

## Schools

### AMS Celebrates 25th Annual Wells Speech Finals



Wells Public Speaking Contest Gradel Level Winners: Left to right – Lucy Hollister, Aaron Ebbert Award, Grade 5 - Mary Rego, Grade 6 – Callie Cinque, and Grade 7 – Lauren McCormick

For twenty-five years students have been participating in the Wells Public Speaking Contest. To reach the finals of this competition, students must first: present speeches in their classrooms, then, present speeches to their teams, next, present speeches to their entire grade level, and last, present speeches on the stage at the high school, to an audience of about two hundred people. More than a thousand students have participated in the finals over the past twenty-five years. The Wells Public Speaking experience helps to foster self esteem, personal growth, and academic excellence throughout their middle school years. Many students have gone on to gain more public speaking recognition in high school and college, and some former students have even pursued careers in public speaking. It's been through these past twenty-five years of tradition that the Wells Public Speaking Contest has evolved into its present form. Every year teachers see students surprise themselves with the courage



Grade Level Finalists: Back row – 7th Graders - Hadley Ramsay, Lucy Hollister, Lauren McCormick, and Elizabeth Hosage. 6th Graders – Tim Hinrichs and Leah Troie

and talent to excel in this program. Many younger students look forward to the challenge, while many older students leave this school with the memory of an achievement that

will last forever. Most teachers and students will agree that even those who don't progress to the finals, experience personal growth and victory.

### New U.S. Citizen From Rwanda Visits AMS

By JESSICA BARLOW AND KATHLEEN FOLEY  
7TH GRADE STUDENTS

On February 4, 2010 the Amherst Middle School's seventh grade was fortunate to experience a presentation by a survivor of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. Since 2006, guest speaker Justin Mazimpaka has told his story of escaping danger in Rwanda to the 7th grade students at the Amherst Middle School. This year was special because Justin became a US citizen in May of 2009. Unable to contain the excitement that came with that accomplishment, Justin began his presentation with "I am now an American!" To which the seventh grade students replied with an enthusiastic applause. When coming to America, Justin's life dramatically changed. He told the students how his history in Rwanda helped him to become a better, fearless person. Now he has a good job and a full life. He

was excited about becoming an American citizen. He spoke about the protections and rights that accompany this achievement. Over the past 2 months the seventh grade has been learning about the geography, culture, and history of Africa. As part of this unit of study the students learned of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. Justin is able to give the students a first hand account of what it was like to be a Tutsi in Rwanda in 1994. Justin has visited many other schools including, Hampton High School, Souhegan High School, and schools in Goffstown. Justin plans on returning to visit Rwanda someday. He may be nervous to visit even though he feels it is safe for him now. In the meantime, he plans on having his mother, who survived the war in Rwanda, visit him here in the United States. He will



Justin Mazimpaka displays his "Congratulations" cake from AMS students.

be glad to reunite with his mother. Following his presentation, many students congratulated Justin and

thanked him for sharing his moving story. He replied with a hug or high five and a heartfelt "Thank you."

### Souhegan High School Jazz Ensemble Commissions New Piece



Carl Benevides and the Souhegan HS Jazz Ensemble has commissioned composer and arranger Craig Skeffington to write a new piece for the group. Mr. Skeffington has been the band director at South Portland High School in Maine since 1994 and his ensembles have won numerous awards both at Maine state festivals and national festivals. As a New England area trumpet play-

ers, Craig's performance credits include working with Natalie Cole, Barry Manilow, the Glenn Miller Big Band, Clark Terry, The New York Voices and the Artie Shaw Orchestra. Mr. Skeffington has several compositions and arrangements published through the Neil A. Kjos and CPP Belwin Music Publishers. The SHS Jazz Ensemble will premier the new work locally at the

Souhegan HS Jazz Night on April 22, 2010 at 7pm. The new composition will also be included in the set performed while the jazz ensemble and concert band travel to Washington D.C., Annapolis and Baltimore in early April. Please join us on April 22nd. For more information, please contact Carl Benevides at cbenevides@sprise.com .

### AMS Geography Bee Winner



The annual Amherst Middle School Geography Bee was held on January 15. For the second year in a row, David Ferreira was declared the winner. Sara Birse, Aidan Bailey, and Taylor Charbonneau also competed in the final round. David, pictured with Charetta Mutarelli the Social Studies Coordinator, has completed the written examination to qualify as a state competitor and a chance at a \$25,000 scholarship.

### Applewild School Radio Play



Fifth-graders at Applewild School in Fitchburg recently staged their annual Radio Play with an adaptation of "It's a Wonderful Life." During the play, the students act out the play as if it were being broadcast on radio. Students took on the traditional roles, such as George Bailey and Clarence the angel, while other students acted out the parts of sound engineers, creating real sound effects.

### Going Public

## "My Spelling Wars"

By PEGGY SILVA, DEAN OF FACULTY

All English teachers have their own little quirks, and I certainly have mine. When teaching on a 9th grade team, I always posted my pet peeves, words that when misspelled earned the dreaded Wrath of Peggy, something to be avoided at all costs. At the top of that list was the word 'it's,' three little letters that people commonly misspell. It is becomes it's—it's that simple. It's never, ever indicates possession. "Learn it now, people," I would fume. I dramatized this lesson over and over, hoping that some humor would help it sink in. I would turn papers back ungraded if I spotted the dreaded error. The kids thought I was weird, but comply they did—eventually. One time I found an 'it's' mistake in a commercial for a Warner Brothers' film. I got my students all riled up and we wrote a letter to the company. The mistake was corrected before our letter reached the company, but we claimed victory, nevertheless. I reported back to them every time I took action helping the world spell this word correctly, and dared them to do the same. Last weekend, my own personal spelling wars reached new heights. We were shopping for a chair for our living room, just a wooden one, not an upholstered one. We found a beautiful one, made by a company we had come upon almost 40 years ago. Back then, we couldn't afford that much quality. This time we sprang for the top of the line model. We loved everything about this beautifully crafted piece, until I noticed two egregious spelling errors in the catalogue's introduction. The catalog spoke of "it's commitment to excellence," and "it's value." ARGHH! I almost couldn't buy the chair, but my husband talked me back from the ledge, and we left the store with our order in hand. When I got home I found the company's website and wrote to the owner, pointing out the errors I had found, and sharing my excitement at owning this chair after first noticing it years ago. To my surprise, he responded immediately. He thanked me for my compliments on his workmanship, and thanked me for pointing out the spelling errors. He said that he was philosophical about the errors I had spotted. He knew he wasn't much of a speller, but he made beautiful furniture. His note conveyed his acceptance of his poor spelling. I wrote back, and explained that I didn't care if he was a lousy speller, but that I believed that lousy spellers had an obligation to use an editor. I told him that I believed that individuals committed to excellence needed to demonstrate that in every aspect of their product. I had just purchased a signed, limited edition chair, but since someone had approved some very expensive text riddled with errors, I did not have assurance that the company would back their product. What if their marketing sloppiness was an indicator of poor customer service? The owner did not respond to my last salvo, but I hope that he corrects his spelling mistakes, that he doesn't dismiss me as a whacko customer. If only spelling were an Olympic event. I'd be right there on the podium, waving the flag as our national anthem played. Can't you just see me on the cover of Time Magazine—making the world a better place, one 'it's' at a time.

### A Beast in Amherst Middle School?

The cast and crew have been practicing really hard to pull together a great show this year. This musical is a thrilling tale of the beautiful young girl, Belle (played by Hailey Aiken) who runs away to try and find her kidnapped father. Meanwhile, she runs into a cursed prince who is a beast (played by Jason Emmond)! Beauty and the Beast Jr. is in full swing! Show dates are March 11th, 12th and 13th. Tickets are on sale now at AMS, The Homestead, and The Black Forest. Hope to see you there!



Jason Emmond and Hailey Aiken play roles in "Beauty and the Beast, Jr." at Amherst Middle School, March 11, 12 and 13.