

MINNETONKA

# AlumniMagazine

2023

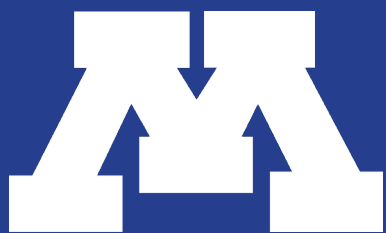


## Getting to Know Minnetonka's New Superintendent

David Law reflects on his first year at  
the helm of Minnetonka Public Schools.

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MINNETONKA

# Alumni Magazine

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A PODCAST FROM MINNETONKA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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## The Principal's Corner

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We often refer to Minnetonka High School as a “school of opportunities.” At MHS, that’s more than a catchy phrase. Our focus on world-class, child-centered excellence means that we are constantly working to pair a student’s talents and interests with outstanding curriculum and leadership-building extracurricular activities.

This spring, we were fortunate enough to bring in some really amazing guest speakers to further inspire our students. In February, juniors met with Keith Hawkins, one of the top youth presenters in the nation, for their Junior Retreat. His message of unity is positive, inclusive and follows our core values of doing the right thing and representing MHS well. In March, we welcomed Idan Chabasov, whose passion for baking and braiding traditional Jewish bread has earned him the nickname “The Challah Prince.” Bringing diverse voices such as these into our community to share their insights helps to prepare our students to be responsible citizens and compassionate leaders.

I’m pleased to share that our school’s new VANTAGE/MOMENTUM building will open in the 2023-24 school year. VANTAGE, our advanced professional studies program, has already helped thousands of students explore dynamic careers from global business to education. Our design and skilled trades program, MOMENTUM, is also growing by leaps and bounds. Last year, we expanded the Pagel Center at MHS to provide space for automotive and construction classes. Once the new building opens later this year, we’ll offer an aviation track for students which will teach them everything from how to fly a drone to taking the first steps to become a commercial pilot. Students will also be able to earn their drone pilot’s licenses. As you reflect on the opportunities that you’ve had at MHS, and those that lie ahead, I hope that you feel the same excitement I do for our next generation of Skippers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jeff Erickson". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Jeff Erickson, Minnetonka High School Principal

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## Minnetonka Natural Resources Club Helps Local Community



Minnetonka High School students are encouraged to find their passions and serve the greater good. For Sarah Johnsen '23, Emma Karbowski '23 and all the members of the Minnetonka Natural Resources Club, these goals aligned when they formed the new service group.

Johnsen and Karbowski were inspired to deepen their involvement in the City of Minnetonka’s environmental efforts after volunteering with the city’s buckthorn removal and bluebird identification programs. They founded the club so that other students could learn more about the significance of sustainability. “We wanted to offer all members an opportunity to give back to their community through these environmental volunteering activities,” said Johnsen.

Club members work collaboratively with the city to build awareness for environmental conservation practices, acting as the city’s first youth stewards. They educated some of Minnetonka’s youngest citizens by visiting elementary schools to share about best practices for pet waste removal.

Creating the club gave Johnsen a new perspective on leadership. “If you do the work, then big things will happen,” she shared. “The more that you put into it, the more of an impact you will make.” Want to get involved? Community members of all ages can connect with volunteer opportunities through the Tonka Serves website at [tonkaserves.org](https://tonkaserves.org).



# Minnetonka High School Celebrates 10 Years of VANTAGE

by Ming Wei Yeoh '24



*VANTAGE Business Analytics students meet with their project partner, Nasdaq, for a site visit to Time Square in New York City. This was just one of many hands-on, professional learning experiences students have had since VANTAGE launched.*

This year, Minnetonka High School celebrated the tenth anniversary of VANTAGE, its signature advanced professional studies program. Launched in 2013, VANTAGE provides students with real-world experiences where they develop professional-level skills and forge connections with business leaders.

"VANTAGE improved my conversation skill, which is great because it's applicable beyond the course," said Charlotte Carney '24, a student in the Design + Marketing strand of VANTAGE. "I'm more capable of standing up for my ideas and opinions due to the professional environment of VANTAGE."

VANTAGE students participate in one-on-one mentorships, hands-on projects, guest events and site visits, in addition to other engaging and immersive activities that allow them to apply their coursework in real-world settings. Students also partner with local businesses, non-profits and multinational corporations to provide recommendations and insights.

"The central goal of VANTAGE is to produce confident young adults who are ready to go out and succeed in whatever they want to do," said Roger Andre, executive director of VANTAGE. "Students get to experience what professional life might be like 5, 10, 20 years from now. It helps them realize that they can do the work and be successful. Most people only get to learn this after high school."

VANTAGE began with just one learning strand that served 35 students. Now, VANTAGE offers 10 unique strands and serves

more than 500 students each year. In addition to student interest, VANTAGE has developed a partner network of more than 1,200 volunteers.

"We have extremely hard-working and dedicated teachers who guide our students through all this wonderful experiential learning," shared Andre. "VANTAGE is a unique learning ecosystem that combines great teacher-coaches with motivated students and exposes them to real-world experiences provided by an involved community."

VANTAGE initially focused on offering business courses, but it has grown over the years, expanding its definition of professional studies to offer an ever-widening pathway for students to pursue. Current VANTAGE strands include: Business Analytics, Design+Marketing, Multimedia Communications, Global Business, Global Sustainability, Health Sciences, Public Policy, UX Design, VANTAGE Education and International Relations.

VANTAGE will enter its next phase in January 2024, with the opening of the new VANTAGE/MOMENTUM building. Currently under construction next to Clear Springs Elementary, the building will add specialized classroom space specifically designated to enhance the learning experience.

Minnetonka families can look forward to many new opportunities in the future that will help students continue to learn professional skills and gain real-world experience. To learn more about VANTAGE, visit [minnetonkaschools.org/VANTAGE](https://minnetonkaschools.org/VANTAGE).



# CELEBRATING SUCCESS AT STATE

## Varsity Athletics & Activities Report 2022-23

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From the top of the ski hill to the depth of the swimming pool and from the blast of the track and field starting gun to the final buzzer on the basketball court and ice rink, Skipper athletes are making an impact in the statewide athletic landscape. Many teams and individuals took home championship or other podium-level titles. "Our student athletes played with heart, skill and competitive spirit this year," said Ted Schultz, Activities Director at Minnetonka High School. "I am so proud of each of them and all that they've achieved athletically, academically and personally." Read on for a brief update on teams' and individuals' state accomplishments, listed alphabetically by sport.

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### ADAPTED BOWLING

*State Second Place, P.I. Division*

Four bowlers competed to place second at the state adapted bowling tournament.

### BOYS ALPINE SKIING

*State Champions*

The Skippers earned their second straight state title, the eighth in program history.

### BOYS BASEBALL

*State Third Place*

The Skippers tied with Edina at state.

### BOYS BASKETBALL

*State Quarterfinal Round*

The team made it to state for the first time since 2008 and made it to the quarterfinal round of the tournament.

### GIRLS CHEERLEADING

*State and National Champions*

The Skippers earned their 26<sup>th</sup> state and sixth national titles this year. They won in the varsity non-tumbling division.

### BOYS CROSS COUNTRY

*State Fourth Place*

The team was also the Section 2AAA champion.

### GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY

*State Second Place*

The team was also the Section 2AAA champion.

### BOYS GOLF

*State Seventh Place*

The team was also the Section 2AAA champion.

### GIRLS GOLF

*State Third Place*

The team was also the Section 2AAA champion.

### BOYS HOCKEY

*State Champions*

The team earned its second program state title by beating rival Edina 2-1.

### GIRLS HOCKEY

*State Fourth Place*

The team advanced to the semifinal round.

### BOYS NORDIC SKIING

*State 13th Place*

The team made it to state for the first time in a decade.

### ONE ACT PLAY

*State Starred Performance*

Minnetonka's original one act play, *Honk & Holler*, qualified for the MSHSL One Act Play Festival after winning the section competition.

### ROBOTICS

*State and National Qualifiers*

Chicken Bot Pie, the MHS robotics team, competed in top-level tournaments.

### BOYS SWIMMING AND DIVING

*State Fourth Place, True Team State Champions & State Individual Champion*

In addition to the team's success, Evan Witte '25 won the individual state champion title in the 100 Freestyle.

### GIRLS SWIMMING AND DIVING

*State Runners Up, True Team State Champions & State Individual Champion*

The Skippers won their fourth straight True Team state title this fall. The team also won the state championship title for the 200 Medley Relay and the 400 Medley Relay. Individually, Paige Dillon '24 was state champion of the 100 Freestyle.

### GIRLS SYNCHRONIZED SWIMMING

*State fourth place*

The Skippers competed in a cooperative team with the Blake School.

### GIRLS TENNIS

*State Champions, State Individual Champion & State Individual Runner-Up*

The team continued its streak of winning every match since 2019. Tennis players Sarah Shahbaz '23 and Kelsey Phillips '23 placed first and second, respectively, in the singles division of the tournament.

### BOYS TRACK AND FIELD

*State Runners Up, True Team Third Place & State Individual Champion*

In addition to the team's success, Tobias Williams '24 won the 100 Dash and was runner up in the 200 Dash.

### GIRLS TRACK AND FIELD

*State Champions, True Team State Champions & State Individual Champions*

In addition to the team's success, the Skippers won the 4x100 Relay. Individually, Claire Kohler '24 won the 100 and 300 Hurdle Races. Lucy Hiller '23 won the Triple Jump event.

### INDIVIDUAL STATE PODIUM FINISHERS

- GIRLS ALPINE SKIING: Marissa Witte '24 was state runner up.
- BOYS WRESTLING: Marco Christiansen '24 was state champion in the 170lb Division.

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





# Boys Hockey Skates to Victory Over Rival Edina

by Mary Cornelius

The Boys Hockey state championship game was one of the most exciting athletic moments of the school year. In a tense game, the Skippers beat their longtime rivals, the Edina Hornets, 2 to 1 in the state finals. It is the Skippers' second state title in program history, joining the 2017-18 season in the team's record book. The team finished the season with a record 29 wins and a record low number of goals allowed.

For Head Coach Sean Goldsworthy, a Minnetonka High School alumnus from the Class of 1990, the state title was always a goal. Still, it was something the team had to work for every day. Early season injuries and mid-season illnesses required new players to step up and make the most of their opportunities.

"This is one of the most unselfish groups of kids I have coached in 27 years," said Goldsworthy. "The senior leadership was outstanding, with the entire group having accountability and ownership in our culture."

Liam Hupka '23 was one of those senior leaders. He has played hockey since age four and is committed to play for the Minnesota State University - Mankato Mavericks in the fall.

Like Coach Goldsworthy, Hupka believed the team could win state from the start. "We had the talent and drive. We took it

week by week, focusing on grit and teamwork," he explained. "We wanted to win for one another. Everyone had a role, and to win, everyone had to be good at their role, which they were."

The venue and the crowd of supporters at the championship game added to the unforgettable experience. "Playing at the Xcel Energy Center was unbelievable, the amount of spectators and the noise level was incredible," said Hupka. "We had supportive parents and a great student section with our friends and classmates. There was a lot of blue and white in the stands!"

Team culture is what Hupka will remember most about his time with his teammates. "All of the time spent in the locker room laughing with the boys is something I'll never forget," said Hupka. "This has been the best year of my life, and winning the state championship was the most meaningful reward for all of the years of hard work. I feel fortunate to have had the opportunity to be a Skipper and will always carry this team in my heart."

Goldsworthy's goal for next year? A repeat state championship win. "We have a very strong group of returning players," he said. With the team's commitment to connection and teamwork, it is well within reach.



# Celebrating the Class of 2023

On June 8, 2023, Minnetonka Public Schools celebrated the graduation of 889 students. We invite you to take a closer look at some of our joyful new alumni as they set sail for their next great adventure.

## Honoring Minnetonka's Legacy Families

The following Class of 2023 graduates join their parents and grandparents as proud MHS alumni.

Emma Mary Anderson joins father, Michael Anderson '83

Evan Blumberg joins mother, Andrea (Hartzman) Blumberg '85

Leo Boime joins mother, Brenda (Brown) Boime '86

Matthew Bunde joins mother, Heidi (Johnson) Bunde '89

Marin Conrad joins father, Sean Conrad '93

Ruby Cranbrook joins father, Kelly Cranbrook '92; mother, Christina (Condon) Cranbrook '94; grandfather, George Cranbrook '57; grandmother, Lynda (Thompson) Cranbrook '62; grandmother, Sally (Niccum) Fillmore '53

Hanna Dahlin joins father, Steven Dahlin '88

Madilyn Elliott joins mother, Jessilyn (Hillstrom) Elliott '96

Owen Krafve joins father, Eric Krafve '86; mother, Shelly (Hanson) Krafve '87

Lily Firkus joins father, Ryan Firkus '95; mother, Karin (Johnson) Firkus '98

Paige Gabbert joins father, Steven Gabbert '84; grandfather, Tom Gabbert '59; grandmother, Susan (Clauson) Jasin '61

Julia Heeb joins father, Andreas Heeb '83

Perrin Hill joins mother, Megan (Peterson) Hill '84

Sophia Hillis joins father, John Hillis '87; grandfather, Jim Hillis '51

Ryan Holzer joins mother, Nancy (Scribner) Holzer '86

Bradley E. Johnson joins father, Erik M. Johnson '84

Jana Johnson joins father, Matt Christopher Johnson '86

Makayla Kennedy joins father, Ryan Kennedy '90

Jack Kochevar joins father, Jason Kochevar '88

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

Natalie Larson joins mother, Kathy (Sevey) Larson '81; grandfather, Bob Sevey '49

Karianna Lien joins mother, Sarah Lien '91

Martina V. Luttschwager joins mother, Stacie (Rutledge) Luttschwager '93; grandfather, Ronnie Rutledge '65; grandmother, Christine (McCafferty) Rutledge '72

Priscilla Lutz joins grandfather, Willy Skadsberg Jr. '63

Matthew Mason joins mother, Kathryn (Simons) Mason '87

Charley Mayes joins father, Chad Mayes '95; mother, Sara (Pletsch) Mayes '95

JD Landstrom joins father, Jason Landstrom '93; mother, Carrie (Raisbeck) Landstrom '93

Cole McLaughlin joins grandfather, Daniel Sullivan '66

Jacob Moss joins mother, Ann (Cimochowski) Moss '87

Owen Mullenbach joins father, Paul Mullenbach '90

Ciera Nash joins father, David Nash '85

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

Alexandra Reichstadt joins mother, Jennifer Holm '87

Alisa Rodionova joins step-father, Jason Kochevar '88

Joseph Rosenstein joins father, Alexander Rosenstein '90

Tenley Rutledge joins father, Dan Rutledge '86; mother, Nadine (Patterson) Rutledge '87

Jack Scanlon joins father, Tom Scanlon '84

Abigail Schmidt joins mother, Resa (Rashleger) Schmidt '90

Taylor Schneider joins father, Jassen Schneider '91; mother, Leah (Krohn) Schneider '93

Isabela Snow joins mother, Marta (Wudlick) Snow '92

Braden Storts joins mother, Breck (Bartos) Storts '95

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

Ketav Udupa joins mother, Veda Pai-Panandiker '90

Anya Vukovich joins mother, Angela (Klein) Vukovich '89

Grace Whisnant joins father, Chad Whisnant '92

Eliot Yeshaya joins mother, Beth (Stiller) Yeshaya '82

**Thank you to the Class of 2023 graduates who have reported that they will be serving our country!**

- Briana Duffy, ROTC program
- Griffin Fahning, US Naval Academy
- Adam McFall, US Merchant Marine Academy
- Jameson Michels, US Air Force Academy





## 889 graduates

99% of seniors graduated

86% College-bound

78% Attending 4-year colleges & universities

8% Attending 2-year colleges

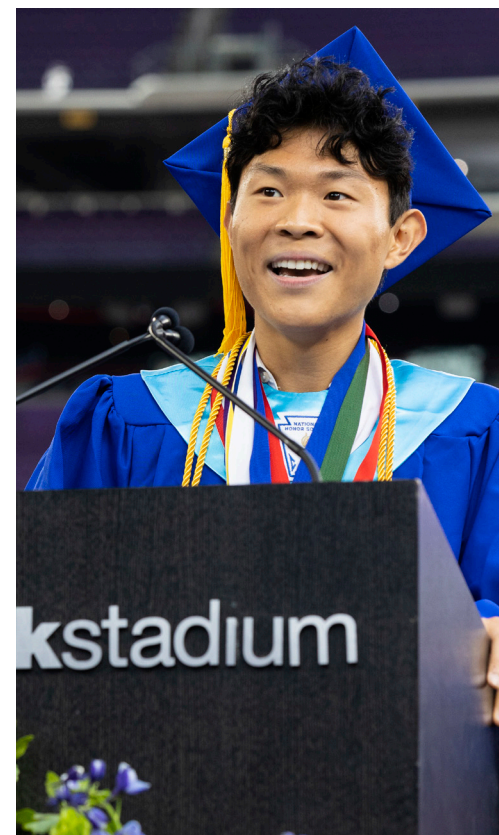
4 Entering military service

31% Attending Minnesota colleges & universities

55% Attending out-of-state colleges & universities

3% Entering the workforce or pursuing an apprenticeship

8% Are undecided or chose not to respond





# SIX TO WATCH

by Julia Srnec '23 and Ming Wei Yeoh '24



## John Hultgren '23

John Hultgren distinguished himself through his strong leadership and academic excellence. He was involved in Quiz Bowl, Math Team, Film Club and played the cello in orchestra for all four years at MHS. A stellar student, Hultgren's efforts were rewarded with numerous recognitions, including AP Scholar with Distinction and National Merit Semifinalist.

From his time attending Excelsior Elementary School, he looks back fondly on his experiences with the Navigator program, which were made all the more enjoyable and impactful by his teacher, Ms. Gluck. His favorite memories from MHS come from working as a team in Quiz Bowl. He found competing with friends and improving over the past four years to have been a fun and valuable experience.

"When you're going through high school, it's easy to get lost in the amount of classes, activities and other responsibilities you have," said Hultgren. "Setting small term goals for yourself is key in making sure that you stay grounded and on a path to where you want to be by the time high school ends."

In the fall, Hultgren will attend the University of Chicago to pursue a double major in math and cinema & media studies.



## Bryce Lesinski '23

Bryce Lesinski's hard work, dedication and diverse interests have enabled him to succeed in many areas. He was a member of the Varsity Sailing Team for six years and was a 2022 State Champion. He was also active on the Student Innovation Team.

Lesinski showed strong leadership and challenged himself academically. He participated in VANTAGE's Business Analytics and Global Business strands. His favorite memory from MHS is traveling to New York City and creating a company project for Frito-Lay and Best Buy as a part of the VANTAGE program. He also took several AP courses. Lesinski took second place at the DECA State tournament, received three Presidential Service Awards and was named an AP Scholar with Distinction, among other accomplishments.

"Whenever I found myself in a situation in school where I felt like I could help someone out, I made it a point to do so," said Lesinski. "This included anything from explaining a concept in a class to giving someone on my sailing team extra encouragement."

In the fall, Lesinski will attend Indiana University to pursue a degree in business.



## Joy Otieno '23

Joy Otieno is a hard-working student and a caring and welcoming friend. During her time at MHS, Otieno has been involved in orchestra and was a prominent member of the Women of Color student group. She received recognition for her efforts in math-related courses and has taken an array of advanced, college-level and PSEO courses.

Beyond academics, Otieno has tried to be a compassionate and supportive friend to those around her. She made it a point to actively listen to others and offer a helping hand to her peers when they needed someone to talk to or to offer advice. By fostering a non-judgmental environment, she says she hoped to create a space where individuals felt comfortable expressing themselves and seeking support when needed.

Her advice to students? "Engage in clubs that truly resonate with your interests and values, as they provide a sense of belonging and allow you to build meaningful relationships," said Otieno. "Remember, your high school journey is a time of self-discovery and exploration, so embrace the opportunities that come your way and make the most of them!"

In the fall, Otieno will attend University of Minnesota Duluth, to pursue a degree in computer science. She has already secured an internship position as a desktop specialist at North Memorial Medical Center.



## Saloni Somia '23

Saloni Somia is a highly accomplished and ambitious student who always strives to make the world around her a better place. She was captain of the Minnetonka Debate Team, a leader of Desi Student Union, president of the Minnetonka National Honor Society, president of DECA and a member of the Minnetonka Girls Golf Team.

In her time at MHS, Somia was also active in the AP and Minnetonka Research programs, and she was an AP Scholar with Distinction. She was a National Merit Finalist and was a gold-level recipient of the Presidential Service Awards from sixth grade through her senior year.

"My involvement in clubs and sports has given me the opportunity to meet incredible people, hone soft skills and further developed my interests," said Somia. "I have found some of my biggest passions, learning opportunities and support systems within my clubs and extracurricular activities. I believe that a positive culture starts with understanding that everyone you meet has so much to teach you. Kindness and empathy are renewable resources."

In the fall, Somia will attend Brown University as part of the Program in Liberal Medical Education and plans to pursue a degree in health policy.





## Ketav Udupa '23

Ketav Udupa has been an impactful leader at MHS. He was involved in Student Government all four years of high school. He was a member of the National Art Honor Society and many student groups such as Unified Club, First Mates and Men of Color. An IB diploma candidate and star soccer player, Udupa excelled both academically and in his extracurriculars.

One of Udupa's favorite memories from Minnetonka High School was being a part of the Homecoming court. He particularly enjoyed being in the Homecoming parade and spending time with his fellow student leaders.

"I think it is really important to foster inclusion to create a positive school environment," said Udupa. "Making sure everyone feels welcome and comfortable is really important to me, and it makes activities and time at school really enjoyable. MHS has so many different opportunities, so definitely take advantage of them and explore different interests you might have. That being said, it is also vital to take some time to relax and just enjoy being around your friends everyday. High school goes by really fast, so just enjoy the time you have and make good memories!"

In the fall, Udupa plans to attend a four-year college to study business or economics. He also plans to minor in South Asian studies.

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## Rae Vaughn '23

Rae Vaughn is known for her kindness and desire to excel in every commitment she takes on. She participated in the Swimming and Diving Team and Spanish Honors Society, among other activities, and she received multiple varsity letters in swimming and was chosen to be a part of Principal Erickson's "Senior Showcase" series.

Vaughn participated in rigorous programs such as Spanish Immersion and VANTAGE Global Business. She was recognized as an AP Scholar and recipient of the Platinum Bilingual Seal.

One of her favorite MHS memories was working together with the swimming and diving team winning the True Team state meet both her junior and senior years. She also enjoyed traveling to Spain in eighth grade as a student at MME. As a leader, Vaughn recognizes the power of small acts of kindness and makes it her goal to invite others into the conversation and to demonstrate a welcoming spirit.

"My best piece of advice for underclassmen is to take advantage of the amazing opportunities at MHS," said Vaughn, "but be sure to maintain a balance. Most importantly, form meaningful connections with your teachers, classmates and coaches."

In the fall, Vaughn will attend the University of South Carolina as a part of the Honors College program to pursue a double major in business economics and Spanish.





# Minnetonka Meets Les Misérables

CHRISTINE HEESUN HWANG '17 STARS IN NATIONAL TOUR OF ICONIC MUSICAL

by Matthew Wadman '22



*Christine Heesun Hwang '17 gives a heartfelt performance as Éponine in Les Misérables.  
Photo by Matthew Murphy & Evan Zimmerman for MurphyMade.*

Christine Heesun Hwang '17 shines as Éponine in the new national tour of *Les Misérables*. She credits her high school experience for inspiring the passion she has today.

"Minnetonka helped introduce and foster the love I have for theatre," shared Hwang. "I performed in my first musical, *Evita*, as a freshman. I was part of the ensemble. Some of my favorite Minnetonka memories are being in a summer show of *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*, as well as my junior year production of *Pippin*."

The foundation of Hwang's passion for the arts was laid at Minnetonka, where she credits support from teachers such as Sarah Finn-Sommerfeld, Lauren Bartelt, Claire Harley and Matt Breen, among others, for their patience and great humor. Success, for Hwang, has always been about the people in her life.

"Every experience and mentor I have met has made me the person I am today," said Hwang. "Both professionally and personally, I owe my journey to those who have been alongside me. Every person I've met has led me toward better understanding myself and the person I want to be."

After graduating from Minnetonka, Hwang went on to pursue her BFA at Ithaca College. She soon started auditioning in New York City, where she landed a part in her first major production, the national tour of *Miss Saigon*. The production's shutdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic was a setback, but

Hwang is grateful to be returning to work as a performer. Given the challenges of the past few years, she believes that *Les Misérables*' story of perseverance and finding light in dark times will resonate with audiences more than ever.

"At its core, the story is about compassion for others," Hwang explained. "With what our world has gone through over the past three years—the COVID-19 pandemic and social reckoning on national and global levels—this story feels as relevant now as it did back in 1985 or when it was originally written in 1862. The show has lasted over thirty-five years for a reason!"

Hwang believes that staying true to yourself is a critical part of growing up and having a fulfilling life. She advises Minnetonka students to follow their passion.

"Don't worry about your career or any of the 'optics.' Worry about you and what fulfills you," Hwang advised. "In theatre, in life, there are so many opinions that will be thrown at you or block you in your path. Ignore them and stay true to yourself and your passions. Ask yourself: what makes you happy? What makes you want to take on the day to the best of your ability? Be curious, be open-minded and don't be afraid to fail. High school is about learning, and a lot of learning comes from failing. Welcome it with open arms."

*Les Misérables* is available for viewing across North America. For upcoming tour dates, visit [lesmiz.com](https://lesmiz.com).





# IT TAKES COURAGE TO CREATE

## An Interview with Artist and Disability Advocate Scott Artley

by Daniel Campbell | Photo by Ivoryhouse Photography

Scott Artley '05 is a disabled queer artist and activist. He has made it his mission to support artists in Minnesota who have struggled to get support for their work. In his role as Accessibility Program Director of the Metropolitan Regional Arts Council (MRAC), he has helped hundreds of individuals and groups access grants and other critical resources. Artley believes that everyone has a right to express themselves and achieve success in their art and has made it his mission to equip his colleagues with the tools and knowledge that they need to succeed.

*Tell us about your work as an artist and where you draw your inspiration from.*

**ARTLEY:** As a cultural producer, I build environments for people to create collective meaning together through arts and cultural experiences. I have produced performances, arts education sessions and events that defy categorization such as an immersive murder mystery dinner party filled with art installations and performances! As a multidisciplinary artist, I generate artistic content that has ranged from visual arts like paintings, sculptures and illustrations to performance work involving storytelling, drag and movement. I am writing my first novel, a queer campy supernatural mystery set in a small Minnesota town based not-so-loosely on Excelsior.

*What kind of challenges did you face as a disabled, LGBTQ+ artist and how did that influence your decision to engage in advocacy?*

**ARTLEY:** There was a time when I insisted my work wasn't about being queer. But when I started to engage with my queer identity, everything started flowing. I could tap into a deep well of pain and joy. I could understand myself in relationship to a history and heritage and a responsibility to continue adding to that lineage. Similarly, I have a number of chronic illnesses, and I spent a lot of my professional career trying to pretend I didn't. When I started to engage with disability activism, and disability as an identity with its own right, another world opened up to me. This also comes with a trade-off. If you create work that is meant for your own community, it risks being illegible to the mainstream. I created a queer performance festival called Controlled Burn, with dozens of queer artists. Unfortunately, we didn't get press coverage and that meant we didn't get a big audience buying tickets. The people who did come, who saw value in it, couldn't afford the cost of tickets and that meant our bank account remained small, which meant funders saw us as "too small" to manage a bigger bank account. We ended up only receiving smaller grants, when we got them at all, which led to disbanding the organization.

*What inspired you to focus your career on supporting artists who are disabled, identify as LGBTQ+ or are part of a marginalized community?*

**ARTLEY:** I was one of the small handful of students out as queer during high school. The arts, particularly my participation in theater, was key to my survival. I was celebrated onstage for the very swishiness for which I was ridiculed elsewhere. Art saved my life, quite literally, and it's why my life's work has centered on making space for people outside of the mainstream to find meaning and community through art.



*How did you first get involved with the Metropolitan Regional Arts Council?*

**ARTLEY:** I was an MRAC superfan for a decade before I became a staff member. I applied for grants, sat on grant review panels and attended management trainings.

*Your current role, Accessibility Program Director of the Metropolitan Regional Arts Council, is a new position. Could you talk about what you do?*

**ARTLEY:** Along with other staff, I develop and manage grant programs for artists and arts organizations in the Twin Cities Metro. I coordinate efforts to ensure MRAC's own grant processes, meetings and other activities are accessible. I also create and mobilize resources to expand the arts participation of people with disabilities in the region. I developed a pretty niche expertise in arts and cultural accessibility planning in the Twin Cities, and have in the last several years started developing trainings on arts and cultural access on a national level. It's admittedly dry material, but my hammy theatrical background manages to turn it into something engaging!

*Why is having an Accessibility Program Director such an important new resource for the artistic community?*

**ARTLEY:** My first job out of college was at Mixed Blood Theatre in Minneapolis, and somehow I was hired to coordinate the organization's fundraising efforts. I think I got the job by explaining I was the top performer in my high school's annual citrus sale drive. I could move grapefruits, why not grants for tens of thousands of dollars and fundraising events? Within a year, among our staff of seven, I was also handed responsibility for coordinating Audience Services. I was thrown into the deep end, yet again, and found I had a passion for ensuring that people with disabilities felt supported and included in the audience. When

I was doing this, all of 23 years old, I had no formal training and only vague ideas of how to manage the job. As the Accessibility Program Director at MRAC, I could help someone in the same position I had been in to access financial resources and share my knowledge on how to level-up accessibility in their work.

*Outside of your work with the MRAC, how have you advocated for assistance to Minnesotan artists and authors?*

**ARTLEY:** I serve on the Minneapolis Arts Commission, a body charged with advising the City of Minneapolis on arts and cultural matters. My advocacy has mostly been concentrated in my professional work—largely because that kind of work can easily become all-consuming.

*Have there been other experiences, professional or personal, that have helped shape your passion for helping others?*

**ARTLEY:** I grew up in a family that emphasized a life built from curiosity, creativity and that everyone can and should be a leader in some way. My parents always emphasized living a values-driven life.

*What advice would you give to a Minnetonka student today who is interested in pursuing a career in the arts or in advocacy?*

**ARTLEY:** It takes courage to create, and it's a unique joy to make space for people to feel safe and supported enough to express themselves. I'd like to say my path to this work was unconventional, but there's no direct path to working in the arts. Find out what feeds your passion, and make sure you're always doing something that keeps it fed. Keep your eye on opportunities to challenge yourself, to make yourself uncomfortable, because that's where you learn the most about who you are, and who you want to be for others.

*Artley performs "Going Low" at the Walker Art Center. This performance focused on body art and teaching caring from a distance.*







# REMEMBERING RON

**A Respected Community Member Who Led through Commitment to Service**

by Mary Cornelius and Andy Smith

Ron Kamps, a dedicated, decades-long Minnetonka volunteer, passed away this spring. It's difficult to describe the magnitude of the impact Kamps has had in Minnetonka because he has been involved in so many key aspects of the community. "I don't know if anyone besides Ron knew all of the things that he did," said Dr. Dennis Peterson, former Minnetonka Schools superintendent.

Kamps was a volunteer and board member for ICA Food Shelf who could often be found at High School athletic events and Minnetonka Community Education events, collecting donations for the food shelf. He was also a grant writer of sorts, working with the District to secure Hennepin County Youth Sports Grants for the MHS soccer-lacrosse turf field, Clear Springs playground and Scenic Heights playground.

He played a key role in establishing and supporting the Diamond Club—the community organization that privately funded Veterans and Legacy Fields. Kyle Heitkamp, Vice President of the Minnetonka Diamond Club, looked up to Kamps as his example for how to make a difference in the community. "When you think of volunteering in Minnetonka, you absolutely think of Ron Kamps," said Heitkamp. "I started volunteering in the community 20 years ago, and I really didn't know what I was doing. Then I realized all I really had to do was to watch Ron and follow Ron, and I knew things would get done right."

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**"Ron was a community champion—someone who never missed a beat. He was a tireless servant leader and somebody who was always about the cause and never about himself."**

*- Lisa Wagner,  
Minnetonka School Board Chair*

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As a board member and events director, Kamps was the force behind many of the Diamond Club's fundraising events that generated tens of thousands of dollars. "A lot of students who have taken advantage of that field never knew who Ron Kamps was, but his work touched their lives," said Dr. Peterson.



"After Ron had an outstanding professional career, he used his passions and his interpersonal skills to make a significant impact," shared Lisa Wagner, Minnetonka School Board Chair. "He was a community champion—someone who never missed a beat. He was a tireless servant leader and somebody who was always about the cause and never about himself."

Kamps was a DECA mentor and judge, for both local and state contests for years. He was an active part of the VANTAGE mentorship program as both a mentor and recruiter of instructors and mentors. Kamps had an incredible network, and when he got involved, he got others involved, too.

"He was an amazing role model," said Wagner. "He really set an example for volunteering that I think will never be exceeded."

Kamps served as part of the Minnetonka Public Schools Foundation Board, Tonka Cares Committee, Dave Nelson's Men of Character Committee, as a Tackle Cancer Volunteer and as a Minnetonka Community Education volunteer extraordinaire, where he was part of many event support committees, including:

- Tour de Tonka committee
- Firecracker Run committee
- Youth Triathlon committee
- Youth Basketball Tournaments
- Holiday Family Giving
- Community Ed Advisory Board

The Kamps family was presented with a special award on Ron Kamps' behalf at the 2023 Celebration of Excellence to honor his lifetime of service to the Minnetonka School District. Previously, Kamps had been recognized in 2015 with the Ross McGlasson Award for his volunteer leadership and community involvement and in 2010 he was a recipient of the Minnetonka Schools Spinnaker Award for exemplifying volunteerism, community and serving the greater good. He was also the 2009 Minnetonka Community Education Volunteer of the Year and was awarded the City of Minnetonka's 2017 Reflections Award.

Kamps embodied the meaning of leadership and community, and his far-reaching involvement has made Minnetonka Schools and many other organizations stronger for families and youth.

Wagner encourages every person to learn from Kamps' example. "I think one of the things we should all do is strive to be more like Ron in our daily lives, to take all of the gifts that we've had and use them to give back to our incredible community."

# Onward Ever, Backwards Never

## The Class of 1953 Celebrates 70 Years of Fun, Friends and School Spirit

by Julia Srnec '23

This year marks the 70th anniversary of the first graduating class of Minnetonka High School. The class graduated in 1953 and had only spent one entire year as Minnetonka students, with one half of the class attending Excelsior High School, and the other half at Deephaven High School. Their class motto was "Onward Ever, Backwards Never."

When they started the school year, it was in a brand-new, still-under-construction high school. The two halves of the class had previously belonged to rival schools, and they had to find a way to come together for the sake of the school and future classes. The class of nearly 90 students was responsible for coming up with many of the names and themes that are still associated with the high school.

"With it being our first year, people were really working at being together as a class and getting to know each other. It was special," shared Lee (Reifenberger) Wurm '53. "The school was beautiful and brand new, so that was exciting, as well."

The students came up with the "Skippers" name and mascot for the District, named after the many sailboats and nautical activities already present in the Lake Minnetonka area. The names for the school newspaper, as well as the yearbook, "Breezes" and "Voyageur," were also selected around the same nautical theme by students in the class.

Jean (Henkelman) David '53 shared one piece of advice that she feels is still as relevant to today's high school students as it was for students in her class: "Aim high and hold your aim. You shouldn't be discouraged. Hitch your wagon to a star. Just follow your dreams. Even if you have a setback, never give up. Keep striving for all that you are capable of!"

The class of 1953 will be recognized at the 14<sup>th</sup> annual Alumni Awards Ceremony on Saturday, September 23, 2023 at Minnetonka High School. All alumni and friends are welcome to attend this free event. You can find event details and reserve your tickets at [minnetonkaschools.org/alumniawards](https://minnetonkaschools.org/alumniawards).







# Getting to Know Minnetonka's New Superintendent

by Daniel Campbell

The first thing that you should know about David Law, Minnetonka's new superintendent, is that he is not the kind of person who is happy to sit behind a desk all day long. He prefers to be in the middle of the action—whether that's dropping into a classroom to chat with first-graders, participating in community events such as Tour de Tonka, cheering the Skippers on to victory at the big Homecoming game or chatting with parents, community members and elected officials about his vision for the future of Minnetonka Public Schools. Given this, it's no wonder that the community has embraced Superintendent Law's authentic, relationship-driven leadership style. Let's take a look at some of the exciting things that he has been up to this year and how his vision for the future is already taking shape.

When Minnetonka's previous superintendent, Dr. Dennis Peterson, announced his retirement last school year, the Minnetonka School Board knew it had big shoes to fill. Dr. Peterson had led Minnetonka for more than two decades and was the longest-serving superintendent in the nation, having been a superintendent for more than 50 years. It was critical, then, to find a successor who could bring the exceptional leadership qualities Minnetonka needed and a passion for excellence. After an exhaustive state and national-level search, Law's name rose to the top of potential superintendent candidates. He accepted the Board's invitation and began his tenure as superintendent of Minnetonka Public Schools on July 1, 2022.

"We know that seating a new superintendent is a critical responsibility, and we took that very seriously as a school board," said Katie Becker, Minnetonka School Board Clerk and a member of the 2022 Superintendent Search Committee. "We are thrilled with how our search ended and feel we have the best possible person to lead our district forward while ensuring the excellence and innovation that defines Minnetonka Schools is preserved."

It's clear that Superintendent Law is a leader with the right kind of experience to build on Minnetonka's legacy of excellence. He's been a middle and high school mathematics teacher, an adjunct professor in organizational leadership and policy development, a middle school administrator, and the superintendent for Minnesota's largest school district, Anoka-Hennepin. He's served on numerous nonprofit boards and was named Minnesota Superintendent of the Year in 2020. It makes sense that Minnetonka Schools would be the perfect district for him to lead.

"It is my great honor to serve the students and families of Minnetonka Public Schools," said Superintendent Law. "This is a district that is well-established for its exceptional academics and for its innovation and comprehensive approach to child-centered excellence. It has been heartwarming to experience the wonderful welcome my family and I have received from so many staff, administrators, students, parents and community members. This is an incredible school district, and I am committed to maintaining the tradition of academic excellence and innovation."

Getting to know his new community was essential to Superintendent Law, who believes that strong relationships are the foundation of success. Throughout the school year, he has visited local senior citizen homes and conducted meetings with city senior citizen organizations to build connections to longtime residents of the District. He meets regularly with local mayors and has held outreach meetings with legislators to ensure the District's needs are being thought about by our local leaders and policy makers. He has met with past and current School Board members, Minnetonka Alumni Association Board members, District supporters, volunteers, Booster Store and booster club leaders and parent organizations.

Superintendent Law knew that it was critical to engage students and parents where they interacted with our District. He made it a priority to visit as many classrooms as he could over the course of the year, attended countless athletic games, participated in community education events and even launched an Instagram account, [@tonkasup](#). The latter has proven to be one of the most successful engagement tools for high school students and parents, garnering more than one thousand followers, thus far.

Each of these experiences has helped Superintendent Law get to know the community and better understand its needs and concerns. "The District is teeming with energy and opportunity for our students," said Superintendent Law. "Teaching staff are bringing their very best to the classroom each day. Students at all learning levels are pushing themselves to explore new challenges and work together inside and outside the classroom on academic projects, service projects and co-curriculars. And, our student athletes, musicians, actors and leaders are making their mark in their chosen activities. I am continuously impressed by what I see."

Interacting with so many different parts of the Minnetonka community also gave Superintendent Law a chance to share his vision for the future of Minnetonka Schools: Excellence in





*Ensuring student success is at the heart of Superintendent Law's vision for Minnetonka Public Schools. In his first year, he visited every school in the District multiple times and met with students, parents, teachers, staff and community members.*

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**"It has been heartwarming to experience the wonderful welcome my family and I have received from so many staff, administrators, students, 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, JD  
Superintendent of Minnetonka Public Schools*

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how we live, lead and learn. This philosophy has guided his actions and interactions with the school community and has helped to shape the work of Minnetonka's teachers, staff and administrators.

Excellence in living, Superintendent Law feels, means ensuring that students and staff have a balanced approach to their Minnetonka experience, with a focus on physical and mental well-being. It is intentional that this ties back to Minnetonka's School Board goals. "Our School Board continues to set goals for our District that are a roadmap for success," said Superintendent Law. "Our goal of Excellence in Well-being, Connection and Belonging remains key to creating and fostering an environment that ensures each student, each staff member and each family feels welcome, valued and encouraged."

Likewise, excellence in leadership ensures that those most responsible for fostering the growth and development of students are supported and given the tools they need to help students succeed, says Superintendent Law. "Our goal for Excellence in Leadership and Organizational Support means we take the trust placed in us seriously. We will continue to do all we can to provide an outstanding education for students, to rise to any challenges and embrace opportunities we encounter as leaders and to remain good stewards of our District's resources."



Excellence in learning has always been at the heart of a Minnetonka education, and while some things will be different under Superintendent Law's leadership, the focus on academic excellence will not change. "Our goal of Excellence in Student Learning and Support has charged us with evaluating all that we do to encourage and guide student growth and success and to unearth new opportunities to increase student support," said Superintendent Law. "Our commitment in this area is that we will continue to equip students with the tools and opportunities to excel and to reach their highest potential."

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**"It takes each of us to ensure our community's foundation is built on strong, trusting relationships. My commitment is that I will continue to seek ways to earn that trust."**

*- David Law, JD  
Superintendent of Minnetonka Public Schools*

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Superintendent Law's vision of excellence takes the community's historic embrace of excellence and achievement and broadens it to all facets of the Minnetonka experience. Looking back over the past year, these themes have already taken root and begun to blossom. "I've seen this play out across the District from the incredible school spirit, joy and energy displayed throughout the community to the collaborative and engaged teachers and students shaping the classroom and field experiences to the impressive outcomes that mark our students' achievements as they work toward their dreams," said Superintendent Law.

With an amazing first year behind him, what's next for Superintendent Law? He looks forward to deepening his connections with the community and encourages everyone who has been impacted by the District—past and present—to help him build on those relationships. "It takes each of us to ensure our community's foundation is built on strong, trusting relationships," said Superintendent Law. "My commitment is that I will continue to seek ways to earn that trust."



*Superintendent Law was introduced to the alumni community at the 13th Annual Alumni Awards Brunch on September 24, 2022. In his welcome remarks, he celebrated the partnership between Minnetonka Public Schools and the Minnetonka Alumni Association to celebrate the accomplishments of outstanding alumni each year during Homecoming weekend.*



*Superintendent Law presided over his first MHS graduation ceremony on June 8, 2023. He took pride in shaking the hands of nearly 900 new alumni and looks forward to sending off thousands more outstanding Minnetonka graduates in the years to come.*





### Letter from the President

Greetings, Alumni! I made it through my first year as President of the Minnetonka Alumni Association and my first year of retirement. Everyone counts the days until retirement, but I have to say it was more difficult going from 100mph to 10mph than I had thought.

There is a lot of news to share! We are making great progress on our goal of filling open Board positions. Email us at [alumni@minnetonkaschools.org](mailto:alumni@minnetonkaschools.org) if you would like to join. We welcomed new Board members: Matthew Andrews, PhD '95, Laura Forslev '85 and Brittany (Wittmers) Stuhr '00 and said goodbye to retired math teacher and basketball coach, Lynn Krafve, who stepped down this year. We also lost former Board member and alumni award recipient Nancy (Palmer) Countryman '59. You will be missed, Nancy.

As you know, we postponed the All-Class Reunion by two years, due to the COVID pandemic. **I am happy to announce that the new All-Class All-Friends reunion is coming next year on Saturday, July 27, 2024 in The Commons in Excelsior.** You

can read more about it on pages 22-23. Another upcoming event you don't want to miss is the Minnetonka Alumni Awards Brunch coming this fall on Saturday, September 23, 2023. It is an amazing award program honoring alumni and teachers. The event is one of my favorites, as the speeches and stories are incredible. Be sure to bring some Kleenex—you will need them! Go to [minnetonkaalumni.com](http://minnetonkaalumni.com) and update your contact information so you don't miss any of our communications.

I get asked all the time, "What does Minnetonka Alumni Association do with the money it raises?" We give it back to the kids! This year, we funded seven grants from teachers for a total of nearly \$5,000 and a photo booth for the 2023 Senior Class party. It is so gratifying to hear the teachers and students say, "Thank you!" Our Minnetonka Public School education may have been free, but there are many things teachers need that are not. I hope you will consider donating to help us make a difference.

Go Skippers!

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

Marietta Jacobsen '70, Minnetonka Alumni Association President

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### Meet the Minnetonka Alumni Association's Board of Directors



Meet the 2022-23 Minnetonka Alumni Association Board of Directors. Pictured: Bob Edmondson '73, Gail (Thacker) Ofstehage '68, Brittany (Wittmers) Stuhr '00, Dan Heiland '74, Scott Meriwether '68 (Treasurer), Marietta Jacobsen '70 (President), Lisa (Lund) Mayer '79 and Max Zinn '94. Not pictured: Matthew Andrews, PhD '95, Laura Forslev '85 (Secretary) and Karianna Lien '23 (Student Representative).



## 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 gave a total of \$4,962 to teachers this year, funding the following grants:

- 1. Best Buddies Club at Minnetonka High School** - The Best Buddies Club fosters one-to-one friendships between high school students with and without disabilities. The funds from this grant will provide for various events, such as bowling and dance parties.
- 2. Digital Pens** - This grant supports innovative ways to create visual work on iPads and web sources by funding a quality set of digital tools for student use. Enabling students to use digital pens will unleash their creativity and unlock their imaginations whether creating artwork, presentations, drawings or animations.
- 3. Classroom Globe** - This globe will be used as part of Minnewashta Elementary School's new science unit, Earth and Sun, to illustrate the effect of the earth rotating and revolving around the sun and during its social studies unit about continents, oceans and countries.
- 4. MHS Harbor Room Recumbent Bike** - This grant supports the purchase of a recumbent bike to be used by students with developmental and cognitive delay in the Harbor program at Minnetonka High School. The bike will provide sensory-motor input to increase self-regulation, attention and engagement in learning.
- 5. Minnetonka Community and Resource Night** - A team of Minnetonka Schools staff will organize a resource fair to connect underserved families and students to community and District resources. The event aims to give families access to resources and decrease barriers. This includes language barriers, computer access barriers and lack of knowledge of available resources such as food and transportation. The fair is expected to attract more than 500 attendees, primarily from lower-income families, English language learners and other traditionally underserved families. The fair will feature more than 45 community organizations that have expressed interest in participating. In addition to connecting families to resources and activities, this event will also foster a sense of belonging and connection within the school district and community for families.
- 6. Sonor SMART Series Xylophones** - This grant will purchase new xylophones for Clear Springs Elementary students. The SMART Xylophones sets are smaller than previous sets and easier for younger students to use and will replace step bells that have experienced heavy use.
- 7. Spanish Immersion Board Games** - This grant is for language-learning board games for use in 6th grade Spanish Immersion classrooms at MMW. Students have "Wednesday Fun Day" choice time each week and look forward to expanding options for fun and collaborative language learning. Board and card games are high-interest materials for students and allow them to engage with Spanish in a small-group setting.



*Alumni association board members show their support for Minnetonka's innovative teachers at the Minnetonka Public Schools Foundation 2023 Teacher Grant presentation ceremony. Pictured: Jennifer Kimball (Grant #6), Emily Swagel (Grant #2), Marietta Jacobsen '70, Anika Hodel (Grant #7), Michelle Makres (Grant #4), Stacy Edlaritch (Grant #1), Gail (Thacker) Ofstehage '68, Laura Forslev '85 and Scott Meriwether '68.*

View a list of all 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).



*ALL-CLASS ALL-FRIENDS*


# REUNION

Prepare for the Reimagined Return of Minnetonka's Biggest Alumni Event in 2024

by Daniel Campbell







In 2002, a group of dedicated alumni came together to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Minnetonka School District by holding the first-ever all-school and all-class reunion. More than 3,000 alumni turned out to reconnect with each other and their alma mater, enjoy music, dine on local food and drinks and make a gift in support of the Minnetonka School District and its dedicated teachers. Follow-up reunions were held every four years by the Minnetonka Alumni Association until the COVID pandemic forced a 2-year hiatus.

Now, for the first time since 2018, the Minnetonka Alumni Association is pleased to announce the return of Minnetonka's biggest alumni event on **Saturday, July 27, 2024!** But the All-Class Reunion isn't just coming back. With a new name and bigger scope, the All-Class All-Friends Reunion looks to be more fun—and raise more funds—than ever before.

"It started as a way to celebrate the school and classes across the generations," said Marietta Jacobsen '70, current president of the Minnetonka Alumni Association. "The vision for the All-Class was to connect people and to celebrate 50 years of history. People loved it. We held it every four years so there would be different individual classes each time who could do their own reunion on the Friday before or Sunday after the event."

But it wasn't just a party. The All-Class All-Friends Reunion has also been the largest fundraiser for the Minnetonka Alumni Association. Money raised at the event goes towards signature community events, such as the Alumni Awards Brunch, and funding teacher grants in the areas of fine arts, science & technology and student well-being through the Minnetonka Foundation, which helps to fulfill classroom needs across the District. See page 21 to read more about what the Minnetonka Alumni Association funded in 2023.

The sixth Minnetonka All-Class All-Friends Reunion is set to once again take place in Commons Park on Lake Street in Excelsior. Admission will now be free and

the event will be open to all graduates of Minnetonka High School, Excelsior High School and Deephaven High School, as well as non-graduates who attended those high schools for at least one year, and all present and former members of the faculty, administration, school board and community members who live in or have a connection to Minnetonka Public Schools.

Details are still being finalized, but next year's All-Class All-Friends Reunion will have some exciting new features to watch for. There will be new music, more local food trucks and beverage options and special collaborations with current MHS students. There will also be more giving opportunities, exclusive alumni merchandise and exciting games, all with the goal of raising record-breaking funds to support the Minnetonka School District.

In addition to offering tours of Minnetonka High School, attendees will get to visit the new VANTAGE/MOMENTUM Building, located across from Clear Springs Elementary School. This state-of-the-art facility will house the VANTAGE Professional Studies Program, which just celebrated its 10th anniversary (read more about VANTAGE on page 3), and the MOMENTUM Design and Skilled Trades Program, which is launching its innovative new aviation program during the 2023-24 school year.

While there are still countless hours of work ahead of the Minnetonka Alumni Association to prepare for next year's All-Class All-Friends Reunion, excitement is in the air. "Each time we host an All-Class Reunion, we learn things," said Jacobsen. "I'm excited that we are able to plan such a fun event for more than 70 graduating classes. We are so ready to party together with you again!"

Visit [minnetonkaschools.org/reunion](https://minnetonkaschools.org/reunion) to keep up to date on the latest All-Class All-Friends Reunion information. Additional details will be added to the website as the event gets closer. Interested in helping to plan or volunteer? Send an email to [alumni@minnetonkaschools.org](mailto:alumni@minnetonkaschools.org).





# MOLLY BETH (OBSATZ) GRIFFIN '01

*Distinguished Alumni Award* by Julia Srnec '23

**Molly Beth Griffin '01** has a passion for writing and creativity. She is the author of 15 books for children and young adults and mentor to other writers in the Twin Cities. Throughout her career, Griffin has always found joy in her community of fellow writers and strives to live a life trying new things.

Griffin connects her passion for writing back to her interests in high school. As a student, she always felt connected to the English courses she took. They helped develop her skills in reading and writing and she feels deeply grateful to her teachers for sparking her passion for telling stories. Griffin was also a part of the Minnetonka Theatre program's tech crew and sang in the school concert choir. These experiences showed her the joy of making art collaboratively.

Griffin received her BA in English from Grinnell College. She moved back to Minnesota after graduation and began an internship at a local publishing house. Eventually, she enrolled in Hamline University's writing for children and young adults MFA program. While she was there, she received her first book contract and her debut book, *Silhouette of a Sparrow*, was published shortly after graduation.

Since then, Griffin has continued to write, critique manuscripts, mentor and teach. She has published books in a wide variety of genres, and recently finished a draft of a new middle grade novel. Her books often feature strong female protagonists, non-traditional families and LGBTQ+ storylines. She currently teaches at The Loft in downtown Minneapolis and hosts the Picture Book Salon, a community gathering for children's authors.

"I am very proud of the work I've done in this community of writers," said Griffin. "I get to help people nurture their own creativity and craft their writing into the stories they want and need to tell. Sometimes I get to see those stories become books. And some of those books are helping to change the landscape of publishing toward more accurate and authentic representation—authors are sharing their own stories, and kids are seeing themselves on the page, sometimes for the first time. What an amazing thing!"

Griffin lives with her partner and two children in Minneapolis and sees her family as her greatest inspiration. It's one of the reasons why making diverse stories and expanding the types of literary representation available to kids is so important to her and her work.

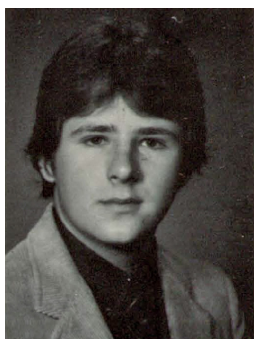


"Living in a queer family with an autistic son has made me very passionate about our need for all kinds of stories, and for those stories to be available to all families," she said. "I am grateful to those who are working every day to ensure that the kids they serve have access to the books they need."

In addition to writing, Griffin expresses her creativity in a wide variety of ways, such as drawing, playing the piano, photography and baking. Her advice to current Minnetonka students is to do the same, even if they are unsure of what their interests are.

"Try everything. Do whatever sounds fun to you, even if you think you might not be any good at it. If you want to write, try writing a mystery or a romance or an alphabet book or a sonnet or a short story about aliens. Make all kinds of stuff and you will learn so much by doing it. High school is a wonderful time to get in the habit of making things, being bad at things, getting better at things and figuring out what brings you joy."





# DR. ALLAN SONSTEBY '83

## *Distinguished Alumni Award*

by Ming Wei Yeoh '24

**Dr. Allan Sonstebly '83** is dedicated to increasing the security of our nation through science, technology, mentorship and education. Through his work on research projects with the Navy, Air Force and NATO, as well as his pioneering efforts to enrich science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education and training, Dr. Sonstebly has combined his passion for STEM with a firm commitment to the progress of the country.

The environment at MHS played a major role in fostering Sonstebly's early interest in STEM and his decision to pursue a career in electrical engineering. "My experience at MHS was excellent preparation for college in a rigorous STEM field, and my transition to college was seamless," said Sonstebly. "Minnetonka prepared me very well."

Sonstebly worked in applied research as a practicing engineer before completing his PhD at Pennsylvania State, where he also had the unique opportunity to lead a project in the university's Applied Research Laboratory. In 2001, he was asked to serve as the chief scientist for a part of the U.S. Navy that was developing cyber technologies.

Throughout his diverse and rewarding career, Sonstebly has held positions that have helped make strides in STEM development and strengthen national security, from serving as the chairperson for two successive NATO research and technology panels to being appointed by the White House to serve on the Air Force Scientific Advisory Board. Sonstebly is also a founding trustee of the Intelligence and National Security Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to developing the next generation workforce that will help secure the nation.

"Science, innovation and discovery have enabled the U.S. to maintain a global advantage. Investment in fundamental science and discovery is integral to economic growth and development as well as to national security," shared Sonstebly. "My career, whether in the private sector, government or leading a large laboratory, has always been focused on ensuring our nation's global advantage and security."

Now, as the Executive Director of the Applied Research Laboratory at Pennsylvania State, Sonstebly continues to perform research on critical issues. He leads a team of highly skilled scientists and engineers in this process, as well as a number of students.



He is especially proud of the laboratory's S.O.A.R. (Student Opportunities in Applied Research) summer outreach program. Now in its 26th year, the program reaches out to minority-serving institutions and provides exceptional students with a 10-week intensive summer internship, where they have the opportunity to work alongside world-class scientists and engineers.

Sonstebly encourages current MHS students to pursue their passions, embrace new experiences, stay focused on their goals and take care of themselves and their loved ones.

His advice to new graduates? "Minnetonka High School has provided you with an excellent foundation, and now it is time to explore your interests and pursue what you love and build upon that foundation. Always listen for opportunity knocking. Continually build and maintain strong relationships throughout your life as you move forward. As I reflect on my time at Minnetonka High School 40 years ago, it does not seem that long ago. Treasure every moment. Life is a gift."



# MINNETONKA *Alumni Awards*

*Congratulations to all 2023 Alumni Award Honorees!*

You are invited to attend the 14<sup>th</sup> annual Alumni Awards Brunch on Saturday, September 23, 2023 at Minnetonka High School. Get event details and reserve your free tickets at [www.minnetonkaschools.org/alumniawards](http://www.minnetonkaschools.org/alumniawards)



Distinguished Alumni Award  
**Molly Beth (Obsatz) Griffin '01**

Molly is a celebrated author of Children's and Young Adult literature. Her extensive library of work features strong female protagonists, non-traditional families and LGBTQ+ storylines.



Distinguished Alumni Award  
**Dr. Allan Sonsteby '83**

Allan is the executive director of Penn State's Applied Research Laboratory. Throughout his career, he has sought opportunities to increase the security of our nation through science, technology, mentorship and education.



Distinguished Service Award  
**Rogene (Hanson) Meriwether '76**

Rogene joined Minnetonka High School in 2001. As the school's nurse, she navigated everything from sprained ankles to the COVID-19 pandemic during her 20 years of service.



Young Alumni Achievement Award  
**Alana Aamodt '14**

Alana founded Momentix Toys to provide children with diverse learning experiences through hands-on play. Her unique toys allow them to practice STEM skills by creating chain reaction (i.e. Rube Goldberg) machines.



Young Alumni Achievement Award  
**Timothy Dawson '08**

Tim has helped foster an incredibly impactful partnership for the VANTAGE program through his work at The Bluebird Group. He has recruited guest instructors and mentors, sponsored a project and created internships and scholarships.



Skippers Hall of Fame  
**Leslie (Wilcox) Johnson '92**

A multi-sport athlete her freshman year, Leslie quickly discovered her passion for swimming. By her senior year she had become captain of the girls swimming and diving team, came in first at State in multiple categories and broke two school records.



Faculty Hall of Fame  
**Earl Christ (Posthumous Honoree)**

Earl taught physical education for more than 30 years at Deephaven High School (before the Minnetonka School District was formed) and at Minnetonka High School. He was also an outstanding basketball coach, winning the District's first state championship in 1965.



Faculty Hall of Fame  
**David Gartner**

Dave began coaching the Alpine Ski Team in 2017 when his youngest daughter, Piper, was a senior. He planned to retire after his daughter graduated, but his love of the sport and the energy of the nearly 60 skiers convinced him to stay.



# Ahoy, Minnetonka!

**Introducing Minnetonka's Newest Way to Share What's Happening in Our Community**

by Daniel Campbell



*Superintendent David Law and guests Freya Schirmacher (Principal of Minnetonka Middle School West), Mary Cornelius (District Communications Specialist) and Lucy Hiller (Minnetonka High School Class of 2023 Graduate) share stories about the power of celebration in Minnetonka Schools on the second episode of the Ahoy, Minnetonka! podcast.*

This spring, Minnetonka Schools launched *Ahoy, Minnetonka!*, the District's new podcast. Listeners can tune in to learn about the many amazing programs, resources and people that make Minnetonka Schools such a unique place.

Each episode features Superintendent David Law leading deep conversations with the many people who make Minnetonka Schools one of the best public school districts in the nation—teachers, students, parents, principals, volunteers, alumni, School Board members, staff and administrators from across the District.

This podcast isn't just for current families. Superintendent Law encourages all members of the Minnetonka Community—past, present and future—to listen in. "The *Ahoy, Minnetonka!* podcast features many of the incredible things happening in

the Minnetonka School District. I invite you to join me through this series of podcasts to meet all of the people that play a role in making Minnetonka school history. Together, we'll learn the stories and talk through the ways we all work together to pursue excellence in the ways we live lead and learn," said Superintendent Law.

In the first few episodes, Superintendent Law discussed topics ranging from stories of excellence to annual celebrations, the ways MHS has innovated to create signature experiences and all the ways our community can stay involved over the summer.

You can find episodes of *Ahoy, Minnetonka!* on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, YouTube or wherever you listen. To learn more, visit [minnetonkaschools.org/ahoy](https://minnetonkaschools.org/ahoy).



The Alumni Magazine is pleased to feature updates from Minnetonka graduates. The Class Notes included in this issue were submitted between August 1, 2022 and June 26, 2023.

**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](mailto:alumni@minnetonkaschools.org) or submit it online at [minnetonkaalumni.com](http://minnetonkaalumni.com).

## 1950s

### 1952

Excelsior High School's Class of 1952 gathered at Hazelwood's Grill in September 2022 to celebrate its 70th reunion. Of the original 58 graduates, 20 are still in regular contact.

### 1957

The Class of '57 celebrated its 55 Year Reunion in August 2022 at Lake Ann Park in Chanhassen, MN.

### 1958

Norma (Wanek) Baker was the keynote speaker at the 2022 high school commencement for Marjorie Wendland High School in Siaya, Kenya. She received a Distinguished Alumni Award from the University of Minnesota College of Education and Human Development in 2012 for her leadership of youth internationally.

## 1960s

### 1960

Lois Arnold-DeWitt is an artist, art instructor and author. She works at Carolina Beach State Park Visitor's Center where many of her drawings and paintings are displayed. She is the author of a cookbook,



*Pop It In The Toaster Oven* and has her own YouTube channel, *Palate to Palette*, featuring cooking and art lessons. Lois lives in Wilmington, NC.

### 1962

William Woodley loves to get together with his classmates. He has his doctorate in veterinary medicine and practiced for 42 years before retiring. William lives with his wife, Jan, in Tacoma, WA. They have two children and three granddaughters.

Karen (Robideau) Anderson celebrated 55 years of marriage in June.

### 1964

Richard "Doc" Quain was recognized for founding the Minnetonka Millers baseball team in 1976. Their home field is Veterans Stadium at Minnetonka High School.

## 1970s

### 1971

Todd Thompson is enjoying life as a full-time realtor with his wife, Nancy. They live in Kingsburg, CA and have two grown children.

Joan Marie Verba's new novel, *Summoned by Dragons*, comes out later this year.

## 1980s

### 1981

Minnetonka teacher and alumna Kathy (Sevey) Larson was proud to serve in the color guard for her daughter's graduation. Natalie Larson '23 will be attending the University of Minnesota this fall.





## 1986

Jeff Renlund is a PE teacher at Excelsior Elementary and a cross country/track coach at Minnetonka High School. In 2021, he was selected to be the Class AAA Boys Minnesota State Cross Country Coaches Association Coach of the Year. He also coached last year's state individual cross country champion, Nick Gilles '23, who was the first to achieve this level of recognition in school history.

## 1988

Nancy (Schmelzle) Weiman retired from the St. Louis Park Fire Department in December 2022 after more than 26 years. Nancy and husband, Ted, also celebrated three graduations in 2022. Their youngest daughter, Victoria, graduated from high school. Their youngest son, Carter, graduated from technical college as a machinist, and their other daughter, Cecelia, graduated from college and is applying to medical school. Their oldest son is an accountant in Boston, MA.

# 1990s

## 1992

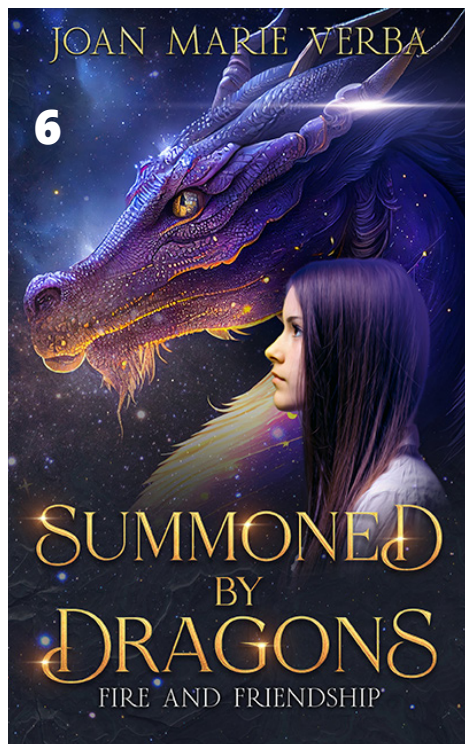
Karsta Hurd spent 20 years as a K-12 educator. Recently, she began pursuing a career as an author and speaker. Her first book, *She is an Overcomer*, came out in September and became an international best seller within 24-hours.

Jessica (Whiteman) Maher was elected as a District Court Judge in the First Judicial District of Minnesota. She is chambered in Glencoe, MN.

## 1998

Kyle Fransdal retired from the US Air Force after 21 years of service. He will begin his new career as a pilot with Jet Blue this summer. Kyle resides with his wife, Elizabeth (Follese) Fransdal '99, in Medford, NJ.

1. Class of 1952 Reunion
2. Class of 1957 Reunion (Women)
3. Class of 1957 Reunion (Men)
4. Norma (Wanek) Baker '58
5. Todd Tompson '71
6. Joan Marie Verba '71
7. Kyle Fransdal '98
8. Nancy (Schmelzle) Weiman '88





## 2000s

### 2004

Tyler Gustafson and his wife, Jessica, opened up a franchise of Discover Strength fitness studio in Wayzata, MN. Tyler began working with Luke Carlson, founder of Discover Strength, when Luke was the strength trainer at Minnetonka High School.

## 2010s

### 2010

Emily (Hamberg) Casebeer married Jacob on August 13, 2022 in Belle Plaine, Minnesota. The couple recently bought a house in Chanhassen, Minnesota.

### 2012

Anna (Benke) Blasey graduated from North Dakota State University in 2016 with her BS in nursing. In 2020, she earned her MSN nurse educator from the University of Mary, Bismarck, ND. In August 2022, Anna accepted a full-time position at her alma mater, NDSU, as assistant professor of nursing practice. She lives in Moorhead with her husband, Brian, and son, Lincoln.

### 2013

Megan Pavlisich is engaged, and the couple is expecting their first child.

### 2014

John Buresh will be appearing as a suitor on this upcoming season of the tv show *The Bachelorette*.

Hunter Hoaglund recently started a golf business based out of Plymouth called Go Low Golf, which offers custom club fitting, club customization, repair and golf lessons.

### 2017

Matt Wilkinson won the Big Ten championship in the 3,000 meter steeplechase and the 5,000 meter run at Indiana University this spring, leading the University of Minnesota team to place second. At the USATF National Championships, he finished sixth in the country in the 3,000 meter steeplechase.

### 2019

Astrid Liden was selected as a 2022 U.S. Rhodes Scholar. Astrid graduated from Columbia University, majoring in political science and Latin American & Caribbean studies, and will complete the MS in refugee and forced migration studies at Oxford. The U.S. Rhodes Scholarship provides 32 students each year with funding to pursue graduate studies at the University of Oxford.

## 2020s

### 2020

Jelena Zbiljic made history with the Minnesota Aurora, Minnesota's new pre-professional women's soccer team. Up until the final championship game, the Aurora progressed throughout its inaugural season undefeated. Jelena is currently a junior attending the University of Illinois Chicago. She plans to continue playing pre-professionally while pursuing her studies in kinesiology.



**9.** Emily (Hamberg) Casebeer '10

**10.** Astrid Liden '19

**11.** Jelena Zbiljic '20



## In Memoriam

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

### Alumni

Elaine (Greenwald) Frees '43  
Mary Jane (Peterson) McInerny '44  
Max Bromell '51  
Marlys (Roust) Werdick '53  
Donald Koch '54  
Charlotte (Ost) Englund '55  
Patricia (Swanson) Axel '56  
Elizabeth (Tallakson) Davenport '56  
Darleen (Taylor) Ellingson '56  
Susan Nelson '56  
Robert Thompson '56  
Patricia (Henkelman) Tancredo '57  
Richard Arbogast '58  
Keith Blatzheim '59  
Nancy (Palm) Countryman '59  
Brian Gammon '60  
Thomas Tallakson '60  
Grayle Leech '62  
Roberta Fontaine '63

Thomas Larson '63  
John Purdy '63  
Richard Thompson '64  
Russell Lundquist '65  
Susan Peterson '65  
Suzanne (Burglund) Berg '66  
Stephen Hoyle '66  
Tim Lovaasen '66  
Mike Collins '67  
Gloria (Jenkins) Vermef '67  
Scott Peters '67  
Geoffrey Mayo '69  
Pat Low '70  
Douglas Anderson '73  
Terri (Quaill) Hauge '73  
Peggy (Kalgren) Isker '73  
Anne Maple '75  
Deborah (Peters) Stephans '75  
Frank Svoboda '75  
Jack Simmonds '80  
Tom Edward Larson '82

Kelly (Haakonson) Pankratz '85  
Mark Hagen '88  
John Michael '89  
Randall Helling '18  
Nathaniel Stratton '20  
Layla Julien '22

### Teachers, Staff and Friends of Minnetonka Public Schools

John Hruby  
Ron Kamps  
Jim Netland  
Dr. Dale Rusch  
Karen Ryding  
Beverly Sikorski



# GIVE A GIFT. MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

Make a direct and lasting impact on future generations of Skippers. Your tax-deductible donation will support fine arts, science and technology and student well-being programs in Minnetonka Schools and events for the alumni community.

Visit [minnetonkaschools.org/alumnigiving](https://minnetonkaschools.org/alumnigiving) or email the Minnetonka Alumni Association at [Alumni@minnetonkaschools.org](mailto:Alumni@minnetonkaschools.org) to find out how you can support your alma mater and make a difference!

**SCAN &  
DONATE  
TODAY!**





## 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](http://www.minnetonkaschools.org/alumni-events).

Know of a reunion that should be added to the calendar? Email [alumni@minnetonkaschools.org](mailto:alumni@minnetonkaschools.org).

### 2023

- July 14 - Class of 1963, 60-Year Reunion
- July 14-16 - Class of 1983, 40-Year Reunion
- July 22 - Class of 1968, 55-Year Reunion
- July 29 - Class of 1973, 50-Year Reunion
- August 5 - Class of 1964, 59-Year Reunion
- August 5 - Tour de Tonka, Minnetonka Community Education
- September 22 - Homecoming Parade and Game
- September 23 - 2023 Alumni Awards Event  
*Reserve your free tickets at [minnetonkaschools.org/alumniawards](http://minnetonkaschools.org/alumniawards)*
- September 23 - Class of 1953, 70-Year Reunion
- September 24 - Fall de Tonka, Minnetonka Community Education
- November-December - Minnetonka Theatre Performances  
*Purchase tickets at [minnetonkatheatre.com](http://minnetonkatheatre.com)*

### 2024

- January 31- Deadline for 2024 Alumni Awards  
*Submit a nomination at [minnetonkaschools.org/alumniawards](http://minnetonkaschools.org/alumniawards)*
- February 3 - Dream Makers, Minnetonka Foundation fundraiser
- April-May - Minnetonka Theatre Performances  
*Get more information and tickets at [minnetonkatheatre.com](http://minnetonkatheatre.com)*
- May 18 - Tonka Youth Tri, Minnetonka Community Education
- July 26 - Class of 1970 54-Year Reunion
- July 26 - Class of 1974 50-Year Reunion
- July 26 - Class of 2004 20-Year Reunion
- July 27 - All-Class All-Friends Reunion
- July 27 - Class of 1959, 65-Year Reunion
- TBD - Class of 2014, 10-Year Reunion  
*Contact Madeline Scott '14 at [madeline.margaret.scott@gmail.com](mailto:madeline.margaret.scott@gmail.com) to join the planning committee.*

### FREE ATHLETICS PASS FOR DISTRICT RESIDENTS 65+

District residents 65 years and older can receive a free lifetime pass to District-sponsored student performances and athletic events held on District property where royalties are not involved. The pass is not valid for theatre productions or sectional/state contests. The pass is nontransferable and valid only for the person to whom the pass was issued. For more information, contact Carrie Voeltz, executive assistant to the Superintendent, at [carrie.voeltz@minnetonkaschools.org](mailto:carrie.voeltz@minnetonkaschools.org).

## MINNETONKA FAST FACTS



Minnetonka High School was ranked 5th best high school in the state by U.S. News & World Report.



In 2023, Niche.com ranked Minnetonka Public Schools #2 in Best School District, #2 in Best Teachers, #4 Best High School and #4 in Best Places to Teach among public schools in Minnesota.



A record-setting 37 Minnetonka High School seniors have been named 2023 National Merit Semifinalists.



The District is recognized for the 10th year in a row as one of the best communities in the nation for music education by the NAMM Foundation.



### Living, Leading & Learning *With Excellence!*



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

Welcome back, Skippers! I hope you enjoyed reading Volume 14 of the *Minnetonka Alumni Magazine*. This year's theme—living, leading and learning with excellence—takes inspiration from Superintendent Law's vision for the future. Let's start there, then, and learn a bit more about how he has worked to get to know our community and put his own spin on the Minnetonka tradition of excellence.

In our cover story, "Getting to Know Minnetonka's New Superintendent," you'll discover an inside look at how Superintendent Law has been building connections across the Minnetonka community, from classroom visits with Kindergartners to setting regular meetings

with mayors and state legislators. And, even though it's only been a year since he started, he is already making a positive change for the District by connecting the theme of "excellence in how we live, lead and learn" to the School Board's goals. If you want to get to know Superintendent Law even better, I invite you to check out his new podcast series *Ahoy, Minnetonka!*, available wherever you listen.

With leaders like that, it's no wonder that Minnetonka Schools does a great job of inspiring our students to work hard and achieve, and we hope that they carry that passion with them for the rest of their lives. It's something that I thought about a lot both personally and when choosing stories for this issue.

As a parent, excellence in living, leading and learning isn't just about my job—it's about being a good parent for my son. Making time to play and laugh with him despite a busy work schedule. Setting a good example for him by helping others. And, ensuring that he learns not only his ABCs, but also how important it is to live a life of kindness and empathy. You only have to read a few of this year's stories to see that it's a lesson Minnetonka Schools does an amazing job of teaching. Most of our alumni features end, intentionally, with advice for current students and young alumni. Invariably, there is an emphasis on well-being and the positive effects of giving back.

This focus on the whole student, in turn, creates great leaders. You only have to look at some of the amazing alumni and community leaders featured in this magazine to see that value in practice. From fine arts to community service to governmental research - these alumni are blazing trails that future generations of Skippers are sure to follow.

First up is a feature on Christine Heesum Hwang '17, who stars as Éponine in the new national tour of *Les Misérables*. She credits her teachers for inspiring her to pursue theatre and took the time to share some advice for our current fine art students.

I also had the pleasure of interviewing Scott Artley '05, an artist and disability advocate. He talked to me about his struggles as a queer disabled artist, unsure of how to get the resources he needed to excel. Now, as the Accessibility Program Director of the Metropolitan Regional Arts Council, he works to equip others who are facing similar challenges to get the tools and knowledge to flourish.

In "Remembering Ron," we look back at the life and impact that one man had on countless students. Ron Kamps was not an alumni, but he was a District parent and one of Minnetonka's biggest supporters. He was a volunteer, a leader, a fundraiser and a mentor. I had the privilege of working with him from time to time and can tell you that he truly led with sincerity and kindness.

You cannot talk about Minnetonka without putting learning front and center. This year marks 10 years since the launch of VANTAGE, Minnetonka's advanced professional studies program. For more than a decade this course has been providing students with hands-on, real-world experiences with businesses, organizing field trips across the country and bringing in mentors who are leaders in their respective fields. With a new building due to be completed next school year, there is no doubt that the impact of these experiences will grow.

Before I go, I have to remind you to save the date for the All-Class All-Friends Reunion on Saturday, July 27, 2024. After a two-year delay, Minnetonka's biggest alumni event will be back next summer and promises to be better than ever. There will be new tour opportunities, student performances, music and—for the first time ever—it will be open to the whole Minnetonka Schools community! I hope to see many of you there next summer!

Until next time, Skippers, keep living, leading and learning with excellence!

Wishing you all the best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Daniel Campbell".





MINNETONKA  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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

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

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# SAVE THE DATE

## Saturday, July 27, 2024

*The Minnetonka Alumni Association Presents the 6th*

# All-Class All-Friends Reunion

**Food ★ Music ★ Fun ★ Tours of MHS**

The Minnetonka Alumni Association's biggest get-together is back and better than ever! Make plans to attend this FREE event to connect with more than 70 years of alumni, teachers and friends in the community. There will be music, exclusive alumni gear and a chance to dine on outstanding local food and beverages!

Donations received at the All-Class All-Friends Reunion help fund grants given annually to Minnetonka teachers and allow us to host future community-building events. Join us to give back while having a great time!

**Learn more at [www.minnetonkaalumni.com](http://www.minnetonkaalumni.com)**

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