

Silvis School District #34

"A Learning Organization"

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Veterans' Day Assemblies are Learning Experiences in Districts

There is no doubt that in my lifetime many things have changed. I am 58 years old, and technology, transportation, and the media are all examples of things that have changed for better or for worse (it all depends upon your own age and view). Another thing that has noticeably changed for the better is how we treat our military veterans and those currently serving.

When I was in high school and college, veterans and those traveling within our country were spat upon, cursed at, and generally held in low regard by many people, including many of their own age group. During the past 15-20 years, this has changed. Veterans' Day used to be "just a day off from school". Now, Silvis students attend school and learn about why we honor and respect our military men and women and praise our veterans. Our annual assembly last week was a great salute to those that fought so that all of us are able to keep the freedoms we cherish.

Our elementary students sang songs such as "Thank a Vet"; our band was outstanding in their renditions of the National Anthem and "Armed Forces Medley"; junior high students Elle Thompson and Drew Pustelnik read poetry and a tribute to Veterans. Art Peterson told the assembly of 700+ students and adults about the Honor Flights. First Sergeant captivated the students with his story of 21 years in the military and praising those that served before him.

3rd grade teacher Kim Bultynck's PowerPoint presentation displayed all of the students' relatives that have served or are currently serving. Our Language Arts teacher, Mari Thomson, did a bang-up job of setting the entire program up. These are real teachable moments for our students. We are proud to be educators because we have seen the shift in our students' attitudes over the past 5-6 years to one of complete respect. Thank you staff, students, and especially our veterans!

OTHER SILVIS NEWS:

*I get asked many times each week as to how the new school (Northeast Junior High School) is progressing. I am happy to say that as you read this, the window frames have been installed and after the windows are put in place, we will be completely enclosed. Siding is going on the building, and this will be a very air-tight, energy efficient building. All 80+ wells have been drilled for the geothermal system, saving energy and money for the district long after my retirement! Pictures can be seen on our website: www.silvis34.org.

*George O. Barr will also see renovations soon. After Northeast JH is moved into in early June, 2012, the work will begin on the Silvis JH 5th-8th classrooms to ready them for George O. Barr students to move into beginning January, 2013. While the remodeled school will be air conditioned, the Board decided against geothermal due to the high initial costs involved. The present Silvis JH gymnasium will be used by elementary students; the JH Commons will become the elementary cafeteria; a new kitchen added on will be the only new construction for Barr. The administrative offices will also be moved, but to save the district money, we will “recycle” much of the furniture and cabinetry that we presently have. In the end, most of what is now the elementary school will be demolished according to state law.

* At both the new Northeast Junior High School and the remodeled George O. Barr, students and staff will be sitting and working in new desks and chairs. There is a large bidding process that we must go through by law giving us the best bang for our buck. The District has put money into our reserves over the past few years to make this a reality.

* Anyone that has driven past our property in Silvis has probably noticed how our bus garages have outlived their lifespan by many years. The Silvis School Board is slowly moving ahead with plans to build a 2 bay garage for maintenance at the Northeast JH site. This will include bathrooms, storage, and concessions area for the new running track. The Board’s concern has been the high cost (in the past this would have been reimbursable over 50 years at a 100% rate. Due to Governor Quinn’s recent cuts, reimbursement rates are less than 50%) of building.

*Congratulations to our parent group for another successful Trivia Night. It was a fun evening, and Rocket Boosters made over \$4,000!

*Congratulations also to Silvis Board member Dan Jecks and Board President Kevin Rossmiller. Mr. Rossmiller received an MBA and Mr. Jecks his PhD recently. Five of the seven Board members attended the Illinois School Board Association Conference, November 18-19 in Chicago. Workshop sessions included the topics of finance, curriculum, technology, etc. Members had to take time from their own jobs in order to attend; members serve without any compensation!

*The Silvis School Board will be setting the levy (property tax rate) at the December 14th meeting. The recommendation is to lower the rate, hopefully saving taxpayers a few dollars in these tough financial times. The Board’s philosophy has always been to give our students the possible education that the taxpayers can afford.