

# SP TLIGHT

## Benefits of being busy

By Sara Frederick

There aren't many days that Stephen Schwartz doesn't have something to do. Schwartz, a junior at West High School, is involved in as many clubs, activities and sports as he can be.

He plays hockey and lacrosse; as a sophomore, he was one of the captains for the varsity lacrosse team. He's a student leader in Project 4 Teens (P4T), and he's on both Link Crew and Student Council, among other activities.

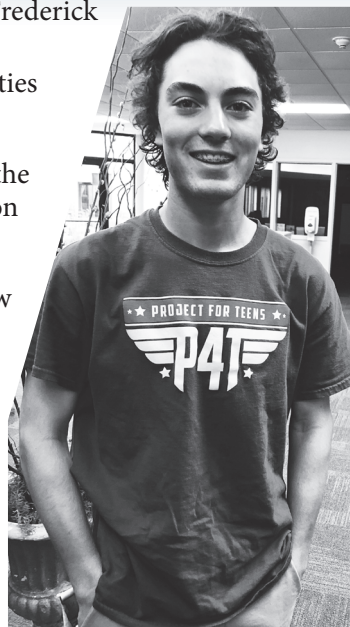
"Every time you get involved in something, you meet new people, develop new interests and make new friends," Schwartz says. "And when you get involved in things, you develop a stronger support system, too."

He admits that sometimes his schedule gets a little too full. When that happens, however, he knows which choices are the most important to make.

"I know when I need to buckle down and get homework done," he says. "If I keep up with that, then I also know I'll have time for things like Project for Teens."

Being busy has helped him learn how to manage his time and to understand the importance of working hard. "I've got to work hard if I'm going to succeed," he says. "But there's also fun in the things I'm doing, so there's a balance to it."

Schwartz is known as a student who is friendly and values getting along with others. "I try to say hi to everyone I see," he says.



One of Stephen Schwartz's many school-related activities is P4T, an organization that promotes healthy relationships.

## Keeping them on their toes

By Sara Frederick

As head custodian at Eagle Lake Elementary School, Terry Peterson is responsible for keeping the building and grounds clean and in good working order. He takes pride in making sure that's done well every day.

"I like everything done," he says. "When the public comes in and comments on how clean and organized everything is, that means a lot to me."

But then there's his other responsibility, which he also takes quite seriously: Keeping all of the students in the school "on their toes," as he says.

"I have a lot of fun with the kids," Peterson says. "I give them a hard time about this and that—and of course, they give it right back to me."

Getting to know the students is part of what he loves about his work. He appreciates that many of them want to help him out—the fifth graders collect the recycling every week, for example. He also enjoys the notes that

they leave for him in his mailbox. "They'll come down the hall and say thank you to me," he says. "It's fun to get to know them from being unsure and quiet in kindergarten until they get through fifth grade here."

Kory Kath, principal at Eagle Lake Elementary School, says that Peterson's role is critical to the success of the school.



Terry Peterson has been the head custodian at Eagle Lake Elementary School for the past 12 years.

"What Terry does is really promote the importance of having a space that is looking its best and ready for learning to take place each day," Kath says. "And the pride he takes in his work becomes infectious; it makes the students want to help keep it clean and ready for learning too."

"He's amazing," Kath adds. "Terry's such a critical part of our community here."

## Prairie Winds Middle School student sets example for peers

By Shelly Miller

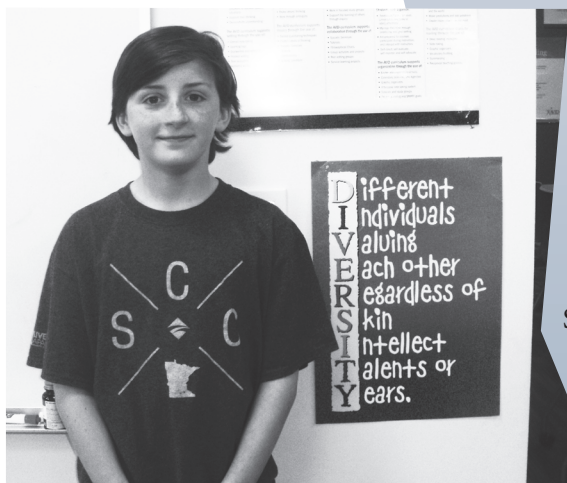
At Prairie Winds Middle School, student Cole Javens lets his actions do the talking. A confident, hard-working student who dares himself and others to be themselves even if that means being different.

"I try to have as much fun as I can and don't try to blend in," Javens says. "Many kids don't like to be the only ones doing something because they stand out, but I try and show that it is okay to be yourself."

Stephen Rustad, principal at Prairie Winds Middle School, agrees. "Cole is a courageous and confident kid that is not afraid to be himself," Rustad says. "He brings value to his peers with his positive attitude and willingness to show his individual style."

Javens says laughter is the best medicine. "I like to have fun with my friends and try to make them laugh," Javens says. "Laughter is always good."

At school, Javens loves math. In his free time, he enjoys gymnastics, scouts, jazz choir and cross-country running.



Cole Javens

## Proactive paraprofessional

By Sara Frederick

In her eight years as a paraprofessional at Dakota Meadows Middle School, Karla Boone has built relationships with hundreds of students. Now, as a success coach, she uses those relationships to help students solve problems and be more successful in school.

It's a role perfectly suited to Boone, according to Principal Carmen Strahan.

"She has such an ease when it comes to building relationships with students," Strahan says. "Students really feel comfortable coming

to her, asking for her opinion and working with her. She makes every moment a teaching moment."

Boone enjoys being able to help students process difficult situations before they escalate into bigger problems. "The key is to be proactive rather than reactive," she says. "You want to keep it positive and build a relationship with the kids who need that. We're trying to help them understand empathy and process a situation. These are really life lessons we're teaching them, and this is a good age to be learning that."

Boone says that she has a special fondness for middle school students. "They're flexible and want to learn," she says. "It's the little moments to appreciate."



Karla Boone is one of three success coaches at Dakota Meadows Middle School.