

Salute to

VALEDICTORIAN CANDIDATES &
PLATINUM STUDENTS

CLASS OF

2023



BILLINGS GAZETTE
COMMUNICATIONS

EDUCATION FOUNDATION
BILLINGS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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SALUTE TO VALEDICTORIANS

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Education Foundation Mission

The Education Foundation for Billings Public Schools provides support to educators and students through philanthropy, connection, and collaboration. We strive to give all students the tools they need to reach their greatest potential and to develop into engaged and productive citizens.

Values

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

EDUCATION FOUNDATION BILLINGS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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.

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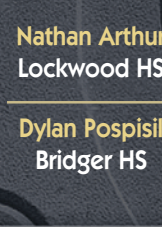

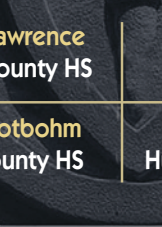
The Education Foundation for Billings Public Schools would like to thank the sponsors that make our many programs possible. From feeding food insecure youth to providing scholarships and classroom opportunities, our sponsors are driving excellence in education.


Our 2023 Salute to Education sponsors allow us to celebrate another successful school year and the synergy between schools and businesses that create opportunity for students.

Thank you to our title sponsor, Billings Clinic, and to the following sponsors for making the Salute event possible!



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 Dylan Pospisil Bridger HS	 Natalie Notbohm Custer County HS	 Kathryn Hayes Huntley Project HS	 Hannah Christman Huntley Project HS



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SALUTE TO VALEDICTORIANS

It Takes a Village

As the 2022 - 2023 school year is coming to a close, I look back with gratitude and admiration for our 'village' of educators and the community supporting Billings Public Schools. I'm grateful for school staff and administrators who put their all into their work, for our donors and volunteers who keep our programs turning, and the students who make our jobs worthwhile.

The 2023 Salute to Education offers a moment to pause and celebrate the students who have achieved valedictorian status as well as platinum students from not only Senior, West and Skyview, but also our friends at Central High School. These students worked incredibly hard, and on behalf of the EFBPS Board of Directors, we congratulate all of you.

We're also thrilled to celebrate business and community investment into the Billings Public School system (BPS). The Foundation is proud to create pathways for philanthropy and community engagement in BPS student achievement and opportunity. Likewise, we are excited to watch the Future Ready program flourish and create an abundance of opportunity for students.

The mission of the Education Foundation for Billings Public Schools is to provide support to educators and students through philanthropy, connection and collaboration. We strive to give all students the tools they need to reach their greatest potential and to develop into engaged and productive citizens. This mission guides us to support a host of student needs ranging from critical need-based support through secondary education



and teacher scholarships. The Foundation is driven to help students stay in school through Backpack Meals and School Pantry programs, the Angel Fund and Little Angel Fund, and the SD2 Homeless Student Program. These programs help alleviate the stress of unmet basic needs, allowing students to progress toward graduation and brighter futures.

EFBPS is honored to offer 22 student scholarships for those seeking continuing education, as well as 8 educator scholarships to help instructors continue to evolve. And, in 2023 we're giving away over \$100,000 in Classroom Grants, a program which not only offers enriched learning opportunities, but motivates teachers and keeps students enthusiastic about learning. For 20 years, we've help children keep their summertime reading skills sharp through Reading Rocks and we proudly raise over \$150,000 for schools through Saturday Live and the SUV Raffle.

This work doesn't happen in a vacuum. Without donors like you, without the support of parents, students and businesses, and without a steadfast and dedicated SD2 administration, the Education Foundation could not do the important work we do. Hundreds of volunteers make our programs and events possible. We are eternally grateful for your support.



On behalf of the EFBPS Board of Directors, thank you. And, to our 2023 graduating seniors, congratulations. We are incredibly proud of each of you.

Gratefully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kelly McCandless".

Kelly McCandless
Executive Director



VIEW: Join the Foundation in supporting student and educator success. Donate today!

2021-2022 School Year Impact By the Numbers:

- \$80,000 in Classroom Grants, 160 Classrooms funded
- 6,060 books given away during Reading Rocks
- \$30,000 inspiring and appreciating teachers through One Class at a Time
- 10 Educator Scholarships Awarded
- 27 Student Scholarships Awarded
- 26 food pantries supported
- \$78,971 raised for more than 45 schools, groups and teams through the SUV Raffle
- \$62,474 raised for 50 schools, teams, and groups through Saturday Live
- Providing Backpack Meals and nutrition to 600 students per week
- Recognized 2,200 SD2 staff through the Educator Appreciation Campaign

Save the Date: Upcoming Foundation Events

Reading Rocks: June 12 to July 20, 2023

SUV Raffle: beginning July 2023

31st Annual Saturday Live: September 23, 2023

Educator for a Day: November 7, 2023 (tentative)



SALUTE TO VALEDICTORIANS

Winners of the 2023 BNSF Railway Excellence in Education Awards

The Education Foundation for Billings Public Schools, in partnership with BNSF Railway, is proud to announce the winners of the 2023 BNSF Railway Excellence in Education Awards. The Excellence in Education Program seeks to recognize teachers who are making a difference in the education of Billings Public Schools students. As Excellence in Education Award winners, these two teachers will receive a \$2,500 grant to use toward continuing education or classroom projects.

Ms. Abbey Kochel, a Geography teacher at Castle Rock Middle School, strives to be a high-caliber educator by being a strong role model to her students and creating connections. In Ms. Kochel's classroom, students are encouraged to be active participants with the hope that active learners will become active citizens in their communities. Ms. Kochel plans to use the BNSF Excellence Award to purchase a 3-D printer for her 7th grade geography classroom. With the printer, students will 3-D print the topography of continents, the landscape of a major city, or even a famous man-made landmark. Printed maps of the state of Montana will enrich Montana history studies like learning about the terrain the Plains Indians traveled while following the buffalo herds. The printer provides a hands-on learning tool that engages multiple learning types and will be used by hundreds of students for years to come. With Ms. Kochel's help, students in her classroom will gain unique perspectives into landscapes and history using a 21st century learning tool.

Mrs. Angie Langeliers has spent twenty years in music education working with children preschool age through high school. She is driven by her belief that music should be available to all students "in a way that fosters



Abbey Kochel

community, kindness, and allows them to see success as they develop in the fundamentals of music." Mrs. Langeliers holds her students to high standards while creating a safe environment to develop socially and musically. With the BNSF Award funding, Mrs. Langeliers will provide her students an opportunity to develop their music reading skills

through the use of electronic pianos. The pianos reinforce student's ability to read music, rather than simply listening to the music to mimic a song. With a classroom set of electronic pianos, or the Piano Lab, students will be able to compose music, to progress independently as they gain skills, and to have an active role in becoming

self-sufficient musicians. Research shows that developing piano skills helps students understand patterns and rhythm at deeper levels, benefiting them in many aspects of learning including math, reading, and science. The Will James Piano Lab will benefit 200 students each year, developing skills for a lifetime of learning.



Angie Langeliers

SALUTE TO VALEDICTORIANS

2023 "DISTINGUISHED EDUCATORS"

Nominated by BPS students for their exceptional classroom leadership

Monique Cunningham	Todd Nevin	Samuel Paterson	Sandy Ulmer	Janae Welch	Justin King
Christine Deshaw	Kimberly Potter	Kiley Goodheart	Leah Yasenak	Tessa Stambaugh	Miriam Jordan
Candice Malia	Kimberly Lane	William Baxter	Colin Welsh	Kimberly MacDonald	Kristina Bruski
Callie Baker	Kristina Scheppele	Kristin Grant	Sarah Leveaux	Emily Houston-Wagner	Jenny Toews
Jenna Appel	Becky Hatler	Justin Engle	Leah Yasenak	Julie Dawkins	Bryce Baker
Marissa Cunningham	Linda Kimmet	Holly Clemow	Amanda Todd	Amber Parisien	Beau Mulvaney
Laura Tieszen	Amanda Maddox	Paulette Gershmel	Ryan Nafts	Joshua Anderson	Matthew Rockeman
Brianna Gleason	Desarae Delting	Kourtnei McHugh	Ann Marie Guelff	Jenny Lueck	Lance Edward
Alissa Gray	Kristin Hersel	Paula Foreman	Shelby Guelff	Kelly Cook	Samantha Drange
Kristen Zalenski	Julie Dannenberg	Courtney Niemeyer	Rebecca Egan	Gina Joyce	Paul Asleson
Janna Lind	Jana O'Donnell	Kali Miller	Kristen Truscott	Jodi Ervin	William Battaiola
Becki Risser	Michelle Holland	Darla Williams	Amy Westrope	Eric Wendt	Anita Cornwall
Shannon Moore	Corrie Bowman	Karson Kidgell	Kassidy Conlon	Connor Silliker	Mathew Hall
Michelle Blakeley	Mark Venner	Megan Lind	Kimberly Harrington	Luke Epperson	Myra Nurre
Wendy Martin	Kerra Olson	Chelsi Podoll	Haley Hert	Jennifer Fleek Airne	Maureen Ladd
Jessica Sery	Ashley Olson	Emily Winslow	Alyssa Elm	Richelle Sitton	Tori Wardrip
Crystal Prolo	Casey Crowe	Erin Sutherland Evans	Darcy McClenahan	Catherine Blee	Kate Delavan
Melissa Ash	Eric Buer	Rebecca Avery	Mark Kane	Jessica Roan	Whitney Pierce
Nicole Redmond	Callie Delapp	Dean Lapke	Keenan Pfeifle	TJ Umemoto	Bobby Anderson
Celeste Peele	Raven Pantoja	Jod'anne Patrick	Alicia Oberg	Jennifer Biersdorf	Kari Field
Raye Alwood	Jennifer Huppert	Jase Oriet	Tara Reiners	Amy Pfeifle	Olivia Bedford
Mariko Trudell	Daniel Kieckbusch	Joseph Dwyer	Norma Romersa	Jacob Music	Jordan McMeekin
Craig Thompson	Danielle Amundsen	Madalyn Stacey	Donna Albaugh	Douglas Brakke	David Green
Mitchell Harmon	Spencer Anderson	Nels Jensen	Sarah Walter	Jacoby Holte	Michaela Johnson
Daniel Kukes	Janelle Bermes	Anna Rice	Brittany DiGiallonardo	Dan Bartsch	Angie Langeliers
Michael Thomas	Kayla Berry	Ross Marquis	Linda Auch	Jodi Stugelmeyer	Charine Hague
Allison Cassie	Aimee Reinhardt	Teri Schulze	April Stetler	Heather Peers	Valeria Long
Alina Chirrick	Kaneesha Beeman	Jamie Jarvis	Danielle Whittmeyer	Luke Epperson	Erin Curnow
Jennifer Peter	Jessica Lee	Adam Johnson	Tiffany Bell	Sabrina Mitchell	Erin Grummett
Clinton Mainwaring	Mandi Hennessy	Travis Frickel	Zoie Hanley	Michael Mintz	Kelsey Renier
Kelly Davis	Wanda Morales	Robin Luft	Desiree' Caskey	Timothy Ottman	James Noble
Ryan Hennessy	Carl Strachan	Matthew Feeley	Nicole Delcamp	Craig Beals	Kristin Kailey
Anna Hanna	Rebecca Ericksen	Amy Leffler	Caitlyn Dimock	Erica Hartman	Jessica Heier
Thomas Burke	Abigail Kochel	Danielle Kieckbusch	Tamera Erickson-Grewell	Julie Lynch	Sheena Wald
Maggie Daly	Isaiah Welch	Cori Phillips	Sarah Spangle	Roy McKenney	Chad Nebel
Curtis Fox	Allison Ferderer	Kaylee Greeley	Julie Smith	Brandon Quesenberry	Rachel Cole
Linda Kimmet	Katrina Davies	Annie Rice	Nathan Reaver	Yalita Nemecek	Jessica Kugler
Mary Beth Krogh	Jennifer Shaw	Michael Qualls	Jordan Pehler	Patrick Choriki	Kristopher Cummings
Kristina Scheppele	Sara Lind	Jacob Pertuit	Angela Schanz-Roe	Elizabeth Heine	Roxanne Jeppeson
Leah Samuelson	Randy Chase	Sydney Holte	Deena Bartsch	Kamee Love	Hunter Jones
Patrick Kenney	Alyssa Espinoza	Janae Bjorgum	Heather Weber	Billy Hurt	
Kimberly Lane	Kathi Hoyt	Christina Knot	Jill Sanders	Bridgett Paddock	
Julie Deschane	John Fitzgerald	Paula Pederson	Darci Davis	Stacy Brensdal	
Sheila Figg	Joseph Astle	Shannon George	Deborah Whitney	Lewis Polkow	

SALUTE TO VALEDICTORIANS



READING ROCKS

For nineteen years, summertime and Reading Rocks have gone hand-in-hand and 2023 will be no exception! This summer, join the Education Foundation and our volunteer team of Reading Mentors for the 20th year of reading with kids in parks. Reading Rocks is a free reading program designed to prevent children's loss of reading skills while away from school. This summer's program will take place in parks across Billings including Castle Rock Park, Pioneer Park, Terry Park, Central Park, and more. Reading Rocks is held in conjunction with Billings Public Schools Free Summer Lunch Program. Children up to 18 years of age may grab a free lunch and come join the fun at Reading Rocks. The reading fun kicks off Monday through Thursday, June 12th to July 20th, at 12:15 p.m. Exciting guest story-tellers read a story aloud to the children while they eat their lunches. Once the story is finished, children are invited to select a book of their choice from the hundreds of books available and practice their reading skills with the volunteer Reading Mentors. The books are the child's to keep to encourage reading at home and to build their own personal library. The program wraps up at 1:00.

Over the past 20 years, Reading Rocks has not only helped thousands of children maintain their reading skills, it's forged a love of books in young people through exciting story-telling and friendships forged with volunteers. Volunteers at Reading Rocks include local teenagers to retired educators, parents, grandparents, and engaged community members. Volunteering at Reading Rocks is a joyful experience that takes as little as an hour a week, or up to four hours a week. If you would like to share a love of books with



young people this summer, we invite you to become a Reading Mentor at Reading Rocks.

An exciting lineup of story-tellers and activities are coming together for Reading Rocks 2023. Expect opportunities to hear stories from the Billings Fire Department, ZooMontana, athletes and coaches, doctors, pilots, DJ's, authors and the list goes on! We'll keep the fun coming with dress



up weeks, surprise visits from the Altana ice cream van, and wonderful book selections. Visit www.efbps.org for location details and to learn about

volunteer opportunities, or contact the Foundation at 281-5150. Reading Rocks is open to all children across Billings. We look forward to seeing you there!

CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL

VALEDICTORIAN CANDIDATES



Allyson Foster

Parents: Anita & Jason Foster

High School: Central High

Middle School: St. Francis

Elementary School: Homeschooled

Post high school plans: I'm awaiting my medical waiver review for the Air Force Academy and Naval Academy. Otherwise, my plans are to play volleyball for Montana Tech while studying engineering.

Most rewarding or challenging class: My most challenging and rewarding class was Dual Credit Chemistry my junior year. This class stretched my mind, and I simultaneously learned and enjoyed all of the new material. I feel like I learned and understood the information and had fun, even though it required my focus and hours of homework multiple times a week.

Teacher who had a positive influence: When I was homeschooled, my mom, Anita Foster, showed me how fun learning can be and how to work hard.

She set me up for success and prepared me to enjoy my academic challenges and look forward to getting an education.

Extracurricular activities: Student Council (student body co-president), Choir (vice president), Jazz Choir, Environmental Club, HOSA Future Health Professionals, Central Student Ambassador, Kids Connecting Kids, Volleyball (captain, 3x state champ, 2x all-state), Lacrosse (captain all years of high school, 2x all-state)

SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

PLATINUM STUDENTS



Robert Brown

Parents: Matt and Sarah Brown

High School: Senior High

Middle School: Lewis & Clark Middle School

Elementary School: McKinley Elementary School

Post high school plans: I will major in economics at Montana State University.

Most rewarding or challenging class: Honors Chemistry with Mr. Beals! His passion for science and commitment to getting students excited about it resonated with me. It made me look at

my surroundings more critically because I realized chemical reactions are happening all the time all around us.

Teacher who had a positive influence: My 5th and 6th-grade teacher Mrs. Williams. She understood me. She recognized my passion for learning and also how to handle my energy in the classroom. She understood how to keep students engaged by creating a classroom atmosphere where students could be themselves.

Extracurricular activities: Silver Run Ski Team, Senior High Student Council, STEM Society Executive Board, Academic Team, Yellowstone Soccer Association (YSA), Blackbeard the Pirate

Motivation to participate in the Platinum Program:

I definitely started because a lot of my friends were in it, but I have stuck with it because I wanted to prove to myself that I can stick with something all four years of high school.

Topic of "Magnum Opus": My project was to build a functional pair of skis with the help of my ski coach Mark Selby. I also got substantial help from Mark Sevier who helped me press and glue the wood for the inside of the ski. I have ski raced with Silver Run Ski Team for many years, so it was natural for me to want to do something with skiing, plus I've always liked to tinker and build things.



Emma Leffler

Parents: Amy Leffler and Chris Leffler

High School: Senior High

Middle School: Ben Steele

Elementary School: Meadowlark

Post high school plans: Go to college for environmental engineering

Most rewarding or challenging class: Calculus. It was a really difficult subject for me so I had to learn how to ask for help and be vulnerable.

Teacher who had a positive influence: Mr. Brakke. He was my calculus teacher and was always willing to talk to me about anything and encourage me to ask for help.

Extracurricular activities: Dance, work, Senior Advocates, and National Honor Society.

Motivation to participate in the Platinum Program: I wanted other kids to be able to have access to books like I would have wanted to.

Topic of "Magnum Opus": I built Little Free Libraries for two elementary schools.

SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

PLATINUM STUDENTS



Anna Ostermiller

Parents: Jan Ostermiller and Rod Ostermiller

High School: Senior High

Middle School: Will James Middle School

Elementary School: Boulder Elementary

Post high school plans: I will be attending Montana State University in Bozeman. As of right now I plan to study biomedical engineering. I plan to then go to med school once I complete my undergrad.

Most rewarding or challenging class: I think that the class that was the most challenging and rewarding during my four years in high school was AP world history my sophomore year. It was so challenging because it was the first exposure to

college level courses. Mr. Epperson, Senior's AP world history teacher, really threw us right into the college experience we were supposed to gain. He not only was a very good lecturer, but he really just taught us a lot about life. You can't always argue your way into a better grade. I never even tried because I knew that he had given us all the tools to succeed in his class. It was only a matter of whether or not we took advantage of that. It was such a hard class with very difficult tests, but it should me exactly what college is going to be like. Sometimes you fail, you learn, and you move on.

Teacher who had a positive influence: A teacher that had a positive influence on my education over the last 13 years was probably Mr. McMullen, my freshman year earth science teacher. The way that he had such high expectations for his students was incredible. He gave us a ton of work but it showed me what the

rest of high school was going to look like.

Extracurricular activities: I am currently the student body treasurer at Senior High. I am a Senior Advocate, which means that I participate in giving tours to incoming freshmen and I attend 8th grade orientation. I am a member of National Honor Society. I am a member of the track team and the cross country team.

Motivation to participate in the Platinum

Program: Just because I have so many strong women in my life, I wanted to be able to share the support that I have with other girls my age. I know it is hard trying to figure out what to do with your life after high school and I just want all the young girls to know that there are so many people on their side and they don't even know it.

Topic of "Magnum Opus": Women's Leadership



Katherine Sanders

Parents: Amy Sanders, Scott Sanders

High School: Senior High

Middle School: Will James Middle School

Elementary School: Poly Drive Elementary School

Post high school plans: After high school, I plan to attend university and obtain a degree in computer science. Although I do not know which university I will be attending yet, I will be going out of state.

Most rewarding or challenging class: My most challenging but rewarding class in high school was my AP Calculus BC class. It was an independent

study, so I had to find time to teach the content to myself. I thought it would be difficult for me to learn without instruction, but I found a way to understand the content and be successful.

Teacher who had a positive influence: My librarian in elementary school, Desiree Caskey, had the most positive impact on my education. She introduced me to the world of coding and continues to inspire me to be a trailblazer in computer science.

Extracurricular activities: Academic Team, Varsity Tennis, Business Professionals of America, Symphonic Band, Pep Band, Kode with Klossy, and National Honor Society.

Motivation to participate in the Platinum Program: I really wanted to do a big project when

I was in high school to convey what I am most passionate about. The Platinum Program allowed me a structured opportunity to do that.

Topic of "Magnum Opus": For my magnum opus, I went to Poly Drive Elementary and taught 4th and 5th graders how to code LEGO robots and websites in HTML and CSS. The goal was to promote gender diversity in computer science as the field demands a workforce that can represent the population well. As a woman who was taught coding by another woman, I believe that it is important for youth to have educators to look up to who break the norm of what they teach. I hope to see more girls with passions in computer science in the future because they saw a girl could do it too.



North Sanderson

Parents: Sara Sanderson, Michael Sanderson

High School: Senior High

Middle School: Lewis and Clark Middle School

Elementary School: Poly Drive Elementary

Post high school plans: I plan to attend Montana State University in Bozeman and major in astrophysics. Additionally, I plan to minor in aerospace engineering and music.

Most rewarding or challenging class: AP Calculus BC has by far been my most challenging

class. The abstract concepts in the class are challenging, but I also find the class very rewarding.

Teacher who had a positive influence: Mrs. Fleek Airne. Having Mrs. Fleek Airne as both an English teacher and Student Council advisor, I have come to appreciate her dedication to her students. She has had a very large, positive impact on my high school career.

Extracurricular activities: Student Council, Billings American Legion Baseball, Symphonic

Band, National Honor Society, United Way Youth Volunteer Corps, and Senior Advocates

Motivation to participate in the Platinum

Program: I thought it would be a fun challenge during high school. I was already planning on taking AP and honors classes and the research and Magnum Opus requirements were nice additions.

Topic of "Magnum Opus": My Magnum Opus is a solo piano recital culminating 12 years of piano study. I performed nine selected works ranging from classical to contemporary.

SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

PLATINUM STUDENTS



Julia Small

Parents: Döndü Böyrazli-Small and Tim Small

High School: Senior High

Middle School: Will James Middle School

Elementary School: many including Boulder Elementary School

Post high school plans: I plan to pursue further education in college on a Pre-Med track, eventually applying to Medical School.

Most rewarding or challenging class: AP Chemistry taught me to break past my mental blocks and always ask for help when needed. Symphonic Band allowed me to express myself through music and make great friends along the way. Medical Terminology prepared me for my future career while memorizing hundreds of terms a week.

Teacher who had a positive influence: While there are many teachers that have influenced me, there are three whom I have spent the most time with and had many of the most significant impacts. First, Dr. Haan, who taught me Medical Innovation and Dual Credit Medical Terminology. She prepared me to be a competitive applicant in the medical field and provided resources along with advice for my healthcare endeavors. Next, Mr. Beals, who taught me Honors Chemistry and later AP Chemistry. He gave me a love for science and continued curiosity. He taught me never to be afraid to ask for help, supporting me unconditionally. Then finally, Mr. McKenney, who teachers symphonic band at Senior High. Mr. McKenney has offered up nothing but love and guidance. Pushing us in skills, he strives to bring our bands to the top of their game, while always keeping the family-like bond at their foundation. Offering many opportunities to improve my

musical skills and leadership, Mr. McKenney has brought so much joy to myself and the entire music department. I give my thanks to each of these teachers who have helped me grow in different aspects of my life.

Extracurricular activities: Speech and Debate, Flute and Piano lessons, STEM Society, Science Olympiad, Business Professionals of America, Health Occupations Students of America, National Honor Society, Horseback Riding, Billings Youth Symphony Orchestra, Mandarin Lessons, Jujitsu, All-State Band, and All-Northwest Band

Topic of “Magnum Opus”: My project aims to better educate minorities and first-generation college students on educational opportunities offered to them and better prepare these populations for a successful future.

VALEDICTORIAN CANDIDATES



Syr Green

Parents: Jasmine Green

High School: Senior High

Middle School: Lewis and Clark Middle School

Elementary School: Broadwater Elementary School

Post high school plans: To study physical chemistry in either Oregon or Washington

Most rewarding or challenging class: AP Chemistry and AP Physics. The concepts in these

classes are difficult to grasp and you have to practice consistently to succeed, but both teachers have been so engaging and encouraging inside and out of the classroom. These classes have helped me gain a love for science and I feel ready for college courses after taking these classes.

Teacher who had a positive influence: The first that comes to mind is Mr. Umemoto. I have taken both physics classes he offers and he has made the class so engaging, enjoyable, professional, and I feel like I am taking a college class when I am in there. His organization of his class is different, but I believe that his focus on hands-on material and trying to form a conclusion on a new topic

off of only prior knowledge helps us recognize the scientific method and our own ability to draw results from everyday activities. Mr. Umemoto is also very kind and open to having conversations about our own well-being. I actively look forward to going to his class; he makes me feel important, successful, and motivated. While he is my teacher and mentor, I also see him as a friend.

Extracurricular activities: I am the treasurer of National Honor Society, I participate in Academic Team (a trivia club), STEM Society (A science club), and Senior Advocates (a volunteering and mentoring club).



Casey LaMont

Parents: Heather LaMont and Bart LaMont

High School: Senior High

Middle School: Riverside

Elementary School: I attended elementary school in Arkansas.

Post high school plans: I plan to serve a two year mission with my church and then attend college.

Most rewarding or challenging class: The most challenging and rewarding class I have taken was AP Chemistry as the material astounded me and I loved to learn and the challenge was a beneficial one.

Teacher who had a positive influence: Craig Beals because he was able to provide me with a passion towards science and connected with me on a personal level.

Extracurricular activities: Student Council, National Honor Society, community service, STEM Society

SKYVIEW HIGH SCHOOL

PLATINUM STUDENTS



Claire Kaufman

Parents: Jessica and Kurt Kaufman

High School: Skyview High

Middle School: Medicine Crow

Elementary School: Bench Elementary

Post high school plans: College then law school

Most rewarding or challenging class: The most challenging and rewarding class has been Spanish. It is always a challenge to learn a new language,

but it has given me the ability to communicate with my world.

Teacher who had a positive influence: Ms. Engel my fourth grade teacher, has had the most positive impact on my education. She has always been a positive role model to me and given me confidence in any goal I try to achieve. Though I was young when I had her, she has always been a supporter of me and my dreams.

Extracurricular activities: National Honor Society, Club Swim, high school swim, Platinum program, and foreign language

Motivation to participate in the Platinum Program: Academic validation and it looks good on college applications.

Topic of "Magnum Opus": Water safety and swim lessons with special needs kids



Bridger McGimpsey

Parents: Lindsay & Jason McGimpsey

High School: Skyview High

Middle School: Medicine Crow Middle School

Elementary School: Beartooth Elementary

Post high school plans: I will be majoring in physics at MSU Bozeman.

Most rewarding or challenging class: The most challenging class was AP World history. The course load was nothing I had experienced previously, but

it set me up to take challenging classes throughout high school.

Teacher who had a positive influence: Ms. Kenny had the greatest impact on my education. No teacher has put in as much effort as Ms. Kenny did when it came to the education of students. Her impact didn't stop at me though, it extended to many other teachers I've had as well. I've had many great teachers, but Ms. Kenny stands out as the most significant.

Extracurricular activities: Platinum program,

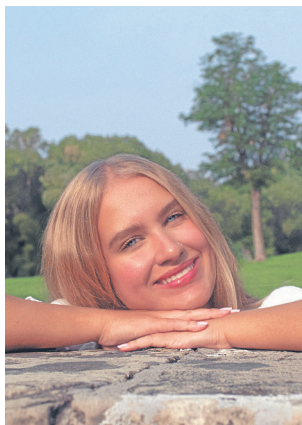
academic team, chess club, and National Honor Society.

Motivation to participate in the Platinum Program: I had already signed up and taken the required courses to participate so I found there was no reason not to. Additionally, I felt being in an extracurricular program where everyone was working on a personalized project would be cool.

Topic of "Magnum Opus": I've been working on creating another legal graffiti wall in Billings after the previous one had been dismembered.

SKYVIEW HIGH SCHOOL

PLATINUM STUDENTS



Jessica Walks

Valedictorian Candidate

Parents: Russell and Tracy Walks

High School: Skyview High

Middle School: Castle Rock Middle School

Elementary School: Eagle Cliffs Elementary

Post high school plans: I plan to continue my education and major in Business Administration, with a possible minor in Environmental Science or International Relations. If everything works out, I will attend college in New York or Southern California.

Most rewarding or challenging class: My most challenging class was Honors Chemistry because although I tried, I was just not good at it. However, this class did teach me the importance of perseverance!

Teacher who had a positive influence: There have been many teachers who have had a positive impact on my education, but one who will always stand out is Molly Barta. She showed me the importance of leadership and professionalism and is the reason I became interested in business. The skills I was taught in her business classes and from her counseling in BPA, are skills I will always carry with me. I appreciate how she does all she can to help her students succeed.

Extracurricular activities: I am President of Business Professionals of America, Co-President of National Honor Society, and Vice-President of Key Club.

Motivation to participate in the Platinum Program: I absolutely love learning and am always looking for ways to expand my knowledge. The Platinum Program was a way that ensured I was learning to the fullest. I enjoy a challenge and knew this program would set me up for success in my future.

Topic of "Magnum Opus": I researched the topic of "fast fashion" and built a website informing on the issue.

VALEDICTORIAN CANDIDATE



Ethan Moore

Parents: Leticia Hadley and Jeff Moore

High School: Skyview High

Middle School: Medicine Crow

Elementary School: Independent Elementary

Post high school plans: I plan to study aerospace engineering at either Georgia Tech or Purdue.

Most rewarding or challenging class: My most challenging high school class was AP Calculus BC

because I took it as an independent study, so the amount of help I could get from my teacher was limited. It has, however, greatly improved my time management skills and I am very proud of the work I've done in that class.

Teacher who had a positive influence: Jehremy Felig - He was my honors and AP chemistry teacher and through his teaching and insight made me set my goals for myself far higher than I otherwise would have. I would not have tried as

hard as I have in high school if I never had Mr. Felig.

Extracurricular activities: I have played Billings American Legion Baseball for five years, worked at Triple Play Academy as a shift leader for 2 years, volunteered to give baseball lessons for 2 years, and been a member of the academic team for 2 years and the captain for 1.

WEST HIGH SCHOOL

PLATINUM STUDENTS



Melanie Irwin

Parents: Jill and Jim Irwin

High School: West High

Middle School: Will James and Ben Steele

Elementary School: Tewksbury Elementary School and Saint Francis Intermediate School

Post high school plans: I plan to further my studies of chemistry or marine biology at either MSU or a school on the West Coast.

Most rewarding or challenging class: AP Chemistry with Mrs. Field was the most challenging and rewarding class I took in high school. Many of the concepts are difficult, but it was incredibly satisfying when I began to comprehend more of the subject matter. Through

this class I realized I want to pursue a degree that furthers my knowledge of chemistry.

Teacher who had a positive influence: Herr Asleson, my German teacher, has made the greatest positive impact on my k-12 education. I've been so lucky to be in his classroom for the last three years. He knows exactly how to balance fun with learning to keep his students engaged. Herr somehow manages to cater to every student within his classroom. I strive to find a career that I find as much passion in as Herr finds through teaching. He has even moved me to consider minoring in German, which is incredible considering I couldn't speak a single German word before High School.

Extracurricular activities: All-State band/orchestra all four years and participated in the All-Northwest band this year. President of West High's

National Honor Society, member of West High's yearbook club and German club for two years, and the art club for all four years of high school. I have worked and volunteered throughout high school and currently working as a barista. With spare time I practice the piano and clarinet, backpack, practice different art mediums, and waterski!"

Motivation to participate in the Platinum

Program: To incentivize myself to go outside my comfort zone and make something that I can be proud of.

Topic of "Magnum Opus": My project focused on me designing a website to sell cards that are prints of my artwork. My artwork depicts endangered species, and a large amount of the sale profits will go to supporting wildlife. Check it out at www.cardsforcreation.com.



Carly Jensen

Parents: Amy Jensen, Lee Jensen

High School: West High

Middle School: Ben Steele Middle School

Elementary School: Arrowhead Elementary School

Post high school plans: I plan to attend college and pursue a degree in pre-medical sciences in order to attend medical school and become a physician.

Most rewarding or challenging class: AP Statistics was my most rewarding class because of its applicability. Being able to understand the

statistics in everyday life is a great skill. Knowing how to assess the credibility of information given to you is imperative to being an active and informed citizen.

Teacher who had a positive influence: Mr. Thomas, the seventh grade Life Science teacher at Ben Steele definitely had the greatest effect on my education. He turned my least favorite subject of science into my career passion. By making science fun, he reminded me that school is as much fun as you make of it. He also taught me that I could accomplish anything I set my mind on. He always treated everyone with kindness and respect, two values in which I aim to uphold every day.

Extracurricular activities: Symphonic Band,

Amnesty Club (President), Pep Band (Drum Major), German Club (treasurer), Yearbook, Volunteering (Moss Mansion tour guide and host), Platinum Program

Motivation to participate in the Platinum

Program: To show myself what I was capable of. I wanted to make a difference in my community as well as push myself to be the best student possible.

Topic of "Magnum Opus": I advocated for and implemented free menstrual products in the restrooms of West High. The dispensers and products have been up since the beginning of the 2022-2023 school year, and have been supported by both students and faculty.



Lexi Luft

Parents: April and Rob Luft

High School: West High

Middle School: Lewis and Clark

Elementary School: Miles Avenue

Post high school plans: I plan to major in Earth Science - Geology and minor in German at Montana State University

Most rewarding or challenging class: My most rewarding class at West High was Mr. Bushey's Geology class. Bushey's class inspired me to pursue Geology as a career. Sometimes all it takes is one class to cement the vision for your future, and Mr. Bushey's Geology class was it for me.

Teacher who had a positive influence: One teacher who made a great positive impact on my education is Lance Edward. Mr. Edward was my junior year English teacher. I looked forward to his class every day because it always made my brain work with some new challenge or critical thinking activity. Nature walk days were always good days in class. Mr. Edward encouraged us to challenge the norm and get outside our comfort zones, and for that I am grateful.

Extracurricular activities: I played volleyball freshman year and I have done track every year that I could, throwing discus and javelin. Volleyball Club, German Club, Bowling Club, Platinum Program, and National Honors Society. Most recently I created Formula 1 Fantasy league to compete with my friends over the course of the

F1 season.

Motivation to participate in the Platinum

Program: I saw all of the projects that previous students had done when I attended my brother's graduation. It looked like a program that I could really personalize and care about. I also was already planning to take a fair amount of honors credits, so the capstone project felt like a great way to finish my high school career.

Topic of "Magnum Opus": My project focused on the geology of eastern Montana as well as a Brachyophosaurus fossil named Elvis. I created a museum exhibit that consists of three posters; later this year, they will be displayed in the Phillips County Museum in Malta, Montana where Elvis is displayed.

WEST HIGH SCHOOL

PLATINUM STUDENTS



Liam Mays

Parents: Heather McGuire, Todd Mays

High School: West High

Middle School: Ben Steele and Will James

Elementary School: Arrowhead

Post high school plans: College, I plan to major in the STEM field with a minor in German

Most rewarding or challenging class: AP Literature, there is nothing more confusing than trying to find the meaning of a work, when the meaning is open to interpretation.

Teacher who had a positive influence: Although many teachers have made a positive impact on me, I have to say Mrs. Bedford, who made me interested in living life as much as she made me

interested in math.

Extracurricular activities: Soccer, Deutsch Klub

Motivation to participate in the Platinum Program: Hope that what I did might actually change someone's life.

Topic of "Magnum Opus": Deceased organ donation in driver's education



Sophia Smith

Parents: Teri Smith, Mark Smith

High School: West High

Middle School: Ben Steele Middle School

Elementary School: Arrowhead Elementary School

Post high school plans: Attend college out of state in pursuit of a pre-medical focused education.

Most rewarding or challenging class: AP Physics. It pushed the boundary of my scientific understanding and showed me how directly applicable science can be to everything in our lives.

Teacher who had a positive influence: Mrs. Zieske. She was my honors biology teacher sophomore year, and my Platinum Project advisor. I always found Mrs. Zieske to be a truly caring person who wanted to do everything possible for her students. She was an amazing teacher who sparked my love for biology and science, and a wonderful advisor who went above and beyond to help make my Platinum Project a dream come true. I am honored to have been able to learn all I could from her in my time at West High.

Extracurricular activities: Varsity Soccer Billings West High, Club soccer (Billings United), Business Professionals of America (Montana State Public Relations Director), Gracie Jiu-Jitsu Billings, Volunteer with Eagle Mount Billings (ski, soccer, rock climbing, summer camp), Special Olympics of

Montana Unified Partner, National Honors Society, Key Club, Montana Girls State.

Motivation to participate in the Platinum Program: I wanted to participate in the Platinum Program because I saw it as an opportunity to take my academic experience to the next level. It was a way to look past any qualms I had about taking on a big project and focus on the benefit it could have to the community.

Topic of "Magnum Opus": My Magnum Opus was the creation and development of a fun run called the Run For Inclusion. The run aimed to raise money for Eagle Mount Billings (A recreational therapy organization for persons with disabilities), and promote inclusion within the Billings Community.



Kate Stauffer

Parents: Karla and Rick Stauffer

High School: West High

Middle School: Ben Steele Middle School

Elementary School: Arrowhead Elementary

Post high school plans: I will be attending either MSU or CSU.

Most rewarding or challenging class: The class that was most challenging for me was AP Physics 1 my junior year. It was a rigorous class that favored math students. Although I am a student that loves math, it just did not make sense to me. I found myself struggling to understand concepts other students understood months ago. As a child of

two engineers, I did not think this was how physics would turn out. Even though physics may not be my calling, the class helped me realize how much I enjoy biology and even helped me decide to pursue microbiology in college.

Teacher who had a positive influence: The teacher that has made the greatest positive impact on my education was my Junior year AP Language teacher Mr. Edward. He not only taught us the curriculum but also future life skills. He wanted us all to grow up to be careful consumers and encouraged us to value different points of view and watch for bias throughout daily life.

Extracurricular activities: Throughout my high school career I participated in Volleyball, Student Council, National Honor Society, Key Club, Ski Club, Interscholastic Equestrian Association, Church

Youth Group, and the United Way Youth Volunteer Corps.

Motivation to participate in the Platinum Program: I was already on track to complete 15 AP or Honors classes, so doing something extra that I found both interesting and exciting was going to be more fun than not. The project allowed me to expand my interests in horses and biology.

Topic of "Magnum Opus": My Magnum Opus was a research project about horses and genetics. I wanted to study on a genetic level why some horse breeds perform better in a certain discipline than another. After I finished researching and contacting professors about my question, I wrote a research paper. At the conclusion of my research paper, I created a lesson plan and taught kids at a local Pony Club about my findings.

WEST HIGH SCHOOL

PLATINUM STUDENTS



Jasmyrn Zimmerman

Parents: JoLana and Jason Zimmerman

High School: West High

Middle School: Ben Steele Middle School

Elementary School: Burlington Elementary School

Post high school plans: Attend college at Pacific University

Most rewarding or challenging class: AP Chemistry has been the most challenging high school class I have taken. Many topics were covered quickly, and each one had new rules

that contradicted the last set of rules or slightly differed. However, when I received a high score on a quiz or test, I felt immense pride.

Teacher who had a positive influence: Dr. Constance Haan made the greatest impact on my education. She is witty and kind, yet strict and very knowledgeable. She holds her students to a high standard. I love Dr. Haan's structured courses, giving us the ability to know what we are going to be learning ahead of time. She is also extremely helpful when you have a question and she will try her hardest to find an answer for you.

Extracurricular activities: Lacrosse, Art Club, German Club, Yearbook Club, and National Honor Society

Motivation to participate in the Platinum Program: I wanted to challenge myself while helping address a community issue.

Topic of "Magnum Opus": I've developed a concept for a food truck called Billings Best that will benefit local residents that are less fortunate. The menu will not have listed prices, though there will be suggested donations. Those who are not able to make a donation can still enjoy a delicious meal and are invited to volunteer at the food truck. I also created lesson plans addressing the stigma surrounding homelessness, as well as a bake sale at West High to help their pantry buy a freezer to store food.

VALEDICTORIAN CANDIDATES



Maiya Easton

Parents: Tammie Easton

High School: West High

Middle School: Ben Steele Middle School

Elementary School: Elysian Elementary

Post high school plans: I plan on studying history, public policy, or global affairs in my undergraduate. Then, I hope to pursue a law degree. I am interested in civil litigation and legislation.

Most rewarding or challenging class: Physics has been both challenging and rewarding because it was not a class that came easily for me. I have had to study harder than I ever had before to understand the concepts thoroughly. Luckily, I had a wonderful teacher, Mrs. Ladd, to help me. She made the class interactive and fun and always took to extra time to explain difficult topics. Even in my second year of physics I struggle, but I am proud of how far I've come to challenge myself.

Teacher who had a positive influence: One that stands out in particular is Mr. Macartney. Mac was my debate coach and really helped me to get out

of my shell. Prior, I very shy and often panicked when it came to public speaking. Mac didn't give up on me, encouraging me until I was confident in my speaking abilities. His influence on my education has lead me to pursue law in college. I am forever grateful for Mr. Macartney.

Extracurricular activities: MADCo (Motion Arts Dance Company), School of Classical Ballet, Key Club, Speech & Debate, National Honor Society, Boeing 306B Project (w/ Mr. Kenney), Stanford Intensive Law & Trial Program, Spring Musical: Mamma Mia, Starbucks Barista



Hayden Trost

Parents: Michelle Trost and David Trost

High School: West High

Middle School: Ben Steele Middle School

Elementary School: Arrowhead Elementary

Post high school plans: I plan on attending an out of state college to pursue degrees in Engineering and Political Science. I hope to support sustainability policies and legislation through science and engineering.

Most rewarding or challenging class: Ceramics. It demands patience, undivided attention, and practice. There is no instant gratification when

doing ceramics, but I have learned that the end product is worth the wait.

Teacher who had a positive influence: My high school golf coach, Mr. Drange. Although he was never formally my teacher, I learned some of the most valuable lessons and wisdom from his coaching on and off the golf course. He is the teacher that has been by my side through unthinkable highs and devastating lows. Every step of the way, he offered unmatched support, guidance, and occasionally a good dad joke.

Extracurricular activities: Platinum, Golf, Tennis, Business Professionals of America, National Honor Society, Youth Group, Montana Girls State.

Motivation to participate in the Platinum Program: I wanted a formal way to stay engaged in the classroom and community. After choosing my magnum opus, I was motivated by my excitement about the project.

Topic of "Magnum Opus": I created an Urban Horticulture Education Center with a public-private partnership between St. John's United and School District 2. The produce grown will be provided to residents on the St. John's campuses. Residents and students can volunteer in the greenhouse while cultivating intergenerational connections. Students after me can use the space as a classroom to develop skills in agriculture, hospitality, and management.



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BUILD COLLABORATION

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HONORING YOUR HARD WORK
& COMMITMENT!



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SATURDAY, MAY 13TH**

Every year parents begin organizing alcohol - free graduation parties in January and the work doesn't stop until June, or as we like to say "the work is not done until the mess is cleaned up..." They do the clean up as well! Join us in honoring all the parents who have made this possible for 32 years!



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