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ROCK RIDGE REPORTER

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF ROCK RIDGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS



EDUCATION TO INSPIRE THE NEXT GENERATION

LAURENTIAN GRADES PREK-6 LET THE GAMES BEGIN!

On Monday, February 2nd, Laurentian Elementary's readers positioned themselves at the "Starting Gate", ready to navigate the activities, events, and challenges of 'I Love To Read' Month!

Italy, Greece, Finland, Spain, Mexico, South Korea were only a few of the countries represented by each classroom. Daily, they sparred for points that in turn earned each class a gold, silver, or bronze medal! As the competitors arrived each morning, they eagerly reviewed the results of the prior day's reading competition!

Team USA was racking up the gold medals with excellent reading scores!

Week One consisted of capturing February's spirit of love and friendship as our students breezed through Valentine card after Valentine card. Coloring, shading, tracing, and outlining sports-themed cards and posters. With these cards and posters, we spread the sparkle of appreciation and kindness to the elderly friends of our community.

Following close behind Week One was Week Two and a fabulous book fair! PaperPie books rallied around us encouraging us to read more, read variety, and read challenging books. With all those new tales, adventures, novels, and mysteries, it was 'game on' and the competition heated up!

Like the whirlwind of a triple axel, Week 3 came sneaking up from behind. Biography after biography, we learned about Roman Josi, Cory Thiesse, Sunisa Lee, Brock Faber, Mikaela Shiffrin, Jessie Diggins, Jake Oettinger - our very

own Mark Pavlich, and so many more Iron Range, Minnesota, and US Olympians who have and still represent our country, making us proud waving our stars and stripes!



Down the long stretch to the finish line with Week 4 - Our celebratory dress-up days filled the school's hallways with RED, WHITE, and BLUE attire commemorating Team USA's great success! Then there were readers with crazy hair bringing smiles to our faces. Some of our favorite book characters were found walking, talking, and enjoying the day- We met princesses, Mario and Luigi, Pokémon, Scooby Doo, and Waldo - even Captain Underpants showed up!





Hats off and 'Howdy' were the greetings for the day when western apparel was requested. And a dress-up week is never complete unless we all "Dress our Best" - Fab Friday!



Our closing ceremony marked the official end of the 2026 Reading Olympics. Reader after reader paraded into the Laurentian Elementary school gym - some with flags or streamers in hand. Others with colorful vestments, face paintings, balloons and more. Switzerland, Australia, Sweden, Morocco, France, Canada, the Philippines, just to mention a few! Excitement filled the air as gold, silver, and bronze medal winners were announced. The crowds roared with frenzy and prizes were awarded!



Then, only a select few, only the most dedicated competitors, got to take their 'best shot' at our guest hockey goalie, Ms. Kristine Miller. The competitors all got to use a hockey stick to make the shot, but Ms. Kristine had to choose what to use in the fight. Her options were an umbrella, a broom, a crutch, a baseball bat, a tennis racquet...all for a 'shutout' game, making this Closing Ceremony one for the books!

And, what better way to reward our best readers than with a trip to the United States Hockey Hall of Fame, rubbing

elbows with the greats, seeing how hockey has evolved over the last 100+ years, and getting a clear idea of just how many Iron Rangers have ‘put us on the map’ with their jaw-dropping skills!



After our trip down ‘hockey memory lane’, we snacked on some delicious pizza and snacks, then bopped around on the ice bumper cars at the Iron Trail Motors Event Center! The students had a blast being rewarded for their efforts!



These Reading Olympic events were sponsored by Barber Graphics, Cinema 6, Cook’s Country Connections, Dairy Queen, Eveleth Elks, Eveleth Masonic Lodge, Fun of Reading/Paperpie Books, Giants Ridge, Hardee’s, Iron Range Rotary Club, Laurentian PTA, Minnesota Masonic Lodge, Pizza Hut, Target, United States Hockey Hall of Fame, and Walmart.

All good things must come to an end, but reading never will!

STORYTELLING COMES TO LIFE WITH MARK MINDT!

We were excited to welcome author and illustrator Mark Mindt, creator of KODA the Warrior, to work with our 5th and 6th graders in an engaging 45-minute writer’s workshop!

Mark shared his journey as a storyteller and artist, guiding students through the creative process of developing

characters, building stories, and bringing ideas to life through both writing and illustration. His energy and passion inspired our students to think like authors and creators—we are so grateful he shared his talents with us!



3RD GRADE READING CHAMPIONS!

Ms. Lanyk’s 3rd grade class was proud to win the Reading Champions competition sponsored by the Pittsburgh Penguins and U.S. Steel!

Competing against all 3rd grade classrooms in the district, Ms. Lanyk’s students read an incredible 51,200 minutes. All participants received prizes, and the class earned the championship medal and Reading Champions Trophy as the winning classroom.

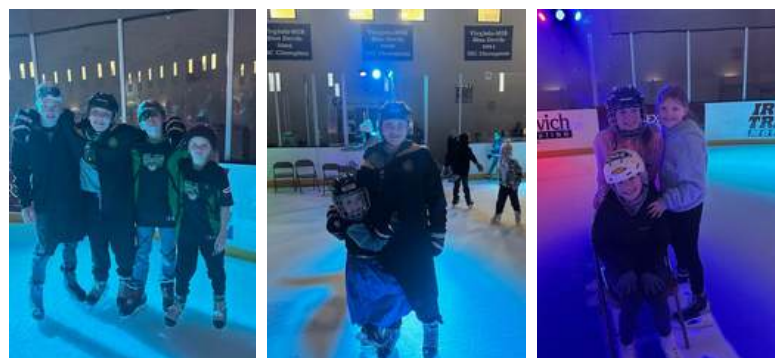
We are so proud of their hard work and love of reading!



3RD GRADE READING CHAMPIONS!

THANK YOU, LAURENTIAN PTA!

A huge thank you to the Laurentian Elementary PTA for organizing such a delightful afternoon of ice skating for our families!



FIRST GRADE ARTISTS

Dogs In Motion - Ms. Gulbranson's first graders learned how to show movement through art by painting dogs shaking their heads and water droplets.



PARKVIEW GRADES PREK-2 GLOW DAY SUCCESS

Mrs. Streier's 2nd grade class recently had the exciting opportunity to earn a special celebration – a Glow Day! Leading up to this bright celebration, students, through hard work, teamwork, and positive attitudes, reached their WIG (Wildly Important Goals) meaning 80% of our class achieved 80% or higher on their tests!

On Glow Day, the classroom was transformed with glowing lights, neon colors, and fun activities. Students enjoyed glowing games, creative art projects, and music that made the day feel extra special. Many wore bright or neon clothing to add to the fun atmosphere.

Most importantly, Glow Day was a way to celebrate the students' successes in working hard and supporting one another - a joyful reminder that hard work and kindness truly do shine!

BIG READERS, LITTLE LISTENERS

Mrs. Ludwig's first graders and Mrs. Seppala's kindergartners teamed up to practice reading and listening skills! The first graders have really been focusing on their fluency - which means reading with accuracy, a good speed, and expression.



Mrs. Seppala's kindergartners were great active listeners as the first graders practiced reading various stories like, "Fly Guy" and "Pig the Pug." And the first graders really enjoyed getting to be the teachers as they read with their "teacher voices!"



LEADER IN ME



Students from Parkview Elementary describe the eight habits of highly effective people that they have learned about as part of the *Leader in Me* curriculum in this fun video. Scan the QR code or click this link

<https://youtu.be/KS34fWIHztc> to find out what they've learned!

NORTH STAR GRADES 3-6 OPERA IN ACTION AT NORTH STAR

Students in Ms. Collins's and Ms. Kemen's classes had a unique opportunity this March as they participated in a live opera performance of *The Elixir of Love* presented by Lyric Opera of the North. Traveling from Duluth, four professional singers and a pianist brought this engaging production to local schools as part of their outreach across the Northland. Since returning from winter break in January, students had been preparing for the performance by learning and practicing several songs, building both confidence and excitement for their roles in the opera.

This adaptation of *The Elixir of Love*, created by Opera for the Young, reimagines the classic story in the Old West town of Lonesome Gulch. Ms. Collins's and Ms. Kemen's students took on the important role of the chorus, portraying the lively townsfolk who help bring the story to life. Their hard work culminated in two performances for students in grades 2-6, offering younger audiences an engaging introduction to opera. The experience not only enriched students' understanding of musical theater but also gave them a chance to collaborate with professional performers in a memorable and meaningful way.

RRHS GRADES 7-12

March was another outstanding month at Rock Ridge High School, filled with hands-on learning, real-world experiences, and student engagement that continues to define what it means to live out Our School, Our Responsibility. Throughout the month, our students demonstrated not only academic growth, but also a commitment to applying their learning in meaningful and practical ways that prepare them for life beyond high school.

At the beginning of March, our DECA students represented Rock Ridge High School at the State Career Development Conference in Minneapolis alongside more than 3,000 students from across the state. The results were nothing short of outstanding. On March 1, our chapter earned eight qualifying spots to the International Career Development Conference (ICDC) in Atlanta. In addition, Andrew Jacobson and Abigail Sather received the Outstanding Student Recognition Award. During preliminary awards on March 2, Corbet Hainey and Zachary Sonnino were both recognized as top 25 finishers in their respective exams, with Zachary also earning finalist recognition in both of his events. On March 3, Zach competed in the finals and ultimately placed third in the Entrepreneurship Series event, securing his spot at ICDC. In total, Rock Ridge will have nine students competing on the international stage—an incredible accomplishment that highlights the strength of our business and leadership programming.



Rock Ridge High School students also represented our school and community at the HOSA-Future Health Professionals State Leadership Conference, and we couldn't be more proud of them. HOSA is a national organization that prepares students for careers in healthcare through competition, leadership development, and real-world application of medical knowledge and skills. Students explored pathways into careers such as nursing, medicine, EMT services, and physical therapy while engaging with peers and professionals from across the state. Experiences like HOSA are incredibly important as healthcare continues to be one of the fastest-growing career fields in our country. These opportunities allow students to apply classroom learning to real-world scenarios, build confidence, and begin to see themselves as future healthcare professionals.



On March 24, RRHS welcomed Essentia Health Labs for their annual visit—an experience that once again proved to be an incredible success. Students engaged in a series of hands-on learning stations focused on blood testing, urology, microbiology, pathology, and pregnancy screening. This interactive experience allowed students to move from station to station, gaining insight into real-world laboratory practices while actively participating in the learning process. The event was made possible through the collaboration of RRHS, HOSA, CIS Chemistry, and AP Biology, and it showcased the strength of our Career Academy model by connecting students directly with industry professionals and authentic career pathways.



Our Law and Criminal Justice students also had an impressive showing this month. On March 20, students in Ms. Ellefson's class brought energy and enthusiasm into the classroom as they participated in a Jeopardy-style review game covering key court system topics. Students

demonstrated their understanding of mediation versus arbitration, as well as landmark Supreme Court cases such as *Brown v. Board of Education* and *Gideon v. Wainwright*. The results were strong with 63% of students earning a B or higher, highlighting both engagement and mastery of the content.

Building on that momentum, students are now diving deeper into criminal procedure, focusing on the Fourth Amendment and students' rights within schools. In this unit, students are analyzing real Supreme Court cases, forming their own conclusions without outside research, and engaging in structured discussions and debates before comparing their reasoning to actual court rulings. This type of learning challenges students to think critically, communicate effectively, and approach problems like legal scholars, further strengthening their understanding of constitutional law and civic responsibility.

A great example of student leadership in action took place earlier this month when CORE students partnered with My Futures 8 classes. Eighth grade students completed a leadership inventory, explored different leadership styles, and then put their skills to the test by competing to build the tallest tower. The activity pushed students to collaborate, communicate, and problem-solve in real time. Following the competition, students reflected on how their leadership skills showed up during the activity and engaged in deeper conversations about how those strengths can be applied at Rock Ridge High School. This experience highlighted the importance of student voice, reflection, and leadership development while also reinforcing connections between our high school and middle school students. A special thank you to Ms. Ellefson for opening her classroom and creating this opportunity for meaningful collaboration.



At the middle school level, students are developing practical, lifelong skills through sewing. These classes focus on teaching students how to operate sewing machines, perform basic stitching, and create or repair everyday items. Beyond the technical skills, students are gaining independence, problem-solving abilities, and a sense of pride in creating something with their own hands. This work reflects our continued commitment to providing real-world learning experiences that extend far beyond the classroom.



Another highlight this month was a fantastic Unified Sports event hosted right here at RRHS. In partnership with Special Olympics Minnesota, the school welcomed students from Mesabi East Schools for an exciting day of floor hockey competition. The event brought together students with and without intellectual disabilities, emphasizing inclusion, teamwork, and school pride. Kaylee from Mesabi East shared, "They are pretty fun to go with," capturing the spirit of the day, while Chip, a Rock Ridge senior, stepped into the role of goalie for his team. Michael, an 8th grader at Rock Ridge, enjoyed supporting from the sidelines, saying, "It's been fabulous so far." Natasha, a sophomore and president of the Unified Club, highlighted the importance of the event by explaining that it provides special education athletes with the same opportunities as others while also helping students build meaningful connections. One parent, Teri, who also helped organize the event, summed it up best: "Everybody wins when they work together." After six matches, the competition ended in a three-way tie for first place, with one team from Mesabi East and two from Rock Ridge. The success of the event has already sparked plans for future competitions, including a potential basketball event next year.

Rock Ridge students also demonstrated leadership and service through the LEO Club, which hosted a charity event to support the Quad City Food Shelf while raising awareness of local resources available to individuals and families facing food insecurity and other basic needs. The event brought together students, staff, and community members for an afternoon centered on giving back, connection, and support. Attendees enjoyed bowls of soup prepared by our talented Culinary students while also exploring a mini resource fair highlighting community support services. Donations were accepted throughout the event, reinforcing the strong sense of community and responsibility that defines Rock Ridge High School. Events like this not only support important local causes, but also give our students meaningful opportunities to lead and make a difference.

Another exciting community-centered event this month was the 2nd Annual REACH Fundraising Event, which brought a fun country-western atmosphere to Rock Ridge High School. Community members grabbed their boots and joined in a full day of activities that included live music, games, food, dancing, and even time spent with farm animals. The event created an opportunity for students, staff, and families to come together, have fun, and support a great cause. The REACH Club continues to play a vital role in promoting a positive school culture, and this event was another example of students leading the way in building connections and school pride.



We also recently celebrated the success of our first-ever Rock Ridge High School Showcase, which was an incredible opportunity to see learning come to life throughout the building. Families and community members had the chance to walk through our beautiful facilities, explore projects from every subject area, and experience firsthand the outstanding work our students are doing each day. The event was more than just a showcase—it was a true celebration of creativity, hard work, and student success. The energy throughout the building was outstanding, and it reinforced the pride we have in our students and staff as they continue to raise the bar.



At Rock Ridge High School, we continue to see what happens when students are given opportunities to engage in meaningful, hands-on learning experiences. Whether in business competitions, healthcare leadership events, science labs, law classrooms, leadership development activities, hands-on skill courses, or inclusive athletic events, our students are rising to the challenge. This is Our School, Our Responsibility in action—students learning, growing, and preparing for their future every single day

OUR BAND SHINES IN FLORIDA

The Rock Ridge Senior High Band traveled to Orlando, Florida at the end of March for an unforgettable performance tour.

While there, the band marched and performed at both Disney World's EPCOT and Universal Studios Florida. Both performances were very well received, earning the group numerous compliments on their appearance and sound.

In addition to performing, the band traveled to Cocoa Beach, where students had the opportunity to visit Kennedy Space Center and swim in the Atlantic Ocean.

“This trip has been a long-standing tradition that gives band students a unique opportunity to perform at Disney World and Universal Orlando,” said Rock Ridge Band Director Kevin Szumal. “The memories from this experience are the highlight of students’ time in band and will last a lifetime.”



MUSIC, MEMORIES, AND MAGIC!

Forty-nine members of the A Cappella Choir and Senior High School Orchestra enjoyed a trip to Chicago March 26-30.

Highlights included going to the top of the Willis Tower - 103 stories overlooking Chicago - and who could forget The Ledge? The dolphin show, belugas, and other tropical marine life at the Shedd Aquarium was part of the fun. We experienced all that the Navy Pier had to offer, as well as singing and playing for Field Museum guests. Festivities at Medieval Times were a big hit, as well as, the grand finale of our trip ~ the Broadway musical, *Hamilton*.

Our chaperones Wes Bruemmer, Jacob Littler, Becky Crain, and Desi Tomczak, and JayBee Travel went above and beyond to make this an incredible experience for all of us. Thank you so much for giving of your time, compassion, laughter, and caring!



EXPLORING CAREERS IN HEALTH

Twenty RRHS students attended a tour of the Essentia St. Mary's Medical Center in Duluth on March 27. They had the opportunity to spend over two hours touring the various departments in this state-of-the art healthcare center.

They experienced the technology and processes involved in Sterile Processing and what it takes to prevent infections with procedures/surgeries. They toured the Radiology Department and learned how important the various imaging modalities are in guiding patient care. They also had the opportunity to visit the Oncology Nursing floor and see how direct patient care is provided with the newest of technologies.

This also was on the 18th floor of the facility with fantastic views of Duluth, Lake Superior and the North Shore! All along the way they met a wide variety of Healthcare professionals and witnessed the importance of teamwork when providing quality healthcare. Thank you to Essentia Health for providing this opportunity to our students!



APRIL IS NATIONAL VOLUNTEER MONTH



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