

The Ripple

Willow Creek
Learning
Center

Lauren Is the Spelling Bee Champion

Seventh-grader Lauren Ritz won the regional spelling bee sponsored by *The Vindicator* March 19th. She will compete in the Scripps's National Spelling Bee in Washington, D.C. in late May. In her first year of participation last year, Lauren was runner-up. Residing in Pennsylvania, she has been a student at WCLC since second grade.

Lauren went head-to-head for forty rounds with this year's runner-up, Max Lee, from Canfield. There were sixty-nine

rounds total in the bee, the longest in memory of WCLC teachers. En route to the championship, Lauren spelled these words: voortrekker, muishond, coati, galjoen, witloof, and gnathonic.

WCLC students will be able to track Lauren's progress at the national bee via the internet. In the past five years, Willow Creek has won three times and been runner-up twice.

Lauren was recently a guest on the WFMJ Today



Photo from The Vindicator

morning show. She was interviewed by Scott Schneider. You can watch Lauren's appearance at www.wfmj.com by selecting the WFMJ video link.

She also appeared on the Homework Express show on Thursday, March 31st.

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Special Events

- Bible Fair April 11-15
- Passover April 20
- Easter Break April 21-27
- Report Cards April 29
- Spring Program May 27
- Scripps Howard Spelling Bee in Washington, D.C.

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Juliette Giannini Parsons

Juliette Giannini Parsons sent this update for publication in WCLC's newsletter.

After graduating from Poland Seminary High School in 1999, I attended Yale University where I majored in History. I worked as a research assistant for the Chair of the Yale History Department and served on the Yale History Advisory Committee. While I was a student at Yale, I often thought about my previous education experience. Even though I was being taught by some of the top professors in the world at Yale, I realized that most of my best teachers were from Willow Creek Learning Center. Not only were the teachers at Willow Creek always willing to do anything for their students, but they used innovative teaching strategies to teach difficult subjects. While I was at Willow Creek, I did not realize how rare it was to analyze Shakespeare in fourth grade or to study algebra and trigonometry in sixth grade. We were doing incredibly high level work and I was having a great time doing it. Willow Creek prepared me for Yale. After reflecting on this, I

decided that I wanted to be a teacher and use the same techniques in my classroom that were used at Willow Creek.

When I graduated from Yale in 2003, I became a history teacher at an urban high school in Louisville, Kentucky through a Yale sponsored program for graduates of elite universities teaching in underserved areas. Many people had completely given up on these students. But I realized that with kindness and creativity, any student could learn difficult concepts. By transferring the methodology I had learned at Willow Creek I was able to teach much of the history I had learned at Yale. I was able to accomplish the same thing when I later went on to teach middle school students at a private school in Pennsylvania.

I eventually came to the conclusion that I wanted to be a History Professor, a career which would enable me to both teach and research history. I was accepted into the History doctorate program at the University of Southern California in 2008 and I am currently in my third year of the program. Soon



after being accepted, I was awarded a Provost Fellowship, a highly selective academic award for graduate school students, for five years.

I credit Willow Creek with giving me the skills to succeed as a teacher and as a student. And it was never a grueling process. I always look back at Willow Creek as a place filled with great joy.

Jackie Ridzon Mercer

Jackie Ridzon Mercer is a 2006 graduate and valedictorian of Crestview High School. She is a 2009 summa cum laude graduate of the Beeghly College of Education of Youngstown State University with a 4.0 gpa. While at YSU, Jackie served as president of Kappa Delta Pi, the education honor society.

She won the Dean's Award for a paper about young adult literature at the 2009 QUEST Day of Research at YSU and the Outstanding Student Teacher Award in 2009.

Jackie is currently working on a Master's degree in English and plans to pursue a PhD in Special Education or English Literature at Kent State University. She is an English teacher at

Crestview High School.

Jackie writes,

"I decided a long time ago that I was going to be a teacher. The value of education and lifelong learning was instilled in me during my years at Willow Creek. Not only did I gain an advantage academically, I also learned to work hard to achieve my life's goals. I was also blessed with a strong Christian foundation at WCLC that has enabled me to be the salt of the earth and to witness to those around me. What I learned during my time there is truly priceless and can not adequately be described. As I walk into my classroom every morning, I thank God for the opportunities that I had and I hope



that I can pass on what I have learned to future generations."

Math Counts

James Haddad, Cooper Johnson, Ryan Moore and Lauren Ritz are the members of WCLC's 2011 Math Counts team. Samantha Fritz and Paul Ugo- lini are the alternates. They competed against twenty-four local schools at Youngstown State University on February 10th. James placed first as an individual participant. Willow Creek placed first as a team. James was also first place in the Countdown Round.

The Mahoning Valley Society of Professional Engineers hosted a banquet for the winners on February 22nd. They presented the team with trophies and t-shirts. James also received a savings bond.

Their victory earned the team the opportunity to compete at the state level. They competed against fifty teams at Columbus State Community College on March 12th. This represents the first time that a WCLC Math Counts team has advanced to the state contest.

James joins several former students who have qualified to advance to the state competition. They include Steven Burns, Jonathan Haski, Alex Sieman (two appearances), and John Umble.



Music and Art

We are currently practicing for our Spring Program, "Amerikids."

The Children's Symphony Concert is scheduled for Thursday, April 7th at Powers Auditorium.

There are several winners

Amerikids *May 27, 2011*

from Willow Creek for the Symphony Art Contest.

The children's artwork was entered in the annual

Green Team's Go Green Poster Placemat Contest. The artwork of kindergartners through sixth graders was displayed at the Boardman Library in March. The students are working on Ukrainian eggs.

Book Fair

Our recent Scholastic Book Fair was a huge success. Due to the large participation, the school earned Scholastic dollars totaling almost \$1,500 which can be redeemed in books and equipment. In addition,

teachers were able to select over \$600 in books to use in their classrooms and the school library. Circus-themed Family Fun Night was the highlight of the Book Fair. Volunteers from Kohl's Department Store

helped with the food and games. Because of their employee participation, Kohl's gave the school a \$500 grant. Many thanks to Mrs. Julie Gunger for organizing this event and the many parents who helped.

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Registration for pre-school and elementary is currently underway for the 2011-2012 school year.

Please contact Mrs. Hoffmaster by telephone or email for more information and/or to schedule a tour.

Home of Champions 2011

Vindicator Spelling Bee... Lauren Ritz, champion

(Willow Creek students have been either champion or runner-up for the last five years)

Math Counts

1st Place Team, advanced to state competition in Columbus

James Haddad, first place individual and winner of Countdown Round

Geography Bee

Cooper Johnson, qualifier for State competition for the third consecutive year

Science Fair

Paul Ugolini, qualifier for State competition for the second year

Ana Johnson, alternate for State competition

James Haddad, qualifier for State competition for the second year

Best of the Best

Willow Creek was voted Best of Youngstown Award for Childcare services for the third straight year. Thank you, parents, for your votes of confidence.



Fundraisers

Many thanks to all who participated in all of our fundraisers this spring.