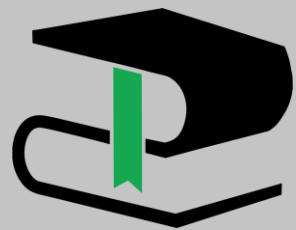


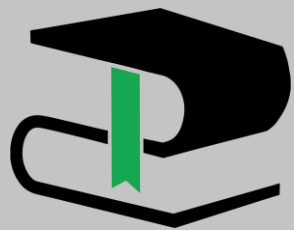
2026 Evening of Excellence



PIERRE
EDUCATIONAL
FOUNDATION



Scholars of Excellence



PIERRE
EDUCATIONAL
FOUNDATION



Paige Sporrer

Post Graduation Plans: Attend University of Nebraska- Lincoln for Communication and Science Disorders with plans to become a Speech Language Pathologist.

Extracurricular Activities: Basketball, Volleyball, Knitting Club, Future Business Leaders of America, Dance



Breanna Tedrow

Post Graduation Plans: I plan to attend Augustana University to major in Nursing and earn my BSN. Then, I will enroll in a 2-year graduate program to earn my MSN in hopes to become a Neonatal Nurse Practitioner.

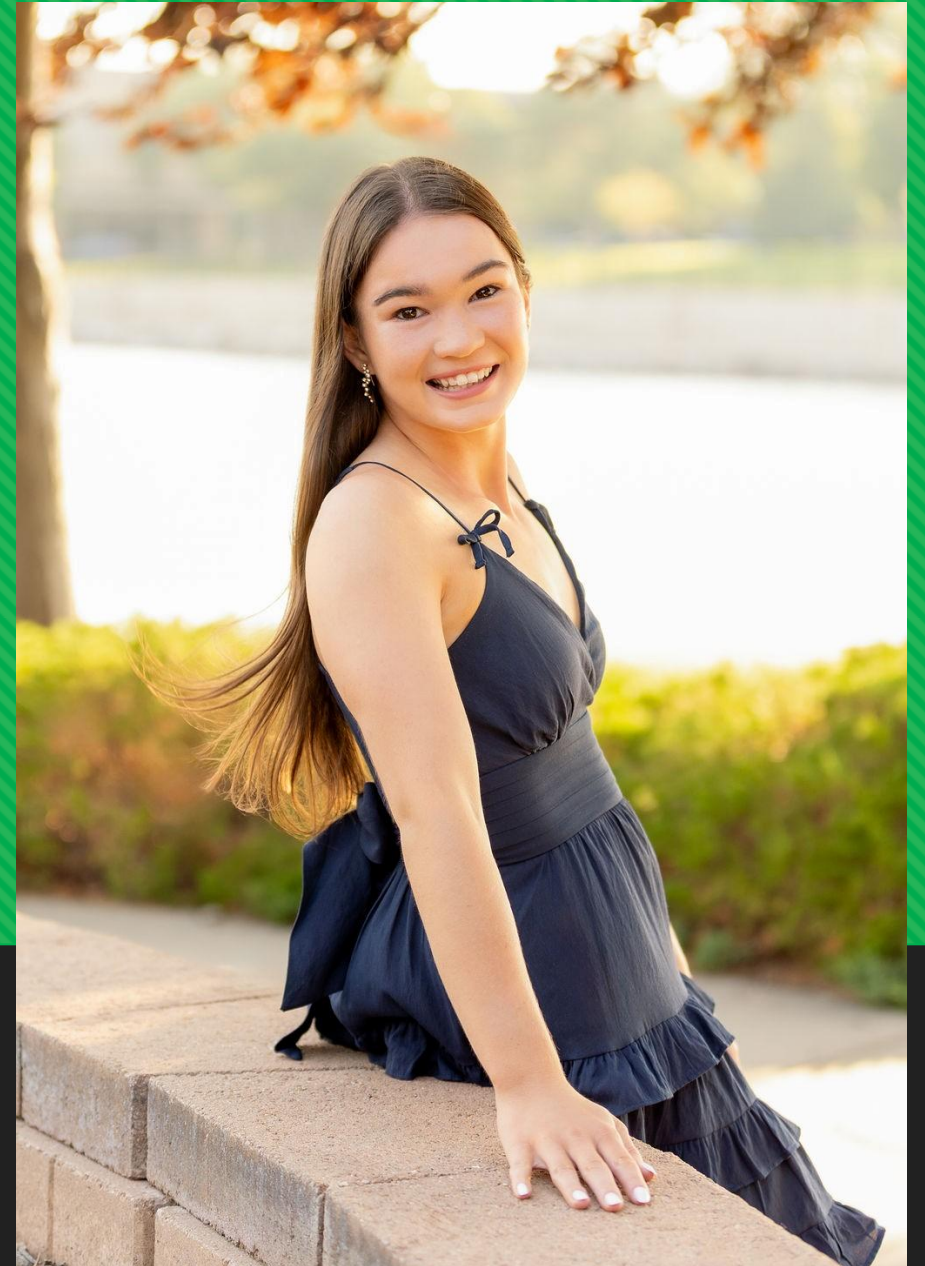
Extracurricular Activities: Tennis, National Honor Society Vice President, Softball, Volunteering in Mrs. Baker's Kindergarten classroom, Future Business Leaders of America



Gwen Richter

Post Graduation Plans: Attend Northern State University majoring in Elementary Education.

Extracurricular Activities: Cross Country, Track, Advanced Gov-to-Gov Mentor, National Honor Society, Student Teacher at Buchanan Elementary School





Emery Larson

Post Graduation Plans: I am committed to South Dakota State University to major in Sports Nutrition and Dietetics while running Cross Country and Track and Field.

Extracurricular Activities: Cross Country, Track and Field, Basketball, National Honor Society Treasurer, Fellowship of Christian Athletes

Tucker Otte

Post Graduation Plans: I will be attending SDSU for Civil Engineering

Extracurricular Activities: Football, NHS, New Life Church, Feeding South Dakota, Lucky 7 Inc.





Charlotte Hull

Post Graduation Plans: I will attend the University of Mary to swim and major in Exercise Science on a Pre-Physical Therapy track.

Extracurricular Activities: Pierre Swim Team, Softball, National Honor Society, Gov to Gov Leadership and Mentoring program, Fellowship of Christian Athletes

Wyatt Theilen

Post Graduation Plans: I plan to attend South Dakota State University majoring in Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences. After graduation I hope to find a job with the Game Fish and Parks.

Extracurricular Activities: Trap Shooting, Chess Club, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Church School Teacher, Gov to Gov





Sloane Waldron

Post Graduation Plans: I will be attending South Dakota State University and major is currently undecided.

Extracurricular Activities: National Honor Society, Future Business Leaders of America, Newspaper Club, Church Youth Volunteer, Volleyball

Lailah Nickolas

Post Graduation Plans: I will be majoring in Business Economics at SDSU.

Extracurricular Activities: FBLA, NHS, Governor Newspaper, PCA at Edgewood, Lifeguarding at the Pierre City Pool





Presley Spies

Post Graduation Plans: I will be attending South Dakota State University and major in Agronomy with the plan of becoming an Agronomist.

Extracurricular Activities: National Honor Society, Governor Fastpitch Softball, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Gov to Gov Leadership and Mentoring Program, Employment at Oahe Veterinary Clinic

Jayden McPherson

Post Graduation Plans: I will be attending University of Lincoln Nebraska majoring in Exercise Science and Physical Therapy.

Extracurricular Activities: Studio Dance at The Academy, Dance Instructor at The Academy, High School Dance Team Captain, National Honor Society, LYF (Church Youth Group)





Kasyah Studenberg

Post Graduation Plans: I plan to attend Minnesota State University, Mankato, and plan on majoring in Communications and Media.

Extracurricular Activities: Advanced Gov to Gov Mentor, Advanced Yearbook Editor, Member of Pierre First United Methodist Church, Cashier at Menards, Server at The Longbranch

Riley Berg

Post Graduation Plans: I plan to attend Augustana University to major in Nursing with the hopes to become a pediatric nurse practitioner.

Extracurricular Activities: Swim Team, Softball, Student Council, National Honor Society, Fellowship of Christian Athletes





Carson Glodt

Post Graduation Plans: I plan to major in Mechanical Engineering.

Extracurricular Activities: National Honor Society, Skills USA, Boy Scouts, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, and Senate Page

Claire Brakke

Post Graduation Plans: I plan to attend SDSU for Business and have a future career in the business field.

Extracurricular Activities: Student Council Representative, FBLA Member, National Honor Society Member, Dakotamart Pharmacy employee, Zesto employee





Zoe Kinney

Post Graduation Plans: I will be attending Hamilton College in Clinton, New York.

Hadley Hart

Post Graduation Plans: I plan to attend a four-year university to study Applied Business Analytics on the pre-law track.

Extracurricular Activities: Golf, Volleyball, Student Council, Pierre-Ft. Pierre Interact, Sarah's Dance Studio





Carter Merrill

Post Graduation Plans: I will be attending South Dakota State University and major in Civil Engineering.

Extracurricular Activities: National Honor Society, Football, Track, Basketball

Clare Madsen

Post Graduation Plans: I will attend South Dakota School of Mines for Mechanical Engineering.

Extracurricular Activities: Pierre Swim Team, Volunteer Swim Coach, Swim Lesson Teacher, Sunday School Teacher, National Honor Society Member





Rebecca Spitzer

Post Graduation Plans: I plan to attend South Dakota State University to pursue a major in Nursing.

Extracurricular Activities: Gymnastics, Faith Lutheran Youth Group, Crochet/Knitting Club, Volunteering at Feeding South Dakota, Babysitting

Caleb Morris

Post Graduation Plans: I plan to attend South Dakota State University for Civil Engineering.

Extracurricular Activities: Cross Country, Track, National Honor Society, Morris Inc., Fellowship of Christian Athletes





Kathryn Hostler

Post Graduation Plans: My post-graduation plans are to attend Northern State University to major in Nursing. For my career, I would like to become a Neonatal Nurse.

Extracurricular Activities: National Honor Society, Gov to Gov, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, High School Soccer, High School Wrestling Manager

Kathryn Oliva

Post Graduation Plans: I will attend Dakota State University and will major in Computer Game Design.

Extracurricular Activities: National Art Honor Society, Gov 2 Gov, Basketball Sideline Cheer, Employment at Avera, Volunteer for Faith Formation at Ss. Peter & Paul Catholic Church





Ella Oxford

Post Graduation Plans: I will be attending University of North Carolina Wilmington to pursue a major in marine biology.

Extracurricular Activities: Figure Skating, Marching Band, Track and Field, Tri-M, Trapshooting

Harper Reichling

Post Graduation Plans: I plan to attend the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to study Political Science and Philosophy on the pre-law track.

Extracurricular Activities: Oral Interpretation, Theater, Newspaper, Future Business Leaders of America, Gov to Gov Volunteer/Mentoring Program





Alex Oedekoven

Post Graduation Plans: I will be attending Northern State University to wrestle and study Business and Economics.

Extracurricular Activities: Wrestling, Soccer, NHS, FCA, Harvest Youth

Bridger Babcock

Post Graduation Plans: I will be attending South Dakota State University to major in Civil Engineering.

Extracurricular Activities: Oahe Capitals Hockey; Student Council; Pierre & Post 8 Baseball; Saint Joseph's Elementary Volunteer/Assistant; Saint Peter and Paul's Church



CJ Moses

Post Graduation Plans: I plan to attend South Dakota School of Mines and Technology to earn a bachelor's degree in Engineering and pursue a career in the field.

Extracurricular Activities: Cross Country, Track & Field, National Honor Society, Chess Club, Volunteer with Feeding South Dakota



Haley McGray

Post Graduation Plans: I will be attending South Dakota School of Mines and will major in Computer Science.

Extracurricular Activities: Track and Field, Drumline, Marching Band, National Honor Society, Tri-M Music Honor Society



Reese Liudahl

Post Graduation Plans: I plan to attend the University of South Dakota where I will major in Biology on the pre-med track. After completing my undergraduate degree, I intend to pursue medical school and work toward a career as a physician.

Extracurricular Activities: National Honor Society, Gov 2 Gov, Student Council, FBLA, Weightlifting



Charlee Williams-Smith

Post Graduation Plans: I will be majoring in Graphic Design at Montana State University and competing for the track team.

Extracurricular Activities: Track, Cross Country, Gov to Gov, FBLA, National Honor Society





Reed Curry

Post Graduation Plans: Attend South Dakota State University, Biology, Forensic Lab

Extracurricular Activities: NHS, Club Soccer, Food and Nutrition job at Avera, Winter Workouts, Track

Atticus Moore

Post Graduation Plans: I will be attending Lake Area Technical College for Law Enforcement.





Grace Fischer

Post Graduation Plans: I plan to attend South Dakota State University to major in Human Biology, on a pre-med track, and minor in music. I also plan to be a part of the Pride of the Dakotas and work as an EMT.

Extracurricular Activities: Emerald Regiment Marching Band, Tri-M Music Honor Society, Awana, Theater, Chamber Choir

Madilynn Fischer

Post Graduation Plans: I plan on going to SDSU for Music Education, hoping to go on and get my PhD so that I can teach post-secondary education.

Extracurricular Activities: Chamber Choir, Marching Band, AWANA, Jazz 1, Theater





Chloe Fuerst

Post Graduation Plans: I plan on attending South Dakota State University to major in nursing, in hopes of fulfilling my dream of specializing in Neonatal Intensive Care at John Hopkins Children's Hospital or Mayo Clinic.

Extracurricular Activities: Softball, National Honor Society, Advanced Gov to Gov, Lead Youth Development Specialist at the Boys and Girls Club

Aiden Bass

Post Graduation Plans: I will attend SDSU for Mechanical Engineering.

Extracurricular Activities: Soccer, Mexico Mission Trip, NHS, FCA, Pierre Closets





Sorrinne Ekle

Post Graduation Plans: I will be attending Augustana University to major in Nursing and Spanish with hopes to become a CRNA. During that time, I will be swimming on the team and participating in a band activity.

Extracurricular Activities: Pierre Swim Team, Track and Field, Band, Tri-M Music Honor Society, National Honor Society

Emily Kringel

Post Graduation Plans: I will attend Hobart William Smith College to study Social Work.

Extracurricular Activities: Bowling, Book Club, Mindset Gear Ambassador, Board of the Next Big Thing Bowling Tournament, Nannying a 1 year-old





Lola Kienholz

Post Graduation Plans: I plan to attend a 4-year university to pursue dental hygiene

Extracurricular Activities: Gov to Gov Peer Mentoring Program, National Honor Society, FBLA, Volleyball, Dancer at Sarah's Dance Studio

Ava Johnson

Post Graduation Plans: I will attend Black Hills State University for Business Marketing.

Extracurricular Activities: Unified Partner for Special Olympics, Captain of Pierre Competitive Dance Team, Feeding SD, Vice President of FBLA, PARS





Katherine Cremer

Post Graduation Plans: I will attend Capitol Beauty School in Omaha, NE for the Esthetics Program.

Extracurricular Activities: Competitive Dance Team, Sarah's Dance Studio, FBLA, T.F. Riggs Theatre Program, T.F. Riggs Choir Program

Isabella Tafoya

Post Graduation Plans: After high school graduation, I will attend Lake Area Technical College for Dental Assisting and Dental Hygiene. After college I plan to work at Missouri River Dentistry as a dental assistant to complete my apprenticeship.

Extracurricular Activities: Gov to Gov, National Honor Society, working at a local dentist office, Working at the Saint Joseph After School Program, Participating in softball





Hudson Shaffer

Post Graduation Plans: I will attend South Dakota State University for Economics & Political Science and plan to attend Law School in hopes to Practice Law and be a Public Servant.

Extracurricular Activities: Student Body President, Football, Baseball, Governor Larry Rhoden's Office Intern, member of St. Peter and Paul Catholic Church

Jacoby Taylor

Post Graduation Plans: I plan on attending Lake Area Tech for Building Trades.

Extracurricular Activities: PAWS Animal Rescue Volunteer, Employee at Walmart, National Honor Society Member, Track and Field Team Member, Pierre Area Junior Dart League





Sam Skjonsberg

Post Graduation Plans: I plan to attend South Dakota State University and major in Biology and Secondary Education Teaching.

Extracurricular Activities: National Honor Society, Gov 2 Gov, T.F. Riggs Native American Education Program, part-time job at Walmart

Drew Rechtenbaugh

Post Graduation Plans: I plan to attend South Dakota State University and major in Human Biology for the pre-med track. I eventually want to become an OB doctor or some type of surgeon.

Extracurricular Activities: Opening Minds Through Art, Student Council, National Honor Society, Future Business Leaders of America, Golf





Chloe Bowers

Post Graduation Plans: I'm currently undecided on which college I will attend, but I plan to major in international relations and hope to work for the U.S. State Department or the U.S. Institute of Peace in a career focused on diplomacy and global cooperation.

Extracurricular Activities: Oral Interpretation Team, T.F. Riggs and Community Theater, Choir, Future Business Leaders of America, The Governors Newspaper

Lincoln Dilges

Post Graduation Plans: I will attend SDSU to obtain a Masters in Business Administration, as well as a private pilot license.

Extracurricular Activities: Football, Basketball, Track, Lutheran Memorial Church, National Honor Society





Chesley Clair

Post Graduation Plans: I plan to attend Lake Area College to pursue a Practical Nursing degree followed by a Registered Nursing degree.

Extracurricular Activities: High School Rodeo, 4H Rodeo, Vice President of the Pierre/Fort Pierre High School Rodeo Club, National Honor Society, Gov to Gov

Max Stangeland

Post Graduation Plans: I plan to attend SDSU for Civil Engineering or Accounting.

Extracurricular Activities: Boy Scouts of America, Eagle project for PAWS Animal Rescue





Tsagaanbars Duinkherjav

Post Graduation Plans: I plan to do something with music. I have not yet decided on a school.

Extracurricular Activities: Marching Band, Jazz Band, Chamber Choir, Playing/singing music in church, Playing/singing for nursing homes



Cienna Tipton

Post Graduation Plans: I plan to go to Lake Area Technical College. I plan to go into the cosmetology and business programs.

Extracurricular Activities: Gov 2 Gov, Yearbook, Hockey, Deb's Feed Store, Track

Conner Lehr

Post Graduation Plans: I plan to pursue a degree in micro-biology, with a focus on pre-medicine. I then plan to attend Medical School for Oncology.

Extracurricular Activities: Oral Interpretation, Theater, Chamber Choir, Band, Tri-M





2025
Daniel Youmans



2024
Guy Hunter



2023
Megan Deal



2022
Brittanie Rezac

Previous Educators of Excellence



2021
Teresa Johnson



2020
Vashti Gibson



2019
Kelly Brandt



2018
John Kalda



2017
Jay Schwartz



**Teresa
Madsen**

**T. F. Riggs
High School**

Teresa Madsen

"Not only was she my 2nd grade math and science teacher, but she is also my mom. She has taught me many valuable lessons: to be kind to everyone, to persevere when things are hard, to help out and give to others who are less fortunate, and to do everything with your whole heart."

"Teresa Madsen was my 2nd grade math and science teacher. I remember always having so much fun in her class, especially when we hatched baby ducks and butterflies. She was also my best friend's mom, so I was around her a lot and she is such a kind and loving person. She was always there for me, and she was like a second mom. I was fortunate to have her in my life."

"Mrs. Madsen is such a kind person. I would consider her to be one of my best mentors and role models. From the day I met her I have looked up to her and wanted to be just like her. She is so kind, thoughtful, and caring. She loves all of her students, and she made sure we knew that every single day. When someone asks me who my favorite teacher was my mind goes immediately to her. I remember she would always talk to us and ask us if we needed her to pray for anyone in our family. She would add them to our prayer board, no questions asked and she would pray for them. When I had Mrs. Madsen in second grade, she felt like a second mom to me. My mom had to travel a lot, and I was always really scared. Mrs. Madsen would talk to me and help me through it. She always made sure I was ok. I have never met a more kind and deserving person for this award than her. She is amazing!"

"Mrs. Madsen taught me to be a good person, a good kid of Christ and a bucket filler. She was kind and encouraging to all her students. Mrs. Madsen always had a smile on her face and positive attitude. Even though we are not her current students, she continues to support us and cheer us on in all we do."

**Steve
Rounds**

**St. Joseph
Elementary**



Steve Rounds

“Mr. Rounds taught me learning could be fun, especially when it's something you are interested in or care about. It didn't have to be systematic and the same for every class and every subject.”

“He demonstrated a fun environment in school while also maintaining the importance of learning. Made everyday special and different. Still remember some of the good memories we made in his class.”



**Hope
Armstrong**

**Georgia
Morse Middle
School**

Hope Armstrong

“Before being in Mrs. Armstrong’s class, I never really thought of science as something I enjoyed. It was just another subject. But the way she taught completely changed that for me. She made science easy to understand and, more importantly, fun to learn. Instead of just memorizing facts, I actually started to see how everything connected and why it mattered. Mrs. Armstrong created a classroom where it felt okay to ask questions and be curious. She explained things in a way that made them click, and that gave me confidence in a subject I hadn’t felt confident in before. Because of her, I started looking forward to science class instead of just getting through it. She didn’t just teach lessons—she sparked my interest in that subject. That impact has stayed with me, and it’s the reason I see science differently today.”

“Mrs. Armstrong was my 6th grade science teacher, and in that classroom, she created a loving and nurturing environment that I still remember today. Mrs. Armstrong not only taught science in a unique way, but she also made all of her students feel special.”



**Charis
Blanchette**

**T. F. Riggs
High School**

Charis Blanchette

“Although Mrs. Blanchette was only my teacher for one year, the impact she has had on my education and growth as a student is extensive. Mrs. Blanchette has been someone that I have been able to look up to, confide in, and learn from for several years. The reach that she has in the communities of Pierre and T.F. Riggs is something that everyone values and recognizes. Thank you for being a great teacher, friend, and role model.”

“Mrs. Blanchette helped me out a lot throughout high school. She coached me in basketball freshmen and sophomore year. She would offer words of advice or just sit and listen when I needed someone too. She would help me when I was struggling with preparing for the ACT. One time I was having a really hard day. Mrs. Blanchette gave me a hug for more than 5 seconds. She told me that hugging someone for more than 5 seconds resets their brain.”

“Mrs. Blanchette made a big impact on me as my English and Yearbook teacher. She always makes learning fun, engaging, and helps me enjoy going to class.”

“Mrs. Blanchette was my teacher for junior English and yearbook sophomore year. I learned so much during her class. Mrs. Blanchette is a teacher I feel like I can go talk anything to. If I’m having a bad day I would go talk to her. I miss her class everyday. Because of her, I will never add an s on the end of anyway!”

**Daniel
Youmans**

**T. F. Riggs
High School**



Daniel Youmans

"Mr. Youmans exposed me to a whole new learning style that has truly improved my academic life. He taught me to be original and curious in my work. Mr. Youmans introduced me to new perspectives ultimately teaching me to think with commonsense."

"I always hated English classes and never felt like I actually learned anything from them, but Mr. Youmans' way of teaching was different. He actually taught me how to write rather than just the rules of writing."

"He is straight to point and well rounded on all topics. He has given me a lot of good things to think about, and his class has taught me more than just English!"

"Mr. Youmans challenged me to think in new ways and held me accountable to being an excellent student. Mr. Youmans was a great teacher and a great influence on my character."

"A one-of-a-kind teacher that not only teaches you how to write an essay of any length but also covers interesting broad subjects and tangents that continues to entertain me to this day. He treats his students as mature adults, something that has earned my utmost respect."

"He is exceptionally intelligent and transformed the way I think. His class was always one I looked forward to. I learned far more than English; I learned how to analyze ideas, question perspectives, and better understand the world around me."

"Mr. Youmans has helped me grow my creative thinking, allowing me to think outside the box. This has pushed me to do things I never thought I could do."

"Mr. Youmans has always pushed me to my limits as a student. He always has criticism for me no matter how good or bad my work is. This has helped me immensely, while also rewiring my learning to be more about application and less about memorization."

"Mr. Youmans taught me how to learn. Not in the traditional sense of just attending classes and paying attention, but how to read on subjects I'm interested in, how to understand them, how to research them, and most importantly, how to write about them. Writing about a subject is the best way to learn about it. To write well, you need to incorporate all the former examples, and it is satisfying to see your work come together."



**Kim
Rogers**

**T. F. Riggs
High School**

Kim Rogers

“She was so kind. She was always there to help me when I wasn't sure what to do. Anytime I needed her I could always go to her office and talk to her about anything. She was such a good role model for me.”

“Kim Rodgers selected me to be a member of teens against tobacco use (TABU) and has continued to impact me as a leader. Throughout high school, I could go to her office anytime to get help with my online classes and more. She listened to me and understood my feelings and for that I'm grateful.”



**Chad
Kringel**

**Buchanan
Elementary**

Chad Kringel

“Mr. Kringel impacted my education by always challenging me and pushing me to be better. He was a very personable teacher and cared for each student by catering to their individual needs and teaching me that everyone learns differently and can succeed.”

**Christina
Schaefer**

**T. F. Riggs
High School**



Christina Schaefer

“Mrs. Schaefer had a great impact on both my education and my life. She is very welcoming and accepting of everyone and never fails to make you feel comfortable and welcomed. She motivated me to try new things, and she was always there to support me. Mrs. Schaefer helped me to acknowledge my strengths and strong characteristics which have impacted me since.”

“Mrs. Schaefer has been a teacher I could go to whenever I needed someone to talk to, whether it is about something at school or something in my personal life. She is extremely understanding and never judges anyone in her classroom but is always the first to help.”

“Mrs. Schaefer has had a tremendous impact on me throughout my time at T.F. Riggs. Having her as one of my teachers has been one of my favorite things throughout high school. Her classes have always been a place where I can relax and have fun with whatever we are doing. Mrs. Schaefer has always encouraged me to do my best in everything and to push the boundaries to better myself in all aspects. She is also willing to help me with whatever I am working on, whether that be homework for a totally different class, a job application, or a scholarship for college. Mrs. Schaefer is one of the most kind-hearted, respectful, smart, sensible, funny, and amazing teachers. She has given me guidance through life, sports, and school, which has impacted my life in an amazing way. Mrs. Schaefer is by far one of the best teachers I have had throughout my academic career and has had a vast impact on me and everyone else who has had the privilege of being her student.”



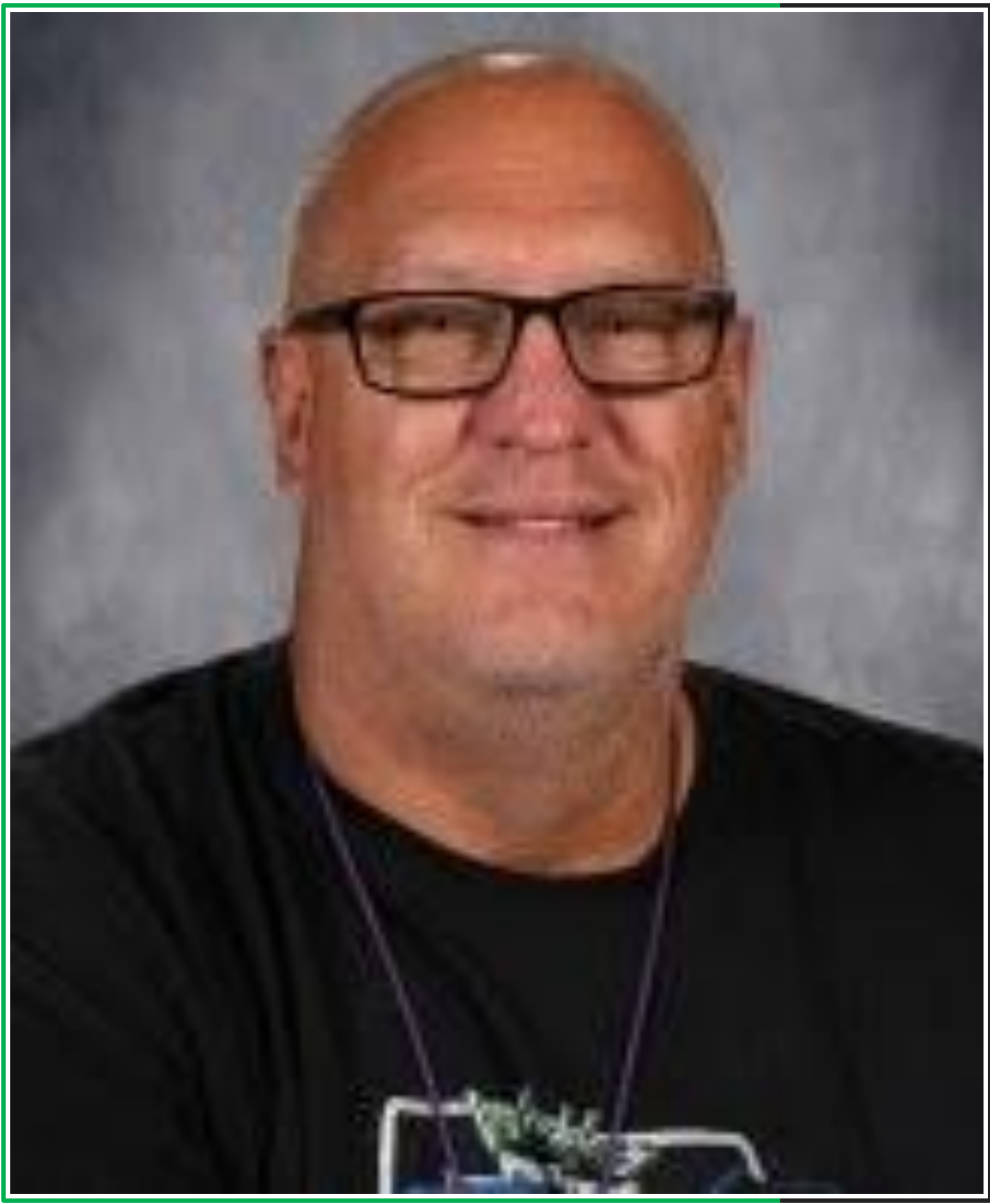
**Jay
Schwartz**

**T. F. Riggs
High School**

Jay Schwartz

“He has impacted me through his AP Calculus class greatly. I appreciate his willingness to help me whenever I need it. I also really like the environment in the classroom. He provides a fun room that makes it easier for everyone to want to participate. Also, the jokes are very funny.”

“I have had Mr. Schwartz as a math teacher for two years and in those two years I always felt welcomed and he was always kind and understanding. I know I can go to him for help when I don't understand the lesson and he will take the time to sit with me and help me through it.”



**Joseph
Lehman**

**Georgia Morse
Middle School**

Joseph Lehman

“When you take a class with Mr. Lehman, you don't just learn about the subject he teaches, you learn life lessons through his class. Mr. Lehman truly does care about every single student he has and wants to see everyone succeed.”

“I really appreciate his life lessons that he taught us in class. They have really stuck with me throughout the years.”

“Mr. Lehman helped me learn how to be a better person and a better man every single day in class. Through his personal stories and lessons in class, he taught me so many life lessons that I consistently use in my day-to-day life. Additionally, he taught me many life skills in his shop class that I will use in my life in the future. Overall, Mr. Lehman helped me become the person I am today.”

**Gay
Pickner**

**St. Joseph
Elementary**



Gay Pickner

“Mrs. Pickner was an influential math teacher who inspired my interest in the subject. She has continued to support and stay connected with me throughout high school, whether in academics or sports. Once you’re her student, you’re always her student!”

“Mrs. Pickner's positive attitude has helped me become the person I am today. Some of my favorite memories were made in her classroom. In addition to being a great math teacher, Mrs. Pickner taught me to always have a positive outlook on life.”

“Mrs. Pickner has always been one of my biggest supporters. Outside of math and science she helped me find my faith in the Gospel. Even after I moved on from her class she has stayed in touch with me supporting me through every step of my academic journey.”



**Brittanie
Rezac**

**T. F. Riggs
High School**

Brittanie Rezac

"Mrs. Rezac was a part of my life in many ways. She was my Accelerated Algebra II and Pre Calculus teacher as well as my mentor in Knitting Club. She taught me how to problem solve, believe in myself, and create long-lasting relationships."

"I loved having your class everyday, and you always made learning impactful. You create a positive environment where I was able to be challenged and grow. Thank you for all that you do."

"I always look forward to going to Mrs. Rezac's room for knitting club each Friday. When I had her as a teacher she always made me smile and helped me learn so much. She is an amazing person, and I am lucky to have had her as a teacher."

"Mrs. Rezac always had faith in me. She treated me with respect and made me feel like an adult. She prepared me for my future education and career by helping me become independent and trusting that I would complete my work on time."

"With struggling with math throughout my high school career, Mrs. Rezac did a great job at always providing a good way of teaching. If I was ever struggling with a certain question, I would always feel comfortable asking her and gaining a clear understanding on how to answer it."



**Rebecca
Walsh**

**St. Joseph
Elementary**

Rebecca Walsh

“Mrs. Walsh created a comfortable and accepting environment. She made sure every student was cared for and given attention throughout the day. Still reaches out to provide support and encouragement at the beginning of each new school year.”

“Mrs. Walsh taught me to have an optimistic attitude in all aspects of life. She has been a great example of what it means to respect and treat others with kindness.”

**Kelly
Brandt**

**T. F. Riggs
High School**



Kelly Brandt

"When I was a freshman, I never would have imagined that I'd be taking AP Physics. Mr. Brandt helped me develop a love for a subject I never thought I'd pursue."

"Mr. Brandt was my travel basketball and baseball coach for 7 years. He taught me many life lessons as my coach. As my teacher, he pushed me to be my best self. In both sports and education, he taught me I can do hard things."

"Kelly Brandt is a once-in-a-lifetime teacher. I had him for chemistry and AP chemistry, and he truly brought back the joy in school for me. I looked forward to his class every day. He connects with every student in his own way, and I'm grateful for the lasting relationship we built."

"I had a class with Mr. Brandt for two years, and he still never fails to bring a smile to my face every time that I see him. I learned so much from both his academic and life lessons. He is a prime example of making learning fun and impactful. Thank you for everything!"

"I had Mr. Brandt for Chemistry my sophomore year and A.P. Chemistry my junior year. Mr. Brandt has not only impacted my life as one of my teachers but also as a friend. No matter how my day was going, I knew I would leave his classroom laughing."

"Mr. Brandt is the kind of teacher who shows how much he cares through high expectations for anyone willing to put in the effort. I was lucky enough to have him for two years, and those classes were a mix of real learning and fun that makes school memorable. He never hesitated to bring energy into the room, whether that meant making jokes or surprising the class with Nerf gun attacks. Some of my favorite memories come from those moments: the day our entire AP Chem class armed ourselves with Nerf guns and finally ambushed him, making s'mores together at the end of the year, going to Zesto, and even golfing with him during the summer. Those experiences made his class more than just any other class."

"I have had Mr. Brandt for 3 out of the 4 years of my high school career. He is an amazing science teacher and a very kind-hearted man. When I lost my grandmother last year and came back to school just to take his test, he asked if I was ready and was very supportive and kind."



**Ann
Noyes**

**Kennedy
Elementary**

Ann Noyes

“Mrs. Noyes had a lasting effect on my academic career. I always remember doing PEMDAS problems repeatedly on her board or helping her grade homework in my free time. She taught me how to be a good student and gave me the drive to do well in school.”

“Mrs. Noyes has played a huge role in building my confidence. Through her encouragement and support I have learned to believe in myself and take on challenges with a positive mindset. One thing that has stuck with me throughout the years is the small note, “a role model”, on my report card. That simple phrase has inspired me to be the best I can be and to keep improving myself.”



**Teresa
Johnson**

**T. F. Riggs
High School**

Teresa Johnson

“Mrs. Johnson has taught me to be a kind, respectful, and humble human being through her Gov-to-Gov class my junior and senior year. Pushing me to be active in the community and helping others every single week, I learned to be a better person. Also, her leadership lessons every week taught me key life lessons that have shaped me into the person I am today. Throughout her class and the many community service hours, I learned many life lessons about being a better person which is the reason I am the person I am today.”

“Mrs. Johnson is an inspiring person to be around. She is always looking for opportunities for her students to volunteer, either in the community or around the school. She genuinely cares about everyone around her. Mrs. Johnson has helped me to become a better leader.”

“Mrs. Johnson taught me how to further become a leader and mentor. Also, when I was battling my Ulcerative Colitis, she was there for me, and she helped gather a gift basket for me because I was so sick and gone for so long. She helped me find hope when there was none.”

**Paula
Weeldreyer**

**Jefferson
Elementary**



Paula Weeldreyer

“Paula has become far more than a teacher in my life. She’s my boss, my coach, my church leader, and one of the best examples I have of the kind of person I want to be. She’s been part of my life since I was five, shaping me with an influence that has lasted longer than anyone outside my family. One of the most important things is how completely I can rely on her. Whether I need guidance, support, or simply someone who will listen, I know I can go to her. That consistency has given me a sense of security and trust that’s hard to find. She’s taught me plenty of academics over the years, but her impact goes well beyond schoolwork. Through her actions and expectations, she’s shown me what it means to serve others, lead with integrity, and live with purpose. Her example has helped shape my character just as much as my education. Paula helped me become the person I am today and the person I want to continue to make better.”



**Jennifer
Allen**

**Buchanan
Elementary**

Jennifer Allen

“Mrs. Allen was my 1st grade teacher. Her class holds my first memories of school. I remember the Christmas play and dressing up as a book character. Mrs. Allen has continued to be a great role model in my life. She is such a genuine person that truly cares about her students. She has shaped me to be the student and person I am today.”

“My favorite elementary teacher was Mrs. Allen in 1st grade. I really loved her Clifford themed class. She had so many fun activities that made learning enjoyable instead of a chore.”



**Melinda
Frank-
Dolezal**

**T. F. Riggs
High School**

Melinda Frank-Dolezal

“Mrs. Frank taught me freshman and sophomore year and has served as my oral interpretation coach throughout high school. Not only was her teaching clear and effective, but her care has made me a better student and person. I am grateful to have a role model like her in my life.”

“Melinda Frank is a good teacher and friend. She treats us like an adult and holds us to higher standards to make us better students and people. She provides a fun, but educational environment.”

“Ms. Frank has been my greatest ally during high school. She has cared for me not only as a student, but also as a person. She's the first person I look to whenever I need advice and has kept me going when I've had hard times in my life.”

**Megan
Deal**

**Kennedy
Elementary**



Megan Deal

“Megan Deal was my second-grade teacher at Kennedy, and she made a huge impact on my life. She created such a warm, encouraging environment, and I am grateful we still stay connected. Even with her own kids and students, she continues to support me.”

“Mrs. Deal has helped me immensely throughout my education, both in elementary school as well as into middle school and high school. As my second-grade teacher, Mrs. Deal gave me many life skills that have helped me grow as a person. Throughout my father's cancer diagnosis, Mrs. Deal was a supportive figure who I could always look to for comfort and guidance. Thank you, Mrs. Deal!”



**Rodd
Bauck**

**T. F. Riggs
High School**

Rodd Bauck

“Mr. Bauck was my choir teacher my freshman year. He believed in me when I didn't believe in myself and helped me grow into the musician I am today. He has given me a future in music and made me realize how much music can impact a person. I truly fell in love with music because of him.”

“Even though I only had him as a teacher for one year because he took a job somewhere else, I still get to work with him. I've been working with him these past 3 years outside of school and he still continues to push me to be a better musician. He helped grow my love for music and helped me on the path to want to be a music teacher. He is always so inspirational, and I could talk to him for hours about life and he would give me advice, help with come up with solutions, and just sit there and listen. I am so thankful to have him in my life and am so happy that I can continue to make music with him.”



**Michelle
Strand**

**Georgia Morse
Middle School**

Michelle Strand

“Mrs. Strand was my math teacher in 6th grade. She showed me that I can learn and that it takes the right perspective to excel in whatever you do. I always thought that I was bad at math and that I would never succeed in it. She showed me how to learn, and I was able to apply those skills in other classes to grow and become the student I am now.”

2026 Evening of Excellence

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Presenting Sponsor**



2026 Evening of Excellence

A special Thank You to Supporting Sponsors!



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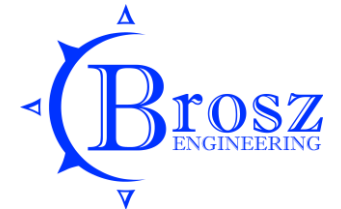
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2026 Educator of Excellence



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**Charis
Blanchette**



2026 BankWest Scholarship Awards



Kathryn Hostler

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BankWest
Scholarship





Caleb Morris

2026 BankWest Scholarship



Harper Reichling

2026
BankWest
Scholarship





Jacoby Taylor

2026
BankWest
Scholarship



Pierre Educational Foundation

2026 Scholarship Awards



Pierre Educational Foundation Bonus Scholarship



The Pierre Educational Foundation Bonus Scholarship is a scholarship awarded in honor of a student who is well respected by their peers and embodies a kindness and empathy that supports the success of others. The total amount of this scholarship is \$1,500.

Ella Oxford

**2026 Pierre
Educational Foundation
Bonus Scholarship**



Pierre Hospital Auxiliary Scholarship



The Pierre Hospital Auxiliary Scholarship Fund was established in 2019 by the Pierre Hospital Auxiliary. This scholarship is intended to go to a graduating high school student who will enter the medical field. The scholarship may be awarded to a student attending a college, university, technical school or vocational school. The total amount of this scholarship is \$1,000.



Charlotte Hull

**2026 Pierre
Hospital
Auxiliary
Scholarship**



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Charles "Lindy" & Shirley Feeney Scholarship



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The Charles "Lindy" and Shirley Feeney Scholarship is offered to a T.F. Riggs High School graduating senior who is in need of financial assistance to further their education beyond high school. The purpose of this scholarship is to assist a dedicated track athlete in his/her higher education costs. This student must have participated in track & field for at least three years, and must be accepted to an accredited college, university or technical school. The total amount of this scholarship is \$1,000.

Charlee Williams-Smith

2026 Charles "Lindy"
& Shirley Feeney
Scholarship



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Dennis & Shirley Eisnach Scholarship



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FOUNDATION

The Dennis and Shirley Eisnach Scholarship Fund was established in 2022 by Dennis and Shirley Eisnach's children to recognize high school seniors who have demonstrated a high level of commitment to voluntary service to their community, participated in extra-curricular activities and achieved academic success. The scholarship will be awarded to a student who is planning to attend a post-secondary school (vocational, technical, or 4-year college). The total amount of this scholarship is \$1,000.

Hadley Hart

2026 Dennis & Shirley Eisnach Scholarship



Herbert & Irene Emde Scholarship

The Emde Family Scholarship is awarded to a T.F. Riggs High School graduating senior who is pursuing a degree in education. The intent of the scholarship is to support a student's efforts to become a teacher in an elementary, middle school, high school or university setting. The recipient should model characteristics of honesty, trustworthiness, caring of mankind, and a passion for teaching. The total amount of this scholarship is \$1,000.





Nora Allen

2026 Emde Family Scholarship



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The Edith & Richard Warder Scholarship

The Edith and Richard Warder Scholarship Fund was established in 2020 by Robert and Jo Anna Warder. This scholarship is intended to go to a graduating high school student who has an interest in political science or law. The scholarship is payable over two years and the total amount is \$2,000.



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Alex Oedekoven

2026
Edith & Richard
Warder Scholarship

Mortenson Family Scholarship

This scholarship is awarded to a T.F. Riggs High School Native American senior who will be attending a college, university, or technical school. The scholarship is payable over four semesters and the total amount is \$2,000.



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Logan Griffith

2026 Mortenson Family Scholarship



Spilde Family Scholarship



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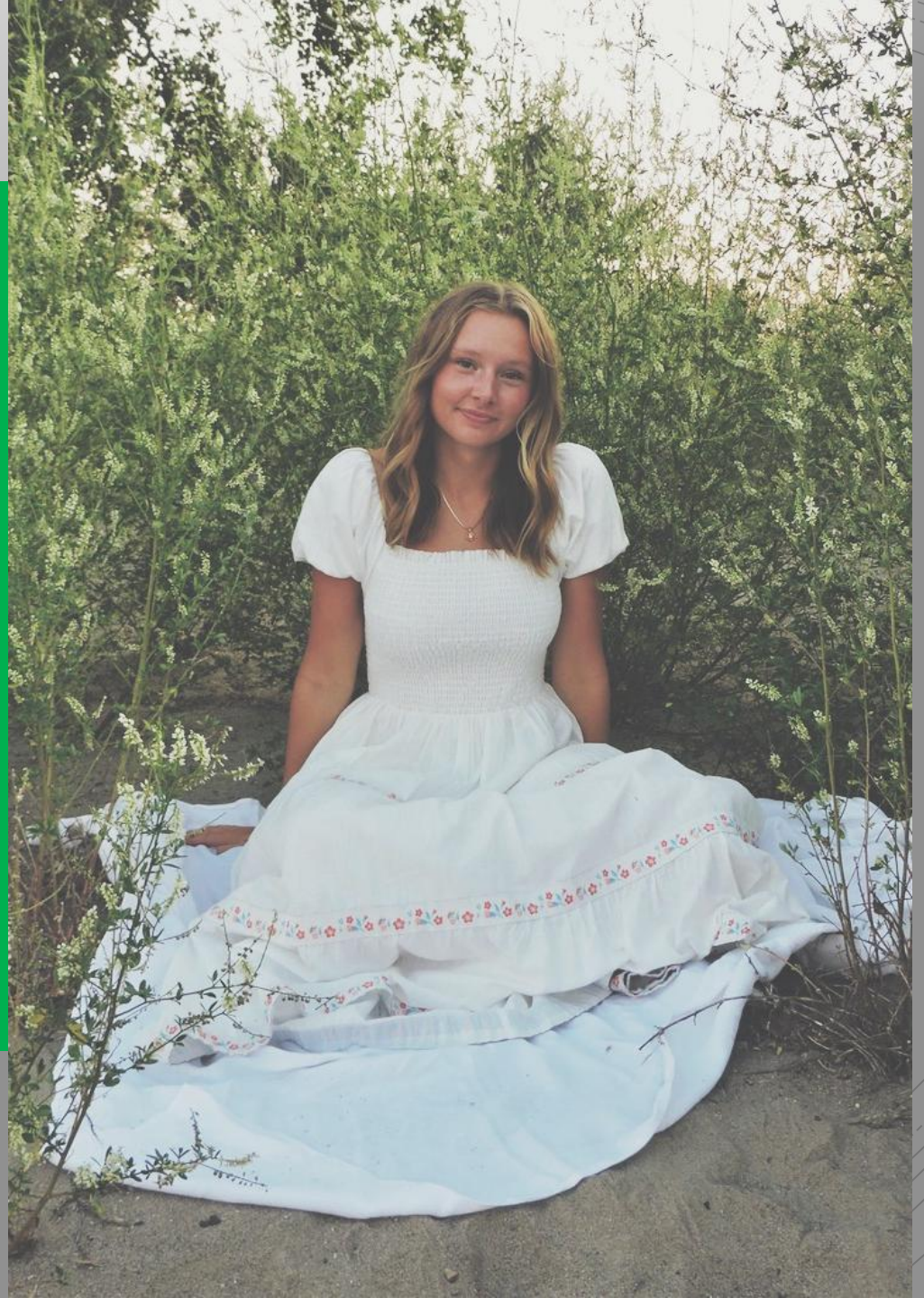
The Spilde Family Scholarship was established to assist a student with the costs of his/her higher education cost. This scholarship is made to a student who will be attending a South Dakota college, university, vocational, or technical school. There is one scholarship for a student attending a college/university and one scholarship for a student attending a vocational or technical school. The total amount of this scholarship is \$2,500.

Riley Berg

2026 Spilde Family Scholarship



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Spilde Family Scholarship



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The Spilde Family Scholarship was established to assist a student with the costs of his/her higher education cost. This scholarship is made to a student who will be attending a South Dakota college, university, vocational, or technical school. There is one scholarship for a student attending a college/university and one scholarship for a student attending a vocational or technical school. The total amount of this scholarship is \$2,500.



Amara Dell

2026 Spilde Family Scholarship



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Jacobson Rise Up Scholarship

The Jacobson Rise Up Scholarship was established in 2025 by Ed and Sandy Jacobson to benefit a graduating senior from T.F. Riggs High School. The total amount of this scholarship is \$3,500.



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Clare Madsen

**2026 Jacobson Rise Up
Scholarship**



James & Gertrude Mueller Scholarship

The James and Gertrude Mueller Scholarship is offered to a T.F. Riggs High School graduating senior planning to enroll in an accredited college or university who intends to pursue a career in the medical field. The total amount of this scholarship is \$3,500.



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Grace Fischer

2026 James &
Gertrude Mueller
Scholarship



Alvin Benesh Engineering Scholarship

The Alvin Benesh Engineering Scholarship was established in 2023 by the Alvin Benesh Family to support the education of a T.F. Riggs graduate pursuing a career in engineering. The total scholarship is payable over four years and the total amount is \$4,000.



CJ Moses

**2026 Alvin Benesh
Engineering
Scholarship**



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Schliessmann Family Scholarship

The Schliessmann Family scholarship is awarded to a T.F. Riggs High School senior who will be pursuing a degree in Science, Technology, Engineering or Mathematics (STEM) from an accredited college or university. Selection is based on the student's likelihood of success in a STEM field and financial need. The scholarship is renewable for up to four years and the total amount is \$4,000.





Carter Merrill

**2026 Schliessmann
Family Scholarship**



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Shaw Family Scholarship

The Shaw Family Scholarship Fund was established in 2020 by the Shaw Family in memory of Mike and Marilyn Shaw, longtime Pierre residents who were impactful servant leaders in their community. The scholarships are awarded to students who demonstrate faith-driven, servant leadership and intend to remain in or return to South Dakota upon post-secondary graduation. The total amount of this scholarship is \$5,000.



PIERRE
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Charlotte Hull

2026 Shaw Family
Scholarship



Shaw Family Scholarship

The Shaw Family Scholarship Fund was established in 2020 by the Shaw Family in memory of Mike and Marilyn Shaw, longtime Pierre residents who were impactful servant leaders in their community. The scholarships are awarded to students who demonstrate faith-driven, servant leadership and intend to remain in or return to South Dakota upon post-secondary graduation. The total amount of this scholarship is \$5,000.



Alex Oedekoven

2026 Shaw Family
Scholarship



Swan Family Scholarship

The Swan Family scholarship was established by the Swan Family and is offered to a T.F. Riggs High School Native American senior who will be attending a South Dakota college, university, vocational, or technical school. The total amount of this scholarship is \$5,000.



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Amara Dell

2026 Swan Family Scholarship



Swan Family Scholarship

The Swan Family scholarship was established by the Swan Family and is offered to a T.F. Riggs High School Native American senior who will be attending a South Dakota college, university, vocational, or technical school. The total amount of this scholarship is \$5,000.



Carter Merrill

2026 Swan Family
Scholarship

Marjorie & Fritz Forney Scholarship

The Marjorie and Fritz Forney Scholarship Fund was established in 2021 by Richard and Dianne Warder. This scholarship is intended to go to a graduating high school student who has an interest in engineering or accounting (business) and will be attending the University of South Dakota or the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology. The total scholarship is payable over four years and the total amount is \$10,000.

Clare Madsen

**2026 Marjorie & Fritz
Forney Scholarship**



Brabander Scholarship

The Brabander Family Scholarship was established in 2021 by the Cindy Brabander family to support the education of a T.F. Riggs High School female senior. The total scholarship is payable over four years and the total amount is \$10,000.



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Adriana Spears

**2026 Brabander
Family Scholarship**



Brabander Scholarship

The Brabander Family Scholarship was established in 2021 by the Cindy Brabander family to support the education of a T.F. Riggs High School female senior. The total scholarship is payable over four years and the total amount is \$10,000.

Clare Madsen

**2026 Brabander Family
Scholarship**



The Evelyn Benesh Music Scholarship

The Evelyn Benesh Music Scholarship was established in 2023 by the Evelyn Benesh Family to support the education of a T.F. Riggs High School graduate studying or emphasizing music in post-secondary education. The total scholarship is payable over four years and the total amount is \$40,000.



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Tiger Duinkerjav

**2026 Evelyn Benesh
Music Scholarship**



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The Evelyn Benesh Music Scholarship

The Evelyn Benesh Music Scholarship was established in 2023 by the Evelyn Benesh Family to support the education of a T.F. Riggs High School graduate studying or emphasizing music in post-secondary education. The total scholarship is payable over four years and the total amount is \$40,000.



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Madilynn Fischer

**2026 Evelyn Benesh
Music Scholarship**



Congratulations to the Class of 2026!

**Thank you for joining us for the
Evening of Excellence!**