

2016 ISD 88 Hall of Fame Bios

Christopher Contag – Class of 1978

It was early September, 1959, when Christopher Contag, an avid outdoorsman, passionate educator, and innovative scientist was born. This extraordinary man would change the face of science and influence more people than he could ever know.

Chris attended New Ulm High School from 1974 - 1978. During those years he participated in football, track, stage crew, and student council. He was a hardworking student who came to class prepared with insightful answers and thoughtful questions. His friends and teachers recall him being helpful, respectful, and curious.

Chris went on to receive his Bachelors of Science degree in biology and a PhD in microbiology from the University of Minnesota. It was during his graduate studies that he met his wife, Pamela Reilly, also a scientist with a brilliant mind and Chris' future partner in scientific discovery. They moved to California where both Chris and Pam continued their training as postdoctoral fellows at Stanford University. While still developing a complex research program at Stanford, Chris shared in every aspect of raising all three of their children; often reading scientific journals to his children as bed time stories.

In 1995, Chris and Pam working together published ground-breaking research that has impacted scientists around the world: *in vivo* bioluminescence imaging. Now as a professor of Pediatrics, Bioengineering, Radiology and Microbiology & Immunology at Stanford, he continues to develop innovative tools to understand biology of complex systems including miniaturized microscopes (3-5 mm in size) that reach into the body and provide cellular level resolution.

Chris' favorite activity is observing the natural world, both in the lab and in the outside world. He has spent many years as a Scout Master and has led expeditions into the wilderness, teaching the boys and their families survival skills. He also greatly anticipated teaching his own children about the natural world, impatiently waiting for his first child to ask "why is the sky blue?" He continues to nurture young minds by volunteering hours of his time hosting high school students in his laboratory and remains dedicated to creating and teaching sustainable approaches for living. He was on the board of directors for Lynbrook Excellence for Education, a nonprofit that promotes excellence in education, and is on the board of directors for Four Elements Earth Education, a wilderness awareness school.

Dr. Contag is clearly a man who has changed the world and impacted society, yet he has not forgotten his roots. Chris remains the humble, grounded individual that New Ulm remembers. New Ulm has a brilliant leader in Dr. Christopher Contag.

