



# Bus Stop Conversations

Neighboring news about the Washington Central Supervisory Union schools of Berlin, Calais, Doty Memorial (Worcester), East Montpelier, Rumney Memorial (Middlesex), & U-32.

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November 29, 2006

Next issue: Jan. 10, 2007



Jenna Cameron votes in the Mock Election held at U-32 November 3<sup>rd</sup>.

## U-32 students vote

U-32 students voted in a mock election November 3<sup>rd</sup> and with the exception of one office, the 369 students voted a straight Democratic ticket.

The mock election was organized by the Social Studies Department and was part of Vermont Votes for Kids, a civics program supported by the Vermont Secretary of State's office. Student volunteers monitored the voting in the U-32 atrium the entire day.

Turn to page 3 for complete results from the November 3<sup>rd</sup> vote.

## Administrative Assistants Are on the Job

By Ellen Beck

There is no doubt that change has taken place in our schools, and few will argue that the role of the administrative assistant (the person who used to be called secretary) has changed considerably. It is a demanding job and takes a special personality to cope with the daily events and still end the day with a smile.

Cally Schober and Diane Noyes greet the students and all visitors to the Berlin Elementary School. Cally worked in the district for ten years before accepting the position of administrative assistant to the principal ten years ago. Now she can't imagine doing anything else. Diane started at Berlin five years ago and is the right balance in a busy space. When asked what training she had for the job, Diane smiles and remembers her first day on the first day of the school year. "It was so hectic. I didn't know any of the children or staff. But everyone did their best, and I still love every minute of it." Cally works mainly with the principal, school board, and finances, and Diane works with student-related issues, such as attendance, test scores, and classroom needs. Both answer a phone that seems to ring a lot. The best

part of the job both agree is "the students." "No matter how bad the day, there is always a child who says or does something to make it all worthwhile,"

says Cally passionately. "The environment provided by the staff and students supports us and challenges us to do our best," she continued.

Linda Royce and Jane Badger are the mainstays at East Montpelier Elementary School. Linda started out as a volunteer and then worked part-time, before becoming full-time. "At the beginning," she says, "I did a little bit of everything. I subbed in the classroom, was the nurse, or whatever was needed. I still know

every child and what bus he/she should be on." Now, 30 years later, Linda finds most of her day is spent on the computer.

Jane started as a para-educator, but chose office work five years ago. Both thrive in the fast-paced days that challenge their multi-tasking skills. "There are more programs now, and with that seems to be even more paperwork," Linda continues. "It's difficult to concentrate with so many interruptions,"

*see unsung hero on page 3*



Berlin administrative assistants Cally Schober and Diane Noyes say they have much to be thankful for – including their jobs which they love. Cally says, "We are blessed to be surrounded by such great children and staff."

## And the Kitchen Sink!

By Kate Ross

I recently snuck a peek inside my daughter's locker after a meeting we both attended at U-32. I was quite surprised to see about five pairs of shoes and assorted articles of clothing, but no books. I briefly wondered why the kitchen sink wasn't included . . .

"The average student carries a backpack weighing almost one fourth of his or her body weight. Three out of ten students typically carry backpacks that weigh up to 1/3 of their own body weight at least once a week," informs the American Occupational Therapy Association, Inc.'s (AOTA) website ([www.aota.org](http://www.aota.org)).

Where were my daughter's textbooks? In her backpack! What happened to the days when lockers were used for storing books – awaiting student arrival the next day? Appears, at least for her, that most textbooks are carried daily between home and school — a point that the AOTA wishes to make known to teachers at all levels.

According to the AOTA, several important factors to consider when purchasing an appropriate backpack are:

- Child's size and age
- Well-padded shoulder straps - provide cushioning (The neck and shoulders are filled with blood vessels and nerves. Constriction can cause pain and tingling sensations in the hands, arms, and neck.)
- A waist-belt - provides extra support and transfers weight to the trunk and hips
- Wheels!
- Properly loading a pack is also crucial. These guidelines are offered:
- Children should carry no more than 15% (1/6) of own body weight. For example, a child weighing 100 pounds can carry 15 pounds; 120 pounds person can carry 18 pounds, and 140 pounds person can carry 21 pounds.
- Heaviest items should be placed closest to the child's back.
- Neatly organize materials within the pack and always wear both shoulder straps. This distributes the weight evenly.
- Adjust the shoulder straps to fit snugly to the child's back, preferably resting the pack in the



Administrative assistant Laurie Fielder keeps things running smoothly at Rumney Memorial School.

curve of the lower back (near the body's center of gravity). Loose packs pull the child backwards and strain muscles between the shoulders.

*continued on page 3*

# Notes on the Chalkboard

## Board Meetings

U-32: first and third Wednesdays, 6:00 p.m., December 6, 20;  
Berlin Elementary School: third Monday, 6:00 p.m., December 18;  
Calais Elementary School: third Tuesday, 5:45 p.m., December 19;  
Doty Elementary School, Worcester: third Tuesday, 6:30 p.m., December 11 (budget forum), 19;  
East Montpelier Elementary School: second Tuesday, 6:30 p.m., December 12;  
Rumney Elementary School, Middlesex: first Tuesday, 6:00 p.m., December 5;  
Washington Central Supervisory Union Executive Committee: December 11 at U-32, 6 p.m. Full Board Budget Meeting (All the boards from the supervisory union) at 6:30 p.m.

**You can view current and past issues of Bus Stop on the web at [www.u32.org](http://www.u32.org)**

**Click on the newsletter link on the left of the page, then click on Bus Stop Conversations.**

## Board Minutes

**December 22: Half-day of school**  
**December 25 - January 1: Holiday vacation**

### Activities

#### U-32

December 12-18: Library Scholastic Book Fair during school hours  
December 13 & 14: Book Fair Family Night, 6-7:30 p.m.  
Dec. 13: Middle School Holiday Concert, 7:30 p.m.  
Dec. 14: Middle School Parent Teacher Council, 6:30 p.m.  
Dec. 14: High School Holiday Concert, 7:30 p.m.  
December 16: Elementary Schools Basketball Jamboree, 9 a.m.- 2 p.m.

#### Berlin

November 29: PTNA meeting, 7 p.m.  
December 7: 3/4 Residency Presentation  
December 14: Holiday Bazaar / Gifts for Giving  
December 18: Holiday Bazaar / Gifts for Giving

#### Calais

December 5: Gifts for Giving  
December 5: PTNO meeting, 6:15 p.m.  
December 11: Nutrition Committee meeting, 4 p.m.  
December 12: Strategic Planning meeting, 5:30 p.m.

#### Doty

December 8: All-School Meeting, 8:50 - 9:15 a.m. Parents are welcome to join us!  
December 12: Gifts for Giving Day  
December 20: Winter Concert, 6:30 p.m.

#### Rumney

Dec. 2: Community Visioning meeting, 9 a.m.-12 p.m.

- The Doty School Board will have its second Budget Discussion on Dec. 11th at U-32 following the Full-Board vote on the WCSU Budget at 7 p.m.
- The Doty School Board will have its third Budget Discussion at its regular meeting on December 19th at 6:30 p.m.
- If needed, the Doty School Board will have a Special Meeting to finalize the school budget on January 4th at 6:30 p.m.

#### Seniors and Their Parents Project Grad Meeting

Please come to a Project Grad meeting at U-32 December 7th at 6 p.m. in room 128 Student/parent ideas welcome

#### A message from Central Vermont New Directions:

Mentors make a difference! Kids who are in a mentoring relationship have an extra adult friend and confidant who can help them through difficult times.

#### Rumney Memorial School, July 11, 2006

- ◆ Board encouraged community member Larry Gilbert to investigate possibility of grant funding for installation of roof-top photovoltaic solar panels.
- ◆ Chris McVeigh gave Facility Committee report: summer cleaning, painting and renovations.
- ◆ Accepted bus routes as proposed with addition of Upper Sunnybrook as a seasonal stop for 2006-07.
- ◆ Approved building use and waiver of daily fee for Vermont String School.

#### Rumney Memorial School, July 25, 2006

- ◆ Board asked Robbe Brook to solicit a proposal from consultant Ray Proulx to facilitate the Values/Vision/Mission process for Rumney. The board is looking for a process that is inclusive of the entire community and that bases budget decisions on the plan developed by the community.

#### Rumney Memorial School, Sept. 5, 2006

- ◆ Principal Adam Rosen reported a smooth start to the year. Fund balance is projected better than anticipated.
- ◆ Robbe Brook provided copies of the WCSU External audit draft.
- ◆ Chris McVeigh was complimented for painting the front doors.
- ◆ Playground Committee reported that upcoming work includes excavation, fencing, storage shed, handicap parking and access.
- ◆ Adam Rosen presented a draft of his principal goals.
- ◆ Adam presented a draft for the Rumney Community Partnership Job Description. The original purpose of the position was to be of service to the faculty and manage special events. Adam will post the position, form an interview/hiring committee, and hope to have a recommendation for next meeting.
- ◆ Approved adjustment to paraprofessional pay rates to be commensurate with experience and service.

#### Holiday Gifts Ideas at the Book Fair

The U-32 Library will host the annual Scholastic book fair, during school hours from December 12-18. There will also be two special **Family Nights** before the holiday concerts on Tuesday and Wednesday, **December 13 and 14, from 6-7:30**. Come for light refreshments and a chance to win \$25 worth of books.

The fair will feature a wide range of books for young teens, including mystery and adventure novels, fantasy trilogies, sports guides, anime (a type of graphic novel), cookbooks, and the latest best-sellers. Gift certificates will be available this year too.

All proceeds from the fair will help fund U-32 Library literacy programs, including author visits, Dorothy Canfield Fisher programs and the seventh grade book promotion. ❖

#### Rumney Memorial School, Sept. 29, 2006

- ◆ The board and other meeting attendees interviewed two prospective candidates for Values, Vision, Mission and Strategic Planning facilitation services.
- ◆ Board discussed next steps and will make a recommendation to the full Board for approval at the October 4th meeting.

#### U-32, October 18, 2006

- ◆ Stuart Savage reported for the Finance Committee that budget Draft #1 will be presented November 15th. Discussion of procedures, timelines, and goals followed.
- ◆ Keith Gerritt presented information regarding "Athletic IQ" and this led to additional questions and discussion.
- ◆ Tom Williams asked about the number of students who defer college entrance and trends.
- ◆ Andrew Huckins-Noss reported on stress the junior class is feeling and how scheduling might be changed to address this.
- ◆ Approved the FY06 Draft Audit Report with discussed changes.

#### U-32, November 8, 2006

- ◆ Tom Williams reported the Policy Committee was meeting regularly with progress noted.
- ◆ Stuart Savage reported the Facilities Committee plans work regarding a capital fund and other facilities-related budget implications.
- ◆ Student Representative Andrew Huckins-Noss spoke of the concerns 11<sup>th</sup> graders have about test schedules.
- ◆ Erin McDermott spoke to the board about Community Connections and ways to communicate with students and parents about the program.
- ◆ Reviewed proposed new courses and NEASC's charge to offer academically rigorous courses to less academically-skilled students.
- ◆ Rob LaClair presented the first draft of the FY08 Budget.
- ◆ Moved to accept the Federal Sub-Grant Award for FY07 that supports the White Table and 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Academy.
- ◆ Approved three 2007-08 new courses as presented.
- ◆ Accepted 2006-07 Co-Curricular Advisors.

#### Thanksgiving Dinner at Berlin Elementary

According to Berlin Elementary School principal Charlie Watson, over 400 turkey dinners were served to parents, guests, children and staff on Thursday, November 16<sup>th</sup> as part of a "wonderful, delicious, enjoyable Thanksgiving celebration." Principal Watson thanked those who helped make the feast a highlight of the fall season and said, "This annual event could not have been possible without all the parent volunteers who donated their time and talent to decorate the lunch room, serve everyone and stay late to clean up." ❖

*Bus Stop Conversations* is published 16 times in the school year by Washington Central Friends of Education, Inc., a private, non-profit corporation committed to strengthening the communication and cooperation between residents of the five district towns of Berlin, Calais, East Montpelier, Middlesex, and Worcester, and the Washington Central Supervisory Union schools. No tax money is used for the production or publication. Send correspondence to: Editor, Deborah Wolf, Washington Central Friends of Education, PO Box 324, Montpelier, VT 05601; e-mail: [dewolf@u32.org](mailto:dewolf@u32.org)



Students ponder the ballot in preparation for voting in the mock election at U-32 November 3<sup>rd</sup>.

## U-32 vote results from page 1

### U.S. Senator

Bernard Sanders, Independent, 61%  
 Rich Tarrant, Republican, 19%  
 Cris Ericson, Independent, 7%

### U.S. Representative

Peter Welch, Democrat, 45%  
 Martha Rainville, Republican, 33%  
 Keith Stern, Independent, 2%  
 Jerry Trudell, Independent, 3%

### Governor

Scudder Parker, Democrat, 46%  
 Jim Douglas, Republican, 40%  
 Cris Ericson, Independent, 8%  
 Bob Skold, Liberty Union, 2%

### Lieutenant Governor

Matt Dunne, Democrat, 48%  
 Brian Dubie, Republican, 36%  
 Marvin Malek, Progressive, 10%  
 Mary Alice Herbert, Liberty Union, 6%

### State Treasurer

Jeb Spaulding, Republican/Democrat, 84%  
 V. Murray Ngoima, Liberty Union, 16%

### Secretary of State

Deb Markowitz, Democrat, 72%  
 Cheryl Moomey, Republican, 16%  
 Boots Wardinski, Liberty Union, 10%

### Auditor of Accounts

Thomas Salmon, Democrat, 37%  
 Randy Brock, Republican, 30%  
 Martha Abbott, Progressive, 23%  
 Jerry Levy, Liberty Union, 10%

### Attorney General

William Sorrell, Democrat, 48%  
 Dennis Carver, Republican, 40%  
 Rosemarie Jackowski, Liberty Union, 12%

## unsung heroes from page 1

said Jane, “but the interruptions are part of what makes our jobs fun.”

Judy Knapp just seems like she’s been at the Doty School for always. A native of Worcester, Judy worked for the State in several positions. Retirement brought her home to Worcester just when the position of administrative assistant opened. Judy says that communication is a big part of her job. “Computers, the internet, copiers, and the whole office structure are so changed from when I was a student,” she comments. Judy is also very active in community affairs, and since the school is the focal point of the community, “There’s not much going on that I don’t know about,” she laughs.

Laurie Fielder is in her sixth year at Rumney Memorial School. With two children at the school, she thought working there would give her lots of flexibility. “But as it turns out, I’m usually so busy; it’s my husband who takes the sick child.” Laurie acknowledges that the nature of the job makes it difficult to take a day off. “A para-educator is familiar with the job and can answer the phone and do other routine work when I need a day off,” Laurie says, “but there is always the unexpected that I know now to expect. I’ve also learned to set boundaries,” she continues, “between work and being a mother. People would see me at a soccer game and give me a message about work. I had to learn to say, ‘Please call me at work for that. I’m a mother now.’” The best part of the job for Laurie is working with the staff and students in what she says is the best environment.

Christine Klaine has been at the Calais Elementary School for 12 years. She has found the levels of what is requested in the job have risen so that she is now much more than just an assistant to the principal. Like the other administrative assistants, Christine fills in as nurse and helps out when needed. She has help at the beginning and end of the school year when the work load is heaviest. And Christine will tell you, “Calais is the best school to be working in. The principal, staff and students are the greatest!”

It seems the elementary schools in the district have struck it rich in the quality of their administrative assistants. ❖

## WANTED: FUN, ATHLETIC VOLUNTEERS & PLAYERS!

Hi, my name is Phillip Heinz and I’m the new Washington Central Supervisory Union Athletic Coordinator. We are working to create a unified elementary athletic program in WCSU with the goal of providing a healthy, positive, safe and fun sports experience for children. Read more about it in the new elementary athletic manual at [www.wcsuonline.org](http://www.wcsuonline.org)

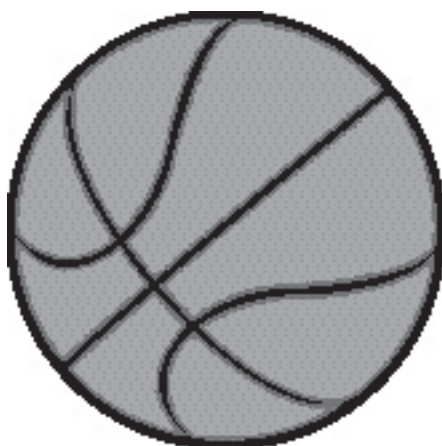
We are about to launch into our Youth Basketball program and could use your support.

### Players - Come on down!

There are still player positions open for boys and girls at all five area elementary schools: Berlin, Doty, Calais, East Montpelier and Rumney. If your child is still thinking about playing, hurry up and sign in.

### REFEREES WANTED: WILL TRAIN! Clinic: Dec. 2<sup>nd</sup>, 9:30 a.m. at Berlin Elementary

One of our biggest needs this season is new referees. You need no training, just the desire to see good sportsmanship spread throughout our community. The clinic will be led by Mr. Noyes who has years of experience as a referee. If you are at all interested, it is free...no cost, no commitment. Call me at 522-7065 or contact your school’s Athletic Director or Principal.



## backpack from page 1

In a study performed on American students ages 9 – 20 years, 6 out of 10 reported chronic back pain related to heavy backpacks. What will this pose for the future adult work force within America? A sobering thought.

What can be done? The adolescent spine continues to grow until the age of 18 years. Properly carrying backpacks now is vital! “Pack it Light, Wear it Right” – a campaign motto set forth by the AOTA is where it’s at. If you have to carry your child’s backpack to the car or bus each day, re-think! Follow the guidelines above – consult with teachers if you see students coming home with many heavy textbooks. Lighten the load on both sides – home and school! ❖



photo credit: Jean-Baptiste Benavent & Benoit Pelosse

## Fall Teams Take Home Record Four State Championships

By Amy Molina, U-32 Athletic & Recreation Director

Wow! What an incredible finish to this fall’s high school athletic season!

Congratulations to the boys’ varsity cross country team, the girls’ varsity cross country team, the boys’ varsity soccer team and the varsity football team for their Division II and Division IV State Championships. NEVER in U-32 history have we taken home four state championships in one season! We might even be one of the only schools in the state to bring home that many championships in one season.

## Mix-It-Up At Lunch

Rumney’s principal Adam Rosen reports on an exciting event at the elementary school a couple of weeks ago. According to Rosen, “Mix it Up At Lunch Day” was a success on Tuesday, November 14, 2006. “Mix it Up at Lunch Day” is a nationwide effort by the “Teaching Tolerance” program to reduce prejudice and improve social climate by helping students cross social boundaries. Last year an estimated four million students participated by sitting with someone new during lunch. Students in grades 1-6 were prepared for Mix it Up at Lunch Day in guidance class by practicing starting conversations and in the upper grades by discussing social boundaries. Rosen thanks Rumney guidance counselor Sharon Grossi for organizing this important event.

Mix It Up at Lunch was also celebrated at U-32 where social studies teacher Tracey Witherspoon reports that the best part for her was seeing a group of high school students who ate, talked with and sang with a group of 7th graders. ❖