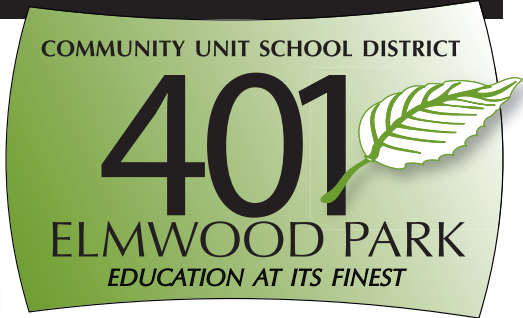


FOCUS



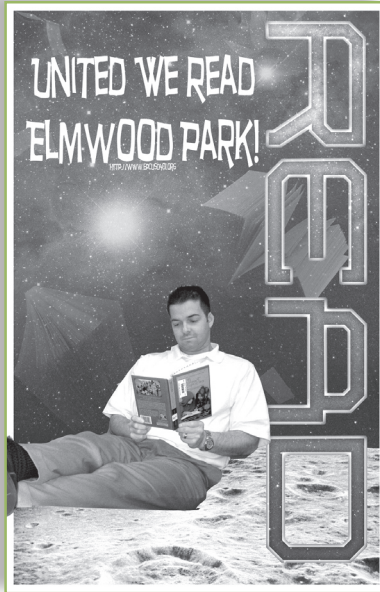
on Education

Volume 15 Issue 2 Winter 2010

www.epcusd401.org

“United We Read, Elmwood Park!” Takes Off

In cooperation with the Village of Elmwood Park and the Elmwood Park Public Library, Elmwood Park CUSD 401 is sponsoring a major reading event: “United We Read, Elmwood Park!” Special events for all ages are underway throughout the Elmwood Park community and in all Elmwood Park schools. Participating in the celebration is easy: Just read the *New York Times*’ best selling book, *Three Cups of Tea: One Man’s Mission to Fight Terrorism and Build Nations, One School at a Time*, by Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin.



Elm Middle School Assistant Principal Adam Paris is featured on this poster for “United We Read, Elmwood Park!”

While climbing the world’s second tallest mountain, Greg Mortensen became ill. *Three Cups of Tea* tells the true story of his rescue by residents of an impoverished Pakistan village. Mortensen chose to repay his hosts by building a school for their children. Recognizing an even greater need, he created a foundation that has, to date, funded and built 130 schools in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

The goal of “United We Read, Elmwood Park!” is to involve people of all ages through an exciting, inspiring book that is available in several versions for different reading levels. The K-4 version of the book is called *Listen to the Wind*. A book for older children in intermediate grades is also available, as are large print, Spanish and audio versions.

Continues on page 3

An Invitation to Digital Generation v401 District 401’s First Technology Showcase

The public is invited to experience how Elmwood Park students of all ages are using technology in new and exciting ways to enhance learning. “**Digital Generation v401**” will take place throughout Elmwood Park High School on Wednesday, March 24, 6:30 to 8:00 PM. According to Irina Ziemann, the district’s technology director, “The district wide technology event is named ‘Digital Generation v401’ because, for the first time in history, all District 401 students belong to a generation that has always used the Internet in their education. Today’s kids were born into a digital, networked world that defines how they learn, communicate, socialize, and play. This is an historic change from all previous generations. Our Technology Showcase is called ‘version 401’ because it exhibits the particular flavor of District 401 students’ digital generation.”

The FREE event demonstrates the myriad ways Elmwood Park students are using technology at home and at school. Adults and children can participate in many hands-on, interactive activities, including recording a podcast, finding their homes on Google Earth, creating a multi-media poster, challenging a teacher to Guitar Hero, using classroom “clickers” to take a poll, and much more. Participants can try new technology communications tools, including chatting with someone in a virtual world, using Skype to connect with friends in far places, and “tweeting” a group of people. People who attend the event will have the opportunity to win exciting technology prizes. “Digital Generation v401 promises to be a fun, interactive evening for adults and children of all ages,” Mrs. Ziemann concluded.

On March 25 and 26, the district will host a **FREE PRESCHOOL SCREENING**. The screening is for all Elmwood Park children who will be 3, 4, or 5 years old by September 1, 2010. Screening will take place at the Early Childhood Center, 4 W. Conti Parkway. Participants can learn what programs will benefit their children. Appointments are necessary: **register by March 8 by calling (708) 583-5867.**

District Responds to Holiday Need

ALL STATE THEATRE FESTIVAL

"CHICAGO" WOWS, GOES TO



Stars of the EPHS production of "CHICAGO."

Students in Elmwood Park High School's theater program recently earned a tremendous honor: they performed their fall musical, *CHICAGO*, for the Illinois High School Theatre Festival at Illinois State University in Bloomington! Each year, throughout the first full week of January, over 4,000 high school students from across Illinois attend the festival to meet other students in the dramatic arts, attend workshops and see student performances. Among this year's nearly 70 student presentations, the EPHS production of *CHICAGO* was one of the few full-length productions selected by festival representatives to be performed in its entirety.

Michael Popplewell, the choral general music director for grades 7-12, was the producer and vocal director of *CHICAGO*. He explained, "Teachers and students felt so strongly about the professionalism of *CHICAGO* that we submitted it for festival review. After three festival representatives watched the entire performance, *CHICAGO* was selected!" Because the musical was performed at the school in November, and the Theatre Festival was in January, weekly rehearsals kept going until the holiday break. The cast even held a dress rehearsal on their first day back to school.

Attending the festival meant bringing 60+ students to Bloomington. "We packed up our entire show—sets, costumes, band instruments and more—on a U-Haul truck, drove to Bloomington, unpacked the truck, and quickly set up on a college stage. Then, the students performed to a packed house!" Mr. Popplewell proudly stated.

The EPHS theater program takes place after school. Currently 60-80 students, freshman to seniors, are involved in the musical productions. Three shows are generally produced each year. Last year, a musical, a play and an improvisational comedy "sketch" show were presented.

The hard work and dedication of many people—students, teachers and volunteers—have made EPHS's theater program grow to the successful program it is today. Among them is the program's director, EPHS alumnus James Kozyra, who, after graduating from Dominican University, studied with Second City and iO improvisational theaters. He has performed, written and directed numerous shows produced by Second City. While pursuing an acting career, he devotes many hours to the EPHS drama students. His efforts on behalf of the school are fueled by alumni pride.

Throughout the year, Elmwood Park students reach out to others through numerous service projects. During the holidays, students responded to the increased need by furthering their efforts. A few of the holiday projects are listed below.

Students and educators gave generously to the annual Village Holiday Food Drive. **Elmwood Park High School** alone collected over 2,000 items. Also at the high school, The National Honor Society (NHS) led the "Adopt-A-Kid" program, where EPHS students shopped for gifts for 200 Chicago children. NHS students also participated in the village's tree lighting ceremony and manned the refreshment table for the village. DECA members raised \$200 for the Epilepsy Foundation through a teacher vs. student volleyball game. DECA also raised \$300 and collected 240 cans of food for the local food pantry through their teacher talent show (see page 4). The Varsity Club continued to assist at soup kitchens, through Loaves and Fishes, a volunteer program that feeds the hungry. One Monday a month, the 35 student athletes help out at a food kitchen, shopping for food, cooking, serving and cleaning. The Varsity Club held a Turkey Trot race before Thanksgiving that collected \$300 for the Chicago Anti-Hunger Federation. The club will also have a fund raiser in April for the homeless.

At **Elm Middle School**, the Student Council organized a drive for food and amenities, collecting over 1,000 items. Student Council continues to collect holiday cards for St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital as part of the hospital's recycling fund raiser. Students in one advisory provided a holiday dinner and gift card for a family through the Salvation Army. They also donated hats, gloves and scarves to needy families. Other students collected candy for the troops. Teachers donated 40 toys to the Leyden Area Toy Drive.

Elmwood School students collected toys and outerwear for Lydia's House, whose mission is to end domestic violence, and the local Sheridan-Carroll Charitable Organization. A canned food drive raised 1,000 food items and also paper goods/toiletries for Sheridan-Carroll; students donated \$300 to the Make-A-Wish Foundation and participated in a Scholastic News program that donates books to needy children. "Our students and their families have shown enthusiasm in participating in the various charitable activities. We are grateful for their generosity as we help those in need," observed Elmwood School Principal Sue Ponzio.

The **John Mills School** Student Council collected over 1,200 cans and other nonperishable food items. During the holidays, the Student Council decorated the trees in Central Park with distinctive items from each class. The school choir thrilled the Early Childhood Center students with holiday songs from their winter concert. The John Mills staff decided to forgo any holiday gift giving at the school and gave money and clothes to 10 needy school families. Students loved sending holiday cards to soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Illinois State Scholars

Thirty-two EPHS seniors are Illinois State Scholars! The Illinois State Scholar Program recognizes Illinois high school students who rank in the top 10% of the state's graduating seniors for their academic achievement. Rankings are based on a combination of ACT and/or SAT I test score results and class rank at the end of the sixth semester in high school. The Board of Education honored these students at their January board meeting.

Congratulations to: **Stephanie Burke, Eduardo Cano, Victoria Cervantes, Kevin Craddock, John Dicristofano, Allison Fabino, Anthony Guidara, Teresa Guidara, Ulyana Homeniuk, Abigail Idefonso, Elizabeth Janis, Robert Kaminski, Klaudyna Kawula, Marisa LaGreca, Ashley Lavorini, Kristofer Lopardo, Natalie Maggiore, Mark Marzillo, Joaquin Mondragon, Andrew Noble, Matthew O'Malley, Kevin Pastores, Craig Pauga, Erik Peterson, Benjamin Piggott, Mateusz Plata, Aneta Pszczola, Tetyana Pytel, Krysta Smith, Michelle Tinajero, Tuan Tran, and Nicholas Vale.**

"United We Read, Elmwood Park!" Takes Off *Continued from page one...*

Monetary donations from local organizations and businesses have allowed the school district to purchase extra books for classroom use. Community members can check out the book from the Elmwood Park Public Library, or purchase it through local bookstores or online booksellers.

At the **Elmwood Park Public Library**, display cases are filled with artifacts that help bring the story to life. Special events include discussion groups, movies, a community blog, and more. Participants receive a "Passport to Pakistan" and a chance to win a prize. To learn more about *Three Cups of Tea* and see a schedule of library programs, visit www.elmwoodparklibrary.org/.

Elmwood Park Village President Peter Silvestri stated that the **Village of Elmwood Park** is supporting the program by promoting it through public information that includes newsletters and the village website.

Within the District 401 schools, myriad "United We Read, Elmwood Park!" activities are reaching students of all ages. To market the event to the community, high school students in Tom Fitzgerald's computer graphics class made posters that feature the three participating organizations and placed them around the village. Fran DiDavide from Tech Services produced a series of posters for the schools with photos of District 401 educators (a poster is shown on page one). The school libraries held a bookmark design contest. The winning designs were printed on bookmarks and distributed to students. On February 18, Aramark Food Services gave students the opportunity to purchase a lunch consisting of Pakistani and Afghan food. The opportunity will be repeated in the coming months.

Sophomore English students in Erica Hanrahan's class were touched by the message of *Three Cups of Tea*. Some of their comments are:

I hope this book really affects the whole community in the way it affected me. Greg [Mortensen] is really a hero and he made many lives entirely better just by building one school at a time. I hope I can accomplish something huge like that in my lifetime. — Trisha Wojcik

This is an absolute must read novel. I had such a humbling experience reading this novel about a man's fortitude that it inspired me to believe that one person really can change the world. — Jon Porch

"Three Cups of Tea" captivated me with its completely out of the ordinary situation. It proved that one person can change the world, that one penny can go a long way, and that family is found in very obscure places when most needed."

— Reno Eckebrecht

In December, to help kick-off "United We Read, Elmwood Park!" students in Erica Hanrahan's sophomore Honors English class read both the adult and young adult versions of the book. After discussions, students divided into three groups. Each group created a promotional project to reach high school and middle school students. The first group used art, the second a PowerPoint presentation and the third, drama. The third group performed a skit that was inspired by an incident in *Three Cups of Tea* at a middle school assembly. The first group's artwork is on display at the high school and the PowerPoint presentation is being shown in classrooms.

Elm Middle School events include a raffle for students who read the book and respond to the high school-initiated blog; creating projects based on the book; a Book Club devoted to *Three Cups of Tea*; and a read-aloud. Middle school students can also earn connection credit by participating in "United We Read, Elmwood Park!" events held at the Elmwood Park Public Library.

Elementary school students will read the book, discuss its message, and create projects.

For example, Elmwood School students kicked off "United We Read, Elmwood Park!" with a presentation from the school library, and colored pictures of cups of tea that were displayed on a bulletin board.

Culminating events will be held in May for EPCUSD 401 students, including an assembly on May 13 with special guest Barbara Jean Janes. Among her many accomplishments, Mrs. Janes served in the Peace Corps in Pakistan. Recently, she could be heard on National Public Radio talking about her work in Pakistan as a part of The Citizens Foundation. Last summer, she spent five weeks in Pakistan, furthering science education.

The Elmwood Park Public Library will hold a culminating event for the community in May. Community members who read *Three Cups of Tea* are invited to share their thoughts about the book on the EPCUSD 401 website: www.epcUSD401.org/blog/193.



Elmwood Park Community Unit School District 401
 8201 W. Fullerton Avenue
 Elmwood Park, IL 60707

Non-profit
 Organization
 U.S. Postage
PAID
 River Grove, IL
 Permit No. 18

Elmwood Park Community Unit School District 401
 8201 W. Fullerton Avenue
 Elmwood Park, IL 60707
 (708) 452-7292 www.epcusd401.org

Board of Education
 marzullo@epcusd401.org
 Michael Marzullo, President
 Angela Stranges, Vice President
 Susan Capraro, Secretary
 Mary Bruscato
 Patricia Cleary
 Albert Fang Jr.
 Frank Parisi

Dr. Douglas Rudig, Superintendent
 (708) 583-5831
 rudigd@epcusd401.org

Dr. Paula Hlavacek,
 Assistant Superintendent for
 Curriculum and Instruction
 (708) 583-5836
 hlvacekp@epcusd401.org

Tom Zelek, Business Manager
 (708) 583-5840
 zelekt@epcusd401.org

Irina Ziemann, Director of Technology
 (708) 583-5710
 ziemanni@epcusd401.org

Elmwood Park High School
 8201 W. Fullerton Avenue
 (708) 452-7272
James Jennings, Principal
 ephsinfo@epcusd401.org

Elm Middle School
 7607 W. Cortland Street
 (708) 452-3550
Kathleen Porreca, Principal
 elminfo@epcusd401.org

Elmwood School
 2319 N. 76th Avenue
 (708) 452-3558
Susan Ponzio, Principal
 ewinfo@epcusd401.org

John Mills School
 2824 N. 76th Avenue
 (708) 452-3560
Peter Herbert, Principal
 millsinfo@epcusd401.org

Early Childhood Center
 4 Conti Parkway
 (708) 583-5860
Joanne Mourikes, Principal
 eccinfo@epcusd401.org

Postal Customer Local Elmwood Park, IL 60707



Physics teacher Bill Boston does a convincing impression of Jack Black in "School of Rock."

EP's Got Talent!

In 2008, the Elmwood Park High School DECA chapter, under the guidance of teacher and DECA advisor Karen Bear, decided to market and produce a teacher variety show. (DECA is an "Association of Marketing Students.") This fund raising event would be an opportunity for teachers to have fun and showcase their talents to students, parents and community members. "EP's GOT TALENT," with its focus on comedy, was a great success. DECA members sold out the auditorium, raising money for their DECA chapter and donations of food and money for the Leyden Food Pantry. "Afterward, the positive response from the school and the community helped to make the event memorable," Ms. Bear remarked. "Students felt more connected to their teachers, and staff members had fun creating a show with their coworkers."

DECA students submitted the project in a 30-page paper for state competition. The students placed second in the state, then went on to become finalists at the DECA international competition.

On December 3, 2009, the DECA Chapter presented the second annual "EP's Got Talent." Social Studies Teacher Anthony Sylvester reprised his role as emcee along with students Krysta Smith (project manager) and Giselle Rodriguez. For the second year, Theater Director James Kozrya produced comedy videos that were shown between acts. Forty-nine EPHS teachers and administrators participated in acts such as "Musical Balloons," a line dance to the song "YMCA," and a Michael Jackson tribute. Emulating the YouTube "Wedding Dance" phenomenon, teachers and administrators danced down the auditorium aisles. Everyone joined in the finale based on a song from the musical "Grease," complete with a motorcycle on stage.

With 610 tickets sold, DECA members raised \$4,000 toward attending their state, national and international conferences. They also received contributions of canned food and dollars for the Leyden Food Pantry. Another "EP's Got Talent" is already planned for next year.