

Faribault High School



“High Flyers” Distinguished Alumni Award

2025 Award Recipients

Faribault Public Schools

April 26, 2025



Distinguished Alumni Award

“High Flyers”

Every year, graduates of Faribault High School will be honored for distinguished achievements or careers. These inductees have attained a high level of achievement in one or more of the following areas:

- Personal and/or professional life
- Community service
- Humanitarian activities

Members of the Alumni Award Steering Committee include Jill Fagerlund, chairperson, Ellen Bisping, Cheryl Freund, Lois Gramse, Barb Wertish, and Mary Ziegler.

Members serving on the 2025 Alumni Award Selection Committee were Marian Bahl, Ardys Johnson, Randy McDonough, Elizabeth Prange, Mark Sybilrud, and Mike Young.

A permanent display in the lobby of Faribault High School honors Alumni inductees with framed photos and an engraved plaque recognizing each of the winners. In addition, individual etched metal plates with each winner's photo and biography are featured in the Alumni hallway near the Counseling office at FHS.

Special thanks to Superintendent of Faribault Public Schools Jamie Bente, FHS Principal Joel Olson, and the Faribault Booster Club for support. The committee also thanks Brendan Cox, Jami Kenney, Troy Temple, The Faribault Daily News, FCTV, and KDHL for technical, printing, publishing, and advertising assistance.

To Recognize, to Honor, and to Inspire



Distinguished Alumni Award

"High Flyers"

Program

Welcome Jill Fagerlund,
Alumni Committee chairperson
Joe Olson, FHS principal

Jennifer Meese Green, PhD Class of 1989
Nominated by Donald and Judith Meese

Gary Kindseth.....Class of 1965
Nominated by Pat Rice and Brad Kindseth

Rod MahlerClass of 1951
Nominated by David Sauer

Drew Sande..... Class of 1980
Nominated by Mary Dusbabek Guenther

Jason Tako..... Class of 1990
Nominated by Greg Sartor and Cassie Hartman

Nancy Meyer Van Buren, MD..... Class of 1975
Nominated by Nancy Miller Johnson

A DVD of tonight's program may be purchased by
contacting Troy Temple at 507-332-7787



Jennifer Meese Green, PhD

MULTILINGUAL EDUCATOR, TEACHER TRAINER, AUTHOR

FHS CLASS OF 1989

Jennifer Meese Green, Academic Director of the Multilingual Education Program at Western Washington University, Bellingham, Washington, has extensive experience teaching English as a Second Language in the United States and abroad. She prepares pre- and in-service teachers to add their English Language Learner and Bilingual Education Endorsements.

Green repeated her senior year of high school as a Faribault Rotary Exchange student to Sweden. Her love of Sweden and its language inspired her to major in Scandinavian Studies and Social Studies Education at Gustavus Adolphus College where she was inducted into Phi Beta Kappa. After graduating from Gustavus, she moved to Japan where she taught English for two years. She returned to the United States and enrolled in the School for International Training at Brattleboro, Vermont, pursuing a Master's degree in Teaching English as a Second Language. Green joined the Peace Corps as part of her graduate program and was assigned to Ukraine where she served for twenty-seven months as a regional teacher trainer for Ukrainian teachers of English.

She returned to the United States to teach ESL in the St. Francis School District. Eventually, she and her husband moved east where she enrolled in a doctoral program at the University of Connecticut completing her PhD in Curriculum and Instruction. Because of her research interests in teacher education and systemic functional linguistics, WWU's Woodring College of Education offered her a full professorship. In 2023, Green became a Fulbright Scholar to the West Bank and Jordan. She returned to Jordan in November, 2024 to support work in English education in partnership with Fulbright, the U.S. State Department, the Jordanian Ministry of Education, and Al-Balqa Applied University.

Professor Green's experiences in Ukraine, Jordan, and the West Bank contribute to her reputation as an expert in delivering bilingual teacher training programs around the world.

Gary Kindseth

BUSINESSMAN, PUBLIC SERVANT

FHS CLASS OF 1965



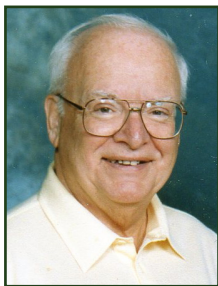
Meticulous, loyal, creative, detailed, insightful, observant, perceptive, credible, and diligent; these are the words that one of Gary Kindseth's nominators used to describe him. After seeing all that he accomplished both professionally and as a community leader, these descriptors fit perfectly.

Gary attended Faribault Public Schools and was given his first job while in Mrs. Balken's class. She had him collect the lunch money. He did so well that he kept the job for three years. In high school, he was involved in sports and select choir, and considered himself an average student. After graduation, Gary worked a number of jobs to pay for college: a laborer at the Turkey plant, dishwasher at Wimpy's, and a bookkeeper at Foss Electric. He attended college and graduated from Mankato State with a degree in Business Administration.

Gary began a lengthy career with Faribault Foods in 1972 as traffic and warehouse manager, steadily moving up the ladder as production manager, operations coordinator, vice president of production, and finally becoming vice president of strategic planning.

Gary's pride and interest in Faribault led him to run for the City Council in 1973. He served as the youngest council member in Faribault history from 1973 to 1979, 1985 to 1995, 2008, and 2012. From 1980 to 1982, he served as mayor. He used his council work to promote many projects such as the remodel of City Hall and Library, and establishing River Bend Nature Center and the Senior Center. He also served on a number of boards including director for Midwest Food Processors, Chairman of Reliance Bank, The Economic Development Authority, the Ice Arena Task Force, the purchase of the YMCA, and on the Public Facilities Task Force. He served as Executive Director of the Industrial Corporation for 20 years. In 2007, Gary was honored to be named the Daily News Citizen of the Year.

Gary's accomplishments and his commitment to the community of Faribault are testaments to his belief in Faribault and his willingness to put in the hard work necessary to accomplish challenging goals. When asked if there was anything he would like to share with others he said, "Give to your community and your community will give back." It's apparent that Gary took his own advice.



Rodney Mahler

BUSINESSMAN AND PUBLIC SERVANT

FHS Class of 1949

Rodney “Rod” Mahler is deserving of the Alumni Award not only due to his career as a successful businessman, but more due to his life-long service to the Faribault community.

Mr. Mahler was an active student and athlete. He participated in band, choir and orchestra. Rod served as the sports editor for the school newspaper. His column was called “Locker Room Lingo By Rod”.

Following graduation from Faribault Senior High, Rod attended Hamline University. He was involved in a full range of activities while attending Hamline: student government, music, and athletics. He served as the student Senior Class Vice President. Continuing his interest in music, he was a drummer in the Hamline band. He played tennis and earned 4 letters, serving as a player/coach for three of those years.

After his college career, Rod enlisted in the United States Army and served three years active duty. After completing his military service, Rod served another two years in active reserve and another two years in inactive duty.

Returning to Faribault, Rod joined his family in managing their hardware and appliance store for 27 years. Our Own Hardware was a pillar of the Faribault community for decades. Rod did memorable demonstrations for the new Weber grill. In fact, one year Rod cooked a whole hog in front of the store.

Rod was an active member of the community. He was on numerous boards and committees including The Faribault Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Council, United Way, Faribault Rotary (67 years), Paradise Center For the Arts, and the YMCA building committee.

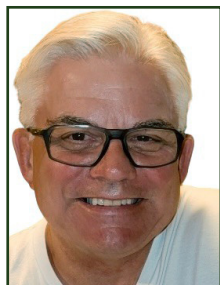
One of Rod’s special interests was big game hunting. Reflecting this passion, customers were thrilled to see trophies of Rod’s hunting expeditions. A full-size mounted Kodiak Brown Bear was an especially unforgettable attraction.

Mr. Mahler eventually decided to leave the retail hardware trade. He went into sales and investments. Then for 20 years, he and his wife Jean, listed and sold homes in the Faribault area. Their slogan was “Two For the Price of One.”

Drew Sande

Navy SEAL

FSHS CLASS OF 1980



Drew Sande, Navy SEAL... enough said?

No, there's a lot to being a Navy SEAL and to Drew!

Drew graduated from FSHS in 1980. He realized college was not a good investment for him, so decided to join the Navy. At seventeen, his parents signed the enlistment papers, and he left for Boot Camp in October of 1980. After Boot Camp, he attended Engineman "A" School and Gas Turbine "C" School at Great Lakes, IL. He was then assigned to the USS Fox CG-33 (Guided Missile Cruiser) at Naval Station San Diego, CA.

A few years later, six months remaining on his first tour, he was planning to return home. But he connected with another SEAL that encouraged him to train and try out for Basic Underwater Demolitions/SEAL (BUD/S). Drew trained and passed the initial screening and graduated with BUD/S Class 133. 1985 was the beginning of his U.S. Navy SEAL career lasting another 22 years. He was assigned to SEAL Team FOUR in Little Creek, VA, which specialized in jungle warfare and maritime operations.

Drew completed three deployments to the Caribbean and the Mediterranean. He participated in sensitive operations including Operation Just Cause in Panama in 1989. The joint operation was successful but, unfortunately, SEAL Team FOUR lost four brave Teammates during the assault on Patilla Airfield. Drew was nominated as SEAL Team FOUR's Sailor of the year in 1989.

Drew also served at Naval Special Warfare Development Group, in Va. Beach, SEAL Team ONE and Naval Special Warfare Command-Admiral's Staff in Coronado, CA, then SEAL Team TEN and Naval Special Warfare Center-Advanced Training Command in Va. Beach. Drew completed Deployments during Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan and Operation Iraqi Freedom in Iraq.

Drew's other honors include the Bronze Star Medal, Meritorious Service Medal (2), Joint Service Commendation Medal, Navy Commendation Medal (4), Navy Achievement Medal (5) and multiple Campaign Awards. He recently served as the President of the UDT-SEAL Association and on the Board of the SEAL Veterans Foundation in support of Naval Special Warfare Veterans and Active Duty.



Jason Lee Tako

ARTIST OF THE AMERICAN WEST

FSHS CLASS OF 1990

After graduating from FSHS in 1990, Jason attended what later became McNally Smith College of Music, graduating with honors. After some time in the field of music, he went to school for applied visual arts at Dakota County Technical College and was encouraged to pursue a career in fine art. Finding a home in historical Native American subjects, his love of landscapes of the American West combined with his interest of history has resulted in his expression depicting cultures and ways of life that are forever etched into the American West.

Jason paints historical Native American subjects in Western landscapes. He primarily works in oil and through direct observation from nature, such as plein air painting (with a strong sense of open air). His work explores themes of restoration, solitude, and reconnecting with nature.

Jason's work has been exhibited all across the United States, including the C.M. Russell Museum and Legacy Gallery. He has been the Featured Artist at prestigious events such as the Southeastern Wildlife Expo and NatureWorks. Jason is one of the foremost Western, wildlife, and historical Native American painters.

Jason expressed, "For me, painting is a way to capture the fleeting feeling of a place and time. I tend to be a bit nostalgic and I love nature. When I'm in the mountains or on the prairie, I get overwhelmed with the beauty and deep emotions of peace, purity, and mystery I sense there. Through my work I first internalize it, and then visually express it to give the viewer the same feeling of being there.

"I have always been fascinated with the American Indians and how they lived, immersed in this beauty when it was still unspoiled. They had the unique privilege of experiencing this on a daily basis before it was taken from them; a tremendous loss as they were removed from their refuge of nature and put somewhere they didn't want to go."

His nominator stated, "Although a highly successful artist, he gives his time and talents freely. He is often sharing his knowledge online, encouraging and coaching other artists. He's also making a significant contribution to Native American heritage in documenting their history and culture."

Nancy (Meyer) Van Buren, MD

PATHOLOGIST AND BLOOD TRANSFUSION SPECIALIST

FSHS CLASS OF 1975



Nancy Van Buren, MD is a medical doctor specializing in pathology and transfusion medicine. She explains that pathologists are physicians with specialized training to diagnose medical conditions using tests performed on blood or fluid samples. Blood banking and transfusion experts oversee testing and collection of blood for patients in need of transfusion therapy.

Dr. Van Buren's passion for the medical field came naturally. She was inspired growing up in a family consisting of generations of doctors and a father who encouraged her to become a physician in an era when few women were doctors. Her high school nurses' aide job caring for elderly patients at St. Lucas Nursing Home helped her make a decision to follow family footsteps into the field of medicine. She remained close to home for her medical training, earning a degree in Biology from St. Olaf College in 1979 and graduating from the University of Minnesota Medical School in 1983.

During her career, she worked for 27 years as a hospital-based pathologist and transfusion medical director for hospitals in Northeast Tennessee and St. Paul, MN, serving in various hospital leadership positions and volunteering as medical director on local and national blood banking organizations. She co-founded a bone marrow donor registry in Tennessee and later served Minnesota Blood Centers and Transfusion Services as Director at Hennepin Healthcare HCMC and Children's Hospitals of Minnesota.

Dr. Van Buren earned recognition and multiple awards including America's Top Physicians (2006 and 2007), and Top Doctor (2024). Since her retirement in 2023, she continues to consult and speak on the topic of transfusion medicine, contribute to medical journals and textbooks, visit elderly people in assisted living facilities with her trained therapy dog, and participate in a reading program for children.



Distinguished Alumni Award

“High Flyers”

Past Winners

2024 Winners

JEFF ELSTAD *Class of 1988*

SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT, COMMUNITY LEADER

ROBERT “TIP” ENEBAK *Class of 1959*

CONSTRUCTION COMPANY OWNER, PHILANTHROPIST

ROGER KOOPMANS *Class of 1949*

LANDSCAPE & DESIGN, BAND LEADER

CARRIE GRAMSE KREMER, MD *Class of 1992*

OB/GYN PHYSICIAN, ADVOCATE FOR SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN

HUNG NGUYEN *Class of 1987*

ARMY VETERAN, FINANCIAL MANAGER

SANDRA BOKMAN PADDOCK, DNP, FNP *Class of 1979*

DOCTOR OF NURSING PRACTICE, FAMILY NURSE PRACTITIONER

DAVID SAUER *Class of 1984*

CIA INTELLIGENCE OFFICER

BRIAN G. SHELLUM *Class of 1972*

WEST POINT GRADUATE, HISTORIAN, AUTHOR

2020 Winners

ANNE CARLIN *Class of 1982*
INTERNATIONAL GOVERNMENT CONSULTANT

ROBERT DETTMER *Class of 1969*
MN LEGISLATOR, VETERAN, TEACHER

BRENDA THAYER EISENSCHENK *Class of 1988*
TELECOMMUNICATIONS ENTREPRENEUR, COMMUNITY LEADER

MICHAEL GRAMSE *Class of 1966*
OWNER OF MGR TOOL AND DIE, VOCATIONAL EDUCATION ADVOCATE

DANIEL LIPS, MD. *Class of 1973*
INTERVENTIONAL CARDIOLOGIST, RESEARCHER

VERNON 'VAN' NELSON *Class of 1962*
CAREER PEACE CORPS WORKER

2019 Winners

BRAD BURKHARTZMEYER *Class of 1978*
SOLAR ENERGY INNOVATOR, ENTREPRENEUR, TRAINER

THOMAS GAGNON *Class of 1964*
PUBLISHER, COMMUNITY BOOSTER, CIVIC LEADER, ENTREPRENEUR

DEANNA KOZITZA MASON, PhD. *Class of 1992*
NURSE PRACTITIONER, PATIENT ADVOCATE, HEALTH EDUCATOR

BRANDEN S. MORIARITY, PhD. *Class of 2003*
PEDIATRIC CANCER RESEARCHER, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, ENTREPRENEUR

ERIN WEIER REMME *Class of 2003*
ADVOCATE AND FUNDRAISER FOR CANCER RESEARCH, NURSE

LORENE MCDONALD RUTHERFORD, MD. *Class of 1976*
PEDIATRICIAN, HUMANITARIAN, MENTOR

WILLIAM 'BILL' SARTOR *Class of 1960*
HABITAT FOR HUMANITY COORDINATOR, COMMUNITY BUILDER

2018 Winners

DONALD "BUCK" BURKHARTZMEYER *Class of 1942*
BUSINESSMAN, PEDORTHIST, COMMUNITY AMBASSADOR

LARRY CHARBONNEAU, PhD. *Class of 1957*
CHEMICAL ENGINEER, PATENT AUTHOR

ALAN MARKMAN, MD. *Class of 1971*
ORTHOPAEDIC SURGEON, BUSINESSMAN

ANN MICHELS *Class of 1988*
PERFORMER - THEATER AND MUSIC

MARTHA SCHULTZ *Class of 2002*
COMMUNITY ORGANIZER AND ADVOCATE

CAROL LUECKE THOMAS *Class of 1966*
AIR FORCE BRIGADIER GENERAL, NURSE

2017 Winners

MARY ANN BUDENSKE *Class of 1966*
COMMUNITY ACTIVIST, LAWYER

RICHARD CARLANDER *Class of 1955*
PHILANTHROPIST, BANKER, COMMUNITY LEADER

RICHARD HAUGLAND, PhD. *Class of 1961*
PHILANTHROPIST, VISTA VOLUNTEER, CHEMIST

TRACY BAHL *Class of 1980*
EXECUTIVE, PHILANTHROPIST, COMMUNITY SUPPORTER

VUI MAI, MD. *Class of 1995*
FAMILY PHYSICIAN

GARY TOLLEFSON, MD. *Class of 1969*
PSYCHIATRIST, PHARMACEUTICAL INVENTOR

WILLIAM BOTTKE, PhD. *Class of 1984*
ASTROPHYSICIST, NASA SCIENTIST, RESEARCHER

ELIZABETH WALL STROHFUS *Class of 1937*
WWII FEMALE PILOT, INSTRUCTOR, STORYTELLER

ERICA STAAB-ABSHER *Class of 1995*
SOCIAL WORKER, AUTHOR

HAROLD PASSER, PhD. *Class of 1939*
GOVERNMENT ECONOMIST, PROFESSOR

JANEL KLEIN *Class of 1994*
JOURNALIST, CORRESPONDENT, ON-AIR TALENT

Donations

To FHS Distinguished Alumni Award Program

2024

Edna Thayer	Anonymous – 4
John and Phyllis Battles	Sandy Paddock
Tina Madson	Roger Koopmans
Linda Butzow	Mary Osborne
Ward and Ellen Bisping	Glen and Shirley Norgaard
Marian Bahl	Barb Fehn
Cindy Trapp	Benet Freund
Joe Olson	Kathryn Becher
Heidi Nichols	Leah Hendrickson
Doug and Barb Wertish	Donn and Ardy Johnson
Dennis and Mary Alice Glynn	Lips Foundation
Ron and Connie Tuin	Pat Kangas
FARE Donation	

In Honor and/or Memory of:

Brian Shellum – In Memory of Alford and Harriet Shellum
Diane Larson – In Memory of Don F. Larson
Jill Fagerlund – In Memory of Fagerlund Family
Don Burger – In Honor of Faribault Teachers
Virginia Sartor – In Memory of Bill Sartor
Carrie and Matt Kremer – In Honor of Harvey Schuldt
Jeanne Michel – In Honor of All Alumni Award Winners
Kathy and Mark Charbonneau – In Memory of Larry Charbonneau
Dr. Richard and Phyllis Berge – In Memory of Dick Schiels and Dave Thayer
Nanci and Bob Fielitz – In Honor of Hung Nguyen
Drew Grandia – In Memory of Betty Grandia Flom
Linda Mueller – In Honor of Sandra Bokman Paddock
Michael Brown – In Memory of Monica Tuma Brown
Ann and Jim Trenda – In Memory of Mary H. Carey, FSHS Librarian
Jeff Elstad – In Honor of the Wonderful Teachers & Staff of ISD 656
Howard and Helen Sauer – In Honor of Paul, Marge, and David
& Memory of Wayne
Walter and Char Wetzel – In Honor of the Faribault teachers
& Memory of Ruth Squire Howard
Tip and Diane Enebak – In Honor of Gordy Bauer, Class of '59
& In Memory of Wes Bahl, Class of '59
Jane Draheim – In Honor and Memory of Faribault Colleagues
Bernard and Lois Gramse – In Honor of Dr. Carrie Gramse Kremer
Virgil and Jane Luehrs – In Honor of All Alumni

Support the Future of Excellence:

Donate to the Distinguished Alumni Award

Join us in celebrating and perpetuating the legacy of excellence at Faribault High School. The Distinguished Alumni Award recognizes and honors alumni who have achieved extraordinary accomplishments and made significant contributions to their profession, community, and society at large. By donating to the Distinguished Alumni Award fund, you're not just honoring the past; you're investing in the future of outstanding achievements. Every donation, no matter the size, contributes to a legacy of excellence.

HOW TO DONATE

The best way to make a donation is to place cash or a check into the provided envelope on the table tonight. Beyond that, Online, Mail, and Planned Giving are important methods as well.

ONLINE:

Use Venmo to make a secure donation.

Scan the QR code and make your donation, Please note in the "What's this for?" section that is for the *FHS Distinguished Alumni Award*.



BY MAIL:

Send a check to Falcon Alumni Award, and mail it to:

Falcon Alumni Award
701 East Division Street,
Faribault, MN 55021

PLANNED GIVING:

Consider including the Distinguished Alumni Award fund in your estate planning to create a lasting legacy.

THANK YOU

Your support is crucial in recognizing and celebrating the extraordinary achievements of our alumni. Together, we can continue to foster a culture of excellence that impacts our community and the world. Donate today and be a part of this prestigious legacy.



Distinguished Alumni Award

“High Flyers”

Nomination Criteria

Every year, graduates of Faribault High School will be honored for distinguished achievements or careers.

1. Nominee must be a Faribault High School graduate.
2. Candidate must have graduated at least 10 years prior to nomination.
3. Nominee must have attained a high level of achievement in one or more of the following:
 - Personal and/or professional life
 - Community service
 - Humanitarian activities

Nomination forms are available on the Faribault Public Schools website under Quick Links >> Alumni or scan the QR code in the bottom corner.

You will be asked to:

- Provide your nominee's name, graduation year, and contact information along with your name, address, and contact information.
- Describe your nominee's career path and special interests.
- List your nominee's service and civic activities and organizations.
- List any special awards, recognitions, and honors your nominee has received.
- Include any additional information about your nominee to assist the Selection Committee in choosing award winners.

Mail the completed nomination form and supplementary documents (optional) **by January 1** to:

Faribault Falcon Distinguished Alumni Award

Jill Fagerlund

701 Division St. E.

Faribault, MN 55021



