

Gina Ziegler, editor
phone: 240-5746
e-mail: ginaz@monroenews.com

CLASSROOM BRIEFS

St. Patrick students earn essay honors

CARLETON — Nathaniel Theobald, Kasey Durkin and Cara Laginess earned top honors at St. Patrick Catholic School in the 38th annual America & Me Essay Contest sponsored by Farm Bureau Insurance.

Nathaniel's essay will advance to state competition. Winners will be announced in April.

The theme of this year's contest was "My Personal Hero."

Monroe Schools fetes minority involvement

The Monroe Public Schools Diversity Committee invites parents and community members to participate in National African American Parental Involvement Day (NAAPID) on Monday.

Parents and other interested individuals are encouraged to visit schools and classrooms.

Visitors must sign in at the main office upon entering any of the district buildings.

School receives \$100 for poster contest

CARLETON — St. Patrick Catholic School has received \$100 from the Monroe Conservation District for submitting the winning poster in a contest with the theme "Birds of Prey — Where They Live."

Second-graders in the school drew tall trees on the poster with little owls peeking out of holes in the trees. Another scene shows a bald eagle with a bird in its beak. The poster says "Conservation is everyone's job."

Ann Werstein, instructor for the second grade, accepted the check recently at the district's annual meeting in Ida.

Although all elementary schools were invited, St. Patrick Catholic School was the only one to submit an entry, said Catherine Acerboni, administrative assistant for the district.

Monroe County Commissioner Floreine Mentel pledged to work with the district to get the contest information out better to the schools next year, Ms. Acerboni said.

Flat Rock band to play at Walt Disney World

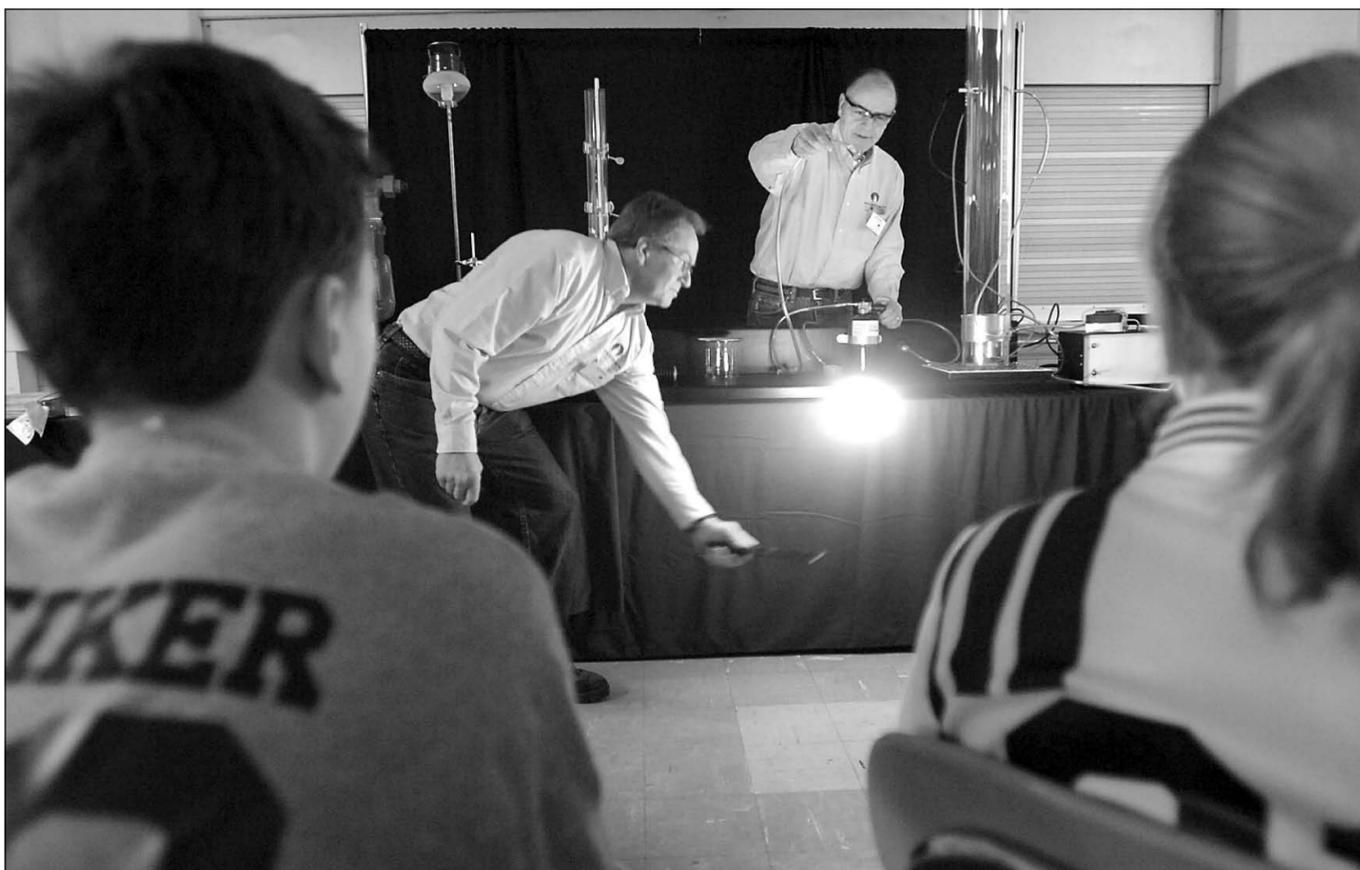
FLAT ROCK — About 50 students will travel with the Flat Rock High School marching band to perform at Walt Disney World in Orlando, Fla., later this month.

The band will depart in two buses Feb. 15 and arrive the next day, according to Susan Romero, vice president of the Band Boosters. Among the 14 adults scheduled to attend are Jim Engelbert, band director, and Beth Keenan, president of the Boosters.

The group will visit Blizard Beach, a water park, and downtown Orlando on the first day. The band and color guard will perform in the afternoon parade at the Magic Kingdom on Feb. 17. The group will visit Animal Kingdom and Epcot Center on Feb. 18 and MGM Studios on Feb. 19 before returning home and arriving in Flat Rock on Feb. 20.

Each member of the band paid \$575 to go on the trip, with various fundraisers — including a pizza sale — held to defray the cost.

The band's next public concert locally will be held March 29 in the high school auditorium.



— Evening News photos by KIM BRENT

Michigan Gas Utilities workers Joe Braden (above left) and Bill Parrish heat up their educational presentation on natural gas with various demonstrations recently at St. John Catholic School of Monroe. Seventh-graders (below, from left) Tyler Steffes, Connor Schmidt and Zacary Cherney, all 13, react as the representatives set off a small, controlled gas explosion.

Safety program ignites students'

natural curiosity



Michigan Gas Utilities representatives are going on the road educating middle schoolers about natural gas' properties and dangers.

BY GINA ZIEGLER
ginaz@monroenews.com

Combining science with safety awareness, Michigan Gas Utilities kicked off a new program last week aimed at helping middle school students understand how to use energy safely.

Seventh-graders from St. John Catholic School hosted Bill Parrish, safety and security manager for MGU, and serviceman Joe Braden in a demonstration and discussion of how energy impacts individuals and the community.

"This program is part of an outreach that we hope will cover many schools throughout southern lower Michigan. We want

our consumers to be well informed, and we think connecting with students in this age group is a good way to begin," said Mr. Parrish.

The two MGU representatives set up a variety of laboratory experiments designed to demonstrate the properties of natural gas and challenge students to make predictions and verbalize their conclusions based on their observations.

The fact that several of the experiments involved controlled explosions was a bonus in terms of entertaining the seventh-grade class of Melissa McCracken.

The presentation focused on different sources of fossil fuels and their properties. The advantages of natural gas were pointed out, and experiments were used to demonstrate how natural gas burns.

"When something goes wrong during the combustion of natural gas, like not enough oxygen, a dangerous gas called carbon

monoxide is produced. It lingers in the air, and it can be a very real danger," said Mr. Braden.

Carbon monoxide is called the "senseless killer," explained Mr. Parrish.

"It enters your body as you breathe, attaches to red blood cells and stays in the body. It can kill a person in a few hours," he said.

The MGU team outlined the symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning (see below) and stressed the importance of having detectors in every home, much the same way that smoke detectors are used.

"These are effective and inexpensive and they save lives," said Mr. Parrish.

Students were challenged to think about safety in the many aspects of their lives and take on new roles as people who consider safety in different situations.

"Be the person who is alert to improve safety in your world," Mr. Parrish encouraged the students.

Michigan Gas Utilities provides free 45-minute demonstrations to middle school classes within its service area, which extends across southern lower Michigan. For further information, people can call Bill Parrish at 457-6127.



Students watch the burning levels of different gases.

CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING SYMPTOMS

Carbon monoxide interferes with the body's ability to use oxygen, much like someone who is suffocating. Young children, pregnant women and senior citizens are the most susceptible to the poison gas.

The milder symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning include slight headache, vomiting, disorientation and dizziness. The severe symptoms include confusion, drowsiness, throbbing headache and convulsions.

Any fossil fuel-burning appliance can be a source of carbon monoxide if the equipment is not properly vented or maintained, including furnaces, water heaters, clothes dryers and gas stoves. Residents are urged to keep appliances in good working order, make recommended furnace filter changes and install carbon monoxide detectors in locations where they can be heard if gas levels become abnormal.

SCHOOL CALENDAR / To submit an item, send an e-mail to doug@monroenews.com

Friday, February 9

Dance the night away: SMCC King's Court dance, 9-11 p.m.
B-E-E: St. Joseph Catholic Church of Erie spelling bee, 9:30 a.m.

Saturday, February 10

Daddy's little girl: St. Anthony Daddy-Daughter Dance, 7-9:30 p.m.
Concert: Monroe High School jazz band at University of Michigan festival.

Sunday, February 11

Meeting: St. Michael's Athletics Club, 7:15 p.m.

Monday, February 12

Meeting: Airport High School Athletic Boosters, 6 p.m., cafe.
Meeting: Custer Elementary School PTO meeting, 6 p.m.

Tuesday, February 13

Jump, jump!: St. Joseph Catholic School's Jump Rope for Heart, gym.
Meeting: Sterling Elementary School PTO, 6:30 p.m.

Wednesday, February 14

Everybody counts: Monroe Public Schools student count day.
Say cheese!: Niedermeier Elementary School picture day.

Thursday, February 15

Speech: Airport's State of the Schools breakfast, Carleton Branch Library, 10:30 a.m.
Home early: Half-day for St. Joseph Catholic School students; VIP Day.