

THE PIONEER POST



East Grand Rapids
Schools Foundation

EAST GRAND RAPIDS ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

Upcoming Reunions

These classes have informed us of their reunion plans for this year.

- **1956** July 25-26
- **1966** September 25-27
- **1971** August 28-29
- **1976** TBD
- **1996** July 10-11
- **2006** TBD
- **2016** Thanksgiving weekend
- **2021** November 25

If your class year is not listed and you have information about your reunion please contact Maria Allen.

Want help planning your next reunion? Contact Maria Allen, the Foundation's Alumni Relations Coordinator, at mallen@egrps.org. It's time to reconnect, reminisce, and celebrate the memories that shaped you.





East Grand Rapids
Schools Foundation

Please Join Us

**Community Service & Distinguished Alumni
Awards Dinner
Wednesday, October 7, 2026
Watermark Country Club**

Addy, Birkbeck, and Lovell to Be Honored

This fall, the Foundation will hold its 15th Awards Dinner at Watermark Country Club on Wednesday, October 7.

Nii Addy '96 will be honored with the Distinguished Alumni Award. Addy is the Albert E. Kent Associate Professor of Psychiatry and Associate Professor of Cellular and Molecular Physiology at the Yale School of Medicine. Throughout his 25 years of neuroscience research, he has contributed to our understanding of reward, motivation, learning and memory, anxiety, depression and addiction. With his neuroscience expertise, Dr. Addy speaks on a range of topics, including mental health, work/life balance, employee wellness, treatments for mental health illnesses, navigating through times of uncertainty, and thriving. As an experienced professor, educator and leader, he trains the next generation of scientists, clinicians and thought leaders. He is also the creator and host of the Addy Hour podcast.

Albert John Koerts "A.J." Birkbeck '78 will also be honored, posthumously, with the Distinguished Alumni Award. Birkbeck was an environmental attorney who had made a career managing corporate-scale cleanups. He was instrumental in exposing the most severe case of toxic PFAS contamination in Michigan and touched off a massive search for the chemicals that helped stop thousands from drinking poisoned water in Kent County and beyond.

Susan Lovell will be honored with the Community Service Award. Lovell is a Michigan-based author, educator, and community leader. Most notably, Lovell co-founded *Cadence*, a beloved weekly East Grand Rapids newspaper that was published for over four decades, from 1975 to 2019. Lovell also served as a consultant to The Wege Foundation and sat on the board of Our Hope and on the Salvation Army Advisory Board.



WHAT'S YOUR

HURRAH!

SATURDAY, MARCH 28 | SILVA 8-11PM

EVENT TICKET – \$100 per person

PATRON TICKET – \$150 per person

(Includes recognition at the event)

Interested in sponsoring? Opportunities from \$750–\$5,000 are available on the HURRAH! registration page.

Share your love for your students and your schools.

Celebrate your community. Join us for our FUNdraiser of the year!

The Foundation supports all students at every grade level at all our schools. That includes dozens of classroom grants including **March Book Madness** and **BizTown** at Breton Downs, Lakeside and Wealthy, the Middle School **Innovation Lab**, and **Gone Boarding** at the high school; more than \$100,000 in performing arts funding; and a multimillion-dollar commitment to the new high school.

Thank you! See you at HURRAH!

Get your tickets at egrsf.org

This Is Going to Be Big!

Alumni are always welcome at HURRAH!, the Foundation's FUNdraiser of the year, but that's even more true this year. HURRAH! 2026 will be in The Big Room at Silva, Grand Rapids' cool new dinnertainment destination that's the brainchild of Mark Secchia '91.

We'll have a DJ, dancing, apps, treats, a hosted bar, and a few surprises. We've already sold 500 tickets, but if you're around, The Big Room is huge so we have room for more. [Tickets are available on the HURRAH! page on our website.](#)

Ice Hockey Wins 5th Straight Regional Championship

Bowling: Girls & boys both finished 5th out of 8 teams in the OK-White Conference. Emily Grin finished 5th in the conference for the season while Blake Sherman finished 9th in addition to being the Pre-Conference Tournament Champion.

Boys Basketball: Won three of their last four games, including a victory over Lowell in the first round of the playoffs.

Boys Ski: Finished top ten at state finals.

Boys Swim and Dive: Finished third at state finals.

Girls Basketball: Won four straight games in February, including victories over Grand Rapids Christian and Forest Hills Eastern.

Girls Ski: Finished in fourth place at state finals.

Ice Hockey: The team won its fifth straight regional championship and reached the state quarterfinals.

To see the full winter schedule of East Grand Rapids High School sports, visit egrpioneers.org.

THE GERKEN OPEN

Save The Date

2026
GERKEN
OPEN
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Wednesday • June 10, 2026
Thousand Oaks Golf Club

IN SUPPORT OF EGR TEAM BOOSTERS AND THE JIMMY GERKEN FUND

egrsf.org

EGRSF Annual Report

This month, the printed version of our 2025-2026 annual report, "The Foundation," was sent to all East alumni who have a street address listed with the Foundation. [An online version is now available on our website.](#) The publication includes a Q&A about the new high school, grant highlights, a roll call of donors from the 2025 calendar year, a message from new EGRSF Executive Director Amy Turner-Thole, financial information about the Foundation, and a whole lot more.



There's even a Homecoming mystery solved, along with the interview with American Pie creator Adam Herz '91 that you'll find below. [You can read the online version of our annual report on your device right now.](#)



"Seussical the Musical" Will Wrap Up Season

It's been a busy winter for the performing arts, with elementary school musicals, the annual district-wide Melodies in March concert, and the student-directed high school play, "When Bad Things Happen to Good Actors" (pictured above).

Altogether, it's been an incredible year. Thanks to our donors, the Foundation is contributing more than \$100,000 this school year to support the performing arts in all our schools. The year will wrap up with performances of "Seussical" April 30-May 2.

To see the full EGRHS Theatre lineup and photos from previous shows, visit [their website](#).



A Virtual Cup of Coffee with Adam Herz '91

Adam Herz '91 is a writer and producer best known for the American Pie movies, set in the fictional "East Great Falls." He lives in Los Angeles with his wife and two boys.

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

Yesterdog. One Ultra, one Tim, a stack of napkins, and a side of

embarrassment for missing the tip target. Rose's caramel corn today is great, but I'd need Bub Rose's original recipe from the original place--the stuff that stuck to your teeth like epoxy.

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

EGR to U of M to Los Angeles. I worked as a production assistant for a year on low-budget tv shows, during which I got lucky and landed a literary manager who liked some sample tv scripts I'd written. He helped me write and sell the screenplay that became American Pie.

Once that movie became a hit, everything was a whirlwind for quite a few years. I worked my butt off on various screenwriting gigs, wrote and produced the Pie sequels, and started my own production company. It was surreal. Every day, the Universal Studios tour tram--the thing I'd once ridden while fantasizing that I worked in one of the old-school Hollywood bungalows it drove past--was suddenly driving past my little bungalow. I got to meet and work with many of my heroes. I knew my head would explode if I thought about it too much, so I just stayed focused on the work.

The early success I was fortunate to have allowed me to shift gears once I was married and had kids. I slowed way down. I've been able to take years off at times to watch my kids grow up and pursue hobbies and passion projects.

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

Good midwest values, perseverance, and the value of friendship. Also, there was this program called SAGE in elementary school--"Skills for Academic Growth and Enrichment"--that taught me things I still think about.

In a sense, I owe my entire career and adult life to EGR and the people I grew up with. The Pie movies wouldn't have existed otherwise--I have no clue what I would've written had I grown up in some other random place, or if I'd even be a writer--every English teacher I had at East encouraged me to keep writing and to find my own voice.

What were you like in school?

Smart but not driven, unless I really enjoyed what I was working on. Socially I was attention-seeking, impulsive, unfiltered, a bit of a class clown. I did a lot of theater in high school. School itself felt like a distraction to endure while trying to be with my friends and goof off. Not all the time, but enough that I got in disciplinary trouble every now and then.

Did you have a favorite teacher or class?

Mrs. Mitchell, Mrs. Graham, and Mr. Froysland, all English. Mr. Norman, Latin. Mrs. Pantlind, speech. Mrs. Knack, creative writing. Miss Bergeon, trig. Mr Jenkins, physics. Mr. Radakovich, history/social studies. Mrs. Kemp, SAGE. Miss VanHaren, 4th grade. Mrs. Brown, kindergarten.

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?

Ooof. I have tons. Spring musicals. Skipping 1st hour to write the essay I forgot was due 2nd hour--multiple times. Open campus lunches in middle and high school. Lots of classic moments with friends. Using the debate room copy machine to duplicate homework that you didn't have to hand in, only answer from in class (regularly). There was a group of us that pulled off some pretty crazy stuff, some of which I can't even mention here.

As far as a particular moment, in retrospect: I wrote the humor column for the first Vision with Robert Fleetwood ('91). We got called into the principal's office (Pat Cwayna) for publishing masturbation jokes. "Guys, come on. You know you can't write that stuff. No more, okay?" Months later, at the honors assembly at the end of the year, Mrs. Ford (I think it was her?) announced that we'd won a MIPA award for our column--a state "excellence in journalism" thing. Mr. Cwayna thought it was a prank. "This is a joke, right guys? It's a joke on me?" I was already on my career path.

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

Self-awareness. Patience. How to listen to other people and really hear them. I wish I'd known how much I'd miss it all when it was gone.

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

Yes. Firstly, Chris Stevenson ('91) has been in LA about as long as I have, and we hang out all the time. Then there's a group of friends I stay in touch with outside of that, and we try to get together when we can. I still have amazing friends back in East and the GR area. I love going back there, hanging out, and just absorbing it all.

The class of '91 was small (135 students). So even for the kids you didn't know well, we all knew each other to some degree. That's kept us all in better touch. Then, I think for some of us, Pie added a kind of layer on top--like it was a record of our collective experience. Not plotwise, but the first movie in particular was full of recognizable elements. Not just "East Great Falls" and the overall look (the art department toured East to know what to approximate, and my yearbooks were treated like bibles), but especially the characters, moments, and "if you know you know" Easter eggs.

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

Fiction has to make sense--the world doesn't. Accept that there's plenty of stuff that will piss you off. Let it go.

Learn how to present yourself well: often it's not what you say, but how you say it. Being good in a room can matter more than the info you're conveying. Turn data into story.

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

My brother Scott. He'll have more practical advice, and I'm pretty sure he did the whole EGR thing better than I did.

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

Stifler's Mom.

To see more Virtual Cup of Coffee alumni interviews, [visit the Alumni Profiles page on our website.](#)



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