



Mount Vernon City Schools DISTRICT NEWS

Spring 2015

Connecting Our Community



Emergency Renewal Levy: *Combining Two Existing*

In recent years, the Mount Vernon City School District has made great strides to improve our district's fiscal stability, while increasing educational options and advancing our preparedness in the areas of Safety and Technology.

Now we have to be sure to keep this progress on track by keeping our funding in place. Here's the scoop!

WHAT?

- May 5th – Emergency Levy **Renewal** for Mount Vernon City Schools that will combine two existing levies into one.
- Levies first approved in 1982 (\$1,250,000) and 1996 (\$1,652,000) will appear as one issue for a total of \$2,902,000.
- **ZERO ADDITIONAL TAXES.** Approval of this issue keeps Mount Vernon Schools funding at current levels.

1982	LEVY #2 \$1,250,000	Renewed in 1984, 1989, 1992, 1997, 2001, 2006, 2011	RENEW IN 2015
	1996	LEVY #3 \$1,652,000	RENEW IN 2016 Renewed in 2000, 2005, 2010

WHY?

- Because we have a total of four emergency levies currently in place – each with a five year term – we are on the ballot to renew a levy almost every year.
- Conducting Levy campaigns is costly and time consuming for the district. Voters often comment that they experience ballot fatigue – voting nearly every year on school ballot issues.

Continued on page 8 ►►

Spring Is in the Air...

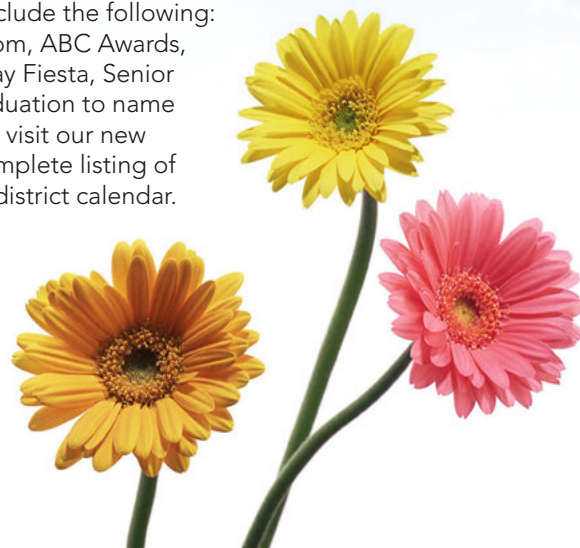
By Superintendent William Seder

A poet once wrote: "Without winter's cold and dreary hibernation we wouldn't be able to enjoy spring's warmth and colorful awakening." These simple thoughts serve as a reminder of the importance of winter, spring, summer, and fall, and how we should embrace the many splendors they bring.

This winter was certainly one to remember. We missed 9 days of school this winter while using several two-hour delays. Thankfully, the cold grey palette of winter is replaced with the vibrant colors of spring. Like clockwork we spring forward, the 'Buzzards' return to Hinckley, and umpires declare "Play Ball". During the past couple of weekends, my wife and I have attended several home and flower shows, and it's obvious by the crowds that we are not alone in welcoming spring.

Spring is a special time of the year in Mount Vernon as well. In the coming weeks, the high school drama department will perform the musical *The King and I*. Other special events include the following: Junior/Senior Prom, ABC Awards, Tops-N-Pops, May Fiesta, Senior Awards and Graduation to name just a few. Please visit our new Website for a complete listing of activities on our district calendar.

THINK SPRING...



IN THIS ISSUE:

- 1 Emergency Renewal Levy: Combining Two Existing
- 1 Spring Is in the Air...
- 2 State of the Schools
- 2 WWW... New Website!
- 4 One Bead – Innovative Program Comes to Mount Vernon Middle School

- 5 U.S. Department of Education honors East Elementary School in Washington D.C.
- 5 Mount Vernon History Online
- 6 Wiggin Street Students – Destination Imagination
- 7 The King and I
- 8 Calling all area Senior Citizens! – Spring Luncheon



UPCOMING EVENTS

APRIL 2015

HIGH SCHOOL

- 17 • Tops-N-Pops
(Jazz Band Concert)
- 23 –25 • Musical –
The King and I

MAY 2015

- 18 • Board Meeting

MIDDLE SCHOOL

- 11 • Choir Concert
- 20 • MS Orchestra
Spring Concert
- 21 • Band Concert

HIGH SCHOOL

- 14 • HS Orchestra
Spring Concert
- 19 • MVHS Band
Spring Concert
- 21 • HS Orchestra
Spring Concert
- 24 • HS Commencement

JUNE 2015

- 15 • Board Meeting

JULY 2015

- 13 • Board Meeting

Call 740-397-7422 or
email Terry Streby at
tstreby@mvcasd.us for
times and other details
regarding events

State of the Schools

A message from Superintendent William Seder

It's hard to believe that another school year is quickly coming to an end. It has been nearly two years since I was blessed with the opportunity to serve the Mount Vernon community as your Superintendent.

With guidance from our Board of Education, and working with dedicated district staff, I feel that we have made significant accomplishments in the areas where we determined the need was most acute. In this State of the Schools report, I am highlighting the four areas where our focus has been most intense: Financial Responsibility, Student Achievement, School Safety and Technology.

FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Together, we have been able to improve the district's financial picture, while keeping an eye on fiscal responsibility through strategic and focused spending.

- With your support, we passed a new \$3 million operating levy in May 2013 and later passed a Permanent Improvement (PI) renewal in November of the same year. The passage of both levies has been invaluable in leading us through some difficult economic times. We have carefully evaluated the many cuts that were necessary – reinstituting expenditures slashed by the cuts in some cases, staying the course with others, and making adjustments where needed.
- We have adopted a Permanent Improvement (PI) spending plan targeted at buildings and grounds, transportation, school safety, curriculum and technology. This plan not only addresses our current needs, but places an emphasis on preventive maintenance and planning.
- We are targeting the use of new State funding from Casino Revenues towards specific areas of need. This past year we used the Casino Revenues to renovate the HS/MS gym floors and replace the High School bleachers.

Looking Ahead: We have a Renewal Levy – combining two existing (expiring) emergency levies on the ballot on May 5. It is important to note that this is a Renewal which will result in a '0' tax increase to taxpayers. Your continued support will enable the district to continue on a path of fiscal stability while still providing quality academic experiences for our students.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Student achievement should always be at the forefront of our planning processes.

- Last year we implemented an "All-Day/Every-Day" Kindergarten program throughout the district providing an additional 640 hours of kindergarten instruction. We are already seeing the fruits of those efforts as students entering first grade are nearly a half a year ahead academically compared to past classes. Teachers also notice improvements in students' social and emotional readiness to begin first grade, which they attribute to the additional classroom time as kindergarten students.
- Utilizing federal Title I funds, we were able to add reading tutors to each of the six elementary schools to assist struggling readers. Last year 99% of all Mount Vernon third grade students met the third grade reading guarantee and moved on to 4th grade.
- The Middle School has "Doubled Down" on Math and English Language Arts providing 90 minutes of instruction per day in these two critical areas. We are excited to see the results.
- We are working collaboratively with local colleges and universities to provide College Credit Plus opportunities for Mount Vernon students.
- We recently adopted and purchased new Math curriculum materials throughout the district. The "Go Math" curriculum was designed to prepare students for the rigors of a 21st century math education. We are in the process of adopting a new English Language Arts curriculum this spring with an implementation timeline of this coming fall.

Looking Ahead: We need to strengthen our 'Gifted Education Program' by providing greater opportunities and access to relevant and rigorous instruction. We also believe it is important to educate the "whole child", and we have written a grant that would provide school counselor support at each of our elementary buildings to assist students and families in meeting their social and emotional needs.

SCHOOL SAFETY

The safety and welfare of our children – your children – is extremely important to us.

- We have implemented the ALICE school safety program. This program was designed to proactively address unwanted intruders in school buildings.
- We have been working closely with local law enforcement to develop an emergency operating plan (EOP) that will comply with the law and will enhance security for our students and staff.
- Working collaboratively with Mount Vernon City Council and the Knox County Career Center we have hired a School Resource Officer (SRO) to protect, educate, and positively connect with our high school and middle school students.
- We have installed new security camera systems at the High School and Middle School.

Looking Ahead: Over the next two years we plan to install new camera systems on all of our buses. We will evaluate and implement new anti-bullying policies and practices.

TECHNOLOGY

Technology will never replace a great teacher, but technology in the hands of a great teacher has the potential to transform learning.

- We have built a wireless network infrastructure throughout the district that will allow us to utilize increased broadband speed and capacity to better utilize mobile technology devices.
- We have implemented a “Google Apps for Education” environment that allows students to stay connected at school and at home at no cost. Students will have access to their work anytime anywhere with the ability to collaborate and share with teachers and fellow students.
- We have purchased 2 mobile Chromebook carts at each of our 6 elementary’s and 4 mobile carts at the High School and 4 at the Middle School to increase opportunities for students to use technology as an instructional tool.

Looking Ahead: We will continue to address our technology infrastructure needs by upgrading and virtualizing our district servers and switches. We will continue to purchase additional Chromebook carts to increase capacity at each of our buildings. We will continue to invest in software and classroom equipment designed to keep our students engaged with cutting edge and innovative technology.

We have a committed Board of Education and administration, outstanding teachers, and a dedicated support staff whose goal is to provide the best education possible for each and every one of our students. Educational excellence is our priority and focus as we work diligently to maintain the values that enhance learning for our young people and make Mount Vernon a great place to live and raise a family.

Respectfully Yours... William Seder Jr.

WWW... New Website!

**STAY TUNED –
COMING SOON!**

New, Improved
Mount Vernon City
Schools Website!



After several months of planning and design, the newly constructed Mount Vernon City School District website is nearly ready to launch. The fresh new graphic layout incorporates our traditional Orange and Black school colors in an eye-catching format that we believe will be easy to navigate. Our plan is to have the new website accessible to the public sometime in April.

The new site will include all of the features you expect and need, including important announcements, district calendar, lunch menus and links to buildings and departments throughout the district.

Each district building will have its own page on the website with news and announcements geared specifically towards the parents and students in that building.

Our future plans include the addition of social media feeds to the website: Facebook and Twitter to name two. Alumni pages and a district directory will also be available to users.

Once the website is up and running with regular updates and timely information, our goal is to make the site interactive by accepting email addresses and text information from the community that will allow us to notify you with breaking news when needed.

As of now, the site is still **Under Construction**, so we ask for your patience as we guide it along through its infancy and watch it progress to become the top notch website we want for our district. Even though we have spent a lot of time working on this, you may have some great ideas for links or information that we may have missed. Please email us at webmaster@mvcasd.us with your suggestions or comments.



One Bead – Innovative Program Comes to Mount Vernon Middle School

This Winter, Mount Vernon Middle School was tabbed to be only the second One Bead Leadership Program in the nation. Partnering with the Ariel Foundation, One Bead and 20 Middle School students launched the Leadership Program as an after school activity during the month of February.

ABOUT ONE BEAD

One Bead was originally started in a college dorm room as an organization that elevates education in East Africa through the sale of recycled glass beads. Now with representatives across the globe and growing school partnerships, One Bead is providing students with an invaluable opportunity to model leadership skills and, at the same time, positively impact others.

At the college, high school, middle school, and elementary level, One Bead is proving that *one student, just like one bead, can be a catalyst for change.*

ABOUT THE ONE BEAD LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

The One Bead Leadership Program was designed to introduce and cultivate leadership skills in young students. The six week long curriculum shares the business model and inherent leadership qualities of One Bead with a younger generation of students.

During the first half of the program, students are taught important leadership attributes and activities. Students brainstorm ideas and plan ways to earn a \$1,000 grant that will be awarded midway through the project. The grant must be used to make a difference in their community.

The second half of the program focuses on creating action plans and determining, as a group, how this grant will be spent.



ONE BEAD IN MOUNT VERNON

Working in teams, under the guidance of Sara Wroblewski, Founder and CEO of One Bead, Mount Vernon students developed and promoted various action plans aimed at topics ranging from child abuse to bullying to public safety.

The winning pitch was created by Lydia Luna and Jordan Schisler, with their idea to “R.O.C.K.” out bullying in the community.

R.O.C.K. stands for:

Respect | Open up | Confidence | Keep away

Some of the students who participated commented on the value of the program:

Annie Neff – *“One Bead Program helped anyone gain leadership skills that would help them in life. In school or a job you need to learn how to talk in front of other people and this program helped me to do this.”*

Callia Lemay – *“I think the One Bead Program was awesome. It helped me learn about leadership skills. I learned how to create an action plan that would help make Mount Vernon a better place.”*

After the ROCK plan was selected, all 20 students worked together to develop strategies and techniques for using the \$1000 grant to stamp out bullying. As part of the project, the students made an anti-bullying video which introduces a pledge against bullying. This video will be shown later this spring to every student at Mount Vernon Middle School during homeroom, and students will be encouraged to sign a physical copy of the pledge during lunch. Upon signing, students will receive a R.O.C.K. wrist band to show their commitment to end bullying.



U.S. Department of Education honors East Elementary School in Washington D.C.

East Elementary School is proud to be one of only 337 school buildings nationwide to be recognized as a 2014 National Blue Ribbon School. Only 11 other school buildings in Ohio received this coveted award.

The Blue Ribbon Award honors elementary, middle and high school buildings whose students achieve at very high levels or have made significant progress and helped close gaps in achievement – especially among disadvantaged students. Each year since 1982 the U.S. Department of Education has searched for schools where students attain and continue high academic goals, including those who beat the odds.

East Principal, Dr. Eric Brown and members of his teaching staff traveled to Washington D.C. in November to accept the honor on behalf of the entire staff, students and the Mount Vernon community. U.S. Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan and his associates presented the award to Dr. Brown. Secretary Duncan noted, "National Blue Ribbon Schools are models of consistent excellence and a resource for other schools and districts. We celebrate them for their tireless effort and boundless creativity in reaching and teaching every student"

This award continues accolades for East and goes on the list along with being named a 2013 School of Promise by the Ohio Department of Education. Mount Vernon Mayor, Richard Mavis proclaimed December 12, 2014 as East Elementary Day throughout the city of Mount Vernon.

East students and staff have celebrated with a school wide ice cream party and will observe their prestigious rating and acknowledge their hard work with other events as the school year comes to an end.



Mount Vernon History Online:

THROUGH THE EYES OF MOUNT VERNON GIFTED STUDENTS

Mount Vernon's elementary Gifted Education students want you to know what they are learning about the history of their city and are doing it in an exciting new way – using technology!

These students, grades 3 through 5 have embarked on a mission to learn about the history of Mount Vernon, create reports and share them online with the community using QR code links.

As the students learn interesting facts about the City, they will write reports and create videos which they will post online. Once the QR codes are in place on metal signs throughout the central Mount Vernon area, anyone can use the QR reader on their cell phone and view the video reports. The project is expected to be ready to launch in May, so watch for the orange signs and link up with these grade level appropriate social studies reports. Don't have a QR reader? The information will be available on the walking tour website later in May at www.mountvernonwalkingtour.info.

As part of their Social Studies classes, these students have been encouraged to "look inward," to discover and understand their own strengths. Some are researchers, while some are writers, editors, narrators, photographers, technology "gurus", designers, or marketers.

They have also been encouraged to "look outward," in community service. Many of these young citizens are already involved, on their own, in numerous service activities.

The Historic Mount Vernon Walking Tour is their gift to this community.

This interactive way of learning and sharing would not have been possible without the generous support of **Mayor Mavis** and the **Mount Vernon City Council**, in coordination with:

- Knox County Historical Society
- Public Library of Mount Vernon and Knox County
- Knox County Convention and Visitors Bureau

The signs have been funded by a grant from the **Community Foundation of Mount Vernon and Knox County**.



QR Codes (abbreviated from Quick Response Code) is the trademark for a type of matrix barcode first designed for the automotive industry in Japan.

Scan this QR code with your smartphone to go to: www.mountvernonwalkingtour.info.



Wiggin Street Students DESTINATION IMAGINATION

How does a giraffe doctor end up at the symphony? How do you escape a melting glacier? These are difficult questions for most of us to answer, but not for two teams of students from Wiggin Street Elementary who put their creativity and imagination to the test as they spent a Saturday in March competing in Region 4 Destination Imagination Competition in Reynoldsburg.

Under the guidance of teacher, Heather Waugh and Parent Coach, Jon Chun, a total of eleven students competed in these challenges. Destination Imagination (DI) is a non-profit, volunteer-led organization whose purpose is to inspire and prepare students to become leaders and innovators for future generations. The regional competition in March was targeted towards incorporating STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) into the process of imagination and innovation. Over 200,000 students and 38,000 volunteers across the country participate each year in DI.

Each team must perform two activities – a Central Challenge and an Instant Challenge. Quick thinking, paired with creativity is the key to being successful in DI competition. For example, for their Central Challenge, the Wiggin Street Varsity Team members were given one minute to create a skit that included a setting, a newscast, caroling and a melting glacier. Using those concepts, they had only two minutes to develop and perform a skit using the scenario they devised and incorporate a solution to a problem! Three minutes for the entire event!

Destination Imagination participants do more than just have fun. They learn patience, flexibility, persistence, ethics, and the



value of collaborating with others while respecting other ideas – all towards the goal of solving problems. As the kids reflected on their experiences, they grasped the long term value of the competition. Fifth grade Trey said “DI gives me improved skills that I can use later in life and I can still have fun with my friends too!” Emily – grade 4 added, “Through DI I have learned lifelong skills like thinking on my feet!”, and Miah – grade 4 overcame some nerves stating, “The DI competition was less scary than I thought. It was actually pretty fun – the judges were laughing and smiling – not staring at us.”

Members of the Varsity Team: Devin Beckett, Beckett Pechon-Elkins, Weston Porter, Jon Stebbins and Trey Stetler came in 3rd place out of 14 teams and had a perfect score of 100 in their Instant Challenge.

The Junior Varsity Team: Felix Brooks-Quijada, Sabina Hawks, Dash Lepley, Mateo Pechon-Elkis, Miah Rodriguez- Hedeon and Emily Springer placed 6th of 14 teams in the meet.

**MOUNT VERNON
CITY SCHOOLS**
PRESENT

The King and I

Mount Vernon City School District proudly presents this year's musical:
Rodgers and Hammerstein's *The King and I*.

More than 70 Mount Vernon students ranging from second graders through seniors and representing all six elementary schools, the middle school, and the high school make up the cast, crew and musicians for this spectacular production. There are twelve students in our orchestra pit, sixteen students working as backstage crew, and forty-five cast members.

Jakob Daniels stars as the King of Siam and Rachel Rinehart is remarkable as Anna Leonowens. The cast also features Alex Jarosz who portrays the number one prince of Siam, Chulalongkorn, and his brother Ethan Jarosz who plays Anna's son, Louis.

Set in the 1860's and based on a true story, the king of Siam hires an English school teacher to "westernize" his country and to make it more "scientific". This is a story of culture clash, of East meets West, of customs, and religions, and men, and women.

It is story about traditions and changes: Lauren Cagle plays Tuptim, a "gift" to the king from the prince of Burma. She is supposed to be pleased to be with the king as his slave; however, she is not since she will never be allowed to be with her true love, played by David McDonald.

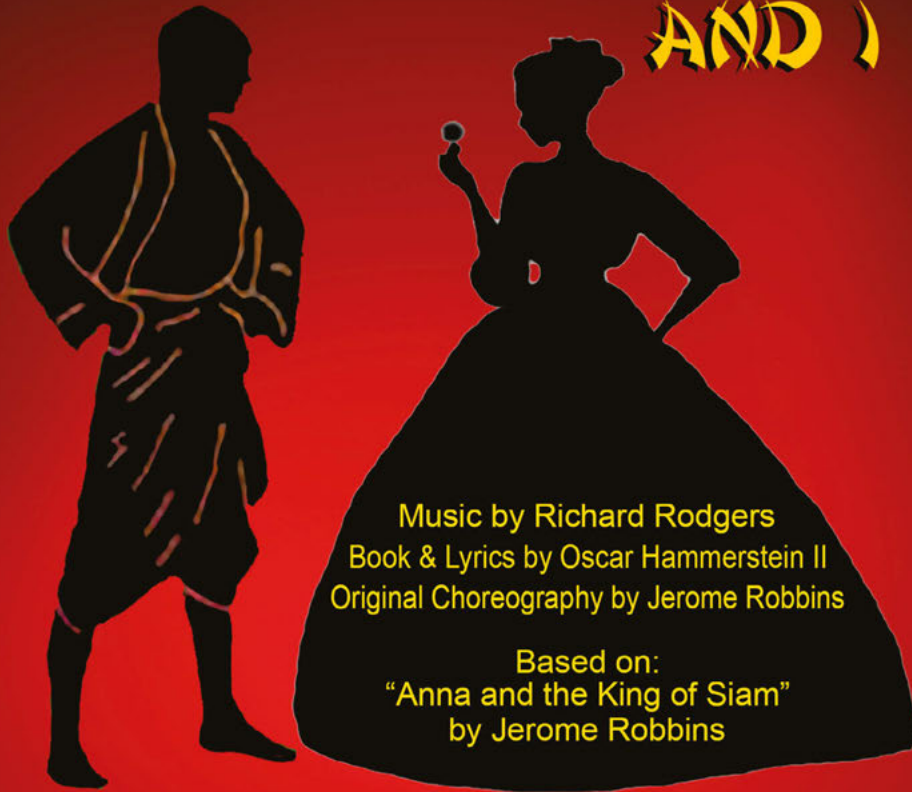
Anna, of course, is appalled at this barbarism, but then there are the royal children, 67 of them, which would have been more, if the king hadn't gotten a late start. If nothing else, Anna can't help falling in love with the children and neither will you.

Don't miss this extravaganza of familiar songs and elegantly stylized dancing. There is humor, suspense, and love. This show will take you on an emotional roller-coaster that will stay in your mind and be the topic of much discussion for days to come.

The show will be presented on *Thursday, April 23, Friday April 24, and Saturday, April 25 at 7 p.m.* each night at the Mount Vernon High School Theater. Tickets are \$12 for Adults and \$8 for children, students, and senior citizens. Tickets will be available at the door or you may buy them on-line at www.MTVarts.com. Click on the ticket sales tab to order tickets.

Rodgers and Hammerstein's

THE KING AND I



Music by Richard Rodgers
Book & Lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II
Original Choreography by Jerome Robbins

Based on:
"Anna and the King of Siam"
by Jerome Robbins

April 23 – 25
@ 7:00 PM



Mount Vernon City Schools

300 Newark Road
Mount Vernon, Ohio 43050-4252

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Calling all area Senior Citizens!

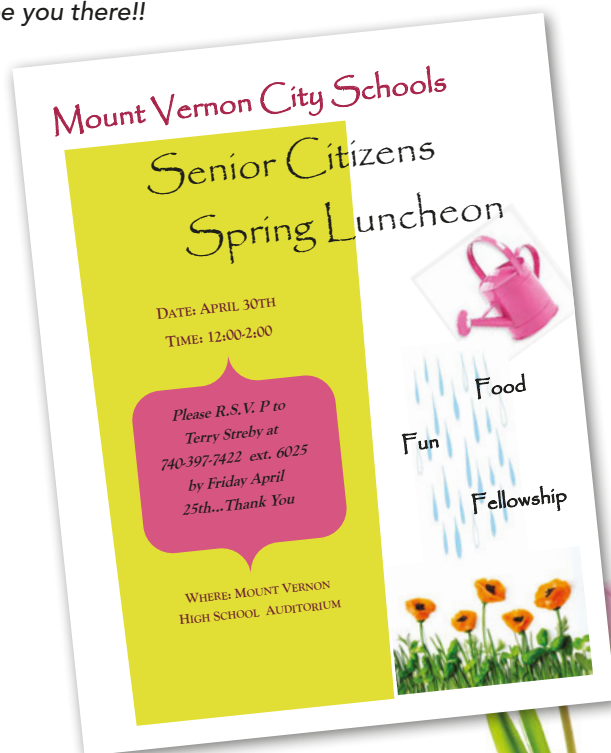
Please join us for a Senior Citizens Spring Luncheon on Wednesday, April 29th from 12:00 noon till 2:00 p.m. at the Mount Vernon High School Auditorium! You won't want to miss this enjoyable event full of great Food, entertaining Fun, and wonderful Fellowship.

Superintendent Bill Seder looks forward to meeting with you again to share the many wonderful things that are happening in your schools. Mount Vernon is a special place made even better by the treasure we call our 'Senior Citizens'.

Sponsors for the day are the Mount Vernon City Schools Board of Education in partnership with Mount Vernon City Council. Lunch will be provided by the Knox County Community Foundation.

Don't wait to sign up! To R.S.V.P., contact **Terry Streby** at **740 397-7422 ext 6025** or email her with your name and number of attendees at tstreby@mvcasd.us. The deadline to register is **Friday, April 24**.

See you there!!



Emergency Renewal Levy:

Combining Two Existing

►► *Continued from page 1*

WHY? (continued)

- Mount Vernon Schools need this continued funding to maintain our financial stability and educational excellence
- Our Board, Administration and Staff have focused very careful spending in these three key areas:
 - **Classrooms and students** – teachers, supplies and curricular purchases.
 - **Safety and security** – student and staff training for potential emergencies
 - **Technology** – state of the art equipment and innovative/interactive programs.

WHEN AND WHERE?

- Vote at your local polling place on May 5 or...
- You may vote absentee beginning April 7, 2015. To request an absentee ballot, download and fill out this form: www.co.knox.oh.us/offices/boe/absentee.pdf.