

## Magic at the Shamrock Ball

Maureen Kelly-Carroll  
RHS special education teacher  
Gail Hoffman, member of the Rosemount  
United Methodist Church

Prom is a rite of passage for many teens. Girls don fancy dresses. Boys rent tuxes. And they dance the night away. Teens with disabilities don't always get the same opportunity. On Friday, March 13, the National Honor Society of Rosemount High School, and Rosemount United Methodist Church joined as one community and gave special education students at RHS and at the church an opportunity to enjoy this rite of spring.

"A year ago, I was sitting in an area disability ministry leaders meeting listening to a discussion about De LaSalle's High School's "Starry, Starry, Night Ball" and the "Snowflake Ball." Both balls are for students and adults with disabilities. Both have over 300 people attending. The more I listened the more I thought our church (Rosemount United Methodist Church) would be the perfect place to hold such an event"

said parent and RUMC member, Gail Hoffman.

"Then I thought that wouldn't it be great to partner with Rosemount High School and have a "practice prom" for special education students and have their partners for the evening be students for the National Honor Society. I thought the "prom" would help the students with disabilities practice their social skills and introduce the National Honor Society to a different student population and teach them that all students have the same hopes and desires as them."

Gail brought the idea to Maureen Kelly-Carroll, an RHS special education teacher. "Maureen and I hoped that by attending the Shamrock Ball that each student whether with or without disabilities would have a special evening. For the student with disabilities we hoped it would be a chance for them to dress up, participate in a grand march, have their picture taken by a professional photographer and dance, just like regular education students do at the annual school prom. Also, it was an opportunity for them to see that a whole community loved



them and wanted them to have a special evening" said Gail. "There were volunteer opportunities for the National Honor Society students as well as the members of our church. We had so many volunteers that we had to turn some away."

It took almost a year of planning.

Each student was introduced by Chuck Brooks, the Master of Ceremonies who is an

English teacher at the high school. Every student was applauded as they walked down the promenade. Watching the parents react to their child's experience was awesome. Some of the parents were witnessing something that they never thought possible for their child. It was also won-

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## Jefferson Elementary music teacher wrote the book on Choirchimes



Jefferson Elementary School music teacher Paul Weller.

Derrick Williams  
Communication Specialist  
Anoka-Hennepin School District

Paul Weller always knew he wanted to be a music educator. He grew up playing instruments and singing, and was active in band, orchestra and choir from middle school through college.

"That's what I wanted to do. I wanted to teach music," he said. "But I never in a million years thought I'd be an elementary teacher."

Weller is now not only a music teacher at Jefferson Elementary School in Blaine, but he is also the co-author of a book aimed at elementary music educators nationwide.

The book, called "Ring, Dance, Play: First experiences with Choirchimes and Orff Schulwerk," helps elementary music teachers incorporate an instrument-called a Choirchime into their curriculum. Choirchimes are a brand of handheld chime instruments similar to handbells, but lighter, sturdier, and more economical, making them ideal for young students.

Weller wrote the book with friend and Massachusetts-based music teacher

Griff Gall, with whom he had previously collaborated on a guide to help educators integrate handbells and handchimes into the classroom. The two were approached by Malmark, the maker of Choirchimes, to create a similar resource specifically for their instruments.

"They said, 'We keep hearing teachers say they've got these things in their closet but they don't know what to do with them,'" he said. "So we spent about two years working on this project and finally came up with something that we liked. The big point of the book is that we're not trying to give you something else to learn, we're trying to say, here's how you can use these things with what you already do."

Weller recently presented the book at a couple of national events, including the Texas Music Educators conference last month, which was attended by more than 25,000 teachers and students.

"People have loved it. We thought that maybe two people would buy it, but it's been more than two, so it's not just my mom buying copies," he said, laughing. "It's been really nice to see. And we get to

go out and do little workshops for people at the national events, and it's really been kind of fun."

The book emphasizes the Orff Schulwerk method, one of a handful of developmental approaches to teaching music. The tagline for the Orff approach is "Sing, Say, Dance, Play," said Weller, an Orff Schulwerk certified specialist.

"So it's a lot of experiential learning through exploring the elements of music and improvising with the elements of music," he said. "It's like you're building a language: You're playing with the sounds of the language first, learning how to use the words and the syllables, and then eventually you move into writing the language and reading the language."

Weller uses the Orff approach in his classroom, as well, which is very different than how he was taught music growing up. "My experience was sitting at a table, opening a book and learning music from the teacher who would play from the piano," he said. "And if I had the kind of

**Continued on Page 7**

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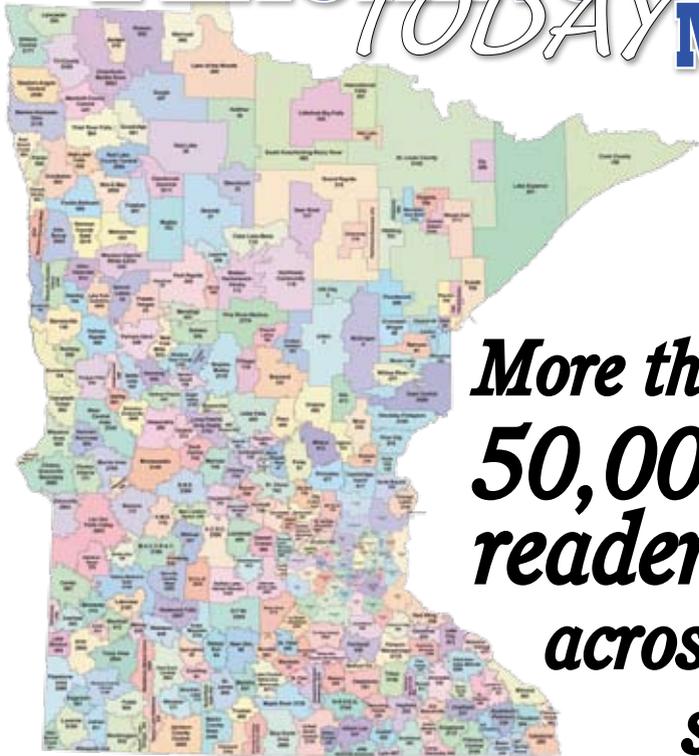
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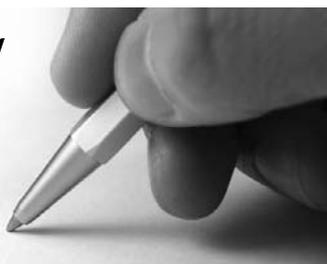
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## National Weather Association Sol Hirsch Education Fund Grants 2015

Sol Hirsch Education Fund Grants are awarded annually to teachers/educators of grades K–12 to help improve the education of their students, school and/or community in the science of meteorology.

**Grant Amount:** \$750

**Deadline:** June 1, 2015

**Website:** [www.nwas.org/grants/solhirsch.php](http://www.nwas.org/grants/solhirsch.php)

## Captain Planet Foundation

The Captain Planet Foundation (CPF) funds innovative hands-on environmental projects to encourage youth around the world to work individually and collectively to solve environmental problems in their homes, schools, and communities. The foundation's mission is to promote and support high-quality educational programs that enable children and youth to understand and appreciate our world through learning experiences that engage them in active, hands-on projects to improve the environment.

**Deadline:** Applications are due February 28 and September 30, annually.

**Website:** [captainplanetfoundation.org/apply-for-grants](http://captainplanetfoundation.org/apply-for-grants)

## Education Grants

Waste Management, Inc. supports environmental and science education programs, such as science fairs and Earth Day projects targeting middle and high school students. There is also interest in proposals to preserve and enhance natural resources. Local facilities may identify and support other causes that are important to the immediate community.

**Deadline:** Applications are accepted and reviewed year-round.

**Website:** [www.wm.com/about/community/charitable-giving.jsp](http://www.wm.com/about/community/charitable-giving.jsp)

## Environmental Advocacy Grants

The Cornell Douglas Foundation provides small grants to organizations that promote the foundation's vision: advocating for environmental health and justice, encouraging stewardship of the environment, and furthering respect for sustainability of resources. Awards range from \$10,000 to \$15,000. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis.

**Website:** [www.cornelldouglas.org/apply](http://www.cornelldouglas.org/apply)

## Farm to School Grant Program

While individual farm to school programs are shaped by their unique community,

geographic region, and scope, the term 'farm to school' is generally understood to include efforts that connect schools with local or regional farmers, food processors, and manufacturers in order to serve local or regionally procured foods in school cafeterias. The purpose of the USDA Farm to School Grant Program is to assist eligible entities in implementing farm to school programs that improve access to local foods in eligible schools.

### Important Dates:

- Training Grant Letter of Intent Due: 11:59 PM, Eastern, April 30, 2015
- Application (Planning, Implementation, Support Service) Submission Due: 11:59 PM, Eastern, May 20, 2015
- Estimated Award Announcement: November 2015

**Website:** [www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/farm-school-grant-program](http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/farm-school-grant-program)

## CHS Foundation Mini-grants

The CHS Foundation is committed to investing in the future of rural America, agriculture, and cooperative business through education and leadership development. The CHS Foundation grants up to \$1,000 to innovative academic and leadership programs that strengthen student learning and enhance professional development. Examples include: leadership training opportunities, mentorship programs, professional development experiences, and student fundraising efforts.

Applications are accepted year-round.

**Website:** [www.chsinc.com/stewardship/leadership-development#minigrants](http://www.chsinc.com/stewardship/leadership-development#minigrants)

## Lorrie Otto Seeds for Education (SFE) Grant Program

The Wild Ones environmental organization annually awards small grants to schools, nature centers, houses of worship, and other nonprofit places of learning in the United States through the Lorrie Otto Seeds for Education (SFE) Grant Program. Projects must focus on appreciation for nature through the use of and teaching about native plants. The choice of plants must be appropriate to the local ecoregion and site conditions (soil, water, sunlight). Eligible applicants must have a site for the project and involve students in all phases of development, including project planning.

Grants under \$500 are awarded for purchase of native plants and seeds for a project during the grant year.

**Deadline:** Applications are due via email October 15, annually.

**Website:** [www.wildones.org/seeds-for-education](http://www.wildones.org/seeds-for-education)

## Small Grants Program

The Clif Bar Family Foundation's Small Grants are awarded for general organizational support or to fund specific projects in the foundation's priority areas: (1) protecting Earth's beauty and bounty; (2) creating a robust, healthy food system; (3) increasing opportunities for outdoor activity; (4) reducing environmental health hazards; and (5) building stronger communities.

The average grant awarded is \$8,000.

**Deadline:** Applications are due February 15, May 15, August 15, and November 1, annually.

**Website:** [clifbarfamilyfoundation.org/Grants-Programs](http://clifbarfamilyfoundation.org/Grants-Programs)

## The Herb Society of America's Donald Samull Classroom Herb Garden Grant 2015-2016

The Herb Society of America will award four (4) schools each year indoor window sill herb gardens. The classrooms selected will receive three (3) windowsill herb garden kits including pots, soil, seeds and educational materials to use in the classroom. The Herb Society of America will provide the educational materials.

**Grant Amount:** \$200

**Deadline:** October 1, 2015

**Website:** [herbsociety.org/resources/samull-grant.html](http://herbsociety.org/resources/samull-grant.html)

## Crayola Champion Creatively Alive Children Grant Program

Crayola Champion Creatively Alive Children grant program provides grants for innovative, creative leadership team building within elementary schools.

Up to 20 elementary schools in the United States or Canada will be selected to receive Champion Creatively Alive Children grants to develop school Creative Leadership Teams that deliver professional development and document the impact increased school-wide art-infused education has on student outcomes. Each selected school will receive a \$2,500 monetary grant and \$1,000 worth of Crayola products.

**Deadline:** June 22, 2015

**Website:** [www.crayola.com/for-educators/ccac-landing/grant-program.aspx](http://www.crayola.com/for-educators/ccac-landing/grant-program.aspx)

## Art Teacher Incentive Grants

Teacher Incentive Grants are given to projects that promote the teaching of art. Eligible projects may address instructional process, curriculum, student learning, student assessment, classroom behavior, management, discipline, or other practices relating to instructional interaction and the achievement of student learning.

Grants up to \$2,500 are awarded.

**Deadline:** Applications are due October 1, annually.

**Website:** [www.arteducators.org/grants/national-art-education-foundation](http://www.arteducators.org/grants/national-art-education-foundation)

## Music Education Grants

The Mockingbird Foundation offers grants to public schools and nonprofit organizations to support projects in music education. The primary focus is students, ages 18 and younger, with particular interest in projects that target underserved children.

Grants range from \$100 to \$5,000 and are made on a one-time basis.

**Deadline:** Initial inquiries due Aug 1, annually.

**Website:** [mbird.org/funding/guidelines](http://mbird.org/funding/guidelines)

## Roots in Science and Engineering (RISE) Awards

Google RISE Awards support organizations that promote access to computer science education and give students ages seven to 18 the opportunity to become creators of future technological innovations. In particular, Google is focused on partnering with organizations that specifically target girls as underrepresented in the field of computer science and STEM, and that have the potential to scale their efforts and reach more girls. RISE goals are to fund organizations that inspire, engage, and retain students on a long-term path in the field of computing.

Awards range from \$15,000 to \$50,000.

**Deadline:** Applications are due September 30, annually.

**Website:** [www.google.com/edu/resources/programs/google-rise-awards](http://www.google.com/edu/resources/programs/google-rise-awards)

## Business Unit Grants

United Technologies (UTC) wants to inspire students to embrace science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). It supports the development of the next generation of engineers, scientists, and finance professionals by sponsoring primary school to university-level programs that spark students' interest and inspire innovation. The program also focuses on promoting opportunities for minorities and women to pursue careers in engineering and research.

**Deadline:** Business units accept online applications from January 1 to June 30, annually.

**Website:** [www.utc.com/Corporate-Responsibility/Community/Pages/Apply-For-A-Grant.aspx](http://www.utc.com/Corporate-Responsibility/Community/Pages/Apply-For-A-Grant.aspx)

## Calvin K. Kazanjian Economics Foundation Grants

The primary focus of the Kazanjian Foundation is to increase economic literacy. It gives special attention to proposals and projects with national impact, specifically programs that:

- Raise the public's participation in economic education or create a demand for greater economic literacy.
- Apply new strategies for teaching economics, including online and web-based instruction.

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# Students finding balance, strength in yoga class

Aaron Tinklenberg  
District 191

Picture an elective high school physical education class in your mind and it probably involves a lot of boys getting exercise and letting off steam by playing some competitive sport. But that's far from what you get if you visit the wrestling gym at Burnsville High School during the first and last hours of the day.

Lori VanderWoude is in her sixth year of teaching "Yoga, Pilates and Fitness" to BHS students who are looking for something different than action-packed competition. Instead, her students — mostly girls, but more than a handful of boys, too — experience dimmed lights, quiet background music, and time learning how to relax through movement.

Practicing yoga three days a week with pilates and cardio exercises the other two, VanderWoude says the skills students learn will help them stay healthy and deal with the stresses they have in their lives.

"It's a fitness class, but we do talk about

relaxing, breathing and dealing with stress. We talk about using deep breathing and other techniques to help stay relaxed and focus if you're getting ready for a test," VanderWoude said. "I've had kids tell me that it works. It's great that they can take what they learn here and use it in their lives."

Senior Kelly Keenan echoed those sentiments as she explained why she registered for the class.

"It gets me active and motivated," Kelly said. "And school stresses me out and this is great stress relief."

On Fridays, VanderWoude has introduced an extended period of deep relaxation time. It's hard to imagine, but at those times, her class has 30-plus teenagers who are completely still, quiet and unplugged. She says she wasn't sure it would work, but once students learned how, they are thriving on that down time.

VanderWoude says the class was developed as a way to appeal to students who weren't interested in the more competitive classes. Plus, she says, it's something every-



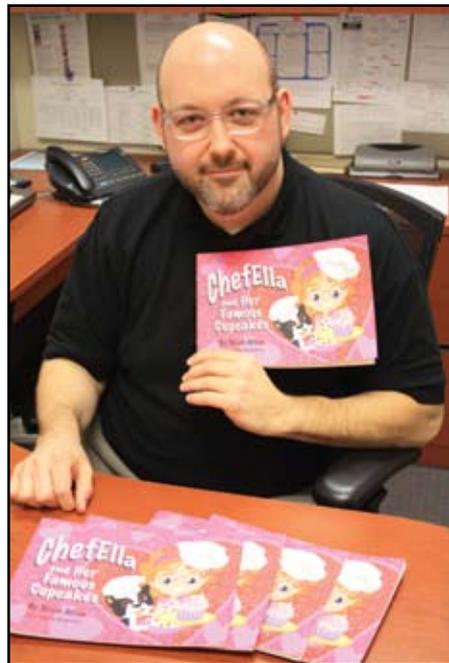
one can do.

"From athletes to students with special needs," VanderWoude said, "this is a great option for a wide range of students."

[www.isd191.org](http://www.isd191.org)  
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# Anoka-Hennepin's Child Nutrition Director Pens Book to Inspire Children's Interest in Cooking



Anoka-Hennepin Child Nutrition Program Director Noah Atlas and the children's book he wrote, titled "ChefElla and Her Famous Cupcakes."

Derrick Williams

Communication Specialist

Anoka-Hennepin School District

As the director of the Anoka-Hennepin's Child Nutrition Program, Noah Atlas oversees the food choices offered to students across the district.

But his relationship with students goes

much deeper. He also the author of a children's book he hopes will inspire children to learn to cook for themselves someday.

"I think the biggest problem these days is people don't know how to cook," he said. "You can fill your refrigerator with as much fresh and natural and organic food as you want, but if you don't know what to do with it, it kind of is a waste."

Atlas said he thinks many people, especially in his generation, simply don't cook because they didn't learn how to while growing up.

Enter "ChefElla and Her Famous Cupcakes," a combination storybook/cookbook written and self-published by Atlas that follows a young girl as she bakes cupcakes with her mother. The book brings readers along on every step of the process and incorporates basic cooking skills and a recipe within the story.

Atlas is hoping that smaller children will enjoy having it read to them, and as they get older, they'll learn how to make the food at the same time, he said.

"So it's entertaining, but you're learning something," Atlas said. "And if you're not comfortable cooking yourself as a parent or someone who's reading this book, it's easy enough to follow so that you could fake it."

If the book is a success, Atlas said he plans to write a series, with each book containing a different recipe.

"The idea is that you would gain skills by following the recipe, and then each successive book you would be learning new skills,"

he said. "Most kids' cookbooks might have 50 recipes, but if you don't know how to cook it doesn't really do anything for you."

This book is definitely a family affair for Atlas: ChefElla is named after his oldest daughter, but illustrated to resemble his youngest. His wife was a collaborator, and the recipe itself was inspired by his oldest daughter's digestive issues, which prompted Atlas to create a healthier version of a recipe she already liked.

"What we learned is if she ate cleanly and ate less processed food, she didn't feel bad, and she was able to control the symptoms she had," he said. "We found a basic recipe and changed it over time to fit the needs of how we wanted her to eat."

The cupcake recipe in the book uses alternative ingredients to make it healthier, swapping applesauce for oil, using whole wheat flour, and cutting down on sugar by using pineapple as a sweetener. It also contains two cups of carrots.

"It really does taste like a carrot cake when all is said and done," he said. "And you get some cream cheese frosting on the top, so that always kind of makes it OK."

To help parents out with feeding their families, Atlas also started a companion blog at [www.chefella.com](http://www.chefella.com), where he posts new recipes weekly.

"Sometimes you're making the same tacos on Monday and spaghetti on Tuesday, the same things over and over again during the week. My idea is to throw something different in there so that you'll have an alternative," he said.

Like the book, the blog recipes also delve into cooking skills, covering everything from cutting an onion to blanching.

"I also try to make one alternative ingredient choice, like if you might normally use butter, I might use olive oil. Or if you might normally use oil, I might use applesauce," he said.

Which is not to say that all of his recipes are necessarily focused on health. "I do believe in the moderation thing," he said. "So one week while I might have a salad, I might also have ice cream sandwich cookies. But you learn how to mix the ice cream yourself from a vanilla flavor to make it your own flavor. So some of it is about how to make things your own when you cook, and others are how to use an alternate ingredient to make it healthier."

If there's enough interest in "ChefElla and Her Famous Cupcakes," Atlas said he would love to continue the series, incorporating more characters — introducing a boy, for instance — as well as holiday recipes, trips to the farm, etc.

Ultimately, he said, "I'd like people to be comfortable with cooking. It's not as scary as they think it is."

[www.anoka.k12.mn.us](http://www.anoka.k12.mn.us)  
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# Cutaway Productions

## Video teacher leads with film business past

By Alexander Pavlicin

A dark background contrasts with the natural white light filtering in from outside. The weather is dreary; rainfall can be heard hitting the walls of the studio. Yet in the moment, once the red button is pushed and the video commences, there is nothing but the camera and scene.

The scene shifts. Noise and laughter fill the air as students discuss plans for making new videos. In both these scenes, Debbie Drew, theatre and video teacher, plays an active role. She no longer works for the film business, but rather as a video teacher, passing on what she has learned over the years to her students. She is reminded of the old memories and creates new ones every day.

Some of the memories Drew has the opportunity to create today are saved forever in the form of videos, created by students in her Cutaway Productions class. Instead of taking written notes and tests like most other classes, Drew designed Cutaway Productions like a student-run business. Local businesses hire Drew's class to make a video, and they have to make the highest quality video possible. As one would expect, a good work ethic is key to making the videos.

"Being able to pass on the work ethic I learned in the film business to my students is incredible. It is quite a valuable lesson for them,"

said Drew, whose days in the film business would often reach 16 hours of work per day.

Drew's start to her career in the film business may come as a surprise. It was not glamorous, and fate most certainly intervened. She was a junior in college, looking in a course catalog for a class to take that was not chemistry or physics.

As she explained it, "I was searching through the catalog and said, 'What should I major in? Oh, video seems interesting.' I have loved it ever since."

Even though many aspects of making a video are often completed individually, such as editing or filming a video, the overall success of a group making a video depends entirely on teamwork. Just completing a job is not enough; students must contribute to the group as a whole for a video to be successful.

"You are only as good as your weakest link. If you have a crappy sound guy, it is going to take a lot to save that video," explained Drew.

To help bring together the class involved in Cutaway Productions, Drew recently organized a field trip to the National Association of Broadcasters in Las Vegas, where students had the unique opportunity to touch equipment worth hundreds of thousands of dollars used for making Hollywood films and meet celebrities such as Daymond John, an investor on the popular TV



show Shark Tank.

For Drew, working with videos has brought more than the occasional celebrity. She has had the opportunity to meet many interesting people, from Prince to several Minnesota Vikings players.

"I have had the opportunity to work with a lot of interesting people. They were difficult people sometimes, but overall it was a lot of fun working in the film business. Now I still deal with interesting people, but they usually have an excuse because they are teenagers," Drew said as she laughed in her office.

The "interesting" teenage students Drew works with now enjoy the open and fast-paced environment of her classes, especially in Cutaway Productions.

As sophomore Jessie Gosso explained, "Cutaway Productions is a really fun class, but it is also a good challenge. Drew has inspired me to look at my future in a new way."

Another sophomore, Anna Scheel, also commented on the class, "It can be stressful at times, but in the end we are a family. The class has a very fun vibe."

Making the switch from "video maker" to video teacher was a great transition for Drew. After having her first child, she soon realized that the film business just simply is not a good "mom job."

"I love what I did and I would never change it, but I would never go back to it now. I love where I am at now," said Drew.

*This article originally was published in The Pony Express, Stillwater Area High School's student newspaper. Reprinted with permission.*

[www.cutawayproductions.org](http://www.cutawayproductions.org)

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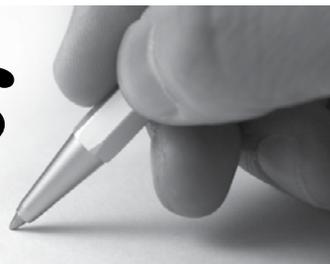


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# Grants



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- Encourage measurement of economic understanding.
- Help otherwise disenfranchised youth and young adults with children learn to participate in the economic system.

Awards range from \$3,500 to \$150,000, with an average award of approximately \$22,000.

**Deadline:** Applications are due February 15 for review in May/June, and September 15 for review in November/December, annually.

**Website:** [www.kazanjian.org/grants/apply](http://www.kazanjian.org/grants/apply)

## Education Grants

The BMW Group in North America provides funding for charitable programs that benefit society. Highest consideration is given to programs that focus on education, road

safety, and the environment.

Applications are accepted year-round.

**Website:** [www.bmwgroupna.com/philanthropy.htm](http://www.bmwgroupna.com/philanthropy.htm)

## Shell Grants

Grant requests related to education must focus on Shell's funding priorities. These include increasing interest in technical careers among students, and professional development in science and mathematics for educators. Funding is provided to support programs in kindergarten through grade 12 that are designed to boost students' mathematics and science skills.

Grant applications are accepted year-round, with a limit of one grant application per organization per fiscal year (September to August).

**Website:** [www.shell.us/environment-society/grant.html](http://www.shell.us/environment-society/grant.html)

## Choirchimes Continued from Page 1

experience that these kids are getting now in our district, I probably could have tested out of freshman year theory in college. Honestly."

The Orff approach offers a much more hands-on, comprehensive experience, he said.

"What I mainly deal with is vocal singing music, because that's the first instrument. When we think about learning a language, that's the first thing you have: a voice," he said. "So in first grade we're learning the basic two pitches that they first need to know, we play around with high and low sounds, we play around with how they sound using instruments, and then writing and reading them in very abstract ways."

Once students have a solid understanding of those two pitches in a vague sense, they can then move into naming them, which leads to working with them in the more concrete context of composition and greater improvisation, he said. Eventually first graders can compose a song in their heads and sing it to Weller, and then write it down.

"The end result is we want to have is that the students are able to be fluent with it, and be music makers and able to read, write, improvise, and create with the elements of music," he said.

While talent plays a role, music is really a learned skill that requires practice, Weller said. And educators in the Anoka-Hennepin School District are very fortunate to have consistent, regular practice with students, which curriculum revisions in the past five years or so have

afforded them.

"Thirty minutes, twice a week is something that really has come about in the last couple of years as being a required tool for the music teachers," he said. "It's really been shown we can't do what we need to without having that regular practice with the kids."

Weller said that like all college music education graduates, he had always imagined himself teaching high school. But watching his student teaching mentor at an Apple Valley elementary school changed his mind. "The things she was doing with her kids, they were so independent and so musical, I was just like, whoa, this is awesome. I didn't know kids could do this, and still have it be fun and engaging," he said.

Now Weller said he's continually amazed by his students' abilities and the level of competency they're able to reach.

"It's really cool to see what these kids soak up and do just fearlessly," he said. "Just seeing what they come up with on their own, giving them the tools and then just sitting back and seeing what they come up with has been really cool. I'm just always amazed that they can, in first grade, sing a 16-beat composition for me, from their brain. Just blows my mind

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## Ray Charles Foundation Grants

The mission of the Ray Charles Foundation is to provide grants for scientific, educational, and charitable purposes; to encourage and educate people about the causes and cures for diseases and hearing impaired disabilities; and to assist organizations and institutions in the advancement of their social, educational, and academic programs for youth.

Applications are accepted May 1 through September 30, annually.

**Website:** [www.theraycharlesfoundation.org/RCF\\_GrantQualifications.html](http://www.theraycharlesfoundation.org/RCF_GrantQualifications.html)

## Library Grant Program

The Lois Lenski Covey Foundation annually awards grants to rural, urban, public, and school libraries and agencies that serve children who are economically or socially at risk, have limited book budgets, and demonstrate real need. Funds are earmarked for purchasing books for young people and are not intended for administrative or operational use.

Awards range from \$500 to \$3,000 for the purchase of children's books.

**Deadline:** Applications are due May 29, 2015.

**Website:** [www.loislenski Covey.org/index.html](http://www.loislenski Covey.org/index.html)

## Magic at the Shamrock Ball

Continued from Page 1

derful to watch students and church members work together.

Volunteers from the church set up the decorations and cleaned up after the dance. They also served as chaperones, along with RHS Principal John Wollersheim. Betty Deming, church member and RHS paraprofessional, assisted students who needed attire for the event and Rosemount High School student, Cody Cope was the disc jockey who kept them dancing throughout the night.

The NHS students, whose advisers are Jodi Rosauer and Heather Walseth, had as much fun during the event as their honored guests.

The Shamrock Ball was amazing," said Maureen. "It was definitely the highlight of my career working with students with disabilities. We had 25 students with special needs and close to 50 Rosemount High School National Honor Society students at the dance. From decorating, to the corsages and boutonnieres, pictures, Grand March and dancing, the entire event was more successful than I could have imagined. It was very rewarding to work with Gail Hoffmann and Doug Hoffman – The Shamrock Ball was their vision and I am honored to have had the opportunity to team with them on the event.

"It was a magical evening and all the students had a fabulous time," said Gail. "Regardless of ability the students just blended into one. For many of the parents, it was an opportunity and a moment frozen in time to watch their child promenade. There was hardly

a dry eye in the building. It was a privilege to witness this event."

From a parent: "What an incredible night for our daughter. We cannot thank you enough for organizing the Shamrock Ball. The Grand March brought tears to my eyes. It just makes our hearts soar to see the NHS students with our special kids. This night will surely be remembered for a long time."



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# Flipping Math at Ellis Middle School



Ryan Mayers  
Technology Integration Specialist  
ISD 492

When students in Julie Londino-Green's 7th grade pre-algebra classes at Ellis Middle School are confused by something during a lecture, they don't raise their hands. Instead, they simply rewind and watch it again. All 7th grade math classes at Ellis Middle School are taught utilizing a teaching method known as a "flipped classroom."

In a flipped classroom, the lecture and

homework parts of learning are switched around. In practice, this means that students are expected to watch a 10-15 minute video of the lecture as homework and then come to class prepared to work through an assignment.

While the concept of a flipped classroom isn't new, Ellis' use of it is. Jason Senne, the principal at Ellis Middle School, encouraged his teachers to look at the new technology implementation at Ellis as a challenge. This is exactly what pre-algebra teachers Amanda Miller, Katie Wilson, and Londino-Green did,

meeting regularly over the summer to discuss how best to use technology during the next school year in their math classes.

The change has been beneficial in a number of ways, according to Londino-Green. "Flipping the classroom takes the lecture portion of the lesson and places it in the students' hands at home where they are to watch the video and take notes. When they come to class each day teachers review and extend the lesson using activities that we did not have time for in a non-flipped math classroom. Then students work on their practice assignments in class. When they're here, we're able to work with them more one on one and really help them understand the content."

"In a traditional classroom, often the students would be here listening to content and maybe getting a little bit of their practice assignment done, and then we'd have to hope they work on it at home," says Wilson. "This way we can flip the passive and active parts of learning."

So far, it seems to be working. The teachers have seen a marked improvement in understanding and participation, and they've heard from parents about how nice it is to be able to go back and replay videos that might have been a little confusing. According to Londino-Green, the teachers "used to hear that parents wish they could help more, but they just

couldn't remember how to do the math. Now, we've been told by a few parents that they're relearning the math along with their kids."

According to Wilson, using class time to complete what would traditionally have been homework allows for more one on one instructional time. "We can walk around and talk to the kids, help them understand something they might have been too nervous to ask about in front of the whole group before. It's been really nice getting to work more with the students."

For the teachers, the change has allowed more time to do activities in class. "We've been able to do more enrichment activities," says Londino-Green. "If we find a game or an activity online, we can have the kids work on them in class where we're able to help them out if they have issues."

In the end, the flipped math classroom seems to be a success. "Really, it comes down to more exposure to the math. When we can work with the students and help them understand things better, they tend to take more ownership of their own education and, in turn, learn more."

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# Making Space for Imagination

## A Look Inside MWHS Makerspaces

By Becca Neuger  
Communications Coordinator  
Westonka Public Schools

In the Mound Westonka High School media center, a table sits checkered with assorted LEGO pieces, colorful wires and jars of Play-Doh. Upstairs in the engineering classroom, a 3D printer is humming away, molding a plastic comb for instructor Dale Kimball.

If this doesn't sound like the setup to your typical library or high school classroom, it's not. Instead, these "makerspaces" are places where MWHS students are learning in a whole new, hands-on way.

In her time as media specialist, Anitra Trapp has seen a transformation in the MWHS media center. Gone is the idea that a library is a place for silent reading and silent reading only. The 21st century library is a place where students can gather to create, build and craft.

This year, Trapp decided to redesign the media center to better promote the 21st century skills of collaboration, creativity, critical thinking and communication. Thanks to a grant from the Westonka District 277 Foundation, Trapp launched a C3 Area in the media center in December 2014 for students to Connect, Create and Collaborate. She designed the space

in a coffee shop style, with a faux fireplace, comfy furniture and even a juice bar. There are charging stations for Google Chromebooks and a white board and drop-down screen for students to use to practice presentations.

Then in January, Trapp launched the MWHS Media Center Makerspace. Equipped with computers and a wide variety of creative materials, the makerspace allows students to expand their collective curiosities by tinkering, collaborating and experimenting. As the name suggests, it's also a space to simply make things: want to play with LEGOs? Make a prototype of a new invention? Transform Play-Doh into a video game controller? The student's imagination is the limit.

Trapp said that her goal was to create a space where her students could put down their cell phones and explore their personal creative interests. "Students at the elementary and middle school levels have time to just sit down and make things," Trapp said. "We need more opportunities for high schoolers to do that."

Since the launch of the makerspace, MWHS students can be found in the media center turning Play-Doh, bananas and other items into computer touch pads using a MaKey MaKey circuit kit. They have fun experimenting with Squishy Circuits and playing with

Sphero, "the app-controlled ball that does it all."

"The kids are really excited to try the new technology," Trapp said. "They figured out MaKey MaKey in about 10 minutes."

Monthly makerspace tutorials also include creative skills, such as crocheting and underwater newspaper basket weaving.

The makerspace in Kimball's classroom is more tailored to the interests of budding engineers, offering students a place to put the science, technology, math and engineering (STEM) concepts they are learning in class to practical use. The engineering makerspace features a 3D printer and 3D scanner, as well as a wide variety of motors and sensors for robotics. Next school year, Kimball will add another 3D printer, a laser engraver and a CNC router, a computer controlled cutting machine.

Kimball agrees with Trapp that creative free time is disappearing from the high school setting and is needed. "The biggest advantage of a Maker Space is for students to use their imagination to create and think outside the



box," Kimball said.

While larger items, such as 3D printers, are more expensive, the makerspace model doesn't have to cost much to get started, according to Trapp. For the media center makerspace, Trapp supplemented purchased items with found objects, as well as items donated by parents and staff through the MWHS Staff Wish List. She hopes that the makerspaces can be added to each year.

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# Little Falls High School Ag Students Transform Local Landfill Site into Pollinator Friendly Area

By Eric Beuning

The Ag Department at Little Falls High School has a long reputation for doing projects throughout the county. The Morrison County Public Works Department asked the Little Falls Community High School to come up with a project that would improve wildlife habitat and aesthetics at the Morrison County Landfill. The project was a prime opportunity for students to get a hands-on education in land management.

Students in the natural resources class were asked to independently come up with ideas that they would propose to the county. Once all of the ideas were heard the county selected their favorite to be put into action.

The county selected a proposal that came to be known as the "Pollinator Project." The project is headed up by students, Erin Retka, Trenton Peterson, Taylor Murphy and Peter Beam, with the guidance of Ag Educator Doug Ploof.

The Pollinator Project addresses the alarming decrease in bee population seen all across the country. The problem known as colony collapse disorder, has become a serious cause for concern in the agricultural industry.

"A lot of people don't realize that one out of every three bites of food is given to us in some way by pollinators," said Peterson.

"Bees contribute over \$20 billion to the U.S. economy," Peterson said. "That number increases to \$40 billion when you include the impact to livestock."

The Pollinator Project is being implemented in three phases.

The first phase started this past fall as a prairie development project. The students planted native grasses and wild flowers in 3.9 acres of the five acres of land adjacent to the Morrison County landfill.

"There is a process to getting the land ready," said Beam. "You want to look at the type of soil, including drainage, which will influence the type of seed you choose. Then we waited for the weather to get hot and dry up so we could prepare for a burn out. We made sure to create a fire break to be safe before we burned the grasses out.

"Burning the grasses converts dead material into nutrient rich ash which helps feed the next generation of plants," he said.

Once the site was burned out and prepared, Beam's father, Ron, of the U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife, came in with a tractor and a no-till Truax drill. The drill specializes in depth bands that allow the seed to be planted one inch deep. The drill also helps ensure that the seeds are evenly distributed.



"The prairie will take up 3.9 acres of the 5-acre site and should germinate this spring," said Retka. "Then we are going to plant the remaining land with flowering crab apple, chokecherry, gray dogwood and American plum."

"The timing of the third phase is yet to be determined," Retka said. "Once the area experi-

ences a drought, we will dig six different pond sites for wildlife."

"This entire site is going to be managed without the use of pesticides and herbicides," said Murphy. "There are large numbers of bees

**Continued on Page 14**

# Pine Hill Elementary students have hands-on plant growing experience with Tower Gardens



Communications Department  
South Washington County Schools

Pine Hill Elementary School has the unique opportunity for one classroom in each grade level to have a Tower Garden, where every student will have the opportunity to plant his or her own seeds. A Tower Garden is a vertical system that allows plants to grow in limited spaces without the use of soil.

Students planted seeds in mid-January

including lettuce, arugula, basil, cilantro, parsley, Nasturtium (an edible flower) and kale. There are 28 spots for plants on one Tower Garden. The kids have been excited to come in every day to see how much their plant had grown. They keep journals of their progress along the way. Some classes are taking pictures of their plants daily so they can watch the progression in a time-lapse. With the first harvest the students pulled off 4-5 leaves from their plant and tossed it all into a bowl. The teachers brought add-ons such as tomatoes, carrots, sunflower seeds and salad dressing. And, they had a salad party. The rest of their plant was put into gallon-sized bags for each of them to take home to share with their family. The Towers were then moved onto another classroom and the process was started all over again. It takes about 6 weeks from seed to harvest.

"The combination of education along with the hands-on experience of planting their own food, watching it grow daily, and consuming produce full of valuable nutrients will offer a jump start in children making healthier choices," said Pine Hill Elementary Teacher Diane Bezdicek.

This project was made possible by a State Health Improvement Plan (SHIP) grant. The City of Cottage Grove also partnered with Pine

Hill Elementary to write the grant and gave additional funds to provide six Tower Gardens instead of four. The City of Cottage Grove is also supporting the purchase of supplies to continue this project for five years. Pine Hill plans to bring the Tower Gardens to Cottage Grove's Strawberry Fest in June to share what they learned with the community.

Through this project, students will learn about aeroponic gardening, where plants are grown in an air and mist environment without the use of soil. By growing their own fresh produce, students will also learn about the Tower to Table process, good nutrition and sustainable practices.

"This demonstrates a sustainable and environmentally friendly way to grow produce," said Bezdicek. It also addresses state education standards in math (measuring and ratios), science (seeds, plants and nutrients), health (nutrition education), and social studies (community connections, farming techniques and sustainability).



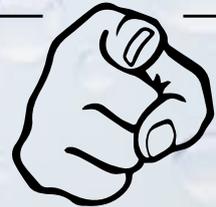
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# Westonka's School Gardens Offer Hands-On Learning



By Becca Neuger  
Communications Coordinator  
Westonka Public Schools

Westonka students and staff have enjoyed getting their hands dirty in an effort to bring school-grown food into the lunch line.

The Westonka School District partnered with Gale Woods Farm in Minnetrista to establish and implement a comprehensive "Farm 2 School" program that provides locally grown food for Westonka's cafeterias and uses school-run gardens to enhance

students' educational experiences.

Susan Storck, a Minnesota GreenCorps member (a state AmeriCorps program) at Gale Woods, helped to coordinate the pilot year of Westonka's Farm 2 School program in 2014. "During the first year, we accomplished great success, and the program is continuing to grow at an exciting rate!" Storck said.

## Hands-on learning

Storck worked with Mound Westonka

High School and Grandview Middle School to educate students about gardening and to construct school gardens on the properties. The gardens provide valuable hands-on learning for students as they connect with how their food is grown.

"Our goal is to create an alternative learning environment where students will engage in a hands-on learning experience," Storck explained. "Working in the garden will also deepen their understanding and appreciation of where food comes from."

Westonka Food and Nutrition Services Director Laura Metzger said, "These gardens provide an awesome learning experience for the students and for my cooking staff and will supply our kitchens with the freshest ingredients possible, grown 150 feet away from our door."

Storck assisted Westonka Food and Nutrition Services in procuring and integrating locally grown products. "The intent is to move Westonka's cafeterias away from a heat-and-serve food production model to one that uses more whole food and unprocessed ingredients," Storck explained.

## WALA at work

Westonka Area Learning Academy (WALA) students at Mound Westonka High School are responsible for planning,



installing and maintaining a sensory garden at their school. "The students planned the layout, made signs, started seedlings, built raised beds, filled the beds and planted them," Storck said.

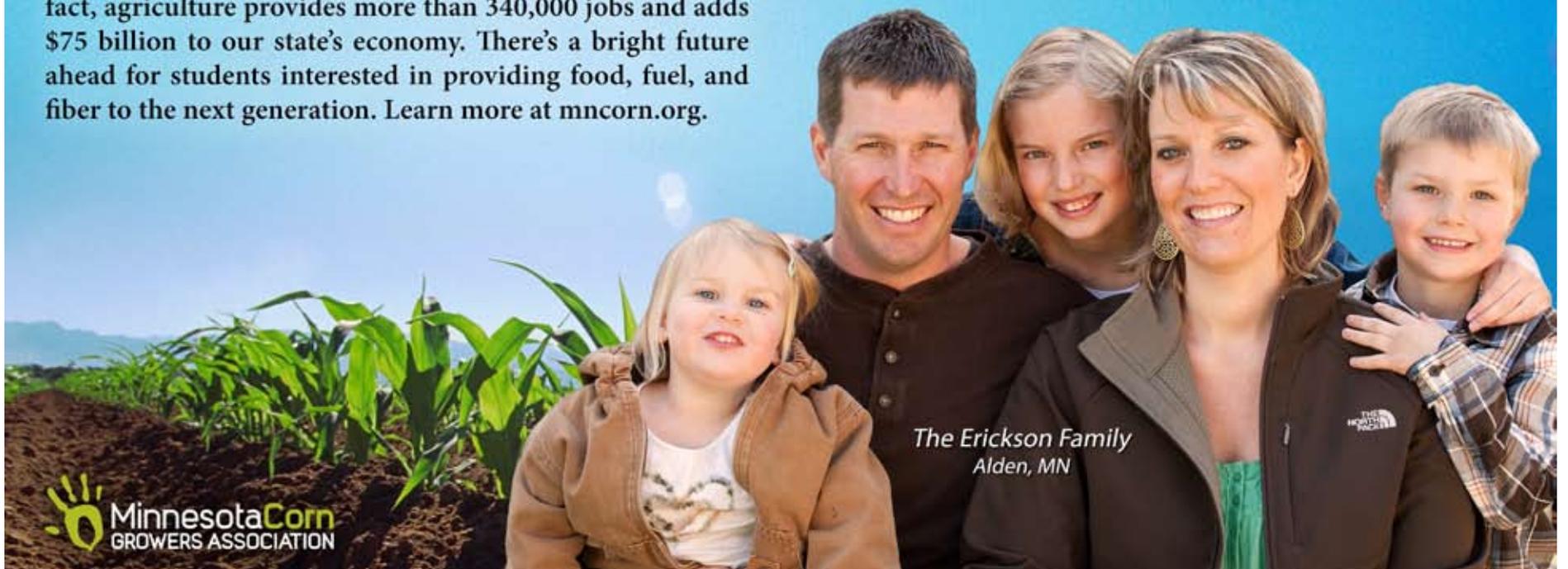
Last spring, the WALA students planted the gardens with primarily culinary herbs that have been utilized by the kitchen staff in school lunches. Garden-based curricula have been incorporated into WALA lesson plans to meet math and science standards.

"The Farm 2 School initiative has been an excellent hands-on project that has implemented science and math in an interdisciplinary way," WALA Coordinator Todd Munsterteiger said. "Partnering with

**Continued on Page 14**

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In the previous issues of *Teaching Today MN*, we highlighted four of six Brainerd Public Schools elementary schools that were honored as 2014 National Blue Ribbon Schools.

Within Minnesota, only eight schools were awarded this honor and six were each of the elementary schools within Brainerd Public Schools. U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan rec-

## 6 Elementary Schools – 6 Blue Ribbon Awards!

ognized 287 public schools nationwide as 2014 National Blue Ribbon Schools.

It's unusual for a school district to pick up so many designations in one award cycle. But the Brainerd Public School District did just that — a feat noted by Minnesota Education Commissioner Dr. Brenda Cassellius.

"We're seeing something unique in this year's winners—multiple winning schools from a single district in a single year, or in recent years. That tells us these schools have figured out something special and important: how to move the needle not for just the kids in one school, but for kids in schools across the district," she said.

In this issue we draw your attention to two more of these award-winning schools.

You can access the previous issues at our website: [www.teachingtodaymn.com](http://www.teachingtodaymn.com)

### Riverside Elementary School

Riverside Elementary School is a community of learners continuously striving for improvement and excellence. Commitment to providing personalized learning is a cornerstone of Riverside's mission and drives their continued successes. Riverside staff are dedicated to best practice professional development opportunities and job embedded professional learning activities. Through purposeful assessment staff can better analyze student abilities and prescribe the individualized learning opportunities and interventions that best prepare students for future challenges. Riverside staff recognize the unique differences of our learners and work tirelessly to meet their needs. Staff are focused on building meaningful relationships with all students and engaging them in purposeful learning as well as memory making activities. Additionally, staff provide multiple levels of academic support for students through the Literacy Collaborative framework, Title I, and Targeted Services programs. Riverside's central focus on improving the culture and learning environment is celebrated by honoring student successes and quality character achievements at the Student of the Month Celebrations. Riverside Elementary lives the "it takes a village to raise a child"



belief by involving staff, families, community members, and volunteers joined in team work. Students receive learning opportunities that go beyond the classroom. Riverside's mission is being achieved as evidenced by the fact that 635 students return through our doors eagerly each morning with smiles and hugs ready to meet the challenges of their day in the hopes for a better future!

*Additional information regarding the 2014 National Blue Ribbon Schools is available at [www.nationalblueribbonsschools.com](http://www.nationalblueribbonsschools.com)*

*A short Brainerd Public Schools video describing methods and strategies for achieving these results can be seen at [www.isd181.org](http://www.isd181.org) under the Success tab.*

*The mission of the Brainerd Public Schools, in partnership with the community, is to ensure all students achieve their individual potential by providing the highest-quality programs and resources to prepare learners for an ever-changing global society. More information can be found at [www.isd181.org](http://www.isd181.org)*

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Continued on Page 17

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## Students Transform a Landfill

Continued from Page 10

and other pollinators that feed unintentionally on plants treated by neonicotinoids, that are dying off because of the use of herbicides and pesticides. They get into the plants, then into the bees and it makes them sick.

“Bees have a natural concept when they get sick they flee the hive in order to keep from spreading it,” explained Murphy. “When a large number of bees pollinates a field with herbicides and pesticides and get sick it causes colony collapse disorder.”

“Bees can actually travel up to eight miles,” added Retka. “So our main goal is to create an area that can enhance the wildlife and the health of pollinators in our area.”

Of course funding for a project of this scale can be a tall challenge for students.

Retka stepped up to meet the challenge, taking on a role as the team’s primary grant writer.

“There’s a lot of information and procedures in grant writing that have to be perfect,” Retka said.

Along with the help of Little Falls Assistant Principal Mike Olson, Retka and the group were awarded a \$3,600 grant from Pheasants Forever, with contributions of \$1,500 coming from the local chapter.

“Assistant Principal Mike Olson was really instrumental in helping to get this project off the ground,” said Ploof. “These projects can’t happen without these kinds of support.”

Phase two of the Pollinator Project is set to begin this spring when students will plant flowering crab apple, chokecherry, gray dogwood and American plum in the remaining 1.1 acres of land reserved at the landfill site.

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## Westonka’s School Gardens

Continued from Page 12

Gale Woods brings a community expert into the classroom to help us with contextual learning. With that, my favorite part is watching our group come together to see a project through to its completion. The life skills and lessons learned are invaluable.”

### Growing at Grandview

The garden at Grandview Middle School was planted with vegetables that the school cafeteria utilizes in the spring and fall. Staff has also been able to incorporate the garden into their curriculum through science and math lessons, as well as through taste testing, cooking lessons and alternative learning.

“Beyond these specific subject matters, all teachers are encouraged to use the garden as a place for their students to engage in outdoor hands-on learning,” Storck said.

The Grandview garden received a grant for supplies from the Jeffers Founda-

tion, and local Boy Scout Nathan Herdegen built the raised garden beds. The Westonka Jaycees donated funds for installing a fence, and the Mound Rotary Club donated funds to install an irrigation system.

Learn more about the Grandview garden: at the website listed below.

[www.jeffersfoundation.org/school-gardens-grandview-middle-school.php](http://www.jeffersfoundation.org/school-gardens-grandview-middle-school.php)  
[www.westonka.k12.mn.us](http://www.westonka.k12.mn.us)  
(952) 491-8000

# CONTESTS AND AWARDS



### Ocean Awareness Student Contest

This contest asks middle and high school students to think critically about the challenges facing the ocean, with a focus on the issue of plastic pollution. Students may enter in one of four categories: art, poem, prose or film.

Because complicated issues like this are best considered with interdisciplinary research and a collaborative problem solving approach, you are invited to participate in this year’s contest as an individual or as part of a group.

Cash prizes for the winners, teachers, and their schools range from \$100 to \$1,500.

**Deadline:** Submissions due June 15, 2015.

**Website:** [www.fromthebowseat.org/contest.php](http://www.fromthebowseat.org/contest.php)

### Green in Action Awards

Green In Action Awards will be granted to inspiring projects based on GEF’s sustainability themes. Winners are those schools, classrooms or youth groups who have demonstrated their commitment, creativity, or passion for sustainability in their application. Great application materials include photos, videos, essays, or artwork describing your environmental project, weigh-in, activity, community service project, or green team program!

Winners receive \$250 for their class! They will also be featured in national news and have their application materials (such as videos, photographs and scanned artwork) shared on the National Green Week site.

**Deadline:** May 2, 2015

**Website:** [www.greeneducationfoundation.org/greenweek/contests/green-in-action-contest.html](http://www.greeneducationfoundation.org/greenweek/contests/green-in-action-contest.html)

### Outstanding Earth Science Teacher Award

The National Association of Geoscience Teachers (NAGT) presents its Outstanding Earth Science Teacher awards to K–12 educators who have made exceptional contributions to the stimulation of interest in the earth sciences. Any teacher or other K–12 educator who covers a significant amount of earth science content with their students is eligible.

Ten national finalists are selected, one from each NAGT regional section. Some sections also recognize state winners. Individuals may apply themselves or nominate a colleague for the award.

Sectional winner awards include up to \$500 in travel funds and \$500 in classroom improvement funds, as well as memberships, subscriptions and publications. There are also a variety of awards for state winners, section runners-up, and honorable mentions.

**Deadline:** Apply by May 1, 2015.

**Website:** [nagt.org/nagt/awards/oest.html](http://nagt.org/nagt/awards/oest.html)

### Brower Youth Awards for Environmental Leadership

Earth Island Institute established the Brower Youth Awards (BYA) to honor founder and legendary activist David R. Brower. Each year, the BYAs recognize six young people ages 13–22 living in North America who have shown outstanding leadership on a project or campaign with positive environmental and social impact.

Each recipient will receive a \$3,000 cash prize, a professionally produced short film about their work, and flight and lodging accommodations for a week-long trip to the San Francisco Bay area.

During their stay in California, the recipients will participate in a camping trip, leadership activities, speaking and media engagements, trainings, and environmental conferences — giving them a chance to meet with mentors and peers. The week culminates in an awards ceremony.

**Deadline:** Apply by May 18, 2015.

**Website:** [www.broweryouthawards.org/apply/#application](http://www.broweryouthawards.org/apply/#application)

### Funky Nests in Funky Places Challenge

Celebrate spring by entering the latest Celebrate Urban Birds Challenge, “Funky Nests in Funky Places.” Take a walk outside and check out store signs, streetlights, balconies, traffic lights, gutters, downspouts, rooftops, stadium lights, light fixtures, grills, utility poles, potted plants and more.

Share your observations and be creative! Take a photo, create a dance, try your hand at some artwork, shoot a video, write a story or a poem, or make a sculpture.

**Deadline:** Entries due June 15, 2015.

**Website:** [celebrateurbanbirds.org/community/challenges/funky-nests-2015](http://celebrateurbanbirds.org/community/challenges/funky-nests-2015)

# Welcome to Willy Wonka's Reading Factory

## Highlands students enjoy Camp Read-a-lot's latest theme

*Edina Public Schools Communications*

This year's Highlands Elementary School Camp Read-a-lot took a turn for the chocolaty by introducing students to the "real" method behind Willy Wonka's delicious candy — reading.

Lisa Dooley, media specialist at Highlands, transformed the school's media center into an indoor campsite, complete with tents, and themed to the 1971 classic, "*Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*."

However, no Willy Wonka-themed event would be complete without the mastermind himself. That's where Dooley came in. Students had been blocked from seeing the media center for four days prior to Tuesday's unveiling. And who better to reintroduce the transformed media center than Dooley, dressed as the chocolatier?

Dooley welcomed students, who showed her their bookmarks, or "admission tickets," to enter the "reading factory." She explained to students that the true secret to Willy Wonka's candy empire was the reading done by Oompa Loompas in their free time.

"The Oompa Loompas read all the time, which gives the factory its magic," Dooley explained. After a short introduction and parody of the Oompa Loompa song, each

student found a spot inside of a tent to read for about 15 minutes.

Dooley also explained the consequences of talking during that time, as well as the rewards to reading. "If you read for the whole time, the factory makes candy, but if you're talking, it only makes pebbles," she said. Students read quietly for the entire 15-minute period.

Camp Read-a-lot is an annual event that Dooley has organized each of her eight years at Highlands. This year, the camp was held March 10-13, during which time, Dooley dressed up for about 22 classes. "It really is fun for me, too," Dooley said. "I think I have a little theatrical spark in me."

Each year, Camp Read-a-lot takes on a different theme. Past themes include: Olympics, Underwater, Outer space, Western — Kids on the Range, Dreamland and "Nancy Drewley," a play on Dooley's last name.

The tents were lent to Dooley by parents and staff, and volunteers helped make the reusable decorations last year.

After reading time was over, Dooley asked for the student whose bookmark had a gold star on the back — the "golden ticket." The selected student opened a box, which contained either candy or pebbles. It was candy.



However, another prize awaited just beyond white board "gates." With wide eyes, students entered a room filled with baskets of snacks, candy and treats.

"I loved the reactions in the Willy Wonka movie when they walk past the edible wall paper and the chocolate waterfall," Dooley said. "I wanted to have those same reactions

with the baskets." The baskets, she said, are the raffle prizes for the Highlands Carnival.

[www.edinaschools.org](http://www.edinaschools.org)

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# Reading Buddies

Ryan Mayers  
Technology Integration Specialist  
Austin Public Schools

On a recent Thursday morning, Ellis 7th grader Parker Lee sat reading a book to an excited cluster of second graders at Neveln Elementary School. Parker, along with several other students, was there as part of a new project between Ellis and Neveln. “We’re bringing students from Ellis over to read to the younger kids. It helps them to develop their reading skills and allows the younger students to see that older kids still like to read too,” says EXCEL teacher Zach Schara.

For many of Zach’s students, reading is a challenge. “We’re dealing with students who tend to struggle with reading, and so we’re constantly looking for opportunities for them to read more. Since Ellis and Neveln are so close, we thought this could be a great way to give them another chance to shine.”

As part of the project, Zach’s students will be communicating with the students at Neveln via the blogging platform EduBlog, which will help to enhance their writing and communication skills as well. “The hope is that giving them the chance to communicate through reading and writing will help them to develop



their skills and become better readers overall. We’ve already seen some awesome things, and we’ve only just started.”

As each session comes to a close, the Ellis students meet in Neveln’s Media Center to reconnect and discuss what they’ve been doing. Schara asks them to share three negatives, or things they need to work on. The answers range from being careful in pronouncing certain words to pacing the book enough to make sure they finish in time, and Zach makes sure to discuss each new answer with the students before moving on.

When they finish discussing the negatives, they move on to the positives and repeat the process. For one student, the best part was

seeing how happy the kids were while she was reading. For another, it’s the feeling he got when he finished the book and knew he did a good job. Before long, it’s time for the students to head back out and meet with a new group of kids. “All of my students have potential,” says Zach as he prepares to follow his students out the door. “This is all about helping them to unlock it.”

[www.austin.k12.mn.us/Ellis](http://www.austin.k12.mn.us/Ellis)  
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# Student Contests and Awards

## STEM Scholarship Essay Contest

Reed Technology and Information Services sponsors an essay contest with a scholarship prize. The essay limit is 750 words, with one essay per student accepted. The winning essay is selected based on the quality of writing and thinking on the topic, innovation selected and a well-supported rationale, and recommendations for improvements that are reasonable and feasible.

One scholarship of \$1,000 is awarded.

**Deadline:** Essay submissions are due May 30, 2015.

**Website:** [www.reedtech.com/about-us/scholarship](http://www.reedtech.com/about-us/scholarship)

## American Association of Physics Teachers High School Physics Photo Contest

Sponsored in part by Vernier Software & Technology and supported by the Committee on Physics in High Schools and the Committee on Educational Technologies, the contest is open to high school students in grades 9 through 12. Entries are limited to 15 per school each year.

Photos may be entered in one of two categories: (1) natural photos are those that

involve everyday situations that may demonstrate a variety of physics concepts; and (2) contrived photos are those that are set up to show a particular physics concept or related set of concepts.

**Deadline:** Entries are accepted annually from March 1 to May 15 for this year's competition.

**Website:** [aapt.org/Programs/contests/photo-contest.cfm](http://aapt.org/Programs/contests/photo-contest.cfm)

## American Rose Society Children's Essay Contest

Kids ages 12 and under are invited to enter this essay contest for kids by submitting an essay that is no longer than 400 words. The essay should be related to roses; create your own rose theme or choose one of the following:

- Why the Rose is America's National Flower
- A fictional story about roses.
- Why Roses Are the Symbol of Love, Friendship, Beauty and Peace
- Why I Love Roses
- Why My Parents or Grandparents Love Roses

**Deadline:** Entries must be received via US mail by June 1, 2015.

**Website:** [www.rose.org/resources/kidz-n-roses/childrens-essay-contest/](http://www.rose.org/resources/kidz-n-roses/childrens-essay-contest/)

## Adventure Write Totem Heads Story Contest

This writing contest is open to kids ages 19 and under who are legal residents of the USA. Write an original adventure story that is made for kids, starts with "So there I was...", and is no more than 1500 words in length. Judging is done in six age categories; winners from each category will have their story published on the Adventure Write website, plus they will receive \$50 cash and a certificate of achievement.

**Deadline:** Entries for the 2015 contest must be received by December 31, 2015.

**Website:** [www.adventurewrite.com/kids/contest.html](http://www.adventurewrite.com/kids/contest.html)

## Young Voices of America Short Story Writing Contest

Judges are looking for short stories that will make them laugh. Stories must be written in English and are no longer than 2,500 words. To enter, you must be in grades Pre-K through 12th grade.

**Deadline:** Deadline for this kids' writing contest is June 30, 2015.

**Website:** [www.youngvoicesfoundation.org](http://www.youngvoicesfoundation.org)

## imageide@s Digital Photography Contest

**Prizes:**

One first-place prizewinner in each age division will receive an iPad Mini. One second-place prizewinner in each age division will receive an iPod Touch. One third-place prizewinner in each age division will receive an iPod Nano. All winning photographs will be displayed on the QEI imageide@s Photo Contest page on imageide@s.

**Deadline:** Postmarked by May 15, 2015

**Website:** [myqei.org/ideas/imageideas2015.php](http://myqei.org/ideas/imageideas2015.php)



## Brainerd's Blue Ribbon Schools

Continued from Page 13

### Garfield Elementary School

Garfield Elementary School is located on the northeast side of Brainerd, Minnesota and services 388 students in kindergarten through fourth grade. Students are drawn from the largest geographical boundary of the six district elementary buildings totaling 161 square miles. Garfield has a history of servicing a large special education population as it has been a district host site for students with Developmental Cognitive Delays (DCD). Over the past two years Garfield has added two more district-wide Federal Setting III special education programs, an Emotional/Behavioral Disorders (EBD), and Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) program. In 2010, Garfield was classified as a Needs Improvement School in the sub-group of special education reading. Since then, Garfield has been recognized as a "School of Celebration" performing in the top 25% of Title I schools, and earned "Rewards School" status in 2013. Garfield made significant gains in gap closure

of free and reduced lunch and special education subgroups. Garfield Elementary School achieved "Celebration" and "Reward" status through hard work, team building, fidelity of instruction and data-driven decision making. Through framed dialogue and communication during staff meetings, teachers began to see the part everyone plays in the education of the whole child and our accountability to the process. Garfield Elementary School is proud of its diverse population and the success it has had in closing the achievement gap. High expectations are held for all students and they are encouraged to achieve their fullest potential each and every day.

[garfield.isd181.org](http://garfield.isd181.org)  
(218) 454-6450



### Best Civil War Lesson Plan Contest

The Civil War Trust sponsors an annual contest for the best Civil War lesson plans at the elementary, middle school, and high school levels. Three winning teachers receive cash awards for first, second, and third prize. Lesson plans are judged on creativity, classroom usefulness, and use of primary source materials.

First-place winners are awarded \$2,500, second-place winners are awarded \$1,000, and third-place winners are awarded \$500.

**Deadline:** All lesson plan entries must be submitted by July 1, 2015.

**Website:** [www.civilwar.org/education/contests-quizzes/best-lesson-plan/best-lesson-plan.html](http://www.civilwar.org/education/contests-quizzes/best-lesson-plan/best-lesson-plan.html)

### Saucony Run for Good Program

The Saucony Run for Good Foundation encourages active and healthy lifestyles for children and is dedicated to preventing and

eliminating childhood obesity. In addition, the foundation acts to inform the public about the causes and prevention of childhood obesity and provide funding to optimize the impact and success of community organizations, including public schools that promote running and fitness programs for kids.

Grants up to \$10,000 are awarded. Up to seven grants are awarded each cycle.

**Deadline:** Applications are due June 13 and December 13, annually.

**Website:** [www.sauconyrunforgood.com/how-to-apply/](http://www.sauconyrunforgood.com/how-to-apply/)

### Fit 4 the Classroom Contest

K-5 teachers are invited to enter Discovery Education's Fit 4 the Classroom sweepstakes for the chance to win \$5,000 for his or her use and \$5,000 for his or her school to be used to extend programs that benefit student health and wellness education.

Two teachers will win \$1,000 and \$1,000 for their schools to fund health and wellness initiatives. If the winners are homeschool teachers, the school prize will be awarded to a local non-profit organization.

**Deadline:** Teachers may submit one online entry per day through 5 p.m. April 30, 2015.

**Website:** [www.fit4theclassroom.com](http://www.fit4theclassroom.com)

# Students Join with Country Superstars to Record Taysha's Song



Carissa Keister, APR  
Community Engagement Manager  
Stillwater Area Public Schools

A fifth grader battling leukemia isn't fighting alone. Students at Afton-Lakeland have been joined by some of country music's finest to record a song of encouragement and support for their friend Taysha Hein, a student currently undergoing treatment for blood cancer.

"We really want Taysha to feel that she has a lot of friends and that we care about her a

lot," said Gracie Bancroft, one of Taysha's fifth grade classmates.

Students wrote Taysha's Song as part of a week-long music residency with Nashville songwriter, Jeff Dayton. They performed the song for Taysha via Skype during an all-school assembly and assumed that was the end of that. But they soon learned that Dayton had shared the song with his friends in Nashville – including professional musicians who work with Tim McGraw, Dierks Bentley and Montgomery

Gentry. The group of country music musicians recorded a track of the song, and with help from a local studio, the students were then able to add their own voices to the recording. The song is available for download on iTunes.

"It was really cool to record our song that we made for our classmate," said fifth grader C.J. Fredcove. "It will be cool because we get to do it with professionals and it will sound better."

The song is just one of many ways the school is showing support for their classmate. Dr. Tom Hobert, Afton-Lakeland's principal, recently shaved his head in a sign of solidarity with Taysha, and parents and students are organizing a blood drive at the school.

"This is such an amazing thing to be involved with," said Lois Sortedahl, Afton-Lakeland teacher. "I'm so proud of our students."

## DEAR TAYSHA

Lyrics by 4/5 Express and Jeff Dayton

Another day at school —

We're all thinkin' about you

Not a whole lot's changed, math and reading's the same . . .

We had a birthday or two

We miss your colorful style —

And your beautiful smile

So we all got together, to sing you a letter

Haven't seen you in a while



## CHORUS

When the healings done

We're gonna have some fun

With the turtles and the teachers

and the kids in their sneakers

We know you're strong, just like King Kong

So anytime you're down, just sing this song

Dear Taysha . . . we miss you . . . Dear

Taysha . . .

You've got a generous heart

We think you're super, super smart

You're kind to everyone, no matter what they've done

You're a super, super star

[www.stillwater.k12.mn.us](http://www.stillwater.k12.mn.us)

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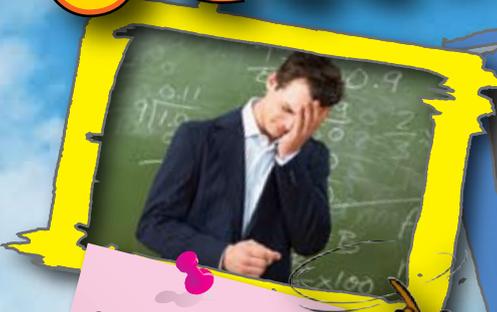
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