

Great turnout for Our Lady of Guadalupe Festival

By John Carpenter
Gazette Staff

Despite sub-zero wind chills and the area's first measurable snowfall, over five hundred area residents came together last Sunday morning to celebrate the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

The celebration began in both the downtown area where residents gathered to enjoy refreshments at Take 2 Scene 2 and La Hacienda, and hear mariachi music. At 9:00 a.m. everyone gathered at St. Joseph's Church where they marched in procession, while reciting the Rosary, to the High School. A bi-lingual Mass was celebrated at 9:30 a.m. in the gymnasium. After Mass entertainment was provided by a local dance group and by the school's Beat for Peace group. A delicious dinner followed in the Student Center.

Our Lady of Guadalupe is recognized by the Catholic Church as the patron saint of all the Americas. The Legend of Our Lady of Guadalupe tells how, during a walk from his home village to Mexico City early on the morning of December 9, 1531, (the Feast of the Immaculate Conception in the Spanish Empire), the peasant Juan Diego saw a vision of a young girl of fifteen or sixteen, surrounded by light, on the slopes of the Hill of Tepeyac. Speaking in the local language, Nahuatl, the Lady asked for a church to be built at that site in her honor, and from her words Juan Diego recognized her as the Virgin Mary. Diego told his story to the Spanish bishop, Fray Juan de Zumárraga, who instructed him to return and ask the Lady for a miracu-



Our Lady of Guadalupe as portrayed during the procession

lous sign to prove her claim. The Virgin told Juan Diego to gather some flowers from the top of Tepeyac Hill. It was winter and no flowers bloomed, but on the hilltop Diego found flowers of every sort, and the Virgin herself arranged them in his tilma, or peasant cloak. When Juan Diego opened the cloak before Zumárraga on December 12, the flowers fell to the floor, and in their place was the Virgin of Guadalupe, miraculously imprinted on the fabric. The image remains today in its origi-

nal state on the cloak.

This was a very spiritual and impressive community event, and was organized and performed primarily by local residents. It was an example of local individuals with a common belief and goal coming together, despite difficult weather, to enjoy the company of others while celebrating a very important cultural event. One young parade participant best summed up the dedication and excitement of the day when he was asked if it was cold. His response to this re-

porter was, "I really haven't noticed, and I'm just excited to be in the parade."

A special congratulations goes to everyone involved in the organization, and a big thank you is extended to Epifania Murrillo who was the event's primary organizer. The Committee would like to sincerely thank the Columbus Schools and the City of Columbus Junction for their help in the day's organization.

(More photos of the celebration appear on page 6.)

School District remains financially strong

By Jim Rudisill

Despite losing 51 students this year, the Columbus School District's financial health is still strong and should have more than enough financial support to tackle a large wish list of capital improvements and other long-range projects.

Superintendent Rich Bridenstine presented that assessment during a special meeting and budget workshop held December 13. While the loss in students might cause a problem for the district's general fund, its two major infrastructure funds will have more than enough money in them to complete the more than 50 major projects.

Dan Vogeler, building and grounds director, and Todd Heck, technology director, outlined their department's needs, identifying nearly \$700,000 in improvements they said should be completed this school year. The list is in addition to nearly \$300,000 in projects already completed in the 2010-11 school year.

Bridenstine told the board the projects needed to be completed. "My recommendation is we do everything," he said. Board member Dan Peters said he agreed. "Nothing is extravagant; and a lot of this ... we have to keep up with. I think we need to do it all," he said.

Other board members echoed that sentiment. A decision on whether to pursue the full list or only certain projects will be made when the board holds its regular monthly meeting on December 20. If the board accepts Bridenstine's recommendation, funding for the projects would come from the school district's Physical Plant and Equipment Levy (PPEL) and its Secure an Advanced Vision for Education (SAVE) fund.

The PPEL fund started the year with a \$13,492 balance and is expected to receive \$229,027 in property tax revenue this year. The SAVE fund, which is supported by a statewide penny sales tax, had \$182,947 beginning balance and will pick up another \$697,220 during the year.

Even if the district completes all

the projects on the list, the PPEL fund would still have a \$38,257 ending balance, while the SAVE fund ending balance would be \$95,567. Bridenstine said he would be comfortable with those balances.

Some of the projects on the list included payments on bonds and other loans taken out to finance the district's geothermal project or other previous work, but the majority of projects targeted continuing or new needs. Two of the larger expenditures included an estimated \$85,000 bus from the PPEL fund and \$80,000 worth of tuckpointing needs at Roundy Elementary. Other major proposals included an electronic timeclock (\$12,600), new storage addition to the bus barn (\$52,500), new south bleachers and press box at the football field (\$40,000), new football field lights (\$50,000) and keyless entry system upgrades at the high school and fitness center (\$24,000).

Additional proposals included demolishing the old sale barn (\$8,000), removing several trees from in front of the schoolhouse and swimming pool areas (\$2,000), adding new wrestling mats to the wrestling room (\$17,000), installing new computers in the IT lab in the vo-ag building (\$30,000), replacing technology servers (\$10,200).

Bridenstine warned the board if the keyless system was installed at the fitness center to expect some complaints. "We need to take security of that room and it will mean no public access," he said, explaining the school's insurance company was demanding stronger control.

Vogeler explained a recent incident where a student used the center without any supervision pointed to the problems that could occur. The student accidentally got locked out of the building and regained access by breaking a window.

While the outlook for the district's infrastructure funds looks strong, Bridenstine said a loss of 51 students this year could impact the school's general fund next year. He said state aid is based on student enrollment, with this year's regular program cost per pupil set at \$5883.

That figure might remain stagnant or only climb about 1% next year, meaning the program cost per student might only go up about \$58. However, because of the loss in students, that could still mean a \$300,000 loss in state aid next year, since that funding trails student enrollment counts by one year.

Bridenstine however said despite that possibility, the district's overall financial picture was strong. He said the district entered the 2010-11 school year with a \$601,107 general fund balance and should end the year

with a \$736,000 balance. "That's good news," he told the board.

Other district funds also appear strong. Bridenstine said the school's nutrition fund was carrying a solid balance, but despite that, he suggested a small increase in adult lunch prices might be needed. According to a fund report, the current price of an adult lunch is \$2.10. The cost to prepare that meal is \$2.31. Officials said the adult price should be raised to the cost of preparing the meal to prevent any criticism that the school was subsidizing the adult meal price.

People everywhere at Roundy Breakfast



By John Carpenter
Gazette Staff

People, people everywhere was the way to describe the Roundy Elementary parent/student breakfast held last Thursday morning at the school. Cars quickly filled the Roundy parking lot, then the High School parking lot and eventually spilled out and lined all adjacent streets. The event lasted throughout



the morning, with participants continually streaming in. Along with the breakfast, students were given the opportunity, along with their parents, to do some last minute Christmas shopping at the Book Fair held in the school's Library. Afterwards, parents were able to observe, and help, their students complete various Christmas crafts and projects.

As one parent described, "Every-

Briefly -

Santa to be in Ainsworth

Santa will visit Ainsworth on Sunday, December 19, 2010. He will be at the Ainsworth Opera House from 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. You may visit with Santa, have your picture taken, make decorations, and have refreshments.

Christmas Concert at C. J. United Methodist Church

The public is invited to a Christmas Concert entitled "The Spirit of Christmas" today, Wednesday, December 15, 2010, from 7:00-8:00 p.m. at the Columbus Junction United Methodist Church. Come hear the wonderful sounds of Christmas music by local performers in the beautiful candle-lit sanctuary and enjoy fellowship and refreshments following the concert (no admission fee).

Colonial Manor Potluck today

Family, friends and guests - Please join us for a Christmas Potluck today, Wednesday, December 15, 2010, at Noon in the Resident Dining Room. Meat, rolls, beverages and table service will be provided. Please bring a dish of your choice. We hope you are able to celebrate with us!

Ham and Bean Supper tomorrow at Masonic Lodge

Columbus City Masonic Lodge #107 will be hosting a Ham and Bean supper honoring all 50-year members, with special recognition to Wayne Barnes and Jack Pugh. The supper will be held on Thursday, December 16, 2010 at 6:30 p.m. Masons and their families are welcome.

Grandview-Letts Lions Club to hold Soup Supper

The Grandview-Letts Lions Club will hold their annual soup supper on Saturday, January 22, 2011, from 5-7 p.m. at the NEW Community Center and Library in Letts. The all-you-can-eat menu includes: Chili and Wisconsin Cheese soups, homemade pies, celery, carrots, pickles, crackers and drinks. The cost for tickets is: (Advanced from any G-L Lions member) \$5.00; (At-the-door) \$6.00; (Ages 6-12) \$3.00; (Ages 5 and under) Free.

Book Fair at Roundy Elementary

The December Book Fair is here at the Roundy Elementary Library! The book fair is open for business with more books than ever. We have over eight crates and many tables of books to page through. This book fair is not a buy one get one free and is sponsored by the Scholastic company. The book fair opened Noon Dec. 6th and will close Dec 21st with hours being Monday - Thursday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Friday hours will be from 8 until 3. We will be opening on Dec. 16th from 6:30-7:30 p.m. during the music program. If you have questions please contact Roundy Elementary at 319-728-6218.

School Board to meet

The Board of Education for the Columbus Community School District will hold a public meeting on Monday, December 20, 2010 at 6:30 p.m. in the Roundy Elementary School Art Room.

Community Club to meet

The Columbus Community Club will meet this Thursday at Noon at the Senior Center.

where I looked there were kids, leading their parents to breakfast, then to all of the events taking place. It was really something to see, and I know that if it is held next year, I'll be back."

Pictured above left, Roundy students making Christmas crafts. Above, right, the Howell Family enjoys breakfast. More photos of the breakfast appear on Page 6.

(From the School: Roundy Elementary would like to thank everyone who made our "Breakfast with Santa" a huge success. We would like to specially thank our guest readers, community volunteers, people who donated clothes for our clothing drive, CJSB for donating napkins, and all of the family members who attended. It was a fun morning had by all!)