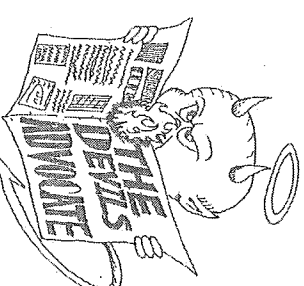


The BLUE DEVIL'S

Advocate



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The Future of Richmond: Gardening in the School

By: Brandon VanGorp
Staff Writer

Just as Mrs. Volpe's 4th hour class was prepared to take their test, they were interrupted with a pleasant surprise.

All of a sudden, Mrs. Michon came into the room with boxes of pizza and cookies, along with a check from Meemic Insurance Company. Mrs. Volpe had won a \$500 grant to spend on her science classes, especially for her honors biology class.

"I applied for a grant for hydroponic equipment," said Mrs. Volpe. "Myself as well as 1000 other schools applied for the grant." There was a small chance of her winning the bid. Mrs. Volpe said, "This is the first time I've applied for the grant so I wasn't expecting much." She is looking at bringing something new to RHS: Hydroponics.

"Hydroponics is the process of growing plants in sand, gravel, or liquid, with added nutrients but without soil," said Mrs. Volpe.

With the newly-won bid, Mrs. Volpe plans on buying many things with the \$500. "Things such as grow lights and shelving units are essential for the hydroponic garden," said Mrs. Volpe. "Seeds for plants, liquid nutrients and pH strips to test acidity

are also items that will be purchased."

She plans on creating a water grown crop area. Mrs. Volpe said, "Being able to have a garden on campus is one of the main goals." The garden will most likely be maintained by Mrs. Volpe and her honors biology class.

"I would like to create a club that can be a big part of maintaining the garden," said Mrs. Volpe. Students then would work on the garden either before or after school.

The hydroponic garden will start off in the old greenhouse room as a test run and then if successful, will be relocated in a permanent spot. "This will most likely be down the new science hall wing by my room," said Mrs. Volpe.

New space with the addition of the science wing allows Mrs. Volpe to have a convenient area put the garden. Mrs. Volpe said, "Somewhere near my classroom will be a great spot to have it because it will be very accessible and can often be looked after."

With this garden, Mrs. Volpe hopes to grow everything from flowers to vegetables and fruits.

"My dream is to be able to sell our produce at the school," said Mrs. Volpe. This is a long-term goal for

her but she thinks it is very possible to achieve.

"The purpose of this is so we can have the ability to test different materials and growing synapses," said Mrs. Volpe. This is the main purpose of the garden.

Another goal that may come in the future is a self-sustaining hydroponic system. "I would love to have one of these," said Mrs. Volpe. "A type of aquarium that can support plants on its own."

Although hydroponics is going to be a new addition to the science wing, it's nothing new to the biology teacher. "I took a class on hydroponics when I was in college," said Mrs. Volpe. "From that point on, I've always had an interest in hydroponics."

The supplies for the project are still not purchased but there is hope to start as soon as possible. With the school year coming to an end, there

she needs to work on what she calls "the little things." These include gale, sight reading and anything else that will push her farther.

Sight reading was one of the categories she believes she needs to improve on, yet she scored a perfect score on that section. So, how does she improve?

Rigole said, "There is always room for improvement. The music at the competition was a lot easier than I had practiced and played before so it was good."

She has not done this alone, though. She has had help from people like Mrs. Schack, the band teacher, her private instructor, her aunt, and Mr. Agosta, a pianist at St. Augustine—all of which had an influential impact.

Her teacher, Mrs. Schack, has a lot of positives to say about Rachel.

In an email interview, Mrs. Schack said, "She is already a very motivated person. She is very dedicated and plays with near perfect technique."

Rigole Hits Right Note; Scores Near Perfect at States

By: Trevor Barrett
Sports Co-Editor

She stood on the stage with her flute in her hand. Her mind was racing thinking about the song she had played a million times before, but none were as big as this. The judges looked at her ready to mark down every single mistake she makes.

These factors did not affect Rachel Rigole, a sophomore, as she scored a near perfect score (97 out of 100) for her flute performance at the state Solo Ensemble competition on March 21.

Solo Ensemble is a musical competition for high school students across the state. Most are familiar with the singing Solo Ensemble, but there are also competitions for musical instruments as well.

"I wasn't sure how I would do. It could have gone either way. I didn't expect to score so high but I had a lot riding on this competition," Rigole said.

Rigole's flute career started at a young age. If it was not for her mom, she might not have even played the flute.

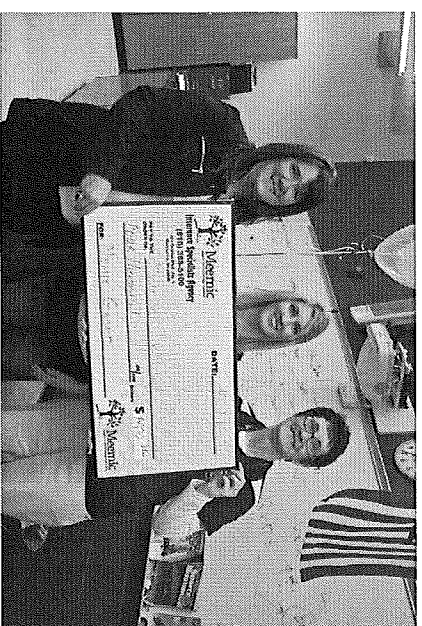
"I originally wanted to play the clarinet," she said, "but my mom really liked the flute and thought I should play that instead."

Preparations for this competition began soon after Districts when she learned she qualified for States. Her training included practice – and a lot of it. Depending on homework, she likes to practice three days a week at an hour at a time.

"I took lessons, practiced on my own time, spoke with my teacher as well as practiced with my accompanist," said Rigole.

All the hard work paid off when it came time to perform. Rachel was judged on three categories: her solo, her scales, and her sight reading.

On her solo, she scored a 48/50. Her scales scored a 24/25, and her sight reading scored a perfect 25/25. This near-perfect score is still not sufficient for Rigole as she believes



Mrs. Volpe receives her grant with Mrs. Michon and a representative from the insurance agency. (Photo courtesy of RHS Yearbook.)

isn't much time left. "I believe by the start of next year we will be much more prepared to work on the garden," said Mrs. Volpe.

Before everything gets underway for the new project, there still needs to be approval from the superintendent.

Overall, she believes this can better her students' education. Mrs. Volpe said, "This helps show students that they can provide for themselves in different living situations by making your own food."

It is because of this motivation and dedication that Mrs. Schack has high expectations for Rachel.

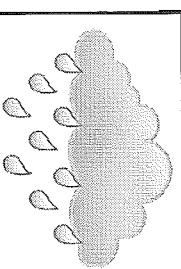
"I think she has potential to play in college and beyond. She has a strong drive and as she continues to mature as a flute player the sky's the limit. The flute is a very competitive instrument, but Rachel could definitely be up there with the best," said Mrs. Schack.

The future for Rachel is bright, and Mrs. Schack has a lot of advice to help her along the way.

"Keep finding opportunities for flute performance, network with other great players and seek out exceptional private study instructors," said Mrs. Schack.

Finding those opportunities will not be hard for Rachel as she plans on competing in similar competitions soon.

Rigole said, "I want to do Solo Ensemble again and I'd like to try other flute competitions as well."

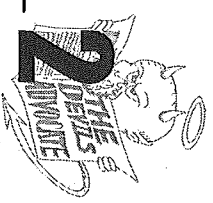


Today's Forecast
Mostly Cloudy
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Juniors are Challenged with the New M-STEP Testing

By: **Haleigh Beedon**
Staff Writer

April 13 marked the start of the new M-STEP testing that replaced the well-known MME for Juniors. Different from the MME, the M-STEP is all online and occurs at a different time than the MME did. The MME would have taken place during ACT week but the M-STEP had two weeks in April dedicated to it.

The reason for the MME and the M-STEP is to test what students missed in the ACT and soon to be SAT.

The M-STEP is more practical and it takes skills students have already learned and applies them in a standardized test.

Mrs. Michon said, "The purpose of the M-STEP is students have to apply the things they know and make sure we, as a district, are teaching you what we should be."

The testing goes greater in depth of our knowledge and pulls out the things we've learned in the past.

Every school district in the state of Michigan gives the M-STEP. Other

states have also seemed to hop on the trend of online testing.

Many changes had to be made in order to adapt to the new tests.

The staff had to put in a lot of extra time in order to get everything where it should be.

Ms. Lepak and Ms. Till, counselors, had to put massive amounts of extra hours into making sure things were in place.

"We had to schedule each student and put up the rosters so they knew what to do, we had to put in extra time to supervise, and we had to print the test tickets," said Ms. Lepak.

The school also had to program a whole new system on the computers. They had to make sure the computers had enough space to support the system and could handle having about 120 students using the same system at once.

They first tested the system with the pre-tests, and it was successful.

The M-STEP program features an online tools training option. This gave juniors a preview of the types of tests they would be taking. They did these pre-tests the week before

spring break.

"About a month before the testing, I was pretty skeptical about how it was going to turn out," Mrs. Michon said. "Then, when we started testing, everything went smoothly."

Ms. Lepak said the only problem they faced was that kids were getting booted off the system, but they were able to log right back on and continue their testing.

Everyone was a little worried, but everything went according to plan.

Ashley Newsome, a junior, had mixed feelings about the testing. She thought she did either really good or really bad.

"I wasn't sure on some of the answers, so I had to make educated guesses because the stuff on the tests were things I learned freshman year," Newsome said.

Newsome also thought that it was difficult because she couldn't plan her essay efficiently. The fact that it is all typing doesn't give the students the ability to write it down and plan it all out.

On the other hand, junior Leslie Ocegüera, thought she did fairly

well on the testing.

Ocegüera said that the preparations they did before the actual M-STEP really helped her. They gave her an idea of what to expect in the near future.

"I didn't really mind the whole testing process. What I did mind was how much we had to type and I'm a really slow typer so that was difficult for me," Ocegüera said.

In the fall, there is going to be an award ceremony regarding the scores. Students who did proficiently will have the chance to not take their exams in those categories.

Every person who was proficient will also be put in a raffle and they'll have the chance to win coupons for local restaurants, the school store, and yearbooks. There are multiple opportunities to win various things.

The results are soon to come out because after the school finished the testing on Monday, April 27, they closed the program and the data was sent to the M-STEP people for evaluation.

Mrs. Michon and the rest of the district are anxious to see how the first round of testing went.

Robotics Romps on to Worlds

By: **Jenna Stafford**
Opinion Co-Editor

Two minutes and thirty seconds.

One challenge.

Hundreds of competitors.

Months of hard work-- all for a chance at one World Championship title.

On April 23, the RHS Robotics

Team made the trek out to St. Louis, Missouri, to compete in the World Championship of Robotics. Getting to this competition in the first place was a feat in itself.

To get to this competition, the Robotics team had to make a series of requirements. To qualify, they had

to earn a certain amount of points averaged between two district events.

Then, they had to be chosen by one of the 16 Alliances to work together in combination with the other teams in their Alliance for the title.

Richmond's Robotics team went into the competition with a strong team, but a small set of disadvantages.

Being a small school, funding and facilities for Robotics is limited. In larger schools, the teams are able to build a robot strictly for practice along with a competition robot.

At RHS, the team constructs only the competition robot.

However, the team is still strong. A good, even mix of both upper and underclassmen gives the team diversity. The younger team members bring in fresh, new ideas and the elders of the team bring experience.

The seniors pass along their best advice to the younger members, and that ensures that even when they graduate, the strength of the team is never diminished.

When in St. Louis, the team competed through a set of qualifying matches. After these, they were selected by the 8th Alliance to be the alternate robot. When the captain of the 8th Alliance's robot broke down, it was Richmond's time to shine.

Their robot was sent in as replacement. After performing well at both quarterfinal matches, the other alternate robot assisting Richmond's broke down and was unable to finish the match.

Richmond and their alliance was unfortunately eliminated in the quarterfinals of the divisional playoffs.

This, however, does not mean failure for the team.

After overcoming the odds to even get to the World Championship, 33rd place in the world doesn't sound too shabby.

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