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SKOWHEGAN Apple film will focus on school

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SKOWHEGAN -- Skowhegan Area Middle School is in exclusive company.

Apple Inc. has chosen the school as one of four in the country it will feature in an Internet documentary focusing on technology-based learning beyond the classroom.

An Apple film crew from California will tour the school with Principal Bruce Mochamer on Sunday, Sept. 16, and begin shooting the next day.

"They will be here all week," said Laura Richter, technical integrationist and local history teacher at the school. "They will choose two students and two teachers to follow around."

Apple will do its documentary just as a Skowhegan Area Middle School community history project, begun nine years ago, enters a new phase that now includes Skowhegan Area High School.

The students have compiled comprehensive written and pictorial histories of Skowhegan and the surrounding area.

A Civil War soldier, the Somerset Railroad, the Abenaki Project and "Skowhegan Then and Now" are among the many features available at www.msad54.org/sams/projects/community/.

The project drew the attention of the Northern Forest Center, which features it in its mobile museum now at the Clinton Lions Club Fair.

Neither the students nor teachers and administrators helping them have rested on their laurels.

John Krasnavage, who retired as school principal last year, helped land a \$14,000 grant from Rural Schools and Community Trust.

As Krasnavage explains it, the grant will allow the students to help with more events and projects in the community. That's what has grabbed Apple's attention.

"We're at a crossroads in the Skowhegan area, with traditional industries on the wane," Krasnavage said.

"How can we as a community move forward, making the schools a vital part of this? The idea is to try to make Skowhegan a destination."

Krasnavage mentioned the Run of River project -- a proposed whitewater park on the Kennebec River in Skowhegan that would draw kayakers and other tourists -- as an example. A walking tour and the Skowhegan Farmer's Market are other ongoing community projects.

The students also will help erect signs in French that will help Canadian tourists find their way around and be more comfortable in town.

"The French teacher is working with the language/arts teacher to provide more translations," Krasnavage said.

"They're also working on podcasts that will be available to tourists as they come of the bus.

Doug Snow, a senior project specialist with Apple, said that his company will focus on "a day in the life" of a technology student at the

middle school.

"They've been deeply involved for a number of years, beyond the classroom," Snow said.


Richter agrees. "The overall thrust is to create this partnership between the schools and the community," she said.

Richter said that the new phase evolved from a workshop, held last month in Bethel.

"It's real work," she said. Something that will have an economic impact on the town."

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