

WALKER FINDER

SPRING/SUMMER 2022 | VOLUME 2



+ ***YOUNG BUT POWERFUL***

How Shrey Started a Community Movement
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one91
Burnsville • Eagan • Savage

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SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

GROWING STRONG TOGETHER

Each Student. Future Ready. Community Strong. The District 191 mission statement is simple compared to a lot of organizations, but it's clear and we mean every word of it.

In this issue of Wayfinder, you'll find stories that focus on those last two words: Community Strong.

We're not a collection of schools that happen to be in the Burnsville, Eagan and Savage communities. We are an integral part of those communities and those communities are an integral part of who we are. We all succeed together. We struggle together. We find our way forward together.

That's true on the big scale, and it's true on the individual level. Each of us - students, staff members, parents, business owners, elected officials and even superintendents - can make a big difference in the lives of our neighbors through service.

And do we even!

This year alone, Burnsville High School students gave more than 8,000 hours of their time to community service, representing an impact of \$238,000 in value. That's just one school and only what they recorded through the school's service program.

There is a tradition of community service in District 191 that goes back decades. In these pages, you'll see that commitment to making the world a better place is as strong as ever and includes longtime residents and our youngest students. It's one of the things that most attracted me to this community. We truly are ONE91.

Theresa Battle

Dr. Theresa Battle,
Superintendent

Young but Powerful:

The Story of Service Day Saturday and Shrey Pothini

Sometimes all it takes is a kid with an idea and a supportive community.

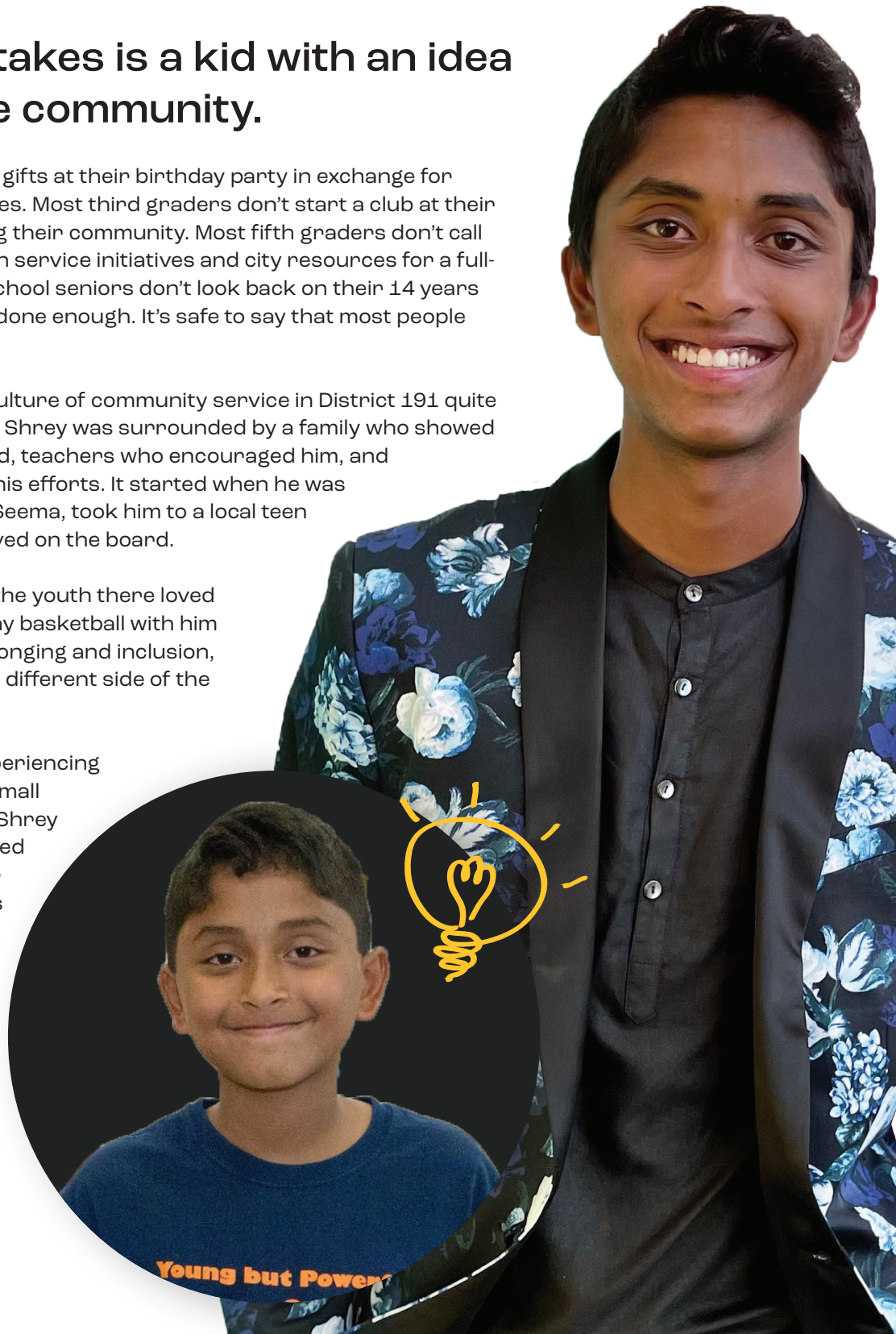
Most four year olds don't decline gifts at their birthday party in exchange for donations for teens without homes. Most third graders don't start a club at their school solely dedicated to serving their community. Most fifth graders don't call their mayor to ask for support on service initiatives and city resources for a full-blown service event. Most high school seniors don't look back on their 14 years of service and wonder if they've done enough. It's safe to say that most people are not Shrey Pothini.

No single person embodies the culture of community service in District 191 quite like Shrey. Growing up in Savage, Shrey was surrounded by a family who showed him different aspects of the world, teachers who encouraged him, and a community who rallied behind his efforts. It started when he was three years old and his mother, Seema, took him to a local teen homeless shelter where she served on the board.

"I would take Shrey with me and the youth there loved him," said Seema. "They would play basketball with him and give him a great sense of belonging and inclusion, even as a little kid. He got to see a different side of the world than most kids his age."

After seeing where the teens experiencing homelessness stayed and their small backpacks of belongings, young Shrey hatched a plan to help that involved giving them some of his dinosaur toys (he was really into dinosaurs at the time). His mother moved him away from toys and instead went through the list of requested donation items with him. One item jumped out as what he would focus his efforts on, bath towels.

"He picked towels because that was something they needed and



can be personalized with different colors and styles,” said Seema. “He had seen whole aisles of towels in stores and wanted to help get everyone served by the shelter a towel that would be their own to keep.”

At his fourth birthday party, Shrey asked guests not to bring any presents, but instead to bring a bath towel that could be donated to the teens. He received 15 towels, which was the exact amount of teens at the shelter. Knowing that the shelter had more needs and more people to serve, Shrey got to work to expand the operation. He immediately found support for his vision in the community.

“I started reaching out to businesses like my eye doctor and asked them to participate,” said Shrey.

Expanding and including other ideas

While Towels for Teens has been more of a solo project, as Shrey got older, he found ways to spread the idea of service to more students, resulting in Service Club being established at his school, Harriet Bishop Elementary. After reflecting on his recent annual towel drive which had collected 900 towels, third grader Shrey realized that other kids his age didn’t have the same exposure to needs in the community as he did. His solution was to start a club at school to help complete a variety of community service projects.

“I needed him to understand how much work goes into something like a service club,” said Seema. “I knew it couldn’t be just us but thankfully he has never been shy about reaching out to people for help.”

Shrey and Seema approached Erin Huber who was a third grade teacher at Harriet Bishop at the time to act as the staff advisor and coordinator for the new club. Huber suggested that the club be limited to the older students, but Shrey was determined to include all grade levels.

“They approached me about a club that met every other week that would be a free club for all grade levels,” said Huber. “It started small but grew quickly with 80 kids staying after school to participate with their parents and volunteers. Shrey’s ability to provide a

“Everyone was immediately willing to help out and eventually Towels for Teens started supporting youth shelters with 1,200-1,300 bath towels every year. I learned at a very young age how to ask adults for help and communicate, which built my confidence.”

“A child has to want to do something like give up his birthday presents to give items to those who need them,” added Seema. “Shrey always thought about how many towels any money or gifts could have bought him and he wanted to help more.”

space where kids can be caring and do the right thing was remarkable and it was such a wonderful group to work with.”

Service Club was the first club at the school available to all grade levels and the slogan quickly became “Young but Powerful” as students brought ideas for different projects. Club members were able to connect with different nonprofits and work on projects including packaging food for local food banks, making bracelets for kids in the hospital, making cards for senior citizens and service members overseas, and even growing and donating their hair to be used to make wigs for cancer patients.

A grant from State Farm allowed Service Club to expand to every school in the district with Shrey and the original club providing training on how to get started, but letting other schools run with it. Organizing and running a club is a lot of work for a ten year old, but Shrey stayed focused on his goals, even when it kept him from regular childhood activities.

“There were times that he had to do prep and work instead of just regular kid stuff,” said Seema.



Growing the impact with community support

When Shrey was in fifth grade, he was looking back at the past year of Service Club and had a lot to be proud of. More than 80 elementary school students had participated and the estimate was that about 10,000 people had been impacted by their work. He again started to think about how to keep going and make more of an impact, ultimately resulting in Service Day Saturday.

"I was just looking at it like, if elementary school kids are able to do this, then why aren't older people doing the same thing? A lot of these projects were super easy so I thought we could get more people to do them," said Shrey. "I thought that if we could show some of the service projects we do in a city-wide event to others, that we could get people involved. We found a similar event on the east coast and reached out to the organizers who basically told me it was way too much for a kid to accomplish, which just made me want to do it more."

Setting up a city-wide event would require more than just a highly motivated fifth grader, his supportive family, and his dedicated classmates. Shrey needed buy-in from the city, so he did what any fifth grader would do, he called the mayor to set up a meeting. Savage Mayor Janet Williams took the meeting and was immediately impressed with this kid and his big ideas.

"He had this plan to do a service day that would be run by the students that would benefit those in our community and beyond who were in need," said Mayor Williams. "He wanted to encourage residents to make volunteering a regular part of their life and I thought it was a great idea. Folks at city hall got involved, businesses donated, other organizations stepped up, and every year it kept getting bigger!"

More than 700 people attended the first Service Day Saturday on a Saturday in April 2015. The event featured different booths with students from Service Club and their families leading a variety of projects. People were able to explore options and find the project that they wanted to work on like

making crafts for children in the hospital, making dog toys or blankets for animal shelters, coloring on Meals on Wheels bags, decorating cards, and more.

Shrey says that a big part of the success of these initiatives is the support he received along the way.

"With every project that I did, there was unconditional support from all angles," said Shrey. "Principals, teachers, superintendents, city officials, and of course my parents - all said yes and encouraged me. Relationships that I have built over the years came from volunteering, and without their support, we wouldn't have been able to accomplish all of this."

Each year, Seema and Shrey would prepare an impact sheet on the event that would show the work that was completed. An example is 2017 where more than 1,000 people attended and they achieved some incredible numbers like 5,500 pounds of food donated to local food shelves and hunger relief programs, 4,000-plus lunch bags decorated with cheerful pictures for meals on wheels, 850 pairs of



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- Shrey

shoes donated to help Shoe Away Hunger, and the list goes on. The event in 2019 had more than 1,500 people attend and made an even bigger impact.

"People got more excited about the projects after seeing the kids so involved," said Mayor Williams. "We pride ourselves on being a welcoming community and we believe in community service and helping each other. Service Day is absolutely going to be sticking around in Savage."

As Shrey started high school, he found that he needed to step back a bit from some of the projects and passed the baton to his sister Meena who is in

Legacy of service

Shrey will graduate from BHS and plans to attend the University of Central Florida in Orlando where he will study zoology and film in hopes of becoming a documentary filmmaker. As he looks forward to his next step, he also looks back on the work he has done and wonders if he will be remembered or whether he did enough. While it may seem like a ridiculous thing to wonder, it's safe to say that those who have worked with Shrey have strong opinions on what his legacy is and will continue to be.

"Shrey leaves a lasting legacy of service here at Harriet Bishop and across the district with service being such a part of our culture," said Huber. "He showed that when challenges arise, kids have a voice and that you can't underestimate what even the youngest kids are capable of."

Burnsville High School Youth Service Coordinator Courtnee Floback helps students keep track of their service hours to earn credit, and prepare for college applications, but notes that Shrey has never submitted his hours and is just fully dedicated to the work.

"Shrey is an anomaly," said Floback. "His passion to do things is so innate and he brings so much energy and creativity to what students can do. I am lucky to have met such a young individual who really inspires me."

"We will remember Shrey for sure, he will have a lasting legacy here" said Mayor Williams. "He showed us that it's so important to listen to kids because that is where our future is. It is refreshing to get to watch these kids stand up and do this work and that started with Shrey."

seventh grade. The COVID-19 pandemic ultimately resulted in the 2020 Service Day Saturday being canceled, and the 2021 and 2022 events pivoted to a donation drive, but there is hope that it will return to a full fledged event next year.

"Meena has taken over leadership of projects, but in her own way, now that Shrey is involved with other activities and is preparing to move on to college," said Seema. "He inspired a lot of youth, including his sister and she is doing a great job keeping the momentum strong."



Shrey's mom has seen more than anyone his journey in service and is encouraged by what can be accomplished even by young children.

"His legacy is not to underestimate youth or elementary students," said Seema. "Kids can do amazing things and they aren't restricted by adult hesitation. He got people motivated and increased awareness of a lot of issues for students and their families."

As for Shrey, he keeps collecting towels for shelters, provides some counsel to Meena if she asks for it, and plans to stay connected with the people who helped him with these projects along the way.

"With all of this, I just wanted to show that there is no age limit on service or helping others," said Shrey. "People can overlook one person, but if you have a big passionate group of people to make change, that can speak volumes. I hope I can leave behind a little bit of the systems we put in place and I am excited to see what happens next." ■

Serving others is the

Community service is part of the culture at District 191

If you look in the schools throughout the Burnsville-Eagan-Savage School District, you will see a strong commitment to service across every building and every grade level. Our communities have ample opportunities for people of all ages to get involved in service. Whether it's helping a neighbor or a classmate, donating supplies, time or money to regional charities, or finding ways to contribute on a more global level, the commitment to service is strong here. Our students are a shining example of that.

District 191 has ways to get involved that aren't found in a lot of other districts, like the Service Club at the elementary level and our weekly food donation program. We have seen students pitching ideas for service projects like towel drives or hair donation, middle school students volunteering at food drives and leadership activities, and high school students donating their time to organize blood drives or cleanup efforts just to be able to give back.



Helping students serve others

Another way that District 191 shows a strong commitment to service is by supporting a partnership between Community Education and Burnsville High School that is responsible for connecting students with service opportunities. Courtnee Floback is the Youth Services Coordinator at BHS, where she helps students find volunteer opportunities and track their hours in pursuit of a service credit.

"Our youth are doing amazing things in terms of service that range across the board from very localized service to international projects," said Floback. "Students show that they are community givers throughout their lifetime. I love being able to show them the impact that they make."

Using a software called InnerView, students can track their volunteer hours and get an idea of the impact they are making through their service



243
One91 students



8,000+
volunteer hours



2,000
different activities

ONE91 WAY

projects. Since June 2021, 243 students have logged more than 8,000 volunteer hours at BHS doing nearly 2,000 different activities. InnerView calculates that by global standards, students have made \$238,000 of impact in the last year.

"It's so amazing to see the culture of service in these communities," said Floback. "I used to keep track of all the service hours by hand on paper, but with the new system it's great to be able to easily add hours and print a resume of their service."

Helping for the sake of helping

BHS students don't just volunteer for the sake of credit, they do it because they are passionate about it. There is a need to connect students with more service opportunities which is one of the main roles of the Youth Service Advisory Council (YSAC) at BHS. YSAC has about 25 student members who meet monthly to get different ideas for service projects and communicate those opportunities to others.

YSAC also coordinates the annual volunteer fair where local volunteer organizations come to the school to share information about the work they do with students at an event after school. Though COVID-19 has prevented the fair from happening the past few years, YSAC President Anna Tran says that students still find ways to serve.

"Volunteering and service is so incredibly important to our community," said Tran. "All of our clubs and organizations are service oriented and there is even a requirement to have volunteer hours to get a varsity letter in athletics. Sometimes kids don't even know about earning the service credit until they have all the hours!"

YSAC works with other groups within the school who are focused on service and a variety of initiatives including BursvilleStrong and the National Honor Society. BHS Senior Zoe Olson serves as Secretary for YSAC, participates with the other groups, and also organizes the annual blood drive at BHS.

Students who complete 80 hours of service over their time at BHS are eligible for a service credit for their transcript. Students also complete an essay that focuses on the impact of the work they have done and how the work impacted them."

"You can feel the passion in those essays!" said Floback. "We have such great participation across a variety of different student groups in these projects and it's really inspiring to see more service opportunities getting kids excited."

"Volunteering and service is so incredibly important to our community. All of our clubs and organizations are service oriented and there is even a requirement to have volunteer hours to get a varsity letter in athletics. Sometimes kids don't even know about earning the service credit until they have all the hours!"

"I got involved with YSAC because I really enjoyed volunteering and I saw it as a way to further my involvement and grow the impact I could make," said Olson. "I was a member of Service Club at my elementary school and did some service leadership activities in middle school and wanted to make a bigger impact in high school."

National Honor Society also spearheads some great initiatives including the Blaze Nation Station, a free store set up in the library at BHS where students can get items that they need ranging from school supplies and personal hygiene products to food and even prom dresses. Donation drives take place at different times throughout the year with bins set up in the school year round to collect donations.

"The vision was to provide everything that students might need," said Floback. "It's like a mini Target where students can get what they need with no judgment. Everything is donated by the community and students and maintained by NHS students."



Addressing the hunger gap with volunteers and service

Another program has become a favorite for students volunteering and provides food and meals for students across the district who may need additional food on the weekends. BrainPower in a Backpack has been active in the district for the past 14 years and currently provides between 600-700 bags of packed food each week to students across the district.

Students from BHS as well as the students in the BEST Transition program volunteer every Thursday to pack food items into bags and help distribute them to the different schools. The program started with help from the Burnsville Rotary Club as a way to provide students who may not have great access to food over the weekend with some options. Pamela Voigt has worked with the program for the past 12 years, including as the coordinator for the past five years.

"BrainPower in a Backpack is very specific to our community and serves only students and families in District 191," said Voigt. "It's great because anyone can participate and volunteer and do this work. It doesn't require any certain GPA, we just need help packing and distributing food."

The main fundraiser for BrainPower in a Backpack is the annual Bowls for BrainPower event where

student volunteers make bowls and pottery pieces that are sold with funds going to the program. Bowls for BrainPower usually sees about 70 students and community volunteers who participate, with schools also donating themed prize baskets that can be won during a raffle.

Hunger relief is a priority for the school district and there are other programs that help serve the community as well. The 191 Community Pantry is a pop-up food pantry that allows anyone in the community to pick up groceries with a drive up option designed to provide a family of four with eight meals. The program is serving around 100 families at bi-monthly pick ups. There is also a fresh produce distribution during farmer's market season from July to October where families can pick up a box of assorted fresh produce from local farmers and suppliers.

"We don't require sign ups or anything, we just want to be able to provide food for those who need it," said Voigt. "Volunteers aren't born, they are created, and we see a lot of students become passionate volunteers after helping provide food to their community."

Community focused future

With so many opportunities for students to volunteer and so many systems in place to allow them to get credit, serve their community, and learn about organizations, it's no wonder that such a large amount of the student population takes advantage of service opportunities.

"We help each other and we help others throughout the district," said Olson. "People volunteer because they want to, not because they have to. Students don't stop at the required 20 hours for NHS or the 80 hours for the credit, they keep finding ways to help."

The plan for the future is to continue to make volunteering and service accessible for all students and to expand opportunities for students across the district.

"I really appreciate that our district and our schools recognize that our kids are doing this kind of work and want to give them more resources," said Floback. "We can do great things in our community and we want to encourage that. There has been a pick up of students who choose to do projects that are focused on being very local, which is exciting. These kids are so willing to do this work, and I love being able to support them!" ■



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- Zoe Olson, BHS student



A Young Mind with a Great Idea

The Beginning of the Hair-riet Bishop Hair Drive

In the early days of Service Club at Harriet Bishop Elementary, the motto was always “listen to the ideas of others” to allow kids to speak up about causes that were important to them. There were a lot of projects born out of Service Club and one has been a tradition at the school that still lives on to this day, the Hair-riet Bishop Hair Drive.

It's not uncommon to see students at Harriet Bishop with exceptionally long hair for the first part of the school year. The reason for this can be traced back to a girl named Ruby and an idea she had to help others. During a service club meeting, she offered the idea of donating hair to make wigs for cancer patients, something she had done on her own before. Working with her mother, Ruby partnered local salons and organized the event, which immediately had great involvement from students.

Hair donation is a great way to support cancer



patients or others who are in need of high-quality wigs. Organizations process the donated hair, manufacture it into wigs, and then distribute the wigs to those in need, like people suffering hair loss due to cancer or other diseases.

Now part of the culture of the school, the annual hair drive is a great way to show the Service Club motto of being able to donate your time, your talent, and your treasures to help others.

Hear from two students who participated

Meena Pothini

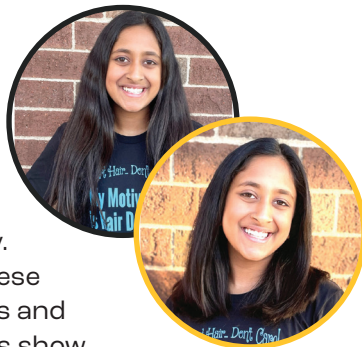
Eagle Ridge Middle School

How does volunteering make you feel?

It makes me feel very happy. I'm really glad that I have these opportunities to help others and make a difference, as well as show others how they can make a difference. It's been very cool to see people start doing their own things and having friends start their own projects with their churches, etc.

What has been one highlight of your community service work?

One of my biggest highlights is seeing the impact that I've made. Every year for my birthday I hold a body wash drive to donate to Avenues, a local homeless shelter. When I drop it off there, it really makes my day to see how happy they are to receive it and how much they needed it. It's really cool to see how the youth react when they receive these donations.



Raul Lopez Carreon

Burnsville High School


Why is it important for you to participate in the Hair-riet Bishop Project?

My dad is a big inspiration to me. He's always given back to his community, in Mexico and here. He gives to St. Jude's Hospital each month.

The first time I donated my hair, I was really nervous, but it was really heartwarming to actually help someone out. I really like helping people and making them smile.

I feel it's like what everybody wants in a way. I can't imagine what it is like for the families to experience a child losing their hair, so I feel like if I can bring some joy to the family then it's worthwhile. ■





A lifetime of service to schools, teachers and students

How Vicki Roy took volunteering as a parent to new heights in District 191

For many parents, finding time to volunteer at their child's school can be a tricky but extremely rewarding experience. Volunteers get to see firsthand what their children are working on and get to know the dedicated staff. Vicki Roy is someone who has taken volunteering to a new level over the past 40 years in District 191, first just helping out in her daughter's classroom and gradually finding her passion and representing the district through decades of service.

Vicki and her husband moved their family to Burnsville around 45 years ago thinking that it would be a great place to raise their kids. As a stay-at-home mom, Vicki wanted to use some of her time to volunteer at school. While her oldest daughter was attending Nicollet Elementary, she got started after some encouragement from a group lovingly known as "The Burnsville Ladies," first as a room mom, soon organizing the first Parent Teacher Organization for the school.

"I was fortunate to have encouragement from my husband and others to start the PTO and then the district started a PTO committee across the district

with all schools getting together," said Vicki. "We got to know one another and learned a lot and found ways to work together and benefit all schools."

She was instrumental in efforts to pass an operating levy referendum in 1988, where she had to pay about \$20 in long distance charges while on a trip out of the country to hear the results that the levy had passed. Vicki was growing her network within the school district while also making connections with a variety of leaders. She started getting asked to represent the district for different organizations through the city, county, and intermediate school district.

Vicki represented District 191 on the Community Action Council, an organization that helps people in need in a variety of ways including meals, services, and connections, as well as on the Burnsville Economic Growth Committee and the Dakota County International Trade Committee over the years. That wasn't all. Over her time volunteering for the



district, and later as a school board member, Vicki represented the district on U.S. Rep. Jim Ramstad's Education Advisory Committee, as an ambassador for public education for the Minnesota School Boards Association, Community Conversations, 360 Communities, Burnsville Promise Committee, and more locally and beyond.

Vicki ran for school board in 1992 and served for 17 years, six of them as chair. She served on other groups as well, including the metropolitan school board, always finding ways to spread the news about Burnsville and the schools in District 191. She represented the district well and taught those she worked with and her own family about using your voice and talents to make an impact. Vicki's daughter Monique Funches now teaches math at Nicollet Middle School. Growing up, she got to watch her mom try a variety of different initiatives that all involved serving schools and students.

"She started seeking out other opportunities to play a bigger role," said Funches. "We knew she was very capable of being on the school board and we were supportive. She was just such a fierce advocate for education and still is to this day. "

"I loved connecting with those folks from other districts and finding interesting ideas that we could build on and expand in our district. I feel like I get to play. Because of my opportunities in the very beginning and good encouragement, I know some people and can help to solve a variety of problems with those connections."

- Vicki Roy

Through her work with the Minnesota School Board Association, Vicki met representatives from districts all over the state and found that being able to work together and compare issues was so helpful. She also found opportunities for community partnerships after hearing from other districts.

"I loved connecting with those folks from other districts and finding interesting ideas that we could build on and expand in our district," said Vicki. "I

feel like I get to play. Because of my opportunities in the very beginning and good encouragement, I know some people and can help to solve a variety of problems with those connections."

Dr. DeeDee Currier took over as Principal at Gideon Pond Elementary, where Vicki was one of her first PTO presidents. After retiring as principal, she decided to run for a seat on the school board after Vicki left the board. Vicki helped counsel Dr. Currier through the process of running and serving on the board.

"Vicki has a very smooth style and she is able to stay calm in the waves of distress," said Dr. Currier. "She has such an inner commitment to her

community and was able to communicate and make connections that I really think benefited our kids as a board member and beyond."

Some of these connections with local business leaders led to an important initiative, Foundation 191. The foundation provides funds directly to schools for items not covered in regular funding sources, as well as the community scholarship program where more than 50 individuals and organizations give out scholarships each year.

Vicki also found ways to directly support students and staff in the schools. She volunteered to proctor ACT and AP tests at the high school and has been doing so for the past 30 years. She was able to connect with students and hear about their plans for the future, giving her work over the last decades some real meaning.

Other programs that Vicki helped to start are still going strong. Read for the Record is a national initiative that aims to have as many children as possible hear the same book on the same day.



Since 2010, Vicki has been instrumental in having community members read the book to students and keeping track of the numbers.

"She is so passionate about her projects," said Dr. Currier. "Her commitment to the district and the variety of all of the activities that she did is so incredible. I wish every school district had a Vicki Roy. Minnesota would have an unstoppable school system if every district had a Vicki."

Vicki was also tagged to help start the BHS Hall of Fame, which recognizes the achievements of people associated with the school from alumni to staff and active community members. She enjoyed getting to see how people from the school are succeeding and still being active in the community. Vicki herself was inducted in the fall of 2021 for her years of service to the school district.

"I know I can't possibly fill her shoes and even in retirement, she continues to make sure she is still involved and actively engaged," said Funches. "That speaks to her passion for what she does. She raised us with the mentality that you are part of a community and it's your job to make sure you make the community the best it can be."

While the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted a few of the ways that Vicki can volunteer she remains dedicated to continuing her work and sharing the exciting stories coming out of the district with others.

"I will volunteer as long as I can in any shape or form that I can. I hope to never stop," said Vicki. "I want to be able to do this for the rest of my life. I get so much more than I give and am so fortunate to have been a part of the district all these years." ■



People have recognized the work I have done over the years, but it's not recognizing me, it's recognizing the people I know and that I have connected to help our school. I get to have all the fun.

- Vicki Roy



Some of Vicki's achievements over the year include:

★ 1989

- NSVP Finalist for Outstanding National School Volunteer
- Community Action Council (now 360 Communities) Gratitude Award
- Burnsville Chamber and Burnsville Jaycees Outstanding Volunteer Service Award

★ 1990's

- Eleven Who Care Volunteer Service Award

★ 1992

- Outstanding Service to Burnsville Soccer Award

★ 1999

- Crystal Apple Award from Boy Scouts of America Viking Council Learning for Life Committee

★ 2000-2008

- Service to City of Burnsville Economic Growth Committee Award

★ 2002

- All State School Board

★ 2005

- National School Public Relations Outstanding Communicator Award
- City of Burnsville Community Builder Award

★ 2012

- Minnesota School Board 20 Year Service Award

★ 2014

- City of Burnsville Community Builder Award

★ 2015-2016

- John Coskran Volunteer Award

★ 2021

- Inductee into the BHS Hall of Fame

Congratulations 2022 Graduates!



More than 600 students graduated in ceremonies at Burnsville High School, Burnsville Alternative High School and the BEST Transition program during the week of June 6. We were so proud to celebrate their achievements!





In their own words:
Hear from members of the
Class of 2022 as they reflect
on their experiences in high
school and look ahead to plans
after graduation.

Extraordinary Contributions

Scan the QR code
to learn more
about the COE
Award recipients.



This spring, 10 Burnsville-Eagan-Savage School District 191 staff members and the entire Food and Nutrition Services Department were recognized for their extraordinary contributions to the One91 community. Students, parents, community members and colleagues were invited to nominate employees in seven categories and a selection committee reviewed nominations and made selections.

The 2022 Community of Excellence (COE) Awards were presented in a ceremony on April 12 at the Mraz Center. Bernie Bien, the districtwide lead nurse was awarded the Spirit of Excellence and we had the chance to ask her a few questions.

Bien joined One91 in 1992 when she became the school nurse at Hidden Valley Elementary. She also spent time at Edward Neill Elementary, M.W. Savage Elementary and Harriet Bishop Elementary before stepping into her current role as lead school nurse.



Navigating a Pandemic as a Lead School Nurse *with Bernie Bien*

Wayfinder: What did it mean to you to be presented the Spirit of Excellence award?

Bernie Bien: To me, the Spirit of Excellence award goes beyond the school nursing profession. I'm honored to have received previous awards from the Minnesota School Nursing Association, but this award represents the incredible partnership between District 191 and the community during the COVID-19 pandemic and is really special. I am humbled and honored to accept this award on behalf of this amazing collaboration and focus on public health as we navigated critical phases during the pandemic. We were all called upon to step up and our hard work is one of the reasons our district did so well in terms of COVID infection and transmission. This is a proud moment for all of us!

WF: What inspired you to become a school nurse?

BB: A lot of people would state a passion or an individual that inspired their career choice, but for me, it was more of a journey with doors opening that provided opportunities leading me down the path of school nursing. Common occupations growing up were either teaching or nursing and as a first-generation college student, I decided to go down the path of nursing on a whim. My first employment was in a spinal cord rehabilitation center which laid the foundation for the importance of health education for patients and families. I became very passionate about public health working for local counties. My passion for health education and health promotion drove me and school nursing combines both of these passions, as well as being able to provide care and education to students.

WF: How has One91 helped you grow?

BB: I have been fortunate to be mentored by amazing Health Service Directors and most recently Stephanie White as the former Director of Student Support Services. I was excited to become the lead school nurse, but my ability to lead saw unexpected challenges thanks to the pandemic. COVID has challenged me to be more comfortable with being uncomfortable. Keeping a low profile is not synonymous with a pandemic. Professionally, envisioning myself as a leader has been instrumental for me and I appreciate the opportunities I have been given by the district.

The relationships and partnerships formed through the pandemic were critical to moving forward despite challenges. I have broadened my understanding of the complexity and departments within a school district beyond health services and got to know so many passionate employees and community members that support our students.

WF: What helped your team successfully take on these challenges?

BB: The Health Services team for One91 is multi-disciplined including licensed school nurses, registered nurses, licensed practical nurses and health assistants. This amazing group of professionals serve on the front line for health in our schools every day and were able to pivot and implement new guidance often as the science rapidly changed. The dedication of this team supported me in my role as the lead. Together we were and are strong.



WF: What does a typical day look like for a lead school nurse?

BB: There is no typical day in a health office as we meet the needs of students and support their learning. Currently, I am the licensed school nurse at BEST and ECSE. A health office can resemble an urgent care setting and we never know what condition will come up. Flexibility and rapid triaging is a critical skill for a school nurse.

The pandemic has made a typical day even less possible. I continue to support, mentor and plan with the health service team for our programming. We meet weekly to collaborate and stay current on best practices. In addition to health service team activities, meetings happen within the district, community partners, local public health and the Minnesota Department of Health for purposes of knowledge sharing, planning, implementation and communication. A health office ultimately supports student's education because healthy students are healthy learners.

WF: What motivates you in your work?

BB: COVID has been challenging and at times exhausting but we keep working hard every day for the benefit of our students knowing that the district and community were united in our pandemic efforts and seeing our success inspired me. Dr. Battle, district leadership and most importantly the friendships that were developed with others supported me in my role during the challenging times. Supporting students and families with health education and promoting health absolutely motivates me. ■





One91

PATHWAYS

Around the District: Winter and Spring 2021

Stories of curiosity, self-discovery
and transformational learning
experiences in our schools.

Spark

Elementary students are inspired to approach the world with wonder.



Students in Mrs. Tracy's Pre-K class created an art gallery after participating in an art study for several weeks. They learned about so many amazing artists, like Andy Warhol, Salvador Dalí and Frida Kahlo. Kiddos were fantastic docents, too!



A viral TikTok about a “domino effect of kindness” at one school became the launch pad for Vista View’s Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) work during the month of March. Calling it March Kindness, teachers Jen Gandrud, Jen Houtman and Courteney Ivory jumped on the idea of using cereal boxes to show students how being kind can produce a domino effect.



At Rahn Elementary, students in Digital Learning Specialist Kaycie Miller’s class used critical thinking, collaboration and creativity to design an inclusive city park using Tinkercad technology. Miller also partnered with the City of Burnsville with the goal to eventually incorporate elements of her students’ projects into a real park in Burnsville!



Fuel

Middle school scholars
discover new ways to
look at the world.



Kids are in the kitchen and learning how to cook! A unique partnership with the University of Minnesota Extension brought Cooking Matters, a cooking-based nutrition education program, to District 191 Community Education's Burnsville Youth Collaborative program. Students at both Eagle Ridge and Nicollet participated in a cook-off to conclude their study.



Volunteers with Trout in the Classroom — a non-profit organization dedicated to protecting, conserving and enhancing streams, rivers and lakes and their watersheds in Minnesota — visited Eagle Ridge Middle School to introduce students in science teacher Pat Mosey's class to the beautiful art of fly tying!



Eagle Ridge and Nicollet theater groups combined to present "Annie Jr." The musical comedy follows little orphan Annie as she is determined to find her parents in 1930s New York City.



Blaze

Immersive experiences increase future readiness for high school learners.



Administrators, teachers and student leaders from various affinity groups at Burnsville High School came together to discuss topics of concern and share their thoughts as the school continues to advance its equity work. In One91 schools, each student deserves a respectful learning environment in which their identity and background is valued - contributing to successful academic outcomes for all students.

Scan the QR code to learn more about the Diversity Council.



Burnsville High School's Theatre Guild finished out Season 61 with "Shrek: The Musical!" Directed by Erika Sasseville, the local production - based on the Oscar-winning Dreamworks Animation film - brought all the beloved characters you know from the film to life on stage and proved there's more to the story than meets the ears.



On Decision Day, the day by which most U.S. colleges and universities require high school seniors who applied "regular decision" to either accept or decline their acceptance, Burnsville High School celebrated all its seniors and whatever post-high school plans they are pursuing, including trade school, 2- and 4-year colleges/universities, military, apprenticeship, employment, gap year and more!





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TO THE ISD191 RESIDENT AT:

A Culture of Community Service: We help others in One91

District 191 is known for a lot of great things, like our innovative Pathways program and dedicated staff, but other things are harder to see. There is a commitment to community service and helping each other that runs throughout our communities, and students are driving the future of what service looks like here.



Read more about Hair-niet on page 10!



I really like to help out, and I think it's really important that kids also know that you're never too young to make a really big impact. That's why I have found different ways for younger kids in elementary school to be able to help in any way that they can.

– Meena Pothini, Eagle Ridge Middle School



The first time I cut my hair, which was two years ago, it was really heartwarming to see that I actually did help someone out. Personally, I really like helping people and making them smile. I feel it's like what everybody wants in a way.

– Raul Lopez Carreon, Burnsville High School, on why it's important for him to participate in the Hair-niet Bishop Project