

# Downingtown Delivers

A Publication of the Downingtown Area School District

## Greetings From the Superintendent

Dear Friends:

Managing growth in a pro-education community has dominated the summer and fall months. You will see reference in this Fall Edition of Downingtown

Delivers to a few articles that give testimony to the work being done by the Board of Directors and Administration regarding our facilities and how the district will continue to offer high quality educational opportunities in high quality facilities.

Groundbreaking ceremonies were held on September 24<sup>th</sup> for the new Springton Manor Elementary School. Having a sense of what this beautiful school will look like only requires a drive by the new Pickering Valley Elementary School, which is on schedule to open in the spring of 07. The Buchart Horn/Basco Associates Facilities Plan has also offered the community an opportunity to understand how our enrollment projections will require additional schools.

Decisions on various options will soon be decided upon and then the work of budgeting, building, staffing, and opening future schools will begin. And all of this will need to happen within the limits of Act 1, legislation which provides for school district property tax reduction to take place by allowing for a higher Earned Income Tax (EIT) or Personal Income Tax (PIT) through a front end referendum. Act I also requires the school board to seek voter approval through a back end referendum for tax rate increases over an annually determined index, which is 3.4% for the 06-07 school year.

What all of this means to me as a superintendent is that the need to communicate with the entire community is probably more important than ever before in the history of Downingtown Area School District. I hope you will critically read this edition of Downingtown Delivers and share with us what additional or new information you require to have a sense of our schools and their relationship to each and every resident. This is a time for us to reach out to you and for you to let us know what ideas, questions, or information you need.

**Toward this end I invite members of the community to join me at 9:00 AM on the third Thursday of each month for what I am calling "A Second Cup of Coffee". I will update you on district activities and answer any question you may have on our educational programs. A Second Cup will be served at the administration building on Wallace Ave.**

Sincerely,  
Dr. Sandy Griffin, Superintendent



## Board Recommits to District Building Plan

In February 2006, the DASD School Board approved a plan to construct additional facilities to meet a growing student enrollment. A new high school and middle school were identified as priority items. To confirm enrollment projections, the board commissioned an up-to-date study of the future demographics of the Downingtown Area School District.

Buchart Horn/Basco Associates was hired to prepare a facilities report that examined new housing projections, future enrollment, school capacity, and economic predictions for the district. With these figures in mind, the firm was asked to provide a variety of options and associated costs to meet the future building needs of the district.

The firm met three times with board members and the public. On August 27<sup>th</sup>, Stephen Krug confirmed the projected demographics and presented the board with several options that would meet the district's building needs. Members of the committee requested confirmation for the costs for each option presented.

Three options were discussed:

- Build one new middle school, one new high school and keep Brandywine Wallace open as a 10<sup>th</sup> elementary school.
- Build one new middle school, one new high school and close Brandywine Wallace and keep 9 elementary schools and construct additions to Beaver Creek and Lionville Elementary in 2010.
- Turn DHS East into the third middle school and build one additional larger high school.

The board received the report at this special meeting held on September 27<sup>th</sup>. During that meeting Dr. Alice Johnson, President of the Board asked each member if he/she was still committed to their February 2006 vote to build an additional high school and middle school. All members present stated that they remained committed to the plan. The school board will now review the data and work toward selecting an option.

The board also agreed to keep Brandywine Wallace Elementary School open as the district's 10<sup>th</sup> elementary school. The school had been slated to close upon the opening of Springton Manor.

## DASD Has New Assistant Superintendent



The Board of Directors of the Downingtown Area School Board voted unanimously on September 13th to appoint Director of Secondary Education Jake Lopez the new Assistant Superintendent of the District.

Jake, 40, has been with the District since 2003. Before coming to Downingtown he was the principal at Harriton High School in the Lower Merion School District and a Principal at Boyce Middle School in the Upper St. Clair School District, just outside Pittsburgh, PA.

Born in Longmont, Colorado, Mr. Lopez graduated from California State University, Fullerton with a BA in Economics and Sociology. He received his teaching certificate in Social studies, business and math in the state of California from Chapman University. He taught economics for five years in California before relocating to Pittsburgh and beginning work as an administrator in Upper St. Clair, PA. He received his MA from Duquesne University in Education Administration.

Jake moved to the East Coast with his family in January of 2001. He is married to Pernille Lopez and is the proud dad of Sine (15) and Sebastian (13).

“When people ask me what I do, I tell them that I teach,” said Mr. Lopez. “I could not be more proud of my chosen profession. I will now get the opportunity to teach, learn and lead at the elementary level as well.”

Superintendent Dr. Sandy Griffin is pleased with Mr. Lopez’s appointment and is grateful that the board accepted her recommendation that he replace her as Assistant Superintendent.

“I have known Jake for 5 years, said Dr. Griffin. “We were both in Lower Merion together--me as Asst. Superintendent and he as principal of Harriton. Jake was highly regarded by parents, administrators, teachers, students, and the Board. I was thrilled when he was able to join me here in Downingtown and I am delighted that he will continue to be a part of this district--which I know to be "simply the best".

### “A Second Cup of Coffee”

**Join Superintendent Sandra Griffin for “A Second Cup of Coffee” on Thursday, November 16<sup>th</sup>, December 21<sup>st</sup> and January 18<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 AM in the Administration Building on 126 Wallace Ave. in Downingtown. Please RSVP to [pmcglone@dasd.org](mailto:pmcglone@dasd.org) if you plan to attend.**

## DASD School Board News



Pictured left to right, bottom row: Dr. Kim Brown, Cynthia Hallman, Dr. Alice Johnson, President, Mary Ann Hlava, Back row, left to right – Norman Long, William E. Fagan, Jr., Vice President, Robert Eldredge, Robert Yorczyk, and James Watson.

### **ACTION REQUIRED**

#### **Potential Property Tax Reduction**

If you haven't previously filed a homestead/farmstead application, DASD encourages you to fill out the application and return it to the Chester County Assessment Office. An approved homestead/farmstead application will allow you to be eligible for any property tax reduction should voters elect to reduce property taxes by referendum on the May 2007 ballot.

Richard Fazio, DASD Chief Financial Officer wants to remind you that the potential property tax reduction is not automatic. You must fill out an application. While more than 14,000 property owners have done so already, nearly 6,000 have not, and as a result will not qualify for the potential property tax reduction. Owner-occupied residential property and agricultural property owners who have not yet applied will receive an application from the school district before the end of this year. The mailing will be sent only to those who do not have an approved application on file with the county.

**If an application is not filed by the March 1, 2007 deadline, property owners will not be eligible for any 2007 property tax reduction.**

Applications are available online at:

[http://dsf.chesco.org/chesco/lib/chesco/assessment/pdf/HOMEFINAL05\\_.pdf](http://dsf.chesco.org/chesco/lib/chesco/assessment/pdf/HOMEFINAL05_.pdf) .

The completed application should be mailed to the county assessor at Chester County Assessment-Homestead Office, Government Services Building, 601 Westtown Rd., Suite 395, P.O. Box 2747, West Chester, PA 19380-0990.

The potential property tax reduction will appear on tax bills for owner-occupied properties in July of 2007. (Commercial and industrial property owners are not eligible). To verify if you have an approved application on file please call the Chester County Assessment Office at 610-344-4570.

## Springton Manor Groundbreaking Ceremony

Dignitaries, neighbors and guests attended the groundbreaking ceremonies for Springton Manor Elementary School on Sunday, September 24<sup>th</sup>. Though the skies threatened to open throughout the ceremony, the rain held off until the festivities concluded.

Springton Manor will be identical in design to the new Pickering Valley School. Both schools will accommodate approximately 650 students. Pickering Valley is slated to open in 2007. Springton Manor is expected to open its doors in 2009.

Participating in the ceremony was Board President Alice Johnson, Superintendent Sandra Griffin, Director of Elementary Education Mac Watters, Board member Mary Ann Hlava and President of the Joint Home and School Association Barbara Hurt-Simmons.



Left to Right: Gil Lappano, Dr. Mac Watters, Barbara Hurt-Simmons, Dr. Alice Johnson, MaryAnn Hlava and Dr. Sandra Griffin.

## Seniors can still sign up for Volunteer Tax Rebate Program



The Downingtown Area School District and Retired & Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) of Chester County are collaborating again this year on the District Tax Rebate Program. Eligible property owners will be given the opportunity to receive credit toward the payment of their school real estate property tax, by volunteering in district schools.

To be eligible for this tax credit program, persons must:

- 1) Be 65 years of age or older during a calendar year in which school real property tax is due and payable.
- 2) Own residential real estate in the Downingtown Area School District (DASD) in which they reside as their primary residence and upon which they pay real property tax to the district.
- 3) Be willing to volunteer their services to the school district.

Prospective volunteers may obtain an Information /Enrollment packet by calling the Business office at 610-269-8460, ext. 6219.

## TAX COMMISSION MEMBERS BEGIN MEETING

Lately in the news, you may have been reading about the Act 1 legislation. Act 1 of 2006 allows communities to make certain decisions about their local tax structure.



Specifically and most immediately, it requires that a referendum question be placed on the May 2007 primary ballot.

If approved, the resulting tax structure would increase income taxes and decrease homeowner property taxes by a like amount. Determining the amount of the tax shift is a very complex issue, and any final outcome will affect demographic groups differently.

On September 26<sup>th</sup>, members of the DASD Tax Commission began meeting to discuss and recommend to the school board an option for the May, 2007 referendum. The referendum question will seek voter input on tax shifting – from homeowner real estate tax to a new or increased income based tax. The recommendation will include whether the referendum question should relate to an earned income tax, or alternatively to a personal income tax, as well as the tax rate to be included in the referendum question.

There were over 160 residents who applied to be members of the tax commission. The nine members and two alternates are taxpayers and/or resident individuals of the school district and reflect the socioeconomic, age and occupational diversity as required by law. Thank you to all who applied.

All meetings are open to the public and will be held at the Administration building on Wallace Avenue. A public meeting will take place on November 19<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 PM.

# OUR DISTRICT

## 2005-2006 PSSA SCORES

DASD Students scoring Advanced/Proficient

	Reading	Math	Writing
<b>Overall</b>			
Grade 3	90%	95%	
Grade 4	89%	92%	
Grade 5	86%	86%	74%
Grade 6	86%	82%	
Grade 7	87%	80%	
Grade 8	89%	81%	81%
Grade 11	84%	70%	93%

## 2004-2005 PSSA Scores

DASD Students scoring Advanced/Proficient

	Reading	Math	Writing
<b>Overall</b>			
Grade 3	88%	96%	
Grade 5	87%	87%	
Grade 8	83%	82%	
Grade 11	79%	67%	73%

## 2006 Pennsylvania Overall PSSA Scores

	Reading	Math	Writing
Grade 3	69%	83%	
Grade 4	68%	77%	
Grade 5	61%	67%	54%
Grade 6	66%	68%	
Grade 7	68%	66%	
Grade 8	71%	62%	66%
Grade 11	65%	52%	86%

Source: Grow Network's "The PA District Report" for 2006

## DASD TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS

	Professional Staff	PA Certified Professional Staff	Prof. Staff w/ Emergency Permits (working toward "highly qualified")
District	836	836	0
Degrees	Bachelors	440	
	Masters	389	
	Doctorates	7	

## 2006 Hiring Statistics

### Elementary

Open Positions due to resignations/retirements/ new positions - 29

Applications Received for these positions - 282

### Middle School

Open Positions due to resignations/retirements/new positions - 20

Applications Received for these positions - 947

### High School

Open Positions due to resignations/retirements/new positions - 25

Applications Received for these positions - 1410

In 1999, Pennsylvania adopted academic standards for Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening and Mathematics. These standards identify what a student should know and be able to do at varying grade levels. Every Pennsylvania student in 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade is assessed yearly in reading and math. Students in 5<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> are assessed yearly in writing.

**Advanced** work indicates an in-depth understanding and exemplary display of the skills

**Proficient** work indicates a solid understanding and adequate display of skills

## District Demographics – Third Day Enrollment Numbers Total Enrollment: 11,603

Grades	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total
<b>Schools</b>														
Beaver Creek Elementary	88	86	78	86	89	87								514
Bradford Heights Elementary	83	68	70	73	78	84								456
Brandywine-Wallace Elementary	92	96	102	104	99	93								586
East Ward Elementary	99	90	101	102	103	97								592
Lionville Elementary	70	95	98	92	90	128								573
Pickering Valley Elementary	92	127	111	118	90	107								645
Shamona Creek Elementary	90	115	127	107	114	120								673
Uwchlan Hills Elementary	98	102	84	110	100	111								605
West Bradford Elementary	92	96	83	105	93	110								579
Downingtown Middle School							372	395	444					1,211
Lionville Middle School							496	467	477					1,440
Downingtown High School East										500	488	476	438	1,902
Downingtown High School West										416	452	518	441	1,827
<b>Sub-total DASD Schools</b>	<b>804</b>	<b>875</b>	<b>854</b>	<b>897</b>	<b>856</b>	<b>937</b>	<b>868</b>	<b>862</b>	<b>921</b>	<b>916</b>	<b>940</b>	<b>994</b>	<b>879</b>	<b>11,603</b>
<b>Out of District Placements</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>475</b>
<b>Grand Total of DASD Students</b>	<b>840</b>	<b>908</b>	<b>893</b>	<b>928</b>	<b>886</b>	<b>968</b>	<b>889</b>	<b>886</b>	<b>944</b>	<b>957</b>	<b>983</b>	<b>1045</b>	<b>951</b>	<b>12,078</b>

# Downingtown High Schools

High School Profile	DHSE	DHSW
Percentage of Students taking Honor Classes	40%	40%
Graduation Rate	99.5%	99%
Class of 2006 Graduates who achieved a 3.5 average at completion of high school	36%	26%
Approximate % of students involved in the 41 Clubs Music/drama/art/sport programs	75%	75%
Students involved in "Pupils Reaching Out" program offering seniors part-time jobs, early graduation and early college acceptance programs.	10	32

Post-Secondary Profile (2005 graduates)	DHSE	DHSW
% Attending 4-Year Colleges	82%	74%
% Attending 2-Year Colleges	8%	10%
% Seeking Employment/Military/Other	10%	16%
% Attending a Privately-Affiliated College	26%	31%
% Attending a Publicly-Affiliated College	74%	69%
Approximate value of scholarships awarded to class of 2005	\$1,700,000	\$2,663,500

Advanced Placement Profile	DHSE	DHSW
Students taking AP Courses	285	295
Students taking at least 1 AP Exam	167	106
Students scoring a 3 or better on exam	147	99
Students scoring at least one 5	55	37

National Merit Scholars (06-07)	DHSE	DHSW
National Merit Finalists (2006 graduates)	2	3
National Merit Semi Finalists (06-07)	3	4
National Merit Commended	11	7
National Merit Corporate Scholarship Award (2006 graduates)	1	1
National Hispanic Scholar Recognition Program	1	

## SAT SCORES

Information obtained from the SAT Summary Reporting Services

### Mean SAT Scores 2006

	Verbal	Math	Writing
DHS East	527	538	518
DHS West	517	523	508
Pennsylvania (College Bound /Public School)	493	500	483
National	503	518	497

### Mean SAT Scores 2005

	Verbal	Math	Combined
DHS East	535	550	1085
DHS West	534	523	1057
Pennsylvania (College Bound /Public School)	497	504	1001
National (all schools)	508	520	1028

### 2006 DASD SAT Profile (in Student Numbers)

Range	Critical Reading	Math	Writing
700 – 800	21	52	17
600 – 699	134	133	127
500 – 599	295	259	255
499 – 499	208	203	210
300 – 399	56	61	71
200 – 299	8	14	14

### Class of 2006 Partial list of Scholarships to:

Arcadia	Gettysburg	Mount Holyoke
Berklee/Music	Hartwick	Neumann
Brigham Young	Harvard	New York U.
Bloomsburg	Haverford	Northeastern
Boston University	Immaculata	Old Dominion
Bucknell	Indiana U. of PA	Ohio State
Case Western	Ithaca	Penn State
Carnegie Mellon	Johnson and Wales	Philadelphia
California Baptist	Lafayette	Quinnipiac
Coastal Carolina	LaSalle	St. Joseph's
DeSales	Lebanon Valley	Syracuse
Dickenson	Lehigh	South Carolina
Drexel	Lock Haven	U. of the Arts
Duke	Loyola	U. of Delaware
Duquesne	Marymount	U. of Hartford
Eastern	Maryland/Art	U. of the Sciences
Elizabethtown	McDaniel	U. of Vermont
Florida State	Mercyhurst	West Chester
Georgetown	Moore/Art & Design	William and Mary

# An Update on Avian Flu

This summer, district administrators attended several of the Avian Flu Pandemic workshops that were held throughout the area. Though the seminars were heavily attended, those who sponsored the events were quick to point out that **NO BIRDS IN THE UNITED STATES have been found to have the disease.**

Nevertheless, Chester County, Pennsylvania and Federal Health Organizations are pressing to make sure that local governments, schools, businesses and organizations have a plan in place should the disease begin to affect humans in areas where the afflicted birds have been found. Should that occur, experts expect the disease will quickly pass to the populace of one nation after another.

At this time, there is no vaccine for avian flu. So what are health agencies recommending? In a nutshell, they advise people to take care to:

- Cover your mouth and nose when you sneeze.
- Clean your hands often.
- Remind your children to practice healthy habits, too.

With approximately 1/5 of the U.S. population attending or working in schools, districts around the country have been quick to share ideas for lesson plans, posters and health facts to pass on to students and their families. While everyone hopes to be spared the devastating ramifications of a pandemic flu in the near future, the advice we hope to share with you in this and future issues of *Downingtown Delivers* works well in any season.

Students need to get plenty of sleep and physical activity throughout the year. Make sure they drink water and eat vitamin-enriched foods to help them stay healthy this winter. Addressing the spread of germs in schools is essential to the health of our students, our schools, and our nation.

## Stopping Germs at Home and School

- 1) Did you know that singing the “Happy Birthday” song can help keep your child healthy? Experts advise both children and adults to wash their hands with soap and warm water for 15 – 20 seconds. That’s about the time it takes to sing the “Happy Birthday” song twice.
- 2) Salute your sneeze! The main way that an illness like a cold and flu is spread is from person to person in respiratory droplets of coughs and sneezes. This is called “droplet spread”. One tip to help get your young child thinking about moving that elbow up in the correct position is to practice saluting.
- 3) Alcohol based hand wipes and gel sanitizers work too! When soap and water are not available, alcohol-based disposable hand wipes or gel sanitizers may be used. You can find them in most supermarkets and drugstores. If using gel, rub your hands until the gel is dry. The gel doesn’t need water to work; the alcohol in it kills the germs on your hands.

For more information about Avian Flu, visit [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov).



DMS teacher Karen Hiller (second from right) was recently designated a “Keystone” by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. “Keystones” are exemplary teachers of technology who share their skills and enthusiasm for technology with both students and teachers.

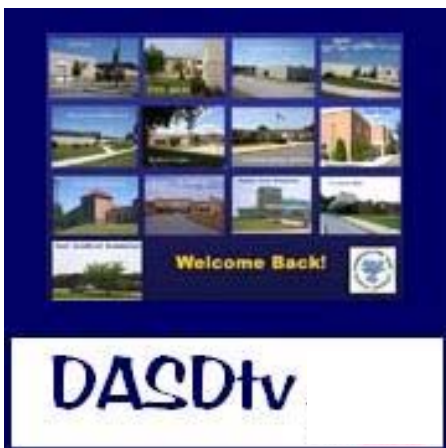


Puma, a Labrador retriever owned by Interquest, demonstrated his ability to sniff out contraband at a recent school board meeting. Interquest makes periodic, unannounced visits to all four secondary schools as part of DASD’s “Safe Schools” plan.



Former West Bradford teacher Susan Cracas has accepted the position of Assistant Principal at Large for grades K-12. Ms. Cracas will support and mentor new teachers through the induction program and in their classrooms.

# WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE DISTRICT?



Have you checked out the newest addition to the DASD website. DASDtv is a three-minute short that contains information, awards, and up-to-date news about our students and our schools. Look for student artwork, projects, and activities to be a part of our new web TV. The shorts are updated weekly.



The new Pickering Valley Elementary School is close to completion. The school will open in April, 2007.

## Practical Language Course A Hit With Life Skills Students

The Practical Language course offered in the Downingtown Area School district was developed for students looking for an alternative approach to language. The course is offered in Latin, Spanish, French and German.



Frequent repetition, hands-on activities, guest speakers, student designed learning, music and dance are regular events. Life skills students in Jane Herzog's class have met with success in this unique program and frequently elect the course year after year.

Students and parents have enthusiastically received the Practical Spanish course, taught by Teresa Madiro. Unlike traditional instruction with its strong emphasis on language mechanics and writing, the new course centers on culture and spoken language and is driven by the particular interests and unique abilities of the students in the class.

Senora Madiro has found the experience extremely rewarding and believes the students come away with rich academic and social experiences. "It has been a truly rewarding experience for me. I am so fortunate to work with such enthusiastic students who have amazed me with the progress they have made in such a short time."

## 26 DOWNINGTOWN STUDENTS RECEIVE NATIONAL MERIT RECOGNITION

The National Merit Scholarship Corporation recently announced the names of the 26 commended and semi finalists from the Downingtown Area School District. We are very proud to announce that 19 DHS students received Letters of Commendation, 7 students have qualified as Semifinalists and one student has been designated a scholar in the 2006-2007 National Hispanic Recognition Program (NHRP)

The eleven commended students from Downingtown High School East are Joshua Anders, Paul Andrejko, Geanine Castaldi, Cassandra Jurgens, Victoria Lai, Travis Lee, Jacob Paul, Richard Samartino, Brian Sechrist, John Shutt and Elizabeth Spengel. The seven commended students from Downingtown High School West are, Andy Abdel-Kader, Natale Bezgin, Tucker Biffel, Brian Dohm, Greg Fiorentino, Kevin Gallagher and Joe Voltz.

The three Semifinalists from Downingtown High School East are David Jacobson, Hannah Selin and Naveen Selvam. The four Semifinalists from Downingtown High School West are Michael Yee, Mike Goldstein, Lena Bradley and Amanda Bowe.

DHS East senior Alexandria Placido has been selected as a Scholar in the 2006-2007 National Hispanic Recognition Program (NHRP).

We are delighted to see an increasing number of students from both our high schools being recognized for this award. Please join us in congratulating these talented students along with their proud parents and teachers.

Thank you to our business sponsors. Due to their financial assistance, we are able to produce this newsletter in color.

## A HELPING HAND

WHEN NEEDED MOST



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06/05

Downingtown Area School District shall not discriminate in their educational programs, activities or employment practices based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, religion, ancestry or any other legally protected classification. This policy is in accordance with state and federal laws, including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act. Information relative to special accommodation, grievance procedure, and the designated responsible official for compliance with Title VI, Title IX, and Section 504 may be obtained by contacting the Director of Human Resources, Downingtown Area School District, 126 Wallace Avenue, Downingtown, PA 19335, phone number 610-269-8460.

**Downingtown Delivers!**  
**Downingtown Area School District**  
**Downingtown, PA 19335**  
**610-269-8460**  
**[www.dasd.org](http://www.dasd.org)**



## Before & After School Care

**For Downingtown Elementary Schools**  
(Brandywine Wallace, Beaver Creek, West Bradford, East Ward, Bradford Heights)

1st to 5th Grade  
7:00 am to school start  
& school day end to 6:00 pm

- Homework help
- Indoor & outdoor play
- Exercise and nutrition activities
- Arts & crafts
- Option for full-day care on days off

**Spaces Going Fast! Register now for the 2006-07 school year!**

Call 610-380-YMCA

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