

HOMER COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

FIRST SEMESTER 2010-2011

NEWSLETTER



From the Superintendent

WELCOME BACK!

Another school year is fast approaching and the staff at Homer Community Schools is excited to welcome the children of our community back to school. We have many new faces in the district and I invite everyone to visit during our Open House on September 1 from 6 to 8 p.m. This is a great opportunity to tour the building and meet our excellent staff.

Homer Community Schools' Board of Education, administration and staff are all asking, "is now the right time to build for the future." The continued maintenance on the 60-year-old, two-story structure is eating away at valuable funds for educating children. Instruction in the classroom has changed in the past sixty years. Students need classrooms that will prepare them for the work place of the future. Technology upgrades, larger spaces for group work and individualized instruction as well as addressing safety and security concerns for school access are all reasons to 'Build for the Future.' The children of Homer are our future and we need to ensure that Homer Community Schools continues to be a 'Destination District.' Feel free to give school board members, administrators and school staff your thoughts on moving forward with a building project to replace classrooms for middle school and high school students.

In closing, I would like to thank the community of Homer for their continued support of our students and their activities. I truly feel 'Homer is Home.' The 2010-11 school year promises to be a GREAT year. Again, thank you for making Homer students a #1 priority.

Yours for academic excellence,
Rob Ridgeway, Superintendent

School Closings

The announcement of school closings due to hazardous conditions will be made beginning at 6:00 a.m. on:

WUFN (96.5 FM)	WSAE (106.9)	WNWN (98.5 FM)
WKFR (103 FM)	WILX (TV 10)	Q106 (106.1 FM)
WWMT (TV 3)	FOX 47 (TV 47)	WQLR (106.5 FM)
WLNS (TV 6)	WLAX (TV 53)	WOOD (TV 8/TV 41)

Homer FFA News

It has been a fast, fun-filled exciting summer for the Homer FFA chapter, the Agriscience Department and the Nutrition Program at Homer Community Schools.

In its second year, the Homer Farmer's Market started in June and will be continuing into October. It is held every Saturday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Water Tower. Homer FFA members have been selling plants grown in the greenhouse and produce grown at the Land Lab and in the school garden. Thank you to Huffman Farms, Jeff Daglow and Anderson Farms for supporting our Farmer's Market booth. A big focus of the booth is for the community and FFA members to learn about the nutritional advantages of buying local food and understanding how to raise your own vegetables. Stop by and see our nutritious foods!

The "Growing Together in Homer" second year summer gardening program went well. In the program, students/FFA members were trained as Certified Nutrition Trainers and then assisted in running the elem. and MS gardening and nutrition sessions. These sessions were held at the school and included trips to the new school garden. The kids grew vegetables and sunflowers. During additional sessions, students visited the FFA land lab to water, weed, harvest and check on the vegetable garden. The students learned about production crops, including corn and soybeans.

June and July were busy for FFA members with the annual canoe trip, state officer training conference, chapter officer training camp, tractor driving contest and Ag Expo. In August, the FFA members participated in the Calhoun County Fair in Marshall, which included our fair booth, parking cars, showing animals and entering non-livestock projects. Great job to everyone who participated. We are gearing up for our annual Point System Trip to a water park in Traverse City for the most involved FFA members.

Fall activities include raising broiler chickens, attending the National FFA Convention, Fall Leadership Conference, bowling night, School Fair and the Corn Maze. Corn Maze is a great fall family activity and we hope to see many families there! Remember after dark we have a bonfire and the maze is haunted. This activity will be held at the Land Lab on 24 1/2 Mile Rd. Watch for more information about the School Fair and Corn Maze!

It was a GREAT summer, but now we are ready for the new school year. Thank you for your continued support. Our FFA chapter and Agriscience program is only as strong as the members, parents, community, school staff and administration.

Lora Finch, Agriscience Instructor & FFA Advisor

Elementary News

We are looking forward to the beginning of another school year and anxious to hear what new experiences our students enjoyed over the summer. In previous years, we had students bring in pictures of fish they caught while on vacation and I displayed them in my office. We have also expanded our picture board to include any summer picture of your child doing something they enjoyed or a hobby. This could include fishing, showing livestock at the fair, camping, swimming, golfing, etc.

Since school is about to begin, I would like you to pay close attention to the following information and safety precautions:

- School will begin for all students at 8 a.m. and the children will be released at 3 p.m. If picking up an elementary student, it would be best to be here by 2:50. All kindergarten students will attend all day, every day and will be following this same schedule.

- Please use good judgment on the time in which you are sending your children to school. Children are not supervised prior to 7:50 am. unless they are eating breakfast at the cafeteria, so please don't send your child earlier. The cafeteria begins serving breakfast at 7:30 a.m.

- If your child will be coming to school after 8:00 a.m. they must enter through the front door. The other doors of the building will be locked after school begins for all of the children's safety.

- If your child needs to leave school early for an appointment, always come to the office as you enter the building and sign out your student while we call the classroom for him/her.

- Our parking lot is "one way." You need to enter off of Fulton St. and exit out the back on Clinton Ct. This is always a major safety concern each year. **Do not** use the parking lot to drop off your children. The drop-off/pick-up area is along the front of the school. The parking lot is for our elementary staff and the people who need to come into the building. If you are coming into the building, please park your car in an

appropriate designated parking spot. People who don't follow these directions put our children at risk and also back up traffic creating another hazard. Also, when picking up your children after school wait in your car for them at the pick-up/drop-off area out front.

- If you live in town, remind your children to walk on the sidewalks, cross at the corners and to always stop and look for traffic. If they ride their bike to school, they should obey traffic signs, ride on the correct side of the street and remind them they need to walk their bikes on school property.

- For the safety of our students, we don't allow roller skates of any kind to be brought to school and that includes the shoes with built in wheels. Last spring we adopted two new policies in the elementary regarding not wearing flip-flop footwear to school and students not being allowed cell phones. Further information on these policies can be found in the Elementary Handbook.

- Please have your child dress appropriately for the weather. Many mornings will be chilly when they start out for school, so they need to have a light jacket with them. At times it may be necessary for your child to borrow an article of clothing from the school. We have a limited supply of items to loan so please make sure that the clothing is washed and returned promptly.

- Let us know in writing if your student will be going home after school in a different manner than usual. If your child rides a bus, and you plan to pick them up, please write a note letting us know. If your child is riding the bus to another student's house, a note from both students' parents is required.

Parents and community members are always welcome to visit our building. Please remember to sign in at the office.

Rick Cooley, Elementary Principal

Life In The Middle

Welcome to the 2010-2011 school year. I am confident that this will truly be an exceptional year!

Are you ready for some football? Please join our middle school fan section "The Trojan Pride" for all home football games this year. Students attending these contests will be able to win prizes and cheer our Trojans on to victory. We have a great time! Sports schedules are available in all school offices. Go Trojans!

Are you looking for an opportunity to help support our middle school? If you are caring, helpful and motivated, I would love to have you become an active member of our CHAMP Club (Caring, Helpful and Motivated Parents). Our group meets monthly and helps plan activities, coordinate fundraisers and serve in many other volunteer capacities. Being a middle school student can be extremely challenging. We need to let each child know that we understand what he/she is going through and that we appreciate the person that they are becoming. Please join us on Thursday, September 16 at 7:00 p.m. in the media center for our first meeting.

Our 2010 MEAP testing window runs from October 12 through October 28. Please encourage your student to be well-rested and to eat a good breakfast. A schedule of all MEAP testing will be sent home prior to testing.

I want to stress the importance of student agendas. This is a great organizational, communication tool and it is used as a hall pass. Please encourage your child to fill out their agenda completely and neatly. They are encouraged to bring them home at the end of each day. Please remind them that they need to have these at school the next day. Included in each student agenda is our middle school handbook and student rights and responsibilities.

Our middle school core classes will continue to be on nine week marking periods. Each student will also participate in three rotation classes. These rotation classes will be working on twelve week marking periods. When nine week marking periods end, grades will be printed on blue paper stock and distributed to the students. The cards do not need to be returned.

To increase instructional time in math and English Language Arts, additional minutes were added to the middle school schedule a few years ago. This has proven to be an extremely positive change. Students in the fifth and sixth grades will continue to use the Everyday Math Program. I am excited about the progress that our students are making with this new mathematics series. With the ever-changing challenges that our students are facing with the new high school standards and graduation requirements, we will continue to offer algebra and earth science to all of our eighth grade students. I have analyzed the reading data, Accelerated Reader, STAR Reading and DIBELS scores. They have shown an increase in our students' academic progress. The gains that our students made in reading last year were impressive. The Battle Creek Science Kits will be used to enhance our science curriculum, and we are in year three with our new social studies materials. We are beginning year four with Writing Workshop. Our writing scores rank among the very best in Barry, Branch and Calhoun counties.

As a result of these curriculum changes, coupled with the hard work and dedication from our entire student body and teaching staff, last spring our school was recognized as the eleventh highest performing school in Michigan (sixth highest middle school). It takes a total team effort of teachers, students, parents, community members, etc...to receive these accolades.

Please feel free to contact the office if you have any questions or concerns. We are looking forward to a great year!

Scott Salow, Middle School Principal

High School News

Welcome to the 2010-2011 school year! I hope your summer was relaxing and full of memorable times with family and friends. I would like to personally welcome the incoming Class of 2014 and all new students attending Homer High School for the first time. It is my hope that your experiences at H.H.S. will be positive and full of memorable times.

We are once again using a seven period schedule at the high school. These class periods will be approximately 50 to 52 minutes each. Lunch will still remain at 40 minutes and will be held at 11:32 each day.

FALL HIGHLIGHTS

Open House will be held on Wednesday, September 1 from 6-8 p.m. and high school schedules will be available for students to pick up. Open House is a great opportunity for students and parents to meet teachers, visit classrooms and get a chance to follow their individual school schedules. Please mark your calendars for this annual back-to-school tradition!

First Day of classes will be on Tuesday, September 7. Students are to report to their first hour class by 8 am. There will be a brief orientation at 8:10 am in the HS gym. Students will report back to their first hour at the conclusion of the orientation. There will be no schedule changes during the first day of classes. Attend all of the classes that appear on your individual student schedule. Those students that request a

schedule change need to sign up for an appointment with Mrs. Malone in the Guidance Office.

Schedule for school days will begin at 8 a.m. and end at 3 p.m. Students are expected to be out of the building by 3 p.m. unless they are under the direct supervision of a coach or teacher. Students are not allowed in the building until 7:50 a.m. each day unless they are eating breakfast in the cafeteria.

Homecoming football game will be on Friday, September 24 versus Concord at 7 p.m. The Homecoming King and Queen will be announced during halftime of the football game. There will be many spirit activities throughout the week. Make sure and get involved with your class and help cheer our team on to victory! Family, friends and alumni are encouraged to attend the assembly, parade and football game.

Parent Conferences will be held on Monday, November 22 and Tuesday, November 23 from 4-8 p.m. School will be dismissed at 2 p.m. on each of those days. Please mark your calendars and make it a point to stop in and check on your child's progress.

I hope to visit with you throughout the year at many school events. If you have any questions or concerns throughout the year, please feel free to stop in the high school office or call 568-4464. Go Trojans!

Tom Salow, High School Principal

From the Counseling Office

Fall is a busy time in the counseling office! Mrs. Malone meets with students individually, and meets with parents as well. Below are some dates to mark on your calendar!

- Thursday, September 23 at 6:30 p.m. is the date for the Fall Senior Night in the cafeteria. Seniors will receive their copy of the Senior *Stepping Out Book*, written by Mrs. Malone. There will be a presentation on college, scholarships, financial aid, work after high school and many more topics that seniors and their parents will find helpful. This is a date you can't miss!

- College representatives will be visiting HHS throughout the fall. The schedule of visits is located in the counseling office and is also advertised in the daily announcements. Students and parents can sign up to meet with any of the representatives to find out more about a college. The visits are usually in the morning and you can sign up in the counseling office to attend.

- **SENIORS:** College applications are due by Thanksgiving. To obtain an application contact the college, apply on-line through their website, or see the counseling office. All scholarship information has been published in the *Stepping Out Book* for seniors that you will receive at Senior Night. Most scholarship applications due dates are in March and April but look through your list carefully.

- **JUNIORS:** You are welcome to look through the *Stepping Out* book and get a jump-start on college information, financial aid information, scholarships, career information, etc. Copies are available to check out at the high school library and at the counseling office! It's very helpful!

- ****Juniors, this is the year that counts the most in all your K-12 education!** You want to make this school year your very best! Colleges look at your eleventh grade with the greatest consideration. Your ACT and your MME exam happen this year, which determines lots of scholarship monies, as well as college acceptance. The ACT is actually part of the Michigan Merit Exam and juniors take this in March.

- **SOPHOMORES:** There is a test called the PLAN Test available to you this fall. It's a type of practice test for the ACT Exam (college entrance exam) and it also measures career interests. All sophomores are encouraged to sign up for this test, which will be given this fall by Mrs. Malone. Please sign up in the counseling office by October 1. The exam is on October 20 at 8:30 a.m. and costs \$12. If you are college-bound, you should take this test! Parents can also sign up their student by calling Mrs. Malone at 724-9336.

- **FRESHMEN:** Mrs. Malone will be meeting with you to explain transcripts, grade point averages, rankings, preparing for college admission, and career exploration. It's time to take a fresh perspective on your life as a student and know that everything you are doing (your grades, your activities, your attendance) in school counts toward that diploma and your life after high school. When I ask seniors to look back on their four years and reflect on anything they would have done differently, they almost always say they wish they would have tried harder in ninth grade. Always do your best, take school seriously, and ask for help when you are overwhelmed. We want you to succeed! Your success in high school opens up so many doors for life!

Kara Malone, Counselor

Athletics - Go Trojans!

Another fall sports season is upon us and our athletic teams are preparing for successful seasons. I encourage all in the community to attend and support our young athletes as they represent Homer. I am privileged to be part of a community that is so supportive of all of our teams and want to remind everyone that good sportsmanship is learned through positive role modeling.

I would like to recognize and congratulate our spring sports on some outstanding achievements. Big 8 and District Champions for varsity softball, Nicole Wurster 2nd in the state track 1,600 meter and Justin Rea 2nd Team All State varsity baseball.

Let's get behind our athletes and support them for all of their hard work and determination.

Drew Bordner, Athletic Director

Nutrition Program

The Homer Community Schools' Nutrition Program remained in full swing throughout the summer, with approximately 40 students participating in the Growing Together Program. Students worked in maintaining, harvesting and tasting freshly grown produce from the school garden, prepared nutritious recipes with the GAP program and played fun, innovative physical activity games in its second summer.

Please stop by our Nutrition Booth in the elementary building at this year's School Open House on Wednesday, September 1st, to pick up numerous flyers full of useful nutritious information, healthy recipe and snack ideas, and for details regarding the start of the second year of our successful Morning Monkeys' Fitness Program. Morning Monkeys' will begin on Tuesday, September 21st for elementary students. Information regarding grades, dates and times will be provided. If you are unable to attend the open house, and would like program details, please call Diane Shank at 724-9359.

Diane Shank, Coordinator



Cyan

Magenta

Yellow

Black