

YOUR SCHOOLS

2012

Aurora City School District

From the Superintendent

By RUSS BENNETT
Superintendent of Schools



I have been looking forward to this school year with much anticipation and it has not let me down. We have been off to a great start. Since the first

day of school we have been settling into our new routines and I have seen many smiles of excitement as our new school year began. Thank you to all of our parents and staff that worked so hard to make the beginning of our school year such a success. It's so important to kick-off the school year on a positive note.

Speaking of notes, I hope you all had a chance to hear our outstanding band at the Aurora Schools' annual "Thunder Over Aurora" marching band spectacular. We hosted bands from surrounding communities including, Euclid, James A. Garfield, Lakewood, Notre Dame Cathedral Latin, and Riverside. The overcast sky and a few raindrops did not appear to slow them down one beat. The crowd loved the band performances and let them know it. The grand finale was a first for the band show. It featured all of the bands on the field together playing "Bridge Over Troubled Waters" that was quite

See Superintendent p. 7

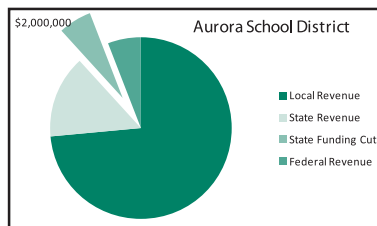
AURORA CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT PLACES 5.9 MILL LEVY ON NOVEMBER 6th BALLOT



As difficult as it is for school districts to ask community members to support a school levy, especially during difficult economic times, this is the method used by the State of Ohio to generate revenue

School District Cost Per Pupil Comparison	
Aurora	\$10,947
Solon	\$13,387
Chagrin Falls	\$12,304
Hudson	\$13,671
Beachwood	\$19,645
Orange	\$21,463
Twinsburg	\$10,450
State Average	\$10,697

for school districts in the State. With the State of Ohio facing an \$8 billion dollar budget shortfall for the current biennial, House Bill 153 (HB 153) includes significant reductions to school funding. For our Aurora School District, the implementation of HB 153 has led to the loss of approximately 2.1 million dollars in State funding through reductions in overall foundation payments and tangible personal property



direct payment reimbursements. These substantial losses have put our district at risk and we need to ensure that a cycle of "emergency need" does not transpire.

There are two types of school district

levies - operating and permanent improvement. General fund operating levies, by law, can only be used to pay for a district's day-to-day operating expenses, such as utilities, curriculum expenses, salaries, transportation and grounds keeping. Our school district has three renewable levies - one permanent improvement levy and two operating levies that were originally passed between 1990 and 1994 that can be renewed every five years. The recently renewed Aurora School District levies **did not** cost taxpayers any additional dollars. So while it may appear that the district seeks levy funds often, it is due to the state levy structure and the state laws governing the levy renewal process. Taxpayers will actually have a reduction

See Vote p. 7

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

From The Superintendent..... 1
Aurora Community Comes Together 1
Dave Renszel Has Kept Us Moving..... 2
Second Annual Outstanding Greenmen 2
Paul Powers Receives Award..... 3

Ohio Auditor Of State Award 3
Staff Excellence Awards..... 3
Who's Who & What's New 4
Class Acts 5
Pat Beck Wins OHSAA Award..... 5

Aurora High School Class Of 2012 Top Ten... 6
Sport Report..... 6
Indoor Percussion Team Takes 2nd Place 7
Mark Wood Performs With Our Orchestra 8

COLLEGE BOARD PRESENTS AURORA HIGH SCHOOL WITH AP AWARD

Mike Roberto (left) and Superintendent Russ Bennett (right) accept AP College Board award from College Board Representative Joel Gulko (center).

Aurora High School was recently presented with an Advanced Placement (AP) Award for their extensive AP program. Only 25 districts in Ohio were recognized by the College Board for expanding access to AP exams. Not only are we 1 of 25 in Ohio, but 1 of 388 districts nationally that earned this recognition!



The Aurora School System offers high quality programming in both academics and extra-curricular activities. Many of our high school students are taking Advanced Placement (AP) courses and earning college credit while at Aurora High School. Many times this results in students entering college as a 2nd semester freshman or sophomore that

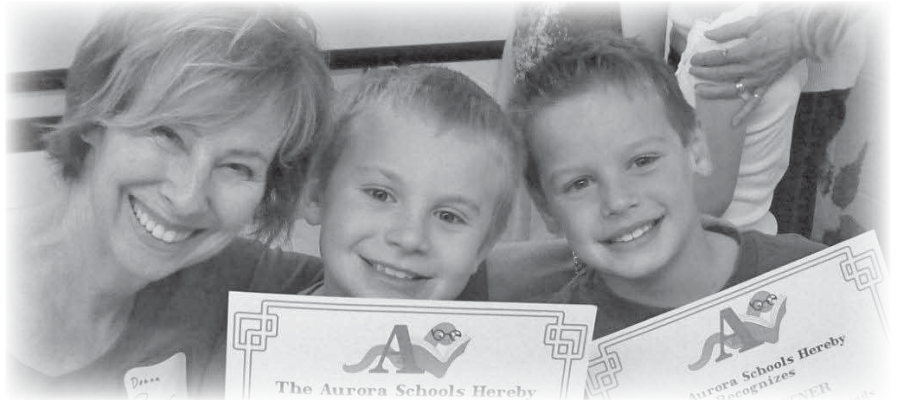


equates to huge cost savings for parents.

For example, during the 2011- 2012 school year, over 500 AP tests were administered at Aurora High School, which equates to over 500 college courses having the potential to be

forgiven. A parent of a student entering Purdue University for the 2012-13 school year, recently shared with us that her daughter entered the college as a sophomore student after having passed her AP class final exams. This saved her approximately \$40,000 in college expenses. Our curriculum department is continually evaluating AP course offerings in an effort to expand our AP program whenever our standards are met and the need exists.

AURORA READS PROGRAM NEEDS VOLUNTEERS



Aurora Reads students thank their volunteers.

The Aurora Reads Program is in need of volunteers for the 2012-13 school year. It only takes ½-hour of your day, only one day a week to help our youngest students improve their reading skills.

For more information please contact:
Craddock School - Sue Mansell - 330-562-8648
Miller School - Peggy McGee - 216-789-6556



YOUR SCHOOLS

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Editor: Stacey DeAnna

Your Schools is a publication of the Aurora City School District. Its purpose is to keep residents of Aurora informed of current events and progress in the Aurora City Schools and to foster pride and a continuous communication link between the schools and the community.

Your Schools has been awarded the "Mark of Excellence" and "Best of the Best" Awards by the Ohio Chapter of the National School Public Relations Association for service as a school district newsletter. *Your Schools* is a quarterly publication, mailed to all residents of Aurora. For information, comments, or story ideas, e-mail Editor Stacey DeAnna at: yourschools@aurora-schools.org.

FIRST DAY SMILES

The first day of school on August 22nd brought smiles and hugs as administrators, students and staff kicked-off yet another new school year of learning and accomplishment.



So Happy To Be Back!

Giant Eagle's Apples For The Students Program Benefits Schools

Please support our students by participating in the Apples for the Students program sponsored by the Giant Eagle grocery store chain. It's easy. Just sign up by going to www.gianteagle.com/about/apples-for-students or by calling 1-800-474-4777 and giving your school ID number:



- Miller/Craddock - #2170**
- Leighton - #3521,**
- Harmon - #2321**
- Aurora High School - #2034**

Each time your Giant Eagle Advantage Card is scanned through March 17, 2013, your purchases automatically earn our school free educational awards.

Thank you for helping our schools every time you shop at Giant Eagle!

FRIDAY NIGHT FUN

Aurora Schools' Veterans Stadium comes alive on Friday nights during football season each fall. This year is no exception. Excitement is in the air. Friday nights at Veterans Stadium become a place where community members gather together to cheer on the home team! Whether your son, daughter, niece, nephew, grandchild, neighbor or friend participates on the field during the game or performs at halftime, this is when we are all proud to say we live in Aurora.



Who's Who & What's New

Aurora Boy Scout **MITCH POLLOCK** completed his project working toward his Eagle Scout rank by creating a garden with trees at Aurora High School behind the school by the football locker rooms. Thank you for helping to beautify our high school.

Leighton School **THIRD GRADE STUDENTS** honored **AURORA FIREFIGHTERS** on September 11, 2012. The firemen were invited to the school to discuss fire safety. The students, wearing red, white, and blue, made a tunnel for them to walk through, presented them with cookies, and gave them thank you notes they had written.



Third graders honor firefighters on September 11, 2012.

Student **LEXILE SCORES** can now be found by going to the Parent Internet Viewer (PIV) on the right hand side of the district website homepage. Go to "Grade Summary" and click on the letter grade in the first marking period of their English class. Their Lexile score will be listed. A Lexile measure is a valuable piece of information about a student's reading ability or the difficulty of a text. A student's Lexile Score is determined from a reading test. Text is also analyzed and given a Lexile text measure based on how difficult a text is to comprehend by word frequency and sentence length. When used together, the Lexile measures help a reader to find books

at an appropriate difficulty level and determine how that reader will likely comprehend the text. Lexile measures can also be used to monitor a reader's growth in reading ability over time.



Louise Beckstrom

Aurora High School (AHS) students **ALFRED** and **LOUISE BECKSTROM** participated in the **2012 WOMEN IN ENGINEERING (WiE) Reach a Career in Engineering (RACE)** Program at Ohio State University. A group of 34 young men and women from around the country were selected to attend the weeklong program. WiE RACE is designed to introduce participants to a variety of areas and career opportunities within the larger engineering field. AHS biology teacher **LAURA BELL-PETERS** recommended Alfred and AHS math teacher **TIMOTHY BACZKOWSKI** recommended Louise.

Construction is now complete on the new roof at **MILLER SCHOOL**. The replacement project was undertaken during the summer months. Superintendent Russ Bennett said that the original 1967 roof was "badly in need of replacement." Funds for the roof replacement, totaling \$222,800, came from the 2008 bond issue and permanent improvement fund. General operating funds were not used for this project.

A big welcome goes to Aurora Schools' new **CHIEF MECHANIC BILL GANOE**. We thank him for all he does to make it possible for our children to get to school safely and on-time every day.

U.S. News and World Report Names Aurora As Gold Medal District

U.S. News and World Report magazine recently evaluated 21,776 public high schools in 49 states and the District of Columbia. Schools were awarded gold, silver, or bronze medals based on state proficiency standards, college readiness, and teacher/student ratios. Aurora High School was ranked as **#436** in the nation and **#18** in Ohio!

These rankings earned our district the distinction of being designated

a Gold Medal School District. There are only a total of 500 Gold Medal districts. Gold medals were given based on the "highest unrounded college readiness index values..." and were then numerically ranked from #1 to #500 and designated as the gold medal winners. Superintendent Russ Bennett said, "Congratulations to everyone! This is proud moment for everyone associated with our schools. My sincere thanks to everyone on a job well done."



The U.S. News's Best High Schools article can be read online at: <http://www.usnews.com/education/best-high-schools/national-rankings>.

CLASS ACTS

Aurora High School Secretary, **Mary Jane Cech**, has gone above and beyond as the unofficial school photographer. Check out the **Aurora High School Photo Gallery**, located in the left-hand column of the high school homepage, to view these fantastic photos throughout the year. Words cannot express the gratitude for the countless number of hours she has put into picture taking for the benefit of our students, parents and staff. Thank you so much!



Mary Jane Cech

The **Aurora Schools' Transportation Department** received a passing rating of 100% on their latest bus inspection. These yearly bus inspections are conducted by the Ohio State Highway Patrol. Recently retired Chief Mechanic **David Renszel**, in his 35 years in the district, has never had a bus fail an inspection!

Leighton and Craddock students who completed the summer Blue Ribbon Reader program were treated to an Exclusive Blue Ribbon Reader Event that featured renowned singer, songwriter and storyteller Foster Brown. Students participated in the reading program over the summer which included completing a summer reading journal tracking their minutes spent reading or being read to.

CONGRATULATIONS BLUE RIBBON READERS



Congratulations to seniors Thuy Li, Daniel Chen, and Sid Mandava who are Aurora High School's most recent National Merit Scholar Semi-Finalists. The National Merit Scholar Commended seniors are Michaela Ritz and Caroline Boehm.

A big "thank you" to our local **Target** store for giving **Craddock and Miller Schools** a \$500 book grant. The money was used to purchase a book for every new **Kindergarten** student, as well as, books for each school's bookroom. Thank you to all of our community members who shop at Target and help our schools to benefit.

Miller/Craddock Principal Patty Minrovic (left) and Counselor Tami Mazzella (middle) accept grant award from a Target representative (right).



SCOOPS OF SMILES

How sweet it was on September 18th and September 20th when students in Pre-K - 5th grade were treated to scoops of ice cream complete with all the toppings. Thank you to our Aurora PTO for sponsoring this popular event. The students loved seeing their teachers dishing up the sweet treats.



HOW SWEET IT IS!



AURORA HIGH SCHOOL SWAT TRAINING SITE

On July 18, 2012, Aurora High School hosted approximately 50 local Metro SWAT



(special weapons and tactics) team members for a day of training exercises. Metro SWAT team members are trained to perform high-risk operations that fall outside the abilities of regular police officers. The Metro SWAT team consists of police officers from Portage and Summit counties.

The training day consisted of mock emergency exercises that were facilitated by Aurora Schools' Resource Officer (SRO) and Metro SWAT Team Member Michelle Ice, police department/safety personnel and school administrators. Several different mock shooting scenarios were carried out with SWAT team members dressed in full gear and specialized safety vehicles located on the premise, adding to the realistic nature of the training session. Superintendent Russ Bennett said, "They made it as real-life as possible." Police Officer and former SWAT member Chris Reiter was responsible for creating the "real-life active shooter" scenarios. His scenarios were based on previous incidents that have actually taken place at other schools. Participants role-played as shooters and students. Administrators worked with SWAT officers to acquire information about the "active shooter," such as location, appearance, and behavior. Situations were also rehearsed using a SWAT team negotiator in separate scenarios. At the end of the training program, questions and concerns were addressed and ideas were gathered for possible use in future training sessions.

While we "hope we never have to experience the real thing," said Superintendent Russ Bennett, "it is beneficial to have the SWAT team familiar with our building." Ice explained that Bennett was "more than willing" to let the SWAT team use our high school when she approached him about the idea. Bennett added that Officers Ice and Reiter led the entire training and that "it was very well done and very thorough."

SPORT REPORT

Football Volunteer "Pops" Gives Generously Of His Time



The Aurora City School District is immensely fortunate to have so many incredible volunteers giving their time and energy to make ours a stand out district. During football season, there is one familiar face and stand out volunteer that all of the players and staff have a special fondness for. They call him "Pops."

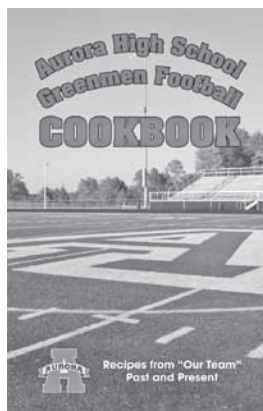
Ben Hill, better known as "Pops," has been giving his time to our Aurora varsity football team for many years. He has become an integral part of the team by helping out with whatever needed to be done. He has been a fantastic example of volunteerism for our players. Paul Powers, Aurora athletic director, said, "We are indebted to all of our volunteers and I can't say enough about Pops. He means so much to the players. The football coaching staff members have told me so many good things about "Pops" and what a help he has been to them."

Unfortunately, this year his health has sidelined him from volunteering on the field. While his presence is missed this fall, players and staff are grateful for the time that "Pops" has spent with them, helping to make our varsity football team the formidable presence that it has become. Thank you to "Pops" for, not only volunteering your time, but for the example you have set, that will continue to shape our young men.

Aurora Chosen as Cleveland Browns High School Game of the Week



The Cleveland Browns are promoting youth football by giving fans the opportunity to vote for a Cleveland Browns High School Game of the Week throughout the season. The Aurora vs. Chagrin Falls game on Friday, September 14, 2012 was selected as the game of the week. The winning team receives \$4,000 for their football program and the winning coach and game MVP are honored live at a Browns home game. Highlights of the game can be seen at www.clevelandbrowns.com/community/youth-football/game-of-the-week.html.



First Ever Greenmen Football Cookbook In Production

A first-ever Greenmen Football Cookbook is currently in the works. The cookbook will feature recipes submitted by past Aurora High School varsity football players and their families along with fun facts and photos. A portion of the proceeds will support the Paulie McGhee Memorial Scholarship Fund. The cost of the cookbook is \$15.00. Pre-orders can be sent to Barb Gardner at 475 Woodview Trail, Aurora, OH 44202 with checks made payable to PM Graphics. They will also be sold at Chet Edwards beginning at the end of October.

Congratulations to the Greenmen varsity boys' golf team who won the Chagrin Valley Conference Chagrin Division regular season tournament.

Vote – Continued from p. 1

in real estate taxes totaling 1.66 mills as the bond issue for the 1997 Aurora High School addition will be paid off.

Property tax rates are computed in mills which can be easily mistaken to mean “million.” A mill is actually 1/1000 or .001. One mill costs a property owner \$1.00 for every \$1,000 of taxable value. If this 5.9 mill proposed levy request passes, the millage equates to an increase in a homeowner’s tax rate by \$180/ year, or \$30/month, or \$.50/ day per \$100,000 in property valuation (based on appraised property tax, not selling price).

The Aurora Board of Education and Superintendent Russ Bennett have been, and continue to be, committed to making the best possible use of the resources provided to the school district by the community. To this end, the frugal spending by the district, have included an energy conservation program and joining consortiums in energy and supplies. These cost saving measures, along with implementing pay-to-participate fees, eliminating middle and high school Family Consumer Science classes and high school German classes, reducing staff positions by seven, increasing class sizes to an average of about 25 students per class, and implementing salary and step freezes for staff, have lead to overall cost reductions totaling over one million dollars over the last three years. Knowledge-Works, a subsidiary of Ohio Education Matters, has recognized our district as one of only a few school districts in Ohio that is exemplary at being efficient in spending non-teaching dollars.

With State of Ohio cutbacks of 4 mills, or over \$2 million dollars per year, present programming cannot be maintained. Unfortunately, without the additional funds, employees and programs will need to be eliminated.

Aurora School Board President, Jerry Kohanski, said, “The Aurora community has a great tradition of supporting the education of our children throughout the years. The Board of Education, administrators, and staff are committed to rewarding this support by providing the highest quality instruction at the lowest possible cost. Our district is in

	Rank	LOWEST PROPERTY TAXES	PROPERTY TAXES
C O M M U N I T Y	1.	Streetsboro	\$1,520
	2.	Lorain	\$1,590
	3.	Amherst	\$1,640
	4.	Brunswick	\$1,650
	5.	Mentor	\$1,670
	6.	Twinsburg	\$1,670
	7.	Chardon	\$1,690
	8.	Richfield Village	\$1,700
	9.	Aurora	\$1,730
	10.	Hinkley Twp.	\$1,7430

the top 2% of academic performance in the state of Ohio while our costs are very close to the state average. In order to continue to attract top

Superintendent - Continued from p. 1

impressive since none of the bands had performed together prior to the finale. Thank you to each of these communities for participating, for valuing your music programs, and for supporting your students in their musical endeavors. I have to tell the Sports Booster parents how much I appreciate all of their hard work and effort to make this event happen each year. It is quite an undertaking and they do an impressive job bringing our community a high quality event that we can all enjoy together.

On a more solemn note, this November 6th we also have the regrettable, but very important task, of asking our community members for their support of our 5.9 mill-operating levy. This is an operating levy that can only be used as revenue to pay for our day-to-day operating expenses, some of which include curriculum, grounds keeping, utilities, salaries, and transportation. Due to a reduction in state revenue of approximately 2.1 million dollars we have come to a point where we need to ask our community for their support.

While our schools rank in the top 2% academically in the state, the cost to educate our children remains close

instructional and administrative talent, we must continue to provide our staff with the best technology and resources available while maintaining our schools as an attractive place to work. While recognizing the financial stresses our voters are incurring, we have reluctantly decided to place a levy on the November ballot requesting 5.9 mills of new funding to enable us to continue to balance our budgets and provide our students with a top flight educational experience. The poor economic environment in the U.S. has resulted in declining revenues for our schools, which, when coupled with cuts in state funding, necessitate the need for additional, critical financial support from Aurora’s citizens. The Board pledges to continue to operate in a fiscally transparent and responsible manner while maintaining the highest standards of our educational services.”

to the state average. Hopefully, our community members, who have supported us in the past, will continue to see the value of the education that we provide. Making education a top priority is what has made our district one of the top districts in the State of Ohio. It is our respect for education that also makes us proud to say we live in Aurora. For a more in-depth discussion regarding this levy, please read the “Aurora City School District Places Levy On November 6th Ballot” article beginning on page 1 of this *Your Schools* issue. As always, I am more than happy, along with our Treasurer Bill Volosin, to answer any questions you may have. We want our voters to be educated voters. If you have any concerns or need clarification on any information, please don’t hesitate to contact us.

On a lighter note, we appreciate the opportunity to work with the children that are entrusted to our care everyday. We work very hard to make sure that our students are challenged to reach their potential in many different areas everyday. We have many things to look forward to including, Dads ‘N Donuts, musical performances, sports awards, and theater productions. It looks like we are off to yet another great year!

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THUNDER OVER AURORA

Aurora Veterans Memorial Stadium was filled with the booming sounds of marching bands on September 22, 2012. The fourth annual Aurora Marching Band Spectacular entitled “Thunder Over Aurora” hosted marching bands from Euclid, James A. Garfield, Lakewood, Notre Dame Cathedral Latin, and Riverside. Our own Aurora High School Marching Band rounded out the evening’s entertainment. A special finale featured over 700 students on the field playing “Bridge Over Troubled Water” together for the first time.

Aurora Schools’ Superintendent, Russ Bennett, said, “I would like to thank all of the participants and community members for their support, involvement and attendance. This yearly performance gives guests the wonderful opportunity to hear bands they may not normally get a chance to hear. Thank you to the Band Booster parents for producing such a top quality community event.”

Lakewood Performs



Riverside Band Up Close



Euclid Twirls

Aurora’s Marching Band



Grand Finale Performance