

HURRAH Times



February 2005

A publication
about Happy
Upbeat Retirees
(& other) Residents
Actively Helping
in Naperville
Community Unit
School District 203

Abundant District Programs Need HURRAH More Than Ever

The need for student mentors in this country is at an all-time high. Due in large part to regulations of the "No Child Left Behind" Act, the tutoring business has grown 13 percent since the year 2000, according to news reports. While parents have spent \$3.5 billion trying to get their children up to academic speed in the past four years, HURRAH volunteers have given freely of their time and individual attention since they first appeared in our schools 15 years ago. They have always known the value of one-on-one contact with students, and now that District 203 has instituted even more adjunct study and fluency programs in our schools, HURRAH members have never been more important. Following are just some of the many District 203 programs and

initiatives through which HURRAH volunteers can help cultivate confidence, independence and academic success among students at all school levels.

Study Skills Academy Requires Broad Volunteer Base

"We really need those HURRAH volunteers!" urged Ranch View Elementary Principal Karen Currier, of the human resources all 14 District 203 elementary schools need to run their newly installed "Study Skills Academy" programs. Aided by a \$2,000 per school grant from the Naperville Education Foundation, the Study Skills Academy is a district-wide initiative designed to boost those District 203 elementary-level students who need extra help outside of the classroom. Held after school on site, each study academy employs staff members and volunteers willing to help third through fifth graders with their daily school work and serve as valuable student mentors—in short, people like HURRAH members.

"The Study Skills Academy program is a great vehicle to get HURRAH volunteers into the right places across the district, using their appropriate skills," HURRAH Chairman Russ Marineau told teachers and staff at a recent strategy meeting.

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HURRAH volunteer Ray Garside helps a student with his homework at Prairie Elementary's Study Skills Academy.

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Programs Need HURRAH

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Said Principal Currier, "We have found that students' relationships with older people are really important." Currier's school, Ranch View, has had a study academy in place for the past five years. Concurred the late Ray Garside, formerly a HURRAH helper in Prairie Elementary's Study Skills Academy program, "Study Academy volunteers show the attending students that not only are teachers and parents important to their schooling, but other adults are too. I desperately hope students realize that [the Study Skills Academy] is a good thing—that instead of rushing home to play video games after school, they are forming life-long study habits."



Beebe Seeks More "Study Buddies"

At Beebe Elementary, where first grade teacher Jennifer Gerard initiated a "Study Buddy" program to bolster math and fine motor skills among K-2 graders, HURRAH volunteers are teaming one-on-one with over 20 Beebe students every week. Beginning with former teacher Helen Brassington last spring, the "Study Buddy" team gained five additional HURRAH members this fall, including Gerard's mother, Bettie Hill. The program needs more volunteers, however, especially as it is projected to expand to other schools across the district. "HURRAH members are so important to these students,

both academically and emotionally," said Gerard, who is committed to helping youngsters improve their math and handwriting skills without the expense of private tutors and occupational therapists.

Prairie and Elmwood Request Greater HURRAH Presence

Prairie Elementary Assistant Principal Kathy Klees recently sent each Prairie family a letter soliciting HURRAH candidates for the school's Study Skills Academy as well as its

"Fluent, Literate, Independent" reading program. "In addition to the wonderful parents of children who volunteer at our school," the letter

read, "we can provide additional support for our students if we can attract more HURRAH volunteers."

Elmwood Elementary Reading Specialist Cindy Husar is trying to establish a solid HURRAH base at Elmwood by bringing students into retirement centers to read poetry and, hopefully, generate interest among seniors in local students. Acknowledging the trepidation many older people feel at the prospect of going into the schools, Husar noted: "The most important thing is to get [potential HURRAH members] to see the benefit of volunteering."

Special Education Always in Need of HURRAH

The District 203 Department of Special Education is another area in quest of HURRAH hands, particularly now that

the District's own Special Olympics program (boosted by a \$10,000 gift from HURRAH volunteer Helen Brassington in her late husband's name) is off and running. HURRAH members have been particularly helpful to junior high and high school students with special needs by reading them exhaustive final exam and standardized state test questions. "We always need help in this area," said Naperville Central multi-needs teacher Breanne Fahey, encouraging the ongoing support of HURRAH volunteers in all areas of Special Education.

Endless are the opportunities in District 203 for HURRAH volunteers; everlasting are the effects of such efforts upon students. In a letter praising the HURRAH team at Washington Junior High, two students wrote: "As you go through life, you come upon many people who inspire you and help you make a path that leads to long-term success in the future.

HURRAH tutors take the time to help us understand what we are struggling with in school; they are not just our tutors, they are our friends."

For a comprehensive listing of all of the many District 203 programs and initiatives in need of HURRAH volunteers, contact Director of Community Relations Nina M. Menis at 420-6815, or visit the District 203 Administrative Center at 203 W. Hillside Rd. ✨

HURRAH members are so important to these students, both academically and emotionally.

Jennifer Gerard,
Beebe Elementary School
First Grade Teacher

HURRAH Opens Door to Woman's Quest to Help Students

When Joanne Graham moved to Naperville to be near her granddaughter two years ago, she literally went knocking on other school districts' doors in search of student mentoring opportunities. The former teacher and active school volunteer was accustomed to being useful. But it wasn't until a fellow newcomer told her about District 203's HURRAH program that Graham was able to satisfy her heart's desire.

"I was yearning to get back with small children," said Graham, who tutored students in the Austin, TX, H.O.S.T.S. (Helping One Student to Succeed) reading program for seven years. Before that, she taught second and third graders in Pennsylvania as well as home-bound students too ill or injured to attend school. When her family lived in Barrington, IL, for 11 years, hers was a familiar face in schools there too.

The mother of two grown daughters (one of whom is head of the social science department at Naperville's Neuqua Valley High School), Graham quit full-time teaching when her children were born. She loves it still, however, and credits HURRAH with allowing her the dual benefit of short-term teaching and generous free time. "I take such joy in teaching," said Graham, who is yet another example of a HURRAH volunteer below

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2005 HURRAH Coordinators

As liaisons between the HURRAH organization and the 21 individual District 203 schools, HURRAH coordinators raise awareness of our organization, identify student needs, and facilitate the implementation of appropriate HURRAH initiatives to meet those needs. It is with heartfelt gratitude that we acknowledge the following 2004-05 HURRAH school coordinators:

Sarah Anderson and Cindy Husar, Elmwood Elementary—420-6341

**Kaye Corrigan, Jefferson Junior High—420-6362
(HURRAH Contact Bill Bien)**

Helen Halkias, River Woods Elementary—420-6832

**Sue Hannan, Ellsworth Elementary—420-6635
(HURRAH Contact Char Linne)**

**Tanya Hughes, Mill Street Elementary—420-6356
(HURRAH Contact Polly Davidson)**

**Christine Johnson, Highlands Elementary—420-6335
(HURRAH Contact Dottie Krejci)**

Jan Kenyon, Lincoln Junior High—420-3257 ((HURRAH Contact Bill Bien)

Pat King, Ranch View Elementary—420-6578

**Kathy Klees, Prairie Elementary—420-3892
(HURRAH Contact Paul Harris)**

**Wally Loague, Kennedy Junior High—420-3224
(HURRAH Contact Bill Bien)**

**Lynn Matyas and Pam Vaughan, Maplebrook Elementary—420-6588
(HURRAH Contact David Wise)**

**Karen McKissick and Pat Gaskin, Scott Elementary—420-6477
(HURRAH Contact Ruth Weber)**

**Margie Nickels, Washington Junior High—420-6390
(HURRAH Contact Gene Rados)**

**Lora Nowicki, Steeple Run Elementary—420-6385
(HURRAH Contact Caroline Kalkis)**

Diane Pancoast, Naper Elementary—420-6345

**Jackie Pfeiffer, Naperville Central High—420-6440
(HURRAH Contact Ray Hill)**

Judy Rubenstein, Beebe Elementary—420-6332

**D.J. Skogsberg, Madison Junior High—420-6416
(HURRAH Contact Bill Bien)**

**Dr. Linda Tusin, Meadow Glens Elementary—420-3201
(HURRAH Contact Margene Meis)**

**Tim Wierenga, Naperville North High—420-6483
(HURRAH Contact Ray Hill)**

**Donna Yule, Kingsley Elementary—420-3216
(HURRAH Contact Joanne Graham) ***

HURRAH Couple Take Volunteer Spirit to New Horizons

The kind of volunteerism demonstrated by Jane and Jeff Aitcheson for the past 32 years could very well be the blueprint for organizations like HURRAH. Indeed, long before HURRAH brought volunteers into our schools, the two were a familiar pair to District 203 students. It's



Veteran HURRAH volunteer Jeff Aitcheson tutors a Washington Junior High student. Jeff and his wife, Jane, plan to establish a group like HURRAH in their new town of Erlanger, KY.

no surprise, then, that Jane and Jeff are planning to initiate a HURRAH-like group in the schools near Erlanger, KY, where they recently relocated to be closer to grandchildren.

From the time their two grown children were students at Beebe Elementary, the Aitchesons led a mini-course in model rocket building at the school. In over 30 years, the only time they took off from teaching the course was when their first grandchild was born. "Even college kids come back and thank us for helping them," said Jeff. "When you see how

well they've done, you think, 'maybe I had a part in it,'" added the veteran volunteer, who, along with his wife, was quickly absorbed into HURRAH once it got underway.

A former Beebe aide, Jane read several days a week to Beebe students in grades K-3. Said one of Jane's students, "If I didn't have Mrs. Aitcheson, I wouldn't read as well." Added another, "[Mrs. Aitcheson] made me feel great about myself." Jeff Aitcheson, a retired Bell Labs engineer, joined his wife in reading to Beebe students and tutored Washington Junior High students in math twice a week. Beebe students had high

praise for him too: "Grandpa Aitcheson helped me to understand Martin Luther King, Jr. by reading me books," said one girl. Another offered, "He taught me that you stop at the end of a sentence to take a breath."

The self-designated "Mr. and Mrs. Volunteer" also taught religion to special education students at Naperville's Ss. Peter and Paul. "We fit best working with children, and the teachers made us feel so welcome," said Jeff, acknowledging that the children also made them feel wanted. Even at the junior high

level, noted Jeff, students looked forward to their next session with him. "Sometimes we'd just talk if I sensed that they needed to."

While the Aitchesons are excited about the new home they've built in Erlanger (near Cincinnati), they will undoubtedly miss the town they inhabited for 37 years. Along with Naperville's clean, organized environment, as well as the familiarity he shared with school and community officials, Jeff cited outstanding volunteerism among the things he'll miss most about Naperville.

"I can get a 'yes' out of anybody here," he boasted. "I just hope we're as welcome in Kentucky," added the man who intends to approach both the Erlanger public schools and the parochial school his grandchildren attend about mobilizing a volunteer effort similar to that of HURRAH. "I know it's dangerous to say, but we're going to tell them we're available nine to five, five days a week!" Jeff quipped. ✨

The kind of volunteerism demonstrated by Jane and Jeff Aitcheson for the past 32 years could very well be the blueprint for organizations like HURRAH.



Remembering Ray Garside

HURRAH remembers faithful volunteer Ray Garside, who passed away January 10, 2005, at the age of 83. For three years, Ray devoted generous hours to students at Prairie Elementary, most recently as a tutor in Prairie’s F.L.I. (Fluent, Literate, Independent) reading program and its after-school Study Skills Academy. “Ray was just so engaged and so committed to assisting children; he made kids feel so good about themselves,” said Prairie Assistant Principal Kathy Klees, noting in particular his ability to help students tackle tough math problems.

Born in New Jersey, Ray was a WWII veteran and a long-time engineer at Bell Laboratories. In 1975, he and his late wife, Helen, moved from Rumson, NJ, to Naperville. The father of two sons and a daughter, Ray was blessed with seven grandchildren and a great-grandchild, all of whom he enjoyed immensely. “I’m a typical grandparent,” said Ray shortly before his death. “I just love children.”

That love was very apparent in the relationships he formed with Prairie School youngsters as a member of HURRAH. Quoting the verse on memorial cards at Garside’s January 14 funeral (which read, “When through one man a little more love and goodness, a little more light and truth come into the world—then that man’s life has had meaning”), Kathy Klees declared: “These words expressed [the Prairie community’s] thoughts about Ray perfectly.”

For more about Ray Garside’s efforts as a HURRAH volunteer, see the article entitled “Abundant District Programs Need HURRAH More Than Ever” beginning on page 1 of this newsletter. ✨

Woman’s Quest

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retirement age. In addition to the Kingsley Elementary students she tutors weekly through HURRAH, Graham also helps students in the fluency program at District 204’s Nancy Young Elementary once a week.

“I love watching the discovery, the sparkle in [students’] eyes when they ‘get’ it.” The greatest reward, according to Graham, is in what the children bring to her life. “I come home feeling better having seen a child light up.” The feeling appears to be

mutual. “[Students] don’t mind being brought out of class to see me; there’s no stigma, no teasing. It’s considered a privilege—a get to, not a have to,” said the fit, cheerful volunteer, whose pupils often draw pictures of the sunny smile she wears. Graham

thanks her students’ “super teachers” for introducing her as someone special and important in the schools.

In addition to mentoring young students, Graham has been very instrumental in recruiting new HURRAH volunteers. “Anyone with an interest in children should consider joining HURRAH,” encouraged Graham. “It’s like riding a bike; that nurturing aspect just all comes back.” According to HURRAH Chairman Russ Marineau, “Joanne is a great example of HURRAH’s new emphasis on members who are not yet retired, but have an interest in volunteering. She does an outstanding job.” ✨



HURRAH volunteer Joanne Graham tutors a student at Kingsley Elementary.

“Other R’s” Join HURRAH, Broaden Ranks of Volunteer Base

Last summer, the HURRAH Times featured volunteer Claudia Stenger, who, as a woman in her forties, did not fit the “typical” HURRAH profile of a retired citizen. Since that time, several other volunteers under retirement age have also joined the ranks of HURRAH. More and more, the program is attracting people from all stages of work and life. Please meet some of HURRAH’s newest members, those who are taking the emphasis off of the “Retired” in HURRAH and bringing the unobtrusive little “(& other) Residents” portion of the emblem clearly into focus.



HURRAH volunteer Sarah Anderson, 24, proves that HURRAH is not just for retired citizens anymore.

Sarah Anderson

While this recent college graduate admits that she worried about being too young for HURRAH, the welcome she received at her first HURRAH meeting quickly erased

her doubts. “I wanted to get involved in this area, and HURRAH just seemed like a good fit for me,” said Anderson, 24. Back in hometown Naperville, after receiving a degree in English from Northwest College in Washington state, Anderson plans to pursue a teaching career. “It’s important for people my age to get out there and volunteer,” stressed Anderson, who hopes to help students

with reading and writing. “They need to know that they can make a difference, even if they don’t start a huge career the day they graduate from college.”

Jane Wernette

A former vice president at the Leo Burnett advertising agency, HURRAH newcomer Jane Wernette is lending students her business savvy in marketing classes at Naperville North and Naperville Central High Schools. The stay-at-home mother of three has also served on the Highlands Elementary School Family Community Partnership team for the past six years. “I’m a firm believer in not wasting resources. All of

[we volunteers] have assets that we can pass along to the next generation,” said the British-born Wernette. “It’s amazing how much you learn in the business world that can be shared with the school community. It’s a win-win situation; the more you give, the more you get back.”

Debbie Shipley

As Vice President of the District 203 Board of Education, Debbie Shipley has a particularly keen view of students’ needs.

“HURRAH takes great strides toward meeting those needs,” said Shipley. “There’s nothing like a good, one-on-one role

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HURRAH “Champions” Win \$1,000 National Prize

Midwest Living magazine has been very, very good to HURRAH. In addition to the national attention it brought HURRAH in a feature article last year, the magazine recently awarded HURRAH \$1,000 in its first annual “Champions in Education” contest celebrating outstanding volunteer efforts in schools across 12 Midwestern states. The honor was well-earned, as only 32 of 600 contestants won money to benefit their schools and further counteract the pervasive education budget cuts that inspired many of these volunteer programs in the first place.

“We acknowledged those volunteers who’ve made a substantial difference in their schools,” said *Midwest Living* Managing Editor and contest judge Trevor Meers. “Obviously, HURRAH is in that category.” Meers added that he and his fellow judges (including Olympic medallist Jackie Joyner-Kersey, *Midwest Living* Editor-in-Chief Dan Kaercher and eminent educators from major Midwestern colleges and universities) reviewed numerous entries from student mentoring organizations like HURRAH. Despite the competition, however, HURRAH was one of only ten \$1,000 first place prize winners. Twenty winners received \$250 second place prizes, one parent was awarded an Outstanding Volunteer prize, and an elementary school in Granger, Indiana, won the contest’s \$10,000 grand prize for its parent volunteer

“Other R’s” Broaden Base

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model for children—that one special person they can count on.” A former critical care nurse, this mother of four has worn countless volunteer hats in our schools and community and is looking to HURRAH to connect her with young children again. “Three of my children are out of the house, and my last is finishing high school!” Shipley lamented.

Bob Fieseler

Like Debbie Shipley, Bob Fieseler is also watching his fourth child go through high school; he, too, wants to

remain active in the District 203 school system through HURRAH. A patent lawyer, Fieseler is helping Madison Junior High science students figure out how to drop an egg from two stories without breaking it. “I gave [students] some ideas about how inventors create solutions to that type of problem,” said Fieseler, who earlier donated his services to procure a trademark registration for District 203’s apple-on-a-globe-stand logo. Fieseler will also be putting his foreign language skills to use by helping a Spanish-speaking student at Madison. Above Fieseler’s professional and multiple other pursuits, the New York native considers himself a

husband and father first. “More than anything,” he said, “I like knowing that at least one student will benefit in some way from interacting with me.”

No matter what your age or career status, HURRAH needs you! Above all, District 203 schools and students need you. To find out more about the many ways in which you can have a positive, lasting effect on a child’s life, contact HURRAH Chairman Russ Marineau at 420-1029 or District 203 Director of Community Relations Nina M. Menis at 420-6815. If you’re already a HURRAH volunteer, please encourage your friends and associates to make a difference today. ✨

force of 500 in a school of 367 students. Contest winners ran the gamut of parents, students, community citizens and teachers who’ve gone above and beyond the call of duty.

According to Meers, the “Champions in Education” judging panel based its decisions upon those groups and programs which best satisfied the criteria of widespread impact and scope, creativity, teamwork and the ability to be replicated. Of this latter criterion, Meers said, “The great thing about HURRAH is that it can be applied elsewhere.” Indeed, according to HURRAH Chairman Russ Marineau and District 203 Superintendent Dr. Alan Leis, other school districts are catching wind of the impact HURRAH is having on District 203 students and taking

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Dr. Alan Leis, District 203 Superintendent of Schools

steps to implement similar programs in their schools. “We continually get questions from other school districts about how to start a program like HURRAH,” said Leis, who nominated HURRAH for the “Champions” contest. HURRAH received additional praise in letters to contest judges from appreciative District 203 students as well as Naperville’s Mayor George Pradel, a HURRAH volunteer himself, and Southern Illinois

University’s Intergenerational Initiative Director Dr. Jane Angelis.

“We are very grateful to be part of a community that believes in the promise and value of public education,” said Dr. Leis. “The recent recognition of HURRAH’s outstanding accomplishments by *Midwest Living* magazine and local media reflects how fortunate we are and gives us a very public opportunity to say ‘thank you’ to our fine HURRAH volunteers.” ✨

