

MAY 2026 | ISSUE 44

# ROCK RIDGE REPORTER

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF ROCK RIDGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS



EDUCATION TO INSPIRE THE NEXT GENERATION

## LAURENTIAN GRADES PREK-6 AWARENESS IN ACTION

In recognition of Autism Awareness Month, students participated in a bracelet sale aimed at raising awareness and promoting understanding of autism and other disabilities. The initiative emphasized an important message: not all disabilities are visible, and fostering kindness and empathy within our school community is essential. As shared with students, "In a world where you can be anything... be kind."

Through their efforts, students raised \$450, which was donated to Special Olympics Minnesota. Several Laurentian students are active participants in this organization, making the contribution especially meaningful.

Special Olympics Minnesota provides year-round sports training and athletic competition for children and adults with intellectual disabilities across the state. In addition to athletics, the organization promotes inclusion, physical fitness, confidence, and social connection, while also offering programs focused on health, leadership, and unified opportunities.

We are proud of our students for their compassion, leadership, and commitment to creating a more inclusive and supportive environment.



## A SPLASHY FINISH TO THE YEAR

Ms. Kush's three-year-old School Readiness classes celebrated their final days of school with a fun-filled beach party!

Students enjoyed a variety of beach-themed activities as they wrapped up a wonderful year of learning, growth, and friendship. The celebration was a joyful way to recognize all the progress the children made throughout the school year while creating special memories together before summer break.



## A WILD DAY AT LAURENTIAN

Students at Laurentian Elementary had a wild and unforgettable experience on Friday, April 24, when Sustainable Safari visited the school for a hands-on animal learning event funded by the Laurentian Elementary PTA.

Throughout the day, students had the opportunity to learn about and interact with a variety of fascinating animals, including a tenrec, a baby American alligator, a porcupine, a skunk, an albino skunk, and even a two-week-old baby emu.



The biggest stars of the day, however, were the six-month-old kangaroo joeys. Students in every group responded with excitement, squeals, and gasps of delight as the joeys peeked their heads out to look around.

Sustainable Safari operates two locations in the Twin Cities area, offering interactive learning experiences with a wide variety of animals. Laurentian students and staff were grateful for the opportunity to enjoy this unique educational experience right at school.

A special thank you to the Laurentian Elementary PTA for making this memorable day possible for our students!



## PARKVIEW GRADES PREK-2 KINDERGARTEN IS BLOOMING

Spring has brought a season full of growth, discovery, and excitement in Parkview Kindergarten! Students have been busy exploring their special Planting Unit in science, where they planted grass seeds and zinnias while learning about how plants grow.

Each morning brought new excitement as students eagerly checked their clear cups to observe changes. They were delighted to see their grass sprout quickly into thick, green blades—so much so that we even gave it a little “haircut” before sending it home!

While only a few of our zinnia seeds sprouted, we didn't let that slow us down. Thanks to Mr. Seppala, we were able to plant beautiful marigolds instead. These bright flowers now sit proudly in the colorful, hand-painted pots created by our talented young artists.



To wrap up our Planting Unit, students celebrated Earth Day with a fun and tasty treat—"dirt cups" made of pudding, crushed cookies, and gummy worms!

It's been a joyful season of hands-on learning, curiosity, and growth. Here's to sunshine, spring, and continuing to reach for the sun as we grow!



For the letter "W," students investigated the world of worms—observing how they move and where they live. They even designed and built their own "playgrounds" for worms, encouraging creativity while learning about habitats and the natural world.

## VOLCANOES TO WORM WORLDS

April was an exciting and hands-on month in PreK 4 as students explored the letters V and W through engaging, play-based learning experiences.

Students dove into "V" by creating erupting volcanoes, sparking curiosity and wonder as they observed exciting chemical reactions. They also explored veterinary play, caring for stuffed animals while building empathy, imagination, and early problem-solving skills.



# SMALL ACTIONS, BIG IMPACT

Mrs. Streier’s class celebrated Earth Day by diving into the importance of the 3 R’s—Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle. Students engaged in thoughtful discussions and brainstorming, exploring ways they can take action to reduce waste, conserve energy, and care for the environment in their everyday lives.

They also learned how human actions impact animals and the habitats around us, building awareness of their role in protecting the natural world.

To put their learning into action, students participated in a meaningful act of service by helping clean up the school grounds—demonstrating that even small efforts can make a big difference.

# NORTH STAR GRADES 3-6

## STUDENTS CELEBRATE EARTH DAY

Our 5th grade students took Earth Day beyond the classroom this year by rolling up their sleeves and giving back to our community through a large-scale garbage pick-up. Students spread out across key areas, making a visible impact throughout town—Southside, Main Street, and the lake—working together to help keep our community clean and beautiful.



This experience was about much more than picking up trash. Students engaged in meaningful conversations about the impact of garbage on our environment, the role we all play in taking responsibility for our surroundings, and the importance of giving back. We also talked about how our community has supported our school, and how this was one way we could show appreciation for the investment and belief they have in our students.

Our 5th graders represented our school with pride. They were focused, respectful, and committed to doing something positive for others. It was a great example of student leadership in action and a reminder that even small efforts can make a big difference.

We are proud of our students for stepping up and showing what it means to care for their school and community!

## FRAMING THE FUTURE

The North Star Sled Shed is taking shape!

Students are gaining hands-on experience with industry standards like “16 on center” and “X ahead” while laying out walls. They’ve learned what a garage door header is, how it’s built, and why it needs to be so strong! They’re also discovering why building things “square” matters—not just for looks, but for strength and stability.

It’s been awesome to see these skills come to life—great work, students! We can’t wait to see the finished shed for our sleds and other outdoor equipment!



# RRHS GRADES 7-12

Rock Ridge High School continues to build momentum as one of Minnesota's emerging leaders in academics, innovation, career readiness, and student opportunity. Over the past month, the school has celebrated statewide recognition for innovation, dramatic growth in advanced academic programming, outstanding performances in engineering and environmental science competitions, and national-level student leadership opportunities through DECA.

School leaders say the success is the direct result of the students, staff, families, and communities rallying behind the philosophy of "Our School, Our Responsibility."

## ROCK RIDGE EARNS PRESTIGIOUS STATE INNOVATION AWARD

Rock Ridge High School recently earned the prestigious MASSP Gold Star Award for Innovation from the Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals. The award recognizes schools across Minnesota that demonstrate exceptional creativity, innovation, and impact in improving school culture, student experiences, and educational opportunities.

Principal Scott Manni said the award reflects the commitment and pride displayed throughout the entire school community.

"This award belongs to our students, staff, and communities," Manni said. "We are building something special at Rock Ridge High School, and people across the state are beginning to notice. We built schools like no other, to produce students like no other."

## RRU ENROLLMENT CONTINUES TO GROW

One of the biggest areas of growth this year has been the dramatic increase in enrollment in Rock Ridge University (RRU). The initiative focuses on expanding rigorous academic opportunities for students through College in the Schools (CIS) courses, Advanced Placement offerings, career pathways, and hands-on learning experiences that prepare students for college, careers, military service, and life beyond high school.

This spring alone, Rock Ridge seniors earned more than \$950,000 in academic scholarships, reinforcing the strength and rigor of the school's academic programming. The high school continues to expand opportunities through advanced coursework, project-based learning, career pathways, and real-world experiences — all while keeping students connected to their school, activities, and community.



## YALE BOOK AWARD RECOGNIZES STUDENT LEADERSHIP

Rock Ridge High School celebrated another outstanding academic accomplishment this spring.

Junior student Addison Golden was selected as this year's recipient of the prestigious Yale Book Award, presented annually by Yale University to recognize outstanding high school juniors across the country for their character, leadership, academic achievement, and work ethic.

"Addison has developed into a tremendous leader at RRHS," school staff shared. "She works incredibly hard, listens to varying perspectives, and consistently helps move projects and learning forward in the classroom."

 A graphic poster for the "Star of Innovation 2026 Award Winners" sponsored by Horace Mann. The poster features three stars at the top and lists Gold Star and Silver Star winners. The MASSP logo is in the top left corner.
 

**Star of Innovation**  
2026 Award Winners

MASSP is proud to partner with Horace Mann for the 2026 Star of Innovation Award. Horace Mann has been a sponsor of this award since 2009. This award is designed to recognize MASSP member schools statewide for the development and support of an exemplary and innovative educational program in their school.

**Gold Star Winners**

<p><b>Apello High School</b> Second Chance Breakfast Courtney Gordon, Assistant Principal</p>	<p><b>Horizon East Middle School</b> RHSF Cory Holten, Assistant Principal</p>	<p><b>Rogers High School</b> Right Place, Right Time: It's the Little Things Rogers High School Administrative Team</p>
<p><b>Franklin Middle School</b> The PMS Kindness Challenge Josh Horne, Principal</p>	<p><b>Mariner Middle School</b> Cumulative Grades Plan Ryan Clark, Associate Principal</p>	<p><b>Sebeka High School</b> Treyan Career Work Amie Westberg, Principal</p>
<p><b>Rock Ridge High School</b> Our School Our Responsibility Scott Manni, Principal</p>		

**Silver Star Winners**



# ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE TEAM EARNS RECOGNITION

Students from Mrs. Glade’s Environthon Team represented Rock Ridge High School with pride during the sectional competition held on May 4.

The students competed in five rounds of Environmental Science testing and presented a real-world rehabilitation plan for Little Elk Lake in Minnesota to a panel of experts.

Out of more than 30 teams, Rock Ridge finished in 8th place, missing qualification for the state competition by only seven points.

While narrowly missing state qualification, the team earned the Team Spirit Award for displaying exceptional school pride, positivity, and sportsmanship throughout the competition.

School leaders praised the students for representing Rock Ridge High School with professionalism, teamwork, and pride.

# ENGINEERING TEAM TAKES 1ST

Rock Ridge students continued proving that academic excellence extends far beyond the classroom.

Students Noah and Tanner recently earned 1st Place at the St. John’s University Engineering Design Competition. The competition challenged students from across the region to apply engineering, teamwork, and problem-solving skills to real-world scenarios.

Earning first place at such a high level showcased the dedication, creativity, and technical skills of Rock Ridge students while reinforcing the school’s growing reputation for academic excellence and innovation.



# DECA STUDENTS ADVANCE TO NATIONALS

Rock Ridge students advanced to one of the largest student leadership conferences in the world through DECA.

Students qualified for the 80th Annual DECA International Career Development Conference (ICDC) held April 25–28 in Atlanta. The conference welcomed more than 26,000 high school students, advisors, and business professionals from around the world, making it the largest conference in DECA history.

The DECA ICDC provides students with career-focused experiences where they apply business knowledge to real-world scenarios through case studies, strategic problem-solving, presentations, and professional pitch competitions. School leaders say the opportunity demonstrates the growing strength of Rock Ridge’s business, marketing, and leadership programs.



# SHOWCASE DEMONSTRATES WHY RRHS IS A CAREER ACADEMY

The recent Rock Ridge Showcase highlighted exactly why Rock Ridge High School continues to build its identity as a true Career Academy. The event gave families and community members an inside look at the extraordinary learning experiences taking place every day throughout the high school.

Visitors witnessed students engaged in captivating chemistry experiments, creative sewing projects, culinary arts and cooking demonstrations, soulful live music performances, impressive cup stacking, anatomy and healthcare experiences using the anatomage table, and even live laser engraving demonstrations.



# THANK YOU TO THE CLASS OF 2026

As graduation approaches, school leaders express deep appreciation for the dedication and commitment shown by the Class of 2026.

Throughout the year, senior students helped shape the culture of Rock Ridge High School by embracing the values of leadership, accountability, and school pride. Whether in academics, athletics, fine arts, career pathways, student leadership, or community service, the senior class played a major role in building a positive environment throughout the building.

Administrators say the Class of 2026 leaves behind a legacy that helped strengthen the identity of Rock Ridge High School during a pivotal time in the school’s growth.

“The Class of 2026 has embraced what it means to represent Rock Ridge High School,” Manni said. “Their dedication, resilience, leadership, and commitment to our school have helped create the culture we see today. We are incredibly proud of them and thankful for the impact they have had on our students, staff, and community.”

