

GREAT PLAINS LUTHERAN

# THE GRAINS

SPRING 2024



*President's Message  
From Behind the Desk  
Perspectives of GPL  
Gifts and Donors*





PRESIDENT DAVID MAERTZ

## Perspectives

One of our goals with each issue of The Grains newsletter is to give you a picture of life at GPL and a growing understanding of how your support is impacting young (and not so young) lives. Each quarter we ask, "How can we accomplish this goal? What can we share with you who care deeply about Christian education and the ministry of Great Plains Lutheran High School?"

With this issue we are sharing several perspectives. One is a long-term, big-picture perspective. It comes from one of our most experienced staff members. Karen Miller, our administrative assistance – usually the first voice you hear when you reach out to us – has been with us since nearly the beginning of our existence. I think you'll enjoy reading her reflections on impactful moments and trends over the years. Thank you, Karen, for your faithful service and for offering your insights!

Here's another perspective. Over the years we have experienced a nice flow of students from the Marshall MN area. We thought it would be interesting to hear about their journey (both parents and students) as they considered, enrolled, and experienced life at GPL. I found it interesting and tremendously encouraging to hear what they had to say. Thank you to all the students and parents that responded!

In fact, we received more responses than we can include in this newsletter – and we didn't want to leave any out. Each one brings a unique perspective. So, what to do? We decided to include a couple examples, and provide access to the others so you can read them all!

Great Plains Lutheran High School is not a perfect place. You will see that reflected in the honest assessments from our students and parents. However, it also becomes clear that GPLHS is a place being blessed by God.

Thank you for helping us focus on Jesus and grow in our Christ-centered convictions.

# PRAISES *Continued*

Please Note:

We are grateful to announce that at the Delegate Meeting on May 4, 2024, the delegates voted to add 4 classrooms to the existing building. We will be having the Groundbreaking Ceremony on June 12th at 5:15pm. Watch for more details in future mailings, emails or announcements at church. *Praise be to God!*



## Administration

**Rev. David Maertz**

*President, Interim Principal*

**Rev. Karl Schauland**

*Campus Pastor*

**Mr. Jeff Roloff**

*Director of Mission Advancement*

**Mr. Christian Weseloh**

*Board Chairman*

## 2023-2024

## School Theme

*Convinced*

## Our Mission

Great Plains Lutheran High School provides a Christ-centered education to assist families in nurturing students as lifelong disciples of Christ.

## Teachers

Mr. Matt Bauer

Mrs. Emily Cantwell

Mrs. Linda Guthmiller

Mr. Mike Haugly

Mrs. Jayne Jaeger

Mr. Sam Kleinke

Mr. Eric Martens

Mr. Alex Mielke

Miss Nicole Porter

Mr. Ryan Rosenthal

Mr. Aaron Schleusener

Mr. Michael Starr

## On the cover:

*Students from the Marshall, MN area.*

*Photo credit: Sam Kleinke*

# From Behind the Desk



Karen Miller  
Administrative Asst.

Our Administrative Assistant, Karen Miller, answered a few questions from Jeff Roloff regarding her perspective through the years from behind her desk.

***When and how did you first begin your journey as Great Plains Lutheran High School administrative assistance?***

July, 1998. I was the third new secretary in 3 years. People didn't expect me to stay more than one year!

***What are some of the changes you have seen as far as facilities, faculty and student body?***

GPL was in a rented school building in 1998 and the dorm was being built but not completed. The faculty was young, eager to teach, and to help the school grow. Sports teams were just getting started that year and without a gym, all games were away games. Sharing the building with teens from public school kept our students a bit intimidated. It amazed me and made me so happy to see the difference in the students when we moved to our own building. They became confident and excited.

***What is a typical day like from behind the desk?***

Basically, organized chaos. There are many "parts" to being an assistant, many responsibilities and no two days are ever the same. Students have needs, from a bandaid for a deep paper cut, to an attendance question, or a new lunch ticket, to a copy of a transcript for a college or scholarship application. Parents need to be comfortable with where their children are and what they're doing, so that takes communication. There are many phone calls, mail to sort, and things to remember such as which teachers are teaching this hour and what are they teaching, student names, who their parents are and where they call home, attendance and appointments, illnesses, what's coming up next that needs a program printed, and ... you understand.

***What is a non-typical day like from behind the desk?***

That would be a day when I get my work done early and don't have 6 things waiting to be done. It's always possible to find something to do, but not with the same stress level.

***What are some of the biggest challenges you have been through during your years here at GPLHS?***

Finances were a big struggle for many years. Understandably, people and their congregations needed to be led to believe that this new school would be around long term and they wouldn't just be throwing their money down a hole. I can assure you that my faith grew ever stronger during those years! I was frightened when there wasn't enough in the bank to make payroll so some had to wait to be paid. I learned that God will provide, just like he says he will.

The human upside was when Pastor Dan Myers learned that there was an army surplus outlet in Huron, SD where we could get odd things for free to help cut costs. Paper in green, gold, cream, and pink was what he often brought us when he made his frequent trips. It made the worksheets "interesting" and made us smile at how God chose to provide basic school needs.

My all-time favorite was as the years went by, needs changed. Tracy (Lemke) Fedke directed a play. There was great involvement from the students. We had a moveable stage in the gym, but no curtain! Where could we find a stage curtain? Yards and yards of fabric would cost too much. Before Pastor Myers left for Huron, he asked me, "So all you need is enough material to make the curtain?" Picturing bolts of fabric, I assured him that was it! Imagine my surprise when he returned with 9 army green parachutes! Liz Arndt and I got busy cutting them apart and sewing them together in wedges. It certainly wasn't beautiful, but the show could go on. I always thought we should do the musical "South Pacific."

## From Behind the Desk continued...

*What are some of your most cherished memories from your years here at GPLHS?*

One that always stands out is the day of the Kaleidoscope Concert, probably 10 years ago. At chapel that morning, Mr. Martens had the Honor Choir sing a beautiful song. It was very moving. That evening at the concert, I happened to be in the gym commons when the Honor Choir sang the same song for the concert. It made me cry to realize how immensely blessed I was to be able to hear that song twice in one day, morning and evening, unlike most people at the concert who heard it only once.

*What is one blessing that stands out to you from your time here?*

People. It takes a lot of people to make a school like this. There are the alumni from Northwestern Lutheran Academy in Mobridge who all know the value of a Christian education. There are many, many donors in every walk of life and in every financial situation imaginable who are moved to support GPL in so many ways. There is the faculty who heed the Lord's call and serve Him by teaching and leading His lambs. They lead by example and have a strong desire to help in teaching so much more than subjects. Students who come from many backgrounds, uncertain of what to expect due to previous difficult circumstances or homesickness or whatever. It is my joy to watch them realize that through God's blessings, this place is different. Soon, they act differently as they are "Convinced" that He is their Lord and Savior. What could be better than watching the Holy Spirit in action?

*If you were going to share one thought about the ministry of GPLHS, what would it be?*

Never underestimate the value of a Christian education. Never think they're missing out on something by being in a Christian school. My faith has grown so much from hearing God's Word every day, and theirs does too. I have been so blessed to watch nearly 2 generations of students come, learn, grow, then go out and serve. It's an amazing feeling to take communion, not only knowing what I'm receiving, but it's being served to me by someone I watch grow from "behind my desk."

## Student's Perspective of GPLHS



William Krenz  
GPLHS Class of 2026

A sophomore, William Krenz, at GPLHS answered a few questions regarding his perspective of GPLHS

*What led up to your enrollment at GPL? Was it a simple decision or complicated? Were you in favor or reluctant?*

My family and I spent a lot of time deciding whether we should go here to GPL or not. It was kind of a complicated decision because we live an hour and a half away. In the beginning I was extremely opposed to it because it is far from the farm and I would have to live in the dorm, and Marshall had a lot of more options for elective classes. As we deciphered where we would be going and looked more into GPL it became clear to me that this was the high school that would serve me and my faith the best. The money was also something that had to be thought through because it cost a lot more money to come here than to go to the public school.

*Describe what you were thinking and feeling in the days leading up to and on the day you moved into the dorm for the first time.*

In the days leading up to moving into the dorm it became clear to me I was extremely nervous and worried to live away from home at such a young age and I wouldn't even have my older brother coming with me since he wasn't going to be in football. I wanted to push off coming to high school because I love being home and being on our family farm and was not excited. I was also trying to get a ton of activities in the little bit of summer since football started much earlier than school.

*Were those thoughts and feelings different a month or two later? If so, how?*

During the couple of weeks of just football before school started I became kind of comfortable living in the dorm and I found many friends to be around in the dormitory that made it quite fun. As school started the homesickness went away and I got into the routine of how life would be. Now most of the way through my second year it's easy to

see that it takes a little time to adjust, but as long as you can find some friends it's a very enjoyable place to be.

***Talk about some of your classes and the activities you've been involved in.***

I've been involved in lots of sports including football, basketball and track. In all three of these sports I have found a brotherhood in these programs unlike any other place. You have people to rely on and people that are always encouraging. You also build good friendships by being in sports here. Classes are extremely fun. The teachers are extremely good at helping whenever you need the help. One of the best options by coming here to GPL is to have a religion class and a chapel every day to always be growing our faith.



Football Parents Day 2023

***Talk about some of the challenges and blessings you have faced during your time at GPL.***

During my time here at GPL, as you would anywhere, I have dealt with some challenges that were dealt my way. The biggest challenge I have faced was being an hour and half away from home. The reason this was such a challenge for me was because I work a lot with my dad on our farm. I'm also not able to complete many of the projects my Dad and me would do together. Another challenge is adapting to living in a dormitory and not being able to see my family every night and every morning. This has also been a blessing to me because I have been able to mature and have become more responsible because I don't have my parents to do everything, like laundry. Another blessing is that by living in the dorm I'm able to be around and make friends that will be around me a lot so it works on social skills. The biggest blessing that I gain from coming here is I get a strong Christian based education to help strengthen my faith and push me on the right path to the most important thing – heaven and eternal life with God.

***If you had to choose just one, what one thing do you want people to know about GPL?***

It's a great school that will prepare teenagers to live a God pleasing life and strengthen their faith. It's a place where students are around many other people that have the same faith as them.

## Parent's Perspective of GPLHS

***Craig and Kristen Heil – Parents of Carlie (GPL '19), Andrew (GPL '21), Alex (GPL '24), Jacob (GPL '26)***

***What led up to enrolling your children at GPL? Was it a long process or short? Smooth or back and forth?***

Our kids attended a Christian grade school, as we place a high value on Christian education. Knowing Great Plains has a great reputation and high success with academics, coupled with the fact our kids wanted to go there, the decision was relatively easy. The enrollment process was fairly smooth.

***Describe what you were thinking and feeling when you dropped your children off at the dorm for the first time?***

This was a comfortable experience for us for the most part. Our kids had played a large part in the decision to go which helps, and they were excited for the experience. It also helped that we had already known some of the staff at the high school and dormitory. That all said, there was of course some amount of hesitation that one



Basketball Parents Day 2024

experiences with any significant changes in life. All of that however quickly dissipates as you see your child flourish in an environment rich in opportunities they may not have had in a larger public school, all of which centers around Christ.

***Talk about some of the challenges you have worked through and some of the blessings you have experienced.***

No major challenges, some smaller things include getting used to distance with attending events, transporting kids back and forth, not being able to hug your child at times when they are stressed. However, balancing those things out are spending quality face time when we are together with our kids (including windshield time when travelling).

***How has having your children away from home at GPL affected your relationship with your children?***

We believe we have grown much closer in many regards. Our kids recognized our trust and confidence in them in being able to handle the early independence, taking on responsibilities of balancing school, extra-curricular activities and personal lives away from home and as a result we feel our kids appreciation for us as parents was greater than it would have been if we were there at every turn.

***If you had to choose just one, what one thing do you want people to know about GPL?***

The called workers and staff at Great Plains value our kids beyond any measure we can describe in words. These are individuals that have devoted their careers to teaching God's Word and setting a God-pleasing example for our kids. This allows our kids to strengthen the foundation that started in the home and prepare them for their adult lives as Christians.

Please Note....

There are more articles to read from other parents and students' perspective of Great Plains Lutheran High School. You may go to [GPLHS.org](http://GPLHS.org) and click on *Perspectives of GPL* in the top menu bar or



Click on the QR code:

## Alumni News

Naomi (Seidl) Johnson (**Class of 2002**) and Anna (Seidl) Johnson (**Class of 2005**) were featured in a Minnesota E-Paper. The Mankato Free Press wrote about brothers Keith and Lindsey Johnson, third-generation farmers outside of Gibbon. In 2006, Lindsey married Naomi. Keith and Naomi's sister, Anna, were married in 2013.

Naomi and Lindsey operate Piggery Run Farm. They raise farrow to finish pigs and sell Berkshire pork. Anna and Keith own Blissful Bee Pastures. Their cows and sheep are raised and finished on pasture.



From left to right are Naomi and Lindsey Johnson with Piggery Run Farm and Keith and Anna Johnson with Blissful Bees Pastures. *Photo credit Laura Cole from The Free Press*

Emelia Enquist (**Class of 2010**) was named the South Dakota NewMedia Association's outstanding young journalist for 2023 in the weekly newspaper division, representing the Grant County Review in Milbank. It was announced at the SDNA convention in Huron in late April 2024.



# Alumni News

Jessie Koob (Class of 2013) was voted the president of the recently started Lion's Club for Garretson, SD!



Lydia Kratz (Class of 2021) and Norah Kratz (Class of 2023) were mentioned in the *Bethany Magazine*. They are part of a group of artist who have been creating comic book style illustrations depicting important Biblical concepts. These posters help spread the Gospel in our mission fields, particularly in low-literacy communities,



Jesus and Lazarus  
by Norah Kratz

*Photo credit - Bethany Lutheran College*



The Supreme Test of  
Abraham's Faith  
by Lydia Kratz

*Photo credit - Bethany Lutheran College*



On March 8,  
Daryan Rosenthal  
(Class of 2021)  
directed the  
Bethany Band  
Concert at GPLHS



Picture from Uganda. *Photo credit - Bethany Lutheran College*

Norah Kratz and  
Claire Marcus  
(Class of 2023)  
spoke to the  
audience during  
the Bethany  
Band Concert.



From left: Rev. Terry Schultz, Lizzy Strackbein, Lydia Kratz, Maida Jaspersen, Abby Skorenkyi, along with BLC alumna Leah Kurth (14) at the annual LWMS in October 2023.

*Photo credit - Bethany Lutheran College.*



In April 2024, Joseph Roland DeVries IV (Class of 2023) graduated from Basic Training in the Coast Guard. He is stationed in San Diego, CA.



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*Return Service Requested*



www.gplhs.org  
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@gplhs

## Upcoming Events

- May 17 Spring Awards Ceremony 4pm
- May 17 Kaleidoscope Concert 7pm
- May 18 Graduation 10am
- May 29-31 GPL Schools Teachers' Conference in Rapid City, SD
- June 2-7 Panther Camp
- June 11-13 Dakota-Montana District Convention at GPLHS
- June 12 Groundbreaking Ceremony at 5:15pm
- July 17 GPL Golf Open at Cattail Crossings Golf Course in Watertown, SD



Join us for the tenth Annual Great Plains Lutheran Golf Open on Monday, July 15 starting at 9:30am. There will be food, fellowship, golfing, prizes and fundraising for the Athletic Department. Register at <https://bit.ly/24gplo>

or scan the QR Code

