

RIPON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT
2023-2024 Friends of Public Schools Award
Cory Pollesch, Lynn Pollesch, and Jon Heatley

Cory Pollesch, Lynn Pollesch, and Jon Heatley are true Friends of Public Schools. The Board selected these three gentlemen for their ongoing support for both students and staff through their continued vision and philanthropic support of the Ripon Area School District. Each year, Cory Pollesch organizes the MP Charity Golf Outing and Lynn Pollesch and Jon Heatley organize the East Central Tractor Cruise to raise funds to provide necessities for children whose families cannot otherwise afford them, such as field trips, coats, shoes, school supplies, eyeglasses, and program fees.

Cory Pollesch, a 1987 graduate of Ripon High School and local business owner, learned of the needs of some Ripon students through his longtime friend and Ripon educator Rick Bunge. Cory paired his love of golf and desire to support this worthy cause to launch a company golf outing. The event spans back 18 years and has occurred each year with the exception of 2020 due to COVID. In addition to about 130 people golfing in the MP Charity Golf Outing, upwards of 60 businesses donating prizes and also items for the raffle and silent auction. The 17 golf outings brought over \$100,000 to Ripon Schools. When asked why he does this, Cory shared, "I just do this to help out and ensure the children in Ripon have what they need. Rick Bunge said of Cory, "He is a kind man who is always willing to assist people in need."

Lynn Pollesch attended Ripon schools from 2nd grade - Junior year, and Jon Heatley, a 1966 graduate of Ripon High School, both long standing business owners in the Ripon area, also share a love of tractors. It was at a family event where Lynn first began to hear of the needs of the schools and spoke to Jon, his fellow tractor enthusiast, about combining their interest in tractor cruises to start the East Central Benefit Tractor Cruise to support charitable causes in the Ripon and Green Lake areas. This year marked the 15th year for the event that in addition to helping fund local food pantries, also benefits Ripon's public schools by sustaining the student basic needs funds. Over time the East Central Benefit Tractor Cruise expanded to provide close to \$240,000 in funding to Rosendale, Brandon, Berlin, Markesan, and Princeton with close to \$50,000 of that impacting Ripon schools.

Former Ripon Area School District Business Manager Rick Ketter, a fellow volunteer for the Cruise, notes of these two founders, "From the very beginning Lynn Pollesch has been the driving force behind the success of this fundraising event. The main source of the funds comes from the sponsorships and driver pledges and that is where Lynn excels. He knows so many people in the 'antique tractor' industry that each year he brings in new drivers from area communities. Jon spends many hours each year preparing his farm property for the Cruise registration, start, finish, and a chicken BBQ each year. Jon and his family also support the Cruise financially as sponsors, drivers, and ticket sellers. The event would not be the same without him."

Ripon is so very fortunate to have the support of Cory Pollesch, Lynn Pollesch and Jon Heatley. These men have found a way to use their hobbies to be models of compassion as they care for others. Many thanks.