

in

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schools

# focus

Preparing World Class Citizens

January, 2007

## District says goodbye to DARE Officer Greg Jensen

### Helps a generation of kids

Colonie Police Officer Greg Jensen stood like a proud parent as he handed out T-shirts and diplomas to his final graduating class from the Sand Creek Middle School DARE program.

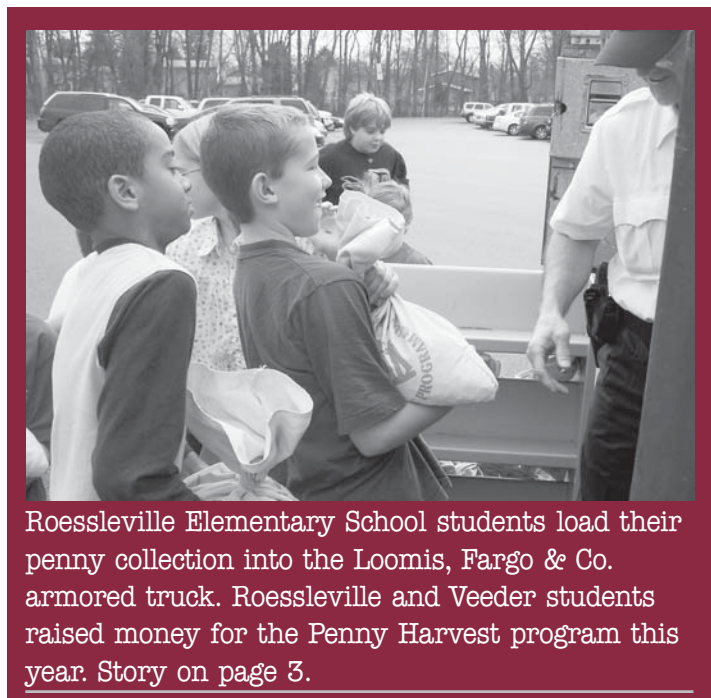
In January, the loveable, familiar face in uniform left the school and returned to his patrol car after helping nearly a generation of South Colonie youngsters "Just Say No To Drugs!"

"It's emotional for me, there's no doubt about that," said Jensen, who started as a DARE officer in the district about a dozen years ago. "There's so much I'm going to miss – the children, the parents, the teachers and staff. It's like I'm losing a family."

DARE – which stands for Drug Abuse Resistance Education – is a national program started in Los Angeles in the 1980s. It came to South Colonie in 1992. The goal behind the program is to arm youngsters with the tools and self-esteem to resist peer pressure, make positive choices and stay away from using harmful drugs and alcohol.

Instead of reporting to the police station each day like most officers, Jensen's office had been at Sand Creek

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Roessleville Elementary School students load their penny collection into the Loomis, Fargo & Co. armored truck. Roessleville and Veeder students raised money for the Penny Harvest program this year. Story on page 3.

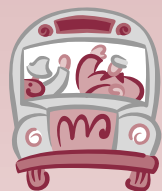
## South Colonie schools earn EPA's prestigious Energy Star label

### Veeder Elementary and Sand Creek Middle School better than 75 percent of U.S. schools

Two South Colonie schools – Veeder Elementary and Sand Creek Middle School – have earned an Energy Star label from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). This prestigious label signifies that these schools operate more energy efficiently than 75 percent of the schools in the United States.

The new Energy Star designation is one more mark of success for the district's five-year-old energy conservation initiative. Since 1991, South Colonie Schools have exceeded their energy savings projections set by the district and its energy conservation partner – Energy Education, Inc. – and avoided more than \$1.5 million in energy expenses.

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**“To be a positive role model you have to have a good head on your shoulders and make good choices yourself. Then, and only then, will you make a difference.”**

**South Colonie DARE Officer Greg Jensen**

## ... Officer Greg Jensen

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Middle School. Two days a week he taught the DARE curriculum to fifth graders and alcohol awareness lessons to eighth graders. He also served as a liaison for the elementary school character education programs and on the district Safe Schools committees.

### Looking back at his career

Looking back, Officer Jensen said he's proud of not only the impact DARE has made on children but the strengthened rapport that has developed between the police and educational communities as a result of his daily interaction with children.

“When I first started, instead of being greeted with a ‘hello’ from a teenager, you’d more likely be called a ‘pig’ or get the ‘finger,’” Officer Jensen recalled. “But today, I’ll be shopping or having dinner somewhere and my graduates — now in their 20s — will come up to me with a handshake or a pat on the back. They’re genuinely glad to see me. That’s so gratifying!”

And though it’s difficult to measure the effectiveness of a program like DARE, Officer Jensen said he believes it has had a “ripple effect” throughout the community.

“Do we still have crime in Colonie? Yes,” he said. “But through the years, I’m confident we’ve prevented kids from using alcohol, from dying in a car accident or from smoking tobacco or marijuana. I know what we do is important.”

That’s not to say that today’s generation doesn’t have problems, because it does, the officer was quick to point out. With both parents working and single family households on the rise, Jensen said he is concerned about the lack of supervision and discipline among today’s teens and adolescents.

“What I’ve seen over the years is a progressive lack of respect toward adults, something you’d never see in my day,” said Jensen, a 1973 graduate of Colonie Central High School. “Kids are under a lot of pressure in this microwave generation. They want it all now.”



Colonie Police Officer Greg Jensen is back on patrol after helping nearly a generation of South Colonie children “say no to drugs” as the district’s DARE officer.

The DARE curriculum has evolved over the years to address these changing needs, focusing on life skills and teaching young people how to make good choices.

“We give them a model to work with and do a lot of role playing so there will be no doubt in their minds that if they make bad choices, there will be bad consequences,” Officer Jensen explained. “After that, it’s up to them.”

As he eyes retirement in a few years, the 28-year police veteran plans to stay as active as he can with the schools while in his new role on the force. Colonie Central High School Resource Officer Rich Barber will take over for Jensen until the end of the school year when a permanent new DARE officer will be appointed in South Colonie.

His advice to his successor is: “Be patient with the youngsters, have compassion for people and give your best every day,” Officer Jensen said. “You can’t be a hard nose all of the time and you can’t treat everyone the same either. Remember, you don’t have all the answers and no one expects you to. In the schools, you are part of a team, and together, you make it happen. Lastly, to be a positive role model you have to have a good head on your shoulders and make good choices yourself. Then, and only then, will you make a difference.”

## ... Energy Star label

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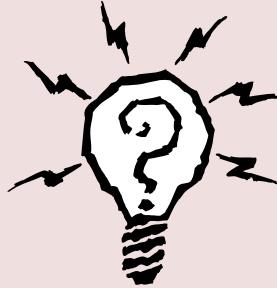
Energy Education, Inc., creates partnerships with school districts and companies by developing and implementing customized energy conservation programs for public schools, enabling districts to redirect saved dollars for educational opportunities and resources.

South Colonie Superintendent Michael Marcelle commended his staff and District Energy Manager James Brown for doing all the "little things" necessary to make this program work.

"Everyone has done such an excellent job and that's the only way we could have reached these milestones," Marcelle said. "Our staff has gone the extra mile to control energy usage in our schools and other district buildings. Thanks to this dedication on the part of our employees, we have an additional opportunity to protect our community taxpayers' investment in our public schools."

The Energy Star designation for Sand Creek Middle School is particularly significant because it is the only school in New York State to achieve Energy Star status two consecutive years.

These Energy Star Awards come on the heels of last year's EPA honors when the South Colonie Central School District was also among 18 organizations recognized for achieving significant energy savings and leading their fields in responding to the agency's Energy Star Building Challenge. Those honored for achieving at least 10 percent energy savings included school districts, a hospital and supermarket, hotel, banking and commercial real estate companies.



## Students do some heavy lifting

# Elementary kids collect a ton of pennies

Students, staff and families from Veeder and Roessleville Elementary Schools gave their pennies a purpose this year. The children spent the fall collecting their unused coins for the Penny Harvest Program — an initiative sponsored by the National Educational Leadership Institute, The Community Foundation, local businesses and other foundations.

Operated through Common Cents New York, a New York City based organization dedicated to encouraging youth to become community activists, Penny Harvest challenges students and families to work together to canvas their buildings and collect pennies. The pennies were placed in canvas money sacks and collected by an armored truck from the Loomis, Fargo & Co.

Students from Veeder School collected about 45 sacks of pennies this fall and Roessleville students added another 25 sacks — the sacks weighing 30 pounds for a total of 2,100 pounds.

In addition to building good citizenship and character skills, Penny Harvest also provides an educational component for students. Schools who meet the "25 sack challenge" (both schools surpassed that) earn a Philanthropy Roundtable. At the roundtable later this year, student leaders from each school decide how to use the money they raised from the Penny Harvest — usually \$1,000 — to address needs in their community.

Using the Penny Harvest curriculum, teachers help guide the children philanthropists through the challenging tasks of assessing and mapping their community and its needs and resources; agreeing how to prioritize those needs; visiting and evaluating organizations that address those needs, issuing Requests For Proposals, using the Internet, making phone calls and using other means of research; and finally, making the tough decisions about how to best use their \$1,000 to make a difference.



## CCHS Girls Volleyball named Scholar Athletes

The Colonie Central High School girls volleyball team was recognized as the Fall 2006 Scholar/Athlete Team State Champion by the New York State Public High School Athletic Association, Inc.

## Sex offender information

The Colonie Police Department provides our schools with a list of the names and addresses of Level 2 and 3 convicted sex offenders living in the South Colonie Central School District. Those lists are kept in a binder at each school and the District Office and can be viewed during normal school hours or by contacting the Colonie Police Department. A signature is required. Pages can be copied for 25 cents each. Information is also readily available on the Colonie Town Police web site at [www.colonie.com/police](http://www.colonie.com/police), the district web site at [www.southcolonieschools.org](http://www.southcolonieschools.org) and the New York State Sex Registered Sex Offender web site at <http://criminaljustice.state.ny.us>.

## New Principal

John Haher is the new Interim Principal at Shaker Road Elementary School. He replaces Elizabeth Wood, who resigned in December to become the first Principal of the new Shatekon Elementary School in the Shenendehowa Central School District. Wood began her career in South Colonie 12 years ago as a high school teacher, middle school Associate Principal then Elementary Principal. Haher retired in 1999 after a long career in the Scotia-Glenville Central School District. For more, visit the district web site.

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**In Focus Editor:** John K. Noetzel



### Shaker Road Elementary adopts Albany shelter

Fourth graders in Heather Penn's class at Shaker Road Elementary School adopted a local Albany shelter for the holidays, collecting and packaging necessities for the Lwanga Center — a non-profit organization that houses about 20 men.

### Sand Creek and others help fight breast cancer

Sand Creek Middle School eighth graders, under the direction of school counselor Judi Jablonka, sold pink bracelets and collected other donations this year totaling \$240 to benefit the "Making Strides Against Breast Cancer" campaign. Many other South Colonie schools also joined in the effort, some participating in the annual breast cancer walk this fall.

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