



Kendra J. Lynn – a graduate of Cambridge-Isanti High School – was one of the first recipients of the MSBA Student School Board Scholarship award back in 2009. Now, Kendra is working as a research geologist at the U.S. Geological Survey's Hawaiian Volcano Observatory in Hilo, Hawai'i. Photo courtesy of Kendra J. Lynn



Kendra J. Lynn lives with her husband, Isaac, and son, Ross, in Hawai'i. Photo courtesy of Kendra J. Lynn

Where Are They Now?

First MSBA scholarship recipient Kendra J. Lynn knows the importance of public service on a school board

By Greg Abbott, MSBA Director of Communications and Marketing

Editor's Note

Ethan Lang of Hopkins and Kendra J. Lynn of Cambridge-Isanti were the first two MSBA Student School Board Member Scholarship winners in 2009. MSBA followed up to see where they are and what they are doing today.

When Kendra J. Lynn was a student school board member for Cambridge-Isanti, she wrote of how she learned about the importance of public service on a school board and gained an appreciation of what they did.

Fifteen years later, she's in a public service job, working as a research geologist at the U.S. Geological Survey's Hawaiian Volcano Observatory in Hilo, Hawai'i.

"I'm realizing that public servants usually are in those positions because they want to be – or are compelled to be – because they are invested in making their communities better," she said.

Kendra was one of two of the first MSBA Student Scholarship winners. The scholarship helped keep her loans down as she received her undergraduate degree from Winona

State University in 2012 – an entire year early thanks to the AP classes and College in the Schools classes she was able to take in high school.

She received a master's degree in Geology and Geophysics in 2015 and a Ph.D. in 2017 from the University of Hawai'i, Mānoa in Honolulu. In 2023, she finally paid off her school loans and is busy with her job, especially with all the volcanic activity in Hawai'i.

"Since I've started this job, we've had seven volcanic eruptions among two volcanoes on our island in the past four years," she said. She's one of the volcanologists who works to monitor and study volcanoes to better understand how, when, where and why eruptions occur so they can mitigate any damage to communities.



Kendra J. Lynn observes a volcanic eruption site in Hawai'i. Photo courtesy of Kendra J. Lynn

Her specialty is petrology, the study of rocks and minerals and how they form. "I naturally spend a large amount of my time analyzing the samples in the laboratory," she said. "I also spend a large amount of my time in the field, responding to eruptions but also studying the geology to better understand the volcano's past eruptive history."

She said the most interesting part of her job is linking the chemistry of the samples to the signs of volcanic unrest measured before eruptions.

In October 2022, she and her husband, Isaac, had their son, Ross, which has added a little more work-life balance to her occupation.

"So much of my work now, and the work we do as scientists, is done with the goal of better serving our various communities – from local neighborhoods that experience volcanic hazards to the global community of scientists who learn best practices for volcanology from our eruption responses," Kendra said.

Public service was always a theme with what Kendra did – from her extracurricular activities in school (Student Council, Model United Nations, Girl Scouts) to her current job.

"In the moment, I don't think I realized that the people who served on the board probably were there because they were passionate about topics related to making their communities better," she said.

And in her own way, Kendra is working with a passion to make her own community better – and safer.



Ethan Lang graduated from Hopkins High School in 2009 and was the other recipient of the inaugural MSBA Student School Board Scholarship that year. Ethan died at age 24 on January 30, 2015.

MSBA offers condolences for Ethan Lang

MSBA offers condolences to the family and friends of Ethan Lang, one of MSBA's first student school board member scholarship winners from Hopkins. At age 24, Ethan passed away unexpectedly in his sleep on January 30, 2015.

An Ethan Lang memorial page was set up on Facebook for people to post their memories of him. Many talked of his magnetic personality and how "he was always the first one on the dance floor."

Recently, friends and family put together a book on thoughts/reflections of what it means to Love Like Ethan. The page is at: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/385263071645305>

Ethan is survived by his parents, Tom and Jean, along with two brothers, David and Bennett.

Greg Abbott is the Communications Director for the Minnesota School Boards Association. You can send your comments about the article to gabbott@mnmsba.org.