



MINNESOTA STATE HIGH SCHOOL LEAGUE

# NEWS

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

# Minnesota State High School League and Wells Fargo Honor Students for Leadership, Community Service

Celebrating its 21<sup>st</sup> year of recognizing high school juniors, the Minnesota State High School League will honor the 2017 ExCEL Award recipients during ceremonies at the Girls' State Basketball Tournament on Saturday.

ExCEL—Excellence in Community, Education and Leadership—is a unique recognition award that is given annually to high school juniors who are leaders in their schools and who demonstrate a strong commitment to community service. The program is sponsored by Wells Fargo.

“The ExCEL program fulfills the League’s mission to recognize students who go beyond the classroom and the fields of competition to demonstrate leadership and community loyalty,” said Lisa Lissimore, the League associate director who oversees the award program. “Their achievements are not measured by finishing first. Rather, their achievements are gauged by what they have given back to others.”

The 2017 ExCEL award recipients are engaged in life-changing projects that build stronger, healthier, and safer communities. They work voluntarily to end hunger, house the homeless, help the environment, and to raise funds for medical research. Many of these student leaders are involved in 4-H and FFA outreach activities while others coach youth sports, teach Sunday school, assist seniors, visit shelters, and tutor at-risk kids.

“We are honored to sponsor the ExCEL award program recognizing Minnesota students who help create solutions for stronger, more resilient communities,” said Joe Ravens, Wells Fargo Community Bank region president.

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The ExCEL award program began in 1996. Award recipients are selected through a multi-level process that involves League member schools and an independent panel of judges from schools throughout Minnesota. More than 4,000 students have been recognized with this award program. Two-hundred and forty-nine students were nominated by their schools this year.

KSTC- TV, Channel 45, the League's broadcast partner, will recognize the 2017 ExCEL award recipients during its broadcast of the semi-finals of the State Girls' Basketball Tournament. Each student will also participate in an on-court award ceremony during the halftime of the Class AA girls' basketball championship game on March 18.

Following is the list of the 2017 ExCEL Award winners:

*Kjerstin Anderson, Owatonna*

*Aiden Begnaud, Lake Crystal-Wellcome Memorial*

*Matthew Benson, Park Rapids Area*

*Leighton Buhr, Lester Prairie*

*McKenzie Cselovszki, Sleepy Eye*

*Reese Eichner, Norwood-Young America*

*Jackson Grove, Alexandria Area*

*Teresa Grunklee, Rosemount*

*Ashley Haxton, Wabasha-Kellogg*

*Lisa Hoffer, West Lutheran*

*Sarita Hook, Tracy Area*

*William Keute, Virginia*

*Taylor Kimman, Pierz*

*Bryce Knutson, Owatonna*

*Brianna Kreft, West Central Area*

*Markayla Kujath, Kasson-Mantorville*

*Brianna Larson, Litchfield*

*Judy Larson, Norwood-Young America*

*Elizabeth McDonald, Fisher*

*Lauren Miller, Zumbrota-Mazeppa*

*Emma Nelson, Hancock*

*Grace Penke, Hutchinson*

*Alex Pohlen, Minnetota*

*Allison Prestby, Alexandria Area*

*Spencer Quast, Redwood Valley*

*Adam Revoir, Tartan, Oakdale*

*Andrew Rippy, St. Croix Preparatory Academy*

*Brady Ristau, Fillmore Central*

*Mason Schmidgall, Hancock*

*Briana Schmidt, Springfield*

*Brock Snyder, Royalton*

*Nick Thielsen, Mankato East*

*Aye Aye Thin, St. Paul Humboldt*

*Mai Xee Vang, St. Paul Harding*

*KaSondra Wiederich, LeSueur-Henderson*

*Austin Windsperger, Watertown-Mayer*

Additional information about the 2017 ExCEL Award recipients may be obtained by visiting the League's Web site at [www.MSHSL.org](http://www.MSHSL.org)-Recognition.