

ALUMNI

Dream Catcher

Winter 2019



**FOREST CITY**
EDUCATION FOUNDATION

In This Issue:

Todd Thorson, Class of 2006
Desta Tedros Reff, Class of 2000
Zach Raulie, Class of 1997

ALUMNI DREAM CATCHER - WINTER 2019

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Todd Thorson Works to Transform Diabetes Care

WRITTEN BY DAVID DAMM | PHOTOS SUPPLIED BY TODD THORSON

It is more than 1,700 miles from Forest City to Irvine, California. For Todd Thorson, a 2006 Forest City High School graduate, it was an eight-year journey consisting of university classes in chemical and biochemical engineering at Iowa State and the University of Iowa.

Today, Thorson is a postdoctoral scholar at the University of California, Irvine, researching and developing a long-lasting device for insulin delivery to help type 1 diabetics maintain healthy blood sugar levels.

Along with research advisors Prof. Ali Mohraz and Prof. Elliot Botvinick, Thorson was part of a small group that filed two patents and was awarded a \$1.4 million grant made possible through collaboration between JDRF International and The Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust to build a long-lasting insulin infusion set. The grant is a continuation of Todd's work and he is leading the research and development.

"We are currently testing materials and building device prototypes," Thorson said. "For reference, an insulin infusion set is a device that delivers insulin through a small tube implanted through the skin."

The set is connected to an external pump, which houses insulin and allows users to control dosing.

"Todd is brilliant, kind, witty and inspirational," Botvinick said. "His hard work and creativity will transform diabetes care."

Thorson got his start in chemical engineering at Iowa State University in Ames, graduating with a Bachelor of Science

degree in 2011. It was there that he met Kristin Geiger (now Kristin Geiger-Thorson) and the two were married this past May. Kristin is from Ames and now runs her own business, teaching yoga and other wellness practices.

He attended graduate school in chemical and biochemical engineering at the University of Iowa in Iowa City beginning in 2011.

After graduating with a Master of Science degree from Iowa in 2013, Thorson started graduate school at the University of California, Irvine the fall of 2014. He received his Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree this spring.

Looking back on his time in Forest City, Thorson said the thing he appreciated the most was the support to "simply be myself."

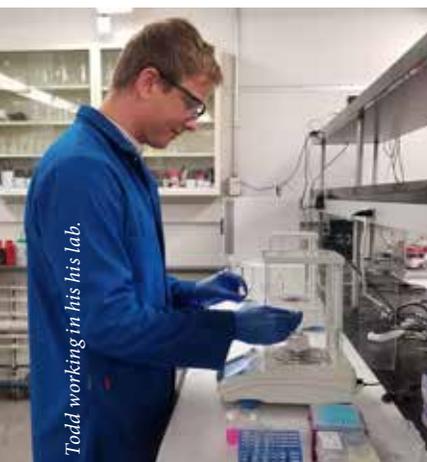
"Being in other areas of the country and interacting with students, parents and teachers there, I get a real sense of pressure being put on students to out-compete their peers in everything they do," Thorson said. "In Forest City, I really didn't feel that pressure from anybody. I could just go about my business in class, in sports, in church, at summer jobs, etc., and receive great support and guidance as needed."

He has always been interested in science and says he is a born tinkerer and puzzle solver. Thorson also appreciated the partnership with Waldorf University, where he was able to take college classes while a high school senior.

Thorson hopes to be in a position to research and develop biomaterials and/or biomedical devices well into the future and to use his hands in the laboratory setting.

"And (I hope) to have the flexibility to continue traveling the globe with my incredibly talented and supportive wife," Thorson said.

Todd is the son of Jaci Thorson, the office manager at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Forest City, and Jim Thorson, a farmer living northwest of Leland. 🐾



Todd working in his lab.

Letter from the President



I am sure that you get a lot of year end letters from the presidents of non-profit organizations asking that you consider their organization in your year end giving plans and I will not disappoint! But let's defer that for the moment while I convey the stories of a few of our scholarship recipients. I think you will find the stories heartwarming and I also want you to think of them as our foundations "Christmas gift" to you, our donors and prospective donors.

Chris Jermeland graduated from Forest City High School in 2018. He is truly an All-American kind of guy who participated in just about everything in high school and was well liked and respected by teachers and his peer group alike. Chris had the dream of attending Iowa State University but the financial situation of himself and his family was such that this was just not possible so he was planning to start at a community college. But then came senior awards night sponsored by our foundation and he received a multitude of scholarships totaling many thousands of dollars made possible by gifts from you, our donors. Chris states: "Without your help, I would not have been able to attend Iowa State and would have missed out on so many opportunities that have been enriching for me." Chris is majoring in elementary education with an endorsement in special education and reading. Chris' sister, Michelle was born with special needs and Chris says that she has had a larger impact on his life than anyone else. She is now a sophomore in high school. Chris says that his sister has given him a bigger heart for children who face the same disabilities as her. Chris

feels blessed that he will have the opportunity to impact the lives of other young children like Michelle and help mold them into strong people who will eventually contribute in some way to society. While at Iowa State Chris has worked at Ames community preschool center and at multiple Ames community elementary schools who have a program similar to what the YMCA offers after school. This has allowed him to gain valuable experience in the field of child caregiving. He actively participates in SALT, a campus ministry program, and has been able to lead a group of college freshman in a connection group that meets weekly. Chris says this has allowed him to watch young men grow in their faith and that he has seen his own faith take strides that he did not believe imaginable. He thanks the Forest City Education Foundation and its donors for allowing him to have the Iowa State experience. He states: "Forest City provides us not just with a home, but with a family. I just want to thank you guys again. Thank you to the past, present and future donors for everything that you have done for the community and its young people. You have and will continue to change the lives of so many young adults. I hope one day I will be able to give just as much back to the community as you guys have done for me."

Logan Hall is a 2016 graduate of Forest City High School (where he participated in and excelled at virtually everything) and will graduate from Iowa State University next year with a degree in mechanical engineering. Upon high school graduation the Forest City Education Foundation awarded Logan the Bill C. Fox Scholarship which pays half of his tuition for the first three years of college and all of it his senior year. This scholarship was funded by the late Bill C. Fox, a 1940 Forest City graduate who went on to get an electrical engineering degree at Iowa State and then to found a very successful company in the Minneapolis area. Bill grew up very poor and credited a couple of his Forest City teachers with encouraging him to go to Iowa State. He wanted to help other Forest City graduates have that same opportunity. Logan has been an exceptional student at Iowa State. In his sophomore year he did an eight month co-op with the Specialty Vehicle Division of Winnebago Industries and has been working for them ever since (remotely and during breaks). He proudly shared with me some of the vehicles and projects he has worked on. Like Chris, Logan is actively involved with SALT where he is a student leader and plays the guitar in the worship band. He is also in the student aviation club and is working towards his private pilot's license. He said: "The efforts of the foundation make a huge difference and I (along with my friends and peers from high school) really appreciate it and hope to give back later down the road when we can."

Vanessa Van Slyke is a 2017 graduate of Forest City High School. Vanessa's home environment was challenging. She says that the impact her teachers had on her was life-changing and

that she came to feel that her real home was in the classroom. From a young age Vanessa was determined to be a teacher. Her dream was to attend the University of Northern Iowa which is known for its excellence in preparing future teachers to be the best they can be. Her family did not have the means to set aside any money for her college education and she began to doubt that she would even be able to attend college. She knew that her best hope was to apply for scholarships and she knew that it was the goal of the Forest City Education Foundation to provide support for students during this critical point in their lives. Like Chris and Logan she fared well at senior awards night receiving a multitude of scholarships including the Raymond and Joan Beebe Family Scholarship (\$2,500 a year for four years). That evening she was overjoyed to realize that she would indeed be able to attend her dream school and she went home and cried tears of joy with her mother. Vanessa states: "The Forest City Education Foundation's generosity is the reason I am where I am today. As of now, I am currently a full-time student at the University of Northern Iowa, pursuing an English education degree with a mental health minor. My current goals include finishing my degree and teaching at the high school and middle school levels. Eventually, I would like to receive my masters degree in school counseling."

I think you can begin to see why I am always bragging about the quality of our young people. I can say without hesitation that they receive an excellent education here which is significantly enhanced by their ability to take Waldorf and NIACC classes while still in high school.

So why should you provide support to our foundation? The stories of Chris, Logan and Vanessa tell it all. We could provide you with countless stories from other scholarship recipients. It is hard to put into words how rewarding it has been for Joan and me to "invest" in these amazing young people. I hope that you will conclude as we have that we can leave no greater legacy than helping our wonderful young people in attaining a college education. The need for private support for young people attending college has never been more critical. College costs have increased dramatically, the income of the American middle class has stagnated leaving many parents unable to provide any significant financial support for their college bound children but yet the earnings differential between a college graduate and a high school graduate continues to widen.

So as we approach the holiday season and the end of another year, we ask that you seriously consider supporting the important work of our foundation. Our executive director, Jessica Bruckhoff, myself and other board members would love to visit with you about various gifting options including the creation of an endowed scholarship. A named scholarship can be created with a minimum gift of \$500. All gifts, large or small, are needed and appreciated. Our Board of Directors and the young people who have or will receive scholarships because "you care," extend our best wishes to you for a blessed holiday season.

Sincerely,
Raymond M. Beebe, President



Former Forest City Superintendent Phillip A. Hintz, 77, of Clive, passed away on October 20, 2019.

A committed lifelong learner, Phil graduated from Wilton High School in 1960; earned his Bachelor of Arts and Masters in School Administration from Northeast Missouri State in Kirksville, Missouri; received his Specialist in Education from Drake University, and acquired his Ph.D. from the University of Iowa. In his career as an educator, Phil worked as a high school principal in Nauvoo, Illinois; Earlham, Iowa; and Huxley (Ballard), Iowa. Subsequently, he was employed as Assistant Superintendent in Spencer, Iowa, and soon after served as Superintendent of Schools in Forest City, Iowa; Newton, Iowa; and McHenry, Illinois.

Dr. Hintz often shared with his children: "If you discover what you love, you won't work a day in your life." And Dr. Hintz loved his career in education. His passion resulted in being named Iowa Superintendent of the Year in 1997 by the School Administrators of Iowa. Additionally, Phil was honored to serve on the IHSA Board of Control, where, under Bernie Saggau's leadership, the organization helped create the Iowa Hall of Pride. In Newton, the Newton Community Education Foundation -- with the backing of the Phil Hintz Endowment Fund -- was established on the principle that "to pursue excellence requires vision". Phil's legacy continues in a community he loved.

Dr. Hintz is survived and remembered with love by his wife, Jan; his daughter, Shelley (Jim) Johnson; his son, Major (retired) John Hintz (Jen Boyden); his grandchildren, Morgan and Gable Johnson, Kylie and Kendall Hintz; his sister, Sharon (Terry) Hester; his nephew, Greg (Denise) Hester and their children, Taylor, Sydney, and Jack; and his beloved cousins. Additionally, Phil is remembered by friends and colleagues in the school districts, organizations, and communities in which he served and lived. Phil was preceded in death by his parents, Jack and Millie Hintz; and his niece, Tracy (Hester) Weisrock.

In Dr. Hintz's memory, please direct any memorial contributions to the Iowa Hall of Pride or another charity of the donor's choice.

A full obituary can be found at http://www.hamiltonsfuneral-home.com/services/services_detail.aspx?rid=48371



DESTA TEDROS REFF

WRITES FOR

TELEVISION & TRAVELS

THE WORLD

WRITTEN BY ALICE LEWELLEN | PHOTOS BY DESTA TEDROS REFF

Desta Tedros Reff, class of 2000, is a Harvard Law graduate, world traveler and television script writer.

Desta says her education and her career path was a meandering one. After graduating from FCHS she went to a small liberal arts college in Tampa, Florida, where her parents had settled after leaving Iowa. While there she spent a semester abroad in New Zealand which she says was “eye opening and amazing”. After college Desta moved to New York City, where she did not know anyone and obtained a job at a university. Her move was motivated by the fact that she had always been interested in writing and film. She lived there for five years working at the university and using her spare time to work on various film and writing projects but it was more of a hobby than a career.

After Desta’s time in NYC she decided to go back to school. On a whim, she applied to Harvard Law School and was accepted.

Although Desta commented it was a wonderful experience, she realized she did not want to be a lawyer because most of what she was doing involved film and writing. She helped start a documentary group at Harvard and did videos instead of papers. Now she was clearly interested in writing because it combined what she liked best about Law School: persuasive communication and smart, diverse people working together. A mentor there told her the best way to become involved in writing for TV was to write and have interesting experiences. As a result, Desta and her family moved to the Mississippi Delta where she took an academic social justice position and wrote for three years, basically trying to “do good” as she said. This included starting an early childhood program, writing and passing a law and starting an emergency child need resource center. As Desta was finishing her work there her mentor reached out to her and gave her a job on his TV show. As Desta says, “This never happens and she is forever grateful.” She and her family moved



(STORY COVER PHOTO)
Desta Reff ????
(LEFT) Director's chair.
(BELOW) ????
(BOTTOM) ?????

in politics and the world around me so that and travel takes up most of my time.”

As stated earlier, Desta is a world traveler. She has traveled all over Europe and South America, bits of Africa, The Middle East and a tiny bit in Asia. Her favorite travel experiences are in Egypt, seeing and being inside a pyramid and Petra in Jordan which is an ancient city carved out of rocks. “It’s like hanging out in an Indiana Jones movie,” she says.

to Los Angeles in October 2016 and she has since worked on five different TV shows: The Last Tycoon for Amazon, Shooter for USA, Sorry for Your Loss for Facebook, Grand Hotel for ABC and Purge, Season 2 for USA. Currently Desta is in a program for Rideback Productions to develop her own TV show.



Desta finds many challenges in her work. “Actually my job is incredibly mentally hard. It is like trying to constantly solve an evolving puzzle. Getting jobs in my industry is very difficult and the uncertainty of my profession can be agonizing. There is a lot of hurry up and wait (for months sometimes). I am always in and adjusting to a new work environment since I generally change shows every six months or so. Being a black woman writer can be difficult when you are trying to advocate for authentic and positive portrayals of people of color on the screen especially when you are the only person of color in the room.”

Of course many advantages also exist with Desta’s career. “It is incredibly cool to watch something on TV with your name on it,” Desta says, “or even more to watch it being made and be a part of the process, especially when you fuse some of yourself into your writing. For example, in a script I wrote is a photo of a character when he was a kid which was a homage to an awkward school photo of my brother when he was 8. I got to be there to cast the boy, who looked like my brother, go to the photo shoot and choose the background and pose and then watch it be used in filming.” Desta said her family knew exactly what this was in reference to when they viewed it. Everyone except her brother loved it.

If Desta is working on a show she goes into the writer’s room, after taking her children to school and works collaboratively with the other writers for 6-8 hours creating stories for upcoming episodes of shows.

In her free time, Desta likes working in her garden and shaping her back yard as she and her family which includes her wife Franziska and two young daughters Edie and Maple recently bought a small home in Los Angeles. “I am always interested

When asked how growing up in Fertile influenced her, Desta said, “My job is to bring unique experiences and diverse perspectives to storytelling and growing up in a small town definitely helps. First, because most people don’t have that experience and they draw from a much more urban well, so I am able to bring something fresh and new. I lived in Fertile, population 400 and New York City and people are the same. They are equally interesting and interested... because they are just people and I find that perspective is shockingly rare. It brings depth to the characters I create because in processing this it gave me a deeper understanding of people.”

Desta says she had a great time as a student at Forest City High School. “I have nothing but positive memories.” She advises students to realize anything is possible. “Dream big, but work hard and ask a lot of questions. Challenge yourself and get out in the world.” Because her father is an immigrant from Ethiopia and her mom is from Minnesota this was easier for Desta than it might be for some. “Every year growing up we would visit Dad’s relatives on the East Coast or abroad. It broadened my horizons so much exposing me to different cultures, building a tolerance for people who lived life in a way different than I did. To achieve, to learn, to grow you have to push yourself out of your comfort zone. I have done it and I know it is worth it.”

In the future, Desta would like to have her own TV show. “Most likely I won’t be a TV writer forever. I miss the social utility of my job in Mississippi. I try to find it in TV (with mixed results) so I will at some point go back to direct social justice work, possibly running for office or in some other governmental capacity.” 🐾



Zach Raulie – Keys to Success

WRITTEN BY KELLI HARMS | PHOTOS BY ZACH RAULIE



A proud member of the Class of 1997, Zach Raulie is guided by three principles: Own your decisions. Learn from your mistakes. Improve.

Those principles have guided Zach through an accelerated college program, work relocations and back to living (with his wife, Jennifer, and son, Luke (11) and daughter, Ava (8) and working in Forest City where he's selling one of the top brands in the US – Winnebago.

After high school, Zach attended Waldorf College and graduated in 2000 thanks to the three-year, accelerated bachelors program Waldorf offered. Zach double majored in business management and finance/banking. While at Waldorf, Business Professor and Advisor Dawn Johnson told Zach: "I can't see you sitting at a desk all your life". For Zach, that's when his job search changed from a non-sit-at-your-desk analyst/Finance jobs.

"I have always been very active person (sports, fine arts, hobbies, work) in all that I do," Zach said.

I like work. I like a goal. I like working with people. I like working with numbers/stats. So a focus on Sales and Sales Management was a nearly perfect fit."

Zach first worked at Sheel's All-Sports, Mankato, Minn., then

later Avery Outdoors/White River Marketing Group, located in the Midwest. Both positions met the non-sit-at-your desk requirement, as well as his passion for the outdoors, but so did Winnebago – and in 2004, he joined the company in their sales department.

Since 2004, he has risen through the ranks while also traveling the country. As a district sales manager, he lived in the South and called on dealers in Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, Alabama, North and South Carolina and Tennessee. He then moved West and worked with dealers in Washington, Oregon, Alaska, British Columbia and Alberta.

In 2014, he returned to Forest City to oversee all motorized sales for the Western United States and Canada. He remains in this role, and has since added the responsibility of inside sales to his resume.

In his 15 years at Winnebago, he has developed skills that have been vital to his success:

"Sales specifically is about building a relationship(s) with who you are selling to, customers, dealers, vendors, suppliers, banks and even co-workers within your own organization," Zach said. "I think that is number one. You need to be personable and find the commonalities with each person you engage with."

“Everyone in one way or another is in ‘sales,’ they just don’t know it or recognize it,” Zach added. “Anytime you influence someone that your business idea, company direction, new process or other opportunity is the choice to take – you just sold them on it. Building camaraderie with each individual person, you gain trust and respect. Once gained, can be easily lost, so this must be cared for and maintained in all relationships.”

Zach also subscribes to the “Never Give Up” mentality. “No day is a bad day, and some are better than others, but that never give up mentality and perpetual optimism can get you through anything,” Zach said.

Zach believes in having a basic understanding of business, surrounding yourself with a great support system (parents, guardians, friends, mentors, teachers), and being accountable are additional keys to success.

What’s next for Zach? “I love what I do and the people I work with. It just happens to be based in the small town I’ve always called home and where most of my friends and family reside. I am humbly blessed. I don’t plan to change much but I’ll keep selling the heck out of Winnebagos and see what opportunities arise. You never know.”

Zach is an extremely talented photographer and he’s passionate about the Outdoors. Those two combined create breathtaking photography that has appeared in print and online.

“I love watching my kids’ activities with or without my camera in hand,” Zach said. Zach also credits his wife, Jenn, for supporting him in his career and life. “I’m a huge fan of my wife, Jenn, without her none of this happens.”

Zach has many special memories of Forest City School – with each of them teaching him a life lesson:

Not making All-State Choir his first year trying out. Zach dedicated himself to improving and was selected the next two years (thanks in part to Mrs. Ferjak).

Not winning the football game against Webster City his senior year. This helped feed Zach’s desire to play at the next level at Waldorf College.

Having a coach tell him that he wasn’t as talented as an-

other (and he still thanks him to this day). Zach said it’s made him work hard to get stronger, faster, and tougher. “These honest memories are what honed me on the path I have taken,” Zach added.

Zach offers the following advice to current FCHS students:

Have range – being well-rounded is a much more desirable trait than being singularly focused. Don’t just participate, but be engaged in the Fine Arts, athletics, 4-H, church – whatever your passion and volunteer!

Be coachable – listen to criticism, learn from it, and improve. That’s all your parents and coaches want!

Be open minded – listen first, understand, then speak. Put yourself in their shoes of others first.

When opportunity knocks, don’t let it pass you by.

Be thankful to those who helped you along the way. You may not always know who stuck their neck out for you in a time they didn’t have to ➡



(COVER PHOTO) Photo of the High School Marching Band marching across on the track, taken by Zach.
(STORY COVER PHOTO) Zach Raulie with his family.
(TOP LEFT) Photo of fireworks over the Emergency Services building, taken by Zach.
(TOP RIGHT) Photo of the Forest City Football team, taken by Zach.
(LEFT) Photo of the High School Marching Band, taken by Zach.

FOREST CITY EDUCATION FOUNDATION

2019 DONORS

Season's greeting to you and yours! At this special time of year, I wanted to take a moment to wish you a happy holiday and let you know how grateful I am for each and every one of you!

The dedication and generosity you offer to our mission is very much appreciated. Every single dollar you give makes a positive impact towards our mission. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for making a difference in the lives of our hard working FCHS students. Because of you our students cannot only dream of higher education but they can achieve it!

*Sincerely,
Jessica Bruckhoff '95, Executive Director*

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