

Prep FORWARD

The Annual Foundation Review

SPRING 2026

**Bold Action.
Lasting Impact.
Together, we move
Prep Forward.**



st.croixprep
FOUNDATION

A publication for families, supporters, and alumni of St. Croix Preparatory Academy

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Annual gala. Same mission. New spark.

To the St. Croix Prep Community,

It is an honor to share with you the inaugural edition of ***Prep Forward: The Annual Foundation Review***. This publication captures a pivotal moment for the St. Croix Prep Foundation—one defined by bold action, meaningful progress, and a renewed commitment to serving our students and our school.

Over the past year, we have entered a new chapter of growth and possibility. With an energized board, a dedicated development director, and a clear strategic vision, we have laid the groundwork for a more future-focused foundation, one designed to elevate our students, support our teachers, and strengthen the mission of St. Croix Prep for years to come.

This work reflects a belief that our students deserve a foundation as strong and exceptional as they are. And while we are proud of what has been accomplished in such a short time, we also recognize that we still have a long way to go. Building a truly well-resourced school, one that can fully support every student, teacher, and program, will require the engagement of our entire community: teachers, parents, grandparents, alumni, and the many community leaders who believe in the mission of St. Croix Prep.

As you read *Prep Forward*, you'll see both the early impact of our work and the possibilities ahead. You'll also get a glimpse of the strategic initiatives guiding our work: alumni engagement, strengthened operations, and enhanced fundraising efforts. My hope is that it inspires you to imagine what we can accomplish together and encourages you to support Prep in a way that feels most meaningful to you.

St. Croix Prep is a remarkable place, and with a united community of supporters, our impact can be extraordinary.

Thank you for believing in our mission and for joining us on this journey.

With gratitude,

Brendon Schrader
Board Chair
St. Croix Prep Foundation



St. Croix Prep was named the **number one high school** in Minnesota, with our lower and middle schools also ranked among the top three. This achievement reinforces what is possible when a community commits to excellence academically, operationally, and philanthropically.

**Thank you to our
Foundation sponsors:**





Supporting the Power of Music at Prep

Thanks to a generous unrestricted gift to St. Croix Prep's Upper School music program, the sounds of learning and creativity are reaching new heights.

Inspired by this gift to think beyond the basics, the band, choir, and orchestra teachers collaborated to identify opportunities that extend beyond the annual operating budget—enhancements that strengthen curriculum, enrich current offerings, and give students meaningful access to instruments and learning tools.

The team identified several impactful additions: a sousaphone, a drum set, and recording equipment. Each will play a unique role in expanding students' musical experiences.

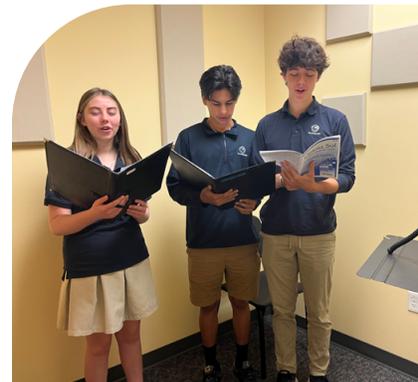
The recording equipment, in particular, introduces an exciting new dimension to the classroom. Teachers will use it to record and play back performances and lessons, helping students listen, analyze, and self-correct in real time, deepening both skill and confidence. The sousaphone will add energy to the pep band and a New Orleans-style flair to jazz band performances.

“We wanted to support a program that gives SCPA students the chance to discover their own voice and experience the joy of making music together.”

“The drum set is an exciting addition to our program that will let us rehearse more efficiently in jazz band during sectionals and give students more practice with improvisation while playing with a full rhythm section,” shared James DeCaro, Upper School Band Teacher. “It also gives our orchestra and choir programs more opportunity to do pieces in collaboration with drummers.”

In reflecting on their gift, the donor family shared “Music has such a unique way of building confidence, connection, and creativity. We wanted to support a program that gives SCPA students the chance to discover their own voice and experience the joy of making music together. Seeing how the teachers and students bring such passion to their work made it an easy decision to give.”

The St. Croix Prep Foundation extends heartfelt gratitude to the donor for believing in the power of Prep's music education and for investing in opportunities that nurture students' talents, curiosity, and growth.





Partnership Brings Soccer Seating Shelters to Prep Field

Teamwork on and off the field is transforming St. Croix Prep's athletic facilities. Thanks to the collaboration of our boys' and girls' soccer families and a generous contribution from St. Croix Soccer Club, Prep has added new soccer seating shelters to the stadium field.

"This project is a great example of what happens when our community comes together with a shared goal," said Keven Seim, Prep Athletic Director. "Parents, supporters, and partners joined forces to enhance the student-athlete experience and show pride in our program."

The new shelters provide comfortable seating and protection from the elements, while giving the field a more professional and unified look. The addition also elevates Prep's facilities to meet standards for hosting pre-professional soccer teams, expanding rental opportunities.

"This partnership reflects the shared commitment of both organizations to enhancing facilities, supporting youth athletics, and building strong community connections," said Nathan Klonecki, St. Croix Soccer Executive Director. "Together, we're investing in the future of the sport and ensuring that players and coaches have the infrastructure they need to thrive."

The covered benches are a tangible reminder of what's possible when families, the Foundation, and community partners work together to elevate Prep's athletic offerings and invest in the experiences that build school pride—on the field and beyond.

"This project is a great example of what happens when our community comes together with a shared goal."





Bringing Learning to Life

Since 2006, St. Croix Prep's 8th grade students have had the opportunity to travel together to Washington, D.C., a capstone experience that connects classroom learning to the living history of our nation's capital.

"We've found that for many students, it's their first time on a plane, first time traveling without their parents, and the first real experience with educational travel," said Deanna Thompson, Trip Coordinator. "The trip brings history to life, allowing students to see firsthand the places and stories they studied in the classroom."

As travel costs have risen, the trip has become financially out of reach for some families. Not wanting cost to prevent participation, one generous family stepped forward to provide scholarship funds for students in need over the past three years.

"When the DC trip came to our attention, it felt like a great opportunity to give back in a meaningful and deliberate way," reflected the donor family. "We reached out to the trip coordinator and, together, devised a way to help more students get there. Traveling, experiencing the wider world, and getting out of your comfort zone – that's important stuff. It preps you for life!"

Nineteen students have received scholarships to help fund their travel. When we invest in our children's education, we're not just funding a trip, we're opening doors to new experiences they might never have imagined.



"We reached out to the trip coordinator and, together, devised a way to help more students get there."

CELEBRATING A PARTNERSHIP:

First State Bank and Trust and Valley Agencies Insurance

For 22 years, First State Bank and Trust has been a steadfast partner to St. Croix Prep. When other banks hesitated to provide a loan to the start-up charter school, First State Bank and Trust stepped in. “Without their early backing, St. Croix Prep may not be here today,” said Kelly Gutierrez, former SCPA Executive Director of Finance. “As a pillar in the St. Croix Valley, they demonstrated they are truly a community bank. They listened and trusted our vision and put their full support behind us when the larger regional and national banks would not.”

That early confidence laid the foundation for the thriving school we have today. Now, the bank and its subsidiary, Valley Agencies Insurance, are furthering their commitment by supporting the St. Croix Prep Foundation, helping advance the school's mission and strategic priorities.

“This support isn't just about funding, it's about believing in us: our students, our teachers, and the long-term vision of Prep. First State Bank and Trust has stood with us every step of the way, strengthening the future of the school and its programs,” said Gutierrez.

Their continued partnership is a powerful reminder of what's possible when a community comes together to invest in education.



A PARTNERSHIP BUILT ON TRUST:

Miller Excavating



From the very first day of construction, Miller Excavating has been a cornerstone partner for St. Croix Prep. They literally dug the hole for the school building and have been involved in every major construction project since—from the middle school expansion to the performing arts center, the stadium and auxiliary building, and even the nature trail.

Their support doesn't stop with big projects. Miller Excavating regularly assists with a variety of facilities needs, stepping in whenever there's a challenge that requires expertise, reliability, and a can-do attitude. “I wouldn't call anyone but Miller Excavating,” says Bill Blotske, Prep's Facilities Director.

This enduring partnership reflects more than just construction work, it's a commitment to the school's mission, to its students, and to the broader Prep community.

Miller Excavating embodies what it means to be a partner to both the school and the Prep Foundation: dependable, invested, and always ready to help when called upon.

“We've had the privilege of watching St. Croix Prep grow from the ground up, and we're proud to play a part in building spaces where students can learn, perform, and thrive.”

STEVE ST. CLAIRE
President, Miller Excavating, Inc.



PREP ALUMNI PROFILE:

Kyle Johnson

What year did you graduate from Prep?
2016

What college did you attend?
University of Wisconsin - Madison (Roll Badge!)

What has been your career path?
After graduation, I worked within the Cloud space at Oracle for two years. I have been working in advertising for Google in New York ever since.

What company do you work for now? What is your job title? What are your job responsibilities?

Google, Senior Account Manager. I currently create and manage digital advertising strategies for some of our largest clients within the Telecom industry. I work directly with external management to understand the current needs of their business, pair this with trends and competitive insights I analyze across the industry, and help bring their new advertising campaigns to life across Google Search and YouTube. I also work with internal teams to figure out which products and new innovations would benefit my clients as well as the Telecom space as a whole.

Looking back, what is one lesson or value you learned at St. Croix Prep that has had a lasting impact on your life after graduation?

The most profound lesson I learned at St. Croix Prep was the value of self-expression. Prep has always fostered an environment where diverse interests—from distinct student organizations to the arts and sports—were equally encouraged. This atmosphere taught me that my identity as a student and person couldn't be confined to a single mold. Rather than conforming to stereotypical high school expectations, the school's culture of acceptance empowered me to confidently channel my individual energy and interests into everything I pursued. The confidence that stemmed from this has driven almost all of my personal and professional decisions to date.



How did Prep prepare you for college or your career?

Prep made me a much stronger critical thinker. Instead of “memorizing for success”, we were encouraged to take each learning one step further to formulate and express our own opinions. This was shaped by the rigorous coursework and collaborative class structure. We were taught from a young age the value in leveraging other people's opinions and working styles to solve complex issues across almost all of our courses. So much of college, and even more of my career, has been spent in group (team, pod, etc.) settings where these skills are vital to creating productive outcomes efficiently.

What advice would you give current students about making the most of their time at Prep to prepare for life beyond school?

The best advice I can give is to try everything! It doesn't always seem like it, but there's so much value in doing things that may make you uncomfortable. It teaches you resilience, adaptability, and how to be resourceful. These are crucial to being able to navigate highly stressful fast-paced environments with many moving pieces. Plus, you meet so many incredible new people through sports, student organizations, volunteer groups, classes, etc.

What's a favorite memory from Prep?

Captaining the Lions Soccer Team alongside my best friends, Coach Tonrey, and Coach Bancroft-Howard.



St. Croix Prep Alumni Association

The St. Croix Prep Alumni Association has launched, bringing together graduates, parents, and educators to celebrate our shared history, build lasting relationships, and support future generations of Prep students. We've kicked things off on LinkedIn, where you'll find school news, alumni spotlights, networking opportunities, and event announcements. The community is rapidly growing with nearly 300 followers.



Join us! Connect, share, engage with fellow students, parents, staff, and alumni as we build a strong, supportive network that reflects the true spirit of Prep for Life.

TOGETHER TOWARD EXCELLENCE:

Dr. Fuchs Shares Her Vision for Prep



St. Croix Prep welcomed Dr. Jenn Fuchs as Executive Director in July. With experience in both charter and traditional public schools, she brings a strong commitment to student success and the belief that great schools are built through strong community support. We caught up with her to talk about her priorities, her vision for the future, and what inspires her most about the Prep community.

Q: What are your top priorities in your role as Executive Director?

A: As we navigate our strategic planning, several key themes are emerging that will shape our future:

- **Control Over Our Schedule:** Consistently highlighted by families in our strategic plan survey, the current start time of 9:45 AM and end time of 4:15 PM poses challenges for our families and students. We want to minimize the time students miss while trying to balance various activities, ensuring they can fully engage in our incredible academic programs.
- **Maintaining Our Focus:** I am committed to fostering an environment centered on academic excellence, character development, and leadership potential. This includes investing in resources and professional development for our educators, equipping them to inspire and engage our students effectively.
- **Strengthening Community Engagement:** Building strong relationships with our families and community is essential. I plan to enhance open communication and collaboration, creating opportunities for families to be actively involved in the life of St. Croix Prep.
- **Financial Sustainability and Growth:** Securing financial resources to support our programs is critical. This will involve expanding fundraising efforts, exploring grant opportunities, and cultivating relationships with donors to ensure the long-term stability of our initiatives.

Q: What excites you most about the future of St. Croix Prep?

A: The future of St. Croix Prep is bright, driven by the dedication of our students, staff, and families. Our alumni often share a large list of teacher names and specific events from their time here that inspired them to achieve great things. I am continually inspired by the passion and commitment I see from both our staff and community members. Our Upper School enrollment has surpassed expectations, showing that families value a complete educational journey at St. Croix Prep. Together, we are creating an environment where students excel academically and develop into well-rounded citizens, contributing positively in ways that others aspire to. The unparalleled support from our families offers tremendous opportunities for our students' futures.

Q: What message would you like to share with the St. Croix Prep community?

A: It is an honor to serve as your Executive Director, and I am deeply committed to upholding the values that make St. Croix Prep exceptional. Together, we have the power to shape the educational experiences of our students and inspire them to reach their fullest potential. I encourage all of you to engage in open dialogue as we explore collaborative opportunities. Your insights are invaluable, and I look forward to hearing your thoughts on how we can work together to make St. Croix Prep an even better environment for our children. Let us move forward with a shared vision of excellence, character, and leadership, ensuring that St. Croix Prep continues to be a place where all students thrive. Thank you for your unwavering support, and I am excited about the journey ahead.



PREP STUDENT PROFILE:

Cooper Beckmann

Cooper Beckmann, Class of 2026, has been named a recipient of the 2025 Coolidge Scholarship — one of the most prestigious and competitive undergraduate scholarships in the nation — placing him among the most accomplished high school scholars in America.

Out of more than 5,000 applicants nationwide, only 12 students were selected for final interviews, and just five were awarded the scholarship.

Cooper has distinguished himself through an outstanding academic record, ranking in the top 5% of his class while pursuing a rigorous course load. His achievements extend beyond the classroom — he is a two-sport athlete (basketball and golf) with nine varsity letters; a leader on the St. Croix Prep NHS Leadership Council; a student representative for the Minnesota Council on Economic Education; a volunteer with Prepare + Prosper; and a tutor at Mathnasium. He is also the author of *Every Dollar Counts: Kai's Lemonade Stand*, a personal finance book for young readers.

The Coolidge Scholarship is a full-ride, merit-based scholarship that covers tuition, room, board, and expenses for four years of undergraduate study at any accredited U.S. college or university. Administered by the Calvin Coolidge Presidential Foundation, it recognizes students who demonstrate academic excellence, public service, and leadership.

Congratulations, Cooper, on this remarkable accomplishment, and thank you for being an outstanding representative of what it means to be a Prep student.

“When I received the call from the Coolidge Foundation, I felt deep gratitude for those who believed in my potential. That belief was shaped over thirteen years at St. Croix Prep, where teachers consistently challenged me, nurtured my curiosity, and prepared me not just for this scholarship, but for a lifetime of learning and service—truly, Prep for Life.”



Prep Scholarships for the Class of 2026

Scholarships for Prep graduating seniors celebrate achievement, expand opportunity, and ensure that students are recognized for their unique talents and contributions.

2026 Senior Scholarships

- Jessica Ducklow Scholarship for Academic Perseverance
- Rich Dippel Legacy Scholarship
- St. Croix Prep Foundation Pillar Scholarships for Academics, Character, and Leadership
- Gutierrez Family Scholarship
- Lakeview Health Foundation Scholarship
- **NEW** - Anna Maakestad Visual Arts Scholarship
- **NEW** - First State Bank and Trust Community Impact Award

We're working to grow the scholarships available so even more students can be celebrated and supported. Contact the Foundation to help expand these opportunities and make a lasting impact on our graduating seniors.

NEW SCHOLARSHIP: Anna Maakestad Visual Arts Scholarship

We are proud to announce the Anna Maakestad Visual Arts Scholarship, a new annual award honoring the legacy of beloved founding faculty member Anna Maakestad and her lasting impact on visual arts education at St. Croix Prep. The scholarship will support graduating seniors who demonstrate artistic excellence and a commitment to pursuing visual arts beyond high school. We invite our community to help carry forward Ms. Maak's legacy by supporting the scholarship and investing in the next generation of artists.

[Click to Donate](#)



Ways to Give



PREP FUND

This year marked an important step forward with the launch of the Prep Fund, a sustainable way for families, grandparents, alumni, and friends to strengthen St. Croix Prep all year long. Through a simple

recurring monthly gift — starting at just \$10 or more — supporters can invest in the areas that matter most to them: Greatest Need, Academics, Arts & Music, Athletics, School Facilities, or Endowment.

These ongoing gifts provide predictable funding that allows the school to plan confidently and sustain the programs and experiences that define a Prep education. When each member of our community gives what they can, the collective impact is powerful, strengthening the programs that shape students' lives and help them thrive.

Join the Prep Fund: www.prepfund.org

MAJOR GIFTS

Major gifts fuel bold initiatives, from academic innovation and facility enhancements to new programs that elevate the student experience. Working closely with the Foundation, major donors align their passion with Prep's priorities, creating meaningful opportunities that enrich learning and strengthen our community in transformative ways.

PLANNED GIVING

Planned gifts allow donors to make a meaningful, long-term impact on St. Croix Prep through options such as bequests, beneficiary designations, or gifts of assets. Planned giving helps sustain excellence for years to come. By including Prep in your legacy plans, you help sustain programs, expand opportunities, and advance the mission for future students.

ENDOWMENT

The Foundation's endowment provides enduring support for St. Croix Prep. Gifts are invested in perpetuity, with a portion of the annual earnings used to advance the Foundation's mission while the principal remains intact. Professionally managed by the Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundation, the fund ensures strong stewardship and long-term financial stability. Through endowment giving, donors establish a permanent source of support for students and programs.

Prep Fund Empowers Teachers Through Grant Program



TEACHER GRANTS

Provided by:  st.croixprep
FOUNDATION

The Prep Fund now supports the **Prep Fund Teacher Grant Program**, which empowers teachers to bring innovative ideas to life and enhance the student experience beyond what the general operating budget allows. Through designated Prep Fund dollars, teachers may apply for grants to support classroom enrichment, curriculum enhancements, new instructional tools, and meaningful learning opportunities that strengthen student growth and advance Prep's mission of academic excellence.

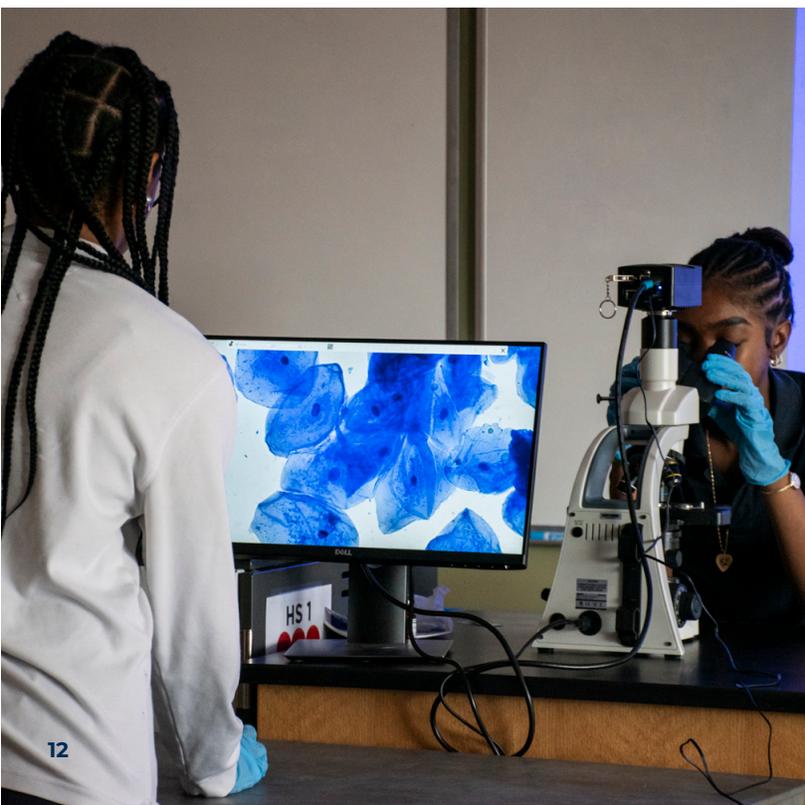
Grant applications will be accepted twice each school year – fall and spring – with the first application window opening this February and grants awarded in April.

As the Prep Fund continues to grow, so does its impact. Every gift, whether a one-time contribution or a recurring monthly commitment, helps ensure that teachers have access to the resources they need to enrich learning and inspire students.

We are deeply grateful to those who have supported the Prep Fund through one-time and recurring gifts. Your generosity directly invests in teachers and strengthens the student experience at St. Croix Prep.

Join us in strengthening Prep — support the Prep Fund today!

www.prepfund.org



Funded through donor generosity, this new trinocular projector microscope with 4k camera allows for real-time projection, image capture, and precise measurement of student discoveries, transforming classroom engagement today while building the skills students will carry into college laboratories tomorrow. Investments in more sophisticated equipment, beyond the scope of the annual operating budget, elevate hands-on science instruction and spark curiosity across Lower, Middle, and Upper School classrooms.



Thank you Prep Fund Donors!

Thank you to the families, alumni, grandparents, and supporters whose investment in the Prep Fund is strengthening Prep today and for the future.

Madelyn Adams
Javid Akram
Lori & Scott Allaire
Robb & Jennifer Ammerman
Sarah & Andrew Bancroft-Howard
Jenna Battle
Marc & Nikki Beckmann
Medora Benson
Camilla & Kevin Biehn
Krissi Bohlsen
Hunter Boleman
Gina Brama
Mary Ann Bunczak
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Lauren Carlson
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Ann & Jason Wachter
Dan Webb
Angela Wilkinson
Julie & Jon Wood
Amanda Yanavitski
Yohanna & Semhar Yemaneab
Bin Zhou



SAVE THE DATE

Our annual gala has a new name — Ignite Prep. Same mission. New spark.

April 11, 2026 ✦ 5:30 PM ✦ St. Croix Prep

A Night to Reflect, Imagine, and Spark What's Next

Food stations, games, live & silent auctions, a fund-a-need, entertainment, an after-party, and many more surprises!



Information & Tickets [here](#).