

Willie Spelts
Director of School to Work Engagement
Fundraising Coordinator
School Board Presentation
October 13, 2025

Summer/Fall of 2025-56

- **\$4,500.00 from Allison Kreibich and \$4,500.00 from State Farm** for their purchase of the varsity baseball scoreboard. \$9000.00 total. This is year 5 of 6. Thank you to Allison and State Farm.
- **Monthly AMFA(Manufacturing)** cohort that I am a member of, met and is planning for the Manufacturing Tours on Oct 22-24. Massive planning needs for this event. Our teachers and students will attend this event. Our students will be attending manufacturing tours in the Duluth/Superior area. We are sending 4 buses of students. Teachers Fyre, Eicholz, one other, and myself will be along as the supervisors.
- **I have become a member of the region's Lead CTE Network** that will meet 7 times(twice in St. Cloud) throughout the year. Thank you to the True North Stars(Shannon Malovrh) Consortium for paying my membership.
- **I will be a part of the Greater Twin Cities United Way Building a Movement group**, as in previous years. This group meets throughout the state to discuss and share and collaborate on Pathway development. This is a great group for collaboration, ideas, and support in the Academy and Pathway model. This is supported by the United Way of Northeastern Minnesota grant. Thank you to the United Way of Northeastern MN, Elizabeth Kelly, for their partnership in applying for another \$10,000 Building a Movement grant. We should find out in December. These grants are used for Career Academy and Pathway development.
- **Just received confirmation of \$7000 from the Komatsu Foundation** for purchases in our CTE department. Huge thank you to Jim Thune at Komatsu for this opportunity. The CTE teachers of Foster, Eicholz, and Fyre will be using these funds.
- **Collaborating with EG Alum, Phill Drobnick, regarding the Pan Continental Curling Championships coming to Curl Mesabi and the ITMEC this fall.** October 19-26. I will let the staff know that they can attend with their classes as they wish. I am also working with Ohill on getting these curlers/county representatives to come and speak to our classrooms, should teachers be interested in them coming to speak. This is still a work in progress, but Phill and I feel this would be a great opportunity.

World curling event set for Iron Range

U.S. Steel to be title sponsor
BY JIM ROMSAS
MESABI TRIBUNE

VIRGINIA—For the first time ever, the Pan Continental Curling Championships will be held in the United States, specifically on the Iron Range.

The prestigious international event with 40 teams from 25 countries will be held at the Iron Trail Motors Event Center in Virginia and at the Range Recreation Civic Center in Eveleth from Oct. 19-26.

"I think the Iron Range is the perfect spot," said Phill Drobnick, Curl Mesabi Foundation president and U.S. National Team director. He will also serve as national coach for the event.

With a \$100,000 sponsorship from U.S. Steel, the



Christy Bartovich, representing U.S. Steel, talks about the company's commitment to the Iron Range and its support of world curling during a press conference Tuesday morning to announce that Virginia will host the Pan Continental Curling Championships October 19-26. U.S. Steel is the major sponsor of the event.

event will be known as the U.S. Steel Pan Continental Curling Championships.

The championships will be "an event that's

going to bring the world to the Iron Range," U.S. Steel Senior Director for

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USA Curling's Phil Drobnick, who coached the 2018 Men's Olympic Team to a gold medal, talks about the upcoming Pan Continental Curling Championships, which will be held in Virginia and Eveleth October 19-26. The championships are for men's and women's teams from World Curling's Americas and Pacific-Asia zones and is used as a qualification event for the World Men's and World Women's championships and will attract players from more than 20 countries.

PHOTOS BY MARK SALER

Email sent to the Teachers:

- Some info from Phill to help in your planning:
 - **Games we would love to have kids at would be**
 - **9:00 am games on:**
 - **Tuesday 10/21**
 - **Wednesday 10/22**
 - **Thursday 10/23**
 - **Friday 10/24**
 - **Arrive around 9am and games finish at noonish.**
 - **I realize that's a long time for younger kids.**
 - **So they could leave at 11, before lunch, and it wouldn't be a problem.**
 - **They could also come from 10-12 as well.**
 - **We will have the A division at the ITMEC and the B division at Curl Mesabi**
 - **The B division is up and coming countries new to curling**
 - **The Olympic and National level teams will be at the ITMEC**

Side note:

I am also looking to get some of these curlers/country representatives to come and visit classrooms to talk about their country and cultures. Please let me know if this would interest you, should this come to fruition.

- **Received our first installment(reimbursement) from the St. Louis County Protective Factors grant in the amount of: \$27,145.08, in July.** These funds reimbursed us for costs in the areas of the work we did on the Job Shadow Week last year, the powwow we hosted, Career Fairs we attend in Duluth and the local area, and Career Exploration Opportunities and all the hours that go into the planning. We now have access to **\$101,354.92** this year for more of these great events and opportunities. **\$30,000.00** of these funds are directed to my salary this year, 2025-26. To date, this grant has reimbursed us for my salary totalling \$23,000 with another \$20,000 allocated,

on top of projects that I do during the remainder of this school year. We are very grateful for this grant!

- **I gave numerous tours of RRHS this summer for class reunions.** Many June and July Saturday mornings for 2-3 hours. What a ton of fun that was! These alumni are amazed at our new facilities and many say, “Can I come back to high school?” 😊 The school did receive a \$250 donation from the VHS class of 1975 as a sign of appreciation. Thank you to Cindy Westin, and their committee, for this donation. Thank you to Traci Addy for the banana bread. 😊
- **Gearing up to get our program, Pathful, integrated into our curriculum at RRHS.** Pathful is an online tool providing career, education, and labor market information, including tools for students to explore careers and track their goals. *Through authentic, industry-informed experiences, Pathful empowers learners to discover career possibilities, build confidence through engaging exploration, and develop essential skills—creating clear pathways to their professional futures.*
 - <https://pathful.com/>
- **Rock Ridge High competes in the Iron Range Rotary 6th Annual Chili Cook-Off**
 - Rock Ridge High School Culinary students competed in the Iron Range Rotary 6th Annual Chili Cook-Off that took place on Thursday, September 18th at the Iron Trail Motors Event Center in Virginia, MN. Businesses, restaurants, and citizens of the Iron Range gathered at the event center to compete for the Best Chili. Students from Ms. Andrie’s Culinary II class teamed up to create their own chili recipe, then they prepared and served their chili at the big event. Ms. Andrie’s class won the event last year, and this year they were short of a victory by just one vote with their Jalapeno Popper White Chicken Chili. Feedback from those who tasted the chili prior to and during the event was very positive! The team would like to thank our teacher, Ms. Andrie, and all those who supported us to make this event possible.
 - Submitted by Sophie Lenich
 - Journalism II and Culinary II
 - Rock Ridge High School Student



- Mrs. Andrie also took students to St. Paul for a Sysco Food event that was a smashing success. A great thank you letter was received from one of the students. Upon permission to share it, we will. It was an incredible letter!
- **The IRRRB has sent a workforce need from a Construction Manager to me.** The IRRR knows of our great programs and connected Terry Pernsteiner with me to see if we can get students/recent graduates on his staff. It sounds like a great opportunity. Really glad to be partnering with the IRRR and to have them sharing our successes with their potential clients. Terry came and spoke to our CTE students on 9/16 about careers and also, his specific opportunities upcoming. Thank you to our teachers Foster, Eicholz, and Fyre for time in their classes.
 - *Conversation with Terry: Willie, Absolutely loved our conversation. I would like to develop the next generation of skilled workers, leaders and successful young men with integrity and feel that you would be a large part of the plan on the Iron Range. Here are the three W's:*
 - **Where:**
 - ***Buhl*** - Demo of the laundromat (now), invest several million in reconstruction of the apartment building adjacent to the laundromat (winter/spring start), constructing 8 units of residential housing on the laundromat site on main street, development of 20 acres into attached wall product working with the city and IRRRB (in two years).
 - ***Gilbert*** - Develop 6 acres of multifamily housing on a site that is currently owned by my investor.
 - ***Duluth*** - Fit out 12 N Lake Ave to first floor retail and the top 3 floors into housing.
 - ***Big Sky Montana*** - Building 3 ski-in ski-out single family homes on the ski hill. With the request by my equity investors to keep building out there.
 - **When:** We have work now for at least 4 guys and will have needs in six months for 15 guys. The IRRRB said that we should be able to get their grants with little bureaucracy.
 - **What:** Construction labor, construction management, room for advancement with no entry level skills expected, just honesty, and hard work ethic.
 - *Also, I could use some help moving visiting teams equipment at Vikings games for a couple of guys if they had an interest.*
- **Volleyball program receives local support from volunteers:**

Joe Sopp

- Welding repairs to the volleyball cart.
- The repair estimate was \$220.
- Joe did it for free.

Bill Hendrickson

- Repaired and replaced the straps on all 3 sets of volleyball post pads.
- New pads are \$600/pair.
- Bill did all the work for free.

Floor to Ceiling store

- Donated enough high traffic carpet to re-cover all 5 boxes.

Thank you cards have been sent to each with a picture of the varsity team, signed by all the girls. **Thank you, Fritz Kvaternik (Organizer)**

- **Strasser donation from Tony Person,**

- **Tony Person**

- **1993 Graduate of Virginia High School**

- [Bio-Techne](#)

- [Vice President, Protein Business Unit](#)

- [Minneapolis, Minnesota, United States · On-site](#)

- Bio-Techne is headquartered in Minneapolis, Minnesota and employs over 3,000 people globally at 34 locations worldwide. As a global developer, manufacturer and supplier of high-quality reagents, analytical instruments and precision diagnostics, Bio-Techne has an extensive catalog of over 500,000 products.

- Incorporated in 1981 as R&D Systems, the company changed its name to Bio-Techne in 2014. Our growth has been accelerated through acquisitions, organic investments, diversification of our customer base and expansion into new markets. In fiscal year 2023, Bio-Techne delivered net sales of over \$1.1 billion.

- Bio-Techne includes the following brands: ACD, Asuragen, ExosomeDx, Lunaphore, Novus Biologicals, ProteinSimple, R&D Systems and Tocris Bioscience.

- <http://www.bio-techne.com/>

- **From Mr. Strasser:**

- Bio-Techne kindly donated an Eppendorf Mastercycler thermal cycler to the science department. Thermal cyclers are used to amplify samples of DNA by quickly, and precisely, changing the temperature of the sample. Heating the sample causes the DNA to unravel, allowing new base pairs to attach to specific regions (genes) and make a copy. The sample is then cooled to allow the DNA to reform. Then it is heated again and the process continues. In about 30 cycles the sample can grow to millions of copies. This allows students to use gel

electrophoresis to visibly see the DNA sample and compare it to others. Tests that require a thermal cycler include paternity testing and DNA fingerprinting in Forensics, analyzing a bitter-tasting gene in AP Biology, and microbial gene sampling in Microbiology. RRHS students are very fortunate to have the opportunities to perform these experiments - many of which would normally first be seen in a college. The RR Science Dept thanks Tony Person and Bio-Techne for supporting the education of RR students.

- **Donation from Dale and Kathryn Cremers to #RockRidgeRising**

- Thank you to Dale and Kathryn for this donation! So kind to simply send a donation of support for the schools.

- **Pohaki Agreement**

- A special thank you to Brandon Seppala at Pohaki for their sponsorship of the Pohaki Construction Lab at North Star Elementary School. This was started last year and we appreciate Pohaki for the donation of \$5000 worth of tools. And, as you will hear in a bit, Pohaki continues to donate! ***This will be an action item on the agenda tonight.***

- **Virginia Community Foundation(VCF)**

- Thank you to the VCF for the two funds they host; Rock Ridge Education Fund (RREF) and Wolverine Fund. These funds provide us with money to spend in the specific areas of education and activities. I manage the spending of the RREF, along with an advisory committee. Josh Lamppa manages the spending of the Wolverine Fund, along with an advisory committee. **We are very grateful to the VCF and all of the donors who give so kindly to these two funds that 100% benefit Rock Ridge Public Schools.** This year, we have been awarded the following amounts:
 - RREF: \$11,867.00
 - Wolverine Fund(MSHSL Activities only): \$13,231.00 Thank you to the Prittinen Family for their beautiful decision to donate funds from Elaine Prittinen(Jim's mom) memorial directly to the Wolverine Fund. I've personally known the Prittinen family for 50 years and what wonderful people they are!

- **Student Success Story**

- Email from the student: Hi Mr.Spelts, it's Isabelle. I passed my CNA exam last year as a junior, with the help of the CNA class taught by Ms. Rantala (an amazing mentor) and started working at Waterview Pines in Virginia this summer. During the school year, I'm working afternoon shifts (2:30 pm to 11pm) and they

are very flexible with their staff. After my senior year, I will be going for my LPN and then continuing my career in nursing!

- **Foster's Class joins Ulland on the Highway Project**

- I was lucky enough to join Mr. Foster's class as they were invited to come and check out the Highway 53 project by a fantastic partner in Ulland, Brooke Donnelly. Huge thanks to Brooke! Well done, Mr. Foster.

- **Foster - Ice Fishing Houses Project**

- Mr. Foster has his Building Construction students doing a great project. They are making six ice houses that will then be put up for sale. The students will be learning about all of the construction skills needed and these are developmental skills that transfer to the many skills needed in all areas of construction. He has received donations from industry partners that make this project possible. We are grateful for this support!

From Greg:

Hello Willie,

Here is the list of donations that I have secured for this project in the last 2 weeks. I am receiving some really good support and traction with this project and the kids are all in!

- Vertex Roofing - Travis Peterson - 10 rolls of coil stock Aluminium -\$1750
- Pernsteiner Builders - Terrey Pernsteiner - Building Materials - \$1500
 - Terry also donated a game used, Minnesota Vikings football to be given to a student in the CTE classes.
- Grayden Outdoors - 30 Catch Covers - \$750
- Pohaki Lumber - Framing Materials - \$780

- **Academy Model collaboration in ACTION**

- I reached out to Jenessa Greenly, Journalism teacher at RRHS. I asked if she would be able to send Journalism students on our field trips so they can do a social media post about the experience. For example, we had the Chili Cook-Off and the Discover Healthcare Event that our students attended. She fully agreed and we were able to apply Journalism learning immediately into action. These students then send their report to Stacie Lamppa who posts it on our social media sites. Yay!

- **Career Exploration Speakers fully scheduled**

- Our 9th grade Career Exploration classes are fully scheduled, even some extra dates added because of the community's interest in getting in front of our students.

- Every Wednesday, professionals from our communities come and speak about their careers, career paths, and all of the jobs involved in their company/place of work. They also offer great career advice!
- We have 14 weeks of presenters scheduled that cover a vast array of professions.
- **A HUGE thank you** to these people for taking and making the time to come in and speak to our students. It is quite a commitment as the day is full with them presenting six times!

- **Discover Healthcare Event**

- Thursday, September 29, 2025
- Yanmar Arena in Grand Rapids
- Rock Ridge brought 40 students
- Teachers Mary Rantala and Tim Strasser brought interested students from their healthcare and science to this annual event. This is a HUGE event that introduces and emphasizes careers and opportunities in Healthcare. We appreciate True NorthStars Perkins Consortium, Shannon Malovrh, for this great opportunity.

- **Golden Bear Foundation**

- Grants were sought and received from teachers during the month of September. We appreciate this great opportunity provided by the Golden Bear Foundation. Awarded grants will be announced soon. Over \$9000 in grants will be awarded during this Fall Golden Bear Foundation grant cycle. Woohoo, thank you to the GBF!!!

- **Grant Submission**

- We have submitted a grant with Lake Country Power for funds to support the Deep Winter Greenhouse project. Keith Peterson and I worked on the grant and are hoping for funds to support this great project.

- **In collaboration with Dawn Savelle, Student Council Advisor,** I took our RRHS Student Council members to this Leadership Conference on 10/9/2025.



- **So much more but I have probably been up here long enough.** 😊