

Learning the Principles of a New Principal

A Visit with the New Principal of West Towson Elementary School

By **Jessica Paffenbarger**

Reliving all the jitters of a first day back to school, I dressed in my "Sunday best" and drove the grand distance of 0.9 miles from my house to the new West Towson Elementary School (WTES) to interview Susan Hershfeld, the new principal of this brand new school, and her assistant principal, Rebecca Rider. Instead of being ushered into the new school, I was perplexed when I was shown into a room in Ridge Ruxton School in which I saw two made-up single beds, a wardrobe, and a chest of drawers. It turns out the new WTES administrators were being temporarily housed in a classroom used to teach the Ridge Ruxton students some of the more practical aspects of life, such as how to make a bed.

Ms. Hershfeld is not new to Baltimore County Public Schools. She began her teaching career in the County at Bedford Elementary School, then moved to several other elementary schools in various capacities: as a special education teacher, an assistant principal and, finally, a principal. She was appointed principal of WTES on the 30th of June, 2009, after finishing up at Fort Garrison Elementary School. At the time of our interview, we were unable to meet in the new building because it was still unfinished. The new school will host the RRLRAIA Annual Meeting on Thursday, the 23rd of September, so a complete tour will be available to all of you then. (See information on page 2 of this newsletter.) For the time being, Ms. Hershfeld and Ms. Rider kindly spent an hour in their temporary

'bed chamber' answering my questions about how the new school is coming together. From our discussion I learned the following.

The school is being outfitted with innovative furnishings and high end technology. For example, the students' chairs, from VS International, were chosen because they are ergonomically comfortable



Rebecca Rider and Susan Hershfeld outside the new West Towson Elementary School. Courtesy of Nettie Washburn

for students of all sizes and flexible enough to adjust to a student's posture for full spinal support whether leaning forward or back, and even allow for safe wiggling. They are also very cool looking! Teachers' desks, which are also ergonomically designed for varying heights, are easily moved on lockable casters, making classroom re-configuration as simple as 'A, B, C'!

Technology will be the real star of the new school. The building houses a TV production studio where students will learn to script presentations and operate equipment for morning and afternoon announcements. A technology integration teacher and the school librarian will coordinate this training. The technology integration teacher will also have access to mobile computer labs. The school is equipped with a lab (of 30 computers each) for every three to four classrooms; there are also two desktop computers in each classroom. Technology training will be conducted school-wide and will include the kindergarten classes. Children will learn a full spectrum of

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Robert E. Lee Park Nature Council Update

It's official! The Robert E. Lee Park Nature Center, the newest of Baltimore County's Recreation and Parks nature centers, now has a nature council of its own.

Officially designated as the Robert E. Lee Park Nature Council, Inc., (RELPC), this group of dedicated men and women have been meeting as an advisory board for the Park since last November to work on such issues as by-laws, the off-leash dog park, Park staffing (including rangers), interpretive historical and environmental programs, and how to accommodate the needs of bicyclists, boaters (kayaks and canoes), hikers, joggers and those interested in fishing.

Baltimore County has awarded contracts for the following tasks under Phase I of its long-range plan for the Park:

- reconstruction of the access bridge from Lakeside Drive to the Park
- refurbishment of the impervious parking lot near the dam
- construction of a boardwalk connecting the Light Rail Park & Ride lot to the Park



Work is progressing on the new bridge over Jones Falls to the entrance to Robert E. Lee Park

■ building a fenced off-leash dog park on the peninsula. The concession stand, built of Butler stone, was razed to make way for parking. The caretaker's cottage was also torn down and a nature trailer will be initially housed on this site.

It is hoped that Phase I will be completed by late summer or early Fall 2011.



Stone salvaged from the concession stand is slated to be used elsewhere in the Park.

