



**East Grand Rapids**  
Schools Foundation

## Alumni

The Pioneer Post

# THE PIONEER POST

East Grand Rapids Alumni Newsletter

Autumn 2019

**Thanks to Alumni,  
Now&Forever  
Campaign Reaches  
Important  
Milestone**



On October 1, the Foundation announced an important milestone: After more than two years of planning, organizing, and hard work,

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.

Nearly 900 families contributed, including 235 alumni families--more than 25% of the total number of donors.

“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 have a community and alumni who understand the value of public education. It's wonderful that we have so many alumni who want to preserve the East schools' tradition of excellence 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.

Already, the Foundation funds programs including elementary para-educators, reading support at the Middle School, and management of the Performing Arts Center, along with dozens of enhancement grants for elementary classroom libraries, the Middle School Innovation Lab, the Gone Boarding class at the high school, and much more. Thanks to Now&Forever, our schools will be better prepared to meet whatever challenges the future holds.

“With this campaign, our alumni and our community have 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 achievement for East Grand Rapids.”

***Foundation Connection: Thanks to the generous donors who pledged to the campaign, in the thirteen years students spend in East schools from kindergarten to graduation, the Foundation will contribute more than \$4,000,000 to their education.***



## Fall Sports Roundup: Girls Cross Country Wins East's 136th State Championship, Anna Petr and Evan Bishop Take Individual Honors, Girls Swim and Dive Wins East's 137th State Championship

**Boys Cross Country:** Evan Bishop won the individual state championship. The team finished seventh.

**Boys Soccer:** Highlights included wins over Wayland, Forest Hills Eastern and Wyoming.

**Boys Tennis:** Team finished fourth in the state, behind Ann Arbor Greenhills, Cranbrook, and Detroit Country Day.

**Boys Water Polo:** From the coach: "The team had the work ethic to keep every game competitive. We had a strong season with a balanced team on offense and defense."

**Crew:** The team capped its successful season with multiple top ten finishes against East Coast schools at the Head of the Schuylkill in Philadelphia.

**Field Hockey:** Finished regular season on ten-game unbeaten streak.

**Football:** Won district championship, lost to Muskegon in regional championship.

**Girls Cross Country:** Won Division 2 team state championship. Anna Petr won individual state championship.

**Girls Golf:** Abby Bell qualified for state championships.

**Girls Swim and Dive:** Won Division 2 team state championship

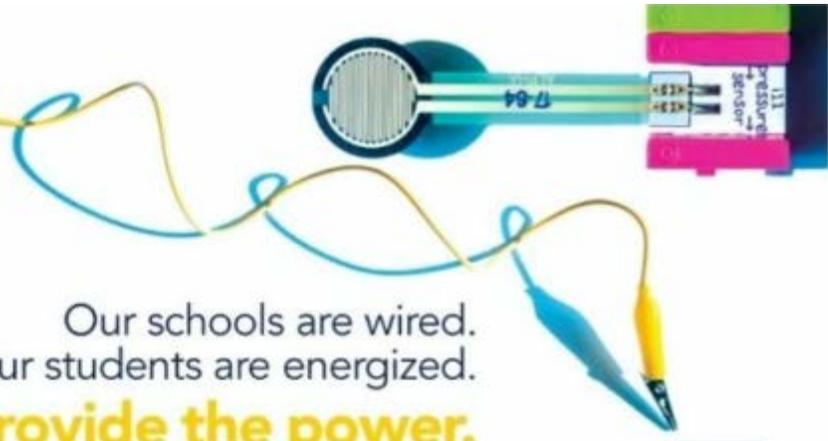
**Sailing:** Finished fifth at the Girls Great Lakes Championships that included teams from the 12-state Great Lakes region.

**Volleyball:** The team traveled to Novi for their final tournament and went 4-1 against teams from Detroit area.

***Foundation Connection: The Gerken Open, the June golf outing organized by the EGR Schools Foundation and the Team Boosters, supports the Jimmy Gerken Fund, which contributes to East Grand Rapids athletics, Kabookie Week, and co-curriculars.***



BE STOKED



Our schools are wired.  
Our students are energized.  
**You provide the power.**

East Grand Rapids Schools Foundation



East Grand Rapids Schools Foundation



There's a difference between schools that are "good enough" and schools that have a tradition of excellence.

**The difference is you.**

For more than 35 years, donors to the East Grand Rapids Schools Foundation have funded programs and enhancements that enable our schools to provide an educational experience that's unsurpassed anywhere in Michigan.

Together, we fund vital programs like **early literacy paraeducators** in our elementary schools, **reading support** in the middle school, and management of our beloved **Performing Arts Center**. We also fund leading-edge enhancements including the **Gone Boarding class** at the high school, the Middle School **Innovation Lab**, and **leveled classroom libraries** at all three elementary schools. During the 13 years students spend in East schools from kindergarten through graduation, the Foundation will provide more than **\$4 million in funding**. **But we can't do that without you.**

**You** provide the power to make our children's education extraordinary.  
**You** fuel educational opportunity for our students.  
**You** help kids succeed.

Please consider an end-of-year donation to the EGR Schools Foundation.

By giving, you help build our future,  
and the future belongs to **Pioneers.**

## You Provide the Power!

Thanks to our community's incredible support of the East Grand Rapids Schools Foundation's Now&Forever campaign, we won't have to make a desperate fundraising push this spring. No more bake sales, lemonade stands and yard signs.

As we promised during the Now&Forever campaign, we're consolidating future fundraising efforts into our year-end appeal and our events. So when you see our "You Provide the Power" message in your mailbox later this month, remember that this will build upon the success of the campaign so that we can not only preserve vital school programs, but also provide innovative new enhancements. Your annual donation helps ensure the education we offer our students is unsurpassed anywhere.

Together, we're investing in our future, and the future belongs to Pioneers.

[Donate Now!](#)

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## Gone Boarding Class Is One Example of What You're Making Possible for Our Students

East Grand Rapids Gone Boarding

[Watch later](#) [Share](#)



## Homecoming Features Two Reunions

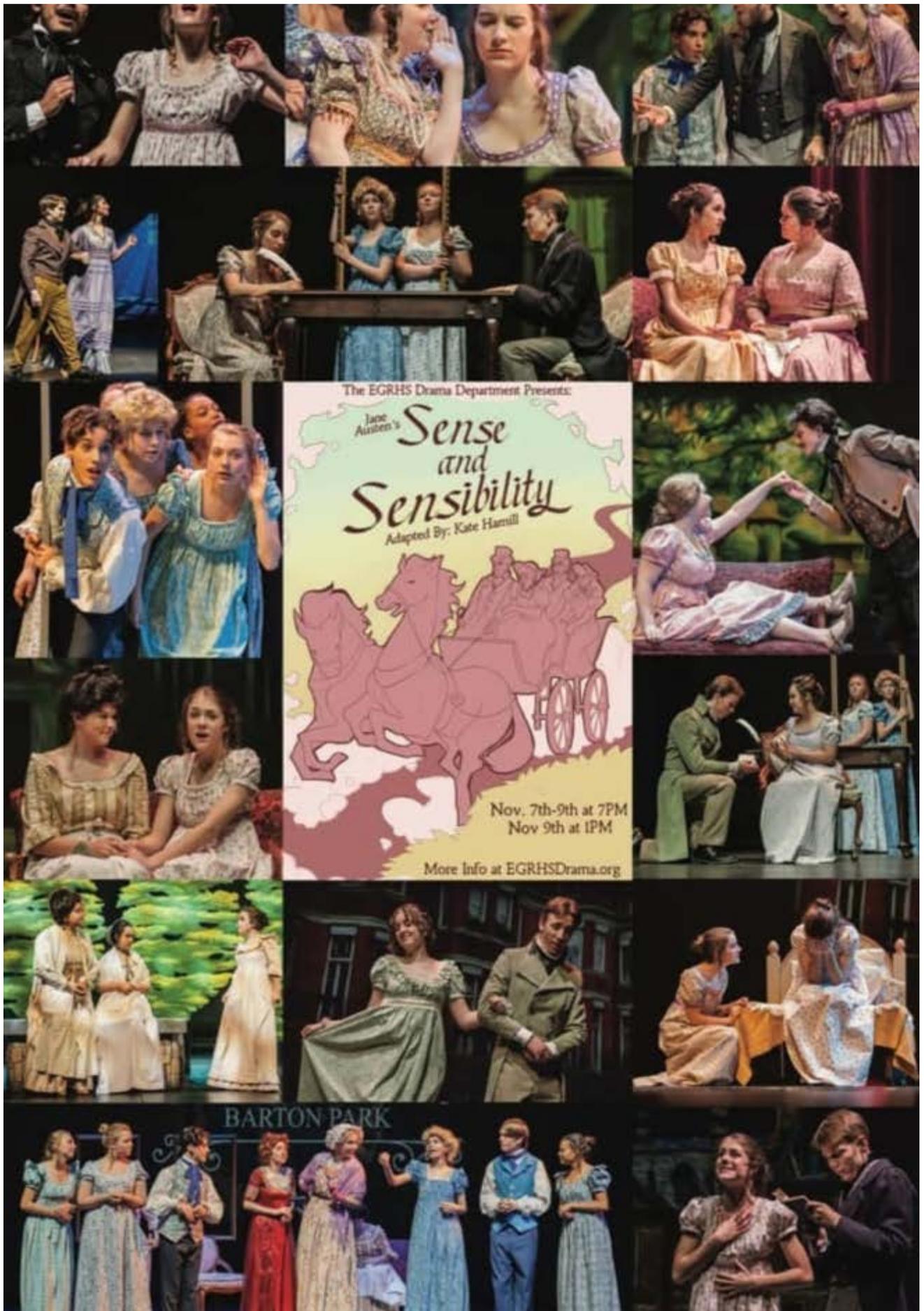
Alumni are becoming more involved in Homecoming than ever before. This past September, the Foundation and Alumni Association hosted an alumni tent at the football game Friday night, and helped organize two reunions during the weekend.

Dozens of alumni stopped by the tent during the game to grab a snack, catch up with old friends, and meet some new ones. The two reunions were for the class of 1959 celebrating their 60th reunion and the class of 1984 celebrating their 35th.

In 2020, we're planning reunions for any East classes whose graduation year ends with a five or a zero. So if you're a member of the class of 1950, 55, 60, 65, 70, 75, 80, 85, 90, 95, 2000, 05, 10, or 15, contact us. We can connect you with the people who are planning your reunion, or help you get started planning one for your class.

***Foundation Connection: Last year, more than 700 people attended class reunions organized by the Foundation and Alumni Association.***





# "Sense and Sensibility," Harmony for Humanity Concert

## Highlight Fall Shows

The East Drama and Music programs offered a full slate of shows at the Performing Arts Center this fall.

Highlights included the annual Harmony for Humanity orchestra concert and the high school fall play, "Sense and Sensibility." The Harmony for Humanity concert honors Daniel Pearl, the Wall Street Journal reporter murdered in 2002.

The fall schedule also featured 24-Hour Theater, performances by the middle school and high school bands and orchestras, and the Autumn Choral Concert.

***Foundation Connection: The EGR Schools Foundation funds vital school programs, including the management of the Performing Arts Center.***

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# ALUMNI GAME

vs. Forest Hills Central  
**Friday, November 29, 2019**  
at Patterson Ice Center

**JOIN THE FUN!**

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**35 and Over game at 2:30pm**  
**Under 35 game at 4:00 pm**

**E** **\$35/player**  
(includes locker room beverages, 2019 EGR hockey booster membership, ticket to 8pm varsity game)

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**COME PLAY** Register at **egrsf.org** by Monday, November 25  
to ensure your spot on the team.

For more information or to help with the event, contact Maria Allen at **mallen@egrps.org**.  
Sponsorship opportunities available.

**VARSITY GAME AT 8:00 PM**

## Alumni Hockey Games on the Undercard for Varsity Game vs. Forest Hills Central

The fifth annual Alumni Hockey Games are set for the Friday after Thanksgiving at Patterson Ice Arena. All East alumni hockey players, whether they played on the high school team or not, are welcome to play in one of the two games. The first game, for players 35 and over, is at 2:30pm. The second, for players under 35, is at 4pm. Participants in the alumni games who register at [egrsf.org](http://egrsf.org) receive a ticket to the varsity game against Forest Hills Central at 8pm.

***Foundation Connection: The \$35 registration fee includes the game, a reusable East solo cup, and a 2019 EGR Hockey Boosters membership. You can register on the Foundation website.***



### **A Virtual Cup of Coffee with Dave Berles '55 and Jim Berles '88**

Every so often, we get to sit down and have a virtual cup of coffee with an East alum who's doing something really exciting. Recently, we sat down with Dave and Jim. Want to join us? Pull up a chair!

Dave Berles '55 worked for Kentwood Public Schools for more than 40 years as a teacher, counselor and coach. He was named Michigan High School Tennis Coach of the Year in 1980, West Michigan Counselor of the Year in 1988, and was elected to the Michigan High School Tennis Coaches Hall of Fame in 1994. Twenty-one of his former players went on to play tennis in college. The annual tennis tournament at Bay View in northern Michigan is named in his honor. He's been married to Mary Kay (Page) Berles for more than 58 years. They have two children, Kathy (Berles) Duisterhof '84 and Jim '88. Dave and Mary Kay have four granddaughters.

Jim Berles '88 works for Alpena Community College as an instructor of engineering, math and GIS

mapping. He spends his summers in Bay View, MI where he met and married his wife, Kristin, of 21 years. They have one child, Amelia (16), and two cats. Jim's hobbies include tennis, Pickleball, coaching girls tennis at Alpena High School, serving on the board at Thunder Bay Theatre, and mapping anything! Jim periodically makes it back to EGR to visit his parents, sister and extended family.

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

Dave '55: Rose's caramel corn, since the early 50's. My father in law used to dive from the high dive at Rose's in the 1930's. My grandfather played baseball against Babe Ruth in 1920 or 1921 at Memorial Field.

Jim '88: Rose's caramel corn! I still remember my father taking me to Rose's in the early 70's and Bud Rose making me a burger and a root beer float.

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

Dave '55: I graduated in 1955. We had about 92 in our class, the last class under 100. I wanted to go to MSU but my dad could not help me. I attended Grand Rapids Junior College for two years for less than \$1,000 a year. I played tennis two years, winning the Junior College Championship. I joined the National Guard in 1955. I worked for the city of East Grand Rapids, helped a builder put in basement walls. I worked for the Kent County Road Commission, taking bumps out of the highway. I attended MSU from 1957-60. I was a member of Phi Delta Theta fraternity and played two years of tennis. I dated my wife in 11th and 12 grades and all four years of college. I worked for Kentwood Public Schools for forty years, as a sixth grade teacher, middle school counselor, guidance director, night school principal, tennis coach, and ran college visits. My wife, Mary Kay, worked more than forty years for Kentwood, East Grand Rapids, Mayflower, and Martin Luther King schools.

Jim '88: A long path! After graduating in 1988 I followed my Uncle Jim Page's (EGR 1962) career path and attended Michigan State University to study civil engineering. After graduating from Purdue

University with a Master's Degree in geotechnical engineering, I worked for two engineering firms in West Michigan and became a licensed engineer. Abruptly, I decided I wanted to teach. My wife Kristin and I moved to Hancock, Michigan so I could complete Michigan Tech's secondary education program. I was very fortunate when my wife found an opening at Alpena Community College. I was hired in 2001 as an engineering/mathematics instructor. 19 years later, a house and a 16 year-old daughter, we feel that Alpena, Michigan is truly our home. I have since gained skills in GIS (Geographic Information Systems) and love to make maps and teach map making and spatial data analysis. This past summer I spent a month mapping ancient shorelines of Minoan archeological sites on Crete.

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

Dave '55: EGR is a top five public school in the state. I had great teachers. In second grade I had my father in law's sister. Very unusual. Some great teachers were Reed Waterman, Margaret Postmus, Mel Buschman, Carl Schiller, Bob Porter, Boss Scharmack, Ma DeJonge. EGR stressed the importance of a good education, and also encouraged us to go to college. I think all 92 of us started college. We had a great class. We had only one marriage in our class.

Jim '88: Drafting and visualization skills with Mr. Benson (Middle School), Mr. Graham and Mr. Zyskowski (High school). I signed up for every drafting class I could take. When I entered the engineering profession, I felt like I had an advantage over many other engineers due to my sketching ability and visualization skills. I continue to use these skills every day.

### **What were you like in school?**

Dave '55: I was an athlete. I played three sports--football, basketball and tennis. Got to state finals in tennis in 10th and 11th grades. I was friendly. Boys were always at my house. It was the meeting place. I was involved with lots of other activities too.

Jim '88: I was an over-studious introvert that was comfortable talking with everyone but not in front of a large crowd. I played a lot of tennis, listened to alternative music, enjoyed reading "1984" in 1984,

and going to high school dances.

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

Dave '55: Margaret Postmus was a counselor for all four of my years. Reed Waterman, who taught PE and was the AD. Mel Buschman, the principal who left for MSU.

Jim '88: There were so many wonderful teachers – so difficult to pick one! I guess Mr. Bardo (Middle School Geography) ranks up there with the best of them. He made us free-hand sketch a map of the world and label countries, seas, etc... I think I still have the map somewhere in storage. Map making has become my favorite hobby, so I think I owe it all to Mr. Bardo.

### **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?**

Dave '55: It wasn't when I was in high school but my heart stopped twice in the fall of 1987. I had two Aero Med rides to University of Michigan Hospital. I returned to work in March. I was in tears that spring when my son Jim graduated, not knowing if I would be at graduation. Jim and Mary Kay saved my life twice. Jim was at tennis finals the day of his graduation. He barely made it back in time for the ceremony. They pulled in just as the graduates were lining up to go in.

Jim '88: Graduation. My father had been ill for much of my senior year. I spent a lot of time on my own while he was at UofM Hospital. Having him fully recover and attend my graduation ceremony was very special.

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

Dave '55: I wish I had more career information. I thought I was going into the insurance business with my dad. I switched to education when I went to MSU. One of the counselor's jobs at Kentwood was teaching career education. I believe students need a lot of help studying careers, talking to people in different careers, and visiting where they work.

Jim '88: Use your time wisely to gain lifelong skills! Vocal and instrumental music instruction would

have been “free” in high school! How many times I have wished as an adult that I could actually sing or read music.

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

Dave ‘55: I stay in touch with players on the tennis team. Glen Young, George Hitler, Dave Leavenworth, and Ren Brander. I hear from many at Christmas. I am looking forward to Reunion #65.

Jim ‘88: Facebook makes it easy to stay connected, but sadly I wish I had worked much harder to maintain some of my high school friendships. The class of 1988’s 30 year reunion last fall made me realize how many classmates I really miss.

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

Dave ‘55: I recommend you apply yourself in high school. Study hard, be a good citizen, be active in different activities, student government, music, debate, sports, and work part time. I worked in junior high. I had a Grand Rapids Herald route. I worked every summer. I think it all helped me in college and in my career.

Jim ‘88: Whatever career path you choose, make sure you are really passionate about your choice. It may take many years to find your true calling. Job shadow as much as possible!

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

Dave ‘55: I would love to share a cup of coffee with graduates from my class that live around the U.S. I hope everyone returns for our 65th reunion. I really look forward to class reunions.

Jim ‘88: Chris Frick, Bill Hodkowski, Andrew Pillsbury, Barb Bergstrom, Cathy Oetting, Pam Foster, and Tim Howell

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

Dave ‘55: My academic record.

Jim '88: The time that my friends and I signed up for ballroom dance classes in 8th grade because we looked at the signup sheet and the first 25 names were girls.

**Extra information from Dave:**

I have lived in EGR all my life. I've lived in four different locations. On Argentina, San Jose, Kenesaw, and Floral. Kind of unusual.

**More extra information from Dave:**

Five generations in my family at MSU. Five generations of tennis players. Four generations living in EGR. Three generations attended First United Methodist Church. Three generations living in Bay View.

For more "Virtual Cup of Coffee with..." visit the [Alumni Profiles](#) page on our web site.

***Foundation Connection: Every year, the Foundation supports reunion organizers for East classes from the last 70 years. If you'd like to organize one of your own, or to learn about other ways to connect with your classmates, you can email Alumni Relations Coordinator Maria Allen.***

## **Alumni Donors**

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# East Grand Rapids Schools Foundation

2915 Hall Street SE - Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506  
(616) 235-3535  
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