



MINNETONKA

# AlumniMagazine

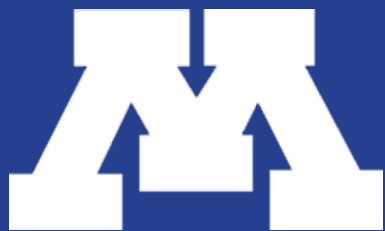
2021



## Meet Minnesota's Top Public Health Official

Jan Malcolm '73 reflects on how Minnesota is making it through a world health crisis.





MINNETONKA  
**Alumni Magazine**

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11



12



14



20



# CONTENTS

---

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>2 THE PRINCIPAL'S CORNER</b><br/>Principal Erickson celebrates the Class of 2021, students give hundreds of letters of support to frontline healthcare workers and Minnetonka High School reopens for in-person learning.</p> <p><b>4 SKIPPER ATHLETICS</b><br/>While state tournaments were canceled in the fall due to COVID, the Skippers made a strong showing in winter and spring. Also, Coach Twenge enters MSHSBCA and NHSBCA halls of fame.</p> <p><b>6 WELCOME, CLASS OF 2021</b><br/>Congratulations to the 797 graduating students in the Class of 2021! View their accomplishments, family legacies and military commitments.</p> <p><b>8 SIX TO WATCH</b><br/>Read all about six amazing new alumni to keep an eye on.</p> <p><b>11 A NOVEL IDEA SPARKS A PASSION FOR SERVICE</b><br/>When the pandemic forced Alexa Bussmann '16 to change her service plans, she turned a setback into an opportunity.</p> <p><b>12 IT RUNS "ZINN" THE FAMILY</b><br/>Carl Zinn '61 celebrates his 60th high school reunion this fall. He has seen his sisters, children and now grandchildren learn and grow as part of Minnetonka Public Schools. Hear how the school district has shaped the Zinn family and how they, in turn, have given back to the Minnetonka Schools community.</p> <p><b>14 ALUMNI COME BACK TO COACH NORDIC SKI TEAM</b><br/>Recent MHS graduates returned to help coach Minnetonka High School's Nordic Ski Team.</p> | <p><b>16 MEET MINNESOTA'S TOP PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICIAL</b><br/>Jan Malcolm '73, Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Health, discusses her memories of Minnetonka High School, the COVID pandemic and what she thinks we can look forward to this summer and beyond.</p> <p><b>20 ART IN THE AGE OF COVID</b><br/>The show must go on! Find out how Minnetonka High School's theatre department used its creativity to adapt to the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p><b>22 UPDATE FROM THE ALUMNI BOARD</b><br/>Hear all the latest updates from the Minnetonka Alumni Association and how much it raised to support Minnetonka Public Schools this past year.</p> <p><b>24 ALUMNI AWARD HONOREES</b><br/>Read about Dr. Joni (Hlavacek) Schwartz '71 and John Stanoch '76, this year's 2021 Distinguished Alumni Award honorees.</p> <p><b>27 MAKING DREAMS COME TRUE</b><br/>The Minnetonka Public Schools Foundation had to convert its biggest in-person event into an online-only one. The result? A record-breaking fundraiser!</p> <p><b>28 CLASS NOTES</b></p> <p><b>31 IN MEMORIAM</b></p> <p><b>32 UPCOMING EVENTS</b></p> <p><b>33 FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK</b><br/>Daniel Campbell, editor-in-chief of the <i>Minnetonka Alumni Magazine</i>, shares insights into creating this year's edition and the joy of seeing the District begin to return to normal.</p> |
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## The Principal's Corner

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As we emerge from a full school year in the midst of the COVID pandemic, all I can say is how grateful I am for the students, faculty and staff at Minnetonka High School who gave their all each and every day. Though we started the year in full e-learning, I'm proud to say we finished strong with a return to in-person classes for all grades. We could only have done this through the tireless efforts of our administrative, health and facilities staff, which you'll read more about on the following page.

In June, I was honored to once again preside over graduation at U.S. Bank Stadium and give our graduating seniors the send-off they deserved. No one can deny the perseverance that the students have shown, and I could not be prouder of them or more eager to see what they do next.

Some great new experiences are coming to the high school next year. Earlier this summer, we broke ground on an addition to the Pagel Center to help support the new MOMENTUM design and skilled trades program. This 10,300-square-foot space will include a six-car auto shop for students to use for automotive maintenance courses, as well as flexible-use spaces for other MOMENTUM courses, such as the Physics of Home Renovation.

To catch all the latest MHS news, join me on my new Instagram account, [@tonkahprincipal](https://www.instagram.com/tonkahprincipal). For districtwide news, check out [@mntkaschools](https://www.instagram.com/mntkaschools) on Instagram or [minnetonkaschools](https://www.facebook.com/minnetonkaschools) on Facebook.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jeff Erickson".

Jeff Erickson, Minnetonka High School Principal

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## Students Send Hundreds of Letters of Thanks to Healthcare Workers

To show their gratitude to the many healthcare professionals working on the front lines of the COVID pandemic, MHS Student Government and DECA members teamed up with students across Minnesota to write more than 500 letters of support.

"Our goal was to spread some holiday cheer and express our thanks to healthcare workers," said MHS Student Government President Bryn Senske '21. "The coronavirus has been so hard on [them], it seemed like a no-brainer to do something like this."

Senske worked with student body presidents from Chanhassen, Chaska, Eden Prairie, Edina, Wayzata and Hopkins high schools

to put together the letter-writing event. After writing positive messages of gratitude, the letters were delivered to healthcare workers and patients at Children's Hospital in St. Paul.

"We recognize how strenuous the pandemic is for healthcare workers, and we wanted to voice our appreciation," said Peyton Crest '21, a student rep and DECA officer. She added that the success of the letter-writing event shows that MHS knows how to instill the value of service in its students. "I am proud to have grown up in a community that emphasizes giving back to the ones who helped us succeed. It was an immensely rewarding process, and I know the impact is invaluable."



## Welcome Back, MHS!



As the COVID pandemic began to grow more serious in the spring of 2021, students at Minnetonka High School and throughout the state transitioned from in-person to e-learning. While this was a necessary health and safety measure to stop the spread of a dangerous disease, staff and administrators knew that many families were counting the days until they would be able to see teachers and students reunited in their own buildings and classrooms again.

By February 1 of 2021, the District was able to give high schoolers the opportunity to begin their second semester at Minnetonka High School using a hybrid learning model. Students attended in-person classes two days per week until March 15, when full in-person learning resumed. That return was only possible thanks to the tireless efforts of District staff, such as Health Services Coordinator Annie Lumbar Bendson.

"Minnetonka Public Schools did an incredible job adapting our response to ensure the health and safety of both students and staff," said Lumbar Bendson. "By focusing on multiple layers of mitigation and health and safety protocols, we provided a safe learning environment, which allowed students to return to school. This was no small feat, but it was worth it to give a semblance of normalcy to these high school students, who have shouldered a much heavier burden of disruption in their lives."

Having a safe learning environment was a critical step in returning to normal, but it wasn't the only one Minnetonka students needed.

"Once we came back, I knew we had to rebuild our students' connection to each other and give them each a strong sense of belonging in our community," said Principal Jeff Erickson. "We especially needed to honor and celebrate our seniors by providing as many opportunities for the class to come together before graduation as we could. While the work of welcoming our ninth grade class will continue into this fall, I am hopeful that they, too, already feel like they belong here. I am excited to see how our community continues to come together."

The District is grateful to the incredible teachers, staff and administrators for their collaboration to prepare for this exciting change—and to the students, who follow the safety guidelines and protocols that made this change possible.



*MOMENTUM students are glad to be back in their class working on hands-on projects that especially benefit from in-person learning.*



## Sports Report 2020-21

Congratulations to all of Minnetonka's state-qualifying teams and individuals! For all the latest sports updates, follow Minnetonka High School's official Athletics & Activities account on Twitter [@TonkaSkippers](https://twitter.com/TonkaSkippers).

### FALL

In light of the COVID pandemic, fall sports tournaments were not held. The District wishes to recognize all of its talented student athletes for their dedication and commitment to their sports. If their tournaments were held, the District is confident all would have concluded their season impressively.

### WINTER

- Cheerleading: State champions (25th consecutive state title), National Runners-Up
- Gymnastics: Elena Cantwell '23 finished 15th overall in the All-Around division
- Hockey (Girls): Advanced to the Class AA State Semifinals
- Alpine Ski (Boys): State qualifier JD Landstrom '23 finished 9th overall
- Alpine Ski (Girls): State qualifiers Isabella Kelly '22 and Stella Stinnett '25 finished 15th and 48th overall, respectively
- Nordic Ski (Boys): State qualifier AJ Hemink '22 finished 36th overall
- Nordic Ski (Girls): State qualifiers Elena Hicks '23 and Maya Mor '23 finished 77th and 101st overall, respectively
- Swimming & Diving (Boys): Section champions, 4th

#### Place Team at State Tournament

- Wrestling: State Preliminary Qualifiers included Charlie Palm '24, Michael Giovenco '22, Alex Shanesy '21, Diego Pitt '22, Gabe Schumacher '21, Marco Christiansen '24, Alejandro Torbenson '22, Carter Roth '21, Quinn Sell '21 and Peter Barrett '22

### SPRING

- Baseball: 4th Place at state tournament
- Track and Field (Girls): 3rd Place Overall. Individual qualifiers were Ruby Pajibo '23 (110m hurdles – 2nd Place), Claire Kohler '24 (300m hurdles – 3rd Place), Winona Stone '23 (high jump – 2nd Place). The 4x800m relay team took 2nd place, the 4x400m relay team took 2nd place and the 4x100m relay team took 5th place.
- Track and Field (Boys): Individual qualifiers were Austin Hunter '21 (800m – 4th Place) and Chase McPherson '21 (400m). The 4x400m relay team took 7th place.
- Golf (Girls): Individual qualifier Ally Chan '21 took 9th in state
- Golf (Boys): Individual qualifiers Ian Meyer '21 and Carson Herron '21 took 2nd and 7th place, respectively
- Esports: In their inaugural season, Minnetonka Esports teams took 1st and 3rd place in the State Championship for Rocket League
- Adapted Bowling: Individual qualifier Hugh Kelly '24 won the singles title for the state tournament



*Congratulations to Girls Track & Field, which took 3rd place overall at the state tournament.*

# COACH TWENGE NAMED TO STATE AND NATIONAL HALLS OF FAME

by Mary Cornelius

Minnetonka High School Head Baseball Coach Paul Twenge was chosen for two prestigious honors this year—being inducted into the Hall of Fame for both the Minnesota State High School Baseball Coaches Association (MSHSBCA) and the National High School Baseball Coaches Association (NHSBCA).

Twenge has coached at MHS since 2006. Under his leadership, the Skippers were both Lake Conference and Region 2AAA/AAAA champions in 2013 and 2018. Twenge coached the Skippers to a third place finish at the Minnesota State High School League State Championship in 2013, and, in 2018, the team was runner-up for the state title. The 2018 season also marked Twenge's 900th career win as a head coach, for which he was recognized by the NHSBCA.

"Paul Twenge is a transformational coach who has a great passion for teaching the game of baseball and building relationships with student-athletes," said Ted Schultz, Activities Director at MHS. "He cares for every student who plays for him, and he wants each of them to reach their full potential."

When asked about his favorite part of coaching, Twenge shared that it's seeing the success of others. "Without a doubt, [the best part of being a coach] is the interaction with the players and watching their development in the game," said Twenge.

Twenge was voted Section 2AAAA Coach of the Year in 2013 and 2018, and in 2018, he earned additional recognition as the American Baseball Coach Association Region 5 Coach of the Year, Minnesota High School 4A Coach of the Year, National High School Athletic Coaches Association Region 5 Baseball Coach of the Year and National DI American Baseball Coaches Association/Diamond Coach of the Year.

"These types of recognition are amazing because they come from your peer coaches across the country," Twenge said. "I am in this position because at one point Minnetonka High School took a chance on me to help lead the Skipper Baseball program."

The more local MSHSBCA honor is also dear to Twenge. "To be recognized by your fellow coaches is extremely special. I am glad to be part of this group," he explained.

Schultz shared that Twenge is truly one of a kind. He said, "I am convinced not a moment goes by when Paul isn't thinking about baseball. It is his love and passion, and he has been blessed to have a great career influencing students through the game he loves."



**"Paul Twenge is a transformational coach who has a great passion for teaching the game of baseball and building relationships with student-athletes."**

*- Ted Schultz,  
MHS Activities Director*



# Welcome, Class of 2021

**797** graduates

99% of seniors graduated

86% College-bound

77% Attending 4-year colleges & universities

9% Attending 2-year colleges

10 Entering military service

34% Attending Minnesota colleges & universities

52% Attending out-of-state colleges & universities

7% Are undecided or chose not to respond





# Honoring Minnetonka's Legacy Families

The following Class of 2021 graduates join their parents and grandparents as proud MHS alumni.

Ella Albrecht joins stepfather, Tom Ostrom '83.

Blake Anderson joins mother, Teri (Schatzle) Quick '89; grandfather, Dean Hermanson '58; grandmother, Nancy (Handy) Hermanson '66.

Fletcher Anderson joins mother, Jill (Mahoney) Anderson '85; grandfather, James Mahoney '59.

Lucas Anderson joins mother, Jana (Goldberg) Anderson '86.

Jillian Baker joins grandfather, Harvey Robideau '60; grandmother, Karen (Anderson) Robideau '62.

Joseph Berset joins father, Mike Berset '89.

Evyn Bishop joins father, Jon Bishop '84.

Gregory Bittle joins father, Gregory Nielson Bittle '86.

Sam Bodeau joins grandmother, Janyce (Frederickson) Wandrei '61.

Sam Boime joins mother, Brenda (Brown) Boime '86.

Sonia Dahlin joins father, Steven Dahlin '88.

Jason Davenport joins father, Jeff Davenport '81, grandmother, Elizabeth (Tallakson) Davenport '56.

Josie Frandrup joins father, Justin Frandrup '94.

Alexander Hawks joins mother, Tara (Alex) Hawks '95; grandmother, LynnRae (Sheplee) Fors '71.

Gus Johanson joins father, Erik Johanson '83.

Joshua Koehnen joins father, Thomas Koehnen '97; mother, Erica (Carlson) Koehnen '98; grandfather, Hal Guyer '70; grandfather, Todd Carlson '74; grandfather, Bruce Koehnen '72; grandmother, Sandra (Daum) Guyer '74; grandmother, Susan (Goebel) Koehnen '74; great-grandfather, Harlan Koehnen '45 (Excelsior High School).

Kayla Koppy joins mother, Jennifer Koppy '88.

Elsa Krantz joins mother, Jill (Arneson) Holter '85.

John LaCourse joins grandmother, Judy (Allen) Kim '64.

Ryan Leary joins mother, Katie (Schmidt) Leary '90.

Shyla McFarland joins mother, Kelly (Peterson) Freeman '88.

Sam Neuenschwander joins mother, Emily (Matejcek) Khan '96.

Haily and Hunter Newhouse join father, Eric Newhouse '89.

Spencer Olson joins father, Steve Olson '73.

Jocelyn Palmer-King joins father, Perry King '85.

Haylie Quam joins father, Dustin Quam '92; mother, Sandra (Mitlyng) Quam '91.

Jack Quinn joins father, Matt Quinn '88.

Elianna Schimke joins father, Mark Schimke '94; mother, Alicia (Sutphen) Schimke '94.

Elise Schmidt joins mother, Resa (Rashleger) Schmidt '90.

Riley Schmitz joins mother, Shari (Titus) Schmitz '82.

Ryan Schulz joins grandfather, Gary Schulz '55.

Andrew Sigel joins father, David Sigel '82.

Calista Smith joins father, David Smith '86.

Joseph Sorenson joins father, Dan Sorenson '90; mother, Andrea Cole-Sorenson '93.

Chase Tessness joins grandfather, Richard Bartholow '70; great grandmother Mary Ellen (Caughrean) Bartholow '50.

Sean Studeski joins father, Timothy Studenski '75.

Grant Thomas joins father, Scott Thomas '83; grandfather, Robert Thomas '46.

Noah Thuecks joins father, Scott Thuecks '92; mother, Priya (Singh) Thuecks '92.

Ayden Tiede joins mother, Susanne Aspley '83.

Emily Truax joins father, David Truax '88; mother, Michelle Huber '87.

Matthew Wenning joins father, Jason Wenning '86.

Whitney Wright joins father, Patrick Wright '87.

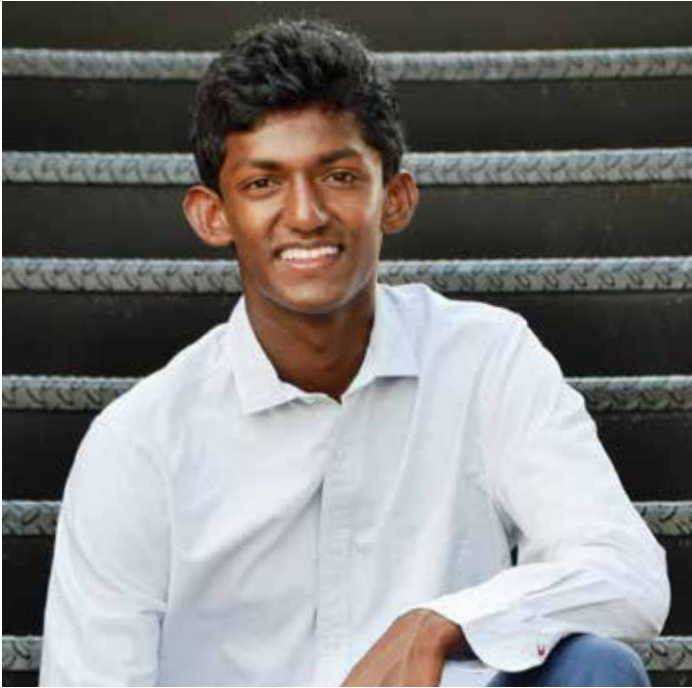
Abby Zwach joins father, Steve Zwach '88.

**Thank you to the Class of 2021 graduates who have reported that they will be serving our country!**

- Patrick Anderson, US Navy
- Emilio Flores, US Marines
- Cedric Garcia, Army National Guard
- Olivia Lutz, Army National Guard
- Elliot Moe, Army National Guard
- Logan Parker, US Marines
- Sam Roehl, US Army
- Autumn Rosenberg, US Marines
- Chase Tessness, Air Force Reserves
- Gavin Zabilla, US Army

# SIX TO WATCH

by Anna Geldert '21 & Emil Liden '21



## Hariharan Chidambaram '21

A stellar student, accomplished athlete and encouraging leader, Hariharan Chidambaram excels like no other. On top of tremendous success with challenging classes such as AP Computer Science and AP Biology, he is a National Merit Commended and National AP Scholar.

Outside of the classroom, Chidambaram's athletic talents have led him to compete at the varsity level for tennis and Nordic skiing, where he was named an all-conference athlete in both sports and served as captain his senior year. As a junior, Chidambaram was one of two Minnetonka students nominated for the ExCEL award, given by the Minnesota State High School League for excellence in academics, athletics and service.

For Chidambaram, fostering a positive school culture means getting his classmates involved and excited. "I really enjoy going to school, and I've always wanted everyone else to feel the same way," he said. As a four-year student government representative, Chidambaram planned school events and worked to make Minnetonka a place where everyone feels welcome.

In the fall, Chidambaram will attend the University of Michigan Ann Arbor to pursue a degree in engineering.



## Kareem Eldahshoury '21

For Kareem Eldahshoury, fostering a positive school culture means trying to smile all the time, greeting people whenever possible and keeping an optimistic attitude. In and out of the classroom, his strong character has made an impact on his peers and teachers.

As a young student at Scenic Heights Elementary, Eldahshoury enjoyed the quiet tranquility of reading in the library. To this day, his love of reading has fueled his passion for school and helped him excel in many subject areas.

An exceptional student, Eldahshoury has participated in both the VANTAGE and Minnetonka Research programs. He was named the first alternate for the Regeneron International Science and Engineering Fair for his project which investigated a prosthetic index finger operated by surface electromyography.

Eldahshoury competed on both the football and lacrosse teams for four years. Some of his favorite memories come from the thrills of competition, whether it was cheering on his friends or getting in on the action himself.

In the fall, Eldahshoury plans to study biomedical engineering at Saint Louis University.



## Eli Hooker Reese '21

Eli Hooker Reese has a passion for music and composition. Throughout his four years, Hooker Reese participated in nearly every musical opportunity offered, from choir to theatre to pit orchestra. In his spare time, he plays with his band, SEDONA, and composes music. Hooker Reese recently won the King's Singers New Music Prize in the under 18 category, an award that accepts submissions from composers across the country.

"I love nothing more than to see my peers, acquaintances and friends creating," Hooker Reese said. "Over the last couple of years, I have realized how much I enjoy making things—mostly music—and I have tried to facilitate and nurture a community of creativity at MHS."

In addition to his musical talents, Hooker Reese has also been involved in Minnetonka Research, Tonka Nordic Racing and Spanish Immersion throughout high school.

To the Class of 2021, Hooker Reese shared, "Thank you for helping me experience my life more fully, for being creative inspirations, for helping me create some of my favorite memories ever and for being my best friends."

In the fall, Hooker Reese will attend St. Olaf College to study composition and liberal arts.



## Lenora McFall '21

Lenora McFall kept a full schedule throughout high school with classes and activities tailored to her interests. In addition to challenging herself with AP coursework, she was also heavily involved in programs such as Chinese Immersion and Minnetonka Choir.

Outside of class, McFall participated in activities such as Minnetonka Girls Swimming and Diving Team, National Honor Society and volunteer commitments at the Salvation Army and Veteran's Affairs Hospital. She is also an accomplished Taekwondo instructor and has earned her third-degree black belt.

McFall stays politically involved by serving on Congressman Dean Phillips' Youth Advisory Council. In this role, she helps draft potential bills to be reviewed by the congressman and his staff.

In the fall, McFall will be attending the United States Military Academy at West Point. She hopes to major in Chinese and international affairs before dedicating her time to serving her country.





## Ellie Muench '21

Ellie Muench stands out as an exceptionally kind and hard-working student both inside and outside the classroom. Muench has been involved in the Spanish Immersion program at Minnetonka since elementary school and earned her Bilingual IB Diploma.

Throughout her time at MHS, Muench has been involved in a variety of service activities including National Honor Society, Backpack Tutoring, Haiti Club, Spanish Intercambio and Gigi's Playhouse.

When not studying for her classes, Muench spends most of her time at the pool. Muench's exceptional performance as captain of the Minnetonka Varsity Girls Swimming and Diving team has earned her recognition at sectional and state meets throughout her four years.

In the fall, Muench plans to attend Westmont College in Santa Barbara, California. She will be part of Westmont's honors college and will be competing on the Women's Swim Team.

## Mya Sato '21

Mya Sato is dedicated to making her community more equitable and inclusive. She is involved in many clubs and programs around the topic of diversity, equity and inclusion. She is president of the Minnetonka Dear Asian Youth Chapter, a member of the Principal's Advisory Council and a member of the Belonging Committee at MHS.

"I try to foster critical thinking, empathy and exposure to nuanced topics of race and gender," Sato explained. "I want to leave MHS better."

In addition to this work, Sato is also a dedicated student who has challenged herself by taking several AP and IB classes and kept busy outside of class with Mock Trial, Philosophy Club, NHS and French Honors Society.

"There is more to life outside of what you've known," said Sato. "Being conscious of where you are, who you are and what you have is so important."

In the fall, Sato will attend New York University. She plans to pursue an individualized major in the field of political ethics.





# *A Novel Idea Sparks A Passion for Service*

by Anna Geldert '21

Alexa Bussmann '16 already has a legacy that reaches far and wide. From volunteering in Guatemala to founding her own non-profit, her passion for service has kept her busy since graduating from Minnetonka High School. Her dedication to helping others and improving the world through advocacy is sure to leave a lasting impact.

"Serving others is important to me because of the privilege that I have," said Bussmann. "I have walked through doors of opportunity that I did not open. I'm really grateful to have gone to schools like Minnetonka and Vanderbilt, and because of those opportunities, I have a responsibility to use my skills and privilege to help others."

Bussmann's journey with volunteering began as a student at Minnetonka High School, where she was involved in service activities like National Honor Society and the Class of 2016 Legacy Project. She continued to volunteer as a student at Vanderbilt University, where she interned at several non-profits centered around equity, advocacy and justice. Most notably, she served as the Monitoring & Evaluation Intern for the International Justice Mission (IJM) in Guatemala, where she worked on determining effective ways to reduce poverty and child sexual assault in marginalized communities.

Bussmann was hoping to return to Guatemala and continue her work with IJM the following summer, but her plans drastically changed when the COVID pandemic began. Travel restrictions and lock-downs threatened to put a pause on advocacy work for the foreseeable future. Many people would have accepted that and dealt with their own pandemic-related issues, but Bussmann got right to work on a new, innovative project—*Novel Hand*—an online publication dedicated to bridging the gap between activism and impact for today's youth.



**Alexa Bussmann '16 founded *Novel Hand*, an online journal and podcast network that helps young adults turn activism into impact.**

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"There's a disconnect in our generation," Bussmann wrote on *Novel Hand's* website. "You're passionate about humanitarian and social issues, but it's hard to know where to start. *Novel Hand* is a publication by and for our generation to advance the best solutions to local and global humanitarian issues. We are capable of impact."

Since Bussmann founded *Novel Hand*, the program has skyrocketed. Current college students and graduates from around the country have come together to contribute to the journal, record podcasts and share resources covering topics ranging from education and immigration to the environment. Each publication is designed to teach the audience how to transform a loose desire to support humanitarian issues

into practical steps one can take to make a significant impact on an issue of interest.

With COVID restrictions finally easing up, Bussmann hopes to split her time between her internship at IJM and serving as the head editor of *Novel Hand*. In addition to writing for and serving as a guest speaker on many of the publications, she is also in charge of innovation and intern recruitment. Never one to sit idle, she also plans to pursue her JD at the University of Texas School of Law in the fall.

Bussmann suggests that young adults, "learn how to put time into things that really matter to you, but also take time to rest. Where you go to college or your first job out of college doesn't determine your future—you are the common denominator in every situation you're in."

You can find dozens of articles and podcasts on advocacy created by Bussmann and other passionate activists at [novelhand.com](https://novelhand.com).

# It Runs "Zinn" the Family

Three Generations Reflect on their Connection to Minnetonka Schools



by Mary Cornelius

**A**s realtors who specialize in helping families buy and sell homes in the Minnetonka area, the Zinns may be some of the first faces people meet when moving into the district. Even after a quick conversation with Carl, Max or Hans—all members of the Zinn Family Realtors team—it becomes clear that they are invested in their community and passionate about the quality of education students receive at Minnetonka's schools.

In addition to being local business professionals, the Zinns are and have been Minnetonka students, parents, grandparents, teachers, volunteers, boosters and advocates. Their connection

with the district is wide, and it also runs deep: two generations of Zinns are Minnetonka High School alumni, and rising sophomore Lucy Zinn will start the third generation of graduates in 2024.

What does being a Minnetonka alumni mean to Carl Zinn '61? "Well, it makes me an expert," he explained. His history with district means he can share firsthand about the difference a Minnetonka Schools education can make.

Carl and his family, including sisters Heidi (Zinn) Larson '63, Julie (Zinn) Kottke '65, Betzy (Zinn) Bicknase '69 and Missy Zinn '73, moved to Minnetonka in 1959. They became involved in the school community right away through sports teams and

extracurricular activities. Julie was a "rouser" who loved to drum up school spirit at sports games, and Carl enjoyed the camaraderie of the football team.

Carl, Julie and Heidi went on to study at the University of Minnesota after graduating from MHS. Carl moved out to Denver, Colorado, but Julie returned to Minnetonka as a teacher at Excelsior Elementary. "I had a fabulous education at Minnetonka that prepared me for an outstanding college experience," said Julie. "I was only gone from Minnetonka four years before I had to come back!"

After nine years at Excelsior, Julie shifted her focus to starting the District's Advanced Learning Program





***"THE MINNETONKA SCHOOL DISTRICT IS THE MINNETONKA COMMUNITY. IT PROVIDES OUR CHILDREN WITH THE OPPORTUNITY FOR A WORLD-CLASS EDUCATION."***

**- CARL ZINN '61**



***"I REALLY ENJOYED MY YEARS AT MINNETONKA. MY SPHERE OF FRIENDS FROM MINNETONKA CONTINUES TO BE MY CLOSEST GROUP OF FRIENDS."***

**- MAX ZINN '94**



***"I'VE LOVED EVERYTHING I'VE BEEN INVOLVED WITH. BEING A SKIPPER MEANS A LOT TO ME BECAUSE MY DAD AND GRANDPA WERE BOTH SKIPPERS. IT RUNS IN THE FAMILY!"***

**- LUCY ZINN '24**

in 1978. "We started out with programs offering enrichment classes at two of the elementary schools, and by the time I retired, we had a comprehensive K-12 program, starting with the WINGS format and going up to AP and IB programs at the high school," she said.

Heidi also became a Minnetonka teacher, joining the teaching team at Scenic Heights in the elementary school's inaugural year. Like Julie, Heidi became involved in program development. She contributed to building Minnetonka's programs for adult education and English Language Learners.

During his time in Colorado, Carl got started with real estate, which eventually led him and his family to move back to Minnetonka in the 1980s. The Minnesota real estate market was steadier than Colorado's, and he knew from both his personal experience and his sisters' teaching experiences that Minnetonka Schools made the southwestern suburbs unique.

"The Minnetonka Public School District is the Minnetonka community," said Carl. "It is made up of a number of cities that have a common, vested interest in the schools. That was most important to me and the reason I moved back. Minnetonka provides our children with the opportunity for a world-class education." Throughout the years, Carl has supported the District in many ways and has earned both a Distinguished Service Award and a Spinnaker Award for his volunteerism.

Carl's three sons Gus Zinn '92, Max Zinn '94 and Hans Zinn '97 were all shaped by their time at MHS and left their marks on the school, as well. Gus and Max were part of the 1991 Hall of Fame swimming team, and Hans was deeply involved in sailing.

Max and Hans now work with Carl as part of the Zinn Family Realtors team. Both have been involved in parent volunteer efforts at the schools where their children attend. After working with the team that planned his class's 20th reunion, Max decided to join the Minnetonka Alumni Association as a new board member in 2021.

"Our reunion was a blast. We had so much fun reconnecting with classmates that we threw another reunion soon after," said Max. "That reunion led me to the alumni association. I wanted to find a volunteer opportunity to commit to for the next few years, and [the alumni association] felt like a great spot right away."

Max's daughter Lucy Zinn '24 has been a Skipper throughout her schooling, starting with ECCE classes through Minnetonka Community Education. She is a member of the MHS sailing team and is involved with UNIFIED, an MHS club that partners with Special Olympics Minnesota.

"Being a Skipper means a lot to me because my dad and grandpa were both Skippers, too," shares Lucy. "It runs in the family!" Other Zinn grandchildren Adelaide, August, Axel and Heidi attend Deephaven,

Clear Springs and Minnetonka Middle School East (MME). Hannah, the youngest Zinn, is a student in Minnetonka Preschool. Julie (Zinn) Kottke's grandchildren also attend Minnetonka schools—Gus at Deephaven and Reese at MME. When Reese was in elementary school, she took part in the WINGS program that Julie helped to start years ago.

Their family connections make investing their time, expertise and resources in Minnetonka Schools personal. "Part of the pleasure of being an alumna is knowing that I had an incredible education from fantastic teachers, but it was not just for me," shared Julie. "My nephews and now my grandchildren are going to have it, as well. The pride of giving back as an alumna, teacher and volunteer is knowing that I've made a difference—for my grandkids and all kids."

Carl's advice to alumni looking to get engaged with the district is simple: "Show up." Whether at sports games or for theatre performances, at Minnetonka Alumni Association events or through other school-supporting opportunities like the Minnetonka Public Schools Foundation, there are many ways for Skippers to be present and build connections with the school community.

"When people wonder what they can do for their grandkids," said Julie, "this is it—support their schools!"



## MHS Alumni Return to Coach Nordic Ski Team

by Emil Liden '21 | photo by Becky Hunter

**Keeping with Minnetonka's spirit of service, recent graduates returned to help coach Minnetonka High School's Nordic ski team.**

It's not often that you see a college student coaching a high school sports team, let alone one that they were part of just a few years ago.

Nagu Chidambaram '16, Sophia Hicks '19, Dominic Barry '20 and Dylan Tahnk-Johnson '20 were among the alumni who came back to coach this winter. Ask these graduates what their favorite part of being a student at MHS was, and chances are that they will mention something about Nordic ski—from meeting new friends to learning valuable life lessons—both on and off the snow.

"Nordic ski was by far the best experience in any sport [I was involved in] at Minnetonka High School, and I made many of my closest friends during my time on the team," said Tahnk-Johnson. "I also was able to get into the best shape of my life





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## Alumni Giving Back

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*Opposite page: Alumnus Nagu Chidambaram '16 imparts advice to current Nordic skiers Hariharan Chidambaram '21, Antonio Muniz '22, Peter McNabb '21 and Alexander Hemink '22.*

both physically and mentally thanks to Coach Kern's incredible coaching."

Being home from college due to COVID gave these graduates a lot of free time. But it was receiving so much from the Nordic ski program in high school that motivated them to want to come back and help coach this year. "My coaches had an enormous impact on me as a skier, as a leader and as a person," said Hicks, who served as Nordic ski captain for two years and remains an active skier in college.

For others, their love working with younger students remained their motivation. "I love coaching and teaching kids how to really invest in themselves and each other to see what they can become," said Chidambaram. "Nordic ski is such a positive community that coming back to help out was [too] good to pass up! There is so much potential in the group this year, and I wanted to help shape and guide them to even more success."

Minnetonka coaches appreciated the extra help more than ever this year. Due to COVID safety restrictions, Nordic ski's normal training plan changed drastically. Practices became more structured, and skiers were divided into pods based on speed. Even though these pods made it difficult to interact with the large group, it gave the alumni the opportunity to

work more directly with the student skiers.

"I ended up skiing with the same group for the most part. We really got to know each other well, knowing just what the other members of our pods needed to be successful," said Barry. Coaching the JV boys skiers was ultimately his favorite part of the season. "These guys made huge progress this year by staying focused. They ended up outdoing all of the goals they set this season," he said.

Likewise, Hicks spent much of the season coaching the JV girls, an experience that was very meaningful for her. "Their enthusiasm and joy for the sport—despite the unusual year—served as a great reminder of how special Nordic skiing is."

Thanks to these amazing alumni volunteers, Nordic skiers

made progress individually and as a team this year. "There were a lot of improvements and everyone had fun doing it," said Chidambaram. "It's always great to see new memories created and walls being brought down."

Giving their time and sharing their knowledge of skiing with current MHS student athletes was something that these alumni will cherish. "Coaching this year has been a phenomenal experience to both be back with some of my high school friends, but also to help spread my knowledge and see skiers develop," said Tahnk-Johnson. "Nordic ski has meant so much to me. It truly was the highlight of my day all winter long while social interactions were few and far between."

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**"I love coaching and teaching kids how to really invest in themselves and each other to see what they can become. Nordic ski is such a positive community that coming back to help out was [too] good to pass up! There is so much potential in the group this year, and I wanted to help shape and guide them to even more success."**

*- Nagu Chidambaram '16*

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For Nordic Ski Head Coach Sean Kern, having his former skiers back was both special and beneficial to the team's success. "I was incredibly honored that I had many reach out and offer to volunteer coach, and the team benefited tremendously," he said. "The purpose of our program is to build a strong community of skiers who give back to others and live a healthy and fulfilling life. Having alumni join us this year was evidence of that purpose in action."





# JAN MALCOLM

## Meet Minnesota's Top Public Health Official

by Daniel Campbell

Jan Malcolm '73 is one of the most respected health policy leaders in the nation. As Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Health, she directs the work of the state's leading public health agency and is responsible for protecting, maintaining and improving the health of all Minnesotans.

Prior to her present role, Commissioner Malcolm had several high-profile positions. They included: faculty member at the University of Minnesota School of Public Health; Senior Program Officer at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation in Princeton, New Jersey; Vice President of Public Affairs at Allina Health System; and Senior Vice President of Government Programs and Public Policy at HealthPartners. She has previously served as Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Health under Governor Ventura and Governor Dayton.

Commissioner Malcolm also has deep roots with the Minnetonka Schools community. She served as president of Minnetonka High School's Class of 1973 and received the Distinguished Alumni Award, Minnetonka's highest honor, in 2010. *Minnetonka Alumni Magazine* caught up with her in June to discuss her memories of MHS, thoughts about the COVID pandemic and what we can look forward to this summer and beyond.

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### **What do you remember most about Minnetonka High School?**

I had great teachers, great friends and a great experience. The quality of the school was a good preparation for my college career and what came after. I credit Minnetonka with helping me grow up.

### **Can you remember a teacher or staff member at Minnetonka High School that made an impact on your life?**

There were many. Brian Halleen who was the drama coach for many years was instrumental. The Skoys, Mr. Peterson—I also remember the subjects that were important. The science classes were great, as was English; I think it was all well-rounded. Good preparation for a liberal arts college.

### **Could you tell me about your career and the achievements you are most proud of?**

When I was at Minnetonka, and later, when I first went to Dartmouth College, I had been preparing for medical school. I thought I wanted to be a physician, but during the last year of college, I was exposed to health policy. I originally thought I would work in the field for a bit, and then go back and into medical school, but I was captured by the health policy world and never did.

All my career I've done a lot of administrative things. Never a clinician, but a generalist in leadership and administration. My interest throughout was in public policy and what the environment does to help or not help achieve a healthier population. I've been working to expand access to healthcare, the quality of healthcare and in the second half of my career, really focusing on the public health system as opposed to the healthcare delivery system. Those broader population public health interventions. That's where I found my greatest alignment with my values and the work of public health, really trying to look at a holistic, systemic way at what really influences the health of populations and how you improve that.

I've had the unusual opportunity to serve as Health Commissioner under three different governors, separated in time by 20 years. The first time I served as commissioner was under Governor Ventura, then I served with Governor Dayton in his last year—which was a 20 year gap—and then I stayed on as part of Governor Walz's team. It was really interesting to come back into that role after such a span of time and other career experiences I had. I felt privileged to serve in that role and to work on big initiatives to improve health and health equity, and of course in this last year to work through this pandemic. [It was] nothing I ever expected or felt qualified to do, frankly, but you respond to what you are dealt.

### **Obviously, COVID-19 has had a major impact on your work. What were you thinking when you first became aware of how serious this crisis could be?**

When we first started learning about COVID, it took several

months to figure out the full scope of it. We were hoping that it would be like a bad flu or that it would have the same kind of a trajectory that some of the other novel respiratory viruses had and not spread to the degree that COVID did. Early on, we didn't have a way to appreciate how much bigger it would be compared to those earlier experiences. What we do in public health is respond to infectious diseases. Every year the flu is a pandemic around the globe. Not to say we were overconfident, but it took a while to see how different this truly was.

In the context of COVID, it's been really difficult for people in public health all over the country. Here, in Minnesota, our local health department directors and those at the state level have been under a tremendous amount of pressure. There's still a lot we don't know, like how long immunity lasts after infection or with a vaccine. There has obviously been a thirst for answers on the part of policy makers, the governor, local elected officials, legislators, the press, the public—everyone wants to know the answer and there hasn't been the kind of straightforward answers everyone wished for.

We're doing our best to be transparent with information and to give the best advice we can to the ultimate decision makers and to the public.

**You talked about some of the challenges. What do you feel has been a success during this health crisis?**

We have had pretty good compliance with public health recommendations. I give Minnesotans a lot of credit for taking responsibility in adhering to the safety measures that are responsible for limiting the spread of disease. The governor has talked a lot about balancing public health with economic considerations and societal well-being. It's never solely been about public health recommendations, because the recommendations can come with some negative effects.

When you think about schools, for instance, it seemed the right and prudent thing was to go into distance learning because we didn't know enough about the risk to kids, how susceptible they may be or what role they played in transmission. But the impact on learning and kids being out of the classroom for a long time is a big concern, too.

I think the governor listened to multiple points of view and balanced several factors. Our economy has been more open than many for a longer period of time and we also managed to keep the toll of cases on hospital patients and deaths relatively low on a per population basis. We rank pretty well among other states on those measures, but we've still lost over 7,300 people to COVID. And that's 7,300 too many. I don't want to minimize that.

**What do you see ahead for Minnesota and the country in the next few months? Are we really at the end of the pandemic or are there still risks?**

The trends have been very encouraging for several weeks now. We're seeing cases and hospitalizations decline. Mortality rates have fallen as treatment has gotten better. And the vaccines are working phenomenally well. We started to see cases go back up in March and April and we were really afraid that we might be headed for a peak that was worse than we saw in the fall, but then the impact of the vaccines kicked in. By getting the most vulnerable vaccinated early on, we were able to blunt that surge and now it's been coming down. That's been true across the country as well. It's good news.



*Commissioner Malcolm, pictured above at the 2018 Minnesota State Fair, enjoys educating the public about what public health policy means and how it affects everyone in Minnesota.*

**Could you talk about what it's been like to be the head of the Minnesota Department of Health during a global pandemic?**

Certainly, COVID has taken over the spotlight over the past year and a half. It has been a public health crisis that's been unmatched in recent times. Because we had never done anything on this scale, there wasn't a playbook to follow. It's been a lot of working with imperfect information, trying things and adjusting as we learn more. There's a lot of work to go back to on a whole range of issues when the pandemic settles down to a level where it's no longer an overarching threat.





*Commissioner Malcolm received the Johnson & Johnson vaccine in March publicly to help demonstrate her confidence in the effectiveness and safety of this vaccine and the importance of vaccination in preventing the spread of COVID.*

Having three remarkably effective vaccines has been a major shift in the equation, but we need to be mindful that this is still raging in countries around the globe like India. The threat is not completely gone, so it is important that people get good information and make well informed choices. We hope most people will make the choice to be vaccinated. We may be seeing booster shots to respond to variants or improve immunity, but we do believe this will become manageable.

#### **What's the best thing that people can do to stay safe?**

Confidence has grown a lot in the effectiveness of vaccination and, for people who are vaccinated, a lot of things are safe. But I know a lot of people are still worried about their children who aren't vaccinated or loved ones who are at higher risk, so it's always good to keep in mind that some settings are riskier than others. We need to respect people's choices around that and meet people where they are in terms of what they are comfortable with and what they aren't.

We hope good habits will last, like not circulating with others when you are sick. We used to think "well I'm tough, I'm going to go to work even though I'm sick." It would be really good if people could continue to stay home when sick. And perhaps masking might be something we do more often during respiratory illness season. We had almost no flu due to the mitigations for COVID, like avoiding crowded spaces and better ventilation. All those things could serve us well.

#### **Is there anything you are looking forward to doing again as things open back up this summer?**

It's great to be outside and wonderful to see friends again. I look forward to going out to dinner with my friends. It's a source of great enjoyment being able to be physically closer to people. It's been a lonely year for most people, so reconnecting feels terrific. I'm looking forward to getting in the garden, getting on the golf course and going out to dinner.

#### **What calls to you and makes you say "I want to keep doing this!"**

I feel so fortunate to have discovered the field of public health and public service. I've had great jobs in the public and nonprofit sectors, but public sector work is a calling. I appreciate the opportunity and responsibility to work on things that affect larger issues and populations. That's been a privilege.

#### **Do you have any advice for current MHS students and recent graduates?**

It is wonderful to find work that is not just a job, but is also fulfilling. I encourage graduates to find a match between their personal values and what gives them energy and fulfillment. We spend a lot of our adult lives at work. It makes a difference if the work is fulfilling and if the fit is good.

My advice is to keep looking for the best fit and, if you are doing something that doesn't feel right, to try not to get stuck. It can take courage to find your best alignment, but it is a joyful experience when you are doing something you enjoy and not just something you have to do.

# ART!

## in the age of COVID

by Emil Liden '21 | photos by Amy Jore



**E**mpty seats, canceled shows and dimmed spotlights seemed to be the new normal in the age of COVID. Like many other public forms of entertainment, the theatre industry took an especially hard blow this last year. However, thanks to the innovation and creativity of the Minnetonka Theatre Department, the phrase "the show must go on!" was taken to heart by both students and staff.

For Trent Boyum and Lauren Bartelt, artistic and associate directors of Minnetonka Theatre, the pandemic not only brought new challenges, but also new opportunities to produce top-notch performances while keeping audiences and actors safe.

Coming into the fall of 2020, Boyum knew that Minnetonka Theatre had to be there for its students. Given the turmoil of

**"The staff and I really had to prepare and be creative in a whole new way. It was a hard pivot, but so worth it!"**

- Trent Boyum, Artistic Director of Minnetonka Theatre



*Opposite page: The fall musical, Broadway, Here I Come!, required additional safety precautions and was held outdoors at the City of Minnetonka Amphitheatre.*

the past few months, he said that “keeping [the] young actors and crew members connected to each other and the activity they are so, so passionate about was the top priority.”

They kicked off the season with *Broadway, Here I Come!* This musical production involved two separate sets of cast members and an outdoor venue. Their first in-person performance in a while, the show was “a wonderful celebration of the students’ love of theatre,” said Boyum.

The return to the stage meant new adjustments, from learning to work new livestream video equipment to creating safety protocols like outdoor and Zoom rehearsals, disinfecting props, sound equipment and sanitation stations. “It was a hard pivot but so worth it!” said Boyum. Thanks to their efforts to keep students safe, Minnetonka Theatre reported zero cases of COVID throughout the year.

In the winter, Minnetonka Theatre pursued a unique challenge: the creation of an original one-act play, *Subject to Change*. “The students and I wanted to create a piece that was personal, uplifting and poignant,” said Bartelt who directed the play along with guest playwright and MHS theatre alumna, Christine Heesun Hwang ‘17. The play is a meditation on how people deal with uncertainty and the lessons learned along the way.

Along with the other winter production, *Blithe Spirit*, *Subject to Change* was recorded for home viewing. This provided a chance for tech students and actors alike to learn new skills and experience the ins and outs of film production.

Minnetonka Theatre ended the season with *Something Rotten*, widely regarded as one of the funniest new musical to come off of Broadway. For Boyum, a comedy was just the right way to cap off the year, adding that everyone, “could use a good laugh about now.”

Despite the challenges of the past year, the creativity and innovation of the Minnetonka Theatre department are truly triumphs to celebrate. Now, with the end of the COVID pandemic in sight, Minnetonka Theatre is hopeful that a return to the main stage will be coming soon. Visit [minnetonkatheatre.com](http://minnetonkatheatre.com) to learn about future performances and purchase tickets.



*The cast and crew of Subject to Change met on Zoom during the height of COVID to work on their one act play, which premiered virtually as a film.*



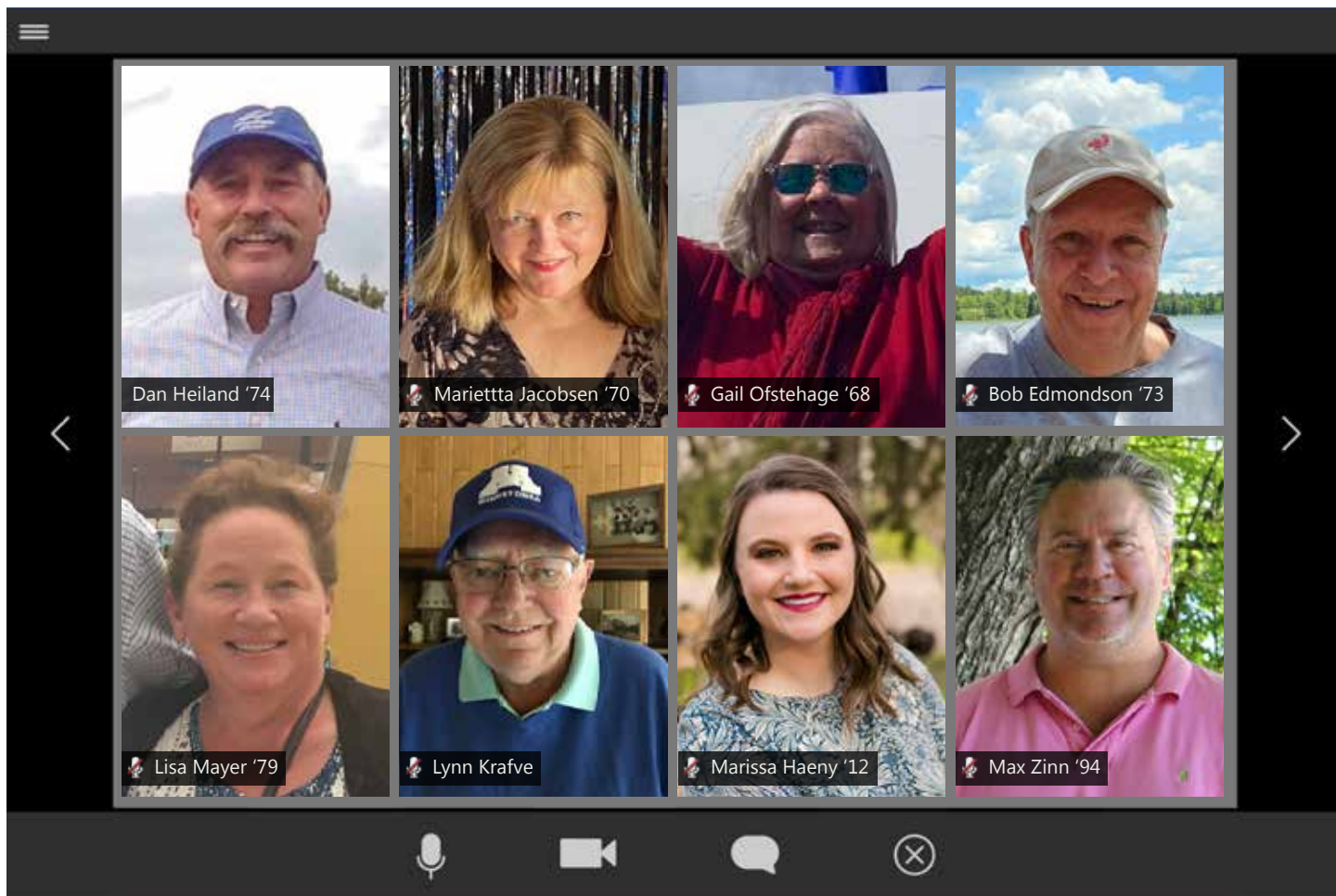
*This year's winter play, Blithe Spirit, was also filmed and recorded for audiences, providing new challenges and opportunities for Minnetonka's young actors.*



*The year ended with a well-deserved laugh, courtesy of Something Rotten, Minnetonka's spring musical. This live performance was held in the parking lot.*

# Alumni Association News

## Update from the Alumni Board



Like so many organizations, the Minnetonka Alumni Association was faced with the daunting task of adapting to the global pandemic last year. Board members, who typically met in-person to plan alumni events and set fundraising goals, were now stuck at home. They adapted to the new situation by initiating regular Zoom calls. This new process has worked well, though board members say they are looking forward to their first in-person meeting in late August.

The news has not been so good for many of the exciting events that the association had planned for 2020 and 2021. Most had to be canceled, postponed or adapted into a virtual format due to health restrictions. One of the most difficult decisions the board had to make was what to do about the All-School, All-Class Reunion. Normally held every four years, they determined there would be no way to hold it next summer and have it be as special as they would like it to be.

"It was a tough decision to delay the All-School, All-Class Reunion," said Dan Heiland '74, President of the Minnetonka Alumni Association, "but the alumni board felt like it was the right call to wait. It takes a full year to plan this event, and we

still don't have a full alumni board. By setting our next All-School, All-Class Reunion in 2024, we can make sure that our board is ready and that the effects of the COVID pandemic will be far behind us."

Nevertheless, the alumni board is excited to begin returning to normal. Its first in-person event will be the annual Alumni Awards held at Minnetonka High School.

"Last year's Alumni Awards event was entirely virtual," remarked Heiland. "It was a great success and I was proud of what we were able to do, but I can't wait to be back in person. There's just something special about meeting people face-to-face. This year's honorees are all outstanding people. I'm glad we can give them the warm Minnetonka reception they deserve."

The Alumni Association is also pleased to welcome Max Zinn '94 as a new member of the alumni board. You can read more about Max and his family's many connections to Minnetonka Public Schools on page 14. If you are interested in joining the Minnetonka Alumni Association, please complete this form: [bit.ly/alumni-connection](https://bit.ly/alumni-connection).



## 2020-21 GIVING UPDATE

As part of the Minnetonka Alumni Association's commitment to support current students, the Association funds Teacher Grants in partnership with the Minnetonka Public Schools Foundation. These grants make innovative ideas from teachers a reality and enhance the ability for students to learn.

Through the generosity of alumni like you, the Minnetonka Alumni Association was able to give a total of \$2,279 and fully fund the following Teacher Grants this year:

- **Promoting Diversity, Inclusion and Social Emotional Intelligence Through Books** - New, age-appropriate books will be purchased to replace outdated or damaged ones for Minnetonka's Preschool and Explorers (childcare) program. The grant allow staff to select books with an intentional focus on diversity, inclusion, positive relationships and social/emotional intelligence.
- **Three Minutes can make a Big Difference: Innovative Methods in Supporting Student and Teachers Well-being** - This grant will facilitate the integration of the "Calm Classroom" program to improve both academic and social/emotional skills in a manner that is not disruptive to standard curriculum, teaching-time and/or classroom preparation efforts. These techniques and exercises require only three-minutes to execute.
- **Special Education Social Skills Games** - This grant will fund the purchase of new games for special education resource students. Games are often played during social skills groups to discuss and teach habits of playing with peers, turn taking, accepting losing and more.
- **Academic Achievements for Chinese Immersion Learners** - This grant aims to evaluate and recognize 5th and 8th grade Chinese immersion students' academic achievement and nominate students for the honor of Chinese Language Association of Secondary-Elementary Schools and National Junior Scholars for Excellence in Chinese.
- **Puppet Theatre for Social Emotional Learning in Kindergarten** - This grant provides for a puppet theatre and several hand puppets for the children, as well as a larger ventriloquist style puppet for teacher instruction. Young students learn through play and imagination. These items will enrich their learning and opportunities to practice social/emotional learning concepts in a safe way.

You can see a full list of teacher grants funded by the Minnetonka Alumni Association from 2005-present at [bit.ly/MAA-teachergrants](https://bit.ly/MAA-teachergrants). To make a gift to the Minnetonka Alumni Association, visit [minnetonkaschools.org/alumnigiving](https://minnetonkaschools.org/alumnigiving).

Minnetonka Alumni Association

## BY THE NUMBERS

July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021



# 8 OUT OF 13

ALUMNI BOARD MEMBER SEATS FILLED



# 21 GIFTS MADE

# \$2,970

RAISED THIS YEAR



## FUNDING RECEIVED FOR ALL 4 GIVING CATEGORIES!



FINE ARTS



SCIENCE &  
TECH



STUDENT  
WELL-BEING



GENERAL  
FUND

# 11,052

CURRENT K-12  
STUDENTS BENEFIT  
FROM TEACHER GRANTS

# 39K+

ALUMNI BENEFIT  
FROM EVENTS HOSTED  
BY THE ASSOCIATION

# DR. JONI (HLAVACEK) SCHWARTZ-CHANNEY '71

## Distinguished Alumni Award

by Anna Geldert '21

Joni (Hlavacek) Schwartz-Chaney '71 wasn't sure what to expect when she moved to New York City after graduating from Minnetonka High School. All she knew was that she felt she had a mission to leave a positive impact on her community.

Forty years later, Schwartz-Chaney has met her goal. She's now living in NYC after founding three learning centers serving marginalized communities, including the Downtown Learning Center, Turning Point Educational Center and the Literacy Partners Learning Center. While these centers started small, they proved extremely successful and have grown to provide services including GED, ESOL and housing for homeless adolescent populations. Their overall goal is to provide people with a second chance at education and career development.

"It's a long history of community-based work, and you put your heart and soul into that," Schwartz-Chaney reflected. "That time in my life [when I first established the learning centers] was some of the best—just being right in there and working with the community in a really intimate way."

In the past, Schwartz-Chaney has also volunteered at the Queensbrook Correctional Facility, where she led a writing group. While this program was shut down due to the COVID pandemic, Schwartz-Chaney hopes to continue working with individuals at the facility as soon as things return to normal.



**"We each have to find our own way to fight for social justice."**

In addition to her service-based involvement in NYC, Schwartz-Chaney is also a writer and professor at LaGuardia Community College. She has written several books and scholarly publications centered around equity and racial dynamics. Her most recent book, called *Learning to Disclose: a Journey of Transracial Adoption* was co-written with her daughter, Rebecca, and describes what each has learned through their relationship.

"I'm a writer at heart," Schwartz-Chaney explained. "I look at



writing as a struggle against silence. My writing is a form of social activism, really, and it's a way to get my voice heard."

Schwartz-Chaney sees herself continuing to write and speak up about social injustice for the rest of her life. She also hopes to continue working at the learning centers and volunteering around NYC for as long as possible.

Schwartz-Chaney said she is humbled to have been chosen to receive the Distinguished Alumni Award. "It's an honor to receive [this award] from Minnetonka because I know it's a really good school."

Schwartz-Chaney believes each and every graduate of Minnetonka holds a responsibility to improve the communities we live in. "With privilege comes responsibility," she said. "I believe that if you are silent, you are complicit, so we all have to be anti-racist. We all need to ask ourselves, 'in the interests of equity and democracy, how am I going to take this life and this opportunity and use it for the greater good?'"

Schwartz-Chaney encourages recent graduates to identify an issue which they are passionate about and continue to work to improve it throughout their lives. "I think everyone can [be an activist] from their corner of the world," she added. "Everyone can address it in different ways, but we each have to find our own way to fight for social justice."



# JOHN STANOCH '76

## Distinguished Alumni Award

by Emil Liden '21

The passion John Stanoch '76 has for law and government began in high school when he participated in the YMCA's Youth in Government program. "It was a blast for me because I [had an] interest in government, and I met some nice people that I'm friends with to this day," he said. From learning to draft bills to touring the Minnesota State Capitol, his enthusiasm for law only grew.

After graduating from Minnetonka High School in 1976, Stanoch attended the University of Wisconsin-Madison where he earned a bachelor's degree in political science. He then went on to earn his juris doctor degree from the Mitchell Hamline School of Law in St. Paul.

Stanoch's career in politics started in 1990 when he was chosen to serve as Rudy Perpich's campaign manager in his final gubernatorial run. For him, it was a chance to not only have daily interaction with the governor, but also to see the state of Minnesota and meet people with whom he would end up working with years later.



**"Remember the people that helped you along the way, and reach out and help others."**

Following that position, he was appointed as a judge on the Minnesota District Court in Hennepin County where he served as a senior judge and later as President of the Minnesota District Judges Association. Stanoch spent his last years on the bench serving the juvenile population, an experience he said was especially meaningful. "I found it rewarding to work with young people who had done something that got themselves into trouble, to turn themselves around so we didn't see them in the adult criminal court later," he said. After retiring as a full-time judge, Stanoch served as Minnesota Deputy Attorney General under then Attorney General Mike Hatch.

Stanoch's career took a sharp turn as he headed into the for-profit sector. He accepted a position as President of Qwest Communications International Inc. for Minnesota and North Dakota. "That was probably the most unusual career turn for me,



because I was trained as a lawyer," said Stanoch. "It stretched my skills and required me to up my game." By the time he left Qwest, the company had \$1.4 billion in revenue.

Once again, Stanoch's career took a sharp turn as he headed into the nonprofit sector, serving as President and CEO of Ronald McDonald House Charities of the Upper Midwest. "It really spoke to me, because I believed in the mission of helping provide comfort to families who are experiencing a life threatening illness or a serious injury that happens to their child," he said.

Reflecting on his time growing up in the Minnetonka area, Stanoch remembered the teachers who made an impact on his life. "They always saw potential and encouraged me. They said that I could do whatever I wanted to do," he shared.

Giving advice to today's students, Stanoch said, "When you move forward with your life, when you move forward with your career and you experience success and failure, remember the people who helped you along the way, and reach out and help others."

# MINNETONKA *Alumni Awards* ★

## Congratulations to all of the 2021 Alumni Award Honorees!

Join us on Saturday, October 2, at Minnetonka High School to honor their achievements.

Discover event details and get tickets at [www.minnetonkaalumni.com/AlumniAwards](http://www.minnetonkaalumni.com/AlumniAwards)



*Distinguished Alumni Award*  
**Dr. Joni Schwartz-Chaney '71**

As a professor of Humanities at LaGuardia Community College in New York, Schwartz has spent her career researching, teaching and writing about social justice and racial equality. She continuously gives back to the community by supporting Brooklyn's poor and marginalized communities.



*Distinguished Alumni Award*  
**John Stanoch '76**

Stanoch served as a judge for Minnesota's District and State court systems. He has also given back to the community through his work in leadership positions with the Ronald McDonald House Charities, the Science Museum of Minnesota, the Greater Minneapolis YMCA and more.



*Distinguished Service Award*  
**Sharon Hermel '65 and Carol Parker '65**

Over the past 15 years, Parker and Hermel have raised over \$100,000 to fight Alzheimer's disease in honor of their classmate and close friend, Julie Webster. They are also dedicated organizers of alumni reunions that have kept the MHS Class of 1965 close for years.



*Young Alumni Award*  
**Brittney Fagerlee '09**

Fagerlee received the Champion of the Year award from Best Buddies, a program helping individuals with developmental and intellectual disabilities connect to their community. She is an assistant at Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church and Beehive Memory Care Center, where she spreads friendliness and positivity to residents.



*Skippers Hall of Fame*  
**Mark "Lunch" McKenzie '70**

After success with the MHS baseball team, McKenzie returned to coach the Skippers and led the team to win numerous conferences, as well as section and state tournaments. He later had a successful career with USA Baseball, training Olympic and Junior Olympic coaches and coaching his own national team.

## Calling All Skippers!

Nominations for the 2022 Alumni Awards are open!

Award categories include Distinguished Alumni Award, Distinguished Service Award, Young Alumni Achievement Award, Skippers Hall of Fame (Arts, Activities, Athletics) and Faculty Hall of Fame. You can nominate yourself, a classmate or a former teacher.

[bit.ly/nominate2022](http://bit.ly/nominate2022)



# Making Dreams Come True

by Daniel Campbell

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This winter, the dedicated leaders of the Minnetonka Public Schools Foundation were faced with an unprecedented challenge—how to hold their largest in-person giving event in a year without mass gatherings.

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## **“WE KNEW WE COULDN’T CANCEL IT,”**

said Lya Hurst, the Executive Director of the Minnetonka Foundation at that time, “but we were unsure about how successful it could be when there were no live components. We moved the event to the end of February hoping things would open up more than they did.”

With the end of the school year approaching and everyone still unsure about when COVID restrictions would be lifted, the Foundation opted to move forward with a fully virtual event. The Dream Makers 2021 Committee looked at how other non-profits were adapting to the virtual environment and took the best parts for their own plan. After a lot of brainstorming, the committee decided to extend Dream Makers from a one-day, in-person event into a five-day, fully online giving extravaganza. They filled their social media with daily video releases, clever posts, an online auction and much more. By the end of the week, their social media posts reached more than 8,000 people, and their videos were viewed 3,000 times.

“Because we didn’t broadcast a live event, more people were able to participate,” explained Hurst. “We had a different message each day that they could watch on their own time.”

Despite the radical change to format, Dream Makers ultimately raised \$165,000 through community partnerships, a silent auction and donations. When factoring in the reduced costs of holding a virtual event, this ended up being one of the

Foundation’s most successful events ever, raising \$34,000 more than the previous year.

“This year’s event opened my eyes to how giving not only from parents, but also from our community, could be,” said Hurst. “We saw a lot of businesses and people who don’t have kids in the schools anymore participate. It not only made me proud as a member of the Foundation, but also as a District parent with two kids.”

Ultimately, Dream Makers was able to fund all 24 proposed teacher grants thanks to the generous donations the Foundation received.

While making so many big changes was a challenge, it also presented the Foundation with the opportunity to try something new. Hurst has since stepped down from her position with the Foundation, but hopes that they will move forward with these lessons for future events. “You can only fit so many people in an event space and not everyone has the ability to make it,” she said. “Having a virtual component opens it up to the entire community.”

Planning for the next Dream Makers is already underway, so be sure to save the date for February 5, 2022. You can learn more about upcoming Foundation events and how to make a gift on the Foundation’s website: [minnetonkafoundation.org](https://minnetonkafoundation.org).

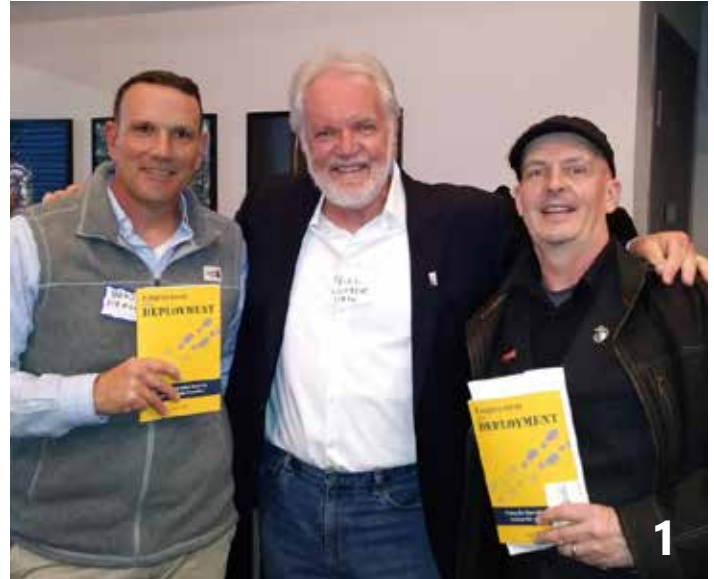
**“THIS YEAR’S EVENT OPENED MY EYES TO HOW GIVING NOT ONLY FROM PARENTS, BUT ALSO FROM OUR COMMUNITY, COULD BE. WE SAW A LOT OF BUSINESSES AND PEOPLE WHO DON’T HAVE KIDS IN THE SCHOOLS ANYMORE PARTICIPATE. IT NOT ONLY MADE ME PROUD AS A MEMBER OF THE FOUNDATION, BUT ALSO AS A DISTRICT PARENT.”**

-LYA HURST

## 1960s

**1969**

Bill Loeber wrote a new book, *Employment after DEPLOYMENT: Using the Operation Hand Up System for Your Transition*, on the subject of transitioning military servicemen and women back to civilian employment. Loeber also joined VETS-Beyond the Uniform, a transition program, as Senior Advisor where he will help reduce friction in the hiring process for veterans and make employers more responsive to their needs.



## 1970s

**1972**

Tim Kucij released his new album, *Kaleidoscope*, on October 1, 2020. He was recently recognized by Marquis *Who's Who Top Artists* for dedication, achievements and leadership in music composition and arrangement.

Dr. Joni (Hlavacek) Schwartz-Chaney co-wrote a new book, *White Mother, Black Daughter: An Honest Look at Transracial Adoption*, with her daughter, Rebecca.

**1977**

Daniel Mielke founded Artistic Wildlife Landscape Architecture (AWLA). AWLA creates Hugelkultur (raised garden beds) in central Minnesota and will be producing wild strawberries and wild blueberries this year.



## 1980s

**1981**

David Mackay has lived in Los Angeles, CA, and has been working in the entertainment industry since getting a master's degree in film at USC in the early 90's. He has produced and/or directed about 15 movies. Mackay has spent the last couple years working on a series of movies called *Matchmaker Mysteries* for the Hallmark Channel. His most recent film was *Matchmaker Mysteries: The Art of the Kill*, which first aired in April. Mackay says he often names characters after members of the MHS Class of 1981.

Todd McGonagle and Polly (Westlie) McGonagle celebrated their 2nd wedding anniversary on February 9, 2021.

**1983**

Cheryl McCollum was named to the Board of Directors of Lighthouse Ministries - Madison, which serves the children and people of Belize through the building of schools, providing employment opportunities and building hope.







## 1990s

### 1996

Jeremy Latterner obtained his master electrician license from the state of North Dakota and is the Master of Record for West Fargo, ND Public Schools.

## 2000s

### 2004

Jessica (Donovan) Matheson was named Minnesota Society of Health and Physical Educators (MNSHAPE) 2020 Health Teacher of the Year. She lives in Chanhassen with her husband, Kyle, and their three children Rhett, Brooks and Kinley.

Chad Miller and his wife, Abbie, took their family on the road for the month of October. They rented a house in Breckenridge, CO, where we were able to stay safe and get outside for hiking and time with family and friends including: Alison Miller '06, Linsey Moe '01, Jennifer Miller '09, Amanda (Miller) Pribble '12, Cody Pribble '12 and Alex Hinkel.

K.J. Richmond wrote a new book, *911: The Cost of Healthcare*. The book is ranked #1 in Amazon's New Releases in multiple categories. She also welcomed her second child this year.

Kelsy Zimba was moved by the need for hospital gowns early in the pandemic. Zimba and her small team produced 250,000 gowns per week for four weeks for the states of New York and Arizona. All gowns were made in the USA. The state of Arizona sent the team a note telling them they "saved the state."

### 2006

Jessica Adams married Nicholas Fischer on October 3, 2020, at a small backyard ceremony in Missouri. The two met while working for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Lodi, CA.

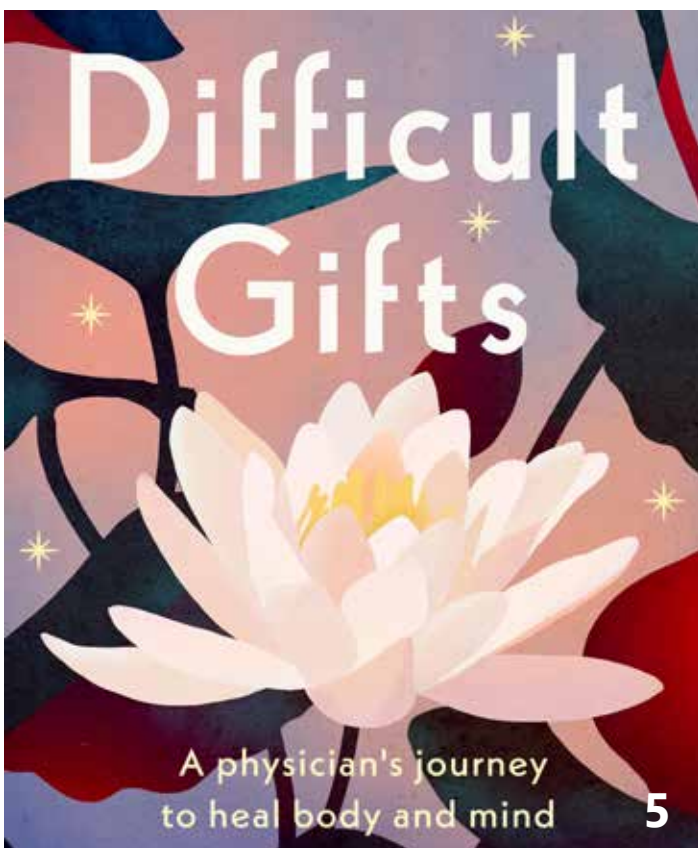
### 2008

Tasha Van Zandt finished her first feature-length documentary film, *After Antarctica*, about Minnesota polar explorer, Will Steger. The film was featured at the Minneapolis Film Festival. Van Zandt is a documentary director and Emmy-nominated producer, and is so grateful to the school for all its support.

### 2009

Dr. Courtney Burnett shared that she spent the past year battling malignant brain cancer. In addition to working on the front lines of the COVID pandemic, she wrote her first book, *Difficult Gifts: A Physician's Journey to Heal Body and Mind*. She lives in St. Paul and works as a physician at Regions Hospital.

Patrick Sorteberg married Christina Grau on July 18, 2020. The couple currently lives in Firestone, CO.



1. Bill Loeber '69
2. David Mackay '81
3. Todd McGonagle '81
4. Chad Miller '04
5. Dr. Courtney Burnett '09

## 2010s

### 2010

Andrew Betker owns his own DJ business and continues to work at Olive's Fresh Pizza Bar.

### 2011

Katie Guzzi started a new job at the Animal Humane Society and is currently working in the Advancement Department as an Advancement Services Assistant.

Liya Sandberg went to school at the University of Minnesota - Twin Cities to study psychology. She also received her master's degree in acupuncture and Chinese medicine from Northwestern Health Sciences University. Sandberg is currently practicing out of Excelsior & Grand Chiropractic.

### 2012

Dr. Beau Bates attended the University of Minnesota Duluth with a bachelor of science, majoring in exercise science and minoring in business administration. In 2016, he attended Northwestern Health Sciences University in Bloomington, MN to study chiropractic. He is now a part-owner of Advantage Health Group, PLLC in Edina, MN.

Dr. James McFarlin graduated from New York Medical College in May and started his internal medicine residency at Washington University in St. Louis, MO.

### 2015

Delaney Barrows launched her own traveling wedding coordinating business, Be Our Guest Wedding Planning, in February 2021.

### 2017

Rachel Adamek has been awarded the Fulbright Scholarship and will be teaching English to middle school students in South Korea for the 2022 school year. She is a recent graduate of Seattle University.

Matt Wilkinson won the 5,000 meters at the NCAA Division III track and field meet in Greensboro, N.C. He currently attends Carleton College.

### 2018

Gabrielle Evans competed at the Women's Track and Field NCAA Final Qualifier hosted by the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. She currently attends Carleton College.

### 2019

Anna Jakubik is currently a sophomore at U of M - Duluth. She transferred schools in the fall of 2020 and is looking forward to a new challenge at a new school.

## 2020s

### 2020

Lisa LaRoche had a fantastic freshman season playing collegiate hockey at the College of St. Scholastica. LaRoche was named NCHA Conference Freshman of the Year, NCHA Conference All-Conference Team and NCHA All-Freshman team.



6. Andrew Betker '10

7. Liya Sandberg '11

8. Lisa LaRoche '20



# In Memoriam

Minnetonka Schools extends its deepest sympathies to the families and friends of all Minnetonka, Excelsior and Deephaven graduates and staff who passed away this year.

## Alumni

Greta (Bergren) Linville '48  
Bonnie (Bristol) Pittsley '49  
Ted Sundin '50  
Donald Sweder '51  
June (Jepson) Hibbard '53  
Thomas Hines '53  
Susan (Weir) Olds '53  
Jackie (Nelson) Anderson '54  
Don Miller '54  
John Anfinsen '56  
John Cunningham '56  
Richard Mueller '56  
Mary (Page) Noble '57  
Linda (Davis) Carpenter '60  
Shirley Hardin '60  
Jackson Dunn '61  
Karen (Pree) Dahl '62  
Lowell Johnson '62  
Stephen Campbell '63  
Mary (Halford) Jenkins '64  
Clarence Keefer, Jr. '64

Shyrl (Stovern) Dailey '64  
Robert Lamson '66  
Carol (Kohman) Wegner '67  
Stephen Dehn '70  
Joseph Jezierski, Jr. '70  
Bruce Graham '71  
Daniel Hoo '71  
Doreen (Frederickson) Montague '71  
Frances (Flavin) Standke '71  
Keith Ward '71  
Jeffrey Carpenter, '74  
Randy Quast '74  
Keith Moody '75  
Christopher Foote '76  
Erick Titrud '76  
Jean Stramer '85  
Dalia (Seng) Dannenberg '93  
Jessica (Lawson) Zaback '93  
Thomas Hines '94  
Kevin Ehrman-Solberg '06  
Madeline (Bloom) Hubert '12

## Teachers and Staff

Burton Grimes  
Jon Hersch  
Tom Hines  
Joe Johnson  
Jeffrey Kirst  
Jerry Martinson  
LaWayne "Lou" Morseth  
Dave Stearns

## GIVE A GIFT, MAKE A DIFFERENCE

There are many ways to make a direct and lasting impact on future generations of Minnetonka students:

- Volunteering your time
- Making a direct donation
- Establishing a scholarship or named fund

Your tax-deductible donation will support fine arts, science & technology and student well-being programs in the Minnetonka School district and events for the alumni community.

Contact the Minnetonka Alumni Association at [Alumni@minnetonkaschools.org](mailto:Alumni@minnetonkaschools.org) to find out how you can support your alma mater!



**Give online at**  
[minnetonkaschools.org/alumnigiving](https://minnetonkaschools.org/alumnigiving)

Send us your class notes at:  
[alumni@minnetonkaschools.org](mailto:alumni@minnetonkaschools.org)  
or submit them online at [www.minnetonkaalumni.com](http://www.minnetonkaalumni.com)

# Upcoming Events

## 2021

August 7 - Class of 1961, 60-Year Reunion  
August 7 - Class of 1985, 35-Year Reunion (Rescheduled from 2020)  
August 7 - Class of 2015, 5-Year Reunion (Rescheduled from 2020)  
August 7 - Tour de Tonka, Minnetonka Community Education  
September 11 - Class of 1980, 40-Year Reunion (Rescheduled from 2020)  
September 26 - Fall de Tonka, Minnetonka Community Education  
September 30 - Class of 1990, 30-Year Reunion (Rescheduled from 2020)  
October 1 & 2 - Class of 1960, 60-Year Reunion (Rescheduled from 2020)  
October 1 - Homecoming Parade and Game  
October 2 - Alumni Awards Ceremony  
October 20 - Class of 1981, 40-Year Reunion

## 2022

February 1 - Deadline for Alumni Award Nominations - [www.minnetonkaschools.org/alumniawards](http://www.minnetonkaschools.org/alumniawards)  
February 5 - Dream Makers, Minnetonka Foundation fundraiser  
May 21 - Tonka Youth Tri, Minnetonka Community Education  
July 4 - Excelsior Firecracker Run, Minnetonka Community Education  
July 29-31 - Class of 1962, 60-Year Reunion  
July 29-31 - Class of 1965, 57-Year Reunion

TBD - Class of 1970, 50-Year Reunion (To help plan it, please email [MinnetonkaClassof1970@gmail.com](mailto:MinnetonkaClassof1970@gmail.com))

## 2024

July 28 - All School, All Class Reunion (Rescheduled from 2022)

For all the latest reunion and alumni event updates, visit [www.minnetonkaschools.org/alumni-events](http://www.minnetonkaschools.org/alumni-events). Know about a class reunion that is not listed? Email [alumni@minnetonkaschools.org](mailto:alumni@minnetonkaschools.org).

## MINNETONKA FAST FACTS



94% of parents in our annual parent survey rated Minnetonka Schools as Excellent or Good.



In 2021, Niche ranked Minnetonka Public Schools was #1 in Best School District, Best High School, Best Elementary School and Best Teachers in Minnesota categories.



Minnetonka Public Schools was selected as a Top Workplace in the Twin Cities.



The District is recognized for the 8th year in a row as one of the best communities in the nation for music education by the NAMM Foundation.



# Welcome Back, Minnetonka!



*Daniel Campbell, Editor-in-Chief  
Minnetonka Alumni Magazine  
[daniel.campbell@minnetonkaschools.org](mailto:daniel.campbell@minnetonkaschools.org)*

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It's good to see you again, Skippers! I hope you've enjoyed reading *Volume 12* of the *Minnetonka Alumni Magazine*. It has been amazing talking with students, staff and alumni about the challenges and triumphs of the last year—and how excited everyone is that things are starting to return to normal.

It's no secret that the past year has been a challenge for our community, as it has for everyone in our state, our country and the world. There are few who have not been touched by grief, whether it is the physical loss of a family member, the financial loss of a job or the emotional loss of our

connection to one another. Over the last year, the staff, administrators and teachers of Minnetonka Public Schools have put in a tremendous amount of work to keep our students safe, provide academically rigorous experiences, develop innovative hybrid learning plans and—of course—work toward welcoming our students back.

After months of being required to stay at home to help mitigate the spread of COVID, MHS students were thrilled to get back into the classrooms with their peers and teachers this spring. Our e-learning programs helped keep these students on-track, but nothing quite replaces the hands-on experiences that they can get with in-person learning.

Being thankful for a return to school wasn't the only thing on our students' minds. MHS Student Government and DECA teamed up to write hundreds of letters of support to the hard-working healthcare professionals who are keeping our families safe and healthy.

Despite a challenging year, the Class of 2021 achieved outstanding results in and out of the classroom. The 797 graduating seniors had an ACT average of 27.2, 15 National Merit Semifinalists and 19 State Science & Engineering Fair participants.

It's also been an outstanding year for Minnetonka's athletics teams, with 16 different teams participating in state tournaments in the winter and spring. Though tournaments for fall sports were not held, many would have gone on to state. I also want to give a shout-out to Minnetonka High School Head Baseball Coach Paul Twenge who has been inducted into two separate halls of fame this year. Athletics wasn't the only student activity worth cheering on this year. Our theatre students used creativity and imagination to rethink what "the show must go on" really means during a global pandemic where indoor gatherings have been restricted.

As you'll also read in this issue, our alumni have been busier than ever this past year. Whether it's using innovation to create novel ways to spark a passion for service, as Alexa Bussmann '16 did, or helping mentor student athletes like our Nordic ski alumni did, a strong sense of giving back to the community resides in the hearts of Minnetonka grads. Perhaps no family exemplifies that better than the Zinns. For three generations, this family has attended Minnetonka Public Schools and been actively engaged in supporting the district and alumni association. I'm excited for you to read more about the many ways they give back to their school and hope it inspires you to consider how to get involved.

I was especially honored to interview Jan Malcolm '73, Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Health. A former Minnetonka Alumni Award honoree, she has the unique distinction of serving as commissioner under three different governors. Her experience was evident throughout our discussion and made it clear that there are few people as dedicated to keeping Minnesotans healthy. In the course of our discussion, Commissioner Malcolm covered everything from COVID to her career to her memories of Minnetonka High School. Be sure to read to the end to find out her best advice for young alumni!

What a joy it has been to see our community come back to life in so many ways. Over the next year, I am hopeful that our community will not only rebuild the amazing connections that make Minnetonka so special, but to make them stronger than ever before. Benjamin Franklin once said, "Through adversity comes opportunity." Knowing Minnetonka, I can't wait to see the amazing opportunities that await our Skippers—past, present and future.

Wishing you all the best,





Minnetonka Public Schools  
Dr. Dennis Peterson, Superintendent  
5621 County Road 101  
Minnetonka, MN 55345

[www.minnetonkaschools.org](http://www.minnetonkaschools.org)

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Hopkins, MN

## Minnetonka Memories: A Look Back at the Year 1961

Science was all the rage in 1961 as the world's attention was captured by the Space Race between the United States and Soviet Union. On April 12, the Soviet Union launched the first manned spacecraft. Three weeks later, Alan Shepard would become the first American in space. With America lagging behind and the scientific conflict kicking into high gear, President Kennedy asked Congress for a staggering \$531 million (approximately \$5 billion today) to put a man on the moon by the end of the decade. In 1969, that investment would pay off as Neil Armstrong became the first man to walk on the moon. Minnetonka High School also began to invest in the sciences.

Pictured below are the "Scitonkans," members of a new club at Minnetonka High School dedicated to promoting interest in and providing opportunities for science-based activities. The club was divided into three sections; chemistry, biology and physics. Students went on field trips, attended lectures and worked on individual projects. That spirit lives on at MHS today through signature programs like Minnetonka Research and the 18 different STEM-related clubs and activities available to students.

