



The Richardson School

# BOBCAT BEAT

Summer 2023

Commit | Respond | Educate

## AN ENTREPRENEURIAL VISION

When given the chance to ask staff about Kevin Silkey, one word kept popping up in every conversation, that word was leadership. Kevin founded The Richardson School back in 2011 along with MyPath (then ORP) CEO Jim Balestrieri with the hope of creating a school that would provide the structure and attention that some students need. Terry Leahy, the current CEO of MyPath, remembers when it first began, "I have told this story many times, but the origin of TRS goes back to a meeting he and I had more than 10 years ago in the old HIL offices in West Allis where he was borrowing an office. He had a blank yellow legal pad, and the topic for discussion that day was, 'How To Start a School.' So we brainstormed on what we would need. 'Building.' 'Licensed School Administrator.' 'Teachers.' 'Staff.' 'School District Need Assessment.' And then he was off and running. And now here we are! I should also note that Kevin asked a very important question before he began his TRS journey: Will I still have a job at (then) ORP if the idea doesn't pan out? Jim Balestrieri and I said, absolutely. It is critical for the future growth of MyPath that our leaders know that they have the freedom to try out new ideas and services, and they will have a safety net and support if what we think is a great idea does not work out. That is critical to shape an entrepreneurial organization that is always learning."



Twelve years later, TRS has opened five schools, served over 130 districts and over 600 students. Holding a presence in all five of the schools, staff would often be able to meet and interact with Kevin both personally, when they would ask him advice, and professionally when he would be

directly helping with the students. Many of the staff viewed Kevin as the face of TRS representing the value and drive of the organization.

Beginning in 2023 Kevin accepted a new role in the organization, becoming MyPath's Director of Emerging Services. In this role Kevin will focus on finding new locations for not only TRS, but all

of MyPath's companies. As sad as it is to see him go, we could not be more excited for Kevin in his new position. Kim Ray, Chief Operating Officer of MyPath, put it well when she said "Kevin's dedication to The Richardson School, its students and staff has been unwavering since he opened the first school in 2011. Hundreds of students later, five schools in total, and hundreds of lives touched, the TRS schools thrive due to Kevin's dedication, hard work, passion, and compassion. The foundation is solid, the future is bright, I wish Kevin well in his next endeavor. I'm excited all of MyPath will benefit from his entrepreneurial vision as he helps to shape our future."

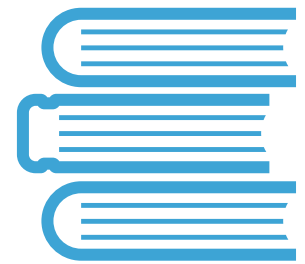


*"The foundation is solid, the future is bright, I wish Kevin well in his next endeavor. I'm excited all of MyPath will benefit from his entrepreneurial vision" - Kim Ray*

Kevin is succeeded by Derek Goodman as Executive Director of The Richardson School. Derek was the Executive Director at Paragon Community Services, another MyPath Company. We are very excited about what the future holds for MyPath.



# TRS-Brookfield Science Fair



## A Judge's Perspective

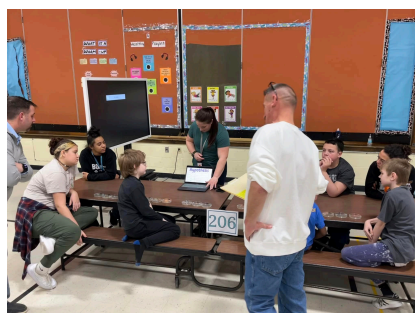
Watching our students succeed is what everyone at The Richardson School (TRS) strives for. That's what gets us up out of bed and why we show up to work each and every day. My name is Tom Mitchell and I've been lucky enough to work for TRS for four and a half years. Currently I work at our school in Appleton as the Admissions Coordinator, but when I started in 2018, I was at our location in Brookfield as an instructional aide working directly in the classroom with our students. There I built many relationships with staff and students, and it wasn't an easy choice to move up to Appleton and take a new position. So, I was overjoyed when asked to return and judge the science fair this year. I was very excited to go and see the growth of the students that I knew there, as well as meet the new ones who enrolled after I left.



There are seven classrooms in Brookfield and each class presented a project. From measuring the biggest splats to monitoring different bacteria around the school, each class had something unique to present. My two fellow judges were Kevin Silkey and Andy Burbank, who you will read more about in this Bobcat Beat. The three of us listened to each presentation and presented each class with an award. From "Messiest", to "Most Blown Away", to "Most Likely to Become the Next Bill Nye", we were able to highlight all of the students and how hard they worked on their projects.



Watching students come together and share their hard work was a very rewarding experience. The classrooms would even stay and watch the others present their findings. We were able to see everything we teach at TRS in one afternoon; the academics we do everyday, the social skills they have grown, to both help in their own presentation but also as they encourage their peers, and the sense of feeling like they belong to the school and feel pride in being a Bobcat. The best word I can use to sum up this whole experience is pride. Pride in our students and pride in our school.







# THE DUCT TAPE OF:



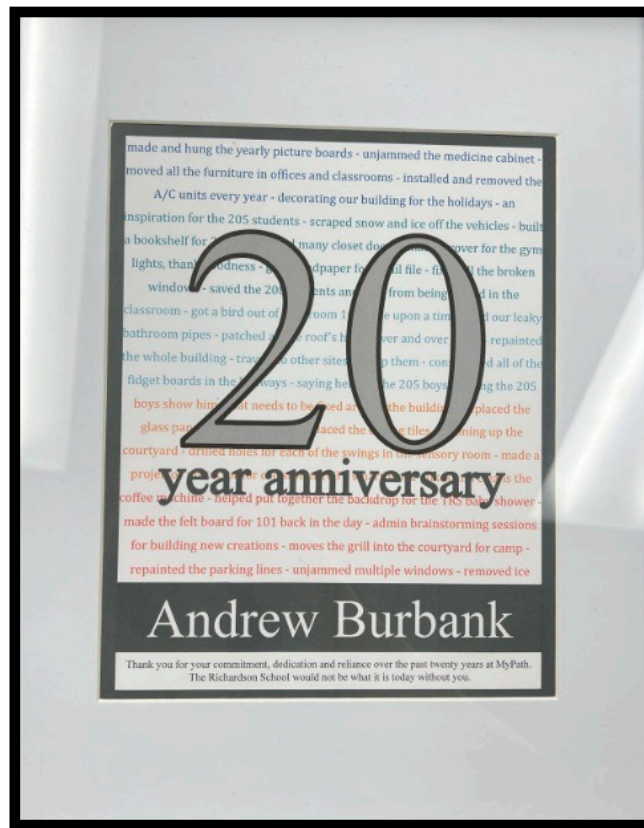
*Holding us Together for the Last 20 Years*

The year was 2002. Kelly Clarkson had won the very first American Idol contest, the national average cost of a gallon of gasoline was \$1.61, and Andy Burbank began working at Genesee Lake School as a Maintenance Assistant. Little did anyone know at the time what an impact this new hire would have over the next two decades.

Fast forward to fall of 2022. It was with deep appreciation that The Richardson School congratulated Andy on 20 years of service at MyPath. He began his journey at Genesee Lake School (ODTC at the time), then joined the ranks of The Richardson School (TRS). Andy shares, "When I volunteered to go to West Allis one day a week to help get them up and running, I really enjoyed those days, so I stayed on helping them out. When Brookfield opened, I was able to help them get up and running as well, and then a full time position opened and I couldn't pass it up."

With his willingness to jump in wherever needed and invaluable ability to fix and build, Andy has helped open the buildings for all five TRS locations. "Handy Andy", as he is affectionately known, enjoys making a difference behind the scenes, but does not shy away if opportunities to help

the students in a more direct fashion come his way. Over the years, they have spent time with him doing everything from gardening and yard work to making birdhouses in art class.



From light tables and sequin walls in sensory rooms to the Bobcat Bistro, Andy's creations are present throughout both TRS-West Allis and TRS-Brookfield. His favorite? The giant Lite Brite. Perhaps his biggest contribution has not been any one accomplishment, but rather his steady and dependable presence. Regardless of the project or problem, Andy shows up willing and able to help. When asked what he loves most about his job, among other things Andy states, "Being around all the kids and seeing them develop over their time with us, and all the relationships that have been built over the years with current and past employees. I know that every day I walk into work, a new adventure awaits me."

Nicole Schmidt, Special Education Supervisor at TRS-Brookfield sums it up perfectly: "It's clear we (TRS) would not be who we are today without Andy's helping hand, creative craftsmanship and reliability."



Thank you for 20  
years Andy!





## APPLETON

2331 E. Lourdes Dr.  
Appleton, WI 54915  
920-944-9996

## BELOIT

321 Olympian Blvd.  
Beloit, WI 53511  
608-473-3244

## BROOKFIELD

175 S. Barker Rd.  
Brookfield, WI 53045  
262-468-0700

## MADISON

2802 International Ln.  
Madison, WI 53704  
608-421-5267

## WEST ALLIS

6753 W. Rogers St.  
West Allis, WI 53219  
414-540-8500

