



August 2, 2021

## Thank you for submitting a nomination for Robert Palazzo.

### Overview

Thank you for your 2021 Community Star Nomination. Here is a copy of the nomination for your records. If you have any questions, please reach out to NRHD Community Star Project Coordinator, Brea Corsaro at [bcorsaro@powerofrural.org](mailto:bcorsaro@powerofrural.org).

### Your Information

**Kerri Quick**

*Community Health Liaison Manager*  
St. Luke's University Health Network  
Coaldale, Pennsylvania  
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570-778-7083

### Community Star Nominee: (Individual)

**Robert Palazzo**

*School Principal*  
Panther Valley School District  
Nesquehoning, Pennsylvania  
[palazzor@panthervalley.org](mailto:palazzor@panthervalley.org)  
570-669-9411

**Have Questions? Contact:**

[powerofrural.org](http://powerofrural.org) | [nosorh.org](http://nosorh.org) | [bcorsaro@powerofrural.org](mailto:bcorsaro@powerofrural.org)



Which best describes the organization your nominee is associated with?

Academic Institution

Please describe your connection to the individual or organization you are nominating.

St. Luke's University Health Network partners with the Panther Valley School District to provide the Adopt A School program since 2014. This is based on the Communities in Schools model, where the school district is the hub of health and wellness in the community.

Please explain the individual's or organization's connection to or interaction with their State Office of Rural Health.

While I'm not sure if the Panther Valley School District is directly involved with the Pennsylvania State Office of Rural Health, St. Luke's operates two Rural Health Centers that are located within the Panther Valley School District and the Pennsylvania State Office of Rural Health has worked with these Rural Health Centers to provide the MORE Care program for dental health in this area.

The Community Star Recognition Program is designed to honor those whose contributions are making a difference in rural through collaboration, education, innovation, and communication. What do you believe to be your nominee's "star" qualities? Provide examples of how your nominee demonstrates these qualities in their work and service.

Mr. Palazzo is the principal of the Panther Valley Elementary School. He is a tremendous advocate for the physical and mental well being of the students of Panther Valley Elementary. Although his job entails many duties and

responsibilities, he always makes times to ensure the students and staff feel supported. Like many rural areas, the Panther Valley School District has a high rate of poverty, but Mr. Palazzo truly cares about his students and he has never let the lack of funds stand in his way. He wants to make the community a better place and he goes out of his way to make improvements. He spends a lot of his own time planning community outreach events, raising funds, and general awareness of issues.

The 2021 Community Star Selection Committee will review and evaluate nominations, making recommendations for which stories to include in this year's book and other NRHD activities based on the following merits. Please review these and select all that apply to your nominee.

Develops leadership capacity to grow rural population health and health equity. , Contributes to rural health innovation, education, collaboration, and communication.

Describe in as much detail as possible, examples of your nominee's work and accomplishments that correspond with your selections to the question above.

Shortly after he arrived at the elementary school in 2017, one of his first concerns was the lack of playground facilities. Panther Valley is a school district with a high poverty rate and although there was no funds readily available for a playground, Mr. Palazzo made it his personal mission to make sure one was built. He fully understands the importance of play on a child's physical and mental well being. He was able to secure grants, private donations, and volunteers to make the playground a reality. Mr. Palazzo also implemented a positive behavior system within the elementary school, realizing that students might respond better being praised for good behavior rather than punished by bad. From the Panther Valley website: " We have a Positive Behavior Support Program at the school. This program encourages students to be Cool Cats! Our three character traits that are taught

throughout the school are Be Safe, Be Responsible, Be Respectful. Students are given direct instruction on what these expectations look like across all settings. Students are given Cool Cat tickets when they demonstrate behavior that shows one or more of these expectations. Each day, one student is selected as the Cool Cat of the Day by a staff member. This student has their picture taken with the principal and shared out on our Facebook page. They also get a positive phone call home from the principal." Mr. Palazzo also understands the impact of mental health on a student's ability to learn, often advocating for his students and their families to get the help they need. He instituted a mentorship program and lobbied for additional funding for a Family Development Specialist position to provide case management for families to address social determinants of health. Mr. Palazzo is also a champion for literacy. He worked on a project in which a van was donated to the school to be used to delivery books to the students in the Panther Valley community. He saw this need arise from COVID when many things were locked down and books were not readily available. Mr. Palazzo even volunteers to drive this "Book Buggy" around the community to make sure that books get in to the hands of children of all ages.

I can confirm that the individual or organization is making a difference in rural through collaboration, education, innovation, and communication, and is located, working, or volunteering in a designated rural area.

Yes

I can confirm that I have notified the nominee of their nomination, and the nomination will be accepted.

Yes

How did you learn about the 2021 Community Star Recognition Program?

NOSORH  
Brea Corsaro



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