

RIDGEVIEW CHARTER MIDDLE
SCHOOL COMMENDATION HON-
ORING PRINCIPAL OPIE
BLACKWELL

HON. LUCY MCBATH

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 18, 2019

Mrs. MCBATH. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor my constituent and Ridgeview Charter Middle School Principal Opie Blackwell. A good principal knows that his or her students need a robust support system along with a strong education to guarantee success in the classroom and in life. This philosophy is the basis upon which Mr. Blackwell has structured his school.

Principal Blackwell demonstrates exceptional dedication to ensuring that the students at Ridgeview Charter Middle School receive the quality education that they deserve. He is actively involved in the daily life at Ridgeview, takes time to chaperone school trips, and is committed to the wellbeing of the faculty.

Principal Blackwell also takes pride in recognizing outstanding members of the school's staff. A few weeks before the last day of the school year, Mr. Blackwell took to social media to document an impromptu jump rope competition that took place during a 6th grade Chinese class. The class had ventured outside to practice their Chinese when the students and teachers began to see who could jump rope the longest. The students won, as Mr. Blackwell proudly noted, but he also gave the teachers their due credit. This friendly competition is one of many examples of how hard Mr. Blackwell and his colleagues work to give their students a positive and engaging learning environment.

This year, that hard work was recognized by the National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform as a Georgia Lighthouse School to Watch. The National Forum is a prestigious organization of educators, researchers, and officers committed to promoting academic excellence for young students.

In 1999, the National Forum selected four middle schools from across the country as the first Schools to Watch. Since then, the program has expanded to 18 states and honored 465 schools. Ridgeview Charter Middle is one of nine schools in Georgia recognized as a School to Watch. The National Forum strives to make every middle-grade school one that is academically excellent, socially equitable, and responsive to the developmental needs and interests of middle schoolers. It has developed tools to help schools meet their criteria to expand their program across the country.

Ridgeview Charter Middle School's policies for the classroom and overall school culture soar above and beyond the Forum's standards. When the National Forum staff spent time at Ridgeview, they saw that almost every student was actively engaged in the classroom and teachers were using a wide variety of learning strategies to assist their students.

As National Forum staff spoke to students, it was evident that Ridgeview students feel that they can be heard by their teachers and administrators when an issue arises. As a result, students are encouraged to give their input and help make changes to improve the school.

The student-first culture is evident at Ridgeview Charter Middle School. Student work is clearly displayed in the hallways, and the faculty and staff are familiar faces at music concerts and the annual musical. Mr. Blackwell recorded the finale of this year's musical, *Alice in Wonderland*, and posted it to social media with encouraging words about the performance and the work done by students, faculty, and parents.

In addition to the environment created by teachers and staff, school administrators have worked to ensure that the school is one that is clean and comfortable. Music is played in the hallways during class change to create a calming and pleasant atmosphere. Inspirational messages painted on the walls add a culture of positivity, and those messages convey the high expectations the school has for students.

Ridgeview Charter Middle School stands out as a success story in public education. In his principal's message on the school's website, Principal Blackwell made his formal title "Proud Principal". With such an exceptional review by the National Forum, he and the entire Ridgeview Charter Middle School family certainly should feel proud of the school, its faculty and staff, and most of all, the outstanding student body.

CHRISTINA VARGAS RECEIVES
THE CHANCELLOR'S EXCEL-
LENCE AWARD

HON. PETE OLSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 18, 2019

Mr. OLSON. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Christina Vargas for receiving the Chancellor's Excellence Award from Texas State Technical College in Fort Bend County.

A Rosenberg native, Christina has been at TSTC for two years and currently serves as the Assistant Director of Enrollment Management. The Chancellor's Excellence Award is given to employees who are recommended by their peers and exhibit TSTC's core values of Excellence, Accountability, Service and Integrity. Christina was one of only 35 recipients from across the state to earn this award. Through her time at TSTC, Christina has helped and inspired her coworkers and students alike.

On behalf of the Twenty-Second Congressional District of Texas, congratulations again to Christina Vargas on receiving the Chancellor's Excellence Award. I thank her for her dedication to our students.

IN RECOGNITION OF RICHMOND
BELL, RECIPIENT OF THE
FRENCH LEGION OF HONOR

HON. WILLIAM R. KEATING

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 18, 2019

Mr. KEATING. Madam Speaker, I rise today in recognition of Richmond Bell as he is awarded the French Legion of Honor, 75 years after bravely serving in the United States Army at the Battle of Normandy.

At only 18 years old, Mr. Bell enlisted in the 29th Infantry in 1943. After many members of his regiment lost their lives on D-Day, Mr. Bell, along with 14 other soldiers, were sent to France in an essential support effort of the remaining American Troops.

While serving on the frontlines each day for more than six weeks, Mr. Bell fought with courage and dedication to his country. He continuously risked his life for the war effort and the safety of his fellow soldiers.

In December of 1945, Mr. Bell returned to his hometown of Wellfleet, Massachusetts, honorably discharged with three Purple Hearts. A lifetime resident of the town, Mr. Bell is a beloved and respected member of the Wellfleet community. He is the son of the town doctor and a former paperboy for the Cape Cod Standard. Mr. Bell, now "semi-retired," lives with his wife Gail. He has 5 children, four step-children and 26 grandchildren.

Madam Speaker, I am proud to honor Richmond Bell for his dedication to his country. I ask that my colleagues join me in thanking him for his immense bravery and valiant efforts through a critical time in our nation's history.

INTRODUCTION OF SAILORS ACT

HON. MARCY KAPTUR

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 18, 2019

Ms. KAPTUR. Madam Speaker, I rise with my fellow co-chairs of the bipartisan Congressional Ukraine Caucus to introduce the SAILORS ACT, or the "Stopping Aggressive Incursions on Liberty by Ordering Russian Sanctions Act."

This bill would direct the Administration to sanction 24 senior officers of the Russian Federal Security Service and its border patrol until it releases all 24 Ukrainian sailors and the three vessels it illegally seized in the Kerch Strait on November 25, 2018.

On that day, an unprovoked Russia brazenly fired upon and took hostage 24 Ukrainians sailors in international waters. The sailors now languish in Russian prisons in Moscow under dire conditions.

Tragically, this is just the latest in a series of dangerous and malicious steps Russia has taken to undermine Ukraine's democratic progress and the international rules-based order.

Since illegally invading Crimea in 2014, Russia now seeks to tighten the noose around Ukrainian coastal waters including building a barrier in the Kerch Strait to starve Ukraine of vital naval commerce.

To date, Russia's illegal war in Eastern Ukraine has led to the death of over 10,000 innocents and the displacement of millions.

The international community must not stand idly by as Russia increases its aggression in Europe and its efforts to undermine democracies globally—including in the United States. The United States and the free world must continue to raise the costs of Russian aggression to protect those at the edge of liberty.

This bill sends a message to the Ukrainian sailors and their families that the American people have not forgotten their immense sacrifice and heroic struggle to protect their nation's democratic future. We call on Russia to