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Key Dates

October

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

14-16.....Fall Break, no school

22...BHS orchestra concert, 7 p.m.

26.....No preschool classes

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

29.....PES Fall Festival, 5 p.m.

30.....MESI Bingo Night

30..Opening Doors Dance, 4 p.m.

November

1.....Daylight Saving Time ends

2...BHS winter sports mtg., 7 p.m.

3.....Election Day

6.....No school PreK-8

(grades 9-12 and PRIDE in session)



Jen Greenhagen is the district's new Director of Community Education. See Page 2.



B1 Bison Night

The first 'B1 Bison Night' on Sept. 3 was a memorable evening for all involved. About 130 kindergartners representing the Class of 2039 were welcomed as Bison by Buffalo High School seniors, the Class of 2027, before the first home football game of the season. As all BHM elementaries take on the Bison identity this fall, the event symbolized the journey from a student's first day of kindergarten to the day they take the same field as graduates, and served as a reminder that we are one district, one community, one Herd!



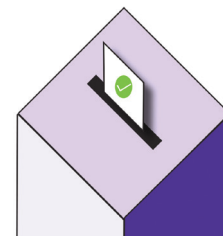
An AVID inspiration

When she raised her hand last spring, Stella Schlak could hardly have imagined the adventure that would ensue.

Each year, as a writing exercise, eighth-grade AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) students put together a proposal to be a

student speaker at an AVID Summer Institute, which draws thousands of teachers from around the country to learn new skills. Students then have a choice if they want to actually go through

See Stella
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Meet the school board candidates

Five candidates have filed for three seats on the BHM School Board.

Matt Hoffman, Bob Sansevere and Sheila Smude are running for re-election, and Debra Dodge and Monica Kunkel have also filed for office. See their profiles and questionnaire answers on Pages 4-5.

Each board member will be elected for a four-year term. Early voting is now open, and Election Day is Tuesday, Nov. 3.

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

See Profiles
Pages 4-5



Stella Schlak addresses district staff during the August Welcome Back program.

New teachers and administrators join BHM Schools



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

Row 1: Ashley Vacek (PES ECFE), Bekah Rockford (PES ECFE), Katelyn Nordal (district-wide ECSE), Christina Boeckers (BCMS special education), Josephine Hillestad (BCMS math), Madelynn Drasher (BCMS math), Lakia Manska (BHS social studies), Julia Weigle (TESS music), Julia Welter (TESS 1st grade), Heather Rickart (TESS special education), Jaden Strand (TESS/PES art) and Christopher Gudvangen (wRight Choice).

Row 2: Emily Pearson (PES 1st grade), Katelyn Osowski (PES kindergarten), Olivia Williams (BHS special education), Danica Shoquist (BHS special education), Avery Zimmermann (DES grades 3-5), Ilse Motzko (district-wide school psychologist), Emily Schroeder (BHS social worker), Steve Schroeder (BHS social studies), Nathan Kurtti (BHS



English), Karin Brinkhoff (HES 3rd grade), Julie Kirkpatrick (HES special education) and Davis Moseng (TESS physical education).

Row 3: Kyle Ballard (BHS life science and business), Sarah Gleason (NES 4th grade), Eric Maas (TESS 4th grade), John Anderson (PRIDE), Natalie Jones (TESS 3rd grade), Kayla Clifton

(BCMS special education), Becca Green (PES 5th grade), Maggie Eckhart (PES 3rd grade), Brennah Bergh (HES ECFE), Becky Heinze (DES ECSE), Grace Hendrickson (DES/MESI school psychologist), Denise Levels (MESI 3rd grade) and Christina Cagle (NES 5th grade).

In the center, back row, are Bill Liming (Phoenix Learn-

ing Center math) and Brian Johnston (Phoenix Learning Center science).

Not pictured: Nathan Brown (TESS 1st grade), Caitlin Hegle (BHS English), Jaime Jones-Trummer (district-wide English Language Learners) and Lee Peterson (PES speech).

Greenhagen steps in to lead Community Education

BHM Schools entered the school year with a new but familiar hand at the helm of Community Education.

Jen Greenhagen has been serving as the director of Community Education since mid-July, when former director Eric Erlandson took a new position with Eden Prairie Schools.

While there were a number of quality candidates for the position, Superintendent Scott Thielman and Human Resources Director Evan Ronken said that Greenhagen became the clear first choice through three rounds of interviews and evaluations. Her growth mindset, collaborative and relational leadership style, and com-



Jen Greenhagen

mitment to Buffalo-Hanover-Montrose Schools were standout qualities appreciated by the hiring committee.

Greenhagen has already

distinguished herself through positive, thoughtful and highly effective work as an education support professional, teacher and coordinator with BHM Schools over the past 13 years.

She began as an Early Childhood Special Education education support professional from 2013-16, then became an early childhood special education teacher in Rockford in 2016-17.

She returned to BHM Schools as an ECSE teacher from 2017-23 before taking her most recent role as Early Childhood and Third Party Billing Coordinator in 2023.

Along the way, Greenhagen obtained her Master of Education degree in 2016

and her K-12 Administrative Licensure Certificate-Director of Special Education Licensure in 2026, both from the University of Minnesota. She earned her undergraduate degree in political science from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee in 1998.

During the July school board meeting, Chair Bob Sansevere told board members that Greenhagen's interview was one of the most impressive he has taken part in, and Dr. Thielman said the hiring committee reached a firm consensus.

"It was very evident, as we went through the process, that Jennifer is the right leader for BHM Schools," Thielman said.

2023 bond projects nearing completion

After another busy summer of construction, projects outlined for the public before and after the 2023 bond referendum are nearly complete. As promised, voter approval of \$41.5 million in bond funds has improved security, building integrity and operating efficiency across the district.

After the installation of some unitary playground surfaces in 2024, the rest of the playgrounds and a majority of the projects took place in 2025, highlighted by the construction of new secure entrances at the middle school and high school, and the implementation of automated door locking systems district-wide.

A two-year mechanical overhaul at Buffalo Community Middle School began in 2025 and was completed in the summer of 2026, involving the replacement of obsolete steam heating



The media center at Hanover Elementary was completely remodeled this summer to provide a more effective learning space that includes small-group study rooms, a reading room, a larger community room, and a space for presentations.

systems with more efficient hot water systems and adding dehumidification to the lower-level activity spaces. Some re-roofing work also took place at BCMS in 2026.

Dehumidification was also added to the north side of Buffalo High School in 2025,

including the Bison Activity Center, gyms, cafeteria and Performing Arts Center.

This past summer a portion of the Bison Activity Center roof was replaced, and the media center, Performing Arts Center and resource areas have been remodeled

and improved for the first time after nearly three decades of continual use.

Additional mechanical work at the elementary schools improved efficiency by converting heating systems to low-pressure hot water at Hanover and Discovery in 2026. Dehumidification projects will take place at Montrose and Tatanka in the summer of 2027.

Additional projects next summer will include the replacement of temporary demountable walls with permanent acoustic walls at Montrose, Northwinds, Parkside and Tatanka. The extent of those upgrades will depend on available funds.

Any final bond-related projects to close out the construction fund may occur as late as 2028.

For more complete project details, see bhmschools.org/construction-updates-0.

News Briefs

Permanent School Fund on the ballot

When Minnesota voters go to the polls on or before Nov. 3 they will have an opportunity to vote on a constitutional amendment to provide additional funding for public schools without raising taxes.

Since the 1850s, the state has set aside proceeds from public lands such as timber sales, mining and land leases in the Permanent School Fund to help fund public schools. The money cannot be used for any other purpose. The amendment would modernize the way the funds are distributed, increasing the annual distribution percentage from about

2.5% to 4.5%, which would result in an increase of about \$33 per student. For BHM, that means about \$150,000 more annually.

To pass, an amendment to the state's constitution must earn a majority of the vote. If a voter leaves that portion of the ballot blank, it counts as a "no" vote.

For additional information, scan the code above or see <https://www.mnpsfamendment.org>.

Website, video
Scan for
additional info



Upcoming Events

'Grease' is BHS fall musical

Buffalo High School's fall musical is a familiar classic, "Grease." Four performances will be held, including 7 p.m. shows on Friday, Nov. 13, Saturday, Nov. 14, and Friday, Nov. 20. A 2 p.m. matinee will be held on Saturday, Nov. 21.

Tickets are \$4 for students and seniors age 62 and up, and \$6 for adults.

Watch the BHM Schools Facebook page, Instagram and website for more information and a full preview.

Halloween Dance

The annual Opening Doors Halloween Dance takes place from 4 to 6 p.m. on Friday, Oct. 30, in the Discovery Center gym. The event is for those age 16-plus with cognitive and physical disabilities. See <https://bhmschools.arux.app/> for more information and to register.

Winter sports meeting

The Buffalo High School Winter Sports meeting will be held at 7 p.m. in the BHS gym on Monday, Nov. 2.

Election 2026 Candidate Profiles

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

• **Dodge:** I want to serve on the BHM Board because change needs to be made. Children need to be thoroughly educated in the fundamentals of reading, writing, arithmetic and core subjects that will make them productive members of society. The school has gone from teaching academics to ideology and our students are suffering, both academically and mentally.

• **Hoffman:** Education is something I hold in very high regard. Having been on the school board for the past four years, I have seen and believe that every employee of this district is doing their best to deliver the best possible education to each student. I would like to continue to support those staff and those students.

• **Kunkel:** While I retired from 38 years in education, I feel I still have more to give to the public school system. I believe my experience working in a variety of schools gives me a full understanding of the importance of high quality public education.

• **Sansevere:** When I was much younger, I thought I could change the world. I realized over time that it is more important to impact your own special corner of the world. That realization led to my wife and me doing foster care for more than 16 years. It also led to me being on the Orono City Council for eight years, led to me being on the Buffalo-Hanover-Montrose school board these past 10 years – the last two as board chair – and led to me becoming president of the Buffalo Rodeo, serving as a PDC regional director for 4H

		
Debra Dodge Buffalo	Matt Hoffman Buffalo	Monica Kunkel Buffalo
Occupation: Movement educator	Occupation: Pediatrician at Stellis Health in Buffalo for 15 years	Occupation: Retired teacher, community volunteer
Family (will you, do you, or did you have children who attended BHM Schools): I do not have children in BHM Schools. My children are adults.	Family (will you, do you, or did you have children who attended BHM Schools): I have a son in his second year of college who graduated from BHS in 2025. I have daughters who are a Junior at BHS and an eighth-grader at BCMS.	Family (will you, do you, or did you have children who attended BHM Schools): We have four Buffalo Schools graduates (2008, 2011, 2012, 2016)
Years lived in the district? 9	Years lived in the district? 15	Years lived in the district? 23

and becoming a Region 5 director for Minnesota High School Rodeo. This school district is in my special corner of the world and I want to continue having a positive impact on it as a member of the school board.

• **Smude:** I don't have a personal or political agenda. I am not a politician. I am an educator, mom and citizen who is passionate about her community and taking an active role in making it flourish. I have always been a fierce public school advocate and believe strong schools make a strong community. My passion for education and love for this district made running for re-election an obvious choice. It has been a delight to serve the past four years and I want to continue the work I have started. With my own children having many more years of school-

ing at BHM and hopefully my grandchildren too, I knew I wanted to take an active role in helping ensure District #877 is strong now and into the future. My goal as a school board member is to be a positive voice for ALL students and make sure they have every opportunity to get a well rounded, high quality education so they are ready to take on the world!

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

• **Dodge:** Honesty, common sense, and hard work with a willingness to serve the people. The School Board works for the Community, not the other way around.

• **Hoffman:** I feel my background and career have fostered a rational and lev-

el-headed mind which I can use when listening to ideas and information to process into sound decisions and opinions. Also, as a pediatrician, I like to think I have a pretty good understanding of children and what they need, and I am a super big fan of seeing them thrive.

• **Kunkel:** I have 38 years of experience teaching and leading in a variety of schools, from rural, suburban to urban, and public and private schools. I have served as a teacher leader for years in professional development curriculum and assessment and local union positions.

• **Sansevere:** Experience. I have been on the school board more than 10 years, with the last two as board chair. I have knowledge of how the board and school district function, and I am proud of the job this board



Bob Sansevere
Buffalo

Occupation: Broadcaster
Family (will you, do you, or did you have children who attended BHM Schools): Four of my children graduated from Buffalo High School and my youngest child is a senior at BHS.
Years lived in the district? 15



Sheila Smude
Buffalo

Occupation: Educator and associate pastor
Family (will you, do you, or did you have children who attended BHM Schools): My husband Andy and I both attended BHM K-12. We have two 10th graders at BHS, Connor and Emma, Nathan is a 9th grader at BHS, Kai and Nova are 8th graders at BCMS and Maya is a 6th grader at BCMS.
Years lived in the district? 34

has done helping guide this impressive district over the last decade.

• **Smude:** Not only do I bring 4 years of experience as an incumbent, but as an educator, I have a unique perspective to bring to the school board. Along with full-time classroom teaching experience and frequent subbing in the district, I have been on numerous committees that support our schools and have taken an extensive resume of classes through the Minnesota School Boards Association. All of these roles have taught me vital information and given me crucial data about school function and governance that improve my ability to be an effective school board member. I have held numerous leadership roles throughout my lifetime that have shaped me into a cre-

ative collaborator and clear communicator. I am a genuine team-player, life-long learner, active listener, and detail-oriented go-getter. I am committed to serving with integrity, diligence and transparency so our staff and students can excel!

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

• **Dodge:** Trying to recreate the wheel on how children have learned for hundreds of years is not working. Our goal as a community is to raise independent, critical thinking, moral human beings – not activist sheep.

• **Hoffman:** There are many, but one of the most worrisome is the institution of education being undermined from many angles, falsely causing distrust and

decreasing support. We need to continue to work together to recruit and retain high quality staff, use the limited resources available to deliver as much as possible to all students and bolster the community that school provides.

• **Kunkel:** The relentless attack on public education causes an undo amount of stress on our public schools. This manifests in underfunding and defunding schools and programs, challenges in educator and support staff retention and equitable experiences for students across classrooms and buildings.

• **Sansevere:** There are many issues facing the school district, but the one that is paramount is making sure the state provides adequate funding to our district and others across the state. The state failed this past year, and many districts, including ours, had to do some serious belt tightening. When funding isn't provided by the state, there is a ripple effect that impacts everyone in the district, including our students. The way to solve this problem is to pound the table – literally and figuratively – to get the attention of state legislators who make the funding decisions. I have spoken to several legislators about it, and that dialogue will continue if I am re-elected to the Buffalo-Hanover-Monrose school board.

• **Smude:** I believe the most important issue facing education today is educator support and retention. There is a very real national teacher crisis happening as more and more teachers leave the profession because of the mental strain and lack of support. Our district has some of the most committed

and caring teachers and staff I have ever encountered. They truly love our students and go above and beyond their job description. They deserve our full support as we trust them to do the job they are highly trained to do. I want to make sure our district is a place where top-notch educators and staff want to work and build their career, because excellent classrooms are built by excellent educators. Secondly, we have to fully fund public education. I will continue to support board decisions that steward tax payer dollars wisely and continue to communicate with legislators as we work together to invest in future generations.

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

• **Dodge:** Buffalo is a lovely place to grow up. I have seen the dedication, pride and sense of community wherever I go. The teachers and staff are well-liked and caring individuals. It's a place where children should be able to dream and achieve their goals without growing up too fast. I was raised in a small town, and I am really grateful for that. Parents, with the help of schools and the community, can make or break a kid's life – I believe Buffalo can be a beacon of excellence – not mediocrity. The children are our future.

• **Hoffman:** We have great people and programs here providing solid and ever improving education and opportunities to build citizens ready for anything the world has to offer.

• **Kunkel:** Our four children had fantastic educa-

Proud Of....

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

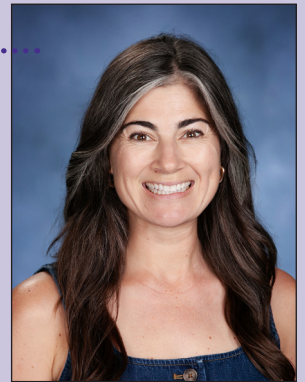


BHS state track champions Rose Lamberts, left, in the 300-meter hurdles, and Tristan Lenton, right, in the 1,600-meter run.



The Bison Girls Lacrosse Team, which took second place at the state tournament in June. Senior goalie Aurora Meyer was the State Goalie of the Year, and coach Krista Crandall was named the Minnesota State Coach of the year.

BHS AVID Teacher Lacy Schramm, who has received the BestPrep Educator of Excellence Award.



BCMS students Elsie Johanson, Dorothy Karson, and Henry Winger, who finished 8th in the Junior Group Performance Division at the National History Day contest.



Occupational therapist Bryden Carlson-Giving, who was honored with a First Decade Award by Gustavus Adolphus College. The Award recognizes individuals for early professional achievement by graduates of the 10th anniversary class. Criteria for selection include the difficulty of accomplishment; quality, creativity, and distinctiveness of performance; recognition by professional peers; and lasting contribution to the world of ideas and affairs. Carlson-Giving was featured in the March-April 2026 Insider for conceptualizing, co-writing, editing and illustrating a book titled 'Neurodiversity-Affirming Occupational Therapy.'



BHS state qualifiers in track and boys tennis. In addition to state champions at the top of this page, the girls 4x400 took seventh at state: Alyssa Simonson, Rose Lamberts, Kennedy Herrboldt, and Abigail Lamberts. Junior Cooper Schultz qualified for state in shot put, and junior Will Schmidt qualified for state in tennis after winning the individual section singles title.



Wyatt Florell
Tenor Bass Choir



Ciera Grambart
Soprano Alto Choir



Isaac Gustafson
Orchestra



Alec Keranen
Tenor Bass Choir



Madeline Krinke
Soprano Alto Choir



Athens Radunz
Tenor Bass Choir



Anthony Schmidt
Tenor Bass Choir

2026-2027 Minnesota Music Educators Association All-State Musicians: Wyatt Florell, Ciera Grambart, Isaac Gustafson, Alec Keranen, Madeline Krinke, Athens Radunz, Anthony Schmidt, and alternates Patrick Tallant, Avy Weinhandl, James Bolin, Sydney Hoffman, Donovan Johnson and Margot Miller.

Oliver Packard, this year's nominee for the 2027 Star of the North Award presented by the Minnesota Educators of the Gifted and Talented. Packard, a sixth-grader in the Quest program at BCMS, is now in the running to receive the award, which is given annually to a student in grades 5-8 who has shown outstanding student accomplishment in academics, arts or leadership.



Senior Russell Yitalo, who finished in a tie for 11th place at the state golf meet.



Candidates

from Page 5

tions in BHM Schools and have gone on to succeed in careers where they can pursue their passions and interests. I see BHM Schools providing many opportunities for students to explore areas of interest and focus on passions leading to career or higher education upon graduation.

• **Sansevere:** For starters, BHM has terrific administrators, teachers, para-professionals and staff, and they all play a role in allowing students to dream, believe and achieve. And, as I mentioned earlier, I have more than 10 years of experience and knowledge from serving on the Buffalo-Ha-

nover-Montrose school board, with the last two as the board chair. I am proud of the work this board and district have done to keep Buffalo-Hanover-Montrose among statewide leaders when it comes to serving our students. Our district ranks in the top 20 out of 366 districts with "the Best Teachers in Minnesota," according to Niche, which claims its "rankings are based on rigorous analysis of key statistics from the U.S. Department of Education and millions of reviews." In the "Best School Districts in Minnesota" rankings, Niche has Buffalo-Hanover-Montrose 36th out of 362. The school board plays a part in the success of the district, and I would like to continue doing what I can to empower that and to make sure BHM Schools continue to be a place to dream, believe and achieve.

• **Smude:** I have experienced BHM Schools as a place to dream, believe and achieve as a student, educator and parent. My husband and I both graduated from Buffalo High School and our experience in the district was exceptional! Our educational and extra-curricular opportunities truly prepared us to go into the world equipped to be successful and achieve our dreams. The staff and teachers in District #877 believe in you in a way that you can't help but believe in yourself. We moved back to Buffalo specifically so our own children could attend BHM Schools and we have been delighted with our children's education thus far and how they have been challenged, encouraged and supported to be all that they can be.

*****ECRWSS**
RESIDENT DISTRICT 877

Stella

from Page 1

the process to apply to be a student speaker.

"I was kind of thinking to myself, 'I don't think I'm going to waste my time doing this, because what are the odds? Thousands of kids are doing this. What are the odds that I'm going to actually win?'" said Schlak, now a ninth-grader at Buffalo High School.

But a friend convinced her to try, and she raised her hand along with seven other BCMS students. When AVID evaluators saw her application, they immediately began to think bigger. Megan Losey, then-AVID coordinator at BCMS, received a phone call from the national office.

"He said, 'We don't think she deserves five minutes on stage. She needs 75 minutes on stage,'" Losey recalled.

In other words, Schlak was given alternate status as a student speaker, but handed the far higher profile position of emceeing the entire general session.

"She was chosen because of who she is, and the brightness and the light that just shine from her," said Losey. "She's got an infectious smile, and she's so genuine and authentic."

A video conference was

arranged where AVID officials extended the emcee invitation to Schlak.

"It was such a such a crazy moment for me to think that out of all the people they could have picked, they just picked an eighth-grade girl from Buffalo, Minnesota," said Schlak.

Losey said that while many local students had applied before, none had even received an email back.

"It's always just kind of been, 'Oh well. Maybe someday,'" she said. "But now, with Stella doing this, it shows our kids that you can be from Buffalo, Minnesota, and you can do cool things. This is a great way to show younger kids that skills you develop in this program are going to help you be able to do things like this."

Both Schlak and Losey



Stella Schlak presents a math problem during an AVID tutorial at BCMS.



SCHOOL BOARD

Bob Sansevere.....Chairperson
Sheila Smude.....Vice Chairperson
Adam Bjorklund.....Clerk
Amanda Lawrence.....Treasurer
Matt Hoffman.....Acting Clerk/Treasurer
Angela Greig.....Director
Mike Honsey.....Director
Scott Thielman.....Superintendent
Eli Koch.....Student Representative

credited BCMS AVID teachers Nicki Schahn and Andrea Koltes with instilling the skills needed to succeed, and Schlak said that the program has been transformational.

"Looking back, I was a completely different person," she said. "Before I joined AVID, I was so shy. Public speaking was my nemesis. Then I joined AVID, and practice does make progress because I started getting better at it. And honestly, there would be no way I could go to Kansas City if I hadn't started doing these tutorials where you're presenting in a small group, or doing these projects where you're presenting a college that you researched. It is such a learning curve, but it helps you feel more confident in yourself by light-years."

In Kansas City

As a student emcee at the AVID Summer Institute General Session in Kansas

City, Missouri, July 22-24, Schlak helped welcome about 2,000 educators and students from around the country to one of AVID's signature events. She guided the flow of the session, introduced speakers, interviewed teachers, and more.

She was nervous ahead of time, but felt well-prepared when she took the stage.

"I had a lot of anxiety beforehand, and then I got on stage and suddenly it clicked and I was just like, 'Okay, we're rolling,'" said Schlak. "And just like that, all of the confidence came back and I was ready to go. People were coming up to me afterwards, asking for pictures and stuff. It was crazy. I couldn't imagine that it could have gone any smoother than it did. It was just amazing."

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

