

# THE blarney stone

A PUBLICATION FOR THE COMMUNITY OF NOTRE DAME PREPARATORY SCHOOL AND MARIST ACADEMY



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## Philosophy club anchors school 'extras'

**G**roucho Marx once said, "I wouldn't really want to join a club that would have me as a member."

Fortunately, current students at Notre Dame Preparatory School and Marist Academy don't feel the same way. And they have more clubs to join than ever before.

Increasingly, however, many students in the U.S. find they don't have the choice to join school clubs as districts across the country face cuts to many of their extracurricular activities. But Notre Dame is bucking that trend as it began this school year with a net increase in these kinds of organizations—organizations that can make "school's out" sound even better to students.

NDPMA's clubs now number more than 20, which is more than many peer schools offer. They are devoted to a variety of topics which include math, improvisation, newspaper, leadership,

environmental awareness and robotics. Among the new clubs this year is a philosophy club in the upper division for students "who would like to discuss



Philosophy Club moderator and religion teacher Ryan Delaney leads a discussion at a recent meeting. Delaney sees the club as still another great way of forming our students as "academic scholars" and "upright citizens."

the big questions in life in a civilized and logical way," according to a description on the school's website.

But what many other students and parents across the country are calling less than civilized is the often complete elimination of clubs and after-school activities as school districts have lost big chunks of

revenue from the real estate collapse and because of bigger and bigger reductions in funding from state governments.

For example, in an effort to save a Cleveland-area district around \$80,000, the Brunswick city schools eliminated or reorganized supplemental contracts associated with a number of student clubs during the 2012-2013 school year. This has led to more than 15 clubs being eliminated at Brunswick elementary, middle and high schools.

Other U.S. schools, in an effort to retain many student extracurricular activities, have resorted to charging extra fees—often to the dismay of parents.

The Honors Jazz Ensemble at Wachusett Regional High School in Holden, Mass., is just one of the programs seeing what some students and parents are calling exorbitant fees this year after the district's recent budget reductions included cuts to club adviser expenses. Melissa Gale, a mother of a junior at Wachusett, spoke out at a recent school committee meeting about the \$400 activity fee charged to each student in the high school's music ensemble. Although it is "a phenomenal music program with phenomenal teachers who give it all their heart," she said her family was shocked to go from no fee to \$400.

And a few years ago, due to budget concerns, the Montrose, Mich., school board eliminated all extracurricular activities with the exception of athletics,

*Please see CLUBS, page 3*

*Notre Dame Preparatory School and Marist Academy provides its diverse student body a Catholic and internationally recognized college-preparatory experience of lasting value.*

UPPER-DIVISION STUDENTS FLOCK TO  
NEW PHOTOGRAPHY CLASSES  
(See page 4)

# Alum studying EECS at Cal-Berkeley

2010 graduate says that Notre Dame Prep has prepared him well for college and his choice of career

Notre Dame Prep graduate Yunjae Cho ('10), now in his junior year at the University of California, Berkeley, says he decided on the school because it is known for its prestigious, leading-edge programs in electrical engineering and computer science (EECS). "EECS is a broad area of the study of semiconductors, circuit design, signal processing, communication, computer architecture and artificial intelligence," he said. "I'm focused specifically on hardware designs in the field of electrical engineering.

Cho, who also works as a teaching assistant at Cal, said that his time at Notre Dame Prep was instrumental in his success at Cal-Berkeley. In his first few semesters at college, he felt better prepared in his introductory classes than many of his peers.

After completing his studies at Cal, Cho plans on attending graduate school. After that he hopes to work on research projects in the robotics area.

Last month, he took time out of his active schedule to discuss his experience in college as well as his time at Notre Dame Prep.

*Over the summer you had the opportunity to work at a research lab. What was that like?*

I was involved in a research project at Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory. I worked under the supervision of a senior electrical engineer in the 88-inch Cyclotron Building and was responsible for examining design flaws or limitations and coming up with potential solutions and implementation. I realized how different it was to work in a lab with real-world constraints than to study the theory in the classroom. It gave me different insights about real-world problems and made me realize what I liked and disliked about being in a research laboratory.

*When you are not in class or assistant-teaching is there anything else at UC Berkeley you do for extracurricular activity?*

Yes, I have been involved in EECS Honor Society in which we strive for excellence and serve our department and community by providing peer tutoring for students and community services to the

surrounding area—just as we did in NHS at Notre Dame Prep.

I'm also involved in a few different choral groups on campus. I love singing after rough days at school because it really refreshes my soul and helps me forget about daily hardship. I also enjoy praising God through music because I believe it's one of the best ways to proclaim His glory and express our gratitude toward Him.

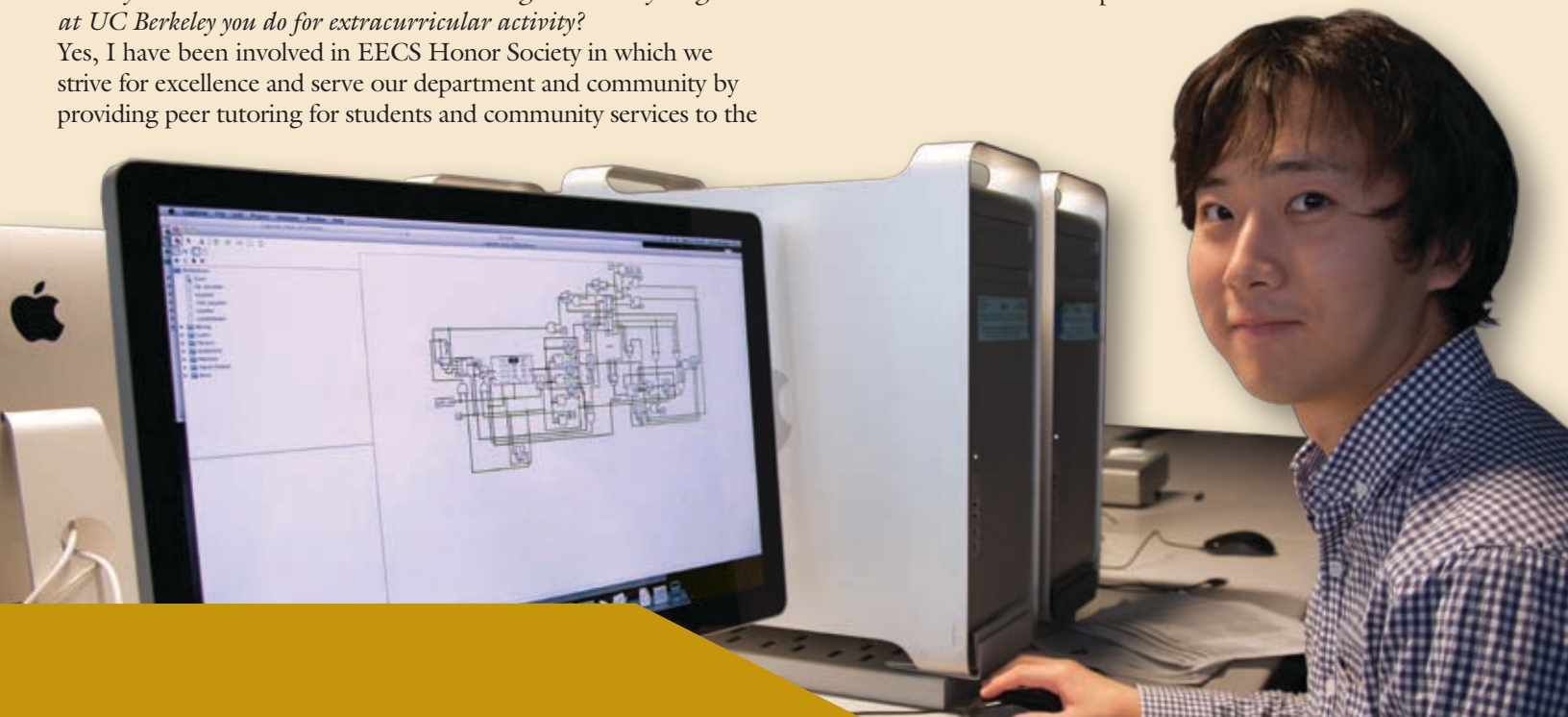
*Do you feel Notre Dame Prep prepared you for life after high school?*

I believe the Catholic education at NDP helped me form and solidify my values and conscience. At NDP, I was constantly reminded that we are all brothers and sisters of Jesus. It wasn't until I came to college that I actually started to appreciate my faith. Arriving at a public, very liberal university, a lot of my new friends were atheists, agnostics and people who were unsure about their faith. That's when I realized how my Catholic education helped me make moral judgments and keep my faith safe from big turmoil throughout my college years.

Also, my experience as president of NHS in my senior year at NDP had transformed my life tremendously. Being a leader of an organization of a few hundred people was a stressful but very rewarding experience. The organization, communication and leadership skills that I learned during my last year at NDP have been serving me well in college and life in general.

*Do you have any favorite memories of NDP?*

Although I have so many good memories from NDP that simply make me smile, my favorite memory from NDP is definitely the Kairos retreat. It was a truly life-transforming experience when, in addition to forming strong, everlasting bonds with friends, I had a great opportunity to reflect on and experience God's wonders in my life. I still go on church retreats regularly, but none of them comes close to the Kairos experience. 🙏



## CLUBS, from page 1

National Honor Society, robotics and student government.

### NDP'S NEWEST CLUB

Notre Dame Prep's nascent philosophy club is helmed by new faculty member Ryan Delaney, who teaches religion in the upper division. He says he suggested the club to provide students with an open forum in which they could discuss the "big questions" in an intelligent, civil and genuinely productive way.

"I notice that this kind of intelligent and civil discourse is rather lacking in



New NDP teacher Katrina Sagert (social studies, English), right, and freshman Mary Boltri participate in a philosophy club discussion.

our society," he said. "If you doubt this, watch five minutes of cable news! I see the philosophy club as still another great way of forming our students as 'academic scholars' and 'upright citizens.'"

The club is open to students in grades nine through 12 and has been well received. About 10 students participate every week, which is pretty good for a new club, according to Delaney.

As for how he makes the leap between his religion class and philosophy, Delaney says he uses philosophy discussions as a bridge. "Among other things, it helps us to resolve apparent conflicts between what we know by the natural sciences and what we know by faith," he said. "Certainly our students recognize these apparent conflicts. Who couldn't in the age of [Christopher] Hitchens and [Richard] Dawkins! In our philosophy club, students have the opportunity to discuss these divergences, and to seek the God who reveals Himself both in the 'book of Creation' and in the 'book of Scripture.'"

"We also discuss other big questions,

such as, 'What is love?', 'Can we prove that God exists?' and 'What makes an action right or wrong?' Lately, we have been using the Harry Potter books and movies as a springboard for discussion. I might ask, for example, 'Would it be ethical to use a love potion and, if it came to that, could a love potion ever produce true love?'"

### OTHER CLUBS KEEP STUDENTS BUSY

Even though Notre Dame's athletic department offers both women's and men's ski teams, there is also a ski club for student skiers who may not want to ski in a competitive environment. The NDPMA Ski and Snowboarding Club welcomes members (over the age of 7) from all three divisions as well as their parents and family—it even includes members of the school's faculty. They ski on Wednesdays during the ski season, weather permitting. The moderators are current parents Rob Meyer, Linus Isabell and Michelle Sutkiewicz.

The Champions for Life Club, whose mission is "defending and celebrating the sanctity and dignity of all life from womb to tomb," instills in students a respect for all life—the unborn, disabled and elderly. The club meets on Tuesdays and is moderated by upper division religion teacher Daniel Orr.

The Environmental Club is moderated by math teacher Michelle Garcia, who says the club "is designed to raise awareness among the student body about the small differences that we can make in our everyday lives to better conserve the Earth's resources.

"In addition to educating others about the environment, we try to show the members and other students how they can do more," said Garcia, who has been on the faculty of Notre Dame for more than seven years. "We participate in Adopt-A-Highway to clean up Giddings Road, we visit organic farms to help plant trees and we've even visited a 'green' convent to see how the nuns there practice environmental sustainability.

And upper-division English teacher Anthony Butorac moderates the school's Creative Writing Club, which meets on Fridays and is comprised of a group of students who are especially interested in expressing themselves and their ideas through writing. 📝

## COMPLETE LIST OF CLUBS AND ORGANIZATIONS AT NDPMA

### CAMPUS MINISTRY

Campus Ministry offers three different commissions of student leaders:

#### - Liturgy Commission:

Meetings: Thursdays. Moderator: Della Laurence

#### - Service Commission:

Meetings: Wednesdays. Moderator: Cathy Zuccaro

#### - Retreat Commission:

Meetings: Tuesdays. Moderator: Cathy Zuccaro

### CHINESE HONOR SOCIETY

Meetings: Tuesdays. Moderator: Joanne Liu

### CREATIVE WRITING CLUB

Meetings: Fridays. Moderator: Anthony Butorac

### DEBATE

Meetings: Thursdays. Moderator: LeAnne Schmidt

### ENVIRONMENTAL CLUB

Meetings: Mondays. Moderator: Michelle Garcia

### F.I.R.S.T. ROBOTICS

Meetings: Mondays. Moderator: Sue McGinnis

### IMPROV CLUB

Meetings: Weekly. Moderator: Erica Alemdar

### LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

Meetings: Once a phase. Moderator: Nick Kator

### NATIONAL HONOR SOCIETY

Meetings: First Tuesday of month. Moderator: Melissa Archer

### NEWSPAPER

Meetings: Periodically. Moderator: Ed Davis

### OCRA ROBOTICS

Meetings: Tuesdays and Thursdays. Moderator: Sue McGinnis

### OPTIMIST CLUB

Meetings: Thursdays. Moderators: Shari Phillips, Amy Preiss, Kathleen Chinavare

### CHAMPIONS FOR LIFE

Meetings: Tuesdays. Moderator: Daniel Orr

### SADD

Meetings: Wednesdays. Moderator: Erica Alemdar

### ACTION FOR AFRICA

Meetings: Periodically. Moderator: Amy Preiss

### SKI CLUB

Wednesdays (weather permitting).

Moderators: Rob Meyer, Linus Isabell, Michelle Sutkiewicz

### SPANISH HONOR SOCIETY

Meetings: Wednesday. Moderator: Kim Anderson

### STUDENT COUNCIL

Meetings: Wednesdays. Moderator: Nick Kator

### VARSITY CLUB

Meetings: Monthly. Moderator: Betty Wroubel

### VENTURE CREW

Meetings: Thursdays. Moderator: Deb McCormick

### MATH CLUB

Meetings: Tuesdays and Thursdays. Moderator: Michelle Garcia

### PHILOSOPHY CLUB

Meetings: Monday. Moderator: Ryan Delaney

More information on NDPMA's clubs and organizations available at [www.ndpma.org](http://www.ndpma.org).

# Students focused on new photography classes

125 Notre Dame Prep students take advantage of latest addition to curriculum

The new-this-year photography classes are seeing a big interest from Notre Dame students, who are enjoying them and doing some great work, according to their teacher.

Basic Digital Photography and Advanced Digital Photography, which currently have 85 and 40 students, respectively, represent the first time this rapidly changing discipline is being taught as part of the school's art curriculum. While not unusual in other schools with comprehensive art programs, stand-alone photography classes are still relatively rare in Catholic schools.

The classes are taught by Kati Swieca-Brockman and Ned Devine from the NDP art department. Swieca-Brockman says she thought the students were initially surprised by the complexities of photography.

"Students were initially surprised by the amount of information involved in photography, both technically and historically," she said. "But now they are really enjoying the class once they started to see how it all works together."

She said that currently the classes only accept junior and seniors and that the prerequisite is the Art Foundations class to help ensure they come in with a better understanding of composition, elements and basic principles.

The department also purchased digital SLR cameras and a dedicated photo printer for the students. Swieca-Brockman said once the kids got used to the new equipment, they dove right into the basics as well as the more advanced concepts. "We are working on how to critically analyze photographs and to read beyond the basic images

presented. We are also covering Photoshop techniques, critiquing work and even the history of photography." 📷



Photographer: Jack Stouffer, senior



Photographer: Ben Sutkiewicz, junior



Photographer: Emily Rodriguez, senior



Photographer: Ashley Agosta, senior



Photographer: Lauren Nantel, senior



## A PLAN FOR PLANNED GIVING

January is a time for New Year's resolutions. Consider setting up an appointment with an attorney or estate planner to get your personal affairs in order.

A proper will is critical to making sure that your children are cared for in the event that you are no longer able to do so. In addition, proper estate planning can ensure that you minimize estate taxes at the time of your death. During the planning process, it is a great time to consider a charitable gift. Statistics show that 44% of people give to religious causes during their

lifetime, but only 9.6% at the time of their death. A simple clause, such as "I bequest \_\_\_% of my estate to \_\_\_\_\_ (charity)," can be a great way to reduce taxes and is a wonderful lesson in giving for your children.

Notre Dame Preparatory School and Marist Academy is a tax exempt, non-profit 501(c)3 corporation and all free will contributions are 100% tax deductible. The school has a volunteer planned-giving committee that will confidentially meet with parents to answer questions on all aspects of wills, estate plans and charitable giving.

Contact Andy Guest in the advancement office at 248-373-2171, or [aguest@ndpma.org](mailto:aguest@ndpma.org), if you have any questions. 📷

## LOWER DIVISION, from page 6

Pontiac, allowing us to go ahead with the renovation of the church building and installation of the classroom structure.

It is our intent to leave the St. Benedict campus by June 30, 2013. We have met with the pastor of St. Benedict as well as with the archdiocese regarding the transfer of computers, desks, etc., to the new Pontiac site. Lower division Principal Diana Atkins and I expect to have a general town hall meeting in the spring to discuss logistics as we come closer to our summertime move. We expect to have a 10th Anniversary Celebration of our lower division as part of the move process.

On another note, we have just purchased 9.2 acres of property from Lawrence Technological University. This parcel is just north of the AutoZone on Perry Street. You will notice that we have spruced the property up a little. It is our long-range intention to construct additional sports fields and tennis courts on that newly acquired property. The Marists now own the property north of the AutoZone up to the north end of the tennis courts in addition to the three newly acquired parcels at Giddings Road south of Walton Boulevard. 🇺🇸

## NDP'S FIRST-EVER BOWLING TEAMS START COMPETITION

Notre Dame Prep's first-ever participation in varsity bowling occurred Dec. 8 as the inaugural Fighting Irish men's and women's teams competed at Drakeshire Lanes in Farmington Hills. The varsity bowlers competed against 11 other schools from around the Metro area and performed up to expectations.

The women's team is coached by Sheri Yanik of the counseling office and the men's by social studies teacher John Smith. 🇺🇸



The new NDP women's bowling team, with coach Sheri Yanik, at their first meet Dec. 8 in Farmington Hills.

## School gets commendations from ISACS team

The Independent Schools Association of the Central States (ISACS) visiting team wrapped up its accreditation visit in mid-November. The team visited with the faculty and staff of NDPMA

at a wrap-up meeting and presented preliminary feedback from their visit. Dawn Nichols, Ed.D., who chaired the 16-member

accreditation team, told those in attendance that "clearly NDPMA is a school that has been on the move since its founding 18 years ago. Focused on 'doing the right things for kids' as stated by school head Father Leon Olszamowski, the school continues its quest to grow into the best Catholic school available. Certainly through both the self-study process and ISACS visiting team experience, NDPMA's willingness to engage in ongoing school improvement was affirmed."

She went on to list the major "commendations" for NDPMA that resulted from her team's visit:

### MAJOR COMMENDATIONS

(From *Notre Dame Preparatory School and Marist Academy ISACS Visiting Committee Report*, November 2012)

The ISACS Visiting Team commends Notre Dame Preparatory School and Marist Academy for its:

**1. MISSION-FOCUSED COMMUNITY AND PROGRAM** Clearly evident is NDPMA's use of the mission statement in guiding academic and extracurricular programs and defining the overall atmosphere of the community. "Work with God to form Christian People, Upright Citizens and Academic Scholars," permeates the ethos of the school. Students, faculty, parents, administration and the Board of Trustees all clearly demonstrate a passion for living the Marist mission.

**2. PERVASIVE STRENGTH OF AND PRIDE IN THE COMMUNITY** Such strength and pride are reflected in: the professional, dedicated faculty, staff and administration; the engaged and committed Board of Trustees; the motivated, enthusiastic students; and the supportive parents and alumni. Students exhibit a love for their school that is palpable and a passion for learning that transcends the classroom.

**3. THE COURAGE AND VISION TO ADOPT ALL THREE PROGRAMS OF THE INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE PROGRAM WITHIN A TWO-YEAR PERIOD** In choosing to be the only Catholic school in the United States that offers all three IB programs, NDPMA faculty and administrators are "risk-takers" in currently embracing a challenging course of inquiry-based, transdisciplinary study that cultivates collaborative, international-mindedness in both faculty and students and provides a planning framework that guides thoughtful implementation of a more integrated curriculum.

**4. SUPERIOR FACILITIES AND GROUNDS** First impressions in schools are critical and NDPMA immediately exceeded the ISACS visiting team's expectations. The school's cleanliness, warmth, décor, maintenance and attention to detail are notable. More important than first impressions, facilities build community and affect student learning outcomes. The team found the overall facility and grounds to be a reflection of the school's community, leadership, overall mission and pride. NDPMA has made and continues to make good, strategic and conscientious decisions, both short and long term, to ensure their infrastructure is thoughtfully developed for future generations.

Notre Dame expects a full report and a decision on accreditation in early 2013. 🇺🇸



# Lower division on the move... part III

By Fr. Leon Olszowski, s.m., president

Since August 24, when last I wrote a Blarney Stone article, the Marist Fathers of Detroit, Inc., has purchased three parcels of land for the lower division move. We have purchased the church and property at 1425 Giddings

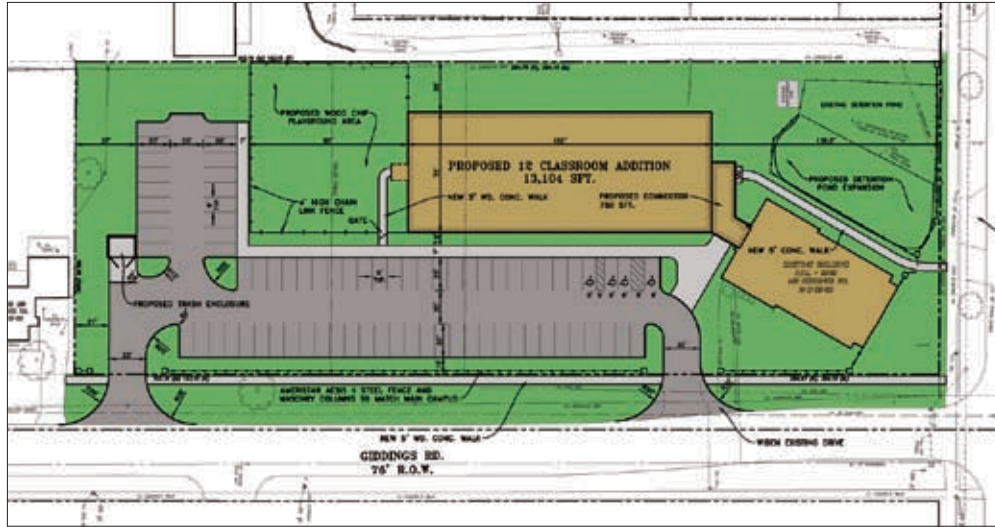
Road, the property just to the south located at 1405 Giddings Road and one additional parcel at 1397 Giddings Road. These properties, amounting to a little over 2-1/4 acres, give us the space needed to connect a building to the existing church building to begin our school opera-

tion this fall.

On December 17, the Board of Trustees voted 17-1-1 to build a permanent 12-classroom building versus the previously proposed temporary building. The permanent building is considered to be an extensive upgrade and a better long-term solution for lower division students and families. The permanent building will consist of steel, concrete and brick siding. It will be connected to the renovated church, which will house the administrative offices, media center and a multi-purpose gathering and play space.


There also will be sufficient room for parking and a playground as well as future expansion. We also intend to add up to four more acres of land when parcels become available for purchase.

We are currently in the design phase of renovations for the church building. Also, a plan for the classroom structure has already been submitted to the state fire marshal, and by mid-February we expect to have site plan approval from the city of



The new lower division 12-classroom building will be a permanent structure connected to the former church building, which will be extensively renovated to accommodate administration offices, a media center and a large activity room.



Please see LOWER DIVISION, page 5



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Get the latest news and updates on your cell phone by texting "follow NDPMA" to 40404. Scan the QR code at right with your smartphone QR-code reader to get to instructions.

NDPMA also is on Facebook! Find link on the NDPMA web site: ndpma.org.

*A world of education*

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