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School Notes: What local schools need now: Lysol, tissues

By **CATHERINE BAUM**
Staff Writer

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EASTHAMPTON

The Parent Teacher Organization in Easthampton typically donates snacks and school supplies to teachers. Last week, it donated Lysol, tissues and disinfecting wipes.

"It's what they need right now," said Dawn Young, PTO president. "The kids come home and go to school. Their sickness is bouncing back and forth. The parents and teachers can only do so much."

A substitute teacher and parent, Young said she came up with the donation idea because she noticed a peak in student and faculty absences in schools. The sickness was also prevalent in her own home, where three of her four children stayed in to rest for about five days around Halloween.

In discussions with elementary school secretaries, Young said she learned up to 20 faculty members and 60 to 80 students were out sick from Maple Elementary School two weeks before Halloween. At Center and Pepin Elementary School, she said, approximately 30 students were out sick from each school the week before Halloween.

"The numbers were so grossly huge in my eyes," Young said. "I thought ¿there's got to be a way that we could help."

She consulted other PTO board members, including treasurer Paula Lloyd, whose two children were also recently out sick, and moved forward. All 29 elementary classrooms, the Maple Elementary School preschool and reading recovery classrooms each received one can of Lysol, one box of tissues and one container of disinfecting wipes. The total value came to about \$250.

Teachers smiled as the volunteers popped in, dropped the items off on their desks and ran out their classroom doors.

"They were forever grateful," Young said.

Schoolchildren are seemingly getting healthier as the number of student absences decreases.

"It looks like it's gone through," said Susan Thibodeau, secretary at Center Elementary School. "It's nothing compared to the way it's been."

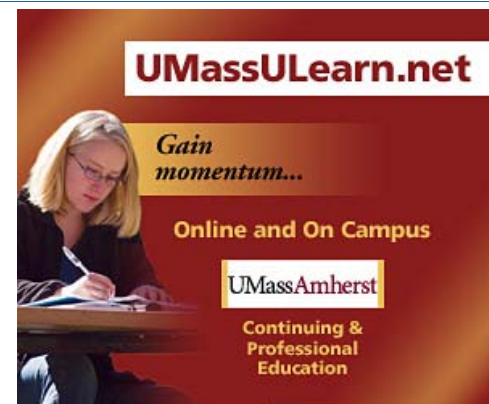
The PTO's biggest annual fundraiser is in January and February, when the group sells butter braids to help fund gifts for schools. Young said last week's donation was made because it was what she called a "right now need."

"We'll do this all winter long if we have to," Young said.

Celebrating literacy month

November is family literacy month, and elementary schools in Southampton and Westhampton hold events today to recognize the occasion.

Westhampton Elementary School students and adults will choose the book they want to read and



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decorate a tote bag in which they will carry that book home to share with their family between 10:30 and 11:45 a.m. Nov. 19.

In Southampton, students at the William E. Norris Elementary School will listen to local storyteller and musician John Porcino perform at 6:30 p.m. in the school's gym. Porcino will then provide parents with educational outreach on storytelling with their children while students create accordion books and pencil toppers. The event will end with cookies and milk for all.

"This is all about teachers and families working together to support literacy in the younger grades," said Pati Mari, librarian for the Norris school. "Storytelling is a different way to experience a story. Instead of having a book in your hand where you're reading it out loud and you're showing the pictures, with storytelling the kids use their imagination for pictures."

Catherine Baum can be reached at cbaum@gazettenet.com.

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