

CONGRATULATIONS CLASS OF 2023

Waconia Public Schools celebrated the 326 members of the Class of 2023 at Waconia High School's 107th annual Commencement Ceremony on Friday, May 26. Seniors Berit Fitzsimonds and Jack Gootzeit represented the class as student speakers, while Board Chair Dana Geller, Superintendent Brian Gersich and Waconia High School Principal Paul Sparby also gave remarks. Congratulations to all members of the Class of 2023! We can't wait to see what your futures hold.



WEA NAMES 2023 ACCOMPLISHED WACONIA EDUCATORS

The Waconia Education Association has announced that Mark Bullis, Stephanie DeYoung, and Kari Klein are the 2023 recipients of the Accomplished Waconia Educators Award. The three recipients were chosen from a pool of 118 nominations and will now go on to represent Waconia Public Schools in the 2023-24 Minnesota Teacher of Year program next Fall.



Mark Bullis

One nominator had this to say about Bullis, a mathematics teacher at Waconia Middle School:

"I think he deserves this award because of how much motivation he gives his students/athletes and the way he treats his kids to make them excited to go to school everyday...He is always there to push you to do greater things along with still letting you have a little fun."



Stephanie DeYoung

DeYoung, an emotional and behavior disabilities teacher at Southview Elementary, was described as a "mentor" by one of her colleagues:

"She taught me how to handle high-stress situations and look beyond a student's behavior. She helped me look for the root of a student's behavior and teach them the skills they need. When dealing with difficult behaviors, she is still there to help me with strategies."



Kari Klein

Klein is a developmental disabilities teacher at Waconia High School and leader of the District's Unified Sports program.

"Ms Klein's passion for Unified activities has helped to create meaningful ways for students to be connected," one nominator said. "Expanding this program to lower grades is an exciting and meaningful enhancement. Waconia Schools is a true leader in special education services!"



BRIAN GERSICH
*Superintendent,
Waconia Public Schools*

We have made it to the end of another school year and there is much to celebrate and be proud of here at Waconia Public Schools.

As I conclude my first year as Superintendent, I want to thank each of you for welcoming me to Waconia and for entrusting your children to our school district and our amazing staff of teachers and professionals.

This school year was not void of challenges, but as I sat on the commencement stage on May 26, and listened to graduating seniors Berit Fitzsimonds and Jack Gootzeit talk about their experiences in Waconia Public Schools, it struck me once again what a special community we have here.

I'm also encouraged by the end-of-year survey data that we have collected from students, staff, and parents/guardians. By overwhelming majorities, stakeholders are confident that students are receiving a high-quality education, that schools are providing a welcoming environment, and that students like being at school. Students are and will continue to be at the center of everything we do here in Waconia Public Schools. I'm excited to be a part of this School District and I hope you are too.

Enjoy your summer and know that our talented staff will be ready to enthusiastically welcome students back to school in late August.

Thank you for your continued support of Waconia Public Schools.

**Ind. School District No. 110
512 Industrial Blvd
Waconia, MN 55387**

**Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 1
Waconia MN**

**ECRWSS
Postal Customer**

SIX STUDENTS NAMED TO MMEA ALL-STATE CHOIRS

Six Waconia High School students have been selected to participate in various Minnesota All-State Choirs sponsored by the Minnesota Music Educators Association (MMEA).

Juniors Jack Anderson and Mara Giesen were named to the All-State Mixed Choir; juniors Jocelyn Heinrichs, Jessica Larson and Tessa Paulson were named to the All-State Soprano/Alto Choir; and sophomore Mathias Pierce was named to the All-State Tenor/Bass Choir.

MMEA’s All-State program is considered the top program of its kind across the nation and aims to develop the finest musicians and leaders among Minnesota’s most accomplished high school students.

Students in high school bands, choirs and orchestras across the state audition for an All-State spot in March. Judges listen to the students, evaluating them on their overall musicianship and technique. In mid-April, the MMEA All-State Committee chooses the final rosters. Selected choir students attend camp August 1-5 at St. John’s University in Collegeville, where they meet their guest conductor and attend hours of rehearsals and sectionals. All-State students will then meet again Feb. 16-17, 2024 to perform at Orchestra Hall as part of the MMEA Midwinter Convention.



Front Row L to R: Jocelyn Heinrichs (11) , Mara Giesen (11), Jessica Larson (11)
Back Row L to R: Jack Anderson (11), Mathias Pierce (10), Tessa Paulson (11)

JACK ANDERSON EARNS TRIPLE THREAT ON HENNEPIN HONOR



Congratulations to Waconia High School junior Jack Anderson for being named one of 24 Triple Threat on Hennepin students for 2023, a program sponsored by Hennepin Theatre Trust.



Junior and senior students with interest or experience in singing, acting, dancing and leadership are invited to audition for Triple Threat on Hennepin with a submission of required materials

including: headshot, resume, video audition and personal essay. Select students are then invited to a live audition where a panel of theater professionals determine the 24 Triple Threat students.

Anderson will now have the opportunity to participate in an intensive coaching, rehearsal and performance process for Hennepin Theatre Trust’s Spotlight Showcase (June 12-13) at the State Theatre in downtown Minneapolis.

The 24 triple threats also have the option to be considered for the Triple Threat New York Experience or to become a Minnesota nominee for the National High School Musical Theatre Awards.

SENIOR BERIT FITZSIMONDS NAMED 2023 WHS TRIPLE ‘A’ AWARD RECIPIENT



Recent Waconia High School graduate Berit Fitzsimonds has been named the school’s 2023 recipient of the Minnesota State High School League’s (MSHSL) Triple ‘A’ Award.

Established in 1988, the Academics, Arts and Athletics Award (Triple “A”) is a unique recognition program sponsored by the MSHSL. The award goes to high school seniors who have a “B” or better grade point average and who are active in fine arts and athletic activities.

The purpose of this program is to recognize and honor high school seniors who have excelled in the classroom, on the athletic field, and in fine arts, as well as to elevate academic standards and create greater awareness of the value of high school activities.

Athletically, Fitzsimonds has been involved in softball and volleyball, both as a player and referee/umpire. She participates in a number of music ensembles at Waconia High School, including Pep Band, Jazz Band, Choir, and Pit Orchestra. Along with a number of statewide musical honors, earlier this year she participated in the National Association for Music Education’s All-National Concert Band.

In the classroom, Fitzsimonds has maintained a 4.0 GPA, has been a regular member of the A Honor Roll, and is involved in the National Honor Society and the WHS Student Council.

In addition, she has recorded more than 500 volunteer community service hours with her church, local senior centers, and alongside area youth.

Visit <https://bit.ly/WHSAwards23> to read more about Fitzsimonds and her accomplishments and accolades during her time as a Wildcat.

SENIOR NATHAN KLITZKE COMPETES AT STATE SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING FAIR



Congratulations to recent Waconia High School graduate Nathan Klitzke for being awarded the U.S. Air Force Certificate of Achievement for his project in Environmental Science at the Southern Minnesota Regional Science & Engineering Fair in Mankato on Saturday, February 11.

Klitzke qualified to participate and compete at the 86th annual Minnesota State Science & Engineering Fair at the St. Paul River Centre in March. He was one of 12 participants in the Earth & Environmental Sciences category. His entry was titled “The Effects of Different Nutrients on Plants.”

WHS JUNIORS AMELIA HEROLD AND CARBEN DOCK NAMED EXCEL AWARD RECIPIENTS

Waconia High School juniors Amelia Herold and Carben Dock have been named the school's 2023 recipients of the ExCEL Award. Sponsored by the Minnesota State High School League, ExCEL (Excellence in Community, Education and Leadership) is a unique recognition program designed exclusively for high school juniors. Students who are active in fine arts and/or athletic activities, who show leadership qualities, and who are model citizens are eligible for the award.

To be eligible for the ExCEL Award, students must: be a junior in high school; make satisfactory progress toward graduation requirements; participate in a League-sponsored fine arts and/or athletic activity; hold a leadership position in their school; work voluntarily in their community; and meet MSHSL General Eligibility Requirements.

Herold, who was also named one of 35 state ExCEL Award recipients, has been active in cross country, track & field, and as a Unified Partner in Special Olympics basketball and track & field. In addition, Herold has earned numerous honors as part of several WHS fine arts programs including marching band, concert band, pep band, jazz band and show choir band. Other school activities include National Honor



Amelia Herold

Feed My Starving Children, the Minneapolis Women's Homeless Shelter, several retirement home and assisted living facilities and as a summer school volunteer. He has also spent time fundraising for organizations such as the Special Olympics and the Waconia Hockey Association. At Waconia High School, Dock has participated in cross country, tennis, band, pep band, the Newspaper Club, the Simpson House Club. He has been a three-time varsity academic letter winner while maintaining an impressive 3.98 GPA.

Society, Conservation Club and Fellowship of Christian Athletes. Outside of school her volunteer endeavors include Adopt-a-Highway, local clean-ups at Lake Waconia and Coney Island, the Carver County Fair, Nickle Dickle Days and the More than Pink 5K Event.

Dock has spent countless hours serving others at



Carben Dock

CLAIRE CANFIELD RECEIVES 2023 ATHENA AWARD



Recent Waconia High School graduate Claire Canfield is the recipient of the school's 2023 Athena Award. Sponsored by the Minneapolis Athena Awards Committee, the Athena Award

is a unique recognition program designed exclusively for female high school seniors.

Selection of the outstanding female athlete from each school is based on excellence in individual sports or for participation and accomplishments in team sports. Students who excel in athletic activities, who show leadership qualities, and who are model citizens are eligible for the award.

Canfield earned seven varsity letters during her athletic career, including six in swimming and one in lacrosse. In swimming, Canfield was a three-year captain, a two-time All-State recipient, earned three All-Conference honors, one All-Conference Honorable Mention honor, and qualified for the state championship meet five times. She was a team MVP and earned the prestigious Girls' Swimming Wildcat Award and Iron Cat Award three times. During her senior season, Canfield won the section title in the 100-yard backstroke and set a school record of 2:12.50 in the 200-yard individual medley.



Academically, Canfield has earned a MSHSL Spotlight on Scholarship award in each of her activity seasons, maintains a 3.85 GPA, and has been named an AP Scholar with Distinction. Canfield has also been active in school and community activities, participating in a variety of National Honor Society offerings as well as volunteering for Feed My Starving Children.

Next fall, Canfield plans to swim and major in Chemistry at the College of St. Benedict.

Canfield and the other 53 Athena Award winners were recognized at the Minneapolis Athena Awards Banquet on May 5 at the Earle Brown Heritage Center in Brooklyn Center.

JUNIOR ABIGAIL VOELKER QUALIFIES FOR 2024 NATIONAL MERIT SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM



Congratulations to Waconia High School junior Abigail Voelker for qualifying to enter the 2024 National Merit Scholarship Program.

Voelker qualified to enter the program by achieving a top-50,000 score out of the 1.3 million students who took the 2022 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test across the country.

Voelker will be notified in the Fall if she is one of approximately 16,000 students named National Merit Semifinalists.

MCENELLY FINISHES CAREER WITH A STATE TITLE AND MR. WRESTLING AWARD



Class of 2023 graduate Max McEnelly capped his Waconia High School wrestling career back in early March in what seemed like the only way possible: on top of the podium at the Xcel Energy Center.

McEnelly was barely challenged in the early rounds of the Class AAA 195-pound bracket as he recorded technical falls in his first three matches. In the state championship match though, against Stillwater's Ryder Rogotzke, McEnelly had to go to

work to earn a 3-2 decision and his fourth consecutive state championship.

Following the season, the Minnesota Wrestling Coaches Association awarded McEnelly the 2023 Mr. Minnesota High School Wrestler Award. The award is presented annually to the senior that best exemplifies the highest ideals of high school wrestling in Minnesota.

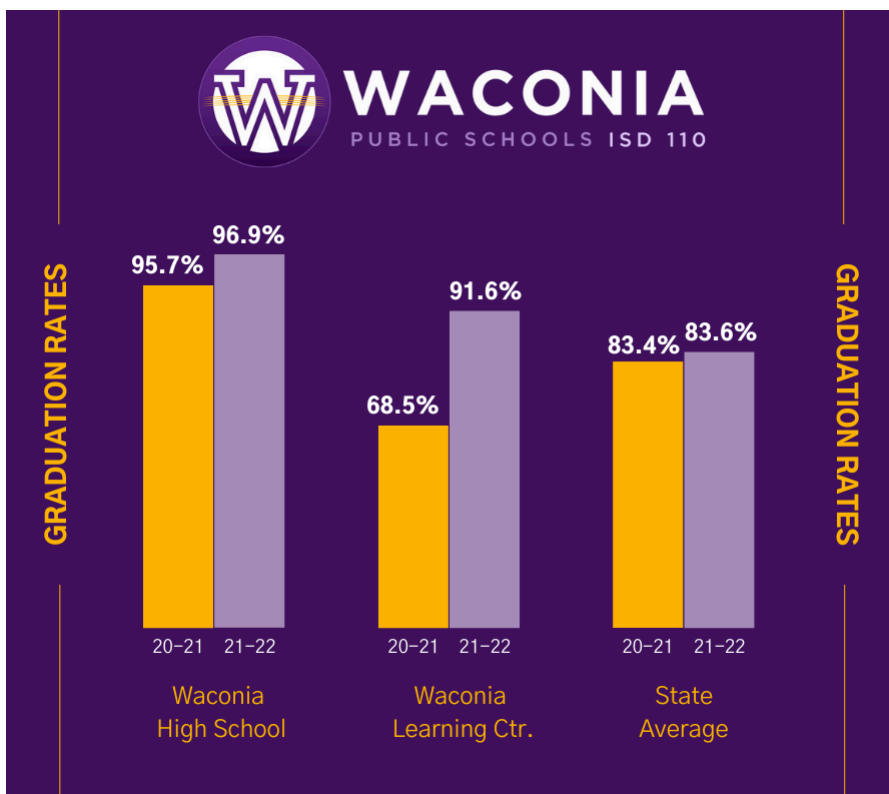
McEnelly plans to wrestle and attend school at the University of Minnesota next fall. He leaves Waconia with a number of school records in both football and wrestling.

CommunicAT

SPRING/SUMMER 2023



WACONIA HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATE CLIMBS TO NEARLY 97 PERCENT



Over the past 10 months I have really come to appreciate the amazing quality of teachers and educational programming that we have here in Waconia, and so I am not surprised that a large percentage of our students are thriving."

- BRIAN GERSICH
Superintendent

Four-year graduation rates went up at both Waconia High School and the Waconia Learning Center according to 2021-22 data released by the Minnesota Department of Education on Tuesday.

At Waconia High School, the four-year graduation rate increased from 95.71% in

2020-21 to 96.95% in 2021-22. The Waconia Learning Center achieved an even greater increase from 68.57% in 2020-21 to 91.67% in 2021-22. Both schools have graduation rates that are well above the state average of 83.55%.

"While Waconia did not see the significant drop in graduation rates during the pandemic that some other school districts did, it's certainly great to see that we are trending in the right direction," Superintendent Brian Gersich said.

SAMANTHA JUNG NAMED SPECIAL EDUCATION MANAGER



Waconia Public Schools is pleased to announce that beginning July 1, 2023, Samantha Jung will serve as Special Education Manager. Jung will replace Jenn Froehlich, who accepted a new position in Edina Public Schools.

Under the direction of Director of Special Education Paul Tordoff, Jung will primarily serve as a leader in supporting the special education programming and services at the elementary and pre-school (3 to 5 year olds) levels. She will also directly supervise birth to age three special education services.

Jung has 12 years of professional experience including seven years as a special education teacher in Glencoe-Silver Lake and three years as special education coordinator for Wayzata Public Schools. She currently serves as a Learning Environment Coordinator for Edina Public Schools. She holds a Bachelor's Degree

from Winona State University and a Master's Degree and Autism Spectrum Disorders Licensure from Hamline University.

LINDSAY SEIM NAMED TEACHING AND LEARNING SPECIALIST

Waconia Public Schools is pleased to announce that beginning July 1, 2023, Lindsay Seim will serve as Teaching and Learning Specialist. Seim is finishing her 20th year in public education, including the past nine years in Waconia Public Schools. She currently serves as an Instructional Coach and prior to that she taught social studies at Waconia Middle School.

Under the direction of Director of Educational Services Erika Nesvig, Seim will serve as a leader in supporting the development and oversight of our curriculum, instruction, and assessment



programming at the elementary level. She will also support the design and implementation of professional development opportunities and support the development of a long-term vision for enhancing our programming for improved student academic achievement.

WACONIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS NAMES ERIKA NESVIG DIRECTOR OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

Waconia Public Schools is pleased to announce that Erika Nesvig has accepted the position of Director of Educational Services. In this newly created position that consolidates responsibilities from the current Directors of Teaching & Learning and Technology, Nesvig will be charged with leading the development and implementation of K-12 curriculum, planning and facilitating staff development and technology integration opportunities, and overseeing K-12 standardized testing and assessment, among other duties. Nesvig will start her new role in Waconia on July 1, 2023.

"I'm excited to welcome Erika to our team here in Waconia," Superintendent Brian Gersich said. "Her combination of instructional and leadership experience will be pivotal as we continue to develop, achieve and maintain an excellent academic program for the students of Waconia Public Schools."



With 28 years of experience in public education, Nesvig has served in a variety of instructional and leadership roles in Washington state, Minnesota and Oregon. After serving as an elementary

teacher for 18 years, she spent eight years as an elementary and middle school principal in the Burnsville-Eagan-Savage School District 191. Nesvig is currently finishing her second year as an elementary principal in McMinnville, Oregon.

In addition to her teaching and administrative experience, Nesvig has completed training in courageous principal leadership, adaptive schools, and cognitive coaching. She earned her bachelor's degree in elementary education from Concordia College, Moorhead, before earning both a master's degree in educational leadership and her administrative license from Minnesota State University, Mankato.

"I'm excited to be joining Waconia Public Schools as the Director of Educational Services," Nesvig said. "I know that Waconia is a high-performing district, and I look forward to collaborating with all staff to continue that level of excellence."