

ROMEEO

Nonprofit exploration fair is Feb. 6

Event at school will connect students with community groups



Eighth-grade students in the Romeo Middle School leadership class will be student ambassadors at the upcoming nonprofit exploration fair on Feb. 6. PHOTO COURTESY OF ROMEEO COMMUNITY SCHOOL

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Sometimes the most important learning experiences happen outside of a classroom.

Jennifer Raicevich, a 24-year teacher for Romeo Community Schools in her first year as an academy coach, has organized Romeo Middle School's first-ever nonprofit exploration fair set to take place Feb. 6, 9-11:30 a.m., in the school's gymnasium.

"This event is based on service learning and making the middle schooler a better and more well-rounded person," said Raicevich. "The students are wonderful, but at this age they can be a little egotistical and something like this that connects them with the community can make them realize there is a world around them."

More than 60 nonprofit organizations will be in attendance from small, local groups like Romeo Open Handed and Friends of the St. Clair River to large organizations like the American Red Cross. Students will have a chance to talk to representatives from the nonprofits and find those that connect with their interests. That connection might open up a whole range of possibilities for a career or volunteering or working together on community projects.

"A student who is interested in animals might connect with an animal rescue, learn more about the organization and at some point, identify a problem in connection with animal welfare and work with a nonprofit to come up with a solution," said Raicevich.

This event is part of the first year of the transformation into the Academies at Romeo Middle School in partnership with Ford Next Generation Learning (NGL). Romeo is the first middle school in the state to transform to an academy model at the middle school level.

"The academy model is based around service learning," said Raicevich. "We have a profile of a middle school scholar and we are trying to give the students experiences with leadership, self direction, and all of the 21st century skills people are looking for."

Those attributes are meant not only to help students in the classroom, but once they leave school to pursue a career and also in their interactions with friends, family, and people in the community.

"Even something as simple as how to speak to an adult that you don't know can be learned through an event like this," said Raicevich. "The kids are very excited and students from our 8th grade leadership class will be student ambassadors and will each be assigned to work with three or four of the nonprofits and make sure they have what they need.

"This is a great opportunity for those kids to step up and take a leadership role."

This first nonprofit exploration fair will be open to all Romeo Middle School students. Going forward, it will be for the sixth grade students only and will be where kids can make their initial contact with a nonprofit. Seventh graders will engage in some kind of service learning with the nonprofit of their choice and eighth graders will work with a nonprofit on some kind of community project.

“The concept of a nonprofit exploration fair began with our staff imagining a new way to support our students,” said Brad Martz, The Academies at Romeo Middle School principal. “The event ties into our school’s core values of teaching students to be accepting, responsible and engaged. We are excited to invite leaders in the nonprofit sector to our school to share their vision for a better way to prepare young people for the future.”