

# 'We Are Resourceful and There Is Much To Be Thankful for in St. Ignace Schools'

The end of the 2005/2006 school year is upon us. The media is filled with news that reflects financial troubles in our educational systems across the state. Last year the St. Ignace Area School system made changes that affected every part of our program, resulting in a 10 percent reduction in our expenditures. Those actions were a direct result of Michigan's ailing economy.

While Michigan's economy is ailing, it is important to keep in mind that if it were a separate nation, Michigan would have the 17th largest economy in the world. All is not doom and gloom. Our state still has a tremendous economic base; we are a resourceful people and there is light ahead.

Likewise with our school system, the financial cuts we made were painful, but we are a resourceful group and there is light ahead. We have many things that we would like to add to our system that would make improvements in our educational program, however, this article is not about those things. This article is, instead, about what it is we do have and what we do offer.

It is human nature to always want more, and there are many legitimate things that we need as a system. I think you will find after reading this article that we have a strong program and we have much to be thankful for.

**Facilities.** Our High School was built in 1961 and underwent extensive renovation in the summer of 2005. Our Middle School was built in 1991. Our Elementary School was built in 1997. All buildings are housed on the same campus. In total, they feature 53 fully



## NEWS FROM ST. IGNACE AREA SCHOOLS

By MIKE SPRINGSTEEN, SUPERINTENDENT

equipped classrooms. At the High School, there is a wood shop, a metal shop, an art room, a chemistry lab, a biology lab, a general science lab, a library, a computer/business lab, a band room, a stage, a gymnasium, a cafeteria, and a kitchen. At the Middle School and elementary school, there are two gymnasiums, two science labs, a library/computer lab, a choir room, an art room, a multipurpose classroom, a cafeteria/multipurpose room, a kitchen, and a stage.

**Technology.** The district has 550 network computers, serving all classrooms, students, and teachers. The buildings have wireless Internet access. All students have controlled Internet access. Two computer labs are available in the high school; one computer lab is available in the middle school. Purchased through a grant, 318 Freedom to Learn wireless laptop computers are targeted for every student in grades 6, 7, 8, 10, and 12. Students have access to Michigan Virtual High School classes and dual enrollment classes, as well as Interactive Television classes.

**Counseling Services.** Two guidance counselors provide assistance to students in K-12. Counselors assist student with personal issues, career planning, health issues, academic issues, and college and vocational planning.

Counselors have developed in-school mentor programs, matching older high school students with younger elementary students. Counselors assist high school students with work experience programs related to their career plans. Counselors are responsible for planning, implementing, and assisting students with MEAP, ACT, PSAT, ASVAB, and other student testing.

**Extracurricular Programs.** A full schedule of Michigan High School Athletic Association (MHSAA) extracurricular athletic programs are offered in grades 7 through 12. More than 50 percent of the student body participates in

one or more of the programs, which include golf, football, boys and girls basketball, boys and girls cross country, wrestling, dance, boys and girls bowling, cheerleading, volleyball, boys and girls track, softball, and baseball. Additionally, the school has an active drama program that puts on at least one major production a year, an after-school elementary choir, a before-school 7-12 jazz band program, an after-school steel high school drum band, and an elementary steel drum program. Athletic and band programs offer summer camp opportunities. In-school clubs include French Club, Europe Club, Shop Club, Art Club,

Biology Club, and Physics Club. The student council provides an excellent school leadership training program. National Honor Society provides a way to recognize and promote student scholarship, leadership, character, and service.

**Curricular Programs.** The state-aligned curriculum is offered to all students in grades K-12. All instructors meet the federal government's Highly Qualified Teacher status. Elementary students have programs with state-certified instructors in Physical Education, Art, Vocal Music, Instrumental Music, and Technology. High school students, in addition to a basic curriculum, may take Chemistry II, Advanced Biology, Physics, Advanced Mathematics, Calculus, French I and French II, College prep English IV, Concert and Marching Band, Choral Music, Advanced Physical Education, Weights, Drafting, Metal Shop, Art, Wood Shop, Construction class building an on-site home, and work experience related to their selected career. Students with special needs are offered the resources that allow

them to make educational progress on the regular curriculum as determined by their abilities. The research-based Reading Recovery program is offered for elementary students to improve their reading skills.

**School Breakfast/Lunch Program.** The school provides free breakfast to all students. A hot lunch is available to all students for a nominal fee. Students that have a financial need receive either a free or reduced price hot lunch.

**Transportation.** The school provides busing for all students K-12.

**Booster Clubs.** The school has an active sports booster club. In recent years it has been instrumental in assisting with new lighting, a new field house, and a new announcing booth at the football field. Boosters are currently working on a new concession and restroom facility at the track, baseball, softball complex. The PTO is a very active group that annually raises thousands of dollars to assist with various educational programs aimed primarily at giving assistance to the school program. The

\*Please turn to page 13

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### Contact Lawmakers To Protest Change in Local Mail Service

To the Editor:

Gaylord Post Office will be closing its mail processing center this month. What can the people of northern Michigan expect for mail service? It will be slower, and not the same as the rest of the state of Michigan. You may ask why. The simple answer is the postal service cares more about the almighty dollar than providing fair and equal service to all Americans. That is not what the postal service was designed to do. Somewhere along the way someone in the postal service decided to change its function without informing the people or the government. It is not right, and the people of northern Michigan must not allow this to happen without a fight.

We must stand up and let our voices be heard. We need to contact our representatives in Washington, D.C., and do it today. Sending a letter to Washington could take up to two weeks because of the screening process that letters go through before they are delivered. For immediate results, please fax your representatives your letter today and express your dissatisfaction about this unfair decision by the postal service. If we all move swiftly, we can make a difference and stop the Gaylord Post Office from closing and keep our good service intact. Fax numbers for state representatives for northern Michigan are: Carl Levin, 202-224-6221; Debbie Stabenow, 202-224-4822; Bart Stupak, 202-225-4735; Dave Camp, 202-225-3561.

Chris Levi, St. Ignace, local president, American Postal Workers Union

## Michigan Politics

By George Weeks



### Who Funds Campaigns? We Find Out Too Late

The traditional start of a full blown gubernatorial campaign is Labor Day. This year's election is five months away.

But Republican challenger Dick DeVos – while Governor Jennifer Granholm keeps her powder dry until voters become more engaged – by about Memorial Day already had spent more for TV ads in the north country, and across the state, than any gubernatorial candidate in Michigan history in an entire campaign, Rich Robinson of the watchdog Michigan Campaign Finance Network said Friday.

Robinson's documented \$5.4 million spending by DeVos (including \$415,586 in the northern lower Michigan and Eastern Upper Peninsula and \$142,455 in the western U.P., with additional thousands on cable stations) comes as no surprise. It's in the ballpark of what Robinson had mentioned here previously.

But, beyond media focus on the whopping DeVos blitz, these points should be kept in perspective:

What an individual candidate, however wealthy, spends is not the important thing. Democrat Geoffrey Fieger spent about \$4.5 million of his own money in an unsuccessful 1998 challenge of Governor John Engler.

What counts most in statewide races – whether gubernatorial, U.S. Senate, or the Michigan Supreme Court contests where interest group spending is really out of hand – is what all the support groups spend collectively from the left or the right.

Robinson expects that the two sides, with all of their Granholm and DeVos support groups that do independent spending, will spend at least \$30 million on gubernatorial TV ads this year. That compares with about \$18 million four years ago.

As for overall spending, Granholm spokesman Chris DeWitt told *The Detroit News*: "We estimate that DeVos will spend \$60 million or more on this race. We expect to be outspent at least 2 to 1."

Early campaign headlines go to wealthy people who run for statewide office, whether DeVos in Michigan, a Rockefeller in New York or West Virginia, or New Jersey's Jon Corzine, the former chairman of Goldman Sachs who, with \$63 million in 2000, waged the most expensive Senate campaign in U.S. history.

But the real focus for voters on the issue of money in politics these days should be "Look Local" – who supplies the "Mother's Milk of Politics," as President Gerald R. Ford and others have said regarding campaign contributions for those we elect?

There's nothing evil about contributing to those who share your

views. But Michigan has an appalling lack of timely disclosure on who contributes to whom among statewide and legislative officeholders and candidates, with all of their shadowy support groups.

There's too much stealth, and not enough sunshine, in the system.

Robinson laments that while legislators in Lansing are "working on the budgets, all kinds of (contributions) are being made" to them but it is "ancient history" before they are reported.

Secretary of State Terri Lynn Land has called for "real time" electronic reporting of campaign contributions as they are made. Robinson would at least like quarterly reporting of contributions by state candidates, as is required for federal candidates.

Don't expect action on either reform. As Robinson notes, citizens are "too acceptable" of the current system.

#### Joltin' Joe

In his last years as a decidedly moderate Republican state senator, former Battle Creek mayor Joe Schwarz was out of favor with the Michigan GOP establishment. In part, this was because he waged a losing 2002 gubernatorial primary battle against Lieutenant Governor Dick Posthumus, buddy of retiring Governor John Engler.

But now, as first-term Congressman Schwarz faces a tough primary challenge from the right, he is getting support from across the party spectrum, including from Engler, president of the National Manufacturers Association.

Schwarz, who chaired Senator John McCain's successful 2002 Michigan presidential primary campaign over George W. Bush, has Bush's support in his primary against ex-state Representative Timothy Walberg of Tipton. Walberg finished third in the six-candidate 2004 congressional primary won by Schwarz, but now has the advantage of being the sole conservative challenger of the moderate Schwarz.

GOP State Chairman Saul Anuzis also supports Schwarz, a reflection of the fact that Schwarz, who won by about 67,000 voters over Democrat Sharon Renier in the seven-county district two years ago, would be heavily favored to hold the seat for Republicans.

Also supporting Schwarz is ex-Governor Bill Milliken, who is not in sync with former governor Engler on many other party matters.

George Weeks recently retired after 22 years as political columnist for *The Detroit News*. His weekly *Michigan Politics* column is syndicated by *Superior Features*.

## St. Ignace News Policies

#### Letters:

All responsible letters will be considered for publication and may be edited. They must be signed and a telephone number must be included for verification. Personal thank-you notes, personal attacks against other people, form letters, and letters promoting political candidates are not accepted, although letters for or against ballot proposals are welcome.

#### Obituaries:

The St. Ignace News maintains a policy of not charging for obituaries and we sometimes add information or rewrite them for clarity and reader interest. Obituaries that the family wants published exactly as submitted can be placed in the newspaper for \$75. Photographs are welcome at no charge.

#### Weddings:

Weddings with photographs are published without charge within 45 days of the ceremony. After 45 days, a photograph can be included for \$32.80.

#### Internet:

The complete edition of The St. Ignace News is available online at [stignacenews.com](http://stignacenews.com).

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## The St. Ignace News

and Les Cheneaux Islands Weekly Wave

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USPS Periodical Publication Number - 462-380

ESTABLISHED 1878

Published each Thursday at Saint Ignace, Mackinac County, Michigan

Entered in Saint Ignace, Michigan Post Office as Periodical Mail Matter, Act of March 3, 1879

Periodical Postage Paid at Saint Ignace, MI • Additional Postage Paid at Gaylord, MI

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to St. Ignace News, PO Box 277, St. Ignace, MI 49781

Volume 127, Number 9, Thursday, June 8, 2006

Publisher/Editor

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Publisher 1975-1995

Wesley H. Maurer, Sr. (1897-1995)



#### Subscriptions:

\$35 in Mackinac, Chippewa, Emmet, Luce, and Cheboygan counties.

\$42 elsewhere in the United States and military post offices.

\$30 for the Web edition at [www.saintignacenews.com](http://www.saintignacenews.com)

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The quotation under the flag of *The St. Ignace News* on Page 1 is from the 10 triads written by Dr. Fred Newton Scott, creator and teacher of the first continuous course in journalism in the United States at the University of Michigan in 1890. The 10 triads are chiseled on the parapet of the Detroit News Building at 615 Lafayette Boulevard, Detroit. They were headed "Ideals of the Press" or "The Newspaper in a Free Society," and serve as a reminder of what a free press means to us.