



THE GOOD FIGHT...Pete Birle, a Tamaques parent and newly published author, spoke to students about his book, "Fighting El Fuego."

Author Birle Gives Advice To Tamaques Students

WESTFIELD - Recently, Tamaques parent Pete Birle spoke to third-, fourth- and fifth-grade students about his first published book, "Fighting el Fuego." Mr. Birle explained how he has always been interested in writing, sports and teaching kids, and how he decided to combine those passions and write sports-oriented stories for children.

He encouraged the students to pursue their dreams and learn from every experience by telling them how he applied skills learned in all his past jobs—including parent and volunteer coach—to become an author. He shared excerpts from his many publisher rejection letters to demonstrate

that writers should never get discouraged, and he showed the editor's markings of his manuscripts to prove that even good stories can be made better.

Mr. Birle also talked about where he gets the ideas for his stories (having three boys who like sports helps) and assured the children that he has many more books in the works.

"Fighting el Fuego" tells the story of a Philadelphia boy who learns to box in order to control his temper. There are two versions of the book: one geared toward fourth graders and one geared toward seventh graders. Pete signed several copies of each for the Tamaques students to enjoy. "Fighting el Fuego" is not available in bookstores, but can be previewed and purchased online at the publisher's website: www.scobre.com.

Saggio Named To Pitt-Bradford Dean's List

WESTFIELD - Scott Saggio of Westfield recently was named to the University of Pittsburgh at Bradford Dean's List for the fall term. He is a History and Political Science major.

One hundred eighty five students from the University of Pittsburgh at Bradford were named to the dean's list for the fall 2004 semester for earning at least a 3.5 grade point average.

Education Matters

What is Special About Special Education in WF?

By Anita O'Neal
Special Services Department Chair, Westfield High School

Early in the morning on any given day, a soft tap on an office door can be heard and a high school student enters and greets an adult with controlled enthusiasm. It is only 7:30 a.m. and the student does not have a class until 8:05 a.m., but he arrives each morning to interact with a few adults who greet him by name, offer a morning snack, kind word and supportive guidance to help him manage himself for the rest of the school day.

In an intermediate school classroom, it is still early in the morning and several students are waiting for one of their favorite teachers to get a little extra help and words of encouragement. Across town arriving on a school bus and eager to start their day, elementary students who were transported out of district until last year, now enter a program much closer to home.

These are just a few faces and voices of the diverse students in the Westfield public schools who receive some level of special services each day. They are in programs called Leaps and Bounds for young autistic children, Prep, Bridge and Shared-Time Vocational for high school students and In-Class Support, as well as inclusive classes throughout the district for all levels.

The Westfield public school district offers a full spectrum of educational and support services, which are designed to level the learning environment to ensure all children, achieve. What is special is the enthusiastic, highly qualified, dedicated staff that provides supportive, nurturing learning communities where the diverse learner thrives.

Imagine being a student who has Asperger's Syndrome and finds the school environment a daily challenge to navigate one's way. Knowing that a small group of teachers, para-educators, and Child Study Team members are available on a daily basis to provide a safe haven to them, students find support when their inner struggles emerge. The smile and sheer joy of a pre-school autistic student attending a local school with her peers illustrates what is special about special education in Westfield.

During a time when standardized testing, adequate yearly progress and No Child Left Behind are faceless

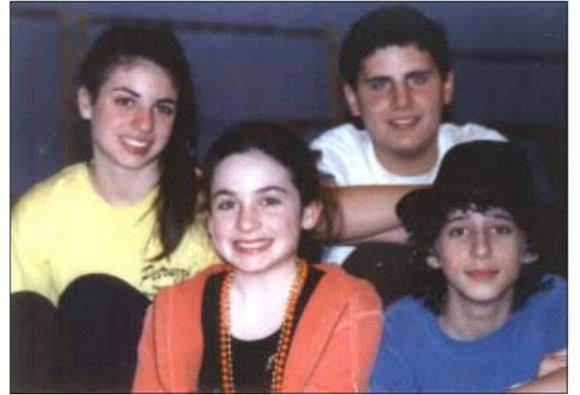
terms to school personnel and the community at large, observing students who struggle with mastery of English, who are eagerly speaking Spanish in a course designed to meet the needs of diverse learners is truly special. Students participating in school plays, operas, athletic teams, Model U.N., Student Council, Key Club and numerous extra curriculum and academic programs is possible because opportunities to achieve at all levels are provided to all students.

Special Education teachers, coaches, Child Study Team members, adaptive physical education teachers, specialized guidance counselors and numerous other support personnel work with diverse learners on a daily basis and provide often unrecognized necessary assistance to ensure they are able to succeed in a highly competitive learning environment.

Often what is spoken about most in communities are the numerous mandated laws, rules and regulations which govern special education. IDEA, IDEIA, NCLB, NJ Administrative Code are just a few of the acronyms, which form the basis of services provided in special education. In accordance with federal mandates, the Westfield Public Schools provide special education to students from age three through 21. Those students represent 17 percent of our enrollment, which is about the state average.

What is truly special about special education in Westfield Public Schools are not the mandates, rules and regulations, but the simple mantra that quality, excellence and high standards are the entitlements for all children including those with special needs. What is truly special is witnessing the enthusiasm in the pre-school handicapped classes or preparing our high school students through programs like Leaps and Bounds, Bridge or Prep, for graduation and life after high school. Watching the progress in the many replacement or in-class support classes in any school in the district and knowing that we made a difference—that is what is special about special education.

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GUYS AND DOLLS...Rehearsals are underway for *Guys and Dolls*, the Roosevelt Intermediate School spring musical. Starring in the production, from left to right, are: Sharon Faktor as Sarah, Georgia Gleason as Adelaide, Michael Rosin as Skye Masterson and Dan Berman as Nathan Detroit. A cast and crew of almost 100 students support them. *Guys and Dolls* will be performed at Roosevelt School on Friday and Saturday, March 17 and 18, at 7:30 p.m. and on Sunday, March 19 at 2 p.m. Tickets are \$8 in advance and \$10 at the door. For more information, contact Roosevelt School at (908) 789-4560.

NJWA Concert Band To Perform At YM-YWHA

WESTFIELD - The YM-YWHA of Union at Green Lane has announced that the NJWA Concert Band will perform a concert on Sunday, March 12 at 2 p.m. The concert will be held at 501 Green Lane, Union. The NJWA, known as the Green Lane "House Band," is directed by Howard Toplansky, author of the "Essentials of Bassoon Technique," which is still in print after 40 years. Tickets are \$7. Seniors and Y members pay \$5.

Mr. Toplansky has made worldwide connections with Russian conductors and is looking forward to his band playing the "Slavic Woman's Farewell March" by Vasily Agapkin. Composed in 1912, this song reflects the concern about the impending Balkan War. Although the war never materialized, the visions of Slavic soldiers parting from their wives and families struck a chord with the populace, and later this piece became the most popular military march during World War I, when new words were

written for it. In addition to this march, "The Lamb's March" by Sousa and "The Leshetinsky Kovar March" by Stolc will be featured during the Sunday concert. Always seeking a musical balance, Mr. Toplansky also features waltz music by Kalman, highlights of "Exodus" by Gold, the haunting "I Will Wait for You" by Legrand, Brahms' "Hungarian Dance #5," the ragtime feature "One for the Road" by Morath and a mix of other eclectic musical selections.

The NJWA Band is also slated to play at the Green Lane Y in April with a new repertoire for the upcoming concert. For more information about the NJWA Concert Band or if interested in joining, call (908) 964-1793 or e-mail the band at njwaband@att.net.

Daniel Seeger Elected To Phi Beta Kappa

WESTFIELD - Daniel Seeger, the son of Susan and Geoffrey Seeger of Westfield, was recently elected to the Epsilon Chapter of Phi Beta Kappa at Hamilton College.

Daniel, a senior majoring in Chemistry at Hamilton, is a graduate of Westfield High School.

WF Students Achieve Rochester Dean's List

WESTFIELD - Ryan Burslem and Evan Bilheimer have been named to the Dean's List for academic achievement for the fall 2004 semester at Rochester University.

Ryan, a sophomore majoring in Mathematics, is the son of Donna Burslem and a graduate of Westfield High School. Evan, a freshman majoring in Applied Mathematics, is the son of Dr. Susan Kaye and a graduate of Westfield High School.

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