



Defined by excellence. Supported by tradition.

SPRING 2019

AROUND THESE HILLS

A publication for alumni and friends of **Ottawa Hills Local Schools**



BAD to the **BONE!**

Foundation Supports Anatomy Enrichment

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BROWN BAG Chorus Turns **40**

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Seeking a new **SUPERINTENDENT**

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Giving *Thanks* to a TIRELESS VISIONARY

We would like to take a moment to thank Dr. Kevin S. Miller for his incredible service to the Ottawa Hills Schools Foundation.

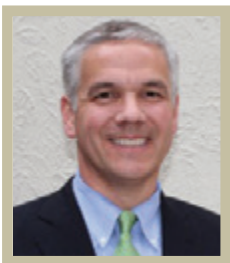
Dr. Miller had the vision in 2013 to create the Ottawa Hills Schools Foundation. His love of public education and understanding of the need to provide breadth and permanence to our district have combined to deliver long-term sustainable funding for our students – today and for generations to come.

Dr. Miller has served the Foundation as a visionary leader and dedicated educator keenly focused on education at Ottawa Hills Local Schools. He believes the district cannot simply maintain excellence; we must constantly create it. Through his tireless efforts, the success of the Foundation leaves an indelible mark on our students every day.

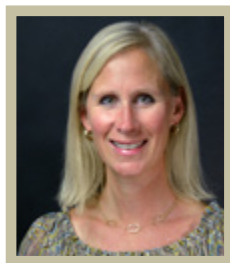
Aside from the above, he also is a dedicated husband and father to four wonderful children. It is not uncommon to see Dr. Miller on the mound coaching Little League or with a timer at track and field events. From superintendent, to coach, to mentor, to friend, Dr. Miller does it all.

We share these sentiments on the eve of his departure after nine years as our district superintendent and faithful supporter. He is leaving at the end of July to become the Director of Government Relations for the Buckeye Association of School Administrators.

On behalf of the Ottawa Hills Schools Foundation trustees, we wish him and his wife Carla the best of luck in the next chapter of their lives. His valuable contributions will stay in our hearts forever.



George Lathrop
President
Ottawa Hills Schools Foundation



Erica (Gatchel) Silk ('89)
Director of Development
and Alumni Relations



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The mission of the Ottawa Hills Schools Foundation is to permanently enhance and extend the unique experience of excellence that defines Ottawa Hills Local Schools.

**SUPPORTING THE OHS
FOUNDATION IS EASY!**

Visit the Foundation's website at
ohschoolsfoundation.org
to contribute online or use
the attached giving envelope.

SLAM DUNK

COMMUNITY CELEBRATES UNVEILING OF JOHN LINDSAY COURT



Village residents, current students and alumni, and family and friends gathered to celebrate the accomplishments of teacher/coach John Lindsay on February 9, as the district renamed the main gym court in his honor.

Supporters filled the stands as the John Lindsay Court was unveiled. The event started a day-long celebration of Mr. Lindsay, who started teaching at Ottawa Hills High School in 1994 and became its boys' varsity head coach the following year. Other events included an alumni basketball game, a brief recognition ceremony at halftime of that evening's boys' game, and a post-game reception.

"It is fitting that from today on, this floor, this epicenter of our community, will bear the name of a man who exemplifies integrity, passion, and selfless commitment to Ottawa Hills schools and our students," said Superintendent Kevin S. Miller. "I can't think of any other name I would want to have on such an important piece of property."

A dozen people spoke during the ceremony, including 1996 alumnus Pete Kadens, who had the original idea to honor Mr. Lindsay. "Outside of my immediate family, this man was the most pivotal person in my human development," said Mr. Kadens, who played basketball under Coach Lindsay.

Mr. Lindsay thanked his family, current and former players, and fellow coaches. "I am so humbled by this incredible honor. Thank you," Coach Lindsay said. He also thanked Mr. Kadens. "Pete Kadens is the hardest-working human I have ever met," he added.

To commemorate the dedication, the High School Student Council organized a T-shirt sale. Nearly 180 shirts were sold, many of which were on display at the event. (The entire dedication was livestreamed to Facebook and can be watched again from the district's Facebook page at [facebook.com/ohschools](https://www.facebook.com/ohschools).)

On the **HORIZON:** **THE CAPITAL CAMPAIGN**

The court dedication gave attendees a sneak peek at the upcoming Kadens Family Health & Wellness Campaign. More than \$2,000 was raised from a raffle; the winner walked away with four tickets to a Chicago Cubs game and a night at The Hotel Zachary.

Look for exciting details in the next issue of *Around These Hills* regarding the Kadens Family Health & Wellness Campaign – and how you can help.





40 Years of BROWN BAG CHORUS A tradition emerges from a teacher's passion

Helen Iossi, 88, beams with pride as she speaks of her time as a teacher at Ottawa Hills Elementary School (OHES) and as founder of the Brown Bag Chorus. Fostering the love of music for OHES students began when she joined the staff in 1977.

She loved teaching and enjoyed the benefits of doing so at OHES, including working with talented students and faculty who valued music class. "I often worked with the other teachers and integrated music into their lessons," she said. "For example, if students were learning about the Revolutionary War in social studies, I would teach them the 'Virginia Reel' and dances of that time to tie the lessons together."

In 1978, Mrs. Iossi was encouraged by fellow teachers such as John McKee to start a chorus. "John told me, 'You have these kids singing, do something with it,'" she recalled. "So that's how Brown Bag Chorus began."

"There are many chapters in life. You can choose how you want to view life, and I am blessed in many ways. You go through the valleys to appreciate the mountain tops. And there are lots of mountain tops."

Students who participated in the initial Brown Bag Chorus were invested in the program. They signed a contract to confirm their commitment and practiced three days a week at lunch time. The Chorus was well recognized throughout the community and invited to sing at other elementary schools in the area, at state music and board of education conventions, and with the Toledo Symphony Orchestra.

"My goal was to make the students an appreciative audience," she said. "When you know what it feels like to be successful and appreciated, you will be a better audience."

Along with preparing students for Brown Bag Chorus, she practiced with the soloists for upcoming productions two days a week during lunch. "Our productions were so exciting," she added. "Every year we did different shows such as *Tom Sawyer* and *Alice in Wonderland* and the students did it all – singing, dancing, and acting."

The performances would not have been successful without help from parents. "There were more than 80 kids who participated in the performances," Mrs. Iossi recalled. "Our parents were truly committed to each production. They made up the choreography, and designed and made the costumes. It was phenomenal."

She retired from the district in 1990 and was inducted into the community Hall of Fame in 2013. Being a teacher was just one chapter in her life; others were serving as a mother, wife, and grandmother. She has braved the loss of a daughter, Mary, who died at 52; and a son, Steve, who died at 41. Steve was a great help to OHES productions before her retirement, and the Brown Bag Chorus students paid tribute to him by singing at his memorial.

Her other sons are Paul, who lives in Michigan, and David, who lives in Toledo. Sadly, her husband Glenn, with whom she walked her life journey, passed away in 2015. She lovingly recalled how he enjoyed working in his garden and called it his labor of love. She laughed, adding: "He labored, and I loved it."

Today, she delights in playing bridge, reading, and exercising. She enjoys helping her friends, especially her dear friend Barb, a stroke survivor, who inspires Mrs. Iossi and has made a significant impact on her life.

Kevin Miller DEPARTS



**SUPERINTENDENT MILLER RESIGNS;
REPLACEMENT SEARCH UNDER WAY**



Superintendent Kevin S. Miller is resigning after nine years as leader of Ottawa Hills Local Schools to join the Buckeye Association of School Administrators (BASA), a statewide group representing Ohio superintendents and other top

administrators. "It has been my honor and privilege to lead Ottawa Hills Local Schools over the past nine years," Dr. Miller said. "The district has grown in many wonderful ways during that time, and we can all take great pride in that." His last day is July 31.

In his new position as BASA's Director of Government Relations, Dr. Miller will focus on the state legislature, where he will seek to influence legislation that affects Ohio's public schools. "It's a unique opportunity to champion public education at the state level," he said.

Under Dr. Miller's leadership, Ottawa Hills has been consistently ranked as Ohio's top school district. Ottawa Hills is the only district to receive all A's for four consecutive years on the Ohio Department of Education's Local Report Card. As superintendent, Dr. Miller manages the district's \$14.9 million budget in support of about 990 students. The district has 130 employees, including 96 teachers and paraprofessionals.

The Ottawa Hills Board of Education hired Finding Leaders, a national company in executive placement, to help them with the search. The company already has conducted focus groups with faculty, staff, parents, and students. According to the Finding Leaders timeline, it expects to submit the names of semifinalists by May 8, with the new superintendent hired by the board by May 22.

NEWS BRIEFS

TEAMS TAKE HOME TAAC TROPHIES

Congratulations to our Academic Quiz Bowl and eighth-grade boys' basketball teams for winning Toledo Area Athletic Conference titles outright; and to our girls' varsity basketball team for sharing the conference title. Well done, students, coaches, and advisors!

STUDENTS WIN AWARDS AT STATE SCIENCE SYMPOSIUM

High school students had a strong showing at the 56th Ohio Junior Science and Humanities Symposium. Freshman Pram Koirala, junior Priya Bhatt, and senior Abigail Berk presented original research at the event. Pram and Priya were two of 24 students selected by the state to participate in the paper-presentation competition. Pram was the state's only ninth grader who earned the opportunity to do a paper presentation for her work on solar cells. Priya won second-place overall for her paper presentation.

O CANADA! SYMPHONIC BAND PLANS TRIP TO TORONTO

The 2019-2020 Symphonic Band will hit at least one very high note next season: a group trip to Toronto. The multi-day trip is the first of its kind for the band. The trip is January 17-20, 2020, and spans the MLK Holiday (Jan. 20). Many stops are on the agenda, including attending a clinic with music faculty at the University of Toronto.

FOR MR. TORIO, MATH+TEACHING+ADVISING=AWARD



Congratulations to high school math teacher Tony Torio for being named the 2019 Sun Federal Credit Union "Extraordinary Teacher of the Year." The award comes with a \$500 check for Mr. Torio and a \$1,000 check for him to award to a senior in the form of a scholarship. "I am very thankful to have the support of my students and this great community," Mr. Torio said. "It is a privilege and an honor to choose a deserving student for the scholarship award from Sun Federal Credit Union. I thank them for supporting education in such a generous way."

CHESS TEAM SWEEPS OPPONENTS IN LEAGUE TOURNAMENT

The high school chess team went undefeated in this year's Greater Toledo Area Chess League Tournament. In January, they won the championship trophy in the annual Beach Chess Tournament at St. John's Jesuit High School and Academy. Congratulations to teacher/coach Tim Adkins and the team.

ART FAIR SHINES SPOTLIGHT ON HUNDREDS OF PIECES OF ART

The annual week-long Elementary School Art Fair celebrated the creativity of students. Throughout the hallways, students in grades K-6 displayed their best artwork. Almost 500 pieces received a colorful participant ribbon; students in grades 1-6 also received award ribbons.



No **BONES** About It! Foundation Supports Anatomy Enrichment

SOPHOMORE ISABELLE GRAY IS NOW GETTING MORE OUT OF HIGH SCHOOL ANATOMY, THANKS TO THE OTTAWA HILLS SCHOOLS FOUNDATION.

She and her classmates are using modeling clay and small mannequins to build replicas of the human body and its interconnected systems. By year's end, this new hands-on approach will produce a complete three-dimensional replica. The tool is helping teach the subject beyond what is offered from textbooks, websites, and the traditional animal dissection.

"I am a very visual learner and being able to use the mannequins helps visualize the material on the body," said Isabelle. "You can envision how the material affects the body as well, which is super beneficial. The mannequins are super fun to work with and Mrs. Puskala is always around to help guide you."

The students' anatomy teacher, Liz Puskala (OH '99), got the idea from a professional-development conference she attended last year. Using the same

models now in her classrooms, she and other teachers learned to use the mannequins to expand students' understanding of the human body.

Convinced the idea would improve anatomy education at Ottawa Hills, she approached the Foundation last summer to fund the purchase of 11 mannequins for her two sections of Physiology and Anatomy class. (The class is one of four students can choose from to meet their laboratory science requirement for graduation.) The full-body mannequins – about three feet in height – are small skeletons (with some cavities for organs) that break easily into halves. Each is assigned to a two-student team, who then work together on it throughout the year.

Mrs. Puskala, who joined the OH faculty in 2017, submitted a funding proposal soon after returning from the conference. The Foundation strongly encourages Ottawa Hills faculty at all grade levels to seek enrichment opportunities for students. The Foundation trustees endorsed the plan and gave her money to acquire the mannequins, clay, and related tools, which arrived in time for the start of the 2018-2019 school year.

The district already had two and a half identical mannequins. That small number meant students spent part of class disassembling what they built so the next class could start fresh. Now, with 13 full mannequins (or 27 halves), approximately 54 students can pair up and work on their own.

Since the mannequins were introduced, students are more engaged with the



material. "It's been such a difference this year. Learning has moved to another level," she added. "Students can only do so many virtual or online activities. It's hard for them to comprehend just from seeing something on a screen or completing a worksheet."

To master the content, students use the mannequins, online instruction, and textbooks. While artistic quality matters, appearance is just one aspect of grading. Because of the time and effort students are showing, Mrs. Puskala has created "Best Of" awards to recognize artistic achievement for individual systems and muscle groups.



GIFTS at WORK

Elementary School Spanish Teacher Prepares for Colombian Adventure

Like every other public school educator, Lisa Marinelli faces the task of making sure she has earned the required credits to maintain state licensure. With that deadline again approaching, she studied her options.

One answer seemed obvious. As a teacher of beginning Spanish at the elementary school, why not immerse herself in a Spanish-speaking culture to learn its geography, art, music, food, and other customs and bring that fresh knowledge to her classroom? So she proposed a cultural trip to Colombia, guided by an educator and native Colombian, which she came across online.

The plan was so educationally appealing that the district not only approved it as meeting her licensure requirements, but the Ottawa Hills Schools Foundation voted to support the trip financially. In addition, the Ottawa Hills Schools Parent Association is contributing to the cost.



"When [the Foundation] awarded me the funds, I was very appreciative and overwhelmed," Ms. Marinelli said. "I think they agreed that for any foreign language teacher, if you go into a country in which they speak the language you teach and you engage in that culture, that itself is growth which you will bring back to the classroom." The 13-day trip takes place in July, and includes visits to the cities of Bogotá, Armenia, Cartagena, and Santa Marta, and national parks.

Ms. Marinelli has been an elementary teacher since 1989 and at Ottawa Hills Elementary School since August 2003. She joined when the district's elementary foreign-language program was starting its fifth year. As more students entered the district who spoke languages at home other than English, her role changed. With certification in teaching English as a Second Language (ESL), she started wearing two hats: teaching Spanish to third and fourth graders and working with ESL students in grades K-12. And that's been her special niche for the last decade.

The Right Answer The Ottawa Hills Academic Quiz Bowl team of seniors Mazin Omer and Daniel Liu, junior Hank Griffin, and sophomore Meredith Randall ran the field with a perfect 10-0 record to claim the 2019 National Academic Quiz Tournaments (NAQT) Ohio Small School State Championship. Mazin was named the All-Ohio Top Individual Performer.

eSports A new district sports team is competing this year, thanks to support from the OHS Foundation. The eSports Club launched this year, and has done well so far in its competitive meets. Students compete against other schools in drone racing or in one of three video games: League of Legends, Super Smash Bros., or Rocket League. The team also has received outside sponsor support as well.



Theatrical Excellence

The OHS Foundation is proud to be a title sponsor for the district's theatrical productions. So far this year, our support has benefitted *Next to Normal*, *Beauty and the Beast JR*, and *Newsies*. Closing out the 2018-2019 season will be *'night, Mother* (May 24-26 and rated PG-13). Congratulations students and their families for such remarkable shows and individual performances.



Science Olympiad

The high school Science Olympiad team, sponsored by the OHS Foundation, had a great day at the Regional Science Olympiad tournament in March. Our students finished first in five events: Astronomy, Chemistry Lab, Circuit Lab, Fermi Questions, and Thermodynamics. Members collectively had their best performances of the season. The team finished second and qualified for their seventh straight trip to the state finals. Congratulations also to the junior high Science Olympiad team; they had 17 top-six finishes and finished seventh as a team.





Ottawa Hills Local Schools

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ALUMNI CAN ALSO REGISTER ONLINE AT:
ottawahillsschools.org/content2/ohalumni



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Serving Up Appreciation

THANK YOU TO THE MORE THAN 120 GUESTS WHO ATTENDED THE APRIL 12 LEGACY LUNCHEON.

This biennial event, supported by the OHS Foundation, is the district's way to honor Village residents for their role in maintaining a legacy of excellence in both our community and schools. The Brown Bag Chorus, Junior Chorale, The Choraliers, and High School Symphonic Band did their usual spectacular job of providing entertainment. Student Council members served our guests while the Student Council presidents led the program. It was a great day! See you in April 2021!



Open for MORE NEWS from
AROUND THESE HILLS!