

Rocket Newsletter

December 2025



Important Dates:

- December 8: RHS Fall Choir Concert - 7:30 pm
- December 10: Launch Your Future Night!
- December 22 - January 2: No School - WINTER BREAK!



The mission of Rockford High School is to foster the development of a caring environment by prioritizing personal relationships and creating a collaborative culture that prepares all students to become inquisitive lifelong learners who act as compassionate global citizens.

From the Principal



Greetings RHS Families,

Welcome to a snowy December! It's a traditional Minnesota winter we haven't been gifted in the last couple of years. As we settle in for the final month of school this calendar year, please know that we are already opening registration for next year this month. Explore our 21 career pathways, options for 50 college credits, and other academic opportunities that may be of interest to your child! Our "Launch Your Future" Curriculum Fair event is a great way to learn more: December 10, 4-7pm. See you there!

SENIOR PARENTS: Senior quotes and photos are due incredibly soon! Please make sure you stay abreast of these deadlines, as the external companies we work with do NOT offer extensions! Feel free to visit our page specific to senior families [here](#).

JUNIOR PARENTS: Winter break is a great opportunity for college visits! Campus admissions departments will eagerly host you for a tour. If your student isn't open to a 2 or 4 year college, have them consider shadowing job sites over break. With enough proactive communications, foremen and project managers can schedule site and facility tours, talk about their companies, and discuss career paths within their industry. There's no better time to best prepare for senior year than now!

SOPHOMORE PARENTS: Your child's great has the unique opportunity of becoming the full term graduates of our "Launch Your Future" initiative. If your child has ever complained about 'why they have to learn' in any course, bring them to our magnet night on 12/10 from 4-7pm to explore and discover their 'why' as we present on our 21 career pathways.

FRESHMEN PARENTS: I am excited to report that this class is already demonstrating a great transition into high school. The realities of 'forever grades on a transcript', 'homework in multiple classes', and 'I'd better stop these middle school behaviors' can be tricky to navigate the first few weeks into high school. Most of our 9th grade students have immersed themselves in our uniquely wonderful school culture, positive decision making, and personal responsibility and accountability. While they begin learning about registration for next year over the next few weeks, please discuss their options with them. As the years progress, their options open up. The best way to prepare for the next three years is to have deliberate decision-making processes in selecting courses to ensure academic success. Instead of, "What is my friend taking," they should ask "What courses do I find interesting, appropriately challenging, and will best prepare me for what I might want to do professionally when I grow up?"

Go Rockets!

Sincerely,

Paul Menard
RHS Principal

Order Your Yearbook Today!

Yearbook preorders are now available!

To order your yearbook, click [HERE!](#)

RHS | Parent-Community News



Free Nutritious Meals
For Kids 18 And Under

Attention:

During the 2023 Minnesota Legislative Session, lawmakers signed into law the Free School Meals program for students, and this continues into the 25-26 school year.

All students will be eligible for one reimbursable breakfast and one reimbursable lunch per day free of charge. This is only for their first meal for breakfast and for lunch. A la Carte and anything extra still will add to your balance due.

Meal Prices

Breakfast

- Adult/Second full Student Meal: \$2.50

Lunch

- Adult/Second full Student Meal: \$5.05

Food Service Reminder

Please note, per our School Board approved [School Meals Policy](#), Low Account Balance and Negative Account Balance email reminders will continue to be sent.

Since Rockford Area Schools are not receiving additional meal funding at this time, it remains the parent(s) or guardian's responsibility to ensure adequate funds are available in the meal account.

Attendance Line: 763-477-7525

Please call our attendance line to report your student's absence.

Option 1: REAMS

Options 2: RMS-CES

Option 3: RHS

Option 4: Galaxy

Option 5: Launching Pad
Preschool



****Not an ISD 883 Sponsored Event****

JOIN US!



DECA DATE NIGHT



FUN AND GAMES!

Games, crafts, and a movie!
Dinner and snacks are also
provided!

Saturday

13TH

December 2025

**5PM-9PM AT ELEMENTARY
SCHOOL GYM**

To register children, visit the QR code!



Join Us!

Join us for our Launch Your Future Event and discover what makes Rockford High School help students thrive!



Wednesday, December 10th from
4:00 pm to 7:00 pm



Rockford High School - Enter through Door 13
(Commons Entrance)

Come meet our teachers, explore our MYP, DP and CP programs and pathways, chat with current students and take a guided tour of the school!

Welcome sessions with Principal Mr. Paul Menard at
4:00, 5:00, and 6:00 pm!



REF News & Updates

DECEMBER 2025

Rockford Education Foundation Fall Event An 80's TV Game Show Success!

Thank you to everyone who joined us - whether in person or from afar - for our 80's TV Game Show Fall Event! Because of your incredible support, along with our sponsors, volunteers, donors, and dessert auction bakers, we enjoyed a night full of nostalgia, fun, and community spirit.

We are thrilled to share that together, we raised **more than \$110,000** to support Rockford Area Schools! These funds directly fuel innovative learning experiences, including art enrichment, environmental programming, hands-on career pathways, and student support initiatives across the district.

Missed the event or still feeling inspired to give?

You can continue supporting our Fund-a-Need initiatives here:

<https://www.rockfordfoundation.org/fund-a-need/>

Every dollar helps bring meaningful, enriching opportunities to Rockford students



Events

Gratitude Gifts

HOLIDAY GIFTS FOR ROCKFORD STAFF

December 1-11, 2025



It is time to THANK teachers, paras, principals, office staff and so many others for giving it their all each day for our Rockford students! You can do it with Rockford Education Foundation's Gratitude Gifts! Staff love these gifts that support their classrooms with grant opportunities PLUS they get a gift card to treat themselves.

Gratitude Gift Details:

- \$10, \$20 and \$50 donation options
- All gifts include a gift card for the recipient - see example
- Gifts are delivered to the school between Dec 15-19
- All donations support the Mini-Grant Program!

ORDER GIFTS HERE: <https://www.rockfordfoundation.org/gratitude-gifts/>

Deadline to order: December 11th at Midnight

Questions: Email Nikki Arvold, nikki@rockfordfoundation.org

This is not an ISD 883 Sponsored Event

♥ Coming in February: Spread Love, Not Germs Bingo at Clays

Join us in February for our *Spread Love, Not Germs* Bingo Night at Clays—a fun-filled evening of laughter, prizes, and community spirit. All proceeds support the REF Mini-Grant Program.

February also features our annual **Classroom Wishlist Drive**, giving families a direct, meaningful way to help teachers purchase their most-needed items.

Your generosity helps ensure students have access to enriching, hands-on learning opportunities throughout the school year.

More details coming soon. Stay up-to-date by

📺 Following us on Facebook & Instagram

🌐 Joining our mailing list at www.RockfordEducationFoundation.org

IN THE CLASSROOM: Language Arts



English 9 - Mr. Kenady

As we read Fahrenheit 451, students used their digital creativity and writing skills—along with their understanding of propaganda techniques and the novel’s themes—to create their own compelling propaganda artifacts connected to the text or to Rockford High School.



English 10 - Mr. Rysavy

Our 10th grade students are diving into an interdisciplinary project that blends their English 10 study of Native American history and literature with their History class exploration of African colonization, uncovering surprising connections between the two. As they compare themes, perspectives, and historical events across cultures, they sharpen their analytical skills in a hands-on, engaging way. Their learning all comes together in a creative final product—like artwork or an original piece of writing—where they get to showcase their ideas and bring history to life.

English 11 - Mr. Von Kaenel

The students in my Intro to Film class just finished a unit on “Auteur Theory” where students explored and analyzed some films by the director Steven Spielberg. They concluded the unit by researching an “auteur” (director) of their choice and created a presentation that explained different aspects of their filmmaking background and particular themes and styles typically present in their movies. Students will next explore the concept of Pre-Production where they will learn about 3-Act structure, storyboarding, and screenwriting. This class provides the foundational knowledge and practical skills students need to analyze and create movies for IB Film.

IB Film just concluded a unit on film movements and presented their learning to the class. We viewed the film Rashomon from the Golden Age of Japanese cinema. They are now currently working on a student film where they apply some of the techniques from this film, such as using a nonlinear narrative structure, incorporating unreliable narrators, and utilizing symbolic visual elements. Next students will begin preparing for the Textual Analysis, which is the first of three IB assessments for this class.

English 12 - Mrs. Merila

Lang and Lit HL 1 and 2 and Lang and Lit SL 2 have been learning to prompt AI to get the information that they want. To do this they have learned to assign the AI roles (like having an English professor help them with issues of literature) and to limit it to the topic that they want discussed, and that giving the AI a more specific prompt almost always enables them to get better answers from it than asking a general question.

This is all part of our greater goal of using AI to help us write. At first students were shocked that we would be using AI, but the fact is that AI is here to stay and students who do not know how to use it will be behind in the world they enter. Our goal is for them to see AI as a tool rather than a method of cheating the system. In class we compare it to calculators, which were considered cheating when I was in school, but are now just a tool to do the time consuming steps of higher math problems. Thus we are going to use AI as an editor or teacher who can be next to them and help them with the parts of writing that frustrate them.

Meet the Teachers



Meet Mr. Kenady!

I teach English Language Arts at Rockford High School. Additionally, I coach girls tennis, and am the Middle School Rocket Power weightlifting instructor. I graduated from Metropolitan State University in 2014 with a degree in English. I decided to pursue my passion for teaching, and enrolled in The College of St. Scholastica in their Graduate Teaching Licensure program. My teaching career began at Westonka High School in 2020, but have been serving the Rockford area community since 2021. I teach MYP English 9 and Mythology.

Meet Mr. Rysavy!

I'm very excited to be part of the Rockford High School community. I graduated from Saint Mary's University of Minnesota in Winona in 2021, where I earned bachelor's degrees in both Literature with a Writing Emphasis and Spanish. I continued my education immediately after graduation, completing my teaching license and earning a master's degree in education in 2022. Since then, I've had the opportunity to teach a variety of English and Spanish courses. This year marks my first year at Rockford High School, and I'm excited to be teaching MYP English 10 and AVID 9. I'm passionate about helping students grow as thinkers, writers, and individuals, and I look forward to building a supportive and engaging classroom community.



Meet Mr. Von Kaenel!

Mr. Von Kaenel, or "VK" as he is known around here, has been an educator since 2005 and has been at Rockford High School since 2019. A 2003 graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Mr. Von Kaenel has experience teaching a variety of ELA core and elective classes in grades 6-12. He also has a Master's degree in Educational Leadership from Concordia University-St. Paul. He currently is the girls' varsity golf coach and is a co-advisor of the Link Crew student leadership program.

Meet Mrs. Merila!

Mrs. Merila has been teaching English at RHS since 1994. A graduate of Bemidji High School, Mrs. Merila attended St. Olaf College in Northfield, MN and graduated with honors in 1994. She received her Masters Degree in English from the University of St. Thomas in 2000.



IN THE CLASSROOM



AGRICULTURE & INDUSTRIAL TECH

Agriculture/ Industrial Tech - Ms. Pinkerman



Students have been busy across all their classes—wrapping up a hands-on concrete unit in DIY where they mixed concrete, poured it into handmade molds, and tested the strength based on water content; diving into the Horsing Around industry unit to explore and try out different agricultural disciplines; completing their toolboxes in Woods and moving on to designing and building their own final projects; and finishing their beef and dairy units in Farm to Fork, which included visiting a local dairy and beef farm in Delano to meet cows and feed calves.

Gen Metals - Ms. Cronk

Students are currently building their foundational welding skills, practicing essential techniques such as T, Butt, and Lap welds using both SMAW and GMAW welders. Through hands-on learning and repeated practice, they not only gain confidence with the equipment but also develop an understanding of how each type of weld is used in real-world applications. By the end of the class, they will have mastered these basic skills and be prepared to apply them to larger, more complex projects—opening the door to future opportunities and even a potential career in the welding industry.



Meet the Teachers



Meet Ms. Pinkerman!

I graduated high school from Edina High School and then went to the University of Kentucky for my Bachelors Degrees in both Animal Science and Equine Science and Management. After I graduated I moved back up to Minnesota where I enrolled in the University of Minnesota's Agricultural Education Masters Program. I am happy to be back in Minnesota and teaching students about where their food comes from.

I love agriculture and being able to teach it but I did not come from a farming background. I went to a nature pre-school and rode horses but other than that I did not have any experience in 4-H or FFA. Being able to get students involved in the FFA now has been incredibly rewarding and a huge point of success for me throughout this year.

Meet Ms. Cronk!

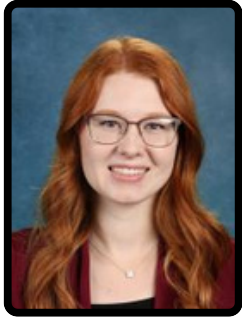
Hello! I am Ms Cronk. I grew up on a beef, corn, and soybean farm in northern Iowa. After graduating high school, I attended South Dakota State University and majored in Agricultural Education. I taught in St James Minnesota for 7 years before coming to Rockford. I live in Watertown which is where my fiancé is from. We are taking over his family farm and are slowly making it our own. At Rockford High School, I teach all of the metal classes, food science, work based learning, and a few other agriculture classes. I will also be co-advising FFA.

When I am not working, you can find me reading, hiking, doing yard work, or remodeling our home.



RHS | Counselor's Corner

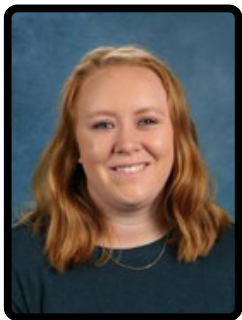
Meet The Counselors



Ellie Engstrom: 9th & 10th Grade

Hello! My name is Ellie Engstrom and I've been at Rockford High School since 2023. I have also been at Rockford Middle School - Center for Environmental Studies since 2022.

I graduated from St. Cloud State University with both my Bachelor's and Master's degree. In my spare time, I love to be up north spending time on the lake.



Samantha Bloom: 11th & 12th Grade

My name is Samantha Bloom and I have been at Rockford High School as a Counselor since 2020. I received my Undergrad in Psychology from St. Scholastica, and my Master of Education Degree in School Counseling Pre-K through 12 from the University of Wisconsin Superior. In my free time I enjoy reading and spending time on the lake.

Contact Us!

Ms. Ellie Engstrom,
Rockford High School
Counselor at
ellie.engstrom@rockford883.org or call
[763-477-5846](tel:763-477-5846), ext. 3020

Ms. Samantha Bloom,
Rockford High School
Counselor at
samantha.bloom@rockford883.org or call
[763-477-5846](tel:763-477-5846), ext. 3033

Mental Health Resources

- **Crisis Text Line- Suicide Prevention Resource for Teens:** Text "MN" to [741741](tel:741741)
- **Hennepin County Mental Health Crisis Response Line:** [1-612-348-2233](tel:1-612-348-2233) (adult)
- **Wright County Mental Health Crisis Response Line:** [1-800-635-8008](tel:1-800-635-8008)
- **Trevor Project for LGBTQ Youth in Need:** Text "start" to [678-678](tel:678-678) or call [1-866-488-7386](tel:1-866-488-7386)
- **National Sexual Assault Telephone Hotline:** [800-656-4673](tel:800-656-4673)
- **PrairieCare- Assessment and Intake Team:** [952-826-8475](tel:952-826-8475)

CARING FOR YOUR CHILD'S MENTAL HEALTH!

Transformational Therapy Services now offers in-school mental health at all Rockford Schools!

At Transformational Therapy Services (TTS), we know how much you want your children to feel happy, confident, and supported—both in school and at home. That's why we've partnered with Rockford Schools to bring mental health and wellness services directly to your family's fingertips.

How We Can Help Your Child:

- School-based therapy for anxiety, depression, ADHD, trauma, and behavioral challenges
- Medication management with a skilled psychiatric team when needed
- Social Emotional Learning (SEL) sessions to build resilience, emotional awareness, and healthy coping skills
- Family therapy and supports to strengthen relationships and communication at home

Signs Your Child May Need Extra Support:

- Sudden changes in mood, sleep, or appetite
- Trouble focusing or declining grades
- Withdrawal from friends or activities
- Big emotional reactions or frequent meltdowns
- Persistent worry, sadness, or irritability

If you've noticed any of these, early support can make a lasting difference!

Services are available in-school or in-clinic. Your child can access support during their school day or after school in office in Rockford. We make the process simple and confidential.

Let's Take the Next Step Together

Email us: info@transformationaltherapymn.com

Visit us: www.transformationaltherapymn.com

or

Ask your child's teacher about a referral for school-based therapy.

Early support changes lives—and we're here to make that happen for your family!

Unwinding for the Holiday Season

As the holiday season approaches, I invite you to take a deep breath and give yourself permission to unwind.

Your dedication to shaping young minds is invaluable, a little self-care goes a long way. As you wrap up 2025, here are some mental health tips to share with your students/families:



- *Bundle up, get outside and move your body (try this [Mindful-Walking](#) activity), then enjoy a warm cup of tea or hot chocolate after!*
- *Reach out for help when needed - you are not alone!*

- *Prioritize sleep and stick to routines as much as possible! Here are a few tips for [Better Sleep](#).*
- *Take breaks from social media and focus on real-life connections.*
- *Practice self-compassion. Perfection doesn't exist, speak to yourself like you would a good friend*



Reminder for all that it's okay to take a break and focus on well-being. Enjoy the holiday season, try new things, and be kind to yourself. You got this!

Senior Portraits & Recognition Ads

Senior Portrait submissions are now open!

Senior Portraits are due at 11:59 pm on January 15th, 2026. **NO LATE SUBMISSIONS WILL BE ACCEPTED!**

Please submit your Senior Portrait using this link:

<https://photos.jostens.com/6YK8U8>

If you are using a professional photographer, you can share this link with them to submit your photo.

**Please make sure the file is saved as LAST NAME FIRST NAME.*



You can also order specialized ads for your graduating senior!

To purchase an ad, use this link: [Yearbook Recognition Ads](#)

Ads are \$24 per 1/8 page

Purchases are due January 15th, 2026. **NO EXCEPTIONS!**

Cap & Gown Order Reminder

Cap & Gown Orders are still open!

Cap & Gowns are free of charge for all seniors. **Orders are due December 19th.**

Please be as accurate as possible when entering your students height and weight, to ensure the gown fits properly. Caps are traditionally one size fits all (XL Cap available upon request).

If you believe your student may need it, please see Olivia Koskela in the front office for guidance.

[Rockford Cap & Gown Order Form](#)



RHS | Athletics & Activities

2025 Football Team Awards

As the Rockford Rockets close their 2025 season, we want to take time and acknowledge our amazing athletes!

Individual Awards

- *Most Valuable Defensive Lineman* - Abbott Callahan
- *Most Valuable Linebacker* - Ian Faber
- *Most Valuable Defensive Back* - Max Ladman
- *Defensive Player of the Year* - Bradley Graunke
- *Most Valuable Offensive Lineman* - Gabe Stuckmayer
- *Most Valuable Offensive Back* - Jacob White
- *Most Valuable Receiver* - Ethan Robran
- *Offensive Player of the Year* - Sean Asangwe
- *Most Improved Player Offense* - Peter Thomas
- *Most Improved Player Defense* - Benton Blanchard
- *Special Teams Player of the Year* - Sean Asangwe
- *Scout Team Player of the Year* - Bob Kruse
- *Why We Play Team Player of the Year* - Jet Gish



District Awards

- *All District*
 - 1st Team: Sean Asangwe & Bradley Graunke
 - 2nd Team: Max Ladman & Ian Faber
- *Academic All District* - Charlie Brun, Peter Thomas, Benton Blanchard, Canon Braun, Max Ladman & Ethan Robran

Section Awards

- *All Section* - Gabe Stuckmayer & Cooper Jennie

Wrestling Begins!

The first Wrestling event of the season is in the books!

The Rockford Rockets traveled to Howard Lake to do a round robin tournament with Howard Lake -Waverly-Winsted, Rocori, and Kimball. It was a Varsity, JV, and Girls Individual tournament.



Notable results for the tournament: Roman Morgan won all of his matches and River Freshour won 3 of 4 matches. It was great to get back on the mat. There were some great matches and some that need work. Overall it was a great event!

Rocket School Store



SCHOOL STORE



December 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3	4 Store Hours 5-8:30pm	5	6 Holiday Market @RCC 9am-3pm
7 Holiday Market @ RCC 8am-3pm	8	9 Store Hours 5-8:30pm	10	11 Store Hours 5-8:30pm	12 Store Hours 5-8:30pm	13
14	15	16 Store Hours 5-8:30pm	17	18	19 Store Hours 5-8:30pm	20
21	22	23	24	25 Happy Holidays!	26	27
28	29	30	31	1 Happy New Years!		