

MINNETONKA

AlumniMagazine

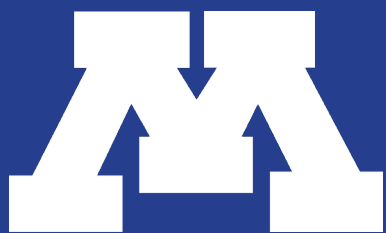
2022

A Legacy of **EXCELLENCE**

Dr. Dennis Peterson has retired after serving for 21 years as Minnetonka Public Schools' superintendent. Learn how his contributions have set the District up for lasting success.

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MINNETONKA
Alumni Magazine

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Courtesy of Robert J. MacColl



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I am excited to tell you that our students came back this fall with a level of excitement and unbridled enthusiasm that I had not seen during the COVID-19 pandemic or, frankly, before it. Nearly 7,500 people packed the Einer Anderson Stadium for Homecoming. Students packed our dances, clamored to join clubs and activities and showed us with gusto that they truly were glad to be back together, in-person. They also poured that passion into our rigorous academic programs, eagerly engaging in VANTAGE, MOMENTUM, Minnetonka Research, Immersion, IB and the Unified program, just to name a few. Knowing these students and their resilience makes me deeply optimistic for our future.

Speaking of VANTAGE (our advanced professional studies program) and MOMENTUM (our design and skilled trades program), I'm pleased to tell you that both will be expanding as we begin construction on a brand-new building that will enhance the amazing opportunities our students have to engage in real-world, hands-on experience.

As you may know, our superintendent, Dr. Dennis Peterson, retired after 21 years of outstanding leadership. Many of you got to know him as students and alumni. He was a familiar face at countless events—from football games to School Board Recognitions to the Alumni Awards Ceremony to the All-School All-Class Reunion. His contributions go far beyond showing up, and I encourage you to read more about the impact he has had on our District on page 16. I would also like to offer a hearty welcome to Superintendent David Law, who began his new role with Minnetonka Schools on July 1. I have heard wonderful things about his leadership, and I have confidence that our district is in good hands.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeff Erickson".

Jeff Erickson, Minnetonka High School Principal

Students Work Together to Celebrate Diverse Leaders Through Art

As part of Black History Month, students were invited to take part in collaboratively painting portraits of African-American leaders to be displayed in the High School Commons. Portraits of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Amanda Gorman, the first National Youth Poet Laureate, were painted. The project was so well-received by students that more portraits of leaders of color were soon being planned. The third portrait, of Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Malala Yousafzai, was completed in March, and a portrait of Frida Kahlo went up in May.

The stylized nature of the murals created an opportunity for students of all artistic abilities to take part, explained Meg Koenitzer, an IB art teacher at the High School who facilitated the project. Each poster also features a quote from the leader along the sides of the canvas.

"They turned out better than I could have imagined," said Koenitzer. "I've loved seeing student reactions as they watched the murals coming together. Many students who had class in the same room where we've worked on the portraits got to witness the whole process and were cheering us on. The murals are a great visual reminder of how we can elevate the voices around us and respect each other despite our differences."



BREAKING NEW GROUND

Expanding Minnetonka High School's VANTAGE & MOMENTUM Programs

by Julia Srnec '23



School Board members, Superintendent Dr. Dennis Peterson and Minnetonka Mayor Brad Wiersum officially broke ground for the new VANTAGE and MOMENTUM building on May 5, 2022.

Plans for a new VANTAGE and MOMENTUM building were put into motion this spring. This building is the first new school building in 55 years and will allow students to have more space for specialized classes, access to technology that aligns with a variety of careers and more space for presentations and research.

"This is a monumental day for Minnetonka Schools," said Chris Vitale, Minnetonka School Board Chair. "We are ushering in the next chapter for the VANTAGE and MOMENTUM programs and opening up new opportunities for students. With VANTAGE alone, in less than a decade, the program has grown so large it's bursting at the seams—with more than 500 students planning to take a VANTAGE course next fall. This new building is the result of that growth and interest."

VANTAGE and MOMENTUM, signature learning programs offered at Minnetonka High School, provide a wide variety of opportunities to students for exploring interests and future career paths.

VANTAGE is Minnetonka Schools' advanced professional studies program with nine strands of study—including Business Analytics, Health Sciences, Design + Marketing, Global Business, Digital Journalism, Global Sustainability, Public Policy, User Experience (UX) Design and, the newest strand, Education. This innovative program is designed to provide students with real-world experiences, forge connections with business leaders and work with real companies.

"VANTAGE teachers and mentors open endless doors for the present and future," said Bryce Alexander '23, a VANTAGE Global Business student.

Minnetonka Schools also recently expanded its technical education offerings with a new program—MOMENTUM Design & Skilled Trades. The MOMENTUM program offers students the chance to do hands-on work in engineering, design, construction, manufacturing and transportation. Over the past two years, many one-off trades classes have been expanded into full strands with multiple courses that allow students to delve deeper into their interests. Classes included in the MOMENTUM program cover many different topics, from math to science to art, but all of them aim to encourage hands-on and forward-thinking styles of learning.

Recently, a new addition was constructed at the High School to provide space for the MOMENTUM program expansion. It includes a four-car automotive garage to host MOMENTUM's growing transportation track, which features courses such as Automotive Career Investigation, Automotive Braking Systems, Automotive Engine Performance and more. The recent addition also includes flexible 'makerspace' classrooms, to be used for MOMENTUM's other career pathways.

"Minnetonka High School is a school of opportunities where we work to help each student find their passion and place," said Principal Jeff Erickson. "MOMENTUM and VANTAGE, in particular, provide pathways for our students to broaden their horizons and apply their learning to real life scenarios in fields that are in dire need of the next generation of workers, such as the trades."

Part of Minnetonka's quest for excellence depends on allowing students to learn more about their interests, as well as exploring new ones. With expanded classroom spaces, VANTAGE and MOMENTUM programs will continue to do just that.

CELEBRATING SUCCESS AT STATE

Varsity Athletics & Activities Report 2021-22

Whether they were on the course, the rink, the slopes, the court or in the courtroom, Skippers excelled at state championships this school year, earning state titles and other podium accolades while competing with skill, determination and heart. "The 2021-22 school year was highlighted by many great accomplishments by our student athletes," said Ted Schultz, Activities Director at Minnetonka High School. "I am very proud of all our teams." **Read on for a snapshot of these teams' and individuals' stellar seasons.**

1. GIRLS TENNIS

Team State Champions, State Doubles Champions & State Individual Champion

The Skippers won the Class AA State team championship and, a few days later, claimed individual state titles in singles (Sarah Shahbaz '23) and doubles (Annika Elvestrom '22 and Karina Elvestrom '24). Minnetonka hasn't lost a team match since 2019.

2. GIRLS SWIMMING AND DIVING

Team State Champions & True Team State Champions

The Girls Swimming and Diving team earned both the True Team and Minnesota State High School League state championship titles during this season, winning the MSHSL meet by a margin of 158 points.

3. BOYS CROSS COUNTRY

Individual State Champion & Team State Fourth Place

Nick Gilles '23 made history when he became the first Minnetonka athlete to win an individual state cross country championship title. His effort led the Skippers boys to a fourth place finish at the state meet.

4. UNIFIED BASKETBALL

Team State Second Place

Minnetonka Unified finished second at the first-ever Minnesota Unified Basketball High School state tournament at Target Center.

5. DEBATE

Individual State Champion (Lincoln-Douglas)

Molly Welch '22 earned first place in the Lincoln-Douglas division of the Minnesota State High School League debate tournament.

6. BOYS AND GIRLS ALPINE SKIING

Team State Champions

Minnetonka dominated the boys team competition at the Class AA state meet, claiming a 26-point margin over the second place team. The Minnetonka Girls Alpine Ski team won the Class AA state championship, as well, with a 6-point victory over second place.

7. BOYS SWIMMING AND DIVING

State Third Place, True Team State Champions & Individual State Champion

At the Class AA State Swim and Dive championships, Minnetonka finished third with 170 points. Carson Witte '22 was state champion in the 100-yard breaststroke.

8. GIRLS HOCKEY

Team State Runners-Up

The Skippers, who survived an overtime section thriller, made a magical run to the Class AA state championship game. The team took second to Andover in the state championships, finishing the season 24-7.

9. GIRLS CHEERLEADING

State Runners-Up & National Third Place

At state, Minnetonka cheerleaders were the runners-up in both the Non-tumbling Game Day and Non-tumbling divisions. At Nationals, they placed third in both the Non-tumbling Game Day division and the Non-tumbling World School Cheer Traditional Routine division.

10. GIRLS TRACK AND FIELD

State Second Place & True Team State Champions

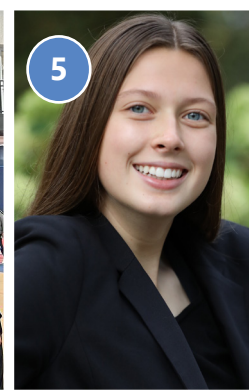
The Girls Track and Field team earned the True Team State Championship title and

were runners-up at the Minnesota State High School League meet. Several school records were set during the season.

OTHER ATHLETES WHO QUALIFIED FOR STATE ON AN INDIVIDUAL BASIS INCLUDE:

- **GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY:** Claire Cashman '23, Abby Downin '26 and Ella Graham '24
- **GIRLS GYMNASTICS:** Emma Callahan '24 and Elena Cantwell '23
- **BOYS NORDIC SKIING:** Jack Callinan '23, AJ Hemink '22 and Antonio Muniz '22
- **GIRLS NORDIC SKIING:** Nina Fedje '24, Elena Hicks '23, Elise Pudwill '23 and Greta Weeks '22
- **BOYS WRESTLING:** Peter Barrett '22, Anthony Chernikh '22, Marco Christiansen '24 and Charlie Palm '24
- **SYNCHRONIZED SWIMMING:** Fern Arreola-Lucio '24, Lynn Behning '25, Anastacia Isbell '23, Alisa Kachkovsky '24, Amelia Kogan '26, Lauren Noble '22, Claire Oh '23 and Anna Siegel '26
- **SPEECH:** Aarya Dev '22
- **BOYS GOLF:** Boomer Well '23
- **GIRLS GOLF:** Kieley Hanson '27 and Selena (Siyu) Wu '26
- **BOYS TRACK & FIELD:** Aiden Chalmers '22, Jackson Downin '25, Ryan Fries '24, Nick Gilles '23, Cosmo Guion '23, Will Hairston '24, Jake Herbert '22, Tyler Lien '22, Walker Liu '22, Lucas Poey '23, Noah Rooney '22, Sam Stefonowicz '22, Tobias Williams '24 and Caden Wixo '24

For the latest sports updates, follow Minnetonka High School's official Athletics & Activities account on Twitter [@TonkaSkippers](https://twitter.com/TonkaSkippers).



Graduation 2022



848 graduates

99% of seniors graduated

86% College-bound

78% Attending 4-year colleges & universities

8% Attending 2-year colleges

8 Entering military service

32% Attending Minnesota colleges & universities

54% Attending out-of-state colleges & universities

2% Entering the workforce

6% Are undecided or chose not to respond



Celebrating the Class of 2022

On June 6, 2022, Minnetonka Public Schools celebrated the graduation of 848 students. We invite you to take a closer look at some of our happy new alumni as they set sail for their next great adventure.

Honoring Minnetonka's Legacy Families

The following Class of 2022 graduates join their parents and grandparents as proud MHS alumni.

Leo Berger joins father, Patrick Berger '92

Reese Bocks joins grandmother, Leslie (Floyd) Erickson '62

Sean Callahan joins mother, Dana (Rovick) Callahan '94

Jack Campbell joins mother, Erica (Shaw) Campbell '88

Sophia Clemens joins father, Chris Clemens '84

Reid Covietz joins mother, Dana (Witta) Rommes '91; father, Wally Covietz '88

Audrey Cranbrook joins father, Chris Cranbrook '86; grandfather George Cranbrook '57; grandmother, Lynda (Thompson) Cranbrook '62

Victoria Cruickshank joins mother, Melanie (Cantazaro) Schilling '97; stepfather, Kyle Schilling '97; father, Andrew Cruickshank '97

Jameson Deneen joins father, Mike Deneen '84

Emma DeVilliers joins mother, Kate (Shearer) DeVilliers '96; father, Ryan DeVilliers '93

Lucia Duggan joins mother, Maud (Anderson) Duggan '92

John L Erickson joins father, John S Erickson '80

John Fitzimons joins father, Pat Fitzimons '83; grandfather, Mike Fitzimons '59; grandmother Susan (Wostrel) Fitzimons '63

Elle Gabbert joins father, Steven Gabbert '84

Stanley Gagner joins father, Eric Gagner '89; mother, Allison Stolz '89; grandmother, Patricia (Dressler) Stolz '66; grandfather, Tom Stolz '66

Michael Giovinco joins father, John Giovinco '86

Marshall Gregerson joins mother, Jennifer (Littlefield) Gregerson '86; father, Thomas Gregerson '90

Ella Izquierdo joins father, Dylan Izquierdo '99

Sophia Lorraine Johnson joins mother, Leslie Wilcox '92; father, Ryan Johnson '89

Evan Jones joins mother, Andrea Satter Jones '90

Riley Kelly joins father, Dan Kelly '82

Ashton Koyonen joins mother, Carol (Jenkins) Koyonen '90

Tyler Lien joins mother, Sarah Kobs Lien '91

Payton Mahady joins father, Micheal Mahady '91; grandfather Mike Mahady '65; grandmother

Valerie (Alstead) Mahady '64

Micheal Manning joins father, Bob Manning '83; mother, Patti (Schneider) Manning '85

Megan McHugh joins mother, Andrea (Leaf) McHugh '91; father, Justin McHugh '91; sister, Kate McHugh '20; grandmother, Carolyn (Burk) Leaf '64; grandfather, Robert Leaf '64; grandmother, Dani (Ostlund) McHugh '64; grandfather, Mike McHugh '64

Jack McKenzie joins father, David McKenzie '94; grandfather, Scott McKenzie '68

Alix McNutt joins mother, Nicole Nelson '90; father, Kelly McNutt '90; grandfather, Robert McNutt '64

Ellie Meyer joins mother, Carey (Sirota) Meyer '89

Zoe Meyer joins mother, Carey (Sirota) Meyer '89

Abigail Newhouse joins father, Eric Newhouse '89

Derek Olsen joins father, Ron Olsen '88; grandfather Ray Olsen '65; grandmother Pat (Schneider) Olsen '68

Ava Ostrom joins father, Tom Ostrom '83

Rebecca Pace joins grandmother, Ann (Merkle) Paschke '64

Thomas Pankoff joins mother, Angela Van Buren Pankoff '90

Elisabeth Polingo joins mother, Lynn (Thome) Polingo '83

Emmarie Raby joins father, John Raby '84; mother, Holly Kerber Raby '91

Samuel Rotunno joins mother, Mary (Cragg) Rotunno '81

Brianna Shields joins father, Mike Shields '77

Blake Shields joins father, Mike Shields '77

Maxwell (Max) Sigel joins father, Mark Sigel '90

Natalie Smith joins father, Jim Smith '73

Grace Stefan joins grandfather, Lawrence Henke '56

Madeline Storts joins parent, Breck (Bartos) Storts '95

Leah Tift joins father, Matthew Tift '94

Sophie Williams joins mother, Vikki (Chambers) Williams '86

Courtney Youngquist joins father, Mark Youngquist '87; mother, Darla (Pierce) Youngquist '88

Thank you to the Class of 2022 graduates who have reported that they will be serving our country!

- Atmos Andolshek, US Navy
- Natalie Chellen, US Army
- Vlad Ciubotaru, US Air Force Academy
- Ayden Dishion, Marines
- Quinn Goergen, US Military Academy (West Point)
- Frances Mathies, National Guard
- Kameron Oelschlager, US Army
- Blake Shields, US Navy

SIX TO WATCH

by Kyla Fung '22 and Julia Srnec '23



Madison Andrews '22

Madison Andrews is an International Baccalaureate diploma recipient, Minnetonka Research student, talented musician and three-time award recipient of the gold President's Volunteer Service Award. Outside of the classroom, she participated in Nordic Ski, Golf, Knowledge Bowl, the Tonka Serves Steering Committee, Hope House Club and National Honor Society. She has also served as an Academic Anchor and First Mate.

Madison has acquired many notable awards, including being named a National Merit Finalist and AP Scholar with Honor, as well as winning first place awards from Ecolab and the Institute of Food Technology for her research projects. Standing out just as strongly is her immense generosity and commitment to making her community a better place through service clubs.

"My biggest piece of advice is to get involved with clubs and to take advantage of programs and classes available," said Madison. "High school is about determining what you want to do with your life in terms of a career, and it provides a low pressure environment to explore that."

In the fall, Madison will attend Baylor University in Waco, Texas and will be a student in the Science Research Fellows program, pursuing a degree in biochemistry.



Ava Chen '22

A committed student and passionate leader, Ava Chen has left a lasting legacy on MHS. She was involved in Chinese Immersion, VANTAGE and Minnetonka Research. Ava has served as president of DECA, captain of the Debate Team and the Chinese Club, editor-in-chief of *Minnetonka Breezes* (the school newspaper), executive chair on the myHealth Clinic for Teens and Young Adults Advisory Board and was head organizer of the TEDxYouth@MinnetonkaHS event in Fall 2021.

She has earned countless honors: National Merit Finalist, AP Scholar with Distinction, Coca-Cola Scholars Semifinalist, the Yale Book Award, multiple DECA awards, two gold President's Volunteer Service Awards, Platinum Bilingual Seal in Chinese, Scholastic Writing Awards and multiple research awards.

Ava has inspired many in the Minnetonka community and helped them feel welcomed at MHS. "I try to come off as an imperfect leader," said Ava, "one who isn't afraid to make mistakes and try new things." By doing so, she hopes to "encourage others to be courageous and benefit the community."

In the fall, Ava will attend the University of Pennsylvania Wharton School of Business to pursue a degree in finance and/or health care management.

Mark Fu '22

Mark Fu has proven himself to be one of the best gymnasts in Minnesota. He placed in the top three in the Regionals all-around and achieved success at state four times (first place in 2019 and 2022 and second place in 2018 and 2021). He won multiple regional champion event titles, including the floor and vault in 2015, floor in 2018, floor and high bar in 2019 and parallel bar, high bar and rings in 2022.

In addition to being an incredible gymnast, Mark is a talented musician and outstanding student. He has played in the Symphony Orchestra, Minnetonka's highest auditioned string ensemble, for three years and has been principal violist for multiple concerts. Mark was part of the Chinese Immersion program and challenged himself with AP and International Baccalaureate classes throughout his four years of high school.

"One piece of advice I'd like to give is to focus on communication," said Mark. "Whenever you are going through a stressful period in life, it's helpful to find someone you know to talk to."

In the fall, Mark will attend the College of William & Mary, where he has committed to competing as a NCAA Division 1 gymnast. This summer, Mark will travel to Taiwan for the Paris 2024 Olympic Training Team Qualification Meet. Mark shared that he has a good shot of making the 2028 Olympic team and may be competing in the Los Angeles 2028 Olympics.



Julius Nurse '22

A leader in the MHS community and an exceptional athlete, Julius Nurse has achieved success in everything from academics to sports. He was also deeply involved in clubs and activities at MHS, becoming the Student Government Vice President. He was actively involved with the Men of Color Club, First Mate program, DECA and received a varsity letter in Minnetonka Football.

Julius graduated as an AP Scholar with Distinction and participated in the AP Capstone program. He participated in both the Global Business and Business Analytics strands of VANTAGE, Minnetonka's advanced professional studies program. Julius noted that his Business Analytics class trip to New York was one of his favorite memories from high school.

Another highlight of his time at MHS was winning the 2021 Homecoming game, bringing the Skippers their first such victory in three years. "I really could feel the energy from the fans in the crowd and it felt good for us to come together as a team," said Julius.

Julius will be participating in an internship at a financial consulting firm this summer. In the fall, he will attend the University of Wisconsin-Madison to pursue a degree in mechanical engineering.





Arlo Rader '22

Arlo Rader is a dedicated artist, student and role model to the Minnetonka High School community. Over his four years at MHS, Arlo has excelled at art classes, IB English courses and participated in many extracurricular activities. He is most proud of being a leader of the Gender and Sexuality Alliance (GSA) at the High School, which he has been involved in for all four years.

"I try to exist as a support system to friends, peers and the members of GSA," said Arlo. "We often take time to share personal issues, and I offer advice and consolation when needed. Be yourself and surround yourself with people who love and accept that authentic version of you."

Arlo has a true passion for the arts. At MHS, he enjoyed a wide variety of art classes, including ceramics, comics and painting. He has been part of the Minnetonka Theatre program since freshman year and worked with the front of house crew for almost every show during his time at the High School, earning a varsity letter in Theatre. Out of all of Arlo's artistic endeavors, he loves film the most.

In the fall, Arlo plans to attend either the Minneapolis College of Art and Design (MCAD) or Emerson College to study film. Focusing on visual cinematography and the storytelling behind the films, he hopes to one day become a writer and/or director.

Molly Welch '22

Molly Welch is an excellent student who explored many opportunities at Minnetonka High School. Beginning in 9th grade, Molly was on the Lincoln-Douglas debate team, serving as captain in her senior year and becoming the 2020 and 2021 Central Minnesota District Champion, and 2022 Lincoln-Douglas Debate State Champion. She was also president of the Bunny Besties Club and participated on the Girls Soccer team.

Molly is an academic and community building all-star. She graduated as an AP Scholar with Distinction, is a National Merit Semifinalist and has won two bronze President's Volunteer Service Awards.

"I try to be friendly with the people who sit around me in all of my classes," said Molly. "I've discovered that you can find something in common with almost anyone you talk to. It makes going to class every day much more enjoyable."

In the fall, Molly will attend Boston College, where she is planning to major in political science. She is also considering attending law school following the completion of her undergraduate degree.



A Hidden Star

Celebrating Friendship, Grief and Film

by Kyla Fung '22

Alia Tarraf '97 has always dreamed of starting her own production company. After 10 years in the industry, she co-directed her first feature film, *A Hidden Star*. Her journey to make that film was a celebration of friendship and an expression of grief.



Tarraf's interest in the entertainment industry began as a student at Minnetonka High School, where she was actively involved in many of the school's theatre productions. "Minnetonka was such a supportive environment," said Tarraf. "I always felt very encouraged there."

Tarraf moved to Los Angeles to work for Walt Disney Studios in 2011. While working as a VFX Production Coordinator, she met two other filmmakers, Mary Elizabeth Gentle and Allison Wilke Gryphon. The trio became fast friends and dreamed of one day starting their own production company and making films together. Before they could get their idea off the ground, Gryphon was diagnosed with stage 3 breast cancer.

"She was on the mend and we thought we were in the clear," recalled Tarraf, "but in 2016, the cancer came back with a vengeance. She was only 44, and we just completely shut down after her passing."

Not long after Gryphon's sudden death, Tarraf and Gentle discovered she had created a video diary. The heart-breaking footage documented Gryphon's fight against cancer and

acceptance of death. Still overcome with grief, they decided to honor their friend by documenting their own journey to Ireland with her ashes, the grief of losing a dear friend and the quest they undertook in search of answers and hope. The final result was Tarraf's first documentary film, *A Hidden Star*.

While *A Hidden Star* deals with the passing of a loved one from illness, Tarraf notes that the themes of grief and acceptance are universal and feels that everyone can get something out of watching her film.

A Hidden Star appeared at numerous film festivals across the world and received a tremendously positive reception by audiences. It was nominated for 19 awards and won 12 including Best Documentary Feature at Paris Cinema Awards, Boden International Film Festival and Stockholm Film Festival. Tarraf is most proud of her film being selected for the Twin Cities Film Festival.

"The Twin Cities Film Festival was such an amazing experience," recalled Tarraf. "I felt so honored to see the film I co-directed on screen in the place I grew up, surrounded by loved ones."

Tarraf encourages young adults interested in filmmaking to learn as much as they can about the craft and to get involved as early as possible. "Intern at a production company, go to local film festivals, network with filmmakers and, of course, keep filming and creating," said Tarraf. "If you don't have a camera, you can do this on your iPhone and edit on iMovie. Submit your own films, shorts, features or documentaries to festivals—there are so many [out there]!"

To learn more about *A Hidden Star*, visit: hiddenstarfilms.com.

In A Hidden Star, Tarraf and Gentle discover their friend's heartbreaking cancer journal. They—with 25 devoted friends—travel to Ireland to scatter her ashes at the Cliffs of Moher.

Read A Lot! Write A Lot! Try Things.

An Interview with Children's Author Molly Beth Griffin

by Daniel Campbell



Molly Beth (Obsatz) Griffin '01 is a celebrated author who has written several picture books, a young adult (YA) novel, two poetry chapter books and a series for beginning readers. She is also a teaching artist at The Loft Literary Center and a graduate of Hamline University's MFA program in Writing for Children and Young Adults. We connected with her this summer to discuss her work, impact on the community and advice for young authors.

...

What inspired you to write books for children and young adults?

GRIFFIN: I've always loved children's literature. Kids change so much and so quickly. It's a lot of fun to write about and for them. I actually went to school to be a teacher, but I discovered that what I love the most is helping kids become lifelong readers. I feel like I can do that best through writing books.

What do you feel is the best and worst part of being an author?

GRIFFIN: My favorite parts are drafting a new story, selling a manuscript to a publisher, seeing the art for the first time and receiving messages from parents, teachers and librarians that show kids enjoying my books. Revision is hard, but really satisfying. Rejection is super hard. But the worst part, in my opinion, is all the waiting! Every step of this process takes so long. It's hard to be patient and trust that it will all come together eventually.

How did your time at Minnetonka Public Schools help shape your journey as an author? Do you remember a particular teacher or class that really made an impact?

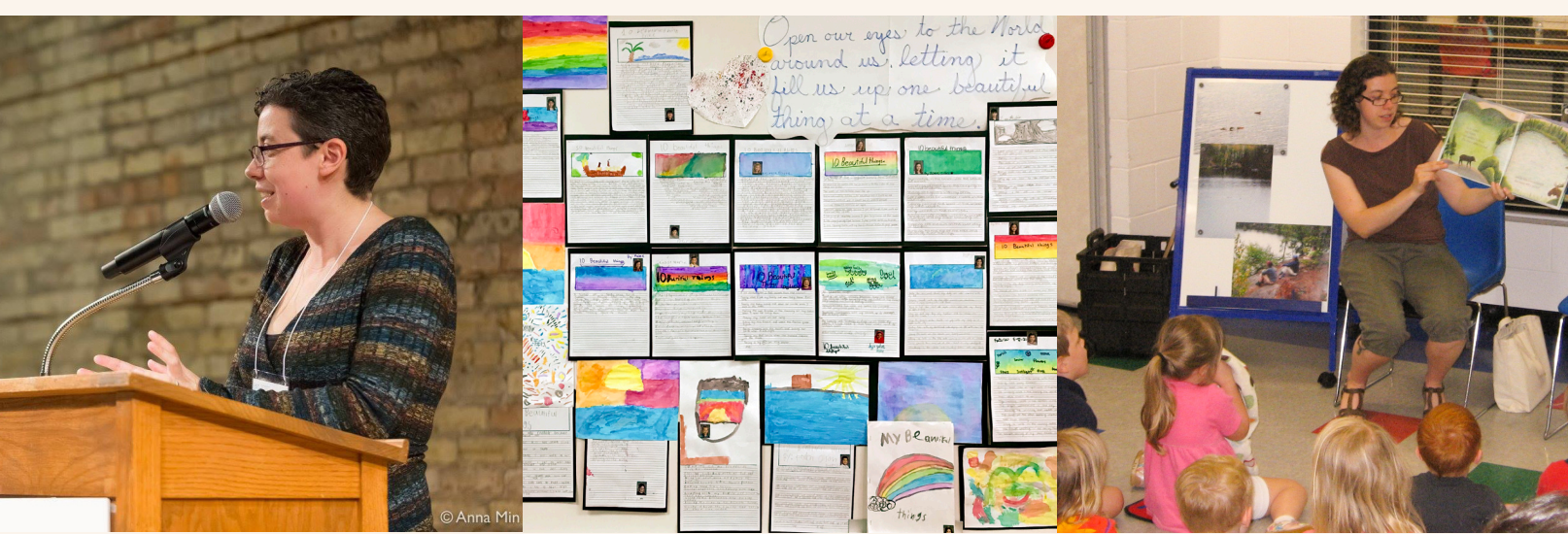
GRIFFIN: I am so grateful to my English teachers at MHS, especially Barb Van Pilsum and Sue Sinkler! They always nurtured my interest in literature and pushed me to be a better writer. I also think my experiences with both theatre and choir at MHS helped me understand artistic collaboration—working together to make something bigger and better than we can achieve on our own.

*You've written an amazing variety of books over the years; from picture books like *Loon Baby*, *Rhoda's Rock Hunt* and *Ten Beautiful Things* to YA fiction like *Silhouette of a Sparrow*. Which are you most proud of and why?*

That's like asking you to choose which of your children is your favorite! I am proud of all the published books, but I'm also proud of my three "drawer" novels and many, many unpublished picture books. I'm proud that I've kept writing while raising my kids, and through a pandemic. What "sticks" with the industry isn't something I can predict, so I try to be proud of the part of this job that I have control over—the writing itself.

Your work in children's and young adult literature has featured strong female protagonists, non-traditional families and LGBTQIA+ storylines. Why do you feel that telling diverse stories is important for children and young adults?

GRIFFIN: Kids need to see their experiences reflected in the books they read, and they need to see kids who are different from themselves as heroes, as well—as complex and fully, beautifully human. It's our job to make lots of kinds of books available to kids, to help them find the books that will make them fall in love with reading and to give them the freedom to choose their own books.



Left: Griffin hosting a YA event as part of a MN State Arts Board grant.

*Middle: Artwork an elementary school class made inspired by Griffin's picture book, *Ten Beautiful Things*.*

*Right: Griffin reads her book, *Loon Baby*, during a library event at New Brighton Public Library for Children's Book Week.*

They learn about the world through books, but they also learn about themselves. It's an honor to get to be part of that process.

I understand that in addition to helping aspiring writers for a decade through the Picture Book Salon, you are also a teaching artist for the Loft. Could you talk about the importance of teaching and mentoring aspiring authors?

GRIFFIN: Yes! Well, like almost all writers, I have to have a day job. The writing itself is not income I can rely on. So I do a lot of teaching and also tons of critique work. I think that being in community with other writers is hugely important, both to my craft and also my sanity. I learn a ton from my students and by engaging critically with other people's writing on a daily basis.

What other ways do you help and encourage children and young authors?

GRIFFIN: I am not teaching kids all that much these days, but I do get to visit schools sometimes and do storytimes at libraries and bookstores. It's always a pleasure to read with kids and to show them what the publishing process looks like. We talk about what they like to do in nature, what they collect and how they engage with the natural world. That inspires me, and hopefully it inspires them too, to walk through the world attentively and with curiosity, and to spin stories out of what they find.

What advice would you give to a Minnetonka student today who is interested in pursuing a career in writing?

GRIFFIN: Read a lot! Write a lot! Try things. Play and mess around. Don't feel like you have to jump into the publishing world right away, either, by submitting to agents/editors or by self-publishing. Just enjoy the writing for now. I went to college and graduate school, but you

don't have to take that route if it's not right for you. Write for a school newspaper. Sign up for an open mic night and read poetry out loud. Look for internships at presses. Take a summer job at a bookstore. Offer to read to kids—your siblings, your neighbors or at an elementary school. Take a class at the Loft, Minnetonka Community Education or online. Keep a journal. Have a friend you can write with or read your work to, and practice revising with their feedback. Have fun! Remember that being able to keep going is the most important skill a writer can have.

Do you have any books coming out soon that we should be on the lookout for?

GRIFFIN: Yes! I have a new picture book coming out September 6, 2022. It's called *The Big Leaf Leap* and it's illustrated by Meleck Davis and published with the Minnesota Historical Society Press. It's about a group of neighborhood kids building a leaf pile with all of the different kinds of leaves from their city block. After that, I have two books coming out in 2024, but I don't think I'm allowed to share details on those yet.

Is there anything else that you would like to share with me?

GRIFFIN: I would like to just mention that I think we all need to be loudly and publicly supporting our libraries right now and fighting for our kids' right to read all kinds of books. There are such amazing books being published these days as the industry shifts toward representing a wider range of voices, and it's vital for kids to have access to those books. So, I'd urge everybody to get involved at the local level and speak up for inclusive libraries.

Thanks for inviting me to chat about my work with you!

MAKING ROOM

by Mary Cornelius



Working Together to Support Minnesota's Afghan Refugees

This winter, more than 80 Minnetonka students, staff and community members volunteered with Alight to prepare homes for Afghan refugees.

Alight, formerly known as the American Refugee Committee, is a nonprofit organization working to provide humanitarian aid and disaster relief. The organization's goal was to prepare homes for more than 250 Afghan refugees in the Twin Cities metro throughout the winter and spring of 2022.

Over the course of several days, Minnetonka volunteers collaborated to build furniture, clean and set up homes across the metro for individuals affected by displacement. "Our students, parents, staff and community members were eager to help our new neighbors," shared Sarah Johnson, Community Service Specialist for Minnetonka Schools. "They helped create warm

and welcoming spaces for many Afghan families. Their care and commitment to the project truly made a difference."

Laura Herbst, Advanced Learning Coordinator at MHS, volunteered for the day with a group of International Baccalaureate students and members of her own family. "One of the best parts of the day was seeing the high schoolers dedicated for hours to the hard work of cleaning, organizing, and assembling furniture," said Herbst. "Seeing the gratitude the students — and my own son — had for what organizations like Alight do for others in need was also very powerful."

Elizabeth Kearns '24, a student volunteer, was surprised by how much fun she had during the event. "My favorite part was working together with friends to make welcoming posters," Kearns said. She collaborated with fellow volunteers to adorn the walls of the home they worked at with homemade signs that read "Welcome" in Arabic.



"It is important to be involved in our local and global communities because a person cannot fully appreciate their community without trying to better it," reflected Kearns.

One of the Aight staff members who assisted in coordinating the effort was Minnetonka alumna Molly Henry '05. Henry has worked with Aight for eight years as an international recruiter, volunteer coordinator and now global team builder lead. "Everything I do supports those on the front lines who are supporting refugees, helping them feel joy and dignity in some of the hardest moments in their lives," shared Henry. During her time at MHS, Henry was greatly influenced by her Spanish and literature classes, which encouraged her to cultivate curiosity and seek to understand different perspectives.

"It is important to be involved in our local and global communities because a person cannot fully appreciate their community without trying to better it."

- Elizabeth Kearns '24

Henry encourages students looking to get involved in their local and global communities to show up, be curious and build relationships. "When there is the chance to do something outside of your comfort zone, do it. That's when you are going to learn the most. Reaching out to local organizations to volunteer—even if you only do it once—is valuable. You'll almost always learn something unexpected."

Thank you to all volunteers who participated in helping to welcome new families to Minnesota! To learn more about volunteer opportunities in the community, visit www.minnetonkaschools.org/tonkaserves.



Minnetonka volunteers worked together to assemble furniture to be distributed to homes for refugees. Pre-assembling furniture allowed Aight to prepare homes quickly and efficiently to meet the needs of families.



A Legacy of Excellence

DR. DENNIS PETERSON RETIRES AFTER 21 YEARS OF SERVICE

by Daniel Campbell



Dr. Dennis Peterson, Superintendent of Minnetonka Public Schools, officially retired at the end of this school year. Dr. Peterson leaves behind an unparalleled career in public education, including a record 52 years of service as a superintendent—21 of which were spent at Minnetonka Public Schools. At his retirement ceremony (which can be viewed here: bit.ly/petersonretirement), colleagues, family and community members shared countless inspiring stories and uplifting connections about the enormous impact he had during his time leading the District. But that is only the tip of the iceberg.

Under his visionary leadership, Dr. Peterson transformed Minnetonka into a nationally recognized district with a reputation for excellence and innovation. Today, Minnetonka is widely considered the best school district in the state and is counted among the best in the nation. This is thanks in no small part to his vision for the District which is reflected in the outstanding teachers and staff hired, the incredible signature programs launched and the amazing student achievement supported throughout his tenure. Without a doubt, Dr. Peterson has left an incredible legacy for the Minnetonka Schools community.

THE RIGHT MAN FOR THE RIGHT TIME

"I think Dr. Peterson was the right man for the right time because he saw the potential in our school community," recalled Minnetonka Middle School East Principal Pete Dymit. "He saw the potential in the people here. He knew what we could become."

One of Dr. Peterson's greatest achievements was to reverse a pattern of annual budget-cutting and turn the District's focus to innovation and growth. This strategy has allowed the District to thrive and to become an education destination for families across Minnesota.

When Dr. Peterson was selected to lead Minnetonka Schools, the District was struggling. Enrollment was declining, budget shortfalls were commonplace and the prospect of closing schools was on the horizon. Dr. Peterson wasted no time in planning for the future and imagining the possibilities. He focused well beyond just stabilizing the District. He envisioned growing it into a district of choice for Minnesota families.

In 2002, Dr. Peterson and the School Board began a strategic planning process that would set a course for success. With careful planning, he began to rebuild academic programs, hired the best and brightest teachers, administrators and support staff in the state and established a child-centered approach to education. One of the first strategies under consideration was to develop a specialized program to attract prospective families.

The District didn't have a spare building or the resources to build one, so it embraced a school-within-a-school model and created the Language Immersion program in 2007. Many non-resident families were excited by the opportunity to engage in Spanish or Chinese Language Immersion, attracting open-enrolled families who wanted the innovative programming being developed.

During Dr. Peterson's time at Minnetonka, open-enrolled families brought in more than \$500M in revenue, more than half of which has gone directly to developing and supporting programs, facilities and other resources used by resident students. Seeing the value of a Minnetonka education, voters have repeatedly passed referendums to supplement this added revenue.

Today, Minnetonka is one of the most financially stable districts in Minnesota. Under Dr. Peterson's direction, the finance team saved millions of taxpayers dollars by refinancing debt to secure the lowest possible interest rates. The strategy was so successful that the District has not had to make budget cuts for 19 years, while almost every other district in the state has made multiple cuts to their programs and staff. It's clear that Minnetonka would not be the district it is today if its leader had not taken the risk to develop Language Immersion and made that initial leap to innovation. This signature program was one of Dr. Peterson's first major accomplishments, but it was far from his last.

ONE WORD: EXCELLENCE PIONEERING PROGRAMS

"It was his first year," recounted former Minnetonka School Board Member Charlie Kanan, "and I said, 'Dennis, what are your plans for Minnetonka? What's your vision?' Dr. Peterson looked me straight in the eye and said, 'Charlie, I can articulate that in one word.' And it was 'Excellence.' And I said, 'Well, Dennis, excellence in what?' And he said, 'Charlie, absolutely everything.'"

Excellence is more than a word to Dr. Peterson, it's a mantra. He has lived it and modeled it for his staff, students and families every day. He has led the District with an expectation for excellence at every turn, believing that there is no limit to what a child can accomplish.

Dr. Peterson's leadership ensured that every member of the Minnetonka Schools team was inspired with a passion for excellence. The results speak for themselves.

During the past two decades, student achievement increased by every academic measure, and Minnetonka Schools distinguished itself as a national leader in using classroom technology as an accelerator for learning.

Minnetonka Schools earned designations of Best School District, Best Place to Teach and Best High School for several years running by Niche.com, and Minnetonka High School is in the top five for U.S. News & World Report's Best High Schools.

"Pioneer." That's how Minnetonka parent and VANTAGE volunteer David Stillman described Dr. Peterson. "This man has pioneered so many cool initiatives in our district. Sure, there's a bevy of teachers and parents and community members that make things happen, but it takes a leader with a pioneering vision to put it out there," said Stillman. "From VANTAGE to MOMENTUM to so many different programs we have in our district, this man is a pioneer, and we are just honored to have had him as superintendent."

Dr. Peterson's leadership has supported a wealth of new opportunities for students, including Advanced Learning programs such as Wings and Navigator, Chinese and Spanish Language Immersion, International Baccalaureate, Minnetonka Research, MOMENTUM, Tonka Codes, Tonka Online (both grades 9-12 supplemental and K-12 comprehensive online learning), S.A.I.L. Transition Program and VANTAGE. He has also established practices and systems such as personalized learning, intensive interventions, personal pathways for learning and improved rigor on all levels. Thanks to Dr. Peterson's constant support for innovation and student success, Minnetonka was able to build a strong foundation of programs that students could pursue. Here is a closer look at some of the many highlights.

Since 2007, Minnetonka's **Language Immersion** program has provided

premiere learning experiences in Chinese and Spanish for students from Kindergarten through graduation. Students who continue in the program through 12th grade may take the HSK (Chinese) or DELE (Spanish) international proficiency exams, apply for a Minnesota bilingual diploma and complete the International Baccalaureate Bilingual Diploma.

Dr. Peterson helped to launch the **Navigator Program** in 2009. It offers access to programming for gifted students aged 8-11. Other Advanced Learning programs that have been added or strengthened include the Wings program and accelerated, honors and AP courses. Each of these programs helps engage students in areas of strength and passion. In addition, older students can access accelerated learning paths and take challenging AP courses in high school. Minnetonka is committed to recognizing and serving the breadth of talent and skills students bring to the classroom every day in all grades.

Developed in 2013, **VANTAGE**, Minnetonka's Advanced Professional Studies program, provides junior and senior students with real-world experiences in professional settings, where they can learn and develop skills for high-demand careers. Through experiential learning, VANTAGE offers a unique opportunity for high school students to apply their coursework in real-world settings. Students solve genuine problems through project-based assignments and work one-on-one

2007

Language Immersion



2009

Navigator Program



2013

VANTAGE



with mentors in the community. VANTAGE offers nine tracks: Business Analytics, Design + Marketing, Digital Journalism, Global Business, Global Sustainability, Health Science, Public Policy, UX Design and VANTAGE Education.

In 2014, Minnetonka became the first district in the state to implement a K-5 coding program with **Tonka <Codes>**. Today, Tonka <Codes> offers a robust K-12 coding curriculum that introduces all students to the language of computer programming. Individual schools offer advanced level coursework for students aspiring to specialize in this area.

With the opening of a state-of-the-art lab in 2016, **Minnetonka Research** provides students the opportunity to pursue authentic research driven by their own questions and interests. By connecting students with leaders in academia and industry, this program inspires and guides students as they develop skills in communication, critical thinking, creativity and collaboration. Students leave the program ready to engage in challenging college courses and cutting-edge STEM careers.

MOMENTUM, Minnetonka High School's newest signature program, began as a reimagining of the High School's technical education department in 2020. Dr. Peterson encouraged District administrators to explore both the needs surrounding post-secondary opportunities in the skilled trades and how Minnetonka

could best prepare students to succeed in those industries. Pathways of the **MOMENTUM** program now include Construction Systems, Manufacturing, Design and Transportation.

"There is an accountability and expectation, set by Dr. Peterson, to bring one's best to all that you do here in our schools," said Chris Vitale, School Board Chair. "That approach to teaching and learning impacts every teacher, every learning space, every administrator and school leader and every student. It encourages us to rise to the challenge and to reach beyond what we think is possible. Dr. Peterson has had love and hope for every single child in this school district, and a dream for each one of them to achieve their highest possible potential, even when society says they can't. That is child-centered."

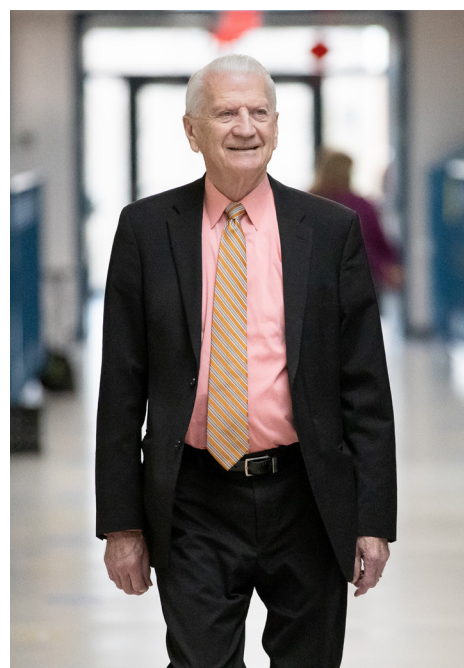
A LASTING LEGACY

Dr. Peterson will be greatly missed by all who knew him, and he will certainly not be forgotten. Through hard work, visionary leadership and a constant focus on being child-centered, he has established a legacy of excellence not just for himself or the District, but for thousands of students and alumni of Minnetonka Public Schools.

"Thank you, Dr. Peterson, for giving us your all ... and for the impact that you have made for our District's students, who've had the incredible privilege to benefit from the wealth of innovative

programs and opportunities you have given them access to experiencing," said Vitale. "Be assured, we will continue on with the standard of excellence you have set for us all."

The District invites you to honor Dr. Peterson's legacy with a contribution to the Dennis Peterson Scholarship for Excellence and Achievement fund. Dr. Peterson started this scholarship on his own in 2001. A scholarship has been given from this fund to a graduating Minnetonka senior every year to support their pursuit of higher education. You can learn more about the scholarship and make a donation here: bit.ly/legacyofexcellence



2014

Tonka <Codes>



2016

Minnetonka Research



2020

MOMENTUM



Smooth Sailing

by Mary Cornelius



Minnetonka Public Schools' new transition program helps students with special needs to thrive in the local community.

Last September, Minnetonka Public Schools launched its Students Achieving Independent Life (S.A.I.L.) transition program, providing young people with special needs, ages 18-21, with guidance and skills training for their lives and careers.

S.A.I.L. affords students the opportunity to continue their educational programming within the Minnetonka community. Coursework includes classes taught by Minnetonka instructors

and work study experiences with local businesses, focusing on developing skills and connections for life after high school. The S.A.I.L. building is a newly-renovated space uniquely designed to support transition education and includes a greenhouse, kitchen space, a video production studio and other learning labs for skill development, as well as a complete model apartment.

"The S.A.I.L. program is an important step forward for Minnetonka Schools in increasing the opportunities and providing an even stronger gateway to success for our students who are transitioning to independent life," said Dr. Dennis Peterson, who was the Superintendent of Schools when the program was proposed, planned and launched. More than 30 students participated in the program in its inaugural year.

Lucas Hagen, a Minnetonka alumnus and the 2019 Homecoming

Below: Coordinator of Transition Education Erin Valenta, then Superintendent Dr. Dennis Peterson, Lucas Hagen '19, School Board Chair Chris Vitale and Executive Director of Special Education Christine Breen at the first S.A.I.L. graduation ceremony.



king, was a S.A.I.L. student this school year and is one of the program's first graduates. His favorite classes were his work experience opportunities. He was employed with the Bethesda Thrift Shop, where he worked in the men's clothing department folding and sorting donations and with Trouvaille Homes memory care, where he interacted with residents and assisted the Activities Coordinator with scheduled classes and outings. Lucas will continue to work with Trouvaille after graduation.

"Going into this year, we wanted to focus vocationally on job training," shared Julie Hagen, Lucas's mother. "Lucas had such great work experiences [with S.A.I.L.]. The staff understood what he was looking for. They took his gifts and what he wanted to do into consideration and sought out local employers to best meet those desires."

The Hagens also appreciated being back in the Minnetonka community after a few years of transition education through the Transition Plus partnership, which was based in a neighboring town. With the S.A.I.L. building less than

a mile from Minnetonka High School, S.A.I.L. students can participate in extracurricular activities such as the Unified Club. "We truly felt part of the District again," said Hagen.

"Minnetonka has high academic expectations for all students, and bringing our students back home into our community allowed us to maintain these high levels of academic excellence we hold throughout the rest of the District," said Christine Breen, Executive Director of Special Education. "Students pushed themselves, as did parents, more than they thought they could this year. They have achieved higher levels of independence and functioning than some thought possible."

Reflecting on S.A.I.L.'s first year, Erin Valenta, Coordinator of Transition Education, is proud of the ways students' confidence has increased. "From the fall to the spring, students have gained so much independence in their decision-making skills. They

have a stronger understanding of what choices their future world offers them and have gained so many tools to access them," said Valenta. "The support of the District and community has been an integral part of our success at S.A.I.L. We felt this support all the time, and it helped us thrive in year one."

"Lucas had such great work experiences [with S.A.I.L.]. The staff understood what he was looking for. They took his gifts and what he wanted to do into consideration and sought out local employers to best meet those desires."

- Julie Hagen, S.A.I.L. parent

Looking ahead, Valenta is hopeful about the ways the program will continue to expand breadth and depth by adding more community partners and aligning curriculum resources. Breen looks forward to building more business partnerships and expanding parent education.

"As much as we are launching students into adulthood after their final year of transition, we are also launching their parents," said Breen. "We want to ensure we are setting them up for success as much as we are their children."

The transition from S.A.I.L. to the adult world is one that made the Hagens feel apprehensive, but now they say that they feel prepared to make because of the support they've experienced from Minnetonka Schools. "Every transition is scary, and Lucas's next step is going out to the big old world! My best experience with S.A.I.L. is how they've prepared me and connected me with his next steps," said Hagen. From providing help with navigating forms to facilitating connections with vocational services, S.A.I.L. staff support families in making transitions smooth.

"S.A.I.L. has prepared me to be Lucas's advocate for all of his next steps," Hagen said. "Now, I know I'll be ready."

To learn more about the S.A.I.L. Transition Program, visit www.minnetonkaschools.org/SAIL.



Hello Alumni! I'm delighted to begin my first year as president of the Minnetonka Alumni Association. This is a rebuilding year for us, and I hope many of you will consider joining me on the board so we can keep our community strong, engaged and—of course—excited for the All-School All-Class Reunion which is coming up in the summer of 2024.

I have to say, Minnetonka Public Schools gave me a great education. I went to college at St. Cloud State where most of the Minnetonka graduates were top of their class. When I decided to transfer to the U of M and met with my counselor, she remarked that Minnetonka Schools provided a solid education. I couldn't agree more.

I had a lot of fun at Minnetonka, too. I was part of the first class to go to Minnetonka Middle School West, and we came up with "West is best." On to Minnetonka High School. I need to remind everyone about the phrase, "Don't Step on the M." Our class never stepped on the big M in the entryway atrium.

My favorite part of being on the Alumni Association's Board is the difference we can make. As many of you know, we raise money to help fund the Minnetonka Public Schools Foundation Teacher Grant Program (which you can read more about on the next page). It is so rewarding to say to teachers, "Yes, we can pay for that!" The Minnetonka Alumni Association has donated more than \$56,000 since starting our partnership with the Foundation in 2004. If you want to make a difference, consider donating to the Minnetonka Alumni Association (see page 31 to learn how). Helping fund more teacher grants means we help more students.

Go Skippers!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marietta Jacobsen".

Marietta Jacobsen '70, Minnetonka Alumni Association President

2021-22 Alumni Association Board of Directors

Thank you to the amazing alumni, faculty and student volunteers who make up the Minnetonka Alumni Association Board of Directors! Their gift of time and talent has positively impacted our schools, their fellow alumni and the broader community.



Meet the 2021-22 Minnetonka Alumni Association board members. Pictured: Gail (Thacker) Ofstehage '68, Bob Edmondson '73, Lynn Krafve (Teacher Representative), Marietta Jacobsen '70 (President), Scott Meriwether '68 (Treasurer) and Quinn Dvorak '22 (Student Representative). Not pictured: Dan Heiland '74, Lisa (Lund) Mayer '79 and Max Zinn '94.

Annual 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 donated a total of \$3,788, funding the following grants this year:

- **The National Parks: America's Best Idea** - This grant allows Minnetonka High School students to view Ken Burns' documentary highlighting five beloved national parks in the United States and addressing concepts of history, ecology, democracy and the indigenous peoples of North America.
- **Urban Mapping** - This grant provides a set of physical street maps for Minnetonka High School students to analyze as part of their "Cities and Urban Land Use" unit.
- **Clay Slab Roller** - This grant provides Minnewashta Elementary School students with a Clay Slab Roller, canvas materials and a wagon wheel handle to roll clay for student projects. There is a great variety in the kinds of clay slabs that can be created on this kind of slab roller (Northstar 24") including thin translucent porcelain slabs and thick, heavily-textured architectural slabs.
- **Outdoor Learning** - Minnetonka Preschool is now offering an outdoor preschool option during the 2022-23 school year. This grant supplies books, manipulatives and other supplies to meet the nature-focused curriculum of the class.
- **Sonor SMART Series Xylophones** - This grant will purchase new xylophones for Clear Springs Elementary students. The German company Sonor has created a SMART Xylophones set that is smaller and easier for younger students to use and will replace eight step bells that experienced heavy use and damage during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Alumni association board members show their support for teacher innovation at the Minnetonka Public Schools Foundation 2022 Teacher Grant presentation ceremony. Pictured above are President Marietta Jacobsen '70, Minnewashta Elementary Teacher Melanie Mozingo, Board Member Gail Ofstehage '68 and Clear Springs Elementary Teacher Jennifer Kimball and Treasurer Scott Meriwether '68.

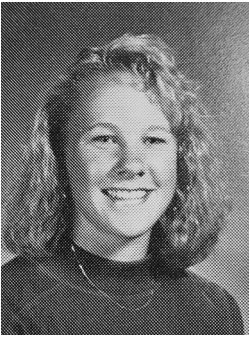
View a list of all teacher grants funded by the Minnetonka Alumni Association from 2005-present at bit.ly/MAA-teachergrants. To make a gift to the Minnetonka Alumni Association, visit minnetonkaschools.org/alumnigiving.

Volunteers Needed to Help Plan All-School All-Class Reunion

The Minnetonka Alumni Association needs your help to ensure the future success of its organization. Many long-serving board members have or are planning to retire this year. So far, the association anticipates having seven board member positions open and is looking to fill as many as possible before planning for the All-School All-Class Reunion, which will take place in July 2024. Alumni from any class are eligible to join the board.

Board members meet monthly to plan events (the All-School All-Class Reunion and Annual Alumni Awards), make impactful decisions (voting on award recipients or how to spend money raised throughout the year), initiate fundraising efforts and connect with the alumni community. It is a great opportunity to give back to fellow alumni and Minnetonka Public Schools, make connections, gain experience leading a 501c3 non-profit organization and have a lot of fun.

To apply to join the Minnetonka Alumni Association Board, please fill out this form: bit.ly/alumni-interest



DR. COURTNEY (HENIFF) ALBINSON '92

Distinguished Alumni Award by Kyla Fung '22

Dr. Courtney (Heniff) Albinson was a three-sport athlete at Minnetonka High School who competed all four years of her school career. When she graduated, she knew one thing for sure—she wanted to help student athletes who faced the same challenges she did. Years later, Albinson has dedicated her life to doing just that.

"A large part of my identity was connected to being an athlete," said Albinson. "I was very competitive and always strove to do my best." While Courtney managed to excel academically throughout high school while serving as captain of her soccer, gymnastics and track and field teams, numerous injuries challenged her physically and emotionally.

"My support team at Minnetonka—my coaches, athletic trainer and teammates—were critical in helping me navigate those challenges," said Albinson. "I felt very supported academically and athletically at Minnetonka and was provided many opportunities to develop important leadership and life skills that have been beneficial in my career and life."

After graduating from Minnetonka, Courtney received her Bachelor of Arts in psychology from the University of Notre Dame and went on to complete her MA in kinesiology from the University of Minnesota, as well as a PhD in counseling psychology from the University of North Texas.

Her own experiences as a student athlete strongly influenced her career path, leading her to establish one of the preeminent collegiate level sport psychology practices in the country. Courtney is now a nationally recognized leader in sport psychology. She is the director of sport psychology services at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois and has served in several leadership roles, including as President of the Society of Sport, Exercise and Performance Psychology of the American Psychological Association.

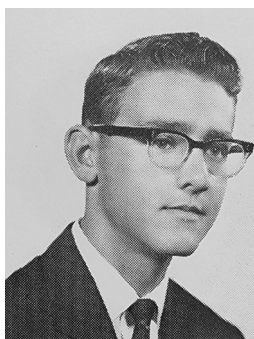
"I believe that mental health is just as important as physical health," said Albinson. "At Northwestern University, I have focused on creating comprehensive services to address the full spectrum of needs experienced by student-athletes, coaches and teams—counseling, psychiatric care, individual and team mental performance consultation, mental health outreach and education and consultation with coaches, sports medicine professionals and administrators."



Additionally, through her journey to becoming a sport psychologist, Courtney has embraced opportunities to mentor other women in her field. "It means a lot to me to be able to support other women in developing their professional networks, preparing for leadership roles and navigating their careers as sport psychologists and mothers," she said.

Albinson said she is truly honored to have been chosen to receive the Distinguished Alumni Award. "Minnetonka High School has a special place in my heart and played an important role in my career path and passions. It is an honor to be recognized among the many talented Minnetonka alumni."

Giving advice to students and graduates, Albinson encourages them to "Savor the present moment, live out their values, embrace failures as opportunities to grow, treat themselves with kindness and compassion and reach out for support when they need it."



BRUCE GOETZ '63

Distinguished Alumni Award

by Julia Srnec '23

Bruce Goetz '63 has a passion for nature and the outdoors. Throughout his life, he has always found a way to bring that love of nature into his interests; from being a Boy Scout in his youth, to spending 43 years at Northland College and developing the innovative curriculum that has transformed it into one of the most prestigious environmentally-focused colleges in Wisconsin and the nation.

Goetz graduated from Minnetonka in 1963 and went into chemistry at the University of Minnesota. However, he soon realized that he didn't want to work in a lab the rest of his life. Given his lifelong passion for the outdoors, he soon switched majors to geography and geology, later attending Northland College to complete his master's degree.

After graduation, he stayed on as a professor. Very quickly, his dedication to science became clear to the administration of the college, and Goetz was allowed to develop new environmental studies curriculum. The programs he founded were popular and impactful, and the college itself shifted its primary academic focus to environmental studies.

"With that emphasis at Northland, I got to do so many different things curriculum-wise and travel-wise with students," Goetz recalled. "It just blossomed."

During his time at Northland, Goetz helped start a number of programs including Outdoor Education, Meteorology, Natural Resources and Geographic Information Systems.

He shaped this curriculum around the importance of hands-on, real-world experiences. "You can learn a lot from a book, but when you can see it or you can touch it or you can walk on it, you can grasp it in a panorama," Goetz shared about the connection he formed between his teaching and love for the environment.

Goetz emphasized the importance of being in the landscape his students were learning about. Starting in 1972, Goetz began to take students on extended trips over spring term to further immerse them in the environments they were studying and places they normally would never see. His trips included sites all around the country, including trips to Hawaii, the American Southwest, the Pacific Northwest, Mexico and more.



"I walked with students on fresh lava flows and across canyons to see the land formations," Goetz recalled. "I even got my pilot's license to fly students on aerial field trips. To this day, I will run into former students, and they always talk about how impactful those field trips were to them. I am so proud that I could help those students appreciate the world around them."

Goetz retired from Northland College in 2016. The following year, he received the highest academic honor a faculty member can receive—Professor Emeritus.

To current Minnetonka students, Goetz advises, "Don't be afraid to follow your dreams, but make them realistic. Not everything is achievable, but if the dreams are worthwhile, [you can] make them happen! Secondly, find balance in your life. I was able to find that balance with my career and my own interests—traveling, research, writing articles and authoring a book. All of that is important, but keep time for yourself and your family. Your life will be more fulfilling."

MINNETONKA *Alumni Awards*

Congratulations to all 2022 Alumni Award Honorees!

You are invited to attend the 13th annual Alumni Awards Ceremony on Saturday, September 24, at Minnetonka High School. Get event details and reserve your free tickets at www.minnetonkaschools.org/alumniawards



Distinguished Alumni Award
Dr. Courtney (Heniff) Albinson '92

Courtney is a nationally recognized leader in sport psychology, and serves as the Director of Sport Psychology Services at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois.



Distinguished Alumni Award
Bruce Goetz '63

Bruce spent 43 years at Northland College developing the innovative curriculum that has transformed it into one of the most prestigious environmentally-focused schools in the nation.



Distinguished Service Award
James Turner '69

An experienced anesthesiologist, James traveled annually to Guatemala with a volunteer surgical team for 20 years to help those without access to proper medical treatment, until retiring in 2018.



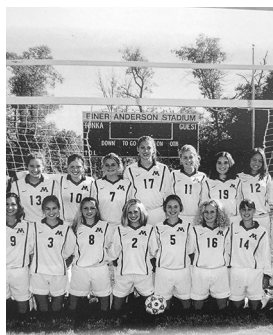
Young Alumni Award
Alexa Bussmann '16

Alexa has served in a multitude of nonprofits and social advocacy organizations across numerous communities, including founding Novel Hand, an online publication dedicated to bridging the gap between activism and impact.



Young Alumni Award
Dr. Brett Cornell '07

Brett set a department record at Drexel University by earning his PhD in 3.5 years. He currently works at Inari Medical in California, where he develops devices that may help prevent venous disease, deep vein thrombosis and pulmonary embolisms.



Skippers Hall of Fame
2001-02 Girls Soccer Team

The 2001-02 Girls Soccer Team was unstoppable. They completed their regular season undefeated and won the Classic Lake Conference Title, the Section Championship and the 2001 Minnesota Class AA State Championship.



Faculty Hall of Fame
Bill Keeler

Bill Keeler taught science at Minnetonka's middle and high schools from the late 1950s to the early 1990s. Bill made it his highest priority to cultivate his students' curiosity and encourage them to pursue their own individual interests.

Calling All Skippers!

Nominations for the 2023 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.

**Learn More about the Awards and
Nominate at: bit.ly/nominate2023**

SHARING THEIR TONKA PRIDE

How a Parent Committee Raises Funds and Spirits

by Daniel Campbell

"TONKA PRIDE IS A WAY TO CELEBRATE AND BRING AWARENESS TO MINNETONKA SCHOOLS. IT PROVIDES AN OPPORTUNITY FOR PRESCHOOL, ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOLS TO PROMOTE SCHOOL SPIRIT AND CELEBRATE STUDENTS ACROSS THE DISTRICT."

- Katie Becker and Stacy Vitale, Tonka Pride Co-Chairs

We've Got "PRIDE" in Everything We Do...

Promote and celebrate our students and staff

Recognize and award students and community leaders for outstanding achievement and community service

Initiate programs to celebrate school pride

Develop community awareness of Minnetonka Schools

Engage and connect the nine Minnetonka School District communities

Tonka Pride is an all-volunteer, community-led, school-supported initiative to celebrate pride in Minnetonka kids and their schools. It is led by a committee of dedicated parent volunteers who partner with the District and PTA/PTO groups from Minnetonka Preschool, all six elementary schools and both middle schools to host apparel sales throughout the year. The committee uses the profits from these sales to give back to PTAs/PTOs across the District. Tonka Pride has also recognized and awarded students for outstanding achievements and community service with their PTAs/PTOs and Principals.

"We both find joy in giving back to our school communities," said Tonka Pride Co-Chairs Katie Becker and Stacy Vitale. "We joined this volunteer opportunity as a way to spread Tonka Pride and school spirit in the community while fundraising for multiple schools in the District."

Becker and Vitale have co-lead the group since 2017. Under their leadership, Tonka Pride has given back more than \$180,000.

"Showing school spirit is essential to building a successful school community," added the co-chairs. "It gives students, staff, families and the community a sense of ownership in their school."

Interested in picking up some spirit gear for your family? Tonka Pride will host three annual sales in 2022-23 at the District Service Center; one in the fall (September 16 & 17), in the winter (December 9 & 10) and in the spring (April 21 & 22). They also host pop-up sales at sites throughout the District. You can learn more about Tonka Pride and see upcoming sales on its website: minnetonkaschools.org/tonkapride.

The Alumni Magazine is pleased to feature updates from Minnetonka graduates. The Class Notes included in this issue were submitted between August 1, 2021 and June 28, 2022.

Interested in submitting a Class Note? The *Minnetonka Alumni Magazine* invites you to tell us about your recent award, new job, wedding or other life event you want to share.

To submit a Class Note, email: alumni@minnetonkaschools.org or submit them online at www.minnetonkaalumni.com.

1960s

1968

Steve Adams is the Hopkins (MN) School Board treasurer and was named to the 2022 All-State School Board, the Minnesota School Boards Association's (MSBA) most prestigious award. The award was given at MSBA's annual Leadership Conference January 13, 2022 at the Minneapolis Convention Center.

1970s

1970

After graduating, **Mary Agrell Stroeing** lived in Alaska for 20 years with her husband, Dan. After moving back to Red Wing, Minn. in 2018, they began a boating journey called the "Great Loop" on their 26-ft Nordic tug. While the COVID-19 pandemic put a pause on their journey, Mary and Dan made it all of the way back to Red Wing in August 2021.



1973

Mark Bedor worked on *Today's Wild West*, which received the Award for Outstanding Western Lifestyle TV show at the annual Western Heritage Awards in September 2022. A documentary series on all things Western, it airs on PBS in 28 states. He also authored two Western coffee table photography books and has written hundreds of magazine articles. He is a former TV anchor, reporter, writer and producer. Mark lives in South Pasadena, Calif.

1990s

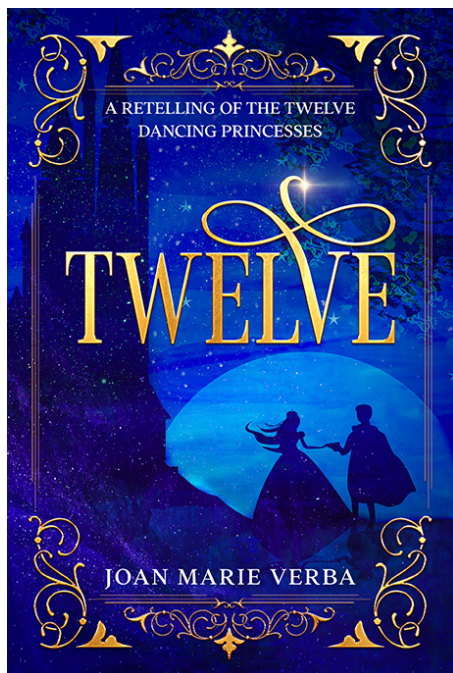
1992

Paul Manley moved from Minnesota to Fountain Hills, Ariz. and is currently the Vice President at Wrap Technologies.

1997

Heather Sweetser won National Language Teacher of the Year 2022 from ACTF. She holds an MA in Arabic and earned summa cum laude BAs in Arabic, Islamic studies and international studies, all from Ohio State University. Sweetser has also served as a lead instructor for the UNM STARTALK program since 2015, helping heritage speakers work toward state certification.

« **Mary Melony Rockino '60** is co-editor and publisher of *The History of Lake Preston: People and Places*. The book tells the comprehensive story of the town from 1881 to 2019, complete with photos, family stories and history about the founding of the town. She is currently a journalist for *The Kingsbury Journal*, a county-wide newspaper. She lives with her husband of 60 years, Bill, on their farm in South Dakota.



⬆️ **Joan Marie Verba '71**'s latest novel, *Twelve: A Retelling of the Twelve Dancing Princesses*, comes out August 2, 2022.



⬆️ **Tim M. Kucij '72**, composer and piano player, has now released four albums and a single. He was also just featured in the 9th edition of *Marquis Millennium Magazine*. Composing a mixture of different styles of music, from classical to pop and jazz, he always aims to paint a vivid picture with the music that he plays.

2000s

2004

Shoshana Anderson was chosen as Global United International 2021 Ms. Charisma for Childhood Cancer and Illness Awareness. Shoshana works at All Saints Preschool in Minnetonka as a teacher and PCA and volunteers with Lake Minnetonka Chamber, Minnetonka Community Education, the Autism Society and many more. She lives in Greenwood, taking care of her disabled parents.

2006

Tony Oberstar has worked as a director for movies, music videos and commercials since graduating in 2006. He has also volunteered as a mentor with VANTAGE for the last seven years. This year, he has worked to organize a scholarship for students at Minnetonka High School interested in film and videography.

2010s

2012

Dan Brandt is currently working as a sales representative for Google.

2016

Will Schmid has been offered a three-year National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship. He is a scientist at Rice University in Houston, Texas working to find solutions to the climate crisis. He plans to research resonant thermal systems for decentralized and scalable solar desalination. Also a musician, he returned to Minnesota in June of 2022 to record his second jazz album with SPACE. His first album, *Non-Trivial Problem*, was released in 2019.

2017

Dustin James Wandrei graduated from the University of Minnesota College of Science & Engineering with a BS in systems & industrial engineering in May 2022. Dustin (DJ) is the son of Lisa (McFarlin) Wandrei, MHS '81.

Annmarie Schmid has been named President-Elect of the Minnesota Chapter of the American Student Dental Association. Annmarie recently finished her first year at the University of Minnesota School of Dentistry where she is pursuing a DDS.



⬆️ **Jessica (Donovan) Matheson '04** was named 2022 SHAPE America National Health Teacher of the Year. Jessica had previously been named the 2020 MNSHAPE Health Teacher of the Year and 2022 SHAPE America Central District Health Teacher of the Year. Jessica lives in Chanhassen with her husband, Kyle, three children and pet weimaraner.

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

James Borgen '54	Mike Cruickshank '69
Robert Rue Parsonage '55	Ann Little '69
George Grodahl '57	Tom Nash '69
John Phillips '57	Merrilee Nelson '69
John Cranbrook '58	Christopher Hogle '72
Annabella Gonzalez Quntanilla '58	Pat Huber '73
Mary Jo Nelson '59	Carol (Fury) Fury-Fistman '74
Ann Shaughnessy '59	Craig Thonander '76
Roland Stanchfield '59	Jim Walz '76
Ronald Stanchfield '59	Drew Anderson '77
Steve Effertz '61	Thomas Kelley '78
Donald Toavs '63	Karla (O'Neill) Hennessy Geehan '80
Christopher Bollis '65	Wendell Fransdal '85
Harold Allen '67	Scott Hanna '85
Donald Kodner '67	Michael Venero '87
Rick Silloway '68	Rhett Rasmussen '90
Margaret Ofstead '68	Hannah Bundlie '04
Kathy Clay '69	Genevieve Lantto '12
Bill Conley '69	

Teachers and Staff

Susan Adamek
Einer Anderson
Julia Beaulieu
John Blomlie
Burton Grimes
Mona Jarnstrom
Shirley Koester
James Markfelder
LaWayne Morseth
Rosemary Patterson
Christopher Polson
Zona Steelman
Martin Luther Thames, Jr.

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 Minnetonka Schools and events for the alumni community.

Contact the Minnetonka Alumni Association at Alumni@minnetonkaschools.org to find out how you can support your alma mater!



Give online at
minnetonkaschools.org/alumnigiving

Upcoming Events

Minnetonka Schools is excited to share the many alumni and District events happening next year! To make sure you have all the latest event updates, visit www.minnetonkaschools.org/alumni-events.

Know of a reunion that should be added to the calendar? Email alumni@minnetonkaschools.org.

2022

- July 16 - Class of 1992, 30-Year Reunion
- July 23 - Class of 2012, 10-Year Reunion
- July 29 - Class of 1965, 57-Year Reunion
- August 6-7 - Class of 1962, 60-Year Reunion
- August 13 - Class of 2002, 20-Year Reunion
- August 20 - Class of 1982, 40-Year Reunion
- August 21 - Class of 1957, 65-Year Reunion
- September 23 - Homecoming Parade and Game
- September 24 - Alumni Awards Ceremony

2023

- February 1 - Deadline for Alumni Award Nominations
www.minnetonkaschools.org/alumniawards
- February 11 - Dream Makers, Minnetonka Foundation fundraiser
- May 20 - Tonka Youth Tri, Minnetonka Community Education
- July 4 - Excelsior Firecracker Run, Minnetonka Community Education
- TBD - Class of 1953, 70-Year Reunion, contact Jean (Henkelman) David '53 at 507-289-7470 to learn more.

2024

- July 28 - Class of 1959, 65-Year Reunion
- July 28 - All School All Class Reunion (Rescheduled from 2022)



Above: Alumni from across the country celebrated at the 2021 Alumni Awards Ceremony, which returned to an in-person format last fall.



Left: 2021 Minnetonka Alumni Award honorees Dr. Joni (Hlavacek) Schwartz-Chaney '71, John Chaney, Sharon (Haley) Hermel '65 and Carol (Fischer) Parker '65 join Minnetonka Alumni Association board member, Gail (Thacker) Ofstehage '68, and president, Marietta Jacobsen '70 as they get ready to ride their float in the annual Homecoming Parade in downtown Excelsior.

Welcome, Superintendent David Law!

The School Board and staff of Minnetonka Public Schools warmly welcomes new superintendent, David Law. Superintendent Law began his role on July 1, 2022.

"We are thrilled that David Law will be taking the helm here at Minnetonka Schools," said Chris Vitale, Chair of the Minnetonka School Board. "He is an experienced, proven leader who we believe will help us to harness and preserve the focus on child-centered excellence across our school system and at the same time will infuse new energy into all we do as a district."

Superintendent Law brings more than three decades of experience in K-12 education to the superintendency. He served eight years as superintendent for the Anoka-Hennepin School District, the largest district in the state of Minnesota, with a student population of 38,000. Prior to that, he was an assistant superintendent in the White Bear Lake School District for seven years. He has also served as adjunct professor

at Bethel University and at the University of Minnesota. He began his career as a math teacher in the Anoka-Hennepin School District.

Superintendent Law earned his BA from Hamline University, his JD from William Mitchell College of Law and his Minnesota K-12 Principal Licensure and Superintendent Licensure from the University of Minnesota.

Highlights of Superintendent Law's time in Anoka-Hennepin include a steady increase in graduation rates, an increase in the number of schools performing in the top quartile in Minnesota in math, reading and science, two National Blue Ribbon Schools of Excellence and a National School Board Association Magna Award-winning School.

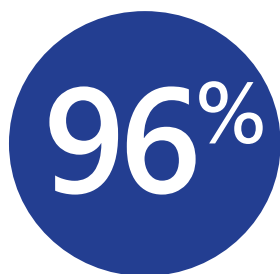
Superintendent Law was named Minnesota Technology Education Teachers Association Administrator of the Year in 2017 and was named 2019-20 Superintendent of the Year by the Minnesota Association of School Administrators.



"It has been heartwarming to experience the wonderful welcome my family and I have received from so many staff, administrators, parents and community members. This is an incredible school district, and I am committed to maintaining the tradition of academic excellence and innovation."

- David Law, Superintendent

MINNETONKA FAST FACTS



96% of parents in our annual parent survey rated Minnetonka Schools as Excellent or Good.



In 2022, Niche.com ranked Minnetonka Public Schools #1 in Best School District, Best High School, Best Teachers and Best Places to Teach among public schools in Minnesota.



A record-setting 32 Minnetonka High School seniors have been named 2022 National Merit Semifinalists.



The District is recognized for the 9th year in a row as one of the best communities in the nation for music education by the NAMM Foundation.

The Times They Are A-CHANGIN'



Daniel Campbell, Editor-in-Chief
Minnetonka Alumni Magazine
daniel.campbell@minnetonkaschools.org

Hello again, Skippers! I hope you enjoy reading Volume 13 of the *Minnetonka Alumni Magazine*. I have to tell you, working on this magazine is my favorite project of the entire year. From sharing the smiling faces of our students and celebrating their achievements, to updating you on all the latest District news and learning about the outstanding stories of success our alumni have achieved—it's simply amazing.

This September, I will be celebrating five years of working at Minnetonka Public Schools. Time truly flies! It seems like only yesterday I was presented with the opportunity to become a part of this truly outstanding community of educators. As I

look back at my own time in Minnetonka, the one thing I can say for sure is that change is constant. Many of the changes have been positive, others have been challenging, but all have been met with innovation and excellence.

One of my personal heroes, Walt Disney, knew that innovation and change walk hand-in-hand. He said, "We keep moving forward, opening new doors and doing new things, because we're curious. And curiosity keeps leading us down new paths." As you read through this issue of the *Minnetonka Alumni Magazine*, I hope you are excited to see the many new paths opening up in our community.

Minnetonka High School students celebrated diverse leaders through collaborative painting. You can check out the first of these great pieces of student art in the Commons. You can also read about how a group of nearly 80 students and staff volunteered to prepare homes for Afghan refugees.

You've read in past issues about the exceptional education that students have access to at MHS through the VANTAGE and MOMENTUM programs. Groundbreaking began in May for a brand new building that will house both programs. As the first new school building in 55 years, it speaks volumes about the interest students have for these hands-on experiences.

Speaking of new programs for young adults, Minnetonka Schools launched the S.A.I.L. transition program in September. This post-high school program prepares students ages 18-21 with special needs to thrive in their local community.

Minnetonka is often celebrated for its cutting-edge science and technology curriculum, but we also have fantastic fine arts and writing programs, both of which have inspired alumni. Alia Tarraf '97 talked with us about celebrating friendship, grief and filmmaking in her debut documentary, *A Hidden Star*. I was

also fortunate to interview Molly Beth (Osbatz) Griffin '01, a talented children's author whose work often features strong female characters, diverse families and LGBTQIA+ storylines.

Our feature story in this issue of the *Minnetonka Alumni Magazine* is a look back at the legacy that Dr. Dennis Peterson leaves as he retires after 21 years as Superintendent of Minnetonka Public Schools. When Dr. Peterson came to Minnetonka, he had exciting new ideas. He believed that the Minnetonka School District could become the very definition of excellence, a place where generations of families would flock to, where innovative programs were commonplace and supporting the growth of children in every way possible was at the heart of all that we do. He succeeded beyond anyone's expectations and left an indelible mark on our district and the lives of countless families.

I also want to personally extend a warm welcome to David Law, our new superintendent. I encourage each of you to do the same next time you see him at a school or alumni event—he's planning to be present at many! As a community, let's all support his vision for our district as he deepens the commitment to excellence that his predecessors began.

The year ahead will be different, as each year is, than all those that came before. Times are changing, and we must, too. It is with the utmost confidence that I say, I am excited to see where this path leads. Until next time Skippers, keep embracing the future, but never be afraid to look back at where you've been, because Minnetonka is always changing, growing and getting better at all that it does to support the next generation of problem solvers, leaders, visionaries and innovators—our students.

Wishing you all the best,

Daniel Campbell



Minnetonka Public Schools
David Law, Superintendent
5621 County Road 101
Minnetonka, MN 55345

www.minnetonkaschools.org

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Minnetonka Memories: A Look Back at the Year 1952

It has been nearly 70 years since Minnetonka High School opened. The high school was built to help complete the merger of the six school districts (Clear Springs, Deephaven, Excelsior, Groveland, Minnewashta and Tonka Bay) that made up the newly formed Minnetonka Public School District. While the building and its programs have grown by leaps and bounds since MHS began welcoming students through its doors on September 1, 1952, the mission of the High School and District is the same. As we bid a fond farewell to Dr. Dennis Peterson and welcome our new superintendent, David Law, let's look at the words of Superintendent William O. Nilsen, who presided over the District when Minnetonka High School opened.

"As a result of a student's experience in the Minnetonka Senior High School, [they] should behave differently all [their] life," charges Mr. Nilsen. "[This] experience should enable [them] to lead a more satisfying personal life and assume [their] responsibilities as a citizen with more intelligence and devotion. The members of our board of education, faculty and community are proud and pleased to present to you students this magnificent building. It is yours to keep, use and maintain. Make yourselves worthy of their confidence!"

Minnetonka continues today to be a district that believes in supporting the whole student and giving everyone the tools to excel at their passions. As alumni, we know you each have made—and will continue to make—our District proud. Go Skippers!

