

NCTC Hall of Fame banquet is set

Prowlers open 2013 baseball season

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LHS Prom photos inside

A Very Special Night



Racheal Rondorf and Nate Halska took it all in as the crowd gave them a standing ovation after they made their way across the stage at the 2013 Lincoln High School Prom Grand March on Saturday, April 27. The classmates, who have special needs, were the first couple to cross the stage. Nate, who has cerebral palsy and uses a wheelchair most of the time, walked across the stage with a walker. Racheal was later named Prom queen. Prom Coordinator Esther Gallagher is also pictured. Video is online at www.youtube.com/trftimes.



Hannah Fladeland placed the crown on Racheal Rondorf's head as Racheal was named the 2013 Lincoln High School Prom queen on Saturday, April 27. Racheal, a senior who has special needs, thought it was really awesome to receive the honor. Josh Halvorson was named Prom king. Video is online at www.youtube.com/trftimes.

Special night for a special couple

by April Scheinoha
Reporter

It was a special night for a special couple in Thief River Falls on Saturday, April 27. Racheal Rondorf was named the 2013 Lincoln High School Prom queen, and her date, Nate Halska, walked across the stage with his walker.

It all started weeks, if not months, ago. Nervously moving her hands back and forth at school, Racheal asked Nate to be her date for prom. Using his iPad to speak, Nate replied, "Yes." Racheal yelled, "Yes!" and put her arms up in the air in triumph.

Racheal and Nate are classmates who have special needs. "He's my friend," Racheal said.

Racheal, a senior, has a chromosomal defect. She is

missing one-fourth of her 18th chromosome. It's the chromosome that relates to development. Nate, a sophomore, has cerebral palsy. He uses a wheelchair to get around most of the time.

The day of the Prom, both Racheal and Nate were up early and excited for the day's festivities. With help from their school, they were the first couple to cross the stage during the Grand March. Nate said he felt lucky to be among the first people to cross the stage.

Nate walks with his walker in his gym class about two times a week with assistance from Josey Smith, a special education paraprofessional. To get ready for that special moment, he practiced walking across the stage three times with a variety

of people, including LHS Principal Shane Zutz and Associate Principal Scott Brekke.

Minutes before the start of the Grand March, Josey helped Nate get ready backstage. She helped get him into his walker and pumped him up for his and Racheal's moment in front of the crowd. She told him, "You're going to do so good." Josey also shed a few tears. Embarrassed by Josey's reaction, Nate signed the word "silly" to her.

"As we start off our evening tonight here at Lincoln, it was a personal request by this young man that he be able to walk in Grand March," Prom Coordinator Esther Gallagher told the crowd.

Before long, Esther walked behind the curtain and escorted Nate and Racheal to the front. Giving them a standing ovation, the crowd clapped the longest and the hardest for the two of them.

In the audience, Nate's mom, Dena, was bawling. "I was glad to have a school district that cares that much about their kids and was willing to go an extra mile," she said.

Racheal's mom, Roxane, also shed tears. It wasn't the first time and wouldn't be the last time that she shed tears, overwhelmed by the special attention given to her daughter and Nate. She was also keeping a secret - a hard secret to keep secret - that led her to shed more tears.

Racheal and Nate's special education teacher, Sara Johnson, also shed many tears and took a lot of photos. She said, "I was very proud of them."

After the other 119 couples crossed the stage for their moment in front of the cameras, another special moment arrived. This one was for Racheal alone. Hannah Fladeland placed the crown atop Racheal's head as Racheal was named Prom queen. She received a standing ovation.

"I was surprised," said a smiling Racheal, who noted it was really awesome to be named Prom queen. Josh Halvorson was named king.

That night, Racheal and Nate danced and danced and danced. And Nate was getting hugs from the ladies, Sara reported.

Two days later, Racheal and Nate were feeling the effects of their stardom. Wearing a shirt that said he doesn't do autographs, Nate told Sara that he only gives hugs - to cute girls.