

Security cameras operational at Sweet Home High School

by DAVID F. SHERMAN
Managing Editor

Installation of security cameras in common areas of Sweet Home High School has begun as part of an overall security and technology upgrade.

Funding for the camera system — which will be implemented in all seven district buildings — was included in a bond issue approved by Sweet Home taxpayers in May.

Superintendent of Schools Geoffrey M. Hicks said a great deal of research has gone into the program, which is currently being implemented on a limited basis.

The first system operates on a separate line similar to cable television. Video images are saved to a DVR on a large hard drive.

The second system, which the district has decided to utilize, operates across the existing computer network. It is Internet-based, allowing supervisory personnel access to any camera's view at any time.

Hicks said four cameras are now in use at the high school, monitoring activity in the cafeteria, computer lab and two hallways.

When complete, the system will include 30 cameras in the high school, 25 in the middle school and 10 in each elementary school.

"Each of the cameras will be installed in common areas," Hicks said. "They will be in hallways, the cafeteria and around the exterior. No one's privacy will be compromised. It's another layer to make sure our schools are secure."

The cost of the districtwide system will be between \$75,000 and \$100,000, according to Hicks. It will be funded entirely by the Excel Aid received through the bond issue and existing funds.

"We have since discovered that there is additional state aid for security upgrades, so we may be applying for it," he said.

While the cameras can provide live views of school buildings, the

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system archives images for 30 days at a time. A specific time and date or time frame can be recalled at a touch, Hicks said.

The cameras are motion sensitive, so when action halts in an area being monitored, it shuts down. Movement reactivates the viewing and recording function.

Additionally, because this particular system is Internet-based, a wireless camera can be linked to it, provided it is within the reach of the network.

"If there was a hot spot or a specific section to watch, we could add that wireless camera," he said.

The district already has a swipe card system for building entry and video monitoring of exterior doors.

Hicks described the current effort as a test, although he said the Internet-based system was preferred. The district will save money on installation, as staff electricians will be able to do some of the work.

Planning ahead when installing the current infrastructure made this possible, rather than retrofitting each building. The cable connection also includes the power supply to each unit.

On a related security note, the

district is still negotiating with the Amherst Police Department and town supervisor regarding implementation of the School Resource Officer program.

Early plans called for the program to begin in January, after the latest class graduates from the Central Police Academy and is trained in the field. Filling vacant positions and assigning an officer to the SRO task would follow.

Approved by the School Board earlier this year, the program provides for an officer to be assigned to Sweet Home High School whenever classes are in session. The SRO is perceived as both a deterrent to improper activity as well as a confidential contact for students.

"Everything isn't worked out yet; it's an ongoing discussion," Hicks said. "We were hopeful the program could start in January. Chief Askey has been great in working us through the political process."

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SANTA CLAUS IN BUSINESS CASUAL — Employees of Tops Markets and Heritage Centers pack up gifts at Tops' corporate headquarters Dec. 20 on Main Street. Toys were donated by Tops employees, and the packages were delivered to area families in need of extra help this holiday season. Helping load a van, from left to right, are: Valerie Camann, Mary Piekart, Katie McKenna, Sally Fitzgerald and Kristine Toth. Heritage Center serves more than 3,000 families dealing with a disability.

Photo by Joe Eberle
Purchase color photos at www.BeeNews.com

Parks group seeks donations

by ELIZABETH TAUFA
Reporter

Garrison Park is about to get some much needed help.

The organization Friends of Williamsville Parks is in the process of being formed to raise money for a new jungle-gym toy in Garrison Park.

The toy, which is more than 20-years-old, suffered significant damage in the October Storm, and now a group of concerned citizens, village officials and members of the Village Parks Committee are committed to finding funding for the toy.

"The Big Toy is our number one project," said Village Trustee Brian Geary, who has been named as honorary vice chairman of the group. "But if it works out, then the sky can be the limit for other projects."

Volunteer contributions are currently being sought for the jungle-gym toy. A large toy with a variety of features that would attract children of many different ages is the objective. The cost would be approximately \$30,000.

The organization has been formed because of the lack of funds in the village's parks budget, according to Geary.

"The money in the parks budget is the bare mini-

mum for maintaining the parks, let alone enhance them," he said. "Volunteers do 30 to 40 percent of the work on the parks."

Geary said that individual volunteers, as well as groups such as the Boy Scouts of America, have contributed time and efforts to paint the parks pavilions and rebuild benches. But more is needed.

"It really depends on the residents of the village," he said when asked when the big toy project would be completed. "We need a lot of help but I've been very impressed, especially with the holiday, that a lot of people are excited about it."

Future uses for the organization could include anything from resurfacing tennis courts to addressing the staircases into Glen Park.

The Friends of Williamsville Parks are still accepting donations from within the community. All sponsors will be recognized at the grand opening for the toy.

All donations should be made payable to Friends of Williamsville Parks, with Garrison Park Project as the memo. Donations can be mailed to Friends of Williamsville Parks, c/o Village Hall, 5565 Main St., Williamsville, NY 14221.

For more information on the organization or donating, call Friends of Williamsville Chairman Tracy Galuski at 632-6912.

Retired Teachers Association donates \$9,000 to programs for the aging

The New York State Retired Teachers Association Western Zone through the Founders Fund, recently donated more than \$9,000 to support the Meals on Wheels program in Western New York.

The Seneca Nation Office of the Aging is also receiving a grant. Also this year, the Founders Fund established an Emergency Fund to aid Western Zone Retired Teachers

in need. The Fund also provides support to the Network in Aging at the University at Buffalo.

The Founders Fund was established a number of years ago to support the needs of retirees in their communities.

Anne Flansburg, president of the Western Zone New York State Retired Teachers Association; Johannes Olsen,

treasurer; and Leonard S. Sikora, chair of the fund, made the presentation.

The Founders Fund, originally called the Home Fund, was started in 1959. Its name was changed in 1989.

Donations made to the fund are tax deductible. For information, contact Len Sikora 689-3136

School News

Kadimah School of Buffalo, 1085 Eggert Road, Amherst, is currently accepting applications for the 2008-09 school year. Kadimah offers curriculum for students 18 months through eighth grade. For information, call 836-6903, ext. 105, e-mail jillmaz-zola@roadrunner.com or visit www.Kadimah.org.

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