



Brainerd Public Schools

Opportunity. Innovation. Success.

Welcome to the Brainerd High School Senior Recognition Program. This year given our commitment to safety and our seniors we host this event virtually. It certainly can't replace the excitement and positivity of being together to celebrate the great accomplishments of our seniors but we feel it is critical we "host" this recognition program. The accomplishments highlighted tonight come in the areas of academics, arts, athletics, activities, and service. These awards represent years of hard work and commitment to many programs in our school and community. In addition to highlighting our seniors, this program gives Brainerd Public Schools an opportunity to recognize our many community members and organizations who continue to support our students. The support provided comes in many ways: financial, education, time, and energy. It is due to this tremendous support our seniors have experienced success and with the scholarship awards tonight, they will continue on their pathway to postsecondary education. The opportunities for them are endless!

Thank you to the individual community organizations that select scholarship recipients and to the many community volunteers who reviewed applications through an extensive blind application process. A special thank you to our Brainerd Public Schools Foundation for providing ongoing support for all public school programs and students within our district. This night would not be possible without our strong community and tremendous support from parents; thank you for the continued support of the Brainerd Public Schools, and especially Brainerd High School. Finally, best wishes to the seniors of the Brainerd High School Class of 2020 - may you continue to do great things and always be proud to be a WARRIOR!

Stay WARRIOR STRONG; congratulations!

Andrea Rusk

Andrea Rusk
Brainerd High School Principal



Senior Recognition Ceremony

Virtual Event

Tuesday, May 12, 2020



Welcome

Andrea Rusk, Brainerd High School Principal

Laine Larson, Superintendent of Brainerd Public Schools

Brainerd Public Schools Foundation

Jessica Gangl, Brainerd Public Schools Foundation Executive Director

Distinguished Achievement Hall of Fame

Richard "Dick" Ashmun Class of 1946, Professor of Higher Education

Jennifer (Pecarich) Carlson, Class of 1987, Professor of Higher Education

Yen Chu, Class of 1989, Law

Presentation of Scholarships & Recognition

Brainerd Public Schools Foundation Scholarships

Community & External Scholarships

Awards & Recognition

Military Awards & Certificates

Closing Remarks

Andrea Rusk, Brainerd High School Principal

Thank You

A very special shout out to the Class of 2020. You have endured and will overcome. We are excited to see where your next steps take you!

"Often when you think you're at the end of something, you're at the beginning of something else."

Distinguished Achievement **HALL OF FAME**



The Hall of Fame Nominations Committee, the Brainerd Public Schools, and the Brainerd Public Schools Foundation are extremely pleased that three extraordinary people have been selected and agreed to be inducted into the Brainerd High School Distinguished Achievement Hall of Fame! The Hall of Fame was established in 1999 to honor graduates of Brainerd High School for distinguished achievements and careers. These Brainerd High School graduates serve as role models for our students. The examples of achievement illustrated by the Hall of Fame members inspires and motivates BHS students to excel in everything they do and foster outstanding citizenship, fairness, honor, pride, and respect for themselves, their classmates, and their school. The charter year for the Hall of Fame was in 1999, and until tonight, a total of 69 men and women had been inducted into this prestigious group.



Richard "Dick" Ashmun

Class of 1946

Professor of Higher Education



Jennifer (Pecarich) Carlson

Class of 1987

Professor of Higher Education



Yen Chu

Class of 1989

Law

The Distinguished Achievement Hall of Fame inductees have had many successes, achieved many goals, and model many of the characteristics possessed by those who receive Foundation Scholarships. To see the inductees' full stories, please turn to the back of this booklet. See all of the Hall of Fame members when you visit BPSF.org.

To nominate a Brainerd High School graduate for the Distinguished Achievement Hall of Fame—visit BPSF.org, click "events," then "Distinguished Achievement Hall of Fame."

The Brainerd Public Schools Foundation

Founded in 1987, the Brainerd Public Schools Foundation's (BPSF) mission is to enhance opportunities for quality academics, arts, activities and athletics for student of the Brainerd Public Schools. Each year BPSF awards numerous scholarships to graduating seniors. Students must complete an electronic Brainerd High School General Scholarship Application to be eligible to receive a BPSF Scholarship. BPSF is proud to be awarding over \$122,000 in scholarships this year! **CONGRATULATIONS TO THE CLASS OF 2020!**

BPSF Scholarship	Student	Award
Aitkin Rebekah Lodge Scholarship	Marcus Lindholm	\$650
Alpha Delta Kappa Beverly Jondahl Scholarship	Jermev Good	\$400
Alpha Delta Kappa Bonnie Cumberland Scholarship	Jenna Hagemann	\$600
Alpha Delta Kappa Sorority Scholarship	Daniel Johnson	\$500
American Legion Post 255 Al Broman Memorial Scholarship	Abigail Klecker	\$500
American Legion Post 255 Frank Vadnais Memorial Scholarship	Erik Desmith	\$500
American Legion Post 255 Henry C Mills II Memorial Scholarship	Andrew Kirzeder	\$300
Arlo V. Renschler Memorial Scholarship	Mazzy-Mae Young	\$500
Baxter Elementary PTO Scholarship	Clare Ceynowa	\$350
Baxter Elementary PTO Scholarship	Hailey Turner-Hubbard	\$350
Baxter Lions Club Scholarship	Owen Davis	\$1,000
Baxter Lions Club Scholarship	Avery Eckman	\$1,000
Baxter Lions Club Scholarship	Jenna Nieman	\$1,000
Baxter Lions Club Scholarship	Cameron Walkowiak	\$1,000
BlackRidge Bank Scholarship	Ian Aadland	\$250
BlackRidge Bank Scholarship	Jewel Aho	\$250
BlackRidge Bank Scholarship	Grace Balsley	\$250
BlackRidge Bank Scholarship	Owen Davis	\$250
BlackRidge Bank Scholarship	Jonah Davis	\$250
BlackRidge Bank Scholarship	Anna Fox	\$250
BlackRidge Bank Scholarship	Emma Hiebert	\$250
BlackRidge Bank Scholarship	Lily Hurlbert	\$250

BPSF Scholarship	Student	Award
BlackRidge Bank Scholarship	Daniel Johnson	\$250
BlackRidge Bank Scholarship	Madison Kalenberg	\$250
BlackRidge Bank Scholarship	Keyahna Kurilla	\$250
BlackRidge Bank Scholarship	Ammy Lin	\$250
BlackRidge Bank Scholarship	Mark McQuiston	\$250
BlackRidge Bank Scholarship	Victoria Narlock	\$250
BlackRidge Bank Scholarship	Kirsten Neistadt	\$250
BlackRidge Bank Scholarship	Caleb Patrick	\$250
BlackRidge Bank Scholarship	Broc Peterson	\$250
BlackRidge Bank Scholarship	Lexus Ruggles	\$250
BlackRidge Bank Scholarship	Logan Severson	\$250
BlackRidge Bank Scholarship	Mackenzie Shaw	\$250
BlackRidge Bank Scholarship	Benjamin Staehling	\$250
BlackRidge Bank Scholarship	Shaylee Stroot	\$250
BlackRidge Bank Scholarship	Seth Vagts	\$250
BlackRidge Bank Scholarship	Ashlyn Vroman	\$250
BlackRidge Bank Scholarship	Maxwell Wheeler	\$250
BlackRidge Bank Scholarship	Grace Zimmerman	\$250
Bob and LaVonne Danzl Family Memorial Scholarship	Maren Rahto	\$250
Bob Johnson Memorial Art Scholarship	Emily Rhoda	\$500
BPSF 4A Academics Scholarship	Leigh Preimesberger	\$1,000
BPSF 4A Activities Scholarship	Karli Knopf	\$1,000
BPSF 4A Arts Scholarship	Noah Barnhart	\$1,000
BPSF 4A Athletics Scholarship	Maxwell Darkow	\$1,000
Brainerd Basketball Association Scholarship	Jewel Aho	\$1,000
Brainerd Basketball Association Scholarship	Benjamin Staehling	\$1,000
Brainerd Noon Sertoma Scholarship	Delani Collins	\$1,000

BPSF Scholarship	Student	Award
Brainerd Noon Sertoma Scholarship	Hannah Tatge	\$1,000
Brainerd Trades and Labor Assembly Scholarship	Jack Anderson	\$500
Brandon Dahl Memorial Scholarship	Logan Severson	\$1,100
Bremer Bank of Brainerd Scholarship	Madison Yeager	\$500
Brighter Days Foundation Scholarship	Hannah Paysse	\$1,500
Brighter Days Foundation Scholarship	Linsey Proctor	\$1,500
C. Elmer and Lillian Anderson Memorial Scholarship	Andrew Mendez	\$1,300
Chef's Association Scholarship	Jude Hiltner	\$500
Class of 1945 Scholarship	Miya Jordan	\$575
Class of 1946 Scholarship	Gemma Peterson	\$575
Class of 1954 Scholarship	Isaac Foster	\$450
Class of 1969 Scholarship	Amanda Olson	\$500
Class of 1976 Scholarship	Tela smith	\$400
Clayton Haglin Memorial Scholarship	Arica Caughey	\$650
Clem & Vi Koering Memorial Scholarship	Malia Hermerding	\$4,000
Clifford & Gwendolyn Greenwalt Memorial Scholarship	Simon Nelson	\$2,000
Crow Wing Power Scholarship	Grace Balsley	\$1,500
Crow Wing Power Scholarship	Christopher Boucher	\$1,500
Crow Wing Power Scholarship	Julia Chock	\$1,500
Crow Wing Power Scholarship	Atlie Danielson	\$1,500
Crow Wing Power Scholarship	Devin Emslander	\$1,500
Crow Wing Power Scholarship	Alissa Haglin	\$1,500
Crow Wing Power Scholarship	Keenan Hodge	\$1,500
Crow Wing Power Scholarship	Helen Knudson	\$1,500
Crow Wing Power Scholarship	Emma Korhonen	\$1,500
Crow Wing Power Scholarship	Peyton McConkey	\$1,500
Crow Wing Power Scholarship	Luke Meyer	\$1,500

BPSF Scholarship	Student	Award
Crow Wing Power Scholarship	Summer Mills	\$1,500
Crow Wing Power Scholarship	Victoria Narlock	\$1,500
Crow Wing Power Scholarship	Sarah Nesheim	\$1,500
Crow Wing Power Scholarship	Sean Paulus	\$1,500
Crow Wing Power Scholarship	Ethan Sannes	\$1,500
Crow Wing Power Scholarship	Elizabeth Selisker	\$1,500
Crow Wing Power Scholarship	Anna Streed	\$1,500
Crow Wing Power Scholarship	Meagan Tollefson	\$1,500
Crow Wing Power Scholarship	Quin Villwock	\$1,500
CTC Scholarship	Andrew Becker	\$500
Daniel, William, & Mark Wheeler Memorial Scholarship	Olivia Killoran	\$600
Deerwood Bank College Scholarship	Jenna Lee	\$750
Deerwood Bank Technical College Scholarship	Gunnar Wicklund	\$750
Derrick Hanson Memorial Scholarship	Madison Holm	\$150
Don Adamson Memorial Scholarship	Georgi Aus	\$550
Don Johnson Memorial Scholarship	Madison Holm	\$150
Dr. Gene Bierhaus Athletic Scholarship	Shayla Makowski Budrow	\$900
Dr. Rudd Thabes - Suzanne Ribbel Scholarship	Meghan McConville	\$500
Duane Doucette VFW Athletic Scholarship	Eli Roberts	\$350
Everett Nelson Music Scholarship	Molly Wells	\$600
Federated COOPS Scholarship	Simon Nelson	\$1,000
Garfield Elementary Scholarship	Nicholas Schneider	\$500
Gary Gorman Memorial Scholarship	Gina Wasniewski	\$150
Gene Sundberg Pilot's Scholarship	Keyahna Kurilla	\$1,000
Good Samaritan Society Brainerd Scholarship	Teerza Schultz	\$500
Good Samaritan Society Brainerd Scholarship	Chloe Sullivan	\$500
Gordy Langness Scholarship	Dawson Cherne	\$250

BPSF Scholarship	Student	Award
Gordy Langness Scholarship	Patrick McDonald	\$250
Gordy Langness Scholarship	Mazzy-Mae Young	\$250
Harrison Elementary Scholarship	Britney Eck	\$300
Harvey Shew Memorial Scholarship	Lexi Larson	\$300
Hershey Family Scholarship	Emelia Hinrichs	\$20,000
Horizon Health Scholarship	Grace Zimmerman	\$300
John A. Benson Memorial Scholarship	Jacob Aanes	\$850
John A. Benson Memorial Scholarship	Emma Hiebert	\$850
Jon Jelacic Memorial Athletic Scholarship	Johnathan Berry	\$900
Judy Bialka Memorial Scholarship	Sophie Robinson	\$550
Kuhn Krueger Memorial Scholarships	Robert Erickson	\$300
Larry Strand Memorial Scholarship	Makayla Bender	\$250
Leonard "Ole" Howard Memorial Scholarship	Dylan Miller	\$250
Lincoln Elementary Legacy Scholarship	Jonah Macejkovic	\$500
Lincoln Elementary Legacy Scholarship	Trey Pike	\$500
Lowell Elementary Scholarship	Jonah Davis	\$300
Lowell Elementary Scholarship	Ammy Lin	\$300
Mac Carkhuff Athletic Memorial Scholarship	Justin Youngquist	\$1,100
Manney Anderson Memorial Scholarship	Camron Glassmann	\$250
Mark Embretson Memorial Scholarship	Gina Wasniewski	\$600
Matthew Gaffney Memorial Scholarship	Bryce Brose	\$350
Maynard Ketterling Memorial Athletic Scholarship	Ian Aadland	\$400
Mid MN Federal Credit Union Scholarship	Derek Bursch	\$500
Mid MN Federal Credit Union Scholarship	Kaleb Sundquist	\$500
Mike and Carol Smith Music Scholarship	Jacob Hanson	\$300
Nisswa Tax Service Scholarship	Rebecka Karpinaki	\$300
Patricia Marchel Memorial Scholarship	Olivia Dilley	\$250

BPSF Scholarship

	Student	Award
Phyllis Cooksey Memorial Scholarship	Elsa Overland	\$250
Reese/Webb Memorial Scholarship	Callie Knapp	\$500
Roger Lykins "Triple A" Memorial Scholarship	Devin Emslander	\$250
Roger Lykins "Triple A" Memorial Scholarship	Elizabeth Selisker	\$250
Roy & Mildred Sargent Family Scholarship	Selena Betker-Martinez	\$1,275
Roy & Mildred Sargent Family Scholarship	Mackenzie Stockinger	\$1,275
Ruth Padgett Memorial Scholarship	Kirsten Neistadt	\$450
School Board & School Administrators Scholarship	Autumn Miles	\$250
Smile Scholarship	Madison Hannah	\$500
Smile Scholarship	Keenan Hodge	\$500
Stewart C. Mills, Sr. Memorial Scholarship	Cody Evans	\$1,230
Stewart C. Mills, Sr. Memorial Scholarship	Colby Watland	\$1,230
Stewart C. Mills, Sr. Memorial Scholarship	Eden Worden	\$1,230
Tammy Bluth Memorial Scholarship	Kasey Knight	\$300
This One's For Hop Scholarship	Tennyson Kelm	\$500
Weichert Realtors Tower Properties Scholarship	Jada Borders	\$250
William Dammann Athletic Scholarship	Maxwell Wheeler	\$500
Zonta Club of Brainerd Scholarship	Madison Kalenberg	\$1,000



Contact the Brainerd Public Schools Foundation to establish a scholarship or legacy fund.

Jessica Gangl—Executive Director
218.454.6923 or jessica@bpsf.org

HELP US MEET OUR GOAL: The Brainerd Public Schools Foundation is working to raise the funds needed to buy 2,020 high-interest classroom library books for our K-8 classrooms! Studies show when kids have quick access to books they love to read, they will have greater academic success! Every donation of \$10 helps buy a new book.

DONATE NOW: BPSF.org



Community & External Scholarships

Many local and statewide organizations, businesses and individual donors generously sponsor scholarships for Brainerd High School seniors. Selected students have filled out a separate application for each of the community & external scholarships.

Community or External Scholarship	Student	Award
Alworth Memorial Fund Scholarship	Maxwell Darkow	\$20,000
Alworth Memorial Fund Scholarship	Erik Desmith	\$20,000
Alworth Memorial Fund Scholarship	Callie Knapp	\$20,000
Alworth Memorial Fund Scholarship	Emma Korhonen	\$20,000
Alworth Memorial Fund Scholarship	Victoria Narlock	\$20,000
Alworth Memorial Fund Scholarship	Quin Villwock	\$20,000
Ascensus Scholarship	Julia Chock	\$1,500
Bernick Family Scholarship	Julia Chock	\$2,000
Bernick Family Scholarship	Keenan Hodge	\$2,000
Brainerd Blue Line Boosters Scholarship	Jenna Nieman	\$500
Brainerd Blue Line Boosters Scholarship	Sophie Robinson	\$500
Brainerd Blue Line Boosters Scholarship	Kaleb Sundquist	\$500
Brainerd Blue Line Boosters Scholarship	Seth Vagts	\$500
Brainerd Chapter MN Deer Hunters Association Scholarship	Caleb Patrick	\$500
Brainerd Chapter MN Deer Hunters Association Scholarship	Seth Vagts	\$500
Brainerd Elks Lodge #615 CLC Arts & Science Scholarship	Noah Barnhart	\$1,400
Brainerd Elks Lodge #615 Most Valuable Student (Male) Scholarship	Luke Meyer	\$1,000
Brainerd Kiwanis Designated Scholarship	Ammy Lin	\$795
Brainerd Kiwanis Designated Scholarship	Molly Wells	\$795
Brainerd Kixters—Heather Star Habeck Memorial Scholarship	Macy Clough	\$250
Brainerd Savings & Loan Scholarship	Jonah Macejkovic	\$500
Brainerd Savings & Loan Scholarship	Isabel Prozinski	\$500

Community or External Scholarship	Student	Award
Church of the Cross—Nisswa	Ethan Sannes	\$400
Church of the Cross—Nisswa	Dylan Paulson	\$400
Crossing Arts Alliance Scholarship	Jacob Hanson	\$500
Education Minnesota Brainerd Scholarship	Jewel Aho	\$1,000
Education Minnesota Brainerd Scholarship	Atlie Danielson	\$1,000
Education Minnesota Brainerd Scholarship	Keenan Hodge	\$1,000
Education Minnesota Brainerd Scholarship	Peyton McConkey	\$1,000
Education Minnesota Brainerd Scholarship	Anna Streed	\$1,000
Elks National Foundation Most Valuable Student	Molly Wells	\$4,000
Elks National Foundation Legacy Award	Helen Knudson	\$4,000
MN Interscholastic Activities Administrators Association Scholarship	Gina Wasniewski	\$600
Nisswa Elementary PTO Scholarship	Karli Knopf	\$750
Nisswa Lions Club Scholarship	Maxwell Darkow	\$2,000
Nisswa Lions Club Scholarship	Owen Davis	\$2,000
Nisswa Lions Club Scholarship	Jenna Lee	\$2,000
Nisswa Lions Club Scholarship	Summer Mills	\$2,000
Nisswa Lions Club Scholarship	Gracie Rivard	\$2,000
Nisswa Lions Club Scholarship	Seth Vagts	\$2,000
Our Lady of the Lakes Father Paul Memorial Scholarship	Isabel Nelson	\$500
Stephen G. Nunnink MPPO Scholarship	Maddie Holm	\$1,600
Stephen G. Nunnink MPPO Scholarship	Broc Peterson	\$800
The Glen Gustafson Brainerd Sports Boosters Scholarship	Jenna Hagemann	\$500
The Glen Gustafson Brainerd Sports Boosters Scholarship	Simon Nelson	\$500
Whittier Elementary Scholarship	Isaac Foster	\$500
Whittier Elementary Scholarship	Malia Hermerding	\$500



Awards & Recognition

	Student	Award
BHS Class Cabinet Recognition	Megan Bisek	Recognition
BHS Class Cabinet Recognition	Devin Emslander	Recognition
BHS Class Cabinet Recognition	Josie Kramer	Recognition
BHS Class Cabinet Recognition	Jenna Lee	Recognition
BHS Class Cabinet Recognition	Ammy Lin	Recognition
BHS Class Cabinet Recognition	Avery Rozinka	Recognition
BHS Class Cabinet Recognition	Elizabeth Selisker	Recognition
BHS Class Cabinet Recognition	Caitlin Shaw	Recognition
BHS Class Cabinet Recognition	Megan Tollefson	Recognition
BHS Class Cabinet Recognition	Molly Wells	Recognition
BHS Student Council—Executive Member	Devin Emslander	Recognition
BHS Student Council—Executive Member	Jenna Lee	Recognition
BHS Student Council—Executive Member	Jonah Macejkovic	Recognition
BHS Student Council—Executive Member	Hannah Paysse	Recognition
BHS Student Council—Executive Member	Caitlin Shaw	Recognition
BHS Student Council—Delegate	Maxwell Darkow	Recognition
BHS Student Council—Delegate	Abigail Klecker	Recognition
BHS Student Council—Delegate	Autumn Miles	Recognition
BHS Student Council—Delegate	Nick Schneider	Recognition
BHS Student Council—Delegate	Mackenzie Shaw	Recognition
BHS Student Council—Delegate	Isabel Wills	Recognition
National Merit Scholarship Program Commended Student	Sean Paulus	Recognition
National Merit Scholarship Program Finalist	Sarah Nesheim	Certificate
National Merit Scholarship Program Finalist	Leigh Preimesberger	Certificate

Thank you to all of our community and foundation supporters. Congratulations to all of the award recipients and their families!

Military Awards & Certificates

Marine Corps Distinguished Athlete Award
Marine Corps Scholastic Excellence Award
Marine Corps Semper Fidelis Award
MN Army National Guard
MN Army National Guard

Student

Ian Aadland Certificate
Leigh Preimesberger Certificate
Ammy Lin Certificate
Kelli Allison \$92,000+
Matt Collins \$92,000+
Jacob Ellstrom \$92,000+
Boston Hackbart \$92,000+
Bailey Hansch \$92,000+
Ryan Miller \$92,000+
Cinquez Pindegayosh \$92,000+
Becca Strangstalien \$92,000+
Dylan Tackett \$92,000+

Award



SAVE THE DATE

> **SATURDAY, OCTOBER 3, 2020** <

Richard “Dick” Ashmun, 2020 Brainerd High School’s Distinguished Achievement Hall of Fame Inductee

Richard “Dick” Ashmun passed away July 8, 2019, in Brainerd. He was 91. Ashmun led a life of service, from his active duty during the Korean War, to his professional career as a university professor and author, to his church and community volunteer work that he passionately believed in until the end of his life.

“He would be so honored to see that his work was appreciated,” says his daughter, Mary Hamad, of Brainerd. “He would be humbled and totally thrilled that programs important to him would be getting recognition.”

“He would love this,” added his daughter, Karen Williams, of Brainerd. “He wanted to make a difference in Brainerd. This is such an honor.”

Ashmun was born June 28, 1928, in Excelsior, Minn., to Ester Violet Rose and Olaf C. Strom. In 1940, his mother, who owned a local restaurant, married Rusty Ashmun, a jeweler, who later adopted him when he was a young adult. Ashmun went by Strom while a student at Washington High School, where he played basketball and football, served on student council, and was voted “Most Courteous Boy” by the Class of 1946. He also enjoyed hunting and fishing.

Following his high school graduation, Ashmun was among the first students to attend Brainerd State Junior College when it opened on the third floor of Washington High School. His mother wouldn’t let him enlist in the military at 17, so junior college was his second choice. He took business and economic classes. He then received his bachelor’s degree in economics from Carleton College. He married his childhood friend and sweetheart, Marilyn Erickson, in 1950. Their son, Richard Arden, was born in 1952 and passed away a year later of a congenital heart defect. A few weeks later, Ashmun was drafted into the U.S. Army. He served two years of active duty during the Korean War. He instructed and coordinated programs in artillery observation. He then spent seven years in the U.S. Army National Guard and Reserves.

Education became a driving force throughout Ashmun’s life. Following his military service, he earned his B.S., M.A., and Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota. He taught at schools in Pine River, Brainerd, Madison, Wis., and Minneapolis. He spent 25 years as a marketing professor and director of graduate studies at the University of Minnesota. He authored/co-authored several textbooks, publications, and research projects. His academic recognition included the Morse Award for Outstanding Contributions to Undergraduate Education at the University of Minnesota.

After retirement, Ashmun stayed active at church and in the community. He served on the boards for Brainerd Public Schools and Central Lakes College Foundations. He was active in raising funds for scholarships and other school projects. He established and financially supported scholarships given at both schools. He went out of his way to talk others into establishing their own scholarships to help local students.



Ashmun was vice president on the executive and finance committees on the CLC Foundation Board. He served on the Brainerd Technical College Foundation Board from 1982-1998. He was vice president of Brainerd Technical College in 1990 when the college merged with Brainerd Community College to form CLC.

Ashmun was deeply committed to community service. He was selected as the 1998 Crow Wing County Senior Citizen of the Year and was named Brainerd Outstanding Senior Citizen of the Year. He was honored with a Central Lakes College Outstanding Alumni award in 2014.

Ashmun passed away last year after a short battle with bone cancer. He was survived by his two daughters, Mary (Mike) Hamad and Karen (Michael) Williams, four grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

“He finished the race well,” said his daughter, Karen Williams. “He just never stopped.”

If my dad were here, he would probably say, ‘Be a trooper and don’t ever lose your sparkle,’” adds his daughter, Mary Hamad.

Jennifer (Pecarich) Carlson, 2020 Brainerd High School’s Distinguished Achievement Hall of Fame Inductee

Jennifer (Pecarich) Carlson, a 1987 Brainerd High School graduate, is the daughter of John and Paula Pecarich of Baxter. Danceline was her sport of choice throughout her formative years and something she participated in year-round while a BHS student. She was a member of the first group of Just for Kix dancers in Brainerd, a national dance program started by Cindy (a 2007 BHS Hall of Fame recipient) and Steve (a 2019 BHS Hall of Fame recipient) Clough.



“Brainerd Kixters helped shape some of my life choices,” she explains.

“Being part of a team and learning how to be competitive, be respectful and to set goals, both personal and as a team, I learned from Cindy Clough and her staff. She was always very good about building relationships with individuals on the team and I’m sure she continues to do that. She was just a really good role model.”

Carlson was a member of the Brainerd Kixters when the team took top honors as the 1985 and 1986 State Danceline Champions, as well as the 1987 State Danceline Runner-Up her senior year. She also participated in band from 1984-1985.

Former BHS English teacher Andre Lamourea was her high school advisor and one of her favorite teachers. Carlson enjoyed reading and writing, and Lamourea was easy to talk to, she says.

“I’ve always loved school. I still love school,” Carlson explains. “I love learning and constantly re-searching and reading.”

Carlson attended Brainerd Community College, where the late instructor Joe Plut became one of her greatest influences in her decision to pursue teaching.

“He taught me the importance of building relationships with students,” Carlson says. “I think most every person who took his class knew he cared about them. He made you feel you were really liked, that you could do it, and he saw you as a person.”

After graduating from BCC with her Associate in Arts degree in 1989, Carlson transferred to Winona State University where she earned her Bachelor’s degree in Secondary English Education, Middle School Licensure and 6-12th Certification in 1991. Her plan was to be a high school or middle school English teacher and coach danceline.

“I didn’t do any of those things,” Carlson says with a laugh.

Carlson starting teaching middle school communications and, three months later, although she enjoyed the students and course content, she felt she needed to do something different. She enrolled in the master’s program at Minnesota State University-Mankato. Dr. Peg Ballard, a young professor in the reading literacy program, encouraged Carlson to continue in her education and earn her Ph.D. It was something that Carlson hadn’t considered.

“I think sometimes people plant a seed and think you’ll be good at something and that’s all it takes,” she says.

She decided to go for it. After graduating with her Master of Science in Curriculum and Instruction from Mankato in 1994, she enrolled at the University of Wisconsin- Madison, and earned her Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction with an emphasis in Literacy and Children’s Literature in 2001.

Carlson was full-time teaching in the undergraduate program at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls from 2000 to 2006. She’s been a full-time professor at Hamline University since 2006, serving in multiple roles within the School of Education. She was chair of Assessment and Accreditation for three years. She also was a principal investigator in a Bush Supplemental Grant Teaching Effectiveness Initiative from 2015-2019, a partnership with Mound View Public Schools. She served as interim director of the Office of Clinical Experience in 2016, facilitating the change to year-long field experience placements for student teachers. She currently serves as a lead in the partnership with Sourcewell for Education/Region 5 Service Cooperative on the development of a program to recruit teachers to Sourcewell region districts.

Carlson currently develops and teaches courses for graduate and doctoral students, supervises student teachers and serves as a mentor and advisor for graduate candidates within four different programs: Education Doctorate, Master of Arts in Literacy Education, Master of Arts in Teaching, and Reading Licensure program. She also chairs and serves on capstone and dissertation committees. She has written and published several articles and research papers. In 2010, she coauthored an educational textbook.

Carlson says her academic experiences in Brainerd cultivated her love of learning.

“I had a great experience in Brainerd Public Schools,” she explains. “I had a great relationship with teachers there, otherwise I wouldn’t have wanted to become one. We may not realize how much a teacher in small ways can have such a positive impact on the decisions we make and how we interact with others.”

Continued

Carlson feels honored to be inducted into BHS Hall of Fame.

“It’s surprising, and I’m happy, honored and amazed,” she says.

Carlson and her husband, Pete, live in Blaine. They have a son, Tait, 23, and a daughter, Claire, 21. In her spare time she enjoys reading and doing CrossFit.

Yen Chu, 2020 Brainerd High School’s Distinguished Achievement Hall of Fame Inductee

Yen Chu, a 1989 Brainerd High School graduate, emigrated to the United States with her family from Vietnam when she was 4 years old. On April 30, 1975, the day that Saigon fell, signaling the end of the Vietnam War, Chu; her parents, Son Chu and Van Nguyen; her sister; the family’s housekeeper; and her grandfather, a prominent Vietnamese writer, narrowly escaped on a ship that was bombed as it left Saigon’s harbor. The bombing killed many on the ship, including her grandfather, and it left her and her family critically injured. Chu and her family were treated at a hospital in the Philippines before being taken to a refugee camp in Arkansas.



She and her family came to Brainerd after they were sponsored by Trinity Lutheran Church. Through the generous efforts of the church, her parents learned English and were able to find housing and employment. Chu learned to speak English in Brainerd Head Start and she and her three siblings, Tracy, Daniel and Catherine — the youngest two were born in Brainerd — were active in Brainerd school activities and sports. She attended three different elementary schools — Harrison, Lowell and Lincoln — and was active in high school. She took many rigorous AP courses, was on the varsity tennis team and participated in art club. She was co-valedictorian of her graduating class.

Chu is grateful for the community support she and her family received as she grew up in Brainerd.

“So much of who I am today has been shaped by my formative years in Brainerd,” says Chu. “The generosity of those who initially helped my family has always inspired me to give back. While it started with necessities, it is the opportunities that were offered to us that were even more valuable than the things that were actually given to us. The generosity in spirit has had a longer lasting impact on me than even the generosity in kind. Those in the Brainerd community who embraced and helped my family have inspired me to be an advocate for the underrepresented. Today, I am passionate about advocating for diversity and inclusion in the legal profession and the workplace in general, advocating for women’s rights and being a mentor for those who are underrepresented. I wouldn’t be where I am today if someone hadn’t helped me learn English or helped my family assimilate culturally. I have a responsibility to pass on that generosity of spirit and help someone else.”

Chu credits her Brainerd teachers for encouraging her academic success, especially her AP instructors Stu Lade and Charles Smith, who she says pushed her academically. She enrolled as an engineering major at the University of Minnesota since she was strong in math and science. However, one semester spent in New York City changed the trajectory of her life. She was one of 30 college students selected across the nation as part of the National Collegiate Honors Council to spend a semester in Manhattan, where she visited the United Nations and volunteered for human rights organizations. She returned to Minnesota and switched to an International Relations field, later applying to law schools in New York.

Chu earned her undergraduate degree, summa cum laude, in International Relations from the U of M in 1994, and then attended Columbia University Law School where she was named a Justice Harry A. Blackmun Scholar. She met U.S. Supreme Court Justice Blackmun, who died in 1999, and they shared stories about their Minnesota ties. In law school she pursued interests in international, public interest and gender law. She served as editor-in-chief of the Columbia Journal of Transnational Law, graduating from law school in 1997.

She started her legal career at the law firm of Simpson Thacher & Bartlett where she spent nine years representing private equity firms, financial institutions and public and private companies. She then served as senior vice president and associate general counsel at Ralph Lauren Corporation for 11 years where she worked with Ralph's Board of Directors and senior executives on corporate governance and global regulatory compliance issues, as well as global trade and financial transactions. She and her RL legal team were also responsible for corporate social responsibility and philanthropic initiatives.

For the past three years, Chu has worked as senior vice president and chief legal officer for Equinox Holdings, a global lifestyle company focused on fitness, health, and wellness. The company's portfolio of brands and business interest includes Equinox Fitness Clubs, Equinox Hotels, SoulCycle, Blink Fitness, and Equinox Media/Variis (a new digital wellness platform).

Chu dedicates her time to mentoring, advancing and empowering women, people of color, first generation students and other underrepresented groups, particularly in the legal profession. Chu serves on the Board of Directors of the Columbia Law School Association and is a mentor/workshop advisor for Columbia First Generation Professionals. She does a lot of speaking on these issues and recently was honored, along with Chief Judge Sri Srinivasan of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the DC Circuit, for a leadership award from the Asian American Bar Association of New York.

"I believe in giving back to community, whether that community is in Brainerd, Minn., or a community-at-large. I'm a firm believer in paying it forward," says Chu.

Chu and her husband, Roblin Meeks, a university dean and professor who taught at Harvard and Princeton, have a son, Mercer, 16, and a daughter, Quynh, 14. She enjoys international travel, learning about other cultures, volunteering at non-profits, and listening to her talented children play music. She has returned to Vietnam on both personal and professional trips. She credits her success to her parents - her father Son Chu and her late mother Van Nguyen - for always modeling strength in the face of adversity.



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