



Group Develops Strategic Direction for District 95

On April 10 and 11, business, community and education representatives came together to renew the District 95 Strategic Plan; a plan originally developed back in 2000.

The decision to renew the strategic plan came after a year of the Strategic Planning Steering Committee (SPSC) fully reviewing the district's current strategic plan. The district's mission, as well as each core value, strategy, delimiter, action plan and its progress was fully reviewed and discussed by the team over the past year. While not all parts of the original plan were completely implemented, the original strategic plan did help the school district achieve success in a large number of areas. With new laws such as the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act and changes in educational requirements, technology and student learning, the SPSC felt strongly that it was time to map out a new five-year plan.



Facilitated by **Dr. Steve Barone**, an expert in strategic planning, the group met for more than 20 hours over the two days at the district's Annex building (formerly Middle School North) to discuss, debate and arrive at consensus on the district's strategic objectives, strategies, and delimiters. The new strate-

gies of the plan will first be shared with staff during special site visits before being shared throughout the community. Team members will also be sought from throughout the school district and the community to help develop the strategies' action plans that will be needed to successfully implement the new strategies.

The members of the Strategic Planning Steering Team involved in the 20-plus hours needed to develop the new strategic plan include: **Sharon Anderson, Jean Bush, Bill Caceres, Sandie Edwards, Michael Egan, Chris Finch, Bonnie Henry, Joel Honegger, Jim Jennings, Brian Knutson, Karen Logan, Stacy Lores, Kathy Perkins, Pat Priniski, Jan Putbress, Bev Smith, Sandy Smith, Phil Stanko, Margi Steiner, Crystal Steker and Sandy Stephen.**

Right: The strategic plan is designed to help students, such as those in this photo, attain both their personal and educational goals.

Steker Named as 'Outstanding Communicator' in U.S.



Crystal Steker

Crystal Steker, Director of Information Technology for Community Unit School District 95, was named one of America's 2006 "Outstanding Communicators" by the National School Public Relations Association. She was one of only 15 people from across the nation selected for the prestigious award, and she was the only award winner from Illinois. The awards recognize those individuals who play a critical role in advancing understanding and support for schools, education and an informed society.

Steker was surprised to learn she had received the honor, and, characteristically, promoted the team concept of successful communication.

"I'm not sure that an award for communication should ever go to one individual," said Steker, "and I can certainly say in this particular

case that this award is truly a reflection of the people with whom I work - District 95 administrators, teachers, support staff, and, most importantly, the other members of the technology team. Technology plays an important role in a world where information is increasingly networked and digital. I am proud to be a part of a team and a district that recognizes the importance of providing technology resources for learning and communication."

Nominated by Superintendent **Dr. Brian Knutson** and **Jim Jennings**, Director of Communications, the NSPRA Outstanding Communicator Awards recognizes those who use their exceptional communication skills in support of students and their education.

"When we told her that we were nominating her for this award, her reaction was typical Crystal," said Dr. Knutson. "She denied that she alone is special and that her team should receive the honor instead. Crystal does lead a team of exemplary workers that she has selected,

Cont. on Pg. 2--See Steker

Right: MSN students check out a WWII era motorcycle with sidecar.

Steker Cont.

but it's her talent, leadership and communication abilities that make her so exceptional and worthy of this award."

When Steker took over the position of Director of Technology, the school district was severely lacking in the area of technology. She accurately assessed the situation and created a technology plan with the input of district staff, parents, and community members. The technology plan was accepted and acknowledged as exceptional in all areas by peer review. Once the technology had been purchased and installed, Steker and her team organized training sessions on the latest hardware and software for staff, parents, and community members. These sessions not only allow the district's stakeholders to utilize the technology available within the district, it also encouraged teachers to work on their technological expertise outside of the classroom.

To help promote the use of technology in learning, Steker recently establish a monthly "Website of the Month" award which celebrates the creativity of teachers in utilizing their websites as communication tools with their parents and students.

The website awards and the technical offerings are just two examples of how Crystal motivates the community. She and her staff also automated the process of parent/teacher conference scheduling district-wide, which eased the burdensome sign-up process for both parents and staff. She is also a member of the district's budget and facilities committees, as well as the high school's Career Advisory Council, where she is co-chair of the Publicity committee,

Steker is currently managing the large-scale implementation of the district's new web-based student management system, a Herculean task that, when completed, will allow district staff and, at a later time, parents to better access needed student data records such as grades, attendance, discipline, etc.

Steker leads just as diligently in areas outside of technology. In 2000, at the request of the then superintendent, Steker led the effort to establish a strategic plan for the district. Along with an outside facilitator, she coordinated the SPSC and five action plan teams, which were made up of a cross-section of community volunteers. On April 10 and 11, she also co-facilitated the renewal of the strategic plan; a process that involved bringing a cross-section of the community together for more than 20 hours of work to produce a strategic plan that will take the district through the year 2011, once it has been approved by the Board of Education.

"Crystal is an outstanding communicator in so many ways," said Jennings. She is a true inspiration for quality communication within District 95, and that is why we were proud to nominate her for the NSPRA Outstanding Communicator Award. There is certainly no one more deserving."

Living History at MSN



On April 7, the eighth grade students at Middle School North welcomed **Andrew Lisowski** and his WWII recreation friends to their school. Lisowski and his friends arrived in a WWII era Jeep, as well as a WWII motorcycle and sidecar. They came dressed as German, American, British, and Polish soldiers, and brought authentic guns and supplies from WWII.

On weekends, Lisowski and his unit travel around the Midwest helping recreate battle scenes from WWII. Lisowski is the father of MSN student **Alex Lisowski**.

One More Chance to HELP



The H.E.L.P. (Hancock County – Ela Township Long term Partnership) organization is conducting a relief drive for Hancock County, Mississippi during the month of April. Cleaning supplies are the focus for this drive. Laundry detergent, disinfectant wipes, bleach, brooms, mops, rakes, work gloves, soap, and sponges are some of the items needed. Volunteers are also needed to sort and pack the supplies collected on April 23 and 30. Visit the H.E.L.P. website at www.lz95.org/elahelp for donation drop-off sites or for more information on how to volunteer.

Show Your School Spirit!

Did you spend Spring Break in Hawaii, Mexico, the Bahamas, or maybe right here at home? If so, we want your Spring Break and other vacation photos, IF you and/or your children were wearing their school's spirit wear (only school spirit wear from Dist. 95 schools will count).

Please send your photo (less than 1.5 meg in total file size) to jim.jennings@lz95.org. Please identify the location and the people in the photo, as well as the school. We'll display a virtual **D-95 Spirit Wall** web page on the district web site, as well as publish some of the photos in future editions of **THRIVE in 95**. Show your school spirit here, there, and everywhere!

Please note that by sending us your photo, you are giving us permission to use your image and name on our district website (www.lz95.org) and in publications.



Fun & Flashy Science Challenges Student Minds



The Physics Van, an outreach program of the University of Illinois Physics Department that is run by the students of the department, recently made a stop at May Whitney Elementary School. At the school, the college students performed crowd pleasing science experiments for the students as they explained the science behind the experiments. One of the presenters was **Alex Howe**, son of MW staffer **Elaine Howe**.



Fourth graders at May Whitney School held a fabulous Magnetism & Electricity show on April 5. The students displayed their knowledge of concepts learned by making a variety of projects. The school annually has an open house for parents and other students to demonstrate the students' electrifying talents.

Far Left: A U of I physics student conducts an experiment for students at May Whitney School.

Left: MW fourth grade students show off their electricity projects.

Have You Registered for Summer School Yet?

There is a host of exciting enrichment courses being offered this summer. Check out the Summer School brochure, available at the District 95 website, and sign up before it's too late.

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|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Fun with Photos & Scrap booking (K-2) | Games Galore (1-2) |
| Painting for the Fun of It | Artsy Readers (K-2) |
| Build-a-Book (1-4) | For an Actor's an Actor (2-3) |
| Cooking and Computers (2-5) | The Great Clay Adventure (2-4) |
| Digital Photography (3-4) | Fabulous Fibers (3-5) |
| Math Art (3-5) | Books By Kids (3-6) |
| Dramatic Drawing (3-5) | Math Mania (3-8) |
| Acting out Wonderfully | Strategy Games (4-8) |
| Warped Fairy Tales (4-6) | Microwave Munchies (4-8) |
| Middle School Success (5) | Digital Photography (5-8) |
| Movies and Morals (5-8) | Fun Foods (5-8) |
| Craft a Critter (5-8) | |

*** Just Added Enrichment Classes ***

Bubbleology – Grades 1-4

Come and join the fun while investigating the world of bubbles through hands-on scientific experiments.

Jeopardy for \$500 – Grades 3-7

Learn to use PowerPoint to create games and other fun projects.

To register, call **Gail Drake** at (847) 514-3400.

Do You Like to Know Stuff?

Do you like to know things before others in the community? Do others seek your opinion? If so, then you are a perfect candidate for the Community Unit School District 95 **Key Communicator Network**.

Our Key Communicator (KeyCom) program is a network of community residents, leaders, opinion shapers and watchdogs whose opinions are well respected by friends, colleagues and neighbors. We are not looking for cheerleaders, but people who care about our schools and want to be kept informed and are then willing to share that information with others.

As a Key Com, you will receive timely, factual information via a regular newsletter e-mailed to you about the work we're doing and the issues affecting your school district and your schools.



Because this is designed to be a two-way communications network, we encourage you to give us your input and share your opinions. As a KeyCom member, your responsibility will be to share the information with friends, neighbors and colleagues.

To become a KeyCom member, simply call, email or fax:

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