

The

# BLUE DEVIL'S

Advocate

**Special Edition: A Look Into the Lives and  
A Close Up On RHS's Blue Devils**



Richmond  
High School

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35320 Division Road

## She's The Dancing Queen

By: Haley Fortuna  
Coordinating Editor

As she stands on the stage alone with ten other finalists, the anticipation is crawling its way in and out of her pores. She can feel her heart beat escalate from her chest to the tips of her fingers to her toes. The announcer begins to list 4th runner up, 3rd runner up, then 2nd runner up, 1st runner up.

Then it happened.  
Her life forever changed.  
She was the next Miss Dance of Michigan.

**What is Miss Dance of Michigan?**  
On February 5, 2017, Emily Simmons, a junior at RHS, was crowned the next Miss Dance of Michigan.

Miss Dance of Michigan contestants are required to be students of a Dance Masters of Michigan instructor.

Terri Newman, director of Miss Dance of Michigan, said in an email, "These teachers are accredited through verbal, written, and physical dance examinations. The members of DMM [Dance Master of Michigan] are passionate about dance education and active members volunteer their time and talents to host several educational dance events each year."  
But Miss Dance of Michigan is no ordinary dance competition. Contestants spent a day with last

year's title holders and learned an opening routine set by a guest choreographer. Then, contestants were to perform their solos in a room with just the judges, where they could form an initial impression of contestants' abilities.

It doesn't stop there.  
Next, potential title holders were scored in audition classes in ballet, jazz, tap, modern and acrobatics where their two highest class scores were used in determining their total scores.

But this contest isn't only about dance.  
Before their final performance, contestants were interviewed by judges. Simmons was not only a star on the stage, but the interview room as well.

Finally, the final performance was held at South Lyon High School and dancers received a solo score following their dance presentation.

**What set her apart from other dancers?**

Imagine being surrounded by talented individuals who all want the same prize you do, but only one can win.

Sound pretty intimidating?  
This is exactly what Miss Dance of Michigan was like for Simmons.

"The most challenging part about the competition was competing against so many other talented dancers," said Simmons.

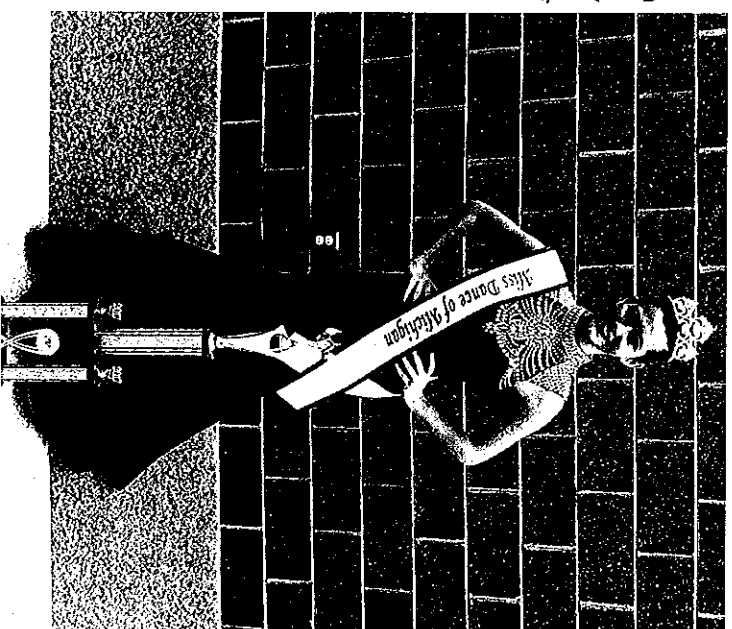
A competition filled with 17 dancers with the ability to dance their way to the title

"Miss Dance of Michigan," becomes a mental contest.

Simmons said, "For me, it was important to go into it having a confidence and knowing I could do it because everyone there was talented. It was just about having the most confidence."

It was Simmons' passion and expression that led her to leap in front of other competitors.

"Emily is very talented and a very passionate and expressive performer. Dance Masters of MI is very proud to have her representing us and we look forward to enjoying her participation this year," said Newman. "Emily scored high in every aspect of the event and closely edged out the 1st runner-up."



Junior, Emily Simmons, poses with her trophy after winning Miss Dance of Michigan.

**Why is Dance so Important?**  
Dance has always been a huge aspect of Simmons' life.

"I have been dancing for 12 years, and it has always been the most important outlet for me," said Simmons.

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## Tuning For Success

By: Alyssa Gall  
News Co-editor

It's senior year.

It's the year full of lasts.

It's the last first day of school, last Homecoming, last Prom, last football game, last Band performance -- you name it.

It's all leading up to the day you walk across that stage and receive the diploma you worked 12 years for.

But then what?

Are you going to college? Are you going to travel the world? Are you going to take a break and enjoy life? What comes next?

For many high school seniors, their future isn't clear.

But Rachel Rigole, already has her life in tune.

Six-and-a-half-years ago, Rigole picked up a flute and her life never beat to the same melody again.

Rigole, a fourth generation musician, has played the flute since she

was 11. However, that's not all she plays.

"I play the flute and piccolo -- my prime instruments. I also play the piano and I'm learning to play the violin," said Rigole.

Rigole, who has been a part of Richmond's Band since sixth grade, said, "I hated the idea of being in Band, but in sixth grade, limited electives led me to pick Band." Ever since then, Rigole has quickly flourished throughout the years.

"I'm happy I made the choice [to be in band] and I've never looked back," said Rigole.

From middle school to high school, Rigole is now the Flute Section Leader and Drum Major in RHS's Band. Being Drum Major entails leading the Band during rehearsals, football games, parades, and conducting the half-time show. Rigole does all of this while running sectionals and helping her section as the Flute Section Leader.

But this is just a small glimpse of how big of a role music plays in

Rigole's life.

Rigole's music involvement outside of school is just as busy as her involvement in the school's music program.

Hence, she keeps her flute skills sharp by having private flute lessons every week with her teacher of two years, Anne Decker-Beck. This not only makes her a better flute player, but helps her be a better Orchestra member.

At the beginning of the year, Rigole decided to do something different than your typical high school senior. She decided to join an Orchestra.

Why? Because of her unforgettable experience with the Masterworks Orchestra at Blue Lake's Fine Arts Camp.

Rigole loved the experience so much that she saved up enough money to go in 2015 and 2016, their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary season.

"At Blue Lake, we have an hour-and-a-half of ensemble rehearsal, both in the morning and afternoon.

We have 40 minutes of sectionals in the morning, but as a member of the Masterworks Orchestra, I was also in a Double Woodwind Quintet, which alternated with sectionals every other day," said Rigole.

On top of this, Rigole also had technique classes every morning for an hour with a professor, plenty of down time -- which consisted of cabin activities and going to watch the Blue Lake Professional ensembles at night -- and being able to minor in something, such as dance and strings (violin), while at the camp.

Rigole said, "The Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp was definitely my favorite because I met my best flute player friend and I was principal and got all of the solos."

Hence, she was eager to join a new Orchestra her senior year. Rigole had her heart set on auditioning for the Detroit Youth Symphony Orchestra.  
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Partly Cloudy

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# Rigole's Orchestra Success

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Rigole said, "My dream has always been to play on stage in Orchestra Hall where the Detroit Symphony Orchestra rehearses and performs. With the Detroit Youth Symphony Orchestra that dream would come true, plus I would be a member of a top-notch Orchestra – another one of my dreams."

But her flute teacher had a different plan for her. Rigole said, "My flute teacher really wanted me to audition [for the Oakland Youth Orchestra]."

But Rigole was hesitant. "I didn't think I would do Oakland's Youth Orchestra because of a college class I was planning on taking," said Rigole.

The college class fell through though and Rigole decided to take her teacher's advice and go for it.

Therefore, Rigole auditioned for the Oakland Youth Symphony Orchestra. She auditioned with her flute and piccolo, but only got accepted for her flute part.

For the audition, Rigole said, "I had to perform a solo and do sight reading."

Ever since her audition, Rigole has been a current member of the 92-person Symphony Orchestra. She is First Flute. Rigole said,

"Orchestral music for flutes is written in multiple parts, so I get to play first part. It is mainly melodic parts, so it is usually prominent when played."

When asked what a typical day of rehearsal, each week, consists of, Rigole said, "We do a tuning note and then we start into one of our pieces. We usually do at least two pieces."

All this rehearsal helps Rigole perfect and prepare for the Orches-

tra's three concerts. Each concert either has a theme or plays music from a specific composer. Rigole's fall performance consisted of music by Johannes Brahms.

Rigole said, "We played Brahms's Symphony Number Four and his Hungarian dances One, Four, and Five."

While practicing for Orchestra, flute lessons and managing school, it's no secret that life can be hectic for Rigole, who also works as a server at Maniacs.

But she finds a way to make it all work, thanks to the support and help of her family. Rigole said, "My family has always been super supportive of me in my music, never complaining when I need another check written for lessons or to drive me to rehearsal."

Adding on to this, Rigole said, "They always come to every one of my concerts and recitals, and it

definitely makes the hard work worthwhile to play for them."

As for her life after high school, Rigole plans to attend the University of Michigan in the fall and major in biochemistry. She is still unsure whether or not she wants to pursue a minor in music.

One thing is for sure though: Rigole plans to continue being a part of an ensemble after high school. Rigole said, "I'm definitely going to continue playing music in various ensembles and audition for community ensembles and bands."

Rigole even plans to audition for the University of Michigan's marching band this summer in which she would play the piccolo.

As for Rigole's takeaway from being involved in music, Rigole said, "It's all about creating beautiful music with great musicians."

## A Portrait of Evans

**By: Jenna Stafford**  
*Features Co-editor*

*The sound of soft bristles on canvas breaks the silence. Crinkled paper towels litter her workspace. White, blue, and red paint smears into each other on a clear plate in front of her. A strand of hair falls dangerously close to the wet artwork in front of her.*

This is an everyday routine for senior Mikala Evans. Each morning, she sits in the senior art room and works on her passion: Art.

Art made its way into Mikala's life five years ago, she explained, when she took her first serious art class in eighth grade.

"Honestly, I really wasn't that into it then," she said. "But everything changed in sophomore year, when I took photography."

*She changes her brush strokes from long and slow to short and fast, careful to stay in the fine lines she penciled prior to painting.*

Photography was Mikala's first love affair with art. She began taking pictures beyond just her in-class assignments, and a passion was born.

*As she mixed colors together in search of the perfect shade, she explained how her first photography class inspired her to create her current social media art project called Project Art.*

Project Art, or @projectxart on Instagram, came together two years

ago in the summer after she took her first photography class. It's an account where anyone who wants to participate is photographed and their photo is captioned with their name, age, and answer to the question, "What is art?"

The account, which now has over 1,000 followers from around the country, has posted over 100 of these definitions of art. Mikala smiled and cleaned her paintbrush as she described how each is different, and that makes it rewarding. "People bring their own perspective to their definitions," she said. "You can see the difference between someone who is a musician and someone who does classic art."

The definitions range from short and sweet to complicated and complex. "Art is the tangible soul of the creator," said a participant named Juliana on the page in eight simple words. Another contributor, Rachel, had a longer definition. She said, "Art is a form of expression that is created from both sadness and joy. I is born out of the person's emotions and personal experiences—which makes it quite beautiful and unique to everyone."

Aside from Project Art, Mikala explains another way she's brought art into others' lives. Last spring, she teamed up with RHS's Key Club to collect and donate art supplies to fifty children in Honduras.

*She mixes shades of paint together in a small plastic cup, searching for*

## There's No "I" in Team, But There Is A "U" In Volunteer

**By: Brandon Furtaw**  
*Sports Co-editor*

Volunteering is more than just giving time to different organizations. It's meeting new people, giving back and helping where help is needed.

For senior Mary Gaffney, being involved in both the school and the community is very much a priority. Developing personal and working relationships with people in the community and surrounding communities creates con-

tacts and references that can be added to a resume.

Gaffney's resume is nothing short of impressive, including volunteering for organizations such as DRAW: Disaster relief at work, The Humane Society, Kids Against Hunger, Sandy's Kids, Habitat for Humanity, Merest and other local clothing drives throughout high school.

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Adding on to this, Rigole said, "They always come to every one of my concerts and recitals, and it

*the perfect color, and describes the moment she passed out all the pencil cases filled with crayons, colored pencils, stickers, and sketchpads.*

"They took them from me with huge smiles and started coloring right away," she said. "People donate lots of things, but art supplies is something they've never had."

*With a smile, Mikala picks up a thinner brush and recounts her two weeks in Honduras.*

Besides delivering the art supplies, she had the opportunity to take many pictures. Some of this photography went on to win her multiple awards in the 2017 Scholastic Art competition, including a nationally-recognized Gold Key award and two Silver Keys.

*She examines her painting, and explains that it's not awards in art shows or followers on Instagram that makes her want to continue creating.*

"I want to inspire people," she said. "Someone reached out to me after seeing a picture of a scratch-board drawing I did and told me that she was going to take an art class because of it. That was so amazing that I actually inspired someone."

*Mikala mulls over the fine details of the bottom corner of her painting. She describes with intense admiration the people who have influenced her.*

Mrs. Belf, RHS's art teacher, has made a huge influence in Mikala's life. Mrs. Belf began teaching

Habitat for Humanity. Merest and other local clothing drives throughout high school.

"I like to keep myself busy and being involved in clubs and organizations where they can use an extra hand," said Gaffney.

But how does she do it? How does she manage all that time between sports, clubs, and school while maintaining a 3.8 GPA.

"Time management is really key. You have to be able to use the time you have available so you can be involved," said Gaffney.

Not only does all of this look good on a college or job application it shows

heightened responsibility and willingness to go beyond a normal schedule.

Not just time management but being willing to take harder honors and AP classes through high school isn't something that every student wants.

"I think it's a benefit to get the GPA bump by taking those classes. I feel like I'm learning more because it's a challenge I definitely think it was worth it," said Gaffney.

Out of all her accomplishments and involvements Gaffney's most prized are becoming NHS President, BETA club president and being on the Miss Richmond court.

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