



VALLEY CITY
STATE UNIVERSITY

THE BULLETIN

A Publication for Alumni & Friends of Valley City State University

ISSUE 071669 | APRIL 2025



Nature's Gift

Generous donation by VCSU alum provides support for Fisheries and Wildlife programs. - PAGE 8

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The Bulletin is published in spring, summer and fall by the Valley City State University Alumni Association.

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McCarthy Hall Update

President Alan LaFave, D.M.A.

Greetings from VCSU!

It has been an exciting start to 2025 at Valley City State University! Our campus has continued to see growth and in February we announced a new record enrollment of 1,854 students. We have already celebrated numerous awards and achievements by our departments, alumni and students – many of which you can read about in this edition of The Bulletin.

One of the more exciting projects happening on campus is the renovation of McCarthy Hall, which will become the new home for our renowned School of Education and technology education department. I had an opportunity to tour the facility recently, and I'm excited to report that significant progress is being made on the renovation.

The offices, classrooms, labs, conference rooms, and student study and gathering spaces are all taking shape. The configuration



LaFave

of these spaces was carefully considered in the design process to bring academic units together near each other for enhanced collaboration.

Progress has been consistent, and it's truly exciting to see the updates week after week.

Construction is scheduled to be completed this summer with the building open for classes during the fall semester. Below are some items that have been completed working from the top of the building down to the main floor.

- Third Floor – carpeting, flooring, and casework are complete. Ceiling cloud install is in progress.
- Second Floor – paint, flooring, tiles, and doors are being installed. Windows and casework are ongoing.
- First Floor – painting has started. Doors, windows, and casework installation is beginning.
- Foyer connection – cement floor is poured, and the measurements are complete for the curtain wall. One of the most striking elements

thus far is the vast increase in natural light throughout the facility. The new windows replicate the size of the original windows, brightening the spaces with additional light.

We are proud of our tradition and history in providing high quality educators for the North Dakota teacher workforce. The renovated McCarthy Hall gives VCSU another tool to prepare future educators and improve the on-campus experience of our students.

In other exciting news, Northern Cass second-grade educator and VCSU 2010 alum Jessica (Hintz) Stoen was recognized and honored as a 2025 recipient of the prestigious Milken Educator Award during a surprise ceremony on February 14. She was one of only 45 pioneering professionals recognized across the nation and the only educator in North Dakota to receive the award. You can read more about Jessica on page 17.

Congratulations Jessica on this well-deserved and prestigious honor! Go Vikings!



The original wood ceiling on the third floor of McCarthy is being preserved and will be displayed in certain areas of the building.



McCarthy exterior and the new foyer area connecting McCarthy to McFarland.



Building Momentum for VCSU's Future

Cory Anderson '89 | Executive Director for University Advancement

As we step into another exciting year at Valley City State University, we are proud to share the progress of several key initiatives shaping the future of our campus. Thanks to the unwavering support of our alumni and friends, our efforts continue to enhance student experience and elevate VCSU's impact.



Anderson

One of the most significant milestones on the horizon is the near completion of McCarthy Hall, home to the School of Education. Staying on time and on budget, McCarthy Hall is set to open this fall, reinforcing our commitment to excellence in teacher preparation. While construction nears its final stages, there are still opportunities for supporters to leave their legacy through naming rights for office suites, a conference room, and other spaces within the building.

Additionally, progress continues on the Tharaldson Family Athletic Center. With the design phase now complete (an exterior rendering is pictured below), work will begin this spring with the relocation of the Track and Field throwing pits.

The bid package will soon be released, setting the stage for a construction timeline that allows us to determine an official groundbreaking date. This facility represents a major investment in Viking Athletics, and we look forward to watching it take shape.

This issue's cover story highlights the generosity of Dick Monson, whose remarkable gift to the VCSU Fisheries and Wildlife programs will provide invaluable support for students and faculty. His contribution was among numerous gifts included in our submission to the North Dakota Challenge Grant during the last biennium, securing VCSU its full allotted match of \$1.1 million. This matching opportunity amplifies the impact of every dollar given, making each gift even more meaningful.

The momentum behind these initiatives is a testament to the dedication and generosity of our alumni and supporters. Your commitment continues to propel VCSU forward, ensuring we remain a leader in education, athletics, and student success.

Thank you for being part of this journey—together, We All Row.

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VCSU sets enrollment record with 1,854 students

Valley City State University announced a 6 percent growth in enrollment, setting another campus record with 1,854 students enrolled during the spring semester.

That shatters the previous spring enrollment record of 1,747 students set in 2024 and even breaks the overall enrollment record of 1,806 students set last fall. VCSU added 66 new full-time students during the spring semester, including 15 freshmen and 51 transfer students.

The record enrollment was fueled by growth in all major areas this spring. The number of full-time students is up 5 percent over last spring and is the second-highest number ever during the spring semester. The graduate programs saw a 23 percent increase in enrollment, growing to 146 students seeking a master's degree.

Overall undergraduate enrollment is up 5 percent; the number of part-time students increased by 7 percent; and the university's full-time equivalency grew by 7 percent to a record FTE of 1,223.

"We are thrilled to see growth in so many different areas of our university," said VCSU president Alan LaFave. "Students have always been our top priority, and the



continued growth and improved retention validates that we continue to put students first."

"Students attending VCSU find a friendly campus that truly cares about their success," LaFave continued. "To meet the changing needs of higher education, we continue to transform and adapt our course offerings, our degree options and the delivery modes by which students take their courses. Paired with our extremely affordable tuition rates, a VCSU education is a great fit for many types of students."

In 2010, VCSU's spring enrollment was 1,034 total students. In the 15 years since, Valley City State has seen steady growth. Since 2010, the number of full-time students has grown by 30 percent and the overall campus headcount has grown 79 percent.

U.S. News Ranks VCSU Among Best Online Programs

Valley City State University (VCSU) has been ranked among the 2025 Best Online Master's in Education Programs by U.S. News & World Report.

U.S. News also ranked VCSU in its 2025 Best Online Bachelor's Programs. VCSU is one of only two North Dakota schools to receive rankings in both online categories. U.S. News annually evaluates schools based on a variety of factors, such as student engagement, faculty credentials, services and technologies.

"These rankings again validate that VCSU is one of the best schools in our region for academic quality, support and student success," President Alan LaFave said. "Regardless of the course delivery mode they choose, our students are getting a great education to fit their individual situation."

About 25 percent of VCSU's enrolled students are classified as online students. That includes the master's degree programs in education, which are affordable online options for working teachers to further their education and career.

VCSU's online master's in education was ranked 150th in the nation by U.S. News and was second among the three North Dakota schools earning a ranking. VCSU ranked 28th in the "Services and Technologies" category, which reflects



an institution's ability to deliver strong support structures for online students that are commensurate with campus-based programs.

"Everyone at VCSU works to help our students succeed, whether they are on campus or online," said Larry Brooks, Vice President for Academic Affairs. "Rankings like this reinforce the quality of the educational experience we offer for online students."

VCSU finished 230th in the online bachelor's ranking and is one of just three North Dakota schools listed in that category. VCSU's online bachelor's programs ranked second among ND institutions.

VCSU Announces New Major in Data Analytics and Visualization

Valley City State University has developed a new major to meet growing workforce demands in the business industry.

VCSU will start offering a degree in Data Analytics and Visualization during Fall 2025. This degree prepares students for a career analyzing complex data, extracting insights from the data, and presenting data in a clear and compelling way.

The profession has a fast-growing job market with more than 19,000 openings in the past year. The advertised median salary is more than \$100,000 for jobs in this field.

The Data Analytics and Visualization major is offered through VCSU's Computer Systems and Software Engineering (CSSE) department. The degree can be earned on campus or online. Students will study elements of statistics, computer science, business and design to learn the skills needed to handle data-intensive tasks in various industries.

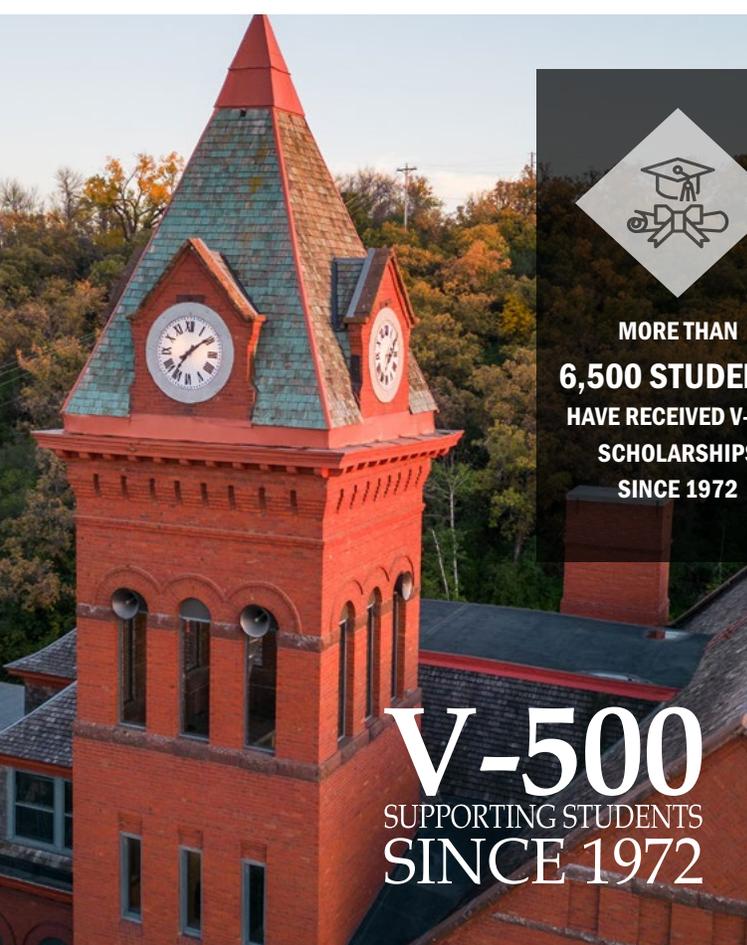
"This new major meets a growing need in many businesses," said Sue Pfeifer, chair of the CSSE department. "Students will take classes from a variety of departments on campus but will ultimately be equipped with a degree that can land a high-paying job in numerous industries such as healthcare, finance, technology, marketing, government or education."

At its core, the degree focuses on understanding data and presenting the information gathered from data in a clear and concise manner. Students will develop skills in data analysis, statistics, programming, critical thinking

and communication. They will also learn data visualization techniques using software such as Tableau or Microsoft Power BI.

"Students who are interested in problem-solving and creativity make a good fit for this major," said Pfeifer. "They should be detail-oriented, paying attention to the accuracy of data. Students should also be interested in technology and exploring new software."

Potential career paths include jobs as a data analyst, a business intelligence analyst or a visualization specialist.



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RECURRING GIFT: Monthly gifts, spread out over the year, make a BIG impact and are a convenient, affordable, and flexible way of supporting VCSU.



ONE TIME GIFT: Cash, gifts of grain, commodities, marketable stocks, bonds, or mutual fund shares have an immediate impact on VCSU and for you. Contact the Foundation office if this is your preference.

HOW CAN YOU SUPPORT VCSU STUDENT SCHOLARSHIPS?



GIVE ONLINE: Fast, easy and secure. Use our online form at give.vcsu.edu to make your gift of choice or scan the QR code above.



MAIL YOUR GIFT to the VCSU Foundation at 101 College St SW, Valley City, ND 58072 or call our office at 701-845-7203 to make a donation over the phone.

V-500
SUPPORTING STUDENTS
SINCE 1972



Hornung qualifies for Speech Nationals

Valley City State University junior Grady Hornung has qualified for the American Forensics Association National Speech Tournament in North Carolina. Hornung earned his spot at nationals after placing 2nd in Dramatic Interpretation at a tournament this past weekend.

A native of Walhalla, N.D., Hornung now has the opportunity to compete at the national tournament running April 5-7 at the University of North Carolina in Charlotte.

Hornung is a member of the recently revived VCSU Speech Team which competed at the Valley Forensics League (VFL) tournament in Marshall, Minn., on Saturday, Jan. 25. Hornung, Tara Dahl and Alliana

Freund competed in three events: Dramatic Interpretation, Impromptu Speaking and Dramatic Duo.

Hornung placed 2nd in Dramatic Interpretation. This placement also qualified him for the national tournament. Dramatic Interpretation is a speech based on a cutting from a play or plays of literary merit. The event focuses on the development of a character and a manuscript is required.

Dahl placed 2nd in Impromptu Speaking. This event focuses on topics derived from quotations. Speakers have seven minutes to prepare and deliver a speech about a particular topic.

The Forge, Student Magazine at VCSU, Wins Highest Honor in REALM contest

Valley City State University's student literary magazine, *The Forge*, has been recognized as a REALM First Class magazine by the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE).

The distinction was awarded after NCTE reviewed Issue 21 of *The Forge*, which was produced by VCSU student editors Sierra Crocker, Abigail Dreher, Beth Mehus and LilyBeth Townsend, and advised by Dr. J. Gregory Brister. *The Forge* is annually produced by VCSU students taking English 213: Literary Publications.

"*The Forge* is honored to be the first campus publication in North Dakota to receive this award," stated Brister, professor of English 213: Literary Publications. "It recognizes the dedication of our student editors and the vibrancy and vitality of the literary, artistic, and scholarly work of the VCSU community."

First Class is the highest honor in the Recognizing Excellence in Art and Literary Magazines (REALM) contest run by the NCTE. The REALM program publicly recognizes excellent literary magazines produced



From left, Abigail Dreher, Beth Mehus, Sierra Crocker, Dr. J. Gregory Brister and LilyBeth Townsend hold up copies of the award-winning edition of *The Forge*.

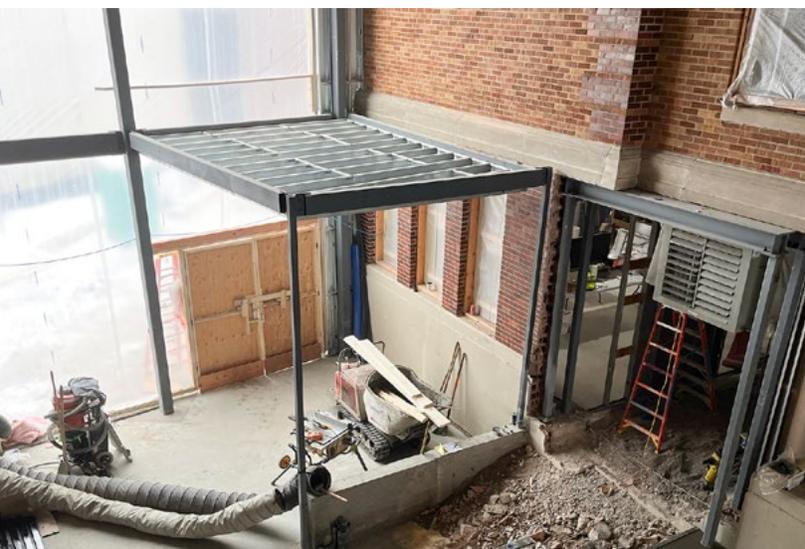
by students with the support of their teachers. REALM is designed to encourage all schools to develop literary magazines that celebrate the art and craft of writing.

Schools in 46 states and five countries nominated 422 student magazines to be reviewed for the 2024 contest. Magazines from middle school, high school, and higher education were included. *The Forge* is one of 125 magazines to receive REALM First Class.



Progress and Projections

The renovation of McCarthy Hall continues to move forward with noticeable progress. Third floor spaces are nearing completion as construction moves from the top down. The renovation is scheduled to be completed this summer and open to students for the fall semester. Campus is also looking forward to an addition to the athletic complex at the W.E. Osmon Fieldhouse. As part of the Forward Together Capital Campaign, VCSU is preparing to break ground as soon as this year on a multi-purpose indoor athletics facility. The photos below show the progress on McCarthy Hall and projections of what the athletics facility addition will look like.



VCSU named a STEM School of Excellence

Valley City State University has been named a 2024-2025 STEM School of Excellence in recognition of a wide range of STEM-related initiatives the university leads or collaborates on.

The award was announced by the International Technology and Engineering Educators Association (ITEEA) STEM Center for Teaching and Learning, which annually recognizes schools for their commitment to providing a robust integrative STEM education experience.

“This award is a result of the hard work, dedication, and forward-thinking of individuals who collaborated and contributed to deliver high-quality STEM education at VCSU,” said Peder Gjovik, Chair of the Department of Technology and STEM Education. “It’s a great honor to receive this designation from the ITEEA, an organization that sets and maintains the standards for technology and engineering education.”

VCSU will officially receive the award in April at the ITEEA 2025 Conference in St. Louis, Missouri.

The ITEEA evaluated numerous VCSU STEM-related initiatives when awarding the School of Excellence honor, including the VCSU Planetarium – which is the only permanent planetarium in the state and regularly hosts free shows for area schools and community members to learn about astronomy and space.

The award also cited VCSU’s technology education degrees, the Great Plains STEM Education Center, and the INSTEM program. INSTEM (Indians into STEM) annually brings Native American students to campus for week-long STEM academies in the summer.

VCSU offers a Bachelor of Science in technology education and has STEM certificates for both elementary and secondary educators. Other STEM-related initiatives mentioned by the ITEEA include the annual Marketplace for Kids event on campus and a statewide engineering design challenge hosted by the VCSU Department of Technology.

“VCSU is honored to be selected as an ITEEA 2024-25 STEM School of Excellence,” said Larry Brooks, Vice President for Academic Affairs. “This is a testament of our commitment to numerous initiatives related to STEM education.”



VCSU NIGHT AT THE F-M REDHAWKS GAME!

PLEASE RSVP. Call 701-845-7203 by July 25 to reserve your tickets.

The VCSU Alumni Association invites you to join alumni and friends at Newman Outdoor field for an F-M RedHawks baseball game on Wednesday, **August 7**.

We will gather for a picnic prior to the game and then have reserved tickets for the game.

COST \$20 PER PERSON

- INCLUDES
- Reserved Game ticket in Section B
 - All-you-can-eat picnic including hot dogs and pulled pork served with potato salad, potato chips, pop and water.

6:02 PM GATES OPEN | SOCIAL HOUR AND PICNIC

7:02 PM GAME TIME



› VCSU students and faculty from the Fisheries and Wildlife program recently met with Dick Monson to talk about the VCSU program and the direct effects his donation will have.

Nature's Gift

Private Donation will enhance VCSU Fisheries & Wildlife Program

The VCSU student experience for Fisheries and Wildlife majors is about to get even better. Already a respected and popular program because of its hands-on, in-the-field approach to learning, the Fisheries and Wildlife program has received an influx of money from a private donation designed to further enhance the program.

VCSU alum and long-time supporter Dick Monson has made a significant donation to the university which will directly support the Fisheries and Wildlife program with annual funds dedicated to scholarships and equipment upgrades.

Monson, a retired farmer from the Valley City area, has been a long-time supporter of VCSU and respects the work that conservation professionals do in North Dakota.

"This program is truly exceptional, and I am honored to contribute to its continued growth," said Monson. "I firmly believe in the value of education that prepares students for meaningful careers in natural resource management. Supporting their success is an investment in the future of our environment and our state."

Monson's gift will fund educational infrastructure, cutting-edge equipment, renewable scholarships, and innovative research initiatives, ensuring VCSU continues to lead the state in natural resources education and workforce development.

"This generous gift opens doors for our students, providing the tools and opportunities they need to succeed," said Dr. Bob Anderson, Professor in the

VCSU Fisheries and Wildlife Science Program. “From scholarships that attract top-tier talent to field experiences that prepare them for real-world challenges, this support is a gamechanger. This gift is an amazing testament to Dick’s commitment to conservation and to training the next generation of natural resource professionals.”

A 1974 graduate of Valley City State, Monson and his late wife Karen both earned elementary education degrees from VCSU. Karen taught kindergarten for 27 years at St. Catherine’s Catholic School in Valley City. Dick eventually went into farming and the couple made their home on a farm west of Valley City.

Since then, Monson has seen native habitats disappearing across the North Dakota landscape. The wildlife that depends on those habitats are also going away. Monson says well known species such as the American Bumblebee and Monarch Butterfly may soon be listed as threatened or endangered due to loss of native habitat.

“I have spent many of the best days of my life in native prairie pastures and cattail wetlands,” he said. “It is my hope that the students graduating from the Fisheries and Wildlife Department will carry the mission forward to preserve the natural world around us and not destroy it as was done in the past.”

The VCSU Fisheries and Wildlife Science Program is the leading undergraduate program of its kind in North Dakota, offering three concentrations: Wildlife, Fisheries, and Conservation Law Enforcement. Graduates of the program are employed in every county across the state and beyond, addressing a significant demand for trained professionals in natural resource management. Since 2020, the program has consistently enrolled an average of 70 students, with a goal to expand

“This generous gift opens doors for our students, providing the tools and opportunities they need to succeed” – Dr. Bob Anderson

enrollment to 100 students in the coming years. The Fisheries and Wildlife Department plans to use Monson’s gift to fund yearly scholarships for its students, upgrade old equipment used in field projects and labs, and purchase new educational tools or software. Rapidly evolving technologies—such as artificial intelligence (AI), geographic information systems (GIS), and drones— can now be more easily acquired and worked into VCSU’s curriculum.

Continued on page 10.

Older equipment, such as these binoculars used by students, will be updated with money from the Dick Monson donation.



Monson talks with students about some of his favorite bird species. Monson says many of the best days of his life have been spent in native prairie pastures and cattails wetlands.



Continued from page 9.

These advancements will allow students to stay at the forefront of natural resources management. Additionally, the funding will equip science labs with the latest equipment to deliver hands-on learning experiences.

“This gift will bolster our efforts to grow the program, attract students to North Dakota, and provide unparalleled educational opportunities,” said Cory Anderson, Executive Director of the VCSU Foundation. “It demonstrates the commitment of donors like Dick Monson to supporting not only VCSU but the broader community and workforce of our state.”

Monson’s donation was part of a \$1.47 million dollar package from numerous donors that the VCSU Foundation submitted to receive a \$747,000 match from the ND Challenge Grant Fund. Monson’s donation has been earmarked specifically for the Fisheries and Wildlife program. To learn more about VCSU’s Fisheries and Wildlife program, visit www.vcsu.edu/fw.



▲ Dick Monson and VCSU professor Bob Anderson have forged a strong relationship over the years.



Your Life & Your Goals

Most of your wealth is probably invested in your home, a bank or other investment accounts. These assets can all be transferred to your loved ones or benefit our cause without you ever writing a will. By making a simple change, these assets can go automatically to the beneficiaries you select.

- **Life Insurance** — Complete a beneficiary designation form, designating a person or charitable beneficiary for your life insurance policy.
- **IRA** — Complete a beneficiary designation form to benefit the people and causes most important to you. Many administrators now make these forms available online.
- **Investment, Checking and Retirement Accounts** — List your loved ones or favorite causes as payable on death beneficiaries on a form provided by your account administrator.
- **Real Estate** — Give your property to loved ones and your favorite causes by deed while reserving a life estate. Contact us for a free illustration of the benefits of this plan.

When a beneficiary designation is completed properly, assets simply pass automatically at your death. Call or email us for all the ways you can make modest changes to your plans and benefit the people and causes important to you.



VCSU Professor Awarded Grant to Research Organic Carbon in Wetland and Lake Sediments



Valley City State University assistant professor Michelle Abshire has been awarded a grant for nearly \$15,000 to purchase equipment and lead a group of students in researching organic carbon in wetland and lake sediments.

Abshire received an Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP) equipment grant for \$14,988 awarded by the National Science Foundation – ND EPSCoR. The money will fund the purchase of new equipment for a project titled: “Organic Carbon in Wetland and Lake Sediments: Informing Agricultural Practices and Mitigating Climate Change.”

Abshire is an assistant professor in the VCSU Department of Science.

“With this research we’ll be able to qualitatively identify ways in which carbon storage in wetland and lake sediment may have changed with increasing agricultural development,” said Abshire. “Knowing how the carbon cycle has been impacted through time will provide a better understanding of the relationship between agricultural development in North Dakota and carbon cycling as well as highlight the importance of preserving our state’s natural water bodies as they serve a valuable carbon storage system.”

Abshire and a group of student researchers will collect lake and wetland sediment cores, measuring and sealing them onsite before evaluating the cores at the VCSU campus geology lab. Half of the core will be sampled for total carbon measurements with new instrumentation from this grant, and the other half will be preserved for future use in further research or classroom activities.

The grant money will purchase a sediment coring device, a benchtop muffle furnace, two analytical balances, and other lab supplies. Along with serving this research, the equipment will also be used in VCSU classrooms for multiple courses in the environmental science, fisheries and wildlife, and biology majors.

Alumni Anecdotes



Dan Kaffar '10

Dan Kaffar has been named the North Dakota Middle Level Principal of the Year by the North Dakota Association of Secondary School Principals (NDASSP).

He is currently the principal at Central Middle School in Devils Lake, N.D. Dan is a 2010 graduate of the VCSU-NDSU dual degree program, earning a degree in elementary education from VCSU and child development and family science from NDSU.

Dan previously worked at Midway Public School in Inkster, N.D., and Fordville-Lankin Public School. He started working at Devils Lake in 2013 and in 2017 was promoted to middle school principal. According to his nomination, it is Dan’s team approach and willingness to give every student, teacher and support staff an opportunity to succeed in and out of the classroom that sets him apart from others.

Dan is now a contender for the National Principal of the Year Award. He is married to wife Hayley and the couple have five children ranging from 2 years old to eighth grade.

VCSU at The Capitol

Numerous VCSU students and employees have made trips to Bismarck this year to represent the university and participate in or observe proceedings of the 69th North Dakota State Legislative Assembly. From left, students Grant Larson, Grace Reep and Grady Hornung represented VCSU at the North Dakota University System Showcase Day in January, talking with legislators about their experiences at VCSU.



2024 Winter Commencement

Valley City State University celebrated Winter Commencement Thursday, Dec. 19, in historic Vangstad Auditorium. 120 degrees were conferred at the ceremony, including 103 undergraduate degrees and 17 master's degrees.

"It's easy to forget, in the hustle of assignments and exams, that this is more than just a place to earn a degree," student speaker Jazmine Truax said. "It's a place where we've grown, where we've struggled and triumphed, and where we've learned to take the time to truly see each other for who we are."





ALUMNI CORNER

Kim Svenningsen-Hesch, '91
Asst. Director for University Advancement and Alumni Relations

As I write this column, it's Spring Break at VCSU. It's hard to believe we are just a couple of months away from completing another semester and welcoming a new alumni class!

I want to extend our thanks to our alumni who are either wintering in or living in Arizona for attending our events in February. This year, we introduced some evening activities that were very well received. We're currently planning to build on these changes by adding a few more locations and including a golfing event. Stay tuned for announcements in our July issue of the Bulletin.

In February, we also conducted our annual Phone-A-Thon. Members of the VCSU Volleyball team helped the VCSU Foundation & Alumni Office with this important fundraiser. As students at VCSU, they appreciate the quality education and experiences they receive and



Svenningsen-Hesch

recognize the long-term benefits these opportunities provide. For this reason, our calls not only requested support from alumni but also expressed gratitude for the wonderful opportunities and experiences that our current students enjoy at VCSU!

As the Alumni Director of Valley City State University, I couldn't be prouder of this institution and its accomplishments. We need your help to reach our Phone-A-Thon goal! I would like to personally ask for your support of VCSU's Phone-A-Thon.

To donate, please visit our website at vcsualumni.org and click on the "Donate Now" button, or you can return the enclosed envelope in this Bulletin. By donating, you can invest in your alma mater and ensure that today's students have the same opportunities and quality experiences that you enjoyed at Valley City State University!

Thank you for your consideration. Once a Viking, Always a Viking!

NOMINATE OUTSTANDING ALUMNI

Valley City State University is proud of its alumni and the tremendous impact they have and are continuing to make across the nation. All nominations will be forwarded to the appropriate screening committees and will receive full consideration.

Certificate of Merit: This award provides the Alumni Association with a way to recognize alumni for accomplishments, service, or other noteworthy honors.

Alumni Service Award: This award is presented to alumni and university friends who have attained exceptional achievements in their careers and have made a significant contribution to the university through dedicated service, promotion, financial support or other efforts.

Distinguished Alumni: The Distinguished Alumni Award is the highest honor presented by the Alumni Association. This award recognizes Valley City State University alumni who have achieved prominence in their chosen field of endeavor. The nominee must have received national or international recognition and must have been identified as an expert in the individual's chosen field.

Young Alumni Achievement Award: The Young Alumni Achievement Award was established in 2012 to recognize VCSU's more recent, outstanding alumni as they embark on their chosen paths and strive for greatness. The award is presented to recognize future leaders under the age of 40 based on the following criteria.

- Those who have demonstrated high levels of achievement in one's chosen career or profession,
- Those who have demonstrated leadership ability or the potential for leadership and distinction in the long term,
- Those who have shown support for Valley City State University, and
- Those who have shown substantial commitment to the service of others.



See our website at vcsualumni.org and click on Awards & Recognition where you will find award descriptions along with nomination forms. Send nominations to: Kim Hesch, VCSU Foundation, 701-845-7403 | E-Mail: kim.hesch@vcsu.edu

Kimberly Souba – Author and Thriver

By Sarah Monilaws, '26

Writing has always been a large part of Kimberly Souba's life. The 2008 VCSU graduate began by writing journals to help process her emotions and later found success in penning stories and publishing her own novels. After 15 years as a teacher, Souba is back at VCSU putting her writing skills to use while pursuing a degree in communications.

Souba's love for writing began at an early age. Eventually she started writing for her high school's newspaper to stay involved with different activities her friends were in.

By the time Souba reached the end of her freshman year, she was already the editor of the school paper, a job usually reserved for juniors and seniors. Entering her junior year, she was editor of the school yearbook and eventually landed a position as youth editor for a Catholic newspaper.

After graduating from LaMoille High School (Ill.), Souba enrolled at VCSU to major in elementary education. Soon, she felt her writing was "hit or miss" and she was no longer writing as frequently. Besides a few articles for a local school's paper or a poem for a friend, she started to fall away from something that had previously brought her joy.

It wasn't until she came back to VCSU a second time that she found her passion for writing once again.

"Part of returning to school was just because I love learning, but part of it was wanting to get help with my writing," Souba said. "I don't want to write the way people want me to. I want to write the way I want to write."

With her fire burning once again, Souba got to work publishing her first novel, "From Death to New Life, the Transformation of a Soul."

The assembly of her novel wasn't easy, and it's something Souba never envisioned doing. When looking through boxes, she discovered old journals from high school. Initially she considered burning them, but a therapist suggested she re-read the journals. With hesitation she started reading and found over 300 poems and prayers. She tore them out, wanting to make a book to give her friends and family as gifts.

"I woke up in the middle of the night, and I just had the phrase 'From death to new life, the transformation of a soul' and I couldn't get that off my mind," she said.

Souba decided to go through a self-publishing process and shortly after had her first set of published novels. After receiving a copy, a close friend and his wife suggested she sell the book. Right away, Souba denied the idea saying, "I don't want people to know about my life" but then her friend said something she will never forget. "He said to me, if you can help one person, wouldn't it be worth it?"

Souba took that comment to heart and decided to take the leap. With the help of two close friends and her editor, they ordered the book chronologically and split it into



chapters, giving people an idea of where to go to when they were feeling a certain emotion. Souba recalls struggling the most with writing descriptions about each section.

"I sat there for four hours and had nothing," she said. "But while I was doing dishes, all of these scripture passages came to me that described each section. They were perfect."

The cover of "From Death to New Life, the Transformation of a Soul" has a significant meaning to the book and to Souba's life. The butterfly represents the transformation of a caterpillar to a butterfly. The cover also features a teal ribbon that represents both a cocoon and symbolizes sexual assault awareness. This is something Souba was and still is dealing with, becoming a thriver, not just a survivor of sexual abuse.

"I think we all grow and change in our lives and that's what butterflies are," she said. "When reading some of the poems and prayers that are in there, my hope is that people will always know that there's hope."

"You can always change your situations. They might be forced upon you, but you can change and become the best version of yourself that you can be, whatever that looks like."

Souba also published two children's books, and she hopes to publish more. All the proceeds go to help children and families who have experienced some type of abuse.

Souba says VCSU professors like Shannon VanHorn, Cindy Zahn, Dave Bass, Al Olson and Lee Kruger have all helped her success and inspired her to keep writing.

"At VCSU you really are a person, not just a number," she said. "Professors support you in class, but also after you graduate. Even when I wasn't taking their classes, they were still in touch, supporting me, and buying my books. If you want to have that lifelong support and network, VCSU is the place to be."

Souba expects to graduate in May of 2025 with a degree in communications. She previously graduated with an elementary education degree in 2008 and taught for 15 years. Souba currently resides in Geneseo, Ill., where she is a full-time student.

Alumni, Friends Gather in Arizona

Once again VCSU alumni and friends came together for the Arizona alumni events this winter. Staff from the VCSU Foundation and Alumni office along with President Al LaFave and his wife Kari hosted events the weekend of January 31 and February 1. Events include a social hour, lunch and a short program from President LaFave on campus updates. This year we added a couple of evening events at local pubs.

If you are an Arizona snowbird and would like to be part of our mailing list for the Arizona socials, please send your contact information to alumni@vcsu.edu.



Thomas '15 and Sierra (Even) '15 Cortez



Back Row: President LaFave, Bob Horne '59, Dan Horne, and Cory Anderson '89. **Front Row:** Kari LaFave, Deanne (Rose) Horne '60, Jane Lemnus, Judy Mathias and Kim Svenningsen-Hesch '91.



Jane Lemnus and Al Dosch '55



Aurissa (Martens) Brinson '15 with husband Dom and their family



L to R: Al & Jan Eggert, Thomas Kinn '87, Thomas '15 and Sierra (Even) '15 Cortez, Cory Anderson '89, Jane Lemnus, Alan LaFave, Al Dosch '55 and his daughter Linda, Kari LaFave, Judy Mathias, and Kim Svenningsen-Hesch '91.



Sharla (Huston) and James Fisher, Steve Koenig '93 and Cory Anderson '89



President LaFave, Bob Horne '59 and Cory Anderson '89



Back L to R: Cory Anderson '89, Ed Pung '75, Jane Lemnus, Kenneth Wendt '76, Dale Hillstrom '69, Bob Horne '59, Gary Thompson, Jim Egeberg, William Wicks '69, Rod Odlin '71, Karen (Anderson) Olafson '71, Kari and Alan LaFave, Marie (Vining) Topp '74, Judy Mathias, Pat (Sheldon) Parish '67 and Kim Svenningsen-Hesch '91. **Front L to R:** Joe '67 and Bernie Welder, Dee (Isensee) Hillstrom '69, Deanne (Rose) Horne '60, Lori Thompson, Pat Egeberg, Pat (Sorenson) Vernell '69, Leorna and Curt '62 Olson, Jerry Topp '74, and Dan Parish '65.

VCSU alum Jessica (Hintz) Stoen '10 Receives Prestigious Milken Educator Award



HUNTER, N.D. – Northern Cass Elementary School second-grade educator and VCSU alum Jessica Stoen '10 thought ND State Superintendent of Public Instruction Kirsten Baesler was holding an all-school assembly to commend the school on its successful personalized learning pilot. Stoen quickly learned there was another treat in tow: a sweet Valentine's Day surprise in the form of a Milken Educator Award. The prestigious, national honor includes an unrestricted \$25,000 cash prize Stoen can use however she chooses.

Hailed as the "Oscar of Teaching," the Milken Educator Award was created by philanthropist and education visionary Lowell Milken in 1987 to further excellence in education and inspire educators. Stoen is the only recipient in North Dakota this 2024-25 season and the first-ever in the Northern Cass School District's history.

Stoen is a 2010 graduate of Valley City State University, earning a Bachelor of Science in elementary education. She later earned a Master of Education in educational administration in 2017 from NDSU.

"Jessica's creative and personalized approach to teaching creates a profound, positive impact on her students, their families and her colleagues in and beyond her school community," said Milken Educator Awards Vice President Jennifer Fuller.

"Jessica's unwavering dedication to education is evident in the enriching, engaging learning experiences she crafts for her students, as well as her relentless commitment to professional growth for both herself and her peers. Congratulations, Jessica, and welcome to the Milken Educator Network!"

Stoen was honored as part of the Milken Family Foundation's 2024-25 Milken Educator Awards season. The tour will honor up to 45 pioneering professionals coast to coast, marking the 3,000th Milken Educator in the Awards' ranks and celebrating a history of changing lives in communities across America.

"It's fitting that an educator at one of our state's most outstanding and innovative rural schools is able to win this prestigious award," said Baesler. "Jessica is a role model and example of teaching excellence for educators everywhere."

Above: Jessica Stoen makes a heart to the gathering of students and staff after her surprise award.

Below: Kirsten Baesler talks to Jessica and her kids.



Alumni Anecdotes



Joe Wright '17

Joe Wright is the owner of Wright Foot, a fun sock brand company that specializes in puns such as "Otter Space", "Fork Life" and "Couch Potato."

Joe sold nearly 10,000 pairs of socks in 2024 and has more than 600,000 followers on the Wright Foot Tik Tok and Instagram accounts. He recently reached a deal with Scheels to carry his socks in store. After establishing the company several years ago, Joe has been able to make Wright Foot his full-time job. You can find his company at wrightfoot.net or search WrightFoot on Tik Tok and Instagram.

Joe graduated from VCSU in 2017 with a degree in professional communications and a music minor. He says the fondest memories from college are the friendships he made and the meaningful lessons from Kari Stricklin.

"My favorite quote from Kari that I still use today," says Joe, "is 'get comfortable with the uncomfortable.'"

Phone-a-Thon & Giving Hearts Day

The VCSU Alumni Association's annual Phone-A-Thon, one of our major activities each academic year, allows our alumni to show their Viking Pride in supporting our university. Donations allow us to stay in touch with alumni in several important ways, including publication of The Bulletin, hosting socials and reunions, sponsoring alumni award programs and supporting programs on the campus of Valley City State University. The Phone-A-Thon also provides scholarship support to our current students attending VCSU.

By supporting the annual Phone-A-Thon, you can help VCSU achieve the strategic initiatives underway that move VCSU forward.

Thank you to everyone who has supported the 2025 Alumni Phone-A-Thon. The following list includes cash donations and payment on pledges received as of February 28, 2025.

If you haven't made your donation, there is still time! Send your contribution today or find us on the web at www.vcsualumni.org

and click on the "Make a Gift Online" button. We accept Visa, Discover and MasterCard, or if you prefer, call the VCSU Foundation Office at 701-845-7203. Thank you for your continued support.

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Homecoming

September 22-27, 2025

The VCSU Alumni Association invites you to join alumni and friends of VCSU for many of the activities we have planned for Homecoming this fall. These are just a few of the events planned. Watch our website at vcsualumni.org as we add more events.

Monday, September 22

43rd Annual Bill Osmon Fun Run 4 p.m. Lokken Stadium

Thursday, September 25

Vikings Volleyball vs. Bismarck State 7 p.m. Grachien Gym

Friday, September 26

Alumni Welcome Back Ice Cream Social	1:30 p.m.	Student Center – Upper Lounge
VCSU Bookstore Open	8 a.m. – 4 p.m.	Student Center
Hall of Fame Social	5 p.m.	Valley City Eagles
Hall of Fame Banquet & Ceremony	6 p.m.	Valley City Eagles
Vikings Volleyball vs. Dickinson	7 p.m.	Grachien Gym

Saturday, September 27

Alumni Honors Breakfast	8:30 a.m.	Student Center Cafeteria
VCSU Bookstore Open	8 a.m. – noon	Student Center
Homecoming Parade	10:30 a.m.	Central Ave
Viking Tailgating	11 a.m. – 1 p.m.	Lokken Stadium
Vikings vs. Simpson University (Calif.)	1 p.m.	Shelly Ellig Field
Postgame and All-Alumni Social	4 p.m.	Valley City Eagles
College Student and Alumni Dance	9 p.m.	Valley City Eagles

For up-to-date schedules and more information, visit www.vcsualumni.org or call 701-845-7203.

Continuing the Connection

If you know the address of any of these individuals, please contact the VCSU Foundation Office at 1-701-845-7203 or email alumni@vcsu.edu.

2019

Lindsay Adams-Smith
 Ryan Allmaras
 Aryelle Jones Schiller
 Even Lago
 Christopher Nelson
 Zachary Noffsinger
 Izaach Pederson
 Jacob Peterson
 Rachel Schwandt
 Taylor Swan
 Gina Zastoupil

2020

Jacob Crawford
 Cassie (Beedy) Dingmann
 Brandon Elton
 Alison Ervin
 Harrison Koetz
 Evan Lang
 Patrick McCarthy
 Jayme Menard
 Sarah Oleksik
 Trevor Peduto

2021

Mason Hall
 Haley (Olsen) Jacobson
 Tyler Kliniske
 Terese Kuhbacher
 Bailey Lacey
 Madelyn Slattery
 Alex Weston
 Marah Wittenburg

2022

Tayah Beck
 Harrison Maas
 Steven Stutlien



I N S I D E ATHLETICS

vcsuvikings.com



Embracing the Frontier Conference Move

Dennis McCulloch, Athletic Director

I'm in my 31st year of being a Viking and it has been a great ride for my family and me. I'm very proud to be the athletic director and head football coach of this program and appreciate the opportunity to work to continue the tradition of greatness in Viking Athletics.

It's three years into being the athletic director and I truly believe my most important job is to improve the resources to help them run a successful program. Resources doesn't just mean more scholarship dollars – which is important – but it is also staffing programs adequately to match or exceed our opponents, improving facilities/equipment, improving travel, providing opportunity for professional development, right-sizing salaries, supplying high-quality support staff (SIDs, athletic trainers, equipment manager, office manager, maintenance, custodial, game management, FAR).

When a program isn't successful, the first thing we blame is the head coach, but I would tell you we should look at all aspects of what it takes to be successful, and if they have the resources necessary to be successful within the conference we compete. If we want our programs to finish in the top half of the Frontier Conference each year, then we need to make sure our resources for that program are in the top half of the conference. If we want to win conference championships, we need our resources to be at the top of the league. I would be the first person to tell you I don't want to be average or below average and I will do everything I can to raise the levels of our programs. If our football program has the same resources as the best teams in our conference, then our expectations should be able to compete for a conference championship and be in the top half of our league.



McCulloch

I'm excited about the Frontier Conference and new competition. They are an established successful conference at the national level and that is where we need to compete. We need to embrace the change and understand we will face an increase in the operational cost of running our programs and need to increase our scholarship to match our opponents. Dr. LaFave has been very supportive in making this move and understands that it will take a larger commitment from the university to support our athletic programs. We need our alumni to help us move our scholarship program forward if we want to compete on the field.

I encourage you to "BE Viking." That means to be actively involved in the future of Viking Athletics – not just a fan. A fan is someone who cheers a team on and is a casual observer of what is happening but doesn't really have a true effect on the team's success.

How can I BE Viking? Find ways to get involved in a successful future of our team.

- Be a member of the Viking Booster Club
- Come to events
- Help recruit athletes from your area
- Stay up to date: check out our website, talk with alumni
- Positively promote VCSU Athletics – wear Viking gear and talk about the positive effect it had on your life
- Find ways to donate your time and talent to Viking Athletics

I want to thank Anna Bratsch, our Associate AD/Head Athletic Trainer, and Steve Olson, Assistant AD/Director of Athletic Development, for their efforts in improving Viking Athletics.

As always, please feel free to contact me. I always enjoy talking with the people who made the tradition of Viking Athletics so strong.

2025 SPRING SCHEDULE

Both VCSU baseball and softball are at about the midway point in their seasons, starting competition in mid-February. The teams traveled to Arizona (softball) and Florida (baseball) in early March. Conference play began in late March and both teams will travel to Dickinson in May for the NSAA Conference Tournaments.



BASEBALL

DATE	OPPONENT	LOCATION	TIME
March 28	Bellevue University*	Valley City, N.D.	1 p.m.
March 29	Bellevue University*	Valley City, N.D.	12 p.m.
April 4	Dakota State University*	Madison, S.D.	1 p.m.
April 5	Dakota State University*	Madison, S.D.	12 p.m.
April 11	University of Jamestown*	Valley City, N.D.	1 p.m.
April 12	University of Jamestown*	Valley City, N.D.	12 p.m.
April 18	Mayville State University*	Valley City, N.D.	1 p.m.
April 19	Mayville State University*	Valley City, N.D.	12 p.m.
April 22	Dakota Wesleyan University	Valley City, N.D.	TBD
April 25	Dickinson State University*	Dickinson, N.D.	1 p.m.
April 26	Dickinson State University*	Mayville, N.D.	12 p.m.
May 2-5	NSAA Baseball Tournament	Dickinson, N.D.	TBD

SOFTBALL

DATE	OPPONENT	LOCATION	TIME
March 29	Dakota State*	Madison, S.D.	2 p.m.
March 30	Dakota State*	Madison, S.D.	12 p.m.
April 5	Bellevue University*	Valley City, N.D.	2 p.m.
April 6	Bellevue University*	Valley City, N.D.	12 p.m.
April 12	University of Jamestown*	Valley City, N.D.	2 p.m.
April 13	University of Jamestown*	Valley City, N.D.	12 p.m.
April 18	Dickinson State University*	Dickinson, N.D.	3 p.m.
April 19	Dickinson State University*	Dickinson, N.D.	2 p.m.
April 25	Mayville State University*	Mayville, N.D.	2 p.m.
April 26	Mayville State University*	Mayville, N.D.	1 p.m.
May 1-4	NSAA Softball Tournament	Dickinson, N.D.	TBD

GOLF

DATE	OPPONENT	LOCATION
April 7-8	Dakota Wesleyan Invite	Mitchell, S.D.
April 13-14	Dickinson State Invite	Dickinson, N.D.
April 22-23	DJGA College Shootout	Bismarck, N.D.
April 28-29	NSAA Spring Championships	Eagle, Neb.

TRACK & FIELD

DATE	OPPONENT	LOCATION
April 5	Al Bortke Open	Bismarck, N.D.
April 11-12	NDSU Spring Invitational	Fargo, N.D.
April 19	UJ Al Cassell Classic	Jamestown, N.D.
April 22	Viking Twilight	Valley City, N.D.
April 25	Bison Open	Fargo, N.D.
April 30	Bismarck Tune-Up	Bismarck, N.D.
May 9	NDSU Tune-Up	Fargo, N.D.
May 8-9	NSAA Outdoor Championships	Dickinson, N.D.

*NSAA Conference game

SPORTS HIGHLIGHTS

Basketball - VCSU Men Fall in Conference Semifinals

The Valley City State University men's basketball team finished the 2024-25 season with an overall record of 15-14, ending the season in the semifinals of the NSAA Conference Tournament.

The Vikings went 5-10 in NSAA conference play, earning



Muhammad



Creger

the the No. 4 seed. They took down No. 5 Bellevue at home in round one of the NSAA Postseason Tournament with a 67-64 win. They later fell to top seed Dickinson State in the semifinals.

VCSU's Tyrel Creger was named NSAA Newcomer of the Year and 2nd Team All-Conference in the 2024-25 season. He averaged 13.1 points per game, made 44.1 percent from the field and 37.7 percent from beyond the arc. He had a team-leading 89 assists, ranked third in steals with 33, and third in rebounds with 103.

Lamar Grayson was named Honorable Mention All-Conference. He averaged 17.0 points per game shooting 53.4 percent from the field. Grayson led the team with 373 points and was second in steals with 39. Senior Shaheed Muhammad was also named Honorable Mention All-Conference. Muhammad averaged 9.3 points per game shooting 34.2 percent from the three-point line. He led the team in steals with 47 and averaged 1.7 per game. Donovan Tynes was named VCSU's Champion of Character.

Track - Robinson and Just set school records at T&F Nationals

VCSU's Tayshaun Robinson and Karly Just both qualified for the NAIA indoor track and field national championships where they both would set school records and personal bests.

Robinson qualified for the 60-meter hurdles with a school record 8.15 and then at nationals he broke his own school record by running 8.09 and placing 15th.

Karly Just nationally qualified for the 3000-meter running a 10:36.41. She also broke her own school record at nationals running a 10:34.94 and placing 18th.

At the NSAA Indoor Conference Championships the Vikings claimed five conference titles, and had 11 individuals and one relay team earn All-Conference Honors (Top 3).

Just took the conference title in the 3,000 meters and 5,000 meters. Jasmine Barnes took second in the mile run earning All-Conference honors for the fifth time in her career. Emma Muggli finished the long jump in third place earning All-Conference for the third time in her career.

Cameron Champagnie also took a pair of conference titles in the long jump and triple jump. Jordan Mount took the conference title in the 400 meters running a 49.27. Tayshaun Robinson took second in the 60-meter hurdles. Zeke Barnick finished second in the high jump. Jordan Mount placed third in the 200 meters and Aaron Cutshall took third in the triple jump.



Robinson



Just

Viking Track and Field set school records in nine different events during the indoor season. Karly Just claimed three records in the mile run, 3,000 meters and 5,000 meters. Jasmine Barnes set a pair of school records in the 800 meters and 1,000 meters. Viking Emma Muggli set the record for overall Pentathlon score with 2,883 points. Jade Azure set the Viking record in weight throw with a mark of 15.26 meters at the NSAA Conference Championships.

Robinson now owns the top three fastest Vikings 60-meter hurdle times with his fastest coming at the NAIA National Championships. Jordan Mount clocked a 400-meter time of 49.27 during the NSAA Championships to set a record.



Women's Basketball finishes with 15-14 record

The Valley City State women's basketball team finished its season with a 15-14 overall record and a 6-9 mark in conference play. The Vikings earned a No. 5 seed for the NSAA Postseason and defeated No. 4 Bellevue to advance to the conference semifinals where VCSU fell to top-seed Dakota State.

VCSU started the season strong as head coach Vanessa Johnson earned her 100th career win on Nov. 6 with a 64-55 win over the University of Minnesota Morris. The Vikings gained momentum later in the season, highlighted by notable wins over teams receiving national attention including No. 24 Jamestown, (RV) Mayville State, and No. 6-ranked Dakota State.

Senior guard Ashlyn Diemert set three school records in VCSU's win over Jamestown including points in a game (39), 3-pointers in a game (11) and became the only Viking to ever shoot 100 percent on 3-pointers in a game (11-for-11) while making at least six.

Five players earned NSAA Postseason awards including NSAA Freshman of the Year and Honorable Mention All-Conference by forward Abby Aslesen. Diemert earned 2nd Team All-Conference, and JayCee Richter was named Honorable Mention All-Conference. Sophomore point guard Ellie Braaten earned a spot on the NSAA All-Defense Team and Delaney Cotton was named VCSU's Champion of Character.



Alumni Anecdotes



Brian Nelson '88

Brian Nelson won a 2024 9-man football state championship as the head coach of Fertile-Beltrami High School in Minnesota.

A 1988 graduate of VCSU, Brian has been teaching biology and science for 34 years at Fertile-Beltrami. He has been the head football coach for 30 years and the head track coach for 32 years. His football and track teams have combined to win 11 conference titles, including four straight titles in football.

Brian is a 10-time conference coach of the year between both sports. He was named State Coach of the Year in 9-man football for 2024, and he was the State Class A Boys Coach of the Year for track and field in 2023. Brian earned his 200th career football win this past season.

He is married to wife, Danielle, with three daughters: Kylie (24), Ellie (22) and Jacey (17).

HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES 2025



> VCSU inducting 27 into Coaches Hall of Fame

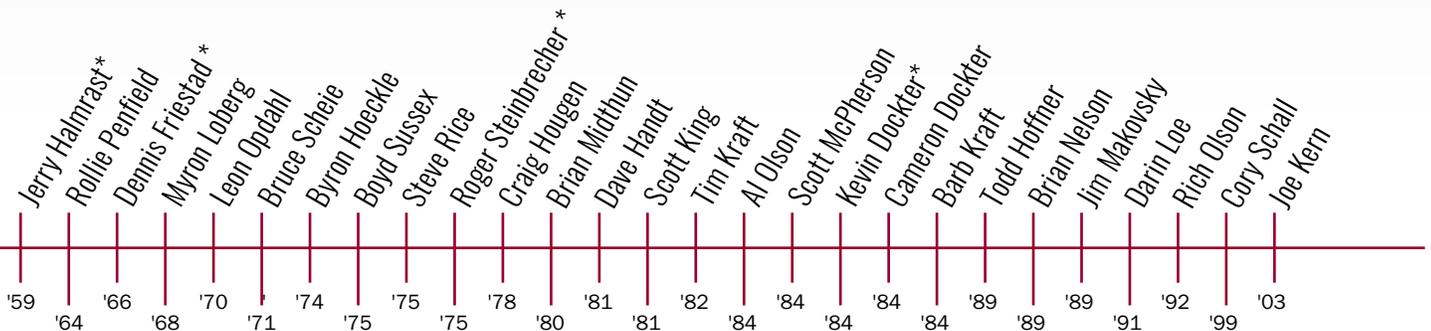
Valley City State University will induct 27 standout alumni into its Coaches Hall of Fame this summer.

They are the second class of inductees into the VCSU Coaches Hall of Fame, which was established in 2022 to honor Viking Alumni who have had successful and influential coaching careers. The induction ceremony takes place June 12, 2025, in Valley City.

Inductees into the VCSU Coaches Hall of Fame receive the Osmon Icon Award, which is named in honor of Viking icon coach Bill Osmon. Coach Osmon's teams won 24 conference championships in four different sports making him the all-time winningest coach in Valley City State history while providing dedication and influential service during his tenure.

The 2025 inductees include alumni from six different decades who achieved high levels of success as coaches at the high school or college level.

2025 COACHES HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES



*awarded posthumously

> Valley City State University will induct five individuals and two teams into the VCSU Athletics Hall of Fame during Homecoming weekend this fall.

Valley City State University will induct five individuals and two teams into the VCSU Athletics Hall of Fame during Homecoming weekend this fall.

Brittany (Lehner) Evans '14, Caitlyn (Wojahn) Graf '11, Jill DeVries, Steve Becher '84 and Jordan Maher '11 will be inducted into the Vikings Hall of Fame as individuals. The 2011 Football Team and 2012-13 Women's Basketball Team will also be inducted.



2012-13 Women's Basketball

The 2012-13 women's basketball team finished with a 24-8 overall record to finish third in the A.I.I. regular season. VCSU placed second in the A.I.I. Tournament to qualify for nationals, marking its third straight year as a national qualifier. At the time, VCSU set school-records with 24 wins on the season, 2207 total points scored, 489 assists and just 58.1 points allowed per game.



2011 Football

The 2011 Viking football team earned the Conference Championship Title and advanced to the NAIA Playoffs. The 2011 team finished with a 9-2 overall record and a 6-0 conference record. VCSU also had A.I.I. Most Valuable Senior in Jordan Maher and A.I.I. Most Valuable Player in LeTheo Proctor. Ken Eliacin, Cody Kilthau, Jordan Maher, Jake Thurston, Major Hopp, Tommy Zinke, LeTheo Proctor and A.J. Pfeifer each earned All-Conference honors.



Brittany (Lehner) Evans

Watertown, S.D.
Women's Basketball/Softball, 2010-14

Brittany Lehner was a decorated dual-sport athlete in women's basketball and softball from 2010-14. Lehner was a two-time 1st Team All-Conference selection and Honorable Mention All-American in women's basketball. She totaled 1390 points to rank sixth in VCSU history and 592 rebounds ranking seventh all-time. In 2014, Lehner averaged 18.4 points per game to rank second all-time. On the softball diamond, Lehner earned NSAA Player of the Year and All-Conference for her senior season in 2014. Lehner was also a two-time NAIA Scholar-Athlete.



Caitlyn (Wojahn) Graf

Milbank, S.D.
Women's Basketball, 2009-11

Caitlyn Wojahn was a standout point guard on the women's basketball team and was instrumental in helping the Vikings to their first NAIA National Tournament appearance as a senior. Wojahn set school records in career steals (283) and single-season steals (101). She also ranks second in career assists (324) and third in career 3-pointers made (145). Wojahn earned 2nd Team All-Conference as a junior and 3rd Team All-Conference as a senior. She was also a two-time NAIA Scholar-Athlete.



Jill DeVries

Head Coach, Women's Basketball, 1999-2013, 2014-17
Athletic Director, 2017-22

Jill DeVries served 17 seasons as head women's basketball coach and five years as athletic director at VCSU. Known for her passion for the game, DeVries is the winningest women's basketball coach in VCSU history with a 283-258 career record. She led the Viking women to the NAIA National Tournament four times and coached the 2010-11 team to a DAC Tournament Championship. She was named the North Star Athletic Association Athletic Director of the Year in 2019.



Steve Becher

West Fargo, N.D.
Football, 1981-84

Steve Becher was a four-year starting quarterback on the VCSU Football team from 1981-84. Becher was the only quarterback to win three conference championships in Viking Football history. At the end of his career, Becher still ranks in the Top 10 in 13 categories of the Viking football record book. When he graduated, Becher held records for passing attempts, pass completions, passing yards, passing touchdowns, total offense, interceptions, punt yards and punt attempts.



Jordan Maher

Bowman, N.D.
Football, 2008-11

Jordan Maher was a dominant defensive lineman who played for the Viking Football team from 2008-11. He helped the Vikings to a conference championship title and the NAIA Playoffs as a senior. Maher was named the A.I.I. Conference Senior of the Year and 1st Team All-Conference in 2011. Maher is tied for the school record with three sacks in a single game and totaled 17 sacks in his career.

Just Married

Send us your wedding photo so we can include it in the next issue of **The Bulletin**. Email the photo and short description to alumni@vcsu.edu or scan the QR code and fill out the Weddings Form.



1



2



3



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8

1 - Sara Engler '11 and Jordan Kuntz were married October 4, 2024 in Valley City.

2 - Amanda Starr '18 and Christopher Erickson were married on December 31, 2024. Christopher and Amanda live in Hope, N.D. with their two kids, Berkley (4) and Bentley (2), one cat (Squirt), and a ½ lab and ½ golden retriever puppy (Cheeto). Amanda is in her 7th year of teaching pre-k-12th grade Art, STEAM, and Technology/Cybersecurity at Hope Page and Christopher is a shop manager at Legacy Seeds in Alice, N.D.

3 - Lyndsey Bunn '19 and Brandon Larson were married August 10, 2024.

4 - Adrienne Rodlund '21 and Brady Matheny '20, M.Ed. '24 were married September 21, 2024. Brady works in Enrollment Services and as an assistant coach for VCSU's Track and Field Team. Adrienne is finishing up her internship at Children's Therapy Center and completing her Masters in Clinical Mental Health Counseling through University of Mary. They have two cats, Hazel and Bella.

5 - Angeline Gannon '22 and Chris Thompson '22 were married August 31, 2024. They met at VCSU's 2019 homecoming.

6 - Brooke Malson '23 and Chance Torrence were married September 21, 2024

7 - Kindra Jacobson '24 and William Magnusson '23 were married June 8, 2024. Will and Kindra attended VCSU to obtain their bachelors degrees. Will earned a degree in accounting and agribusiness and is currently an ag and business banker at Choice Bank. Kindra earned a degree in elementary education with an endorsement in kindergarten and is currently a kindergarten classroom teacher. Will and Kindra are so glad that VSCU brought them together.

8 - Sydney Anderson '24 and Trayton Cossette were married December 7, 2024.

Not Pictured

- Taylor Thompson '16** & Sam Wangler, June 8, 2024
- Kelci Nelson '22** & Mike Haugen, June 29, 2024
- McKenna Truhlicka '23** & Nathan Johnson, July 11, 2024
- Sydney Brunmeier '21 & Cody Didier '19**, August 10, 2024
- Alyson Rodin '21** & Adam Haberman, September 14, 2024
- Payton Hoggarth '22** & Nathan Hanson, October 5, 2024



Lil' Vikings

Have you had an addition to your family?
Share your good news with the Viking family!



Contact Kim Hesch at kim.hesch@vcsu.edu or scan the QR code and fill out the form to receive a free t-shirt for your new Lil' Viking. Include your baby's name and birth date. After you have your Lil' Viking shirt, send a photo to kim.hesch@vcsu.edu so we can include it in the next issue of **The Bulletin**.



Silas Gonzalez

June 7, 2024
6 lbs. 15 oz., 20.5 in.
Dennis '19 & Grace '19 Gonzalez



Ophelia Jo Kosel

March 18, 2024
7 lbs. 9 oz., 20 in.
Brothers Theodore (6) & Kellen (4)
Trent '11 & Chelsea Hageman Kosel
Grandparents: Todd '85 & Loni (Hovel) '85 Kosel



Dillyn Marie Denny

September 27, 2023
7 lbs. 11oz., 20.5 in.
Krista (Briss) '14 M.Ed. '19 & Justin Denny



Lila Johnson

December 26, 2023
5 lbs. 11 oz., 18.75 in.
Jacob '16 & Laura Johnson
Grandma Diane (Elhard) '81 & Dale Johnson



Vilem Vavra

January 5, 2024
7 lbs. 11oz., 19.75 in.
Jesse '17 & Harley (Mairs) '19 Vavra



Haven Holm Anderson

October 17, 2023
7 lbs. 1 oz., 18.75 in.
Sydney Anderson '24



Quinn Anderson

April 29, 2024
8 lb. 14 oz., 21.5 in.
Joins big sister Ila Brady & Kara (Fike) Anderson
Grandparents: Cory '89 & Kristi (Tait) '93 Anderson; Steve '93 & Mary (Enstad) '92 Fike



Maeve Lynne Walls

December 28, 2024
6 lbs. 13 oz., 21.5 in.
Kurtis '18 M.Ed. '23 & Kadie (Anderson) '19 M.Ed. '23 Walls
Grandparents: Cory '89 & Kristi (Tait) '93 Anderson



Hunter Yanish

October 5, 2024
6 lbs. 6 oz., 20 in.
Brittany Nathan '19 & Martin Yanish
Grandparents: Stacey (Wieck) '99 & Matt Nathan





Richard '71 and Carol (Hurley) Schmidt '74 proudly fly the VCSU flag in their yard in Marion, N.D.

David Katzenmeyer '78 is still enjoying retirement and going on 9 years. He is looking forward to seeing how the VCSU Vikings will compete in their new conference.

CLASS OF 1980s

Myron Buchholz '80 took the leap, and the \$7,500 tax credit, and bought a Ford F150 Lightning EV that surprisingly, but barely, fits in his garage. Now he drives around and intimidates people in little cars. He also likes to be first at a red light and then make everyone disappear in the rearview mirror. 0-60 in 4 seconds, with no sensation except when feeling one's body pressed back into the seat. No squealing, no roar, it's completely nuts. Recently, Myron was click-baited by "Can you identify these classic cars?" The caption for each stated their 0-60 times. Now, he always told his history students that he has a time machine, pausing to see the confusion before stating, "it doesn't work, but if it does it's going to be great." When Myron makes it work he is going back to Hwy 32 outside of Fingal, N.D., and win every drag race against those who always mocked him in his 1973 Vega. Go Vikings!

David Bergum '81 is enjoying retirement; it is the best job he has ever had! David continues to enjoy the great outdoors and stays busy with his 4 grandsons; Jack (12), Tripp (7), Axel (3) and Onyx (2). David gives a special shoutout to all of his teammates from the 1979 and 1980 basketball teams.

Joan (Batesole) John '82 hasn't won the lottery yet so she is still working at Midwest Radio. She visited her grade school through college friend, **Donna (Hoeckle) Slais '82**, this past summer in Waford City, N.D.

Jaci (Miller) Gately '84 will retire in December 2025 after 37 years of employment with Job Service ND. She enjoys camping and fishing at Devils Lake with her husband, Doug. Jaci hopes to substitute teach at Maple Valley School District when she is retired.

Rick '84 and Robin (Orr) Kohler '82 welcomed their 2nd granddaughter, Poppi Lake Schoenbauer, last May; she joins Charlie Rudy Kohler who will be 4 years old in March. Rick is the vice president of procurement at Standard Iron LLC. They send their love to the Tau Sigs and Delphis.

Laurel (Ploium) Westby '84 had a wonderful year in 2024. Their oldest daughter, Mallory, was married in February! Their son, **Scott Westby '15**, was married in June! Their granddaughter was a flower girl. Their middle daughter, Erin, and her husband celebrated their 5th wedding anniversary. Laurel retired after 40 years of teaching; she taught 4 years at VCSU and loved it!

Coleen (Ellefson) Ashe '86 is retired, but as busy as ever. She is a Tupperware Director, AirBnb host, and she helps Rick at his insurance office during the busy fall season of Medicare open enrollment. Coleen and her husband, Rick, spend a lot of time at their new lake home and love spending time with their family. They have five grandchildren so far! Coleen says "life is good".

Naomi (Wieland) Kreidlkamp '89 plans early childhood educator training for Northwest Minnesota for Child Care Aware through the Community Action Partnership in Moorhead.

CLASS OF 1990s

Brenda (Anderson) Hill '94 is in her 30th year of teaching kindergarten in Wahpeton, N.D. Her daughter, **Jazmine (Hill) Truax '24** just graduated from VCSU and teaches kindergarten in West Fargo N.D.

CLASS OF 2000s

Tony Piccalo '02 is currently teaching at Satellite High in Satellite Beach, Fla. He teaches career research and is the assistant athletic director.

CLASS OF 2010s



Jerica (Buckman) Smith '14 M.Ed. '21 accepted the position of elementary principal in her hometown of South Heart this past spring. She will be graduating this fall from the University of North Dakota with a Master's degree in Teaching and Leadership. Jerica feels fortunate to have both of her children attending the same school - Jaxson is in third grade and Jaylee is in first grade. Her husband, Joshua, also stays involved in the school, helping coach junior high football.

Paige Fettig '18 moved to the Detroit Lakes area and teaches 4th grade at the Detroit Lakes public school. This is her seventh year teaching.

Hattie Wood '19 earned another BS in Anthropology at ASU and has worked at Rowllins Middle School for the last five years as an ELA teacher for 6-8th grade. She is currently enrolled in a Global Health MS program at ASU.

CLASS OF 2020s

Randy Smith '22 will graduate with a Masters Degree in Music Composition in May 2025. He would not be doing that if it had not been for the music program at VCSU.

In Remembrance

Lois (Piculell) Brier '40, Valley City
Elizabeth (Oxley) Hart '42, Prospect Hts, Ill.
Gerald Saar, Jamestown
Dorothy (Wahl) Crandall '43, Hayward, Wis.
Nora (Whitman) Sanness '46, Fargo
Ardis (Ziegler) Rhoades '48, Coleraine, Minn.
LaVern (Fraedrich) Morlock '50, Gackle, N.D.
Carol (Watson) Peterson '50, Valley City
Hubert Thoreson '50, Bellingham, Wash.
Donald Thoreson '50, Fargo
Helen (Cheatley) Saxlund '51, Langdon, N.D.
Phyllis (Wohl) Stribling '51, Livermore, Calif.
Lois (Hahn) Moe '52, Ontario, Calif.
Herbert Tillapaugh '54, Wickenburg, Ariz.
Betty Jean (Benzinger) Winston '56, Branson, Mo.
Mary (Nicolli) Prante '57, Wahpeton, N.D.
LoEtta (Remmich) Sellner '57, Bismarck, N.D.
Jadie Dahlen '59, Fergus Falls, N.D.
Patricia (Chalk) McDaniel '59, Valley City
Gene Kotaska '60, Devils Lake, N.D.
Ernest Randa '61, Rolla, N.D.

George Gaukler '62, Valley City
Donna (Desizlets) James '62, Vadnais Heights, Minn.
Delmar Zimmerman '62, Wishek, N.D.
Jane (Miller) Kamletz '64, Breckenridge, Minn
Larry Kersten '64, Newburg, N.D.
Lyle Bollinger '66, Jamestown
Keith Rath '70, Jamestown
Richard Myer '71, Mesa, Ariz.
JReed Fredenburg '74, Edgeley, N.D.
Kim Homan '75, Casselton, N.D.
Kathy (Johnson) Nordeen '76, Bismarck
Terri Nims '84, Lisbon, N.D.
Mark Edinger '85, Bismarck
Paul VanHorn '88, Fargo
Celine Landauer-Allen '90, Mount Vernon, Wash.

Former Faculty & Staff

Mylo Falstad, Valley City
O'Neil Oppegaard, Valley City
Karen Ostgarden, Moorhead, Minn.

George Anton Gaukler



George Anton Gaukler, age 88, of Valley City, ND, passed away in Valley City on March 11. He was born on August 22, 1936, in Sisseton, SD, to Aloysius Bernard Gaukler and Agatha Catherine (Duerr) Gaukler. George grew up on a small farm outside of Lidgerwood, ND. After graduating high school in 1954, he drove truck to deliver gas to local

farmers. George joined the U.S. Army and served two years.

George attended Valley City State College from 1958 to 1962, graduating with a bachelor's degree in education. During his college years, he benefited from great mentors and became a student leader in politics and student government. Following college, he had a brief stint as principal and math teacher at a small rural school in Noltimier Township, ND.

In 1964, George changed his career path to pursue real estate development, which he enjoyed for the rest of his life. George founded Valley Realty, Hi-Line Construction, and Valley Rental Service, which built, managed, and sold single family homes, multi-family developments, and commercial buildings. George served as president of the ND Board of Realtors and the ND Real Estate Commission. In 1997, George founded the Dakota REIT, a private real estate investment trust that owns properties throughout the Midwest. He retired from the Dakota REIT's Board of Trustees in 2023, but remained actively involved.

George and his beloved wife, Audrey, who he married in 1971, were active contributors to VCSU and sought numerous ways to support the long-term growth and well-being of the Valley City community, including the fundraising

and development of the Gaukler Family Wellness Center and George's longstanding work with the talented teams at the Valley City-Barnes County Development Corporation and the VCSU Foundation. George was a founder of Tri W-G Manufacturing, a medical equipment manufacturer in Valley City since 1967.

George was a long-time leader of the ND Democratic-NPL Party. He served as its state chair from 1980 to 1994, during which time he helped numerous local, state, and national leaders be elected to office. He also served as the Democratic National Committee person for ND, and as a member of the National Executive Committee.

He enjoyed grilling and entertaining family and friends and had a true passion for gardening, eagerly sharing his produce with those who enjoyed his fresh fruits and vegetables. George and Audrey shared meaningful time with family and friends at their lake home in Minnesota and along the beaches of St. Maarten. George also enjoyed decades of family gatherings in Lidgerwood – his childhood home.

George is survived by his children, Michael (Kristin) Smith, Tracy (Jeff Eyres) Smith, and Geoffrey (Monte) Gaukler; grandchildren, Connor, Mara, Karin, Nina, Patrick, Keegan, Dawson, Madison, Megan, and Reagan; great-grandchildren, Nora, Lennon, Quinn, and Sawyer; and siblings, Paul Gaukler, Cathy Wollitz, Lois Jaeger, and Claire Belford. George is preceded in death by his parents and his wife of 53 years, Audrey Lee (Dohman) Gaukler.

His family extends heartfelt appreciation for the loving care provided by Kaley Machart and the team at Elderbee Care. Memorials are preferred to the Abused Persons Outreach Center in Valley City or the VC Parks and Recreation Foundation for the development of the Hidden Pond Trail.

O'Neil Delano Oppegaard



O'Neil Delano Oppegaard, 91, Valley City, passed away January 13.

O'Neil was born on March 31, 1933, the son of Olaf and Marie (Strand) Oppegaard of Litchville. After completing his schooling, he began to work for a carpenter in town and learned the skills of carpentry.

O'Neil moved to Valley City and began working for Berge Construction and later worked for Wick Construction. He also spent several years building homes. O'Neil retired after spending several years working at VCSU.

He was united in marriage to Janice Olson on February 27, 1960, in Valley City at First Lutheran Church. His gift to his

wife was a new home he had built on the hillside. He later built another home near a school for Elizabeth to attend which was across the road.

In retirement, O'Neil took classes in wood turning and spent many hours in his shop. Another pastime for O'Neil was the lakes and fishing. He taught his wife and daughter to fish, and they liked it as well. The family spent over 50 years on Toad Lake in Minnesota. He was a past member of the National Guard and a longtime member of the Eagles and Faith Lutheran Church.

He was preceded in death by his parents, brothers Wallace & Marvin and sisters Evelyn, Marlene & Nordis. O'Neil is survived by his wife Janice and daughter Elizabeth, along with numerous nieces and nephews.

Karen Lynn Ostgarden



Karen Ostgarden, 69, Moorhead, Minn., passed away Jan. 6 in Fargo.

Karen Lynn Cederberg was born in Fargo on October 25, 1955, to Vernon and Elenor (Woodward) Cederberg. She grew up along the shores of Silver Lake in rural Hawley. She attended school at Hawley Public School and graduated in 1973. Karen went to Concordia College

and graduated with a math major and computer science minor in 1977. She was united in marriage to Mark Stewart Ostgarden at Hegland Lutheran on May 28, 1977. She and Mark moved to Mandan, N.D., but moved back to Hawley in 1980. She was a computer programmer for Steiger Tractor and Crystal Sugar. While they were in Hawley they had their daughter Alison. In 1986, Mark and Karen moved to South Saint Paul. Karen continued her computer programming work at National Computer Systems (NCS) in Eagan. They had their son Joseph while in Lakeville, Minn.

In 1994, Mark and Karen moved to Hatton, N.D., and she worked as a high school secretary for Hatton Public School. In 2000, Mark and Karen moved to Valley City where she

was an office manager for the Allen Memorial Library at VCSU and later as an office manager for the Technology Education department. She and Mark were involved in starting a Celebrate Recovery branch in Valley City. In 2014, Mark and Karen moved to Moorhead to be closer to their growing family. They became actively involved in the Lighthouse Church in Fargo.

Karen delighted in being a friend to all people she met. She loved being involved in congregational life. She was an avid cross stitcher, loved to play games and watch movies. Most of all, she loved spending time with her grandchildren and was always cheering on her loved ones at concerts, games and more. She loved to spend her summer days at Silver Lake with her family.

Karen is survived by her husband, Mark; two children, Alison (Kelly) Voss, Tintah, Minn, and Joseph (Theresa), Grand Forks, N.D.; six grandchildren, Jacob and Abigail Voss, and Nathaniel, Eli, Charles, and Alex Ostgarden; her siblings, Keith (Jennel) Cederberg, Hawley, Minn., Annie (Brad) Cardwell, King George, Va., and Janet Cederberg (Marc Helgeson) Enumclaw, Wash., and their families. Karen is preceded in death by her parents Vernon and Elenor.

Mylo Birgir Falstad



Mylo Birger Falstad, 84, Valley City, passed away January 8 in Fargo.

Mylo was born October 11, 1940, in Valley City, the son of Birger and Myrtle (Olstad) Falstad. He attended and graduated from Hastings (N.D.) High School in 1958. Mylo attended Interstate Business College, Fargo. He worked and became manager of Brekke's Grocery store in West Fargo.

Mylo married Joan Marchand on June 24, 1961, at St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Moorhead, living in Moorhead for two years and then purchasing a home in West Fargo, N.D. In 1966, they moved to the Falstad Farm near Hastings where they farmed and their children attended school in Kathryn. In 1991, they retired from farming and Mylo began working at VCSU in the boiler room and later became maintenance

supervisor. They moved to Valley City in 1995.

He was an active member of St. Catherine's Catholic Church in Valley City. He was a caretaker and volunteer of many organizations throughout his life. Mylo always took time to visit his neighbors and friends and especially enjoyed his morning coffee time with the guys. Mylo took the most pride in his family, he enjoyed following his children and grandchildren to all their activities with Joan.

Mylo is survived by his sons, Jeffrey Falstad, LaMoure, N.D., and Paul (Tammy) Falstad, Kathryn, N.D.; daughter, Joy (Ritchie) Larson, Casselton, N.D.; seven grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren and a brother Wayne, sisters, Elaine Erickson, Mavis Schlottman and Marci (Dale) Myer; and many nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his parents, his wife, sister Bernice Ketterling, brothers in law Stan Erickson, Albert Ketterling, Frank Schlottman, a daughter-in-law Kristy and grandson Jordan.



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