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MONTELLO, WISCONSIN

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Lake Lawrence Fisheree attracts record crowd

Lake Lawrence, near Westfield, was covered with fishermen from one end to the other on Saturday, January 16th during the annual Ice Fisheree. Sponsors of the event, the Lawrence Lake Sports Club and the Westfield Lions Club, were happy to see big crowds and a nice catch of fish for the day. No one caught the specially tagged fish, but there still was plenty of fishing success reported on the lake and nice prizes to go with them.

Montello School Board approves contract for new charter school

The Montello Board of Education met on Monday night to discuss and approve the charter school contract that will dictate the operation of the High Marq Environmental Charter School as part of the Montello School District.

Before any discussion on the specifics of the contract was able to take place, board members reviewed the anticipated cost of the Charter School with members of the Charter School's planning committee. Board members were reassured that the cost of having to hire an additional teacher would be offset by state aid received from the anticipated gain on enrollment figures. Other costs for the school can be covered through a \$525,000 three-year grant.

Although concerned about public perception on adding a staff member to the district, board members seemed to acknowledge that the creation of the Charter School was new ground

and that it made economic sense to go forward with the contract. Board member Andy Zellmer even suggested that the Charter School's Governing Council draft a "business plan," where projections of enrollment, revenue and expenditures could all be viewed in one document.

District Administrator Jeff Holmes commented he is, "cautiously optimistic, based on conversations with neighboring districts that have charter schools that (Montello) will have the student draw needed," adding however, "Can you guarantee it? No."

High Marq Board Member John Otto explained that the River Crossing Charter School in Portage, which houses grades 7 and 8, had a waiting list after its first 2 years. It has been operating for 8 years now.

After a few minor changes, the Board of Education voted 6-0 to approve the contract and moved to their next agenda item. Under CESA contracts, District Administrator Jeff Holmes informed the board of his intent to discontinue the use of the SCING network, the distance learning lab, which will save the district nearly \$16,000 a year.

The other contract that was discussed was COMAN, an alternative learning site designed to house the most difficult of students and used only as a last resort. Based on next year's projected enrollment, Holmes recommended that the district not remove themselves from the setting, with Dawn Sine, the Director of Pupil Services, agreeing that COMAN was the "safest and best alternative," as well as the most economical."

The final agenda item before adjournment was an update on consolidation. Mr. Holmes announced that the district's bookkeeper, Cheryl Troost, would meet with Westfield's business manager, Brian Walters, to finalize numbers comparing costs for various consolidation scenarios before they are presented to both districts.

Mr. Holmes also updated the Board on talks with State Superintendent Tony Ebers and State Representative Fred Clark concerning the possibility of getting a waiver to hold a binding referendum in April. He stated that Clark was adamant that the Montello Board must pass a resolution of intent to consider consolidation in the same manner that Westfield already has. Clark told him that in order for him to have a chance to get the waiver through, they must see the same commitment from the Montello Board as they have seen from Westfield. That topic will be back on the agenda for the Board's February meeting.

Burns Birthday Tea fills Montello's Vaughn Hall

By Kathleen McGwin

Over 100 people filled J. P. Vaughn Hall for the Montello Historic Preservation Society's Robert Burns Birthday Tea on Sunday. The tea was part of the Year of John Muir activities happening around the county in 2010. Burns is the much loved Scottish poet whose book John Muir carried with him as he went on his wilderness sojourn when he left Marquette County. His birthday is celebrated by Scottish folks around the world.

The Madison Scottish Country Dancers John Muir (Wisconsin) Branch of the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society entertained with dance, poetry, and even some lessons about the kilt. A fiddler and keyboard kept the music lively and 10 dancers stepped to Scottish tunes.

In between Scottish music sets, re-enactors Ed Thalacker as John Muir, Dick Dufour as Robert Burns, Bruce Dethlefsen as Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Jack Frost as Teddy Roosevelt with Kendra Koback as narrator, gave the audience an educational performance that shed light on the 4 great men and their connections to each other.

Tables were filled with scones, shortbread, and other treats to accompany the large assortment of teas to sample. The Douglas Doers 4H Club, Neshkoro Kidz Cook from Healthy Communities Healthy Youth, Westfield High School students and many individuals baked and donated to the tea.

This was a grand start to the Year of John Muir in Marquette County. Go to www.kathleenmcgwin.com/montello-historic-preservation-society to find out more events coming up.



Dancers from the Madison Scottish Country Dancers John Muir (Wisconsin) Branch of the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society posed with re-enactors Bruce Dethlefsen as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Jack Frost as Teddy Roosevelt, Ed Thalacker as John Muir, Dick Dufour as Robert Burns, and, left of Dethlefsen, Kendra Koback, narrator. (Photo by Kathleen McGwin)



Audience members were encouraged to join in the fun at the Robert Burns Birthday Tea sponsored by the Montello Historic Preservation Society. Rosa Haskett from Westfield enjoyed the dancing. (Photo by Kathleen McGwin)