



Foundations

East Grand Rapids Schools Foundation & Alumni Association **SPRING 2023**



**Introducing Mental Health
& Wellness Fund**

Grant Highlights

**The Doctor Is In: A Virtual Cup
of Coffee with David Barrett '60**



East Grand Rapids Schools Foundation

VIRTUAL CUP OF COFFEE

Dr. David Barrett '60

In Dr. David Barrett's illustrious career, he has served as a United States Air Force Flight Surgeon during the Vietnam War, Mayo Clinic Chair of Urology, President and CEO of the Lahey Clinic, and as Clinical Professor of Surgery in the Dartmouth-Hitchcock Department of Urology.

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

My plan was to attend Albion College and pursue a business administration degree and ultimately join my father's manufacturing firm. As I was finishing my sophomore year at Albion my father sold the company. Wow! What do I do now? Fortunately, I had done well in Kinesiology and became very interested in human anatomy. This was the beginning of a lifelong participation in the practice of medicine. Not only did I have a keen aptitude in mastering the medical sciences, it satisfied a personal need of wanting to serve mankind.

Medical School was next at Wayne State and following a surgical internship at Detroit Receiving Hospital I was accepted as a surgical resident at the Mayo Clinic. I was able to finish one year of a five year commitment when the needs of the USAF intervened due to the Vietnam war.

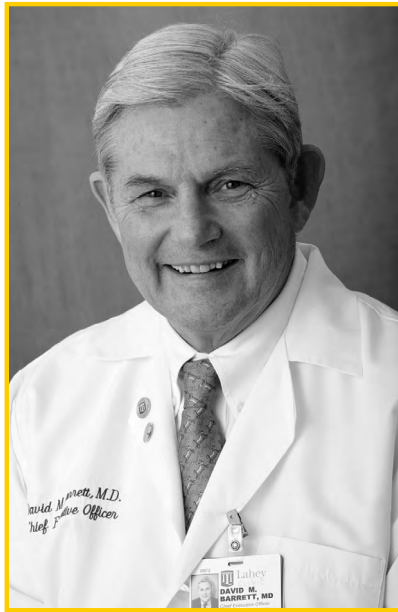
I was selected to attend the USAF School of Aerospace Medicine, where the Apollo astronauts were training. I graduated in the summer of 1970 as a USAF Flight Surgeon and Captain. I had hopes of being in the space program, but the Air Force had other ideas. After a short stint with the Strategic Bomber command I was sent to Cam Rahn Bay, Vietnam. This is a story in its own right but I returned from Vietnam in 1972 as a moved and much wiser man.

I returned to Mayo to pursue my residency and finished my specialty training in Urology. I joined the staff at Mayo, becoming the Anson L. Clark Professor and Chair of Urology in 1988. I eventually chose to leave Mayo in 1998 to become the President and CEO of the Lahey Clinic in Boston. I was their leader until 2011.

After that, I served as a Clinical Professor of Surgery in the Dartmouth-Hitchcock Department of Urology, finally leaving the active practice of medicine in 2015. Not operating and seeing patients has been difficult, but I directed my interest to several board of trustee and director positions, which I continue to pursue.

Did you have a favorite teacher or class?

Reed Waterman and Frank Kuta had no specific class but taught many life lessons. Mr. Wisz in Physics and Mr. Froyland in English both had confidence that I was a "diamond in the rough"



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

Without question Rose's caramel corn.

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

I was a very insecure child upon entering Mrs. Golden's kindergarten class in 1947. I was also a marginal student until college. Most of the important lessons learned were on the athletic field from coaches and fellow players. I was fortunate to be blessed with above average athletic ability which helped give me stature with my friends, older students and adults. This definitely helped overcome my innate insecurity. Later in life I was easily able to overcome the fear of competition which I overcame on the track and fields at East. This was the beginning of developing true courage which would come later.

The students and staff at East had character. They were polite, kind and highly moral. Disagreements and misbehavior were handled appropriately. Seeing this type of culture and tradition helped me mold and define my own vision of myself, which has served me well.

What were you like in school?

I'd like to think I was well dressed and reserved but I think most would say that I was a jock, not too smart and basically a nice person. I had trouble doing the best I could in academics. My mind was focused on athletics and non-academic school activities. My best friend was Dan Miller. He was not only a good student but good in athletics. I think we developed simultaneously and were often seen together and probably defined similarly.

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?

1956: In 9th grade being called to the varsity football team to be the starting defensive end.
1960: Winning and setting the regional record in the 880 yard dash.

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

Learn from others. Watch human behavior and learn from the good and discard that which does not fit your definition of right or wrong. True leaders have a good sense of what is the right thing to do.

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

Dan Miller, Bill George, Dick Biehn, George Andrews, Dave Frey, Fred Vogt, Kent Dickinson, George Maentz, John Frey.

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

Be prepared for change. CHANGE is one of the laws of life. In many ways, how you deal with change in your life will define how successful you will be. (Read "Who Moved My Cheese" by Spencer Johnson.)

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

Mr. John Frey, Frey Foundation

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

Who was responsible for putting the VW bug on the library roof on senior skip day in 1960.

Want to read more? Visit egrsf.org/coffee.





EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MESSAGE

Last year, we updated our mission statement: “The East Grand Rapids Schools Foundation enriches the experience of all students by investing in programs and educational enhancements that support the whole child.”

So, what does that mean? To me, two changes are the most important: the addition of the words “all students” and “the whole child.”

By acknowledging that we’re enriching the experience of “all students,” we’re also redefining excellence in our schools as enabling “all students” to reach their full potential. Not every student will excel in all areas, but we can—and will—help all students do their best to meet their greatest level of excellence.

Supporting “the whole child” is another touchstone of our efforts. Educating the whole child means creating an environment where students can not only succeed academically, but also socially, cognitively, emotionally, and in extracurricular activities too.

Last spring, the Foundation made a \$750,000 commitment to support student mental health over three years. In December, an East alum made the largest individual donation ever to the Foundation. The million-dollar gift will help establish a Mental Health and Wellness Fund that will support student mental health in all our schools for years and years to come (you can read more on page 7).

Also last year, we created Jimmy’s Friendship Fund, which is named for former East resident and EGRPS staff member Jimmy Gerken. It’s a way to help East students in need by providing assistance to families who are experiencing financial difficulties.

We’re also constantly funding classroom enhancement grants that support excellence in teaching and learning, while supporting all students with varying abilities and interests. Supporting Robotics, Quiz Bowl, We the People, drama, music, broadcasting, Gone Boarding, and many more initiatives gives students multiple opportunities to find their passion, their connection to school.

With you as our partner, we’re supporting the whole child, and we’re doing that for all our students. Thank you!



Amy Stuursma

AWARDS

Nominations for Excellence in Teaching | Deadline May 1, 2023

The purpose of this annual award is to recognize and encourage superior professional effort, to improve instruction and to cultivate the continuance of educational excellence in the East Grand Rapids Public Schools. The award is a monetary gift of \$1,000.

Nominations for the award may be received from students, parents, alumni, community years of experience in the district may be nominated for the award.

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ENHANCEMENT GRANTS

APPROVED FALL 2022

ELECTIVES: Broadcasting & Media Production

MIDDLE SCHOOL | Derek Dean

Broadcasting and production technology students write, perform, videotape and edit a variety of public service and news features.

FIELD TRIP: Grand Rapids Public Museum: Celebration of Souls Exhibit

ELEMENTARY | Becca Chavez Todd & Katie Vicente

Exploration of the rich history and significance of Mexican celebrations.

PERFORMING ARTS: 2022 Disney Universal Music Experience

HIGH SCHOOL | Jake Castillo, Mark Wells, Kayla Cordell, Emily Verdonk, & Bree Mitchell

Staff support for performance and workshop. (Students & chaperones paid for their own trip.)

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: Literacy Conference

MIDDLE SCHOOL | Jill Smith & Rachel Ries

2022 National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Annual Convention.

VISUAL ARTS: Artist-in-Residence Muralist Corey VanDuinen

MIDDLE SCHOOL | Holly Lampen

Students use pottery elements & traditional painting techniques to create a bas relief mural in cafeteria.

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: Jump Rope Readers for Kindergarteners

ELEMENTARY | Kerry McKee

Units of Study Decodable Book Series increases the connection and transfer of phonics instruction.

PERFORMING ARTS: Fall Play Choreography Instruction

HIGH SCHOOL | Marcus Chapman

Forty hours of professional stage combat instruction for the production of *Robin Hood*.

MUSIC: Ukuleles and Storage Rack

ELEMENTARY | Samantha Pugia

Students will learn about chord charts and a new genre of music. Each elementary building now has a classroom set.

MENTAL HEALTH: Classroom Sensory Tools

MIDDLE SCHOOL | Amy Marlow on behalf of all Middle School teachers

Resources supporting lessons about mindfulness, managing emotions, relaxation, and self-care that reduce anxiety and increase academic achievement.

PERFORMING ARTS: Digital Piano

MIDDLE SCHOOL | Katherine Larson

Accompaniment capability provides opportunity for formative assessment during choir rehearsal.

LANGUAGE ARTS: 2023 March Book Madness

ELEMENTARY | Sarah Webber, Carlye Allen, Caroline Breault-Cannon, & Stephanie Thelen

Month-long program intended to get students excited about reading.

PERFORMING ARTS: Eclectic String Music Ensemble (ESME) Clinic & Performance

MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOLS | Bree Mitchell

Learning creative and technical skills required to play popular styles of music enhances musicianship.

ROBOTICS: Team Competition Fees

HIGH SCHOOL | Ronen Dujovny & Tim Knappe

The EGR Robotics Team plans to compete in the Districts as well as the State Competition.

LANGUAGE ARTS: We are all Unique!

ELEMENTARY | Caroline Breault-Cannon, Carlye Allen, & Stephanie Thelen

Classroom picture books so students can see themselves in the literature.





PROGRAM SUPPORT | Learning Commons Coordinator | ELEMENTARY

As Sarah Webber reads to a group of children, the students' rapt attention demonstrates the simple pleasure of a book being read aloud. The children appreciate the book, of course, but if they knew everything Webber is doing for our schools, they might appreciate her even more.

Sarah Webber began volunteering in the Breton Downs Learning Commons when her daughter started kindergarten. A transplant from Florida with a background as a wildlife biologist, Webber was a dedicated volunteer until the pandemic closed the Learning Commons and prevented anyone from volunteering in our schools.

When libraries reopened and students and volunteers returned, they discovered something alarming: Hundreds of books were missing. "It was really, really bad," Webber says.

Webber and the other Learning Commons got to work. Together, they took inventory of what was left, identified books and categories they wanted to add to the collections, and figured out ways for the district to obtain them.

Last winter, Webber and two other volunteers, Kelli Mulderink and Dana Parent, applied for an "Elementary Learning Commons Inventory Revitalization" grant from the Foundation. The Foundation, thanks to our donors, approved thousands of dollars in new book purchases. "That made a huge difference," says Webber.

Then last spring, the district asked the Foundation to fund a new paid Elementary Learning Commons Coordinator position. It's been more than a decade since elementary school librarian jobs were eliminated due to budget cuts, but the Foundation was able to fund this new position. Webber applied—and got the job.

"I'm just so glad that we live in a community that supports our schools and is willing to invest in books for our students," Webber said recently, while surrounded with shelves filled with overflowing with books. "The Foundation has been amazing through all of this."

In January, Webber organized a Children's Used Book Sale. Volunteers sorted through the Learning Commons collection to find outdated or no-longer-in-demand books—or titles that just had too many copies—and sold them at a two-day sale in the Community Center. The sale raised hundreds of dollars for the district to buy new books, and the remaining books that were in good condition were donated.

Webber will use the proceeds to buy new books for the elementary schools. First, though, she and school staff are organizing March Book Madness, another Foundation-funded project that has students voting for their favorite books in an NCAA tournament-style bracket format. "It's amazing how excited these kids get for March Book Madness," Webber says. "I love my job," Webber says with a smile, before adding, "I mean, I did it for free so...I just love it."



PIONEERING SUPPORT



INTERVIEW WITH FOUNDATION PRESIDENT | BETH SKAGGS

What does the Foundation do for our students?

Our mission is to invest in programs and educational enhancements that support the whole child. To me, that means we try to provide our students with everything they need to reach their full potential.

Why did you decide to become involved with the Foundation?

I knew I wanted to do what I could to give back to our schools for everything they provided for my own children. And I knew the Foundation had been instrumental to so much of that. So when I was offered the opportunity to join the Foundation board, I was thrilled to get involved.

How important do you think the Foundation is to our community?

It's vital to our community. Our schools are such a huge part of what makes East Grand Rapids such an amazing place. The Foundation supports our schools, which helps not only our students and their families but everyone. Our schools are why people want to live here.

Your kids went through East schools.

What was the Foundation able to provide for them?

My daughters went to school during the EGRNOW! days when the Foundation was frantically raising money every year to save programs from budget cuts. Saving the World Language program was something my children benefited from, along with all the other kids in the district.

What has been the most challenging situation you've experienced during your time on the board?

I think one of the biggest challenges turned into one of our biggest accomplishments. The Foundation's response to the pandemic—from immediately supporting the purchase of robotic air sanitizers to organizing One East, with the massive community yard sales and returning thousands of cans—that was a remarkable effort from the Foundation and everyone in our community.

Why should people support the Foundation?

That's an easy one. It is absolutely a given that either their child or a child they care about has benefited from what the Foundation provides. We talk a lot about how the Foundation will provide more than six million dollars to support East students from kindergarten through graduation. That's for today's students, and for generations to come.

Which of the accomplishments of the Foundation during your time on the board make you the most proud?

I think this is also related to that challenge and our response. The Foundation's commitment to supporting our students' mental health has been extraordinary. Students everywhere are struggling, but we have taken a leadership role in trying to provide resources to help teachers and kids identify problems and address them before they become worse. I'm very proud to be connected to that, and also to everything we're doing to support what I'll call non-traditional academic programming. There's more work to be done, but I think we've really made strides in redefining excellence so every student has an opportunity to find their own success.

What would you say to someone who's considering getting involved with the Foundation?

It's a great organization, and it's also just a great group of smart, enthusiastic, dedicated people. We rely on volunteers, committee members for events like Hurray!, the Gerken Open, and our awards dinner. If you're willing to help, we'll find a worthwhile, enjoyable way for you to be involved with making our schools even better!

What's on your wishlist?

What would you like to see the Foundation do in the future?

I've never had a wish list of my own, but I'm always curious to see all the requests for classroom grants that our teachers bring to us. It's always inspiring to see their ideas.

What is one thing you would like others in the community to know about the Foundation?

How much the Foundation is involved behind the scenes, the incredible variety of what we do. Funding elementary paraeducators, the middle school innovation lab, classroom beehives and Tower Gardens, thousands of books, helping fund plays and concerts, the Gone Boarding class at the high school. Those are just a few that come to mind. We work with PTOs and booster groups, district administration, Gaslight Village, the city, and other organizations, all to support our students and our schools. We connect all of that to help our entire community.



PROGRAM SUPPORT | **Mental Health and Wellness Fund** | DISTRICT-WIDE

A committed alum has made the largest individual gift ever to the East Grand Rapids Schools Foundation. The donation will support student mental health in our schools.

The million-dollar gift has established a Mental Health and Wellness Fund that the Foundation will administer for the district. In December, two more donors pledged \$50,000 each in matching gifts to encourage community support for the fund. Numerous donors have already contributed to take advantage of those matching gifts.

Plans call for the Mental Health and Wellness Fund to grow to a multi-million dollar endowed fund. Once that goal is reached, investment income from the endowment will fund the Wellness Coordinator position—as well as ongoing training for teachers and staff and additional resources for students—in perpetuity, without ever reducing the principal.

“I’m grateful to all our supporters for recognizing that our students are our greatest resource,” says Foundation Executive Director Amy Stuursma. “It’s up to us to provide students with tools and training to navigate their ever-changing, unpredictable world. This is a sustainable solution that will allow for greater student self-awareness, provide strategies for navigating stress and anxiety, and help students form healthy, strong relationships.”

Student mental health is a nationwide problem. More than 75 percent of schools surveyed last year said teachers have reported concerns about student depression, anxiety and trauma. A federal study showed 45 percent of high school students nationwide said they were so persistently sad or hopeless they were unable to engage in regular activities. Almost one in five said they had seriously considered suicide.

Last June, the Foundation, at the request of East Grand Rapids Public Schools, made a \$750,000 multi-year commitment to support student mental health at all schools in the district. Since then, EGRPS has hired a wellness coordinator and an additional social worker. Training and additional programming is already happening, giving kids and teachers tools and resources to recognize a problem before it becomes a crisis.

Lauren Ahlers, who had been working as a counselor at East Grand Rapids Middle School, is the new Wellness Coordinator. “This role will provide additional resources to help students cope with difficulties that arise throughout their academic careers, and into their young adult lives,” Ahlers says.

“The mission of East Grand Rapids Public Schools has been and continues to be supporting the whole child. Moving forward, we want to continue bolstering our social emotional learning curriculum, and providing tools for students to use to manage anxiety, depression, and stress. Providing psychoeducational knowledge, helping students develop healthy relationships and coping skills will empower students to manage mental health challenges when and if they arise.”

Ahlers says those efforts are already underway. “With this generous gift, we have already begun providing professional development opportunities for staff and will continue this work moving forward. The wellness coordinator position will allow us to break down barriers to accessing mental health supports, and increase involvement within our community.”

“We are grateful for the support of our community and the Schools Foundation,” Ahlers says.



FALL 2022

GRANT HIGHLIGHTS



PERFORMING ARTS: Digital Piano | MIDDLE SCHOOL

If you know middle school choir teacher Kathy Larson at all, you know how enthusiastic she is. It comes as no surprise, then, to learn that she was positively thrilled by the Foundation grant that funded a new digital piano for the choir program.

“EGRSF’s gift of a digital piano is a Game Changer for the middle school choir classroom!” she says. “We so rarely are able to have our amazing and wonderful accompanist, Mr. Todd Wilke, in our presence; choir students then rely on a mere handful of opportunities to work with my conducting and piano accompaniment in any of our repertoire.

“In the choral world, this interplay between singers, pianist and conductor is **key** for reaching the highest heights of a vocal performance! In walks the DIGITAL PIANO: its ability to record accompaniment of any portion of our repertoire will allow me to conduct the choirs in what would most closely mimic a live performance. Voila! The choirs are better prepared for the actual performance; the audience receives an even greater gift of the choirs’ proficiencies. “The entire 6th-8th grade choral program joins me in thanking you for your generosity!”

LANGUAGE ARTS: Spanish Field Trip | ELEMENTARY | EGRSF Board Member Amanda Rogalski

This past fall the fifth grade classes at all three elementaries visited the Grand Rapids Public Museum’s exhibition “A Celebration of Souls: Day of the Dead in Southern Mexico” with the help of a grant from the Foundation. It was the first ever Spanish field trip for elementary students.

Spanish teachers Rebecca Chavez and Katie Vicente first heard of the exhibition the summer before and talked about possibly taking all 600+ students that they teach on a field trip. While that seemed daunting they did decide to write a grant for the 5th graders as it tied directly to their lessons about Dia de los Muertos.

The museum website explained that each November 1 and 2, families in villages across Mexico gather to welcome home the visiting spirits of departed relatives on the Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead). The photographs in the exhibition show villagers immersed in all aspects of the celebration—preparing centuries-old recipes for the departed to enjoy, scattering trails of marigolds to guide the dead home, and offering chocolate and pan de muerto (“bread of the dead”) at community gatherings. This annual celebration is commemorated in photographs of candlelit home altars known as ofrendas, public processions, and rich offerings of food—including rows of solid chocolate skulls.

“The field trip was an excellent opportunity to see real artifacts and photographs of the things they have learned all throughout Spanish in elementary school and we thought it would be a fun and engaging way for students to learn more about this special holiday,” shared Chavez.

Students shared some of their favorite memories of the field trip:

“I liked the part of the exhibit with the panels that showed the food because it was really interesting that they made chocolate skulls. It made me want to try one,” said Roman Orsini.

“My favorite part was the marigold pictures. I learned that they use them to light the path during the night during Dia de los Muertos. I love flowers and marigolds are my favorite,” shared Heidi Winstead.



Quiz Bowl Team | HIGH SCHOOL | by EGRSF Student Board Member George Murphy '23

Quiz Bowl is a big commitment. Students involved in the program practice together for at least two hours a week, and they learn an astonishing array of interesting facts about history, literature, the sciences, the arts, and pop culture. Without funding from the Schools Foundation, the team wouldn’t be able to compete consistently against some of the best teams in the country. This year’s Quiz Bowl captain, Hania Timek '23, says that, “the money that we receive from the Foundation helps pay our tournament entrance fees, and we make the most of it.” Getting to compete, she continues, is “a grand time.”

“The Quiz Bowl team is grateful for the continuing support of the Foundation,” Timek says, “and is excited about the opportunity to keep doing our best.”

PERFORMING ARTS: Music Trip to Orlando | HIGH SCHOOL | by Maialen Murva '24

Last fall, a grant from the Foundation helped the band, orchestra, and choir travel to Walt Disney World and Universal Studios in Orlando for performances and workshops. Band student Maialen Murva put together this daily diary of the trip for us.

Saturday: We arrived at school at around 11 pm Friday night and then at Midway Airport around 4am. By the time we got to Animal Kingdom everyone was exhausted but being at the park rejuvenated us. The safari was one of the best experiences of my life but the Pandora ride was so amazing and my group have not stopped talking about it since.

Sunday: This was performance day, and the band had to wake up early which we were not happy about but the hotel breakfast was to die for. When we arrived at Disney Springs it was raining pretty heavily and we performed in the pouring rain but had a surprisingly large audience. Navigating Hollywood Studios with wet shoes was kind of a nightmare but was still a lot of fun especially with the star wars area.

Monday: We got to spend all of Monday in Universal Studios which was so much fun. The rain was gone and it was great to explore the parks. There were a lot more rides than at Disney which also kept wait times relatively low which was really nice. It also had Harry Potter world which was, of course, magical.

Tuesday: The band and orchestra started the morning with the workshop. We made the background track and voices for a clip of the Lorax which was really cool. We spent some time going to places in the park we weren't able to on Monday and managed to catch a fountain light show on the way out of the park that night.

Wednesday: We got to sleep in! Final buffet breakfast was hard, the week had gone by fast and everyone was a little bummed but ready to get home. We spent the morning at Disney Springs so people could go shopping or just lounge until it was time to go. We got to the airport a few hours early again which was torture but we got onto the plane with no trouble. The buses were late because of the weather so we ended up getting back around 1am.

Overall one of the coolest trips ever I would totally go again. The performances and the workshops were a lot of fun but it was also just really nice to spend some time with my friends and be able to share those experiences with each other.

Speech Pathology iPads | DISTRICT-WIDE

"Behavior is communication." That's what Amanda Werner, a speech pathologist with more than 20 years of experience in East Grand Rapids Public Schools, says when asked how students' behavior improves when their ability to express themselves improves. "Many students, especially very young or non-verbal ones, will act out when they can't express what they want to say. Instead of asking to have a turn with a toy, for example, they'll just grab it."

Werner is one of four EGRPS speech pathologists—along with Mel Krieg, Marissa Lehman, and Stefanie Erck—who requested a grant from the Foundation last fall for new iPads to use while working with students. The new iPads replace older tablets the Foundation funded more than ten years ago. "I think when we got the first ones iPads had just come out," Werner says. "We got more than ten years of use out of them, but they needed replacing. Two years ago, mine crashed just as I was compiling a big report on our students. That was an awful feeling."

The new iPads are better able to keep up with Werner's busy schedule with students. She has about 50 students she's working with regularly. Altogether, the department usually has about 5% of the student population in its caseload, with students moving in and out of that population all the time. "The capability of the new iPads is just amazing," Werner says. "Together with the app the PTO funded for us, we can track all our schedules, keep statistics for each student, record them so they can hear their progress themselves. It's really very motivating for students. We can play games that make it fun for them too."

Werner says the iPads are an important part of her tool kit. "We're sensitive about screen time," she says. "And some kids would rather play a back and forth game with us. Other kids might want more of a sensory experience with things they can touch. But a lot of kids really respond to what we do with them on the tablets. They look forward to it." Allowing kids to hear their progress for themselves might be the most powerful use of the iPads. "These students go through this amazing change and they don't really notice it day to day," Werner says. "When you can play for them a recording of where they were, and what they've accomplished, they're so proud. They're not self-conscious anymore. Their behavior improves. It's really wonderful."

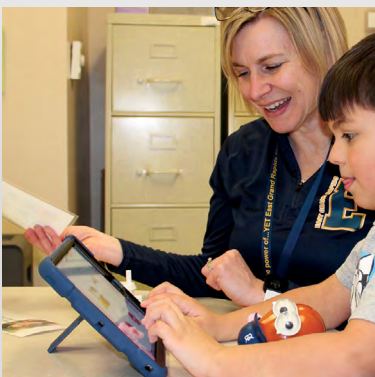
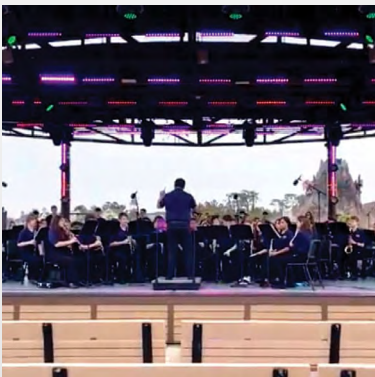






Photo by Bruce Edwards



VISUAL ARTS: Photographer Steve Jessmore

HIGH SCHOOL & MIDDLE SCHOOL | November 17, 2022

Two-time Audubon Award winning photographer Steve Jessmore was visiting East Grand Rapids Middle School's Learning Commons to speak with students. The projector was set up at the other end of the room. Chairs for students were lined up in neat little rows in front of the screen.

Nobody was sitting down.

Instead, students were gathered around the window, pointing their phone cameras out of the window to take pictures of their own of a visitor outside, who also seemed to have come to see Steve speak: a bald eagle, perched in a tree right outside the window.

And what was the award-winning bird photographer doing? Taking pictures on his phone of students taking pictures on their phones of the very same majestic bald eagle that appears in Jessmore's photo on this page. It was a once in a lifetime experience, brought to our students by donors to the Foundation.

In 2021, Friends of the EGR Library commissioned Jessmore for "The Reeds Lake Project: Birds Doing Stuff, 365 Days on the Lake." Over the course of a year, Jessmore spent more than 100 days taking tens of thousands of pictures capturing the wildlife on and around Reeds Lake. When the project was finished, he shared it with the community at the Performing Arts Center in November. The Foundation partnered with Friends of the Library to bring him to speak to students at the high school and middle school that same day.

Jessmore didn't just share his photos with students. He also shared his background and his process. A professional photojournalist for more than 30 years, Jessmore found the pandemic had brought his business to a halt in 2020. When his wife urged him to get outside and find something to do, he turned to photographing birds.

On the advice of friends, Jessmore entered four of his photos in the Audubon Photography Awards, which attracts thousands of entries from dedicated professional bird photographers. Amazingly, one of his four photos took first place. Another took second. "I remember getting cold sweats when I heard that," Jessmore says. "How in the world could I do that? How could I do that the first year I ever shot bird pictures?"

Students at the middle school were captivated by Jessmore's pictures. As he clicked from one photo to the next, "ooohs" and "aaaahs" filled the room. "The middle school event was amazing," Jessmore says. "I loved being able to see the students react to the images and ask lots of questions about my work, the birds, the lake and the process.

"My main recollection was how inquisitive they all were. It was a barrage of hands raised and questions at the end of the presentation. It was loud as the images hit the screens with a lot of pointing and screaming which I thought was nice they were engaged. It was a great group that had this wonderful opportunity to learn overlooking such a beautiful, special place. The eagle dropping in was evidence of that."

A calendar and prints from The Reeds Lake Project are available on the Friends of the EGR Library website and stevejessmore.com. You can also view a YouTube video about the project using the QR code.



FALL 2022

GRANT HIGHLIGHTS

TECHNOLOGY: Broadcast Studio | MIDDLE SCHOOL | by Beth Heinen Bell

This article first appeared on School News Network, a partnership that provides an inside look at schools throughout the Kent Intermediate School District.

With one hand on the switchboard in front of him and one eye on the computer monitors above it, eighth-grader Matt DeBoer watched intently as the cameras rolled. On the other side of the room, three of his classmates sat at a table, facing Matt and the cameras and reading from a script. He waited for one of them to finish the weather report before raising a hand to pause filming. “Hey, Meredith,” he said, “you went from, like, a little enthusiasm to, like, no enthusiasm at the end. So, like, you should probably try it again.” Matt was working as part of the production team that week for the East Grand Rapids Middle School’s eighth-grade broadcasting class.

The young broadcasters put together a short newscast that the entire school watches on Fridays. As part of the production team, Matt played a crucial role in many of the “behind the scenes” details that the casual viewer might not notice — like making sure his classmates’ delivery on-camera goes smoothly and with appropriate enthusiasm. “We’re kind of watching for any minor mistakes that might make (the broadcast) worse, so that we can ask them to maybe tweak it and make it better,” he said. “Like if they’re fiddling with their (microphone), if I have my headphones on, I will catch that. “We also get all the green-screen effects set up and things like the graphics. It’s basically us behind the camera, behind the scenes, making everything go.”

New Course, New Gear

Broadcasting class is an elective at the middle school, and one that has proven to be quite popular — so much so, that this year they’ve introduced another elective for seventh-graders that is focused on technical and video skills. This year, students also have the added benefit of using brand-new equipment, thanks to a grant from the East Grand Rapids Schools Foundation. The broadcast studio offers a switchboard that has the option of loading different camera feeds, a two-camera setup, a green screen and more. “The new system is basically a smaller version of what the high school has, but it’s like a scaled-down version of what actual live TV networks use,” said teacher Derek Dean. “So the students get to learn the software, how to load different videos, how to polish everything up — it looks nicer when it’s polished. And it’s all legit like how the network stations are set up.”

Dean’s eighth-grade broadcasters rotate roles and responsibilities throughout the trimester, to make sure that everyone gets experience with all aspects of the broadcast. Some students will be on camera and some on the production crew, while others work as field reporters to build their interviewing skills. Still others take on the roles of video or graphics editors for the show.

In addition to creating a weekly newscast, broadcasting students also have special projects to work on, including creating a podcast and making a commercial or public service announcement. These assignments give the students an opportunity to keep learning the equipment as they work in other media or for different audiences. “It’s fun to watch the progression as they build their skills,” Dean said. “The first time they make and edit a video, it takes forever, and then by the end of the trimester, they can finish it in a day. Or the first time they use the TriCaster (switchboard), they’re confused out of their mind, but then after just a few days, they’re doing things with no problem. It’s so cool to see that development as they get more proficient.”

Scaling the Learning Curve

As Matt was directing the weathercast in the studio, classmates Genevieve Kam, Natalie Chappus and Amelia McIntyre were hunched over a computer in the main classroom, reviewing video footage they’d taken earlier. The three were working as field reporters for that week’s show, and they were trying to edit a segment about stereotypes in the style of Dude Perfect, a comedy group popular on YouTube. “Maybe we shouldn’t have her come in at the start,” Genevieve said as they rewound a segment of video to watch again. “We can cut it around here —” she gestured at the screen — “or maybe when she starts speaking? What do you think?” A spirited discussion ensued.

For Natalie, who had never edited video before, the class came with a big learning curve. But she enjoyed coming up with ideas for the special segments, writing the scripts and filming the interviews. As a whole, she said, the class was getting much better at the broadcasting process. “Since every week we switch jobs, I like that you can have a new perspective on what you have to do,” she said. “Last year it was really cool to see all the kids doing the show, and I thought it looked like fun and I wanted to take the class. I really like being in videos and learning all the things that you have to learn.”





ROBOTICS: Team Competition Fees | HIGH SCHOOL | by Tim Knape '23

EGRHS student Tim Knape has been doing such an amazing job of updating us on the EGR Robotics team that we're sharing exactly what he wrote in response to the simple question, "How did the grant from the Foundation help you?" (If Tim decides not to make a fortune in robotics, he may have a bright, low-paying future in communications.)

November 15, 2022

"This grant will help our team a lot this year. EGR Robotics was started in 2015 by high school students so we could participate in the global competition made by FIRST Robotics. FIRST is a non-profit organization that aims to educate kids in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, all while having fun and teaching the values of working on a team and being professional. Every year FIRST launches a new game with certain objectives and opportunities to score points using a custom-built robot. EGR Robotics competes with teams across Michigan and connects with teams from all over the world. We're proud to have won the Chairman's Award 3 years in a row, which is the most prestigious award that recognizes a team who embodies the mission of FIRST and sets an example for all other teams. Our team consists of students from every grade level with different backgrounds and experiences, helping bring a diverse set of ideas and talents to our team. This year we plan to build a robot and compete at two district competitions (with the opportunity to advance to the state tournament and world championship). To register and compete at these two competitions costs a total of \$6000. The Foundation grant will allow us to pay for these entry fees, which will take some pressure off our budgeting and allow us to invest more in building our robot and other expenses. East Grand Rapids Robotics is shaping the lives of students locally, and globally, and we're beyond thankful the Foundation could help provide further opportunity!

January 23, 2023

"We've officially entered our 'build season.' We learned what this year's competition and game will be at our kickoff event on the 7th and now are in full swing. During the build season, we brainstorm, design, prototype, and crack down on building the best possible robot to compete. Our code team works during this time educating team members and researching new technologies to program the completed robot in late February.

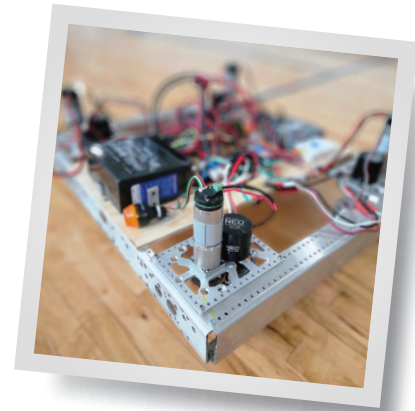
"Our district competitions will be this spring. We'll be competing in St. Joe, and at Grand Valley State University. At either of those competitions, we'll have the opportunity to qualify for the Michigan State Championship, which will be at Saginaw Valley State University. Michigan's State Championship is the largest FIRST Robotics competition outside of the World Championship, due to Michigan's booming auto industry and expanding tech companies.

"Thanks to the Foundation's grant, we were able to cover competition entry fees, which will allow us to direct more of our funds toward purchasing tools and parts for the robot. There's no question that this grant took lots of stress off our team, as outside of the robot, the competition fees are the largest expense we face every year.

January 25, 2023

"We've begun inviting 8th-grade students to practices to help them learn and build interest for their upcoming high school careers. It benefits us as a team because it ensures we'll have experienced freshmen for future years to remain sustainable. It also benefits the 8th graders since middle school robotics lost traction during covid, so it gives them a way to participate in the amazing opportunities available from our program."

Thanks, Tim! You can follow the team's progress on Instagram @egrrobotics5980





PIONEER LEGACY

WHY WE GIVE | KATE & PATRICK '87 MCCARTHY

Kate and Patrick McCarthy had been attending the Foundation's annual fundraiser, Hurrah!, for years before they had a child in school. They'd also supported the Now & Forever campaign from 2019-2021. It wasn't until their daughter entered kindergarten this year at Lakeside, though, that they realized just how important the Foundation is to our schools.

"We've been amazed by how many opportunities the Foundation provides for our daughter," Kate says. "The elementary learning commons coordinator, designated library time for classes, schools embracing reading as the foundation for learning, lots of new books in the Learning Commons and in the classroom. The weekly book bags that come home, so many of them have that East Grand Rapids Schools Foundation sticker in them. The books are appropriate for her reading level and there are plenty of choices."

Kate was a co-coach of her daughter's First Lego League team too. "I'm so glad girls are getting that STEM experience," she says. "Kids love the Chromebooks in the classroom for math and reading exercises, and the Bridges pilot math program at Lakeside." The visit by children's author Matthew Cordell, a partnership between EGRSF and the Friends of the EGR Library, was a highlight, too. "Our daughter loved the visit and the opportunity to sketch along with him," Kate says. "His book, Cornbread and Poppy, is a new favorite."

Their daughter's experience has made Kate and Patrick even more enthusiastic fans of the Foundation. "We've been blown away by the resources available to her," Kate says. "We're thrilled and happy to support the Foundation."

WHY WE GIVE | CHRIS & MICHELLE RABIDEAU

Few people know as much about the importance of the Foundation to our schools as Michelle Rabideau does. A parent of two East alumni, Michelle served on the Foundation's Board of Directors. She also served on the East Grand Rapids Public Schools Board of Trustees including as Treasurer and President. And for part of that time, she served as the school board's representative on the Foundation board.

"I know first hand, both as a parent and a community servant, that our schools would not be as outstanding as they are without the incredible support of the Foundation and its donors," Rabideau says. "I know that both my sons, Jacob and Josh, benefited from Foundation supported programming while they were at East. I witnessed teachers coming to the Foundation for classroom grants that changed students' lives. And I literally experienced the Foundation saving programs in our district. East just wouldn't be East without the Foundation."

Rabideau is also an expert on philanthropy. She is recognized as a national leader in philanthropy raising more than \$100 million for various organizations over 25 years and currently serves as president of the Saint Mary's Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Trinity Health Grand Rapids.

All of that experience combined helped convince Michelle and her husband, Chris, to include the Foundation in their estate plans. "East schools are the heart of East Grand Rapids, and we love our community," Michelle says. "We've supported the Foundation for years and my involvement with our schools convinced me that our support made a difference. By including the Foundation in our planned giving, we know that we'll continue to make a difference for our schools and our community for generations to come. We love it here and we'd like to be a part of East Grand Rapids forever."



There are multiple ways you can include the Foundation in your estate planning.

To learn more, please call or email EGRSF Executive Director Amy Stuursma at (616) 235-3535 or astuursm@egrps.org.





**Thank you to the members of
the Louise Neesley Legacy Society:**

- RAY '71 & KRISTIN ABRAHAM
- MURPHY AINSWORTH^ '10
- BOB^ & VAL BERNECKER
- REN BRANDER '55
- BARBARA CONE
- DAVID^ '57 & NANCY COOK
- PETER CORONEOS^ '96
- LINDA KEHM^
- DAVE '57 & LINDA^ MEHNEY
- LOUISE HITT NEESLEY^
- MARJORIE NEUBIG^
- CHRIS & MICHELLE RABIDEAU
- CHARLES H. ROSE^ '40
- JOHN D. ROSE^ '53
- THE PETER^ & JOAN SECCHIA FAMILY
- RICH & ABBY SOROTA
- JANET L. STAUSS^
- KAREN STEFFENSEN STURGES^ '58
- PETER '89 & AMY '89 STUURSM
- WILLIAM^ & SHIRLEY^ VANDENBERG
- WILLIAM^ '56 & PATRICIA WARING

^Deceased

PLANNED GIVING | A Present to the Future

Will you make the world a better place? Will you make a difference? How will you be remembered? By including the East Grand Rapids Schools Foundation in your estate planning, you can be an enduring part of a brighter future for our community. Making a commitment to our schools today will give our students a better tomorrow.

The Louise Neesley Legacy Society, named for an East resident who understood the powerful, positive difference the Foundation can make in our public schools, recognizes people who have pledged to include the Foundation in their estate plans.

Including the Foundation in your will is just one way to make a planned gift. There are many more, including charitable trusts and donor advised funds, both of which may have significant tax advantages. Planned gifts can come in the form of money, property, an individual investment, or a percentage of an estate.

To add your name to the Louise Neesley Legacy Society, please call EGRSF Executive Director Amy Stuursma at (616)235-3535 or email her at astuursm@egrps.org. She'd love to talk to you about how you can make your last gift a gift that lasts forever.



CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS | Thank You!

There are lots of ways you can support the Foundation. Donating, attending Foundation events, sharing our mission with others, and volunteering your time. Dozens of volunteers help us every year. Thank you, volunteers—we couldn't do it without you!

Mary Rosendall and Carolyn Skaff at the EGRSF office at Woodcliff Building.

CALLING ALL PIONEERS

ALUMNI NEWS | REUNIONS | 2023 Homecoming: September 29-30

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. Join the classes listed who are already planning their reunion celebration in 2023. And if 2024 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.

1962	10/13/23	Watermark Country Club
1963	9/23/23	Celebration Cinema North
1968	9/23/23	GR Yacht Club
1973	10/6-7/23	Kent Country Club
1983	9/29-30/23	GR Yacht Club
1993	9/30/23	TBD
1998	7/15/23	Long Road Distillery
2002	10/21/23	TBD
2018	11/22/23	TBD



Class of 1972



Class of 1971



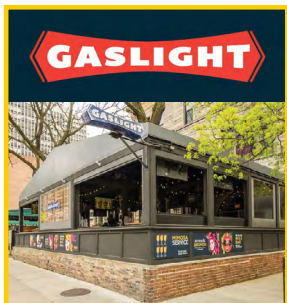
UPCOMING EVENTS

HURRAH! Adventure Awaits | Saturday, April 22, 2023
Wege Plaza | EGR Community Center behind the library

Food, fun, friends, flannel, fleece, fundraiser for the kids. HURRAH! Adventure Awaits will bring our entire community together to celebrate our schools and explore all the possibilities the Foundation provides for our students. Wege Plaza overlooking Reeds Lake will transform into an outdoor oasis, providing hundreds of happy campers with a spectacular night of food, fun, music from Troll for Trout, and more to benefit our schools. It will be a great night for a great cause. We want you to be a part of it and you'll want to be there.



Scan to Register for Hurrah!



Chicago Alumni Happy Hour | Thursday, May 11, 2023
Gaslight Bar | 2450 North Clark Street, Chicago, IL

All East Alumni in Chicagoland are invited to a get together at Gaslight Bar, in Chicago's Lincoln Park neighborhood. Catch up with your fellow Pioneers. See old friends and make new ones. Appetizers and your first drink are on us! RSVP by May 1st.



Scan to Register for Happy Hour!



Gerken Open | Wednesday, June 7, 2023 | **Thousand Oaks Golf Club**

The Gerken Open is one of the most popular events on the EGRSF calendar and has sold out the past three years. 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, egrsf.org.

- Scramble format | shotgun start
 - Nine holes at 9am or 18 holes at 1pm
 - Breakfast or lunch
 - Happy hour on the patio with BBQ, beverages, live music
- Questions? Contact Maria Allen at mallen@egrsf.org or (616)235-3535.



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

Community Service & Distinguished Alumni Awards | Fall 2023

Every other year, the Foundation honors someone who has made a difference in their community as well as an East alum who has led a life of extraordinary distinction. In 2021, our honorees were Bruce Towne for Community Service and Commander Bill Krissoff '66. This year's honorees will be announced soon!



PIONEER PRIDE

CLASS OF 1957 | 65th Reunion

September 23 & 24, 2022

Nearly two dozen graduates from the Class of 1957 gathered to reconnect and reminisce at the Sheraton Hotel.



Class of 1957



Class of 2017



Class of 2001



Class of 2001

REUNION GIFTS

CLASS OF 1957	\$902
CLASS OF 1967	\$1,651
CLASS OF 1971	\$4,050
CLASS OF 1972	\$10,050
CLASS OF 1977	\$1,385
CLASS OF 1982	\$1,510
CLASS OF 2001	\$645
CLASS OF 2022	\$591

(Graduation Gift)



Class of 1970



Class of 1992



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 to egrfsf@egrps.org.

1944
Mary Alice (O’Gorman) Staples

1945
Patricia (Hannagan) Edison

1946
Sheryl (Barman) Clement
Tom Fox

1947
Margaret (Hibbard) Steketee

1948
Carl Kutsche
David Miller

1949
Wallace James Chamberlain
John “Jerry” Mulvihill

1950
John Barton

1951
Albert Bliss
Mary Lou (Payette) Campbell
Thomas Payette
T. Gregory Schmidt

1952
Clifford Herold

1953
Walter List
John Rose

1954
Richard Ryan

1955
Philip Chamberlain
George Damoose
Thomas Ghysels
Marilyn (Albert) Titcher

1956
James Ragsdale

1957
Mary Ann (Terryberry) Byam
Thomas Halstead
Donna (Caswell) Howland
Philip Idema
Linda Loveland
Judy (Robertson) Matthews
Janet (Miller) McGinty
Evelyn (Vollmer) Miller
Don Vidro

1958
Peter Steketee

1959
Margaret (Kelm) Lenz
Paul Schneider
Judith (Sorenson) Sturm

1960
John Aves

1961
John Gould

1962
Suzanne (Chaille) Payne

1963
Kenneth Clark
David DeFouw
James Rogers

1964
Karin (Goosman) Gillett
Michael Henry

1966
Susanne Smith Elrod

1967
Diane (Bensted) Lawson
Widdicombe Schmidt
Doug Taylor

1968
Jill (Gilchrist) Murphy Walsh
Robert Smith
Diane Zillmer

1969
John Johnston

1970
Christine (McIntyre) Cope
Peggy (Muste) Gurney

1971
Bill Hagerup

1973
Alice Wharton-Bickley

1977
Brenton Hire
Steven Hook

1979
Barbara Bruce
Mark Connor
Diane (Zwingeberg) Woodard

1986
David Wiener

1998
Christopher Uber

2015
Champlin McCahill

EGRPS Former Staff
James Ogilvie
George Woons

EGRSF Board Member & Coach
Joseph O’Brien



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