



Foundations

East Grand Rapids Schools Foundation & Alumni Association **SPRING 2024**



Donor Roll Call | Grant Highlights | A Virtual Cup of Coffee with Ray Abraham '71



East Grand Rapids Schools Foundation

VIRTUAL CUP OF COFFEE

Ray Abraham '71

Ray and his wife, Kristin have 3 grown children and 7 grandchildren. He is a Professional Financial Advisor and runs his own firm based in the San Francisco Bay Area and also Grand Rapids. They spend a lot of their time with their immediate and extended families. When they are not doing that, Kristin and he spend a lot of time with various non-profits that they have partnered with over the years. Giving back is important to them. Ray is an avid distance runner and has competed in over 200 half and full Marathons. He is grateful that most of his competition in his age group have given up, as it allows him to win his age group regularly!

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

Definitely Rose's caramel corn. It has a nostalgic taste that can't be duplicated. Brings back so many memories of childhood.

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

Being passionately relational, I was destined for sales/marketing and business. Being entrepreneurial from an early age, I needed independence and no limits on possible growth. I entered the financial services business in 1978 and used my midwest work ethic to propel me to success. There has been a sea of change that has been constant for the last 45 years and I have been fortunate to ride that wave. It has allowed me to impact lots of people as they have faced critical crossroads in their lives and have developed plans for their future. As a professional Financial Advisor, I have been fortunate to land in a career I continue to be passionate about. In 1980, my wife and I moved to the San Francisco Bay Area to build my business. In 1999, we bought a second home in GR and built a small clientele. Have bounced back and forth ever since.

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

The culture in EGR taught me to want to strive to get better. For a lot of people, it was to get better academically. For me, it was motivation to have options as I grew up and got older. My parents were uneducated immigrants. We had five kids in our family. It was all my parents could do to keep food on the table and keep us in the EGR school system. That was their goal—keep us in the EGR schools. They were successful at that but we were on our own. I wanted everything my friends had and was fortunately forced to generate my own income to pull it off.

Did you have a favorite teacher or class?

I really liked Carl Nestor, my math teacher and former coach. I loved my wrestling coach, Dave Dozeman, and still see him today.

What were you like in school?

School days were busy for me. Wrestling and Cross Country were my two sports. When I wasn't doing that, I had 2-3 jobs at a time to generate spending money and money to make investments. Being passionately relational, I had lots of friends and enjoyed my classmates. Many are still close friends.

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?

I loved wrestling. I wasn't that good at it but loved the sport and loved being around it. One time, a handful of kids on the team were talking about going to a wrestling camp in the summer for a week at MSU. They asked if I was going. I told them I would love to go but there was no way I could afford something like that. They asked if my parents would pay. I let them know I wouldn't even be asking because I knew they just could not afford those types of luxuries. The next day, I came to school and two of the guys (they were brothers) came to me and said my tuition had been paid by their parents. No questions asked, no repayment necessary. I was floored and could not believe I was going. I vowed that day to put myself in the position to be able to do that when I got older. Paying it forward. That's one reason I am a big supporter of the Jimmy Gerken Fund to help families that are challenged financially. It allows kids to fully live the EGR experience.

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

Our class (1971) is very active. Our reunions are large and 1-2 times a year, we have a get together that 20-40 of us gather for. Yes, our close class stays in touch. As we are aging, these relationships that we share our upbringing with are more valuable than ever. Most of us have been battered and bruised by life along the way. Sicknesses, financial challenges, dysfunctional families and all. Throughout all of that, we share our roots and cherish each chance we have to reconnect with classmates of the past.



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

EGR is an amazing place. Students and parents need to covet the opportunity to be there and be as involved as they can in the community. By participating and giving back, not only does the community benefit but the individual gains so much more.

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

Stay close to your classmates. These may end up being cherished relationships for the rest of your life. Stay connected and learn to give back. Being part of the EGR Schools Foundation is a small way you can do something. Contribute to the Jimmy Gerken Fund and help some family with some of the essentials of staying in the community. Start with a small amount. You can build on it over time.

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

1.) Peggy Cowan and twin sister Laura. Class of '71, also. They went on to become All-Star educators. Moving to opposite ends of the country. Laura is a professor at the University of Maine in Portland. Peggy is now a retired Superintendent of schools on the North Bank of Alaska. Great classmates.

2.) Steve Turcotte, also class of '71. Ended up being an Admiral in the service and is now retired, living in Tucson Arizona.

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

My GPA in EGR. Let's just say, I was one of the kids that allowed 75% of the students in my class to be in the top 75%!

Want to read more? Visit egrsf.org/alumni/ alumniprofiles



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MESSAGE

“That’s ok. I’ll still be your friend.”

I hope you’re familiar with that quote, but if you’re not, it’s what Jimmy Gerken said to someone who was bullying him. Jimmy was an East resident and later EGRPS staff member who had special needs. He had an extraordinary gift for being a friend to everyone.

You don’t need me to tell you how much we need more people like Jimmy today.

At the Foundation, we’ve made an enormous commitment to supporting student mental health in all our schools. We’ve committed hundreds of thousands of dollars to provide mental health resources for the district. A donor family has made the single largest donation ever to the Foundation to help create our Mental Health and Wellness Fund. We know our students are struggling with their mental health, and we’re committed to helping them with that struggle.

Thanks to our donors, we also created Jimmy’s Friendship Fund, a grassroots way for our community to help families in need.

Just as important as having those programs in place, though, is the magical power of what Jimmy Gerken embodied: friendship.

To me, East Grand Rapids has always been an incredibly supportive community. My father benefited from close friendships when he was a student here; so did I when I was in East schools; and so did my children when they were here. For all of us, friends made all the difference.

But I also understand that not every child has a network of friends like the ones we enjoyed. That’s why we’re striving to inform a new generation about Jimmy Gerken’s message: “That’s ok. I’ll still be your friend.”

We want everybody in our schools to know who Jimmy was. We want everybody to know about what Jimmy symbolizes for our community.

Because everybody needs a friend. As we say every year on Jimmy’s birthday, “It’s a great day to make a new friend or be a good friend to someone you know.”


Amy Stuursma

THANK YOU, VOLUNTEERS!

In addition to the countless volunteers who help us plan and manage events, we have a few dedicated individuals who help us with important tasks in our office. We’d like to recognize the efforts of Margaret McIntosh, Mary Rosendall, Racquel Self, and Carolyn Skaff.

Want to help out? We have lots of projects that are worthy of your time. If you’d like to donate your time, fill out the Volunteer form on our website, egrsf.org.



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GRANT HIGHLIGHTS

ENHANCEMENT GRANT

Kitchen Play Equipment | ELEMENTARY

Kindergarten Purposeful Play, Part of Foundation's Record-Breaking Year

Written by School News Network reporter Riley Kelley

A dollhouse, a mini kitchen, baby dolls — they might seem like toys to most, but to Norah Knoerl's kindergartners at Breton Downs Elementary, they're so much more.

On a mid-December day, the dollhouse served as a much-needed housing upgrade for students Wilson Koontz, Willa Mileskiewicz and Olivia Oates.

"We're playing that we're in New York and this is our house," Wilson said as he and his classmates fluttered around the dollhouse play area. "We had to move from Michigan because our house in Michigan was too small."

A relocation of that magnitude would take a lot of work, but the students are making sure they sneak in some fun, too.

"We're going to see a Taylor Swift concert," Wilson belted excitedly. Then he added even more detail: The show starts at 4 a.m., he said, and popcorn is involved. Oh, and they'll all have 3D glasses, "so Taylor Swift will walk right up to us. Not for real, just because of the glasses."

This multi-layered play scenario took shape in Wilson's imagination thanks to an \$18,000 grant from the East Grand Rapids Schools Foundation. The grant funded new play equipment for kindergarten classrooms at each of the three East Grand Rapids elementary schools. The funding was part of the foundation's record-breaking fall grant round.

While Wilson and his crew were cavorting in the Big Apple, elsewhere in Knoerl's class, Knox Watson, Josh Eizinger and Nora Sulisz transformed a newly refurbished kitchen play area into a holiday bakery. "The kids have real bowls and spoons and whisks so they can pretend that they're making cookies in there," Knoerl said.

Students do everything from "cooking" to filling pretend orders. "I'm paying the money we're collecting from the people who want cookies and hot chocolate," said Josh from behind a brightly colored register. The prices were steep, though. "I just paid \$589 million for gingerbread cookies," Knoerl joked after a brief hagggle with Josh.

In another corner of her classroom, Lillyana Nuñez and Mia Lahnsteiner enjoyed hosting a picnic with brand-new baby dolls.



Dramatic Play

It's all about dramatic play, Knoerl said, which involves pretending, imagining and exploring. While dramatic play can be a subset of purposeful play, which has a specific goal to educate, it doesn't necessarily need to be, Knoerl said. It's more about letting kids be kids.

"It's being thoughtful about what the kids are working on as they're playing, which is a huge part of kindergarten," she said. "It's valuable because they work on their language skills, they work on looking at other perspectives and other points of view, they work on working together."

Knoerl said students have been immensely appreciative of the new equipment. "They love it," she said, adding that the kitchen area is a favorite that's used every single day.

Play Supported by Foundation, District

The EGR Schools Foundation grant originated with Knoerl, but it grew into a collaborative effort to get supplies for each of the district's elementary schools. When she saw how "loved" the play equipment was in her classroom, she worked with other EGR teachers to secure funding for upgrades.

Knoerl said she's grateful that the foundation saw the value of dramatic and purposeful play. "Unfortunately, there are a lot of kindergartens in the state that don't allow for play time, and it's such a huge, important part of the child's development," she said.

She's also thankful that the district's administrators still value play, and that the EGR community rallied behind the effort to support it through the grant.

ENHANCEMENT GRANTS | Approved Fall 2023

ONLINE RESOURCES: IXL and Brainpop

ELEMENTARY | Katie McIntosh
Tools for all elementary teachers

LANGUAGE ARTS: Author Visit

ELEMENTARY | Monica Walen, KDL
Visit from Author Jason Chin in collaboration with Kent District Library

FURNITURE: Math Class

MIDDLE SCHOOL | Tracy Packard, Amanda Hicks
Building Thinking Classrooms supplies

PERFORMING ARTS:

Marching Band Annual Program Support

HIGH SCHOOL | Jake Castillo, Mark Wells, Kayla Cordell
Sustaining the program with expert drill design in partnership with the Music Boosters

BOOKS: Second Grade Readers

ELEMENTARY
Meagan Cornett-Wright, Lisa Valanty, Kristen Borak, Andrea Dudley
Books supporting below benchmark readers

PERFORMING ARTS: Field Trip

ELEMENTARY | Haley Kline, Sam Pugia
Grand Rapids Symphony Orchestra experience

TOOLS: Outdoor Learning Resources

PRESCHOOL | Hilary Berens
Equipment for Woodcliff Early Childhood Fives Program

STEM: Gone Boarding Class

HIGH SCHOOL | Terry Szpieg, Patrick Reed, Breanna Wagenmaker, & Students
Stand Up Paddleboard design/build pilot program, year 2

LANGUAGE ARTS: 2024 March Book Madness

ELEMENTARY
Sarah Webber, Stephanie Olson, Katie McIntosh, Stephanie Thelen
Month-long program intended to get students excited about reading

BOOKS: Non-Fiction

MIDDLE SCHOOL | Carol Dills
Learning Commons resupply

ROBOTICS: FIRST Lego League

MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL | Tim Knape (student)
Robotics Underwriting, Grades 6-12

FURNITURE: Engaging Classroom

WEALTHY | Kelly Tomasi, Stacey Goodman
Horseshoe table to cultivate learning

TECH: Calculators

HIGH SCHOOL | Math Instructors
Graphing calculators for all high school math classrooms

PERFORMING ARTS: Field Trip

HIGH SCHOOL | Pamela Steers, Lauren Ufkes
Tickets to Stratford Shakespeare Festival

MENTAL HEALTH: Classroom Sensory Tools & Supports

ELEMENTARY | Katie McIntosh, Stephanie Olson, Stephanie Thelen
Resources supporting lessons about mindfulness, managing emotions, relaxation, and self-care that reduce anxiety and increase academic achievement

TECH: 3D Laser Cutting Machines

MIDDLE SCHOOL | Holly Lampen, Kevin Vance, Isabella Wilson, John MacKenzie, Elizabeth Miller-Wallau
Glowforge lasers to cut and engrave raw materials

TECH: Electrophoresis Equipment

HIGH SCHOOL | Janyce Huff, Jeff Webb
Mini One System provides an introduction to biotechnology and genetic engineering with hands-on PCR DNA amplification in classrooms

TECH: 3D Printers

HIGH SCHOOL | Bennett Rockwell (student), Patrick Reed
Five Bambu Labs X1 3D printers

TEAM BUILDING: Camp Miniwanca

BRETON DOWNS | Katie McIntosh, Christy Gast.
Alison Buffin, Chiara Hemsley
Fifth grade camp field trip

TECH: iPads

HIGH SCHOOL | Ben Ruppert (student), Katie Michell
Media Devices for the East Vision and Journalism II Class

BOOKS: STEM in Literacy

LAKESIDE | Kailey Farns
Science, technology, engineering, and math books

PERFORMING ARTS: Percussion Instruments

MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL | Jake Castillo
New equipment for band and drumline

PERFORMING ARTS: Theater Productions

DISTRICT WIDE | Jenny Hall (parent)
Support for school musicals/play performances

DRAMATIC PLAY: Kitchen Equipment

ELEMENTARY | Kindergarten Teachers
Resources for purposeful play





PROFILES | Foundation Leadership

By EGRSF Board Member Amanda Rogalski

TREASURER | TOM BLOWER

Tom Blower and his wife, Jenny, have a son at the middle school and a daughter at Breton Downs. He is a Partner and Senior Financial Advisor at Fiduciary Financial Advisors. He has served the board on both finance and grants committees.

He joined the board to learn more about the schools. His service has exceeded expectations, “the effort that goes on behind the scenes to make everything move along is just incredible,” he says.

“I want to recognize the amazing staff at the Foundation,” Blower says. “I have worked with many non-profits and they truly run a well-oiled machine. They are a wealth of knowledge, know so much of the history, and know who to call to make things happen. It is truly a joy to watch them work.”

SECRETARY | AMY KNAPE

Amy Knappe and her husband, Chris, have three boys who went through Breton Downs Elementary. Two have graduated from EGR High School and the third is graduating in 2024!

Outside of her work with the Foundation, Amy is the Senior Director of Fund Development for Amplify GR, a place-based organization working in community development in southeast Grand Rapids neighborhoods. Their mission is to preserve and widen pathways in economic opportunity, housing, education, and community well-being so that all neighbors can participate in and benefit from community growth in the Boston Square and Madison Square neighborhoods.

With her professional background in fundraising and philanthropy, Amy was keenly aware of the incredible work and the impact of the Foundation. As a past school PTO member, she has continually looked for ways to support the schools. “The Foundation is the perfect alignment of my interests, commitment to EGRPS and professional experience,” she says.

Amy loves the Foundation grants for March Madness Books each spring in the elementary schools and the professional development opportunities granted to teachers. Her favorite grants though, are the ones that support the Robotics Team. Her son, Tim, is the project manager and captain of EGR Robotics Team 5980 so the grants given to support the team and their competitions mean a lot to her (although she has to excuse herself from the votes related to these grants due to her conflict of interest).

PRESIDENT | NICK ADAMY

Nick Adamy and his wife, Shellie, have a son and daughter, both at the high school. He is the President and Managing Director of Adamy Valuation, providing business valuation services.

This is his last year on the board and he currently leads the Administrative Committee. He joined five years ago thanks to an invitation from Abby Sorota. “I am so glad she reached out to me. It has been a wonderful experience,” he says.

His favorite grant was the collaboration with the Friends of the East Grand Rapids Library to bring photographer Steve Jessmore to speak to the students and community. “Jessmore’s Reeds Lake project was absolutely phenomenal,” Adamy says. “To hear him tell the story of his hard work to capture some of those spectacular images was inspiring.”

VICE PRESIDENT | JENNY MCMAHON

Jenny McMahon and her husband, Steve, have four children that all attended Breton Downs Elementary and went on to graduate from EGR High School.

For the past 26 years, Jenny has worked part time as a clinical pharmacist at Helen DeVos Children’s Hospital in the neonatal intensive care unit and pediatric intensive care unit.

She joined the Foundation board in the fall of 2019, when her youngest was a freshman, as a way to stay involved in the school district.

Since then, she has served on the development committee and the grants committee. “I enjoyed the grant committee and the discussions we had about each grant application. A lot of thought, consideration and research goes into each grant request before the committee makes any recommendations. I am always impressed with the creative and innovative ideas our staff and students propose to improve the student experiences for our school community,” she shared.

She says her favorite grants can be divided into two types. First, the ones that seem so simple but make a big difference. For example, this past grant cycle the Foundation funded an \$18,000 grant for new pretend kitchen play equipment for kindergarten classrooms at each elementary school.

“The teachers and students were so excited to replace their much loved and worn out play kitchens and doll houses with new items for dramatic play. It is a pleasure to be able to support something that seems so simple but has a huge impact on the development of our youngest students,” she says.

The second type of grant she loves are the creative ones that provide something extra to the student experience at East. The Foundation funded a fight choreographer to teach the members of the drama club how to execute fight scenes with fake weapons for a high school play. “The student enthusiasm for these types of grants is just amazing,” Jenny says.



EVENT RECAP

2023 Community Service & Distinguished Alumni Awards Dinner

September 13, 2023 | JW Marriott

The Foundation's 13th Community Service and Distinguished Alumni Awards dinner, was a fascinating night celebrating service and world affairs!

Lifelong community supporter Betsy Willey (EGRHS class of '64) was honored with the Community Service and Leadership Award. Climate and Energy Journalist and former Wall Street Journal Middle East Bureau Chief Bill Spindle (EGRHS class of '81) received the Distinguished Alumni Award. The dinner was at the JW Marriott in downtown Grand Rapids.

UPCOMING EVENTS

HURRAH! A Party 40 Years in the Making

April 20, 2024 | Wege Plaza

Use a highlighter, a sticker, a big red circle—whatever you do to keep track of important events—you'll want to save the date of Saturday, April 20.

The East Grand Rapids Schools Foundation's annual fundraising party, HURRAH!, will once again fill Wege Plaza overlooking Reeds Lake with food, fun, friends, music, drinks and more. This community-wide event is always a highlight on the East Grand Rapids social calendar. Last year, HURRAH! was sold out weeks before the event so be sure you register as a sponsor or get your tickets to attend right away.

Approximately 400 people attended HURRAH! in April of 2023 and this year's party is a special one. Throughout the school year, the Foundation, which was founded in 1983, has been celebrating 40 years of supporting our schools. This year's HURRAH! will be a celebration of the Foundation's birthday and its mission of enriching the experience of all students by investing in programs and educational enhancements that support the whole child. It's a party 40 years in the making. You won't want to miss it!



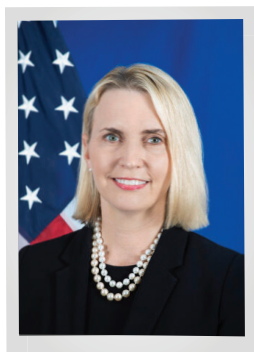
2024 Community Service & Distinguished Alumni Awards Dinner

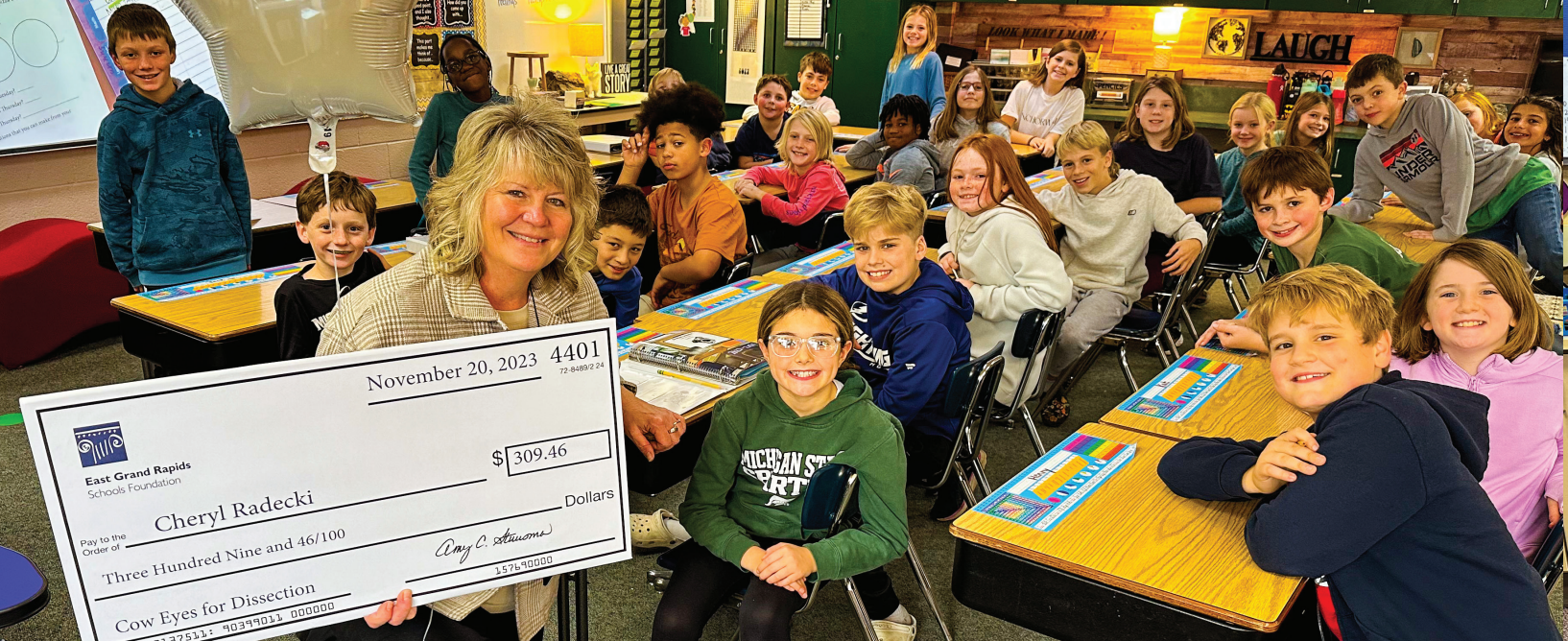
October 16, 2024 | Watermark Country Club

Big news! This year's Distinguished Alumni honoree will be U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine Bridget Brink, who graduated from East Grand Rapids High School in 1987.

After graduating from East, Brink earned her bachelor of arts degree in political science from Kenyon College and a master's in international relations and political theory from the London School of Economics. She has worked for the U.S. Department of State since 1996, serving first as U.S. Ambassador to Slovakia before becoming U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine in 2022. She took office during the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

The Community Service and Distinguished Alumni Awards Dinner will be held on Wednesday, October 16, 2024, at Watermark Country Club. Tickets and sponsorship information will be available on our website, egrsf.org, later this year.





RECOGNITION

We acknowledge all who have supported our mission in 2023. This list does not include participants in Foundation-sponsored events. We strive to be accurate, but errors may occur. We welcome assistance from readers in bringing any inaccuracies to our attention.

2023 DONOR ROLL CALL | Annual Fund Supporters

\$5,000 or more

- Anonymous
- Ray '71 & Kristin Abraham*
- The Adamy Family*
- Sue '56 & Marty Allen*
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- David Mehney '57*
- Meijer, Inc.*
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- Elaine Rongey*
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- Abby & Rich Sorota*
- Charley '87 & Janine Thompson*
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- The Zagal Family

\$2,500 - \$4,999

- Anonymous
- Terri Burg Amann '71
- David '60 & Sibley '62 Barrett
- Dennis & Jennifer Bruce*
- George Family Foundation, Bill George '60
- Cynthia Daverman Gompers '64
- Tom & Mary Sidell '61 James
- Mark Secchia '91 & Laurie Duthie
- Beth Wells Skaggs*
- Nick Thole & Amy Turner-Thole*
- Carrie Walton & Justin Gray
- White Mitten Movers*

\$1,000 - \$2,499

- Ashley Agerson '97 & Julia Becker
- Tom '77 & Beth Ainsworth
- Matthew '90 & Sara Allard
- Steve Baker
- John & Janet Boyles
- Heather Slay '89 & Brett Brinker
- Jason & Elizabeth '95 Christopherson*
- Dave '57 & Nancy Cook Family*
- Erik Daly '00 & Jessica Bloom '00
- Julita & Rob '85 Eleveld
- ERDI Partners, Inc.,
In honor of Dr. Heidi Kattula
- Michael '63 & Sheila Hannah
- Nancy & Gerard Kowley
- Rob '84 & Julie Hicewlewski+
- The Lingwood Aguayo Family
- Jane & Paul McCarthy
- Terry McGovern &
Carol Paine-McGovern
- Steve & Jenny McMahon*
- Steve & Katie Millman*
- Todd & Kelly Plawinski
- Heidi Lacks Pucci '07+
- Fritz Schaefer '62 & Karen Rasmussen Schaefer '63
In honor of Bert Froyland
- Joan Secchia
- Brent & Diane Slay
- Keith & Meghan Swayman
- Liz & Michael TerHorst
- Chris & Sarah VanDeven
- Beverly Woons,
In memory of George Woons
- Laura Young '78
- Brad & Fleur Zylstra

\$500 - \$999

- Anonymous
- Mark & Kate Austin
- Jeff Bergers '73 & Cindy Braak
- Jeff '69 & Kathy Boylan
- Dan & Lynne Brown
- Susan & Dev Butler
- Beth & Chris Chappus
- Stuart & Rita Citron
- Sue & Christine Duquette
- Steve Spicer Elliott '65
- Omar & Elizabeth Flores
- Brian & Karey Hamrick
- John & Janyce Huff
- The Kopp Family
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- Matt & Katie '93 McIntosh+
- Chris & Joan Panopoulos Family Fund
- Heidi & George Roberts
- Buck & Judy Saunders
- Jeff Schad & Marilyn Lancker
- Tim Schad
- Ben & Beth Simon
- Peter '89 & Amy '89 Stuursma
- Tami Sytsma & Jason Batts
- Tim & Lisa '01 Weaver
- Charles Wilkinson,
In memory of his wife, Patricia, and son James '75, and in honor of sons David '73, Michael '74, John '77, Daniel '79 and Thomas '82
- Charles Winslow & Judy Sopeland

\$250 - \$499

- Steve '86 & Maria Allen
- Drs. Erica & Shannon Armstrong
- Jim '56 & Betsy Barton
- Jenny Berglund & Smith Roberts '94
- John & Pat Bergstrom
- Fred & Kathleen Burkhardt
- Emilie & Stew Collins
- Greg '99 & Kim Crane
- Kyle '04 & Patty Cunningham
- Liz '98 & Rich Della Croce
- Alice Dodgson '55,
In honor of the Dodgson Family (Mike '55, Alice '55, Bill '78, JoAnne '79, Susan '81, Steve '81, Emily '15, Sam '18 & Lauren '21)
- Linda Dudley '65
- David & Elizabeth Filkins
- Chuck & Julie Frayer
- John F. Gilmore '48
- Betsy Bacon Grodhaus '76
- Abbie Groff-Blaszak & Robert Blaszak
- Gregg Henderson '85
- H. Spencer Holmes '58
- Barb Jourdan & Dennis Kellermeier
- Theresa Keyes
- Amy & Chris Knappe
- Laurel & Jack LLC
- R. Dale & Shirley A. Lausch
- Paul & Rosanne '83 Mack
- Bill & Melissa Marsh
- Carole & Mike McDonald
- Microsoft,
In honor of Maggie Edison
- Rick & Liz Morris
- Lou Murray '64
- Norm & Jan Palm
- Mark & Barb Periard



Jerrel K. Ralph '49
 Christopher & Lindsey '00 Riker
 Tim Saunders
 Raymond Saylor
 Mark Schwartz
 Mary Reagan Shapton &
 Bob Shapton
 Jim & Ann Stuursma
 Martha Teichner '65
 The Tupper Family
 The Warner Family
 Deb & Greg Weaver
 Mary Whiting

\$100 - \$249

Anonymous
 Bruce W. Avis '53
 Jon Paul & Susan '66 Bachelder
 Laurie Beard,
In memory of Paul E. Beard '96
 Scott Brundage
 Dr. Peggy Burke
 Elizabeth & Brandon Burnette
 George & Nancy Buth
 Carol Ellis Campbell '81
 Cherrah Casserly
 Todd & Amanda Chassee
 Jason '01 & Carly Colegrove
 Barbara Cone
 Cynthia Conway '64,
In memory of Carol Murray '64
 Ed & Linda Cox
 Robert & Kathleen Yukon '70 Eager
 Martha Escobar & Jens Forsberg
 Ezra Fechtner+
 Max Fechtner+
 Harvey Fixler '62
 Andrea Fotias '75
 Thomas Getz &
 Margaret Burrows-Getz
 Jim, Katie & Molly '22 Green
 Andrea Haidle,
*In honor of Andrew Haidle '93 &
 Noah Haidle '97*
 Dr. & Mrs. David D. Hamm,
*In honor of sons David Jr. '89,
 Jonathan '94 and Andrew '96*

Libby Headrick '57
 Thomas Hollingsworth '69
 Judith Joseph
 Norman Keller
 Brad & Michelle Kirk
 Bill Krissoff '64
 Lisa A. Larsen '73,
In honor of the Class of '73
 Arnold & Kristin Lee
 Nancy Letherby,
In memory of Frank Letherby
 Jim Logie '55
 Chris & Sharon Longstrech
 Genie Lyman
 Gary E. MacDougal Jr.
 Lynne Boyles Marino '77
 The McCahill Family
 Richard K. Miller '62,
In honor of Bertel J. Froyland
 Thomas '72 & Glynis Miller+
 Claire Minneman '02
 Jim & Carolyn Morse
 Dan & Katie Nugent
 Kris Pachla & Anne Marie Carson
 Sheila Pantlind
 Linda Patterson
 Richard Perkins '52
 Larry '69 & Jean '70 Pinckney
 Owen Pyle,
In memory of Margaret Pyle
 Robert V. V. Rice, Jr. '49
 Kerry Rowe & Dan West
 Shelley Schmidt
 John & Judy Schneider
 Nancy Seymour '62
 Carolyn S. Skaff
 David Smith '63 & Peggy Child '64
 Albert & Joan Stauffacher
 Mary K. Weadock
 The Webbers
 Virginia Mitchell Welch '65
 The Wisniewski Family,
In memory of Rob Wisniewski '04
 John Woods
 Michelle Yates '73

\$20 - \$99

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 Kirk '85 & Kirsten Essenmacher
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 Peggy Ford '63,
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 Anne Genthe
 Ryan Genther '10
 Linda Graham,
In memory of Bill Graham
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 Marcia Irvine Hammerslag '53
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 Lee Webber Porter '58
 Rise Samuelson Rasch '75
 David '87 & Robbie Reynolds
 Hayley Rohn '00
 Cynthia Savara '75
 James Siegel '66
 Barbara Snow,
In memory of James W. Snow '42
 Lane Stewart
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 Ben '94 & Meg '97 Zerfas

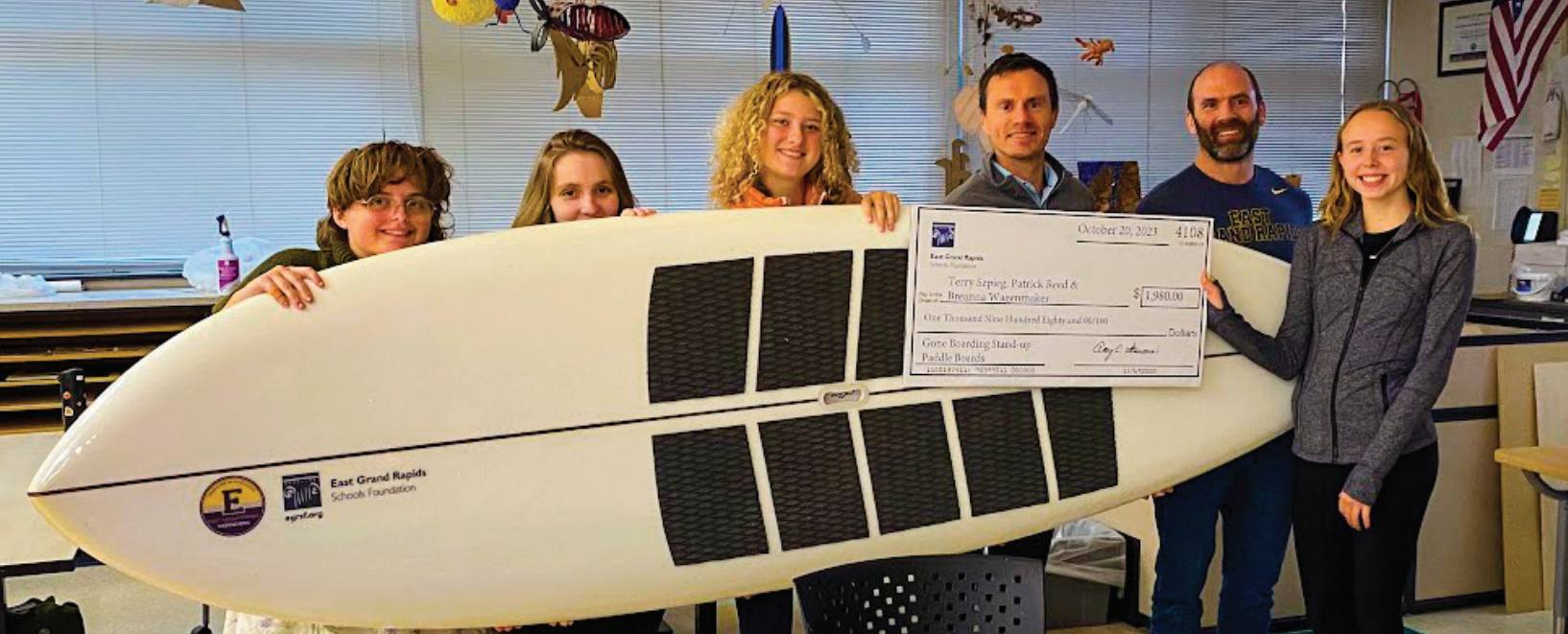
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 Keith Freeman
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 John & Deanna Green
 Diane & Bob Hall
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 Vicki '70 & Tom '71 Kimball
 Kathy '59 & Bill Laidlaw
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 Erika Trost '89, David Schwab & Family
 Jim '58 & Susie '59 Sebastian
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 Virginia '73 & Martheen Wanty
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EGR Middle School Staff

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JERALD TEBEAU

Nancy Letherby

DON T. VIDRO '57

Libby Headrick '57



2023 DONOR ROLL CALL | STAR Appreciation Awards

If you're looking for a way to make your donation to the Foundation extra meaningful, a STAR Award can be a great way to do it. When you give a STAR Award, not only do you help provide program support and classroom enhancements in our schools, but you also honor a teacher or staff member at the same time.

Lakeside Elementary 3rd grade teacher (and EGRSF board member) Michelle Kirk has multiple STAR Awards proudly displayed in her classroom. "The way the STAR award reads truly says it all," she says. "Thank You for Making a Difference in the Lives of Your Students. When someone takes the time to give a STAR Award, it validates a teacher's/staff member's hard work and dedication to the profession. An outward sign of gratitude."

STAR Awards honor outstanding teachers and staff members for everything they do for our students. For a donation of \$25 or more to the Foundation, we'll produce a STAR Award for your favorite teacher or staff member and either present it to them or give it to you to present it yourself. Best of all, your donation will go toward funding enhancement grants that offer our kids educational opportunities that are second to none. To honor a teacher quickly and easily, just visit the STAR Awards page on egrsf.org.

Carolynne Allaben	Barbara Cone	Emiliya Heerema ...	Christian Mercier & Family	Tracy Packard	Caden Butler
Katie Billmeier	Miles Aramburu & Family	Erin Huffer	The Stanley Family	Margaret Richards	Leila Sorenson & Family
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John Burke	Shelley Schmidt	Michelle Kirk	Bowen Millman	Brett Scheidel	Meredith Wiseman
Michelle Burkey	Scotty & MC Millman	Becky Kramer	Angie & Chris Barry	Lindsey Schuitema	William Wiseman
Doree Burnside	Simone Aramburu & Family The Foster Family	Holly Lampen	Caden Butler Henry Seufert	Josh Shattuck	The Millman Family
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Sarah Cannon	Matt Millman	Kristen Lecours	Olivia Brundin	Terry Szpieg	Sam Connor
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Peri denDulk	Team Metz— Matilda, Amelia, Mark & Alli	Kaitlin Merpi	The Foster Family	Nicole Vanderplow	Meg & Josh Keys
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- Gail Essenburg '70
- Amelia Grant
- Joanna Grant
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- Jordan Grzegorzcyk & Family
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- George & Mary Ann Coroneos

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- Class of 2023
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 - *In memory of John, Mark '79 & Holly '84 Connor*
- Brody & Allison Fouch '99 Duncan
- Kersten '88 & Franz Jevne
- Glenna Paukstis '55,
 - *In memory of Jimmy Gerken*
- Vivian Ragsdale,
 - *In memory of James Sterling Ragsdale '56*
- The Peter & Joan Secchia Family

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- Kurt & Michele Bishop
- Christine Coon
- EGR Boys Varsity Tennis Team
- Campbell '01 & Alice Frey





Class of 1958



Class of 2018



Class of 1983



Class of 2008

2023 DONOR ROLL CALL | Reunion Gifts

Class of 1958 | \$3,546

- Carla Duemler Blandford
- Rick Chalker
- Bonnie Blackport Johnson
- Phil Leech
- Scott Maentz
- Jim Sebastian
- Kathy Bennett Tonkel
- '58 Reunion Gift

Class of 1963 | \$6,563

- David Boyce
- Dirk Buth
- Bonnie Barnes Cole
- Diane Donley
- Martin Falarski
- Peggy Hicks Ford
- Henry A. (Happy) Fox, Jr.
- Charlie Frost
- Patricia Leidlein Gast
- Richard Hansen
- Jim Hewitt
- Sheryl King
- Phyllis Martini Knoop
- John Loeks
- Sam Metcalf
- Sheila Green Nordhof
- Robert Raemer
- John Sebastian
- David L. Smith
- Craig Thompson
- Linda Sarafis Triant
- '63 Reunion Gift,
- *In honor of Louis Murray*

Class of 1971 | \$4,050

- '71 Reunion Gift

Class of 1983 | \$1,666

- Scott Andrews
- Timothy Clark
- Darcymarie Klenk Connelly
- Mitch Cook
- Jay Dunwell
- Bill Herold
- Rosanne Ellis Mack
- Jim Sebastian
- Rob Spindle
- Carrie Krause Stahl
- '83 Reunion Gift

Class of 2008 | \$329

- Meredith Rizzo Bonner
- Andrew Hakim
- Emily Shuart Hakim
- Jonathon Minard
- Gabriele O'Brien Wiarda
- '08 Reunion Gift

Class of 2018 | \$104

- Macy Albaitis
- Tomer Andegeko
- Julia Howard
- Nathan Kettler
- Dominic Lannon
- Chris Owens
- Ben Sagritalo
- Grayson Snoeyer
- Natalie VanderZyden
- Maddie Woudstra

Class of 2023 | \$1,500

- '23 Graduation Gift



ALUMNI NEWS | REUNIONS | 2024 Homecoming: October 4, 2024

The East Grand Rapids Schools Foundation and Alumni Association is your partner for your reunion planning needs. Please check the EGRSF Alumni Class News page for more class reunion information. If your class year is not listed and you are planning a reunion, even if you're unsure of the date or location, please let us know so we can share the news with your classmates. We're here to help!

Maria Allen, Alumni Relations Coordinator, has supported numerous groups in the preparation of their class reunions over the years. Need alumni contact information, a school tour, a list of local venue options, activity ideas, invitations, technology help, decorations? Maria is available to help your group. Join the classes listed who are already planning their reunion celebration in 2024. And if 2025 is a reunion year for your class, now is a good time to start the planning process.

Go to the EGRSF alumni page www.egrfsf.org/alumni for more info or contact Maria at mallen@egrps.org.

2024 REUNIONS

1964	60 TH	8/23 - 8/24
1969	55 TH	7/19 - 7/21
1974	50 TH	9/14
1984	40 TH	10/19
1999	25 TH	FALL (TBD)
2004	20 TH	FALL (TBD)
2009	15 TH	FALL (TBD)
2014	10 TH	11/30



Class of 1963

SAVE THE DATE | Celebrate Coach Briggs | May 18, 2024 | EGRHS Pool

Help celebrate boys and girls swim coach Butch Briggs' 50th season of coaching! In his half century of coaching the Pioneers, Coach Briggs has twice been named national high school swim coach of the year. Combined, his boys and girls teams have won more than 30 state championships. The celebration is Saturday, May 18th, from 2-4pm at the high school pool.



Scan to register or sponsor the Gerken Open! (Space is limited.)



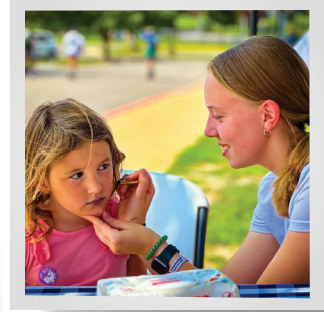
UPCOMING EVENTS

Gerken Open | June 5, 2024 | Thousand Oaks Golf Club

The Gerken Open is one of the most popular events on the EGRSF calendar and typically sells out every year. The four-person scramble format includes your choice of “Nine at Nine” 9-hole morning event or 18 holes in the afternoon. The Gerken Open supports athletics and co-curriculars through the Jimmy Gerken Fund and EGR Team Boosters. The Jimmy Gerken Fund also sponsors Kabookie Week at EGRHS. Registration and sponsorship opportunities are available on our website, egrsgf.org.

- Scramble format | shotgun start
- Morning 9 holes at 9am or afternoon 18 holes at 1pm
- Happy hour on the patio with BBQ, beverages, live music

Questions? Contact Maria Allen at mallen@egrsgf.org or (616)235-3535.



Midsummer Ice Dream | July 17, 2024 | 1-4pm | EGR Middle School Parking Lot

Put Wednesday, July 17 on your summer calendar. We'll be hosting our second annual Midsummer Ice Dream in the parking lot of the middle school. The Kona Ice truck will be there offering free treats for kids, along with face painting and sidewalk chalk. Last year's event was a lot of fun, with hundreds of kids stopping by. Join us!



IN REMEMBRANCE

We extend our deepest condolences to the families and friends of the following alumni and EGRPS staff who passed since our last publication. They will be greatly missed. We apologize for any errors or omissions. Please help us stay informed by calling us at (616) 235-3535 or emailing egrfsf@egrps.org.

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| 1942
James Snow | 1956
Thomas Hansen
John Pettersch | 1971
Katie Bergagnini-Solowey
Mary Lynn Cornelius |
| 1945
Majel (Chance) Obata | 1958
Ann (Garrison) Bixel
Janet (Mayer) Peacock
Arlene (McCarthy) Smith | 1983
Michael DeLano
Daniel Zondervan |
| 1947
Lindsey (Parker) Bozeman | 1959
Martha Davis
Harvey Rasmussen
Elizabeth (Freeman) Walter | 1984
Joseph Steketee |
| 1949
Carolyn (DuMond) Laird | 1960
David Frey
Judith (Plett) Rutherford
Julie (Mulnix) Wolf | 1993
Jodi (Dial) McMahon |
| 1950
Irene (Varnum) Honn | 1961
Lynn (Freeman) Brodie
John "Jack" Teggelaar | 2003
Michael Greiner |
| 1951
Marcia (Lorch) Meyer | 1962
William Free | 2008
Calvin Blair |
| 1952
Gordon Anderson
Mary Ann (Erskine) Haarer
Edward Kress
Neil Thomas O'Keefe
Janette (Hickey) Reid | 1963
Harry "Skip" Baxter
Patricia (Duetting) Hare
Heidi (Kress) Karell
Harvey Miller | EGRPS Former Staff
Arthur Apkarian
Henry "Hank" Doele
Cheryl Matthews
Jerald Tebeau |
| 1953
Julia (Rasmussen) Colvin
Sally (Parrott) Ray
Karen (Brown) Schermer | 1964
Larry Engel
Richard Hoffman
M. Primrose (Hook) Sebastian
Shirley (Cook) Southland | EGRHS Coach
Christopher Ingram |
| 1954
Darlene (Douglas) Hemenger | 1965
Dale Bensted
Jon Graber | EGRSF Former Board Member
Rebecca Wrigley |
| | 1966
Cindy (Creagan) Benson
Jennifer (Hoekje) Courtright | |
| | 1967
Syd Baxter
Brian Keenan
James "Brook" Taliaferro
Scott Thompson | |
| | 1968
Roger Erbaugh
David Veneklasen | |
| | 1969
David Eberhard
Mark Gillett
Terrence Wisner | |
| | 1972
Barbara (Phillips) Hooks | |
| | 1977
Kathy Jo (Kramsvogel) Erdman
Bradley Palmer | |
| | 1978
Katharine (Jensen) Miller | |



Thank you to the members of the Louise Neesley Legacy Society

- RAY '71 AND KRISTIN ABRAHAM
- MURPHY AINSWORTH^ '10
- BOB^ AND VAL^ BERNECKER
- REN BRANDER '55
- BARBARA CONE
- DAVID^ '57 AND NANCY COOK
- PETER CORONEOS^ '96
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- JOHN D. ROSE^ '53
- THE PETER^ AND JOAN SECCHIA FAMILY
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- JANET L. STAUSS^
- KAREN STEFFENSEN STURGES^ '58
- PETER '89 AND AMY '89 STUURSM
- WILLIAM^ AND SHIRLEY^ VANDENBERG
- WILLIAM^ '56 AND PATRICIA WARING

[^]Deceased

PLANNED GIVING | Meet Abby & Rich Sorota

The more people know about how vital the Foundation is to our schools, the more likely they are to include the Foundation in their estate plans. Parents, teachers, school staff, school board members, and Foundation board members are some of our most enthusiastic supporters. They know what we do, and they want to help.

Abby and Rich Sorota check just about all of those boxes. Since moving here from Connecticut, they've been extremely active in our schools. Abby was a driving force behind the EGRNow campaign, served on the Foundation board, and is now treasurer of the Board of Education.

"Our children have significantly benefited from the stability and enhancements that the EGRSF has provided to our district," Abby says. "The Foundation's model was created and originally funded over 40 years ago. We included the EGRSF in our estate planning to ensure that generations to come will have the same high level education and enrichment opportunities that our children received."

From her experience, Abby knows how important a stable, well-funded Foundation is to prepare for future lean times. "The state of Michigan relies on the strength of the economy and the current priorities of the state legislators to fund its schools," she says.

"The Foundation was created to maintain programs in lean times and to provide life-shaping educational opportunities for our students. It's one of a very few of its kind. It has worked extremely well, and will continue to, but only if it continues to grow and be adequately funded.

"If you believe in the power of education to change lives and want East to continue to be the premier destination for outstanding schools, then this is a great place to give your financial support. By putting it in your estate plans now, you ensure that your wishes are met later."

Interested in ways to include the Foundation in your estate plans? Call EGRSF Executive Director Amy Stuursma at (616)235-3535 or email her at astuursm@egrps.org.



East Grand Rapids Schools Foundation

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