



WELCOME

We are excited to bring to you our first Rock Brook School online newsletter *Rock Brook Review*. Twice a year we will catch you up on all of the exciting happenings at our school as well as inform you of upcoming events. We welcome your feedback so please feel free to get in touch with us with any ideas or suggestions or just to say "hi." So, sit back, relax and enjoy reading all about our wonderful students, staff and families.

Mary Caterson
Director

Upcoming Events

12/3/16 - Parents Night Out

2/4/17 - Parents Night Out

4/1/17 - Parents Night Out

5/4/17 - Annual Plant Sale

5/19/17 - Community Open House/Family Night

6/4/17- Rock Brook Celebration

Back to School

By: Principal Katie Hardgrove

Students returned to school on Tuesday, September 6th and with every new school year brings an opportunity for change and reflection. I am excited for the many programming initiatives that will continue for this school year. We are starting this school year off with 10 High School Students! This is our 3rd year of the program, and we have almost tripled the amount of students served since the first year. We continue our commitment to offering a technology-rich program, and have recently updated the Technology Plan for the next three years.

Our technology vision: We embrace technology as an essential teaching and learning tool that enables our students to realize their ability to become self directed learners. We believe that in providing our teachers access to various technological tools, they become stronger facilitators, thereby more effectively meeting the needs of the 21st Century Learning approach. We will ensure students and staff have continual access to a vast array of resources that encourage collaboration, project-based learning, application of critical thinking/creativity, communication and exploration skills.

Plan of Action for Infusing Technology:

- Provide students with daily access to multiple technology options throughout the school day;

- Facilitate student's development of a personalized learning experience with technology;
- Continue providing staff with professional learning/ development activities involving technology;
- Embrace digital assessments;
- Continue to update the school's social media outlets, including the website, Facebook, Twitter, school blog, etc. to allow families to easily access information relevant to their child's education.

Summer Program Highlights

Our extended school year (aka Summer Program) was a wonderful six weeks of fun and excitement. Our kids and staff had a blast participating in our very own Summer Olympics as well as taking trips to iPlay America, Gigglesberry Fair and Reading Cinema. Lego week was a lot of fun and included a visit from Bricks4Kidz.



Rock Brook Celebrates

On June 5th, we held our second annual fundraiser *Rock Brook Celebration ... An Evening of Creative Expression* at the Lodge at Montgomery. More than 100 guests joined us as we celebrated the arts. Led by artists from Princeton Wine & Design, guests painted a lovely summertime image. Additional highlights of the evening included student art displays and a musical performance by one of our very own alumnus. [Click here](#) for video of Michael's performance. The food, catered by Blawenburg Cafe, was delicious and the auction prizes were fabulous. **Mark your calendars for next year's *Rock Brook Celebration* on Sunday, June 4th!**



Blood Drive

On July 19th, the Community Blood Council of NJ held a blood drive at Rock Brook. Thank you to all who came out and donated blood. Each donation saves up to 3 lives. All donors received a pint for a pint coupon from Tiger's Tale and a free yoga class coupon from Princeton Center for Health & Yoga. A big thank you to both businesses for supporting our blood drive. To find out more about donating blood visit <http://givebloodnj.org/>.



Our Supporters

We are so grateful to the many individuals and businesses who support our school. Your contributions allow us to enhance the programs and services we provide to our students. Last year, the school purchased 40 new iPads, 10 laptops, 3 of which are touchscreen and educational software including Osmo, an educational concepts based gaming system; Dot & Dash for coding Robots; and Bugs and Buttons, bundles of different education and therapeutic applications.

If you would like to support to our school with a monetary donation, [click here](#). To find out about volunteer opportunities [click here](#). If you would like to learn more about providing work skill opportunities for our students please email me at maryc@rockbrook.org or call me at (908) 431-9500.

Our Champions

Each newsletter, we will be highlighting one Rock Brook student and one staff member.

Javier

Javier, is an 18-year old student in our high school program. Once a week he works at [Kismet Farm](#) to work at Club O.T.I.S., a special program which stands for Opportunity, Training, Inspiration and Support. Kismet Farm is a remarkable place where students with special needs can learn various aspects of farming. Students from Rock Brook School often visit the farm to help out in the garden and spend time with the animals. Javier has been hired by the farm and gets paid to spend a few hours a week making sure the farm is in tip-top shape. His job responsibilities include mowing the lawn, cleaning the barn, brushing the horses, cleaning out the chicken coop and he even helping to make a path in the woods.



"It's kind of hard work, but it makes me feel good," says Javier. He continues to say that one of the most important things about work is showing up on time. When asked his favorite task, with a big smile he responds mowing the grass. Javier works the riding mower and after some training he now does a terrific job mowing the grass in nice straight lines

"Javier has made wonderful progress on learning his new skill. Riding the mower is fun and he had to quickly learn that it was not a game but an expensive piece of machinery that does a lot of work on are farm. His ability to track and build discipline to compete a thorough job improved every week," says Anne Michaelson, owner of Kismet Farm.

With his earnings, Javier has purchased a wrestling video game. He also likes to buy hot chocolate at school on Fridays.

Another milestone for Javier is voting for the first time. He is registered to vote in this year's Presidential election. He worked with his brother and one of his teachers to fill out the registration form and has followed the election on the news. He's excited to cast his ballot.



Laurie Patullo - Physical Therapist

Since February 2003, Ms. Laurie has been making the students at Rock Brook stronger, happier and healthier. Described by her colleagues as a dedicated, hard-working professional, Laurie says she is inspired every single day by the amazing kids and supportive staff that she works with.

"This is the place I want to be," says Laurie.

With more than 20 years experience in the field, Laurie came to Rock Brook with a great deal of Physical Therapy experience from many different settings, including a major medical center and the public school system. What impressed Laurie the most about Rock Brook was when she witnessed the dedication of each and every faculty member. *"Every staff member knew every kid inside and out."* Laurie's favorite part of her job is the interdisciplinary aspect. She gets to work with OT, Speech and classroom teams. Considered the "ultimate professional" by her peers, Laurie has carried over an endeavor from her personal life to work. Laurie, her husband and 2 children are all World Title holders in Tai Kwon Do. Laurie says that [Martial Arts](#) have taught her the importance of a positive attitude and to focus on the solution instead of the problem. She wanted to share these principles with her co-workers by having her MA instructor come to RBS to do a team building exercise. Staff broke boards and really enjoyed this experience.

"We are so grateful to have Laurie at our school," says RBS Director Mary Caterson. *"The students love her and the staff admires and respects her. She definitely is a Rock Brook Champion."*

On the Road Again

On the Road Again - Rock Brook's theme for the 2016-17 Annual Appeal. With your generosity, we are looking to get more of our students out of the classroom and into the community. To do that, we are in need of funds to cover the cost of community activities, as well as the means to get there.



Community programming is an essential part of our curriculum. The cost to run this critical component is not covered by standard tuition. For our students, taking part in community activities offers them the chance to develop and apply social and behavioral skills. Community experiences for our students include grocery shopping, ordering food at a restaurant, going to the movies, and more. In addition, our high school students (ages 18-21), begin workplace training internships which allow them the opportunity to develop a career path. Our students are currently doing some filing at a local office, baking at a local dessert shop and taking care of animals at a local farm.

We are in need of funds to pay for additional staff for skills training during the community experiences which encourage increasing independent ability; transportation costs; admission fees; and shopping/restaurant expenses. Rock Brook currently has one small bus to transport students, but we would like to purchase an additional 16-passenger van. Also, we would like to buy a food cart (such as hot dog cart, ice cream cart, etc.) to take to festivals and community days. The carts will serve to provide job training experiences for students to run their own business.

If you would like to contribute to this year's annual fund, please [click here](#) or call (908) 431-9500.

ADDITIONAL WAYS THAT YOU CAN HELP SUPPORT ROCK BROOK SCHOOL



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