

insights



Mon Valley Education Consortium

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Literacy for Life

For the Love of Books, community book drives, Mon Valley Reads: the Consortium's literacy initiative is growing by leaps and books

FOR THE LOVE OF BOOKS

**Feb. 11-20
At Borders**



The Consortium, Borders Books & Music and WQED Multimedia once again are teaming up to sponsor For the Love of Books, a 10-day celebration of books and the joys of reading.

From Feb. 11-20, new and/or gently loved children's books can be donated at any of the three Pittsburgh-area Borders stores (Monroeville, South Hills, North Hills).

And there will be in-store special events, including appearances by storytellers, guest authors (Kitty Griffin, cartoonist Joe Wos) and favorite book characters (Arthur the Aardvark, Clifford the Big Red Dog).

Adding to the fun will be a special "stuff the truck" challenge sponsored by the newest partner in For the Love of Books: Radio Disney. From 12 to 3 p.m. on Sunday, Feb. 13, books will be collected and "stuffed" in a truck parked in the parking lot at the Monroeville store. There will be games, literacy activities, on-site music, entertainment and Radio Disney prizes for those who turn out to help.

Meanwhile, the Consortium is working to give students the opportunity to visit Borders during February by raising sponsorship funds to provide transportation to the stores and cover the purchase of a book for each child to take home.

As in past years, there are Act 48 opportunities on the schedule. They include: Ready to Grow Literacy Workshop with

Charlese White of WQED Multimedia, 9-11 a.m., Saturday, Feb. 12; Educator/Author "Fishbowl" Conversation on using children's books as learning tools, 6:30-8 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 16; Ready to Learn Workshop with Annette Waldron, also of WQED, 9-11 a.m., Saturday, Feb. 19. Deadline to register is Feb. 1.

"We're hoping that our committed network of friends and supporters will turn out for the Borders' event and use the certificates (valid Feb. 12 & 13) that provide us with a portion of the sales proceeds," MVEC's executive director, Dr. Linda L. Croushore, said. Certificates are on the MVEC website (www.mvec.org)

and in the February issue of WQED's *Pittsburgh Magazine*. Volunteers also are needed to staff the collection and information tables at Borders. Call the Consortium office if you can help (412-678-9215).



Volunteers from Eat'n Park Hospitality Group sorted books at MVEC's storage locker on United Way's 2004 Day of Caring.

Mon Valley Reads *Still time to join this region-wide event set for April 25-29*

April 25-29 are the dates for Mon Valley Reads, the Consortium's region-wide focus on books and all things literary - with a little fun thrown in.

Special reading activities for students, teachers, administration, and community members have been the rule for the past six years of this annual observance. Each school is asked to plan a reading activity for at least one day during Mon Valley Reads.

In some schools, these events have become regular parts of the program. For example, McKeesport Area School District brings in a force of 100-plus "community readers" on Mon Valley Reads Day (April 27 this year). High school students there help to plan the day and recruit the readers.

Across the Consortium, there have been day-long activities based in the school library with community and celebrity guests, reading marathons, a Book-nic

(picnics with books outdoors, weather permitting), a walk to the river for reading and snacks, and reading rallies and awards assemblies.

Each participating school receives commemorative Mon Valley Reads bookmarks for students, a small keepsake for celebrating the joys of reading with the Consortium.

Mon Valley Reads is one component of the Consortium's ongoing Power Reading on the River campaign. The other is a monthly Drop Everything And Read (D.E.A.R.). Forty-nine schools signed up this school term to "get in the habit" of observing a period of sustained silent reading.

To sign up for Mon Valley Reads, contact David Pribish at the Consortium (dprish@mvec.org).



LEADERSHIP RETREAT MARCH 18-19

Information on the Consortium's 12th annual Leadership Retreat, set for March 18-19 at the Holiday Inn Meadow Lands, has gone out to all MVEC districts.

This concentrated two-day conference is geared to participation by teams composed of school personnel and school board members, according to MVEC Executive Director Linda L. Croushore, who noted, "To experience the maximum benefit, it's best to bring a representative team."

Theme for the retreat is "Schools in the Context of Their Communities." As in past years, there will be time for teams to work on challenges unique to their districts and also to discuss common problems with their peers from across the Consortium.

Activities begin at 9 a.m. Friday, March 18, and run to noon on Saturday, March 19. Final registrations are due in the Consortium office by Tuesday, March 1.

Call or e-mail Ginny Dunsavage at MVEC with questions: dnsavage@mvec.org



Student Leadership Conference Switching from July to April in '05

The Consortium's annual "summer" Student Leadership Conference will become a "school-year" activity with this year's event scheduled for April 28-29 at Pittsburgh Marriott City Center.

A major component of The Future Is Mine (TFIM) initiative, the conference is designed for students in Grades 9-11. The agenda again will include in-depth career exploration. There will be a focus on diversity and a chance for attendees to share their TFIM Student Project "best practices."

First conference mailings will be going out in mid-February. Meanwhile, other aspects of The Future Is Mine are expanding. TFIM Student Project teams (see photo below) have been busy with activities in their home school districts and with preparations for the roles they will play in this year's leadership conference.



High school students participating in TFIM Student Projects are charged with creating career awareness/exploration experiences for themselves and their peers and the results to date have been varied and enthusiastic. Above, the South Allegheny High School team swings into a "J-O-B-S" presentation, to the tune of the 70's hit, "Y-M-C-A", before their school district's elementary students. See Page 2 for more on TFIM Student Projects.



This cheery welcome sign greeted visitors at Bentworth Elementary Center.

MON VALLEY LEARNS



3-D Rhombicuboctahedron construction posed a math puzzle at this chat room at East Allegheny High School.

The 2004 edition of Mon Valley Learns was another successful day of sharing best practices among more than 1,500 participating educators across the Consortium. There were 91 "chat rooms" on the program and 13 "special opportunity" sessions, something for everyone committed to making school a place where all children can succeed. The photos on this page are just a sampling of the activities that Mon Valley Learns participants experienced on Oct. 1, 2004.



Presenter Janice Boyko of South Allegheny School District leads her chat room through West Newton Cemetery for "History Lies in the Graveyard, Too."



History of a different kind was the topic of this chat room at Bentworth Elementary Center, where the French and Indian War was the subject.



The Consortium has streamlined and redesigned its web-site. For the latest news on programs, special events, Act 48 opportunities and more, please visit www.mvec.org on a regular basis.



MINI FAIR Representatives from some 50 colleges, universities, the military and career and technical schools brought the College/Career Mini Fair to 16 high schools in mid-September. The admissions officials met and talked with juniors and seniors about their post-high school options. This is the 15th year for this Consortium-sponsored event. Above, the rep from California University of Pennsylvania talks with Woodland Hills High School students.

In Their Own Words

'The Duke Meets DC': How Duquesne High's TFIM Student Project became a mini 'Roadtrip'

Holly McGraw, TFIM Student Project Advisor at Duquesne Education Center, writes:

After seeing clips of Roadtrip Nation at last year's "The Future Is Mine" student conference one of my students by the name of Angelo turned to me and said, "Miss Holly...we have to do that!!! I mean we could definitely pull that off as a service project." Then as others began to present, Angelo and I quietly passed ideas back and forth on a little piece of scratch paper, writing about how we could pull it off. We were both so excited. So needless to say the boys from Roadtrip Nation totally inspired us to get out, talk to people about their careers and dreams, relay the message back to the students at Duquesne, and most of all take a road trip!

Once the conference was over and we got back to Duquesne that's when reality hit. We started talking to people about the project and they thought we were crazy. Then we started to question how we could pay for the project. Before you knew it the idea died. Growing up in the urban city of Duquesne, opportunities don't normally come knockin' like those offered at Stanford, or so some think. But then when Mon Valley Education Consortium called us, asking us to do a student project we gave it a second chance. And wouldn't you know it...the funding came through from America's Promise - Allegheny County. We were so pumped!!!

Our plans for our own version (The Duke Meets DC) of Roadtrip Nation are somewhat different than the original. In short, we plan to...

- decorate 2 vans
- drive to DC for 3-4 days
- have 2 teams of interviewers (1 interview crew and 1 street team)
- hopefully interview some political people, some athletes, some college students
- visit 2 local colleges
- do random interviews of people on the streets
- talk to youth organizations about what job opportunities are available to their youth

Your idea to get out and explore what is out there has truly inspired us! Thank you! We hope to be able to inspire the students back at Duquesne as well to explore the possibilities and define their own road in life.

NOTE: Ms. McGraw's references to Roadtrip Nation stemmed from a presentation at last year's conference by one of the original members of the group of college students who hit the road after graduation to answer the question, "What should I do with my life?" They criss-crossed the country, making cold calls to the powerful and the not-so-powerful, asking them how they found their own road in life. The experience led to a PBS series, books and DVDs, and annual summer Roadtrips for other questioning college students.

For more information, go to: www.roadtripnation.com

Praise for The Future Is Mine

By Stephen Selly, MVEC Associate Executive Director



Last September a writer from the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) was working on a case study of our initiative, The Future Is Mine, with NAM, the U.S. Department of Commerce, and the Institute For Educational Leadership. I would like to share some of the quotes from this case study with you:

- Since its inception, some of the major expressions of MVEC's school/business partnership and college/career expectations programs have been efforts to improve the "career literacy" of students in the schools it serves, particularly for the non-college-bound... MVEC was a leader in the recent School-to-Work movement and has mounted a follow-on effort called "The Future Is Mine" (TFIM) under which it advises schools on incorporating career education and exploration into their curricula and has just completed its fourth annual Student Leadership Conference.
- MVEC received universal and generally effusive praise from the other Pittsburgh area interviewees. Educators said MVEC was a "terrific resource" and that the summer Student Leadership Conference had "kids enthusiastic about attending." Business people said that MVEC was an "exciting" organization that "goes beyond normal limits and reaches out with high energy to employers"; that the Student Leadership Conference was "fabulous" in showing students a broad range of options and opportunities; and that "they (MVEC) teach us how to understand the schools."
- One outside professional familiar with the program was quoted as saying:
 - MVEC is probably the best organization working here in career exploration, school improvement, and literacy. Their staff is amazing. Their planning and doing reflects the highest professionalism and is phenomenally creative and consistent. They truly engage teachers, parents and business people and are expert at "patiently pushing" in ways respectful of such people.

The Future Is Mine has taken career exploration to the next level by allowing two specific elements to guide the work—CHOICE and OWNERSHIP. It is crucial to empower young people, the primary audience, to drive their own future through self-discovery. Only when young people are encouraged and given permission to choose and own the process in which new information is experienced and delivered will the impact on their hearts and minds be meaningful and long-lasting.



Marla Hayes' "Disappearing Garbage" grant already is under way at McKeesport Area High School. Students began a study of the composting process with some hands-on work at the composting bin, loading the hay, leaves and manure needed to make humus. The bin was assembled by Building and Construction program students.



61 'Great Ideas' funded

Projects run gamut from 'good' garbage to stars and SpongeBob

What is the "real science" of Bikini Bottom, the home of SpongeBob SquarePants?

Will the junior detectives at H.W. Good Elementary School (Yough School District) solve the mystery of the missing pickles?

And just where in the world is the Beehive Cluster?

The latest round of Great Idea Grants funded by the Mon Valley Education Consortium promises the answers to all of the above while providing area students with creative and innovative learning experiences.

Bikini Bottom will come under the microscope at Bentworth High School, where biology students, under the direction of teacher Lisa Foglia, will examine characters from the popular cartoon and research their real biological counterparts. They'll incorporate their findings in a "SpongeBob Fair" that they'll take to fourth graders at the district's elementary school.

The missing pickles are at the heart of a "classroom mystery" grant awarded to a trio of Yough School District teachers at H.W. Good Elementary. Second graders there will apply key scientific concepts (observing, analyzing, deductive reasoning) to the puzzle of the pickles, keep a log to record their findings and, hopefully, earn their detective badges in the process.

And when West Mifflin Area High School students seek the Beehive Cluster (and the Whirlpool Galaxy and Great Nebula in Orion), they'll be turning their eyes to the sky to "Discover the Night." Scientific inquiry and discovery are at the heart of this Great Idea Grant that provides a starting point for new astronomers.

Across the Consortium, 61 Great Idea Grants will be unfolding over the next year as a result of awards made in the Fall Round of this long-running, popular Consortium initiative. Of the 61, 39 were teacher-level grants and 21 were school-level grants. One district grant, for \$5,000, was awarded, to Yough School District for "Libraries Galore!", a project to start a district-wide summer reading initiative that has school and local public library components as well as home "family reading" times.

The 61 grants awarded, for a total of \$45,777.68, make this round the largest in recent years, according to MVEC's grants coordinator, Patricia E. Hoke. Fourteen of the 17 eligible school districts in Allegheny, Fayette, Washington and Westmoreland Counties participated, along with regional Career and Technology Schools (CTCs) and Area Vocational-Technical Schools (AVTS). There have been 35 grant rounds since 1987, when the program began. The total amount distributed to educators to date topped one million dollars in 2003 and stands at \$1,073,721.59 today.

Other highlights include:

- Five teacher-level grants in McKeesport Area School District awarded with funds contributed by McKeesport High School alumni.
- Three teacher-level grants – one each in California Area, McKeesport Area and Ringgold School Districts – awarded with funds from Dominion, which has an ongoing partnership with the Consortium. Dominion funds are earmarked for grants that promote math, science or the environment.
- Teacher-level grants in Yough School District and East Allegheny School District and a school-level grant in Belle Vernon Area School District awarded with funds from the State Farm Companies Foundation.

At the teacher-grant level, applications are evaluated and awarded on a competitive basis by local School Action Committees, which are the Consortium's grassroots arms in school districts in which it works. These committees raise funds for teacher grants in their home districts, while the Consortium funds grants at the school/district level with monies provided by The Grable Foundation.

A special committee composed of all School Action Committee chairpersons reviews and awards grants at the school and district levels.

Great Idea Grants/Fall Round (2004) Teacher/School/District Winners

Belle Vernon Area School District

Ross Farmer, Carol Aten Frew, Nancy Berna, Christin Matta – *It's In Our Own Backyard* (funded by State Farm Companies Foundation)
Ann Gillett – *Tone Chimes for Learning and Performing*

Bentworth School District

Lisa Foglia – *The Biology of Bikini Bottom: The Science Behind SpongeBob SquarePants*
Brain Nath, Nicole Thomas, Stacy Skerbetz, Diane Watson, Joy Fidazzo – *Writing Buddies*
Yvonne Baker, Ronald Johnson, Neal Baker, John Areford, George Linck, Brian Malecki, Sandy Krupa, Ted Watkins, Tom Teagarden, Jacqueline Gurdish, Kathy Jo Mitchell – *E2: Education with Entertainment* (funded by Bentworth School Action Committee)

Brownsville Area School District

Mary S. Seelye – *Let's Start Cooking*
Mary S. Seelye – *School Store*
Lynn Hartmann – *Going For The Gold*
Terri Trempus, Susan Solomon – *Fit Kids 4 Life*
Amy Horner, Kathy Lacek, Ken Harasty – *Go With G.L.O.B.E.*

California Area School District

Genevieve Difilippo, Sharon Washlack, Sherron Weaver, Terry Zidek – *Trees for Vets*
Elaine Shannon – *Where in the World Is Flat Stanley?*
Elaine Shannon – *Subtraction Around the World* (funded by Dominion)
Elaine Shannon – *Addition Around the World*
Leslie Dennis, Nicole Haschets, Ron Royer, Cathy Schmider, Mary Lee Kalocay, Ray Huffman, Debbie McPherson, Darrin Dillow, Kathy McCrory – *New Age Newspapers*

Central Westmoreland CTC

Jack Kovach, Russell Leap – *Great Buildings of the World*

Charleroi Area School District

Marlene Oreski, Barbara Kendra – *Mega Math Marathon*
Brian Corrin – *Adaptive Physical Education*
Laurie A. Lash, Mary Tickner, Eric Farnier, Regina Moorby, Stephanie Rice, Elizabeth Noble – *Academic Festival* (funded by Charleroi School Action Committee)

East Allegheny School District

Loraine Pennington – *Power Point Your Past* (funded by State Farm Companies Foundation)

Elizabeth Forward School District

Douglas Watson, Barb Potenziani, Carol Wolfe – *The Act of Reading Program*
V. Ann Malady, Tim Petty, Wendie Covelli, Douglas Watson, Kyra Popp, Janet Iacone, William Boucher, Ms. Fleischauer, Rob Scott, Carol Hill, B. Boucher – *Community Action*

Forbes Road CTC

Stephen W. Bickerstaff, Paula MacArthur, Keith Rhodes – *F-1 High Tech Model Racing*
Wendy Moore, Stephen Bickerstaff, Paula MacArthur, DeeDee Cicarelli, Cindy Wittman, Kathy Walker – *Cook Book*
Tony Kresicki, Jim Cristillo – *From Work-Room to Board-Room*
Sandra K. Semcoski – *Oral Hygiene Project*
Robert Lydiard, Kathy Walker, Jim Cristillo, George Karnbauer, John Lyman – *The Forbes Road Show*
Kathy Walker, Daniel Shorthouse – *Forbes Road CTC Promotional Video Project*

McKeesport Area School District

Marla Hayes – *Disappearing Garbage* (funded by Dominion and Ann Louise Steele-Buck, MD, MHS Class of 1948)
Jane Steiner, Daniel Bonga, Dorian Siebel, Patrick McGuire – *Let's View It* (funded by Gary L. & Sharen Gibbons Thomas)
Alice Saxon, Mary Jane Keller – *Our Signs of Learning* (funded by MHS Class of 1976)
Brooke M. Smith, Marian Gregg – *Be Fit- Don't Sit* (funded by Nancy Fortune Anderson, MHS Class of 1943)

Mary S. Hullberg, Margot Minor, Bonnie Haver, Pam Gordon, Doris Martino, Irene McAdams – *S.U.P.E.R. S.T.A.R.* (*Students Using Packets to Expand Reading Skills Through Academic Resources*) (funded by Darlene S. Payne, MHS Class of 1953, and Hartley C. King, MHS Class of 1951)

Monessen City School District

Carla Cislak, Cathi Carpenter – *Manners Make Matters Mean More- A Way of Life*

Ringgold School District

Kathleen D. Moranelli – *Achievement Avenue-The Roadway Between Home and School*
Patricia Bellora – *24 Champions* (funded by Dominion)
Mary Jo Brady, Sue Mohney, Joy Gazi, Kay Fisher – *Faces on the Wall*
Patricia Bellora – *Knights of the Times Tables/ Pages and Squires of the Facts Table*
Mary Anne Mares, Jon Bellamy, George Hanna, Pat Murphy, Jeff Bonifate, Robyn Cheplic – *This Valley*

Steel Valley School District

Toni Besh, Tracey Miller, Erik Jabs, Carolyn Griffiths, Cindy Levick – *Our Neighborhood, Near & Abroad*
Alice Coltone – *Framing Our Environment*
David Emro, Carol Sekura – *Digital Yearbook*
JoAnn Pisula, Susan Kaufoed, Kim Gennari, Maria Heddleston, Chris Cortinovic, Holli Bobick, Tony Verbanik, Dee Lewis, Karen Kunac, James Spindler – *KDZ4KDZ (Kids for Kids)*
Judith K. Stokes, Karen Catterall, Kathleen Marzec, Jennifer Williams – *Citizenship Garden*
Alice A. Coltone, Gail Meister, Rick Owston, Steve Puello, Steven Large, E. McCorvey – *Biodiversity in Our School's Backyard*

West Jefferson Hills School District

Albert E. Jackson – *Think of the Potential*
Joan Perry – *Pleasant Hills Middle School Save-A-Life Program*

West Mifflin Area School District

Donna Vranesevic – *Bridges of the Mon Valley*
Gina Susan, Heather Vidic – *All Star Authors*
Gina L. Susan, Melissa Bracco, Mike Sable, Heather Vidic, Mundi Gouker, Lisa Newmyer, Erik Hilligsberg, Sharna Baker – *Mega Math Workout*
Kelly Gomolak-Bandik, Michele Kameg, Barb Gregory, Arlene DeMauro – *The Homeville 500*
Alisa A. Welsh, Christine O'Lare – *Discover The Night*

Yough School District

Leann Steban, Nancy Smith – *Magic Tree House Learning Center Day*
Jennifer Klobucar, Elaine Trentin, Shawn Kohlhepp – *Who Took the Pickles from the Pickle Jar?* (funded by State Farm Companies Foundation)
Jennifer Klobucar, Elaine Trentin, Doug Kasic, Shawn Kohlhepp – *A Learning Adventure to My Country's Neighbors*
Dawn Hildenbrand – *A Walk Through My Year*
Holly MacLaughlin – *Super Second Grade Scrapbooks*
Elaine Yackovich, Bob Weaver, Rose Castine, Erin Lawson – *Kinder-Castle*
Jan Merlino, Cathleen Laird – *A Treasured Moment in Time*
Bob Weaver – *Alphabet Band*
Cathleen Laird, Linda Kustru, Nancy Smith – *Libraries Galore! (Home, School, & Public)*

SPRING ROUND
GRANT DEADLINE:
FRIDAY,
FEB. 4, 2005

THE GREAT KENNYWOOD CAPER 2004



Kennywood's mascot, Kenny Kangaroo, was everyone's favorite photo op. He posed with MVEC Executive Director Linda L. Croushore (above left) and State Rep. Ted Harhai, who's a member of the Consortium's Board of Directors (lower left). Then he helped crown the "Kings of the Caper" above, attending to Leo W. Gerard, president of the United Steelworkers of America, as Ben Woods of Waste Management, and Debbie Tawney of Sky Bank looked on.

Another great Caper, another great party! The Consortium's fourth signature fundraiser at Kennywood Park on Friday, Sept. 10, 2004, drew some 1,600 people for an evening of fun and games, rides and favorite Kennywood food. Our thanks go out to all who supported The Great Kennywood Caper 2004, from major event sponsor to ticket-holders to volunteers.

The Caper happens just once every three years (the first was in 1995), thanks to Harry Henninger of Kennywood, who makes an extraordinary "gift" of the park to the Consortium for the evening. Other major gifts in 2004 came from Waste Management, United Steelworkers of America, Sky Bank and Steel City Media. Companies, individuals and organizations from across western Pennsylvania provided additional underwriting.

The photos here provide a snapshot look at the evening. For more photos, go to the Consortium's website: www.mvec.org



Without volunteers there would be no Caper. Nearly 150 friends and supporters donned their yellow T-shirts and pitched in.



Since this Caper fell on a Friday night, it was advertised as the "biggest T.G.I.F. Party in the 'Burgh" and it lived up to that billing. There was plenty of entertainment, ranging from the headline music group, Joe Grushecky and the Houserockers (above); to the Clairton Teachers' Trio (above left), who provided music for the VIP Reception; to veteran camp entertainer Frankie Capri, shown at middle left with a fan. Caricaturists worked throughout the park (lower left), providing Caper-goers with a personal memento of the evening, and the games (below) drew some determined competitors.



Consortium staff members ready the Silent Auction booth.



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