

Looking back
with admiration.

Looking forward
with anticipation.

2021
RETIREMENT
RECEPTION



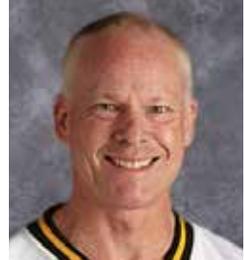
In Their Own Words

We invited this year's retirees to share some of their most memorable experiences and plans for retirement.

William Aamodt, 2006

Teacher, Burnsville High School

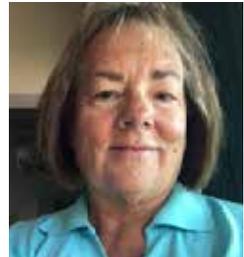
Bill has been serving students in District 191 for 15 years.



Trudy Allen, 1990

Teacher, Eagle Ridge Middle School

Trudy has been serving students in District 191 for 30 years.



What was the most rewarding experience of your career?

- My whole teaching career was with ISD 191.
- From 1995-2000, opening and managing ISD 191 Savage School for Adults (in conjunction with the district's ABE program) and working with hundreds of at-risk learners ages 16 and older to recover a few credits or finish their high school diploma, prepare for GEDs, or learn English.
- Assisting with the grant to implement AP Human Geography for 9th grade in our district and then building the curriculum and guiding students to reach beyond what they thought possible and witness their successes from hard work and dedication. In 2009, I was also one of 19 teachers in the U.S. to be invited to South Korea to participate in the first international conference on territorial integrity.

Favorite One91 story? Sharing with anyone interested in history what it's been like to teach, from my first classroom experience with reel-to-reel projectors/overhead projectors to my final classroom

experience fully remote and online and all the changes in between.

What do you plan to do in your retirement? Volunteer, manage and assist my brother with our family grain farm in southern MN, and have fun and pass on lots of knowledge to my 1 ½ year old grandson and future grandchildren.

Barbara Anderson, 2001

Educational Assistant, William Byrne Elementary School

Barbara has been serving students in District 191 for 19 years.



Nancy Birch, 2004

Teacher, Hidden Valley Elementary School

Nancy has been serving students in District 191 for 17 years.



What was the most rewarding experience of your career? The most rewarding experiences are the little moments each day when you see students experiencing success and building confidence in themselves.

What do you plan to do in your retirement? To start off retirement, my plan is to do absolutely nothing. Once I get that out of my system, I will do all of the things that I have been putting off, because I didn't have the time while teaching. I hope to feed the creative side of my brain by doing fiber arts (knitting, crocheting, weaving), gardening, and learning new things. I will spend as much time as possible playing with my grandchildren. I will volunteer with youth organizations and a local school. Spending time with children will still be a focus during my retirement.

Jennifer Blocker, 1990

Food Services Associate, Eagle Ridge Middle School

Jennifer has been serving students in District 191 for 31 years.



What was the most rewarding experience of your career?

I loved the 18 years I worked in Community Education as a Pre-K educational assistant, truly the best job I ever had. It was rewarding because of the awesome co-workers I had the honor of working with. We worked hard but have a lot of fun, too. Our good relationships spread to the classroom with students and parents. The relationships were the most rewarding.

Favorite One91 story? I taught the students about science with a puppet named Science Sam. The kids would like to talk to him like he was a real person. One child asked the puppet if he was the boss of the teachers. Many funny memories.

What do you plan to do in your retirement? Enjoy the freedom of no schedules or commitments, travel, hike, bike, volunteer work, and visit family and friends.

Steve Brady, 1994

Teacher, Eagle Ridge Middle School

Steve has been serving students in District 191 for 27 years.



What was the most rewarding experience of your career?

The most rewarding experience of my career was being selected to serve on the Eagle Ridge design team. Our team was led by Rudy DeLuca, who was a perfect fit for the job. He was energetic, outgoing and liked to play pranks.

Favorite One91 story? The summer of 95' our Eagle Ridge design team attended the Nuts and Bolts Middle Level Conference in Boulder, Colorado. Rudy DeLuca convinced my 12-year-old son Matt that the rocks he was finding on the trail were full of gold! To prove it, all Matt had to do was put the rock in a tray of Coca-Cola over night, and if they turned black he had struck gold. That night, Rudy bought a can of black spray paint and painted the rocks. My son

woke up a very rich young man! He was so excited that he started filling our minivan with this precious one. Rudy insisted that nobody "spill the beans." Since I didn't want to drag all those rocks home, I told Matt about Rudy's little trick. Rudy was a great principal and friend.

What do you plan to do in your retirement? First ... cancel that morning alarm! Then, I plan to pursue my interest in blacksmithing, travel, fishing and cycling around the United States. See you all down the road!

Carol Brennan, 1988

Teacher, Burnsville High School

Carol has been serving students in District 191 for 33 years.



What was the most rewarding experience of your career? There are many rewarding experiences I have had during my career as a special education teacher. One of my most rewarding periods of time in the district was when I was the site-based teacher at William Byrne for students with developmental cognitive disabilities. I celebrated with each and every student when they read their first words, counted higher than the day before, wrote their name, counted coins or read a clock. Every student can learn and I made sure every student in my room experienced success.

Favorite One91 story? I worked in many buildings in District 191 and have memories/stories from each site. I have stories and fond memories of the first building I worked in, Sioux Trail. I was hired by Dr. Larry Brady. Despite being at that time the youngest staff member in the building by at least 7 years, the Sioux Trail staff was a welcoming group of wonderful people. I remember after school outings that helped bond us together. These outings were inclusive of ALL Sioux Trail staff. Custodians, food services, secretaries, educational assistants, everyone was part of our after school shenanigans. We had bowling tournaments at Cedarvale Lanes (I still have my pin trophy), bus tours of holiday lights, apple orchard fun at the Tornells, and pig roasts every year during workshop week. Guess where several of the pig roasts took place? My backyard! Jan Finnigan and crew were pros at carving up the cooked pig. Fun was always had by all!

What do you plan to do in your retirement? In retirement, I am looking forward to leisurely lunches with retired friends, traveling, and spending time visiting family and friends across the United States. Photography and genealogy research will also fill my days.

Sandra Carlson, 2005

Custodian, Harriet Bishop Elementary School

Sandy has been serving students in District 191 for 15 years.



What was the most rewarding experience of your career? I was married, but we never had kids. Then, I was hired and instantly had 500 kids! And every day, I would tell them a “joke of the day.”

Favorite One91 story? I was asking a kindergartner if she enjoyed the program in the gym that day. She asked “what program?” I told her it was a band concert. She said, “Oh no Sandy, we didn’t go. We’ve got learning to do!” And she was serious!

What do you plan to do in your retirement? Spending a lot of time at the cabin, learning how to paddle board. Also, setting up a booth at a local flea market and selling my fixer uppers.

Cynthia Check, 1986

Early Childhood Programs Coordinator, Diamondhead Education Center

Cindy has been serving students in District 191 for 35 years.



What was the most rewarding experience of your career? Collaborating with others to grow and develop early learning programs for children and families that reflect a respect for children’s development and the needs and values of families in the community.

Favorite One91 story? I am proud and impressed by the way early education staff came together to figure out how to provide meaningful connections with children and families along with learning opportunities during the pandemic.

What do you plan to do in your retirement? Off to new adventures with my husband who is also retiring! Priorities are travel, creative pursuits, learning new things and time with family and friends. I’ll continue to advocate for policies and practices that support young children and their families. Advocacy for young children and their families will always have a place in my life!

Michele Curtis, 2013

Clerical, Diamondhead Education Center

Michele has been serving students in District 191 for 7 years.



Wendy Decker, 1990

Clerical, Burnsville High School

Wendy has been serving students in District 191 for 30 years.



What was the most rewarding experience of your career? In 2007 I started working at the Senior Campus and moved to the high school when it was expanded to accommodate ninth grade. My responsibilities included the high school scheduling. With two campuses and 1800 students at that time (and now with grades 9-12) it was quite a challenge and one of those things where not everyone was pleased with the results. But I have to say that on the first day of every school year, when teachers had classes to teach and students had classes scheduled, it was a proud moment (and relief).

Favorite One91 story? Over the course of 30 years there have been many students and staff members that I have had the pleasure of meeting. I don't have one fabulous story, but will list a few snippets: 1) A note was sent to excuse a student for being late because they were out of peanut butter and wrote "I don't want to see this in Reader's Digest." 2) The way the district was able to quickly shuffle the high school students to Sky Oaks and Nicollet after the fire at BHS in the 90's. 3) While at Nicollet as Guidance Secretary I would enroll new students. Occasionally a student would just be learning English and when I transferred to the high school I ran into a few of those students who were by then speaking English fluently and doing great! 4) At the Senior Campus my favorite thing was when the Government classes would select a political character and do a parody of a song and perform. Best day of the semester! 5) And now with the pandemic, all the accommodations that have been made are quite impressive.

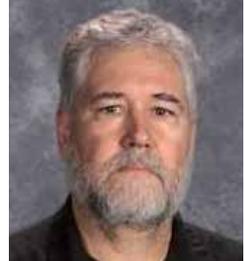
What do you plan to do in your retirement? Again, the pandemic. However, even though some of our plans had to change (for now), we have been able to spend time exploring Minnesota. We live in a

beautiful state! Hopefully we will be able to go on a few trips soon. We also have four grandchildren who are growing quickly and we love spending as much time as we can with them.

Robbie Dimberio, 1986

Custodian, Burnsville Alternative High School

Robbie has been serving students in District 191 for 35 years.



What was the most rewarding experience of your career? Being able to help people every day.

Favorite One91 story? In the late 1980's, a group of custodians would hang out and tell stories in the BAHS parking lot on a Saturday afternoon after working out together.

What do you plan to do in your retirement? Do as little as possible!

Peggy Fontana, 1996

Educational Assistant, Harriet Bishop Elementary School

Peggy has been serving students in District 191 for 24 years.



Jodell Greiner, 2002

Educational Assistant, Burnsville High School

Jodell has been serving students in District 191 for 19 years.



What was the most rewarding experience of your career? I enjoyed the “teams” of people that I worked with in each building I worked in.

Favorite One91 story? Some of my favorite stories in the district would include the summer EA trainings . We all got to meet in one room and became familiar with everyone. As the years went by, I felt connected to so many others.

What do you plan to do in your retirement? I plan to travel the US with my husband now that we are both retired. Being able to leave our home and venture out is quite exciting in this time of our lives. We are hoping for another cruise in the future.

Janet Gulden, 2015

SISA Coordinator, Diamondhead Education Center

Janet has been serving students in District 191 for 6 years.



What was the most rewarding experience of your career? In my 40+ years working in education, the highlight has been the last six years in 191. It has been a privilege to work with our dedicated teachers and staff. A special shout-out to my SISA team which is the best team I've ever worked with!

What do you plan to do in your retirement? My husband and I plan to spend winters in Arizona. I also hope to spend more time with my grandchildren.

Cheryl Haberlack, 1988

Teacher, Harriet Bishop Elementary School

Cheryl has been serving students in District 191 for 33 years.



What do you plan to do in your retirement?

During my retirement, I look forward to relaxing on Sunday evenings (no school work), traveling during off peak times, spending more time with my family and friends, and volunteering.

Joanne Himrich, 1998

Teacher, Early Childhood Special Education

Joanne has been serving students in District 191 for 23 years.



What was the most rewarding experience of your career?

The most rewarding experience of my career was being part of a child's first school experience. I appreciated the opportunity to lay a positive foundation that they and their parents/caregivers were experiencing together...building a bridge between school and home. I appreciated and valued the trust that parents/caregivers gave to me as their child was experiencing this new world of learning. I believe in the saying by Carl W. Buechner, "They may forget what you said, but they will never forget how you made them feel."

What is your favorite One91 story? My favorite 191 story is about engaging with students in a variety of fun learning activities, while building their school family, and when looking out our classroom window at DEC, seeing my son's Eagle Scout Project on the ECSE playground: wheelchair accessible picnic tables, being enjoyed by students and staff too. My children attended Tiny Tots Preschool and seeing the picnic tables has been a sweet reminder of bringing their education full circle from Preschool through Grade 12 in ISD 191.

What do you plan to do in your retirement? I plan to enjoy family time!

Leslie Horwart, 2001

Teacher, Sioux Trail Elementary School

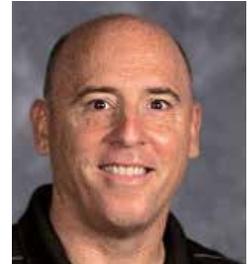
Leslie has been serving students in District 191 for 19 years.



John O'Reilly, 1988

Teacher, Nicollet Middle School

John has been serving students in District 191 for 32 years.



What was the most rewarding experience of your career? The most rewarding experience of my career was having the opportunity to work with so many outstanding people for so many years. The quality of people in this district is unmatched and I'm just happy to have been a part of 191.

Favorite One91 story? There are just so many "favorite" stories it is almost impossible to pick out one. I have favorite student stories, favorite fellow teacher stories, favorite administrator stories, and hundreds of other favorites so I just can't pick one.

What do you plan to do in your retirement? I was fortunate enough to buy back a few days of teaching this year in order to retire so I already have a headstart on my fellow retirees, and I'm happy to report that it really is great when everyday is a Saturday. Gina and I are expecting our first grandchild this July so we are totally excited for that big event. My plans will certainly include continuing to play pickleball, and play golf and head to warmer weather for the winter months. Even during the pandemic we were able to travel and visit our other daughter, Kaitlyn, a naval officer based in Maine and spend time with her as well. Lots of adventures to enjoy!

Laura Peterson, 2006

Clerical, Metcalf Middle School

Lori has been serving students in District 191 for 14 years.

What was the most rewarding experience of your career? Meeting incredible families and students!

What do you plan to do in your retirement? Enjoy my family and relax at our cabin.



Nancy Ramlow, 1996

**Food Services Assistant Manager,
Eagle Ridge Middle School**

Nancy has been serving students in District 191 for 24 years.



Pam Reiher, 1992

Registrar, Burnsville High School

Pam has been serving students in District 191 for 28 years.

What was the most rewarding experience of your career? Making life-long friends.

Favorite One91 story? Too many to list! I loved working at 191 and enjoyed every (3) position that I held.

What do you plan to do in your retirement? Slow down the pace and really enjoy life. It goes by much too quickly!



Mary Sawdey, 2000

Teacher, Nicollet Middle School

Mary has been serving students in District 191 for 21 years.



What was the most rewarding experience

of your career? The Halfway to Graduation Day tradition our 6th grade team (Eileen Feely, Mark Stork, and I started) that honored our 6th graders when they were exactly halfway to their high school Graduation. After the graduation, we celebrated with a Sled Dog Race! P.S. My class won almost every year (sorry Mark and Eileen and Marielle and Alex)! And, two, my Science lessons on kinetic/potential energy and momentum!

What do you plan to do in your retirement? I plan to get a puppy, substitute for ISD 191 and spend a lot of time with my family and up at the lake!

Patricia Schroeder, 1992

Teacher, Eagle Ridge Middle School

Patti has been serving students in District 191 for 29 years.



What was the most rewarding experience of

your career? Taking the 5th- and 6th-grade students to Eagle Bluff for 3 days. The students learned so much, and we had a blast with the parent volunteers.

Favorite One91 story? My favorite memories were when Connie Iles, Mike, Andy, and myself were putting the 6th grade program together. The whole staff, students, parents, and even some neighbors would come to watch. There were always mess ups, which made the show even better and more funny! The kids loved it!

What do you plan to do in your retirement? I am hoping to spend more time in AZ and TX, where I have family. I also want to spend more time with my husband, three adult children & three grandkids, soon to be four. I'm looking forward to going for walks, reading when, and as long as I want, going and watching my daughter play college lacrosse out east, and having NO schedule!

Joanne Schlink, 1997

Teacher, Hidden Valley Elementary School

Joanne has been serving students in District 191 for 24 years.



What was the most rewarding experience of your career?

The most rewarding experience in teaching has been being able to share my passion, personality and sense of humor in the classroom. It is gratifying to see my students consider our classroom a safe place with their school family. The academics usually fall in place when they have this sense of stability and security mixed in with a few laughs along the way.

What do you plan to do in your retirement? After retiring, I plan on spending more time with my family, including my three grandkids. Crafting and extended time up at our cabin will also be in the plan. I am considering advocating and educating for special needs young adults and their families in some capacity also.

Holly Schultz, 1997

Psychologist, Sky Oaks Elementary School

Holly has been serving students in District 191 for 24 years.



What was the most rewarding experience of your career?

- Sharing tears, grief, hugs, joy, laughter, and excitement with students, families, and colleagues. I've been honored to walk alongside students as they experienced tragedy. I've witnessed incredible strength and resilience in our students as they show up each day to bring their best no matter what curveballs have come their way.
- Advocating for Mental Health and Social Emotional Learning supports districtwide.
- Connecting with thousands of students, staff and families - you've all made me a better person.

- Helping students see their value and believing in themselves.

Favorite One91 story?

- Students calling me "Talk Doctor," "Mrs. Shits" (Schultz is tough to say), and "The Brain Lady."
- Student saying "Holly's like the sun except brighter!"
- Bounce and Thrive nights with Brittany Bruns and Emily Robison at Sky Oaks.
- Class Acts and channeling my inner Tina Turner.
- Nate Dungey sabotaging my Neill office and Jim Vertein at Sky Oaks office to Viking decor (I was too short to get all the streamers down.) -Don't worry I got them back. Go Pack Go!
- Eric Reuss organizing Staff v. Students in volleyball and softball at BAHS (So.Much.Fun.).
- Attending BAHS graduation ceremonies.
- Having to sing the Skol song on Sky Oaks' PA after Packers lost to Vikings.
- Rolling down a hill for a student's movement break and both of us laughing really hard while gazing at the clouds (I needed a moment because I was so dizzy).
- Sneaking out to make snow angels when I had a hot flash.
- Getting caught running in the hall by Superintendent Amoroso (we all laughed).
- 1st Grader saying my hands were as soft and wrinkled as her Grandma's...5th grader saying I looked so young. I'll take it all!
- All the rituals and routines (especially ones involving food!) at each building I've been a part of: BHS, BAHS, MJS, Neill, HV, Pond, Sky Oaks, Early Childhood.
- LAUGHING until peeing my pants (I hear there's special underwear for this issue ...).

What do you plan to do in your retirement? Move to Wisconsin, travel to see daughters, laugh, dance, and buy special underwear. Maybe write a book, teach at a university....can't wait to see what I cook up!

Jacqueline Smith, 2011

**Early Childhood Special Education
Supervisor, Diamondhead Education
Center**



Jackie has been serving students in District 191 for 10 years.

What was the most rewarding experience of your career? Working with a wonderful team of Early Learning educators who are so dedicated to students and families.

Favorite One91 story? Spending fun time with staff - wellness activities.

What do you plan to do in your retirement? I plan to travel the US with my husband (Route 66) with our 1957 Ford as well as traveling to other countries. Spending more time with grandkids!! Doing whatever I want!!

Kay Sponsel, 2013

**Educational Assistant, Early Childhood
Special Education**



Kay has been serving students in District 191 for 7 years.

Thomas Umhoefer, 1988

Director of Community Education,
Diamondhead Education Center

Tom has been serving students in District 191 as the Director of Community Education since 2007 and has 22 years of total service.



What was the most rewarding experience of your career? No ONE experience - I got to work with fantastic, talented people who never said no and went to the "nth" degree to get the job done. Best colleagues ever in my 34 years in Community Education.

Favorite One91 story? One of my favorite moments was pitching Internal Giving to the whole staff in the high school gym for the start of the school year meeting and people applauding for BrainPower in a Backpack.

What do you plan to do in your retirement? I will continue working, fishing, golfing and spending time with my family.

Cheryl Walczak, 2007

Technology Specialist, District-wide

Cheryl has been serving students in District 191 for 13 years.



What was the most rewarding experience of your career? Every day was rewarding! Knowing that the staff was relieved when I stepped into the room and resolved the technology problem - it was a de-stressing moment for them.

What do you plan to do in your retirement? Move to Wisconsin and build a retirement home on the 40 acres my husband and I purchased from his family. Enjoy the peace and quiet while finding time to have a vegetable garden, raise chickens and enjoy our grandkids!

Rachelle Waldron, 1996

Nurse, Nicollet Middle School

Sheli has been serving students in District 191 for 25 years.



What was the most rewarding experience of your career?

To choose just one experience that was the MOST rewarding is nearly impossible. Was it the experience of walking the journey of chemo treatment with a 6th grader? Being her 'go-to' person when she was too sick to be in class and yet so wanted to be in school. Was it when a police officer and myself witnessed the bruises inflicted by an angry adult? Then to watch the family get help and be restored. Was it when the 6th grader was crying uncontrollably because his girlfriend broke up with him and he just needed a 'place'? Was it daily guiding the newly diagnosed diabetic in how to take care of himself and seeing him ready to launch into high school? Was it when that parent came back and told me that "I got their child through middle school"? Was it when the emergency medication worked to stop the child's uncontrollable seizures? Was it helping a child get glasses and see them so excited to be able to see everything clearly? Was it when 911 had to be called because a child overdosed in the school bathroom, and knowing that child was going to be okay and his/her cry for help was heard? Was it when the child needed a place to take a break because life was just too overwhelming? The rewards of being a school nurse are not in that 'one' experience, but in every daily encounter with every child.

Favorite One91 story? So many stories that bring back great memories. This one kind of sums it up. It was an unusually quiet day in the nurses' office. A student was sitting with me and chatting. They asked if I ever got 'bored' being a school nurse. I proceeded to share all that I encounter on a daily basis; and described some of the major crises I have encountered and what I have to be ready and equipped to deal with every day. After a few minutes this middle schooler asked another question; "Why would anyone want to be a school nurse?"

What do you plan to do in your retirement? After retirement I plan to spend a lot of time with our grandchildren. We have 9, ranging in ages 4-19. I am a certified life coach and hope to continue to mentor women in their faith journey. I love to bike, hike, sew and do any craft. I also have trips with the grandkids planned to DisneyWorld. One of my favorite quotes is from the last book in the Chronicles of Narnia: "I'd rather be killed fighting for Narnia, than grow old and stupid at home and perhaps go about in a bath-chair and then die in the end just the same." C. S. Lewis, The Last Battle. For me, retirement is not about R&R, it's about the next place God has for me to make a difference.

Eli Walls, 1993

Educational Assistant, Metcalf Middle School

Eli has been serving students in District 191 for 27 years.



Sybil Zimmerman, 2001

Clerical, Gideon Pond Elementary School

Sybil has been serving students in District 191 for 19 years.



Thank you, retirees,
for your combined 803
years of service to
Burnsville-Eagan-Savage
School District 191!