

Kindergarten Enrollments Healthy This Year

Higher Numbers Harbinger of More Per-Pupil Funding for Local Districts

By Paul Gingras

Many area schools are reporting higher numbers of kindergarten students this year, based on registrations conducted in the past several weeks. That is especially good news for those schools that receive per-pupil education funding from

the state. Some schools are upgrading their curricula, some are extending to all-day classes, and at least one plans to provide more nutrition in its snacks.

St. Ignace Area Schools, Moran Township School, Engadine Consolidated Schools, Les Cheneaux

Community Schools, Mackinaw City Public Schools, and Rudyard Area Schools all reported higher kindergarten registrations. Mackinac Island Public School, Pickford Schools, and DeTour Area Schools reported lower enrollment for kindergarten classes this year.

While the true student population won't be known until classes begin Tuesday, September 5, registrations are a good indicator of what

administrators can expect. All numbers reported in this article were current Wednesday, August 24.

St. Ignace Area Schools

"It changes all the time," said secretary Danette Andrews of the student enrollment, but for now, St. Ignace Area Schools reports a tentative count of 50 registered kindergarten students, compared to last year's final count of 49. Over the years, kindergarten registration

numbers have remained relatively stable, said Bonnie Ledy, the elementary and middle school principal.

Marcia Bishop, Sherrie Gustafson, and Lil McDonald will teach kindergarten this year, and their youngsters will be the first in the school's history to experience all-day sessions, compared to traditional half-day programs. The

**Please turn to page 12*

Mackinac Bridge Walk Information Inside this issue...

Information on the Mackinac Bridge Walk, art festivals, and other Labor Day weekend events in Eastern Upper Peninsula communities is on Page 3.

Swim, Jim, Swim

Dreyer Battling Straits Currents for New Record

Marathon athlete Jim Dreyer from Byron Center plans to swim at least 31 laps across the Straits of Mackinac this week, swimming non-stop for 125 miles or more, to set a world distance record. The record-setting Great Lakes distance swimmer will once again swim unescorted.

He began his first crossing from St. Ignace Monday, August 28, at 9 a.m., though heavy morning fog in the Straits caused him to divert his swim, said Bob Dryer, a St. Ignace land crew member. The fog made it impossible to view approaching freighters. As a backup plan, Mr. Dreyer swam south to the end of the bridge causeway before returning to St. Ignace and then continued on toward Mackinaw City. By that time, the fog had lifted and by 2:30 p.m. he was nearing the south end of the bridge.

He plans to continue swimming the length of the bridge until he reaches the 125-mile mark, sometime on Thursday, depending on water currents and weather.

Though swimming alone, he has a radio to communicate with his land crews, if needed. The event, which he calls "Dire Straits 125," will have Mr. Dreyer battling the Straits' cross current for an estimated 84 to 96 hours, without the support of an escort boat.

He is pulling a diver down buoy along with him that contains drinking water, liquid meals, and vitamins. He remains in the water as he touches the shoreline on each pass. Land crews on both sides of the bridge replenish his supplies, explained Shelley McLain, a Mackinaw City crew member.

While training for the event, he stayed awake for three days, she said.

At night he will wear strobe lights.

He averages about 1.5 mile per hour and each trip across the Straits is approximately five miles, crew members say.

"He's an amazing individual," said Al Dreyer, his cousin and a paramedic stationed with the St. Ignace crew.

In announcing his plans in June, Mr. Dreyer said he welcomed the challenge of the Straits swim, noting he has already swum across the five Great Lakes.

Mr. Dreyer has set 14 records while swimming across all five Great Lakes. Last year's Lake Superior swim set the world distance record for a self-sufficient swim as he pulled 250 pounds of supplies for 59 miles alone across Lake Superior.

He will attempt to set his 15th record while raising funds and awareness for the Big Brothers Big Sisters program.



Volunteer Joannie Grogan shows a gosling to children in one of this year's incoming kindergarten classes, during kindergarten orientation at St. Ignace Area Schools Wednesday, August 23. Pictured here (from left) are students Parker Tracey, Madison Olsen, and Bryan Kasper.

St. Ignace Students To Begin Classes Tuesday

The 2006-2007 school year will get underway for St. Ignace Area Schools students and staff Tuesday, September 5.

All students will attend in the morning only on September 5. Kindergarten through sixth grade students will start each day at 8:10 a.m., while seventh through 12th grade students will start at 8:05 a.m. Dismissal time Tuesday, September 5, will be 11:15 a.m.

Classes will dismiss at 2:55 p.m. for kindergarten through sixth grade students and 3 p.m. for seventh through 12th grade students on full days.

Parents who transport their

students to school are asked to bring them to school 10 minutes before the start of classes. School doors will open at 7:30 a.m. daily.

Parents of kindergarten students have been sent a letter regarding a specific schedule for their child. Registration may still be made by calling 643-8500. Immunizations must be up to date to allow attendance in public school.

The school breakfast program will begin Tuesday, September 5, the first day of school.

The school lunch program will begin for all students Wednesday, September 6. Lunch

prices for the 2006-2007 school year are \$1.80 for elementary and middle school students and \$2.10 for high school students. Class lists for grades kindergarten through seven are posted on the school doors.

Athletic event prices for the 2006-2007 school year will be as follows: Middle School/freshman contests, adults \$4, students \$3, and family ticket \$12; High school Junior Varsity and Varsity events, adults \$5, students \$4, and family ticket \$15; season pass \$80 for students, \$100 per adult, and family pass \$200.

Bus schedules for the 2006-

**Please turn to page 14*

County To Add One Corrections Officer

By Karen Gould

Mackinac County commissioners approved hiring an additional corrections officer and the purchase of video equipment for the Mackinac County Jail at their Thursday, August 24, meeting. Hiring one full-time corrections officer and adding video equipment to monitor the holding cell

from the jail's front office will satisfy the Michigan Department of Corrections (DOC) staffing requirements at the jail, said Sheriff Scott Strait.

A staffing analysis had originally called for four additional corrections officers, and the compromise follows three months of negotiations with the DOC, including an

August 15 meeting to review staffing levels, attended by DOC county jail services unit manager Jack Kann, Sheriff Strait, and county commissioners Larry Leveille and Jim Farero.

"I was satisfied with the meeting and I was satisfied with the outcome of it," said Mr. Leveille.

**Please turn to page 15*

Noise, Campers Draw Debate at Portage Twp.

By Paul Gingras

"You guys have to decide as a board if this is a resort town or a retirement town," said Kim Bushey, owner of Kim's Tally Ho bar in Curtis, regarding a debate over a prospective noise ordinance discussed at the Portage Township meeting Tuesday, August 15.

The board authorized Supervisor Donald Ferris to work with the township attorney to investigate noise ordinances in other communities so the board can deliberate what kind of noise ordinance, if any, would be appropriate for Curtis.

Much of the discussion about the issue centered around weekend

activity at Kim's Tally Ho bar. Mr. Ferris said he has received complaints about noise on Friday nights, when musical entertainment is provided at the bar. He added that he must respond to these requests and that the matter is not a personal issue.

Ms. Bushey suggested that overly restricting establishments like hers could hurt the local economy.

"You have to give people who come to this town on vacation an outlet," she said. "We promote people to come to this town. Now we're saying, 'Come here, but we're going to have the cops here, so if you drink too much, you're

going to jail.'" Restricting music could deter visitors, she also suggested.

Treasurer Nancy Kister questioned the value of creating an ordinance every time a complaint is made in the township, particularly in this case, because the debate seems to focus on only one establishment. Therefore, the matter begs for another solution, she said.

Creating a noise ordinance in Curtis is "a dead horse that has been beaten many times," she said, adding that the township has turned down noise ordinances on several occasions.

**Please turn to page 14*

Area Firefighters Join Forces in Propane Burn

Flames from a blazing 300-gallon propane tank shot above the roof of the Little Bear East Conference Center and Ice Arena in St. Ignace Thursday evening, August 24, alarming some residents and prompting several to call 9-1-1. The blaze, however, was part of a training session for area firefighters learning to control propane fires. The "live burn" was held in the Little Bear East parking lot.

Sixty firefighters from 14 Eastern Upper Peninsula and northern Michigan fire departments participated in the state-certified propane emergency response training session, which was conducted by Michigan Propane Gas Association of Lansing. The association had held a training session in Manistique the day before.

The session included a classroom course as well as a hands-on outside training course. The classroom course covered properties and principles of propane.

The dramatic live burn gave firefighters a chance to experience a propane fire, which few have seen, said St. Ignace Fire Chief John "Bucky" Robinson.

"We don't have very many propane tanks this size in the area because we use natural gas, so we don't see very many propane fires," said Mr. Robinson. The training session taught firefighters to control such a violent fire.

The fire was operated by a control panel connected to the propane tank.

Firefighters, working in teams of six men operating two hoses, created a wall of water, sprayed from each side of the fiery tank, as the men moved slowly toward the tank. Once the spray wall reached the tank, one firefighter had to reach in and turn the valve on the tank to cut off the leaking propane.

"The firefighters learn a lot from this," said Brian Lincoln, the

**Please turn to page 15*



Members of the St. Ignace Fire Department, forming a spray wall, charge toward the flaming 300-gallon propane tank during a training session at Little Bear East Conference Center and Ice Arena Thursday, August 24.

The St. Ignace News DEADLINE AND OFFICE HOURS Labor Day

The St. Ignace News office in St. Ignace will be open Monday, September 4 from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m.

DISPLAY ADVERTISING DEADLINE will remain 5:00 p.m. Friday.

CLASSIFIED DEADLINE will remain 1:00 p.m. Monday.