

Ridgewood Newsletter



Congratulations to Cari Franz on receiving the [University of Chicago Outstanding Educator Award](#).

From the Superintendent

These are unprecedented and interesting times, to say the least. We have been challenged to rethink how we deliver educational services while also keeping everyone safe. Fortunately, our shift to competency education has allowed for these challenges to be addressed while still supporting our learners. Although we are not able to have a "normal" school year, students are still engaged in learning and co-curricular activities. You can access our full Back-to-School plan here: <https://www.d234.org/back-to-school-plan/>. We continue creating more opportunities for students to be at the school building. Students are able to complete their morning synchronous classes at the school building and the following courses are occurring in-person: Introduction to Trades, Geometry in Construction, Project Lead the Way, AP Calculus, AP US History, Theater and Band. Additionally, Marching Band, Art Club and Drama Club are being held in-person. Lastly, we also have had the following sports operating this Fall: Girls Tennis, Golf and Cross Country. You might have also noticed several other sports practicing on our fields as we were allowed to offer contact days for the last several weeks. All of us would like to be back to normal and in-person and we will continue finding ways to bring in more students. To keep updated on all things Ridgewood, please visit our website at www.d234.org.

Sincerely,
Jennifer Kelsall, Ph.D.



@RHSRebelPride



Track Open to the Public

The RHS Track is open to the general public. Open Monday through Friday from 7-8 a.m. and 5-10 p.m. Saturdays 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. Closed Sundays.

Reminder to social distance and use reasonable judgment when using the track. If you have any questions you can contact, Thomas Parrillo, (708) 697-5535.



If you would like to request meals for Monday and Wednesday pick up, please register at [Weekly Packaged Meal Reservation Form](#).

Meals are only available for students enrolled at Ridgewood High School. All dining areas at the school are closed due to the pandemic. Packaged meals will be distributed on Mondays and Wednesdays to bring home.

Students attending synchronous learning sessions may purchase boxed breakfasts and lunches that are available for pick-up on Mondays and Wednesdays. Cashless purchases are required. Each paying student must have dollars preloaded to his or her student account.

NO CASH OR CREDIT CARD TRANSACTIONS WILL OCCUR AT THE DOOR AT TIME OF PICK-UP.

Class of 2020

Graduate Reflection

The 2020 school year ended in a way no one could have ever predicted. For the Class of 2020, it wasn't just the end of the school year, but the end of their high school career. Despite the ongoing pandemic, Ridgewood administrators and staff found ways to honor the Class of 2020. However, it was not what the students had envisioned and looked forward to after four long years of high school.

We wanted to gain insight from a 2020 graduate on how they felt about ending high school in the middle of a global pandemic. Domenica Ferdinardo '20 reflected on the end of her high school career and her favorite memories.

Q. What were you most looking forward to for the end of your senior year?

A. "I was looking forward to having all four of my grandparents at the awards ceremony and at graduation. They are so proud of me, and I was looking forward to sharing those moments with them."

Q. What do you think Ridgewood did well for the end of your senior year?

A. "Ridgewood did a great job making the seniors feel special given the circumstances. Ridgewood also planned a very nice graduation ceremony. It is definitely one we will always remember."

Q. Favorite memory from your senior year before COVID-19?

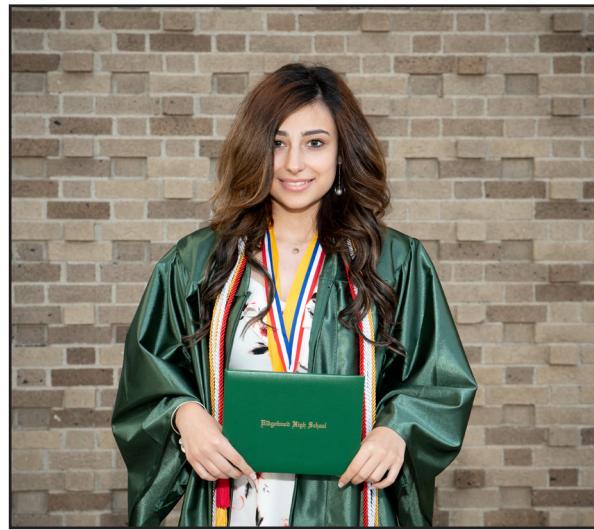
A. "My favorite memory from senior year before COVID-19 was Senior Night for the boys basketball team. That was also the same day as the NED Student Council Convention and when my college decisions came out. It was a very eventful, celebratory day."

Q. What do you think would have been something monumental RHS didn't do, but you think would have been thoughtful?

A. "I think that it would have been nice if during the summer after graduation, Ridgewood would have had one final outdoor goodbye for the seniors before they all left for college. This year, many of my close friends went away to college opposed to staying here, so I think that would have been really special."

Q. What was your favorite memory from your senior year?

A. "My favorite RHS memory was the homecoming week of senior year. Knowing that it was our last one, I felt that we went all out and had a fun time."



Photography by Rapski Photography

Q. What do you wish you would have done in high school that you think others should do?

A. "One thing that I didn't do in high school that I think others should do is try to visit as many college campuses as you can. I think it is extremely beneficial to visit in order to feel comfortable and confident in your decision."

During her time at RHS, Domenica was extremely involved in clubs and activities. She also served on the Illinois State Board of Education Student Advisory Council (ISBE SAC). Serving on the ISBE SAC peaked her interest in educational policy, which is something she wants to continue to be involved in.

"My future plans are to major in political science and business economics. After that, I want to apply to law school and become a corporate/family attorney. I also would like to still be involved in educational policy and begin to involve myself in politics. One of my goals is to work for Sidley Austin in Downtown Chicago," said Ferdinardo.

More about Domenica: <https://www.d234.org/rhs-junior-selected-to-serve-on-isbe-sac/?pg=10>

Calling All RHS Alumni!!

Ridgewood has many outstanding alumni who have used their education and experiences to become successful, positive contributors to society. We want to highlight and celebrate their successes. Can you think of a former classmate with a great story to tell? Email RHS Public Relations Coordinator, Bree Sabin (bsabin@ridgenet.org). We want to share your stories on our website, d234.org, social media channels and in our newsletters!



Read more stories: www.d234.org/news

RHS Names New Principal and Assistant Principal

Ridgewood High School District 234 is pleased to announce we have welcomed two new administrative leaders into the Principal and Assistant Principal positions.

Our students will notice that these new administrators are familiar faces. Gina Castellano (previous Assistant Principal) has taken over the Principal position, and our new Assistant Principal is Eric Lasky (previous STEM division head).

Castellano was previously the Assistant Principal for the 2019-2020 school year. She has been at RHS for the past 15 years; serving as Dean of Students, school counselor and as Interim Director of Student Services. Before that she was an elementary school teacher for 7 years. Castellano earned a B.S.Ed from Loyola University Chicago, a master of Arts in School Counseling from NEIU and a Master of Arts in School Leadership from Concordia University, Chicago. She is also a National Board Certified Counselor.

Understanding the culture and having invested so much time and energy into District 234 made her the perfect candidate for this position.

"Throughout my 15 years, I have worn a lot of hats. I was a School Counselor, Director of Student Services, Dean of Student, and Assistant Principal. Each role brought its own rewards and challenges," said Castellano. "I knew being Principal would combine a lot of my strengths and give me an opportunity to use all the many skills I have learned over the years to serve students in a larger capacity."

Despite the ongoing pandemic, Castellano is overjoyed to be taking on this new position.

"I am really excited about continuing my journey at Ridgewood High School. I am starting my 15th year here and love our kids so much! I look forward to more collaborative opportunities with colleagues, chances to dialogue over best practices, to work through the unknown of a pandemic, and to share in the excitement of our students as they move forward in their lives and their learning," said Castellano.



Pictured above: Gina Castellano - RHS Principal



Pictured above: Eric Lasky - RHS Assistant Principal

Castellano's promotion created a vacancy in the Assistant Principal role, leading to the hiring of Eric Lasky.

Eric Lasky has dedicated his career to education for the past 21 years. He spent sixteen years as a teacher and the last four years as the STEM Division head. Lasky holds a Bachelor degree in Math Education from Illinois State University, Masters in Curriculum and Instruction from Olivet Nazarene University and a Masters in Educational Leaders from American College of Education. He is currently working on his Doctorate; he has currently completed two chapters of his Dissertation and is on track to be finished by June 2021. He is also a National Board Certified Teacher. Fun fact: Lasky attended flight school and reached the point where he can fly planes on his own. He also has his advanced open water scuba-diving certification.

During his first ten years of teaching, he coached three sports, announced all home football games and was the student council sponsor. Lasky coached Track and Field for one year, Baseball for 13 years, Golf for 17 years (4 at RHS) and Basketball for 17 years (4 at RHS).

Lasky was an extremely motivated candidate, which helped him land his new role as Assistant Principal.

"Over the last four years, I have been able to work with great people in the school, in the state and nationally. Many of them have challenged me to go outside of my comfort zone, allowing me to grow. I have learned so much from so many different people I have been around and it has given me the confidence and motivation to do more," said Lasky.

The 2020-2021 school year will be a school year like no other. We are positive that we have identified the right people to represent and carry forward the vision set by the Ridgewood Community.



Fall Athlete Spotlight

This year, sports look completely different in the state of Illinois. While we don't have all the "normal" fall sports. We are fortunate to have 3 sports programs up and running. We have 33 girls tennis players, 5 girls cross country runners, 8 boys cross country runners and one female representing Ridgewood as an independent golfer.



Boys Cross Country

Caden George - Senior

Sports: Cross Country and Track and Field

Clubs/Activities: Jazz Band & a Running Club in Chicago

Favorite Sports Memory: "My favorite sports memory was the track meet sectionals when our 4x100, 4x200 and 4x400 relays qualified for State Preliminary. I was in the 4x400 so it was very exciting for my team and I."

Best Part About Competing: "The best part of competing is finding a competitor who has similar strength and skill as yourself, and then going against them and finding out who the best man is. Also, winning medals is great!"

Senior Year Sports Goals: "My goals for this cross country season are to get sub 17:30 times for 3 miles. And for my track season, to become Conference Champion for both of the hurdle races."



Girls Cross Country

Angela Borek - Junior

Sports: Cross Country and Track and Field

Clubs/Activities: Italian National Honor Society and Chess Club

Favorite Sports Memory: "Definitely running in pouring rain last year! We came back completely drenched from head to toe but had the best time after splashing in huge puddles the whole time."

Best Part About Competing: "The best part of competing is feeling the audiences excitement cheering you on as you run and cross the finish line to see if your work all week paid off."

Goals for the Season: "I would love to come close to or beat my personal record. Really, just to keep on improving mentally and physically and staying healthy."



Golf

Brianna Rostescu - Freshman

Sports: Golf and Softball

Clubs/Activities: Jazz Band & a Running Club in Chicago

Favorite Sports Memory: "My favorite golf memory is when I participated in the Drive Chip and Putt Tournament. I did really well the first year, earning second overall in my age group. The following year, I finished in first place. This win lead me to the Regional in the Midwest."

Best Part About Competing: "The best part of competing is meeting new people and finding others who like the same sport as you. Since I am the only golf player at Ridgewood, it means a lot to me if I win a match to represent our school and I'm looking for more people that want to play as well, because it is a fun sport that they should experience."

Do you wish to play after high school? "I do wish to continue to play golf after high school. My goal is to earn a scholarship or for my golf profile to be recognized. I've been playing since I was eight years old and I am currently first flight (first to tee off) for the majority of my matches. I'm excited to see how I will be playing in the next four years, especially since I am already playing against varsity seniors."

Girls Tennis

Kristin Karakoleva - Sophomore

Sports: Girls Tennis

Clubs/Activities: DECA, Varsity R and Class Council

Favorite Sports Memory: "My favorite sports memory was when I went to my very first tennis tournament and I won all of the matches that I played."

Best Part About Competing: "The best part of competing is how you get to play the sport you love, while also learning from your mistakes after your match, so you can improve your skills."

Goals for the Season: "My goals for this season are to improve my skills and I want to win my match(es) for the tournament at the end of the season."



Karakoleva is in the second row, second from the left.