



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MEDIA ALERT – Thursday, November 16, 2023

Fargo Public School District #1

SOUTH HIGH SCHOOL HALL OF FAME INDUCTION CELEBRATION

South High School will celebrate the accomplishments and community impacts of four graduates in a Hall of Fame induction celebration.

WHAT: South High School Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony
WHEN: **Tuesday, November 21** – Social at 5:30 p.m.; Ceremony and Dinner at 6 p.m.
WHERE: South High School, 1840 15th Avenue South, Fargo
CONTACT: **Todd Bertsch**, South High School principal, 701.446.2004 or bertsto@fargo.k12.nd.us for more information

South High School will hold an induction celebration for its 2023 Hall of Fame class on Tuesday, November 21 at South High School. The event will include a social at 5:30 p.m. followed by the induction ceremony and dinner at 6 p.m.

The South High School Hall of Fame Class of 2023 includes:

- David Johnson – Class of 1968
- Dr. Maria Burkland-Balintona – Class of 1989
- Dr. Susie Schraufek Westerlund – Class of 1982
- Dr. Kendra Lystad – Class of 2004

Inductee Biographies:

David Johnson – Class of 1968

David Johnson has perhaps the most unique high school resume among inductees in the Fargo South Hall of Fame, having excelled in four sports while attending three schools. Johnson spent his sophomore year at Fargo Central, which burned down in 1965; his junior year at Fargo North, where students attended in split shifts; and his senior year at South, as a member of the school's first graduating class.

No matter the school, venue or sport, coaches say Johnson was one of the best local high school athletes in the last half-century.

“The teachers and students respected him not only for his athleticism, but his dedication to always doing his best not only on the basketball court but in the classroom and community,” says Karl Groth, his coach at South.

The late Jerry Harter was a legendary coach who was at South when the school opened in 1967. Harter said in 2019 that while he worked with several outstanding athletes during his tenure at South, “none was ever better than Dave Johnson.”

Harter and others cited Johnson’s 100-yard touchdown run, his playmaking and scoring as a three-year starting guard and his state titles in the long jump and high jump. He set numerous school records.

And then there’s baseball, which was not a high school sport at the time. Johnson was the Most Valuable Player on the 1969 Fargo team that reached the American Legion World Series. Harter, who coached two major leaguers, said Johnson would likely have joined them if he attended a southern college where they played more games.

Instead, Johnson attended the University of North Dakota where he was a standout center fielder and was later accepted into UND law school. He went on to practice law for 33 years, specializing in the complicated fields of bankruptcy and collection law.

Dr. Maria Burkland-Balintona – Class of 1989

It should be no surprise that a student known for her character, leadership and empathy would choose a career that helps those struggling the most. Dr. Maria Burkland-Balintona is a clinician in behavioral health at Essentia Health in Fargo. After 18 years in the southwestern U.S. working as a medical social worker, she came home in 2020 and immediately earned the hospital’s Golden Stethoscope Award for providing excellent care and being a team player.

She was a team player and more in high school, where she participated in swimming, soccer, orchestra, student council, DECA, spirit club and cheerleading. Carol Beaton, who coached Dr. Burkland-Balintona as a varsity cheerleader, says the most memorable aspect of the 1989 graduate was her positivity and enthusiasm, whatever the task.

“Maria was a natural cheerleader, not just on the ice or the sidelines, but in the way in which she lived her life,” Beaton said. “She was everyone’s friend. She made time to talk to anyone and everyone and showed a sincere interest in them.”

Dr. Burkland-Balintona earned her master’s degree in social work at the University of Maryland and practiced at the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda. She then moved to New Mexico, where her husband served as a doctor on the Navajo Indian Reservation. She worked as an inpatient medical social worker for patients in the Four Corners area. Among other things, she worked with at-risk families, substance use and recovery, stress, financial concerns, and other behavioral health issues.

She earned her doctorate in social work from the University of Pennsylvania in 2018, specializing in caregiver stress, particularly among adult children dealing with a parent with Alzheimer’s disease.

“The field of social work is truly advocacy work and really speaks to the selfless nature of Maria,” South principal Dr. Todd Bertsch said.

Dr. Susie Schraufek Westerlund – Class of 1982

In a sport where the future of athletes can be determined at a young age, Dr. Susie Schraufek Westerlund was tabbed as an Olympic hopeful, starting as a standout for Fargo South as a seventh grader and moving on to perform for the heralded F-M Acro Team and compete nationally for USA Gymnastics. Six state team championships later, a knee injury shattered those dreams. She quickly set her sights on another lifetime goal: improving the health of others.

“Her heart, compassion, humor and perseverance kept her going for her goal of wanting to be a doctor,” 1982 classmate Brian Hayer said.

Dr. Schraufek Westerlund went on to graduate summa cum laude in psychology at North Dakota State University. She earned her master’s degree in psychology at the University of Minnesota and her doctorate from the University of North Dakota. She completed her residency at Georgetown University in obstetrics and gynecology.

Dr. Schraufek Westerlund is the founder and owner of three women’s health and wellness clinics in the Columbus, Georgia, area, covering OB-GYN and comprehensive breast imaging and advanced companion diagnostics. She has earned a People’s Choice Award as the top doctor in Columbus.

Dr. Calvin Fercho, whom Susan credits with her decision to attend medical school, says he’s impressed with her innovative approaches to her practice of obstetrics and gynecology and her national standing at the forefront of the profession.

“I believe that Susan’s most outstanding characteristic is her enthusiastic and outgoing personality and how she interacts with people, especially her patients,” Dr. Fercho said.

“She cares for all people and is one of the only physicians in her practice area who has a following with transgender clients,” Hayer said.

Another classmate, Mary Morton Fercho, compares Dr. Schraufek Westerlund’s enthusiasm and zest for life to “a shot of adrenaline.”

Kendra Lystad – Class of 2004

Dr. Kendra Lystad was the most dominant high school track and cross-country runner in the state during her time at Fargo South, yet the 2004 graduate has continued to go the distance, as a renowned pediatrician.

Her high school coach, David Tack, says Kendra’s running record alone merits a place in the school’s Hall of Fame, while at the same time highlighting her selfless, worldwide career work in serving children who have developmental disabilities, such as autism spectrum disorder. Kendra is someone who “can inspire students to greatness during and after their time” at South, Tack says.

“I am certain Kendra Lystad was nominated to the FSH Hall of Fame because she was the fastest female runner in the state in 2004,” adds former teammate Megan Gramlow. “I would argue that

her presence as a friend and willingness to uplift the community around her are her greatest contributions yet.”

Dr. Lystad, a pediatrician for a Federally Qualified Health Center in Houston, Texas, has been recognized for her medical work, humanitarianism, and public service. Her global medicine experience includes work in India, Nepal, Thailand, Somaliland, Peru, Tanzania, and Bangladesh. In high school, she and her teammates could always make one another laugh. Shortly after she won the state cross country title in 2002, her teammate, Diane Miller, says she hugged the champion so hard it almost knocked the wind out of her.

“What did you eat for breakfast?” Miller recalls, screaming in joy at the outcome. “Toast!” Kendra yelled back.

Miller, now an accomplished journalist and musician in the Twin Cities, describes herself as a “total outcast” who struggled in school and might not have succeeded without Dr. Lystad’s friendship and leadership.

“Kendra somehow saw me and valued me in ways other kids never did,” Miller said, “She’s intelligent, funny, kind ... not to mention fast.”

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