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National spotlight shines on LHS

BY SARAH LANG
The Lebanon Reporter

LEBANON — Lebanon High School Principal Kevin O'Rourke announced news to the students and staff Wednesday morning that left them in shock and awe.

O'Rourke shared that LHS has been named by the national magazine "U.S. News and World Report" as one of the top high schools in the country.

"We were all shocked because we didn't know where it came from," O'Rourke said. "And that's a reputable magazine."

It was surprising because it's an honor nobody knew was coming. O'Rourke said he didn't even know the magazine recognized high schools; he thought they only listed colleges.

"I'm excited and proud and happy," he said.

One staff member, O'Rourke said, could only say, "Wow."

The magazine looked at almost 13,000 high schools in the country, O'Rourke said. They were looking comprehensively at how all students were performing, not just specialty groups. Thirty high schools in Indiana received this recognition — 22 getting bronze medal status, seven silver and one gold.

"And they're all across the board, from high socio-economic

areas to very small schools," O'Rourke said. "So I'm very impressed and pleased."

LHS received a bronze medal. Zionsville High School, also recognized by the magazine, received silver.

After receiving the news last week, O'Rourke spent some time preparing a Powerpoint presentation and ordering banners to make it special, he said.

"I'm excited, and proud, and happy."

KEVIN O'ROURKE
LHS principal

The Powerpoint presentation brought students and staff through recent awards and recognition for LHS: Indiana Chamber of Commerce Indiana's Best Buy School Award in 2004-2008, the ACT Red Quill Award in 2007-2009, *The Indianapolis Star* Best Education Job Award 2007-2008, and named an "exemplary" school corporation by the state and an Indiana Top 20 school corporation in 2009. Adding things like the graduation rate just breaking through 90 percent; having the 2010 Indiana Teacher of the Year, Byron Ernest; and the 2009 Indiana Jumpstart Teacher, Jennifer Tai; along with rigorous classes and outstanding teachers, staff, students, parents and community — the last slide read — and putting them all together means "Lebanon High School, U.S. News and World Report, America's Best High Schools 2010."

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"This validates that we have a great community, a community that values education and our schools," O'Rourke said. "It's affirmation that our work is recognized and rewarded."

A lot goes in to this kind of honor, O'Rourke said, from the administrators to teachers, students to parents, and the community as a whole.

"It's great to know our students are getting a nationally recognized education," he said, "that will allow them to compete with anyone, anywhere."

For more information on U.S. News and World Report's top high schools, visit www.usnews.com/sections/education/high-schools.