

KSD wellness program alive and going strong

(Continued from Page 1) schools are taking as part of a comprehensive wellness program.

More than a third of Keene School District students are overweight. A reality that is disturbing to a dedicated group of school and community leaders who are determined to reverse that trend. They've had help from First Lady Michelle Obama who has made childhood obesity a personal priority, which in turn has helped focus national attention on this growing health problem.

Locally, Keene School District personnel have joined together with a number of community organizations, including Cheshire Medical Center's Vision 2020 and Monadnock Family Services, to launch a school-wide wellness campaign. Spearheading that effort is Symonds School physical education teacher, Beth Corwin, who is on leave from her teaching position to coordinate and develop programs and practices Keene schools can adopt to get students eating well and leading more active lives.

Corwin's belief, one shared by many of those involved in the effort, is that:

- Healthy children are most available to learn
- Healthy staffs are most effective teachers
- Staff members are role

models

- Schools have a role and responsibility in the development of healthy habits in children
- Health is vital to the productivity of members of society

"Building a healthy school culture and environment which fosters optimal teaching and learning will help us fulfill our stated educational mission," Corwin said.

The mission of the schools within SAU 29 is to provide each child with the opportunity to participate in challenging, productive and relevant learning activities, which promote individual growth and skills development that will enhance the likelihood of each student leading a productive and fulfilling role in our society.

The goal of comprehensive school wellness is twofold according to Corwin:

1. To help students be more available for learning, the fundamental objective in school.
2. To help students learn to be healthy adults by:

- Teaching them the knowledge, skills and motivation necessary to make informed, healthy behavior choices, and;
- Creating a school environment that supports health, healthy behavior development and allows for the daily practice of making

healthy choices;

- Aligning school practices (programs, activities, services, culture) with wellness related curriculum and policies.

For example, at **Jonathan Daniels School**, 26 staff members are participating in a weight loss program. A recess walking club for students will start up soon.

At **Franklin School**, in addition to the fruit and vegetable cart, students can stay after school for yoga or to try their hand at the school's climbing wall.

At **Fuller**, after school activities include fitness and kidrobics and just this week students participated in a "Jump Rope for Heart" fundraiser.

At **Symonds**, after school activities include mountain biking, a walking/running group and, now that spring is here, a gardening crew.

At **Wheelock**, an after school walking/running program is about to begin and many staff participate in yoga.

At **Keene Middle School**, hundreds of students participate in intramural activities such as floor hockey, basketball and fitness, and the school just received a grant to conduct an asthma awareness week.

And, at **Keene High School**, a number of the staff participate in a weekly yoga program and students take advantage of the school's intramurals, which include soccer, basketball, whiffle ball, and Frisbee depending on the season. In addition, the

Keene Food Service program offers students fresh fruits and vegetables every day, serves only whole wheat bread, buns and rolls, exceeds guidelines for reducing fats and increasing protein, and participates in the farm-to-school program.

Wellness is not a new concept to the Keene School District. It has been evolving for the past five years. The Keene Board of Education adopted wellness as a goal back in 2005. Since then, the curricula for physical education, health and guidance have been written to include wellness. At the direction of the Board, a Wellness Committee was formally formed in the fall of 2007.

This year the Keene School District committee expanded to include all 13 SAU schools. "This more inclusive committee has been working to support each school as it researches its current wellness practices by looking at its strengths and areas for improvement," Corwin said, adding, "The committee provides a way for

school representatives to find out what resources and ideas are available to help them as they work toward their goals." Corwin noted, "The committee includes parents, students, and wellness/health agencies who form the partnership needed to make a real difference for our students." The group has determined that a healthy school wellness program should include:

- Physical Education and Physical Activity
- Health Education
- Health Services
- Staff Wellness
- Counseling, Psychological and Social Services
- Parent and Community Partnerships
- School Environment
- Nutrition

Back at Franklin School, the cart has made its way into Gail Woolridge's third grade class. She asks who has never had a kiwi before. Nine-year-old Sara Corrieri raises her hand. "I'll try it, but I don't want to eat the furry part."

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New Keene Middle School project moving right along

Anyone who has been on Maple Avenue in the past month or so can attest to the incredible impact the new middle school building project is having on that area. Where once stood a long stand of pine trees, there is now a 20-acre cleared building site. "Most of the trees were taken down for two reasons," said project architect Paul Marinace, "Nearly every square foot of the site is being developed and, with the exception of a few large hardwood trees which we saved, most of the trees were saplings or large pines. Pines are dangerous to save as they blow over easily once the trees around them are cleared," he added. "There will be extensive



Initial site work for the new Keene Middle School is nearly complete. It has transformed that section of Maple Avenue.

new landscaping planted on the site including 164 trees, 267 shrubs, and more than 1,000 perennials," he noted.

Concrete foundations for the two-story classroom wing

will begin April 19.

We will follow the progress of this project in subsequent issues of *Scanning the Schools* through its completion in August of 2011.

On Sunday, April 18 at 6 p.m., tune in to NHPTV's *Celebrate America* on Channel 11, to catch the last performance of the KHS A Cappella Choir. Help the school win a \$500 coupon for sheet music by pledging \$40 to NHPTV before or during the broadcast. Log on to NHPTV.org or call 1-800-639-8408 to receive a DVD or CD of the broadcast and a membership to NHPTV.



Franklin School first graders, from left to right, Haiqiu Guo, Jaden Greenwald, and Ava Lunge stand with physical education teacher Martha Kenison who delivers fresh fruits and vegetables to students twice a week. It is part of the school's Wellness program which includes nutrition instruction and physical activities.

Kiwis anyone? Keene School District Wellness program multi-faceted

"I love them," said an enthusiastic Ava Lunge, a Franklin School 1st grader as she held high a kiwi. "If you take the skin off and cut them up," she added sagely. Kiwis were one of two fruits on the Franklin School fruit and vegetable cart on a recent afternoon. The cart, manned by

physical education teacher Martha Kenison, offers students fresh fruits and vegetables every Tuesday and Thursday. Getting children to eat a healthier diet and to try new foods is one of the many steps Keene School District

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The mission of the Keene School District is to provide students with the tools to become productive and responsible citizens in an ever-changing world.

A peace garden takes shape at Jonathan Daniels School

Keene native and Civil Rights martyr, Jonathan Myrick Daniels, has been remembered in many different ways. St. James Episcopal Church has a permanent memorial inside the church and the State of NH will soon be placing an historic marker outside on church grounds. There is a city committee named after him and the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., which sponsors yearly events. Most recently, the committee produced, "The Struggle for Freedom: A Program of Poetry, Dance and Music" in January which featured Keene elementary school choruses, the Keene Middle School Show Choir, Keene High School readers, and MOCO Arts. And then, of course, the district has its own elementary school named after Daniels that was built in 1968 several years after he was

murdered in Alabama. The school, located on Maple Avenue, is now in the midst of a garden project to honor Daniels.

"It only seemed right that our Garden Club create a Peace Garden in honor of Jonathan Daniels, who gave his life, so that others may live in a free and peaceful world," said Kathy Huston, a parent and prime mover behind the effort. The committee, made up of parents (Carrie Stewart, Becky Russell, Sue Rogers, Jodie Theriault, Deb Chamberlain, Raquel Schmitt, Tamara Cruz, Theresa Blaisdell, John Hoffman and Amy Pierce) and staff (Patty Yoerger, Ellen Jahos, Sue Kowalczyk, and Marcia Zurick-Thompson), has been raising money for the project. The committee has also been selling personalized cobblestones which will be used to create a path through the garden. Landscape

designer, Jim Kelliher, volunteered to create the design and will be there to execute the project.

"Our hope is to have the garden completed at the end of this school year," Huston said. "Jim will begin preparing the soil, building the walkway and placing the hardscape materials (cobblestones, boulders and the peace pole) as soon as the weather allows. We will then invite our school community to help with the planting of perennials and annuals." The club's aim is to dedicate the garden on International Peace Day September 21, 2010. Music teacher Ellen Jahos said, "We feel very fortunate to have an active, strong and caring parent group. This garden will spark many teachable moments for our students."



Jonathan Daniels Garden Club is in the process of transforming this area at the front of the school into a Peace Garden dedicated to Civil Rights martyr and Keene native Jonathan Myrick Daniels. Below is a sketch of the garden by landscape designer Jim Kelliher, who volunteered his services to the school.



Ad hoc committee to study elementary system

The Keene Board of Education announced the formation of the Elementary Ad Hoc Advisory Committee, which will study, gather input and make recommendations on Keene's elementary system, as identified by the Administrative Structure Task Force in the fall of 2009. The committee held its first organizational meeting April 12 to review its charge and prepare for its first community forum

on Wednesday, April 28. All meetings will be open to the public. Dates and times will be posted on www.SAU29.org.

The topic of the first forum will be: What are our highest priorities? Identifying our educational priorities and core beliefs.

"Understanding that we must make difficult choices, what core principles must underlie all of the work to come?" said committee chair Kristin Blais.

Committee members include: Board members Kristin Blais; Neil Donegan, Chris Coates, and Amy Speas; administrators Co-Superintendent Bill Gurney, Dir. of Curriculum and Assessment Meredith Cargill, and Asst. to the Co-Supt. Brenda Finn; Wheelock Principal, Gwen Mitchell; district teachers Jan Bergeron (Franklin), Amy Strong (Symonds), and

John McMahon (KMS); heads of parent groups: Rebecca Russell (Daniels) and Tracy Beard (Fuller); and community members: Gary Spykman, Brenda Dunn, and Robert Mallat. Committee members were selected to have a broad representation of teachers, parents, administrators, board, and community members from across the city.

"In order to move forward effectively, this process must

be collaborative and inclusive," Blais said, adding, "Our goal is to provide the means for all stakeholders to take part in the conversation. The work ahead will not be easy, but we have enormous passion, talents and strengths. I urge everyone to bring their hopes, thoughts, ideals and open minds to the conversation. We welcome all members of the public to actively participate in the upcoming forums."

Developmental Designs for KMS

Keene Middle School is piloting a social skills Developmental Designs for Middle School program this year. This program, developed by the non-profit organization Origins, is designed to meet the "unique combination of social, emotional, physical and intellectual needs of young adolescents." DDMS "offers an array of strategies designed to keep young people safe, connected, responsible, and engaged in learning." One of the teachers at KMS who has been very involved with the implementation of the program is 6th grade English teacher, Eric Stinebring.

"For this first year, 6th grade teachers have committed to establishing a morning meeting, using a universal signal for attention and silence, and democratically establishing a social contract to bind the community to common rules," Stinebring said, noting that his morning meeting follows a set pattern. The morning begins with a greeting. Students then have an opportunity to share some personal news and on many days participate in a "fun activity" such as tossing a ball around the circle.

"Teaching children to make eye contact when they greet someone and to use that person's name when greeting them are important social skills for young people to develop," Stinebring said. He noted that one of the main goals of DDMS is to give kids a safe and predictable routine and to have

them participate in and take ownership in their interaction with other students and their teachers.

He gave as an example how students travel through the school to assemblies. There had been complaints that students were making too much noise, disrupting classrooms as they passed by. DDMS has a mechanism called Y charts, which gives teachers a format to work with student to brainstorm ways to change behavior. There are three sections on the chart – "looks like," "sounds like" and "feels like." Brainstorming resulted in a number of steps students could take to move more quietly and in a more orderly fashion through the halls – such things as staying in a single file, not talking, and not engaging in "horseplay".

Stinebring has used the Y chart method to address a number of different classroom situations as well – such things as best practices for reading and writing. "When students contribute to the creation of what constitutes a learning community, they are much more invested in a positive outcome," Stinebring said. Behavior issues are also dealt with. Inside each DDMS classroom there is an area set aside called "take a break" or TAB. If a student's behavior is not acceptable, he or she is asked to go to the TAB area. If the behavior is not addressed through that step, the student is then asked to TAB in an

adjacent classroom. Stinebring said most issues are dealt with within a class and only rarely does he have to use the outside TAB option.

One of the most important steps in the DDMS process is the development of a social contract, which guides day-to-day student behavior and expectations. After much collaboration, the entire 6th grade adopted a social contract, which has four components:

- Treat others the way you would like to be treated
- Come to KMS with a positive attitude and try your hardest every day
- Use appropriate language and behavior and think before acting
- Be focused and responsible in school

Stinebring noted that the DDMS program is continuation of the Responsive Classroom social skills program used in Keene's elementary schools. He added that DDMS would be extended to seventh grade next year, and eighth grade the following year. Teacher training is an integral part of implementing such a school wide program. Sixth grade teachers received training last year, seventh grade teachers are on track to be trained this summer and 8th grade next year.

By the time KMS moves to its new building in the fall of 2011 all grades will be using this important social skills program, just as Keene schools have, over the recent years, adopted the same reading and math



Students in Eric Stinebring's 6th grade class at Keene Middle School create a Y chart as part of a new social skills program called Developmental Designs, which teaches children how to work cooperatively to resolve social and educational issues.

programs to provide students with a consistent curriculum that builds on skills from year to year and provides students with a common language. It is expected that the adoption of DDMS will provide Keene students with the same set of social skills from kindergarten through eighth grade.

KHS art on display



KHS student art work is on display at the Colony Mill Marketplace until April 27th. The show is sponsored by the Monadnock Area Art Association. On the left, is an acorn pencil drawing by junior Laura Damato. In this year's NH Scholastic Art competition, KHS students earned 12 Gold Key, 8 Silver Key and 14 Honorable Mention Awards. Senior Tara Morrison won a NH Art Educator Scholarship for \$1,000. She is one of only two NH students to win the coveted award.

School Publication

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