



Contact: Lisa Jacobs
Rockford Public Schools
616/863-6322
or
Sue Arend
Rockford Education Foundation
616/863-6317

New Rockford Public Schools Hall of Fame Announces Inaugural Class of Alumni Inductees

ROCKFORD, Mich., August 3, 2010 - The first group of honorees for the Rockford Public Schools Hall of Fame has been selected. The Hall of Fame, sponsored by the Rockford Public Schools (RPS) and Rockford Education Foundation (REF), recognizes those who have demonstrated exceptional achievements in their chosen field or who have made significant contributions to RPS or the Rockford community.

The inaugural class of honorees is as follows:

The Arts

J. Brett Grill; RHS, 1997

Assistant Professor in the Department of Art at the University of Missouri

Brett was selected by the Gerald R. Ford Foundation to produce the bronze, full-body sculpture of the late President Ford. The sculpture will be displayed at the National Statuary Collection in Washington, D.C.

Academic/Career

Scott Baldrige, Ph.D.; RHS, 1988

Professor of Mathematics at Louisiana State University

Scott has been influential in research of theoretical mathematics, setting new national standards for math education, and improving school achievement in math. He has written textbooks and won a NSF CAREER award for introducing techniques and methods to construct exotic new examples of four-dimensional spaces.

Erik S. Douglas, Ph.D.; RHS, 1998

Scientist/Bioengineer

Erik developed a cell phone-microscope system for point-of-care diagnosis in resource-limited settings, research which has earned him grants from Intel, Vodafone, and the Gates Foundation. He has conducted research at Oxford, Johns Hopkins, and Stanford, has been granted fellowships from the NSF and United Nations, and holds three patents.

Linda M. Johnston, Ph.D.; RHS, 1970

Associate Professor, Conflict Management, at Kennesaw State University, Atlanta, GA

Linda has done conflict-resolution work worldwide, including the Ukraine, Republic of Georgia, Barbados, Nigeria, Egypt, and The United States. She is the director of several conflict-management programs, and her research interests include racial and ethnic conflict, narrative and discourse theory and world view theory.

Michael D. Lepech, Ph.D.; RHS, 1997

Assistant Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering at Stanford University

Mike's teaching and research focuses on the creation of new building materials for green infrastructure systems, and he is currently involved in creating a new construction material known as Engineered Cementitious Composite (ECC). He is a senior fellow at Stanford's Center for Sustainable Development and Global Competitiveness.

Service to Rockford Public Schools/Community

Clarence Blakeslee (Deceased); RHS, 1932

Clarence served in some of the most intense battles of WWII and was recognized for his heroism. Upon returning to Rockford, he served the community for the rest of his 95 years as a business leader, city councilman, mayor, county commissioner, and as a continual and energetic volunteer in every aspect of Rockford Community life until his death in 2010.

Neil Blakeslee; RHS, 1966

Neil is a former city councilman and two-term mayor. While on the City Council he was instrumental in the overall redevelopment of downtown Rockford's streetscape and riverfront development projects. He has served in leadership roles in numerous civic organizations, church, and youth activities, including mentoring RHS students.

Honorary Achievement

Carol Baker

Carol is a Rockford community member who has been involved with Rockford Schools since the 1960s. As an employee (26 years), she worked mainly with children with special needs, and most-specifically with blind students; she even learned Braille! She has been the varsity cheerleading advisor and continues to serve in the schools as a volunteer in a variety of capacities.

Linda Blackmore

Linda is the director of Rockford's Odyssey of the Mind program. She has coached numerous teams over the years, beginning with her own child's team. Throughout the years, Linda has enriched the lives of countless students through OM by helping them become out-of-the-box thinkers and by putting kids first.

Dr. Michael Shibler

During Dr. Shibler's tenure as superintendent of schools, all RPS buildings have received North Central Accreditation, and eleven buildings have been named Blue Ribbon Schools. Dr. Shibler is recognized as a leader among superintendents statewide as he continues to lead the fight for equitable school funding throughout the State of Michigan.

The Hall of Fame class will be honored at a special induction ceremony and dinner October 2, and their names will be engraved on a permanent monument that will be installed on the grounds of Rockford High School.

The Hall of Fame dinner will also serve as a fundraiser for the Rockford Education Foundation, which awards grants that enrich the educational experience in Rockford public and private schools. Event chairs are Jon and Carol Muth and Pete and Amy Kruer. Information about the event and tickets will be available at www.rockfordschools.org/ref.

The inductees were selected by an Advisory Council coordinated by RPS Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, Dr. Ryan Kelley.

The Advisory Council members were:

Wally Anderson, retired Rockford High School counselor

Neil Blakeslee, community leader

Dan Gaydou, publisher, The Grand Rapids Press

Carol Hillman, RPS Board of Education Trustee

Dr. Ryan Kelley, RPS Assistant Superintendent for Instruction

Nancy Martin, Rockford Education Foundation Trustee

Jacque Melin, retired RPS principal and Grand Valley State University
Professor

Fred Reusch, Rockford High School Math Teacher

Jim Scales, Rockford Education Foundation Trustee

In addition, Sarah Ginebaugh, former President of the Inter-School Advisory Council served as the Administrator to the council, while Jack Bolt, Rockford Historian, advised the council.

Hall of Fame sponsors include Wolverine World Wide Foundation; United Bank; Patten Monument; Grand Rapids Controls; Smith Haughey Rice & Roegge; Blakeslee, Fry & Scales; Greg Garner, Kate Bolt-Garner & Family; Thom and Sue Arends; Neil and Mary Blakeslee; Ron & Nancy Hager; Dr's Dater & Cadorette DDS; Lake Michigan Credit Union; McDonalds; Owen Ames Kimball; Speese Painting Co. and the Rockford High School Class of 1977.

About Rockford Public Schools

The mission of the Rockford Public School District is to provide the teaching and learning environments which will ensure, with the support of the students, parents and community, that all students, upon graduation, will have the academic and social skills and strategies to be successful life-long learners.

About Rockford Education Foundation

The Rockford Education Foundation (REF) was established in 1991 to provide resources for increased educational opportunities for people of all ages in the Rockford Community. The REF is an independent, non-profit corporation, governed by a volunteer Board of Trustees from the community. Teachers, students, and community members with innovative ideas have received grants for wide-ranging, educational purposes. Grants are awarded twice yearly based on the merit of the request and its ability to promote educational excellence. Since its founding, the REF has awarded over \$830,000 in grants.

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