

## Community Wellness Day

Saturday, Jan. 26

9 a.m. - 1 p.m.

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WINTER 2013



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## Transition Math pilot a success, expanded in second year

To bridge the gap between elementary and middle school math, the Anoka-Hennepin School District piloted a “Transition Math” class last year for fifth grade students at Oxbow Creek, McKinley, Rum River, and University Avenue elementary schools. The program was so successful that this year it was expanded to Eisenhower, Dayton, and Champlin Brooklyn Park Academy for Math and Environmental Science elementary schools, with plans to include other elementary schools in the future.

The class was created to meet the needs of top math students on a daily basis. Laurie Resch, director of elementary Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment, said the Transitions Math class does this while providing a stronger foundation for students in middle school courses.

“In the past when students have taken advanced math courses in middle school, they often skipped some of the pre-algebra topics that provide a strong foundation for the study of algebra,” Resch said. “The Transitions Math class was designed in collaboration with sixth grade math teachers to fill these gaps and to support the transition between fifth grade and middle school math classes.”

Students are selected for Transition Math through Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) and Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA) scores as well as learner characteristics. In the Transition Math class, the pace of instruction is faster, and the content is more rigorous. With classes that are compacted and accelerated, there is less repetition and review and more time for work. Students receive homework three to four times a week, which helps to develop good habits for middle and high school.

Penny Freberg, a math specialist at Oxbow Creek Elementary School, has 32 students in Transition



Penny Freberg works with a student during a Transition Math class.

Math she works with every day. Freberg’s students are organized and responsible, understand their work and can move through concepts quickly.

“For the Transition Math class we really want students who have a love for mathematics and love a challenge,” Freberg said. “There isn’t a formal process to identify the students for the class. We look at students’ scores and talk with fourth grade teachers and ask them which students are performing at a higher level in math. We don’t have a set number of students for the Transition Math class; the class is based on what students need this type of instruction.”

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## Rumors spread on social media can disrupt schools; monitor your children’s use

By Superintendent Dennis Carlson



Students, parents and staff in several of our schools have worried needlessly this year because of threatening statements posted on social media that spread through the school community like wildfire. Law enforcement and school administrators have spent countless hours investigating threats and rumors of threats in the past few months.

This is becoming a serious problem for schools across the country. A quick Internet search on social media threats in schools turns

up dozens of examples within the last few months. For example, in Carlisle, Pa., police beefed up security at the high school after rumors of a shooting. The local paper reported four or five police cars and extra officers placed on duty at the school as a result of rumors on Facebook and Twitter. Across the country in Beaverton, Oreg., police determined a rumor of a bomb threat was without merit, but the rumor continued to circulate for several weeks with students insisting the threat was real and would impact classes. In Kanawha County, W. Va, three separate threats demanding police involvement were posted in a single month.

These threats disrupt the learning environment. They create an undercurrent of tension

within a school, causing anxiety in students and staff and making it more difficult for students to concentrate on their schoolwork. In some cases, school attendance is down because students don’t want to take a chance coming to school if they fear a rumor may be real.

The amount of time police spend on threats that are simply rumors or hoaxes takes valuable resources away from other responsibilities in the community. The more time police spend tracking down prank threats, the less time they have to investigate actual crimes and patrol neighborhoods to ensure safety.

Students who issue threats face consequences at school, including possible expulsion.

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## Anoka-Hennepin Finance Department honored for 10th straight year

**B**ecause of the high-quality work of Anoka-Hennepin's Finance Department, the school district has received the Association of School Business Officials' (ASBO) Certificate of Excellence in Financial Reporting award for fiscal year 2011. This is the 10th year in a row the school district has received this award, which honors organizations for high standards for financial reporting and accountability.

The Certificate of Excellence award confirms the school business office's commitment to financial accountability and transparency. Recognition through the program can help strengthen a district's presentation for bond issuance statements and promotes a high level of financial reporting.

John Koehler, director of finance, said receiving the award 10 years in a row is an honor.

"It is very gratifying to see the committed and professional business services staff at Anoka-Hennepin recognized for their integrity and superior accounting practices," Koehler said. "This further demonstrates to the public the district's dedication to the proper use and reporting of the funds with which it is entrusted." ■



**Congratulations to Anoka-Hennepin's finance team for receiving a "Certificate of Excellence" for 10 years in a row. Pictured in the back row (left to right) are Kim Mattson, John Koehler and Denise Zurbey. Middle row (left to right): Bernice Humnick and Renee Rodewald. Front row (left to right): Eva Marquis and Michelle Vargas.**

## Vargas receives awards for financial work



**M**ichelle Vargas, Anoka-Hennepin's chief financial officer (CFO), was named the 2012 CFO of the Year by the *Minneapolis/St. Paul Business Journal*. Vargas won the award for the

nonprofit civic/cultural/education category.

Earlier this fall, Vargas was named one of the "Top Women in Finance" by Finance & Commerce. Vargas was nominated for both awards by Mary Olson, director of Communication and Public Relations, who works closely with Vargas.

"Michelle Vargas has provided the leadership that has brought the state's largest school district, with a total budget of more than \$480 million, from the brink of a catastrophic deficit of \$60 million or more to the position of having a projected general fund balance for fiscal year (FY) 2013 of \$39.3 million, which is 9.5 percent of expenditures," Olson wrote. "Michelle has accomplished this remarkable turnaround in a year despite the fact that state funding for education has not kept pace with cost increases for approximately eight years. In addition, the district ended the last fiscal year with a surplus of more than \$11 million as the result of a number of small efficiencies she implemented."

A graduate of Coon Rapids High School, Vargas told the *Minneapolis/St. Paul Business Journal* that she was the first four-year college graduate on her father's side. Vargas worked her way through college and said she would not be where she is today without that achievement. Vargas earned a B.S. in business with an emphasis in accounting from the University of Minnesota Carlson School of Management.

In addressing her accomplishment in providing fiscal responsibility and economic balance to the district budget, Vargas referenced the balancing act that is required.

"In public education, the bottom line is where resources are maximized to fund educational resources, while maintaining financial stability," she said. "Cost avoidance and efficiencies in the public sector are similar to revenue generation in the private sector. A keen understanding of funding, long-term costing and cost-avoidance measures is essential to keep a devoted eye on the bottom line in public education."

Vargas was praised for her work to refinance district debt to take care of lower interest rates and investing one-time federal American Recovery Reinvestment Act dollars and Education Jobs revenue in a way that would make the biggest impact on the district. With two children in Anoka-Hennepin schools, Vargas also shared this insight on her work.

"Being a CFO requires knowledge beyond the financials," Vargas said. "In order to truly make an impact as a CFO, you must fully understand the mission and operations of the business you are leading financially. In public education, there are many non-financial factors that are continuously monitored."

"Seeing our preschoolers walk in with backpacks larger than them, and their huge smiles, is a daily reminder of the important work I do." ■

## Superintendent *continued from page 1*

Depending on the circumstances, they may also be charged with a crime.

Our school district's web filters do not allow students to access Facebook or Twitter during the school day so the inappropriate and threatening messages are posted and spread away from school. This means parents and guardians must set clear guidelines and expectations for their children's interactions with social media.

As soon as your children start using the Internet, begin talking with them about ways to be safe online and let them know that you will be monitoring them. When you see a story in the news or a television program about social media, use it as a springboard for a conversation about their experiences online.

Remind them that once they post, they can't take it back. Their message may be shared almost instantly with dozens of kids. Remind them not to post messages that might later be embarrassing.

Encourage them to consider messages carefully before posting them. Ask them, "how would you feel if you got that message?" Suggest they reread their messages before sending and consider them from various points of view. Will what they have written be clear to everyone? A message that seems okay to the writer may be taken quite differently by someone else.

Anoka-Hennepin middle schools have all provided information on social media safety for students and parents through a program we developed called Digital Citizenship. Schools give students monthly tips on online safety and they offer occasional parent information nights. Take advantage of the resources your school offers and take a look at our Digital Citizenship and Online Safety page on the district website, [www.anoka.k12.mn.us/digitalcitizen](http://www.anoka.k12.mn.us/digitalcitizen). You will find links to useful resources.

By working together, we can keep our kids and our schools safe. ■



## COMMUNITY Wellness Day

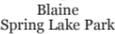
Saturday, January 26 | 9 am-1 pm

Roosevelt Middle School | 650 - 125th Ave. NE • Blaine

Presented by:



Sponsored in part by:



### Free educational opportunities throughout the day:

- 9:00-9:30 Zumba Sampler
- 9:15-10:15 Healthy Food on a Budget
- 9:30-10:30 The Food Mood Connection
- 9:30-11:00 Drop off for Book Swap
- 9:45-10:15 Yogurt-It's Greek to Me
- 10:30-11:30 Dazzling Dave Yo-Yo Master
- 10:30-11:30 Why Diets Don't Work
- 11:30-12:30 Family Book Swap
- 11:30-12:30 Eating Fast Without Fast Food
- 11:30-12:00 Family Yoga Sampler
- 12:15-12:45 Family Fitness Sampler
- 12:30-1:00 Yogurt-It's Greek to Me
- 12:30-1:30 Aqua Zumba Sampler

Register online at:

[www.DiscoverCommunityEd.com](http://www.DiscoverCommunityEd.com)

or call 763-506-5766 (M-F 9am-4:30pm)

Scan Me



For a complete list of activities & exhibitors visit:

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

Subscribe for updates and early-bird free class registration information.

## Four Community Education staff honored with statewide awards



**Marilee Christensen-Adams**  
*assistant manger,*  
*Community Education*  
**Community Educator of the Year**

For bringing a “genuine dedication, a commitment to quality and humor to her work,” Marilee Christensen-Adams received the “Community Educator of the Year” award from the Minnesota Community Education Association (MCEA). In her role in Community Education, Christensen-Adams is responsible for early childhood programs.

Christensen-Adams was nominated by Early Childhood Special Education (ECFE)/School Readiness Program (SRP) supervisors Mary Washburn, Beth Yokom, Kathy Mirocha, and Jody Bordwell. In their nomination letter, the women wrote that they have all benefited from Christensen-Adams’ wisdom, kindness, respect, and humor. The women wrote about how Christensen-Adams has made a difference in the lives of young children in the Anoka-Hennepin School District.

“An example of this is our Kindergarten Readiness Program, a targeted low income preschool, which has grown from three locations to eight locations, due to additional funding from the K-12 budget,” the women wrote. “Working with K-12 district leadership, Marilee secured administrative and school board financial support for the program.

“Saying that she ‘puts the money where her mouth is’ is no small statement. Thanks to Marilee’s leadership, 320 low income children, who otherwise might not have attended preschool, will be ready for kindergarten and ongoing academic success.”

Surprised and humbled by the award, Christensen-Adams points out that the word “community” is in the award title. Christensen-Adams speaks warmly about the work of the Kindergarten Readiness Program (KRP), School Readiness Program (SRP) and ECFE teachers.

“We had a child who was so far behind at the start of the school year that we were going to refer him to special education,” Christensen-Adams said. “But by January he was writing his name legibly, starting with a capital letter.

“It’s great to see a child’s growth. I love reading parent evaluations. The comments are so heartfelt from parents who appreciate the benefits our programs provide to their children and their families.

“Every day I come to work I want to contribute something and make a difference.” ■

“For most people, data is not the most thrilling thing on earth, but for Linda Keller, the mere mention of statistics and numbers makes her eyes sparkle.”

“Thanks to Marilee’s leadership, 320 low income children, who otherwise might not have attended preschool, will be ready for kindergarten and ongoing academic success.”



**Sue Archbold**  
*Volunteer Services supervisor*  
**Mary Wiser Award for Excellence in Volunteer Administration**

Sue Archbold received the Mary Wiser Award for Excellence in Volunteer Administration from the Minnesota Association for Volunteer Administration (MAVA).

Glenice Jones, the volunteer services coordinator for Metro North Adult Basic Education, supplied a nomination letter for Archbold because she has been a mentor.

“I know that anytime I have questions or need the best information in the field, I will call Sue to discuss it,” Jones wrote. “We have worked together to create information to share with volunteers and she has lead the way in many areas, including risk management, outreach/recruitment and recognition. She is always learning and sharing the best recommendations in volunteer management.”

“I am thrilled and honored to receive the award. I’ve always felt we’ve had a good program and this award validates that feeling.”  
- Sue Archbold

Archbold did not know that Parent Involvement Coordinator, Linda Rodgers had nominated her for the award and was very surprised to receive an email notifying her she had won.

“It’s very humbling to know that Linda nominated me for the award; that speaks volumes,” said Archbold of her long-time co-worker. “I am thrilled and honored to receive the award. I’ve always felt we’ve had a good program and this award validates that feeling. The award belongs to everyone who has worked to make Anoka-Hennepin’s volunteer services an excellent program.” ■



**Linda Keller**  
*accountability coordinator,*  
*Metro North Adult Basic Education*  
**ABE Leadership Award, Literacy Action Network**

Linda Keller was nominated for the Adult Basic Education (ABE) award by Pat Adams, a Community Education manager, who began the nomination with, “For most people, data is not the most thrilling thing on earth, but for Linda Keller,

the mere mention of statistics and numbers makes her eyes sparkle.”

Keller did not know she was nominated for the award and said she cried when Adams told her she had won. ABE works with about 6,000 students a year. Keller enjoys what she does and the self-esteem and confidence people build through the ABE program.

“This is a very supportive environment for students learning English or gaining skills for their GED (general equivalence diploma) or to gain skills for a new job or to excel in the job they are in,” Keller said. “We have teachers and volunteers as well as students who are in the same boat. And there is no age limit. We have students who are 16 to 85 years old. A 72 year-old student earned a GED last spring; it’s never too late.” ■



**Beth Yokom**  
*supervisor, Early Childhood Family Education/School Readiness Preschool*  
**Ruth Hathaway Jewson Distinguished Service to Families Award from the Minnesota Council on Family Relations**

For many it’s an honor to be nominated for an award. For Beth Yokom, a supervisor for the Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) and School Readiness Preschool (SRP) programs, it was a double honor because she was nominated by her mentors, Marty Rossmann and Betty Cook. Rossmann was Yokom’s adviser at the University of Minnesota; Cook and Yokom have worked on many projects together.

“All of Beth’s work can be characterized as a deep commitment to families through parent education and early education,” the women wrote. “She puts families first in all decision making.”

Yokom had no idea she was nominated for the award and was stunned to learn she had won. She said it was humbling to be nominated by her mentors and is inspired to mentor others as she has been mentored.

“There is a point in your career in which you realize it’s our turn to turn around and offer a hand to the next generation, the next group of professionals,” Yokom said. “They have important work to do and it will be easier for them to do if they have the support of people in the field.” ■

“She puts families first in all decision making.”

## Transition Math

*continued from page 1*

Families are notified in the spring that their student has been selected for Transition Math and an informational meeting is held in the fall. Freberg spoke to parents about supporting their Transition Math students both academically and emotionally. Students who have not struggled before may struggle for the first time. Freberg told parents to expect students to “hit a wall” and asked the parents to support them.

For example, for Transition Math students, the first quiz of the year was a real eye opener.

“Some students didn’t do very well because they are not used to studying,” Freberg said. “It was a good thing it was only a quiz and now they know they need to study.”

In addition to tackling academics, the class also has something of a social lesson, too. Students accustomed to being the top of the top in their class might feel intimidated to be in this group of peers. The class stresses team work and collaboration.

“I encourage students to consult with others if they have questions about their work,” Freberg said. “It’s important that students learn to work as a team because that models the workplace. There are studies that students who do well academically sometimes lack social skills needed in the work force.”

The way Freberg teaches is more inquiry based; posing questions students have to think about.

“The first week of school a parent who teaches at Oxbow Creek, and has a student in Transition Math, came to me and said ‘we got into a debate with each other and talked about why we thought our answers to a problem were right,’” Freberg said. “That was very powerful.”

Other parents have also given Freberg positive feedback.

“They feel like their children’s needs are being met academically,” Freberg said. “Parents have been grateful that their students have this experience in a supportive environment before their students hit middle school.”

For Freberg, Transition Math is a very exciting project.

“It’s fun to see students who are excited about math,” she said. “It’s fun to see them overcome preconceived notions of themselves. I had a student who was a slower thinker who needed time to process her work. She didn’t think she was smart in math, but my interpretation was she had a different learning style. She did very well in the class and by the end of the year her self-identity had changed.

“After the class ended she wrote me a letter that made me cry. It was fun to see her blossom into her ability to do the work. It’s great to see students growing in confidence and to see them change their idea of what it is to be capable and smart.” ■

## Determination, hard work result in top science scores for Adams students

**A**dams Elementary School students amazed their teachers and principal by breezing past the school’s goal for performance on the state science test last spring, beating the state average by a whopping 21.2 points! Results were released in mid-September for tests given last spring.

Last year, teachers set a goal of having 56 percent of their students score at a proficient level on the new state science test. Students disagreed. They thought they could do much better than that – and they did.

Despite having one of the highest levels of poverty among Anoka-Hennepin Schools, Adams School had the highest percentage of students scoring at a proficient level on the state science test, which is given in grade five only. The state average was 57.9%; at Adams 79.2 percent of students scored proficient.

According to Dr. Mary Wolverton, associate superintendent for elementary schools, the accomplishment was especially remarkable because Adams School has not only a high rate of poverty, but also the third highest rate of mobility in the district, meaning students move frequently in and out of the school. Poverty and high mobility are often cited as factors in poor school performance.

“Our scores had been in the 30’s all the years we had taken the state test, so to have our students score nearly 80 percent was pretty remarkable,” said teacher John Keran, who taught science to all fifth grade students at Adams last year.

Keran said the students were determined to do well and they worked very hard. “They are a group of strong students,” he said.

For Principal Jeremy Tammi, it was a particularly sweet success because he remembered only too well what he described as a humbling experience. “It was just a few years ago under the No Child Left Behind law that I had to send a letter to parents saying that Adams School was a failing school and give them a choice of other schools for their children to attend. So, moving from two years of school choice to seeing how well our kids are doing now, well, I was quite proud of the students and staff here,” he said.

Tammi said his staff believe there can be no excuses for students doing poorly in school. “There may be no one at home to help students with homework, but we can’t use that as an excuse,” he said. “We believe we must control what we can control. That means setting up support for kids before and after school, during recess and at lunchtime to give kids additional help. It means finding any free minute during the day to help.”

Adams started an intervention-enrichment period in which all support and supplemental staff, and English as a Second Language (ESL) and special education staff go into classrooms to work with individual students who need help. “They use the model of Professional Learning Communities (PLC) to see which students need help with skills that are aligned to the state standards,” said Tammi. With this model, teachers work collaboratively with a focus on four questions: asking what students need to know and be able to do, how teachers will know when students have learned it, what teachers will do when they



*Adams students learn about one of the properties of water as they experiment with the concept of surface tension, placing one drop of water at a time on a penny to see how much it will hold.*

haven’t, and what teachers will do with students who already know the concepts.

Keran gives Tammi the credit for the dramatic improvement in student achievement. “Jeremy has created an atmosphere here with the PLCs that supports kids and the kids have really taken ownership of their education. We talked with them about the goals and essential skills we want them to have and they took ownership. It was nice because you could tell they wanted to do well.”

Although Keran taught all the fifth grade science classes, he said all teachers on the fifth grade team played a part in the students’ success. “We would meet during the week and talk about how we could support each other with cross discipline strategies such as using the science vocabulary in other areas to help students understand what they were learning so it wasn’t coming just from me but from the other teachers as well.”

Tammi has created a culture of pride in achievement at Adams through special events such as academic celebrations for the whole school. Last year students gathered in the gym every five weeks for *Growing with Knowledge So You Can Go to College*. They celebrated student successes and brought in people from the community to talk about their journeys through college. “Some of these students had never experienced pride in themselves until they heard 500 other kids clapping for them,” said Tammi. “We are going the extra mile to give kids hope and let them know there is a future for them. They don’t all get that from home; it needs to come from school.”

Tammi said staff were “very happy and excited” to see students do so well on the state tests. “You can make excuses or you can embrace them (the tests), but we are living in a system of accountability,” he said. “With our high rate of poverty and mobility, there are a lot of issues these kids bring to the door but our staff finds ways to get the kids to understand that they can do well. There are a lot of high fives.”

In addition to more than doubling science scores, Adams was named a “celebration eligible” school in the state’s new accountability system, which ranks schools on the basis of student proficiency on the state math and reading tests, improvement of

individual students on the test from one year to the next, and reduction of the achievement gap between high and low performing groups of students. ■

**“We are going the extra mile to give kids hope and let them know there is a future for them.”**

**- Jeremy Tammi**

## CPHS's Higginbotham finds student success with 'flipped' classroom

**W**hen Rob Higginbotham began teaching at Champlin Park High School (CPHS) eight years ago, the math teacher remembers going home with "marker arm." After spending the day giving lessons using an overhead projector, Higginbotham would have marker all over his arm.

While marker arm is a thing of the past for Higginbotham, so is standing in front of his Honors Algebra II students and giving a lecture.

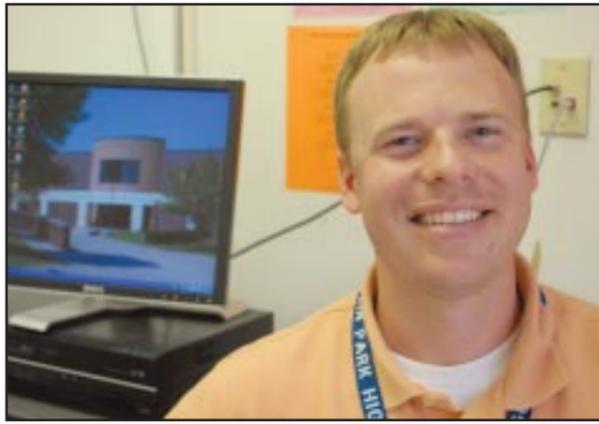
Under this form of instruction, Higginbotham records videos of his lessons. Students watch the videos outside of the classroom. Classroom time is spent doing assignments. In that time students can ask Higginbotham questions about the lessons and sometimes work in groups.

In using a flipped classroom, Higginbotham has seen student test scores significantly increase, moving up an entire quartile. Prior to his flipped class, 25 percent of Higginbotham's students would earn 90 percent or better on their exams; with the flipped classroom that number has increased to 50 percent.

Higginbotham decided to try this form of instruction after researching it for his graduate work at St. Mary's University. Even before his graduate work, Higginbotham was on his way to using a flipped classroom.

"I started to make videos of my lessons a couple of years ago," he said. "Between the video and giving the lesson in the classroom, I felt like I was teaching everything twice. And the students would watch the videos at home, come into class and want to get going on the assignments right away."

"I did research and found out teachers



**Rob Higginbotham has "flipped" his classroom.**

have been doing flipped classrooms and had success with it. I decided to do this for my action research and last year I went fully flipped."

Students watch Higginbotham's videos through the district's Moodle site. While lessons vary in length, they typically take 20 to 25 minutes to complete. Higginbotham breaks the lessons into five minute or so segments so a student can easily re-watch a segment if she or he has a question or is preparing for an exam.

For students who do not have Internet access at home or have slow internet, Higginbotham downloads the lessons onto a thumb drive or burns them onto a DVD. Students can also watch the lessons during class if they have the appropriate mobile device with a personal data plan. When the students come to class, the goal is for them to complete their assignments and hand them in by the end of the hour.

While Higginbotham has found success using a flipped classroom, he knows it's not for everyone.

"Using a flipped classroom depends on the subject and the instructor as well," he said. "Teachers need to present information in the way they are most comfortable and the way they know; that's how they will be most effective." ■

## Anoka-Hennepin figures equation for math success

**C**urrently, Anoka-Hennepin elementary and middle school students' scores are well above the state average on math tests while high school students' scores are slightly below the state average.

To even out this equation, Ellen Delaney, director of secondary curriculum, instruction and assessment, said district staff is looking at the entire math program. Staff wants to ensure elementary students are ready for the middle school math classes; middle school students are prepared for high school math classes; and high school graduates are ready for whatever comes next.

Steps are also being taken to align the math program so students are in courses that will lead to proficiency on the state standards. The state standards are aligned with Minnesota's College and Career Readiness Standards.

"If we align our classes with the state standards, our students will be ready for their post-secondary experience, whether it be a career or college," Delaney said. "We want to make sure each child is prepared and their futures are not limited because they don't have access to a quality math program."

Delaney said technology has really changed the expectations for students. We live in a much more demanding society where math and reading literacy are necessary for long-term success. Students must also be able to reason and problem solve.

"As reading more can lead to improved reading scores, doing math and problem solving can help with math scores," Delaney said. "Students should know that studying and asking for help when they need it is all part of being a good student."

Parents can help students by showing an interest in what they are learning, monitoring their progress and attending school conferences.

"Perseverance is a really important skill for math," Delaney said. "If students say their math is hard, parents should remind them that while some things are harder to study, it's important to have perseverance and to try. They will likely become more successful if they have that trait." ■

## Indian Education Program instills knowledge and pride of students' unique culture and traditions

**T**hanks to the dedication of Indian Education Program staff, Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) and families, the Anoka-Hennepin School District has one of the highest graduation rates for Native American students in the state; more than half of the students go on to college.

This success is due in large part to the program's advisors who work with students beginning in elementary school and then follow them through middle and high school. The advisors are Kathy Eisenschenk (Anishinaabe, White Earth Reservation, Mississippi Band, Eagle Clan), Mary Beth Elhardt (Ani-Yun-Wiya, Cherokee Nation), Rita Rios (Anishinaabe, White Earth Reservation), and Pam Fairbanks (Anishinaabe, White Earth Reservation, Wolf Clan). Elhardt has worked with current seniors since they were in second grade.

"By following students, we are able to build a relationship with them," said Eisenschenk. "When they move from elementary to middle school, there is someone who knows them and knows their history."

During school, the advisors work with students

on academics and talk about their school and home lives.

"We bridge the gap between school and home," Elhardt said. "We check on the students' attendance and how they are doing academically. If there are issues, we have resources available to students."

Every Wednesday, the program hosts either a Drum Circle pot luck or cultural events for students and their families.

"The more they learn about the culture, the better they are to teach it," Rios said.

In all they do, the thing the advisors like most about working with the Indian Education Program is the students.

"The students are able to learn things that will last a lifetime," Fairbanks said. "And they are able to share that knowledge with other people."

Students in the Indian Education Program appreciate the relationships they've built with their advisors. Gabriella Carroll, a senior at Champlin Park High School and member of the Ojibwe Band, has worked with Elhardt since elementary school. When she was younger,



**Indian Education Program advisors Pam Fairbanks, Mary Beth Elhardt, Rita Rios, and Kathy Eisenschenk are a continuous presence in lives of students' involved with the program.**

Carroll participated in the cultural activities, learning to make a jingle dress. Worn by women participating in a pow wow, a jingle dress includes several rows of metal cones that create a jingle sound as the dancer moves.

"Many Native American students don't know much about their culture," Carroll said. "Taking part in the Indian Education Program helps you to understand where you come from and your roots. It's important not to let our traditions die." ■



Ally Anderson

The series of a Blaine High School student helping the fallen competitor taken by Blaine High School's yearbook editor.

## Yearbook photo editor catches peer's 'act of kindness' at cross-country meet

**W**hen Blaine High School (BHS) cross country coach Rachel Karel introduced Tommy Anderson, a member of her team, and Ally Anderson, a student in her Spanish class and yearbook photo editor, she said, "Ally, Tommy. Tommy, Ally. You made each other famous."

In a case of being in the right place at the right time, Ally captured dramatic photos of Tommy Anderson stopping when he saw an Irondale High School runner laying on the ground, reaching down to help him up and then running with his competitor's arm draped around his neck. This happened during the Blaine Invitational Oct. 4 at Majestic Oaks.

Ally, a senior, had never been to a cross-country meet before. A long-time photographer, Ally was flustered when she got to the meet because she wasn't sure where to go so she just followed the crowd of spectators.

Ally was far away when she saw the Irondale runner fall. Some runners ran past the fallen competitor when all of a sudden she saw someone stop to pick him up.

"Then I realized it was a Blaine runner so I got closer," she said. "It was very heartwarming; I knew the photos would tell an amazing story."

As soon as she saw the photos, Ally knew they were special. Ally's parents loved the photos and asked her to send them to Shannon Garrety, BHS

athletic director. Karel posted them on Twitter and they went viral. Tommy's grandmother sent them to KARE-11 who featured Ally's photos on their website and came to BHS to interview Tommy and Karel.

"Tom didn't do this for the attention; it was just an act of kindness," Ally said. "It's really cool people know what he did."

The day of the Blaine Invitational, Tommy, a junior and three-year member of the cross-country team, had a goal of beating his personal best time. But as he rounded the corner at the two-mile mark he saw the Irondale runner lying on the ground.

"I ran up to him to see if he was OK," Tommy said. "I helped him up and tried to get him to start running again. I had him put his arm around my shoulder and I carried him for about a half mile."

Because runners who assist other runners can be disqualified, adults instructed Tommy to stop helping the Irondale runner. The runner, who had hurt his knee, was eventually able to run on his own, crossing the finish line shortly after Tommy.

While Tommy did not earn his personal best running time that day, he showed true character and compassion. Tommy had no idea the incident was being photographed and thinks Ally's photos are really good. He said his mother, Natalie Anderson, a staff member at River Trail Learning Center, who is a photographer with high standards, was also impressed with Ally's work.



Blaine High School yearbook editor.

In her first year as head coach of the cross-country team, Karel saw the Irondale runner go down and then Tommy reaching down to help him up. Though cross-country running is something of an individual sport, Karel works hard to emphasize the team aspect. The group's mission statement includes the goal of developing young men and women of character.

"I was really proud of Tommy for helping someone else even though he knew it would hurt his race," Karel said. "Not every kid is going to make a choice like that but in a sport like cross country that's what we do – we take care of each other."

"As we've gone through the season we've talked about supporting each other and in this case that carried over to the competition. What Tommy did speaks for itself." ■

## Coon Rapids High School to offer Biomedical Program

**T**o help meet the growing demand for health-care workers, a Biomedical Program at Coon Rapids High School (CRHS) is the latest entry into Anoka-Hennepin's successful program of specialty schools. It will use curriculum developed by Project Lead the Way (PLTW). The program, coordinated by Leah Sams, is the third Biomedical Program at a high school in the metro area and the first in the northern suburbs.

"We want students to get involved with the Biomedical Program because there are so many students who can be successful in this program," Sams said. "We will provide Biomedical Program students individual counseling and a program that suits them. This is especially helpful because the biomedical field is very broad. We will always encourage math and science courses regardless of each student's academic ability."

"The biomedical field offers really great careers with schooling from technical colleges and those pursuing any post-secondary degree. We want all students to see that they are college-ready and career-ready. The Biomedical Program will be our (CRHS) claim to fame."

CRHS is an excellent choice for the Biomedical Program because it already offers concurrent classes

with Anoka-Ramsey Community College. Through concurrent classes, students earn both high school and college credits. Students earn the college credits free of charge to them and their families.

Additionally, Minnesota is a hub for medical companies with future job opportunities available at Medtronic, Boston Scientific, CentraCare Health Systems, United Health Care, Mercy Hospital, and the Mayo Clinic. As a hands-on program that is technology driven, three CRHS classrooms will be renovated for the classes. Sams said 35 "very fast" computers have been ordered; even the technology staff was in awe of the computers purchased.

Students will enroll in the Biomedical Program through their regular registration forms in January. The program is open to all students. Students not in the CRHS attendance area can apply for an in-district transfer; students outside of the Anoka-Hennepin School District can apply for open enrollment. The school district has petitioned for the program to be added to the Northwest Suburban Integration School District. If the proposal is accepted, free transportation will be available to students outside of the CRHS and Anoka-Hennepin boundaries.

For more information about the Biomedical Program go to [www.anoka.k12.mn.us/crhs](http://www.anoka.k12.mn.us/crhs). ■



Leah Sams is leading the Biomedical Program at CRHS.

## Pathways Career Closet goes to work for Anoka-Hennepin students

**W**alking into the Pathways Career Closet at the Coon Rapids Family Place Mall is like walking into any other store; clothing is displayed attractively and the space has a warm, cozy feel. Unlike other clothing stores, all items are free and the workers earn competitive work skills rather than paychecks.

Pathways serves students ages 18 to 21 who have not graduated from high school because of a disability or an interruption in their schooling. Through several work assignments, students have the opportunity to practice basic skills required in a workplace and develop independent skills for work and/or post-secondary education.

Through the Career Closet, Pathways students and staff provide professional attire for job interviews to eligible Anoka-Hennepin students or individuals in need who are working with the district and county agencies. When possible, goodie bags of personal hygiene items are provided to Career Closet visitors preparing for interviews.

Work coordinator Paula Holden, who developed the Career Closet, and her students visited the Coon Rapids Goodwill store to learn about displaying items and working with inventory. Holden said all items in the Career Closet are donated from individuals, civic groups, the faith community, staff, students, friends, and family.

Holden said students are learning and becoming invested in the Career Closet and the idea of giving back. They are also learning “soft skills” such as interacting with co-workers, supervisors and customers as well as flexibility in accepting assigned duties, punctuality and workplace ethics. Students are also learning “retail specific skills” such as arranging and displaying merchandise, inventory and discriminating “career clothes” from casual attire.

The Career Closet is in need of donations of men’s white oxford shirts as well as extra-large and larger business-casual clothing for males and



*Chamber of Commerce’s Young Professionals brought donations into Pathways. Bringing in donations today were (from left to right): Stephaine Szeremeta, program and communication manager, MetroNorth Chamber of Commerce; and President Lori Higgins, MetroNorth Chamber of Commerce; Phil Geertsema, Automatic Data Processing; Joe Johnson, One for Joe; and Jeremy Schmitz, American Family Insurance. Pictured with the group is Paula Holden, Anoka-Hennepin work coordinator.*

females. Donations of new undergarments and professional socks and nylons are also needed. Holden hopes to someday add accessories and scrubs worn in medical settings to the Career Closet.

Donations to the Career Closet can be delivered to Pathways located in the Coon Rapids Family Place Mall, 11244 Coon Rapids Blvd, Coon Rapids. For more information contact 763-433-4625. ■

## AHEF Northern Stars Celebration a success

**A**bout 300 people came together Saturday, Oct. 13 at the Northern Stars Celebration to support the Anoka-Hennepin Educational Foundation (AHEF). The event raised almost \$30,000 for early childhood education, talent development and career and college readiness for Anoka-Hennepin students. It featured Blaine High School choir, orchestra and band students performing a patriotic program.

Tess DeGeest, AHEF executive director, said she is impressed with the depth of understanding and appreciation community members have for the Anoka-Hennepin School District and AHEF.

DeGeest said she appreciates everyone who attended the event and those who donated silent and live auction items and purchased raffle tickets to support Anoka-Hennepin students and schools. She had a special thank you for all the wonderful musicians and choir members from Blaine High School.

“The passion with which the Blaine High School students played was inspiring for all of us and the recognition of those among us that have served in the military was a wonderful reminder of the sacrifices that have been and continue to be made by our friends and neighbors,” she said. ■



*Members of the Blaine High School concert choir, and choir director, Sue Zemlin, were part of an inspiring performance at AHEF’s Northern Stars Celebration.*

## Wallin Scholarships open doors for Anoka-Hennepin students



*Brian Christner*

**I**n 2007, a unique partnership was created between the Anoka-Hennepin School District and Wallin Education Partners (WEP). Winston and Maxine Wallin, who had both received scholarships to attend college, started a scholarship program in 1992 to assist students at South High School in Minneapolis. Recognizing a great need, the Wallins expanded their scholarship program to the Anoka-Hennepin and St. Paul school districts. Through partnerships, they eventually added seven other high schools.

Students selected for WEP scholarships receive \$4,000 each year for four years and a mentor. The number of Anoka-Hennepin Wallin Scholars from the Class of 2007 has an almost 100 percent graduation rate, much higher than the program’s overall graduation rate.

A 2007 graduate of Blaine High School (BHS), Brian Christner was in the first group of Wallin Scholars. Christner saw information about the scholarship in the school’s advisement center and his adviser helped him to apply.

“I had a significant need for financial aid because I would be paying for college on my own,” said Christner.

Christner attended the University of Minnesota – Duluth (UMD) where he triple majored in economics, finance, and statistics and actuarial science. In addition to the Wallin Scholarship, Christner received a “best of class” scholarship from UMD which covered half of his tuition.

While Christner would have gone to UMD without the Wallin Scholarship, he said his education would have been a more challenging experience.

“I would have had to take out loans and probably work outside of school,” Christner said. “The Wallin Scholarship afforded me the opportunity to focus on academics and graduate in four years

with a 4.0 grade point average. And without the Wallin Scholarship, I would never have been able to study abroad in China.”

Christner also enjoyed working with the mentors provided by WEP. He said Kim Roufs, Rebecca Thelen, who works at UMD, and Janet Benson provided him with excellent advice for managing course work and positioning himself to graduate in four years.

Having completed his graduate work in financial mathematics from the University of Chicago, Christner is an options trader for Citigroup in Minnetonka. He encourages other students to apply for a Wallin Scholarship.

“I really can’t thank the Wallin Foundation enough for offering this scholarship,” he said. “Its impact on my college education was profound and I really appreciate the generosity of the foundation.”

The 2013 scholarship application closes at 11:59 p.m. on Sunday, Jan. 27. Final selections will be communicated in early April, 2013. ■

## Anoka-Hennepin Schools

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www.anoka.k12.mn.us

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# FOCUS

## Volume 28, Number 2

*Focus* is a service for residents of Anoka-Hennepin School District 11 published to keep them informed about the investment in their public schools and students. The Anoka-Hennepin School District serves more than 39,000 students and a population of 248,650 residents in 13 communities: Andover, Anoka, Blaine, Brooklyn Center, Brooklyn Park, Champlin, Coon Rapids, Dayton, Fridley, Ham Lake, Nowthen, Oak Grove and Ramsey.

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# Graduate Spotlight . . . Head of Minnesota Board of Pharmacy was inspired at 'new' Blaine High School

**B**laine High School (BHS) was still fairly new when Cody Wiberg graduated in 1977. The result of the building being new had an unintended effect on Wiberg.

"Blaine had many younger, energetic and idealistic teachers," Wiberg said. "Some of them, most notably Roger Dahl and Jim Nelson, inspired me to want to pursue a career where I could help people."

Wiberg initially thought he would be a teacher, but he became interested in pursuing a career in healthcare after he was hired as a ward clerk for the University of Minnesota

(U of M) Hospital Emergency Room during his first year in college. While he decided to become a pharmacist after researching various healthcare professions, Wiberg did find his way to teaching. In addition to working as the executive director of the Minnesota Board of Pharmacy, the state agency that regulates the profession of pharmacy and the distribution of drugs into and within the state, Wiberg is an instructor and course director for the University of Florida Graduate School and a clinical assistant professor for the University of Minnesota College of Pharmacy.

Wiberg began his post-secondary work at Anoka-Ramsey Community College the summer before his senior year at BHS. After earning a degree from the U of M College of Liberal Arts, Wiberg earned a B.S. in pharmacy and then a PharmD from the U of M College of Pharmacy. He

went on to earn a M.S. in pharmacy from the University of Florida.

When told BHS now hosts the Center for Engineering, Mathematics and Science (CEMS) program, Wiberg said that this is important because the world economy is more interconnected than it was when he was a student at Blaine. In his field, pharmaceutical products are being designed, tested and manufactured all over the world. Large pharmaceutical manufacturers are now multinational corporations with operations around the globe.

"Also, the advent of the internet and other communication technologies has made it possible for healthcare to be provided from a distance," Wiberg said. "Boards of pharmacy around the country have been asked to allow U.S. licensed pharmacists located in India to remotely perform portions of the drug dispensing

**"The teachers at BHS "Inspired me to want to pursue a career where I could help people."**  
- Cody Wiberg



**Cody Wiberg**

process. If this country is going to successfully compete in the world-wide economy, we must provide superior education in critical areas such as engineering, mathematics and science."

Wiberg, who is often quoted in Minnesota newspapers and appears on television public affairs shows, recommends Anoka-Hennepin students stay in school until they graduate, do the best they can as they study and once they graduate, continue their education.

"For me, education has been a lifelong process that has been rewarding in many ways," Wiberg said. "But have some fun along the way, too and participate in extra-curricular activities." ■

**"Education has been a lifelong process that has been rewarding in many ways."**  
- Cody Wiberg