

COMMUNITYConnections

A newsletter for the stakeholders of Stillwater Area Public Schools | SUMMER 2023



A new class of Pony alumni

Celebrating our 2023 graduates

On Saturday, June 10 more than 650 students received their Stillwater Area High School diplomas during the district's 147th commencement ceremony. This year's class entered high school during a global pandemic. Through multiple learning models and numerous disruptions to school and life, they demonstrated resilience, flexibility and perseverance.

Those experiences will serve them well as they leave our schools. More than 80% of our graduates have plans to attend a 2 or 4 year college or university next year. Others are planning to enter the workforce, serve in the military or take a gap year.

Learn more about the Class of 2023 on pages 5-6



Stillwater
AREA PUBLIC SCHOOLS



HONORS



November bond request to address growth

Voters will be asked to consider funding new facilities

With approximately 1,000 new students projected to join the district over the next 10 years, district leaders are going to the voters in November with a bond request for new and expanded facilities.

The school board recently approved a resolution to hold a bond referendum on November 7, 2023. If approved, the bond funding would provide more learning spaces for our growing enrollment, improve school safety and security, and replace aging facilities.

The bond request is based on the recommendations of a community Facilities Planning Team, along with feedback gathered during several community meetings and two district-wide surveys. The request will include the following projects:

- Replacing Lake Elmo Elementary with a new, larger building within the city of Lake Elmo.
- Replacing Andersen Elementary with a new, larger building - preferably in Bayport.
- Adding on to and remodeling Oak-Land Middle School to accommodate additional students.
- Improving safety and security improvements throughout district facilities, including a secured front entrance addition and remodel at Stillwater Area High School.

The \$175 million request would cost taxpayers with a median priced home of \$500,000 approximately \$17 per month.

Learn more about the bond request at stillwaterschools.org/bond2023

Room to Grow

Voters will be asked to consider a facilities bond to address 3 major concerns:

1. Provide more learning space for our growing enrollment.
2. Improve school safety and security.
3. Replace aging facilities.

Bond 2023: Things to know

- Recent projections show that the district's K-12 enrollment will grow by more than 300 students in the next 5 years and about 1,000 by 2032.
- Lake Elmo is the fastest growing city in the state of Minnesota.
- Several schools that are already near capacity are projected to be over capacity in the coming years, including Afton-Lakeland, Andersen and Lake Elmo elementary schools and Oak-Land Middle School.
- Andersen Elementary and Lake Elmo Elementary are both 100+ years old.

Bonds are for buildings

Unlike an operating levy, which can be used to pay for teachers, books or other district expenses, bonds can only be used for the construction or remodeling of facilities.

Board studying ways to address achievement and mental health

As they plan for the future, district leaders are looking for creative ways to improve achievement and address student and staff mental health concerns. Among them are 3 ideas being considered for possible implementation during the 2024-2025 school year.



Idea #1: Change school start times for elementary and secondary schools

The idea of starting the high school day later has been brought up in the district many times. A later start time aligns with medical evidence and scientific research on the sleep cycles of teens and children. The proposed concept would basically flip elementary start times with the current secondary start times.

Idea #2: Begin the school year earlier in August

The board is considering a calendar that starts the school year a week earlier in August and ends the year just before Memorial Day in May. Traditional breaks, like MEA, Winter Break and Spring Break, would fall at the end of each quarter - giving both students and staff time to regroup and refocus.

Idea #3: Adopt a new high school schedule

For years students, parents and staff have expressed concerns that the current high school schedule doesn't provide enough elective opportunities for students. In response, high school staff will spend time this fall studying alternative schedules, gathering feedback from students and families and developing a recommendation for a new schedule.

District staff will continue to study all of these options and will work with the community to develop recommendations to bring back to the school board this winter for possible implementation in the fall of 2024.



Celebrating our distinguished alumni

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

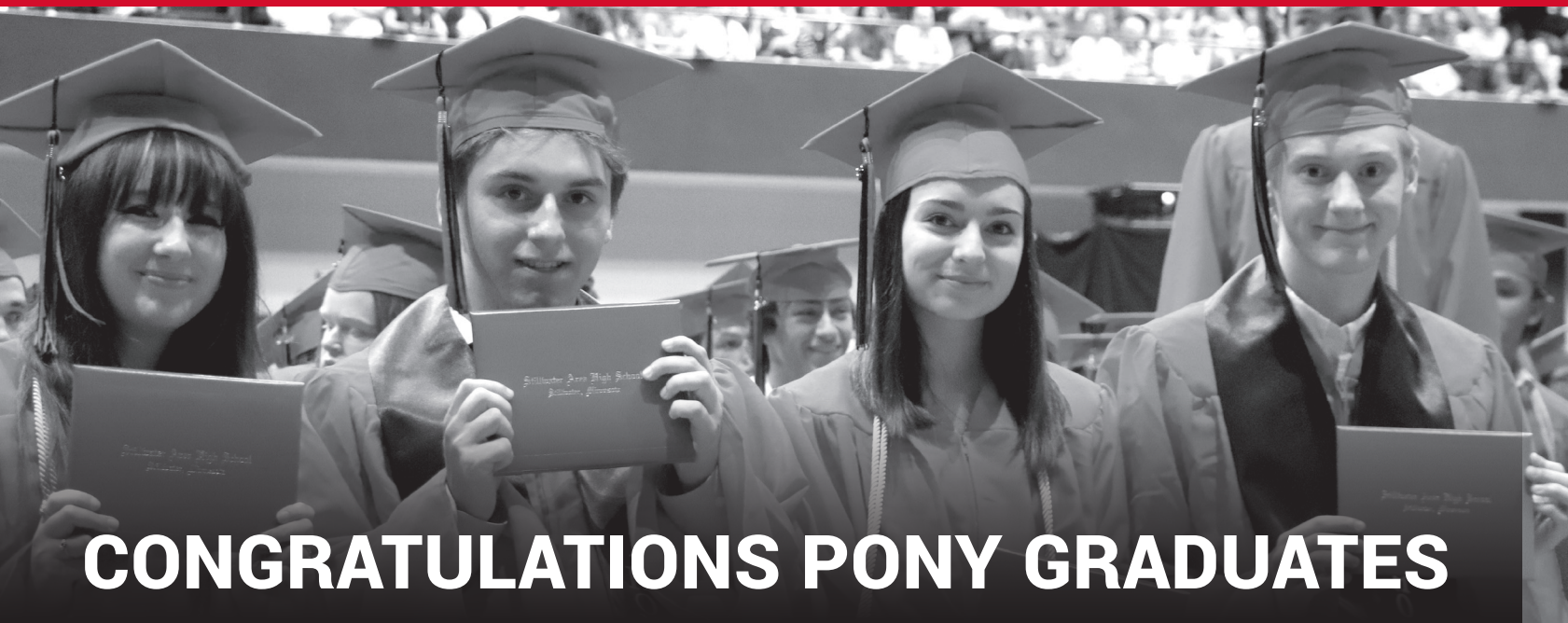
This year's class of Distinguished Alumni includes: Glenn T. Harris, Brigadier General, United States Air Force (Class of 1991); David M. Pierce, Ph.D. (Class of 1992); Zach Sobiech (Class of 2013); Pete Winslow (Class of 2012); and Sara Zara Zanussi (Class of 2006).

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



It's been a big year for Principal Bach

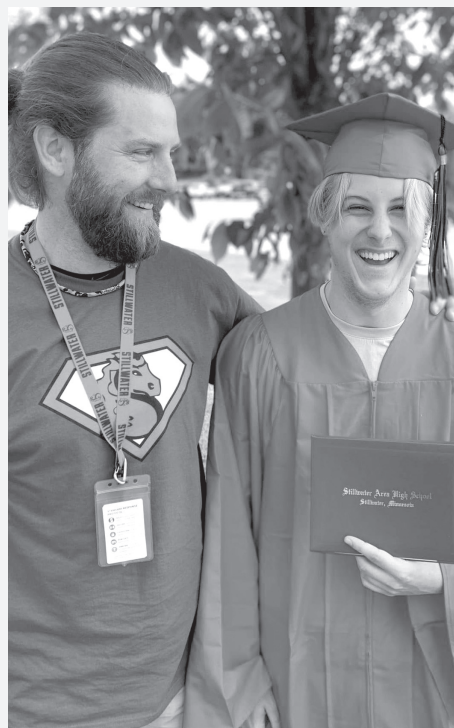
The Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals (MASSP) named Rob Bach the High School Principal of the Year for the Capitol Division. Bach has served as the principal of Stillwater Area High School since 2014. He is one of 8 high school principals from across the state to be recognized with this honor. Bach was nominated by his peers for this award, which recognizes outstanding school leaders. Bach was also selected to serve as the 2023 Grand Marshal of the Lumberjack Days Parade, which will be held in Stillwater on Sunday, July 16 at 11 a.m.



CONGRATULATIONS PONY GRADUATES

Recognizing our ALC graduates

The St. Croix Valley Area Learning Center (ALC) gives students the flexibility they need to graduate at their own pace. Throughout the school year a total of 41 students completed their high school requirements and graduated from Stillwater Area High School via the ALC. Individual ceremonies were held for students at the ALC as they completed their program, while some also chose to walk with the full class of 2023 in June.



AVID graduates have big plans for the future

35 students graduated from the high school's AVID program. AVID, which stands for Advancement Via Individual Determination, is an elective program designed to close the achievement gap by preparing all students for college readiness. This is the seventh class of graduating AVID seniors at Stillwater Area High School. 33 of the students are going on to colleges and universities with a total of more than \$475,000 in scholarship funding, including \$60,000 in local community scholarships. One AVID graduate is attending a vocational school, while another is enrolling in an apprenticeship program.

Congratulations to our Special Education graduates

Students, staff and families gathered this spring to cheer on the accomplishments of 5 students who graduated from the high school's Special Education program. Four of the students will move on to the district's Bridge Transitions 18-21 year old program in the fall, and 1 will be attending Century College.



Community supports our graduates

More than \$400,000 was awarded in community scholarships to Stillwater Area High School students this spring. A total of 71 donors offered 134 first-year and renewable scholarships to 83 graduates. These scholarships all come from our local community.

Additional scholarships were granted to graduates from national programs and individual colleges and universities.



Spotlight on a Stillwater graduate

When Emily Kargel graduated from Stillwater Area High School this spring Cindy Williams-McClung was by her side just like she has been since kindergarten. Emily was born with a rare genetic disorder and does not walk or talk. Cindy has been her paraprofessional for 13 years, helping Emily to navigate all of elementary, middle and high school. To recognize the milestone, Cindy was awarded her own Stillwater Area High School honorary diploma.

Recognizing Native American and Indigenous grads

7 Stillwater Area High School graduates were recognized by the Stillwater Native American Parent Advisory Committee with a special ceremony in their honor. Each of the Native American and Indigenous graduates was presented with an eagle feather or medicine bag by a local elder.

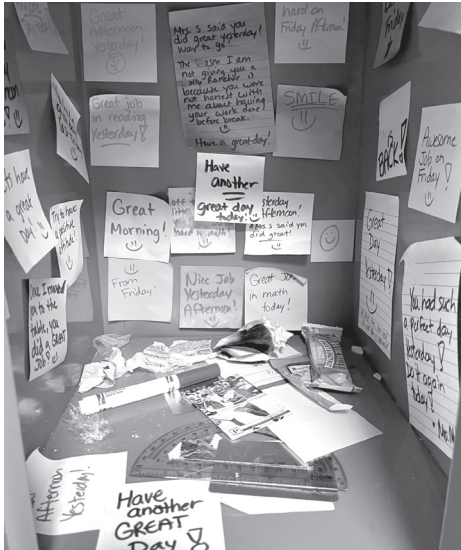


Celebrating our Bridge Transitions graduates

13 students graduated from the Bridge Transitions program which allows 18-21 year olds to work on independent living skills, community access skills, and pre-employment skills. Most of the graduates will continue to employment or attend day training/employment centers next year, while 3 will be pursuing post-secondary education.



Stories from around the district



Encouraging notes inspire student at Lake Elmo

A Lake Elmo Elementary parent stumbled upon a heartwarming surprise in her son's locker. She expected to find a mess to clean up, but instead found a collection of notes that her son had saved from his 4th grade teacher Pam Mohs.

The notes were all handwritten with messages of love and support for her student, who has struggled in school since kindergarten. The parent said she was so touched by the notes that she cried when she read them.

This story is a reminder of the power of a teacher's words and proof that even a simple gesture can have a profound impact.



Reading for a cause at Stonebridge

A menagerie of barnyard creatures visited Stonebridge Elementary as part of the school's Read to Feed project. When student's reached their reading goals, local businesses and individuals donated funds to fight against worldwide hunger and poverty through Heifer International. The money raised will be used to purchase livestock for families in need around the world.



ALC students share their talents

Students at the St. Croix Valley Area Learning Center (ALC) used their carpentry and art skills to share some love with our littlest learners. The students designed, built and painted step stools for kids at the Stillwater Early Childhood Family Center (ECFC).



History comes to life at Lily Lake

Lily Lake fifth graders brought the "Boston Tea Party" to life this spring by dressing up as historical figures like George Washington and Abigail Adams. During their presentations, the students enjoyed a spot of tea while gossiping about all the latest American Revolution events, people and documents. Each group researched and wrote their own script to highlight what they learned about this era and the influence their historical figure had on the formation of the United States.



Celebrating the many languages of our students

More than 75 people turned out for the district's English Learner (EL) Family Night this spring. It was a great opportunity for students and families from across the district to celebrate unity, recognize diversity and share their language and culture. There are 320 EL students who attend Stillwater Area Public Schools, and they speak 53 different languages including Spanish, Hmong, Arabic, Russian, Chinese, Polish, Somali, and Urdu.

Students take a quack at parenting

Some students at Stillwater Area High School raised ducklings as part of their Advanced Placement biology final. The students received a real-life lesson on imprinting - the critical period of time early in an animal's life when it forms attachments. In other words, the ducklings thought the teens were their caregivers, which made for some sleepless nights at home. The students also tested the ducklings' memory and intelligence by putting them through a wooden maze.



ECRWSS
POSTAL PATRON

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

Worth the wait

For 65 years, Nile Kriesel regretted missing his Stillwater Area High School graduation. But the 82-year-old can finally call himself a high school graduate after donning a cap and gown and receiving his honorary diploma from the school board in May.

Back in 1958 Kriesel was one credit shy of graduating. After high school he joined the Navy, went on to get his GED and earned a bachelor's degree in accounting from the University of Wisconsin in River Falls. He spent 5 years working as an auditor for the state of Minnesota before taking the job as Stillwater's finance officer and city administrator for 23 years. He also served as Washington County commissioner.

Based on his life achievements, Superintendent Mike Funk said Kriesel met the graduation requirements and finally gave him his diploma.

Funk said Kriesel was an example "for all of our students who may fall a little short initially, but can go on and make a difference in the world."

