

Wagers with Cobber basketball players.

CONCORDIA SPORTS INFORMATION DEPARTMENT



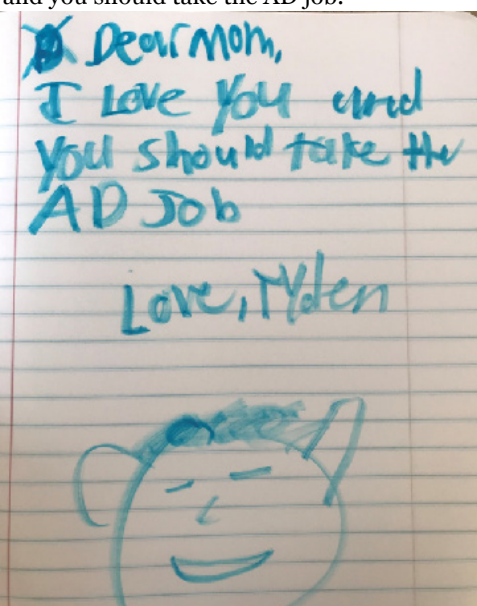
# “If I can see her, I can be her”

## Concordia recognized for gender diversity in coaching

MARIA KLIPFEL  
mklipfel@cord.edu

Rachel Bergeson knew that taking the athletic director job would mean either she or her husband would have to sacrifice something. Her husband would have to give up coaching to help with childcare. Bergeson could have potentially lost her impressive career ahead of her.

Late one evening, Bergeson and her husband were discussing the pros and cons when a rustling was heard outside their bedroom door. Bergeson investigated and found a note from her oldest son, who was eight years old at the time, that said: “Dear Mom, I love you and you should take the AD job.”



Bergeson's son's note. RACHEL BERGESON

For Bergeson, that night marked her decision to become the first female athletic director of Concordia College.

Ever since her promotion in 2018, Bergeson has made steady progress toward gender equality in Concordia's athletic department. Her efforts came to fruition this year when the Tucker Report, an annual evaluation of gender diversity in head coaching in the Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference, gave Concordia an A.

The report is run by the University of Minnesota's Tucker Center for Research on Girls and Women in Sport. Although this report focuses primarily on MIAC colleges, NCAA demographics and national statistics are considered during evaluation.

This year's results conclude that Concordia is the only one of 12 colleges in MIAC Tucker report that received an A, with 70% of head coaching positions for women's sports at Concordia being held by women. Eight out of 12 of the MIAC institutions had less than 50% of women in head coaching positions.

Despite Concordia's high numbers this year, five years prior the college received an F for having only 10% of women in head coaching positions. With the leadership of Bergeson, Concordia has increased from 10% in 2018, to 70% in 2021.

“When we received an F five years ago, it wasn't just about getting an A or about hiring women. It was about hiring the best person for the job and diversifying our pool of candidates to attract women to apply for our positions,” Bergeson said. “These are not token hires. These are quality women coaches.”

Although major progress has been made, the road has not been easy. As the first female athletic director, Bergeson has faced her fair share of challenges.

Athletics is primarily a male-dominated field. The NCAA demographics database reports that in 2020 across all divisions, 76% of athletic directors were men. Psychologist and Concordia professor Dr. Elizabeth Ewing Lee said this is largely caused by societal perceptions of gender that depict men as more successful leaders.

Bergeson and other women in Concordia athletics have realized this, and, in response, adopted their own motto: “If I can see her, I can be her.”

Head women's basketball coach and senior woman administrator, where she promotes representation of women in leadership of college sports, Kim Wagers said this phrase applies to her life growing up and still into today.

“I remember sitting in the gymnasium as a young girl and looking up to the female players. I remember thinking that's what I want to be,” Wagers said. Having female role models, especially one in Bergeson, made it possible for Wagers to feel more confident in her pursuit of leadership.

While there is research proving this concept, Dr. Ewing Lee also argues that gender is not nearly as relevant as the aptitude for empowerment a coach has when interacting with athletes.

“Anyone who is a leader has an impact on the way you can perceive yourself. Coaches have direct contact and give feedback constantly and will have a large impact on ath-

letes in and outside of athletics,” Dr. Ewing Lee said.

Senior captain of women's basketball Autumn Thompson said she grew up surrounded by sports and said she feels more receptive to feedback from a female coach because gender connects them. Moreover, Thompson said she is more likely to confide in her female coaches.

“I was able to completely open up to them. I truly don't know what I would have done without them. That's where I appreciate a female coach because men can sometimes not be as intuitive about feelings, especially in a coaching position.”

Thompson is grateful that her coaches at Concordia are involved in her life both in and outside of sports. They keep her accountable in practice, monitor her academic life and check in with her emotionally.

“We are trying to take a holistic approach to help them get them where they want to be,” Wagers said.

There is a traceable line of inspiration at Concordia. Thompson looks up to Wagers, who looks up to Bergeson. Wagers said supporting and advocating for each other as women have made Concordia stronger.

Concordia would not be in its current position without Bergeson, according to the Tucker report. One woman can make a difference for many others. Bergeson said often the hardest part of woman leadership is taking the first step.

“Have the courage to take the job, because I almost didn't,” Bergeson said.

# Moorhead farmers market season ends

MICHAEL HARVALA  
mharval1@cord.edu

Nov. 28 marks the last day of the local farmers market, hosted by the City of Moorhead, Minnesota. Every Tuesday from June 1 to September 28 the City of Moorhead allows vendors to sell produce and other homemade products. This seasonal event is held in the Moorhead Ace Hardware parking lot. During peak season, this space holds between 12 and 15 vendors.

These vendors include many local, vocational farmers and hobby farmers alike. Trailers full of pumpkins, gourds and other large produce can be found. Homemade jams, jellies and pickled goods are also common during the on-season for the Moorhead farmers market. Goods such as wire art and wooden creations are also available.

This farmers market is not only a hub for local artists and farm-

ers to sell and distribute goods, but also a place for children to learn and experience the process of growing and selling produce. Working with the Minnesota State University Moorhead, the farmers market is included in a program called Power of Produce. This program helps incentivize children to come to farmers markets throughout the nation.

PoP supplies children with a weekly stipend of two dollars. These two dollars, in the form of a wooden token, can be spent on fresh fruits and vegetables. The vendors are then reimbursed at the end of the day.

Bailey, a distributor of these tokens said “I think PoP is really important for families, the kids get so excited.” This not only helps children get excited about produce, but also brings the community closer.

“Sometimes we get the Moorhead Library here too, so they can bring

their books back,” she said. “Being able to talk to the vendors really brings the community together.”

The City of Moorhead also accepts EBT, through something they call the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or SNAP. This is not typical of other farmers markets, even those in the nearby area.

“SNAP is put on by the USDA and Clay County Social service,” says Trevor Magnuson, the recreation coordinator for the city. “We have the capability to accept those benefits here. We also partner with Hunger Solutions of Minnesota who will match \$10 worth of the EBT benefits for no cost.” This allows patrons of the market who use EBT to redeem \$20 worth of market coins for the price of \$10.

The farmers market is loved not just by the children and local customers, but also vendors as well. Since it started eight years ago, the



EBT at the farmers market.

MICHAEL HARVALA

vendors have created a community among themselves. Michele Gedgaud, a canine massage therapist, said her favorite part of the market was meeting new people.

“All the people who come by,” she said, “they start telling stories, and we get to educate them about things. Meeting the people is just the best part.” Gedgaud owns Mutts Unleashed, a small business that sup-

plies natural health care for pets and pet products.

The Moorhead farmers market will be up and running for its ninth year on June 1 of 2022. The market is sponsored by American Crystal Sugar Company and Lemke Home Improvements. It will be in the Moorhead Ace Hardware parking lot on the corner of Main Avenue and Seventh Street South.

MICHAEL HARVALA

