



## At a Glance

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2024-25 calendar

## Key Dates

### March

14...BCMS Night Music, 7:30 p.m.

16....Drumline home show, 5 p.m.

19...NES PTO family event, 6 p.m.

19....HES Gr. 2 musical, 6:30 p.m.

21....NES Gr. 4 musical, 6:30 p.m.

23.....BHS Night Out for

Music, 7:30 p.m.

25.....School board mtg., 7 p.m.

29.....Good Friday, no school

### April

1-5.....Spring break, no school

8....School board wksp, 4:30 p.m.

11.....877 Endowment Pork Chop

Dinner, 4:30 p.m.

12.....Two-hour early release day



**Brian Voerding, a BHM alumnus, has been named president of the Initiative Foundation. See Page 2.**



## For love of reading

**February was 'I Love to Read Month,' and students enjoyed a variety of fun activities, including an author visit in Hanover, the character and vocabulary parade at Parkside, shown above, and visits from guest readers like Miss Buffalo McKenna Thoe, at right.**



## Music Educator of the Year 🎵

### Rabehl earns statewide honor

Teaching music may not have been Scott Rabehl's first career, but he has been recognized multiple times for excellence since he traded the business world for a podium and baton.

In 2006 he was named the Outstanding Young Band Director for the State of Minnesota by the American School Band Directors Association. In 2018 he became the Schmitt Music

Educator of the Year. And in January the Buffalo High School band director was named High School Music Educator of the Year by the Minnesota Music Educators Association (MMEA).

When asked about the latest honor, Rabehl said he couldn't help but think of the roles played by his fellow

**See Rabehl**  
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**Scott Rabehl directs one of the BHS bands during the fall concert.**



**Alumni:** Brian Voerding  
**Buffalo High School Class of 2001**  
**Lives In:** St. Cloud  
**Family:** Wife: Mollee; Stepsons: Mason and Miles  
**Employed:** President, Initiative Foundation

# Giving back

## Voerding named president of the Initiative Foundation

"I don't volunteer to make myself feel good. I volunteer (because) one person can make a difference in someone's life."

Brian Voerding, a 2001 graduate of Buffalo High School, shared that thought in a feature article about students serving others in the 2000 edition of the BHS Tatanka yearbook.

Two decades later, Voerding has earned his way to a key position that allows him to help others on a scale far grander than he may have ever imagined as a high school junior.

In November of 2023 the Montrose native was named president of the Little Falls-based Initiative Foundation, an organization dedicated to supporting the people, businesses and organizations of a 14-county region in Central Minnesota, including Wright County.

Voerding said his success is the fruit of a growing process that started in Buffalo-Hanover-Montrose Schools, continued through college and early work as a journalist and entrepreneur, and ultimately led to his current role.

"I had a great experience at Hamlin, where I went to college, but some of the teachers in Buffalo had a more profound impact in my life and where I am today," Voerding said.

### Starting in Montrose

As the president of an organization dedicated to helping rural communities thrive by supporting local entrepreneurs, businesses and organizations, Voerding now has the perspective to fully appreciate what a local school can mean.

"Something I think about much more deeply now as an adult who does rural economic development is the fact that there was an elementary school within walking distance of our home that really built a community around it," Voerding said. "That's such a powerful, vital thing for any community, especially a smaller community. When you're 7 or 8 years old you don't realize



**Brian Voerding, a 2001 graduate of Buffalo High School, was named president of the Little Falls-based Initiative Foundation in November of 2023.**

what a special experience it is to be part of a small crew of kids just collecting each other in the neighborhood and walking to school."

Voerding remembered music teacher El Gervasio being a particular influence,

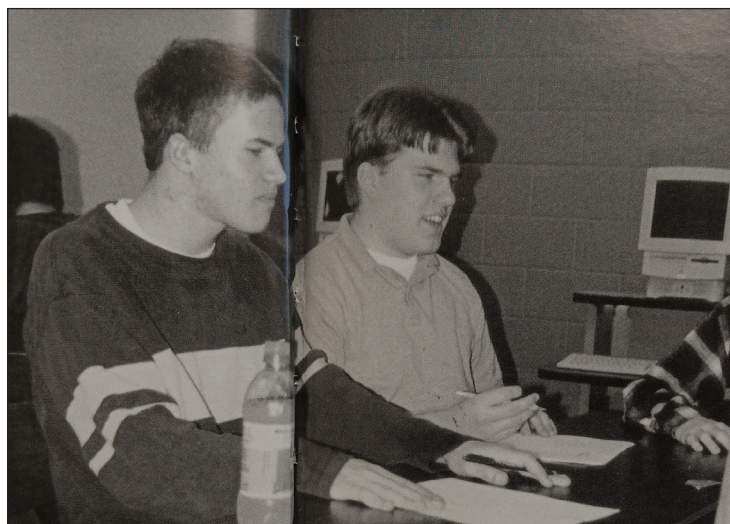
as well as rich experiences with spelling bees, plays and other extracurriculars.

"The opportunity to explore a lot of different things at a young age was really important. I loved that about Montrose Elementary," he said.

### Growing as a leader

In middle and high school, Voerding said all of his teachers, but particularly those in the music and English departments, began to shape him into the leader he has become. He was a stand-out trumpet player in the concert and jazz bands, went to state with the Knowledge Bowl team, joined mock trial, and pitched and played first base for the baseball team.

"There was an investment in all of us as learners, as



**Voerding, left, shown here at a Knowledge Bowl meet, went to state with the Knowledge Bowl team, and took part in many other activities as a student at BHS.**

**See Voerding**  
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# End of pandemic funding leads to staffing realignment

I would like to share some important information about our staffing situation, and changes that will be made over the next few school years.

Due to a drop in Wright County birth rates, the COVID-19 pandemic and the addition of other educational options to our community, BHM Schools has experienced a significant enrollment decline in recent years. In

ordinary times, this would have meant a corresponding reduction in teaching staff to maintain the student-staff ratios that our district has established and followed for the past few decades. However, we have not made any instructional staff reductions during this time because federal pandemic relief funds were available to maintain our staffing.

Unfortunately, that federal funding expires at the end of the current school year, which means we will return to our traditional staffing levels. Because staff reductions have not occurred incrementally as they normally would have over the past few years, a more sizable realignment is now needed.

At this point we expect to reduce 20 teaching positions for the 2024-25 school year, and another 11 staff positions for 2025-26 based on a decline of more than 500 students since 2019. Whenever possible, ordinary retirements and departures will be factored into staff reductions.

On the positive side, Wright County birth rates have recently returned to pre-pandemic levels, and our enrollment is projected to begin increasing again around the 2027-28 school year. It's also worth mentioning that many school districts around the state and country have seen enrollment declines since the pandemic, so our situation is not unique.

Still, this news likely raises a number of questions, and I have provided additional information below.

### How will this affect class sizes?

This reduction merely returns our district to normal staffing levels, so class sizes will be comparable to what students generally experienced prior to the pandemic.



Scott Thielman

### Will other budget reductions be made in addition to staff reductions?

No. The enrollment decline is the sole reason for the staff realignment, so no additional budget reductions are needed at this time. Ultimately, fewer students means that fewer teachers are needed. The staffing of employee groups other than teachers has already been adjusted to enrollment.

### Why didn't we reduce staffing before now?

The school board decided to invest federal funding to maintain staff and thereby create smaller class sizes than usual in order to help students overcome any learning loss that may have resulted from the pandemic.

### What happens if these staff reductions are not made?

Our business office has carefully studied the financial outcomes of various options. The fact is that these reductions must occur, and postponing them would reduce our fund balance (savings) below responsible levels, and even impact the district's credit rating.

### If we knew these reductions would be necessary, why did the district seek voter approval for a building bond last fall rather than an operating levy to maintain staffing?

We have a responsibility to maintain our facilities over time, even as we experience fluctuations in enrollment. The staffing realignment is an example of "right-sizing," so it would not have been appropriate to ask taxpayers for extra money to maintain staffing beyond normal levels now that the pandemic has ended.

### Difficult decisions, but a strong position

Unfortunately, the fact that a staff realignment is necessary does not make it any easier. We value every staff member, and do not make decisions about reductions lightly.

That said, we remain in a strong position to continue offering an exceptional educational experience for the students of our district, because we will still have our typical number of staff available to serve students after reductions are made. In all circumstances, we remain committed to *making a difference* in the lives of our students by providing a place where they can **dream, believe** and **achieve** their highest aspirations!

## Author in Hanover

Hanover Elementary school students hung on every word during author Douglas Wood's visit to the school on Friday, Feb. 9. Wood told stories, played music and shared about his own journey as a student and writer.







**Ryan Babatz**



**Gabe Roehl**

Ryan Babatz and Gabe Roehl, who represented Buffalo High School at the state wrestling tournament. Babatz is a junior and Roehl is a freshman.



**Kaylee Dehmer**



**Lydia Field**

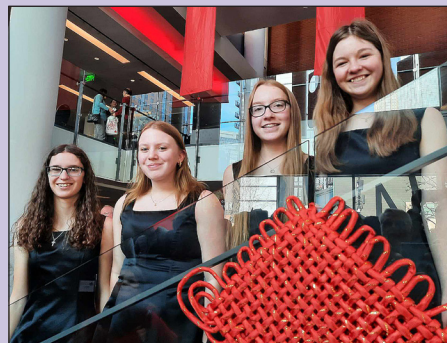
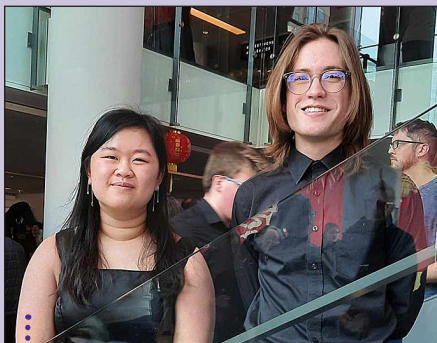
Kaylee Dehmer and Lydia Field, who qualified for the state gymnastics meet. Dehmer, a senior, qualified on the uneven bars, and Field, a junior, qualified in the floor exercise.



Boys swimming and diving team members who qualified for the state meet. Qualifiers, shown here with alternates who accompanied them, included Mason Evenson, James Lemus, Mason Pilcher, Cameron Cich and Rylan Close.



Yiqian (Lexi) Zheng, a senior at Buffalo High School, who is a finalist in the 2024 National Merit Scholarship Competition.



Eleven BHS musicians, who gathered in downtown Minneapolis in mid-February to rehearse with their colleagues in the All-State Bands and All-State Choirs. The musicians were featured in performances at Orchestra Hall on Saturday, Feb. 17. Congratulations to Lexi Zheng and Oliver Holt (All-State Concert Band, left); Malaika Gallus, Maggie Bertsch, Anna Wuollet and Kiera McGorry (All-State Symphonic Band, center); James Nelson, Xander Sabinash and Harrison Klaphake (All-State Tenor-Bass Choir, right); and Hope Schmitz and Ellie Cassady (All State Soprano-Alto Choir, right; Cassady not pictured).



# Rabehl

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music teachers in Buffalo, Hanover and Montrose.

"I walk out on stage here and put my stick up and wave my arms, and I hear the instruction of all my colleagues coming back at me," he said, explaining that the bedrock of musical excellence so often exhibited by members of the BHS Concert Band was established years before, as students benefited from the instruction of their teachers in earlier grades.

"I have all these colleagues with me who are represented in my musicians," Rabehl said. "To have my name be the

one that gets called out is humbling and does not recognize, adequately, all the other people that are building the foundation for what happens here at the high school."

Rabehl added that his way as a leader in the BHS music department has been paved by his predecessors.

"This instrumental and vocal music program was established long before I got here," said Rabehl. "I stand on the shoulders of giants – Lee Kjesbo, Rolf Mohwinkel, Mike Walsh, Mark Minkler – these were incredible music educators."

Abridged article  
Scan to read  
the full story



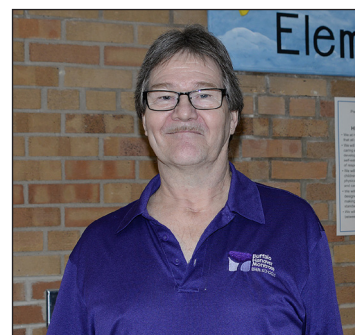
# Ogren retires after 32 years

For the past 32-plus years Eric Ogren worked nights to make sure students and staff members in Buffalo and Hanover returned to clean classrooms in the morning.

In mid-February, the 1977 Buffalo High School graduate – and longest-serving member of the BHM Building and Grounds Department – retired at the end of a career marked by hard work, careful attention to detail, and kindness.

He spent nine years at the current Buffalo Community Middle School building, and the past 24 years at Hanover Elementary.

"How he went out of his way to help people and his kindness – that's what we'll



remember," said Hanover Elementary Principal Brad Koltes. "We'll certainly miss him, but we're grateful for all he's done for our staff, our students, and the Hanover community."

Abridged article  
Scan to read  
the full story



## Proud Of....

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



The Buffalo High School music listening teams, which competed in the state championship event at Augsburg College on Friday, Feb. 9. Members of Team 1 (left) included Oliver Holt, Avery McCallum and Christopher Roehlke. They took eighth place. Team 2 (right) included Vivian Grambart, Maggie Bertsch and Mitchell Nosbush. They took 19th place.



Clarinetists Oliver Holt, Anna Wuollet and Lexi Zheng, who were selected to perform with the 2024 U of M Honor Band on Jan. 28. This ensemble accepts auditions from all over the upper Midwest and selects only the top musicians.



# Erickson, Mahannah earn Triple 'A' Award

An ability to thrive in the classroom, on the playing field and in artistic endeavors calls for more than just natural talent. It also takes hard work, determination and a positive attitude.

Buffalo High School seniors Claire Erickson and Nolan Mahannah exemplify those traits, as evidenced by their selection as the school's Academics, Arts and Athletics Award winners for 2024.

## Claire Erickson

Erickson holds a 3.89 grade point average despite taking numerous College in the Schools courses, and has earned multiple academic awards for outstanding performance in social studies.

On the soccer field, Erickson is a four-year letter winner, three-year captain, two-time all-conference defender and the first player in program history to receive all-state honors. She also plays on a national club team.

As for the arts, Erickson sings in the concert choir as well as the select BHS Singers ensemble. Outside of school she also sings on her church's worship team, and plays piano.

In a letter of recommendation for the Triple 'A' award, BHS special education teacher and assistant soccer coach Carrie Schmitt wrote that "Claire is an exemplary student-athlete as well as a person of tremendous character and leadership skills." Schmitt added that Erickson is "humble, selfless and respectful to all. It is a result of her determination, positive energy, and



**BHS seniors Nolan Mahannah and Claire Erickson have been recognized for outstanding performance in academics, the arts and athletics.**

commitment to others that she is a leader on and off the field."

Next fall Erickson plans to play soccer and sing in the choir at Gustavus Adolphus College while pursuing a degree in elementary education. She is the daughter of Brad and Torri Erickson.

## Nolan Mahannah

Mahannah seeks out classroom challenges, maintaining a 4.0 GPA while taking 10 College in the Schools

courses alongside his other classwork. On the artistic side, Mahannah serves as a writer and photography editor for the award-winning Tatanka yearbook, a demanding position that requires extensive time outside of regular school activities.

In the athletic realm, Mahannah played football his senior season, is a member of the basketball team that made it to the state tournament last year, and also plays tennis in the spring.

Head basketball coach Josh Ortmann wrote a letter of recommendation for Mahannah and characterized him as "an individual with many natural gifts, a hard-working, able student/athlete who embodies everything you would want as a role model in our community."

He added that Mahannah's leadership traits, including a high level of motivation and persistence, set him apart in the classroom and in competition.

"His mature stature, values, and demonstration of intelligence and leadership are qualities that guarantee success both in and out of the classroom or competition arena," Ortmann wrote.

Next fall Mahannah plans to attend the University of North Dakota to pursue a career in commercial aviation. He is the son of Brad and Sara Mahannah.

**Abridged article**  
**Scan to read**  
**the full story**



## Upcoming Events

### 30th annual Pork Chop Dinner

For three decades, the 877 Scholarship Foundation's Pork Chop Dinner has helped Buffalo High School graduates take the next step on their college or career pathways.

The 30th annual dinner takes place from 4:30 to 7 p.m. on Thursday, April 11, at Buffalo Community Middle School.

One pork chop meal is \$12, and a two-pork chop meal is \$17. Beans, apple-sauce chips and dessert are included. There are also \$5 hot dog meals for kids. Dine-in or curbside options are available. An additional feature this year



**Order meals now**  
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**advance tickets**



is a scholarship drawing for \$2,024 for one 2024 BHS graduating senior. All seniors are eligible. Entry forms are available at the BHS counselor's office or at the pork chop dinner. The drawing will be held at 6:30 p.m. See [877foundation.org](https://877foundation.org) for more information or to donate.

### ECFE Family Fair

The annual Early Childhood Family Education Family Fair, including food, entertainment, a silent auction and more, takes place from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on Saturday, April 20, in the Discovery Center gym. All are welcome.

### Transition Trek+

The 13th annual Transition Trek+ will take place from 6 to 8:30 p.m. on Thursday, April 23, in the Discovery Center auditorium. A vendor fair will also be held from 5 to 7 p.m. This event provides resources and support to families of individuals with disabilities of all ages. See <https://bit.ly/BHMTrek24>.



# Buffalo-Hanover-Montrose School District Calendar 2024-25

| S                       | M                                       | T  | W  | T  | F  | S  | S   | M  | T  | W  | T              | F                                 | S  | S               | M  | T  | W  | T  | F  | S  |
|-------------------------|---|----|----|----|----|----|---|----|----|----|----------------|-----------------------------------|----|-----------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| <b>August/September</b> |   |    |    |    |    |    | <b>October</b>  |    |    |    |                |                                   |    | <b>November</b> |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| 25                      | 26                                      | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 |   |    | 1  | 2  | 3              | ④                                 | 5  |                 |    |    |    |    | ①  | 2  |
| 1                       | 2                                       | 3  | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  | 6   | 7  | 8  | 9  | 10             | 11                                | 12 | 3               | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  | 8  | 9  |
| 8                       | 9                                       | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 13  | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17             | 18                                | 19 | 10              | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
| 15                      | 16                                      | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 20  | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24             | 25                                | 26 | 17              | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 |
| 22                      | 23                                      | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 27  | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31             |                                   |    | 24              | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |
| 29                      | 30                                      |    |    |    |    |    |   |    |    |    |                |                                   |    |                 |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| <b>December</b>         |   |    |    |    |    |    | <b>January</b>  |    |    |    |                |                                   |    | <b>February</b> |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| 1                       | 2                                       | 3  | 4  | 5  | ⑥  | 7  |   |    | 1  | 2  | ③              | 4                                 |    |                 |    |    |    |    |    | 1  |
| 8                       | 9                                       | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 5   | 6  | 7  | 8  | 9              | 10                                | 11 | 2               | 3  | 4  | 5  | 6  | ⑦  | 8  |
| 15                      | 16                                      | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 12  | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16             | 17                                | 18 | 9               | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| 22                      | 23                                      | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 19  | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23             | 24                                | 25 | 16              | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 |
| 29                      | 30                                      | 31 |    |    |    |    | 26  | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30             | 31                                |    | 23              | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 |    |
| <b>March</b>            |   |    |    |    |    |    | <b>April</b>  |    |    |    |                |                                   |    | <b>May</b>      |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|                         |   |    |    |    |    | 1  |   | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4              | 5                                 |    |                 |    |    |    | 1  | ②  | 3  |
| 2                       | 3                                       | 4  | 5  | 6  | ⑦  | 8  | 6   | 7  | 8  | 9  | 10             | ⑪                                 | 12 | 4               | 5  | 6  | 7  | 8  | 9  | 10 |
| 9                       | 10                                      | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 13  | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17             | 18                                | 19 | 11              | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 |
| 16                      | 17                                      | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 20  | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24             | 25                                | 26 | 18              | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 |
| 23                      | 24                                      | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 27  | 28 | 29 | 30 |                |                                   |    | 25              | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 |
| 30                      | 31                                      |    |    |    |    |    |   |    |    |    |                |                                   |    |                 |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| <b>June</b>             |   |    |    |    |    |    | <div> <div>Teacher Workshop/No School K-12</div> <div>Teacher Workshop/No School K-8</div> <div>Teacher Workshop/No School 9-12</div> <div>No School/Holiday</div> <div>Early Release (2 hours)</div> </div> <div> 174 Student Days<br/> Quarters 41-43-47-43<br/> Trimesters 58-58-58 </div> |    |    |    |                |                                   |    |                 |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| 1                       | 2                                       | 3  | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  |   |    |    |    |                |                                   |    |                 |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| 8                       | 9                                       | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |   |    |    |    |                |                                   |    |                 |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| 15                      | 16                                      | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 |   |    |    |    |                |                                   |    |                 |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| 22                      | 23                                      | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 |   |    |    |    |                |                                   |    |                 |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| 29                      | 30                                      |    |    |    |    |    |   |    |    |    |                |                                   |    |                 |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| <b>Important Dates</b>  |   |    |    |    |    |    |   |    |    |    |                |                                   |    |                 |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| Aug. 26-29              | Teacher Workshop Days - No School K-12  |    |    |    |    |    |   |    |    |    | January 20     | Martin L. King Day                |    |                 |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| September 2             | Labor Day - No School K-12              |    |    |    |    |    |   |    |    |    |                | No School K-12                    |    |                 |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| September 3             | 1 <sup>st</sup> Day of School           |    |    |    |    |    |   |    |    |    |                | Teacher Workshop                  |    |                 |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|                         | Grades K-5 (last names A-K), and 6 & 9  |    |    |    |    |    |   |    |    |    |                | End of 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter    |    |                 |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| September 4             | 1 <sup>st</sup> Day of School           |    |    |    |    |    |   |    |    |    | February 17    | President's Day - No School K-12  |    |                 |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|                         | Grades K-5 (last names L-Z) and Gr 7-8, |    |    |    |    |    |   |    |    |    | March 7        | Teacher Workshop - No School 9-12 |    |                 |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|                         | Gr 10-12, PLC, PRIDE                    |    |    |    |    |    |   |    |    |    |                | End of 2 <sup>nd</sup> Trimester  |    |                 |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| October 16              | Teacher Workshop                        |    |    |    |    |    |   |    |    |    | March 28       | Teacher Workshop                  |    |                 |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|                         | No School K-12                          |    |    |    |    |    |   |    |    |    |                | No School K-8                     |    |                 |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| October 17-18           | Fall Break - No School K-12             |    |    |    |    |    |   |    |    |    |                | End of 3 <sup>rd</sup> Quarter    |    |                 |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| November 4              | Teacher Workshop - No School K-8        |    |    |    |    |    |   |    |    |    | Mar. 31-Apr. 4 | Spring Break - No School K-12     |    |                 |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|                         | End of 1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter          |    |    |    |    |    |   |    |    |    | May 26         | Memorial Day - No School K-12     |    |                 |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| November 27-29          | Thanksgiving Break - No School K-12     |    |    |    |    |    |   |    |    |    | June 5         | Last Day of School                |    |                 |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| December 2              | Teacher Workshop - No School 9-12       |    |    |    |    |    |   |    |    |    | June 6         | Commencement                      |    |                 |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|                         | End of 1 <sup>st</sup> Trimester        |    |    |    |    |    |   |    |    |    |                | Teacher Workshop - No School K-12 |    |                 |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| Dec. 23-Jan. 1          | Winter Break - No School K-12           |    |    |    |    |    |   |    |    |    |                | End of 4 <sup>th</sup> Term       |    |                 |    |    |    |    |    |    |



\*\*\*\*\*ECRWSS\*\*  
RESIDENT DISTRICT 877

## Voerding

from Page 2

leaders and as humans," Voerding said, naming former English teacher Joel Squadroni and band director Lee Kjesbo as particular influences. "It was a really expansive experience that I didn't fully appreciate at the time. They helped us see how we could use those things we were really passionate about to contribute to the places and people that we planned to be around after high school.

"Reflecting on that now, I still feel so much gratitude for having such a positive, powerful experience with folks who cared so deeply about the kids they were educating. I mention those two teachers because I loved music and English and that's where I invested most of my time, but across the board, I had really good experiences with everyone."

Although he was reluctant to take on leadership roles, Voerding said his teachers saw the potential in him, prompted him forward, and helped prepare him for success in that capacity.

"In music I learned what it meant to be part of a really effective, high-performing team of people, and what it meant to really listen hard, to be responsive, and to col-

laborate with other people, even if we had very different ideas of how to proceed," Voerding said.

While musical endeavors were particularly helpful in that regard, those points of emphasis were not limited to the band room, and they are still reflected in the school's core values today.

"I know that was a rich part of the culture of education at Buffalo High School: teaching kids to find what they love and what they want to pursue, but to also do that in a way where they are accountable and a model for others," Voerding said.

### College and career

Inspired by Squadroni and former BHS creative writing teacher Jean Pehl, Voerding left for college at Hamline University intending to pursue a future in writing. On the way to earning degrees in behavioral psychology and music history, Voerding also



**Voerding speaks at a chamber of commerce event in Little Falls earlier this year.**

# INSIDER

Feb/Mar  
2023-24

Buffalo-Hanover-Montrose Vol. 50 No. 4



### SCHOOL BOARD

Melissa Brings.....Chairperson  
Bob Sansevere.....Vice Chairperson  
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Sue Lee.....Acting Clerk/Treasurer  
Sheila Smude.....Director  
Matt Hoffman .....Director  
Scott Thielman.....Superintendent  
Cambelle Feldman .....Student Representative

**Do you know BHM alumni who should be featured in a 'Beyond BHM' article? Contact Communications Coordinator Paul Downer at [pdowner@bhmschools.org](mailto:pdowner@bhmschools.org) or 763.682.8783.**

started writing for the weekly Hamline newspaper. Following graduation, he worked as a freelancer and reporter, eventually becoming the editor of Winona Daily News from 2011-17.

From there, he helped start a non-profit community building group called Engage Winona, and served as its executive director for four years, overseeing substantial growth.

The next step to the Initiative Foundation was a natural one, and he was hired as its vice president for inclusive entrepreneurship in 2021, before becoming president.

"This was a really incredible opportunity to come back to the region where I grew up and do the same work on a larger scale," Voerding said. "We walk alongside our rural communities to support their long-

term vitality anywhere we can. We provide loans and grants, we train people, we support nonprofits, and we support entrepreneurs and folks starting businesses for the first time."

In the sense that his current mission is to build strong communities, Voerding says his work is not unlike that done by educators.

"The Buffalo-Hanover-Montrose school district creates really good people who contribute to the world," he said. "I'm grateful to be part of this much larger story. All of the opportunities I was given – the chance to be well-educated and prepared – have led to where I am today."

**Abridged article  
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