

**MEET THE GRADS:** Photos of the 2026 graduating seniors **PP 4-5**

## Bomber seniors graduate May 22

BY HOPE MURRAY  
NEWS@BRAHAMJOURNAL.COM

Braham Area High School's Class of 2026 will soon mark one of the biggest days of their young lives — graduation. More than 50 Braham Bombers will gather to listen to heartfelt speeches, receive their diplomas and toss their mortar boards in the air. Graduates will join friends and family at 7 p.m., Friday, May 22, at Braham Area High School gymnasium. "I couldn't be more proud of this group of seniors," said High School Principal Shawn Kuhnke. "They were in middle school

SEE **BOMBER**, PAGE 6

## Braham posts impressive grad rate

BY HOPE MURRAY  
NEWS@BRAHAMJOURNAL.COM

Schools across Minnesota are celebrating the highest four-year graduation rate in state history, Education Minnesota said in mid-April. According to the latest data, close to 85% of the state's class of 2025 earned their high school diplomas within four years. This breaks the previous record of 84.2%, set in 2024. It also marks the second consecutive year of record-breaking progress.

SEE **RATE**, PAGE 6

## Ready for your close-up



HOPE MURRAY | JOURNAL

Whitney Sikkink and her husband Cody own Venture North Studio, now in downtown Braham. The studio offers a spot for Whitney to photograph portraits and create her magazine and make contacts for Wedly, a networking platform for wedding professionals.

## New Main Street photo studio in focus

BY HOPE MURRAY  
NEWS@BRAHAMJOURNAL.COM

A chance stroll down Braham's Main Street has resulted in the opening of the new business in the city. Whitney Sikkink said walking by the space, formerly the home of Main Street Boutique, sparked her and her husband Cody to open Venture North Studio.

"It felt like it was meant to be," Sikkink said. "I walked past, and I'm like, I'm jumping on it. And I didn't have to think twice about it."

Venture North Studio houses rustic and romantic settings and backdrops where Sikkink — a professional photographer for more than 12 years — can snap pics of maternity moms, new babies, engaged couples and portraits. In the past, she had to travel to the Twin Cities to find suitable spots for her photography or she took pictures in their home.

"I used my house most of the time," she said. "I set up our

whole basement with backdrops, and I had an office also upstairs that I made into a mini studio. So I used my natural light upstairs; downstairs I used my lights, and it worked really well. I had lots of people coming, but the thing is, you can only invite certain people to your home."

### SPACE FOR ANOTHER VENTURE

In addition to the safety found in having a spot separate from home to work in, Sikkink also has plenty of space now for her photography and video equipment.

She now has an office where she can adjust her photos but can also manage her networking group called Wedly.

Wedly is a platform where workers in the wedding industry — florists, venues, planners, etc. — can network and share information. Sikkink produces a Wedly magazine, filled with photographs taken

SEE **FOCUS**, PAGE 8

## Ninjas! Anywhere? Everywhere!

BEPO fundraiser will let elementary kids show off their athletic skills

BY HOPE MURRAY  
NEWS@BRAHAMJOURNAL.COM

The Braham Elementary Parent Organization is inviting kids to climb, bounce, run, jump and trapeze, all in hopes of raising funds to support BEPO's annual activities.

On May 1, elementary students will take part in Ninja Anywhere, a sys-



FILE PHOTO

A Ninja Anywhere course, such as this one at the Kanabec County Fairgrounds, will serve as a fun-raiser and fundraiser for Braham Elementary Parent Organization on May 1. Parents and family members are invited to watch the kids tackle the apparatus.

tem that delivers "thrilling, turn-key ninja obstacle course experiences that engage communities, energize events, and inspire all ages to move, play, and challenge themselves," according to its website.

"We handle everything—from setup to cleanup — so event organizers can focus on creating unforgettable moments. Whether at schools, festivals, fairs, or

SEE **NINJAS**, PAGE 7

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## Stormy weather

I saw a startling weather map earlier in April when we were all waiting for the thunderstorms that were in the forecast. The map was a display of the hazardous weather happenings from southeastern Minnesota, into Wisconsin, and then south into Illinois, Iowa, Missouri, etc.

The whole idea of severe weather always makes me think of growing up in the country in northeast South Dakota, and watching Pa and Uncle Tommy stand in the driveway, trying to ascertain how far away the funnel cloud to the south was and which direction it was heading. I imagine there are still farmers who do that.

The house I grew up in was around 100 years old and had been a store at one time. It also had an addition that was tacked on sometime in the early 20th century. When summer storms came, the house shook like it was in the middle of an earthquake. (There actually was an earthquake in our neck of the woods in 1975; I slept through it.)

During daylight hours, the situation wasn't so fraught. We could sit together in the comfort of our living room and watch our soap operas until Dave Dedrick, the weatherman from KELO-Land TV in Sioux Falls, interrupted, urging us to seek cover and contact our deaf neighbors. We did neither of those things. We stayed on the davenport hoping Dave would stop talking long enough for us to see the end of "As the World Turns."

At nighttime, it was different. We weren't all together, and Dave Dedrick was replaced by a test pattern. Strong winds could really do a number on the old windows; it really did feel at times as though the house would break apart.

Frequently, Ma would wrangle us into the cellar until the storm would subside. There was only one occasion, however, when we felt in actual danger. My brother was already in the Navy, and my oldest sister was in college, so this must have been in the summer of 1974 or so.

The storm had awakened all of us, and Ma maneuvered us into the cellar. I say "cellar" as opposed to "basement" because that's what it was — a dank, dark spot where the canned goods lived. It was so crammed full of various discarded bits and bobs that we could only stand in the very front of the cellar — Ma and five of her children.

And one of those children was hysterical. When I say hysterical, I mean crying, screaming, having difficulty breathing. It didn't help that Pa refused to get out of bed to join us. "If God's gonna take me, he'll take me lying down," he said.

So there was my little sister, in a frenzy, crying out, "We're all going to die!!"

My mother tried her best to console her, but she was having none of it, and the rest of us girls were getting really frightened and agitated. Ma was at the end of her rope, so she did the only thing she could think of doing: She slapped my sister. It wasn't a hard slap by any means, and it's definitely not a recommended solution to the problem. But in that moment, Ma saw no other method to help her kid.

And my sister calmed down immediately. She stopped screaming, and Ma held her tight. Now that she could get a word in, Ma told her that nothing was going to happen to Pa or anyone, and God would take care of us. And He did. The storm blew over, and we were safe.

Children don't always know they are safe, whether it's in a thunderstorm or on a car ride. Remind them that they are in good hands, even when they don't seem as though they are afraid.

Have a great May, everyone. Remember to be kind!

**HOPE MURRAY** is the editor of the Braham Journal and the Kanabec County Times. She can be contacted at [editor@moraminn.com](mailto:editor@moraminn.com) or by calling 320-225-5128.



## Eliminate hunger in our communities

As long as I've been alive I've been aware there is hunger in the world. As a child I was reminded at meal time to clean my plate because there were people in other parts of the world who were starving.

In the Christian community we hear a lot about missionaries working with people in countries where there is a food shortage.



**About the Town**  
Gene Johnson

In world news we hear of areas where there are food shortages, wars, and climate conditions making it difficult to grow adequate crops to feed people. Some of the hardest hit areas during the Covid-19 pandemic have been in Africa and Asia.

There are a number of world organizations like World Vision, Compassion and ECHO that are showing great progress in the food crisis.

ECHO is an international Christian organization that strengthens farmers, pastors and development leaders as they serve communities

facing hunger and poverty. It was established over 40 years ago with headquarters in North Ft. Myers, Florida. It continues to expand its advanced global seed banking.

ECHO's goals integrate the mission of linking churches with seed banks, agroecology, and sustainable farming training. ECHO has 20,000 network members in 190 countries.

This means practical solutions spread faster, farmers gain confidence and resilience, families experience improved nutrition and income, and communities move toward long-term stability.

Minnesota has provided strong leadership to ECHO's programs. For example, Mark Carlson, who grew up in Cambridge, Minnesota is employed by

the State Department as a lawyer and serves on the board of directors for ECHO. His cousin, Dr. Doug Carlson, resides in Stillwater and is the former chair of ECHO.

Kathy and I were guests at an outdoor dinner at ECHO in March. It provided an update of their expansions into new regions and reports from their impact centers.

Bethel University for several years sent journalism students to assist with communications at ECHO for a semester.

One of the more impressive things we learned is that ECHO will suggest to a farmer in one of these arid areas of the world to try ECHO's method of farming. The farmer's first response is "If it doesn't work my children will starve". ECHO comes alongside the farmer and assures him that ECHO will reimburse finances if their method comes up short.

At harvest time, ECHO comes along side to measure the results and to celebrate the new farming methods. These new methods are shared with neighboring farmers. It is like a one-on-one learning process and the lasting change has impacted whole communities.

This helps farmers grow crops they can sell which enhances their income. ECHO has been feeding families for five generations which provides encouragement and hope.

When farmers have access to the right knowledge and resources, land is restored, families are nourished, and communities become more resilient.

If you are in the Ft. Myers area you will find it worthwhile to visit ECHO Global Farms. They have tours for individuals and groups. They also accept volunteers.

**GENE JOHNSON** is Publisher Emeritus of Press Publications, White Bear Lake, and owner of the Kanabec County Times.

**'Go confidently in the direction of your dreams. Live the life you have imagined.'**

Henry David Thoreau

American naturalist and essayist

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**BRAHAM JOURNAL**

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Noon Third Wednesday of Month

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## UPCOMING EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES



FILE PHOTO

### Featured event

MAY 2

#### 10th Annual Color Run/Walk

The Braham Girl Scouts will host their annual color run/walk event starting at 9 a.m. at Braham High School. Registration begins at 8 a.m.

MAY 1

#### Blood Drive

Welia Health will hold a community blood drive with the American Red Cross from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at 301 S. Hwy 65, Mora. For more information or to make an appointment call 1-800-733-2767 or sign up online at redcross-blood.org.

#### Book Sale

The Friends of the Mora Library will hold the semi-annual book sale from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. in the library's Community Room. The sale will continue from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday, May 2. A variety materials—books, CDs, DVDs—will be available for purchase.

MAY 3

#### Music for Many

The first Music for Many for adults with disabilities is set for 12:30 to 3:30 p.m., at the Braham Event Center.

Singer Jenni Thyng and Mark Manthie will provide the music and opportunities for sing-alongs and dancing.

There will be a red carpet theme with appetizers served.

Later that afternoon, Music for Many will be directed at teens and young adults, and will run from 5 to 8 p.m.

A third Music for Many for senior citizens will be announced at a later date.

MAY 5

#### Traumatic Brain Injury Support Group

This group meets the first Tuesday of the month from 6 to 7:30 p.m. at Emmanuel Baptist Church in Mora.

#### A Musical Evening with the Decibelles

Join the Decibelles as they take us on a trip through the decades with songs from the 1930s to Ingrid Michaelson and Justin Timberlake.

The Decibelles are a local women's acapella singing group organized by Play Inc Arts.

The event takes place from 6-7 p.m. at the Cambridge Library. No registration needed.

MAY 7

#### Kanabec Quilters

Kanabec Quilters will meet at 10 a.m. at the Ogilvie Civic Center. New members are always welcome.

MAY 10

#### Mother's Day Brunch

The annual Mother's Day Brunch will be held from 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at the Braham Event Center. To register call 320-396-3177 or purchase online at brahamcenter.org/events.

MAY 11

#### Old Wheelers Car and Tractor Club

The "Old Wheelers Car and Tractor Club" will meet at 6 p.m., at McBees on Ann Lake, 2198 Hwy 47, Ogilvie. All vintage car and tractor enthusiasts are welcome. For information, call Clayton Berg at 320-272-4387.

MAY 12

#### Musical Evening of Poetry with Local Musicians

Come to the Cambridge Library for a magical partnership of music and poetry. Madeline and Brian (Fendrick & Peck) are a Minnesota based indie-eco-acoustic duo whose music is all harmony—exquisitely crafted lyrics and composition with unbridled delight peppered throughout.

Laurie Allmann is an award-winning environmental writer, essayist and poet. She has taught writing workshops in many settings, and has been a course instructor for The Loft Literary Center.

The event takes place from 6-7 p.m. at the Cambridge Library. No registration needed.

MAY 19

#### Braham Parkinson's Support Group

The support group meets at 3 p.m. on the third Tues-

day of each month at Braham Evangelical Lutheran Church, 905 Central Dr. W., Braham. For more information call Lonnie Anderson at 612-423-1863.

MAY 21

#### SCSF Defensive Drivers' Class

A 4-hour course on defensive driving will be held from noon to 4 p.m. Classes are held at Eastwood Life Enrichment Center in Mora.

Call 320-679-4700 to reserve your spot. Sponsored by Seven County Senior Federation.

MAY 24

#### Memorial Day Service

The public is invited to the Royalton Memorial Cemetery Association's annual Memorial Day Service, at 2 p.m. located at 2511 Church Road, Braham. Enjoy a Memorial Day message by Pastor Bruce Thompson and music by Jay Mankie and Randy Plageman. A luncheon will be served. Contact Roxanne Orvis at 320-396-2639 for more information.

MAY 26

#### Veterans' Coffee Talk

The coffee talk is held at 10 a.m. on the fourth Tuesday of each month at the Kanabec Veteran Memorial building in Mora.

Come and enjoy coffee and a donut with other veterans.

MAY 28

#### Vision Loss Support Group

Learn about helpful resources at this vision loss support group. It meets from 2-3:30 p.m. the fourth Thursday of each month at Mora United Methodist Church, 500 Clark St., Mora.

This group is co-facilitated by the State Services for the Blind.

For more information call Stacy at 651-249-5118.

## ONGOING EVENTS

### The Alice Studt Library

The Alice Studt Library is located at the north entry of the Braham Event Center, 655 8th Street SW. The East Central Regional Library Link Site Librarian is currently available for check-outs on Wednesdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Regular hours are 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday-Friday to check materials using the internet or computers. For more information, call 320-396-3177.

### MONDAYS

#### AARP Tax Aide

Appointments required for aide at the Braham Event Center. 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Feb. 3-April 28. Call Seven County Senior Federation at 320-679-4700.

### Bingo in Braham

Bingo is played every Monday at the Braham Events Center, 655 8th Street SW. The doors open at 4:30 p.m. with bingo beginning at 6. Hot meals starting at 5:15 and concessions will be available for purchase. The event is hosted by the Pokegama Lake Association.

### TUESDAYS, THURSDAYS

#### Senior Fitness Class

Live 2B Healthy Falls Prevention Fitness Class takes place from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. at the Braham Event Center.

### Senior Dining

Catholic Charities presents in-person Senior Dining at Park Manor on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays at 11:45 a.m. Diners must pre-register for a congregate meal at least one day in advance by calling the North Branch Catholic Charities number at 651-674-1956 between 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. An annual registration form is required for a new diner.

### WEDNESDAYS

#### Basic Tech Help for Seniors

Seniors can sign up for weekly one-on-one tech help sessions from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. at the Cambridge Public Library, 111 N Dellwood Street N. Please bring your laptop/device and a power cord to your session. To register, contact the library or visit the events calendar at eclib.org.

### THURSDAYS

#### East Central Baby Cafe

Free, drop in support center for breastfeeding families and their babies. Call 763-689-4212 with questions. From 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. in the second floor training room of the Cambridge-Isanti Adult Enrichment Center, 540 5th Ave NW, Cambridge. Siblings, support persons and grandparents are welcome, and light refreshments will be available. For more information, call 763-689-1711.

## BAEF Gala held on May 2

The Braham Area Education Foundation is gearing up for another special celebration of Braham's history and its future, with its eighth-annual Spring Gala on May 2, at the beautiful Braham Event Center. The event will include a live and silent auction and a special keynote presentation from Braham Graduate and professional singer and speaker Jenni Thyng. The gala will also include recognition of the current members of the Braham Hall of Fame, along with the induction of its newest member.

Jenni Thyng is an engaging public speaker and vocal performer who inspires audiences of all ages to recognize their value and experience hope and true joy.

Tickets to the Gala, which will include a social hour beginning at 5:30 p.m. and dinner beginning at approximately 6:15 p.m., are \$50, and are available for purchase at the Braham Area High School Superintendent's Office at the Braham Area High School. Tickets and sponsorships may also be purchased online at <https://secure.qgmv.com/event/baef2026>.

— Braham Area Education Foundation



**April 30 • Senior Music Concert**

**1 - 4pm**

Featuring Larry Rose and the Neighborz Band. This is a free event and in partnership with the Initiative Foundation Joy & Connection Grant

Appetizers and drinks provided at no charge

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**May 3 • Youth Concert**

**5 - 8pm**

All youth 9th thru 12th are invited

Live bands performing

Free Event

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**May 10**

**Mothers Day Brunch**

**10:30am - 12:30pm**



**May 16**

**East Central Chorale Concert**

**Concert 6:30pm**

**Dinner 7pm**

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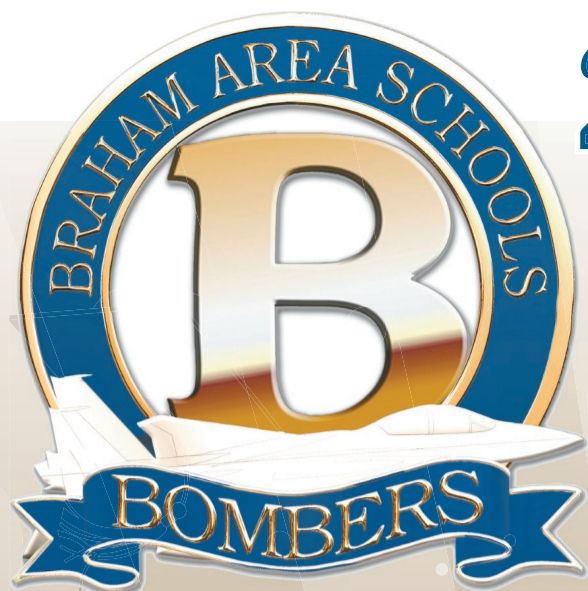
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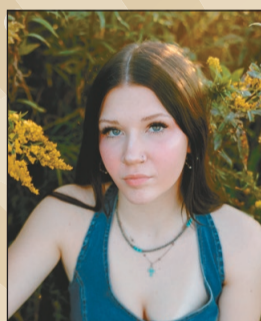


# 2026 Graduation Braham Area High School

## Friday, May 22, 2026 – 7 PM at Braham High School



# INTRODUCING THE CLASS of 2026



Brooke Anderson



Braelyn Bacon



Jenna Beck



Carter Beckman



Kalen Beckman



Eliyah Belden



Magnus Bremer



Anthony Brown



Kaitlyn Bujak



Makayla Carlson



Emily Davis



Eric Duverney



Isaac Eklund

2026 Braham Area High School Graduates Sponsored by the Following Businesses

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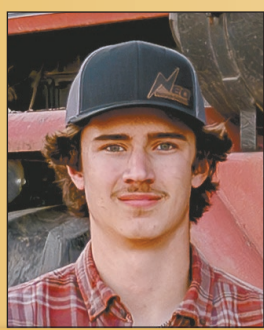


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Tyler Eklund



Wyatt Eklund



Madison Emerson



Caden Fast-Horse



Saphyarah Fehrman



Madeline Floding



Kyri Focht



Addison Forslin-Ruppert



Paition Gagne



Gregory Gelle



Bridget Golly



Makenzie Golly



Anthony Graves



Wyatt Heckt



Katherine Heidelberger



Kaylee Iverson



Dallis Jambretz



Lacey Jensen



Kruse Johnson



Garrett Kenmir



Alyssa Klepsa



Alexandra Kunshier



Garett Lidke



Carter Lotz



Nicholas Lucht



Brandon Lund



Ace-Emma Macauly



Leah Oliver



Dylan Schleicher



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Marlayna Schwermer



Avery Shockman



Ashlee Splittstoser



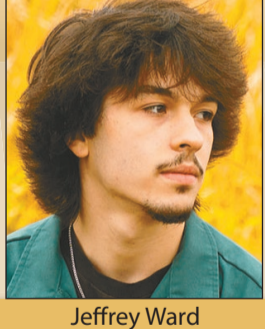
James Struckman III



Hannah Sward



Madelyn Walborn



Jeffrey Ward



Elizabeth White



Thadus Yang



Celine Zoehling




# Congratulations to the Graduates!

2026 Braham Area High School Graduates Sponsored by the Following Businesses

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# Braham High School releases third-quarter honor roll

## A HONOR ROLL

**7th Grade**  
 Asleson, Greta  
 Brandt, Scarlett  
 Brown, Abigail  
 Erickson, Brant  
 German, Sunny  
 Graves, Cecilia  
 Greeley, Bridget  
 Heckt, Elayna  
 Jensen, Flynn  
 Johnson, Benjamin  
 Jordan, Autumn  
 Kappelhoff, Kroy  
 Kozicky-Tomczak,  
 Lakeberg, Cale  
 Lund, Lauren Janet  
 Mendy, Chloe  
 Michaud, Madalynn  
 O'Donnell, Jessica  
 Olson, Vera  
 Peltz, Uriah  
 Perrone, Myles  
 Scanlon, Amelia  
 Schmakel, Marisa  
 Shockman, Amelia  
 Van Hees, Aubrianna  
 Witulski, Mayson

**8th Grade**  
 Betsinger, Logan  
 Brandt, Carly  
 Cain, Amelia  
 Cardenas, Alexa  
 Claseman, Dawson  
 Dahlin, Isabelle  
 Edwards, Levi  
 Eisenbraun, Isaiah  
 Gream, Greyson  
 Heath, Makenna  
 Karas, Jetta  
 Kiesz, Audrey  
 Lind, Caroline  
 Lucht, Alexis  
 Moffatt, Peyton  
 Nordling, Lylah  
 Pearson, Alyse  
 Perry, Justice  
 Salas, Nalaiyah  
 Sandberg, Edna  
 Shockman, Audi  
 Sward, Kathryn  
 Weber, Matthew  
 Williams, Kylee  
 Zambory, Jade

**9th Grade**  
 Asleson, Henry  
 Azulaitis, Brooklynn  
 Benzen, Eli  
 Eklund, Madelyn  
 Endicott, Brody  
 Erickson, Lanaya  
 Fix, Brock  
 German, Waylon  
 Graves, Ricky  
 Hirsch, Virgil  
 Hopkins, Cora  
 Jensen, Sawyer  
 Klemz, Jennavecia  
 Lakeberg, Bristol  
 Lidke, Gage  
 Long, Anna  
 Miers, Maraiely  
 Murrell, Samuel  
 Rawls, Caelyn  
 Smith, Norah  
 Stanley, Tyler  
 Swanson, Blake  
 Swanson, Sayler  
 Ward, Skye  
 Zuniga, Arturo III

**10th Grade**  
 Anderson, Piper  
 Blomdahl, Emily  
 Blomdahl, Matthew  
 Bremer, Sigmund  
 Brenny, Leala  
 Claseman, ZoeAnn  
 Dahlin, Logan  
 Edwards, Ayla  
 Erickson, Lindsay  
 Fix, Adam  
 Fix, Luke  
 Gadiant, Maxwell  
 Gunderson, Danica  
 Heath, Maiah  
 Henley, Emily  
 Iverson, Paxton  
 Kendall, Taylin  
 Lotz, Noah  
 Merchlewicz, Samantha  
 Morrison, Lexis  
 Nelson, Brynlee  
 Schneider, Zachary  
 Sheridan, Bella  
 Shockman, Isabelle  
 Trevino, Nora  
 Utermoehl, Bella  
 Ward, Aiden  
 Wendorff, Sophia  
 Wood, Tycen

**11th Grade**  
 Barn, Lucas  
 Davis, Austin  
 Johnson, Avery  
 Kiesz, Olivia  
 Kuhnke, Ava  
 Kuhnke, Grace  
 Leniz, Lauren  
 Leopold, Joey  
 Mohamed, Mohammed  
 Muchow, Kylie  
 Ryle, Paeton  
 Schneider, Olivia

**12th Grade**  
 Beckman, Carter  
 Bujak, Kaitlyn  
 Eklund, Isaac  
 Eklund, Tyler  
 Eklund, Wyatt  
 Emerson, Madison  
 Fehrman, Saphyarrah  
 Floding, Madeline  
 Gelle, Gregory  
 Graves, Anthony  
 Jensen, Lacey  
 Lidke, Garrett  
 Lotz, Carter  
 Lund, Brandon  
 Macauly, Ace  
 Schwartz, Preston  
 Splittstoser, Ashlee  
 White, Elizabeth  
 Zoehling, Celine

## B HONOR ROLL

**7th Grade**  
 Arntson, McKenna  
 Behm, Wyatt  
 Brock, Frankie-Jo  
 Cotton, Jaymason  
 Eng-Astedt, Oliver  
 Erickson, Kayden  
 Leary, Wyatt  
 Pearson, Mason  
 Powell, Luca  
 Sannes, Lukas  
 Schultz St Aoro, Jaxson  
 Simms, CJ  
 Sjolie, Ellieana  
 Snedeker, Jaxson  
 Trzcianko, Tallan  
 Williams, Karra

**8th Grade**  
 Alt, Madison  
 Bacon, Brax  
 Bergren, Austen  
 Cameron, Evan  
 Chavez, Cecilia  
 Fix, Jessa  
 Gelle, Henry  
 Huber, Teagan  
 Knapp, Teagan  
 Koolmo, Waylon  
 Lindberg, Evan  
 Mooney, Connor  
 Quiroz, Bam  
 Shockman, Owen  
 Smith, Kade  
 Sparks, Bennet  
 Ward, Cheyenne  
 Wekseth, Nikolai

**9th Grade**  
 Adams, Brayden  
 Adams, Zoltyn  
 Brown, Chayce  
 Bujak, Madalyn  
 Cummings, Levi  
 Davis, Faith  
 Derheim, Lucas  
 Karas, Capri  
 McGrath, Layla  
 Peterson, Bryn  
 Riccio, Kyle  
 Salas, Christian  
 Schroeder, Ayla  
 Seiberlich, Chase  
 Shockman, Luke  
 Sjolie, Lillian  
 Thompson, Audriana  
 Underwood, Piper  
 White, Theodore  
 Witulski, Maya

**10th Grade**  
 Carter, Deven  
 Christiansen, Andrea  
 Gould, Riley  
 Gudilias, Savannah  
 Hing, Kierra  
 Kelley, Julyssa  
 Lilly, Sierra  
 Markson, Luke  
 Maser, Tyler  
 Oknich, Weston  
 Reiling, Grace  
 Schleicher, Marlin  
 Tauer, Jonathan

**11th Grade**  
 Blanchette, Evan  
 Blanchette, Ezec  
 Boettcher, Dakota  
 Brown, Brody  
 Bruce, Hailey  
 Colleen, Colton  
 Graf, Alexus  
 Gunderson, Amelia  
 Hirsch, Everett  
 Kinglsey, Kayden  
 Lilly, Soren  
 Nahl, Dominic  
 Pierson, Waylon  
 Stafford, Nathan  
 Swanson, Bowen  
 Yslava, Juan

**12th Grade**  
 Beckman, Kalen  
 Belden, Elijah  
 Bremer, Magnus  
 Focht, Kyri  
 Kenmir, Garrett  
 Lucht, Nicholas  
 Oliver, Leah  
 Schwermer, Marlayna

## Four-year graduation rates: Comparison among area schools

Data is released one year after graduation year.

|               | 2018  | 2019  | 2020  | 2021  | 2022  | 2023  | 2024  | 2025  |
|---------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Braham        | 90.6% | 93.3% | 92.5% | 85.2% | 81.8% | 79.6% | 87.4% | 93.8  |
| C-I           | 87.4% | 87.4% | 85.8% | 86.0% | 77.9% | 76.3% | 79.9% | 81.8  |
| Chisago Lakes |       |       |       |       | 94.1% | 95.3% | 93.4% | 93.8  |
| East Central  | 78.8% | 82.5% | 67.9% | 81.6% | 72.1% | 74.6% | 64.6% | 76.6  |
| Hinckley-Fin. | 81.4% | 78.7% | 76.1% | 84.9% | 76.3% | 80.8% | 81.2% | 82.2  |
| Isle          | 73.5% | 81.1% | 71.9% | 95.2% | 59.4% | 78.1% | 75.8% | 87.2  |
| Milaca        | 89.6% | 86.0% | 84.9% | 93.9% | 85.5% | 87.7% | 86.4% | 92.7  |
| Minnesota     | 83.2% | 83.7% | 83.8% | 83.3% | 83.6% | 83.3% | 84.2% | 84.9% |
| Mora          | 88.0% | 83.8% | 86.7% | 94.9% | 84.3% | 85.6% | 93.5% | 86.8  |
| North Branch  | 84.7% | 89.6% | 82.6% | 82.8% | 84.2% | 81.5% | 83.4% | 86.3  |
| Ogilvie       | 95.0% | 91.7% | 83.3% | 81.0% | 80.0% | 84.2% | 94.4% | 92.1  |
| Pine City     | 91.4% | 86.0% | 87.4% | 87.4% | 86.6% | 88.5% | 78.0% | 83.3  |
| Princeton     | 81.4% | 83.2% | 92.1% | 92.5% | 89.7% | 91.6% | 91.1% | 93.3  |
| Rush City     | 91.9% | 93.3% | 91.7% | 88.1% | 90.5% | 90.9% | 97.1% | 91.9  |

Data compiled and shared by Braham School District

# RATE: Graduation rate among highest in area

### FROM PAGE 1

Area schools had reason to celebrate — with the majority surpassing the state percentage — but none more so than Braham, which saw a marked increase in its graduation rate.

### BIG NUMBERS

The Braham Area School District saw a massive gain in its graduation rates from 2024 to 2025, increasing its rate from 87% to 94%, a 7% change.

“We are thrilled to see these numbers rise,” said Superintendent Ken Gagner. “I would attribute it

first to our staff in Braham. While operating systems are important, you really need quality people to implement change and stay connected to our students.”

The operating system Gagner referred to is Flight 707, a one-hour delay to the start of school on Mondays. Teachers, paraprofessionals and staff arrive at 7:07 a.m. on Mondays to prepare before the school week begins. It is intended to improve academic performance and the overall school experience for students.

“I love that Flight 707 allows our key people — the ones with daily interactions

with students: teachers, principals, paraprofessionals, counselors — to meet every Monday to talk about what we teach, how we teach, and what are the needs of students. All this is done without students losing any instructional time vs. the schedule prior to Flight 707,” Gagner said.

“And while there are multiple people to recognize — most importantly all the teachers — I want to highlight Staci Kuhnke (guidance counselor), Shawn Kuhnke (high school principal) and Tammi Johnson (dean of students) for their leadership.”

# BOMBER: Graduates of class of 2026 have wide array of future plans after high school

### FROM PAGE 1

when COVID hit, yet through it all, they have shown resilience, adaptability, and a strong determination to succeed.”

Students will have bright futures ahead of them, with unique career aims and dreams of success.

“We do have a wide range of pathways and goals from our senior class. Some of our seniors are planning to attend colleges and universities, some are pursuing technical and trade programs that will lead directly into high-demand careers, and we also have some students who are eager to enter the workforce right away,”

**“My hope for this graduating class is that they continue to believe in themselves and in their ability to make a difference.”**

**Shawn Kuhnke**

Braham Area High School Principal

Kuhnke said.

“Each of these paths is valuable, and we are proud that our students feel confident choosing the direction that fits them best.”

Kuhnke shared his wishes for the graduates.

“My hope for this graduating class is that they continue to believe in themselves and in their ability to make a differ-

ence,” he said. “I hope they pursue their goals with confidence, treat others with kindness and respect, and stay connected to the values they developed here in Braham.


“They will always have a home in this community — once a Bomber, always a Bomber — and we will be cheering them on every step of the way.”

**Have a story idea? Call 320-225-5128 or email editor@moraminn.com.**



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## SPRING SPORTS SCOREBOARD (THROUGH APRIL 21)

### TRACK AND FIELD (TOP 3 FINISHES)

**Rush City Meet April 7**  
1st place: Girls ZoeAnn Claseman (400), Audi Shockman (800), 4x100 relay, 4x400 relay, 4x800 relay, 2nd place: Girls Nevaeh Fix (300 hurdles), Boys 4x200 relay, Slade Ribbey (triple jump), 3rd place: Girls Kylie Muchow (100 hurdles), ZoeAnn Claseman (long jump)

**East Central Meet April 10**  
1st place: Girls ZoeAnn Claseman (400), 4x100 relay, 2nd place: Girls ZoeAnn Claseman (200), 3rd place: Girls Nevaeh Fix (300 hurdles), 4x200 relay, 4x800 relay, ZoeAnn Claseman (long jump)

**Hinckley-Finlayson Meet April 16**  
1st place: Girls Nevaeh Fix (100), Zoe Claseman (200, 400), Emily Blomdahl (300 hurdles), 4x100 relay, 4x200 relay, 2nd place: Girls Audi Shockman (800), 4x800 relay, Bridget Golly (shot put), Avery Shockman (high jump - tie), Audi Shockman (high jump - tie), Carly Brandt (high jump - tie), Emily Davis (pole vault), Zoe Claseman (long jump), Boys Jason Robinson (1600), 3rd place: Girls Bridget Golly (triple jump - tie), Boys Tycen Woods (300 hurdles), Dominic Nahl (shot put, discus)

**Braham home track meet April 21**  
1st place: Girls ZoeAnn Claseman (200, 400, triple jump), Emily Blomdahl (100 hurdles, 300 hurdles), 4x100 relay, 4x400 relay, Bridget Golly (shot put), Boys 4x400 relay, 2nd place: Girls Audi Shockman (800), Boys Slade Ribbey (300 hurdles), 3rd place: Girls Nevaeh Fix (100, 300 hurdles), 4x200 relay, Boys Jason Robinson (1600), 4x100 relay, Dominic Nahl (shot put),

### SOFTBALL

**April 9**  
Braham 11, Ogilvie 1

**April 14**  
Braham 3, Aitkin 6

**April 16**  
Braham 0, Barnum 3

**April 20**  
Braham 18, Mora 2

**April 21**  
Braham 18, Hinckley-Finlayson 0

### BASEBALL

**April 9**  
Braham 3, Ogilvie 12

**April 10**  
Braham 7, Barnum 5

**April 14**  
Braham 13, Aitkin 14

**April 16**  
Braham 2, Ogilvie 13

**April 21**  
Braham 9, Hinckley-Finlayson 13

### BOYS AND GIRLS GOLF

**April 15 @ RushCity**  
Boys - 4th/10 teams  
\*Top finisher: Ethan Schroeder - 1st place (76)



DARWIN NELSON | BRAHAM JOURNAL

(Top photo) Braham's Eilyah Belden slides safely into second base during the Bombers' game against Grantsburgh. (Left photo) Braham's Olivia Kiesz lays down a bunt during the Bombers' game against Barnum.



DARWIN NELSON | BRAHAM JOURNAL

## UPDATED BRAHAM BOMBER SPRING SPORTS SCHEDULES (AS OF APRIL 23)

Below is the schedules for Braham spring sports. All schedules are subject to change based on weather, availability of officials, or other reasons. To find updated schedules and exact game times and locations, go to [www.great-riverconference.org](http://www.great-riverconference.org).

**Friday, April 24**  
•Softball @ Milaca - 4:30 p.m.

**Monday, April 27**  
•Softball home vs. Pine City - 4:30 p.m.  
•Baseball home vs. East Central - 4:30 p.m.

**Tuesday, April 28**  
•Boys and girls golf home @ Purple Hawk - 10 a.m.  
•Boys and girls track @ Rush City - 3:45 p.m.

•Baseball home double header vs. Mille Lacs - 3 p.m.  
•Softball home double header vs. Mille Lacs - 3 p.m.

**Thursday, April 30**  
•Boys and girls track @ Mora - 3:45 p.m.  
•Baseball @ Moose Lake - 4 p.m.  
•Softball home vs. East Central - 4:30 p.m.

**Friday, May 1**  
•Baseball home vs. Mora - 4:30 p.m.

**Saturday, May 2**  
•Softball @ Deer River Tournament - 9 a.m.

**Monday, May 4**  
•Boys and girls golf @ Spring Brook Golf Course

**Tuesday, May 5**  
•Boys and girls track home meet - 2 p.m.  
•Softball @ East Central - 4:30 p.m.  
•Baseball @ East Central - 4:30 p.m.

**Wednesday, May 6**  
•Boys and girls golf @ Mille Lacs - 10 a.m.

**Thursday, May 7**  
•Baseball home vs. Wrenshall - 4 p.m.

**Friday, May 8**  
•Baseball home vs. Rush City - 4:30 p.m.  
•Softball @ Ogilvie - 4 p.m.

**Friday, May 9**  
•Softball triangular @ Gibbon-Fairfax-Winthrop - 10 a.m.

**Monday, May 11**  
•Baseball home vs. Pine City - 4:30 p.m.

**Tuesday, May 12**  
•Softball @ Rush City - 4:30 p.m.  
•Baseball @ Rush City - 4:30 p.m.  
•Boys and girls track @ Pine City - 3:30 p.m.

**Wednesday, May 13**  
•Boys and girls golf @ Crosby-Ironton - noon

**Thursday, May 14**  
•Baseball home vs. Hinckley-Finlayson - 4:30 p.m.  
•Softball home vs. Hinckley-Finlayson - 4:30 p.m.

**Tuesday, May 19**  
•Boys and girls track @ East Central (Subsection 5A Meet) - 3:30 p.m.

## NINJA: Friends, family invited to watch students take on 70-foot obstacle course

FROM PAGE 1

fundraisers, we make active fun easy and accessible for everyone."

According to BEPO's Jennifer Bendickson, students in each grade will have 45 minutes to play on the 70-foot obstacle course, with Kindergarten kicking off the morning at 8:30.

They will be followed by third grade from 9:20 to 10:05; second grade from 10:10 to 10:55; fourth grade from 11 a.m. to 11:45; sixth grade from 11:45 to 12:30; first grade from 1 to 1:45 p.m.; and fifth grade, wrapping up the day from 1:45 to 2:30.

Family and friends are invited to come, watch and cheer on the students.

### HELPERS

Like most BEPO events, it takes a village to make it happen.

"Thanks to some amazing local businesses, this event was 100% paid for by donations, which allows the elementary school to keep 100% of the profits made during their fundraiser," said Bendickson. "We are incredibly grateful to our amazing sponsors for their support."

Among the 2026 Braham Elementary Ninja

Anywhere sponsors, available as this edition went to press, are Grandy Lions, Braham Moose Lodge, Cambridge Walmart, Isanti Tool, Dale's Heating & Appliance, Precision Hardscapes, Salon Cole,

The Barbershop, North Forty Fleet, Leaf's Towing, Frandsen Bank, East Central Energy, Mike's Discount Foods, Cambridge Bar & Grill, Northboud Collision, FGM, Owatonna Motor Company, Target, Bra-

ham Family Dental and Kwik Trip.

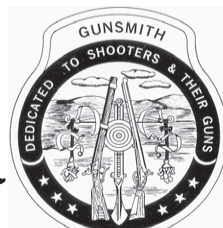
"If anyone is interested in donating they can contact BEPO at [BrahamBEPO@gmail.com](mailto:BrahamBEPO@gmail.com) or cash or a check can be dropped off at the elementary school office,"

Bendickson said.

All funds will benefit the elementary school for student field trips, classroom supplies, staff appreciation events, snacks, and other events and activities.

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# FOCUS: Photography, wedding networking group all found in new Braham business

FROM PAGE 1

by her and other photographers, along with information for engaged couples and wedding professionals.

"Couples can sign up to be matched with different wedding vendors," Sik-kink said, "kind of like a dating website. They can sign up and design what they want for their wedding vendors."

Wedly also has regular networking meetings for vendors to share tips and contacts. "It's about getting to know people and connecting with people. It's not high pressure, no sales. Just genuine connections."

Wedly is focused on the Midwest, with most vendors currently hailing from Minnesota and Wisconsin, Sik-kink said.

## GETTING SET UP

Sikkink, a native of Cambridge, and Cody, originally from Hinckley, have lived in Braham for two years. As a child, she visited Braham frequently to visit with her grandparents Dave and Cheri Busby.

"They have lived on Beachwood since I was little, so I have lots of memories in Braham," she said.

She was always artistic, something her father recognized in her. He bought Sikkink her first camera, a Sony Point and Shoot, when she was around 17.

"I took pictures of everything, and then I was editing them on my laptop. And (my dad) was like, 'You have to do this.' I told him you can't make a career out of this; it's a hobby. So I did hold off for a long time."

Her father also procured her first gig, taking pictures at a friend's wedding.

"I went and I did it the best I could," Sikkink said. "I was lucky. I had good lighting that day, and everything went well. But that's where it started."

## HOME AT LAST

Living in Braham has meant the Sikkinks can stay close to the people they love.

"We wanted to stay close to family and I love Braham," she said. "It's a small, cute little town." Braham is also closer to the North Shore, where Sikkink frequently travels to snap elopement photos.

They home school their 5-year-old Emily, while 14-year-old Cassidy attends Braham Area High School, which she loves. The whole family is

involved in the photography business, Whitney as photographer, Cassidy as her assistant, and Cody as photographer/videographer. While Emily isn't quite ready to pitch in, she carries a tiny pink camera of her own.

After a dozen years as a professional photographer Sikkink isn't shy about touting her abilities.

"I enjoy it, and I'm good at it," she said. "For so many years I had that doubt. But I've worked hard to get there. I wasn't always good. I've worked really, really hard and I've learned to give myself that credit."

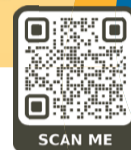
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#### Inside Sales Representative

Northstar Media in Cambridge is looking for a motivated person who likes to work with customers over the phone.

Mon., Tues., Wed. - 20-25 hours per week.

Responsibilities include classified ad sales, service and church directory ad sales, and special page/section ad sales.

Wage is \$17-\$19/hour plus attainable bonuses

#### Sales Representative

Kanabec Publications in Mora is looking for a motivated person who likes to work with customers over the phone and in person.

Mon., Tues., Wed., 20-25 hours per week

Responsibilities include display ads, inserts and special page/section ad sales in newspapers, shoppers and online.

Wage is \$17-\$19/hour plus attainable bonuses

**If interested, please submit resume to Jeff Andres, Publisher**  
[jeff@northstarmedia.net](mailto:jeff@northstarmedia.net).