



## Monthly Bulletin

February 2008

*Dr. Patrick Michel*  
Superintendent of Schools

[www.monticelloschools.net](http://www.monticelloschools.net)

### From the desk of the Superintendent

We are hearing it and feeling it - prices are going up and the economy is in bad shape. All of us are facing much higher fuel prices and the cost of the supplies and services we obtain for the benefit of our children are rising as well. This has put substantial pressure on our school budget. Just like many businesses, we need to begin to look at how we can reduce costs and position ourselves to remain successful in an economic downturn.

Though January is the official beginning of our budget cycle, we began a savings analysis of our entire budget in October. As a result, we have put a spending freeze into effect. We have contacted our largest outside providers of goods and services to discuss the renegotiation of costs. We are working with our local BOCES to explore more state aid options for services we are already providing. We are also working with other local school districts to reduce costs by combining services such as staff development. And we are reviewing every program to measure cost effectiveness.

Last year, through good fiscal management, we were able to give the vast majority of our taxpayers in the Monticello School District a property tax cut. We were not able to give our property owners in Forestburgh and Bethel a tax cut due to the equalization rate, but we were able to produce a substantially lower tax rate for both municipalities.

This year, it is our intention once again to work hard to produce a budget that people will be willing to support.

At this time, we are facing uncertainty from our State government. Though Governor Spitzer has promised districts like Monticello substantial increases in state aid, we are also being told that there is a large deficit. Last year we received a 19% aid increase that led to improvements in our programs and gave us the ability to put the district in a strong financial position. If we receive even half that amount this year, we will be able to continue making the improvements needed to prepare our children for the global economy, and at the same time keep property taxes at an acceptable level. We cannot be sure where we stand until we see the numbers from Albany. Until then, we must budget under the assumption that we will not be receiving any significant aid increase.

I am sharing all of this because we need you. Last year we created the Citizens' Advisory Budget Committee (CABC) to help make our budget formation process as transparent as possible. Many community members participated in the meetings and as a result, we created a very good budget. Once again, we would like community participation this year. During these uncertain times, we need as many ideas and suggestions as possible.

The CABC will meet a total of four times during February and March. This will allow considerable input from the public. I invite you to be a part of this important group, as your advice and guidance will be greatly appreciated.

As always, if you have any specific questions, please do not hesitate to call me at 794-7700, ext. 70910.

**All CABC meetings will be held at 7 p.m. in the RJK Middle School cafeteria on the following Tuesdays: February 5 & 26, and March 4 & 18.** Topics of discussion will include: the rollover budget, state aid, enrollment, PPS, tech, music & athletics, transportation, curriculum/staff development, BOCES services, benefits, staffing, the "College in the Classroom" initiative, new programs and high school football. **Join us, and let your voice be heard!**

## QuickCLIPS

**FYI:** The Village of Monticello Parks & Recreation Department is offering classes in Ballroom Dancing and Latin Dance, Saturdays, beginning Feb. 9, at the Ted Stroebele Recreation Center. Ballroom classes are 10-11 a.m. Latin Dance classes are 11 a.m.-noon. Cost is \$45 per person for each six week session. Singles are welcome. Space is limited. To register, call Betsy at 794-2351.

**Rescheduled Date: Bop for the Boys & Girls Club of Sullivan Friday, Feb. 22, 7 p.m.**

For more information or tickets, call Elizabeth Rowley at 361-2222.

## Important Dates

**MONDAY, FEBRUARY 4:**

- Monticello School Community Advocates meeting, 7:30 p.m., RJK Middle School cafeteria

**THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 7:**

- Board of Education meeting, 7 p.m., RJK library

**FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 8:**

- RJK Dance - Grades 7 & 8, 7 p.m.
- RJK EPIC Parent Get-Together, 7 p.m.

**MONDAY, FEBRUARY 18 - WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 20**

- Mid Winter Recess - NO SCHOOL

**THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 21:**

- Board of Education meeting, 7 p.m., RJK library

**MONDAY, FEBRUARY 25:**

- Monticello Schools' Parent Advisory Group meeting, 7 p.m., RJK Middle School cafeteria

**TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 26 - FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 29:**

- RJK Middle School PTA Book Fair

**Important Note:** The following additional Superintendent's Conference Days have been added to our calendar.

**Wednesday, Mar. 19 - FULL-DAY Conference Elementary level ONLY.** (Due to the timing of the Math assessment and the correction schedule provided by the state we will not be able to correct the Secondary and the Elementary Math assessments on the same day.)

**Wednesday, Apr. 2 - FULL-DAY Conference Secondary level ONLY** (middle school and high school). (This day was added to correct the NYS Math assessment and have building-level staff development.)

A complete updated school calendar is available in pdf format at [www.monticelloschools.net](http://www.monticelloschools.net).

## A quarter of a million and still collecting at Chase

In October 2007, the Emma C. Chase Elementary School was one of the first schools in the Tri State area to accept a challenge called the Million Tab Club, a program that's in conjunction with the Ronald McDonald Family Room (RMFR) at the Maria Fareri Children's Hospital in Westchester County. The school took on the challenge in honor of Chase 5th grader Andrew Pekal, who passed away last year after being diagnosed with rhabdomyosarcoma. During his illness, Andrew's parents were able to stay close to him by utilizing the Ronald McDonald Family Room, as it is used as a "home away from home" for families during their child's hospital stay.

The Million Pull Tab program is simple. Students bring in aluminum pull tabs from cans. Each class collects and counts the tabs for a weekly total. With the help of community members and other district schools who have been contributing to Chase's pull tab collection, in just three short months, they have almost ¼ million tabs! Eventually the tabs are sent to a recycling plant and melted down for cash. The cash goes directly to the Ronald McDonald Family Room at Westchester Medical Center to provide respite for families who are enduring the most difficult times of their lives. One night at the RMFR for a family is equivalent to 31,675 tabs.

In collecting pull tabs, Chase Elementary School students and staff feel they are honoring the memory of their friend Andrew and they hope to help other families through their difficult times. The students' hard work will culminate with a party featuring Ronald McDonald as a special guest during a school assembly later in the year.

**If you wish to help Chase reach their 1,000,000 goal, please send your tabs to the main office or call 888-2471 to arrange to have the tabs picked up.** Have you ever wondered what a million looks like? Chase students are determined to find out!