

**And the Award Goes to.....**

**Mr. Wes Benzing**

2011 Distinguished Alumni

Reed City High School

by Tonya Harrison, Assistant Principal, RCHS

Each year Reed City High School selects an alumnus who exhibits a resume of caliber that demands the attention of the Reed City community. For the 2010-2011 school year, Reed City Area Public Schools is honored to bestow this honor on Mr. Wes Benzing. After graduating in 1964, Mr. Benzing chose to lead a life that has given him success in the business world, which has allowed him to give back to the community he grew up in.

Growing up in Hersey, Michigan, was not always an easy task for Mr. Benzing. After losing his father at a young age, he learned that new clothes and spending money required a young man to work hard. While in high school at RCHS, he played four years of varsity basketball. He credits the lessons he learned in athletics as valuable assets in the adult world: confidence, social skills, competitive drive, and the “never quit, even when it is stressful” attitude.

Upon graduation, Mr. Benzing left Reed City on a Greyhound bus and went to East Lansing. He attended Lansing Community College and Michigan State University at the same time; knowing the general credits were cheaper at a community college. In 1967, he was drafted into the Vietnam War, where he served as an Airborne Ranger in a Special Forces Unit. Upon returning from the war, as his wife began her teaching career, Mr. Benzing began working in the computer sales and marketing division for NCR Corporation. As he was promoted from district to regional sales manager, Mr. Benzing began giving back to the community as the president of the local JC group. Eventually, he left NCR and started his own company called Datamatic. His company grew quickly, developing software products, and became one of the 500 fastest growing companies in the United States.

With an eye for investment and growth in areas outside of his own computer business, Mr. Benzing began investing in the stock market, purchasing stocks in the “dot-com” companies and purchasing land around the greater Orlando, Florida, area. Throughout this time of growth, he understood the need for giving back. He became a financial donor to numerous organizations, including The American Cancer Society, the Red Cross, and Boy Scouts. However, as he began turning over his business to his son, he knew he wanted to give more.

He started the “Benzing Scholarship Fund,” which has provided over \$230, 000 in scholarship funds to students who are in serious need of help paying for schooling. Two of these \$7,500/year scholarships have gone to Reed City Area students. He also gives money to Reed City churches that provide meals to the community, offer food banks, and provides monies that can be used to buy Christmas gifts for children in our area. Mr. Benzing has also made several donations to Reed City Area Public Schools’ classrooms and athletic programs. Mr. Benzing learned the value of hard work and through his own success has chosen to give back to the community that gave him his start.

Reed City High School is honored to have Mr. Wes Benzing named the Distinguished Alumni for 2011.