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SUN CURRENT BLOOMINGTON



First victory

The Kennedy football team defeated Richfield 69-42.
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Thursday, Oct. 25, 2018

Not everyone will get out and vote on Election Day

By **MIKE HANKS**
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For more than 4,400 Bloomington voters, the election might as well be over.

Early voting at Bloomington Civic Plaza is

driving plenty of Minnesota voters to their local city halls, according to Bloomington City Clerk Janet Lewis.

There are intriguing races at the national, state and local level, but the 2018 election lacks

the drawing power of a presidential race. You wouldn't know it by the turnout, as Hennepin County has issued 102,200 ballots as of Monday morning, Oct. 22. That's more than 1,000 ballots higher

than two weeks prior to the 2016 election, Lewis noted.

Bloomington voters won't see city council or school board candidates on their November ballot, but 4,485 voters have already cast their

preference as of the beginning of this week, she added. "We're seeing more people coming out and taking advantage of early voting."

Since the legislative change to the "absentee" voting process loosened

the requirements to cast an early vote a few years ago, interest in beating the rush at precinct polling places on Election Day has been on the rise. But that doesn't ensure

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At 10 years old, NCC student is years ahead of the curve

By **MIKE HANKS**
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Elliott Tanner's father said that as a 2-year-old child, Elliott gravitated toward numbers.

Elliott, now 10, found the suggestion kind of funny, noting that gravity is the weakest fundamental force in physics.

His son's response was not an atypical one. All Patrik Tanner could do is nod his head in agreement.

"I'll have to take your word for it," he said.

It's that kind of logic and reasoning that has propelled Elliott far beyond the academic achievement

of children his age. The St. Louis Park student goes to class five days a week, much like many of the children in his neighborhood. The difference is that Elliott's classes are at Normandale Community College in Bloomington.

And, it's his second year there.

Elliott's classes this fall include calculus, computer programming and physics. Some days his school day is spent entirely in a classroom. Twice per week, he has a lab session. His classwork is no different than that of the adults seated around him in the classroom, and his enthusiasm for the

coursework is hard to match.

Early learner

There's no obvious explanation for why a 10-year-old is attending his second year of college.

His parents realize that Elliott has a similar temperament to his paternal grandfather, who was a scientist in Sweden, according to Patrik.

That doesn't explain why Elliott was so fond of numbers at such a young age. He had magnetic numbers that were like toys for him, and he wouldn't leave the house

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(SUN CURRENT STAFF PHOTO BY MIKE HANKS)

Elliott Tanner, 10, of St. Louis Park, takes notes during a computer programming lecture at Normandale Community College of Bloomington. Years ahead academically of children his age, Tanner is in his second year of college.

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Student

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without them, his father recalled.

Elliott had letters, as well, at a young age. He used those to teach himself how to read, and he used a wooden number set to learn how to add and subtract. Those early signs were the indicators that his intelligence was unique for his young age, according to his mother Michelle.

By time Elliott was ready to go to school, the challenge of finding a setting that could meet his unique needs unfolded.

A Spanish-immersion school provided an opportunity to learn how to speak a second language, but the school couldn't meet Elliott's advanced mathematics needs. The Tanners decided that homeschooling was the best way to meet his needs, although that had its limitations, as well. Elliott's mastery of advanced algebra exceeded his parents' ability to continue teaching him, Patrik said.

Local high schools weren't prepared to accommodate Elliott's educational needs, so the family turned to area colleges and found a willing partner in Normandale

Community College, Patrik noted.

The college granted Elliott the opportunity that finally provided the challenge he needed in a classroom setting, albeit in a classroom full of adults. The main concession the family had to make in order for Elliott to continue his education at Normandale, one of his parents needs to accompany him from class to class each day. Given his parents are self-employed, it's a concession they're able to make, according to Patrik.

Although they act as his chaperone, his parents aren't sitting idly by in the corner of a classroom, as they are able to attend to tasks associated with their professions – Patrik a musician, Michelle a photographer. Those lessons on computer programming Elliott takes? "I wouldn't get as much out of it," Patrik admitted.

Elliott might be younger than his classmates, but he doesn't shy away from participating in class. He might not have the same life experiences as his counterparts in the classroom, but that doesn't seem to affect him, according to Sharon Harvey, his computer programming instructor at Normandale. "He's charming and

amicable, and the teachers and students love him," according to Harvey. "He corrects my errors for me and answers the questions that I can't answer. He's easy to talk to and makes friends easily," she added. "Everyone loves him."

Beyond Normandale, the family will consider the University of Minnesota as a possible landing point. With a gifted child who is years ahead of his peers, there's no road map to follow, Patrik noted.

"It always seems to work out," he said. "It takes a lot of advocating – and flexibility."

Life as usual

His parents make sure there's time for Elliott to interact with children his own age, be it the children in his neighborhood or other gifted students he has met through STAR Academy, a home-school program for gifted students, Michelle explained.

Some of Elliott's hobbies are unusual – he enjoys the challenge of computer coding, be it writing programs that assist him with his homework or creating simple pleasures in life. His parents introduced him to pinball, and he'll talk about the game enthusiastically. And he's learning to

play the piano and guitar, the latter influenced by his father, Elliott noted.

Listening to him talk, it's easy to forget he's 10 years old. But then there are the days when he reminds his parents that he's still a child, such as the days when he forgets his coat or water bottle in a Normandale classroom, Michelle said.

Having a son who is on the fast track to being a math professor or physicist – two career options Elliott foresees in his future – can cause anxiety for his parents. His parents ensure that there are recreational and social outlets to provide balance in his day-to-day life, but the potential absence of some social interactions and experiences of a typical childhood, such as going to school dances or prom, are sometimes troubling to Michelle.

"That's what I knew from going to school," she said.

Despite that, the family has come to expect the unexpected as Elliott is navigating his way through the hallways of Normandale Community College, and whatever the future holds for him.

"Every year has brought its own surprise," Patrik said.

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