



# The Bluebird

A Publication for the Alumni of Goessel High School

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## Names, Numbers: Our Identity

One definition of identity is who we are and the way we think about ourselves. Our identity is also associated with our names. According to American author Ralph Ellison, “It is through our names that we first place ourselves in the world. Our names, being the gift of others, must be made our own.” Generally, when we meet someone new, our name is usually the first piece of information about ourselves that we share. It is often one of the first markers of our identity that others learn.

Specific surnames run deep in the early history of the Goessel community as well as the Goessel High School. Understanding the history of education among the Mennonites within the Goessel area helps make the connection between surnames and identity.

Russian Mennonite immigrants had barely settled on the prairies of Kansas when they began discussing the need for educational institutions. Their educational views were firmly entrenched in their particular view of life and they were firm believers in handing down this rich heritage to their children. In order to maintain their identity they needed to continue a school system independent of the American public school system.

Goessel Preparatory School opened its doors the fall of 1906. Twenty years later Goessel High School enrolled seventy-four students for the fall semester. Common original Mennonite names such as; Banman, Bartel, Buller, Duerksen, Flaming, Frey, Funk, Goertzen, Goerzen, Goossen, Hiebert, Janzen, Klassen, Nickel, Ratzlaff, Reimer, Schroeder, Schmidt, Voth, Unruh, plus many others dominated the enrollment list. In the history of the school, there are four surnames that rise to the top. They are Schmidt, Schroeder, Voth, and Unruh.

### **Contact Information**

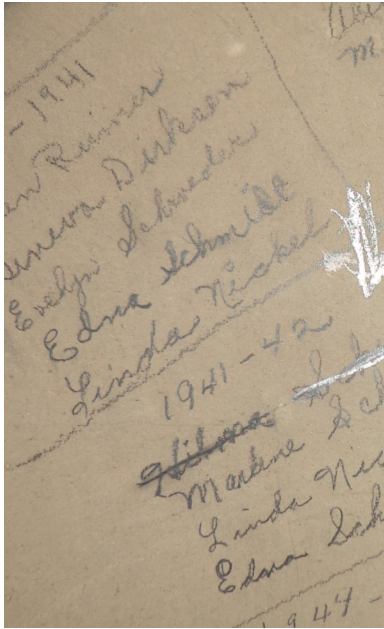
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The alumni newsletter is  
also posted on the  
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411 website.



Names on wall at boarding house

### Names, Numbers: Our Identity, continued

So which of the five surnames is repeated the most? Using the maiden names of female students, here is the breakdown. The name Schmidt appears 232 times, Voth-108, Schroeder-106 and Unruh-100. In fact, there are only ten years when the name Schmidt is not listed in a graduating class. Although, the name Schmidt does not appear in the first graduating class of 1927, it appears in 1928 until 1986, continuously. For those of you who like statistics, here are a few other numbers. Duerksen-66, Reimer-60, Nickel- 57, Banman, Flaming, Goertzen, and Klassen, 43 each. Actually, there is little diversion from these names until 1982 when twenty-eight percent of the class had names not common to Mennonite origin. The graduating class of 2020 only listed seventeen percent with a common Mennonite surname.

In some ways it is remarkable that a group of non-speaking English immigrants from Russia, would be the catalyst for a quality education system that is still vibrant today. With their foresight they were able to establish a foundation that continues to provide quality education for ALL students, regardless of surnames.

*2,387 students have graduated from Goessel High School.*



### Alumni Website

Some of you may be familiar with the USD 411 website. If not, it is worth checking out. It has a lot of information about different areas of the school system; grade school, middle school, and high school. Some of the links include; academics, athletics, activities, weather, staff directory, Board of Education, Bluebird Backers, school nurse, road map for away games and alumni.

Recently, I have been working on the alumni link. With the help of some high school students, pictures were taken of all the senior class pictures dating back to 1927. I have added all of those pictures, including student names to the link. Log on to USD 411. Under the District Office link you will find a link for the Alumni. Under this link there are four options; Alumni News, Alumni Pictures, Classes, and Newsletters.

Under the Alumni News link, I'm looking forward to sharing news about graduates. At this point Alumni Pictures has pictures from the 90th anniversary in 2016. All of the senior class pictures from 1927-2020 are under the Classes link. Alumni Newsletters dating back to the summer of 2013 are under the link, Newsletters.

Make sure to check this website to see what is happening at USD 411.

Goessel High School  
Graduating Class of 2020

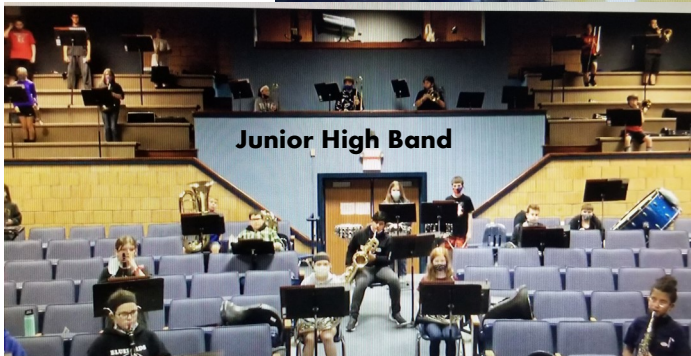
Scott Babin, Justin Duerksen, Elizabeth Kuhn, Kaitlyn Olson, Zackary Duerksen, Jacob Schmitt, Luke Frazier, Amanda Meyer, Sara Blanche Muehle, Evan Babin, Alexa Kuchler, Ryan D. Kuchler, Jacob Hagedorn, Vincent Hagedorn, Allison Hagedorn, Kaitlyn Hagedorn, Loren Hagedorn, Aaron Kueker, Jacob Kueker, Dylan Lindeman, Brian Melger, Renee Nicks, Brady Schroeder, Pauline Unruh



**The Song**



COVID-19 has forced schools to adapt, be flexible, and make extensive changes. But at Goessel, “The Song” could not be quieted. Vocal teachers, Mr. Braden Unruh and Mrs. Marcia Brubaker, along with band instructor, Mr. Scott Taylor decided to outsmart COVID 19 and bring music to the Goessel community regardless of the circumstances. The pictures on this page show their creativity during a time when people needed to hear “The Song”.



The pictures aren’t the best but they show the creativity. Audio is available on YouTube.

Renewal Form

This year, the winter newsletter is being sent to all alumni with a USP address. This is a one time situation. If you would like to receive this newsletter via the USP service you will need to return the subscription form below. If you have an updated address or an email you would like to share that would be great!

**Goessel High School Alumni**

Only alumni who contribute a yearly fee of \$5 every January, will receive the newsletter via the mail. The contribution will be used to pay for the cost of printing and mailing the newsletter. Newsletters will continue to be sent to all current email addresses. As a Goessel High Alumni I would like to continue to receive this newsletter through the postal service.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Class of \_\_\_\_\_

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City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

Zip \_\_\_\_\_

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