

YOUR SCHOOLS

2008

Aurora City School District

NEWSWEEK ratings place AHS among nation's best public high schools

Aurora Superintendent Russ Bennett was pleased enough when he received a call from editor Jay Matthews at *Newsweek*, telling him that Aurora High School had been ranked among *Newsweek* magazine's 'Top 1300 high schools,' but he was even more thrilled to learn that the district's ranking improved by more than 100 places over last year's ranking.

"It's truly a validation of the exemplary work of our school staff and of the continued support of the Aurora Community," said Bennett. "It takes the combined effort of both to earn a reputation as one of the best school districts in the country."

Each year, *Newsweek* researchers rank the nation's public schools based on a formula created by *Newsweek* editor and *Washington Post* reporter Jay Mathews. The ratio includes the number of Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate and/or Cambridge tests taken by all students in the school, divided by the number of graduating seniors. The schools that make it to the 'Top 1300' have an index of at least 1,000, representing the top five percent of schools in the nation.

"It's an extraordinary accomplishment to be placed so high among the top schools," said School Board President Jerry Kohanski. "Consistently, our students and our athletes put Aurora in the news, but it's truly remarkable to see Aurora achieve national recognition on such a prestigious list."

Aurora moved to #529 on *Newsweek's* Top 1300 schools list this year, an improvement of 137 spots over last year's ranking of 666.

Newsweek reports that this year, only five percent of the approximately 27,000 U.S. public high schools reached their standard and qualified for listing as one of America's best.



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District-wide 'Crocs' project aids children in Ethiopia

Throughout the school year, Aurora students have participated in numerous service projects, benefiting such groups as the American Heart Association and the American Cancer Society and collecting food, clothing, and other items to benefit those in need. One project, which became a district-wide effort this spring, stands out as one of the most heartwarming.

When Aurora students learned that children in Ethiopia walk barefoot for miles on rugged terrain to get to school, they launched the 'Croc's Project,' setting up collection bins for donations of 'Crocs,' the sturdy, rubber shoes that have gained popularity in the United States.

Colorful collection boxes were placed at the entrances of every school in the district, and by the end of the school year, more than 200 new and used pairs of Crocs were ready for delivery to Ethiopia.

"The students exceeded our expectations," said parent volunteer Elizabeth Taylor, who spearheaded the program

with Craddock teacher Karen Cantelmi. "It was so heartwarming to see so many children thinking about the needs of others before their own."

Taylor, as a representative of the President's African Education Initiative Textbook Program, has helped to write English as a second language books for Ethiopian children in several grade levels. She was instrumental in the collection effort, which included scrubbing the slightly used crocs to prepare them for shipping to Africa through the Ministry of Education and U.S.Aid.

"The Crocs will be passed out to the poorest of schools in Ethiopia," said Taylor, who was impressed with the cultural research the children did as part of their service project. "They really took the project to heart by researching the region and identifying the needs of the children there. I actually learned a lot from them."

The shoes were shipped to Ethiopia in June, with promises by the program director and team to send photos of



the Ethiopian children wearing the shoes donated by the children of Aurora.

"So often, we don't get to see where our donations go," said Taylor. "It will be a thrill for our kids to see children in Africa wearing their Crocs and benefiting from the good will of Aurora's students."

Ohio Grad Tests keep Aurora at top of Portage County schools

Once again, results of the Ohio Graduation Tests mandated by the Ohio Department of Education place Aurora above all other school districts in Portage County, with 90.4 students scoring at proficient or above, compared with the second place school that had a score of 76.2 percent.

Social studies scores showed improvement over last year in Aurora, and students who scored as proficient or above in

reading (98%), math (96%), writing (97%) and social studies (95.2%).

The ODE requires that all tenth graders take the test in the spring. Students must pass all five parts—reading, math, writing, science, and social studies, before they can graduate from high school.



YOUR SCHOOLS

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Your Schools is a publication of the Aurora City School District. Its purpose is to keep residents of Aurora informed of current events and progress in the Aurora City Schools and to foster pride and a continuous communication link between the schools and the community.

Your Schools has been awarded the "Mark of Excellence" and "Best of the Best" Awards by the Ohio Chapter of the National School Public Relations Association for service as a school district newsletter. *Your Schools* is a quarterly publication, mailed to all residents of Aurora. For information, comments, or story ideas, e-mail Editor, Roseann Canfora at: yourschools@aurora-schools.org.

AHS art students earn state honors, scholarships

There is likely no greater tribute to retiring art teacher John Smolko than to see his art students at Aurora High School win numerous awards and garner thousands of dollars in scholarships to some of the most prestigious colleges and art schools in the country.

That is precisely what AHS art students accomplished this year under Smolko's direction, and their success is indicative of the legacy of this outstanding teacher.

Six AHS students had nine works of art selected for the Ohio Governor's Youth Art Exhibition this spring. The works of Danielle Dobies, Emma Kropp, Monica Cronin, Sara Mirrolli, Jessica Buse, and Annelie Frantzen will be on display in the Ohio Governor's Office, the Ohio Department of Education, and the Rhodes State Office Tower in Columbus. The artists were honored in a special awards ceremony in the Capitol Theatre in April for having their artwork selected from more than 12,000 works submitted to the competition this year.

AHS sophomore Kathryn Becker was named the overall winner of U.S. Rep. Steven LaTourette's Congressional High School Art Contest. Becker was awarded a \$5,000 scholarship for her award-winning colored pencil drawing that will hang in a corridor of the U.S. capital for one year.

In the 30th annual Portage County Art Show in May, AHS students placed in each of the categories they entered and returned with honors in six of the 19 categories. AHS students won the first three places in both the competitive Ink Drawing category and the challenging Colored Pencil categories, with Ariana Linden-felser earning first and second place for her ink work and Katy Filarski placing first for her pencil drawing, respectively. Filarski was identified as the "Best in Show" winner for

the colored pencil drawing she created for her AP Art Portfolio.

Ten AHS art students were awarded more than \$600,000 in art scholarships to attend some of the most outstanding art schools and universities in the nation.

Future AHS Artists...

The walls of Craddock School were adorned with the artwork of students this spring. Parent volunteers matting and labeling the artwork of Aurora's first and second grade students, and every student was represented in a colorful display that turned a school hallway into the "Craddock Art Gallery."



Class of 2008's 'Top Eleven' leave AHS for nation's top schools



Alyssa Ogonek



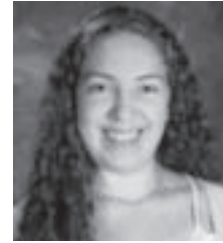
Deana Wolford



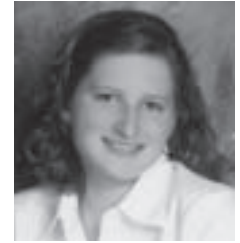
Sara Mirolli



Tabitha Lee



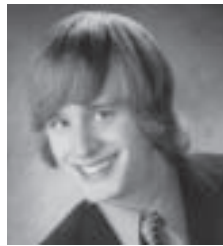
Sarah Onyshko



Julie Kirk



Aubrey Boswell



Adam Swanson



Christopher Denzinger



Dan Corey



Brendon Roberto

Valedictorian **Alyssa Ogonek** will attend Northwestern University to major in engineering. She earned the Voice of Democracy scholarship and participated in NHS, cross country, track, marching band, and Girls on the Run at AHS.

Salutatorian **Deana Wolford** will enter the freshman class at the University of the South where she will major in environmental science. She was a member of the marching and symphonic bands at AHS, and participated in track, cross country, NHS, orchestra, French Club, and Environmentally Concerned Students.

Sara Mirolli will major in architecture at the University of Notre Dame this fall. While at AHS, she was a member of the Highlights dance team, show choir, NHS, and Quiz Bowl team.

Tabitha Lee will attend Ohio Northern University to pursue a career in pharmacy. She has been active with Key Club, Student Council, NHS, Leadership Team, Diversity Club, French Club, Chess Club, and Quiz Bowl.

Sarah Onyshko will major in English and pre-law at the University of North Carolina. At AHS, she earned a Home Savings scholarship and the Smith Book Award, and participated in Key Club, Diversity Club, basketball, NHS, French Club, and choir.

Julie Kirk will enter the University of Notre Dame as a political science and international relations major. A recipient of the Portage County Franklin B. Walter All Scholastic Award, she was

student council vice president, leadership team representative, and a member of the Key Club, French Club, NHS, and the marching and concert bands.

Aubrey Boswell plans to attend the U.S. Military Academy to major in biology and pre-medicine this fall. Her activities while at AHS included diving, softball, Leadership Team, IB, student council, NHS, Key Club, Quiz Bowl, wrestling, Spanish Club, and Philharmonic Orchestra.

Adam Swanson is a National Merit Finalist who will attend Grove City College on their Presidential Scholarship to major in engineering. He was a member of the AHS marching band, Key Club, Spanish Club, NHS, and Leadership Team.

Christopher Denzinger will major in mechanical engineering at the University of Dayton. While at AHS, he ran cross country and track and was a member of the Leadership Team, NHS, jazz band, Spanish Club, and Principal's Leadership Council.

Dan Corey, a winner of the AP Scholar Award, will attend the University of Notre Dame to major in physics and math. He was a member of NHS and Debate Club, Students Taking an Active Role and he was a math and science tutor.

Brendon Roberto will attend Carnegie Mellon University on a scholarship to major in computer science. He was a member of the AHS marching and jazz bands, show choirs, Key Club, and tennis team.

'To understand the heart and mind of a person, look at not what he already has achieved, but at what he aspires to.'

*Kahlil Gibran
Class Motto*

Class of 2008 faces future with hope, optimism

Anyone present at the 2008 AHS Commencement ceremony could not help but leave Parkside Auditorium feeling optimistic about the future, considering the inspiring messages this year's graduates delivered to those in attendance.

Valedictorian Alyssa Ogonek led her class not only in academic standing, but in the Class of '08's stated mission to recognize the responsibility they have to shape a better future for themselves and their children.

"The future is like clay," said Ogonek. "We can mold our future simply by our ideas, but we can mold the future for others by our actions."

The valedictorian, one of 222 graduates this year, talked of the importance of

compassion and encouraged her classmates to utilize the knowledge they have gained and to remain aware of issues and the potential each of them have to make a difference in the world.

"Pass on your torch and make a difference," she said. "Don't settle for mediocrity; instead, be bold and fight for change, not only for yourself, but for those around you."

Of the 222 graduates, several were recognized for honors and for qualifying for IB diplomas, and numerous students wore the prestigious tassels of the National Honor Society. The top 11 students were also recognized for their outstanding academic achievement that put them at the top of their class.



Who's Who and What's New

The AHS track team won its third straight Chagrin Valley Conference championship, with six first-place finishes, four of which were captured by **DEE BRIZZOLARA**, who finished first in all four of his events and **ANDREW KREIGER** was first in two events. The relay team of **BRIZZOLARA, KREIGER, STEVE SNYDER**, and **ERIC SHEPARD** also took first, as did the relay team of **ZACH FLOWERS, JOSH OHMAN, FREDERICK FRANTZEN**, and **BRIZZOLARA** to secure first place in the CVC for Aurora.

Athletes named as **MVP'S** for their respective sports this spring were: **ROB LAJEUNESSE** (baseball); **HANNAH YOE** and **MARY BETH PAVLICK** (softball); **RAMILL FRIZZELL** (boys tennis); **DEE BRIZZOLARA** (boys track); and **BROOKE HRADISKY** (girls track).

After more than 15 college football teams vied for AHS senior **ADAM BELLAMY** to join their programs, the talented defensive tackle will join the Ohio State Buckeyes this fall. The 6-foot-4, 275-pound lineman played defensive and offensive tackle for the Greenmen and received impressive scholarship offers from not only OSU, but from Michigan, Michigan State, Indiana, Northwestern, Pittsburgh, and Boston College.

The "Top Senior" award, presented by the All-Sports Boosters at their annual gathering in May, went to **CHRIS DENZINGER**, who ran cross-country and track during his high school years.

Harmon Middle School eighth grader **KATIE CLARK** won first place and brought home the "Best of Round" award from the 2008 Power of the Pen regional tournament.

BRIAN FORCE, former basketball coach at Berkshire High School, will replace **DAVE MUNSON** as the AHS boys head

basketball coach this fall. He has already begun meeting with the team for off-season training.

Harmon Assistant Principal **MARK ABRAMOVICH** has been named Principal of Harmon School, replacing Will Laine who has moved with his family to North Carolina. Abramovich's former position will be filled by interim Assistant Principal at AHS, Paul Goodwin.

Craddock students **SYDNEY POLK, HANNAH DUNCAN**, and **CADE HUFFMAN** earned recognition for their writing in the Gardens of Western Reserve Grandparent Essay Contest.

Miller School student **RYAN KACMAR** flew "solo" at the Destination Imagination competition this spring, becoming the only student on Aurora's youngest team to compete in a special event.

A **new telephone system** installed by the end of summer will bring the communications system of the Aurora City Schools into the 21st century. A bond issue passed by Aurora citizens in the spring made it possible to replace an obsolete phone system for which it had become increasingly difficult to find replacement parts. The new phone system will improve staff links with safety forces and with parents.

Donations from the **Aurora All-Sports Boosters** will be used to upgrade athletic fields at Veterans Stadium this summer, including the installation of artificial turf for the safety of Aurora's athletes. Improvements in the field will benefit all AHS and Harmon football and soccer teams, the AHS baseball and softball practice, youth soccer and football teams, and the AHS Marching Band.



Alumni CORNER

AHS graduate **Carrina "C.J." Crow**, was one of 14 players selected by USA Athletes International to represent the United States in the 2008 Softball International Friendship Series in Sydney, Australia this year. Crow, a starting sophomore pitcher at Mercyhurst College in Pennsylvania, led the AHS varsity softball team to one of its most successful seasons two years ago.

The Reunion Committee of 1969 is planning a multi-year reunion during the summer of 2009. AHS alumni who graduated between 1966 and 1972 are invited to gather for a Lake Erie cruise on the Goodtime II. Alumni interested in helping with or in attending the reunion are asked to contact Sharon Crowder Gimperling at gimp711@aol.com.

The AHS class of 1988 will host its 20th year reunion from August 1-3. For information on the reunion plans, e-mail dtelerico@alltel.net or auroraclassof88@gmail.com.

Teaching legends, long-time staffers retire from service

Some of the most familiar faces in Aurora City Schools will not be returning to their positions in the fall, including eight AHS staffers who retired at the end of the school year.

HS Athletic Director and long-time wrestling coach Dick Bliss, guidance secretary Charlotte Ward, health and PE teacher Cathy Goudy, Spanish teacher JoAnn Gavacs, art teacher John Smolko, math teacher Debbie Langford, English teacher Barb Stroh, and guidance counselor Nancy Dowling left Aurora with 192 collective years of service to the district.

Craddock students said goodbye to second grade teachers Cindy Simenc and Phyllis Estis, who together have given 67 years of service to Aurora's children. Craddock also bid farewell to Head Custodian Terry Rudge, who retired in May after 31 years at Aurora's oldest elementary school.



2008 AHS retirees leave countless memories for which they will be remembered at Aurora High School. Row 1: Debra Langford, Barb Stroh, Nancy Dowling & Richard Bliss Row 2: Charlotte Ward, JoAnn Gavacs, Cathy Goudy, John Smolko

'Girls on the Run' builds self-esteem for Leighton Elementary students

Research shows that although girls and boys between the ages of 8-11 are developmentally similar, as they enter adolescence, girls experience a disproportional drop in self-esteem. To address this issue, staff members at Leighton Elementary School developed a new program this year to build self-esteem of girls in 3rd, 4th, and 5th grades through physical activity.

School psychologist Diane Bush, who was one of four staff members to launch the program, said the girls met two afternoons each week for 12 weeks to talk about real-life problems and issues common to pre-teens.

"The chats included everything from gossiping to getting along with others, making good food choices, and handling strong emotions," said Bush.

During their meetings, the girls walked, ran, skipped, jumped, and crawled through the training sessions. "Anything to get them up and moving around the track," said Bush.

At the end of the program, participants completed a 5K run at the Shaw JCC with 'Girls on the Run' participants from other area schools.

"The race wasn't timed," said Bush. "It was just about getting them to the start line and finish line."

Leighton's first GOTR group involved 14 participants under the direction of Bush and Leighton School counselor Leann Lampers, Interventionist Kara Kralik, and community volunteer Karen Pierce.



Summer Library open through August 8

The Summer Reading Library at Craddock School will remain open for grades K-5 from mid-June to the first week of August, providing elementary students with grade-level books to enjoy during their summer vacation. Citizen volunteers staff the summer library to provide students with an opportunity to enhance their reading skills before returning to school in August.



Mark your calendar...

School Supply Sale Pick-Up

Aug. 18 Harmon 3-8 PM

Craddock School Meet 'n Greet

Aug. 25 Gr. 1 & 2 3:30-5:30

Miller Kindergarten Orientation

(Parents)

Aug. 25 evening TBA

Miller First Days of School

Aug. 26 A-L Students

Aug. 27 M-Z Students

Aug. 28 All Students

Craddock First Day of School

Aug. 26 Grades 1-2

Native American Pow-Wow

Sept. 6-7 AHS



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