

The background features abstract, overlapping green geometric shapes in various shades, creating a modern and dynamic feel. The shapes are primarily triangles and polygons, some semi-transparent, layered on a white background.

2018 Pierre Educational Foundation

Evening of Excellence

The background features abstract, overlapping geometric shapes in various shades of green, ranging from light lime to dark forest green. These shapes are primarily located on the left and right sides of the frame, creating a modern, layered effect. The central area is a plain white space where the text is located.

2018 Educator of Excellence Nominees

These educators were nominated
by the 2018 Scholars of
Excellence for the impact they
made in students' lives.

Terry Becker

T.F. Riggs High School



Mr. Becker has taught me for three out of four years in high school. From World History, AP U.S. History, and U.S. Government, he has taught me to embrace hard work because there's no way around it. AP U.S. History has a reputation for being one of the longest and grueling AP courses in high school complete with a 1,300-page textbook, and Mr. Becker didn't disappoint in his first year teaching the class. He finds humor in challenging his students when they complain about how difficult it is. To me that's a very inspiring perspective on hard work, to find laughter and joy in an otherwise difficult and frustrating class. Mr. Becker's perspective on hard work will stay with me throughout my college years.

- TF Riggs Class of 2018

Kim Bierle

Georgia Morse Middle School

My sophomore year I had the pleasure to have Ms. Bierle for World Geography. During the semester I had World Geography, she was undergoing a rigorous chemotherapy regiment. Regardless of the pain she was in, she always succeeded on putting a smile on everyone's face. She taught us World Geography, but also other important life skills to make us successful. Rather than taking a long grueling final, she assigned our class a sustainable development project. Our job was to pick a country that had an environmental problem and solve it. I choose the country of Kuwait and wanted to solve its issue of oil spills. With encouragement from Ms. Bierle, I spent hours and hours designing and researching a cheap and effective way to separate oil from water in lakes, rivers, and oceans. I eventually developed a system that uses gravity by syphoning the water and oil mix into a filter. Because Ms. Bierle chose to have our semester test be hands-on, I was able to explore into a field that I am now pursuing as a job. Her strength and love for teaching will forever stay with me as I continue my education after T.F. Riggs.

- TF Riggs Class of 2018

Mackenzie Blake

Buchanan Elementary



Mrs. Blake started her first year teaching in my class. She was extremely nervous, but she had an affinity for 2nd graders that grabbed our attention. I was always the shy kid, but Mrs. Blake pushed me to put myself out and show others my talents. She never looked down on anyone for being different or weird and gave all her kids equal amounts of attention. I was the victim of bullying that year, and she helped me when that happened without making things obvious. She discreetly made sure I had an adult near me on the playground at all times and dealt with the kid in a way that didn't embarrass him, but he stopped.

- TF Riggs Class of 2018

Charis Blanchette

T.F. Riggs High School



I am a very shy person and Mrs. Blanchette really had me step out of my comfort zone at times in class. She would call on me when she knew I was too timid to raise my hand and answer myself. She really challenged me in my writing ability, and she encouraged me to move into Honors English 12 when I had my own doubts. She didn't just tell my parents at conferences how well I was doing, but she actually showed me daily that she had faith in me. I walked into that class silently and left feeling a sense of pride in myself.

- TF Riggs Class of 2018

Karla Blemaster

Kennedy Elementary



When I think about elementary school, I get very nostalgic about the teachers and the experiences I had. I was very lucky to attend a school with an amazing staff and I still occasionally speak to many of the teachers I used to have way back when. One of my favorite teachers, and really one of my favorite classes, was fourth grade with Mrs. Blemaster. I think Mrs. Blemaster not only unleashed my creative side but she made my education fun and made me want to learn. She had a tub in her classroom filled with pillows that students got to read in sometimes, and I was always eager to get my work done and attempt to claim the tub. I also remember around Halloween, we all got to write our own scary stories complete with a picture and we compiled them all into a book she kept in her classroom. When I think back on it, I cannot believe that she actually convinced us all to write our own stories. Mrs. Blemaster, however, didn't make anything feel like work. We were just kids having fun while learning new things. I went on to fifth grade with plenty of fond memories from her class, and an eager desire to learn more and more. Mrs. Blemaster was a wonderful influence on my life and she taught me that education can be fun and rewarding at the same time.

- TF Riggs Class of 2018

Ashley Boone

T.F. Riggs High School



Mrs. Boone taught me 9th and 10th grade English and she instilled a zeal for the English language and literature in me. She has also coached me in Oral Interpretation for the last four years which has given me my passion for sharing literature. Most importantly, her example has inspired me to live life to the fullest as well as pursue a career in English Ed. Outside of information in a textbook, she has prepared me with valuable life skills that I will continue to use for the rest of my life including teamwork, mental health and self-care, and above all acceptance of opposing thoughts and beliefs. I can say with certainty that without the example Mrs. Boone has been to me, I would not be the same person I am today.

- TF Riggs Class of 2018

Kelly Brandt

T.F. Riggs High School



Mr. Brandt has taught me over the last three years, and I have enjoyed every second of his classes. Mr. Brandt not only has a vast knowledge of the subjects he teaches, but also has the ability to make class fun. His classes are not just focused around lectures, but also have labs that keep students engaged. Mr. Brandt's classes always have interesting activities that go hand in hand with whatever topic we are learning at the time. I have enjoyed his AP physics class most of all, and it has inspired me to take up a major in physics. I know that the many lessons Mr. Brandt has taught me will be applicable in college next year, and I am glad that I got the chance to take three of his classes throughout high school.

- TF Riggs Class of 2018

Guy Hunter

Georgia Morse Middle School



He may not have always said the best jokes or had the most “proper” teaching methods, but my 8th grade Algebra teacher Mr. Hunter set me on the right track to be the person I am today. He has energy to flood a room, a smile that can take any gloomy day and form it into a great one, but his biggest assets are being able to understand and teach each one of his students to their needs. Most can tell you I am not the smartest cooking in the jar, but Mr. Hunter found the brightness in me and invested in it. How he can relate school to the real world and have actual FUN in math class is a very hard task to accomplish with a room full of 8th graders. He pushed me to be a better note taker, read books to gain knowledge, ask questions when needed, come in for help when you lack understanding, but most importantly he motivates his students to be more than they already are. Sure, maybe him bribing us with cake from his wife’s bakery or jolly ranchers from under his desk did help his case a little, but nobody else through my years in Pierre have been able to connect with me the way Mr. Hunter did. He is truly one of a kind.

- TF Riggs Class of 2018

John Kalda

Buchanan Elementary



Mr. Kalda has left the biggest impact on me. He is one of those teachers that you just don't forget. The first day I had class with him I was nervous because I had decided to double up on my sciences. But after spending just one day in his class I knew I was going to be okay. Mr. Kalda teaches quickly yet effectively, gladly answers your questions, and empowers you to be successful. At the end of that year, it was decided that he would be teaching the new AP Bio class. Right before summer break I jokingly told him that he "better learn what he's doing for the AP class" as I was enrolled for it. That next fall I came to find out that's exactly what he did. He had prepared all summer for the new course. If he didn't know something, he wrote it down and came back the next day being an expert on that topic. He taught me so much in those two years, while always being someone that I could talk to. Even though I don't have a class with him anymore, I know that if I ever need anything he will always be someone that I could go to for help.

- TF Riggs Class of 2018

Jill Kokesh

T.F. Riggs High School



Ms. Kokesh's personality was calming. When things became too much to handle, I could count on Ms. Kokesh to calm me down and make me laugh.

- TF Riggs Class of 2018

Pam Kringel

T.F. Riggs High School



Before I had even met Mrs. Kringel, my siblings had told me what a wonderful person she was -- that she could find a book you would fall in love with just by looking at you. I swear she is a mind reader. My passion for reading only deepened when I walked into the library the first day of sixth grade. I was heartbroken that I was to leave her behind when I went to the high school, but, luckily, she moved with me. I am so grateful to have had her guidance and recommendations the past seven years. I have no idea what I would have done without her input at book club or her assistance on my research paper. Her love for words and books is contagious. My siblings were right, she is an absolutely phenomenal person.

- TF Riggs Class of 2018

Shawn Lewis

T.F. Riggs High School



Mr. Lewis has been an incredible influence in my life and in my education. I have had the pleasure to have him as a teacher for two full years including middle school and high school. Along with having him as a teacher, I have also had him as a wrestling and football coach for six years. Mr. Lewis is an incredible teacher, coach, person, and friend. As my teacher he has taught me the importance of achieving high grades and that academics should come first. As my coach he has always pushed me to work hard and be the best I can be. He has always worked hard to put me in the best position to be successful. As my friend he has helped me through difficult times without judgement. Mr. Lewis dedicates much of his personal time to his students and athletes. However, his primary goal is to lead me and his other students and athletes to become good people and successful in what we do in life. Mr. Lewis has taught me that helping others is more rewarding than helping myself; my situations in life do not define me, but what I make of those situations does; and that my examples are the best advice that I can give. Mr. Shawn Lewis has taught me endless life lessons and has made an everlasting impact on my life.

- TF Riggs Class of 2018

Kim Livermont Kennedy Elementary

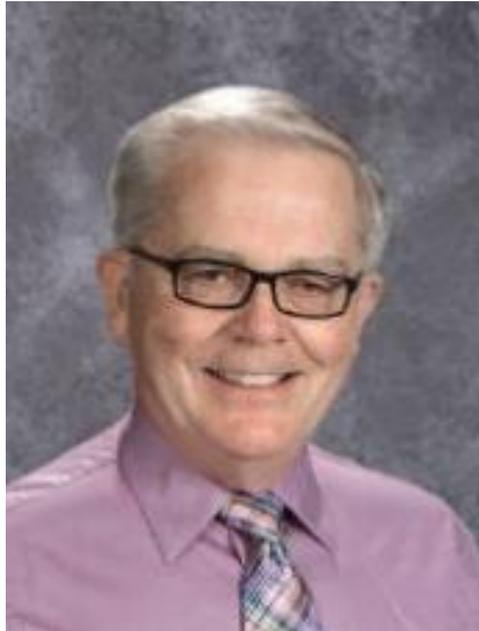


Mrs. Livermont has allowed me to come in to her 3rd grade class and work with her kids a few times a week. She truly does amazing work with them. They're all very well behaved but they like to be kids every once in a while, too. Whenever she's faced with a problem, she handles it with grace, patience, and a smile on her face. It's not hard to see that her children love her and that one day they'll appreciate her like I do now.

- TF Riggs Class of 2018

Jay Mickelson

T.F. Riggs High School



Saying that Mr. Mick simply had an impact on my education really doesn't do the effect he has on people justice. The first time I took a Mick class was my junior year in Western Civilization. He told stories and spewed facts making ancient history seem like just yesterday. It made history so much more fun to learn. He even demonstrated things to the class. I remember being flayed, being put into a phalanx formation, and having my brain looked at the Ancient Egyptian way, with lots of drills. Sadly, my schedule only allowed me to take a semester of the course, so I decided I had to have Mick again, and this was the sole reason I took mythology in my senior year. His story telling came alive when he could tell actual stories, and I spent eighteen weeks enthralled in ancient Greek mythology. I was sad when I finally had to leave that class as it too was only a semester long. Mr. Mick fits my description of an outstanding teacher deserving of this award. He can make a seemingly pointless class come alive and even had me taking a class just to see him every day. If I had to pick one person who made my high school experience great it would be Mr. Mickelson.

- TF Riggs Class of 2018

Jayson Poppinga

T.F. Riggs High School



Science has always been one of my favorite school subjects, but I was never truly engaged with my science classes until I took Mr. Poppinga's biology class. His excitement for the materials he taught influenced my outlook on science and biology. As a student he inspired a passion for science in me that I never knew I had. His class encouraged me to major in a science field.

- TF Riggs Class of 2018

Shannon Poppinga

T.F. Riggs High School

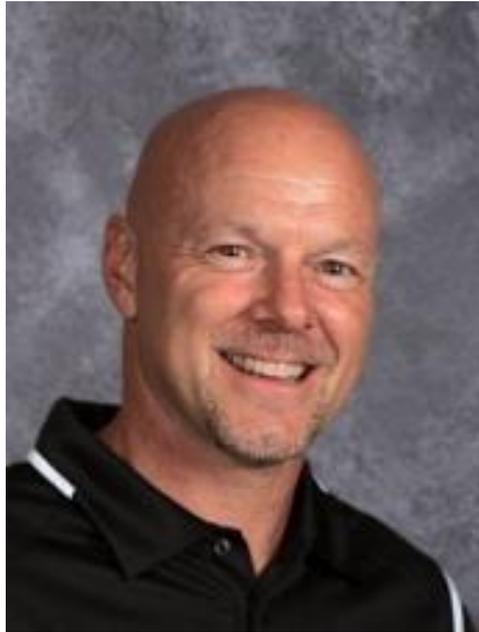


Mr. Shannon Poppinga was my biology teacher sophomore year. His passion for all things biology and sports analogies made that class one of the best I have ever had. I absorbed so much information, and while I am not going to be pursuing a career in science, his teaching has strongly influenced my love of studying. He was energetic, understanding, and had a way of turning the most confusing of subjects into an academic adventure. I miss seeing him in the hallways and the classroom, but his impact on my appreciation and love of science will last a lifetime.

- TF Riggs Class of 2018

Tom Rogers

T.F. Riggs High School



Mr. Rogers was always caring, patient and passionate when it came to teaching us students and getting to know us. While we always learned a lot in his classes, they were also fun and I always looked forward to them. His teaching introduced me to architecture and inspired me to pursue it as my future career choice

- TF Riggs Class of 2018

Samantha Schuetzle

T.F. Riggs High School

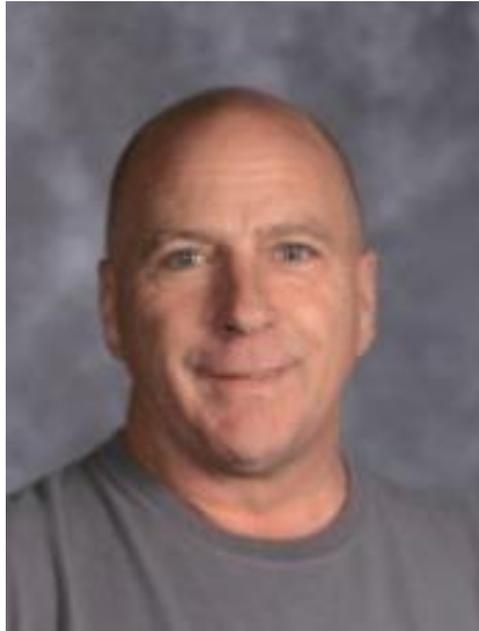


Mrs. Schuetzle has taught me to go above and beyond in my educational goals. She has kept me on track in my math studies to graduate and what I need for college.

- TF Riggs Class of 2018

Dan Snyder

T.F. Riggs High School



Mr. Snyder is a teacher that cares a lot. He cares enough to call a student out when he or she is not working to his or her fullest ability. Mr. Snyder is able to bring a smile on his students face by coming up with funny nicknames or by simply stating you do not have to run today. Mr. Snyder allowed for me to have a mental break in school by allowing us to work out and send endorphins throughout our bodies. He also taught me how to safely lift weights and attempted to guide me on how not injure myself in the pool.

- TF Riggs Class of 2018

Adam Spoehr

T.F. Riggs High School



Mr. Spoehr impacted my life in a very positive way that can be described in many manners. To start off, Mr. Spoehr was a great history teacher. Throughout my educational career here in the Pierre School District, I never really understood history and much less liked it in that matter. Mr. Spoehr helped me in this subject very well and taught me how to work hard for things that did not come easy to me. He was a very straight forward teacher and I respected him for that. Most of his teachings were normal, as in notes, quizzes, and then tests. It may have not been out of the box, but that was never the point. No matter where I was confused at in his discussions he always explained it to me with no question. From being a teacher, Mr. Spoehr was also known to me as Coach Spoehr in football. As in class, he showed me the same work ethics on the field and even off, as well in the weight room too. He always showed us football players what was right to what was wrong. From being a positive influence on my life, he was also an adult figure that I could call my friend, and not many people can say that about their football coach/teacher.

- TF Riggs Class of 2018

Chris Swiden

T.F. Riggs High School



He has always been there for me whenever needed, whether it be academically or personally. He is an all-around great person. He is an amazing teacher, listener, and advice-giver.

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Cheryl Ulmen

T.F. Riggs High School



Mrs. Ulmen has always given 100% to her students without giving it a second thought. She is the teacher you can always count on for advice or help and she will do whatever she can to help you prepare for a test or activity.

- TF Riggs Class of 2018

Elizabeth Vogt

T.F. Riggs High School



I have taken two classes with Mrs. Vogt, Honors English 11 and Honors English 12. Mrs. Vogt has not only taught me how to properly write a five-paragraph essay or use MLA 8, but she has strengthened my passion for English and literature. I am grateful for Mrs. Vogt's appreciation for education and her constant willingness to help. Mrs. Vogt has introduced me to new genres of books and different writing styles. I have been blessed by her desire for teaching and her encouragement and advice!

- TF Riggs Class of 2018

Glenda Woodburn

Georgia Morse Middle School



Mrs. Woodburn taught me to like math again. When I was in elementary school I seemed to be pretty good at it and math quickly became one of my favorite subjects. After elementary school I hated 6th grade math with a fiery burning passion, but I didn't do bad enough to not go into pre-algebra. Once I stepped into her class I started to feel like I would begin to enjoy it again. Her passion in the subject translated onto me and I have remembered her lessons even as I went through calculus. She challenged me to see a different side of the subject and learn something completely new. I will never forget to sing the quadratic formula to the tune of happy birthday, nor will I forget the kindness and passion she translated onto her students.

- TF Riggs Class of 2018

Congratulations on your
nomination. Thank you for
making a difference in the Class
of 2018!