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GMC Track Meet

The Comet Track & Field team takes on the GMC meet today at 4 p.m. Check thecspn.com for coverage.

Science Fair

Sophomore Sreeram Venkatarao is presenting his project at the prestigious INTEL International Science and Engineering Fair this week. Check thecspn.com for an interview with Venkatarao.

Destination Imagination

The Destination Imagination team competes in the Global Finals May 20-23 at the University of Tennessee. Check thecspn.com for coverage.



Photo contributed by Sabrina Patel
Destination Imagination team compete at Globals in 2014.

compiled by Jessica Sommerville

THE BIGGEST LOSER

New budget proposal has Mason taking financial hit

Duncan MacKenzie | Staff Writer

It turns out the sheriff of Nottingham didn't bring down Robin Hood—it was postcards and protestations from the Mason community that put a halt to Ohio Governor John Kasich's latest attempt to find a solution to the school funding formula in Ohio.

Earlier this year, Governor Kasich proposed a plan with "Robin Hood" qualities, to equalize resources available to rich and poor school districts alike. If it had come into effect, Mason City Schools would have lost \$7 million over the next two years in the form of reductions of TPP (Tangible Personal Property Tax) reimbursement. Because Mason was one of the biggest receivers of TPP tax reimbursement, it would in turn become one of the biggest losers if this source of funding were to go away.

This tax would be replaced with funding from the CAT (Commercial Activities Tax). Recently, Ohio's House of Representatives passed a new version of the biennium budget, called House Bill 64, which keeps the district's funding at its current level for the next two years, without reduction.

This change was greatly influenced by Mason community members, who sent thousands of emails and letters to state representatives voicing their opinions about Governor Kasich's proposition. According to Public Information Officer Tracey Carson, Mason community members made sure their voices were heard at the state level in numerous ways.

"(This) has an impact for all Mason residents, and really Ohioans."

— TODD HENDERSON
MASON HIGH SCHOOL PARENT

"Folks wrote emails to members of the House Finance Committee, they wrote emails to members of the House Education Committee, they wrote letters to our own Representative Zeltwanger and Senator Jones, and we also had a 48-hour postcard campaign where thousands of people flocked to our schools to make sure that they signed a postcard," Carson said. "Then fellow parents went with us to the House Finance Committee to deliver them."

Todd Henderson was one such community member who made sure his voice was heard. Henderson has children in Mason City Schools and said he is concerned, as a Mason resident and parent, about the future of the district. Henderson said that one of the reasons that Mason appealed to him as

a place to raise his family was because of the top-notch schools, and he intends to keep them that way.

"The challenge that we're trying to overcome is helping people realize that it has impact for all Mason residents, and really Ohioans," Henderson said. "Mason is a pretty big draw and attraction for Ohio. I'm certainly one of the people that responded to that attraction and moved my family here from Pennsylvania because it's a good place to live, good schools, good health care, good quality of life. That good quality of life is tied to the schools."

"We're concerned because even in the House version, in year three, we could lose \$7 million."

— TRACEY CARSON
PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER

Carson said that the new plan is a move in the right direction, but it only protects Mason for the next two years. After those two years are up, she said it's back to the drawing board.

"We're concerned because even in the House version, (in) year three, we would lose \$7 million," Carson said. "We want them to put in, like they did in 2011, a measure that would say districts that are disproportionately impacted would see a permanent reimbursement in perpetuity for the TPP tax."

According to Ohio Representative Paul Zeltwanger, the real difficulty that the bill will have to overcome is that each school and student has different needs, and catering to everyone's needs isn't going to occur with one collective bill.

"From my perspective, the issue becomes that we have three very unique categories within schools: urban schools, suburban schools and rural schools," Zeltwanger said. "They all have different needs, different demands, and different challenges. The problem becomes when we try to produce a state funding solution to address each of those, even though they are unique. That's one of the biggest hidden challenges in it all. I am probably more of a proponent that state funding should be set based on a certain amount per student and the funding should follow the student."

The bill also has many more obstacles to overcome before finally becoming law. Carson said that the battle is yet to be won and the community's assistance is still needed.

"We had a lot of support from the community and we will continue to call on their support throughout this process," Carson said.