

## Go Home Early Drill

On Thursday, November 10, South Colonie Schools will send its students home 15 minutes early to test its Emergency Management Plan. The Go Home Early Drill is required once a year by the New York State Education Department. The purpose of the early dismissal drill is to test the effectiveness of the transportation and communications systems in the event of an emergency. Copies of the Emergency Management Plan are located in the principal's office of each school and at the District Office.

## CCHS craft fair Nov. 19

Colonie Central High School will host its 22nd annual craft fair sponsored by the PTSA on Saturday, November 19, from 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Admission is free. 125 vendors will be selling a variety of homemade crafts and food items. There will also be raffles throughout the day. Mark your calendars!

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Superintendent of Schools

**Peter Haessig**  
Assistant Superintendent/  
Management Services

**Anthony DeBlois**  
Assistant Superintendent for Instruction

**Beverly Miller**  
School Business Administrator

**David Seaver**  
Director of Human Resources

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In Focus Editor: John K. Noetzel



## Neil Johanning appointed to school board

Neil G. Johanning, of 4 Wellesley Court, Loudonville, has been appointed to the South Colonie Board of Education to fill the unexpired term of the late Joan Ricciardi. He was appointed by the board on October 4.

By law, the school board can appoint a replacement when a seat opens due to death or resignation. Ricciardi died in June while serving her second, five-year term on the board. That term will expire on June 30, 2007, meaning the seat would be open for election again on the May 16, 2006, school board ballot.

Johanning has lived in South Colonie for 20 years and is employed as Director of IT Services for the New York State Department of Health. He has been involved with the school district through the PTAs at Shaker Road Elementary School, Sand Creek Middle School, Colonie Central High School and the PTA Council. He has held many positions including Council Representative, Secretary, Treasurer and President and served on numerous committees such as District Shared Decision Making, Building Site Based Management, Bylaws, Membership and Craft Fair. He has also served on the Capital District PTA as Secretary, Meeting Manager and District Director supporting more than 60 PTA units. He was a softball and baseball coach at the West Albany Athletic Association and for the Capital Region Rampage Softball Organization.

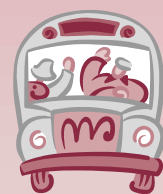
He holds a master's degree in Computer Science from Union College and a bachelor's degree in Mathematics from Siena College. He and his wife, Maryann, have three children — two who now attend Colonie Central High School.

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## Soaring fuel prices put strain on bus budget

### District continues to weigh travel in wake of higher gas/diesel costs

Anyone who owns a car knows all too well the financial battle they face each week to top off their gas tank. With fuel prices soaring well above \$3.00 a gallon this year, drivers are asking themselves, "Is it ever going to end?"

Now, imagine yourself logging 836,000 miles a year on your vehicle and what that would mean to your annual fuel budget. Sound far fetched? It is — unless you're in the school transportation business.

"Higher fuel prices have been tough on all of us," said South Colonie Transportation Director Peter Tunny. "It doesn't matter if you're a commuter going to work or you run a business, we're all suffering at the pump."

South Colonie transports about 6,500 students a year on its fleet of 78 buses — most of which operate on diesel fuel and some on gasoline. The 836,000 miles traveled annually includes transportation to

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### Sharing their toys

Shaker Road Elementary students pack 12 boxes of toys and stuffed animals — 293 in all — they collected for the victims of Hurricane Katrina. The boxes were shipped to homeless shelters in Baton Rouge, LA.

## Students face new state testing this school year

### More exams debut in grades 3, 5 and grades 6-8

Beginning this school year, children in grades 3 and 5 will take a new crop of state tests in math and English language arts. Similar exams have been in place for fourth graders for a number of years.

At the middle school level, new tests will debut in English language arts and math for sixth, seventh and eighth graders. Similar exams have been in place for eighth graders for many years, as have tests in second languages, science, social studies and technology.

The expanded testing in English language arts — covering reading, writing and listening skills — and math for each of the upper elementary grades is designed to show whether children have a firm grasp on the skills they will need to succeed as they move toward middle school, high school and beyond. These tests will also help teachers identify where the curriculum

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Soaring prices for gasoline and diesel fuel are putting a strain on the South Colonie transportation budget.

## ... fuel prices

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71 schools — the district's five elementary, two middle and one high school — and private and parochial runs the district is required by law to make. The miles also include travel for field trips and athletic events.

So how have higher fuel prices affected the transportation budget? Even though the district gets the best prices under state contract, last year at this time, it was paying \$1.47 per gallon for diesel fuel compared to \$2.05 per gallon for the October shipment. Similarly, gasoline prices in October were \$2.58 per gallon compared to \$1.17 per gallon one year ago. And that can really add up on a bus fleet.

For example, the district uses about 10,000 gallons of diesel fuel and 3,000 gallons of gasoline per month. Over a 10-month school year, that's 130,000 gallons of fuel. Last year, that fuel cost \$182,100. This year, at the higher price, that same fuel will cost \$282,400 or 55 percent more.

What's the district doing to combat this? First, it uses state bidding to get the most competitive fuel prices. Second, it uses a high-tech computer software program to map its bus routes so they are the shortest and most fuel efficient. Third, the district will continue to scrutinize its transportation needs including weighing the importance and educational value of all athletic and field trips.

## ... new state testing

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might need to be fine-tuned to better meet students' needs.

Testing children regularly throughout the middle school years is one way of ensuring that they are progressing academically. Such tests help show whether children need additional help to confidently move ahead in school.

### A look at the new state exams

Testing children beginning in the third grade is one way of ensuring that students are learning their daily lessons well. These tests, as well as the middle school exams, are carefully designed to reflect the types of information and skills that children are expected to learn at their grade levels.

Although students will be given opportunities throughout the school year to become familiar with the format of these tests, the school year will not be spent drilling for these exams. Instead, the primary focus is on expanding children's knowledge in many subject areas and disciplines like listening, reading, writing and math — encouraging them to reason better and become critical thinkers.

For more information on the new state exams and for some sample questions, parents should check their mail for the most recent issues of the South Colonie elementary and middle school parent newsletters. They can also get information on the Internet at <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/3-8/home.html>.

### Upcoming testing dates

November 16-17: Grade 5 Social Studies; January 9-10: Grade 3 ELA; January 11-13: Grade 4 ELA; January 11-12: Grade 5 ELA; January 16-20: Grade 6 ELA; January 16-17: Grade 7-8 ELA; March 6-7: Grade 3 Math; March 7-8: Grade 5 Math; March 9-10: Grade 4 Math; March 14-15: Grade 6-8 Math; April 25-26: Grade 8 Science Performance; April 25-26: Grade 4 Science Manipulative (Veeder Only); April 27: Grade 4 Science Manipulative (Shaker Road Only); May 2: Grade 4 Science Manipulative (Roessleville Only); May 3: Grade 4 Science Manipulative (Forest Park Only); May 4: Grade 4 Science Manipulative (Saddlewood Only); May 9: Grade 4 Science Written Exam; June 7-8: Grade 8 Social Studies Exam.



### What's for lunch today?

Why not visit the South Colonie web site before you send your child off to the bus stop? School lunch menus are just one of the new informational items you'll find there. Take a look at [www.southcolonieschools.org](http://www.southcolonieschools.org)



### From bricks to books

Construction crews take advantage of the pleasant fall weather as they put up the walls on the new library addition at Shaker Road Elementary School. Capital project improvements are also underway at Saddlewood and Veeder Elementary Schools and Lisha Kill Middle School.

## New buses/radios approved



South Colonie Central School District residents — on October 20 — passed a \$521,500 referendum to purchase six new school buses by a vote of 491-142. The new buses will enable the district to meet its annual replacement schedule. Residents also passed a proposition calling for spending \$298,000 to replace 100 school bus two-way communications radios and two base radios and to upgrade the emergency communications system from analog to digital. That vote passed by a margin of 447-142. Both purchases are eligible for 52 percent state aid reimbursement. The two propositions together will increase property taxes about \$4.80 on a house assessed at \$150,000.

## Financial aid workshop

Colonie Central High School will hold a Financial Aid Planning Workshop at 7 p.m., November 9, in the auditorium. Topics include filing for financial aid, federal, state and institutional aid programs; deadlines, single-remarried parents, and evaluating financial aid packages. It will be presented by Peter V. Laurenzo, a Certified Financial Planner and author of the book — College Financial Aid: How to Get Your Fair Share.

## Veeder named 2005 Audubon Partner for the Environment

Veeder Elementary School has been named a 2005 Audubon Partner for the Environment in cooperation with Audubon International, an environmental organization that engages people in protecting and improving the land, water, wildlife, and natural resources around them.

Last year, Veeder Elementary achieved designation as a Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary from Audubon International. As an Audubon Partner, Veeder will be continuing many of the environmental projects it has in place, including the nature trail, gardening and bird nest boxes.



The emphasis of the Audubon Partners program is on helping students not only learn about the environment, but also care for wildlife, water, plants and natural resources close to home. Participation teaches respect and responsibility, while boosting science learning and environmental knowledge.

## Seaver to head Human Resources

South Colonie Schools has named David Seaver as the new Director of the Human Resources Department. Seaver has been an Associate Principal at Colonie Central High School since 1995. Prior to that he was an administrator with the Berlin Central School District in Rensselaer County and was the longtime Director of St. Colman's Home for Children in Watervliet. Seaver holds a master's degree in Administration Management from the State University at Albany and a bachelor's degree in Behavior Science from Mount Angel College in Oregon. The South Colonie Human Resource Department oversees about 1,000 employees. He will start the new position as soon as his replacement is hired.