

# SCHOOL DAYS

RADFORD CITY SCHOOLS / NEWSLETTER

SPRING ISSUE

MARCH 2008

## NEW BELLE HETH UNDERWAY !

Superintendent's Corner  
BY DR. CHUCK BISHOP

In past issues of *School Days*, I have provided updates on the progress of the new Belle Heth Elementary School. The new 73,000 square foot facility will be built for grades 3-6 on the site adjacent to the current Belle Heth facility. It is designed to accommodate self-contained grade level pods, as well as shared common spaces such as computer labs, cafeteria, gymnasium, art and music rooms. Upon completion of the new building, the current school will be demolished and new outdoor recreation space will occupy the footprint of the old building. By the time you receive this edition of our school division newsletter, construction will have started.



The issue of new school facilities in Radford has been discussed over the past five years. During that time, members of the School Board and City Council as well as staff from both entities have done their due diligence in researching possible solutions. The end result of this work has led to the decision to build a new elementary school. In addition, both elected bodies have approved a capital improvements plan to address our school facility needs over the next 25 years. Our new school and the capital improvement plan have developed as a direct result of our City's elected officials working together toward a common goal.

Any time public projects of this nature are proposed there is a concern about the fiscal impact on the community. The school board and city officials have come up with a plan to share in the cost of the debt service payment for the new facility. This kind of relationship does not exist in most localities. Our City representatives, however, have partnered to tackle these issues head on. For that, they should be commended.

While new school facilities create a level of excitement throughout the community, there are inconveniences associated with them. Beginning March 3, our contractor, H&M was already on site installing safety fencing around the construction area. Due to the size and configuration of the new school on the site, it is necessary to eliminate all parking adjacent to the activity field. In addition, we will be faced with a lack of outdoor recreational facilities for students. We will utilize all available green space on site for physical education and recess. However, it will be extremely difficult to ensure that students are provided a full array of opportunities for daily physical activity.

Our primary focus during construction will be the education of our students as well as the safety of our students, staff and visitors. To that end, we have engaged in conversations with our contractor regarding safety and potential issues with our instructional program. H&M is committed to working with us through any and all situations. The end result of a new building and outdoor recreation facilities will be well worth any minor inconvenience.

We ask for your patience and understanding throughout this process.

The photo is of Elena Stone, 6<sup>th</sup> grader at Belle Heth, wearing one of the hard hats provided for the Ground Breaking ceremony by H+M Schools, Contractors.



## RHS, DALTON CHOIR MEMBERS HONORED

Nine Dalton and RHS students were chosen to join honors choirs, which performed in early March at the Southern Division ACDA School, Church and Professional Choir Directors convention in Louisville, KY. Chosen from over 1500 audition CD's sent to the organization, in Radford's case by Choral Director Lois Castonguay, only 200 were chosen in each of the junior and high school divisions. In the high school competition, only 34 were chosen from Virginia, and six of those were from RHS!

Those honored (l-r): Rachael Baber, Ava Bell, Paul Castonguay, Shane Craig, Ian Mullins, Liza Sutphin, Elise Castonguay, Willa Piro, Rebekah Wright. Mrs. Castonguay (right center) is shown coaching the group.

### ASSISTANCE FOR FAMILIES EXPERIENCING HOUSING NEEDS

The federal McKinney-Vento Act guarantees school enrollment for anyone who, due to lack of permanent housing, lives in inadequate or temporary settings such as: emergency or transitional shelters; motels or campgrounds; cars, parks or public places; doubled up with relatives or friends; and is a migratory child or youth.

*Children or youth living in these settings meet criteria for the McKinney-Vento definition of homelessness, and have special educational rights.*

**Contact the Supt. of Radford City Schools  
for more information at 731-3647**

## DALTON PROUD OF COMPETITION WINNERS

Three Dalton Intermediate students were recent winners in the third annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. poster and essay contest, sponsored jointly by the NAACP of Montgomery, Floyd, Pulaski and Radford, in association with Virginia Tech's Multi-Cultural Affairs department. Jeff Feng was top winner of 74 entered in the poster competition, with a watercolor of four faces of Dr. King, entitled "Daring to Dream." Hanna Krayner won second place and Byronae Lewis was third in the essay division. 7<sup>th</sup> Grade teacher Kelly Morris sponsored the entries from Dalton.

And Dalton student Zeke Shaffer (not shown) represented Dalton at the state MATHCOUNTS competition.

## RHS GETS GOVERNOR'S NOD FOR EXCELLENCE

By Heather Bell

Radford High School has been honored as a premier school by Governor Tim Kaine.

Kaine recently announced the recipients of excellence in education awards, part of the Virginia Board of Education's new incentive program for schools created to advance Kaine's "competence to excellence" agenda.

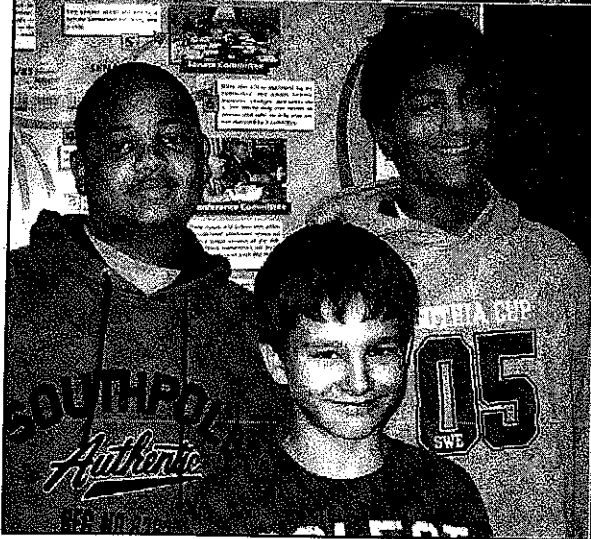
"Students in these schools are soaring far beyond the minimum requirements of the Standards of Learning and No Child Left Behind," according to Kaine. Nineteen school divisions and 475 schools, including RHS, earned the Board of Education's VIP Excellence Award, a second-tier honor in the VIP program.

"These schools and divisions also have met all state and federal accountability benchmarks for at least two consecutive years and have made significant progress toward goals for increased student achievement and expanded educational opportunity set by Governor Kaine and the Board of Education."

Radford City Schools Superintendent Dr. Chuck Bishop noted "this award is a testament to all of the hard work and dedication of our administration, faculty and staff in making student achievement as well as increased educational opportunities a top priority for all students. The award is also a direct reflection of our outstanding students."

The Virginia Index of Performance (VIP) program "awards points to schools and divisions based on the percentage of students achieving at the advanced level on Standards of Learning assessments and progress made toward educational goals advocated by Kaine and the Board.





**THESE BOYS KNOW THEIR WAY AROUND THE GLOBE**

Top photo: Alexander Tso (center) sixth grader at Belle Heth, won the school-level competition of the National Geographic Bee. The school Bee was the first round in the 20<sup>th</sup> annual National Geographic Bee, sponsored by the National Geographic Society. The school runner-up was Andrew Mah (at left) and third place went to Jacob Simmons (at right).

Bottom photo: Zack Turk (center) was school Geo Bee champion at Dalton. Second and third places were won by (from left) D'Vante Edwards (second runner-up) and Ben Khandan-Barani (first runner-up).

High scorers from across Virginia will be invited to participate in the State Bee this spring.

**RHS WINS STATE SCHOLASTIC BOWL**

For the fifth time in the state Scholastic Bowl series of eleven competitions, RHS has come home with the championship!

Coached by Elaine Argabrite, the members are Ian Akers, Henry Kirby, Amy Hill, Rick Kellerman, Malik Mubeen, Calvin Poe, Jake Harvey, Sanjay Kishore, Jon Harrison, Caitlyn Oakley, Charles Mogen and Katie Rogers.

**MORE ABOUT THESE CHAMPS IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF SCHOOL DAYS!**

**RHS FOUNDATION GRANTS BRING CLASSROOM INNOVATION**

By Heather Bell

Several Radford teachers came back to the classroom in 2008 with unexpected grant funds designed to help turn creative ideas into reality.

The Radford High School Foundation recently awarded teachers over \$16,000 in classroom grants through its yearly "Campaign for Excellence." From microscopes to a new piano, and a cave program to access to the National Archives, this year's RHS Foundation classroom grants are enabling innovative things to occur in Radford's schools.

Foundation Chairman George "Abie" Williams said the grants are a great way to supply "extras" for Radford's classrooms. "We are confident these grants are supplying needed extras for our teachers and students."

Williams thanked the RHS Foundation's cash grant review committee, led by former school teachers Jean Umberger, Sylvia Lloyd, Jo Anne Mannon, Jerry Osborne and former Superintendent Dr. Michael Wright for doing "an excellent job of evaluating the many applications submitted for funding. In addition, we relied on Dr. Mark Lineburg and several of the senior high school students to help the committee evaluate the applications," he added.

Williams says it has been a "record" year for the Foundation, with grants of \$16,124 and \$13,825 in scholarships. Scholarships were given out last spring. He marvels at how far the Foundation has come since it stated more than a decade ago.

"I can remember appearing before the school board with Mandy Martin, the late Charlie Fretwell and other foundation board members in 1986 to let the school administrators know we had formed a non-profit foundation to help support our already successful school system," Williams recalled. "When we told them we hoped to raise \$250,000 as an endowment to produce income, we received a few laughs, and they wished us luck. Since that time, the RHS Foundation has awarded \$223,084 in cash grants and scholarships, and holds endowed investments approaching \$647,000."

Radford High School was awarded \$4,336 for five projects; Dalton Intermediate School was awarded \$2,100 for four projects; Belle Heth School was given \$3,300 for five projects and McHarg was awarded \$4,300 for 13 projects. Disbursement is determined by school population.

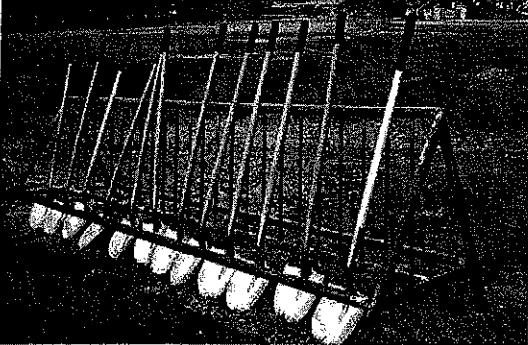
In addition to the Campaign for Excellence grants, Williams said the foundation "has been able to contribute to other worthy community causes through memorial funds established for Bill Goodykoontz, Morris Lepchitz and an honorarium fund for Radford Bobcat legendary football coach Norman Lineburg."

"The foundation also acted as the liaison in fund raising and construction of the James P King Center, a \$1.2 million strength and fitness center on the RHS campus built in 1999. Currently the RHS Foundation has taken the lead role in building a \$600,000 municipal baseball field at the Radford Recreation Center. We appreciate the alumni, friends, donors and volunteer board who have helped to make the RHS Foundation a success."

Photo by Heather Bell:

RHS Foundation Board Member Chip Craig (left) presents McHarg Principal Robert Graham with a check for \$4,300 for classroom grants as part of this year's RHS Foundation "Campaign for Excellence." Check presentations were also made to all the other city schools' grantees recently.





**A LOOK AT BELLE HETH GROUNDBREAKING**

"It's finally here. It's going to be unreal," said Belle Heth principal Kenny Alderman at the Feb. 26, 2008, ceremonies preceding the long-awaited groundbreaking for a new school on the land adjacent to the current facility.

Kate Little, Belle Heth SCA President told the gym full of students, faculty, city and school officials that "I'm excited about Radford's schools."

The gym was a sea of white hardhats imprinted "Ground-breaking 2008", provided by H+M, the project contractors.

School Board chair Vanessa Duncan called it "a momentous occasion – our first new school in over 50 years."

"It has taken a long time," according to Radford Mayor Tom Starnes. "It is a great day for the kids in our city."

And the sixth grade choir sang "The Future Begins With Us," to highlight the event.

Then city and school officials wielded gold shovels to break ground for the new building.

PHOTOS BY BOB THOMAS

**MCHARG AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT FAMILY**

**By Robert F. Graham, Principal, McHarg Elementary**

The outpouring of support for Michael Bennet and his mother is hard to describe. Many community members, businesses and churches came together to provide for this family during an extremely difficult period in their lives. Thus far, financial donations have totaled over \$4000. We also have collected clothing, toys, food and furniture items to help the family.

I am proud to report that Michael is back at school with his classmates, teachers and friends. The school routine and interaction he has with the staff and classmates are both good for him. He does not seem to be struggling with his loss, though I am certain that he will continue to have some tough days ahead. He does, however, have the support of a very caring and generous community to help him, and to provide him with friendship, guidance and love.

Donations will continue to be accepted at McHarg through the Honeybee fund. We appreciate all that everyone has done, and will continue to do, for Michael and his family.

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