League announces “Triple A” Award recipients

**Allison Benjamin of East Ridge High School**, Preston Rohloff of Hancock High School, Kadyn Treibenbach of Osakis High School and Lane Versteeg of Owatonna High School were recently selected as the recipients of the 2021 Minnesota State High School League Academic, Arts, and Athletics Awards.

Established in 1988, the award, popularly known as the Triple 'A' Award, recognizes and rewards high school seniors from across the state for their achievements in the classroom, the arts, and athletics. To qualify for the award, students must have a “B” or better grade point average and participate in League-sponsored athletic and fine arts activities. League member schools are invited to nominate two students—a boy and a girl—for the award.

Award recipients are selected through a multi-level process involving the League’s administrative regions and a committee of athletic, fine arts and educational leaders. One girl and one boy from Class A schools and one girl and one boy from Class AA schools receive a four-year, $1,000 scholarship.

Meet the recipients:

**Allison Benjamin - Region 4AA - East Ridge High School**

GPA: 4.35
Choir, One Act Play, speech, tennis

In Region 4AA, Allison Benjamin of East Ridge High School is called a “model student.” Allison is a straight-A student and National Merit Finalist. She worked as a research assistant for University of Minnesota (UMN) teams conducting COVID-19 research and won the UMN Global Health Poster Showcase Outstanding Poster Award for an Undergraduate.

Allison chaired the Drama Club and performed in seven school theatre productions. She was selected for multiple regional, state, and conference honor choirs and received superior ratings for solo musical theater at the Minnesota Thespian Festival. She also organized musical outreach events at local nursing homes.

Allison co-captained the school’s speech team, is a state and national tournament qualifier, and was awarded the National Speech and Debate Association’s All-American award for competitive success, academics and exemplary character.

On the varsity tennis team, Allison received an All-Conference Honorable Mention and Academic All-State Award.

Science teacher Stephanie Harberts says Allison is an “outstanding student leader.”

**Quote:** “My involvement in the arts, athletics, and academics has developed my soft skills, leadership, and worth ethic—qualities I believe are crucial to being not only a good doctor, but more importantly, a good person.”

**College plans:** To pursue a pre-med biology degree, with minors in Spanish and music; and participate in choir, A cappella, theater, intramural tennis and sailing.

*Continued on page 3*
New website serves many audiences, continues to grow

By Laura Mackenthun, Director of Technology

The Minnesota State High School League provides services, information and entertainment to a wide audience across the state of Minnesota. The scope of the League’s reach has been evident as the new website continues through the process of a total rebuild. In the seven months since the website first launched last August, new features continue to roll out as the website grows and evolves.

The original website won awards when it was first unveiled more than 20 years ago. In the time following that, it continued to grow and provide services, but didn’t go through upgrades to allow for opportunities that would align with future needs and newer technologies. As a result, it no longer could service current needs or expand for the future. A total rebuild was the only option.

A decision was made to best manage financial and time resources and not maintain the existing website and build a new site at the same time. This decision would clearly be uncomfortable at times, but it was the right direction in which to move.

Services for member schools

The League’s primary partners and stakeholders are its member schools. A majority of the website is actually unseen by the general public. This “backside” of the website is built for those with a log in. In this area, schools have management tools to manage their athletics and fine arts activities. Here, activities directors and coaches complete educational requirements, access League and sport-specific information and communicate with League staff.

This log-in only section of the website also provides region secretaries and section tournament managers with tools to schedule their contests, enter tournament information, manage contests and communicate with those teams taking part in these section contests.

For fans of League activities

The public-facing website is designed for spectators and fans of all kinds. These include the families of participants, school communities and many others in Minnesota and beyond. League activities and sports have a large following across the state. Some want information once a year at tournament time, some want to follow a specific team from a specific school, and some want to follow everything connected to a school. Others want to follow everything connected with a single sport or activity.

General fans and spectators

The home page was designed for users to gain an overview of League activities. The many elements contain links that lead to additional information. Viewers can access information on upcoming tournaments, see current news stories and link to additional news stories, access John’s Journal and podcast, see celebrated League participants, and learn more about awards given out by the League.

Fans and spectators of a school

For those that want to follow a specific school, School Pages (accessed under the Schools button) and the associated Team Pages for that school (accessed from the individual sports and activities buttons on each School Page) provide the public with access to information about the school—school address, colors, administration, school song and much more. Team Pages provide the coaches for the team, a picture of the team, and if the team is a co-op, the schools that comprise the co-op. Each school provides the information that populates these pages.

In just the past week, schedules, results and rosters are now rolling out on these School and Team pages. Schools are working to get these populated and accessible for spring sports. These are used by many website visitors and having them available will be a great asset!

Fans and spectators of a specific sport or activity

And, for those who want to follow a specific activity or sport, Sport and Activity Pages (accessed under the Sports & Activities button) provide an opportunity to view a vast amount of information about each sport. The buttons across the top provide access to schools participating in that sport or activity, records associated with that sport or activity, and a tournament archive. The Tournament Archive will be an ongoing project with the goal of providing information about past tournaments.

Information about state and section tournaments is found on the Sport and Activity Pages including brackets, schedules, online programs. Links to teams Section Placements and information about Section Tournaments for that sport or activity are available.

For many activities and sports, galleries of photos from recent state tournament championships are linked on these pages. These provide an opportunity to relive the tournament championship as well as purchase photos.

News stories that connect to the sports/activity are linked to this page as are general resources and information about the sport/activity.

Please continue to check back frequently as the website continues to be evolve and grow. If you have feedback or questions, we’d love to hear them! Email me at lmackenthun@mshsl.org.
“Triple A” Recipients excel in Academics, Athletics and Arts

Continued from Cover

Preston Rohloff - Region 6A - Hancock High School
GPA: 4.0

Band, choir, One Act Play, football, basketball, baseball

“I have never seen anyone as passionate about everything they do as Preston. He is the type of student that parents, teachers and administrators hope for.” In Region 6A, Hancock High School’s principal gave this strong commendation for Preston Rohloff. Principal Tim Pahl calls Preston a “go-getter” with “an amazing work ethic” and a “great sense of humor.”

Preston has received numerous academic achievement awards, most notably the individual Academic All-State Award. He has had many leadership roles in high school, becoming captain of the baseball team in 2019 and captain of both Hancock’s football and basketball teams this year.

Preston has been involved in swing choir, honor band and marching band. He says, “you have to work as a team while rehearsing and performing music.” Preston is active in Business Professionals of America and Knowledge Bowl.

The principal says hard work, passion and motivation make Preston an excellent role model for every student.

Quote: “I have developed through these activities in a way that has shown me that you cannot be good at something unless you put your time into it.”

College plans: To pursue a mathematics degree at North Dakota State University.

Kadyn Triebenbach - Region 6A - Osakis Public School
GPA: 3.93

Band, choir, tennis, basketball, golf

In Region 6A, Kadyn Triebenbach “works hard at everything she does,” according to her basketball coach at Osakis Public School. Coach Patrick Kalpin says Kadyn is “positive, a leader, communicator, role model, and a great teammate.” Kadyn will not only graduate with a high school diploma, but also an Associates degree. She has been awarded Academic All-State along with other seniors on the school tennis team.

Kadyn plays and sings in many of the school’s band and choir groups and has received superior ratings for her work in solo and ensemble events. She’s pursuing a music education degree as a result of this experience.

Kadyn has been captain of the tennis, basketball and golf team. Her basketball coach describes Kadyn as a “loyal athlete,” whose “dedication and desire to put the team first above and beyond her own personal goals are important qualities she’ll carry with her” in the future.

Quote: “Interacting with others of different abilities and skills has allowed me to form better communication skills as well as compassion and empathy while being mindful of what others live and deal with...teamwork and working for the betterment of all is what really matters.”

College plans: To pursue psychology and vocal music education degrees at Concordia College—Moorhead or St. Olaf College, and participate in band, choir and golf.

Lane Versteeg - Region 1AA - Owatonna High School
GPA: 4.102

Choir, orchestra, soccer, football, basketball, track and field

In Region IAA, Lane Versteeg is at the top of his class at Owatonna High School. He is a 2020 Semper Fidelis All-American, a national award given by the U.S. Marine Corps for academic, athletic and community service performance. He is also vice president of the school’s National Honor Society and DECA, an association that helps students develop business and leadership skills. He helped found a student diversity group called “Dig.” His high school counselor says Lane is “a person who makes a difference wherever he goes.”

Lane played first chair violin in orchestra and in choir, he received a superior rating for vocal performance.

In athletics, Lane was captain of the soccer team, and for three years, he was chosen for Minnesota’s Youth Soccer Olympic Development Team. He was also on the football, basketball, and track teams.

His high school counselor concludes Lane “will have a major impact on this world, I am sure of it.”

Quote: “My involvement in high school has been a real-life testament that if you are driven by passion, there is no goal too lofty, and there certainly is no challenge too large.”

College plans: To study mathematics and economics and participate in soccer and choir.

What school in the southwest metro has a nickname for its boys’ programs and another for the girls’ programs?

What is the oldest accredited high school in Minnesota?

What current member of the Board of Directors serves as the Postmaster in Little Falls?

What school that no longer exists won a basketball state championship in 1925 and then fell just short of a chance at winning a national title?

In 1933, how much was a reserved seat to watch the boys basketball state championship game?

Answers on page 7
2021 Academics, Arts & Athletics Award Finalists

REGION 1A
Abigail Theusch
Alden-Conger
Luke Bothun
Sibley East

REGION 2A
Halle Bemmels
Le Sueur-Henderson
Devan Kumar
Sibley East

REGION 3A
Josie Harms
Murray County Central
Nathan Kuehl
Westbrook-Walnut Grove

REGION 4A
Lay Lay
St. Paul Humboldt
Henry Hakanson
Heritage Christian Academy

REGION 5A
Mary Miller
Maple Lake
Aiden Mikla
Milaca

REGION 6A
Kadyn Triebenbach
Osakis
Preston Rohloff
Hancock

REGION 7A
Baylie Jo Norris
Greenway
Zachary Quirk
Chisholm

REGION 8A
Emily Berghuis
Farmington
Kate Ulrich
Waconia

REGION 1AA
Connor Slette
New Ulm

REGION 2AA
Nicole Kelly
South St. Paul
Anders Roback
Rosemount

REGION 3AA
Allison Benjamin
East Ridge
Abby Maeder
St. Michael-Albertville

REGION 4AA
Riley Edding
St. Paul Central
Michael Ude
Fridley

REGION 5AA
Miriam Manna
Robbinsdale
Benjamin Bauer
Cloquet

REGION 6AA
Crystal Kaczmarczyk
Duluth East
Matthew Du Wayzata

REGION 7AA
Ellie Andersen
Fergus Falls
Jonah Kalsnes
Thief River Falls

REGION 8AA
James Pederson
Stephen-Argyle Central

Academics • Arts • Athletics Award
McDonald’s

[Image of McDonald's logo]
The Minnesota State High School League is honored to announce that Kylen Running Hawk, a senior at Morris Area High School, has been selected the national winner of the Heart of the Arts Award by the National Federation of State High School Associations. The Heart of the Arts Award recognizes individuals who exemplify the positive ideals of performing arts that are the core mission of education-based participation in arts and activities.

The MSHSL honored Kylen as the Minnesota Heart of the Arts Award in January. Each state high school governing body is eligible to nominate a statewide winner, with the NFHS, which is based in Indianapolis, Ind., selecting the national recipient.

Kylen is active in many school activities, including choir, theater, speech and mock trial. He found his passion in the performing arts despite a language barrier, hearing loss and other obstacles. Kylen plans to study education in college, with an emphasis on choir and theater, with hopes of teaching those art forms to Native American students.

Kylen’s family is Hunkpapa Lakota from the Standing Rock Nation in North and South Dakota and the Winnebago tribe of Nebraska. His Lakota name is Wica Kawitaya, which translates to He Gathers the People/Nation. Kylen’s early years were spent on the Standing Rock Reservation in North Dakota and his first language is Lakota Sioux.

Kylen’s first theater role came in The Princess and the Pea at St. Mary’s elementary school in 2013 after moving to Morris. With deafness in his left ear – which several surgeries were unable to repair -- he learned to read lips and understand English along the way. Kylen also enjoys donning traditional Lakota costumes and performing at powwows, parades and other events.

Kylen was accepted into the prestigious Perpich Center for Performing Arts in suburban Minneapolis for his senior year of high school but respectfully declined due to the Coronavirus pandemic. He will attend the University of Minnesota, Morris in the fall. After college he would like to share his talents with Native American students.

He is the second Minnesota student to be recognized as the national winner of the Heart of the Arts Award. The 2017 honoree was Josephine Ross of Benilde-St. Margaret’s High School in St. Louis Park.

The League congratulates Kylen Running Hawk, the 2021 Minnesota and NFHS Heart of the Arts recipient.
This letter was sent to the League by basketball official Tyler Livingston of North St. Paul after working a boys game between Hill-Murray and host Simley:

I am writing to offer appreciation for the table crew working the Hill-Murray at Simley boys basketball game on March 13. We had several challenging administration situations during the game, and the table crew was on top of each one. In one particular situation, we had multiple technical fouls to administer, and the officials got some numbering backwards. The table crew was patient, asked us the right questions, and worked with us as a team to get the correct fouls assigned to the correct players. Just an excellent job all around! Thank you for your excellence and professionalism.

This letter was submitted to the League by basketball official Doug Inman:

I am a registered basketball official in the Rochester Area Officials Association, and have had the Chatfield Gophers boys twice this season.

On Feb. 5, Chatfield was on the road at Dover-Eyota. As the clock wound down, Chatfield had the game in hand. With roughly one minute remaining, the Gophers inserted a sub that I recognized from prior seasons. He took the floor, and positioned himself deep in a corner outside the three-point arc. His teammate passed him the ball, and he attempted a shot. It missed, but the nine remaining players relaxed while a Chatfield player rebounded the ball and passed it back to him. His shot missed again and bounced directly out of bounds, untouched. As I turned to head down the court, Dover-Eyota’s head coach stopped me and asked us to give the ball back to Chatfield so he could attempt another shot. I paused, and, made sure that I heard him correctly. After a quick discussion with my partner, we reversed the call. The Chatfield player got one final attempt off, which missed, before the final horn sounded.

Later in the month, I was in Chatfield as the Gophers hosted St. Charles. In the second half, the Gophers again pulled away, and with a minute or so left, both teams put their subs in, including the player I mentioned above. He again positioned himself outside the three-point arc, and just like last time, his first shot attempt missed. Following a St. Charles possession, he returned to a spot in front of his team’s bench and shot again. It missed, but this time a St. Charles player rebounded the ball, paused a moment, and passed it to the waiting Chatfield player. He got one final attempt off, which went in just before the horn sounded.

Both these games were conference matchups by teams that know each other well. The teams played hard and with intensity as they competed. Yet, in both cases, Dover-Eyota and St. Charles displayed excellent sportsmanship and perspective in allowing the final minute of these games to play out as they did for this athlete. Kudos to all three of these teams for two memorable nights!

This letter was submitted by Tommy Houdek of Mahnomen-Waubun:

I would like to express my gratitude to the Hancock community for the recent act of kindness by one of their own. Following a Mahnomen-Waubun Thunderbirds loss in the Section 6A boys basketball championship game, the Hancock players and fans celebrated a well-deserved victory that propelled the Owls to the state tournament. The Thunderbird players were crushed as they saw their unblemished season come to an end to a well-coached and disciplined Owls team. As Thunderbird players emerged from the locker room and shared hugs and tears with our proud fans, the Hancock players and coaching staff were in the midst of cutting down the nets. Prior to the second net coming down, the unthinkable happened. Coach Cory Bedel halted the Owls’ celebration and offered the opportunity to our Thunderbird seniors to cut a piece of the net as a keepsake. As a parent to one of those seniors on the Thunderbirds team, I was overwhelmed by the selfless and most considerate gesture I may have experienced. After our three seniors fought through tears to take home their piece of history, I shook Coach Bedel’s hand and thanked him for the reminder to us all that it’s more than just a game. Coach Bedel responded that he has the utmost respect for our head coach, John Clark Jr., and impressed with the programs developed in football and basketball in Mahnomen-Waubun. On behalf of the Mahnomen-Waubun communities, I hope that Coach Bedel is recognized for his display of exceptional sportsmanship. Hancock has definitely earned additional Owl fans. Best of luck to the Hancock players, fans, assistant coaches and head coach Cory Bedel in the state tournament.

This letter was sent to the League by basketball official Tim Litfin after working a girls basketball game between Eden Prairie and host Buffalo:

This is totally a sportsmanship/praise report and it is most deserving. For whom you may ask? I would like to answer that by saying anyone and everyone involved in the varsity girls basketball game on Feb. 12 at Buffalo High School. The head coaches set a tone of excellence from the pre-game conversation. Both Grant Stewart (Buffalo) and Ellen Wiese (Eden Prairie) are as good as there are in the state. The Buffalo AD, Tom Bauman, could not be a nicer guy and more in control. What a treat it is to officiate at Buffalo High School and work for Tom. His assistant is the very capable Barb. What a gem!

Then, you go to the scorers’ table where Brig and Steve the trainer and I am sorry but I do not recall the name of the best PA/DJ guy in the state takes residence on game night. But, he and Brig make quite a pair. I smile each time I think about going to Buffalo to officiate basketball in part because of those two people. The other person on the table was new to me this year. She picked right up with the excellent veterans and did very well. The night started with a very appropriate message of pause, and, ponder the sad happening in Buffalo (the shooting at a clinic). Very respectful and read very well by the PA/DJ man.

My fellow officials, Nick Litfin and Gary Revenig, were awesome to work with as they always are. They, too, enjoyed the atmosphere and the professionalism of the Buffalo High School Activities Department. Thank you for the great game. Thank you for the great support. I look forward to seeing Buffalo and Eden Prairie again on my schedule.

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Questions on page 3

1. Jordan High School. The boys teams are nicknamed the Hubmen and the girls’ teams are the Jaguars.
2. Stillwater, 1903.
3. Matt Heier.
4. St. Paul Mechanic Arts defeated Buffalo 20-8 for the boys basketball state championship at the Kenwood Armory in Minneapolis. Ten days later, the Trainers played in the National High School tournament in Chicago, losing 29-28 to Westport High School (Kansas City) in the semifinals.
5. $1.25.
THE MINNESOTA STATE HIGH SCHOOL LEAGUE IS GRATEFUL TO OUR CORPORATE PARTNERS THAT CONTINUE TO INVEST IN HIGH SCHOOL ACTIVITY PROGRAMS.