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## SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

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*Mission Statement: We are committed to the success of every student!*

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## NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release  
Thursday, March 10

### ***District's new Sunshine State Scholar advocates for better communication of scientific information***

Rishi Gadikota thinks scientists need to do a better job of explaining their work to the public. COVID, he says, is proof of that. He points to the misinformation about the virus, vaccines and protocols that has prevented so many from protecting themselves and the community.

“It is more important than ever to communicate modern research to the general public in a way that the vast majority of people are capable of understanding it, even if it requires separate translational articles,” Gadikota wrote in an article posted last fall in the *Gainesville Sun*. “This freedom to access information may greatly reduce the intense fear and uncertainty that currently lies within the people, for their loved ones and for themselves.”

The Buchholz High School junior believes scientists should be taught how to more effectively share their work so that people aren't relying so much on other, often unreliable or biased sources of information.

“It would help the layperson, which is incredibly important, but it would also help them communicate better with scientists in other fields, who can then take their research and apply it to their own work,” said Gadikota.

Gadikota is himself a scientist, having worked as an intern under medical researchers at the University of Central Florida and even presenting and publishing some of his work on topics like multiple sclerosis and comparisons between COVID and the flu. He's volunteered many hours at North Florida Regional Medical Center. He's served as an editor for the Courieux Academic Journal, a youth-led non-profit publication for research done by middle and high school students, and has worked as an operations director for Elevate the Future, a non-profit committed to increasing access to economics, business and computer education around the world.

At Buchholz, Gadikota has a nearly perfect 4.9 GPA, taking many Advanced Placement classes and passing numerous AP exams, even while he was in middle school. He's also earned many individual and team awards in math and science, including a first-place award in last year's State Science Olympiad. He's also spent two summers teaching math to younger students as part of the Buchholz Math Team's outreach program.

Gadikota says his parents helped foster his love of science.

“When I was younger they would take me to museums, and they'd buy me books about science,” he said. “I thought it was so cool, and I'd immerse myself in science, and when I took science classes in middle and high school, I got even more serious about it.”

*(more)*

For his many accomplishments in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math), Gadikota has been named the district's Sunshine State Scholar for 2022. The Scholar program was established more than 20 years ago to recognize Florida's top 100 11<sup>th</sup> graders in the area of STEM achievement. The award criteria include advanced coursework and grades, test scores, extracurricular activities, awards and honors.

Gadikota has excelled in other areas as well at STEM. He's earned a black belt in karate. He plays the piano. He's a member of the school's JV wrestling team. He's even reached the rank of Life Scout, the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest rank in Boy Scouts behind Eagle Scout.

In the community, Gadikota has also volunteered with Alachua County Library Youth and Teen Court, among other groups.

Ultimately, Gadikota wants to work in the medical field, probably specializing in microbiology or biomedical research. And of course, he says he wants to communicate his own research so that it will reach as many people as possible.

Gadikota will be recognized for his achievements at the upcoming School Board meeting on March 15. He will then go on to a special program in Orlando in late March-early April to meet with other Scholars and representatives from STEM-related employers and Florida colleges and universities.

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