

Residence Life

Summer 2021



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Updates from Torin



Several times this year, I heard a member of our team articulate something along the lines of, "each week is going so fast, so slow, so exhausting, so boring, and yet, so very important." Yup!

In February, with pandemic restrictions and limitations at the highest levels on campus, I nervously sent an email to the leaders of the Student Union and Dining Services. Below is part of what I had to say:

"I want to own that this is personal to me (and acknowledge it being personal alone can't make this happen). As the Associate Director, as a Department of Residential Life, and as a campus, I/we have asked/expected so much of our live-in staff of CAs, Hall Directors, and grads to provide an experience, in a pandemic, that actively supports students building connections, getting involved, and achieving success. And, on a daily basis, CAs, HDs, and our Grads have been engaged, delivered, stepped-up, adapted to frequently changing policies/practices they may not always agree with and are difficult to operationalize, and provided daily support, encouragement, and comfort to students living on campus during this pandemic. In no uncertain terms, I am more proud of their individual and collective efforts this year, than any residential team that has been assembled since I joined the Maverick team in 1998."

"Unlike most housing programs throughout the country, we have continued to provide in person opportunities for students to meet others, connect, laugh, and have fun—a fabric of our residential education program and a key contributor to students' experiences. It has, and continues, to make a difference. I believe these staff members deserve more than a "thank you note." The ritual of an end of year staff banquet, where some form of in-person acknowledgement/celebration of the impact they made, can create that powerful, meaningful, moment and shared experience. What can we do together, what can I do, to make something like this work?"

We had our staff banquet, sitting at tables of 3 in the large ballroom. While different, the symbolic importance was powerful and most importantly, deserved.

- Torin Akey,
Associate Director

Year in Review: Crawford

2020 - 2021



As the famed philosophical troupe 'Poison' once said, "Every rose has its thorn." While 2020-2021 certainly presented its fair share of thorny moments, Crawford's team of dedicated and flexible staff managed to flip the script on many of this year's unprecedented obstacles. The Crawford Team created highly engaging opportunities for residents to hang out, have fun, and engage with their campus community in many unique ways – all while adhering to safety guidelines that limited traditional engagement strategies. Nevertheless, they persisted.

Despite a year of wonderfully mysterious unknowns, Crawford was able to hang on to many of its annual traditions. Floor communities banded together to participate in Crawford's Pinewood Derby Race and individual residents showed off their incredible skills in Crawford's Got Talent! Most impressive of all, Crawford continued its longstanding Carnival tradition. The weather did not cooperate enough to host the event outside, but in holding with the staff team's flexibility, the event moved to the old Carkoski Dining Center. Balloons were popped, rings were tossed, bottles were knocked over, fish were raced, and prizes were won – all culminating in a rich experience Crawford residents were all too eager to join.

This year also presented the opportunity for new Crawford traditions to begin. The creativity and drive of the Crawford staff led to inaugural implementations of in-person games of Among Us, WOW events that met residents where they were at (their rooms), virtual game nights, and new ways of thinking of old events. In particular, Crawford's Haunted House was transformed initially into a socially-distanced Haunted Trail before the weather forced the event to transform once again into the Crawford Haunted Bash – a costume party themed Halloween event!

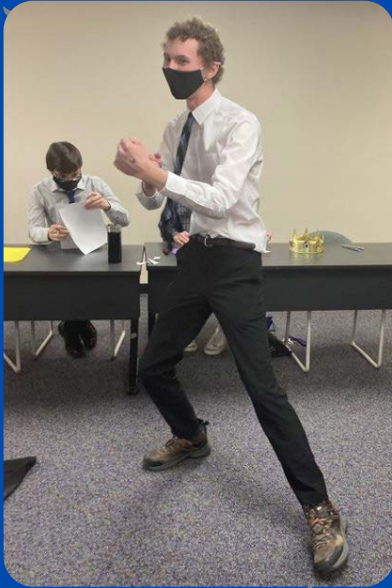
In a year with no shortage of moral victories and inspirational one-liners, Crawford Residence Community leaned on an old standby to cultivate a sense of belonging for residents – "Home is Where the Crawford Is." While short and to the point, it's a message that has evolved from a simple marketing approach into a commitment our residents and staff have made to others in the building. They are welcome, they are seen, they are home.

- Alexis and Chris,
Crawford Hall Directors



This is
Torin...





Leadership Review: RHA

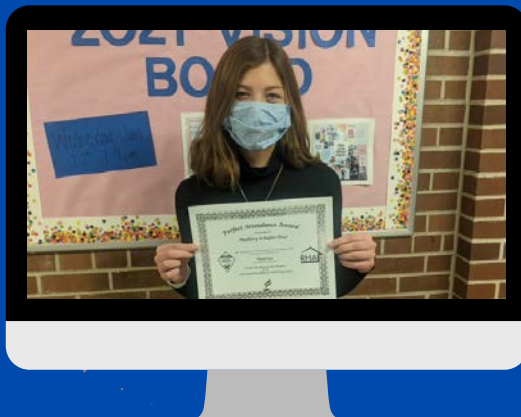
Like many student organizations on our campus and across the country, this past year presented many unique challenges. At the start of the academic year, only two of the seven RHA Executive Board positions were filled and there were real questions about how the organization could be successful with all the COVID-19 restrictions regarding in-person meetings, staffing changes, and reduced residence hall occupancy. There were no shortages of hurdles for RHA work through.

However, a dedicated group of student leaders emerged to re-envision how the organization could overcome these challenges. General assembly meetings moved to Zoom, annual events were reconfigured, RHA Executive Board office hours were spread out, and masks were worn; but still, it was RHA through and through. The mission of RHA is to voice the opinions and concerns of residential students, provide social and educational events, promote the development of positive residence hall communities, and support the academic success residence hall students. The proof

that RHA succeeded in accomplishing these goals is evidenced in the fact that many RHA members went on to pursue more significant leadership roles on campus. Next year, there will be many Community Advisors, Student Senators, and students in other leadership positions who got their start in RHA during the time of COVID-19.

Next year will be an exciting one for RHA with a committed group of Executive Board members already elected, a new Program Advisor joining the department this summer, and an incoming first year class that will be craving connection opportunities. This positive energy will be filtered through this year's RHA constitutional changes, which adjusted the Community Council structure to better align with the needs and interests of current students. If the perseverance and grit of the students in RHA this year showed me anything, it is that the future of the organization is bright.

- Peter Hausladen,
Acting RHA Advisor



Leadership Review: NRHH

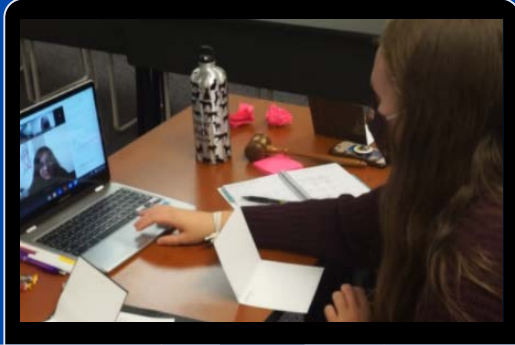
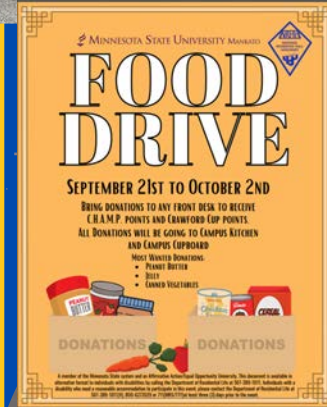


2020-21 was a big year for the National Residence Hall Honorary (NRHH)! Membership was a key focus moving into this academic year, focusing on recruiting candidate members so that they could start getting involved with the organization at the beginning of the year. The organization grew to having 25 members, each engaging in different committees and involvement in the group throughout the year. One committee was focused on bringing new personality to the Maverick Chapter in the form of a logo that captures the MNSU identity.

The engagement of our recognition programs is also notable when reflecting on the year. The Maverick Chapter received 93 Of-The-Month (OTM) submissions throughout the academic year with an average of about 13 submissions each month. Out of these 93, eight were selected as MACURH regional winners and one was selected as the NACURH national winner. It goes to show that our campus is committed to highlighting the outstanding efforts of others at MNSU!

While it has been an unconventional year with general membership meetings and conferences being held over Zoom, the members of NRHH made remarkable efforts to give back to campus and the community.

- Jesse Heath, Acting NRHH Advisor



Year in Review: Julia Sears



This past year was one heck of a roller coaster ride. Though COVID-19 brought numerous restrictions and uncertainty, not to mention some other challenges that surfaced, the Sears Squad came together and did some truly amazing things for the residents. Like winning Homecoming for the second year in a row.

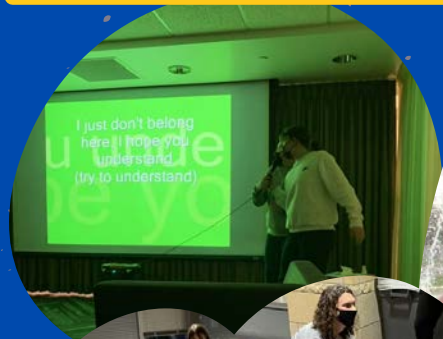
This past year Julia Sears welcomed a new Hall Director and Student Service Coordinator, and they both did some outstanding work for our Desk Assistants and Community Advisors. They worked to learn and discover the available resources for them and our students living on campus. Carly, the new SSC, has been doing everything well and has been truly outstanding. The HDs of Julia Sears, Todd and Becky, worked hard to form connections with the residents outside of their conduct meetings through the numerous HD visibility events.

We couldn't be more proud of our CAs and all their work over the past year. There were many challenges with COVID and along with some staff changes in the Fall Semester. Nonetheless, it was still a great year with many wonderful memories. CAs used

their brainstorming and problem-solving skills throughout the year to provide a positive experience for the residents of Julia Sears. Three of our CAs noticed their residents interacting with each other daily and began working together to plan hangouts for all their residents. As always, there were some new and creative WOW events presented this past year. One of the most memorable WOWs was Mario Cart, but not just any Mario Cart... We used Remote Control Cars and created our own course for them to race on.

It was this creativity, team work, and so much more that made this past year great. We had a new CA come in the middle of the semester and learn the role as they went, we had two new CAs join the team at semester. All around, this year was one wild roller coaster... but sometimes those are the most memorable.

- Becky and Todd,
Julia Sears Hall Directors



Scholarship Winner



Susan Simonis



At the end of the year staff banquet, Susan Simonis was awarded the \$200 Residential Education Scholarship. As conveyed in Susan's nomination, "Conveying passion through ones work and attitude versus feeling the need to proclaim passion is a trait that many I have worked with over the years have not possessed. However, it is apparent with Susan that she loves what she does and truly enjoys getting to spend time building relationships with everyone that comes into her life. She expresses her excitement, but her passion does not need to be verbalized, it is apparent through her actions."



Year in Review: McElroy



This year in McElroy was a roller coaster to say the least, but amidst the uncertainty of starting a new school year during COVID, the staff and students found ways to connect and build community. We had plenty of new faces on the CA staff this year and while they were learning how to best serve their residents in a year of new policies and procedures, the staff established a bond during training that continued throughout the year. In September, Sarah Frazier stepped away from the G&H Hall Director role and we welcomed Dan Vorwerk to the MAC Fam as he took over supervision of G&H along with his work at Stadium Heights.

Through transition in staff and the ushering in of a "new normal" MAC hosted some great WOWs and floor hangouts throughout the year. McElroy residents were excited to show off their creative skills as WOWs like tie-dyeing and pumpkin painting were very popular. McElroy also got active and hosted kickball, volleyball, and other outdoor activities whenever the weather allowed. Weather was definitely a challenge that affected our end of the year event "Mac goes to the Movies." A planned outdoor showing quickly pivoted with April snow to be hosted in the old Carkoski dining center and the film "Knives Out" was played with plenty of prepared snacks for residents to enjoy. Events like G&H's Pre-Finals Study Breaks and individual pizza parties also got residents excited to engage with their building and floor mates with the former winning the Commitment to Student Leadership award at this year's TOPS Ceremony. To incentivize this engagement HDs Grace and Dan hosted MAC Madness throughout the spring semester, awarding points for residents who shared good grades and who participated in all types of McElroy happenings. E1 and E4 came in first in this two-part competition, with H3 coming in second. The winners walked away with a choice between a donut party and a free appetizer from Chet's Place. Despite restrictions on how many residents could gather or the types of snacks that could be provided at events, the McElroy staff found many innovative ways to make MAC feel like home for everyone this year.

A new G&H hall director will soon be joining the team along with a new Student Services Coordinator as former SSC Cal Evoniuk graduates and begins a new role at Northern Michigan University. McElroy has moved to hosting summer school students and planning a few WOWs to take advantage of the warm weather. Wrapping up the year, we were happy to finish strong and give the residents a sendoff with hopes for a great summer.

- Grace, McElroy E&F Hall Director
- Cal, Student Services Coordinator

Year in Review: Preska



The 2020-21 academic year brought a variety of challenges to the Preska Residence Community which helped staff members to grow and think outside of the box when it came to engaging students.

The "What's On Wednesday" or "WOW" event series focused on connecting smaller groups of residents, individual activities, or virtual events. Some of the most popular WOWs were Virtual Grocery Bingo, Black History is American History, and the St. Patrick's Day Carnival. The Spring Preskapalooza was also a big hit as residents took over the Bullpen in the Union: unlimited bowling, billiards, ping pong, video games and prizes for two hours. It was a perfect way to end the academic year!

Preska HDs Cori Deming (I/L) and Jesse Heath (J/K) could be frequently seen in the Preska Lobby wearing floral attire for their Tropical Tuesday visibility event, where they would offer students a Capri Sun and chat for a moment as they headed off for class.

Student Services Coordinator Erin Gellings worked to provide outstanding customer service at the desk, coaching the Desk Workers to focus on this as a high priority. Erin also helped create an aesthetically inviting front desk, creating a variety of decorations that staff members were able to take with them at the end of each month.

While it was a bit of an abnormal year, it did not stop the Community Advisor staff. They frequently connected on floor hangouts, coming together to create a larger event. They also built incredibly strong bonds, often spending time together outside of training and throughout the academic year playing volleyball, watching movies, or simply sharing space to study.

It's been a unique year that has brought its fair number of hurdles. But sometimes those challenges help create the best memories.

- Cori and Jesse,
Preska Hall Directors



Winter Welcome Week

For the past several years, the Winter Welcome Week planning committee has gambled there will be snow during the first week of classes in January and have planned wonderful, exciting snow-related events. And every year for the past several years, that gamble hasn't paid off. So this year, the Winter Welcome Week planning committee decided not to take that bet and ... they won! With an average of 40 degrees during the week of January 11th, 2021 it was sunny and beautiful most of the week!

As a common theme of 2021, and this newsletter, Covid-19 made things challenging. Then throw spring degree days during a "winter" welcome back event, the planning committee was challenged, to say the least. However, they prevailed and had a successful welcome back week! High, physically distant, attendance at all the events, including the virtual events, made Winter Welcome Week feel like MSU was getting back to "normal" for the start of spring semester.

Highlights of Winter Welcome Week include virtual bingo facilitated by RHA with a grand prize of a Nintendo Switch Lite, palm readings sponsored by Student Events Team, and trivia night put on by the Residential Life team. Across the week, there were 893 unique student interactions! These numbers are even more significant given the lower occupancy numbers in the spring semester. Winter Welcome Week not only re-energized our students, but staff as well, and set the tone for the rest of spring semester.

And who knows, maybe next year there will be snow!

Winter Welcome Week

Monday 1/11

Welcome Back Hot Chocolate

Residence Community Lobbies
1-2PM (SH)
2-4PM (CR, MC, PS, JS)

Thursday 1/14

Happening on Thursday

Like a WOW but on a Thursday! Ask your CA for your community's specific details.

Tarot Card Reading

Visit movevents.com for details.

Tuesday 1/12

Bingo

Links to Zoom and Bingo Cards here:
<https://www.facebook.com/mnsurha>
7-9PM

Friday 1/15

Trivia

Carkoski Dining Center (By Chet's) and the Julia Sear's Lobby
8pm start for both locations

Monday 1/18

MLK Day of Service

Residence Community Front Desk
Pick up a service project and return completed projects to your front desk!

Wednesday 1/13

Welcome Back Welcome Mats

Residence Community Lobbies
7-9PM

Saturday 1/16

Football Playoffs

Residence Community Lobbies
Check your residence hall
Instagram for details.



Happening All Week!

MavHunt

Palm Reading (visit movevents.com for details)

Coming Soon

MSU Ice Skating Rink
Tubing Night at Mt. Kato

Year in Review: Stadium Heights



Stadium Heights, like the rest of our campus, experienced some ups and downs throughout this past year but ultimately, these opportunities for growth helped create a better sense of community in the apartments. In summer 2020, Building 741 was taken offline for academic year occupancy and 11 of the 12 units were prepped to be used as Quarantine & Isolation Housing for students in need of a separate space if they tested positive for COVID-19 or came into contact with someone who had. Additionally, all our 5-person apartments were limited to a maximum occupancy of 3 students living per apartment to reduce density in the apartments. A nice benefit to this, though, was it allowed students additional closet/dresser space and a 2nd bed too.

Despite all the changes to the delivery method of classes and campus programs, many of our annual events still occurred, with CAs hanging out with their residents weekly, hosting WOWs, and completing monthly MavChats with each of their residents. In August 2020, we launched our 3rd year of Building Battles- our twice a semester building vs. building competition where residents earn points for their building by attending their CA's hangouts, attending WOWs, turning in grades to their Hall Director, Dan, and by competing in building wide competitions. This fall, Building 731 swept the competition twice while this spring, both Building 711 and Building 701 found themselves hoisting the Stadium Heights Cup as the victors.

During TOPS, Stadium Heights won the 2021 Commitment to Student Leadership Award for hosting "Pre-Finals Week Study Break", a weeklong program in December providing a way to relieve stress for students and providing them with social opportunities to bring them closer together during the height of the pandemic in Minnesota.

This summer, we are working to replace all of the refrigerators in every apartment as well as continuing an ongoing flooring project, replacing the carpet in every apartment with floating gravity tile flooring.

- Dan,
Stadium Heights Hall Director



A Day in the Life: Being a CA During a Pandemic

My name is Brady Bosse, and I will be coming into my fifth year here at MNSU, Mankato. I am double majoring in Biology and Life Science Education. I served as a CA from Fall 2020 to Spring 2021 at Stadium Heights, and currently serve as a summer CA at Stadium Heights. A fun fact about myself is I love to hike.

I knew becoming a CA during the pandemic was going to be interesting and challenging. I heard and experienced hangouts, WOWs, etc., prior to the pandemic, but all I knew was how to be a CA during the pandemic. I was in charge of Stadium Heights 731, and my building at first had around twenty residents. Once Thanksgiving Break came, my building dropped to fifteen residents. At the start of the spring semester, my building had around twelve residents. However, every moment we all spent together was a great moment. Many of my residents were sad to leave my building due to the pandemic, but from what they have told me they were very grateful to have lived in 731.

I always knew before becoming a CA that establishing a great community was going to be challenging. However, from my experience, it was a lot easier than I thought. I am so grateful for the residents I had. We all got along and had so much fun at every event we went to or every hangout that was put on within our own community. For me, it was so easy to build connections with my residents and I am so lucky to have had that experience.

Making additional door decs outside of the ones supplied to us was not required, however, I decided that making door decs was a way to help make my residents' place feel like home, and I'm glad I did because my residents loved and appreciated how I made them door decs. One resident told me how much they loved having a more decorated door and greatly appreciated my effort to help make our building feel like a home. Once spring started, I decided to make personalized door decs by asking them who their favorite Disney character was and I would make that door dec, and my residents loved that. Not only that, but I had a Disney Madness board where my residents filled out a Disney bracket and then voted every other day on which Disney movie was the best. Lastly, I had a "Would You Rather..." board where I would present a new question every week. The main reason why I did the Disney Madness board and the Would You Rather board was because I wanted to get my inactive residents active. Because of that, I had many of my inactive residents participate in both activities, as well as my active residents.

Overall, I would not take back anything. Even though it was a challenging year, I am so grateful for the experience of becoming a CA. I grew so much as a person and I want to thank my Stadium Heights staff and my residents for helping me grow to become a better person. I am very satisfied with my time being a CA, as well as building new, lifelong connections with staff members and residents.



Community Advisor Spotlight



"You don't have to be loud to be heard" is an apt description for the relational and intellectual leadership Louis brings to his team and residents. As a self-proclaimed "behind-the-scenes person," Louis influences his friends and peers by being a sounding board for their thoughts and providing strong support when issues arise. Louis' quiet-but-playful nature makes him easy to connect with and his natural curiosity about the world leads to many deeply philosophical conversations. Louis is one of the most self-aware people you will come across, as evident by the gentle and intentional leadership he provides as the CA to the Be You learning community. His commitment to fostering equitable spaces creates natural opportunities for residents to bond and grow with one another. Louis is involved with the Psychology department and will be a mentor in the Multicultural Center this upcoming fall. We will miss Louis in Crawford next year!

Louis Ikponmwoza - Crawford - D1

This year has been quite a year for all of the members of our CA team, but Julia Sears would like to highlight a CA who showed great willingness and ability to be flexible throughout the year, jump into new and ever-changing roles, and remain extremely positive throughout their CA experience. This person is Mikayla Ebnet, the Julia Sears SP3 CA. Mikayla started her CA journey thinking that she would be a part of the Preska CA team this past year, but with Covid-19 requiring quarantine housing to be available for residents, Mikayla's floor was selected to be one of the locations. This prompted Mikayla to become a Mail Coordinator for the department, in addition to helping with different events in Preska in order to fulfill her work hours for the department. Luckily for Julia Sears, Mikayla still wanted to be a CA, and since she went through CA training with everyone in the fall, she was able to enthusiastically jump right in when she was needed halfway through first semester. Her ability to quickly connect with her new residents, plan hangouts that appealed to her community, and create a strong bond with the staff team are all qualities that helped our residents and Julia Sears team be successful this year!



Mikayla Ebnet - Julia Sears - South Purple 3



This year a CA that McElroy wanted to highlight is G3's Leo De Souza. Leo is a returning CA in McElroy, having worked on E2 for the 2019-2020 school year. When COVID-19 caused campus to shut down in March of 2020, Leo returned to his home country of Brazil, slated to come back in the fall as a returner for the E/F staff. Unfortunately, pandemic travel restrictions prevented him from joining us on campus for fall of 2020. Eager to return to campus in the spring, Leo reached out and inquired about applying to be a midyear CA in November, as plans started to look up for Leo to return to Mankato. For the spring semester Mac staff had an anticipated vacancy, so the HDs worked with leadership team to bring Leo back to Mac on G3 and the rest is history! Leo bonded with the new McElroy staff and quickly connected with the residents of G3. In the fall, G3 was quite isolated, but Leo achieved great success bringing together residents for community meals and hangouts and it was great to have him back on the team.

Leo De Souza - McElroy - G3

Alexander Prom served as a Preska Community Advisor from 2020-2021. During his time, Alexander was exceptional at creating unique relationships with his residents and with other staff members. Alexander often helped other brainstorm different hang-outs that they could implement on the floor. Alexander even organized the large-group event of pumpkin painting in October 2020, where he coordinated the purchase of a bulk order of pumpkins from a local greenhouse. Alexander was often identified as someone who would go above and beyond the expectations in order to assist the staff and make a meaningful contribution to the Preska Residence Community.



Alexander Prom - Preska - J2



As a community advisor, Susan distinguishes herself as a team player and an effective leader. She possesses a genuine desire to serve students that choose to live with us in the Stadium Heights Apartments. As a leader in her community, she always encourages and celebrates the accomplishments of others. Susan has a natural ability to build community among residents in her building and has worked hard to foster an environment among her peers where all individuals are accepted for who they are. Susan is a leader who seeks to perform her best no matter the task presented to her; she strives for excellence. While Susan is the first to admit that Stadium wasn't her first choice for her CA placement, she has found her home and her community there and will be returning as a 2nd year CA in the fall!

Susan Simonis - Stadium Heights - Building 761

Staff Updates

DEPARTED

Brice Matthews
Area Director

Sarah Frazier
McElroy G/H Hall Director

Ash Rieth
Program Advisor & Summer Operations

Danny Schindler
Crawford Student Services Coordinator

Cal Evoniuk
McElroy Student Services Coordinator

TRANSITIONED

Emily Ender
Assistant Director of Residential Education

INCOMING

Beekah Media Russell
Program Advisor & Summer Operations

Hannah Konrad-Huttner
Assistant Director of Residential Education

Shawna Keating
Crawford Student Service Coordinator

Sussana Machinga
McElroy Student Service Coordinator



How it started...

How it ended...

