

PRESS RELEASE

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2017 Orono Distinguished and Promising Alumni Award Honorees Announced

Orono, MN (August 8, 2017) - The Orono Foundation for Education and its Orono Alumni Association are pleased to announce the winners of the 2017 Orono Alumni Awards. Stephanie March, class of 1989, joined the ranks of the Distinguished Alumni, and Justin McCoy, class of 2002, was named as this year's Promising Alumni.

"We are thrilled to recognize these important Orono Alumni, Stephanie March and Justin McCoy, and welcome them to a truly incredible list of alums. We are excited to honor their achievements this fall during Orono Homecoming activities on October 13 and 14," states Jeanne Morrison Cook, Orono '83, and Orono Foundation's Director of Community Engagement. "This year is the 20th Anniversary of the Orono Alumni Awards, so we will be planning some special celebrations," explains Cook.



Stephanie March, Senior Editor, Food & Dining Editor, Mpls. St. Paul Magazine, was named 2017 Distinguished Orono Alumni

Stephanie March graduated from Orono in 1989 and attended Lawrence University in Appleton, WI, with a degree in English. She started her career in the food industry as a Director of Training for Buca restaurants, and moved all over the country as they opened restaurants. Today she is a highly acclaimed food writer and critic as Senior Editor of Food and Dining at *Mpls. St. Paul Magazine*. She can be found on her weekend radio show, *Weekly Dish* on myTalk 107.1, and makes regular appearances on the Fox 9 Buzz and KSTP's Twin Cities Live.

Besides her professional role with *Mpls St. Paul Magazine*, Stephanie is very active volunteer with People Serving People, and had donated time to Second Harvest Heartland, Corner House, and other organizations. She uses her knowledge of the food industry to help these and many other area charities with events and fundraising.

While March was a student at Orono Public Schools, she recalls that "Orono had no barriers to entry, if you wanted to try something you could, because it was a small district where teachers really knew and cared about individual students." One of her most influential teachers was Ms. Melodee Moniken, who taught her all about creative writing and expressing oneself through chosen words.

"I am truly honored to be awarded the Distinguished Alumni Award this year! Orono is one of those amazing small schools with a wonderful team of educators and a supportive community that allows kids to bloom into whatever they can imagine. I think it's the mentality of potential that's fostered there which helped me and so many other great Orono alums push into the world and forge a path. It's the reason I moved back to the community, so that all my kids could become Orono alums too," says March.

Her advice to students today "Collaboration is the future. You need to develop a diverse self in many lanes, not just one."



Justin McCoy, Coordinator of Facilities and Safety, Orono Public Schools, was named 2017 Promising Orono Alumni

Justin McCoy graduated from Orono in 2002, and received his degree in Business & Political Science from Bethel University, in St. Paul, MN. McCoy later attended Hamline University, also in St. Paul, where he received his Certification in Public Safety Management in 2015 and his Master's Degree in Public Administration in 2016.

"Being selected as the recipient of Orono's Promising Alumni Award among a network of thousands of recent graduates with many accolades of success is truly a rich honor. Growing up I had the opportunity and blessing to be surrounded by Orono Alum that invested in me and sacrificially invested in our community. These investments proved to be a motivation and an encouragement to enter the field of public service," McCoy said.

Some of McCoy's greatest mentors at Orono were his coaches. Former Orono football coach, Steve Fedie, always said "Remember every boy is someone's son." And McCoy's basketball coach, Mike Blanksi, taught him "You learn to show up and get to work. You cannot control events, but you can prepare." McCoy tries to pass these messages on to the students he coaches on the track team as Head Varsity Track and Field Coach, a position he has held for the past 8 years.

"Justin McCoy is an amazing Orono graduate. He is one of the top performers on our leadership team and actively serves our communities with the finest character," says Dr. Karen Orcutt, Superintendent of Orono Schools.

McCoy has also been a dedicated volunteer in the Maple Plain Fire Department since 2009, where he currently serves as Fire Chief.

Both March and McCoy were selected for these awards by a panel of Orono alumni, Orono faculty, and other volunteers, from a large group of nominees in both categories. "It was very difficult to pick amongst all the highly qualified alums who were nominated this year. We took many factors into consideration, and focused on what impact these alums have had in their careers and leadership opportunities, along with their character and citizenship in their communities," says Peter Vickery, volunteer Chair of Orono Alumni Awards selection committee.

The Orono Foundation and the Orono Alumni Association will be hosting an alumni breakfast on Saturday October 14th to recognize both March and McCoy, as well as celebrate the past 20 years of Alumni Awards honorees and nominees. To learn more about getting involved with the Orono Alumni Association and about the Alumni Awards breakfast on October 14, please go to: www.oronofoundation.org/alumni-friends. Past Orono Alumni Awards honorees can be also found on the website.