SAINT PETER PUBLIC SCHOOLS
LEARNING MATTERS

School Highlights

Saint Peter Public Schools

April 2026

"Never let the fear of striking out stop you from playing the game."
— Babe Ruth

Shea Roehrkasse named Region 2AA Activities Director of the Year

Congratulations to Saints' Activities Director Shea Roehrkasse as he was named as Region 2AA Activities Director of the Year, which was announced at the Minnesota Interscholastic Activities Administrators Association annual awards banquet held in St. Cloud on March 25.

Roehrkasse, who began his Activities Director position at Saint Peter Public Schools in the fall of 2021 in time for the 2021-22 school year, was one of eight region winners for Class AA that were announced at the banquet, held at the River's Edge Convention Center.

"Shea's selection as the Region 2AA Activities Director of the Year is unsurprising to anyone who has had the privilege of working with him," SPHS Principal Annette Engeldinger said. "In only his fifth year as our Activities Director, he has already established himself as one of the most respected, trusted, and effective leaders in activities administration across the state of Minnesota.

"Shea understands that high school activities are extensions of the classroom. What sets him apart is his commitment to opening doors for every student. He seeks ways to expand opportunities, remove barriers, and ensure that participation in athletics and activities provides a positive and healthy learning experience for our students. His vision is grounded in student-centered decision-making and a belief that activities change lives."



Mend the Middle Phase 2

Dr. Jon Graff, Superintendent of Saint Peter Public Schools



It's hard to believe that we are three quarters of the way through the school year. I guess what they say is true, "Time flies when you are having fun!"

That sense of momentum carries beyond the classroom and into the continued transformation of our facilities. As we move through the fourth quarter, we are also preparing for another exciting summer of construction at the Middle School/ Early Learning Center. Phase Two of the three-phase Mend the Middle Project is scheduled to begin in earnest on June 8. The roughly $33 million project, made possible by a combination of voter-approved renovations and a board-approved indoor air quality project, will pick up where Phase One left off, focusing on the central portion of the academic wing and extending south to the gymnasiums and locker rooms.

Renovations occurring this summer include:

Mechanical systems: New mechanical and electrical equipment will be installed throughout the building to improve air quality and overall system efficiency. While these upgrades may not be visible, they will certainly be felt.

Classroom and corridor improvements: The building will continue to receive a "refresh," including new ceilings, flooring, and wall finishes, along with updated paint on existing walls and lockers. Additional storage cubbies and built-in upholstered seating will also be added throughout the hallways.

Improved accessibility: An additional elevator will be installed near the gymnasium to enhance accessibility throughout the building.

We look forward to welcoming students and staff back to these updated spaces next fall and remain incredibly grateful for our community's continued support of our schools.

For more information and/ or construction updates, visit MendTheMiddle.org/updates.

I TACOS









SPHS culinary arts students take part in taco competition

Kurt Hildebrandt,
School Information Coordinator

Saint Peter High School students in Courtney Shoemaker's Advanced Culinary Arts class put their skills to the test with a taco competition on March 10th. The class was divided into teams and tasked with creating a taco dish using steak, ground beef, and/or shredded pork. The dishes also featured freshly made salsa, queso, and guacamole.

Students spent the early part of the week planning, making, and serving the dish to a panel of four SPHS staff members who served as judges. The judges included SPHS Principal Annette Engeldinger, Dean of Students Shari Karlsrud, and teachers John Warren and Robbie Deering.

The winning team of Maliah, Sofia, Alia, Ceejae, and Melody made and served their special version of steak fajitas, which were well received. Some of the comments received from the judges for the winning steak fajitas entry included, "Salsa had good color. Good spice! Corn was perfect! All of the elements were very well done and complemented each other! Beautiful plate with lots of color!"

Here are some photo highlights of the fun and educational taco competition in Mrs. Shoemaker's class.



Members of the 2026 SPHS Mock Trial team included: front row (l to r), Octavia Fuller, Vayda Gratton, Hadley Stauff, Melina Chadwick, assistant coach Andrea Faches; back row, head coach Dan Clark, Khalid Ibrahim, Sam Barnick, Devlin Kinney, and Elijan Cherland Narum. Not pictured are Gabe Zayas, Andi Turritin, and Natalie Twait.

SPHS Mock Trial team finishes 2026 season

Chelsea Klaphake,
SPPS Communications Coordinator

Saint Peter High School's Mock Trial Team competed at their final competition on February 12, and closed off a season full of hard work, growth, laughter, and skill-building. The 2026 Saints' Mock Trial team, coached by Dan Clark and assisted by Andrea Faches, attended five competitions and left victorious against Mayer Lutheran and Fairmont.

"One of my favorite parts of coaching Mock Trial is helping students build their characters and really step into their roles," Clark said.

The 2026 Mock Trial season was Clark's last as coach of the team. Going forward, Andrea Faches, the mother of Mock Trial junior team member Melina Chadwick, will step into the role and continue the program.

"This year's Mock Trial team had a really nice mix of experience and new energy, Clark said. "Our senior leaders were Elijah Cherland-Narum, Vayda Gratton, Octavia Fuller, and Gabe Zayas, who became our timekeeper for his senior year. They brought a lot of confidence and courtroom experience after competing over the years. Our junior class included Melina Chadwick, Khalid Ibrahim, and Sam Barnick, who really stepped into bigger roles this year and were key in helping the team prepare. We also had a strong group of sophomores, including Andi Turrittin, Natalie Twait, Hadley Stauf, and Devlin Kinney, who were newer to Mock Trial, but they were incredibly enthusiastic and quick to learn the process."

ST. PETER SEASON SCORES

Jan. 8th - St. Peter (Plaintiff) 221 vs Watertown-Mayer White (Defense) 229 – (LOST)
Jan. 14th - Luverne (Plaintiff) 205 vs. St. Peter (Defense) 183 – (LOST)
Jan. 29th - St. Peter (Plaintiff) 211 vs. Mayer Lutheran (Defense) 194 - (WON)
Feb. 4th - Fairmont (Plaintiff) 193 vs. St. Peter (Defense) 217 - (WON)
Feb. 12th - St. Peter (Plaintiff) 224 vs. Watertown-Mayer (Defense) 239 - (LOST)

MN River Strike Force adapted bowling team kicks off new season!

Kurt Hildebrandt,
School Information Coordinator



The Minnesota River Strike Force adapted bowling team is already in the midst of a successful season, with three matches under their belts. The team caps the season with the section tournament at the Wow Zone on April 29th and the MN State Tournament on May 8th in Brooklyn Park.

The Minnesota River Strike Force adapted bowling team recently kicked off its 2026 season, and the team has turned in a strong showing so far at the Wow Zone lanes (Mankato) this season! The Strike Force is a cooperative program between Saint Peter High School and Le Sueur-Henderson High School.

Head coach Kris Voeltz, assistant coach Keith Bense, and their crew kicked off the competitive portion of their schedule in mid-March and have already competed in matches against Lake Crystal-Wellcome Memorial and Stewartville.

"The season is off to an incredible start! We're having a lot of fun and seeing improvement in skills every single week," Coach Voeltz shared. "With 20 bowlers on the roster this year, it's exciting to see our program's growth."

"We are so thankful for having a great facility like the Wow Zone available to us each week during the season. Allison and her staff at the Wow Zone have been so wonderful to work with, and we really enjoy visiting there each week for our matches."

Minnesota River Strike Force team members include:
SPHS students
Grade 12 - Connor Mugaas, Abby Schily, Abby Voeltz, Calvin Stoffel
Grade 11 - Kallie Brovold, Judd Wartman, Autumn Squires, Abbi Westphal (Manager)
Grade 10 - Peyton Attenberger
Grade 9 - Caden Pugh, Keith Erickson

LSH students
Grade 12 - Angela Molina, Gavin Jones
Grade 11 - Ryleigh Sullivan, Jayda Marroquin, Hanie Sirovy
Grade 10 - Isaac Dieball (10)
Jr. High - Rolando Worthen (8), Liam Harland (7), Ben Bhenke (7)

STRIKE FORCE ADAPTED BOWLING SCHEDULE 2026
March 11 - Lake Crystal-Wellcome Memorial
March 18 - Stewartville
March 25 - Wayzata
April 1 - Albany
April 8 - Mankato
April 15 - Janesville-Waldorf-Pemberton
April 22 - Zimmerman
April 29 - Sections (at Wow Zone)
May 8 - State Tournament (at Bowlero, Brooklyn Park)

SPHS Speech team kicks off season with strong start

Chelsea Klaphake,
SPPS Communications Coordinator



Members of the 2026 Saints Speech team include: front row (l to r), Elise Carter, Julia Nienow, Himalaya Harrison, Theory Harrison, Makenzie Moeller, Maya Knutson; back row, Greta Stoffregen, Iris Sharstrom, Zac Hall, Addie Maxfield, Britney Vogt, Jazmyn Hermel-Eggers, Sadie Albrecht.

Practices and competitions are in full swing for the SPHS Speech Team! The season has gotten off to a smooth start, with students quickly finding their footing and performing well at meets. This year's team is made up largely of younger students, including both middle and high schoolers, who have shown impressive dedication early on. Speech Team members have the option to compete in various categories, including Creative Expression, Duo Interpretation, Extemporaneous Reading, Extemporaneous Speaking, Great Speeches, Humorous Interpretation, Informative, Original Oratory, Serious Discussion, Serious Poetry, Serious Prose, and Storytelling.

There is a lot to look forward to in this speech season. Head Coach Erika Carlson notes that this year's group of students is a fun, excited, and vibrant team. Additionally, quite a few competitors are double-entering for the first time (competing in two events), which is especially exciting!

Carlson also speaks to those considering joining the team: "I try to encourage students to start young (7th-8th grade) to give them the advantage to grow as a speaker. Most of my high school State Finalists and Champions are ones that start in middle school. This is truly an activity for everyone, from the hyper-competitive to students who just want to improve their speaking skills. This is a realm for writers, storytellers, researchers, conversationalists, and dreamers."

SPHS senior Addy Maxfield has been on the Speech Team since 7th grade, and she reflects on her fulfilling experience: "Being in speech has taught me to carry myself in a respectable, professional manner and how to convey emotions and communicate in an understandable way to others. Participating in speech has also taught me to be myself. No one person is the same in speech, and everyone is from different walks of life coming together for the love of the same things, to talk to walls, scream in mostly empty classrooms, bus talks, and all the things Speech."

Addy's time on the Speech Team has been incredibly meaningful, and as an upperclassman, she is looking forward to welcoming new members and passing on the team's fun traditions.

The remaining Speech Team meet schedule is listed below:

Saturday, April 18 - Section 2AA meet at Mankato East
Friday, April 24 - MN State Speech Meet at Park Center HS

SPMS Penny Wars raises more than $550 for animal shelter

Kurt Hildebrandt,
School Information Coordinator

Saint Peter Middle School Student Council members recently finished tallying up the money that was collected through this year's annual Penny Wars fundraiser. This year, the SPMS students raised $560.47, which is donated to a different charity each year.

"The money is supporting the local animal shelter - P.A.W.S., which is run by the St. Peter Police Department," Mrs. Knutson, the SPMS Student Council advisor, said. "This year, the student council students have been adamant about wanting to do something to support our local animals/animal shelter. So, when we started discussing our annual penny wars competition, they chose PAWS right away!"

The following are the classroom winners by grade and the overall winner by number of pennies collected. (NOTE: Classrooms received positive points for pennies and cash collected and negative points for any silver coins.)

5th grade - Mrs. Panitzke's class (overall winner with 6,263 points)

6th grade - Mr. Petersen's class (2,216)

7th grade - Mrs. Knutson (384)

8th grade - Mr. Bartholow (3,710)



Saint Peter Middle School Student Council members recently collected the money raised during their annual Penny Wars fundraiser. Shown here with this year's collection includes: front row (l to r), Ryan Christenson, Parker Collins, Addison Seitser, Elsie Biengang, Gus Byers, Mrs. Knutson, Lexi O'Konek; back row, Dustin Stadtherr, Sylvie Kuhlman, Mia Gazzola, Maci Grunzke, Julia Nienow, Makenzie Moeller, and Maddie Bur.













SPHS FFA WEEK WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

Kurt Hildebrandt,
School Information Coordinator

Saint Peter High School Future Farmers of America (FFA) members were busy the week of March 2-6 with FFA Week activities, but they were particularly busy on that Wednesday with a couple of big events. SPHS FFA advisors are Jasmine Witty and Jacob Pehrson.

During the school day, the SPHS FFA crew hosted their annual Career Fair and Lunch for fellow SPHS students over the noon hour, which included helping the food service staff serve the food as well as setting up for the Career Fair with 14 area businesses and organizations on hand to discuss career opportunities in their business/industry. Those groups participating included University of Minnesota Extension, Kibble Equipment, Jaxwon Witty-Keller Williams Preferred Realty, Wakefield Pork, Minnesota State Southern Agricultural Center of Excellence, Home Depot, Bolton & Menk, US Army and Army Reserve, Compeer Financial, South Central College, POET Bioprocessing, Seneca Foods, Agropur, AG Partners, CDL Made Simple (Chris Hanson), and STP Well.

In the evening, the SPHS FFA Community Meal once again proved to be very popular, as the local chapter accepted free-will donations for a scrumptious meal of BBQ Ribs, shredded beef sandwiches, mac & cheese, green beans, dinner roll, and ice cream for dessert. In all, the SPHS FFA raised $1,300 in donations, which will be used for future FFA activities. Here are some photo highlights from the busy and productive day!













NORTH'S ARTS & ACADEMICS NIGHT HIGHLIGHTS

North Elementary students had their chance to showcase their skills and talents on March 5th as part of the school's annual Arts & Academics Night festivities. Students could participate in one of several activities/events at Arts & Academics Night. Among those activities/events taking place were Visual Arts, Performing Arts, Science Fair, Interest Fair, and Spelling Bee. Here are some photo highlights from the fun event!

NORTH'S SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE PROGRAM & CONCERT HIGHLIGHTS

Congrats to North Elementary on receiving the 2025-26 Minnesota School of Excellence Award during a special program and music concert at the SPHS gym on Monday, March 9, in the evening.

A large crowd was on hand for the program and concert, which featured statements from North Principal Darin Doherty, Saint Peter Schools' Superintendent Dr. Jon Graff, and Saint Peter School Board Chair Charlie Potts. Amanda Feterl, Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association's (MESPA) President-Elect and Principal at Sibley East Elementary, also provided information on MESPA's School of Excellence Award and presented Principal Doherty with a commemorative plaque.

North music instructor Robyn Woods directed the combined grades 2-4 choir for three songs during the event, much to the delight of all of those in attendance. Here are some photo highlights from the big event!

SOUTH KINDERGARTEN KIDS HAVE A SPECIAL GUEST READER!

Kindergarten students in Mrs. Hartfiel's class had a special guest reader when former South teacher Mrs. Sizer dropped by to read the book, "Maxi the Taxi," to the kids. Here is a photo of Mrs. Sizer reading to the children.



SOUTH HOSTS KINDERGARTEN OPEN HOUSE

A large group of future kindergarten students who will be attending classes at South Elementary this fall, and their family members, took part in the annual Kindergarten Open House event on March 5th. Attendees had the chance to tour the building, meet teachers and staff, and participate in a variety of hands-on activities. Here are some pictures from the kindergarten open house!





Minnesota Starwatch Program with WCCO's Mike Lynch



Discover the cosmos over St. Peter! Use some of Minnesota's largest mobile telescopes for stunning close-up views of Jupiter, Venus, and star clusters. New, light pollution-proof astronomical cameras will display live, vibrant images of distant galaxies and nebulae. Learn to recognize constellations (Big Bear, Orion, Gemini) and their fascinating myths. A complimentary handout package includes star maps, charts, and a practical guide to buying your own telescope. Mike Lynch is a retired WCCO Radio meteorologist and has been hosting star parties and teaching astronomy classes for over 50 years. He also writes a weekly stargazing column for the St. Paul Pioneer Press and is the author of the book "Stars, a Month-by-Month Tour of the Constellations." It'll be available for purchase at the program. Select Mike Lynch celestial photos, and super cool glow-in-the-dark star shirts will also be available for sale. This program is best suited for adults and children ages 8 and up. An adult must accompany children. Bring a lawn chair to make yourself comfy! Class will be held rain or shine. Min. 20, max. 50.

Fri., Apr. 17, 8–10 p.m., SPHS Commons Area Register with Community Ed by Apr. 13
$15 per person, $45 per Household

Heart Nebula photo by Mike Lynch

That's Community Ed!
Saint Peter Public Schools – ISD 508

Saint Peter Community & Family Education

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CHILDREN & YOUTH CLASSES

Activity	Gr. K	Gr. 1	Gr. 2	Gr. 3	Gr. 4	Gr. 5	Gr. 6	Gr. 7 & up	Date of activity	Day(s)
Prized Pancakes *Kids' cooking with Jackie M.*	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		Apr 22	W
Mad Scientist Eats *Kids' cooking with Jackie M.*	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		May 28	Th
Summer Art Camp *with Mrs. Nyhammer*	X	X	X	X	X				Jun 8-10, AM	M-W
Red, White & Blue-tiful *Kids' crafting with Laura Maki*	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Jun 10, PM	W
Private Percussion with Justin T. *Call Community Ed for available lesson times*					X	X	X	X	starts Jun 11	Th
Fruitopia *Kids' cooking with Jackie M.*	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		Jun 24	W





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The school district newsletter, *Highlights*, is distributed monthly through the office of Community & Family Education. Any questions or suggestions regarding *Highlights* should be directed to:

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Is your family on the school census?

The Saint Peter School District keeps a record of all families in our school district. Being on the school census ensures:

- You will automatically receive ECFE mailings.
- You will be notified of Early Childhood Screening.
- The elementary school will be expecting your child when it is time for kindergarten.
- That maximum funding is received by our district from state/local government.

Please call 934-3048 ext. 2018 if you are new to the district or your family has grown with additional births or adoptions!