

Connections

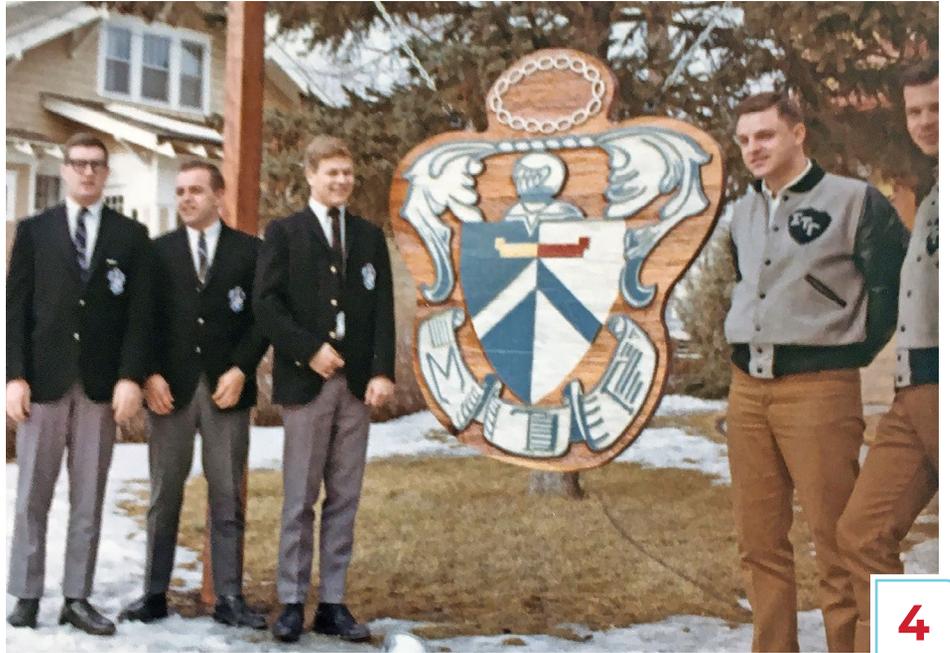
Alumni Association and Development Foundation :: Spring 2026



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Sigma Tau Gamma



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Welcome to another issue of Connections.

The cover story focuses on the history of the Sigma Tau Gamma fraternity at Minot State University. As you will see, we welcomed back a huge group of Sig Taus last fall during Homecoming Week as they celebrated their 60-year reunion. I have enjoyed getting to know so many of the Sig Tau brothers and sweethearts during my time at MSU and am grateful for the continuing loyalty and support they show for their alma mater all these years later. MSU clearly had a big impact on these Sig Taus during their formative years, and they likewise had a big impact on the Minot State campus. Congratulations to our friend John Theisen and all his brothers for an incredible 60-year legacy at MSU!

You will find a number of other notable profiles of MSU alumni in this issue as well. Please take time to read each of their stories and learn more about the impact these individuals are making in their organizations and communities. As you all know, we have so many amazing alumni doing great work who got their start at MSU. The stories told are powerful reminders about the thousands of impactful graduates who have graced the MSU campus, and these alumni profiles help reinforce that fact. I also want to pause and publicly commend our advancement and alumni team who do such a terrific job bringing you Connections and sharing all these great alumni stories with every issue. I might be a little biased, but I would hold the outstanding quality of our alumni magazine up with that of any other college or university throughout the nation!

There will be some physical transformations across the MSU campus this spring and summer. Dakota Hall, our nearly 100-year-old residence hall, will soon be coming down and the area upon which it stands will be returned to green space. We are also commencing with a \$3 million renovation (funded through student fees) of the Student Center's second floor to modernize the space and open some of the area to better accommodate student activities, gatherings, and study spaces. Additionally, during the 2025 Legislative Session, Minot State was appropriated funding to significantly upgrade several academic areas across campus. This work will soon be underway to renovate classroom and lab areas within nursing, computer science, exercise science and rehabilitation, along with developing space for our new innovation engineering program.

The MSU Alumni Association is planning yet another active spring and summer, beginning with the Gala on May 1, followed by many events across North Dakota this summer, and culminating with Homecoming Week Sept. 17-19. Please see pages 27-31 for more details (along with photos from numerous events held over the past few months), and plan to join us as you are able for any of these fun events. Best wishes from Minot State, and as always, **GO BEAVERS!** ::::

Steven W. Shirley, Ph.D.
President



MSU adds two new programs for 2026

Minot State University is expanding its academic offerings in Fall 2026 with the launch of two new degree programs designed to address critical workforce needs across North Dakota and beyond.

The University announced a Bachelor of Science in Innovation Engineering and a Master of Science in Mental Health and Substance Use Counseling, programs shaped by collaboration with industry leaders and healthcare professionals.

Together, the new degrees reflect Minot State's continued commitment to preparing students for meaningful, in-demand careers, while supporting the evolving needs of the region.

"As we continually work to ensure MSU has the most relevant and in-demand programs available for our students, it became apparent that a new undergraduate degree in innovation engineering and a graduate degree in mental health and substance use counseling are exactly what is needed to meet workforce needs," said Minot State University President Dr. Steven Shirley. "These decisions became especially clear as we met with industry partners and reviewed shortages existing in western North Dakota and throughout the region."

Innovation engineering marks a milestone for Minot State as its first four-year engineering degree. Previously, the University offered a pre-professional

engineering pathway with a science emphasis. The new program builds on that foundation, offering students a complete engineering education rooted in flexibility, hands-on experience, and real-world relevance.

Designed to meet the growing demand for engineers in energy-rich central and western North Dakota, the program takes an innovative approach to engineering education. Students will earn industry-aligned micro-credentials alongside their degree, allowing them to demonstrate specialized skills and adapt to emerging technologies throughout their careers.

"We've built some great partnerships with local industries over the past year," said Bryan Schmidt, chair of the Department of Science. "I'm looking forward to the launch of engineering in the fall and providing programming that students have been showing a great amount of interest in and helping to fix a labor shortage we have here in North Dakota."

From their first year through their final year, students will engage in Engineering-Studio (E-Studio) courses that emphasize problem-solving, teamwork, fabrication, and industry-relevant skills. Practical learning experiences are embedded early and often, enabling students to apply core engineering principles while developing confidence in professional settings.

MSU's newest master's-level degree expands on the University's bachelor's degree in addiction studies, the only such program in the North Dakota University System.

The degree responds to a growing need for licensed mental health

By Michael Linnell

professionals across North Dakota, particularly in rural and underserved communities. Unlike many graduate counseling programs that require students to specialize in either mental health or addiction counseling, Minot State's new degree integrates both areas of practice into a single, comprehensive curriculum.

"We are thrilled about Minot State's proposed MS in mental health and substance use counseling," said Krystal St. Peter, chair of the Department of Behavioral Sciences and Criminal Justice. "While most graduate programs ask students to choose between mental health or addiction counseling, our integrated program will meet North Dakota standards and academic requirements for both."

The program will be delivered through a hybrid cohort model, giving students flexibility to participate either on campus in Minot or synchronously online, with several in-person residencies built into the curriculum. This structure allows working professionals and students from across the state to pursue advanced training without relocating.

Both programs are pending final approval by the Higher Learning Commission. Minot State is scheduled to welcome its first students in Fall 2026 for both programs and is currently taking applications for admission.

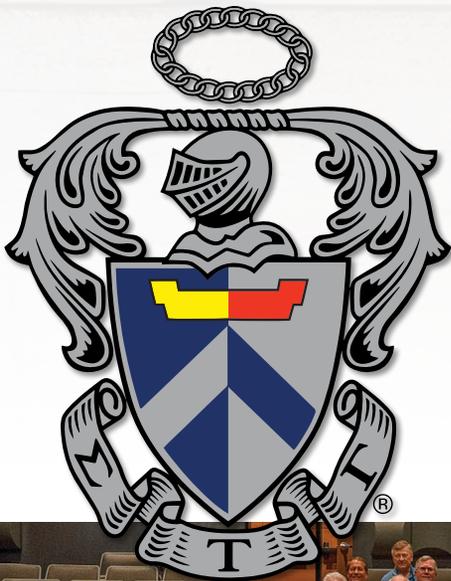
If you know of any prospective students or would like additional information about either of these new programs, please contact the MSU Enrollment Services office at 701-858-3350. ...



Sigma Tau Gamma

Fraternity bonded by brotherhood

By Michael Linnell



Brotherhood.

This one word sums up the ultimate experience for many of the Sigma Tau Gamma fraternity members at Minot State University.

Beyond their time in class, at social events, triumphs, mishaps, and tall tales – and there are plenty of those – there is a lifetime of shared experiences that connect each member.

“The life lessons and the brotherhood formed were priceless,” said Albee Allstadt '69. “The start of the fraternity chapter by a bunch of teenagers was an amazing accomplishment. No money, no house, no advisors – just a great desire to start something very special.”

The Gamma Delta Chapter of the Sigma Tau Gamma Fraternity was launched by friends John Theisen '67, and the late Lou Trombetta '67, after



Top: Sigma Tau Gamma Fraternity - Gamma Delta Chapter, 1966 | Bottom: Sigma Tau Gamma 60th Reunion group at MSU Homecoming, 2025

the duo transferred to Minot State from Moorhead State University (now Minnesota State University-Moorhead). The pair were recruited by Hank Hettwer, who coached wrestling and football, in 1965.

"Hank was an assistant at Moorhead State and recruited me to Minot. He was very instrumental in my life, and I later established a scholarship fund for him at MSU," said Theisen.

"Before I can talk about the Sig Taus, I would be remiss if I didn't talk about Hank Hettwer. Hank is (a big reason) why MSU had a chance to have a fraternity," added Dwight "Ormy" Ormiston '69. "He brought two transfers (Theisen and Trombetta) with him when he was hired at Minot and then brought in many more guys. He even gave me a scholarship that allowed me to get a college degree."

The chapter was founded after Theisen, 800 miles from home in Wisconsin, began to long for the camaraderie from his time at Moorhead. He believed the fraternity could stand for something more.

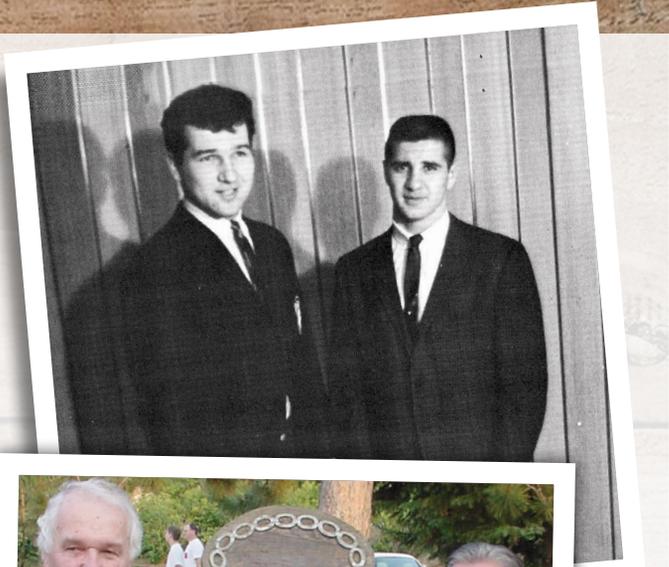
"I was viewing the campus, the students, and fraternities that were in existence," Theisen said. "I wanted to duplicate what I had come from; a fraternity that cared for you, a fraternity that would be the best of the best, standing above and beyond all the rest."

From the beginning, that vision emphasized diversity of background and talent. Early pledge classes included students from across the country, representing athletics, academics, music, and the arts. Fred Kelesnik '69, a member of the charter class, said that mix helped turn the fraternity into a family.

"As we came from various towns and cities, we did not have the luxury of homes to go to after classes or on weekends," Kelesnik said. "The fraternity became our family and home. We relied on each other for support."

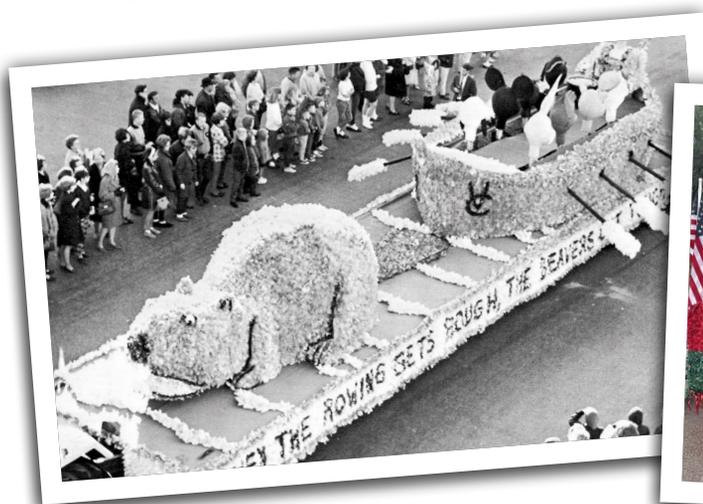
Members became highly visible in athletics, student organizations, academics, and community service.

"Word spread that the Sig Taus were involved with all activities on campus," Ormiston said. "If something was happening, we were there."



It also quickly became known for its work ethic and creativity, particularly during Homecoming. Allstadt, who played a major role in designing the chapter's floats, said those projects reflected the fraternity's mindset.

"Every contest or challenge was met head-on with being the best you can be," he said. "Sixty years later, the Homecoming float built by the fraternity still holds the prestigious title of having more moving parts and being the all-around best float in Minot State history."



Top right: John Theisen '67 and Lou Trombetta '67, co-founders of the Gamma Delta Chapter of Sigma Tau Gamma Fraternity at Minot State, 1966
Middle right: Theisen and Trombetta, 2010 | **Bottom left:** Trophy-winning Sig Tau 1967 Homecoming float | **Bottom right:** Bob Mau '74 and Jay Altringer '75 with the Sig Tau 2025 Homecoming float

While the public accolades were meaningful, many alumni say the most lasting impact came from quieter moments. The late nights in the house, shared work projects, and friendships forged through adversity. Chuck Rhinhart '74 believes the fraternity opened doors across campus.

"I was able to get involved with school, played on the tennis team, did some reporting for the Red and Green," Rhinhart said. "Those are great memories."

For others, it provided formative life lessons and instilled a commitment to service.

"I didn't realize the impact on me — thinking back on 60 years of a lifetime of friends," Randy Burckhard '74 said. "I can hardly go anywhere and not find a brother. The first time I donated blood was a Sig Tau project, and I've done it 177 times since then."

Traditions also played a central role in shaping the chapter's identity. Neil Bosch '75 highlighted the importance of the Gamma Delta sweethearts, who were woven into nearly every aspect of fraternity life.

"The sweethearts participated energetically in all of our activities, from social functions to work projects," he said. "Joining the Sigma Tau fraternity was the greatest thing I did in college, and I'd definitely do it again."

Those traditions came vividly back to life during recent reunions. Keith Bjornson '75 shared a powerful moment from a reunion screening of decades-old home movies filmed by a former brother.

"The emotions in that room went from joy and laughter to sadness and tears," Bjornson said.

"When the showing was over, brothers came up to me with tears in their eyes, thanking me for doing this. I told them you don't have to thank me; your emotions I saw during these 90 minutes were thanks enough."

For Jay Altringer '75, who was one of the chairmen of the first Sig Tau reunion held at Trestle Valley, this year's reunion was bittersweet.

"The first time around, I was a chairman and was one of the young guys. I remember meeting so many people, so many brothers," he said. "The reunion we had in September was great, just to see so many of those guys again, but it was sad in a way, as more brothers have passed. We made lifelong memories and have great stories to tell, and when we get together, we bring a lot of those up."

For Theisen, those emotional connections that endure across generations affirm the original goal.

"Leadership is best learned by giving, by making others feel comfortable and natural in their skin," he said. "We are here for four years, and then we scatter to the winds. It makes coming home for the fall reunions that much sweeter."

That legacy was on full display during Minot State's 2025 Homecoming celebration in September, when Sigma Tau Gamma alumni returned to campus to mark the fraternity's 60th anniversary. The weekend brought together brothers from across the country, many seeing one another for the first time in decades.

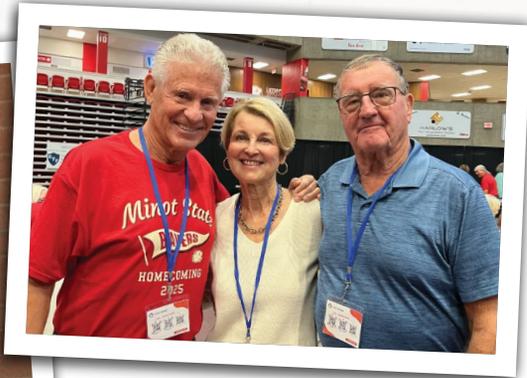
"We had a lot of fun then, and we had a lot of fun at the reunion this past fall," Burckhard said. "We all reflected on how fortunate we are to be alive and have all these friendships. It's precious. It was very sentimental."

"I want to thank all the people who helped make the reunion possible. Courtenay [MSU director of alumni engagement, Courtenay (Burckhard) Brekhus '12], and everyone at Minot State were awesome."

The chapter's enduring story is ultimately one of people. Young men who arrived on campus looking for connection and left with lifelong brothers. Though the chapter is no longer active, its legacy continues through alumni who still proudly call themselves Sig Taus.

"Personally, I loved my brothers while at MSU and continue to this day," Kelesnik said.

"Brothers forever." ❄️❄️❄️



Top right: John Theisen '67 and Keith Bjornson '75

Middle left: Sweethearts Bobbi (Rieder) Arnt '69 and Denise (Huddleson) Ness '69 | Middle right: Albee Allstadt '69, Karen (Morris) Allstadt '70, and Fred Kelesnik '69, 2025 | Bottom: Sig Tau members with MSU cheerleaders at the 2025 Homecoming parade



Slind serves with care, compassion

By Jill Suzanne Hambek

Long hours and emotional demands are part of the profession for funeral home directors, whose work centers on guiding families through some of life's most difficult moments.

For Ben Slind '00, director of Thompson-Larson Funeral Home in Minot, those demands are outweighed by the opportunity to serve with care and compassion, making his work profoundly impactful and fulfilling.

"It allows me to walk alongside families during one of the most difficult times in their lives," Slind said. "Being there to support and comfort them as they navigate grief gives my work deep meaning."

A lifelong Minot resident, Slind is a graduate of Minot High School and Minot State University and has been part of the professional staff at Thompson-Larson Funeral Home since 2004. He became an owner in 2017 and was named president of the company in 2024. In addition to directing services, Slind specializes in pre-arrangement planning, helping individuals and families thoughtfully prepare for the future.

Slind earned his bachelor's degree in business management from MSU and later graduated with honors from Mt. Hood Community College in Gresham, Oregon, earning an applied associate's degree in funeral service education. He became a licensed funeral director in 2001.

His path into the funeral service profession began surprisingly.

Encouraged by his mother and in need of a summer job, Slind had the opportunity to observe funeral directors at work. The compassion, organization, and professionalism required to support families through difficult times left a lasting impression.

"Funeral directors must navigate complex and sensitive family dynamics during meetings, providing support while managing conflicts, grief, and differing opinions," Slind said.

He also hopes more people understand the realities of the profession. Funeral service, he notes, is far from a traditional

workday, often requiring late nights, middle-of-the-night calls, and round-the-clock availability while serving multiple families at once.

"Each family deserves 100 percent of our attention and care," he said. "Every family needs to feel like they're the only one we're serving, even when we're balancing many."

Outside of work, Slind stays active through sports. A former MSU football and hockey student-athlete, he continues to play recreational hockey and softball and recently took up golfing — an activity he enjoys but admits he's still learning. Slind also remains a loyal supporter of MSU athletics, regularly attending football, hockey, and basketball games.

Slind began his college career on a pre-med track, majoring in biology, before shifting to business management while maintaining an interest in pre-mortuary science. That combination of interests ultimately shaped his career path, culminating in his ownership role at Thompson-Larson Funeral Home.

"My time at Minot State University was filled with unforgettable moments and personal growth," Slind said.

A proud alum, Slind currently serves on the Minot State University Board of Regents and is a member of the MSU Beaver Boosters. He also served on the Minot Area Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors from 2017 to 2020. MSU has been instrumental in expanding Slind's professional network. Through various programs and events, Slind has connected with peers and faculty who continue to influence his career today. Serving on boards has allowed him to give back to the community.

"Throughout my journey, I deeply appreciated the professors who took a genuine interest in my career path, inspiring and guiding me towards my goals," he said. "These memories and relationships have left a lasting impact on my life. The ongoing relationships with staff and faculty have been invaluable." ❖❖❖



Popinga empowers family farms

By Emily Schmidt

McKensie Popinga's roots run deep in Minot.

Born and raised in the area, she values its sense of community and strong work ethic. When choosing her next step after high school, she couldn't imagine moving away to attend college, especially from her younger sisters who were still in high school.

Fortunately, she didn't have to.

"It was important to me to be present in their lives and support them while still receiving a strong education," she said. "Minot State allowed me to do both."

While Popinga '18 knew where she wanted to earn a degree, she didn't initially know which one to pursue. She entertained a few majors until her first marketing class. Pairing well with her interest in management, the combination planted a seed that has grown into the career she has today.

"I loved the way I was able to be creative and find ways to connect ideas to people," she said.



Before she graduated from Minot State, Popinga completed marketing internships at Minot businesses, including SRT Communications and the North Dakota State Fair, that helped prepare her for the workforce. She eventually went on to work full-time at SRT. Then she explored freelance work before joining Gooseneck Implement, a John Deere retailer across North and South Dakota.

Popinga never imagined herself in the agriculture industry. Separated by a generation from growing up on a farm or ranch like her parents, the field was more of a family memory than a part of her day-to-day childhood. But when she saw the opportunity to become Gooseneck's marketing manager, she took it in 2022 and hasn't looked back.

Gooseneck's values inspired Popinga to accept the job. Her supervisors encourage her to prioritize her family, and she gets to support other families at work every day. As the marketing manager, she connects farmers with the equipment they need for their businesses to thrive, which oftentimes are small and family-operated.

"Our customers feed the world," she said. "It's meaningful to play a role in supporting their success."

In 2024, Popinga also took on the general manager role at Gooseneck's Velva branch, utilizing both her marketing and her management majors.

Each workday looks a little different. She oversees sales, parts, and machine services, meets with team members and customers, and tackles whatever challenges her branch faces that day. She appreciates the opportunity to share her passion for supporting North Dakota farmers with her coworkers.

"I'm fortunate to work with an incredibly talented and diverse team," she said. "Some excel at diagnosing and repairing equipment, others at building strong customer relationships, and some can recall parts numbers from memory with impressive accuracy. What they all share is a strong commitment to helping our customers succeed."

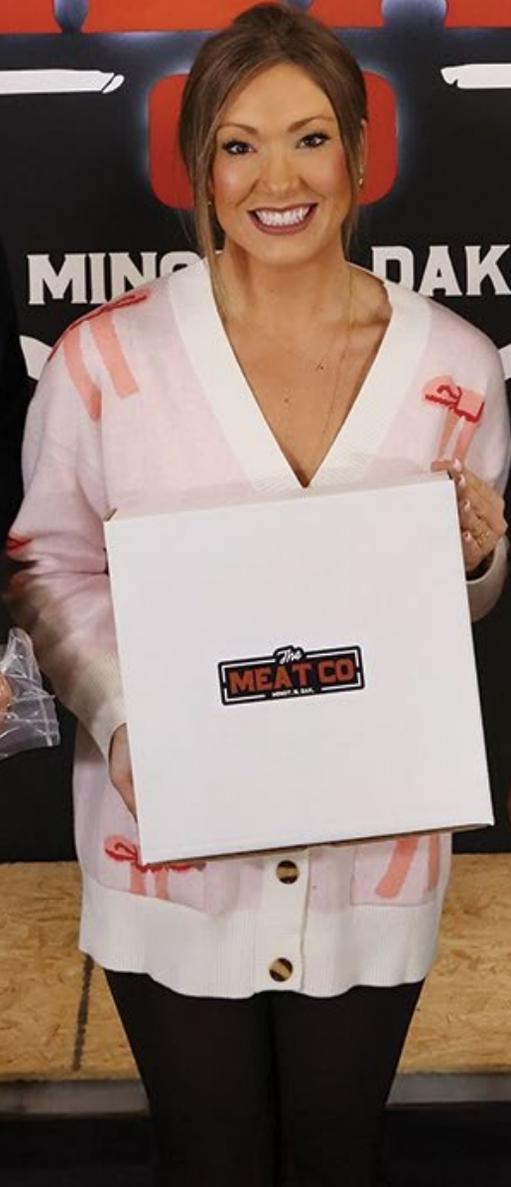
As general manager, Popinga encourages her team to practice the same values that drew her to Gooseneck in the first place, making sure her professional community feels like family.

"I strive to create an environment where team members feel heard, respected, and supported," she said. "I want them to feel encouraged to grow, confident that their opinions matter, and empowered to put their families first, all while delivering exceptional service to our customers."

And Popinga appreciates getting her start at a university that fostered the same values in her.

"I'm grateful for the foundation Minot State gave me and the role it continues to play in shaping how I lead today and into the future." ❖❖❖





The Meat Company is a learning journey for five high school friends

By Adam Papin

When the Wald family decided to retire from a local meat company, five friends made a life-changing decision.

Jordan Wald '10 and his wife, Lindsey (Wolf) '11, partnered with couple Jordan Huettl '10 and Katie Huettl, along with Braden Bosch, to purchase the family business in 2023.

The group rebranded it as The Meat Company. "We were all at a point in our careers where we were ready to take something on that we could call our own and really make something that felt like ours," said Lindsey. "It's been a learning journey, probably for all three of us (along with Jordan Huettl and Bosch, Lindsey manages the day-to-day operations of the store), but it's been really exciting to become business owners and make something that is incredibly important for our Minot community."

Three years later, The Meat Company has grown into a destination for accessible, high-quality foods that extend beyond traditional butcher cuts. The shop also provides farm-fresh eggs, a licensed garden produce producer, and it recently added beer and wine sales.

"I think our goal is to build our storefront to be a one-stop shop," said Lindsey. "We will always have all of our custom smoked products, all of our fresh cut steaks, but our goal is to have all the different checklist items that people need when they go somewhere. We are on the outskirts of town, so we are trying to make it be a destination."

All five graduated from Bishop Ryan High School in Minot, with four continuing at Minot State. Lindsey graduated with a degree in international business, Jordan Wald with a degree in biology, and Jordan Huettl with a degree in finance.

Lindsey didn't start out at Minot State with ideas of becoming a business owner. Originally, she planned on becoming a teacher before discovering marketing and management classes.

"I was working at a school for a couple of years, and while I enjoyed it, I just felt like maybe I didn't want to

make a career out of it, so I switched paths," said Lindsey, who worked in insurance for 10 years before starting The Meat Company. "I ended up drawing on some of that knowledge from the marketing and business classes when we were making the business plan. Things like how you get started, and some of the steps that are involved with actually getting something off the ground," she added.

Jordan Huettl always wanted to own a business. He credits the faculty at Minot State with helping make that a reality, particularly Jerry Stai '75 and the late Dean Frantsvog '99.

"Obviously, the textbook version versus real life is quite a bit different," he said. "The ideas behind that, I always loved. All the finance classes taught me how to evaluate certain situations, look at the numbers, and attack them."

Both cited Frantsvog as a major influence.

"Dean Frantsvog was the one who made me want to go to school and laugh and have fun," said Lindsey. "I realized it was a really enjoyable experience, and the culture he created in the classroom was just so fun. I truly loved going, and a lot of it had to do with his behavior and how he managed the classroom."

Frantsvog's humor stood out to Jordan Huettl as well.

"Just the humor, and yet, you still learned something," he recalled. "Some other people try to be like that, and they're just not. He was kind of his own deal."

Without that foundation, Jordan Huettl isn't sure he would have started a business.

"I already had young kids. That financially is kind of scary," he said. "To start a company with two other partners was attractive to me, and I guess I just wanted to give it a shot.

"We're plenty smart enough to put it together on a normal day." ❄️❄️

Pictured left to right: Jordan Huettl '10, Lindsey (Wolf) Wald '11, and Braden Bosch

WHERE are they NOW

Curl-Langager creates a meaningful career at MSU

Professor emeritus Rita Curl-Langager dedicated 27 years to Minot State University's psychology department and taught courses in child, adolescent, and adult developmental psychology. She was quick to join University committees, including the Academic Assessment Committee, Intellectual Climate Committee, and MSU Faculty Senate.

The Illinois native joined the Minot community in 1991 when the possibility to combine two important opportunities arose: a faculty position with tenure and to work with the North Dakota Center for Persons with Disabilities.

"I took the job because of the dual opportunity to do research with the Center for Persons with Disabilities and to teach in the psychology department as a developmental psychologist," she said. "That good job combination with the psychology is what brought me to Minot State."

After retiring from MSU, Curl-Langager had more time to focus on writing. She wrote "Adulthood: An Introduction," and published it in 2024. Her goal was to provide information to fill the gaps about adult developmental psychology, a course she taught for many years.

"You see books focusing on one topic and other books focusing on other topics, but then you don't necessarily know how those go together unless you fill in that intermediate part," she explained.

Looking back at her time teaching, Curl-Langager is thankful for all the students and hopes she left them with what they needed most.



By Veronica Corey

"One of the most important things to me was making sure that students had the skills they needed so they would have choices and opportunity," she said.

Curl-Langager has also made it a point to give back to students by donating to the Gordon B. Olson Library. She believes this is yet another way for her to provide more opportunities for students at Minot State.

"It's important that students have the resources they need, and it's important for the University to have the money to develop those resources," she said. "The library has always been very important to me, as a reader and a writer."

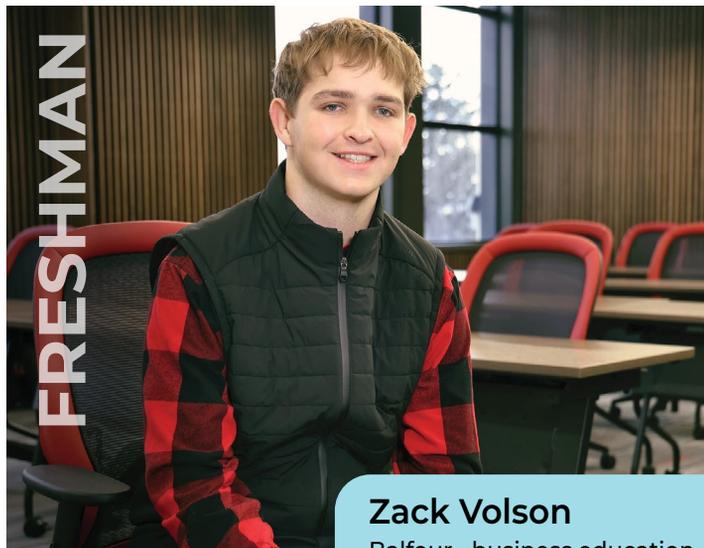
Even now, after thriving in the Minot community for the past 35 years, Curl-Langager remains involved. Most recently, she shared her valuable insights with the International Peace Garden board.

"Having valuable skills, organization, and management, and wanting to have an impact on the way things are going, motivates you to stay involved," she said.

In the future, Curl-Langager looks forward to spending time split between her Minot and Minnesota lake home with her husband, Tyrone, and leaving room for more opportunities to continue working on her book and to expand her teaching materials.

"I've been working on teaching auxiliary materials, so I have a big PowerPoint package that goes with it ("Adulthood: An Introduction") and a big test bank package," she said. "Now I'm working on an instructor's manual, and I'm thinking about what I want to do. I think I will revise the book if I have the opportunity to keep going with it." ❄️❄️❄️

Alum from DAY one



Zack Volson
Balfour • business education

Why did you choose Minot State?

I chose Minot State because of Jan (Thompson) Repnow '84 (assistant professor, business administration) and the business education program. I'm confident that with her knowledge and direction, I will be successful in my career.

How has Minot State helped you further your academic career?

MSU has helped me further my academic career through events where I can network with leaders across several industries in Minot, building professional relationships for the future.

What has been your favorite class?

Accounting 200 with Nicole Wald (assistant professor, accounting). I enjoy accounting and appreciate how the numbers come together to paint a picture. Nicole also does an excellent job teaching the fundamentals of accounting.

Who has been your most influential professor?

Jim Sturm (director, Looyenga Leadership Center). He really cares about making students on campus better leaders and members of our community and the world. I can see his passion for what he does, and I hope to one day lead students in the same way!

What is the best-kept secret about Minot State?

The small class sizes. You can easily learn the names of everyone in your classes, and there is something special about when you can add a name after saying hi to someone you recognize on campus.

What is your most memorable moment at MSU?

My most memorable moment was the welcome week activities. Along with the fun and prizes, this environment provided an opportunity to find friends on campus.

Why did you choose Minot State?

I am attending Minot State because it is a solid opportunity at an affordable price. My older brother, Sam '24, went to college here and graduated with a degree in management information systems, and I have looked up to him my whole life.

How has Minot State helped you further your academic career?

Minot State has provided me with opportunities to develop my soft skills. I have learned what it takes to succeed in courses that I might not have been naturally gifted in, and I have built closer relationships with my professors.

What has been your favorite class?

Professional ethics with Kelly Hendershot (assistant professor, finance and accounting). She is so fun and lets the class give input and discuss real ethical scenarios and topics in class.

Who has been your most influential professor?

Jim Sturm (director, Looyenga Leadership Center). He is an incredible human being who has always given me lots of feedback and laughs, and he gives honest, constructive criticism.

What is the best-kept secret about Minot State?

The MSU Wellness Center is accessible all day and into the late night. My personal favorite secret is the gym is very slow from 8:30 p.m. to close for all the lifters who don't want to wait for a machine.

What is your most memorable moment at MSU?

Watching my brother graduate in 2024. He worked hard to get through college and considering that both our parents attended MSU but never graduated, it was a big deal for our family.



Griffen Aannerud
Minot • finance



Madisyn Emter
Bismarck
communication sciences and disorders

Why did you choose Minot State?

I chose Minot State for the CSD program! In high school, I learned about speech pathology and knew it was what I wanted to do. I heard MSU had a great program from many, many people. On top of this, MSU is very affordable and is smaller than other universities in North Dakota.

How has Minot State helped you further your academic career?

I have been provided with all of the resources I need to be successful. The faculty are amazing. I have learned so much throughout my time, and my professors have helped me further realize that this career is what I am passionate about and want to do.

What has been your favorite class?

Every semester, I find myself saying that a different class is my favorite, but it would be my speech sound disorders class with Leisa (Halverson) Harmon '88/'89 (associate professor, communication sciences and disorders).

Who has been your most influential professor?

It is so hard for me to choose! My advisor, Courtney (Johnson) Olson '16 (assistant professor, communication sciences and disorders), has a large impact on my learning. While I have not yet had her as a professor, she has been involved in and committed to my learning from day one.

What is your most memorable moment at MSU?

It just happened recently. In one of my classes, we hosted a baby shower for a student who is about to be a new mom. The support from everyone, both students and faculty, really stood out to me.

Why did you choose Minot State?

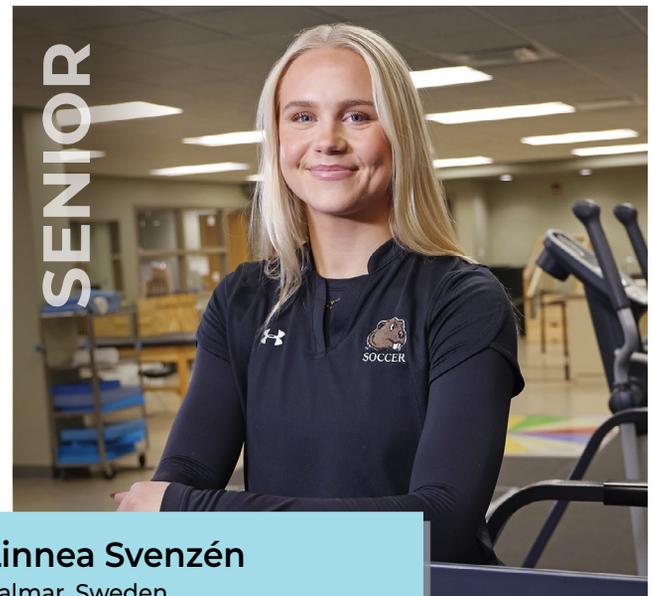
Minot State's soccer program's level and opportunity to compete for championship titles every year, while still going to a school small enough to get to know your professors.

How has Minot State helped you further your academic career?

My program and professors have pushed me to build a network of professionals in my field and in the Minot community.

What has been your favorite class?

Any of the therapeutic exercise courses. They offer incredible insight into the clinical world, and the second course made me feel like I was already working as a professional in the field. It was both inspiring and motivating.



Linnea Svenzén
Kalmar, Sweden
exercise science and rehabilitation

Who has been your most influential professor?

Beth Marschner (assistant professor, exercise science and rehabilitation) and Terry (Ferebee) Eckmann '81/'82 (professor, teacher education and kinesiology). Dr. Marschner is an amazing professor in general, and working with a professor who has actual clinical experience is very helpful as a student. She shares practical tips and techniques that are immediately applicable in real patient scenarios. She also supported me tremendously when I experienced a major knee injury last year, and I don't think I would have gotten through the semester without her. Dr. Eckmann has been equally influential. Her networking skills and dedication to student success have given me opportunities I'm incredibly grateful for.

What is the best-kept secret about Minot State?

MSU has lots of resources for internships and certifications.

What is your most memorable moment at MSU?

Our win over Concordia University, St. Paul in the Northern Sun Intercollegiate Conference tournament semifinal in 2024.

Why did you choose Minot State?

I was initially drawn to Minot State for its softball program, but I slowly gained appreciation for much more than that. I love the campus, the people, and the town.

How has Minot State helped you further your academic career?

The connections I established with professors and faculty will be impactful for a lifetime.

What has been your favorite class?

It might sound funny, but my favorite class was methods of teaching dance with Terry (Ferebee) Eckmann '81/'82 (professor, teacher education and kinesiology). This class was early in the morning and started the day off right by moving the body; it was high vibes.

Who has been your most influential professor?

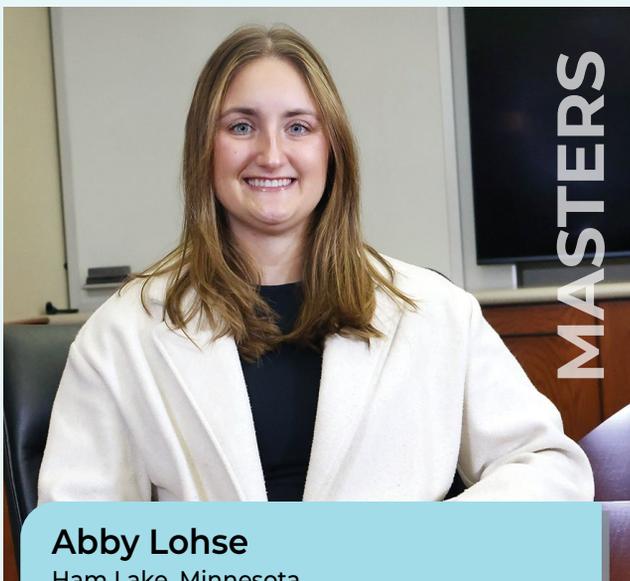
Terry Eckmann. She has been there with me since the beginning. I had her as an advisor for all four years of undergrad and as a professor for many classes. I built a relationship with her that goes beyond the classroom. I got the chance to go with her to Mexico to teach exercise classes. I look up to her in more ways than I can express.

What is the best-kept secret about Minot State?

How clean and pretty our campus is year-round. There is just a hidden beauty to the campus at sunrise or sunset, in a fresh snowfall, when the leaves are changing color, or in the spring when all the flowers are blooming.

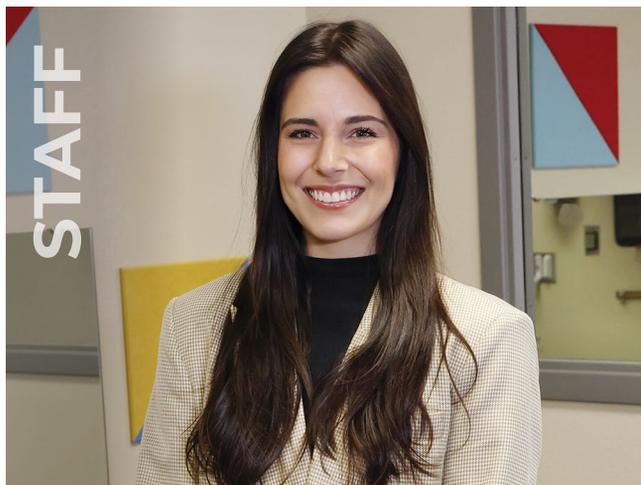
What is your most memorable moment at MSU?

In 2022, I was a freshman living in the dorms, and a snowstorm in April shut down the town for days. Instead of moping, the softball team went out and had some fun. We built a massive snowman on the Old Main lawn and went sledding down the Old Main stairs!



Abby Lohse

Ham Lake, Minnesota
corporate fitness and wellness management
and finance



Katelyn (Larson) Fornshell '15/'17

communication sciences and disorders/
speech-language pathology

- **Why did you choose Minot State?**
- It was a no-brainer for me to stay close to home and save some money in my first couple of years of school. Minot State was an easy choice given its positive reputation for the speech-language pathology program.

How has Minot State helped you further your academic career?

In graduate school, I had the opportunity to serve as a research assistant with Holly (Pick) Pedersen '93 (associate professor, special education). I hope to collaborate with her again now as a colleague. My department has been so supportive of continuing education opportunities. This fall I was able to attend Closing the Gap, an AAC conference, to learn from Linda Burkhart. In March, I will have the opportunity to lead a presentation on pediatric feeding at the NDSLHA state conference.

What has been your favorite class?

A class from grad school that I still think about a lot was CD 536 AAC: multiple disabilities. This area has become a strong professional interest for me, with my favorite kids being those with complex communication needs. I am eager and feel fortunate to teach this class in the upcoming fall semester.

Who has been your most influential professor?

Erin (Zeltinger) Holt '97 (assistant professor, communication science and disorders) was my first clinical supervisor as an undergrad, brand new to therapy. The positive clinical experience she shared that semester instilled a love for working with the pediatric population.

What is the best-kept secret about Minot State?

I was in the Northwest Arts Center for the first time this fall. A must see!

What is your most memorable moment at MSU?

Receiving my master's hood next to my classmates made the hard work worth it.

Volleyball scholarship fuels Swain's nursing passion

By Veronica Corey

Hayley Swain '20 always knew she wanted to pursue a career in healthcare.

A volleyball camp helped the student-athlete find a home away from home.

Swain, an Airdrie, Alberta native, connected with a Minot State University coach during her volleyball camp and was invited to tour the campus.

"I visited and toured other universities; however, I was really drawn to MSU," she said. "The girls on the volleyball team were so friendly and welcoming. I had the opportunity to meet with the faculty of nursing, and they were so informative and got me excited about the program they offered. I toured the campus, and it just felt right. It felt very similar to home."

With the help of a volleyball scholarship, not only did Swain earn her nursing degree, but she also gained an instant support group.

"To be given the opportunity to get a volleyball scholarship and earn a degree in nursing at MSU is something I will always be grateful for," she said. "Being a student-athlete on a university team provides an instant friend group and circle of support. We pushed each other to be our best on and off the court."

From community and opportunities, Swain knew Minot was a great place to start her career.

"I never fully understood or appreciated how great the community of Minot is until I finished school and started my career here," she said. "It's a city with a small-town feel and a strong sense of community. There are so many opportunities for growth within the community in any career, especially here at Trinity Health."

"I was offered a position in the ICU right after graduation; not many hospitals hire new graduates into ICU positions," Swain added. "I felt incredibly excited and grateful for the opportunity. There were many amazing nurses in the ICU that I looked up to during my clinical rotations and being able to learn from them was something I couldn't pass up."

After working in the ICU for two years, another opportunity came from Trinity Health.

"I then had the privilege to accept a position on the First Response Air flight team, where I have now worked for just under three years," she said. "Both of my nursing career positions have helped me grow as a person. There's a lot of education that comes with being a flight nurse to ensure my partner and I can safely take care of our patients in the back of our aircraft."

"I am fortunate to have a lot of support from my co-workers, family, and friends. Overall, as a flight team, it's rewarding to see the support from the community, the hospital, and our team."

Swain is thankful for the education and experience she received at Minot State. Being a nursing student and athlete required her to remain calm even in high-demand situations and know what to prioritize.

"Graduating from MSU prepared me well for entering the ICU before joining the flight team," she said. "I am always eager to learn new things, not afraid to take on challenges, and enjoy taking on a leadership role to mentor new staff. When you have a critical patient, their immediate well-being and needs take absolute priority; you stay focused and do what you need to do to help them."

Swain will forever be grateful for the community she has built in Minot.

"Some of my coaches, teammates, professors, and coworkers really became extended family," she said. "They truly make an impact on your growth and your journey. When you are so far from home, it's comforting knowing you have them here." ❖❖❖



MSU ALUMNI
UNDER
30



TRINITY HEALTH
FIRST RESPONSE

N94



The **second** time around

By Eden Jackson-Jones

Derek Hackett '13 was working in the oil field in northwestern North Dakota, standing outside in sub-zero temperatures, trying to pull apart a cable that wouldn't move.

The job required bare hands and fine motor control.

"You couldn't wear gloves. You need dexterity," Hackett noted.

His fingers burned. The wind didn't let up. At some point, he stopped pulling.

He looked up and saw a Minot State University billboard in the distance.

"What the [expletive] am I doing out here?" he wondered.

A Bishop Ryan High School graduate and Minot native, Hackett showed an early ability to command a room. The moment caught the attention of then-superintendent Kevin Harmon '89 (now Minot State's vice president of student affairs and

intercollegiate athletics).

"I think it was during a school talent show," Hackett recalls. "I recreated the famous 'Napoleon Dynamite' dance. He (Harmon) told me I had potential."

Hackett first enrolled at Minot State in 2006, but his academics slipped.

"I was social," he said, with a quick laugh. "That was on me. I had to work my way out of academic probation the second time around."

He studied broadcast journalism, but dipped his toe into being an entrepreneur, starting Pretty Lights, a holiday and events lighting service, in 2008 with a group of peers.

"We were all students at Minot State," he said. "Dean Frantsvog '97 (MSU business law professor who passed away in 2022) helped us put the business plan together, Russ Hanson (former

MSU art instructor who passed away in 2016) helped with graphic design, and my broadcast professor, Neil Roberts (MSU associate professor of professional communication), was our first client."

When the team was asked to light Minot's downtown Christmas tree, Hackett went back to campus again.

"Before we said yes, I went to one of my algebra professors and asked, 'How many lights does it actually take to light a tree like this?' We sat down and did the math," he recalled.

Nearly 20 years later, Pretty Lights has scaled from seasonal holiday installations to permanent lighting solutions, serving clients across the region — from southeastern North Dakota to northwestern Montana.

"You don't survive that long without innovating. You try things, figure out what



works, and then you build on it," Hackett said. "Pretty Lights wouldn't exist without Minot State. We leaned on people there constantly."

After graduating, Hackett worked in local television as a reporter and anchor in Minot. He later brought those skills into public information with the City of Minot. Drawing on his broadcast background, he helped modernize how the city communicated — including spearheading the livestreaming of city council meetings to social media, a move that expanded access and accountability.

"We were building things from scratch. And as it grew, so did the visibility. More eyes. More scrutiny," he said of his time with the city. "That came directly from my TV days. People want access. They want to see what's happening, not just read about it later."

The work required constant adjustment.

"You learn fast when you're talking to an entire community. You have to listen, adapt, and keep your credibility," he said.

Hackett aimed for a voice that was observant and credible, sometimes tongue-in-cheek, always grounded in paying attention to how people actually responded.

The approach gained traction beyond city limits.

"I had people calling from other states asking how we were doing it," Hackett said.

Today, he serves as marketing director for Prairie Grit, a nonprofit providing therapy and adaptive sports for individuals with physical and mental disabilities, and was instrumental in Minot's Union Silos project, a transformative project turning an abandoned grain silo into the state's largest art mural.

Prairie Grit continues to grow its reach, services, and visibility across the region.

Its founders, Chad '04 and Angie Thompson, saw what was possible elsewhere and chose to build it in Minot instead.

"And instead of moving, they came back and said, 'Let's do this here.'" Hackett said.

In 2025, Prairie Grit merged with the Minot Family YMCA, bringing expanded leadership and resources to a facility central to Minot's health and wellness landscape. The transition is focused on growth without disruption — scaling thoughtfully, without losing trust.

"There's a lot ahead of us," he said. "This is about doing it right."

The Union Silos project also came with a practical twist. The property includes a large industrial building that

now serves as the headquarters for Pretty Lights — a two-for-one that made the long-abandoned site workable from the start. As conversations began circulating about bringing a large-scale public art project to Minot, Hackett found himself thinking his building might be the perfect fit.

"We were talking about it with a few other community champions, and at some point, I just said, 'I think I have the place. Let's do it,'" he recalled.

Internationally recognized artist Guido van Helten spent several summers in Minot, getting to know the community before beginning the mural in spring 2025. Hackett watched the process up close.

"There are very few artists in the world who can scale something like that and execute it," he said. "To see it come together was incredible — it's going to change Minot's skyline for the better, permanently."

Looking back, Hackett sees that moment out in the cold, open fields of oil country differently now.

"A lot of my life has been timing and luck," he said. "But luck only matters if you're willing to adapt and put the work in." ❄️❄️❄️



Giving to Minot State University is already a meaningful way to invest in students, programs, and the future of our region. North Dakota offers two powerful incentives that amplify that generosity: the North Dakota Higher Education Challenge Grant Fund and the North Dakota Tax Credit for Charitable Giving. Together, these programs reward donors for supporting higher education while maximizing the impact of each gift.

The ND Higher Education Challenge Grant Fund is designed to strengthen public colleges and universities across the state by matching private donations. When you make a qualifying gift to MSU — such as scholarships, academic programs, or faculty support — the state provides matching funds that significantly increase the total value of your contribution. For every \$2 in donor support, the state provides \$1. In practical terms, a donor's gift can be leveraged into something much larger, helping Minot State expand opportunities for students and enhance educational quality without placing additional burden on tuition or taxpayers.

At the same time, the North Dakota Tax Credit for Charitable Giving provides donors with a direct financial benefit. Eligible contributions to the MSU Development Foundation may qualify for a 40% North Dakota state income tax credit, reducing the amount of tax owed while still supporting a cause you care about. Unlike a deduction, a tax credit directly offsets tax liability, making it one of the most donor-friendly incentives available. This means donors can support MSU's mission while also making a smart financial decision.

Taken together, these programs create a rare opportunity to do more good with the same dollars. Gifts to the MSU Development Foundation help prepare the next generation of professionals, educators, and leaders. By taking advantage of the Challenge Grant and the charitable tax credit, donors can multiply their impact, strengthen higher education in our state, and ensure Minot State University continues to serve students and communities for years to come. ...

Ways to Give today and tomorrow

Minot State University has many flexible and meaningful ways to support, whether you're planning for the future or making an impact right now.



Bequest

Include MSU in your will or trust



Beneficiary Designations

Name MSU as a beneficiary of a retirement account, life insurance policy, or donor-advised fund

Endowments

Create or contribute to a scholarship or program endowment



Gifts of Stock or Securities

A tax-efficient way to give



IRA Charitable Rollover

If you are 70 1/2 or older, make a qualified charitable distribution directly from your IRA



One-Time or Recurring Gifts

Support areas of greatest need or a program close to your heart

Every gift helps ensure Minot State continues to provide high quality education.

[Explore ways to give today!](#)



NORTH DAKOTA CHALLENGE GRANT

The program allows for a 50% match to scholarship endowments and other areas such as technology, educational infrastructure, classroom enhancements, and equipment.

Donor gift amount	\$5,000	\$10,000	\$15,000	\$20,000	\$25,000
Challenge Grant Match	+ \$2,500	+ \$5,000	+ \$7,500	+ \$10,000	+ \$12,500
TOTAL GIFT AMOUNT	\$7,500	\$15,000	\$22,500	\$30,000	\$37,500

NORTH DAKOTA TAX CREDIT

The North Dakota Tax Credit for Charitable Giving provides for a 40% ND tax credit on qualified charitable contributions of \$5,000 or more to a qualified endowment. Any unused portion of the tax credit can be carried forward for up to three taxable years. Credit applies to ND income tax payers only.

Donor gift amount	\$5,000	\$10,000	\$20,000	\$25,000
ND Tax Credit	- \$2,000	- \$4,000	- \$8,000	- \$10,000
Federal tax deduction (24% bracket)	- \$720	- \$1,440	- \$2,160	- \$3,600
ACTUAL NET COST OF GIFT	\$2,280	\$4,560	\$6,840	\$11,400

For more information, please contact:
Rick Hedberg '89, Vice President for Advancement
Executive Director, MSU Development Foundation
rick.hedberg@minotstateu.edu, 701-858-4483



There's no place like home ... for leaving a legacy



For many couples and individuals, their home represents one of their largest estate assets, and for others, it is their largest estate asset. And yet when it comes to charitable giving, many people tend to think only in terms of conventional or traditional assets (cash, stocks, bonds, mutual funds, etc.) when contemplating annual or planned gifts. Consequently, the home is often an overlooked opportunity for leaving a substantial legacy to Minot State University.

This article examines two ways in which your home can be utilized to make a significant charitable gift. For purposes of our discussion, the word “home” is used in its broadest sense, and can mean a personal residence, a second or vacation home, a lake property, or farmland (whether raw land, land and buildings, or just the farmstead).

The first and most straight-forward method for utilizing the home to facilitate a charitable gift — apart from a direct transfer by deed — is through a testamentary bequest, which as the name implies, is a gift made pursuant to one’s last will and testament. Most married couples own their home as joint tenants (with right of survivorship), meaning that the property automatically passes, by operation of law, to the survivor upon the death of the first joint tenant/co-owner. As long as the survivor has made provision in his/her will for passing the property to the charitable organization upon death, the legacy gift will be accomplished.

While a testamentary gift of the home can work well for many donors, there are a few potential drawbacks with this approach. What if one or both spouses end up in a nursing facility, requiring skilled care? Unless the donors have adequate nursing home insurance, there could be a rapid spend-down of cash and financial assets to cover the nursing home obligation. Once those assets have been depleted (and neither spouse is living in the home), the state can require that the property be sold and the proceeds spent down prior to the state providing medical assistance. At the very least, a claim could be made in the estate of the

non-institutionalized spouse, which would enable the state to recover any medical assistance (Medicaid) benefits on behalf of the spouse in the nursing home facility upon the death of the non-institutionalized spouse. Either way, the testamentary gift would fail, since there would be nothing left to bequeath to the charitable organization.

Another drawback with a testamentary gift is that there is no income tax charitable deduction available to the donor(s), unlike with lifetime gifts of cash or securities. While there is a charitable estate tax deduction available upon death, it is most often a moot point for many, since the current (2025) estate tax exclusion exempts assets up to \$13,990,000 per person (\$27,980,000 per married couple) from estate tax.

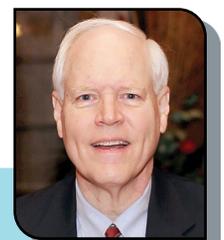
A further drawback with a testamentary gift is that wills are subject to change. Wills can generally be amended (or revoked) at any time. Donors may change their mind or there may be circumstances that could impact their original intention to leave the home as a testamentary bequest. So while the donor may have initially had charitable intentions — as expressed in the will — there is no guarantee that the gift will ultimately be completed.

A second (and often better) approach for utilizing the home for a planned gift might be to transfer the home to the charitable organization during their lifetime, while reserving a life estate in the property. A retained life estate is a form of split-gift, consisting of 1) the donor or donors retaining a lifetime interest in the property, and 2) gifting the remainder interest to the charity. With a gift of property with a retained life estate, the donors irrevocably transfer their home to the charitable organization but retain the right to live in it for the rest of their lives. Upon the death of the last surviving donor, the property becomes fully vested in the charitable organization, which can either keep the property for its own use or sell the property and use the proceeds for purposes designated by the donors. In the meantime, the gift is protected from

Medicaid claims, as the asset is considered unavailable to claims of creditors.

One of the appealing features of a retained life estate is that the donors retain use of the property while they are alive, but do give up the ability to sell the home and receive the proceeds from a sale. The donor(s) can continue to live in the home or rent it out during their respective lifetimes. The donors still have the responsibility to maintain the property, insure the property against loss, pay annual real estate taxes, utilities, and expenses of routine maintenance, including even remodeling or redecorating as they so desire during their lifetimes. In return for making an irrevocable gift of their property, the donors will receive an immediate income tax charitable deduction, based on the present value of the remainder interest. The deduction is typically capped at 30% of Adjusted Gross Income (AGI), and any unused portion can be carried forward for up to five years.

This article has highlighted two ways in which a home can be unlocked for making a significant charitable gift. That said, nothing in this article should be construed as legal and/or tax advice. Needless to say, you should contact your attorney or accountant concerning questions as they relate to your specific situation. However, if you would like additional information on how you might leave a legacy gift to the MSU Development Foundation, please call 701-858-3399 or 800-777-0750 to speak with one of our development professionals. You can also visit our planned giving website at MinotState.giftlegacy.com. We would be happy to provide a no cost/no obligation consultation, along with a personalized illustration. And as always, thank you for your consideration of Minot State University! : : : :



Dan Langemo
Vice President
MSU Development Foundation



Minot State provides drive for Dascher to become Big Ten referee

By Mike Stetson

Sometimes the road to the big stage goes through a small town like Minot.

For former two-sport Minot State University student-athlete Josh Dascher '03, that's proven to be the case as he is making a name for himself on the gridiron.

Not playing the game, but as a top official in the NCAA.

This past season, he was a crew member in the Big Ten Conference — one of the Power Four conferences — and worked the Big Ten championship game in December. Dascher drew nationwide praise as an official for his work in November during Indiana's 27-24 comeback win at Penn State.

Having put in nearly two decades in stripes, starting out working small college football games on his way to where he is now, Dascher credits Minot State for his drive.

"I'm thankful I chose Minot because of all the interactions, and I've been a part of so many things," Dascher said, reflecting back on his five years as a student and athlete. "Without having these pivotal relationships, I definitely wouldn't be the person I am today; I definitely wouldn't have the competitive drive or the desire."

Growing up in Montana, Dascher had dreams of being a student-athlete in one of the power college conferences like

the Big Ten or Pac-10, but admits his talent wasn't up to that level.

Not that it was a bad thing. Dascher believes he wouldn't have had the same intense interaction he found with coaches and professors at a small college like Minot State.

"Athletically speaking, just being a part of those teams — was just a lot of fun; just the friends, I still call some of those my closest friends from that time, those teams," he said. "Academically, to me, those connections in the classroom and stuff were so much fun. We'll look back on it and carry those lessons on in the world."

Minot State was more than just a place that created drive and passion for Dascher. He recorded more than 1,500 receiving yards and hauled in 12 touchdown passes, twice earning All-DAC-10 honors and being named an Academic All-American as a receiver with MSU football.

He also competed in track & field for MSU, starting out as a hurdler before transitioning to the decathlon.

Away from competition, Dascher worked toward a dual major in business administration and radiologic technology,



That support comes from his wife and former Beaver student-athlete Kayla (Blom) Dascher '02, a two-time Academic All-American herself who was named an NAIA All-American in women's basketball in 2001-02 at Minot State. Kayla is No. 3 all-time in scoring with 1,620 points in her time at Minot State, where she met Josh.

"A lot of great officials never got the chance just because they couldn't make, you know, one or two of those things work," Dascher said.

While his schedule working games for the top teams in the nation means no trips back to enjoy Beaver football, Dascher doesn't miss out.

"I actually assist the Northern Sun in some of their official development and training," he said, adding that he's impressed with the current direction of the Beaver football program. "I watch regularly on film; I get to watch the whole game film from Minot State almost weekly."

While he can't make it to football games, Dascher and his wife continue to support their alma mater and visit during the offseason when they can.

And Dascher never undervalues the impact of Minot State.

"I credit a lot of those coaches," he said. "They really — as a young adult — bring out that part of you that you didn't know you had." ❄️❄️❄️

graduating with business administration before training in Rochester, Minnesota — where he currently lives — to be a radiologic technician. After working for 13 years in the medical industry, he moved back to his business background and now works as a financial advisor.

Dascher works a full-time job as he admits being a college football referee doesn't pay the bills but is more a passion and part-time vocation.

A pretty special part-time job.

"Just to be out there, and with those athletes, and some of that history that lingers; it's fun, it's really special," he said.

"It's a very demanding job, it's certainly not a spectator position," Dascher added. "You really do have to be at the top of your game. After more than 20 years of officiating, I'm still continuing to grow every time I step out there."

Helping make the demanding job possible is a flexible full-time job, time and ability to continue training as a referee, and a strong support system at home.



HOME

from day one

By Mike Stetson

In the current landscape of college athletics, it's not unheard of for student-athletes to look for different options, opportunities, or places to call home for a year or two.

But that kind of college experience never suited Sam Buchanan.



A three-sport athlete from Gunnison, Colorado, Buchanan looked at colleges in Colorado, went on a few recruiting visits to NCAA Division III schools, but when he visited Minot, he was sold.

"The campus was awesome," Buchanan recalls. "I really loved my recruiting visit; all of my college decision was really based on football recruiting.

"When I came up here, I met all the players, and I met all the old coaching staff; that recruiting visit was so much fun for me. I got to go to a hockey game, which is pretty cool. So that kind of recruiting visit was pretty fun."

That first trip to Minot made MSU home for Buchanan, who enrolled as a freshman in 2022 and was set to play linebacker for the Beavers. He redshirted that season, which he still looks back on fondly.

"I always tell everybody that freshman year for me was probably the most fun I ever had," he said, adding that he developed friendships with teammates he was recruited with and still lives with today.

After his redshirt season, the leadership in MSU football changed as current head coach Ian Shields took over, and with the change, Buchanan switched from linebacker to running back.

"That was just exciting for me, it was kind of like starting over, refreshing, and it kind of seemed brand new again," Buchanan said of the coaching and position change.

Even during the coaching change, the thought of leaving Minot never really crossed his mind.

"If I'm signing a commitment letter, I'm committed to that school long term," he said. "I'm not the kind of person that's ever going to think about transferring to a different school.

Buchanan will graduate with a bachelor's degree in corporate fitness and wellness management this spring, then return for a final season of football in 2026 as he finishes a minor in business.

"I can't imagine ever putting on any different colors and playing for any different team," he said. "I want to be in Minot and having that year of eligibility that's on the table; there's no way that I'm going to live with myself if I'm in Minot and not playing football."

In his career, Buchanan has rushed for 590 yards and five touchdowns in 32 games through three seasons.

Away from the gridiron, he's been equally busy. Starting his collegiate career as a communication major, he looked to gain broadcasting experience and put his hockey background to use, applying and becoming the voice of Minot State hockey.

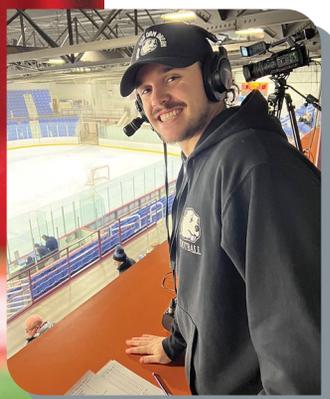
"I had an interest in play-by-play, and as soon as I reached out, I was in," Buchanan recalls. "That kind of freaked me out a little bit, but it was also really, really exciting."

While MSU has been the perfect fit for him, it turns out it's been a great fit for his younger brother, Grady, a freshman safety on the Beaver football team, as well.

While he promoted Minot State to Grady, Sam stressed that he needed to enjoy the recruiting process and make his own decision.

For Buchanan, enjoying the recruiting process has kept him from looking elsewhere.

"That'll never, ever cross my mind, 'Should I go somewhere else and play?'" he said, "because that's your team, you can't leave your team." ❖❖❖



Interdisciplinary study uses VR to study stress recovery

Minot State University faculty and students are collaborating on an innovative research project that blends multiple disciplines and cutting-edge technology to better understand how the body recovers from stress.

What began as a natural partnership between Lacey Corneliusen, associate professor of social work, and Zeb Wallace, associate professor of geography, has evolved into an interdisciplinary study using virtual reality (VR) to examine how intentional sensory experiences may help regulate the body's stress response.

"Zeb and I work together each year to help new faculty get acclimated to campus," Corneliusen said. "Over the past four years, we realized how our two fields connect in ways most people wouldn't expect. Both look

how interdisciplinary collaboration broadens our understanding," Corneliusen added.

Using a Meta Quest 3S headset and a program called Nature Treks VR, participants enter short, guided virtual environments designed to promote calm. The program uses forests with falling leaves, quiet beaches, savannas with naturally moving wildlife, and more. Each session lasts just five to seven minutes, allowing participants to immerse themselves in rhythmic, steady visual and auditory cues.

Wallace noted the potential implications for disaster recovery and emergency response fields.

"My interest is in the human side of hazards and disasters," he said. "Finding additional avenues for recovery after a traumatic event is so

By Michael Linnell

early feedback: participants describe the experience as "calming" and "like hitting reset," reinforcing the potential of intentional, sensory-based VR tools to help the body return to balance.

"What we hope to learn is whether tools like VR can support stress recovery by helping the body move from a heightened state back to balance," Corneliusen said. "Our study looks at VR not as an escape, but as an intentional tool for regulation.

"When used with focus and purpose, it can help calm the body and reset the stress response, opening new possibilities for recovery and resilience." ❄️❄️❄️



at people within their environments, how surroundings shape behavior, and how stress affects our ability to function."

Supported by a grant, the project also highlights an area Corneliusen feels is an MSU strength — meaningful student involvement in research. Social work junior Sierra Schramm and psychology senior Addison Sorenson are actively involved in every stage of the project, from data collection to preparation for national conferences.

"It has been a great example of

important. VR may be a solution that can help individuals and communities build resilience and return to a better mental state after a disaster."

Schramm sees similar promise.

"The mind is so intriguing," she said. "I'm excited to see how the findings of this study may provide insight into reducing the heightened stress levels of people like first responders, police officers, and individuals who have experienced natural disasters."

The project ran through the end of the Fall 2025 semester with consistent





Educating for IMPACT

When Kim Tiedman decided to transition from clinical nursing to education, it was driven by a desire to leave a lasting impact on the profession she loves.

By Michael Linnell

Her commitment to her students, the nursing profession, and her North Dakota roots were recognized in two distinct areas in the fall, with her selection as an AgriSafe Nurse Scholar and as Minot State's Nurse Educator of the Year.

"I love my profession so much and want to share that passion," Tiedman said. "I originally wanted to be a physician. One clinical area I observed was the pediatric floor at the hospital. I worked with a young child who was there, and that is when I fell in love with nursing. It was the only thing I wanted to do then."

The AgriSafe Nurse Scholar program is a national program focused on improving health and safety outcomes in agricultural and rural communities. The distance-based program includes 23 modules developed by health and safety experts and addresses issues ranging from pesticide exposure and respiratory health to behavioral health and pediatric farm injuries.

"I really don't know why I received the email, but I am so glad I applied for it," she said. "I felt it was very appropriate to be able to bring this education into my classroom and to share with my peers."

The AgriSafe experience has had a direct impact on Tiedman's teaching and her students' learning. She incorporates program content into classroom instruction and clinical discussions, helping future nurses recognize health concerns unique to rural and agricultural populations.

"I feel it is critical for those of us who serve in areas that deal with agriculture and rural areas to have a better understanding of some of the unique needs of agricultural providers," Tiedman said.

Her connection to the topic is personal. The Minot native, growing up around family farms, witnessed firsthand the physical demands and health risks faced by agricultural workers.

"This is my state and my community, and I want to make sure I am helping prepare our nurses to be conscientious of the unique needs of this population," she said.

The Minot State Nurse Educator of the Year award is a student-driven honor that holds special meaning for Tiedman.

"The award is completely student-driven and is a very special award since the students determine the outcome," Tiedman said. "It means a lot because it solidifies my choice of profession."

Students say that passion is evident in the classroom. The Nurse Educator of the Year award is designed to recognize outstanding nursing educators and inspire interest in academic nursing careers statewide. For Tiedman, the honor reinforces why she chose to teach.

"I love going to work to see my students," she said. "To be able to work with the future of nursing is a privilege." ...

The Alumni Association
is now accepting
nominations for the 2026

Golden Awards and Young Alumni Achievement Award

NOMINATE AN ALUM who has excelled in his/
her profession, in service to their community, or in
service to Minot State.

USE THE ONLINE FORM to make a nomination and
to review the qualification criteria.

Deadline to submit nominations is March 31, 2026.

For more information call the Alumni Office
at 701-858-3373 or 800-777-0750.

»» ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

Upcoming EVENTS

Alumni & Friends Social
FARGO
June 11



Friend-Raising
GOLF TOUR
June 9 VELVA
June 23 GARRISON
July 30 KENMARE

Alumni & Friends Night
at Minot Hot Tots



June 15

North Dakota State Fair Luau



July 22

Alumni & Friends Social
BISMARCK
Aug. 11

HOMECOMING



SAVE THE DATE
Sept. 17 - 19

MinotStateU.edu/alumni

::: Alumni and friends EVENTS :::

MSU Night at Berry Acres



Fun Bus to MSU Basketball at 4 Bears



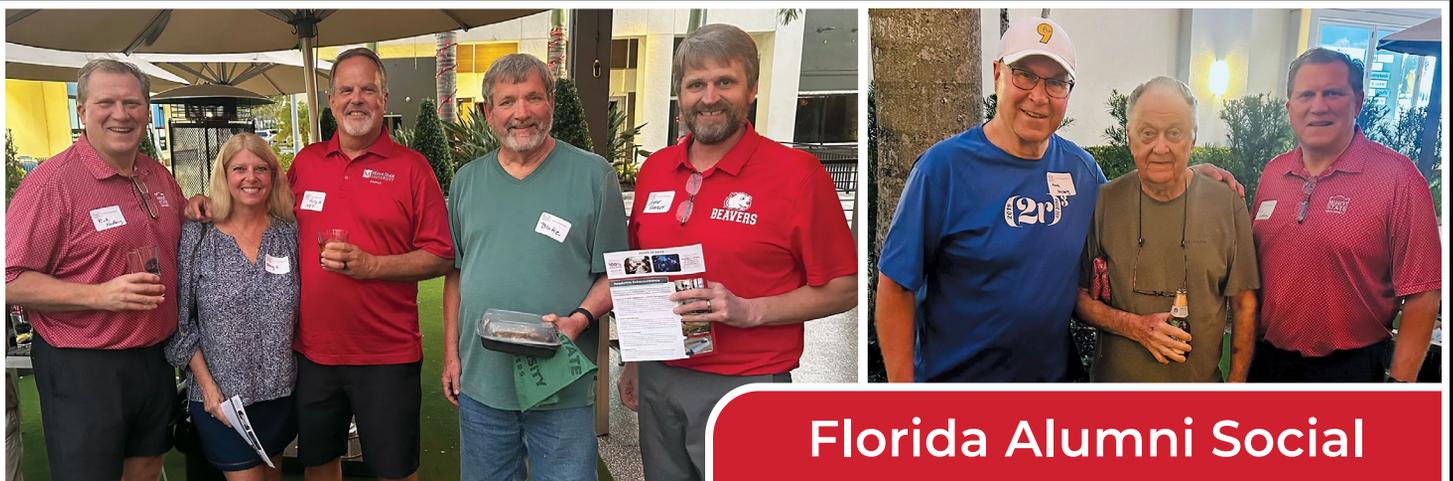
Danube River Cruise



Alumni Appreciation Night at the Dome



Minot Chamber Showcase of Business



Florida Alumni Social





Be Our Guest

for the 42nd Annual

Alumni Association GALA

Friday, May 1, 2026

MSU Dome

Silent & Live Auctions
Elegant Dinner | Cocktail Hour
Raffles & Games

Contact the MSU Alumni Office at
701-858-3234, scan the QR code, or visit
MinotStateU.edu/Alumni for more information.



CLASS NOTES



1948

Ethel Thompson, who lives in Williston, celebrated her 100th birthday on Sept. 21, 2025. She is a proud Minot State graduate. She earned her undergraduate degree from Minot State and later a master's degree from the University of North Dakota. On her 100th birthday, pictured at left, both her diploma from her undergraduate degree at MSU and her diploma from UND for her MS degree in education are included. She and fellow classmate Adelaide Johnson '47 (deceased) are pictured at right on their graduation day from Ray High School. Born nine days apart and growing up a few miles from each other north of Ray, they both graduated from RHS in 1943, continued to Minot State, both taught business courses, and traveled together to all corners of the world.



1990



Rhonda (Thingvold) Edwardson has been named associate professor and dental programs director at Dakota College at Bottineau Downtown, Minot.

1999



Amy (Goodman) Bergrude has been promoted to service line administrator at Trinity Health and will lead cardiovascular, orthopedics and therapies strategies, and service expansion.

2002

Char (Williams) Ferrell was recognized by North Dakota Health and Human Services with a Legendary Service Award. A nurse practitioner with 18 years in human services, she helped establish the Williston Stabilization Center.

2008



Genevieve (Binsfield) Hanson is the inaugural cross country coach at North Star Schools in Rudyard, Montana. They earned a second place team finish at state in their debut season.

1991



Chuck Kranz has accepted the pastor position at Bethel Baptist Church in Powers Lake.

2001



Kirsten (Schafer) Baesler was confirmed as assistant secretary of elementary and secondary education at the U.S. Department of Education. She had served as North Dakota State Superintendent of Public Instruction since 2013.

2003



Karna Taft has been promoted to senior vice president of operations at Town and Country Credit Union.



Tiffany Speas has stepped into the role of chief executive officer for the Peninsula Agency on Aging in Virginia.

1992



Lisa Luft is the new pastor at the Velva United Methodist Church.

2005



Kerena (Crowe) Saltzgiver has joined Trinity Health. She was the 12th Native American to achieve certification as a nurse-midwife in the United States, according to the American College of Nurse-Midwives.

2010



Sam (Medcalf) Brandt, Kindred High School girls basketball coach, reached a milestone of 200 career wins.

1995



Jason Harris has been named director of athletics at Bismarck State College.



Cory Gorder has been named campus dean at Dakota College at Bottineau. He previously served in the interim campus dean role and as associate dean for student services.

2011



Kelsey Tate joined Dakota College at Bottineau Downtown, Minot, as a dental instructor.

1996



Jeremy Brandt, Minot High School boys basketball coach, celebrated his 500th career win.



Mary Gorder joined the Dakota College at Bottineau, Bottineau campus as a practical nursing instructor.

2007



Tina (Marquart) Webb has accepted a position as the Workforce Development Officer for MSU's new innovation engineering bachelor's program.

2014



KayLee (Fenner) Bourquin has been promoted to retail manager-west for Town and Country Credit Union.



Kierstin (Myrdahl) Hurtt was named to the North Dakota Council on the Arts board of directors, representing Region 4. She is superintendent for the Valley-Edinburg School District #118.

2015



KateLynn Albers, Minot State assistant professor of accounting, was named a 2025 Prairie Business 40 Under 40 honoree.



Frank "Clay" Renick has released his novel "Always." Homeless and alone, Harv Meldon finds hope in a devoted friend and a stray dog, discovering that loss can lead to new beginnings, renewed faith, and unexpected strength.

2016



Mark Lyman, Minot Area Chamber EDC economic development specialist, earned the nationally recognized designation of certified economic developer from the International Economic Development Council.



Harmony (Bickell) Wilkie has joined the lending team at Aspire Credit Union as mortgage loan processor.

2019



Sydney (Landsiedel) Yale was hired as the executive assistant in the Minot State University President's Office in January. For the past two and a half years, Yale served as the coordinator of fitness and wellness in MSU's Wellness Center.

2020



Ben Eder, band and choir teacher at South Prairie School, is the new director for the Minot Chamber Chorale.

2021



Leisa (Reid) Peterson has joined the Trinity Health emergency/trauma medical team as a board-certified nurse practitioner.

2025



Jake Anthony, former Beaver goalie, has returned to Minot State as a volunteer assistant with the men's hockey team.

Attended



John and Karen (Schmidt) Grey were honored with the Sioux Award for Distinguished Achievement and Leadership at the UND Alumni Honors.

Friend



Tom Seymour was re-elected to the North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives.

Minot Daily News Best of the Best

The Minot Daily News' Best of the Best is a large, reader-driven contest recognizing top local businesses, individuals, and attractions. The following Minot State alumni were recipients of the 2025 Best of the Best awards.



Sean Arbaut '15,
photographer,
Arbaut Photography



Douglas Bengson '86,
dentist,
Dakota Dental Health Center



Abby (Martinson) Burckhard '13,
insurance agent,
Allstate Kim Albert Agency



Jason Burckhard '05,
orthodontist,
Burckhard Orthodontics



Josie (Gilles) Frueh '13,
massage therapist,
J Marie Massage Therapy LLC



Amanda (Burckhard) Geinert '12,
bank loan officer,
First International Bank & Trust



Sammy Herslip '14,
real estate agent,
Brokers 12



Heather (Stevenson) Keller '14,
bank mortgage officer,
Gate City Bank



Jordan Ross '06,
tattoo artist/body piercing,
2D Ink



Janie Savelkoul '23,
speech therapist,
Trinity Health



Kayla (Titus) Thomas '06,
nurse,
Trinity Health East Ridge

Send us your news: [MinotStateU.edu/alumni](https://www.minotstateu.edu/alumni)



Minot State alumni earn teaching awards



Minot State University alumni **Jade (Teske) Myers '18/'20** and **Bryan Kramer '85** were named ND SHAPE Teacher of the Year and ND SHAPE Athletic Director of the Year, respectively, by the North Dakota Society of Health and Physical Educators (ND SHAPE).

Myers, a double major in corporate fitness and physical education, is in her eighth year of teaching elementary education at South Prairie and serves as the school's archery coach. She has a passion for helping students discover the job of movement, build lifelong healthy habits, and find confidence through physical activity.

Kramer, who has a degree from MSU in social science, has been in education for 37 years and is in his ninth year as athletic director at South Prairie. He has served as an athletic director for 33 of his years in education.

Tara (Flaman) Smith '05/'07, who graduated from MSU with degrees in elementary education and special education, was awarded the Lake Havasu (Arizona) Unified School District Board Award Teacher of the Month for December 2025. Smith has taught in the district for 19 years and supports two schools in reading intervention.



MACEDC Eagle Award

The Minot Area Chamber EDC honors individuals who have excelled in customer service with the Eagle Award. The following Minot State alumni were recipients of the Eagle Award.



Jeanette (Froehlich) Beck '92,
Washington Elementary School



Brenda (Hughes) Boehler '93,
Edgewood Minot on 10th



Avery Bradley '25,
Prairie Grit Adaptive Sports
& Therapy



Katelynn Demery '20,
Domestic Violence Crisis Center



**Katelyn (Larson) Fornshell
'15/'17**,
Minot State University



**Jason '97 and Amy
(McKibben) Gemar '02**,
Gemar Photography



Caleb Harris '17,
Trinity Health First Response



Emily (Baggett) Helstedt '18,
John Hoeven Elementary School



Kim (Fjeldahl) Lentz '04,
South Prairie School



**Andrea (Harchenko)
Monson '05**,
Monson Dental Center



**McKenzie (Mosser)
Nelson '12**,
Edison Elementary School



Cheryl (Tryhus) Nilsen '90,
Minot State University
volunteer



Carson Schell '19,
Val's Cyclery



Nathan Schrum '13,
Arrowhead Ace Hardware



Marcus Quist '19,
Lotus Lagree

It is with honor we dedicate this section to recognize alumni and friends who have passed away from approximately October 2025 through February 2026 or as submitted.

In memory

Graduates

'49 King, Edward Lyle; Salem, Ore.
'50 Blackstead, David; Bismarck
'50 Bowers, Verna; Harvey
'50 Warren (Mauratis), Dorothea; Hampton, Va.
'52 Guymmer (Jett), Carol; Pocatello, Idaho
'52 Hagen, Jerome; Arlington, Va.
'54 Martens (Lemer), Rosemary; Ross
'54 Rooks, Gerald; Williston
'56 Anderson, Marilyn; Cando
'56 Wilson (Nelson), Ann; Aurora, Neb.
'57 Bassingthwaite, Alinda; Wahpeton
'58 Fjeld, Ronald; Carmichael, Calif.
'59 Berg, Caroline; Bottineau and Butte
'60 Anderson, Darrell A.; Bolivia, N.C.
'60 Fandrich, Clyde; Beulah
'60 Norman, Darlene; Esmond
'61 Barlow, Janice; Charlotte, N.C.
'61 Hartel, Muriel "Lavonne"; Riverhead, N.Y.
'61 Soukup, Mary Lou; Rochester, Minn.
'62 Krack, Marlene; Devils Lake
'64 Paulson, Gerald; Carrington
'64 Vicha, John F.; St. Charles, Ill.
'65 Sivertson, Janice; Watford City
'65 Stein, Raymond; East Grand Forks, Minn.
'66 Grindy, Larry; Minot
'66 Wilcox, Jacqueline; Parshall
'67 Huwe, Franklin; Oxford, Ga.
'67 Sidener, Steven; Minot
'68 Parizek, Sandra; Valley City
'69 Stach, Gerald; Minot
'70 Hale, Lawrence; Spokane Valley, Wash.
'70 McGrath, Jane; Fountain Hills, Ariz.
'72 Snyder Sr., Donald; Grand Forks
'73 Belisle, Edna; Buckeye, Ariz.
'73 Schmitz, Doris; Kenmare
'74 Franks (Trudell), Linda; Cleveland, Tenn.
'77 Barton (Reimnitz), Beth; Freeport, Ill.

'79 Sampson, Janet; Minot
'79 Smith, Carolyn "Carol"; Minot
'80 Balerud, Lee; Minot
'80 Bartz, Ellen; Bismarck
'82 Arnold, Renee; Sawyer
'82 Coffin, Norine; Minot
'82 Evje, Phillip; St. Paul, Minn.
'87 Fraser, Vikie; Minot
'89 Severson, Dawn; Cooperstown
'92 Schmiesing, Larry; Minot
'94 Wick, Esther; Minot
'99 Gottbreht, Rosann; Dunseith
'00 Held, Jennifer; New Salem
'00 Shea, Alvin; Regina, Saskatchewan
'13 Gilbert, Samantha; Bahamas

Attended

Barnes, Monte; Surrey
Bice, Jeffrey; Minot
Borud, Arlyn; Minot
Castelluccio, Patrick; Scottsdale, Ariz.
Dahle, Philip; Sioux Falls, S.D.
Durbin, Richard; Devils Lake
Locker, Sue Ann; Devil's Lake
Pederson, Christopher R; St. Louis, Mo.
Peterson (Aaberg), Sharon; Crosby
Rakness, Richard; Saratoga, Wyo.
Schnase, Dawn; Tower City
Selzler, Troy; Fargo
Stein, Ray; Devil's Lake
Stewart, Elizabeth "Betty"; Bottineau
Vetter, James M; Minot
Walker, Corliss; Perrysburg, Ohio
Weems, Kiara; San Antonio, Texas
Windfaldet, Lyle; Ambrose
Wunderlich, Eunice; Velva

Friends

Abelseth, Fred; Minot
Backes, Norman; Fargo
Bauman (Fisher), Darlene; Golden Valley
Berg, Norma; Minot

Berg, Larrel; Minot
Dahl, Gordon; Sawyer
Dehlin, Glenn; Mobile, Ala.
DesLauriers, Gary; Minot
Dokken, Duane; Minot
Goheen, Royal; Kennebunk, Maine
Gordon, JoAnne; Willow City
Gould, Michael; Roseville, Calif.
Gregoire (Bauer), Connie; Bismarck
Gundersen-Achterberg, Emily; Eau Claire, Wis.
Hatfield, Larry; Billings, Mont.
Hunskor, Todd; Bottineau
Keller, Angeline; Karlsruhe
Kern, Kenneth; Libby, Mont.
Kittelson, Dorothy; Velva
Leintz, Richard; Harvey
Lesmann, Kenneth; Minot
Lynn, Louise; Minot
Mittelberg, Orland "Mitt"; St. Joseph, Mich.
Norwick, Milo; Sioux Falls, S.D.
Olson, Noran; Minot
Pedersen, Marvin; Velva
Pretzer, Ronnie; Minot
Rolloff, Betty; Minot
Schilken, Carla; Minot
Skinningsrud, Oliver "Ole"; Carpio
Stafslie, Derris; Minot
Stakston, Malin; Burnsville, Minn.
Swanson, Tom; Minot
Tuttle-Allen, Judith; Wichita, Kan.
Vetter, Doreen; Minot
Wald, Donald; Minot

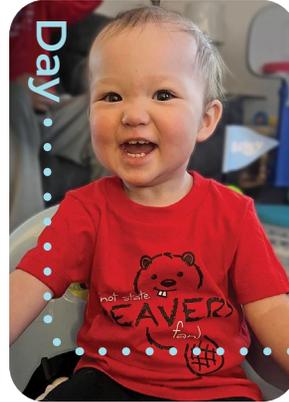
Faculty and Staff

Brooks, Fred; Grand Forks
Klipfel, Mary; North Aurora, Ill.
Schaffer, Dannah; Minot
Starr, Sandra; Minot
Wagner, Jonathan; Florence, Wis.
Wilz, Michael; Minot

BABY BEAVERS



Chantz and **Lindsey (Nelson) '14/'16 Buxbaum** welcomed Andrew David on July 31, 2024. He joins siblings Aubrey, Carter, and Samuel, with Grandma Tami (Horob) '87 Nelson and great grandpa Doug Hoglund '60 sharing in the joy.



Sairyn was born on March 18, 2024, to **McKenzie (Jerome) Day '22** and her husband, Lane.

Kaitlyn (Korte) Duree '19 and her husband, Chris, welcomed their second little girl, Halen Drew, on Aug. 10, 2025.



Karissa (Erdmann) Gahner '13 and her husband, Carter, are proud parents to Lainey JoLynn, born April 15, 2023, and Kinley Grace, born Aug. 22, 2025. They join brothers Emmanuel and Gabriel.



Bowen Roger entered the world on June 19, 2025. He was welcomed by **Dakota '15 and Carley (Stewart) '23 Larson**.

Alex Mack '19 and his wife, Alissa, welcomed a baby boy, Benson Allen, in July 2025.



Sylvie Kate was born May 4, 2025 to **Kale '17 and Jocelyn (Haman) '18/'20 McHenry**. She joins big sister, Nora.





Allyson (Eckroth) '07 Middlestead along with her husband, Andrew, welcomed Adam Vernon on April 22, 2024. He joins big sister, Abigail.



Mitch and **Jordan (Marken) '20 Sawicki** welcomed Bowen Lee on Jan. 23, 2025.



Reyna was born on Feb. 8, 2025, to **Billy Seright '96** and his wife, Deanna. She joins big brother Liam.



Laramie Layne entered the world on Aug. 02, 2024. Proud parents are **Rebekah (Stoe) '21 Urban** and her husband, Bridger.



Shannon (Guinn) '18 Watson and her husband, Marshall, welcomed their first child, Davy, on Aug. 9, 2025.



Adeline was born on Dec. 12, 2024, to **Nico (attended 2009-12) and Samantha (Redding) '18 Youngren**.

>>> Have you had an addition to your family recently? We want to know!

Contact Kate Marshall, director of foundation operations, at kate.marshall@minotstateu.edu to receive a free T-shirt for your new little Beaver. Please be sure to tell us your baby's name and date of birth. Also provide your graduation year, spouse's name, and contact information. After you receive your T-shirt, email your baby's photo!



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