

# Hometown boy reflects on now, then

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Garrison Keillor returns to his hometown of Anoka next week.

He'll provide entertainment for a benefit Oct. 25 to raise money for Central Center for Family Resources, a nonprofit that provides children's mental health services in Anoka County.

Keillor recently spoke with Star Tribune North reporter Sarah Moran. Answers have been edited for length.



**Garrison Keillor**

**Q** You're a man of "Prairie Home Companion" fame (first the radio show and now the movie) who is probably in high demand. Why did you say yes to this event?

**A** I'm from Anoka. I was born in Anoka in a little house on Ferry Street and went to Anoka High School and my family is still all up there. It just touched me; it seemed like a good cause. They asked me to do a show in Anoka. I don't get asked to do that but once every 25 years. They know me too well.

**Keillor continues:** "Kids are just under such stress." **N11 ►**

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◀ KEILLOR FROM N1

**Q** You graduated from Anoka High School in 1960 in a building that is now Fred Moore Middle School Center for the Arts. What memories will be conjured up when you return?

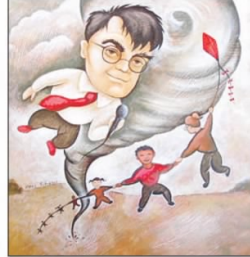
**A** It's changed so much. We were little scared rabbits and we went dutifully up and down the halls like little lab rats, and we sat quietly in these rooms and we applied ourselves. School now I think is just a lot looser.

I just can hardly imagine the lives of young people. They're very, very complicated lives and of course they're complicated by the Internet and by cell phones and text messages. We endured loneliness and isolation, which I think are not that hard to endure compared to the social pressures, which can only be intensified by these communications.

We were little modest kids who wet their combs with water and combed their hair, we wore clothes from Sears and sat up straight in class and we were sort of terrified students, and students now are living in such a high-pressure world, so it seems to me that this children's mental health center is really crucial.

There were children who I went to school with who had problems or as they say now issues, but nobody talked about it and they didn't have all these syndromes with initials that are around today. I'm sure it's an improvement to have a name for things and to treat them, but it seems to me that kids are just under such stress.

**Q** How often do you get back



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to the area?

**A** It's changed so much. It's difficult for me to go up there because I have such clear memories of how it used to be. Anoka used to be a small town in the Mississippi and Rum Rivers and now it's a suburb. This is a painful change.

As a small town it was really lovely and it had shops and cafes on Main Street, a couple little banks, a men's clothing store, a hardware store, and now everybody goes to the mall for those things.

The football field is still there, and sometimes I go up to football games because that is so much the same as it always was.

**Q** Were you part of the team?

**A** Of course not. I was a writer. Writers don't like to run and crash into other people's bodies. We like to watch other people do that.

**Q** Is Lake Wobegon based on your memories from Anoka?

**A** To some little extent, life as it was.

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