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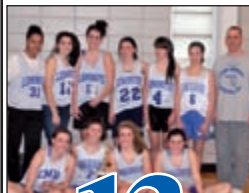
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Peter Hodgkins as The Scarecrow, Wesley Young as the Lion, and Sam Ashton as The Tin Man console the sad Dorothy played by Deanna Martinez, at the Wizard of Oz last weekend at Leominster High School.

CHAMPION PHOTO / CHARLES STERNAIMOLO

Mayor follows Leominster's youth down the Yellow Brick Road

BY AMANDA ROBERGE
CHAMPION CORRESPONDENT

It's hard to say whether Leominster Mayor Dean Mazzarella was helping out the middle school students by joining in the cast of their play, or whether they helped out by letting him.

"I hope [the kids] had as much fun as me," he said of his role as the Wizard.

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Ready....Set....Find a job! Hundreds of local residents receive help in job hunt

BY CAROLINE KERAS
CKERAS@FITCHBURGPRIDE.COM

When Victoria Mead was laid-off from her senior bookkeeping job in mid-December, she was at a loss for what to do next.

"I had never been laid-off before," said Mead.

She immediately went to the North Central Career Center in Leominster, and has since found it to be a beneficial asset to her job search.

"I always come back with tidbits to keep me positive about the process," said Mead.

Employees at the career center are doing all that they can to help Mead and the hundreds of other people who are unemployed in north

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"Snowy Owl", by Camera Club member Peter Salisbury, is one of many images to be on exhibit this weekend at the Doyle Conservation Center.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

Camera Club to host picture perfect exhibit

BY AMANDA ROBERGE
CHAMPION CORRESPONDENT

If a picture is worth a thousand words, the Camera Club of Central New England will have plenty to say this weekend. The group will celebrate its 70th anniversary with a something-for-everyone event at the breathtaking Doyle Conservation Center.

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FROM THE FRONT

Wizard of Oz

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Either way, the result was a fantastically successful production of *The Wizard of Oz* where Mazzarella had the time of his life.

"The kids are so funny, and they asked me all kinds of questions, they shared their food with me, we were always backstage chatting," he said. "Honestly, it was a great experience."

With a three show run last weekend, Leominster's middle schools, along with Director Robert Landry and a large production crew, showed audiences what it's made of -: humor, hard work and an entire yellow brick road paved with talent.

"It was amazing to see these kids day after day, pouring their heart and soul into it."

— Mayor Dean Mazzarella

Deanna Martinez wowed the room with her lovely singing voice and sincere dramatic portrayal of Dorothy, complete with a real live Toto.

Comic relief was provided by the trio of Peter Hodskins, Samuel Ashton and Wesley Young, who brought laughter and applause with their sweet Scarecrow, big-hearted Tinman and loveable Cowardly Lion.

Small groups of spectacular students - portraying everything from Lollipop Kids



The mayor poses with the cast of *Wizard of Oz* last weekend at Leominster High School.

to Flying Monkeys to Trees in the Forest - made the performance especially entertaining.

And dozens upon dozens of Tiny

Munchkins were played by costumed Leominster thespians from all the elementary and middle schools.

"It was amazing to see these kids day after day, pouring their heart and soul into it," said Mazzarella, who is a long-time fan of the *Wizard of Oz*.

In fact, when the production was first staged in Leominster 10 years ago, Mazzarella had made an offhand comment

CHAMPION PHOTO / CHARLES STERNAIMOLO

to Landry about wanting to be cast when they put it onstage again. A man of his word, he was involved this time around in all aspects of the play. "He took me up on my offer!"

If you think a mayor is too busy to fraternize with the cast in between scenes, think again. "I didn't just jump in and say my lines and run," he said. "I was there when the kids were there; except I didn't have homework to do."

And because the Mayor is used to speaking publicly, his role on the stage at Leominster High School should be second nature, right? "You'd be surprised," he said. "It's not the same... really, it's much harder."

The production made exciting use of technology in their production, from a big-screen tornado scene reminiscent of the one from the original black and white movie starring Judy Garland to Mazzarella himself on that same huge screen as the giant - and daunting - face of the Wizard.

"The kids worked really hard," he added. "I have to say, I'm pretty proud of them."

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