



TITAN TIMES

RUTHVEN-AYRSHIRE COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Providing Quality Education Means Doing Battle with the Pandemic



It's been exhausting. Fed up, burned out and simply fatigued, everyone is ready for a pre-pandemic world. At Ruthven-Ayrshire CSD, the pandemic has shaken up every aspect of education. Students, teachers, administration and support staff have taken on extra duties, learned new processes and invented new methods in order to overcome the challenges.

"One of the biggest things that COVID has thrown at us is that there really is no routine," said Superintendent Marshall Lewis. "Things change on a daily basis. We look at every piece of data that comes in that can potentially change things or give us an insight on how to address something."

Classes have changed from face-to-face, some grades in virtual classes, and back to face-to-face. Those decisions are based on the percent positive in the county over a 14-day period. Before Christmas, that rate was below 10% and rose to 13 to 18% in January.

The administration has had to seek out information for decision making. Some details come from the state mandates, but much information must be researched. Lewis checks a state website daily for county information and updates and those are available to the staff and the community.

"One of the biggest tasks we deal with is the mask wearing. Since it is required, we monitor that a lot. Our students have become more accustomed to it and are doing a good job."

Principal Jon Josephson agrees on some of the bigger challenges for administrators. "The two biggest challenges we have

faced this year are dealing with a very regular stream of changes to protocols and requirements," he said.

"For example, we began the year with a recommendation of mask wearing, other than in specific locations where they were required. That quickly changed to a mandate and thus a whole new series of expectations, logistics, and protocols. Probably the biggest area where changes have been rapid and fairly constant is with spectator restrictions at events. Again, these have morphed from recommended social distancing to required masks and distancing, to severe limitations on numbers of spectators allowed to attend, to loosening those limitations, and so on. It has really been the constant flux that has been demanding of time."

Josephson continued, "Trying to educate students in-person and virtually simultaneously has been a huge challenge. The pandemic has put some families in the position of needing to have their children 100% virtual, while required quarantines have created pockets of students who, on a rotating basis, become temporary virtual learners. For teachers to adequately provide

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everything needed for each of these groups simultaneously has been difficult and not without problems.”

Lewis explained, “Just about every decision we make on a daily basis has an impact from COVID. Everything from budgeting and increased spending to personnel. We are going to have some exposures and we are going to have absentees. The number of substitutes has decreased this year. So, managing all those things, every day throws a new curve.

A walk through the school building shows obvious signs of pandemic-forced changes. There are Plexiglass dividers in the cafeteria and in elementary classrooms; there are dots in the hall as reminders to social distance and there are hand sanitizers in every room. For elementary students it has meant learning new habits while high school students have been able to adapt and take on changes themselves.

Many challenges lead to positive outcomes and so it has been at R-A. “First and foremost has been the overall spirit of cooperation. We have had some extraordinary student leadership in helping navigate the student body through all the changes that we have adapted to. We have also become much better at using technology effectively systemically. Teachers have gained a comfort level and have risen to the occasion when challenged to teach virtually,” said Josephson.

“One of the best parts of going into battle is having a good team with you,” said Lewis. “Our administrative team talks daily. The teachers get involved and sometimes the students are involved.

“Recently someone used the term village, and I think we have a school village. We all have a piece to contribute and a piece that we rely on others for. It is essential to bring these together in an orchestrated manner. We pull out the best in each other and do it on behalf of the kids we serve.”

Some of the new procedures will likely stay around for the future. “Our hand sanitizers will be something that stays, they are front and center and are easy. Some of the cleaning approaches will probably stick around. The biggest win comes from some of the academic changes and that is embracing the technology and the virtual experience, as a supplement to day-to-day classrooms,” said Lewis.

“The systemic use of Google Classroom will definitely continue,” added Josephson. “Having all teachers make all assignments and activities available through Google Classroom has improved access for students and parents. The ability to teach virtually will also continue and can be used on days when weather, or something like a water main break would keep students from attending face-to-face.”

TECHNOLOGY ON THE FOREFRONT

“COVID-19 really sling-shot technology to the forefront. It was being used in the classrooms every day, but now it is the classroom in many ways. So, I went from busy to extremely busy overnight,” said Brian Hersom, Technology Director at R-A.

“As soon as it hit, we needed to make sure everyone had the devices, the connections and the software they needed. It has been a learning curve for everyone, and we are in the trenches learning along with everyone else. For example, sanitizing computers. We had protocols before, but now, we need to figure out how to sanitize at scale.”

A typical day starts with being on email all day and doing after-hours tech support. In the evening, tech staff are streaming activities, helping teachers who are working with students.

“During the day, I’m putting out a lot of little fires and coordinating with students on their computer issues. I never thought I would be trying to trou-



Brian Hersom is the Technology Director at R-A.

bleshoot people’s home Internet and trying to figure out things that I have no control over. Those are all things that are part of my daily routine.

“We started out our livestreaming with equipment we had and skills we had from doing some previously, so we were able to produce a product that we could be proud of.”

Hersom encourages parents to reach out if they need help with technology. “That is one of the biggest things we encourage because everyone is here to help. We all want the best outcomes for the students.

“We came into this pandemic, slightly better prepared than some districts. At R-A, every student already had a computer assigned to them. The ability to hit the ground running was a lot better than many districts. I feel like our implementation of distance learning went a lot better. Our students were a lot better with devices and how to use them. There wasn’t nearly the learning curve here as I have heard of for other districts.”



Elementary students have learned to wear masks everyday.

IN THE CLASSROOM

Strategies vary for the classroom based on grade and subject matter. All of the teachers assist with extra cleaning, enforcing mask and social distancing rules.

In the preschool class, Melanie Williams has had to change daily routines due to social distancing requirements. “We try to maintain space between the kids, so we have fewer kids at one table and we needed a big area to do our whole group activities, so I had to rearrange the room and take some furniture out. We also don’t share items like we used to. Each child has their own Play-doh and we have individual sensory bins instead of our large table we used last year. I have to be careful when planning lessons because some activities are difficult when we can’t share items. We also had to step up cleaning our room. We wipe and spray down toys daily.

“I’m lucky to have two paras that clean after school for me. The kids really cope remarkably well. They don’t really know any different. We wear masks everyday. When kids have good fitting masks, they

do well wearing them. We've had a lot of people donate masks, so we have a lot of size options for the kids to wear if they need one. I think the kids like having individual items of their own that they do not have to share and they also like using hand sanitizer!"

CLEANING AND SANITIZING

Cleaning and sanitizing have always been a priority for custodians Tom and Jan Murphy. Now, it means more repetition of wiping the high-use areas.

Jan says, "We always did a certain amount of cleaning. Now we hit handrails and doorknobs more often. We go to handrails, to the gym, to restrooms and then move on to classrooms following three classes.

The teachers help to clean desks and the cooks help to sanitize the tables. "With supplies, we can't get the regular items for example, we haven't been able to get Lysol for 3 or 4 months."

"We sanitize the tables in the cafeteria after every group," added Tom. "For transportation, we have made changes that include sanitizing the buses, keeping masks on board for the students. Also, bus drivers have taken on delivering meals to students. There are hand sanitizing pumps in every room, so students use those when entering or leaving class."

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Tom Murphy uses a backpack sprayer to disinfect dining tables.

IN THE KITCHEN

According to Jesse Gilmore, Food Service Director, there have been many changes related to feeding students and staff.

"We need to order pre-packaged items or package our food items individually. So, the menus are always changing to keep up with state guidelines which can be hard to follow. We need to roll silverware now and students can't reach for things like their own milk or condiments. We used to have a sharing basket, but we can't do that now. We have Plexiglass barriers which make it difficult to communicate with students on choosing options from the serving line.

"We package meals to go for students who are at home. Last summer, we did meals for home and I think the families really appreciated that."

"We do as much as we can homemade. Serving time takes a little longer because we need to put everything on the trays."

Currently, school meals are free for all students which has been a help for families.



Food service staff includes, (L-R) Heather Jensen, Barb Larson and Jessica Gilmore.

The kitchen staff serves between 160-180 meals for breakfast and lunch. Gilmore says they have tried to keep the menus the same and consistent for the students while also trying to give several options daily. They have continuing education to learn how to adapt to state changes and guidelines.

One thing Gilmore thinks will continue is wrapping of the silverware. "It's a simple thing that helps them keep everything in one hand and is more sanitary. I want to get back to having a condiment cart so they can make choices rather than us needing to hand those out."

Everyone is looking forward to a time without masks, without distancing, without quite so many rules, but until then, everyone at Ruthven-Ayrshire will continue the battle. After all, it's always been about doing whatever it takes to provide the best for the students.

Valentine's Day

WORD SEARCH

	H	E	A	R	T	T	C	N	T	N	E	Q		
	U	V	R	O	S	E	H	B	E	H	J	M		
	C	V	G	Z	B	S	M	L	O	V	E	V	G	O
	A	B	S	O	V	V	O	Y	C	D	W	A		
	C	A	U	C	D	I	V	B	O	A	S	L		
	U	P	G	I	F	T	I	E	L	T	N	E	U	P
	P	A	R	T	Y	I	E	L	A	E	N	R	A	
	I	B	P	O	E	M	N	O	T	S	C	T	E	R
	D	T	V	A	X		V	E	E	N	I	T	R	
	C	A	R	D	N		E	O	V	A	N	T	O	
	K	P	I	N	K	R	G	D	N	O	M	E	E	W
	I		S	E	C	R	E	T	D	O	I	L	Y	
	S		A	A	D	O	R	E	B	R	P			
	S	F	O	U	R	T	E	E	N	T	H	Z		

CUPID	GIFT	MOVIE	LETTER	PINK
LOVE	SWEET	PARTY	ARROW	VALENTINE
HUGS	KISS	FEBRUARY	DOVES	POEM
HEART	DATE	FOURTEENTH	ROMANCE	BELOVED
CHOCOLATE	ROSE	CARD	ADORE	SECRET

Athletes Make Full Use of New Gym Complex



Leading up to 2018, the R-A and G-T School Districts worked on plans for improvements to facilities at all locations. At the R-A location, a \$1.4 million outdoor sports complex was completed in 2020 that included the renovation of the baseball and football fields; construction of a new softball field and Little League field; new lighting, new parking, walkways and bleachers. At the Terril location, improvements were made to the sidewalks, and main entrance. At Graettinger, a \$9.4 million project provided a new gym, commons area, updates to classrooms, security, and administrative space.

This year's winter athletes have had the opportunity to enjoy the new complex at the Graettinger building.

The project includes a gymnasium with regulation floor, 1080 seating capacity, new girls and boys locker rooms, training room, coaches offices, equipment storage areas, and the adjoining commons with the open concept to the north end of the gym with areas to eat, wait, relax, plus new restrooms, and concessions.

"The obvious visible comparison is just the sheer size of the commons and gymnasium," said R-A Athletic Director Jon Josephson. "The new commons area provides such an excellent environment for students and spectators as they arrive in the facility. Massive restrooms, lots of elbow room, multiple seating areas and an excellent concessions facility are just a few of the benefits of this area of the addition.

"Unlike our other gymnasiums, the new one has a regulation floor with more than adequate spacing around it which allows for a complete and unobstructed playing area for the athletes and officials. This would be in comparison to our other gyms which have less than regulation size floors and had so little space surrounding the playing area, that restraining lines were necessary for inbounding the ball in basketball. With the bleachers back, the floor accommodates two regulation playing areas to be used simultaneously for both basketball and volleyball. The seating is nearly triple what we had before. To put that into perspective, with COVID regulations resulting in blocking out every other row and distancing between people in rows, we still have nearly the same capacity as we had before."

Josephson believes the new complex provides many benefits for the athletes. "Without question, having a regulation facility for our student-athletes to practice and play is a huge advantage. Although the old courts may have given us an element of 'home court advantage' they had the equal and



New seating will allow as many as 1080 fans to be seated once COVID restrictions are removed.

opposite effect when we were on the road. Having coached basketball and volleyball and observed both as an administrator and parent, it was glaringly obvious that our teams were at a huge disadvantage when they traveled to other schools in the conference that had regulation facilities."

Handicap accessibility has also been an added benefit in all of the improvements. For example, the new bleachers have cut-aways to allow for wheelchair accessibility.

Randy Hough has been the head boys basketball coach for 18 years and he sees similar advantages.

"It was quite a disadvantage for us to have the small court. This is a really beautiful facility. The students are getting a big advantage to have a court that is the same as the others. With six hoops we can now do more shooting drills. Now we have as good a facility as anyone in the conference," Hough said.

"Here we have six baskets so we can split the gym," remarked Todd Hough, Athletic Director.

"I think it also makes a positive impression. The old gym made an impression too, 'are you kidding me, you really play here?' The old court if you had size 8 shoes you couldn't shoot a 3-pointer because you would be out of bounds," laughed Hough.

Matt Masters, is in his first year as an assistant coach for high school boys basketball. "As a coach, I like that is a lot bigger for home games. For practice, we can break into groups to practice at different stations. We can also keep all the students here instead of tak-

ing them to the other locations. For practice, we switch between girls and boys taking turns between the old and new gyms."

Athletes and spectators shared their remarks about the new complex as well.

Mercedes

▶ Mercedes DePyper, is a senior who plays volleyball and basketball. "We were able to push back the bleachers and do two volleyball courts. So younger kids can go on one side and the varsity on the other so we can have more productive practice time. For basketball, we have more hoops so we can get more shooting in. Also, we don't have to travel. Both high school teams can practice in the new gym at Graettinger without traveling to Terril or Ruthven."



▶ Kate Sorenson, a junior, plays volleyball, basketball and track. "We haven't had a regulation court before, so playing away games was really different and much longer. So, it is nice to have a full-size court. In our old gym, there isn't much room behind the serving line to actually serve, so it is nice to have the extra room. The

new commons is great for studying and much more comfortable."

Senior Ashton Wooten plays basketball. "It is super nice. It is a lot bigger."

Drew Schnell, a sophomore plays football, basketball and golf. "It's a lot bigger and a lot more fun to play in. In the future we will be able to have more fans here. It is a really nice addition."



▶ Freshman Collin Hoffman plays football, basketball and baseball. "There is a lot more room in corners to shoot threes, there are more hoops to practice on. There is better lighting, too."

Issac Murphy, a freshman, plays football, basketball and golf. "It's a lot bigger and holds more people. It is a lot nicer."



The old school gym is well, old school.



The new commons area looking north from the new gymnasium.



▶ Sophomore Gabby Conlon plays basketball. "My favorite thing is the big locker rooms."

Mara Koenck, a sophomore, plays basketball. "Overall, the court has so much more room than the older court." Senior Matt Graves, plays basketball. "The main difference is that is bigger. It is easier to practice in."

Blake Rosacker, a junior, plays basketball, football, baseball and golf. "The gym compares more to the gyms we play in when we are away."

Natalie Swedin, a freshman plays basketball. "I like that multiple sports can play in one area at one time and we don't have to go to other towns to practice."

▶ Adri Krieger, a sophomore, plays basketball. "My favorite thing is the new facility. I love the gym with bigger seating and a bigger court."



▶ Freshman Fabian Bowman, is a new student and freshman. "It is newer and bigger. Everything is nice. Classes are more fun, generally better than my old school."

Layla Thompson is a sophomore cheerleader and plays softball. "I think the new facilities are much better including the restrooms. Now people want to spend time here."



▶ Aisha Fehr, a junior cheerleader also plays volleyball and softball. "For volleyball I loved having two courts. And in cheer, I like having more space on the sides so we have more room to cheer."

As spectators, Maria Krieger and Ron Zylinski enjoy the new gym. "There is a lot of room, it makes it more comfortable. It also makes a good impression. The seating is good."

Miranda DePyper says, "As a parent and spectator, I see that the kids have more space for practice and there is more space for spectators, especially with distancing. I think the kids have enjoyed and thrived because of it."

Kate Myers teaches family consumer science and as a junior class sponsor helps with the concessions. "There is more room, more comfort for athletes and spectators. We use the commons for classes to work in groups."

The new indoor gymnasium and related improvements, are just one more way R-A is Building for the Future.



Cheerleaders, (L-R): Kiley Upton, Kelsey Moran, Drea Reparetti, Taylor Gilmore, Layla Thompson, and Aisha Fehr.

School Closures Today Mirror Those During 1918 Epidemic

SCHOOL DAYS GONE BY



It was October 1918. The headlines of *The Graettinger Times* read much like newspapers have since March of last year. "Community Shrouded in Gloom as Epidemic Rages," reported the newspaper.

That same week the *Spirit Lake Beacon* reported that nearly fifty percent of the students were absent along with some of the teachers being sick.

Communities were under strict quarantine which meant that schools, churches, theaters and pool halls were closed. No-spitting ordinances were also enforced.

On October 10 that year, the Iowa State Board of Health issued an order to all mayors to discontinue all public meetings, close all schools and places of amusement and to make all cases reportable to the mayor who would then report the number of cases to the secretary of the State Board of Health. It was ordered that all precautionary measures should be taken to combat the spreading of the disease.

At the same time the country was battling what would be called Spanish Influenza, it was also fighting in World War I. Front pages focused mainly on the war effort, on the obituaries of soldiers or updates on the war. Families were encouraged to purchase war bonds, reduce use of coal, save tires and save food.

Many communities recommended or required that citizens wear face masks in public. The Red Cross took out newspaper ads encouraging people to wear masks and gave instruction on how to make them at home. People were encouraged to wear masks as a patriotic measure to protect the troops.

Not everyone went along with the mask requirements. Some were fined or otherwise penalized. While in San Francisco, 2,000 members created the "Anti-Mask League" and rallied to defeat the mask ordinance in January 1919.



DRUGGISTS!! PLEASE NOTE
VICK'S VAPORUB OVERSOLD
DUE TO PRESENT EPIDEMIC

Tremendous Demand Last Few Days Has Wiped Out Excess Stocks That We Had Estimated Would Last Until Next January. Last Week's Orders Called For One and Three Quarter Million Jars—Today's Orders Alone Amount to 532,459 Jars.

Big Shipments Are En Route to Jobbers. Until These Arrive There May Be a Temporary Shortage. All Deals Postponed—Buy in Small Lots Only.

RETAILERS CAN GET IMMEDIATE SHIPMENTS DIRECT BY PARCEL POST

40—We are now out of the 40c size and will be for the next few days. WHAT WE ASK THE RETAILER TO DO

SPANISH INFLUENZA TAKES HEAVY TOLL OF LIFE; NEW CASES REPORTED ON DECLINE

From the war department statistics it is now in the decline. There has been no new case reported in the neighborhood of forty cases of the disease since the first case in the county in Graettinger. The total number of deaths in the county to date have been as follows:

John Adams
 Oscar Christensen
 Henry Christensen
 Lewis Larson
 Andrew Johnson
 John Hansen
 Shubert Peterson

The public school has been closed for two days and the churches have had no public meetings. Last night the men who are ill. While we are sure that the disease is on the decline we will not be lulled into a false sense of security.

The epidemic of the winter of 1918-19 is estimated to have cost the lives of 20,000,000 people in the United States.



Influenza Epidemic Impedes war progress. To prevent as much as possible the spread of Spanish Influenza, barbers all over the country are wearing masks. Credit: National Archives, Oct. 26, 1918.

Newspaper articles told readers that the chief danger of the disease was from complications arising, attacking principally patients in a run-down condition, "those who don't go to bed soon enough or those who get up too early."

Symptoms of the Spanish Influenza started with a chill, followed by aching, fever, and sometimes nausea and dizziness, and a general feeling of

weakness and depression. Those with symptoms were told to see a doctor and remain in bed at least two days or more after the fever had left or if over the age of 50, to stay in bed four days or more.

People could avoid the disease by avoiding crowds and avoiding common drinking cups or roller towels. It was promoted to keep up body strength with plenty of exercise in the open air and good food. News articles explained that, "The influenza runs a very brief course when the patient is careful, and if we keep the system in good condition and throw off the poisons which tend to accumulate within our bodies, we can escape the disease." They were also reminded to remember the three C's: a clean mouth, clean skin and clean bowels.

A vaccine was never developed, and it took until 1920 before the epidemic had run its course. The Spanish Influenza infected one-third of the world's population. From 1918-1919 the disease killed up to 50 million people worldwide with more than 675,000 people from the U.S. According to the Iowa Department of Public Health, in Iowa, more than 6,000 people died and more than 93,000 were infected. Unlike other flu viruses, the Spanish Influenza infected and killed healthy young adults. Almost half of all deaths were those 20-40 years old.

As often is the case, we can look at school days gone by and realize that as much as things change, many things remain the same.



A recipe from the R-A kitchen that you can make at home. This recipe is new this year and the kiddos LOVE it.

Eggless, Edible Cookie Dough

- 4 c. margarine, softened
- 4 c. brown sugar
- 2 c. white sugar
- 1-1/2 c. milk, add slowly (may not need all of it, just until it makes a smooth consistency)
- 8 t. vanilla
- 8 c. flour
- 8 c. chocolate chips

Mix all together and enjoy. Makes 150 1 oz. portions or about 35 4 oz. servings.

Pandemic Takes a Toll on Mental Health

Reduced socializing, new habits, new routines and new technology can shred one's mental and emotional health. At Ruthven-Ayrshire, Guidance Counselor Matt Borchers recognizes how overwhelming these things can be.

"I have two kids of my own doing hybrid learning at times," he said. "For families that have challenges with the Internet or technology it can be overwhelming."

"One of the biggest challenges is that teachers aren't able to check up on students as much, so parents need to make sure their kids are getting the work done. Those kids who need more support and structure have much less



Matt Borchers is the R-A Guidance Counselor.

when there is distance learning. "Teachers are trying to stay on normal standards, but they have been forced to slow down. It creates a high-stress environment for everybody. Anyone who normally struggles with mental health issues are dealing with it with greater intensity because of the isolation and less social interaction. They may also have less access to positive role models. For teachers, they have taken

on more responsibilities and everyone has had to learn new skills. All these things weigh on a person's mental capacity," said Borchers. There is one thing that hasn't changed with COVID. Parents need to talk to their kids. "They should ask about homework and review their online work when distance learning."

The CDC provides these Steps to Help Provide Stability and Support to Children: Maintain a normal routine, Talk, listen, and encourage expression, Give honest and accurate information, Teach simple steps to stay healthy, Be alert for any change in behavior, and Reassure children about their safety and well-being.

DATES AND TIMES

Thursday, February 4

4 p.m. Basketball: Girls JH Game vs North Union (H)

Friday, February 5

4 p.m. Basketball: JV/V B Scrimmage vs Sioux Central (A)

6 p.m. Basketball: Varsity G-B vs Sioux Central (A)

Saturday, February 6

12 p.m. Wrestling: Boys Varsity Sectional/District vs TBA (A)

Sunday, February 7

2 p.m. Dance Showcase

Monday, February 8

4 p.m. Basketball: Girls JH Game vs Harris Lake Park (A)

Tuesday, February 9

6 p.m. R-A Board Meeting

Thursday, February 11

4 p.m. Wrestling: Boys JH Meet vs MNW (A)

7 p.m. Basketball: Varsity Sectional/District vs TBA (H)

Friday, February 12

6 p.m. Basketball: JV G-B vs Harris Lake Park (A)

7:15 p.m. Basketball: Varsity Boys vs Harris Lake Park (A)

Saturday, February 13

12 p.m. Wrestling: Boys Varsity Sectional/District vs TBA (A)

Tuesday, February 16

4 p.m. Wrestling: Boys JH Meet vs TBA (H)

Thursday, February 18

Wrestling: Boys Varsity State vs TBA (A)

6:30 p.m. Basketball: Varsity Sectional/District vs TBA (H)

Friday, February 19

Wrestling: Boys Varsity State vs TBA (A)

8 a.m. No School

Saturday, February 20

Wrestling: Boys Varsity State vs TBA (A)

Monday, February 22

4 p.m. Basketball: Girls JH Game vs Harris Lake Park (H)

4 p.m. Wrestling: Boys JH Meet vs West Bend-Mallard (A)

Tuesday, February 23

4 p.m. Wrestling: Boys JH Meet vs Spirit Lake (A)

Tuesday, March 2

4 p.m. Wrestling: Boys JH Meet vs Spencer (A)

Thursday, March 4

7 p.m. HS Pops Concert

Tuesday, March 9

Joint G-T and R-A Board Meeting

Friday, March 12

7:30 p.m. HS Spring Play

Saturday, March 13

7:30 p.m. HS Spring Play

Friday, March 19

8 a.m. No School

Wednesday, March 24 - Sunday, March 28

R-A NHS Trip

Friday, April 2

8 a.m. No School

Monday, April 5

8 a.m. No School

Tuesday, April 6

8 a.m. No School

8 a.m. Professional Development

7 p.m. GT Elem Concert

Friday, April 16

7:30 p.m. R-A MS Play

Saturday, April 17

Solo/Ensemble Contest

7:30 p.m. R-A MS Play

Saturday, April 24

Jr./Sr. Prom

Monday, April 26

7 p.m. HS Band/Vocal

Monday, May 3

7 p.m. R-A 5-8 Band/Vocal

All activities subject to change. Spectator guidelines vary by location. Please view our website for updates.



*****ECRWSSDDM****

POSTAL CUSTOMER

ECRWSS

Ruthven Grads are now Ruthven's Rock Stars

Fifteen years ago, someone asked Jeff Cacek if he knew where there were any rocks. That's all it took for him to start his rock selling business. The business, Ruthven Rocks, is family owned and operated, and is located at the north end of Gowrie Street. Caceks' son Keith and nephew Matt also work in the business.

It takes a certain knack to make a profitable business hunting and selling rocks. Jeff says not only does he know where the rocks are, but they make a special effort to provide their customers with clean rocks that have been sorted to a specific size. They typically travel up to 35 miles to gather the rocks. Most come by way of word-of-mouth because he has a good reputation.

"The boulders and rocks are dug up, loaded into the trucks and then returned to our location in Ruthven," said Cacek. "Here they are sorted by size and cleaned. If someone wants three-inch rock, that is exactly what they get. Our delivered loads are clean without dirt and debris which our customers appreciate."

About 300 loads a year are delivered to customers in the Iowa Great Lakes, Des Moines and the Lake Panorama area.

In 2018, Cacek expanded his business to include sandblasting and rock cutting. Since then, they have been sawing and blasting rocks with custom designs for people all over Northwest Iowa. Cut rocks are used for landscaping and decorating, sandblasted rocks are customized to any design and any size requested by the customer. They have also created headstones, benches and water fountains.

"It really has been about the rocks," he said. "I enjoy being my own boss and being a loaner. I like the solitude and enjoy going out to a grove and running an excavator to pick up rocks."

Cacek graduated as a Ruthven Ram in 1977. From there he served in the Army for three years. He returned to Ruthven and worked for the local phone company. After stints owning a local restaurant, trucking and living in Hawkeye, Iowa, he returned to Ruthven. He and his wife Leah, have three children, Keith, Michael and Hannah, all are graduates of the local school. They have three grandchildren, two who have graduated and one currently attending R-A. Matt Cacek is also a graduate of Ruthven.

"There has been a Cacek in the Ruthven school since I was in kindergarten," he said.



Jeff Cacek doing what he loves to do, digging rocks.

Learning
Today for
Living
Tomorrow

"I think graduating from school shows that you have completed your first major accomplishment. When employers look to hire, they look at the things you did to see if you finished every task. Graduating is reflective of how you are viewed."

Cacek has always supported the school. "The way I see it is there is nothing better than supporting the kids. It doesn't have to be money. I think it's good to keep kids active and involved in something positive which makes it easier to stay away from things that are negative. It helps to open the door for them. If I can help in any way, shape, or form I will because I really enjoy it."

Cacek family Ruthven grads: Jeff, 1977; Keith, 1998; Michael, 2001; Hannah, 2010; Maya, 2017; Tyson Kruse, 2018; Treyton, 2020.

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