

The Minnesota Chemist



Chair's Corner

It's finally spring in Minnesota, and there are several ways the ACS Local Section likes to celebrate! After meeting at Bethel University for an evening devoted to Project Management on April 30th, one of our biggest events of the year, the Awards dinner and ceremony, will be happening on May 13th at the 3M Innovation Center. We are excited to offer a tour option prior to the evening's program—something you won't want to miss! We are also working on a family-inclusive after-hours networking picnic at Como Zoo on Monday, June 2nd...please see our announcement below. After these two Section-wide events, the ACS Local will take a break for summer, as we



we know Minnesotans are busy soaking up the long days and warm temperatures in a myriad of ways for these few months. We hope to see you for the Awards and at the Como Zoo!

Sarah Dimick Gray
Chair 2025

ACS MN Local Section Meetings

May Awards Dinner at 3M Innovation Center Tuesday, May 13, 2025

Mark your calendars for a special evening at the 3M Innovation Center this May! Join us as we celebrate the outstanding achievements of our award recipients while exploring one of the most cutting-edge research hubs in the industry.

Don't miss this opportunity to connect with fellow professionals, honor excellence in chemistry, and experience the innovation that drives 3M forward. We look forward to celebrating with you!

Presentation

Video Enhanced Learning for a Dynamic Classroom Environment

Mr. Kevin Dirksen of Eagan High School

2025 High School Chemistry Teacher Award Winner

Time

4:00 - 5:00 pm Tour of the Innovation Center

5:00 - 5:45 pm Social & Networking (beer, soft drinks and water)

5:45 - 7:00 pm Buffet Dinner

Location

3M Innovation Center, 2350 Minnehaha Ave E, St Paul, MN 55119

Dinner

Beef Tenderloin with a cherry demi glaze, Ritz Cracker Breaded Walleye with homemade tartar sauce, (For vegetarian - Pasta Primavera), Mixed Greens with Apples, Dried Cranberries, Candied Pecans and a Port Wine Vinaigrette, Wild Rice Pilaf and Creme Brulee dessert

Cost

\$20 / \$10 students

RSVP

Register by May 5, 2025 at <https://www.mnlocalsectionacs.org/event-info/mn-acs-awards-dinner>

Abstract

Video Enhanced Learning for a Dynamic Classroom Environment

Kevin Dirksen, educator at Eagan High School, has spent his career refining instructional methods to enhance student learning. Frustrated by the limitations of traditional lecture-based instruction, he transitioned to a model in which students obtain primary content through concise video lessons at home, freeing up class time for deeper engagement. This approach allows Kevin to create a dynamic blend of laboratory investigations, group activities, visual demonstrations, collaborative problem-solving, formative assessments, and digital learning. It also allows Kevin to step off the "stage" and act more as a facilitator, providing targeted support to students who need it most while fostering independence in those ready to progress at their own pace.

Beyond the classroom, Kevin serves as the Science Department Coordinator, hybrid credit recovery program facilitator, mountain bike team coach, and district Chemistry Curriculum Lead.

In his presentation, Kevin will share the history behind how he shifted his instructional style, insights into his video-enhanced learning environment and, hopefully, get some active participation from those willing to be a student for a short time again.

2025 Minnesota High School Chemistry Teaching Award

The Minnesota high school chemistry teaching award is given to an outstanding high school chemistry teacher for Excellence in High School Chemistry Teaching. This year's award goes to Mr. Kevin Dirksen of Eagan High School (EHS) in Eagan, MN. Mr. Dirksen serves as both a Chemistry and Physics teacher and according to EHS Assistant Principal of EHS, Mr. Stephen Thompson, possesses a profound understanding of his subjects, which he conveys with enthusiasm and clarity. He has developed a series of videos related to his courses which have become invaluable resources for his students. He uses these videos to "flip his classroom" so he can spend more time with hands-on activities and labs in his classroom. Beyond the classroom, Mr. Dirksen has taken on a variety of coaching and co-curricular roles. He has been a science olympiad coach, football coach, track coach, cross country coach, newspaper advisor, and advisor of several smaller student run clubs. He currently is a volunteer coach of the ISD 196 mountain bike team, which he co-founded in 2011. For his chemistry innovative teaching methods, science olympiad coach and outstanding contribution to the EHS school community, MN ACS is proud to honor him with this award in our May Awards meeting at 3M Innovation Center on May 13. This award comes with a plaque and a \$600 honorarium.

2025 Janet Tarino Volunteer Award

The Janet Tarino Volunteer Award is given to an individual for outstanding volunteer service to Minnesota ACS, and/or chemistry related projects and events not directly connected to Minnesota ACS. This year's award goes to Ms. Linda Nanko-Yeager. Linda received her B.S. in Chemistry from Carnegie-Mellon University and worked for nearly a decade doing production analysis, quality control, and formulations in the fields of polymers and pharmaceuticals. Since her retirement she has been a science education volunteer in addition to engaging in a number of community activities. Her notable volunteer work is for the Chemists-in-the-Library program with Dr. Phil Buhlmann for our section since 2005 (20 years!). Phil writes in her nomination that Linda has attended as a volunteer 142 of library events, a number that is higher than any other of the volunteers who are helping him with this program. Her other volunteer activities include volunteering for the Kids & Chemistry program for our section, Science Museum of Minnesota, Wyoming Elementary School, Delta Gamma Society of Minnesota, Forest Lake Montessori School, Giese Memorial Library in Wyoming (MN) and Rotary Club of Forest Lake as well as 17 years of service for the Wyoming City Council. The Minnesota section of ACS is very enthusiastic

in bestowing this award to an absolutely exceptional volunteer, Ms Linda Nano-Yeager. The award comes with a plaque and a \$250 honorarium. Linda will be honored at the May Awards Dinner at 3M Innovation Center on May 13.

MN ACS Summer Social at Como Zoo Monday, June 2, 2025

ACS Summer Picnic at Como Zoo

Join us for a laid-back evening of food, fun, and connection!

On Monday, June 2nd, the American Chemical Society invites you to an after-hours picnic at our local favorite Como Zoo & Conservatory.

Come early to explore the zoo and conservatory before it closes, then stick around for a casual dinner and drinks (alcoholic and non-alcoholic options), bounce house, games, and activities designed for all ages—family and friends are welcome! While the zoo exhibits will not be accessible during the picnic, we are planning plenty of fun ways to interact, relax, and enjoy a great early-summer night together.

Time

Monday, June 2nd, 2025

5:30 pm - 8:30pm - Social & Games

6:00pm - 8:30pm - Dinner, Social & Games

Location

Como Park Zoo & Conservatory, 1225 Estabrook Dr, St. Paul, MN 55103

Dinner

Southern BBQ Buffet - Smoked beef brisket, baked beans, coleslaw, potato salad, cornbread and a chocolate brownie (please note any dietary restrictions in ticket registration)

Cost

\$18 Adult Meal & Drink Ticket / \$5 Student & Child Meal Ticket

Zoo Admission – “Free. A voluntary donation of \$4 for an adult and \$2 for a child to help us care for our plants and animals is appreciated. You are always welcome whether or not you choose to make a donation.”

RSVP

Register by May 26

To purchase meal tickets and view Metro Transit options, go to the MN ACS Meetings page at <https://www.mnlocalsectionacs.org/meetings>. Please send any questions or comments to [Sarah Dimick-Gray](#).



2025 Great Lakes Regional Meeting

Chemistry for a Better Planet: The 2025 Great Lakes Regional Meeting of the ACS is coming up fast! We hope to see you there in Appleton, WI on June 4-6, with hundreds of chemistry students, faculty, and industry professionals from around the upper Midwest. For more information, see our website at <https://greatlakesregion-accs.org/event-welcome/ghrm-2025>.

ACS MN Local Section News

Unlocking Project Success: Scientists Dive into Project Management at Bethel

On Wednesday, April 30, scientists, students, and STEM enthusiasts gathered at Bethel University for Unlock Project Success: Intro to Project Management for Scientists, a dynamic and engaging session led by Rachel Mussell and Mike Schafer of Back in the Box Consulting.

Rachel and Mike brought project management to life with an interactive game that helped attendees understand key project management principles in a



fun, hands-on way. Their message was clear: even if “project manager” isn’t in your job title, you’re likely managing projects—and communication is the key to doing it well.

The event provided practical tools tailored to scientists navigating lab moves, course development, or organizing STEM events. Attendees learned how to define project scope, build schedules, identify risks, and improve communication strategies. Emphasis was placed on building strong networks before challenges arise, reinforcing the value of relationships in project success.

A Southern BBQ buffet and lively conversation rounded out the evening, leaving attendees not only better equipped to lead projects but also more connected to their STEM community.

Missed the event? Stay tuned for future workshops and resources at mnlocalsectionacs.org.



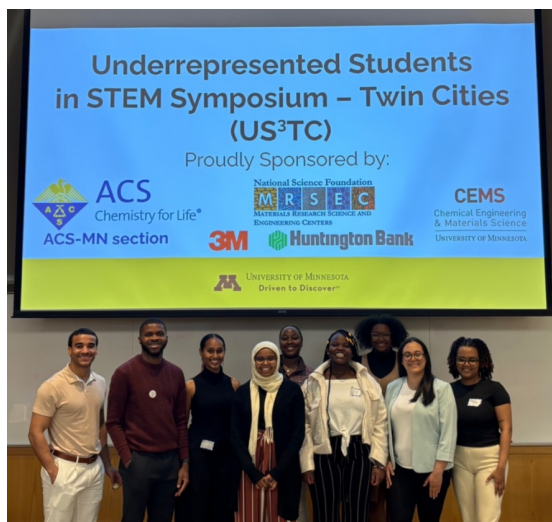
4th Annual Underrepresented Students in STEM Symposium—Twin Cities (USSS–TC)

On April 12th, the student NOBCChE chapter at the University of Minnesota hosted the 4th annual Underrepresented Students in STEM Symposium—Twin Cities (USSS–TC). During the symposium, more than 40 undergraduate students from local

universities/colleges gathered for a full day of activities centered around building community through STEM.

The undergraduate students were given the opportunity to present their research during a poster session and were joined by graduate students from the University of Minnesota, faculty members from local institutions, and representatives from 3M. Although every student that presented during the poster session did an amazing job at communicating their research topic, there were three that stood out from the rest and were awarded poster prizes: 1st place Uritas Vang, Macalester College; 2nd place Tomas Sepulveda, University of Minnesota; 3rd place Muskaan Chopra, University of St. Thomas. Congratulations to these three exceptional poster presenters!

In addition to the poster session, students were able to network and sharpen their professional development skills through a Q&A panel with current graduate students and a resume review workshop with faculty members and 3M representatives. These activities gave students insights into how to prepare application materials, how to overcome challenges and barriers in graduate school, and how to build community in STEM.



Overall, it was a day filled with excitement and joy, with one participant writing: “I’ve never been in an environment with such pure diversity and eagerness, especially not in STEM—it really made me feel seen and motivated.”

This event was a huge success and would not have been possible without the help from all of our volunteers and sponsors, including the Minnesota Local Section of the American Chemical Society (MN ACS), 3M, Huntington Bank, the Materials Research Science and Engineering Centers at the University of Minnesota (MRSEC), and the department of Chemical Engineering and Materials Science at the University of Minnesota (CEMS). On behalf of the student NOBCCHE chapter at the University of Minnesota, thank you to everyone that made this year’s USSS–TC special!

Volunteer Opportunities

Chemists in the Library

Watch the Minnesota Local Section ACS website for details about upcoming events. If you are interested in helping as a volunteer, please get in touch with [Phil Buhlmann](#); he

would be grateful to hear from you. No preparation before events is required, and no commitment has to be made; volunteers can sign up for one event at a time.

Chemists in the Library Events 2025

17 May, 1:30 PM: Rogers

21 June, 1:30 PM: Chisago

19 July, 1:30 PM: Golden Valley

16 Aug, 1:30 PM: Augsburg Park

13 Sep, 1:30 PM: Merriam Park



Committee Volunteer Opportunities - Get Involved!

Are you looking to enhance your leadership, project management, and networking skills? Volunteering as a committee chair for the Minnesota Local Section of the ACS is a fantastic way to grow professionally while making a meaningful impact!

We are currently seeking passionate leaders for the following committees:

- **Younger Chemists** – leads initiatives to support, engage, and connect early-career chemists and students within the Minnesota Local Section of the American Chemical Society (ACS).
- **National Chemistry Week** – responsible for leading efforts to promote and coordinate activities related to National Chemistry Week, an annual outreach event organized by the American Chemical Society (ACS).
- **Public Affairs** – serves as a bridge between the chemistry community and policymakers, advocating for science-related policies and engaging the public on key issues.
- **Government Affairs** – plays a key role in advocating for science policy and fostering relationships between the chemistry community and government officials.
- **Minority Affairs** – plays a key role in promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) within the Minnesota Local Section of the American Chemical Society (ACS).

If you're interested in learning more, please reach out to [Sarah Dimick Gray](#) to explore these opportunities.

Take the next step in your leadership journey—get involved today!



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