



MINNESOTA STATE HIGH SCHOOL LEAGUE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Minnesota State High School League and Wells Fargo Honor Students for Leadership, Community Service

Celebrating its 21st year of recognizing high school juniors, the Minnesota State High School League will honor the 2017 ExCEL Award recipients during ceremonies at the Girls' State Basketball Tournament on Saturday.

ExCEL—Excellence in Community, Education and Leadership—is a unique recognition award that is given annually to high school juniors who are leaders in their schools and who demonstrate a strong commitment to community service. The program is sponsored by Wells Fargo.

“The ExCEL program fulfills the League’s mission to recognize students who go beyond the classroom and the fields of competition to demonstrate leadership and community loyalty,” said Lisa Lissimore, the League associate director who oversees the award program. “Their achievements are not measured by finishing first. Rather, their achievements are gauged by what they have given back to others.”

The 2017 ExCEL award recipients are engaged in life-changing projects that build stronger, healthier, and safer communities. They work voluntarily to end hunger, house the homeless, help the environment, and to raise funds for medical research. Many of these student leaders are involved in 4-H and FFA outreach activities while others coach youth sports, teach Sunday school, assist seniors, visit shelters, and tutor at-risk kids.

“We are honored to sponsor the ExCEL award program recognizing Minnesota students who help create solutions for stronger, more resilient communities,” said Joe Ravens, Wells Fargo Community Bank region president.

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The ExCEL award program began in 1996. Award recipients are selected through a multi-level process that involves League member schools and an independent panel of judges from schools throughout Minnesota. More than 4,000 students have been recognized with this award program. Two-hundred and forty-nine students were nominated by their schools this year.

KSTC- TV, Channel 45, the League's broadcast partner, will recognize the 2017 ExCEL award recipients during its broadcast of the semi-finals of the State Girls' Basketball Tournament. Each student will also participate in an on-court award ceremony during the halftime of the Class AA girls' basketball championship game on March 18.

Following is the list of the 2017 ExCEL Award winners:

Kjerstin Anderson, Owatonna

Aiden Begnaud, Lake Crystal-Wellcome Memorial

Matthew Benson, Park Rapids Area

Leighton Buhr, Lester Prairie

McKenzie Cselovszki, Sleepy Eye

Reese Eichner, Norwood-Young America

Jackson Grove, Alexandria Area

Teresa Grunklee, Rosemount

Ashley Haxton, Wabasha-Kellogg

Lisa Hoffer, West Lutheran

Sarita Hook, Tracy Area

William Keute, Virginia

Taylor Kimman, Pierz

Bryce Knutson, Owatonna

Brianna Kreft, West Central Area

Markayla Kujath, Kasson-Mantorville

Brianna Larson, Litchfield

Judy Larson, Norwood-Young America

Elizabeth McDonald, Fisher

Lauren Miller, Zumbrota-Mazeppa

Emma Nelson, Hancock

Grace Penke, Hutchinson

Alex Pohlen, Minnesota

Allison Prestby, Alexandria Area

Spencer Quast, Redwood Valley

Adam Revoir, Tartan, Oakdale

Andrew Rippy, St. Croix Preparatory Academy

Brady Ristau, Fillmore Central

Mason Schmidgall, Hancock

Briana Schmidt, Springfield

Brock Snyder, Royalton

Nick Thielsen, Mankato East

Aye Aye Thin, St. Paul Humboldt

Mai Xee Vang, St. Paul Harding

KaSondra Wiederich, LeSueur-Henderson

Austin Windsperger, Watertown-Mayer

Additional information about the 2017 ExCEL Award recipients may be obtained by visiting the League's Web site at www.MSHSL.org-Recognition.