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Key Dates

- February**
- 10...School board wksp., 4:30 p.m.
 - 13.....District-wide Kindergarten Registration Night, 6 p.m.
 - 17.....Presidents Day, no school
 - 20...Jazzin' It Up concert, 7:30 p.m.
 - 24.....School board mtg., 7 p.m.
 - 27....BCMS conferences, 4-7 p.m.
- March**
- 4, 6.....TESS conferences
 - 7.....End of 2nd Trimester (no school grades 9-12; PreK-8 and PRIDE in session)
Two-hour early release day
 - 9.....Daylight Saving Time Begins
 - 10....School board wksp., 4:30 p.m.



Sign up for kindergarten on Feb. 13. See more information on Page 2.



Energy in action

The Parkside Elementary School PTO organized a fun Career Fair for students on Jan. 29. The event showcased a wide variety of jobs, from electrical line work to heavy equipment operations, and from farming to cake decorating and computer repair. The Wright-Hennepin Electric demonstration above emphasized safety, while Jenn Nygaard, right, discussed radiology.



From the Superintendent

Bids awarded for spring construction

The latest action resulting from voter approval of the district's \$41.5-million bond proposal in November of 2023 has involved the bidding process for construction at the high school, middle school and Discovery Elementary.

After BHM facilities staff and consultants from RA Morton Construction Managers opened and

evaluated 161 bids covering a total of 25 total bid packages for the high school and Discovery projects in December, the board awarded about \$9.8 million in bids for the high school on Monday, Jan. 27. The biggest physical change will be construction of the secure entrance and administrative

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Scott Thielman

Molesky, Herbst nominated for ExCEL Award

Audyn Molesky and Aiden Herbst have been named Buffalo High School's nominees for the Minnesota State High School League's ExCEL Award.

The award, which stands for Excellence in Community, Education and Leadership, is for juniors who participate in an MSHSL fine arts and/or athletic activity, hold a leadership position in their school, and volunteer in their community.

Audyn Molesky

Molesky has become a standout at BHS and in the wider community through sports, music and volunteer work. She is a captain on the girls hockey team, and a member of the two-time section runner-up soccer team.

Hockey coach Sydney Driver, in a letter of recommendation for the ExCEL Award, said that Molesky stands out as "an exceptional student and leader. Her unwavering determination,



BHS juniors Aiden Herbst, left, and Audyn Molesky have been recognized for strong performance in the classroom, in school sports and activities, and in community service.

positivity, and ability to inspire others set her apart in every area of her life."

Molesky is also a cellist in the Concert Orchestra and Symphonic Orchestra. Outside of sports and music, Molesky is active with the school newspaper, student council, National Honor Society, Unified club, Tri-M Music Society and more.

She volunteers with Feed My Starving Children, the school's blood drive committee, youth hockey and has

helped at a nursing home.

Molesky is the daughter of Joseph and Angela Molesky.

Aiden Herbst

Herbst has been a mainstay on the BHS wrestling team, having competed at the varsity level since seventh grade.

"It is not very common to have a seventh-grader regularly competing and contributing at the varsity level; however, Aiden did and has continued to thrive

for the last five years," said Blake Trullinger, head wrestling coach at BHS. "He has a passion for the sport."

Teammates and coaches have selected Herbst to serve as team captain the past two years, and he has also earned "hardest worker" and "MVP" team honors. Outside of wrestling, Herbst also plays football, has competed in track and field, and is a member of the Concert Choir.

"I feel like you're not living out the full high school experience if you're not participating in many different activities," he said.

Herbst also is a member of the yearbook staff, and has volunteered with the American Legion and Feed My Starving Children.

Herbst is the son of Robert and Karen Herbst.

Abridged article
Scan to read
the full story



Enrollment Opportunity



Kindergarten Registration

If your child will be 5 years old by September 1, 2025, you are welcome to enroll them for the 2025-26 school year in BHM Schools! The district-wide **Kindergarten Registration Night takes place Thursday, Feb. 13, at 6 p.m.** If you cannot attend that evening, you may contact the appropriate school to register. See more info at bit.ly/BHMkindergarten.

All incoming kindergarten students need to complete Early Childhood Screening. Call 763.682.8408 to make an appointment.





Career exploration

Nearly 20 community partners shared about their jobs during 7th Grade Career Day at Buffalo Community Middle School in January. Students heard from their choice of manufacturers, media personnel, radiologists, a chiropractor, veterinarian, salon owner, financial advisor, florist, police officer, and more. Each grade level at BCMS has an annual Career Day to build opportunity knowledge.



Thielman

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offices to improve safety at the building.

Staff, students and visitors will also benefit from a refurbished Performing Arts Center, which will feature new seating, flooring, lighting, sound and stage equipment. This is the first major upgrade for the facility since it opened in 1997.

In other remodeling work, the Library Learning Commons will receive a variety of upgrades, and single-use shower stalls will be installed in the home locker rooms.

Less visible, but significant to the school's function and comfort, will be the installation of three chilled water plants that will provide dehumidification to the north side of the building, including the Bison Activity Center, gyms, locker rooms, cafeteria and Performing Arts Center spaces.

A separate construction project to create a new vestibule at Discovery Elementary's Door #6 will address a



This is an architect's rendering of the new secure entrance at Buffalo High School. Construction will start during Spring Break.

longstanding water infiltration problem, as well as upgrade the Discovery auditorium. The total bid price for that work was \$886,539.

Construction at the high school is expected to begin at the end of March during Spring Break, and Discovery work is scheduled to start in June.

Middle school bids

Back in November, the school board approved a list of bids to create a

secure entrance at Buffalo Community Middle School, relocate administrative offices, renovate the student services area, and upgrade the building's mechanical systems. A total of 88 bids were opened on Oct. 24, covering 25 bid packages. Based on the lowest qualified bids chosen, the total project cost is roughly \$10.5 million.

Due to the extent of the work at BCMS, construction will proceed in two phases. Work is scheduled to begin in April, with completion of the first phase scheduled for October of 2025. The second phase will take place in 2026. The areas in each phase will be determined by the mechanical upgrade schedule, which has not yet been finalized.

Our consultants from RA Morton have been pleased with the level of contractor interest, and with the quality of the contractors who have submitted bids. We are looking forward to the improvements in security, building integrity and efficiency that these projects will provide, and thank our BHM community members for their support!



This architectural drawing shows the new secure entrance for Buffalo Community Middle School. Construction is expected to start in April.

Bjornson, Friesz earn Triple 'A' honors

Excelling in the classroom, on the playing field or in the arts takes hard work and perseverance. Becoming a leader in all three areas simultaneously is a testament to a student's character as well as their skill.

For that reason, Buffalo High School is proud to recognize seniors Hope Bjornson and Mitchell Friesz as its Academics, Arts and Athletics Award winners for 2025. The Minnesota State High School League honor, also known as the Triple 'A' Award, is given annually to two students who stand out in diverse disciplines.

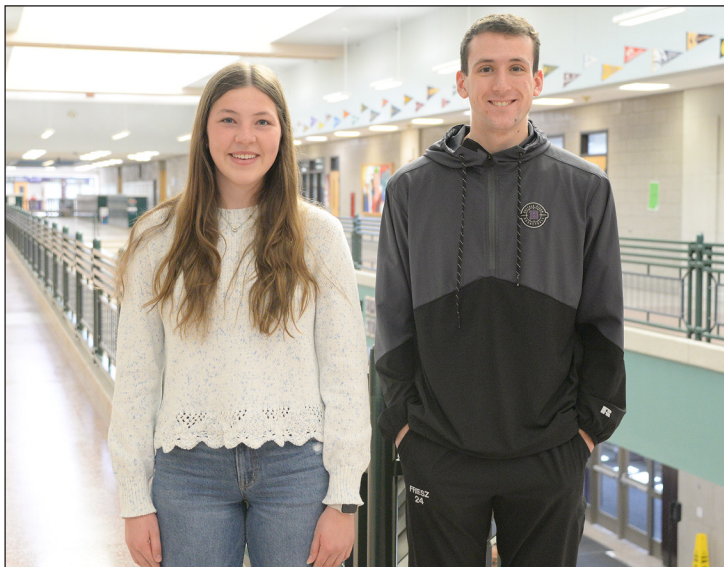
"Hearing what it's about and what it represents makes me feel humbled and honored to be the recipient of the award," said Friesz.

Bjornson agreed.

"I have heard of it, but I never really considered it to be something I would get," she said. "I know a bunch of people who could have also gotten this award, so I was kind of shocked. I'm honored."

Hope Bjornson

In her Triple 'A' paperwork, Bjornson explained how her academic focus has shifted from outcomes to seeing



BHS seniors Hope Bjornson and Mitchell Friesz have been named the school's Triple 'A' Award winners for 2025 due to their high performance in academics, arts and athletics.

how a variety of classes can help her grow, discover her primary interests and plot a course for her future. That mindset has not diminished her results, as she has managed to maintain a 4.0 grade point average even while taking numerous College in the Schools courses.

"I like each subject for different reasons," she said. "I like math and science a little better than most because I like figuring out how things work."

Bjornson has carried the same exploratory mindset

into her athletics and activities endeavors. She had never taken a choir class before high school, but now considers it one of her favorite parts of the day and is a member of the select BHS Singers group.

"I find my rest in taking time to participate in choir, as it enhances my performances both athletically and academically," Bjornson wrote in her Triple 'A' application.

She joined cross country as a sophomore, and learned to embrace the physical and

mental challenges of distance racing.

"Running means not always measuring up to our own expectations but having the courage to enter the race," she wrote. "This ability to continue pursuing improvement despite a momentary lack of success has guided me throughout my life in athletics, academics and art activities."

Bjornson also competes in track and field, participates in Mock Trial and yearbook, and is a member of the National Honor Society and Tri-M music society.

"I just like doing really different activities and learning a bunch of new skills," she said. "It helps me learn what I like and don't like. It helps me know what I want to do in the future. And I like the different communities. I get to know a bunch of new people."

Staying focused enough to achieve success in a variety of areas is difficult, but Bjornson said that her advice is to take each responsibility as it comes.

"You have to be dedicated. You have to want it

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BCMS play features 40

About 40 students from Buffalo Community Middle School put on 'Kokonut High' for their annual play in January. The comedic plot follows island residents as they start a boarding school to generate revenue in the wake of a hurricane. 'I just like seeing it all come together, the set and the props,' said sixth-grader Preston Young about the production experience. The show took place in the Discovery Center auditorium.



Proud Of...

Those listed below were submitted by district staff and recognized by the BHM School Board for their special contributions and accomplishments.



The BHS Music Listening Team Maggie Bertsch, Mitchell Nosbush and Vivian Grambart (shown with advisor Scott Rabehl), who took first place at the Region 2 Minnesota Music Listening Contest and will compete in the state championship on Feb. 7. This marks the 27th time in 29 years that BHS has advanced a team to state in music listening.



BHS musicians Jayde Hallman, Kiera McGorry and Anna Wuollet, who were selected for the prestigious University of Minnesota Honor Band and performed at Ted Mann Concert Hall on Jan. 26. This ensemble is even more select than the Minnesota All-State Band and includes the finest players from throughout the Midwest.



School board member Matt Hoffman, who received MSBA's Leadership Development Certificate for completing the Learning to Lead Workshop Series, Phases I, II, III and IV.



BHS Unified Music students, who performed at the American Choral Directors Association State Conference earlier this school year.



The BHS boys swim and dive team, which won the Section 8AA True Team meet on Saturday, Jan. 11.

Triple 'A'

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for yourself," she said. "It's hard to go home after music practice and work out and do my homework. Sometimes it feels impossible. But you have to remember that it is possible. Take away those negative thoughts and hone in on the thing you're doing right then, and stay in the present."

In a letter of recommendation for Bjornson's Triple 'A' candidacy, BHS Choir Director Zack Carlson-Giving said that she "exemplifies the qualities of academic excellence, artistic dedication and athletic achievement that this award celebrates."

Carlson-Giving went on to highlight Bjornson's technical skill paired with work ethic, as well as her genuine kindness, poise and leadership capacity.

"As an educator, I have rarely encountered a student as multifaceted, articulate, and humble as Hope," he wrote.

Next fall Bjornson plans to attend the University of North Dakota and pursue either nursing or pre-law as her major field of study.

Depending on her schedule and available opportunities, she plans to continue singing and to join an intramural running club.

She is the daughter of Bart and Jill Bjornson of Buffalo.

Mitchell Friesz

Like Bjornson, Friesz has a 4.0 GPA even while challenging himself with numerous advanced classes.

"My favorite subject overall is the sciences because of its diversity," said Friesz. "Chemistry, biology, I find them all very fascinating. Another subject I really like is math. It just comes naturally to me, understanding numbers and calculations."

Friesz needs no introduction to Bison sports fans, or to music aficionados. He is a key member of the basketball team, has been named a captain of the tennis team, and also played football his junior season. As for music, the winter orchestra concert featured one of his own compositions. A standout on the cello, he also plays in the Chamber Strings ensemble, with the Buffalo Community Orchestra, and as a pit orchestra member for school and community theater productions.

"Mitchell is a wonderfully unique student," said BHS Orchestra Director Kristine Wiese in a letter of recommendation. "He is quiet, hard-working, musically talented, helpful, and a confident leader. He is also extremely successful at balancing out his many talents between academics, music and sports, and considers them all to be of equal importance."

"It keeps me busy," Friesz said of his various endeavors, which include volunteer time with National Honor Society

and Tri-M. "I really enjoy all the things I do. I wouldn't do them if I didn't like it. For me it's about finding a balance and doing what I am passionate about. I've put in a lot of time for basketball, and I've put in a lot of time for orchestra. I'm just trying to use all those skills I've been developing and pursue my passions."

Next fall Friesz plans to attend Gustavus Adolphus College and pursue a degree in biochemistry or molecular biology.

"What I'm hoping to do out of that is study either different parts of the body or different diseases or cancers – find the main problem behind them so solutions can be found," he said.

At the same time, Friesz hopes to minor in music, play in the orchestra and continue private lessons, as well as play basketball.

What are his keys to success?

"You have to be dedicated and hard-working and put the time in," he said. "You might be interested in something, but if you don't practice for a sport or try to make yourself better, you won't get the most out of it. Even if you have very little time, focus on one thing for that short amount of time, and then you can really focus on something else for a short amount of time too. That helps you grow and be the best at what you're doing."

Friesz is the son of Joshua and Stephanie Friesz of Buffalo.

Cell studies

Young scientists at Buffalo Community Middle School took part in a live euglena lab in January. Shortly after creating their own models of cells, students studied this single-cell organism that includes features of both animals and plants, and noted how it reacts to lighter or darker conditions.



Key staff members recognized for service

From fueling students in the cafeteria to morning hugs as they arrive, and from efficiently handling myriads of office duties to providing a caring and helpful media center presence, this year's Educational Support Staff Award winners have made their mark on Buffalo-Hanover-Montrose Schools.

Four individuals were honored at a recognition event hosted by Resource Training & Solutions on Nov. 20 in St. Cloud. They included Tamra Otten (educational support professional at Buffalo High School), Tess Teichert (teaching and learning director's secretary), Susan Van Lith (former Northwinds nutrition services manager), and Melissa Wycoff (principal's secretary at Montrose Elementary School of Innovation).

More information about each is included below.

Tamra Otten

There are many logistical duties that factor in to keeping a school's media center humming, but Otten has distinguished herself by creating an atmosphere that draws in students and staff of all interests.

"Tammy goes beyond these already time-consuming duties in how she creates such a welcoming and positive space, as well as goes out of her way to connect with staff and students," wrote a BHS staff member who nominated her for the award.

Part of Otten's ability to engage with the school community comes through questions of the day, fun seasonal décor, and interactive displays. But more importantly, it comes through her genuine care for and interest in those around her.

"I have seen her warm, quirky personality resonate with any and all kinds of students, especially those who may not normally 'feel seen' or drawn to academic learning," said the nomination. "Although she equally upholds school expectations and will be the voice of reminders to help students get on task, she also connects with them through her sense of humor and kindness."

Otten, who is in her 19th year at BHS after serving for 20 years as a bus driver and driver trainer, said her faith moti-



BHM personnel who received Educational Support Staff Awards earlier this school year were, from left: Tess Teichert (teaching and learning director's secretary), Melissa Wycoff (principal's secretary in Montrose), Susan Van Lith (former nutrition services manager at Northwinds), and Tamra Otten (education support professional at Buffalo High School.).

vates her to care for those around her.

"God reminds me often as to why He has me here. My number one job is to love on these precious students," she said. "Life can be hard. I want them to know that I am in their corner. I see them, hear them and care about them. I want them to know that they have a place to come and someone will listen. Getting a snack is always a bonus as well. I also have the privilege to do the same for the staff. I love serving them and hopefully making life easier with all of what they do. This is what brings me joy."

When she learned that she would be the recipient of the award during a staff meeting earlier this school year, Otten was moved to tears.

"I am so honored to receive this award," she said. "It means the world to me because I know that I have helped students and staff. That's what it is all about for me."

Tess Teichert

Now in her 28th year with BHM Schools, Tess Teichert has long been a key facilitator of information for families, new teachers and community members.

"Tess is a wealth of knowledge and

her wisdom is appreciated by those who reach out to her," said a joint nomination submitted by several co-workers. "She is an integral member of our department; we are more effective with her on our team."

Teichert has become invaluable by anticipating what others need, then providing it in the most creative, efficient and user-friendly way possible.

A 1994 graduate of Buffalo High School, Teichert gained experience working in an office prior to joining the district as a secretary in the curriculum department. She quickly moved into her current role, and said she feels honored both to serve in the position on a daily basis, and to receive the Education Support Staff Award.

"The recognition means the world to me," she said. "I never thought I would be where I am today. When the opportunity came to work in a school, I was super excited. I had the privilege of watching my two daughters go through BHM Schools, and it was rewarding watching them go from kindergarten to graduating.

"I am very passionate about helping



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RESIDENT DISTRICT 877

ESSA

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others. We all work here for the same thing: to support and contribute to the success of our students. I think of myself as one piece of the puzzle."

Susan Van Lith

Though she retired in January, Van Lith had the opportunity to feed students in two newly opened elementary schools during her 27 years with BHM Schools. She started with the Nutrition Services department in 1997 when Discovery Elementary first opened, and where three of her children were enrolled. In 2006 she moved to brand-new Northwinds Elementary, where she became the manager.

"Prior to working at Discovery, I ran a home daycare for teacher's children," Van Lith said. "Once my youngest was in school full time, I decided to look for a job outside my home that would still provide for a work/family balance. I have degrees in sociology and psychology and love kids, so working in the school was a perfect fit."

A nomination submitted on Van Lith's behalf said she knows every one of the 400-plus Northwinds students by name, is patient, encour-

aging, and creates a fun atmosphere with new food and decorations for various occasions.

"Sue makes sure the kitchen and cafeteria are exceptionally clean, safe and inviting, and greets everyone with her warm and genuine smile," said the nomination. "You can tell her assistants enjoy working with her, and her positive attitude rubs off on them."

As for what she enjoyed most about her job, Van Lith said it was the relationships.

"I love my interactions with the students," she said. "I am able to see the majority of them at least once a day. I enjoy celebrating their victories: learning their lunch pin numbers, making a new friend, celebrating special events in their lives. They have so much pride in their accomplishments. I have also had the pleasure of working with many talented and dedicated people."

"It is very humbling to be selected for the ESSA honor. There are so many other deserving staff. It is amazing what can be accomplished when we all work together. I'm forever grateful."

Melissa Wycoff

As the principal's secretary, Wycoff is a heart-and-soul member of the MESI family.

"Melissa sets a positive

tone for students, staff members, and parents as the primary face in the office greeting everyone who enters our school," Principal Tony Steffes wrote in a nomination for Wycoff's award.

After spending 14 years as a daycare provider, Wycoff joined the district 20 years ago as a substitute educational support professional. Over time she shifted to a full-time ESP role, then to the school office, and finally to the principal's secretary role.

"The most enjoyable part about my job is the MESI Morning Hug Train that starts out our office work day, which is very rewarding," Wycoff said, referring to the procession of students off the buses and through the office, where they are greeted like family. "I enjoy working with kids and seeing their progress throughout their years at MESI. Knowing that I can still build strong relationships with them makes

my heart happy, and I cannot wait to see what the next day brings."

Of course her role also requires a variety of technical skills, from troubleshooting problems with office equipment to keeping inventories, paying orders, compiling reports, and other essential duties. In all circumstances, Steffes said Wycoff serves school staff members and families with personal warmth and a pride in the learning experience provided at MESI.

"Her dedication to her job and to the MESI community is unmatched," Steffes said. "She goes above and beyond what is expected of her on a consistent basis. She truly cares about our great school."

Wycoff said the honor is much appreciated.

"I love my job and coming to work every day!" she said.