



Maplewood Public School teachers Scott Augustine, left, Melissa Murray and Dave Hill decorate a Grade 4 classroom in preparation for the first day of classes Sept. 5. Students and teachers of schools around the region have been gearing up for the start of the year for the past two weeks.

Area schools prepare for kids, welcome new staff

BY DANIEL SCHWAB

Summer is winding down and both students and teachers are preparing for another school year.

Classes for elementary and high schools begin Sept. 5. For the past week, new students and their parents have been touring the hallways as teachers put the finishing touches on their classrooms.

Some local schools will be welcoming a number of

new staff members this year.

Essex District High School's new vice-principal Tony Omar said he's excited to be coming to a "real sports school."

"Basketball, football, hockey, soccer – I'm looking forward to attending a lot of games," Omar said.

He said he is already familiar with the Red Raiders' sports teams after refereeing both boys' and girls' volleyball last year.

This year, he may even

try to coach soccer.

Omar began his teaching career as a math teacher at Leamington District High School. After 13 years, he moved to General Amherst High School in Amherstburg to become vice-principal for two years.

Now, he's still in transition to becoming a Red Raider.

"You always have the school that you grew up with," Omar said. "And separating from that school is

the toughest part."

But for now, Omar said things are already in motion at the school and, as a newcomer, he's still learning his way around.

Another new staff member, JoAnne Shea, is also learning her way around a

local high school.

Shea calls herself the "new girl" around St. Thomas of Villanova in LaSalle.

She will be taking over the role of principal at the school this year, after four years at F.J. Brennan in Windsor.

For the past week, the school has been offering a technology camp for budding Grade 9 students.

"It's a great way to have a meet-and-greet with some of our new students," Shea said.

About 300 Grade 9s are expected to attend the school this year, and the technology program is something Shea says she's looking forward to being a part of.

For Dennis Edmonson, the new principal of Gosfield North elementary school, one of the most exciting things to look forward to this year will be planning for the facility's 50th anniversary in 2007.

"We're going to start preparing for the anniversary in the fall so we can have a major celebration next year," Edmonson said.

Entering his sixth year as a principal, Edmonson worked previously at Queen Elizabeth and East Mersea schools in Leamington.

He will be welcoming Gosfield North's 560-plus students the first day of classes with "some positive words."

"I've already met all the teachers and students in June," he said. "It's very

exciting."

Another school, Maidstone Central, which celebrated its 45th anniversary last year, is preparing to launch its annual fundraising campaign in September.

Principal Margaret Ramcharan said staff, students and parents will soon discuss "innovative and creative ways to fundraise for sports teams and field trips."

This year, the facility will include more split classes after Grade 3 teacher Elizabeth Tremaine transferred to another school in the board. Grades 3-4, 4-5, 6-7 and 7-8 will now be split classes.

That won't be the case for Colchester North Public School. The school will be welcoming three new staff members, special education teacher Barbara Anderson, Junior Kindergarten teacher Jennifer Eaton and Grade 6-7 teacher Christine Decaire.

Three Grade 8 exchange students from France will also be spending their year at the facility.

Principal Barb Chevalier said the school has been bustling with activity the past couple weeks, with new students and parents touring the halls and becoming familiarized with the classrooms and bus stops.

"We're always open for tours or just having parents and kids drop by just to say hello," Chevalier said. "We're a country school and that's the atmosphere we have here."

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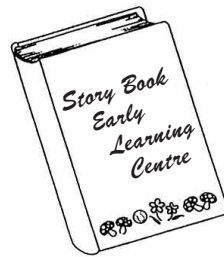
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