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East Grand Rapids Schools Foundation





VIRTUAL CUP OF COFFEE

Charlie Spies '91

Charlie Spies, now a Member at Dickinson Wright PLLC in Washington DC, provides political law counsel to national political organizations and campaigns, having served as election law counsel to the Republican National Committee, then CFO and



Counsel for Mitt Romney's 2008 campaign for president. He co-founded Restore Our Future, the largest conservative super PAC in history, and then Right to Rise USA (supporting Jeb Bush) in the 2016 election cycle. He frequently speaks on political and election law issues on Fox News, CNN, Fox Business Network and other national television and radio. He's a graduate of the University of Michigan and Georgetown University Law Center, and has been married to his wife Lisa for almost sixteen years.

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

Let's go with Yesterdog with a Rose's caramel corn chaser. But I love all three of the traditions and with the proliferation of chains, it's great that each is local and has endured.

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

My law practice in Washington DC is representing politicians, as well as corporations and individuals that engage in the political process. Growing up in EGR gave me unique political opportunities, starting with my going as a 4 year old (I don't remember, but have a picture to prove it) to see President Ford vote in his hometown precinct, and later, while in high school volunteering on Congressman Paul Henry's campaign (with his daughter as one of my debate partners). I also volunteered on Ronna Romney's US Senate campaign when I was in college and have fond memories of her campaigning in Gaslight Village. At a more fundamental level regarding "path in life," however, I believe that the reason so many East grads go on to lead interesting and successful careers is because the community as a whole values education and has high expectations.

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

This one is easy. I spent most of my high school time focused on debating, and while I had some great partners (Stokes Young and Maggie Bergin) that helped lead the team to then record success, the driving force of the team was Coach Becky Knack. I'm confident that Mrs. Knack's willingness to invest time and resources in the team was

that what she taught with debate was the building blocks for both life and career success. The most important skill for debating is learning and understanding both sides of issues so you can effectively advocate on either side. Now, almost 30 years after my high school, we live in a hyper-polarized world where people choose their news sources to affirm existing beliefs and rarely hear, much less learn, other sides of issues. It would be nice to have Mrs. Knack force Sean Hannity and Rachel Maddow to argue the opposite positions also!

What were you like in school?

Probably exactly what you would expect for someone who excelled on the debate team..

Did you have a favorite teacher or class?

It's tempting just to crib off my classmate Katie Michell's answers to this question [Mr. Frazier and Mr. Letherby in middle school, Mrs. Jones, Mr. Froysland, and Mrs. Mitchell in high school] because we had many of the same classes and I appreciate the middle and high school teachers that she listed. I would also add Mr. Sink, who went above and beyond helping me with math and again Mrs. Knack with debate.

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?

Because I was so focused on debate it would have to have been the Harvard tournament. We were the first EGR team ever invited to the exclusive Harvard Round Robin...and bombed there. I still recall one of the other coaches snarking about how EGR shouldn't have been invited, so it was a great sense of vindication when we then recovered underappreciated at the time, but I now know and made the finals of the full Harvard tournament.

For many families it's a sacrifice to pay higher taxes

to live in East, and parents are willing to do that because of the quality of the schools and community.

What do you know now that you wish you'd

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

I still have family in town and two nieces are now at the high school, which has made me start following high school sports again.

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

You have the benefit of families and a community that expects excellence and is able to provide the tools to succeed. Everyone will have challenges and high expectations can seem like a burden at the time, and personal and professional success will be defined in your own way, but at some point you will look back and know how blessed you were to go to EGR.

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

From my class: Adam Herz, Jeff MacKeigan and Bruce Conely (to talk about his military service).

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

My win/loss record playing tennis...or whether I could swim faster than my sisters!

Want to read more? Visit egrsf.org/coffee

EXCECUTIVE DIRECTOR MESSAGE

What's Next?

Try as we might, I don't think anyone in education knows the answer to that question.

Ten years ago, as our school district was struggling to save vital programs from being cut because of budget shortfalls, I don't know if anyone would have predicted the astonishing, groundbreaking enhancements we've seen in our schools over the last few years.

Not only were we able to preserve elementary Physical Education, Art, and Music, early literacy education, and the K-12 World Language Program, but we have also seeded new offerings including the Middle School Innovation Lab, the Gone Boarding class at the high school, our championship Robotics teams, the Science Olympiad program, and Lego League teams in our elementary schools.

At the same time, we've been able to introduce "old school" enhancements such as high-interest, multi-genre classroom libraries in all our schools and the March Madness Book Project in our elementary schools. Together, these programs are putting tens of thousands of books into the hands of our students, helping our children become lifelong readers and learners

Truly, none of this would have been possible without the generosity of our community, and our shared commitment to the power of public education. All of those programs and enhancements were preserved, seeded, or supported thanks to donations to the East Grand Rapids Schools Foundation.

Think about that. Even while East Grand Rapids was forced to make cuts, we were funding innovative new programs. While other districts were closing schools, we were opening up new opportunities for our children. All thanks to you.

So where do we go from here? Again, no one knows for sure. There will be tough times and challenges ahead. There always are. But thanks to foresight, careful planning, and the Foundation's Now&Forever campaign, with your help our schools will be ready to meet those challenges. Together, we're investing in our students, because the future belongs to Pioneers.

Chuy C. Stuuoma East Grand Rapids Schools Foundation

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The East Grand Rapids Schools Foundation's Donor Roll Call recognizes those individuals, businesses and organizations that have supported the Foundation from **January 1, 2019 through December 31, 2019**. This list also includes all supporters who made a pledge to our Now&Forever campaign through December 31, 2019. The Foundation's Board of Directors gratefully acknowledges all who have generously supported our mission through their gifts. We also thank individuals who have secured matching gifts from their employers, as well as the employers who have supported their employees' generosity through matching gifts. This list reflects all outright gifts and does not include participants in Foundation-sponsored events such as Sip & Support or golf outings.

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LAST FALL, after more than two years of planning, organizing, and hard work, the final donations came in to push the cash portion of the Now&Forever campaign across the finish line. Together, our community met its goal and raised more than \$6.4 million through Now&Forever. This bold, innovative effort creates a sustainable source of funding for our schools. More than 900 families, including more than 130 EGRPS staff members, contributed.

"Nothing on the scale of Now&Forever has ever been attempted by a public school district in Michigan," says Foundation Executive Director, Amy Stuursma. "Raising more than six million dollars in cash pledges was an ambitious goal, but we are very fortunate to live in a city that understands the value of public education. This is a remarkable, community-wide success that will support our students and our schools now and for generations to come."

Along with \$2 million to be raised through planned giving, the funds raised will build the Foundation's endowment to \$12 million. When that number is reached, the growth and investment earnings will generate approximately \$600,000 each year to benefit our students and our schools without reducing the principal amount. That means that over the course of students' thirteen years in East schools—from kindergarten through high school graduation—the Foundation will contribute \$7.8 million to their education.

"With this campaign, our community has helped secure the future of our schools," Stuursma says. "We'll be able to continue to offer educational opportunities we can't even imagine today. This is a monumental accomplishment for East Grand Rapids and a pioneering achievement for public education."

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GRANT HIGHLIGHT

8th Graders Attend Hamilton

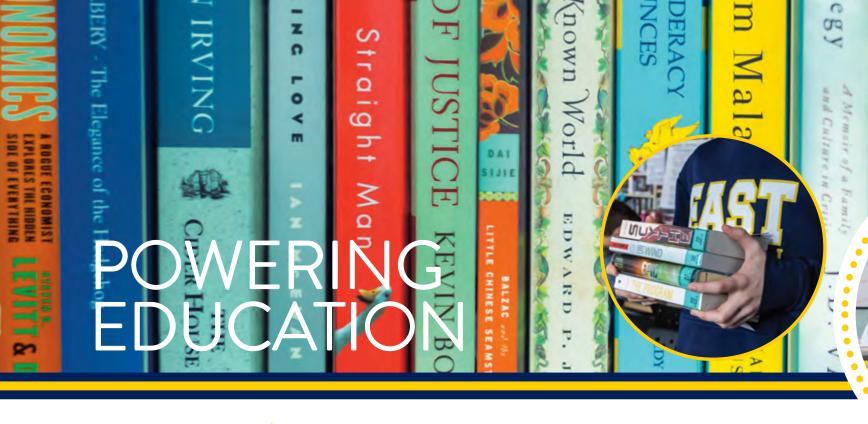
Pete Miller, EGRMS social studies teacher, has been dreaming of sharing "Hamilton" with his 8th grade students for years. Together, Miller and the Foundation worked out a plan for families to share the cost of tickets when the show came to Grand Rapids. A grant of \$9,558, funded by donors to the Foundation, made it possible. "It ties directly with a huge chunk of our curriculum," Miller said. "Our job is to take something that might feel a little bit dry and make it relevant."

Miller said, "Everyone seemed to be blown away by the show. Even some students who wouldn't consider a musical to be their thing still walked away with an awe that somebody created that from scratch."

Student Marley Shelton said, "I thought it was an amazing opportunity for all the 8th graders because we were learning about this time in history, so to see it come to life was amazing.

Eighth grader Riley Padgett thought the show was "Really exciting. It helped that we'd just had a unit about this period in social studies; I don't know if I would have understood most of it if we hadn't."

Miller provided another unique opportunity for the 8th graders. Mikey Winslow (EGRHS '04), a Hamilton cast member, came to the middle school the morning after the students went to the show to speak to the entire grade in the Learning Commons about his experience in the cast, his journey from East to Broadway, and his dance comeback after a total hip replacement in 2018. Winslow also reminded students that he had once been a student in the very same learning commons. "I was shy and middle school is hard," he said. And then he encouraged them to pursue their goals step by step, seize opportunities to dance in their own lives, do their best, and be themselves.



2019 DONOR ROLL CALL | EGRSF Annual Fund Supporters

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GRANT HIGHLIGHT

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CLASSROOM LIBRARIES

Columbia University Teachers College

"Mv experience at Teachers College was both affirming and inspiring. Their approach to teaching and learning is data-driven and allows for teacher and student choice, which is powerful. I already have implemented several strategies and practices into my teaching that have increased engagement in reading and writing. I can't wait to build upon this foundation so that all students may benefit from my learning at Teachers College." -Sara Edleman, EGRHS Teacher

"Teachers College provides the best professional development I have had in my 22 years of teaching. It not only provides practice and modeling for how we work with the students by having us go through the sessions as a student would, but it provides the current and relevant research behind why it is so effective."

— Jill Smith. EGRMS Teacher

"I left Teachers College feeling energized and inspired. The sessions at the Book Clubs for Middle School and High School Institute were engaging, informative, and useful. I know my students will benefit from what I've learned." - Erika lannuzzi, EGRMS Teacher





: ALUMNI NEWS Reunions

There were more than a dozen reunions in 2019, a record-setting year for the East Grand Rapids Alumni Association. The gatherings ranged from the class of 1949's 70th reunion in July all the way up to the class of 2014's 5th reunion over Thanksgiving weekend.

The number of reunions held last year is evidence that the Alumni Association is making great strides in connecting East alums no matter where they live or how many years have passed since they graduated. Already, there are eleven reunions planned for 2020, with more being scheduled every month.

2020 REUNIONS

 (9/11-12) **1975** (TBD) (TBD) **2000** (8/1) **1949** (7/25) (9/17-18) **1970** (9/25-26) **1980** (9/25-26) **1995** (7/11) **2010** (TBD)

All that is in addition to the alumni content on our website, which includes Class News and the popular "Virtual Cup of Coffee" alumni profiles.

This spring, Alumni Relations Coordinator Maria Allen will once again hold an Alumni Happy Hour in Florida. The second annual event will be Wednesday, April 8 from 5:30-7:30pm at the North Palm Beach Country Club. More events at other locations are in the works.

Homecoming will be another chance to catch up with old friends and meet new ones. Stop by the Alumni Tent Friday, September 25 at the football game for refreshments, East swag, and more. Join us!

Finally, in November, the Community Service and Distinguished Alumni Awards Dinner will honor longtime EGRPS Custodial Supervisor—and East legend—Bruce Towne, along with CDR Bill Krissoff, MD, Medical Corps, United States Navy (Ret.), an orthopedic surgeon who honored his fallen Marine son Nate in an extraordinary way. After Nate was killed in action in Iraq, Dr. Krissoff, at age 60, decided to walk away from his thriving practice to join the United States Navy Medical Corps. He served in both Iraq and Afghanistan, caring for injured soldiers. Tickets will be available on our website (egrsf.org) later this spring. Get yours early. This event is expected to sell out quickly.

If you'd like to organize an Alumni Happy Hour in your area, email Alumni Relations Coordinator Maria Allen at mallen@egrps.org.

Want more alumni news? Visit www.egrsf.org/alumni

Are you getting the Pioneer Post quarterly alumni newsletter in your email? Send a message to egrsf@egrps.org to be added to the mailing list!













1949 Robert Campbell 1950

Barbara (Friend) Van Ess Clifford Mitts, III

R. Parke Collins 1952

Karen (Hagstrom) Dopke

Nancy (Lawyer) Barrows

John Wardrop James Freeman

L. Peck Green 1957 Jean (Whyte) Wilson

1958 Carla (Hudson) Miller

1959

Ross Stephens 1960

Thomas McAllister 1961 Bruce Meyer, Sr. 1963

James McInerney

We extend our deepest condolences to the families and friends of the following alumni and former EGRPS staff who died since our last publication. They will be greatly missed.

ALUMNI NEWS In Remembrance

Mary Gwen Warnshuis Jack Barrows Judith (Wyer) Ekkens Gracia Blanchard Linda Sutton Andrew Dennen

Shelly (Ayars) Mickam

William McCormack

Stephen Chamberlain

Randall Phillips Eric 'Ric' Gadbois

Mark Kay Thomas Ditmar 1984

Darcy (French) Hoppman

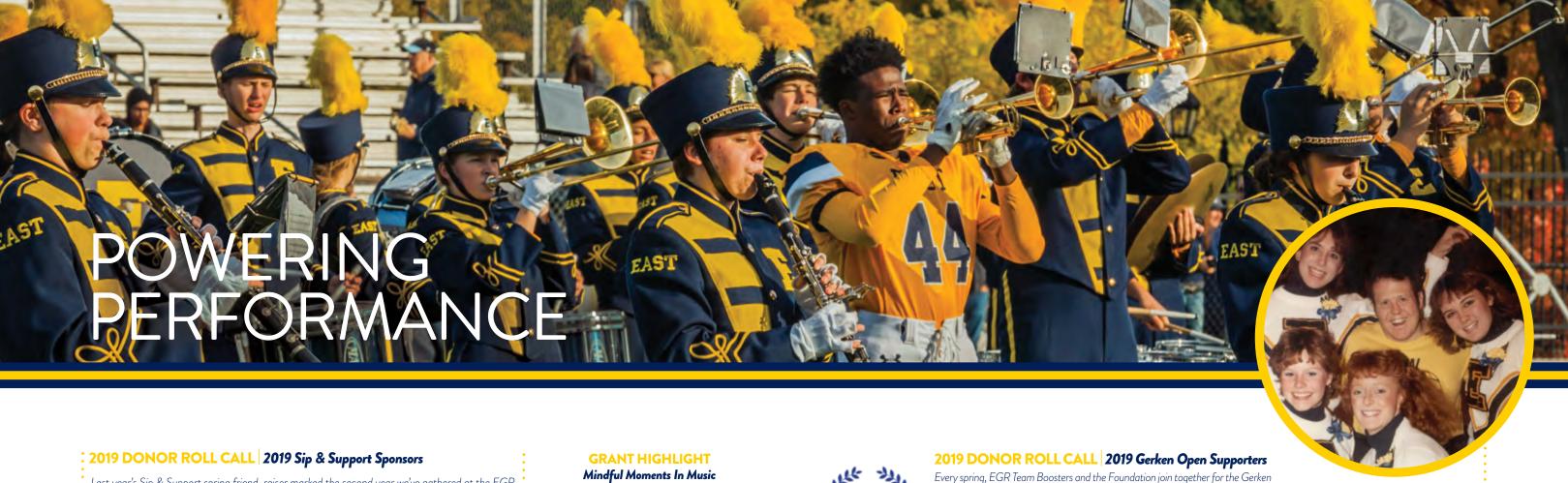
Greg Williamson 2004

Robert Wisniewski

Former EGRPS Staff Matt Fouch Dale Lancaster

Frank Letherby Jeane Swart Helen Wade

We apologize for any errors or omissions. Please help us stay informed by calling us at (616) 235-3535 or emailing to egrsf@egrps.org.



Last year's Sip & Support spring friend-raiser marked the second year we've gathered at the EGR Community Center to celebrate our schools. After ten years of Hurrah! parties, we created Sip & Support in 2018 as a partnership between our schools, our city, Gaslight businesses and our community as a whole. Our schools are an enormous part of what makes East Grand Rapids such a wonderful place to live. Hurrah!, Sip & Support, and now Recharge! give all of us an opportunity to catch up with old friends and make new ones while supporting our schools' tradition of excellence.

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Mindful Moments In Music

Many afternoons at the high school, an enthusiastic group of special education students can be found marching, singing, smiling, and tapping their drumsticks to the beat at Cardio Drumming, a unique after -school activity funded by a grant from the East Grand Rapids Schools Foundation.

The grant supports both the high-energy, after-school Cardio Drumming Club and the more mellow, in-class Mindful Moments music programming for MOCI (Moderate Cognitive Impairment) students. Both weekly programs are led by musician John Nowak, EGR '11, and both harness the power of music to enhance social-emotional learning, fine motor control, spatial awareness, and focus. "During mindful moments in music, any worries about other school work, or interactions with other students, tend to disappear," Nowak says. "Those are replaced by this activity that's positive and fun."





GERKEN 🕇 OPEN

Open at Thousand Oaks Golf Club. This year, just like the Masters, we're moving it to the fall. The Gerken Open supports the Boosters and the Jimmy Gerken Fund, which was established to remember Jimmy and ensure that athletics and co-curriculars—the activities Jimmy loved most—remain an integral part of our students' education. The Jimmy Gerken Fund also pays for student activities during Kabookie Week, keeping Jimmy's memory alive while encouraging students to continue to experience personal excellence, just as Jimmy would have wanted.

















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The 2020 Gerken Open will be

Monday, October 5, 2020.

Register online to play or be

a sponsor of the event at egrsf.org.

Thank you to all our 2019 sponsors!

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GRANT HIGHLIGHT | Gone Boarding

A little over a year ago, East Grand Rapids High School art teacher Terry Szpieg wrote a grant request for more than \$21,000 over three years from the East Grand Rapids Schools Foundation. Szpieg wanted to start a class at the high school called Gone Boarding, in which students would design and build their own skateboards, surfboards and snowboards.

The Foundation Board took the leap and approved the grant, but nobody knew if enough kids would be interested in it to make it worthwhile. So when students were given the opportunity to sign up for Gone Boarding last spring, and 157 students said they wanted to take the class, Szpieg knew he had a hit on his hands.

Twenty seniors were selected to take the inaugural Gone Boarding class. Szpieg is thrilled to see how it's taking shape. "This class is so much fun," he says. "It's new. It's different. It's exciting!"

Gone Boarding enables students to learn real-world STEAM concepts including physics, drafting, and aerodynamics while designing and building their own boards. "This class can have a far-reaching impact by getting kids involved," Szpieg says.

On any given day, the class is a hub of activity, with teams and individuals at different stages of their projects. "The kids are really enjoying the class and they're putting a lot into it," he says. "I'm just so glad we have the support of the schools and our community to make this possible. And it's only going to grow from here. The grant is for first semester this year, next year, and the year after that. Long term, this is going to make a huge difference in students' lives."

2019 DONOR ROLL CALL Appreciation Star Award Sponsors

Gifts to the Foundation were made to honor stars in our school community. Below is the list of gifts made during 2019 recognizing a special teacher, staff member or school employee. Thank you to the many contributors and to the many outstanding staff members who make East Grand Rapids Public Schools a great place to learn!

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Every donation to support education is an investment in the future.

Funding school programs gives students of today and tomorrow every opportunity to succeed. A donation made through planned giving takes that investment in the future one step further. Planned giving to the East Grand Rapids Schools Foundation is an investment in education for generations to come.

When individuals name the Foundation in their estate plans, they become part of the Louise Neesley Legacy Society.

"As a member of the East Grand Rapids community, Louise recognized the importance of education and understood the value of our schools and the impact the Foundation can have on our public schools. By making the Foundation part of her estate plan, Louise demonstrated her understanding of how important our schools are to our community."

-Amy Stuursma Foundation Executive Director



Thank you to the members of the Louise Neesley Legacy Society

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If you have any questions about the Louise Neesley Legacy Society, or any aspect of planned giving, please contact us. We'd be happy to talk to you about making a lasting investment in our community and our children's future.

*deceased

2019 DONOR ROLL CALL

Class Reunion Gifts

Reunion gifts are a great way for East alumni to give back to the schools and community that gave them their start. Different classes plan their gifts in different ways. We can help figure out the best way for your class to organize its gift. Every gift is appreciated, and you can decide the best way to do it for your group. Thank you for supporting the schools that helped make you who you are!

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