



# River Rock Gator

Sep/Oct/Nov/Dec 2019

Volume 15 Issue 1

*A newsletter for the students, families and friends of River Rock*

## New Directors Named

Jennifer Long and Robert Flowers were promoted to Campus Directors at the start of the school year. Both Long and Flowers are having positive transitions into their new leadership roles.



Serving as a Counselor and Clinical Leader at the Carlisle Campus beginning in 2009, Long has been a part of the River Rock Academy team since 2007. Upon the recent retirement of Steve Cutia, who served the Carlisle Campus with excellence since the program began, Long's leadership skills and dedication led to her appointment as the new Carlisle Campus Director.

A strong commitment to teamwork and a supportive environment have long been some of the keys to success at the Carlisle Campus. Long seeks to continue developing a strong level of respect between staff and student. She envisions a future of trying new things, enhancing program experiences and helping everyone become more confident and successful in their goals.

Long feels grateful for the seasoned staff as well as newer staff who work hard to support each other every day. "Our team has goals to improve our daily functioning as a program and help our students in new and inventive ways. We strive to maintain River Rock Academy's values daily and provide a respectful and encouraging learning environment for our students."

Rob Flowers was promoted to the position of Campus Director at the Amity Campus this school year. Flowers has been with River Rock Academy since 2013 serving as a Social Skills/Life Skills Teacher, School Counselor and Team Leader throughout his tenure. His initiative and commitment to a positive campus culture is a great asset to the Amity Campus.

Before students arrived in August, Flowers worked closely with the Amity Campus staff to set specific goals for the program. Together they strive to focus on the growth of each and every individual making sure the students they serve develop the skills needed for success. Flowers explains, "This provides us with the foundation of a positive culture that is focused on positive peer interactions and people first."

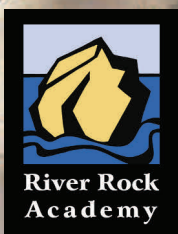
Continued professional development and a team approach among staff continues to strengthen the program. Flowers feels that when the Amity Campus team focuses on meeting the mental, physical and emotional needs of students, strong relationships develop which lead to growth and success.

## The Importance of First Aid Training

Knowledge of first aid training became imperative in December when Teacher Nick Hall, pictured right, of the Shiremanstown Campus began choking on his lunch. Thankfully, Behavior Manager Rusty Barrick, pictured left, stepped in and performed the Heimlich maneuver on him which resolved the issue. Hall is a actually a Certified CPR and First Aid Instructor and during



*Continued on Page 2*



**Change  
Effect  
Improve**

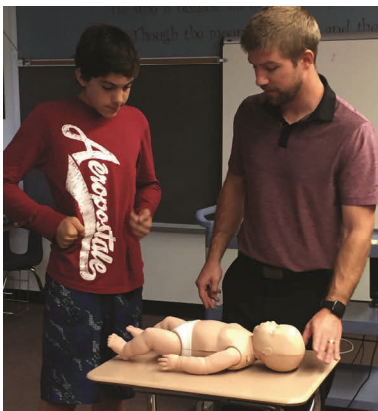


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his own emergency was able to show Barrick the correct location to apply the pressure to dislodge the obstruction.

This past summer, Day Treatment Team Leader/Case Manager Lawrence Williams also put first aid skills he learned to use. While on vacation in South Carolina, people started asking for help for a small girl on the beach who was not breathing. Lawrence performed rescue breaths and finger chest compressions until she began breathing again and was assisted by beach patrol. When asked about this incident, Lawrence humbly said, "I personally do not feel like I did anything special, just something that we've been trained to do when needed."

That ability to help people be prepared, trained and ready to react for emergency situations is very important. Last year River Rock Academy began a CPR and First Aid Training Program for students. Each River Rock Campus now has a Certified Staff Trainer who works with students to train and certify them on these valuable life-saving skills. Fifty one students have completed the program this school year and many more will be instructed and certified in the months to come.



During training, Nick Hall instructed a Shiremanstown Campus student how to perform infant CPR.

## Sinking Spring Hosts Career Fair

The Sinking Spring Campus organized an employment and career fair at their campus. Educating students how to apply for a job as well as learning about opportunities available after earning a high school diploma was the purpose of the event. Career Link, Reading Area Community College, Gage Personnel, Berks Technical Institute and Universal Technical Institute were a few of the organizations who participated in the fair.

Students worked on their resumes, interview skills and participated in stations where they applied for jobs online. Campus Director Rick Perez was pleased with the event and felt positive about the students' reactions. "I was very encouraged to see the students be empowered and have interactions with so many people," shared Perez. Numerous students secured part-time jobs as a result of the fair and others are planning visits to schools to learn more about careers, job training and college.



Joey Negron of Cool Speak facilitated team building activities at the Amity Campus to help students with their communication and leadership skills. He later visited the Sinking Spring Campus where he conducted a community service project that involved students preparing bundles of blankets and food for the homeless population in Reading.



T.J. Griffin, founder of a program called V.I.S.I.O.N, Values Inspiring Students In Overcoming Negativity, visited Day Treatment. Griffin shared his story of overcoming life on the streets and discussed negative influences of some rap music that degrades women.



Former Bloomsburg University Tennis Coach Marty Coyne visited the Lancaster Campus to share the story of a torch carried in the 2016 Olympics in Brazil that was gifted to the University. Students had the opportunity to hold and have their photo taken with the torch.





# Our Elementary Programs

## Pebbles, Cobblestones & Boulders

### Amity Campus



- In honor of Police Officer Recognition Day, students prepared care packages for officers who visited their classrooms and learned more about how they serve the community.
- Pebbles students worked to create a gingerbread house as part of Winter Festival week.
- Students learned about farm animals and participated in fun activities during a field trip to the Oley Fair.



### Newville Campus



- Students made thank you cards for veterans and delivered them to a local nursing home.
- Guest speaker Mr. Elliott shared stories with students about his experiences in the military and the importance of Veterans Day.
- As part of their Native American Indian unit, Cobblestones students visited Fort Hunter in Harrisburg and learned about the process of an archeological dig.

### Red Lion Campus



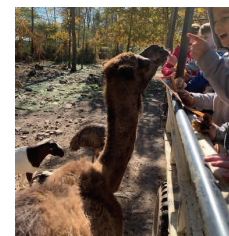
- Former professional ice hockey player Todd Fedoruk shared his experiences with students and provided autographed photographs, even bringing one signed in braille to a visually impaired student.
- Cobblestones classroom students made anti-bullying friendship bracelets to share with others as part of Unity Day.
- Students from the Pebbles classroom learned about fall fruits and vegetables and experienced a variety of harvest activities at Flinchbaugh Orchards.

### Shiremanstown Campus



- Cobblestones students learned how to act, design a set and read with expression when they presented *Aladdin and the Magic Pickle* to Boulders and Pebbles students.
- Students enjoyed a trip to a farm in Carlisle where they had the chance to walk through the beautiful fields and learn about sunflowers.
- During a field trip to experience the Battle of Gettysburg, Boulders and Cobblestones students learned about Pickett's Charge and had the opportunity to hike the battle path.

### Spring Grove Campus



- Students learned about various animals and creatures of the night during an interactive trip to the Catoctin Wildlife Preserve in Maryland.
- A group of students worked together on a stand up block as part of a team building activity.
- During a trip to Cherry Crest Adventure Farms, students explored the learned about agriculture and experienced the challenge of a corn maze.



## Serving the Community



Spring Grove Campus students made 200 peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for York Giving Helping Hands who distributes food to those in need.



Students from the Shiremanstown Campus served meals and prepared boxes of food at the Bethesda Mission in Harrisburg.



Sinking Spring Campus students packaged boxes of food for distribution at the Helping Harvest Food Bank.

## River Rock Students of the Month

The following are the Students of the Month for September, October, November and December. Students are selected based on their behavior, grades, attendance and positive attitude. Congratulations to all of the Students of the Month!

### Amity Campus

- September
  - Peter Ragonese
- October
  - Alexander Foose
- November
  - Angelina Rodriguez
- December
  - Angelina Rodriguez

### Carlisle Campus

- September
  - Ethan Hunt
  - Timothy Treaster
- October
  - Matthew Gardner
- November
  - William Trimble
- December
  - Konnor Little

### Day Treatment Campus

- September
  - William Arias
  - William Rodriguez-Nazario
- October
  - William Rodriguez-Nazario
- November
  - Andrea Castillo
  - Ajinae Sease
- December
  - Ricardo Medina
  - Ajinae Sease

### Lancaster Campus

- September
  - Patrick Richardson
- October
  - Dylan Ashley
- November
  - Tyler Mease
- December
  - Tyler Mease

### Newville Campus

- September
  - Joshua Bastidas Maldonado
- October
  - Cody Paige

- November
  - Trey Jones
- December
  - Christian Trayer

### Red Lion Campus

- September
  - Sylvia Shawkey
- October
  - Seth Livingston
- November
  - Logan Colon
- December
  - Aijaleak Gray

### Shiremanstown Campus

- September
  - Skye Barnes
  - Damian Shindel
- October
  - Skye Barnes
  - Dakota Weitkamp
- November
  - Aronn Calabrese
- December
  - Genesis Towles

### Sinking Spring Campus

- September
  - Christopher Lutz
- October
  - James Finken
- November
  - KeSean Williams
- December
  - Marc Dawkins

### Spring Grove Campus

- September
  - Brandon Weiman
- October
  - Kast French
- November
  - Symezz Simmons
- December
  - Brian Wolf



## River Rock Perfect Attendance

The students listed below had perfect attendance for September, October, November and December. They were rewarded with a River Rock snack gift card.

Students who had perfect monthly attendance and spent no time in the resource room were entered into a

contest. One student from each campus was selected at random. Winners received a gift card. Contest winners have a \* next to their name.

Congratulations to all the students!

### Amity Campus

#### September

Lanz, Kaiden; Patterson, Damian; Ragonese, Peter\*; Roman, Juan; Williams Jr., Michael

#### October

Foose, Alexander\*; Grimes, Jayden; Lanz, Kaiden; Patterson, Damian; Venberg, Dylan; Williams, Robert; Williams Jr., Michael

#### November

Devlin, Westley; Foose, Alexander; Grimes, Jayden; Hix, Cheyanne; Leone, Nathaniel; MacNeill, Lucas; Patterson, Damian; Ragonese, Peter; Venberg, Dylan\*; Williams Jr., Michael

#### December

Devlin, Westley; Foose, Alexander; MacNeill, Lucas\*; Mroz, Avery; Powers, Michael; Venberg, Dylan

### Carlisle Campus

#### September

Spraglin, Maxwell; Thomas, Jahaire; Trestler, Timothy\*

#### October

Gadsden, Anyah; Hernandez Velez, Alex\*

#### November

Boshnakov, Phillip; Eyer, Christian; Rodriguez, Sean; Thomas, Jahaire; Trimble, William\*; Zaroe, Thomas

#### December

Boshnakov, Phillip; Eyer, Christian\*; Hills, Tyrail; Mickle, Blake; Rushing, Maggie; Trimble, William; Zaroe, Thomas

### Carlisle Thunder Program

#### September

Smith, Kendrique\*

#### October

Hernandez Velez, Yediel

#### November

Smith, Kendrique

#### December

Gonzalez, Andrew\*; Smith, Kendrique

### Day Treatment Campus

#### November

Lifred, Jamere

#### December

Rodriguez-Nazario, William; Sease, Ajinae

### Lancaster Campus

#### September

Diallo, Djiby; Glick, Jackson; Mays, Clayton; Santiago, Jaidden; Saunders, TI

#### October

Chapman, Titus; Diallo, Djiby; Glick, Jackson\*; Keller, Caleb; Santiago, Jaidden

#### November

Diallo, Djiby; Glick, Jackson; Richardson, Patrick; Saunders, TI; Stoltzfus, Ryder

#### December

Carpenter, Malachi; Greenwald, Hunter; Harnish, Levi; Harris, Michael; Jones, Ella; Kramer, Autumn; Laverty, Isaac; McCleary, Angel; Paige, Cody; Ranson, Daireon-Synsire; Stine, Blake; Walck, Isaiah

### Newville Campus

#### September

Girardi, Jacob; Greenwald, Hunter; Harris, Michael; Kramer, Autumn; Richards, Samuel\*; Walck, Isaiah

#### October

Girardi, Jacob; Greenwald, Hunter; Magwire, Caleb; McCleary, Angel\*; Osoria, Jaden; Walck, Isaiah

#### November

Carpenter, Malachi; Cunningham, Cyrus; Girardi, Jacob; Greenwald, Hunter; Harris, Michael; Jones, Ella; Osoria, Jaden; Paige, Cody\*; Preston, A'Nyilia; Richards, Samuel; Walck, Isaiah

#### December

Carpenter, Malachi; Greenwald, Hunter; Harnish, Levi; Harris, Michael; Jones, Ella\*; Kramer, Autumn; Laverty, Isaac; McCleary, Angel; Paige, Cody; Ranson, Daireon-Synsire; Stine, Blake; Walck, Isaiah

### Red Lion Campus

#### September

Anderson, Camryn; Bedford, Daameon; Hunter, Michael\*; Mills, Skyler; Thomas, Emma; Yessler, Braxton

#### October

Anderson, Camryn; Bedford, Daameon; Berry, Nikolaus; Hunter, Michael; Mills, Skyler; Wueschinski, Zade; Yessler, Braxton

#### November

Anderson, Camryn; Bedford, Daameon; Colon, Logan; Hunter, Michael; Jamboretz, Ariel; Jones, Norman; Livingston, Seth\*; Stough, Brooklyn; Thomas, Emma; Warfel, Andrew

#### December

Anderson, Camryn; Banks, Kelis; Epright, Kandice; Froehlich, Kyle\*; Hoffmaster, Zachary; Hunter, Michael; Jones, Norman; McMillan, Evan; Pakacki, Sean; Simmons, Jaih'me; Stough, Brooklyn; Thomas, Emma; Warfel, Andrew; Whiteford, Michael; Yessler, Braxton

### Shiremanstown Campus

#### September

Davis, Lucas; Hamid, Ghazi; Martin III, Franklin; Neill, Parker\*; Polk Jr., Odren; Shindel, Damian; Weitkamp, Dakota

#### October

Hamid, Ghazi\*; Neill, Parker

#### November

Feliberty, Angelo; Hamid, Ghazi; Neill, Parker; Polk Jr., Odren\*

#### December

Butler, Jaimer; Davis, Lucas; Evans, Dominic; Hamid, Ghazi; Neill, Parker; Pineda, Derrick\*; Shindel, Damian; Towles, Genesis; Weitkamp, Dakota

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## Guest Speaker Encourages Students

### Sinking Spring Campus

#### September

Hernandez- Gonzalez, Guadalupe; Johnson, Zamire; Lutz, Christopher\*; Mengel, Benjamin; Mercado, Jazavier

#### October

Finken, James; Johnson, Zamire; Mengel, Benjamin; Williams, KeSean\*

#### November

Fiers, Jerome; Getz, David; Johnson, Zamire; Mengel, Benjamin\*; Mercado, Jazavier; Sanelli, Logan; Williams, KeSean

#### December

Breidenstein, Xavier; Cowsette, Jonathan; Dawkins, Marc; Furman, Jackson; Keys, Olivia; Mengel, Benjamin; Oviedo, Laura\*; Wanner, Talon; Williams, KeSean; Williams, Dioviyon

### Spring Grove Campus

#### September

Copenhagen, Logan\*; Eckert, Jeremiah; Elliott, Joshua; Myers, Zachary; Varner, Cameron; Wychryst, Sebastian

#### October

Arndt II, Erich; Billet, Hunter; Boehme, Ian; Brannon, Shane; Davison, Francis; Elliott, Joshua\*; Lowe, Icic; Myers III, Charles; Ramos-Dewitt, Kavaun; Startt, Christopher

#### November

Arndt II, Erich; Billet, Hunter; Eckert, Jeremiah; Elliott, Joshua; Godinez Jr, Jack; Naylor, Sebastian; Todosijevic, Adam; Townsend, Mia\*

#### December

Conrad, Alexis; Elliott, Joshua; French, Kast; Johnson, William; Santiago, Jonathan; Simmons, Symez; Townsend, Mia; Waltman, Tyler\*

Steve Mason recently visited multiple River Rock Campus locations to bring awareness to the topic of suicide prevention and share valuable lessons he learned from his circumstances. Now a healthy and successful actor, stuntman and producer, Mason strives to start open conversations with the goal of helping others deal with their struggles in a healthy way.

As a child, Mason lived in troubled home environment. He found his father, who died by suicide, at the age of eight which had a lasting impact on his life. For many years, Mason bottled up his feelings and lived a life of negative choices and substance abuse that eventually lead to his near death by overdose.

In time, Mason learned that not dealing with his unresolved past lead to his unhealthy lifestyle. By being honest and vulnerable, he hopes to help people communicate better and learn to process their emotions instead of burying them. "Not talking about substance abuse, suicide and mental health problems are not going to make these things go away," shared Mason. "Don't be an island of one. Talk to people and when you struggle with anger or depression, don't let your emotions make your decisions for you."

Mason shared the importance of growing stronger from past struggles and mistakes. He illustrated his point by sharing the story of how a butterfly develops its wings by breaking through its cocoon. Without the struggle that makes the wings strong, the butterfly would never fly. With that lesson, Mason encouraged students to learn from their past circumstances, take advantage of second chances and start thinking about what they want in life. "You don't have to know what all the answers are, but you do need to recognize what the answers are not. Recognizing the ability to learn from mistakes is what is important."



The River Rock Gator is written, compiled, edited and designed by Wendy Capoferri and Barbara Rodgers in the interest of RRA students, parents and Adams, Berks, Cumberland, Dauphin, Franklin, Lancaster Perry and York County School Districts.

RRA Administrators  
Steve Capoferri – CEO  
Patti Shatto-Young – COO  
Bob Howard – COO



### Weather Watch

During poor weather conditions, please watch for the River Rock Academy announcement for the appropriate campus on the television station WGAL Channel 8 or check their website at [www.wgal.com](http://www.wgal.com).

**Note to parents/guardians:** An automated call system to directly inform of campus delays/closings will be used.



## Honor Roll

The following is a list of students who achieved the Honor Roll for the first marking period. To be named to the Honor Roll, all A's and B's must be earned. Those who received all A's were named to the Distinguished Honor Roll. Congratulations to all of the students for their hard work and success.

### Amity Campus

Joanna Delphin  
Jayden Grimes  
Alexander Foose  
Jayden Potts

### Carlisle Campus

Timothy Treaster  
Matthew Gardner  
Cobane Curry

### Lancaster Campus

Jackson Glick  
Adonijah Mason

### Newville Campus

Malachi Carpenter  
Travis Coover  
Reneer Isaac  
Trey Jones  
Cody Paige  
Samuel Richards  
Blayden Rosario

### Red Lion Campus

Kelis Banks  
Robert Feiser\*

Kyle Froehlich  
Seth Livingston  
Skyler Mills

### Shiremanstown Campus

Skye Barnes  
Hans Diorio  
Angelo Feliberty  
Benjamin George  
Ghazi Hamid  
Parker Neil  
Damian Shindel  
Zane Snow  
Genesis Towles

### Sinking Spring Campus

Amiah Evans  
Olivia Keys  
Jamil Baez

### Spring Grove Campus

Jack Godinez, Jr.  
Joshua Elliott  
Kavaun Ramos-Dewitt\*

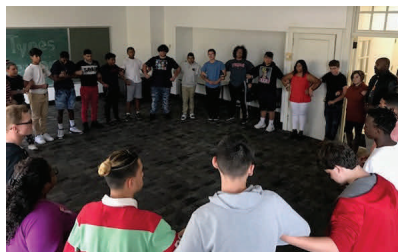
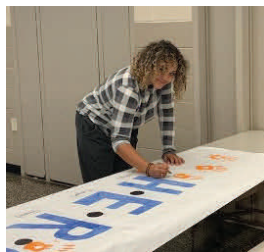
\*Denotes Distinguished Honor Roll



Nick Brady was recently honored by York College of Pennsylvania. Brady, a Team Leader and Behavior Manager at River Rock Academy's Spring Grove Campus, was selected as one of "The Year of 50 Spartans." This award recognized alumni who have demonstrated dedication, excellence and professional achievement. Brady earned his Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice while at York College and was a standout member of their men's basketball team. He then served as the assistant basketball coach from 2011-2016 and remains an active alumni of the college. Congratulations to Nick Brady on this achievement.

## Unity Day

Every school year, all campus locations spend valuable time on the education of bullying prevention and the acceptance of others. During participation in National Unity Day, students had the opportunity to be creative, commit to tolerance of their classmates and recognize the unique talents of their fellow peers. Participating in team building activities, creating anti-bullying artwork and designing t-shirts were a few ways Unity Day was recognized at River Rock Academy.



Day Treatment students painted benches as part of River Rock's vocational education experience.



Biff Healy of the Cumberland Valley Chapter of Trout Unlimited introduced students to the Trout in the Classroom project they will be a part of throughout the school year.



## River Rock Academy Administration

2124 Ambassador Circle  
Lancaster, PA 17603

Sep/Oct/Nov/Dec 2019

Three basic behavioral norms that are the foundation of River Rock Academy are:

- No student has the right to hurt, intimidate, or ridicule another student.
- Education and the classroom are sacred.
- Our school is sacred and we will always protect its property and belongings.

## Life of Opportunities

Why would someone travel 2073 miles to share his story and inspire students at River Rock Academy? Because Judge Andrew Valdez, the first Hispanic Juvenile Court Judge in Utah, believes that life is about opportunities and he wants each and every student he encounters to value second chances and the doors that education can open.

Over a three day period in the fall, Judge Valdez traveled to River Rock Campuses in Berks, Cumberland, Lancaster and York County where he explained to students how his world was impacted by the kindness of a stranger when he was a child. Before he arrived, many students had the opportunity to read his book, *No One Makes It Alone*, the true story of Valdez's life and unexpected experiences.

Growing up in poverty surrounded by gangs, Valdez's life took a positive turn when he met a man named Jack Keller. He showed streetwise Valdez that there are better ways than gang life to face adversity and take responsibility. Keller introduced Valdez to the game of tennis and stressed the importance of his education as well as the values of honesty, respect and hard work. "For me, tennis opened up doors and made me realize problems can't be solved with violence. It can be art, music or whatever you want. If you want your world to get bigger you need to value education," said Valdez.

The acts of kindness extended to Valdez came full circle when four decades later he came upon Keller in a convenience store, alone in life and suffering from Alzheimer's disease. Keller was taken in by Valdez who made sure his childhood mentor was cared for during the remaining years of his life.

Valdez told students he recognized that they have made mistakes but encouraged them to take advantage of the opportunities they have now. He shared, "By being in this program you have people who are your Jack Keller's in life. They care about you and you matter. Open your heart and mind and ask yourself if you want things in your life to get better or worse. Don't miss this opportunity."

