



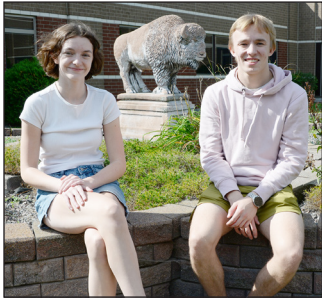
BHM INSIDER

SCHOOLS

October
2024

Buffalo-Hanover-Montrose

Vol. 51 No. 1



Jayde Hallman and Julien Kariniemi are National Merit Semifinalists. See the story on Page 3.

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Key Dates

October

14...School board wksp., 4:30 p.m.
21.....BHS choir concert, 7:30 p.m.
24..BHS orchestra concert, 7:30 p.m.
27.....Opening Doors Halloween
Dance, 4 p.m.
28.....School board mtg., 7 p.m.
28...BHS band concert, 7:30 p.m.
29..BHS winter sports mtg., 7 p.m.

November

1.....Two-hour early release day
3.....Daylight Saving Time ends
4.....No school PreK-8 or PRIDE
(grades 9-12 in session)
5.....Election Day



Kicking off 2024-25

It has been a busy first month of the new school year, with students returning to their studies, fall activities in full swing, and Buffalo High School's Homecoming events already in the rear-view mirror. Above, the football team takes the field before a 34-7 Homecoming win over Eastview on Sept. 20, a victory enjoyed by a capacity crowd at Bison Field West.

From the Superintendent

Welcome to a new school year!

As we begin a new school year, I am filled with excitement and optimism for all that lies ahead. I know that our students are ready for a year of growth, learning and new opportunities. Our teachers, staff and administrators have been working very hard to ensure a smooth start, and we are excited to see our schools come alive with energy and enthusiasm.



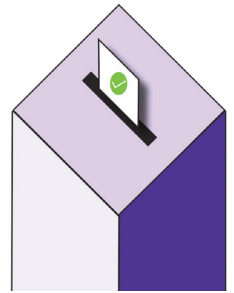
Scott Thielman

This year we remain focused on providing a safe and academically challenging learning

environment for all students. The school year brings many exciting opportunities, from the district's recently adopted Portrait of a Graduate essential skills to extracurricular activities, and we are committed to providing a supportive environment where every student can **dream, believe and achieve** their highest aspirations.

I encourage you to stay engaged with your student's education and our school community as we strive to make this year a success for everyone.

See Thielman
Page 8



School board election

It's election season, and seven candidates have filed for four available seats on the Buffalo-Hanover-Montrose School Board.

As a service to voters, each candidate has provided biographical information and answered questions for this edition of the Insider.

See Pages 4-6 for more information.

New teachers and administrators join BHM Schools



New licensed staff members joining BHM Schools this year include, from left:

Row 1: Jessica Rud (PES), Tammy Baardson (PES), Kaitlyn Alberg (PES), Evalina Baber (PES), Sunshine Hedlund (PES), Margaret Hohenstein (ECFE), Jessica Bergman (DES/ECFE) and Aubrey Henrickson (DES).

Row 2: Emily Mueller (BHS), Kamryn Arceneau (BHS), Maren Hamann (HES), Martha Koltjes (PES), Amy Bollman (MESI), Jan Fournier (BCMS), Marci Weiche (BHS), Bryden Carlson-Giving (districtwide) and Sheila Keehr (districtwide).

Row 3: Bjorna Jayson (BHS), Jordan Zrust (TESS), Sandy Vajda (BCMS), Saman-



tha Monsma (BCMS), Hannah Alexander (BCMS), Nikki Olesen (PES), Stephanie Adelman (MEEC) and

Madi Miller (BHS).

Row 4: Marc Mens (BHS), Matthew Muetzel (PES), Casey Hilden (PES), Tim Snook

(PES), Kiley Broste (TESS) and Kim Freiberg (PES).

Not pictured: Therese Kolodzik (BHS).

Erlandson now leading Community Education

On Tuesday, Oct. 1, Eric Erlandson stepped in as the new Director of Community Education for Buffalo-Hanover-Montrose Schools.

He replaces Kim Carlson, who served BHM Schools for 18 years.

Before accepting his new role Erlandson was the Director of Community Education for Delano Public Schools, and he has a strong organizational leadership background in both education and business.

Erlandson began his career as a Community Education program supervisor in Monticello (1997-1998) and program coordinator in Waconia (1998-2001) before taking his first job as a Director of Community Education with Albany Public Schools in 2001. He then joined Annandale Public Schools as the Director of Community Education in 2004, and also served as the district's business manager.

Although he has a passion



Eric Erlandson

for Community Education, Erlandson stepped away from the field in 2007 to help his father with Action Fastenings, a small family owned business focused on specialty tools and fasteners. During a 13-year period as president of the company, Erlandson oversaw exponential growth from a local business to one that served the entire United States and Canada.

In 2021 he sold the com-

'Everywhere he has gone he has done an outstanding job. We're fortunate to have him on our team.'

Scott Thielman
BHM Superintendent

pany in order to return to Community Education, and took the director's role in Delano.

While evaluating candidates, the hiring committee noted that Erlandson values relationships and partnerships within the schools and community, that he takes multiple perspectives into account when solving problems, and that his diverse leadership background and ongoing pursuit of educational opportunities demonstrate a valuable growth mindset.

Erlandson earned his undergraduate degree from St. Cloud State University in 1998, and along with other academic advancements recently earned a doctorate of education in executive leadership from St. Mary's University.

"Everywhere he has gone he has done an outstanding job. We're fortunate to have him on our team, and we're really excited to have him join the BHM School District," Thielman said.

Erlandson said the enthusiasm is mutual.

"I was attracted to the district's long-held reputation for commitment to kids and families," he said. "The strong community identity and the opportunity to contribute to it was a draw. I am excited to help grow and improve our programs while contributing to the overall success of BHM Schools. I am excited to take my past experiences and apply them as a Bison!"



Above and below, students at Hanover Elementary School felt right at home during the first days of classes.



Above, Tatanka Elementary STEM School students enjoy a get-to-know-you activity with their new classmates.



Community focus at BHM

Students reconnected with teachers and friends during a staggered start spread over several days, beginning Sept. 3. Here are a few scenes from those opening days. Above, eighth-graders in the WEB (Where Everyone Belongs) program welcome new sixth-graders to the BCMS family. At right, Discovery Elementary students and staff cheer on newcomers in the annual Kindergarten Parade.



Hallman, Kariniemi are National Merit semifinalists Huss, Jungwirth and Koren earn 'Commended Student' status

Although more than 1.3 million students compete for National Merit scholarships each year, few advance beyond the first step of taking the Preliminary SAT/ National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test due to the highly selective nature of the competition.

In September, however, two Buffalo High School seniors learned that they ranked among the top 1% of students in the national pool, qualifying them to become semifinalists for a National Merit scholarship.

They are no strangers to academic success, but Jayde Hallman and Julien Kariniemi said the news was still surprising.

"It's pretty hard to conceptualize that fact," said Hallman, who was one of Buffalo High School's ExCEL



Seniors Jayde Hallman, left, and Julien Kariniemi finished in the top 1% of students nationally on the P-SAT test.

Award winners last winter for leadership across a range of disciplines, from sports and fine arts to community volunteering. "It's kind of like, 'Oh, it's just us two. Cool.'"

While Hallman and Kariniemi are the only semifinalists, Buffalo High School

also had three students earn Commended Student status by finishing in the top 2.6% of students who took the PSAT nationally. Commended Students do not advance for scholarship consideration, but Dexter Huss, Daniel Jungwirth and Mackenzie

Koren have still distinguished themselves among the top students nationally.

BHS Principal Mark Mischke said that having five total students earn semifinalist or commended status might be the most the school has ever had in one year.

"What we dream of happening at the high school is that every kid sees themselves in our building," Mischke said. "Rigor with support is the theme. We've given them rigorous challenges and supported them along the way in the things they want to explore. They are great examples to our community."

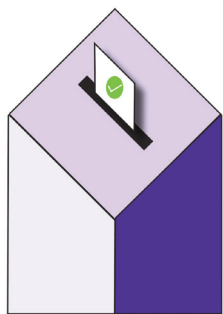
Abridged article
Scan to read
the full story



Election 2024 Candidate Profiles

Seven candidates have filed for four seats on the BHM School Board. Each board member will be elected for a four-year term. Early voting is now open, and Election Day is Nov. 5.

See information on voting locations and options at www.bhmschools.org/elections.



Adam Bjorklund
Buffalo

Occupation: I'm a Financial Advisor and Wealth Manager at Berger Financial Group, serving many local families.

Family (will you, do you, or did you have children who attended BHM Schools): My wife, Abby, is an elementary teacher in Monticello. We have two children who are in BHM Schools. Our daughter, Avery (16) is a junior at BHS, and our son, Asher (12) is in sixth grade at BCMS.

How many years have you lived in the district? I can proudly say that I have lived in Buffalo my whole life. A BHS graduate of 1998, I have called Buffalo "home" for 44 years.



Candy Burns
Corcoran

Occupation: I recently retired from Boston Scientific, as VP of Regulatory Affairs. I am currently an Adjunct Professor at the University of St. Thomas.

Family (will you, do you, or did you have children who attended BHM Schools): I have raised my family in our house in Corcoran. My daughter Allie attended Hanover Elementary, Buffalo Middle School and Buffalo High School. My granddaughter McKenna attended Hanover Elementary through second grade.

How many years have you lived in the district? 27 years



Angie Greig
Buffalo

Occupation: Physical Therapist Assistant

Family (will you, do you, or did you have children who attended BHM Schools): My daughter is a junior at the high school. She attended Hanover Elementary, Buffalo Middle School and Buffalo Senior High.

How many years have you lived in the district? 20 years

Why do you want to serve on the BHM School Board?

• **Bjorklund:** I have deep roots in the Buffalo community. My parents and grandparents were born and raised in this community. Having my own family carry on that tradition is important to my wife (also a BHS graduate) and me. I also married into a family of educators, which has given me an even greater sense of appreciation for school staff. My commitment to and history with this wonderful town is what drives me to want to do more by continuing to be member of the school board.

• **Burns:** I have always been interested in education. I have a degree in Elementary Education from the University of Minnesota. When I graduated, there were not many teaching jobs available, and I went into the business world. Now that I am retired, I am interested in helping to make the BHM Schools a successful place for the students and staff. Teaching at St. Thomas has defi-

nately given me an appreciation for the work and challenges that goes into the education process.

• **Greig:** I want an opportunity to give back to a school district that has given my daughter so much support.

• **Holmstrom Jr:** I am passionate about my children's education and want every child and parent in our community to experience the highest quality education we can provide. We have a responsibility to ensure our students receive the educational opportunities necessary to forge a better future for themselves, their future families, and our community.

• **Honsey:** I have had the opportunity to be involved in the PTA at Northwinds, the mentoring program at BCMS and an Avid Tutor at BCMS. I believe we have strong schools and I want to do my part to keep it that way.

• **Lawrence:** I decided to run for the board in 2020 because I love our schools and have a passion for public

education. I knew my leadership abilities, steady temperament, and strong communication skills could serve the district well. After four years on the school board, my dedication to this work has only grown. I come to every meeting prepared, ready to listen and ask questions. I am a team player who knows that a school board is only effective when all members respect each other and are willing to work together. I want to ensure that BHM continues to be a place where our outstanding staff wants to work. I want every student in our district to believe in themselves and that their unique talents and abilities are an asset to the world.

• **Zbaracki:** I want to serve on the BHM School Board because I believe in a strong educational foundation for our students. My vision is to prepare students with a solid foundation involving critical thinking skills, and ensuring they have the tools to succeed in their academic and educational pursuits.

Election 2024 Candidate Profiles



Michael Holmstrom Jr
Buffalo

Occupation: I am a Realtor with North Star Pro Realty, and a small business owner.

Family (will you, do you, or did you have children who attended BHM Schools): My wife (Nicole) and I have five beautiful children, (Michael, Matthew, Olivia, Emily, and Cecilia). I graduated from BHM Schools and I look forward to watching each of my children do the same.

How many years have you lived in the district? 15 years



Mike Honsey
Buffalo

Occupation: Owner of Uppercut Outdoor Services

Family (will you, do you, or did you have children who attended BHM Schools): My family consists of my wife Krista and my three daughters, Marley (sophomore), Harper and Hayden (eighth grade).

How many years have you lived in the district? 14 years



Amanda Lawrence
Buffalo

Occupation: I have been serving our district, staff and community on the BHM School Board since 2020. My professional background is in customer service and corporate training.

Family (will you, do you, or did you have children who attended BHM Schools): My husband of 27 years, Dale, is a family practice physician at Stellis Health. Our three children all attended BHM Schools K-12. Elizabeth graduated in 2019, Rachel graduated in 2022 and Lucas will graduate with the class of 2025.

How many years have you lived in the district? 21



Tim Zbaracki
Hanover

Occupation: Claims processor
Family (will you, do you, or did you have children who attended BHM Schools): We currently home-school our oldest. I believe it's the parents' rights to choose where their children go to school.

How many years have you lived in the district? I've lived in the district for three years. We moved back into the district after living in the district in the mid 2010s.

If elected, what qualities will you bring to the school board?

• **Bjorklund:** I've always been very driven to serve others. Prior to becoming a financial advisor, I owned other small businesses in the Twin Cities area. During that time, my leadership skills allowed me to manage a large staff, while still maintaining a "family feel." By blending my passion to serve with my financial background, I feel that I am a strong candidate to continue being on the school board.

• **Burns:** I think I have unique qualities to bring to the board. I have an educational foundation, and teaching experience. I also have worked in the corporate world for 20+ years managing programs, supporting and hiring people, and managing a large budget. I am detailed orientated, and not reluctant to make difficult decisions.

• **Greig:** I am a parent. I also have worked with parents in the district and other districts regarding concerns they

may have about their child's learning program.

• **Holmstrom Jr:** I have a robust background in business management and communication. I intend to be a voice for the community on the board. We need board members who are willing and able to honestly and critically review the current systems, processes and goals with the aim to drive the district toward innovation and excellence.

• **Honsey:** I have a finance degree from Winona State University and have a financial background, including 13 years in banking, and I understand how bonding and referendums work. I am serving my sixth and final year on the Buffalo Youth Hockey Board of Directors, the last two years as treasurer. I am confident that I can work with other board members and administrators to tackle challenges as they happen. I care about our kids and believe in doing what is best for them, not what is easiest for the board or administration.

• **Lawrence:** In my four years on the school board I have learned so much about all things related to public education. I have spent countless hours reviewing documents, attending meetings, and completing school board training sessions. I have gained a solid understanding of school policy and finance. I have established positive relationships with district leaders and staff, resulting in productive discussion and collaboration. In my second term I would provide stability, continuity, and wisdom as a seasoned member of the board.

• **Zbaracki:** I will ask the critical questions to get to the truth of things that are going on. I will also empower staff with effective tools to maintain a safe learning environment.

See Candidates
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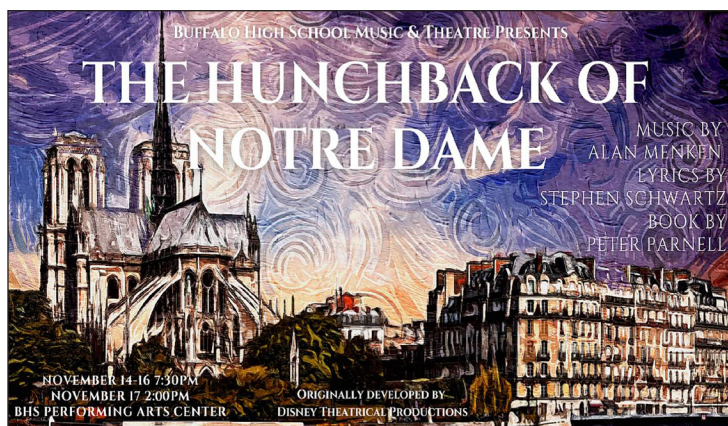
Fall BHS musical is a classic

What makes a monster and what makes a man? This is the central theme of “The Hunchback of Notre Dame,” a sweeping, grand-scale musical from Disney Theatrical.

Based on the 1996 Disney film and Victor Hugo’s 1831 novel, the production tells the story of Quasimodo, the hunchbacked bell-ringer of

Notre Dame, and his desire to one day be a part of the outside world.

Shows are at 7:30 p.m. Thursday through Saturday, Nov. 14-16, and at 2 p.m. on Sunday, Nov. 17. Watch the BHM Schools Facebook page and website for photos and a full preview story.



Candidates

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What do you believe is the most important issue facing education today?

• **Bjorklund:** I think some of the most important issues facing the school district are educational inequity and fiscal responsibility. Students deserve equitable access to technology, educational resources, and support from our district. They shouldn’t be granted nor denied access to opportunities solely based on the school they attend. I will work with district staff and teachers to create equitable access to educational resources, ensuring all students receive the same opportunities within BHM Schools. I will use my professional experience as a financial advisor to ensure the district is fiscally responsible with the taxpayers’ money.

• **Burns:** Education should always provide an encouraging, safe environment for students to learn. It is important to engage the students, parents, and school staff to form a successful learning environment for all students.

• **Greig:** The most important issue today is our drop in proficiency across the board. If our community cannot read and understand they cannot flourish.

• **Holmstrom Jr:** In the last three years Minnesota has gone from being ranked seventh nationally in education to 19th, and across the country test scores are nearing all-time lows. Schools are struggling to properly engage students. Our board needs to examine how we are reaching our students and work with our educators to determine the necessary tools,

resources and best practices needed to monopolize on the time we have with them.

• **Honsey:** I think there is a mistrust of our education system that is perpetuated by the media. Oftentimes we see issues at another school and believe the same is happening at our schools.

• **Lawrence:** Like every public school district, the top issue facing our district is a critical shortfall in funding. Every year, the gap between the cost of running the district and the amount of state funding we receive gets larger. We are forced to ask the residents of our district to make up this difference in order to maintain the staffing levels, programs and overall excellent education that our students deserve. Minnesota did make a large investment to public education in 2023, but the investment nowhere near erased the cumulative effect of over 20 years of shortfalls. Unfortunately, there is no easy solution. Communicating with lawmakers and advocating for public education is vital.

• **Zbaracki:** I believe the most important issue facing education today is the declining proficiency in math, reading and science. This can be fixed by hiring more teachers and decreasing the administrative bureaucracy so students have more individual attention in subjects they’re behind in.

Why do you believe BHM Schools is the place to dream, believe and achieve?

• **Bjorklund:** I believe our schools have the best staff around who genuinely care about the education and well-being of every student.

• **Burns:** My daughter and granddaughter had wonderful experiences

in the BHM Schools. I believe that their teachers and school staff made a real difference in their lives and have set a strong foundation for their lives. I have been impressed with both the quality and the compassion of the BHM School teachers and staff, and if elected, look forward to working with them.

• **Greig:** I think they have the child’s well being at the heart of their decisions.

• **Holmstrom Jr:** I graduated from BHM Schools, and chose to raise my family here in large part because of the values and opportunities offered to me in this community. I have always been proud to have come from our schools and I intend to work diligently to ensure that my children and yours have the same experience.

• **Honsey:** It comes down to our people. We have great teachers and excellent leaders at each of our schools that care about each individual student. I have seen this day in and day out with my time at BCMS in the AVID program.

• **Lawrence:** BHM Schools recognize that every student has unique dreams. Our students have a huge variety of classes, programs, and activities to choose from, encompassing a myriad of different interests. We need to maintain these great options so every student can believe in themselves and their abilities, achieve excellence in something they feel passionate about, and learn important skills to help them reach their future goals.

• **Zbaracki:** Kids have their futures ahead of them. A strong, solid educational foundation is paramount to achieving their dreams. With great teachers and learning opportunities in the district, kids can believe their dreams will come true!

Proud Of....

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



Dexter Huss



Daniel Jungwirth



Mackenzie Koren

Dexter Huss, Daniel Jungwirth and Mackenzie Koren, who were named National Merit Commended Students for finishing in the top 2.6% out of approximately 1.3 million students from 21,000 high schools who took the PSAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test.



Occupational therapist Bryden Carlson-Giving, who received the 2024 Emerging Leader Award from Boston University's Sargent College of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, and who was selected to speak at the 2024 Minnesota Occupational Therapy Association Conference, as well as the 2024 OT/PT School-Based Institute, in September.

The achievements below took place after the end of the last school year and were recognized by the BHM School Board in June of 2024.



The following athletes who qualified for the Class AAA State Track and Field Meet: Saul Rhodes, Landon Carrell, Caleb Crawford, Jerome Thomas, Jacob Macheel, Dexter Huss, Collin Berg, Wesley Wistrom, Sam Studnicka, Ryan Babatz, Joel Benson, Cady Macheel, Miley Farniok, Avery Larson, Hannah Braun, Rose Lamberts, Allee Feldman and Andrea Rodenwald.



Nolan Mahannah and Sam Shaffer, who advanced to the Class AA State Tennis Tournament.



Russell Ylitalo, who qualified for the Class AAA State Golf Tournament.



Andrew Schmidt, Aiden Pfeifer, Spencer Peterson, Brody Baumann and Adam Murto, who qualified for the State Trap Shoot Tourney. Graham Johnson and Austin Kortisses qualified as alternates.

Thielman

from Page 1

Bond updates: enhancing our schools

Thanks to the overwhelming support for the bond referendum, we are moving forward with several important projects that will improve our facilities, enhance student safety, and create better learning environments.

Playgrounds: This summer the playgrounds at Tatanka Elementary STEM School, Montrose Elementary School of Innovation and Hanover Elementary School were upgraded to unitary surfaces, which will improve accessibility and provide a safer, smoother surface for all children to enjoy.

Bids will begin for the following projects and construction is scheduled to begin in the spring of 2025.

Buffalo Community Middle School (BCMS) – The bid package for BCMS includes several key improvements:

- An addition at the main entrance to create a secure entrance, enhancing safety.
- Conversion of the heating system from steam condensate to low-pressure hot water, using the existing steam boilers.
- A remodel of the stu-

dent services area, making it more efficient and accessible for students.

- Installation of a chilled-water cooling system to ensure a more energy efficient and comfortable learning environment.

- Three alternate bids will also be received for the removal of demountable partitions (temporary walls) and classroom remodels.

Buffalo High School (BHS) – The bid package for BHS includes the following:

- An addition at the main entrance to create a secure entrance, enhancing safety.
- A remodel of the Performing Arts Center to enhance the experience for both performers and audiences. This includes new lighting, sound, seating and curtains.
- Remodeling of the media center to provide



Hanover Elementary students enjoyed their new playground equipment and surface on the first day of school.



SCHOOL BOARD

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Bob Sansevere.....Vice Chairperson
Adam Bjorklund.....Clerk
Amanda Lawrence.....Treasurer
Sue Lee.....Acting Clerk/Treasurer
Sheila Smude.....Director
Matt Hoffman.....Director
Scott Thielman.....Superintendent
Lucas Lawrence.....Student Representative

students with more collaborative accessible spaces.

- Updates to resource areas on the second floor to better support student learning.

- Installation of a chilled-water cooling system, similar to the middle school, for improved climate control and energy efficiency.

Discovery Elementary School (DES) – The DES bid package will be opened concurrently with the high school bid. Updates include:

- Upgrades to the auditorium, including new curtains and lighting, enhancing the space for school events and performances.
- A vestibule addition at Door 6 to improve security and accessibility.
- A remodel of the interior corridor at Door 6 to create a better traffic flow.
- Egress changes to the lower-level storage areas to comply with safety standards.

These projects will bring significant improvements to our facilities, ensuring that our schools remain safe, efficient and conducive to high-quality education. I will continue to keep you updated on the progress of these projects throughout the year. The updates and upgrades will make a lasting impact on our schools for years to come, and we are excited to see them take shape.

Thank you for your continued support, and I look forward to a fantastic school year!