

# THE BURLINGTON BARK

Burlington, Iowa | Feb. 1, 2023



Bus driver Linda Junker welcomes aboard seventh-grader Christoff "C.J." Sewell Monday, Jan. 9, 2023, outside Edward Stone Middle School.

## BCSD BUS DRIVERS MAKE AN IMPACT

**Bus drivers serve as consistent presence in students' lives.**

Linda Junker's face lights up as she rises to greet her riders aboard Bus No. 17.

She welcomes each of them by name, asks about their day and waits patiently while they place their bags on the floor and make their way to their seats.

She looks back and forth between rearview mirrors and  
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Linda Junker takes pause from helping first-grader Dmoni Jefferson, left, and third-grader Taylor Jack Strause settle in aboard her bus to check out the cupcakes Jefferson brought to school to celebrate his seventh birthday Monday, Jan. 9, 2022, outside Grimes Elementary School. Junker has been a school bus driver for the district for 44 years.

### QUICK SIX

- 1. Feb. 1**  
100th day of school for the 2022-23 school year
- 2. Feb. 3**  
TWO-HOUR EARLY OUT
- 3. Feb. 13**  
The Burlington School Board will meet at 6 p.m.
- 4. Feb. 17**  
NO SCHOOL
- 5. Feb. 24**  
Second trimester ends
- 6. Feb. 24**  
Celebrate Black History Month at Aldo Leopold Intermediate School, where students will host a Black History Museum from 4 to 6 p.m.

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

January was National Mentoring Month. Take a peek at BCSD's Club M on page 2.

We asked, and you answered: See the full results of last month's social media poll on page 5.

THIS IS BURLINGTON

## FROM MENTEE TO MENTOR

# A GENERATIONAL EFFECT TAKES SHAPE AT CLUB M

### BCSD's one-on-one mentoring program enters eighth year.

Each Wednesday afternoon, elementary students rush into the cafeteria of Burlington High School, eager to spend an hour with their mentors.

Six years ago, Kiera Wagler, now 17 and a junior at BHS, was among the elementary mentees enrolled in Club M, the Burlington Community School District's one-on-one mentoring program that matches K-4th grade students with high schoolers based on interests and personalities.

"It was just nice to have someone who was older than me but not an adult that I was able to hang out with," Wagler recalled.

It was something she looked forward to each week, but between extracurricular activities, academic responsibilities and after-school jobs, high schoolers are busy, and Wagler estimates she had three or four mentors in a single year.

"I went through mentor after mentor," she said. "I would have a mentor who would show up for a while and then stop showing up, so I never had one solid mentor through a whole year, and I wanted to be able to be there for someone through a whole year."

That's why Wagler rejoined Club M her freshman year, this time as a mentor.



**Burlington High School junior and Club M mentor Brooklyn Rice reaches for a Lego while playing with her mentee, Ryden Ward, a second-grader at North Hill Elementary School, Wednesday, Jan. 11, 2023, in the BHS cafeteria. Rice is among seven mentors who first joined Club M as mentees.**

#### Become a mentor

Those wanting to become mentors can apply by visiting [bcsds.org/District/Portal/YouthNet](https://bcsds.org/District/Portal/YouthNet) and clicking on the [application link](#).

person that I wanted to have when I was that child," Wagler said. "I wanted to be a staple of their life that's there weekly and that they can trust."

She's become just that for Kylie Curry, 9, a fourth-grader at Grimes Elementary School, who is in her second year as Wagler's mentee.

"She's nice and she's funny, and she likes playing the things that I do," Curry said. "Sometimes she complains about playing tag, but she'll get over it."

Despite having a part-time job

and homework, Wagler still makes it a priority to spend a portion of her Wednesday afternoon in the high school cafeteria or in the courtyard, where Curry will talk her into playing a game of tag.

"I really like my mentee, so it's really easy to take time out of my week when I have something to look forward to," Wagler said.

Next year, Wagler will have a new mentee as Curry is in her final year of elementary school, but she hopes to have a positive impact on whomever her next match may be.

"It'll be new and different, but I'm hoping I can somehow make an impact on their life in the little time I'll have with them," Wagler said.

Wagler is one of seven mentees-turned-mentors who were presented with a Club M mug and picture frame this past month in recognition of their commitment to the program — and their young peers.

That's not to say that Club M's other mentors are without dedication.

About 52 high school mentors show up for the program each week in hopes of having a profoundly positive impact on the lives of their respective mentees.

"I just really like working with kids, and it's really nice to be such an important person in their life and be someone they look up to," 15-year-old

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## CLUB M

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freshman Shannon Skeens said while molding Play-Doh into figures alongside two of her fellow mentors and their mentees.

"I like that I get to be an inspiration to younger kids," said 14-year-old freshman Isha Salokhe.

### About Club M

Club M meets from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. each Wednesday during the school year, save for days when there is no school.

The program is in its eighth year at BCSD.

That's 250 hours of peer mentoring, with more than 150 students served each year.

This past summer, the program was re-certified for an additional three years through the Iowa Mentoring Partnership based on the National Quality Mentoring System's best practice standards.

"Everything we do goes back to that vision of having a profoundly positive impact on adult quality of life, and having Club M as part of that experience in our schools definitely goes toward that," Cassie Gerst, BCSD Supervisor of Grants and Community Outreach, told the Burlington School Board during its first meeting in January, which is National Mentoring Month.

Club M is one of the only school mentoring programs in Southeast Iowa.

It is aimed at improving self regulation and executive functioning skills, the mental processes that enable planning, focusing attention, memory and multitasking. It also helps build social skills.

Surveys completed by Club M mentees at the beginning and end of the year indicate an



**Burlington High School junior and Club M mentor Kiera Wagler and her mentee, Kyli Curry, a Grimes Elementary School fourth-grader, pose for a picture Wednesday, Jan. 11, 2023, at the BHS cafeteria. Wagler is among seven mentors who first joined Club M as mentees.**



**Cayden Parker, a Grimes Elementary School third-grader and Club M mentee, plays Tetris Link with his mentor, Anthony Box, a freshman at Burlington High School, Wednesday, Jan. 11, 2023, in the BHS cafeteria.**



**Burlington High School freshman and Club M mentor Aubrey Hesler and her mentee, Ethan Gerst, a kindergartner at Black Hawk Elementary School, enjoy a snack Wednesday, Jan. 11, 2023, in the BHS cafeteria.**



**Dawn Leasure, a North Hill second-grader and Club M mentee, and her mentor, Galilaia Sutton, a sophomore at Burlington High School, pose for a photo Wednesday, Jan. 11, 2023, in the BHS cafeteria.**

their ability to graduate high school and college.

Gerst said the program also has enabled the formation of friendships between students from different schools who

otherwise may not have met until at least fifth grade.

The program also has a positive impact on mentors, with 92% of mentors either agreeing or strongly agreeing that Club M



**Burlington High School freshmen and Club M mentors Isha Salokhe, Rayleigh White and Shannon Skeens craft with Play-Doh alongside second-grade mentees Journey Green and Lauren Johnson Wednesday, Jan. 11, 2023, in the BHS cafeteria.**

helps them to be better role models and 68% indicating that Club M helped them think about their own future.

For more, visit [bcstds.org/District/Portal/YouthNet](https://bcstds.org/District/Portal/YouthNet).



Buses await the next day's routes Monday, Jan. 9, 2023, at the bus barn.

## DRIVERS

Continued from page 1

the road ahead as she eases the 75-foot-long vehicle into traffic, all the while managing to keep a watchful eye on her passengers.

The next two hours hold no shortage of tight turns, narrow roadways, or distractions, but Junker takes it all in stride.

"You just have to get over your fear of driving something really really big," Junker said with a grin.

Junker conquered that fear long ago, having first started driving for the Burlington Community School District in 1979. She retired briefly in 2014 but returned that same year.

"They needed the help so bad that I came back," Junker said.

What initially attracted Junker to the job was its schedule, which coincided perfectly with that of her children's schools.

"When I started here, we had



Bus driver Linda Junker waits for passengers to board her bus Monday, Jan. 9, 2023, outside Edward Stone Middle School.

no men drivers," Junker recalled. "None. It was all women, and most of us were young moms. It was a good job because we knew that we work and then our kids go to school."

Now, men make up nearly half of the 27 drivers who gather at the bus barn each morning and afternoon before boarding their buses and driving their routes, which amount to a total of 1,898 miles. Among those men are Junker's son, Jason.

"He was about 6 or 7 when I started driving," Junker said. "He

used to go with me when he was a kid and he loved it."

The demographics of the job may have changed, but Junker's memory and compassion for her passengers have not. She can still recall the names and faces of riders who graduated long ago, the dogs who waited outside to welcome them back home after a long day at school, and how bad or mild the winter was that year.

She keeps in tow a blanket for a rider with a medical condition that makes them more susceptible to cold, and tucked

away near her seat is a notebook full of tips and advice for substitutes on the rare days she cannot work.

"All these kids, every one we've got in here, I've had when they were little," she said.

At each drop-off, Junker waits until she sees her riders enter their homes before departing for the next stop.

Once all of her middle schoolers are safely home, she makes her way to Grimes Elementary School to pick up a trio of riders who like to sing. It's something Junker encourages while she helps those who need it to their seats.

One of those students, Junker noted, soon will go on to middle school and no longer will be on her route.

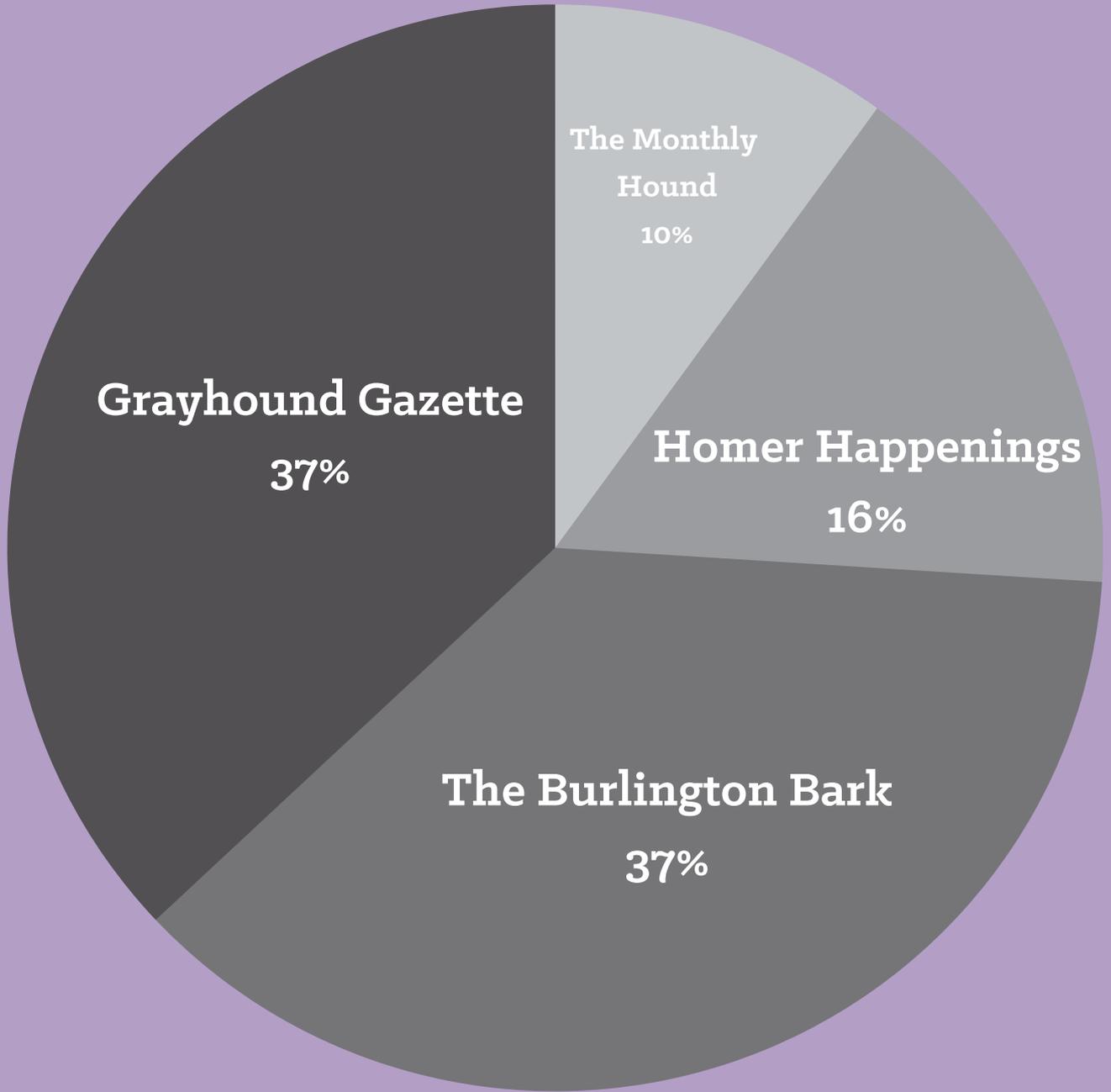
"I've got him for one more year, and then he'll go to Aldo," she said, explaining that her bonds with her riders have made it difficult to decide when to finally retire. "I don't know what I'm going to do. When the time

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INSTAGRAM POLL RESULTS

# NAME THE NEWSLETTER



## DRIVERS

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comes and I do end up retiring, I'm going to miss these kids terribly."

Likewise, Transportation Director Scott Mason said bus drivers play an important role in the lives of the children they serve.

"Our staff is phenomenal ... They are professionals who drive because they love interacting

with kids and making an impact," Mason said. "They are great employees and even better people.

"We share the belief that there is something special about being the first BCSD face kids see in the morning and the last they see in the afternoon. There is an impact that can be made just by being dependable; kids yearn for stability and knowing they get to see the smiling face of their morning or afternoon driver may be something kids come to depend upon. The staff

believes this, too, and represents all of us in the best way possible."

This year, about 1,200 students ride BCSD buses.

Mason said substitute bus drivers are always needed and encouraged those seeking fulfillment to consider giving it a try.

"If you find yourself looking for something fulfilling, especially if you are recently retired, and you are looking for something

where you can have a direct impact on someone or something, I would absolutely encourage you to think about becoming a substitute," Mason said.

"It would be unfair to sugarcoat interactions with kids by saying that they are always positive and good, but the good will always outweigh the bad. Kids sincerely want adults to care about them, so if anyone finds themselves looking for a way to influence a younger generation, this might just be a good way to do it."

# BURLINGTON ACTIVITIES DEPT.

To view the Activities schedule [click here!](#)

## THE RECAP



# UPCOMING EVENTS

## BURLINGTON COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

February 3 - Two-hour early out  
 February 13 - Burlington School Board meets at 6 p.m.  
 February 17 - No school  
 February 24 - End of second trimester

## BURLINGTON HIGH SCHOOL

February 12 - Wrestling tournament from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. at BHS Carl Johannsen Gymnasium  
 February 21 - BHS Vocal Pops Concert at 7 p.m. at ESMS Auditorium  
 February 23 - FAFSA night from 4 to 7 p.m. at BHS  
 February 27 - BHS Spring Orchestra Concert at 7 p.m. at ESMS Auditorium

## EDWARD STONE MIDDLE SCHOOL

February 9 - Winter Band Concert at 7 p.m. at ESMS Auditorium  
 February 24 - Travel Through Time Trivia at 6:30 p.m. at the Burlington Moose Lodge. Proceeds go to ESMS student celebrations.

## ALDO LEOPOLD INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL

February 24 - You're invited to the Aldo Leopold Black History Museum from 4 to 6 p.m. at ALIS, where students will have displays celebrating Black History Month.

## VIBE VIRTUAL LEARNING PROGRAM

February 2: Parent-teacher conferences are from 1 to 3 p.m.

## ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS & CORSE EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER

February 1: 100th Day of School celebrations



## AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS

[Click here to view the PiECES Calendar](#)

[and activities!](#)

**Saturday Movie! XXXXXXXXXXXXX**

February 11 at 1 p.m. at the Capitol Theatre

**Saturdays with PiECES**

February 4 and 18

**NO PiECES**

February 3 and 17

**CONNECT WITH US!**



@BurlingtonCommunitySchoolDistrict



@bcsgreyhounds



@bcsgreyhounds

# AT BCSD, WE ARE RAISING GRAYHOUNDS!



## BURLINGTON COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT NONDISCRIMINATION NOTICE

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For Educational Programs: Cory Johnson, Director of Curriculum, [cory.johnson@bclds.org](mailto:cory.johnson@bclds.org)

For Employment: Laci Johnson, Director of Human Resources, [laci.johnson@bclds.org](mailto:laci.johnson@bclds.org)