

SCHOOL

Muddy Brook honors student achievements

By David Scribner

GREAT BARRINGTON—At Muddy Brook Regional Elementary School, the school's student body — 400 strong — ended the last week of classes before spring break in high spirits, cheered by their comrades and staff for their accomplishments and entertained by their guitar-toting principal, Thad Dingman.

During an all-school assembly attended by parents, teachers and administrators, including Superintendent Peter Dillon, second-grader Jackson Blanchard of Housatonic was named as the winner of the logo contest sponsored by the Berkshire Hills Fund for Excellence.

Administered through the Berkshire Taconic Foundation, the BHFE provides support for innovative educational initiatives that fall outside the customary curriculum, but it has never had an identifying logo, explains attorney Lucy Prashker of Cain Hibbard & Myers, a corporate underwriter of the Fund for Excellence and the logo contest.

"We decided that since we are education focused, we should have a student design our logo," she said. "We had 55 entries, open to grades kindergarten to high school seniors. Thirty entries came in from the elementary school alone. And Jackson's entry was judged to be the best, to represent what we imagined a student-designed image should look like that signified the Fund for Excellence.

In Berkshire County, there are 13 such enrichment funds for educational projects, but BHFE is one of the most successful. It has raised so far this year \$200,000 for district programs.



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Second-grader Jackson Blanchard of Housatonic, winner of the logo design contest sponsored by the Berkshire Hills Fund for Excellence, receives an oversized mock check representing his \$135 grand prize.

"We are very proud of the Fund for Excellence in Berkshire Hills," she said. "It's a very successful philanthropic effort that allows both individuals and corporations to support educational excellent. Among the projects we have supported are Project Sprout — the organic garden at the school — artists and dancers in residence. These have all been very successful."

During the assembly, Prashker presented Jackson Blanchard with an oversized mock check for \$135, his grand prize award.

Blanchard's creation was selected as the best from among eight finalists. The other submissions were from Craig Gordnier and Anne Woodger from Monument

School; Julia Miner and Brocque Tonini from Monument Valley Regional Middle School; and Eva Letteron, Athena Wingo and Wilson Sprague from Muddy Brook Regional Elementary School.

Among the other tributes presented at the school assembly was recognition for Amy Salinetti's kindergarten for participating in a nationwide program that donated clothes to children in need in Japan. Called "Cranes for Kids," the kindergarteners created 197 origami cranes and, for each crane, OshKosh donated an item of clothing for Japanese children displaced by the March 11 earthquake and tsunami.

In addition, fourth-graders were honored for establishing a more comprehensive

recycling program for the school and the cafeteria.

Kaitlyn Decker and Alyssa Kent showed the assembly their "golden recycling bin," a recycling mascot that will be passed from class to class to encourage the reuse of paper, plastic and glass products.

The school has now introduced a program to recycle juice boxes and milk cartons that were previously thrown away.