



MEET OUR NEW SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT



**Dirk Weeldreyer,
Our New Superintendent**

“Like father, like son” is a quote we’re all familiar with. And the proof of its validity lies with our new superintendent, Mr. Dirk Weeldreyer. Dirk’s father, James Weeldreyer has been superintendent at Mattawan Consolidated School for the past 30 years! Can something like that be in the genes?

I’ve had several occasions to meet with Dirk since he officially took the reins in July. My first impression, which I’ve subsequently heard echoed by others is, “he has an easy soft-spoken manner that exudes confidence and competence.” And at six foot six, he’s a man most of us will have to look up to. ☺

Dirk comes to us from Martin where he spent the last five years as principal of the Middle and High School. Prior to that, he was a teacher at Jenison for over 16 years While there, he also coached boys and girls basketball at the JV and Varsity levels. Over the years he spent as a teacher, he sponsored six European trips for his students.

Aside from his vast front line experience in education, Dirk is well lettered.

He holds an undergraduate degree from Hope College and two Masters degrees – one in Education, and a second in Educational Leadership. He is currently working on his third advanced degree, Educational Specialist, which he explains is higher than a Masters, but not quite a Doctorate.

Dirk and his family are 20 year residents of Jenison. His wife Sarah manages a household of four children: Karsten (13), Hannah (11), Grace (5) and Jorin (4). As anyone with children would readily understand, that’s quite a management challenge.

Dirk believes that good listening skills are an important requirement in his job. *“I think people who are most successful are those who are good listeners. Not that you’ll always be able to solve every problem but you need to hear what they have to say and take what steps you can toward a resolution.”*

Armed with barely six months on the job, I asked Dirk what his initial impressions of Fennville were. *“I think Fennville is a wonderful community”* he said. *“I’ve been continually impressed by the commitment the people here have to their community. As for the school,”* he says, *“we have an excellent group of professionals here, but we’ll continue to focus on improving student achievement. Improvement is a never ending process and I’ve seen a real receptiveness by folks here to take a look at what we’re doing and find ways we could be doing it better.”*

I asked Dirk what his goals were for Fennville Public Schools. *“Short term we want to improve student achievement. In these tough economic times, the role I see for myself as superintendent is to ensure the school district is run in a fiscally responsible manner while continuing to meet our main charge which is to educate our children.”*

“My door is always open” says Dirk. *“I’ve met a lot of people in the community but still have many more to meet. I look forward to any opportunities to do so.”*

FENNVILLE UPDATES ITS DOWNTOWN MUSIC SYSTEM



Fennville Joins the iPod Generation

The size belies its capability.

Downtown events in Fennville have evolved with the times and so have the demands made on our downtown infrastructure. This year we’ve had to acknowledge that our 12 year old PA system was no longer up to the tasks we had scheduled for the upcoming year.

For the past several years we’ve been using our so called “Green Space” next to the post office as a reviewing stand for parades and other downtown activities. Up until recently, we were obliged to borrow a sound system from a generous community member, Mr. Mark Schrock. Many thanks Mark, but we won’t need to impose on your generosity any more.

We now have in place a 700 watt amplifier connected to a series of speakers mounted on the downtown light poles. Besides being able to play appropriate music on the various holidays, we can use a wireless microphone to broadcast through the speaker system. This will enable us to make announcements anywhere along main street from Su Case to the Blue Goose café.

We’ve also upgraded our music sources from a 5 CD changer and dual cassette player to an iPod nano as shown in the photo above. The iPod holds up to 40 hours of music which can be played in random sequence or sequentially interspersed with recorded announcements. Fennville streets are now “alive with the sound of music.”

TWO SIDES TO EVERY STORY

by Roman Palitano

Ever hear the old saying "There are two sides to every story"? The older I get the more I can relate to the truth of that statement.

I thought it'd be appropriate to write something about Thanksgiving to mark the event. Hardly an original topic, to be sure, so I decided to do a little research and see if I could come up with something new and interesting about this holiday.

Like most adults, I learned about Thanksgiving back in my earliest school days. I learned how the Pilgrims came to Plymouth to escape the religious persecution they were subjected to in England. I learned that during the first winter more than half the settlers were unable to survive on the meager food supply available to them. I learned how the Native Americans befriended the Pilgrims and taught them how to survive in their new land. I learned that as a result of this teaching, the Pilgrims' first harvest was overwhelmingly successful, and in celebration of this abundant harvest, the Native Americans and the colonists feasted and celebrated together on a day we now call "The First Thanksgiving."

I didn't have to do much research on the Internet before I realized that what I had learned about Thanksgiving was a mixture of both history and myth. It seems that many of the 'Puritans' who came to the new world weren't at all what we'd call *puritan* today. Some were victims of bigotry in England, but some of them were themselves religious bigots. Many were outcasts and fugitives who, in some way or other, did not fit into the



mainstream of their society back in England.

The small number of original colonists saw the Native Americans as a powerful force. A force they must cater to until the next ships arrived bringing more colonists and thus shift the balance of power in the colonists' favor. In reality, they thought of the Native Americans as heathens calling them instruments of the devil. They only invited the Native Americans to the feast so that a treaty could be negotiated giving the colonists all rights to the lands of Plymouth.

In recent years, on Thanksgiving Day, many Native Americans and their supporters travel to Massachusetts and gather at the top of Coles Hill overlooking Plymouth Rock. Here they proclaim a "National Day of Mourning." They believe that the theft of their lands and the destruction of their traditional way of life started there with the arrival of the colonists.

But of course the meaning of Thanksgiving today goes well beyond whatever may or may not have started back in Plymouth in 1621. Thanksgiving Day in America is a time to offer thanks, of family gatherings and holiday meals. A time of turkeys, stuffing and pumpkin pie.

Nearly half a century ago, President Dwight Eisenhower proclaimed Thanksgiving as a time when Americans should celebrate "the plentiful yield of our soil . . . the beauty of our land . . . the preservation of those ideals of liberty and justice that form the basis of our national life, and the hope of international peace." Each of us might put it a little differently, but I think the vast majority of us could embrace that meaning.

Here's a final thought. If you're one of those people who can trace their lineage back to someone who came over on the Mayflower, you just might want to think twice before you let others know about it. Maybe they can trace their lineage back to the early Native Americans who were here first. END



Each year, Native Americans gather at Coles Hill overlooking Plymouth Rock in a National Day of Mourning.

CHAMBER SPONSORS FALL EVENT

More than 40 chamber members and their significant others attended our annual Fall Event this year. The Rye, immediately adjacent to the journeyman hosted the affair.



Pizza, networking and website edification were the order of the evening. Non-business-related social interaction didn't have to be encouraged. To our delight, it happened naturally as it does at all our chamber events.

Webmaster Al LaShell did one-on-one tutorial sessions with individual members. Al showed how members could better utilize some of the capabilities of the chamber website to communicate more effectively with potential customers.

The journeyman provided several varieties of their unique wood-fired pizza. For those who imbibed, a selection of alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages were also available.

Members present also voted for the 2009 slate of officers who will oversee the business of the chamber in the coming year. The new officers are:

Jim Lytle
President

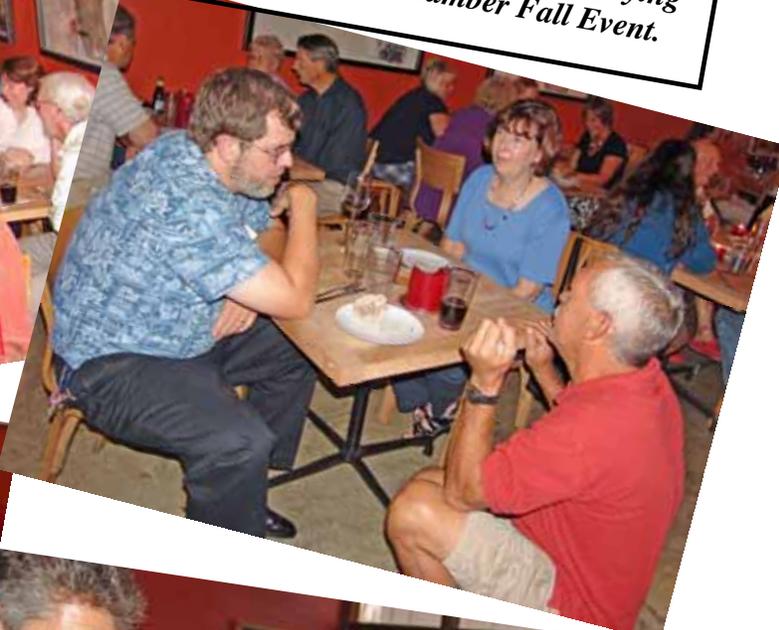
Bill Busscher
Vice President

Sandi Busscher
Recording Secretary

Sue Gawaluch
Corresponding Secretary

Martha Wickett-Schrock
Treasurer

See the happy people. They're enjoying themselves at the chamber Fall Event.



A good time was had by all!



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Board of Directors

- Jim Lytle, President
- Bill Busscher, Vice President
- Sandi Busscher, Recording Secretary
- Martha Wickett-Schrock, Treasurer
- Sue Gawaluch, Corresponding Secretary
- Tom Tucker, Member
- Larry Fuerst, Member
- Reid Ruggles, Member
- Paul Hix, Member

Business Tip: Get involved in your community. Join a service club, charities, business organizations such as the chamber of commerce. Network yourself and keep your antennae up!

Message from the President



Keeping our chamber active and viable is the job of our board of directors. Without their commitment of time and talent, our chamber would be “little noted nor long remembered.” I’m very pleased to introduce to you our three newest board members: Sue Gawaluch, Tracey Cochran and Paul Hix. All three are long-time business professionals with much to contribute to our chamber and our community.



Tracey held a similar position in Holland and also held

various other positions during her 17 year career at Huntington Bank. “I’m excited to be working in a place with such a hometown feeling” says Tracey.



In addition to being on the chamber, Sue is also a member at large for the Commission on Aging for Allegan County. “I enjoy helping and working with seniors. You can learn so much from them. I also feel it is important for businesses to support and be involved with community activities.”

Paul Hix is a Financial Advisor from Edward Jones Investments. He is also part owner of Spruce Cutter’s Cottage, a local Bed and Breakfast.



Following a 16 year multi-faceted career with General Motors, in 2006 Paul decided to go into business for himself. He choose Edward Jones Investments as the vehicle to realize that goal.

Would-be Financial Advisors representing Edward Jones are carefully scrutinized. Only 10% of applicants are granted an interview and of those interviewed only 5% actually become Financial Advisors. Paul is planning to open a downtown office within the next few months.

