



OFFICE OF THE WASHINGTON COUNTY ATTORNEY

PETER J. ORPUT COUNTY ATTORNEY

Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Washington County Attorney's Office Announces "Pledge to Graduate" Award Winners

Washington County Attorney's Office announced the hosting of events at East Ridge High School in Woodbury and White Bear Lake High School. The events were designed to reward students who had made the commitment to graduate from high school. The County Attorney's office has made a significant effort to raise awareness of the importance of high school graduation, so, this past school year the office sponsored a drawing online whereby students could sign a Pledge to Graduate from high school. The winners of the drawing could win an iPad. Late Washington County Attorney Pete Orput started this event in 2013 and has continued it each year.

Washington County Attorney's Office acknowledged East Ridge High School in Woodbury student, Samuel Tran (a resident of Newport, MN), as the winner of an iPad which was presented by the Washington County Attorney's Office.

Washington County Attorney's Office acknowledged White Bear Lake High School student Calista Castonaguay (a resident of Hugo, MN), as the winner of an iPad which was presented by the Washington County Attorney's Office.

The Washington County Attorney's Office has placed a high priority on school attendance, education and graduation for all students living in the County. Washington County has a three level Truancy Program that involves addressing poor school attendance. Assistant County Attorney Betsey Urbas runs the program, along with staff from Washington County Community Services. Both agencies work in partnership with school officials from eight different school districts that serve Washington County students. When a child has 3-5 days of unexcused absences from school, they are referred to the County Attorney's Office. These students and their parents are sent a letter urging them to attend an Attendance Intervention Meeting (AIM) where they hear from the County Attorney the importance of school attendance and obtaining a high school diploma. Those students who continue to be truant from school are then asked to meet with school and county officials to develop a diversion contract which is designed to address the specific reasons for absences, provide services and avoid the court process. If these additional efforts are unsuccessful, the student and their parents are petitioned to court.

As Pete Orput always stated, "We know that if we don't educate our children, we will end up incarcerating them down the road. 71% of our inmates in Minnesota have dropped out of high school. If we can make a difference in just one student's life and convince them to graduate from high school, our efforts will be worth it."

East Ridge High School in Woodbury – Winner - May 19, 2022



Present were: Betsey Urbas, Assistant Washington County Attorney; Adam Hayes, Assistant Principal, East Ridge High School; Student Winner Samuel Tran; Student Parent Van Phan; Wayne A. Johnson, Washington County Commissioner; Brent Wartner, First Assistant Washington County Attorney

White Bear Lake High School - Winner – May 24, 2022



Present were: Betsey Urbas, Assistant Washington County Attorney; Student Parent Tammy Castonguay; Student Winner Calista Castonaguay; Brent Wartner, First Assistant Washington County Attorney; Matthew Young, Assistant Principal, White Bear Lake High School

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