

# Connections

**STAI**

uses the  
power of  
storytelling  
to teach



**Spring 2024**

Alumni Association and  
Development Foundation

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# President's Message



Welcome to another edition of Connections. Thank you for taking the time to check in with Minot State and learning more about a number of terrific alumni featured in this issue. We are in the midst of a busy spring semester and nearing the final stretch of the 2023-24 academic year.

MSU has hosted many significant events on campus this year, including last fall with North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum and First Lady Kathryn Burgum's Recovery Reinvented, a wonderful performance by the Oslo Chamber Choir from Norway, a town hall with Minneapolis Federal Reserve Bank CEO Neel Kashkari, and this winter with Minot Mayor Tom Ross's recent State of the City luncheon as well as the many regional and statewide high school competitions and tournaments. It is always nice welcoming guests from across the state and beyond to the beautiful MSU campus!

We were excited to announce our 2024 spring semester enrollment was up compared to last spring's student numbers. This is our first increase in several years due to some challenging demographic and external factors since the pandemic, and thanks to a number of new initiatives across campus, we are also looking forward to welcoming a strong class of freshmen next fall.

This spring, we are re-opening Hartnett Hall, which has been offline for nearly two years, during a \$26.6 million complete renovation. This wonderful new space, home to many classes and important academic programs, will be a showpiece facility at MSU for years to come. We look forward to welcoming you the next time you visit campus to see first-hand the terrific Hartnett upgrades.

As you know, MSU has a rich history of graduating students and preparing them for careers in banking and financial services. The cover story features professor Jerry Stai who has taught at MSU for the past quarter-century and has had such a profound and meaningful impact for so many of those students throughout the years.

In addition to the cover story, you will find profiles on many MSU alumni who are leading financial institutions throughout Minot and across the region. We are proud to have Brenda Foster, Blaine DesLauriers, Kelly Perrin, Terry Sandvold, Ryan Hertz, John Schwan, Kevin Vigested, and so many others in the financial industry as graduates of MSU. The companies they lead have also hired many MSU graduates over the years, regularly employ current students, and provide important internship opportunities.

Lastly, we have hosted multiple opportunities connecting MSU alumni, friends, and supporters both near and far from campus over the past few months. Attendance was strong, and you will see several photos in this issue highlighting those gatherings. Please join us as you are able for future events as we head toward the summer months.

Thank you for staying up-to-date with Minot State, and thank you for supporting our students. As always ... **GO BEAVERS!**

**Steven W. Shirley, Ph.D.**  
**President**

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When you  
come to my class...you and  
I are going to get to know  
each other. I tell my students  
they will be lifetime learners  
because I am.





# Stai uses the power of *storytelling* to teach

by Michael Linnell

SPEND TIME WITH JERRY STAI '75 AND YOU ARE going to get a story, an anecdote, or a tidbit from his life experiences.

Take a class from him, and it will be the biggest element you will take away from his lectures.

"When you come to my class, I take it personal," he said. "You and I are going to get to know each other. I tell my students they will be lifetime learners because I am. But I can't just sit there telling stories. I send out a PowerPoint — a road map — but I can veer off and it's not just a tangent. It is all to help them relate."

The formula has worked for nearly 25 years. But don't just take his word for that success. Stai revels in comments made by students during the University's annual evaluation process, including:

"Professor Stai makes class worth coming to. (He) relates class to real-world experiences that he has! He is extremely knowledgeable and willing to work with students."

"Real-life applications were heavily used, so I never wondered, 'Why do I need this?'"

"Mr. Stai is great about telling us real-world stories that apply to what we are learning. I think that really helped me not only grasp the concept but remember it on test day as well."

"I really enjoyed the way he conveyed, through his own lens of experiences, the information we were learning. He had personal stories and would apply various problems from them to the information we were learning. It made for an interesting and exciting way to learn the information."

After 25 years working in the banking industry — and a couple years teaching night classes as an adjunct professor — Stai became a full-time professor.

"In 1988, Dr. (Dale) Atwood '57 asked if I would like to teach a night class, and I thought, sure. Then he asked about another and another, so at one point, I was teaching three night classes and working," he recalls. "I never intended to do it full time but after a few years, my wife, Diane (Engel) '72, and I talked about it, and just like that, I did. It has been a wonderful time."

He stays connected to his banking days, however,

still serving on the Board of Directors and Trustee for Integrity/Viking Funds, as well as the chair of the Audit Committee.

Still the consummate educator, he uses those experiences to teach as well.

"I have board meetings with the mutual fund at the (College of Business) Slaaten Board Room and invite the students to come and talk about whatever they want; ask any question," he said.

Stai believes having a solid background in finance is beneficial for all students, not just those majoring in business.

"Finance courses at MSU will provide any student, finance major or not, the knowledge for a better life," he said. "MSU has graduates working in all facets of finance, including corporate financial management, entrepreneurship, banking, financial planning, investment management, and international finance."

Stai holds a Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA) designation and is proud to have helped guide several students to obtain the CFA designation — one of the most respected designations in finance and widely considered to be the gold standard in the field of investment analysis.

"Being around young people and seeing what they can do is a big part of why I do this," he said. "When you show someone something they didn't know about or help make someone's life better, and they are working on learning about it, and who they are, that's powerful. I take a personal interest in their development."

His enthusiasm for the world of finance is only matched by his exuberance for his counterparts in the department.

"A big part of the success of our students is the expertise of everyone in our department," Stai said. "David Frantsvog '04/'07, for example, teaches a personal finance course that I think every student should take and probably a lot of faculty members should too."

The success of Stai and his counterparts in the department are reflected in the success of many MSU students.

"We equip our finance majors with the theories, knowledge, and skills to take them anywhere," he said. "And, we have students all over the world excelling. When I tell students they can go anywhere in the world, I mean it." ■

# Fostering community

by Michael Linnell

## Early in her career at First Western Bank & Trust, **Brenda Foster '84/'92** received some sage advice.

"My first degree with Minot State was an associate in legal secretarial studies," she said. "The legal field interested me and I wasn't really sure what I wanted to do as a career. I was working in the trust department (at First Western), but I thought about leaving to go to a law firm.

"After some discussions with John Hoeven, now U.S. Sen. Hoeven, he encouraged me to go back to college to get a bachelor's degree. I worked full time and went to school full time to get it done. From there, I went into lending, liked it, and at that point, could have seen myself having a long career in the lending area. But things change. John left the bank to be president of the Bank of North Dakota, I just kept working and learning at First Western. One thing led to another, and longevity, knowledge of the bank, and my desire to help our customers led me to where I am today."

Foster has been with First Western for 42 years and now holds the title of chairman, president, and CEO. During her 42 years at the bank, the industry

has gone through many changes.

"I didn't have a computer, of course, when I started, and while it is hard to think about now, we filed checks by hand, which was one of my first jobs. We physically met with other banks and exchanged checks for clearing," she recalled. "The changes have been remarkable. But, for First Western, our passion for the community and being a partner with the community hasn't changed, it goes back to (bank founder) Jack Hoeven and his passion for the community."

Along with industry changes, First Western has grown up as well during her time. Some of the most significant changes took place during the global COVID-19 pandemic – an unprecedented time in the financial world.

"We grew up in Minot, our headquarters are in Minot, and we built the business here," Foster said. "We started as an agricultural bank and still have a nice ag portfolio but have expanded into commercial and real estate, trust, insurance, and leasing. We have

expanded our footprint into the Twin Cities, Sioux Falls, Fargo, and Bismarck.

"We bought Blackridge Bank, which had locations in Bismarck, Fargo, and the lakes country of Minnesota, and it really filled in our footprint, but it happened in 2019 when COVID hit, and we were doing the conversion during the heart of the pandemic. It was a challenging time trying to keep our team healthy and our new, extended team healthy. We got through it and figured out there wasn't anything we couldn't solve. The team learned a lot and rose to the occasion."

While Foster is considerably busy with her duties at First Western, she has found time to be a part of the Ninth District Federal Reserve Board, first on the nominating committee and then as a member of the board. She is in the second year of her second term.

"It has been a great experience, very rewarding," she said. "The opportunity knocked. My knowledge had been on banking and the regulatory side, but I've learned there is so much more to the Federal Reserve. I've

thoroughly enjoyed working with (Neel) Kashkari (president, Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis); he is passionate about the economy, and I am so impressed with the work he and the Ninth District does. It's very impactful."

While the Hoevens proved to be excellent mentors for Foster, their passion for the community continues to drive both her and First Western.

"It really started with Jack and how important the community was to him. And not only through monetary donations but community service, too," she said. "Everyone has a passion, and we make sure our employees have time to volunteer, from MSU, the Magic City Discovery Center, to the soup kitchen, to the zoo, Meals on Wheels, you name it. They all have an economic impact on the city, which is important both for the community itself and it helps to bring others to our community."

"If you find things for people to get involved in, they are more likely to give back. It is rewarding, it just feels good." ■





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# A chance beginning leads to dream career for DesLauriers

by Michael Linnell





THE DEMISE OF HIS FIRST BANKING opportunity ultimately fueled Blaine DesLauriers's '79 career dream.

After Midwest Federal Savings Bank ended up failing like many savings and loans in the late 1980s and early 1990s, DesLauriers was hired by a bank that had been around since 1910 out of Watford City, First International Bank & Trust (FIBT).

"The S&Ls were struggling," DesLauriers said. "I hung around with Midwest, knowing there were some opportunities because they had a lot of bank locations in North Dakota, and low and behold, First International out of Watford City purchased some of those bank locations. I ended up being hired to run

are going to work for an independent community bank, family-owned, and you are going to really enjoy that. He was spot on. Here I am 33 years later."

A young DesLauriers never dreamed of having success in the financial world. The first-generation college graduate credits football and early coaching mentors for deciding to attend Minot State.

"Like most kids, I really didn't know what I wanted to do after graduation. I thought about pharmacy or something in chemistry," he said. "I was the first one to go to college. My dad was a farmer, his dad was a farmer, and my great-grandfather migrated from Minnesota to homestead west of Sherwood.

the blue-collar field. I can remember helping wire a sign at Dakota Square Mall when it was being built, it was cold, the wind was blowing, and I was freezing. I met my fiancé, now wife Kathy (Hendershot) '80, for lunch and said I need to find a job where I can wear a suit and tie."

His football mentors at MSU and his mother instilled in him a strong sense of community and giving back.

"My mother was the volunteer. She worked on the farm as well, but she volunteered at the school, ran the church choir, and was our Cub Scout leader," DesLauriers said. "Once I got to MSU, Bert became a strong influence on me, a mentor. Gary Leslie '61, Dean Bachmeier, Wes Luther '54;



I remember this guy with the Resolution Trust Corporation telling me this was going to be a life-changing moment. You are going to work for an independent community bank, family-owned, and you are going to really enjoy that. He was spot on. Here I am 33 years later.



the operation in Minot; we have continued to grow and expand our footprint. It's been steady growth. We have since expanded into Arizona, Minnesota, and South Dakota.

"Through that, we've stayed with the idea that if a bank is to be successful, especially in a small town, you have to have a strong main street."

While he might not have recognized it at the moment, this was going to set in motion a career with FIBT to his current position as vice chair of the board of directors.

"When Steve (FIBT CEO/Chairman Stephen Stenehjem) met me for lunch and offered me the job, that was the goal," DesLauriers said. "I remember this guy with the Resolution Trust Corporation telling me this was going to be a life-changing moment. You

"My high school football coach was Rocky Hager '74, who went on to do great things at North Dakota State; he was the first one to tell me I could play college football. Bert Leidholt offered me a small scholarship, and at that point, I was gung-ho for playing football. I wasn't as sure about what to do as a major."

Football ended up inadvertently helping him shape a career where he could trade Carhartt overalls for suits and ties.

"I was working construction and making good money; maybe I'll become a master electrician," he recalled. "I enrolled in the electrical apprenticeship program with the goal of owning my own company. But my hands are so banged up from football that I couldn't see myself in

I saw those guys outside of the University doing things. It started with those coaches instilling a sense of community in me."

DesLauriers shares his company's passion for giving back to the community and is proud of their philanthropy in the region, especially at his alma mater.

"It has been the company's philosophy. We are always thinking about how we can give back – to youth activities and certainly to the colleges and universities in our area," DesLauriers said. "It's been fun to be involved with MSU and being part of changes at the Dome and Herb Parker Stadium. The campus was nice in '75, but nowhere near how it looks today." ■

# Perrin follows a distinctive path to education, career

by Michael Linnell

KELLY PERRIN '99 DIDN'T FOLLOW the typical path to his current position as Minot regional president of Bravera Bank.

But Perrin's path to – and through – his college career wasn't exactly typical.

"My path is pretty unique," he said. "I didn't move up through the bank the traditional way. My background is as a CPA (certified public accountant). I did that for 10 years, worked at a credit union for five years, and then was a credit risk officer for a bank. After the previous owner, who was the CFO, wanted to move, I became the CFO of United Community Bank. Then came some more changes, and I moved into the role of regional president.

"But I didn't go to college to be a CPA, I came down from Canada to get a criminal justice degree so I could join the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police)."

Perrin, who is originally from Grenfell, Saskatchewan, earned his degree in criminal justice and was set to join the RCMP but learned of an eight-year waiting list. Not wanting to return to Canada as he had made Minot his home, he investigated his options.

"I called U.S. Immigration and just asked what was the best way for a Canadian to stay," Perrin recalls. "They

said just about anything in the business world, so I weighed my options. I could have done a master's degree, but instead, I re-enrolled in business."

His path to accounting began by simply taking a class, but his fondness for the discipline was firmly rooted in the tutelage he received from Minot State professor Joan Houston.

"I hadn't taken a single class, not even in high school. But Joan Houston could explain it to me like no one else," he said. "To me, she was a kindergarten teacher at the university level. She was the one that got me into it; that was the start."

While he has moved away from the CPA world, he continues to rely on his accounting degree while managing Bravera Banks in the region, including Stanley, Drake, and Burlington.

"Every day, 100%, especially my time as CFO," Perrin said. "I fall back on it constantly. Bank balance sheets are different than business balance sheets; loans to banks are assets, loans to businesses are liabilities, but debits and credits always remain the same. My accounting brain kicks in. It's been vital for my career."

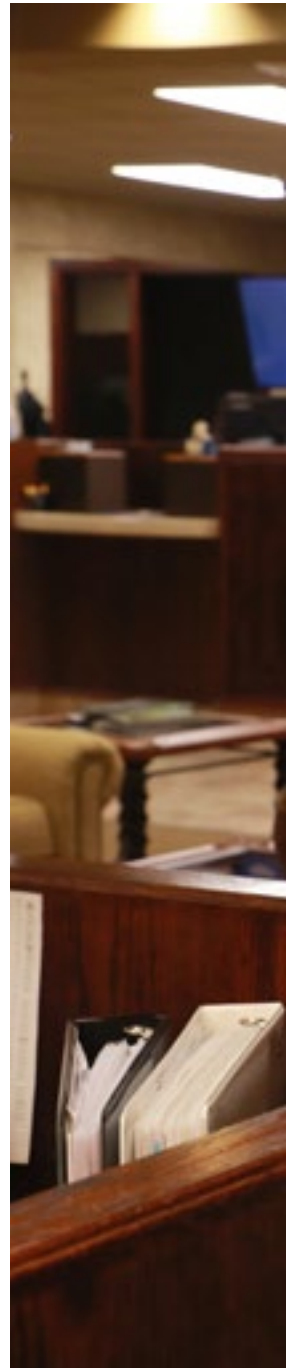
Perrin's accession to president of the Minot market at Bravera happened alongside changes in the company and worldwide upheaval of the financial markets following the

COVID-19 pandemic.

"The whole industry basically flipped-flopped in nine months," he said of the markets following the pandemic. "We use an interest rate risk model, and the rapid interest rate increase exceeded the modeling parameters. It's been an unprecedented time, and we are constantly working on ways to be competitive.

"American Bank Center purchased United Community Bank in 2015. In 2020, they decided to implement a new branding change to Bravera as they expanded. In certain areas, there might be several banks with American in their name and you can't trademark that. The biggest change for us is it moved us from a \$400 million bank to a \$3 billion bank."

That change helped lead Bravera to a distinctive position with Minot State, becoming the first corporate sponsor of MSU Beavers FC, the men's club soccer team. For a parent







of three soccer-playing daughters, it was a gratifying moment for Perrin.

"It was huge," he said of the day MSU announced the deal. "I didn't play soccer, but I have three girls who all do, and our family has been very involved in soccer in Minot through the club. There is a reason it is the No. 1 sport in the world, and the U.S. hasn't quite caught up yet, but I think

it is changing. I was excited Bravera and MSU started this partnership.

"The likelihood to be a part of this partnership may not have happened if we were still United Community Bank. But now, with Bravera, we can compete with or at least be in the same sentence with others, and that's a game changer." ■

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# Just *Try* it

by Emily Schmidt

**Terry Sandvold '77** has had a passion for investing since he started his first savings account in early elementary school.

Working as a package delivery driver throughout college, the finance major from Minot was hesitant to take a pay cut and pursue his first job in his field.

"If I never try it, I'll never know," he said.

He became assistant manager at a firm on Main Street in Minot, providing second mortgages and retail financing. It wasn't exactly what he wanted to do, but he knew the experience in the industry would benefit him in the long run.

Eventually, Sandvold stumbled upon another opportunity that was too good to pass. He walked through Dakota Square Mall as it was being constructed and met the vice president of a national shoe store chain.

"I was just curious to see what was going on in there," said Sandvold. "We started talking, and he said, 'I run stores in Minnesota. Would you ever consider moving?'"

The vice president offered to hire Sandvold as assistant manager and pay for his moving expenses. Having already discussed potentially moving to Minnesota with his wife, Lynda (Stevenson) '76, Sandvold decided to take a chance.

"If we never tried, we were never going to know," he said. "Neither one of us knew what the future was going to hold. We just knew that we were hard workers and dedicated to making something happen."

In the three years he worked there, he tripled the business at one location and increased it by 50% at another. The company eventually offered to transfer him to their biggest location, in New York City, but he longed to return to his passion and pivot back to finance.

While he returned as a financial advisor, Sandvold was in a new market and worked hard to find connections near him. Some worked out, and some didn't. Nevertheless, in his first year as a financial advisor, he won rookie of the year. When he received his award, he was reunited with a familiar face.



"One firm told me when I first got started that they didn't have room for me. At the awards banquet, the lady who turned me down was the one who gave me the award," he said. "After the event, the CEO of that company said, 'I understand we made a terrible mistake. Here's my card. Would you join our group?' They've reached out to me every two, three years over my whole career."

Sandvold never took the offer. Instead, he founded his own firm, Sandvold Financial Group, in Minnetonka, Minnesota, and he always puts his clients first.



“ If we never tried, we were never going to know... we were hard workers and dedicated to making something happen. ”

“Over the years, when we go to all these conventions, the first thing I say to the advisors sitting in the audience is, ‘Hopefully, you’re all here because your clients succeeded first,’” he said. “There’s a lot of aggressive salespeople in our business. I always tell our clients that I’m not that type of person. I’m one to earn your business by proving what we can do.”

Sandvold Financial Group hosts a weekly radio show called “Money Talks,” and members of the team are active in the community, including the Alzheimer’s Association, American Cancer Society, and the board for CEOs Against Cancer. The firm is also creating the Sandvold Lakeshore Learning Center in a historical railroad house in Wayzata, Minnesota, to promote science, technology, engineering, arts, and math education for all ages.

As the Sandvolds say, “Not too bad for two kids from Minot, North Dakota.” ■





# Hertz moves up through the ranks

by Michael Linnell

RYAN HERTZ '00 BEGAN HIS banking career in the fall of 2001 in what is considered the quintessential entry-level position.

"I started as a teller; in fact, I was a part-time teller at first," he said. "From there, I moved to full time, jumped into the personal banking world, consumer lending, tiptoed into business lending, and eventually had the opportunity to replace my predecessor as market president.

"It's an industry where if you work hard, you can definitely work your way up."

Hertz has found a level of stability at Dacotah Bank that better suited him than his first career as a financial planner.

"The dream out of college was to be self-employed, make a ton of money managing other people's money, and golf more than I worked," he said. "But the economy dictates some of that and it was an uphill battle being a 21-, 22-year-old coming out of college working on straight commission. I took a step back. I got married and decided I needed to do what was best for my family."

His employment at Dacotah Bank also offered him and his family greater permanency than he had growing up as a military kid.

"I was born in an Air Force family and moved around every three to five years. We were in Japan for three years, Virginia, Denver, Abilene, Texas, so all

over," he said. "My parents are Bismarck-Mandan natives, so when it came time to retire, my dad retired in Minot.

"I came here in eighth grade and my wife, Erin, is rooted in Minot, so it's home. When you spend no more than five years anywhere growing up and then you spend the next 20-plus years in the same community, it becomes home. We like everything about Minot, except maybe the winter weather."

While he enjoys the sense of stability, he and Dacotah Bank have tried to pass that along to the next generation of students.

"All the communities we work in have a university, and we understand we should be very present with time and dollars to support that," Hertz said. "It's important to touch the lives of the students in our area, that's the next generation of employees. It's been a focus of ours for the last five or six years, and from our Academy program, we created a robust, summer-long internship program that we call Dacotah Grown. We provide our interns the experience of every aspect of banking as well as getting them involved within the community."

While Hertz moved up through the ranks, Dacotah Bank thrived. He has been at the bank for 17 years, now overseeing Minot and Bowbells, managing a staff of 20 between the two markets. He likens his position

to the ultimate cheerleader for his staff.

"I've seen a lot of growth with Dacotah Bank, most recently expanding into Bismarck and Fargo for a larger presence in North Dakota, and our most recent venture is a corporate bank in Minneapolis," he said. "In Minot, I came on just after we built our new location on South Broadway, so we had a presence here before, but we're expanding.

"A big part of what I do now is encourage our staff to get out in the community and meet with businesses, expand marketing and PR opportunities to grow our footprint, and get our brand into the marketplace. At the end of the day, I'm doing what I can to empower our staff."

His involvement with his alma mater mirrors that.

"On a personal level, the time I've invested in Minot State has been fruitful," Hertz said. "I spent 10 years on the MSU Alumni Association board and served as president. I think it is important to give back to the University that gave me so much.

"I got to meet a lot of great people and have stayed in touch with many of them. I started out with (former vice president for advancement) Marv Semrau, and to this day, if I see Marv and Barb out, I have to give them a big hug. It's the lives that you touch that matter." ■



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# People *and* process

by Emily Schmidt

**John Schwan '82** wouldn't be where he is today without getting to know the good people who have shaped him as a person.

Schwan was born in Minot and graduated high school in Miles City, Montana. He returned to Minot to study to be an educator and play basketball for the Beavers.

Working at a local business, however, opened his eyes to financial services, the path his father took after retiring from education and coaching, and where Schwan is today.

"I had great experience working with people at Minot Restaurant Supply while going to college," he said. "I really enjoyed meeting people with different business backgrounds, so I thought financial services would be good for me to meet a lot of people, work with them, and build a network."

The first job Schwan took after graduating was working in sales for a radio station that a family friend purchased in Aberdeen, South Dakota.

"He was a great recruiter," he said. "He convinced me that I would meet a bunch of people and learn a lot about businesses because that's who we called on for the radio station. He was 100% right."

After two years there, Schwan started Schwan

Financial Group in Aberdeen and began working with small businesses himself. While he initially was the only member, he did not open his business alone. His wife, Laurie, did all the bookwork for the company's first 15 years, and a personal business coach helped him develop the Master Plan System that has made Schwan Financial Group successful.

"We do everything in a repeatable format because that's how you deliver the results," Schwan said. "Everything was designed to customize something for each person or family. If the people you work with don't win, you don't win and the company you are building doesn't win. The culture at Schwan Financial Group today is 100% about that."

Now in their 40th year, Schwan Financial Group operates in 35 states. Of their clientele, 90% are family-owned businesses or privately held wealth, and over 40 families have successfully transferred their wealth to the next generation after the first generation passed. All of their clients have found Schwan through personal referral or through other

professionals in law, accounting, or banking.

Still, Schwan continues to develop his company, perfect his processes, and build a quality team to ensure they serve their clients well.

"I joined a national study group of 10 to 12 businesses who are successful in what we do," he said. "We've met once a year for 30 years now and have become great friends. That's been a big part of our growth."

"I've got great people around me. Nobody does this alone, and when I was the commencement speaker for Minot State (at the 107th Commencement in 2022), that was my story. If you want to build something big and do it alone, it's not going to be very

successful. You need to have a lot of great people, a culture."

Schwan's own process of finding his value in people started with playing basketball for his father and the teams at Minot State.

"I credit much of my learning experiences about commitment, hard work, and humility to being part of the people at Minot State," he said. "I had great access to Wes Luther '54, Ken Becker, my relatives, my uncle Jerry Schwan '71, friends. I've not lost touch with people I played ball with, went to school with. Those are big things in life. I learned a lot from them at early stages in life, and you don't forget those lessons." ■







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# Alum from DAY one

## Emma Taylor

Tioga • business education

### Why did you choose Minot State?

I chose Minot State because it was the most affordable and has an excellent reputation for its business department.



### How has Minot State helped you further your academic career?

MSU provides classes in my specific career field with excellent professors who are more than willing to offer advice.

### What has been your favorite class?

Personal finance with David Frantsvog '04/'07. It's extremely relatable to our personal lives and finances.

### Who has been your most influential professor?

KateLynn Albers '15, accounting. She has encouraged me to not only focus on my physical health, but also my mental health, embrace our quirks, and enjoy every aspect of college.

### What is the best kept secret about Minot State?

The energy of the MSU community and the students' obsession with bingo.

### What is your most memorable moment at MSU?

Attending an MSU Life Event called Flannel Fest.

## Blake Espino

Fairfield, California • physical education

### Why did you choose Minot State?

The atmosphere of the whole campus – it felt like a place where I could connect, grow, and extend my academic and athletic career. I was also given the opportunity to play football with my brother (Emmett) again.

### How has Minot State helped you further your academic career?

As I pursue my passion for being a physical educator, I credit MSU's dedicated professors and organizations as they have provided me with exceptional first-hand experience.

### What has been your favorite class?

Kinesiology 107: Introduction to Physical Education, with Kelsey Higginson, allowed my mindset and perceptions about teaching to be challenged.



### What is the best kept secret about Minot State?

How much professors genuinely care for their students.

### What is your most memorable moment at MSU?

So far, it would be leading my first bingo for MSU Life with my older brother, Emmett, right by my side.



JUNIOR



## Emma-Leigh Cornejo

Coos Bay, Oregon • pre-medical studies (biology) and nursing

### Why did you choose Minot State?

I had to go where I could be the most successful student and afford it because medical school is going to be the next important thing.

### How has Minot State helped you further your academic career?

Minot has furthered my academic career by consistently challenging me with new opportunities.

### What has been your favorite class?

Microbiology. I learned more than I thought was possible, enjoyed everything I learned, and never felt that it was above what I could handle.

### Who has been your most influential professor?

Rachel Schomaker, biology. I cannot say enough wonderful things about her. She was my microbiology professor, and she made that class as wonderful as it was.

### What is the best kept secret about Minot State?

Everybody can come to school here and feel like they fit in. There is a group and an opportunity for everyone.

### What is your most memorable moment at MSU?

When we went to a Halloween party in Lura Manor. There was tons of food, activities, and games. They even had a murder mystery for us all to solve, it was amazing.

## Hailee Fletcher

Minot • nursing, concentration in biology

### Why did you choose Minot State?

I transferred from the University of Mary to be close to home and have a stronger support network from my family, friends, and community.

### How has Minot State helped you further your academic career?

I have been able to meet peers from across the country, engage my leadership skills daily, and have a well-rounded education – all while being in my hometown.

### What has been your favorite class?

Adult Health III: Critical Care Nursing.

### Who has been your most influential professor?

It's impossible to pick just one – the entire nursing department has been incredibly supportive and influential in their own way.

### What is the best kept secret about Minot State?

The snack shack in the nursing department. You can stock up on snacks and drinks while you hunker down to study.

### What is your most memorable moment at MSU?

Building an airplane for the Nursing Student Association '80s Homecoming float. Our theme was Top Gun!

SENIOR





# Alum from DAY one



## Lisa Jundt

Minot • graduate leadership certificate

### Why did you choose Minot State?

I am the human resource director for the City of Minot and have a busy schedule. The class schedule and proximity enabled me to attend class in person which allowed for more active engagement.

### How has Minot State helped you further your academic career?

The graduate leadership certificate program provides an opportunity for active executives to further their education and personal development.

### What has been your favorite class?

Talent management and people analytics. I was pleased with the class engagement and individual participation in the classroom setting.

### Who has been your most influential professor?

Cyriac Joy is very knowledgeable and encourages students to give personal views on the subject matter presented.



### What is the best kept secret about Minot State?

MSU provides large-scale university advantages in a smaller, intimate setting for students.



## Emily Norman '22

Las Vegas, Nevada • professional communication

### Why did you choose Minot State?

I was looking for an affordable out-of-state school and knew that I wanted to be on a smaller campus. As an admissions counselor, I get to help so many different types of students, which is very rewarding.

### How has Minot State helped you further your academic career?

Since working at MSU, I have been inspired to continue my education. Currently, I am working on a Master of Education degree.

### What has been your favorite class?

Social media. Each week, we made a blog post with specific prompts, and it was a unique way to creatively think about possible career fields.

### Who has been your most influential professor?

Neil Roberts and Lee Johnson '09. They were very supportive and instilled confidence in my academic abilities.

### What is the best kept secret about Minot State?

I have always appreciated how friendly and supportive everyone is on campus.

### What is your most memorable moment at MSU?

My entire time in the professional communication department. I made lifelong friends and will always be grateful for those connections.

# WHERE are they NOW

by Veronica Corey

## Sando continues service-first life

BOB SANDO TRACES HIS LIFELONG CALLING TO ONE of the first things he noticed on campus during his job interview.

"I turned into the parking lot, and something caught my eye that impressed me and had an effect on me, even to this day," he said. "There was a sign with the motto of Minot Teachers College, as it was known then, that said, 'Service First.' Service has been a big part of my life."

From an impromptu interview for a temporary position to 36 years of dedicated service at Minot State as a business faculty member, department chair, and ultimately the Dean of the College of Business, his commitment to serving others was unwavering.

"I left my wife in the hospital in Grand Forks with our firstborn, got up with the chickens first thing in the morning, and drove to Minot to interview with Dale Atwood '57," he reflected. "I was offered the job, came here the next year, and immediately started working on my doctorate, which was the smartest thing I ever did. I served on almost every committee on campus and was probably the chairman of almost all of them as well."

"Part of what kept me at Minot State was my involvement in so many things, chaired search committees for presidents and athletic directors."

Sando's service extended past MSU and spread throughout the community.

"I was active in the Minot Area Development Corporation, the Magic Fund, the city planning commission, you name it," he said. "When I retired, I got very active with the Scandinavian Heritage Association. I was on their board and volunteered almost daily to work on various projects in the park."

"I eventually became a member of Sertoma, which is an acronym for service to mankind. I've been setting up

the Sertoma Christmas display for many years and will continue to set up the First Lutheran Church display."

Sando and his wife, Ilze, who passed away in 2006, were advocates for MSU students and student-athletes.

"I have been very involved with athletics, including donating money to athletics. My and my wife's names are on the soccer team room, and I'm very proud of that," he said. "Many of the recipients of my scholarship have been student-athletes and some of the best players on their teams."

In retirement, Sando relishes attending as many Minot State athletic events as possible. When he travels south during the winter, he still seeks the thrill of the game.

"I've been going to South Padre Island, Texas for about 20 years now," Sando said. "I would stay with my daughter in Pflugerville, Texas, a suburb out of Austin, and go over to the University of Texas to squeeze in about as many athletic events as I could. I saw (NBA star) Kevin Durant



play, I watched (WNBA's) Brittney Griner, who played for Baylor, play numerous times, and got to see UT's Cat Osterman pitch — they were some tremendous players. I've had some wonderful experiences in Austin."

With his first position at MSU a temporary appointment, Sando was most likely thinking his time was limited with the University. He is glad it didn't end there.

"That was probably the thought at the time," he said about leaving after his temporary assignment was done. "It worked out that I could stay here and I have been forever grateful. I've enjoyed my career here immensely, and when I retired here, the story that was done said that if I bled, it would be the school colors." ■



# Brose stays home for education

by Emma Cornejo

THIRD-GENERATION MINOT STATE STUDENT Cole Brose '21 decided to stay local and continue his education at Minot State University after high school.

"I didn't want to get away from Minot," said Brose. "I didn't want to move away from family, it was affordable, and you get a quality education."

Brose started his academic career undecided on a major but eventually felt management and entrepreneurship best fit his talents.

"I had no idea what I was going for," Brose said. "So, I decided to go for business, thinking it was general enough to find something. I worked three part-time jobs during college, and I knew that none of them were what I wanted to do as a career."

"I started part time as a teller and went from there."

Throughout his time, first at another financial institution and then at First Western Bank & Trust (FWBT) starting in 2022, he has swiftly worked his way up the ladder. He moved into consumer lending when he joined FWBT, focusing on auto, construction, and home equity loans. His financial evolution brought him into his current position as a commercial banker.

"We strive to build strong customer relationships," Brose said. "We navigate through the unique circumstances of each business owner and find the products that best fit their need."

Despite Brose being unsure of what his career would look like while at MSU, he quickly found a passion in banking, finding that this

area of work nurtured his adoration for working with people and numbers.

"Once I started as a teller, I found it interesting; just balancing was a fascinating process to me. It sparked an interest, and I just kept going with it," he said.

Looking back on his time at Minot State, he owes much of his career path to the ability to dabble in multiple business fields and subject matter.

"I believe that without my experience, education, and degree, I would not be able to have the job I currently have," he said. "I can apply what I learned in my business classes to my everyday job. My favorite class was business law. It was an insightful class."

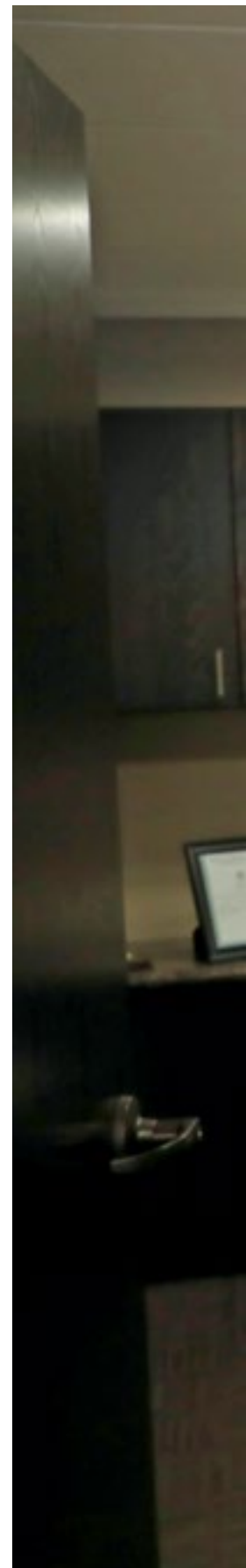
Along with his academics, Brose continued to make connections at Minot State through MSU Life and serving on student government as VP of finance. While he enjoys traditional hobbies like hunting, fishing, and golf, he has a unique hobby in aviation.

"In high school, there was an aviation class, and I thought I wanted to fly as a career," Brose said. "I quickly learned how expensive flight school was, and I decided to get my private license as a hobby."

He might not have as much free time for hobbies as he and his wife, Ashlyn (Almy) '21, welcomed a second child in February.

As both his banking career and his home life continue to develop at a rapid pace, his mantra remains simple.

"I want to continue to grow and learn as a person" he said. ■







“ I believe that without my experience, education, and degree, I would not be able to have the job I currently have. I can apply what I learned in my business classes to my everyday job. ”

# First International Bank & Trust



# Rising through the bank

by Emily Schmidt

ONE OF THE PHILLIPSES discovered their passion at Minot State University. The other studied what they thought would be their dream career.

They both ended up in banking.

Preston Phillips '10 graduated from Bishop Ryan Catholic School. Without a set plan for college, he stayed in Minot with his friends and family. He knew he wanted to pursue a financial career, but he wasn't certain where that would lead him.

Thanks to an internship at First International Bank & Trust in Minot, Preston found banking.

"I credit Minot State for that opportunity," Preston said. "Without it, I don't know if I would have entered into banking. My advisor, Jerry Stai '75, brought passion to his

lectures that resonated with me. His connections in the community led me to the internship where I saw all departments of a bank. It gave me that same passion."

While Preston was unsure of his path, Jessica (Demory) Phillips '14 was the opposite. She knew since she was a kid working at her family's grocery store in Harvey that she wanted to be an accountant – or so she thought. Offered a full-ride scholarship for her first year, Jessica chose to study accounting close to home.

"Growing up, I thought that accounting was what I wanted to do. I helped my mom do the charge slips and bill people out. I felt happy doing that. It developed into something different, but it was all-important to where I

am today," she said. "If I needed one-on-one attention, the professors were open to discuss problems. The smaller intimate classrooms cultivated a learning environment where I could expand my knowledge base from my peers."

Preston and Jessica's paths crossed at First International Bank in 2012. They each started as credit analysts in their first full-time roles and have risen through the ranks to find fields where they can make a difference in Minot.

For Jessica, that's serving as a senior trust officer. After her year as a credit analyst, she reevaluated the accounting path. Something was missing. As she was studying for her certification, she came to a realization.

"I think I am more social than what I'm telling myself," she said. "I was intrigued by the financial side. I was able to be both behind the scenes and in front of customers in the perfect mix."

She transitioned to the trust department in 2015 and has led it locally since 2022.

Similar to Jessica, building relationships with clients was essential to Preston when choosing to pursue business banking. Today, he is vice president of commercial lending.

"I'm very relationship-driven," he said. "A lot of that started at Minot State. Being a smaller campus, you get to know your professors and develop connections with them. Many had relationships with people throughout the community and could put me in contact. Minot State taught me to develop relationships, and that's been key to my success."

Preston and Jessica married in 2017. Working together has brought new growth to their relationship, both professionally and personally.

"With both of us having very demanding careers, we can understand each other's stressors and be one another's support system at both the office and raising two young children at home," said Preston.

"That's been an important part of us being at First International. Not only do they believe in family time, but also to be involved in the community," added Jessica. "Preston and I are very involved in the Minot community. Minot State is a huge part of that, and we're grateful the college was here for that start." ■

“Being a smaller campus, you get to know your professors and develop connections with them...Minot State taught me to develop relationships, and that's been key to my success.”

- Preston Phillips





# Vigested relishes opportunity to help members through Aspire

by Michael Linnell

KEVIN VIGESTED '00 KNEW HE was filling large shoes when he was hired to replace retiring Aspire Credit Union CEO Mindee Kohlman.

Within the first two weeks on the job, however, it was made apparent just how big those shoes were.

"I guess I knew what I was getting into for the most part, but two weeks in, Mindee's getting inducted into the Credit Union Hall of Fame in North Dakota. We all go to Fargo for the event and people are lined up to congratulate her and get a chance to visit with her. She's a credit union legend. At that point, it all sunk in — I will have to work to replace someone this great."

While that might have been daunting, Vigested came to find it was more of a blessing than a curse.

"Mindee's work with the staff was second-to-none and she helped me get comfortable with the team," he said. "We have a great staff here at Aspire. With the work she did, things were going well here, so I didn't need to come here and save a sinking ship. It's been a great transition."

Vigested spent the past 19 years in the lending business working for First International Bank & Trust (FIBT), including being branch manager since 2016. While he credits FIBT and Blaine DesLauriers '79 for much of his current success, he felt it was time to move on.

"I have a lot of respect for First International and a lot of respect for Blaine, especially since he took a chance on me 19 years ago," Vigested said. "When I heard Mindee was retiring, I felt this opportunity at Aspire was right: the right

size company, the right staff, a family atmosphere, everything felt comfortable."

While there are overlaps in services offered between his former life at a bank and his new endeavor at a credit union, Vigested has been invigorated with what he feels are the key differences.

"You know, the intrinsic rates and loans, we are all fighting for the same," he said. "But the credit union truly has a family feel, the term we use is 'people helping people.' We are genuinely there to help our members."

Vigested began his college career not overly thinking about a professional life. He earned a college scholarship to play basketball and thought a teaching degree might be the best option. He had a love of accounting from a course in high school, and that blossomed through the mentorship of former MSU professor Joan Houston.

"I think it goes back to my time in high school in Sawyer, I was a part of the first class that offered accounting as an elective. I think there were five of us, and if we had a problem and asked the teacher, they were learning along with the students," he recalled. "It wasn't until my junior year at MSU that I started to think about accounting and took a class. Joan Houston became my advisor and mentor, and she was amazing. She kept me on the right path."

His blend of accounting and being a student-athlete on scholarship has resonated with him throughout his career, serving three terms as Beaver Booster Board president.

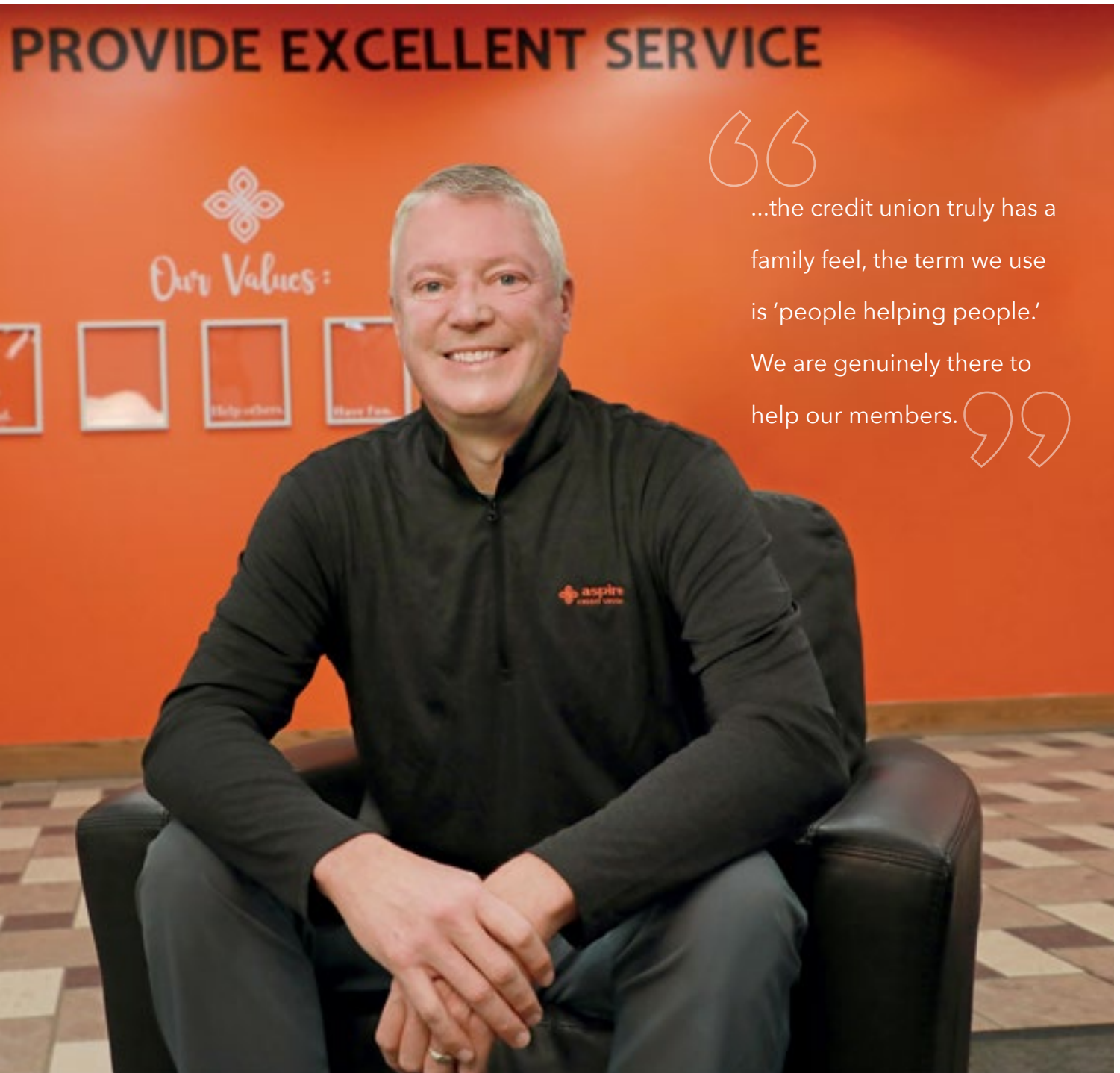


"For me, I was blessed enough to get a scholarship for basketball, and I want to pass that on to others," he said. "I know how hard it is to be a student-athlete, it's basically a full-time job. It's nice to help out with the financial burden."

Along with Houston on the academic side, he credits coaches and former teammates as individuals who have inspired him.

"Coach (Dick) Limke '63 was a big mentor of mine in college," he said. "It was impressive the amount

of leaders we had on the basketball teams in the late '90s. We maybe didn't win as many games as we would have liked, but we had some successful professionals come out of those years." ■



“...the credit union truly has a family feel, the term we use is ‘people helping people.’ We are genuinely there to help our members.”

## Development Foundation

THE SIXTH ANNUAL MSU GIVING DAY WILL BE HELD ON WEDNESDAY, APRIL 10. MSU Giving Day is a 24-hour period focused on supporting those things that mean the most to you. We've been extremely fortunate over the previous five giving days as literally thousands of you have stepped forward in support of campus projects and student scholarships.

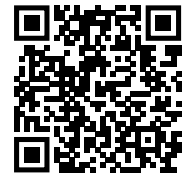
Every member of our community can make an impact on Giving Day. With matching funds and challenges available, your gift can go even further. Giving Day 2023 raised more than \$366,000 with 1,176 donors making 1,695 gifts. A total of 65 different designations, including scholarships, academic programs, student life funds, and Beaver Athletics, received gifts in just 24 hours.

We are currently in the final year of our EMPOWER Capital Campaign. As we strive for the finish line of this historic campaign, this is the perfect opportunity to invest in important strategic initiatives. MSU Giving Day has become an annual tradition that brings our campus community together. We hope you will consider a gift on April 10 in support of MSU. Onward Beavers! ■



*Rick Hedberg '89, Vice President for Advancement  
Executive Director, Development Foundation  
Rick.Hedberg@MinotStateU.edu • 701-858-4483*

EMPOWER



[MinotStateU.edu/Empower](https://MinotStateU.edu/Empower)

The Alumni Association is now accepting nominations for the 2024

## GOLDEN AWARDS AND YOUNG ALUMNI ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

**NOMINATE AN ALUM** who has excelled in his/her profession, in service to their community, or in service to Minot State. **SCAN THE QR CODE** or **VISIT [MinotStateU.edu/alumni](https://MinotStateU.edu/alumni)** to complete the nomination form and for a full list of qualification criteria and former awardees.

**Deadline to submit nominations is March 31, 2024.**

For more information call the Alumni Office at 701-858-3373 or 800-777-0750.





# MINOT STATE GIVING DAY

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50% match  
on gifts  
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to support



Exclusive matches  
and challenges  
on select projects

View the 60+ projects at  
**GIVE.MinotStateU.edu**



MINOT STATE UNIVERSITY  
Alumni Association's  
40th Annual



Elegant dinner



Live auction



Mobile bidding

# 2024 Gala & auction & dinner

Friday, May 17

The Clarion Hotel

Contact the MSU Alumni Office at 701-858-3234,  
scan the QR code, or visit [MinotStateU.edu/Alumni](http://MinotStateU.edu/Alumni).




## ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

# Upcoming **EVENTS**

MSU Night at  
 **MAGIC CITY  
DISCOVERY  
CENTER**  
**April 23**  
Sponsored by  
 **BRAVERA**

Friend-Raising  
**GOLF  
TOUR**  
  
**June 11** VELVA  
**June 25** GARRISON  
**Aug. 1** KENMARE

Alumni &  
Friends Night  
  
**June 6**

Alumni &  
Friends Social  
**FARGO**  
  
**June 20**

2024  
North Dakota  
State Fair  
  
**July 24**

SAVE THE DATE:  
**HOMECOMING**  
  
**SEPTEMBER  
10 - 14**



# Alumni & friends FALL/WINTER EVENTS

## Berry Acres Pumpkin Patch



## Alumni Speaker Series: Monte Yellow Bird Sr.



## Bingo Night at Spicy Pie





# Rhine River Cruise



# Alumni Appreciation Night at the Dome





# Denver Social



# Florida Socials





1970



**Charles Notbohm**, dealer principal at Notbohm Motors Inc., a Chevrolet dealership in Miles City, Montana, was nominated for the 2024 TIME Dealer of the Year Award. Notbohm is one of 49 dealer nominees from across the country who will be honored at the 107th annual National Automobile Dealers Association Show in Las Vegas, Nevada. The award is one of the automobile industry's most prestigious and highly coveted honors. It recognizes the nation's most successful auto dealers who also demonstrate a long-standing commitment to community service.

1977



**Mike Elgie** was posthumously inducted into the North Dakota Officials Association 2023-24 Hall of Fame. Elgie officiated football for 47 consecutive seasons. He worked over 1,000 football games in his career from junior high, sub-varsity, varsity, and high school football playoff games, worked six North Dakota High School Activities Association football championship games, and worked for 20-plus seasons as a college football official. He was selected as a North Dakota Officials Association Football Official of the Year and was an NDHSAA Officials Workshop supervisor and game scheduler for the Minot Football Officials Association. One of Elgie's proudest moments, and highlight of his officiating career, was being able to officiate football games with his two sons on the crew. He passed away in 2020 and is survived by his wife, Tammy (Gandrud) '83; son Zac (Liz (Nelson) '17) and their children, Jaxen Michael and Charli Kay; and son Luke '16 (Katie).

1979



**Jane Kostenko '79/'80** and her husband, J. Tyler Bell, were awarded the Cross Bottony from Historic St. Mary's City at the Maryland Day 2023 ceremony. The Cross Bottony is the museum's highest honor and was bestowed on them for their 40 years of volunteer service. They were also presented with citations from the Maryland General Assembly.

1981

**Steve Perry** was selected as a 2024 board director for the Ward County Historical Society.

1983



**Sherry Niesar** has joined the faculty of the United Tribes Technical College in the new wildlife biology program. She continues to manage the North Dakota Game and Fish Department's Habitats of North Dakota education program.

1988



**Vicki (Greel) Michels**, Minot State chair and professor in addiction studies, organized and moderated the panel of four brave students who went on stage and talked about their recovery from drug and alcohol addiction during Recovery Reinvented at Ann Nicole Nelson Hall.

**Michelle (Kleven) Peterson** joined First Western Bank & Trust - Minot region as a retail manager. Peterson grew up in Berthold and has over 35 years of banking and financial experience. She is a board member of the Pass the Hat Foundation and a past member of the Minot State University Accounting Advisory Board.

1990

**Ken Arneson** recently celebrated his 25th anniversary at the Evergreen Retirement Community in Oshkosh, Wisconsin. He currently serves as president and CEO.



**Cheryl (Tryhus) Nilsen**, Minot State professor emerita, was awarded the 2022-23 Service to the Profession Award by the Communication Speech and Theatre Association of North Dakota at its September conference in Mandan. The award was given in recognition for the work Nilsen does managing, scheduling, and adjudicating speech meets and adjudicating one-act play competitions.

1991



**Robert Hubbard**, professor of theatre at Northwestern College and MSU Academic Hall of Fame inductee, is the author of a recently published book titled, "Scenes With My Son: Love and Grief in the Wake of Suicide." The book is a poignant tribute to his son, Auggie, who took his life at the age of 19 after struggling with clinical depression for more than five years.

1992



**Laurie (Gerhardt) Weber '92/'02**, Minot State University director of financial aid, earned the prestigious FAAC® designation through NASFAA's Certified Financial Aid Administrator Program. Weber became one of two professionals in North Dakota with the certification. Fewer than 500 professionals nationwide hold the honor. The certification requires passing a comprehensive exam, achieving sufficient industry-related experience, and commitment to standards for ethical behavior. Maintenance of the designation requires on-going growth and development activities,

continuing education, qualifying leadership, instruction, authorship, advocacy, and other activities.

1994



**John Drady**, First International Bank & Trust market president of the Central North Dakota region and overseer of the treasury management team, is the recipient of the 2023 Odin Award. Named after Odin Stenehjem, who founded the bank in 1910, the award is given annually to the employee who best exemplifies FIBT's mission, vision, and values.

1995



**Jason Harris** was inducted into the Dakota College at Bottineau Athletic Hall of Fame.

1996

**John Alstad** was selected as a 2023 National Distinguished Principal by the National Association of Elementary School Principals. Currently serving as principal at John Hoeven Elementary School, Alstad is proud to have served the profession in local, state, and national leadership roles, and he regularly provides mentorship of both current and preservice teachers.

1999



**Chad Fenner**, Minot State College of Business assistant professor, was appointed as chair of the Dakota Digital Academy/TechND Workforce Advisory Committee. The Dakota Digital Academy (DDA) provides digital-cyber oriented education, training, and knowledge that is produced collaboratively across the 11 institutions of the North Dakota University System. The Technology Council of North Dakota (TechND) represents



software developers, telecommunications companies, internet providers and content developers, system integrators, educational institutions, state agencies, and manufacturers across North Dakota. Working collaboratively, the DDA and TechND workforce advisory committee will forge digital and cyber educational needs to meet current and future workforce needs.

## 2000



**Evan Borisinkoff**, Minot State Department of Special Education associate professor, received an

outbound award from the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. He traveled to Kampala, Uganda as part of the Professional Fellows Program on Civic Engagement implemented by the Institute for Community Inclusion at UMass Boston and Humanity and Inclusion. Borisinkoff assisted professional fellow Priscilla Kisakye Mugume, a lobby and advocacy officer at the Uganda Society for Disabled Children, with her project on increasing parent involvement in the participatory budgeting process to improve inclusive education efforts for children with disabilities.

## 2001



**Corey Gorder** has taken a new position at Dakota College at Bottineau and will now serve as associate dean for student services. He was previously the Athletic Director and a counselor at the college.

## 2002



**Valerie (Dunn) Heilman**, Bottineau High School marketing education teacher, received the Next

Gen Personal Finance's (NGPF) Distinguished Educator Award, joining only 785 other teachers across the United States who have earned the title.

## 2003



**Amanda Francis**, who has worked as a graphic design specialist in Minot State Design and Print Services for the

past 11 years, was named director of the department in December. Francis is a small-business owner as a jewelry designer and mixed media artist.



**Karna Taft** has been elected to the Souris Valley United Way board. She is VP retail manager at Town & Country Credit Union, Minot main.

**Deandra Witt** has joined the Garrison School District as an elementary school special education instructor. Witt has a decade of hands-on experience within school settings as a special education aide.

## 2004

**Tanya (Werner) Cowart** and Lisa Hermosillo have formed a new peer support group to create community connections and promote mental health. Talk United Minot will bring together airmen at Minot Air Force Base and community members from Minot for a socially centered, no judgement group that will promote healthy coping skills and mental healthcare among active servicemembers.



**Timothy Deater** completed his Doctor of Education degree from Liberty University in Spring 2023.



**Adam Filipek's** book, "Life in Christ: Rooted, Woven, and Grafted into God's Story," was published by Concordia Publishing House

June 2023. "Life in Christ" allows the reader to walk through the Bible and Christian faith in an understanding, engaging, and memorable way. Filipek is a reverend at Holy Cross and Immanuel Lutheran Churches, Lidgerwood.

## 2005



**Jennifer (Hovda) Paterson** was promoted to controller at First Western Bank & Trust - Minot

Region. Paterson has been with the bank for seven years.

## 2006



**Amanda (Brunner) Duchsherer** has joined the Minot State Development Foundation as administrative coordinator, previously having spent over five years working in the MSU communications and marketing offices. She and her husband, Joe, own and operate 4 Acres Welding & Fabrication.

## 2007



**Jason Trainer '07/'08** has been named vice president of strategic enrollment management at Minnesota State University Moorhead. He was previously employed at Indiana State University for five years as vice provost for enrollment management.

## 2009



**Ryan Bodell** coached the West Fargo Sheyenne Mustang's baseball team to three Class A ND State Championships in 2021, 2022, and 2023. In 2023, he was named the Eastern Dakota Conference Coach of the Year.

He taught high school mathematics in Beulah and at West Fargo Sheyenne High School for 13 years. In 2022, he was named dean of students at Sheyenne and, in 2023, named assistant principal at the high school.



**Heather (Borman) Halvorson**, Minot State enrollment services assistant director, was honored as the 2023

Dakota Association for College Admission Counseling (DACAC) Individual Rising Star recipient. Halvorson received the recognition due to being action-oriented, having an optimistic attitude, and for being highly reliable.

## 2011



**Brendan Weidler** has been promoted to chief operating officer of the Senior Living Division for Edgewood

Healthcare. Prior to this new role, Weidler was Edgewood's chief nursing officer and executive vice president, providing clinical oversight for the care delivered across all 64 Edgewood communities. Weidler joined the Edgewood Healthcare team in 2017.

## 2013



**Danielle (Cook) Rued** joined First Western Bank & Trust as the Minot region's marketing and communica-

tions specialist. Rued is a Minot Area Chamber EDC chamber ambassador and serves on the board of directors for Minot State's Alumni Association as vice president of events.

## 2014



**Ellen Fenner** received the Nonprofit Leader of the Year award at the Minot Alliance of Nonprofits' fifth annual Community Recognition Luncheon. Fenner is the executive director of the Minot Symphony Orchestra.



**Elizabeth (Anderson) Weeks** was honored at the Minot Alliance of Nonprofits' fifth annual Community

Recognition Luncheon with the Emerging Leader Award for her work at the Magic City Discovery Center.

2015



**Olivia (Fetherolf) Clinton** has been promoted to loan operations supervisor in the Minot region for First

Western Bank & Trust. Clinton has been employed at the bank for over a decade.



**Abbie (Naze) Eads** performed "Dying Swan" in the "Nutcracker! Magical Christmas Ballet!" at Ann Nicole Nelson

Hall. A former ballerina, Eads is a conductor, currently serving as conductor-in-residence of the Northwest Edvard Grieg Society. Eads is also a development officer for the Minot State University Development Foundation.



**Katy (Port) Allers** has joined the Minot State POWER Center as program director. She began her employment at

Minot State in 2016 in the Division of Humanities and in 2021, moved to NDCPD as a research associate.

2017



**Logan Gunderson** has been named AVP ag banker at First Western Bank & Trust, Minot region. He has been a member of the First Western team for over four years.

2018



**Amanda Mogen** has opened Dakota Dream Destinations, a travel agency in Bottineau, with the goal to provide

great trips for her clients. Mogen previously spent the prior five years as a high school teacher.

2019

**Eric Delzer** joined the North Dakota Petroleum Council (NDPC) as the organization's regulatory portfolio manager.

Raised in rural western North Dakota, he has dedicated over 12 years as a division director for the state's Agriculture Commissioner Doug Goehring.

2020



**Joshua Berdahl** has been promoted to network analyst officer at First Western Bank & Trust, Minot region.



**Cole Edwards** is the new girls basketball coach and activities director for Bishop Ryan Catholic

School. Before arriving at BRCS, Edwards was director of basketball operations at Minot State and an assistant coach at Our Redeemer's Christian School and BRCS.



**Germain (Gorden) Krueger** celebrated her 20-year service anniversary at Basin Electric Power Cooperative with a

new position as an IT project manager in October. Previously, she served as a senior enterprise application architect with a focus on energy trading and risk management systems for the cooperative.

2022



**Michael HarriSOn** was named the Minot Symphony Orchestra's 2023-24 Young Composer Competition winner.

HarriSOn is an elementary band teacher at Minot Public Schools and performs regularly with several community groups in the Minot Area.

2022



**Kate Head '22/'23** is returning to the hardwood in Australia where she will start her professional

basketball career as the first signing by the RPQ Group Ipswich Force of the NBL1 North league based in Queensland.

**Theresa (Welch) Flagstad '78** and **Ann (Munro) Jussero '87** head the Minot-area Reading Education Assistance Dogs program, which encourages young readers to strengthen their skills by reading to therapy dogs. The duo are also members of the Alliance of Therapy Dogs, a nonprofit, volunteer-based organization who facilitate animal-assisted activities such as visiting hospitals, schools, or nursing homes, and are charter members of the nonprofit dog training Club Action Agility.



Photo: Angie Reinhoehl/MDN

The Minot Area Chamber EDC honors individuals who have excelled in customer service with the Eagle Award. The following Minot State alumni were recipients of the Eagle Award:



**Angelique Chapin '04**,  
Broadway Liquor



**Teresa (Kraft) Loftesnes '07/'15**,  
Norsk Hostfest



**Karen Foley '87**,  
Minot State University teacher education and kinesiology instructor



**Brigitte (Lugo) McCauley '95**,  
The Title Team



**Elaine (Voeller) Gunderson '93**,  
Minot Daily News



**Brandon Tollefson '11**,  
Tollefson's Carpetland

Not pictured: **Kadee Simonson '03**, The Station

On Oct. 31, 2023, North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum announced the members of the Task Force for Teacher Retention and Recruitment through an executive order in September 2023 to address the state's chronic teacher shortage. The 15-member Task Force consists of Burgum and State Superintendent **Kirsten Baesler '01**, or their designees, and 13 members appointed by the governor and representing stakeholders across the education community. The following Minot State alumni were appointed:

**Sherry Tandeeski '95**, elementary school principal at St. John Public Schools

**Bret Dockter '97**, Harvey Public Schools teacher

**John Porter '98**, director of the South Valley and Rural Cass Special Education Units

**Ashley (Hansen) Seykora '06/'17**, Rugby Public Schools instructional coach

**Erin Jacobson '09**, coordinator of the Teacher Support System in Bismarck

# In memory

It is with honor we dedicate this section to recognize alumni and friends who have passed away from approximately October 2023 through February 2024 or as submitted.



## Graduates

'50 Shauer (Cilke), JvVonne; Billings, Mont.  
'50 Walker (Vincent), Marlys; Federal Way, Wash.  
'51 Sletto (Biberdorf), Norine; Grand Forks  
'52 Groninger (Narum), Isabel; Douglas  
'53 Knox (Weyrauch), Verena; Ray  
'54 Hval, Darlene; Williston  
'59 Tyndall, Donna; Arlington, Texas  
'60 Fritz, James; Kalispell, Mont.  
'60 Ravnaas, Lui; Turtle Lake  
'61 Bayley (Sanderson), Patricia; Valley City  
'61 Markle (Tryhus), Ardis; Minot  
'62 Grabinger, Russell; Fargo  
'62 Limke, Patrick; Minot  
'62 Smith, Dennis; Minot  
'63 Beck, Jerome; Mandan  
'63 Graham, Patricia (Brickner); New Rockford  
'63 Huesers, Dorothy; Minneapolis, Minn.  
'63 Schullo (Shomento), Denise; Hopkins, Minn.  
'64 Halseth, Ernest; Tioga  
'64 Klecker (Lang), Arvilla; Elk River, Minn.  
'64 Matti (Schrader), Ethel; Minneapolis, Minn.  
'64 Stevick (Peterson), Joan; Minot  
'65 Bonner (Loorence), Julianne; Carrington  
'65 Metz (Lynnes), Sandra; Onalaska, Wis.  
'66 Estrem, David; Sequim, Wash.  
'66 Terpening, Bruce; Maddock  
'67 Grandall, Theodore; Lignite  
'67 Lajoie, Leona; Denver, Colo.  
'67 Miller (Des Lauriers), Cheryl; Sherwood  
'67 Pedie (Volker), Dianne; Grand Forks  
'69 Murphy, Cecil; Des Moines, Iowa  
'70 Feldner, Donn; Minot  
'70 Findlay, Dennis; Minot  
'70 Talley, Rolland; Bottineau  
'70 Torgerson, Robert; Henderson, Nev.  
'71 White Calfe, Greta; White Shield  
'72 Olson, Robert "Bob;" Minot  
'72 Schnase, Ricky; Minot  
'72 Shipman, Thomas; Bismarck  
'73 Boettcher, Marc; North East, Pa.  
'73 Borstad, Barry; Bismarck  
'73 Deschamp, Ted; Tucson, Ariz.  
'73 Madsen (Odegaard), Kay; Minot  
'73 Martinson, Alvis; Carpio  
'73 Skarphol, Dayton; Souris  
'74 Darby (Borgers), Pamela; Olympia, Wash.  
'75 Everson (Kabanuk), Pamela; Minot  
'78 Muffenbier, Dennis; Rugby  
'79 Klein, Ronald; Bismarck  
'80 Storseth, Craig; Williston  
'81 Locken, James; Minot  
'82 Fleck, Thomas; Saint Paul, Minn.  
'84 Johnson (Hahn), Carol; Minot  
'84 Rodvold, Steven; Fargo  
'85 Gillette, Jill; Garrison  
'85 Motter, Janice; Apache Junction, Ariz.

'86 Primeau (Dillon), Cindy; Americus, Kan.  
'87 Hett (Stevenson), Barbara; Minot  
'87 Snyder (Sorenson), Snyder; Minot  
'88 Toohey, Mary; Buford, Ga.  
'90 Wible (Hystad), Michaela; Velve  
'92 Jeanotte, Frank; Belcourt  
'93 Daughtery (Olson), Chrysann; Moorhead, Minn.  
'93 Schreiber, Charles; Minot  
'95 Borud (Momerak), Merrie; Minot  
'97 Aubrey (Dahl), Maurita; Alexander  
'99 Larsen, Douglas; Mandan  
'00 Loken (Hoffman), Donna; Minot  
'02 Johnson (Gehringer), Jodi; Mohall  
'02 Sorenson (Tofteland), Lisa; Bottineau  
'06 Larsen (Johnson), Amy; Mandan  
'20 McCarty, Michael; Minot

## Attended

Anderson, Carlon; Antler  
Bauer (Lasher), Eunice; McClusky  
Belgarde, Clayton; Dunseith  
Bruner (Feller), Betty; Drake  
Dahllien, Dillan; Minot  
Eman, Carie; Bismarck  
Engberg (Hauge), Marion; Fargo  
Espeseth, Joyce; Minot  
Evenson, Gary; Baxter, Minn.  
Fairbrother (Pietsch), Linda; Rugby  
Hanson, Lowell; Minot  
Jeannotte, Vernon; Medina  
Kallestad (Widmayer), Denise; Minot  
Ketterling, Jeremy; Bottineau  
Lawson, John; Tucson, Ariz.  
Liebel (Samuelson), Gussie; Underwood  
Modin, Roland; Minot  
Myers (Hulet), Kimberly; Minot  
Paschal (Bickler), Debra; Saint Charles, Ill.  
Reiser, Lee "Chuck"; Washburn  
Rockvov, Larry; Devils Lake  
Rothmann, Thomas; Columbus, Ohio  
Schwols, Linda; Devils Lake  
Sharp (Becker), Faye; Minot  
Simonson, James; Minot  
Smith, Davin; Minot  
Smith (Edwardson), Elma; New Rockford  
Stewart (Haner), Elizabeth "Betty;" Minot  
Stock, Allen; Carrington  
Thompson (Christianson), DeNae; Minot

## Friends

Anfinson, Edward; Sun City West, Ariz.  
Belcher, Steven; Minot  
Chole-Eidsness, Audrey; Minot  
Crawford (Gutierrez), MaryLou; Minot  
Doerr (Oelke), Elma; Minot  
Ellingson (Temanson), Sally; Minot  
Erickson, Ronald; Columbus  
Evanoff, Phillip; Des Lacs  
Feist, Richard; Minot

Follman (Burckhard), Irene; Towner  
Haas (Guedesse), Delia; Saint John  
Hady, J. Michael; Minot  
Haman, Bernetta "Berni;" Bismarck  
Haugen (Young), Bette Merle; Kalispell, Mont.  
Hight, Jay; Minot  
Hoffman (Reeder), Norma; Bismarck  
Jacobson, John; Wildrose  
Kilene, Don; West Fargo  
Konen, Ivan; Great Falls, Mont.  
Kotasek, Blaine; Minot  
LaFontaine (Ulberg), Margaret; Minot  
Larsen (Lindberg), Lois; Kenmare  
Leslie, Grace; Minot  
Mayer, Clayton; Minot  
Merck, William; Minot  
Metz (Roll), Phyllis; Minot  
Parizek, Leonard; Glenburn  
Peterson, Kenneth; Flaxton  
Pietsch (DeBilt), Eleanor; Minot  
Randall (Stevahn), Diana; Grand Forks  
Schall (Dufner), Betty; Minot  
Scheufler, Paul; Carrollton, Ga.  
Schreiner (Van Berkorn), Yvonne; Minot  
Schwan, Robert; Minot  
Score, Melvin; Minot  
Sollin, Dale; Rugby  
Thor (Doerr), Florence; Minot  
Wade, Lanny; Minot  
Weyer (Gray), Marilyn; Minot

## Faculty and Staff

Champieux-Miller, Andre; former staff in Addiction Studies, Psychology, and Social Work; Minot  
Glock (Wruck), Nola; retired staff; Fargo  
Hunter, Deborah; former faculty; Deering  
'47 Johnson, Adelaide; retired professor in College of Business, Minot  
Miller, Edmund; retired staff; Minot  
Radford (Thompson), Arliss; retired staff emeritus; Minot  
Wharton, Donald; former VPAA, Landaff, N.H.



# Look who's **NEW!**



**Battle**



**Anthony '17 and Amber (Anderson) Battle '17** welcomed their second son, Otto Beau, on Jan. 27, 2023.

**Bourquin**



**Sutton '15 and KayLee (Fenner) Bourquin '14** welcomed Avery on Nov. 15, 2018 and Emersyn on May 13, 2021.

**Brown**



Theodore (Teddy) Peter was born July 8, 2023, to Colby and Melissa Brown. He is the grandson of **Todd '83 and Linda Cresap**, director of MSU's Graduate School and professor of business.

**Cooper**



The Cooper family welcomed Archie Odin on March 31, 2023. Parents are **Jordan '08 and Deidre (Karhoff) Cooper '14**.

**Deutsch**



Tyrone and **Jamie (Larson) Deutsch '14** welcomed a baby girl, Taylor Ann, on Oct. 29, 2022. She joins big brother Raymond.

**Huber**



Emerie Rose was born Sept. 1, 2023 to Braden and **Tia (Klein) Huber '14**.

## Have you had an addition to your family recently?

We want to know. Contact Kate Marshall, director of foundation operations, at [Kate.Marshall@MinotStateU.edu](mailto:Kate.Marshall@MinotStateU.edu) to receive a free T-shirt for your new little Beaver! Please be sure to tell us your baby's name and date of birth. Also please provide your graduation year, spouse's name, and contact information. After you receive your T-shirt, email your baby's photo to Kate.

Hustad



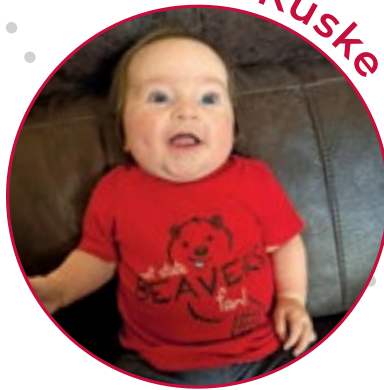
Colter and **Taylor (Foley) '17 Hustad** welcomed **Kampbell** on Aug. 23, 2023. He joins big brother **Koe**.

Korf



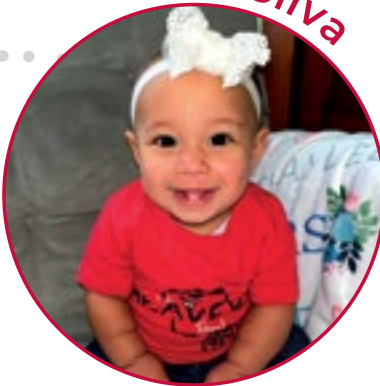
Tommy was born on March 23, 2023, to **Thomas '15 and Liva (Rovig) Korf '15**. He joins big sister **Rosie**. The family resides in St. Michael, Minnesota.

Kuske



Blakely Ruth joined the Kuske family on July 27, 2023. Proud Beaver parents are **Matt '14 and Josie (Blake) Kuske '16/'18**.

Silva



Chris Silva and **Carissa Mikesic Silva '20** welcomed **Shaylee Rowan** on March 26, 2023.

Scherr



Tyler and **Jade (Neumann) Scherr '19** welcomed **Jameson** on Oct. 3, 2023.

Tofteland



**Eleanor Rae** arrived Feb. 7, 2023. She was welcomed by parents **Jonathan and Katie (Schmaltz) '07 Tofteland**.

Towne



**Lydia Mae** entered the world on Aug. 16, 2023. Proud parents are **Jordan '20 and Tayler (Fitzgerald) Towne '20**.





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**M**inot State University has been important to my family for generations. My mother, Voni (Witham) Slind '74, father, Ron Slind '74, brother, Josh Slind '05, and my sister, Ashley (Slind) Stevens '06, all received degrees from MSU. Jen and I are also proud Minot State graduates.

While attending MSU, we received a high-quality education, gained valuable knowledge, and had many great experiences. The friendships and connections we made then and now have been invaluable. Some of my favorite memories are being a member of the Beaver football and hockey teams and serving as student government president and the 1999 Homecoming King. Now, Jen and I enjoy taking our daughters, Eve and Avery, to many MSU athletic events.

As owners of Thompson-Larson Funeral Home and Arrowhead ACE Hardware in Minot, we understand the importance of being a part of the community. MSU plays a key role in our community which is why I am currently serving on the MSU Board of Regents and we are Beaver Booster members.

We strongly feel Dr. Steven Shirley, his administrative staff, and faculty, have the University headed in a very positive direction. To give back, we recently established the Benjamin and Jennifer Slind Scholarship Endowment to support the University and teacher education students.

Go Beavers!

*– Ben '00 and Jen (Kobes) '03 Slind*

