

## Class acts

Pigeon and Lozefski receive recognition

By SEAN LEONARD

Egg drops, building a space station or shooting soda bottle rockets are a few of the activities that make learning science a blast for students in Diloreto Elementary School teacher Matthew Lozefski's class.

And Lozefski's engaging, hands-on approach to teaching is the reason he was recognized by the Connecticut

Science Teachers Association at its awards luncheon.

Lozefski, finishing his eighth year of teaching in the district, was nominated for the honor by Tom Menditto, technology director for New Britain schools.

"His enthusiasm for the subject is what really makes him stand out," Menditto said. "He approaches his lessons with a lot of vigor

See TEACHERS Page 10

Keith Pigeon, left, and Matthew Lozefski are award-winning teachers.



## SMITH MAKES THE TOP 10



Jayden Torres, a kindergartner at Smith School, reads a book he wrote and illustrated. Smith was named one of the 10 most improved schools in Connecticut. PHOTO: REBA SALDANHA

Page 3

## HALS spotlights excellence

By SEAN LEONARD

In an urban school district with a high percentage of economically-disadvantaged students, the most gifted students can sometimes be overlooked.

Six years ago, to prevent that from happening in New Britain schools, Superintendent Dr. Doris J. Kurtz created the House of Arts, Letters and Sciences (HALS) to challenge the best of the best at the middle school level.

HALS began as a satellite program at Pulaski Middle School, where it was housed for three years, and last year the program moved to the former Mary Immaculate High School. Next year, the program plans to move to the former St. Francis of Assisi School on Pendleton Road.

"You have to be invited to attend HALS," said

See HALS Page 10



HALS students Oumou Sylla, left, and Yaryna Hrynyukh work during study hall.

Three New Britain elementary schools receive Magna Award: Page 5



# Celebrating excellence in New Britain



**Dr. Doris J. Kurtz**

The theme of this year's issue of *The New Britain Educator* is Celebrating Excellence. There is much to celebrate. The district staff and students have won awards and other competitive recognitions in record numbers.

Across the state and the country, New Britain students and staff have represented our school district and community with pride and honor. Their recognitions span spectrum of academics, sports, vocational education, music, art, and extracurricular activities across all grade levels and all schools.

This issue highlights some of the outstanding achievements earned by staff and students this year. There are many others. The Consolidated School District of New Britain family and New Britain community salute the accomplishments of all students and staff.

*Dr. Doris J. Kurtz is Superintendent of Schools in New Britain.*



**Mayor Timothy T. Stewart**

One of our most important concerns in the City of New Britain is the quality of education that we provide to our children. That is why it is essential that we all work together to ensure that we are providing the best educational services that we can.

For the past four years, I have worked closely with Superintendent Dr. Doris Kurtz and members of the Board of Education on

## Teamwork leads to better schools

issues facing our city's schools.

During the past year, we worked promptly and effectively to address the issue of school safety. A successful joint forum was held where parents, students and teachers aired their concerns. As a result, security has been enhanced throughout our school system and children and teachers are safer and more secure through such measures as additional school resource officers.

In addition, effective teamwork has moved the high school expansion and the alternative behavior center projects along in a timely and efficient manner. Once completed,

issues of overcrowding at the high school and middle and high school behavioral issues will be greatly alleviated and our outstanding faculty members will be able to concentrate their efforts on teaching rather than worrying about safety and crowded classrooms.

As I have throughout my term as mayor, I remain committed to working with the Board of Education and Dr. Kurtz to assure all New Britain residents that our children will receive the best education we can provide.

*Timothy T. Stewart is mayor of New Britain.*

## Students exhibit success in many ways



**Peter Kochol**

*"With regard to excellence, it is not enough to know, but we must try to have it and use it."* — Aristotle

One of the great pleasures derived from service on the New Britain Board of Education is sharing in the many ways New Britain students exhibit excellence. In my 12 years on the school board, this has been demonstrated through academic achievements and honors, on the athletic fields, and through the arts.

Although I could easily cite an extensive

litany of such successes, I want to recognize all those in the district who continually heed the words of Aristotle and "...try to have and use (excellence)." Students are able to demonstrate excellence when supported by the adult members of our school community. Parents, staff, teachers, administrators, the Board of Education, and the broader New Britain community in unique and important ways provide this essential support.

For some of our students an important step to demonstrating excellence is to be shown that they are capable of achieving excellence through hard work and practice, while for others it is providing outlets and opportunities to demonstrate skills and talents already possessed. Regardless, it is the obligation of the adult members of our

school community to ensure that our students are provided with these necessary experiences.

Thus, it is with great gratitude to district parents who expect nothing but the best from and for their children; and, to district teachers and administrators who in their commitment and dedication continue to strive for higher levels of professional excellence; and to all members of the school community who work to provide our students with pathways to excellence that I thank you on behalf of the Board of Education for all that you do!

Best wishes for a happy and successful summer.

*Peter Kochol is president of the New Britain Board of Education.*

### NEW BRITAIN EDUCATOR

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Produced by:  
GRANT COMMUNICATIONS  
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## Sixth-graders focus on college

### Global Collegiate Academy will help students be prepared for their future

BY BILL BROTHERTON

Superintendent Dr. Doris J. Kurtz has a simple belief: "College begins in kindergarten." By that, she means every child deserves to be fully prepared for post-high school education or to be successful in the workplace.

This fall, New Britain takes another giant step forward with Global Collegiate Academy, a collaboration between the city's public schools and Central Connecticut State University. Sixth-graders will attend classes at the college's downtown campus with a focus on 21st-century academic skills for college preparation and "soft skills" for future employment.

Dr. Jeffrey Mulqueen, assistant superintendent for instructional services, said the Global Collegiate Academy is the district's newest small learning community, a concept that has proved highly successful.

"It's a unique partnership (between) us and the university. It's very different. Two college professors are affiliated with the academy and our students will attend classes in a college building downtown," Mulqueen said.

Yes, sixth-graders will be learning on a university campus, some of whom will one day

be the first in their family to attend college.

Mulqueen said applications for the program far exceeded expectations.

About 100 students applied for the 50 seats. "We were fortunate to add a third classroom. Now, 75 students can take part in this. The focus is on building 21st-century learning skills, and it's a much more personalized educational experience for all students, more highly-tuned to each student's needs," Mulqueen said.

Kurtz and Mulqueen said the plan is to expand the Global Collegiate Academy to grades 7-9. Today's sixth-graders will continue with the program in upcoming years, with a new sixth-grade class entering each fall. This continuum will pay dividends each year.

Mulqueen grew even more excited as he described the "virtual learning experience" of the new academy. "Electronically, our students will be able to meet and study with students from London, England, and Kentucky. Teachers will participate and offer views ... This is the start of a pilot program, and I'm confident it will continue to become even more amazing each year."

Mulqueen cites the overwhelming success of the K-3 Scholastic Academy and other small

learning academies. One program has 60 applicants for 25 seats.

"Parents are enthusiastic for this. We're on the right track," said Mulqueen. "The academies are attracting kids back to the public schools. Parents who have sent their children to private schools are now calling my office asking how they can enroll their children in our small learning academy programs."

Mulqueen added that "urban students do not always come to us with college readiness. For many, they will be the first in their family applying for college. Education after high school has never been a consideration for some. It is our job to boost their confidence and competence so they are prepared and ready to apply to college."

This is all part of Kurtz's vision for New Britain's schools. It has been from the time she took over as superintendent six years ago. "College-ready equals workplace-ready," she said. "Every student deserves to have skills once reserved only for those considered candidates for college, to learn what's necessary to be successful in the 21st-century workforce. Our students will graduate with these skills."



# Smith CAN ... and did

## School named one of the 10 most improved in Conn.

BY SUSAN BYRNE

Smith Elementary School Principal Paula Eshoo received great news when ConnCAN – Connecticut Coalition for Achievement Now – a statewide outreach, education and research organization, named Smith one of the top 10 Most Improved Elementary Schools in Connecticut.

Smith was tied for eighth on the list with a school from Bridgeport. Considering there are 595 elementary schools in the state, Eshoo was proud of the accomplishment.

“We talked about it with the children in assemblies, and we notified the parents through our newsletter,” she said. “We also had a special luncheon for the staff as a thank you for all their efforts in helping Smith receive this recognition.”

ConnCAN’s mission is “to close Connecticut’s academic achievement gap, the largest gap between rich and poor students in any public school system in the nation.” To this end, it has developed report cards for all the schools in the state, as well as the Most Improved list.

ConnCAN developed the reviews and rankings by using data from the Connecticut Department of Education’s Strategic School Profiles database, the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) and the

Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT).

ConnCAN assesses schools based on the average percentage of students that are meeting state goals at particular grade levels and across various subject areas tested. Smith School recorded a 21.2 percent increase in students within goal range across all subjects between 2004-06.

How did this improvement happen? In her second year as principal, Eshoo has worked hard to complete some of the work started before her arrival.

Besides utilizing the training the state provides, Eshoo said, “We have increased the rigor and tried to link the relevance of learning to life in order to be good citizens and educated ones.

“We talk a lot about being scholars,” she added. “Our promise is to treat children as scholars, to try our personal best, learn from mistakes and strive to do more. There also is a structure in place for discipline. Behave and be safe, so that you can get as much learning in as possible.”

You may also see posters around the halls of the largest elementary school in the school district with the motto, “Taking care of ourselves, taking care of each other and taking care of the school.”



From top to bottom: Fifth-grade teacher Michelle Mayette works with student Luisdaniel Caballero; Second-graders Meralys Santiago, left, and Roslin Vickers enjoy the Star Scholar breakfast at Smith School; Smith School kindergartners Ralique Velez, left, and Romeo Gordon listen during class; Smith School kindergartners, from left, Juliangelys Goyochea, Elizabeth Rosado, and Esmeralda Hernandez; Marc Santiago, a fifth-grader at Smith School, works during class.





# Attention!



## New Britain High JROTC is again tops in region

BY SEAN LEONARD

The trophy collection amassed by the New Britain High School JROTC program has grown considerably this year, as the unarmed drill team ranked best in Southern New England for the third consecutive year.

First Sgt. Don Fairthorne, U.S. Army (retired) started the Corps of Cadets and JROTC at New Britain High School a dozen years ago. He said he couldn't be more proud of the young men and women who competed this year in the unarmed drill team and color guard.

"When the program started in 1995 we had eight students. People said it wouldn't work here — that the kids would never want to wear the uniform in school. Since then we've never had fewer than 100 kids and we've had to turn kids away," Fairthorne said.

This year's JROTC unarmed drill team earned the most cumulative points over five meets that culminated with a February 4 competition in Springfield, Mass.

There are 36 members on the unarmed drill team, though only nine compete at a time. Those who demonstrate the most discipline and precision in practice leading up to each meet are selected for competition, Fairthorne said.

"It's all about precision: how well we move together, and that takes a lot of work. They



Members of the champion New Britain High School JROTC drill team salute.

have to apply themselves," he said. "There are 51 moves in the routine and for a kid to know when to execute those on command, and wind up where they're supposed to be, it takes a lot of practice.

"When (the students) join the drill team they get a rope (for their uniform), but they don't get a medal tab until they actually compete," Fairthorne added. "We practice two nights a week during the season, and we take practice seriously. If someone has two

unexcused absences, they're off the team."

Those who stick with the program gain invaluable leadership skills and learn the definition of teamwork. "They gain self-confidence, self-esteem and learn what it takes to be successful," Fairthorne said, adding that drill team members typically stick together through the year and regularly practice on their own, even during the summer.

Six years ago, Lt. Col. Mark Durfee, U.S.

Army (retired) came on board to help Fairthorne run the JROTC program, and today the two are both full-time instructors at New Britain High School, teaching courses including leadership, military history, first aid and CPR.

Durfee has taken charge of the color guard team, which has about 30 members, half of whom are also members of the drill team.

"We have great kids and they've put themselves second to the team," Durfee said.

Some might be surprised, Fairthorne said, that the drill team and color guard are comprised mostly of girls.

"We have six or seven guys on the team, but a lot of guys come in with a macho, take-control mentality and that doesn't work ... The girls are much more disciplined," he said.

Among this year's graduating JROTC leaders are co-captains and twins Donald and Robert Eshou. A female, junior Huiaim Mubarak, has been selected to captain the 2007-08 drill team.

While the drill team has qualified each of the past three years for national competition, Fairthorne said competing on that level is out of reach financially. The team is content, he said, to be the best in Southern New England.

"The practice and perseverance, it's all worth it when they're announced as winners," he said.

## New Britain is the place to be for BEST Robotics competition

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

In a battle of will, sportsmanship and engineering, five high school teams from Connecticut came together for the BEST Robotics Central Connecticut Hub Competition in New Britain.

The event, hosted at Roosevelt Middle School, featured a student-designed and -built robotic competition, judged by community groups, organizations and local volunteers. The robotics game consisted of a series of three-minute, round-robin matches among the teams. This year's theme, Laundry Quandary, challenged students to develop a machine that would simplify laundry handling, while saving energy and providing a fresh outdoor scent to the fabric.

Teams were given six weeks to design, build and test their creations. They were also required to submit a project summary notebook and make an oral presentation, and were judged on table display, spirit and good sportsmanship.

BEST — Boosting Engineering, Science and Technology — has more than 700 middle and high schools and more than 8,000 students participating in its competitions each year. A non-profit organization, BEST was founded to inspire students to pursue careers in engineering, science and technology.

"Students increase their understanding of technical

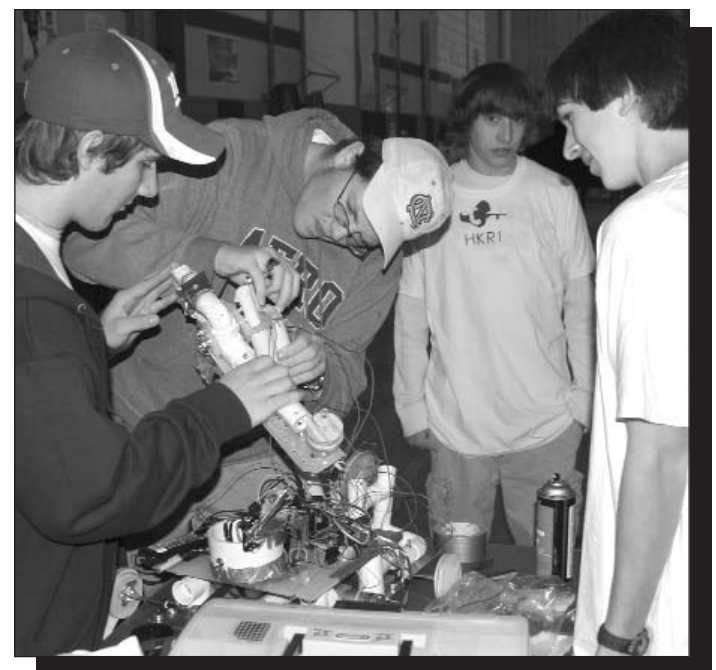
concepts and scientific principles, gain real-world engineering experience with limited resources and learn project management concepts with constrained time period," said Thomas Menditto, district coordinator of science, technology and applied education. "It prepares them for life."

This was the second year New Britain High School participated in the competition, and the first year Connecticut formed its own competition hub. Other teams included Bristol Central High, Montville High, Crosby High and Haddam-Killingworth High. New Britain High students, who last year participated in the Philadelphia event, took home awards for the most spirit and for oral presentation.

The program is supported by Central Connecticut State University. Kits of equipment and parts were funded by East Hartford's Connecticut Center for Advanced Technology.

The New Britain High students are involved in building a full-size solar car from scratch. They hope to enter it in competition in July, during which they will travel from Austin, Texas to Newburgh, NY — driving 1,600 miles in nine days.

The theme for the upcoming BEST competition will be 2021: A Robot Odyssey. Teams will receive their kits in the fall.



Students work on their entry in the BEST Robotics Central Connecticut Hub Competition at Roosevelt Middle School.





Vance Village Principal Mary Beth Iacobelli looks on as first grade students Jorge Cruz, left, Christopher Toce listen to classmate Alexandra Talarczyk read.

## Scholastic Academy earns national acclaim

BY SEAN LEONARD

The New Britain School District's Scholastic Academy received an honorable mention Magna Award from the American School Board Journal.

The Scholastic Academy, a K-3 school in its third year, is a school-within-a school program that includes low-income students in three elementary schools — Lincoln, Smalley and Vance Village — who demonstrate a spark for learning.

Dr. Pamela Granucci, coordinator of grants and early childhood education for New Britain Schools, said the Scholastic Academy is a curriculum based on the book *Removing the Mask: Giftedness in Poverty*, by Paul Slocumb and Ruby K. Payne.

"Paul Slocumb's piece of this is specific to children from poverty, that

often times they show their potential — gifts if you will — in ways that are different from mainstream kids," Granucci said. "The book is a guide to understanding how giftedness in children from poverty may look different, and what the children need in order to be nurtured."

Some 62 percent of New Britain's public school students come from families with per capita income of \$18,400 a year or less, and qualify for free or reduced-price lunches.

Students in the Scholastic Academy are selected from among those students, and while it is based at Lincoln, Smalley and Vance schools, Granucci said the program serves students throughout the district.

"We designed the program to nurture those kids, to provide an enriched language environment to build a strong vocabulary, with a technology component that adapts instruction to the student ... and a key piece

of the program is a breakthrough-to-literacy program," Granucci explained. "We give kids a lot of background experiences through content-related field trips, for example to public library. We connect

with that community resource to instill lifelong learning."

The program, which began at Smalley and DiLoreto elementary schools three years ago but is no longer at DiLoreto, is funded from the regular school budget, with additional support from a state priority school district grant.

Teachers are carefully selected and specially trained for the academy, Granucci said.

"What we know about these children is the relationship between the teacher and the student is critical, and the teachers expect them to go the extra mile," she said. "The academy has grown each year and our results have been phenomenal. We don't have scores yet for this year, but last year, in our spring scores, every one of our second-graders were scoring well above grade level. And that makes them excited about school."

The teachers and administrators are also excited when they hear the level of conversation third-graders engage in about literature, social studies and other subjects. "The children love to challenge each other," Granucci said.

Parents are also very pleased with the Scholastic Academy, and plans are for the continued growth of the program. "We will be expanding it to the fourth and fifth grade," Granucci said.

## Microsociety experiences macro success

BY SEAN LEONARD

In order to learn about the larger community outside of their school building, students at the Vance Village Elementary School have created their own community inside the school.

Vance Village was named a Microsociety Ambassador School by the National Microsociety Board, in recognition of the fact that the program has become wildly popular with students and parents over the past several years.

"Microsociety provides very practical, hands-on application in a real world," said Vance Village Principal Mary Beth Iacobelli.

The program evolved from a single classroom in New York City in 1967 and has grown to more than 200 programs in 40 states. It was implemented at Vance in 1997, but really took root in 2005.

"The students run their own society within the school," Iacobelli said. "Twice a week, Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2:15 to 3:15, the kids go to different jobs for which they have applied. We have a government with a president and vice president, a bank, a post office, a court, security officers, an ice cream parlor, a bowling alley, health and fitness club, a company that delivers musical telegrams, and a tutoring business.

"And they earn money when they're at work — called fins, which is like Monopoly money — and they even pay taxes on their pay to support non-profit ventures in the school," Iacobelli said. The program is effective, she said, because the Microsociety is relevant; the children associate what they learn to the world outside of school.

"They learn about bank accounts, and how to structure personal loans. And they know that if they deposit their money (fins) in the bank, it will grow," Iacobelli said.

But the students also learn about impulse spending, she said. "Three times a year we have Market Day, in which all of the students in their various jobs market their goods and services. The children love it."

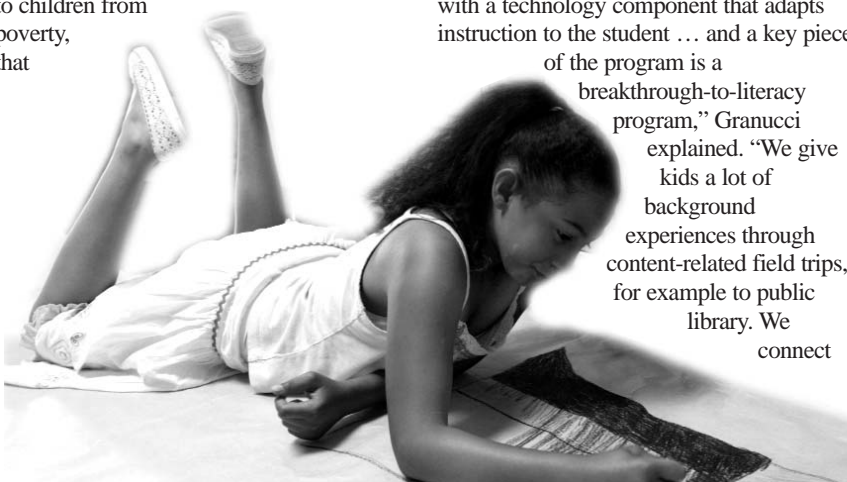
The Microsociety at Vance Village is comprised of 480 students in grades K-5, and the teachers and staff at the school have special training to oversee the program. While the teachers facilitate the program, they act more as spectators or referees, as the students take charge.

"At the beginning of each school year the kids apply for jobs in the Microsociety — they apply for a different job each year — and the teachers conduct the interviews and make the placements," Iacobelli said. But from then on, the children rule the roost.

"If children break the rules, they're called before their peers in court and could be issued a fine or be suspended from their job," she said.

The program's success led to Vance's designation as a Microsociety Ambassador School in January, and Iacobelli said the program has led to an influx of students.

"Parents are moving into the district to place their children here," she said. As for the children, "Once they're here, they don't want to leave."



Vance Village student Celenia Rivera works on her "Tall Tales" project.





Lyse Ruiz chops herbs for a chicken marinade.



Lyse Ruiz, left, and Cindy Godin take a break at the ProStart invitational.



Nicole Safford mixes ingredients.

# RECIPE FOR SUCCESS



A dish prepared by ProStart students.



Cindy Godin shows off her asparagus dish.



New Britain High School ProStart students won first place in the Connecticut ProStart Invitational.



Myles Mason cooks a chicken dish during culinary arts class.



A student finishes mixing a dish during class at New Britain High School.

## NBHS culinary arts program heats up

BY SUSAN BYRNE

Bobby Flay, Giada De Laurentiis, Rocco DiSpirito — treated like rock stars, the current generation of celebrity chefs are turning the food industry into a world of fame and glamour.

Taking inspiration from their success, culinary arts students at New Britain High School are embracing the growing career opportunities. The students are participating in a high school curriculum called ProStart, developed by National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation (NRAEF).

The program serves more than 50,000 students nationally in 45 states and territories. New Britain High School adopted ProStart last year and has made a name for itself this year at regional and national competitions.

According to teacher Nann Thomson, the comprehensive program includes business management and culinary arts classes. "It is quite a rigorous curriculum created by the industry to train tomorrow's managers in the food and hospitality industry," Thomson said.

The NRAEF estimates that from 2006-2016 the number of restaurant and food service industry jobs is projected to increase by 1.9 million, including 47,000 management positions.

Thomson said one week's instruction could be on fruits and

vegetables and another week on cost accounting. The courses can also be combined with a work component, as well as certification and college scholarship opportunities.

Last fall, Thomson took a team of her ProStart students to participate in the Connecticut ProStart Invitational. Four teams in the state participated in a culinary segment and a management segment to receive a combined overall team score. The New Britain High School culinary team, consisting of co-captain Myles Mason, Lyse Ruiz, Cindy Godin, Jovan Williams and alternate Sergio Flores, had to prepare a one-dish salad with protein within one hour. The team of students chose a Thai beef salad while teammates and co-captains Nicole Safford and Alex Carver were simultaneously competing in the management area that focused on safety and sanitation. After all was completed, the New Britain High School team achieved a first-place finish.

In April, the school advanced to the National ProStart Invitational in Charlotte, N.C. to represent the state of Connecticut. The same four students participated in the culinary competition, which consisted of creating a three-course meal for under \$75, on two table-top gas stoves, with no electrical appliances, all in under one hour.

Thomson said she was proud of all the hard work and hours of practice the students put into the competition, and the meal turned out to be "exquisite."

The management team included the same two students and Wioletta Pilip. They first competed in a knowledge bowl competition. They were then given a real-life scenario to which they had to react as if it were happening in their own restaurant. Thomson even secured the help of NBHS public speaking teacher Neil Cowan to help prepare the students for the big day.

After competing against 32 other states and Guam, the New Britain team finished in the middle of the pack, which was quite an accomplishment in its first year at the event.

"The kids did a remarkable job and really made the district proud," said Thomson, who was named ProStart Teacher of the Year. "The program received visibility from the competitions, and I hope we will be able to recruit more students from business and sciences to the ProStart program. The reason that I love the program so much is that it doesn't reward one type of student because of one type of interest. It provides something for everyone and rewards all different kinds of skills and provides hands-on and intellectual learning. It's a great combination."



Teacher Nann Thomson instructs, from left, Cindy Godin, Myles Mason and Lyse Ruiz on food presentation.



# HEADS OF THE CLASSES

## NBHS Class of 2007 Top 10 percent

Kristin Arena	Christopher Szylobryt	Wen Jie Li
Michael Ostrowski	Natalia Burakowska	Gabriela Maj
Robert Drozd	Melynda McLeod	Katherine Swanson
David Wanik	Jose Nazario	Danielle Wanik
Diana Fuller	Travis J. Olis Reyes	Maureen Mihalik
Steven Mussman	Amanda Sadlowski	Kelly Charette
Bartosz Starodaj	Mateusz Zyla	Alicia Talarico
Peter Paul Stroczkowski	Anna Newberg	Jennifer Kilpatrick
Arhanti Sadanand	Aditi Kamdar	Kristene A. Welch
Sarah Hudkins	Alexis Hart	Jasmine A. Thompson
Melissa Sulewski	Marek Krach	Jennifer Schrader
Jacqueline Maietta	Dorota Glosowicz	Demeree Douglas
Brian O'Connell	Christopher Tabaszewski	Sarah Gostin
Gisele Cazeau	Samantha Alyn Fabretti	Amanda Jean Paradis
Michael Pomykala	Brittany Green	James DeMarco
Isabel Estefania Gonzalez	James Hudyma	Katarzyna Rutkowska
Hernan Pagan	Amanda Marie Brzozowy	Lisa Litrenta
Pamela Levesque	Alexandra Ostrowski	Sarah Leone
Lauren Collin	Christina Bukowski	Christina Esposito
Andrea Dombkowski	Christina Cianci	Mark Grzywacz
John Louis Mason	Korrin M. Leslie	Andrew Tardiff



The top 10 percent of the New Britain High School Class of 2007.



## NBHS National Honor Society

Kristin Arena	Sarah Gostin	Melynda McLeod	Jennifer Ramirez
Christina bukowski	Brittany Green	Steven Mussman	Jennifer Schrader
Gisele Cazeau	Sarah Hudkins	Jose Nazario	Peter Stroczkowski
Kelly Charette	James Hudyma	Anna Newberg	Christopher Szlobryt
Christina Ciance	Wen Jie Li	Brian O'Connell	Alicia Talarico
Amanda Clark	Jacqueline Maietta	Alexandra Ostrowski	Andrew Tardif
Lauren Collin	Gabriela Maj	Hernan Pagan	David Wanik
Samantha Fabretti	John Mason	Michael Pomykala	Kristene Welch

## Young Scholars



The Society for Young Scholars at New Britain High School includes students in grades 9 and 10 who have exhibited academic excellence.

# Slade teacher is the best New Britain has to offer

Louis P. Slade Middle School seventh-grade science teacher Sudha Sikka has been named New Britain Consolidated School District Teacher of the Year. Sikka has been a valued member of the Slade staff for the past three years. She is involved in many aspects of the academic and social life of the school. Sikka volunteered to be the science teacher for the AVID cluster in seventh grade, taking the time to be trained last summer. She took in

this approach for teaching and brought it back to her classroom. Her commitment to AVID is complete. She meets with her own cluster and the other grades. It is apparent by her eager participation that she is committed to making this program a success. With her classroom well organized and her students trained to learn, Sikka is a dynamic instructor. Her lessons are structured for students to be involved in their learning. This year Sikka participated in the

Leadership Academy for Middle School Science. In nominating her for the Teacher of the Year award, one of Sikka's colleagues wrote, "It is my observation that as a teacher she is a true professional, performing her duties with the utmost efficiency and ability. She is innovative and dynamic in the classroom, infusing her students with tremendous motivation and instilling in them an appetite for the joys of learning."

## Bridging cultures

# Number of students learning Arabic is on the rise

BY SEAN LEONARD

With the New Britain Consolidated School District experiencing an influx of immigrant students from Yemen over the past decade, an Arabic-English bilingual program was established last year at Jefferson Elementary School.

Principal Margaret Walsh noted that the state requires a school district to launch a new bilingual program whenever the number of first-generation children from a given community reaches 25.

"Last year we were at 23. We needed someone who spoke Arabic and English to support these children," Walsh said. "There was a gentleman teaching French in the New Haven schools who is of Moroccan descent and he speaks Arabic."

Answering an advertisement posted by Adnelly Marichal, the school district's world language director, teacher

Omar Nouchkioui was hired to instruct the students from Yemen, now numbering 43, and Jefferson Elementary was selected as a base for the Arabic-English program.

"Omar interprets the lessons in Arabic. Mathematics is perhaps the easiest to teach because it is an international language, but with reading, the concept of print is very different in Arabic. They read from right to left — so reading in English is all backwards to them — and the sounds and symbols of the language are very different," Walsh said. "It's a challenge because some of the children are from rural Yemen and had no formal education. It was very piecemeal.

"The goal is to get the students to be conversational in English, but it's also important to make sure they study and are fluent in Arabic. There's a belief that if students are fluent and

adept in their native language, they are more likely to be successful (learning English)," the principal added.

What's equally important, Walsh said, is that the students do not lose touch with the traditions and customs of their native culture.

"Some of the kids in third, fourth and fifth grade observe Ramadan, and have parties and wear native dress," Walsh said. "We were also successful in getting a grant to hold a program 15 Saturdays during the school year where the students and parents explore their native customs."

Another significant cultural difference, Walsh said, is that seldom if ever does she discuss the students' progress with their mothers. "I deal with the fathers because they come from a very patriarchal society," she said.

Nouchkioui said that despite the challenges the Arabic speaking students

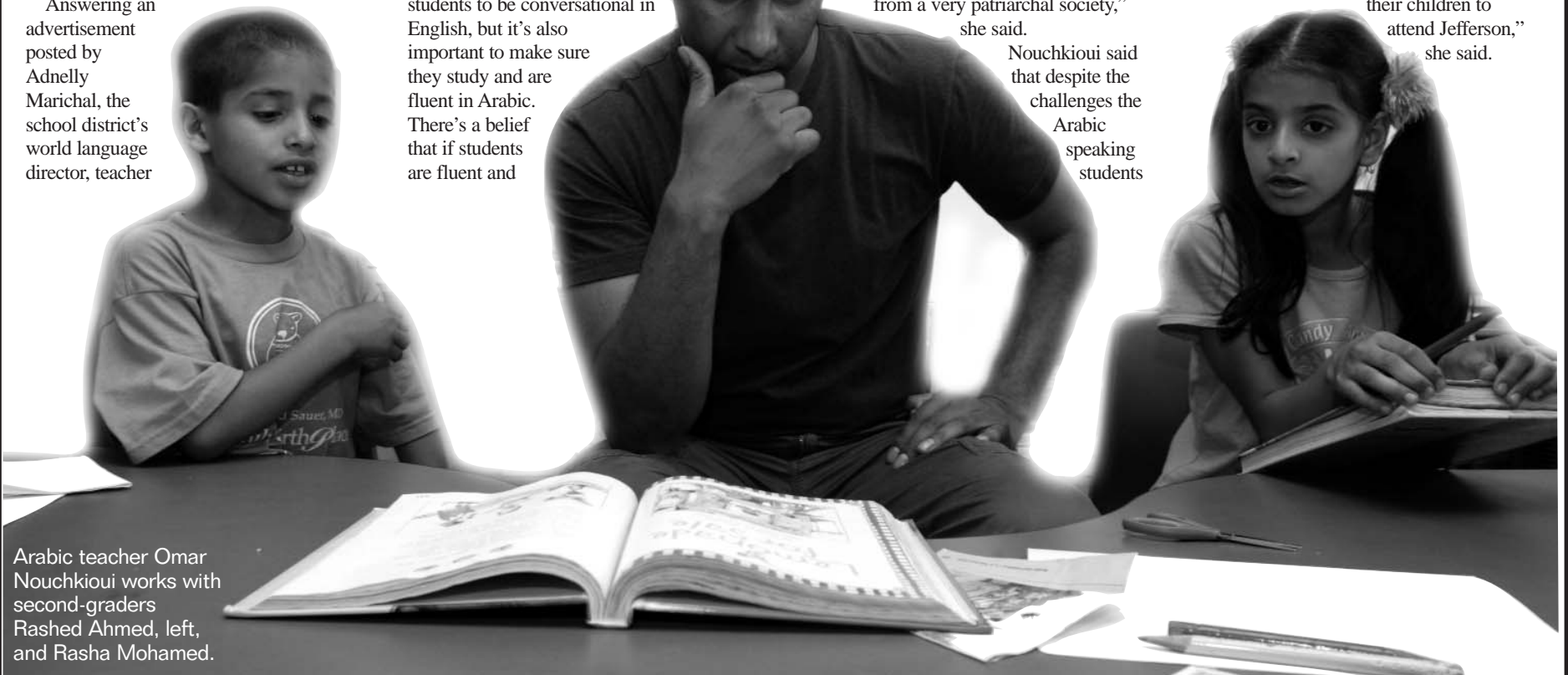
face, they are diligent in their studies and achieving success in the classroom. "They want to speak English as quickly as possible," he said. "I am very pleased with their work."

Nouchkioui said his first challenge when a new student arrives, sometimes in the middle of the school year, is to quickly assess the student's academic background and determine the appropriate grade-level.

"Some of the students come to us in the fourth-grade level but speak no English, so they really have to catch up, and they do work at it," he said.

Walsh said she anticipates the Arabic-English program will continue to grow, as word spreads about its success. "When the Arabic-English families learn about the program, they come to the district and want

their children to attend Jefferson," she said.



Arabic teacher Omar Nouchkioui works with second-graders Rashed Ahmed, left, and Rasha Mohamed.

## Reading is Fundamental working wonders in New Britain

BY SUSAN BYRNE

One way or another, Nancy Puglisi was going to find a way to provide a library in every home for the children of New Britain.

As the facilitator of Extended Day Programs at the New Britain Consolidated School District, Puglisi searched four years ago and found a program called Reading is Fundamental (RIF). As the nation's oldest and largest non-profit children's literacy organization, RIF prepares and motivates children to read by delivering free books and literary

resources to those children and families who need them most.

A partnership was formed with RIF and New Britain Schools after Puglisi wrote and received an annual grant. Now in only its fourth year, the New Britain school program is being honored by RIF as one of the top 25 RIF programs in the country.

The program consists of three RIF parties a year at each of the 10 New Britain elementary schools. Each of the parties is held after school and may have a different theme, such as a pajama party,

Friday night ice cream social, celebrity reader or professional storyteller. However, at all of the parties, new books are distributed free to children and their families.

The students often refer to Puglisi as the "book lady." She has found that several of the more popular titles these days are any of the June B. Jones books, The Magic Tree House and the Chronicles of Narnia. Some of the books are provided in both English and Spanish.

Puglisi knows the program is achieving its goals of encouraging

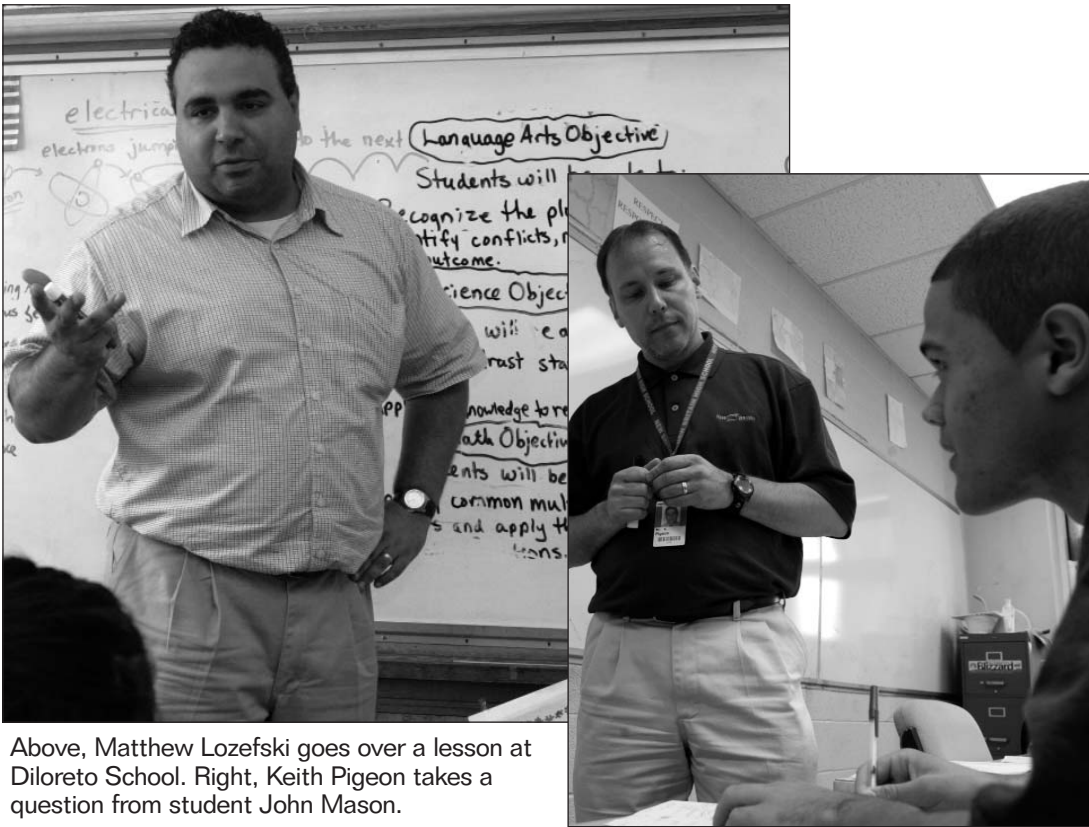
reading and family time. "The children are talking about the books they receive at the RIF parties. They are even asking me to order certain titles and telling me how they swapped books with their friends," she said.

"I have such joy for this. It is such a positive around the whole school, especially the week of RIF Day," she added. Puglisi is also quick to praise the parent/school liaisons. "They have put these programs together, and it has been so great to work with the parent/school liaisons and all of

the parent volunteers. With all the response from the community, you just know the program is working."

According to Dr. Pamela Granucci, district coordinator of grants and early childhood education, the Reading is Fundamental Program is accomplishing two important goals. "We are putting books in homes and in the hands of children and adding to their libraries. It also is raising families' awareness of literacy," Granucci said.





Above, Matthew Lozefski goes over a lesson at Diloreto School. Right, Keith Pigeon takes a question from student John Mason.

# Pigeon and Lozefski are class acts

## TEACHERS: from Page 1

and he addresses academic areas in an atypical fashion that connects them to science, thereby he is teaching reading and writing, and mathematics as well.”

Menditto noted that many of Lozefski’s students have special needs or come from economically-disadvantaged homes, and Lozefski sparks their interest in science through hands-on activities and offering one-on-one instruction to students before class.

“His commitment also goes beyond the classroom. Over the past seven years I’ve been able to rely on him to assist me in workshops for elementary teachers throughout the district,” Menditto said.

Lozefski said his philosophy as a teacher is that “knowledge is power, but enthusiasm and passion are what pull the switch.

“In order to keep kids engaged the material has to be relevant to them ... Electricity is not something kids think about,” he added. “But when I talk to them about how it is a necessity and it adds comfort to our lives, then they get really into it. How is it made? How is it used in a house?”

And discussion of the subject matter, Lozefski said, always leads to hands-on experimentation.

“For example, to learn about kinetic energy we build a roller coaster out of macaroni ... Today we’re making solar ovens,” Lozefski said, sounding every bit as excited about the lessons as his students.

“My job is my passion, and I get prepared because my students have to be prepared,” Lozefski said. “The students have been exceptional. In my eight years of teaching I’ve never had to send a kid to the office.”

New Britain High School also has a teacher who received a special honor this year: Math teacher Keith Pigeon was named a Yale University Teacher of the Year, nominated by his former student and last year’s valedictorian, Monika Adamczyk, who is now a Yale student.

Pigeon has taught at the high school since 1995. He said the honor took him by surprise.

“I came in one day and the principal congratulated me,” Pigeon said. “Monika was in my AP calculus class last year and she nominated me.”

Pigeon said advanced mathematics classes are challenging for many, and that he draws on his own background to help motivate his students.

“I went to a trade school and my math was not up to par,” he said, noting that he once failed a math placement test in trade school.

“I had to work hard at it, and now I have a master’s in mathematics,” Pigeon said. “That’s what I tell the kids in calculus who struggle.”

His students’ test scores are the best indicator of Pigeon’s success in the classroom.

“In AP testing last year, we had eight students get a perfect score (in math). That’s the best I’ve ever had,” he said.

# Golden Hurricanes win another title

## BASKETBALL: from Page 12

lot of rebounding and about 30 points a game, and we knew other players had to step up.”

The Hurricanes returned three starters — senior wing player Dominique Stellmacher, point guard Roberts and sophomore guard Sarah Sideranko, a five-foot sparkplug. Senior Cherelle Allen returned after not playing in 2006 and was strong on the boards, including 12 rebounds in the title game. Co-captain Ciara Hooks “does all the little things that don’t always show up in the box score,” Piper said.

Cassandra Bell and Monika Malec provided support off the bench and a freshman had a night to remember in the championship game. Post player Tyler Kimball, who had split time

between the varsity and junior varsity during the season, had 18 points and 10 rebounds. Allen had been sick with the flu and had talked to Kimball before the game about the importance of her taking on a bigger role.

“Symone was named MVP and deserved it, but you could make the case we had two MVPs that game,” said Piper.

# HALS spotlights excellence

## HALS: from Page 1

Elaine Zottola, the district’s coordinator of fine arts. “Each year we take 54 students from every grade level – 6, 7 and 8. At the end of the 5th grade, we administer the SAGES test (Screening Assessment for Gifted Elementary and Secondary Students), and based on that and the most recent CMT (Connecticut Mastery Test), we rank the students and issue the invitations.”

Prior to the inception of HALS, Zottola, who serves as principal at HALS, said the district lacked sufficient programs to serve the highest-achieving students.

“We were experiencing a lot of flight from the district. Parents would move out when their children got to middle-school age. Now, I’m getting calls from parents who have done that and it’s the opposite,” she said. “Now they want back in, and for their children to get into HALS. Parents are now opting to keep their children within the public schools rather than turn to magnet schools in Hartford or to parochial schools.”

Zottola said HALS follows the same curriculum as other middle schools in the district, but at a much faster pace, and follows the same class schedule as the high school.

“At HALS there’s more of an emphasis on evaluation and analysis. We teach the students not to think in

simple ways. It’s a highly rigorous and accelerated program,” Zottola said, adding that technology is a significant focus. “The program affords students with similar abilities and interests to learn at their faster pace, and there’s a lot of research that says that’s what is best for them.”

Citing the best measure of the success of HALS, Zottola said, “Our first group who started way back at Pulaski, they’re high school sophomores now, and they’re very highly ranked, at the top of their class.”

The teachers at HALS are each content-area certified in math, science and social studies. There are six full-time teachers, as well as a part-time projects teacher, art teacher, music teacher and physical education teacher. Some of teachers, Zottola noted, are pursuing master’s degrees in gifted education.

In addition to HALS, Zottola formed the National Junior Honor Society in all of the district’s middle schools, and created the Society of Young Scholars for ninth- and 10th-grade students to bridge the gap between the Junior Honor Society and the National Honor Society at New Britain High School.

“It’s important to have programs to recognize high-achieving students,” she said.



HALS students, from left, Max Maynard, Zachary Grabko, James Buckwell practice during music.



# AROUND

## New Britain

# SCHOOLS

### Gaffney School

A wonderful time was had by those who attended Gaffney Elementary School's ninth annual Celebrate the Arts, 2007 festival on May 4. The 525 students, teachers, parents, and community members who attended were treated to student activities and exhibits related to Gaffney's HOT (Higher Order Thinking) goal for the year which was the integration of a circus theme with the curriculum.

Art, music and media teachers assisted classroom teachers with ideas and activities to help their students implement this theme. They also linked the circus-theme activities with the regular curriculum. Activities were creative in nature, which motivated students to read and write about the circus. The Celebrate the Arts evening represented a culmination of students' learning. Students' artistic creations were hung throughout the building for all to enjoy. The entire school also visited the Ringling Brothers/Barnum and Baily circus on May 10 at the Hartford Civic Center. It was a fabulous way to relate what was learned during the year to a real circus performance!

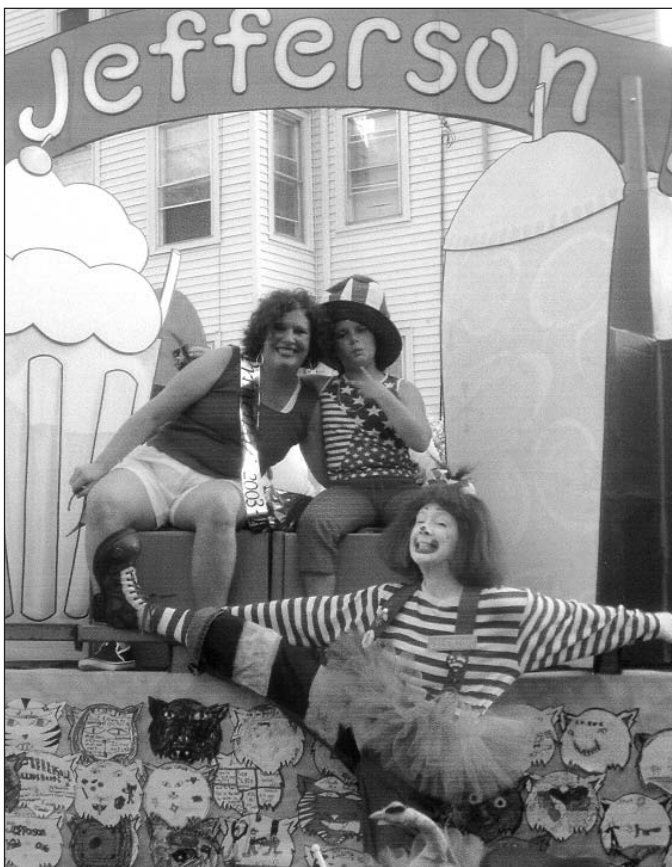
Many additional activities were included to make Celebrate the Arts a memorable evening. A dance troupe, led by third-grade teacher Ms. Libby, performed traditional German dances; face painting was offered; creating origami animals was taught to students and parents; circus finger puppets were created; and the Jefferson School Drummers made a guest appearance.

### Jefferson School

For the past three years Jefferson Elementary School has participated in the New Britain Memorial Day parade, creating a float with a different theme each year and inviting students to march in the parade. This year, Jefferson celebrated its 50th anniversary. The theme of this year's float was the golden anniversary. Art teacher Tony Hernandez came up with the idea and designed the float. Gumby was introduced in 1957, so he was on the float, along with modern-day cartoon character SpongeBob SquarePants. The school mascot is the wildcat so Hernandez had every child color in a wildcat and they were glued to the skirt that was around the float. Every child who attends Jefferson was represented on the float.

Many volunteers helped paint the backdrop gold. The lunch/recess supervisors came into work early and were painting away. Several PTA members contributed to the development of the float. Elaine Riccio, our PSL (Parent/School Liaison), was a crucial factor in pulling all of this together. She purchased golden beads that could be tossed to the children in the street as the float made its way downtown. Candy was also given out. Former principal Ron Jakubowski rode on the float with current principal Margaret Walsh.

None of this would have come to fruition if not for our wonderful friend, John Currin, of Empire Motors who allows us to use a flatbed truck every year at no cost. Not only does John provide the truck, he drives it in the parades.



Jefferson Elementary principal Margaret Walsh and her daughter, Annie, were part of the school's 50th anniversary parade.



## Super super

Superintendent Dr. Doris J. Kurtz has been collecting the hardware this year, winning the following awards: Conn. Friend of the Gifted; Elks Phenomenal Leader; and YWCA Women in Leadership

### Smalley Academy

Smalley Academy has been participating in the RAP Program (Reaching Academic Potential). Thirty children were chosen by their teachers in three target areas for improvement: 10 for attendance, 10 for behavior and 10 for academics to help improve student achievement. It has been a huge success for the Smalley students participating. The students have made gains in all areas through ongoing monitoring and discussion of their progress in their target areas. They also receive incentives for improvement. Students have won a variety of prizes including a pizza party, binoculars and Walkmans.

The Smalley Aspira Club bid farewell to elementary school by performing a play titled "A Day at New Berry Middle School." The club has been engaged in its Children Helping Children campaign since last October. Club members have been role models, collecting more than 200 new winter coats for the needy. They also hosted a Christmas dinner, which generated funds to buy new Christmas toys for more than 250 New Britain children. This fine group of students wanted to continue their community involvement by presenting this moving play about a young student who is bullied by the class bully and her peers. The message is that bullying doesn't make you special, it only makes people weak and hurts others. The Aspira Club has been a wonderful part of the Smalley Academy and its work will not be forgotten.

### Smith School

Smith's mentoring program for grades K-5 was designed to establish adult connections, set goals, create arts and crafts, read, learn about decision making, learn about nutrition and exhibit good sportsmanship during games.

The program "Where in the World is Smitty" was developed to support research and geography. Students are given clues as to where the school's scholar owl, Smitty, is. Any students who is able to determine the location is entered in a raffle and one student per grade level wins a prize, sponsored by Mr. Kass and his fourth-graders.

Every class honors one student each month at the Star Scholar

Breakfast. Scholars are chosen for working to the best of their ability, making good decisions, coming to school, and having a positive attitude. They have breakfast with the principal and receive a certificate and bookmark along with a picture in the special star scholar chair.

### Slade Middle School

Eleven seventh- and eighth-grade students from Louis P. Slade Middle School participated in the 23rd annual Science Olympiad Program at the state level. The Slade team finished in sixth place.

The event was held at the UConn campus in Storrs, marking only the third time the event has been held in Connecticut.

The Slade team came back with nine medals in five different events. The following students came back victorious:

**Olivia Rapisarda** – gold medal in wheeled vehicle event; bronze medal in bridge building

**Alyssa Koch** – gold medal in wheeled vehicle event; bronze medal in bridge building

**Kwabena Afum** – gold medal in Anatomy

**Antonio Giovannucci** – gold medal winner in Storm the Castle event; silver medal in balloon launch glider event

**Pawel Zyla** – gold medal in Storm the Castle event; silver medal in balloon launch glider event

Teachers and students have made charity and helping the community a part of daily life at Slade. The staff has dress-down days for different charity events, while the students also raise money for charities such as Pennies for Patience and Pennies for Pluto. When everything is totaled, more than \$10,000 is raised by students and staff.

The charitable endeavors at Slade have included:

Raising more than \$1400 for Pennies for Patients, for families with children with childhood leukemia;

Donating Thanksgiving baskets to 33 families in need;

Raising more than \$2500 for agencies including Prudence Crandall House, Friendship Center, Susan G. Komen For the Cure.

## New Britain School Directory

### Chamberlain Elementary

Jane Perez, Principal  
120 Newington Ave.  
(860) 832-5691

### Diloreto Magnet School

Sharon O'Brien, Principal  
732 Slater Road  
(860) 223-2885

### Gaffney Elementary

Don DelBiondo, Principal  
322 Slater Road  
(860) 225-6247

### HALS

Elaine Zottola, Principal  
30 Pendleton Rd.  
(860) 826-1866

### Holmes Elementary

Glenn Horter, Principal  
2150 Stanley St.  
(860) 223-8294

### Jefferson Elementary

Margaret Walsh, Principal  
140 Horse Plain Road  
(860) 223-8007

### Lincoln Elementary

Cynthia Cassada, Principal  
145 Steele St.  
(860) 229-2564

### New Britain High School

Michael Foran, Principal  
110 Mill St.  
(860) 225-6351

### Northend Elementary

Elsa Saavedra-Rodriguez, Principal  
160 Basset St.  
(880) 223-3819

### Pulaski Middle School

Vonetta Romeo-Rivers, Principal  
757 Farmington Ave.  
(860) 225-7665

### Roosevelt Middle School

Brenda Lewis-Collins, Principal  
40 Goodwin St.  
(860) 612-3334

### Slade Middle School

Mark Fernandes, Principal  
183 Steele St.  
(860) 225-6395

### Smalley Academy

Braulio Santiago, Principal  
175 West St.  
(860) 225-8647

### Smith Elementary

Paula Eshoo, Principal  
142 Rutherford St.  
(860) 223-1574

### Vance Village Elementary

Mary Beth Iacobelli, Principal  
183 Vance St.  
(860) 225-8731



# SPORTS

THE NEW BRITAIN EDUCATOR

## Shining stars

### New Britain athletes finish the season on top

While the New Britain Golden Hurricanes captured the major winter sports headlines by winning their second straight State Class LL title in girls basketball, several other student-athletes had strong individual showings.

Junior Athalia Smith finished first in the girls shotput in Class LL and then duplicated the feat at the state meet. Her twin sister, Chantaul, also a shotputter, was third in Class LL and sixth at the state open. Senior Melynda McCloud finished fourth in the Class LL 55-meter dash.

Senior Mark Pascal was second in the Class LL 55-meter dash and fourth in the state meet, while high jumper Walter Rodriguez, a senior, was second in Class LL.

Senior wrestler Joe Colella was third in the 189-pound class in the Class LL competition and fourth in the state open.

Senior Jordan Jacquo was second in the Class LL 140-pound class and finished third in the state open.

Sophomore Nick Gialluce was fourth in the 125-pound class in Class LL competition.

New Britain high school shot-putting twins Athalia, left, and Chantaul Smith finished first and sixth, respectively, in the state.



## Repeat: Hurricanes repeat

### NBHS girls win another title

By RICH FAHEY

They came into the season with the confidence, and perhaps a little cockiness, that the defending state champion should have. But the New Britain Golden Hurricanes knew there

were questions to answer and holes to fill.

The holes were filled, replacement parts found and questions answered when Symone Roberts scored 25 points and New Britain used a key fourth-quarter stretch to defeat Manchester, 54-46, in the CIAC Class LL final at Central Connecticut State University.

Second-seeded New Britain (23-3) won its second consecutive title and third overall. It was New Britain's second win over Manchester.

"Every year is a different group of kids," said 19-year New Britain coach Beryl Piper, who was named head coach at Central Connecticut State June 12. "We lost two key players, a

See BASKETBALL Page 10



The New Britain girls hoop team celebrates another state title.