

# The Newsletter of LaGrange School District 105

# The Blackboard

www.d105.net

Countryside  
Hodgkins  
LaGrange

105

**District 105  
Central Office**  
701 S. Seventh Avenue  
LaGrange, IL 60525  
(708) 482-2700

**Dr. Glenn T. Schlichting,**  
Superintendent of Schools

**JULY/AUGUST 2011**

## Special Events Spotlight DISTRICT 105 FACILITIES

Community members, school and city officials, teachers and families joined District 105 in celebrating two special events.

On April 10, the district showcased renovated and reconstructed facilities at Seventh Avenue School. Community members toured the building and enjoyed refreshments.

A ribbon cutting ceremony at the newly reconstructed Ideal School Park on May 1 showcased the park facilities and also the Ideal School renovations. Speakers and guests included City of Countryside Mayor Robert Conrad, District 105 Superintendent Glenn Schlichting, Ideal School Principal Steven Bahn, and many others.

The reconstructed park is a collaboration between the City of Countryside and District 105. The park has lighted basketball and tennis courts, softball and baseball diamonds, and playground equipment for children of all ages.



Joining in the ribbon cutting ceremony at Ideal School Park are (L to R): Board of Education President Mark Smith, Ideal School Principal Steven Bahn, Township Assessor Barbara Weyrick, District 105 Superintendent Glenn Schlichting, Alderman Robert Pondelicek, Miss Western Springs Outstanding Pre-teen Cassie Callahan, Township Trustee Tom Garrette, Countryside Mayor Robert Conrad, Township Supervisor William Mundy, and Alderman Jim Jasinski.

## Construction Continues During the Summer

The district's construction project, that is bringing facilities improvements to every school, is continuing over the summer, with work at Gurrie Middle School, Spring Avenue School, and Hodgkins School. The entire construction project is scheduled to be completed by the beginning of the new school year. Major components of the current construction, Phase II, include expanded libraries at both Hodgkins Elementary and Gurrie Middle schools; a new kindergarten classroom at Spring Avenue School, and a new shared gym for Gurrie and Spring Avenue schools. (The existing gym at Gurrie will also be kept.) Two gyms at Gurrie are needed due to the district's rapid population growth.

Other improvements that are currently underway include a new playground at Hodgkins School, and improved plumbing, wiring, HVAC and security upgrades at Spring Avenue, Gurrie and Hodgkins schools.

***Due to construction, the Spring-Gurrie complex and Hodgkins School are closed over the summer. The Gurrie Middle School office is temporarily located at Ideal School in Countryside. The Spring Avenue School office is temporarily located at Seventh Avenue School in LaGrange. Hodgkins School's summer office is located at the Noel B. Cummings Administration Center, 8990 Lyons Street, Hodgkins.***

**Gurrie Middle School**  
1001 S. Spring Avenue  
LaGrange, IL 60525  
(708) 482-2720  
Ed Hood, Principal

**Hodgkins Elementary School**  
6516 S. Kane Avenue  
Hodgkins, IL 60525  
(708) 482-2740  
John Signatur, Principal

**Ideal Elementary School**  
9901 W. 58th Street  
Countryside, IL 60525  
(708) 482-2750  
Steven Bahn, Principal

**Seventh Avenue Elementary School**  
701 S. Seventh Avenue  
LaGrange, IL 60525  
(708) 482-2730  
Sherry Krzyzanski, Principal

**Spring Avenue Elementary School**  
1001 S. Spring Avenue  
LaGrange, IL 60525  
(708) 482-2710  
Elizabeth Webb Peterman, Principal

# Congratulations, Retirees

Nine dedicated staff members retired in June. Their average tenure in the district is over 30 years, with individual District 105 teaching experience ranging from 17 to 45 years. Their collective teaching experience in the district is 277 years! The entire District 105 community extends its best wishes to:

## District



**Carol Nendza,  
District Band  
Director**

Mrs. Nendza helped District 105 students make beautiful music for 25 years. She worked in education for 36 years. "This has been a great place to teach, and my years in the district were some of the best years of my life. I will miss the band members and staff, but I won't miss getting up at 5:15 a.m.!" Mrs. Nendza commented. Visits to her grandchildren in California, travel to other states, and home remodeling are on the horizon.

## Gurrie Middle School Joyce Barrs, Seventh/Eighth Grade Math Teacher



Joyce Barrs taught for 29 years; the last 17 as a Gurrie Middle School math teacher.

"District 105 is a hidden gem among the west suburban school districts. The faculty is a truly dedicated group who cares about their students' success. The administrators are supportive of new ideas and of new technology. It has been a privilege to work with such exceptional educators," Mrs. Barrs reflected.

"Teaching middle school adolescents has been a unique experience. I will miss their quick smiles, boundless energy, and youthful exuberance."

She also wants to acknowledge and thank the parents and the community for their efforts that enhance education in the district.

The future holds a trip to Italy—she has just completed an Italian language class—visits to her grandson in Denver and her daughter in Nashville. Mrs. Barrs plans to take painting classes and music lessons, and will tutor or substitute teach. She is also looking forward to more frequent bike rides and trips on many of the local bike paths.



**Christine  
Hunka,  
Eighth Grade  
Resource  
Teacher**

Over the last 32 years, Ms. Hunka taught in every district school. For the past four years she worked at Gurrie. She was a resource teacher, student support team coordinator, elementary reading teacher, and SAIL resource teacher. "It has been an honor to be part of such a dedicated, hardworking group of teachers. After all these years I still love working with children, and learned something new from them every day," Ms. Hunka observed.

Her family is celebrating her retirement with a trip to Italy. She also plans more travel and to increase her volunteer activities. Ms. Hunka looks forward to spending more time with family, while learning carpentry skills from her father, and knitting from her mother; logging miles with her walking buddies; gardening and reading.

## Ideal School

### Joan Kennerley Bartolomei, Third Grade Teacher



Over the past 45 years, Mrs. Bartolomei has taught first, second, third, fourth and fifth grades and has substituted for all grade levels.

"District 105 students, teachers and community are all wonderful. They are so fantastic that I have 'lived' here for 45 years!" Ms. Bartolomei remarked. She plans to get rid of the things she no longer needs, will travel, and may substitute teach. She will spend time

with her two "wonderful children and two perfect grandchildren."

"I hope I have made a positive impact on children and on their lives, and have taught them a love of learning."



**Wendy Roberts,  
Resource  
Teacher**

Ms. Roberts was a resource teacher in the district for 32 years, most recently at Ideal

School, but she also worked at Gurrie.

"I was fortunate to work with a wonderful, supportive staff and formed many lasting friendships. My students made my job extremely enjoyable, and inspired me to be the best teacher that I could be. Seeing students' progress on a daily basis made me so proud of them and of everyone who works with them. I am equally as proud to have worked in a learning community that supports the inclusion of all learners. This was the best job in the world and I will miss everybody, students and staff members," Ms. Roberts stated.

She will have more time to spend with her parents, three sisters, nieces, and nephews, old friends, and new friends. Mrs. Roberts looks forward to having time to read, join a book club, go to movies, take day trips, and beautify her home. She also hopes to see Cher in concert, go on another African Safari, or visit Hawaii once more.

## Seventh Avenue School



**Marlene  
DeMaertelaere,  
Second Grade  
Teacher**

Ms. DeMaertelaere taught in the district for 27

years. "I have many wonderful memories of the students who passed through my classroom. However I am saddened to lose the daily companionship of my teaching family," Ms.

DeMaertelaere stated.

Her new found time will give her more time to spend with her children and with her grandson, Ben. She is also looking forward to a new addition to the DeMaertelaere family in September. Traveling to places she has always wanted to visit is also on the agenda.

## Daria Myers, Kindergarten Teacher



Mrs. Myers' entire 37-year teaching career took place in District 105. She commented, "I will miss the very dedicated, caring

Seventh Avenue School staff and all of the wonderful families I have gotten to know over the years. I am so thankful for the wonderful children I have had the privilege of teaching! Kindergarten is such a special year. I am very fortunate to have been a part of this time in my students' lives. I have many wonderful memories, funny stories and heart warming moments that I will cherish forever. District 105 will also be very special to me."

She looks forward to spending more time with her family and opening "new doors" and experiences along the way.



**Denise Reicher,  
Fifth Grade  
Teacher**

Mrs. Denise Reicher spent 24 of her 28 years as a teacher in District 105.

"The entire District 105 community is unsurpassed in caring, warmth, and its commitment to education. I have cherished my time here and will always treasure the wonderful children, parents and staff," she said.

*Continues on p. 6*

**The  
Blackboard**



# District Holds First HEALTH FAIR

Over 200 families and community members flocked to the district's first Health and Wellness Fair on the evening of April 13. Visitors came to Gurrie Middle School to receive information on many health-related topics from more than 30 local health care specialists, sports organizations, public and service groups, to help inform them about the many available community resources that promote better health and improve physical fitness.

The Health and Wellness Fair was organized by the district's physical education teachers and by the district's head nurse. Presenters gave information on a wide range of topics and activities. Presenters included companies that provide sports and fitness lessons and activities for students to enhance their interest and abilities.



Representatives from the *LaGrange* and *Countryside Police Departments* presented safety information. The *LaGrange*, *Countryside*, and *Hodgkins Park Districts* informed the attendees about fitness activities that are available to adults and children throughout the year.

Representatives from *Extreme Mixes Martial Arts* invited older students and adults to test their strength and focus by breaking a wooden board. *Vision Quest Athletics* led attendees through a variety of training circuits.

Before and after participating in gym activities, district nurses took attendees' blood pressure and monitored vital signs. The nurses also answered health-related questions. Social workers presented information about children's social and emotional development. District physical

education teachers told guests about the physical education curriculum. The guests could watch students demonstrate the various units of study and also participate in them themselves. Lucky guests received many raffle prizes supplied by the Health Fair vendors.



"The fair was such a great success that we plan to hold it again next year, with even more opportunities for community members to learn ways to improve their fitness levels and health," said Seventh Avenue School Principal Sherry Krzyzanski, "and so they can learn how to access resources within the school district and the community to improve their overall well-being."

## Reading Program is Approved

The District 105 Primary Reading Committee recommended, and the Board of Education approved, the adoption of a new CORE reading program for grades K-2 beginning in the 2011-2012 school year. The program is called **StoryTown** and is published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. "This reading program provides the necessary structures and systematic instruction to ensure that all students are receiving the same core reading skills, strategy instruction, vocabulary instruction, and genre exposure," explained Kathryn Heeke, director of curriculum and instruction.

StoryTown also allows for individualized instruction through the use of four leveled readers: below level, on level, advanced, and ELL (English Language Learners). Small group instruction using these leveled readers allows for teachers to introduce grade level reading skills and strategies through stories that meet individual reading levels. Furthermore, "Storytown supports our Response to Intervention (RtI) efforts through a strategic intervention component that provides struggling students with an opportunity to learn grade level skills and strategies by using an interactive student text. Storytown extends learning both at school and at home through the online student versions that have unit/theme-related activities," Ms. Heeke explained.

## Dashboards give Instant Information

Anyone who wants to learn more about the district can get information at a glance through the district and schools' dashboards. The dashboards are posted on the District 105 website: [www.d105.net](http://www.d105.net). The District Dashboard contains the district goals, historical data, targets, and a status indicator (red, yellow, green).

The District Dashboard is updated on the website and presented to the Board of Education on a quarterly basis to provide current information about the progress the district is making toward its goals. The most critical problem solving areas are marked by a "red" status—areas in which the district is not progressing adequately toward its targets.

Each of the five schools has also developed a Dashboard that reflects the school's specific progress and priorities. These dashboards can also be viewed on the district website, on each school's home page.

To view the District Dashboard, visit the district website. On the home page, click on the link "About D105" near the top of the page, right hand side, then click on "District Dashboard" in the pull-down menu. To view school dashboards, go to each school's home page, click on the "About...(school name)" at the top right, then click on "dashboard."

# Highlighting Winning Teams, Students



School Citizens of the Year (SCOTY) Award winners (L to R): Connor Carson, Gurrie Middle School; Jason Williams, Spring Avenue School; Karina Urquizo, Hodgkins School; Kali Huynh, Ideal School; and Sarah Pavlik, Seventh Avenue School.

During the school year, District 105 students engage in many activities and events outside of the everyday classroom, including competitions and contests, that increase their knowledge, skills, and experience. Here is a look at a few of the many ways in which students are excelling in these areas:

## District-wide School Citizens of the Year

Each year West 40, the state's educational service center for the West Cook County region, hosts the School Citizen of the Year (SCOTY) Awards for students in grades two through twelve. Teachers and administrators from every school in the area are invited to choose one student from their school who stands out as a "good role model for other students and is a good school citizen." The SCOTY winners exhibit kindness, caring, helpfulness, compassion, and lead by example. They are recognized in a ceremony in March, where they receive a medal, certificate and a copy of the SCOTY winners' biographies.

Congratulations to the District 105 SCOTY Award winners for 2011: Gurrie Middle School—**Connor Carson**, grade eight; Hodgkins School—**Karina Urquizo**, grade six; Ideal Elementary School—**Kali Huynh**, grade six; Seventh Avenue School—**Sarah Pavlik**, grade six; and Spring Avenue School—**Jason Williams**, grade six.

## The Battle of the Books

Over 100 students in grades five through eight participated in the district's second annual "Battle of the Books." The students, who have all read the same 20 books, compete in teams and answer questions in a game-show format. The teams are mixed

by school and grade, making this a truly unique District 105 experience. Students are looking forward to next year's Battle!

## Writing Festival

All K-8 students participate in the annual District Writing Festival, which recently celebrated its sixth year. Classroom winners are chosen, and then about 20 adults score their work. Overall, there are six winners from each elementary school and four from the middle school. The winners were recognized at a ceremony held at the LaGrange Public Library in May. "It's quite a wonderful affair and families come out to listen to our amazing young writers as they present their original poetry or prose," stated Spring Avenue School Principal Elizabeth Webb Peterman, who also organizes the event.

## Math Team

About 90 students in grades two through eight participated in the math team. Students practiced for about an hour a week, after school, from November through March.

A group of sixth and seventh grade students took first place at St. Joseph's Math Competition in March. **Lenny Prystalski** and **Jon Yeager** scored second and third overall on the test.

In April, students participated in the local Math Olympiad hosted by McClure Jr. High. The fourth/fifth grade team took third place, and the seventh/eighth grade team took second place. Individual winners for their grade levels included **Lenny Prystalski**, first place, and **Jon Yeager**, third place.

## Gurrie Middle School Athletics

These teams won their Conference Championships—

- Eighth Grade Boys' Softball (fall season)
- Eighth Grade Boys' Basketball (winter season)
- Eighth Grade Boys' Volleyball (spring season)
- Seventh/Eighth Grade Boys' Cross Country (fall season)

This year marked the premiere of the Gurrie wrestling team. Over 40 students attempted the sport, and 24 competed during the entire season. Gurrie Principal Ed Hood stated, "Even though the students had never wrestled before, we won three dual meets and had several tournament champions. Nine wrestlers qualified for regionals, four for sectionals, and two for state. We had a second place and a fourth place winner at state. Of the 150+ IESA teams, the Gurrie wrestlers came in twenty-third overall!"

## Music

- The Concert Band achieved a first place at the District competition, and a second place at state.
- The Jazz Band received a first place at the District competition, then went on to earn first place in the state!
- At the LTHS Solo and Ensemble Contest, students earned a first place, clarinet solo, and a first place, tenor sax solo.
- At the IGSMA Solo and Ensemble Contest, all of the participating Gurrie orchestra students received a 1+, 1 or 2 rating.

## West 40 Speech and Drama Festival

Every year, schools throughout the West Cook Region compete in team and individual events that showcase their oral presentation skills. At this year's Speech and Drama Festival, Gurrie students achieved six first place ribbons and three second place ribbons.

## Registration for the 2011-2012 School Year

District-wide registration will be held Tuesday, August 2, from 1:00 to 7:00 p.m. *Due to construction, registration for all schools will take place at Seventh Avenue School.* Residency verification will be consistent with the requirements of Lyons Township High School. In July, further information on verification requirements was posted on the district website: [www.d105.net](http://www.d105.net). Families received registration packets in the mail in mid-July. Parents must make copies of all documents for residency verification prior to coming to registration.

The first day of school for all students will be Thursday, August 25.

# SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

The administration presented year-end goals data at the July 25, 2011, District 105 School Board meeting. The presentation highlighted the many strengths of the district along with some areas for improvement.

- Gurrie Middle School eighth graders achieved the highest EXPLORE composite score of any Gurrie graduating class since the test was first administered in 2006. EXPLORE, a precursor to the ACT, is the freshman placement test used by Lyons Township High School.
- Over 40% of Gurrie Middle School eighth graders placed into accelerated/honors levels classes at Lyons Township High School. This is a dramatic increase since 2006 when we began tracking this data.
- Overall, district Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) results were the highest since the test was first administered in the 1999-2000 school year.
- District 105 K-8th grade students make significantly more progress in math, reading, and language from fall to spring than national averages.
- After several years of increased student achievement, the percentage of students achieving at or above national averages in reading, math, and language on the Measures of Academic Performance (MAP) test has lagged recently. This lag can be traced to summer learning regression. In response, the district has enrolled over 400 students in a Summer Connect program to keep them engaged in literacy and math over the summer months.
- With the completion of the facilities improvement project, our five schools have become safer, healthier, and better designed for teaching and learning. This work, funded from regular revenue sources, is consistent with the needs the district outlined during the 2005 referendum.
- District 105 received the highest financial rating offered by the State of Illinois. The district has worked to keep budget increases to a minimum even with significant student enrollment increases.
- Responses from parents, staff, and students about climate, communication, instruction, curriculum, technology, and facilities were again very positive—more positive than the state and national award-winning districts against which we have benchmarked ourselves.

Community members interested in more detailed information about our school and district performance can visit our website. Posted on the district website are the district dashboard, the year-end data presentation made to the School Board on July 25, and the District 105 Survey results presented to the School Board on June 27. School dashboards are posted on the individual school websites. Our District and School Dashboards display our progress toward District Goals.

## Welcome, NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Two new Board of Education members were elected in April. District 105 welcomes **Lawrence Prystalski** and **Jan Reagan** to the school board.



Lawrence Prystalski

At the start of the 2011-2012 school year, Lawrence Prystalski, a twelve-year District 105 resident, and his wife, Carrie, will have four children in the district schools. Mr. Prystalski, a mathematics teacher at Oak Park-River Forest High School, earned a B.S. in Biochemistry from the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana, and an M.S.T. in Mathematics from the University of Illinois, Chicago.

"As an educator, it is important that my children receive excellent instruction. As a parent, it is my responsibility to be involved in their education. As a community member, it is important to give back to the community, be an active participant in community affairs, and help ensure that all the children in the district receive the highest quality education possible," Mr. Prystalski explained. "District 105 is clearly committed to the children they serve. I believe the district will be a model for all primary districts in Illinois. It has a diverse population with unique challenges that are being addressed in innovative and insightful ways."

Jan Reagan has lived in the district for five-and-a-half years. More than a year ago, she began to regularly attend board meetings when she became interested in several issues in education. "I found the meetings to be interesting, informative and educational," she stated. Mrs. Reagan then enjoyed volunteering on the district committee that evaluates school programs. She decided she would like to contribute to the district on a larger scale by becoming a member of the Board of Education.



Jan Reagan

"Not only do our students have great classroom educators, but every student will soon attend a newly remodeled school with a terrific environment for learning," Mrs. Reagan continued. "We are very fortunate to have the talented volunteers who helped work on these complex facilities' projects for several years. In fact, our district has wonderful volunteers in everything from each school's PTO, to parents who volunteer in the classrooms.

"District progress is evaluated on the district dashboard, with very high standards as a guide. Looking at the dashboard makes us realize that the administration has set very challenging goals, and is willing to take the necessary steps toward meeting those goals. Recent examples are the renewed summer school and enrichment programs. I have a saying, 'How our schools do directly impacts what our home values do.' The district's constant evaluation and improvement of programs keeps our community, as a whole, healthy. In comparison to many districts in Illinois, we are fortunate that District 105 is currently financially sound.

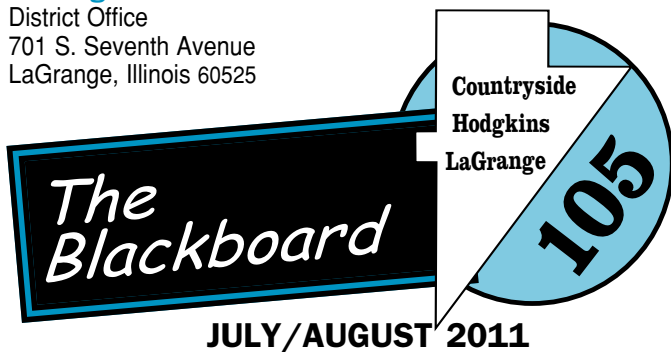
"As the State of Illinois works on improving its financial position, it is worrisome that cuts may need to be made to programs and funding that could negatively impact our students. It will be important to be proactive with the state and our community to ensure our voice and concerns are heard."

Mrs. Reagan earned a B.S. in Marketing from the University of Nebraska, and an MBA in International Business from the University of Dallas. She and her husband, Chris, have two young children at Spring Avenue School. Prior to staying at home to raise her children, she worked in sales and marketing for S.C. Johnson, Pillsbury, and General Mills. Currently, she is the board president for Chicago Area Families for Adoption, a 250-member organization of adoptive families and adoption professionals.



## LaGrange School District 105

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JULY/AUGUST 2011

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## Congratulations, Retirees

*Continued from page 2*

Mrs. Reicher will spend time with her grandchildren, travel, and enjoy a leisurely life.



### **Phyllis Stimac, Second Grade Teacher**

For 38 years, her entire teaching career, Mrs. Stimac worked at Seventh Avenue School. She taught second grade for 36 years.

"It is always difficult to say good-bye to family and friends. Seventh Avenue has been my home away from home for the past thirty-eight years. Every student I have worked with, every family I have come to know, has their own special place in my heart. We have grown together and become wiser and more compassionate through our experiences," Mrs. Stimac reflected.

"Seventh Avenue School will always be a special learning community. It is a family in which parents and staff work in partnership to provide a solid child-centered environment. I have had the pleasure to work with former students who have returned to our district to begin their teaching careers. I have also been honored to carry on our classroom heritage by working with children of my former students. The strong connections made through a positive educational experience draw us back to continue the cycle. My years at Seventh Avenue will always remain some of the best of my life."

Mrs. Stimac will spend more time with her new granddaughter, and take trips with her husband.

## District 105

### Board of Education

Mark Smith, President  
David Herndon, Vice President  
Eileen Tucker, Secretary  
Virginia Kogen  
Kristine Lonsway  
Larry Prystalski  
Jan Reagan

The public is invited to attend board meetings – generally held at Gurrie Library Learning Center on the fourth Monday of each month, 7:30 P.M.

ENTER

**VISIT THE DISTRICT  
105 WEBSITE:**  
[www.d105.net](http://www.d105.net)