

## Edina Students Engage in Service Learning

*Learning adds meaningful component to service projects*

I hear and I forget.  
 I see and I remember.  
 I do and I understand.  
 -old Chinese proverb

Pulling buckthorn and garlic mustard is usually not the way typical sixth-graders would prefer to spend their day. But if you make the work interesting and meaningful by incorporating learning into the process, you'll be surprised at how a sixth-grader's attitude changes.

At least that's what happened to a group of sixth-graders from Valley View Middle School when they participated in a service learning project last year at Eden Wood Center, a program center in Eden Prairie that provides services for children and adults with developmental disabilities.

"The students had a lot of prep before they went to the center for their day of service," said Donna Klemenhagen, a sixth-grade science teacher at Valley View Middle School.

"That made a huge impact on the kids because they knew the purpose of the center and who they were helping. They made a personal connection."

Service learning is a teaching method that ties in-depth learning to a service project.

In service learning, an educator looks for an opportunity for the students to learn something

about the population for whom they are providing the service.

Klemenhagen seized the opportunity to weave learning into the service project so her students could make that personal connection. Curriculum Resources and Programs (CRP) coordinated presentations by guest speakers to help prepare the students for what they were going to experience. For instance, they learned in advance how invasive plants damage the forest ecosystem and how to remove them. They also planted vegetable seeds, studied their growth and then transplanted them at the center. In addition, they learned about the needs of people with disabilities and the adaptive equipment that is used at the center.

The sixth-graders made a big impression on the Eden Wood Center employees, who worked side by side with them in small groups. One staff member said they had never seen a group so well prepared to work.

Julie Rogers Bascom, the service learning coordinator for Edina Public Schools, said students who participate in service learning are so much more committed to the task and are thus well prepared.

"Data indicates that when you combine the instructional goals with service goals, learning

*I will walk away with a sense of pride, knowing I did something wonderful for a great cause*



**Valley View Middle School students take a break from pulling buckthorn and garlic mustard at Eden Wood Center.**

goes deeper and it's more meaningful for the students," she said. "Service learning is a way to engage students in real life issues. Our goal as educators is not just to impart knowledge and educate with facts and figures, but to encourage kids to be active citizens."

This was evidenced when one student said to a classmate, "Isn't it great to feel like you're really helping people?"

Another student said, "I will walk away with a sense of pride, knowing I did something wonderful for a great cause."

The sixth-graders from Valley View will be doing another service learning project at Eden Wood Center this spring.

**Service Learning: to page 5**



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# Superintendent's Column

## Best Days Ahead for the District

by Ric Dressen, Superintendent  
superintendent@edina.k12.mn.us



As we look to the future, the challenges facing our school district are significant. We are living in times of disruptive change, exponential growth in information through technology, and resource limitations. These resource

limitations include funding, time, technology access, and school facilities. I believe that, just as our District has overcome challenges in the past, we will do it again. Yes, the best days for Edina Public Schools are ahead of us.

My belief is based on the following five factors that will advance our educational mission and ensure successful, innovative and personalized learning for our young learners.

### Focus on Students

Our community and staff continue to place a high value on young people and their education. The students' academic and extracurricular successes demonstrate this commitment. Our mission's focus on educating all individuals to "thrive in a rapidly changing, culturally diverse and global society" will continue to be the basis for critical decisions in the District.

### Strong District Position

Our school district is well-positioned to survive and thrive during these challenging times. Our talented teachers, administrators and support staff have amazing skills and continue to improve upon these skills through advanced training. The District's leadership has created a healthy financial reserve, which will ease the projected revenue shortfalls in the upcoming years. We will continue to advance programs and services accessing these strengths.

### Outstanding Strategic Planning

Educational research continues to validate our district's strategic focus on creating personalized learning experiences for all students. Further, we are ensuring that our strategic initiatives are aligned to the mission and demonstrate accountability. We are also developing strategies to exit procedures, programs, and learning that are no longer critical to our work in the 21st century.

### Innovative Culture

Our district has a long tradition of innovation. It is truly part of our educational culture. Our staff consistently demonstrates creativity and collaborative problem-solving, both in the classroom and at the program level, to find enhanced approaches to advance learning. We will need this spirit of innovation to assist us in seeking solutions to the challenges we face.

### Great Team

Our district is fortunate to have staff, parents, community members, and students working together and celebrating together as a team. This teamwork is a real strength for the Edina Public Schools.

The administration and School Board will keep staff and the community informed as our planning evolves. I know there will be times that we may be struggling with the challenges facing our school district, but I believe that these five identified factors will pull us through these turbulent times and guide our district to a bright future for our students.

### Ric Dressen

Superintendent, Edina Public Schools

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ric Dressen". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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More stories and a complete calendar of events can be found at [www.edina.k12.mn.us](http://www.edina.k12.mn.us)

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# Edina PCN Speaker Forum Gets Back to Nature



## Edina PCN Speaker Forum

*The Last Child in the Woods*

**Marti Erickson**

Monday, April 11, 2011  
7:00 – 9:00 p.m.  
Highlands Elementary Gymnasium  
Free

Do you have a child with “nature-deficit disorder?”

Many of today’s kids are out of touch with nature. Their busy educational and social schedules can keep them separated from the very basic pleasure of being outdoors in nature.

What impact does this separation from nature play in the development of children?

Erickson is passionate about the role of nature in children’s development and hopes to spur a movement to reunite children with the natural world.

Marti Erickson, Ph.D. is cofounder and board member of Children & Nature Network. She is founding director of the University of Minnesota’s ground-breaking Children, Youth & Family Consortium, and now serves as consultant and director emeritus. Marti Erickson is well-known for her research and writing on parent-child attachment, children’s mental health, and strategies for working with high-risk children and families.

Hailed as “an absolute must-read” by the *Boston Globe* and “too tantalizing to ignore” by *Audubon* magazine, *Last Child in the Woods* is an inspiring work that proves children need nature as much as nature needs children.



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## UPCOMING EVENTS

### March

- 1 Masterworks Choral Concert  
Men's Chorus, Chamber Singers, 6 p.m., EPAC  
Masterworks Choral Concert  
Concert Choir, Men's Chamber Singers, Bel Canto, 8 p.m., EPAC
- 14 School Board Meeting, 7 p.m. ECC 349
- 15 High School Orchestra Concerto Concert, 7:30 p.m., Fick
- 22 High School Orchestra Symphonic/Varsity Band Concert, 8 p.m. Fick

### April

- 11 School Board Meeting, 7 p.m. ECC 349
- 28–30 High School Theater Spring Show, 7:30 p.m., EPAC

### May

- 12 High School Orchestra Cabaret, 7:30 p.m., EPAC
- 16 School Board Meeting, 7 p.m. ECC 349
- 19–20 Happenin' Concert, 7:30 p.m., Fick
- 24 Concert Band Concert, 7:30 p.m., EPAC
- 26 Symphonic/Varsity Band Concert, 7:30 p.m., EPAC
- 31 Elementary Orchestra East Concert (CC, CN,HD), 7 p.m., ECC/ND Aud

### June

- 2 Elementary Orchestra West Concert (CS, CV, ND), 7 p.m., ECC/ND Aud
- 14 Commencement
- 20 School Board Meeting, 7 p.m. ECC 349



## Dr. Robert Ouren and William Webb selected as 2010 MMEA Educators of the Year

Dr. Robert Ouren and William Webb have been selected as 2010 Educators of the Year by the Minnesota Music Educators Association (MMEA). They received their awards during the 2011 MMEA Midwinter In-Service Clinic, February 17-19, 2011, at the Minneapolis Convention Center.

Dr. Robert Ouren has been teaching music in Minnesota for 35 years. He has taught students of all ages, from beginners to adults, during his tenures in Caledonia, Winona, Pine Island, the University of Minnesota, the FAIR School, and Edina. He currently teaches band at South View Middle School after having completed a four-year term as Teaching and Learning Specialist for the Arts for Edina Public Schools.

"I am humbled by this award," said Ouren. "To be selected by colleagues and peers in my field, all of whom could be candidates in their own right, is an incredible honor. I am very appreciative and thankful."

William Webb was band director at Edina High School for 24 years. Last year, he left high school band directing to take a position as a fifth-grade band director for Concord, Highlands and Cornelia Elementary Schools.

"I absolutely loved teaching high school band during my career at Edina High School and at Spring Lake Park High School," said Webb. "At this point in my career I am equally thrilled to be teaching our Edina elementary band

students and watching their enthusiasm and development. Every year I become even more passionate about the joys, benefits and rewards of music and music education."

Ouren and Webb have inspired thousands of music students throughout their illustrious careers. They have even influenced the career path of numerous pupils. One such person is

none other than Edina High School (Class of '96) band director, Andy Richter.

"Dr. Bob Ouren and Mr. Bill Webb were my high school band directors and they each had a significant impact on my interest in becoming a band director myself," said Richter. "They provided opportunities for me to learn about leadership, musical expression, and creation at a high level. I am grateful for their mentorship in my life and career . . . and am honored to now be working with them in the very school system I grew up in."

The **Minnesota Music Educators Association's** mission is to provide high quality music education for every student in Minnesota. To achieve this mission, MMEA provides various resources for its more than 2,000 members, including an annual

in-service conference and a quarterly magazine, *Interval*. The MMEA sponsors All-State bands, choirs, orchestras, and jazz ensembles; and provides opportunities for its members' students to enrich their musical experiences through elementary and junior high festivals.



**Dr. Robert Ouren**



**William Webb**



## Community Quotes

We asked community members, staff and students about their favorite moments as students in Edina Public Schools. This is what they said:

**Julie Hurley, Class of '89, Edina Community Member** — "One highlight of school for me was being a part of the concert choir my senior year. Through choir I was able to meet a lot of great people I may not have had other classes with or been able to get to know well otherwise. We had the opportunity to travel to Washington D.C. for a tour and performed on the steps of the Capitol, in the Senate Rotunda, and at the National Cathedral, and got to see almost all of the well-known monuments and memorials. That was pretty powerful (and I wasn't even all that interested in history!)."

**Sujit Varadhan Fourth-Grader, Highlands Elementary School** — "My favorite part of being in the CP Program at Highlands is that I have friends from different grades and I have learned to get along with children older and younger than me at the same time. I think that makes school more fun."

**Ann Dickey, Class of '88, Edina Community Member** — "I have two very different ideas as to how to respond. One is a memory I have from my sixth-grade year at Highlands. My teacher, Mr. Walton, would have a mystery person of the week. He would provide three clues and we had one week to figure out who it was. I loved spending the time pouring over the clues with my mom as we uncovered the mystery person of the week."

"I also have a very strong memory of our golf team winning the state tournament my senior year. At the end of the tournament, the three seniors on the golf team had to hustle back to Edina, because we were graduating that same day. Walking onto Kuhlman Field, wearing my graduation gown and being recognized as the state champions was a moment in time I will never forget."

**Sarah (Johnson) Wohlrabe, Class of '94, Edina Community Member** — "One of my favorite Edina High School memories was the Pops concert. The camaraderie and teamwork were amazing! When the lights came on, the music played, and people cheered, it was worth all the hard work."

### Peace Readers

Service Learning can take many forms. The service part can be physical, like pulling invasive plant species, or it can be philosophical, like discussing ways to incorporate peace in your life. Any act of peace can be considered an act of service.

When Rosemary Rink, a third-grade teacher at Creek Valley Elementary School, wanted to increase her students' reading fluency and comprehension, she had her students practice using books with messages about peace. Rink carefully selected 20 books, but then allowed her students to pick the books they wanted to read. Subjects included: dealing with anger, friendship, race, being the new kid, appreciation of diversity, and bullying. The students then practiced the reading strategies with their books and studied the peace messages with the hope of developing their own path to peace.

"Since they read so many peace books, they were better able to identify what peace is and understand that it isn't just an absence of war," said Rink. "It is also harmonious relationships, showing integrity, compassion, inner contentment, safe relationships, appreciation of diversity and so much more."

Once the students were comfortable reading a book and understood its peace message, they read the book to a younger student. "Through rich discussions, third-graders were able to help their younger buddies discover the peace message of the book they read. They were then able to help their buddy find his or her own path to peace," said Rink.

To measure the impact of the peace readers' project, Rink did a fluency test one month before it began and one at the conclusion of the project.

The improvement in her students' reading skills was noticeable. "It probably wasn't the only thing that helped them grow in comprehension and fluency, but I definitely saw an improvement, which is important in third grade," said Rink.

Rink was able to purchase the books and materials for the peace reader project with a grant from the Edina Education Fund. She plans on repeating the program this spring.

### Fulfilling the Social Contract

Claude Sigmund, ninth-grade government teacher at South View Middle School, also includes service learning in his curriculum. "Part of the social contract is people need to give back to the system, otherwise the system falls apart," he said. "Democracy is dependent on citizens being civically engaged."

At the beginning of the school year, Sigmund introduces service learning by asking his students a series of questions: What is the role of government? What is our role as citizens? What would our country be like if no one volunteered? How much better would our country be if more people volunteered? Could we solve some of the problems of society by volunteering?

"This is not a three-week project. It is integrated into the entire school year," said Sigmund. "The students spend the first semester researching agencies and issues they are personally passionate about; second semester they volunteer and document their experiences on a web blog."

In the six years Sigmund has been doing this project, students have chosen a wide variety of issues, including poverty, animal abuse, community gardening, water quality, autism and AIDS. They have also tutored elementary



Creek Valley Peace Readers

students, taught piano to children whose families couldn't afford lessons, and supervised children so single mothers could take classes.

Sigmund said there are four main goals of the project. The first is to have the students realize teenagers can have an impact on society. The second is to understand there is a civic responsibility to participate in government systems. The third is to grasp that the world is bigger than "our myopic view of home." And the fourth is that the students can learn from anyone, no matter who they are.

In addition, the students pick up some valuable "real world" experience doing research, making cold calls to agencies, conducting video interviews, and learning organizational skills. "These are the life skills that will pay off later," said Sigmund.

By the end of the school year, Sigmund's students are the ones asking the questions: What else can be done? What greater role could the government play? What legislation could help our particular causes? Whose responsibility is it to keep our agencies running — the government or citizens?

When teachers like Klemenhausen, Rink and Sigmund hear these kinds of thoughtful questions, they know they have successfully engaged their students in a service learning project.



Editor's note: For more information or to become involved in service learning in the Edina Public Schools, go to <https://sites.google.com/a/apps.edina.k12.mn.us/service-learning-edina/>



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## Edina Community Center Woodshop Provides Outlet for Creativity, Coffee and Camaraderie

*Woodworkers build friendships in addition to wood projects*

The sign on the door simply says “Woodshop,” but members of the daytime open woodshop class at the Edina Community Center use words like “social club,” “adult day care” and even “family” to describe the place — and people — they hold near and dear to their hearts.

To them it’s more than just a shop to make objects out of wood; it’s a place to build relationships, feel a sense of camaraderie and discuss current events.

“Every day at 10:00 a.m., we turn off the machines and sit down and have coffee and cookies,” said Frank DuRocher, the incumbent woodshop president.

“And we try to solve the world’s problems from 14 different perspectives,” interjected Harold Hanson, a retired doctor.

“But we don’t solve anything,” added Don Sable, a retired engineer.

“We actually tell jokes, make announcements, talk about shop safety and socialize,” said DuRocher, bringing the conversation back on

topic. “This is a very social group. People tend to stay after the woodworking is done.”

Retired Edina teacher Bill Welch shares the same sentiments. “It is more of a fellowship thing,” he said. “It is a fun place to come.”

While the class does provide an important social element to this bunch of mostly retired woodworkers, it is first and foremost a woodshop. Some serious woodworking gets done here. The daytime class has around 20 to 30 members who are working on projects that include grandfather clocks, furniture, cabinets, bowls, holiday gifts, children’s toys and items for local churches.

Every December, the woodworkers display their projects at the Woodshop Open House. The public is invited to walk through the festive-looking shop, have some food and drink, sing some carols and even meet Santa Claus. They also get to mingle with the woodworkers and see their handcrafted projects up close.

The camaraderie and friendship that is such a big part of the shop is apparent during the open house. The woodworkers seem to share a communal pride, as they are quick to point out each other’s projects and compliment each other. They share in the credit because they know the woodshop means so much to all of them.

It really is more than a shop class; it is an activity that gets them out of the house where they can be with friends who have become like family. After all, what they are really building are friendships that will last the rest of their lives.

The Edina Community Center Woodshop, formerly the East Edina High School Shop, opened its doors



**Tom Peter, right, shows Don Sable one of his projects.**

to the public shortly after the two Edina high schools merged in 1981. Since then, it has seen hundreds of woodworkers and aspiring woodworkers enroll in the woodshop orientation class and open shop.

To participate in the open shop, one must first take the orientation class, which is currently being taught by Sable. The next orientation begins Wednesday, April 6.

During the six-week orientation class, students learn proper and safe techniques for using the power equipment and tools while working on a small project, like a desktop organizer or a clock.

After the six classes are completed, students may join an open shop class for the remainder of the session, and are allowed to enroll in future open shop sessions.

In addition to the morning open shop class, which meets Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to noon, there is an evening class that meets Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m., and on Saturday, 8:30 to 2:30 p.m.

<http://www.edina.k12.mn.us/community/adult/index.html>



**Dr. Harold Hanson showcases his cherry tables at the Woodshop Open House.**



# Volunteer Spotlight

*Volunteers with different backgrounds help make a difference*

Tom Spaeth and Christine Aboussouan are two community volunteers who help enrich the lives of Edina Public Schools students by sharing their time and talents.

Spaeth is a retired businessman who volunteers once a week as a "homework helper" at Cornelia Elementary School. He has roots in Edina where he is an active community baseball coach, parent and grandparent. He enjoys the time he spends helping students because he sees the positive results.

"An interested, caring and dependable adult can make a huge difference in a young person's life," he said. "I have volunteered for two years and have asked for the same children each year. Watching their progress, both academically and socially, is extremely rewarding to me."

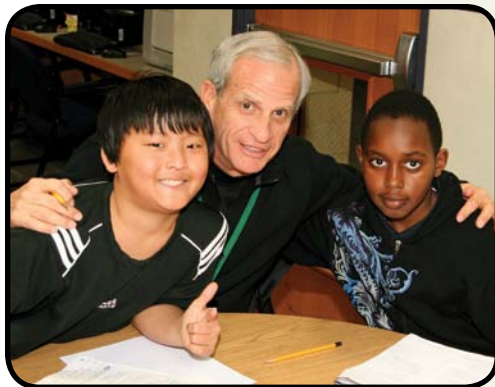
Aboussouan is a Montessori teacher who teaches French in her home. She was born in Switzerland, has lived in Asia, and has a rich history of volunteering. She started volunteering while living in Singapore. She moved to Minneapolis three years ago and volunteered at Whittier International Elementary School. A year ago, she moved to Edina and is now assisting with kindergarten art at Highlands Elementary School.

"It was important for me to be a part of the community and give the kids the attention they deserve," she said. "It's a lot of fun to help them and it's really rewarding."

In the 2009 – 2010 school year, more than 1,100 community volunteers enhanced the learning experience of students in Edina Public Schools. According to Marcia Friedman, volunteer program supervisor, this number continues to grow as more opportunities are being added in the District. "We will always need volunteers," she said. "Our schools are discovering more ways they can benefit by bringing in volunteers."

There are multiple ways to volunteer. Some community volunteers visit classrooms to speak about their work experiences and expertise; this helps connect the classroom subject matter with the real world. Other volunteers are working to help reinforce basic skills or assist with homework through one-to-one or small group instructions.

It all begins with a phone call or a visit to the District's web site. You are invited to learn about the ways you, as a community member, can volunteer with Edina Public Schools. Call us at 952-848-4926 or visit our web site at [www.edina.k12.mn.us](http://www.edina.k12.mn.us) and choose the Community Education drop-down.



**Tom Spaeth with Tenzin Lhaung, left, and Eltayeb Ismail**



**Christine Aboussouan**



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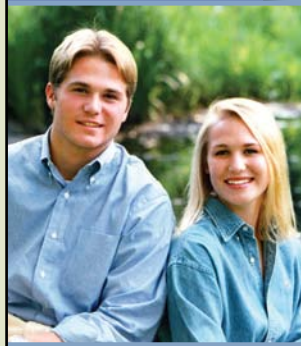
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## Cornelia Elementary School to Build New Playground

Next fall, Cornelia Elementary School and Cornelia Park will be home to a new, 21st century playground. This new community playground will incorporate:

- Innovative play structures that engage children in continuous play
- Inclusive and accessible areas for students with disabilities
- Sustainable and durable materials

### Why now?

- The current playground is nearing the end of its life cycle.
- The current playground is not accessible to all children.
- Today's play structures are safer, more durable and sustainable.

"One of the main hopes I have is that Cornelia's new playground will be a focal point for the whole community and neighborhood," said Cornelia principal Chris Holden. "It will be a real magnet for all families in southeast Edina."



Cornelia Elementary School Students "hanging out" during recess on one of the current playground structures.

To date, \$120,000 has been raised for this project. Individuals, businesses, foundations and government agencies have all made contributions toward the Cornelia community's new playground. However, to make this dream a reality, an additional \$55,000 needs to be raised.

"We are so grateful for the support we've received from the entire community, but there is much more work to be done if we want to be ready for next year," said Holden.

"Our playground is one of the oldest in the city, and serves not only Cornelia students but the surrounding neighborhoods as well. A replacement is well overdue."

If you would like to help create inspiring play experiences for all our children please:

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- Share your time, expertise and/or materials during the community build. Contact John Johnson at:  
[jj.landarch@gmail.com](mailto:jj.landarch@gmail.com)

If you would like more information about the Cornelia community's new playground, visit [www.corneliaplayground.com](http://www.corneliaplayground.com) or call Chris Holden at 952-848-4699.

