

# STUDENT RECOGNITION

*Region 5 Rising Star Award*

## 2018 STUDENT RECOGNITION BANQUET AGENDA April 11, 2018

*Masters of Ceremonies: Sarah Speer & Kip Hines, NJPA*

- 5:00 p.m. Registration
- 5:25 p.m. Call to Order  
Mike Wilson, NJPA Board Chairman
- 5:30 p.m. Annual meeting of the NJPA Representative Assembly
- Approval of the minutes of the 39th annual meeting held on April 12, 2017
  - Open Forum
  - Input from the membership on the development of new programs and services
  - Matters to come before the NJPA Representative Assembly
- 5:50 p.m. Dinner
- 6:15 p.m. Welcome and keynote  
Chad Harlander
- 6:45 p.m. 27th Annual Student Recognition Banquet
- Presentation of the Region 5 Rising Star Awards
  - Scholarship presentations
  - Door prize drawings
- 8:00 p.m. Closing remarks | Dr. Chad Coquette, NJPA Executive Director/CEO  
Adjournment | Mike Wilson



# RISING STARS

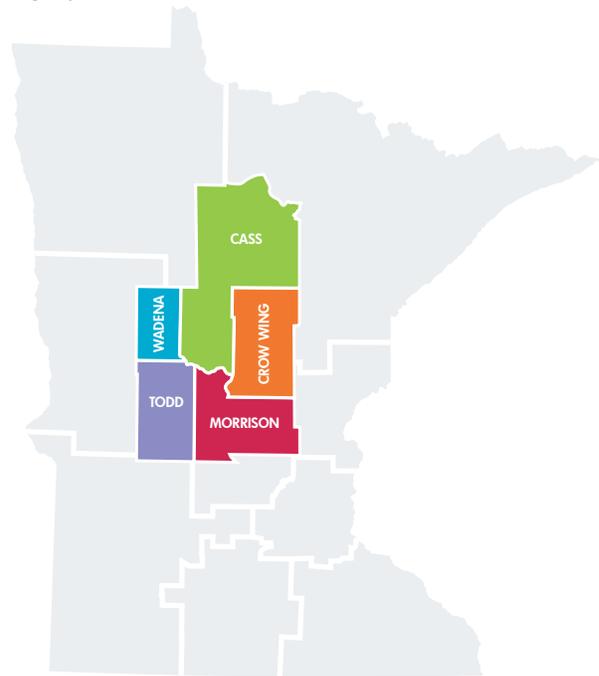


## WHO IS NJPA?

National Joint Powers Alliance® (NJPA) is a public service agency committed to providing cooperative solutions that assist government, education, and nonprofit entities as they strive for efficient public service. NJPA was created in 1978 through Minnesota Statute 123A.21, Subdivision 1, as one of Minnesota's nine service cooperatives and offers a variety of cooperative programs and services for members on a local, regional, statewide, and national scale plus Canada. On behalf of our locally elected Board of Directors and public employee staff, we are committed to meeting and exceeding the expectations of our members.

## WHOM WE SERVE:

### REGION 5



“Every great *dream* begins with a dreamer. Always remember, you have within you the *strength*, the *patience*, and the *passion* to reach for the stars to *change the world*.”

—Harriet Tubman

## OUR FOCUS:

**VISION:** NJPA provides member-centered solutions that enable government, education, and nonprofit agencies to work more efficiently; and leverages its resources to effectively reinvest in the communities we serve as an invaluable service cooperative partner.

**MISSION:** To build valued relationships and deliver innovative solutions with integrity, exceeding the expectations of our members.

### VALUES:

Service • Relationships • Trust • Passion • Communication • Individuality  
• Continuous Improvement

*Many of you are wondering just how you got here tonight. A brief history might help explain. On Jan. 31, 1992, a group of educators, board members, and parents came together at the request of ECSU-5 (now called NJPA). Their goal was to help our member schools recognize deserving students who might not otherwise receive any recognition for their hard work and dedicated service to their community, school, and fellow students. This advisory group decided to incorporate a Student Recognition Banquet into the Annual Meeting of the Representative Assembly.*

Each school district is invited to select one or two students (grades 11-12) to be recognized. The criteria for the recognition is left up to the local district, but NJPA does provide the following guidelines:

- Select your representative(s) without regard to grade point average, class rank, standing in the National Honor Society, or athletic ability. These students are honored locally already.
- Look for the ordinary student who has worked hard and excelled; the one who has been satisfied to stay behind the scenes to make sure that the necessary tasks are accomplished, knowing all along that no one would notice or possibly even say "thank you."
- Look for that student who has done the most to help his or her fellow students.

Twenty-six years later the program is the same. Each year we hear about the students who make our schools what they are. NJPA is even prouder to be able to host such an extraordinary group of fine young leaders. Congratulations to all of you, your families, your nominator, your school, and community. You represent the best of the best!

# 2018 REGION 5 RISING STAR AWARD RECIPIENTS



**MADILYN AMUNDSON**

**Aitkin High School**

Nominated by:  
Meredith Sander, School Counselor

Madi is a hard-working student with many goals and ambitions. She plans to enroll at St. Cloud State University to major in psychology, astronomy, or geology. Madi has overcome many difficulties in her life, including the loss of her father. It is the cherished memories of him that help Madi to persevere and work hard toward the goals she has set for herself.



**CAINE OWENS**

**Aitkin High School**

Nominated by:  
Steve Jacobson, Industrial Arts Teacher

Caine is an extremely hard-working student who is dedicated to numerous projects and hobbies outside of the school day. He has demonstrated talent in multiple areas and is an overall talented young man. He plans to pursue his talents upon graduation and take the time to find the career that is a best fit for him.



**CHARLES BAKKEN**

**Bertha-Hewitt High School**

Nominated by:  
Bertha-Hewitt Teachers and Staff

Over the years, Charles has grown from a well-mannered young child, full of energy and ambition, into a young man who is a great representative of his school and a great role model for the younger students in the building. Charles has excelled in the classroom, taking some of the most challenging courses and remaining at the top of his class. Charles has had to overcome a lot during his time in high school, and, when many students might have given up, Charles remained dedicated to his education. Charles has also given his best efforts in the football and basketball programs.



**ADAM BAUCH**

**Bertha-Hewitt High School**

Nominated by:  
Bertha-Hewitt Teachers and Staff

Adam is a problem solver and a hard worker. What makes Adam unique is his ability to see a need and then get people to work together toward a common goal. In his senior year, when many students have fulfilled all their required classes and realize they could finish the year by simply coasting, Adam continues to take classes that challenge him and prepare him for his future. Adam can often be found around the school doing projects for teachers and helping other students in his spare time. Adam has also been a mentor for younger students in his time at Bertha-Hewitt. He is constantly going above and beyond to ensure that everyone, both staff and students, is having a bright day.

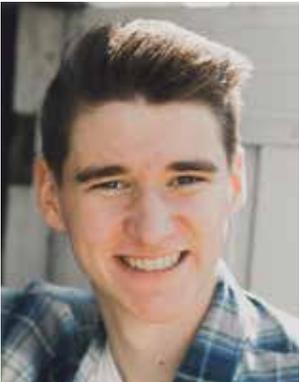


**ANTHONY BAYLOR**

**Brainerd High School**

Nominated by:  
Daniel Fischer, School Counselor

Anthony is the definition of a quiet leader. He leads by example and his hard work pays off. He is involved in football, and was awarded Student of the Semester via nomination from his classroom teachers. While employed at McDonald's, he was selected Employee of the Year for 2016. He is involved in the community and has volunteered at the Sharing Bread Soup Kitchen, as well as with the Brainerd Jaycees Ice Fishing Extravaganza, to name a few. Anthony has had to overcome many challenges in his life. He continues to exceed expectations and strive to be his best, while never making excuses. After high school, Anthony will pursue his dream of enlisting with the United States Army.



**JACOB POLOVICK**  
**Browerville High School**

Nominated by:  
Charlie Stier

Browerville Public Schools have many students who step up and pitch in whenever needed. Jacob Polovick is a great model of this ideal. Jacob is an involved and strong student who quietly goes about his business without fanfare or attention. He is willing and able to help in many capacities. He is heavily involved in performing arts, speech, and theater. Even with his busy schedule, Jacob still finds time to teach guitar lessons. He is always willing to coach a fellow student and is a leader in everything he does. When something needs to get done, Jacob can be counted on. He is a positive role model for all of the younger students, and he is appreciated at Browerville Public Schools.



**KYLIE CROWE-MANTANEZ**  
**Browerville High School**

Nominated by:  
Ann Noska

Browerville High School has many students deserving of recognition for hard work and kindness. Kylie Crowe-Montanez is a great example of this. Kylie is a kind, hard-working, helpful student. There are times when the school calls on students to pitch in and help out. Kylie has never declined the opportunity to step up and save the day. A great example of this is when the kitchen staff needs a helping hand. Kylie always takes the time to help out, and she does it with a smile. The kitchen staff cannot say enough about how helpful and nice Kylie is to have in school.

# 2018 REGION 5 RISING STAR AWARD RECIPIENTS



**JENNALEE FAIRBANKS**  
Cass Lake-Bena High School  
Nominated by:  
Luann Frazer, Director of Indian  
Education

Jennalee is such a deserving young woman for this recognition as she always does the right thing and, yet, is a humble person. She doesn't like to be in the limelight. She was born and raised in both the Cass Lake and Ball Club communities by her mom, Jennifer Fairbanks, and spent a lot of time in Ball Club with her grandparents and family. Jennalee is third in the 2018 graduating class. She has been involved in robotics and the National Honor Society. Her plans upon graduation are to attend nursing school, either at Bemidji State University or the University of Minnesota Morris, both of which she has been accepted. She would eventually like to land a job working in the OB/GYN department somewhere close.



**MARK REYES**  
Cass Lake-Bena High School  
Nominated by:  
Luann Frazer, Director of Indian  
Education

Mark Reyes III is an exemplary student to be nominated for this honor as he is the kind of guy who does things right in school, on the basketball court, football field, and in class. He is well liked by students and staff alike, and, at home, he has 14 brothers and sisters. Mark has persevered throughout the years, even though he has been met with many struggles in his lifetime. He believes these struggles only made him stronger and more determined to be a good role model to his younger siblings and other young people from our community. Mark would like to go into law enforcement after he graduates. He is also interested in building things and working with his hands.



**ALISON LENZ**  
Crosby-Ironton High School  
Nominated by:  
Michelle Wolter, FACS Teacher

Alison is an outstanding student and is a pleasure to have as a student in any class. She works very hard in her classes and shows exemplary work. Not only does she participate in choir, but she is also section leader. She is driven to do her best at all times. Alison is considered a silent leader. She excels while staying behind the scenes and is satisfied to make sure the necessary jobs are accomplished, and devotes her time unselfishly to help other students. For the past year and a half, she has worked at the local hospital in the area of food service. She is dependable and responsible and carries out all of her duties to the maximum.



**ANDREW LOUKS**  
Crosby-Ironton High School  
Nominated by:  
Michael Gindorff, Science Teacher

Andrew is a student who quietly goes above and beyond. He is well-rounded and very giving of his time, especially to his classmates and on projects at school. He is inquisitive and asks questions that other students want to know, and he sets a great example in the way he conducts himself in terms of work ethic, character, and focus on his school work. He is pleasant and supportive to all he interacts with and is always looking to give his best. This model behavior and character are what set him apart from other students and will undoubtedly lead to success in his college and adult life.



**DEREK STALBERGER**  
**Freshwater Education District**  
 Nominated by:  
 Lindsey Noll, Lead Teacher

Derek is deserving of this nomination because he has leadership qualities, works hard towards graduation, and has overcome great adversity. Derek has focused on having a positive outlook in the classroom, not only for his benefit but for the benefit of his classmates. He assists classmates with assignments and projects, and encourages others to push themselves, modeling that behavior himself. Derek has also worked hard towards his goal of graduation by attending school full time, earning work experience, and attending night school, all while still working part time. Despite facing many challenges throughout his life, Derek has persevered.



**JACQUELINE ANDERSON**  
**Freshwater Education District**  
 Nominated by:  
 Freshwater Staff

When asked to describe Jacque, resilient, hardworking, focused, courageous, and driven were words used over and over. Jacque has taken responsibility for her actions and maintained a positive attitude through difficult times in her life and, with the help of others, has overcome adversity. Her willingness to improve herself has shown others that tough times do not have to define you. Currently, Jacque is taking PSEO classes at CLC in Brainerd but plans to attend St. Cloud State in the fall to continue giving back by becoming a licensed chemical dependency counselor.



**ANDREW DEYONGE**  
**Little Falls Community High School**  
 Nominated by:  
 Timothy Bjorge, Principal

Andrew has faced challenges that have helped him mature into a wonderful young man. Andrew didn't have the best start to his high school career, often finding himself behind in credits and in jeopardy of not graduating from high school. However, over the last year, Andrew has made a positive transformation. He has found the drive and motivation academically to go from getting D's and F's to A's and B's last semester. He has been attending extended days to make up credits so he is able to graduate with his class in May. Andrew also works at the Boys and Girls Club in town and hopes to someday work with kids to be a positive influence in their lives.



**ASIA MOHAMED**  
**Little Falls Community High School**  
 Nominated by:  
 Debra Yliniemi-Ahlin, Andy Ward, and  
 Katherine Kaddatz

Asia's story is one of beating the odds and overcoming major obstacles. Despite all she has faced and has had to conquer, she walks with a smile on her face and a spring in her step. When one considers where this young lady has been, it is nothing short of remarkable where she is headed. She has entered into a system where she is most definitely an outsider. She is currently battling the major differences that exist in two very different cultures. Through it all, she remains level headed and goal oriented. Taking rigorous classes is tough enough for any student, but being a learner of the English language makes it that much more difficult. Asia has overcome this deterrent and has done outstanding in school. If all students put forth the effort and had the attitude Asia has, they would all have great success.

# 2018 REGION 5 RISING STAR AWARD RECIPIENTS



**ABBEY GRABOWSKI**  
**Long Prairie-Grey Eagle High School**  
Nominated by:  
David Blanchard, Teacher

Always on time and never without a cheerful greeting, Abbey comes into first hour English with her materials and water bottle each day. She is someone who has persevered through all of the challenges life has thrown at her, accomplishing much through her hard work and best efforts. Abbey gives every assignment her all, every time. Born prematurely, she has learned to compensate for many things through hard work and determination. Her grit and “can do” attitude serve to inspire her fellow students, as well as her teachers.



**GUADALUPE OROZCO**  
**Long Prairie-Grey Eagle High School**  
Nominated by:  
Jennifer Meagher, Teacher

Guadalupe exemplifies excellence! He is a humble leader, a solid student, and a role model. In every endeavor, Guadalupe contributes more than he would credit himself. He is very intelligent and is able to tackle difficult concepts with ease. As he makes these contributions, his servant leadership and influence build the positive in others. He nurtures and encourages, building capacity in others through care. Guadalupe would not allow himself to gloat about his successes, whether in the classroom, in school organizations, or at work. He also leads as a role model, making his contributions in quiet but meaningful ways. More importantly, he never expects recognition or any praise. When he does receive what is much deserved, he is quick to point out the contributions of others and note what they did well. Whether he knows it or not, this humility is appreciated and remembered!



**NICHOLAS MCNEELY**  
**Menahga High School**  
Nominated by:  
Jennifer Farnam, English Teacher

Nicholas is an unsung hero. He is a hard-working and dedicated student who strives to do his best. He is a true-hearted person and is strong in mind and feelings. He is always a pleasant young man who is personable, responsible, and reliable, with a friendly word for everyone he meets. Nick is a fine young man who brings his unique personality to Menahga High School. He plans to enlist in the Army Reserves and pursue a career in psychology after graduation.



**SAMANTHA JEWEL**  
**Menahga High School**  
Nominated by:  
Tara Weaver, Teacher

Sam has proven herself as a leader, role model, and a positive participant in her community. She has overcome many academic challenges and is currently on the honor roll. She is an active member of the National Honor Society, Menahga Student Council, and the cheerleading team. She works and volunteers in the community while maintaining excellent grades and participating in extracurricular activities. This amazing student has volunteered for community blood drives, community education events, Ruby’s Pantry, and helped with Special Olympics on multiple occasions. Samantha is able to recognize and use her strengths to overcome adversity. She is a valuable member of her school and community.



**MADISON SHEPARD**  
**Northland Community High School**  
 Nominated by:  
 Tim Hasse

Madison has an amazing work ethic. She pushes herself to do her very best. Instead of taking the easy road and taking only required high school classes, Madison has pushed herself to take some college-level classes knowing it will be even more work for her. Aside from her work ethic, she has an amazing attitude. She does not see cliques in school but rather sees peers as equals and gets along with everyone. Madison is able to celebrate others' successes instead of feeling slighted or jealous. She also finds time to promote school spirit by leading by example and spending any extra hours before or after school on activities to promote this spirit.



**TAYLOR SHEPARD**  
**Northland Community High School**  
 Nominated by:  
 Scott Peterson

Taylor is a student who spends many unrecognized hours before and after school helping with school activities to encourage and promote positive school pride. Earlier this year, Taylor was in an accident but continued to strive to do her best even on the days she felt her worst. She is always willing to lend a hand, help another student in need, step up to accomplish a task even when others will not, and pushes herself to exceed her own expectations.



**AUSTIN YOUNG**  
**Pequot Lakes High School**  
 Nominated by:  
 Aaron Nelson, High School Principal

Austin has never let difficulty deter him from earning success. Despite difficult events in his life, Austin has worked to demonstrate that a commitment to excellence is a choice. As a senior, Austin helped lead the Patriot football team to the State 3A Semi-Finals, earning individual honors for his excellence. Popular with his peers, Austin is quick to recognize others for their support and offer support to those who need encouragement. Austin is a rallying voice from the stands for the Patriots, leading cheers to rouse the teams to victory. With a quick smile and a happy disposition, Austin has left a lasting impression on the Patriot family.



**COLETTE VAVPOTIC**  
**Pequot Lakes High School**  
 Nominated by:  
 Aaron Nelson, High School Principal

The Patriot family is fortunate to have the support of Colette Vavpotic. A senior at Pequot Lakes High School, Colette embodies the values of a commitment to the care and support of the Patriot student community. Every day, Colette brings a smile and a genuine desire to help others succeed in achieving the success that is a hallmark of Pequot Lakes. Colette was a new student to the Pequot Lakes School District as a freshman and has continued to be one of the hardest working students. Her positive attitude, work ethic, friendliness, and perseverance are second to none. She has not let any limitation stand in her way of being on the B honor roll and a student who is college bound to pursue a career in the field of natural resources. Colette is a bright spot in the school day on a daily basis.

# 2018 REGION 5 RISING STAR AWARD RECIPIENTS



**SAMANTHA WINSCHER**

**Pierz-Healy High School**

Nominated by:  
Derrick Paulson, English Teacher

Sam is an excellent role model for not only her three brothers but for her peers. Sam has an active role in her family's dairy operation and is a proud advocate of the farming lifestyle. That said, she has been a cornerstone of the local FFA chapter since seventh grade and, as a senior, is currently the chapter president and will run for Morrison County Dairy Princess in March. She has attended leadership camps with other FFA members, including one in Washington, D.C., and always encourages all members to step outside of their comfort zones and to grow. Whether it is in FFA, cross country, or Spanish Club, she is filled with patience and tolerance and is so inclusive of others, a set of qualities that also makes her an ideal member of EPIC, Peer Helping, and Reading Buddies.



**ZAIDA L. NIEKEN**

**Pierz-Healy High School**

Nominated by:  
Amy Jindra, English Teacher

Zaida's quiet, but dedicated, demeanor is what makes her an exemplary candidate for the NJPA Rising Star Award. She has demonstrated outstanding work in the areas of literature and art, and has portrayed a deep understanding of the content. Zaida is a role model among not only her peers, but her siblings as well, guiding them through with her soft-spoken manner. Outside of the classroom, Zaida is an active member of Art Club and Spanish Club. She is a highly visible member of both groups who has not been recognized for all that she does. Whether it's packaging food for the hungry with Spanish Club or crafting bowls in Art Club to sell to raise money for charity, Zaida's active participation and care for the greater community deserve to be recognized.



**JORDAN HINES**

**Pillager High School**

Nominated by:  
Jamie Prax, English Teacher

Jordan is always a bright and shining student walking down the hallway with a positive attitude. But you wouldn't know the challenges that he has had to overcome, and continues to overcome, unless you got to know him. Jordan has had to make a path for himself and has done quite well. You see him involved in many different activities and he is quick to volunteer his time when asked. Jordan may strike his peers as a leader but you do see them look up to him throughout his high school years. He is a great role model to others because of what he has had to overcome and the way he continues to hold himself up and challenge himself, and is striving to have a successful life after high school.



**SABRINA OTTO**

**Pillager High School**

Nominated by:  
Sue Turner, School Counselor

Sabrina has overcome many obstacles in her life and has persevered. Sabrina is working toward a nursing certificate through Lake Superior College, as well as graduating with her high school diploma this spring. She will be the first of her siblings to graduate from high school and continue on to post-secondary education. It is not uncommon to see Sabrina helping her peers. She is a quiet leader who leads by example, always kind and considerate to everyone she encounters. Sabrina has the heart and spirit to be an amazing health care provider and will be successful in whatever she chooses to do.



**DYLAN MALZ**  
Pine River-Backus High School

Nominated by:  
Tiffany Abrams and Laure Marquardt,  
Teachers

Dylan is a student who is described by many as kind, patient, and respectful. Dylan goes out of his way to greet others and make them smile. He is polite and has excellent manners with everyone he meets. Dylan has had several obstacles to overcome in his life, yet he is still successful in school, both in his academics and by being a good person. Dylan volunteered to be a peer mentor for other high school students and works with them daily. He is an excellent example of a team player and takes directions from others very well. When he makes mistakes, Dylan can take responsibility and fix the problem. His kindness often goes unnoticed because he doesn't ask for anything in return and doesn't want attention placed on him. He plans to attend college in the future and is exploring career options.



**TAYLOR VREDENBURG**  
Pine River-Backus High School

Nominated by:  
Kyle Bergem, Business Teacher

Shortly after the school year began, Taylor suffered the loss of her boyfriend to a tragic car accident. Taylor's focus on her education and her positive outlook prevailed through her grieving process. She continued to take the steps needed to make plans for her post-secondary education. Taylor has a goal to pursue a career in education. Her involvement in school activities has come late in her high school years. However, this year, Taylor has grown from her experiences with mentoring other students, being an active member of the STRIVE program, and qualifying for a team event at the Regional Business Professionals of America competition, where her team qualified to advance to the state level. Taylor can be a quiet student in class, but she pushes herself to do her best.



**MARSHALL MEEHL**  
Royalton High School

Nominated by:  
Monica Flakus, School Counselor

Marshall is a personable, young man and the go-to guy in his yearbook class. As a sophomore, he sold more ads than the top three seniors combined. These past two years, he topped the thousand-dollar amount, which made the cost of students' books drop by almost \$20 per book. In addition to yearbook, Marshall is a three-sport athlete in football, wrestling, and track, and takes pride in his athletic ability. Marshall, like most students, has had to deal with family issues. Instead of surrendering to the obstacles, he has channeled his angst and focused on his academics. His personal motto is "Keep Your Eyes on the Prize." Marshall has a cumulative GPA of 3.42 and plans to attend St. Cloud State University and major in marketing. His personality, art of persuasion, and artistic ability will serve him well in this field.



**MARTIN SOLLAND**  
Royalton High School

Nominated by:  
Monica Flakus, School Counselor

Martin is a student with deep conviction. His actions, and how he spends his time, say a lot about what he values. Martin enjoys being smart – not in an arrogant way, but simply because he finds value in knowledge. The past few years, for example, he has captained the Forestry Career Development Event in FFA and this year, has served as FFA vice president. Martin has also participated in Knowledge Bowl for the past four years. Outside of school, he devotes his time to his church community. For the past eight years, he has been an altar server and has helped serve monthly breakfasts at his parish. He has achieved academic success at Royalton and has a cumulative GPA of 3.79 and an ACT composite of 28. This fall, he plans to complete his AA degree and transfer to a four-year college to complete his Bachelor's degree. Martin's future career goal is to become an agriculture teacher and FFA leader. Just like he was helped, he wants to help others and give back to his community.

# 2018 REGION 5 RISING STAR AWARD RECIPIENTS



**BRIANNAH NOLAN**

**Sebeka High School**

Nominated by:  
Dave Kerkvliet, Band Director

Briannah is truly an unsung hero at Sebeka School. As a musician, Briannah has tremendous natural ability. Her major instrument is the trumpet, but she's expanded her musical repertoire by performing with the drumline. In her early years at Sebeka, Briannah struggled academically - not because she lacked skills or intelligence, but because she didn't give appropriate effort. However, during her junior year, she decided she wanted to do well in school because she wants to be successful in life. Briannah turned her academic life around and has made the A and B honor roll ever since making her choice to improve. Briannah's hard work, kindness, and considerate nature will no doubt lead her to future successes in life. She's made tremendous contributions to the Sebeka Band program over the years and will be missed.



**RYAN OAKLAND**

**Sebeka High School**

Nominated by:  
Luke Roberts, Dean of Students

Ryan is a great student to be around. He always seems to have a positive attitude. He is one to lend a helping hand anytime someone needs one, whether he knows you or not. Ryan has been a peer tutor for two teachers this year, and has also helped maintain the school's concessions area and beverage machine. Ryan has been involved with the basketball program since his elementary school days. Although he wasn't the most talented player, he didn't want to just quit the team so he became the student manager as a junior. He has helped the team tremendously by videotaping each game. We know we can count on him to do a great job and to be present at all games. Staff at Sebeka School would all agree that Ryan's commitment to the school, his kindness, generosity, and his selflessness make him one of Sebeka High School's unsung heroes!



**ALYSSA VANDERHOOF**

**Staples-Motley High School**

Nominated by:  
Mike Schmidt, Principal

Alyssa is well on her way as an author, illustrator, and advocate for mental health. Her thoughts, emotions, and truth are now in print via the book she's written and illustrated, which served her well when applying to the Minneapolis College of Art and Design. Furthermore, her story has secured multiple scholarships, ensuring her education awaits her. Alyssa is remarkable. She's real. She has embraced those who love her and believe in her, as advocates and allies in her continued journey through life's challenges. She is the light she writes of, not only to herself, but now to those looking for a light of their own.



**CRYSTAL KAUN**  
Swanville High School

Nominated by:  
Pam Czech, Social Studies Teacher

Crystal shows her inner fighter daily. Losing her mom when she was 11 years old has definitely helped build the person she is today. Her mom may have lost her battle with cancer, but she, along with Crystal's dad, have shown Crystal that you don't stop fighting for the things that matter to you or the things you want. Crystal strives every day to be a hard-working, trustworthy, dependable, and honest person. She never holds back; she will always tell you what she thinks, but she does it in a manner that doesn't hurt people. Crystal has set goals for herself and NO ONE is going to tell her she cannot achieve them.



**KATELYN NOHNER**  
Swanville High School

Nominated by:  
Liza Hasse, Math Teacher

Katelyn is an asset to the Swanville High School student body. She respects her peers and the staff, strives to do what is right, and encourages others to do the same. She is not afraid to voice her opinion when she feels a situation is not moving in a positive direction. Katelyn is involved in volleyball as team manager. She maintains a positive attitude and continuously encourages the team to do its best. She is a member of student council, leading with her ideas and actions. Katelyn has overcome many personal and academic struggles but maintains a positive attitude. She has developed into a leader who leads by example, displaying kindness and compassion for others.



**ALEXANDRA WUEBKER**  
Upsala High School

Nominated by:  
Gretchen Schleper, Agriculture  
Instructor and FFA Advisor

Alexandra has proven to be a dedicated, behind-the-scenes worker with tons of personal integrity and high standards of character. She has worked tirelessly with young FFA members, showing up mornings before school, during lunch, and other hours to coach the FFA teams; planning practice curriculum and influencing other kids to believe in themselves. She has the heart of a servant leader, taking from herself to give others the opportunity to shine. She is the right hand of Upsala High School's ag program, organizing materials and willing to do any task without question. Her conduct with adults and staff in the school building has grown to be exceptional; she is trusted and understanding. Her assistance has been invaluable to helping the ag and FFA program grow, as she has linked members to alumni to help convey that learning is lifelong!



**ERIC STARICKA**  
Upsala High School

Nominated by:  
Gretchen Schleper, Agriculture  
Instructor and FFA Advisor

Eric has had to overcome some personal and learning challenges in his high school career, and he has! Eric has proven to be a steady hand and the voice of reason many times in classroom discussions, and in projects in the school shop and robotics team. He speaks the truth and facts without hurting feelings, an admirable quality. He has a personality that is calm and unruffled, even when he is faced with difficult challenges. As an FFA officer, his leadership growth has been amazing. He nearly single-handedly organized a large donkey basketball event, communicating well with all the groups involved. In robotics, he has willingly worked extremely late hours after school, using his amazing engineering and mechanical skills to guide a successful team effort in fabricating awesome robots. Eric is hardworking, willing, and has a light-hearted sense of humor that diffuses arguments and tension. He has the skills to go far in life.

# 2018 REGION 5 RISING STAR AWARD RECIPIENTS



**HUNTER SEEFELDT**  
**Verndale High School**  
Nominated by:  
Sheri Brewer, Math Teacher

Hunter is positive and energetic, despite having to take on huge family responsibilities over the last few years. Due to separate illnesses, both of Hunter's parents were lost and he and his brother have had to transform their whole lives. Trying to juggle a job, his family responsibilities, and his schoolwork, Hunter perseveres as a student who is involved, takes care with his classes, and has a cohesive group of friends.



**MAYA WELLNITZ**  
**Verndale High School**  
Nominated by:  
Shalom Grandy, PE/Health/DAPE  
Teacher

Maya Wellnitz is a beautiful young lady inside and out. She has been able to keep up with her classes, getting almost all A's and taking multiple college-level classes. She does this in addition to helping her parents take care of her siblings while her mother is at work. Maya's father has been unable to work due to multiple illnesses. Maya still finds time to participate in a few after-school activities and volunteers. She is a part of Verndale's Honor Society. She loves football, both playing and following the NFL. Maya takes pride in what she does and accepts responsibility for all the demands life has thrown at her.



**MITCHEL HAMAN**  
**Wadena-Deer Creek High School**  
Nominated by:  
Norm Gallant, Activities Director

Mitchel has made great strides in his academic career at Wadena-Deer Creek. After struggling during his freshman and sophomore years, Mitchel has matured and become more focused at school. He is a polite, helpful young man who makes school a better place. He is the kind of student that teachers and staff look forward to working with each day. Mitchel has become involved in extracurricular activities, including wrestling, where he has demonstrated the kind of tenacity and work ethic that will transfer to life after high school. Mitchel is involved in the CEO program at WDC, and his GPA has improved significantly over the past two years.



**RYAN ANDERSON**  
**Wadena-Deer Creek High School**  
Nominated by:  
Tyler Church, WDC Principal

Ryan is the type of student every teacher would like to have in class. He is a behind-the-scenes leader who leads by example in that he is always doing things the right way. Ryan takes this positive approach in the classroom, on the football field, basketball court, and wherever he goes. Ryan's quiet demeanor does not draw attention, but his ability to serve as a positive role model is what sets him apart. Ryan has always been a solid student who does whatever he is asked to do. He accepts his role, no matter what it is, and does it to the best of his ability.



**MARIA FRANCISCO**  
Walker-Hackensack-Akeley High  
School

Nominated by: Thomas McIver,  
Academic Dean of Students

Maria Francisco has truly overcome significant obstacles to arrive at this evening's celebration. It was just a few years ago she came from the Philippines to Chicago. Two years later, her family moved to Hackensack. In addition to a major cultural change, she had to overcome the English language barrier. She performed so well that, near the end of her junior year, she no longer needed English Language Learner assistance. She has become a highly respected 'A' honor roll student. Her optimistic outlook, friendly, supportive personality, and self-confidence have assisted her in becoming a fantastic person with a bright future. Maria plans on pursuing a career as a flight attendant following graduation.



**VIRGINIA (GINNY) STEWART**  
Walker-Hackensack-Akeley High  
School

Nominated by:  
Debbie Peterson, Science Teacher

Earning her diploma hasn't been easy for Ginny. Yet she has persevered over the past four years and is on track to graduate at the end of May. In fact, when some of her senior classmates have sought to take an easy schedule during their final year, Ginny has done the opposite. She has taken classes in all four core content areas; plus, she has chosen to study classes like Health Care Core Curriculum and Medical Terminology. These classes will better prepare for her pursuit of becoming a certified nursing assistant. Ginny will have the opportunity to display her greatest strengths: the ability to be kind and provide care for others. Despite many challenges she has faced during her early life, Ginny will no doubt make a significant difference in bettering the life of others.

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