

# THE FOUNDATION

2024-2025  
ANNUAL REPORT  
OF THE EAST GRAND  
RAPIDS SCHOOLS  
FOUNDATION

Upcoming Events  
High School Transformation  
Grant Highlights  
A Cup of Coffee with Kerry Eleveld '88  
Donor Roll Call  
Alumni Reunions



East Grand Rapids Schools Foundation & Alumni Association



# UPCOMING EVENTS

**HURRAH!** EXPLORE THE EXTRAORDINARY  
DISCOVER THE PAST  
INSPIRE THE FUTURE

**APRIL 26 7-11 PM WEGE PLAZA**

East Grand Rapids  
Schools Foundation  
egrsf.org

Tickets are on sale now for the Foundation’s fundraiser of the year, HURRAH! On **Saturday, April 26** from 7-11pm, HURRAH! will fill Wege Plaza overlooking Reeds Lake. The big party under a big tent will bring our entire community together for food, friends, and fun showcasing all the opportunity the Foundation and our supporters provide to our students.



It will be a great night for a great cause. Tickets to the event—which has sold out the last two years—and sponsorship opportunities are available now on the HURRAH! page on the Foundation’s website, egrsf.org.

**SCAN THE QR CODE FOR TICKETS & SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES**

**THE GERKEN OPEN**

*Save the Date*

**2025 GERKEN OPEN**  
Wednesday • June 11, 2025  
Thousand Oaks Golf Club

IN SUPPORT OF EGR TEAM BOOSTERS AND THE JIMMY GERKEN FUND

egrsf.org

The Gerken Open golf outing is one of the East Grand Rapids Schools Foundation’s most anticipated events, and it’s sold out for the past four years! This year, mark your calendars for **Wednesday, June 11**, at Thousand Oaks Golf Club. If you want to be part of the fun and support the Foundation’s Gerken Fund and the Team Boosters, sponsorship opportunities are available on the Foundation’s website at egrsf.org.



**SCAN THE QR CODE FOR MORE SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES**



**On WEDNESDAY, JULY 16**, the Kona Ice truck will return to the Middle School parking lot for the Foundation’s “Midsummer Ice Dream,” offering free frozen treats to everyone in our community from 1-4pm. Just a little thank you from the Foundation for all your support!

## ON THE COVER:

Dave Kagan ‘64 took this photo of the EGRHS production of “Treasure Island” last fall. Kagan is a member of the first class of Pioneers to graduate from the current high school building. He and his wife, Bev (also an EGRHS alum) have children and grandchildren who are also graduates and current students of East Grand Rapids Public Schools. His website is sensitography.com.



## Executive Director Message

When the “new” East Grand Rapids High School opened in 1964, the most highly anticipated part of the \$2.3 million facility was a “space age” control center in the front office. Today, we’d call it a switchboard (for those of us that remember the word).

Years from now, when the new high school opens, it will include innovations and technological advances that would have been unthinkable in 1964. It will be a world-class high school built for the next generation of Pioneers. And the Foundation will be a huge part of it.

Over the next five years, thanks to our donors, the Foundation will contribute \$2.4 million—that’s more than the original bond to build the high school 60 years ago—to help the district build the new high school that will be the leading-edge home of teaching and learning our students deserve.

In many ways, that’s what the Foundation has been doing for more than 40 years. This year, for example, we’re contributing more than \$700,000 to our schools, including nearly \$100,000 in performing arts funding alone. We fund programs and classroom enhancements in all our schools and at every grade level.

Thanks to our supporters, that’s what we’re going to keep doing. Sixty years from now, we’ll still be driving innovation and providing what’s next. Our donors have helped us build for the future. With your help, we’ll make that future bright for the next generations of Pioneers.

Amy Stuursma  
Executive Director



## EAST GRAND RAPIDS SCHOOLS FOUNDATION

### **Board of Directors**

Jenny McMahon, *President*  
Amy Knape, *Vice President*  
Carrie Walton, *Secretary*  
Tom Blower, *Treasurer*  
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Jena Lacks  
Lisa Lovell  
Kelly Plawinski  
Amanda Rogalski  
Jim Seufert  
Tammy Shreiner  
Michael TerHorst

### **Student Members**

Audrey Krajewski, '25  
Tanyon Sanders, '26

### **Ex-officio**

Dr. Heidi S. Kattula, *EGRPS Superintendent*  
Matt Richenthal, *EGRPS Board of Education Member*

### **Staff**

Amy Stuursma, *Executive Director*  
Maria Allen, *Alumni Relations Coordinator*  
Jay Forstner, *Communications Director*  
Rosanne Mack, *Accountant*  
Carole McDonald, *Office Manager*

# Treasurer Message

BY TOM BLOWER



Many of us balance our household budgets each month. We review our income, list our planned and unplanned expenses, and then determine if we have a surplus or need to find additional funds. For some, this is enjoyable; for many, it's painful!

Your East Grand Rapids Schools Foundation operates in much the same way. We track monthly income and expenses, create an annual budget (approved by our board of directors), and then manage it throughout the year.

The East Grand Rapids Schools Foundation is fortunate to have a substantial endowment, currently around \$17 million. While this large balance and its annual distributions simplify our budgeting process, we don't over-rely on it. The endowment provides a small portion of our annual operating expenses, but we also have other income streams, including annual sponsors, events, bequests, and additional fundraisers.

The expense side of our budget is equally important. Numerous costs are associated with running the Foundation, such as salaries, benefits, software, postage, marketing, and professional services.

This 2024/2025 school year marks my sixth and final year as Treasurer. I'm proud that each year, our Foundation has achieved a balanced budget. Whether through increased fundraising or expense management, this "household" has been managed professionally and prudently.

As a personal financial advisor, I work with budgets every day. The East Grand Rapids Schools Foundation's budget is one that I'm very proud of and one that doesn't cause me sleepless nights.

*-Tom*





# FINANCIALS

## STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION JUNE 30, 2024 (AUDITED)

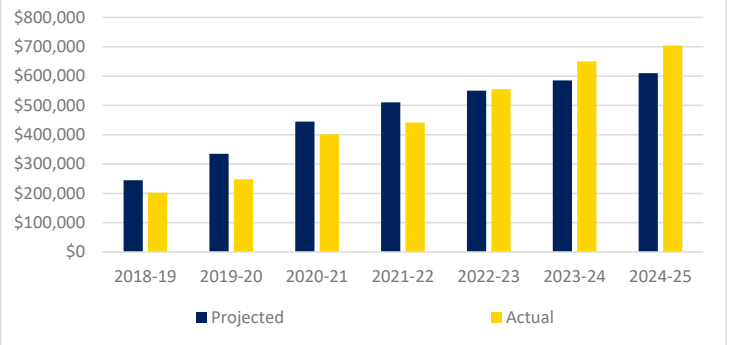
### Assets

Cash and equivalents	\$	70,244
Prepaid expenses		10,149
Pledges receivable, current portion		29,507
Investments		16,782,070
Pledges receivable, long-term portion, net		314,000
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>17,205,970</b>

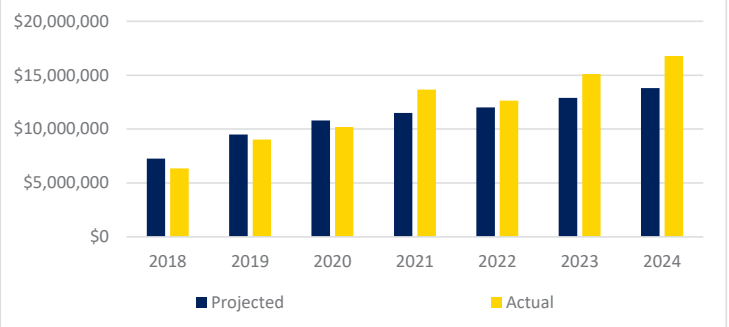
### Liabilities and Net Assets

Accounts payable and accrued expenses	\$	10,221
Grants payable, current portion		832,137
Deferred revenue		1,282
Alumni reunion funds held		31,166
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>874,806</b>
<b>Total Net Assets</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>16,331,164</b>
<b>Total Liabilities and Net Assets</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>17,205,970</b>

ENDOWMENT FUND AVAILABILITY  
(by school year)



ENDOWMENT FUND BALANCE  
(as of June 30)



# Future Home of the New Pioneers



In November 2023, East Grand Rapids residents approved a bond program focused on renovating the high school, expanding preschool and childcare opportunities, and supporting other K-8 infrastructure lifecycle replacements. The budget for the high school transformation alone is more than \$130 million.

Thanks to our donors, the Foundation is making an extraordinary multi-million-dollar commitment to the high school renovation project. Beginning in 2025, the Foundation plans to contribute \$2.4 million to the project over six years.

“We are proud to provide the support for this historic project that will create a world-class facility for the students of East Grand Rapids,” says Foundation Executive Director Amy Stuursma. “These funds will come from the earnings from our endowment. That means anyone who has contributed to our endowment in our more than forty-year history will truly be part of this effort, and will be part of the new high school. Our contribution will help ensure that the new high school is a teaching and learning environment that is second to none.

***“Thank you to all our Foundation supporters for making this transformative commitment possible.”***





## Jimmy's Friendship Fund for Students in Need

The East Grand Rapids Schools Foundation has always been about providing outstanding educational opportunities. Now, the Foundation is making sure every student in our district has access to every opportunity our district has to offer.

Jimmy's Friendship Fund provides money to cover immediate needs for families within the district that are experiencing financial difficulties. The funds may be used to cover pay-to-participate expenses for extracurriculars, student activity fees, household needs, or personal needs.

We call the fund Jimmy's Friendship Fund because Jimmy Gerken was a friend to all. Jimmy was an East resident and then staff member with special needs. One of his most famous quotes is his response to someone who was bullying

him about his special needs: "That's okay," Jimmy said. "I'll still be your friend."

School principals allocate the funds based on needs they see. Families may also contact school principals or the guidance office as needs arise. So far this year, the Fund has helped families pay for utility bills, participation fees for co-curriculars and sports, and even winter clothing.

Right now, a generous donor has offered to match all donations to Jimmy's Friendship Fund up to a total of \$20,000. That means the power of your donation will be doubled!

You can donate to Jimmy's Friendship Fund quickly and easily by visiting our "Donate Now" page and selecting "Jimmy's Friendship Fund." Thank you!

## Mental Health and Wellness Fund Has Matching Gift Available Too



Thanks to another generous donor, your gift to the Mental Health and Wellness Fund will be matched dollar for dollar, too, doubling the impact of your donation.

In 2022, the largest single gift ever given to the Foundation—one million dollars—established the student Mental Health and Wellness Fund that the Foundation will administer for the district. The Fund was created in response to a nationwide student mental health crisis, and it has provided resources for professional development, student training, and Community Connections presentations.

Your gift has the potential to make a profound positive difference in the lives of our students and their families. Thank you again for your support! You can donate to the Mental Health and Wellness Fund quickly and easily by visiting our "Donate Now" page and selecting "Mental Health Fund." Thank you!



# CLASSROOM ENHANCEMENT GRANTS THE FOUNDATION FUNDED IN 2024

## SPRING 2024

- NCTE annual convention for English teachers
- Middle School Social Studies Department professional learning in Washington DC and New York
- Keyboards and Mice for Drafting, Design, and Technology Class
- Classroom Library, Materials and Flexible Seating
- Epson Plotter Printer
- Video Cameras for High School TV Studio
- Junior Achievement BizTown for Breton Downs 4th Graders
- Stand-up Paddle Boards for Gone Boarding Class
- Mural with Artist Dylan Bonner '09
- Eagle Scout Project–Middle School Tree Identification
- Physics Equipment Modernization
- Author Visit to EGRPS–Christina Soontornvat
- Camp Manitou-Lin 6th Grade Camp
- Underwriting of FIRST Lego League Grades 1-5
- Cow Eyes for Dissection
- Spectrum Tube Power Supplies, Bulbs, and Spectrum Chart
- Cooking and Nutrition Club Funding
- Motion Detectors and Sensor Updates for Physics Classes
- Elementary Gym Equipment
- Playground Soccer Goals
- The “EGR Bard” High School Upper Level English Learning Experience
- First Grade Literacy Supplies
- Snap Word/Phonics Learning Tools for Kindergartners
- The “EGR Bard” High School Freshmen English Learning Experience
- Math Resources for Small Groups and Independent Learning
- Madrigals Rehearsal Tracks
- iPad Mini for Math Classroom
- Personal Tuners with Clip-on Microphones for Band
- Kindergarten Math Resources for Individualized Learning
- Sing Me a Story Music Composition Program
- iPads for FIRST Lego League Challenge Teams

## FALL 2024

- Marching Band Program Annual Support
- EGRMS School Store
- Stratford Trip Tickets
- MidSchool Math Conference
- Non-Fiction Rebuild for Middle School Learning Commons
- Listening Stations for Kindergarten
- Junior Achievement BizTown for All 4th Graders
- High School Robotics Competition Entry Fees
- Grand Rapids Symphony Orchestra Experiences
- March Book Madness 2025
- Orton Gillingham Decodable Books Fiction and Nonfiction
- Elementary Book Repair Machine
- Ignite Engagement Advanced Cohort
- MASP 2024 Fall Conference
- Veterans Day Speaker and breakout sessions
- Drama support - Breton Downs
- Drama support - Lakeside
- Drama support - Wealthy
- Drama support - Middle School
- Drama support - High School
- Speech Therapy Bjorem Materials
- Drafting, Design, and Technology Supplies





## Foundation-Funded Listening Stations Open Up Possibilities for Kindergartners

By Riley Kelley, School News Network

### SOME OF THE DISTRICT'S YOUNGEST LEARNERS ARE BEING WOWED BY NEW WAYS TO ENGAGE WITH THE WRITTEN WORD.

Kindergarten classrooms at Breton Downs, Lakeside and Wealthy elementary schools are now equipped with Yoto Player listening stations, which allow children to listen to audio recordings of books while they read along.

The handheld players scan and read cards containing audio versions of books in the school's collection. Once the cards are inserted into the devices, students can plug in headphones for a multi-sensory dive into whichever book they're reading.

The equipment was purchased with a \$12,400 grant from the East Grand Rapids Schools Foundation and installation wrapped up in early February. The listening stations quickly became hotspots for students with an ever-growing desire to read.

"Right away it was a hit. They wanted to dig in," Wealthy Elementary kindergarten teacher Carly Schwartz said of her students. "I think, for kindergartners, they all have this urge to learn more, because they're so young and they want all the information.

"For reading, this has just given them something else to add to their toolbox. ... It's another avenue for them to explore books, explore vocabulary."

Schwartz's students are loving the new tech, situated in its own corner of the classroom. The space is a haven for kindergartner Frankie Carlson, who delights in the fact that "it's calm and nobody's making noise."

Frankie's classmate Lena Agerson explained how the players work.

"You turn them on and hold the button for a few seconds, plug in the headphones, you put in the card, it immediately starts introducing the story and then it starts reading it," Lena said. "You don't have to always read; you can also (look) and listen."

"These knobs turn it up louder or not loud," added classmate Niles Breuthin, gesturing to the buttons and dials on the Yoto Player. "And I don't know what this one does," he said of one knob, "but you put the card in there... and you get to listen to the story you want."

After getting situated at his station, Henry Corstange spent some time reading and listening to "Dragons Love Tacos" by Adam Rubin.

"Do you know why I'm reading this? Because I like tacos. It's my favorite food," Henry said.

The best part of his reading time? "Well, hearing it!" Henry said decisively, adding that he also has a Yoto Player at home.

## SUPPORTING VOCABULARY, LANGUAGE, FLUENCY

Norah Knoerl, a kindergarten teacher at Breton Downs, wrote the grant requesting funds for the listening stations. She said she did so because the benefits of reading aloud are “immense,” and she wanted to give students an opportunity to do it on their own.

“Readalouds support vocabulary, language and fluency,” Knoerl told SNN, adding that, though teachers do plenty of reading to students on any given day, the listening stations let students pick their own reading exercises and engage with the material personally and independently.

In addition to paying for the listening equipment, Knoerl said the grant covered the cost of more than 50 print and digital books.

“With our grant, we ordered hard copies of all the books as well as the Yoto Cards so the students could enhance their concepts of print as well as comprehension,” she said.

Knoerl said the grant will impact around 1,000 students throughout the district, and that the listening stations will continue to serve learners for years to come.

Schwartz said the listening stations are helping kindergartners build important skills that will stay with them for life.

“We were talking about what we enjoyed about them so far, and a lot of kiddos just said, ‘I just like being able to listen to the story,’” Schwartz said. “I told them that I, even as an adult, love to listen to stories. So that’s something that carries through no matter how old you are.”





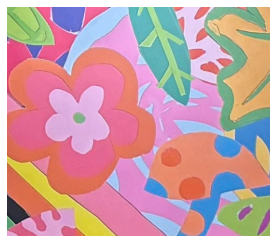
***“This looks like an art school.  
It’s like walking through a gallery.”***



That’s what East Grand Rapids Middle School art teacher Holly Lampen hears from new students and new families when they first see the middle school. In Lampen’s tenure, more than ten different art installations have been added inside and outside at the school.

The latest large-scale art project to be added was created through a partnership between the Foundation, the Friends of the EGR Library, and the Middle School PTO. And it was made possible by an East alumnus who used to sneak into the Wealthy Elementary art room to leave drawings of the Little Mermaid on the whiteboard.

The new middle school mural was funded in part by a Foundation grant Lampen wrote in 2024, but it got its start in a fortuitous conversation at a field hockey game. “I saw Holly at our daughters’ East field hockey game and on the sidelines proposed the idea that her students could take ownership and do something special” with a mural for the Teen Room at the library, says Friends of the Library vice president Kyle Watson.





“I assured Holly that the Friends would remove financial barriers and get approvals and encouraged a partnership with the Foundation. The library and schools are a perfect match!”

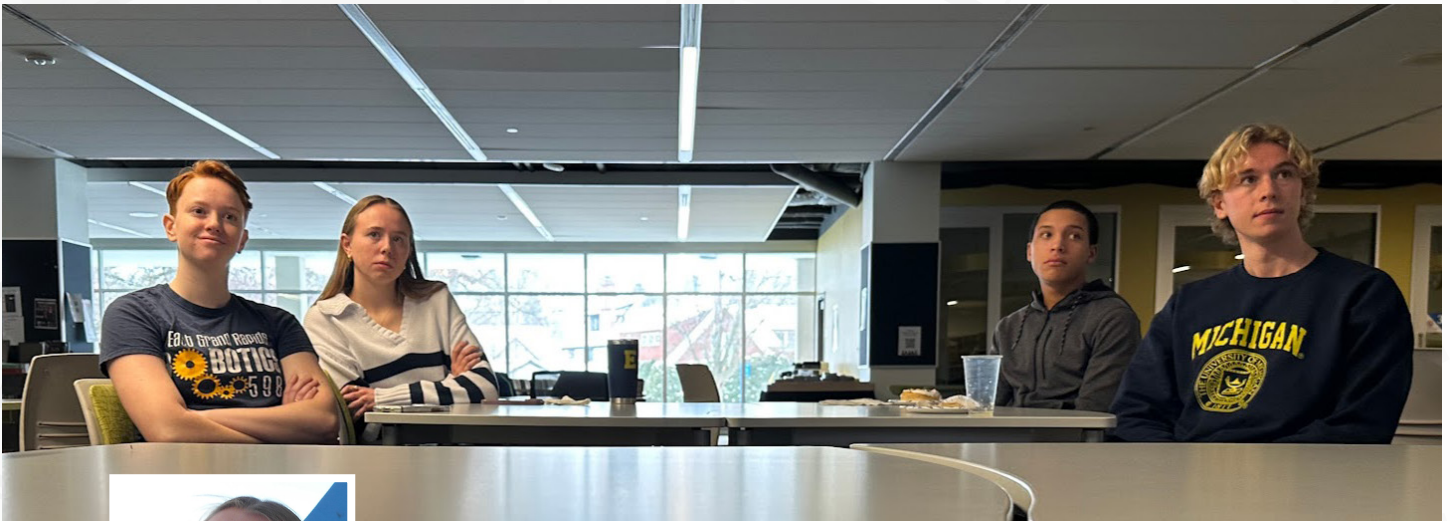
The Foundation grant enabled Lampen to bring in Disney animation artist Dylan Bonner '09 to work with her students on the project. “Dylan is a superstar,” Lampen says. “He’s truly larger than life. He’s this six and a half foot tall guy who you wouldn’t expect to be drawing Disney princesses. Athletes relate to him. Art people, Disney people. He instantly gets kids’ respect. Last year he had a bunch of football players all trying to perfect their drawings of Ariel. The fact that he’s an alum is a bonus.”

When Bonner was in 4th grade at Wealthy, Lampen was his art teacher. “I think we started the after school art club because of Dylan,” she says. “It was clear how talented he was even then.”

Bonner has worked with EGRMS students on the mural that now graces the hallway above the lockers. He’s also worked with them on the similar mural that’s now in the Teen Room at the EGR public library. And he’s working with them now on a third part of the mural that will be added to the Teen Room because the first one was so well received.

The whole project shows the power of partnership, and something else too. “These projects convey our commitment to visual arts,” Lampen says. “It shows everyone who comes to our school that we support the arts.”





EGRSF STUDENT BOARD MEMBER

## Audrey Krajewski's Robotics Diary



My first exposure to STEM was through the Foundation-sponsored Innovation Lab class at the middle school. Mr. Vance encouraged my interest in STEM and introduced me to the middle school's FIRST Tech Challenge Robotics team. Joining the team sparked a journey of creativity, teamwork, and problem-solving that has profoundly shaped my passions for engineering and leadership.

While involved in FIRST Robotics, I've developed a working understanding of Java and Python programming and improved my public speaking, project management, fundraising, and critical thinking skills. I've also had hands-on experience in engineering design. FIRST Robotics introduces a new game each season, bringing new challenges in robot design, construction, and programming. Participants become adaptable problem solvers who can collaborate with their teammates and communicate effectively.

My involvement in FIRST Robotics has offered opportunities to engage in STEM programming throughout East Grand Rapids and beyond. I've connected with FIRST Robotics at all levels of our school district: FIRST Lego League at Breton Downs, Lakeside, and Wealthy, FIRST Tech Challenge at EGRMS, and EGR Robotics at EGRHS. As a high school student, providing mentorship for the elementary and middle school programs has strengthened my belief in the importance of STEM education.



EGR Robotics prides ourselves on our ability to make connections globally. Over the last three years, I have spearheaded our 'Excellence in Global Relations' Initiative, connecting us with 16 FIRST Global teams worldwide, from Iran to China, Chile, Norway, Ukraine, Mexico, and Algeria, to name a few. I've become a globally oriented citizen who thrives on finding common ground in the curiosity and creativity of teenagers worldwide who share my passion for STEM. These experiences have taught me that we are much more alike than we are different.



None of this would be possible without the support of the Foundation. In addition to helping fund elementary FIRST Lego League teams and middle school robotics, the Foundation provides the high school robotics program with \$6,000 annually so we can pay the entry fees for our regional competitions. This allows us to allocate the rest of our funds to building a competitive robot and fulfilling our mission of inspiring each student to navigate successfully in a global community.

# BY THE NUMBERS:

Total Contribution Available to Schools in 2024-25:  
**\$700,000**



Grants Funded in Fall 2024:  
**21**



Total of Grants Funded in Fall 2024:  
**\$84,871.64**



Program Support to District 2024-25:  
**\$544,420**



Support for Performing Arts in 2024-25:  
**\$95,000**

Support from Gerken Fund for Athletics, Co-Curriculars, and Kabookie Week in 2024-25:  
**\$33,500**

Alumni Contributions to the Foundation in 2024:  
**\$351,689.72**

Total Amount Contributed to Class of 2025 Since Kindergarten:  
**\$5.5 Million**

Alumni Who Attended Reunions in 2024:  
**500+**



# What We Do, Together



Schools in District That Benefited from Foundation Support:  
**6**

Cups of Kona Ice Given Away at Midsummer Ice Dream:  
**653**

Community Members Who Attended a Foundation Event in 2024:  
**1,350**



Students in District That Benefited from Foundation Support:  
**3,137**

Teacher Awards in 2024:  
**4**

Teacher Professional Development Scholarships Awarded in 2023-24:  
**23**

Student Scholarships Awarded in 2024:  
**10**

Foundation Annual Sponsors:  
**38**

Spooky bracelets given away at Gaslight Village Terrifying Tuesday:  
**360**



# VIRTUAL CUP OF COFFEE

## KERRY ELEVELD '88

Kerry Eleveld worked as a journalist for nearly 30 years, covering business, politics, and a critical stretch of the LGBTQ movement. As White House Correspondent for *The Advocate*, she was the first reporter from an LGBTQ news outlet to attend daily White House press briefings and also the first to get a one-on-one sit-down interview with Barack Obama as president. Eleveld's work has won numerous accolades and awards from the National Gay and Lesbian Journalists Association. Her work has appeared in *The Atlantic*, the *Washington Post*, *Politico Magazine*, *Salon*, and *The Daily Beast*, and her commentary has been featured on *PBSNewsHour*, *MSNBC*, *CNN*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, the *Associated Press*, and *Sirius XM*. Eleveld now resides in Portland, Oregon, with her family, serves as Director of External Communications and Media Relations for the Democratic strategy and donor hub *Way to Win*, and hosts the weekly podcast *Charting The Way Forward*.

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

Oh man, love it all, but *Yesterdog* for sure. It's one of a kind--can't be recreated. And I find myself thinking about a midnight rendezvous there much too often for someone who lives on the West Coast.

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

Wow, in one word: circuitous. After graduating from Michigan (Go Blue!) I headed to LA for a summer, then moved with a friend to Charleston, SC, and later Greenville. It was in South Carolina that I began writing for publications and forging a path as a journalist. From SC, I moved to San Francisco during the dot-com bubble—eventually got laid off, like nearly everyone! Went back to grad school for journalism at Berkeley, where I fell in love with political reporting, then moved to New York after graduation. There I began writing

for an LGBTQ news outlet covering city/state politics and eventually landed a job at the national magazine, *The Advocate*, where I covered the Democratic primary between Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton—what a thrill! I eventually moved to D.C. to cover the Obama White House and Congress for *The Advocate* during an absolutely historic period of advancement for LGBTQ rights. I met my wife in D.C. and we moved back out to the Bay Area for her doctoral internship. One pandemic and two kids later, we decided we loved the Pacific Northwest (and my brother and his family are in Seattle), so we moved to Portland, OR, where we currently reside. I also recently hung up my reins as a journalist—it was the only sane thing to do for any number of reasons. I currently work as a political strategist.

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

Never give up—there's almost always daylight somewhere behind whatever is clouding our vision. I learned that



through some great friends and some amazing teachers. I also managed to play on every bad team we had at the time—specifically women's basketball and softball. I learned to like being the underdog—be scrappy, get creative, work hard, and you can usually find a way to win some big ones. Every news outlet, organization, and constituency I have worked/reported for has been an underdog of some sort that found a way to win some big ones.

**What were you like in school?**

Well, which year are we talking about? Depressed sophomore and junior year, I think it's fair to say. I don't know how people experienced me then, but I don't think I was my best self. Senior year, things really turned around. I grew into some leadership roles, felt far more sunny/optimistic, and was hopefully a source for good most days, though far from perfect. By my senior year, I hope that I treated people well, brought some joy, made some people laugh, and was a little kinder than I had been earlier.

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

Lots of great teachers at East. I would have to say Mrs. Graham’s AP English class, my sophomore year, was where I started to see the potential in writing—what great literature can do. I was (and still am) a very slow reader, but I just felt so motivated by her class to show up prepared so I could soak in what she was teaching us. Also, Mr. Kemp, who taught computers and Algebra (or was it Geometry?). I just really liked that little Teddy Bear of a dude.

**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?**

That’s a tough one. Two-a-day basketball practices and my basketball buds stand out as formative. I’ll never forget a magical post-basketball season 2:00 a.m. walk through Gaslight Village on a snowy night—completely sober, I might add—that felt like a scene ripped straight from a Dickens novel. Homecoming prep, making the floats, and especially riding in a homecoming car stand out as fun highlights. But I have to say, what rises above all of it was, senior year, sitting around the kitchen table at the house of my friend Allison Armstrong (now Montague) with a half dozen friends on many a night and chewing over just about anything and everything life had to offer at the time. We had some seriously solid chats and I am beyond grateful for the bonds formed there and what felt like a home away from home.

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

Such a hard question to answer. Life’s always a mystery that’s yet to be solved. There’s no cheating time. But if I could tell my younger self something it would probably be that there’s so much goodness ahead.

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

Some people, for sure. I’m on a text chain with our crew from senior year. But I’ve lived so many places now, and I

find that I usually stay in touch with one core person from each one of those places who grounds me in that phase of my life.

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

Just get out there and do it—try some things, move some places, see what fits. We are limited in life only by our imagination and the amount of effort we are willing to put in.

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

Hmm, so many options. How about Kat Olin (née Allen), who is literally my oldest friend in the world (my second oldest friend is Jenny Fee, but I’m guessing you’re already in touch with her. ;)



PETE SOUZA, OFFICIAL OBAMA WHITE HOUSE PHOTOGRAPHER

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

Nothing. I’m forever a journalist at heart—no question is too invasive.



**Want to read more virtual cup of coffee alumni interviews? Visit [egrsf.org/alumni/alumni-profiles.html](https://egrsf.org/alumni/alumni-profiles.html)**

# ANNUAL FUND SUPPORTERS

## \$5,000 or more

Anonymous\*  
Ray '71 & Kristin Abraham\*  
The Adamy Family\*  
Sue '56 & Marty Allen\*  
The Bissell / Krueer Family\*  
The Connor Family\*  
Damian & Sara deGoo\*  
Laurie Duthie & Mark Secchia '91\*  
Don Gerken '67  
Rick & Carol Godfrey\*  
John & Deanna Green\*  
The Hoekstra Group LLC\*  
The Iakiri Family\*  
Tom & Mary Sidell '61 James  
Kurt '73 & Lori '76 Lacks  
KV '02 & Jena Lacks\*  
David '57 & Linda Mehney Family\*  
Meijer, Inc.\*  
NPF Investment Advisors\*  
Pure Architects\*  
Matthew Richenthal\*  
Elaine Rongey\*  
The Peter & Joan Secchia Family  
Jim '58 & Susie '59 Sebastian  
Aaron '93 & Jill Smith  
Abby & Rich Sorota\*  
Varnum LLP\*

## \$2,500 - \$4,999

David '60 & Sibley '62 Barrett  
The Cherveney Family\*  
DFCU\*  
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2019



## Class of '19 Honors Deceased Classmates

When the class of 2019 gathered for their five-year reunion last November, they had their fallen classmates, Parker Spindle and Ella Thorne, in mind. Parker passed away in November, 2021; Ella had passed away a year earlier.

After the reunion, the class decided to honor Parker, who wore number 12 on the East soccer team, by raising \$1,212 to contribute to the Parker Spindle Genuine Heart Scholarship, which was established in 2021 by his parents Jenelle Spindle and Rob Spindle to remember Parker and his genuine heart as well as to provide additional funding for social emotional/mental health programs, training or staffing in the East Grand Rapids Public Schools.

"I am extremely proud of our class's generosity in their donations, but I am not surprised," says class of 2019 president McKeathan Robertson. "It goes to show how strong an impact Parker had on his classmates' lives. He was a positive force to everyone that spent time with him. We all miss him dearly. The mission of Parker's scholarship is so important as well; it is really special to be able to both honor Parker's memory and support people that share a bit of his spirit and values."

**Contributions to the Parker Spindle Genuine Heart Scholarship Fund can be made on the Donate page on our website.**

## REUNION GIFTS

### Class of 1964

Anonymous  
Jill (Golden) Baltzer  
Cynthia (Conway) Mulnix  
Mary Whittier Gore  
Clarissa (Pond) Hesner  
Liz Johnson  
Susan Whittier

### Class of 1974

Mark Armstrong  
Bob Blackburn  
Bruce Brooks  
Adrian Callaghan  
Jim Hagerup  
Julie (Murray) Hawksworth  
Bill Knape  
Christine Feighner-Linabury  
Luci Staples McCall  
Roberta (Zaremba) Polzin  
Deborah Sandberg-Bowers  
Michael Silverstein  
Lynne (Andrews) Whitelaw

### Class of 1984

Mike Allen  
Karen (Simon) Budde  
Laura (Cohen) Bull

Terry Byam-Egan  
Ann (Hipskind) Campbell  
Tim Cary  
Dan Clark  
Karen (Krywicki) Couvelaire  
Ann (Rankin) Douglas  
Katie (Stocksdale) Feldman  
Brad Fletcher  
Carole Clodfelder Hammerslag  
Chris Krupp  
Betsy Muir

Thania Panopoulos  
Andrew Rougier-Chapman  
Brian Schwartz  
Suzi (Ammond) Shirley  
Ned Snell  
Andy Steers  
Julie (Lewis) Torem  
Adam Wolman  
Laura (Kundtz) Yaeger  
'84 Reunion Gift

### Class of 1994

Andy Ballema  
Jenny (Morris) Bauernfeind  
Jeff Conway  
Sarah Conway  
Tom Crawford

Matt Duiven  
Kristy (Marshall) Eckman  
Derek Harnish  
Scott Herz  
Christine Lynch  
James Peterson  
Ryan Sawyer  
Louie Sobong  
Amy (Jarvis) Turner  
'94 Reunion Gift

### Class of 1999

Andrew Irwin  
Mike McLaren  
Staci Rickman  
Ben Thompson

### Class of 2019

Jill Agents  
Isabel Albaitis  
Max Albuseiri  
Kyra Allen  
Livvie Berger  
Ben Biermacher  
Christopher Boylen  
Jackson Brandstadt  
Maura Burns  
Griffen Caul

Colton Cheney  
Daniel Coles  
Jack Collins  
Zola Crow  
Jack Distel  
Ryan Distel  
Teddy Drake  
Chase Fisher  
Amelia Flemming  
Ana Gehl  
Sydney Higgins  
Katie Huizenga  
Nina Kallil  
Alex King  
Nicholas Lambert  
Connor Lannon  
Laura Levine  
Will Marsh  
Maddy Mayer  
Reed Mehney  
Macy Oakes  
Izzy Osbourne  
McKeathan Robertson  
Erin Rogers  
Alaina Romanowski  
Miriam Ronda  
Ellie Roubal

Sophie Sears  
Patrick Smith  
Ryan Smith  
Sloane Teske  
Anna VanderLaan  
Madeline VanGessel  
Dylan Walker  
Jack Ward  
'19 Reunion Gift

### Alumni Hockey Game

Matt Albers  
Charlie Fee '21  
Sam Forstner '14  
John Green  
Jeff MacKeigan '91  
Jim Mehney '98  
Drew O'Brien '10  
Baden Rushmore '23  
Ryley Sikkenga '21  
Tyler Sikkenga '23  
Jake Stewart '18  
Peter Stewart '14  
Jim & Ann Stuursma  
Mitchell Stuursma '23  
Alex West '17  
Andrew West '21  
Andy Winkler

# UPCOMING REUNIONS

1965 - September 12-13

1975 - September 27

1985 - October 11

1990 - June 20-21

2009 - August 9

2015 - November 26

2020 - Thanksgiving Weekend/TBD



CLASSES OF 1955, 1960, 1970, 1980, 1995, 2000, 2005, 2010, the countdown to your class reunion in 2025 has begun. Now is the time to start planning your unforgettable celebration. Need help getting started? Contact Maria Allen, Alumni Relations Coordinator at [mallen@egrps.org](mailto:mallen@egrps.org). It's time to reconnect, reminisce and celebrate the memories that shaped you.



# 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 [egrfs@egrps.org](mailto:egrfs@egrps.org).

<b>1941</b> Doris (Dingeman) VanEss	<b>1956</b> True (McDonald) Burley John Chandler	<b>1965</b> Eric Adamy Lawrence Ballard Gerald Muste Judith (Duffy) Sunderman	<b>1975</b> James Lincer Mitchell Thompson
<b>1944</b> Arthur Prange Jr.	<b>1957</b> Bruce MacLean Mary (Remien) Mulvihill Thomas Spooner	<b>1966</b> Martha (Williams) Arnson Bettina (Thomas) Hall Keith Norwalk Kerry Norwalk	<b>1977</b> Martha Bradshaw Marylynn Webster
<b>1947</b> Joan (Voigt) VanderPloeg	<b>1958</b> John Frey Frederick Stephen "Steve" Larned John McDonald Charles "Chip" Tappan	<b>1967</b> Alice Cutter Jim Gaertner Gail (Humphrey) Vidro	<b>1978</b> Bill Tupper
<b>1948</b> Nancy (Parrott) Hatton Marilynn (Davis) Hodgson Ellen (Rittenger) Trumbo	<b>1959</b> Dorothy (Albers) Douse	<b>1968</b> William Watkins	<b>1981</b> Joel Penny
<b>1949</b> Barbara (Spees) Begrow	<b>1960</b> Susan (Griffith) Gleacher Dennis Spooner Jeffrey Van Den Bosch	<b>1969</b> Jeanne (Romence) DeJong Scott Feighner Cheryl (Burke) Stirdivant	<b>1982</b> David Abbott
<b>1951</b> John Hibbard	<b>1961</b> Thompson Clay	<b>1970</b> Jill Woller-Sullivan	<b>1987</b> Anderson Alexa
<b>1952</b> Barbara (Pfluecke) Goretzka Saralyn (Norton) Lerch Carl Shook	<b>1962</b> Craig Miller Judy (Tucker) Spooner	<b>1973</b> Angela (Jourden) Banker Richard Schneider	<b>1998</b> Jayme Karris
<b>1953</b> Harold Cornelius II Melvin Johnson, Jr. Robert "Ted" Luce William Reeves, III	<b>1963</b> Harvey Howitt Richard Sidell, Jr.	<b>1974</b> James Bylenga Joe DiCesare Robert Kazma Daniel Matthews Terry Risch Clifton Rowden	<b>EGRPS FORMER STAFF</b> Lynn Bardo Marian (Miller) Black Herbert "Will" Brenner Irene Essenschacher Philip Hertel Martha Jane Koepf David McCoy Elizabeth "Betts" Russell Ralph Simms
<b>1954</b> Howard Ellis, Jr. Mary "Mindy" (Anderson) Spillane William Stellin	<b>1964</b> Nancy Boshoven Gail (Baron) Courim Jack Faude John Fisher Thomas Sorenson		
<b>1955</b> George Hitler, Jr. James McColl Rita (Wilson) McDonald			



## 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  
Kristine S. Mulder '71  
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 Stuursma  
William^ & Shirley^ VandenBerg  
William^ '56 & Patricia Waring

^ deceased

Interested in ways to include the Foundation in your estate plans? Call EGRSF Executive Director Amy Stuursma at (616)235-3535 or email her at [astuursm@egrps.org](mailto:astuursm@egrps.org).



## A Mother and Daughter Legacy

*“I went to kindergarten in one of the two houses that were where the Wealthy Elementary playground is now. There’s beautiful learning here. Teaching is an art form. I want to keep that alive.”*

**Kris Mulder ‘71 established the Dr. Winifred W. Mulder and Ms. Kristine S. Mulder Mother/Daughter Fund in 2019.** “My mother and I were both dedicated teachers,” Kris says. “I used my power of devotion to advocate for kids.”

Ms. Mulder established the fund after her mother passed away in 2018. Dr. Winifred Mulder worked in East Grand Rapids Public Schools for 28 years. Kris Mulder was also a teacher, having spent 36 years teaching in Grandville Public Schools. “Many members of my family were teachers,” Kris says. “Teaching was in our blood.”

The goal of the Mulder Fund is to honor requests that support kindergarten students and kindergarten teachers. In the last

few years, the fund has helped pay for kindergarten play kitchens and the read-aloud listening stations described on page 10, among other grants. “Kindergartners do such neat things,” Kris says. “They get so absorbed in what they do.”

In addition to establishing the fund, Kris Mulder became part of the Louise Neesley Legacy Society by including the Foundation in her estate planning. “I had a wonderful education in East Grand Rapids,” she says. “I went to kindergarten in one of the two houses that were where the Wealthy Elementary playground is now. There’s beautiful learning here. Teaching is an art form. I want to keep that alive.”

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You can be included in our next report of donors by giving to the Foundation today. Open the camera on your phone and scan the QR code below to be taken directly to our Donation page. Or if you prefer, fill out this simple form and mail it to us. Every gift makes a powerful positive difference in the lives of our students.

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