

TRAILBlazer

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Adult Continuing Education classes

Below is a list of Adult Continuing Education classes that will be offered in the spring:

- Pre-Licensing Class
- Greening Your Kitchen
- ZUMBA
- Stretch Your Food Dollar
- Making Ends Meet
- Heart Smarts
- Defensive Driving Course
- Control Credit, Manage Debt
- Save Energy, Save Dollars

For more information about these classes, contact Noreen Shunney at 972-1293 or visit www.bkwschools.org.



Congratulations to Rich Holoday for being named Class D JV Wrestling Coach of the Year.

DECREASE IN STATE AID MEANS DIFFICULT DECISIONS AHEAD

Facing a proposed revenue loss of \$558,755, Berne-Knox-Westerlo Central School District leaders are striving to find a balance between raising taxes and cutting school programs.

As they do every year, district leaders began the process of developing the 2011-12 school budget with a rollover budget that maintains all programs, services and personnel and takes into consideration any contractual increases. BKW's rollover budget, which would also restore many of the line items that had to be removed from this year's contingency budget, would require a 7.94 percent, \$1,560,001 spending increase.

However, under Governor Andrew Cuomo's proposed state budget, BKW stands to lose 11.4 percent of its non-local revenue for the 2011-12 school year. The cut in state aid combined with the rollover budget's increase in spending means BKW would have to raise the local school tax levy 10.07 percent in order to maintain all programs and services.

"The 10 percent tax levy increase we're facing is a direct result of the proposed cuts in state aid to our school," BKW Business Official Kevin Callagy said. "If our state aid were to remain the same this year to next, the tax levy increase for our rollover budget would have been 4.15 percent."

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BKW FACES A 15.98% DECREASE IN STATE AID

The Berne-Knox-Westerlo Central School District is facing a loss of \$1,252,347, a 15.98 percent decrease, in state aid under Governor Andrew Cuomo's proposed state budget.

When the governor's proposed state budget was released Feb. 1, the first impression among many residents might have been that Berne-Knox-Westerlo was facing a minor decrease in state aid: \$143,586, or 1.7 percent. But a closer look at the numbers reveals a different story.

In 2011-12, BKW will start repaying the bond for its \$12.7 million capital project. Originally approved by voters in

December 2007, the capital project includes upgrades to classroom spaces, expansions of the gymnasium and library, and the creation of a new fully accessible cafeteria, among other improvements to the educational environment that also comply with accessibility laws.

As promised in 2007, the state is reimbursing BKW for 79 percent of the cost of the capital project. Now that the bond will enter repayment in 2011-2012, BKW's state building aid will jump from \$519,837 for the 2010-11 school year to a proposed \$1,628,598 in 2011-12 — an increase of more than 200 percent. This

increase in building aid is reflected in the total 1.7 percent decrease in state aid to BKW.

"The building aid offsets our capital project debt payments," BKW Business Official Kevin Callagy said. "For every dollar we spend to repay our bond, the state gives us 79 cents. But that building aid money is already spoken for; we have to use it to pay back our bond. So, if you want a true idea of how the governor's proposed state budget would affect BKW, you really need to look at the numbers without building aid factored in."

Once the building aid is removed

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Visit our Web site: www.bkwschools.org

STUDENTS 'DIVE' INTO READING WITH PARP

BKW students in grades K-5 will "Dive into a Good Book" in March as part of Parents as Reading Partners (PARP).

Funded by the PTA, PARP encourages family members to take 15 minutes, four days a week, for three weeks in March to read to their child from a book of their choice. The purpose is to cement the bond between home and school.

"The goal is to increase the time spent by parents and children reading together and to encourage a love of reading in children," Kindergarten

teacher and PARP chairwoman Tamara Fisher said.

This year, the program takes place March 7-25. The event was kicked off with a skit performed by teachers during the March 2 Bulldog Early Show. As part of the event, teachers will decorate classroom bulletin boards to match the "Dive in" theme, storyteller Nancy Payne will visit the school, and students will be encouraged to bring in beach towels to lie on while reading during "Beach Day."

"The program is about investing parents, making them part of the process," second grade teacher Patricia Miller said.

Students must return a form signed by their parent or guardian stating they have completed the required reading. The PTA will donate a book to each child who completes the program, as well as a book to each classroom involved.

"That's their reward for participating," Fisher said. "The students really love it."

COMMUNITY QUILTERS REWARD STUDENTS FOR READING EFFORTS

Community quilters are adding an extra incentive to entice BKW Elementary School students to participate in the Parents As Reading Partners program (PARP).

Local quilters are donating their time and talent to provide lap quilts to be offered as lottery prizes. Each student who completes the program will be entered into the drawing for his or her grade. Winners will be announced during the April Bulldog Morning Show.

"Anything that gets children to read is a good thing," quilter and former BKW teaching assistant Peg Hoagland said. Hoagland has been making quilts for the program for four years. "There is nothing like a little prize to get kids to do anything."

Though BKW has participated in PARP for more than 20 years, the quilt lottery began about five years ago, when the theme was "Snuggle Up with a Good Book."

Elementary School Nurse Colleen DeMuth, who had been quilting for years, decided to make a lap quilt as a prize for the program. The name of every student who completed the program was placed into a hopper. The winner was drawn at random.

DeMuth decided to make the quilts a permanent part of the program. Word spread through the quilting community, and faculty and residents joined in.

"Colleen DeMuth explained the program to



The winners of the 2010 PARP quilt lottery were, from left, Kaylee Duncan (quilt made by Peg Hoagland), Grace Tymchyn (quilt made by Ruth Norray), Trevor Burnside (quilt made by Colleen DeMuth), Luke Valachovic (quilt made by Ruth Norray), Paige Daguillo (quilt made by Peg Hoagland), Trevor Dibble (quilt made by Amy Carlson), and Olivia Seymour, (quilt made by Ruth Norray).

me, and I really wanted to help out," quilter Ruth Norray said. This is her second year contributing to the program. She donated four quilts last year and six this year. "It's a wonderful project and I am very happy to be involved."

Last year, a quilt was given away for each grade. This year, they are hoping to have enough for two quilts per grade. The donated quilts will be on display this month in the elementary school.

This is not the first time the community and school joined forces in quilting

for a cause. After Hurricane Katrina devastated the Gulf of Mexico, students decorated quilt squares that community members then pieced together. The finished quilts were sent to a school in Mississippi.

"Activities like these bring the community together in a multi-generational way," second-grade teacher Patricia Miller said. "The community is fully involved and has been for years."

If you are a quilter and would like to participate in this program, please contact Colleen DeMuth at cdemuth@bkwcsd.k12.ny.us.



TEACHING BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

ROBERT BENTLEY JR. STRIVES TO EDUCATE CHILDREN IN ALL AREAS OF LIFE

Social studies department chair Robert Bentley Jr. has a love of history, which anyone who has entered his classroom can clearly see: From the memorabilia to figurines, bits of history line the walls of his room.

"History has always been a passion. History and culture and passing them on to future generations are necessities that I am afraid are getting lost," he said. "When I am talking about history, the students know it means something to me. We are guardians of our culture, and it is our job to pass it on."

During his 22 years at BKW, Bentley has taken on a myriad of roles from teacher and department head to coach and advisor, and even as cast member in the school musical.

"When people think about teaching, people just think about the classroom," he said. "It goes way beyond that."

As department head, Bentley has worked to integrate more technology into the classroom. Each social studies classroom now has a projector for showing PowerPoint presentations. Academically, he made sure the core curriculum was mapped. He is also looking at more interdisciplinary opportunities with other departments.

"Rob and I work closely together because our two classes (American Literature and AP American History) have overlapping curriculum. It's nice to work with someone who is so knowledgeable about his own subject but has such an appreciation for literature as well," English department chair Audra Rys said. "Every year, I'm in amazement at how much Rob knows about history. I like having him across the hall from me because I learn something new every day when he's teaching his classes. I purposely leave my door open so I can hear his lectures."

For Bentley, teaching opportunities arise outside the classroom as well. He stepped into an advisory role last year for two student organizations: Key Club and Student Senate. Since taking over as advisor for Key Club, membership increased from six to 44 students.



Teacher, advisor and former coach Robert Bentley Jr. brings history to life at BKW.

"I make the distinction between teacher and educator very infrequently. Mr. Bentley is truly an educator," Secondary School Principal Tom McGurl said. "In the classroom and out, he challenges, encourages and promotes our students at every opportunity. In looking for a Key Club advisor, Mr. Bentley was an obvious first choice. His personal passion for service and community spills over at every meeting. I know the students respect Mr. Bentley and appreciate his efforts. I certainly do as well."

Under Bentley's direction, Key Club members have collected \$500 for the Muscular Dystrophy Association, \$400 for UNICEF and \$200 plus 200 toys and 100 pounds of food for the Hilltown Holiday Drive. Currently, the students are coordinating with elementary teachers Molly Tiffany and Stefanie Scram to volunteer with the "Read Across America" program and are also volunteering to tutor elementary students after school.

"It's all about giving back to the community and building leadership and a network of students willing to give back," Bentley said.

When asked last year to oversee the Student Senate, Bentley was eager to accept.

"I always thought of student government as an integral part of high school. The Senate works on leadership to make school a better environment."

Members recently built shelves for the restrooms and are currently working to get a bronze statue of the school mascot for the gym. They also handle much of the secondary school's bottle recycling.

"I can't be more proud of them. They really work hard," he said.

Bentley also used to coach the girls JV basketball, modified track, girls softball and girls JV volleyball teams and said that, down the road, he might return to coaching.

As far as lessons in the classroom, Bentley goes beyond books. He likes to have a little fun with students while putting his collection of more than 300 ties to good use.

"I like to start out a new school year by wearing a different tie every day from September until winter break, except one I wear twice. Then, I have the students try to guess which one," he said. "It's fun to see how observant they are. I always get one or two that get it right."



DR. PAUL DORWARD
Superintendent of Schools

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According to Callagy, for every \$104,000 cut from the rollover budget, the corresponding tax levy would decrease 1 percent. Therefore, a proposed school budget with a 5 percent tax levy increase would require \$525,742 in program cuts; a 4 percent tax levy increase would require \$629,450 in cuts.

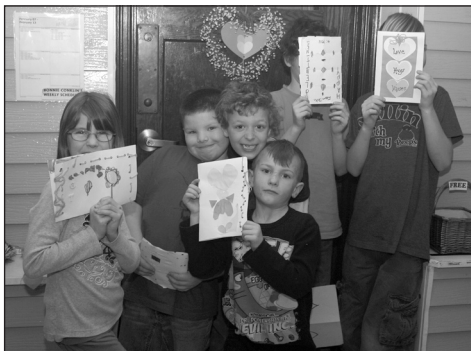
"We recognize that we can't propose a 10 percent tax levy increase—that would be irresponsible to our taxpayers," Superintendent Dr. Paul Dorward said. "However, in order to get to a tax levy increase between 4 and 5 percent, we have to take a hard look at everything contained in the 2010-11 school budget and identify areas for potential savings that will have the least negative impact on students."

To help make those decisions, district leaders will seek feedback from the community during two forums that will be held in March. During the forums, residents will have a chance to share their opinions on possible program cuts and their feelings about local tax levy options.

"The forums will help us identify the community's priorities and give us an idea of what residents will support," Callagy said.

"Right now, we're facing a tough choice between having a higher tax levy or cutting hundreds of thousands of dollars in programs," Dorward said. "We have to decide what we can do in terms of minimizing a tax levy increase without significantly impacting programs."

Students in the BKW Connections after-school program show off the Valentine's Day cards they made to distribute at the Hilltowns Senior Citizen Center.



Students of the Bulldog Barker went multimedia this semester. In addition to the paper edition, The Bulldog Barker can now be found online at www.bkwschools.com and at its own YouTube channel.

Aid, continued from Page 1

from the equation, the numbers are quite different. The change in total state aid with building aid removed from the equation works out to a proposed decrease of \$1,252,347, or 15.98 percent.

School officials are currently working on ways to offset some of that loss. For example, the district received \$384,463 in Federal Education Jobs Act money that it did not spend during the 2010-11 school year. However, this money must be spent by September 2012.

"The districts had a choice to use the Ed Jobs money during the current 2010-11 school year or to use it next year. We chose to use it next year," Callagy said. "That money isn't factored in to the proposed state aid, but it will definitely help the district."

Even with the addition of the federal money, BKW is still short \$558,755 for the 2011-12 school year. The district will have to make up the difference by either cutting programs and services or increasing the local tax levy. District leaders will seek input from residents before making any final decisions about BKW's budget proposal for the 2011-12 school year.

