

**CALENDAR**

**Wednesday, January 11:** AKtion Club, MPS Administration Center, 5:30 (**Martha Briggs**)

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**Martha Briggs:** Pick up your new tee-shirt! AKtion Club meets next Wednesday at 5:30 at the MPS Administration Center.

**Al Forster:** Pay your dues! Your invoice includes the Christmas Dinner for you (and your guest) and your tee-shirt.

**Dick Jellum:** While down from last year, Nut & Candy sales were ~at \$8000. See Aaron Oberlin about any funds you owe.

**Bill Krueger:** Turn in your Nut and Candy monies to Bill by next week or face the wrath of Gordon Rogers!

**Diane Stevens:** January pre-school readers will be distributing books purchased by Junior Youth. The first pre-schoolers to receive books through this project back in 2004 are now 17 years old! A solid legacy of service to children.

**Fred Honerkamp:** If you did not participate in this year's Nut and Candy Sale, there's still time to make a donation! In other news, we received a thank-you note from the ARC for attending and sponsoring a table at and their first luncheon fun-raiser.

**GUESTS:** Fred welcomed Kristy Godley, an active member of Northwood Circle K.

**PROGRAM: West Midland Family Center**

Junior Youth co-chair Susan Love introduced Melina Garcia and Alura Nash of the West Midland Family Center. Both are lead pre-school teachers, Melina at the WMFC site and Alura at the St. Louis site. Melina is also MWFC's Volunteer Coordinator. WMFC serves Midland, Isabella and Gratiot Counties with nine pre-school classes: four at WMFC, two at the Shephard site, and one each at Bullock Creek Elementary, Floyd Elementary, and the St. Louis site.

Melina and Alura focused their presentation on the Gary Kerestes Bridge, which Kiwassee financed and constructed last year. After Gary passed away, the club dedicated the bridge to him to honor his commitment to the project, and Melina explained that the teachers talk to their students about Gary when they use the bridge. She and Alura thanked the club for this important addition to the Center, explaining that it provides children safe and easy access to both the creek that runs behind the building as well as the playing fields on the other side of the creek. The bridge has seen heavy use since its dedication, along with several improvements, as shown in a series of photographs Melina showed:

- students in the Dow COP Program clearing space along the banks of the creek in preparation for construction
- Kiwassee members working on the bridge, a process that took about three weeks to complete
- Dedication Day last Memorial Day Weekend, including the plaque with Gary's name on it
- Summer Program participants on and around the bridge: the kids love to catch frogs and aren't afraid to get dirty! One skittish boy overcame his reluctance to touch a frog with his bare hands—a major accomplishment for him. Another photo featured two girls with mud up to their thighs they held the frogs they captured.
- an Eagle Scout's project: hand rails along one set of steps, a paver platform at the top of the bridge that allows persons in wheel chairs to get closer to the creek, and a path along the creek
- pre-school students using the new hand rails, an important developmental task they learn and practice
- children in WMFC's child-care program standing on the snow-covered bridge on a recent winter day

WMFC has purchased "frog suits" to help keep the kids (relatively) dry as they play in & around the creek this spring. Melina said there's always a need for volunteers in many capacities in addition to reading and playing with the children:

- classroom assistance (a consistent commitment requires clearance)
- Senior Center activities
- sorting and cleaning in the clothing room
- organizing the food and diaper banks
- serving at the Date Night, which Penny Ecarius explained is a night out for parents, with child-care provided while they enjoy a sit-down dinner that includes all the amenities of a restaurant meal.

**NEW HOPE VILLAGE UPDATE:** John Congleton said the extensive paperwork for a low-interest USDA loan at the state level, awaiting imminent approval (the Hillside renovation project qualifies for this "rural development" loan).

NHV has acquired a higher profile, thanks to a recent article and editorial in the Midland Daily News and a news spot on the local FOX News station featuring a building tour and interview with John. Seventeen groups have each claimed a room to decorate and furnish the 360 square-foot space with needed items (see the Kiwassee website for details). Duane Brooks's woodworking club will construct Murphy beds for each of the total 22 rooms. The Kiwassee Resource Room is in the design phase, with Penny Ecarius serving as our club's representative. Exciting progress!