

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Our dream school
- The heart of CWA
- Holiday Festivities
- Who is Frank?
- The knight in shining Under Armour
- Send a Candy Gram ♥

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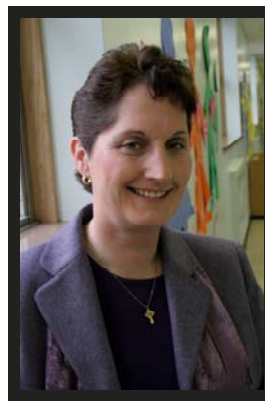
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PRINCIPAL'S MESSAGE

A new year is a time to reflect, examine, and vow to make improvements in the coming year. A new year's resolution is an opportunity to make a commitment to a cause, whether that cause or dream is personal or more encompassing. In 2008 Clare Woods Academy is making a commitment to a dream, one that has been in the works for eight years. Our dream is a new school and the groundwork for this dream has been carefully laid.

As our capital campaign unfolds, we have something tangible; we have a new building plan. The design for the new building was the result of a needs assessment and many meetings with faculty, the facilities task force, and the board of directors.

Eight years ago, the "dream" school started off as a 75,000 square foot project. We are currently at approximately 43,000 square feet, but with more efficient space utilization. Due to the difficulty of the site, five different designs were considered but for one reason or another, none were feasible. With each previous design idea we lost a great deal of space, particularly outdoor use space—the playground, basketball courts, etc. These plans were deconstructed and from them our current design was devised. It looks good, fits our needs, and doesn't take up the



Anne Craig
Principal

entire land space given to us by the Sisters.

The new school has as its center the gymnasium which is also the multi-purpose room. The entry level will have windows that look down into the gymnasium. Everything else is to be built around this focal point. The design places classrooms around the periphery of the building, ensuring they all have much needed windows. Our architects created a "gallery" which will feature a donor recognition wall, as well as student artwork and awards. The architects avoided a bulky square, distinguishing the school from the rest of the buildings on the property. They achieved this unique look using glass stairwells and extending the gallery into the building, providing an area where students can gather. The classroom arrangements are designed with adjacencies in

mind; all classrooms will be kept in their respective departments. On the first floor, the focal point will be the library. Every square inch of this building is utilized to its maximum benefit. The multipurpose room will be used for lunch, P.E., and performances. The new school has been planned with the intention of satisfying all of our students' needs.

Now that the design has been accomplished, the next phase is committee sign up. The Capital Campaign Cabinet, headed by Rich Francis (see page two) is being formed. Once created, this committee will be responsible for the "silent" part of the campaign: actively seeking prospective major donors through press releases, along with a formal kickoff. In addition, Holly and Tim Hickey are forming a Parent Appeal Group. Volunteer opportunities are plentiful.

I encourage everyone to stop in and review these exciting plans. I welcome your emails, ideas and any other input you wish to share. This campus is truly going to be the story of "the little engine that could." This is a change that will be affected by our parents', stakeholders, and our board. This is eight years in the making...we have a dream for the future of our children because they matter so much.

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN UPDATE

Happy New Year! I hope everyone enjoyed the holiday season and had an opportunity to spend time with family and friends. This is another favorite time of the year (remember I love the four seasons) for me and my family. My wife is one who likes to shop and will trek to the stores at 3 A.M. I like to cook, certainly no **Emeril**, it may take me a little longer and the only **bams!** I get would be a pot falling to the floor. Ouch! But I do fry a good turkey that is quite tasty. For those of you who have tasted a fried turkey you know what I'm talking about.

It is often said that timing is everything. Just think, we're coming off of a great holiday season; a season for reflection and now a season for new beginnings. And new beginnings are where we are at Clare Woods Academy. After receiving Board approval for the design of the new school building in November and

with discussion by the Board in December on financing the project, Mike Kelly, Board President, has given the Capital Campaign the approval to move ahead with the first fundraising phase of the campaign— Family Members that include the parents, faculty, staff and board and key donors already identified. This is really great news and I hope you are as excited as I am, along with the Capital Campaign Cabinet Members. We expect to have all marketing material (CD's, brochures, etc.) produced very shortly.

In reaching this milestone, we can begin raising the funds for building the new school. Cabinet Chairs such as Ken Lahner, Larry Tabor and three of your very own: John Anton and the always on point, Holly and Tim Olmstead-Hickey, are ready to launch their fund raising efforts. Watch for great news that will be coming your way.

Any parents or faculty interested in working on the campaign please contact the main office at the school and they will have one of the Cabinet Chairs contact you.

I'm encouraged. But it's not principally the brick and mortar that I'm encouraged by – it's the children who encourage me and seeing the work that the faculty and specialists provide under the direction of Anne Craig. And the more involved I get, the more encouraged I get. Please join me in helping to make this a success**Because Their Dreams Matter.**



Rich Francis
Capital Campaign Chair

EDITORS' COMMENTS

“Because their dreams matter...”

With the new year already upon us, “change” is a key word in the air. The Clare Woods family can anticipate many significant changes such as the upgrade and expansion of the Educational Technology program as well as changes on a larger scale which we hope to realize through the Capital Campaign.

The publication of a newsletter such as this is a daunting task and we are grateful to the CWA staff and key family members for their significant collaboration and contributions.

Comments or questions? Please email us at mmcnerney@blcinc.org.

Editors
Terri Mertz
Moisette McNerney

See How We've Grown...

Technology is an exciting and stimulating tool that promotes learning and social interaction, enabling students to become confident users in the future.

- ◆ Our media center has dedicated software for video, picture and sound editing.
- ◆ Our website continues to grow!
- ◆ A variety of software options enhance our students' learning and enrich classroom curriculum.
- ◆ We offer our students alternatives to traditional books including *Thinking Readers* and *Playaways* in an assortment of titles to encourage interest and support reading comprehension.

A NURTURING ENVIRONMENT THROUGH CHARACTER EDUCATION

By Sr. Margaret Gazdic

Character education helps children learn to think before they act, to understand fundamental differences between right and wrong, and to make good decisions. Character education gives students life skills needed to be good citizens who are productive and successful in today’s society. Character education influences the kind of human beings students become.

Character education in one form or another has always been part of the heart of Clare Woods Academy. In the beginning years, courtesy and manners, along with respect of all individuals, permeated the classrooms, the halls, and the bulletin boards. Each child was accepted no matter what the special need. A focus on the whole child and nurturing environment has continued to exist throughout the history of CWA.

Today’s focus at CWA continues the development of character traits. Character education is the responsibility of everyone in the school building. Each is viewed as a role model for the students. Character education is incorporated into CWA’s core curriculum. For example, the LEAD Behavior Program has as its goal developing respect, responsibility and relationships. Students work to achieve points/rewards based on these traits and how they express them. Thus, character education continues.

During the past four to five years, the follow-

ing were introduced: respect, responsibility, integrity, tolerance, citizenship, compassion, trust, kindness, perseverance, courage, fairness, loyalty, and honesty. Each trait was introduced to the student body by one or two classrooms at an assembly. Ownership projects have included: reading stories illustrating the trait; role playing; creative art projects, posters and murals; making booklets; developing a video during Friday club times; and whole school character activities. Classes paired up to be “classroom buddies” illustrating and modeling the traits being studied. The entire school is engaged in character trait development.

Students “caught” displaying a trait are rewarded. Photos on bulletin boards, recognition over the PA system, and small prizes are examples of the affirmation students receive. Concrete expressions of traits are displayed by the school as each class has participated in collecting food for local pantries, making prayer blankets for soldiers in Iraq, collecting school supplies for children in Iraq, and making more blankets for the elderly in nursing homes.

We at CWA, adults and children, make a focused effort toward creating an environment of respect and nurturing. Character education involves all of us in this process.

“Character education influences the kind of human beings students become. Character education is the responsibility of everyone in the school building. Students ‘caught’ displaying a trait are rewarded.”

Intermediate department students buddy up with primary students for a holiday party. Pictured from left: Colin, Michael, Sean, Miss Joanna, Matthew and Michael.



THE SOUNDS OF CHRISTMAS

By Terri Mertz

The halls of Clare Woods Academy rang with the “sounds of music” in the weeks preceding winter break. The reasons behind this were the preparations for the Christmas Concert, held on December 21st. The entire CWA family, children and adults, participated in some level of activity—ranging from set design to costuming, rehearsals and promotion.

CWA’s musical director, Sue Harig, coordinated the entire effort. When asked what particular challenges she encountered in carrying out this production, she responded that incorporation of instrumentation, sign language and dramatic interpretation was a significant task. So also was the effort of effectively involving every student. According to Sue, an added benefit of this school-wide effort is that “working with multi-age classrooms [provides] a unique opportunity

for creative exchanges among students.”

One week prior to the Christmas concert, the CWA choir presented a joint concert with the Heartland Singers and the Elgin Children’s Chorus. Sue described this event as an opportunity for the choir to perform in a more formal setting, to present an adult audience, and to hear other choral groups. She also saw this as an occasion to showcase the choir’s abilities and as a way to present the school to the community.

Through a great amount of work and dedication, these programs allowed CWA students to explore and stretch their talents. Sue Harig hopefully felt great satisfaction on seeing the beaming faces of the parents and smiles of the students at the close of each performance.



Scenes from the Christmas concert: (clockwise from upper left): Music director Sue Harig; CWA Children’s Choir; Students Gabe Morris (front), Colin Russell (left), and Derrick Francis (right); Choir students perform (from left): Ellen Moess, Colin Russell, Adam Rapacz, Gabe Morris, Sean Rohn, Mike Caplan, and Bobby Walston; Intermediate department students perform *Silver and Gold* (from left): Alex Perez, Santiago Davalos, and Bobby Walston.

CWA AND EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY...OR “CALL FRANK”

By Frank Zito

I started working at Clare Woods four years ago. I remember coming down to the computer lab with the class I had been assigned to. We had ten computers at the back of the computer lab against the outside wall. There was a huge conference table and chairs at the other end. There was no computer network. The only place students had to access computer lab programs was in the lab itself. Thanks to the support of our principal and our board, technology at Clare Woods Academy has come a long way.

As we started to expand our technology, we changed the name of the area that housed the computers to Educational Technology Services (ETS). We wanted people to know that technology at Clare Woods was more than just two computers in a room. It was becoming a part of the daily lives of our students and staff. We are making technology a part of the everyday routine at Clare Woods by expanding its presence in our building.

The computers in ETS are all networked. The benefits of networking include being able to print to multiple printers in the building, network programs, and carefully monitor access to the internet, and provid-

ing back up capabilities. We have spread our network from ETS to OT, the library and two of our high school classrooms.

In addition to expanding our computer network, we have also updated our website. If you have not seen it yet, I encourage you to visit www.blcinc.org. It has been updated with a fresh look and we are continuously working to add new information.

Clare Woods continues to search for new computer programs. Recent additions have included the Intensive Phonics Program, and three new Thinking Reader titles (bringing our total to 6 of 9 titles). Thinking Reader has been such a success with the older students that we are searching for something similar for our younger ones. Thinking Reader is a reading program that displays a book on the computer screen, reads the book aloud for the student and highlights as it reads. Students are required to answer questions at the end of each passage and take quizzes throughout the book. Hints and sample answers help students as they work on the passage questions. Teachers can monitor students' answers and quiz results. We also hope to add to our math selection.

With that bit of background on our technology here at Clare Woods Academy, you may still be wondering what I do. My job, put simply, is to manage all the things you read about in the background section. I am based out of ETS but you will find me all over the building. The biggest part of my day is spent keeping the ETS computers running, having programs ready when classes come down and helping students and staff to use those programs. I also help them if they just need ink for a printer, but it could also be that they need a program installed or something isn't working right. When a monitor goes out, call Frank. If your flash drive which contained all your work for the year suddenly has nothing on it, call Frank. If your internet doesn't work, call Frank. If you need help creating a special project, and your computer won't turn on and your printer says it's jammed but you don't see any paper...well, you get the idea. I do my best to troubleshoot the problems our staff experiences, and when it gets beyond my skills, I am the contact point between CWA and our computer consultants. When I am not helping a class in the lab, or looking into (continued on page 6)

A HOLIDAY LUNCH WITH SPECIAL GUESTS

December festivities included lunch with members of the Illinois Crime Prevention Association. This organization is comprised of individuals who represent different police departments from throughout the northern Illinois district. PTO sponsored and served lunch while students and their guests enjoyed a visit from Santa and sang Christmas carols together.



Above: A special guest;
Right: Room 209B enjoying pizza.



Vocational department students
Lisa Center (left) and Shannon Horn
show off home baked cupcakes.

PARENT EXCHANGE

SHARING GOLDEN NUGGETS

Valuable Information from Parent-to-Parent

By Holly Olmsted-Hickey

I've been described as independent, self-sufficient, organized, dependable...the quintessential "go-to gal who could pick up the ball and run with it" in just about any situation. Yep, that would be me...Holly...before entering the murky world of special needs parenting.

Like all of us parenting our special kids, I hedge. I wait. I stop. I go. I feel like I'm on this ongoing roller coaster and the ride operator is on an extended coffee break. However, I have one trait that continues to serve me well now: asking questions. And I ask **A LOT** of questions. I definitely continue to feel challenged in the areas of organization and dependability these days, but I do feel I've gained a wealth of information – a gold mine, in fact – from sharing information and resources with other parents in this special needs community. I'm pleased to pass along the first of what will hopefully be some "golden nuggets" that you can use as a parent and maybe even pass along to someone else.

Who Is That Knight In Shining Under Armour®?

CWA student Kyle Walis (Primary G-1) is one of those knights. His mother, Robin Walis, has seen some interesting changes in Kyle since adding Under Armour compression sportswear to Kyle's daily school "uniform." "It gives Kyle the proprioceptive feedback his body needs," said Robin. "It helps him better understand where his body is in space and impacts his overall body awareness," she continued.

Educational Technology contd. from page 5

staff computer troubles, I am collecting website content to forward to our web designers. In addition to computer related responsibilities, my job has broadened to include electronics in general. I am proud

Robin has been happy to spread the word about the sensory benefits has seen with Kyle.

As it often happens, some of the most valuable nuggets of information come in the form of small talk with other parents of special needs children. In fact, Kyle's sensory-tackling wardrobe came into conversation with fellow CWA parent Holly Olmsted-Hickey over a chat about football. "My older son Rory wears Under Armour for sports. He suggested I buy Kyle the compression fit because of the way it felt on his own body during a game or practice," Robin told Holly.

Holly was sold and invested in a week's worth of Under Armour for her son Jack Hickey (Primary G-8). Like Kyle, Jack has low overall tone – especially in the trunk region also known as "the core." The Under Armour provided Jack with constant input much as a weighted vest or pressure vest would. As with Kyle, the Under Armour also helped support and stabilize his core resulting in better posture and attention. Using it just during school hours seemed to work out the best for Jack. "It is work for Jack's body to wear Under Armour even though it provides support and stabilization," commented Holly. "He does realize the difference in having it on and off from a sensory standpoint. As parents, we've noticed a difference when it is on and off from a behavior standpoint," she continued.

An additional benefit Robin found in Kyle wearing Under Armour is that his attention is focused less on his clothes and more on the activity in front of him. "Kyle loves to pleat his clothes," said Robin. "An Under Armour shirt fits his form so he cannot play with it, allowing him to concentrate on

to say that we recently updated our sound system with a new sound board, speakers and choir, and wireless microphones. One of the most satisfying parts of my job is to run the sound board during our Christmas show and spring play. It is wonderful to see our students have a chance to shine.

an event or activity, instead of his clothing," she continued.

In addition to short-sleeved shirts, Under Armour also uses the compression weight fabric for sleeveless and long-sleeved shirts as well as short and long leggings. Robin feels that Kyle reacts well to gross motor activities such as climbing when wearing the shorts and pants.

The Under Armour compression material provides constant input to the clothed area. It is moisture-wicking so the child stays dry around the year. For more information about Under Armour, you can visit www.underarmour.com or visit your neighborhood sports apparel store. For additional questions about Under Armour, please contact Robin or Holly at their respective e-mail addresses: Robin Walis tonywalis@comcast.net or Holly Olmsted-Hickey ohickey4@comcast.net.

Under Armour Benefits

Depending on specific needs of the child Under Armour materials may provide help in the following areas:

Proprioceptive: better awareness of where body is in space & general body awareness.

Sensory: better overall sensory calming or awakening.

Attention: better focus and attention to activities or events.

Behavior: better ability to calm and regulate self.

Holly Olmsted-Hickey has Jack's gently used Under Armour compression shirts for purchase at \$10 each in size large. If you are interested, please contact her at 630-435-5845 or ohickey4@comcast.net.

I enjoy the opportunities this job has given me to help our students and staff. This is honestly the toughest and best job I have ever had. I am delighted to be a part of the CWA family.

FROM A PTO PERSPECTIVE

It is amazing how quickly this school year is going, and I am so pleased at how much PTO has accomplished thus far. In October, we held our first Family Fall Festival and Dance. Not only did the students and their families enjoy making crafts, decorating cookies and playing games, but readily bought raffle tickets in hopes to win one of many scarecrows decorated by our talented students and staff. The participation and feedback that we received surpassed all of our expectations.

In December, we sponsored a pizza luncheon for the students in cooperation with the Illinois Crime Prevention Association. The children enjoyed the opportunity to socialize with the police officers as well as participate in a sing-along. The luncheon ended with a visit from Santa Claus himself. The after-

noon was filled with music, joy and laughter.

At the beginning of the school year, PTO presented a challenge to students and staff to collect 2,500 Box Tops by the end of the year. Thanks to an overwhelming response, we surpassed this goal and decided to increase the total to 5,000. As of the end of December, we have collected 2,940 Box Tops.

As we enter the second half of the school year, PTO continues to look for new members and more faces to join us at our monthly meetings. Typically, meetings are held the second Thursday of each month. Some things to look forward to in 2008 are Candy Grams for Valentine's Day and Fannie May candy for our spring fundraiser. We also are continuing to sell CWA Spirit Wear. We have

added new items to our collection including sweatpants that many of our students are already enjoying.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Lourdes Diamond for joining the PTO Board as Treasurer. Lourdes' son Brian is a student in the Vocational Department.

For those families that have joined PTO, sent in Box Tops and have placed orders from Manna, your support is greatly appreciated. We look forward to bringing you and your family many more programs in 2008.

If you have any questions, please contact Patricia Medina at mc2mom@aol.com.

The Clare Woods Academy PTO Board of Directors

Patricia Medina
President

Marianne Vician
Vice President

Sarah Donnelly
Secretary

Lourdes Diamond
Treasurer

The North Stars, a musical trio, delighted the students and staff during a December performance at Clare Woods Academy. Teaching assistant Christie Schroeder, whose uncle is a member of the trio, made arrangements for the show. Pictured from left: acoustic rhythm guitarist Mark Mazzeri, bass guitarist Pete Mazzeri, vocalist and electric lead guitar Rich Schroeder, and Christie Schroeder from Room 102B.



CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

Feb. 1	School Improvement Day— No Classes
Feb. 9	Evening at Pheasant Run Theatre
Feb. 29	Countywide School Improvement Day— No Classes
March 21-31	Spring Holiday
April 24 & 25	Spring Play
June 12	Golf Outing



Intermediate Department students Michael, Scott, and Colin lend some helping hands to do concert set-up in the gym.

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