

Mesabi Range Foundation Newsletter

Volume 1
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February 2026

Foundation Update

By Scott Wirtanen, Foundation Coordinator

As the 2026 calendar year begins, we continue to be busy seeking grant opportunities for the Foundation, as well as initiating our work with donors for scholarship contributions for the 2026-27 academic year.

In September 2025, the Foundation Office was notified that we were successful in obtaining two \$50,000 grants to be used for scholarships on the Eveleth Campus. The Emberg Charitable Trust and the Patricia Ann Emberg Charitable Trust granted the Foundation \$50,000 each to be used for 20 - \$2,500 scholarships for students in the Welding, Electrical Controls Maintenance or Industrial Mechanical Technology programs, and an additional 20 - \$2,500 scholarships for students in the Nursing and Paramedic programs. These scholarships will be awarded for the 2026-27 academic year.

At the end of the 2025 calendar year, the Foundation updated the Donor Recognition Wall on the Virginia Campus. We had seven donors that moved to elevated contribution categories, and 17 new donors added to the Donor Recognition Wall.

We continue to maintain our collaborative effort with all the Minnesota North College campuses to utilize one scholarship portal for all students / potential students attending the Minnesota North College. In addition to the Hibbing, Itasca, Mesabi Range, Rainy River and Vermilion Foundations, the Mesabi Alumni Association and the Iron Range Engineering program scholarships are part of the portal. This collaborative effort provides students with the opportunity to make one application for all the scholarships they qualify for at the campus they are attending, as well as any additional scholarships provided through the Minnesota North College administrative offices.

If you have any questions regarding the Foundation, I can be reached at 218-550-2519. My office hours are 7:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon, Monday-Thursday, so please feel free to stop in and visit when you visit the Virginia Campus.

Board Accomplishments and Future Goals

- September—November: Conducted a successful Annual Fund-Raising Campaign
- December: Award Spring, 2026 Foundation Scholarships
- January: Updated Donor Wall
- February—April: Foundation Scholarship Application Portal open
- May: Award 2026-27 Foundation Scholarships



Board Members

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Calendar of Events

January 13	Spring Semester Begins
January 27	Foundation Board Meeting
February 24	Foundation Board Meeting
March 9-13	Spring Break – No Classes
March 24	Foundation Board Meeting
April 28	Foundation Board Meeting Selection of Scholarship Recipients
May 13	Commencement Ceremony - Iron Trail Motors Event Center – 4:00 p.m.
May 26	Foundation Board Meeting

*The Mesabi Range Foundation Board of Directors
meets the fourth Tuesday of each month at 12:00 noon.*

Keeping up to Date Through the Website

As the college has transitioned from the Mesabi Range College to the Minnesota North College – Mesabi Range Campuses, several changes have been made to our website. You can keep up to date with the Mesabi Range College Foundation through our website, located at <https://mesabi-range.givenorth.org/>

A current listing of all the scholarships offered through the Foundation is available, along with an on-line portal to make donations directly to the Foundation. You can find the “Donate Now” link as follows:

- Go to the Mesabi Range College Foundation webpage (see web address above)
- Scroll down to “Ways to Give”
- Click on “Donations”
- Click on the “Donate” button

OR directly at - https://www.paypal.com/donate/?hosted_button_id=B6NLHEQR8MDJA

Donor Profile—Rod & Jackie Ogrezovich

In 2021 Rod and Jackie Ogrezovich established a scholarship for the Mesabi Range Campuses. The Rod and Jackie Ogrezovich Scholarship is a \$2,500 annual award for a full-time student who is an active resident of the Iron Range.

Rod and Jackie are both graduates from Virginia Junior College – Rod in 1963 and Jackie (Anderson) in 1964. Rod graduated from Metropolitan University in the Twin Cities, while Jackie continued her studies at the University of Minnesota and St. Thomas University.

Rod launched a very successful business, Creative Laminating, Inc. The company laminated printed materials that needed protection or beautification for a customer base throughout the state of Minnesota. Many of the customers requested lamination of menus for bars and cafes.

Jackie worked as an Elementary Education instructor in the Minneapolis area. She retired after 30 years of service in the education industry.

They have enjoyed traveling after retirement. Both stay active golfing and recently started playing Pickleball. Rod and Jackie currently reside in San Diego, California.

Rod and Jackie wanted to donate a scholarship to Mesabi Range because that is where their post-secondary education started, and they wanted to give the same opportunity to other students on the Iron Range.

The Mesabi Range Foundation Board of Directors and Mesabi Range faculty and staff are extremely grateful for the Ogrezovich's charitable contributions and their support of the Iron Range students attending the Mesabi Range campuses.

Thank You to All Of Our Donors!

2026 Spring Scholarships

The following students received Foundation Scholarships for the 2026 Spring semester year:

The Josephine Elioff - Voiture 634 408 Scholarship - \$500 each
Recipients: Emily Fosso and Bella Today

For more information contact Scott Wirtanen at (218)550-2519 or foundation-mesabirange@minnesotanorth.edu.

Donor Profile—Soroptimist International of Virginia



Soroptimist International of Virginia (SI Virginia) was established 70 years ago, on January 26, 1956, after an initial planning meeting in Virginia's Red Cross office. Soroptimist International was just 35 years old at that time, but had over 30,000 members in 27 countries around the world, with a mission in part "to promote the spirit of service, to foster high ethical standards in business and profession, to advance the status of women, to develop interest in community, national and international affairs and to promote world peace and understanding."

SI Virginia hit the ground running with service to the community and, only eight years after becoming chartered, SI Virginia gave its first scholarship, \$100 to Ms. Carol Winter, a student at the Virginia School of Practical Nursing. The

scholarship was moved to the Eveleth Vocational-Technical School's Nursing Program, and to what is now the Minnesota North College – Eveleth Campus. This annual scholarship of \$1,000, for a second-year female, Licensed Practical Nursing student with a 3.0 or higher grade point average has, to date, provided \$25,000 to area nursing students, strengthening them, the communities they serve and the college that trained them.

SI Virginia continues to support the community by contributions, among others, to:

- Live Your Dream: \$1,000 grants to women obtaining education or training while being the head of the household
- Dream It Be It: mentoring program to high school girls
- Adopt a Highway – Highway 53 Clean-up
- United Way of Northeast Minnesota – Buddy Backpack Program
- Meals on Wheels – Hot meal delivery
- Salvation Army – Christmas Bell Ringing
- St. Louis County Adult Drug Court Program – Gas cards and transportation tickets
- Sexual Assault Program of North St. Louis County – Incentives for the program
- Quad Cities Food Shelf – Food access to those facing hunger challenges
- Area High School nurses – emergency clothing for girls
- Superior Babies (now MECSHV) – Supplies to promote healthy prenatal and parenting behaviors

Soroptimist International - Virginia will celebrate their 70th anniversary on January 24, 2026, with an event at the Mt. Iron Community Center from 1:00 – 4:00 p.m.

The Mesabi Range Foundation is grateful for the assistance SI Virginia has provided the Foundation and the students at Mesabi Range.

Campus Update



*By Jodi Pontinen, Campus Director—Mesabi Range—Virginia Campus
Mesabi Range Virginia Campus Update*

Thanks to the generous support of the Lesar and Sher families, the Virginia Campus has been hard at work over winter break making improvements to enhance the look and feel of our spaces. Fresh paint, new woodwork, and updated furniture help create a more welcoming and comfortable environment for students. These upgrades will continue throughout the spring semester. We invite you to stop by campus to see the progress and the impressive work of our talented maintenance team.

*By Jessalyn Sabin, Campus Director—Mesabi Range—Eveleth Campus
Mesabi Range Eveleth Campus Update*

Mesabi Range Welding Class Collaborates with Rock Ridge High School Building Construction Classes

Students in Greg Foster's Building Construction-1 class at Rock Ridge High School built five **"Precision Built. Northern Tough."** fish houses this past fall. This project began last year with the design and manufacturing of the all-aluminum 6x8 skid bases. Students in last spring's Building Construction-2 class designed the frames, built a jig, and cut all the pieces for two different skid-house layouts—one for angling, and one designed for both angling and spearing.

Mesabi College North Welding Instructor Randy Washenesky tasked his second-year welding students—Jacob Mackai, Logan Johnson, and Grant Hutar—with welding together all the aluminum skid bases.

Production continued this fall with the fabrication of the fish houses. Students began by lining the bottoms of the skis with plastic, then attaching plywood and insulation to the floors. Next, they built all the wall and ceiling panels. All dimensional lumber was generously donated by **Brandon Seppala / Pohaki Lumber**. Throughout this process, students applied principles of mass production to ensure precision, quality, and accuracy.

Once the walls were built and assembled, students applied rubber roofing to the roof. Aluminum coil stock—donated by **Travis Peterson / Vertex Roofing**—was installed on the exterior as a lightweight, durable weather-resistant material. Interiors were painted and Catch Covers—donated by **Graydon Outdoors**—were installed. Final steps included adding diamond-tread aluminum to the corners and base of each house, along with manufactured doors and windows. The finishing touches were the application of **The Rock Ridge Wolverine** logo and a decal listing all supporting sponsors.

The finished product turned out great, and the students did an amazing job with this build. This was a very rewarding way for them to learn about framing techniques, insulation, different types of fasteners and adhesives, roofing materials, and the installation of doors, windows, and decals. Hands-on, applied learning—with a strong emphasis on precision, quality, and accuracy—made for a very successful project.



Winter Sports—Men's Basketball



Coach Bio

Matt Breeden serves as the Head Coach of the Men's Basketball Program at Minnesota North College – Mesabi Range Campus. A former student-athlete at Mesabi Range from 1999 to 2001, he competed in both baseball and basketball before beginning a coaching career that has spanned roughly two decades at various levels throughout the local community.

Returning to the program where he once played has been a meaningful full circle experience for Coach Breeden. He considers the Mesabi Range gym and campus his home and remains committed to fostering growth, development, and a strong culture within the program for years to come.

Team Summary

The MNC-MRC men's basketball team is off to a 1 - 2 conference record, with a 4 - 10 record overall. The season has brought its share of highs and lows, but the team's win-loss record doesn't fully reflect the progress being made. The roster features a motivated and skilled group of players who are dedicated to putting in the work required for long-term success.

A core group of hardworking sophomores provides leadership and stability, while a talented class of freshmen contributes valuable minutes in every game. As the season continues, the team is steadily growing into its identity, embracing individual roles, and preparing for a challenging and competitive conference schedule.



2025-26 Basketball Schedule – Games Remaining

				<u>Women / Men</u>
Saturday	Jan. 31	Central Lakes	Home	1:00 / 3:00 p.m.
Wednesday	Feb. 4	Gogebic	Away	5:00 / 7:00 p.m.
Saturday	Feb. 7	MN North – Hibbing	Home	3:00 p.m.
Wednesday	Feb. 11	Northland	Away	5:30 / 7:30 p.m.
Saturday	Feb. 14	MN North – Itasca	Away	1:00 / 3:00 p.m.
Wednesday	Feb. 18	MN North – Rainy River	Home	5:30 / 7:30 p.m.
Saturday	Feb. 21	MN North – Vermilion	Away	1:00 / 3:00 p.m.

Winter Sports—Women's Basketball

The MNC-MRC women's basketball team is off to a 2 - 0 conference record, with a 5 - 6 record overall. We have struggled with injuries and some other issues, so right now we are rolling with five women! These five give 110% every game and their dedication to our basketball program has been phenomenal! Sophomores are Gabby Lira and Suzy Aubrey from Mountain Iron-Buhl, and Egypt Painte from Fort Yates, North Dakota. We have three freshmen: Jasia White from Osseo, Memphys Tendrup from Bigfork and Zya Broden from Louisiana. Zya suffered a season ending knee injury in our third game of the season.

Mesabi Range is fortunate to have Earl Otis as our assistant coach. This is Coach Earl's third season on the sideline. He is the District III Representative of the Fond du Lac Tribal Council in Brookston. Earl is an alumnus of Mesabi Range College and has many years of coaching experience. He is a great asset to have on our bench.

We also have the fortune of having Jesse Bennett on our side! Jesse helps with all day-to-day operations and is our main statistics person. He also helps as an assistant coach when his stats duty is not needed. We are lucky to have him at Mesabi Range!

Coach Brad Matuszak is in his 8th season as head coach at Mesabi Range. He spent two years at Hibbing CC before coming to Mesabi. Prior to that he was the head girls' coach at Eveleth-Gilbert for five years and the head boys' coach at Cotton for six years. He has been involved with coaching the game of basketball for 26 years.

Coach Brad is also an instructor at Mesabi Range College. He and his wife, Sara, have four kids and live in Iron. Sara is the volleyball coach at Mesabi Range, and she is also an instructor on campus. In his free time, Coach Brad enjoys listening to music and sitting by the fire during the summer months.



Message from the Foundation Treasurer



By Elizabeth Pluskwik, PhD

We've had a great year! I'm pleased to share with you an update on the financial strength of the Scholarship Funds that you entrust the Foundation Board to oversee.

Over the past year, the Board distributed \$162,000 in scholarships to 102 students enrolled in the Virginia and Eveleth campuses of Minnesota North College. Thanks to your generous donations, these students received vital financial support as they focus on fulfilling their educational goals. The Board also supported the completion of several on-campus projects that directly improve students' experiences in the College such as stocking the Food Pantry and refurbishing student study areas in the library. The Donor Wall was also completed.

We have several new Scholarships available to the Mesabi Range Students in 2026, as described in this newsletter.

Our Board collaborates closely with a trusted local financial manager, and the funds we oversee earn the best possible returns while adhering to a fairly conservative investment profile. Our investment strategy is aimed at safeguarding the funds that directly support our mission of supporting scholarships and selected campus projects.

Thank you for your continued support of the Minnesota North students on the Iron Range. We appreciate your confidence in the Board in managing the scholarship portal and overseeing the application

New Scholarship Opportunities for 2026-27

The Foundation is excited to announce the following new scholarship opportunities for the 2026-27 academic year for students on the Mesabi Range Campuses. A complete listing of the scholarship opportunities available for students attending MN North College – Mesabi Campuses are found on our website at <https://mesabi-range.givenorth.org/>



Emberg Charitable Trust Scholarship –

The Foundation will award 10 - \$2,500 scholarships to students enrolled in the technical programs (Welding, Electrical Controls and Maintenance, and Industrial Mechanical Technology) that would assist students in developing the skills necessary to enter the iron mining industry. Additionally, The Foundation will award 10 - \$2,500 scholarships to students enrolled in the Nursing and Paramedic Programs on the Eveleth Campus.

Patricia Ann Emberg Charitable Trust Scholarship –

The Foundation will award 10 - \$2,500 scholarships to students enrolled in the technical programs (Welding, Electrical Controls and Maintenance, and Industrial Mechanical Technology) that would assist students in developing the skills necessary to enter the iron mining industry. Additionally, The Foundation will award 10 - \$2,500 scholarships to students enrolled in the Nursing and Paramedic Programs on the Eveleth Campus.

Virginia Elks Lodge #1003 Scholarship –

The Foundation will award two \$1,000 scholarships from the donation from the Virginia Elks Lodge Gambling fund. The student must attend one of the Mesabi Range Campuses and be a full-time student.

Natural Harvest Food Co-op Change is Within Reach Program



The Foundation is excited to announce that the Foundation has been selected to participate in the Natural Harvest Food Co-op Change Within Reach Program. As a participant in their program, shoppers will donate by allowing their purchase amount to be rounded up to the next highest dollar. The Foundation has been selected to be a recipient of funds raised through this program during the month of **August 2026**. It is anticipated that organizations selected could receive donations of \$1,000 - \$2,000. In 2024 over \$24,000 was raised through this

program for local non-profit organizations.

The Natural Harvest Food Co-op is located at 732 North 4th Street South in Virginia, MN. Please support them, the Foundation, and all the non-profit organizations they work with within our communities.

Walmart Round-Up

The Mesabi Range College Foundation has teamed up with Walmart.com to raise funds for the Foundation. The Foundation is now registered with the Walmart **“Round-Up”** program. You can register on-line and **“Round-Up”** your purchases on Walmart.com or the Walmart app to make a donation to the Foundation. All of your on-line purchases will be rounded up to the nearest whole dollar and the Mesabi Range College Foundation will receive your donation.



Follow these simple steps and help the Foundation continue our mission to continue to provide scholarship assistance for our students, while partnering within our communities to meet the workforce's and community's needs.

Donate to the Foundation through “Round-Up” at Walmart.com

Go to <https://www.walmart.com>

- Sign into your Walmart.com account
- Top right-hand corner – under your name – click on **“Account”** from the drop-down menu
- Left side of the page – Under Manage Account – Click on **“Giving and Impact”** under “My Profile”
- Find a local charity – Search Charities – Click on **“Mesabi Range College Foundation”**
- Review the message from Walmart – Click **“Done”**

Please feel free to share this information with your family and friends. The **“Round-Up”** program is available to anyone who has a Walmart.com account or uses the Walmart app.

If you have any questions or problems registering, please feel free to contact the Foundation office at 218-550-2519, or email us at foundation-mesabirange@minnesotanorth.edu

Thank you for your continued support of the Mesabi Range College Foundation!

Round-Up Today!

Scholarships!

The members of the Mesabi Range Foundation are grateful for your support of our students at Mesabi Range - Virginia and Eveleth campuses. The Mesabi Range College Foundation's mission is to support the Minnesota North College - Mesabi Range Campuses (Virginia and Eveleth) in the work it does to provide an extraordinary education to our students!

Your support has provided students with over \$100,000 in scholarships each year over the past several years. These funds make a real difference to our students, many of which are adult learners, athletes away from home, and local students from our community.

As the College has transitioned from Mesabi Range College to the Minnesota North College-Mesabi Range campuses, several changes have been made to the logo, name, and websites - but the mission of the Foundation and the students who rely on our support has not changed a bit. In fact, the need is great.

The Mesabi Range College Foundation

- ★ Facilitates approximately \$100,000 of tuition support annually through scholarships – \$3.1 million to over 5,300 students so far!
- ★ Accepts monetary donations from individuals, businesses, and organizations on behalf of Mesabi Range Campuses.
- ★ Facilitates in-kind donations and grant opportunities for the College.

Be part of the positive impact!

Make donations online: go to this webpage →

<https://mesabi-range.givnorth.org/ways-to-give/>

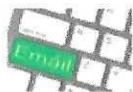
Click the "Give Now" button



- Mail a check made out to *Mesabi Range College Foundation* to Mesabi Range College Foundation Office
1001 West Chestnut Street, Virginia, MN 55792



- Contact Foundation Coordinator Scott Wirtanen at 218-550-2519



- Email foundation-mesabirange@minnesotanorth.edu

Thank you for your support!

Keep your compass pointed north to find the education you need. Minnesota North College offers programs in a variety of areas of expertise all designed to give you an on-campus college experience unlike anything else you will find. Our six campus locations across Northern Minnesota will ensure you find plenty of off campus activities as well. Let us help you reach your goal of finding an educational experience leading to the career of your dreams. All while you...

Head North



Mesabi Range Campus Foundation

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