

# Students of Character

Celebrating quiet leaders in our region

April 19, 2023 | 5 p.m.



# Celebrating quiet leadership

## Welcome to the 32nd annual celebration

The Students of Character Celebration recognizes high school juniors and seniors in our region for their quiet leadership, perseverance, and dedication to their community, school, and fellow students. Honorees are selected by their school staff with the criteria that they are unsung heroes of their districts. The event celebrates the difference these students make and lets them know we appreciate and believe in them.

## Students of Character



**Ryan Alexander**

**AITKIN HIGH SCHOOL — Nominated by:** Meredith Sander

Ryan has the ability to be friendly to all, which goes a long way in contributing to a warm, welcoming climate at school. Despite struggling academically during the pandemic, he persevered, worked hard, and has become a fantastic student. He brings positivity and energy to the classroom and is willing to contribute to discussion and enhance the learning of others.

**Savannah Holm**

**AITKIN HIGH SCHOOL — Nominated by:** Meredith Sander

Savannah is a hardworking student who brings a consistent, steady presence to the classroom. After graduation, she plans to attend Central Lakes College in Brainerd to begin her education and eventually pursue a career in early childhood education. She is approachable and dependable and shows promise to be a fantastic educator in the future.

*\*Will receive a \$750 scholarship from Central Lakes College.*



**Alayna Barthel**

**BERTHA-HEWITT HIGH SCHOOL — Nominated by:** Karla Weishalla

Alayna is a quiet leader, has a talent for leading by example, and is approachable to everyone in the building and community. She is always willing to help, including with the food shelf and working with younger students as a teaching assistant. She looks out for the best interests of others and always has time to listen when others need help.

# Wednesday, April 19, 2023 | 5 p.m.

## Agenda:

Hosts of ceremony: Travis Bautz and Chelsea Ornelas, Sourcewell Marketing staff

- Call to order by Board of Director Chairman Greg Zylka
- Student photos in lobby
- Representative Assembly meeting
- Welcome by Chad Coquette
- Keynote presenter Joe Beckman
- Presentation of awards and scholarships
- Closing

### How to watch on April 19:

- Go to [facebook.com/sourcewellgov](https://facebook.com/sourcewellgov)
- Click on the post that says: "2023 Students of Character Celebration"
- Enjoy!

## 2022-2023



### Stetson Guderjahn

**BERTHA-HEWITT HIGH SCHOOL — Nominated by:** Brittani Oyster

Stetson moved from Montana to Bertha during his middle/early high school career. Moving to a new state as an older student is often a difficult transition, especially when you don't know anyone. Stetson took on the challenge of making new friends and quickly became someone other students wanted to be around.

### Alexis Abraham

**BRAINERD HIGH SCHOOL — Nominated by:** JoDee Moen

Alexis has persevered despite obstacles and has continued to bring joy to staff and her peers within the school community. After dropping out for a year, she took it upon herself to re-enroll and graduate. Alexis has the best sense of humor, a great perspective on life, and adds to the overall positive atmosphere of Brainerd Learning Center.



### Casey Provost

**BRAINERD HIGH SCHOOL — Nominated by:** Katie Anderson

Despite having a hearing impairment, Casey has overcome many academic goals and challenges, resulting in a mature and confident student who shows great integrity and self-advocacy. She has a naturally positive outlook on life and always seems to have a smile. In the classroom, Casey works to bring her peers together, support her friends, and be a leader. *\*Will receive a \$750 scholarship from Central Lakes College.*

# Students of Character



**Eric Fontanez**

**BROWERVILLE HIGH SCHOOL — Nominated by:** Patrick Sutlief

Eric is a very hard worker, both in and out of school. When he first came to Browerville, his English skills were limited, but he worked hard to learn English and school subjects. Eric is a strong, positive force in the school. He is a tremendous role model for all students and a bright, friendly person every day.

**Mackenzie Uhlenkamp**

**BROWERVILLE HIGH SCHOOL — Nominated by:** Patrick Sutlief

Mackenzie is involved in activities and athletics and is a positive, bright part of each of them. She can be counted on to go the extra mile and do so with a big smile. She is a great role model as an example of hard work and a positive presence. Mackenzie demonstrates high integrity and has an extraordinary work ethic.



**Caraira Jensen**

**CASS LAKE-BENA HIGH SCHOOL — Nominated by:** Alisha Hillukka

Caraira always lends a helping hand. She is a leader on the girls' robotics team and has led the team to many victories over the past four years. She is part of the National Honor Society, has helped with the annual food drive, has helped plant trees, and has been active with the Feed My Starving Children program.

**Logan Oehler**

**CASS LAKE-BENA HIGH SCHOOL — Nominated by:** Alisha Hillukka

Logan has always been a helper in his classes, especially his Ojibwe language class. Whenever he sees students struggling, he slides over and helps them. Recently, he helped several teachers learn their Ojibwe protocol, which takes a lot of effort and time. The teachers presented at a meeting, and Logan spoke with the local news to brag up the teachers.



**Taylor Beddow**

**CROSBY-IRONTON HIGH SCHOOL — Nominated by:** Mike Gindorff

Taylor leads by example and brings calm and kindness to a classroom while maintaining a high level of achievement. She is an outstanding science student and is always willing to include any student in a study or lab group. Taylor is always ready to help others and pitch in wherever needed around the school. *\*Will receive a \$750 scholarship from Central Lakes College.*



**Elio Mendoza Delgado**

**CROSBY-IRONTON HIGH SCHOOL — Nominated by:** Jessica Dietz

Elio and his family moved to Minnesota from Venezuela part way through eighth grade. He had limited English proficiency and faced the challenge of adjusting not only to a new school, friends, and community, but also to a new language and culture. He has become a C-I Ranger through and through and helps radiate the Ranger Way every day.

**Chloe Jones**

**FRESHWATER EDUCATION DISTRICT — Nominated by:** Jill Line

Chloe exhibits courage and strength on a daily basis. She has overcome many physical obstacles, which have led to numerous surgeries. Yet she continues to persevere, working and going to school, all with a smile on her face. Chloe has not allowed her physical or personal challenges to interfere with her positive attitude and persistence to shine.

*\*Will receive a \$500 scholarship from M State.*



**Brian Monroy Chavez**

**FRESHWATER EDUCATION DISTRICT — Nominated by:** Jill Line

When Brian was a young child, his father passed away. This event could have been detrimental to Brian's future; however, he has chosen to lead a life full of positivity, generosity, compassion, and to be an influential role model for his younger brothers and peers. He is a great leader in school and does what is required and more.

**Laci Maleski**

**LITTLE FALLS HIGH SCHOOL — Nominated by:** Karen Warner

As someone who doesn't want to be in front of the crowd, Laci leads by example. Her quiet demeanor and positive, can-do attitude are noticed by others. Despite growing up facing challenges, Laci always has a smile and a strong work ethic to accomplish whatever she sets her mind to.



**Kilee Motzko**

**LITTLE FALLS COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL — Nominated by:** Karen Warner

Kilee struggled her freshman year with her home life and grades, but through the years has developed healthy relationships with family and friends. She has demonstrated that you can overcome obstacles and turn your life around; just because you have a rough start to high school doesn't mean that has to be your path.

# Students of Character



**Alexis Johnson**

**LONG PRAIRIE-GREY EAGLE HIGH SCHOOL — Nominated by:** Stacey Custer

Compassion is perhaps the most notable trait setting Alexis apart from other students. Throughout her school years, Alexis has navigated through challenges, including an autism diagnosis and being bullied. She took those challenges and turned them into who she is today, including someone who helps provide necessities for other students and makes everyone feel welcome, safe, and seen.

**Atlanta McCoy**

**LONG PRAIRIE-GREY EAGLE HIGH SCHOOL — Nominated by:** Cody Cox

Atlanta has had to overcome various challenges in her life, from mental health to academic struggles; however, she has the passion and perseverance to do so. Atlanta works well with others, likes to collaborate with school staff, and continues to seek out new ways to become more successful in her classes.



**Michael Andersen**

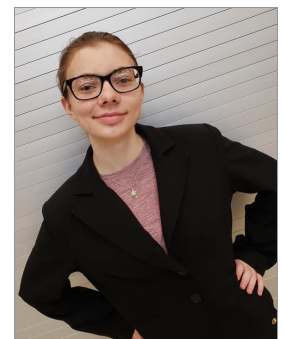
**MENAHGA HIGH SCHOOL — Nominated by:** April Hodge

Michael is quiet yet talented. In recent years, he has found his voice in playing guitar. He has played in the high school musical “Bye Bye Birdie,” played the National Anthem at sporting events, and accompanies a student in his adaptive music lesson. Additionally, Michael sings and plays trumpet in band. He works hard and takes everything he does seriously.

**Emma Jackson**

**MENAHGA HIGH SCHOOL — Nominated by:** Michelle Rinke Koch

Emma is an upstanding, hardworking, positive contributor to her community and school. She has an amazing ability to prioritize her workload and gives 100% to all that she does. Emma has continued to demonstrate her dedication and hard work with her involvement in Just For Kix, the school speech team, and 4-H.



**Abigale Hurt**

**NORTHLAND COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL — Nominated by:** Scott Peterson

Despite having experienced her own personal struggles from a young age, Abby remains a positive influence on her peers. She helps calm students when they are upset or stressed and is always there if someone needs to talk. When Abby is able, she helps her peers with class work and is willing to lend a hand whenever asked.



**McKinna McKinney**

**NORTHLAND COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL — Nominated by:** Scott Peterson

Social and emotional anxiety have been an issue for McKinna since elementary school, but she has found comfort by helping tutor elementary students and has served as an assistant to teachers and office staff. She is in leadership positions at school and helps make important decisions on how to improve school functions for all students.

**Cameron Cain**

**PEQUOT LAKES HIGH SCHOOL — Nominated by:** Aaron Nelson

Cam has overcome many obstacles throughout his life and academic career. Diagnosed with verbal apraxia as a child, he has worked through challenges, and his speech and academic markers for reading and math have continued to improve into his senior year. Cam used to doubt his abilities to complete post-secondary education, but he now plans to attend Central Lakes College. *\*Will receive a \$750 scholarship from Central Lakes College.*



**Kylie Stallman**

**PEQUOT LAKES HIGH SCHOOL — Nominated by:** Aaron Nelson

Given Kylie's childhood trauma, she could have been angry, aggressive, mean, or played the victim, but she did just the opposite. Kylie always has a bright smile on her face and is always willing to help a student who might be hurting physically or emotionally. She is a good student, responsible, hardworking, thoughtful, and brings joy to the school.

**Kristen Rauch**

**PIERZ-HEALY HIGH SCHOOL — Nominated by:** Jessica LeBlanc

Kristen has been a quiet leader throughout high school and leads by example. She always tries to make school a better place by respecting others. Kristen is a member of the high school band and loves to perform for others. She also takes pictures for the school yearbook, attending activities and athletic events to make the yearbook something students will enjoy. *\*Will receive a \$750 scholarship from Central Lakes College.*



**Edward Westmoreland**

**PIERZ-HEALY HIGH SCHOOL — Nominated by:** Carl Mathwig

Eddy is a hardworking student who also spends time working as a custodian, taking care of the school and its grounds. Eddy enjoys playing the bass clarinet in pep band and the symphonic band at Pierz. He is also an active member of FFA, where taking care of the greenhouse is one of his most cherished responsibilities.

# Students of Character



**Jasmine Beaudreau**

**PILLAGER HIGH SCHOOL — Nominated by:** Kelly Savage

Jasmine lost her dad when she was very young and her mom when she was in ninth grade. She has conquered so much and has learned to advocate for things most students don't have to worry about. Jasmine handles what is thrown at her with perseverance and determination and has learned to stay positive even in the midst of adversity. *\*Will receive a \$750 scholarship from Central Lakes College.*

**Kaylee Mudgett**

**PILLAGER HIGH SCHOOL — Nominated by:** Jamie Prax

Kaylee has overcome many obstacles due to a medical condition that started early in her high school career. Kaylee never gave up on academics or extracurricular activities; she always strives for excellence in all she does. Her teachers, along with many others, admire her strength and determination to not let her obstacles define her and to always give her best.

*\*Will receive a \$750 scholarship from Central Lakes College.*



**Miqaella Williams**

**PINE RIVER-BACKUS HIGH SCHOOL — Nominated by:** Melanie Lindquist

Miqaella has had to persevere through some tough life circumstances, and she is now taking her experience and advocating for others, particularly when it comes to mental health. Miqaella is everyone's cheerleader. She always lifts up others, so it is now her time to shine a little of that light back on herself. *\*Will receive a \$750 scholarship from Central Lakes College.*

**Ezekiel Zwart**

**ROYALTON HIGH SCHOOL — Nominated by:** Janice Oakley

Even though Zeke has experienced many challenges in the past few years, he has persevered with grace and tenacity. All his teachers have been impressed with the way he handles hardship. He has also turned his grades around. Zeke never thought about college until last winter. Now he plans to attend school for graphic design.



**Cylie Brezinka**

**ROYALTON HIGH SCHOOL — Nominated by:** Joel Swenson

Cylie is a triplet, along with brothers Ashton and Bryson. They have had the unique experience of navigating high school together, and while her brothers have captured recognition in athletics, Cylie has carved her own path for success. She is hardworking, dependable, and kind to students and staff. She is a quiet leader who leads by her strong example.



## Ashton Oldakowski

**ROYALTON HIGH SCHOOL — Nominated by:** Joel Swenson

Ashton exemplifies integrity. He is a very quiet young man who has constantly worked to do the right thing for himself and others. School has not always been easy for Ashton, but he has always put forth his best effort and will finish high school in the top half of his class. He has a bright future ahead.

## Keala Mika

**SEBEKA HIGH SCHOOL — Nominated by:** Kristopher Olson

Last summer, Keala moved to Minnesota to live with his grandmother to have a fresh start and escape an unhealthy home life. In the few months he has attended Sebekah High School, he has improved his attitude, self-esteem, school attendance, work ethic, and grades. Through hard work and focus, he is now on track to graduate with his class in May.

*\*Will receive a \$500 scholarship from M State.*



## Jacob Pauly

**SEBEKA HIGH SCHOOL — Nominated by:** Ashton Seieroe

Jacob has had to overcome significant mental health challenges throughout his life. Despite these obstacles, Jacob continues to maintain excellent grades and a positive, helpful attitude at school. He has a unique and loveable personality and isn't afraid to be himself. He exudes empathy and compassion and has the courage to stand up for himself and others.

## Hunter Miller

**STAPLES-MOTLEY HIGH SCHOOL — Nominated by:** Debbie Ferdon

Hunter has a personality that makes people want to be around him. He has grown into a leader through sports and mentoring younger students. While working with a seventh-grade math class, he encouraged them to work hard, adding he wished he had worked harder as a middle-schooler. These remarks made a bigger impact than he will ever realize.



## Trinity Seamann

**STAPLES-MOTLEY HIGH SCHOOL — Nominated by:** Debbie Ferdon

Trinity doesn't allow past challenges to define her. She sees the obstacles that she has been through as another step in her journey. She lost her mother suddenly three years ago, and while that was a devastating loss, she has shown strength and resiliency by continuing to work hard in school and support herself and her family through difficult times.

# Students of Character



**Austin Hollermann**

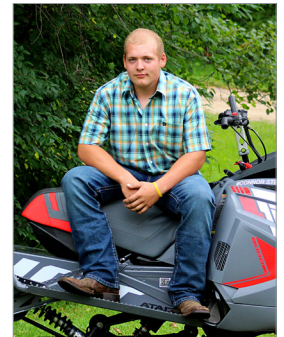
**SWANVILLE HIGH SCHOOL — Nominated by:** Joel Rieffer

Austin has overcome many obstacles, including moving numerous times throughout his 12 years at Swanville. Growing up in a house where money was tight, he would find odd jobs to help his family. There were times when getting to school was tough for Austin and school was difficult, but he never let that affect the effort he put forth.

**Logan Leyendecker**

**SWANVILLE HIGH SCHOOL — Nominated by:** Pam Czech

Logan has dealt with two significant challenges in his life: losing his older brother to cancer in 2015, and losing his dad in 2021. Despite these challenges, Logan continues to be upbeat and hardworking, and he has a positive outlook on life. He has set large goals for himself and is well on his way to achieving them.



**Nicholas Kulla**

**UPSALA HIGH SCHOOL — Nominated by:** Gretchen Schleper

Nicholas is a jack-of-all-trades student at Upsala Area Schools. He is always the first to lend a helping hand to anyone who needs it. Whether he is helping a custodian fix something or helping the ag teacher reorganize the shop, Nicholas is dependable and always willing to donate his time to help others. Nicholas shows true traits of servant leadership.

**Natalie Wensmann**

**UPSALA HIGH SCHOOL — Nominated by:** Nick Klug

Natalie had to overcome reading difficulties at a young age, but with hard work she has become an honor student taking college-level courses. Now, she helps other students with academics and serves as a mentor for an elementary student. Natalie encourages others to follow expectations and leads by example.



**Mary Kern**

**VERNDALE HIGH SCHOOL — Nominated by:** Sam Schmitz

Mary is often the biggest cheerleader for others and is willing to help anyone in need. She has been involved with a variety of school and church organizations, including FFA, Students Against Drunk Driving, and the school's Clothes Closet for students in need. She is extremely responsible and always radiates kindness.



**Tyce Russell**

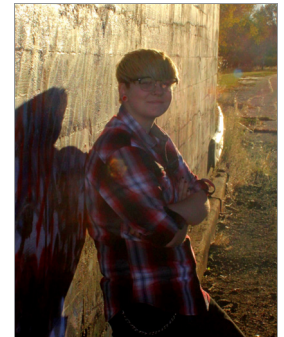
**VERNDAL HIGH SCHOOL — Nominated by:** Matt Jones

Tyce currently lives with his grandpa and younger sisters and has accepted the challenges that come with living with a single parent and younger siblings. As a football and basketball captain, Tyce helps mentor underclassmen and supports his teammates. He is also involved in his church youth group and helps with elementary basketball.

**Nathan Muchow**

**WADENA-DEER CREEK HIGH SCHOOL — Nominated by:** Laura Kiser

Nathan has grown from a very shy, anxious student at risk of failing classes to a positive, energetic, self-driven, successful student with many goals and skills to help him with the next steps in life. Nathan's journey to accept himself as a transgender youth and subsequently navigate the various levels of acceptance in a small community has been inspiring.



**Charlize Pichardo**

**WADENA-DEER CREEK HIGH SCHOOL — Nominated by:** Laura Kiser

Charlize is just an all-around nice person. She has come out of her shell and become more involved in school activities, including the National Honor Society and theater. She also pushed through her immense shyness and completed a successful project for the benefit of the Humane Society. She is a quiet, kind leader who will have a very successful future.

**Cliff Cloud**

**WALKER-HACKENSACK-AKELEY HIGH SCHOOL — Nominated by:** Thomas McIver

While the life of a high school student is full of ups and downs, Cliff has never wavered in his positivity. In a letter to his pen pal, Cliff wrote: "I wave to everyone I can because I feel like a simple little wave could make their day a bit better or could improve it by making a friendly and welcoming environment."



**Savanna Liimatta**

**WALKER-HACKENSACK-AKELEY HIGH SCHOOL — Nominated by:** Thomas McIver

Neither middle nor high school has been easy for Savanna. She struggled to overcome significant issues along the way but made major adjustments in her learning to achieve success in the classroom. She has demonstrated perseverance while overcoming challenges and leads by example while exemplifying a rock-solid work ethic.



# Thank you

Sourcewell partners with local businesses, organizations, and individuals to hold this annual celebration. Thank you for your donation of prizes and scholarship money.\*

## Platinum



## Gold

AASA, The School Superintendents Association  
Allegra Brainerd  
Bart & Leah Graves  
Chad & Dawn Coauette  
Craig & Susan Nanik  
Jeremy & Joni Schwartz  
Jim's Electric  
Marcus & Erica Miller  
Nor-Son Construction  
Sourcewell Board Members, Past & Present  
Sourcewell Marketing & Public Relations Team  
Subway-Staples

## Silver

CentraCare  
Hinkle Realty Inc.  
Long Prairie Chamber of Commerce  
Mike & Sara Carlson  
Noonan Sports Specialists  
Pivotal Consulting, LLC  
Staples ACE Hardware  
Staples Lions Club  
The Learning Ladder  
Tyler Monda Agency-Farmers Insurance

## Bronze

ATEK Access Technologies  
Campfire Bay Resort  
Contegrity Group, Inc.  
Craig & Jennifer West  
Demi Dancewear (Bozeman, MT)  
Mike Domin  
Minnesota National Agency, Inc.  
Scott & Jackie Bruns  
Tom & Jenny Hoppe  
Wadena State Bank

## About Sourcewell

Sourcewell is the regional service cooperative for Cass, Crow Wing, Morrison, Todd, and Wadena counties. As a service cooperative, we're a self-sustaining government organization charged by Minnesota state statute to partner with education, government, and nonprofits to boost student and community success. Locally, we deliver training and contracted services. Statewide, we manage a self-funded group health insurance option for public agencies. Throughout the United States and parts of Canada, we offer a cooperative purchasing program and technology solutions for schools. Sourcewell staff aim to be force multipliers, empowering public employees as they fulfill their public service mission.

*\*Up to date at press deadline. Watch the live celebration on April 19, 2023, for final list.*

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