



MCIU CONNECTION

The bi-weekly newsletter of the Montgomery County Intermediate Unit

April 18, 2008

Online: www.mciu.org

Educational Improvement Tax

Credits Helps the IU and Area Businesses

Over the past year, the IU has been the recipient of \$27,500 in Educational Improvement Tax Credit donations--a wonderful program that allows businesses to contribute to educational foundations in lieu of paying taxes. Through the Pennsylvania Department of Community & Economic Development, these tax credits are available for eligible businesses who contribute funds to a Scholarship Organization, an Educational Improvement Organization, and/or a Pre-Kindergarten Scholarship Organization. As an approved EITC organization, the IU can receive funds to support academic competitions, including the Reading Olympics, technology to enhance instruction and cultural activities beyond the classroom. With some of the EITC funds it has received, the IU purchased SMART Boards for the Anderson School.

On **Tuesday, April 22 at 8 AM**, the IU will host a seminar on the EITC. Joan Morello, of Penn Liberty Bank and member of Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce, will share how easy it is to submit an application to become an EITC organization and what a positive experience it has been for Penn Liberty Bank. Educators will share some of the great programs they have been able to offer children throughout the county as a result of receiving EITC donations.

To attend the seminar on April 22nd, please RSVP to Sharon Richardson at 610-755-9305 or srichardson@mciu.org.



Education Foundation Board President Mike Rodden, Joan Morello with Penn Liberty Bank, Sharon Richardson, Director of Legislative Services, and Jerry W. Shiveley, Executive Director/CEO pose with a mock check presented by Penn Liberty for their \$5,000 EITC donation.

Surf the IU's New Website & Win

The MCIU is pleased to offer its users a new and improved website featuring a visually appealing format, a more streamlined navigation system and additional information on IU services and events. We invite all of our customers-- parents, students, teachers, administrators, counselors, other educators and the business community--to log on **beginning April 28th** to check out the new design and features.

Surfing Made Easy

The new website was designed to take the guesswork out finding information. The site has grouped information together according to our visitor groups-- teachers & administrators, students and families and our business/community partners. Each of the MCIU's nine divisions have their service information organized in a user-friendly manner with the added benefit of an MCIU services listing from A to Z. The enhanced search capabilities make surfing for information even easier. Important announcements will be highlighted on our home page as well as our latest news. Contact information for our 22 school districts is

See website page 2

MCIU MONTGOMERY COUNTY INTERMEDIATE UNIT
Serving the Schools of Montgomery County, PA

Home | Register | Login

ABOUT US | DIVISIONS | SCHOOLS | SERVICES | WORKSHOPS/COURSES

News | Events | Bulletin

10th Annual Reading Olympics
The 10th Annual Reading Olympics attracted a record number of young competitors this year with 266 teams or more than 6,000 students registered to participate.

New Video Streaming Technology Now Available
Imagine parents being able to watch important student activities even though they are at work. Imagine a child's grandparents being able to see them graduate even though they live in another country. Thanks to a new video streaming and hosting service provided by the MCIU, these opportunities are now available to all Montgomery County schools.

Choking Game Presentation
Upper Merion School District will be hosting an informational night on "The Choking Game" on March 27, 2008 at 7 PM in their Middle School Auditorium AND at the MCIU on April 2, 2008, at 7 PM.

For Students & Families | For Teachers & Administrators | For Business & Community Partners

Popular Links

- Employment Opportunities
- Hours of Operation
- Contact Us
- MCIU Staff Email

Did You Know ???

Intermediate Units in Pennsylvania are part of the governance structure of public education in the Commonwealth. They are located in the middle between the state education agency and the local school districts. They were designed primarily to provide services to local school districts that can be operated more effectively and efficiently on a regional basis.

March 2008						
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30	31					

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The bi-weekly newsletter of the
**Montgomery County
 Intermediate Unit**
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Questions?

Comments?

Story Ideas?

Contact Kristen Rawlings
 krawlings@mciu.org or 610-755-9313

Website continued...

a feature of the website, allowing visitors to link directly to the Montgomery County school districts' websites.

Workshops and Courses

To sign up for one of the MCIU's many workshops or courses, visitors will still use the My Learning Plan system. However, a calendar of events listing all upcoming trainings will be available on the home page to allow users a quick preview without logging in to My Learning Plan.

Staff Benefits

All MCIU staff will enjoy the same benefits as the general public, but those staff who are responsible for updating the site have the following additional benefits:

- Improved content management
- Easier to maintain and update content
- Simple navigation
- Graphical text editors
- Ability to assign expiration dates
- Graphic upload capability
- Access to custom modules that increase site features

Log on & Win!

Community Users: Registering on the MCIU website has the added benefit of allowing our community visitors to customize the news and information that they would like to receive. Anyone who registers during the month of May will be entered into a drawing to win a \$50 American Express Voucher. To register, simply click on the [Register](#) button in the top right corner of the home page.

Staff: To encourage all IU staff to become familiar with the new benefits of our website, during the month of May we invite our employees to participate in a website scavenger hunt. Staff are challenged to find the answers to the three questions listed below on the website and email Maureen Quinn (mmquinn@mciu.org) with the answers. At the end of the month, all respondents will be entered into a drawing to win a \$50 American Express gift voucher.

Scavenger Hunt Items

1. What is an eRate?
2. How many members serve on the Montgomery County School Directors' Legislative Committee?
3. Is Virtual High School limited to just high school students?

Computer Fair Winners



The middle school winners of the Pennsylvania Computer Fair organized by the IU on April 3 will advance to the state finals. The participants, which also included area high schools, competed in a variety of categories including multi-media, animation and logo design.

IU Teachers Raising Awareness about Autism

Did you know that autism is growing at a startling rate of 10-17 percent per year and is estimated to affect 4 million Americans in the next decade?

This is one of the facts that MCIU teachers and their students are hoping to make others aware of during National Autism Awareness month this April. In Montgomery County alone, the number of children with autism ages 3 to 21 have increased from 430 in 01/02 to 1,260 as of 12/1/07. This represents a 34% increase from 01/02 school year to the 07/08 school year. Yet, even with the prevalence of autism affecting 1 in 150 people, many do not understand the characteristics of the developmental disorder.

MCIU special education teacher Linda Raffa and teacher assistants Ruthann King and Joy Marinkov are part of the awareness effort at Perkiomen Valley South Elementary School. This month, they ordered awareness ribbons from the Autism Society of America which were distributed to every classroom at South Elementary and to all the Board members of the MCIU. The students also created a display of their art work in the school lobby which includes information about autism.

Fifth graders known as “peer helpers” made squares for a quilt—a yearly activity coordinated during awareness month. The helpers are selected at the beginning of each school year based on essays they submit on why they would like to work with the autistic support class. There are 13 helpers this year who also come in to the classroom on a daily basis to play games, read, work on the computer or go to lunch with the students.

“The helpers give one to one attention to the students which really helps them with their communication and socialization skills. The emphasis of our curriculum is to get the kids to learn receptive and expressive language skills – we want the students to be able to request what they want or need,” said Raffa.

Other awareness activities planned by King, Raffa and Marinkov include participation in the Special Olympics on April 17th at North Penn High School. The Kiwanis Club is also coming to the school on April 28th to recognize the helpers and give them an award gift certificate for their support of the autistic class.

“I wish we had more educational awareness activities to get other schools involved in throughout the year,” said King. “It really helps to form a better understanding of autism. Many people just aren’t sure what people with autism can and can’t do.”

Essay Excerpts from the 5th Grade Helpers

“I would like to be an IU helper because I think I have the patience. It would help me understand what kids go through in a day. What challenges they face.”

“I would like to do this because I think they would like somebody to play with them, have fun, and be encouraged.”

“I would like to help because I want to make people happy, especially people with special needs.”

“I would like to be a helper because I love to help people, especially people that need more help than others.”



Students from the autistic support class at Perkiomen Valley South Elementary School pose in front of their art work display during Autism Awareness month. Teacher Assistant Ruthann King helped organize awareness activities for Autism Awareness Month this April.

Facts about Autism

Autism is a complex developmental disability that typically appears during the first three years of life and is the result of a neurological disorder that affects the normal functioning of the brain, impacting development in the areas of social interaction and communication skills. Both children and adults with autism typically show difficulties in verbal and non-verbal communication, social interactions, and leisure or play activities.

There is no known single cause for autism, but it is generally accepted that it is caused by abnormalities in brain structure or function.

Early intervention for autistic children – services delivered to children from birth to age 3 – are vitally important. Research shows that it has a dramatic impact on reducing the symptoms of autism spectrum disorders. Intensive early intervention yields a tremendous amount of progress in children by the time they enter kindergarten, often reducing the need for intensive supports.

The MCIU’s autistic programming is part of two state projects, the PA Verbal Behavior Project for kindergarten through second-grade and the Competent Learner Model for third through fifth grade.

Source: Autism Society of America

Welcome Spring!



IU staff joined in a walk around the MCIU neighborhood, enjoying the beautiful 70 degree day on April 17th.