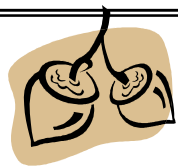


YOUR PARENT TEACHER ORGANIZATION

Mansfield Middle School, 205 Spring Hill Road, Storrs, CT 06268



MMSA NEWS



Volume XIII Issue I

October 2007

From the Principal



Dear Parents,

Thursday, September 29th was a special day at Mansfield Middle School. Mr. Earle Bidwell of the Connecticut Association of Schools and Ms. Judith Abrams of the Connecticut Center for Early Adolescent Educators came to MMS to present the school with the Connecticut Middle School of the Year Award for 2007-2008. In addition to the speeches included here, the ceremony featured student remarks/performances from each grade, remarks by Mansfield Mayor Betsy Paterson, greetings by students in several different languages spoken in students' homes. There were musical performances by several student groups: Fiddlehikers, string ensemble, flute ensemble, celebration drummers, and chamber choir. Finally, there was a presentation of souvenir t-shirts to all students and staff members to commemorate the occasion.

Remarks by Judy Abrams
Connecticut Association of Schools
Middle Level Honors and Awards Committee

Today, September 27, 2007, the CAS Middle Level Honors and Awards Committee presents you with a plaque that tells the world that Mansfield Middle School has earned the title of Middle School of the Year! You impressed our committee with your dedication, compassion, and hard work. You have shown that you do "whatever it takes" for students. You work together as parents, students, teachers and administration. Mansfield Middle School is truly an educational community, welcoming the diverse talents and creativity of everyone involved.

Students we met said, "No matter what type of kid you are, you can fit in here." "Teachers just don't do the minimum, they teach you the academics AND how to be a better person." "The older kids kind of take care of us."

MMS is an exemplary, cutting-edge school. Your students consistently score well on the CT Mastery Tests. This is a testament to your unique team structure that ensures all students receive the same high level of instruction in all content areas.

You are blessed to have exemplary leadership in every level of education that most schools only dream about.
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Upcoming Events

- Columbus Day: Monday, October 8th; No school
- Common Curriculum Day: Tuesday, October 9th; No school
- Board of Education Meeting: Thursday, October 11th
- Photo Day: Monday, October 15th
- American Education Week: October 22nd-26th
- MMS Book Fair: October 22nd-26th
- MMSA Meeting: Tuesday, November 6th, 7pm, RM 99
- Report Cards Issued: Thursday, November 8th
- Common Curriculum Day: Friday, November 9th; No School



**REQUEST FROM THE
PHYSICAL EDUCATION TEAM**



We are looking for anyone who would be willing to donate your old *Playstation 2* or *X-Box* to the Physical Education Team at the Middle School. We would like to expand our use of "**Dance Dance Revolution**" in our Dance curriculum. **DDR** is a great way for your children to exercise and improve their coordination while having fun.

We would appreciate any help you can give us. If you donate a gaming system, **DDR** game and/or a dance pad we will write you thank you note so you can take a tax deduction for your donation. If you are interested in donating, please contact Brenda Bissell or Adam Ramsdell by email.

Thank you, in advance, for your support.

Visit our website at: www.mmsnet.org
Link: *Mansfield Middle School Association*

Remarks by Judy Abrams (continued)

Superintendent Gordon Schimmel and Assistant Superintendent Fred Baruzzi believe in their staff, and support and encourage their initiatives. Under the superb guidance of Principal Jeff Cryan, you have a high degree of teacher leadership within your school community. Your respect for others and your global awareness is pervasive throughout the school. The sense of community was evident in our conversations with parents, students, teachers and administration. We walked your hallways and heard laughter! We saw the artwork on the walls everywhere, and kids were helping each other. We could feel the passion and excitement in the classes, and we believe it's that way all the time, not just because we were visiting! We admire your involvement and strength in the arts, especially with your annual plays that include teachers and parents. In regard to after-school activities, one student commented, "My mom said they never had these kind of choices!"

It says a great deal about a school when the outside community is actively involved in educating its students. Professionals in a variety of fields lend their support, and parents are involved and knowledgeable about the school's programs, its vision and mission.

When outsiders come to MMS, they are impressed to see the pride students take in their school as they help one another, regardless of skills, talents and abilities. The entire school climate is one of support and encouragement for each member. You empower each other to learn not only about academia, but also about life, about becoming a successful member of a community. You learn from each other, and care for one another as a family. You exemplify educating the whole person – mind, body, and soul.

What you accomplish each day is not easy. We appreciate and acknowledge the sacrifices you make for others. It is your dedication that makes your school a success. As William James said, "Spend your life for something that outlasts it." You are making a difference in the lives of many. And the legacy you leave is immeasurable.

It is a great honor and privilege to present you with this award. Thank you for all you do, every day.

WELCOME

MMS will celebrate Middle School Education Week during the week of October 22-26. Parents are welcome to visit classes that week, according to this schedule:

- Monday, 10/22 *Grade 7*
- Tuesday, 10/23 *Grades 5 & 7*
- Wednesday, 10/24 *Grade 5*
- Thursday, 10/25 *Grades 6 & 8*
- Friday, 10/26 *Grades 6 & 8*

We hope you will join us! Watch for a flyer from school about plans for the week.

Mr. Cryan's remarks after receiving the award:

I have two very strong feelings about this award – One is PRIDE -- I am proud to work every day with such talented, creative, energetic and caring adults and with such kind and inquisitive and hard-working students. I hope that you all share my pride in the work that we do here every day – which has now been recognized by the Connecticut Association of Schools with this award.

The other feeling that I have is GRATITUDE. This is a town with a strong tradition of valuing the education of its children. Every year at our closing ceremony for 8th graders, I tell parents that I wish that everyone who works in public education could have the experience of working in a school district that supports education the way that this one does. I am also grateful for the strong tradition of excellence that exists at this school. That was created by many of the former staff members who are in the audience today,

Finally, I am grateful that our work has been recognized by the Connecticut Association of Schools.

We all share in this recognition, and we can all be proud of it. Congratulations, everyone!

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MMSA 2007-2008 **Board Members**

Executive Board

President	Sheryl Lambert	429-3088
Vice-President	Lynne McPhee	456-2450
Secretary	Kathy Ward	456-8258
Treasurer	Lisa Drzewiecki	423-3942

Grade Representatives

Grade 5:	Linda Sydie	
	<i>Are you interested?</i>	
Grade 6:	Shamim Patwa	429-4321
	Anne Wiant-Rudd	429-4469
	Sherri Lee	456-9552
	Cari Vincente	429-2497
	Kim O'Keefe	429-6711
Grade 7:	Diane Briody	429-1585
	Jean Phillips	429-0692
	Therese John	429-4220
	Kate Cox	429-3844
Grade 8:	Charlie Dainton	456-2073
	Sue Kaeser	423-7264
	Doreen Simonsen	456-1871
	Jane Moynihan	429-9225

Teacher Representative:

Wayne Trembly

Administrative Representatives:

Jeff Cryan

Candace Morell

Julie White's remarks on behalf of the faculty and staff at MMS:

Each summer I enjoy the good fortune of participating in a week of backpacking, canoeing, and rock climbing with 16 adolescents on the Appalachian Trail, the Housatonic River, and St. John's ledges. There's nothing more satisfying than watching teenagers face an obstacle they didn't think could be overcome, attempt it, fall down, always get back up, and learn they possess an inner strength they had not yet recognized. If you've ever backpacked before, or spent some time enjoying the beautiful outdoors in any capacity, then you've probably heard about the importance of "leaving no trace." Leave No Trace is the name of an actual organization, but it's also a code some people honor, a code by which they show respect for their environment. The trails, rivers, mountains, fields, and streams of the great outdoors are so precious that it's critical that we humans leave no mark to mar the beauty of nature's glory. During Challenge, we not only "leave no trace," but the students learn it's even more important that we leave every campsite even better than the way they found it. Before leaving we check the ground for signs of our dinners or snacks or gum wrappers, but we also clean up any mess that may have been there prior to our arrival. If someone before us accidentally dropped a gum wrapper, we pick it up. If there's part of a shoelace that fell off someone else's shoe, we put it in our own trash. If another member of our own group drops something from a backpack without knowing it, we are always sure to help out and leave the campsite and trail better than the way we found it.

You might wonder what camping, Challenge, and leaving no trace has to do with our school receiving this award today. I think it has everything to do with our school. Why? Because I think schools serve many purposes: to help students read, write, do math, and solve problems better; to provide opportunities for students to enrich themselves in art, music, drama, and sports; to provide a safe place for children and adolescents to develop social skills during critical years. And I think that ultimately, the most important role a school serves is not for individual students, but for the improvement of our society, our world. Schools should be places that make our world a better place, a better one than the way it started when the children who attend that school were born.

It's magnificent for our school to be honored with this award today. I'm sure when most people hear about any school receiving an award, they must think the school has good programs, decent teachers, a strong curriculum, new technology, high test scores. Yes, we have that and I'm very proud to be a part of it. I'm guessing some people picture a building and think about the way it's run smoothly and efficiently. Yes, we have that too and I'm also proud of that.

But, what I want to emphasize today is that all the programs, the curriculum, the technology, the teachers, and all the "things" in the building are only one portion of a school. Students, I'm talking to you. YOU are the school. What is a school, if it isn't the students who fill it?

I think the real reason we are receiving this award is that Mansfield Middle School's students have continually risen to the challenge, worked hard, stepped forth, and done whatever they can, not only to "leave no trace," but to make this school, this town, this world a better place than the way they found it. Let me give you a few examples.

This past Monday, 90 MMS students stayed after school to welcome guests who traveled very far from their homes to be with us. In the past few years, about 60 students have worked with either Respect Me or Student Council to find ways to make our school a better environment, one in which people feel comfortable and safe. Each year we have well over a hundred students who participate in sports programs at MMS and the rec department has about 870 registrations! This marking period alone, we have 440 (wow! 440!) students who choose to participate in after school activities, all activities that promote thinking, creativity, or social skills. This year we have 380 students who maintain the discipline of practicing their instruments and participate in the music program. Last year, 103 students researched topics for History Day and learned about how the past influences the present, and reflected on how their lives can inform the future. Last year, 135 students participated in *The Wizard of Oz* production.

There's an idea about education that sometimes annoys me. It's the notion that schools are meant to prepare students for "the real world." It makes me wonder, "Well what is this? The fake world?" It bothers me, because I think there's never a more precious moment than now. But when I think about the power of the actions of our students today, I get very excited with the possibilities. This is a school filled with students who care, who want to make the world a better place. They understand that they don't have to wait until they are presidents of a corporation, a group, or the United States to encourage better relationships among people or groups. Instead, they do it right here, right now by joining groups such as Respect Me or Ambassadors Club. They don't wait until they will run environmental advocacy groups or are the directors of Greenpeace, but instead they do it by composting at lunch, joining Roots and Shoots, and picking up trash in the hallways or outside. They don't wait until they are symphony conductors or famous rock stars to make beautiful music; they do it every day in our band, orchestra, or chorus programs. They don't wait until they are wearing white lab coats or sitting in laboratories to solve complex scientific problems, but they do it in classes here.

Remarks by Julie White (continued)

They don't wait until they are sitting at a perfect writing table in a sunlit studio to create poetry or prose that's worthy of being published, they do it every day at MMS.

It's more likely that it will be someone from your generation, not mine, who will find a cure for cancer or AIDS. It's very likely that someone in this room will master economics to reduce poverty or science to reverse the trends of Global Warming. It's likely that your generation, not mine, will find solutions to disagreements among countries that don't include war. And where does it start? Right here, right now. Today. In fact, it has already started. Our students know the value of learning, caring, and responsible thinking. This is why we're receiving an award.

In closing, I want to return to the notion of Challenge and extend a challenge to you. This celebration will end after our barbecue lunch today, and it would be easy for us to rest on our laurels and not strive to do better. Not only that, but next year another school, not MMS, will be the Middle School of the Year. Yet we still have an obligation, a responsibility, to be a part of making the world a better place. As a member of this community, you have tremendous opportunities to learn from your peers and teachers during your years in this school. Of course, you can do this to give yourself a better life and more opportunities down the road. I don't want you to stop there. Instead, ask yourself every day: How am I making this world a better place? It starts with every action, from picking up a piece of trash at lunch to smiling at a new student to greeting your bus driver with a friendly hello.

I know we're just one school, but we're a great school, filled with students who are making this world a better place.

MMS Book Fair October 22nd-26th



You're invited to the MMS Book Fair during American Education Week in the MMS Library! We are open from 7:30—3:00pm, Monday-Thursday and Friday morning. Cash or check only. We'll have a variety of children and adult books available and the ability to order any book you want from the UConn Co-op Bookstore. All proceeds will be used to buy new books for the library.

From the MMSA President

Dear Parents,

Welcome to the first newsletter of the 2007 – 2008 school year. Thank you to Margie Ouimette for coordinating the newsletter. On behalf of the school and *MMSA*, we appreciate your hard work.

If you were not able to attend the Open House or missed the opening remarks, we remind you that as a parent or guardian of a MMS student you are a member of the *MMSA*. We would like you to provide us with your name, phone number and e-mail address and pay a suggested dues donation of \$10.00 which goes back into the school to help fund programs. You are encouraged to give any dollar amount that fits into your family budget. We will put the money to good use within the school.

There were several parents who gave their time that evening to assist in answering questions and selling T-shirts for the school. Many thanks and much appreciation to Lisa Drzewiecki, Lynne McPhee, Kathy Ward, Stacey Fulton, Christina Chin, Diane Briody, Mike Kelly, Sara Zambo, and Tirza Roda for helping at Open House.

We have decided to give our gift wrap fundraiser a "rest" for this year and will be offering a pie fundraiser in its place. The pies we will be selling arrive frozen so prompt pick-up on delivery day is necessary. The pies are restaurant quality and they will arrive in time to be served on Thanksgiving, if you are so inclined. Thanks to Pam Cheney for coordinating this fund raising endeavor.

The annual Book fair that benefits the MMS library will be held during National Education Week on October 22nd-26th. Mark your calendar and come into the library to see the many fantastic books that await you. Big thanks to Stacey Fulton and Natalie Miniutti for co-chairing this event.

We are in need of parents who are willing to be a representative for the 5th grade class. Linda Sydie has agreed to be a representative, thank you Linda. There are three more spots that would be nice to have filled by the November meeting.

Speaking of meetings, with the exception of December and January, there will be a *MMSA* meeting on the first Tuesday of every month at 7:00pm in Room 99. Come and check us out.

We are off to a great start! Congratulations to the staff and students on being chosen the Middle School of the Year for 2007-2008. We have always been proud of the school and believe it to be a wonderful place to learn and grow; now many more folks believe that too. It was great to see the T-shirts commemorating that event on the students and staff; which brings me to the last but not least thank you to Mara Salles and Tina Lambert for folding and organizing all those shirts.

Sincerely,
Sheryl Lambert
MMSA President