

THE DISTRICT DISPATCH

School News & Updates
for the School District 197
Community
Spring 2022

School Board Welcomes New Members

At its January 3 meeting, the School District 197 School Board welcomed Marcus Hill, Sarah Larsen, and Jon Vaupel. The three will serve until their terms expire in 2025. In addition, during the board's annual organizational meeting, Joanne Mansur was elected chair, Hill was elected vice chair/clerk, and Byron Schwab was elected treasurer.



Marcus Hill



Sarah Larsen



Jon Vaupel



Garlough Environmental Magnet's music teacher, Kelsey Lawrence-Amend, loves teaching 4th grade students how to play the recorder as it's a wonderful way to connect with students as they learn the instrument. According to Lawrence-Amend, the curriculum, called Recorder Karate, allows students to learn at their own pace, but also allows them to be competitive with one another if they desire!

From the Superintendent

In this issue, I want to focus on HOPE. There were many times during these past two years when our world felt gray. Our students were learning from home, our teachers were teaching from home, and some staff members – Child Nutrition, School-Age Care, Buildings & Grounds to name a few – were working in person to provide services essential to our families. But we didn't have plays, concerts, skating events, sledding days, project fairs, open houses, and so much more.

In this issue of the *District Dispatch*, we have a number of wonderful examples of how far we've come... and how we cause to have hope. We also highlight our amazing nurses, who diligently support the health and well-being of the students across our district.

And no...our vigilance when it comes to COVID-19 is not over. We will continue to work closely with health professionals at the county and state to monitor the data to ensure we are making the best decisions for our students, staff, and families.

The scope of my thanks and gratitude is very broad and very deep. I am thankful for our staff members who continued to show up to educate, feed, transport, and care for our students. I know these past two years have been very, very difficult and I appreciate their commitment to our students.

And to our families, I want to express my gratitude for your support of your children's education. Despite the obstacles put before you, you have remained engaged in your children's education. Your children see and feel your support – and so do we.

Peter Olson-Skog
Superintendent

Nurture. Inspire. Prepare. Together, we thrive.



Honoring Our Nurses:
Debbie Lee
Early Learning Center

“I find it very gratifying to see progress in our preschool students as they learn and grow. The last two years have been difficult for all, but I am blessed to work with a wonderful team of people who make coming to work a joy!”

Garlough Student Wins Dakota County Poster Contest for “Most Original” Design

Congratulations to Garlough 4th grader Malin L. for winning first place for “most original” poster in the Dakota County America Recycles Day Poster Contest for 2021 open to all 4th graders. The theme of the contest, which was open to all 4th grade students in the county, was “Recycle Right,” which Garlough students know how to do. The Dakota County School Recycling Program coordinator presented Malin with a home recycling bin along with her winning poster professionally printed to hang at Garlough.



Garlough Students Study Ancient Cave Paintings

Fourth grade students at Garlough traveled back 30,000 years to learn about the creation of ancient cave paintings. The students heard the story of the discovery of the Lascaux cave paintings. Then, they gathered buckthorn berries in iNature class, both preventing the spread of invasive species and collecting valuable art supplies! Students mashed their berries with a mortar and pestle to extract the deep purple juice and make their own natural paint, just like ancient people might have done. The fresh buckthorn berry paint was then used to create their very own cave paintings.



Honoring Our Nurses:
Jennifer Gottberg, RN
Garlough Environmental Magnet

“Garlough kids and staff have been absolutely amazing and it’s been my pleasure to enter such a wonderful educational environment. Thank you for allowing me to serve your kids.”

Moreland Cross-Curricular Unit Connects Music, Poetry, and Visual Art

Third-grade students at Moreland Arts & Health Sciences Magnet participated in a cross-curricular unit that helped the students make connections between music, poetry, and visual art. During one project, students in Mollie Schellinger’s class read winter poetry and created winter scenes using chalk. Students then wrote their own poetry about their artwork.





Mendota Students Practice Reading to Service Dog

Hazel, a service dog owned by the Miltz family, visited Mendota Elementary to read with small groups of students in early March. This was an exciting opportunity for students to practice their reading while cuddling with Hazel in the library.



Moreland Kicks Off I Love to Read Month with Special Guest Readers



Students from Two Rivers High School visited Moreland to read to the younger students and kick off the school's I Love to Read Month activities. In addition to reading books, the high school students spoke about the importance of reading and what life is like in high school. "It is very powerful for our students at Moreland to have these positive interactions with the high school students," says Principal Mark Quinn.



Mendota Teacher Mary Gilsdorf Receives Inclusive Educator Award

Mendota kindergarten teacher Mary Gilsdorf was nominated and selected for the Intermediate School District 917 Inclusive Educator Award for the 2021-2022 school year! Gilsdorf was recognized by her Intermediate School District 917 colleague Sarah Ludewig for her work to support the inclusion of the unique learners who are served at Mendota Elementary. This is a well-earned honor for Gilsdorf's advocacy and support for students with disabilities.



Honoring Our Nurses: Laura Grulkowski, RN Mendota Elementary

"Working within the Mendota school community for almost 15 years has given me a great opportunity to promote health and wellness. I especially enjoy the daily interactions and challenges this position provides."

Moreland 4th Grade Students Perform Willy Wonka Kids



The entire 4th grade Moreland class participated in the Willy Wonka Kids Musical performance last week. The community performance at the Two Rivers Auditorium on March 10 boasted a full house. Check out some rehearsal photos of these incredible performers!





Honoring Our Nurses:
Kalynn Bliss, RN, LSN
Moreland Arts & Health Sciences Magnet

“I love being able to make a positive impact on a student’s physical and mental health. Knowing that I can make a difference in their lives is extremely rewarding.”



Pilot Knob Camp Focuses on STEM-focused Lessons

Grade-level teams at Pilot Knob STEM Magnet School created STEM-focused lessons to engage students. Lessons included fun topics such as fairy tale engineering, stop motion animation, chess, and exploration of the stars. Pilot Knob teachers plan to expand on this pilot program throughout the year by hosting additional STEM Camps.



Students Embrace Winter Through Ice Skating

This winter, Pilot Knob students have been learning to ice skate and play hockey at the Sky Hill Park and rink in Eagan. The school also hosted an evening of ice skating at the ponds at Viking Lakes. For some Pilot Knob students, this is the first time they have ever seen or been on an ice skating rink. “If you live in Minnesota, you might as well embrace and enjoy our winters,” says Principal Tom Benson.



PK 2nd Graders Create Solutions to Prevent Flooding

Second grade students at Pilot Knob have been engaging in a Project Lead The Way (PLTW) unit on Weather Hazards. During one part of the lesson, students investigated how water flows through different earth materials as they make the connection between permeability and flooding. Next, students applied their learning as they created solutions to prevent flooding. Don’t worry, no classrooms were flooded during learning!



Somerset, Garlough Students Celebrate Kindness Day

Somerset Elementary continued the tradition of celebrating Kindness Day, a service learning approach to Valentine’s Day through the non-profit Doing Good Together. Students made chewable jewelry and play-dough, painted comfort stones, and created

a banner – all to benefit local organizations including Brighter Days Grief Center, Ronald McDonald Charities, and Southview Acres Health Care Center. This year, Somerset partnered with Garlough Environmental Magnet on their Kindness Day efforts with a special station where students make kindness bookmarks for their friends at Garlough!



Honoring Our Nurses:
Roberta Tichy
Somerset Elementary

“I’ve been a nurse in District 197 for approximately 18 1/2 years. From first aid to Covid to screening, each day is a new adventure and I’m happy I’m here.”



Honoring Our Nurses: Lynn Baggot Pilot Knob STEM Elementary

“I love working with the elementary students and families with chronic health concerns and everyday health issues. Empowering students to safely manage their health concerns is very rewarding.”



Friendly Hills Students Create Prototype Windmills

Engineering minds are busy at Friendly Hills in the Project Lead the Way (PLTW) class taught by Dave Wichman. Seventh grade students in PLTW are exploring wind power by creating prototype windmills. Student windmill designers are learning about voltage and torque. In 8th grade, PLTW students are designing, building, and coding race cars. The objective is to have the fastest car on a 15-foot track. Hands-on learning is powerful!



Honoring Our Nurses: Julie Berg Heritage E-STEM Middle School

“Helping middle schoolers with health issues so that they may be successful is a joy. Both our amazing students and staff brighten my days, and we will emerge from this challenging time together!”



Somerset Hosts Olympics Opening Ceremony

In February, Somerset Elementary hosted Olympic opening ceremonies, following the same protocol of what took place at the opening ceremonies in Beijing. Highlights included a flag ceremony, speeches by dignitaries, musical fanfare, the Olympics mascot, and the lighting of the Olympic flame.



Book “Tasting” and Reveal Add Excitement to 6th Grade Literature Circles

Friendly Hills 6th grade literature arts teacher Kara Metz hosted a “book tasting” during which students could take a sneak peek at all potential literature circle books. Students then completed a survey to vote for their top three book selections. After all the data was compiled, Metz placed students into literature circle groups based on their book choices. To add an element of surprise to the book reveal, each student had to find the paper bag with their name on it. When students opened the bags, their literature circle books were inside. It was a fun and engaging way to create excitement around reading. The students couldn’t wait to dive into their books!



UofM Students Assist Heritage Class in Crafting & Coding Experience

Students from the University of Minnesota visited Heritage STEM Magnet to work with Project Lead the Way (PLTW) teacher Stephanie Sykes and a small group of 7th grade girls on an amazing opportunity that combined crafting and coding. The experience gave the students a way to look at coding from a different perspective. The Heritage students not only left the experience with new information but also a fun craft with LED lights!



Honoring Our Nurses: Amy Graham, RN, LSN, PHN Friendly Hills Middle School

“I am so grateful to be able to be a source of caring in a student’s school day. I am able to simultaneously promote physical as well as mental/emotional health.”



Halverson Named National Merit Finalist

Two Rivers High School Senior Oscar Halverson has been named a National Merit Scholarship Finalist Program. Halverson is among just 15,000 students (out of 1.6 million applicants) from across the country who were named finalists. He will go on to compete for more than 7,500 scholarships totalling \$30 million. Congratulations, Oscar!



Two Rivers Students Create Mural

The wall of Principal Al Johnson's office now features a wonderful new mural designed and painted by Two Rivers students Maxwell Oliver-Machuca and George Altier. According to Johnson, the goal was to create something new in the space that represented the coming together of a community. "As the Mississippi and Minnesota rivers come together right in this school district, what can we do to come together as Warriors? We're stronger together!"



Honoring Our Nurses: Karen Leif, RN MA LSN Two Rivers High School

"I enjoy the camaraderie that I share with my colleagues. My students bring me joy, whatever they may be experiencing in the moment. I never know what health situation will come through my health office door! Relationship building is important to me and I try to connect with students and families on an individual level."

Two Rivers Announces AAA Award Winners



Congratulations to Two Rivers seniors Adam Lail and Bella Ramos for being selected as the 2022 Academics, Arts, and Athletics Award winners. Commonly known as the AAA Award, high school seniors throughout the state are honored for maintaining a 3.0 or higher grade point average and their participation in league-sponsored athletic and fine arts activities.



Student Earns National Speech and Debate Award

Congratulations to Two Rivers High School senior Eleanor Richards for earning the National Speech and Debate Association Academic All-American Award! This coveted award recognizes academic rigor, competitive speech and debate success, and personal excellence. More than 141,000 students are members of NSDA and fewer than one percent of students receive this award per year.



Honoring Our Nurses: Jane Lao Two Rivers High School

"I enjoy working with the fun and supportive group of colleagues in our district. I love building relationships with the students and watching them grow and mature over the years."



Two Rivers students in Linda Zurn's Clothing 1 & 2 classes are completing their log cabin quilted pillows!

News

Branch Out Hosts Student Art Gallery

Each month, teachers in the Branch Out Transition Program focus on one activity to develop as a self-calming strategy. In February, students created artwork to relax and to express themselves creatively. Guests were invited to “vote” on student artwork in three categories: Most creative, most colorful, and most detailed. “I like to try different things to see what I can come up with,” said Floyd Lamar III. “It was fun to try different colors to see how things look.” Student Elizabeth Gaines said, “I enjoyed the opportunity to be creative. This was a really fun project. I was able to use my own style with my artwork. I would definitely do this again.”



SAVE THE DATE!

**13TH ANNUAL
WARRIOR 5K**
WALK/RUN

Saturday, September 24, 2022
Race starts at 9 a.m.
Two Rivers High School



Did you know that the ISD197 Educational Foundation donated several thousand dollars to every school library in our district last year? Help us continue these great programs. Save the date for our annual fundraiser, the Warrior 5K on September 24. Not a runner? No problem! Feel free to stroll the course or do our Family 1 mile on the Warrior Field track.



Honoring Our Nurses:

Stacie O'Leary

Branch Out and District Health Coordinator

“My passion is health and wellness. I enjoy the sound of students running in gym class or out on the playground. I believe that healthy children are better learners and educated people are healthier. I support schools so they can do their best. It has been a historically challenging time for all but together we can heal.”

District to Conduct Middle School Schedule Review

In alignment with the district’s strategic framework and with support and facilitation from TeamWorks International, School District 197 will conduct a middle school schedule review. Recommendations as a result of this process will not begin until 2023-24. The goal of the work will be to develop a consistent schedule that meets the needs of our students, addresses the challenges of the current schedule, and ensures we are meeting the standards requirements from the Minnesota Department of Education.

A Middle School Options Team will be formed later this spring that includes middle school administrators and staff. The team also will include district administrators who will act as information

resources and liaisons to the School Board. The options team will begin its work this summer.

There will be specific opportunities for input and feedback about the middle school schedule by all middle school staff, students, and families throughout the process. In April/May, all middle school staff, students, and families will have an opportunity to provide input through a survey that will be used by the options team. In Sept/October and again in November/December different schedule options will be shared with all middle school staff, students and families and feedback will be gathered. The goal is to bring a recommendation to the board for approval in February 2023.



West St. Paul + Mendota Heights + Eagan Area

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Mendota Heights, MN 55118
www.isd197.org

District Dispatch

Summer Youth Swim Lessons at the Aquatics Center

School District 197 is excited to offer a wide variety of youth swim lessons this summer. Lessons include Parent & Child, Tiny Tots, and Levels 1-5. Registration opens April 15 and fills quickly so mark your calendar! Three session options (Monday-Thursday): June 13-23, July 11-21, and July 25-August 4. To register, visit www.isd197.org/community/aquatics.



TPAC Selected for Best of Saint Paul Awards

For the third consecutive year, Thompson Park Activity Center (TPAC) has been selected for the Best of Saint Paul Awards in the category of Senior Citizens Information & Services. "It is a true honor to be recognized by the Best of Saint Paul Awards," says Director of Community Education Lisa Grathen. "We are so proud of the programs and services we provide to the older adults in our community and this award is a testament to the hard work and dedication of our staff and volunteers."



Adult Enrichment: Fly Fishing, Outdoor Cast Iron Cooking, and More!



Looking for a new hobby or to try something you've never tried before? Check out the Community Education Adult Enrichment offerings. For example, in the Introduction to Fly Fishing class, attendees will learn about the equipment, the fish species available to the fly angler, places to fish, and what's needed to get started. In Outdoor Dutch Oven and Cast Iron Cooking, attendees will learn to bake and cook in an outdoor dutch oven. Class will include care of cast iron. These classes and more are available at www.tridistrictce.org/adult-enrichment.

**Community Ed
Highlights**