

January 2013 Edition

In This Issue:

Page One

-Penquis JMG News
-Alumnus Emily Tibbetts

Page Two

-Winter Wonderland in
Biddeford
-Snowflakes for Sandy
Hook

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Penquis Valley JMG in the Community

Penquis JMG juniors and seniors visited Mars Machines and Eastern Maine Shooting Supplies both this school year and last year to compile information on the businesses housed there. Owner Ron Desmarais provided product samples, tours, and employment skills tips to our students. In exchange, students used this newly gained knowledge to create a poster for Mr. Desmarais, which is now on display at the facility. Pictured below from left to right are: Greg Hathorn, Kenny Pennington, Ron Desmarais, Ian Perkins, Cevonte Johnson, & Gary Kargakos.



JMG was asked for the first time this year to coordinate the annual **Veterans Day Ceremony**. This school-wide assembly, open to our entire community, featured nine JMG students as color guards, Career Association members as narrators and singers, and slide shows compiled exclusively by our students. The feedback was extremely positive, and the planning and execution of such a large-scale event was excellent work experience for our JMG students.

Alumnus Spotlight: Emily Tibbetts

Like many of the students JMG has served, 1999 Deering High School JMG alumnus Emily Tibbetts says she struggled with the traditional classroom setup, but JMG helped her discover strategies that fit her learning style..

“I was never one to be able to sit in a classroom and learn,” she says. “I was more of a ‘hands on’ learner. I seemed to lack the attention span needed to learn by listening alone. I have always had a lot of energy so asking me to sit still for 90 minutes was next to impossible. I still have issues with it! The skills I acquired from JMG [allowed me to] enter the workforce after high school with the confidence and knowledge I needed to be successful.”

Possessed of a strong work ethic even in high school, Tibbetts worked as a banquet server at the Eastland Park Hotel, serving dinner to the residents at 75 State Street, and at Mail Boxes, Etc., where she started in a retail position and eventually became the store manager.

Tibbetts was attending paralegal studies classes in the evenings at Andover College (now Kaplan University), but discovered that “college wasn’t for me.” She had applied for a receptionist position at Pack Edge, Inc., a Portland-based company that designs and sells perishable and specialty food packaging for wholesale, retail and shipping. After a couple of interviews, instead of the receptionist job, the company offered Tibbetts a position as their second sales representative. “I took a leap of faith, and have been successful here ever since!” she says. She is currently the HR/Accounting director at Pack Edge.

Pictured at left are Emily Tibbetts and her husband, Matt.



A Winter Wonderland in Biddeford

The Biddeford Elementary School gymnasium was the place to be for 1st graders December 19, as students from Dave Pasquarello and Jenelle Harris' JMG classes at Biddeford High School transformed the large space into a wonderland of fun.

About 200 first graders had a blast hopping from one activity to another – all run by JMG students. They made ornaments, did freeze dancing, and played present ball (like basketball). They were treated to face painting and wrote letters to Santa Claus. They even made 'snow angels.'

With holiday music playing in the background, the gym was decked out with wrapped presents and a Christmas tree as the focal point, and a visit from jolly old Saint Nick himself added to the festive mood of the event. It was hard to tell which group was having more fun – the little kids or the JMG students running the event.

Each child who attended the Winter Carnival received a t-shirt courtesy of the event sponsors, an impressive list of area businesses. The JMG students started actively seeking sponsorships for the event in September. They were also able to get a donation of pizza from Papa John's to feed all of the children at the end of the carnival.

The Winter Carnival has been a Biddeford JMG tradition since 2006. In 2011 the venue moved from the high school to the elementary school for logistical, financial and safety reasons. It is truly a program-wide effort, as all Biddeford JMG students help in some way – from two weeks of classroom prep for the event, fundraising, building, decorating and setting up the night before, and then actually running the stations and leading groups at the carnival.



Kids display their painted faces and hands at the carnival.



A boy makes a jump shot at the 'present ball' station.

Senior Christine Judd said that the best part for her was “knowing that we made over 200 first graders who may not get a lot or anything at all for Christmas smile and have fun.” She continued, “One of the first graders looked at me and said, ‘Santa never comes to my house, but here, I’m having the best Christmas ever.’”

“The first graders were having fun they will remember throughout their lives, but the high schoolers were having more,” said senior Moise Marcial.

The first graders wrote letters of thanks and drew pictures for the JMG students. First grader Cadence wrote, “Dear JMG, Thank you for the best time of my life. I liked the face painting.”

It seems a good time was had by all, and the Winter Carnival was just the thing to get everyone into the holiday spirit.

Thank you to the following businesses for helping to make this event possible: Sterling Rope; Northeast Transmission; Saco & Biddeford Savings Institution; Portland Junior Pirates; Mulligan's Bar & Grill; Pizza by Alex; Atlantic Comfort Systems; Boston Connection; Sally's Gamesters; PeoplesChoice Credit Union; Garnsey Bros. Insurance; and Papa John's Pizza.

Snowflakes for Sandy Hook

At right, Lewiston JMG students and their snowflakes

In the wake of the Sandy Hook Elementary School tragedy last month, our students wanted to help. We became aware of the “snowflakes for Sandy Hook” project and spread the word among our staff. The project was started by the Parent Teacher Association of Sandy Hook Elementary School, and it called for teachers and students to create snowflakes that could be hung in the former Chalk Hill Middle School to create a welcoming, winter wonderland-like feel for when the students returned to classes.

JMG programs across the state participated in the snowflake project, and some of them got their entire schools involved. Other projects to help the survivors of Sandy Hook included students in Lewiston making cards, while students at Morse High School wrote letters to the survivors and the first responders. JMG students at Maine Central Institute in Pittsfield made green and white (their school colors) ribbons and bracelets and handed them out to the student body to wear during a campus-wide moment of silence and remembrance at the school.

The response to the request for snowflakes was so overwhelming that the Connecticut PTSA website requested that the donations stop, saying, “Please take this idea and your snowflakes and create a winter wonderland of your own in your community as a show of solidarity for our Newtown families. Please share your winter wonderlands with us. We would love to share your pictures with the families of Sandy Hook and all the other participating communities.”

