



Soaring Eagle

\$3 million in district funds stolen; \$2.5 million recovered

The Duanesburg Central School District is working closely with the Federal Bureau of Investigation and New York State Police Cyber Crime and Critical Infrastructure Unit to investigate unauthorized electronic transfers of school district funds from its NBT Bank account.

The district first learned of the fraudulent activity on Tuesday, December 22, when contacted by an NBT bank representative, who questioned the validity of a request for an electronic transfer of funds to multiple overseas accounts that day. Upon confirming with the district that the transfer was not authorized, the bank immediately cancelled the pending transaction, which totaled approximately \$759,000.

After further review, it was discovered that an additional \$3 million in unauthorized electronic transfers to various overseas banks had already been executed over the course of three business days. Both district officials and the bank immediately contacted the FBI, which opened an investigation along with the state police.

To date, \$2.5 million of the stolen funds have been recovered by NBT Bank, working with several overseas financial institutions.

“We are fortunate that the vast majority of the money has been recovered,” said Duanesburg

“...We are committed to doing everything in our power to recover the remaining funds.”

—Superintendent Christine Crowley

Superintendent Christine Crowley. “However, \$497,200 of Duanesburg taxpayers’ money is still missing, and we are committed to doing everything in our power to recover the remaining funds.”

To prevent any district bank accounts from being further compromised, the district closed its existing bank accounts and established new ones with

restricted online access.

The district is cooperating fully with the ongoing investigation by the FBI and New York State Police.

For a list of questions and answers regarding the online theft of funds, visit the district Web site at www.duanesburg.org.

Updated information will be posted online as it becomes available. ▲

Duanesburg Day set for Saturday, Feb. 27



View student art and history projects on display at the event.

Duanesburg Day is a community-wide event celebrating the area's local history, heritage and culture.

Features of the free event include:

- ☐ Fun events and activities
- ☐ Informational booths, crafters and free child ID cards
- ☐ Homemade foods

The festivities will begin on Saturday, Feb. 27, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Duanesburg Middle/High School.

We hope to see you there!

For more details, turn to page four.



District prepares for challenging budget season

Feedback sought during budget development process

Under Governor David Paterson's proposed state budget, released Jan. 19, Duanesburg Central Schools could see approximately \$787,000 less in state aid, which already includes federal restoration monies, if the proposal is enacted by the Legislature.

“At this point we are still reviewing details of the governor's proposal and what it will mean for Duanesburg

schools,” said Superintendent Christine Crowley. “However, there’s no doubt that we’re facing another difficult budget year, and input from residents will be critical to the development process.”

State aid has generally increased every year to help districts keep pace with the rising costs of running a school system. However, with the state’s budget crisis,

foundation aid has been frozen at 2008-09 levels—leaving school districts and taxpayers to absorb inflationary increases.

The proposal for flat state aid and a Gap Elimination Adjustment—a large cut on top of the flat aid—combined with continued rising costs will result in a significant gap between expenses and revenues.

Last year, the district faced a similar situation with cuts to state aid. The budget gap was closed by a combination of a tax rate increase of 1.6 percent; \$258,000 in cuts to programs and services and the restoration of some state aid through the federal stimulus package.

School districts have limited options to offset every dollar that is not derived from state aid. These include cutting programs and services and/or raising property taxes.

Over the next few months, the district will be reviewing its options with input from the community. In addition to the regularly scheduled budget meetings and workshops, two special meetings are being held on Feb. 24 and March 1.

“Those meetings are being designed specifically for community members to gain a greater understanding of the challenges before us as well as to ask questions and to solicit their feedback,” said Crowley. “We hope to see you there.”

Residents may also feel free to voice their questions and concerns or provide input by calling the district office at 895-2279 or via the district Web site at www.duanesburg.org. ▲

2010-11 Budget Planning Calendar

Date/Time	Meeting Type/Location
Tuesday, Feb. 23, 7:30 p.m.	☐ Regular Board Meeting & Budget Work Session, Middle/High School Library
Wednesday, Feb. 24, 7-9 p.m. *Same material as March 1	☐ Special Budget Planning Meeting for the Community , Middle/High School Cafeteria
Monday, March 1, 7-9 p.m. *Same material as Feb. 24	☐ Special Budget Planning Meeting for the Community , Middle/High School Cafeteria
Tuesday, March 2, 7:30 p.m.	☐ Regular Board Meeting & Budget Work Session (First Draft of the Budget), Middle/High School Multi-Purpose Room
Tuesday, March 16, 7:30 p.m.	☐ Community Budget Forum & Regular Board Meeting with Assemblyman George Amedore, Middle/High School Multi-Purpose
Tuesday, April 13, 7:30 p.m.	☐ Community Budget Presentation & Regular Board Meeting (Budget Adoption) , Middle/High School Multi-Purpose Room
Friday, April 16	☐ Last day to submit school board petitions
Monday, April 19	☐ School board candidate ballot position drawing
Tuesday, April 20	☐ No meeting scheduled
Monday, May 4, 7:30 p.m.	☐ Public Budget Presentation of Adopted Budget & Regular Board Meeting, Middle/High School Multi-Purpose Room
Tuesday, May 11, 7:30 p.m.	☐ Regular Board Meeting, Middle/High Library
Thursday, May 13, 7 p.m.	☐ Meet the Candidates Night, Sponsored by the PTSO, Middle/High School Library
Tuesday, May 18, 1-9 p.m.	☐ District Budget Vote & School Board Elections , Polls open at Duanesburg Elementary



School cafeteria serves nutritious and affordable meals

Every school day, Duanesburg cafeterias serve up nutritious, well-balanced and affordable school meals for breakfast and lunch.

Breakfast is the most important meal of the day—feeding students' bodies and minds with the energy they need to remain sharp and ready to learn. To that end, students can kick start their day at school with fresh fruit, yogurt, cereal, toast, or an egg sandwich straight from the cafeteria.

WHAT'S FOR LUNCH?

From homemade soups and freshly made salads to sandwiches and a daily entrée, there's certainly something for everyone to eat at lunchtime.

All foods are made with low-fat or lean ingredients, and served with fresh or canned fruits and vegetables—many of which are purchased locally through a wholesaler—in addition to reduced-fat milk and other healthy options.

"Our goal is to provide students with well-balanced, great tasting meals that not only meet state and federal nutritional guidelines, but surpass them," said Food Services Manager Mary Jewell.

In part, the guidelines dictate how much sodium, sugar and fat content foods may contain.

Pizza, hamburgers and chicken fingers, which remain student favorites, are prepared in a more healthy way. For example, pizzas are topped with fresh vegetables and part-skim mozzarella cheese, and hamburgers and chicken fingers are baked, not fried.

Because good nutrition helps build strong bodies and strong minds, the district's food service staff help ensure students don't leave the cafeteria hungry. Staff accommodate special



Middle schoolers got out of their comfort zones during "Mix It Up at Lunch Day" in November, when they sat at assigned tables and got to know their peers.

requests on the spot and accept pre-orders each morning.

"As long as we have the ingredients we'll make it," said Jewell, explaining that chicken can be added to a garden salad or a turkey and ham sandwich can be prepared without cheese in a wrap, for example.

An extensive selection of sandwiches and salads are available at the middle/high school daily. Sandwiches range from standard peanut butter and jelly, to turkey, ham and bologna and egg or chicken salad. Toppings include lettuce, tomato, onions and cheese, while bread choices include white, wheat and rye as well as wraps.

The elementary school features a different sandwich of the day all week—available on either white or wheat bread.

HEALTHY HABITS LAST A LIFETIME

The district participates in "Choose Sensibly," a national program endorsed by the School Nutrition Association.

The goal behind the program is to offer several snack options that meet the Choose Sensibly nutritional profile—along with a few that do not—to provide students an opportunity to make informed decisions regarding the foods they eat.

Baked chips, pretzels, crackers, granola bars and popcorn are among some of the snack items offered. Sales records indicate that students are in fact making positive choices. Sales of baked, not fried, products are higher than anything else.

In addition to the Choose Sensibly program, the food services department promotes healthier eating habits in other ways, such as offering low-fat versions of salad dressing, yogurt and mayonnaise as well as foods and snacks that do not contain trans fats whenever possible.

FREE AND REDUCED-PRICE MEALS

Breakfast at all schools costs \$1.00 per day. Lunch costs \$1.75 at the elementary school and \$2.00 at the middle/high school.

That translates to just \$8.75 at the elementary school and \$10 at the middle/high school for an entire week's worth of lunch for one child.

For many families these meals may cost much less or nothing at all. Students from households that meet federal income guidelines are eligible for free or reduced-price meals for 25 cents.

For more information, visit the district Web site. ▲



Duanesburg Day offers historical, cultural and fun activities for all ages

Whether you're interested in obtaining a free antique appraisal, learning about local history or playing a virtual video game with a group of friends, there will certainly be something of interest to everyone at the seventh-annual Duanesburg Day.

The event will kick off at 10 a.m. and run through 3 p.m. on Saturday, February 27, at Duanesburg Middle/High School.

The day-long celebration recognizes the community's local heritage and culture—past, present and future. It's a collaborative project between the Duanesburg Historical Society, Duanesburg Area Community Center (DACC) and the Duanesburg Central School District.

ENTERTAINMENT FOR EVERYONE

Families, friends and community members are invited to participate in a variety of hands-on activities

throughout the day, including playing the music video game Rock Band. Perform music from the world's biggest rock artists as a virtual band using drum, bass/lead guitar and microphone peripherals. A nominal fee will be charged to play the game, however, prizes will be awarded with all proceeds benefiting the yearbook.

The DACC will offer physical fitness activities, including tae-kwon-do, boxing, kickboxing and aerobics.

Watch members of Cub Scout Pack 51 and Boy Scout Troop 51 compete in the Pinewood Derby, a racing event in which scouts, with the help of their parents, build their own cars from wood. Following the derby, children will be invited to race cars.

For history buffs, the Duanesburg Historical Society will be selling a wide range of publications. In addition, community members may have their historical stories recorded

for the society's archives.

UNIQUE OPPORTUNITIES ABOUND

Fans of the popular television program Antique Roadshow will want to bring their antiques and collectibles. Jim Kerr and Russ Carlson will be providing free antique appraisals throughout the day.

Parents and guardians may obtain free Operation Safe Child ID cards on the spot from the Schenectady County Sheriff's Department. Cards contains the child's name, biographical information and a fingerprint image of both index fingers, and are extremely helpful to law enforcement in the event a child is reported missing.

STUDENT PROJECTS ON DISPLAY

Student projects continue to be a mainstay of the annual event. Visitors will find a variety of entertaining and informative student projects on display throughout the hallways and the MOCC.

BRING YOUR APPETITE

To keep your hunger satisfied, the Class of 2014 will be selling foods and beverages throughout the day. Make sure you save room for snacks and homemade desserts! Money raised will help fund the senior class trip and other end-of-the year activities.

For more information and a complete schedule of events, visit the district Web site.

In the event of inclement weather, Duanesburg Day will be rescheduled to Sunday, Feb. 28, from 12 to 5 p.m.

Highlights of Duanesburg Day 2010

- View student art and history projects
- Visit local antique dealers, crafters and community/civic vendor booths
- Play Rock Band, a music video game contest to benefit the yearbook
- Bring antiques and collectibles for free appraisals
- Obtain free child ID cards from Schenectady County Sheriff Department's Operation Safe Child program
- Record local histories & purchase Duanesburg Historical Society publications
- Watch the Cub Scout/Boy Scout Pinewood Derby and race a car!
- Participate in the Class of 2011 Silent Auction
- Win door prizes from the Duanesburg Business Association
- Participate in DACC physical fitness activities
- Get a free family photo from ismile as part of a PTSO fundraiser
- Enjoy a variety of foods, many homemade, throughout the day



Parents witness school life during Visitation Day Other opportunities encourage parental involvement year-long

Ever wonder what a typical school day is like for your middle school or high school student?

Nancy Damato, parent of a Duanesburg sixth-grader, recently got a first-hand look inside the classroom activities offered at the middle school when she attended Visitation Day.

Damato proudly watched as her sixth-grade son stood before his entire class to describe the Egyptian pyramid he created at home using sugar cubes. In turn, she said he was excited about her visiting his classes.

Each year, the Duanesburg Central School District welcomes parents and community members to visit the middle/high school and elementary school on separate dates in November.

The event is held in recognition of American Education Week, which was established by the National Education Association to highlight the importance of providing a quality public education to all children.

“We would love to have more parents involved and in attendance whether it’s during Visitation Day or at other events throughout the year.”

—High School Principal
Beth DeLuke



Nancy Damato is pictured with her son during a visit to the middle school.

While many elementary parents take advantage of this annual event, Duanesburg High School Principal Beth DeLuke would like to see an increase in participation at the middle/high school.

“Visitors at the secondary level are most often parents of sixth-graders, particularly if the child is the oldest sibling,” said DeLuke. “I think they’re most interested in observing the class dynamic and watching teachers interact with students.”

According to DeLuke, the discrepancy among grade levels may be attributed to the events’ proximity to open house and parent-teacher conferences, or the possibility that teenagers may discourage their parents from becoming overly involved in school.

However, ongoing research shows that parental involvement in schools improves student achievement, reduces absenteeism, and restores parents’ confidence in their children’s education.

Unlike open house and parent-teacher conferences, parents visit regularly scheduled classes throughout the day—and observe their child(ren) in action as they engage in class discussions; participate in hands-on projects for core courses and specials; interact with peers, teachers and support staff; and deal with the intricacies of school life today.

“We would love to have more parents involved and in attendance whether it’s during Visitation Day or at other events throughout the year,” said DeLuke. “There are plenty of opportunities for parents to volunteer in the classroom—not just at the elementary school, but at the secondary level as well.”

For example, an extra set of hands would be very helpful during science lab activities at the high school.

Parents may contact their child’s teachers to let them know they are interested in helping in the classroom or with fundraising activities. ▲



Fourth-graders bring history to life

Students share knowledge of Native Americans

In just one day, the entire fourth-grade, with help from parent volunteers, faculty members and staff, constructed a Native American village on school grounds—bringing history alive for visitors and other students at Duanesburg Elementary School.

The village, complete with a 20-foot longhouse, fire pit, drying rack, stockade fence, corn garden and tree of peace, was built using materials generously donated by parents and staff.

“This was such a wonderful way to engage children in learning about Native Americans,” said Stacia Cassale, a parent who helped construct the village. “It was such a rewarding experience that they’ll remember forever.”

For two weeks prior to construction, students researched the life, culture and history of the Iroquois and Algonquin people as part of the state’s fourth grade social studies curriculum.

“I wanted students to gain hands-on experience with a simple, more peaceful time as well as to learn how it would be to build without the modern tools we have today,” said fourth-grade teacher Melissa Durrant, who facilitated the project after hearing about a similar one in a neighboring school district.

Students were assigned to one of eight clans where they used their collective knowledge to develop a presentation on a specific area of the village. They also made and wore necklaces that signified their designated clan.



A group of fourth-graders, pictured above, explain the stockade fence they helped build on school grounds as part of a history project.

As elementary school students and other visitors toured the village during the week, fourth-graders served as guides, using their presentations to explain the significance of their respective areas and answer questions.

“The pride in their voices and expressions on their faces as they explained and demonstrated each part of the village to their peers is something I will never forget,” said PTSO President Tina Gamache. “The teamwork they displayed and the hands-on experience they gained is something that could not be matched inside a classroom.”

In addition to hands-on experience, students gained confidence speaking publicly,

listening, writing and team-building.

Many students, like Alex Onorati, indicated that learning the traditional skill of lashing was a favorite part of the project. Similar to tying a knot, lashing was used by Native Americans to prevent the longhouse from falling apart.

To culminate their experience, fourth-graders and their parents attended a closing ceremony during which they celebrated their accomplishments and enjoyed refreshments.

“In addition to being a great opportunity for parents and students to work together, we simply could not have done this without the dedicated support of so many volunteers,” said Durrant. ▲



The district has been and remains in contact with New York State and Schenectady County health officials as well as the Centers for Disease Control regarding H1N1. For the most current facts and information regarding this strain of the flu virus, visit the H1N1 resource page of the district Web site.



Donations sought to help fund graduation at Proctors

The Duanesburg Central School District is currently accepting monetary donations to help fund the Class of 2010 graduation. This year's ceremony will be held at Proctor's Theatre in Schenectady on Saturday, June 26, at 7 p.m.

All donations, both big and small, are welcome. "This is not a fee or requirement," explained Superintendent Christine Crowley. "We are simply making this opportunity public for those who may have an interest."

Donations will help cover the rental fee to hold graduation at Proctor's Theatre. Although the fee is approximately \$3,000, the difference to the district is actually half that cost.

Each year, the district spends approximately \$1,455 to hold graduation at the high school, which covers the cost of running extra utilities, printing graduation materials and paying custodians' overtime. The price difference translates to approximately \$18 per senior.

In response to concerns about the additional cost, the Board of Education agreed this summer not to fund the difference using monies from the 2009-10 budget. To that end, donations are currently being accepted and plans are underway to develop additional fundraising opportunities.

The new venue will provide students, families and community members with a memorable ceremony, in which everyone can

To make a donation, stop by the district office or mail a check, made payable to Duanesburg Central Schools with Graduation Fund written on the memo line, to: Duanesburg Central School District, District Office, c/o Business Administrator, 133 School Drive, Delanson NY 12053.

be comfortably seated and better able to hear keynote speakers and graduates' names being announced as they receive their diplomas.

A committee of students, parents and school officials have been meeting to review the ceremony procedures. ▲

District to save on energy costs with new service

To cut costs without impacting student programs, the Duanesburg Central School District has joined a new service aimed at saving thousands of dollars in energy costs.

"We are excited to announce that we're one of the first districts to join Capital Region BOCES new energy management service," said Superintendent Christine Crowley. "We have long focused our efforts on energy conservation and this is yet another example of how we're continuing to take steps to achieve considerable savings for our taxpayers."

The service helps smaller school districts by allowing them to qualify for assistance from Energy Education, a Texas-based company that helps schools and other organizations nationwide learn how to save on energy costs.

Because Energy Education only works with larger institutions by partnering with other districts through Capital Region BOCES, Duanesburg is eligible

to participate. This is the first time the service has been offered through a BOCES in New York.

The Energy Management Service focuses on making behavioral changes to lower energy costs, rather than adding high-efficiency hardware. To that end, BOCES staff members Tom Schweizer—a Duanesburg graduate—and Dale Johnson will be working extensively with Duanesburg staff at all levels.

They will educate staff on conservation techniques, such as turning off lights, computers and other electrical equipment when possible. In addition, they'll conduct a series of audits examining the district's facilities and identify potential areas for cost-savings.

The cost of the program is paid from the savings on utilities. BOCES guarantees the district will save more than it spends, if not the company will write the district a check to cover the difference.

For periodic updates on the energy savings, visit the district Web site.

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INSIDE

this Issue:

2010-11 BUDGET PLANNING P. 2

*Get involved in your schools through
the budget planning process.*

SCHOOL CAFETERIA P. 3

*Healthy and affordable meals—straight
from Duanesburg cafeterias.*

DUANESBURG DAY P. 4

*Learn more about the district's annual
community celebration on Feb. 27.*

VISITATION DAY P. 5

*Parents get a first-hand look inside the
classroom.*

LONGHOUSE PROJECT P. 6

*With help from volunteers, fourth-
graders create a historical village.*

SPONSOR A GRADUATE P. 7

*Donations are currently being accepted
to help cover the rental fee at Proctors.*

ENERGY CONSERVATION P. 7

*District joins BOCES' new energy
management service.*

Henry "Gus" Geidel joins Board of Education

Henry "Gus" Geidel is the newest member of the Duanesburg Central School District Board of Education. He was appointed to the board on Oct. 6, filling the position left vacant by former board member John Iseman, who resigned in June citing personal reasons. His term was not set to expire until June 30, 2011.

New York state law allows school boards to fill such vacancies by appointment until the next regular election in May. Geidel will serve a term of eight months. He received the fourth-highest number of votes in the May 2009 school board election. However, only three board seats were open at the time. ▲

SAVE THE DATE: SECOND ANNUAL ARTS & CRAFTS FESTIVAL SET FOR MAY 1

Mark your calendar for the Auditorium Fund Committee's second annual Arts and Crafts Festival.

Spend the day shopping on **Saturday, May 1**, while raising money to build an auditorium within the school district. The event will run from **9 a.m. to 5 p.m.** at Duanesburg Middle/High School.

Artists or crafters interested in securing a table for the day must register by April 1. Vendors are being asked to donate 10 percent of their sales to the auditorium fund.

A group of parents and staff formed the committee in 2009.

DON'T GET CAUGHT OUT IN THE COLD!



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