

A tribute to people and places

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Let's start 2008 with a short list of 2007's outstanding people and places:

1. Rushford-Peterson's courageous citizens: Faced with a ferocious flooding, RP area citizens helped each other, challenged others to help, and stood up for their community. RP tops my 2007 Minnesota list for courageous communities.
2. Anoka Hennepin's STEP program. We're learning that attending some form of post-secondary education dramatically increases a person's chances of achieving their financial goals, and living a healthier life. That does not mean everyone needs to attend a four year college or university. The STEP program helps high school students develop strong, marketable skills, and explore careers in fields like carpentry, graphic design and emergency medicine. It's a great model, and deserves to be widely replicated.
3. Elk River District and St. Paul Community of Peace Charter became two of the first Minnesota to create "green roofs" on their buildings. Researchers suggest that this approach will help save energy and help young people learn ways they can conserve.
4. Representatives Debra Hilstrom of Brooklyn Center and Representative Mindy Greiling, of Roseville. Together, these strong public school advocates stood up to the Minnesota State High School League. The League backed away from a proposal to restrict students who wanted to participate transfer to another school to participate in debate, drama or music competitions. While eager to restrict student movement for athletics, league officials acknowledged they have not disciplined a single athletic coach for recruiting in the last five years.
5. Kaidi Williams-Jankowski, one of the winner's in a Minnesota statewide writing contest, wrote "Geek is chic" in her essay. Kaidi, a student at the Woodbury Math and Science and wrote how her school respects and honors academic achievement.
6. Shannon Peterson and Cameron Hedlund of the Forest Lake Area. Peterson, a parents, and Hedlund, a three decade veteran of public schools, worked together to create Lakes International Academy where elementary students learn both English and Spanish. The school attracts students for more than 20 miles, and dedicated a new home in 2007.
7. Wayne Roberts, a retired Macalester college professor, has for more than two decades, has been one of the architects and guiding spirits of Minnesota's Math League. Roberts calls participants in this league "mathletes" and has worked ceaselessly to attract the kind of attention and respect to these young people that outstanding football, hockey and

and basketball players receive.

8. Stonehenge - an incredible set of stones erected thousands of years ago on plains west of London. Since reading about Stonehenge more than 50 years ago, I've wanted to visit. 2007 was the year. Stonehenge was awesome! It's a reminder that if there is some place you want to visit, make doing so a priority.

9. Karen, a former student, who contacted me after 35 years to say "Thanks". Stonehenge and Karen represent two examples of my new years resolution: Do not wait for "someday." This is the year I will try to carry out acts of kindness, exploration or questioning, that I have long wanted to do. One never knows about the future. My resolution and recommendation is "don't leave it to fate in 2008!"

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