



RICHMOND HEIGHTS LOCAL SCHOOLS



SPARTAN CONNECTION

SUMMER 2023 NEWSLETTER FROM THE DESK OF THE SUPERINTENDENT, DR. RENÉE T. WILLIS



MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

DEAR RICHMOND HEIGHTS FAMILIES, STAFF AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS,

I can't believe we have already reached the end of summer vacation! I hope our staff, students and families are having a wonderful break from school.

This edition of the newsletter is designed to highlight our Spartan students who are achieving at high levels. Part of our mission to prepare individual learners to navigate an ever evolving global community using 21st century competencies involves helping our students find their passion and nurturing their dreams across all grade levels.

Priority area #1 in our all-new Strategic Plan, which will carry us through 2027, is Student Achievement. Objective 4 centers on building student capacity through empowerment opportunities. Empowering our students goes beyond the classroom and traditional academic lessons. This summer, thanks to several community partnerships, we are empowering our students to grow their leadership skills, gain real-world experiences through hands-on job training, and learn about societal issues and how they can affect change.

I hope you enjoy reading about these opportunities and our student achievements. We are grateful for the support of our community in helping make Richmond Heights a first-choice school district.

Renée T. Willis, Ph.D.
Superintendent | Richmond Heights Local Schools



MARTHA HOLDEN JENNINGS FOUNDATION

Superintendent Presented Award of Excellence

Richmond Heights Local Schools is fortunate to have strong leadership, and we aren't the only ones who think so! Congratulations to Superintendent Renée Willis, Ph.D., for receiving a Martha Holden Jennings Foundation Ohio Outstanding Superintendent Performance Award of Excellence for 2023. She will be recognized at a retreat in late July in Cleveland, Ohio.

Kindergarten Readiness Academy Focuses on Early Literacy Achievement

Nineteen soon-to-be Spartans participated in the district's first-ever Kindergarten Readiness Academy in June. The Academy gave students a jumpstart on their educational journey, particularly in the area of literacy skills.

The students will be placed in the same class for kindergarten, allowing Richmond Heights to measure their progress throughout the year. This opportunity was funded through a grant from the Ohio Department of Education.



Treasurer Update

It is an uncertain time in the world of school finance. The Richmond Heights Schools Board of Education approved the district's latest 5-year forecast in May. Unfortunately, the forecast shows that Richmond Heights will see a revenue shortfall of more than \$1.1 million in FY 2023, increasing to a projected shortfall of \$2.5 million by FY 2027. However, there are still many unknowns right now that can impact these numbers.

Ohio's next two-year budget bill was signed into law on July 4. It includes funding for the Fair School Funding Plan, which was enacted in House Bill 10, the state's last budget bill. We are currently running simulations to see how Richmond Heights Schools will be affected, and will update our five-year forecast accordingly.

The Board of Education is taking a proactive approach to our current financial challenges by exploring levy options and examining areas for cost containment. Additionally, we are continuing to work with Rockmill Financial Consulting and our community-led Tax Policy Committee on a long-term plan to replace some local property taxes with an earned income tax. This will create a more equitable taxing system, reduce the overall cost to taxpayers, particularly senior citizens and those on fixed incomes, and generate more money from renters.

We will continue to keep you updated on the financial realities of Richmond Heights Local Schools. **Please feel free to reach out to me at martin.cooper@richmondheightsschools.org with any questions.**

Cooper Martin
Treasurer/CFO



Spartans Head to Med School

Our country is experiencing a healthcare worker shortage; however, the National Youth Leadership Forum's Med Camp is here to help. Alexzandria Jackson and Kingston Jackson, nominated by Science Teacher Mrs. Graves, attended this one-week camp at the University of Maryland, College Park in Washington, D.C. this summer.

Med Camp gives students the chance to step into the shoes (and scrubs) of a physician and gain transformational medical school and career knowledge. Students can discover the right path for their future through a fun and interactive curriculum that allows them to test their personal and academic strengths in true-to-life simulations and hands-on clinical training while gaining the confidence they need to excel in the future.

We'll be calling these Spartans "Doctor" in no time!



HOBY Helps Sophomores Develop Leadership Skills



The mission of the Hugh O'Brian Youth Leadership (HOBY) program is to inspire and develop our global community of youth and volunteers to a life dedicated to leadership, service, and innovation.

This summer, four Spartan sophomores are exploring their leadership potential through State Leadership Seminars, 3 to 4-day residential programs held at John Carroll University. These highly interactive seminars allow students to discover leadership from a personal, group, and socially responsible perspective.

After the seminars, HOBY alumni are challenged to complete 100 hours of community service over the next year to put their passion and newly built leadership skills into action. Congratulations to Angel Dinh, Cedvion Thornton, Autumn Perry, and Ja'onna Diamond for being selected for the program!

Elementary Students REACHing for New Heights

It's never too soon to start developing our students for their future. This summer, five of our fifth grade boys attended a 5-week, tuition-free program called REACH, a rigorous summer enrichment program at University School for academically talented African-American boys.

The program accommodates up to 100 students who are chosen at the end of their fifth-grade year. The students remain enrolled for three consecutive summers. The program is designed to teach boys lessons concerning focus, thoughtfulness, creativity, persistence, determination, courage, resilience, and excellence. In addition to the summer curriculum, the boys attend cultural events and workshops throughout the school year. A typical day would include Core Classes, taught by experienced mentor teachers; Elective Classes, selected by the student and designed to deepen the students understanding of the African-American experience; Recreation, an hour-long period where again the student selects the activity and learns about sportsmanship and teamwork; and Field Trips, used to reinforce concepts studied in class. Throughout the school year, students may also participate in follow-up activities such as career panel discussions, service projects for community building, and college guidance and preparation sessions.

Six boys were recommended for the program, and the following four were accepted:

- **Tyler Bell**
- **Kacey Compton**
- **Jackson Powers**
- **Ali'jah Vinson**

Recycling Program Coming to Richmond Heights

Recycling is on its way to the city of Richmond Heights and Richmond Heights Schools thanks to a group of Great Lakes Literacy Scholars. The group of Spartan students made up of Mason Minor, Tasean Gross, Autumn Christian, and Nikolai Iwanyckyj, have been educating, advocating and acting on this issue.

They have learned the environmental and health effects of garbage leaking toxins into our water and homes, and the social, political, and financial aspects of bringing a recycling effort to a community.

First Ring Leadership Academy Students Make Final Presentation

As part of the First Ring Leadership Academy, four Richmond Heights students — Autumn Perry, Cedvion Thornton, Angel Dinh, and Penelope Zoldak — spent last school year researching a topic of their choice based on a challenge they identified within the district.

Their research informed their hypothesis, and they presented their findings and recommendations to the First Ring Superintendents Collaboration in May.

See an excerpt from their presentation below.

We are so proud of our students!

THE IMPORTANCE OF Academic Achievement

“Graduation is so far away. I have time.”
students say every year. Watching graduation happen before them was when some realized

“I didn't know where to go from here.”

“It is shown that 75% of high school students expressed boredom, anger, sadness, fear, or stress while in school (Research.com).”

That can lead to lack of motivation or just giving up. Our research topic is about how to improve our school's Academic Achievement and why people aren't performing to the best of their abilities. This is very important to us because we feel it affects the students mental health, physical health, and future.

In our survey we sent out, of the 57 responses, results show some students to be unmotivated to complete assignments, lack time management, and struggle with mental health.

Recommendations to support all students achieve academically in and out of the classroom have been made and will be the focus for year two.



Students Receive Humanitarian Awards

Two brothers from Richmond Heights Schools were recently named recipients of Humanitarian Awards from the Educational Service Center of Northeast Ohio. Award winners were nominated by administrators and teachers in their schools for showing leadership and community service as well as possessing great character during the 2022-2023 school year.

In addition to a cash award, students received a personalized plaque, starfish pin, and starfish bookmark. The starfish is the symbol of a story of the impact one person can make in a community. The awards are being presented by Tony Miceli, vice president of the Educational Service Center of Northeast Ohio.

CONGRATULATIONS TO RICHMOND HEIGHTS WINNERS!



Drew McSears 8th grade *Richmond Heights Middle School*

Drew showed outstanding leadership as Student Council president throughout the 2022-2023 school year. He also organized the staff cookies bake-off and bake sale, led the concession stand, was a leader on the track team, participated in community service events, and assisted with the Jr. Prom and sports banquet.

Drew excelled academically as well, making the honor roll each quarter, despite three high school courses being part of his schedule.

Kaleb McSears Senior

Richmond Heights High School

During the 2022-2023 school year, Kaleb was an active member of the National Honor Society, National Technical Honor Society, president of the senior class, graduate of the MAGNET Early College/Early Career Program, and was in the top 10 of his class.

He was a model student by enrolling in College Credit Plus at Tri-C where he worked toward his associate degree, and completed the Auto Tech program through Excel TECC Consortium. Kaleb has been an intern at Parker Hannifin for the past two years and has a patent on a product with the company for which he'll reap the benefits for the rest of his life. He will be majoring in mechanical engineering at the University of Cincinnati this fall.



A Manufacturing Pathway Success

Taylor Robinson, a 2023 Richmond Heights graduate, has the foundation she established as a Spartan to thank for her full-time employment. She was accepted into the Component Repair Technologies (CRT) SOAR program this summer, an immersive 6-week advanced manufacturing opportunity, before walking across the stage to get her diploma.

Upon completing the program, she will be offered a full-time position with the company, with the potential to make up to \$25 an hour complete with benefits and other incentives such as free schooling. Two other students — Leela Otey-Smith and Mason Powell-Hawkins, also continued work with CRT this summer.



Spartan Student “Look Up to Cleveland” Ambassador

Angel Dinh represented Spartan Nation June 19-23 in the Look Up to Cleveland program, which provides high school students with leadership development, gives them a heightened awareness and appreciation of Cleveland, and shows them how they can contribute to their community.

Angel Dinh:

- Built teamwork skills
- Connected with like-minded classmates
- Learned about urban planning in Cleveland including the role community development organizations play
- Explored local climate change and environmental justice initiatives
- Delved into issues of hunger, food insecurity, economic disparity, and social determinants of health
- Met local government leaders



Student Getting Jump-start on College with Online Program

Tiffany Singh is getting a jump-start on her college career with Case Western Reserve University’s Pre-College Online Program this summer. She will attend Case Western for four weeks where she will have access to the following pre-med classes:

- **Engineering: From 2D Sketch to 3D Model**
- **Computer Science: An Introduction to Digital Technology**
- **Astrophysics and Evolutionary Biology: The Origins of Life**
- **Neuroscience and Medicine: Inside the Brain and Nervous System**
- **Social Entrepreneurship: The Business of Helping Others**









Richmond Heights Local Schools
 447 Richmond Road
 Richmond Heights, OH 44143
 Phone 216-692-0086 • Fax 216-692-2820

PRSR STD
 ECRWSS
 U.S. POSTAGE
 PAID
 RICHMOND
 HEIGHTS, OH
 Permit No. 1625

SOCIAL

-  [RichmondHeightsSchoolDistrict](#)
-  [RH_LocalSchools](#)
-  [RH_Local_Schools](#)
-  [Richmond Heights Schools District](#)



Josiah Harris graduated from Richmond Heights High School and Lakeland Community College with his associate degree in 2022. He helped lead the basketball team to its first state championship. He earned a full ride to West Virginia University thanks to his academic and athletic abilities. This December, he will graduate with a four-year degree! Josiah will continue his basketball career as he pursues his master's. *Way to go, Josiah!*

Academics + Athletics = #RHSPartanPride



Basketball season will be here before we know it!

Stay tuned for the schedule and be sure to come out and support our team in their Feat to 3-peat!