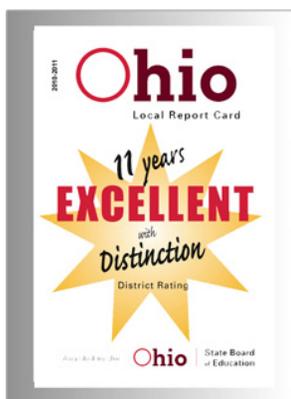


# R S C H O O L S | S

digital edition

## Rocky River Schools Top In Northeast Ohio; Second In State

The Ohio Department of Education's 2010-2011 report cards are out and the Rocky River School District is the top district in Northeast Ohio and tied for second place in the state of Ohio. The District earned an "Excellent with Distinction" rating for the 11th year in a row, with a performance index score of 110.9. This is up from a 108.1 performance index score last year which ranked the district 5th in Northeast Ohio and 11th in the state.



The State Department of Education releases a yearly report card for each district in the state, showing the progress made based on four measures of performance: state indicators; performance; adequate yearly progress; and value-added. These combined measures are the basis for one of the six designations assigned. Excellent with Distinction is the top rating a district can earn.

### Dates to Remember

11/10/11	<i>Parent Teacher Conferences (No School)</i>
11/11/11	<i>Teacher Professional Day (No School)</i>
11/18/11	<i>Basketball Challenge Cup</i>
11/23-25/11	<i>Thanksgiving Vacation</i>
12/22/11	<i>Winter Vacation Begins</i>
1/3/12	<i>School Resumes</i>

## RRHS Junior Presented Community Service Award



*Rob Hendricks is joined by school board member Jean Rounds, RRMS counselor Peg Liberatore, SportsTime Ohio president Jim Liberatore, superintendent Michael Shoaf, RRHS principal Debra Bernard and school board member Jon Fancher.*

Rocky River High School junior Rob Hendricks was presented with a Community Service Award by Cleveland Clinic Hospitals for his work with Hoops for Hunger.

Rob thought of the idea for Hoops for Hunger as an 8th grader at Rocky River Middle School when he was looking for a service project. A similar project, Volley for the Cure, sparked the idea to use a basketball game between Rocky River and Bay Village high schools as a fundraiser for the Cleveland Foodbank.

RRMS guidance counselor Peg Liberatore contacted her brother Jim Liberatore, the president of SportsTime Ohio (STO). Rob shared his idea with STO executives and members of the board of the Cleveland Foodbank, including Anthony Rego. STO agreed to televise the game and support the fundraiser. With the support of these mentors and the Rocky River and Bay Village schools, Hoops for Hunger raised 8,000 units (food and funds) the first year. The second year saw 25,000 units raised and last year \$30,000 in cash and 15,000 food items were raised.

Rob is quick to share the credit for the amazing achievement, saying that fellow student council members at both schools play a big role in making Hoops for Hunger such a successful event.

**This year's Hoops for Hunger will be held December 9 when the RRHS basketball team plays Bay Village.**

# Kensington Earns National Blue Ribbon Distinction

On Thursday, September 15, 2011, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan announced the Nation's Blue Ribbon Schools for 2011. Rocky River's Kensington Intermediate School is one of them.

"We are very proud to be recognized for the hard work that takes place at Kensington every day. Both our staff and our parents are dedicated to each doing their part in ensuring all students are learning," said Todd Murphy, Kensington Principal. "We have an outstanding staff who collaborate and focus on student learning and success. I know our students and faculty look forward to school every day. We love what we do, and it shows. Student learning is our mission."

The Blue Ribbon Schools Program is a national recognition program honoring elementary and secondary schools in the United States that make significant progress in closing achievement gaps or whose students achieve at the highest levels in their state. Recognized schools are models of academic excellence and achievement. "National Blue Ribbon Schools are committed to accelerating student achievement and preparing students for success in college and careers," U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan said. "Their success is an example for others to follow."

In early October 2010, the Ohio Department of Education informed the district that Kensington was one of fourteen public schools in the state nominated to apply for the award. Once nominated, the school was required to apply to the U.S. Department of Education for the award.



Eight staff members volunteered to join Mr. Murphy on the Blue Ribbon application writing team: Linda Bracken, Nancy Brassell, Laura Daugstrup, Traci Harrison, Judy Hudson, Linda Rocco, Jackie Seedhouse, and Melissa Spangler. Team members worked for two months collecting evidence and collaborating on an application of twelve essays surrounding curriculum/instruction and indicators of academic success.

"The National Blue Ribbon Award recognizes the successful culmination of professional educators working diligently with students and parents to meet

rigorous standards," said district superintendent Michael Shoaf. "Kensington is a fine example of how successful students can be when working in an environment rich with high expectations. The partnership of parents and professional educators collaborating to help all children learn is the established culture that can be seen every day at Kensington."

Kensington Intermediate School was also recognized this year by the Ohio Association of Elementary School Administrators as being a Hall of Fame School for outstanding educational practices and programming.

255 public and 49 private schools nation-wide will be honored this year at the National Blue Ribbon awards ceremony on November 14 and 15 in Washington, D.C. Since 1982, 6,500 of America's schools have won this coveted award. A list of the 2011 National Blue Ribbon Schools can be found at <http://www.ed.gov/nationalblueribbonschools>.



*Goldwood Primary School's Second Grade Line Art Drawings*

## High School Forensics Team Receives Two Prestigious Awards

There's simply no debating it: the Rocky River High School Forensics Team is on a roll.

In mid-September, the team was awarded two prestigious honors by the National Forensics League (NFL): the 2010-11 Leading Chapter Award in the North Coast District, and membership in the NFL's 100 Club.

The Rocky River High School Forensics Team is 35 students strong, including 25 involved in speech and 10 involved in debate. The team won the Leading Chapter Award based on student participation. The award is the highest one given out by the NFL, and Rocky River High School is one of only 107 NFL Chapters to receive the award. There are over 2,800 NFL member chapters nationwide.

The second award, membership in the 100 Club, places Rocky River's Forensics Team in the top 10% of NFL chapters nationwide. It means that the Rocky River chapter has achieved over 100 degrees. RRHS Forensics Moderator/Coach Adam Moeller explains: "Degrees are awarded by the NFL to students participating for a certain amount of time in forensics. There are various degrees with different levels with "merit" being the first degree "superior" being the highest. The levels are based on the amount of points earned through not only participation in forensics tournaments but also tournament results."

Mr. Moeller, who also teaches US Government & Current Issues and AP US Government at the high school, points out that students involved in forensics earn life-long skills as well as win awards. "Skills acquired with forensics include public speaking, organization, information filtering, communication, and acting and performance," he points out. Poise, confidence, and the opportunity to compete and interact with students from other schools are also some of the perks of involvement with forensics.

Rocky River High School's Forensics Team begins its season in late October and continues until the State Tournament in March. The team's assistant coach, Bob Santo, coached the team for over 50 years before handing the reigns to Mr. Moeller four years ago.

## River Film Fest

We are excited to announce that the 1st Annual River Film Fest is coming!

- RRMS & RRHS Students can enter films
- Staff members can enter films
- Trophies awarded
- Winners announced at River Film Fest



### River Film Fest

**Date:** February 9, 2012

**Time:** 7 PM

**Place:** Rocky River High School Auditorium

**Cost:** \$2 suggested donation

### Categories

- Creative (entertainment, drama, comedy, art, cartoon)
- Documentary
- Foreign Film
- Mobile (created entirely on a mobile device such as iPhone, iPad, etc.)
- PSA (Public Service Announcement)
- Sports
- Staff (open to all RRCS staff members)

**DEADLINE FOR ENTRIES IS  
TUESDAY, JANUARY 17, 2012 at 4 PM**

**Complete Guidelines & Submission Information@  
River Film Fest Website**

<https://sites.google.com/a/rccs.org/riverfilmfest/>

**(Link available on district website under "Parents & Students")**

### Questions?

Contact Mrs. Garver at [garver.jennifer@rccs.org](mailto:garver.jennifer@rccs.org) or Dr. Foley at [foley.dianna@rccs.org](mailto:foley.dianna@rccs.org).

## Lolly the Trolley Takes Eighth Graders on a Cultural Trip

On Monday, October 12 and Tuesday, October 13, the eighth-graders at Rocky River Middle School experienced Cleveland in a unique way—as tourists in their own city. It's a chance to teach them more about Cleveland, and it's also a chance to get them ready for their big spring trip to Washington, DC.

"There's so much different culture in Cleveland," notes Eighth-Grade Coordinator and Spanish Teacher Lilia Clark. "This trip fits in perfectly with the district's goal [as stated in the system's tagline] of teaching kids to be 'Globally Competitive.'"

Half the class took the trip on Monday and the other half on Tuesday. The first hour of the trip, narrated by professionals from Lolly the Trolley, is a tour of Cleveland landmarks. This year, the kids were able to go into the newly renovated Soldiers and Sailors monument on Public Square. That's a great opportunity for them to learn about what to look for in monuments, from plaques to symbols to architecture. It's a skill they'll certainly use again when visiting national monuments in DC.

The next portion of the eighth grade's Lolly the Trolley trip involved going to four different ethnic food markets, including Italian, Hispanic, Caribbean, German, Asian, and/or Arabic. "Prior to the trip, the kids learn about what to expect and how it's different from going to Heinen's or Giant Eagle, with the open aisles and the different smells and offerings," Ms. Clark explains. "And food is so

popular with kids. It's a great way to help them see different and creative things."

These things can range from pop and artistic candies purchased at the Asian market to Italian pepperoni bread from Gallucci's. In fact, students will bring home a list of the name and location of each store they visit. Teachers began compiling the list a few years ago, after multiple requests from parents who wanted to know where their kids had found such interesting new foods.

In addition to scoring a terrific lunch, kids learn something about interacting with people of different cultures on these trips to various markets. This, in turn, will serve them well on their long-awaited DC trip. "We teachers watch them closely on this Lolly the

Trolley trip, as we're planning this big three-day trip to DC," reports Ms. Clark. "How they behave outside of a school setting. We teach them to be aware of their surroundings, not only for safety, but to interact with and be kind to people who are different from them."

The Lolly the Trolley trip is partially funded by the PTA, who is "so supportive of any sort of culture or art program," Ms. Clark notes

"It's a terrific trip," she says. "These kids come back and they are so amazed at what they didn't know about Cleveland."



*Teacher of the Year Jill Jones (left) and Employee of the Year Kim Reddy were honored at the Rocky River City School District's convocation in August.*

## It's Red Wagon Farm Time Again!



Each year, kindergartners at Rocky River's Goldwood Primary School take their first big-time field trip, to Red Wagon Farm in Columbia Station. It's a great way to celebrate fall and another opportunity for teachers to blend learning with having fun.

The children prepare for the trip by learning about the season of fall and some of its characteristics. These characteristics are in full glory at Red Wagon Farm, including the bright colors of changing leaves, the cool air, and the wonderful smells of hay and pumpkins.

Speaking of pumpkins, these fruits (yes, they're fruits—another thing the kids learn!) are a big part of the trip. Before they go, the students learn about how a pumpkin grows and do a sequencing activity to show the phases of growth. Once at the farm, the class is given a big pumpkin to use for math and science activities. "We figure out how much it weighs, how many seeds are in the pumpkin, and we use our senses and discuss how the pumpkin smells, feels, looks, etcetera," explains Goldwood kindergarten teacher Janine Walsh.

Of course, some of what these littlest students do on their field trip is just plain fun, like the hay maze, the wagon ride, and the ever-popular straw jumping area. It's like jumping with your best buddies in an enormous pile of leaves, only in this case it's straw.

The straw jumping area comes up a lot after the trip, when the students reflect on their trip. Kindergarten teacher Brenda Goodman explains, "After we go, the kids make a class book about our favorite parts of the trip." Each child in her class draws a picture and dictates a sentence that Ms. Goodman writes on the bottom of the paper. She then spiral-binds them all together and sends the book home with every child in turn.

When the books come home, the kindergartners get to relive the beloved trip with their families. And the grown-ups get to enjoy the kindergarten trip to Red Wagon Farm as well.

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## Kensington Teacher Has "A Day Made Better"



On October 4, Kensington Intermediate School teacher Amy Wilhelmy was one of 1,000 teachers across the nation who received a surprise delivery of school supplies from OfficeMax worth a total of \$1 million dollars.

These teachers were honored and recognized with an award and \$1,000 worth of school supplies as part of the "A Day Made Better" national event that celebrates teachers for their extraordinary efforts in the classroom.

## School Resource Officer Joins RRHS Staff

If you're the parent of a Rocky River teen, don't be surprised if you encounter a police officer who greets your child by name. It doesn't mean your child has been in any trouble, it just means that Officer Mike is on the job.

Officer Mike Bernhardt, a Rocky River police officer since 1994, is the district's first School Resource Officer, or SRO. Officer Mike has an office at Rocky River High School and is on campus during school hours, year-round. He's made it his goal to learn every senior's first name before the end of the year. "I'm good with names," he laughs, "so I think I can do it."

This personal contact between police officer and high-school student is a big part of why this program was implemented. "People aren't always sure how to react to police," Officer Mike continues. "There's almost an adversarial role, because we're always called in for conflicts. So it's good to get them [students] to see us in other lights, too. That bond, the familiarity—it's important."

The SRO program is a joint venture among the Rocky River Police Department, the Mayor, and the School District. In fact, even the SRO's salary is a joint venture. The School District pays him for the nine months of the year that he's in school, and the city picks up the other three months and benefits.

As Dr. Michael Shoaf, Superintendent of the Rocky River School District sees it, the school is getting an excellent return on its investment. Having Officer Mike in the building "provides a meaningful opportunity for students to communicate and interact with the Rocky River Police Department," Dr. Shoaf states. Plus, given the district's commitment to providing a safe learning environment for all students, he points out, "the implementation of a School Resource Officer at Rocky River High School provides an additional measure of security for students and staff."

The added security is one of three specifically stated goals for the SRO program: Officer Mike is there, in part, to serve a law-enforcement role. "That ends up being the least of what I do here," he explains, "but teachers and

administrators have told me that my presence creates a sort of calm so the staff and kids can concentrate on what they need to be doing."

The second stated goal of the SRO program is for the officer to act as a law-related counselor for any students or staff with questions or concerns. "I'm not a certified counselor," Officer Mike points out, "but I know how to talk with people because I do it a lot in my job. Plenty of students have come in to talk one-on-one, and when I need to, I steer them towards the correct resources." He notes that he maintains confidentiality in all those conversations, unless there's a criminal act that must be reported, and he would always tell the student up-front if this were the case.

Thirdly, the SRO provides education in the school. Officer Mike, throughout the year, will be working with teachers to come into their classrooms and talk with kids about drugs and alcohol prevention, as well as responsible use of social media and the dangers of "sexting," or sending sexually explicit content over the internet. These issues are important to the shaping of responsible adults, says this father of two. "I do care about all these students," he says emphatically, "and I want to see them be responsible and successful wherever they go."



*Officer Mike Bernhardt joins Principal Debra Bernard and Athletic Director Jeffrey Schultz as they greet students at Rocky River High School.*

These three goals are why the Rocky River Police Department stands so firmly behind the SRO program. "The Rocky River PD has been trying to implement this type of program," explains Chief of Police Kelly Stillman, "and if it wasn't for the unique partnership that the Police Department has established and now enjoys with the Rocky River School System and the hard work of Dr. Shoaf and Mayor Pam Bobst, this program would of never gotten off the ground."

Mayor Bobst echoes that sentiment. "The SRO Program is about building and strengthening relationships, enhancing communication and promoting a safe and positive learning environment for students. Officer Mike serves as an important resource to support students, their families, faculty and staff. His school-based liaison efforts are critical to the success of our community-wide initiatives focused on creating and sustaining a safe and secure community. The City deeply values collaboration at all levels with the Rocky River City Schools and the integration of efforts that contribute to their demonstrated commitment to excellence."

Officer Mike Bernhardt is well-suited to his role as the district's first School Resource Officer, a placement for which he asked to be considered. "I've always been a big fan of what teachers do," he says. "It's very important, from [a law-enforcement] perspective, to be involved with teaching kids and helping them learn from their mistakes. Plus, communication [among the city, police force and schools] is so much better than what it was in the past. It's like a circle, where we're always communicating with one another."

Just as he's communicating with the kids, one name at a time.

## From Denmark to Rocky River

Madel Mogensen is fitting nicely into her AFS host family. In fact, at 16, she falls right in between the Kurfis family's two daughters; Emma, 18 and Libby, 14. Madel was a part of her host family's trip to drop Emma off at college in Colorado recently, an adventure for all of them. "It was really nice in Colorado," she says. "I have been in this country for a month and a couple weeks, but it feels like just two weeks. There's always something going on and I am busy all the time."



*AFS student Madel Mogensen is welcomed by principal Debra Bernard at the first home football game. (Photo courtesy of David Ploenzke.)*

Madel is from Denmark. She is enrolled at Rocky River High School this year, the age of most juniors but a member of the senior class. That's so she can experience such uniquely American events as the senior prom and homecoming. So far, that's working well, as she's spent a lot of free time lately working on the senior class float for the homecoming parade.

The social aspect of American high school has been a big change from what Madel's used to in her native Denmark. "In Denmark, we have grades one through ten," she explains. "We're with the same kids all the way through and only have four different classrooms that whole time. I know everyone: their parents and their siblings."

After the tenth year, Madel continues, students go on to what's known as Gymnasium. That's equivalent to grades eleven, twelve and thirteen. The big difference between Denmark's Gymnasium and Rocky River's high school is that in Gymnasium, students have to declare their field of

study: sciences or language. Madel was not ready to choose, so she is taking a "gap year," spending time in the US while she decides.

Her mind is still not entirely made up, but Madel says she's leaning towards science, and cites her current chemistry teacher, Mrs. Olinger, as a big influence. Madel is especially interested in the way the Metric System is taught, since in Denmark students use the Metric System every day. She's enjoying the in-depth look at the way the system works, since it's so ingrained into Denmark's daily life that it's not as closely examined as it is in her Rocky River science course.

Madel misses her family in Denmark, especially her brothers, to whom she is very close. Her younger brother recently turned nine and Madel sent him a gift of Skittles, jellybeans, and a souvenir from Colorado (her other brother is 14). "It's okay, though," she says. "These days it's nothing, with Skype and things."

Things like her blog, which she updates regularly. "That way I don't have to update everyone one at a time," Madel explains. This fits in with her goal of not being overly in touch with friends back home—she wants to challenge herself to make some new friends instead of relying on relationships with friends in Denmark. "I know it won't just happen: I need to take initiative," she says.

And certainly, initiative is something this sixteen-year-old solo traveler knows a lot about.

## RRHS Homecoming 2011



*Jane Dickey and Daniel O'Callaghan were crowned queen and king of this year's Homecoming festivities.*

## Rocky River Senior Named National Merit Semifinalist

Rocky River High School senior John Patrick Corcoran is going places, starting with college in the fall. Corcoran, who goes by Patrick, was recently named a National Merit Semifinalist by the College Board. He took the PSAT during his junior year, and his scores were in the top one-third of the 50,000 high scorers nationwide.

In addition, Patrick is one of 26 state semi-finalists nominated for the US Senate Youth Program. This nomination was based on his participation and achievement in the Buckeye Boys State Program, a civics and state government program sponsored by the American Legion (the girls program is separate). Over the summer, Patrick spent nine days at Bowling Green State University with 1200 other boys. The group was set up and run like the government, from city up to state. Patrick was a city treasurer.

Patrick's interest in politics has roots in his family. "In 2008 my brother and I went with our dad [John] to hang up signs to remind people to vote," Patrick laughs. "I don't remember the details, but I think he parked at the end of a street and Devon and I ran up and down the street hanging up signs."

Patrick is interested in learning more about the ways people want their government to run and how they make it happen. He's looking forward to being able to vote in the 2012 Presidential election, and notes that since he'll be 18 then, he's allowed to vote in the primary as well, even though he won't yet be 18 when the primary takes place.

It's not only politics that Patrick is eager to learn more about: he's also a fan of chemistry. "Any question you have about how things work," he

marvels, "if you wonder why desks are hard [he taps on the table in front of him], chemistry can answer that." He credits Rocky River High School chemistry teacher Mrs. Zebris, who taught him honors chemistry and AP chemistry, with sparking his interest in the field.

The son of Mary and John Corcoran, Patrick is also the older brother of Devon, a freshman. Devon is a musician and a member of the Rocky River band and the Cleveland Youth Wind Symphony.

Patrick intends to study both chemistry and political science in college, a combination that he's already spent his high school years juggling admirably.



**Congratulations to the following students who earned commended status from the *National Merit Scholarship Corporation* this year:**

- Paige Altemare
- Zoe Becker
- Arianna Perry-Moore
- Madeline Tingle
- Daniel Wolfe