



VILLISCA
ALUMNI AND FRIENDS
 • ASSOCIATION •

BLUEJAY
PRIDE

VAFA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Executive Committee

Gail Maxwell-President
 Donna Robinson-Vice President
 Jeff Focht-Secretary
 Jim Robinson-Treasurer
 Marcia Schrader-At Large
 Doug Darnold-At Large
 Pat Shipley - Past President

Decade Representatives

50's-Linda Moore '55
 60's-Mary Lynn Poston '63, Jim Robinson '67
 70's-Tom Shipley '71, Marcia Schrader '77
 80's-Mary Carlson '84
 90's-WE NEED MEMBERS!
 00's-Trisha Fast '00

Members at Large

Doug Darnold '69
 Shari Fulton '67
 Pat Shipley '71
 Gail Maxwell '74
 Donna Robinson '75
 Jeff Focht '76

Ex Officio Member

Joe Erickson, Superintendent
 Liz Timmerman - Principal
 Shona Means - Lead Teacher

Next meeting of the VAFA Board
 May 3, 2026, 1:30, Villisca Middle School

VAFA Mission Statement:

The mission of Villisca Alumni and Friends Association is to support the educational opportunities in the Villisca school system.

Please help keep the website up to date, check us out at villiscaalumni.org

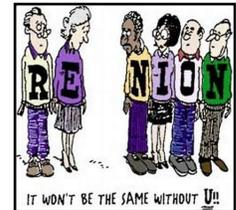
Email Class Reunion plans, information about class members, and address changes to: villiscaalumniandfriends@gmail.com

VAFA is on Facebook - join the group and become a fan at **Villisca Alumni and Friends Association**, over 600 members and growing!

Mailing Address:

VAFA PO Box 45 Villisca, IA 50864

Plan Now! Attend the All School Reunion and Heritage Days July 3rd, 4th and 5th



To kick off the weekend events the VAFA Board will be hosting a Sip and Snack gathering at 113 North 2nd Avenue on Friday, July 3rd, from 5:00 - 7:00. Tents and chairs will be set up with complimentary beverages and snacks provided. This will be a chance to sit and catch up with fellow classmates, alumni and friends in a relaxing atmosphere.

Tentative events of the weekend - more detailed list to be posted on the VAFA Facebook page and webpage at a later date:

Thursday, July 2nd :

- Horse Pull

Friday, July 3rd:

- Sip and Snack
- Supper hosted by a civic group at the football field
- Family activities hosted by Villisca Community Betterment Association
- DJ/Music
- Fireworks

Saturday, July 4th:

- Pancake Breakfast
- Farmer's Market
- Parade (We encourage classes to have a float!)
- Lunch provided by local establishments and food trucks
- Photo Ops downtown
- Activities in the Park - Ferris wheel, Face painting, money drop, children's games
- Street Dance

Sunday, July 5th

- Church in the Park
- Golf Tournament

Message from VAFA President Gail Maxwell

Villisca Alumni and Friends,

VAFA is beginning its 20th year serving the Villisca community and its schools. During 2025 VAFA donated \$17,422 to assist teachers and staff, support student activities and field trips, and aid in community outreach.

Villisca has changed over the years but it has always been supported by the people who live here and those maintaining ties to the community. I am proud to say that VAFA has been a part of that support. It has 352 members, with 123 of those being lifetime members. Our oldest member is from the class of '44 and our youngest member is a 2013 graduate. Besides alumni, our members are friends or current and past teachers, administrators and staff of the Villisca/SWV Schools.

I'm sure as you read this newsletter you remember many events from your school years here. A few things I remember are the kindergarten train ride, the Shrine Circus, assemblies by Al Bell, the state basketball tournament in 1968 (All the way to state in '68!), field trips with Mr. Gifford, and many other events. VAFA helps provide similar experiences for the students today by funding all field trips and providing stipends for students qualifying for national competitions. We also help provide resources for the classrooms that go beyond the school budget. This is why your membership and donations are so important to all students in our district, especially the west campus of Villisca.

Please consider becoming a member in 2026 and help with these important opportunities. Membership fees remain the same as when VAFA began 20 years ago: \$25 for a single membership, \$500 for a single lifetime membership, or \$750 for a lifetime couple. Dues can be mailed in the **enclosed envelope, paid online** at villiscaalumni.org by selecting the "Become a Member" tab, **or through Venmo** (search for Villisca Alumni and Friends Association).

Thank you from each member of our board to all who have supported VAFA or plan to through membership, donations, or memorials! You truly do make a difference to the students of our schools and to our community!

Sincerely,
Gail (Stein) Maxwell, Class of '74

Thank you!!

We would like to extend a huge thank you to Pat Shipley for her service as president of VAFA for the past five years. She has done an excellent job leading VAFA and will continue on as a member of the Board of Directors. Her experience and expertise are invaluable. Thank you, Pat!



With respect and regret the VAFA Board accepted Ed Peterson's resignation from the board. We extend an



enormous thank you to Ed for his many years of service on the board, especially for his countless hours of compiling and updating mailing and email addresses, membership lists, and for the many statistical spreadsheets he created.

We mourn the loss of Susie Enarson, a 1957 graduate and founding member of VAFA. Susie was past president and the original and long time editor of this newsletter. Susie was a very active member of the community and was former mayor. Recently Susie had been a resident of Clarinda but she remained forever a Bluejay.



Memorials have been given in memory of deceased graduates and friends of Villisca Schools. A list of these names is printed on www.villiscaalumni.org. Thank you to those who have donated in this manner. Memorials may be sent PO Box 45, Villisca, Iowa 50864

Welcome to new SWV superintendent Joe Erickson

The new superintendent of Southwest Valley, Mr. Joe Erickson, began in the district in July. He grew up south of Massena, graduated from Cumberland-Massena, and his first teaching job was at Corning Elementary. After working as a principal and superintendent in northern Iowa, he feels that returning to Southwest Valley has been like coming back home. He has family in Massena and Red Oak, and he has fond memories of playing golf and other sports at both Villisca and Corning.



When asked about his observations and perspectives as he is becoming familiar with our two school districts, he said, "I am truly impressed most of all by the people - students, staff, families and the communities." From elementary to high school, he has been very impressed with the staff. He has seen students working hard in the classroom, in activities, and in the communities.

A key success of Southwest Valley has been coordinating and working as a cohesive team. Mr. Erickson noted that, "Individual qualities of communities and buildings provide cherished identities, whether it be the Harris Harmony Walking Trail and Wellness Center at Enarson Elementary or the John J. Harris Wrestling Tournament at SWV High School. Together Villisca and Corning provide opportunities for students that would be impossible without the Whole Grade Sharing Agreement." He has felt a true sense of pride in the work of the staff to prepare students to be tremendous citizens.

When asked about his vision for Southwest Valley, Mr. Erickson believes it will be a continuous process of improvement, in which the district reviews and evaluates initiatives in order to improve. Successes will be celebrated together, and input will be taken in order to have the district remain innovative and to provide for students' and communities' needs. It's important to partner with others, whether it's in academics, the trades or colleges. Achievement, facilities, district finances, and maintaining a positive employee culture as one of the largest employers in the area are all priorities.

Finally, Mr. Erickson is happy to be here, and is grateful for the flexibility of many entities in the name of helping students. The community and community groups here (such as VAFA, Lions, Rotary, etc.) are stronger and more connected to the schools than any other place he has been.

Speaking of Superintendents Let's Catch up with Former Teacher/Superintendent Teresa Nook

Teresa, a '75 graduate of Lenox High School and NWMSU grad, joined the Villisca teaching staff in 1984 as an English instructor where she taught grades 7-12 for 14 years. She also taught evening adjunct classes in English and communication for IWCC and in education and reading for Buena Vista.

While at Villisca she began to take classes in administration. In 1999 Teresa left Villisca to pursue administrative jobs. In 2004 she returned as the superintendent where she led the district for 5 years. After 18 years of teaching and 18 years in administration she retired in 2017 while serving as an administrator for the Clarinda schools.



Teresa has many fond memories of her time in Villisca, both in teaching and administration. Her students will remember her no nonsense rules, such as "no gum" and "no fuzzy edges". Her goal was always to get students to think. One assignment was to identify all of the events in the Billy Joel song "We Didn't Start the Fire". This ignited them to read books which had been banned in order to understand these events. If students' assignments weren't done they were "Nooked", which entailed staying after school, much to the annoyance of the coaching staff. She wanted her students to learn English, but Teresa's main objective was for students to function and thrive as they became adults. She wanted every student to feel recognized and cared for. Teresa remains an active citizen in both Villisca and Clarinda. She still believes "Knowledge is Power".

VAFA Dollars Impact Students and Community

In addition to supporting our students through the schools, VAFA contributes to their well-being away from school. This year we donated to the Feed the Pack Program as well as the We Care Program which is administered by the Villisca Interchurch Council. This program provides holiday meals for families. Both programs help our students and their families facing food insecurity.



We Care representative, Shari Fulton, accepts a donation from VAFA Board member Jim Robinson.

A few other things we provided funding for this year beyond our normal expenditures were:

- New bleachers for the baseball diamond. The previous bleachers were unsightly and unsafe. We assisted the school in the purchase of these bleachers.
- The refinishing of the sign at the Harris Harmony Trail.



A Soggy Day Turns Sweet

Here is a highlight of one of the VAFA sponsored field trips. Mother Nature did not cooperate with the kindergarten trip to Blank Park Zoo. However, the day ended on a sweet note, thanks to alumnus Phil Garland, class of '63. Phil, a SWV bus driver, treated students and staff with a special stop at Dairy Queen where he provided ice cream for the entire bus.



Wow! Amazing Work by Students!

The sixth grade students at SWV Middle School created models of cells using Tinker Cad, an app for 3d design, and the 3D printers purchased by VAFA through their teacher wish program. We love seeing the excited faces of students learning!



Villisca Community Betterment Association

This organization, formerly the Chamber of Commerce, has stepped up to fulfill the need of a community newspaper. They are now publishing a monthly informational newsletter entitled "As Seen In Villisca". This can be found at villiscabetterment.com or printed copies are available at various businesses in town.

VAFA is collaborating with the Betterment Association to provide a fun-filled All School Reunion and Heritage Days. Please plan to attend!

If your class is planning a reunion or get together during the All School Reunion be sure to let us know at villiscaalumniandfriends@gmail.com. We will post it on future flyers, Facebook posts, and on the VAFA webpage.

Memberships, donations and memorials may now be paid through Venmo. Search for Villisca Alumni and Friends from your Venmo account.