So turn the page to go back to the future … Enjoy the journey!
Elders Ridge Academy
"Black in 1832 a few persons began receiving pri-
vately to Rev. Alexander Donaldson in the second
story of a log springhouse at Elders Ridge."

This was the beginning of the famous Elders Ridge Academy. With no thought
of an institution evolving from the lessons he gave, Rev. Donaldson agreed to
give private instruction in the classics and
other branches to young men preparing to
enter college. However, during the winter and
spring of 1847, the number of applicants
for instruction had so increased that Rev.
Donaldson was faced with the decision of
either giving up the instruction or obtaining assistance in teaching.

J.M. Barnett of Blairsville, then an undergraduate in
Jefferson College, was engaged as an assistant. On April 16, 1847, the academy school
was opened at Elders Ridge. The schoolroom was a small one
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designe...
Elders Ridge–A Rich History

Thom had erected boarding houses. During the same time boarding rose to $1.25 and increased from year to year until it was raised to $3.50. In 1849 a woman’s department of the academy was opened under the care of Miss Martha Bracken but it was abandoned in 1858 because of the difficulty in securing suitable boarding places for them. Some years later the academy admitted females upon condition they would keep up with the males in class work and its doors were never closed to women after that. In 1876 Rev. Donaldson, wishing to secure in a legal way the perpetuation of the academy after he would be separated from it, selected a board of 10 trustees from the different religious denominations in the vicinity. The agreement contained the condition that in selecting the faculty, the principal should always be a Presbyterian. To this board of trustees, Rev. Donaldson conveyed all his right, title, interest and claim to the academy building, its grounds, etc. asking in return that whenever any of his descendants should be sent to it as a pupil, no charge should be made for tuition. In 1885 he sent a letter of resignation as principal of the school to the board. It was accepted and Professor T.B. Elder who had been associated with him as assistant for nearly half the time since the school’s organization was chosen principal. Around 1910 the school ran into financial troubles and was about to be sold when Lucius W. Robinson, president of the Rochester and Pittsburgh Coal Company agreed to give the school $3000 to help pay off the debt and turn the school over to a board of trustees in five years, provided it could be conducted in a self-supporting fashion. In 1914 the Elders Ridge Vocational School was established. It was the pioneer school of its type in the state. On October 31, 1932, the gymnium with the original log academy burned. In 1933, a large yellow brick building was erected on the site of the old gym. Most of it was destroyed by fire on March 4, 1956.

Answer: Indiana Gazette, Indiana, Pennsylvania.

The campus of the vocational school consisted of three buildings. The first building, the Academy Building, was constructed in 1852. A red brick building, it contained three classrooms and stood on the site of the present Donaldson Building. The Academy Building was destroyed by fire in 1956. The other two vocational buildings were the gymnasium and the dormitory. The gymnasium (foreground), a wooden structure, was built in 1903. It housed the gymnasium, the agricultural classrooms and a laboratory. Also destroyed by fire in 1932, it was located on the site that would later become the Althouse building. The third building, the dormitory, housed boys who had no transportation to school. The principal’s residence and the homemaking department were also located here. The building was torn down in 1954. Photo courtesy Indiana County Historical Society, Indiana, Pa.

Elders Ridge High School Alma Mater

Where the top of Elders Ridge meets the eastern sky, proudly stands our Alma Mater on the hilltop high. Flag we love, blue and white, floats for aye, E.R.H.S. ‘o thee, may thy sons be true and loyal to thy memory.

Apollo-Ridge History Detectives

The 40 Years in 40 Days Innovative Projects Grant, funded by the Apollo-Ridge Education Foundation, included the creation of the Apollo-Ridge History Detectives Club. The History Detectives — Ashley Worst, Kayleigh Jenkins, Shannon Bittering, Michael Glasser and Michael Connor — researched the District’s history by searching through yearbooks, newspaper clippings, school board meeting minutes and, finally, by inviting District stakeholders to participate in the Speakers Series. The Detectives developed a Scavenger Hunt Trivia Game to strengthen the school / community / business bond. The Game served as a fund raiser for the 2011 Learning Festival — a celebration of the 40 year history of the District. Funds also supported the development and construction of the Apollo-Ridge Community Fitness Trail.

The 40 Years in 40 Days Trivia Challenge — see if you can answer these questions about Apollo-Ridge!

1. On what date was the Apollo-Ridge School District authorized to be established by the Department of Public Instruction?
2. Name the reasons for Elders Ridge, Apollo and Apollo-Ridge, respectively.
3. Name the school colors for Elders Ridge, Apollo and Apollo-Ridge, respectively.
4. On what street was the “red building” located?
5. On what date did Apollo-Ridge High School open?
6. On what date was the Apollo-Ridge High School dedicated and name three faculty members still on staff?
7. What happened on the fifth day students occupied the new Apollo-Ridge High School that caused school to be closed?
8. What was unique about the newly constructed High School?
9. Where was the first public performance of the Apollo-Ridge marching band?
10. Name two High School rooms that now serve different purposes than originally designed and who one was the only room with double doors.
11. At the end of what school year did the first class graduate from Apollo-Ridge?
12. Name the Drama Club production at Elders Ridge that turned the school into a “broadway” production.
13. When was the first Apollo-Ridge High School yearbook published and who was the editor in chief?
14. When did the Elders Ridge Academy open and in what year did the Elders Ridge Elementary School close?
15. On May 4, 1991, try destroying the Elders Ridge High School. Where were classes held for the remainder of that school year?
16. When did the Elders Ridge Academy open and in what year did the Elders Ridge Elementary School close?
17. Why were Elders Ridge football games popular in the 1960’s?
18. Which elementary school building was occupied the new Apollo-Ridge High School?
19. On what date was the Apollo-Ridge High School re-dedicated by the Department of Public Instruction?
20. Name the two locations considered for Apollo-Ridge’s campus.
21. What was unique about the newly constructed High School?
22. Name the two locations considered for Apollo-Ridge’s campus.
23. Why were Elders Ridge football games popular in the 1960’s?
24. In what school year did the kindergarten first class graduate from Apollo-Ridge?
25. To whom was the 1979 Elders Ridge Girls Varsity Basketball championship team dedicated?
26. What was unique about the newly constructed High School?
27. Name the head coach and three players who were on the championship track team in 1984.
28. Name the coach and three players who were on the championship track team in 1984.
29. On what date did Apollo-Ridge clinch their 2nd straight Allegheny Conference football title and what team did they beat?
30. Apollo and Elders Ridge were football rivals for fourteen years. How many games did Apollo-Ridge win?
31. Which Apollo-Ridge graduate completed high school with a perfect attendance record.
32. What group began advocating for a new Elders Ridge Elementary School building in the 70’s?
33. Name the school colors for Elders Ridge, Apollo and Apollo-Ridge, respectively.
34. How did the Elders Ridge Academy re-open in 1884?
35. On what date was the Apollo-Ridge High School re-dedicated by the Department of Public Instruction?
36. Name the PTA program that challenges students to create an art inspired by a specific theme.
37. Name the two locations considered for Apollo-Ridge’s campus.
38. How did the Elders Ridge Academy open and in what year did the Elders Ridge Elementary School close?
39. What was unique about the newly constructed High School?
40. Name the head coach and three players who were on the championship track team in 1984.

Answers on page 19!
ELDERS RIDGE VOCATIONAL SCHOOL

Although a number of influential citizens discussed the idea of a high school, it was decided that graduates of a vocational school would be of more value to the community. This was the first state-supported school of its kind in Pennsylvania. Just as the Academy enjoyed many years of success and acclaim, so did the Vocational School. Although academic subjects were taught, the emphasis was on practical training in areas such as agriculture for male students and home-making for female students. Tuition to the school was free to those who passed the entrance exam. A number of the buildings used by the Academy were used by the Vocational School.


ELDERS RIDGE HIGH SCHOOL

In 1937, the Vocational School ceased and became a high school for the students from Elders Ridge. In 1951, a fire, which started in the vocational shop, gutted the building. Ten classrooms were destroyed and only four rooms at the front of the building were saved. The estimated loss was $334,000 at the third fire at the school within a 15 year period.

At the time of the fire, the Donaldson Memorial Building was under construction. On March 4, 1954, the Donaldson and Althouse Memorial Buildings were dedicated. The Donaldson building was named after Dr. Alexander Donaldson and the Allshouse building after Charles Althouse, a former school board president. Also dedicated at that time was the Yuha Memorial Field named in memory of John Yuha, a student who died after injuries suffered during a football game.

When Elders Ridge merged with Apollo in 1969, the Elders Ridge High School became known as the Apollo-Ridge High School. The buildings were used in this capacity until 1975 when the new Apollo-Ridge High School opened in Spring Church. In 1975, the Donaldson Memorial building became the Elders Ridge Elementary. The Althouse building was torn down in the interim.

ENRICHING EDUCATION

The Apollo-Ridge School District faces many challenges in educating the students of the district. The most urgent one is the need to continue providing quality educational opportunities for students and the chance to succeed in life.

The Apollo-Ridge Education Foundation was formed in 1996 to provide concerned individuals with the opportunity to contribute tax deductible, charitable donations to enhance educational programs. Over the years, the Foundation has distributed more than $25,000 to classroom teachers. Projects funded include Civil War photography; Art in Residence program through a partnership with IUP; a virtual autopsy where students watched a videotaped autopsy and solved for cause of death; a fifth grade Invention Convention; visits by the Mobile Ag Science Lab from Penn State University; a World War II retrospective celebrating the 60 year anniversary of the end of the war; and a birding club tracking blue bird activity in Pennsylvania.

The Foundation is heavily involved in strengthening community relationships through memberships in the Apollo Area Historical Society; the Apollo Area Business Association; the Strongland Chamber of Commerce; and Armstrong County Chamber of Commerce. Currently students volunteer at the local food banks and participate in community clean-up efforts. A plan is underway to involve senior citizens in a volunteer program that offers tax rebates for service to the school.

The Foundation invites local businesses and community leaders to participate on the Board of Trustees to further its mission of enriching education.
**Schools Make Good Neighbors**

**Community Engagement**

Investing in the school district where your home or business is located is a wise move. Good school districts pique the interest of sophisticated home buyers. School districts have a major impact on home values. Good districts increase property values. Potential home buyers want to live in good school districts. Increased home ownership translates into valued consumers for area businesses. Increased consumption generates interest by potential business owners. More businesses mean less tax burden on residents. Increased tax revenues provide better resources for schools. Better educational programming increases student achievement. Increased student achievement draws potential home buyers.

**What is Community Engagement?**

Ongoing, collaborative process in which the school district works with the public to build understanding, guidance, and active support for education of children in the community.

**Assessment of Past/Current Activities**

School/Sponsored Events
- Athletic Competitions (Musical Chairs, 1966)
- Drama Club Productions (Dinner/Dance, 1968)
- Student/Parent Literature (Technology) Re-Use Project (April 2001–May 2002)

Track
- Athletic Events and Community Health/Medical Resources
- Stadium
- Goalie Game
- Montour Field
- Stadium

Elementary Libraries
- Community Service Projects
- Law Enforcement and First Responders
- Internet Safety (Cyber/Bullying)

Evaluating Public Through Various Forums
- Weekly Newsletters
- School/Day Care

Superintendent Focus Sessions
- Key Communications & Community Meetings

Rock the PSA Pops/Rally
- Educate Through Entertainment

Open Dialogue with State Representative
- Invitations to school functions

Sharing of District Resources
- Computer/Technology and the School/Day Care

Revealing of Education Foundation
- No longer “active” but continuing to fund

Elementary Programs
- Community Service through Law Enforcement
- First Responders

Future Plans
- Communication
- Focus sessions
- Increased Koccer to the Schools
- Facebook

Health
- Fitness Trail
- Spring Bingo
- YMCA
- Biking/Run
- Yoga

Healthy Armstrong
- Drumming
- Health and Healthfulness Initiative

Future Plans
- Community Involvement (through AABA)

Community Engagement
- Business/community/school bond

**Assessment of Past/Current Activities**

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- Drumming
- Health and Healthfulness Initiative

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- Community Involvement (through AABA)

Community Engagement
- Business/community/school bond

**What is the Value of Community Engagement?**

Increased student achievement and strengthening of the whole child

Enhanced role of schools in community

Educates the public on the programs and resources offered by the school

Strengths representative democracy

Develops advocates for the school within the community.

**Future Plans**

Communication

Focus sessions

Health

Healthy Armstrong

Community Involvement

Business/community/school bond

**New Buildings at Elders Ridge Joint High School Near Completion**

Ridge Echo, Elders Ridge, Pa., October 6, 1953

By early November the students of Elders Ridge High School will be housed in an ultra-modern school building. This new structure will have the most modern, adequate facilities available.

Upon completion, the facilities will include physics and chemistry laboratories, music, art, bookkeeping, kitchen, cafeteria, and library. There will also be a combined auditorium and gymnasium.

The interior of the building will also be the “last word” in school beauty. When the building is completed, the senior high students will utilize it.

An addition to the partially ruined old building is being completed. This project will house the industrial arts and vocational agriculture shops. The classrooms in the old building will be used by the junior high students.

Upon termination of construction of both projects, the school will contain accommodations for about 750 students. The enrollment this fall is exactly 500.

A dedication is being planned when both the Donaldson Memorial Building and the junior high buildings are completed.

**Elders Ridge – A Rich History**

The photo above is typical of classroom in the Donaldson Memorial Building as it appeared during the last year of use for elementary education. The floors were carpeted and the ceilings were low. The rooms were brightly lit and had colorful posters on the walls. A computerized heating system controlled the climate within each classroom. Internet service and computers were slowly making their way into the building.

The Donaldson Memorial Building was vacated in December 2003 when students were moved to the Apollo-Ridge Elementary School. It still stands today, owned by a family from the Pittsburgh area.
In April of 1975, the new Apollo-Ridge High School was opened to students. The opening of the $5.3 million building brought an end to many years of planning and many months of construction. Ground-breaking ceremonies were held for the school on Thursday, October 25, 1973. Among the people attending the ceremony was Milton Shapp, Governor of Pennsylvania.

A few of the special features inside the new building included a beautiful library, a gymnasium with a tartan floor, various student activity rooms, agriculture and industrial arts shops, and an auditorium that could be divided into five classrooms. The outside athletic facilities included tennis courts, a soccer field, a football field, and an all-weather track. At the time of the merger, the boys’ athletic program consisted of cross-country, track and field, football, basketball and baseball teams. Girls could compete in basketball, softball, and volleyball.

The architectural design of the building was selected for exhibit at the 1976 National Convention of the American Association of School Administration. The school’s design was the 25th selected by the association in a nineteen year period.

Included in the planning for the construction of the new high school was the abandonment of three obsolete elementary buildings—the two at the belinus campus and one at Coal Run.

The former Apollo High School, a yellow brick building on Pennsylvania Avenue in Apollo, became a middle school building. The Donaldson Memorial building in Elders Ridge became an elementary school.

In 1988, the Middle School was added to the High School in Spring building in Spring Church and the yellow brick building was sold. It is now known as the Tiger Gym.

In 1993, the high school gymnasiums, inclusive of the classrooms to be reconfigured. Initially the classrooms had no doors, however, the sound from one classroom became a distraction for a neighboring classroom and doors were later added.

The High School

TOP RIGHT: An aerial view of the High School in 1976 before the addition of the Middle School.

BOTTOM RIGHT: The entrance to the High School as it appears in 2011. A unique design feature of the high school was movable walls enabling the classrooms to be reconfigured. Initially the classrooms had no doors, however, the sound from one classroom became a distraction for a neighboring classroom and doors were later added.

Interactive white boards are in every regular and special education classrooms thanks to grants written by District personnel.

Every grade level in every subject showed positive academic growth according to PVALAS—an indicator of individual student progress from one grade level to the next.

A revised maintenance plan for the District ensures that the facilities are well kept and safe for staff, students and the community.

A new scoreboard, occurred in time for the 2010-2011 athletic season.

The Owens Field Stadium was accomplished in the spring and summer of 2010. The newest athletic complex in the Alle-Kiski valley is not only a facility for school use, but also serves the community for festivals during the summer months.
Who We Are... 

We are the Vikings — Mighty, Mighty Vikings!

MISSION "Preparing Students to be Responsible Citizens and Lifelong Learners"

ALMA MATER Apollo-Ridge High School is in our memory; Her colors remain with our hearts eternally; Viking school we honor; Blue and gold sustain.

Apollo-Ridge High School, A unity of strength and dreams

Alma Mater hail!

WEBSITE www.apolloridge.com

SCHOOL MASCOT Viking

EMPLOYEES 225 staff members

ENROLLMENT 1451 students

SPECIAL SERVICES ARIN III 28 provides educational needs for pupils with special needs and training for professional staff

BUDGET Approximately $20 Million

PARTNERS IN EDUCATION Indiana University of PA; Penn State, New Kensington; Armstrong County Memorial Hospital, Indiana Regional Medical Center; Butler County Community College; Clarion University, University of Pittsburgh, Saint Vincent University

POPULATION A quiet residential population of 9,000 persons in a 70 square mile area encompassing the boroughs of Apollo and North Apollo and the townships of Kiskiminetas, Young and Jacksonville/Blacklick.

CUSTOMIZING INSTRUCTION FOR EVERY STUDENT

The Apollo-Ridge School District has been through many changes in the past 40 years. New ways of teaching, combined with advancements in technology and student data analysis, are used to differentiate and target an individual student’s specific educational needs.

From specialized classrooms, like life skills and emotional support, to on-line learning through A-RVA, the Apollo-Ridge Virtual Academy, each student is provided with the specific tools necessary for enrichment or remediation.

The 21st Century learning environment requires technological advances and educators who address the "whole child." At Apollo-Ridge, students are taught critical thinking and problem solving skills — not just "reading", "rari", or "arithmetic."

Where We Are Going... 

W h e n W e A r e G o i n g ... 

After the construction of the high school was completed, the PTA began lobbying for a new middle school to be built. It would take more than a decade for this to be accomplished.

In 1976 three buildings served the middle school students—two for classes and one for storage. When originally constructed, the storage building had two floors with six classrooms; however, in 1975, the second story was eliminated and a roof was put on the remainder of the building. The original use for this building was for an elementary school.

The building shown at right in an undated postcard, is the elusive “red building” that served as for the Middle School was put on the remainder of the building. The original use for this building was for an elementary school.

The yellow brick building shown below, having been used for a high school and middle school, is now the Tiger Gym, named after the Apollo High School mascot.

Above is a photo of the main entrance to the Middle School that is part of the High School/Middle School complex in Spring Church.

The building shown at right in an undated postcard, is the elusive “red building” that served as for the Middle School was put on the remainder of the building. The original use for this building was for an elementary school.

The walls that have housed our students have turned into a memory for the future, the walls that have housed our students have turned into a memory for the future, the walls that have housed our students have turned into a memory for the future.

The light of our learning is still brightly burning, our thoughts never fading, nor will we forget the challenges we have met! We cherish her yet—

Hail Apollo High! 

- 1969 Alma Mater

Apollo High School

Alma Mater

The light of our learning is still brightly burning, our thoughts never turning to old Apollo High. Our memories never fade of dear friends we have made, of plans that we have laid in days for gone by. The walls that have housed our hopes for the future, the lights that have led us through life’s stumbling ways, nor will we forget the challenges we have met! We cherish her yet—

Hail Apollo High!
The Apollo Area Schools

Over the years, many buildings were used to educate students who resided in Apollo, North Apollo and Kiskiminetas Township. Many had been closed and either sold or demolished by the time of the merger. The locations of those buildings included Sugar Hollow, the Iselin “Campus” (so-named because there were two buildings at this location), Coal Run, a red brick building in Apollo that served as both an elementary and a middle school, Cherry Lane, Shady Plain, Horrell, Jackson and Brownstown. Until the completion of the Middle School, the former High School building (known today as the Tiger Gym) served as the District’s Middle School.

Four buildings in North Apollo, Apollo, Spring, Church (Sunnyside), and Elders Ridge served the District as elementary buildings until the new state-of-the-art $16 million structure was completed and occupied on January 6, 2004. Sunnyside housed all of the Kindergarten students. North Apollo educated students in grades 1 and 2 and then moved them into the Apollo building for grades 3, 4, and 5. Elders Ridge had two classrooms each of students in grades 1 through 5. It was the only building with a Life Skills classroom.

North Apollo Schools

In December of 1930, a school was set up after the incorporation of Pegtown, Allison Lane and Luxemberg Heights into the borough of North Apollo in March of that same year. There were two schools, one along the old canal bed in Pegtown, and the Allison School built near the present-day intersection of North 16th Street and Hickory Nut Road. The Allison School burned in 1908 causing some of the students to attend Sugar Hollow School until the new building was finished in Luxemberg Heights. This building served the community until 1954 when another building was built on Wilson Avenue. At that time it became an elementary school for students in first and second grades. The North Apollo School closed in December 2003 upon the completion and occupation of the current Apollo-Ridge Elementary School in 2004.

The North Apollo Elementary School was sold and used for a Christian Academy until 2008.

Investments By and For The Community

A study in contrasts … the bricks field house (top left) completed the stadium project begun in 1938 with the help of local community members. It was replaced by a modern facility that opened to the public on September 24, 2010.

OWENS FIELD STADIUM

Property Donated by Owens Family: 1919
Block Building Construction: 1988-1990
Demolition: Monday, May 10, 2010
Groundbreaking: Monday, May 24, 2010
Grand Opening: Friday, September 24, 2010

The iconic stadium, at 90 years young, was demolished and rebuilt at a cost of $3 million dollars in 2010.

The oldest football stadium in Pennsylvania is the site of community-sponsored events throughout the year, including the annual 4th of July and Moon Landing Celebrations, High School graduation, and Veterans programs.

FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS School Board member, Sharon Jaworskyj, and Board President, Gregory Primm, at the stadium’s grand opening on September 24, 2010.

The Apollo-Ridge Community Fitness Trail

Funded completely by grants and donations from local businesses, the community, and school employees, the Apollo-Ridge Fitness Trail is a fine example of how school/community/business partnerships can benefit all stakeholders. In addition to being used for Apollo-Ridge health and physical education classes, the trail will be used to train all A-R athletes. The trail will be used extensively in the reirth of a cross-country program for the school and as a wellness resource for the entire school community.
A-R ELEMENTARY CELEBRATES COMPLETION OF NEW PLAYGROUND

Thursday, May 5, 2005, was another historic milestone for the Apollo-Ridge School District. One-hundred and fifty students, the PTA parent representative and teachers who served on the playground committee, and several school board members and district administrators were on-hand for the official opening of the new Apollo-Ridge Elementary School playground that was completed in late April.

Last fall, an elementary playground committee was formed to investigate the needs of the elementary students. Suggestions were made and catalogs were combed to find just the right combination of equipment that would be cost-effective, durable and provide adequate recreation for the students. Based upon the findings of the committee, a design was submitted and bid upon. Sports & Recreation Associates, locally represented by Mr. Mark Ford, won the bid and broke ground on Thursday, March 17.

Special thanks to the Apollo-Ridge Elementary PTA who donated miscellaneous items that can be used by the students on the playground.

The playground was unofficially opened to the delight of the students on April 15. The completion of this facility brought to a close the construction of the Apollo-Ridge Elementary School which was officially dedicated on Saturday, May 14, during the Learning Festival.

A MONUMENTAL-MOVING EXPERIENCE

When the Apollo-Ridge School District sold the Sunnyside Elementary School, it faced the dilemma of moving a veteran’s memorial placed there from Jackson Elementary School when it was vacated many years ago. Quotes obtained from local contractors were nearly $5,000. A cost effective solution was needed... and it came from a very unlikely source.

Oren Vigo, a Boy Scout from Troop 552 (Poke Run Presbyterian Church), was in search of a community service project. On Wednesday, October 17, 2007, Oren, his father, Joe, and two other members of his Scout Troop, Jason Temple and George Petree, began cultivating a base for the monument’s placement. Mr. Scott Deemer, using equipment donated by K-R Rigging, would use a 26-ton forklift to remove the monument from the former Sunnyside Elementary School and place it in the new location in front of the recently-built Apollo-Ridge Elementary School.

The memorial was dedicated at a ceremony on Veteran’s Day that included members of local veterans organizations along with Oren’s Scout Troop. Scott Deemer, Oren Vigo and his father, Joe Vigo, proudly stand by the project in the photo above.

The Dedication of the Apollo-Ridge Elementary School Completes Elders Ridge and Apollo Union

As part of this year’s Apollo-Ridge Learning Festival, the Apollo-Ridge Elementary School was officially dedicated. Although the building has been open and operating since January 6, 2004, the event was well-attended by students, parents, current and former school board members and several support staff members.

Mr. Mark Fetterman, Principal, welcomed everyone to the historic event calling it a major milestone in the history of the Apollo-Ridge School District since its formation in 1969. His opening comments included the philosophy that the elementary schools are the foundation upon which our children’s future educational successes are based. The fact that this new building exists is testimony to the fact that our community embraces that philosophy.

Mr. Fetterman introduced the members of the fourth and fifth grade chorus ensemble, branded the gathering in the singing of our National Anthem. At the conclusion of the anthem, Dr. Michael Vranesevic, district superintendent, and Mr. William Naser, school board president, are all smiles as St. John Niehoff of Hayes-Large Architects officially turns over the key to the new building during the dedication ceremony that was held on May 14, 2005.

Completion of the Merger

The article published in the Apollo News Record, June 2004

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In closing, Mr. Fetterman pointed out the time capsule that will be buried outside the entrance doors. A plaque will be placed over it indicating that the capsule is to be opened in twenty-five years revealing the historical artifacts that have been placed therein. He encouraged everyone to sign the guest register as it will be included in the capsule.

Before introducing Ms. Robin Barber, Assistant Principal, Mr. Fetterman pointed out the brick garden made possible by a fund raising initiative of the Apollo-Ridge Education Foundation. The guests were invited to participate in Phase II of the “Paving the Way” program. He encouraged everyone to visit the newly installed elementary playground that completed the construction phase of the elementary school; Mr. Fettermen thanked Ms. Cris Kostak, Administrative Assistant to Dr. Vranesevic, for her contribution to the day’s events.

Ms. Barber introduced visitors of note who included Mr. William Naser, school board president, and Mr. John Missell, the architect representing the Hayes-Large Architectural firm. She also introduced current school board members, Mr. Raymond O’Neill, Ms. Kathleen Taylor, Dr. John Helgeson, Mr. Timothy Stewart; and former school board members, Ms. Debra Schloegast and Mr. Mark Shaffer. Several district employees were also in attendance and they included Mr. Frank Davis, A-RSD Director of Building and Grounds and Clerk of the Works during the building’s construction; Ms. Lynne Snyder, Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment; elementary secretaries, Ms. Amy Kurkle and Ms. Kim Akins; and elementary paraprofessional, Ms. Michele Brown.
At this time, Mr. John Missell of Hayes-Large officially turned over the key to the new building to Dr. Michael Vranesevic, the district’s superintendent. The chorus ensemble returned for the singing of America the Beautiful.

Mr. Fetterman then turned the podium over to Mr. William Naser, current school board president. Mr. Naser’s comments were brief, but to the point, when he discussed how this building would enable all students to receive a quality education—equally. This building ensures that students will not be required to be transported from Apollo to Elders Ridge in order to balance class sizes. He emphasized that this building will provide all students a safe environment in which to be more efficiently educated. Mr. Naser’s closing remarks included a thank you to the community for their support of the board’s decision to make the vision a reality.

Former school board member and current president of the Apollo Area Economic Development Council, Mr. Mark Shaffer, emphasized that by doing proper research and planning, and by presenting a factual report to the community, this project was met with no resistance. He talked of the late 60’s when the school board was told by Pennsylvania’s Department of Education to merge Elders Ridge and Apollo and how in 1969 it was accomplished. He commended those board members for their vision in purchasing the sixty acres necessary to create the beautiful campus we have today. He pointed out the fact that each building was built seventeen or eighteen years apart enabling each structure to be paid for before the next phase began. This allowed effective, efficient growth without burdening the community.

Mr. Shaffer next emphasized the purpose of the Apollo Area Economic Development Council is to increase the tax base to further the success of the District. He discussed how the district and community exist in a symbiotic relationship: the community supports the district through its tax base and the district, in turn, feeds the economy of the community. He estimated that over 50,000 students have passed through the Apollo-Ridge School District, including his children. He feels that Apollo-Ridge gave them a successful foundation to carry them through the college years. Mr. Shaffer expressed that all of our students now have the potential to benefit from the educational experience at Apollo-Ridge and, hopefully, bring their experience and knowledge back to this community to further its success.

The next speaker, Ms. Anita Bafik, former school board member and current District Treasurer, addressed the gathering on the importance of supporting the Apollo-Ridge Education Foundation. The Foundation was formed to provide concerned individuals with the opportunity to contribute tax-deductible donations to the district to support technology, educational programs, sports and wellness, and the performing arts that go above and beyond the educational opportunities the children already receive. Ms. Bafik announced that the Apollo-Ridge Education Foundation is launching a Phase II of the “Paving the Way” brick program. Through this fundraising opportunity, staff, parents, students, alumni, local businesses or any other organizations, can purchase a brick. This purchase will not only create a meaningful legacy for the Elementary building, but generate funds to support the Foundation’s mission. The bricks come in two sizes: 4”x8” ($50) or 12”x12” ($75) and are engraved with your special message in black. Ms. Bafik thanked everyone for their past support and asked that the effort be continued.

The final speaker, Dr. Michael J. Vranesevic, Apollo-Ridge School District Superintendent, opened by thanking Mr. Fetterman for bringing all the components together to make the dedication successful. He expressed that Mr. Fetterman, having the most years of service with the district at today’s gathering, was the “heart and soul” of the Apollo-Ridge elementary. His thirty-plus years in the district have given him an exceptional historical perspective on the evolution of the elementary from its humble beginnings to today’s culminating event.

Dr. Vranesevic recognized the school board members and district administrators who were involved in making the courageous decision to build the new elementary building. The decision-making process started several years ago. Data was collected and five options were developed, with the building of a new elementary being the fifth. All options were presented to various civic groups for their opinion.

Due to the diligence of the researchers, the facts and figures were in alignment. The decision to merge the elementary schools was made meeting with little to no resistance. Dr. Vranesevic recognized Hayes-Large for their tremendous effort in developing the proper facility to meet our needs. He discussed how they met with the teachers and administrators for their input. After digesting all the information, plans were drawn up and construction began in the spring of 2002. Mr. Frank Davis, Apollo-Ridge’s Director of Building and Grounds, was commended for his perseverance in keeping the project on time and within the budgetary constraints.

Dr. Vranesevic commented on the strategic planning that was involved in getting the move accomplished, particularly since it occurred during the school year, rather than over the summer break. He remarked how it was a new experience for all of the district’s leadership and acknowledged Mr. Fetterman, Ms. Barber and the district’s faculty, secretaries, food service workers and custodians for the considerable effort they made to accomplish this task. He was thankful for the efforts of Mr. William Naser, school board president, and Ms. Coleen Stein, former A-R business manager, who stayed on top of the construction’s progress and the financial needs to keep the project running smoothly. Dr. Vranesevic credits the entire experience with giving him a wealth of experience and new found knowledge.

This new building, in Dr. Vranesevic’s mind, proves that we are a progressive learning community and are not afraid to take risks to improve the educational opportunities for our children. He noted that we are fortunate to have a staff that sets high standards for our children. He gave the PTA high marks for supporting our district and working so well together to merge themselves into one unified organization.

Dr. Vranesevic ended his address with the African proverb that states, “It takes a village to raise/teach a child,” and encouraged us to give life to its meaning.

Mr. Fetterman concluded the program by inviting everyone to take a tour of the building and playground and to stop by the brick garden at the front of the building.