

# *Salute to* VALEDICTORIAN CANDIDATES & PLATINUM STUDENTS

CLASS OF

2021



**BILLINGS GAZETTE**  
COMMUNICATIONS

**EDUCATION**  
FOUNDATION  
BILLINGS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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# SALUTE TO VALEDICTORIANS

The Education Foundation and Billings Gazette Communications are proud to honor businesses that support education in our community, and local students who are Valedictorian Candidates and Platinum Students.

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Dave Worstell

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## Education Foundation for Billings Public Schools

### Who is the Education Foundation for Billings Public Schools

The Education Foundation for Billings Public Schools works in cooperation with Billings Public Schools to give all students the tools they need to reach their greatest potential. Through endowments, scholarships, grants, and specific projects, the Foundation provides financial resources for students and educators to supplement student opportunities in Billings Public Schools. The Foundation serves as a community partner with both our community and schools to support opportunities for volunteers, mentors, and community engagement.

### Vision:

We will be the catalyst for ensuring that students have opportunities for excellence in our community. We leverage investments in a way that creates resilient, successful students and schools that represent the best of public education.



### Values

■ **Equity:** We believe all students should have programming and opportunities to achieve their greatest potential.


■ **Collaboration:** We actively seek out partnerships and support so that we can maximize opportunities and share successes as a community.

■ **Stewardship:** We work with donors and constituents to leverage funds in the best use possible, and pledge transparency so the community maintains unwavering confidence in our foundation.

■ **Advocacy:** We are a community leader in discussions about better public education and school needs. We will support efforts to improve classrooms, and communicate to our community the necessity of having strong schools and successful, well-rounded students.

■ **Responsiveness:** We collaborate with district experts in identifying emerging needs and problems and then leverage community support and philanthropy to creatively engineer solutions to respond quickly to those challenges.





**ROCKY MOUNTAIN COLLEGE CONGRATULATES  
THE GRADUATING CLASS OF 2021 AND  
WELCOMES THE FOLLOWING  
VALEDICTORIANS TO CAMPUS**

<b>Jennifer Bautz</b> Lander High School (WY)	<b>Megan Smith</b> Columbus High School	<b>Landri Paladichuk</b> Ennis High School
<b>Gabriel Varns</b> Helena High School	<b>Taylor Bryan</b> Billings Senior High School	<b>Tanner Hansen</b> Hamilton High School
<b>Isabella Sloan</b> Bigfork High School	<b>Meghan Eiselein</b> Roundup High School	<b>Kaitlyn McColly</b> Hinsdale High School
		<b>Josephine Teegarden</b> Laurel High School

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# SALUTE TO VALEDICTORIANS

# THE AMAZING SHAKE

In an effort to put school lessons on manners and “soft skills” to the test, Travis Niemeyer, Newman Elementary principal at the time, decided to host an event titled “The Amazing Shake.” It’s a competition designed to challenge students in the social constructs of the business world by purposefully practicing soft skills, manners, and leadership, highlighting community involvement and investment. Newman School looked to the Billings business community and leaders to volunteer valuable time to meet, listen, and evaluate student performance in skills ranging from conversational skills to interviewing ability. Soft skills including shaking hands, making eye contact, communicating with confidence and conviction, as well as being poised in challenging situations, were put to task through various phases of the competition. Students had to “work the room” to leave a lasting impression, be in the spotlight and on camera at our local news station, present and pitch ideas to board members, interview with various leaders, create business cards & resumes, and then work at a local business to engage with employees and guests alike.

This year, the “Amazing Shake” carried on through Zoom. While COVID restricted our ability to meet face-to-face, it opened us up to the world. Students met with leaders in Israel, England, Denmark, Illinois, and California - not to mention those leaders right here in Billings. The skills, other than a handshake, remained the same with the addition of learning to meet on a digital platform and gain computer skills.

Through the generous gift of time devoted to our students, community volunteers have shown students the significance of “soft skills” in the community, in business, and in life. Over the last six years of “The Amazing Shake” competition, business and community leaders have nurtured our students’ ability to bring energy and enthusiasm to all they do, be conversational, greet properly using eye contact and being friendly. This program has grown over the years to take place at Newman Elementary, Beartooth, Boulder, Ponderosa, Washington,



McKinley, Eagle Cliffs, and Elder Grove Schools. Each year, participating students from each school shake hands over 1,000 times, interact and learn from 40 to 50

community members, and connect with 25 businesses.

“The Amazing Shake” and the Billings community has helped introduce kids at



these schools to a myriad of careers and a world of possibility and hope. They have inspired our kids and in turn, been inspired by our students’ leadership at each phase.



## BILLINGS CAREER CENTER

### Connecting Students to Careers in Health

**S**tudents taking Biomed classes at the Billings Career Center have many business and community partners lending a hand in their learning. CNA, EMT, Introduction to Surgery, and Medical Interventions are just a few of the classes that are offered as options for Billings students to take as part of the biomed pathway. In addition, students taking these courses have the opportunity to be a part of a Career Student Technical Organization (CSTO) called HOSA-Future Health Professionals. This school year many of the community partners have stepped forward in new, innovative ways to engage the biomed students. Here are some of the examples:

- Montana Bioscience Alliance (a collaboration of many healthcare partners including City College, Rocky Mountain College, MSU Billings, SCL Health St. Vincent Healthcare, Billings Clinic, Eastern Montana AHEC, RiverStone Health, Billings Works and many others) have been meeting and collaborating on ideas to bring virtual job shadow experiences to our students.

- Eastern Montana AHEC recently secured 2 double robots (they are like an iPad on a segway). The Bioscience Alliance has been working with our hospital partners to set these up for job shadows. Med Careers students will initially test the program and then move onto a broader scale with them.

- Big Sky EMS (a partnership between Billings Clinic and SCL Health St. Vincent Healthcare) moved the conference that they normally donate tickets to EMT students to a virtual format so students had access to attend and view these sessions virtually and then the videos were used in class.

- A BNSF Railway grant purchased a 3D printer that allowed students to 3D print masks so EMT students could safely continue their hands on training and assessments working on each other.

- Big Sky EMS and Laurel Ambulance helped set up recordings of interviews with practitioners from both hospitals,



fire department, police department (tactical medicine and forensic) and other allied health fields to be used for career exploration in Med Careers.

- Dr. Holly Basta, Rocky Mountain College, has been a guest presenter multiple times sharing the lessons and research she has been doing with the Howard Hughes Medical Institute.

- City College continues to be a key community partner in hosting EMT national testing and helping to collaborate the clinical hours EMT students need to get with the Fire Department. We are hopeful that we will be able to still do these shadows/clinical observation hours this spring.



- In addition to hosting the clinical hours for our students, the Fire Department also often helps EMT students by sending paramedics to help facilitate the national registry EMT practical exam in late May/June.

- City College is donating space to be the host site for the 2022 State HOSA conference.

- The Bioscience Alliance group along with City College were instrumental in bringing the HOSA Conference to Billings as the host city. Even though we have gone virtual in 2021, they all stepped forward to still assist by helping judge student competitive events, donating as sponsors, and hosting online workshops

for the students. The involvement of these organizations is extra important this year as the HOSA conference will play a bigger role in our classroom.

- Additional funding was used to support all Med Careers students and EMT students who are not part of the HOSA-Future Health Professionals club in the second semester to attend the conference which helps fill the gap as students haven't been able to do their hands-on, experience learning in the hospitals this year. Education partners are putting on seven different workshops that students can choose to attend ranging from hands-on activities like suturing to panels of medical students and experts in the field.



# SALUTE TO VALEDICTORIANS



# BUILD MONTANA

**I**n January 2020, the Montana Contractors Association (MCA), MCA Education Foundation and the Montana Equipment Dealers Association launched a joint action plan and strategy called Build Montana. One of Build Montana's major goals involves a workforce development initiative to increase the pipeline of people entering the construction industry by developing relationships and partnerships between the construction industry and school districts across the state.

In the months after the launch, Adam

Gilbertson and John Hurd from RDO Equipment and Hal Fuglevand from Knife River Corporation began working with SD2 Superintendent Greg Upham and Career Outreach Director Bo Bruinsma on developing Build Montana's first pilot project, an internship for-credit. SD2 students were encouraged to apply if they were interested in building more awareness and having opportunities to explore what the construction industry has to offer.

Six SD2 students were offered and accepted the opportunity to participate in the Build Montana internship program during the Spring

2021 semester with RDO Equipment and Knife River. Through their internship experience, students have a chance to have real-life learning experiences onsite at RDO and on jobsites with Knife River, as well as chances to learn about various aspects of the construction industry and receive credentials recognized within the industry through RDO's online employee learning platform, John Deere University. These students will be uniquely positioned and qualified to apply to entry-level positions within the industry upon completing the internship program and graduating high school.



## DO YOUR PART CAMPAIGN – WORKING TO KEEP SCHOOL DOORS OPEN

Last summer, many parents and students worried and wondered if schools would be able to open in the fall. A group of community members, feeling strongly that school is essential to student health and well-being, decided to take a proactive approach to helping students return to school safely. A team of businesses, organizations, and Billings area schools joined together to create a grassroots campaign designed to remind our community to do its part in keeping healthy and safe so we can keep our school doors open. School provides more than just academics to our students. Being in school is best for their physical, mental, social, and emotional health. For many students, schools are safe places to be while parents/guardians are working. For many families, schools are where kids get healthy meals, access to the internet, and other vital services.

The Do Your Part campaign was born to remind people to “Do Your Part - Keep Our School Doors Open”. The focus of the messaging campaign was simple: Remember the 3 W’s - Watch your distance, Wear a mask, Wash your hands. The campaign emphasized working together to keep us healthy so school doors can remain open and to keep students in the classroom learning, participating in music, sports, and other activities, and preparing educationally for their future.

The Education Foundation for Billings Public Schools, Billings Public Schools, Billings Catholic Schools, MSU Billings, and Rocky Mountain College partnered with SCL Health-St. Vincent Healthcare, RiverStone Health, Billings Clinic, Big Sky EDA, Visit Billings, and Billings Chamber to develop the campaign. The Foundation reached out to partners and supporters to raise funds to create a 12 week campaign that included yard signs, posters, banners, billboards, radio, and a social media presence. Visit Billings and Montana Aware took the lead in reminding visitors to Yellowstone County to do their part to keep



our citizens safe.

The many efforts to keep school doors open this year have paid off. Thank you to the partners who made this campaign possible, and thanks to the Billings community for “Doing Your Part”!





# Building Student Opportunities in CONSTRUCTION

**I**n the fall of 2020, Derrick MacAskill, West High Construction Educator, entered into a conversation with Fish, Wildlife, and Parks about the need for a small Factory Built Housing Unit for AmeriCorps staff at Plenty Coups State Park to live in. The students, under Mr. MacAskill's direction, would construct a small housing unit in the West High Construction Program that could be moved to Plenty Coups State Park in the summer of 2021 to replace the aging trailer currently onsite. Students in Mr. MacAskill's program would work with Fish, Wildlife, and Parks staff to determine the needs of the housing unit. In addition, students would have an opportunity to learn from and work with many construction industry professionals that would be involved in some capacity from the development of the small housing unit design to the finished project. To date, this project has had students learning framing, roofing, siding, flooring, electrical, plumbing, and design to name a few. Students have also had to work with the customer, as well as with inspectors and others who play a role in a top to bottom build. "Ever since Mr. MacAskill reached out to me last fall, I have been heavily involved in this project, first as a student, and now as his teacher's aid. I was learning great skills like home designing, electrical design, planning, budgeting, and working in a team, and now I am able to pass what I learned down to other students. One thing that made this project possible was the fact that Mr. MacAskill has formed numerous connections with multiple trade professionals from insulators to house framers. These trade professionals come in to donate their time and supplies to teach

our class everything we need to know to succeed in completing the project for the Fish, Wildlife, and Parks organization. They also tell students of what the employment path for their trade looks like, and they sometimes even offer us jobs in the field," shared Shaun Honcoop, West High student.

Mr. MacAskill and Bo Bruinsma, BPS Career Outreach Director, are currently working with the Home Builders Association and exploring industry curriculum opportunities and partnerships with local builders. Partnerships with the community to fill needs in our local workforce, as well as provide opportunities for students to explore and learn, are key cornerstones to the success of Mr. MacAskill's program and similar programs in our district.





# SALUTE TO VALEDICTORIANS

## BNSF Railway Excellence in Education Award

The Education Foundation for Billings Public Schools, in partnership with BNSF Railway, is proud to announce the winners of the BNSF Railway Excellence in Education Award for 2021. The Excellence in Education program seeks to recognize teachers who are making a difference in the education of Billings

Public Schools students. Middle and high school students across the district nominated 147 teachers as Distinguished Educators. All of these outstanding educators were invited to apply for the Excellence in Education Award. From those who applied, two teachers were selected for the award by a panel of local business

and education leaders. As Excellence in Education Award winners, these two teachers will each receive a \$2,500 award to use toward continuing education or classroom projects. This is the fourth year BNSF Railway has recognized teachers in Billings Public Schools with this award.



### Paul Asleson

Mr. Paul Asleson began his teaching career in kindergarten and first grade classrooms, where he learned a great deal about early literacy instruction. That early experience with early literacy would prove instrumental when he transitioned to teaching high school German at West High. Mr. Asleson's teaching philosophy is simple: everyone can learn a second language because we all learned our first language! Communication is at the center of Paul's teaching style and he encourages his students to speak, write, listen to, and read in German. Through student's growing proficiency in a second language and culture, their eyes are opened to the wider world, and they may become mindful of other people and perspectives. Mr. Asleson will use his award to expand hands-on learning tools for the classroom such as European money sets, bingo games, city portraits for exploring the German-speaking world, masks and costumes, German flags, maps, game supplies, and even Play-Doh. These tools get students moving and excited to learn.



### Janae Welch - Eagle Cliffs Elementary

Mrs. Janae Welch has been teaching with Billings Public Schools for seven years and is guided by her teaching philosophy of the golden rule with a twist, "teach the way you would want to be taught". Mrs. Welch strives to get to know her 5th grade students at Eagle Cliffs Elementary as individuals and to pick lessons, activities, and hands-on experiments that meet each student's educational and emotional needs. Mrs. Welch is not afraid to innovate and try new tools in the classroom. One such activity Mrs. Welch has incorporated into her classroom is "3D Pen Day" in which students use 3D pens to learn engineering and science. Students not only love the pens but retain the lessons extremely well and can use the pens to learn multiple concepts. Mrs. Welch will use the award to purchase a class set of pens so each student may participate in the 5th grade Engineering Design and Scientific Method proficiency scales. Janae has found the 3D pens to capture the interest of students who might otherwise struggle at school and to engage her students like nothing else she has used before.



## SALUTE TO VALEDICTORIANS

# SILVER LININGS: FINDING THE GOOD IN THIS SCHOOL YEAR

**A**fter 13 years in classrooms, the 2021 senior's academic careers have culminated in a hard, and in many ways disappointing, year. When asked, many students say the hardest part of this school year was the cancellation of so many high school traditions and events. Cancellation of school dances, band concerts, homecoming football games, and other activities left students feeling unconnected and with little to look forward to. The lack of activities and work of always adapting sometimes leaves students feeling unmotivated and overwhelmed. Without question, the Class of 2021 imagined their final year of high school differently.

Yet, despite the many disappointments, Billings students have found themselves in an incredibly fortunate position. Our school doors have been open five days a week to in-person learning the entire school year. Few other comparably sized school districts can say the same thing. At breakneck speed, our school administrators, teachers, and school staff developed a plan for Billings students to have in-person school, and on-line learning for those who needed it. We in Billings are lucky.

This year's seniors have risen to the challenge of the Covid year and proven resilient and creative. A recent conversation with school leaders from Billings High Schools revealed some positive outcomes of this past school year like a gained appreciation for teachers and essential workers in our community, fewer colds, and a chance to slow down and enjoy our families and self-reflect.

Conversations also revealed creative ways students have worked to stay connected and engaged in school and in the community. For instance, student council members at Skyview High School have a tradition of decorating cookies with Heights kindergarteners.



This year, student council members were unable to visit the kindergarten classrooms, so they made the decision to bake and drop-off cookies to kindergarten classes. Handwritten notes are included with the treats offering words of encouragement. Their goal is to make

and deliver cookies to all five Heights elementary schools by the end of the school year. By adapting their usual way of doing things, Skyview student council has connected with more kindergarteners than in previous years and put a smile on more little faces than ever before.

At Senior High, the student council has been busy creating monthly school-wide

scavenger hunts to combat apathy and give students something to look forward to. On the last Friday of every month, themed paper cut-outs are hidden around the school. The winner of the hunt gets a prize. In previous years, Senior students would visit St. John's residents for bi-weekly bingo games. Handwritten letters have replaced the bingo games for now, but have created some long-term relationships and hopes for future visits for more bingo and even to play the piano together. Senior High student council members have also recognized the enormous work put in by the entire school staff this year and awarded the staff "Covid-19 Warriors" awards with BSH Honor Horseshoes, an honor usually only given to five staff per year.

West High student council worked hard this year to create a community of support at school through their "Bear Aware" Campaign. The goals of their campaign were to boost morale and support the second home that school is to many students. Instead of dances, students put their energy into building new trophy cases, painting two new murals, updating the announcement system, and repainting. In place of the Homecoming football game, student council hosted food and clothes drives to support their student family and hope to do it again in the spring. On February 26th, the West High student body gathered the "Bear Family" together in a show of support for their classmates lost in a tragic vehicle accident and reminded each other that they are in this journey together. There is not doubt that the West High Class of 2021 is leaving their school even better than it was before.

A multitude of efforts have been made by students, teachers, and administrators this year to adapt to the many challenges Covid introduced into schools while maintaining connection and a sense of fun. While we wish our students could have a more normal year, we are incredibly proud of this year's graduating seniors. The Class of 2021 has proven that when given lemons, they can make lemonade with the best of them. And cookies.



## DISTINGUISHED EDUCATORS 2021

- |                     |                       |                       |                        |                        |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| ■ Jenna Allie       | ■ Jehremy Felig       | ■ Mark Kane           | ■ Megan Parish         | ■ Rachel Shaw          |
| ■ Raye Alwood       | ■ Megan Fetters       | ■ Joshua Keller       | ■ Tiffany Parish       | ■ Richele Sitton       |
| ■ Monica Anderson   | ■ Kari Field          | ■ Linda Kimmet        | ■ Jod'anne Patrick     | ■ Heather Soelter      |
| ■ Mickel Anderson   | ■ Kristi Fred         | ■ David King          | ■ Steven Patton        | ■ Robert Stanton       |
| ■ Melissa Ash       | ■ Tiffany Frenk       | ■ Justin King         | ■ Celeste Peel         | ■ April Stetler        |
| ■ Paul Asleson      | ■ Kimberly Gelfarth   | ■ Cassandra Kutzler   | ■ Amy Pfeifle          | ■ Carl Strachan        |
| ■ Ryan Asleson      | ■ Paulette Gershmel   | ■ Steve Landerdahl    | ■ Keenan Pfeifle       | ■ Julie Tallman        |
| ■ Linda Auch        | ■ Kristin Grant       | ■ Dean Lapke          | ■ Cori Phillips        | ■ Tammy Taylor         |
| ■ Beth Bakken       | ■ Kaylee Greeley      | ■ Sarah LeVeaux       | ■ Patricia Pinter      | ■ Michael Thomas       |
| ■ Dan Bartsch       | ■ David Green         | ■ Carla Ljunggren     | ■ Lewis Polkow         | ■ Craig Thompson       |
| ■ Tiffany Bell      | ■ Kristi Green        | ■ Stephen Macartney   | ■ Bobbi Poser          | ■ Tracey Tounsley      |
| ■ Reagan Bennett    | ■ Ryan Groshans       | ■ Rebekah Mackey      | ■ Molly Reas           | ■ Sandy Ulmer          |
| ■ Kayla Berry       | ■ Bryan Grummett      | ■ Ross Marquis        | ■ Jacquelyn Redfern    | ■ John Urbaska         |
| ■ Michelle Blakeley | ■ Erin Grummett       | ■ Wendy Martin        | ■ Aimee Reinhardt      | ■ Kyle Vierthaler      |
| ■ Corrie Bowman     | ■ Ramona Gullett      | ■ Denise Maurer       | ■ Kelsey Renier        | ■ Taylor Walk          |
| ■ Theresa Brewer    | ■ Charine Hague       | ■ Darcy McClenahan    | ■ Bert Reyes           | ■ Sarah Walter         |
| ■ Janet Bumgarner   | ■ Joe Halligan        | ■ Tori McCoy          | ■ Anne Rice            | ■ Michael Webb         |
| ■ Thomas Burke      | ■ Anthony Hammond     | ■ Andrea Meyer        | ■ Chelsy Riddle        | ■ Isaiah Welch         |
| ■ Lynda Chase       | ■ Alysha Hanson       | ■ Erin Miller         | ■ Becki Risser         | ■ Janae Welch          |
| ■ Randy Chase       | ■ Kimberly Harrington | ■ Taryn Miller        | ■ Lisa Robinson        | ■ Lyndsay White        |
| ■ Alina Chirrick    | ■ Becky Hatler        | ■ Beau Mulvaney       | ■ Leah Samuelson       | ■ Danielle Whittmeyer  |
| ■ Patrick Choriki   | ■ Dee Hauff           | ■ Christopher Murdock | ■ Lisa Saur            | ■ Steven Wieder        |
| ■ Paul Curnow       | ■ Heather Hayter      | ■ James Noble         | ■ Kalcy Schafer Mallas | ■ Susan Williams-Baker |
| ■ Katie Davey       | ■ Allie Hein          | ■ Myra Nurre          | ■ Amy Schendel         | ■ Julie Winkler        |
| ■ Darci Davis       | ■ Keyleigh Hennessy   | ■ Jana O'Donnell      | ■ Kristina Scheppele   | ■ Mallory Wood         |
| ■ Taylor Dees       | ■ Ryan Hennessy       | ■ Alicia Oberg        | ■ Lars Schmidt         | ■ Leah Yasenak         |
| ■ Vickie Eagle      | ■ Anna Hovland        | ■ Elisa Olson         | ■ Christine Schulze    | ■ Alyssa Ziegler       |
| ■ Shealtiel Eberly  | ■ Chad Jackson        | ■ Kerra Olson         | ■ Teri Schulze         |                        |
| ■ Justin Engle      | ■ Michaela Johnson    | ■ Bridgett Paddock    | ■ Jessica Sery         |                        |
| ■ Tammy Erlenbusch  | ■ Tayler Johnson      | ■ Angela Paris        | ■ Leticia Shaffer      |                        |



# SALUTE TO EDUCATION

## *Congratulations*

**to all  
VALEDICTORIAN  
candidates,  
PLATINUM  
students**

**and all 2021  
GRADUATES!**



**BILLINGS GAZETTE**  
COMMUNICATIONS



## PLATINUM STUDENTS



### Kendra Curtis

**Parents:** Inger and Mike Curtis

**High School:** Billings Senior High School

**Middle School:** Lewis and Clark Middle School

**Elementary School:** Broadwater Elementary School

**Post high school plans:** I will attend Westmont College in Santa Barbara, California, where I plan on majoring in Biology and minoring in Spanish.

**Teacher who's had a positive impact on your**

**education:** I have had so many great teachers over the years, but my 5th and 6th-grade teacher Mrs. Williams has had the greatest positive impact on me because she believed in my abilities and created an exceptional classroom environment.

**Motivation for Platinum Program:** I originally was not planning on participating in the platinum program but my mom encouraged me to do it and I'm glad she did because once I

started working on the project, I realized how meaningful it is.

**Magnum Opus:** My project is centered around the positive impact of youth participation in sports and how sports need to be affordable and accessible to all kids. I researched the benefits of sports, specifically for underprivileged youth, and did a change drive at my school and in the community to raise money for the YMCA's youth sports scholarship fund.



### Evan Kidd

**Parents:** Gene and Melissa Kidd

**High School:** Billings Senior High School

**Middle School:** Riverside Middle School

**Elementary School:** Meadowlark Elementary School

**Post high school plans:** After high school, I'll be attending MSU Bozeman for Conservation Biology. Afterwards, I may pursue a PhD as well, but I have yet to decide. I hope to move

out of Montana and work for the Forestry Service in another state, or a private company if available.

**Teacher who's had a positive impact on your education:** Mrs. Fleek Airne. I had her

once sophomore year and again senior year for English. She has greatly improved my school/work ethic and helped me improve my writing.

**Motivation for Platinum Program:** I was

intending on taking all honors and AP classes regardless, so I decided to participate in the Platinum Program as well.

**Magnum Opus:** For my Magnum Opus project, I wanted to create my own computer for gaming and schoolwork. Along the way, I researched the history of the PC and early computers, their components, and how they work.



### Riley Mays

**Parents:** Todd Mays, Heather McGuire

**High School:** Billings Senior High School

**Middle School:** Will James Middle School

**Elementary School:** Arrowhead Elementary School

**Post high school plans:** At the current time I am undecided on exactly where I will go for college, but I plan on pursuing a career in materials science. And if not materials science

specifically, definitely something in chemistry.

**Teacher who's had a positive impact on your education:** Mrs. Fleek Airne. While it may seem

silly that I chose an English teacher despite going into chemistry, Mrs. Fleek Airne is the teacher that forced me to pull my scattered disorganized self together. Even if I was grumpy about the amount of homework I couldn't be as successful as I am today. Seriously, thank you.

**Motivation for Platinum Program:** Spite, but mostly my parents.

**Magnum Opus:** The topic of my Magnum Opus is poetry. I have always loved poetry and mainly wrote in free verse. In my learning journey I worked to share my love of poetry by writing short booklets to explain certain aspects of poetry like iambic pentameter and rhyme schemes.

Red Willow Photography



# SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

## PLATINUM STUDENTS



### Bryn Turnquist

**Parents:** Darci and Cody Turnquist

**High School:** Billings Senior High School

**Middle School:** Lewis and Clark Middle School

**Elementary School:** Poly Drive Elementary School

**Post high school plans:** I plan to go to college out of state. I will pursue a political science major, possibly a minor in literature or classics, as well as focusing on the pre-law track.

**Teacher who's had a positive impact on your education:** Craig Beals for his professionalism

and enthusiasm. Jenny Fleek Airne for teaching me patience and perseverance. Ryan Gage for expanding my interest in my passions. Darla Williams for being the first person to accept me for who I am, along with encouraging me to follow my dreams no matter what anyone else thinks.

**Motivation for Platinum Program:** I have always been up for a challenge and succeed in what I put my mind to. I am never satisfied with the bare minimum and wanted a way to stretch

myself. Learning is the best food for thought, and participating in the platinum project has provided me with a seven-course meal.

**Magnum Opus:** My topic was poetry. For my project, I composed, self-edited, self-published, and sold a poetry book. My learning stretch for this project was not only academic but also personal. I am not a naturally vulnerable person, and by sharing a book full of my raw thoughts and emotions I was able to tap into this side of my character.



### Dax Wilson

**Parents:** John Wilson and Cassidy/Walter Brophy

**High School:** Billings Senior High School

**Middle School:** Lewis and Clark Middle School

**Elementary School:** Boulder Elementary School

**Post high school plans:** I am going to attend Montana State University in Bozeman. I plan to study in the field of engineering.

**Teacher who's had a positive impact on your education:** Amy Pfeifle because she is

dedicated and motivated me to do my best every day. She cares about the success of each and every one of her students. She helped me to succeed in her class, and continues to offer help today.

**Motivation for Platinum Program:** I have always pushed myself to do my best, and I

knew that the Platinum Program would be challenging, but ultimately something I could do.

**Magnum Opus:** With the help of Vitalant Blood Services, I conducted a blood drive between the three public high schools in Billings called Drops for Life. With the willingness to donate from the community and the high schools, we donated a significant amount of blood to help those in need.



### Dacee Zent

**Parents:** Allison Kipp

**High School:** Billings Senior High School

**Middle School:** Lewis and Clark Middle School

**Elementary School:** Poly Drive Elementary School

**Post high school plans:** I am going to attend Oregon State University and study mechanical engineering. I intend to complete a masters degree in aerospace engineering and go into the

aerospace field.

**Teacher who's had a positive impact on your education:** Mrs. Pfeifle my pre-calc teacher.

She really helped me enjoy math again and made it easy to understand. I loved going to her class and seeing the pun she had on her whiteboard but most of all the huge smile she always had!

**Motivation for Platinum Program:** My mom

told me I was doing the Platinum Program. But after I found out what it was about I became interested.

**Magnum Opus:** I researched the ill effects of illegal bats in high school softball. I am proposing a new standard to MHSA for them to take more precautions when it comes to illegal bats and their usage in high school games.

### Julia McMullen

**Parents:** Matt and Michele McMullen

**High School:** Billings Senior High School



## VALEDICTORIAN CANDIDATES



### Daisy Parnell

**Parents:** Sarah Watson and Dan Parnell  
**High School:** Billings Senior High School  
**Middle School:** Lewis and Clark Middle School  
**Elementary School:** McKinley Elementary School  
**Post high school plans:** After high school, I plan on attending Montana State University to study architecture.  
**Most rewarding or challenging class:** My AP Chemistry class has definitely been my most

challenging class. The class is filled with math and abstract concepts that are often difficult to comprehend without hands-on experience. However, this has also been one of my most rewarding classes because, despite its difficulty, I have been able to succeed in this subject.  
**Teacher who's had a positive impact on your education:** Brett Nichols has made a huge positive influence on me. He was my AP World History teacher my sophomore year,

and he was always willing to let me come into his room after school and talk. Mr. Nichols made me feel like the things I was talking about were important, and that validation was instrumental in helping to build my confidence.  
**Extracurricular activities:** Cross country, student council, senior advocates, track and field, rock climbing, work at the Sassy Biscuit.



Red Willow Photography

### Rosamarie Roccisano

**Parents:** Lynne and Anthony Roccisano  
**High School:** Billings Senior High School  
**Middle School:** Lewis and Clark Middle School  
**Elementary School:** Poly Drive Elementary School  
**Post high school plans:** After high school, I plan on going to the Honors College at MSU Bozeman and majoring in Biological Engineering and/or Pre-Med.  
**Most rewarding or challenging class:** AP

World History was the most challenging and rewarding high school class I ever took. It was my first AP class, so it started out as a challenge. By the end of the year, I loved it, and I still use a lot of what I learned in the class in my day-to-day life.  
**Teacher who's had a positive impact on your education:** Mr. Duneman, an 8th grade P.E. teacher, made the greatest impact on my K-12 education. He is the reason I started working

out for fun, which has become a vital part of the way I manage stress. He also provided me with one of my earlier leadership positions by allowing me to be his TA.  
**Extracurricular activities:** Student Body President, Student Council, Teen Council, Senior Advocates, STEM Society, National Honors Society, Orchestra, Youth Leadership Billings.



### Ethan Wynia

**Parents:** Josh and Kimberly Wynia  
**High School:** Billings Senior High School  
**Middle School:** Riverside Middle School  
**Elementary School:** Blue Creek Elementary School  
**Post high school plans:** I plan on going to MIT and studying Mechanical Engineering  
**Most rewarding or challenging class:** I have taken Spanish for all four years of high school

and it has been both a challenge and a reward. It is just so different than any other class that I have taken. With such a large focus on communication, I have grown bonds between my classmates and my teacher as I struggle for something that did not come naturally for me.  
**Teacher who's had a positive impact on your education:** Mr. Thompson was one of my math teachers in 7th grade and he really supported

me and gave me a lot of opportunities. He knew that I had a lot of potential in me and made sure that I was able to push myself and accomplish what I wanted.  
**Extracurricular activities:** I have played varsity soccer for three years, varsity basketball for two and ran varsity track for all four years of high school. I am also on the executive board for STEM club at Senior High.



## VALEDICTORIAN CANDIDATES & PLATINUM STUDENTS



### Jazmyn Brelje

**Parents:** Cassandra Brelje

**High School:** Billings Skyview High School

**Middle School:** Castle Rock Middle School

**Elementary School:** Bitterroot Elementary School

**Post high school plans:** I plan to attend Rocky Mountain College to start my medical career. I will join their pre-med program then probably travel out of state for my medical schooling. Once I have graduated, I plan to come back and work in the Billings hospitals as a doctor.

**Most rewarding or challenging class:** My AP Language class was the most rewarding. That year I was taught how to write essays that will help me succeed in college, and help me to pass all of my AP tests.

**Teacher who's had a positive impact on your education:** My third grade teacher, Mr. White. He believed in me in more areas than just schooling. He taught us all important lessons that are no longer taught within schools such as cursive writing. I will never forget how he encouraged me to become a runner and to follow my dreams

outside of just doing well in school.

**Extracurricular activities:** Throughout high school I was involved in Key Club, Cheerleading, Pep Band, TSA, National Honors Society, and the Platinum Program.

**Motivation for Platinum Program:** I love to learn and the platinum program allowed me to learn more than what is presented through the schools in a topic that I was interested in.

**Magnum Opus:** I researched tap shoe sounds and what materials should be used to make the clearest and loudest sounds from them.



### Jasen Denowh

**Parents:** Todd and Shauna Denowh

**High School:** Billings Skyview High School

**Middle School:** Castle Rock Middle School

**Elementary School:** Eagle Cliffs Elementary School

**Post high school plans:** After high school, I plan to go to college at Montana State University. I want to work in college, and I will hopefully begin to flip houses during my time there.

**Most rewarding or challenging class:** I take a lot of AP classes, but the most rewarding so far has been AP World History. I had to work really hard to keep up with notes and essays, and I have learned a lot from that experience. I also got a five on the test, which is the highest score

you can get.

**Teacher who's had a positive impact on your education:** Mr. Michels was my Junior Honors Chemistry teacher, and his class was definitely difficult. One thing I appreciated learning from him was that sometimes you fail, and while it isn't always possible to redo what you fail at, it is always possible to work hard and recover what has been lost.

**Extracurricular activities:** I have participated in Varsity Soccer, where I served as the Captain, National Honors Society, where I am the President, I work at Tailwind Property Management, and I coach for Billings United Soccer Club.

**Motivation for Platinum Program:** I wanted to be in Platinum Program to test myself. It is one of the highest honors that is recognized at our school, and I always try to push myself. It also helped that the program fits perfectly with my courses, and ultimately allowed me to qualify.

**Magnum Opus:** The goal of my Magnum Opus is to help people in need gain access to electronics such as computers. The project has both benefitted and been harmed by COVID-19 because more than ever people were in need of technology, but everything has been shut down and it has been difficult to connect with those whom my project aims to serve.



### Stayce Mockel

**Parents:** Jenny and Rudy Mockel

**High School:** Billings Skyview High School

**Middle School:** Castle Rock Middle School

**Elementary School:** Eagle Cliffs Elementary School

**Post high school plans:** I hope to attend Oregon State University in Corvallis and major in Bio-engineering. Later, I intend to pursue a graduate program in Biomedical Engineering to aid me in undertaking a career of designing and developing medical devices and prostheses.

**Most rewarding or challenging class:** My most challenging class, AP Physics, was also my most rewarding class. It taught me to be resilient and develop problem solving skills when things are

difficult. It also opened my mind to a new study of science that now I want to explore further into.

**Teacher who's had a positive impact on your education:** Mrs. Kenny. She was not only a phenomenal teacher, always invigorating in class and pushing each individual student to achieve greatness, but she was also someone I could spend hours talking to about anything and everything. I am so grateful for the time I got with her in and out of class. She is an amazing role model and a huge inspiration to me.

**Extracurricular activities:** I was part of the Falcon Fusion Dance Team all 4 years and was Captain my senior year. I also danced at studios for 12 years. I was a debater as a freshman, and

then later returned to forensics as a senior to do speech. I was part of National Honors Society, the Platinum Program, sisters closet, and student council. In summer I was a camp mentor.

**Motivation for Platinum Program:** I was motivated to participate in the Platinum Program to delve further into the topics and issues that I care about. Additionally, the program provides me with many teacher mentors to reach out to and additional opportunities to broaden my knowledge.

**Magnum Opus:** The topic of my Magnum Opus is the history and importance of dance studios and spaces, and how the sport has grown its presence around the world.



## PLATINUM STUDENTS



### Elizabeth Berns

**Parents:** Nicole Berns

**High School:** Billings Skyview High School

**Middle School:** Castle Rock Middle School, Medicine Crow Middle School

**Elementary School:** Sandstone Elementary School

**Post high school plans:** I'm going to college in Montana to get a PhD in Psychology.

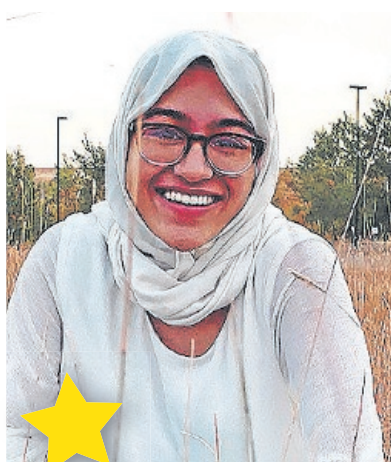
**Teacher who's had a positive impact on your**

**education:** Bridgett Paddock. This incredible woman is powerful, inspiring, and courageous and she cares about her kids so much. She has helped me through so much, with not just school but with my home life as well. I can not thank her enough for what she has done for me.

**Motivation for Platinum Program:** Helping the community with mental health while bringing the community is what is motivating

me throughout this project. Also showing the hard work that I have made throughout the four years at Skyview and being able to put it in a project is also motivating me the most.

**Magnum Opus:** My topic is looking toward a better future of those who are experiencing themselves or others who have depression, anxiety, or looking toward suicide with a community based Hope Tree.



### Safira Khan

**Parents:** Qasim and Bagas Khan

**High School:** Billings Skyview High School

**Middle School:** Castle Rock Middle School  
**Elementary School:** Sandstone, Poly, and Rose Park Elementary

**Post high school plans:** I plan to attend the University of Montana in the Fall of 2021 with a presidential scholarship. These plans may be subject to change as college admission decisions are being released, but regardless of where I choose to go I'm very excited for what the future holds!

**Teacher who's had a positive impact on your**

**education:** Darla Williams, or Mrs. Williams. She was hands down what shaped my whole entire educational experience. For 5th and 6th grade I was chosen to attend the Gifted and Talented Program full-time and she was the one who taught the class. I was taught to reach for the stars and be as creative as possible. I owe all my accomplishments to her.

**Motivation for Platinum Program:** I've always been studious especially after being a part of the Gifted and Talented program with Mrs. Williams. We used to always do "Passion Projects" and that's exactly what the

Platinum Program is all about—getting the best education you can, challenging yourself, and breaking boundaries to create a project in something you take interest in.

**Magnum Opus:** Writing a book as a fiction web series based on a modern take on Progressivism in Europe, and the struggle for progressive rights in the 19th century. Although the book premise itself is witty and humored, the research behind it focuses on how the stigma around this has progressed and changed to today - but also how it has stayed the same.

## VALEDICTORIAN CANDIDATES



### Natalie Beck

**Parents:** Robert and Bridget Beck

**High School:** Billings Skyview High School

**Middle School:** Castle Rock Middle School  
**Elementary School:** Eagle Cliffs Elementary School

**Post high school plans:** I plan to attend the United States Coast Guard Academy to pursue a degree in STEM while also continuing my softball career.

**Most rewarding or challenging class:** Mrs.

Kenny's AP World History class my sophomore year. That was the first time that I put in a lot of extra work outside of class to achieve the result I wanted. I would be up until all hours of the night taking notes. I wanted to do well for myself and for Mrs. Kenny so I put in the hard work and it was a very challenging and rewarding experience.

**Teacher who's had a positive impact on your education:** Mr. Engle was my band teacher in

seventh and eighth grade. He genuinely cared about everyone in his class and wanted them to be the best they could be and though his class was fun, it was often difficult. Mr Engle was the first teacher I had who not only believed in his students but also challenged them and pushed them to be better.

**Extracurricular activities:** Softball, Soccer, Band, Youth Group, Reading Rocks, National Honor Society.



# WEST HIGH SCHOOL

## VALEDICTORIAN CANDIDATES & PLATINUM STUDENTS



### Avery Kimmel

**Parents:** Kim and Corey Kimmel

**High School:** Billings West High School

**Middle School:** Will James Middle School

**Elementary School:** Arrowhead Elementary School

**Post high school plans:** I will attend Purdue University to study chemical engineering and potentially continue on to medical school.

**Most rewarding or challenging class:** AP Physics 2 has proved to be challenging, as it has forced me to visualize concepts that are not concrete and has pushed me out of my comfort

zone. In the face of this challenge, however, I have grown to really enjoy physics.

**Teacher who's had a positive impact on your education:** While I have had many inspirational teachers, Mr. Marquis, my fifth-grade teacher, had an immense impact on my education. Not only did he have a fun classroom, but he recognized potential in me and gave me the confidence to succeed.

**Extracurricular activities:** Soccer, orchestra, piano, Business Professionals of America, Key Club, and Ski Club.

**Motivation for Platinum Program:** The Platinum Program allowed me to continue challenging myself with rigorous classes and complete a rewarding project at the end of my high school career. I was able to apply the knowledge I have gained throughout high school to my outside interests, which is a very important part of education.

**Magnum Opus:** I organized and administered a youth soccer camp with the goal of it becoming an annual event benefiting the West High girls soccer program.



### Jack Wyss

**Parents:** Curt and Lisa Wyss

**High School:** Billings West High School

**Middle School:** Will James Middle School

**Elementary School:** Arrowhead Elementary School

**Post high school plans:** I plan to attend Harvard University and major in Government. I want to study abroad and eventually earn a law degree.

**Most rewarding or challenging class:** AP Chemistry was both extremely challenging and rewarding. Being a humanities/social sciences student, it was sometimes difficult to immerse myself in the heavy math and science of the subject. At the end of the year, however, I could name an organic compound like nobody's business.

**Teacher who's had a positive impact on your education:** My English teacher and debate coach, Steve Macartney, has been a key figure in my educational development. Mr. Macartney taught me how to think critically, and his class would often transcend the literature we read to examine politics, philosophy, history, and everything in between. He challenged us every day and is a great role model for students.

**Extracurricular activities:** I played football and was in speech and debate all four years. I also ran track through my junior year. I recently landed a lead role in the school production of the Mary Poppins musical.

**Motivation for Platinum Program:** The Platinum Program gave me the opportunity

to express my creative writing instincts. I've spent a lot of my free time jotting down ideas and writing stories, but I've never had the opportunity to complete a work of fiction. I decided to join the program to learn more about myself through my writing and to disseminate my thoughts into words.

**Magnum Opus:** I am writing a collection of interconnected short stories in the Western genre, titled "Ghosts Out on the Prairie." The book tells the stories of people living in Montana during the end of the frontier age and mixes elements of horror, fantasy, and the revisionist Westerns of the 1970s. I was inspired by both Stephen King and Clint Eastwood.

## PLATINUM STUDENTS



### Allison Bullman

**Parents:** Jon Bullman and Susan Petersen

**High School:** Billings West High School

**Middle School:** Will James Middle School

**Elementary School:** Arrowhead Elementary School

**Post high school plans:** Being a very indecisive person, I do not have any exact plans. I'm thinking about going to an in-state college with an undecided major. Because of my love for animals and interest in the beauty of other people, I may go into a field where I could work with and help others everyday.

**Teacher who's had a positive impact on**

**your education:** Mr. Schmidt, who teaches math at West High, ironically wasn't even one of my teachers. Instead of him being my teacher, he was my javelin coach for the track team at West. He has not only taught me how to be determined in every aspect of high school, academics or not, but he has taught me, by example, how to be a great leader and role model.

**Motivation for Platinum Program:** My sister, Mikayla, has been the biggest motivation in my participation in the Program. She also did the program and excelled academically. For us

two, it has always been a "rivalry" of who can be better and do more, in the most loving way possible. This rivalry and her endless amount of determination are the reasons I decided to participate.

**Magnum Opus:** My "Magnum Opus" for the Platinum Program is that I am building a cello, with the help of my cello teacher, to donate to the Arts Without Boundaries Program. They've been a huge part of my own school music career, so by giving them one more higher quality cello, other students can hopefully have a chance to learn to love music just as much I have.





## Jordan Dervishian

**Parents:** James Dervishian, Lana Dervishian

**High School:** Billings West High School

**Middle School:** Will James Middle School

**Elementary School:** Arrowhead Elementary School

**Post high school plans:** I plan to attend MSU in Bozeman to pursue a Mechanical Engineering degree with a minor in Aerospace Engineering.

**Teacher who's had a positive impact on your**

**education:** Kari Field has made the biggest impact on my education. Mrs. Field was my Honors Chemistry teacher Sophomore year, and it was my favorite class from K-12. She was able to demonstrate how a difficult topic can be taught in a fun and easy way.

**Motivation for Platinum Program:** I planned to take many honors and AP classes in high school, so joining the Platinum Program

encouraged me to complete even more. The project also provided a unique challenge and learning experience.

**Magnum Opus:** Since I plan to enter the field of engineering, I chose a project that furthered my knowledge in electrical and mechanical engineering. I chose to partially restore a 1969 Mustang by focusing on fixing the mechanical and electrical issues.



## Aleisha Dutton

**Parents:** Kurt and Karen Dutton

**High School:** Billings West High School

**Middle School:** Lewis and Clark Middle School

**Elementary School:** Miles Avenue Elementary School

**Post high school plans:** I plan to attend Montana State University in Bozeman to obtain a master's degree in architecture and become a

licensed architect.

**Teacher who's had a positive impact on your education:** My fifth-grade teacher, Mr. Dyba, greatly influenced my passion for math, inspiring my future course selections and career path.

**Motivation for Platinum Program:** In high school, I wanted a special challenge that

motivated me to reach my full potential in coursework, and the platinum project would provide me with real-world experience.

**Magnum Opus:** Inspired by my interest in photography, the purpose of my project is to learn more about how business and marketing would help me establish my own photography business.



## Kevin Halsey

**Parents:** Greg Halsey

**High School:** Billings West High School

**Middle School:** Will James Middle School

**Elementary School:** Meadowlark Elementary School

**Post high school plans:** Firstly I plan on finally sleeping in! Jokes aside, I plan to attend the University of Northern Colorado or the University of Colorado Boulder. I will

be pursuing Music Performance, as well as Genocide/Holocaust Education.

**Teacher who's had a positive impact on your education:** Mrs. Carol Clapper. She was my Kindergarten teacher, and we've stayed in contact throughout the rest of my public school career. She was there from learning basic arithmetic to my Junior research paper, and I wouldn't have accomplished this without her.

**Motivation for Platinum Program:** I was curious as to what else I wanted to do with my life, and I saw it as an avenue that I could explore my other interests and be rewarded. Also I get a fancy chord at graduation ;)

**Magnum Opus:** Racism in Yellowstone County: The Stories and History of Racism in Yellowstone County, its Impact, and How to Use Your Voice Against It.



# WEST HIGH SCHOOL



## Kellan Moore

**Parents:** Krista and Cory Moore

**High School:** Billings West High School

**Middle School:** Will James Middle School

**Elementary School:** Central Heights Elementary School

**Post high school plans:** Attend Montana State University and study Mechanical Engineering

**Teacher who's had a positive impact on your education:** Eric Anderson at the Career Center.

I've been at the Career Center all 4 years and his engineering classes were the perfect balance of learning and independence. The NASA HUNCH program that he incorporates in Aerospace Engineering is one of the most enjoyable programs I've ever been involved in. **Motivation for Platinum Program:** Nobody besides myself, I wanted to be among the best kids at West High and do a project that

showcased my talents and abilities.

**Magnum Opus:** The topic for my Magnum Opus was a family car. I'm partially restoring a 1950 Ford F-1 that belonged to my Great Grandpa and that had been sitting in a building for the last 10 years. It's a really special car to my family and especially my Grandpa who spent a lot of time in it when he was growing up.



## Shane Stauffer

**Parents:** Rick and Karla Stauffer

**High School:** Billings West High School

**Middle School:** Will James Middle School

**Elementary School:** Boulder Elementary School

**Post high school plans:** I plan on attending college (still weighing my school choices) and majoring in Biological Engineering. Also, I plan to complete Pre-Med coursework to prepare myself for medical school after my undergraduate education. I am hopeful I can continue to do the outdoor activities I have enjoyed while living in this great state.

**Teacher who's had a positive impact on your education:** Mr. Charles Swarm has had the greatest impact on my K-12 education. He was one of my cross country coaches during my four years of high school, and I had the opportunity to take his Human Anatomy class this year. He is willing to provide help in the classroom and at practice, and he has helped solidify my interest in the medical field.

**Motivation for Platinum Program:** My motivation for participating in the Platinum Program was the sense of satisfaction that comes with completing all of the requisites

for the program itself. Knowing I could take 14-16 Honors/Advanced Placement classes and complete a capstone project proved to me that I have the ability to do anything I put my mind to.

**Magnum Opus:** My Magnum Opus involves creating an injury prevention guide for the West High Cross Country Team. I ran cross country each year of my high school career, so this project has been very important to me. The guide includes information and input from health professionals on common running injuries and how to treat and prevent them.



## Olivia Tyrrell

**Parents:** Megan Littlefield and Benjamin Tyrrell

**High School:** Billings West High School

**Middle School:** Will James Middle School

**Elementary School:** Arrowhead Elementary School

**Post high school plans:** I plan to go to college to pursue a major in Theatre, with a focus on Musical Theatre, and a degree in Human Communication Sciences and Disorders. I then plan to continue on to graduate school to receive a master's in Speech-Language Pathology. I am interested in finding ways to connect performance with communication and

language development.

**Teacher who's had a positive impact on your education:** The teacher who made the greatest positive impact on me is my drama teacher, Myra Nurre. She taught me to be confident in who I am, but always be kind and respectful to others, no matter what. She also taught me that hard work is incredibly important, but there's no such thing as perfection and that it's ok to give ourselves grace and room to grow.

**Motivation for Platinum Program:** I joined the Platinum Program because I recognized

that it would expose me to experiences beyond the traditional high school curriculum. I knew it would challenge me in ways, both academically and personally, to move beyond my comfort zone and help me to grow into a more well-rounded student and person.

**Magnum Opus:** The topic of my Magnum Opus is how interactively reading with young children affects their language development and future literacy skills. And how this strategy of caregivers reading with infants and toddlers can be used as a tool to close the socioeconomic literacy gap.



## VALEDICTORIAN CANDIDATES



### Mikayla McClintock

**Parents:** Paul and Janet McClintock

**High School:** Billings West High School

**Middle School:** Trinity Lutheran School

**Elementary School:** Trinity Lutheran School

**Post high school plans:** I plan to attend Washington State University and major in biochemistry. This is to achieve the ultimate goal of becoming a veterinarian, with as little college debt as possible.

**Most rewarding or challenging class:** The most challenging class was AP chemistry in

my junior year. Honors chem. was difficult, and AP took it to the next level. It required a lot of hard work and dedication to earn the A that I desired and the passing score on the AP test. There are too many classes that I consider rewarding, such as genocide, psychology, and yes, chemistry.

**Teacher who's had a positive impact on your education:** I adore all of my teachers, but the one that has made the greatest impact is Rob Stanton. He taught my genocide class, which

really opened my eyes to the world around me. He did not sugar coat anything. At the same time he encouraged personal growth and helped me come out of my shell a little more. His class helped me become a more mature person.

**Extracurricular activities:** There have been several extracurriculars I have done all four years. These being cross country and track. Along with those I participated in Business Professionals of America the last two years.



### Sarah Meron

**Parents:** Rick and Mary Meron

**High School:** Billings West High School

**Middle School:** Canyon Creek School

**Elementary School:** Canyon Creek School

**Post high school plans:** I am enlisted for 6 years active duty in the United States Air Force.

**Most rewarding or challenging class:** My most rewarding and challenging class would probably be Chemistry. It has always been

really fun being able to learn complicated scenarios and try to imagine chemical bonds and equations. It is rewarding when you spend a lot of time working to solve a problem and can see it play out in the lab.

**Teacher who's had a positive impact on your education:** Mrs. Field, she has always supported me and worked to teach me in alternate ways if I didn't understand something

the first time. I loved being able to go to her class each and every day because it was always a surprise on what we would be learning. I could never go a day without smiling and laughing in that class.

**Extracurricular activities:** Cross country- 4 years, Track - 2 years, Yearbook Club- 4 years, Ski Club - 3 years, Key Club - 4 years, National Honors Society- 1 year.





## Isabelle Erickson

**Parents:** Ryan and Shelley Erickson

**High School:** Billings Central Catholic High School

**Middle School:** Broadview Public Schools

**Elementary School:** Broadview Public Schools

**Post high school plans:** After high school, I plan to attend Carroll College on a basketball scholarship. While at Carroll, I will be a part of the Pre-Medicine program. After graduating from Carroll, I intend to apply to medical school

and later become a dermatologist.

**Most rewarding or challenging class:** AP Biology has been the most challenging, yet rewarding class that I have taken in high school. The class taught me the importance of preparation, organization, and hard work. It strengthened my love for science and helped me get a head-start on my future in biology.

**Teacher who's had a positive impact on your education:** Shane Fairbanks, my junior year

U.S. History and English teacher, has made the greatest impact on my K-12 education. Mr. Fairbanks always taught with so much enthusiasm, and he did everything in his power to make his class memorable and fun.

**Extracurricular activities:** Volleyball, Basketball, Student Council, Pursue Excellence, Billings Youth Leadership, 4-H Club, Excel Club, Lumen Christi, Youth Group, National Honors Society, Kids Connecting with Kids.





## WHY STEM? WHY NOT?!

ExxonMobil helps build capacity for future workforce

**W**henver conversations in Billings venture toward real-world STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) experiences, often times an ExxonMobil reference is in the mix.

That's because employees at the ExxonMobil Billings refinery are fully engaged in STEM outreach and activities in various venues. Through active collaboration and relevant experiences, ExxonMobil brings likeminded STEM enthusiasts together to build capacity for students who are thirsty for activities that matter for future workforce opportunities.

Partnering with other businesses, educators and non-profits, ExxonMobil employees have developed and stewarded STEM Yellowstone, a unique program to engage kids in a hands-on and relevant fashion. Since inception in 2015, those regular STEM activities has provided influential events for nearly 2,000 kids with nearly 100 volunteers from around the community.

Subject areas have included health and medicine; coding and computer science; energy and engineering; and environmental science.

Even during a pandemic year, the organization found a way to safely involve families in an outdoor-based, geology-focused activity.

STEM Yellowstone partners have embraced the notion that work-based learning is in the eyes – and hands – of the beholder. Together, they know that passion can be found any time, any place... and yes, even outside of school hours.

Students are encouraged to be fearless while business/industry partners are urged to be bold in a new integrated approach to learning and training. The real-world application of math, chemistry, physics, engineering, and computer science has a major impact on feeding local workforce needs.

Whether it involves connecting kids to shadowing an engineer or enabling understanding pump operations, a



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commitment to STEM outreach is aimed to:

- Foster STEM ecosystems that unite all stakeholders across the community to drive talent toward good paying STEM jobs.
- Erase artificial boundaries between “traditional” career/tech education and between formal and informal STEM education in terms of impact assessment, credentialing and professional development to better align education with employer needs.
- Increase diversity and inclusivity in STEM fields (women, minorities, persons with disabilities and in rural areas.)







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*Teachers, Parents & Students*

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