Your Royalton Schools
"We Inspire and
Empower Learners"

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High School Key Club Welcomes Students and Staff Back to the Building with Positive Messages

by Emma Kolick, Junior, North Royalton High School

As full-time students and staff returned from a relaxing spring break marked by beautiful weather on Monday, April 12, they were greeted by colorful and vibrant artwork on the sidewalk leading up to the high school. Created by members of North Royalton High School's Key Club in an effort to create a joyful atmosphere upon the return to school, the club is a student-led organization that works to enhance the community through both service and volunteerism. With numerous Key Clubbers gathering for a few hours on a delightful Sunday afternoon to create chalk images that showcased positive messages, complete with COVID precautions through masks and social distancing, their work resulted in intricate and creative drawings that succeeded in spreading happiness to kids and administration alike. ■







Your Royalton Schools
Spring 2021
North Royalton & Broadview Heights

Michael Laub Named Next Superintendent



The North Royalton Board of Education has named Michael Laub as the next superintendent of North Royalton City Schools. The Board approved his three-year contract on April 16. Laub is currently the superintendent of Avon Local School District. He will officially begin his role on July 1, 2021. Laub succeeds Greg Gurka, who is retiring at the end of the school year.

The Board of Education began the superintendent search in January with the assistance of Finding Leaders. The District received 42 applications of interested candidates to become the District's next superintendent. Working with executive search consultant, Finding Leaders, the Board interviewed six candidates in the first round of interviews in an executive session, which took place in person on March 23 and 24. There also were many focus groups representing a cross-section of the community, including teachers, staff, administrators, students, parents and other community stakeholders, who gave input to Finding Leaders on what attributes they were looking for in the next superintendent. The Board conducted final interviews with these two candidates in executive session on April 14.

"On behalf of the North Royalton City Schools Board of Education, we are looking forward to having Mr. Laub join our school community as the next superintendent of schools," said Board President Heidi Dolezal, North Royalton City Schools. "Mr. Laub has the experience, vision and ability to make a positive impact in our School District. His leadership at Avon has proven his ability to develop a model district. We are confident that Mr. Laub's passion for learning will allow us to continue to inspire and empower the learners of the North Royalton City Schools. We also are appreciative of our school and community stakeholders who were instrumental in providing their thoughts and assistance through the search process."

Laub has been superintendent of Avon Local School District for the past nine years. In addition to his superintendent position, his career includes experience as a teacher, assistant principal, principal, human resource director and coach for Westlake and Strongsville City Schools.

> "A positive culture is the cornerstone of any successful school district," said Laub. "To help build a positive culture, a superintendent must be a visible leader, actively engaged with students, staff, families and the community. I look forward to leading this School District and making a positive impact in the communities of North Royalton and Broadview Heights."

Laub received his superintendent's licensure from Bowling Green State University; his Master of Education in Educational Administration from Cleveland State University; and his Bachelor of Education in Middle School Math and Social Studies from Baldwin-Wallace College.

Laub resides in Avon with his wife, Julie, a fifth-grade teacher in Strongsville. Their daughter, Brooke, is a sophomore at Avon High School and their son, Michael, is a cadet at The United States Air Force Academy. ■

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Construction Update

Elementary School

The finishing touches on the building are occurring with furniture being delivered and installed and the playground equipment also being installed. The sewer line installation is being completed and the road widening in front of the building will be starting shortly. State Road is being widened and a turning lane is being added to allow cars traveling southbound to access the new school campus. For cars entering the new school from the south, the widened road will also provide room for cars to safely pass those entering the school campus. The building is on schedule to open on August 30, 2021, for students.

Middle School

Work includes:

- Continuing HVAC and heat pump work
- Installing a new ADA compliant ramp at the athletic area entrance to the building
- Renovating media center
- Creating a new STEM room from an open area outside classroom pods
- Changing the configuration of the fifth and sixth-grade pod area in incorporate more area for group learning

Existing Buildings

Royal View Elementary - One concept that has been mentioned is to utilize the buildings as an administration/ Board of Education office. Currently, administrators are located in the current Board office and a trailer outside the Board office. Initially, only the pupil services department who previously was housed in the 1950 section of the high school will be moved to Royal View.

Albion Elementary and Valley Vista Elementary - The Board of Education is currently receiving bids on the demolition of both buildings. The bids will be evaluated by our construction manager and shared with the Board at an upcoming meeting. The Board of Education will more than likely wait until sometime later in the summer to make a final decision. If they move ahead with demolition, it will occur in late summer/early fall.

Current Board Office Building - The Board of Education is considering converting it into visiting team locker rooms. Currently, the visiting team has to walk down the hill behind the Board office to the boys' locker room at the high school. This will enable the District to hold playoff games at their facility. This is a long-term concept and no funds have been budgeted or requested for this project at the present time. This is just one possible use of the building that the Board of Education is considering.

High School

Bricks will be available to the community from May 7-21 from the demolition of the 1950 and 1960s section of the high school. The bricks will be placed in a pile/stack outside the construction fence and next to the white construction trailer along Ridge Road if any residents would like one as a keepsake. After these dates, the bricks will no longer be available. If you know someone who would like one and can not attend, please take one for them.

August 2020
New STEM wing addition opened

March 2021
Renovated 1970 and 1980s portion of the high school opened (now the Humanities wing – social studies, English and foreign language)

May 2021
Demolition of the 1950 and 1960s section

Spring - Fall 2021
Renovation of the music, art and family and community science area, development of the front student parking lot and drives, entry courtyard and new front facade.

North Royalton Elementary Schools' Virtual Family Literacy Night Focuses on Reading Superpowers

To celebrate Read Across America Week, the North Royalton City Schools' elementary principals had a surprise for the youth of the community. On Thursday, April 1, the principals of the elementary schools produced a special 45-minute Virtual Family Literacy Night video that premiered live on YouTube at 7 p.m. With the theme, Today A Reader, Tomorrow a Leader, hundreds of families tuned in to see their favorite superheroes talk about the importance of reading and got to watch many school administrators and special guests read books throughout the show.



Laura Nary, retired Royal View Elementary music teacher, read Mr. Brown Can Moo! Can You? By Dr. Seuss. She brought many special friends and sound effects!

Director of Pupil Services Julie Bogden read Superheroes are Everywhere by Kamala Harris.



Superintendent Greg Gurka read Even Superheroes Have Bad Days by Shelly Becker.

Special guest U.S. Air Force Captain Sarah Kociuba, who also is a former Royal View Elementary student, read one of her stories from Missouri where she is stationed. The book was called First Heroes of Flight by Thea Feldman.

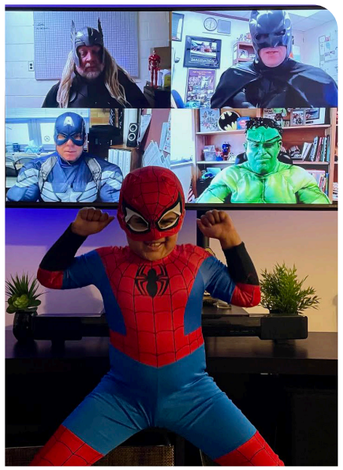
School Resource Officers Jon Karl and Lexi Bell read A Hero Lives in My Family, a Story for Kids of First Responders by Dr. Susan Hunt.

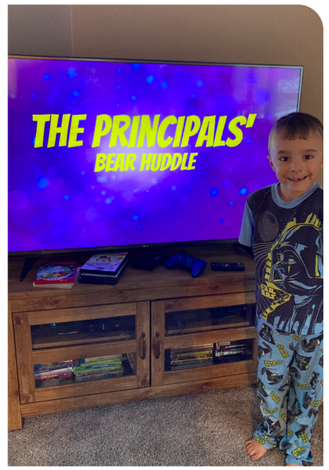
The video ended with a collage of pictures of students and staff reading their favorite books and celebrating their week of reading.

"We had such a wonderful response in December when we collaborated on a Holiday Singalong program so we wanted to plan something literacy-related after Right to Read Week that our students and families would enjoy," said Principal Kirk Pavelich, Royal View Elementary School. "Many thanks to elementary staff members Sarah Burrows, Dana Kesselem and Brittany Troyer for their many hours spent editing this video production. It was so exciting to plan the program with these staff members and then see it come to life with their special effects wizardry and editing expertise."

Families can view the video at this link: http://bit.ly/NRLiteracyNight2021 ■

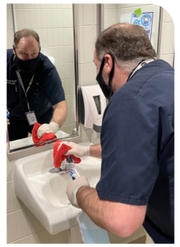






NORTH ROYALTON CITY SCHOOLS DEPARTMENT SPOTLIGHT

CUSTODIAL





The custodial department consists of 36 day time custodians and evening custodians who maintain the cleanliness of over a million square feet of interior space that spans five school buildings and three other facilities within the District. While each position looks slightly different at the elementary, middle or high school level, the general functions remain the same.

The custodial staff are the primary workers who maintain each building's cleanliness. They are always on the lookout for safety concerns and immediately report them to their building principal. Custodians focus on cleaning and sanitizing restrooms, sweeping and mopping floors/hallways, and trash removal. They also assist with the set up and take down of school functions, end of the day cafeteria cleaning, and other projects as assigned.

When a light bulb needs to be changed, a window unstuck, a soap dispenser filled, a ceiling tile replaced or a coat of paint added, School custodians take the lead. Depending on their level of knowledge, they also may perform services on pipes, heaters, and air conditioners. Custodians' scope of work doesn't end there, they also maintain the exterior of their buildings. These tasks include mowing the grass, snow removal from sidewalks and entrances, and light maintenance on playgrounds.

This time of COVID-19 the custodians and cleaners are proving to be the most valuable link in the efforts to get all the students back at school. Whether it's installing thousands of desk shields, rearranging furniture and desks for social distancing, disinfecting thousands upon thousands of touchpoints daily, the custodians do it all with a smile. ■

36
day & evening custodians

1,000,000
square feet of interior space maintained

5
school buildings and three facilities

MAINTENANCE



The goal of the maintenance department is to ensure safe schools and protect the health and safety of all students and staff.

The maintenance department inspects, maintains facilities, performs preventative maintenance of mechanical and HVAC equipment, maintains grounds, and prepares for all outdoor sporting events.

The maintenance department works daily with the central office for the delivery of supplies and tends to the needs, as they arise, for the technology, athletic departments, and the administration team throughout the year. Larger requests for services and repairs are channeled electronically to the maintenance office for distribution to the appropriate trade.

During winter months, the maintenance director and personnel monitor the weather closely so that we can address snow removal in the parking lots and drives in a timely manner. In order to address snow removal throughout the District, select members of the maintenance department shift their hours just after Thanksgiving based on forecast conditions and maintain that schedule until the threat of snow has diminished.

Soon the clank of the snow plows will turn into the hum of the mowers cutting District lawns. That's just part of the ongoing work for the North Royalton City Schools' maintenance department. As soon as the school year comes to an end, new projects will need to be tackled. The maintenance department is dedicated to keeping the schools and facilities in top shape. ■

100+
acres of grounds and sports fields maintained

7
skilled positions and laborers, part of OAPSE Union Local 231

700,000
square feet of building space maintained

North Royalton High School Senior Jillian Baracz Receives Phi Beta Kappa Award



North Royalton High School (NRHS) senior Jillian Baracz was named this year's Phi Beta Kappa Award recipient.

The Cleveland Association of Phi Beta Kappa recognizes the academic achievement of graduating seniors in schools across Northeast Ohio. There are approximately 120 participating schools that choose one student in their graduating class who is in the top 10 percent of the class and "demonstrates qualities of academic honesty, inquiry into scholarship matters which goes beyond assignments and requirements, a creative involvement in scholarship, and great interest in things of the mind."

Students who contribute to their intellectual environment and participate in extracurriculars are highly considered. The Phi Beta Kappa award is one of the most prestigious honors a high school student can receive. Baracz's name will be engraved on a Phi Beta Kappa plaque that will be displayed permanently at NRHS.

During her time at NRHS, Baracz was the president of the National Honor Society, was a Student Council member, Link Crew member, and Student Advisory Board member. She also participated in the Key Club, Yearbook Club and the Innovative Leadership Club. She was involved in College Credit Plus and played on the varsity softball team.

Her favorite memories of the school include having fun in classes with her teachers Sean Folk, Matt Kish, Dave Marhefka, Chris Roach, and Señor Chris Carion. She will miss her teachers and friends the most when she graduates.

Baracz's advice to underclassmen is, "Surround yourself with genuine people. Work hard and you will accomplish your goals. Always believe in yourself even if others don't. You can do anything you put your mind and effort to."

Following graduation, Baracz plans to attend the University of Findlay to major in Animal Science/Pre-Vet, minor in Spanish, and play with the school's softball team, the Oilers. Eventually, she wants to move to Arizona to enjoy the dry heat and attend medical school.

School Counselor Rachel Hoag said, "Jillian has an amazing reputation at school and truly has been such an asset to NRHS. She is kind, responsible, respectful, well-respected by her peers and teachers. She is one of a kind and so deserving of this award!" ■

Students Earn Awards in PTA Reflections Contest

NATIONAL PTA® REFLECTIONS®

Students in North Royalton City Schools have earned awards for their submissions to the 2020-21 National PTA Reflections Program.

This program provides opportunities for recognition and access to art, which boosts student confidence. Students from kindergarten to grade 12 submit original works of art that follow a selected theme with the goal of helping them develop artistic literacy and explore their own thoughts, feelings, and ideas.

Thousands of students sent entries in response to the theme, "I Matter Because…" Submissions fell under the categories of Literature, Music Composition, Photography, Visual Arts, Film/Video Production and Dance Choreography. Judges of the works came from multiple professions across the state of Ohio including artists, teachers, and professors in the arts.

Three students from North Royalton City Schools earned awards for their artistic submissions. In the category of Film Production, Kevin Nather from Valley Vista Elementary won the Award for Outstanding Achievement.

In the category of Photography, Evan Garvas from Valley Vista Elementary earned the Award of Merit. Finally, in the Visual Art category, Sienna Cervenka from North Royalton Middle School earned an Honorable Mention.

The Ohio PTA Facebook page read, "The Ohio PTA is proud of all the students who participated in this year's Reflection Program. This was an extremely challenging year and all the entries we received for the theme 'I Matter Because…' beautifully showcased all the resilience, creativity and talent of our students from around our state." ■

Crystal Starfish Recipients Receive Recognition



During the week of April 12, North Royalton City Schools announced the winners of this year's Crystal Starfish Award presented by First Federal of Lakewood.

At Valley Vista Elementary School, Counselor Dana Kesselem was presented with the Crystal Starfish Teacher Award. Besides the award, she also received a $250 Professional Development Grant from First Federal of Lakewood. Kesselem was nominated by two parents.

Her nomination states: *"My children, like a lot of others, were impacted mentally with the pandemic. Mrs. Kesselem gave them tools to identify and address their feelings, as well as give many ways to get themselves back to happy feelings (aka the Green Zone). When times have gotten tough, she has been there to talk to them. She applies these sophisticated concepts in ways that they understand. Even before the pandemic, Mrs. Kesselem was there for my kids. One dealing with anxiety and the other dealing with ADHD, she was able to give them each a "toolbox" full of things to help them identify their behaviors and be more in control of themselves. Kids light up when they see her. They are excited to visit her office. She is establishing an amazing baseline for these kids that will lead to better mental health understanding for the rest of their lives!"*

"Mrs. Kesselem is such a positive person and a breath of fresh air. She works very hard to ensure that students are trying their hardest in school each day. She goes above and beyond to help students that are struggling and problem solves to help them be successful. Mrs. Kesselem also attends many school events and interacts with the students there. She makes herself known and her smile is infectious. Mrs. Kesselem has helped make Valley Vista a nurturing environment for both of our children. Valley Vista would not be the same without her!"

Jackie Kuchta, administrative secretary at North Royalton Middle School was the recipient of the Crystal Starfish Support Staff Award. Several colleagues nominated Kuchta.

Excerpts of her nominations read:

Ms. Kuchta continually works to make NRMS and our entire school community the best that it can be. She thinks 10 steps ahead and makes certain that each person regardless of his or her position has what he or she needs to be successful for the betterment of our kids. She truly is part of our leadership team and her thoughts and opinions are valued by me more than she will ever know.

Not only has Jackie organized, updated and shared our homeroom spreadsheets (including information for over 1,100 kids), but she has assisted parents on the phone, helped teachers find information, and worked an insane amount of hours to ensure our kids and teachers have the information they need to make this all run smoothly. She hasn't complained. She has kept us thinking ahead. She has been overwhelmingly positive.

Ms. Kuchta starts her day off early and works tirelessly throughout the day. She is a driving force for both our staff and our students at the middle school. She is always consciously looking for the best outcome for a student when working on their schedules, and is willing to assist staff with anything. Jackie's calm, professional manor and ability to handle any task has earned her the respect of all staff members at the middle school and throughout the District.



> Both Dana and Jackie are deserving of this recognition. It is so clear from the numerous nominations that both Dana and Jackie received that they are an instrumental part of inspiring greatness in their buildings and with the students, parents and staff they work with daily.
>
> – Greg Gurka, Superintendent, North Royalton City Schools

The First Federal of Lakewood Crystal Starfish awards are presented to support staff members and teachers who make a difference in their schools and go above and beyond in all that they do. "Every day, teachers and staff of North Royalton City Schools are making a difference," said Branch Operations Manager Endia Small, First Federal of Lakewood. "Our bank is honored to partner with the District, enabling these special individuals to be recognized publicly for their contributions." ■

Superintendent Greg Gurka Receives National PTA Lifetime Achievement Award



On April 21, Superintendent Greg Gurka was surprised with the National PTA Lifetime Achievement Award. Members of the North Royalton City Schools' PTA, administration, family and friends were present to celebrate the outstanding contributions Gurka has provided to the School District throughout his career as principal of Albion Elementary School, director of personnel and superintendent. This PTA award is the highest honor from the organization. In 2017, Gurka received the Ohio PTA Achievement Award.

Emphasizing community and student-based initiatives, Gurka created a sense of pride in both the experience of the schools themselves and the buildings the students reside in, and this mindset led to the creation of new and renovated schools that will pay dividends for generations to come.

Overseeing nearly every aspect of the District, his main objective always has been to hone in on how each decision will impact the educational experience of students and ensure that teachers have the tools necessary to carry out their plans. "My goal as an administrator has always been to help people and take obstacles out of teachers' way to help the students," said Gurka. "When I can impact the kids, that's when I have the best day, and it makes me happy I was able to contribute to that here in North Royalton City Schools." Despite his visible achievements throughout his career, Gurka has shown outstanding character through his positive and lighthearted interactions with both students and staff that has served as a reassuring role in guiding North Royalton City Schools' community to always "inspire greatness."

Gurka will be retiring at the end of May. His lengthy educational career will come to an end at this year's commencement, marking his last official act as superintendent. Gurka's easy-going approach has certainly contributed to the sense of community felt by staff, and his presence within the District will undoubtedly be missed by the entire North Royalton/Broadview Heights community. ■

Contributing to article: Emma Kolick, Junior, North Royalton High School