

ALUMNI

Dream Catcher

Winter 2020



**FOREST CITY**
EDUCATION FOUNDATION

In This Issue:

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Hall of Fame Inductees
The Schools and COVID

ALUMNI DREAM CATCHER - WINTER 2020

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ON COVER: Wnter Family. From left, Mark Winter, Larry Winter Pastor Ole Winter and Kathy (Winter) Thomsen in 2017.

Letter from the President



Writing this 2020 year end letter is definitely a challenging exercise. I hope I can safely say that there will never be another year like it! Joan and I returned from a three week vacation in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, on March 14 and a couple of days later we were welcomed into the world of "social distancing." I could not have known at that time that it would be about three months before I could again meet with my coffee groups or share breakfast with any of the high school/college age young men for whom I am a friend/mentor. That did not sit well with me because I consider myself to be a "people person." But I think those who have borne the bigger brunt of the Coronavirus Pandemic are our high school and college-age young men and women. For the Forest City Class of 2020 the traditions that mark the last year of high school all but disappeared. They missed the rituals of a senior prom, senior parties and a traditional graduation ceremony (an abbreviated graduation ceremony was held later in the summer). And their senior year was truly cut short as in-person classes were discontinued several weeks before the end of the school year. And what about our college students? They are basically being cheated out of the "college experience" enjoyed by generations of people who went before them. Some of them never leave their dorm room or apartment to attend classes because they are taken "virtually." They miss interaction with their professors and other students. Also, many of the extracurricular activities they might participate in have either been curtailed or eliminated. We think of college as the first stop on a young person's journey to independence. But many of them were back home living with their parents through most of last spring where they took online classes. They were back to assigned household chores and curfews—not exactly the independence they had planned!

But the Forest City Education Foundation was determined that the support which it and its donors provide to our students would in no way be impaired. Our 11th annual Academic Banquet scheduled for March 26 had to be canceled. But academic letters, certificates and a congratulatory letter from me on behalf of the foundation were sent out to each of the students being recognized. Senior Awards Night is the most important event of the year for our foundation. It is the culmination of our year-long effort to raise money so we can provide scholarships to our wonderful young people to help them further their education. Again, the in-person event had to be canceled but under the direction of Executive Director Jessica Bruckhoff a video was prepared and released at 6:00 p.m. on May 13 which was the scheduled time for the event. We awarded scholarships with a value of just short of \$400,000 and the recipients of each scholarship were named in the video. Thanks to the generosity of our donors this represented a significant increase from the \$330,000 awarded in 2019. In the remarks I made on the video I suggested that that while every student had a right to be angry, I was hopeful they would see through the storm and realize that no matter what was taken away from them what could not be taken away were their memories together. I further suggested that I did not want their class to be remembered as the class that was robbed but rather as a class that rose to the occasion. Other speakers included Janet Boman Coe speaking on behalf of the Hanson and Boman families and the Hanson Family Foundation, the largest benefactor of our foundation, Superintendent Darwin Lehmann, and Gina Schleuger, mother of Colby Schleuger, who was a member of the graduating class until his tragic death in 2017. She spoke from her heart about her well liked son and also announced that Colby Schleuger Class of 2020 Memorial Scholarships were being awarded that night to several of Colby's classmates.

It is with regret that I tell you that our Executive Director, Jessica Bruckhoff, has recently resigned from that position. A search for her replacement is underway and Jessica has graciously offered to help us during the interim. I have thoroughly enjoyed working with Jessica the past four years and the foundation will definitely miss her dedication and expertise. She had a real heart for our young people and they never doubted that she wanted to help them in any way that she could.

I don't think that any of you will be surprised when I tell you the 2020 has been a financially difficult year for the foundation. Virtually all of our fundraising events have been canceled because of the coronavirus pandemic. This has included the meals that we serve before football and basketball games and our largest fundraising event, the New Year's Eve Gala. It was virtually impossible to have personal contact with many of our donors. Many of our donors participate in the Senior Awards Night and, of course, that did not happen. I also think that many of our donors and prospective donors were adversely impacted by the economic stress we have experienced this year. What I am saying is that we really need your year-end support. You have heard me brag time and time again about the wonderful young men and women who year after year walk the halls of the Forest City High School. Most members of each class work hard and get good grades and actively participate in a multitude of extracurricular activities, but perhaps more importantly, they are well-rounded, humble, possess strong values, are spiritually engaged and want to "make a difference." Now, more than ever, we need your financial support so we can help turn these young people's dreams into reality. 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 healthy and blessed holiday season.

Sincerely,
Raymond M. Beebe, President



BAKKE AND JEFSON INDUCTED TO FOREST CITY EDUCATION HALL OF FAME

BY ALICE LEWELLEN

The Forest City Education Hall of Fame has many outstanding members including educators, staff members, and friends of the school system. The Hall began inducting members in 1981 with Sig Fardel and Helen Brown as the first two inductees. This year two very worthy individuals were inducted: Anne Bakke and Paul Jefson.

Anne Bakke was an educator for 30 years with 24 of those years in the Forest City School system. She also taught in Indianola Middle School and Lake Mills Community School. She taught Family and Consumer Science which included the following classes: Conditioning and Nutrition, Foods, Advanced Foods, Human Relations, Child Development 1 and 2, Life Management, Fashion Strategies and Design and Production.

Anne says she retired twice, once in 2009 and again in 2012, but she has never really left the system as she has continued to volunteer teaching a special group of students in Mr. Smith's room. Anne commented that these students have taught her so much and this experience has been a joy.

When asked about her favorite part of teaching Bakke commented, "It has been said that what you play as a child helps determine a career. This was true of me as I spent many days on the front porch teaching my sister and neighborhood children. I was especially talented in making mud pies and sand cakes. I felt lucky to be doing something I really loved all my life. My career was filled with all my passions. I loved working with students especially with hands-on activities that contributed to their self-reliance, self-worth and self-satisfaction."

Some memorable moments in Anne's career included teaching entrepreneur skills while running a restaurant called Fridays which was a part of Advanced Foods class, and teaching baby

skills when having students take home a "real" crying computer called "Baby Think It Over". Baking breads and cinnamon rolls that made her classroom smell so good and baking gingerbread houses (over 700 of them) were other favorites.

As a result of the high school changing to a trimester schedule, more students were able to take Anne's classes. As she says, "I always saw the importance of teaching life skills no matter what careers students pursued. Everyone needs to eat, have people skills, raise a family and provide things that give life meaning."

One of Bakke's favorite career accomplishments was an invitation to travel to China with other Family and Consumer Science teachers. This was a result of Anne's participation in state and national presentations. "We visited 17 schools and universities while meeting some very friendly people. At the first dinner in Beijing I am very certain that I sat next to the future President of China."

Another accomplishment was "Cookies With a Cause". This project raised money to help purchase land in Belize. Forest City students' donations along with many others saved a rain forest and added a learning center for students. What a legacy for Forest City participants.

A fun memory of her career Anne shared was when her Fashion Strategy students modeled Prom dresses from four decades and the highlight was "Elvis" escorting the 50's prom dress model to the tune of "You Ain't Nothing but a Hound Dog".

Anne has been busy in retirement. She started a Creative Kitchen Cooking school on Clark Street before teaching another year at the high school. In 2016 she worked the holiday season at Crate and Barrel in Minneapolis and recently finished writing a book of family stories for her grandchildren. Currently she says, "My days are



always filled with cooking, gardening, creating and photography.”

In addition to her husband, Steve, Anne’s family includes her son Aaron and family who live in the San Francisco Bay Area and her daughter Laura, Laura’s fiancé Sam and their goldendoodle who live in Ankeny. Two new grandchildren will join the family in December and March.

Paul Jefson has many ties to the Forest City School System. He graduated from Forest City High School in 1965. He attended Kindergarten and 1st grade in Hayfield close to a dairy farm where he grew up. Redistricting put his family in the Forest City School District and after graduation, Paul attended college at SCI which became UNI. “I was drafted out of college into the U. S. Army.”

After two years in the military, Paul married the love of his life, Karen, and in March they will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary. “We have been blessed with four children, Matthew, Angela, Megan and Amber and eight loveable grandchildren.”

For 13 years, Paul and Karen farmed just south of Forest City, and during that time I had the privilege of serving on the Forest City School Board for nine years. “One might say I followed in my father’s footsteps as he had spent several years as a Board member.” During his term, the current Middle School was built as a High School and during my tenure the present day High School was built.

In the early 80’s the Jefson family went through a very difficult time as did many other farm families. “The Farm Crisis found many of us bankrupt and trying to put lives back together mentally and monetarily. It was then due to an opening at the Forest City Elementary School Superintendent Wayne Sesker and Elementary Principal Gary Kipling gave me what turned out to be the chance of a lifetime. I still remember signing the contract and committing that I would work for the school for two years until I was emotionally healed. 32 years later I retired from the Forest City Community School serving in the position of Director of Maintenance.”

Paul says the toughest part of his job was without a doubt, snow removal. “We always had to assume school could be held and at 1:00 a.m. the wind can certainly blow cold in North Iowa.”

When asked what he felt was his biggest accomplished on the job, Paul said, “When I first started working for the school, there were only a handful of decent trees on the entire campus. Many years of planting and watering in some cases replacing, led to those trees football fans enjoy on windy and chilly Friday nights. I still occasionally drive down Spring Valley Road today and enjoy those evergreen trees.”

Paul mentioned he enjoyed the kids, the teachers, the cooks, his staff and everyone in between and the overall atmosphere of caring and sharing a bit of ourselves and the young lives that carry on where we left off. This is also what he misses about his job.

Paul says he has many funny stories but this is his favorite. “During lunch hour at the Elementary school a young boy asked me what the word Emmanuel meant and I answered ‘God with us’. I asked why he asked me that and he pointed to a girl coming down the hallway and he said she had called him that. I had to know why, so when she came through the line, I asked her. She said, ‘I did not call him that. I called him imbecile’. My takeaway from that story is every day we all have a choice to which of those two words define our behavior.”

Currently Paul and Karen live in Mason City on a small quarry lake where he enjoys sailing, canoeing, fishing and taking out the paddleboat. Traveling to see their children is a top priority. He also volunteers with the Mason City chapter of Youth for Christ. “And, yes, Sandy Damm, I still play my piano and sing and the fact that I am not too good at either one does not bother me a bit,” Paul concluded.

In closing, Paul quoted a lyric from the song, “The Rose.” “The soul afraid of dying will never learn to live. Certainly 2020 has been a challenge and we must adapt, but let’s not let the trials we face keep us from living life to the fullest. God is in control and will be for eternity.” 🍀



From left, Mark Winter, Larry Winter Pastor Ole Winter and Kathy (Winter) Thomsen in 2017.

A WINTER STORY

WRITTEN BY DAVID DAMM

A decision in 1971 by Pastor Ole Winter to accept a call to Immanuel Lutheran Church in Forest City brought with it unexpected benefits to Forest City High School and the community.

Pastor Winter and his wife, Naomi, left southern California with their four children in July of 1971: Mark, 16; David, 14; Larry, 11; and Kathy, 8. Each of the kids made an impact on the Forest City Community School and the three living Winter kids agree that their educational and extracurricular experiences left a positive life-long impact on them.

MARK

The oldest of the four children, Mark was entering his junior year of high school following the move to Forest City. Initially it was a tough transition.

“I think I developed a good attitude about the move and accepted whatever changes might be,” Mark said. “It was not really difficult, just different. In hindsight it was probably one of the best things that happened in my life.”

At Forest City High School, Mark was able to participate in a more diverse way than would have been possible at a large high

school in California. He was in the choir, sang in the fall musical, and participated in basketball and golf.

“The overall experience of a small town, four seasons of weather, a broader athletic and music experience, and a more laid-back approach to life are really my best memories,” Mark said. “It changed my approach to the world and my vision of life.”

After graduation, Mark attended California Lutheran University in Thousand Oaks. During his senior year, a friend approached him on the golf course and let him know that Travelers Insurance Company was hiring marketing associates.

Mark went for an interview in the sales department of the life insurance division.

“The last thing I wanted and thought I would do is sell anything,” Mark said. “Well, here I am 42 years later having had a great career in the life insurance and financial services world.”

Mark became a sole proprietor with Travelers in 1979, then opened his own insurance company in 1982. From 1988-1995 he and his brother, Larry, were in partnership with the Winter Financial Group. From 1996 until the present, Mark has



continued in the financial services industry, currently in estate planning, life insurance and business succession planning with WealthPoint LLC.

Mark and his wife, Annette, have been married since 1979 and they have a son and twin daughters. Dane and his wife, Tuesday, live in Denver, Colorado, where he is a partner in a successful financial planning firm. They are expecting their first child in February.

Haley lives in Atlanta and is a regional marketing rep for a Berkshire Hathaway company. Rebecca lives in Thousand Oaks and teaches fifth grade at a Charter School. She is engaged to be married in July of 2021.

DAVID

“David was one who really benefited from a Forest City education,” Pastor Winter said. “He learned Spanish there, which got him started in foreign languages.”

David was involved in musicals, played the trumpet, played on the golf team, was active with AFS (he went to Argentina for the summer of 1976), and he worked at Bowen’s Grocery Store.

He attended Luther College with a Spanish and German double major. “The German came in handy when he surprised my family in North Germany and was fluent enough to enjoy that meeting,” Pastor Winter said.

After graduating from Luther, he worked in the Dominican Republic with the Peace Corps.

David was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis in 1983. After the Peace Corps, he attended the University of California in Davis, Calif., where he got his master’s degree in International Development. After graduation he worked for the World Wildlife Fund in Washington, D.C. before applying for a Fulbright

Scholarship to study in Ecuador. He was awarded the Fulbright Scholarship and spent one year in Ecuador.

David married Martha Bruland of Forest City and the couple lived in Eugene, Ore. and then Mason City, Iowa. David passed away on Nov. 29, 1999 at the age of 43.

LARRY

“I often tell my dad that I was really glad to have had the opportunity to ‘grow up’ in a small town in Iowa after spending the first 11 years of my life in California,” Larry said. “Forest City offered our family many opportunities that we would never have been able to do in the city.”

In high school Larry sang in the choir, participated in musicals, played the saxophone in the band, was active with AFS, and played on the football team, baseball team and golf team. “This never would have been possible in a large high school in California,” he said.

Like Mark and Kathy, Larry is still an avid golfer and credits the small greens in Forest City with his proficient “short game.”

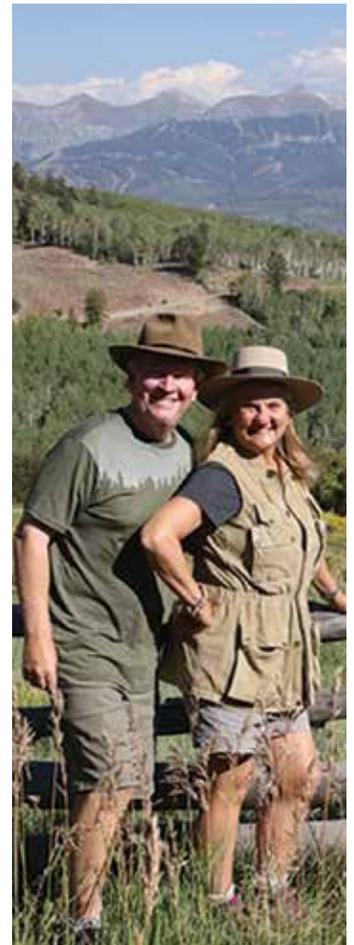
Larry also started his business career in Forest City—delivering the Des Moines Register at age 13, working at the Red Owl grocery store and working parttime at Winnebago Industries.

Following graduation from FCHS, Larry accepted a scholarship to spend one year in Norway through AFS (American Field Services). Some 42 years later, he still has a close relationship with his Norwegian AFS family.

After returning from Norway, Larry spent four years at Luther College, where he graduated with a business management and political science degree. He spent one fall semester at the World Bank in Vienna, Austria.

He was offered a job at Winnebago Industries by John K. Hanson during his senior year at Luther. He worked there for one year before southern California beckoned.

With Mark already in California working in the financial services industry, Larry was provided an introduction to the managing partner for Lutheran Brotherhood (now Thrivent Financial) in 1984.



Larry Winter and Jane Lee

CONTINUED PG.8

After conversations and interviews, Larry decided to load up his Honda and start his financial planning career in Pasadena, California. In 1986 he moved his office to Thousand Oaks and also married his wife, Jane Lee, that year. The couple stayed there until retirement in 2019.

During his 35-year career with Lutheran Brotherhood, Larry received many awards, including “Most Valuable Producer” for several years.

While living in Thousand Oaks, Jane Lee and Larry were active members of Ascension Lutheran Church and Larry served as a board member for the Los Angeles Chapter of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society and was active in the Kiwanis Club of Thousand Oaks.

Jane Lee and Larry have owned Town & Country Travel, a luxury travel agency, for more than 30 years. In 1993 they traveled to Botswana, Africa, and fell in love with the people and the wildlife. For the past 27 years they have led photographic safaris throughout all of Southern Africa, giving Larry a chance to develop his wildlife photography skills.

“During our travels to Africa, we found a very special orphanage and school in Livingstone, Zambia,” Larry said. “For the past 10 years, Jane Lee and I have been supporting the ministry of this Christian school and orphanage.”

Today, there are 450 extremely poor children in the school and 50 in the orphanage. Both Larry and Jane Lee serve on boards that work to help these children in Zambia.

Larry sold his financial business in 2018 and the couple retired to Scottsdale, Ariz.

“Our plan is to spend winters in Arizona and then travel the world, leading groups on safari and other adventures,” Larry said. Obviously, the current pandemic will have a say in how soon they are able to resume their travels.

To date, Jane Lee and Larry have visited over 100 countries. Their goal is to visit additional countries in Africa, along with the Arctic and Antarctica.

KATHY

“My experience at FCHS was extremely positive,” Kathy said. “I look back on it even more fondly now as I age.” Like many at the high school then and now, she was able to “do it all.” She was a cheerleader for football and volleyball, played golf, and was active in music (choir, band and Avocado Heights).

“My memories of that time are all so positive. Weekends with football or basketball games, cruising main street, hanging out with friends at the teen center uptown, going to each other’s houses ... It was a very social time for me.”

She was also involved with youth groups at Immanuel and leadership groups at the high school. “There seemed to be time for all of it,” she said. “It gave me a sense that I was well-rounded and welcome to try my hand at anything I wanted. What a great thing!”

After graduating from FCHS, Kathy attended Luther College in Decorah. She participated in choir, sorority life, admissions work and ministry groups. She majored in communications with a minor in Spanish.

After her freshman year, she joined Up With People, an international travel program that empowers young adults to make a difference in the world through volunteering, leadership, performing arts, and more.

“This was life changing for me on so many fronts,” she said. “I traveled all over the United States and two countries in South America. We also did the halftime show for the 1982 Super Bowl.”

The most important aspect of her Up With People experience was meeting the man she would end up marrying—Jim Thomsen. They were married in 1986.

After graduating from Luther, Kathy worked in the admission department there before moving to southern California when her husband took a new job. Kathy worked for a while with a personnel agency as a sales rep before being a recruiter for The College of Osteopathic Medicine of the Pacific.

When the couple had their first daughter, Abbey, they made the decision that Kathy should stay home to raise her. Another daughter, Leah, followed two years later.

The family, following Jim’s career path, moved to Colorado in 1996, suburban Chicago in 1999 and Eden Prairie, Minn., in 2001. They currently live in Scottsdale, Ariz., just three miles from Larry and his wife, Jane Lee and six hours from Mark and Annette in California.

Pastor Ole and Naomi Winter finished their call at Immanuel in 1993, when Ole retired three months before his 65th birthday. “We didn’t want to leave Forest City,” Ole said. But the protocol is for pastors, especially ones of long standing, to leave the community where they served. The couple moved to Decorah, where Pastor Ole did supply preaching and taught Sunday School for many years. Naomi died in 2017.

“That long ministry at Immanuel was, for me and my family the correct decision,” Pastor Winter said. “We never regretted our move to Forest City and Immanuel.” ➡

Kathy (Winter) Thomsen's Family



The Schools They are a Changin'. SCHOOL AND COVID-19.

WRITTEN BY SCOTT BERTELSEN

It's 8 a.m., fall 2019. FCCS students are entering their perspective buildings. When coming in, they congregate at their lockers, hang out in the lunchroom and converse in the hallways.

Now let's flip ahead to fall 2020 8 a.m. Students are wearing mandatory masks, reporting directly to 1st hour, carrying hand sanitizer and hauling their backpacks with them everywhere. What has caused this change? We all know now it's the COVID-19 virus. Make no mistake; this school year is unlike anything we have seen before.

Darwin Lehmann, Supt of FCCD, states that even though the speed of education has been slowed, he is really proud of the progress to serve students on site and online. When school shut down last March, online learning was available quickly. Also high school students were able to receive credit for courses so they were not behind coming into this school year. This allowed them to take Waldorf, NIACC, and other courses of their choice.

During this school year, families may decide to not send their child to school because of health reasons. Because of this, the school will provide the option of home learning. The school will provide a technology device, live/paper lessons and a staff person to review student's progress. This is called the Home Connection Program.

At present, the school meets on site Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. Wednesday is designated for E-learning from 8:15 a.m.-2 p.m. The district designed this flexible model to hopefully sustain the school year however, country positive rates, student or staff absentee rates, healthcare availability, public health guidance or changes by the State could change this model.

So in addition to the mandatory wearing of masks for students and staff, other guidelines have been implemented. Social distancing is required for all students/staff. Drinking fountains are turned off, but students may fill water bottles. Students are also asked to eat in classrooms with washable containers and disposable plasticware. During K-5 recess time, contact sports/activities will not be allowed and hand sanitizer and hand washing will be done before and after recess. At the end of the day, dismissal will be staggered. Lockers will not be used between classes at the Middle School or High School. During class, desks will be spaced with maximum distancing for the room. All desks are to be wiped down prior to use by students. Custodians will also increase cleaning of door handles, classrooms, hallways and high traffic areas. They also fog each building nightly.

The school nurses have played an important role this year. Not only do they educate students and staff on the COVID-19, they



Tami McInroy

also screen students and work with Public Health. They play a pivotal role in the school pandemic plan.

Even with all these precautions in place, Ken Baker, high school principal, said that the strain put on students, families, faculty and staff is very apparent and needs to be monitored. High school faculty are encouraged to prioritize what students are taught and realize they are under no pressure to 'catch up' students from the end of last year.

Tami McInroy, high school Spanish teacher, states the changes in the classroom have made it more difficult to have everyone engaged. She feels students are not getting as far as in the past, but she says she has to accept that. Tami uses Google Meets as a daily "way to come to class live" for online kids. Overall, Tami says the kids have been very understanding and patient.

Gage Juhl, a high school sophomore, says the school year so far has gone surprisingly well. He felt everyone has become largely used to wearing masks and socially distancing. He personally would rather do the on site learning when possible. Gage also stated that he felt the teachers have been very patient with all the changes.

With the future unclear as to when the pandemic will end, the FCCS has taken tremendous measures to ensure the safety and educational growth of all its students. Because of FCCS's dedication to learning, we can be sure our students are receiving the best possible education. ➡

FOREST CITY EDUCATION FOUNDATION

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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, Former Director*

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