



Jason Coppola has been recognized with the 2010 Excel Award

## Toledo Blade Math Teacher Wins Prestigious Award

Written by Joyce Cattelane

Jason Coppola, a fifth-grade teacher at Toledo Blade Elementary School, has been recognized with the 2010 Excel Award by the Foundation for Excellence in Education as one of two Sarasota County teachers whose students have shown progress in mathematics for three consecutive years. Also recognized was Taunya Fogleman of Southside Elementary in Sarasota.

Winning teachers were selected using a statistical model which measures the annual academic growth of all students in reading and math, using four years of Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) data provided by the Florida Department of Education.

Coppola was recognized for achieving the greatest learning gains in math with all students and especially with students from low-income families.

He has been teaching at Toledo Blade five years. Prior to teaching, he worked 11 years as a counselor at a drug rehabilitation center for teenagers in Bradenton, which has since closed. Before he was hired at Toledo Blade he was a substitute teacher for a year, and during that time he worked with 5th graders, and he "loved it." He applied to 100 schools in five counties and only one person called him back, Principal Chris Renouf. "I owe everything to him."

Why do his students do well? "I am very disciplined. My expectations are very high and I'm a good motivator. I try to turn their weaknesses into strengths. I have two daughters and I treat my students as if they were my own kids. If they act out or don't put out their best effort, I get on them. We work hard and play hard."

When asked why math is so important in today's world, he said, "You use it everywhere you go. You need to balance a checkbook and when you go grocery shopping. Even in the age of computers, you need to know math."

"Great teachers produce great students," said Jeb Bush, chairman of the Foundation for Excellence in Education and former governor of Florida. "This year I am honored to recognize 76 extraordinary Florida educators for their proven excellence in the classroom." The awards will be presented at the Celebration of Teaching on October 30 in Orlando.

So when your child can add numbers in their head quicker than you, thank a teacher like Jason Coppola!

For more information on the Foundation for Excellence in Education, visit their website at [www.excelined.org](http://www.excelined.org).

## Economics of Life

### Junior Achievement Day at Heron Creek Middle School

Written by Jessica Pilkins

On May 20, eighth grade students at Heron Creek Middle School will be taught real life skills by trained volunteers at a Junior Achievement day program titled Economics for Success. Junior Achievement, a non-profit organization, brings economic programs to schools to help young people understand the economics of life. Middle school students will learn the value of workforce readiness, entrepreneurship and financial literacy through these programs.

Volunteers from the community are invited to use their personal experiences to give students a practical and realistic look at the economy of life. Training sessions are required for all volunteers. Junior Achievement creates the kits, materials and games needed and volunteers spend time facilitating the lessons with students for a couple of hours at selected schools. Junior Achievement holds programs throughout Sarasota County.

Michele Groves, academic advisor for USF Sarasota-Manatee, has participated in past Junior Achievement days and encourages her education, business and psychology students to volunteer. The program at Heron Creek will work with students on "creating a budget for housing expenses and food expenses," explains Michele. "That was one of the humorous aspects; students thought they were going to spend \$200 a month on rent." She said that one new item added to the curriculum is talking to students about credit scores. Such topics are common place to volunteers but are going to be important to students one day. "It was when they have that 'aha' moment, exposing them to all of these ideas and having them think about their lives down the road. They don't really think past tomorrow," says Michele.

A total of 38 volunteers are needed for 19 classrooms. Two volunteers will teach together in one class. The training session for the Heron Creek Junior Achievement day will be held on May 11 at the USF campus in North Port. For more information about Junior Achievement or to volunteer, visit [www.jasarasota.org](http://www.jasarasota.org).

# Our Community



YouthArts Fest - April 2, 2011 By Arts and Cultural Alliance of Sarasota County

## YouthArts Fest in Sarasota

On April 2, Five Points Park in downtown Sarasota was the scene for an art festival featuring area youth. Sponsored by the Arts and Cultural Alliance of Sarasota County, YouthArts Fest had more than 500 students from local schools showcasing their talents in various performances throughout the day. Student art was also displayed in an exhibit at Selby Library. For more information on YouthArts Fest, contact Scott Ferguson at (941) 927-9000, ext. 31148.

## Publix Presents Check to United Way

On April 15, Publix Charities presented a check to the United Way of South Sarasota County at the 4173 Tami Trail Publix in Venice, on the corner of Jacaranda Boulevard. This year's check was an all-time record of \$179,900, compared to last year's \$161,000. For more information, contact Steve Brett at (941) 484-4811.

## Local Food Banks Receive Donation at Rays Game

The Mosaic Company presented a donation check to the Harry Chapin Food Bank at the start of the March 26 Tampa Bay Rays game at Charlotte Sports Park. The check presentation was a celebration of Mosaic's new Home Runs for Food partnership with the Harry Chapin Food Bank and the Tampa Bay Rays to help feed hungry families in Charlotte County. For every home run hit by the Rays, Mosaic contributes \$500 to local food relief efforts. While the Harry Chapin Food Bank serves Charlotte, Collier, Glades, Hendry and Lee counties, Mosaic's donation will be earmarked to help overcome



hunger specifically in Charlotte County. For more information, contact Kaley Miller at (941) 575-1387 or e-mail [Kaley.Miller@MosaicCo.com](mailto:Kaley.Miller@MosaicCo.com).

## Sarasota Memorial Names Employee and Leader of the Year

In March, Sarasota Memorial Health Care System recognized its EXCEL Employee of the Year and Leader of the Year, two of the organization's most prestigious awards. Physical Therapist Mark Moore was singled out as this year's EXCEL Employee of the Year. Colleagues describe the longtime staff member as "dedicated and compassionate." In fact, Moore broke the hospital's record for the most nominations ever submitted for the employee award. Clinical Information Systems Director Pamela Ramhofer was named Sarasota Memorial's Leader of the Year. Ramhofer is known as an excellent communicator, role model and mentor. Sarasota Memorial's EXCEL Program was established in 1985 by former hospital board member Jim Tollerton to recognize the health system's outstanding employees. For more information, contact Kim Savage at (941) 917-6271.

## 3rd Annual Girls S.T.E.M. Summit to be offered at USF Sarasota-Manatee

The 3rd Annual S.T.E.M. Summit will be held at the University of South Florida Sarasota-Manatee (USFSM) on May 14. Middle school girls interested in science, technology, engineering and math are invited to spend a day exploring these fields through hands-on activities, workshops and interaction with local S.T.E.M. professionals. Last year, girls were able to simulate the oil spill in one workshop and created snow in another. The S.T.E.M. fields are generally dominated by men and the purpose of this workshop is to encourage middle school girls to pursue the fields they are interested in while giving them the necessary tools and information. Parents/guardians will also be invited to attend a workshop at the end of the Summit, giving them the necessary tools to continue encouraging S.T.E.M. and other education at home. The event is free but space is limited. For more information or to register, visit [www.sarasota.usf.edu/stem](http://www.sarasota.usf.edu/stem).