

THE LYNN EDUCATOR

A PUBLICATION OF LYNN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Vol. 4, No. 3

Winter 2008

Superwoman: Latham to lead Lynn

Dr. Catherine Latham was chosen superintendent of schools by the Lynn School Committee on Dec. 22. Latham had served as a deputy superintendent under Nick Kostan since 2006.

"I'm pleased and excited and nervous all at once," Latham said, adding that, although becoming a superintendent was not necessarily among her long-term

goals, she is thrilled to serve in that role in her hometown.

"I wouldn't have gone anywhere else," she said. "Those of us who are from Lynn have a love and loyalty for the city. There are great people in the system."

A lifelong Lynn resident and graduate of Lynn English, Latham taught in Peabody before returning to Lynn to

teach at Breed Middle School in 1992. She went on to serve as math department head at Lynn English. From 2002-06, she served as school support specialist, working with leadership teams at each school to write school improvement plans. She was named deputy superintendent in 2006.

Latham's goals are focused on

strengthening parent involvement, data analysis and alternative programs.

A recipient of the Milken Family Foundation Educator Award for excellence in education, Latham holds her bachelor's and master's degrees from Salem State College and a doctorate from the University of Massachusetts Boston.



Dr. Catherine Latham

Nick *had a* knack

Kostan closes book on 38-year career in Lynn

BY JESSICA BENSON

After a 38-year career that has spanned the gamut of jobs in education – teacher, coach, principal, superintendent – Nick Kostan is ready for the next chapter in his life.

Kostan is retiring as superintendent of Lynn Public Schools, effective January 9, the week he turns 60. He took time to reflect on his long career.

"I'm very lucky to have been able to experience a lot of different positions at a lot of different schools," he said.

"It's been very

rewarding."

Kostan began his career as a teacher, and still remembers his first day in the classroom. He chuckles when he recalls how intimidating the experience was for a 22-year-old rookie.

"The first year teaching is always tough," he said.

Kostan moved into an administrative position when he was named vice principal at Breed Middle School. That eventually led to a post as principal at Classical High

School, which he held for seven years.

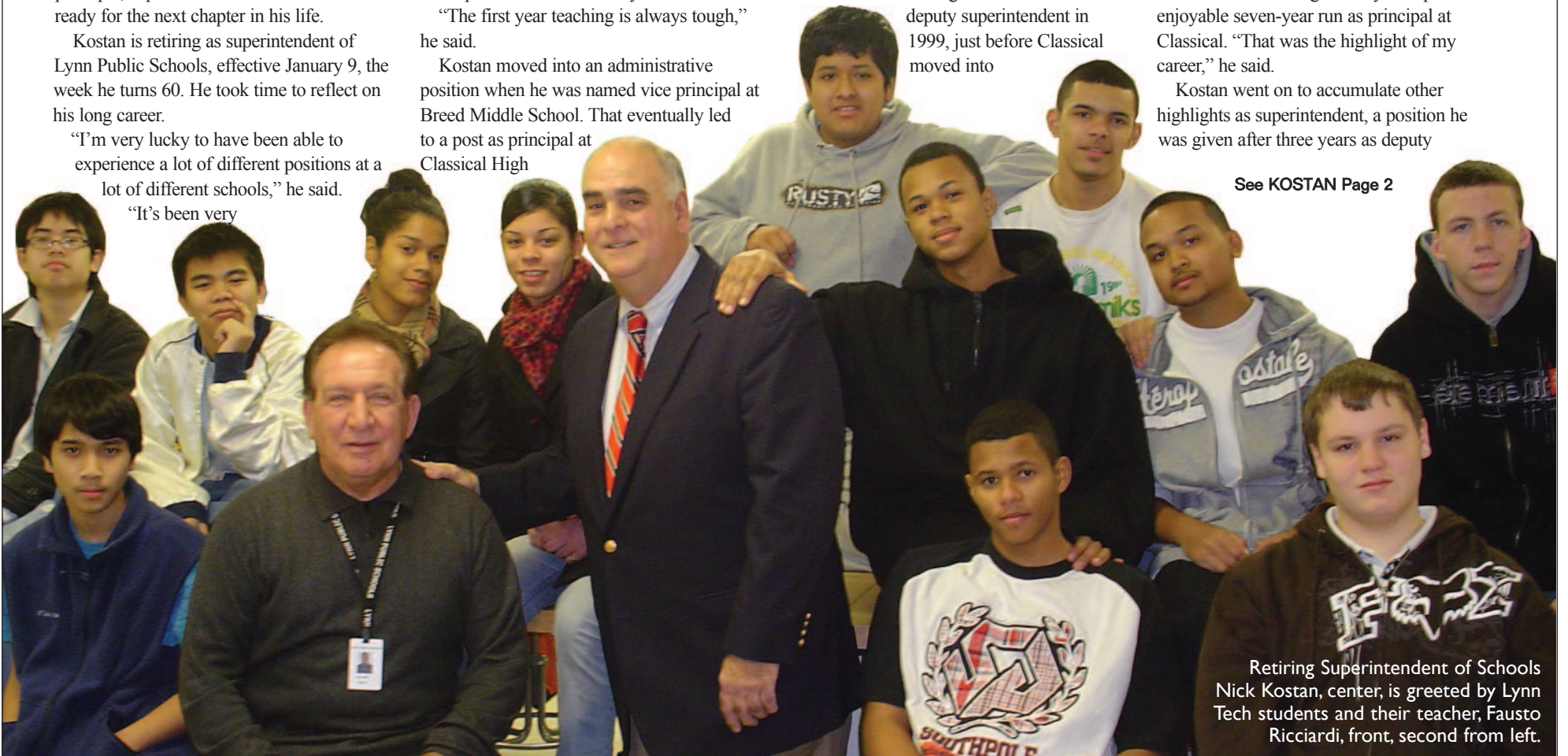
While at Classical, Kostan made improvements in academic achievement and helped plan the construction of the new school building. Kostan was named deputy superintendent in 1999, just before Classical moved into

the new building.

Around the same time, the school was named one of the country's top 100 urban schools by U.S. News and World Report. Kostan said it was a great way to cap an enjoyable seven-year run as principal at Classical. "That was the highlight of my career," he said.

Kostan went on to accumulate other highlights as superintendent, a position he was given after three years as deputy

See KOSTAN Page 2



Retiring Superintendent of Schools Nick Kostan, center, is greeted by Lynn Tech students and their teacher, Fausto Ricciardi, front, second from left.

Inside this edition: If you believe you will achieve — Project Summit, Pages 6-7

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Super's style will be missed



Edward J. Clancy Jr.

For the last seven years, students, teachers, administrators and anyone else associated with Lynn Public Schools have been the beneficiaries of Superintendent Nick Kostan's style: understated, compassionate and focused.

In education, everyone talks about putting students first, which would seem like an obvious mantra. With Nick Kostan, that was a philosophy with which he approached

every decision he made, not only as superintendent, but also in his distinguished career as a teacher and principal.

As Nick prepares to close the book on his storied 38-year career in Lynn Public Schools, I wish him well on behalf of all residents of the City, as well as all those students and families whose lives he impacted in a positive manner.

Lynn students have been fortunate to

have Nick Kostan on their side for the last four decades. The City of Lynn and the school system will no doubt be poorer in his absence. We wish him a long, happy and healthy retirement.

I also wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Edward J. "Chip" Clancy Jr. is mayor of Lynn.

Reflections on a 38-year career in Lynn



Nicholas P. Kostan

It is often difficult to leave behind something that has been a very large part of your life for many years. However, at the beginning of the new year there will be a change in the leadership of the Lynn Public Schools. I have thoroughly enjoyed my 38 years of service in Lynn and wish the system nothing but the very best as we move into a potentially perilous financial period.

Tough budgets have been nothing new to the City's municipal and school leadership teams. However, the extremely difficult national economic outlook presents more challenging times ahead for all school districts in the Commonwealth. During the past few years Lynn Public Schools has attempted to move forward in spite of depleted budgets.

Improved student achievement, the

reinstitution of all-day kindergarten and excellent staff development programs for teachers have contributed to the growth of our district. At the heart of the district are our outstanding and dedicated classroom teachers who provide a caring and supportive learning environment for our students.

We have a diverse group of students who represent many world cultures, with linguistic differences challenging our system. Our goal as a public school district is to educate every student to the best of our ability and to provide the very best education our resources allow.

I strongly believe that the opportunities for our students to be successful and to improve their lives through higher education are validated by the excellence of our schools. Every year students from

Lynn schools are admitted to the finest colleges and universities in the country.

Both English and Classical high schools have been recognized by U.S. News and World Report as outstanding U.S. high schools. Our graduates continue to be successful in the fields of business, education, law and medicine. I have always been a believer in the strength of our schools and I know our schools will become stronger and more vibrant in the future.

Please know that it has been a privilege and an honor to serve as the superintendent of Lynn Public Schools for the past seven years. I wish for nothing but the best for our school system in the years ahead.

Nicholas P. Kostan is superintendent of schools.

Kostan retires after 38 years in LPS

KOSTAN: from Page 1

superintendent. Under his leadership, test scores throughout the district improved, and all-day kindergarten was restored. Kostan is also proud that he was able to maintain extracurricular activities without the user fees that most other schools districts have imposed on students.

"A lot of our kids simply can't afford to pay \$200-\$300 to be in the band or play sports," he explained.

Over the years, Kostan has earned a reputation as someone who genuinely cares about students. When he announced his plans to retire a few months ago, the School Committee gave him a standing ovation, praising his compassion and integrity.

Kostan has offered to help in any way he can with the transition in leadership, noting that the next superintendent will likely be grappling with difficult challenges, including another potential budget crunch. Plus, the district's older

school buildings will be needing improvements in coming years.

Overall, Kostan feels he is leaving the school system in good shape. The building problems at Classical are close to being resolved, and test scores are improving.

"We've made a lot of progress over the last seven years," he said. "It's really time for somebody else to come in with some new ideas."

As for Kostan, he is looking forward to spending time with his family and friends and is hoping to do some reading. Playing more golf is also in his future.

"I just need some time to relax," he said.

After 38 years, Kostan has earned a little downtime. He is proud to have served for 10 years in the central office, when most school superintendents in Massachusetts last less than three years.

As he begins his retirement, Kostan feels good about the work he has done. "It really has been an honor and a privilege to serve as superintendent," he said. "I have no regrets."

PEACE POETS



As part of Anti-Violence Week in Lynn, youth and community leaders gathered at the Ford School to march to City Hall, equipped with signs emphasizing peace and unity. Mayor Edward "Chip" Clancy commenced the peace address with an inspiring message for young people, while representatives from community organizations spoke about the importance of after-school programs and keeping kids off the street. A few youth leaders closed the ceremony with remarks about how they experienced violence. Breed Middle School students April Fana, left, and Manuela Rosa were both recognized for their anti-violence poems.

Welcome to Washington

Students in alternative programs enjoy new surroundings

BY MEGHAN WEBER

This fall, the students of Welcoming Elementary School – an alternative learning program for students in grades 2-6 who struggle with emotional and behavioral challenges – were granted a significant upgrade in their learning environment by relocating from the O’Keefe building on Franklin Street, where the program had been sited since 1996.

Welcoming Elementary School moved to the second floor of the building on Blossom Street that formerly housed the Washington Community Magnet School. The Washington Community building became available last June when the school was closed due to declining enrollment.

According to the school’s educational director, Nancy Takis-Conway, students have benefited from the enhanced learning environment.

“The children have really appreciated the new location,” said Takis-Conway, who is certified as a principal. “They are excited and responsive about having a beautiful building. In addition to other improvements, the classrooms here are at least twice the size as those at O’Keefe.”



Washington Elementary School aide Chris Pedro speaks with sixth-grader Peoko Nawa.

While Welcoming Elementary took the second floor, Connery Annex, an alternative school for pre-K- grade 1 students moved into the first floor of the building. Together, the two schools are known as Washington Elementary school and cater to students with the same needs.

“With this new building we can get more creative and provide more room for students to access the curriculum,” said Takis-Conway. “The benefits of a newly painted, larger, more modern school building have made a difference.”

Washington Elementary’s facilities represent a significant change for its students, who had previously attended classes in a more limited setting without some of the spatial benefits available to students at most traditional elementary schools such as a gym, playground and cafeteria. The new school has two libraries,

elementary schools, such as eating lunch in the cafeteria and going to gym and releasing excess energy,” said Takis-Conway. “With daily access to traditional facilities, our students will be able to reintegrate when they are ready more easily back into the routine and activities of traditional school life.”

With eventual reintegration into traditional grammar school the goal, Washington Elementary School students require some special facilities while they learn coping mechanisms that will allow them to succeed. The school has a new art room for art therapy and a new music room to help students with self-expression. In addition, the school has retrofitted two rooms in the building into “settling rooms” stocked with mats, balls and soft objects, as designated areas where a monitored student can be safe if in an agitated state.

“The staff loves the kids here,” said Takis-Conway. “We all share a commitment to do whatever it takes to make it right for the students and help them grow educationally, behaviorally and emotionally. We work to teach

students the tools they need to succeed and foster their self esteem. When we can achieve that, the kids will want to do well and will persevere when faced with adversity in the future.”

expanded computer labs, a renovated gym, a cafeteria, and an extensive playground newly surfaced with wood chips, courtesy of Girls Inc.

“This new building allows students to mirror the activities of traditional



Washington School teacher Elizabeth Peters and student Matthew Torres in the new music room.



Washington School students James Barber, left and Sheldon Camell enjoy the new playground.

Different approach



Fecteau-Leary High School teacher Rosemarie Thistle works with Steven Murray.

Alternative program getting good results at Fecteau-Leary

BY JESSICA BENSON

These students – nearly 100 of them – were struggling in a traditional classroom setting.

Now, they are thriving, thanks to a simple formula being applied at the new Fecteau-Leary Junior-Senior High School.

The school is using small class sizes, individual attention and hands-on learning to reach these students, who otherwise were having trouble doing well in school.

Just a few months into the new program, Principal Maureen Horgan says she can already see the difference; many students have dramatically improved their attendance. The program is really just a collection of alternative programs, which were discontinued last year and merged into one new school.

“It was several programs coming together into one program,” Horgan said.

Housed in the Fecteau-Leary building on North Common Street, the school opened this fall and currently has 95 students in grades 7-12. Fecteau-Leary Junior-Senior High School is not a special education program, nor is it a vocational school, though students do take shop classes. Courses in culinary arts, painting and decorating, carpentry and graphic design allow students to try out different skills and practice hands-on learning.

The idea is to give students an alternative way of learning when they have trouble in a traditional school.

“Some people are overwhelmed by the size of a high school,” Horgan said. “Kids that have had pretty significant attendance issues

can be referred up here.”

To attend the program, students must express a desire to be in school. The goal is to help students who want to finish high school earn their diplomas.

Teachers also must want to be there; they choose to be assigned to the school, Horgan noted. As a result, the teachers are experienced, know what to expect from alternative education, and have a passion for the work.

“It’s either something you like, or something you don’t like,” Horgan explained.

The teachers are helped along by unusually small class sizes – usually no more than 10 or 12 students per class. This way, teachers are able to get to know students better, and are more in tune with potential problems at home which could threaten their success in the classroom. Fewer students are getting lost in the shuffle as a result.

“You get to know the kids quite well, and what’s going on with them,” Horgan said. “The students become very familiar with their teachers.”

The formula is working so well that Horgan hopes to see it expand in the future.

“I just think it provides kids with a great opportunity to finish their diploma,” she said.



Maureen Horgan

Classical students’ interpreting skills benefit other schools

BY RICH FAHEY

In today’s world, there is a great need for interpreters who can help non-English speakers navigate the worlds of health care, government and education. People who can speak two or even three languages are expected to play an ever-growing role as U.S. trade expands with countries throughout the world.

Because Lynn Classical High has many students who speak a second or third language, students from that school have become sought after for their language skills, including serving as interpreters for open houses at Lynn elementary schools.

They serve as vital links between teachers and parents who are non-English speaking, wearing name tags with the other language they speak.

Tracy School Principal Mary Dill said about

20 Classical students helped out at the school’s open house in October. Classical student Karla Bermudez translated what Dill was saying into Spanish at a meeting about the Title I program, and students later assisted non-English speakers at a meeting of the school council.

When parents went back to the classrooms, each classroom had two student interpreters on duty.

“The students were unbelievable,” said Dill. “For 53 percent of our students, English is not their first language and many of their parents don’t speak English at all.”

Sean Elbousty, chairman of the Foreign

“

For 53 percent of our students, English is not their first language and many of their parents don’t speak English at all.

Principal Mary Dill
Tracy School

Languages Department at Classical High, said he often gets call from principals or other school officials asking for assistance from one of his students. “They are also finding ways to use their skills in the community,” Elbousty said.

Many of Classical’s English as a Second Language (ESL) students are bilingual or in some cases trilingual students who speak a variety of languages,

including Spanish, French, Greek, Creole, Swahili, Persian, Arabic, Khmer, Portuguese, Russian and Vietnamese.

Students have realized the importance of knowing two or more languages.

“Writing in one language can help your

writing in a second language,” said Pollyanna Q. da Silva, who speaks Portuguese and English.

Basant Badr, who speaks Arabic, is helping his parents learn English.

Students participating in the interpreter program and their additional languages include: Pollyanna Q. da Silva (Portuguese); Lovely De Los Santos, Louis Diaz, Nancy Figueroa and Arlene Subero (Spanish and French); Ivanna Solano, Maria Nunez, Jhoselyn Caldamez, Xiomara DeLeon, Keila Severino, Irayda Natos, Jasmin Natos, Karla Bermudez, Louis Cruz, Cesar Castro, Sarai Zelada, Vladimir Genao and Brayan De la Cruz (Spanish); Bria Mazige (Swahili); Daveth Clzeth (Khmer); Basant Badr, Esraa Ahmad, Samur Yousif and Marven Abdah (Arabic).

ALUMNI
PROFILE

On a mission

English alumnus is taking the fight to the enemy in war on terror

BY RICH FAHEY

He's no longer flying a desk. As befitting a former star athlete, he's back where the action is.

Navy Commander Mark "Lumpy" McManus, 40, is in the South Pacific, his mission part of the Global War on Terror.

The Lynn English graduate, a basketball and soccer player at the school and the 1987 winner of an Agganis Foundation Scholarship, graduated from Mass. Maritime Academy in 1991, majoring in nuclear power management. While at Mass. Maritime, he won the award as best military cadet and student-athlete of the year.

He graduated from Mass. Maritime as an ensign in the U.S. Navy, and it has been his career ever since. After leaving Buzzards Bay, he went to flight school in Pensacola, Fla., and eventually began flying helicopters. He has logged 2,500 flight hours in the SH-60F/HH-60H combat helicopter. He has served in both the Bosnian and Iraqi conflicts, helped victims of Hurricane Katrina in the Gulf states and, at the age of only 36, served as director of security for the Asian Games in Qatar. His personal decorations include the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, Navy Commendation Medal and Navy Achievement Medal.

McManus now serves as officer-in-charge of Expeditionary Sea Combat Unit One, a two aircraft HH-60H Seahawk helicopter detachment on the USNS Gunner Sgt. Fred W. Stockham. He is in charge of the day-to-day operation of the two helicopters and commands five other officers and 24 enlisted personnel.

His job is to conduct Expanded Maritime Interdiction Operations (EMIO) in support of the Global War on Terror. In addition to that, his unit can support pretty much any mission you could imagine a helicopter doing in the Pacific Command area of responsibility.



Mark "Lumpy" McManus on his helicopter in the South Pacific.

"Basically we are in the South Pacific supporting the United States and our allies in GWOT issues," he said via e-mail. "Right now, I love my job. I'm flying and I get to help make a difference. Also, for this job, I'm in charge out here, so I get to do things the way I think they should be done."

McManus and wife, Gage, a native of Jacksonville, and their two children, Anna, born Dec. 8, and Mary, 19 months, are based in San Diego. When the mission is over, he expects to be assigned to the Naval War College in Newport, R.I., teaching officers the intricacies of Joint Military Operations and Planning. Earlier in his career, he graduated from the school.

He admitted that being away from his family is hard, especially missing the birth of Anna, and said when he returns to instructing, he will be happy to be able to go home to his family every night.

Mark McManus' father, Art McManus, is the former girls and boys soccer coach at Lynnfield High and the former director of the Agganis All-Star Women's Soccer Classic.

He said he keeps in close contact with his son and knows that he his work often puts him in harm's way.

"As Mark has told me, they do shoot back," Art McManus said.

Mark McManus earned the nickname "Lumpy" from his colleagues at his first squadron, flying HS-3 Trident Antisubmarine Helicopters in Jacksonville, Fla. He took a great amount of ribbing over his alleged lack of "sea time," and a roommate started called him "Lumpy" because he took so many lumps from his squadron mates. When he revealed he didn't like the nickname, that cemented it; it followed him to his next assignment as an instructor in San Diego, where he trained crews on the H-60 helicopter.

"Today there are many pilots and naval officers who do not know that my first name is really Mark," he said. "I'm simply 'Lumpy.' The commodore I work for out here calls me that; I have 4-star admirals who call me 'Lumpy.'"

McManus said he is grateful his wife has allowed him to live his dream of being a pilot. "My wife has been strong through this because she realizes that I'm living my boyhood dream of being a pilot," he said. "She also realizes that my flying days are coming to a close soon, so she doesn't want to stop me from doing what I love to do for the few years I have remaining."

He has 17 years in the Navy and can retire after 20 years. After his service time is over, he isn't sure what he'll do: teach, work at a federal agency such as FEMA, or a civilian firm. His dream job would be to return to Mass. Maritime as commandant of cadets.



Navy Commander Mark McManus, far left, and the Navy SEALs in his group are making a difference.

Art is alive

for Lynn’s talented fifth-graders

By Rich Fahey

Might the next Georgia O’Keeffe, Claude Monet or Vincent van Gogh be living right under our noses?

Could be. If the work of 72 talented fifth-graders from across the city is any indication, there will be an artist or two heard from along the way.

The fifth-graders, part of Lynn Public Schools’ Project Summit for gifted and talented students, have been studying the abstract art of O’Keeffe, French impressionist Monet and van Gogh’s post-impressionism at the Drewicz School in what Project Summit teacher Kathy Ryan calls “Masters in the Making.”

O’Keeffe (1887-1986) was associated with the American Southwest, where she found artistic inspiration, and was chiefly known for paintings in which she synthesized abstraction and representation in paintings of flowers, rocks, shells, animal bones and landscapes.

Monet (1840-1926) was a founder of French Impressionist painting and the most consistent and prolific practitioner of the movement’s philosophy of expressing one’s perceptions before nature, especially as applied to plein-air landscape painting. The term Impressionism is derived from the title of his painting “Impression, Sunrise.”

van Gogh (1853-1890) was a Dutch Post-Impressionist artist. Some of his paintings are among the world’s best known, most popular and expensive works of art. He produced more than 2,000 works,



Stephanie Bryson displays her version of van Gogh’s “Irises.”

including around 900 paintings and 1,100 drawings and sketches, during the last 10 years of his life. Most of his best-known works were produced in the final two years of his life, which were marked by bouts of mental illness that led to his suicide.

The students have been studying the lives of the artists and their styles of painting and, as part of the exercise, have been replicating the styles of the masters in their own ways using acrylics or water colors. “It’s an exercise in both creativity and critical thinking,” said Ryan.

The fruits of their labors – each child

contributed two works to the exhibit – will be on display in the LynnArts’ Children’s Gallery through Jan. 5.

Project Summit students have also been making headlines in other ways. A partnership with the Peabody Essex Museum resulted in the students making three visits, each inspiring a different area of study.

On their first visit, students learned about past trade between Salem and China, part of the museum’s Asian Export Wing. In 1984, the China Trade Museum merged with the Peabody Museum (now the

Peabody Essex Museum) in Salem, giving the museum vast resources in the area.

On a second visit, they explored the Yin Yu Tang House, the Qing dynasty home painstakingly transported from Southeastern China to Salem, a building that was the home of the Hwang family for 200 years. They also visited the Gardner-Pingree Home, built in 1805 by John Gardner during Salem’s most prosperous era.

Students compared and contrasted the homes and lifestyles of the people who lived in those homes with the students’ own lives today. Students kept journals and sketchbooks and designed postcards about the homes.

In their third visit, students viewed the exhibit “To the Ends of the Earth, Painting the Polar Landscape,” a collection of 50 works done by artists-explorers of polar vistas they encountered in the 19th- and early 20th centuries. The works depict the drama and magnificence of setting out to sea in the Arctic and Antarctic regions and are especially poignant today, given the effect climate changes have had on the polar ice caps. Students designed pastel landscapes of some of the things they had seen.

The work of Project Summit students was also featured in the Fun Pages of the Boston Globe on Dec. 21, pages created for kids by kids. The theme of the December edition of the Fun Pages was “Christmas Around the World.”



Project Summit student Nadia Healy works on her paintings.



Kelly Osborne of Marblehead looks at a painting by Ariana Oliveira at LynnArts.



Asia Curtis’ re-creation of van Gogh’s “Starry Starry Night.”



Teacher Kathy Ryan, left, views student artwork with Swampscott teacher Pat Gorham.



Project Summit students traveled to the State House Dec. 15.

Gifted LPS students get political

Young photojournalists from the Project Summit program for gifted and talented fifth-graders celebrated freedom and got a good look at government in action.

Under the direction of teacher Kathy Ryan, the students got out their cameras and entered the Massachusetts Newspapers in Education Council’s second annual Five Freedoms Photojournalism Contest for students in grades 5-8.

Twenty-one Project Summit students sent photographs depicting a freedom of their choosing to the Newspaper in Education program at The Daily Item. Five of the photos, one for each freedom, were put forward to the Massachusetts NIE Council for state judging.

The finalists whose photos were

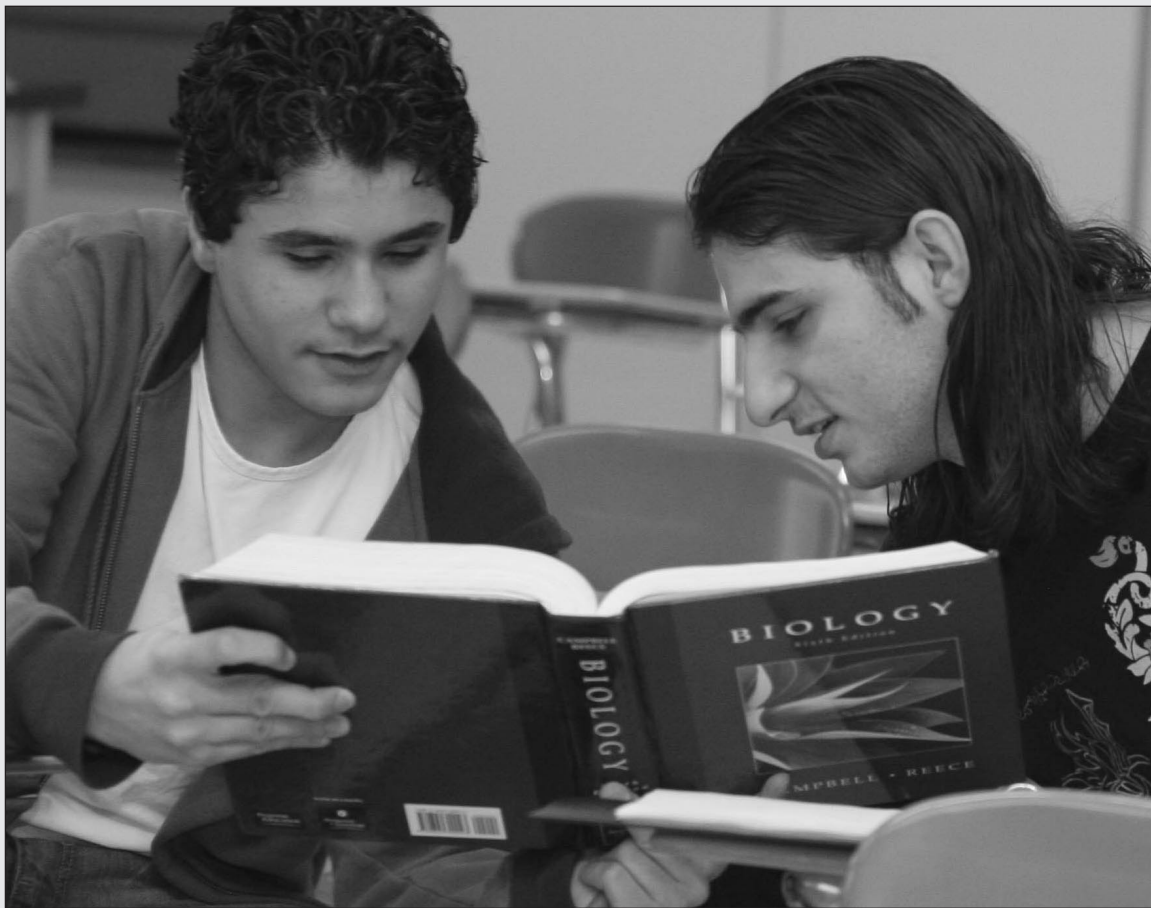
entered in the state competition were Emily Bucklin for “Seeing Is Believing” in the Freedom of Religion category; Ariana Oliveira for “Waving for Freedom” in the Freedom of Speech category; Rachel Fisher for “What’s In the News” in the Freedom of the Press category; Haylee Denham for “Rooted in Strength” in the Freedom of Assembly category; and Betty Louis for “Will You Sign My Petition” in the Freedom of Petition category.

The state winners and local finalists were honored with their teachers and families on Bill of Rights Day, Dec. 15, in the Great Hall of the State House in Boston. Prior to the ceremony, all photos were shown in a streaming slide show.

Other photos entered into the contest by Project Summit students included:

“The Cross of Religion” by Mia Kennedy; “Mi Angelito” by Josue Lemus-Paz; “Vote Obama!” by Nadia Healy; “Put Your Best Foot Forward” by Tayla Mills; “Arise Together in Christ” by Jordan Corbishley; “Singing Praises” by Kelsey McGovern; “Battle of the Balloons” by Casey Kurpiel; “My Toys and I Together” by Krystal Veras; “Just Dance” by Stephanie Bryson; “Waltz Turns” by Kerriann Molea; “Go Obama!” by Patrick Gibb; “Let’s Go Rams!” by Shea Dunnigan; and “Tee Shirt” by Gage McManus. Photos were also submitted by Julianna Rivera, Brandon Baker, and JaNathan Ayala.

The Massachusetts NIE Council originated the photojournalism contest as a way for teachers to observe the federal mandate to celebrate U.S. Constitution Day in their classrooms.



Lynn Classical students Marvin Abdah, left, and Saif Yousif came to the United States from Iraq less than a year ago.

From Iraq to Lynn Classical

Students adjusting well with help of Arabic-speaking teacher

By RICH FAHEY

Once a rarity — even in the mini-United Nations that is Lynn Public Schools — the number of students with Arabic backgrounds is growing steadily. Among those are refugees from the conflict in Iraq.

At Lynn Classical High, three students from Iraq, each of whom has been in the U.S. for a year or less, are adjusting well with the help of a faculty member who speaks Arabic.

Esraa Ahmed, 15, Samur Yousif, 19, and Marvin Abdah, 16, are all natives of Baghdad. Ahmed has been in this country for just a month, Yousif for nine months and Abdah for just over a year. Abdah's brother, Saif, is a student at the ninth-grade Classical Academy; the two arrived in this country a few months apart from a refugee camp in Jordan.

Sean Elbousty, chairman of the Foreign Language Department at Classical, is of Moroccan and French descent and speaks several dialects of Arabic, including that spoken by the three students.

He said language is the first and most obvious barrier the students have faced in adjusting to their new lives. Arabic has 28 letters, compared to the 26 of English, and the language is read from right to left, instead of left to right.

"It's totally, totally different," said Elbousty.

Yousif said making new friends and adjusting to his new home have been difficult.

"The first month was very hard," he said, speaking through Elbousty, who translated for the students.

Abdah said he struggled introducing himself to people, explaining that in the Iraqi culture people are very close and

very welcoming and he felt he couldn't be that way at a new school where he didn't know many people.

Ahmed said she had trouble making herself understood at a hospital, especially when it came to medical terms. Another time, when she left a phone message, she repeated it five times, trying to make sure she was understood.

The students said they are sometimes mistaken for Hispanic-Americans and that people come up to them on the street and start speaking Spanish.

All three students credited the Classical faculty with making the extra effort to explain a concept over and over to overcome the language gap. That and the diversity of the school and the Lynn community have made them feel more at home.

"It helped a lot to hear so many different languages being spoken," said Abdah. "I didn't feel bad about speaking my own language."

As representatives of the Arab community, they feel they have been accepted and have not

experienced a lot of animosity, even when telling people where they are from.

"I'm proud to say I'm from Iraq," said Abdah.

There are about 40 families of Arabic descent living in Lynn, according to Abdah, who said his family was one of the first to arrive in the area.

Judy Taylor, vice principal at the ninth-grade Classical Academy, said both Marvin and Yusuf Abdah did well at the school last year, but Marvin had progressed more in learning English and, having been placed in mainstream classes, he moved on to 10th grade while Yusuf has remained at the academy for another year.

All of the Iraqi students have similar goals: go on to college, get a good job, and contribute to the community.

“It helped a lot to hear so many different languages being spoken. I didn’t feel bad about speaking my own language.”
Marvin Abdah

A world away

Former refugee achieving great things at Classical

By RICH FAHEY

Once a refugee from death and violence and a stranger in a strange land, Lynn Classical High senior Zuruf Musa Tongo, 17, has adapted quite well since he arrived in the United States three years ago.

In fact, Tongo has adjusted to his new country so well that on Dec. 8 he won the Lynn Lions Club speech contest, speaking on the theme "How Modern Media Affects Us." He advances to a regional competition in Woburn in January. Tim Cullinane, an English teacher at Classical, was one of several teachers who have helped coach him.

For someone who came to this country knowing only a smattering of English and who has worked his way through ESL classes to the point where all of his classes — except for one — are completely in English, it is an impressive achievement.

Tongo is a native of the Sudan but also spent seven years in Ethiopia before coming to the U.S. Both countries have experienced internal strife. Ethnic and tribal conflicts in Darfur in the Sudan began in 2003, and there has been resistance to international attempts to stop the killings. There has been a protracted civil war in Ethiopia, although it has not attracted the international attention Sudan has.

Tongo entered the U.S. as a refugee but has since gained permanent residency. His goal is to become a U.S. citizen as quickly as possible.

"I miss my home countries — both of them," said Tongo. "After I graduate from high school I would like to visit Ethiopia. But I have been told I cannot visit the Sudan until I am a U.S. citizen."

He tries to keep tabs on what is happening in both the Sudan and Ethiopia via CNN, the Internet and the BBC's worldwide service.

"I understand I have a good life here now and that other people are miserable and need help," he said. "When I was living in the refugee camps, we talked often about what a great country, a rich country the United States is and of someday going there."

Tongo's brother, Joseph, graduated from Classical last year. They are living here with a stepmother and a half-brother. Joseph attends North Shore Community College. Their parents, Musa and Miel Tongo, also spent time in Ethiopia but have since been repatriated to the Sudan; other family members are still in Ethiopia.

Zuruf is a member of the Sudanese People Liberation Society in Boston. He was elected vice president, but has since taken a lesser post because vice president would have required too much time.

Julie Cushing, chairperson of the English as a Second Language program at Classical, said both Zuruf and his brother are "remarkable young men."

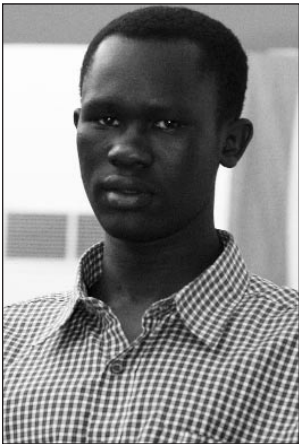
Cushing said when it came to English, Zuruf "learned very fast, he really did."

Both brothers read the book, "A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier," Ishmael Beah's harrowing story of his experience as a child soldier from Sierra Leone, and said the book spoke to them, since both had similar experiences while in Africa.

"This is what it was like in my country," Cushing said the brothers told her. "They've gone through war and displacement."

Zuruf enjoys studying American government and history, chemistry, politics, and psychology. He would like to attend college and has been speaking with teachers and other students about possible choices.

He said his father was very pleased and excited when he told him about winning the speech contest. "He dreams about me entering politics or becoming a doctor," Zuruf said. "In college, I think I would like to run for the student government."



Zuruf Musa Tongo



Andy Fila has been principal at Lynn English since 2000.

No-nonsense guy says goodbye

After leading English turnaround, veteran principal Fila to retire

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

Almost 50 years ago, Andy Fila walked out of Lynn English High School, equipped with a diploma and dreams of playing hockey at Boston University. In August, Fila will exit the building one last time, as he concludes his 10-year reign as principal.

"I have the best job in the city," said Fila. "The next person who takes over for me will find that out."

Fila assumed leadership of English during the 1999-2000 school year, in the midst of school construction. He immediately set out to change the culture of the school and expectation levels of students.

"I believe in discipline," said Fila, a 1959 English graduate. "That was a focal point when I came here. No tolerance, no nonsense; it works. If you have a safe school and an environment where kids feel comfortable coming to class each day, they'll do well."

Recent academic achievements by English students reveal that Fila's methodology is working. For the second straight year, English has been selected by U.S. News & World Report as one top

public high schools in the country, "performing better than statistically expected for the average student in the state." English was also named a Commonwealth Compass School in 2007 — a designation designed to recognize, celebrate and support significant and continuous improvement in public schools across Massachusetts.

"Our test scores are the best in the country and we were named one of the best high schools two years in a row," said Fila. "There's a lot of great progress. It's a good feeling when you put hard work into something and it shows."

In 2008, 97 percent of the class of 2010 passed the English Language Arts portion of the MCAS exam and 95 percent passed the

mathematics portion. Since 2004, the percentage of students passing the MCAS has risen by 18 points in ELA and 15 points in math. Fila attributes the success to the teamwork among students and staff and the commitment to education and supplementary programs such as the Retired Teachers MCAS Program.

Prior to coming to English, Fila served as principal at Eastern Junior High School, now Marshall Middle School. He began his career at the junior high as a teacher in 1967 and went on to become assistant principal in 1972 and principal in 1981.

"If you don't like kids, this isn't the business for you," said Fila. "I've had more than 40,000 in the 42 years I've been doing this."

During the early part of his career, Fila also served as an assistant coach of football and hockey at English, as well as hockey and baseball at BU. He coached hockey at BU from 1967-81, working with three national championship teams. A highlight for him was attending the 1980 Winter Olympics and watching the U.S. hockey team, which included four BU players, win the gold medal.



Every year Andy Fila takes his current and former secretaries out to lunch to say thank you.

SCHOOL LYNN DIRECTORY

Elementary schools

Aborn

Anne Graul, Principal
409 Eastern Ave., Lynn, MA 01902
(781) 477-7320

Brickett

Debra Ruggiero, Principal
123 Lewis St., Lynn, MA 01902
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Julia F. Callahan

Edward Turmenne, Principal
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(781) 477-7340

Cobbet

Brian Fay, Principal
40 Franklin St., Lynn, MA 01902
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William P. Connery

Patricia Riley, Principal
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Drewicz

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Robert L. Ford

Claire Crane, Principal
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E. J. Harrington

Michael Molnar, Principal
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Hood

Joseph Cole, Principal
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Ingalls

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Lincoln-Thomson

Helen Mihos, Principal
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Lynn Woods

Ellen Fritz, Principal
31 Trevett Ave, Lynn, MA 01904
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Sewell-Anderson

Patricia A. Mallett, Principal
25 Ontario St., Lynn, MA 01905
(781) 477-7444

Capt William G. Shoemaker

Linda Mann, Principal
26 Regina Road, Lynn, MA 01904
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Edward A. Sisson

Jane Franklin, Principal
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Tracy

Mary Dill, Principal
35 Walnut St., Lynn, MA 01905
(781) 477-7466

Washington

Nancy Takis-Conway, Principal
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(781) 477-7401

Middle schools

Breed

Fred Dupuis, Principal
90 O'Callaghan Way, Lynn, MA 01905
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Thurgood Marshall

Richard Cowdell, Principal
19 Porter St. Lynn, MA 01902
(781) 477-7360

Pickering

Robert Murphy, Principal
70 Conomo Ave, Lynn, MA 01904
(781) 477-7440

High schools/Alternative

Lynn Classical

Warren White, Principal
235 O'Callaghan Way, Lynn, MA 01905
(781) 477-7404

Lynn English

Andrew Fila, Principal
50 Goodridge Street, Lynn, MA 01902
(781) 477-7366

Lynn Vocational Technical Institute

James Ridley, Director
80 Neptune Blvd, Lynn, MA 01902
(781) 477-7420

Fecteau-Leary Junior-Senior High

Maureen Horgan, Principal
33 North Common St. Lynn, MA 01902
(781) 268-3000

LEEP Evening Program

Karen Twomey, Director
50 Goodridge St., Lynn, MA 01902
(781) 477-7361



Aborn School Principal Anne Graul, left, joins Lynn Woods Principal Ellen Fritz and students Cameron Greenleaf and Jesse Anderson in the Lynn Woods School library.

Lynn Woods and Aborn receive grant to expand school libraries

BY MEGHAN WEBER

Thanks to a mini-grant from by the Peter and Elizabeth C. Tower Foundation, the student libraries at Lynn Woods and Aborn elementary schools are about to expand. Winning the grant indicates significant progress in an ongoing effort by Lynn Woods Principal Ellen Fritz and Aborn Principal Anne Graul to enhance the quality and array of books available to their students.

“It is always very rewarding to set a goal and accomplish it,” said Fritz, an 18-year Lynn Public Schools veteran currently in her second year at Lynn Woods. “Naturally, Anne and I are thrilled about the grant and the benefits it will bring to Lynn Woods and Aborn students.”

The \$15,000 grant from the Getzville, N.Y.-based foundation will be divided evenly between Lynn Woods and Aborn for the purpose of purchasing new, high-quality, age-appropriate, non-fiction books to update each school’s library.

“We want to cultivate a love of reading now, so our children grow up to be young adults who love reading and learning,” said Fritz, who credited Lynn Woods faculty and parents such as Dianna Fisher, parent volunteer organizer, for the library improvement effort.

“

We want to cultivate a love of reading now, so our children grow up to be young adults who love reading and learning.

Principal Ellen Fritz
Lynn Woods

After a suggestion and input from Lynn Public Schools Executive Director of Curriculum Susan Rowe, Fritz and Graul applied for the book-specific grant in 2008 on behalf of both schools as a means of improving the quality and range of books available to their students.

Fritz and Graul met with school librarian Barbara Camann to provide counsel on identifying quality books that could sustain significant use and add a new dimension to learning.

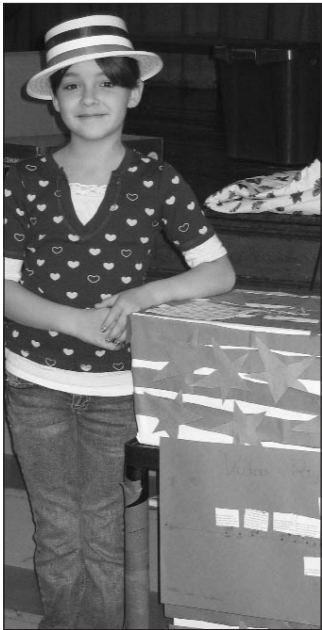
“The books are well-known and

of the best quality,” said Graul. “They will integrate perfectly with classroom work, and will enhance the learning process for students, bringing topics alive.”

Prior to any book selections, the two principals also consulted the Massachusetts State Frameworks to ensure that all books selected for purchase aligned with grade-level state standards.

“The new books will provide students with an educational advantage,” said Fritz. “Much of the MCAS includes questions on literature passages in Language Arts, Science and Social Studies. Naturally, the more experiences students have answering this type of question, the more comfortable they will be taking the MCAS and the better they will do on them.”

CIVIC DUTY



Lincoln-Thomson students, including fourth-grader, Bryanna Gigas, held a mock election in November. President-elect Barack Obama defeated John McCain, 198-47.

Miracle man

Heart transplant gives Melanson new lease on life

By RICH FAHEY

It is a story about friendship and family, the power of love and the gift of life.

The generosity of a family suffering the loss of a loved one has given Al Melanson a new lease on life.

On June 17, 2008, Melanson underwent a heart transplant at Brigham & Women's Hospital in Boston. The donor was Michael T. Neves, the 22-year-old nephew of Pam Laramie, a kindergarten teacher at Lynn Woods School and a colleague of Melanson's wife, Nancy, a fourth-grade teacher at Lynn Woods.

Melanson continues to recover at home, on leave this season as coach of the Lynn Jets, the co-op high school hockey team that features players from all three Lynn public high schools. The Jets just missed qualifying for the MIAA tournament last year in the team's first year of existence, with players from English and Classical.

Joe Conlon has taken over as interim coach, assisted by former Beverly head coach Mike Deering, Ron Gaudet and Joe Gunning.

Melanson speaks to the coaches often and is optimistic about the season, which opened with a 6-1 win over Latin Academy. He hopes to be able to return next year.

Melanson, 62, has logged 32 years as a hockey coach, including stints at Lynn Tech, English (twice),

Newburyport and Masconomet, before taking over the Jets last year. He is also a retired Massachusetts State Trooper.

Melanson said coaching the Jets last year was a positive experience. The English locker room was repainted in neutral colors to make all the players

feel comfortable. The 25 players who turned out played a varsity and JV schedule; 32 players came out this season with the addition of skaters from Tech, allowing for full varsity and JV teams.

That Melanson is even around to talk hockey is a bit of a medical miracle. He suffered a heart attack in Maine on Feb. 10, 2008, with no warning. He was in full cardiac arrest while being taken to Maine Medical Center in Portland. After being revived and stabilized, doctors found his heart so weakened that a pump was inserted into the left ventricle, requiring a restructuring of the area around his heart.

Patients aren't supposed to spend more than 60 minutes on a heart-lung machine; Melanson spent more than 300 minutes on the machine. There was some damage to his eyesight, likely the result of lack of blood being pumped to the area. He is recovering the lost vision slowly but surely.

He spent six weeks at Maine Medical Center, but he was almost never alone. His wife lived there during that time and their three

children — A.J., Paul and Lauren — were also there much of the time. Former North Shore Spirit owner Nick Lopardo, for whom Melanson worked for several years, spent a week there while Melanson was in critical condition. There were hundreds of get-well cards and e-

mails, as well as visits from troopers, hockey players, and Lynn friends such as Superintendent Nick Kostan, English Principal Andy Fila, Athletic Director Gary Molea and Classical Athletic Director Bill Devin.

On April 1, Melanson was



Al Melanson with his wife, Nancy, left, and Pam Laramie, whose nephew was the donor of his transplanted heart.

transferred to Youville Hospital in Cambridge where he spent a month. He was in desperate need of a transplant and he was on the list to receive one. Then came the call.

Laramie's 22-year-old nephew was in a tragic accident and had been kept alive on life support. On June 16, Melanson got the call to go to Brigham and Women's and the operation was done the next morning.

It was first thought the pump would have to remain in his body while he was transitioning to the new heart, but the new heart "jump-started" all by itself and immediately assumed a regular beat, and the pump was no longer needed. He spent 13 days in the hospital, with a few small complications, before coming home to recuperate.

Laramie said she and her family

had known about Melanson's condition. She said the decision to donate organs is a very personal one. "Many people in my family have made the choice to be organ donors and I have it marked on my license," she said.

Neves, the donor, loved the Celtics, Red Sox, and the Patriots; he and his two sisters lived with their grandmother from the time he was three, and he was very close to his aunt Pam and his cousins.

When he was on life support, the New England Organ Bank inquired about the possibility of organ donation. In the end, he helped not only Melanson, but his left kidney went to a 36-year-old man on dialysis for many years; an 18-year-old young man received his right kidney; a six-year-old boy suffering from renal

failure has the liver; a segment of his liver was also transplanted into a 60-year-old woman. His corneas have restored sight to two women, one in Maine and one in California.

Laramie said she feels her nephew "absolutely lives on" because of the transplant and that she feels good about the family's decision every time she sees Nancy Melanson.

Al Melanson said the experience has changed him in many ways. "I have a greater respect for life and what's really important, such as friendship," he said.

His thoughts often turn to the heart that beats strongly within him. "They say I'm the miracle man because I survived all this," he said. "The miracle man was the individual who gave me the heart. I was the recipient of the miracle."

“
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I was the recipient of
the miracle.
Al Melanson

Tech support

Officer Cash is a valuable resource at Lynn Tech

By MEAGHAN CASEY

School resource officers play a unique role in Lynn Public Schools, uniting the district and the Lynn Police Department in a shared vision of advancing the city's youth.

The SRO positions were created six years ago, through funding from an ongoing federal Community Oriented Policing grant. Jennifer Cash, school resource officer at Lynn Vocational Technical High School, was one of the original officers to be hired full-time in the district. She works directly with the LPD and LPS in developing security policies and intervention programs at the high school.

"The focus is on preventing problems," she said. "I don't want to be a security guard, reacting to a situation. I want to get to know these kids and help them contribute to this school, contribute to their home life and contribute to society. It's rewarding watching kids succeed when they leave here."

To be successful, Cash has adopted a proactive approach.

"You have to listen to what's going on, and use every resource in the school — the hall monitors, kids, teachers and administrators," she said. "Once I get wind of something, even if it's just a rumor, I go right to that person to check it out."

“

I want to get to know these kids and help them contribute to this school, contribute to their home life and contribute to society.

Officer Jennifer Cash

Born and raised in Lynn, Cash attended Tracy Elementary School, St. Pius School and St. Mary's High School. A soccer and softball standout, she graduated from St. Mary's in 1990 and went on to earn her degree in sociology from the University of New Hampshire, where she also minored in criminal

justice and psychology. She joined the LPD nearly 12 years ago and worked as a patrol officer for six years. When the opportunity arose to work in the schools, she readily accepted. "I always wanted to work with kids and help them make better choices and decisions," she said. "The challenge is getting them to leave their street lives out of school."

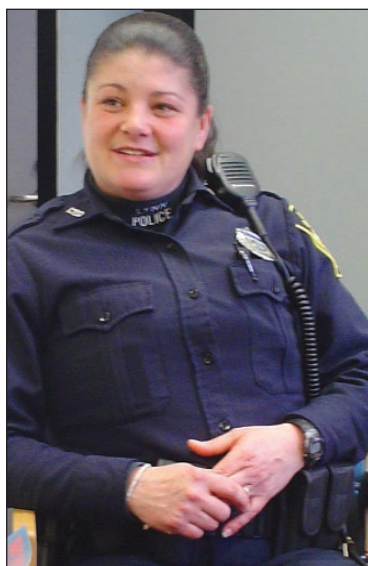
School Resource Officer Jennifer Cash enjoys interacting with Lynn Tech students, such as sophomore Klaus Alexis.

In her first year as an SRO, Cash was stationed at the former Fecteau-Leary Middle School, and later at Cobbett K-8. She is in her third year at Lynn Tech.

"Some of these seniors were in middle school when I started six years ago, so I've already built relationships with them," she said. "I've gotten to know so many kids,

and the majority will pass me in the halls and wave or say hello. There are many days with nothing but positive interactions with the students. Those are my favorite days."

In addition to Cash, there are school resource officers stationed at Lynn Classical and English high schools, as well as Marshall and Breed middle schools. Through another partnership between the public schools and police department, Lynn was also the recipient of a \$100,000 federal Secure Our Schools grant in 2004. The district used the grant funding to make physical security improvements, such as replacing exterior doors and upgrading locks.



Jennifer Cash takes a proactive approach in dealing with students.

