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**KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT**

# NEWS RELEASE

## *One school district: 43 diverse schools Kenai Peninsula graduate inspirations*

The Kenai Peninsula Borough School District encompasses 25,600 miles, with 43 diverse schools including neighborhood schools, a K-12 school house, Russian Old Believer schools, a performance based school, four charter schools, Connections homeschool, and four schools only accessible by boat or plane. Two years ago, these young people were beginning their last few months of K-12 education in Kenai Peninsula schools.



**These student graduate snapshots demonstrate Kenai Peninsula school success.** Take a read of the online story for graduates—click the hyperlink at the end of each section to read the rest of the story.

### **Patrick Napier [Connections Homeschool]**

Using dual credit and Jumpstart opportunities, Patrick Napier earned 33 college credits over the last two years. He's traveled to 20 countries, and works to become a good global citizen. For the past three years he pursued missionary work in Uganda and East Africa, working and living in the slums trying to better the lives of impoverished children. <http://bit.ly/2uEwirL>

### **Larion Kuzmin [Homer Flex School]**

Larion enrolled at Homer Flex his sophomore year, focused on receiving a high school diploma. A

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Russian Old Believer who has captained his own commercial boat since he was 14, Larion brought with him the tenacity and resolve acquired through years of gillnetting in Cordova. His January graduation ceremony was a celebration of all his hard work! <http://bit.ly/2vGxhEN>

### **Juan Sarmiento [Homer High School]**

As a very limited-English speaker newly in the United States, Juan Sarmiento wasn't sure of the question when he was asked if he wanted to take algebra or geometry. Moving from Argentina to Alaska is quite a shock but in the fall of 2017 when he goes from Alaska to Princeton, New Jersey, it will be a shock of a different sort. Juan is an excellent athlete, Poetry Out Loud winner, and a top scholar. He is one of the most independent students ever to graduate from Homer High School while at the same time willing to help anyone who asks, in topics ranging from his native Spanish to calculus. <http://bit.ly/2uH0C4t>

### **Ben Peck [Hope School]**

Ben Peck started the first debate team for Hope School, and they placed second in the Nikiski High School Debate in February 2017, and ended up going to the State Debate and Forensic 2017 Competition for the first time ever! A small two-man team heading off to state, where they had to prove to the lady at the front desk that they had a right to be there, while she looked and looked for their name on the roster, for a little, not yet known team from tiny Hope, Alaska. <http://bit.ly/2tL2kOo>

### **Azary Reutov [Kachemak-Selo School]**

One of Azary Reutov's most notable traits is his positivity. He is cheerful and supportive of classmates and a natural leader in school and out. His ready sense of humor, combined with his willingness to work hard, make him sought after as a teammate and friend. As an upperclassman, he has been a great role model to younger students, showing strong and steadily improving academic achievement and consistent attendance. <http://bit.ly/2uf8OqD>

### **Emily Koziczkowski [Kenai Central High School]**

Emily Koziczkowski is a shining example of how life's challenges shape who we become. Emily's yearbook quote: "Life's a climb but the view is great" exemplifies her approach to her education. She took the most rigorous classes offered at Kenai Central and still excelled. When she had completed the highest math offered, AP calculus, she decided to continue taking math at Kenai Peninsula College. She took calculus II and III and earned A's in both classes. Additionally, she took psychology so that she could get a head start on some of the general college requirements. Emily is not just an academic, she is a well-rounded young woman and is a role model in how she gives back to her community. She has a drive to help others and demonstrates this by volunteering at the Leeshore Center and the Central Peninsula Hospital, and by coaching volleyball at Kenai Middle School. <http://bit.ly/2ufWYyU>

### **Terence Paul Swenning [Nanwalek School]**

Terence Paul Swenning shows exceptional determination, talent, and perseverance. Rather than taking a solely academic route through his schooling, he demonstrated the ability to finish school with attention to academics, artistry, and athletics. Ambitious, Terence plans to move to California to start a business selling t-shirts with his own artistic designs. He is currently putting his mind to the finances of this endeavor, seeking small business loans, and making necessary contacts in California. This independent means of making a living will allow him to pursue professional skateboarding. <http://bit.ly/2uH0v9d>

### **Vera Fefelov [Nikolaevsk School]**

Graduating summa cum laude with a GPA of 4.105, an incredible work ethic academically and athletically, through hard and focused work Vera is graduating one year early to attend Georgetown

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University in the fall where she will major in International Business Regional Studies at the McDonough School of Business, with a minor in Russian. Advice for her schoolmates: “Never doubt yourself in anything you put your mind to. Just because you may experience failure in some way, it’s what you do with that failure that defines you. Don’t be afraid to push your limits—that’s where you find yourself and learn what you are capable of. The struggle is definitely worth it. It isn’t easy—but it’s worth it, trust me!” <http://bit.ly/2ufE5Ly>

### **Michale Meyers [Nikiski Middle-High School]**

Michale Meyers is the first high school graduate in his family, and has taken advantage of every opportunity throughout high school to prepare himself for the world of work. With a diploma in hand, eight semesters of welding courses under his belt, and a job already in place with MagTec, Michale knows his future is bright, with a career in welding. For Michale, having a high school diploma means having options, like the opportunity to take a project management course at Kenai Peninsula College to move up the ranks. He is a great example of a student who has positioned himself for success. With a background working for L&G Enterprises and MagTec, this brand new high school graduate already has real world experience. <http://bit.ly/2vp9J86>

### **Mikayla Clark [Ninilchik School]**

Through the I-team process Mikayla started taking both math and language arts classes for high school credit and didn’t stop there. She sits on the State Future Farmers of America (FFA) team and travels on a national level to talk to kids about not only FFA but also growing as a young adult. In addition to her academic success, Mikayla has also been a member of three varsity sports and has been part of state track and basketball. She will attend the University of Alaska, Southeast, for her bachelor’s degree in environmental science and then onto the University of Idaho for a masters in biological engineering. <http://bit.ly/2tkyRLJ>

### **Rick Jager [Port Graham School]**

During the Port Graham School 2017 graduation ceremony, natural storyteller, University of Alaska scholar, and graduate Rick Jager told the story of what helped him reach the finish line. Hard work and perseverance were part of it, but having a teacher who took the time to reach out to Rick during challenging times was the key to his success during his final year. Rick was speaking of his teacher, Mr. Colby Way, one of the 2017 BP Teachers of Excellence finalists. Rick’s story underlines that without supportive relationships, none of us can be as strong. <http://bit.ly/2tv0INg>

### **Izabeau Stalkfleet Pearston [River City Academy]**

Class of 2017 Valedictorian Izabeau Stalkfleet Pearston has been a cornerstone of River City Academy since seventh grade. Izabeau graduates with a 3.98 GPA and a total of 16 college credits through JumpStart at Kenai Peninsula College (KPC). Her completed college courses include college algebra, trigonometry and communications. Izabeau has earned the University of Alaska Scholars Scholarship, the Alaska Performance Scholarship and a partial tuition waiver from Kenai Peninsula College for next year. <http://bit.ly/2uNRj3x>

### **Logan Smith [Seward High School]**

Logan Smith is a tinkerer. This curiosity led him to all things tinkering that Seward High had to offer—shop, metals, woodworking, and so forth. Logan also has a natural aptitude for mathematics. This made him a logical candidate for Seward High’s engineering course called Project Lead the Way. It was here that his talents combined to truly find his niche—and make Seward High better in the process. Logan’s work ethic, commitment to studies, and contribution to Seward High was also recognized by the

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University of Alaska, Fairbanks (UAF), who accepted him into their early admission engineering program where he will begin his post-secondary education in the fall. <http://bit.ly/2uNP5S6>

### **Jackson Blackwell [Soldotna High School]**

The Kenai Peninsula Borough School District and Soldotna High School have provided me and many other students with countless opportunities. Over my thirteen years in the district I have been challenged to excel and make a difference within the school and greater community. I credit my many teachers and the KPBSD staff for allowing many students, like myself, to find opportunities and challenges that engage and make us all better global citizens. I have excelled and will be starting my studies at Boise State University this fall where I am enrolled in the Honors College and plan to receive a double major in Political Science and Economics. Following undergraduate studies, I hope to attend Law School and focus in Constitutional and Resource Law. Following Law School, I hope to move back to Alaska to practice Resource Law and ultimately be involved in State politics. <http://bit.ly/2vpmG1C>

### **Gavin Elvsaaas [Susan B. English School]**

Gavin Elvsaaas grew up in Seldovia and is part of the graduating class of 2017 at Susan B. English School, the same school from which her mother, aunts and uncles, cousins, and other relatives graduated. She is a self-possessed, kind-hearted, and passionate girl who has made her family and community proud. As a K-12 school, Susan B. English provides opportunities for students to become leaders and role models for much younger students, and Gavin is both. She worked as a classroom aide in the K-6 class this year, helping kids with their reading and math. She has earned her Emergency Trauma Technician certificate and aced her anatomy class, and she plans to pursue a career in the medical field. <http://bit.ly/2uEFkoO>

### **David Kalugin [Voznesenka School]**

School, football, and Project Grad are important parts of David's life, but so is his family, and commercial fishing. For the last two summers David was a captain on his family's fishing vessel, and prior to that he spent several years as a deckhand. However, David does not have an interest in making fishing his livelihood, rather, his dream is to become an industrial electrician. He is currently working towards an apprenticeship in this field. He has liked electronics since he was a little boy, and earned respect by repairing inoperative cell phones. <http://bit.ly/2tkhdrI>

**#AKlearns #KenaiLearns #results**

*Do you have a story tip about a KPBSD graduate to profile in our Wednesday Inspiration? Kindly email Pegge Erkeneff, KPBSD communications liaison, [Pegge@KPBSD.org](mailto:Pegge@KPBSD.org).*

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