

## **Don't Let the Global Village Prevent You from Sharing Your Family History with Future Generations**

**There was once a time when grandparents sat amidst a group of wide-eyed grandchildren telling stories of days gone by. As the global village shrinks and families spread out across the nation and the world, the tradition of sharing family stories orally is in decline.**

Oral tradition—passing stories by word of mouth—has been the primary means of sharing family histories until the very recent past. As families spread out across the globe, it is far less likely that multigenerational families will spend extended time together; however, just because the method of communication is changing, does not mean that the global village will be the death of family history.

Despite the fact that extended families are more separated than ever, modern technology narrows the communication gap caused by distance. Families do not have to be distant even though they live far apart.

The same holds true for sharing family histories. While family histories may not be shared at the dinner table as they once were, it does not mean that they can't be shared. The same modern technology that allows families to stay close also allows them to communicate family histories from one generation to the next. The only difference is the absence of the dinner table and the means of communication.

Since the written word is a much more permanent—and accurate—method of preserving family history than dinner table conversation, it is actually recommended that all families make an effort to preserve their family histories in written form.

In some cases, the stories will only hold significance for the family itself; however, in many cases, one family's history may be representative of an entire town or era. Just as historians and students today study Revolutionary or Civil War era letters to learn about what life was like for regular people, one day, people will turn to our electronic transmissions to learn what life was like in the early 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Those people who do not feel confident enough to write their family histories themselves should seek out professional writers to ghost write for them. The most important thing is to get the stories in written form to preserve them for later generations, but some families may even choose to go a step further and self-publish their family histories in a nicely bound book. There are many self-publishing services that copy and bind books. Because of new print on demand technology, people can order 10 copies or 1,000 copies. Some of these services even sell the books online, making it easy for family members and members of the community to obtain copies.

No matter how you choose to proceed, preserve your family's history in written form before the stories are lost to coming generations.

The Writing Tutor has recently expanded to offer professional writing and editing services to people who wish to preserve their family histories.

## **The Writing Tutor Steps up to Get American Students Back on the “Write” Track**

**Writing represents a basic ability to communicate. Universities & businesses complain that surprising numbers of college students and recent grads lack this basic ability. The Writing Tutor is a new online resource that is designed to fill the void left by problems that plague American schools.**

Deerfield, IL – The ability of American students to write well has declined rapidly in recent years. As schools are forced to add more and more content to their curricula, teachers have little choice but to neglect the basics that produce good writers. The Writing Tutor is designed to help students, teachers, and parents get back on the WRITE track.

The Writing Tutor is a new online resource for student writers, teachers, and parents that provides enrichment and remediation opportunities for students and preparation resources for overburdened teachers. Resources include: ready-to-use lesson plans, notes, activities, and handouts; online and independent study courses; online book discussions; writing contests; a series of homework help reference guides and writing tips; and online discussion groups for teachers and parents.

The Writing Tutor evolved as a direct response to the founder’s experiences as a classroom teacher. “I found that the vast majority of my students struggled with writing, so I was constantly looking for new ways to help them write and communicate better,” Michele R. Acosta, The Writing Tutor founder, said. It became clear that many students really needed to return to grammar basics because they could not learn how to avoid common writing pitfalls if they could not recognize the basic components of English grammar.

Unfortunately, in today’s educational system, most schools deliver a curriculum that is so full that it leaves little time for either remediation or enrichment. In addition to time constraints caused by packed curricula, growing class sizes make it increasingly difficult for teachers to meet the needs of a very diverse population of students who range from special needs students (LD, ADHD, ESL, etc.) to above average students who chose not to take honors level courses. The Writing Tutor has been designed to fill in the gap.

The Writing Tutor supplements a student’s education in several ways:

TheWritingTutor.biz is an online resource that provides quick reference guides and other resources that address many issues facing young writers, their parents, and their teachers.

The Writing Tutor sponsors several writing contests each year in order to encourage students to write.

Because good writers are also readers, The Writing Tutor promotes reading in The Readers’ Corner. The Writing Tutor provides a list of suggested reading and also encourages students, parents, and teachers to submit their own suggestions. The Readers’ Corner also moderates online book discussions.

In addition to student resources, The Writing Tutor also provides resources for teachers, parents, and homeschoolers.

All courses, materials, and resources offered by The Writing Tutor are written and taught by a certified English/language arts teacher and are designed for students in grades 6 through 12, although both younger and older students could benefit, depending upon their needs and ability.

***This door hangar was distributed throughout Deerfield, IL in late March/early April, 2005. Text size has been adjusted for fit.***

Why is District 109  
running out of money?

- ◆ The 1991 tax cap legislation has placed school districts throughout Illinois in financial jeopardy.
- ◆ Illinois school districts are unable to increase revenue without a referendum.
- ◆ Operating revenue in District 109 has only increased marginally over the past five years.
- ◆ Out-of-control health insurance costs have increased District 109's operating expenses approximately 65 percent over the past five years.
- ◆ State and federal mandates have increased District 109's special education costs by 75 percent.
- ◆ District 109 will actually lose \$500,000 in state funding over the next five years because Deerfield is an affluent community.

***Vote yes on April 5!***

What has District 109 done  
to offset its deficit?

- ◆ District 109 has been using its cash reserves and the interest income from those reserves to fund operating deficits incurred over the past five years.
- ◆ It has cut non-essential expenses from its budget in order to make those reserves last longer.
- ◆ It has increased user fees.
- ◆ It has frozen expenditures for computer purchases and travel.
- ◆ Last year, District 109 spent approximately \$1600 less per child than Lincolnshire and Lake Forest and approximately \$2700 less than Highland Park.
- ◆ Despite the differences in per pupil spending, Deerfield students perform as well on standardized tests as students in all three surrounding communities.

***Vote yes on April 5!***

## **Why should you vote yes?**

*Since, Deerfield schools will not be able to maintain the high quality of education in the face of such drastic cuts, you should vote yes to...*

- ◆ protect the value of your home,
- ◆ maintain the superior quality of education for which Deerfield is known,
- ◆ foster growth in the community

## **Who should vote yes?**

- ◆ parents with children in District 109 or with children who will soon enter District 109
- ◆ teachers and administrators who live in District 109
- ◆ empty nesters whose children have been educated in District 109
- ◆ anyone who may one day sell a home in District 109

***Vote yes on April 5!***

## **What will happen if the referendum does not pass?**

- ◆ District 109 will be forced to make drastic cuts that will negatively impact the quality of education offered in Deerfield.
- ◆ The cuts required to balance the budget will place Deerfield in a per pupil expenditure bracket that is well below the state average and that is in line with communities like Berwyn, Calumet City, and Diamond Lake, many of whom are on the State's academic watch list.
- ◆ Budget cuts may include the following:
  - ◆ one teacher per grade per building;
  - ◆ all special programs, including instrumental and general music, art, computers, foreign language, P.E., and extra curricular sports;
  - ◆ all transportation, including transportation to/from private schools;
  - ◆ the reduction of specialized staff and services, including psychologists, social workers, reading trainers, and gifted and special education coordinators.
- ◆ Property values will decline accordingly.

***This is just the short list***

***— our kids stand to lose a lot more!!***

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**SCHOOL DISTRICT NUMBER 109  
LAKE COUNTY, ILLINOIS  
APRIL 5, 2005**

**PROPOSITION TO INCREASE MAXIMUM ANNUAL  
EDUCATIONAL FUND TAX RATE**

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Shall the maximum annual tax rate for educational purposes of School District Number 109, Lake County, Illinois, be increased and established at 2.73% upon all the taxable property of said School District at the value, as equalized or assessed by the Department of Revenue, instead of 2.38%, the present maximum rate otherwise applicable to the next taxes to be extended for said purposes?

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*The District 109 referendum is part of an overall plan to alleviate the problems created by tax caps, mandates, and health insurance. In addition to the referendum, user fees have already been increased for this school year, and non-essential budget cuts will continue.*

**Support  
Your Community!**

**logo**

**Vote YES!**

**for the**

**School Referendum**

**on**

**April 5**

***This letter ran in the Deerfield Review (Pioneer Press) in March of 2005.***

Over the past several months, Pioneer Press readers have seen letters and articles pertaining to District 109's upcoming referendum. Referendum supporters have provided facts explaining the need for a referendum and what will happen if it fails. Please support your community and vote on April 5.

Some naysayers have claimed that referendum supporters are using scare tactics to convince voters to pass the referendum. For those of you who believe that the facts are nothing more than scare tactics, I urge you to become informed. Don't just listen to what other people are saying. Find out for yourselves what happened in Kenilworth, Palatine, Grayslake, and other Illinois communities that have failed to pass referenda. How early are their children dismissed from school? How long does it take to sell a home? Are sellers getting what they should for their homes (or what they would have gotten if school quality had not declined)?

I have to admit that I had some doubts when I first heard that District 109 was out of money. I questioned how a community like Deerfield could have difficulty funding its schools, especially considering the high taxes we are already paying. I took some time to investigate how the situation would affect my children and the value of my home, and discovered that the impact would be significant. I also discovered that the root causes of District 109's funding problems are extraneous to Deerfield. Some of the problems exist state wide, some exist nation wide. This is not a problem that starts or ends in Deerfield.

Kenilworth failed to pass a referendum by a tie four years ago. They passed another referendum the following year after experiencing the ensuing cuts, but their schools have still not returned to where they were before the first referendum failed.

Palatine failed to pass a referendum in February. They will lay off teachers as of April 1 and their school day will be shortened. The long term impact remains to be seen.

Grayslake has failed to pass several referenda. For sale signs are up everywhere, but houses are not selling because of very large class sizes and because students are dismissed at 1:55. (Had it not been for parent volunteers who agreed to supervise a lunch/recess hour, students would have been dismissed at 12:55).

To those of you who believe a failed referendum will not affect your children, your grandchildren, or your property values, I hope we never find out how wrong you are. In these last few weeks before the election, I urge all Deerfield residents to take time to find out for themselves what a failed referendum will do to our community and to get out and vote on April 5.

***This letter ran in the Deerfield Review (Pioneer Press) in March of 2005.***

Deerfield is a wonderful place to live.

We have parks spread throughout the community where people come to play and exercise. We have easy access to Route 41, Interstate 94, and the Metra railway. We have friendly neighbors and neighborhoods that offer a true sense of community non-existent in many other suburban and urban locations. But what really draws people to Deerfield?

For those of us who chose to live here when our downtown area – known then as The Commons – was downright ugly, it certainly was not the aesthetics that made us want to pay well over market value for our three and four bedroom homes. And if we are honest with ourselves, we are not the only community with nice parks and easy access to highways and alternative transportation. So what is it that enticed us to move to Deerfield?

The answer is simple. Whether we moved here in the 70s, the 80s, the 90s, or the 00s, most of us came to Deerfield for its superior schools, and stayed because it is a nice place to live. While the parks make life in Deerfield pleasant and the easy access to transportation makes life convenient, without our schools we're just another suburb.

Unfortunately, the State of Illinois has created a situation that has placed District 109 and other school districts across the state in financial jeopardy. The tax cap legislation enacted in 1991 was intended to give voters a voice about how their tax dollars were spent. Ironically, tax caps do not always apply to other taxing bodies like park districts or local governments. So while some taxing bodies can levy tax increases at will, schools statewide must beg to increase revenues when their costs outstrip their revenue.

The big question, then, is: Why has spending in Deerfield schools (and schools in other Illinois communities) become greater than revenue? Again, the answer is simple. A school district's expenses increase every year, just as our household expenses increase and just as a business's expenses increase. The same spiraling health insurance costs affecting all of us are also increasing operating expenses for schools. The only difference is that most individuals and businesses also increase their income on a yearly basis. Because of the tax cap legislation, school districts are unable to increase their revenue by any substantial margin without a referendum. Operating revenue in District 109 has only increased 3 percent over the past five years.

In addition, both state and federal governments add to the financial burden of schools across the country by issuing unfunded mandates with which school districts must comply. These mandates have increased District 109's special education costs by 75 percent. At the same time governmental mandates continue to increase, governmental funding continues to decrease. Because we live in an affluent community, District 109 will actually lose \$500,000 in state funding over the next five years.

With these facts in mind, the real question should be: Why hasn't District 109 asked for a referendum to increase operating revenue sooner? District 109 has been using its cash reserves and the interest income from those reserves to fund operating deficits incurred over the past five years. The district has cut non-essential expenses from its budget in order to make those reserves last longer. For example, the district has reduced the school technology budgets by one third, has reduced support staff and has outsourced transportation, maintenance, and technology.

District 109 also spends less per child than school districts in neighboring communities. Last year, District 109 spent \$9139 per child. This figure is approximately \$300 higher than the state average, approximately \$1600 less than the per pupil expenditures in Lincolnshire and Lake Forest, and approximately \$2700 less than the per pupil expenditures in Highland Park for the same year. Despite the differences in per pupil spending, Deerfield students' standardized test scores are in line with test scores in all three communities; so our kids are doing as well as or better than kids in surrounding communities for less.

District 109's cash reserve will be completely exhausted midway through the 2005-2006 school year. If the district is unable to increase its revenue by passing a referendum in April, drastic cuts will be required to balance the budget. Cuts may include: the elimination of one teacher per grade per building; the elimination of all special programs (instrumental and general music, art, computers, foreign language, etc.); the elimination of all transportation (including transportation to/from private schools); and the reduction of specialized staff and services including psychologists, social workers, reading trainers, and gifted and special education coordinators. This is just the short list—our kids stand to lose a lot more! If the referendum does not pass, next year's projected per pupil expenditure will drop to \$8356 per child. This figure is \$500 less than last year's state average.

Deerfield's appeal will diminish as the quality of our schools declines; pleasant parks and convenient transportation alone will not entice newcomers to pay well over market value for homes in a community that spends less per child than the state average and that squeezes 30 children into a classroom.

Please use your voice and make sure that Deerfield remains a wonderful place to live. Save our schools and our property values by voting yes to District 109's referendum in April.