



DISTRICT 279 FOUNDATION

*Investment in Youth
Celebration*

2021

Investment in Youth Celebration

For over 20 years, District 279 Foundation's Investment in Youth celebration has honored students, volunteers, and staff in Osseo Area Schools. District 279 Foundation is honored to celebrate the following students, staff, and volunteers who contribute to our community with confidence, courage, and competence.

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Chartered in 1991 as a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization, District 279 Foundation partners with the school district, parents, students, volunteers, city officials, civic organizations, and the business community to support and make a difference in Osseo Area Schools.

Our Mission

Our mission is to support and enhance the district's dedication to all students.

Our Vision

Our vision is to provide learning opportunities for students in Osseo Area Schools by funding programs, projects and other opportunities that are not presently available through the district's budget.

Our Core Value

We believe that there is a moral, social and economic imperative to support student success and equitable student achievement.

District 279 Foundation Is Honored to Celebrate the Following People as This Year's Award Recipients

Significant Investment in Developing Their Own Talents:

Exhibiting unique expressions of creativity or talent.

Ava Lee	Student	North View Middle School
Jacob Pearson	Student	Maple Grove Senior High

Significant Investment in Overcoming Adversity:

Displaying the will and courage to overcome major challenges.

Trent Adair	Student	Basswood Elementary
Sarah Arias-Esquivas	Student	Oak View Elementary
Rasheed Baya	Student	Weaver Lake Elementary
Jacob Bourgeois	Student	Osseo Education Center
Halaseh Cooper	Student	Park Center Senior High
Ashley Devereaux	Student	Rice Lake Elementary
Gladys Garcia	Student	Adult Basic Education
Chasen Gilbert	Student	Cedar Island Elementary
Kristy Johnson	Kidstop/Four Star Coordinator	Kidstop
Miles Korti	Student	Palmer Lake Elementary
Balkees Oladejo	Student	Crest View Elementary
Sophia Taye	Student	Woodland Elementary
Brody Tiffany	Student	Early Childhood & Special Education
Diego Zavala-Varela	Student	Park Center Senior High

Significant Investment in the Betterment of Education:

Showing commitment to education by giving of their time, talents or resources.

Lisa Coulter	Education Support Professional	Park Brook Elementary
Lolita Davis	AESP Resource Manager	Elm Creek Elementary
Gail Dubester-Litt	Substitute Teacher	Educational Service Center
Tara Gibbs	Educator	Fair Oaks Elementary
Lara Gilbert	Volunteer	Cedar Island Elementary
Emily Hable	Education Support Professional	Osseo Education Center
Deb Haeg	Education Support Professional	Early Childhood & Family Education
DeAnn Hill	Kidstop Lead Instructor	Rice Lake Elementary
Anne Kolden	Educator	Oak View Elementary
Ann Kozarek	Educator	Edinbrook Elementary
Michelle Krelic	Educator	Educational Service Center
Becca McGrane	Volunteer	Early Childhood & Family Education
Maura Nelson	Educator	Osseo Area Learning Center
Gayle Nieman	Volunteer	Birch Grove Elementary
Kristen Palyan	Substitute Teacher	Fernbrook Elementary
Johnathan Richmond	Educator	Maple Grove Senior High
James Ringold	Educator	Osseo Middle School
Beth Theisen	Education Support Professional	Rush Creek Elementary
Dana Trouth	Educator	Brooklyn Middle School
Josiah Tusler	Student	Osseo Senior High

District 279 Foundation Is Honored to Celebrate the Following People as This Year's Award Recipients

Significant Investment in Helping the Community:

Exhibiting involvement and dedication toward the community and its members.

Diane Anderson
Brenda Bokusky
Marisela Catarino
Mai Nhia Cha
Jill Dalton
Megan James
Donna Jones

Volunteer
Nutrition Services Manager
AESP
AESP
Resource Manager
Student
Resource Manager

Osseo Area Retired Educators
Osseo Senior High
Enrollment Center
Enrollment Center
Garden City Elementary
Elm Creek Elementary
Weaver Lake Elementary

Significant Investment in Their Own Learning:

Demonstrating perseverance, love of learning or pursuit of knowledge by study or experience.

Axel Assogba
Leling Chen
Shaun R. Crudup, Jr.
Asa Cummings
Bintu Donzo
Lola Dopkins
Daniel-Ayomide Fapohunda
Makenzy Farmer
Christine Gbotee
Princess Harris
Marilynn Krou
Nguyen Le
Phillip Melamud
Tyrezz Morris
Juan Muniz-Zaragoza
Omael Sobro
Carolyn Voss
Jayden Vu
Keanu Xiong
Connie Yang
Luna Yang

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Zanewood Community School
Distance Learning Academy - Elementary School
Osseo Area Learning Center
Brooklyn Middle School
Zanewood Community School
Edinbrook Elementary
Distance Learning Academy - Senior High
Palmer Lake Elementary
Park Brook Elementary
Fernbrook Elementary
Maple Grove Middle School
Crest View Elementary
Distance Learning Academy - Middle School
Distance Learning Academy - Middle School
North View Middle School
Fair Oaks Elementary
Woodland Elementary
Rush Creek Elementary
Distance Learning Academy - Elementary School
Distance Learning Academy - Senior High
Birch Grove Elementary

Significant Investment in Modeling for Youth:

Demonstrating through words and actions an example for young people.

Kirsten Bakken
Sam Khwice
Badou Sowe
Aubrey Stauffenecker

Education Support Professional
Educator
Student
Student

Basswood Elementary
Maple Grove Middle School
Osseo Middle School
Garden City Elementary

Award Recipient Descriptions

Adult Basic Education



OSSEO AREA SCHOOLS
Community Ed
Adult Basic Education

Gladys Garcia, Student

Nominator: Kelli Ferguson

Category: *Significant Investment in Overcoming Adversity: Displaying the will and courage to overcome major challenges.*

Gladys Garcia has been a student in our Adult Basic Education English language classes since 2019. During this time, she has shown dedication not only to her learning, but to the overall betterment of her family's life in the United States. Gladys immigrated to the United States from Venezuela in 2019 and had to start her life all over again. She has overcome so many obstacles and has never backed down when faced with adversity! Her perseverance is truly something to be admired. She has come a long way with her English language skills, and was recently promoted to a management position at her job and got her driver's license. This is just the beginning for Gladys because she will continue to thrive.

Basswood Elementary



**BASSWOOD
BULLDOGS**

Trent Adair, Student

Nominator: Kris Nelson

Category: *Significant Investment in Overcoming Adversity: Displaying the will and courage to overcome major challenges.*

Trent Adair has attended Basswood Elementary since kindergarten. Now, as a 5th grade student, it is incredible to see the growth that he has made! Trent is a true example of educational transformation and perseverance. In the beginning, school started out confusing, overwhelming, and challenging for him. Trent never gave up. He trusted his team with his most vulnerable emotions and frustrations, and they guided his way. Trent has become a role model student, intent on listening to directions, completing tasks given, self-regulating and self-initiating. He has a wonderful sense of humor as well behind that shy facade. He works to his greatest potential and exudes confidence. He is a great student.

Kirsten Bakken, Education Support Professional

Nominator: Tammy Flanigan

Category: *Significant Investment in Modeling for Youth: Demonstrating through words and actions an example for young people.*

Kirsten Bakken is an absolute gift to Basswood! She is always willing to help wherever needed and does so with a smile and a big chuckle. She has an amazing talent of helping students achieve at their highest potential, while also keeping things in perspective. She takes the time to build relationships with all students and works hard to see what makes each student tick. Students notice the extra attention and they feel her love! Even when a student has a difficult day, she is there to encourage, validate, and help them through the situation. She truly sees the good in every single student! Kirsten is not only a gift to the students but is also an amazing support to staff members as well. The fact that she does not even know the true gift she is to our school speaks to the authentic nature of her teaching. She is a wealth of knowledge, a helping hand, a shoulder to do the heavy lifting, a smile that gets us through, and a whole lot of fun to be around! We hope that others know how truly blessed we are to get to work with her every day.

Birch Grove Elementary



Gayle Nieman, Volunteer

Nominator: Dr. Ronald Salazar

Category: *Significant Investment in the Betterment of Education: Showing commitment to education by giving of their time, talents or resources.*

Gayle Nieman has been volunteering at Birch Grove Elementary for about 12 years. She has done an awesome job supporting our Kindergarten students for 12 years. She works long days preparing materials for the classes to make sure students have a meaningful learning experience while enjoying class activities. Her support of the classroom teacher allows the teacher more time to prepare and teach. She brings joy to Kindergarten and the entire school. We are missing having her around our school and look forward to having her back for many more years. We are fortunate to have her as part of the Birch Grove family.

Luna Yang, Student

Nominator: Stephanie Vleck

Category: *Significant Investment in Their Own Learning: Demonstrating perseverance, love of learning or pursuit of knowledge by study or experience.*

Throughout her years at Birch Grove Elementary, Luna has shown a tremendous effort to immerse herself in all areas of learning. She is responsible, reliable, helpful and kind. Luna has been a part of many different learning opportunities at Birch Grove, including the musicals and Art Troupes. Luna persevered during distance learning and continued to work hard and stay engaged in a difficult learning situation. No matter which teacher was online for learning with her class, Luna was there. Luna has worked hard to make the most of her education at Birch Grove Elementary School for the Arts!

Brooklyn Middle School



Asa Cummings, Student

Nominator: Annessia Xiong

Category: *Significant Investment in Their Own Learning: Demonstrating perseverance, love of learning or pursuit of knowledge by study or experience.*

Asa Cummings' love for education and learning is evident each day he comes to Brooklyn Middle School. His enthusiasm and positivity show when he is in class and in the halls. He smiles and says hi to his teachers and friends and greets them with such a humble attitude. He gets to class on time and is prepared to learn. His excitement for each class and respect for staff and peers is amazing. He is a role model not only for his peers but for me because he shows that each day is a brand-new day full of exciting learning opportunities and to always pick yourself up when the work seems to be impossible. Asa- continue to love what you learn and to use that positive attitude and your possibilities will be endless!

Dana Trouth, Educator

Nominator: Brooklyn Middle STEAM School Staff

Category: *Significant Investment in the Betterment of Education: Showing commitment to education by giving of their time, talents or resources.*

When we think about dedication, commitment, kindness and passion, one who goes above and beyond of what is asked of him; we think of Dana Trouth. Dana has been an educator, leader, mentor, colleague, community education supervisor, coach and the ultimate wing man. He has created friendships to the hundreds of staff he has worked with in Osseo Area Schools for the past 44 years. He has impacted thousands of students that have been in his classroom, joined him in projects in the STEAM maker space, has hosted hundreds of Brown Bag luncheons, numerous fieldtrips, experiments and has collaborated with experts in the field of Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics. He continues to light a passion in students each day and will continue to leave a legacy of a man who thinks of others ALWAYS before he thinks of himself.

Cedar Island Elementary



Chasen Gilbert, Student

Nominator: Jaime Anderson, Dan Wald and Danielle Novak

Category: *Significant Investment in Overcoming Adversity: Displaying the will and courage to overcome major challenges.*

Chasen is a 5th grade boy who is legally deaf and has cochlear implants. He has never allowed his hearing issues to limit him as he fully participates in academic life at Cedar Island and in athletics. Chasen is a voracious scholar and athlete who continuously tears down barriers caused by his hearing loss in clever and innovative ways. Chasen chooses to see the bright side and has never met a challenge that he has not been able to conquer. For Chasen, deafness is a part of his identity not a disability that holds him back. As an example, he has chosen to join the school band this year. His unwavering optimism and constant drive to do his best regardless of the challenges he faces daily makes him a natural leader and role model to his peers. Nothing is off limits for Chasen as he sets his hopes and dreams for life.

Lara Gilbert, Volunteer

Nominator: Barb Lindsay

Category: *Significant Investment in the Betterment of Education: Showing commitment to education by giving of their time, talents or resources.*

Lara has been an active parent volunteer at Cedar Island Elementary for many years. In addition to helping with classroom activities and special events, Lara has made a tremendous impact as treasurer of our Parent Teacher Organization (PTO). As PTO treasurer, Lara manages the budget set by the organization, makes sure funds are deposited and bills paid, and provides detailed information to an accountant to ensure that tax forms are submitted. Lara has put her organizational and leadership skills to good use in this role. She has organized files, taken care to fully understand and fulfill her duties, and has set the stage for her predecessor to step into a clearly defined position. Thank you, Lara!

Crest View Elementary



Nguyen Le, Student

Nominator: Megan Kleen

Category: *Significant Investment in Their Own Learning: Demonstrating perseverance, love of learning or pursuit of knowledge by study or experience.*

Nhi has shown dedication and perseverance from the moment she started school. She asks questions and absorbs new information with such joy. With hard work and desire to learn, she has flourished in her language learning abilities. It is an honor to work with her.

Balqees Oladejo, Student

Nominator: Megan Kleen

Category: *Significant Investment in Overcoming Adversity: Displaying the will and courage to overcome major challenges.*

Balqees moved to the United States from Nigeria in 2020. Balqees is a ray of sunshine. She asks questions, focuses on her schoolwork every day, and helps others stay focused. During distance learning, after she completes her work, she helps her siblings. During library media lessons, she demonstrates that she is an eager reader and has a love of learning. She is a natural leader among her peers and the school community.

Distance Learning Academy - Elementary School



Leling Chen, Student

Nominator: Amy Branton

Category: *Significant Investment in Their Own Learning: Demonstrating perseverance, love of learning or pursuit of knowledge by study or experience.*

Leling has persevered in the most challenging times our education system has faced. Her focus and determination to learn everything she can is inspiring. Leling is a go-getter, a student with such a strong growth mindset that nothing can stop her. She drives towards excellence in her second-grade studies and her personal interests of the natural sciences and art. She is caring and helpful, always looking out for her fellow classmates. Leling has been a joy and a marvel to have as a part of our class. Congratulations Leling!

Keanu Xiong, Student

Nominator: Janeen Burow

Category: *Significant Investment in Their Own Learning: Demonstrating perseverance, love of learning or pursuit of knowledge by study or experience.*

Keanu is the kind of student every teacher loves to have. He clearly wants to do well, and completes every assignment given to him. He asks for clarification of expectations. He kindly explains homework to other students. He politely reminds me when I miss something and is quick to volunteer to show how to do something on a Chromebook. He is a leader and is well-liked among his classmates. Keanu has many ideas on how we can be awesome together. Not only does he share his ideas, but he also takes action. I hope his parents don't mind if he brings home a stray dog someday.

Distance Learning Academy - Middle School



Phillip Melamud, Student

Nominator: Mary Anderson

Category: *Significant Investment in Their Own Learning: Demonstrating perseverance, love of learning or pursuit of knowledge by study or experience.*

Phillip is a leader in 7th Grade Distance Learning Academy (DLA) English class. Phillip is kind and respectful. He advocates for himself to deepen his understanding of the topics we are studying. He adds critical thinking skills, humor and wit to class discussions and in weekly discussion posts. Phillip has a bright future ahead filled with many personal and professional accomplishments.

Tyrezz Morris, Student

Nominator: Elise Miller

Category: *Significant Investment in Their Own Learning: Demonstrating perseverance, love of learning or pursuit of knowledge by study or experience.*

Tyrezz has shown tremendous academic growth this school year. He set a goal to improve his performance this trimester which he has met with enthusiasm in science class. He follows through on suggestions for improvement with humility and responsibility in everything from classwork to organizational skills. During class time, he shows respect for his classmates and teachers with his respect and active, creative participation. Tyrezz has become a model of growth mindset among his peers with both his actions and attitude.

Distance Learning Academy - Senior High



Daniel-Ayomide Fapohunda, Student

Nominator: Crystal Johnson

Category: *Significant Investment in Their Own Learning: Demonstrating perseverance, love of learning or pursuit of knowledge by study or experience.*

Daniel works his hardest each day of class no matter what. He is an exemplar online student and actively participates and engages every day. He expresses gratitude for each learning opportunity, and actively seeks guidance for growth. His active involvement in class has made online history much more fun for me as a teacher. His perseverance and dedication to his studies also encourages his peers to participate as he leads by example.

Connie Yang, Student

Nominator: Melissa Bougie

Category: *Significant Investment in Their Own Learning: Demonstrating perseverance, love of learning or pursuit of knowledge by study or experience.*

Connie is continuously showing dedication to her own learning. She asks questions when she needs help, she helps others in her class when they are struggling, and she always puts forth her best effort. She makes every class she is in better and really understands the importance of education.

Early Childhood & Family Education



OSSEO AREA SCHOOLS
Community Ed
Early Childhood & Family Education

Deb Haeg, Education Support Professional

Nominator: Bertie Williams

Category: *Significant Investment in the Betterment of Education: Showing commitment to education by giving of their time, talents or resources.*

Deb has been serving families in Osseo's Early Childhood & Family Education program for 22 years. She is intentional about building strong relationships with young children and parents. Deb makes school fun for all learners! During her time in Osseo, Deb has stepped into many roles. This year, she has shown persistence in learning technology skills to support students during hybrid and distance learning models. Deb's favorite color is glitter, and she brightens every space she enters with her caring and compassionate spirit.

Becca McGrane, Volunteer

Nominator: Sally Nault-Maurer & Elise Ruegsegger

Category: *Significant Investment in the Betterment of Education: Showing commitment to education by giving of their time, talents or resources.*

Becca is a member of the Early Childhood Parent Advisory Council. In her role on the council, Becca has promoted the program in the community, encouraged families, and shared her bright smile with those around her. Becca has chaired the Family Literacy Night for two years and has seen family engagement in the event grow significantly as she has used her background in education to show parents easy ways to promote reading and writing skills at home. Becca is passionate about reading and currently leads the program work with Scholastic Books. We are thrilled to honor Becca's important role in Osseo's Early Childhood & Family Education program.

Early Childhood & Special Education



OSSEO AREA SCHOOLS
Community Ed
Early Childhood & Special Education

Brody Tiffany, Student

Nominator: Ginger Luoma Anderson

Category: *Significant Investment in Overcoming Adversity: Displaying the will and courage to overcome major challenges.*

"My secret is very simple. It is only with the heart that one can see rightly...what is essential is invisible to the eye." The Little Prince. Brody Tiffany was born at Mayo Clinic with a congenital heart condition. This condition's big name, Transposition of the Great Arteries, did not dissuade his family's big hope and big love. Brody is five and has had five heart surgeries. Brody laughs through his heart, eats life through his heart, shines through his heart and beams joy. In Brody's own words, "I'm so excited!" We protect and thank his ribs for containing love in each beat. He is a miracle. It is with his heart that he sees rightly.

Edinbrook Elementary



Lola Dopkins, Student

Nominator: Sarah McCarthy

Category: *Significant Investment in Their Own Learning: Demonstrating perseverance, love of learning or pursuit of knowledge by study or experience.*

Lola is a leader by example and works hard to do her best in all areas of learning. She gracefully takes on all challenges presented to her, then works through them methodically until she has a deep understanding of the subject. When she is with her peers, she is able to encourage them to be their best selves. She is deeply supportive of the people around her and helps others find value in both themselves and learning.

Ann Kozarek, Educator

Nominator: Michael Harvey

Category: *Significant Investment in the Betterment of Education: Showing commitment to education by giving of their time, talents or resources.*

Ann creates a strong classroom environment by her positive encouragement, consistent use of technology, her establishment of routines, and her general high expectations she has for her students. Her students are noticeably excited and happy to be in her learning space and respond well to her direction. Her follow through in her lessons are always on target. She can adjust her instruction as needed to meet the needs of all her students. Ann is always seeking new techniques to more fully engage all her students to achieve at their fullest capability. Ann has been a part of the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) team at Edinbrook where she continually finds ways to promote student success.

Educational Service Center

OSSEO AREA SCHOOLS

ISD  279

Gail Dubester-Litt, Substitute Teacher

Nominator: Lisa McLearn

Category: *Significant Investment in the Betterment of Education: Showing commitment to education by giving of their time, talents or resources.*

Gail has gone above and beyond as a substitute teacher. She makes sure she has a relationship with the teacher before she subs, she will call the attendance specialist to get teacher's school email to get lesson plans or other helpful information to prepare for her time in the classroom. She took initiative to connect with the technology team to get additional training and resources on teaching remotely as she admitted she is not tech savvy. Gail was a former teacher and subs daily this school year. She will call and see which school would benefit the most rather than just picking a vacancy. She is good at providing feedback to our team to help our subs. Gail is an advocate for our substitute teachers and has our students at the front.

Michelle Krelic, Educator

Nominator: Jan Bitzer

Category: *Significant Investment in the Betterment of Education: Showing commitment to education by giving of their time, talents or resources.*

Michelle, a former promising practices teacher, currently a Staff Development Assessment Specialist with Student Services, works tirelessly to promote literacy for students who receive special education services. She continues to build on the strengths of our teachers through the implementation of Wilson Curriculum, and coaching and modeling of effective strategies that support high academic achievement for each student. She continues to build on her own knowledge and skills through ongoing professional development, both through the District and independently. As a direct result of her amazing work for Osseo Area Schools, she has been asked to be an adjunct professor for reading teachers through the University of St. Thomas.

Elm Creek Elementary



Lolita Davis, AESP Resource Manager

Nominator: Angela Paige

Category: *Significant Investment in the Betterment of Education: Showing commitment to education by giving of their time, talents or resources.*

Lolita, otherwise known as Lita, is a dedicated Resource Manager at Elm Creek Elementary. She greets everyone in our building with her bright smile and positive attitude each day. She listens and will do whatever she can to help the staff and students at Elm Creek. Lita took on the challenging job of COVID Coordinator this year for the building. She adapts easily to many changes and challenges, and clearly communicates important information. Lita's kind soul and ability to listen creates a calm environment for everyone. She is compassionate about keeping everyone safe during stressful times. Lita adds enthusiasm and joy to our school and has truly made a difference in the lives of many students and staff members!

Megan James, Student

Nominator: Cami Tran

Category: *Significant Investment in Helping the Community: Exhibiting involvement and dedication toward the community and its members.*

Megan is known to go above and beyond in her acts of kindness towards her peers, especially for students who may need it the most. She is a leader, and helps others amplify their own voice. She can easily see the good in every person she encounters. During the springtime of the 2020 pandemic, Megan was devastated that she could not connect to her peers and teachers in the way that she previously had. During this time, she thought about how she could help others and reflected on what our school may need. She came up with the idea to create a lemonade stand during the summer and donated the proceeds to the Elm Creek media center. What a kind and selfless act, all before 4th grade!

Enrollment Center

OSSEO AREA SCHOOLS

ISD  279

Marisela Catarino, AESP

Nominator: Jim Greeley

Category: *Significant Investment in Helping the Community: Exhibiting involvement and dedication toward the community and its members.*

Marisela is an Administrative Assistant at the Enrollment Center. Every day, Marisela demonstrates a significant investment in helping the community. Marisela excels in her ability to connect and build relationships with our Spanish speaking families. She can create a seamless first experience for all families and Osseo Area Schools. In addition, she carries a welcoming, positive, and friendly attitude with her each day. Marisela works directly with our Voluntary PreK families and provides our earliest learners an opportunity to start their education journey with Osseo Area Schools. Marisela's work and passion exemplifies the districts mission, and she provides a much-needed resource and helping hand to many parents, students, and community members.

Mai Nhia Cha, AESP

Nominator: Jim Greeley

Category: *Significant Investment in Helping the Community: Exhibiting involvement and dedication toward the community and its members.*

Mai Nhia is an Administrative Assistant at the Enrollment Center. She is dedicated to serving all members of the community. Mai Nhia has been crucial in the enrollment planning and implementation of the Distance Learning Academy and 279 Online School for next school year. Her efforts and dedication have provided thousands of students the ability to transfer or enroll accurately and quickly into a remote learning opportunity that's safe and meets the needs of the student and family. Mai Nhia's positive attitude is contagious. Her willingness to help all students and families has created a sense of relief to many during these very difficult times. Mai Nhia is well deserving of this recognition.

Fair Oaks Elementary



Tara Gibbs, Educator

Nominator: Halee Vang

Category: *Significant Investment in the Betterment of Education: Showing commitment to education by giving of their time, talents or resources.*

Tara is one of the hardest working teachers that I know. She goes beyond to support her English Learning (EL) students, their families, and other teachers. She often volunteers to help the school with duties and projects. As an EL team lead, she has often stayed after school just to assist me with both technical support and EL content. She is hard working, dedicated, and knowledgeable, and goes above and beyond to ensure that students learn.

Omael Sobro, Student

Nominator: Tara Gibbs

Category: *Significant Investment in Their Own Learning: Demonstrating perseverance, love of learning or pursuit of knowledge by study or experience.*

Omael reads and learns widely about science and the universe (among many other things). He is actively engaged in sharing his knowledge and discussing ideas with others. Omael is quick to engage teachers and students in his latest research about the universe. His love and zest for learning causes him to read and learn about science and the universe every chance he gets, and his desire for others to share that knowledge brings great excitement to learning and discussion.

Fernbrook Elementary



Princess Harris, Student

Nominator: Jeff Zastrow

Category: *Significant Investment in Their Own Learning: Demonstrating perseverance, love of learning or pursuit of knowledge by study or experience.*

Princess is royalty in Fernbrook's book! She doesn't let challenges get her down as she overcomes obstacles to keep moving forward in her education. During distance learning, you could see her engaged in a Google Meet while helping younger siblings simultaneously. There's no stopping Princess Harris!

Kristen Palyan, Substitute Teacher

Nominator: Susan Cvek

Category: *Significant Investment in the Betterment of Education: Showing commitment to education by giving of their time, talents or resources.*

Needing a day off from teaching is never easy. Teachers must write lesson plans, find a sub, wonder how the day will go, and sort through what was covered upon returning. Many teachers at Fernbrook have breathed a sigh of relief when we know Kristen Palyan will be our sub! Kristen always follows plans carefully and leaves thorough notes when plans inevitably need modification. Most importantly, she has excellent rapport with students and truly cares about people, both students and staff members. This year, she has been our most consistent sub, willing to be in the trenches when COVID changes have stopped many others from wanting to sub. We are grateful for Kristen's commitment to Fernbrook learners and staff!



Garden City Elementary

Jill Dalton, Resource Manager

Nominator: David Branch

Category: *Significant Investment in Helping the Community: Exhibiting involvement and dedication toward the community and its members.*

Jill has gone above and beyond this school year. In addition to her job duties and responsibilities as Resource Manager she graciously accepted the role of Site COVID-19 Coordinator for Garden City. This role was critically important to ensure the safe reopening of our school to both students and staff. She has taken the role seriously and at the same time adding humor to relieve staff anxiety. She answers questions quickly and respectfully. Jill's action during the COVID-19 pandemic has truly demonstrated an investment in our school community.

Aubrey Stauffenecker, Student

Nominator: David Branch

Category: *Significant Investment in Modeling for Youth: Demonstrating through words and actions an example for young people.*

Aubrey has been at Garden City Elementary since Kindergarten. She has ALWAYS demonstrated excellency in both learning and behavior. She has been a role model for her peers no matter the grade level. Before returning to full in-person learning she stayed engaged and focused with our digital learning tools, participating in Google Classroom sessions, uploading assignments to Seesaw, etc. Since returning to full in-person learning she has continued her leadership for other 5th grade students. She has been a member of the SWIM Team [student leadership team] for the last two years. Aubrey is always willing to help and is a positive role model for all students at Garden City.



Kidstop

Kristy Johnson, Kidstop/Four Star Coordinator

Nominator: Carrie Cabe

Category: *Significant Investment in Overcoming Adversity: Displaying the will and courage to overcome major challenges.*

Kristy has fundamentally been challenged over the last 12 months by completely having to revamp and redesign her program and team (multiple times) all while dealing with the ups and downs of the COVID pandemic on those with whom she engages. The Kidstop/Four Star Express program has experienced so many changes in the last year, and through this process, she has led with a smile on her face, and was always there to support and embrace her team and more importantly students. She has truly stepped up to serve our community in new ways and her dedication to keep youth at the center of all she and her team do has been amazing!



OSSEO AREA SCHOOLS
Community Ed
Kidstop

Maple Grove Middle School

Sam Khwice, Educator

Nominator: Claire Stordahl

Category: *Significant Investment in Modeling for Youth: Demonstrating through words and actions an example for young people.*

Those of you who know Sam Khwice, know that he has a big, wonderful personality, and he uses it to teach music in new and exciting ways. He leads by example; always encouraging students to use their strengths to make music, but he also doesn't shy away from being willing to learn new things from them. Sam truly "gets" how to connect with middle schoolers. He is not afraid to be himself in front of them and encourage them to be their true selves in return. He always takes time to listen to what students have to say and shows them that he cares. Because of this rapport, the band students at Maple Grove Middle School are a true family of learners.

Marilynn Krou, Student

Nominator: Julia Fromm-Mohlencamp

Category: *Significant Investment in Their Own Learning: Demonstrating perseverance, love of learning or pursuit of knowledge by study or experience.*

Marilynn exemplifies individual determination and a commitment to her education. She advocates for herself, never gives up even when obstacles seem insurmountable, and her moral and social conscience exceeds that of many of her peers. She plans to attend Spelman College to study education and become an elementary school teacher. She deserves recognition for her love of learning and her determination to share that with the next generation.



Maple Grove Senior High



Jacob Pearson, Student

Nominator: Maple Grove Crimson Staff

Category: *Significant Investment in Developing Their Own Talents: Exhibiting unique expressions of creativity or talent.*

In only the past few years, Jacob has exhibited truly exceptional artistic skills which he has worked diligently to develop, specifically in drawing. In incredibly short amounts of times, he has produced brilliant depictions of significant people and events, many of which at the request of Crimson staff members. Most recently, he has challenged himself by building a portfolio that is diverse and is outside of his interests and strengths. He continues to research, practice and learn new skills that broaden his perspective as an artist. His work ethic and talents have earned him a college scholarship, and he has a future without limit. Maple Grove Senior High is proud to honor Jacob with our 2021 Investment in Youth award!

Johnathan Richmond, Educator

Nominator: Maple Grove Crimson Staff

Category: *Significant Investment in the Betterment of Education: Showing commitment to education by giving of their time, talents or resources.*

Johnathan is a mentor, advocate, role model, and father-figure for countless Crimson students of all racial/cultural backgrounds. He works above and beyond for students, staff and families, especially during the past year when he maintained continuous contact with students to support and encourage them through the hardest of times. He creates a welcoming community for all students and staff by his caring, genuine, and authentic presence at all times. Each Crimson student knows Johnathan will hold them to the highest of expectations while always conveying his love and devotion to their well-being. Maple Grove could not be more fortunate to have Johnathan Richmond, and we are proud to honor him as a 2021 Investment in Youth award recipient!

North View Middle School



NORTH VIEW MIDDLE

Ava Lee, Student

Nominator: Diana Bledsoe

Category: *Significant Investment in Developing Their Own Talents: Exhibiting unique expressions of creativity or talent.*

Ava has put significant Investment in Developing her own talents in drawing. She has goals of going to Art School after High School and she is taking Advanced Placement Studio Art in High School to push herself to get better and grow in her talent. Additionally, she has made a significant investment in overcoming adversity: she has displayed the will and courage to overcome major challenges in her life and continues to be a strong advocate for herself and others.

Juan Muniz-Zaragoza, Student

Nominator: Diana Bledsoe

Category: *Significant Investment in Their Own Learning: Demonstrating perseverance, love of learning or pursuit of knowledge by study or experience.*

Juan has a great attitude, always respectful, and always thinks deeply. North View Middle teachers couldn't ask for a better student. He is one of our best and brightest!

Oak View Elementary



Sarah Arias-Esquivias, Student

Nominator: William Kuendig

Category: *Significant Investment in Overcoming Adversity: Displaying the will and courage to overcome major challenges.*

Sarah an exceptional 5th grader, not because of her super long legs, not because of her beautiful long black hair, not because of her cool white cane. Although all these are special, Sarah is unique because she is incredibly patient even though things don't always go the way she wants. She is curious and willing to try new things even though they seem difficult at first. Sarah is confronted everyday with situations that no other student has a true understanding of, but she can still act and smile and be invested in her class as any other young girl who wants to be successful. Her resiliency gives her the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties and handle these with grace every single day. Sarah has a huge knowledge related to adaptive technology that goes beyond that of other 5th graders. Sarah is gentle and polite and shares kindness with any new person she meets. For Sarah, nothing will stand in her way of her being successful and doing what she wants.

Anne Kolden, Educator

Nominator: William Kuendig

Category: *Significant Investment in the Betterment of Education: Showing commitment to education by giving of their time, talents or resources.*

Anne Kolden has served Osseo Area Schools as a dedicated teacher for 26 years! She's taught mostly 5th grade at Oak View Elementary and Cedar Island. Anne gets most excited when her students learn something important to them and the pride they feel. Literature and the joys that a great book can bring to her classroom community has always been a teaching highlight. Mrs. Kolden is a thoughtful colleague, a kind person with a positive outlook, and understanding teacher who shows care for her students, and a loved staff member. This award is well deserved!

Osseo Area Learning Center



Shaun R. Crudup, Jr., Student

Nominator: Maura Nelson

Category: *Significant Investment in Their Own Learning: Demonstrating perseverance, love of learning or pursuit of knowledge by study or experience.*

Shaun has developed a new level of confidence recently. He is more confident in his answers, in his knowledge about the content, in his reading, and in his ability to get to graduation. His writing has been thoughtful and thorough, and real. He also has moved into a more active role in his education, with a renewed internal sense of motivation. As soon as one assignment is completed, he asks for the next. I can feel his excitement and readiness to be done. We are all so proud of him.

Maura Nelson, Educator

Nominator: Emily Bollinger

Category: *Significant Investment in the Betterment of Education: Showing commitment to education by giving of their time, talents or resources.*

Maura is an amazing colleague and an even more phenomenal teacher. She is constantly creating engaging units with curriculum that is responsive to scholars' interests and needs, and she works tirelessly to ensure all scholars succeed. In this virtual environment, for instance, she is constantly in Google Meets, working one-on-one with scholars until they truly grasp the content and demonstrate proficiency in the standard. Accordingly, she has been such a key person in many scholars' graduations. I am so grateful for Maura as a colleague, as a passionate advocate for our scholars, and as a friend.

Osseo Area Retired Educators

OSSEO AREA SCHOOLS

ISD  279

Diane Anderson, Volunteer

Nominator: Mary Bursaw, OARE

Category: *Significant Investment in Helping the Community: Exhibiting involvement and dedication toward the community and its members.*

The Osseo Area Educators (OARE) are proud to recognize Diane Anderson for her significant investment in helping the community. Diane retired in 2004 after teaching for 36 years at Palmer Lake and Birch Grove. She also taught evening Adult Basic Education with English as a second language (ESL) students for 24 years. Diane also volunteers at her church with the ESL Day Program and with Friends of the Library. Diane has been an active member of OARE, serving on several committees over the last 5 years. As our Sunshine Committee, she diligently hand-writes cards to members and families. She also serves as co-chair on the Scholarship committee, facilitating the selection and distribution of high school scholarships. Thank you, Diane, for sharing your talents with the District 279 community.

Osseo Education Center



Jacob Bourgeois, Student

Nominator: Angela VanHee

Category: *Significant Investment in Overcoming Adversity: Displaying the will and courage to overcome major challenges.*

Jacob is a hardworking, thoughtful and introspective young man. Jacob has Autism and attends the transition program at Osseo Education Center. He has made significant gains in the past two years that he has attended. Jacob has helped plan lessons for his Cooking and Know Your Disability classes. He has shown great empathy towards others as well. Jacob is soft spoken but always attentive and when he speaks, his input is always well thought out and adds so much to the topic. Jacob has made deliberate decisions to overcome extreme anxiety and fixed thinking in order to make the gains that he has. His teachers have encouraged him to explore the world of Autism Advocacy because he has such great input.

Emily Hable, Education Support Professional

Nominator: Angela VanHee

Category: *Significant Investment in the Betterment of Education: Showing commitment to education by giving of their time, talents or resources.*

Emily Hable is one of the Vocational Trainers at Osseo Education Center (OEC). This year she has started a project to record morning announcements to help OEC feel connected and stay informed during distance learning. She is continuously seeking to create new opportunities for scholars that will help them find new talents, interests and practice skills that will help them in work and life. She decided to encourage scholars to do the recordings which has been a huge success. Many scholars have volunteered, some more than once. Emily provides scholars with the script and supports them in recording the message. This has been especially exciting to see how scholars are able to record the messages independently at home. Emily then ensures the videos are of good sound quality, etc. before emailing to every scholar and staff at OEC each morning. Her innovative thinking is extraordinary! She also helped by subbing in our Connect classroom after our teacher was transferred to Distance Learning Academy (DLA) and we didn't have a replacement. She did an amazing job supporting scholars and staff during a very tumultuous time! We are fortunate to have such a hardworking, talented and kind staff member who is so scholar centered, and equity focused.

Osseo Middle School



James Ringold, Educator

Nominator: Brian Chance

Category: *Significant Investment in the Betterment of Education: Showing commitment to education by giving of their time, talents or resources.*

James has spent 31 years serving the students and community of Osseo Middle School. During this time, he has influenced the lives of numerous students. He is passionate about teaching science and has spent his career creating engaging lessons that students can relate to. James will be missed at Osseo Middle School, but we wish him the best in retirement.

Badou Sowe, Student

Nominator: Brian Chance

Category: *Significant Investment in Modeling for Youth: Demonstrating through words and actions an example for young people.*

Badou has done an excellent job modeling the “Oriole Way” during his three years at Osseo Middle School. He is invested in his education, takes responsibility for his own learning and makes positive contributions to his classroom environment. He is a leader amongst his peers and is always willing to support a classmate who needs help. During distance learning, Badou also did an amazing job supporting his brother and helping him stay engaged with his learning as well. Badou will be greatly missed at Osseo Middle School, but we know he will do a great job in high school.

Osseo Senior High



Brenda Bokusky, Nutrition Services Manager

Nominator: Amber Hegland

Category: *Significant Investment in Helping the Community: Exhibiting involvement and dedication toward the community and its members.*

Brenda shows up daily with high commitment and high energy to provide food for our scholars. She values her role and always goes above and beyond for our scholars. She knows she makes a difference and approaches her job with the highest integrity. She is innovative and finds solutions prior to issues materializing. She provided our athletes a cooler to keep their food cold while they were at practice. She found a way to ensure that all families had ENOUGH food. She does it all with a smile on her face while positively influencing the lives of many scholars, staff and community members. Kudos to Brenda! We are grateful to have her as a member of our OSH family. She IS Osseo Excellence!

Josiah Tusler, Student

Nominator: Adam M Woods

Category: *Significant Investment in the Betterment of Education: Showing commitment to education by giving of their time, talents or resources.*

Josiah has gone above and beyond to be a model for student engagement and success. Josiah started the year by volunteering 50 hours to make sure our building was ready for students with signage and COVID materials. He also helped create a welcome video and did tours for freshman to help their comfort level of entering high school. Josiah then recognized some of his classmates were struggling with distance learning and helped create student lead tutoring hours on Fridays as President of our National Honor Society. This is all being done to improve student success while playing varsity football, being a leader in band, and taking multiple advanced classes. Josiah is Osseo Excellence.

Palmer Lake Elementary



Makenzy Farmer, Student

Nominator: Samantha Bogdanovich

Category: *Significant Investment in Their Own Learning: Demonstrating perseverance, love of learning or pursuit of knowledge by study or experience.*

Makenzy is a phenomenal leader in our 5th grade classroom. She not only works hard on her own learning, but also encourages her classmates to do the same. It is evident that she loves learning because she always goes above and beyond the given expectations to learn more and more. Students in our classroom gravitate towards her positivity and optimism every single day. Makenzy also leads important discussions in our classroom about important issues in our society such as social justice, racism, and women's rights. She is passionate about these issues, and educates others in a kind, but assertive, way. Makenzy is a unique individual who has a significant investment in her own learning. She demonstrates perseverance, a love of learning, and a pursuit of knowledge.

Miles Korti, Student

Nominator: Jennifer Kil and Shannon Alexander

Category: *Significant Investment in Overcoming Adversity: Displaying the will and courage to overcome major challenges.*

Our Mighty Miles was a fighter even before he was born. You can ask his mom and doctors to attest to this fact. To know Miles is to instantly love him. He had a fan club and cheering section before he graced the halls as a student at Palmer Lake. When he made it, Miles waltzed into Pre-K with a backpack bigger than him waving and smiling.

Miles was born on August 1st, to his parents Catherine and Enos. He came into this world with a slew of medical conditions and the need for corrective surgeries. However, those adversities never stopped him. He had a will to live life to the fullest, love the most, laugh the loudest, be the bossiest, and shine brighter than the sun. We were privileged to have Miles in our pre-K and Kindergarten classes at Palmer Lake. In the summer of 2019, Miles went in for a routine but always risky operation. It was to be one of his last big operations before he started kindergarten. It was supposed to give his heart the needed strength to allow him to grow. Miles had setbacks after his surgery. What was to be a few weeks dragged on all summer. Instead of letting it get him down, he fought harder.

Miles made it to kindergarten and was able to participate with his classmates. Even when he was strapped to his oxygen machine, he gave his teachers, the nurse, and assistant a run for their money. Miles got to make a best friend, have a girlfriend, meet his big brother, star in the school program, get into trouble for talking too much, bug his sisters, boss his brothers, mom, and dad, and let his teachers and doctors know who was in charge. He showed everyone who met him or heard his stories of his courage and love.

Miles passed away on April 2nd, 2020, right as the world was shutting down and COVID-19 was flaring up. Most of us did not even get to say goodbye. He was surrounded by his family. He knew he was loved; he knew he was a fighter, and he knew that he was something special. What he did not know was that he brought a whole community together. Strangers came together to hear of his bravery, sass, and spirit. People connected to become a new family: one who celebrated, grieved, and honored the legacy that he left behind. We do not know of many people who make such an impact, but if it were someone, it would be our Mighty Miles. We miss and love you every day. Thank you for letting us know you. ~ Love your teachers, Mrs. Kil and Ms. Shannon.



Park Brook Elementary



Lisa Coulter, Education Support Professional

Nominator: Jyl Dieckhaus & Michelle Leopoldt

Category: *Significant Investment in the Betterment of Education: Showing commitment to education by giving of their time, talents or resources.*

Lisa Coulter is a fixture at Park Brook Elementary, continuously demonstrating her passion for students throughout the school day and supporting students in several afterschool activities. During COVID, her position shifted, but she continues to demonstrate her passion for students! During the instability of 2020, students and teachers knew we had to count on each other, and one person we consistently could rely on was Lisa Coulter. If Lisa was bothered by what was happening, she did not show it. She had the sentiment with complete empathy that others had to deal with much more than herself. Her empathy led her to be there for those in need, but this has always been her attitude. Over the years, Lisa has consistently displayed the necessary qualities of a fabulous ESP and colleague. Out of her many amazing inherent characteristics, there are a few that stand out the most. First, Lisa is patient. She works well with students of all abilities and temperaments. Her patience shows her love for the students and allows them to like her and learn from her. Perhaps one of Lisa's most important strengths, considering this past year, is that she is so flexible. She can move from subject to subject, grade level to grade level, and classroom to classroom with ease. Lisa works successfully with students of all abilities and backgrounds and continues to be positive and productive during an ever-changing work environment due to her flexibility. During this challenging year, she models for our students empathy, flexibility, and patience to grow, learn and help our students.

Christine Gbotee, Student

Nominator: Michelle Johnson, Jaclyn Otto and Kelly Brant

Category: *Significant Investment in Their Own Learning: Demonstrating perseverance, love of learning or pursuit of knowledge by study or experience.*

Christine is a fifth-grade student at Park Brook Elementary. She has shown incredible perseverance, responsibility, and resilience throughout this pandemic without losing her positive attitude and caring spirit. Throughout her years at Park Brook, she has been a role model for many others, gone above and beyond to make sure she was completing all her work, and shown great leadership, volunteering to help with after-school programs, asking for extra work, and finding and using digital resources to increase her understanding of a topic, outside of her school day. Her gentle and caring nature draws people to her, and her spirit comes across in everything she does, from her journaling in class, to the way she speaks with others. We are very lucky to have met Christine and watch her grow into the beautiful soul she is today.

Park Center Senior High



Halaseh Cooper, Student

Nominator: Danielle Johnson

Category: *Significant Investment in Overcoming Adversity: Displaying the will and courage to overcome major challenges.*

Halaseh Cooper came to Park Center Senior High as a 9th grader, moving to Minnesota from out of state. Halaseh has significant medical conditions which make school challenging for her and had a very negative school experience prior to coming to Park Center. However, once she joined the Pirate family, she quickly reached out to staff and developed supportive relationships. During her time at Park Center, Halaseh has grown leaps and bounds! She has worked hard to achieve academic success. She has also increased her understanding of her disability and has become an amazing advocate for herself and for the community of students with disabilities. Halaseh has never stopped dreaming! Halaseh's creative and insightful spirit inspires all around her, and she will achieve great things.

Diego Zavala-Varela, Student

Nominator: Jana Morton

Category: *Significant Investment in Overcoming Adversity: Displaying the will and courage to overcome major challenges.*

Diego is an intelligent, determined, and resilient young man who has grown tremendously over the last several years. His first couple of years of high school were extremely challenging. He found himself immersed in the wrong crowd and making poor choices. During his sophomore year, Diego knew that he had to make major changes in his life. His courage and strength allowed him to do just that. He changed who he was hanging around with, how he was using his time and committed himself to his future through his education. He became a straight A student. Diego has established himself as an intelligent, confident, articulate, and inquisitive young man and a leader in our school community. He has made Park Center proud.

Rice Lake Elementary



Ashley Devereaux, Student

Nominator: Heather Ayer

Category: *Significant Investment in Overcoming Adversity: Displaying the will and courage to overcome major challenges.*

Ashley Devereaux is a shining example of displaying the will and courage to overcome major challenges. In her Kindergarten year, Ashley was involved in an accident that has resulted in significant vision loss in her right eye. She has undergone several surgeries to save her vision, still she smiles and always has a positive attitude. She has had to relearn how to do some things because of her vision loss, still she never let it hold her back. Ashley has big dreams, even at her young age, she is a decorated gymnast, even though there was a time that she couldn't participate in gymnastics. Ashley is brave, strong, positive, determined, and kind. She is unstoppable! Rice Lake is proud to nominate Ashley for her courage to overcome major challenges. We know you are going to do great things no matter what your challenges!

DeAnn Hill, Kidstop Lead Instructor

Nominator: Heather Ayer

Category: *Significant Investment in the Betterment of Education: Showing commitment to education by giving of their time, talents or resources.*

DeAnn Hill has been a Kidstop lead at Rice Lake Elementary for 4 years. She is the epitome of a team player. There isn't anything she isn't willing to help with, problem solve, or support. Her first response is "how can I help?" She builds relationships with Kidstop students and families, as well as Rice Lake staff. She communicates the intricate gears of the Kidstop program with clarity and ease. DeAnn has tackled each "pivot" this school year with grace, flexibility, and positivity. She works tirelessly to come up with creative, fun activities and games for her Kidstop kids and is always willing to share ideas. During distance learning she worked to make sure she had students' schedules organized with a plan in place for supporting kids with their classroom work. She is a cheerleader for so many and so deserving of recognition. DeAnn is a true asset to Rice Lake and our Kidstop program.



Rush Creek Elementary

Beth Theisen, Education Support Professional

Nominator: Rush Creek Staff

Category: *Significant Investment in the Betterment of Education: Showing commitment to education by giving of their time, talents or resources.*

Beth has been a Special Education ESP for 25 years at Rush Creek Elementary. Beth has a true passion and special talent for working with students that need a little extra care. Beth always puts the students first because she genuinely cares about each one of them. She demonstrates this by taking the time to get to know the students she works with to build on their strengths and best meet their needs. She is calm, reassuring, and insightful when working with students in the classroom. Beth positively challenges students to exceed their own expectations and is their cheerleader when they accomplish their goals. The entire Rush Creek community has been fortunate to be the beneficiary of Beth's investment in education.

Jayden Vu, Student

Nominator: Donna Kliche

Category: *Significant Investment in Their Own Learning: Demonstrating perseverance, love of learning or pursuit of knowledge by study or experience.*

Jayden is a compassionate child who consistently works hard on all his lessons. He demonstrates perseverance each day through in-person school as well as distance learning. He strives to understand each new topic of learning and asks questions when he doesn't understand. Jayden is involved in the Student Library Advisory Team and the Continental Math League and exhibits a love of learning, especially in mathematics. He is a gifted mathematician whose computation skills are exemplary; he employs many critical thinking and analytical skills when solving problems. Jayden is kind and respectful to all his classmates and teachers. His classmates enjoy being around Jayden and working with him in school.



Weaver Lake Elementary

Rasheed Baya, Student

Nominator: Chris Heitz, Julie Redman, Kris Larsen-Johnson

Category: *Significant Investment in Overcoming Adversity: Displaying the will and courage to overcome major challenges.*

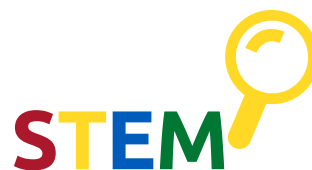
Rasheed is kind, caring and respectful. He works hard to make friends, always has a positive outlook and will try his best no matter what the task. His hard work and progress allow him to spend more time in his general education classes.

Donna Jones, Resource Manager

Nominator: Weaver Lake STEM Staff

Category: *Significant Investment in Helping the Community: Exhibiting involvement and dedication toward the community and its members.*

Ms. Jones works hard to ensure staff, students, parents and the community has what it needs to ensure success. She has gone above and beyond this COVID-19 school year to ensure a safe, positive learning environment for all.



Woodland Elementary



Sophia Taye, Student

Nominator: Bobbi Lastovich

Category: *Significant Investment in Overcoming Adversity: Displaying the will and courage to overcome major challenges.*

Sophia is a remarkable, resilient and strong student! Coming to Woodland in second grade, adults around her learned very fast that she had endured a lot in her young life that she did not deserve and would need a lot of support and love! That was the easy part! It is so easy to love Sophia and be impacted by her resilient personality. Through every obstacle and barrier that she has met, she has continued to press on and work through the hard stuff each day. Having endured so many changes in her life, she has grasped onto and practiced some very important skills to help her succeed and shine bright in and out of the classroom. Her smile, laugh and bubbly personality is infectious, and you can't help but have fun when you are around her. She exemplifies the epitome of strength from the inside out and there is no doubt that she will continue to shine wherever she goes and will continue her growth as she rises above challenges and in turn changes the world around her making it a better place - simply because she shows that there can be a rainbow after a storm.

Carolyn Voss, Student

Nominator: Patti VanLiew and Logan Moe

Category: *Significant Investment in Their Own Learning: Demonstrating perseverance, love of learning or pursuit of knowledge by study or experience.*

Carolyn is an amazing student! She is a leader and a role model in her 5th grade classroom at Woodland Elementary. Carolyn is always respectful and treats others with kindness. She is honest, compassionate, and makes good choices each day. Carolyn is on the Woodland School Patrol team and is helpful to all students crossing to and from school. She is also an important member of our WDTV daily news broadcast. She follows through on tasks, takes her schoolwork seriously, is involved with helping in the community, and represents our school well. We are very proud of Carolyn and wish her well in her future!

Zanewood Community School



Axel Assogba, Student

Nominator: Mrs. Kelly Stewart

Category: *Significant Investment in Their Own Learning: Demonstrating perseverance, love of learning or pursuit of knowledge by study or experience.*

Axel is a powerhouse of dedication to his own education. This year has proved challenging on so many levels. Axel has repeatedly shown determination in overcoming all obstacles with an unwavering work ethic and an incessant desire to ask questions and dig deeper into all topics. Axel has undertaken research and art projects on his own time and taken time with teachers throughout the building to assist in various academic endeavors. Axel also participates in orchestra, where his love of music and desire to learn new things shines through. Axel is a leader inside and outside the classroom and is an inspiration to all learners.

Bintu Donzo, Student

Nominator: Mrs. Kelly Stewart

Category: *Significant Investment in Their Own Learning: Demonstrating perseverance, love of learning or pursuit of knowledge by study or experience.*

Bintu is an amazing scholar. Not only does her daily work reflect her dedication to her own learning, but her determination to better herself on every level shine through each day. Bintu participates in band, where she continuously shows growth in her experience. Bintu is a compassionate and kind classmate, and often helps other students who are struggling or who are striving to reach their own potential. She is constantly challenging her classmates and her teacher, which not only facilitates her own growth, but the growth of every person she connects with! Bintu will continue to excel in her growth and studies, inspire others, and show the perseverance and dedication to her learning in whatever she decides to pursue in life.



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Save the Date

Reading is Fun 5K Run/Walk

Fundraiser to benefit media centers in Osseo Area Schools

Virtual Event August 1-12, 2021

A Night Out Celebration

Fundraiser to benefit District 279 Foundation programs

Friday, February 4, 2022