



Mavis Fodness photo/0925 Alumni Educator Induction 2025

Luverne Public Schools Superintendent Craig Oftedahl (far left, at podium) introduces the Class of 2025 Alumni and Educator Halls of Fame inductees Sept. 19 in the performing arts center. On stage (from left) are Luverne School Board member and award presenter Mike DeBates, Tim Connell, Dyan Ebert, David Piegras, Mao Wildung, Laurin Carroll, Gregg Gropel, Katie Hemme and Joseph Roberts.

Eight honorees inducted into Halls of Fame

By Mavis Fodness

Four Luverne High School graduates and four educators became the newest members of the Luverne Educator and Alumni Halls of Fame Sept. 19, in an induction ceremony in the Luverne Public Schools performing arts center.

Alumni included Tim Connell ('67), Dyan Ebert ('86), David Piegras ('58) and Richard "Dick" Wildung ('39).

Educators included Laurin Carroll, Gregg Gropel, Katie Hemme and Joseph Roberts. Together, the educators served a total of 135 years in Luverne.

For the first time in the history of the halls of fame, beginning in 2023 for alumni and 2024 for educators, a father-daughter duo, Laurin Carroll and Dyan Ebert, were inducted in the same year.

HALLS OF FAME/SEE PAGE 3

Honor Roll of Alumni News contributors

Compiled by Johnna Ahrendt

During this past quarter ending Sept. 30, 2025, the Alumni News received money in the form of memorials, and gifts totaling \$935. In the memorial section below, the individual being memorialized is printed in bold print, followed by the individual or individuals who made the gift. Contributions given by graduates and friends follow the list of memorials. THANK YOU, READERS!

NOTE:

If you have recently made a contribution to the Alumni News and your name does not appear on this page, please let the staff know. Chances are your contribution was received after this page was compiled. Please watch for the next issue, January 2026, for additional names of Alumni News contributors.

Memorials and contributions may be sent to:
Alumni News
709 N. Kniss Avenue
Luverne, Minnesota 56156

Financial summary

Balance 6/30/25: \$58,546.16

Donations: 935.00

Interest & Dividends: 912.41

Expenses:

Postage: 2,878.66

Office Supplies: 1,701.70

Printing: 962.40

Labels: 754.74

Balance 9/30/25: \$54,096.07

Memorials

Winifred Haggard '50

Pat Salonen - Daughter

**Judith (Anderson)
Johnson '53**

Orrin '58 & Karen
Anderson

**Audrey (Madison)
Greene '60**

Dean Madison '63
Delores (Madison)
Walters '58
Hal '60 & Donna
Paulson
Roger Madison '60
Virgil Madison '54

Jim Brandenburg '63

James '66 & Carol
(Aanenson) '66 Hatting
Mick & Joan

(Aanenson)'75 Berry

Lloyd (Stanley) Stanley '66
Class of 1966

Bryan Fodness '76
Hal '60 & Donna
Paulson

Mike Ripley '77
Class of 1977

Bill Sievers - Teacher
Marlin Spangrud -
Teacher

**Wayne Michelsen '51 -
Magnolia High School**
Hal '60 & Donna
Paulson

Contributions

Ardis (Ormseth) Mickelson '67

Jim Sanden - Teacher

Thank you for your support

There are expenses incurred with printing, mailing and database support, and these costs are paid for with generous contributions from our alumni and readers.

Luverne Dollars for Scholars ... Did you know?

Scholarship Application Season is upon us

Scholarship application season is upon us once again! The Luverne High School Class of 2026 is busy working on their scholarship applications. They will be evaluated on the following criteria: academic performance, scholastic aptitude, work experience, school activity and community involvement.

Students are also required to write an essay describing their future aspirations as well as seek a recommendation from someone, whether a teacher or an adult who has worked with the student. These applications are due each year around February 15.

All applications are submitted through an online student profile application located on the Luverne Dollars for Scholars website.

Once all of the information is compiled, the selection process begins. Each application is assigned a number. The Luverne High School counselor verifies each students' class rank, GPA and ACT scores. Only the application number, not the applicant name, is seen throughout the

rest of the scoring. Each essay is read and scored by a group of DFS board members. References, work experience, school activity and community involvement are cross checked against the computerized score assigned each applicant.

Not all applicants receive a scholarship. Applications who do not reach the minimum score do not qualify for a scholarship award. None of the scholarships are based on financial need.

Good luck to the Class of 2026! We look forward to awarding your hard work over the past four years.

If you would like to contribute to Luverne Dollars for Scholars, or receive more information, please write:

Luverne Dollars for Scholars
PO Box 822
Luverne, MN 56156

Email: luvernedfs@gmail.com
Call: 507-227-4030 (Johnna Ahrendt)
Or visit: www.luverne.dollarsforscholars.org

Luverne Alumni and Educators Halls of Fame/continued from page 1

"It really makes it much more meaningful for me," Ebert said after the ceremony. "It was a great honor."

Carroll, as the proud parent, added "Her accomplishments are unbelievable." Ebert was one of two alumni who became lawyers after leaving LHS. Tim Connell was the other.

Piepgras became a neurosurgeon at Rochester Mayo and Wildung excelled as a player with the Green Bay Packers in the National Football League.

Each remembered LHS as a place where lifelong learning was instilled.

"It's so important as far as life goes," Piepgras said in his induction speech. "I was imbued

very early in life with lifelong learning, and it's, I think, something that I still strive for, not only for myself, but for my family and other people, to take a wide view of learning."

Wildung viewed learning essential for successful team building, according to his daughter, Mao Wildung, who accepted her father's induction medal. Wildung died in 2006 at age 85.

"Whatever your job is, whatever your position is, do everything you can to become an expert in that notion that team sports mean everyone needs to get along," she said.

HALLS OF FAME/SEE PAGE 7

Remembering our classmates

Compiled by Carol Schumacher Serie

1940 – 1949

Lois (Huisman) (Meyer) Ahrendt '47 passed away at The Villages, FL, on August 23, 2025. Lois was married to Robert K. Meyer on October 11, 1947, until his death on April 27, 1984. Lois worked at the Magnolia Steakhouse, the VFW, and the Magnolia Public School as a teacher's aide for 18 years. She was a member of the VFW Auxiliary. On February 14, 1992, Lois married Orland Ahrendt and they enjoyed 15 years together until his death on April 10, 2007. Lois was very active in her church, and in retirement she enjoyed crafting, the Red Hats Club, traveling, and volunteering at the History Center in Luverne.

Lois is survived by her children: Nancy Cooper of Golden, CO, William (Fiona) Meyer of The Villages, FL, Kathy (Alan) McArthur of Anchorage, AK, Sandi (John) Hagen of Sanford FL, LeAnn Beaty of Hayden, ID, and Robert (Kim Mason) Meyer of Orcas Island, WA; 17 grandchildren; 21 great-grandchildren; 8 great-great-grandchildren; 5 step-grandchildren; and her sister, **Marge '56** Bjornson.

She was preceded in death by her husbands, Robert and Orland; son Steven Meyer; sons-in-law Marc Cooper and Roger Beaty; granddaughter Nancy Hagen; sister **Charlotte '52** Meester; and brother K. James Huisman.

1950 – 1959

Winifred "Freddie" (Steffen) Haggard '50 died August 15, 2025, in De Smet, SD. Freddie married **Douglas '48** Steffen in October 1951. They were married for 32 years. She was a stay-at-home mom for many years and then owned and managed Montgomery Wards in Redwood Falls for nine years. She also worked as a bookkeeper and eventually found her passion selling life insurance for Combined Insurance where she won many sales awards. Freddie lived at home until she was 89 and then became a resident of the Good Samaritan Society in De Smet.

Winifred is survived by her children: Jean (Darrell) Hup of Pleasantville, IA, James (Jean)

Steffen of Sioux Falls, SD, and Patricia (Tim) Salonen of De Smet, SD; seven grandchildren; and 16 great-grandchildren.

She was preceded in death by her daughter, Elizabeth Steffen; her brother and sister-in-law, **Dr. Dale '52 (Sunny '51)** Haggard; and her sister and brother-in-law, **Helen '54** (Dr. Dwayne) Rollag.

Barbara (Smith) Gits '52 died on July 28, 2025, in Mankato. In 1952, she began employment with Rock County Bank. In 1954 she was named Miss Luverne. The following year she moved to Washington, D.C. and worked in the Navy Department for three years. She returned to Luverne and on June 8, 1957, Barb married **Gordon Gits** in Luverne. Barb donated time to her church and her community, serving as Girl Scout and Boy Scout leader in the Luverne community. She enjoyed many hobbies including traveling with Gordon and spending time with her grandchildren.

Barbara is survived by four children, **Theresa '76** Gits-Borgstrom, **Paul '78** Gits, **Mary '82** Reiggins, and **Elizabeth '84** Hackett; 2 grandchildren; and four great-grandchildren.

She was preceded in death by her husband, **Gordon**, in 2012; son, **Stephen '79**; sister, Mary; and brother, **William '63**.

Gladys (Reemts) Walker '52 of Sioux Falls, passed away on September 16, 2025. In 1963, Gladys moved to Sioux Falls and remained living there. She was a lifetime member of her church, and the VFW Auxiliary. She was also a member of the Moose Auxiliary and the Center for Active Generations. From 1973 until 1985, Gladys worked in the office for the Elks Club and then became the office manager for the Sioux Empire Fair office. She married Herman Walker on April 21, 1990, and they had 35 wonderful years together. Gladys enjoyed playing bridge and pinochle. She and Herman spent winter months in Mesa, AZ.

REMEMBERING OUR CLASSMATES/SEE PAGE 5

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Gladys is survived by her husband, Herman Walker; children, Dean Lawrence, Julie (Steve Natz) Miller, David (Marcia) Lawrence; stepdaughter, Tammy Walker; 5 grandchildren; 2 step granddaughters; 12 great-grandchildren; 3 step great-grandchildren; and niece, **Linda '68** (Dick Knapper) Schoon.

She was preceded in death by her first husband, Julian Lawrence; her sisters, **Joyce '47** (Norman) Wessels and **Dorothy '50** (Ermil) Johnson; and a grandson, Michael Miller.

Judith (Anderson) Johnson '53 died August 29, 2025, in Portland, OR. Judith attended Augustana College, where she received her teaching certificate and taught in the Sioux Falls school system. She married Lyman Johnson and the couple moved to California and then Washington State before settling in Eugene, OR. After Lyman's passing, Judith remained in Eugene until 2024 when she moved to Portland to be closer to family.

Judith is survived by daughters Jayne and Janna, 2 grandchildren and son-in-law Patrick O'Neil.

Rosemary (Herman) Merkel '54 died on July 4, 2025, in Worthington, MN. Rosemary's first job was working at the family business, Herman Motors, pumping gas. She attended Concordia College, St. Paul, where she met her husband, Leroy Merkel. They just celebrated their 68th wedding anniversary on May 4, 2025. Rosemary's career included owning the Worthington Fabric Center, and she was an excellent seamstress. She worked at a local shoe store and was a teacher's aide at Worthington Elementary school until her retirement. Rosemary enjoyed volunteering and was a "Red Hatter", played in both golf and bowling leagues, as well as a bridge club.

Rosemary is survived by her husband, Leroy; children Timothy (Jamey) of Cook, MN, Rebecca (Patrick) Walding of Sioux City, IA, and Nancy (Joel) Vandeputte of Marshall; 8 grandchildren; 10 great grandchildren; brothers

James '52 (Judy) Herman, Richard (Clarice) Herman, and other family and friends.

She was preceded in death by her sister, **Caroline '48** Hendrickson, and brother-in-law, Carl Hendrickson.

1960 – 1969

Lloyd Stanley, Jr. '66 died in Spokane, WA, on September 3, 2025. Lloyd enlisted in the Air Force and was stationed at Fairchild Air Force Base in Spokane. He was deployed to Guam, as part of the Security Forces detail. After his discharge, Lloyd returned to Spokane and married Mary "Anne" McIntyre on March 27, 1971. Lloyd had a passion for photography which he pursued at Spokane Falls Community College. His love of design led him to a career at Ross Printing Company where he made significant contributions.

Lloyd is survived by his son, Michael (Jeni) of Spokane, his daughter, Sarah (Steve) Germain, of Spokane; sisters **Sharon '63** Granke, **Phyllis '69** Sutton, and **Donna '71** Mauer (Steve); and one brother, **Tommy '72 (Barb '73)** Stanley; 2 grandchildren; 2 bonus grandchildren; and many nieces and nephews.

1970 – 1979

Richard Mann '71, of Brandon, SD, died July 24, 2025. Richard studied carpentry at Alexandria Technical College from 1971 to 1972 and returned home to help on the family farm before starting his career as a skilled carpenter. In 1974 he married **Joleah '74** Twito and they raised two sons. They later divorced. Richard married Katie Ryan, and they made their home in Brandon. She passed away in 2020. In addition to his carpentry business, Richard was also employed, over the years, by Luverne Lumber, the Blue Mound Inn, M-M Distributing and most recently at Pace Manufacturing in Brandon.

Richard is survived by his son, **Anthony '98 (Candice '99)**; 3 grandchildren; his mother, **Betty '48** Mann, Luverne; his siblings, **Peggy '76** Raker, Sioux Falls, **Ken '79 (Joy '79)** Mann, St. Michael,

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and **Andy '80** Mann, Wentworth, SD.

He was preceded in death by his son, **Nicholas '94** Mann, and his sister, **Debra '74** Barnes.

Bryan Fodness '76 died on July 18, 2025, in Sioux Falls. Bryan helped on the family dairy farm while working a variety of jobs. He attended the Mason City College of Auctioneering in Mason City, IA, receiving a diploma in 1984. He also attended Pipestone Area Vocational and Technical College and obtained an Ag Banking degree in 1986. On July 4, 1987, Bryan married **Mavis '83** Olson in Luverne. He owned and operated various businesses through the years involving sales of livestock, land, household goods, insurance and real estate. For the past 10 years he operated Fodness Trucking with his dad while continuing to be an auctioneer. Bryan enjoyed golfing, hunting, fishing or motorcycle rides.

Bryan is survived by his wife of 38 years, **Mavis**, of Hardwick; four children, **Andrew '07** (Laura) of Lismore, **Courtney '08** (Andy) Blenner of Schaller, IA, **Lyndsey '11** (Adam) Hartman of Sioux Falls and **Adam '16** (Fiancee, Adriana) of Winchester, CA; 8 grandchildren; step mother, Kathy Fodness of Rushmore; brothers **Bruce '75** (**JoAnne '76**) Fodness of Hardwick, **Jonathon '10** (Brittany) Fodness of Vermillion, SD; sister **Julie '07** (Fiance, Derrick) Fodness of Bennington, OK; and many nieces, nephews, family members and friends.

Friends of Luverne Graduates

Bernadine Merrill was born on July 26, 1927, in Minneapolis, and grew up in Golden Valley, the eldest of five children. She graduated from St. Margaret's Academy in Minneapolis. Bernadine pursued a major in home economics at the University of Minnesota. In 1949 she accepted the position of Rock County Extension Home Agent, where she worked with the Women's Extension Program and 4-H Program. She married John (Jack) Merrill on December 27, 1951, in Minneapolis. Bernadine was a homemaker and was involved in many organizations. She was a member of St. Catherine Catholic Church, LCCW, ARC, Beta Sigma Phi and Zeta Tau Alpha. She enjoyed volunteering, playing the piano and organ, sewing, knitting and bridge. Bernadine was a 4-H leader and Girl Scout leader and served on the DAC Board. Interacting with family was her greatest joy.

Survivors include children **Martha '71** (**Kevin '71**) Petersen, St. Cloud, MN, **Margaret '74** (Tim) Petrick, Clancy, MT, **Michael '78** Merrill, Phoenix, AZ, **Mark '82** (Tara) Merrill, DeSoto, KS, **Melissa '87** Merrill, Luverne, and son-in-law Paul Hatrick, Litchfield, MN; eight grandchildren; and five great-grandchildren; sister Mary (Lyle) Treptau, Burnsville, and sister-in-law Margie Busch, Plymouth, and many nieces and nephews.

She was preceded in death by her husband, Jack, daughter **Mary '73** Merrill Hatrick, her brother Robert Busch, sister-in-law Helga Marlow, sister Ann Mykelby and brother-in-law Donald Mykelby, and brother Leonard Busch.

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Mavis Fodness photo/0925 Alumni Educator Induction 2025

In her acceptance speech into the Educator Hall of Fame, Katie Hemme holds up a red gym suit similar to the two-piece blue ones girls wore for class in Hemme's early years of teaching in Luverne. "I do hope those girls have better memories than ugly gym suits," she said. Hemme was instrumental in implementing interscholastic girls' sports at LHS.

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Katie Hemme acknowledged that team attitude is alive and well in education because teachers can't do their jobs in isolation.

She pointed to students as the most important team members of her teaching career.

"It's just really awesome to realize what they (students) have accomplished, and hopefully that I have had some part in that encouragement," she said. "To be a part of their lives was so special for me, and I certainly do hope and pray that those experiences were positive for

HALL OF FAME/SEE PAGE 8



Mike DeBates, School Board member, reveals the names of the educators who make up the Class of 2025 Educator Hall of Fame. Watching are inductees (front to back) Joseph Roberts, Gregg Gropel and Katie Hemme.



Mavis Fodness photo/0925 Alumni Educator Induction 2025

The 1895 school bell from the former Luverne High School is rung as board member Mike DeBates reveals the names of the Class of 2025 Alumni Hall of Fame recipients under the canopy of school, built in 1956.

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them.”

Like Hemme, who was instrumental in implementing the girls’ interscholastic athletics program and establishing the developmental adaptive physical education program at Luverne, each teacher focused on expanding opportunities for students.

Carroll, who taught high school math, introduced the advanced placement (AP) classes to LHS with AP calculus.

Gropel began his career at Luverne Public Schools as an elementary teacher and went on to begin the district’s community education program, establish the Dollars for Scholars program, and begin the “Alumni News” newsletter.

Roberts, a middle school math teacher, created the summer youth baseball program.

Their contribution hasn’t gone unnoticed by the alumni who returned to Luverne to raise their own

families and inspired current educators.

“I thank you for giving me the education and giving me the opportunity to be here as it continues to grow and prosper and just become better,” Connell said. “It’s a beautiful place, wonderful place to go to school.”

After the induction ceremony, attendees gathered under the middle school/high school canopy, where the names of the Class of 2025 alumni are inscribed in the black granite located in the Alumni Garden.

In their honor, the refurbished school bell from the 1895 high school was rung.

The names of the Class of 2025 educators were revealed on the display located in the middle-high school commons.

This story originally appeared in the Sept. 25 Rock County Star Herald.

Meet the new Luverne Alumni Hall of Fame inductees

David Piepgras, a Luverne High School graduate of the Class of 1958, was born in Luverne, MN. He earned both his Bachelor of Arts and Medical degrees from the University of Minnesota.

Following an internship in New Hampshire, three years of military service, and a year in general surgery, he completed his neurosurgical residency at the Mayo Clinic. He remained at Mayo, where he became a professor in 1988 and served as Chair of Neurosurgery from 1992 to 2004. David received the following awards from the Mayo Clinic: named the inaugural Matthews Professor of Neuroscience in 1994; selected as the Distinguished Mayo Clinician in 1998 and named the Distinguished Mayo Alumnus in 2022.

Dr. Piepgras has been a leader in organized neurosurgery, serving as President of the AANS



Joint Section on Cerebrovascular Surgery, the American Academy of Neurological Surgery, and the Society of Neurological Surgeons. He also served on the American Board of Neurological Surgery, including as Chair from 2002 to 2003. In 2004, he received the first-ever Founder's Laurel Award from the Congress of Neurological Surgeons for his lifelong

contributions to neurosurgical education and service. His legacy is also honored through the Minnesota Neurological Society's annual "Piepgras Awards" for outstanding research papers.

Dr. Piepgras has published more than 200 peer-reviewed articles, contributed book chapters, and lectured internationally on cerebrovascular disease, aneurysms, and arteriovenous malformations. He retired from the Mayo Clinic in December 2022.

Dick Wildung was a talented two-sport athlete in high school, excelling in football and basketball, and played for the Luverne Cardinals in the 1939 State Basketball Tournament.

He attended the University of Minnesota at a time when there were no athletic scholarships and joined the team as a walk-on when freshmen were allowed only to scrimmage. In his first year of eligibility in 1940, Dick started as a right tackle for the Gophers, a position he held through his senior year in 1942.

He played a pivotal part in the Gopher's back-to-back National Championships in 1940 and 1941, received All-American honors in 1941 and 1942, and was named Gopher MVP and Gopher Captain in his senior year.

He was drafted by the Green Bay Packers, an 8th overall pick in the first round of the 1943 NFL



Draft but was called into the Navy during World War II, where he served as a lieutenant on a PT boat.

After his service, Wildung rejoined the Packers in 1946, playing on the team during a period of decline. He had a standout career as a two-way lineman, playing in 81 games over seven seasons, and served as team captain from 1948 to 1951. Wildung was known for his

toughness and versatility, playing both offense and defense despite the trend toward specialized positions.

He retired in 1952 to run a hardware store, but returned to the Packers in 1953 for one more season. Wildung later declined an offer to coach the Packers' line in 1958, marking the end of his football career.

Dick was inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame in 1957, the Green Bay Packers Hall of Fame in 1973 and Gophers Hall of Fame in 1993.

Meet the new Luverne Alumni Hall of Fame inductees

Dyan Ebert, a graduate of Luverne High School Class of 1986, joined the law firm of Quinlivan & Hughes in 1994 and became a Shareholder in 1998.

She was the first woman to serve as the firm's Chief Executive Officer and has also served multiple terms on the Board of Directors, including her current role as Chief Financial Officer beginning in 2023.

She has held leadership positions in national, state, and local organizations, including serving as President of the Association of Defense Trial Attorneys (2024–25), the Minnesota State Bar Association, and the Minnesota Defense Lawyers Association. Dyan is a member of the Minnesota Chapter of the American Board of Trial Advocates, has an AV rating from Martindale-Hubbell, has been named a Minnesota Super Lawyer, and was recognized as one of the Top 50 Women Attorneys in Minnesota in 2014, 2021, and 2024.

In 2021, she was honored as an Attorney of the Year for Outstanding Service to the Profession.

Her legal practice focuses on civil litigation,



particularly employment, government liability, and professional liability; representing individuals, corporations, and government entities in state and federal courts. She also provides counsel to employers on workplace policies, conducts employment investigations, and represents them in discrimination matters, while frequently lecturing on employment law topics.

Beyond employment law, she handles professional liability, personal injury, premises liability, wrongful death, and insurance coverage cases.

Dyan serves on the American Arbitration Association's no-fault arbitration panel and was appointed in 2023 to the Minnesota Legislative Salary Council by Chief Justice Lorie Gildea.

She has also contributed to judicial reform through her work on the Minnesota Supreme Court's Civil Justice Reform Task Force in 2010 and remains active in her community by coordinating the Apollo High School Mock Trial Invitational Tournament.

Tim Connell, a Luverne, MN native, graduated from Luverne High School in 1967 and earned a Bachelor of Arts from St. John's University in 1971. He went on to receive a Juris Doctor degree from William Mitchell College of Law in 1976.

Returning to Luverne, Tim worked at the Skewes, Klosterbuer, and Connell law firm and served as Rock County Attorney from 1976 to 1987. In 1987, Governor Rudy Perpich appointed Tim as District Judge of the 5th Judicial District, a role he held for 35 years until his retirement in 2011. Post-retirement, he has continued to serve as a mediator.

Tim has held many leadership positions



during his career including serving as President of the Minnesota District Judges Association. In 2010, he founded the Southwestern Minnesota drug court program that has positively changed the lives of many people in the area. He has also served on various local and statewide boards, including the Southwest Initiative Foundation, Luverne Initiatives for Tomorrow and Southwest Minnesota Regional Legal Services.

Tim and his wife, Connie, were active in the Luverne hockey program, helping raise funds and build the Blue Mound Ice Arena. Tim has been a passionate supporter of Luverne sports, providing color commentary for the hockey team for over 16 years.

Meet the new Luverne Educator Hall of Fame inductees

Gregg Gropel graduated from Ivanhoe High School in 1963 and earned his Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education and Physical Education from Winona State College in 1967.

He began his career at Luverne Public Schools as a sixth-grade teacher and later taught elementary physical education. After serving as a Title I teacher in 1971–1972, he spent six years teaching fifth grade. In 1978, Gregg started and built the Community Education program at Luverne Schools, which he directed until 1999. He earned his Master's Degree in Community Education in 1990, further strengthening his leadership in lifelong learning programs.

Gregg founded Luverne's Dollars for Scholars chapter in 1983, which has grown into



the second-largest in the United States. The program awarded over \$562,500 in 2025 totaling over \$7.7 million being presented to 2,294 LHS graduates since its inception.

Gregg also co-created The Luverne Alumni News to keep alumni connected and supportive of the schools and community. His contributions included organizing youth summer recreation programs, establishing the fifth-grade boys' flag patrol (recognized with state awards), and supporting FFA and community projects. Gregg's recognitions include Teacher of the Year (1972), induction into the Mankato State Hall of Fame, Friend of Education (2007), and Honorary Chapter Farmer. His vision and dedication have left a lasting impact on Luverne Public Schools, its students, and the entire community.

Joe Roberts taught mathematics and algebra at Luverne Public Schools for 40 years, from 1963 through 2002.

He also served as head baseball coach from 1964 to 1980, leading his teams to four District 8 Championships, three Southwest Conference titles, a Region 2 Championship, and a trip to the State Tournament in 1972. In addition, he was the offensive coordinator for the football program for 13 years, helping guide the team to four conference championships, three section titles, and three state tournament appearances. Beyond school athletics, Roberts coached American Legion and VFW baseball teams and managed Luverne's youth baseball program from 1980 until 2003.

A 1957 Worthington High School graduate, he was a standout athlete, earning letters in football, baseball, and basketball, including two District



8 baseball championships. He continued his athletic career in college, playing football at St. John's University and baseball at Mankato State University, where he earned All-Conference honors.

Roberts built the foundation of Luverne's baseball tradition, including helping construct the two-field complex later named in his honor, Joe Roberts Field. His philosophy emphasized teaching fundamentals and ensuring all youth had opportunities to participate, regardless of skill level. He was equally respected in the classroom, where he helped generations of students understand how mathematics applied to everyday life. Even after retirement, Joe Roberts remained a strong supporter of youth athletics and the sport of baseball, leaving behind a legacy of dedication, inclusion, and community impact.

Meet the new Luverne Educator Hall of Fame inductees

Katie Croes

Hemme joined Luverne Public Schools in 1963, where she taught girls' physical education and health for grades 7-12. In 1974, her classes transitioned to a co-ed setting. That same year, Katie became the first interscholastic girls' varsity coach in track & field, volleyball and gymnastics.

Katie graduated from Mankato State College in 1963 with a BS degree. In the early 1980's. She earned her adaptive physical education certification and became the first to develop an Adaptive PE program in Luverne Public Schools. She also became involved with Special Olympics, coaching bowling and track and field.

Katie contributed to state committees,



helping to develop curriculum for health and physical education and represented the SW region in the MN high school league for interscholastic sports. In 1987, she was named Luverne School Teacher of the Year for her exceptional work in adaptive education. In 1999, she was recognized as the Outstanding Special Olympics Coach of the Year. Katie organized Cardinal Sports Day,

a local event for students with disabilities to compete in athletic activities, from 1987 to 1998.

She served on the DAC (now Rock County Opportunities) board, is a member of Chapter DI P.E.O. and Delta Kappa Gamma. She enjoys traveling and spending winters in Arizona.

Laurin Carroll

dedicated 29 years to high school basketball coaching, building successful programs in both South Dakota and Minnesota.

He was inducted into the Minnesota High School Boys' Basketball Coaches Hall of Fame in recognition of his outstanding career and contributions to the sport.

Carroll began his head coaching career at Dell Rapids, South Dakota, where he compiled a 187-81 record over 11 seasons and led teams to back-to-back state tournament appearances in 1970 and 1971.

In 1972, he became the head coach at Luverne High School, a role he held until 1990. Under his leadership, Luverne won two Southwest Conference championships and reached the District 8 title game 10 times,



winning seven, including five straight from 1977 to 1981.

His most successful season came in 1983, when Luverne won the Region 2 Title and finished second at the state tournament. Carroll's teams continued to be competitive, reaching another region championship game in 1984 and consistently fielding strong squads through the 1980s.

He retired from coaching in 1990 with a record of 242-154 at Luverne and 429-235 overall in his 29-year career. Alongside his coaching success, Carroll also taught mathematics at Luverne High School until his retirement in 2000.

Humble about his accomplishments, he credits his assistants, supportive administrators, and talented players for the success of his teams.

A CELEBRATION OF LIBERTY

JULY 30-31 & AUGUST 1-2, 2026

During the Rock County Fair



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Complete Schedule in January Alumni News!

AMERICA

250

ROCK COUNTY MN

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- **Tours & Open Houses**
- **Military Vehicle Cruise In**
- **Live Music Every Night**
- **Special 250th Programs**
- **Historical Re-enactors**
- **Contests & Games**
- **Block Parties**
- **RC Hall of Fame Induction**
- **AND MORE!**



Class of 1965 gathers for reunion

Front row L to right
 Marlene Johansen Nelson
 Janet Boone Jessen
 Jeanne Boone Bowron
 Jackie Mulder Gertz
 Jayona Collins Bowman
 Sharon Leslie Gilman
 Loree Untiedt Davis
 Lee Ann McCue Toms
 Linda Janssen Koranda

2nd row. L to right
 Alon Hemme
 Char Vanlperen Hovland
 Louise Janssen Parent
 Shirley Johnson Olney
 Nancy Hengeveld Corson
 Jeanne Viland Ellsworth
 Diana Chapin Ouverson
 Curt Laudon
 Bob Bertrand

Back row L to R
 Bryce Davis
 Bob Nelson
 Karen Christenson Kullnat
 David Barclay
 Tom Thomas
 Daryle Vegge
 Becky Burns Schenk
 Carol Raschke Tomaseski
 Randa Smith Gangestad
 Becky Birkeland Herreid
 Jerry Deuschle (not pictured)

REUNIONS IN THE MAKING



To list reunion plans in **ALUMNI NEWS**
 or for help with planning your reunion...

Contact: **LIVERNE AREA CHAMBER**
luvernechamber@co.rock.mn.us 507-283-4061

The Chamber/CVB offers a **FREE MAILING**
 with reunion information for your class!

BUTTON DESIGN CONTEST



\$250

In celebration of the 75th TRI-STATE BAND FESTIVAL the Committee is opening the button design competition to any and all TSBF FANS to commemorate the spectacular history of this very special event!

Winner will be selected by TSBF Committee and received \$250 cash prize and will be promoted on the TSBF Website!

All entries must be emailed/mailed/delivered to Luverne Chamber no later than April 15, 2026.

MAIL: TSBF—Luverne Chamber | 213 East Luverne St | Luverne MN 56156

EMAIL: luvernechamber@co.rock.mn.us

The following design elements must be included to be eligible:

- *75th Annual*
- *Tri-State Band Festival*
- *Luverne, MN*
- *September 26, 2026*
- *There are no restrictions on colors; artist can use as many as desired*
- *No Cardinal logo may be used*

To check out all the past button designs and everything else Tri-State
...take a look at the website:

<https://www.tri-statebandfestival.com/buttons>

Alumni News Staff: Cindy Arends, Jane Wildung Lanphere, Carol Schumacher Serie, Lori Sorenson
Johnna Bowron Ahrendt, Patti Kirby Pierson and Rock County Opportunities

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Alumni News

**709 North Kniss Avenue
Luverne, MN 56156**

Luverne
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