

"Federation Corner" column
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Current county education issues

by Paula Bienenfeld
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In August MCPS (Montgomery County Public Schools) held a meet-and-greet to introduce the county's new School Superintendent, Joshua Starr. The Civic Federation President, Peggy Dennis, welcomed and hand delivered an invitation to Starr to speak at a program on education being planned for the September MCCF monthly meeting. Despite repeated follow-ups, we never received a response. And the topic for our September program was changed.

There are, however, a number of events at which you can meet Josh Starr beginning with a series of evening "Listen and Learn" events which began in September. The remaining "Listen and Learn" events are as follows:

Oct 18 - Long Branch Community Center, 8700 Piney Branch Road, Silver Spring

Nov 1 - Damascus High School, 25921 Ridge Road, Damascus

Nov 7 - Wheaton High School, 12601 Dalewood Drive, Silver Spring

Nov 21 Sherwood High School, 300 Olney-Sandy Spring Road, Sandy Spring

All of the above events are scheduled to take place from 7 pm to 8:30 p. m.

Superintendent Starr was also scheduled to participate in a Town Hall meeting for school students, held the evening of October 12 at the County Council Building in Rockville. Another Town Hall meeting is tentatively planned for November 9, but the location and time of this event has not yet been announced.

There will also be three education related book clubs to which the community at large is invited. The first is on November 29 at the Carver Educational Services Center, located at 850 Hungerford Drive in Rockville. The book that will be discussed at the November 29 event is *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* by Carol Dweck. Dr. Dweck is the Lewis and Eaton Professor at the Department of Psychology, Stanford University.

While Dr. Dweck's book is available for purchase, her articles are available for free on her website, at <https://www.stanford.edu/dept/psychology/cgi-bin/drupal/cdweck>. The book is a popular version of her research and professional articles, so familiarity with some of the professional articles would be sufficient for an interesting conversation.

The two other book clubs are scheduled to be held on January 31 and April 24, 2012. The locations and books have not yet been announced for these events

As the school year is starting, I want to put in a plug for the wonderful National History Day (NHD) Curriculum, which is used at some schools in the county. Some teachers follow the curriculum provided, while others act as sponsors for children who strike out on their own. The curriculum is also used by home-schoolers, and those children turn out in large numbers at our county's NHD competition day.

National History Day requires critical thinking, writing, reading of primary and secondary sources, and a deep understanding of the topic chosen. The Montgomery County Historical Society sponsors and organizes NHD in our county, and generally does the heavy lifting for the day. The theme for this year's NHD event is "Revolution, Reaction, Reform in History." The county competition for this school year will be held on Saturday, March 17 at Richard Montgomery High School.

Judges and volunteers are needed for this year's NHD competition day. If you would like to volunteer for the one day event, please contact Taylor Baltzer at the Montgomery County Historical Society and let him know by emailing to tbaltzer@MontgomeryHistory.org, or phoning 301-340-2871.

Finally, it has come to light that the Board of Education holds a Master Lease with Deutsche Bank. To date taxpayers have paid \$22 million, and now an additional \$16 million, for lease/purchases under this Master Lease agreement. We recently learned that the Master Lease agreement is not only for Deutsche Bank, but also for First Southwest Leasing Company, the Carlyle Group, and Bank of America.

Thanks to Maryland Public Information Act (MPIA) efforts by Janis Sartucci of the Parents Coalition, the Master Lease is now available for perusal on the Parents Coalition website at: <http://tinyurl.com/masterlease>. So the first step of getting the document has been accomplished. The next step is to find out what items have been leased or purchased under this Master Lease agreement. I will keep you posted on the findings.

The views expressed in this column do not necessarily reflect formal positions adopted by the Federation. To submit an 800-1000 word column for consideration, send as an email attachment to theelms518@earthlink.net