind of emotional all day. It’s hard to see him, but really good to see him. It doesn’t feel like he’s so far away.”

The idea to connect the family and students with Aponte came from Lon Jorgensen, Central’s associate principal. “My brother has been in the Navy for 20 years. Many Christmases have come and gone when we hadn’t been even able to talk with him. And then it was just on the phone. With everything we have here in technology, I thought of David, that there must be a way to connect with him.”

Brandon Holt, instructional media manager, and others in the Department of Information Technology conducted a couple dry runs before the big connection in December. The only cost for the web visit was an inexpensive, off-the-shelf web camera that is used for other teleconferencing purposes in the district. While there was a line formed of those wishing to speak with him, the conversation could be seen on other television monitors in the LMC. What made the day even more special is it occurred on the joint birthday of Aponte and his mother Beverly.

“I am very happy that he is doing well and I think this is great,” Beverly Aponte said after seeing and speaking with him. “The technology is unreal. It’s been a really pleasant day to think it’s his birthday and my birthday and we can exchange greetings to one another.”

Major Aponte is the only district employee serving in Kuwait. He actually was reassigned to the Appleton-based 2nd Battalion, 127th Infantry, for this assignment.

“My oldest sister had a husband in Vietnam,” Joan Aponte said. “She said she never heard from him at all. I feel very blessed that I do get to email him and talk with him on the phone.”

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We’re proud of our staff

With so many nominations for the La Crosse Tribune’s Person of the Year for 2005, it was a great honor for Logan High School Principal Scott Mihalovic to be selected. It was also an honor for the district and education in general. It shows the Tribune recognizes the valuable contribution that our schools make to the whole community.

In the article announcing this honor, Associate Principal Doug Leclair described Scott as having “genuine unrelenting enthusiasm.” “What’s impressed me through the years,” Leclair added, “is that when times are their toughest, Scott’s at his best.”

Like a good leader, Scott gives credit to others, including our students. “If you expect a lot of young people, more often than not they’ll meet those expectations,” he said in the Tribune article.

Scott is an example of the very talented and caring professionals we have in our district. While there isn’t room in my column to tell you about all of the great staff we have, let me introduce just a few I also describe as having the “genuine unrelenting enthusiasm” attributed to Scott. Here’s what they have to say about working in our schools.

JoLynn Jensen, a second grade teacher at Summit Elementary School, is in her 19th year of teaching, a career decision that she’s never regretted. “People really strive to do their best for kids and people really work hard to make sure children are successful,” she said. “I like that people are really open to learning and looking at new ways to help children.”

As Logan Middle School’s night building engineer, Doug Gschwind is active in a variety of committees in the district and at Logan Middle, and is president of the custodial union. “I feel proud when I see kids going through sixth, seventh and eighth grades and going on to senior high and advancing in their lives,” said Gschwind, who has been with the district 21 years. “I feel like I’ve played a little part in it.”

State Road Elementary School’s Marilyn Trussoni is a health assistant at State Road Elementary School who sees her role as dispensing tender loving care (TLC) as much as Band-Aids. “I am another adult they can connect with in the school, a safe haven for them,” she said, adding, “I think a lot of people view this job as primarily medical but I also think about the relationships we form. I believe our schools are safer because of the services we provide.”

Lynda Narish-Johnson, supervisor of school nurses, joined the district in 1988 as the first district nurse. “Working as a school nurse every day has been incredibly difficult and there have been a lot of challenges,” she said. “The overall role of school nurses is to support education, to help with any individual health problems and remove barriers so students can get the best education they can.”

Deb Talle, who joined the district in 1999, is cook/manager for both Central High School and Logan High School cafeterias. “What I am trying to do is to make food service visible and really a part of the community of each high school. I really want my staff to be considered as much a part of the school as show choir and basketball. I want to be like history and English—a part of the school.”

As secretary of Summit Elementary School since 1985 and with the district since 1974, Carolyn Schwartz has the philosophy of welcoming everyone into the building like she would someone to her home. “I am one of the first people they see in the building. I realize I can have an impact on every person I greet by smiling or being pleasant,” she said, adding, “I’ve come to realize that we are all teaching the children, and not just in the classroom, where you might expect teaching. What we do has effects on a child that can last a lifetime.”

I hope you are as impressed by these talented staff members as I am. They and our hundreds of other employees are the reasons I enjoy being your Superintendent of Schools. The dedication and professionalism of people like Scott, JoLynn, Doug, Lynda, Deb, Marilyn, Carolyn and others entrusted with the education of the children in this district are inspiring to me.

I’d like to thank each and every one of our employees who take such pride in the difference they make in children’s lives.

Superintendent Jerry Kember visits with biology students at Central High School. They are from left, Rebecca Lichtie, Jessica Johnson and Jessica Baldwin, all freshmen.
Throughout 2005, a series of billboards around La Crosse linked positive values with famous faces: Mother Theresa with compassion, Christopher Reeves with strength and Winston Churchill with commitment, to name a few. The goal was to encourage others to pass on these values.

That campaign could have connected the Logan High School’s football seniors with the word “perseverance.”

These 23 guys demonstrated the power of never giving up by winning the Mississippi Valley Conference after two years without a single varsity win. In fact, as freshmen, these players did not win a single game and those who played junior varsity as sophomores won only two games. And yet, these young men kept at it. Why?

“I would say for the love of the game,” said Luke Callen, an offensive guard and defensive end. “All of us knew what had to be done.”

“We knew if we kept it up and kept going and believed in each other, we could win,” said Tyrone Poindexter, a wide receiver.

Added defensive tackle, Chris Turtenwald, “We knew the class ahead of us didn’t have a whole lot of seniors. We knew it would be tough for us. But if we stepped up and played varsity (as juniors), we knew in our senior year it would only make us better.”

These three seniors, along with Max Wiggert, Justin Michaels, Jordan Whitewater and Joe Burgmaier talked about what made their magical senior season possible and what they learned from the experience.

First, it has to be said that they nearly won some of the earlier games. “We knew we came close lots of times,” said Burgmaier, a wide receiver and cornerback. “If we could just improve a little bit, we knew we could be good.”

So they worked – hard – to improve. During the summer of 2005, they put in hours in the weight room. “Football doesn’t end when the football game is done,” Wiggert said. “That summer, a big part of it was our not sitting around and getting lazy. We had to stay in shape. There were no excuses for not working out or not coming in to lift. We had to get it done to win games.”

Michaels agreed. “Everybody got into the weight room to lift weights. We worked harder at football.”

As Whitewater, a running back and defensive end, put it, “If you want something bad enough and work hard enough for it, it will come to you, but it takes a lot of hard work.”

In times like these, the players could have turned against each other and/or their coaching staff. But they didn’t.

“Coach did a nice job. He set goals for us,” Callen said. “He prepared us every week even through the losing season. We always started new each week.”

“He never quit on us,” Burgmaier added.

Poindexter said seniors received letters from the coaches about what they could do over the summer to prepare for the upcoming season. “We had to feel determination,” he said. “Our motto was ‘no excuses.’ If we wanted to get better, we just had to do it.”

“We played for ourselves and for each other and for the town and for Logan to get the pride back into the football program, the pride of the North Side,” Poindexter said.

Highlights of the season included winning their first game; a goal-line stand in the Sparta game as that was the team that was expected to win the conference; winning the “Ark” back from Central High School; and beating Tomah, where their coach previously was before Logan; and then winning the conference.

Walter Gnewikow, who was even named coach of the year by the La Crosse Tribune, said he was impressed with the players’ character. “They never wavered. Sure, they were disappointed at losing, but there was no backstabbing each other, or fighting or complaining or quitting. A lot of that was inside them,” he said.

He also gives credit to others. “Through all the rough times, our assistant coaches, parents and administration were very supportive and positive. Without their attitudes, the job of turning things around would have been MUCH more difficult,” he said.

Everyone worked to send the message that there is a right way to live your life “even if you don’t get an immediate payoff right away,” he said.

Asked if the team would have learned as many life lessons if they had won the conference all through high school, Gnewikow said, “I have absolutely no doubt in my mind that if you always have success or it comes easily, you don’t build a lot of character. You can get spoiled and take it for granted.”

Asked how important a football game was, the coach said, “Not very important, but the process, the journey that you take with your teammates is very important. I really find activities and athletics – the whole journey and teamwork – to be extremely important because they are learning all these life-type values.”

These values include working with people, overcoming adversity, working hard when you don’t feel like it, being responsible and on time, following the rules, and social and leadership skills. “They will help them in what people call the real world,” he said.
Foundation fund continues one teacher’s legacy

Sally Grimslid was the living, breathing embodiment of the concept of performing “random acts of kindness.” All the years she taught at Franklin Elementary School, Sally kept an eye open for children who could use a little extra kindness ... giving a pair of socks to a youngster with more holes than fabric in the ones he was wearing ... warming the hands of a little one without mittens on a very cold January day ... paying the cost of a field trip for a child whose family could not afford it ... or giving a hug to a little boy or girl who needed reassurance. She, like teachers everywhere, often dipped into her own financial resources to meet these everyday needs.

“It was important to her that every child felt loved, felt special. She thought some children did not get enough of that love at home,” said her daughter, Holly Grimslid. It’s because such kindnesses were so important that Sally’s husband Gale and daughter created the Sally A. Grimslid Memorial Fund for Franklin Elementary School through the La Crosse Public Education Foundation, which grew to more than $21,000 by the end of 2005. The memorial is an endowment, which means only interest from the fund is spent; the principal remains untouched forever.

“In a nutshell, the endowment is Sally’s legacy. We can continue doing the things she would like to do,” Gale said. “These were things that she did just as part of her teaching. She loved teaching and loved kids.”

Twice each year, the La Crosse Public Education Foundation provides Random Acts of Kindness Fund checks to each La Crosse school. These funds provide emergency food, warm clothing, field trip money for those in need, and class fees for those who can’t afford them. The amount each school receives is now based on the number of students in the building and the percentage of those eligible for free and reduced meals. The Grimslid money will go to Franklin in addition to money from the Foundation.

Sally absolutely believed in Franklin Elementary School, having gone there as a child. A North Side girl, she started dating her future husband as a Logan High School sophomore. After graduation, she attended the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse (UW-L) for two years before transferring to Luther College to be near Gale.

“She set her mind for teaching and never wavered from that. In college her goal was to work with young kids. She taught kindergarten, first, second and third grades over the years,” recalled Gale, now retired director of admissions for UW-L. “When she started teaching at Franklin, four of the teachers she had when she was a child were still there, including the principal, Emma Erickson, who hired her.”

Sally frequently came home with stories of things her children had said in class, such as the announcement from one during sharing time that, “My mom is a go-go dancer!”

Having lost their son Kent in 1983 in a motorcycle accident on his way home from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, the Grimslids learned to appreciate life. They and two other families in the community established a chapter of Compassionate Friends, a support group for parents who experienced the death of a child.

“It really changes your lifestyle and there is so much pain when you lose a child,” Gale said. “You are not supposed to survive your kids.”

“We have had two different lives, before and after,” Holly added.

It was just five months after Sally retired in June 2000 that she learned she had breast cancer. With surgery, chemotherapy and radiation, the disease was under control for a time. The hope was that if she could stay cancer free for five years, she might beat it. Then in early 2004, Sally learned the cancer was back with a vengeance. “She never got to enjoy her retirement,” Gale said. “The cancer was everywhere and in her lymph nodes.”

Knowing she had less time than they would like, Sally realized she “had to make the best of it,” Holly said.

While always religious, Gale said she became more spiritual. “She prayed often. She was just a different person in that regard. She believed and knew she was in God’s hands.”

“She always appreciated the simple things and she appreciated everything that much more after she had breast cancer,” her daughter added.

What is particularly exciting for the Grimslid family is how many of her former colleagues and students have supported the Sally Grimslid Fund, one of the largest funds the La Crosse Public Education Foundation has.

Nancy Dull, who worked with Sally at Franklin called her “an extraordinary teacher and a compassionate person” who always had a student’s best interests at heart.

“I know of several instances when she would provide from her own pocket for kids rather than see them go without. One...”

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Sally Grimslid had a passion for teaching and for meeting the needs of young children.
CHEERing with the Harlem Globetrotters

When Anthony Blakes visited the Hamilton Early Learning Center and School of Technology and Arts I, the Harlem Globetrotters was expected to do some fancy dribbling. But what he was really there for was to teach the Globetrotters’ all-important message of having a healthy mind and body. Showing the students the word, CHEER, printed on his official Globetrotters basketball, Blakes said, “The C in CHEER is for Cooperation. The H is for Healthy Mind and Body. The first E is for Effort and the second E is for Enthusiasm. The R is for Responsibility. That’s one of your words. I’ve seen it in the office.”

He then invited students to tell him what each of the words meant, asking each who answered correctly to stand by him. As their reward, they learned the five basic steps of being a Harlem Globetrotter, a team whose tradition goes back to 1921. It was not until 1950 that the first African American was signed to play in the National Basketball Association.

The first move that Blakes taught didn’t seem so hard: circling their body with the ball. The second was the first step plus moving the ball under a leg, something that was a bit challenging for some. The third move was stretching the ball out straight plus the first two. For step four, Blakes added rolling the ball up one arm and down the other, which was definitely trickier. Finally, the students had to do all the previous moves plus catch the ball after bouncing it over their heads.

A group of Hamilton/SOTA I teachers and Principal Nancy Matchett learned the importance of keeping their day jobs after he tried to show them the maneuvers performed in the Globetrotters’ Magic Circle.

So what did the students learn from Blakes’ visit? Third grader Maggie McConahay said, “I learned how to do a lot of neat tricks.”

Fifth grader Amelia Richardson said, “I learned that a famous basketball player can do much more than bounce the ball up and down and shoot.”

“I learned about responsibility and the CHEER program and more about the President’s Challenge, too,” said fifth grader Benjamin Mighall.

Asked what it meant to be a Harlem Globetrotter, Mighall said, “It means you know your virtues very well and I also think it means you are very skilled and very unique at playing basketball and also very, very kind to other people and very significant.”

Nathan Juran, also in fifth grade, had a similar comment. “I think you have to be athletically fit and be smart and be a good person.”

Those words would have been the equivalent of a slam-dunk to Anthony Blakes.

“We want to make sure you guys take the CHEER challenge, to make sure you kids stay physically active 60 minutes a day,” he told students during his talk. “Any activity counts and we want you to take the character traits and use them in the classroom as well, to be cooperative and have a healthy mind and body. We want you to put effort in everything you do, to be enthusiastic about everything you do and be responsible and complete your homework and chores.”

He also challenged the students to participate in the President’s Challenge to fitness, which could earn them a special patch for having 60 minutes of activity each day for six weeks.

“We are not just about basketball. We are known as the Ambassadors of Goodwill. We’ve played all over the world to make sure we put smiles on people’s faces,” Blakes said. “We visit hundreds of schools throughout our season to make sure we give back to the community. We give money to charities worldwide. We are really adamant about making sure we give back to the world, not just the United States, but the world.”

Foundation fund continues teachers legacy…continued from pg. 4

cannot think about working with Sally without remembering the joy she brought to all of us through her gift of laughter,” Dull recalled. “She could always look at the bright side, even if it meant laughing at herself. She really knew how to enjoy life and she brought that feeling to her commitment as a teacher.”

Retired Franklin first grade teacher Ellen Detert said Sally was a teacher who cared about each and every student. “She had so much empathy for students, especially those who struggled. Sally had a great sense of humor and loved jokes, but she could never remember the punch line so she could never tell them to anyone else,” Detert said.

“Sally was a strong woman who overcame so much sorrow in her life. She was an inspiration to all who knew her.”

The Sally Grimslid Fund “perpetuates the values that she held so dear in her teaching,” her husband said. “The endowment is Sally living on in perpetuity by working for what she stood for with young kids.”

The La Crosse Public Education was created in 1987 to raise funds to enhance the education of our children in the School District of La Crosse. Most recently, its “Thank a Teacher” fund has been added as a vehicle to honor or memorialize the important role of educators. Tax-deductible donations may be made to the La Crosse Public Education Foundation, PO Box 1811, La Crosse, WI 54602-1811. More information is available online at lacrossepubliceducationfoundation.org.
The courage to fight oppression

Mary Rostad was not much older than the Longfellow Middle School sixth graders listening to her story when she joined the Resistance during World War II, first in her native Belgium and later in France. After the Germans took over Belgium, the spunky Rostad found herself fighting back in small ways, which she described as silly in retrospect. She and her friends stood behind German officers at railroad stations and clandestinely cut off acorn attachments to their weapon covers. They put sugar in Nazi vehicles and passed out anti-war leaflets.

“It was a silly thing. It didn’t accomplish anything much except letting the Germans know we didn’t like them,” she said.

Rostad later moved on to carrying messages to other members of the Resistance. Given a message, she would go sit in a park and wait for someone – she had no idea who – to stand by her. She would know it was her contact if the person said something like, “I come here to watch the squirrels.” Squirrel was, in fact, Rostad’s code name in the Resistance.

Rostad, who married an American soldier after the war, now speaks around the community. Sixth grade teacher Karen Wilke arranged for her talk at Longfellow.

“She was my Girl Scout leader when I was their age. I never knew any information about her,” Wilke said. “I knew she was a war bride obviously but about her working for the Resistance, I knew nothing. She kept that very private.”

Rostad began speaking out after she heard people denying the Holocaust - the deaths by the Nazis of more than six million Jews and other minorities during the war.

“She realized when people were claiming the Holocaust didn’t happen that she needed to tell her story,” Wilke said. “Lucky for us.”

Rostad was just 15 when the Germans invaded Belgium on its way to occupy France. “Pretty soon the German soldiers descended on Brussels and the troops who came to Brussels were very cruel, very nasty people,” she said. “Some of my friends started to be missing. They started rounding up my Jewish friends and I couldn’t understand it. They said they were relocating them to a prison camp. I didn’t understand why they had to move them to another place.”

She heard about torture - crushing hands between metal blocks, electric shock and near drowning - to make people talk. Recognizing her activities put her entire family at risk, Rostad left her house for school one morning and kept on walking.

“The only thing I took with me was a picture of my family. I left very early in the morning and kept on walking. The Resistance gave me a person to get in touch with in Waterloo about 25 miles away,” she said.

Her hope was to get to England, but stayed in France working for the Resistance there when she realized she could not make it to England. She was present in Normandy when the massive Allied action called D-Day occurred. That was the beginning of the end of the war.

“I didn’t know about the invasion, about D-Day. I was in Normandy when it happened. It was wonderful to see the Germans retreat,” she said.

After the war, Rostad was assigned to work at the Allied Headquarters in Germany, working directly with American soldiers. From interviews with concentration camp survivors, she learned the extent of the horror of the Holocaust.

“Some of the things were beyond belief. I don’t want to think that people can be that horrible, that mean,” she said.

When she speaks, Rostad always shares a poem from Pastor Martin Niemoller, a German minister who nearly died in a concentration camp for opposing Hitler.

“First they came for the communists and I didn’t speak up because I wasn’t a communist. Then they came for the Jews, but I didn’t speak up because I was not a Jew. Then they came for the Catholics and I didn’t speak up because I was not a Catholic. Then they came for me and by that time there was no one left to speak up for me.”

Rostad finished by telling students that there were some in the world who would once again do the kind of things that Hitler advocated. She noted a neo-Nazi group in Rochester, Minnesota.

“These young people think Hitler was wonderful. They are willing to do the same things over again. It is important for us to remember that,” she said.

Sixth grader Stacy Seekamp was moved by her talk. “She talked about her personal life. It’s hard to talk about that. I’m surprised she wasn’t really emotional.”

Sarah Scott was amazed by the stories of torture that she heard from Rostad.

“I didn’t know they tortured people like that. I didn’t know they squeezed their hands, that they were that horrible or about concentration camps.”

Nathaniel Lucey and Kyle Seubert recognized Rostad risked her life with her actions. Neither knew how he would react under similar circumstances.

“I don’t think I would right now, but if we were under attack, I probably would,” Lucey said.

“In a life or death situation, I probably would. Otherwise, no,” Seubert said.

When she read that poem, it was a big lesson.

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Internet predators are targeting children online

It seems so innocent, a 12-year-old boy sending instant messages via the Internet. But who exactly is that new cyber pen pal? Eric Szatkowski, a special agent with the Wisconsin Department of Justice, said the new friend might be a sexual predator using the Internet to lure his prey.

“It’s almost a cliché. Never take candy from a stranger and it’s true. But that’s a technique that predators still use to this day. Even in the age of the Internet, they bribe children with something as simple as sweets or candy,” he said.

Szatkowski ought to know. A former homicide investigator, he now works full time on crimes against children. Surfing the Internet posing undercover as a child, he receives messages from individuals who turn out to be sexual predators trying to lure boys and girls with what he calls the “new candy.”

“In the years I’ve been working undercover, I have literally been offered vacations to Disneyland and Disneyworld,” Szatkowski said. “I’ve been offered money, jewelry, digital cameras and rides in sports cars and in boats. They will offer literally the world to gain trust and confidence of a child.”

Szatkowski made two presentations at Logan Middle School in January. The first was for students and the second was for parents or others age 18 or older.

In both, the investigator talked about the ease with which predators connect with children and gain information about them. As he put it, the monsters aren’t in closets anymore. They are on the Internet. The difference is that these very real monsters can really hurt kids.

During his afternoon talk to students, Szatkowski asked students how many use instant messaging, how many visit Internet chat rooms, how many have online profiles with personal information, how many have sent their picture to people, have blogs or play interactive games on the Internet. He then told them how easy it is for these monsters to connect with kids in any of those venues. Once they know what a child likes to do, they pretend to enjoy the same things. That makes the child trust the predator.

Two Logan Middle students, Madeline Holt, a seventh grader, and Pelli Lee, an eighth grader, said they were careful with what they did on the Internet, but would be more wary in the future. Both were most shocked that middle-aged and even elderly people would pretend to be kids like them.

“I didn’t really understand how a 69-year-old could act like a 10-year-old. So I thought the 69-year-old could be pretty smart even though he is pretty old,” Lee said.

“I thought it was weird, the ages. People as old as 69 and as young as 18,” Holt added.

Lee said he would cut down on the amount of time he spends on the Internet and will not use instant messaging. “I knew all the stuff about the Internet and there are predators and how it can affect you and what they can do to you.

“I will probably try to make sure I know who I’m talking to on the Internet,” Holt said.

In the evening session for parents Szatkowski went online posing as a child to demonstrate how easy it is for kids to enter adult chat rooms. The school district blocks such activities, but had a special line installed for that day only for demonstration purposes.

Within seconds of entering the adult chat room, Szatkowski, who was pretending to be a 13-year-old child, was contacted by adults befriending him. That amazed and frightened Tammy Hayden, a parent and member of the La Crosse School Board.

“I had heard quite a bit about it prior to tonight, but I was shocked how quickly he was getting hits after typing in one line.”

“I can’t believe the impact it can have on a community,” Hayden continued. “If parents are

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Dos and Don’ts for Kids Online

1. Set up the computer in a common area (never in a bedroom)
3. Consider using monitoring software like www.guardiansoftware.com or www.spectorsoft.com
4. Never forget SUPERVISION (innocent children can be groomed by a predator)
5. Talk to other parents (your child could be victimized online at a friend’s house)
6. Know where your kids go online (library, school, relative, friend, etc.)
Parents’ involvement in middle school? You better believe it!

Now here’s a problem any school would love to have – needing to add additional chairs for parents attending a monthly Logan Middle School Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) meeting.

Logan Middle, like Lincoln and Longfellow Middle Schools, have discovered that parents and middle school really do – and should – mix.

“The first night we couldn’t believe how many parents were here,” said Mary Ihle, president of the Logan Middle PTO. “We definitely needed to get this up and running. Parents are concerned; teachers need help. We can all work together for kids.”

At a January meeting, topics of discussion included protecting children from Internet sexual predators, the school’s food pantry, the PTO’s new website and ways to thank the “everyday heroes” at Logan Middle – staff members.

“When we had our first meeting, there was consensus between parents that we wanted to have involvement. We as parents want to know what our middle school children are doing,” said Jean Ann Burkard, parent of a Logan Middle seventh grader.

While elementary school children dutifully bring home notes from school, by middle school these notes often end up at the bottom of lockers or backpacks, never to see the light of day again. Many parents who are used to being active in their younger children’s schools look for opportunities to volunteer even if it’s embarrassing to kids to have their parents show up at school.

As an Emerson Elementary School preschool teacher, Burkard found a way to help Logan Middle by picking up the groceries that Family and Consumer Education teacher Sue Dinger needs for her classroom. “I got to spend money that wasn’t mine and did something that really helped out,” she said. “I felt like I was contributing in a little way. It was a privilege for me to do that.”

Logan Middle Principal Troy Harcey said he and Associate Principal Amy Winger share the philosophy of wanting a “partnership with parents” in the school. “When parents feel more connected, it transcends into better things happening in the classrooms,” he said.

“It’s always good to get involved at any level,” said Tim Hill, Lincoln Middle School PTO president. “We are all used to elementary school PTOs, which are more active and get more parents in the school to help out in the classroom.”

One area that Lincoln’s organization is working, is to improve the very limited space around the school. “We are trying to better utilize the space that is out there. We will try to fix it up a bit and try to make it more kid friendly ... have a real basketball court with lines.”

Longfellow Middle School has also seen parent involvement increase, according to principal Penny Reedy.

“My PTO has really been instrumental in listening to the needs of our school and helping us work to meet them,” Reedy said. “An example of this has been their Phoenix-like ability to reinvent themselves from the ground up last year when I first came on as principal. They raised $18,000 so we could buy a second cart of computers that moved from class to class and planned and implemented an eighth grade celebration ceremony.”

Katherine Erickson, president of the Longfellow PTO, said this year the PTO is working on increasing communications with parents. “Middle school students are not necessarily known for talking to parents all the time,” she said. “You ask, ‘What did you do at school?’ and hear ‘Stuff.’ We are just trying to get the word out about things going on at school and that there are opportunities for parents.”

Topics at Longfellow PTO meetings have included the differences between a junior high school and middle school and about the school nutrition program.

Like many parents of a middle school student, Erickson said, she felt nervous when her daughter started at Longfellow. “I found this is a very great place,” she said, adding, “I don’t think you stop being interested in what happens at school just because your kids go to middle school. If anything, you should be more interested.”

The courage to fight oppression...continued from pg. 6

for me,” Lucey added. “Stand up for what you believe in.”

Rostad minimizes what she did during the war. “It sounds like I did fantastic things, but I didn’t. A lot of kids in Belgium, probably 50 percent, did things against the German army. It was our way of showing the Germans we resented what they were doing.”

Rostad does not minimize the impact of war on both soldiers and citizens. “We are so safe here and we keep sending men to war – brothers, fathers and grandfathers. War is always over there. It is good to remember that in war there are terrible things. Men who go there suffer and so do their families and people who are there.”

Wilke truly is honored to have Rostad speak to her class. “She is a phenomenal person and lady. She has quite a lot of personality packed into a small package. You can see the sassiness and spunk come through in how she dealt with the situation thrown at her as a child. You can still see that sparkle in her eye.”
Preschool is a time to learn through play

Ask a child in one of the School District of La Crosse’s preschools what he or she likes best about school and the word, “play,” nearly always comes out.

“I like that we get to play and eat,” said Ryan Van Nuland, a preschooler at Emerson Elementary School. If having a snack - any kind of snack - wasn’t enough, young Mr. Van Nuland had another comment that surely warms the heart of his teacher and parents: “We are learning to have manners.”

That, in a nutshell, is what preschool is about. “Preschool is a place where children come and have their first taste of what school is really like. It’s a place where they come and learn about each other,” said his teacher, Jean Ann Burkard. “They come and learn about being a good friend, how to get along. They learn about manners and what the real world is really like.”

Until the year 2000 when preschool became available for all 4-year-olds in La Crosse, each elementary school had room for about 18 children, according to Jane Morken, Supervisor of Programs for Young Children. “From a public school perspective, we felt it wasn’t meeting the needs of all 4-year-olds in our community.”

Working with the childcare community, the district created three different models for how preschool would be offered:

• Model 1, a 2.5-hour program located within elementary schools.
• Model 2, a collaborative program at childcare centers taught by district teachers.
• Model 3, a program in which the district contracts with childcare centers to conduct the program with licensed teachers the centers employ.

Through creativity and collaboration, about 80 percent of kindergarten students today have gone through the district’s preschool programs. “We did not leave out the childcare community, but rather used their talents to enrich the program,” Morken said.

No matter where the program is located, the goals are to enhance children’s:

• Social/emotional well-being and getting along with others
• Daily living skills, including self care and classroom rules
• Language and communication development
• Math and scientific thinking
• Creativity and discovery of talents and interests
• Movement for good health and developing large and small motor skills

With so many choices, parents have opportunities to find the program that best fits their families. One advantage of both the model 2 and 3 programs is that many offer childcare services within their buildings beyond the preschool day. That means fewer transitions for children of working parents. The benefit of preschool in one of the public schools is children likely attend the same school they will be in for kindergarten.

Bonnie Jean Hulsing, a former kindergarten and second grade teacher, now teaches preschool as a Coulee Children’s Center staff member. Some children in her preschool class are with her the entire day; others come in just for that preschool session.

“I think the wrap-around care is really helpful. For those children who are in day care all day, they might as well be in preschool and have activities and play,” Hulsing said. “And the focus is on play. That is how they learn to get along and solve conflicts, things like that.”

Mary McGinley-Miller is pleased with the experience her son, Connor, has had at the Coulee Children’s Center. “It really helps with socialization skills. Kids learn to play with each other and follow the specific structure of the day. Once they get into kindergarten, if they are not used to the structure of the day, it’s hard on them and hard on the teacher.”

Connor just sees it as fun. “I play with my friends and play on the swings and that kind of stuff. Sometimes I just play by myself and I just play with singing a lot cause I’m having fun.”

Continued on Page 12

Internet predators are targeting children online...continued from pg. 7

not going to take responsibility for that, they are inviting predators to our community.”

Parent Lynn Weiland was surprised at how easy it was for Szatkowski to gain personal information about children in the La Crosse area through Internet profiles.

“Young people love to talk about themselves and write down information about themselves. All that information is out there... their favorite songs... anything they can access so quickly,” she said.

Ellen Holt, another parent, was surprised there were any open seats at the presentation when it was such an important topic. “Part of it is parents don’t understand that their kids can get sucked into this so quickly,” she said.

Saying there are a half million registered sex offenders in the country and 14,000 in Wisconsin, Szatkowski added. “Kids really need to understand that there are bad people out there. Sometimes people are uncomfortable with that. They want to keep kids sheltered from the bad things out there.”

Do students take the threat seriously? “I think some kids take it seriously and some parents take it seriously, but many don’t. They have the attitude and it’s a troubling attitude that it would never happen to me. It will never happen to my kids,” the investigator said. “The only ones who truly take it seriously are the ones who have been victimized or come this close to being victimized.”
Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Listed below are the gifts to the School District of La Crosse received since September 2005.

- Tony Tanke, cash donation for Central High School Debate Team
- InkRX.com-26, new mouse pads for Logan Middle School Computer Lab
- Dan and Tucky Skemp, cash donation for Lincoln Middle School PAWS
  (Positive Achievement Within Schools) program
- Dean and Susann Skinner, cash donation for Franklin Middle School
- Robin Swartz, furniture for Lincoln Middle School seventh grade
- David and Diane Sherwood, memory chip for Lincoln Middle School seventh grade
- Viterbo University, school supplies for Franklin Elementary School
- Sally Grimslid Memorial Fund, cash donation for Franklin Elementary School Random Acts of Kindness
- Cindy Vieth, school supplies for Hamilton Elementary School
- Bob and Mary Beran, winter coats, mittens and hats for Hamilton Elementary School
- Barb Heintz/Gundersen Lutheran, art supplies for Hamilton Elementary School
- Rotary Club of La Crosse North, cash donation for Franklin Elementary School Random Acts of Kindness
- Al Brandsetter/CBS Graphics, banner for Franklin Elementary School
- Drs. John Vdel and Amanda Stroshahl, cash donation for Lincoln Middle School Show Choir
- La Crosse Public Education Foundation, cash donation for Lincoln Middle School Random Acts of Kindness
- Bethel Lutheran Church, groceries for Franklin Elementary School Food Pantry
- Olivet Lutheran Church, groceries for Logan Middle School Food Pantry
- American Legion Post 417, cash donation for Logan Middle School Food Pantry
- Olivet Lutheran Church, cash donation for Franklin Elementary School Food Pantry
- Eric Stevens/Plasco-Plastic, donation for Hintgen Elementary School Nutrition Program
- Eric Sorenson, cash donation for Logan Middle School Choir
- Scott Klaeser, computer monitor for Hintgen Elementary School Library Media Center
- A.L. Mathy Charities, donation for Logan High School message board
- Logan Booster Club, donations for Quiz Bowl buzzer system, boys soccer and basketball uniforms, band uniforms, wrestling digital scale and track and field high jump pit
- Frito-Lay, two computers and printers for Logan High School
- Logan Alumni Association, scholarships, school supplies and equipment
- Dan Wettstein, measuring wheels and case for Logan High School cross country
- JoAnn Healy, Brio train set, table and parachute for Hintgen Elementary School
- Wal-Mart, gift card for Franklin Elementary School
- Goodwill Industries, socks, shoes, jackets for Franklin Elementary School
- Mrs. Peter Sedbrook, violin outfit for Emerson Elementary School orchestra
- Robert and Julie Zink, cash donation for Lincoln Middle School PAWS
- Ulrich Construction, cash donations for Lincoln Middle School PAWS
- Lincoln Middle School PTO, Embroidery thread for Lincoln Middle School Family and Consumer Education Program
- Jon and Jodee Davies, cash donations for Lincoln Middle School PAWS and Random Acts of Kindness
- Denise and Carl Shedivy, cash donation for Lincoln Middle School Random Acts of Kindness
- Glotfelty Construction, cash donation for Lincoln Middle School PAWS
- Lincoln Middle School PTO, choir risers for Lincoln Middle School Choir
- Dan Wettstein, cash donation for Logan High School Cross-Country
- Target, cash donation for Emerson Elementary School T.E.A.M. Fund
- Milt and Jackie Schmid, cash donation for Emerson Random Acts of Kindness
- Diane Smith Dingman, cash donation in memory of her father for Emerson Elementary School Random Acts of Kindness
- Michael and Lois West, cash donation for Logan High School Band
- Aubert, school supplies for Summit Elementary School
- Cindy Adams, backbacks and school supplies for Summit Elementary School
- Olivet Lutheran Church Youth Group, backpacks, supplies and tennis shoes for Summit Elementary School
- Thrivant Group, school supplies for Summit Elementary School
- Hembd Family, jackets for Summit Elementary School
- Logan Booster Club Cans for Kids, cash donations for Logan High School football, girls basketball, boys basketball, Academic Decathlon, girls swimming, boys soccer, girls cross country, pep band, French Club, LaCrossroads, boys baseball, boys tennis, boys swimming, Ranger Renaissance, orchestra, girls track, wrestling, girls soccer, Women’s Choir, softball, choir, French, Spanish, and volleyball
- Central High School Booster Club, cash donation for Central High School hockey
- Robert Hembd, cash donation (matched by Northwestern Mutual) for Logan High School girls basketball and Logan message board
- Lincoln Middle School PTO, donations for tuba rental for band, math screening kit, world map and Scholastic magazines for sixth grade, all for Lincoln Middle School
- La Crosse Public Education Foundation, batting cages for Logan High School
- Anonymous cash donation to Logan High School boys track
- Brian and Nancy Manske, cash donations for Lincoln Middle School Random Acts of Kindness and Lincoln Middle School PAWS
- Shelly Breitenstein, cash donations for Lincoln Middle School Random Acts of Kindness and Lincoln Middle School PAWS
- David Buroker Family, cash donation for Emerson Elementary School Food Pantry
- Pete and Deb Bemis, cash donation for Emerson Elementary School Food Pantry
- Jerry and Pat Morrison Family, Woodman’s Gift Certificate for Emerson Elementary School Food Pantry
- Emilie Kloss, mittens, hats, and scarves for Emerson Elementary School
- Borton Construction, cash donation for North Woods International School
- Wal-Mart, gift card for Lincoln Middle School PAWS
- Rocky Rococo, coupons for Lincoln Middle School PAWS
- “Tuesday Girls,” winter wear items for Hamilton Elementary School
- Donna Sullivan, school supplies for Hamilton Elementary School
- Mr. and Mrs. Steve Gores, cash donation for Hamilton Elementary School Random Acts of Kindness
- Ramison Ice Cream and Candy, coupons for Lincoln Middle School PAWS
- Pla-Mor Lanes, coupons for Lincoln Middle School PAWS
- Pizza Doctors, coupons for Lincoln Middle School PAWS
- Mount La Crosse, pass for Lincoln Middle School PAWS
The following have made donations to the La Crosse Public Education Foundation:

- Burton and Norma Altman
- Ellyn Ash
- James and Carolyn Bagnewski
- Jean Bassett
- Deb and Pete Bemis
- Dr. William and Judith Blank
- Bill Oldenburg and Sheila Hilke
- James and Donna Hommer
- Dr. Edward and Thelma Overholt
- Susan Paudler
- Dr. John and Cathy Pederson
- John and Helen Perlich
- Clara Peterson
- Roy and Dolores Pokorny
- Ruth Richards
- Dr. Cameron and Carlene Roberts
- Stu and Charlene Robertshaw
- Terri Rudolph
- Alice Sather
- Jack and Penny Schultz
- Louise Sedevie-Lawryn
- John and Ruth Sherman
- Tucky and Daniel Skemp
- Thomas and Judith Sleik
- Richard and Janice Snowberg
- Roland and Janeane Solberg
- Mary Stanek
- Tom and Dena Trannel
- William and Lorna Vafeas
- Jane Weiser
- Susan Welsh
- Jeff and Mary Lin

- Kathleen and Daryl Wood
- David and Stacy Yellick
- Donald and Susan Zimmerman

**Honorary Gifts:**

- James and Deborah Ames in honor of Logan High School and Logan Middle School
- Kenneth and Mary Barrett in honor of Rosemary Burnett
- Gerald and Ruth Berns in honor of the “Excellent Franklin Staff”
- Gregory and Beth Bonney Family in honor of the faculty, staff and administration at Logan High School
- Sandy and Eric Brekke

**Family in honor of Cathy Fuchs at Roosevelt Coulee Montessori and Susan Houlihan at Southern Bluffs Elementary School**

- Todd and Linda Eber in honor of Susan Houlihan
- Priscilla Thibodeau and Cheryl Dummer at Southern Bluffs Elementary School
- Abigail and David Gerzema in honor of Deb Bemis at Emerson Elementary
- Mark Glendenning and Margaret Webster in honor of the staff at Lincoln Middle School and Central High School
- Ramona Gonzalez in honor of Joe Kuhn
- Charlene Harnish in honor of Katherine Cappelen
- Lois Hatch in honor of all elementary teachers
- Susan Hessel and Richard Mial in honor of Logan High School staff
- Tara Johnson and Tim Padesky in honor of Deb Jaskiewicz at Coulee Montessori and Shari Riley at Southern Bluffs Elementary School
- Sondra LeGrand in honor of Helen Perlich’s retirement
- Dr. Mark and Gwen McConnell in honor of Phil Gredler at North Woods International School
- Mary and Ron Garvis, Mary and Dale Wetterling, Nancy and Bill McMullin, and Daryl and Margaret Wood, all in honor of Jackie Meyer’s retirement from State Road Elementary School
- Jackie Meyer in honor of her retirement from State Road Elementary School
- Dr. Charles and Susan Miller in honor of Richard Swantz
- Dr. Christine Miller and John Streyle in honor of Kim Shively at Central High School
- Karen Newburg in honor of Natalie and Melanie Kaytor
- Troy and Jaralee Richter in honor of Debbi Roh, Chuck Dutchin, Priscilla Thibodeau and Mary Lin Wershofen at Southern Bluffs Elementary School and Jaime Hauser, Katie Steffen and Mark White at Hintgen Elementary School
- Roosevelt/Coulee Montessori Schools in honor of Dr. Harvey Witzenburg and Boss’ Day
- Roger and Pat Roslansky in honor of Rachel Gunderson’s birthday
- Janet Rosseter in honor of Jerry Kemer, Kathie Tyser and Doug Happe
- Alice Sather in honor of Nancy Tanke at Hintgen
- Richard and Judith Swantz in honor of Woody Wiedenhoeft’s retirement
- Myron Swenson and Chris Jensen in honor of Barbara Schultz at Longfellow

**Memorial Gifts:**

- John and Sue Blanchar in memory of Duane Taebel and Elwood Carr
- Board of Education and Superintendent Gerald Kember in memory of Seth Hammes
- JoAnn Carr in memory of Elwood Carr
- Karen Ekern in memory of Gerald Ekern
- Charles Forer in memory of Mary Forer
- Sheila Garrity in memory of Lee Hessel
- Gale Grimslid in memory of Sally Grimslid
- Dr. Sigurd Gundersons, Jr. in memory of Avery Gundersons
- Paul and Cynthia Halter in memory of Pam Halter
- Charlene Harnish in memory of Borghild Olson

**Thank You. Thank You. Thank You...continued from pg. 10**
Central connects with teacher in Kuwait...continued from pg. 1

Students and staff clearly love Aponte, who was a teaching assistant at Central for a number of years until he earned his teaching degree. His sense of humor stands out.

“He’s funny and stuff,” Mulrennan said.

“What do I like about him? He has a good sense of humor,” Walton agreed. “He likes funny stuff.”

Teaching Assistant Tom Pfaff said his colleague “has the ability to take his job very seriously, but he doesn’t take himself seriously. That’s really important in the kind of work we do where we really have to be very flexible and very fluid. Each day can be a little unpredictable.”

Special education teacher Wendy Hunnewell said it was pure joy for all involved to speak with him. “Some of us teachers knew about it a little in advance. We had a little warning. The students didn’t know at all. They were just shocked. I had a couple crying because they miss him. The students love him and justifiably so,” she said.

Mary Robinson, another special education teacher, agreed. “He is a great guy and has a wonderful rapport with the students.”

His mother certainly agreed. “David is a good man. He’s a good person, a considerate man. He’s always been a real special person even as a child.”

The conversation with David Aponte in Kuwait with his wife and students can be seen on the computer.

Preschool is a time to learn through play...continued from pg. 9

Another parent, Julie Peterson, is also pleased with her son Colton’s experience.

“I think it helps him with the day-to-day things that he does, like washing his hands before he eats and after the bathroom. It’s helped with manners. I’ve heard he’s pretty polite.”

District preschool teacher Mary Mick comes to the Elm Grove Day Care Center in the afternoon after teaching in the morning at Roosevelt Elementary School. The program in both settings is essentially the same, except Elm Grove children may spend their entire day there.

“The real benefit is that children don’t have to make a transition or get on a bus at a certain time. Everything is done right here in the day care,” she said. “They walk down the hall and into the classroom. There’s a great benefit in that.”

Regina Siegel’s son, Antonio, attends Elm Grove. “I have really enjoyed Model 2. My husband and I both work full time,” said Siegel, who is principal of Emerson Elementary School. “It’s important to have a setting that allows him to learn new things in preschool and when preschool is done, move into a safe day care setting, to feel comfortable with friends and the staff.”

An additional preschool choice in the district is Montessori, either through La Crosse Montessori, a private preschool, or Coulee Montessori, a public charter school located in Roosevelt Elementary School. Both schools follow the nearly century-old teachings of Maria Montessori.

“Montessori philosophy is to follow the child,” said teacher René Jacobs.

“It’s a different type of education. There is not large group instruction so much as individual, one-on-one instruction or small groups of three to five kids.”

In the Montessori classroom, specific materials allow children to explore their world. For example in the practical life section of the classroom, children pour liquids, take care of plants, and practice tying their shoes.

“Children see their parents working at home whether it is in the kitchen, garage or working around the house. They want to do the same kind of things,” Jacobs said.

Kindergarten teachers like Lynn Lange from North Woods International Elementary School recognize the value of preschool. “It helps us move to an academic focus for children to have experience in listening and following directions,” she said. “It’s fun to watch kids walk in a line in the hallway. It’s a challenge for them to know proper procedures, to walk quietly and to keep their hands to themselves. At this age they are so touchy feely.”

Among other comments from preschoolers was one from Mason Parkhurst, who said, “We go to the library and check out some books and keep them for a couple days.”

Asked if he’s ready for kindergarten, young Mr. Parkhurst said emphatically, “YES!!”

“Because children are so individual and develop at their own pace,” Morken said, “some kids leave preschool simply knowing how to interact with others. Some kids leave preschool potentially able to read simple sentences.”

“Our goal in preschool,” she added, “is to help each individual child reach his potential.”

More information about preschool is available by calling (608) 789-7006.

Thank You...continued from pg. 11

• Ruth Kielley in memory of Gerald Ekern
• Sherry Kloeyt in memory of Len and Lodene Baltz
• Daniel and Paula Koenen in memory of Julianna and Steven Blanchar
• Kay and Dean Morton in memory of Mary Forer
• Donald and Leslie Nelson in memory of Dr. Duane Taebel
• Elizabeth Nutter in memory of Lloyd Teff
• Julie and Robert Porter in memory of Lee Hessel
• Jan Sahagian-Crandall in memory of Mary Passe
• Beverly Ranis in memory of Erma Schroeder
• Gary Robarge in memory of Harry Viner and Mary Rudolph
• Susan Schumann in memory of Lee Hessel
• Patrick and Louise Sedevie in memory of Dr. Duane Taebel
• Carol Taebel in memory of Duane Taebel
• Priscilla Thibodeau in memory of Steven and Julianna Blanchar
• Clifford and Viola Venne in memory of Sally Grimslid
• Barbara Wilder in memory of Lee Hessel
• Logan High School administrative team in memory of Lee Hessel