



Tenth-grader Juan Salazar and ninth-grader Joey Mrozinski buckle their belts in the back seat of a van during the Battle of the Belts event at Mohonasen High School on Monday, April 19.

# Seatbelt savvy scores points

**Mohon High School's Battle of the Belts encourages positive choices**

By SEAN AHERN  
aherns@spotlightnews.com

Students at Mohonasen High School were in a frenzy as they tried to buckle their seatbelts during the school's third annual Battle of the Belts on Monday, April 19.

Teams of four students worked to quickly fasten and unfasten their seatbelts, run around the car, and quickly change seats in order to be the fastest in seatbelt safety.

The event grew out of the Sean's Run fundraiser - 5K run/walk in memory of Sean French, a Chatham High School student and track athlete who was

killed in a drunk-driving accident on New Year's Day in 2002.

Battle of the Belts, hosted by Students Against Destructive Decisions, encourages students to buckle up and make positive choices during prom season.

"We're just trying to make people aware of the destructive decisions that people make around prom," said SADD president Shelby Leonard. "It's just a fun and creative way to keep people from making mistakes."

Mohonasen Board of Education member Eileen French, who is also the aunt of Sean French, said the event helps to highlight the need for seatbelts and wearing them no matter who is driving.

"This is something that



Domenico Nanci, a senior at Mohonasen High School, participates in the Battle of the Belts on Monday, April 19. The event promotes safe decisions and the use of seatbelts in cars. Teams of four students raced around the van, buckling seatbelts, while teacher Greg Massaroni timed each team.

Photos by Sean Ahern/Spotlight

really highlights that no matter where you are in a car or who is driving that you need to wear a seatbelt," said French.

Mohonasen Principal Dave Collins said the event differs from other DWI events that the school holds, which often have a somber tone, because the belt battle is a positive, fun experience.

"Any weekend is a weekend where a student makes many decisions," said Collins. "This is a really good opportunity to take something that is a competition for the students and bring a positive message that a moment's decision can have a profound impact

on themselves and those around them."

Rotterdam police officer and school resource officer Tim Rumbaugh said the event helps to inform students while having a good time.

"It brings good awareness to seatbelt safety, and the kids have a fun time doing it," he said.

The winners of the high school contest will go on to the World Championship Battle of the Belts, on Sunday, April 24, as a part of the Sean's Run event. For more information on Sean's Run or the Battle of the Belts, go online to [www.seansrun.com](http://www.seansrun.com).



Kinjal Patel, Tyler Massaroni, Kiera O'Dwyer and Shelby Leonard of SADD stand with Rotterdam police officer Tim Rumbaugh at the Battle of the Belts event at Mohonasen High School on Monday, April 19.

# Mohon board adopts \$42.7 million spending plan

**Budget includes 2.3 percent levy increase**

By SEAN AHERN  
aherns@spotlightnews.com

The Mohonasen Board of Education unanimously adopted the 2010-11 budget on Monday, April 19.

The \$42.7 million spending plan includes a tax levy increase of 2.3 percent from the 2009-2010

budget of \$21,387,652, with a home assessed at \$100,000 seeing an approximate \$19 increase from the previous year, according to Assistant Superintendent of Business Denise Swezey.

Superintendent Kathleen Spring said board members sometimes had differing opinions on the budget, but worked through it.

"We are doing what's right for the district and balancing the budget the best way we can," said Spring.

Board President Dominic Cafarelli said coming up with a budget this year was tough, but in the end, the board members were able to come up with a plan that would work for the district despite funding cuts at the state level.

"We're pretty proud



Dr. Margaret Gray, center, attends the dedication of the Mohonasen High School Auditorium on Monday, April 19. The facility has been renamed the Gray Theatre in honor of the longtime arts educator.

Sean Ahern/Spotlight

about what we have done," he said.

The board was able to decrease the tax levy from the previous 2.4 percent estimate with an increase of \$40,000 from BOCES for the renting of rooms for the summer.

Board member Joe

Salamone said the board was able to strike a nice balance with next year's budget, and while the board was still waiting for news from the state about its budget, the administration did a good job working on the adopted budget.

The proposal is \$336,477 higher than the current 2009-2010 budget, or a 0.8 percent increase in the tax levy. After a cut in state aid, the Board

of Education faced over \$2.5 million in reductions across the district that would affect both faculty and staff while still trying to keep education programs intact. Cuts include the elimination of 17.6 full time equivalent positions, a reduction of \$60,583 in transportation expenditures, \$591,748 in instruction expenditures, and \$638,322 in reductions from state aid for revenues. The board also saw an increase of \$500,000 in fund balance appropriations, with \$850,000 proposed in the 2010-11 budget. The board decided to wait until April 19 to pass the budget in the hope of hearing information from the state regarding education funding.

The budget will go before voters on Tuesday, May 18. A public hearing is set for the budget on Monday, May 10, at 6 p.m. at the Farnsworth Technology Center at Mohonasen High School.

## Board dedicates Mohon theater

The board also dedicated the Mohonasen High School Auditorium to longtime teacher and theater director Dr. Margaret Gray at the Farnsworth Technology Center at 6:15 p.m. The facility has been renamed the Gray Theatre in honor of the longtime arts educator.

Starting her teaching career in 1952 at Draper High School and later working at Mohonasen High School after the combination of the two programs in 1986, Gray has been the director for the Mohon Masque and Li'l Masque theater groups for the past 30 years. At 83, Gray said she is happy about the dedication.

"I'm very emotional about the whole thing," she said. "To have my name on the Gray Theatre, number one, I can't believe it that my name will be here forever."

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