

# Commentary

A Newsletter for the Residents of the Westlake City School District

## Master Facilities Plan Phase I

With passage of Phase I of the Master Facilities Plan, the Westlake Schools can move forward on a much-needed building project that will include:

- Renovating and adding space at Lee Burneson Middle School to turn it into an intermediate school for grades 5-6. *Estimated completion: Winter 2013/2014.*
- Building a new middle school for grades 7-8 near the existing building. *Estimated completion: Winter 2012/2013.*
- Rebuilding an extensive portion of Westlake High School while preserving the 2005 additions.

*Estimated completion: Fall 2013.*

This first phase of improvements will save hundreds of thousands of dollars in operating costs annually and provide a fiscally responsible approach to fixing an urgent program with our facilities.

Phase II will involve renovating the existing Parkside Intermediate School into a PreK-4 building, and building two new elementary schools.

It is important to note the district will have a tax millage drop-off in 2017 that potentially would equal

the cost of implementing Phase II, amounting to a tax neutral situation for the community.

The Westlake Schools will document all aspects of Phase I through our website -- [www.wlake.org](http://www.wlake.org) -- as well as through various avenues of communication with the community, including this *Commentary* newsletter. You can also follow the school district on Twitter at @Westlake-Schools.

If you have any questions or concerns, please call (440) 250-1258 or e-mail [bonvissuto@wlake.org](mailto:bonvissuto@wlake.org). Thank you!

## Moody's upgrades bond rating

The Westlake Schools' bond rating was upwardly shifted from Aa2 to Aa1 by Moody's Investor Service, placing the district one notch away from the highest quality Aaa rating. Westlake is one of 23 Ohio local school districts rated in the Aa1 or Aaa rating categories, placing Westlake in the top 4% of all Ohio schools.

The Aa1 rating highlights the district's credit quality versus other debt securities, which should mean lower interest costs on future district borrowing -- including the recent bond issue -- and savings of additional taxpayer dollars.

This shift is part of a large recalibration by Moody's to bring municipal issuers in line with other global issuers. The new ratings are intended to indicate average levels of credit quality consistently across different sectors and geographies.

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# Westlake appoints 2 new principals

The Westlake Board of Education approved the appointment of two new principals.

Sitting Westlake High School Assistant Principal Paul Wilson was named the new principal for Lee Burneson Middle School. Wilson replaces retiring Principal Dave Newman.

Ben Hodge was named the new principal for Bassett Elementary School, replacing retiring Principal Tim Rickard.

Wilson has served as WHS assistant principal for four years. Wilson has held positions with Avon



**Paul Wilson**  
Lake, Euclid, Claymont and Holy

Rosary Central schools. He earned his bachelor's degree in comprehensive Social Studies from Capital University and a master's degree in School Counseling from the University of Akron. He earned a



**Ben Hodge**

master's degree in School Administration and his superintendent licensure from Ashland University.

Hodge, of Avon Lake, is returning to Westlake after spending a year as principal of Parknoll Elementary School in Berea. He also taught at LBMS and served as LBMS assistant principal. Prior to Westlake he taught for the Strongsville City Schools.

Hodge earned his bachelor's degree in elementary education from Baldwin-Wallace College and a Master's in Education Administration from Cleveland State University.

## Grand Concours winners

Students at Westlake High School participated in the 75th annual Grand Concours, a national competition sponsored by the American Association of Teachers of French, and came away with several Top 10 finishes.

Students were evaluated for their written, oral and listening comprehension skills in French. More than 100,000 students in all 50 states competed in the 2010 event. Participants in the 2010 Grand Concours are students of Joy Horvath, Nicolette Miller and Elizabeth Zingales.

Sophomore Ben Audebert placed 5th nationally in Level 3 and junior Dan Meehan placed 10th nationally in Level 4.

At the state level, Katherine Beaton, Arunaditya Kulshreshtha and Lynn Orfahli all had scores placing them 10th in the state in Level 4. Sarah Stroh earned a score in Level 3 to place 9th in the state.

Le Grand Concours is a French event, in the form of a 60-minute national test designed, written, financed and disseminated by the members of the American Association of Teachers of French. Its purpose is to help stimulate further interest in the teaching and learning of French and to help identify and reward achievement on the part of both students and teachers. There are seven levels (elementary and school-high school) and five divisions to accommodate most students.

## New Athletic Director

Anthony Cipollone, associate director of athletics and recreational services for Allegheny College, was appointed as the district's new Athletic Director. At Allegheny College, Cipollone was charged with primary oversight of 20 club sports, intramurals and all fitness/recreation related activities, and secondary oversight of 21 intercollegiate sports. He served on committees for Community Advisors, Director of Safety and Security, Director of Conference and Event Services, head baseball



coach, assistant women's volleyball coach, Director of Sports Information, and head basketball coach positions. He previously was Associate Athletic Director for Mercyhurst College in Erie, PA, where he had primary oversight for compliance of one of the largest Division II athletic programs in the nation, as well as the Division I men's and women's ice hockey programs. At Mercyhurst, Cipollone managed a \$4 million scholarship budget for all 25 varsity athletic teams. He also held football and wrestling coaching positions with Muskingum College and Baldwin-Wallace College.

# The Summit kicks off strategic planning

This spring the Westlake City Schools initiated a strategic planning process to develop a new Continuous Improvement Plan for the school district. The culmination of that process resulted in a 1 ½-day Summit around the planning topic: *Innovating for Excellence in Education: Creating exceptional learning experiences to ensure lifelong student success in a global society.*

The goal of the Summit was to engage as many diverse stakeholders from various segments of the community as possible to help envision and plan for the district's continued success.

The Westlake Schools used the Appreciative Inquiry (AI) approach to planning developed by the Case Western Reserve University Weatherhead School of Management. Facilitators Molly McGuigan and Maura O'Donnell-McCarthy led about 120 participants over two days through a series of exercises to focus attention on the positive potential of the district – the best of what has been, what is and what might be.

AI is a process that uncovers the positive core of an organization and focuses on what gives live and meaning to the entity using dialogue to leverage its strengths moving forward. This approach to organizational change is based on the assumption that questions and dialogue about strengths, successes,

values, hopes and dreams are themselves transformational.

AI shifts the focus from one of deficit-thinking – where organizations spend most of their time analyzing their problems and remembering what they did wrong – to a strength-based ap-



proach that hones in on the organization's vitality and moves toward making it even better.

The keynote address was delivered by Dr. Julian M. Earls, former director of NASA's Glenn Research Center. During his career, Dr. Earls authored 27 publications and was twice awarded NASA medals for ex-

ceptional achievement and outstanding leadership. He also received the

Presidential Rank Award of Meritorious Executive. An avid runner, Dr. Earls has successfully competed in many marathons, including the Boston

Marathon. He was selected as a torchbearer for the Salt Lake City 2002 Winter Olympic Games.

The Summit was attended by representatives from higher education institutions, business, parents, Westlake Schools' staff, students, community organizations, city government and community members. This diverse group

came together to define nine core areas of concentration – global education, response to intervention, world languages, data management, business and community partnerships, project-based learning, STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics),

varied learning needs, and green and sustainability. The major emphasis was on preparing Westlake Schools' students to compete on an international level.



# Dog Tags for Kids teaches economics, service

Tracy Sicafuse's third-grade class at Dover Elementary School worked on an assembly line in the school cafeteria to make key chains out of dog tags.

The students applied patriotic stickers and a ring with beads to the dog tags from Dogtagsforkids.com. The dog tags were distributed to students at Dover Elementary who bought them through a fundraiser for the nonprofit Dog Tags for Kids, which sends engraved dog tags to children from their parents who are serving in the military. Dover students raised \$400 as part of an economics project.

Sicafuse funded the program through a grant from the Westlake Education Foundation.



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