



# staying CONNECTED

A NEWSLETTER FOR THE ALUMNI AND FRIENDS OF MINNESOTA WEST COMMUNITY & TECHNICAL COLLEGE

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The Minnesota West Foundation is a private non-profit, 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization.

The Minnesota West Foundation believes in affordable and accessible educational opportunities for students. Because of this belief and commitment to education, the Minnesota West Foundation provides funding for scholarships and development opportunities for students attending Minnesota West Community and Technical College.



## The **POWER** of MINNESOTA

Our energy. Our communities. Our stories.



Community leaders, business representatives, educators, students, and local citizens congregated at the Canby Campus of Minnesota West on the evening of September 18th to celebrate wind energy and wind energy education. The audience of 100+ was treated to a pre-screening of the PBS documentary, "The Power of Minnesota," which was produced by local PBS affiliate Pioneer Public TV and included a collection of stories and voices from around Minnesota. The program highlighted the successes and benefits of wind energy throughout the state and also featured students, faculty, and staff associated with the Wind Energy program at Minnesota West.

After the screening, attendees participated in an open discussion about the renewable energy sector in Minnesota. Gary Olsen, Minnesota West Wind Energy instructor, addressed numerous questions during the forum regarding wind turbine technology, turbine repair, and worker shortages. "The demand for wind energy technicians is huge and is outpacing supply. These skilled workers are graduating and rapidly advancing both professionally and financially," Olsen stated. Bruce Peterson, Minnesota West Dean of Energy Programs, and Executive Director of the Minnesota Energy Center of Excellence, reiterated that very sentiment in the film. "Wind technician positions are among the fastest growing in the United States. The economics of wind energy have become so much more competitive." Minnesota has set a goal of 25% of its energy to be generated by renewable sources by the year 2025. Wind and solar are a key part of this plan.

The event in Canby was hosted by Clean Energy Resource Teams, in partnership with Pioneer Public Television, Minnesota West, and other local development agencies. The documentary, *The Power of Minnesota*, can be viewed in its entirety at [www.powerofmn.com](http://www.powerofmn.com).



# From the **PRESIDENT**

Like most people who work in primary, secondary, or post-secondary education, I look forward to fall. Sure, summers in Minnesota are a treasure, but the excitement and anticipation every August of a new school year energizes and re-energizes me. Our faculty and staff offices are buzzing with activity as they prepare for new students and new classes. Our classrooms, hallways, labs, and bookstores fill with students. Our communities come alive as employees and students alike frequent local businesses for food, shopping, and more. It doesn't get old.

The energy of the new academic year is even more pronounced at Minnesota West this fall. Our residence halls on the Worthington campus opened to new students for the first time, beginning a new chapter in the story of our community's college. And in Canby, a television documentary on the power of wind energy, featuring Minnesota West faculty and staff, was unveiled in mid-September. These are only two of the numerous activities taking place across our service region, as we strive to be the regional college of choice in southwestern Minnesota.

We also engaged students in "Pizza with the Pres" discussions across all of our campuses this fall. Our goal was to engage our students in sharing their own feedback regarding successes, challenges, and recommendations for our college. We gained a wealth of great comments, too many to share in this limited space, but we will use their voice as we continue to shape and strengthen their educational experience at Minnesota West.

I am blessed every day when I come to work and see the critically important skills and knowledge that are being shared between faculty and students. I am excited for fall, yes, but I am even more excited to be a part of something that is making a difference in the lives of students.



## Tops in Network Security & Accounting

Minnesota West was recently ranked 2nd in the nation for online Associate in Network Security Programs by TheBestSchools.org. The college was also ranked in the Top 25 in the nation for its online Associate in Accounting program.

# OSCAR'S GOLDEN TICKET

WORTHINGTON — Earlier this fall, Oscar Martinez cashed in what may be the only certificate of its kind — one free tuition credit at Minnesota West — given 18 ½ years ago to the first baby across the entire state of Minnesota to be born in the new millennium.

The gift certificate was part of a gift basket provided to Oscar's parents, Patricio and Fransisca Martinez, in early 2000, shortly after he was born in Worthington, MN. For 18 years, they safely stored the certificate until Oscar was able to redeem it at the start of his freshman year at Minnesota West.

"If it was me," said Martinez, "I would have lost it right away."

"The certificate is perhaps the only one of its kind and definitely the first brought forth for redemption," said Minnesota West Marketing, Enrollment, and Communication Director, Amber Luinenberg.



The certificate was originally endorsed by former Dean and current Provost Jeff Williamson. "I never dreamed that someone would actually hang on to it and bring it back," Williamson said.

But keep it he did, and now Martinez is pursuing his associate's degree at Minnesota West, with the goal of eventually transferring to the University of Minnesota and becoming a teacher.



# Fall Kick Off

## MOVE-IN DAY

The Bluejay Villas, located on the Worthington Campus, opened their doors to students for the first time on Friday, August 20th. Students, families, and staff were on hand to move students into the on-campus apartments.



## Getting Connected

Minnesota West students across all campuses participated in Getting Connected Day on August 29th – an opportunity to learn about available college and community resources, to meet and socialize with other students, and to interact with college faculty and staff.







# AN AFRICAN JOURNEY

Minnesota West alumna and Computer Support instructor Terri Pelzel made a life changing trip to Africa this past May, delivering iPads to the All Day FORE Africa Children's Academy in Rwanda. Her trip not only delivered a powerful teaching tool to students halfway across the world, but it also enabled her to provide computer support training to her students in Jackson, MN.

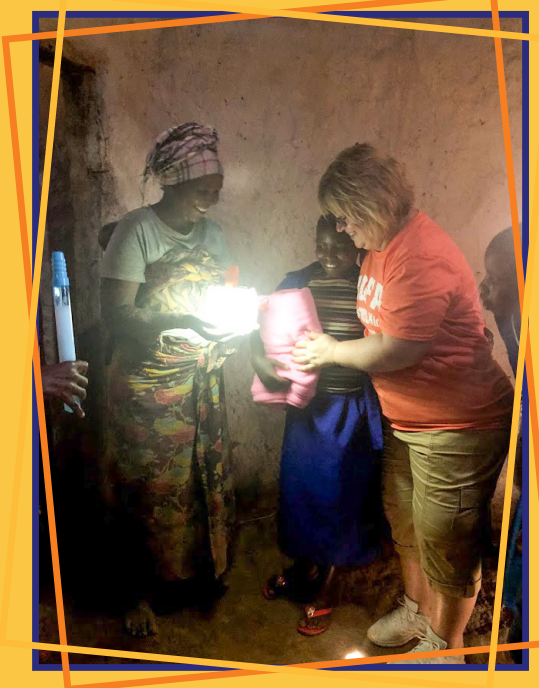
Pelzel was first introduced to the idea of traveling to Africa by her daughter-in-law, Kate (Lesnar) Pelzel. In 2010, Kate began a fundraising campaign for children in Rwanda and eventually raised enough money for a new water system at the Nyrashishi Primary School in Kibeho, Rwanda. Since then, her fundraising efforts have expanded, and the non-profit organization All Day FORE Africa has now raised over \$400,000 to support numerous projects in the Kibeho village.

One of those projects was building a special talent academy known as the Children's Academy. About 40 kids from the Nyrashishi Primary School are able to attend the academy, where students receive specialized learning opportunities in subjects such as Language, Art, Music, Sports, and more. Here is where Pelzel learned that she could provide assistance.

During the planning stages of her trip, Pelzel and her fellow travelers decided to gather electronic devices to assist in teaching English and Reading at the Academy. They put out a call to friends and business colleagues for

donations, and the group received 8 iPads, 1 dell laptop & 1 iMac pro. Pelzel then structured a portion of her PC Maintenance and Repair curriculum around iPad configuration, providing her students experience in troubleshooting Apple hardware and software, and specially fitting the iPads with apps that helped the Rwandan students to learn English. When they were finished, Pelzel had 10 prepped and ready devices for the trip to Africa.

The group of eight travelers left for Africa on May 27th with iPads in tow and suitcases filled with vitamins donated by a local pharmacy. "Before All Day FORE Africa support, the 920 students from two schools in Kibeho didn't get meals during the day," says Pelzel. So, All Day FORE Africa built a bakery. "Now they get two rolls each day at school, but nutrition is still an issue." The donated vitamins – enough to support 920 students for 4 days a week - provide the supplemental nourishment needed for healthy kids. "Kids learn better when they have something to eat!" Pelzel remarked.







During her 10 day trip, Terri spent time teaching the kids of Kibeho how to use the iPads she brought, reading with kids, feeding them from the bakery, and even meeting her prayer partner from the past two years.

*“Two years ago, I became a prayer partner with Christine from Kibeho Rwanda. I had the privilege to meet her at her school, and I was able to visit her home. I brought her a MN West embroidered blanket, and a LuminAID solar panel. My heart is full. She even came to the Children’s Academy and we were able to paint together in the afternoon.”*

Although the trip was exhausting, Pelzel is excited to go back. Whether or not her next trip will include another technology exchange is unclear, but seeing and experiencing the joy of the children in the village and at the schools was reason enough to want to return.

To learn more about All Day FORE Africa go to [www.alldayforeafrica.com](http://www.alldayforeafrica.com).



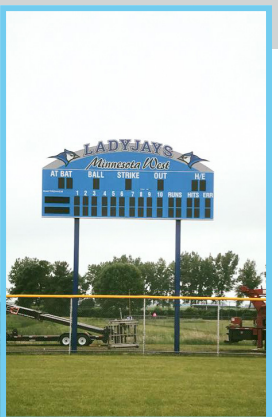
Volleyball - Brittney McNab



Volleyball - CJ Nelson

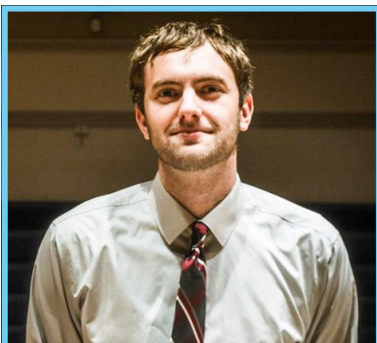


Softball – Tanner Gunnick



# ATHLETIC MAKEOVER

The Bluejay athletic programs underwent a makeover this fall. The college welcomed new coaches in volleyball, men’s basketball, and softball. A new trapshooting league kicked off this fall, and new scoreboards were installed for Bluejay Baseball and Lady Jay softball teams.



Boys Basketball – Taylor Lupton





# STUDENT UPDATES

## BPA SUCCESS



The Minnesota West Chapter of the Business Professionals of America experienced great success in its trip to the National Leadership Conference in Dallas, Texas in May:

- Roxanne Wavra was awarded National BPA Post-Secondary Student of the Year, 2018 Post-Secondary Ambassador of the Year & Outstanding Achievement Award, Service Learning for her many hours volunteering for Special Olympics. She also placed 4th in Advanced Interview Skills.
- Cody Uithoven placed 3rd in Computer Network Technology, 6th in Systems Administration Using Cisco & passed the Microsoft Technology Associate - Network Fundamentals Certification & Microsoft Technology Associate - Windows Operating Systems Fundamentals Certification.
- Chai Sysavath placed 4th in Computer Security and passed the Microsoft Technology Associate – Security Fundamentals Certification.
- Seantae Read placed 10th in Network Administration using Microsoft.
- Spencer Schwartz placed 5th in Network Administration using Microsoft, 7th in Systems Administration Using Cisco, 8th in Computer Network Technology, & 9th in Business Law & Ethics.
- The Minnesota West Community & Technical College, Jackson Campus received the Chapter Award for Outstanding Achievement Award for Community Service.



## EMPLOYER PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships between local employers and Minnesota West have helped to provide needed job skills. Monogram Foods in Chandler, MN recently celebrated three welding certificate completions, with funding through the Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council and a Job Skillz partnership grant.

JBS Pork, with locations in Worthington, MN, Marshalltown, IA, and Ottumwa, IA, recently celebrated its employees who graduated with an Industrial Technology Certificate & Mechatronics Diploma from Minnesota West.





# Westra to be President-Elect



Minnesota West Dean of Institutional Effectiveness, Kayla Westra, was recently elected as the President-elect for the NACEP (National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships) Board of Directors. Kayla has been involved in concurrent enrollment as an English mentor faculty member and Dean for over 17 years. The Minnesota West Concurrent Enrollment program, known as REACH, involves training and mentoring high school teachers to provide college level courses at local high schools. Westra will begin a two-year term as President-elect (followed by two years as President) this November.

## PHILANTHROPY Corner

### Planned Giving


The term “planned giving” is one of those jargon terms that fundraising organizations use to describe charitable giving that is planned in the present, but realized at some future date. And while it can be tempting to get overwhelmed by the complexity of the various ways to structure a planned gift, it doesn’t need to be. Keep a few things in mind:

- **FIRST** and foremost, realize that planned giving is not something just for the wealthy. It is for anyone who wants to have a say in where their assets go when they are deceased.
- **SECOND**, work with a financial planner or attorney in the same way that you would in estate planning. Structuring a planned gift into your will can ensure that it becomes part of your legacy.
- **THIRD**, communicate with the organization that you are considering a planned gift for. You may be able to work with them to structure even more clearly how you would like your gift to be used.

# Alumni Updates

*What have you been up to? We would love to hear from you!*

Go to [www.mnwest.edu/profile-update](http://www.mnwest.edu/profile-update) & update us on life since Minnesota West.

Also, “Like” us on Facebook and message us your selfie!  [www.facebook.com/minnesotawest](https://www.facebook.com/minnesotawest)

### 1970s

*Lynn Braband* (1970, Pre-forestry) – Lynn works as an extension educator with the New York State Integrated Pest Management Program of Cornell University. After Minnesota West, he went on to obtain an MS in wildlife Biology (1979) at Iowa State University and has worked in environmental consulting, college teaching, and nuisance wildlife control. He lives in Rochester, NY.

### 1980s

*Douglas Wachal* (1982, Drafting & Electronics) – Douglas has been in the office equipment industry for 35 years. Today he works for Metro Sales in Richfield, MN, where he sets up printing and scanning functions for printers and copiers. He lives in Waseca, MN with his wife, Peggy.

*Steve Fiek* (1982, Powerline) - Steve recently retired from Rochester Public Utilities after a 36 year career, where he spent 29 years as a lineman/foreman and 7 years as an Electric Construction Supervisor.

### 1990s

*Jeffrey Mayer* (1992, Accounting) – Jeff recently retired after 26 years in accounting. Most recently he was the accountant at Total Tire and Auto/Total Track

and Performance in Long Prairie, MN. He and his wife Carol live in Sauk Centre, MN.

*Tim Cook* (1995, Electrician) – Tim is a Master Electrician at Weightronix in Fairmont, MN.

*Zack Reimers* (1995; Fluid Power) – After moving to California after graduation, Zach moved back to Minnesota and now works at Air Engineering and Supply as an outside sales engineer, covering Southern Minnesota, Northern Iowa and South Dakota. He lives in Prior Lake, MN.

### 2000s

*Nicole VanderVeen* (2007, Nursing) – Nicole joined the New Ulm, MN Medical Center in August of 2016 and then completed her BSN at Southwest Minnesota State University in December of 2016, graduating SUMMA CUM LAUDE and in the Nursing Honor Society. She works in the in-patient mental health unit.

*Rosaline Asuigui* (2007, Administrative Assistant) – Rosaline currently works as a patient account representative in medical billing for a commercial insurance company. She and her husband Marcelino live in Chesapeake, VA. Their children work in the Virginia area as a graphic designer, a nurse, and a PhD student.

*Drew Hage* (2007, Business Management) - Drew is currently the Executive Director for the Economic Development Authority in Windom, MN. According to Drew, “Minnesota West was a great opportunity for me to finish my AA Degree and set my career path. I appreciated the small class sizes, lower tuition costs, and being able to play golf at Minnesota West.”

### 2010s

*Stan Sebring* (2013, Telecommunications; Computer Support) – Stan is employed at Midco, a telecommunications company, as a Quality Assurance Specialist. He and his wife Amanda live in Sioux Falls, SD.

*Logan Ellenbecker* (2014) – Logan is a Winemaker with Round Lake Vineyards where he tends to all things grapes during the growing and harvesting seasons.

*Jake Walker* (2016, Law Enforcement) - Logan is currently a police officer with the Worthington Police Department in Worthington, MN.



A  
Year  
With

# Frog and Toad

## UPCOMING: DINNER AND A SHOW!

For the second year in a row, the Minnesota West Foundation is partnering with the Minnesota West Theater program to offer dinner and a show! The fall musical theater production of "A Year With Frog and Toad" will kick off its production run with an evening performance at 8:00 pm on November 16th, with the option of a special, catered dinner at 6:30 pm on the Worthington Campus. Additional matinee performances will follow on Nov 17th and 18th at 2:00 pm.

Regular ticket prices are \$8 for Adults and \$5 for all students.

Dinner Theater tickets are \$20 and require an advance reservation. Please call 507-372-3448 for tickets.



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