



MCIU Connection

The bi-weekly newsletter of the Montgomery County Intermediate Unit

February 22, 2008

Online: www.mciu.org

16 High Schools Compete at MCIU Academic Competition



Good News!

A feature article about the MCIU appeared in The Times-Herald on February 17th. Full story reprinted on pages 4 and 5.



Sixteen scholarly teams competed in the annual Pennsylvania State Academic Competition regional event sponsored by the MCIU's Curriculum, Instruction and Professional Development Division on February 12, 2008.

Although the threat of snow and ice loomed over the competition, teams stayed focused on Shakespeare, World War II, the polar ice cap and a myriad of other topics to demonstrate their knowledge and problem solving skills. Students were asked questions about literature, American history, contemporary events, world history, pot-pourri, and science which covered all time periods.

The highest scoring team after match 6 was from Spring-Ford High School. The team sponsor, Joanne DeMeno, was proud of her team's accomplishment and good sportsmanship. Students included Robert D'Alonzo, James Eveland, Andrew Kennedy, Erik Lampmann, Michael Masciandaro and Kevin Rafuse.

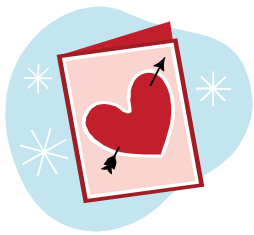
Upper Dublin High School showed great strength with a second place finish. Third place was a triple tie with Harriton, Plymouth-Whitemarsh, and St.

Pius X. The field would have been narrowed had the competition been allowed to continue; however weather played the spoiler ending the competition after 6 matches.

Teams also racking up competitive scores came from Bishop McDevitt, Cheltenham, Hatboro-Horsham, Mt. St. Joseph Academy, Perkiomen Valley, Pottsgrove, Episcopal Academy, Haverford School, Upper Merion, Upper Moreland, and Upper Perkiomen High Schools.

On April 25, teams from all over the state will compete at the state Capital in Harrisburg. Each of the 29 intermediate units in Pennsylvania is permitted to send one high school academic team to participate in the competition. The championship team will receive a \$2,000 scholarship for their high school and will have the opportunity to participate in the Panasonic Academic Challenge at Disney World in June. The Pennsylvania Academic Competition was begun in 1992.

Congratulations to Maria Johns and Linda Bean or their successful organization of this great event!



Valentine's Day Bake-Off / Auction Raises \$360

"YUMMY!" was the word of the day at the MCIU Valentine's Day Bake-off/Silent Auction hosted by the Spirit Committee on

February 13th.

More than 30 desserts were donated by MCIU staff and put up for auction. The event raised \$360 to be used for upcoming Spirit Committee events.

With an eye toward best presentation and baking expertise, the Spirit Committee judges selected two desserts for blue ribbon awards. The awardees were Melissa George, Non-Public Division and Rosanne Westerfer, Executive Assistant to the CEO.

A big thanks to Sandy Edling, Nancy Saul and Dawn Harrington for organizing this delicious event! The Spirit Committee plans to hold this event next year, also on February 13th.



Melissa George (left) and Roseanne Westerfer (right) won the blue ribbon awards for the Valentine's Day Bakeoff. Roseanne contributed a Black Forest Cake that took her three days to bake and auctioned for \$30. Melissa created a festive goblet filled with Ghiradelli brownies.

More than 225 Educators & Health Professionals Attend First Annual Specialists Symposium Hosted by MCIU

The consensus was clear: there are not enough professional training opportunities for specialists—the health professionals and teachers in our schools specializing in music, art and physical education. Darlene Anderson and Dan Deegan, the adapted physical education teachers with the MCIU, decided to address that need. After surveying the various specialists in the county, Dan and Darlene, of the Special Education Division, partnered with the IU's Curriculum, Instruction and Professional Development Division to organize and host the first annual "Specialists Professional Learning Event" offered in the tri-county area. Held on February 15, there were 175 health & physical educators at the Health & Physical Education Symposium. The event provided 12 workshops during the day including a much needed session on "Adapted Physical Education" by Dan and Darlene.

Tim Stokes, a Health & Physical Educator from Wissahickon High School, said, "This was the best in-service provided to health & physical educators that I have attended in all the years I have been teaching. The workshops were informative and inspirational and the ability to network with other health & physical educators was a bonus."

More than 55 educators attended the Art and Music sessions held at Upper Merion Middle School. Symposiums were held in four different specialties. The fine arts teachers attended a session with Dr. Susan Rodriguez, an author, artist, educator and seasoned public speaker, who explored the work of well-known female artists. Instrumental and choral teachers learned about different curriculum to engage students over multiple years and methods to assess young musicians. Health professionals reviewed the First Signs program to help serve autistic students and learned about a successful induction program to place school nurses in appropriate training sessions.



Dan Deegan and Darlene Anderson (back), IU adapted physical education teachers, advise two PE teachers on how to play tug-of-war.



Fifteen fine arts teachers show off their art work during a training session with Dr. Susan Rodriguez (front row, second from left).



Daylight Saving Time Reminder

Daylight saving time begins on March 9, 2008. Please remember to set your clocks ahead 1 hour at 2 a.m. on Sunday Morning.

Special Education Focus Groups Held

PaTTAN hosted three regional focus group meetings to gather input on changes to the current special education forms being used in Pennsylvania.

The meetings were held 2/20 in King of Prussia; 2/21 in Harrisburg; and 2/22 in Pittsburgh

Key stakeholders (parents, educators, education organizations, and advocacy groups) were invited. Each IU also was invited to bring a team consisting of the Special Education Director, an educator, a representative of their districts and a parent. PaTTAN expects to gather input from about 150 people across Pennsylvania.

Strategic Thinking



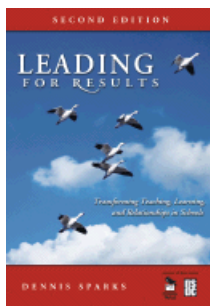
Cabinet members and administrators put their heads together during a brief retreat February 19th to discuss the strategic goals and action planning for each of the IU's divisions. Bob Shields (middle), who facilitated the discussion, helped IU administrators, including Sharon Richardson (left) and Jeanmarie Mason (right), review their progress in completing the goals of 07-08 and plan their divisional objectives for 08-09. Plans for the new year must be submitted to and approved by the Board of Directors in May.

Upcoming MCIU Events

Professional Lecture Series



A waiting list is already in place for the first seminar in the 2008 Professional Lecture Series with Dennis Sparks, nationally known as the guru of professional development. Sparks will be at the MCIU on March 11 & 12th as part of the learning series sponsored by the Curriculum, Instruction, and Professional Development Division. Sparks is the author of "Leading for Results: Transforming Teaching, Learning, and Relationships in Schools." To join the waiting list, go to <http://tinyurl.com/29lz9u>.



The April lecture series, "Motivating Learning and Building Memory in All Students' Brains" with Judy Willis, is also filling up fast. To register, go to <http://tinyurl.com/29r7bl>.

Spring Fling

Mark your calendars for the Spring Fling on Thursday, March 20th— an event for all MCIU employees . More details will follow about Spring Fling activities that celebrate the first day of spring and support the First Annual MCIU picnic planned for the end of this school year.

9th Annual Golf Classic

It's time to pick up those sticks for a good cause! Register now for the 9th Annual Golf Classic sponsored by the MCIU Education Foundation to be held on Monday, May 12, 2008 at the Blue Bell Country Club. Participants in the Education Foundation's Golf Classic help raise funds to enhance the educational opportunities for students enrolled in school throughout Montgomery County. Golfers will be treated to a full day of activities, including brunch, golf with a shotgun start, skill contests, on-course refreshments, and an Awards Dinner with hors d'oeuvres and door prizes. The reservation deadline is April 15th. Sign up online at www.mciu.org and click on MCIU Education Foundation.

Invisible Partner

Montco Intermediate Unit is always at work behind the scenes

By Judy Baca, Times Herald Staff

Sunday, February 17, 2008

The following feature article, reprinted with the permission of the Times Herald, highlights the many diverse services provided through the MCIU23. The article as it appeared in the Sunday paper on February 17, 2008 also featured photographs of Anderson School Teachers Assistant Carol Falcone working with Anderson student Elexis Borowy, Guidance Counselor Tom Wurerstle doing a training at Kennedy Kenrick High School and Dr. Jerry Shiveley, Executive Director/CEO.

The invisible educational partner" is one of the ways executive director Dr. Jerry W. Shiveley describes the Montgomery County Intermediate Unit (MCIU).

The behind-the-scenes agency, founded during the 1960s, with headquarters at 1605 W. Main S. Jeffersonville, is the link between approximately 134,000 public and non-public students in the county and the state and federally mandated programs available to them.

Known to many for its services and programs for special needs children, the MCIU, actually works with the all of the county's 22 school districts and some 168 non-public schools to provide programs designed to meet the needs of students from 3 to 21 years of age.

The agency's mission statement explains that the MCIU "is committed to providing and coordinating services which meet the diverse educational needs of children in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania. The MCIU serves school districts and schools by providing cost effective programs, services and resources to meet the needs of Montgomery County students and school personnel."

Eight divisions have been set up within the unit. Special Education is one. The others: Technology and Information Systems; Curriculum Instruction and Staff Development; Non Public Schools; Legislative Services and Grants Development; Communications; Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN) and Management Services, which serves as the unit's fiscal arm.

Dr. Jeanmarie Mason, director of the Special Education Division, explained that the only time the intermediate unit deals directly with the special ed students is when the children are 3 years to school age.

"We serve students with disabilities in two different departments," she said. Pre-School, from age 3 to beginner, the age at which they are able to go to kindergarten in their district, and School Age, which moves from beginner to age 21.

For the preschoolers, she said, "we become the local education agency and we are responsible for them through an agreement with the State of Pennsylvania.

"When they reach school age, they go on to their own districts. However, their districts may come to Special Education at the Intermediate Unit for services the district does not have. We are like a hub for all the 22 school districts."

Mason noted that the number of special education students in Montgomery County has risen from 13,744 during the 2001-2002 school year to 17,497 today, with the cases of autism alone rising from 430 in 2001-2002 to 1,260 today. She credits more screening and evaluation with making it possible to diagnose these cases and to begin programs to help.

Mason and Shiveley both stated that the Intermediate Unit takes its lead from the districts. "We ask what can we do for them, what they need?" said Mason. "The primary goal (for the Special Education Division) is student achievement and progress for students with disabilities."

"The key function for us," said Shiveley, "is to help districts improve instruction and help them to operate more efficiently and effectively. Our total purpose is to serve our school districts."

To that end, the MCIU has some 700 employees in the county. Noting that funding comes from the districts and non-public schools served, Shiveley said, "We are no different than a business. We sell our services."

And he gives a great amount of credit for the success of the business to his Management Services Director Stan Wisler, without whom he claims he would not be able to work.

Continuing, Shiveley added, "Every summer I meet with every superintendent in the county about our services and what they each feel we need to initiate. I ask them: What do you like about us? What do you not like about us? What can we do to make your life simpler?"

I've been here for going on four years and I think we improve each year. Our goal is for us to be the first call for help from our districts."

One of the latest improvements is the recent move of the Intermediate Unit's Anderson School from the Variety Club Camp in Worcester to a brand new facility in

(Continued on page 5)

Lower Providence. The new school means that not only will the educational needs of the middle and high school special education students be met, but also those of students requiring alternative education,

In addition to the general education curriculum set by Pennsylvania State Standards, the students will have group counseling, positive behavior management, conflict resolution and peer mediation training available to them. MaryAnn Franklin is principal of the Anderson School.

Director of the Non Public School Division of the MCIU, Dr. Ken Voss, and his staff are responsible for providing auxiliary services, mandated by the state, to non-public school students and for providing professional development for teachers under federally mandated funding.

Discussing the services for students, Voss said, "We offer to the nonpublic schools, on a voluntary basis, such things as remedial math and reading services, speech therapy, hearing therapy, counseling and psychological services. These things are available to those who are eligible and wish to participate."

Voss added that workshops are available for teachers on "at least a weekly basis" in such areas as literacy, bullying prevention and substance abuse. These workshops may be given onsite, at the school, or at the Intermediate Unit.

"Our programs are researched and scientifically based," he said. "We also provide a crisis intervention team when that is warranted. The services that are provided come primarily from the state and also through the Title Federal programs. They are strictly available to the 168 nonpublic schools in the county ... some big, some small."

He proudly mentioned two upcoming summer programs available to middle school students.

For the third year, middle school girls will be invited to attend Camp Ophelia. According to Voss, the camp was established "to better prepare students to deal with difficult social issues" as they get ready to enter high school.

There will be three sites for Camp Ophelia: Mount St. Joseph Academy, Merion Mercy Academy and Manor Junior College.

Continuing, Voss said, "We also have a new camp for middle school boys, The Boys Leadership Camp, which will run, in cooperation with LaSalle College High School, from June 16 to 20, at no cost at all to students.

"The camp is designed to help the boys become leaders of tomorrow by focusing on various aspects of lead-

ership. We are excited about this new program and we are working closely with LaSalle College High School because the students at LaSalle will mentor the boys who attend."

Dr. Peter Grande is director of the Curriculum, Instruction and Professional Service Division.

"What we do," he explained, "is that we have 10 curriculum advisory councils, with representatives from each district in areas such as math, science, the arts, etc."

He said the administrators of each council meet to discuss what is working for them in each of their districts in terms of curriculum, resources and so on, so that by sharing this information, each district will benefit from the experience of the others.

Grande said the three primary functions of his division are: to help each district develop a strategic plan, which is required by the state every three years; to support principals and school districts with the state's Getting Results method of school planning; and to provide aid with the PSSA (Pa. State System of Assessment) tests in writing, reading, math and science each year.

"The state develops administrative guidelines and we help disseminate them throughout the county," said Grande.

He noted that three top national and international educational speakers will be coming to Montgomery County this year to work with administrators and principals.

"We have workshops offered by local experts and we offer about 50 workshops a year on a variety of topics to support the national experts who will be here," Grande said.

"We also offer about 120 continuing education classes per year for teachers ... on weekends and after school. These are scheduled by finding out what the teachers want. We try and pay close attention to what our districts want and need, then develop our plans from there."

A 22-member board of directors governs the MCIU. Each board member is a member of the school board of one of the 22 districts served by the agency.

Declaring that the IU "has an incredible amount of talent," Shiveley said that his staff "continually gets favorable feedback from division chairs who get it from the districts.

"This is a great organization," he continued. "I have a wonderful board of 22 members who are concerned about the right things and they give me a lot of latitude."

With a grin, he added, "Our goal is to have raving customers, happy with our services."