



VALOR *Voice*

Avail Academy Newsletter Summer 2026



Equip minds.
Nurture hearts.
Reclaim God's world.



One Shared Foundation. Two Distinct Schools.

For 60 years, Avail Academy has been committed to making Christ-centered, Reformed Christian education available to families throughout the Twin Cities. What began as one campus grew into three, all with the same mission, vision, and values.

Now, the Avail community is preparing for a new milestone.

On June 2, 2026, the Society voted overwhelmingly in support of a proposal to launch two independent sister schools: a PreK-8 school in Edina and a PreK-12 school that combines the Blaine and Fridley campuses.

While this represents a significant organizational change, it is rooted in the same vision that led to the launch of the Blaine campus more than 30 years ago and the high school nearly 20 years ago: expanding the impact of Christian education by empowering local school communities to flourish.

A Natural Next Step

The Board's discernment process centered around the question: "How can we best expand the cause of Christian education in the Twin Cities?"

Board Chair Ross Nelson said, "Throughout the process, the Board kept returning to that question. After significant prayer, planning, and consultation, we became convinced that launching two independently operated schools gives the greatest opportunities to flourish for generations to come."

The conviction emerged after months of strategic planning, financial analysis, consultation with outside experts, and conversations with more than 130 members of the Avail community. It became clear that the campuses have developed distinct communities with unique opportunities, challenges, and strengths.

Parents build friendships with other parents in their local community. Teachers collaborate most closely with colleagues on their campus. Students participate in campus-specific traditions, activities, athletics, and events. Faculty and leaders respond to the unique needs of the students and families they serve. The proposal approved by the Society recognizes this reality.

Why Make This Change?

The sister-school model creates greater ownership for each campus. As Avail has pursued its vision of serving 800 students by 2035, the school has recognized that shared structures have created complexities that slow decision-making, complicate communication, and limit each school's potential, as if trying to create a one-size-fits-all model for multiple schools.

The new structure will remove those barriers.

"Both schools can take ownership of their future," says Nelson.

"When teachers, leaders, and parents are empowered to invest directly in their own school community, growth can happen."

What Will Change And What Will Not

The proposed transition is targeted for the 2028-29 school year.

At that time, the Edina campus would continue as a PreK-8 school under the Avail Academy name. The Blaine and Fridley campuses would become a unified PreK-12 school with its own name, brand identity, athletic identity, and governance structure. The Board will work with an external organization

to help create this new identity.

Each school would operate under its own board and leadership while continuing to serve families through a covenantal model of Christian education.

What will not change is equally important. Both schools will continue to share the same mission, vision, and values. Both schools will remain firmly rooted in the Reformed Christian tradition. Both schools will continue Teaching for Transformation, maintain their commitment to biblical discipleship, and equip students to reclaim God's world.

The structure will evolve, but the foundation remains unchanged.

Looking Forward

The next two years will be dedicated to planning and implementation. Governance structures and operational systems will be established. New branding and identity work will begin for the North School.

This decision reflects confidence in the future of Christian education, in the strength of our school communities, and in the belief that God will continue to lead and provide as He has for 60 years.

We will share updates and opportunities for involvement as we move forward. To learn more about the proposal, visit

www.availacademy.org/school-restructure.



Avail Academy NEWS

Celebrating Excellence



This year, Avail Academy celebrated two remarkable honors: President Ross Douma received the MinnDependent Leadership Award, and Julie Amen was named Best Teacher in Edina for the second time.

Scan the QR code to read the full stories behind these well-deserved recognitions.



Grandparents Day

Perhaps the most anticipated day of the year is Grandparents Day, and faculty, staff, and students love welcoming these special people to campus. Take a look at some of our favorite moments from this year's event.



Lumen: A Small Presence with a Big Impact

If you spend time in the hallways of Avail Academy Edina, you may see a golden retriever quietly moving beside students or resting nearby in Principal Kathy Johnson's office. That's Lumen.

Lumen's story carries special significance for the Edina community. He was gifted in memory of Sarah Jelgerhuis, a former Avail student and hospice nurse who deeply valued both people and animals. Her family's gift made it possible for Lumen to begin training as a therapy dog, who is already providing comfort, support, and companionship to students.

Therapy dogs like Lumen play an important role in school communities by offering a calm, steady presence that supports students in both everyday moments and times of stress. At Edina, Lumen's presence helps create a sense of peace and reinforces the school's commitment to nurturing hearts and minds.



Our inaugural PreK class spent the year learning, growing, and discovering the joy of a Christ-centered education. From first friendships to newfound confidence, these young learners helped launch a program that will shape Avail Academy for years to come. We can't wait to see all they'll accomplish as they head to Kindergarten!



ACADEMICS

Building Friendships Before Middle School

As students prepare for the transition to middle school, having familiar faces and trusted friends can make all the difference. Avail Academy senior Gabe Christianson recognized that need and turned it into an opportunity through his Faithfulness Project.

Gabe launched **Game Lab**, an after-school program that brought together third through fifth graders for an afternoon of board games, outdoor activities, and fun. The goal was to create a welcoming environment where younger students could build friendships before taking the next step in their educational journey.

The response exceeded expectations. Interest was so strong that the program quickly reached capacity, prompting an expansion to welcome nearly 30 students throughout April.

Faithfulness Projects are a distinctive part of the Avail experience, challenging our High School seniors to identify a real need and take meaningful action. By creating Game Lab, Gabe demonstrated that leadership can be as simple as creating a space where others feel known, included, and connected.





Faithfulness Project Serves the St. Paul Community

For Avail Academy senior Noah Bandstra, faith is being lived out through action.

For his Faithfulness Project, Noah partnered with The Way Church in St. Paul, an organization committed to serving individuals experiencing homelessness and hardship through acts of compassion, connection, and care.

Each Sunday, volunteers from The Way go into the community to offer basic necessities, including snacks and water, and with a reminder that every person is valued and not forgotten. Volunteers seek to demonstrate the love of Christ in tangible ways.

Noah was inspired to support this ministry and help others understand the impact of serving those in need.

Faithfulness Projects are a meaningful part of the Avail experience, challenging seniors to recognize needs around them and take initiative to make a difference. Through his project, Noah demonstrated that serving others begins with compassion, humility, and a willingness to step beyond what is familiar.



Connections Across the World

A book can open a door to a new world. For students at Avail Academy, that idea became a reality when their generosity traveled thousands of miles to Kenya.

As part of a special service project, Avail students collected books to support the Brydges Centre Library in Kenya, partnering with the Samuelson family as they spent a semester learning and serving abroad. The Samuelson children, who are Avail students, helped deliver the books during their family's visit and shared the gift of reading with students eager to learn.

When the books arrived, the response was overwhelming. The children at Brydges Centre were so excited to explore the new resources that they had to be gently reminded that the library needed to close for the evening.

The project also created a meaningful exchange between students across the globe. Students and teachers at Avail wrote letters to accompany the books, and in return, children in Kenya shared letters back with the Avail community.

Scan the QR code to see a thank-you video from Brydges



Celebrating Student Achievements

Throughout the year, students across our campuses have been recognized for excellence in academics, innovation, research, and communication. These accomplishments reflect the curiosity, perseverance, and Christ-centered purpose that define the Avail experience.

STEM & INNOVATION

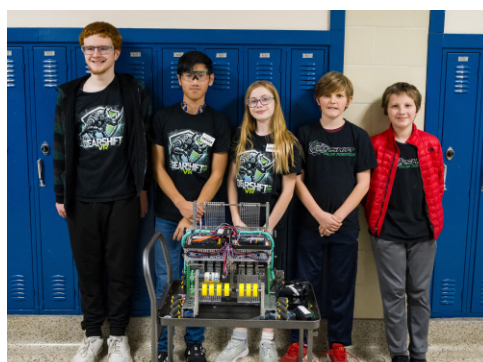
Minnesota Zoo ZOOMS STEM Design

Challenge: Fifth graders Hannah Miller, Elin Johnson, and Hazel Abbring received the Conservation Award for their exhibit design, selected from more than 5,200 participating students representing 85 schools.



Science Fair Excellence: Edina students Addie Koelewyn, Ellianah Weinacht, and Abram Kron advanced to the State Science Fair, with Addie and Ellianah competing at the state level. Blaine students James Postma and Colton Dykstra advanced to the Minnesota State Science and Engineering Fair. James earned a 3M Award for his project “Stick with It,” and Colton received a Bronze Award from the Minnesota Academy of Science for “Comparing Capacity.”

Valor Robotics: Gearshift Valor Robotics earned the Think Award, advanced to the State Competition, and received a \$2,000 Gene Haas Foundation Sponsorship Grant. Senior Ezekiel Hinton was named a FIRST Tech Challenge Dean’s List Minnesota Finalist and competed in Houston for the Global Dean’s List Award.



MATHEMATICS

Edina Math Masters: The team placed in the Top 10 among 25 competing teams. Miles King earned 4th place in the Fact Drill competition.

Blaine Math Masters: 6th-grade students placed 2nd out of 22 teams, with Caleb Rieke earning 2nd overall and Andrew Schoonveld placing 10th overall. Fifth-grade students also placed 2nd out of 26 teams, with Caleb Auch earning 6th overall and Ian Janssen placing 13th overall.

HISTORY AND HUMANITIES

Edina History Day: Six 8th graders earned Honorable Mention recognition at the State Competition: Tabitha Bell, Mira Byers, Ariel Dammann (Honorable Mention recipient), Leo Inestroza, Evangeline Leeper, Camilla Swenson

Blaine History Day: Three students advanced to the State Competition: Henry Bruin, Roman Martin Makarych (Honorable Mention recipient), Ezra Youso

WRITING AND COMMUNICATION

Five 4th-grade students from last year’s Mrs. Hatton’s Edina class were selected for publication in an upcoming devotional book based on the Psalms by author Julia Taves: Hazel Abbring, Mac Abdo, Fisher Dederichs, Kate Matasovsky, Mackenzie Stoltzman

CO-CURRICULARS

Alumna Marley Aune Honored

The former Avail Academy student and University of Northwestern volleyball standout was recently named the 2026 NCCAA Game Plan 4 LIFE Female Student-Athlete of the Year, one of the highest honors awarded by the National Christian College Athletic Association. The award recognizes one male and one female student-athlete each year who best exemplify four Christian character qualities: Love, Integrity, Faith, and Excellence.

During her collegiate career, Marley has become one of the most accomplished volleyball players in the University of Northwestern's history. A two-time AVCA All-American and 2025 UMAC Player of the Year, she helped lead the Eagles while rewriting the program record books as one of the top blockers in NCAA Division III volleyball.

Marley's impact extended beyond statistics and awards. A kinesiology pre-therapy major with a 3.82 GPA, Marley consistently pursued excellence in the classroom while investing in the people around her. She serves in children's ministry at her church, has led a small group for her teammates, worked with local elementary students, and participated in a mission trip to the Dominican Republic, where she helped lead volleyball clinics, deliver food, and serve communities in need.

Northwestern Head Women's Volleyball Coach Beth Wilmuth said Marley's greatest impact comes not just from her athletic accomplishments, but from the way she leads others through faith, integrity, and service.



"To her, it's not about checking boxes," Wilmuth shared. "It's about growing closer to her Savior and bringing others closer to Him."

2025–26 Athletic Highlights

Girls Volleyball: Varsity finished 9–14, while JV finished 6–10.

Boys Soccer: Finished 3–10 in a competitive season of growth.

Boys Basketball: Varsity finished 11–12, with JV finishing 7–11.

Boys Volleyball: Avail launched its first boys volleyball program, building the foundation for future seasons of competition and growth.



Academic Excellence on the Field/Court

Avail teams were also recognized for excellence in the classroom through the Minnesota State High School Coaches Association Athletic-Academic Awards:

Boys Soccer – Gold Award (3.74–4.0 team GPA)

Girls Volleyball – Silver Award (3.5–3.74 team GPA)

Boys Basketball – Silver Award (3.5–3.74 team GPA)



New Opportunities for Avail Students

Launching Chamber Singers

Beginning in the 2026–27 school year, Avail will launch Chamber Singers, providing additional opportunities for advanced vocal students to grow their musical skills and share their gifts.

First Year of Boys Volleyball

The introduction of boys volleyball marked another step in expanding opportunities for Avail athletes and building new traditions.



Music

High school musicians achieved notable recognition:

- High School Band earned a Superior rating – the highest possible rating – at the MSHSL Large Group Contest.
- High School Choir earned an Excellent rating at the MSHSL Large Group Contest.
- Seven students were selected for the Dordt Honor Choir.
- Twenty students were selected by audition for the Concordia University Honor Choir.
- Seven students were selected for various Honor Bands, including the MN Junior Winds Honor Band, UNWSP Honor Band, and MN Band Directors Association 6-8 Honor Band.



Theater



Peter Pan Jr., Blaine Middle School



Mary Poppins Jr., Edina Middle School



A Wrinkle in Time, High School



Brian the Comet, High School One Act



Matilda the Musical, High School

Impact Drive Surpasses Goal, Raising Nearly \$300,000 for Avail's Future

Thanks to the support of parents, grandparents, alumni, churches, staff, and friends of Avail Academy, the 2025–26 Impact Drive raised \$298,000, surpassing its goal by nearly \$50,000.

The funds are making a visible difference across our campuses. At the Blaine campus, we've replaced a large section of the aging roof, purchased new desks and furniture for the classrooms, and added a much-needed air conditioning unit to the PreK classroom. In Edina, the library has been refreshed with new carpeting, sticking doors have been replaced, and the Kindergarten ceiling was scraped and repaired. Additional projects supported by the Impact Drive will continue to improve our campuses while strengthening safety, learning spaces, and the overall student experience.

Every gift, large and small, played a role in making these improvements possible. More importantly, every donation represents a shared commitment to Avail Academy's mission and to equipping students with a Christ-centered education for generations to come.

To every individual, family, church, business, and community partner who invested in this year's Impact Drive, THANK YOU! Your faithful support is leaving a lasting impact on our students and our schools.

Avail Business Partners

Thank you for the generous support of our business partners.

GOLD AND SILVERS PARTNERS

Aaron Hall
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BRONZE PARTNERS

Crown College

Dordt University

Frontier Fire Protection

Nate's Window Cleaning

AVAIL ALUMNI

Stay Connected

Whether you graduated from Avail Academy last year or attended Calvin Christian decades ago, our alumni are an important part of our story. We love to stay connected and hear about how God is using you in his world.

Send us an update at www.availacademy.org/alumni and be sure to follow us on Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn.



Orienteering Event



Alumnus Gives Back

When Avail Academy alumnus Davis Wurst ('23) began planning his Eagle Scout Project, he knew he wanted to give back to the community that helped shape him. Davis chose to design, build, and lead the construction of a new crate for Lumen, the therapy dog at Avail's Edina campus. The project fulfills a key requirement on his journey to earning the rank of Eagle Scout while leaving a lasting gift for students and staff.

We are so grateful for this gift!



Avail Alumni Go Back to School

Avail alumni share how God led them back to the classrooms that once shaped them

Student Journalism Feature | Written by Sophia Krueger, Avail High School Journalism

Alumni relationships are a meaningful part of a school community, and nowhere is that more evident than at Avail Academy. Today, seven Avail alumni serve across the school's campuses. That's about 1 in 7 Avail teachers and paraprofessionals who once walked these same hallways as students themselves: Zack Petersen, Amanda Kubacki-Postma, Kellie Hedberg, Rachel Mulder, Natalie Cohoon, Val Van Holland, and Amy Teunissen.

To celebrate these connections, I interviewed three alumni who found their way back to Avail and reflected on how their journeys connect with this year's theme, "In All Things."

Mrs. Amanda Kubacki-Postma serves as the librarian at the Blaine campus, teaches elementary STEAM one day each week for PreK–5th-grade students, and co-directs the middle school musical each spring. Reflecting on her time as a student, she shared, "I was known and loved by my teachers and the staff here. As a teacher, I try to do the same for my students."

She described her experience with Christian education as "foundational" and said this year's "In All Things" theme reminds her that "God is always there and part of our lives." Through her work, she loves helping students recognize that "He shows up in the books we read and the stories we tell."

Mrs. Valerie Van Holland (Kroll), a member of the 5th-grade teaching team at the Blaine campus and a current Avail parent, said her return to Avail happened unexpectedly. "To be honest, Avail asked me to come," she explained. "In August 2021, they were seeking to fill this 5th-grade role, and they gave me a call. I knew I wanted to get back into

teaching eventually, so I saw this as God opening a door and giving me a nudge to do just that."

While much has changed since her student days, Van Holland appreciates that the heart of the school has remained the same. She shared that "the current issues of my student days were still approached with the same thought and care toward reclaiming God's world."

Ms. Rachel Mulder, who teaches Pre-K at the Blaine campus, said reconnecting with Avail simply "feels like home." Along with her mother working as a teacher at Avail, Mulder said one of her favorite parts of the school has always been "the close-knit community and smaller class sizes, especially in the high school."

Reflecting on the "In All Things" theme verse, Mulder pointed to the phrase, "He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together." She shared that the verse "brings comfort to know that God has planned all my days and knows the plan and direction of my life." Looking back, she added, "I can find comfort in knowing that God knew I'd be back at Avail long before it was a thought in my mind."





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Share your Avail Academy Story

Have you been encouraged by your experience at Avail Academy? We'd love to hear from you!

A review on Niche helps prospective families learn what makes our school community so special. Whether it's a favorite teacher, meaningful friendships, spiritual growth, or academic excellence, your story can help another family discover Avail. Your feedback also helps us maintain a strong presence and grade on Niche, making it easier for future families to find us.

Follow Along

Follow us on social media for student stories, campus updates, and all the latest from Avail Academy.



Blaine



Edina



HS



WHAT'S COMING UP?

Back to School Night.

Monday, August 31, 2026

First Day of School.

Wednesday, September 2, 2026

Avail Gala.

Friday, October 2, 2026