

# THE MALDEN EDUCATOR

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## FORESTDALE FANATICS

Forestdale School students Jake Skiffington, left, and Shannon Hodgkins celebrate during the Red Sox home opener party at the school. PHOTOS: REBA SALDANHA

## Smith seen as super selection for Malden

BY PAUL HALLORAN

The search committee charged with finding a replacement for Superintendent Dr. Joan Connolly was assisted by the New England School Development Council. Little did both of those groups know that the real recruiting had been done a few years ago.

Sidney W. Smith, who was chosen on May 7 by the Malden School Committee to become the next superintendent, explains:

"I was in the DOE (Dept. of Education) building in Malden with my youngest daughter, Maya, who was working on her (teacher) certification," said Smith, who has served as director of curriculum and instructional practices in Boston Public Schools since 1995. "As we were walking out of the building, I saw this incredible art exhibit, and there were photos and bios of the (Malden High) kids who did the



Sidney Smith

See SUPERINTENDENT Page 6

## INSIDE

### SUPER FAREWELL

Dr. Connolly reflects on 37-year career in education

Page 2



### HIGHLY PRODUCTIVE

Hewlett-Packard grant adds technology at Ferryway

Page 3

### MALDEN MODEL

Malden shows an increase in student achievement

Page 6



## Posse leads Malden students to college

BY COURTNEY DEVEAU

When asked why he had dropped out of college, a young man from New York City explained that he would have made it if he could have taken "his posse" with him.

Nearly 20 years since that statement was uttered, the Posse Foundation has taken that ideal to heart to ensure that urban youths thrive and prosper in a collegiate setting.

This fall, nine students from Malden High will be attending college with the benefit of a Posse Foundation scholarship. They are: Tom Carlson, Denison University; Dana Quigley, Hamilton College; Alan Ye, Bucknell University; Saed Hamidzade, Bucknell; Carl

Dor, Bucknell; Cynthia Lin, Bryn Mawr College; Gina Cesar, Union College; Isade Salcedo, Union; and Saghar Hamidzade, Union.

The assistance from the Posse Foundation extends beyond financial issues. The foundation will not only send these nine deserving students to college, but it will also do its best to ensure their happiness and success throughout the next four years of their lives and beyond.

The Posse Foundation selects young leaders from inner-city schools and assembles them in the multicultural "posses" that will serve as

See POSSE Page 6

At left, Posse Scholarship recipients, from top to bottom, left to right, Carl Dor, Sa-ed Sepher Hamidazde, Alan Ye, Cynthia Lin, Thomas Carlson, Dana Quigley, Saghar Hamidzade, Cina Cesar, and Isade Salcedo.

# Malden enters an important transition



**RICHARD C. HOWARD**

Over the next several months, the Malden Public Schools will undergo an important transformation in its front office as Superintendent Joan Connolly retires from her position and her successor assumes the role as the leader of our school system.

The position of business manager will also change as Tom Rose has left our system after years of dedicated service and Irene Oliver of South Hadley, Mass., will join the front office as business manager.

Joan's departure comes with much trepidation because she has been so successful at embedding in the Malden Public Schools community the notion that everything the system does should revolve around student achievement and the maximization of teacher performance. From the day she arrived, Joan delivered a consistent message; namely, that students in cities like Malden are the future of our communities and our country and their successful participation in our society and in a worldwide economy is the cornerstone to our democracy. Joan has taught us that only by setting high standards and showing these great students that they can excel, can we be sure we are preparing them for this challenge.

We will miss Joan's dedication, optimism and personality and we wish her an enjoyable and productive retirement. We certainly hope she finds a way to be part of the future of the Malden Public Schools as well.

Joan, from all of us at the School Committee, thank you for everything.

*Richard C. Howard is the mayor of Malden.*

## THE MALDEN EDUCATOR

### City of Malden

Richard C. Howard, Mayor

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# Achieving goals and looking ahead



**DR. JOAN CONNOLLY**

As you read this issue of *The Malden Educator* our teachers and students are heading into their final weeks of the 2006-2007 school year.

The month of May is filled with the intensity of MCAS testing, finishing up the important teaching and learning goals of the year and making plans for summer programs and the next school year which comes so very quickly.

By this time most of our Malden High School seniors have made their plans for life beyond the Malden Public Schools. As a school community we are very proud that members of the class of 2007 have been accepted to some of the finest colleges in the country and are already the recipients of thousands of dollars of scholarship money. Others are joining the military or are entering the world of work.

The 2007 Blue and Gold Gallery had its opening night at 350 Main St. on April 10 where the outstanding art work of MHS students was displayed for the public to view

and purchase. The spring sports season is underway and the bands and choruses of schools across the city are preparing for their spring concerts.

Against this backdrop of high student achievement we also face the challenges of raising the achievement of all of our students, many of whom come from families who struggle with poverty and other difficult and complicated issues. Some of these families have come from poor and war-torn countries where employment opportunities are limited or nonexistent. They have come to this country for the same reasons and with the same hope that my grandparents came almost 100 years ago. Unlike my grandparents, however, often their first language is not English, and learning to communicate is the first of many hurdles that they and their children must overcome.

Enter the Malden Public Schools. Our teachers accept and embrace our new arrivals and face the huge challenges associated with both teaching them to communicate in English and to score at a passing rate in both English Language Arts and Mathematics after they have been here in our classrooms

for only a year. This is a challenge that is both daunting and expensive. We need to continue to both inform and educate our elected officials at the federal, state and local levels about the need for increased funding for urban schools. There is no way that one can successfully argue that the cost of educating a child from a middle-income family whose first language is English is the same as the cost of educating a child from a poor family who speaks a first language other than English and who most likely encounters other difficulties associated with economic struggle.

Please work with us to support our teachers, administrators and elected officials in the work that we do together to educate each and every one of our students to the high levels that they must achieve in order to be fully productive members of the democratic way of living that we all value and cherish. Absent a system of high quality public education, our democracy as we know it will die.

*Dr. Joan Connolly is superintendent of schools.*

# Dr. Connolly reflects on 37 years

BY RICH FAHEY

It may be 37 years since she first stepped into a classroom, but Superintendent of Schools Dr. Joan Connolly will tell you that it's gone by in the blink of an eye.

Connolly will retire on June 30, ending seven years as Malden superintendent. She is proud of what she and her staff, teachers and students have accomplished during that time, while acknowledging the frustrations common to the head of any urban school district.

If there is one thing she has learned during her career that rises above all others, it is the importance of mentoring when it comes to developing young teachers.

"At every stage, there were people who took a risk on me to give me the chance to move into another position," she said. "It's important to get that critical feedback on your performance."

As a large number of teachers have retired and continue to retire in the coming years, she worries that younger teachers won't have the mentors she did.

Connolly's road to Malden actually began in neighboring Somerville, where she worked with youth, beginning a 15-year teaching career in Salem, where she was a guidance counselor, middle school assistant principal and principal. She was a middle-school principal in Lincoln and Gloucester before moving on to Winthrop, where she was assistant superintendent from 1994-96, and superintendent from 1996-2000.

Connolly paid tribute to her predecessor in Malden: "Dr. George Holland brought this school system through Proposition 2½ and the recession of the late 1980s to the biggest school building project in the state."

By the time Connolly arrived on the scene, there were five new school buildings in place, with plans for an Early Learning Center and renovations to Malden High. With the facilities issue out of the way, Connolly said she was free to pursue curriculum and instructional issues and she believes the district has made great progress.

For Connolly and others who run urban school districts, the biggest challenge has been moving student achievement forward in an

environment of limited resources. She has seen both positives and negatives in the MCAS; she approves of its goal to promote high levels of understanding that might not be possible in the absences of high-stakes testing, but sees real inequities in making urban districts meet yearly progress goals while dealing with challenges such as a high rate of transience.

She believes the change to the K-8 configuration has worked well.

A graduate of Norwood High and Emmanuel College, Connolly also did graduate work at Boston University's School of Theology before going on to earn master's degrees in guidance and counseling and administration at Salem State College. She earned a doctorate from the University of Massachusetts in educational leadership and, from 1985-2001, taught at the graduate school level at Salem State.

Connolly's husband, Charles Costello, her "best friend and strongest supporter," is a wetlands biologist. Daughter Meghan Holtz is a teacher in Salem, while son-in-law Peter Holtz teaches in Ipswich. They have 8-year-old twin daughters, Eliza Jane and Madeleine Joan, who are second-graders at the Bowditch School in Salem.



Superintendent Dr. Joan Connolly visits with student Terrance Moore.

# Ferryway goes digital with HP grant



Students Kachi Choi, left, and Andjy Germain work with teacher Robert Simpson on computers obtained through a grant from HP.

BY COURTNEY DEVEAU

Pens and pencils are fading into the past at the Ferryway School. The tech-savvy students matriculating at this elementary school are taking with them a technology-based education that is due in large part to Hewlett-Packard.

In 2006, Ferryway – a math, science and technology magnet school – was awarded the HP Technology for Teaching Leadership grant with an electronics awards package worth more than \$56,000. The grant is designed to improve student achievement through the innovative use of technology in the classroom, and the team at Ferryway has made great strides in implementing such an important initiative.

Last summer, the Ferryway teachers made a trek to San Diego to make a presentation to HP. The Ferryway representatives backed up their proposal with data from the Saugus Iron Works Great Adventure, a program that had been developed to give students an opportunity to research how Colonial-era people first used water to power America's first successful iron works. This district-wide unit was at the heart of Ferryway's quest for technological support.

While students gain an appreciation for Colonial life and insight into the history of the world outside their doors, they also emerge from this unit with increased MCAS scores.

"Our data research shows that kids working on this unit do better on MCAS," said Ferryway principal Thomas DeVito. "The data is there; these Ferryway students who have completed this unit are doing better on science and technology than other fifth-graders."

The value of such a widespread project was not lost on the people at HP, and the Ferryway team was rewarded for its coast-to-coast trip, as it was one of just 15 schools selected from more than 130 applicants.

The HP award included a traveling technology cart containing 15 tablet PCs, an HP digital camera and an HP digital projector. With the cart setup, it's easy to bring technology to every classroom at the school.

In an increasingly digital age, the computer experience that these students are receiving at such an early age is immeasurable. The usage has extended beyond the Iron Works project and has permeated from math and science classes to more creative applications.

"We're teaching eight-year-olds how to use the computer for research," said DeVito. "They've used the computers in their presentation and projects, in their creative writing. A lot of these things you just can't do with a pen and pencil."

All of these skills have aided the Ferryway students when it comes time to take the MCAS. "It all correlates to what they're going to need to succeed," said DeVito.

Students are not the only ones HP is helping to succeed with its grants, as the company is also aiming to reach educators to show them how to best implement technology into their teaching.

Teams of educators participate in a mentor-development program led by HP partner the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE).

Ferryway will be reaching out to HP again this summer, hoping to gain more technical assistance from the company.

# Teachers learn from teachers at Beebe School

BY BILL BROTHERTON

Martie Vatalaro remembers attending a teachers' conference where the speaker was telling everyone how to be better at their job. "So, I'm sitting there, and this woman's talking about her credentials, how she taught French or something for five years. I looked around and there are all these incredible educators with 20, 25, 30 years of experience. So, I thought to myself, 'OK, you were a teacher for five years and you chose not to be with the children. You have five years of experience in the classroom. We have, like, 500 years. What's wrong with this picture?'"

Then and there, Vatalaro decided that teachers sharing ideas and discussing their experiences made much more sense.

Her principal — and former sister-in-law — Susan Vatalaro agreed. So the Beebe School eighth-grade teacher and the innovative principal organized a Teaching Writing workshop for and by teachers.

About 25 teachers attended that first workshop. Martie handed out a stack of students' papers — the kids' names were whited-out — and participants spent a day exploring ways to improve both the youngsters' writing and their teaching methods. When the fruitful day ended, Martie said everyone stood and applauded.

"It was one of the best workshops ever," said Susan Vatalaro. "And it makes so much sense. Our teachers work together every day. We all work with the same kids." Martie added, "Teachers still come up to me all the time and say, 'I tried this. It worked great.'"

"There is no greater resource than the teachers in this school, sharing their knowledge and talking about what works and what doesn't work. They do it every day," Susan said. "You sort of get a picture of what you want the kids to do in their journey from kindergarten to Grade 8 in your school. You can set a benchmark you want the kids to reach and what to do if they don't reach that level."

The principal believes that developing a sense of teamwork and community has helped both the Beebe faculty and its student body. "We see each other every day in the corridor," she said. "The kids I taught last year, you are teaching this year. We understand. The connection is there. We know where our school is going and what we are doing for our kids."

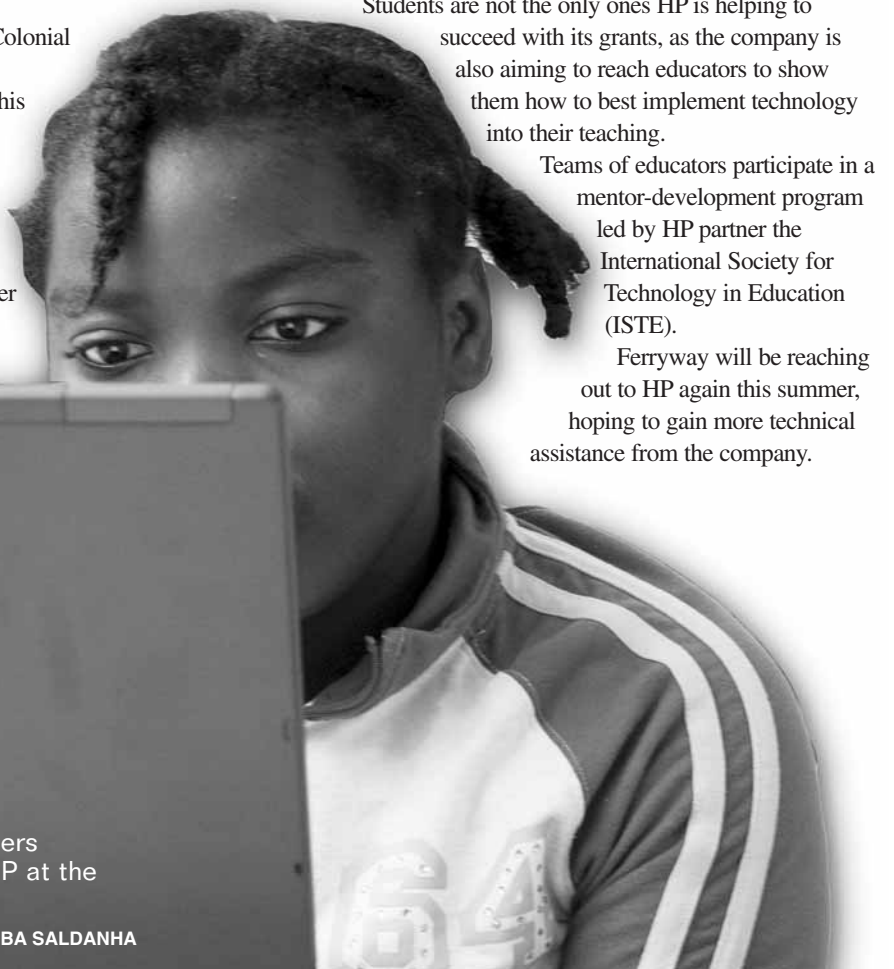
Thanks to MCAS, Martie says writing skills have never been more important. Every test has a writing component, not just the English test but math and science. She laments that MCAS guidelines have taken some of the creative writing out of the process: "We write about literature a lot, because that's what the state wants us to do."

Martie sees a link between reading and writing. She has about 1,500 books in her classroom and lets the kids choose what they want to read. If the first 20 pages don't knock their socks off, they select another book.

"We still have anchor books," she said. "We're all reading 'Romeo and Juliet' now and I want to get to Anne Frank. But I find the kids are much more involved if they read a book they like ... their writing improves, too."



Martie Vatalaro



Chrisell Dutrevil works on computers purchased through a grant from HP at the Ferryway School.

PHOTOS: REBA SALDANHA

# BEFORE...and AFTER



Above, Lilly Kelley enjoys milk during the jumpstart breakfast at the Beebe School. Right, Linden School after-school program counselor Kellie-anne Lawler plays a game with children.



Linden School after-school program participants stretch with dance teacher Caroline Walsh. Pictured from left are Mo Nguyn, Diana Tran, Quianna Long, Iara Santana, and Jada Deandrade.



Linden School after school program participants, from left, Paul Pacheco, Ashvin Nair, Kim Nguyen, Thanh Le, Jeff Blanc, and teacher Nick Potenza make stop motion puppets.

## Morning and afternoon programs benefit students and parents

BY COURTNEY DEVEAU

For many Malden students, the school day extends much longer than that of their classmates. While that could be a nightmare for these children, the Malden branch of the Partnership of Community Schools has strived to create an enjoyable and stimulating atmosphere that keeps these kids excited about school.

Malden parents with early workdays know that their children will be taken care of before the normal school days get underway. The before-school programs offered at every Malden K-8 school, focuses on nutrition and health. Children in the before-school program spend two mornings a week in the gym, and three mornings in the classroom learning about health and nutrition.

Nearly 100 children participate in the before-school program. The program costs from \$3.50-\$4.00 a day for parents, but the cost is small compared to the benefits.

"It helps alleviate parents' worry," said program director Karen Steele. "It's a safe place to leave

their kids before school, where they can get a good breakfast and get ready to go on a full stomach."

While the program makes parents' lives easier, it also helps their children to start the day. Healthy life lessons are key, but these students reap more than just nutritional benefits from the program.

"It helps them organize themselves for the day. School becomes a place for them to feel comfortable and to become part of a community," Steele said.

While the before-school program focuses on getting kids ready to face their day, there are a number of after-school programs that offer them an educational and fun way to unwind at the end of the day. These programs cost just \$12-14 per day and serve more than 375 children in Malden.

One of the most popular programs, A-Z University, combines academic enrichment with recreation for kids in grades K-5. The program stresses math problem solving, reading and written communication.

In addition to A-Z University, students can also take classes on Values and Manners and Women in History as well as less conventional offerings such as a Scrumptious Chocolate course that highlights history and math lessons pertaining to the sweet treat, or a Games class that examines the purpose and math behind the game.

The after-school program is broken into three sessions, and there is a one large-scale event each session: a citywide spelling bee, choral presentation and talent show.

While the younger kids are content with spelling bees and chocolate stories, pleasing middle schoolers can prove to be more difficult. What better way to appeal to this challenging demographic than with a program based on TV?

The Channel Surfing program runs Monday-Thursday from 2:15 to 5 p.m. at Beebe, Ferrywood, Forrestdale and Linden and costs just \$10. The program takes its cue from television, offering a "CSI" class in forensics, a Mythbusters science course, a Shabby Chic knitting course and an

ESPN sports class. There is also MCAS tutoring available in remediation, math and reading.

While the other schools are taking a television-based approach to learning, the Salemwood School has teamed up with the Citizens schools program for their after-school offerings. The program, which was developed in Boston and replicated throughout the country, teams students up with local business owners and exposes them to the world outside their school.

Students in the Citizens program have developed small businesses, created their own comic books, opened a school store and much more. They've also seen the practical application of their schoolwork with college tours.

"To see even these local colleges, it's exposing them to a world outside of Malden and giving them something to look forward to," said Steele.

To find out more about any of Malden's before school and after school programs, contact PCSM at 781-397-7320.



Alex Marossian and Marley Mendoza enjoy breakfast at the Beebe School.

PHOTOS: REBA SALDANHA

# FAME support leads to SMART students

By RICH FAHEY

Partnerships between the schools and members of the community at large are one of the most important ways a system can lift all students. And the stronger a city's school system and the higher the educational level of its residents, the better place it will be to do business.

The Foundation for the Advancement of Malden Education, Inc. (FAME) has joined other community groups in supporting the Adopt-a-Classroom program that provides additional resources for Malden Public Schools teachers and students. The program is also supported by the Malden Education Association and the Malden Chamber of Commerce.

To date, 25 classrooms have been adopted and FAME's goal is to have 25 more adopted during 2007, according to Paula Neville of FAME, Inc. The idea of the program is to give every student access to an equal education, using resources outside of the school budget.

Those participating in the program already include: Cataldo Ambulance; Comcast; Arthur Epstein; Richard C. Howard; Malden Kiwanis; Diane Lind; Marie & Greg Lucey; Bill Mini, N.E. Coffee Company, Rucci, Bardaro & Barrett; Ruderman Family Foundation; Salem Five Charitable Foundation; and the Zonta Club.

FAME has also boosted the math curriculum at Malden High School with the purchase of state-of-the-art

technology designed to stimulate learning and develop and improve math skills.

A donation of \$36,000 from FAME enabled the school to purchase RM Frameworks software and interactive SMART board technology for math classrooms. The technology incorporates a variety of teaching and learning strategies, engaging students with diverse learning styles by providing both immediate access to a wide range of digital materials and a common focus for the entire class.

Donations to FAME, Inc. are tax-deductible. For more information call 1-877-324-3263, visit [www.maldenfame.org](http://www.maldenfame.org), or e-mail [pneville@cityofmalden.org](mailto:pneville@cityofmalden.org).



Melchi Noel works on a SMART board at Malden High School.

## Malden model: kids first

By BILL BROTHERTON

When Dr. Joan Connolly arrived as superintendent of Malden schools in 2000, the city's education system was facing a number of challenges. Teachers were preparing to strike and the urban district of 6,300 students had scored in the bottom 10 percentile on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System tests for years.

Thanks to an innovative program that puts the kids ahead of everything else, teachers and administrators are working together to improve all aspects of K-12 students' academic life. Buying into the Urban District Improvement Model as championed by Teachers 21 has been successful. Five years later, the future is bright for the children — and educators — in Malden.

Dr. Connolly was determined to improve the relationship between the city and the Malden Education Association, the union that represents teachers. Gerry Ruane, union president, and his executive board had long fought for teachers to have more say in setting an agenda for improving student achievement. Dr. Connolly, the School Committee and Mayor Richard C. Howard agreed this was a rare opportunity to change long-established practices.

In an application for a grant from the Rennie Center, which promotes improved public education in the commonwealth, participants wrote that "There is a growing understanding in our district that an adversarial relationship between administration and union is nonproductive and flies in the face of everything that we are trying to accomplish in our schools."

All participants in Malden embraced Teachers 21's approach for improving school culture and its 10 common goals, which include: ensure that the district's diverse student body is reflected in its curriculum, staff, communication styles and teaching; develop a district-wide strategic plan; strengthen school committee/superintendent partnership in shaping the agenda; strengthen union/management partnership in collaborating on the agenda; begin open, honest communication; coach school and district leaders; and begin a career ladder for teachers.

The main mission: "to attract, support and retain quality teachers who have the knowledge, skills and attitudes that ensure a high quality education for the children on the Malden Public Schools."

Now, with the teachers union a full and equal partner in change that is happening.

Yes, Malden has achieved much in five short years.

## Smith seen as super selection for Malden

SUPERINTENDENT: from page 1

work. It was great, a very diverse group. I said to my daughter, 'I could really enjoy working in a place like this.'

And so when Smith was contacted by NESDEC's Jim Walsh — who had unsuccessfully tried to get him to apply for other superintendent's jobs in the past — and was told the Malden position was open, this time he said yes.

After the School Committee voted 8-1 to offer the job to Smith, it authorized Mayor and School Committee Chair Richard C. Howard and school counsel Howard Greenspan to negotiate a contract. "We are working on a contract and hopefully we can get the ink dry very soon," Smith said the day after being selected.

The School Committee also named Irene Oliver business manager. She served in the same capacity for the Pioneer Valley Regional School District in Western Mass. Oliver replaces Tom Rose, who retired. Paula Neville has been filling the role in the interim.

Smith has worked in Boston Public Schools for the last 23 years, with the exception of 1992-95, when he worked at Brown University as director of the Coalition of Essential Schools' Atlas Communities Project, a national school restructuring effort. Prior to that he served as headmaster at

Boston English High School for eight years, director of alternative programs for three years, and as a teacher for seven years.

The mayor said Smith's extensive experience in an urban district more than offset his lack of superintendent experience. "He came equipped with significant strategies centered around data compilation and curriculum and instruction," Howard said. "He was part of a good team in Boston that moved the system forward."

A Duke graduate with a master's from UMass Amherst, Smith said that what attracted him to Malden — in addition to the aforementioned masterpieces — was its diversity in the areas of income, culture and race. He was also impressed with some of the initiatives Connolly has put in place and what she told him about the climate in the school system and the city.

"Joan had some good things to say about the mayor and the School Committee and the good relationship with the teachers' union," Smith said. "All those things added up to a big 'Wow!' moment for me."

A Roslindale resident, Smith and his wife, Gloria, have five daughters: Maya, a teacher in Boston, Sandra Miner, Sarah Medel, Lauren Miner and Valencia Miner.

## Posse leads students to college

POSSE: from page 1

their support system as they navigate the unfamiliar world of college.

Candidates for the Posse Scholarship must first undergo a thorough selection process before they are awarded a scholarship. Students must be nominated by a principal, teacher or guidance counselor. There are three major interviews that are designed to gauge far more than just academic ability. Students must also show their leadership capability and demonstrate a desire to meet challenges and persevere through them. The entire process takes

four months and less than 10 percent of applicants are finally rewarded with a scholarship.

The abundance of Malden recipients is a testament not only to the Class of 2007, but also to the entire Malden High School community. Prior to 2007, the largest number of Malden students selected for Posse Scholarships was six.

"Obviously this year we are very proud," said Malden High School Principal Dana Brown. "I think it speaks not only to these students but also to the level of support and guidance they get."

These nine Malden students, like

many others throughout the country, will begin their participation in the Posse Foundation program long before they first set foot on their college campus. The support system starts just weeks after students are selected for the scholarship. They begin meeting weekly in the months leading up to college. Although these students have already been singled out for their leadership capabilities the training is designed to help nourish this tendency and to help them develop their voice. The training sessions cover four core tendencies: teamwork, leadership, cross-cultural dialogue and academic skill building.

# Principal's lesson plan: plans are made to be broken

BY RICH FAHEY

The reality check for first-year principals usually comes early. Plans are made to have a teachers' meeting, observe a new teacher at work, or get involved in issues involving curriculum. Then there are students and teachers having problems, or parents with issues to discuss. Soon the best-laid plans of mice, men and rookie principals have to be pushed to the back burner to take care of the current crisis.

"You can't predict or plan on when there'll be a problem," said Sally Orme, nine months into her first year as principal at the Forestdale School. "The greatest of plans and intentions can be hard to follow."

And so much of the work gets pushed to later in the day, often long after students have gone home.

"It's stressful at times, but I love it," said Orme, who came to Malden from the Cambridge schools. "The teachers and parents have been very supportive."

Orme had only a few months as an assistant principal in Cambridge to prepare her for her new post, so a lot has been new to her, not the least of which is the city she now works in. "Getting to know the community and the people you work with is the most important thing," she said.



Sally Orme and kindergarten student Vianna Jimenez.

As a new person coming in from the outside, Orme said it takes time to gain the trust of staff and teachers, and as a result she has tried to be patient and realistic about changes she wants to put in place.

"Teachers have legitimate concerns when they are asked to do things in new ways," she said.

Teachers and staff also want to see how she responds in tough situations. "I have to take the time to earn their trust and keep their trust," she said.

Students at the Forestdale have been busy. Students and staff in the school's Puentes (Bridges) bilingual program, which emphasizes learning a second language for both English speaking and non-English speaking students, recently participated in a conference organized by two groups, MABE (Mass. Association for Bilingual Education) and the Mass. Association of Teachers of Speakers of Other Languages (MATSOL).

Orme said the conference was a good way to allow staff and parents to do long-term planning, get the latest research on two-way language programs, and discover ways to prepare the 100 students in the program for the state assessment tests.

"It was a great opportunity for the staff to get together and put together a three-year plan to strengthen the program," Orme said.

In late April, the Salemwood PTO, led by parent Karen Buck, hosted a weekend of Earth Day activities. On April 27, the Al Gore documentary about global warming, "An Inconvenient Truth," was presented at the school along with another movie suitable for younger students.

On April 28, the local Stop & Shop supermarket used special Earth Day bags decorated by the students.

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From left, Police Sgt. Dave Franzese, Linden School 5-8 Principal Camille Colantuoni, Malden School Committee member Judi Bucci, Linden K-4 Principal Diane Buttimer, Karen Steele, and School Committee member Greg Lucey.

## Task force examines youth behavior

BY RICH FAHEY

Parents, police, teachers and even the average citizen all have a stake in the health and safety of Malden students. If those students engage in unhealthy behavior — be it drugs or alcohol or gang-related activities — it has an effect on the quality of life of all Malden residents.

A new task force funded by a state grant is examining and discussing the behavior of city youth and devising strategies. The city has set up the Youth Intervention and Opportunity Task Force, a partnership among schools, parents, police and residents, co-chaired by School Committee member Judy Bucci and Detective J.P. Kelly of the Police Department.

Funded by the Shannon Community Safety Initiative, an \$11 million state grant program, the task force recently hosted a series of parent information nights at city schools.

The need for such a group was reinforced by a confidential survey of 1,459 students in Grades 5-8 set up by the schools last year to study risky student behavior.

In the study of students:

- 34 percent reported drinking alcohol at least once;
- 24 percent have smoked at least once;
- 11 percent reported using marijuana;
- 21 percent carry a weapon such as a knife, gun or club;
- 52 percent have been in a fight, with 94 students requiring medical attention;
- 19 percent seriously considered killing themselves;
- 19 percent had intercourse at least once;
- 36 percent said their parents have not discussed these issues with them.

School Committee member Greg Lucey, who had a son participate in the survey, said at first that he thought the questions asked were a little graphic for kids that age. Seeing the results, though, helped "take the blinders off" when it came to looking to the issues involved.

Lucey and Bucci both said the issues involved revolve more around home life than the schools. One of the most pressing concerns for many parents

is the Internet forum MySpace.

Bucci, who first became involved as part of Police Chief Ken Coye's strategic planning initiative, said the task force has two goals: prevention and education. She praised the commitment from the Police Department and the schools, including principals such as Diane Buttimer and Camille Colantuoni at the Linden School.

Colantuoni and Buttimer recently held a parent information night at the Linden on Internet Safety and MySpace. Another meeting at the school included Kelly and an expert on gangs from the state Department of Youth Services, who told parents what to look for.

"In the middle school ages, we see a lot of gang 'wannabes' who can go either way," said Colantuoni, who oversees grades 5-8 at the Linden. Even younger students can pick up on some of the symbols, such as bandanas or the hand signals being used by older brothers.

"It's eye-opening about how much some of these little kids know about these things," said Buttimer, in charge of grades K-4 at the Linden.

# SPORTS

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# FIRST RESPONDER

## Athletic trainer plans to share tricks of the trade with Malden students

BY RICH FAHEY

Training future trainers may be part of the health curriculum at Malden High School, beginning this fall. Students may be able to get a taste of what it means to be an athletic trainer while also earning academic credit.

Jen Sturtevant, 28, is an employee of Hallmark Health, under contract as an athletic trainer for the Malden Public Schools' athletic programs. She would like to instruct Malden High students in some of the basics of her job, both to allow them to get a taste of the field to see if it's something they would want to study in college, and also to serve as her eyes and ears when she can't be everywhere at once. She oversees all Malden High athletes and is the first responder when an athlete suffers an injury.

The program is slated to begin in the fall as part of the high school's health curriculum, after all the legalities are worked out. Basic first aid and CPR instruction are also expected to be part of the program, and Sturtevant is working to get students involved earning credit and points towards the letterman's jacket worn by student-athletes.

"Sometimes, there are two or three events happening at once at different fields, and I'm on call for all of them," she said.

Ideally, trained students could administer basic first aid in the case of a minor wound, for instance, and let her know where she is needed by cell phone. Sturtevant said she would also hope she can teach students basic taping techniques, along with the basics of physiology and

anatomy.

Sturtevant said even though she is small in stature, she is an experienced athlete who has played volleyball, basketball and softball and still plays softball competitively, and that she quickly earned the respect of both male and female athletes.

"I think once kids see that you know what you're doing, there's no problems," she said.

Just as many women as men, if not more, are becoming athletic trainers. In fact, 40 percent of the members of the National Athletic Trainers Association are women, and the NATA reports that more than half of those certified in recent years have been women.

Athletic training is a four-year degree program at schools that offer it. Candidates study anatomy, exercise physiology, different therapies and treatments and the administrative aspect of the profession. Prospective trainers undergo internships at high schools and clinics. Athletic trainers must pass a national certification test, and trainers in Massachusetts must be both certified and licensed.

Some school systems have tried to get by with part-time trainers. "Sometimes, they just don't have the money," said Sturtevant, a native of Falmouth who attended Salem State College. "That's where parents may enter the picture. They want to know their kids are safe."

Malden High School athletic trainer Jen Sturtevant tapes an ankle.  
PHOTO: REBA SALDANHA



SAVE THE DATE: MALDEN HIGH'S 150TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION IS OCT. 5-7, 2007