



# Contoocook Valley School District Winter Newsletter

A Publication of the Contoocook Valley School Board

January 2002

INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS

## THE CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

By Diane Creeley, Peterborough School Board Representative

Greetings and Happy New Year!

As I write this letter, it certainly looks as though winter has finally arrived. The snow has been falling for hours and the trees are now beautifully snow-covered, forming an archway over the road. I'll bet skiers and snowboarders are rejoicing this morning!

We are extremely fortunate to live in an area that is not only rich in natural beauty, but also with many talented people who teach and volunteer in our schools, providing exciting learning opportunities for our students each and every day.

The ConVal District is also lucky to be involved with groups such as the Harris Center, whose staff captivates and instructs our students about the wilds of New Hampshire – or the Monadnock Arts Council, who provides support for the many remarkable artists who come into our schools to share their craft with our students – or the local police and fire department personnel, who educate our youngsters about the dangers of fire, drugs and alcohol, and who are always responsive to the safety needs of our schools.

We are blessed with wonderful teachers like Joan O'Donnell, social studies teacher at ConVal High School, who was recently named Rotary Teacher of the Year.

We are grateful to have the talents of Jeannie Connolly and Terri Reeves (recently named Chamber of Commerce's Citizen of the Year), who are the coordinators of our Artist-In-Residence Program, well known for providing incredible and diverse opportunities to the students of our District.

And there are numerous parent volunteers – too many to name them all here – to whom we are indebted. They provide invaluable support to the students and staff in our schools each day and truly represent the best of public education.

One final note: The ConVal School District Meeting Part 1 is coming up quickly – February 6, 2002 at 7:00 P.M. in the High School Gym. Please take advantage of this opportunity to learn more about the budget for the 2002/2003 school year, the new teacher contract and other warrant articles that will be on the ballot Tuesday, March 12<sup>th</sup>.

As always, we welcome your input, so please contact your school board representative with any questions you might have. We look forward to seeing you on February 6<sup>th</sup> and March 12<sup>th</sup>.

We thank you for your continuing support of students and staff of the ConVal District.

# THE HARRIS CENTER

By Dan Harper, Hancock School Board Representative

For over 30 years, the Harris Center has worked with the ConVal School District to help students, teachers and families learn more about the natural world through their firsthand approach. Science and the natural world have come together to create a wonderful learning experience for our students.

The 4th grade curriculum is titled Wild New Hampshire: Habitats & Land and Water. This program is comprised of two different programs: Beavers at Work and At Home with the White-Tailed Deer. The recently completed Beaver program was lead by senior teacher and naturalist, Susie Denehy, a long-time and familiar face to many students.

In this program the students are literally busy as beavers, building dams and two story houses. They become beaver experts and unravel the mysterious ways of NH's largest rodent. The students see how beavers change the landscape to meet their needs and how animals and plants are affected by their work. Trips to active beaver ponds provide a wonderful opportunity to observe how the beaver has become one of nature's best engineers.

Susie uses many different teaching methods to create an enriching experience for students. In the classroom she sets up different learning stations that include examining beaver tracks, the inside of a lodge, a beaver pelt, a skull, and even beaver scat. After examining the materials at each learning station, the students may be asked to build, draw, or write about their observations. Susie also uses Native American storytelling to help round out the students' understanding of the beaver. One of Susie's favorite exercises is transforming students into beavers using flippers for web feet and goggles for eyes. And a favorite activity for the students is visiting beaver dams in Peterborough and Hancock.



"Tom the Beaver" displays all the characteristics that help the beaver survive

The Harris Center teachers worked very closely with our teachers in putting this program together. One of the goals is to integrate other areas of study, such as reading, writing and local history. All indications are that it has been a very successful program. This hands-on approach to science can best be described by the Harris Center's slogan, "We turn science inside out."

## ***ConVal District's Technology Wizard – Ken Campbell***

By Barbara Busenbark, Peterborough School Board Representative

For most of us it seems like magic the way information is transmitted across the District or even the globe with the use of computers. The language of "bits", "bytes", "megs" and "gigs" has become everyday conversation for some, but for most, it's enough to make their eyes glaze over. The man who makes the magic work for the ConVal District is Ken Campbell. With a degree in Computer Systems and fifteen years experience as an engineer in the computer industry, he came to work for the District in 1996 to help implement the first ConVal District Technology Plan. He has been very busy ever since, setting up networks, databases, file servers, a web server, e-mail, voice mail, and running networking cable. In fact, the ConVal network, which links all schools in the District to one another and to the Internet, was completed a year earlier than the plan called for! This is a feat that Ken is especially proud of, but he is quick to share the credit with the community at large. His thanks go to the many volunteers who helped run cable on Net Day 1997, a volunteer effort around the country to help schools get networked.

Changes in technology come so rapidly that Ken's greatest challenge is to keep up with the latest developments on an ongoing basis. Balancing the need for new technology with its cost is also a constant consideration. Recently, Ken began using Linux (free server software and very secure) for one of the District's servers, and he will be converting more to Linux in the future.

Another large project that Ken has recently spent time on is the student database – new software being used across the District to maintain student information. It's a huge task to input all of the pertinent information for 3,000 students (such as grades, medical, bus and contact information). But once the database is complete, it will be a very powerful tool that will ensure the accuracy and consistency of student records throughout the school system. "Setting up the software and providing the training is just the beginning," according to Ken. "Using it to its full potential is the real test."

Ken is a resident of Frankestown where he lives with his wife and two daughters. He wanted to make special mention of the support he receives from his family – especially his wife, who is forgiving of the long hours Ken spends at work, making our information systems the best for students and staff.

# EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

By Anne-Marie Irwin, Peterborough School Board Representative

Emergency management planning and school safety became a priority of the ConVal School District when Keith Burke assumed the superintendency. During the summer of 1998, representatives from each of the schools participated in a workshop run by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Since that time, each school, in conjunction with local fire and police departments, developed a plan to cope with emergencies.

There are a lot of bad things that could happen – from natural disasters, to hazardous material spills, to intruders in the building. The key to preparation is forethought and organization. While there is no way to anticipate completely all the disasters that could occur, we are committed to insuring the physical and emotional safety of our students.

Each school has an emergency planning team with a designated 'incident commander' and specific areas of responsibility assigned to staff members. These procedures include drills (such as fire and evacuation) as well as lock downs and shelter in place in the event of an intruder. It is important that we familiarize students and staff with emergency procedures in a calm, thoughtful, and organized manner so that everyone knows what to do, where to go, and how to proceed in the case of emergency. We also need to accomplish familiarity with emergency procedures without creating undue fear in the students.

Different schools face different challenges. At the high school, for example, the size of the building and the number of students require particular attention to security. Preparation is underway for the installation of security cameras. Access to the building is restricted and all visitors are required to sign in and wear identification badges. The Emergency Management Team meets regularly to review and update procedures and to continue training with the staff.

## THE HANCOCK DEPOT PROJECT

By Denise Holmes, Antrim School Board Representative



**Tromping through the snow en route to another adventure in learning.**

The Hancock Depot Project is a new program developed to enhance the curriculum at Great Brook School. The old Hancock Depot, with permission from the Hancock Depot Association, is being used as a place to learn, explore, and apply skills. Students are working on projects that will increase their understanding of the community and contribute to it.

Students participate in a variety of projects involving the history and environment of the area. They have studied the Depot, local train lines and steam engines. They have explored the remains of an old trestle and have helped to refurbish a model train set. Some students have had the opportunity to interview an older resident of the area about his memories of the Depot. They have also used the cemetery and Historical Society as resources in gathering information about local history. Many projects involve the environment around Moose Brook and Norway Pond. They have studied local plants and animals, learned map and compass skills and have been involved in trail work. They use poetry, journals, plays and art to share what they have learned.

Many of their projects involve getting connected to the community and making a contribution to it. Quilted "Santa Sacks" were created and filled with cranberry relish and banana bread they made themselves. These "Santa Sacks" were delivered to elderly residents in the area. A Turkey Trot was organized for the Hancock Elementary School to gather food for the needy. Another project involved building and maintaining trails for the elementary school around Norway Pond. In these concrete ways, these students experience how they can make a positive impact on the community they live in.

We are grateful to teachers for all the extra efforts made to connect their classrooms to the community. We commend the students who are working hard to enrich their community. We also thank community members for sharing time and resources with our students. This program is a fine example of how schools and communities can collaborate for the benefit of all.



# www.conval.edu

LOG ON

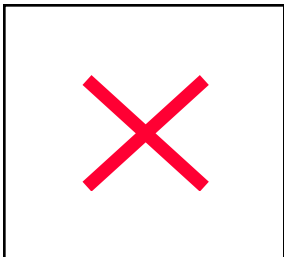
If you haven't visited the ConVal School District's web site, here's what you've been missing:

- ◆ **Schedules of School Board and Committee meetings. The public is invited to attend these meetings . . . and this is a convenient way to find out when and where they're taking place!**
- ◆ Links for contacting your Board representative
- ◆ Calendar of school events, drama presentations, sports and more!
- ◆ Links to each of the schools with contact information for reaching teachers and administrators
- ◆ And so much more...LOG ON!

Don't forget – ConVal School District Meeting Part 1 takes place on Wednesday evening, February 6<sup>th</sup> at 7 PM in the ConVal High School Gym. It's another opportunity for you to learn first-hand about the warrant articles you'll be voting on in your town on Tuesday, March 12, 2002.

Contoocook Valley School District  
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106 Hancock Road  
Peterborough, NH 03458

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