



# Eye of the Tiger

District 879 Newsletter December 2022-January 2023

## At a glance

### Page 2

Support staff honored  
College signings

### Page 3

Budget breakdown  
School board update  
DASA membership

### Page 4

State swim and dive  
Teacher awards

## Dates to remember

### December

18.....Jazzy Christmas, 4 p.m.  
19..School board mtg., 5:45 p.m.  
19.....Gr. 7-8 band concert, 7 p.m.  
21.....Two-hour early release  
22-31....Winter break, no school

### January

1-2.....Winter break, no school  
3.....Classes resume  
9.....HS PIE meeting, 6 p.m.  
9.....HS registration mtg., 7 p.m.  
16.....MLK Jr. Day, no school  
20..End Quarter 2, early release  
23.....HS registration mtg., 7 p.m.

### February

7, 9.....ES, IS conferences  
15.....Two-hour late start



The Delano swimming and diving team took second at state, and Avery Lommel was the Class A diving champion. See Page 4.



Delano educators receiving Leadership in Educational Excellence Awards last month included, from left, DIS social worker Nicole Gohman, English Language Learner Instructor Ashley Johnson, DHS language arts teacher Kellie Makela and DES physical educational instructor Mollie Graham.

## Leaders in excellence

By Paul Downer  
Communications Coordinator

Each year Delano Public Schools staff members honor a few outstanding individuals with Leadership in Educational Excellence Awards.

DES physical education teacher Mollie Graham, DIS social worker Nicole Gohman, DHS language arts teacher Kellie Makela, and 2021-22 Delano Teacher of the Year Ashley Johnson, who

teaches English Language Learners, recently received their awards at a regional banquet in St. Cloud.

• Graham, a fourth-year teacher who began her career in Delano, received multiple nominations for the LEEA honor. Co-workers highlighted her upbeat, organized and creative approach

See LEEA  
Page 4

## What the levy outcome means

By Matthew Schoen  
Superintendent

First, I would like to thank our community for supporting the school district by passing the first question of our operating levy request on the November ballot. The passage of the first question, which provides an additional \$200 per pupil above the expiring levy, helps us avoid a financial crisis,

but it does not solve our funding challenges for the future.

As we have communicated to our district community over the past four months, passage of the first question but not the second means that we must continue to cut our budget. For next school year we will have to reduce the

See Schoen  
Page 2



# Support staff honored for service

By Paul Downer  
Communications Coordinator

A school can't operate without the numerous support staff who come alongside teachers and students to aid them in their teaching and learning, and Delano Public Schools recently recognized four individuals with Educational Support Staff Awards for their outstanding service.

Those honored included Delano Elementary School special education paraprofessional Barb Kenison, Delano Intermediate School special education paraprofessional Joelle Strandquist, former Delano High School paraprofessional Kim Muckenhirn, and bus driver Janet Berzins.

- School staff have taken note of Berzins, who drives a special education bus and also worked as a paraprofessional for extended school year classes in 2020-21.

"She thoroughly understands what the needs of each of her students are and what things they enjoy," said an anonymous nomination statement. "She has a kind heart, hard work ethic and truly shows passion for her job."

- Kenison has been on the job for 15 years. She joined the staff to help provide



**Joelle Strandquist of DIS, left, and Barb Kenison of DES accepted support staff awards on Nov. 16.**

the same care and services that her own child received at DES.

An anonymous nomination on Kenison's behalf noted her cheerful disposition and ready laugh that is shared with students on a daily basis.

"She seeks out ways to keep our special education students included in their classroom activities," the nomination said. "She models and supports communication for

kids using speech-generating devices."

- Strandquist is now in her eighth year with the district. A large collection of anonymous nominations on Strandquist's behalf testified to her dedication and perceptive handling of those entrusted to her.

"Joelle knows her students well and works well with the teacher and class to create the best environment for her students," one nomination said. "She is always coming up with innovative ways to provide her students the same access as every other student."

- Muckenhirn served Delano students from 2008 to the spring of 2022. An anonymous nomination submitted on her behalf last spring praised her steady approach and overall contributions to creating a quality learning environment.

"Kim is consistent, patient, supportive and encouraging to students," the nomination said. "She helps so much to keep the classroom environment positive and flowing well."

*This is an abridged article featuring the award winners. See the full article at <https://bit.ly/ESSA22>.*

## Schoen

from Page 1

budget by another \$360,000 on top of the \$1.7 million in cuts we have already made over the past four years. These new efficiencies may come through a combination of additional staff reductions, reallocations of dollars from other areas of the budget, and higher fees.

How will these changes be identified and implemented? In the upcoming months we will take the following steps to remain fiscally responsible and maintain as much programming as we possibly can.

1. We will review our current budget based on the latest financial data.
2. A budget reduction task force will

review feedback collected from site teams last school year and develop scenarios to meet the \$360,000 shortfall.

3. The superintendent will meet with the school board's Finance Committee to review the scenarios proposed by the task force, and the committee will provide feedback and guidance.

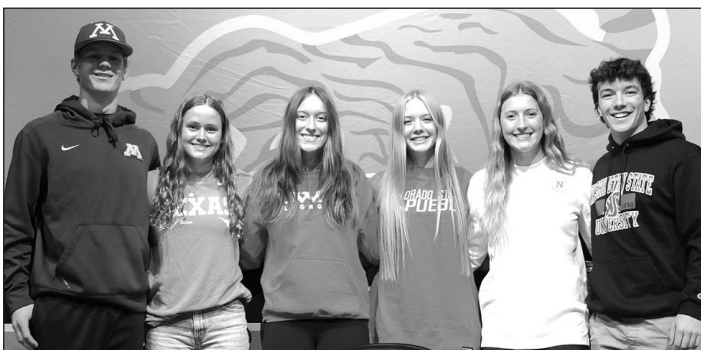
**The district will reduce its annual budget by \$360,000 for next school year.**

4. The task force will make final adjustments, and the school board will adopt next school year's budget with proposed efficiencies in June.

In addition to the steps above, it is important to note that there are two ad-

ditional variables in play that could affect our financial situation going forward: enrollment and state funding. Growth in enrollment has a positive impact on the district's revenue, and we have seen some growth this year. Also, state funding makes up approximately 80% of our general fund. Minnesota school districts will learn how much funding they are allotted for the next biennium after the legislative session.

While some uncertainty remains in those areas, the parameters of what must be done to prepare our budget for next school year are now mostly clear. Again, thank you to our district community for the support shown by the passage of Question 1. As always, we remain committed to upholding Delano's tradition of educational excellence.



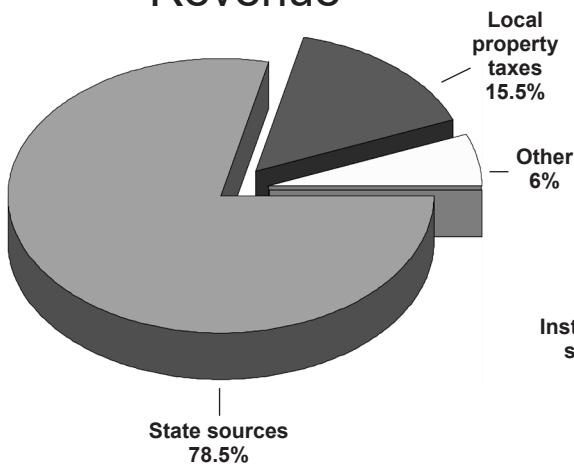
## College signers

Six DHS student-athletes signed National Letters of Intent on Wednesday, Nov. 9, to play on at the college level in locations across the country. They are, from left: Cade Bruett (University of Minnesota, baseball), Emma Kern (University of Texas, swimming), Kylah Link (University of Wisconsin-River Falls, lacrosse), Abby Menk (University of Colorado Pueblo, soccer), Corbyn Menz (Northern State University, volleyball), and AJ Rasmussen (Washington State, baseball).



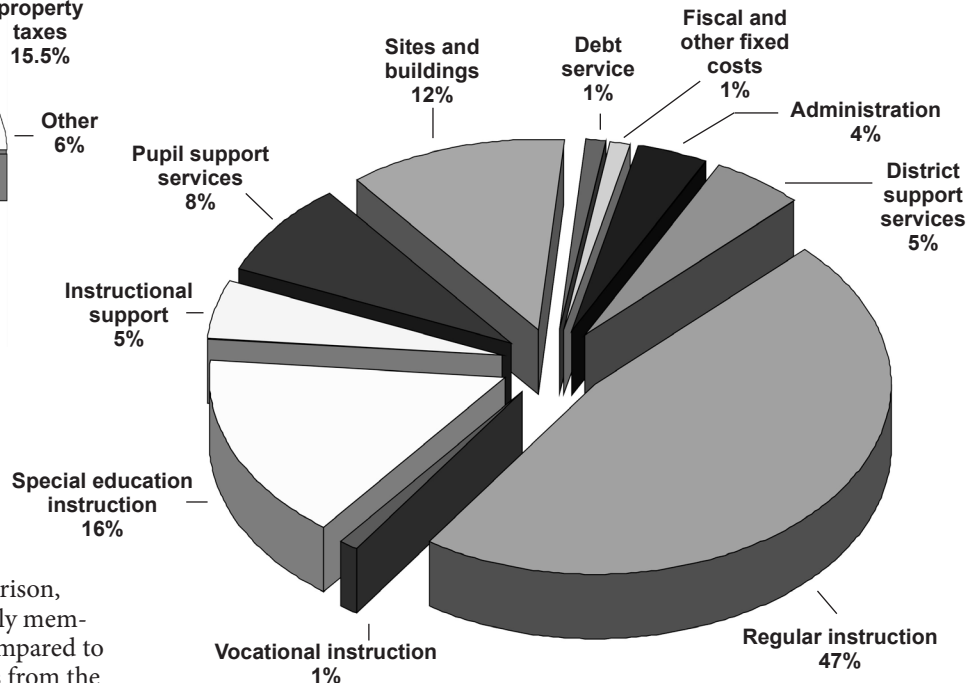
# Sources of funding and uses

2022 General Fund  
Revenue



In 2022 Delano Public Schools collected \$29.1 million in general fund revenue and expended \$29.8 million from the general fund. In 2021, the most recent year that statewide numbers were available for comparison, revenue from property taxes per average daily membership (number of students) was \$1,815 compared to a state average of \$2,381. This information is from the district's annual audit presented in November of 2022.

2022 General Fund  
Expenditures



Rachel  
Depa



Corey  
Black



Sarah  
Baker



Ryan  
Schaust

## Delano School Board Baker, Schaust to join board in 2023

As a result of the Nov. 8 election, the school board will feature two new members in January. Sarah Baker, a former board member, is returning, and Ryan Schaust is joining for the first time.

In addition, Rachel Depa and Corey Black are returning to the board after earning re-election. Board member Lisa Seguin did not seek re-election and will step down in January after 13 years of service. Jennie Rosenow did not win re-election and will depart after four years of service.

Election results were as follows: Rachel Depa (3,096), Ryan Schaust (2,895), Sarah Baker (2,491), Corey Black (2,420), Steve Rogers (2,333), Jennie Rosenow (2,188) and Richard Paskach (2,036).

## DASA seeks members

Delano Area Scholarship Association (DASA), formally known as Dollars for Scholars, is a well-established, volunteer-run organization that provides scholarships to Delano High School seniors for post-secondary education.

Since 1986 this group has awarded over \$1 million dollars in scholarships to students that have participated in our program.

The scholarship money is raised through a combination of efforts between student fundraising activities and generous donations from Delano community businesses and private individuals.

This year, a record 69 students have started the process of qualifying for a scholarship by taking part in our fundraising. Later this spring, each student will complete an application highlighting their school, community and work

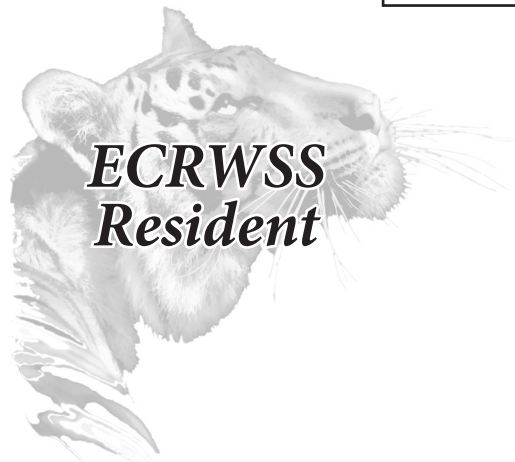
activities. Applications will be reviewed anonymously by the DASA committee and awarded scholarships at the DHS Senior Awards event in May.

The Delano Area Scholarship Association committee (DASA) is comprised of parents, teachers and local residents dedicated to helping students fund their post-secondary education. Many of our current members have served over 15 years with this organization. Due to this longevity, the DASA committee has become a highly successful, well-organized program.

DASA is currently seeking new members to replace outgoing members and lead this committee into the future. If you are interested in this rewarding and fulfilling opportunity, please contact us at [delano.scholarship@gmail.com](mailto:delano.scholarship@gmail.com).

**Delano School District**  
**700 Elm Avenue East**  
**Delano, MN 55328**

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### **Delano Public Schools Vision**

*Systemic growth toward educational  
excellence for every learner*

### **2022 Board of Education**

Rachel Depa, Chair  
Amy Johnson, Vice Chair  
Jennie Rosenow, Clerk  
Jim Gierke, Treasurer  
Lisa Seguin, Director  
Corey Black, Director  
Susan Roeser, Director

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Public Schools, 700 Elm Avenue East,  
Delano, MN, 55328. Editor, Paul Downer,  
Communications Coordinator, 763.972.3365,  
ext. 1911, [paul.downer@delanoschools.org](mailto:paul.downer@delanoschools.org)

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## **A trophy and a title**

Delano's swimming and diving team took second place out of 44 teams represented, and also claimed one individual championship at the state Class A swim and dive meet Nov. 16-18.

Visitation earned the team state title with 397 points. The Tigers finished with 194.5 points, ahead of Mound Westonka-Holy Family (168), Orono (122.5) and Blake School (113).

In diving, Delano senior Avery Lommel stood above the rest of the 16-individual field with a score of 20 points. The second-place diver scored a 17. No more than a single point separated divers 2-8, but Lommel was the clear favorite with a three-point margin of victory.

Other team accomplishments this year included 11 all-conference individuals, 13 state qualifiers, and an undefeated season for the conference and section championships.



## **LEEA**

from Page 1

to class time, school events and special projects, and said she is a consistent "speak-up leader."

"In addition to planning and implementing dynamic learning experiences for her physical education and DAPE students, she also takes on every extra project available to her at the elementary," said one nomination. "Mollie is a consummate professional who always exhibits excellence and remains tirelessly dedicated to her students and team members."

• Gohman has channeled a lifelong desire to help others, particularly children, into a school social work career. She is in her 11th year as a social worker, and eighth year with Delano Public Schools.

Multiple individuals nominated Gohman for the award.

"Nicole is a strong advocate in making sure all students feel safe and welcome walking into school each day," said one anonymous nomination. "She goes out of her way to be helpful to both students and staff."

Another nomination noted

that Gohman has a knack for meeting the social and emotional needs of students, and that students always look forward to meeting with her.

• Makela has 20 years of classroom experience, and is in her seventh year of teaching in Delano. She has emerged as a leader in the language arts department, Q-Comp, interventions and the process of making data-driven decisions, according to an anonymous nomination submitted on her behalf.

"She strives to create growth in every student she encounters and works tirelessly to find resources to meet each individual's needs," the nomination said. "Her passion for creating meaningful units and incorporating technology in Communications Arts has allowed her students to collaborate and learn in new and exciting ways."

• A full feature about Johnson has been previously shared and is available at <https://bit.ly/Teacherofthe-Year22>.

*This is an abridged article  
featuring the award winners.  
See the full article at <https://bit.ly/LEEA2022>.*