

A Publication of the Pierre Educational Foundation

The

in

Pierre

Educational

Foundation

is honored

to announce the largest

donation

made to the

Foundation

history. The

generous

gift from the

estates

its

of

# **Foundation Receives \$1.6 Million Donation**



Evelyn Benesh

Alvin and Evelyn Benesh total over \$1.6 million to benefit T.F. Riggs High School seniors for generations to come. Alvin and Evelyn Benesh, lifelong residents of Pierre, provided this gift through a charitable trust remainder to benefit students pursing engineering and music degrees.

The \$1.6 million donation establishes two scholarships under the Pierre Educational Foundation. "The Evelyn

Benesh Music Scholarship and Alvin H. Benesh Engineering Scholarship will provide an unprecedented opportunity for students pursuing careers in engineering and music," says Jennifer Stalley, Pierre Educational Foundation Executive Director. "Beginning in 2023, students will have the opportunity to apply for substantial scholarships to help with pursing degrees that are reflective of important areas of work and lifelong passions for the Benesh family."

Alvin Benesh was a dedicated federal highway engineer in Pierre for many years. Evelyn was a conservatory trained pianist and built a studio in her home where she taught piano to numerous students in Pierre. Over the years, her students did much accompanying for the Pierre junior and senior musicals. Many of her students went on to pursue training at conservatories and universities. Prior to her time as a piano teacher, Evelyn worked as a fashion illustrator in New York City. Eventually, war in the mid-1900's led Evelyn back to South Dakota, where she and Alvin built their life together in Pierre.

**August 2022** 

After a lifetime of devotion to the community, engineering, and music, Alvin and Evelyn decided together to donate a portion of their estate to the students of TF Riggs by establishing these scholarships. "This generous gift will provide opportunities for generations of students at Pierre Riggs High School pursing an engineering or music degree," says Bob Lowery, Pierre Educational Foundation President. "We look forward to awarding these scholarships to students who see a future in engineering or music and want to continue their educations. Hopefully, the students find inspiration in the lives of Alvin and Evelyn and create a positive impact in their communities like they did for the community of Pierre and our students."

## **2022 Scholars of Excellence**

Lauren Bland | Jenna Bush | Teddi Crawford | Edmund DeVaney Griffin Gates | Brady Getz | Adisyn Gray | Ainslee Hutchinson | Michael Jackley Aydan Johnson | Lucas Jones | Blake Judson | Steven Juhas | Madelyn Jungwirth Claire Koenecke | Spencer Letellier | Teyah Lewis | Emily Lingle | Alexis Moran Oksana Mutchelknaus | Kayla Petersen | Ela Petersen | Abbie Pillen Jacob Roberts | Sydney Roberts | Isaak Rombough | Emily Sattizahn Drew Schuchard | Carter Schulz | Hayden Shaffer | Ellie Simpson | Ellie Smith Noah Smith | Carmela Stangeland | Nevaeh Starr | Emerie Stephens Devin Strutt | Olivia Swenson | Spencer Taylor | Ariana Vazquez Madigan Vogeler | Maegan Walsh | Nathan Williams Draix Wyatt | Sydney Youngberg

Read more about the Evening of Excellence on page 3.



Emerie Stephens accepts her scholarship from Evening of Excellence Emcee and PEF Board member Grace Beck. Evening of Excellence Photos by Sigrid Wald-Swanson Photography.



#### **Pierre Educational Foundation**

PO Box 94 Pierre, SD 57501 (605) 224-9016 jennifer@pefgovs.org www.pefgovs.org

### **Board Members**

Bob Lowery- President City of Pierre Designee Ann Schwartz - Vice President At Large Trustee Nick Marso - Treasurer At Large Trustee Betty Hanson - Secretary Pierre School District Board Representative Grace Beck - Director Capital City Campus Designee Dan Cronin - Director Pierre School District Board Representative **Dennis James - Director** Pierre School District Board Representative Katie Johnson - Director Pierre Chamber of Commerce Designee Lindsey Riter-Rapp - Director At Large Trustee Gina Schuetzle - Director At Large Trustee .....

The Foundation was established in 1995 with a gift from the Cora London Estate. Cora London was a successful clothier business owner and operator for many years in Pierre. Her generosity will encourage additional grants, gifts and endowments for educational purposes.

The Pierre Educational Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, community based organization committed to academic excellence in the Pierre Public School District.

The activities of the foundation are directed by a Board of Trustees representing business, education and the community.

The funds of the Pierre Educational foundation are currently being managed and held by the community-based Oahe Foundation.

# **From the President**

Bob Lowery



As we look forward to the school 2022-23 year, I would like to highlight а few items from this past school year. The Pierre Educational Foundation was fortunate enough

to receive a huge gift from the estate of Alvin and Evelyn Benesh in the amount of \$1.6 million dollars. The money is to be used as scholarships for a graduate of Pierre High School who will be pursuing a career in music. The PEF Board is currently working on the specific criteria for the scholarship that will be awarded starting in 2023.

Mini grants were also awarded to teachers who needed extra funds to explore new and innovative ideas in their classrooms. The number of applicants for these grants has decreased in recent years and the Board is currently evaluating the criteria used to award the grants in hopes of increasing the number of applicants we receive.

We also provided \$100 in Pierre Pride dollars to each new teacher in the district to help them with initial expenses as they begin their careers in the Pierre School District. This money can be used as each one sees fit, buying supplies for their classroom, groceries or other expenses they may have. We welcome all the new staff to Pierre.

The highlight each year is our Evening of Excellence where we recognize outstanding teachers and students of the Pierre School District. This year there were 18 scholarships awarded to 16 very deserving students totaling Serving on the selection \$50,100. committees is a very difficult task as each applicant is very deserving of the scholarships awarded. There were 45 Scholars of Excellence recognized as well as 25 teachers nominated by the Scholars of Excellence for their commitment and dedication to education.

Of course none of this would be possible if it weren't for the dedicated and hard working administrators, teachers and staff of the Pierre School District. We have no idea how lucky we are in Pierre to have the outstanding school system we have. We have some of the most talented students in the state and I want to congratulate to them all. Good luck to our graduating seniors as they begin a new chapter in their lives, pursuing the careers of their dreams.

# **Evening of Excellence by the numbers**



### Pierre Educational Foundation would like to recognize the sponsors of the event—their support is appreciated!

BankWest, Slumberland Furniture, Cathy Sonnenschein Properties, Clausen and Rice Incorporated, Dairy Queen, Reinke Gray Wealth Management, Delta Dental of South Dakota, Brittney Schiefelbein Agency – American Family Insurance, Brakke Financial Services, May Adam, Riter Rogers, LLP, Sanford Health, Floss Dentistry and Sigrid Wald Swanson Photography.



Lindsay Riter-Rapp, PEF Board Member, presents the Warder scholarship to Claire Koenecke.

# **Celebrating an Evening of Excellence**

The Pierre Educational Foundation hosted the 6th annual Evening of Excellence on May 5th to recognize the top scholars of the 2022 graduating class. Each of the Scholars of Excellence achieved a 3.75 grade point average or better throughout their academic career. Forty-five Scholars of Excellence and twenty-five Educators of Excellence were recognized at this year's event. The evening also included a pre-dinner art display by the students competing in the state art competition under the direction of Jill Kokesh. Brittanie Rezak was recognized as the 2022 BankWest Educator of Excellence. Ms. Rezak was nominated by this year's Scholars of Excellence for her impact on her students. The evening concluded with the Scholarship Awards. Over \$50,000 was awarded to 16 students.





Art display by the students competing in the state art competition.



Educators were asked to stand and be recognized during the event.



Brittanie Rezak, T.F. Riggs High School science teacher was selected as the BankWest Educator of Excellence and received a \$1,500 award from BankWest. Steve Bauman, Chief Investments Officer of BankWest prsented Mrs. Rezak with her award.



Samantha Sevier, scholarship recipient with PEF Board Member Gina Schuetzle.



PEF Treasurer Nick Marso with scholarship recipient Vick Becker.

## 2022 Educator of Excellence Nominees

### T. F. Riggs Nominees

Jenny Hodges, Pam Kringel, Mackenzie McKeithan-Jensen, Samantha Palu, Brittanie Rezac, Christina Schaefer, Dan Snyder, Adam Spoehr, Steve Steele, Elizabeth Vogt, Daniel Youmans

### **Elementary & Georgia Morse Nominees**

Jennifer Allen, Hope Armstrong, Rob Coverdale, Megan Deal, Taylor Hamblin, Guy Hunter, Becky Kitts, Chad Kringel, Joseph Lehman, Kim Livermont, Amber Stout, Michelle Strand, Becky Walsh, Paula Weeldreyer

# **2022 Foundation Scholarships Winners**

The Pierre Educational Foundation awarded 18 scholarships this year. These scholarships are awarded on behalf of families who have given endowments to the Foundation so Pierre students can continue their education at the next level with financial support. Each of these donors has selected specific areas of post-secondary education to support with their donations.



## The Pierre Hospital Auxiliary Shaw Family Scholarship Scholarship

The 2022 Pierre Hospital Auxiliary Scholarship was awarded to Jenna Bush. Jenna's high school activities included volleyball, basketball, track and trap shooting, Student Council and senior class vice president. Jenna plans to attend South Dakota State University and major in human biology.

The 2022 Shaw Family Scholarship was awarded to Jenna Bush. Jenna's high school and community activities included the Gov 2 Gov Program, Feeding South Dakota, Missouri Shores Domestic Violence Center and cabin leader for Victory Center Bible Camp. Jenna plans to attend South Dakota State University and major in human biology.

Pierre Hospital Auxiliary & Shaw Family Scholarship Recipient

## Charles "Lindy" and Shirley Feeney Scholarship

The 2022 Charles "Lindy" and Shirley Feeney Scholarship was awarded to Vick Becker. Vick's high school activities included track and field (high jump, long jump and sprint relays), Little Governor Track Meet, National Honor Society and national Art Honor Society. Vick plans to attend Liberty University and major in studio and digital arts.

## Shaw Family Scholarship

The 2022 Shaw Family Scholarship was awarded to Vick Becker. Vick's high school and community activities included Student Council, Art Club, mission trips to Mexico and assisting with Vacation Bible School, AWANA and church youth group. Vick plans to attend Liberty University and major in studio and digital arts.

**Vick Becker** Charles "Lindy" and Shirley Feeney & Shaw Family Scholarship Recipient

## Shaw Family Scholarship



**Spencer Letellier** Shaw Family Scholarship Recipient

The 2022 Shaw Family Scholarship was awarded to Spencer Letellier. Spencer's high school and community activities included National Honor Society, Feeding South Dakota, YMCA youth football referee and Capital City Baseball Association umpire. Spencer plans to attend South Dakota State University and major in exercise science.

# Edith & Richard Warder Scholarship



**Claire Koenecke** Warder Scholarship Recipient

The 2022 Edith and Richard Warder Scholarship was awarded to Claire Koenecke. Claire's high school activities included National Honor Society, Gov to Gov Program, and co-founder of the Knitting Club. Claire plans to attend either South Dakota State University or Augustana University and major in English and Political Science.

## Mortenson Family Scholarship The 2022 Mortenson Family



Samantha Sevier Mortenson Family Scholarship Recipient

high school activities included Gov 2 Gov Program and Lakota Nation Invitational Knowledge Bowl Team. Samantha plans to attend South Dakota School of Mines & Technology and major in biomedical engineering and mathematics.

Scholarship was awarded to

Samantha Sevier. Samantha's

# Schliessmann Family Scholarship



**Griffin Gates** Schliessmann Family Scholarship Recipient

The 2022 Schliessmann Family Scholarship was awarded to Griffin Gates. Griffin's high school activities included Boys State, National Honor Society, Future Business Leaders of America and STEM club. Griffin plans to attend Dakota State University to major in Cyperoperations.

# 2022 Scholarships Awarded Continued

(continued from page 4)

# Brabander Family Scholarship



**Emerie Stephens Brabander Family** Scholarship Recipient

The 2022 Brabander Family Scholarship The 2022 Swan Family Scholarship for was awarded to Emerie Stephens. Emerie's high school activities included National Honor Society, Gov to Gov mentoring and high school athletics. Emerie plans to attend the University of South Dakota and major in biology.



**Madelyn Jungwirth** Brabander Family Scholarship Recipient

The 2022 Brabander Family Scholarship was awarded to Madelyn Jungwirth. Madelyn was active in Future Business Leaders of America, National Honor Society and had several volunteer and leadership activities during high school. Madelyn plans to attend Lake Area Technical College to major in business and finance.

# Swan Family Scholarship



**Kylen Horsley** Swan Family Scholarship Vocational/Technical Recipient

Vocational/Technical was awarded to Kylen Horsley. Kylen's high school activities included Fellowship of Christian Athletes and motorsports. Kylen plans to pursue an education in automotive technology with the hopes to one day own his own auto shop.



**Teyah Lewis** Swan Family Scholarship College/University Recipient

The 2022 Swan Family Scholarship for College/University was awarded to Teyah Lewis. Teyah's high school activities included one act plays, softball and National Honor Society. Teyah plans to attend Black Hills State University and major in exercise science.

# Spilde Family Scholarship



**Theodora Crawford** Spilde Family Scholarship College/University Recipient

The 2022 Spilde Family Scholarship for College/University was awarded to Theodora Crawford. Theodora's high school activities included National Honor Society, National Art Honor Society and Spanish Club. Theodora plans to Augustana University to pursue a degree in psychology.



**Matthew King** Spilde Family Scholarship Vocational/Technical College Recipient

The 2022 Spilde Family Scholarship for Vocational/Technical College was awarded to Matthew King. Matthew plans to attend Lake Area Technical College to enroll in the Caterpillar ThinkBIG heavy diesel equipment program. Matthew plans to become a CAT certified heavy equipment diesel technician with hopes to one day own his own dealership.

# **2022 Scholarships Awarded Continued**

(continued from page 5)

## James and Gertrude Mueller Scholarship



**Emily Lingle** James and Gertrude Mueller Scholarship Recipient

The 2022 James and Gertrude Mueller Scholarship was awarded to Emily Lingle. Emily's high school activities included Class Secretary, Future Business Leaders of America, and varsity girls basketball team captain. Emily plans to attend South Dakota State University and major in human biology.

## Marjorie and Fritz Forney Scholarship



Alexis Moran Marjorie and Fritz Forney Scholarship Recipient

The 2022 Marjorie and Fritz Forney Scholarship was awarded to Alexis Moran. Alexis's high school activities included National Honor Society and music. She plans to attend the University of South Dakota and major in finance.

## Herbert and Irene Emde Family Scholarship



**Addison Cumbow** Herbert and Irene Emde Family Scholarship Recipient

The 2022 Herbert and Irene Emde Family Scholarship was awarded to Addison Cumbow. Addison's high school activities included track, volleyball, basketball, National Honor Society and the Gov 2 Gov Program. Addison plans to attend Northern State University and major in special and elementary education.

## Dennis and Shirley Eisnach Scholarship



Adisyn Kuxhaus Dennis and Shirley Eisnach Scholarship Recipient

The 2022 Dennis and Shirley Eisnach Scholarship was awarded to Adisyn Kuxhaus. Adisyn's high school and community activities included 4-H, SD Quarter Horse Youth Association and the America Quarter Horse Association. Adisyn plans to attend South Dakota State University and major in animal science.

# Gifts Anyone Can Afford!

Have you ever wished you could help PEF in our work, but thought you couldn't afford to make a charitable gift? Here are two ways you can give today while still preserving your assets for retirement and providing for your family:

### Gifts from a Will or Trust

Designating PEF as a beneficiary in your will or trust is a simple way to commit to our mission, and it will not affect your cash flow during your lifetime. In addition, it's easy to revoke this type of gift if your situation or goals change.

### **Beneficiary Designations**

Naming PEF as the beneficiary of a retirement plan, financial account, or annuity is another easy way to help our mission. You can continue to benefit from these assets during your lifetime. A beneficiary designation may also be changed at any time.

## Cleaning out your closets?

PEF is looking to build upon our collection of T.F. Riggs yearbooks. If you have any Gumbos from 1950-1975 and would like to donate to PEF,



please contact us at 605-224-9016.



Don't forget to like us on Facebook @ Pierre Educational Foundation!

# **New Scholarships for 2022**

The Pierre Educational Foundation was pleased to announce four new scholarships during this year's Evening of Excellence.

### **Brabander Family Memorial Scholarship**

The Brabander Family Memorial Scholarship was established by Cindy Brabander, a 1979 alumna of T.F. Riggs. Cindy is committed to helping young women succeed through education and the \$2,5000 scholarship is awarded to a female TF Riggs High School senior. The scholarship is renewable for three additional years for a total scholarship award of \$10,000.

**Dennis and Shirley Eisnach Scholarship** The Dennis and Shirley Eisnach Scholarship Fund was established in 2022 to recognize high school seniors who have demonstrated a high level of commitment to voluntary service in their community. Both Dennis and Shirley were dedicated to serving their communities at the state and local level throughout their lives. Dennis served in a decades long career with the SD Highway Patrol followed by several years as an elected official with the SD Public Utilities Commission, and then Mayor of Pierre. Shirley taught in the Pierre Public Schools as a sixth-grade teacher at Washington, McKinley, and Lincoln Elementary Schools and as an eighth grade English teacher at Pierre Junior High School until her retirement in 1995. During their working and retired lives, Shirley and Dennis volunteered generously with their leadership, energy, and time in many organizations at the local, state, and national levels. Both were ardent supporters of the Pierre community and especially of its students whom they encouraged, cheered on, and followed closely even after their graduation from high school.

#### Marjorie & Fritz Forney Scholarship

The Marjorie and Fritz Forney Scholarship was established by Richard and Dianne Warder to support a student pursing a degree in engineering or finance at either the University of South Dakota or the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology.

### Swan Family Scholarship

The Swan Family Scholarship was established by Aaron Swan to support a Native American student pursing education beyond high school. The scholarship provides financial assistance to help students be successful in the next step of their educational path. The Swan Family Scholarship is awarded to a student attending a College/University and to a student attending Vocational/ Technical school.

## **REUNIONS**

Attention Classes of 2003, 1993, 1983, 1973, 1963...planning a reunion next year? Contact PEF for a class list!

### Class of 1960

60th Reunion (rescheduled from 2020) September 14, 2022 Drifters in Fort Pierre 5:30pm Contact: Dianne (Newlon) Roisum dianneroi@sio.midco.net

#### Class of 1962 60th Reunion

September 23, 2022 American Legion Cabin 2 pm to Close Contact: Linda (Schooler) Bettison linbet@charter.net

Do you need help with ideas or who to connect with for your reunion? Don't see your class reunion listed? Want to include your class reunion in the next newsletter? Contact the Foundation office at 605-224-9016 or jennifer@pefgovs.org for information about listing your reunion dates, possible reunion locations, class lists and other information to help begin your reunion planning.



Pictured above: The Class of 1997 recently celebrated their 25th class reunion with an evening at Richie Z's.

# **Foundation Awards Mini-Grants for Innovative Projects**



The Foundation recently awarded a \$1,400 mini-grant to Ms. Kim Bierle for a Native American Medicinal Garden at TF Riggs High School. The garden overlooks the entrance into the high school (photo). The Native American Studies class was researching traditional medicinal plants and the project grew into developing and planting their own traditional medicinal garden. "We used the garden as a teaching tool this past spring, including an explanation of each of the plants and what they are used for" stated Ms. Bierle. Work continues in the garden area, with the addition of a Can'sa'sa (red willow) area.

## **GMMS Students Receive STEAM Tools**



The Foundation recently awarded a \$1,000 mini-grant to Mr. Joseph Lehman for STEAM Tools. Through this mini-grant, Mr. Lehman was able to purchase eight new Black & Decker cordless drills and six new Black & Decker cordless impacts to use on various projects in the STEAM classroom at Georgia Morse Middle School. Some of the projects that the kids used the new cordless tools on include: Coaster Holders, String Art, Barnwood Clock and CO2 Dragsters.

"I truly appreciate the generous grant donation as I really want to get as many boys and girls involved in "real world" skills as possible. I talk with my STEAM students on a weekly basis about being able to perform the skills needed around the house/garage/shop so as they can then put that money in their pockets rather than having to hire someone to complete the job" stated Lehman.

*Pictured:* 7th graders utilizing the cordless drills on their coaster holders projects.

Mini-Grant Applications are due April 1 and October 1! Visit the Pierre Educational Foundation's website at www.pefgovs.org for more information and an application. If you would like to donate to the mini-grant program, please compete the donation form on page 9.

# **Pierre School District Retirements**

The Pierre School District recently celebrated the retirement of eight district staff members with a combined 249 years of service to the district!

The retiring staff members include:

Hope Armstrong, Georgia Middle School, 6th Grade Science Kathy Askew, Guidance Counselor Jerry Elrod, District Buildings & Grounds Pam Gaetze, TF Riggs Special Education Math & English Sue LaRoche, Jefferson Tutor Kevin Mutchelknaus, TF Riggs Principal Kim Roberts, Jefferson Elementary Speech Pathologist Michael Time, Buchanan Used Gustadian	
Michael Timm, Buchanan Head Custodian	

Thank you for your service to the Pierre School District!

# Foundation Unveils New Logo

Say goodbye to the chalkboard and apple, there's a new logo in town. The Pierre Educational Foundation unveiled their new logo during the 2022 Evening of Excellence. The logo was designed by Shuree Mortenson, Pierre and incorporates books and the letter P. Make sure to check out PEF's new website as this has been updated too. www.pefgovs.org.



# Thank You

The following is a list of donors to the Pierre Educational Foundation from July 1, 2021 - July 1, 2022. Every effort was made to ensure accuracy of the donor list. If your name was omitted or misspelled, please accept our apologies and contact the Foundation with corrections at 605-224-9016 or via e-mail at jennifer@pefgovs.org.

Brakke Family Fund Verne Brakke, Matthew Brakke

**Emde Scholarship** Arlen Diamond, William Hoppes, Pamela Nowell

#### Mortenson Family Scholarship Fund Curtis Mortenson

**Pierre Educational Foundation General Fund** 

American Family Insurance Central Dakota Eyecare Dental Dental Of South Dakota Jo Gilbert Ruth Grinager Paula Huizenga Randall Ice Wade Pogany Karen Lindbloom in memory of Elliot Harmon Chuck Schroyer in memory of Gilda Stein Ann Schwartz in honor of TF Riggs graduating class of 2022 and Team Denali of GMMS Cathy Sonnenschein in memory of David Lindekugel, Gretchen Dirks and Tiny Warren Sporer Jill Wellhouse in memory of Dennis Stepanek, Blain Foss and Bill Benesh John Wellhouse in memory of Larry Nelson and Ron Leidholt

#### **Pierre Educational Foundation General Fund Continued**

Penn Williams in memory of Penn Wiilliams III and Kathy Williams (Pew) Jennifer Wynne in memory of Gilda Stein

#### **Evening of Excellence**

Brakke Financial Services, LLC Brittney Schiefelbein Agency - American Family Insurance Cathy Sonnenschein Properties Clausen and Rice Inc Dairy Queen Delta Dental of South Dakota Floss. Dentistry in Pierre May, Adam, Gerdes, & amp; Thompson LLP Reinke Gray Wealth Management Sanford Health Slumberland Furniture Sigrid Wald Swanson Photography

> Schliessmann Scholarship Donald R. Schliessmann

Shaw Family Scholarship Fund Howard Grinager

Swan Family Scholarship Aaron Swan

# Pierre Educational Foundation Contact/Donation Form

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l Maiden Name (if applicable)	Riggs Grad Year	
Address		
	State Zip	
Email	Phone ( )	
Spouse's Name	Riggs Grad Year	
News or Comments:		
l		
Enclosed is my gift of \$		
This gift is in: 🗌 memory of 🗌 honor of		
Designated toward: 🗌 General Donation 🗌 New Teacher Welcome Program		
Scholarship/Enrichment Fund (please specify):		
Evening of Excellence Event		
Please make checks payable to Pierre Educational Foundation. Thank you! Mail to: Pierre Educational Foundation, PO Box 94, Pierre, SD 57501		



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