



Awards Dinner Was Inspiring and Uplifting

"This is one of the best events we've ever had."

Time and again, we heard that on September 30, as we honored former EGRPS Custodial Supervisor Bruce Towne and CDR. Bill Krissoff, MD, Medical Corps, United States Navy (Ret.) as the guests of honor at the Foundation's Community Service and Distinguished Alumni Awards Dinner.

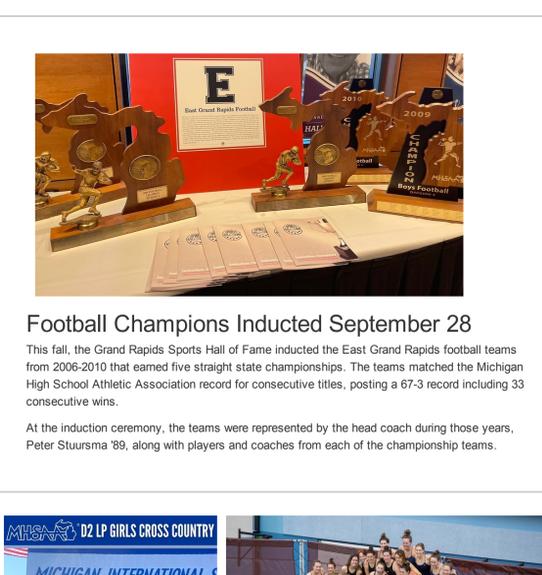
Towne is still one of the best-known, best-loved people around East Grand Rapids. He spent 23 years as an EGRPS custodian, but that barely scratches the surface of the contributions he's made to our community. His enthusiasm, friendliness, energy, and passion are infectious and inspiring. Towne was honored with the Community Service Award.

Commander Krissoff, who graduated from EGRHS in 1964, is 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 join the United States Navy Medical Corps. He served in both Iraq and Afghanistan, caring for injured soldiers. If you don't know his whole story, you can watch [this Steven Spielberg video about him](#). Commander Krissoff was presented with the Distinguished Alumni Award.

Both honorees participated in school events during the week. The day of the dinner, Commander Krissoff spoke to all high school students in the PAC, and then met with a smaller group of students for lunch and an engaging question and answer session. Towne appeared in the Homecoming parade and even helped set up the stage for the Homecoming court at halftime of the football game.

At the event, Krissoff was introduced by longtime EGRHS English teacher Bert Froyland. EGRHS principal Craig Weigel gave a heartfelt, emotional introduction to Towne. Before the night was over, there were laughs, tears, and joy at the opportunity to honor these two remarkable people. Videos of both men's remarks, along with other highlights from the night, are available on the [Awards Dinner page on our website](#).

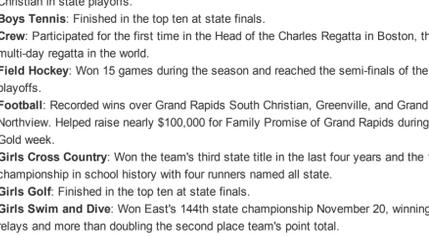
Foundation Connection: Our next Awards Dinner will be in the fall of 2023. You can nominate people for either award [on our website](#).



Save the Date for Hurrah: Together Again!

The Foundation's spring event, Hurrah: Together Again! will be Saturday, March 26 on the top of the parking structure in Gaslight Village. The last time we had an event there, in 2017, it was one of our most successful, fun parties.

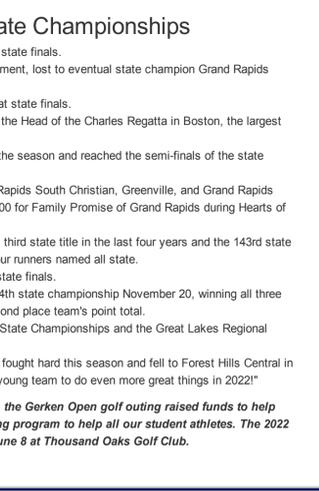
Put Hurrah: Together Again! on your calendar for March 26, 2022. You won't want to miss it!



Football Champions Inducted September 28

This fall, the Grand Rapids Sports Hall of Fame inducted the East Grand Rapids football teams from 2006-2010 that earned five straight state championships. The teams matched the Michigan High School Athletic Association record for consecutive titles, posting a 67-3 record including 33 consecutive wins.

At the induction ceremony, the teams were represented by the head coach during those years, Peter Stuursma '89, along with players and coaches from each of the championship teams.



East Extends State Record for Titles As Girls

Cross Country, Girls Swim and Dive Earn 143rd and 144th State Championships

Boys Cross Country: Finished 8th at state finals.

Boys Soccer: Won conference tournament, lost to eventual state champion Grand Rapids Christian in state playoffs.

Boys Tennis: Finished in the top ten at state finals.

Crew: Participated for the first time in the Head of the Charles Regatta in Boston, the largest multi-day regatta in the world.

Field Hockey: Won 15 games during the season and reached the semi-finals of the state playoffs.

Football: Recorded wins over Grand Rapids South Christian, Greenville, and Grand Rapids Northview. Helped raise nearly \$100,000 for Family Promise of Grand Rapids during Hearts of Gold week.

Girls Cross Country: Won the team's third state title in the last four years and the 143rd state championship in school history with four runners named all state.

Girls Golf: Finished in the top ten at state finals.

Girls Swim and Dive: Won East's 144th state championship November 20, winning all three relays and more than doubling the second place team's point total.

Sailing: Finished in the Top 12 at the State Championships and the Great Lakes Regional Qualifier.

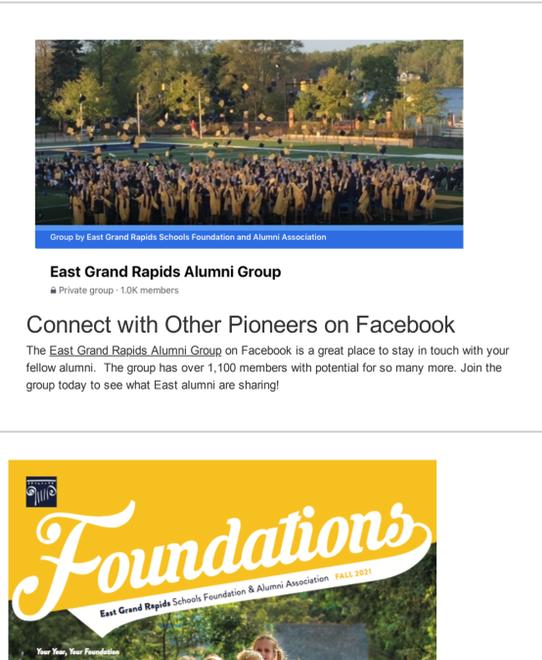
Volleyball: From a parent: "The team fought hard this season and fell to Forest Hills Central in the district semifinals. Watch for this young team to do even more great things in 2022!"

Foundation Connection: On June 9, the Gerken Open golf outing raised funds to help restore the strength and conditioning program to help all our student athletes. The 2022 Gerken Open will be Wednesday, June 8 at Thousand Oaks Golf Club.



Alumni Hockey Game Is Wednesday, November 24

If you want to play in the alumni hockey game at Patterson Ice Center Wednesday at 5:30pm, it's not too late. Join the fun and [register for the game](#) by Monday, November 22. You don't need to have played on the varsity team to participate. All alumni hockey players are welcome. [Email Maria Allen](#) with questions.



"Clue" Highlights Fall Performing Arts Schedule

The cast of the High School Fall Play, "Clue," was able to perform before a full Performing Arts Center November 11-13. The audience was treated to a night of mystery and comedy, along with the excitement of seeing live theater in person.

Other highlights of the fall season were the Autumn Choral Concert, concerts from the Middle School and High School Orchestras, and 24-Hour Theater.

Foundation Connection: Through its Performing Arts, and by sponsoring productions, the Foundation supports the arts in all our schools.

Giving Tuesday Is November 30

Alumni from the last ten graduating classes should look for a video email from Foundation Student Board Member Rahshona Saydazamova '22 on Tuesday, November 30. We know that there are many worthy organizations competing for your attention on Giving Tuesday, but there will be a quick, easy way to support our schools contained in the email. Even if you don't choose to donate this year, it's always good to hear from Rahshona.

Class Reunion News

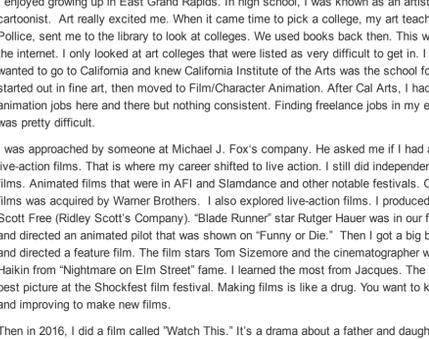


Reunions for '55, '80, '81 and 2016

Beautiful September weather was the backdrop for three EGR class reunions that came together to reconnect and reminisce. Please go to the [Class News page](#) for additional reunion information. The Class of 2016 will celebrate their 5 year reunion November 24. Go to [2016 reunion page](#) for more information.

Class Reunions Planned for 2022

It's exciting to know and share class reunion plans for 2022. The list of class reunions that we know about are on our [Alumni Events page](#). If you have class reunion information to share, please contact [Alumni Relations Coordinator, Maria Allen](#). She is also available to support reunion planning.



East Grand Rapids Alumni Group

Private group · 1.0K members

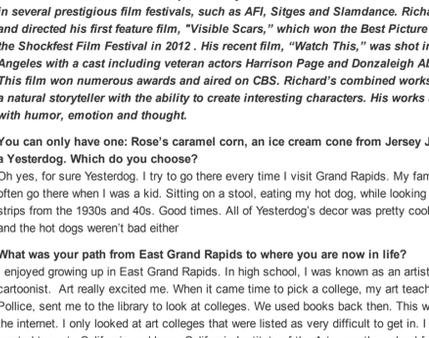
Connect with Other Pioneers on Facebook

The [East Grand Rapids Alumni Group](#) on Facebook is a great place to stay in touch with your fellow alumni. The group has over 1,100 members with potential for so many more. Join the group today to see what East alumni are sharing!



Foundation Fall Newsletter Is Available on Our Website

The newsletter has grant highlights, financial information, and an interview with NHL player Luke Glendening '07. Just click on the image above to read more.



Virtual Cup of Coffee with Artist and Filmmaker Richard Turke '88

Richard Turke '88 has used many different media to express his creativity and natural storytelling ability. After leaving East Grand Rapids, he graduated from The California Institute of the Arts. Richard started in fine arts, where his artwork displayed a talent for telling a story and humor. Transitioning to film, he created several original short subjects, which continued to reflect his depth of story and humor. Richard's work has been featured in several prestigious film festivals, such as AFI, Sitges and Slamdance. Richard wrote and directed his first feature film, "Visible Scars," which won the Best Picture Award at the Shockfest Film Festival in 2012. His recent film, "Watch This," was shot in Los Angeles with a cast including veteran actors Harrison Page and Donzaleigh Abernathy. This film won numerous awards and aired on CBS. Richard's combined works show he is a natural storyteller with the ability to create interesting characters. His works are filled with humor, emotion and thought.

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

Oh yes, for sure Yesterdog. I try to go there every time I visit Grand Rapids. My family would often go there when I was a kid. Sitting on a stool, eating my hot dog, while looking at old comic strips from the 1930s and 40s. Good times. All of Yesterdog's decor was pretty cool to look at and the hot dogs weren't bad either

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

I enjoyed growing up in East Grand Rapids. In high school, I was known as an artist and cartoonist. Art really excited me. When it came time to pick a college, my art teacher, Mrs. Pollice, sent me to the library to look at colleges. We used books back then. This was before the internet. I only looked at art colleges that were listed as very difficult to get in. I always wanted to go to California and knew California Institute of the Arts was the school for me. I started out in fine art, then moved to Film/Character Animation. After Cal Arts, I had a few animation jobs here and there but nothing consistent. Finding freelance jobs in my early twenties was pretty difficult.

I was approached by someone at Michael J. Fox's company. He asked me if I had any ideas for live-action films. That is where my career shifted to live action. I still did independent animated films. Animated films that were in AFI and Slamdance and other notable festivals. One of the films was acquired by Warner Brothers. I also explored live-action films. I produced a film at Scott Free (Ridley Scott's Company). "Blade Runner" star Rutger Hauer was in our film. I wrote and directed an animated pilot that was shown on "Funny or Die." Then I got a big break. I wrote and directed a feature film. The film stars Tom Sizemore and the cinematographer was Jacques Haikun from "Nightmare on Elm Street" fame. I learned the most from Jacques. The film won best picture at the Shockfest film festival. Making films is like a drug. You want to keep going and improving to make new films.

Then in 2016, I did a film called "Watch This." It's a drama about a father and daughter coping with the loss of their mother. That film was eventually shown on television. It was cool that Billy Ray Cyrus called me up to tell me how much he enjoyed the film. Lately, I've been writing a lot of scripts trying to get the next movie made. The industry is changing. We're saturated with so much content. This industry is not easy. Not everyone succeeds. Even from their best efforts. I am grateful for what I've achieved so far.

In between films, I work in post production, which gives me a steady income. The entertainment business is unpredictable. A lot of ups and downs. I still love art. In my spare time, I try to find time to paint and draw

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

I learned that with a lot of hard work you can achieve your goals. I had a lot of support from students and teachers. That gave me confidence that I might not have had in myself. I'll always appreciate that.

What were you like in school?

I was quiet and shy for the first few years in high school. I kept things to myself. Focused mainly on my art. I remember walking down the hallways in between classes. Students saying hello to me. I would have my head down not knowing what to say. I took students from class to bug me to go to the East football games. I would say no at first. But I eventually went. I made some great friends.

Did you have a favorite teacher or class?

Hands down, I would say my art teacher, Mrs. Pollice. She believed in me and saw potential. She introduced me to the work of artists Andrew Wyeth and Norman Rockwell. In my sophomore year, Mrs. Pollice told me I should learn art outside of high school. I enrolled in adult art classes at night. Then my junior year I enrolled at Chicago Art Institute. She was a huge supporter and challenged me to do more

I also have fun memories in Mr. Brenner's class. He was very entertaining. Learned a great deal from him. Most memorable was his admiration for Walden and Moby Dick. I remember our Walden exercise was writing in a journal while communing with nature. He had a miniature iron cannon that he would point at a student if he/she would disrupt the class.

I wasn't really good at math. I remember Mr. Sink spending that extra time with me. Always had a can-do attitude. He was attentive and patient with his students

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?

It would probably be a toss-up of going to the East football games (they were fun to go to and meet up with friends) and when I received the artist of the year award at the auditorium. Mr. Sink presented me with the award and my folks were there for support.

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

I wish I hadn't been so shy and had taken more chances in activities that were outside my comfort zone.

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

I still reside in Los Angeles. It's hard to keep in touch with people when you live so far away. But when I do go back, I do reconnect with friends. I did reconnect with a lot of people from my 30th reunion. That was a great time. Took me back to high school. I still talk regularly to Brennan Ringlever and Matt Jordan. Matt and his family lived in Los Angeles for many years and have now moved back to East Grand Rapids. I know he loves to be back.

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

To have a good balance. Work hard to achieve your goals, but don't let it consume you.

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

Brendan Ringlever. He was known as Brenny back in high school. He lives in Lansing, Michigan with his wife and two boys. Brendan has 25 years of legislative and lobbying experience, which includes 12 years of service to the Michigan Legislature. He has held many top legislative posts, including top management positions within the highest levels of state government. Brenny and I are different in a lot of ways, but his mom is an artist. So, he kind of gets me on that level.

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

There was a Cancun spring break trip senior year. A bunch of us decided to go to Daytona Beach, Florida instead. MTV did a Daytona beach live show that week. That was a crazy week.