

## Metro State honors students

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Ten students were selected spring semester outstanding students at Metropolitan State and recognized during a special reception prior to the school's commencement ceremony.

The honored students, were Emebet Fantahun, Greg Gustafson, Kathryn Herzog, Kristan Hiltley, David Squier Jones, Carol LaFleur, Yasir Muhammad, Janeil Popp, Shawna Faith Thompson, and Alexander Weston.

Fantahun, of Eagan, is an Ethiopian native who is a part-time nursing assistant at The Commons on Marice, an Eagan assisted living center. The Master of Science in nursing graduate participated in Metropolitan State's Student Parent Center. Before arriving in the United States in 2008, she was an agricultural researcher in her native country. A graduate of Alamaya University in Harar, Ethiopia, with a degree in crop science, Fantahun attended Normandale Community College and earned academic honors there before enrolling at Metropolitan State. The married mother of two eventually plans to return to Ethiopia and assist underserved women and children.

Gustafson, of Saint Paul, is a financial analyst with Minnetronix, a Saint Paul medical device firm. Before that, he was a shift manager at Seward Community Cooperative, Minneapolis, where he also served on the co-op's board. The accounting major volunteered to complete tax returns for low-income folks for the Volunteer In Tax Assistance program. Gustafson graduated from the University of Minnesota-Duluth in 2007 with an English degree.

Herzog, a resident of Woodbury, is one of Metropolitan State's most active and accomplished psychology students. She co-founded a new university group called the Behavioral Science Student Association and is a member of the student Psychology Club, the American Psychology Association, the Society for Personality and Social Psychology (SPSP), the International Society of Political Psychology (ISPP) and Psi Chi, an international honor society for psychology students. Active in community service, she helped with two voter mobilization efforts and volunteered for Feed My Starving Children and the Ramsey County Public Library system. A 2012 graduate of Madison (Wisconsin) Area Technical College, Herzog plans to seek a master's degree in Metropolitan State's applied social psychology program.

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Hiltsley, of Minnetonka, is an urban elementary education major. When she discovered that Saint Louis County homeless shelters were short of blankets, jackets and other winter clothing, she started a collection and drove to Duluth to deposit those items. The student teacher at Robbinsdale Public Schools has also been a children's literacy volunteer and assisted with several charity fund-raisers. Hiltsley earned an associate's degree from Normandale Community College in 2012.

Jones, a Saint Paul resident, was a graduate assistant who helped faculty research violent crimes against the homeless and the experiences of cities consolidating their police and fire services into one public safety department. He is a former police officer on Saint Paul's East Side and he also previously served as a deputy sheriff and community service officer in California. Active in community service, Jones was a member of the West Side (Saint Paul) Safe Neighborhood Council and volunteered with the Special Olympics and Habitat for Humanity. Jones graduated with a bachelor's degree in legal studies in 2001 from California State University-Long Beach.

LaFleur, of Brooklyn Park, recently won her city's Good Citizenship Award for her commitment to assisting at-risk youth and violence victims, promoting diversity, volunteering for the city's police department and performing other community service. Selected student commencement speaker, the criminal justice major was a member of a group that played a key role in the Brooklyn Park City Council approving a shelter for homeless and at-risk youth. LaFleur's achievements are all the more inspiring because of challenges she has confronted, including struggling with drug/alcohol addiction, anorexia, bulimia and agoraphobia. Wheelchair-bound in her mid-30s, she did not leave her Brooklyn Park home for years. Enrolled at North Hennepin Community College, LaFleur became active in student organizations, including serving as Student Senate vice president and president of the Student Volunteer Club. She graduated Phi Theta Kappa in 2011 with an associate of arts in liberal arts and an associate of science in criminal justice. No longer in a wheelchair but still struggling with lupus, LaFleur credits higher education for playing a transformative role in her recovery.

"I wanted to die but education gave me a place to live," said LaFleur.

Muhammad, of Maple Grove, is a native of Pakistan who is a principal engineer at Saint Jude Medical. The MBA student was a member of Metropolitan State's Student Parent Center and Walkabout group. Previously, Muhammad performed engineering, quality and other professional duties for Boston Scientific and Ford Motor Company. Muhammad, a board member of the North West Islamic Community Center, Plymouth and a volunteer for the Osseo-Maple Grove Hockey Association, earned a master's degree in mechanical engineering from the University of Detroit Mercy and a bachelor's in mechanical engineering from the University of Engineering and Technology, Peshawar, Pakistan.

Popp, of Saint Paul, is a nurse case manager for Homeward Bound, a Plymouth nonprofit that provides housing and services for people with developmental and physical disabilities. For helping people with severe disabilities paint, she won an Association of Residential Resources Minnesota Cares Award. Popp became the legal guardian of one woman with developmental disabilities, because she was isolated and her family appeared to have abandoned her. Persons

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with disabilities "absolutely influenced" her to become a better person, she said. She graduated from Normandale Community College in 2011 with an associate's degree in nursing.

Thompson, a Minneapolis resident, is a financial wellness manager at Emerge Community Development, a north Minneapolis nonprofit offering workforce, financial and housing programs. She previously worked at WomenVenture, a northeast Minneapolis nonprofit supporting women-owned businesses, where she received the Greatest Client Impact Award. Thompson, who concentrated her studies on economic development, received a community impact award from Rich Chicks, a nonprofit that helps women plan and manage their finances. A member of several professional organizations, she is also active in community service. Thompson served on the East Side Food Co-op board, helped raised funds for the Minnesota Humane Society and HIV/AIDS awareness and volunteered for the Twin Cities-to-Chicago bike ride now called Red Ribbon Ride. She graduated with honors from Minneapolis Community and Technical College in 2011 with an associate of arts degree in liberal arts.

Weston, of Saint Paul, a history major works part-time as a Minnesota Historical Society (MNHS) interpreter at the Alexander Ramsey House in Saint Paul. He previously was an interpreter at Historic Fort Snelling and the Mill City Museum, Minneapolis, and a MNHS media producer. Weston volunteered for Harmony Theater Company and School, Saint Louis Park, and he actively helps at Saint Paul Fellowship, a Saint Paul church. He graduated from Minneapolis Community and Technical College in 2007 with an associate degree in filmmaking.