

USC announces Triple “A” Award winners

JILL ROESLER
Staff Writer

When asked about their high school years, most people would either agree that they were the best four years of their lives, or the worst.

No matter how much a person loved or hated high school, it is likely that everyone has a special memory or two of their years as a teenager.

For two United South Central High School seniors, earning the 2014-2015 Triple “A” Award is one of those special moments they will remember fondly.

Amber Klein and Nate Pederson both grew up in the Wells area and have attended the USC School District since they were in kindergarten.

Amber Klein

Klein grew up just outside of the city of Wells with her parents Tim and Bev Klein and four older siblings.

She claims that rather than the two sports or the assortment of college-level courses she has participated in during her high school career, her favorite aspect of what the Triple “A” Award encompasses is fine arts.

“I’ve been in plays and musicals since I was in seventh and eighth grade,” Klein says. “Last fall (her junior year), I played Annie in our production of ‘Annie Get Your Gun,’ and that was really fun.”

Although her niche may be in the fine arts, Klein is also interested in athletics and academics.

She has been on the varsity track and cross country teams since she was in seventh grade, and in choir and band since

elementary school.

In addition to playing her trumpet in the concert band, she is also in the jazz marching band.

“I have four older siblings and my parents started all of us young in things like piano,” Klein explains. “They pushed us to do our best when learning new things and they always helped me to work hard in school.”

And according to her transcript, she has worked very hard to achieve that goal.

Luckily for this high school senior, USC is part of the Southwest Minnesota State University College Now program.

According to the SMSU website, College Now allows “qualified high school students” to take college courses during their regular school day, in conjunction with their high school courses.

This allows students to earn college credits through SMSU without having to pay tuition and while earning credit for their high school courses as well. Throughout her high school career, Klein has taken courses such as psychology, sociology, college English and advanced biology, all while earning high school and college credit.

Because of her dedication to academics, it comes as no surprise that she is part of USC’s Math League and the National Honor Society.

“Both of our parents have really pushed us, regardless of the outcome, to be leaders and to inspire others to do the same,” she says.

Klein plans to attend Iowa State University in the fall where she will major in either communications or business with a minor in statistics.

Both of her parents are also alums of ISU.

Nate Pederson

Growing up in the area has had its perks for these students. Pederson, son of Duane and Jessica Pederson, believes that his involvement in activities throughout the community has influenced his high school career.

“I was always involved in summer sports leagues when I was a kid,” he recalls. “We used to go around to nursing homes with my grandma and we would sing for the residents there.”

To this day, Pederson is still involved with the high school choir and he plays percussion in the high school band.

“I was in the fall musical last year, too,” he says. “I played the trap set and that was a lot of fun.”

In addition to developing a keen interest in the fine arts as a child, Pederson also discovered his talent for and interest in athletics.

He began playing football, basketball and golf when he was in middle school and since then, he has been a three-sport athlete for the USC Rebels.

“I’ve been on varsity football and basketball since I was in 10th grade,” he explains. “And then in golf, I’ve been on varsity since seventh grade.”

That’s why it comes as a surprise to many when they learn that Pederson has decided not to play on a collegiate team once he leaves for college this fall.

Instead, he will put all of his focus into his academic career.

He has been accepted into the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, physics program, where he will study physics

and mechanical engineering.

Pederson has also taken full advantage of the College Now program offered at the school—he’s taken six of the college courses already.

As if that is not enough for this high school senior, he is also an active member in the National Honor Society and the USC Math League.

“I guess my parents are probably the biggest influences in my life,” Pederson says. “They always pushed me to be the best that I could be, never settle for second best and always strive to be the best at everything I do.”

He has certainly reached his goal to be one of the best when it comes to this particular recognition.

After Pederson was recognized as the male winner of the USC Triple “A” Award, he was selected to advance into the Section level of the Minnesota State High School League Triple “A” competition.

“A competition like this shows that you don’t excel at just one thing,” he says. “It shows that you can be a diverse and well-rounded person.”

Pederson is the fourth student from USC to have made it to the Section level of the MSHSL Triple “A” competition.

Last year, Claire Christian and James Dundas were the recipients of the award and they both advanced to the Sub Section 5 level of the competition.

However, only Christian continued on in the competition and she was named the Section 2A winner.

Likewise, in 2013, Hannah Goemann also advanced to the Section 2A level where

she represented the USC School District at the State competition.

Because Pederson had also made it into Sections, he was interviewed by League officials who asked questions about his

ideas and actions as a leader, his future plans and why he believes he should advance into the next round.

On Wednesday, Feb. 4, Pederson was named the Section 2A Triple “A” Award

winner and he will go on to compete against 14 other Triple “A” Award winners from Minnesota in an attempt to attain the Class “AA” Minnesota State High School League recognition and a

four-year \$1,000 scholarship.

The winner will be announced during the Boys’ State Basketball Tournament Saturday, March 14, at the Target Center in Minneapolis.