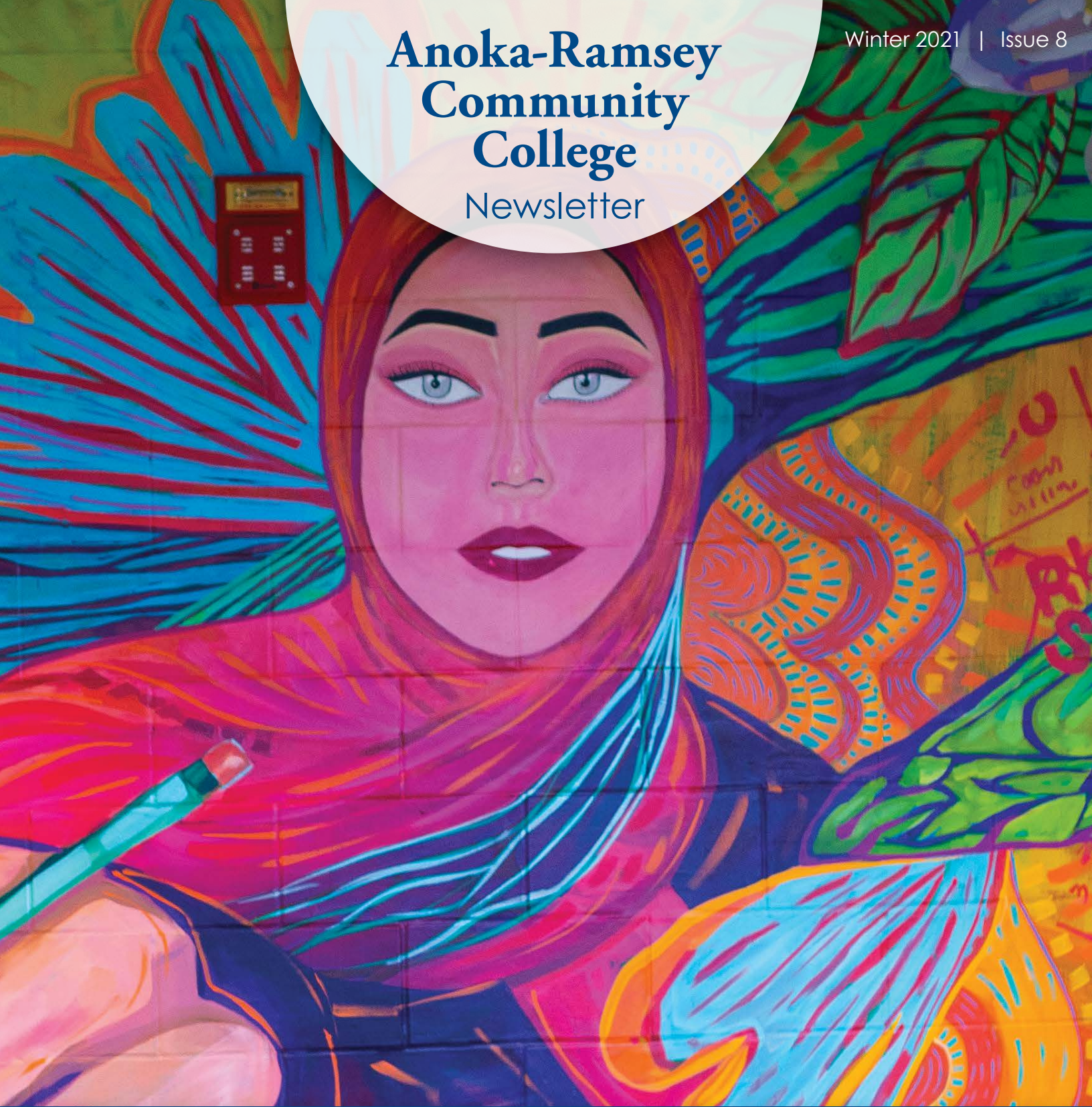


Anoka-Ramsey Community College

Newsletter



This Issue: Campus Mural • Equity and Inclusion • Student Success • Alumni Connection • Foundation Scholarships • In Memorial



ANOKA-RAMSEY
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

A member of Minnesota State

Inside This Issue

2

The President's Message

My Story, Your Story,
Our Story

3

A Culture of Equity
and Inclusion

4

Committed to
Student Success

6

Alumni Connection

7

Making a Difference -
Foundation Scholarships

In Memoriam of
John C. Herbert

The President's Message

Welcome to the Winter 2021 issue of the Anoka-Ramsey Community College newsletter.

This year has certainly been a difficult one. COVID-19 has impacted many areas of our lives and changed the way we teach and learn at Anoka-Ramsey. In times of adversity, I am especially struck by how fortunate we are as a college to have an alumni community and partners like you to support the work we do. Thank you for your continued support of our students, faculty and staff.

At Anoka-Ramsey, we responded to the pandemic by focusing on two priorities:

1. the health and safety of our students, faculty and staff,
2. the continued progress and success of our students in their programs of study.

“In times of adversity, I am especially struck by how fortunate we are as a college to have an alumni community and partners like you to support the work we do.”

These priorities continue to drive everything we do and have required great effort and creativity on the part of our faculty and staff. I am proud of the care and innovation exercised by our college community in the face of the adversity posed by COVID-19. In this newsletter, you'll get a glimpse of a few of the ways that faculty and students are adapting to new methods of approaching their work and scholarship.

Anoka-Ramsey is also fortunate to have received funding from the state's bonding bill to further student success through the modernization of our Business and Nursing building. This project will right-size nursing labs and classrooms and make flexible use of learning spaces across programs. We are grateful to the legislature and to each of you who lent support and advocacy to making this long-awaited project a reality.



This year has also seen renewed momentum at the college to further goal three of our Strategic Plan—to foster an environment that practices equity and inclusion. Work on this goal has been ongoing, through our Strategic Diversity and Inclusion Plan, and in service of Minnesota State's Equity 2030 plan to eliminate educational equity gaps. However, the killing of George Floyd and deepening of existing racial inequities by the pandemic have added urgency to what Anoka-Ramsey can do locally to address systemic issues and become an antiracist college.

This work is challenging and sometimes uncomfortable, but it is essential to the success of our students, employees and all the communities that Anoka-Ramsey serves. One way we are advancing this goal is featured in this newsletter, the Equity by Design initiative, aimed at identifying and eliminating disparities in success for students of color within our academic programs.

As we enter 2021, I send my best wishes for good health and a better year ahead. Thank you again for your support of Anoka-Ramsey Community College.

Take care,

Kent Hanson, Ph.D.
President

On the Cover

My Story, Your Story, Our Story

Who we are as a community and who we aspire to be; that's what Anoka-Ramsey Community College's mural, "My Story, Your Story, Our Story" represents.

What began as a grant proposal written more than two years ago to the Minnesota State Arts Board is now proudly displayed in the Business/Nursing building on the college's Coon Rapids Campus. The mural was developed with input from students, staff, faculty, alumni and community members at the direction of student mentees and local muralist, Greta McLain.

A Culture of EQUITY INCLUSION

As a member of Minnesota State, Anoka-Ramsey Community College is part of the largest, most diverse network of higher education providers in the state of Minnesota. The college's strategic plan pushes beyond diversity and challenges Anoka-Ramsey to close equity gaps and become a more inclusive college for students, faculty and staff.

Through the Minnesota State Office of Equity and Inclusion, four priority areas have been defined in the Equity 2030 plan for colleges to:

- build equity-minded administrators, faculty and staff through professional development opportunities;
- ensure all students have access to equitable opportunities in all aspects of their education and that all colleges and universities are student ready to serve a more diverse student body;
- improve support and resources for colleges and universities related to compliance with federal and state civil rights laws and supporting board policies;
- ensure welcoming and inclusive environments across the colleges and universities.

With these goals in mind and building on the college's Strategic Diversity and Inclusion Plan chartered in 2016, Anoka-Ramsey engaged in the Equity by Design initiative as just one approach to inform and implement this work.

But what does equity mean in the college environment?

"We all have diverse abilities and backgrounds, and our educational process should reflect that," shared Melanie Melendrez-Vallard a biology instructor and faculty representative for the department in the college's Equity 2030 workgroup. "As educators our role is to determine what a student needs to be successful and provide that; to individualize that student's educational journey as much as we can to ensure they have the same education, the

same opportunities, a set of new skills and a strengthening of the skills they already have that make them unique and indispensable."

As a college, it also means using data to understand the equity gaps that exist. One example of this is the graduation rate for students from diverse backgrounds. Anoka-Ramsey has reviewed data for the past three years, the Equity by Design process will allow the college to ask how we look at the data and work it's doing through an equity lens to consider how to get to parity and reduce the equity gap.

Through this process, it is easy to recognize opportunities and want to quickly jump in to make a change but making a change to an organizational culture takes time to be sustainable.

"This work is mission critical, not only to our students but our entire college community," said Steve Crittenden, interim vice president of academic and student affairs. "We

need to understand what equity is and see gaps through data and experiences. Then we can incorporate best practices and new practices to get to where we need to be."

Anoka-Ramsey is ready to remain committed to the long-term goal of creating a community where students are part of defining their success and the college plays a role in providing the resources needed to achieve their goals.

"Every student is capable, every student has the potential to be a productive member of our society," said Melendrez-Vallard. "As instructors, I believe, we should provide them the tools they need and show them how capable and amazing they are. That's equity."

“We all have diverse abilities and backgrounds, and our educational process should reflect that.”

Melanie Melendrez-Vallard
Anoka-Ramsey Biology Instructor

"The school really supports an *all are welcome* environment, but the walls don't tell that story," shared McLain in a documentary about the project.

The final panels of the mural were installed in the fall. While campus is closed to the public due to COVID-19, we invite you to enjoy portions of the work throughout this newsletter and view the documentary at AnokaRamsey.edu/muralproject.



COMMITTED TO Student SUCCESS

In March 2020 Anoka-Ramsey Community College, along with colleges across the state of Minnesota, made the decision to close its campuses and move all classes possible online. With the health and safety of our students, faculty and staff the priority, this model continued into the Spring 2021 semester.

Quickly moving to a remote style of learning and access to support services took commitment and creativity in order to ensure success for our students.



Prop kits for each actor were carefully put together with costumes, makeup plots and props. The technical crew that would typically be supporting set design, lighting, sound, etc... had to learn how to utilize technology in new ways to record and produce the final performance by recording the actors individually via Zoom.

From Stage to Screen

Moving classes online was no small feat for Theater Department faculty member Lisa Weaver. After the spring production was cancelled mid-performance due to the pandemic, the department was determined to make the fall production a reality.

Enter “The Living” a play set in 1665 London as the Black Plague sweeps the city.

times. The plot involves social distancing, fear of contagion, loss, grief and community.”

Auditions and rehearsals were held virtually and plans for the production were made in the process. “The creativity of the students and opportunity to make the best of the situation we’re in have been a gift for everyone involved,” said Weaver.

“It wasn’t a surprise that there was such a support system with my teachers and my friends, but what was a surprise was that it was constant.”

Caitlin Sparks
Anoka-Ramsey Theatre Student

“I saw this play being workshopped when I was in grad school and loved it at the time,” shared Weaver, also the play’s director. “It has so much relevance for our lives right now. It’s about finding our best selves in the worst of

“Typically, we would have costume fittings and get to see the set being built,” shared student cast member Caitlin Sparks. “Instead we have people getting our pictures to create makeup plots and we’re more in a technical production.”

Sparks has been part of multiple productions at Anoka-Ramsey and this experience as both a member of the cast and student impacted by the shift to an online format tested her resolve. “When I found out we were moving online I was nervous. I have not been successful learning in that format before.”

But Anoka-Ramsey’s supportive culture helped shift her mindset to see opportunity and hope.

“Anoka-Ramsey has always been a good place to find support, whether it’s academically or just as a person,” shared Sparks. “Ever since last spring when we went into quarantine to now, it wasn’t a surprise that there was such a support system with my teachers and my friends, but what was a surprise was that it was constant.”

“The thing that has pushed me to keep going and be successful as a student has been surrounding myself with that support system and working towards a common goal of maintaining hope.”

While the production wasn’t what students originally expected, the format gave everyone involved





the opportunity to practice a different set of skills and reach a larger audience than it would in a traditional production.

“Recording our show over Zoom is exciting because I have family in Russia and down south that will be able to see me perform for the first time,” said Sam Babkin, a second-year student.

“The big consensus we’ve come to as a cast is that this is our

reality now,” said Sparks. “This can be theatre right now, this can be something we learn from, where we can create amazing art just like we would if we were on stage. The entire cast has been able to look at this as a learning opportunity and make the most of it. Because of that I think it’s one of the most interesting shows I’ve been part of.”

Expanding Basic Needs Resources

Anoka-Ramsey operates food shelves on both college campuses. Having access to basic needs like food and hygiene products allows students to focus on their health and academic success.

300+

bags of food to students in need

To ensure the safety of the college’s staff and students since the pandemic, the food shelves converted to a grab-and-go distribution. Bags of food and personal hygiene items are prepackaged and placed at the main entrance of each campus monthly and remain until they are gone.

Anoka-Ramsey distributed more than 300 bags of food and more than 100 hygiene bags in the Fall 2020 semester.

Even with resources available like food and hygiene products, underutilization of existing campus support services to help students connect with basic

needs resources—food, housing, transportation, emergency grants, etc.—is a persistent problem at the college.

While the underlying causes of that underutilization are complex and interconnected, a lack of awareness and challenges in accessing existing information may be a significant contributing factor.

A student’s basic needs must be met as a prerequisite for success, especially during a pandemic when support is being provided remotely. In an effort to collect

100+

hygiene bags to students in need

and distribute resources and information to students to help them secure basic needs, Anoka-Ramsey worked to centralize relevant resources in an online hub that can be accessed anywhere, any time.

AnokaRamsey.edu/basicneeds

Technology to Make it Possible

Learning online only works if there is technology to support it.

244

laptops & tablets on loan

The Office of Information Technology at Anoka-Ramsey played a critical role in providing faculty, students and staff with the equipment, tools and skills needed to move to online learning.

Anoka-Ramsey provided 244

loaner laptops and tablets to students who lacked equipment and 28 hotspots for students who did not have reliable internet access.

28

hotspots for Wi-Fi access

Expanded hotspots were also added across campuses so students and faculty could access reliable internet from vehicles or outside when campus was closed.

Alumni CONNECTION

From our first graduates in the class of 1965 to today, Anoka-Ramsey Community College is proud of our alumni and their contributions to our community. Catch up with some of our alumni and share your own story at AnokaRamsey.edu/stories

Abdi Hassan '17 and Salman Elmi '17



Salman Elmi (left) and Abdi Hassan (right) at their office.

“The freedom of flexibility of schedules [at Anoka-Ramsey] was what allowed me to start something else, you know, and pursue other things.”

Salman Elmi '17
Anoka-Ramsey alumnus

was what allowed me to start something else, you know, and pursue other things.”

Those other things included a side-hustle turned business developing websites. Since 2016, Top Figure has helped businesses create and grow a presence online.

“We work with a lot of small businesses,” Hassan said. “It’s sad that a lot of businesses now are going out of business because they weren’t properly trained on how to have their digital platforms ready for them to be able to sell. They had the physical, but then a pandemic just ended things that quick and things are never going to go back to being the same.”

“2020 has shown us that if you don’t have a skill, it’s hard to grow,” he added.

As COVID-19 pushed retail and hospitality businesses to close their doors in early 2020, many found themselves in need of an online presence to stay afloat and connected to customers.

Enter Anoka-Ramsey alumni Abdi Hassan and Salman Elmi. The two are co-founders of Top Figure, a Minneapolis-based e-commerce marketing agency.

The pair met and joined business forces as Anoka-Ramsey students while Salman was studying computer science and Abdi studying business.

They say Anoka-Ramsey’s flexibility and affordability drew them to campus.

“It was a great test environment for me. It really allowed me to be flexible and not overloaded with classes,” Elmi said. “The freedom of flexibility of schedules



Erica Parker '14

Anoka-Ramsey’s basketball and soccer programs are what first brought her to the college. Through challenges including the loss of a friend and teammate, Parker also experienced the highlight of being on the first Anoka-Ramsey soccer team to go to nationals.

Parker transferred after completing her associate degree to complete a Bachelor of Science degree in Exercise Science. Today she is an NCAA Division Women’s Basketball Official and cites officiating in the Big Ten and Division II NCAA Tournaments as some of her biggest professional accomplishments.



Abigail (Schraufnagel) Strauss '13

Originally from North Branch, Strauss attended Anoka-Ramsey to get a quality education with small class sizes while staying close to her family. After finishing generals, she transferred to Winona State University and eventually completed a Doctor of Optometry degree at the Illinois College of Optometry in Chicago.

“I am currently in the processes of completing a fellowship in Advanced Medically Necessary Contact Lenses at the University of Illinois at Chicago,” said Strauss. “I am so blessed to be able to perform specialty contact lens exams for those in need.”



Mulenga Kapungulya '10

A sibling initially introduced Kapungulya to Anoka-Ramsey and as an international student, felt a sense of belonging that started at his initial visit.

Kapungulya was part of the first Men’s Soccer team at the college and helped make history by winning a championship as a first-year program. Kapungulya went on to complete a Bachelor of Science degree in Business from UW-Parkside and is the owner of EdHope Academy. “My dream job is doing what I currently do educating and giving hope to athletes through soccer development and sports performance.”



Earl Thompson '81

Thompson believed Anoka-Ramsey was, “a great place to attend because of its environment and the administration was very helpful and friendly.” As a football player and student, Anoka-Ramsey provided a space for Thompson to meet new people and capitalize on an affordable education.

Thompson has held a long career as a football coach in high school, junior college and semi-professional teams and has been inducted into two halls of fame. Thompson works as a Court Operation Associate but dreams to coach football full-time.

Making a Difference Through Scholarships

The Anoka-Ramsey Community College Campus Foundations exist to make college affordable and accessible through scholarships and crisis grant funds to students at Anoka-Ramsey.

For students like Katie, Rebecca and Mikaela, scholarships received in the 2020-2021 academic year made the difference between attending college and not during the COVID-19 pandemic.



In Memorial of John C. Herbert

This summer, Anoka-Ramsey suddenly lost an invested member of our campus community. John Herbert taught Political Science at the college for nearly 13 years. John was passionate about helping students and was also an advisor for the PTK (Phi Theta Kappa) honor society at the college. His caring, humor and light-heartedness truly made a difference in many students' lives and he will be greatly missed.

With the encouragement of the Herbert family, the Coon Rapids Campus Foundation has established a memorial fund in John's name to honor his legacy at Anoka-Ramsey. All funds raised in memory of John will support a scholarship for Coon Rapids Campus students as they work toward their educational goals.

To learn more or make a gift, visit [AnokaRamsey.edu](https://www.anokaramsey.edu)/donate.

Recognizing Retiring Faculty and Staff

In 2020, 12 members of Anoka-Ramsey's faculty and staff retired. The college is thankful for each of their contributions to our educational community.

- Nancy Boatman, Health
- Kevan Dockter, Math
- Scott Ford, Theatre
- Ellen Garner, TRIO
- Luanne Hogan, Dean
- Ann Kinkel, TRIO
- Mary Ann Larios, Counseling
- David Larson, Biology
- Al Mamaril, Library
- Thomas McCarthy, Speech
- Martha Muehlhauser, Library Tech
- Steven Ollenketo, Math

Katie Anderson 2020-2021 General Foundation Scholarship Recipient



"I can't express how truly grateful I am to have received this financial support. I was very worried that I wouldn't be able to attend college next year due to coronavirus' heavy impact on my family's finances. I've also had to become a main caretaker for a member of my family. Their normal caretaker works part-time at the hospital, but as COVID-19 gets worse, they have to be at the hospital more and subsequently is unable to work with my family member.

Without the scholarship I doubt I would have been able to afford college this year.

I am in the transfer program, so after I graduate this spring I will be transferring to the University of Minnesota to study Special Education and Deaf Education."

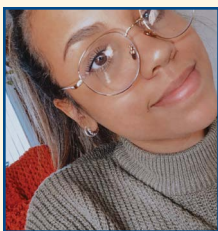
Rebecca Bridges 2020-2021 Ramsey Lions Scholarship Recipient



"Receiving this scholarship will allow me to focus on school without having to worry as much about finances. The past seven months have been challenging to say the least, especially with the pandemic. I'm excited to begin the fall semester and get started in the Nursing program. And now it seems that I'll be able to do so with a little less financial stress.

This being a Veteran's Scholarship, I must recall the path I chose to serve. With the core values instilled in me through the United States Navy, I will continue to represent my country, as a veteran, in the most positive light possible."

Mikaela Hayes 2020-2021 Kopp Family Foundation Scholarship Recipient



"I've been attending Anoka-Ramsey for two years now and I plan to graduate in 2022 with a Health Sciences degree. After graduation I plan to attend the University of Minnesota Twin Cities enrolled in the College of Biological Sciences and chose to attend Anoka-Ramsey because of their partnership with the U and the MnCap program.

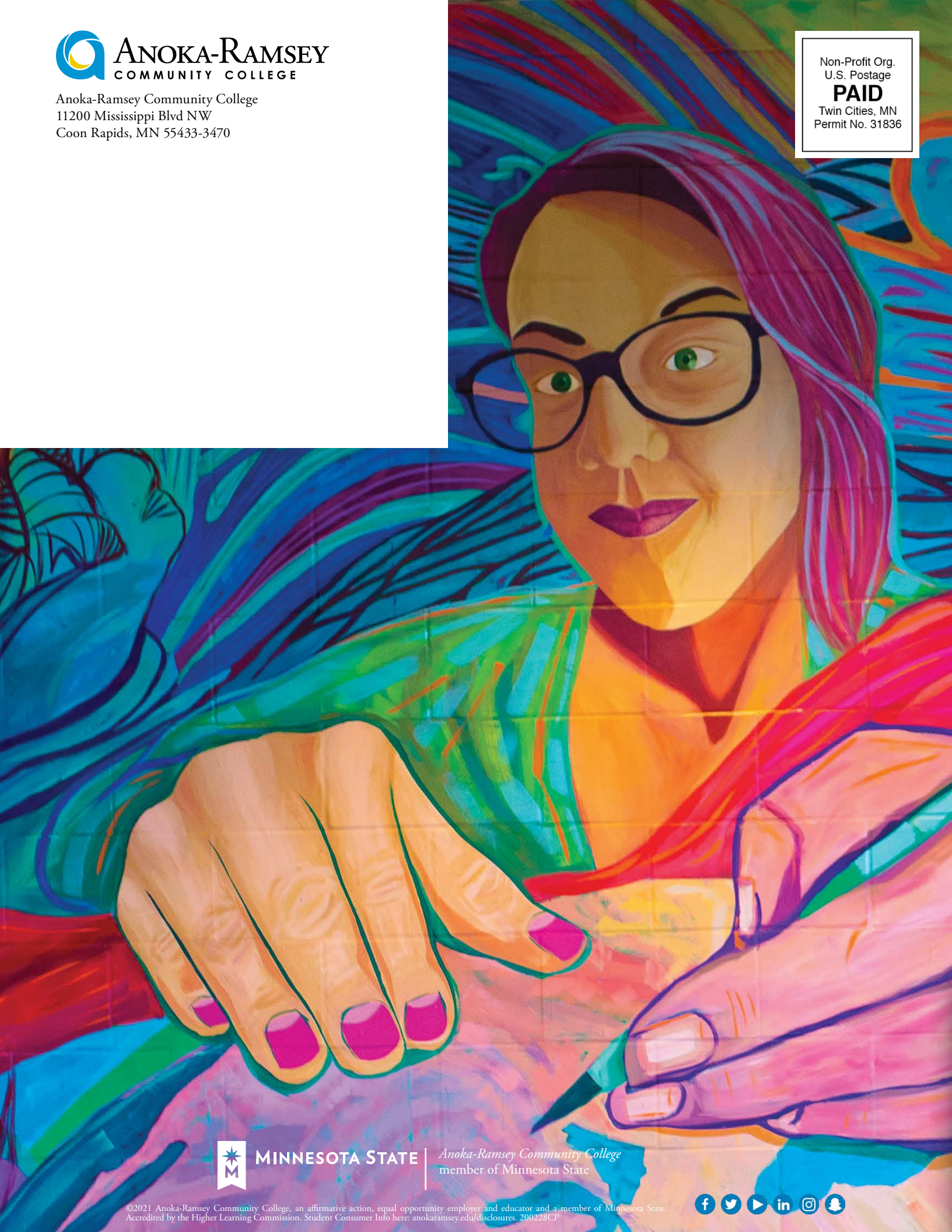
I want to say thank you to the board of directors for choosing me for a scholarship. This year has been one of the most difficult in my life. Early this year my dad battled with liver cancer, and eventually received a liver transplant. After that, COVID-19 came along and I lost my job.

As a Black woman in America, the police killing of George Floyd broke my heart completely and became a significant part of my life. This scholarship has been the best news I've heard in a little while now. This scholarship has taken a great weight off me and has allowed me to take the classes I needed to this fall semester."



Anoka-Ramsey Community College
11200 Mississippi Blvd NW
Coon Rapids, MN 55433-3470

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Twin Cities, MN
Permit No. 31836



MINNESOTA STATE

Anoka-Ramsey Community College
member of Minnesota State

