

## Amherst Schools

# EXCEL aid discussed

by PATRICK J. NAGY  
Reporter

Last April, the Amherst Central School District received \$964,000 in new supplemental aid called EXCEL (Expanding our Children's Education and Learning). How the district can use that aid was the main topic at the Oct. 3 Amherst Central Board of Education meeting.

Bill Hayes of Thomas Associates told the board that EXCEL is a \$2.6 billion program added to the 2006-07 New York State budget. It is funded by the New York State Dormitory Authority.

Hayes said each school district in the state is allocated EXCEL aid for building projects once after April 1, 2006. EXCEL is only available for the 2006-07 and 2007-08 school years.

According to Hayes, EXCEL could be used for more than one capital construction project and must follow State Education Department guidelines. Seventy-five percent of the project has to include work for EXCEL categories.

The categories are educational technology, health and safety, accessibility, physical capacity expansion, energy enhancement/reduced consumption and debt service.

Mark Whyle, the district's director of administrative services,

said the district could use EXCEL as a \$964,000 grant that would not need voter approval or as part of a \$3.3 million bond issue, which would require a referendum.

"It has been suggested that EXCEL aid could be spread over 15 years to take the place of the taxpayer contribution, which would mean that the taxpayers in the district would contribute nothing towards that," he said. "The refund would come through the state building aid at around 70 percent and the other 30 percent from EXCEL aid. If you wanted to do that with no contribution to the taxpayers, you could break even with a \$3.3 million bond issue."

Whyle said there is also the potential, if the board chose, to borrow up to \$10.8 million, \$3.3 from EXCEL aid and \$7.5 million from another maturing bond.

Whyle said an additional \$230,000 left over from a previous capital construction project could pay for roof vents at the high school and put a temporary, wooden, roof-type structure on top of the air-handling unit to stop a leak above the Windermere Boulevard Elementary pool. A new roof will eventually be installed, said Whyle.

Whyle said both roofs have already been approved by voters but have to be taken to the State Education Department for an en-

gineering review, which could possibly take 14 weeks.

"Once they get to review it, we will be authorized to bid that work out," said Whyle. "It could take up to four months or longer because every school district in the state is considering a capital project right now because of EXCEL aid, and the folks in Albany are probably quite short-staffed."

Other possible district capital projects include site and sidewalk work at the high school, boiler replacement at Windermere and a first floor hallway replacement at Smallwood Drive Elementary.

The board did not make a final decision on where to use EXCEL aid and will set up a work session with Thomas Associates for further discussion.

In another matter, Acting Superintendent Paul Wietig has written a draft of requirements necessary for the Smallwood principal position. Barbara Marotto, the current principal, will retire July 1, 2007.

Wietig said the district would begin to solicit potential letters of interest before the job is posted later this year.

"At this time, it doesn't compromise the process," he said. "It makes sense. It shows the board what is out there."

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## Police locate hit and run suspect at house

Amherst police have charged 23-year-old Zachary Jaenecke of North Tonawanda with second-degree assault and leaving the scene of a personal injury accident after he allegedly struck a pedestrian in a parking lot.

Police reported that Jaenecke ran a stop sign and almost struck a 46-year-old man who was coming out of Tops Markets on Niagara Falls Boulevard around 5 p.m. Monday.

When the pedestrian yelled at Jaenecke, the two exchanged words, and Jaenecke reportedly backed up his car and drove at the man. The man was hit by the car and rolled onto the hood, striking his head on the windshield.

According to witnesses, Jaenecke then left the scene. He was followed out of the parking lot by witnesses, who lost track of the vehicle but were able to provide Amherst police with the license plate information.

The store was also able to provide police with footage from the surveillance camera, which caught most of the accident on tape.

Officers located Jaenecke at his North Tonawanda home and charged him with second-degree assault, a D felony; possession of a weapon; failure to use due care, failing to obey a stop sign, reckless operation of a vehicle and leaving the scene of a personal injury accident.

The victim was taken to DeGraff Memorial Hospital where he was treated for injuries.

## Business News

The Eastern Hills Sunrise Rotary Club will be hosting the Supervisor Satish Mohan of the Town of Amherst for a dinner meeting at 6 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 18, at LaScala Ristorante, 9210 Transit Road, East Amherst. For more information, call Rocco Lucente at 881-3010 or visit [www.ehsrotary.org](http://www.ehsrotary.org).

BNI Business Makers will conduct its weekly meeting from 7 to 8:30 a.m. Thursday, Oct. 12 at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Amherst, 6320 Main St., Williamsville. Vincent Jones of Buffalo Design & Construction will speak. Contact the Chapter President, Charlie Totoro, at 688-5700 for more information.

## Playground builds skills for Summit Academy students

Representatives from Fisher-Price Inc., Ingram-Micro, and Fox Valley Club will join staff and students to officially open the new special needs playground at the Summit Academy.

A ribbon-cutting ceremony will be held at 10 a.m. Thursday, Oct. 12 at the playground, 150 Stahl Road, Amherst.

Two separate play areas — one for preschoolers and one for school-age students — have age-appropriate play equipment.

The playground is adjacent to Summit's new state-of-the-art building, completed in July 2005. The building houses a year-round school program for students, ages 3 through 16, with developmental disabilities, along with Outreach, Office of Mental Retardation & Developmental Disabilities, and administrative offices.

"The playground will provide an outdoor learning environment that is safe, fun and challenging to the more than 300 students who attended Summit Academy, said Stephen R. Anderson, executive director of Summit.

He said the contributions of Fisher-Price, Ingram-Mi-

cro, and Fox Valley Club allowed completion of the project more than a year earlier than planned.

Playground construction began in September, with more than 50 Fisher-Price volunteers working to prepare the site and installing playground equipment.

Fisher-Price contributed construction costs along with funding for equipment in the preschool play area which features an alphabet panel, tot rock climber, fun phone, sand and water tables, slides, and swings.

"Playgrounds provide a setting for young children to learn physical and social skills — and it's a place for them to have fun," said Sarah Craig, vice president of Human Resources and Administration for Fisher-Price. "We are extremely proud that Summit is the recipient of our 20th Fisher-Price playground."

Ingram-Micro contributed \$42,000 in proceeds from its Aug. 26 golf tournament. Those funds were directed to the school-age playground for students ages 5 and older. This area features swings, a climbing wall, slides, ladders, bridges, fun phones, and a spray mister for water play.

Fox Valley Club, sponsor of the 2006 Vixen Cup,

donated more than \$30,000 in proceeds from its annual charity golf tournament on Sept. 17. The tournament was co-chaired by Fox Valley member Marla Mellon of Williamsville and Frank Broderick of Clarence.

Support from Summit families and staff at the Walk for Summit, Monte Carlo Night, and recent book sales raised additional funds, which were directed to the playground.

"This playground is a dream come true for our students, staff, and families. A lot of time and attention was given to selecting equipment that would provide visual, physical, and tactile experiences for the wide variety of students with developmental disabilities that we serve," said Kathy Bunce, Summit development officer, who worked on the playground project.

The entire project cost more than \$200,000, significantly less than expected, due in part to a substantial discount offered by Joe Denzak, factory representative of Miracle Recreational Equipment, and James Dobmeier, president of Surface America, who installed the playground's safety surface.

## Corrections

The cutline for the photo featured on page three of the Oct. 4 edition should have read: Two persons were treated by Snyder firefighters Thursday afternoon, Sept. 28 when a westbound pickup truck smashed through the center guard rail and entered the eastbound lane of traffic on the New York State Thruway, strik-

ing a second vehicle broadside. State Police charged Cristino Almonte, 31, of Medina with driving while intoxicated, driving on the wrong side of the road and unlicensed operation. The photo was taken by David F. Sherman.

Kennedy's Cove restaurant does not take reservations, as

was published in the Bee's Oct. 4 and 5 Dining Guide.

The Williamsville and East Aurora locations of Ladies Workout Express were omitted from a story in the September Health special section. They are at 5272 Main St., Williamsville, in Quality Plaza and 176 Main St., East Aurora, in Eckerd Plaza.

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