

YEAR IN REVIEW 2016

Schools continue delivering well-rounded experience



KEVIN JAUCH
SUPERINTENDENT
Avoca School District 37

Avoca School District 37 continues to be a premier school district. Living its mission of maximizing the unique potential of each

child, Avoca provides a wide array of opportunities for students to excel well beyond academics. In February, five creative writing pieces by four different students were recognized at the national level through the Scholastic Art and Writing Award program. Along the visual art branch of Scholastic's program, six different works from another four students also received national recognition.

Our varsity and junior varsity co-ed soccer teams combined for a 15-1 record, with both winning

the North Shore Independent Conference. Eleven students medaled at the Science Olympiad National Championships this year, extending Avoca's long tradition of excellence in this arena. Had you attended Evanston Public Library's second annual Storytelling Festival last October, you may have had the pleasure of watching fourth and fifth-grade students from Avoca West Elementary School spin tales in the rich, traditional storytelling style of old. With 43 extracurricular opportuni-

ties across its two schools, approximately 84 percent of Avoca students participate in at least one program above and beyond what is required, maximizing each student's unique potential indeed!

The philanthropic efforts of Avoca's students must also be lauded. Last spring, Marie Murphy students collected \$3,800 to be split between the Juvenile Diabetes Research Fund, Back on my Feet Chicago, and the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. Last June Bernie's Book Bank recognized

Avoca West for donating at least 5,000 gently used children's books for the last three years. Marie Murphy 8th graders constructed 130 "survival kits," donating them to Connections for the Homeless in Evanston. Most recently, students at Avoca West made quite a large donation of clothing, food and personal items to Journeys: The Road Home, a non-profit agency that provides shelter, social services and housing to the homeless across the north and northwest suburbs.

An important point of discussion, however, for Avoca's Board of Education (BOE) is Avoca Center, formally Avoca East Elementary School. Originally opened at the height of the baby boom, Avoca East served this district well during a period of rapid growth when enrollment peaked at over 1,500 children, double current levels. Within two decades, those numbers rapidly declined leading to the closing of the school.

For the last 20 years Avoca has rented the facility

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to two long-term tenants. Though the district does draw rental income from them, the monies collected are not enough to pay for the approximately \$7 million in capital improvements currently needed in the 60 year old building. After months of deliberation and several discussions with community members, our tenants and the Wilmette Park District among others, the Avoca BOE has decided against renovating the building, knowing that is not in the best interest of the Avoca community, especially in light of the fact that the building is no longer needed or being used to educate Avoca students.

As of this writing, the BOE has exercised its right to terminate its current lease with the tenants effective December 31, 2017. In the meantime, it is considering potential options regarding the property including raz-

ing the building, working in partnership with the Wilmette Park District to identify a mutually beneficial use for the grounds or selling the property to a developer for the purpose of building single-family homes.

The Avoca BOE knows that this is an important decision with significant implications to not only the school district, but the entire Avoca community. They are considering both the financial and community impact of all options. For more information about this topic visit www.avoca37.org/avoca-center/.

With all that the District is currently undertaking, and while still being one of the highest performing school districts in the state academically, 2016 was a year of reflection, vision and planning for Avoca. In January the district conducted a thorough system assessment to measure itself against the best-practice criteria of the Baldrige Performance Excellence Education crite-

ria and the Characteristics of Professional Learning Communities. Approximately 175 people participated in this process, which led to a detailed report that was used to inform the Strategic Planning Committee, which was made up of Board of Education members, parents, staff and administrators. The resulting strategic plan produced five overarching district goals in the following areas: student learning, collaborative teams, continuous improvement systems, family and community connections and effec-

tive and efficient use of resources. With so much to celebrate, Avoca still continues its push toward excellence.

Though Avoca is well known for its academic accomplishments, the District and our community also believe in the inherent value of a well-rounded education. It is why we go above and beyond to provide our students with the skills and dispositions to realize their hopes and dreams. We are excited to see what the new year will bring! To find out more, visit www.avoca37.org.

THE WILMETTE BEACON

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