

**NEW MEMBERS for 2004-2005**

Seven new MPEA members have joined our association this fall. This issue of Chalkdust profiles four of them.

**Timothy Briggs****MPHS Science**

Tim grew up in Lake Fenton where he graduated from high school and played soccer and ran track for four years. He attended Northern Michigan University where he played rugby and ran track. He then transferred to Lawrence Tech. Tim decided that architecture wasn't for him and transferred to Mid Michigan and eventually Central Michigan University where he earned his Bachelors in Education. He is 33 years old and along with his wife Dana and two sons Kolin and Trent, has lived in Mt. Pleasant for the last eleven years.

**Earl Ingram****MPATC Plumbing & Heating**

Earl is a life long resident of Mt. Pleasant. He graduated from MPHS in 1986. Since graduation Earl has worked in the plumbing and heating field and now operates his own business in Shepherd. He has been married for seven years to his wife Kelli. They have three children, Noah, Logan and Lane. Earl is currently attending Ferris State University to earn a vocational education degree.

**Scott Slancik****MPHS Math**

Scott was born and raised in Midland, Michigan, and graduated from Midland High School. While attending Midland High he participated in Football and Track. After graduation he attended Delta College, earning his associates degree in science. He then went on to study at Central Michigan University, where he earned Bachelor's degree in Secondary Education—math major and business minor. Scott is currently attending Central Michigan University working on his Master's degree. He completed his student teaching in Davison, Michigan at the middle school level. This is his first year teaching in Mt. Pleasant, but has subbed and lived in Mt. Pleasant for the past five years and looks forward to being involved in the community for many years to come.

**Allison Karr****Vowles 2nd grade**

Allison is originally from the Mt. Pleasant area. After graduating from Central Michigan University with a Bachelor of Science in Therapeutic Recreation, she attended Saginaw Valley State University where she received her Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education. Allison lives in Mt. Pleasant with her husband Luke. Besides teaching, she likes to read, travel, cook and enjoys spending time with family and friends.

*From the desk of the President***President goes to kindergarten.**

The Board of Education has taken a major step aimed at stopping the hemorrhaging of students we have been experiencing over the past 6 years at the kindergarten level. The change to half-day everyday kindergarten and the addition of enhancement programming for the other half of the day should help us attract a greater percentage of the area's school age children to our classrooms in Mt. Pleasant.

As the district tries to design and implement the program, our current kindergarten teachers are serving as the experts. They know the students, the outcomes, the buildings and the needs and their input is essential. On February 1<sup>st</sup>, I attended a meeting with our six kindergarten teachers and it quickly became apparent to me that I did not understand very much about it and said "I need to learn a lot more about kindergarten."

Hearing that, my friend and colleague Judi Swartz invited me to spend a day in her classroom. I took her up on that offer. Of course, it wasn't until after the deal was sealed for February 11, that she informed me that I would be there for their Valentine's Party. No problem. It's just a few 5 year-olds anyway, right? I'll never have that thought again!

**Diary of a day in a kindergarten room.**

I arrived at about 8:20 ready for our 8:40 start to the school day. Both the teacher and the aide were already actively engaged with students. By 8:30, Judi had me sitting at a table with a group of students working on a "messy" project. Unless you have taught or worked in a kdg room, you might not appreciate what that means. In simple terms it means 5 year-olds, construction paper, scissors, and glue. Working with about 4 students at a time, with one leaving and one joining every two minutes or so, I toiled to get all the students through the project, giving the directions, step by step every time a new student replaced one who finished the project. While doing this, I was watching the teacher and the aide work with a large group of students on a project at their desks, move them into a reading activity, move them back to their desks and then into a group for their Art Reach visit for the month. While this was going on resource room teachers, SPL's and the building principal were coming into and out of the room, and in some cases pulling kids out to

work with them and then, within a few minutes, the students would return and the teacher and the aide would seamlessly get the student back into the group activity and get them caught up on what they missed during the pullout. It was amazing to see the number and frequency of activity transitions that took place, and the interplay between the aide and the teacher as they worked individually with students to keep them on task, in the group, participating, and behaving properly.

By 10:30 they had to go to their music class, and I found ten minutes to return calls and do “president’s stuff”. I was already mentally starting to feel a bit of the overload that comes from the multiple priorities that kindergarten teachers face daily. When I joined the music class one of the students announced to the teacher “HE’s NEW”. Then I watched and listened as Mrs. Jorgensen worked with them on a series of rhythm and singing games and despite having to make behavior corrections every 30 seconds or so, the smile never left her face.

We returned to the classroom at 11:00 and the next hour saw Valentine card exchange, which was really hard since all the cards had names on them but many of the students distributing them couldn’t read. I was helping a girl read the names and a boy who the aide was helping ran right into my elbow. He just looked at me rubbed his head and grabbed another Valentine and went to deliver it. While this was going on the teacher and aide and three parent helpers worked in snack time and Friday folder time before getting kids ready to head for home. By 12:00 all the students were on their way home and the adults turned not to lunch, but to cleaning tables and resetting the room so we could be ready for the next group which was scheduled to arrive in just under 30 minutes. The first ICTC drop off was less than 5 minutes after the first group departed and within 15 minutes, half a dozen kindergartners were dropped off early and the aide and teacher were back at work. The afternoon mirrored the morning except for the fact that seven students from the primary room came in which added one more priority for the teacher and the aide.

I was tired by the end of the day and all I had to do was follow directions, but I learned many things. I learned about the schedule and how demanding it is. I learned how integral the aide and the aide/teacher relationship are to the success of kindergarten. I learned that kindergarten could stand MUCH bigger rooms and much more time. I learned that, “she ain’t what she used to be”; no more play time, snack time, nap time, alphabet and go home. I learned that without the aides, our program would be forced to make drastic cutbacks in curriculum options and delivery.

Perhaps the most important thing I saw was the skill and the professionalism demonstrated by our colleagues. Judi was amazing, but so was Marie Osborn, her aide. Karen Turnbull shuffled students out and back into the room without disrupting anything, a student teacher from the resource room did the same. The music teacher, Mrs. Jorgensen, was tireless in performing a job that would drive me sane. Mrs. Weber’s story time in the media center was excellent.

I take great pride in being a good teacher. I tell other teachers we need to brag about what we do, and I try to set the example by often saying to other teachers and to the public, “There aren’t many people who can do with a group of kids, what I can.” After a day with Judi, I am certain I could NEVER do what she, and those who help her, do with her students.

I thank Judi for tolerating my presence and taking on one more kindergarten “student” for a day. She has planted an idea and I hope to be able to spend a day in different classrooms across the district. Next up, first grade? Anyone interested in having an extra “adult-student” in the way for a half day or a whole day, let me know.

## Building News

•**Linda Louisell**, the music teacher at Vowles and Ganiard this year, was presented with the Michigan Music Educator of the Year award on January 21, 2005. The award was received at a ceremony held in Ann Arbor, Michigan, during the Michigan Music Educators Inservice Conference. This award is given annually to one of about fifteen hundred educators in Michigan. It was presented by the Michigan Music Educators Association. Congratulations Linda for an award that is truly deserved.

•**Mary Kay Voeks**, the Interior Design instructor at MPHS/MPATC was recently named the Star Performer of the Michigan Construction Teacher’s Association (MCTA). The Star Performer is selected by the 130 members of MCTA. The Star Performer is a person who gives 110% and consistently goes above and beyond. Mrs. Voeks served as the Trade Show Director for MCTA last year. Voeks has been teaching for six years. Prior to teaching she has worked for paint and decorating centers in management positions.

•**Kathy Millar**, West Intermediate, was selected by The Michigan Association of Middle School Educators to receive a state Award of Excellence. Millar was nominated by CMU associate professor Norma Bailey. Millar will receive the award March 11 at Scripps Middle School in Lake Orion.

“It’s beyond words to be honored,” said Millar. “The award is a validation of my hard work and of my students’ hard work. Receiving this award of excellence is tenfold better because I was nominated by someone I highly respect, my professor.”

Each year, Millar’s students develop Readers’ Theater productions and perform them for their friends and family. Her students have also developed Veterans’ Day celebrations which have included writings, interviews with veterans, parades, programs honoring veterans and care packages sent to soldiers, all within the context of effective language arts standards.

•Congratulations to **Dan Schell** (WI) and wife **Amy Schell** (MPHS) on the arrival of their baby daughter Katelyn Jo. Katelyn was born February 2, at 8:00 p.m. weighing in at 8 lbs. 5 oz.

## STAFFING Q & A 2005

**Q.** In the first stage of postings, (March 22-April 5, 2004) , may I apply for any position in which I am interested?

**A.** No. You may apply for any **POSTED POSITION or VACANCY**. Only those positions shown with a blank line beside them or those positions filled after the start of the school year are available for members to apply. In addition, any members who were awarded a position after the beginning of the school year **MUST** apply for their own positions.

**Q.** Is any position shown with a blank line beside it considered a vacancy at this time?

**A.** Yes. Any member may apply for any vacancy during this stage of postings.

**Q.** If I apply for and am granted a position in the first stage of postings, can I change my mind later? What if I no longer want that position because people have moved out of the building?

**A.** No. The contract language that applies is Art. IV.E.1., p.7. A position you accept becomes your current assignment for staffing purposes. At the May 20, assignment meeting you will automatically be placed in your current assignment unless you are bumped by a senior teacher who is displaced. If you change your mind after accepting a position, your recourse is to apply for a vacancy in subsequent rounds of postings. If your previous assignment is posted as a vacancy, you may reapply for that position. Changes in other staff within a building do not change your current assignment.

**Q.** I am currently teaching full time (100%). If (at the Assignment Meeting) I accept 80% because that is all that is available to me for next year, am I permanently stuck at 80%?

**A.** No. The key is that if you reduce because a full time position is not available to you, you still are entitled to 100% when it does become available.

**Q.** I am currently teaching full time (100%), and I want to reduce to a half-time position even though a full time position is available to me. Is this a permanent reduction?

**A.** If the board agrees to allow the reduction – and it is important to note that they are not required to - it becomes a permanent reduction. In order to increase your percentage at a later date, you would be required to apply for positions that become available. The contract speaks to this in Art. IV. H. p. 14.

## Staffing Timeline for 2005-2006

### March 15

Current seniority and staffing list (all current positions and who holds each) to all teachers including those on leave.

### March 24

All vacancies for 2005-2006 properly posted.

Positions posted on March 15, 2005, may be filled.

Posting of all positions filled after August 22, 2005 including any known retirements or new positions known to be available in 05-06.

### April 11

Application deadline for internal applicants for positions posted March 22.

Staffing of “bubbles” within buildings completed.

Exchanges must occur within buildings or depts. by this date.

### April 11-May 2

Posting and interviewing for vacancies created during initial round of staffing process.

No position posted after April 27 may be filled prior to the assignment meeting.

### May 2

All internal interviews completed.

Positions may be filled.

### May 5

No exchanges after this date.

No vacancies filled from this date until after the assignment meeting.

Vacancies created after this date are posted and may be selected at assignment meeting.

### May 12

Displaced teachers must declare intent to claim position or a vacancy by this date.

Teachers displaced after this date will enter the staffing meeting as displaced.

### May 17

Teachers whose position have been claimed notified by this date.

### May 19

Assignment Meeting. 4:30 p.m. Location to be determined.

### Week of May 23

Positions available at the end of staffing meeting will be posted.

### Week of May 23

Positions available at end of staffing meeting posted.

### June 30

Notice of 2004-2005 assignment in writing to all teachers

### At least 30 days before the beginning of the semester

Notice to all laid off teachers by this date by certified mail

## Another attack on public school employees

**H.R. 14 attacks pension, health care benefits** MEA members should contact their state representatives immediately to protest the Legislature's most recent attack on public education employees. House Resolution 14, reported to the full House last week, contends that funding problems plaguing public education could be solved by controlling the "generous" pension benefits of school employees and reducing health benefits of active employees. A vote is expected this week.

**The real cost of education.** The oft-stated belief by legislators who push these types of resolutions—that "we must put more funds into the classroom to educate our children," rather than into pay and benefits for school employees—ignores the fact that quality school employees are the most important component in educating students. Labor costs, pension costs and health costs are the REAL costs of educating students, MEA Executive Director Chuck Anderson said, and must be protected to attract and retain well-qualified teachers and support personnel in our classrooms.

**Irresponsible decisions hurt.** H.R. 14 refuses to acknowledge the reductions in health benefits most districts have implemented in the past 20 years along with the premium caps in many districts and the salaries given up in virtually all districts to keep quality health care. Likewise, the attack fails to recognize the cost increases for Michigan Public School Employees Retirement System (MPSERS) pensions and benefits incurred by actions of the State Legislature. In particular, the Legislature's irresponsible decision in the early 1990s to stop pre-funding health benefits for retirees has now resulted in a complete lack of assets to pay the cost of benefits.

**Benefits for retirees reduced.** H.R. 14 also gives no recognition to the major benefit reductions that have been forced onto all MPSERS retirees in the past few years. Larger co-pays and deductibles, increased premium contributions, the implementation of preferred providers and a pharmaceutical formulary all have resulted in much larger out-of-pocket costs for retirees. Instead of attacking school employee benefits, the House needs to address the heart of the problem—the fact that in the last three years the state has provided no increase in per pupil funding for schools. With reductions in categorical line items and mid-year reductions in foundation allowances, the net result is that school funding has been reduced by more than \$350 million since the 2002-03 school year. When

compared with increases in the CPI, the funding shortfall for K-12 alone amounts to \$1 billion. Higher education has seen upfront reductions of nearly 15 percent, roughly \$500 million, in the same time period.

Act now! With a House vote expected this week, let state representatives know where you stand on H.R. 14 and similar attacks on public education. [Contact them today.](#)

## 2004 Tax Tips for MEA members

**Members should ALWAYS consult their tax preparer before utilizing these tips!!!**

### **\$250 deduction for eligible members**

For those who worked at least 900 hours in 2004 as a K-12 teacher, counselor or paraprofessional and who had unreimbursed out-of-pocket expenses for educational supplies, computer equipment, books and/or supplementary materials used in the classroom, a deduction of up to \$250 is available. Yes, you should keep your receipts.

### **Itemize your 2004 MEA/NEA and local dues**

As most know, MEA/NEA and local dues are deductible as an itemized deduction on personal tax returns. Dues are only deductible however, pursuant to IRS rules which include the two-percent floor applicable on itemized deductions.

To assist members, following are the amounts of MEA/NEA dues which would have been paid by a member in the appropriate classification working the indicated number of load/hours for the complete 2004 tax year. You will need to contact your local association treasurer to obtain the amount of local dues you paid during 2004.

**INTERESTED IN FREE TICKETS TO  
SEE THE MPHS PERFORMANCE OF  
CAROUSEL?**

**SIMPLY EMAIL YOUR NAME AND BUILD-  
ING TO LISA JOHNSON AT  
ljohnson@mtpleasant.edzone.net TO BE  
PLACED IN A DRAWING. WINNERS WILL  
BE NOTIFIED VIA EMAIL BY  
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 23. EMAILS  
MUST BE RECEIVED BY TUESDAY FEB. 22  
AT 3:00 PM.**

## IMPORTANT DATES

•Board of Education Meeting  
Monday, February 21, 2005  
6:30 PM City Hall

•General Membership Mtg.  
Thursday, March 17, 2005  
4:30 PM, MPHS room 111

•Board of Education  
Subcommittee Meeting  
Monday, March 14  
7:00 PM Kinney