

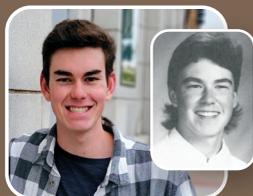
# ALEXANDRIA Alumni MAGAZINE

## Advancing rural healthcare

*Margaret (Benesh) Kalina '72*

2023 Issue  
Alexandria  
Alumni  
Magazine

*Inside...*



Legacy  
Families



Bright Stars,  
Bright Futures



Teacher  
Innovation Grants



**ALEXANDRIA**  
Public Schools

Annual Publication

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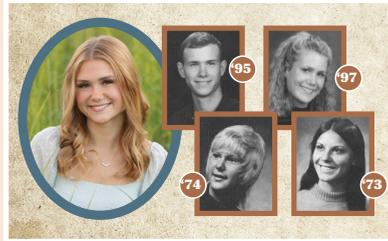
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## SUBSCRIPTIONS

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## Legacy Families 3

### Class of 2023 Legacy Students



## PAZDERNIK LEGACY

Alexis Pazdernik (2023)  
Parents Jamie ('95) & Amber (Srock, '97) Pazdernik  
Grandmother Joanne (Walker, '74) Srock  
Grandmother Tonya (Whitman, '73) Pazdernik

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### Margaret (Benesh) Kalina '72



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### Steinbring Motorcoach



## Home Grown Leaders

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The *Alexandria Alumni Magazine* seeks to share inspiring stories about our alumni, staff, school board, and students. Our educational connections are the legacy that is Alexandria Public Schools.

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## KEEP IN TOUCH

Let us know where you are and what you are doing so we can connect you to your classmates through the *Alexandria Alumni Magazine*.

We would greatly appreciate your assistance in our efforts to reach out to alumni by making them aware of this magazine. Additional copies are available at the District Welcome Center, 1410 South McKay Avenue, Alexandria, and online at [www.alexschools.org](http://www.alexschools.org).

To request a copy by mail, email your current contact information to [jjohnson@alexschools.org](mailto:jjohnson@alexschools.org) or call (320) 762-2141 ext. 4202.

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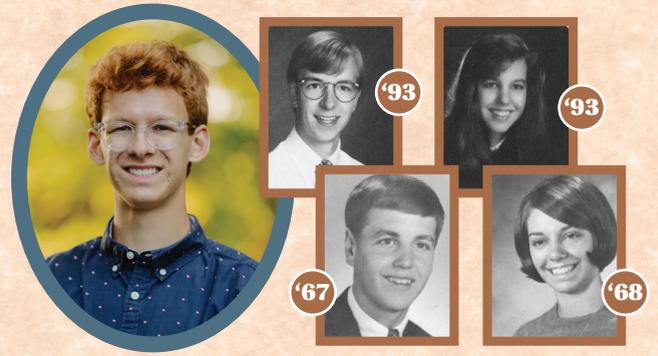
# Legacy Families

This year we honor these graduates of the Class of 2023 as legacy students. Their mothers and/or fathers, and in many cases their grandparents and/or great-grandparents, graduated from one of our high schools (Alexandria, Central and Jefferson).



## AAMOLD LEGACY

Erik Aamold (2023)  
 Parents Jeremy ('96) & Katie (Nelson, '96) Aamold  
 Grandparents Kyle ('72) & Mary (Floding, '72) Nelson  
 Great-grandfather Cyril ('44) Nelson  
 Great-grandfather Clarence ('32) Floding  
 Great-great-grandfather Noel ('14) Arnold - no photo available



## BORDEN LEGACY

Nick Borden (2023)  
 Parents Nathan ('93) and Amy (Flaig, '93) Borden  
 Grandparents Bill ('67) and Barb (Saar, '68) Flaig



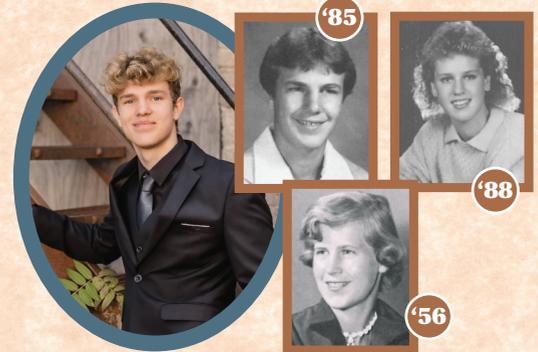
## ANDRES LEGACY

Kaitlyn Andres (2023)  
 Mother Erin ('88) Petermeier



## ARVIDSON LEGACY

Landon Arvidson (2023)  
 Mother Nicole (Fernholz, '99) Bachman



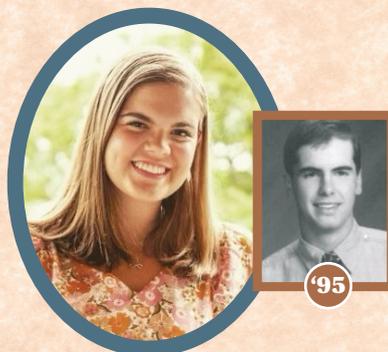
## BOSEK LEGACY

Ryker Bosek (2023)  
 Parents Jeff ('85) & Karen (Johnson, '88) Bosek  
 Grandmother Arlene (Olsen, '56) Bosek



## BREITZMAN LEGACY

Jack Breitzman (2023)  
 Mother Sarah (Hartness, '96) Breitzman



## BUGHER LEGACY

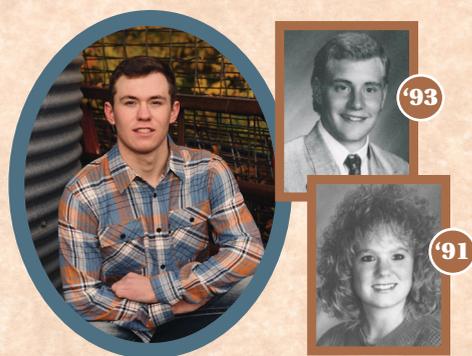
Emmalee Bugher (2023)  
 Father Justin ('95) Bugher



## CARVER LEGACY

Gavin Carver (2023)  
 Mother Jennifer (Ellwanger, '91) Carver

# Legacy Families



## CAVERS LEGACY

Colton Cavers (2023)  
Parents Sean ('93) &  
Jennifer (Langner, '91) Cavers



## FABER LEGACY

Samuel Faber (2023)  
Father Daylon ('99) Faber  
Grandfather Ray ('68) Faber



## FERNHOLZ LEGACY

Gavryn Fernholz (2023)  
Father Peter ('93) Fernholz



## GUENTHER LEGACY

Alaina Guenther (2023)  
Parents Jeff ('88) &  
Sara (Schuette, '93) Guenther  
Grandmother Ginny (Bergby, '67) Schuette



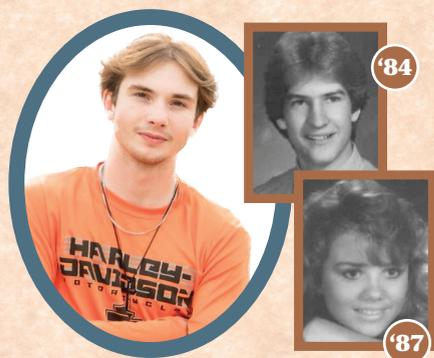
## HEDSTROM LEGACY

Janoa Hedstrom (2023)  
Mother Becky ('98) Hedstrom  
Grandfather Ben ('68) Hedstrom



## HARRISON LEGACY

Morgan Lee Clark Harrison (2023)  
Grandmother Patricia  
(McWhorter, '66) Harrison



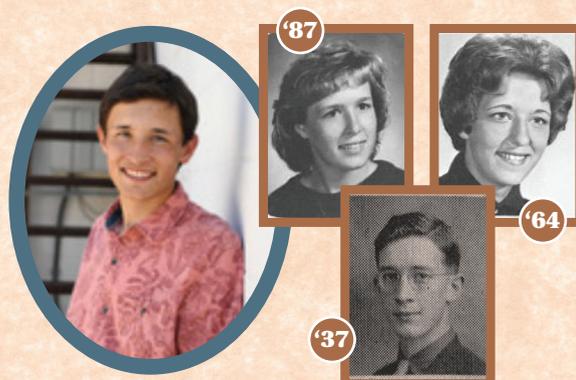
## HANSEN LEGACY

Kasey Hansen (2023)  
Parents Randy ('84) &  
Missy (Sorenson, '87) Hansen



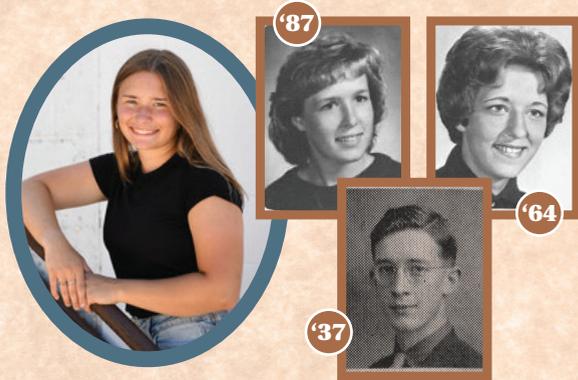
## HELMBRECHT LEGACY

Samantha Helmbrecht (2023)  
Grandfather Gordon ('65) Peterson



## PANTHER LEGACY

Luke Panther (2023)  
Mother Pamela (Boesl, '87) Panther  
Grandmother Phyllis (Herzog, '64) Boesl  
Great-grandfather Francis ('37) Herzog



## PANTHER LEGACY

Ellen Panther (2023)  
 Mother Pamela (Boesl, '87) Panther  
 Grandmother Phyllis (Herzog, '64) Boesl  
 Great-grandfather Francis ('37) Herzog



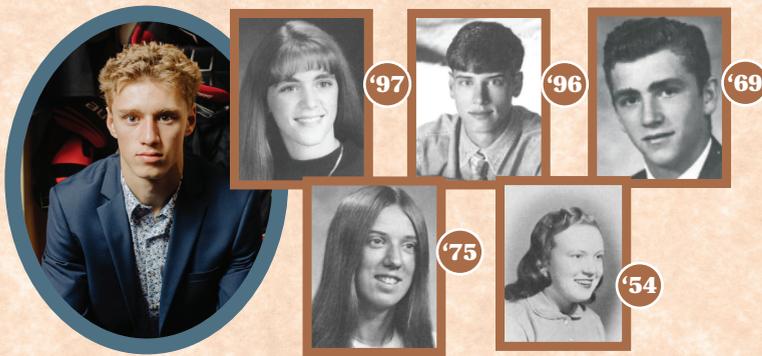
## HOVEN LEGACY

Gabe Hoven (2023)  
 Father John ('89) Hoven



## HUGHES LEGACY

Amaya Hughes (2023)  
 Mother Kristi (Maidl, '90)  
 Morlan-Hughes



## KLUDT LEGACY

Tyler Kludt (2023)  
 Mother Shannon (Vickerman, '97) Patience  
 Father Cory ('96) Kludt  
 Grandfather Brad ('69) Vickerman  
 Grandmother Vicki (Pantze, '75) Ekdahl  
 Great-grandmother Ruby (Toft, '54) Pantze



## KLIMEK LEGACY

Makayla Klimek (2023)  
 Mother Amy (Ruud, '00) Klimek  
 Father Joshua ('99) Klimek  
 Grandmother Virginia (Oberg, '76) Klimek



## KNAPPER LEGACY

Olivia Knapper (2023)  
 Mother Amber (Mace, '98) Knapper



## LARSON LEGACY

Tiffany Larson (2023)  
 Father Jamie ('93) Larson



## LOCH LEGACY

Mason Loch (2023)  
 Father Brian ('92) Loch  
 Grandmother DIAnne (Norling, '66) Loch

# Legacy Families



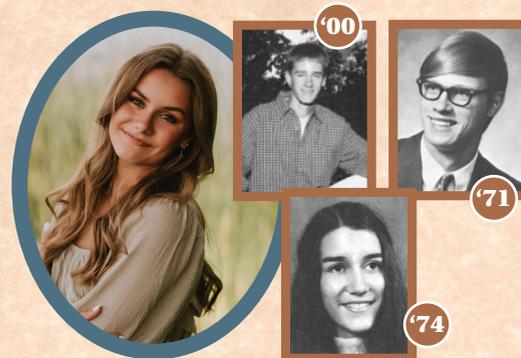
## ABELL LEGACY

Izaya Abell (2023)  
Mother Brandi (Chanay, '00) Abell



## ABELL LEGACY

Keenan Abell (2023)  
Mother Brandi (Chanay, '00) Abell



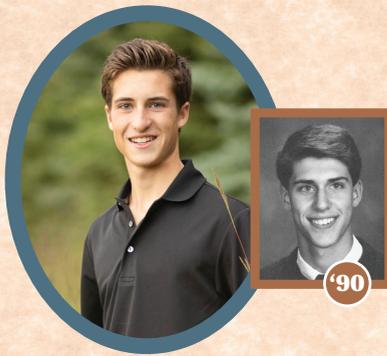
## NELSON LEGACY

Abigail Nelson (2023)  
Father Marc ('00) Nelson  
Grandparents David ('71)  
& Sue (Berger, '74) Nelson



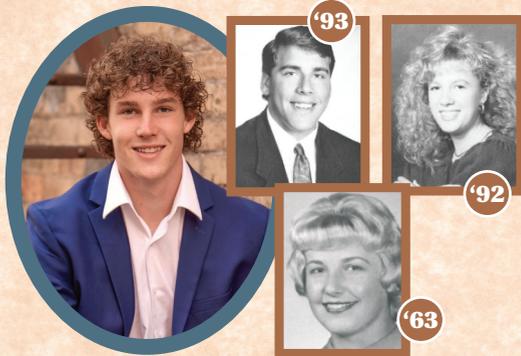
## MINNERATH LEGACY

Sophia Minnerath (2023)  
Mother Renee (Augeson, '86) Minnerath



## REINEKE LEGACY

Erik Reineke (2023)  
Father Mark ('90) Reineke



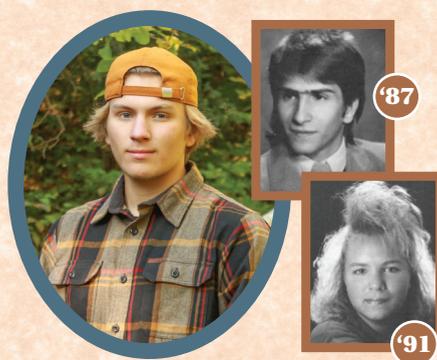
## NOETZELMAN LEGACY

Zaven Noetzelman (2023)  
Parents Brad ('93) &  
Karla (Foshaug, '92) Noetzelman  
Grandmother Karen (Hass, '63) Noetzelman



## PAZDERNIK LEGACY

Lily Pazdernik (2023)  
Father Bill ('95) Pazdernik  
Mother Amie (Grussing, '94) Shay



## RITTER LEGACY

Slade Ritter (2023)  
Parents Jay ('87) &  
Kristi (Landowski, '91) Ritter



## NELSON LEGACY

Timothy Nelson (2023)  
Father Matthew ('01) Anderson  
Grandfather Mark ('71) Anderson  
Grandmother Robyn (Lorenz, '74) Donnay



## ROERS LEGACY

Brady Roers (2023)  
 Mother Sarah (Swor, '95) Roers  
 Grandmother Darlene (Hens, '71) Roers



## ROERS LEGACY

Ethan Roers (2023)  
 Mother Sarah (Swor, '95) Roers  
 Grandmother Darlene (Hens, '71) Roers



## SAAR LEGACY

Bailey Saar (2023)  
 Father Ricky ('94) Saar  
 Mother Rebecca/Becky  
 (Collins, '94) Hoelscher



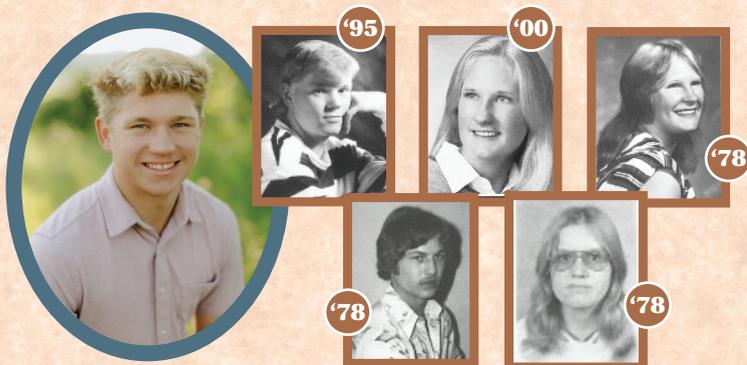
## SAYRE LEGACY

Ashton Sayre (2023)  
 Parents Kris ('97) & Crystal (Craig, '97) Sayre  
 Grandfather Ronald ('69) Craig



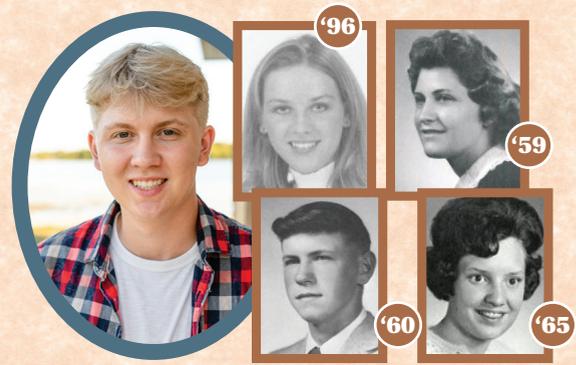
## SCHLOSSER LEGACY

Ashton Schlosser (2023)  
 Parents Troy ('94) & Kathy (Klimek, '94) Schlosser  
 Grandparents Charles ('60) & Sylvia (Forster, '63) Klimek  
 Grandparents Richard ('66) & LaNell (Guenther, '67) Schlosser



## SCHMIDT LEGACY

Spencer Schmidt (2023)  
 Parents Shaynen ('95) & Angela (Hendrickson, '00) Schmidt  
 Grandmother Laurie (Ekdahl, '78) Jensen  
 Grandparents Shane ('78) & Vickie (Whitman, '78) Schmidt



## NAVRATIL LEGACY

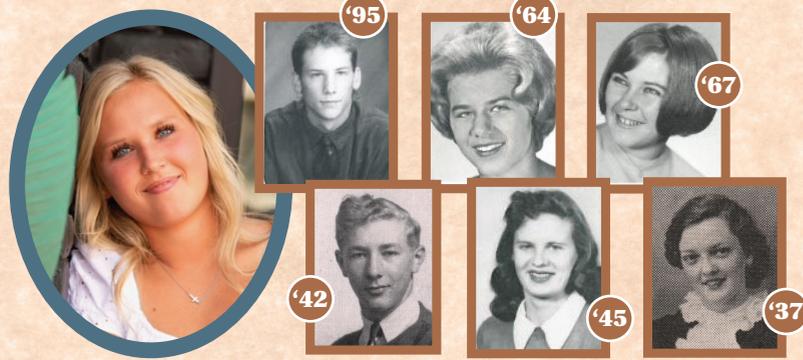
Jacob Navratil (2023)  
 Mother Jackie (Kliver, '96) Navratil  
 Grandmother Beverly (Vickerman, '59) Kliver  
 Grandparents James ('60) & Wanda (Meyer, '65) Navratil

# Legacy Families



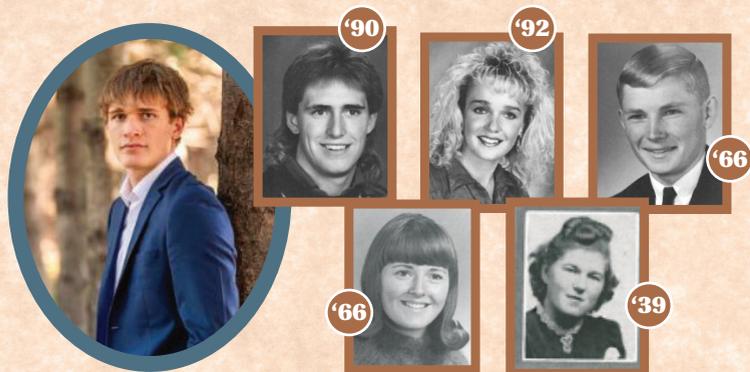
## SETTERLUND LEGACY

Sophie Setterlund (2023)  
 Mother Caryn (Schmidt, '91) Schutz  
 Grandfather Carter ('72) Schmidt



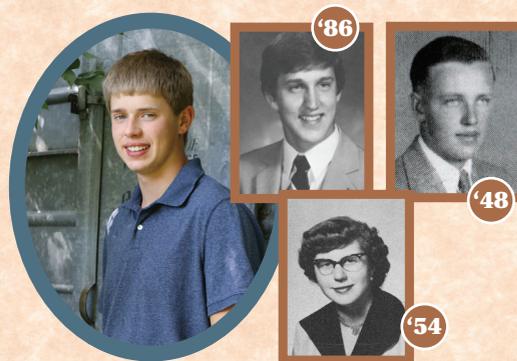
## THORSON LEGACY

Ryanna Thorson (2023)  
 Father Travis ('95) Thorson  
 Grandmother Sandra (Kuehl, '64) Thorson  
 Great-grandparents Otis ('42) & Evangeline (Helgeson, '45) Kuehl  
 Grandmother Patricia (Mrnak, '67) Klimek  
 Great-grandmother Sarah (Robbins, '37) Mrnak Nelson



## STEIDL LEGACY

Brayden Steidl (2023)  
 Parents Scott ('90) & Jennifer (McPhail, '92) Steidl  
 Grandfather Gary ('66) McPhail  
 Grandmother Janet (Waldvogel, '66) Steidl  
 Great-grandmother Evelyn (Spieker, '39) Waldvogel



## STARK LEGACY

Evan Stark (2023)  
 Father Larry ('86) Stark  
 Grandparents Norman ('48) & Iris (Schultz, '54) Stark



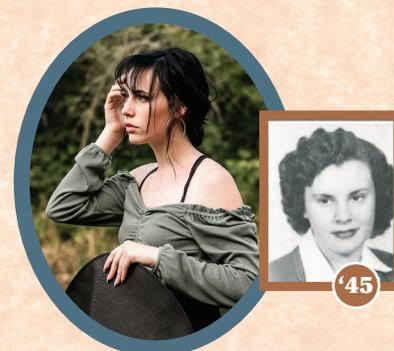
## STEUSSY LEGACY

Ella Steussy (2023)  
 Parents Michael ('88) & Faith (Freier, '95) Steussy  
 Grandmother Juanita (Thorson, '60) Freier



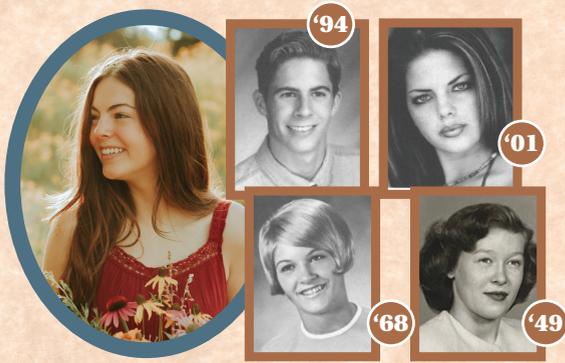
## WAGNER LEGACY

Jason (J.C.) Wagner (2023)  
 Parents Jason ('96) &  
 Sarah (Chan, '00) Wagner



## WALES LEGACY

Cheris  Melissa Wales (2023)  
 Grandmother Cheris  
 (Sexton, '45) Elmer



## SIEVE LEGACY

Kendra Sieve (2023)  
 Father Danny ('94) Sieve  
 Mother Jamie (Zarbok, '01) Sieve  
 Grandmother Cheryl ('68) Metcalf  
 Great-grandmother Dorothy (Oberg, '49) Metcalf



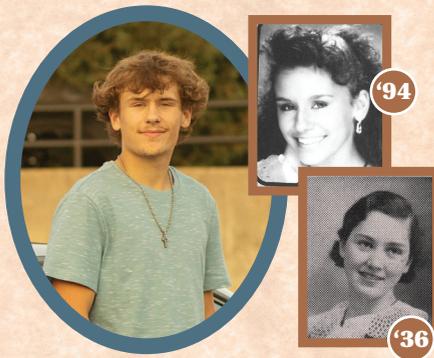
## WARREY LEGACY

Tyvan Warrey (2023)  
 Mother Amy (Loken, '96) Warrey  
 Grandparents Dan ('71) &  
 Deb (Ackerman, '72) Loken



## WIRTH LEGACY

Aurora Wirth (2023)  
 Father Tyler ('93) Wirth



## HOEPNER LEGACY

Trevin Hoepner (2023)  
 Mother Crystal (Skoglund, '94) Hoepner  
 Great-grandmother Lucille  
 (Arvidson, '36) Skoglund



## HOUGHTALING LEGACY

Madison Houghtaling (2023)  
 Grandmother Bonnie (Tuttle, '70) Gades  
 Great-grandmother Vivian (Eblen, '50) Tuttle



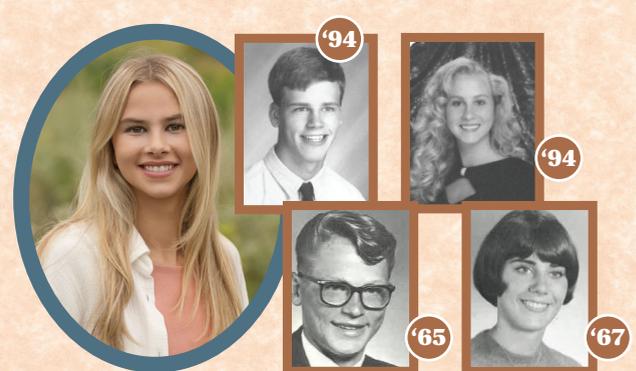
## WEGNER LEGACY

Rachel Wegner (2023)  
 Parents David ('94) &  
 Angela (Larson, '94) Wegner



## CHLIAN LEGACY

Mitchell Chlian (2023)  
 Parents Jeffrey ('98) & Holly (Rupert, '01) Chlian  
 Grandparents John ('67) & Carolyn (Yanda, '68) Chlian  
 Great-grandmother Adeline (Clarno, '40) Yanda



## WESSEL LEGACY

Miah Wessel (2023)  
 Parents Chris ('94) & Marisa (Ekdahl, '94) Wessel  
 Grandparents Gary ('65) & Nancy (Steen, '67) Ekdahl

# Continuity of care

By Colin Sokolowski  
Photography by Jennifer Guenther Photography

## Margaret (Benesh) Kalina '72 has spent her career advancing rural healthcare

For more than four decades, one person has been at the heart of healthcare services for Douglas County and beyond. And she has no intention of retiring any time soon.

Margaret (Benesh) Kalina '72 is the Director of Patient Services and Chief Nursing Officer for Alomere Health, formerly known as Douglas County Hospital in Alexandria. As a senior member of the Alomere Health administrative team, she supervises 300 nursing department employees along with cardiopulmonary services and pharmacy departments.

"My goal is to ensure my leaders have everything they need to do their job well," says Kalina. "I provide oversight with issues like scheduling, staffing and ensuring that our quality of care continues to be carried out."

That quality of care includes nursing services provided by a variety of different departments that Kalina oversees, including the emergency department, surgical services and the medical/surgical/pediatrics, obstetrics and intensive care units. It also means preparing the staff to meet the needs of the community. When respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) was hitting Minnesota hard, Kalina helped her staff study best practices in order to keep affected infants from being transferred out of Alexandria.

"One of my greatest joys is watching my nurse leaders be very passionate about their careers and loving their jobs. I have a great team," she says.

### Growing the workforce

With more than 900 employees (including the hospital, Alexandria Clinic and the Heartland Orthopedic Specialists), Alomere Health is the largest employer in Douglas County. Growing its future workforce is a responsibility Kalina takes very seriously.

"We need to continue to grow our staff," she explains. "Minnesota's population is growing very slowly. We have to keep looking not only at growing people into our profession but also



finding ways to be sure we are doing our work efficiently. If there is a better way to do the work, we need to discover and implement those approaches."

Kalina believes nursing can be an ideal career for many. And she's proud of the association Alomere Health has with Alexandria Area High School and its Academies model. She has served on an advisory board for the healthcare academy and has helped many different departments become active in exposing students to healthcare professions.

"They are doing a great job with the healthcare academy at the high school," she says. "It's an excellent resource. Students come to Alomere Health to job-shadow in many departments. It's very satisfying to show students what the possibilities are right in their hometown."

### A promising career

Kalina herself didn't immediately see the possibilities of a career in nursing when she attended Jefferson High School.

"At the time, I thought I'd be a music teacher," she says. "We had wonderful music directors in high school, and I was able to

“ I am patient centered.  
 You will always find the  
 correct answer if you look at  
 what is best for the patient.  
 - Margaret (Benesh) Kalina '72 ”



*“I can’t think of a more positive role model for professionalism, collegiality, hospitality and love for healthcare than Margaret.”*  
 - Alomere Health CEO Carl Vaagenes

have all kinds of musical experiences. Then I thought I’d go into political science. I kept changing my mind. I had relatives who were going into nursing, and it looked like a promising career. There were a variety of options, and I could have a career in any sized town. And the University of Minnesota had a wonderful program in nursing.”

She completed her Bachelor of Science in Nursing at the University of Minnesota in 1978, and worked as an obstetrics nurse, a public health nurse, a school nurse for Alexandria Public Schools and eventually became the Assistant Director of Nursing for Douglas County Hospital. Since 1991, she has held her current role. She has also earned a Master’s Degree in Public Health and a Doctorate in Business with an organization and management focus.

“Margaret has a deep passion for lifelong learning and a commitment to help develop other leaders while always promoting the field of nursing,” says Alomere Health CEO Carl Vaagenes. “I especially admire how she values relationships, and how she works with others through some very challenging circumstances at times. It’s her sense of humor and her calming, gentle, non-judgmental and consistent demeanor that make her very effective, leading others in a constantly changing environment.”

Her career at Alomere Health includes a variety of milestones. Kalina helped with the creation of a new emergency department and multi-million dollar expansions of the operating room and a new in-patient tower. She helped establish an oncology/chemotherapy unit, and helped transition to electronic health records. During her tenure, Douglas County Hospital has twice been designated as a Top 100 Hospital and as a Top 100 Rural and Community Hospital the last four out of six years.

“It’s been a great journey to see the growth of Alexandria and the growth of our hospital,” she says. “It’s amazing to see all the different specialties we are able to provide and how healthcare has changed dramatically. When I started my career, many of the conditions we would see required a long inpatient stay. Now those same conditions are outpatient visits.”

### Rural healthcare advocate

With more than 40 years of service, mostly in leadership, Kalina is admired and sought out by her colleagues for advice because of her extensive experience and expertise in her field.

“I can’t think of a more positive role model for professionalism, collegiality, hospitality and love for healthcare than Margaret,” says Vaagenes. “That’s why she has earned the respect and admiration of so many people.”

Beyond Alomere Health, Kalina is active in professional organizations and other works that advance healthcare in general. She serves on a number of advisory boards and also teaches healthcare administration courses for higher education. Her list of affiliations includes, in part, the Alexandria Technical College Advisory Council for Nursing, the American College of Healthcare Executives, the MN Organization of Leaders in Nursing and Prime West Health Systems Quality Care and Coordination Committee.

Most notably she has been appointed by the governor four times to serve on the Rural Health Advisory Committee. Its 15 members represent licensed healthcare and higher education professionals, legislative officials and consumers. Together they conduct research and advise the commissioner of health and other state agencies on important rural health issues.

### Hometown roots

Married to Darrel, a 1969 graduate of Jefferson High School, Kalina has spent nearly all of her life in Alexandria. “I grew up on a farm and married a wonderful farmer from Alexandria. My nursing career has given me so many opportunities to stay and raise my children here.”



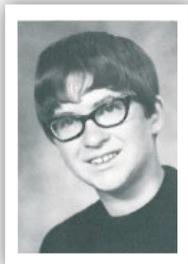
Darrel Kalina '69



*The Benesh sisters:*



*Margaret '72*



*Mary '69*



*Elsie '65*

Their family includes Patrick '00 and his wife Haley; Frank '02; Rachel '08 and her husband Michael; and six grandchildren. Patrick works at LGC Biosearch Technologies and currently serves as the chair of the Alexandria Education Foundation, Frank runs his own pressure washing business and Rachel followed her mother's footsteps into a career in nursing. Kalina also cherishes an extended family she has cultivated through her love of music.

"I play organ and piano on weekends with my three different church families," she says. Kalina shares her talents at St. Luke's Church in Garfield, Bethesda Lutheran Church and United Church of Christ in Alexandria. "Each church is a family, and they each have many talented musicians," she says.

Kalina appreciates her high school education and fondly remembers teachers who continue to make an impact on her daily life.



*2022 Family Christmas photo (Back l to r): Haley Kalina (daughter-in-law), Pat Kalina (son), Frank Kalina (son), Rachel Kitsch (daughter) and her husband Michael Kitsch (son-in-law). (Front l to r): Grandchildren Sam, Charlotte, Sophie, Grace, and Millie. New grandchild Eve arrived Jan '23 (inset).*



*The JHS Class of '72 was a class of 311 and 126 classmates came to the 50th reunion held September 16-17, 2022. Margaret is pictured front row center, green top.*



## **Class of '72 50th Reunion**

*Class of '72 50th reunion planning committee (l to r): Al Zeithamer, Colleen Lundgren Gullickson, Margaret, Gaye Emmert Moundson, Bill Meyer, Dave Anderson.*

*"We had so much fun planning and having the reunion. It makes you realize how important high school and your classmates were and are to this day."*

*- Margaret (Benesh) Kalina '72*

"I had a wonderful math teacher in Larry Ortloff and a great German teacher in Kathy Giese." Those two former teachers married, and Larry serves on the Alomere Health Board of Trustees.

"One of the great pleasures of teaching is watching students grow and prosper," says Ortloff. "Margaret has grown into a leader in this community. She's been a key to the success of Alomere Health for a very long time."

Kalina and her classmates from 1972 recently celebrated their 50th reunion, and she enjoyed serving on the planning committee.

"This is my hometown. These are my family and my friends. We are surrounded by such loving people," she says. "I see great things for Alomere Health in the future. I am sure it will continue to grow and meet our community's needs." ☆



About 20 years ago, Jon Steinbring (center) bought a motorcoach, and he took his family on excursions visiting nearly every state. "Funny how your life's desires personally turn into a great business opportunity," he says.



Jon Steinbring '76



Chase Steinbring '12



Sydney Steinbring '15

## Steinbring Motorcoach -- a family driven to satisfy customers

About seven miles northwest of Alexandria, the town of Garfield is home to 350 residents, Garfield Elementary School and Steinbring Motorcoach -- a third generation business which is well on its way to welcoming its fourth generation of leadership.

A 1976 graduate of Jefferson High School, Jon Steinbring carries on the heritage started by his grandfather Andrew who started selling vehicles with motors more than 100 years ago. Jon's father Bob took over the business in the mid-1960s, and Jon started the motorcoach company in 2008.

"Ever since I was a young boy I knew I was going to be a car dealer," says Jon. "That was always my plan."

Today, Steinbring Motorcoach is recognized as one of the nation's leading Newmar dealerships -- a premier producer of luxury motorhomes, RVs and class A motorcoaches. Each year, Newmar awards a diamond award to its top three dealerships for sales and customer satisfaction. Steinbring Motorcoach consistently nabs the honor.

"It's such a fun product to sell," he explains. "Most of our customers are already committed to purchasing a coach, so there's no arm-twisting. Just show them the features, know what you're talking about and it all falls into place."

A typical customer comes from the Midwest, but more than half travel from far away. One day, their showroom welcomed a man from Nova Scotia, a couple from California and a woman from Texas. The average buyers are in their early '60s, close to retirement, love traveling and have been successful in their career -- which also describes Jon pretty well, with one exception.

"I'll never retire. My biggest hobby is work," he says. "My biggest challenge is to find a younger generation to take this company into the future. We need to find quality people on the management side, the sales side and the technician side."

Fortunately for Jon, his children Chase '12 and Sydney '15 have chosen to take on that challenge. After earning college degrees in business and finance, they returned to Alexandria to manage the operations. Today, Chase serves as the business manager and Sydney is the service manager.

"Our parents were awesome. They always said if you want to be part of the business, do it because you want to. Don't feel like it's something you need to do," says Chase.

"I always thought about coming back to the dealership," says Sydney. "Alexandria is such a great community with its schools, a lot of businesses and activities. And it's fun to work with people you like. A lot of families don't get to see each other every day."

Their grandmother used to say the one meal of the year when business talk was forbidden was Christmas dinner. For Jon, Chase and Sydney, that proved difficult to honor.

"It's nice to be part of a legacy. It's something to be proud of doing things right, having integrity and being honest. I think a lot of businesses in our community operate that way too," says Chase. ☆

*"I love my business," says Jon. "Now to have both my son and daughter here, I'm such a fortunate person to have that as my life."*

# Bright Stars, Bright Futures!



The AAHS one act play cast and crew represented section 8AA at the MSHSL State One Act Play Festival where they were one of three plays to earn the Spotlight on the Arts, or "Star" award, which recognizes the best plays of the day. This was the seventh consecutive star rating for AAHS one act play.



The Ag Mechanics Team (l to r: Josiah Opp, Nic Hiles, Noah Beulke and Lars Dropik) competed at the MN FFA State Convention finishing 2nd overall, with Lars Dropik placing 1st individually and earning a Gold ranking, Noah Beulke and Josiah Opp receiving Gold rankings and Nic Hiles receiving a Silver ranking.

Meet ten seniors from the Class of 2023 full of promise and hope – ready to make their mark on the world!

## Bright Stars,

### Erik Reineke

- Triple "A" Academics, Arts and Athletics Award Nominee
- 3-sport athlete: Team Captain Boys Swimming & Diving; Soccer; Tennis
- Competed at State Boys Swimming & Diving in 5 events. All-state honors in 4 events - 200 Medley Relay, 50 yard freestyle, 100 yard freestyle, and 400 yard freestyle relay
- All state award Swimming & Diving
- Gold Academic Award Scholar Athlete earned a GPA of 3.6 to 4.0
- Orchestra
- DECA Officer
- DECA ICDC Finalist; 2nd place
- Attending University of MN - Twin Cities; Biology/Dentistry

### Parker Zwach

- Fall Musical Leading Roles "Little Women"; and "Chicago: Teen Edition"
- Featured Dancer for Spotlight on Hennepin
- One Act Play State past 4 years
- Concert Choir/Carolers
- National Honor Society
- Attending New York University: Tisch School of Fine Arts; Drama major; BFA in Acting

### Berg Swanson

- Nordic Ski
- Boys Cross Country
- Perfect Score ACT
- Knowledge Bowl
- Attending Liberty University; Economics

### Brynn Kosters

- Team Captain Girls Cross Country; Section Champs & 2nd Place State Team Finishes
- Girls Track and Field Captain
- DECA President
- 1st place DECA state; Individual Role Play
- 2 time DECA ICDC qualifier
- Carolers
- 4 time Fall Musical Participant
- 2 time MSHSL One Act Play Star Award Winner
- NHS Exec Bd Member
- Triple "A" Academics, Arts and Athletics Award Nominee
- ExCEL nominee
- Attending University of WI - Madison; Political Science & Legal Studies (Pre-Law)

### Spenser Chinn

- Wind Ensemble Section; Leader
- Marching/Jazz Band Section Leader
- Pit Orchestra - Fall Musical
- Alexandria Mountaineers Captain
- Varsity Nordic Skiing
- AAHS Ambassadors
- National Honor Society
- Cyrus Scholarship Recipient
- Attending University of Minnesota - Twin Cities; Mechanical Engineering



# Bright Stars, Bright Futures!



The AAHS Boys and Girls Cross Country Teams each captured Section 8AA Championships advancing to the state competition where the Girls' Team finished 2nd at State.



The Alexandria Area High School Girls Basketball team clinched the Section 8AA title and added to an incredible season with a 4th place finish at state.



AAHS DECA sent 39 students to compete in the DECA International Career Development Conference with 23 out of 39 students qualifying for finals at ICDC. Congratulations to Alexa Eggebraaten, Sam Faber and Grace Wink for bringing home a 2nd place glass trophy.

## Bright Futures!

### Class of 2023 Motto

*"If your dreams do not scare you, they are not big enough."*

- Ellen Johnson Sirleaf

#### Aisling O'Connor

- Girls Golf Captain
- Girls Golf Team State Champions (2021 & 2022)
- AP Scholar
- DECA President
- 5 time ICDC Qualifier
- Key Club President
- A-Club President
- Student Council Executive Board
- National Honor Society
- AAHS Ambassadors
- Attending Columbia University: Economics and Political Science

#### Henry Ramstorf

- Boys Hockey Assistant Captain
- Boys Hockey and Soccer
- National Honor Society
- 2nd Place State DECA Financial Operations Research (2023)
- 6th Place ICDC DECA Financial Operations Research (2023)
- 2 Time Hockey Section 6A Champion, and State Qualifier
- Attending University of Minnesota - Twin Cities; Biology, Society, and Environment

#### Alexa Eggebraaten

- Team Captain Girls Soccer; State Qualifier
- 1st place State DECA Financial Operations Research (2023)
- 4th place State DECA Marketing Management Team Role Play (2023)
- 2nd place ICDC Competition Financial Operations Research (2023)
- National Honor Society
- DECA President
- 1st place Business CAPS Shark Tank Competition
- AAHS Ambassadors
- Attending University of Minnesota - Twin Cities; Marketing

#### Logan Tung

- Boys Swimming & Diving
- 2022-23 All-State Honors 4 events - 200 Medley Relay, 200 Individual Medley, 100 Breast, 400 Freestyle Relay
- Pool Records 200 Medley and 400 Free Relay
- CLC All Conference
- Back to Back section champion 200 Individual Medley & 100 Breast
- State competition since 8th grade
- All State since sophomore year
- Future plans enlist in the Navy to be a Aviation Rescue Swimmer

#### Charlotte Lempka

- Volleyball
- State Girls Basketball Participant
- Central Lakes Conference Leadership Day
- Culinary Arts III / Cardinal Cafe
- State DECA 1st place, Buying and Merchandising Operations Research (2023)
- ICDC Finalist, 5th place, Buying and Merchandising Operations Research (2023)
- Attending University of Jamestown; Business Administration w/a marketing concentration and a minor in sports communication
- Full tuition scholarship to play volleyball



## Home Grown Leaders



### Alumni Aaron Crowser '96

#### Same-day care delivered by a familiar face: Aaron Crowser '96 returns home as an express care physician

As a high school freshman, Aaron Crowser shadowed a doctor at the Alexandria Clinic during a 9th-grade career day. By then, he knew he was already on the path to a career in medicine.

"In school, I enjoyed science and biology," he says. "To me, becoming a doctor was a more tangible way to see how you can apply that knowledge and passion to positively influence other people. My teachers, coaches, music directors, church leaders -- all were very supportive of my goals."

*"Becoming a doctor was a tangible way to positively influence other people."*

A 1996 graduate of Jefferson High School, Crowser received his medical degree from the University of Minnesota and completed his residency training at La Crosse-Mayo Family Medicine in Wisconsin. He practiced family medicine and urgent care for 10 years with Mayo Clinic Health System in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, before deciding to return to Alexandria in 2018. Today, he leads Alomere Health Express Care clinic for non-critical emergencies.

"Five years ago, my wife Holly and I had three young children, and we started to ask ourselves where we wanted our kids to be raised and go to school," he explains. "I had a great experience going to school in Alexandria, and this job was open at that time. It all seemed to fall into place."

Crowser says he's enjoying a rewarding career in acute care, but it's not exactly where he predicted landing.

"When I started out in medicine, I had an idealistic image in my mind," he admits. "I was picturing a country doctor who did it all, from delivering babies to caring for children and adults and then supporting those who are dying -- the full spectrum. There are very few of those people left."

Throughout his career, Crowser has become adept at taking his personal passions and tying them to medicine. As an outdoor enthusiast whose goal is to visit the highest point in each state, that means practicing wilderness medicine and studying topics like how bodies react in outdoor survival mode. As an aviation buff who holds a pilot's license, that means providing aviation physicals required for pilots of light crafts all the way up to commercial airline pilots.

Like most healthcare providers, Crowser and his colleagues endured some considerable professional and societal challenges during the pandemic. But he says he's grateful he navigated those obstacles in Alexandria.

"There were some pretty rough months," he admits. "But I work with some great people who all have a wonderful heart for taking care of patients and for meeting the needs of our community."

For Alomere, that passion includes partnering with Alexandria High School's Academies, offering pre-healthcare trainings, demonstrations and simulations.

"That partnership is valuable for the students and for us," Crowser says. "We need more well-trained nurses, radiology techs, doctors and PAs. The more kids we can get interested in healthcare, the better it is for our community."

Crowser is now the father of three Alexandria Public Schools students with Andrew (junior) and Grace (freshman) at Alexandria Area High School and Caleb a seventh-grader at Discovery Middle School. As an alumnus and a parent, he appreciates that the tradition of excellence continues in the schools today.

"We've all seen across the country lately how public school administrators, teachers and school board members have come under attack," he says. "As a community, we are so fortunate that Alexandria is full of wonderful people who are teaching our students and running our schools and on our school board. They are doing an excellent job." ☆



## Alumni Nicole Mulder '91

### Theatre L'Homme Dieu a perfect fit for Nicole (Tharaldson) Mulder '91

It's said that discovering one's passion is the secret to a fulfilling life. For Nicole (Tharaldson) Mulder '91, that passion is the arts, and she found it at Jefferson High School.

Although she's never acted on stage, Nicole was involved in high school theater productions in other ways. "I was in the pit," she says. "I usually played piano and sometimes percussion."

But it wasn't only musical theater that Nicole was involved in during her time at Jefferson. She also had roles in A club, Earth Day club, pep band, marching band, choir and carolers. "I participated in everything I could," she says. "Whether it was student events or sporting events, I just kind of embraced it."

Beyond participating in high school activities, she also volunteered. And it was through volunteering that she had her first encounter with Theatre L'Homme Dieu.

"That's how I started out," Nicole explains. "I volunteered there when I was a teenager, and I was able to see the shows for free. It's a really great way to be introduced to theater."

At the time, Nicole never thought that theater would turn into her career, and by the time college came around, she still hadn't quite made up her mind about what she wanted to do.

"I went to college on a piano scholarship, so I thought I might have a career in music. Then I switched to English, and then I thought I might teach, which I didn't like." After teaching, she believed she would go to law school instead. "I worked at legal services for a couple years while I went through my last two years of college." That, she claims, prepared her more adequately for a career in business than it did for a legal career.

Theatre L'Homme Dieu ended up being the perfect way to combine many of her interests. In 2015, Nicole was invited to be part of the Board of Directors for Theatre L'Homme Dieu, and in 2016 she accepted the "temporary" role of the Executive and Artistic Director. She ended up loving it, and has been doing that since.

"Theatre L'Homme Dieu is unlike any other place. It's so easy to just leave the rest of the world behind you, to get in there and say 'I'm going to have an experience here,'" she says. "What I encourage people to do at the theater is to allow it to change you."

Through her role, Nicole is able to choose which shows to put on and what professional shows to bring to the Alexandria area during the summer months. She calls Theatre L'Homme Dieu a community asset that is known regionally, but she'd love to see more people out there experiencing the theater. "What I would offer is an invitation: come out and see the theater."

Nicole says that she was very lucky to be given the opportunities she has had. "Theatre L'Homme Dieu showed me things I didn't know. It has the ability to change your life if you allow it to."

Yet, during her school years, there was only one reason that Nicole started volunteering there. It was because of the invitation her friends extended to her. "Even with Theatre L'Homme Dieu, I didn't know what was out there," Nicole says. "My friends and I just sort of started ushering. It was because one of my friends invited me to usher with her. That was it."

Nicole claims that being invited to do something can change your life. "Take that, and apply it to anything in your life. Sometimes it just takes an invitation." ☆

*"What I encourage people to do at the theater is to allow it to change you."*

## Christie (Chlian) Converse '93



Class of 1993  
yearbook photo

Christie and her husband Sam ('93) enjoy family time with their sons (back l to r) Parker, grade 10, Colton, grade 11, and daughter Rylin, grade 6.

### What were the highlights of your own K-12 experience in Alexandria Public Schools?

I attended Garfield Elementary School where I made some wonderful memories and friendships! At Central Junior High and Jefferson Senior High School I was part of the gymnastics team, ran track and field, and joined the swimming team as a diver for a couple of years. I also played clarinet in the band all the way through senior year and have many wonderful memories from marching band, including marching in the Opryland parade in Tennessee and in Washington DC on the fourth of July! I was also a part of a few groups such as Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Youth Encountering Awareness club, National Honor Society, and the Big Brother-Sister match program. I also have great memories from attending leadership retreats as a captain of the gymnastics team. APS gave me a lot of opportunities to develop leadership skills and work with children, as well as build a strong academic foundation. I am looking forward to our 30 year high school reunion this summer!

### What/who inspired you to pursue a career in public education?

I always loved spending time and working with children. I am the oldest in my family and had many opportunities to babysit. I went to Gustavus Adolphus Collogee where I was able to continue my gymnastics career and take part in a strong education program. I loved the classes I took and enjoyed all of my practicums and student teaching experiences! I wanted to become a teacher because I wanted to help kids be the best they can be and inspire a lifelong passion for learning!

### What did it mean when you were raising your children and bringing them through the same educational system that you were part of?

I was hired at Milona Science Magnet School in 2002 and have been there ever since! All three of my children went to Milona and I absolutely loved being with them at school and being their 2nd grade teacher! Getting to smile and wave at them during lunch,

seeing them interact with friends and other teachers, watching them grow and learn on a daily basis was something I will always treasure! Our oldest will be a senior next year, I can't believe how the time has flown! Our middle child will be a junior and our youngest will be in 7th grade! I feel so proud of this school district, as both my parents and my husband and I all graduated from Jefferson Senior High!

### What is the best part of working for Alexandria Public Schools?

Two things come to mind...team and opportunity! I love my team at Milona! Our team has a passion for kids, works hard to inspire lifelong learning, and is dedicated to integrating environmental education! I have also had the opportunity to be a part of district wide teams such as the elementary literacy team, literacy review team, building leadership team, our local union, and most recently, our technology team. I have had many wonderful opportunities to grow as a teacher and leader with APS. I love all the opportunities for learning that our district provides and I appreciate our district's dedication to putting kids first! ★

## THANK YOU!

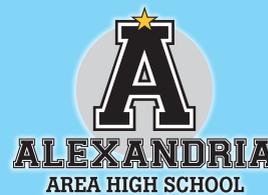
Please join us in thanking our 2022-2023 retirees for their service and dedication to the students and families of Alexandria Public Schools.

<b>Kendon Anderson</b> .....28 years Custodian	<b>Barbara Hedstrom</b> .....20 years Paraprofessional
<b>Lorie Arneson</b> .....32 years Kitchen Manager	<b>Mary Hegland</b> ..... 10 years High School English Teacher
<b>Julie Bany</b> .....24 years Paraprofessional	<b>Kristin Kuennen</b> .....34 years Elementary Teacher
<b>Lisa Colen</b> .....34 years Cook	<b>Laurie Lahman</b> .....20 years Secretary
<b>Jeff Dewanz</b> .....26 years Teacher	<b>Arlene Ludwig</b> .....37 years Secretary
<b>Teresa Evink</b> .....6 years Cook	<b>Tammy Nelson</b> .....8 years Reading Intervention Teacher
<b>Lori Faust</b> .....21 years Paraprofessional	<b>Wayne Oberg</b> .....15 years Custodian
<b>Susan Flynn</b> .....16 years Reading Intervention Teacher	<b>Gerald Olsen</b> .....8 years Bus Driver
<b>Doreley Glisson</b> .....4 years Paraprofessional	<b>Therese Serum</b> .....40 years Elementary & Middle School Teacher
<b>Darla Harstad</b> .....31 years Elementary Teacher & Principal Teacher Mentorship Program Coordinator	<b>Julie Shulstad</b> .....32 years Elementary Teacher
<b>Nanette Haugen</b> .....16 years Elementary Teacher/ Literacy Instructional Coach	<b>Todd Skramstad</b> .....23 years Custodian
	<b>Karen Tolifson</b> .....4 years Paraprofessional



Fall of 2023 will mark the start of our 10th year at Alexandria Area High School. We will be celebrating during our Open House to kick-off the year. Please stop by and visit!

**WHERE: Alexandria Area High School**  
**DATE: Wednesday, August 30, 2023 • TIME: 5-7:30p.m.**



## Opening Our Doors to the Future

In 2022, Alexandria Public Schools proudly completed two facility projects. The **Early Education Center addition** opened in October 2022. The addition is 9,539 sq ft and includes a two-classroom addition for early childhood programming, flexible spaces for education, party rooms, and a large open space designed for the Shenanigans indoor playground which includes a climbing wall and Laser Tag.

The **Discovery Middle School addition** opened in November 2022. The addition is 30,000 sq ft and includes a two-station gym to support educational, athletic and community needs as well as a dedicated Gymnastics Center with tumble room, and flexible meeting spaces. Both projects eliminated lease obligations for the school district and will support growing school and community needs.



*Early Education learners, parents and staff cut the ceremonial ribbon at the open house event.*



*Celebrating a new two-station gym and dedicated Gymnastics Center.*



*Alexandria Cardinal gymnast, Mia Haugen, competes in floor exercise in the new Gymnastics Center.*

# CLASS REUNIONS

**Jefferson High School  
Class of 1978  
45th Reunion**

**Date:** Saturday, July 22, 2023

**Where:** The Elks, 115 15th Ave W #2883, Alexandria  
Reunion details and other information can be found on the JHS Class of 1978 Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/59858146012/>

**Jefferson High School  
Class of 1979  
45th Reunion**

**Events:** Friday, May 31, 2024 -

“evening” informal get together at Eagles  
Saturday, June 1, 2024 - Golf tournament  
TBA; evening event 7pm Broadway Ballroom



# Education Foundation News

## Your Support Impacts Classrooms

### Congratulations to our 2023-24 Teacher Grant Recipients!

**Lego Spike Prime Robots**  
 School: Discovery Middle School  
 Teacher: Jon Hennen  
 Amount Awarded: \$4,939



**Orff Instrument Music Class Enrichment**  
 Schools: Garfield, Miltona, & Carlos Elementary Schools  
 Teacher: Ray Noble  
 Amount Awarded: \$5,300



**3D Printer Farm**  
 School: Alexandria Area High School  
 Teacher: Austin Aker  
 Amount Awarded: \$1,200

**Instruments for Music Class Enhancement**  
 School: Discovery Middle School  
 Teacher: Lisa Blevins  
 Amount Awarded: \$6,200



**Grab & Go's**  
 School: Miltona Science Magnet School  
 Teacher: Amy Revering  
 Amount Awarded: \$6,000

**Outdoor Makerspace**  
 School: Carlos Elementary School  
 Teacher: Kristen Schmidt  
 Amount Awarded: \$3,624.67

**Engineering Derby Cars in Innovation Lab**  
 School: Discovery Middle School  
 Teacher: Lukas Gotto  
 Amount Awarded: \$1,875



**Rock Climbing Walls**  
 Schools: Garfield Elementary & Carlos Elementary  
 Teacher: Riley Gustafson  
 Amount Awarded: \$12,000



The Alexandria Education Foundation supports creativity in the classroom through our Teacher Innovation Grants. Since 2009 and through the generosity of our donors, we have awarded over **\$486,000** in grants to teachers in Alexandria Public Schools. This year, AEF awarded **\$41,138.67** in Teacher Grants to fund eight projects that will impact students PreK-12. AEF Teacher Grants help our teachers bring more creativity, innovation, and inspiration into classrooms.

## 2023 Hall of Fame inductees announced

The AEF Board is looking forward to celebrating these inductees on September 15, 2023: **Dr. Christina Krist**, Class of '05; **Michael J. Anderson**, Class of '85, and **David "Dave" Dittberner**, Class of '51.

The Alumni Hall of Fame was created in 2007 to honor graduates or any staff or faculty member who has earned distinction or achievement in their professional field. The Hall of Fame recipients will be inducted at the Hall of Fame celebration on Friday,

September 15, 2023. They will be invited to be grand marshals during the Homecoming Community Parade later that same day, 4:00 p.m.

"We are excited for our 16th annual Hall of Fame celebration this fall," said Kelli Minnerath, Foundation executive director. "We look forward to honoring the legacy of achievements of these three very special individuals."

Complete biographical information on the honorees and celebration event details will be announced in July and available on the Alexandria Education Foundation's website at [www.alexeducationfoundation.org](http://www.alexeducationfoundation.org)

If you know of a deserving alum or staff member, please let us know! The nomination form may be found on the Education Foundation's website, and nominations are accepted year-round.



Dr. Christina Krist  
Class of 2005



Michael J. Anderson,  
Class of 1985



Dave Dittberner,  
Class of 1951



## Helping students attain college degrees

The Foundation wants to build a financial cornerstone for investing in students in Alexandria Public Schools. One of the ways they do that is by helping students attain college degrees.

Through a competitive scholarship process, the Foundation financially supports students in the transition from high school to 2 and 4-year colleges. The purpose is to make the cost of a college education more affordable for students.

Since 2009, \$73,400 has been awarded to help 73 students further their education.

Visit our website for details on these continuing education scholarships for graduating seniors.



Alexa Johnson (c) and Erik Reineke (r) were recipients of the Class of 1988 Scholarship, each receiving a scholarship in the amount of \$2,200.



Amaya Hughes (r) was the recipient of the Ken and Jeanne Howell Scholarship in the amount of \$1,000.



Ashton Schlosser (r) was the recipient of the Bill Flaig Community Service Scholarship.



Quinn Wheelcor (r) was the recipient of the Kim Jenson "Lift Her Up" Scholarship in the amount of \$1,000.



Kelly Johnson (m) and Alexis Eggebraaten (r) were the Seeds for Future Learning Klimek Family Scholarship recipients, each awarded a \$400 scholarship.



### AEF MISSION

The Alexandria Education Foundation is committed to supporting student excellence and expanding learning opportunities in Alexandria Public Schools.

### CONNECT WITH US

We want to keep you informed and hear from you. Visit [AlexEducationFoundation.org](http://AlexEducationFoundation.org) for upcoming events and to sign up for our newsletter. Become a fan and stay connected with the Alexandria Education Foundation.



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### CONTACT US



Funding for the AEF Teacher Grant Program is made possible by donor contributions to the Alexandria Education Foundation. Donations can be made online at [www.alexeducationfoundation.org](http://www.alexeducationfoundation.org), or by mail to AEF, P.O. Box 308, Alexandria, MN 56308.

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Alexandria, MN 56308

[info@alexeducationfoundation.org](mailto:info@alexeducationfoundation.org)

Visit us at:  
[AlexEducationFoundation.org](http://AlexEducationFoundation.org)

Our vision is to be a premier education foundation that significantly impacts Alexandria students.

# Alumni Marketplace

## Welcome to the Alumni Marketplace!

We greatly appreciate the advertising support of these Alexandria alumni affiliated businesses that help make this publication possible. If you are interested in advertising opportunities in the 2024 issue for your Alexandria alum business, please contact Jill Johnson at [jjohnson@alexschools.org](mailto:jjohnson@alexschools.org).

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## Investing in our future.

Every semester, our providers teach medical procedures like applying casts, child birthing, intubation, and suturing at the Alexandria Area High School. Just like you, we know investing in our youth is an investment in our own success. A community that helps each other, is just another reason why it's better here.

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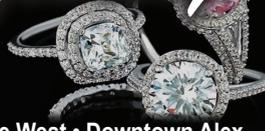
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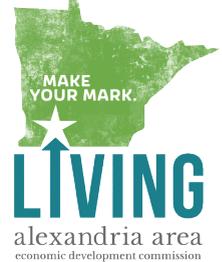
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**Friday, September 15**

- Hall of Fame Celebration, Broadway Ballroom, 12:00 p.m.
- Community Parade, downtown Alexandria, 4:00 p.m.
- Football Game, Alexandria Cardinals vs. St. Cloud Tech, 7:00 p.m. kick-off



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