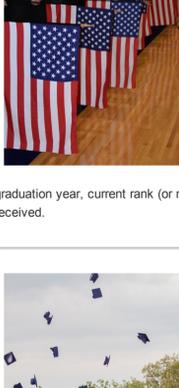


THE PIONEER POST

East Grand Rapids Alumni Newsletter

Spring 2022

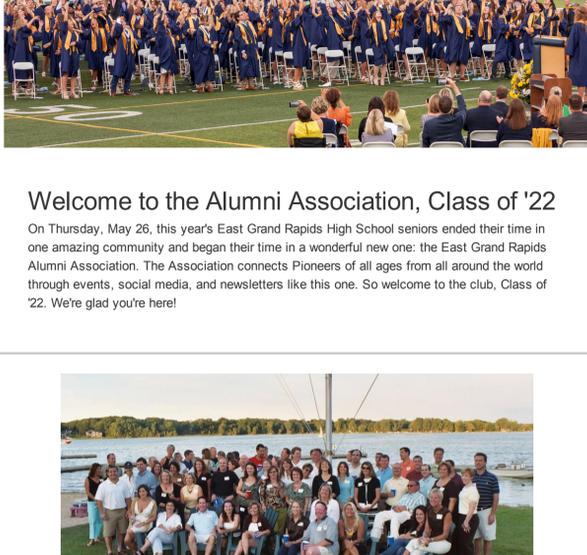


Attention Alumni Service Members and Veterans

Are you a veteran of the United States armed forces or an active-duty service member? Or do you know of any East alumni who are? East Grand Rapids High School is gathering this information in order to recognize the brave people who have served our country in the armed forces. The school plans to honor them permanently and remember the sacrifice each of them has given to help protect our country at a special place in the high school and every year on Veterans Day.

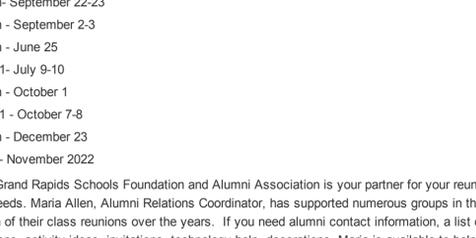
Find the link to submit information on our [Honoring Alumni Service Members](#) page. Or you can send an email to Maria Allen, Alumni Relations Coordinator, at mallen@egrps.org. Be sure to include the following information: name (include name at graduation if different),

graduation year, current rank (or rank at retirement), locations of service, and any medals or commendations received.



Welcome to the Alumni Association, Class of '22

On Thursday, May 26, this year's East Grand Rapids High School seniors ended their time in one amazing community and began their time in a wonderful new one: the East Grand Rapids Alumni Association. The Association connects Pioneers of all ages from all around the world through events, social media, and newsletters like this one. So welcome to the club, Class of '22. We're glad you're here!



Class Reunion News

Reunions in 2022

Join the EGRHS classes who are already planning their 2022 reunion celebration. Additional information can be found on the [EGRSF Alumni Events](#) page.

- 1952 - 70th - September 8
- 1957 - 65th - September 23-24
- 1967 - 55th - September 17
- 1970 - '70 Turns 70 - October 8
- 1971 - 50th - August 12-13
- 1972 - 50th - September 22-23
- 1977 - 45th - September 2-3
- 1982 - 40th - June 25
- 1991 - 30+1 - July 9-10
- 1992 - 30th - October 1
- 2001 - 20+1 - October 7-8
- 2012 - 10th - December 23
- 2017 - 5th - November 2022

The East Grand Rapids Schools Foundation and Alumni Association is your partner for your reunion planning needs. Maria Allen, Alumni Relations Coordinator, has supported numerous groups in the preparation of their class reunions over the years. If you need alumni contact information, a list of local venue options, activity ideas, invitations, technology help, decorations, Maria is available to help your group. Go to the [EGRSF Alumni](#) page for more information or contact Maria at mallen@egrps.org. And if 2023 is a reunion year for your class, now is a good time to start the planning process.



Save the Date for Homecoming in October

Mark your calendars for Homecoming Friday, October 7 and Saturday, October 8. Come to the Homecoming parade and football game Friday and stay to revisit your old stomping grounds on Saturday. We'll have an Alumni Tent at the football game Friday night. Stop by to meet up with your fellow Pioneers!



Jimmy's Friendship Fund Will Help Families in Need Gain Access to Opportunities

The East Grand Rapids Schools Foundation has always been about opportunity. Whether funding program support and classroom enhancements for our students or professional development for our teachers and staff, we've always strived to provide educational opportunities in our district that are second to none.

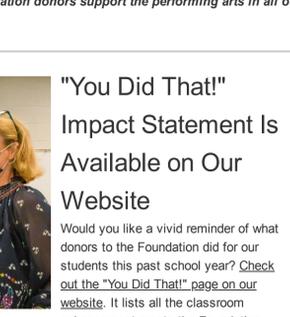
Now, the Foundation is making sure everyone in our district has access to every opportunity our district has to offer.

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 needs, or personal needs.

Jimmy's Friendship Fund will be administered by the Foundation through the Jimmy Gerken Fund, which has been supporting athletics and cocurricular activities for almost 15 years. School principals will allocate the funds based on needs they see. Families may also contact school principals or the Foundation as needs arise. Our goal is to make these funds available to the people who need them, without any stigma attached to asking for them.

We're calling the fund Jimmy's Friendship Fund because Jimmy Gerken was a friend to all and friendship was near and dear to his heart. Jimmy was an East resident and then staff member with special needs. One of his most famous quotes is his response to someone who was bullying him about his special needs: "That's okay," Jimmy said. "It'll still be your friend."

Foundation Connection: You can donate to Jimmy's Friendship Fund quickly and easily by visiting our ["Donate Now"](#) page and selecting ["Jimmy's Friendship Fund."](#) Thank you!



Girls Track and Field, Girls Lacrosse Win State Championships, Record 147th State Title for East

- Baseball:** Reached district final before falling to Grand Rapids Christian
- Boys Lacrosse:** Reached state semifinal game before losing to Detroit Country Day
- Boys Water Polo:** Had huge upset win over Holt/East Lansing to take second at districts, fell to Jenison in regional
- Crew:** Finished 6th in combined points at state championships
- Girls Lacrosse:** Won state championship, defeating Detroit Country Day 12-11 in overtime
- Girls Tennis:** Team finished third in state, Meg Simon and Ella Webb won state championship at #2 doubles
- Girls Soccer:** District champions, lost to Forest Hills Central in regional
- Girls Water Polo:** Scored upset win over East Kentwood to take second at districts, lost to Jenison in regional
- Softball:** Lost to Forest Hills Eastern in districts
- Track and Field:** Girls won Division 2 state championship, the first in program history, with more than double the points of the team that finished in second place

Foundation Connection: This past Wednesday, June 8, the Gerken Open golf outing raised funds for Jimmy's Friendship Fund, a new effort to make sure everyone in the district has access to everything the district has to offer (see article above).



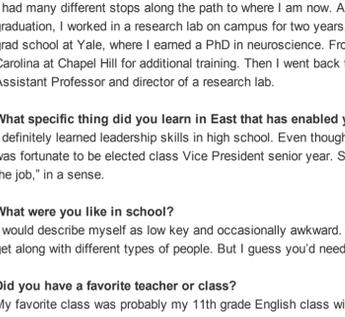
Foundation Grant Funds Professional Musicians to Join Students in Spring Musical Orchestra

EGRPS music teacher Bree Mitchell is clever. Just look at how she describes a Foundation grant that funded professional musicians to play with students at the high school musical: "Hiring professional musicians for our Pit Orchestra for the high school's production of *Once Upon a Mattress* was instrumental to the musical's success." Get it? Instrumental. Very clever.

"The musicals EGR performs are created with classically trained musicians in mind, so having the assistance of professional musicians ups the caliber of our shows and also allows for professional coaching for students from music professionals other than their band, orchestra and choir teacher," Mitchell continues. "The experience of live theater is unlike any other in terms of the work it takes to prepare a show, all the people who are involved in making a show successful and the feelings that students have in performing a show and sharing a whole new world with an audience."

"Bringing characters to life with music is challenging, but magical and we are very thankful that the East Grand Rapids Schools Foundation supported the Drama department in making our show the very best!"

Foundation Connection: Thanks to our donors, the Foundation contributed \$9,000 in funding for the spring musical. It's just one example of how Foundation donors support the performing arts in all our schools.



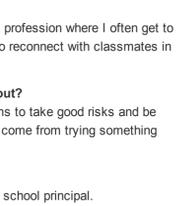
"You Did That!" Impact Statement Is Available on Our Website

Would you like a vivid reminder of what donors to the Foundation did for our students this past school year? Check out the ["You Did That!"](#) page on our website. It lists all the classroom enhancement grants the Foundation

funded this school year, along with photos and testimonials from teachers and students for most of them. If you have donated to the Foundation, you made it all possible. Thank you for your support!

Foundation Connection: In the 2021-22 school year, thanks to our donors, the Foundation funded more than 30 classroom enhancement grants totaling approximately \$240,000.

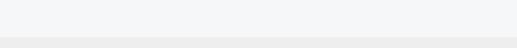
Do You Know Someone Who Has Changed the World? Even Our Little Corner of It?



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.

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



Virtual Cup of

Coffee with Nii Addy '96

Nii Addy '96 is the Albert E. Kent Associate Professor of Psychiatry and an Associate Professor of Cellular and Molecular Physiology at the Yale School of Medicine. Dr. Addy directs a federally funded research program investigating the neurobiological bases of substance use disorders, depression and anxiety. He is the inaugural Director of Scientist Diversity and Inclusion at the Yale School of Medicine, focusing on supporting the faculty development of basic scientists from underrepresented groups at the School of Medicine. In addition to his campus work, Dr. Addy hosts the "Addy Hour" podcast, discussing topics at the intersection of neuroscience, mental health, faith, culture and social justice. His research and community work have been featured by National Public Radio (NPR), Newsday, the National Football League Players Association (NFLPA), and many other media outlets.

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

Definitely Jersey Junction, even though I didn't go there often in high school.

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

I had many different stops along the path to where I am now. After East, I went to college at Duke. After graduation, I worked in a research lab on campus for two years, before going to grad school. I then went to grad school at Yale, where I earned a PhD in neuroscience. From there, I went to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill for additional training. Then I went back to Yale in 2010, where I started out as an Assistant Professor and director of a research lab.

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

I definitely learned leadership skills in high school. Even though I was hesitant to take on leadership roles, I was fortunate to be elected class Vice President senior year. So I learned leadership skills while I was "on the job," in a sense.

What were you like in school?

I would describe myself as low key and occasionally awkward. I thought of myself as someone who tried to get along with different types of people. But I guess you'd need to ask others if I was successful at that!

Did you have a favorite teacher or class?

My favorite class was probably my 11th grade English class with Mrs. Mitchell. English wasn't necessarily my favorite subject, but Mrs. Mitchell was a dynamic and engaged teacher. She had a clear passion for teaching and she excelled in her craft. She could definitely be intense in the classroom, and she pushed us academically. But she also kept things fun and lighthearted, and she tried to motivate us.

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?

One of my most memorable moments actually happened at the end of high school. It was our whole-class, all-night party that we had immediately after our graduation ceremony. That was one of the few times I remember, during high school, where everybody seemed to let their guard down and simply enjoyed hanging out together. It was great to see everyone celebrating, reminiscing, and just having a good time.

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

This is a bit sobering, but I wish I had the foresight to realize that some of my classmates wouldn't be around a few years after graduation, and a few more wouldn't be around only 25 years after graduation. I probably would have savored our time together more.

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

I still stay in touch with a handful of folks from East. I'm blessed to be in a profession where I often get to travel the country for conferences and talks. So sometimes I'm also able to reconnect with classmates in the cities I visit.

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

This will probably sound cliché, but I would honestly encourage young alums to take good risks and be willing to try something new. Sometimes, the greatest successes seem to come from trying something completely new that's outside one's comfort zone.

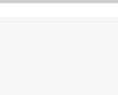
Who else would you like us to have a virtual cup of coffee with?

Adam Brush—one of my good friends, an EGR classmate, and current high school principal.

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

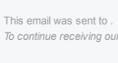
High school nickname! Actually, I probably wouldn't mind.

Foundation Connection: To read more "Virtual Cup of Coffee" alumni interviews, visit the ["Alumni Profiles"](#) page on our website, egrfsf.org.



East Grand Rapids Schools Foundation, 2915 Hall, egrfsf.org

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