

MARCH 2025 | ISSUE 33

ROCK RIDGE REPORTER

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF ROCK RIDGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS



EDUCATION TO INSPIRE THE NEXT GENERATION

LAURENTIAN GRADES PREK-6 WE MADE IT TO 100!

Earlier in February, the 100th Day of School was celebrated! All things 100 were the topic of the day! Here's how kindergarten students in Ms. Negen's class enjoyed the day!



IT'S COOL TO BE RESPONSIBLE

These Laurentian students were nominated as Responsible Students of the Month by their classroom teachers. They have consistently demonstrated accountability, reliability, and leadership in their daily actions. Their commitment to responsibility reflects not only in their personal success, but also in their willingness to help others and contribute to a positive learning atmosphere. Their recognition is well deserved, as they display the qualities of integrity and dependability that make them role models in our Laurentian school community.

SCHOOL READINESS: Dahlia Addy, Grace Monson, Asher Johnson, Bria Orehek, Aria Ward, Annabelle Roskowski.

KINDERGARTEN: Sloane Hennen, Kassie James, Emily Everson, Bristol Rask, Hailey Rice, Lucas Venne.

FIRST GRADE: Makenzee Bernard, Layla Moller, Hayden Schmidt, Madilyn Burns, Hallie Stefanich.



SECOND GRADE: Peyton Dahl, Mason Latvaaho, Trinity Anderson, Claire Eiting, John Niemi, Scarlett Malich.

THIRD GRADE: Mila Quick, Leija Stanaway, Halley Jacobson, Bennett Mosher, Mira Kallevig, Grant Eiting.

FOURTH GRADE: Laney Laabs, Jaxson Talbert, Harlow Anderson, Vincent Auel, Maddie Jacobson, Lilli Luoma.

FIFTH GRADE: Leelah Knipfer, Ely Macomber, Nadine Ebnet, Jayda Schroeder, Armas Ahlgren, McKenzie Thompson.

SIXTH GRADE: Andrew Hill, Kylie Hadrava, Stella Malich, Osten Petron, Ava Berglund, Nicholas Hoel.



of these critical issues, building awareness and fostering empathy within their classroom and beyond.

To celebrate their learning, the students worked together to create a final project: a stunning mural that beautifully symbolizes their journey. Each piece of the mural reflects their individuality, showcasing their unique traits and perspectives. Together, these pieces come together as one cohesive and united puzzle, representing the powerful message that diversity is what makes a community strong and beautiful.

The mural now stands as a proud testament to the students' hard work, creativity, and commitment to inclusion. It serves as a daily reminder that despite our differences, we can come together to form something truly extraordinary. Laurentian Elementary's 4th graders have proven that understanding, empathy, and unity are the foundation of a brighter future.

A DAY WITH DENNIS WARNER

Did you know you can't brush your teeth with a cat in the sink? Or that it's hard to love your feet when they're hot and they stink! Well, if it weren't for Dennis Warner sharing his great wisdom with us- we would have never known!

The Laurentian Elementary students were excited to receive Dennis at their school in February. They enjoyed his music, storytelling, and heartfelt conversations, which left a lasting impact through his touching and heartfelt tributes to humanity!



PIECES OF A UNITED PUZZLE

Under the thoughtful guidance of Mrs. Fierke and Ms. Young, the 4th-grade students at Laurentian Elementary recently concluded a powerful 10-week inclusive curriculum. The program invited students to explore essential topics such as culture, diversity, embracing differences, stereotypes, prejudice, discrimination, protected classes, racism, microaggressions, empathy, and strategies to ensure safety for themselves and others.

Through hands-on activities, open discussions, and creative exercises, students developed a deeper understanding

Through Dennis' award-winning song and children's book, students and staff learned that we are all "Beads On One String" sharing of ourselves with those around us to create a community that celebrates how much we are all alike in spite of all our many differences!



The time with Dennis taught them to appreciate our neighbors, respect everyone we encounter and encourage the practice of kindness.

We are all beads on one string, we are one world!

And, a fantastic event like this is never complete without a random drawing for an opportunity to enjoy 'Lunch with the Author' which featured some very excited students, curious questions, lots of laughs and full tummies! Sawmill Saloon & Restaurant's pizza was a HIT! Thank you!

Dennis and Tammy, we are grateful for you and for the Eveleth and Gilbert Public Libraries as well as the Arrowhead Library System. ALS Legacy Program for funding this event. This program, sponsored by Arrowhead Library System, was funded in part or in whole with money from Minnesota's Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund (ACHF).



A NATIVE AMERICAN PBL UNIT

Second grade students at Laurentian Elementary recently completed a project-based learning unit about Native Americans and the changing seasons.

Students learned about different Native American tribes and how they adapted to the different seasons. Specifically, students learned about the different types of homes, clothing, and foods that were gathered and preserved for use.

One highlight of the unit was a visit from Emily Jankila Christenson, our Indigenous Education Director. She shared many artifacts of tribal culture including animal pelts, beadwork, and clothing. She also shared how Native Americans were skilled at using all parts of the animals they hunted.

Students shared their knowledge of a typical season with the completion of a diorama showcasing the housing, food, and clothing needed.



PARKVIEW GRADES PREK-2 I LOVE TO READ MONTH: A PURPLE-POWERED ADVENTURE IN READING

What an exciting and PURPLE month it has been at Parkview! Our I Love to Read Month celebration, themed “Draw Your Own Reading Adventure!” based on the classic Harold and the Purple Crayon, has come to a close, and it was a huge success! Pre-K through 2nd grade students embraced the joy of reading, creativity, and adventure like never before!

Kick-Off Fun

We kicked off the month with a bang, starting with a video of Harold and the Purple Crayon, followed by an activity where each class made their own purple-themed door decorations. This activity set the tone for a month of imagination, students were encouraged to draw their own reading adventure—just like Harold used his crayon to explore new worlds!

Classroom Adventure Graph

Each class received purple paper crayons, which became the cornerstone of the challenge. Students read books or spent 10 minutes reading, and for every achievement, they added a crayon to their classroom’s “Reading Adventure Path,” starting at the office. The excitement built as each class worked together to fill their paths with crayon throughout the month. Every Thursday, we updated the “CRAYON COUNT” to see how much progress was made! We read OVER 1000 books or approximately 10,000 minutes!



Week 1: Draw Into Reading

Students decorated bookmarks with purple crayons and illustrations from their favorite books. The challenge? The class with the most crayons on their graph by the end of the week earned a Purple Popcorn Party—and the competition was fierce!



Week 2: Explore New Worlds

It was time to create a Reading Adventure Wall! Students illustrated scenes inspired by the books they read, and these masterpieces were proudly displayed. The class with the most reading crayons at this point won a special read-aloud with our guest reader, Mrs. Stefanich!



Week 3: Color Your Adventure

The students had the opportunity to create their own story in a blank book. Teachers helped guide the creative process, and we had so much fun using our imaginations and getting to work on our own books! The class with the most crayons this week earned an opportunity to choose-their-own prize, the winning classes were Mrs. Kemen and Mrs. Little's classes who won some special stickers, Mrs. Streier's class who won a mini golf set, Mr. Davidson's class who decided on suckers, and Mrs. Reid's class who picked out the Creepy Crayon book!



Week 4: Celebration!

The grand finale was a Purple Celebration Day! Students wore purple and the classes that met their reading goals were treated to purple snacks and a fun-filled day of activities to celebrate all their hard work!



What a month! From drawing adventures to exploring new worlds through books, our students embraced reading with creativity and enthusiasm. Thank you to everyone who participated and helped make this month so special!



SNOW BETTER TIME TO READ

Students from Ms. Kemen and Ms. Collins' 4th grade classes teamed up with Mrs. Kemen and Mrs. Little's PreK classes to take a storybook walk around the snowy ball field.

Fourth graders read "Sneezy the Snowman", had hot chocolate, and drew a snowman with their PreK buddy for a fun filled Friday.

Special **THANK YOU** to Dawn and Jen in the Parkview cafeteria for volunteering their expertise with our treat!





2025-26 SCHOOL READINESS



PRESCHOOL INFORMATIONAL SESSIONS

FOUR YEAR OLD PRESCHOOL
PARKVIEW ELEMENTARY
MARCH 10, 2025
5:30-6:30

THREE YEAR OLD PRESCHOOL
LAURENTIAN ELEMENTARY
MARCH 11, 2025
5:30-6:30

ROCK RIDGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS
PRESCHOOL PROGRAM



3 & 4 YEAR OLD PRESCHOOL

rrps.org

218-742-3805



NORTH STAR

GRADES 3-6

A GLIMPSE INTO OUR PAST

At North Star Elementary, learning history isn't just about reading from a textbook—it's about experiencing the past firsthand. This week, students and staff had a unique opportunity to connect with Virginia's history as they explored artifacts from a recently opened time capsule.

The time capsule, discovered at the former Northland Office Building, had been in storage for years. Its contents, dating back more than a century, were finally revealed at the St. Louis County Government Services Center, giving the community a rare glimpse into Virginia's past.

North Star Elementary is dedicated to helping students understand the importance of history and civic engagement. By examining letters, journals, and newspapers from the 1920s, students can see how life in Virginia has evolved while recognizing the values and sacrifices of those who came before them.

Virginia Mayor Larry Cuffe Jr. emphasized the significance of remembering the past while building for the future.

"So remember the past, work on the present, and prepare for the future. Somebody has to lay the foundation for that," Cuffe said. "This time capsule is one of many that we've opened up over time, and it serves as a reminder that we are a community. We work together for a common goal. Despite challenges, we unite to make Virginia a better place to live and work."

For North Star Elementary students, this message resonates deeply. As part of their "My School, My Responsibility" initiative, they take ownership of their school environment, ensuring cleanliness, safety, and a welcoming atmosphere. This commitment to teamwork mirrors the dedication seen in the historical records from the time capsule.

St. Louis County Commissioner Keith Nelson highlighted the emotional weight of the artifacts, particularly a list of local soldiers who served in World War I.

"The list of the veterans that were lost by the city of Virginia in World War I—that list alone is pretty memorable. Can you imagine how that impacted the community back then?" Nelson said. "The loss of 24 young men, in a town that probably had a population nowhere near what it is today."

To help students make meaningful connections to this history, North Star Elementary will be incorporating these findings into classroom discussions and school projects. Educators are using the time capsule's contents to teach students about the impact of historical events on their own community, reinforcing the idea that history isn't just something that happens elsewhere—it's woven into the very fabric of Virginia.

The city of Virginia plans to display the recovered items near the entrance of the Government Services Center, allowing the public—and students—to see firsthand how the past continues to shape the present.

At North Star Elementary, the excitement around this discovery is a testament to the power of experiential learning. By exploring Virginia's history, students gain a deeper appreciation for their city and an understanding of how their own contributions today can shape its future.



LIFE SKILLS IN ACTION

A fun and exciting week was had by Rock Ridge 5th graders from Eli Little's class at North Star Elementary. These students stepped into the future by learning essential skills in construction, teamwork, and problem-solving—all while building firewood sheds in the high school's Construction Lab.

This initiative is part of a new collaboration between North Star Elementary and the high school, giving younger students early exposure to hands-on learning in trades and technology. By working alongside older students in the Home Maintenance class, the 5th graders are not just learning how to build, but also gaining real-world skills that will benefit them in the years ahead.



Why Future Skills Matter in Elementary Education

The workforce of tomorrow is rapidly evolving, and students need more than just traditional academics to be prepared. Problem-solving, collaboration, and hands-on technical skills will be crucial in fields ranging from engineering to technology and trades. By introducing students to practical, career-related skills at an early age, North Star Elementary is helping them develop confidence, critical thinking, and adaptability—qualities that will be invaluable no matter what path they choose.

“Giving students these opportunities at the elementary level helps spark interest in areas they might not have considered,” said Eli Little, 5th-grade teacher at North Star Elementary. “It also builds foundational skills like measuring, following instructions, and working together—things that will serve them in any career.”



Community Partnerships Strengthen Learning

A key aspect of this project is the support from local businesses. Pohaki generously donated shirts for the group and has invested in the construction labs at both North Star and RRHS. Their partnership highlights the importance of community involvement in education, ensuring that students have access to quality materials and experiences that connect learning to real-world applications.

The goal of the project is ambitious: build 12 firewood sheds and sell them. This teaches students not only the mechanics of construction, but also introduces them to entrepreneurship, supply and demand, and the value of craftsmanship.



Shaping Well-Rounded Students for the Future

North Star Elementary’s focus on future-ready skills aligns with its broader educational philosophy—preparing students to be engaged, responsible, and capable individuals. Whether they pursue careers in skilled trades, engineering, or any other field, these early experiences give students a head start in developing the confidence and problem-solving abilities they’ll need.

With hands-on learning like this, North Star Elementary is ensuring its students are not only ready for middle school but for a future full of possibilities.



A Huge Thank You to Mr. Foster

This incredible learning experience would not have been possible without the vision and leadership of Mr. Foster at RRHS. As a dedicated educator and community leader, Mr. Foster has been instrumental in bridging the gap between elementary and high school students, ensuring that hands-on learning opportunities like this become a reality. His passion for education and commitment to student success have had a lasting impact on both the district and the broader Rock Ridge community.

RRHS GRADES 7-12

HUMAN ANATOMY

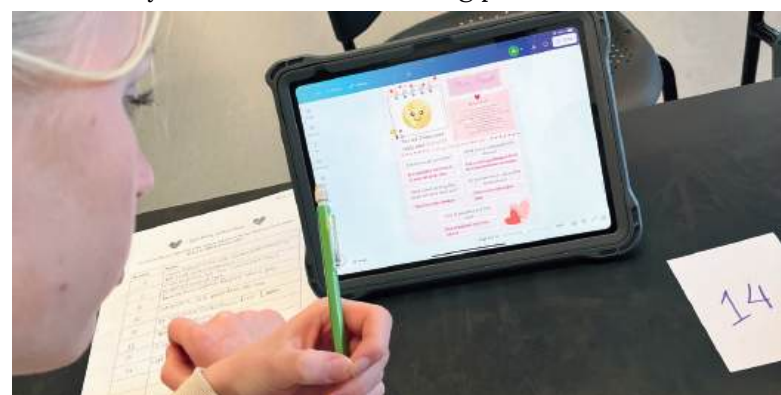
Students in Mrs. Parker's College in Schools Human Anatomy class completed the Nervous System Unit by dissecting a sheep brain.

The objective of dissecting a sheep brain is to learn about the structure and function of the brain. This can be done by identifying the different parts of the brain, observing the brain's texture and color, and comparing it to the human brain.



SPEED DATING IN THE SOLAR SYSTEM

Our 9th grade Earth Science students have been studying our solar system. In light of Valentine's day, they did a research project looking at the different celestial bodies in our solar system and created dating profiles for each one.



Students investigated characteristics of the different planets, the asteroid belt, and our moon. Using their information and some creativity, they created dating profiles for their fellow students to read through. The students then participated in "speed dating rounds" where they visited different planets, read through various dating profiles and submitted their favorites at the end! A student said, "It was fun to come up with our own answers while learning about the solar system." This was a great twist to learning about our solar system!

WHAT DOES THE DNA SAY

Students in Mr. Strasser's AP Biology class worked on a genetics lab where students isolate their own DNA in order to see if they have the gene for tasting bitter foods. Students also tasted PTC paper to see if their genes (genotype) match their actual taste (phenotype).

The equipment used in this lab was donated by Princeton University and the Howard Hughs Medical Institute (HHMI).



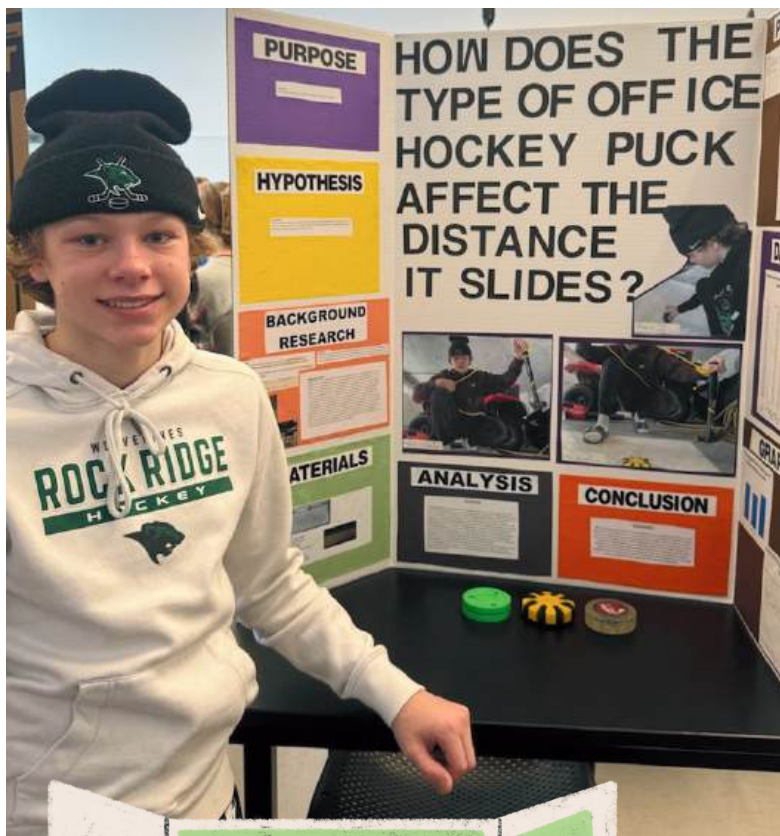
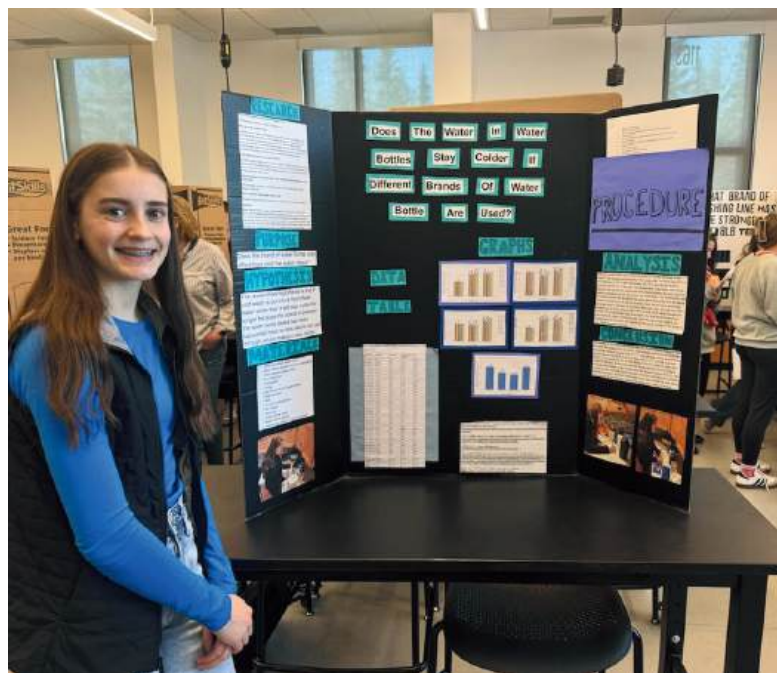
DID YOU EVER WONDER...?

Students in Mr. Borich's Honors Integrated Science class recently put their scientific skills to the test in the annual Rock Ridge Honors Science Fair. The event highlighted months of research, experimentation, and problem-solving, culminating in a day of engaging presentations.

Throughout the first semester, students explored topics of their choice using the scientific method, conducting at least 30 trials to gather quantitative data. At the fair, they not only presented their findings to peers, but also took on the role of science fair judges, evaluating, and learning from each other's work.

The event was a true celebration of curiosity, creativity, and dedication. These young scientists demonstrated a passion for discovery and problem-solving, proving that the future of science is in good hands at Rock Ridge High School!

Pictured: Eli Pontinen, Lucy Ufford, Alice Johnson, and Janessa Smith.



ORCHESTRA HONORS

The following are accomplishments of the orchestra students at the MSHSL Region 7AA solo and ensemble contest held at Cloquet High School on February 28, 2025.

SUPERIOR RATINGS (highest rating)

- Chamber Orchestra (All students)
- Brady Peterson - Violin Solo
- Haiden Hampton - Violin Solo
- Maleina Duffy String - Bass Solo
- Brady Peterson & Haiden Hampton - Violin Duet
- Jonathan Crain & Henry Heikkila - Cello and String Bass Duet
- Wyatt Mettler, Amberlee Heishman, Hailey VanSoest, Brady Peterson - Violin Quartet

EXCELLENT RATINGS (second highest rating)

- Wyatt Mettler - Violin Solo
- Darren Tweten - Viola Solo
- Ella Scherf & Jayden Jackson - Violin and String Bass Duet
- Delia Alger & Maleina Duffy - Violin and String Bass Duet
- Wyatt Mettler, Connor Tweten, Jack Kenyon - Violin Trio
- Anna O'Connell, Samantha Daugherty, Ava Johnsen - Violin Trio
- Adrian Rausch, Jonathan Crain, Jesse Jones, Riley Lambert, Haiden Hampton - Cello Quartet

This was the project-based learning unit for Quarter 2-3. Students formed groups on their own, they selected music on their own, they devised a rehearsal plan on their own, they conducted their own rehearsals, and performed for the judge, Eric Olson, string professor from Bemidji State University. Instructor Ms. Sheila Wilcox said she was very proud of their hard work, determination, poise and behavior throughout this project and hoped some of the groups will want to share their pieces with our audience at the orchestra's **Winter Concert, March 13 at 7:00PM** in the RRHS Performing Arts Center.



THE GREAT DEBATE IN WORLD HISTORY

After researching their parts, students role-played historical figures as they tried to find solutions to ancient and current ethical dilemmas that plague society. Props and costumes were encouraged, and debates were judged based on character authenticity, innovative ideas, and intelligent arguments.



MARCH MADNESS

Students taking world language classes have been participating in an international competition - listening to authentic German and Latin music! In German, it's called März Musik Madness and hundreds of German schools across the United States and Canada are participating. In Spanish, it's referred to as Locura de Marzo and has participants from thousands of schools all around the world who are learning Spanish. We started in February by doing a quick listen to sixteen songs and making predictions about which songs would move forward in our brackets. Then each day, we listen to one song focusing on pertinent vocabulary to that particular song, watch the videos, and learn about the artists, and where they are from. Every other day, we vote both locally and nationally for our favorite songs.



Rock Ridge High School is aiming to grow its esports program and any 7-12 grade student interested in the program should contact Mr. Conger at liam.conger@rrps.org. Students who wish to join must pay an activity fee and be passing all of their classes. The MNLV regular season just concluded with the state tournament but an informal spring club season is starting in April.

SLICING & DICING

Students in 7th grade Family and Consumer Science class have been busy! They just finished practicing knife skills - cutting vegetables to use in a future soup lab. They really enjoy learning in the new commercial kitchens and have been doing a great job!



In a couple weeks, we will declare the winning songs and the winning students - those who predicted the winning songs most accurately. No better way to connect with real language than through music!

ESPORTS

Jonathan Crain and Cameron Vandelinde represented RRHS at the Minnesota esports state tournament at St. Cloud University on March 1. Jonathan and Cameron competed in Mario Kart 8 against numerous schools from across the state. Jonathan and Cameron had a great regular season with a 5-3 record and finished 15th at the State Tournament. Other students that participated in esports at Rock Ridge include Allen Forseen, Jack Kenyon, Brady Peterson, Josh Tweten, Ingrid Welch, and Linus Welch.

Minnesota Varsity League sponsors the state league and is currently working to get the esports sanctioned by the MHSL as esports is currently the fastest growing extracurricular activity in Minnesota. There are thousands of high school, college, and professional esports teams across the nation. Colleges offer scholarships and recruit students to play esports. Several colleges including Gustavus Adolphus, UND, and St. Cloud attended the state tournament and stated they offer scholarships up to \$5,000 per year to students on their esports teams.

Many might not realize that video games can be much more than a hobby as the industry offers many career and economic opportunities. Video games comprise the largest share of the media market and gross over \$250 billion globally every year, doubling that of the film industry. Most professional esports players make over \$150,000 a year and many video game streamers make millions and are some of the biggest social media personalities in the world. There are numerous career opportunities in the video game industry outside of esports including game design, artistic and animation development, sound and video engineering, game testing, and technical support.





Community Education Classes

YOUTH CLASSES

Take and Bake Pizza \$25/child

Thurs, April 3 | 6:00 - 7:00 PM | RRHS

Join Zaden and his mom to make an easy dinner! Each child will receive all the ingredients to make a take-and-bake homemade pizza. Each child will need an adult present to help during class. Deadline to register: March 22.

Build Your Own Pet Workshop \$15

Wed, March 12 | AFTER SCHOOL

Join Rock Ridge Community Education for an afternoon of building your own stuffed animal. There are three pets to choose from and three locations to choose from (Laurentian, Parkview & North Star). Each class is limited to 25 participants. Class and pet choices are on a first come basis.

Ninja Warrior Classes \$75/session

NSE NINJA GYM

Ninja Warrior Welcome to the Ninja Warrior Class, where young warriors aged 5-15 embark on an epic adventure filled with excitement, agility, and fun! This action-packed class is designed to develop essential ninja skills through engaging and dynamic activities that keep kids moving, learning, and smiling. Classes are 3 days a week for 6 weeks. Check the website for registration and more information.

March 2025



ADULT CLASSES

Building Your Retirement Foundation

Mar. 11 | 6:00 - 7:00 PM | FREE

Attendees will learn four smart retirement planning moves, tactical changes they can make that set up their retirement foundation. You will also learn how to help future proof your tax bracket and pick up an answer to that nagging question about Social Security. This class is free, but registration is required. Please call 218-735-3516 to register! Online registration is also available.

Estate & Nursing Home Planning

Mar. 17 | 5:30 - 7:00 PM | FREE

Get your estate in order by planning for incompetency and/or death. Learn why you need a Power of Attorney, Health Care Directive, and will. Also, get up-to-date information about nursing home planning and learn how titling your assets impacts your estate and nursing home planning. This class is free, but registration is required. Please call 218-735-3516 to register! Alicia L. Cope Instructor.

Spring Paint Event

Mar. 19 | 6:00 - 8:30 PM | \$50

Did you miss out on the Winter Sleds? Well, here is your second chance! Join Nana's Paint Nook for a fun evening. Register online. (15 person minimum to run the class.)

**For more information and to sign up online go to:
rrps.cr3.rschooltoday.com or call (218) 735-3516.**

Northland Learning Center

2025 TRANSITION EXPO

April 24, 2025

9:30am to 1:30pm

Northland Learning Center Gym

(Door #4)

1201 S 13th Ave Virginia, MN

EXPLORE RESOURCES

Explore resources available to students and families as students transition out of high school.

- Informational booths
- Light lunch provided
- Drawing for prizes

TEACHERS

Apply for transportation and substitute teacher funding through True North Stars Perkins Consortium .

<https://forms.gle/xY3hKPKFBTjVB4Lt8>

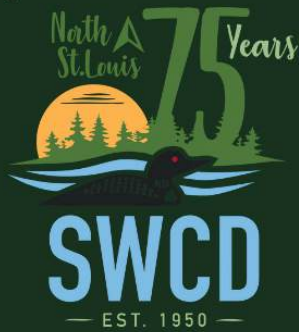
CONTACT US:

To be a vendor or have any questions contact:
Amanda Slattery
NLC Special Education Coordinator
(218) 471-1047 or aslattery@northlandsped.org



FREE WORKSHOP!

ROOTS & RAIN



RAINGARDEN & FORESTRY WORKSHOP

**03.26.2025
6-7:30PM**

Manage your land for cleaner water and healthier forests! This workshop covers rain garden design for stormwater management and forestry-related financial incentives for sustainable land stewardship. You may even qualify for financial assistance if you're in a priority area—programs are available for various lot sizes!

**ROCK RIDGE HIGH SCHOOL
AUDITORIUM**

Please Register at Rock Ridge Community Ec