



**Read more inside!**

**NEW EPS Teacher Cohort p.6**

**District-Wide Robotics p.10**

**EPS Alumni Through The Decades p.16**



# Foundation Focus

## 2023 Annual Newsletter



Elkhorn Public Schools  
**FOUNDATION**



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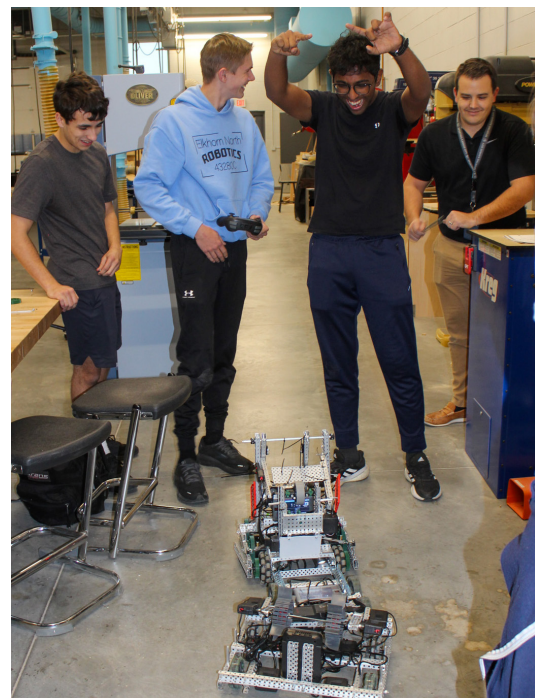
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Elkhorn Public Schools Foundation



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Thank you to **Chad Rutar** (Past President & Advisor) and **Scott Moore** for their years of service and leadership given to the Elkhorn Public Schools Foundation Board.



Elkhorn Kids Campus Staff



# EXECUTIVE MESSAGE

Dear Friends of the Foundation,

It is always hard to find the words to best express our gratitude for the truly humbling ways our Elkhorn community supports the Elkhorn Public Schools Foundation. Through the generosity of our donors, volunteers, Elkhorn Public Schools staff, and community sponsors, we continue to fund existing programs and embark on new initiatives to support Elkhorn Public Schools students and staff.

This past year we established the "Partnership & Alignment Committee (PAC)." This group of dedicated Foundation board members worked alongside Elkhorn Public Schools District administrators to identify and fund district needs and opportunities to support students and staff. I encourage you to read and learn more about the exciting new PAC projects approved in 2023, including the "Cohort Pathways Program" (an EPS Teachers Cohort), engineering curriculum, and more!

I continue to be blessed by a dedicated staff who works hard to support the mission of the Elkhorn Public Schools Foundation, in addition to the insight and leadership provided by the Elkhorn Public Schools Foundation Board of Directors. Thank you for some remarkable achievements this past year! Onwards and upwards! Wishing you and your family a happy new year filled with hope, health, and happiness!

With gratitude,

*Stacey L. Falk*



Stacey L. Falk  
& the Foundation Team

*The Elkhorn Public Schools Foundation promotes student achievement and the unity of our community and its public schools by encouraging, supporting, and recognizing excellence in innovative education, quality school programs, and civic involvement.*

Partnership & Alignment Committee
Teacher Cohort

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Partnership & Alignment Committee

We implemented a new committee tasked with approving projects funded by one-time or short-term contributions that align with the Elkhorn Public Schools Strategic Plan and Goals.

Classroom Grants

We enrich Elkhorn Public Schools by fulfilling yearly grant requests from teachers, creating opportunities for thousands of students in the district.

Math & Reading Intervention

We fund the before-and-after school Math & Reading Intervention groups that take place in the elementary schools. These clubs help students gain confidence and improve their overall math and reading comprehension through small group tutoring.

Scholarship Program

We administer scholarships for our ACHIEVE Scholarship Program and on behalf of community businesses, families, and organizations, awarding scholarships to countless Elkhorn Public Schools graduates.

Alumni Program

We foster the interconnectedness of the Elkhorn community by providing EPS Alumni updates, assisting with reunion communication, and hosting fun events to bring alumni together.

Hall of Fame

We honor outstanding teachers, staff, alumni, and community members at our annual Hall of Fame ceremony.

76

Classroom Grants totaling \$140,000 were awarded for the 2023-2024 school year, benefiting all 20 schools.

90

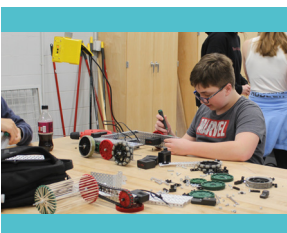
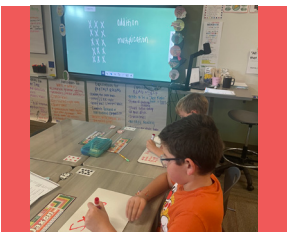
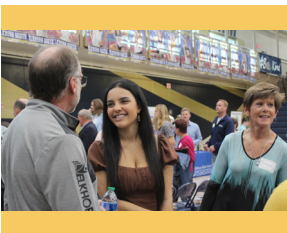
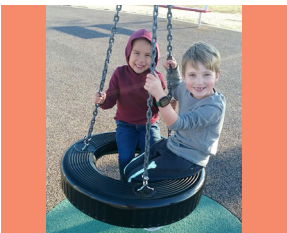
EPS staff utilized our partial tuition reimbursement program, totaling \$37,000.

2,145

Advanced Placement tests subsidized by the Foundation for high school students in 2023.

35

Scoreboard sponsors promoted their businesses on Foundation-funded scoreboards.



450

Scholarships were awarded to the Class of 2023 on behalf of the Foundation, families, businesses, and organizations totaling \$550,000.

12

Crucial need categories met through the Foundation's Kids In Need fund, including school supplies, eye exams, clothing, and more.

400

Elementary school students benefited from before-and-after school math and reading tutoring programs.

290,000

Dollars committed to fund large-scale projects through the new Partnership & Alignment Committee.





Twelve Elkhorn Public Schools teachers are participating in the first teacher cohort to further their education funded by the Foundation.

## New Partnership & Alignment Committee Helps Further Teachers' Education

After more than 20 years of teaching, Staci Stevens and Julie Patchen are students once again. Both veteran teachers began pursuing their master's degrees through a 12-person teacher cohort coordinated by Elkhorn Public Schools (EPS), the Elkhorn Public Schools Foundation, and the University of Nebraska Omaha (UNO).

The "Cohort Pathways Program" features three courses taught by EPS administrators, which are only open to EPS educators and focus on "key educational concepts, allowing EPS staff to develop rich learning around topics that matter to the District," said Dr. Jodi Miller, EPS Assistant Superintendent. Upon completion of the three EPS-taught courses, participants will choose their desired master's pathway at UNO and complete their studies at their desired pace.

The newly designed program was implemented as a tool to strengthen and retain EPS staff, while also offering an opportunity for them to increase their pay. The Foundation pays for participants' tuition up front, with a stipulation that it be paid back upon completion

of the coursework, which is offset by the participants' coinciding pay increase earned by continuing their education.

The Cohort Pathways Program was one of the first projects approved by the Foundation's Partnership & Alignment Committee (PAC). This committee came into fruition from an EPSF Strategic Planning session goal to increase alignment with the Elkhorn Public Schools. The committee reviews projects brought to it by EPS administrators and approves those that align with the EPS Strategic Plan and Goals and require one-time or short-term funding commitments. The Foundation is very proud of its PAC projects funded in its inaugural year!

According to Dr. Miller, "We are incredibly grateful for the support of the EPS Foundation in assisting us to achieve our identified goals. We want the best quality people working with our students each and every day, and this program helps us achieve that goal."

The teachers who are enrolled in the Cohort Pathways Program are finding it extremely rewarding.

Julie Patchen has taught music at Manchester Elementary for 16 years. She decided to join the cohort for several reasons, but the biggest was that the program set up made it easy to get started.

"With the Foundation and the district going ahead and paying for it, and we pay back, that helps with that burden of getting started," Julie said. "I appreciate that they've given me this opportunity to advance my knowledge and advance me where I maybe couldn't have afforded it before."

After completing the first two courses, Julie is already seeing benefits from participating in the cohort, including collaborating with EPS teachers of all subjects and grade levels, strengthening her leadership through the coursework, and providing ways to apply her learning to her teaching. "I feel very blessed that I was able to be part of the first cohort and see immediate changes on how I do things," Julie said.

Staci Stevens, an educator with 20 years of experience and cohort member, is in her second year of teaching in Elkhorn Public

Schools after moving from California several years ago.

Ultimately, Staci knew participating in the cohort was the right choice for her. "It's always good to hone in (your skills) even though I am a veteran teacher," she said. "I am always open to growth, and I think it's a wonderful opportunity as it's keeping me wanting to improve my craft."

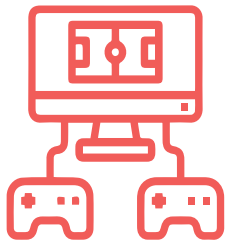
Overall, she wants the community to notice that "we have teachers dedicated to being the best version of themselves, wanting to continue to expand themselves." The Cohort Pathways Program and other Foundation programs help EPS staff continue learning and growing.

"This opportunity makes me feel important and valued in my district because they want to invest in me," Staci said. "I am extremely blessed to be a part of Elkhorn Public Schools. I feel that I have a voice and my opinion matters."

If you would like to invest in the education of our amazing EPS educators and other PAC projects, please visit our website to contribute.

### E-Sports at all High Schools

The clubs broaden the opportunities available to students with different interests.

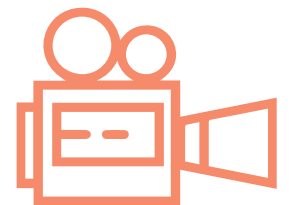


### Green Room and Equipment

The goal is to increase student involvement with video recordings, livestreams, digital content, and more.

### Media Equipment

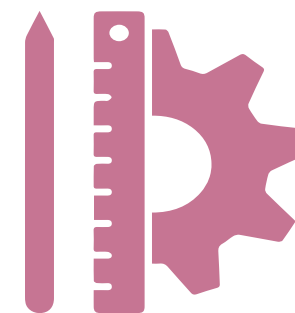
This allows for families to remotely view performing arts productions.



## More PAC Projects

### Engineering Curriculum and Equipment at High Schools

PAC supplied purchased engineering software and 3D printers, laser engraver/cutter, and various tools.



"Getting tools in the hands of kids so they know how a thing gets made is certainly a benefit. We are eternally grateful. It is so wonderful to be at a school where people say 'yes.'"

- Matt Wachter, Elkhorn North Skilled & Technical Sciences Teacher

### Reading Incentives at all middle schools

\$4,000 was allocated to middle school media specialists to buy prizes to motivate students to read.





# Storm Brewing Brings Smiles While Teaching Valuable Life Skills at Elkhorn Ridge

Most people start their morning with a steaming cup of coffee. Stacy Kreun’s special education class serves coffee with a side of learning to the Elkhorn Ridge Middle School (ERMS) staff.

For the 2023-2024 school year, Stacy applied and was awarded funds to create a mobile coffee cart business for her life skills and resource students. Her clever students named their business Storm Brewing. Foundation grant funds were used to purchase a sturdy mobile coffee cart, a generator, blenders, and airpots for Stacy’s classroom. Other items were donated by Stacy’s friends, Noelle and Lisa Hobza who run Special Perk, or purchased through the district’s special education fund.

This interactive skills lab introduces Stacy’s students to important lessons including measuring liquid and dry items, counting money, providing change, planning, hygienically preparing food, and communicating in a work setting such as greetings/closings, taking orders, and thanking customers. Many of these important skills overlap with lessons Stacy’s students are learning at home, so there is a direct real-life application.

Initially, Stacy envisioned the grant being more

geared toward her life skills students; however, the cart has proven to be beneficial for all her students. It has been particularly motivating to one of Stacy’s students. On more than one occasion, Stacy recalls saying to the student, “You have to do some work first then you can do the coffee cart.”

“The practice with real job skills and real materials gives the students confidence and so much joy,” Stacy said. “My one student just beams when she can make and deliver the coffee. I just love seeing them (my students) feel successful on a bigger scale.”

*“My students grow more confident each day, and the staff LOVES to see them being successful and happy. The smiles are contagious.”*

After receiving the grant funding, Stacy asked ERMS staff what beverages they would like to see offered on the coffee cart. Based on their feedback, the

students are selling hot coffee, iced coffee, tea, and bottled water. Stacy and her students hope to add smoothies to their offerings in the warmer months. Staff can purchase their beverages using a punch card (10 cups for \$20) or by paying cash (\$3 a cup).

Since this is their first year, Stacy and her students try to get the coffee cart out once a week before school. The eventual goal is to have the cart out on the same day every week. Until that can be accomplished, teachers can submit orders during the day, and Stacy’s students will deliver the order when there is free time.

ERMS staff have been really supportive of the coffee cart and helping Stacy’s students learn. “Some teachers are all in, to the point that they paid for their punch card with dollar bills, so my students could practice their math skills,” she said.

Another benefit is that the coffee cart provides an opportunity for more peer involvement. Currently, there are several consistent peer helpers who assist Stacy’s



Another student counts the money received from their coffee cart with guidance of a peer helper.

without the Foundation’s support. They just really bring so much joy and happiness to the kids.”

Stacy encourages other teachers to apply for a classroom grant for the 2023-2024 school year.

If you are interested in reading about other classroom grants, please visit our website.

**The Foundation awarded 76 classroom grants for the 2023-2024 school year totaling \$140,000.**



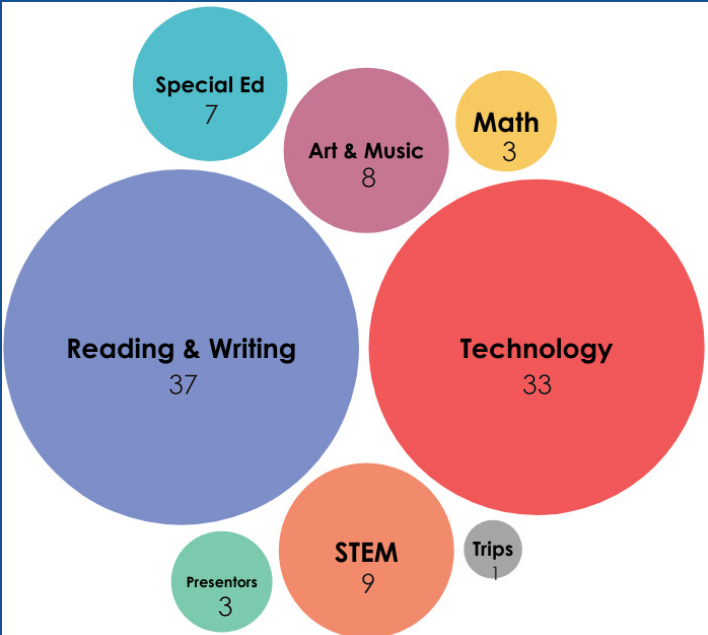
One student serves the coffee she made to Elkhorn Ridge Middle School principal Tanner Schutt.

students in the classroom and with the coffee cart. Stacy said, “The peer helpers are also learning how to work with differently-abled people, patience, and grace. I think overall, the benefit is some joy for everyone.”

Stacy continued, “My students grow more confident each day, and the staff LOVES to see them being successful and happy. The smiles are contagious. [The Foundation’s] contributions are helping prepare differently-abled learners to have the skills they need to contribute to our community as young adults and beyond.” She added, “We couldn’t do these fun things



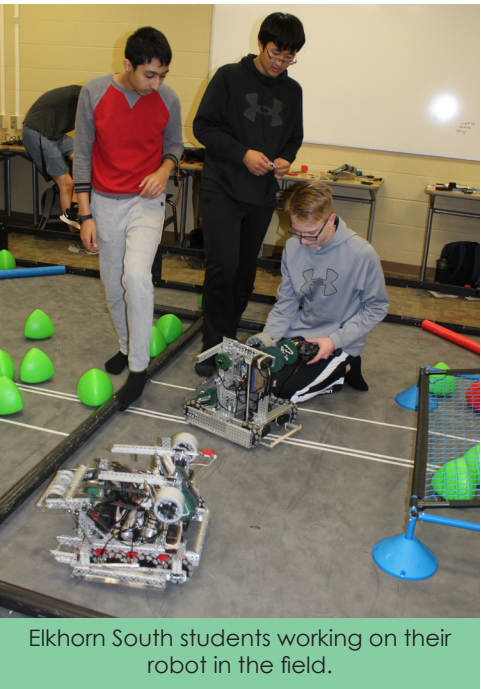
Special education students, peer helpers, and teacher Stacy Kreun pose behind their coffee cart funded through the Foundation’s Classroom Grant Program.





# Robotics Grants Provide Unique Learning Experiences at Every Grade Level

In the center of the classroom, there is a 12’ X 12’ square field with two netted goals, PVC barriers, two offensive zones, two elevation bars, and 60 triballs scattered throughout the field. On the elevation bar, hanging an inch or so above the ground is a silver, mechanized robot that can run autonomously, raise itself into the air, and fling triballs across the field. No, this isn’t a scene from *Transformers* or *iRobot*. It is a typical practice for a high school robotics team in the Elkhorn district as they prepare for competition.



For more than 10 years, the Elkhorn Public Schools Foundation has funded robotics programs throughout the district including the high school Robotics Clubs and robotics kits for several elementary schools through our Classroom Grant Program. No matter the level, students participating in robotics learn problem solving, time management, coding & programming, collaboration,

initiative, and perseverance. In addition to these valuable skills, robotics also aligns with academic standards for computer science and technology through the Nebraska Department of Education.

### Elementary School

The Foundation has funded grants for coding and robotics at several elementary schools. This past year, Fire Ridge, Arbor View, and Blue Sage elementary schools were awarded classroom grants for Sphero Indi Robots.

Melissa Lightle, media specialist at Fire Ridge for 19 years, has seen an increase in technology integration within the library curriculum for K-5th grade. Students are taught digital citizenship, research, and computer programming.

She marvels at her students’ engagement with this technology. “The neatest thing is that it makes the kids problem solvers more than anything,” Melissa said. Students persevere and are so excited when they solve the problem. She continued, “It makes them think about what they want to achieve and making a plan of how they can get there.”

Melissa has received multiple classroom grants during her time teaching in the Elkhorn Public Schools (EPS) district. “When I think about the opportunities it (the Foundation Classroom Grant Program) provides for our students, it’s things that they need for their core classes, and it’s also the creativity and problem solving,” she said. “It’s the extras that you don’t get through the daily curriculum.”

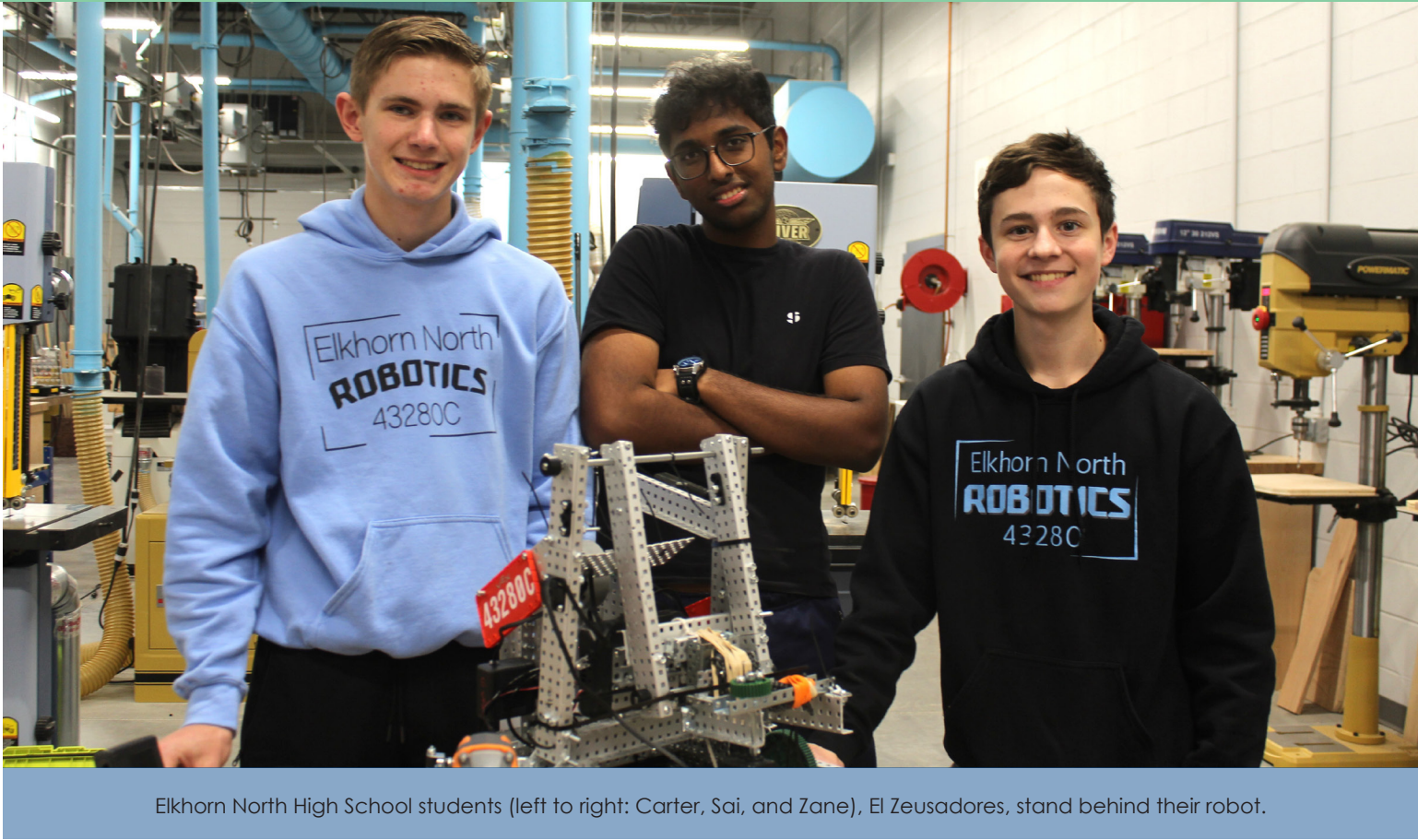
Introduction to activities

like the Sphero Indi Robots start an appreciation for computer programming at a young age that continues into middle and high school.

### Middle School

Some middle schools have a computer/technology club, including Elkhorn Valley View Middle School. Amy Williams, EVVMS media specialist, began leading a computer club a year ago and found a surplus of old robotics parts. She decided to revive the EVVMS Robotics Club, and this year she is coaching six 4-person teams! Each team is building a plastic robot and participating in approximately seven VEX-sponsored competitions during the school year.

Amy sees how valuable the robotics club is for her students. She explains, “They have to work through a problem. I just think it’s so cool. Where in their life do they have to do that anymore? They’re using the same concepts we teach in math, and we’re using that in real life with robotics.” Another benefit is that the robotics club is a “community” that gives students a “safe place to be themselves.”



Amy plans to continue coaching the EVVMS Robotics Club, and she plans on applying for a classroom grant to fund more robotics equipment for the 2024-2025 school year.

### High School

The Foundation has provided annual funding for the EPS high schools’ Robotics Clubs. Each year Robotics teams build a new robot to compete in that year’s competition, which can be quite expensive. Molly Erickson, HALE Coordinator who also coaches robotics at Elkhorn High School and assistant coaches at Elkhorn South High School, said the grant funding goes to “replenishing and getting newer supplies that VEX will come out with and enhance what the robot can do. The (Foundation’s) funding helps our teams stay competitive.”

Chris Peters, math teacher and Elkhorn North Robotics Club coach, agrees wholeheartedly with

Molly. “[The Foundation grant has] just taken everything to the next level of learning. They aren’t just operating at the basics,” Chris said. “We’d be stuck just buying metal and gears if it wasn’t for the Foundation.” The need for more robotics parts has intensified because there are currently 53 students signed up for Robotics Club at Elkhorn North. The large number of students in the club is both a “blessing and a problem. When you have 53 kids, you need parts for 53 kids. We are using every scrap of metal we’ve got. The Foundation has been an absolute savior for us. The community is investing in kids and getting their hands on technology.”

Zane L., a sophomore at Elkhorn North joined the Robotics Club last year after seeing Coach Peters at the activities fair. The club was a good fit for Zane, whose team ended up going to State even though “we didn’t know how to build anything.” As sophomores,

Zane’s team is learning from their experiences last year. “This year we’re trying to figure out what our bot is good at. Our robot is a good defender – we can just tower over them (opponents),” Zane said. “We’re planning everything out before we build it.”

***“The Foundation has been an absolute savior for us. The community is investing in kids and getting their hands on technology.”***

The Elkhorn South and Elkhorn High School Robotics Clubs are smaller but just as mighty. Last year, one team from Elkhorn South qualified for both the State competition and the Worlds competition in Dallas, Texas. Molly, who a few years ago had zero robotics experience, has learned





Elkhorn High School Robotics Club students rebuilding their robot for an upcoming competition.

so much from her students, online trainings, and the regional VEX coordinator. “The coolest thing about robotics is that it is completely student-driven. It’s great for them to work as a team and for them to figure out things together. It’s also great for them to have a problem that no one is going to help them with. They have to figure it out themselves,” she said.

Molly is especially noticing these problem-solving skills in action with her EHS robotics students because “they are really and truly starting from ground zero.”

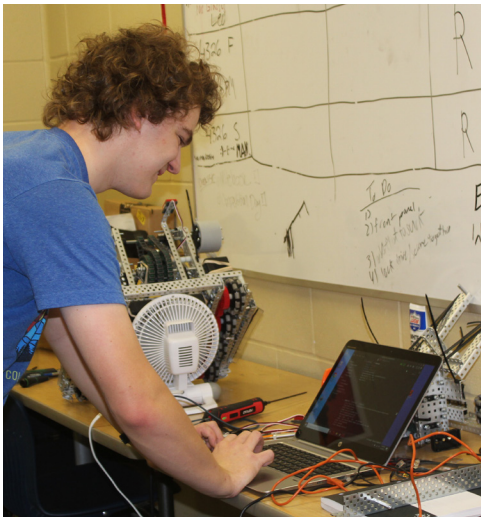
Chris B., a senior at Elkhorn South, was part of the team that went to Worlds in Texas last year. He was introduced to robotics through robotics kits and some experiences in middle school. He joined Elkhorn South’s Robotics Club when he was a sophomore. “I find problem solving and building stuff fun,” he said. His three-person team has figured out their roles and

how to work together. When Chris B. graduates in the spring, he plans on studying robotics engineering in college.

Mike Hale, science teacher and Elkhorn South Robotics Coach, says the biggest benefit for students in robotics club is they develop the engineering design cycle. He has a team who went to a competition in October then decided to completely rebuild their robot before the next competition. “Anytime we can get kids involved in activities that will promote their learning is always an added benefit,” Mike said. “Without robotics, kids aren’t going to get that exposure to engineering principles, especially coding.”

Academic skills are so important, but robotics also gives students a place to belong. Molly expressed that “robotics is just a really great pocket for students who need a place to fit in. It gives them a sense of belonging and place to be plugged in.” Chris Peters agrees, “Robotics brings kids together first

and foremost. We have a lot of high academic-achieving students who don’t necessarily have a team activity they participate in. Robotics brings those kids together.”



Elkhorn South High School student Chris B. programming his robot.

If you are interested in contributing to our Classroom Grant Program, please visit our website to make a donation.

# Foundation Funded Math Clubs Help Students Gain Individualized Instruction

Projected on the white board at the front of the classroom is the following problem: Evaluate the expression  $9 \times (9 \times 7 \div 7)$ . Isaac, a fifth grader, begins writing and solving the problem on his personal white board during before-school Math Club at Spring Ridge Elementary.



Spring Ridge student Isaac working on math with teacher Leanna Bral.

Isaac is one of the 42 students at Spring Ridge who attend before-or-after school math club. Throughout the district, approximately 400 students are participating in Reading or Math Clubs funded by the Foundation at the various elementary schools outside of school hours.

This is Isaac’s first year in Math Club, and he is already seeing the value of coming before school to get extra assistance. “Math Club is important to me because I just want to get better in math so I can do better in school,” he said. “I like the teachers because they’re super fun and nice.” Other students at Spring Ridge, fourth graders Eliot and Kennedy, have been attending Math Club for three years.

“Sometimes math stresses me out, but Math Club introduces me to things I will do in class, and I

feel a little bit better about what we are going to learn,” Kennedy said. She wants to improve her math skills because “math is everywhere and it’s so important to learn.”

The Elkhorn Public Schools teachers are amazing, but it is difficult to give specialized attention when a teacher has a whole classroom of students. The Math & Reading Clubs provide a smaller learning environment where students get more individualized attention. Through Foundation funding, teachers are paid for time they spend before and after school leading the clubs.

Students recognize how important these clubs are for them, and parents with students in the clubs also appreciate the impact the extra help has on their children’s learning. A key theme among parents was the confidence Math & Reading Clubs help to build in their children.

Molly Anderson saw a huge change in her daughter’s overall academic performance. “Not only did Addi’s math skills improve, but her overall academic performance saw a positive shift,”

Molly said. “The critical thinking and problem-solving skills in Math Club spilled over into other subjects. In addition, the club instilled a sense of discipline in Addi teaching her the importance of practice and hard work to achieve success.”

These parent and student testimonials are so powerful! They represent the 400 elementary students in the Elkhorn Public Schools District who need additional instruction in math or reading. Bids For Kids is the main fundraiser for the Math & Reading Intervention program. This year, the event raised more than \$71,000 thanks to the generosity of our sponsors, donors, attendees, and auction participants.

Angela Bell reflects, “When you first find out that your child might not be keeping up in class, it can be kind of devastating as a parent because you just want them to succeed, but what I love about the Elkhorn Public Schools Foundation is that they’ve stepped in to fill that gap.”

If you are interested in contributing to our Math & Reading Intervention program, please visit our website to make a donation.



Spring Ridge students Eliot and Kennedy in math club with teacher Emily Haynes.



# Elkhorn Alumni Scholarship Looks to Grow While Rewarding a Sense of Community

The Elkhorn Public Schools (EPS) Alumni Scholarship began its journey when the Elkhorn High School Class of 1992 was planning their 30th high school reunion the summer of 2022. As part of their



Members of the Alumni Scholarship committee, Elkhorn High School principal Mark Schroder, and recipient Danah Alounk. Danah says, "Elkhorn prepared me for college by instilling a good work ethic and allowing me to pursue extracurricular activities."

reunion activities, Class of '92 representatives initially thought they would fundraise for a scholarship to honor people in their class who had passed away. After more brainstorming, they decided to broaden the scope of the scholarship to a scholarship celebrating the essence of the entire Elkhorn community. They set on a mission to raise seed funding for a new all-class alumni scholarship that would benefit seniors from all three Elkhorn Public Schools' high schools (Elkhorn High, Elkhorn North, and Elkhorn South).

As the class sizes get bigger at each school, the Class of '92 hopes to preserve the close-knit bond they felt growing up in the EPS school district. One alumna from the Class of 1992, Dawn Dreessen, vividly recalls positive experiences attending EPS schools. She moved to Elkhorn in 3rd grade and attended Skyline Elementary, and then continued her educational journey at Elkhorn Middle School and Elkhorn High School. For her, a notable characteristic of her graduating

class was their sense of community. "No matter when they (students) entered our class, they were just accepted and became part of the group. That connection has carried on for 30+ years," Dawn said. "We might not get together that often, but when we do, it's just picking up where we left off."

Dawn is proud to be an alumna of EPS because "it's about having that connection to the community," she said. "I have a long history with Elkhorn. Even before I went there, I knew people who went there. It just has a special place [in my heart]." The goal of the scholarship is to recognize students who embody this sense of community that Dawn and other Elkhorn alumni remember fondly.

The first EPS Alumni Scholarship winners were selected by a committee comprised of alumni from four different Elkhorn High Schools' classes (1991, 1992, 1997, and 2011) and a former Elkhorn administrator who served from 1973-1986. All seven members of the EPS Alumni Scholarship Committee attended at least one scholarship ceremony. Dawn noted, "It was nice to see the people we awarded."

Nicci Clark, Class of 1992 alumna and Scholarship Representative for the EPS Alumni



Members of the Alumni Scholarship committee, Elkhorn North High School principal Dan Radicia, and recipient Caleb Polking. Caleb says, "I feel like even outside of the classroom, I was always learning because of the role models in the community."

Scholarship committee, attended the scholarship ceremonies at all three high schools. "It's wonderful to see the community continue to grow and attract talent," she said. "Our hope is, with this scholarship, we reward those students who embrace the community and contribute to it!"

Dawn and the other committee members would like to grow the scholarship fund balance to ensure the future of the EPS Alumni Scholarship. "I'm hoping that we continue to collect donations and give the scholarship for many years," she said. "We'll work harder in the next few years to increase fundraising efforts with other alumni."

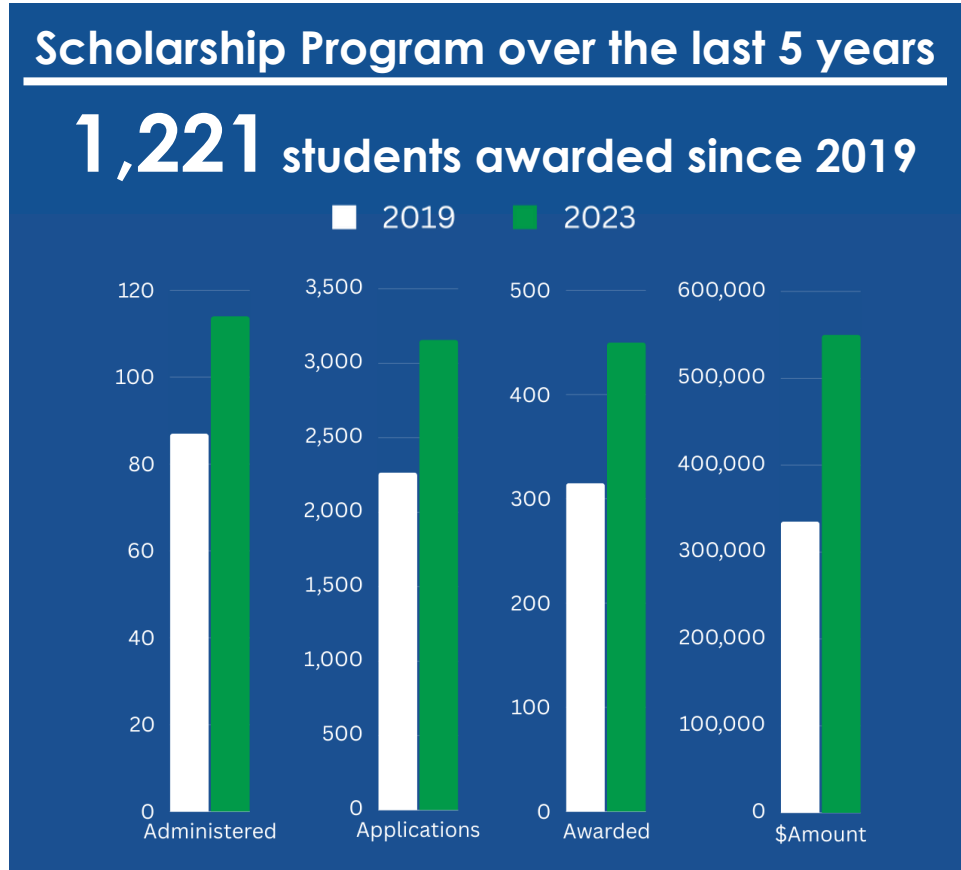
*"Our hope is, with this scholarship, we reward those students who embrace the community and contribute to it!"*

This past fall, the scholarship committee voted to increase the scholarship amount to \$1,000 and add a maximum ACT score requirement of 31 to emphasize the "connection to the Elkhorn community more than their scores," Dawn noted. The alumni committee wants to recognize and honor applicants who are academically strong and are well-rounded students.

If you would like more information on donating to the EPS Alumni scholarship, establishing a scholarship, or joining our Alumni Program, please visit our website [elkhornfoundation.org](http://elkhornfoundation.org) and our alumni website [elkhornalumni.org](http://elkhornalumni.org).



Members of the Alumni Scholarship committee, Elkhorn South High School principal Mark Kalvoda, and recipient Tessa Foster. Tessa says, "I was so excited to be a recipient of this new award, but I was more grateful to be considered by Elkhorn Alumni."



#### Are you 73 years or older with a retirement plan?

You may want to consider designating a portion of your Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) as a Qualified Charity Distribution (QCD). Benefits of a QCD is the distribution is not taxable to the retirement account holder resulting in greater tax savings than a cash donation to a charity! Consult with your investment firm or financial advisor to find out how to take advantage of this tax saving strategy.



# Elkhorn Alumni by the Decades

50s

"If I were to have the honor of speaking to a new class I would tell them to be proud of their community, their town, and to the long time friends that they will without doubt make. Take advantage of what their community has to offer."  
- Don Baker, 1950



70s

What does Elkhorn mean to you? "Community"  
- Jeff Holling, 1979



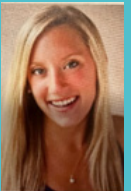
90s

"When I think about what Elkhorn means to me, I think about the pride I have for this community. Growing up here and now raising my three children in the district brings me joy. We love calling this community our home."  
- Cori (Pollak) Kerr, 1999



20s

"Elkhorn is the place where I learned valuable life lessons and built life-long friendships and now have the opportunity to teach."  
- Carlie (Bull) Hodgson, 2011



"Elkhorn helped me build a strong foundation and confidence for my future education and career. My German teacher, Frau Duda, was the major influence in my becoming a German teacher for forty-four years."  
- Judy (Houchin) Kerkhoff, 1964



"It was a small town, and a community that stuck together, and looked out for one another. A great place to grow up!"  
- Scott Custard, 1984



"Elkhorn is a special place. It's a small town in a big city in a small state. It's a place where simple things like Friday night football, summers at the pool or baseball diamond, or getting ice cream at Dairy Chef hold generations together."  
- Kevin Huddleston, 2004

# Elkhorn Alumni Brian Kempf Returns as the EPS Director of School Safety

School safety has become more and more important over the past few decades. With the ever-changing landscape of youth, culture, and technology, schools have had to update their security measures to keep their students safe. Elkhorn Public Schools has done just that, while already working on safety measures through the years, this school year, a new position, Director of School Safety, has been created. An Elkhorn alumnus, Brian Kempf, has filled this position and is off to a running start! Brian has an impressive background in security from the highest places in the US government.

Brian grew up in Elkhorn, attending Skyline Elementary, Elkhorn Middle School, and Elkhorn High School, graduating in 2006. Following high school, Brian studied at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln; there, he made the courageous decision to enlist in the Marine Corps Reserve while juggling his college education. On the military, "I always wanted to serve my country. It was a necessary way for me to show my gratitude for the opportunities this country has afforded me and a way to ensure these opportunities continue for future generations. The Marine Corps was a stepping stone to a life of public service." It was also during this time at UNL that he met his wife, who went on to pursue a medical degree.

From the Marine Corps to 3 1/2 years working as a police officer at the Supreme Court, Brian's career took off. His dedication to professional growth led him to obtain a Master's in Defense and Strategic Studies from Missouri State University. He worked in government contracting where he collaborated with Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), missile defense, and the Department of Homeland Security's Science and Technology Directorate.

Brian and his wife were juggling life in DC. Living around Washington DC, traffic can be hectic and commutes can be time consuming. Seeking a more peaceful life, good schools, and a stronger sense of community, Brian and his wife made the decision to return to Elkhorn with their young child. With perfect timing, Brian noticed the Director of School Safety position opening in December of 2022, and accepted the position. In May of 2023, Brian began his new role in Elkhorn.

Brian is "proud that even though the district has grown a lot since I graduated, it still feels like Elkhorn

as a community still exists. [Our school district is] education focused, we care about education and it shows within the district and the staff."

As the Director of School Safety, Brian's day-to-day activities at work can vary from threat assessments, crisis planning, vendor calls, and school visits. He also plays a crucial role in crisis intervention for students and serves as a pillar of support for the community in times of need.

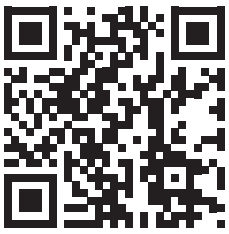
Brian's vision is to "create a layered security architecture of complementary components with scalable solutions having a routine utility and offer that protection in depth for interaction and intervention." The end goal, of course, is helping keep our kids safe. Drawing from his own childhood experiences growing up in Elkhorn, he is passionate about providing the best possible education while prioritizing safety.

When asked why he thinks schools having the position of Director of School Safety is important in this day and age, Brian says, "I think it's important to have someone in this position who has professional experience protecting people - I take the approach that every student and staff member is my 'protectee', someone I am responsible for protecting - much like a Supreme Court Justice." Brian adds, "In today's age, everyone realizes the stakes are high - we know that students learn better (and teachers provide a better education) when they feel safe. Education is our mission, safety is our priority."

Brian's journey from Elkhorn graduate to the Director of School Safety is remarkable. We are grateful for his dedication and love for our community. For Brian to put the thought and care into our students as though they were Supreme Court justices is a truly special feat.



Join Today!





## April ALUMNI TRIVIA NIGHT

Elkhorn Public Schools alumni competed in trivia! It was a night full of fun, pizza, and throwback questions. The class of 1973 took home the trophy. Be on the lookout for this event in 2024!



# YEAR IN REVIEW 2023

## November RETIRED TEACHERS' LUNCHEON

Our Alumni Program welcomed retired Elkhorn Public School teachers to a lunch of reminiscing and looking to the future of this district! If you know a retired EPS teacher to invite next year email [alumni@elkhornfoundation.org](mailto:alumni@elkhornfoundation.org).



## May SCHOLARSHIPS

Over \$550,000 was awarded to seniors at all three schools to continue their endeavors beyond high school!



## June GOLF FORE GRANTS

Friend of the Foundation supporters and businesses golfed to raise funds for our Classroom Grants program, totaling \$57,000.



## October BIDS FOR KIDS

Community members came together and donated, sponsored, or bid on items at this annual event. More than \$71,000 was raised benefiting our Math & Reading Intervention and Classroom Grant programs!



## August

### OPENING DAY

The Foundation kicked off the TEAM campaign (Together Everyone Achieves More). 389 EPS Staff donated funds for our programs while receiving exclusive prizes!



## November HALL OF FAME

Hall of Fame awards were presented to Carla Rohwer, Renee Vokt, Family Fare, Preston Speece, Linda Blomenkamp, Don Petersen, Brooke Riggert, Paul Fewell, and Tim McArdle (in memoriam).





**VISIT OUR WEBSITE!**



elkhornfoundation.org

Elkhorn Public Schools  
Foundation & Alumni Center  
20272 Veterans Drive  
Elkhorn, NE 68022



**Interested in supporting the  
Foundation through your business?**

**Learn about Scoreboard Sponsorships on our website!**



## **EKC 2024 Summer & 2024-2025 School Year Registration**

Current Family Registration will be held at the Elkhorn Public Schools Foundation office from February 5<sup>th</sup> - February 8<sup>th</sup>.

**February 5<sup>th</sup> - 8:00am to 7:00pm**  
**February 6<sup>th</sup> - 8:00am to 7:00pm**  
**February 7<sup>th</sup> - 8:00am to 7:00pm**  
**February 8<sup>th</sup> - 8:00am to 4:00pm**  
**February 9<sup>th</sup> - EKC registration closed**

New Families please email **ekc@elkhornfoundation.org** with the school your child will be attending to receive the registration link.

