

Spotlight

Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan Public Schools



DISTRICT196

One District. Infinite Possibilities.

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At District 196, the sky's the limit. That's because our committed team of educators is dedicated to helping learners explore the outer limits of their vast potential.

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Apple Valley High wins national STEM Excellence Award

Apple Valley High School received the 2019 STEM Excellence Award in the high school category at the national Future of Education Technology Conference in Orlando Jan. 30. The award recognizes schools for their innovative approaches to implementing science, technology, engineering and math education.

"This is tremendous recognition for our school and our program," said teacher **Jim Lynch**, who oversees Apple Valley's E3 STEM program. "It affirms the work we are doing and the opportunities we are providing students to explore STEM learning and career possibilities."

In 2014, District 196 received nearly \$3 million through a federal YouthConnect grant from the U.S. departments of education and labor. The grant supported the establishment of the E3 STEM program, focusing on exploration, education and employment. Through partnerships with businesses and colleges, the program

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Pursuing Infinite Possibilities: Emily Jewell, Class of 2013

(Editor's Note: In District 196, the sky's the limit. That's because our committed team of educators is dedicated to helping learners explore the outer limits of their vast potential. We are nationally recognized for providing students with boundless opportunities to learn and grow. This is the first of a new regular Spotlight feature that will highlight District 196 graduates who are "Pursuing Infinite Possibilities.")

Eastview High School 2013 graduate **Emily Jewell** is quickly making a name for herself in aeronautics and astronautics. She was recently named to the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics' (AIAA) top 20 list of emerging leaders.

From her days at Greenleaf Elementary School, through her formative years at Falcon Ridge Middle School and Eastview, Emily has always had a passion for science, technology, engineering and math. She graduated with honors from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and during her undergraduate years was a founding member of the Engineering Physics Student Advisory Executive Committee and volunteered for STEM activities. She is now a full-time student at Stanford University, where she is studying for masters and doctorate degrees in aeronautics and astronautics.

Emily is working toward her dream of developing a deep space exploration craft to send people and scientific probes far into outer space.

"I am focusing my research on computational methods for space exploration," she said. "I've presented at two international conferences and have one journal paper submission for my research in the field of structural dynamics."

The recognition from AIAA is hardly the first for Emily, who has more than 25 awards and scholarships from national organizations, the University of Wisconsin and local education institutions.

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Young hero recognized

Advait Nandikotkur, a fifth-grade student at Glacier Hills Elementary School of Arts and Science, waved to the crowd during the Jan. 7 School Board meeting, where he was recognized for saving a man from drowning. Advait and his family were at their apartment pool in Eagan Dec. 30 when someone noticed a man at the bottom of the deep end. Advait dove in and brought the 34-year-old man to the surface, where family members lifted him out of the pool and performed CPR. The man made a full recovery thanks to Advait's life-saving efforts.



Infinite Possibilities

District 196 is nationally recognized for providing boundless opportunities in which students can learn and grow. Whether they have an affinity for academics, arts or athletics, our goal is to expose students to the infinite possibilities within the district and throughout our communities. Together, we encourage them each day to pursue excellence as they experience their exciting journey along the road of life.

Spotlight Newsletter

This quarterly publication is mailed to every household in District 196 to inform parents and other residents about district news.

Send comments on **Spotlight** to tony.taschner@district196.org.

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The Director of Human Resources, Tom Pederstuen (651-423-7859 - tom.pederstuen@district196.org) has been designated to respond to employment-related inquiries regarding the non-discrimination policies including Title IX. The Director of Elementary Education, Sally Soliday (651-423-7782 - sally.soliday@district196.org) and the Director of Secondary Education, Dr. Mark Parr (651-423-7712 - mark.parr@district196.org) have been designated to respond to student-related inquiries regarding the non-discrimination policies including Title IX. The Director of Special Education, Mary Kreger (651-423-7629 - mary.kreger@district196.org) has been designated to respond to inquiries concerning the rights of a student with a disability (504 Coordinator). The mailing address for all directors is 3455 153rd Street W, Rosemount, MN 55068.



Apple Valley High School teachers (from left) **Drew McCluskey**, **Jim Lynch** and **Chris Lee** accepted the STEM Excellence Award on behalf of the school at the Future of Education Technology Conference Jan. 30 in Orlando.

STEM Excellence Award << from front page >>

has expanded students' opportunities for hands-on learning and exposure to career pathways in STEM-related fields. Students are able to earn college credits in some of their coursework and experience real-world learning through internships with business partners like SFM Mutual, Thomson Reuters and Uponor.

The grant also funded creation of Apple Valley's fabrication lab, or "fab lab," which has equipment and machines that give students the ability to design and make almost anything they can imagine.

"The fab lab has played a key role in helping us establish our 'STEM for All' philosophy by integrating its use into an increasing number of our courses," Lynch said. "Learning becomes so much more authentic when students can design and produce products that can be used by others in the real world."

The fab lab and the school's commitment to providing opportunities for all students were main factors in the judges' decision to select Apple Valley for the STEM Excellence Award. Over the last four years, Apple Valley has become a thriving STEM-focused school, and with the support of the YouthConnect grant, has provided access for all students and increased participation in programs that prepare them for success in the 21st century workplace.

"What E3 STEM helped me and other students achieve is incredible," said Apple Valley senior **Serena Abraham**. "The combination of guidance and opportunities to explore different career fields has made me a more well-rounded student overall. With the support system in place, I can make the transition from high school to college and beyond with confidence."

Join the District 196 team and make a difference for students

District 196 has immediate job opportunities for quality individuals who enjoy working with children. Available jobs include substitute teachers, paraprofessionals, nurses and custodians, as well as bus drivers and food service associates. For more information and to apply online, go to District196.org and click on the red "Quick Links" circle in the top right, then select "Employment."

Friday visits provide evidence of learning, engagement and growth toward achievement goals

By **Mary M. Kreger**, superintendent

One of the highlights of being superintendent is having the opportunity to visit our schools to experience the energy in our classrooms and the excitement of students learning new things, growing in confidence and pursuing their infinite possibilities.

This year, I have been making regular visits to schools on Friday afternoons, accompanied by members of our School Board. On any given Friday, we find students and staff fully engaged in their work and proud to share their learning with us. In one kindergarten classroom, the students were excited to tell us about their work on "ethnographies," descriptions of human cultures. They divided into small groups and led us around the classroom to show us the artifacts of their learning.

On another Friday, a class of fourth graders shared the memoirs they were writing and explained their writing process with us. One of the students told us he is a proponent of year-round school and showed us the presentation he was creating to support his reasoning. In another class, students taught us how to write computer code to maneuver their robots.

During our visits to our middle schools, we've heard the sweet sounds of young musicians singing and playing instruments; we learned about Native American history in Minnesota from a class that was studying the topic, and we listened to a group of students working together on their iPads and discussing how to determine if a source of information was credible.

Our high school students are in a category of their own. We've had in-depth discussions with them about what matters most in their learning and how we can improve their

experience at school. Repeatedly, they've told us about the importance of relationships and the value of knowing their teachers care about them as a person, as well as a student.

These Friday afternoon visits have affirmed our confidence in our system, the commitment of our teachers and staff, and the capabilities of our students. They provide the anecdotal evidence that we have a positive culture of learning throughout our district.

District 196 is a truly amazing school district. We pride ourselves on our "Triple-A" philosophy of offering opportunities for all students in academics, the arts and athletics. We know it is important for all students to experience challenges, success and growth. We know students need to feel connected and belonging in their school community. And we know that each teacher makes a difference for every student, every day.

We also know that we still have work to do to achieve our goals as a district and our mission of educating each child to reach their full potential.

To that end, our teachers are constantly engaged in their own learning to ensure they have the knowledge and skills to teach the content. New learning in the areas of cultural proficiency, technology and social-emotional learning are supporting student achievement. We are all learners in a system that recognizes and applauds learning.

We are committed to building a system that holds high expectations for all students. Inquiry based learning, student independence, constructivist learning and problem solving grounded in cultural proficiency provides the foundation to meet the



Visiting a kindergarten classroom at Glacier Hills Elementary School of Arts and Science.

needs of our diverse student body.

With acceleration being the goal, we are able to challenge students labeled as gifted while also supporting the learning of students who may struggle with basic concepts. We also focus on students in the academic middle and the opportunities they need to grow educationally. With a student-centered curriculum and pedagogy, we believe we will see student growth at all levels.

I will continue to monitor our progress toward these goals first-hand during our regular Friday visits to our award-winning District 196 schools!



Mary M. Kreger

Legislative priorities focus on increased state funding in critical budget-setting session

Increased state funding for education is the top priority for District 196 in the 2019 session of the Minnesota Legislature that began in January.

Members of the district's Legislative Advisory Council (LAC) developed the priorities, with input from members of the Budget Advisory Council, and the School Board approved them in December. LAC and School Board members have been advocating for the priorities in meetings with local legislators, chairs of the Senate and House education committees, and representatives from the Governor's Office.

This is a critical budgeting year for Minnesota schools. The Legislature's actions during the 2019 session will determine state funding for education for the next two years.

District 196 is making \$7 million in budget adjustments for next school year due to years of inadequate funding from the state (*see related article on p.6*). The cuts will mean larger class sizes, less support for students and increased fees for families. Without a significant increase in funding the next two years, District 196 will face the need for additional cuts to staffing and programs that would further reduce support for students.

The state has majority responsibility to adequately fund public schools, but state lawmakers have failed to fulfill this Constitutional duty, putting at risk Minnesota's future prosperity and ability to compete in the global economy, the district's priorities document reads. Increases for basic education averaged less than 1 percent per year in the first half of this decade and the unfunded portion of special education costs continues to grow. As a result, school districts across the state are in a revolving cycle of cutting staff and programs, then asking voters to increase local taxes to prevent further cuts. With the completion of each cycle, the level of service goes down while the needs of students continue to increase.

On behalf of the 29,000 students and 155,000 residents of District 196, the School Board and LAC members believe the Legislature should establish stable funding solutions for Minnesota schools by taking the actions listed below during the 2019 budget-setting session.

✓ **Increase basic education funding by 4 percent per year**

The general education formula allowance is the single biggest source of revenue Minnesota school districts receive. Since 2003, the difference between the actual and inflation-adjusted general education formula allowance has grown to \$618 per pupil. If the formula had kept pace with inflation, District 196 would be receiving an additional \$19 million in state aid this year.

✓ **Increase special education funding to reduce unfunded costs**

The state and federal governments mandate special education services but fund just 59 percent of what it actually cost District 196 to deliver those services last year. The other 41 percent in unfunded special education costs, known as the "cross-subsidy," were paid for out of the district's general fund. In fiscal year 2018, the special education cross-subsidy was \$700 million statewide and \$29 million in District 196 alone.

✓ **Treat homeowners fairly by increasing equalization aid**

State equalization aid helps balance the impact of school taxes for homeowners in school districts that have less commercial/industrial property wealth, like District 196, with those that have greater property wealth. However, factors used to calculate equalization aid have not kept pace with the growth in property values over time and no longer provide the intended level of equalization or taxpayer fairness. With increasing reliance on local property taxes to adequately fund schools, state lawmakers should increase the equalizing factors for referendum, debt service and lease levies, and index these factors to keep pace with inflation.



The graphic features a large, stylized number '196' in red and white on the left. To the right, on a dark grey background, is a green circular button with the text 'Sign Up Today!'. Below this, the text 'District 196 Legislative Link:' is written in large white font, followed by 'Your connection to the Minnesota Legislature' in a smaller orange font. At the bottom, the website 'www.district196.org/advocacy' is listed in white.

In February, the LAC launched Legislative Link to provide timely information and alerts to residents and staff throughout the session. You can sign up to receive the Legislative Link emails on the front page of the district website at www.district196.org/advocacy.

Magnuson re-elected School Board chairperson

Jackie Magnuson was elected School Board chairperson for 2019 at the board's annual organization meeting in January. This is Magnuson's 12th year as chairperson during her 30 years on the board.

Also re-elected to officer positions this year are **Joel Albright** as vice chairperson, **Sachin Isaacs** as clerk and **Art Coulson** as treasurer. The board also approved assignments to board committees and organizations on which the School Board is represented.

In January, Magnuson was recognized for her 30 years of service on the District 196 School Board during the Minnesota School Boards Association Leadership Conference in Minneapolis. Board member **Bob Schutte** was also recognized at the conference for his 26 years on the board. The seven School Board members have a combined 113 years of service, including Albright (15 years), Isaacs (2 years),



School Board Chairperson **Jackie Magnuson** was recognized for her 30 years of service on the board in January. She is pictured with **Kirk Schneidawind**, executive director of the Minnesota School Boards Association.

Coulson (11 years), **Mike Roseen** (28 years) and **Craig Angrimson** (1 year).

Graduate Spotlight: Emily Jewell, Class of 2013 << from front page >>

Stats

A 2013 graduate of Eastview High School; earned a B.S. in engineering mechanics (distinguished scholar) and mathematics from the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and is pursuing a M.S. and Ph.D in aeronautics and astronautics at Stanford University.

Fun fact

"I recently went backpacking across Europe, Ecuador and Australia/New Zealand. I've also hiked to glaciers on four continents; the highest was above 16,500 feet."

How did District 196 prepare you for life after high school?

"The best skills that District 196 gave me for life after high school was that life is what you make it. I was involved in lots of activities, everything from musicals and Destination Imagination and marching band, to math team, Science Olympiad and varsity athletics. I learned from a young age that the possibilities were endless if I had

the strength, courage, motivation and determination to pursue them."

Which District 196 teachers made the biggest difference in your education?

"**Mr. Haugh** at Eastview High School has had a tremendous influence on my life. He set an example not only as an educator, but also for being an amazing person that I aspire to emulate through actions of good and helping others. He made math fun and his teaching encouraged me to double major in mathematics. **Mrs. Hoffman** at Falcon Ridge helped me begin my accelerated math pursuits and recognize there does not need to be a gender divide in STEM. I personally feel having an amazing female STEM role model makes a big difference for girls pursuing the field. I could honestly list nearly every teacher I ever had in District 196 because so many were passionate about their job as an academic educator, but also as a life educator."

District maintains high 'capture rate' among resident students

More than 86 percent of school-aged children who live in District 196 are attending District 196 schools this year, according to student enrollment and census data maintained by the district.

There were 32,840 students in kindergarten through grade 12 living in District 196 when the district's official enrollment report was calculated in October. Of those children, 28,394 are attending District 196 schools this year, giving the district an 86.5-percent "capture rate" among resident students. Anything over 80 percent is considered high for school districts in the Twin Cities metropolitan area, according to former state demographer **Hazel Reinhardt** of Hazel Reinhardt Consulting. She said capture rate is a reflection on the quality of local public schools, as well as the presence of charter schools, nonpublic schools and other educational alternatives in the area.

Of the less than 14 percent of school-aged children who live in District 196 but do not attend District 196 schools, approximately 7 percent are homeschooled or attend a traditional nonpublic school and the remaining students attend charter schools or public schools in another district. Students who open enroll into the district are not included when calculating capture rate.

Budget information available online

Budget information for the 2018-19 school year and previous nine years is available on the Finance Department page of the district website at District196.org. The final budget for 2018-19 includes an introductory section that summarizes the district budget in user-friendly language and graphs.

Board approves \$7M in budget adjustments

The School Board approved \$7 million in budget adjustments for the 2019-20 school year at its Feb. 11 meeting to begin to address a projected \$25 million budget shortfall over the next three years. The shortfall is the result of years of inadequate funding from the state.

The approved adjustments include \$3.4 million in staffing reductions (46.41 full-time equivalent positions), \$1.2 million in non-staffing cuts and \$2.5 million in revenue enhancements.

Revenue enhancements include use of \$2.3 million from a trust established by the board in 2009 to pay for retiree benefits. Director of Finance and Operations **Mark Stotts** said the fund has performed well enough to support a one-time withdrawal that will not affect employees' retiree benefits.

The budget adjustments were developed by a committee that began meeting in September. Input from focus group meetings in early December confirmed the committee's goals of minimizing cuts to the classroom and not eliminating any programs before giving voters an opportunity to increase local funding in a levy referendum election that may be brought by the board in November 2019.

Without significant increases in funding over the next two years, the district could be facing another \$18 million in budget adjustments for the 2020-21 and 2021-22 school years.

The general education formula allowance, the single biggest source of revenue for Minnesota school districts, has not kept pace with inflation since 2003. If it had, District 196 would be receiving an additional \$19 million in state funding this school year. In addition, unfunded special education costs topped \$700 million statewide last year and were \$29 million in District 196 alone.

For a detailed list of the budget adjustments, go to www.district196.org/budgetadjustments.



Let's do lunch

New Coordinator of Food and Nutrition Services **Spencer Fischer** had lunch with some of his customers at Rosemount Elementary School Feb. 5. "I am passionate about preparing nutritious and great-tasting food options for students, and making sure they are well fed and ready to learn," said Fischer, who was previously the assistant director of nutrition services for Eastern Carver County Schools. He started with the district in December.

Board approves levy for payable 2019 property taxes

In December, the School Board approved the 2018 (payable 2019) property tax levy of \$95.3 million, an increase of \$4.3 million or 4.8 percent over the current year's levy.

The biggest reason for the increase is the annual inflationary increase the district receives on the 10-year operating levy approved by voters in 2013.

The Minnesota Department of Education calculates the maximum levy limitation for each public school district in the state. The School Board approved a preliminary levy at the maximum amount in September. In November, Dakota County mailed notices to all property owners showing estimated taxes for their city, the county, school district and other taxing agencies.

The total value of all property in District 196 increased by 7.1 percent over last year to \$16.7 billion. Payable 2019 property taxes will be spread

across this total valuation.

The value of the average home in District 196 rose from \$277,000 last year to \$298,665 this year, an increase of 7.8 percent. School taxes on last year's average-value home will decrease by 1.9 percent, if there was no increase in the assessed value of the home. If the assessed value of last year's average-value home increased to the current district average, school taxes on that property will increase by approximately 6.2 percent or \$81 for the year.

Local property taxes represent approximately 20 percent of the revenues District 196 will receive this year. The other sources are state aids and credits (61 percent), federal aid (4 percent) and the remaining 15 percent from other sources such as self-insurance, gifts, donations and miscellaneous revenues such as food service fees, activity fees and admissions.



Eagan High School seniors **Jason Scheller** (left) and **Ayush Patel** won the state championship in public forum debate. They were recognized at the Feb. 11 School Board meeting along with their coach, **Chris McDonald**.

Two Eagan High School seniors are state debate champions

Two Eagan High School students won championships and 10 other District 196 students advanced to the elimination rounds of the state debate tournament in January.

Eagan seniors **Ayush Patel** and **Jason Scheller** won the state championship in public forum debate. They defeated a team from Edina in the quarterfinals, then topped Eastview High School senior **Harika Thota** and junior **Nikhil Kapur** in the semifinal round to advance to the championship, where they defeated a team from St. Paul Academy and Summit School. Patel and Scheller, who fell in the quarterfinal round of last year's state tournament, argued the affirmative that the United States should prioritize reducing the federal debt over promoting economic growth. Eastview seniors **Siddharth Addagudi** and **Rohin Alapati** advanced to the quarterfinal round in public forum debate.

In congressional debate, Eagan senior **Grant Davis** finished state runner-up, Eastview sophomore **Layla Foster** finished in fifth place and Apple Valley High School senior **Abby Brachio** took sixth place. In congressional debate, students debate a variety of legislative bills and resolutions.

In policy debate, sophomore **Anika Jackson** and junior **Charlie Huang** of Rosemount High School advanced to the semifinal round before they were defeated by the state runners-up from Edina. In Lincoln-Douglas debate, Apple Valley senior **Brandon Schellhaass** advanced to the quarterfinals.

Twenty-two District 196 students qualified for and competed at this year's state debate tournament.

Rosemount head debate coach **Cort Sylvester** was named 2019 Coach of the Year and Eastview assistant coach **Zachary Prax** received the 2019 James Graupner Distinguished Service Award from the Minnesota Debate Teachers Association. The other head debate coaches in District 196 are **Scott Voss** at Apple Valley, **Chris McDonald** at Eagan and **Todd Hering** at Eastview.

This was the 118th annual state debate tournament, the longest-running event of the Minnesota State High School League.

Four magnet schools earn national honors

Four elementary magnet schools in District 196 have been selected for recognition by Magnet Schools of America.



Cedar Park Elementary STEM School, Diamond Path Elementary School of International Studies and Glacier Hills Elementary School of Arts and Science are three of 106 magnet schools in the nation selected to receive a 2019 School of Excellence Award. In addition, Echo Park Elementary School of Leadership, Engineering and Technology was named a 2019 School of Distinction.

Magnet Schools of America advocates for high-quality instructional programs that promote choice, equity, diversity and academic excellence for all students. The awards recognize magnet schools that show a commitment to high academic standards, curriculum innovation, successful desegregation/diversity efforts, specialized teaching staffs, and parent and community involvement. To be considered for an award, schools must submit an application that is scored by a panel of educators based on their demonstrated ability to raise student academic achievement, promote racial and socioeconomic diversity, provide integrated curriculum and instruction, and create strong family and community partnerships that enhance the school's magnet theme.

Cedar Park, Diamond Path and Glacier Hills have received these awards in previous years. This is the first time for Echo Park, which converted to a magnet school in 2016 along with Oak Ridge Elementary School of Leadership, Environmental and Health Sciences.

For more information about the district's magnet schools, go to www.district196.org/magnetschools/.

Career development classes are training next generation of medical professionals

It's not every day that students walk out of **Leigh Anderson's** class at Rosemount High School looking like extras from a disaster film, but it's all in the name of education. The art of "moulaging," or applying fake wounds, is just one of the unique learning experiences for students in Anderson's emergency services class.

Emergency services is one of several medical and health care careers classes that are offered through the district's Career Development and Enrichment Opportunities Program. The 18 career development classes, ranging from animal science to vehicle services, are offered at one high school but are open to students at all District 196 high schools.

About 20 years ago, Anderson, a Rosemount firefighter/EMT, and **Patti Drew**, a District 196 biology and chemistry teacher, started a forensic science unit after seeing a growing number of students entering the public health and safety field. Soon after, they recruited educator-turned-registered diagnostic medical sonographer **Judy Kilgore** to add the health care piece.

The emergency and health care career fields are some of the fastest growing industries and the demand for workers continues to rise. As students begin exploring careers earlier in high



Leigh Anderson applies a fake wound to a student during his emergency services course.



Educator **Judy Kilgore** shows students how to mold muscles onto a skeleton during an anatomy lesson at Rosemount High School.

school, Anderson said the program is important in helping them decide if the health care field is – and in some cases, may not be – right for them. The elective attracts all types of students, from those interested in pursuing a career in medical or public safety to those who are getting their first exposure.

"Everything we teach is used in the career field today," Anderson said. "We have national standards that we must adhere to when teaching our program. We have the same expectations for our students as a college professor or medical professional."

It starts with a firm understanding of the sciences behind the careers. Students get lessons in biology, chemistry, anatomy and physiology. They learn about the human body and the intricacies of the organs and ligaments. Kilgore said one of the best tests of a student's grasp of the content is molding muscles onto skeletons.

The program gives students the opportunity to go beyond their textbooks and experience what it's truly like in the field. The forensic science students often invite speakers to share more about their professions. They've heard from lawyers, law enforcement officials, an Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms agent and the

Hennepin County medical examiner.

"The exposure piece of this is critical to helping students see that this isn't just what you see on television, but what it really takes to be in this profession," Kilgore said.

Similarly, students in the medical and health care courses take regular field trips to hospitals and clinics, and shadow professionals for a more up-close-and-personal experience. Back on school grounds, they also have access to an ambulance, which was donated several years ago. They use it to run mock drills, work with instruments and immerse themselves in an environment that mirrors the real world.

Many of the career development courses offer students the opportunity to earn college credits and certifications. Both emergency services courses prepare them to take the exams required to be a certified EMS first responder or emergency medical technician.

"Whether or not students decide to go into a medical or forensics career, they have had the experience that makes them appreciate that education," Drew added. "And what's more, is they leave this class with a better understanding of how challenging those jobs are, but also how important those jobs are."

SES students are familiar participants at international climate conference

For two weeks in early December, the United Nations held its 24th annual Conference of the Parties (COP) in Katowice, Poland to discuss the framework for addressing climate change. The event featured diplomatic leaders, government officials and environmental experts from around the world, along with nine students from the School of Environmental Studies (SES).

This is the ninth year juniors and seniors from SES have attended the conference, during which officials discussed the current state of the world's climate and how countries can take steps toward greener practices.

Principal **Lauren Trainer** said SES is the only American school to have official observer status with the U.N., allowing students to attend the conference. Students had to go through an interview process with SES teachers and pass a climate change and policy course to be considered for the trip. The students selected to attend were **Isabel Gustafson, Kira Buck, Jozie Burns, Abby Helke, McKenna Krey, Mikayla Samlaska, Maddy Lavan, Lily Trainer** and **Carly Zielinski**. They split into two groups so each could have a week to attend the conference and a week to explore the area.

"It was really interesting to see how everything we do affects our climate," said Zielinski, a senior. "We often think of how we as humans can impact our climate, but it was eye-opening to see how animals and sports and even how people make their livelihood can affect our world."

Sessions throughout the week offered a variety of topics related to weather, climate and national and global policies. Students were able to tailor their experience to match their interests. Lavan, a senior who aspires to work in human rights and advocacy, said she attended many seminars focused on how climate affects culture and sustainability.

"In a lot of cultures, the climate can impact peoples' financial well-being,"



Students from the School of Environmental Science attended the 24th annual Conference of the Parties in Katowice, Poland to observe and participate in conversations about global climate change. Pictured, from left, are **Lily Trainer, Maddy Lavan, Carly Zielinski, Abby Helke, Isabel Gustafson** and **Kira Buck**.

she said. "For some, gathering water is critical to their operation and critical to their survival. But with rising temperatures, water in those regions is evaporating and creating inconsistent weather patterns."

Zielinski, who wants to explore a career in climatology, took part in sessions that looked at how sports can have an impact on the globe. "I was surprised to see just how much the Olympics takes a toll on our climate," she said. "A lot of land experiences harsh change as a result of building the venues."

Students also attended a press conference facilitated by former U.S. Vice President **Al Gore**, who talked

about new climate data and shared how nations can work together to create bipartisan policies. Throughout the two weeks, students said the participants reached the same conclusion that addressing the long-term stability of the world has to be a collaborative effort.

"I am very proud of these young women," Principal Trainer said. "Not only did they ask to be part of the conversation, they also took personal responsibility to be change-makers. Our curriculum at SES really lends itself to them attending an event like this. And they've really stepped up into a leadership position where they can make a difference."

Pinewood will offer full-day gifted classrooms in 2019-20

Pinewood Community Elementary School will continue to offer full-day classrooms for students identified as gifted and talented (GT) learners in grades 3, 4 and 5 in the 2019-20 school year, if enough students are enrolled in each grade.

The program offers a rigorous curriculum in all subjects. Principal **Cris Town** says the program allows GT students to accelerate their learning by having deeper conversations with

other GT students and pursuing their areas of interest.

Enrollment for students entering grades 3 and 5 this fall is available on a first-come, first-served basis. Grade 4 is currently full, but a waitlist is available for interested families. Transportation is not provided for students who enroll through a transfer. For more information, call 651-683-6980.

Five middle school teams win engineering awards for their Future City designs

Two teams of District 196 middle school students had top-five finishes and five teams won special awards at the Minnesota Future City regional competition in January.

Sponsored by the National Engineers Week Foundation, Future City is a national, project-based learning experience where middle school students imagine, research, design and build cities of the future that showcase their solutions to a citywide sustainability issue. This year's theme is Powering Our Future! Teams were tasked with designing a resilient power grid for their future city that can withstand and quickly recover from the impacts of a natural disaster.

Students work as a team with a teacher and engineer mentor to design their virtual city using SimCity software. They also research and write a 1,500-word essay about their city, build a tabletop scale model with recycled materials, develop a project plan and make a presentation to judges at the regional competition. Regional winners represent their region at the national finals held in Washington, D.C.

each February.

The Sin Kuren No Toshi team from Scott Highlands Middle School took third place and won the award for Most Environmentally Friendly Power Source. Members of the team are **Meris Catchings, Kyle Eull, Vik Murali, Elisabeth Nielsen, Alana Wick and Claire Wick**. Teacher **Theresa Back** is their advisor and 3M Engineer **Jim Kotsmith** served as their engineer mentor.

The Titan team from Black Hawk Middle School earned honorable mention, finishing in the top five, and won the award for Best Rail Infrastructure. Team members are **Chloe Breen, Tyler Burbey, Sam Cohen, Owen Ford, Carter Larson, Tia Rao and Thuy-Sa Truong**. Teacher **David Herem** is the advisor and **Russ Matthys**, director of Public Works for the city of Eagan, volunteered as the team's engineer mentor.

Team Kido Toshi of Valley Middle School of STEM won the People's Choice Award, given to the team whose model receives the most votes from teachers, mentors and

students participating in the competition. Members of the team are **Vinnie Bilotta, Martin Breaan, Wyatt Candella, Aidan Kuss, Logan Nelson, Kyle Olson and Axel Yust**. Teacher **Sheri Gedlinske** is the advisor and **Ben Reilly** of Drov Technologies was the team's engineer mentor.

Team Neptune from Rosemount Middle School won the award for Safe Drinking Water, awarded to the team that uses the most innovative methods to protect and provide safe drinking water. Members of the team are **Lilly Duckless, Summer Jensen, Ada VanderWiel, Hana VanderWiel and Sophie Vankeulen**. Teachers **Megan Lynsky and Alicia Dodge** are the advisors and **Steve VanderWiel** of IBM was the team's engineer mentor.

Team Le Meme Vivant from Scott Highlands won the award for Best Transportation System. Team members are **Zac Byers, Shamitha Jampana, Noah Kujawski, Prince Mohapatra, Amrit Sarangi, Jack Skare and Ava Vaillant**. Back is the advisor and Kotsmith was the mentor.



Members of the Sin Kuren No Toshi team from Scott Highlands Middle School posed with their model city at the regional Future City competition in January. The team took third place and won the award for Most Environmentally Friendly Power Source.

Program exposes African-American males to role models and career options

A local program is giving African-American teens in District 196 unique opportunities to explore careers in fields ranging from law enforcement and criminal justice to marketing and wildlife conservation. The African-American Male Mentorship Program is a core initiative of the Tazel Institute, which provides opportunities for students to interact with black males in different leadership roles.

Founder **Leon Tazel** started his namesake institute five years ago and launched the mentorship program in 2015. The program continued to grow and now includes students from all four District 196 high schools and two in St. Paul.

"It's really about exposing them to careers that they would never think of doing," Tazel said. "The key is having an African-American man out front to tell his story of how he got where he is. From there, the kids seem to grab onto this. This is our recipe for success."

Through his own full-time work in human resources, Tazel has made a number of connections with businesses and organizations around the state, providing students with a myriad of career paths to consider. By the end of the school year, the students will have visited Winona State University, Hennepin Health Care, Nexstar, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Twin



Leon Tazel (left) founded his male mentorship program to introduce African-American teens to men in leadership roles, like **Jeramie Strickland**, who is a wildlife biologist for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Cities Ecological Services Field Office, Mitchell Hamline School of Law and the Washington County Attorney's Office.

In October, about a dozen District 196 students joined their peers to hear from wildlife biologist **Jeramie Strickland**. A native of Chicago, Strickland told the students that his middle school counselor encouraged him to explore STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) courses. Strickland said he realized he had a knack for these subjects and would go on to win the school district and county science fairs. He developed his skills at Chicago High School for Agricultural Sciences and went on to earn a master's degree.

"Meeting these people and hearing their stories, it creates a tangible reality for our students," said **Will Finley**, Rosemount High School student assistant coordinator. "It makes it more real for them when they see the success that comes from hard work, commitment, sacrifice and making good choices."

Tazel said he envisions the program having a physical space to allow more students to benefit from these informal life lessons. "We are about educating and enriching the experiences of our future leaders through exposure," he said. "And when you combine the formal and the informal you're going to get the best well-rounded education. That's when it becomes more relevant."

Services available to district homeschool students

District 196 offers services to families who homeschool their children, including textbook reimbursement, shared-time courses for students in grade 5 (band only) and grades 6-12 (maximum of two courses per grading period), and participation in cocurricular activities.

For families who registered for textbook reimbursement for the 2018-19

school year, the deadline to submit requests is April 30. Students who wish to participate in shared-time courses must register at their attendance-area school by June 1. Students who wish to participate in cocurricular activities at their attendance-area school must register annually.

For more information on these services, call 651-423-7722.



With the help of a wildlife biologist, students banded birds before releasing them back into the wild.



Eagan High School Spanish teacher **José Martinez** (front row, far left) is helping students explore their culture through the study of language, history and social justice in his Spanish for Heritage Learners class.

New Spanish class empowers heritage learners to use their voices and explore culture

Spanish heritage students have been exploring their language, identities and culture through the newly-created Spanish heritage class offered at Eagan, Eastview and Rosemount high schools. The district's Spanish teachers developed the course to offer Latinx students a Spanish class that best serves them. (Latinx is a gender-neutral term for people of Latin American descent.)

Spanish for Heritage Learners facilitates development of the students' linguistic skills, exploration of cultural practices and study of Latinx history. The course provides a unique opportunity for students to validate their perspectives and showcase their voices as multilingual students.

Rosemount student **Mariely Rivera Cervantes** said the class teaches "about the culture and to learn to read and write better in Spanish." Although most students are fluent speakers, they may have limited experience reading and writing in Spanish. Building language proficiency in Spanish is a primary goal for these heritage learners, and the course

develops these literacy skills by teaching language through culture, history and social justice lenses.

"I like this class because I learn things about my culture that I didn't know before," said Eastview student **Sebastian Rivera-Arreguin**.

Students are eager to learn more about their own cultures, but the course also gives them the opportunity to learn about numerous other cultures within the Spanish-speaking world. Rosemount student **Abigail Mancha** said the class helps students feel "closer to our own culture through learning about our roots and language." This cultural and linguistic connection helps draw students closer

together and create a community within the classroom.

"We accept everyone," said **Dylan Chavarria Diaz**, a Rosemount student.

Several students in the class at Eagan say their teacher has created a very relaxed environment where they can connect and get help with problems they face in school and in society. They say they feel comfortable because they can speak freely in Spanish and show how they feel about their culture.

"We know that our voice should be taken into account and that we can be great global citizens," said Eagan student **Ángela Nieto Galicia**.

DID YOU KNOW?

During the 2017-18 school year, donations to the District 196 Foundation provided weekend food for 480 students and summer reading books for 787 students. The foundation seeks to double its impact this year and you can help. A \$215 donation provides a child with weekend food for a year and \$30 provides 10 summer reading books for a child. To make your tax-deductible donation, visit www.district196foundation.org or send a check payable to The District 196 Foundation, 15180 Canada Ave., Rosemount, MN 55068.

State tests provide important measures of student progress

The state tests students take each year provide a measure of their achievement and growth, as well as data the district uses to make decisions regarding curriculum and instruction. The tests are required by state law and students are encouraged to take them seriously and do their best.

Parents are encouraged to mark state testing dates on their calendars and help prepare their children to do well by making sure they get enough sleep the night before and a good breakfast each morning, especially on testing days.

Students in grades 3-8, 10 and 11 take the standards-based Minnesota

Comprehensive Assessments (MCAs) or an alternate assessment called the Minnesota Test of Academic Skills (MTAS) for students who receive special education services and meet eligibility requirements. The testing windows for the reading, math and science tests are listed below. Specific test dates for each school are available at www.District196.org/academics/assessment; click on State Required Testing Schedule for Schools.

MCA Reading and Math

- March 4–May 3 testing window

MCA Science

- March 4–May 10 testing window

Woodland recognized for STEM education and innovation

Woodland Elementary School is leading the way in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) learning. And efforts to enhance students' access to 21st century technology earned Woodland the 2019 STEM Innovation Award from the Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association.

Each year, the innovation award recognizes a Minnesota school taking creative approaches to provide STEM education. At Woodland, access to this curriculum is the foundation of their technology and STEM programming. Prior to implementing the program, Principal **Lisa Carlson** said she saw a need to make STEM coursework and enrichment opportunities more accessible to all students. She hired Technology and STEM Specialist **David Lostetter** and piloted an extended-day coding club, which sought students who struggled academically or qualified for targeted services.

"Traditionally, these students are less likely to be included in enrichment and regular extended-day programming," Carlson said. "In the coding club, they are given specialized instruction to develop confidence, persistence,

collaboration and critical-thinking skills."

Along with the coding club, Woodland teachers have embedded more STEM concepts into their daily curriculum. Students are engaging in more hands-on learning activities to address real-world problems.

"Students need to be able to see themselves as writers, mathematicians, scientists and engineers," Carlson said. "They do this through experiences that immerse them in the practice of these disciplines."

Now three years into the program, student achievement is on the rise, partnerships provide critical face-to-face opportunities and more students are aspiring to work in STEM-related fields.

"This award is so exciting because it is an opportunity to celebrate our school and the work that we are doing every day to give our students the best opportunity to learn and succeed," Lostetter said. "Our school staff is committed to providing our 21st century learners with the skills and experiences that they need to be successful both now and into the future."

Sixty students named to state honor choirs

Sixty District 196 students were selected by audition to participate in state honor choirs for grades 7-10 sponsored by the American Choral Directors' Association of Minnesota.

Twenty-six middle school students were part of the honor choirs for grades 7 and 8, which performed in November at St. Andrew's Church in Mahtomedi. They are: **Russell Forga, Amiya Bury, Samantha Rudoy and Angie Stapf** of Black Hawk Middle School; **Manjim Bhattacharyya** of Dakota Hills Middle School; **Noah Lomibao, Jean Jacques Ngando, Connor Halpin, Samuel Ngando and Leylah Boullos** of Falcon Ridge Middle School; **Zachary Byers, Austin Devnich, Ja'leel Hardemon, Jonah Langley, Samuel Thompson, Connor Dixon, Jayden Nyamorambo, Caroline Mroczenski, Roma Pedenko, Serafina Swanson and Melina Solorzano-Cruz** of Scott Highlands Middle School, and **Jayden Barsness, Oliver Jones, Eva Gordhamer, Nimisha Bora and Madelyn Mortinson** of Valley Middle School of STEM.

Thirty-four high school students were part of the honor choirs for grades 9 and 10, which performed Feb. 14 at Central Lutheran Church in Minneapolis. They are: **Evan Galchutt, Joshua Collins, Avery Marsyla, Frida Santos Castillo, Amira Oliver, Bete Collins, Kylie Hayes and Sarah Deboard** of Apple Valley High School; **Audrey Schwartz, Grace Park and Finn Wallace** of Eagan High School; **Sebastian Matte, Davey Wright-Walstrom, Jonah Hummel, Morgan Gallagher, Hanna Olson, Alexis Schulke, Brigid Coyne, Laura Schile, Brianna Barry, Svea Hagen, Cade Eliason and Tommy Wagner** of Eastview High School, and **Jackson Henry, Parker Foster, Alexander Nunez, Leon Williams, Henry Buck, Guyal Buckley, Dawit Gebremaryam, Nikolas Tosh, Joshua Cobian, Alexander Owens and Luke Sewpersaud** of Rosemount High School.

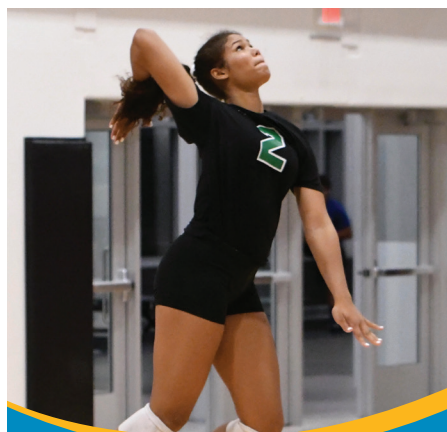
Congratulations!

A sampling of recent student and staff achievements in academics, arts and athletics

Eastview High School's broadcast, The Flash, is one of seven regional finalists in the Weekly Show category of the Student Television Network's (STN) Broadcast Excellence Awards program for 2018-19. The national winner will be announced March 29 at STN's national conference in Seattle. Students involved with The Flash include **Jake Brockman, Ian Carroll, Olivia Cuoco, Mateo Davis-Prinzing, Gabrielle Granger, Simeon Hill, Khai Hoang, Iqra Ismail, Sydney Lacher, Jillian Lamkins, Abigail Lindgren, Joey Mayer, Cara Miller, Emma Rae Roberts, Brady Schlaefter, Jon Singer, Jessica Trang, Tyler Tschida and Will Verduzco**.

Eastview High School multi-sport coach **Mark Tollefson** coached his 100th season this winter. For the last 33 years, Tollefson has coached girls' swimming in the fall, boys' swimming in the winter and boys' track and field in the spring. He has coached at Eagan, Sartell and Eastview high schools.

Mimi Le of Eastview High School was selected one of 16 Class AA recipients of the Excellence in Community, Education and Leadership (ExCEL) Award for the 2018-19 school year. Sponsored by the Minnesota State High School League, the ExCEL Awards recognize high school juniors who are active in fine arts and athletic activities, who demonstrate leadership qualities and who are model citizens in their community. Each high school in the state can nominate one junior boy and girl for the ExCEL Awards. Two recipients are selected from each of the eight competitive regions in the state for both Class A and AA schools. The other seven ExCEL nominees from District 196 are **Colton Bauer** and **Elianna Van Hulzen** of Apple Valley



State's best in volleyball

Eagan High School sophomore **Kennedi Orr** was selected the 2018-19 Gatorade Minnesota Volleyball Player of the Year in January. A setter and outside hitter, Orr amassed 411 assists, 380 kills and 230 digs this past season in helping lead Eagan to the Class AAA championship match.

High School; **Kayla Daniel** and **Max Meekin** of Eagan High School; **Sanat Iyer** of Eastview High School, and **Ellie Ackland** and **Jonathan Wise** of Rosemount High School.

Rob Graham, head coach of the Eagan High School girls' track and field team, was named the state Class AA Coach of the Year for 2018 by the Minnesota Track & Field Coaches' Association this winter.

Eight District 196 seniors were nominated for the Academics, Arts and Athletics (Triple A) Award for the 2018-19 school year. The Triple A goes to nominated seniors with a 3.0 or higher grade-point average who participate in athletic and fine arts programs, and exhibit exemplary citizenship and the highest standards of sportsmanship and conduct. Each high school in the state can nominate one senior boy and girl for the award. Section and state Triple A Award

recipients will be selected this spring from the list of nominees. The Triple A Award nominees from District 196 are **Anna Johnson-Taylor** and **Jonathan Connors** of Apple Valley High School; **Divya Mouli** and **Ayush Patel** of Eagan High School; **Anna Schumann** and **Ryan McClure** of Eastview High School, and **Abby Doran** and **Luke Labatte** of Rosemount High School.

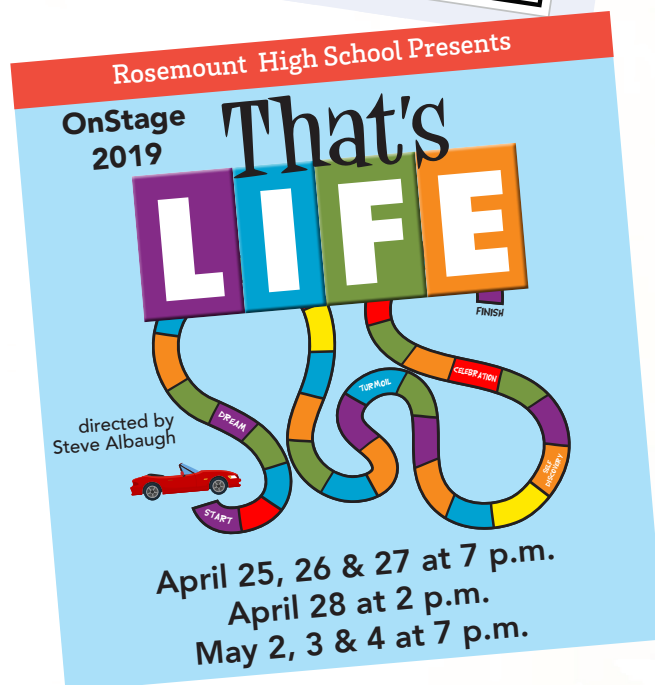
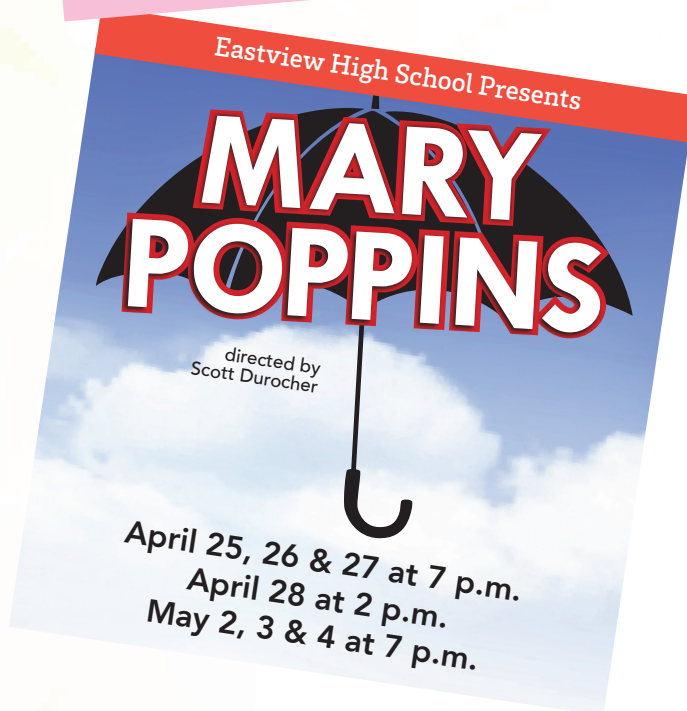
Eleven District 196 robotics teams qualified to compete at the Minnesota FIRST Tech Challenge state championship in early February, after this issue of *Spotlight* went to press. The qualifiers included one team from Dakota Hills Middle School (Tactical Tech Tomato Turtles), two from Apple Valley (Iron Maidens and NextGen), two from Eastview (Blue Lighting and Short Circuits) and six from Eagan (The Glorious Dweebs, Solid, Likwid, Confidential Robotics, Green Girls and Thunder Pengwins). Of the 48 state qualifiers, 10 teams were to be selected to advance to the FIRST Championship in Detroit in late April.

The Purple Circuits team from Dakota Hills Middle School qualified to compete at the Minnesota FIRST LEGO League state championship Feb. 23, after this issue of *Spotlight* went to press. Of the 48 state qualifiers, the top three teams were to be selected to advance to the FIRST Championship in Detroit in late April.

Steve Elliott of Eagan High School was named Class AAA Assistant Coach of the Year by the Minnesota Volleyball Coaches Association.



Laurie Herman, music teacher at Red Pine Elementary School, and **Tammy Morett**, a special education teacher at Woodland Elementary School, were among the 168 candidates from around the state nominated for 2019 Minnesota Teacher of the Year.



Upcoming high school concerts and performances

Apple Valley High

- Danceworks 2019, May 16, 17 & 18, 7 p.m.
- Band concert, May 23, 7 p.m.
- Choir pops concert, May 28, 7:30 p.m.

Eagan High

- Choir showcase concerts, March 4, 6 & 7:30 p.m.
- Band concerts, 9th grade, 6 p.m.; 10-12th grades, 7:30 p.m.
- Just Desserts, March 19, 7:30 p.m.
- Jazz concert, March 21, 7 p.m.

Eastview High

- Spring band concerts, March 4, 6 & 8 p.m.
- Spotlight speech showcase, March 6, 6:30 p.m.
- Choral showcase concerts, March 11, 6 & 7:30 p.m.

Rosemount High

- Choir concerts, March 12, 6 & 8 p.m.
- Choir concerts, May 30, 9th grade, 6 p.m.; 10-12th grades, 7:30 p.m.

School Board

Jackie Magnuson, chairperson
 Joel Albright, vice chairperson
 Sachin Isaacs, clerk
 Art Coulson, treasurer
 Craig Angrimson, director
 Mike Roseen, director
 Bob Schutte, director

Mary M. Kreger, superintendent
 Tony Taschner, communications director

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Community Education



Save the date! Bridge to School

Monday-Thursday | Aug. 12-15 | Mornings | \$77

Kindergarten is coming! Is your child enrolled in District 196 kindergarten this September? If so, you and your child are invited to participate in **Bridge to School**. Ease the transition into kindergarten and become familiar with your new school environment, teaching staff, classmates, routines of the day and riding the bus. Parents have the opportunity to join us for a portion of the first day. Space is limited. Visit www.district196.org/preschool for more information. **Watch for registration materials mailed to homes in April.**

Parent Night Out

A Guide to Laughing for

Modern Parents with Katy Smith, licensed parent educator and the 2011 Minnesota Teacher of the Year.

Friday | April 26 | 7-9 p.m.

FRMS | donations accepted and benefit Foundation for ECFS



Learn to swim in our middle school pools!

Learn to swim with our caring and dedicated instructors. They are Red Cross-trained to help you and/or your child enjoy developing swimming and water-safety skills in our positive learning environment. Swim lessons are offered for children ages six months and older, teens and adults. Register now for classes beginning March 31 and throughout the summer. Great value! \$82 for eight group lessons with five students or less per instructor. Visit www.district196.org/swim or call 952-431-8777.



Waffle breakfast fundraiser!

Enjoy an all-you-can-eat waffle meal served with sausage, fruit, and a beverage. Bring your family and invite a friend or two to join you for a delicious breakfast and help raise money to keep program costs down for Project Explore adults with disabilities.

Saturday | April 27 | 8:30 - 11:30 a.m. | \$9, \$5 ages 6-12, children 5 and younger eat free
 Messiah Lutheran Church, 16725 Highview Ave, Lakeville

Eight adult students train for a new career, you can too!

Adult Basic Education (ABE) is partnering with Goodwill-Easter Seals and Dakota County Technical College to offer electronics soldering technician training. Earn certification and gain skills and experience. Available at no cost to eligible adult students. For information call 651-379-5837 or email soldering@gesmn.org.

Monday-Friday | March 4-April 5 | 12:30-4:30 p.m. | skip March 25-29 | CVLC



Come one, come all! Spring Ahead with Community Ed!

Friday | March 15 | 6-8:30 p.m. | **Free!** | Black Hawk Middle School

See what we have in store for you! Swim and log roll, plant some seeds, putt like a pro, create a spring masterpiece and more! Food and beverages available for purchase. Proceeds benefit Community Education scholarships.