Rocket Dance Team Performs at Super Bowl LII

Members of the Rocket Dance Team were selected to perform with pop star Justin Timberlake at the Super Bowl Halftime Show at US Bank Stadium on February 4. They joined hundreds of high school dancers from the Twin Cities metro area for this once in a lifetime experience.

The dancers started rehearsing about a month ago for the show, but had to keep their involvement a secret, all signing confidentiality agreements.

It was a busy few weeks for the dancers, as the teams were practicing for their Minnesota state high school league tournaments at the same time they were rehearsing for the big game. The dancers often would not get home until late on school nights.

Timberlake was not present for most of the rehearsals, of course, but the dancers did get five or six rehearsals in with him once he arrived in town at the end of January.

Congratulations to Gigi Simpson, Lindsey Condon (RDT Alumni), Rileigh Martin, Anni McMillen, Emma Swanson, Bailey Gruber, Sam Vraspir, Danielle Hagen-Johnson (RDT Alumni), Leiana Jensen, and Sadie Skeie (RDT Alumni) for their hard work and performances!

Pictured: (above, left) Members of the Rocket Dance Team pause for a photo after the Super Bowl Halftime Show outside of US Bank Stadium. (left) The dance teams perform together during Justin Timberlake's song, Mirrors.
Message from the Superintendent

College Prepared — Work Ready

By Paul Durand, Superintendent of Schools

Rockford Area Schools currently offers some unique programs—our business programs, agricultural courses, and STEM-based coursework. It is interesting to note how many of the middle and high school programs and special events tie into our partnership with BestPrep.

BestPrep is a statewide nonprofit that helps to build a bridge between business volunteers and educators to prepare students with business, career and financial literacy skills. Their vision is that every Minnesota student is college prepared, work ready, and career bound. BestPrep works with 700 teachers at 400 schools to impact 61,500 students annually with the help of 4,600 volunteers providing 65,000 hours of service. These partnerships with individuals from business communities help to conduct presentations in the classroom, serve as faculty-in-residence, email mentor students, and participate on committees and/or the Board of Directors.

As one of three educators on the BestPrep Board of Directors, I have worked to develop school district/business partnerships for our school district. These partnerships offer programs that help reinforce students’ business, career and financial literacy skills. Some of their programs include:

**Classroom Plus:** This is BestPrep’s flagship program started in 1976, which offers classroom speakers, mock interviews and tours that supplement classroom curriculum. Through this program at our high school, students have participated in mock interviews and the Cargill Career Day event. At our middle school, students participated mock interviews and STEM Fields tours through this program.

**Minnesota Business Venture:** The week-long residential summer program, started in 1981, brings high school students and business professionals together from across the state to spend a week on a college campus and learn about business, financial literacy, and career information. Rockford High School students, Lucas Botten, Samantha Campbell, Kailey DeWolfe and Kate Hu participated in the Best Prep’s Minnesota Business Venture summer camp held at St. Cloud State University and at St. John’s University this past July. The opportunity was made possible through support from Rockford Greenfield Chamber of Commerce, who sponsored the students camp fees.

**The Stock Market Game™:** This online investing simulation gives students a virtual $100,000 to invest in the stock market, teaching them more about the economy, investing, teamwork, decision making skills and more. Students in all three schools—elementary, middle and high—have participated in the Stock Market Game. This program was first started in 1991. In the 2010-11 school year, Rockford Middle School students Nick Klonne and Nick Seig placed second the junior high/middle school division with their portfolio equity. Also, Stella Smith was Minnesota’s first place winner at the middle school division for the fall 2015 competition in the InvestWrite student essay competition, a culminating activity for the Stock Market Game.

**eMentors:** With the help of technology, eMentor program, started in 2003, connects volunteer professionals and students through email. Students develop professional writing skills and learn about the relationship between classroom learning and future career skills. Rockford Middle School has work with Medtronic in the past with this program. At the high school, representatives from Accenture, Emerson Process and UHG have worked with our students.

**Financial Matters:** This coursework, developed in 2012, equips students with the tools necessary to develop sound money management skills through classroom presentations given by volunteers from the financial services industry. Coursework at Rockford High School has included Budgeting Matters, Credit Matters and Renting 101.

**Technology Integration Workshops:** This is a four-day professional development opportunity, held during the summer, for K-12 educators to enhance their curriculum through the integration of 21st century technology skills. Participating teachers update a curriculum unit plan during the workshop and participate in a corporate job shadow to better prepare their students with the skills needed in today’s workplace. During the past two years, Rockford teachers, McKenzie Gregory, Tucker Reec, Kevin Neff, Dawn Engebretson, Paul Stariha, Shawn Weddel and John Palm, have participated in this opportunity.

The concept for BestPrep began with a pilot project conducted at Breck School in 1973. Then economics teacher, Bob Kaitz, was selected by the school’s headmaster to lead the project, which compared a traditional lecture format class with an experiential format that bridged education and business. The impact of the hands-on approach became clear immediately, with the experiential group testing two grades above their current grade level.

Following the success of the pilot project, BestPrep was officially founded in 1976 to help students and teachers in Minnesota gain business and career skills through experiences. With the initial volunteer and financial support of 3M, Cargill, Ecolab, General Mills and Peavey, BestPrep was at the forefront of a national trend of connecting students and educational institutions with members of business, government and social services. By connecting students with members of corporate America, participants gain first-hand exposure and experience to what life after school is really like.

BestPrep continues to bridge the business and education communities today. The organization has reached more than 1.3 million students with seven wide-ranging programs including classroom curriculum, week long summer programs, financial literacy education, career skills development and integrating technology into the classroom. BestPrep’s success is due to its

Continued on next page...
Music Notes

Seven Students Qualify for Honor Choir

Rockford High School students, (pictured above) Caden Lupino, Mitchell Johnson, Ryan DeRoo, Stella Smith, Kelsey Anderson, Lindsey Schirado and Grace Schulte were selected to perform in the Wright County Conference Honor Choir at Annandale High School on Saturday, January 6, 2018. Thirteen regional high schools nominate their top performing students for this event. This year’s choir was directed by Dr. Michael Culloton from Concordia College, Moorhead, MN.

RHS & RMS Students Qualify for Honor Bands

On Saturday, January 13, 2018, three Rockford High School students, (pictured below) Steve Mutterer (grade 9) on the clarinet, Josie MacMillen (grade 10) on the flute, and Kailey DeWolfe (grade 10) on the baritone, participated in the Central Minnesota Band Directors Association’s 9th-10th Grade Honor Band. Also that day, four students from Rockford Middle School Center for Environmental Studies, (pictured right) Mikayla Graunke on alto saxophone, Joe Harkess on bassoon, Sophie Bremel on French horn, and Kate Kariniemi on flute, participated in the Central Minnesota Band Directors Association’s 6th-8th Grade Honor Band. The event was held at the Elk River High School.

The MBDA sponsors two honor bands annually, one comprised of students in grades 6, 7 and 8, and another comprised of students in grades 9 and 10. The MBDA Honor Bands provide the opportunity for select students from across the state of Minnesota to immerse themselves in an invigorating environment of music-making under the direction of a distinguished guest conductor.

Students from dozens of area schools came together for a day of rehearsals, sectional work, and a final concert. Molly Schultz (grade 9) was also nominated but was unable to attend. Congratulations to our fine musicians!

Message from the Superintendent

Continued from previous page...

Innovative programs, entrepreneurial spirit and ongoing collaborations with businesses, schools, teachers and students.

Rockford Area Schools is proud to have become one of their leading schools in utilizing Best Prep’s outstanding programs and I am proud have been involved with of Best Prep for the last 16 years. For more information on Best Prep, go to their website at www.bestprep.org.

Feel free to stop in, call (office: 763-477-9165 x4002) or send me an email (durandp@rockford.k12.mn.us) anytime you have a question or comment.

2018 Outstanding Agriscience Teacher

Clint Smith was recognized as the Region IV MAAE (Minnesota Association of Agricultural Educators) Outstanding Agriscience Teacher of the Year at the 2018 Agricultural Technology Conference held in January in St. Cloud.

This award recognizes teachers who have inspired and enlightened their students through engaging and interactive lessons in the science of agriculture. Smith is in his 19th year of teaching Agricultural Education and his fifth year at Rockford. He teaches various different classes like Animal Science, Natural Resources, Food Science, Companion Animals, and Horticulture to name a few.

The Minnesota Association of Agricultural Educators is an organization of teachers of agriculture at the high school, post-secondary, and adult levels who seek to advance agricultural education in Minnesota.
Students at Rockford Elementary Arts Magnet School already understand the importance of kindness, and joining the Start With Hello program took kindness to a new level.

REAMS staff and students have been working hard on kindness and including others in all aspects of the school day. And now, REAMS recently joined hundreds of other schools across the nation to address social isolation through a program called, Start With Hello, during the week of February 5-9.

Social isolation is the overwhelming feeling of being left out, lonely, or treated like you are invisible. As a result, many kids pull away from society, struggle with learning and social development and/or choose to hurt themselves or others. During the Start With Hello week, students are taught the skills to reach out and include those who may be dealing with chronic social isolation and to create a culture of inclusion and connectedness within their school. Students practiced conversation starters to include students that they may not know very well. The first steps in meeting or including new people are always the hardest, and the goal is to help the students at REAMS make connections with one another.

 Principal Brenda Nyhus and Counselor Elizabeth Sigette gave classroom presentations during the week to show students opportunities to say “Hello” in a variety of languages, as well as ways to make connections with one another through role playing and other activities.

Start With Hello is a program that is part of the Sandy Hook Promise, a national, nonprofit organization led by several family members whose loved ones were killed in the tragic mass shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School. Rockford Elementary Arts Magnet School is honored to collaborate with the staff at the Sandy Hook Promise organization to assist our students in becoming more connected to their school community.

Second Grade students, Cody Folger, Addison Wilcox, Annmarie Brisson, Jackson Distad, Owen Fortney, and Owen Strand practice ways to include others for Start With Hello week.

Welcome Class of 2031

Kindergarten Round Up March 8

Please join us for Kindergarten Roundup on Thursday, March 8, 5:45 to 7:00 pm. The event will be held at Rockford Elementary Arts Magnet School, 7650 County Road 50, Rockford. This will be our ninth year of offering all day, every day Kindergarten in our district.

The Kindergarten program includes a robust core curriculum with enrichments in art, music, physical education and media offered within a small, caring community of learners. Open enrollment and transportation are available! Enrollment packets will be sent out in February. If you would like more information, please contact the REAMS office at 763-477-5837.
Dabbs Returns to Rockford

Inspirational speaker, Reggie Dabbs, made a return trip to Rockford on January 31 to speak to the students at Rockford Middle School—Center for Environmental Studies. He previously gave presentations at Rockford High School for elementary and high school students last April.

Born to an unwed teenager who at one time considered abortion as a viable option for solving her “problem,” Reggie Dabbs considers himself fortunate to be alive. With no place to go, the pregnant teenager ended up living in a chicken coop in Louisiana. It was there she remembered a former school teacher, Mrs. Dabbs, who had said to her students, “If you ever need anything, call me.” The girl called.

Mrs. Dabbs went to Louisiana, picked up the girl, and took her back to Tennessee where she and her husband, whose six children were adults by this time, took the girl into their home and cared for her until after the baby was born. They continued to care for little Reggie as foster parents until he was in the fourth grade, and then officially adopted him.

After graduating from college, Reggie began his public speaking. During one engagement, his host asked if he would be interested in addressing a high school assembly. From that small beginning in 1987, Reggie has become a popular public school speaker.

“Today’s generation is facing unparalleled hurts, pressures and choices. If we can heal those hurts, help in times of pressure and equip students in their choices, we will have better students and a positive school atmosphere,” said Dabbs in a letter, “I share with students often, ‘You can’t change your past, but you can change your future.’ With all that students are facing, we must give them hope.” Dabbs came to speak to all RMS-CES students about the power they have within themselves to make good choices and make their dreams come true.

From being a “problem” to an unwed teenager, Reggie is fast becoming one of the most in-demand speakers who helps teenagers meet their problems head-on and overcome them.

Reggie makes his home in Ft. Myers, Florida, with his wife, Michele, and their son, Dominic.

Pictured: Speaker Reggie Dabbs speaks to middle school students on January 31.

Spring Activities Meeting Feb 26

The spring activities meeting for families with students in grades 7-12 is scheduled for Monday, February 26, 2018 at 6 pm in the Rockford High School Auditorium.

Families can meet the coaches, get practice/game schedules, and complete the necessary registration forms to ensure your student is eligible to begin practice on the first day.

The following RAS spring activities are offered this spring—baseball, golf, softball, track & field, and trapshooting.

To register online, go to www.rockford.k12.mn.us.

School Bus Drivers Needed!!

Looking to earn a little extra money and to work close to home?

Rockford Bus Service is now hiring bus and van drivers. No experience necessary. We will train!

Now offering a SIGNING BONUS!

We offer a fun, flexible work environment with a schedule that allows for you to have free time during the day, with opportunities to work more if desired.

E-mail myersb@rockford.k12.mn.us or call 763-477-6100 for more info!
The Business of Learning
And Learning about Business at Rockford High School

The Business department at Rockford High School currently consists of seven courses, all taught by one teacher, Ryan Sparrman.

This school year is the first year Sparrman has taught at Rockford High School. “I found my way to Rockford with a bit of luck,” said Sparrman, “I was working at Proto Labs in Maple Plain as an account manager when I made the decision to pursue a teaching license and a Masters in Teaching degree. I received my Bachelors of Accountancy from Central Methodist University in Fayette, MO. It wasn't until my last year at Central Methodist that I found my calling in education. Since I was so invested in a degree specializing in accounting, I decided to use my degree as a way to gain business experience to transfer to the classroom.” Sparrman continues, “Every day I reference my experience in the corporate world to bring "real life" connections to the classroom.”

The Courses

The courses offered at RHS include Personal Finance, Accounting, Sports & Entertainment Marketing, Intro to Business (Entrepreneurship), Career Exploration, Computer Applications, and Web Design.

In the Personal Finance course, Sparrman utilizes the Dave Ramsey curriculum to teach students about spending behaviors, savings strategies, how to budget their money as a student and as an adult, and the dangers of debt. In Accounting, the students learn how to record, analyze and make financial business decisions in a sole proprietorship. In the class, students have a lot of great discussions on business ethics and how all business decisions stem from accounting.

The Sports & Entertainment Marketing course is a project-oriented class focusing on marketing strategies within both industries. Students examine items like Super Bowl advertising, ethics in sports, and online streaming apps versus traditional entertainment. The Intro to Business class has an emphasis on entrepreneurship, learning what it means to be an entrepreneur, the risks versus rewards, and how to create a business plan. The Computer Applications course focuses on how to utilize Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint for professional situations. Sparrman believes students need a foundation in these programs since most employers ask for a background in one of these in most job postings. In Web Design, students learn how to utilize XHTML to build their own website. Students are constantly using the internet and surfing various web pages. “The look on students’ faces when they see how coding creates their own web page is priceless,” said Sparrman.

The Career Explorations course may be one of the most valuable courses students take at Rockford High School. In the class, students learn how to transfer skills and experience into a professional resume, how to translate the resume into a professional quality cover letter, strategies to interview effectively, soft skills necessary in the workplace, how to find a job, the best route after high school, and how to turn passions and interests into a career. Sparrman said, “My goal is to give students confidence when they decide to enter the work force. There is a place in our economy for each student to make a living doing what they love and I am excited to be a part of that adventure.”

DECA and Rocketc.

DECA is a student ran organization focusing on giving students experience in business and "real world" situations. DECA is an international organization with nearly a 70-year history and is organized into two unique student divisions each with programs designed to address the learning styles, interest and focus of its members. The High School Division includes 200,000 members in 3,500 schools. The Collegiate Division includes over 15,000 members in 275 colleges and universities.

DECA members pick a couple events to compete in ranging from Marketing, Business Administration, Interviewing, Sales, Hospitality Management, and many more. The events consist of students’ role playing with judges in their chosen area and then they are judged on how they handle customer service situations, manage employees, and conduct job interviews. “This year Rockford has 23 students competing at the Districts in St. Cloud on February 6 and I expect some of them to make it to State competitions in March,” said Sparrman, “I have big expectations and goals for our DECA program.” Thousands of students throughout Minnesota compete with the goal of making it to Nationals in Atlanta, GA. For more information on the DECA program, go to www.deca.org.

The school store, Rocketc., is becoming one of the identities of Rockford High School and is managed by Sparrman with the help of members of DECA. The DECA students are help choose and order the merchandise, work with vendors, set prices, work with customers, and learning the financial aspect of having a profitable business. Rocketc sells performance sportswear, backpacks, chairs, ornaments, keychains and jewelry. This year custom airbrushed apparel was introduced. Each shirt, hat, sweatshirt, or item of choice is hand airbrushed to the specifications of the customer, adding another

Continued on next page...
unique identity to Rockford High School. The store is open before and after school and at most home sporting events. “Those of you attending the Rockford-Greenfield Community Expo on March 17 will be able to see our state of the art store, interact with students, and purchase some awesome Rockford gear,” said Sparrman, “Connecting with community members, or what we call Networking in our business classes, is a top priority for the students and I. We are so excited to meet everyone.” If you have any questions about the merchandise or hours, contact Ryan Sparrman at sparrmanr@rockford.k12.mn.us.

Sparrman commented, “I'd like to thank the faculty, students, and community for being so welcoming in my first year at Rockford High School. Although it was a long path to attain my dream as business teacher, I consider myself so lucky to be able to share my experiences with the students of Rockford High School. It's apparent this is a special place to work and live.”

Pictured: (opposite page) New airbrushed merchandise is available at the school store. (above) Senior Penina Boros helps sell merchandise with Business teacher, Ryan Sparrman, with the mobile Rocket at a football game last fall.

One Act Play Cast Places 2nd at Sections

Rockford’s One Act Play cast placed second at Section 4A Finals on Saturday, February 3, 2018 at St. Paul Academy. Their show, “The 146 Point Flame” by Matt Thompson and directed by Stephanie Roe, is the story of historic 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire in New York City.

Through words, movement and music, four young women share their dreams, thoughts, fears and feelings about their ultimate destinies. An Italian immigrant, Vincenza, shares her last night on Earth with romance, smiles and dancing. Tessa celebrates her life with a story about her brother and mother. Sisters, Lena and Yetta, meditate on the strength and endurance of moving from Russia to America and the parallels of moving from life to the afterlife. Touching and poetic, this piece illuminates the definition of human courage.

Pictured: At the section finals are Advisor Stephanie Roe, Keegan Finger, Ben Nelson, Gabe Zilmer, Sami Raissouli, Joey Seymour, Jessica Seymour, Noah Lewis, Mari Olson, Rayna Bowen, Grace Schulte, Nicole Steenstra, Maria Schirado, Elise Higgins, and Nolan Aker. Not pictured: Taylor Andres, Tanner Robinson and Lindsey Schirado.

School Boards Lead So Students Can Achieve!

The Minnesota School Boards Association set February 19-23, 2018 as School Board Recognition Week to build awareness and understanding of the vital function an elected board of education plays in our society. School board members give the Rockford Area Schools citizens a voice in education decision making. RAS children benefit every day from the hard work of our school board, so we thank these dedicated leaders for spending countless hours away from their own families and jobs so all our children can get a good education. The members serving our district are as follows: (pictured left, back) Amy Edwards, Kevin Campbell, Lia Hall, Superintendent Paul Durand, (front) Jessica Johnson, Chuck Tryon and Ted Botten.
Local Businesses Encouraged to Register for Rockford Greenfield Community Expo

Join other local businesses for the 15th annual Rockford-Greenfield Community Expo on Saturday, March 17, from 9 am to 12 noon at Rockford High School.

Rockford Community Education is excited to again host the Community Expo. Past Expos have had over 1,500 community members visit the Community Expo that morning. It is a great opportunity to exhibit your business or organization and connect with community members and potential customers. There are also stage demonstrations, door/cash prizes, and a breakfast.

Please consider joining us this year at the Rockford-Greenfield Community Expo. Vendor booths are $80 (early bird fee) or there is a $35 fee for non-profit groups that want a skirted table but no booth. The registration forms must be returned to the Rockford Community Center by Saturday, March 10. Table rental is an additional cost of $10 each and electricity is another $20 fee. To reserve your booth, please complete the registration form located on the Rockford Area Schools website at www.rockford.k12.mn.us under Community Education.

Vendors are asked to provide one door prize valued at $20 or more. There will be also be a drawing for the vendors only for a free booth for the 2019 Rockford-Greenfield Community Expo.

If you have any questions, please contact Melissa Joseph through email at josephm@rockford.k12.mn.us or call 763-477-4563.

Pictured: (below) Photos from the 2017 Rockford-Greenfield Community Expo.

Late Start Day

The last late start day of the 2017-18 school year is scheduled for Monday, March 12, 2018. Classes will start two hours later as noted:

- Elementary school at 10:05 am
- Middle school at 9:50 am
- High school at 10:00 am

Bus pick up times will be two hours later than the normal pick up time.

This is the last of three late start days for the school year. If you have any other questions regarding the late start day, please contact the building office:

REAMS 763-477-5837
RMS-CES 763-477-5831
RHS 763-477-5846

Lunch Cashiers Needed!

Taher Food Service at Rockford Area Schools is now seeking cashiers to work 2 to 3 hours per day, Monday through Friday, when classes are in session. If interested, please contact Deb at 763-477-5846 ext. 3052.