

# Stockton School News

Spring 2010

Stockton Borough School—Serving the Community Since 1832

## Stockton Residents to Vote Tuesday, April 20

Stockton residents will have an opportunity to vote on the budget for the 2010-2011 school year, as well as for three candidates for the Board of Education, at the annual election. This year, the polls will open at 3 P.M. on Tuesday, April 20. Voting will take place at the Stockton Firehouse on Mill Street until 9 P.M.

After a public hearing on March 31, Stockton School's Board of Education approved a operating budget of \$759,055. Local taxes will pay \$642,672 of the operating expenses for the school years, an increase of 4 percent over last school year. That represents a \$121 increase for the owner of a home assessed at the town's average value of \$322,466.

"We have tried to develop a budget that will meet the needs of our students,

while also being sensitive to the very difficult economic times facing New Jersey," said board president Jim Gallagher. "Unfortunately, like all school districts, Stockton is feeling the effects of Governor Christie's decision not to provide the level of financial support that the state has in the past. In addition to the loss of 100 percent of our regular state aid, we also anticipate that the state will not provide approximately \$35,000 in 'extraordinary aid' funding that it has promised in the past to help offset certain state-required special education costs. As a result, we're looking at a hole of approximately \$50,000 for the 2010-2011 school year. To cover that gap, we anticipate using more than \$35,000 from the district's emergency fund, which will deplete that fund by

about 40 percent. We are also asking for a 4 percent increase in taxes to help us through this current economic crisis.

"We intend to maintain all of our educational programs, such as our full-day kindergarten and our tuition pre-kindergarten (four-year-old) program. There will be no salary increase for administrators, and a minimal 1 percent increase for teachers. We've been through the budget carefully and have cut spending or kept spending levels flat wherever possible. We continue to share administrators and related arts teachers (for example, music) with neighboring districts, which helps to keep our costs down."

In developing the budget for the upcoming year, the school was faced with

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*Stockton kids braved the cold to hunt for candy-filled eggs at the annual Egg Hunt on Saturday, March 27. Many thanks to event coordinator Tami Hettman (pictured with her little bunny, center) and the many other volunteers who helped make the event a success.*



This spring, the Stockton School PTO sponsored an after-school Lego/Robotics Club. During the four-week program, the first hour was open to students in kindergarten through sixth grade. The younger (K-3) students were permitted to build projects using Lego bricks, to encourage hands-on learning and generate interest in the school's robotics club for when they get older. In the photos at right, kindergarten student Helen Mankovich (center), first grader Jared Ardman (top right), and second grader Branson Hettman (bottom right) show off their projects. During the second hour of each week's program, students in grades 4-6 programmed a small computer that guides a robot built with Legos to complete various tasks. The robotics club gives students an opportunity to put their math and science skills into practice.

## Budget

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significant cost increases in such areas as special education, health care, and legal services, as well as the state's decision, announced in late March, to eliminate the financial aid it has provided to the school in the past.

In the 2008-09 school year, New Jersey had provided the district with \$14,244 in aid. The same amount was promised to Stockton for 2009-2010, but in February the new administration said that it would reduce its aid payments to schools. This decision meant that Stockton actually received less than \$11,000 in state aid. To cover the difference, the school dipped into its emergency fund. This fund is ordinarily used for emergency problems, such as special educational or maintenance expenses that were not anticipated and thus included in the annual budget. (For example, when the school's boiler broke down a few winters ago and had to be replaced.)

Cost increases in 2010-2011 were partially offset by utilizing anticipated revenues from tuition, grants, and the tireless efforts of fund-raising by the PTO, along with the tax increase. Stockton also

receives grants from the Lambertville Area Educational Foundation and the Municipal Alliance for educational programs and materials.

In addition, Stockton's pre-kindergarten program for four-year-olds will enter a third year in 2010-11. This pro-

gram is paid for through private tuition funds. Stockton School is also accepting tuition students in all grades, from its full-day kindergarten through sixth grade. All tuition monies are used to help reduce the school's operating costs and thus ease the burden on local taxpayers.

## Three Candidates Running for Three Board Seats

On Tuesday, voters will choose representatives to fill a pair of three-year terms on Stockton's Board of Education. The terms will expire in April 2013.

Kenneth Good is running for the school board seat vacated by Richard McDaniel. Reverend Good is the pastor of Stockton Presbyterian Church and is an adjunct professor of history at Kean University. He says, "In our home, we have a window that overlooks the school's playground. My two-year-old daughter watches the kids playing with great interest. I realize that, gulp, in three years, she will be in kindergarten, learning and growing in the place she looks at through her window. I am happy to help support the school with its purpose and goals by serving on the board."

Incumbent board member Lisa Levine is also seeking re-election.

Last fall Diane Walker-Torkelson was

appointed to fill the seat vacated by Aтира Abatamarco Ransavage, who was elected to a three-year term in April 2009 but moved out of the district a few months later. Ms. Walker-Torkelson must now stand for election to complete the remaining two years of that term, which expires in April 2012. She says, "I have been a borough resident for 23 years, living here with my husband Norman and two daughters, Kjisten and Sara, both successful alumni of Stockton School and SHRHS. As a career educator with thirty-five years in the elementary classroom, I am also former PTO officer, school volunteer, and board president. My only agenda is to maintain a vigilant, fact-finding approach as we seek to maintain the excellent and unique qualities of a small school education in an ever-changing world, at the lowest possible cost to the taxpayer."

# PTO's Art and Spaghetti Dinner Set May 8 at Firehouse

The Stockton Borough School's PTO is sponsoring its eighth annual Spaghetti Dinner and Art Auction at the Stockton Fire House on Saturday, May 8. This year's event will include many new features, such as a buffet-style dinner served from 4 to 7:30 P.M., an outdoor auction tent, assorted desserts, raffle baskets, and a 50/50 drawing. There will also be live music. Diners should feel free to bring wine; wine glasses will be provided.

A silent art auction will feature the work of many local artists, including Nancy Ashman, Bob Beck, Tom Berenger, Dot Bonn, Jerry Cable, Jim Cascio, Greta Carlton, Diana Contine, Henry Eick, James Feehan, Soraya Ignatow, Gloria Kosco, Connie McIndoe, Ken McIndoc, Ruth Manning, Tom Manning, Steve Messenger, Miguel Osorio, Susan Roseman, Loretta Shigo, Harriet Wiseman, and many others. Gift certificates and other items from many area restaurants, merchants and entertainment venues will also be available for auction.

Adult tickets are \$12 in advance, or \$15 at the door. Tickets for children ages 5-12 are \$6; children under 5 eat free. This event sells out quickly, so make your reservations soon. To purchase tickets,



*Stockton School students Peter, Hope, and Mariel Vandegrift visited the studio/gallery of local artist Jerry Cable and helped select items for the Spaghetti Dinner and Art Auction. The PTO fundraiser will be held May 8 at the Stockton Fire House.*

contact Kathleen at (609) 397-7376 or via email at [kathleenvandegrift@yahoo.com](mailto:kathleenvandegrift@yahoo.com). To donate art, contact Susan Goeckeler at (908) 996-0593 or via email at

[statira@earthlink.net](mailto:statira@earthlink.net).

All proceeds from this event are used for programs that benefit the students of Stockton Borough School.

## Annual Stockton PTO Rummage Sale a Success

On March 20-21, the Stockton School PTO held its annual rummage sale. This event, which attracts customers from all over the state, was a great success. Thanks in part to spendid weekend weather, the sale raised more than \$7,500 for the PTO, which will be used to benefit students.

Funds raised by the Stockton School PTO are used to enrich the school experience for Stockton students without burdening local taxpayers. In the last school year (2008-09), the PTO raised more than \$15,000 through various fundraisers, such as

the rummage sale and the annual Spaghetti Dinner and Art Auction (see above). Approximately 35 percent of these funds were spent to provide after-school enrichment programs for students, such as the Robotics Club and instrumental music lessons. About 19 percent of PTO funds were spent on educational field trips. The remainder of the funds were used to sponsor school and community-related activities, or to purchase necessary items for classrooms, including carpeting, new computers, and printers.

## Tuition Registration Open

Stockton Borough School offers a private tuition program for students in grades PreK through six. If someone you know lives outside of the Borough and is interested in enrolling a child in our unique school, please tell them to visit our webpage at [www.stocktonschool.us](http://www.stocktonschool.us) for more information or call the CSA Suzanne Ivans at 609 397-2012 to arrange for a personal tour of the school.

## Alumni News Sought

Did you, or someone in your family, attend the Stockton School? Do you have any old pictures? Do you have a funny story about something that happened when you attended the Stockton School? Would you like to share what you are doing now? Send in your story and/or photos to the school at [sbs@stockton-school.us](mailto:sbs@stockton-school.us) and it may be printed in a future newsletter!

Volunteers are needed to help with a "clean-up day" at the Stockton park on April 24 from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. This event will involve cleaning up the mulch in the playground area to prepare it for a new load of mulch. This will mean weed pulling and raking. Please bring rakes, gloves, leaf bags, wheelbarrows, etc.

# Ask the CSA

*Question: I have heard how Stockton shares services, such as a business administrator and music teacher. What are some of the other ways the school saves money?*

*Answer:*

One of the advantages of being so small is that we can carefully scrutinize all purchases for services and goods that come through our doors. The best way to save money is not spend it in the first place. There are many typical purchases that schools make which Stockton School does not. Here are some examples:

1. *Furniture:* The Stockton School belongs to the School Business Alliance which matches school furniture needs with donated furniture and office supplies from local businesses. From office chairs to filing cabinets, from pens to clipboards—we take full advantage of these free offerings.

2. *Retail Purchasing:* A disadvantage of being small is that we cannot leverage discounted bulk purchases for large orders. Instead, we take advantage of our local ESC (Educational Services Commission), which orders on our behalf along with

other school districts. By doing this the School saved \$2,323 last year.

3. *Legal Fees:* Auditors have remarked how little our district pays in legal fees. This is because we utilize free legal services from School Boards and the Association of School Administrator for such tasks as a review of case law, analysis of current legislation, and reviews of district contracts and policies. We also take advantage of insurance coverage for legal challenges that can be quite costly.

4. *Information Software:* Most districts utilize costly software packages to facilitate completion of the numerous reports required by the DOE. At Stockton, with existing resources provided by MS Office software and a tech-savvy CSA, we utilize our “homemade” programs to manage these data services.

5. *Dedicated Volunteers:* We are very fortunate to have the support of our parents and our community who regularly

contribute their time and supplies on the behalf of the school. From cultivating our rock garden, to spreading mulch, to clearing weeds, a variety of volunteers pitch in to maintain our school grounds. This very newsletter you are reading—and all past editions—was done by volunteers. This includes the layout, paper, printing, and postage: not one penny of taxpayers’ money was spent to bring this publication to you.

6. *Enrichment Programs:* We are able to provide a variety of enrichment programs to our students outside of our school budget by utilizing multiple grants and funding from private sources. Our parents, PTO, and local organizations like the Lambertville Area Educational Foundation support such activities as Mandarin Chinese, instrumental music lessons, Robotics Club, and numerous educational field trips.

—Suzanne Ivans, CSA

*This publication made possible by generous donations from individuals and the Stockton School PTO. No taxpayer funds were used for the publication or distribution of this newsletter.*

Citizens to Support the Stockton School  
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