

COMMUNITY Connections

Spring 2025

From Class to Creek

Stillwater Area High School biology students release rainbow trout into Brown's Creek after raising them through the Trout in the Classroom program. The hands-on project gives students a close-up look at the life cycle of trout and the importance of healthy ecosystems.



A newsletter for the communities of Stillwater Area Public Schools



News From Around the District



Taking Leadership and Teamwork Skills to New Heights

Oak-Land Middle School seventh graders visited Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center for an overnight field trip where they took part in a full lineup of classes. From outdoor survival, forest ecology, GPS and geocaching, animal signs, and the Ridgetop Ropes Course, they spent three days building new experiences and skills together.

Going Phone-Free to Support Student Success

Beginning in the fall of 2025, the district is implementing a phone-free learning environment across all of its schools. From the first bell to the last, students have the opportunity to put away their phones and other devices and fully engage in their learning. Students will be asked to leave personal electronic devices at home. If a device must be brought to school, it must be turned off and securely stored until dismissal.

Research shows that reducing screen time during the school day can boost focus, improve academic performance, and support mental health.

This shift aligns with the district’s mission to inspire curiosity and the love of learning in every child. Learn more at stillwaterschools.org/phonefree.

Giving Students a Voice in Meal Planning

The 2025-26 lunch menu is in the making - with a little help from students across the district. The Nutrition Services staff has been providing students with samples of various menu items - from pizza to french toast - and allowing them to vote for their favorite. The top vote-getters will be added to the menu next fall.

Did you know? The Nutrition Services team added a chef this year. The position is paid for out of the food services budget - a separate funding source from the district’s general fund. The chef is helping to create new menu items, add more homemade recipes, and expand ethnic food offerings.



Superintendent Mike Funk Teaches First Grade

Students at Andersen Elementary School had a special substitute teacher in April. By winning an annual staff contest, first grade teacher Jill Kostynick earned a day off as the superintendent covered her duties. Dr. Funk taught lessons in literacy, math and science, and even showed off his dance moves.



Community Donates Life-Saving Equipment to SAHS

Fast action saved sophomore Keegan Hawke’s life last fall after he went into cardiac arrest during football practice. In partnership with Teddy’s Heart Foundation, a new SaveStation AED device has been installed just steps from the sideline of Stillwater Area High School athletic fields to help others in the future.

The life-saving device was dedicated in April with Keegan’s family, Teddy’s Heart Foundation, and Stillwater first responders on hand.

Students Design Prosthetic Attachment for College Student

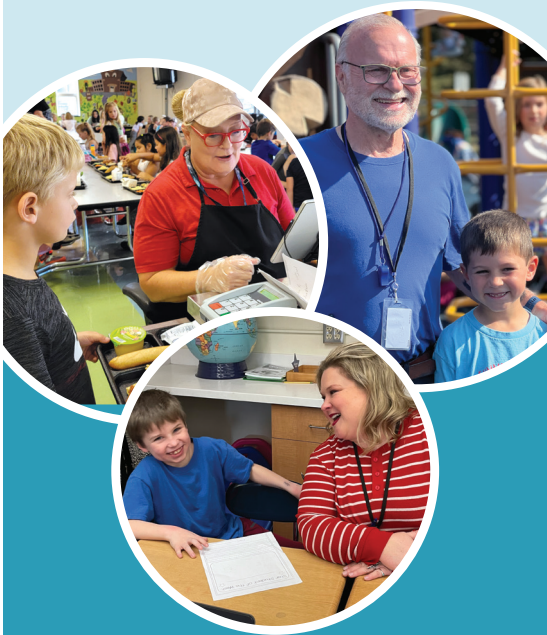
Students at the high school recently worked with a Century College Orthotics and Prosthetics student to create a terminal device for fly fishing. The project builds engineering and mechanical skills, and students were excited to create a prosthetic attachment to be used in everyday life.



Looking for a Career with Heart?

Stillwater Area Public Schools has fun, rewarding job opportunities where every day makes a difference!

- Before and After School Care
- Custodians
- Nutrition Services
- Paraprofessionals



Scan to Apply Today



All employees receive free diagnosis, treatment, and prescriptions for many conditions at our Well@Work Clinic

UNDER CONSTRUCTION!

Building for the Next Generation of Ponies



Opening Fall 2026

Bond 2023 Construction Projects Underway Across the District

Thanks to the overwhelming support of voters in 2023, construction is officially underway on several major projects throughout the district. These initiatives are part of a \$175 million bond aimed at addressing enrollment growth, replacing our two oldest school buildings, and enhancing safety measures across all schools.

Projects include the construction of new elementary schools in Bayport and Lake Elmo, expansion of Oak-Land Middle School, and district-wide safety and security upgrades—including construction of a new front office area at Stillwater Area High School.

Follow along
on all of these
projects



Visit our website for the latest photos, videos, and monthly progress reports.

Lake Elmo Elementary



Bayport Elementary



What's In a Name?

New School to Adopt its Old Name

We're naming our new school Bayport Elementary, instead of Andersen Elementary. This better reflects the school's history and celebrates the community that has housed it for more than 100 years. Bayport Elementary was the name of the original building, built back in 1919. It was changed to the Fred. C. and Katherine B. Andersen Elementary School in 1996 in recognition of a grant to remodel the facility.

Oak-Land Middle School



Stillwater Area High School



Celebrating Stillwater Schools Students and Staff



Chess Club State Champion

Owen Pelletier was named a co-champion at the 2025 Minnesota K-12 State Scholastic Championship - the largest chess event of the year with more than 300 competitors from across the state of Minnesota. Owen advances to represent Stillwater at the national tournament this summer.

SAHS Students Invited to International Science and Engineering Fair

Stillwater Area High School's Riddhi Singhvi and Ethan Finch have been invited to participate in the 2025 International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF). The 10th graders are among the 1,800 students chosen from a pool of over 100,000 applicants representing 80 countries, territories, and regions. This marks the second straight year that both Singhvi and Finch have qualified.



Business Students Advance to National Leadership Conference

Five students from Stillwater Area High School's Business Professionals of America (BPA) advanced to the 2025 BPA National Leadership Conference.

Personal Finance Team Wins Second at State

The BPA Club's Personal Finance team earned second place in the 2025 Minnesota State Personal Finance Decathlon, showcasing exceptional skills in financial literacy, teamwork, and critical thinking. The title earned them a trip to Nationals.

Did you know? Beginning with the current ninth grade class, students must now complete a half-year course in personal finance and a course in government and citizenship to graduate. This initiative aims to equip students with essential skills in money management and civic participation.



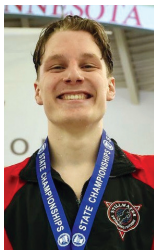
SAHS Musical Earns Statewide Recognition

Stillwater Area High School's production of Alice by Heart earned top honors in the Hennepin Theatre Trust's spring Spotlight Awards. The show received the title of Outstanding Achievement in Musical Theatre—the highest recognition available.

Often called the "Tony Awards" of Minnesota high school theater, the Spotlight program recognized SAHS with 21 total honors, including 13 top awards. These included Overall Performance, Overall Technical Production, Ensemble Dance, Costume Crew, Overall Technical Team, Sound and Light Crew, along with several individual awards.

Choir Hits all the Right Notes

For their performances at the annual MSHSL Vocal Solo and Ensemble Contest, 42 Stillwater Area High School soloists earned a superior score and nine students earned an excellent rating. All ensembles earned a superior score and Stillwater was named "Best of Site" in three of five sites in the contest.



Pony Swimmer Wins Two State Championships

Several Ponies from the boys swimming and diving team advanced to the Minnesota State Tournament for individual events. Jackson Kogler set a state record in the 200 Individual Medley and broke his own school record in the 100 Backstroke to become a two-time state champion. As the Section 4AA Swimmer of the Year, both of Jackson's title times stand as automatic All-American times.



Boys Wrestling Team Captures Third Place at State

The boys wrestling team placed third at state. The Ponies also had two individual state champions: Grayson Eggum and Audrey Rogotzke who captured her second state title for

the girls, going undefeated this season. Stillwater had three individual third place finishes: Noah Nicholson, Isaac Leonard, and Lindson Turner, as well as a Pony that earned fourth individually: Joe Dauffenbach.

Boys Hockey State Runners-Up

The Stillwater boys hockey program advanced to its first Minnesota State Championship in program history. In a hard-fought matchup against Moorhead, the Ponies finished second in the state.



Adapted Floor Hockey

The Stillwater/Mahtomedi adapted floor hockey program earned second place at the state tournament and a trio of Ponies were named to the MSHSL All-Tournament Team.

Stillwater Boys Win True Team State

The Stillwater boys track and field team captured their fourth True Team state title, marking their first championship since 1997. This prestigious win highlights the team's exceptional depth, as the True Team format celebrates overall team performance rather than individual top finishes.



MN School Counselor of the Year

High school counselor Sydney Piras has been named 2025 Minnesota School Counselor of the Year by the American School Counselor Association (ASCA).

MN French Teacher of the Year

Jackie Parr is this year's recipient of the American Association of Teachers of French (AATF), Minnesota Teacher of the Year Award.

MN Teacher of the Year Finalist

Science teacher Stacy Bartlett advanced to the final round for the 2025 Minnesota Teacher of the Year Award. Bartlett is a nationally-recognized biology teacher who has been teaching at Stillwater Area High School for 13 years.

Bartlett was recognized as one of 12 finalists. Bartlett was joined by Hannah Reyes (Lake Elmo Elementary) in the pool of 142 candidates of nominees from across the state.

Celebrating 2025 Retirees

Congratulations to the 25 employees retiring from Stillwater Area Public Schools this school year - more than half of which have more than 20 years of experience in the district. They represent teachers, paraprofessionals, custodians, support staff and school leaders. In all of these roles, they've helped to build a warm and welcoming school community and have impacted the lives of countless students. See a list of retirees at stillwaterschools.org/retiree2025.



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Celebrating **THE CLASS OF 2025**

The 149th class of Stillwater Area High School graduates on Saturday, June 7. We are so proud of the nearly 650 students who are walking across the stage to receive their diploma. Watch the graduation ceremony live at 7 p.m. on YouTube @ValleyAccessChannels and check out the district's social media feeds for photos and video.

**Congratulations to our
newest Pony graduates!**



Celebrating Distinguished Alumni

Four individuals have been 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:

- **Jane Dickinson (Class of 1961)**, a life-long educator with a passion for art, who taught elementary students, as well as adults.
- **Colonel Benjamin M. Gerds (Class of 1996)** rising from an enlisted Airman to command the 115th Fighter Wing of the Wisconsin Air National Guard.
- **Kris Schwartz (Class of 1984)**, a compassionate leader, ensuring basic needs are met in the St. Croix Valley.
- **Eric Thole (Class of 1984)**, a celebrated athlete, accomplished attorney, and passionate historian of Stillwater and Ponies athletics.

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

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

Learn more about Stillwater Area Public Schools

stillwaterschools.org | 651-351-8340



Stillwater834



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Pony Voices Podcast