

June 2006 Edition

# COM- MUNI- cations

The image features the word 'COM-MUNI-cations' rendered in a highly stylized, 3D block font. The letters are light orange with black outlines and shadows, giving them a three-dimensional appearance. The text is arranged in three lines: 'COM-' on the top line, 'MUNI-' on the middle line, and 'cations' on the bottom line. The 'cations' part is written in a lowercase, cursive-like font. The entire text is set against a light orange background and is surrounded by numerous black, five-pointed stars of varying sizes, scattered across the page.



# Meandering Through Mini...

Hi, our names are Zach and Zorina. We are Ramona's kids. We would like to reflect a bit or meander if you will through Mini-School. We each got to write the Meandering the year we were born (Doug really made us), but this year we wanted to because it's our mom's last year in Mini and we just wanted to say a few things.

Mini-School began in 1970 and has been here for many and all types of students. As the laws and education have changed Mini-School has changed as well. The goal has always been to be there for the students that need the program. Our mom started in Mini-School in 1992 with a small group of students, only around 45, that were strong, outdoors kids. By the end of the year, there were around 95. Wow!! The classrooms got really crowded. Mom was a bit overwhelmed that year. She had to attend college classes all year in order to take the job in Mini, and Grandpa died that winter, as well. Even though the students were upset to see Joe, the previous math teacher, go they helped our mom through the year. Some, like Jesse W., took her class even though he didn't need any math. Can you imagine that?

Mom has grown so much during the time she has been in Mini-School. Though she camped all her life, she never camped the way she did in Mini. Doug truly mentored her to do things that she never thought she would do. Sounds so much like what he did with, and for, so many of the students. So Mom did several things she had never done before, like: backpacking, snow shoeing, skiing, going on a bike trip and even writing in Meandering. Randy mentored her as well, but in different areas. He worked with her to stretch her skills in the classroom by doing Women's Issues, teaching the Crime and Justice Class, and by doing more of the

coordination and Department Chair work. Sometimes Mom looks back and wonders how it all happened and how time passed so quickly.

As the staff all leave their imprints on each other, the students leave imprints on all of us as well. There are so many, it's hard to just name a few. When Mom became part of the program she had two step-sons living with her and Dad. Because the program is such a family, we all get talked about and the students were really helpful to Mom in understanding what Travis and Ryan (our big brothers) were going through and how she could or could not help them – she's very grateful for the students during that time for all the perspectives they gave her. We came along in '94 and '97 and the students made cards for Mom and us. She still has a picture of Joe B. and Pat C. holding Zach when he was just two or three months old. She still remembers Chad A. and how he just couldn't believe that Zach was growing inside of her. How he wished he could experience that feeling – of course he also thought it seemed like an alien thing. The students were always so encouraging and often, when Mom talked about them outside of school, she would have to clarify that she was talking about her students and not us. Mom has lots of pictures of her students, past and present, all around her desk. She loves that. We know at this time of year she goes into that "get business done" mode because if she stops too long to think about what's happening – sadness can break in. She is so proud of all of you, but also sad that you will be gone – bittersweet. You know how men get all confused when women cry during happy things – "If you're happy why are you crying?" The math teacher in her wants to keep it under control.

This past summer Mini-School had its 35<sup>th</sup> Reunion that was really wonderful. Mom had such a good time seeing, all the alumni and meeting so many that were students from before her time. There were many alumni there from all periods of the program. Don't forget-- this summer Minnetonka is going to have an all-class reunion in Excelsior – hope to see all of you there. If you didn't get a Mini-School Jersey let Mom know and you can still get one.

We are supposed to write about this school year as well. Paul Gerten left at the end of last year to try some new career opportunities. He is still around and subs for us regularly. Matt Mosiman joined us this year to teach Social Studies and has fit in well. Merlin Zimmerman returned this year and has been busy teaching English. He also had the opportunity to go to Washington D.C. to play with the Minnesota Police Pipe Band that he is involved with. They played for the President. Very Exciting!! Jen Goepfert also joined us to help with 10<sup>th</sup> grade English. She brought lots of energy with her and that is why we have one last Com-Mini for you to enjoy. Thanks Jen. Pauline was reassigned this year and joined the Science Department. The students still have her for science, but they go to the mainstream classrooms for that. We also had Nancy Schuett join us to help with Health this year – she did a great job and really enjoyed teaching the class.

This year Mom needed to get students to do some service learning for the Health requirements. So with the help of Matt Mosiman, Kenny Kraft, Keith and Eric, a trip to Timber Bay went out for two days. The students were Renee Aymar, David Barnier-Wells, Michael Griffiths, Marty Strait, Greg Lasky, Ben Dols, Matt Dols, Joe Hines, Melli Fleming, Ashley DeMers, Ben Pollock, Chase Crowley, Nick Ellenbaum and Erik Goderstad. The students cut down trees and stripped off the bark to prep the logs to make a cabin in the near future. The students cleaned the camp and built a great

big bon fire. They worked very hard. Mom also arranged two service projects with Loaves and Fishes in St. Paul, a charity that helps to feed the poor. Renee Aymar, Megan Harper, Ryan Studer, Amanda Frederick, Monica Sheats, and Joe DeMiguel helped with these activities. The last activity was a fun Egg Hunt with Jaquon Blair and Rosalind Turner helping kids at the Pillsbury Crisis Nursery Center in Minneapolis. We think the students really enjoyed the things they did. Way to go guys!!!!

Jen has brought some new energy into the program – Mom has been very encouraged by her. Jen took out two trips during her one semester here in Mini. She took her 2<sup>nd</sup> hour class to James J. Hill House and several F. Scott Fitzgerald historical sites. She also brought Paul back for a day to do a one-day canoe trip down the St. Croix River. The kids had so much fun. Mom said that it was great to see their energy and excitement. The next day she said they were a bit tired, but they managed.

The year is coming to an end now and that means Recognition Night and Graduation. Wow, has it gone fast. Mom's anxious about Recognition – she wants to say a few words, but she doesn't like doing that very much – just another learning experience chalked up to Mini-School. She's trying to keep those emotions down right now.

As we, Zach and Zorina, look back over Mom's time in Mini-School and after having met so many of you – her students over the years – we are so glad that she was with you and you were a part of her and our lives. She has grown and changed over the years and become a better person because of Mini-School.

Thank you and know she loves all of you – we can tell. Continue to go and make great imprints in the lives of those you meet.

Sincerely,  
Zach and Zorina

## Alumni News:

Mike Peden '97 is in the Army. He served in Iraq for 7 months, but is now in Maplewood recruiting – if interested call 1-877-666-9672. He is married and has a 2 year old Tatiana.

Alex Peden '02 is carpet-laying right now and has a steady girlfriend and doing fine.

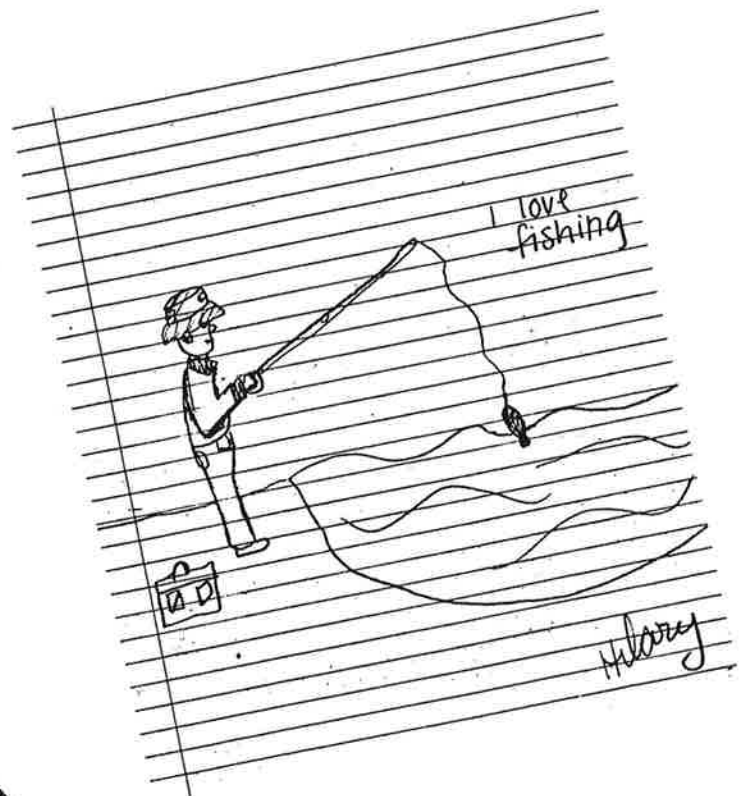
Justin McNeal '05 was living in Mpls, but recently moved back to Minnetonka with his parents. He is currently working in the restaurant business but is looking at college soon in Duluth.

Stephanie Tucker '93 is expecting a child, but has probably had it by the time you see this – so well wishes to your family Steph!!

Chad '93 and Jessica '94 Zaback had a baby boy!!! Mom and baby are doing fine. Congratulations!

“When I got out of high school they retired my jersey, but it was for hygiene and sanitary reasons”~

George Carlin



**“Now that I’m where I always wanted to be, I wonder where I’m going next.”**

By Jojo Skolnick

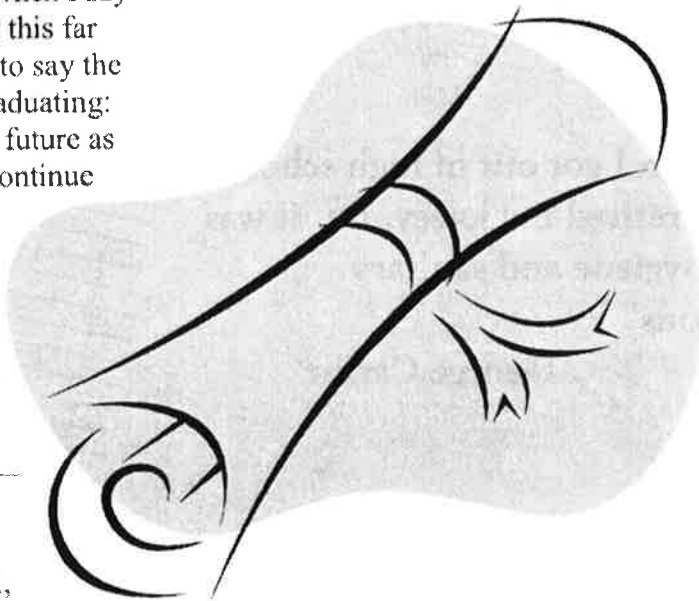
As the end of the school year approaches, I have come to realize that I am getting closer and closer to the rest of my life. Mini-School has boosted me to new heights with my scholastic altitudes. The staff has been a supportive family for me to fall back on during any time of need. I still can’t believe that in June I will walk in my cap and gown across a stage that will set me free to a world of college, maturity, and a broader education.

I want to submit a thank you to the staff of Mini-School in this issue of our fabulous newsletter to let each and every member of this family to know how much I honestly do appreciate the things they do for my fellow pupils and I. I speak for the entire program when I say that we couldn’t have made it this far without you guys! This far is to say the least. Several of us will be graduating: the biggest step towards ones future as far as I am concerned. I can continue on knowing that with each step I take in this valuable time here on Earth, this wonderful institution is right behind me cheering me every minute of the way.

I say this with great pleasure— Thank you Doug, Ramona, Mary, Merlin, Matt, Jen and our past staff members Carol, Pauline, Scott, and Paul for everything you do and did here in Mini-School. I can only imagine how many boundaries you will break down as you

continue to transform detached mines into those of great thinkers! I will take all the lessons you have taught me into my future and show you that all of your time and passion has not been wasted.

You are educated. Your certification is in your degree. You may think of it as the ticket to the good life. Let me ask you to think of an alternative. Think of it as your ticket to change the world. ~Tom Brokaw

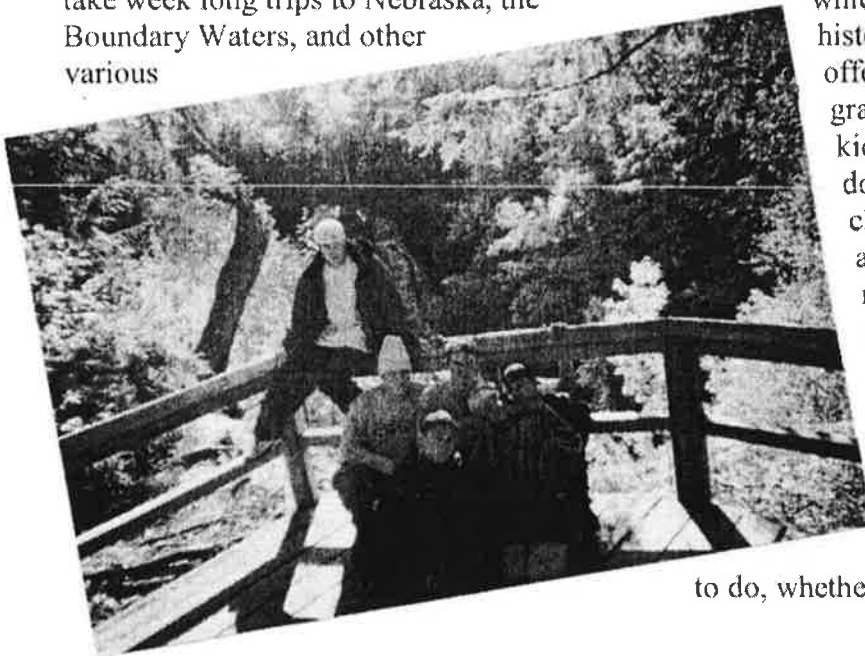


## An Overview of Mini-School

By Monica Sheats

Mini-School, which has now been around for 36 years, is an alternative program that was started by Randy Nelson and Doug Berg, designed to help students that were in desperate need of help, whether mainstream was just simply moving at too fast of a pace, or if they were in fear of not graduating on time or even at all. Mini-School has helped thousands of struggling kids achieve more than they may have ever thought they were able to do, by helping them see that they really can succeed and do well.

Mini-School has gone through many changes in the past few years, some of which are good and some of which are bad. The "old" Mini-School offered a place for kids to come and get educated in all the subjects needed to graduate, just in an alternative environment, and with a little bit of a different teaching style. For example, to help students earn the required amount of gym and science credits needed to graduate, they would take week long trips to Nebraska, the Boundary Waters, and other various



nature sites. On these trips they were required to keep journals, cook their own food, set up their own tents, canoe up and down rivers, and hike miles and miles. They carried all their things that they needed to survive in the wilderness on their backs, along with canoes. Not only were they expected to do it for themselves but to help out others, when needed. They got to experience what it was like to live without power, running water, and other things that we take for granted in our daily lives. Also, on these trips they were able to really get to know and bond with the other people that were there, learning to have patience with each other and listen to one-another. The "old" Mini-School had a great atmosphere, in the sense that everyone got what they wanted and needed out of it. Mini-school's a lot like a huge family, always helping each other out and being there for one another.

Over the past few years, Mini-School has changed dramatically, but not all bad. Although still very much helping kids succeed, classes have been cut down to only offering three classes,

which are; math, English, and history. These classes are still offered to 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> graders, and are also helping kids that are in Mini-School do well in their mainstream classes by offering them additional help, if they need. For example, Ramona is very helpful and considerate when it comes to kids needing help getting their community service project hours by providing things for them

to do, whether its serving food to local

Mini School students enjoyed a trip to Michigan in 2000.

## Overview of Mini Cont'd

citizens at Loaves and Fishes or taking a weekend trip to Timber Bay to chop down trees to build a new cabin.

Lately Mini-School has become more like mainstream, like in the ways that we now earn our credits and how things are being taught. In previous years, we learned new things that we need to know for everyday life, like how to survive in the wilderness and get along with all different types of people. Also, it's getting harder to get more one-on-one time with the teachers and we are required to do certain things that weren't required before like the new accelerated math program and reading certain books (but don't get the wrong idea, we're not lazy), where as before, our curriculum was more planned out to teach not only the basic school subjects like math, science, English and history, but also to teach us the everyday life skills that we need, like how to do your taxes and how to manage your money and buy a house. Adding these things isn't necessarily a bad thing, it just makes it more like mainstream, and the whole reason kids come to Mini-School is to get away from that sort of curriculum, to be taught in a way that they can understand a bit better and get the attention they need.

Also one thing I know that kids really miss is the Mini-School recognition nights. Although we still have them once

at the end of the year, it was fun to have them every month or so, just to be able to sit down and watch a slide show of things they've been working on and to see the kids receive awards for things that they accomplished and did well, or even just tried. I think that receiving these awards really made the students feel good about themselves. Now, don't get me wrong, I'm not trying to say that what we have now isn't good enough, because that's not it at all, we just don't want to see what we have lost.



We hope that everyone who reads this sees how important and great Mini-School really is. How it can really change a person for the better by giving them a better attitude and out-look on not only school, but life. And even with all the changes, Mini-School is still going strong and we all hope to see it stick around for another 36 years, or more. We want other kids to be able to experience what we have.

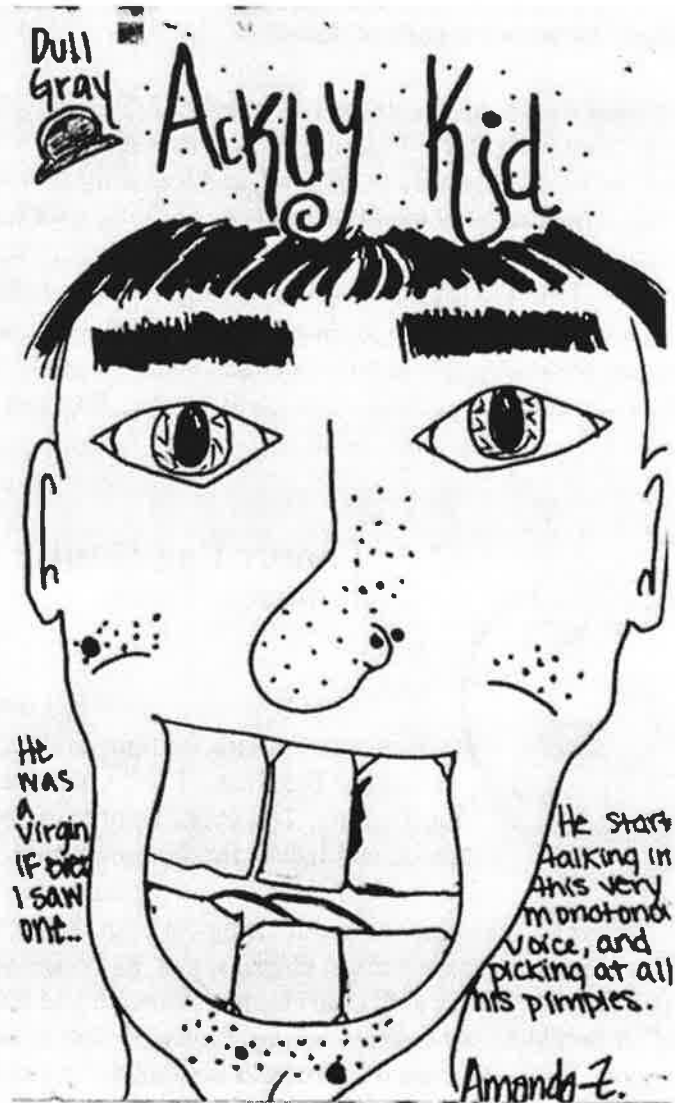


## English in Mini by Steve Iversrud

Mini School has many great subjects of interest. One of which is their expansive English department which has two great teachers in it. First is veteran Mini School English Teacher Merlin Zimmerman who teaches 9<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grade in and out of Mini School. And second is Jen Goepfert who is making her Minnetonka and Mini School debut. She teaches 10<sup>th</sup> grade English in and out of Mini School.

Since I first came to Mini School I have been in both teachers' classes and have had many great learning experiences. In Merlin's class so far this year I have read the books *Brave New World*, *Animal Farm*, and the acclaimed Shakespeare play *The Tempest*. We have also gone over units such as 18<sup>th</sup> century Romantic Poetry. In Jen's English class, we have read the Ernest Hemmingway Pulitzer Prize novel *The Old Man and The Sea* and Hometown Hero Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. We just finished up with *Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger. Every day in class we free write in our journals to gain penmanship and experience in writing.

Every day in English class, whether it is Merlin's or Jen's class, there is something new to do and new to discuss. The most favorite memory of mine is when we were *reading Brave New World*. The book is about a brainwashed industrial society in the future. And the thought of such a future for mankind seemed uncanny but, at times, not far out of reach. Learning in these classes and reading books like these help keep my mind open and thinking freely like all minds should.



Amanda Frederick's rendering of "Ackley," a character from Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye*.

# Service Learning Projects



By Chase Crowley

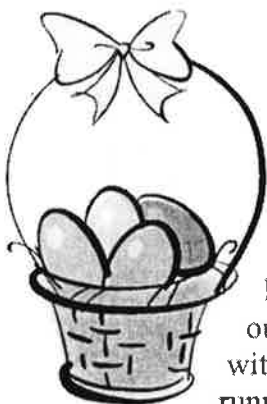
From October 27-28, Mini School went to Timber Bay for a service learning project for health. While we were there, we cut down trees, moved a lot of brush, had a huge bonfire and shaved the trees we had cut down.

The food we ate up there was really good and the lodging wasn't that bad either. Working there was really fun because I think we all had a really good time, and knowing that we were getting our service hours done made everything a lot better.

Going to Timber Bay is really fun because doing work on the crew is laid back and fun at the same time. Besides this, Timber Bay has winter camps, summer camps, etc. I've pretty much talked about all I can think of so go to Timber Bay and have fun



Our trusty leader Kenny. Is this the 70s?



## Family Egg Hunt

By Rosalind Turner

On Saturday, April 8, I went to the Pillsbury Center in North Minneapolis with Ramona and another student Jaquon to help with a Family Egg Hunt. I went because of a service learning project for health class. The event went from 10 to 2:30. I had to hide eggs outside and inside for the community. They were plastic eggs filled with candy. I helped out by giving the kids instructions. The kids were running around looking for eggs while the parents were eating and talking. There were chili dogs, chips, water, Kool-aid and cookies. During the hunt, I played Double Dutch with a girl named Jasmine and Ramona. Jaquon watched. After the hunt, at 10'clock, we cleaned inside. I learned how to mop! It was nice to see all the kids so happy. I got six hours of volunteer service for my class and I got some candy!



### **LOAVES AND FISHES** By Amanda Frederick

Late in 2005, on a very cold December 1<sup>st</sup>, Mini-School students set out to earn volunteer hours for their 10<sup>th</sup> grade health class. Accompanied by Matt Mosiman, six students (Renee Aymar, Ryan S., Meghan H., Joe DiMiguel, Amanda Frederick, and Monica Sheats.) went to St. Matthews's church in Minneapolis to volunteer for five hours.

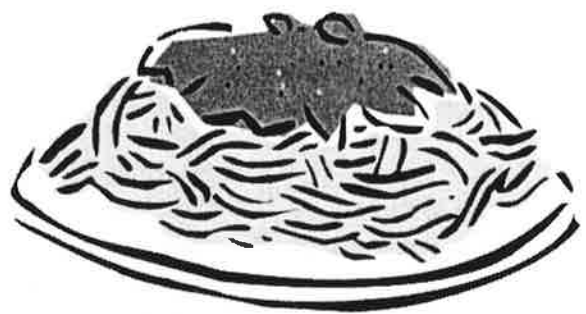
We started out with wrapping spoons and forks into napkins, then into preparing the water, coffee, milk. Most of the adults in charge made and passed out the food. When people started to come, they would come and sit down and wait for the adults to say the food was ready to eat. All ages from babies, to the elders, had spaghetti, bananas, bread sticks, and a cookie.

For some of us, this was our first time serving, but the other half of us, this was our 2<sup>nd</sup> time being down there. Most of the families or individuals there couldn't afford a good meal, or they needed a place to eat because they didn't have a

home to go to. This, for some of us, was an emotional ride. Renee Aymar was the one person to cry two times in a row. "It's just so sad to see a little two-year-old girl come in with her mom, who looks like she's only 19," Renee said.

But there were some pretty funny parts as well as sad. We met a young boy and girl there, whose mom was in charge of Loaves and Fishes, who seemed to enjoy Matt. So much, in fact, that the young girl drew a picture of Matt then said, "You have a mustache, just like mommy!"

After the night ended, we went back to Minnetonka High School, left for home satisfied, with five more volunteer hours. This was just one of the options for SLP (Service Learning Project); there was also Timber Bay, the walk-a-thon, and painting the Mini-School rooms.



**F. Scott Fitzgerald/J.J. Hill House  
tour  
By Erik Goderstad**

This year on March 10<sup>th</sup>, Jen's English class took a tour through downtown St. Paul of many places F. Scott Fitzgerald lived, worked, and played. We took this trip to support our curriculum which currently includes The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald. The trip was to see his boyhood home, workplace and residences while he lived in St. Paul. We also took a tour of the railroad tycoon, J.J. Hill's, residence on Summit Avenue. We visited the Hill house to get somewhat of an idea what life was like in the roaring twenties and to see how Gatsby would have lived.

We began our trip after first hour on the first warm Friday of the year. It was an interesting start because it was Jen's first time driving the van, but she was used to it soon after the start. We drove down to Summit and started by seeing a three-story apartment building where he lived with his parents during his sophomore year at Princeton. He also lived a few doors down, where he wrote his first book This Side of Paradise. These homes were on the less nice side of Summit Avenue.

After seeing these places, we had some time to kill so we drove by the capitol for a quick minute but there was no parking. After seeing the capitol we drove on to see the church which he was baptized in. From there we went on to the J.J. Hill House.

J.J. Hill was a railroad tycoon who began his career in the late 1800s when he and a group of investors purchased the dying St. Paul and Pacific railroad.

He worked incredibly hard to push the railroad North to Canada and into the West. By the end of his career he had amassed a significant fortune of about \$36 million. With this money, he was able to build the amazing estate in St. Paul now known as simply the J.J. Hill house. The mansion was completed in 1891 and was a grand way to show his success. It was 36,000 square feet on 5 floors. It contained 13 bathrooms, 22 fireplaces 16 chandeliers, a two story sky-lit art gallery and every technological advancement of the time. We took our tour of this amazing house which lasted about an hour.

After the tour we saw one more Fitzgerald residence before continuing on to the St. Paul Academy where he attended preparatory school. This was where the tour ended. After a long day of seeing some historical sites, we took a break and went over to McDonalds for a quick lunch. We finished eating and had some time to kill so we went over to enjoy the beautiful day at Harriet Island. We just ran around and enjoyed the day for a while before piling into the van for a final drive back to the school. This was our adventurous day of Fitzgerald and J.J. Hill which was a very successful trip.



Jen, Alex, Monica, Renee, Joe, Chase, Amanda, and Erik in front of one of F. Scott Fitzgerald's residences in St. Paul



## How Mini-School Helped Me

By Renee Aymar

I started at Minnetonka my freshman year and everything was going great; I had a lot of friends and my grades were good. About half way through the year, my grades started slipping because I didn't understand what I was learning and I was not getting the help I needed to fix my problem. There was no time for the teachers to wait for me to understand things because the class sizes were just too big. So my grades continued to slip and I ended up failing just about everything except gym. That's when I came into Mini-School.

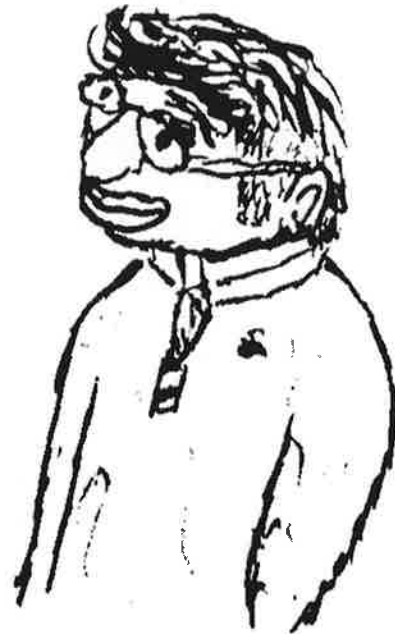
Since I have been in Mini-School my high school experience has made a huge turn around. I think this is because the classes are smaller and much more personal. I also feel like I can ask as many questions as I want without making everyone else mad about waiting for me. I also think that Mini-School has worked so well for me because I am learning about things that I am actually somewhat interested in and that makes it a lot easier to focus and do well.

One other reason I think that Mini-School has helped me is because there is rarely, if ever, homework. In main stream I would never do my homework because I would get home and forget

how to do it or have questions about it and no one to answer them. So doing all the work in class makes it easy to get help.

Mini-School is also helpful because I feel the teachers are way more down to earth and understanding and because of that they can teach in different and, I think, more effective ways.

When I was finishing my freshman year, I never thought graduating on time would be possible. Because of Mini-School and the wonderful staff, I am now on the right track towards graduating on time.



## Interview with Jen By Monica Sheats

*Q: Where do you live?*  
Minneapolis

*Q: Are you married?*  
No—divorced.

*Q: Do you have any kids?*  
Yes, one.

*Q: Boy or Girl? How old and what is her name?*  
She's a girl, fourteen, named Sarah.

*Q: What kind of music do you like?*  
Everything, really. Alternative, mostly. My favorite band right now is *The Decemberists*.

*Q: How long have you been teaching English in Mini-School?*  
I started second semester—  
January 23<sup>rd</sup>.

*Q: I know that you also teach some mainstream English classes. How do they compare?*  
My mainstream classes are larger and they get more homework. In my Mini-School class, I am able to form more of a relationship with the kids. They do all their work in class and I go by my first name there. Overall, it's a bit *more relaxed and I get to just be myself*.

*Q: Which do you like teaching more and why?*

I like teaching both equally. I get different experiences from each. I get to work on alternative teaching styles and interpersonal communication skills in Mini-School. I get to hone some different areas of my teaching style in

mainstream and communication is different because they are larger groups.

*Q: What was your first impression of Mini-School?*

I was excited because I came from Washburn High School in South Minneapolis and I knew that I would really miss some of the diversity and challenges that I had there. Mini-School kids remind me of Washburn kids and I am excited to work in this setting. I was overall excited but also nervous because I knew that you guys were suspicious of new teachers and I wasn't sure if you guys would like me!

*Q: What would you like to see brought to Mini-School that we don't have?*

I like the program meetings and would like to see more of those because they do a great job of helping us build a sense of community here.



## Impressions of Mini-School

Molly Piotter

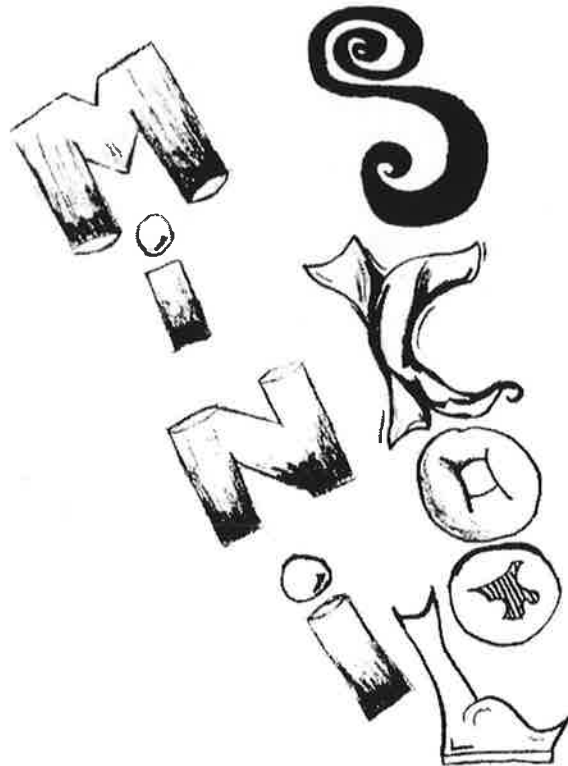
Recently, we passed out a survey to a class of mainstream students. We found out that there are a lot of misconceptions and kids probably don't know much about Mini-School. This might help clear things up.

Mini-School is actually a program within the school that helps kids with individual learning issues. Mini-School is not an easy way out, it's for people who have issues with credit, attendance, family, etc. and need more help to graduate, among other things. We do school work just like mainstream students. One of our students says, "I think Mini-School is possibly one of the best programs ever thought of. Without it, I never would have graduated and since I joined three-years-ago, my life has done nothing but prospered."

At one time we used to get credit for camping, but it wasn't only camping for fun. Students had to work for service learning project hours and the trips were also good for character building. We could get credit for PE, Health, and Science. We no longer have this as an opportunity.

It is true that some students in Mini-School may have issues with chemical dependency, just like some mainstream students do. But Mini-School is not just a school for students who do drugs. People are often in Mini-School for credit problems, or because they like the small-classes and atmosphere. It is also true that some students in Mini-School may have issues with ADD or ADHD, just like some mainstream kids do. But

again, it is not a problem with all Mini-School students.



It is also true the people in Mini-School are diverse and have unique issues, but this does not make them abnormal. Kids in mainstream are also diverse and have unique issues. Every student has unique needs and learning styles that simply can't be addressed in mainstream classes. The alternative for many students is Mini-School. One Mini-School student says, "I think Mini-School is one of the best programs created for this school. Without this program I would not graduate or even be at school this year".

Students in Mini-School care about grades just like mainstream kids do. If the students in Mini-School didn't care about school and grades they wouldn't

## Impressions Cont'd

be in an alternative program changing their grades and coming to school at all.

We work just as hard as Mainstream kids just in an environment that addresses our individual needs. The people are just doing their work at a slower pace and the work is mostly done in class. One Mini-School student points out, "The same things happen in here as in mainstream, we do work and learn the same things that mainstream does and what we don't finish in class, we take home as homework."

Most of the kids in Mini-School stay in school the whole day; some may be in school for half the day and are in work-programs or are taking classes at local colleges the rest of the time.

Despite the misconceptions out there, the students in the Mini-School program have nothing but good things to say about the program. It has helped each and every student in different ways. Students tell us they like Mini-School because, "Mini-School cares about their students. We are a family. The kids that join find a renewed faith in the school system and teachers...the teachers in the school are there to try and help." It just may be harder for some students than others to learn within mainstream teaching. But they do have an alternative in Mini-School where the teachers know their individual needs so that they can succeed to the best of their ability.

\* \* \*





## **Conquering the St. Croix (Or did it Conquer Us?)**

**By Jen Goepfert**

Whew! I can't believe the year is ending! What a whirlwind semester! I have a ton of memories of Mini School, but my favorite is most definitely of our canoe trip to the St. Croix River.

I decided to end the year on a quiet reflective note with a brief introduction to American Nature writers. When I found out that Mini-School owned canoes, I couldn't believe our luck! I decided to take my class out of the school for the day so they could "get their feet wet."

I invited Paul Gerten back to help out with the trip. Paul is a former Mini-School teacher who now works with Wilderness Inquiry, an outfit that provides outdoor adventure experiences. Even though I am a huge outdoor enthusiast and have been canoeing hundreds of times, I knew that I would need help with this trip. I was so grateful to have Paul with us on this trip. His expertise and his experience came in handy.

Together, we planned a trip that would start at Interstate State Park, just south of Taylor's Falls, and would end about 16 miles downriver at William O'Brien State park. I had canoed a section of this run before and Paul was familiar with the whole route. We decided to take the kids out on Tuesday, May 23<sup>rd</sup>. My plan was to enjoy a nice, leisurely paddle downstream, stop for lunch, journal for a bit, and finish up around five o'clock. Of course, I should have known that Mother Nature doesn't usually care about your plans.

The morning of the 23<sup>rd</sup>, Rosalind Turner helped Paul and me load the canoes and get the trailer ready for the trip. The rest of the class was ready and waiting for us: Alex Lopex, Chase Crowley, Renee Aymar, Amanda Frederick, Steve Iversrud, Chris Guilfoil, Molly Piotter, and Monica Sheats all joined us. Paul even brought his dog, Murphy! We left the high school around 8:30. Ramona was a huge help. She followed the Mini-School van and canoes and shuttled the van to our take-out site after she dropped us off. Thanks Ramona!

When we unloaded at Interstate, everyone was abuzz with excitement. Paul and I, being the old fogies of the group, slathered ourselves with a ton of sunscreen. We reminded everyone to lotion up but were met with a chorus of, "I never burn." Yeah, I've heard that one before. We loaded up the canoes and headed out.

The weather was beautiful for the most part but we were paddling into some pretty nice headwinds for the majority of the trip. This meant that at some times, when the wind came up hard, if we stopped paddling, we would start going backwards. But we made it through the first leg of the trip in the time I had figured and we had a great time paddling around and laughing.

We stopped midway for lunch where, after gorging ourselves on sandwiches, chips and cookies, students grabbed their notebooks and found a quiet spot to journal alone. There, they began making observations and writing impressions about the river and our trip so far. Some of the students even wrote poetry. It was

## Canoe Trip Cont'd

nice to see everyone engaged in their notebooks for a while.

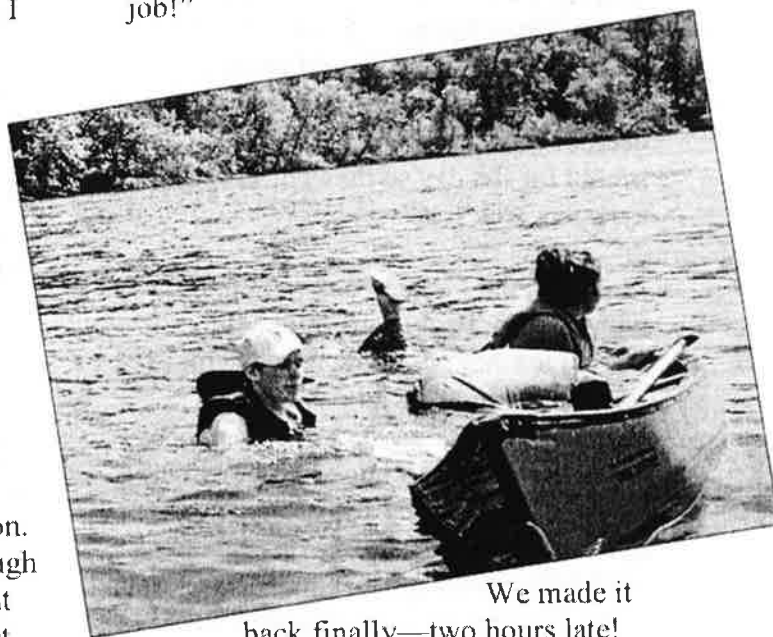
After lunch, we loaded back up and headed into the second leg of the trip. I started noticing some pretty pink skin everywhere I looked, and my sunscreen suddenly became very popular. The wind kicked up pretty heavy during some moments and I could see fatigue setting in. Monica Sheats and I started lagging behind the crew. I have to say, I am more out of shape than I thought. This kind of stuff used to be so easy!

Suddenly, up ahead, I noticed something was off. There was a canoe upside down in the water! I yelled, "Paddle, Monica! Paddle!" We paddled as quickly as we could and pulled up alongside the overturned canoe. Amanda and Alex were swimming next to the canoe! I, of course, had to document it all. While I was snapping pictures, Paul, ever the calm expert, organized a rescue mission. (Honestly, the water was shallow enough for Alex to stand up in). Paul was great at getting everyone together to help get Amanda and Alex and the overturned canoe close to shore where we could right their canoe and get back in. They climbed in shaken, but fine, and we headed back down.

The trip was tough at times. Chase and Molly covered twice as much area as everyone else since they zigzagged across the river all the way down. Once, when I looked over at them, Molly was facing backward and Chase was singing loudly into the wind. Delirium had clearly set in. They started lagging way behind on the last leg and I felt bad that I had made everyone go so far! The hour

started to get late and I realized we were never going to make it back by 5.

We stopped for one final rest. a few of us waded or swam, we tossed Chris's football around and that slap-happiness that comes with exhaustion set in. Renee got the giggles and Steve was starting to get that faraway look that told me he was checking out mentally. But I looked around at my sunburned, tired crew and thought to myself, "Wow, I love my job!"



We made it back finally—two hours late! Everyone hit the wall right toward the end but when we pulled in to our take-out spot, I saw smiles and pats on the back. We had made it. Despite the fatigue, there was a lot of chatter and laughter on the long ride home.

The trip was fantastic. I had a great time out there and it was compounded by the happiness I found when I read through everyone's journals back at school. I want to thank each and every student on that trip, Paul, Ramona and even Murphy the Dog. What a great trip. You guys Rock!

## BEING RESPONSIBLE

BY: MATT DOLS, KERI HANSON AND MORGAN DVORAK

**B**E THE BIGGER PERSON

**E**NFORCE THE SOBER DRIVER

**I**N EVERY SITUATION

**N**EVER DRIVE DRUNK

**G**ET SOMEONE TO DRIVE THAT HASN'T DRANK

**R**EMEMBER THE LAW

**E**VERYONE GETS CAUGHT

**S**O DON'T BE STUPID

**P**ASS THE KEYS ALONG

**O**R YOU WILL DIE

**N**O ONE SHOULD DRINK AND DRIVE

**S**OBER IS THE ONLY WAY

**I**F YOU WANT TO LIVE TO SEE ANOTHER DAY

**B**E RESPONSIBLE

**L**ET SOMEONE ELSE DRIVE

**E**VERY TIME

# Halloween



scary, hairy spiders  
leaky creaky pipes  
wind blowing  
children showing fright  
pumpkins candy and scary black cats. witches wearing  
big black hats. kids in power ranger suits, hot  
teenage nurses looking cute, toilet paper and  
razor blades, party'n and getting laid  
on a sweet moonlit night.  
halloween oh so right

Sia  
Hilary  
NICK E.

# BY ALEX LOPEZ

## MINI SCHOOL WORD SEARCH

N	I	G	E	H	S	N	R	T	E	I	S	G	H	C	V	D	E	E	L	E	T	T	N	
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ramona

matt

merlin

english

history

math

slp

minimeetings

graduate

credits

mary

jen

minischolar

timberbay

walkathon

loavesandfish

meandering

tattoos

minifamily

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Special Thanks to each and every student in Mini-School  
for all their hard work and dedication this year!



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**Have a great**  
**summer!!**