

June 2025

GRIZZLY CHRONICLES



The newsletter for and about alumni of Skyline High School

SGAA finds role as supplemental funder with scholarships and aid for academic team

For the third year in a row, the Skyline Grizzlies Alumni Association presented \$1,000 scholarships to two graduating seniors.

The SGAA asks school administrators to direct the funds to students for whom the aid may make the difference in their ability to attend college. The 2025 scholarships were awarded to Ella Price and Hannah Vollmer.

The SGAA scholarship program targets people “who ought to be helped,” said SGAA Vice-President George Groberg, '70. “When people have the ability to do well with learning and they’re held back only by lack of funding, that is a very effective place to use the funds,” he said.

Earlier this spring, the association gave \$500 to the Skyline Scholastic Team. The grant supplemented funds the team raised on its own to help pay for travel to a national competition in Washington, D.C.

Alumni financial assistance represents an evolving role the SGAA board believes will become a significant part of the organization’s mission.

“I see it as an appropriate thing for an alumni association,” Treasurer Garth Blanchard, '71, said. Some associations focus on service to alumni, but the SGAA needs to increase its membership first. “We’re not there yet,” he said.



Blanchard would like to see the SGAA fund six to eight groups a year, “focus more on the academic side of things,” and leave support of Skyline athletes to the Booster Club.

In the past, the district funded extensive extra-curricular activities. For many alumni, SGAA President Bob Schoch said, those activities became the most memorable part of their high school education. With the state legislature limiting funding, the state’s public schools backed away from paying for extra-curricular activities decades ago, the SGAA’s Steve Smith said.

“Things have changed. I don’t remember the money struggles in our years at the school,” Blanchard said. “Now virtually all (Idaho) school districts have to ask for supplemental levies to cover operating expenses.”

He said there were “maybe 10 supplemental levies” on ballots in southeastern Idaho for the May 20 election.



Recipients of the SGAA’s 2025 scholarships, Ella Price, above, and Hannah Vollmer, left, were all smiles at the May 27 graduation ceremony.

Inside this issue

- Alumni volunteer to be interviewed for senior projects
- Skyline students qualify for state and national academic competitions
- Class reunions planned for Summer 2025
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Activities

Booster Club Golf Scramble: June 21

The Skyline Booster Club will host its fifth annual Golf Scramble, Saturday June 21 at Sage Lake Golf Course in Idaho Falls.

Four-person teams will compete in the 18-hole tournament with prizes awarded to the top three teams. The winning team will receive the coveted Blue Suit Jacket from Ferrell's Clothing, considered the equivalent of the green jacket given the winner of the Masters Tournament. Prizes also will be awarded for closest to the pin, longest putt, and best team spirit, often awarded to the team with the best costumes.

This is a major fundraising event for the Booster Club. In addition to entry fees, donated gift baskets will be raffled. No need to be a golfer to attend and throw tickets into the buckets attached to favorite baskets.

The Skyline Booster Club supports both athletic and academic endeavors of Skyline students.

For more information about how to participate, provide gift baskets or to donate, please contact Lisa Allen at Lisa.allen5@rocketmail.com

Save the Date: Homecoming 2025 is October 10

Let this be the homecoming parade in which you ride on a float and throw candy (or do it again)! Alumni will be celebrated at Skyline's homecoming this year with a float in the parade, group recognition at the football game, and an evening social event. For details, visit the SGAA website, [SkylineGrizzliesAlumniAssoc.org](https://skylinegrizzliesalumniassoc.org).



Alumni volunteers offer to share expertise with students for senior projects

Twenty-six alumni with 40 different areas of expertise volunteered this spring to be interviewed by a member of Skyline's Class of 2026. The interviews will partially fulfill a graduation requirement: a senior project that demonstrates the student's ability to gather, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information. An interview with someone who has expertise in the topic area is required.

"I want to thank all of you for your willingness to help our seniors," senior project advisor Julie Nawrocki told the Skyline Grizzlies Alumni Association. As they develop their projects, students get a boost when they have a list of topics for which knowledgeable adults have agreed to be interviewed, she said.

Topic areas for which Skyline alumni volunteered include acting, carpentry, cattle ranching, design, editing, firefighting, hospital administration, international relations, landscaping, medicine, project management, technical writing, and more.

Students must select their topic and arrange the interview. It is possible that many alumni who volunteered will not be contacted. "Even so, a long list showing a wide variety of occupations filled by Skyline alumni sends a supportive and inspiring message to current students," said SGAA board member Kari McKim, '70.

The SGAA easily can add names to the list of willing alumni experts. Alumni who have expertise they want to offer should email their name, area(s) of expertise, and contact information to SkylineGrizzliesAlums@gmail.com with a subject line that includes 'Senior project interview.'

Can you help the SGAA spotlight alumni accomplishments?

Over 50-plus years, Skyline has sent more than 16,000 graduates into the world. Among those people, there must thousands of great stories. Did the person voted the "Most likely to be a politician" actually win election to office? How about the "Most likely to star in a viral video?"

The SGAA works to uncover and feature alumni stories in two ways: Alumni achievers, and the Skyline Hall of Fame. Alumni achievers are people who have accomplished good things in either career or community—the kind of thing that makes classmates think, "Way to go!" and current students think, "Hey, I can do that!" Recognition takes several forms; achievers are featured in the SGAA's social media posts, in short spots on Skyline's Jumbotron during breaks in sports events, and in newsletter items like the stories here, to the right.

The Skyline Hall of Fame is the second way the SGAA features alumni successes. The Hall of Fame is a lifetime achievement award, which memorializes members of the Skyline community who have provided significant service to the school, community, state, or nation. Recipients are inducted during the school's awards ceremony in May and commemorated with a permanent plaque displayed in Skyline's main hallway.

"Telling the stories of alumni accomplishments helps us to build pride and unity within our Skyline community," said SGAA Vice-president George Groberg, '70.

If you know someone whose story could be featured in this way, please go to the SGAA website at <https://skylinegrizzliesalumniassoc.org> and click on the "Alumni Recognition" tab.

Skyline students win spots in state and national speech, history scholastic competitions

In regional competitions this spring, more than a dozen Skyline students qualified for state or national academic tournaments.

Speech and Debate advisor Christine Hubbard said nine students were selected to compete at the State Speech Tournament in events that included impromptu and panel discussion, informative speaking, communication analysis, broadcast journalism, and retold story.

Skyline also did well in regional contests associated with International Academic Competitions, which are Jeopardy-style events requiring fast answers to questions covering a broad range of knowledge. In March, the Skyline team took second place in the regional Science Bowl competition, and four students qualified for the National History Bowl in Arlington, VA, in April, according to SHS biology teacher McKenna Klepfer.

The trips to national contests provide students an opportunity to compete with the best of the best. Travel costs are not covered by the school district, so students must raise their own funds. The History Bowl team appealed to the SGAA for support and was granted \$500.

The SGAA hopes to become a reliable backstop for student fundraising efforts and will develop a protocol for school clubs to follow when they seek support in future years.



Larry Morris, '70, was a track athlete and Key Club vice-president who succeeded as an author. Specializing in history of the American West, Larry's books have been published by Oxford and Yale University Presses, Deseret Book, and other publishing houses. Morris now has 10 books listed on Amazon and 17 on Goodreads. He is one of only six authors whose work on Lewis and Clark is recommended by Encyclopedia Britannica. His 2004 book, *The Fate of the Corps*, was praised by *Choice*, a source used by academic librarians, as "among the best books in the crowded world" of Lewis and Clark history books.



Casper (Cap) Bendixsen, '03, worked a part-time job during high school as cowboy, horse trainer, and wrangler on the X Lazy J Ranch near Idaho Falls. That sparked his lifelong passion for agriculture and rural communities.

Now, Cap — Dr. Bendixsen at work — is a tenured research scientist and director of the National Farm Medicine Center at the renowned Marshfield Clinic Research Institute in Wisconsin. Among his projects: Investigating why children who grow up on farms have stronger immune systems; farm safety advocacy; and delivery of agricultural safety and health information to rural communities.

Activities

Ten alumni enjoy annual ski day at Grand Targhee

The third annual SGAA ski trip attracted 10 alumni who enjoyed both alpine and Nordic skiing at Grand Targhee on March 5.

The alpine skiers were together for runs in the morning and early afternoon. Over lunch they discussed skiing adventures and reminisced about some of the legendary skiers from Skyline High School.

"We enjoyed the views of the Teton range and an after-ski gathering at the end of the day," trip organizer Bob Schoch, '70, said.

Some in the group have skied together since the mid-1960s, when they learned to ski at Kelly Canyon, and three areas now closed: Taylor Mountain, Pine Basin, and Bear Gulch Ski Basin. In those days, Jackson Hole was just opening with ticket prices of \$5/day, and Sun Valley tickets were \$3.75, with single chairs and blankets to stay warm.

Schoch plans to organize the fourth annual ski trip during the first week of March in 2026.

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**Skyline Grizzlies
Alumni Association**

We are needed. You are needed. A note from the SGAA Board

Alumni of Skyline High School already know that America's public schools are changing.

This decade began with a pandemic that forced educators to improvise new teaching methods and that strained students' and communities' relationship with their schools. Chronic absenteeism, for example, was at an historic low before the pandemic but now hovers, nationally, around 28%.

Education funding is complex and often controversial. A decade before the Covid pandemic, the Great Recession destabilized funding, adding to the financial challenges facing the nation's schools. Public education spending in Idaho is low compared to other states. Nevertheless, Idaho's public educators consistently deliver better results than the funding level might indicate.

Why are we telling you this? An alumni association cannot reverse national financial and demographic trends, nor is it our role to lobby legislators about public education funding.

We are bringing this up because educating our youth is necessary to both our economy and our democracy. Supporting our school is not just about money. It is also about skills, talent, and time. Alumni can, right now, help the students and faculty of Skyline make the best of the situation.

Inside this newsletter, you can read about several initiatives involving SGAA volunteers who deliver much-needed support to today's Skyline community. Along with the efforts of the parents in Skyline's strong Booster Club, we believe we can do even better in the coming year. We hope this newsletter will elicit ideas for supporting the school and its students and will inspire you to participate in the SGAA by donating either time or money, or by helping us to guide and grow the organization.

The Class of 2025 wraps up its high school experience

Nearly 300 Skyline seniors graduated during ceremonies May 27 at the Mountain America Center in Idaho Falls.

Born in 2006 and 2007, they knew only Barack Obama as American president until they were 10 years old. For them, the COVID pandemic is a middle-school memory.

Zach Nielsen, current student body president, is aware that his peers' high school experience is a lot different than the experience his parents remember. "We sit at the same desks that they did but they used a paper and a pencil every day and we use a computer."

Fallon Johnson, senior class president, agreed. "Cell phones and the internet were in their infancy," she said. "Researching was more in-depth and more difficult. They used the Dewey decimal system."

Still, it was a low-tech memory that came first to their minds when they were asked to identify a highlight of their years at Skyline:

"We had two gas leaks exactly a year apart. Both days school was cancelled. It was great," Nielsen offered. Johnson concurred, listing the gas leaks at the top of her list of big events the class will remember.

Zach Nielsen, left, served as student body president in 2024-25. Fallon Johnson was senior class president.

Photo: McKenna Klepfer



Class reunions in 2025

To be put in touch with the organizers of the following reunions, email SkylineGrizzliesAlums@gmail.com.

Class of 1970 – (55) Sept 5; Steve Smith

Class of 1975 – (50) Aug. 15-16; David Collette

Class of 1985 – (40) June 27; Cristie Perry

Class of 1995 – (30) July 5; Rikki Watkins

Class of 2005 – (20) July 5; Ken Frei

Class of 2015 – (10) July 19; Maria (Anderson) Smith

Please let us know of any other reunions not listed here, and [follow us on Facebook](#) for updates.