

# 2019 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 page, framing the central white area.

# 2019 Educator of Excellence Nominees

These educators were nominated  
by the 2019 Scholars of  
Excellence for the impact they  
made in students' lives.

# Kim Bierle

## T. F. Riggs High School

- ▶ Ms. Bierle is by far my favorite teacher. She is such a genuine and kind woman. I know that I can go to her with any problems that I have. She always keeps it real with her students and wants the best for us. She teaches her classes in a way that is both interesting and fun, her classes were never boring. In her classes she also gives great advice and life lessons.

- TF Riggs Class of 2019

# Mackenzie Blake

## Buchanan Elementary



I feel like Mackenzie Blake impacted my entire school career and my life. Mackenzie is one of the sweetest and most caring teachers I have ever had. She is a person who actually cares about the well-being of the students she teaches. If I ever struggled in class, she made sure I eventually understood the lesson. Mackenzie always checks up on me from time to time even though she no longer teaches me. Whenever we see each other in public, I am always greeted with a warm smile and a big hug. She is also the person who got me started with figure skating. Figure Skating is one of my favorite activities outside of school and I can't imagine my life without it, so I am very grateful to have had Mackenzie introduce me to it. I wouldn't be the person I am today if I had never had Mackenzie's influence at a very young age.

- TF Riggs Class of 2019

# Karla Blemaster

## Kennedy Elementary



Mrs. Blemaster was my 4th grade teacher. I am happy to be able to volunteer in her 4th grade classroom. It's funny to think that's where I was only eight years ago. I'm grateful to have such a caring and supporting teacher for one of the most difficult times in my life. I love helping Mrs. Blemaster from cleaning soggy apples from her yard to helping her students get to the bus on time.

- TF Riggs Class of 2019

# Kelly Brandt

## T.F. Riggs High School



Through taking chemistry, AP chemistry, and AP physics from Mr. Brandt, I've come to understand that not everything I do can be perfect. Mr. Brandt's classes have helped me transform from an anxiety-ridden perfectionist into someone who can be satisfied with my best efforts. His classes have made me realize that it's not the end of the world to not know everything on a test or to not be an expert on a chapter. The classes I've taken from him both push me academically and force me to realize my own limitations. Mr. Brandt has been my teacher for three years, and he's helped me to develop reasoning skills I didn't think I was capable of. He has also been someone who has helped me grow and supported me in all my endeavors. He's been a great mentor to me. The passion with which he teaches us and takes interest in us is a testament both to how much he loves his job and how great of a teacher he is.

- TF Riggs Class of 2019

# Vasthi Gibson

## T.F. Riggs High School



Mrs. Gibson was my Spanish teacher from my freshman to junior year. Of course, studying a subject for so long would only be possible with a great teacher. It was always my favorite class to walk into because Mrs. Gibson is always welcoming. Mrs. Gibson teaches in a way that keeps everyone engaged and having fun. She shows that she truly cares for all her students both in school and out. Mrs. Gibson has had a great impact on my education and my life.

- TF Riggs Class of 2019



# Brittany Green

## T.F. Riggs High School (Brandon Valley High School)



I chose Mrs. Green as the teacher who most impacted me because she is the reason I really started to like math, and she seemed to expand beyond her teaching duties for students. I had Mrs. Green in sixth grade for general math course and again for Accelerated Algebra II as a sophomore. She was the kind of teacher who would go through every lesson in class, but she also had videos of all the lessons online in case students were gone for a sporting event or something; just this shows she wanted all her students to succeed. Mrs. Green was the kind of teacher who treated us like our age, which I appreciate. She was not afraid to scold students for not paying attention or not being responsible enough to finish the homework, and that showed confidence and authority in her position. By having Mrs. Green as a teacher for multiple years, I really learned to appreciate and respect her, and I have grown as a student and person because of her major impact in my life.

- TF Riggs Class of 2019

# Guy Hunter

## Georgia Morse Middle School



Mr. Hunter taught me to ask questions and enjoy math (to some extent). He was able to motivate students to want to learn and made class interesting and fun.

- TF Riggs Class of 2019

# Teresa Johnson

## T.F. Riggs High School



Mrs. Johnson is definitely someone I look up to. Throughout my time being her student, it really seems like not much goes her way. She deals with a lot of adversity in her life. From her dream boat sinking to her husband's accidents to her having to get surgery and get stuck in a boot, she doesn't have the best of luck. Despite all these unfortunate events happening in her life, she comes to class everyday worrying about nothing but helping others and trying to make a difference in people's lives, whether it be big or small. Mrs. Johnson is always putting others' needs over her own and it shows how much of a strong, caring woman she is. She is also one of the most understanding and supportive people I know. She is a great listener and very open to new ideas from her students. She understands that nobody is perfect, and everyone has things going on in their lives no one knows about, making her very compassionate towards others. Mrs. Johnson has made a great impact on my life by showing me how to be tough, yet compassionate woman and I am forever thankful for her.

- TF Riggs Class of 2019

# Mackenzie McKeithan- Jensen

## T.F. Riggs High School



Mrs. McKeithan was the first teacher I met upon entering high school. Four years later she's the first teacher I see every school year and even the first person in the morning. She has always been a prominent role-model for me and a confidant when need be. When my parents got divorced, she was there for the emotional support and when I was stressed about college applications, she helped me sort out what I actually needed to do making life ten times easier. Overall, Mrs. McKeithan-Jensen has used her experience to help guide me through the gauntlet of high school.

- TF Riggs Class of 2019

# Brianna Postma

## T.F. Riggs High School



Ms. Postma was my freshman year geometry teacher. She always has had a positive personality every time I walk by her in the hallway or on her classroom. She was always helpful not only with homework questions, but also always helped when I had a problem outside of the classroom. While teaching lessons every day, she also made class enjoyable with her lively personality. She has always pushed me to do my best in whatever I do. Ms. Postma has been a positive role model in my life since freshman year. She still makes sure to smile and say “Hi” whenever I walk by her classroom. She also has helped me with my college decisions as well. Ms. Postma attended South Dakota State University to become a math teacher and this is also what would like to do. I will forever remember her kind words and valuable life lessons she has taught me.

- TF Riggs Class of 2019

# Jay Schwartz

## T.F. Riggs High School



Mr. Schwartz has been my math teacher for pre-calculus and for AP calculus and he has easily been one of my favorites. In calculus, students may think extremely critically, and he has taught me how to critically think about mathematical relationships and how they relate to real life. Because there are challenging concepts, he reminds us that it is okay to make mistakes because we learn from them. (He also told us there are no “dumb mistakes” and only “smart mistakes”) He simply encourages us to do our best. He is very open to hearing and answering questions. He never makes anyone feel stupid or bad for not understanding a concept or having a question. He also encourages us to be inquisitive because it drives discussion. He loves discussion and loves hearing about different methods of thinking and about “tricks” to help students remember material better. He truly loves teaching and always strives to do his best. He wants to help all his students and genuinely cares about their education and wants them to succeed. He also always asks me personally if I am feeling okay because I get sick easily because I have the rare lung disease primary ciliary dyskinesia, which shows how he cares about his students beyond their academics. He is the teacher I am going to miss the most when I go to college next year.

- TF Riggs Class of 2019

# Adam Spoehr

## T.F. Riggs High School



The teacher with the most significant impact on my education was Adam Spoehr. Mr. Spoehr was my history teacher. We learned so many interesting things in his class. Among other things, he brought to my attention that the Underground Railroad wasn't an actual underground railroad.

- TF Riggs Class of 2019

# Christina Staskewich

## T.F. Riggs High School



Ms. Staskewich's art classes are essential to the spirit of T.F. Riggs. Ms. S has the ability to make every student feel appreciated. Her classroom is refreshing, welcoming, and interactive. Ms. S inspires my creativity and motivates me to always care for others. Her compassion exemplifies how I want to impact those around me.

- TF Riggs Class of 2019



# Elizabeth Vogt

## T.F. Riggs High School



Mrs. Vogt cares about her students and helping them as much as she possibly can. We are very lucky to have such good teachers at Riggs. She is a very experienced teacher, and while she could be doing many other things, she has stuck to teaching. It is easy to tell she loves what she does.

- TF Riggs Class of 2019

# Becky Walsh

## St Joseph School



Becky Walsh was my 4th and 5th grade teacher. Mrs. Walsh taught me life lessons along with my academic education. I learned to love everyone and to stand up for what is right. Mrs. Walsh was a role model not only during my elementary years but also throughout my middle and high school years. At the beginning of every new school year, Mrs. Walsh sends an email to all of her former students wishing them luck for the upcoming year. Clearly Mrs. Walsh is an amazing role model and leader who never stops caring for others. I am very blessed to have Mrs. Walsh in my life.

- TF Riggs Class of 2019

# Paula Weeldreyer

## Jefferson Elementary School



Coach Paula is a great teacher, coach, mentor and role model. As a 5th grade teacher, she would make sure that I would do my best. One time I did not listen to the instructions and ended up in a group for reading that was at a lower level. Rather than switching groups she had me stay in the group to learn that listening was important. She has continued to impact my life through swim team, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, and working the city pool. She is always volunteering her time to positively impact kids' lives. She has taught me to be a good role model for younger kids, holds me accountable during work, life and swim team.

- TF Riggs Class of 2019

Congratulations on your  
nomination. Thank you for  
making a difference in the Class  
of 2019!