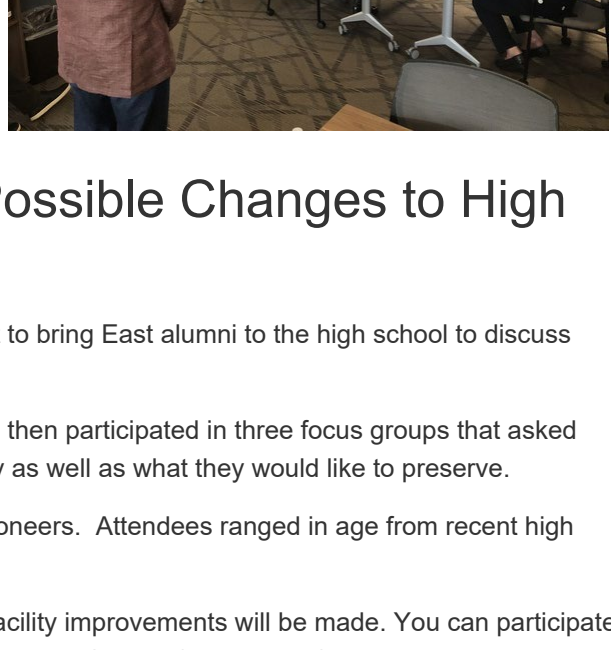


# THE PIONEER POST

## East Grand Rapids Alumni Newsletter

### Autumn 2022



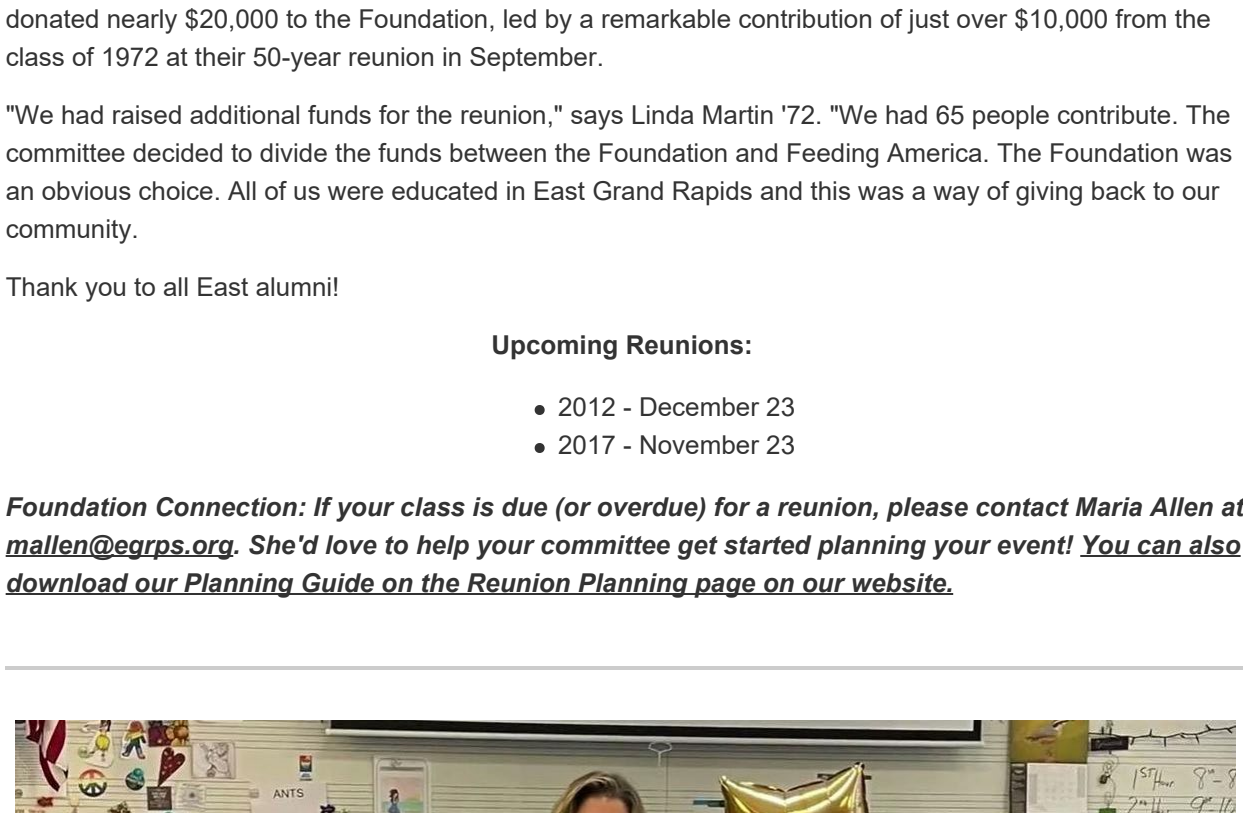
## Alumni Give Feedback on Possible Changes to High School Building

On November 1, the Foundation worked with the district to bring East alumni to the high school to discuss possible facility improvements.

Alumni took a tour of the school led by current students, then participated in three focus groups that asked what alumni would like to see in the possible new facility as well as what they would like to preserve.

The Foundation invited alumni from eight decades of Pioneers. Attendees ranged in age from recent high school graduates back to the class of 1955.

The district hasn't made any decisions on whether the facility improvements will be made. You can participate in the district's EGRHS Facility Survey. The next step is the High School Community Open House Monday, November 28 at 6pm. After that, a presentation will be made to the Board of Education at its December meeting.



## Class of 1972 Makes Remarkable 50-Year Gift

We couldn't be more proud that Pioneer alumni entrust the Foundation with funds to support our mission of enriching the experience of all students by investing in programs and educational enhancements that support the whole child.

This year, many East classes—including the classes of 1957, 1967, 1971, 1972, 1977, 1982, and 2001—have made class gifts to the Foundation a part of their reunion activities. In all, the reunion classes have donated nearly \$20,000 to the Foundation, led by a remarkable contribution of just over \$10,000 from the class of 1972 at their 50-year reunion in September.

"We had raised additional funds for the reunion," says Linda Martin '72. "We had 65 people contribute. The committee decided to divide the funds between the Foundation and Feeding America. The Foundation was an obvious choice. All of us were educated in East Grand Rapids and this was a way of giving back to our community.

Thank you to all East alumni!

### Upcoming Reunions:

- 2012 - December 23
- 2017 - November 23

**Foundation Connection:** If your class is due (or overdue) for a reunion, please contact Maria Allen at [mallen@egrsf.org](mailto:mallen@egrsf.org). She'd love to help your committee get started planning your event! You can also download our Planning Guide on the Reunion page on our website.



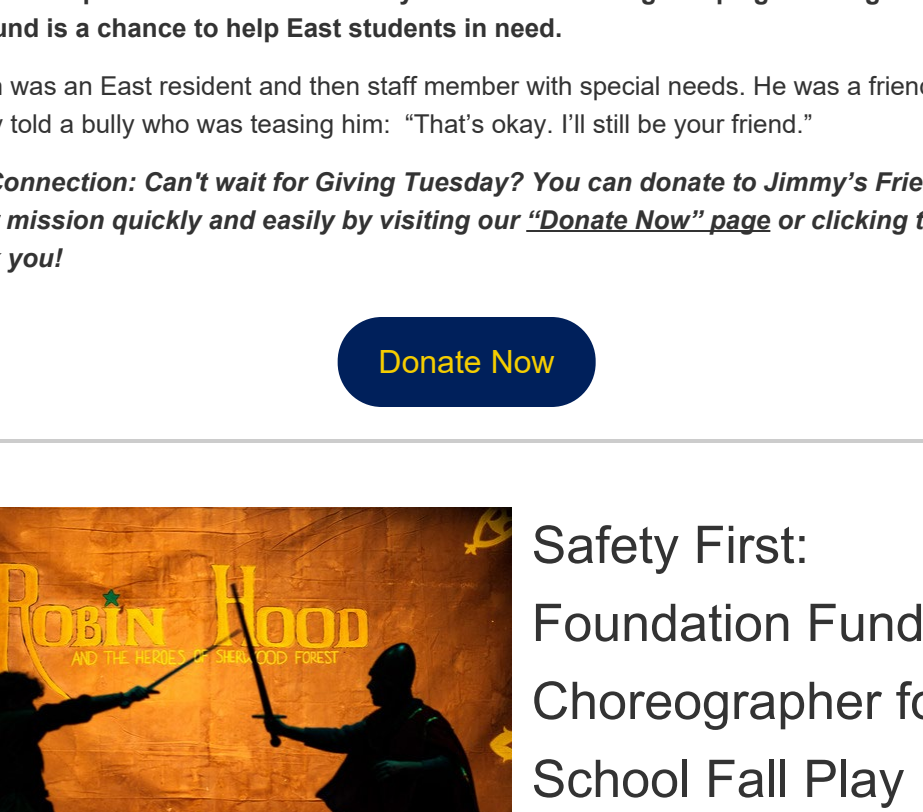
## Foundation Funds Nearly \$90K in New Grants

What do a middle school mural, the marching band drumline, books for new readers, a fight choreographer for the fall play, the robotics team, March Madness books, digital pianos, and ukuleles all have in common? They're all part of exciting new classroom enhancements approved by the East Grand Rapids Schools Foundation this fall.

In addition to the fifteen funded in grants and mini grants, there were also six mini grants approved by the board. The total amount funded in grants and mini grants is \$88,338.32.

Thank you, Foundation donors, for providing all these exciting classroom enhancements for our students. Without your generous support, none of this would be possible.

**Foundation Connection:** Last year, thanks to our donors, the Foundation funded 34 grants totaling \$238,114. That money comes from investment earnings on our endowment. You can support these grants by contributing to the Foundations's Endowment Fund on the [donation page of our website](#), [egrsf.org](http://egrsf.org).



## Save the Date! Hurrah: Under the Stars April 22

Last year's Hurrah: Together Again! was an amazing community event, with about 400 people filling a tent on the upper deck of the Gaslight Village parking structure. In below freezing temperatures. In a blizzard.

This year's event will be even more fun and—w we hope—warmer. Put Saturday, April 22 on your calendar. If you're in town or anywhere nearby, you'll want to come to Hurrah: Under the Stars. Food, fun, drinks, dancing, and lots more. Adventure awaits!



## A Chance to Help Students in Need

Every kid needs a backpack, right? But not every kid can afford one.

That's one of the ways Jimmy's Friendship Fund can help.

Jimmy's Friendship Fund—named in honor of Jimmy Gerken—will provide money to cover immediate needs for families within the district that are experiencing financial difficulties. The funds may be used to

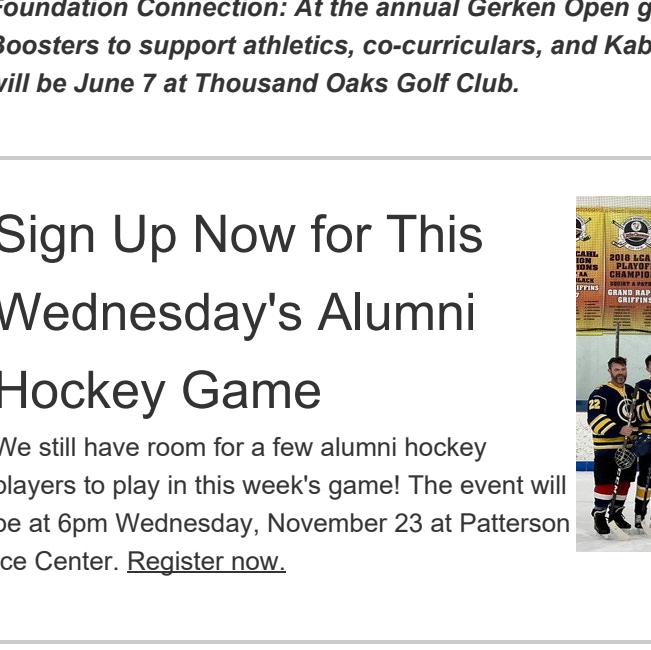
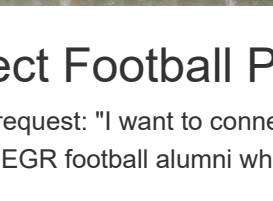
cover pay-to-participate expenses for extracurriculars, student activity fees, household or personal needs.

This fall, one of those personal needs was a backpack. A student needed one, but the family couldn't afford it. A school principal used money from Jimmy's Friendship Fund to get one for the student.

**On Giving Tuesday, November 29, there will be a special, alumni-only opportunity to give to Jimmy's Friendship Fund as part of our "What's Next" year-end fundraising campaign. Giving to Jimmy's Friendship Fund is a chance to help East students in need.**

Jimmy Gerken was an East resident and then staff member with special needs. He was a friend to all. He once famously told a bully who was teasing him: "That's okay. I'll still be your friend."

**Foundation Connection:** Can't wait for Giving Tuesday? You can donate to Jimmy's Friendship Fund or support our mission quickly and easily by visiting our ["Donate Now" page](#) or [clicking the button below](#). Thank you!



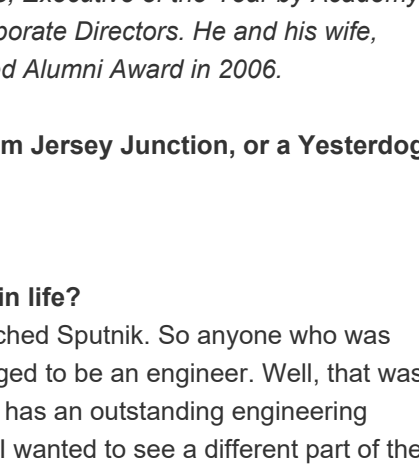
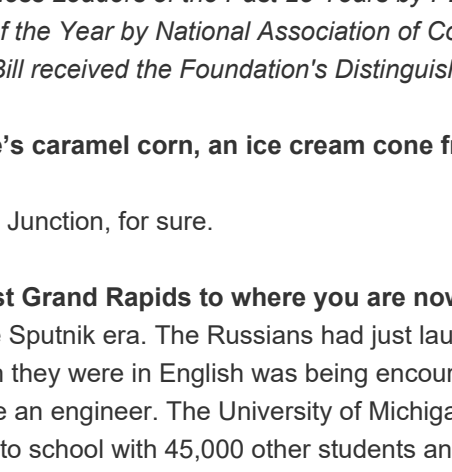
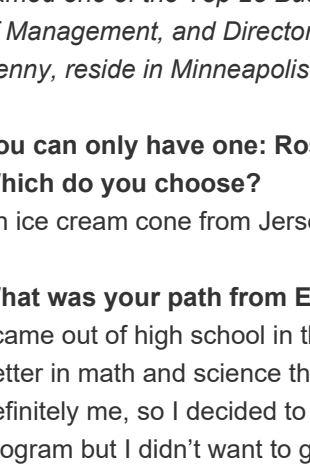
## Safety First: Foundation Funds Fight Choreographer for High School Fall Play

"Robin Hood had a great run in November!" says EGRHS drama director Marcus Chapman.

"The show featured eleven stage Chapmans."

scenarios, all carefully choreographed and planned out. We hired Kateri Kline-Johnson, the artist behind these fights, through the generosity of the EGR Schools Foundation and its donors."

"Kateri has over 40 years of experience," Chapman continues. "Kateri is able to fill the stage with bursts of action that move the story forward and entertain. Using swords, quarterstaves, and sticks, the students spent over 40 hours learning how to safely and flawlessly execute their choreography. The result was a fantastic show that left the audience captivated!"



## Boys Cross Country, Drew Muller, Girls Swim and Dive Are State Champs! Record 148th, 149th Titles

**Boys Cross Country:** Won first state championship in program history, a true team win as no East runner was in top 27 individually.

**Boys Soccer:** Won districts and reached regional final before falling to Forest Hills Northern.

**Boys Tennis:** Finished tied for fourth in state tournament (tied for best performance by a public school).

**Boys Water Polo:** Made it through districts before losing to Grand Haven in regionals

**Crew:** Largest team ever, including more than 30 freshmen. A boys four finished in the top half of the Head of the Charles in Boston. Girls Varsity 8+ was top five in the state.

**Field Hockey:** Defeated Pinckney in the first round of the state playoffs.

**Football:** Made the playoffs, falling to St. Joseph in the first round.

**Girls Cross Country:** Drew Muller won the individual state championship and the team finished second.

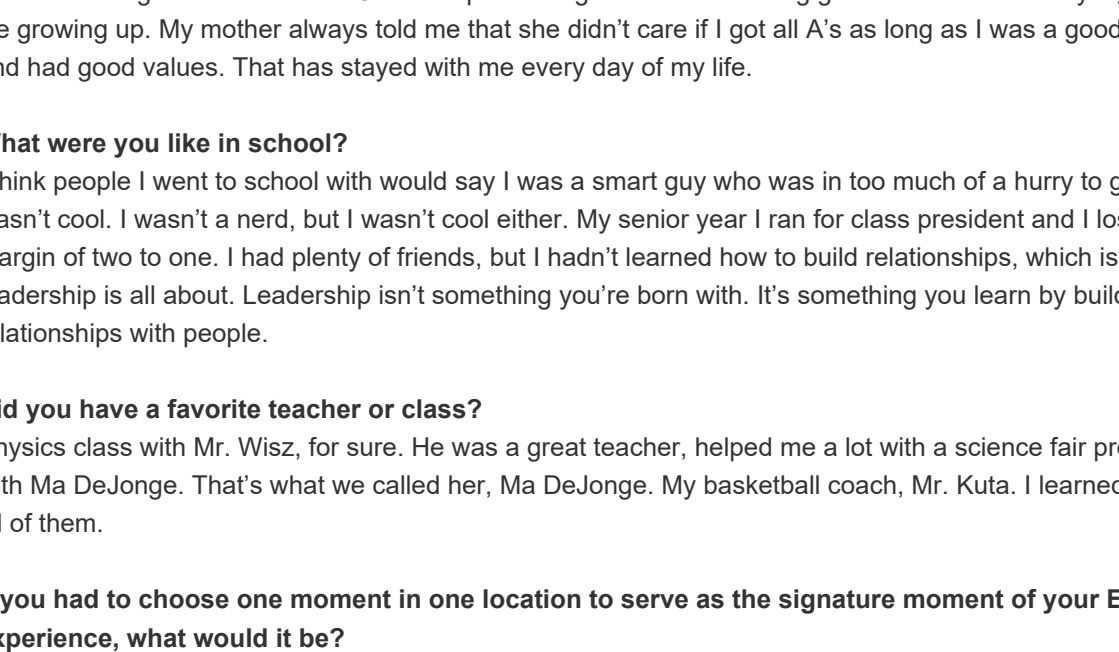
**Girls Golf:** Senior-led team had a fun and memorable season filled with personal and team achievements.

**Girls Swim and Dive:** Won East's 149th state championship, extending state record for any school.

**Sailing:** Finished 15th in the 12-state Midwest Region at the MISSA Great Lakes Championship.

**Volleyball:** Rebuilding year with new coaches at every level, one of whom was Brielle Oosse '18.

**Foundation Connection:** You can check [The Cheat Sheet on our website](#), [egrsf.org](http://egrsf.org), for a weekly listing of what's happening in our schools, sports, the arts, and our city.



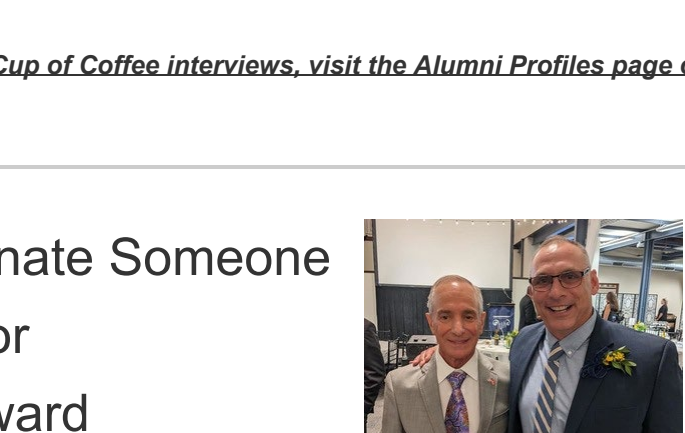
## Coach Wants to Connect Football Program with Alumni

Head football coach Josh Shattuck has a request: "I want to connect our program and community through alumni relations by building a database of EGR football alumni who might be interested in what our program is doing and ways to get involved."

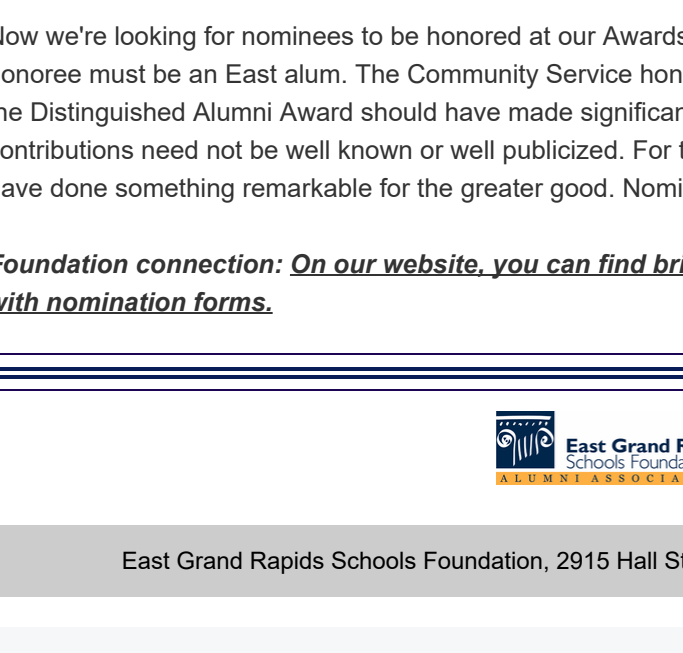
We'd love to help build this line of communication. If you played football at East at any level, [just fill out this quick Google form](#) and the Foundation will share your contact information with Coach Shattuck.

**Foundation Connection:** At the annual Gerken Open golf outing, the Foundation partners with Team Boosters to support athletics, co-curriculars, and Kabookie Week activities. This year's Gerken Open will be June 7 at Thousand Oaks Golf Club.

## Sign Up Now for This Wednesday's Alumni Hockey Game



We still have room for a few alumni hockey players to play this week's game! The event will be at 6pm Wednesday, November 23 at Patterson Ice Center. [Register now](#).



## A Virtual Cup of Coffee with Bill George '60

Bill George is executive fellow at Harvard Business School (HBS), where he has taught leadership since 2004. He is the author of *True North* and the *Emerging Leader Edition of True North*. He has served as a director of Goldman Sachs, ExxonMobil, Novartis, Target, the Mayo Clinic, and the World Economic Forum USA. He received the 2014 Bower Award for Business Leadership and was elected to the National Academy of Engineering in 2012. He has been

named one of the Top 25 Business Leaders of the Past 25 Years by PBS, Executive of the Year by Academy of Management, and Director of the Year by National Association of Corporate Directors. He and his wife, Penny, reside in Minneapolis. Bill received the Foundation's Distinguished Alumni Award in 2006.

**You can only have one: Rose's caramel corn, an ice cream cone from Jersey Junction, or a Yesterdog. Which do you choose?**

An ice cream cone from Jersey Junction, for sure.

**What was your path from East Grand Rapids to where you are now in life?**

I came out of high school in the Sputnik era. The Russians had just launched Sputnik. So anyone who was better in math and science than they were in English was being encouraged to be an engineer. Well, that was definitely me, so I decided to be an engineer. The University of Michigan has an outstanding engineering program but I didn't want to go to school with 45,000 other students and I wanted to see a different part of the country so I went to Georgia Tech.

After college I went right to Honeywell Business School. So by the time I was 23 I had my MBA and I went to work for the defense department, first working for the CFO of the Department of Defense and then for the Secretary of the Navy. This was during Vietnam. Not a day went by when there wasn't a protest on the National Mall. It took us a long time to learn the truth about that war.

In 1969, I went to work for Litton and soon became general manager of Litton Microwave Ovens. There weren't any consumer microwave ovens in 1970. After Litton, I worked for Honeywell. I was president of Honeywell Europe and moved my young family to Brussels.

I was traveling a lot for Honeywell and it became clear to me that they were only interested in making money. I'd always wanted to be the head of a large company, but then I found a medium-sized company, Medtronic, that was led by a group of people who were focused on the mission of improving people's health and their lives. I became CEO of Medtronic in 1991 and chairman of the board in 1996.

**What specific thing did you learn in East that has enabled you to be successful?**

I think people I went to school with would say I was a smart guy who was in too much of a hurry to get ahead. I wasn't cool. I wasn't a nerd, but I wasn't cool either. My senior year I ran for class president and I lost by a margin of two to one. I had plenty of friends, but I hadn't learned how to build relationships, which is what leadership is all about. Leadership isn't something you're born with. It's something you learn by building relationships with people.

**Did you have a favorite teacher or class?**

Physics class with Mr. Wisz, for sure. He was a great teacher, helped me a lot with a science fair project. Math with Ma DeJonge. That's what we called her, Ma DeJonge. My basketball coach, Mr. Kufa. I learned a lot from all of them.

**if you had to choose one moment in one location to serve as the signature moment of your East school experience, what would it be?**

My senior year, winning the Varsity Club award. I wasn't the best athlete in my class, but it was a combination of athletics and academics. Coach Kuta presented the award. I was never a starter on the basketball team, but Coach Kuta said he'd never seen a kid work as hard as Bill George. That was a thrill for me, that all my hard work had paid off.

**What do you know now that you wish you'd known then?**

That leadership is all about building relationships. I wish I'd learned that earlier in life.

**Do you stay in touch with many people from East Grand Rapids?**

Not as many as I'd like. John Young, Dave Barrett, Dan Miller, Dave Frey.

**What advice do you have for young East alums who are just starting out?**

Life is long. Take time to figure out who you are and what you want to do with your life.

**Who else would you like us to have a virtual cup of coffee with?**

Dave Barrett. The best athlete in our class, an exceptional individual, outstanding physician.

**Bonus question: What are you glad we didn't ask you about?**

I volunteered some of my disappointments on my own, so I guess there really isn't anything I wouldn't share with you.

**Foundation Connection:** To see more Virtual Cup of Coffee interviews, visit the [Alumni Profiles page on our website](#).

## Now's the Time to Nominate Someone for Community Service or Distinguished Alumni Award



Every two years, the Foundation honors worthy individuals with the Distinguished Alumni Award and the Community Service Award at our Awards Dinner.

Last fall, CDR Bill Krissoff, MD, Medical Corps, United States Navy (Ret.) of the class of 1964 was our Distinguished Alumni honoree. Longtime EGRPS custodian Bruce Towne received the Community Service Award.

Now we're looking for nominees to be honored at our Awards Dinner in 2023. The Distinguished Alumni honoree must be an East alum. The Community Service honoree can be, but it's not required. Nominees for the Distinguished Alumni Award should have made significant contributions to their chosen field, but those contributions need not be well known or well publicized. For the Community Service Award, nominees should have done something remarkable for the greater good. Nominations are due December 1.

**Foundation connection:** [On our website, you can find brief descriptions of previous winners, along with nomination forms.](#)



East Grand Rapids Schools Foundation, 2915 Hall Street, Grand Rapids, MI 49506, [egrsf.org](http://egrsf.org)

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