



Out of This World Learning Opportunities

Students build award-winning Mars rover

What began as a way to pass the time during distance learning and the state's lockdown ended up in a top prize for several Stillwater Area High School students in the NASA Human Exploration Rover Challenge (HERC).

The team earned second place in the 27th annual competition, and competed with teams from around the world - many of which have been taking part in the event for several years.

In just its first year in competition, the Stillwater HERC team placed second overall in the high school division and won the Ingenuity Award.

Team members Ben Abbott (grade 12), Vincent Ramirez (grade 11), Addie Foote (grade 11), Jocelyn McBride (grade 10), James Daum (grade 9) and Ethan Foote (grade 9) spent the last eight months designing, building and testing a human-powered rover on a course that simulates the terrain found on rocky bodies in the solar system. The team also performed mission tasks while negotiating the course, including sample retrievals and spectrographic analysis. They submitted a video of their rover at work in order to enter the competition.

Oak-Land students take a virtual trip to the moon

Students at Oak-Land Middle School spent several weeks this spring preparing for a virtual mission to the Moon. About a dozen sixth graders are part of the newly formed Space Club. They met virtually after school to work on engineering design challenges centered on an epic journey to the Moon.

Each week they held mission meetings where they learned about aspects of different space problems from space suit design to growing plants in space. Then they were challenged to come up with their own solutions, competing against 110 other teams from across the U.S. and Canada. The students also participated in live career chats with NASA engineers and other STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) professionals.



Spreading Kindness **IN A PANDEMIC**

From the Superintendent **A remarkable school year**

There are many words that can be used to describe this past year. But to me, the word remarkable tops my list. It has been a year like no other in our history and one that will never be forgotten. Nor should it.

As difficult as this past year has been, and as much as we might long to return to "normal", I can't help but hope we never go back to where we were before.

As a school district, we've been pushed beyond our comfort zone and forced to adapt and change on a dime. All of the systems and structures we've always known were wiped away this year. We had just one focus - connect with our kids. And we've done it remarkably well.

What we've been able to accomplish for our kids is nothing short of extraordinary. Teachers know their students better than ever before. They've met their families and their pets and been invited - virtually - into their living rooms and kitchens. They've talked with their students about more than academic content, but have helped them navigate complicated emotions. In the midst of a pandemic and a racial justice revolution they've listened as students expressed their insecurities, fears and trauma. And through it all, they've ensured that kids continue to learn.

It has not been a lost year for our students, but a year of incredible growth. They've learned resiliency, they've gained independence, and they've been heard and seen in entirely new ways.

So much of what happened previously in our schools was about routine and 100 year old traditions. But when we were forced to close the school doors and deliver learning in an entirely new way, it gave us the freedom to see our kids as they are today.

As we begin to plan for next year and the years beyond, we will not be looking to the past. That playbook is out-of-date and out of touch. Instead, we are taking all that we've learned this year and creating a new vision for our schools. One where every student is respected and valued for who they are. Where obstacles and barriers that may contribute to systemic inequities are removed. And where all students have the resources and opportunities to succeed.

Serving our students better - That's the legacy of this remarkable school year.

Malinda Lansfeldt

Superintendent Malinda Lansfeldt



A lesson in kindness

Kindness is spreading throughout the community thanks to the efforts of a group of first and third grade students. The Andersen Elementary first graders, along with a group of third grade online learners from Andersen, Afton-Lakeland and Lake Elmo, were tasked with developing a marketing plan for "kindness."

They called themselves the Kindness Kids and began by researching community helpers who are experts in kindness, including local police officers and firefighters, the school principal, staff at Croixwood senior living, and a librarian at Bayport Library. They also interviewed other students in the school as their target audience, so they could create a kindness campaign that would resonate with them.

They even drafted a mission statement: "We believe kindness should be marketed in any way possible to help people feel better, happy and make the world a better place."

In teams, the students created advertisements to promote kindness based on all they learned from the community helpers. From artwork to songs, the students depicted ways that people can show kindness to one another - from helping turtles safely cross the road to respecting police officers. They then presented their advertising campaigns to a panel of marketing professionals via Zoom for feedback.

"The highest form of learning is when it is shared from the heart," said first grade teacher Jill Kostynick. "Our students surpassed our expectations when they advertised the kindness within our community with incredible thoughtfulness and creativity."

The project was funded through a classroom grant from The Partnership Plan.

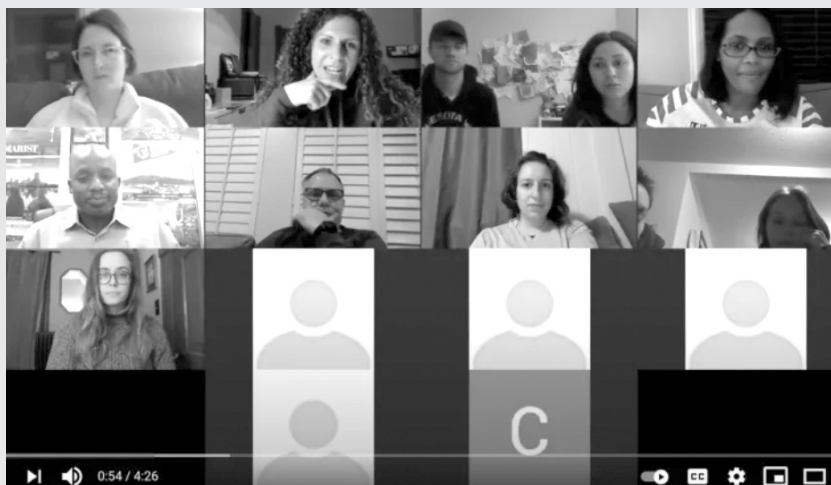
Making the world a better place one project at a time

While much of the world has spent the past year staying apart, a group of students at Oak-Land Middle School have been working hard to bring it back together. Members of the school's National Junior Honor Society (NJHS) are doing all they can think of to care for the individuals most impacted by COVID-19.

"It's been a super difficult year for everyone," said eighth grader Ella Begnaud, who serves as vice-president of NJHS. "But we can make such a difference."

Begnaud and her peers on the NJHS leadership team are committed to community service. Every year NJHS students conduct hundreds of hours of community service projects. In a typical year, students might spend a good portion of that time volunteering in the community. But with so many of the in-person volunteer options limited this year, they've had to get creative. And while COVID might have limited some opportunities, it certainly provided many others ways for the students to help.

This year the NJHS students recognized that people have lost jobs and are struggling financially as a result of the pandemic. They understood that some of the most vulnerable individuals have been isolated and completely alone. They had even heard of people who had to surrender their pets because they just couldn't care for them anymore. So the students took it upon themselves to organize a food drive for Valley Outreach, collect hygiene kits for a local women's shelter, create hand-made dog toys for the Humane Society, send letters to senior citizens at two local nursing homes, pack meals at Feed My Starving Children, and even collect special gifts and notes for their teachers and staff at Oak-Land.



Working to end racism one family at a time

Up until last summer, Marie and Matt Sprader hadn't really thought about racism. As two white people, raising their young children in the largely white community of Stillwater, they'd never experienced discrimination or even talked about systemic racism. But then George Floyd was murdered in a nearby community and suddenly their understanding of the world around them began to change.

"The events of last summer really made it clear to my husband and I that we didn't know enough about racism for our own knowledge," said Marie Sprader, "nor did we know how to talk to our kids and how to raise them to be the kind of humans we hope them to be."

So when the Stillwater Area Public Schools' Early Childhood Family Education program offered a series of classes on Parenting for Racial Justice, the Spaders were among the first to sign up.

They are among more than 60 people who have participated in the racial justice courses this year. The classes are taught by school district staff and special guests, and are designed to help participants understand the history of racism in America and teach them to become allies and change makers within their community. Part 1 of the series outlines the systemic racism that has existed in this country since its founding and helps participants recognize biases that exist in their everyday lives. Part 2 focuses on what families can do in their own homes to help children grow up without negative biases. A new Part 3 will be added this summer, which will allow participants to take part in a book study to dig even deeper into topics covered in the first classes.

A \$15,000 grant from the Stillwater Area Community Foundation will help make the course more accessible to families by lowering the cost and offering free registration for those who are unable to pay.

Classes are open to all district residents, whether their kids attend Stillwater Area Public Schools or not. While originally designed for parents and caregivers of young children, the content is relevant for elementary and middle school parents as well.

Read the full story and sign up for the classes: stillwaterschools.org/racialjustice.

CLASS OF

Asmeret Abraha
Meghana Acharya
Anghom Ajak
Heather Akey
Rachel Allan
Abygail Andebrhan
Claire Anderson
Grace Anderson
Molly Anderson
Isabella Anderson
Kirsten Anderson
Olivia Anderson
Jacob Andreachi
Carlos Andrews
Na'Shaun Andrews
Dara Andringa
Mitchell Ardolf
Colette Argiro
Porcia Asiedu
Ryan Augustine
Grant Auleciems
Justin Avery
Ethan Badger
Alyssa Baggenstoss
Hannah Bahma
Brandon Baker
Terrance Ball
Ethan Barclay
Cristopher Bardwell
Adriaunna Bass-Funke
Clayton Batterton
Benjamin Bauer
Megan Baxter
David Beck
Audrey Behm
Daniel Beletsky
Juliauna Belisle
Rowan Bell-Myers
Julia Bennett
Camden Benson
Zachary Benson
Derek Berg
Jack Berger
Paige Berheim
Olivia Bernard
Rachel Bernath
Luke Bethke
Logan Bies
Haakon Bjork
Elizabeth Blair
Elizabeth Bliss
Carina Block
Isabelle Boegel
Emma Boehle
AnnaMarie Born
Carol Boules
Kellen Bourdaux
John Bouthilet
Shelby Braund
Jacob Breth
Kyle Breth
Savina Brinda
Annika Brown
Isaac Brown
Sophie Browning
Meredith Bruening

Augustus Buettner
Tomas Bumgardner
Tristan Cadu
James Calderone
Grace Campbell
Mekhi Cannedy-Grady
Kieler Carlson
Zachary Carlson
Jackson Carter
Paige Carter
Kirsten Castillo
Lauren Caywood
Jared Celentano
Adelaine Charlsen
Ava Chaves
Noah Chlebeck
Alayna Christian
Makenna Christiansen
Lillian Cichon
Ryan Ciminski
Emily Clayton
Logan Clendenen
Cameron Cole-Scott
Jahnett Coleman-Cotton
Andrew Constant
Lilyann Cosgrove
Emily Cossetta
Grace Cote
Luke Cullen
Aidan Cummings
Joseph Curtis
Maria Curtis
Maggie Dalager-Ericsson
Benjamin Dandeleit
Soren Danelius
Nicholas Dario
Hudson Day
Jacob Day
John DeBeer
Cole DeCorsey
Perla DeLa rosa
Noah deLeon
Ellie DeMars
Joseph Devins
Michael Deziel
Fatoumata Diallo
Claire Dicks
Alexia Dobbs
Nya Dobier
Lauren Doe
Ronald Donar
Dylan Doroff
Wyatt Dorweiler
Calvin Dougherty
Dylan Doyle
Gavin Dunbar
Bridget Dupre
Mitchel Ebner
Sienna Ecker
Delston Eckerman
Allison Eder
Haley Eder-Zdechlik
Andrew Edwards
Lauren Einan
Jordan Eiselt
Connor Eisenmenger

Samuel Ek
Braiden Elfert
Madeline Eliassen
Sean Ellis
Lauren Enerson
Jed Ericksen
Grant Erickson
Nathan Erickson
Yunita Erniajan
Tucker Estenson
Amelia Evanoff
Caroline Evans
Connor Evenson
Jaden Eviota
Ezekiel Fajemirokun
Ibrahim Fakri
Vincent Falkenberg
Hannah Farmer
Estelle Fearing
Robert Fedor
William Fedorowski
Fayuma Felema
Alexander Fena
Aubrie Filandrinos
Michael Finch
Elizabeth Fisher
Dominick Flach
Hazel Flock
Rachel Fogelberg
Savanah Foix
Rachel Folden
Jack Ford
Sidney Foreman
Grace Foss
Bayley Foster
Madison Foster
Charles Franke
John Franklin
Logan Frattalone
Tyson Fredkove
Logan Fritsche
Mary Fultz
Morgan Gackstetter
Erin Gallion
Matthew Gallion
Antonio Garcia
Hannah Genosky
Cade Gentes
Alison Gerard
Raif Gergen
Nathan Gessler
Christopher Geving
Luke Giesregen
Benjamin Gjerde
Jordan Goltz
Maria Gorde
Carly Gordon
Gaven Gow
Samantha Gow
Molly Graber
Peter Grace
Emily Gray
Adam Green
Paxton Grobe
Walker Grogan
Brady Gross

Ellie Gruber
Mackenzzi Gulbrantson
Aidan Gunderson
Salugla Gurhan
Madeline Haase
Allison Hafner
Jack Haley
Destiny Halleland
Logan Halverson
Holden Hammerlund
Lucas Hamp
Samuel Hansen
Ryann Hanson
Garrett Hanson
Katelyn Harris
Helaina Hart
Halle Hauer
Ty Hawkins
Jacob Hegner
Sadie Heieren
Olivia Heim
Colin Heininger
Justice Heinrichs
Chase Heintz
Jack Heintz
Madeline Heinz
David Helgeson
Anthony Hels
Paythe Hendry
Paige Hendry
Grace Henke
Linda Herr
Braden Hilde
Braden Hill
Lauren Hill
Linda Hill
Alexis Hiltunen
Julia Hinz
Sierra Hippel
Serena Hiveley
Cuong Ho
Lauryn Hoff
Jacob Hoffman
Raina Hoge
Royce Hogue
Dylan Holmes
Nicholas Hong
Madison Horn
Vivian Horning
Christian Howlett
Dawson Hoyos
Elsa Huckels
Maleka Hussein
Zakharia Ibrahim
William Isaacson
Kevin Jaap
Benjamin Jacobs
Connor Jacoby
Taylor Janssen
Grady Jerdee
Ryan Jinks
Cody Johnson
Cooper Johnson
Imani Johnson
Jeremy Johnson
Lauren Johnson

Samuel Johnson
Tyler Johnson
Zachary Johnson
David Jones
Nick Kahle
Connor Kapfer
Aliza Karlen
Samuel Kavapalu
Benjamin Kazmerski
Logan Kelley
Quinn Kelley
Alexis Kellogg
Allison Kelm
Kevin Kerber
Zaid Khudhair
Ethan Kilmer
Anne Kiolbasa
Owen Kiser
Julia Klancher
William Klein
Abigail Kneeskern
Dustin Knighton
Nicholas Knutsen
Jonathan Koehn
Pablo Koller
Madeline Koltun
Jack Konigson
Anthony Koslowski
Haden Kraft
Austin Kramar
Ashton Kramer
James Kratz
Zackary Kraus
Zane Kraus
Matthew Krogstad
Henry Kruse
Trey Kruse
Madison Kulzer
Martin Kurle
Samantha Kvaas-Reed
Emily Laabs
Ava LaBelle
Shaudae Lacy
Stacy Lam
Jacob Lambrides
Nicole Lammers
Theodore Lammers
Tra LaMosse
Gabrielle LaMotte
Andrew Langenberger
Ivy Lariviere
Marisa Larson
Madissen Lavalley
Shae Layne
Marie Lecuyer
Abigail Lee
Cody Lee
Taylor Lee
Mary Legato
Aftyn Lehman
Patrick Lentz
Sean Lenz
Benjamin Leon
Sean LeRoux
Jordan Le vasseur
Myah Lienke

Lexie Ligday
Grace Lilla
Courtney Lillemoen
Anna Lindeberg
Alexis Litchy
Teddy Lockhart
Amielya London
Benjamin Long
Maria Longtin
Tony Lor
Sophia Lord
Jackson Lowe
Anthony Lucas Jr.
Charlotta Lueth
Elena Luna
Blake Lund
Levi Lundstrom
Juliana Lussio Litschauer
Logan Lynn
Chase Lynskey
Jemina Ruth Maasin
Zimm MacLeslie
Blake Madden
Carson Madsen
Juan Malon
Lucas Mann
Hunter Marcaccini-Teeple
Tyler Maroney
Rebecca Marquez
Camryn Martin
Katrina Martin
Giovany Martinez Cruz
Grace May
Sophie McAfee
Trevor McClaine
Logan McCormick
Grace McDonough
Riley McDonough
Amy McElin
Daria McGee
Nikita McGee
Katlyn McGrath
Carter McGraw
Marlee McGuire
Mallory McKay
Sydney McNurlin
Leslee Menjivar
Rachel Menzel
Cecil Meredith
Cameron Mesto
Elizabeth Milker
Parker Mock
Grace Moden
Carter Moening
Khadro Mohamed
Maxwell Mohrlant
Elizabeth Montgomery
Catherine Monty
Jarett Monty
Matthew Moore
Alyxandria Moosai
Jimena Morales Rodriguez
Dante Moreno
Maxwell Morris
Lily Mowery
Aaron Mozey

2021

We Love Our Ponies

Abigail Mueller
Nawal Mukhtar
Grace Murphy
George Musser
Nikita Nederloe
Britta Nelson
Haley Nelson
Kate Nelson
Linh Nguyen
Phuong Anh Nguyen
Sidney Nguyen
Thanh Nguyen
Rosella Nichols
Kylee Nicoski
Samuel Nitardy
Braedy O'Brien
Ashlynn O'Connor
Michael O'Gorman
Kyra O'Loughlin
Paige O'Neal
Adelyn O'Reilly
Adelyn Oberg
Emmanuel Obikwelu Jr.
Zach Obler
Olajide Oduloye
Olawunmi Oduloye
Margaret Odumuyiwa
Madeline Oeltjen
Louis Oesterreich
Joseph Ogaard
Ellsa Ohmann
Elizabeth Olafson
Adam Olson
Eliot Olson
Olivia Olson
Sofia Olson
Omar Omar
Mildred Osei
Jack Ostrander
Matthew Oswald
Daniel Palmer
Nicholas Parent
Meredith Parry
Austin Paseka
Dhara Patel
Wyatt Patzner
Joshua Paulson
Casey Pearson
Joseph Pearson
Elsa Persson
Michelle Peterson
Mitch Peterson
Nicholas Peterson
Sydney Peterson

Parker Petronack
Nevyn Pflugrad
Jaden Phelps
Serenity Phernetton
Alexander Philion
Joshua Piechowski
Siri Pomarius
Brandon Pott
Alex Potter
James Prendergast
Catherine Price
Isabelle Primeau
Owen Prom
Megan Puhrmann
Nicholas Purdie
Josephine Ramirez
James Rapp
Kailey Rapp
Grace Rauker
Mya Reeves
Cole Reimann
Haley Reiter
Wakinyan Renville
Campbell Reynolds
Benjamin Richardson
Maximus Richardson
Elise Riniker
Jacob Ristow
Wyatt Rivers
Michael Robinson
Quentin Robinson
Theodor Robinson
Luke Rodlund
Owen Rodriguez
Grace Roeske
Ryan Roeske
Erin Rogers
Patrick Roisum
Catherine Roloff
Rachel Roth
Alexandra Roti
Jerrod Rude
Ely Runk
Daniel Russell
Isabelle Rustad
Reagan Sadler
Eleanor Sand
Paige Sanders
Jackson Sandquist
Cristina Santamaria Quesada
Issac Sauer
Sawyer Sawotin
Isabella Schaak
Abby Scheel

Ethan Scheel
Alex Scherber
John Schilling
Avery Schlagel
Reid Schlosser
Jordan Schmidt
Andrew Schoenecker
Samuel Schraut
Skyler Schreiber
Courtney Schroeder
Austin Schuldt
Trevor Schultz
Rachel Schulz
Lucas Schumacher
Jakob Schuman
Sophie Schuster
Luca Schweins
Linus Schwenke
Jordan Schwingler
Hatti Score
Sydney Scott
Haley Seekel
Zachary Seitz
Ethan Selph
Andrew Sentman
Madeleine Servais
McKenzie Sessing
Katelyn Shanahan
Hailey Sharon
Elizabeth Shay
Lily Shayegan
Sarah Shelton
Grace Silbernack
Nathaniel Simcik
Nicholas Simcik
Jacob Sletten
Benjamin Smalley
Stella Smebak
Allison Smith
Cory Smith
Hayley Smith
Madeline Smith
Olivia Smith
Tristan Smith
Addison Smith-O'Brien
Nathan Smith-Wessel
Emma Sneden
Benjamin Snyder
Julia Snyder
Lyndsey Snyder
Cady Solberg
Tyson Sonnek
Cora Souffront
Devin Spaulding

Paige Speedling
Livia Spitzer
Elle Sprenger
Barath Sridher
Eric Stack
Ben Stafne
Emma Stansbury
Jack Steele
Joseph Stengl
Hunter Stevensen
Henry Still
Joel Stockstead
Dylan Stormoen
Ella Stratmann
Caleb Strom
Julia Styrbicki
Daisha Suedkamp
John Sullivan
Nelson Summary
Cody Sundberg
Drew Supina
Carly Suro
Elli Swanson
Joely Swanson
Keller Swanson
Scott Swanson
Harrison Swift
Sarah Symalla
Israel Taddese
Tony Tan
Aaina Tanski
Javon Taschuk
Noah Tatro
Philip Taube
Austin Taylor
Isabella Thao
Anthony Thomas
Tristan Thomas
Zachary Thometz
Isaac Thompson
William Thomson
Anders Thorager
Josie Thrall
Robert Thueson
Tyler Thureson
Isaac Timberlake
Gabriella Tirado
Kylie Tollefsbol
Alayna Tomaro
Morgan Tope-Yates
Tabatha Torrejon
Gavan Townsend
Elise Truman
Madison Tubbs

Elizabeth Tuttle
Emma Urban
Daniel Ustipak
Nicole Vagle
Anna Valek
Allen Vang
Anjali Vang
Souryeeta Vang
Olivia Velte
Taylor Venancio
Marc Villalobos Puertas
Maxwell Vogel
Delaney Wagner
Mark Wagner
Jacob Wallace
Nathan Wallace
Matthew Walton
Rebekah Warner
Tyler Warner
Bianna Warzeka
Sophie Watkins
Abigail Weaver
Adrian Weber
Andrew Weber
Avery Weber
Caitlin Weiand
Zachary Weicherding
Sophia Weiss
Toby Weiss
Colin Welch
Isaac Welshons
Xavier Weston

Kylie Weyer
Quinton White
William White
Madeleine Whittington
Charles Wick
Connor Willingham
Nathaniel Willius
Elijah Wilson
Ethan Wilson
Caeden Windschitl
Grace Wirkkala
Truman Wojksi
Ayla Womeldorff
Avery Wright
Benjamin Wrightsman
Paige Wulfling
Cooper Wylie
Justin Wyzykowski
Khuluc Yang
Lucas Yang
Queniesha Yang
Vanessa Yang
Autumn Yangwakue
Emmanuel Yarison
Jenna Yingling
Carly Young
Joseph Young
Yingjie Zhong
Mason Ziegelmann
Joshua Zimmer
Sarah Zimmerman
Piper Zoller



STORIES *From Around the District*



Good News!

Stay up-to-date on the latest district news at [Facebook.com/Stillwater834](https://www.facebook.com/Stillwater834)

High school students invest well in Stock Market game

Three marketing students at Stillwater Area High School took top awards in the states BestPrep Stock Market Game. Garrett Haynes finished in first place, Jacob Ehlenz earned second place and Morgan Peterman took fifth. The online simulation has students investing \$100,000 for twelve weeks.

Lego League team earns first place

The Stillwater Middle School First Lego League team earned top awards in the state robot competition. They designed an Ev3 robot, programmed it to perform missions, and created a project to solve the problem of people not getting enough exercise. The team placed first in creative presentation and also earned the third highest score in the robot performance run.

Andersen Elementary educator named Outstanding Teacher

Andersen Elementary teacher Brigid Sandager was named 2021 Outstanding Teacher by Minnesota Agriculture in the Classroom.

Student debaters heading to national tournament

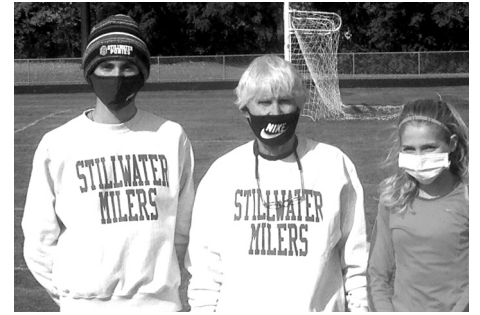
Stillwater Area High School students Gursimrat Dahry and Annika Fredeen qualified for the National Speech and Debate Association's national tournament.

Yearbook recognized among best of the best

The Kabekonian yearbook was once again featured in Josten's Look Book 2021. The Look Book is a collection of outstanding yearbooks. The 2020 Kabekonian spread "On a Mission" was recognized for its design, captioning and readability. The Kabekonian was one of only 460 yearbooks selected from over 1,000 yearbooks submitted.

Pony athletes recognized among nation's best

Two Stillwater Ponies were named Minnesota Gatorade Runners Of The Year. Ethan Vargas and Analee Weaver are among the nation's most elite high school cross country runners. They were recognized not only for athletic excellence, but also for high standards of academic achievement and exemplary character. Stillwater Area High School is the only school in the country to have two winners of the prestigious award.



Students speak out for change in their school

Give high school students two hours and they just might change the world - or at least the culture of their school. That was the premise behind a recent Voices of Change Student Conference held at Stillwater Area High School.

Nearly 130 students gathered virtually to talk openly about the challenges they face, or have faced, in their educational career. The first-of-its kind conference was student-led and facilitated, and gave kids a safe place to talk about the issues they see in their school - from racism and institutional bias to inequitable access to resources and activities. Students of different backgrounds, cultures, races, and religions met in small and large groups to share ideas and develop solutions to address issues they are facing in their school.

The ideas and solutions gathered during the conference will be shared with district leaders.

Through the pandemic, our students are still learning

While state and national reports indicate significant learning loss is expected due to the pandemic, a look at our data shows Stillwater area students are doing better than expected.

Overall, our students are holding fairly steady in reading achievement at all levels. Math achievement has dipped, but performance is still better than many experts predicted. At the high school level, the number of students passing all of their courses has seen a decline, but is still higher than levels we saw prior to 2017 when we implemented the BARR (Building Assets, Reducing Risks) program to better meet students' academic, social and emotional need.

INVESTING IN EXCELLENCE

Time to Reinvest

Time is running out on the district's existing operating levy. The levy, which was originally passed in 2013, expires next year. If a new levy is not approved, the district will be out between \$11 million and \$12 million and would face significant reductions in staff and programs.

The levy has helped to stabilize funding for the past eight years, allowing us to maintain many of our programs and staff. We've also used levy dollars to create several new opportunities for our students - from language immersion to Pathways career exploration programs.

Even with our current levy in place, the district had to make budget cuts three times. That's because we rely on state funding to pay our bills, but that funding hasn't kept pace with inflation.

The school board will be asking the community to renew the levy and provide additional revenue to help make up the funding gap. The board is expected to make a decision on exactly what will be included on the November 2, 2021 ballot this summer.



The real costs of a pandemic on our local schools

Planning for the coming year is in full swing, and thanks to the pandemic, predicting what next year might look like is proving to be difficult. On top of the perpetual funding challenges we face due to state funding that does not keep pace with inflation, we've also seen a significant decline in student enrollment this year as a result of COVID-19.

This isn't a Stillwater problem alone. Districts across the state are facing similar enrollment decline and resulting financial challenges. Many are making significant budget cuts for next year and considering ways to increase revenue through voter-approved referendums. Here in Stillwater, we've lost more than 330 students in our district between March 2020 to March 2021. As our enrollment declines so too does our funding. While we are hopeful more families will return to our district as the pandemic turns around, we anticipate continued funding challenges in the year ahead.

But what about the federal and state COVID-19 relief packages?

The federal COVID-19 relief funds (CARES Act) have helped keep us afloat this year, but do not solve our ongoing funding challenges. The district will receive a total of about \$5.6 million in one-time funds to help support the unexpected costs of the pandemic. These funds are being used to purchase things like cleaning supplies, personal protective equipment, Chromebooks and internet Hotspots for students to support at-home learning. It also helped pay for additional teachers, custodians and support staff hired for one year only to support students learning from school and at home.

Levy Replacement Fast Facts

Expiring Levy

The current operating levy, which generates between \$11 million and \$12 million annually, will expire at the end of the 2021-2022 school year. If the levy is not replaced, the district would have to cut its budget by more than 10%.

89% AGREE

"Our community receives a good value from its investment in the Stillwater Area Public Schools."

- 2019 Community Survey

Did You Know?

- A straight levy renewal isn't enough. It would take between \$13 million and \$14 million in today's dollars to replace the expiring levy, due to inflation and rising costs.
- State funding hasn't kept pace with inflation. This past year we were short nearly \$4 million because of this gap.
- Even with our current levy in place, we've cut our budget in 3 of the last 8 years - totaling \$7 million.
- If you could pick up your home and move it to any other school district in the county, you'd pay more in school taxes. That's because the tax rate in Stillwater schools is lower than our neighboring districts.
- We are one of only a handful of districts in the metro without a dedicated source of funding for technology. Most districts have a technology levy that pays for computers, infrastructure and even technology staff - freeing up money in the general fund to reinvest in programs for kids.

Celebrating CLASS OF 2021

This year's graduates have proven they are resilient, adaptable and Stillwater Strong. We're so proud of the more than 650 students who will graduate from Stillwater Area High School this year!

Watch the 145th Stillwater Area High School Commencement Ceremony live on June 5 at 1 p.m. at stillwaterschools.org/grad21. Videos and photos will also be posted on facebook.com/Stillwater834 following the event.

**Congratulations to the Class of 2021.
Go Ponies!**

Si usted tiene alguna pregunta acerca de esta hoja informativa, por favor llame a la oficina de su escuela para hablar con un intérprete.

Federal fund help but don't solve funding challenges

One-time federal COVID-19 relief funds have helped support the unexpected costs of the pandemic. But they will not solve our ongoing funding challenges.

- Federal funds paid for things like additional custodians, as well as teachers and technology to support online learning, cleaning supplies, plexiglass barriers and personal protective equipment.
- We've lost more than 300 students as a result of the pandemic, resulting in millions of dollars in lost state revenue.
- Our operating levy, first approved in 2013, expires next year.
- Without this levy in place, we'll lose between \$11 million and \$12 million annually.
- State funding hasn't kept pace with inflation. The gap was nearly \$4 million this year.

Learn more on page 7.



Independent School District 834
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Celebrating our distinguished alumni

Four individuals will be honored for a lifetime of distinction after graduating from Stillwater Area High School. They will join more than 100 others who have been named Distinguished Alumni since the award was first given in 1987.

This year's class of Distinguished Alumni includes: Julie Kink (Class of 1979); Kami Mendlik (Class of 1991); Marlena Chow Morgan (Class of 1996); and Mark J. Salmen (Class of 1969).

Read more about their impressive accomplishments on our website at stillwaterschools.org/alumni.



stillwaterschools.org | 651-351-8340