

New lunches for school district in 2007

By Michaela Kennedy

The Jamestown School Committee has worked diligently in 2007 to address federal and state mandates for public schools, ensuring a safe and top-performing environment for our island's children.

Topping the list of improvements is the school district's revision of its food service nutritional standards, which now exceed the federal requirements. Jamestown is the only district in the state to have eliminated the sale of snack items, high-profit items that help offset the cost of lunch programs but contribute to childhood obesity. Students who want to buy lunch now have only healthy choices. The school committee hired a food vendor willing to work with the district towards implementing healthy goals. The committee

and administration report they are closely monitoring the program. "It's a test year," School Committee Chairwoman Cathy Kaiser said. "We need to determine that the program is financially feasible as well as beneficial for our students."

In August, the committee successfully completed contract negotiations with teachers.

One significant change was a revision in the health care deductible. The adjustment represented a cooperative effort by the two sides to share the burden of the district's health insurance premium increase, a problem that weighs on school districts nation-wide.

Also in August, the committee hired Marcia Lukon as part-time superintendent. Panel members continue to be impressed with Lukon's work. She has not only

addressed personnel and facility details within the Jamestown Schools but has also bolstered relations with North Kingstown High School. One highlight the committee is pleased with is the access to high school student data, which until recently has been a struggle for the district. "She came to us with extensive experience and hit the ground running," Kaiser comments about Lukon.

The committee agreed that another coup for the district was the appointment of Robert Fricklas as special education director. Fricklas has successfully taken over the position vacated by Beth Pinto, who moved on to the Narragansett school system after many years in Jamestown. Parents and staff feared that Pinto's shoes would be hard to fill, but Fricklas quickly displayed his expertise and is now strengthening communication between state offices and the district, and working closely with administration and school support staff.

From a government perspective, Jamestown continued its efforts to be a voice for education at the state house. "I was particularly pleased to have a seat last spring on the statewide committee drafted by the legislature to work on a funding formula, and to serve currently on the legislative commission reviewing mandates," Kaiser said.

No review of the past year would be complete without acknowledging the community's loss with the February death of school committee member Jim Filkins.

"We miss Jim's soft-spoken presence and insightful contributions," Kaiser reflects. The committee showed deep gratitude to David Dolce for completing Jim's term.

The committee wraps up the year with a welcome to B.J. Whitehouse. "We are delighted with the election of B.J. as the school committee's newest member" Kaiser says.

through donations, the sale of T-shirts, and applying for government grants, the faithful and diligent society members raised more than \$135,000 with an additional \$120,000 in a grant from the Rhode Island Department of Transportation. The light itself was made possible by a contribution from an anonymous donor.

Richard Ventrone, Jr., an architect from Newport Collaborative Architects, designed the lighthouse exterior to restore the structure and reflect its historic appearance. Olga Bachilova, director of preservation at NCA worked closely with Keith Lescarbeau, owner of Abcore Restoration, the contracting company awarded the restoration project.

The restoration included interior and exterior repairs, removal of years of guano deposits, replacement of floors and metal work, and the repair of interior stairs. Graffiti and rust stains have been painted over, and the tower now has a white, stucco finish. The pump house next to the tower has also been restored and painted.



Police help local teens

Karen Catlow, right, delivers a \$1,000 donation from the Jamestown Police Officer's Association to Melissa Minto and Bill Piva for the purchase of a television for the Teen Center.

Top ten

Continued from previous page

puter station and quiet area for doing homework and other projects.

DiMauro volunteered the services of his Jamestown architectural firm and worked hard to come up with a design, said Keiser. Input was solicited from the teens, and the Conanicut Community Coalition, the group that originally wrote the grant to start the teen center in Jamestown.

Minto said she had met with folks from the Rhode Island Foundation, who expressed interest in the teen center project and offered some funding.

"I don't know how long it will take," she added, "but I'd like to see it cranked out" by the end of January.

So far, everything is close to schedule, and the grand opening is planned for February. The town praises Minto and all who were involved in the planning, funding, and creation of the long awaited center for teens.

Dutch Island light renovated and lit

A dozen cars and twice as many people lined the shore at Fort Getty on the Jamestown side of Dutch Island on Saturday, Nov. 16. All eyes were focused on the freshly painted Dutch Island Lighthouse tower that was bathed in white light. At approximately 7:18 p.m., a red light blinked 42-feet above ground atop the tower.

A cheer went up from the small crowd. Four seconds later, the light blinked again for two seconds. The light in the 1857 Dutch Island Lighthouse had completed its first cycle in more than 28-years.

"Now it will stay on every night, 24/7, 365 days a year," Dutch Island Lighthouse Society director Scott Chapin said.

After years of fund-raising,



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Amazing Women series goes green

Tune in on Sunday mornings to Jamestown resident Deb Ruggiero's weekly radio show, Amazing Women. On Dec 30, "go green" as Sheila Dormody of Clean Water Action and Sarah Kite, of Rhode Island Resource Recovery Corp. discuss the 3 Rs: reduce, recycle, reuse. On Jan 6, Karen Feldman, founder of a student group called Young Voices that trains young

people to become articulate advocates and community leaders is interviewed along with Kayla Gonzalez, a senior at Central High School who shares her story of how the youth organization has changed her life.

Amazing Women airs Sundays at 8:30 a.m. on 630 WPRO AM, at 6:30 a.m. on 92 Pro FM, and 6 a.m. on Lite Rock 105 FM.

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LEGAL TIP

A defendant's two prior convictions for drunk driving were admissible as evidence on the issue of punitive damages in a personal injury suit stemming from his third DWI conviction, the Arkansas Supreme Court has ruled.

The defendant caused the accident when he pulled out into oncoming traffic from a parking lot and the plaintiff's vehicle collided with his. The responding police officer smelled alcohol on the defendant's breath, and he eventually pleaded guilty to driving while under the influence of alcohol.

The plaintiff alleged not only negligence, but also that the defendant's driving while intoxicated constituted a "reckless disregard for the safety of others... from which malice could be inferred," and sought both compensatory and punitive damages.

The defendant admitted that he was intoxicated at the time of the accident, but at trial his attorney successfully sought to have the evidence of his two prior DWI convictions excluded as irrelevant. The jury declined to award punitive damages.

The plaintiff argued on appeal that the prior convictions were probative of the defendant's habit of driving while intoxicated.

The Arkansas Supreme Court agreed.

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