

For Immediate Release
Thursday, September 21, 2023
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Ripon High School Announces 2023 Distinguished Alumni

Ripon, WI – Ripon High School is proud to announce that the 2023 Distinguished Alumni Award has been awarded to John Erickson.

From growing up in Ripon, Wisconsin, to serving as Mayor Pro Tempore in the City of West Hollywood, California, John Erickson's journey to create a more just, tolerant, and diverse world began at the age of six when he became a regular volunteer with his maternal grandmother, Gladys Hritsko, at the Ripon Community Food Bank. Even back then, John saw the power that community and activism could have on people's everyday lives.

At Ripon High from 2000-2004, John became recognized for his exceptional athletic abilities as well as his musical and thespian talents. He became the school's all-time vertical jump record holder in volleyball, was a 4-year varsity letter awardee on the cross country and tennis teams, sang with the Ripon High School Choir and the Vocal Jazz Group, and acted in school theatre productions. At UW-Oshkosh, John learned the importance of living his true self and became the first openly LGBTQ+ athlete on campus as a member of the volleyball team. With grandmother Gladys as his guiding light, John served as the President of the school's Women's Advocacy Council, the Gender Equity Council, and worked at the Women's Resource Center where he was actively involved in the "Take Back the Night " campaigns. After graduating from

Oshkosh with honors in English and Women's Studies, John moved west to study at Claremont Graduate University in California – becoming the first man to graduate with a dual master's degree in Applied Women's Studies and Women's Studies in Religion. He then went on to earn a Ph.D. in American Religious History in 2019.

While at Claremont, John was selected to intern for the iconic West Hollywood City Council where he combined his passion for justice with public service. His trailblazing spirit and magnetic activism got him elected to the West Hollywood City Council in 2020.

In addition to his council duties and his day job as the Vice President of Public Affairs, Communications, and Marketing at Planned Parenthood Los Angeles, John is a fearless, tenacious, and effective voice for those who are often silenced. His advocacy work includes serving as a national board member of the National Organization for Women and former President of the ACLU Southern California. He serves on the UW-Oshkosh Alumnae Board and is the Founding President of UW-Oshkosh's LGBTQIA+ Alumni Board.

During John's frequent visits to Ripon, John can be spotted at Culver's sipping a Concrete Mixer.

Any comments or suggestions, please contact Sam Daun at (920) 748-4621.

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