



# Blue Ribbon Report

SPRING 2009



*"The Kettering Board of Education understands the challenges this community is facing, and we do not ever take for granted the support consistently shown for our schools."*

Jim Trent,  
School Board  
President

## Renewal Issue on May 5 Ballot Means ZERO Increase in Taxes for Kettering Voters

The Kettering City School District will have the renewal of an operating issue on the May 5 ballot that is vital to maintaining the excellent programs and services provided to the children in the Kettering City Schools.

"Because this is a renewal levy, there will be absolutely no increase in taxes as a result of this Renewal Issue," says Bob Mengerink, superintendent of the Kettering City School District. "However, although this is a renewal issue with no tax increase for property owners, it is extremely important to the ongoing, quality operations of our schools," says Mengerink, adding, "I don't think it is putting it too strongly to say that the loss of the operating funds provided to the district

through this issue would be devastating to Kettering."

Schools are a "people" business, and the vast majority of dollars generated by operating levies are used to fund the people who work in a school district – everyone from classroom teachers to principals to aides who assist students with disabilities to custodians to the bus drivers who transport children safely to and from school every day.

The remainder of operating funds covers such costs as textbook purchases, heating and electricity, classroom supplies and computer and technology purchases.

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## 'Inch by Inch,' Students Work Together to Produce Class Play

Jessie Rindler's kindergarten class at Beavertown Elementary School gave new meaning to the term "team-work" when they took on the monumental task of writing an original class play based on *Inch by Inch*, a children's book by Leo Lionni.

The students spent the months of February and March writing their own script and producing an original song for the play, designing their set and costumes



Mara Retherford ("dog"), Elayna Goodwin ("goldfish"), Kirsten Bagwell ("cat") and Zoe Blum ("inchworm") perform in their class play, *Inch by Inch*

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**Q. What is a Renewal Issue?**

**A.** With a Renewal Issue, the school district asks voters to continue ("renew") an existing operating levy. In 2004, Kettering voters approved a 6.9-mill operating levy for a five-year period. The district is now asking voters to consider the renewal of this levy, which will be on the May 5 ballot. Because this is a renewal of a levy that voters already approved in 2004, passage of **Issue 12** will mean a **ZERO INCREASE IN TAXES** for Kettering residents.

**Q. How are the funds from this levy used by the district?**

**A.** Operating levies fund the important day-to-day functions of the schools. Because schools rely on people in order to operate – i.e. teachers to teach students, bus drivers to transport students, custodians to keep buildings clean, aides to assist special needs students -- the majority of the funds generated by an operating levy cover the cost of salaries and benefits. A portion of operating funds is also used to cover everyday expenses like gas and electric bills and to purchase classroom supplies, textbooks, equipment and classroom technology. It is important to note that by law, funds generated by an operating levy **CANNOT BE USED FOR BUILDING CONSTRUCTION OR MAJOR RENOVATION PROJECTS.**

**Q. Everyone is having to tighten their belts in this difficult economy. Is the Kettering City School District doing the same?**

**A.** Yes. The district is working very hard to make reductions, wherever possible, and is trying to do so, as much as possible, without negatively impacting students. We have seen what some of our neighboring districts are going through right now as they make difficult adjustments after levy failures. We are confident that Kettering doesn't want that same thing to happen here in our community, and we are doing all that we can to avoid these types of massive cuts that definitely impact the children in our schools. Over the past three years, the district has cut \$6.3 million from the budget by eliminating positions when someone retires or resigns and through cuts in our supplies, materials and equipment lines. We will continue to look at all positions as they

come open and will continue to make cuts, where possible.

**Q. What is the average Kettering property owner paying for this operating issue that is up for renewal?**

**A.** The owner of a \$100,000 home in Kettering is paying approximately \$17 per month on this operating issue.

**Q. How important is this levy? Could the schools function without it?**

**A.** The consequences of losing this levy would be grave. This levy brings about \$8.2 million a year into the district to educate children. Without these funds, the district would be forced to make massive reductions in services and programming for students.

**Q. We've heard a lot of talk about Gov. Strickland's "education budget and reform plan." Will this plan fix the school funding issue in Ohio?**

**A.** Since Gov. Strickland first proposed his budget and education "reform plan," we have heard a variety of numbers being tossed around in terms of state money that may be coming into the Kettering Schools. At this point, we are not sure what this number might be. What we do know, however, is that much of the money a district might receive from the state will be earmarked in terms of how it can be spent. It appears, at this time, that this will not be money that a district will be able to deposit into its general fund to cover its existing operating costs.

For instance, some of the things that Gov. Strickland has proposed in his education reform plan – released in tandem with his new budget proposal – include initiatives that will be extremely expensive for every school district in the state of Ohio. Proposed initiatives such as all-day kindergarten, 20 extra school days and additional counselors and nurses in buildings are all good ideas, but they also are proposals that will be very expensive to implement.

We will keep you informed as the package works its way through the Legislature. Suffice it to say, however, that as presented, the proposed "reforms" are inadequately funded by the state.



Senior homeowners who are at least 65 years of age can apply for a tax exemption through the Homestead Exemption Act, which was signed into law by Gov. Ted Strickland in 2007 as a means of providing property tax relief to senior citizens.

The following are details about the Homestead Exemption Act. If you have questions regarding the tax exemption, please contact the Montgomery County Auditor's Office at 937-225-4341.

- Seniors **65 years-of-age and older** who own and reside in their home can claim the Homestead Exemption.
- A homeowner who is **permanently disabled** may claim the Homestead Exemption. A homeowner with a disability needs to complete a *Certificate of Disability* signed by a doctor or psychologist. The certificate can be found on the back of the *Homestead Exemption Application Form*.

- The Homestead Exemption Act allows eligible individuals to shield \$25,000 of the market value of their home from property taxes. This means that when property taxes are calculated for the eligible homeowner, the calculation will be done after the \$25,000 is subtracted from the market value of the home.
- Any homeowner who has already completed the Homestead Exemption Application Form and is currently receiving the tax credit exemption **DOES NOT NEED TO RE-APPLY**; you will automatically qualify for the exemption.
- Applications must be filed with Montgomery County Auditor Karl Keith's office (451 W. Third St., Dayton, Ohio 45422) no later than June 1. Applications are available by calling the auditor's office at 225-4341, or by visiting the county website at [www.mcoho.org](http://www.mcoho.org). Once on the site, click on "Government," then "Auditor" and then "Homestead."

## Preschool Programs Currently Registering Students

The Kettering City School District provides two preschool options for children in our community, and both the Integrated Preschool Program and the Pathfinders Preschool Program currently are taking registrations for new students.

### Integrated Preschool Program

The Integrated Preschool Program is designed to provide an opportunity for children with disabilities and typically developing children to interact in a learning environment. There are openings in the morning and afternoon sessions, which operate Monday through Thursday from 8:30-11 a.m. and from 12:15-2:45 p.m. The preschool program operates at four locations, including Greenmont, Moraine Meadows, Indian Riffle and Oakview elementary schools.

The program is play based and is characterized by a language-rich environment and small class sizes designed to help prepare children academically and socially for kindergarten. Each preschool class is comprised of no more than 16 children, approximately half of whom are children with disabilities and half of whom are typically

developing children. The classroom is staffed by one certified preschool teacher and one-to-two teacher assistant(s), based on enrollment numbers and the needs of the children in each class.

Registration packets for typically developing children for the Integrated Preschool Program are available at any of the four school locations from which the program operates. The fee for typical preschoolers is \$250 per quarter, and the program is open to children ages 3-5 who reside within the Kettering City School District.

When registering a child, the parent may request attendance at a particular location. Every effort is made to fulfill these requests, however, on occasion, it may be necessary to place a child in a school other than the one requested due to enrollment numbers. Typically developing children who will be three-years-of-age by August 31 may enroll in the program for the 2009-2010 school year. For additional information regarding the Integrated Preschool Program, please contact Deb McCall, coordinator of Preschool Services, at (937) 499-1474.

"Preschool" cont. on page 5



*Dear Kettering Citizens:*

What a year this has been in the Kettering Schools. Our International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Program got off to a great start this year, and already, we have 12 IB diploma candidates signed up for the 2010-2011 school year to participate in this rigorous academic program that is recognized by the finest colleges and universities nationally and internationally. We also have an additional 544 students registered to take individual IB courses next year, and we added several Advanced Placement Programs (AP) to our high school curriculum, increasing to 17 the number of AP courses students at Fairmont High School can take.

Our *Marching Firebirds* had another award-winning year, and our high school a capella group, *Eleventh Hour*, was chosen as the only high school-level group featured on the *Alliance for A Capella Initiative's* (AAIA) album, *Sing* – a CD that features college groups...and Fairmont High School...representing six countries.

Our middle school competition cheerleading squad placed first at the nationals in Orlando and our high school squad brought home the third-place trophy. Our boys' bowling team was the state runners-up, and our boys' and girls' basketball teams had phenomenal seasons. Our boys' team made it to the District Finals and our girls' team made it to the Regional Finals.

There's a lot of learning going on in the Kettering Schools – both in the classroom and beyond – and I hope that you take as much pride in the efforts and successes of our students and in the excellent educational programs and extracurricular activities that we can offer them as I do, because none of this would be possible without the strong, unfaltering support of the Kettering Community.

On behalf of the Kettering Board of Education, let me say that we do understand the challenges this community is facing, and we do not ever take the support consistently shown for our schools for granted. As we weather the economic difficulties that we are all facing, I ask that you keep in mind the fact that assuring the continuance of a strong public school system is perhaps the number one variable we have control over locally when there are so many financial challenges at the state and federal levels that impact us all. We all know that quality schools protect the stability of our Kettering community, and we, as voters and taxpayers, have the ability to maintain that

quality and to assure that our district and our community come out of this recession stronger and healthier than ever by continuing to support our schools.

We, as a board, pledge continued fiscal responsibility as the district faces budget challenges in the coming months and years. As your representatives on the Board of Education, we take very seriously our charge to be good stewards of the funds you provide to us to use in giving the children of the Kettering City Schools opportunities to succeed now and in the future.

Kettering is an excellent community that supports excellent schools. I have traveled all over the state of Ohio as an educational consultant and hands down, there is no other community that supports its schools and no other municipality that has a better relationship with its school district, than Kettering. This is something for which we should all take great pride. The continued excellence of our schools will have to be maintained at the local level, and I truly believe that our children and future generations of children deserve nothing but the best that we can provide to them when it comes to educational opportunities.

I hope you will join me on May 5 as I head to the polls. Together, we can assure continued quality programming and services for our children and a strong foundation for our community -- **with zero increase in taxes.**

*Jim Trent*  
*President*

*Kettering Board of Education*

*"Inch" cont. from page 1*

and creating murals to document their project.

And on March 26, the class proudly presented their play to an eager audience of family members and friends. "Our project fostered growth in many 'languages,' or intelligences," says Rindler, noting that linguistic, mathematical, musical, naturalist and interpersonal intelligences were just some of the areas of growth for the students as they researched animal habitats, learned to write their script, became comfortable speaking in front of an audience and collaborated on set and costume designs with each other and their families. "I am so proud of my students because they worked so hard. They were proud of themselves, too, because they learned what can be accomplished when you work together as a team," says Rindler. ■



Dylan Nelson, a student in Fairmont High School's Digital Design Tech Prep Program, designed the winning logo for the *South Suburban Coalition ... United for Alcohol and Drug-Free Youth*. Dylan's entry was selected from among 40 designs by students from five south suburban area high schools. The logo will be used on all materials developed by the South Suburban Coalition (SSC) and will be used in both black and white, as shown, and in green and yellow and orange and yellow.

Dylan, the son of Shannon Nelson, was recognized at a special luncheon meeting, where he was presented with an award from Dr. David Roer, a local pediatrician, a member of the Centerville Board of Education and chairperson of the South Suburban Coalition.

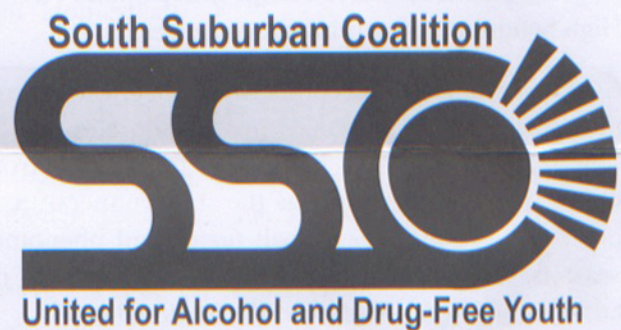
The SSC is an organization of volunteer youth and adults from eight communities (Kettering, Centerville, Miamisburg, Miami Township, Moraine, Oakwood, Washington Township, and West Carrollton) who are working collaboratively to promote healthy choices and positive alternatives to reduce underage drinking and drug use in south Dayton communities. The SSC is looking for youth and adult volunteers to assist with:

- Planning and organizing projects and special events
- Recruiting and contacting volunteers
- Writing and marketing
- Graphic design
- Web site design and maintenance
- Development and fundraising
- Financial management.

If you would like to get involved in the efforts of the SSC, please contact the Kettering City School District's Community Relations Office at 499-1458 or at [kari.basson@ketteringschools.org](mailto:kari.basson@ketteringschools.org).



Dr. David Roer presents Dylan Nelson with his award for designing the winning logo for the South Suburban Coalition.



*"Preschool" cont. from page 3*

### **Pathfinders Preschool**

Pathfinders Preschool is an early learning program funded by the Ohio Department of Education and operated by the Kettering City School District. Children ages 3 and 4 who live in Montgomery County are eligible to enroll in Pathfinders.

Pathfinders classrooms are located at the Kettering Board of Education Building and at John F. Kennedy Elementary School. The program offers half-day and full-day sessions at the Board of Education location and half-day sessions at Kennedy Elementary.

The program provides children with academic and social preparation for entry into kindergarten.

Tuition fees for Pathfinders are based on household income and family size, and applications can be picked up at the Kettering City School District's Office of Community Literacy Programs, located on the first floor of the Board of Education Building, 3750 Far Hills Avenue. You can also download an application from the district's web site at [www.ketteringschools.org](http://www.ketteringschools.org). Once on the site, go the "Departments" and then click on "Office of Community Literacy Programs." For more information, contact the office at (937) 499-1450. ■



"Renewal Issue on May 5 Ballot," cont. from page 1

"It is important that voters understand that the funds generated by this operating levy that is up for renewal are used only for operational costs and by law, cannot be used for building projects," says Mengerink.

Over the past three years, Kettering, like many school districts across the state, has seen some major changes occur that are having a significant impact on how school districts operate and are funded. In 2005, the Ohio Legislature voted to eliminate what is known as Tangible Personal Property (TPP) taxes on businesses. This, essentially, is the elimination of taxes on a business's inventory.

The Kettering Schools have said all along that this is not necessarily a bad move on the part of the legislature because the elimination of this tax makes Ohio, as a whole, a more attractive state in which businesses will locate and expand. Unfortunately, the elimination of this tax means an approximate loss of \$9.5 million annually to the Kettering City School District's general fund. The state is currently reimbursing school districts for this loss. However, this reimbursement will begin to be phased out starting in calendar year 2011. In addition, changes in property valuation in Kettering, huge changes in investment

income for the district, increased operational costs for such things as gas and electricity -- all coupled with no inflationary growth in school funding from year-to-year -- have forced the Kettering Schools to make cuts and adjustments, just as many of our community members have had to do to their own household budgets in order to ride out this turbulent economy.

In anticipation of these major changes, the Kettering City School District has been making reductions to its operating budget, wherever possible. Over the past three school years, more than \$6.3 million has been cut from the budget. "Our Board of Education is dedicated to fiscal responsibility and has charged this administration with looking at every area of our budget to see where we might be able to make reductions," says Mengerink. "Through this budget-cutting process, we have eliminated positions and reduced textbook, equipment and supply purchases. We are hopeful that with continued vigilance and with the continued support of our Kettering community, the district will be able to make prudent reductions in the operating budget, wherever possible, while attempting not to negatively impact the direct education of our students and our work in the classroom."



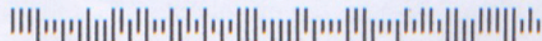
### Kettering City School District

3750 Far Hills Avenue  
Kettering, Ohio 45429

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