

Did You Know?

A rundown of news and events from Fridley Public Schools

SCHOOLS AND DISTRICT NEWS

AFRICAN AMERICAN PARENT INVOLVEMENT DAY GROWS TO DISTRICT-WIDE

Fridley Public Schools held its first annual, district-wide African American Parent Involvement Day on February 14, 2017. Last year, the program began at Fridley Middle School.

“Parents had the opportunity to participate with their kids in the classroom,” said Samuel Payne, Equity Coordinator with Fridley Public Schools.

He added that the turnout from

parents was bigger than was expected. “Being this was our first year district-wide, we were not expecting many to attend. We hope to double or even triple involvement next year,” he said.

African American Parent Involvement is one of several initiatives underway in the district to build community engagement. All families are welcome to such events, regardless of race or cultural background.

“Inclusion means everybody,” Payne said. “We hope that all parents will come out and learn about it as we build a stronger and more connected school community in Fridley.”

“This is a stepping stone to bridging that. The door is always open.”

National African American Parent Involvement Day is an event aimed at increasing the involvement of African American parents in schools.



Several parents spent the morning with their kids at Fridley Middle School (pictured above), Hayes and Stevenson elementary school as part of African American Parent Involvement Day.

MUSLIM POLICE OFFICER SHARES UNIQUE EXPERIENCES WITH HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS



A truly unique opportunity presented itself to Fridley High School recently, as one Somali woman shared her path toward changing

the face of local law enforcement.

Kadra Mohamed, the first Muslim to wear a hijab as part of her uniform with the St. Paul Police Department, has been receiving notoriety from journalists throughout the United States, including the Los Angeles Times and Huffington Post. But if her time with Fridley High School students on February 14, 2017 was any indication, it was perfect motivation for students to step forward boldly.

During the forum, students had questions ranging from the logistics of wearing the hijab as part of her uniform to the public's perception of a Muslim woman as an officer.

"It has buttons on the side so it can come off easier if I'm in a physical altercation with somebody," Mohamed said, when talking about her hijab. "Other departments around the US and worldwide are trying to adopt this style of hijab for their female officers as well."

Many questions had to do with other people's perception of a Muslim woman as a police officer. She talked about how her training was a bit different because she was different than her classmates. Her teachers were helpful and supportive, but not all people were open to her being involved in law enforcement. She used any negativity to push her harder toward realizing her goal.

"I'm here specifically to bridge that gap between law enforcement and all of the community, particularly the Muslim community," she said. "If it wasn't me, it would've been someone else. So why not me?"

Several students in attendance shared they are interested in careers in law enforcement and engaged in conversation about the various training programs in the state.

"My family at first didn't believe I was serious about the job," Mohamed said when asked about her family's reaction to her becoming an officer. "My parents were really nervous. But they've been very supportive."

Mohamed's visit to Fridley was organized by Fridley High School's social worker Kelsey Knutson, who was looking for community resources to increase representation for students. Knutson has heard only positive feedback from people.

"People seemed excited that she was willing to come to our school, felt that she was very engaging and positive, and seemed to speak candidly about some unique issues that she faced," she said.



TRANSITION STUDENTS SEE JOB POSSIBILITIES AT BOSTON SCIENTIFIC

Fridley Public Schools Transition students had a peek behind the scenes at a major medical device manufacturing company on February 10, 2017.

Boston Scientific was host to the students and offered an opportunity to learn about the creation of unique products, different roles in the production process, and how they can take skills and interests they already have and apply them.

Stephanie Warner, Work-Based Learning Teacher with the district, reached out to Resource Manufacturing, a temporary employment agency in Fridley, to facilitate the tour. The agency hires students who apply, then trains them for jobs at Boston Scientific.



“A lot of students were very interested in what they saw,” Warner said. “They could use their skills not only at Boston Scientific, but Medtronic or other places. They got to see that they can do something that earns more than minimum wage - a hands-on job - with a high school diploma.”

An additional benefit of working with Resource Manufacturing is tuition

reimbursement for trainees who qualify, Warner said. Fridley Public Schools’ Transition program focuses on assisting students aged 18-21 who have completed four years of high school as they progress from an educational setting toward living and working as independently as possible in their community. The program provides experiences that will enable young adults to live independently in the community.

Boston Scientific produces life-saving devices used in the medical field, from surgical tools to pacemakers. The company also provides educational tools for doctors to use with their patients. Their products are a part of the treatment of 22 million patients each year throughout over 100 countries.

UPPER CLASSMEN TEAM WITH YOUNGER STUDENTS FOR VALENTINE’S EVENT by Daegia Vang

The Fridley High School Key Club volunteered at the annual Hayes Elementary School’s Valentines Party on February 10, 2017. Sixteen Key Clubbers helped out at the event. At the party, the high school students helped gather the attendees from their classrooms to the cafeteria to get an after school snack. Afterwards, the Key Club set up the party and fun-filled activities.

There were different stations of games (including Bingo), tattoos and a coloring station. There were also some Key Clubbers dressed up as hearts to help encourage the kids to dance! After the party, the Key Club stayed after to help with the clean-up.



FRIDLEY'S SOCIAL WORKERS HIT THE GROUND RUNNING



Fridley High School's social worker Kelsey Knutson was born and raised in Rockford, Minnesota. She received a bachelors degree in social work from Winona State University, and a masters degree in the same field from a dual program from the University of St. Thomas and St. Catherine University.

Wanting to give a voice to those in need, Kelsey previously worked in mental health for four years as a social worker in both a residential treatment program and in an emergency room.

Her work experience in a residential treatment center for teenagers helped Kelsey realized that she really liked working with teenagers and became specifically interested in school social work.

"Teenagers are at a really awesome age where they are learning how to be independent and shaping their futures. It is really wonderful to watch them grow along that journey," she said.

Kelsey said she saw that Fridley posted five social worker positions, one for each school. "I knew that the district was at a point where they were placing a lot of value in what a social worker can bring to the school," she said. "As I have gotten to know the district more, I am excited about the direction it is moving in order to make education a positive experience for each student."

One of her goals at Fridley High School is enhancing the inclusive environment for the education provided at FHS. "I want to set up an environment where each student, no matter their background, feels that Fridley has something special to offer them," she said. She also wants to focus on overall wellness of our students.

"Some ways that I want to help is to make sure that community resources are available, teach proactive self care strategies, and provide space for emotional support. This will help students in their education and their futures," she said.



McKenzie Laurion is the social worker at Fridley's Area Learning Center.

McKenzie was born and raised in Anchorage, Alaska and obtained her bachelors degree in social work from Portland State University in Portland, Oregon. She will be graduating with a masters degree in education in youth development leadership from the University of Minnesota in the spring of 2017.

McKenzie says she has always enjoyed interacting with new people, and hearing unique stories and perspectives on the communities they come from.

A four-year veteran in the social work profession, she said social work has given her the opportunity to walk alongside youth as they navigate the world, explore different challenges, uncover new ideas and accomplish self-determined goals.

"I am privileged to have the opportunity to work with young people and truly enjoy the work that I do," she said.

McKenzie said it became apparent during her interview process that Fridley staff care about creating a welcoming community for students to learn and grow.

"The Fridley school district has a mission to meet each student where they are, inside and outside of the classroom," said McKenzie. "I appreciate the vision of seeing a young person as more than a statistic or test score and striving to understand the complexities of their experiences."

She hopes to create an atmosphere of support and advocacy for students and their families. "I plan to do this by promoting proactive behavior interventions, collaborating with teachers and administration to work with the whole child, and by maintaining open communication with students and their support systems," she said.

FRIDLEY'S SOCIAL WORKERS HIT THE GROUND RUNNING



Melissa Strangl is the social worker at Fridley Middle School.

Melissa grew up on a dairy farm about two hours away from the

Twin Cities. She attended the University of St. Thomas where she earned a BA in Social Work with a minor in criminal justice, and received her masters degree

in Education Youth Development Leadership from the University of Minnesota. Melissa worked as a social worker for seven years and also worked as a family advocate and a youth and family counselor.

Asked why she wanted to be a social worker, she replied: "I enjoy helping students explore their identities and learn their strengths while achieving an education that will give them limitless options for their future."

She developed an interest in the Fridley school district due to the students that she was mentoring. "I was impressed

with Fridley's dedication to diversity and inclusion and their approach to education within the International Baccalaureate framework," said Melissa.

One of Melissa's goals is to help all Fridley Middle School students realize the importance of being on time for school and all their classes every day. Studies have shown students who are absent to school at a greater risk to drop out of high school," Melissa said. "My goal is to prepare all Fridley Middle School students for high school and beyond."



Hayes Elementary School's social worker is Brittany Sutherland.

A Minnesota native, Brittany attended Minnesota State University-Moorhead

where she graduated with a bachelors degree in social work. She is currently

pursuing a masters degree in social work online from Texas State University.

Brittany, who has been in the social worker for three years, said that the decision to pursue that profession later in her college career.

"After some experiences, I've found that I love working with kids and helping them succeed," she said, adding that being a social worker can be difficult at times and also incredibly rewarding.

Brittany and her husband recently relocated to the Twin Cities area right around the time Fridley was hiring social workers - so through good timing or fate, a great opportunity arose at the perfect time.

Her priorities in her new job include reaching out and supporting families with resources in our community, especially families who are in transition. "I am also working on building relationships with students in school and their families," said Brittany.



Michael Higgins works at Stevenson Elementary School as its social worker.

Michael was born and raised in Mahtomedi, Minnesota. He

attended the University of Minnesota where he graduated with a bachelors

degree in individualized studies. He has been employed as a social worker for the past 30 years.

He says his love of problem solving and helping people led him to his profession.

Michael chose to come to Fridley because the district has a reputation for being a great school district and says that so far it has been great. "The staff at Stevenson are wonderful," he said.

He was initially hired as an Alternative Delivery of Specialized Instructional Services (ADSIS) teacher and later transferred job positions when the social worker opportunity became available.

His goal in his new role is "to be a productive part of a team that provides a safe, fun and intellectually stimulating environment, that allows all students to grow to their fullest potential," he said.

FRIDLEY RECEIVES PBIS STATE GRANT

Fridley Public Schools received a \$39,963 Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS) grant from the Minnesota Department of Education. The grant funds are to be used beginning February through June 30, 2017. Fridley submitted the grant to support the work the district has undertaken in culturally responsive teaching and learning, as well as the implementation of multiple tiers of student support framework for social and emotional learning.

The grant will be used to: provide coaching for 34 teachers at the high school and Area Learning Center (ALC) through Dr. Sharroky Hollie, an education consultant working with the district in Cultural Responsive Teaching; provide

training in Restorative Conversations for some of our administrators, school social workers, deans and counselors; cover expenditures related to visiting an exemplary Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) ALC training site in Grand Island, Nebraska; and to purchase an online Statistical Package to assist in making deeper level data based decision making. This is a non-renewable grant and the funds have to be spent by June 30, 2017.

The application, which was written and submitted by Dr. Patrick Varro, elementary school psychologist, who articulated the critical need for positive environments for the facilitation of the academic, social and emotional success of all district students.

FATHERHOOD PARTNERSHIP TAKES DADS AND KIDS BOWLING

The Fatherhood Partnership group convened at Brunswick Bowling Center on February 4, 2017 for a morning of fun and bowling. Approximately 50 students and their dads turned out to take part in the event.

The event was organized by Heshima Selassie, family liaison at R.L. Stevenson Elementary School.

Selassie used feedback from elementary school dads to organize the event. Bowling gave an opportunity for district fathers to have a fun day with their children, take pictures, eat and socialize with other dads.

Future events for the program are in the works. For more information, contact your school's family liaison.



HOST FAMILIES SOUGHT FOR FOREIGN EXCHANGE STUDENTS

Make the world a part of your family. Imagine inviting a student from one of the 64 countries into your family as your international son or daughter. Families are currently being sought to host foreign students for the coming school year.

Visiting students are between the ages of 16-19 years old and live as a member of the family while attending school in Fridley. The support offered to AFS students and host families is second to none. Orientations, cross cultural counseling, social activities and more are available to AFS participants through the AFS community based volunteer network. Although many host families have children of high school age, this is not a requirement.

To become a host family, or to receive more information, please call Sue Davis at 763-784-9318.

Band O Rama - January 19, 2017

Students from Fridley Middle School and Fridley High School bands converged on the high school gym floor to fill the air with music on January 19, 2017. Band O Rama presented a song from each middle school band, then a couple from each high school group. All bands then joined together for one grand finale, *Winged Victory* by Brian Balmages.



STUDENTS WORK ALONGSIDE TEACHERS TO FEED HUNGRY CHILDREN

A strong contingent of personnel representing Fridley Middle School took over the Feed My Starving Children facility in Coon Rapids on December 20, 2016. Students, parents, and staff members met for the second annual volunteer effort on behalf of Fridley Public Schools.

"We had 75 spots and they were all filled," said Danielle Peterson, Fridley Middle School Assistant Principal. "Some people refilled supplies, while others worked in the back putting

stickers on boxes and putting them on shelves. Other people were packing the meals; adding the ingredients, making sure it met their weight requirements, sealing them and then boxing," she said.

The group assembled ahead of their shift to learn about the program, the people it benefits and the choice of ingredients.

"The kids come away with an understanding of how children in other

countries are living," Peterson said. "They enjoy volunteering enjoy because they see how it's making a difference."

Peterson also underscored the opportunity for teachers and students to mix outside of the classroom setting.

"It was fun to see the students getting to know their teachers outside the classroom and realizing they're human beings with families, too. They see them as someone who's really cool!"



ALUM RETURNS TO SHARE BARD WISDOM

Students at Fridley High School had the rare opportunity of working with a seasoned actor specializing in Shakespeare on January 20, 2017. Casey Hoekstra, a 2006 Fridley High School alum, is a professional actor who has performed Shakespeare works at The Guthrie Theater, Montana Shakespeare in the Parks and Georgia Shakespeare.

Hoekstra's brother, Jesse, is an English teacher at the high school whose 9th grade students had just completed reading *Romeo and Juliet*. In addition, he was directing the one-act play *The Bard and the Hat*, a compilation of Shakespeare cuttings.

Casey Hoekstra is currently based in Chicago, after finishing a show at the American Players Theater in Wisconsin. He performed in *Romeo and Juli-*

et with Georgia Shakespeare, but with only four actors playing all the roles. The group toured the production to high schools where they would perform it first, then conducted a workshop with students to examine the work further.

Jesse had contacted his brother about coming to Fridley to work with his students. Over the course of the day, Casey Hoekstra worked with six classes before running a workshop with the one act cast.

"He prepared some material, and we printed out some monologues for him to work with the students on," said Jesse. "He did a really good job of saying, 'yeah, there are all these words, but this is really the meaning of it' and really engaged the students."



PERSONAL PROJECTS DISPLAY KNOWLEDGE AND TALENT

The annual International Baccalaureate (IB) Personal Projects exhibition for 10th graders was held on January 18, 2017 at Fridley High School. Projects this year ranged from sign language and music education to building personal computers and electric guitars. This long term project is designed as an independent learning skill that formally assesses students' self-management, research, communication, critical and creative thinking, and collaboration skills.



GRAPPLERS WIN WITH COMMUNITY FUNDED UPGRADES

Wrestlers at Fridley High School aren't necessarily looking for a soft spot when it comes to training. But the legacy of Fridley's wrestling program is alive and well with community involvement in upgrades to the team's workout room and mats.

A special dedication was held on February 3, 2017, where luminaries from Fridley's wrestling past, present and future gathered to recognize the program, the heart of which is the fully enclosed wrestling room, located in the space that used to exist behind the west upper bleachers. Unveiled also was the new competition mat, complete with tiger stripes, on the new gym floor.

"This school has a history of excellence in this sport," said Dan Roff, Fridley's Director of Activities. "It's really a celebration of hard work by such a great community over a long period of time."

Former Fridley standout Don Meyers, and former coaches Joe Frank and Walt Wenzholz - all members of the Minnesota Wrestling Hall of Fame - organized the Champions Club to solicit donations for the room and mat from former wrestlers in the district. \$35,000 was raised in six weeks, according to Roff.

In addition to the new mat, the wrestling room now features a historical

wall with photos of Fridley's wrestling teams since 1959, the state championship teams and individual state champions. Strength equipment will also be installed soon, making the room an all-encompassing workout space not just for the wrestling squad, but cross country and track teams as well.

"For our current wrestlers, they can see the work ethic of Fridley in the 60s, 70s and 80s winning state championships and individual state championships," said Eric Anderson, Fridley wrestling head coach. "Our kids now know they can reach those same goals with that same attitude of being tougher than your opponent on the mat."



Above left (from left to right), back row: Steve Ranallo, Maureen Faber, Pat Faber, Sr., Ryan Gerhard, Steve Varichak, Louis Grosklags and Jim Stangler. Front row: Jinny Ranallo, Tammy Allen, Don Meyers, Ron Ackerman, Eric Anderson, Lance Bailey, Jaime Olivera and Sue Hanson.

NOTEWORTHY ACCOMPLISHMENT

LADWIG AWARDED 2017 HORATIO ALGER MINNESOTA SCHOLARSHIP



Abigail Ladwig, a senior at Fridley High School, has been awarded the 2017 Horatio Alger Minnesota Scholarship. Ladwig is one of ten students from

Minnesota to receive the scholarship.

Her award is in the amount of \$10,000 and was announced to her on February 9, 2017. She found out about her

receiving the scholarship via email, but it didn't quite register at first.

"I got an email from the organization, but it started out by stating expectations and guidelines," Ladwig said. "It was until I scrolled down and read the dollar amount and how it's distributed that I realized, 'WOW! That's a lot!'"

Ladwig plans on attending either the University of Minnesota or Arizona State University, and is looking into a marketing major.

She applied for the scholarship last fall after receiving information from Jessica Baker, IB Coordinator at Fridley High School. This is the second year in a row a Fridley student has received the award (last year, 2016 graduate Praise Hall received the honor).

Named after the author, the scholarship strives to promote the values of can-do spirit and individual initiative exemplified in his books.

Congratulations Abigail!

FRANKLIN AND ZELNY NAMED TRIPLE "A" WINNERS

Seniors Gabriel Franklin and Maureen Zeleny have been announced as the 2017 Fridley High School Triple "A" Winners.



Franklin is a multi-sport athlete who has lettered in wrestling from 2014-2016 and received All Conference Honorable Mentions in 2014 and 2015. He also

took two trips to State competition in football in 2016 and 2017, which he lettered in from 2014-2017. On the performing arts side, Gabriel has lettered in choir from 2014-2016 and the Performing Arts Club in 2015.

Franklin is well known as a cheerleader of school pride. "At the end of the

Fridley parade when everyone was tired, he starts a cheer in his football uniform," said Nikki Zeleny, choir director at Fridley High School. "He's in his football uniform, with the choir, *singing*, which is so Gabe because he's always representing everything.



Maureen Zeleny has also been a stand out in multiple sports. She first lettered in tennis in 2014, which she has continued to do through 2017, and was named All Con-

ference for the sport in 2016 and 2017. Zeleny lettered in softball in 2015 and 2016 as well. In the arts, she has lettered in both band and the Performing Arts Club in both 2015 and 2016. Maureen also lettered in Youth in

Government in 2015, and both Academics and the Math Team in 2015 and 2016.

"We always say attitude is one of those small things that makes a big difference," said Anthony Branitski, Girls Tennis coach. "I can't speak highly enough about her energy level that she brings to the court and her tremendous leadership skills to where everybody around her is more than willing to jump on board with her ideas."

The Triple "A" Award, sponsored by AAA Automobile Club and Fairview Health Services, is given to one male and one female senior at each high school who have excelled in the classroom, on the athletic field and in the fine arts.

Congratulations Gabriel and Maureen!

FRIDLEY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WIN AWARDS AT MSAA COMPETITION



Fridley High School's 2017 Minnesota Scholastic Art Award winners are congratulated by Principal Patty Awsumb and art teacher Cheryl Burghardt. From left to right, Patty Awsumb, Amir Kadar, Savannah Covington, Briana Fodstad, Sanela Karic, Julia Swendsrud and Cheryl Burghardt.

Fridley High School's art students received numerous awards again this year at the annual Minnesota Scholastic Art Awards (MSAA), with 22 total awards, two of which were senior portfolios. The students who received MSAA awards are:

Amir Khadar - 4 Gold Key, 3 Silver Key (one a Portfolio Award) and 5 Honorable Mention Awards

Julia Swendsrud - Gold Key Portfolio Award

Mohamed Yusuf - Gold Key, 2 Silver Key, and 2 Honorable Mention Awards

Savannah Covington - Silver Key and an Honorable Mention Award

Briana Fodstad - Honorable Mention Award

Sanela Karic - Honorable Mention Award

In addition, Amir Khadar had incredible success at this year's Minnesota Scholastic Writing Competition. He received a total of 12 awards (more individually than most schools in total), and was one of five to receive a nomination for the American Voices Award.

Here is a breakdown of Amir's awards:

7 Gold Key Awards

4 Silver Key Awards (one a Writing Portfolio)

1 Honorable Mention Award

His poem, *Unsolicited Advice to a Gay Boy in the Back of a Classroom Who Can't Say No*, was awarded the American Voices nomination and will compete at the National Scholastic Writing Competition for

this prestigious award.

As with Visual Art, all Gold Key Awards continue on to the National Scholastic Writing Competition this spring.

The exhibition of Minnesota award recipients were on display at the Regis Center for Art at the University of Minnesota through February 18, with the awards ceremony at the Weisman Art Center on February 18.

Since 1923, the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards have recognized the vision, ingenuity, and talent of our nation's youth, and provided opportunities for creative teens to be celebrated.

Congratulations to all our winners!

FRIDLEY MIDDLE SCHOOL 6TH GRADER BECOMES HERO FOR SELFLESS ACT

News outlets in Minnesota lit up on Valentine's Day with the story of one of our own students saving the life of an injured neighbor.

Colby Hansen, a 6th grader at Fridley Middle School, heard cries for help while walking to school on February 1. He found Laurie Harms laying on her driveway, having slipped on ice and shattering her hip. Colby and another student (whose identity is unknown) called 9-1-1, covered Harms with a blanket and waited with her until paramedics arrived.

Both Fridley Middle School and the Fridley Police Department recognized Hansen at a special event February 14. Colby's family was there to surprise him, as were fellow students and faculty who gave him a standing ovation for his actions. And Harms was there with a hug.

"Thank you," Harms said. "You saved my life. I could've laid there until school got out at 3:00 p.m. There could've been a lot of damage."

Although this February has been unseasonably warm, temperatures on



From left to right: Principal Matthew Boucher, Colby Hansen, Officer Mark Mickelson and Laurie Harms.

the 1st were around 12 degrees Fahrenheit in the early morning.

"It just goes to show that in Fridley, we have great quality people who raise great quality children," said Officer Mark Mickelson, liaison at the middle school. "On behalf of the Fridley Police Department, thank you for being who you are and for being a member of our community."

Fridley Middle School Principal Matthew Boucher awarded Colby the FMS Citizen Award, and Officer Mickelson presented him with a Certificate of Appreciation. Fridley Middle School Assistant Principal Danielle Peterson bestowed 50 GRIT tickets upon Colby, redeemable for snacks and other items.

Well done Colby!

KELLY CARPENTER SELECTED FEBRUARY 2017 DISTRICT EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH



Fridley Public Schools February 2017 Employee of the Month is Kelly Carpenter, a paraprofessional at Hayes Elementary School.

Kelly demonstrates the International Baccalaureate (IB) learner profile in her actions while working with students at Hayes. She shows empathy and compassion to

these students and is creative in solutions to different needs.

Kelly takes time to get to know every student. She makes it obvious to each and every student that they are cared for and taken care of.

Kelly is extremely open minded. Not only does she exhibit this trait in herself, but she makes it a priority to teach every student that they should be open minded as well. She is also very principled. Kelly handles every challenge with grace and integrity. She is com-

mitted to creating a fair environment for every student, and spends time reflecting on her own actions, equipping herself with experience and tools for the future.

This is the first year that she has worked with students diagnosed with Emotional Behavioral Disorders (EBD). Kelly is described as one of the most caring and hardest working paraprofessionals that many at Hayes have ever worked with.

Congratulations Kelly!

LARSON IS COMMUNITY EDUCATION'S LIFE LONG LEARNING AWARD HONOREE



Toni Craft, Director of Community Education for Fridley Public Schools, presents Tom Larson with the Life Long Learning Award on February 11 prior to the opening night of *The Dining Room*, a dinner theater presentation by Fridley Community Theater at Fridley Community Center.

Fridley Public School's Community Education Program is pleased to announce that Tom Larson is the 2017 recipient of its annual Life Long Learning Award. The purpose of the award is to honor a community member who demonstrates Community Education's mission to support life-long learning, promote a strong and healthy community, and to actively engage in leadership.

Larson, a Fridley Public Schools employee, is a speech coach at Fridley High School, director of Fridley Community Theatre and a founding board member of the Fridley Community Theatre.

"Tom gives his all, all the time," said

Toni Craft, Director of Community Education, adding that Larson has been an important part of Fridley High School in the position of theatre director and speech coach for 15 years.

"He has mentored and encouraged hundreds of kids in their specific theatrical roles and has pushed them beyond what they thought they could achieve," Craft said.

His patience and understanding toward novices and long-time actors and singers is commendable. He provides opportunity for the kids to not only excel on the stage but also try their hand behind the scenes in the technical crew, orchestra, or as student directors and choreographers. He has also brought community theatre to Fridley

as its director for the last seven years, providing our community with summer musicals and winter dinner dramas.

"His energy is unflagging, his enthusiasm contagious, and his love of people is heart-warming," said Craft. "Tom has given so much to his community and undoubtedly deserves this award."

Since 2006, the Fridley Community Education gives a recognition award called the Life Long Learning Award. Nominations are sought from the community and the Community Education Advisory Council chooses a winner based upon these nominations.

Congratulations Tom!

Reimagine Minnesota

A commitment to create lasting equity and excellence in education for all students

Please join us for a community conversation as we gather input to embark on a plan that creates equity, integration and excellence in education for all Minnesota students.

Over 40 school district superintendents have come together to develop a collective education plan to address integration, access, opportunity and educational achievement. We cannot accomplish this important work without your voice. The conversations will inform the work of superintendents as they create a plan and recommendations for new local and statewide policies and practices. We invite you to Reimagine Minnesota and help us conceptualize a model of education that's designed for the success of all students.

Thursday, March 9, 2017, from 6:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Mounds View Community Center, 5394 Edgewood Dr, Mounds View, MN 55112

RSVP

Please accept our invitation to participate by contacting [list district contact info here]

Transportation from [the district] to [event location] will be provided. Interpreters will also be available upon request. When you RSVP, please let us know if you will need transportation and or an interpreter. **Light food and refreshments will be provided.**

The event is designed to be participatory and engaging. Everyone is welcomed, honored and respected for who they are and the contributions they offer.

See you there!

