

Happy Holidays



Mount Vernon City Schools

DISTRICT NEWS

FALL 2014

Connecting Our Community



Keeping the Thanks in Thanksgiving

The cold rain did not discourage over 150 area senior citizens from being treated to a tasty luncheon and some great entertainment on November 6th at Mount Vernon High School. The guests were escorted from the parking lot by high school students, equipped with umbrellas to help keep the attendees dry. The entire event was sponsored by the Mount Vernon Board of Education in conjunction with Mount Vernon City Council and the Community Foundation of Mount Vernon and Knox County.

Members of Mount Vernon High School National Honor Society, Student Council, senior and junior class officers and Key Club served as student hosts for the lasagna lunch, serving and sharing the meals with the senior citizens who attended. Interesting and valuable conversations between the teens and their guests were a highlight of the event, each group enjoying the perspective of the other.

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Improved Financial News!

An update from Treasurer Judy Forney

As the Treasurer of the district, I am excited to announce that the Mount Vernon School District has emerged from a period of slashing budget cuts and very tight budgets to a position of strong, stable finances. The change in our status is due to the following factors.

- Voter approval of a 5-year, \$3 million Emergency Operating Levy in May of 2013.
- Lean budgets and focus on spending efficiencies.
- Increases to our State Foundation funding for both years of the Governor's Biennial Budget.
- Careful spending by our principals and teachers from their building budgets.
- Positive and professional partnerships with members of our employee bargaining units – who agreed to multiple salary constraints when district funds were tight.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

DECEMBER 2014

22 - January 2, 2015
Winter Break
NO SCHOOL

COLUMBIA ELEMENTARY
18 • Holiday Program

DAN EMMETT ELEMENTARY
12 • Holiday Program

EAST ELEMENTARY
16 • Holiday Program

PLEASANT ST. ELEMENTARY
16 • Holiday Program

TWIN OAK ELEMENTARY
17 • Holiday Program
19 • Holiday Program

WIGGIN ST. ELEMENTARY
9 • Gingerbread Man Program
18 • Holiday Program

MIDDLE SCHOOL
3 • Orchestra Concert
10 • Band Concert
15 • Choir Concert

HIGH SCHOOL
6 • Honors Band Concert
15 • Choir Winter Concert
16 • Band Winter Concert
17 • Orchestra Winter Concert

JANUARY 2015

18 • M.L. King Day
NO SCHOOL

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

Celebrating What's Right with Mount Vernon

A message from Superintendent William Seder

The start of another year gives us plenty of reasons to **celebrate**. Dewitt Jones, National Geographic photographer produced a movie titled "Celebrate what's right with the World". Through his words and photographs he inspires us to look at what's right with every situation and **celebrate** it. During our district opening day we embraced that idea and changed it slightly to say "Celebrate what's right with Mount Vernon".

We have a lot to **celebrate**: We live in a community that values and supports education, we have a school board committed to providing a high quality education while being fiscally responsible. We have teachers who are committed to excellence by putting students first.

Through your financial support of the renewal of our Permanent Improvement (PI) levy last November, we have developed a PI spending plan over the summer that targets areas of need in the district. Those specific areas include building maintenance, new buses, textbooks, wireless technology, gymnasium bleachers, and security camera systems at the High School and Middle School. The district has received nearly \$200,000 in casino revenues which we earmarked to be spent for mobile chromebook labs for student use. Each elementary now has two mobile labs of 25 computers while the High School and Middle School received 4 mobile labs each.

We **celebrated** a stadium renovation...With the support of the Mount Vernon Jacket Boosters we have a new artificial turf field, new all-weather track and a new video scoreboard that was 100% financed by private individuals, local businesses, foundations, and various energy partners. We are in the process of fundraising for Phase 3 of this project which will include new locker room facilities.

We continue to strive towards academic excellence and **celebrate** successes like East Elementary being named a "National Blue Ribbon" school. East Elementary was 1 of only 15 schools in the state of Ohio to receive this prestigious designation which exemplifies student achievement and closing the gap. We **celebrate** Pleasant Street, Wiggin Street, and the Mount Vernon High School for receiving an "A" on the district report card for meeting 100% of their performance indicators. We **celebrate** Dan Emmett and Columbia Elementary for receiving an "A" on the district report card for their work with special needs students. We **celebrate** Twin Oak Elementary for receiving an "A" on the report card for overall student growth, and we **celebrate** the significant improvement in student growth at Mount Vernon Middle School.

We realize that we still have a lot of work to do and we will continually strive for EXCELLENCE in all areas - for all students. Today we choose to "Celebrate what's right with Mount Vernon" and for that I'm grateful.

Wiggin Street Enrichment

Summer provides an opportunity for teachers to attend workshops and seminars where they can learn new techniques to enrich student learning in the classroom. Over this past summer, Wiggin Street teachers enrolled in a variety of summer opportunities that included the following:

- Online Classes
- Google Apps for Chromebooks
- PAX Classroom Techniques
- Operation Physics
- The Bach Summer Institute in Germany



Mrs. Loveland and her Operation Physics class observe the effects of convection currents.

Ms. Sarah Reyes teaching second grade students about Johann Sebastian Bach following her trip to Germany.



Wiggin Street staff members participate in a summer PAX training session to create a more productive learning environment for their students.



Dear Ariel Foundation,

Thank you for buying our tickets, our lunch, and the charter buses. I had a blast! The plays were amazing! My favorite was "The Monkey's Paw." Thank you for the charter buses, way better than old plain buses. We had fun on our way there and on our way back. The lunch was really good. If it wasn't for you guys, nothing of this would have happened. I love what you do for our community, our school and for making all this possible!

Thank you,
 Andrea Origel
 Seventh Grade
 Mount Vernon Middle School



Students standing in the Rotunda at the Statehouse.



Mr. Lewis reading *Tell Tale Heart* by candlelight to his classes prior to our trip.

A Day at the Theater is Educational, too! *By Walt Lewis*

The above thank you note represented the large majority of opinion of the all 301 Mount Vernon Middle School seventh grade students regarding a field trip they took on Thursday, October 30, 2014. Not one seventh grade student missed this trip! **A Day at the Theater** was a joint effort of the Mount Vernon City Schools, specifically Mount Vernon Middle School, with funding from the Ariel Foundation. **A Day at the Theater** grant proposal was written by Walt Lewis, Middle School Language Arts teacher and was ultimately approved by The Ariel Foundation.

A Day at the Theater was designed to provide a full day experience where students would be exposed to fine arts and a sit-down meal at a nice restaurant, in this case Spaghetti Warehouse. The theater performance was held at the Capitol Theater, Columbus, Ohio, and was performed by Chamber Theatre, Boston, Massachusetts. The students watched five performances based on short stories of classic authors: *The Tell-Tale Heart* and *The Raven*, by Edgar Allan Poe, *The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County* by Mark Twain, *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* by Washington Irving, *The Necklace* by W. W. Jacobs, and *The Monkey's Paw* by Guy De Maupassant. In addition to the play performance and Spaghetti Warehouse dinner, students visited our Statehouse. Here they completed a Scavenger Hunt based on finding out different aspects of our Statehouse and the role it plays in our Ohio government.

There were several reasons and goals when writing this grant. First, seventh grade teachers believed Knox County students would benefit by being exposed to numerous, high-quality theater performances since theater performance is not necessarily first choice of entertainment experiences. Second, 45% of our 6th–8th grade student population take advantage of Federal Free and Reduced lunch benefit, so the ability to pay for such an experience would be out of reach for a large portion of our student population. Third, casual teacher observations and conversations with students, revealed that significant numbers

of our students do not take the opportunity to visit Columbus, Cleveland or Cincinnati, to take in visual arts. Teachers felt that many families do not have the financial means to take even mini-vacations beyond our county.

Teachers collaborated to read and discuss all the stories prior to the play, in each story's original language. The challenging language of these stories definitely met the rigorous readability standards that teachers now address through Common Core standards. Additionally, collaborative activities were tied to the stories in other areas, such as science, where students created jumping frogs and practiced their understanding of use of variables. Additionally, teachers felt it was extremely important to teach theater and restaurant etiquette to the students.

"This was the best field trip I've ever been on," Lainey Hicks declared after returning to class the next day. The good feelings and good will generated because of this grant will be far-reaching and long-remembered.



Students giving a State of the State Address at the Statehouse.



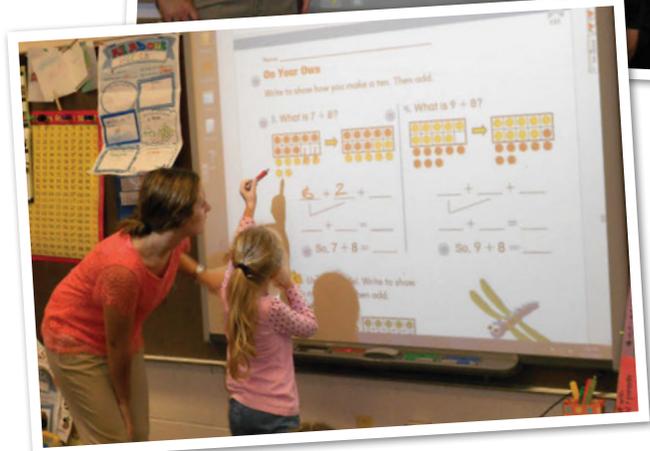
Enjoying a fantastic lunch at The Spaghetti Warehouse.



Technology at Dan Emmett

The great thing about technology is that it is used at all grade levels, often in very different ways. At Dan Emmett Elementary, we serve students from Kindergarten through Fifth grade – all enjoying the opportunities provided by some of today’s cutting edge technology devices.

- **First graders** in Mrs. Wilson’s class share reading adventures as a group using projectable books. This program works in coordination with individual reading sessions where the students have access to tools such as electronic post-its and highlighters. Using these tools they are able to note words or passages so they can return later and review or explore further. First grade teachers also use a program called SuccessMaker to track student progress in Math and Reading. Obviously staying on track in Math and Reading is crucial for students in these early years.
- Smart Boards provide interactive learning exercises for Mrs. Joseph’s **second grade** students. Students practice phonics and vocabulary strategies using Smart Boards as a center while the teacher is working in one-to-one sessions with other students. When students have questions about the topics at hand, teachers often help them acquire research and online skills by having them find answers to their own questions on classroom computers. These tech devices become great resources for satisfying student curiosity while they learn to navigate search engines.
- Dan Emmett teachers and students are excited this year with the addition 50 Lenova ThinkPads , which are small laptop computers. **Third through fifth graders** use these tools as they work through various subjects with software such as Study Island, SuccessMaker and GoMath. ThinkPad activities also help students to improve keyboarding skills that are so important for them as computer keyboards become an even bigger part of their academic experience. Fifth grade teachers Mrs. Goeppinger and Mrs. Seng are delighted as they watch the students’ enthusiasm grow. “Our students are engaged and excited about using technology that brings the world right to their own desk!” said Seng.
- Intervention Specialists who work with **special needs students** find that technology provide an astonishing level of interactive learning for these kids. Apps that help students with letters, sounds and basic math skills are available on their devices.



Using technology in education makes school fun and exciting for kids. Giving them the chance to explore the internet and use laptops and Smart Boards can sometimes make the difference between students who are indifferent about school and those who are excited to see what new devices and ideas are in store for them each day. Keeping students interested and maintaining high levels of excitement at a young age is the key to creating happy and successful students in upper grades and beyond.

Rolls Royce Energizes Science at Pleasant Street Elementary

If you’re a fifth grader, what’s better than reading about science? Doing it!

Students love to participate in hands-on activities that give them a chance to experience and experiment with the concepts that are on their textbook pages, and for the second year in a row, fifth graders at Pleasant Street Elementary are learning this way. These students are enjoying the benefit of years of experience in the fields of electricity, sound, light, thermal energy and career exploration when volunteers from Rolls Royce arrive monthly – projects in hand – to help bring science to life for our students.

The monthly volunteers work in partnership with district staff to align their planned activities with the curriculum that these students are studying. Some of them have expanded their service to include weekly visits to the school to provide tutoring to some students.



Exposing children as young as fifth grade to hands-on, real world connections with what they are learning in the classroom often helps spark an expanded interest in a field of learning that might otherwise not occur.

A big THANK YOU to Rolls Royce from Pleasant Street Elementary School!! What a great example of how our Mount Vernon business community reaches out to our kids.

Mount Vernon Senior is Regional Finalist in Prestigious Competition

Mount Vernon High School senior, Achal Fernando-Peiris is one of a select group of top-notch students chosen by Siemens Foundation as a finalist in the 2014 Siemens Competition in Math, Science and Technology. This challenge is widely considered to be the nation's premier science research competition aimed at high school students. This year nearly 4,500 students submitted projects to the Siemens Competition which was eventually narrowed to around 400 semi-finalists and has now condensed to only five individuals and five teams that will advance to the Regional Competition.

The competition was established by Siemens in 1999, and encourages and rewards research projects that help students to understand the value of scientific study. This process often leads students to seriously consider future careers in fields of science and research.

Achal describes his research by stating, "I conducted research trying to fabricate an artificial smelling technology. A recent article published by researchers at Bates College stated that smell could be categorized into ten basic groups. By obtaining spectroscopic data for these different smells I was able to create a device that is able to show different responses when exposed to different smells."

Achal joined other finalists November 7th and 8th at the University of Notre Dame for Regional Competition. Winners at the regional level will receive a \$3,000 college scholarship. All finalists who qualified for the Notre Dame event have already won a \$1,000 college scholarship.

Regional winners at Notre Dame will advance to the National Competition in Washington D.C. in early December and will compete for

scholarships ranging from \$10,000 to the top prize of \$100,000.

Achal's other activities at Mount Vernon High School include 4-Yr Varsity Tennis, Astronomy Club, Spanish Club, Debate Club and Violinist – 4 year member of Philharmonic of Central Ohio. He has also served as the Treasurer of the Key Club and is a 2 year member of the National Honor Society.



Achal Fernando-Peiris shows off his award with Robert Bacchus.

Box Tops for Education: Project-Based Learning



Box Tops for Education has been an ongoing fundraiser for the Twin Oak Parent Teacher Organization for many years. The PTO has also supported many student activities using funds from the collection of Box Tops including paying a significant part of the cost of the fifth grade overnight camp in May. This year fifth graders at Twin Oak Elementary have taken on the responsibility of facilitating the Box Tops for Education campaign for the 2014-15 school year as a service project and to help the PTO as they have been helped each year.

This project incorporates many of the Common Core State Standards for both Math and English Language Arts and allows the students to step up to a leadership role in our school. The students will be responsible for setting collection goals, providing collection sheets to all classrooms, collecting loose Box Tops and affixing them onto collection sheets, counting Box Tops, organizing and reporting collection data for the building, arranging and reporting rewards for each monthly collection, and organizing and displaying collection data for viewing by all in the building. They will be writing and delivering announcements about all aspects of the Box Tops campaign for morning announcements and newsletters throughout the year.

The fifth graders have been researching the Box Tops for Education website to insure that they are knowledgeable about the products offering Box Tops and the most up-to-date offers on the site. It is also the intention that the students will be creating and maintaining their own Twin Oak Elementary Box Tops for Education website later in the year. Since each Box Top earns 10 cents for our school, the Twin Oak fifth graders would be glad to accept your Box Tops for their project. Please feel free to call Twin Oak at any time.



A.L.I.C.E. and School Safety... It isn't Wonderland anymore

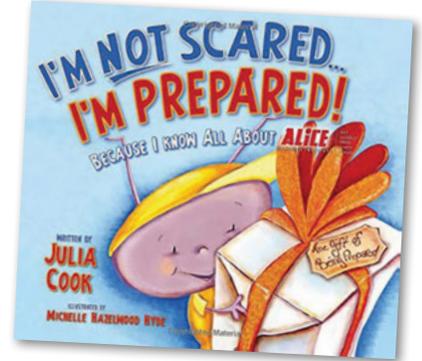
Safety in schools has become a national conversation and priority among school districts everywhere. Here in Mount Vernon City Schools we are taking this challenge head on and being proactive by implementing safety initiatives aimed at making our students, staff, and schools safe.

Last spring we initiated the A.L.I.C.E. safety program. ALICE is an acronym which stands for Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, and Evacuate. This program is a new way of addressing a violent intruder situation in our schools. Because school safety is a community endeavor, we enlisted the assistance of the Mount Vernon Police Department, Knox County Sheriff's Department, Ohio State Highway Patrol, and Knox County EMA for staff training in August. Coordinating with local agencies - working hand in hand with law enforcement experts - our entire staff was trained in this innovative new program.

The essential difference between this new training and old practices revolve around the Lockdown and Counter components. Using the old Lockdown procedures, teachers locked the doors and crouched down in the corner of the room during a security breach. The new ALICE practice has teachers and students locking and barricading doors with desks, chairs, filing cabinets, etc. The 'Counter' component is also new. Instead of crouching in the corner students would be ready to throw anything they could possibly throw (books, staplers, backpacks, pencils) in the event an intruder would enter the classroom.

On October 20th, we provided additional training to our teachers. This session of training prepared them to elevate this program to the next level – that is to teach students how to implement the ALICE safety program. Students in grades K-5 will utilize a book titled *I'M NOT SCARED I'M PREPARED* by

Julia Cook. This age-appropriate book takes the scary topic of a violent intruder in the school building and puts it in the context of the Sheep, the Shepherd and the Wolf. There are copies of this book on file in each building if you wish to preview. Students in grades 6-12 will be taught in a similar method to how the staff was trained earlier. Student training will always be done with the students' levels of comprehension and coping in mind.



In addition to staff training, we have invested our P.I. funds to shore up safety in the High School and Middle school by installing new security camera systems in both buildings. "Emergency Operating Plans" will be established for every building in the district.

Finally, we are collaborating with the Knox County Career Center, Mount Vernon City Council, and MVPD to explore implementing a full time School Resource Officer (SRO) who will be on site and able to respond to security and/or serious discipline issues when needed.

We don't need surveys or polls to let us know that when it comes to sending your students off to school everyday, your highest priority is that they will be protected from harm and return home safely each night. Our highest priority is the same as yours - and we are focusing a significant amount of our resources to make it happen.

Mount Vernon FFA – Soils Team Wins Big!

The Mount Vernon FFA Rural Soils Team placed First in the Ohio FFA Rural Soils Career Development Event. More than 200 FFA chapters begin at the district level to qualify for the State event . They now have the opportunity to compete at the National Soils Contest in Oklahoma next May. Team members include Caleb Hickman, Dalton Hoffman, Bradyn Burke and Clayton Noggle. Caleb also had the second highest individual score in the contest. The Urban soils team placed 14th in the State event. Team members include Charlie Atkinson, Ryan Ebright, Lily Nickel and Morgan Hunter.

A Minion Reasons to Read this Summer!

East Elementary School's annual reading program had a theme based on the Despicable Me animated movies. The Minion Reasons to Read theme challenged students to track the books they read for a medal. During the past summer, K-1 students kept track of reading books for either a bronze, silver, or gold medal. Kids in grades 2-5 kept track of pages for a particular medal. Students were further motivated by knowing if the students met their reading challenge, Dr. Brown, the East School Principal, would get dressed as a Minion.

The reading program was a great success! Students read 183,147 pages. There were 105 medalists. On August 29th, the entire school met in front of the school for our Minion Reading Ceremony. Thanks to Mrs. Fannin and Mrs. White, 5th grade teachers at East, for coordinating this special event.



District Maintenance

The year 2014 has brought significant improvements to the status of the Mount Vernon City Schools' facilities and equipment. In February when Rick Shaffer became our full time Director of Maintenance, a change from many years of having only a part time director, a clear and intense focus on our facilities, grounds and equipment began.

All winter long and into the spring, Rick and our Maintenance Department worked closely with the Superintendent, Treasurer and others to identify, assign a potential cost, and prioritize repairs, upgrades and maintenance that needed to be done to our buildings and grounds. The list was long, but we allocated Permanent Improvement money (not General Fund operating) to many projects and began the process of making our facilities safer and more efficient, not to mention more attractive.

During the summer when class was not in session, the work began. This is a partial list of the impressive and crucial projects that were begun and/or completed over the summer. Many are ongoing.

- Fenced in playgrounds at Columbia, East and Dan Emmett Elementaries.
- Rerouted visitors at the High School with a new wall to provide increased security to the building.
- Repairs to district boilers to improve service and cut costs.
- New controls to HVAC units at the High School – more cost cutting measures.
- Plumbing upgrades to save water.
- Roof repair or resurface at High School, Pleasant Street and Twin Oak.
- Remodeled kitchen at Dan Emmett.
- Repaved Yellow Jacket Drive.
- Painted lockers at Pleasant Street.
- Painted hallways and doors at Columbia.

As a district, we have identified our priorities for the future, being sure that they reflect the values of our community. We know that Mount Vernon residents want us to be cautious with our spending and target the areas that are absolute necessities. The safety and security of our students and staff certainly qualifies as one of those necessities. Our district is large and even though we believe we have done a very thorough inventory of concerns thus far, we invite your feedback on this topic. If you see a potential safety or security matter, or if you have noticed the improvement and want to comment, please let us know. You may email Rick at rshaffer@mvcasd.us or his secretary Christine Hohman at chohman@mvcasd.us or phone either of them at 740 397-7422 ext 6019.

Columbia Principal Connects with Parents using Technology

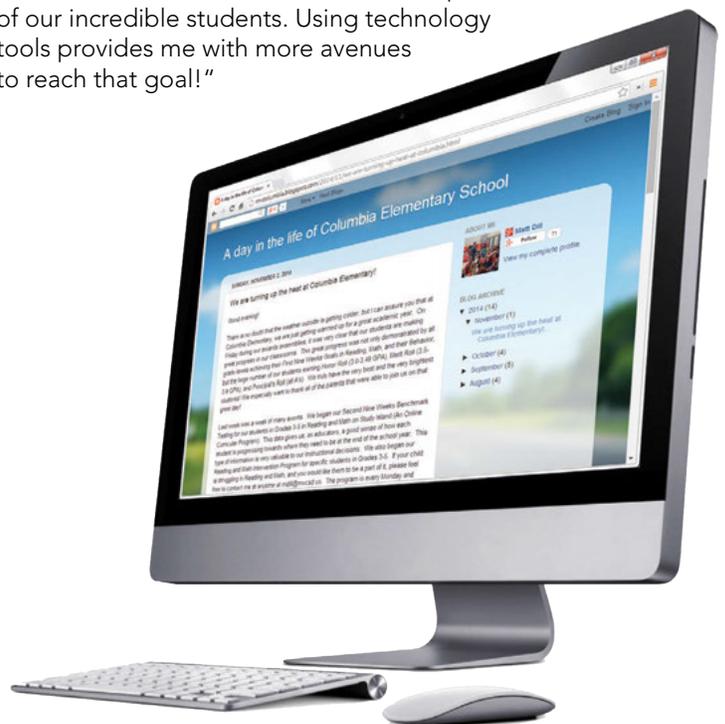
While the traditional 'parent newsletter in the backpack' is still a great way to let moms and dads know what's going on at school, Mr. Dill, Principal at Columbia Elementary, is broadening his outreach to parents by posting blogs on a regular basis. To read Mr. Dill's blogs, connect via this link: mvcolumbia.blogspot.com/2014/08/columbia-elementary.html

He began in early August, blogging and sharing information for parents including announcements about Back-to-School Night and other beginning-of-the-year activities, dates and information. At the end of the first week of school, Mr. Dill posted a blog with a wrap-up, sharing events and highlights of the first week of school as well as some additional information about procedures for the year ahead.

Several times each month, Mr. Dill posts his reflections on the school day and shares exciting happenings from Columbia. His blogs include ideas and great resources that are helpful to students and families as the entire community works together to make learning a fun and positive experience for Columbia's students.

Fifth grade teacher Nicole Justice has coordinated with Mr. Dill to create and maintain a Facebook page for Columbia. The Facebook posts include pictures, stories and videos of students in the midst of their school day. Check out Columbia's Facebook page: www.facebook.com/mvcolumbia.

Mr. Dill is a strong proponent for communication. Using technology and social media to connect with the parents and families of Columbia kids helps him to interact with them in a timely and creative way. Discussing his passion for this outreach, Mr. Dill explains, "It is a personal goal of mine to do a better job at communicating with the parents of our students, and I want to share with the world the accomplishment of our incredible students. Using technology tools provides me with more avenues to reach that goal!"





Improved Financial News!

▶▶ *Continued from page 1*

Now that our finances are on the right track, we are not complacent. In fact, after enduring this financial crisis, we are even more determined to keep our promise of fiscal responsibility to the community by:

- **Keeping budgets lean** while still focusing our spending on the following areas that are most crucial:
 - **Classroom learning** – including targeting funding to teachers, supplies and equipment.
 - **Facilities and vehicles** – making sure that our students and staff learn, travel and work in safe and efficient buildings and vehicles.
 - **Technology** – keeping our students and teachers equipped with high-quality, cutting-edge technology hardware and software that will keep them in sync with private business and industry and advanced educational opportunities.
 - **Security and safety** – Preparing staff and students for potential crisis situations and outfitting our buildings with security devices and systems to minimize or prevent the possibility of dangerous situations.
- **Spending vs. revenue** – keeping our expenditures in line with our current revenues each year to avoid deficit spending.
- **Reviewing our 4 existing Emergency Levies** and considering potential combining and/or extending them to avoid being on the ballot every year. Running levy campaigns is expensive and time consuming. Reducing the number and frequency of these efforts benefits everyone.

Besides sharing some 'nuts and bolts' of our funding like those shared above, we are anxious to begin a dialog about our district's finances so that members of our community have the opportunity to embrace a basic understanding of where and how their tax dollars are being spent.

We believe that paying taxes to support our children and our schools entitles our community to have access to this information. This newsletter and this column from the Treasurer are the beginning of this endeavor. If you have any questions about Mount Vernon Schools' finances, or about school funding in general, please feel free to contact me either by email at jforney@mvcisd.us or by phone at 740 397-7422 ext 6023.

Keeping the Thanks in Thanksgiving

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Following the luncheon, guests were treated to a musical presentation by Columbia Elementary fourth and fifth grade students, presentations from high school students who are enrolled in Family, Career and Community Leaders of America courses and the High School Orchestra.

Wrapping up the observance, Superintendent, Bill Seder, shared his own thoughts on our quick-paced world and the value of taking time to remember to be thankful for our many blessings.

Using a twig, he created a small tree complete with autumn leaves, each leaf representing things for which he is thankful: family, senior citizens, veterans and country – to name a few. He reminded all in attendance to take time to appreciate our families and friends, our freedoms and privileges and also, to savor each day as we approach this busy holiday season.

Plans will begin soon for a Spring 2015 Senior Citizens Luncheon in April.

