

A publication of Ottawa Hills Local Schools for alumni, families, and Villagers

AROUND these HILLS

SUMMER 2020



STRONG TOGETHER

District adapts to a COVID-19 world

Special Coverage

Alumni share reflections from the front lines

Video career talks connect students, alumni

A look ahead: What happens this fall?

2020 seniors: In a class by themselves

ohschools.org



#1
high school in Ohio!



PROMOTING TEAM GROWTH

While we await the return of fall sports, the Ottawa Hills Schools Foundation is proud to help the co-ed cross-country and girls' soccer and field hockey teams get stronger and more competitive. Foundation grants from the Mindel Family Athletic Fund are allowing these athletes to attend summer sports camps.

Now that's worth standing up and cheering about.



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insidesummer2020



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HIGH SCHOOL NAMED TOP OF THE CLASS IN OHIO

U.S. News & World Report has a new No. 1 in Ohio: Ottawa Hills High School. The school was measured against 902 others from 732 Ohio school districts.

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MOST LIKELY TO ... NEVER BE FORGOTTEN

Vocal music director Donna Wipfli has ended a nearly 40-year teaching career – 30 of which were enjoyed in Ottawa Hills. A new scholarship honors her many contributions.

14

TESTED BY ADVERSITY, CLASS OF 2020 OVERCOMES

The Class of 2020 pulled together to finish a senior year remade by COVID-19 and capped by a stadium-size Commencement and a Village parade.

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AN AWARD-WINNING DISTRICT



Learn more about our awards at ohschools.org/honors

ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION:

Around These Hills celebrates the students, faculty, and alumni of Ottawa Hills Local Schools, and the donors making possible many of their achievements. It is published four times a year by the district's Office of Communications in partnership with the Ottawa Hills Schools Foundation. It is mailed to all homes and businesses in the Village, alumni, and donors to the Ottawa Hills Schools Foundation.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU:

Around These Hills welcomes letters from readers at info@ohschools.org.

ADDRESS CHANGE REQUESTS:

Around These Hills, 3600 Indian Rd., Ottawa Hills, OH 43606

On the cover

Parents, alumni, teachers, and the community pulled together to help students (and others across the country) adapt to COVID-19. Stories sharing that compassion appear throughout this special edition. Alumni coverage begins on page 18

LOOKING AHEAD: FALL 2020

Our next issue will provide an update on the opening of school and profile the recipients of 2020 alumni awards.

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MISSION

In partnership with our community, Ottawa Hills Local Schools will challenge and inspire each student to realize his or her unique potential; to embrace learning as a lifelong process; and to become an active, responsible citizen.

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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.

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DISTRICT LETTER

A year of WHYs and HOWs

Our world changed forever this spring because of COVID-19. In fact, change never seemed to stop coming. Our schools and playgrounds closed, our extracurricular activities halted, and families were forced to create classrooms out of dining rooms.

But we became resilient and adapted. Now, we are slowly reopening society and rebuilding our institutions. As we do, my advice is to "Start With Why."

It's a theme I introduced when I joined Ottawa Hills. The phrase is a shorthand way of asking: What inspires you to do your best? By asking that probing question, it leads you to the source of your energy and focus. In August, I distributed bracelets embossed with the "Start With Why" message to remind everyone about the role of purpose in achieving greatness.

In late May, I distributed something else: facemasks featuring an OH logo. Every member of the Class of 2020 received one at Commencement. The mask has a functional purpose (slowing the spread of germs) but also a symbolic one. It says you are part of our community and the effort to protect each other.

Bracelets and facemasks: Bookends to the most unpredictable year in education I have ever seen.

For the past three months, our educators had to focus more on "How" than "Why." How do we enable students to learn from home? How do we keep socially distanced, people employed, and our economy moving? How do we organize a Commencement that meets stringent public health safety standards?

Answering those questions allowed us to adapt to the pandemic. We still have a lot of "How" issues to address, and we will do so as a team and as quickly as possible. As we do, we must bring our "Why" back to the forefront.

Evidence of our "Why" was on display at our spectacular outdoor Commencement. We created a shared memory that will be fondly remembered for decades. In June, it will be on display again as we launch the privately funded Summer Learning Plan to keep our students academically stimulated. It's time again for everyone to focus on "Why."



Superintendent Dr. Adam Fineske
afineske@ohschools.org

 [@AdamFineske](https://twitter.com/AdamFineske)  [fineskeadam](https://www.instagram.com/fineskeadam)

Mission focused, moving forward

OTTAWA HILLS LOCAL SCHOOLS WILL

spend the next two months studying a question the district has never before faced: Will our buildings reopen as normal this fall?

The answer is likely “No” as some accommodations to deal with COVID-19 are likely. But the fact the question is being asked underscores the massive shifts in expectations and operations districts everywhere are facing. “We take this responsibility very seriously, as students’ health and safety cannot be compromised,” said Superintendent Dr. Adam Fineske.

The spring of 2020 was a roller-coaster ride for district families and employees (see timeline below). Every week seemingly brought news of a new state order affecting our 1,000-plus students, beginning with Gov. Mike DeWine’s March 12 decision to close schools temporarily. As he did, district buildings were emptied and Village homes became makeshift classrooms.

“We thank parents for providing heroic support to their children and teachers for making learning from home possible,” Superintendent Fineske said.

Guiding the district forward is the OH Coronavirus Response Team. Its recommendations – guided by national, state, and local health guidelines – will be presented to the Board of Education for review and shared with parents along the way. Here are some questions to be addressed:



Signs of the time: Safety fencing goes up around the Elementary School playground; a socially distant but memorable Commencement.

- **When will schools reopen?** The current scheduled date for students is Aug. 17 (Aug. 13 for teachers).
- **How will schools operate?** Some states are studying staggered days of attendance to limit building populations.
- **What is the future role of remote learning?** It replaced in-person instruction starting April 8.
- **Will there be fall sports?** The Ohio High School Athletic Association will make the final decision.
- **How will health and safety be assured?** Among the accommodations being used by businesses are temperature checks, hand-sanitizing stations, and facemasks.

KEY DATES IN CRISIS

March 4: District sends first communication to parents about coronavirus-related planning and changes in operations.

March 11: District cancels out-of-state trips and field trips, restricts visitors to buildings, and postpones non-essential events drawing more than 100 visitors.

March 12: Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine temporarily closes schools through April 3.

March 13: Teachers begin creating at-home lessons during the temporary shutdown. Spring sports teams continue practicing.

March 16: First meeting is held of the district’s Coronavirus Response Team.

March 30: Gov. DeWine extends order closing schools from April 3 to May 1.

April 8: Remote Learning Plan launched.

April 14: Board of Education adopts rule allowing it to meet “virtually” during crisis.

April 20: All Ohio K-12 schools closed for remainder of academic year; spring sports season canceled.

April 27: Gov. DeWine launches Responsible Restart Ohio.

May 26: High school athletes resume low-contact, non-contact sports.

May 28: Class of 2020 participates in outdoor Commencement and post-event parade through the Village.

DRONE PHOTO BY TREY SOUDER AND PETAR ISALIOVIC



Ottawa Hills High School has 322 students in grades 9-12.

A VIEW FROM THE TOP

High School named best in Ohio

OTTAWA HILLS HIGH SCHOOL IS NOW THE No. 1 high school in Ohio, according to the annual *U.S. News & World Report* rankings. But a celebration will have to wait until fall as the news arrived in the middle of the COVID-19 shutdown.

The climb to No. 1 has been steady. For the past two years, the building finished fifth in Ohio. Nationally, it's climbed from 258 to 136 to 92 in the past three years. The state rankings looked at 902 high schools and 732 school districts; for the national standings, 17,790 high schools were studied.

In the "Math and Reading Proficiency" category (one of six used to determine the rankings), our high school tied for No. 1 in the United States. The publication creates that

RANKING FACTORS	USA	OHIO
College Readiness Index	#190	#3
College Curriculum Breadth Index	#151	#5
Math and Reading Proficiency	#1 (tie)	#1
Math and Reading Performance	#333 (tie)	#13

rank using the aggregated scores on state assessments students may be required to pass for graduation.

"We are thrilled to be considered the No. 1 high school in Ohio and among the top 100 in the United States," said Principal Ben McMurray.

"Our faculty and staff work incredibly hard to ensure our students feel valued, challenged, and supported. Our school's mission encourages students to be well-rounded, creative, compassionate, and curious. We are grateful for the strong partnership with our parents and community."

In coordination with RTI International, *U.S. News* does not collect any information directly from high schools. The data comes from the Common Core of Data from the U.S. Department of Education website; Ohio math and reading level assessment tests and high school graduation rates (from the 2017-2018 school year); The College Board; and the International Baccalaureate.

The rankings use six indicators of school quality:

- **College readiness**, based on the proportions of 12th graders who took and passed AP exams.

- **College curriculum breadth**, based on proportions of 12th graders who took and passed AP exams in multiple content areas.

- **Math and reading proficiency**.
- **Math and reading performance**, based on whether performance on state assessments exceeded expectations given the school's proportion of underserved students.

- **Underserved student performance**, based on how black, Hispanic, and low-income students performed on state assessments compared with those who are not underserved in the state.

- **Graduation rates**, based on the proportion of students who entered 9th grade in 2013-2014 and graduated four years later.

TREASURE HUNT

How good is your Ottawa Hills IQ? Do you know what these images show and where on campus they are located? (Answers on page 10)

1



2



THE DEAN WILL SEE YOU NOW

Darrin Broadway looks into future in new role

ONE OF THE MANY LEGACIES OF COVID-19 will be a rethinking of learning models for the 21st century. In fact, signs of classroom change were present even before the virus: the increased role of technology, a growing need for personalized learning, greater collaboration among learners, and an embrace of new teaching and curriculum strategies.

To keep Ottawa Hills Local Schools ahead of those and other changes at the secondary level, it's turning to Darrin Broadway, a 27-year classroom teacher and our new Dean of Secondary Teaching and Learning. "I know it's a mouthful, but the title was created with precision to convey the scope of the work to be explored," said Mr. Broadway.

The job description and its goals are expansive, too, but focus primarily on three groups (parents, teachers, students) and three areas (instruction, intervention, innovation). While the work focuses on grades 7-12 (those in the secondary level), the progress achieved in helping teachers and parents diagnose root causes of academic and behavioral challenges will be applied at the Elementary School (grades K-6) as well.

"Developing systems to strengthen communication among teachers, students, parents, and our leadership will be paramount," he said. "Synergy is the key."

Mr. Broadway hopes to continue to be involved with producing and assisting in school theater productions; his classroom replacement has already been hired. Discussions about the deanship started before COVID-19 disrupted the learning environment – and school year.

"Darrin is the perfect person to lead this review,



Darrin Broadway (center) will work with students, parents, and fellow teachers to study and implement ideas for improving secondary teaching and learning. BELOW: Mr. Broadway and sophomore Roger Xie have some fun with the Personalized Learning Approach.

analyze the data, and get results" said Superintendent Dr. Adam Fineske. "He loves teaching and students, and his record of community engagement is unmatched."

Mr. Broadway brings to the role a reputation for excellence and innovation. Last year, he led an effort that resulted in The Studio, a student-run program that helps other students become more successful academically.

"Working with all types of students is my passion," he said. "We will continue to offer academic coaching, tutoring, and Structured Learning Assistance at all times of the day to help students grow academically and socio-emotionally." Among the additional ideas to benefit students: reinventing study halls and creating a "Leadership Academy" that teaches elements of leadership, critical thinking and problem solving, collaboration, creativity, conflict management, and adaptability.

Parents will be involved through workshops and advisory committees that will explore homework expectations, vertical curriculum alignment, executive functioning challenges, emotional literacy, and 21st century learning.



ONLINE: Watch a video explaining the role at ohschools.org/videos. Follow him on Instagram at [@darrinbroadway](https://www.instagram.com/darrinbroadway) and on Twitter at [@BroadwayEdlead](https://twitter.com/BroadwayEdlead).

DATABANK

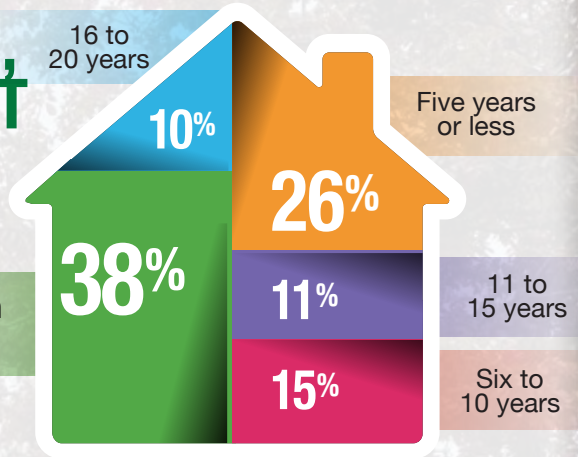
SURVEY SAYS...

Ottawa Hills Local Schools asked Village residents for their opinions this spring on two issues: district improvement priorities and communication tools and preferences. The results are now in. More than 660 responses were received either by mail or online (a 23-percent response rate). Several questions were identical to those in the district's 2017 Community Survey. (Great Lakes Marketing Research conducted both surveys). View the survey questions, full results, and resident comments at ohschools.org/community.

HOME, SWEET HOME

Years in the Village

More than 20 years



INSIDE THE NUMBERS

39%

'Empty nesters' who had children graduate from OH



6%

Respondents who are OH alumni



7%

'Empty nesters' who never had children attend OH schools

19%

Follow the district on both Facebook and Twitter



49%

Do *not* follow any district social media platform

AREAS OF INVESTMENT

Scale of 1-5: 5 is fully support; 1 is do not support at all.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS	4/5	3	1/2
Upgraded science labs and enhanced educational programs	79%	12%	6%
Improved climate control at both buildings	70%	16%	12%
New 21st century collaborative workspace for students in grades 7-12	57%	23%	15%

FACULTY, STAFF ADDITIONS	4/5	3	1/2
Math, science, and English teachers to accommodate smaller class sizes	71%	15%	11%
Special education staff to enhance K-12 experiences	63%	20%	14%
Counselors to address social and emotional support needs	56%	23%	18%

YOU'VE GOT (AND WANT) EMAIL!



When presented eight types of school news, residents selected email as the preferred way to receive that information for all but one (alumni achievements). Other delivery options were social media, *Around These Hills*, website, or "Do not want this information."





Spring sports: A final look

Here are the teams whose seasons were lost to COVID-19: boys' tennis, girls' lacrosse, baseball, softball, boys' lacrosse, and co-ed track and field.



THREE-PEAT!

FOR THE THIRD CONSECUTIVE YEAR, Ottawa Hills Local Schools has won the All Sports Cup for the best varsity athletic program in the Toledo Area Athletic Conference (TAAC). The trophy is awarded to the TAAC member whose fall, winter, and spring sports teams collectively perform the best in conference competition. (Points are assigned by a team's finish with the most going for first.)



While the pandemic forced the cancellation of spring sports, 2019-2020 still had many highlights. Here is our "Top 10" list of sports achievements from Green Bear Nation:

- ▶ District transforms student health through capital campaign, opening of The Kadens Family Fitness Center.
- ▶ Ottawa Hills retains All Sports Cup for the best overall varsity sports program in the Toledo Area Athletic Conference.
- ▶ Girls win third straight, boys win 14th straight TAAC soccer titles. Nate Baer named "Coach of the Year" for Ohio boys' soccer by the National Federation of State High School Associations.
- ▶ Dance Team scores three, top-10 finishes at states.
- ▶ TAAC titles galore at the Junior High: boys' and girls' cross-country teams, 7th-grade boys' basketball, and 8th-grade girls' volleyball.
- ▶ Boys' golf captures 11th straight TAAC title.
- ▶ Girls', boys' varsity basketball teams win sectional titles.
- ▶ Girls' varsity cross-country wins third straight TAAC title.
- ▶ Swimming added as a varsity sport.
- ▶ Abbie Westmeyer, Priya Bhatt advance to states in girls' tennis doubles.

BEAR NECESSITIES

Whether you know someone with a new baby or just want to be comfortable at a picnic, the Bear Cave (managed by the OH Boosters) can help. The Cave is open 11 a.m.-noon during the school year at the Junior/Senior High School.



- 1 2T crew neck shirt (French Toast) | \$18
- 2 OH onesie (Rabbit Skins) | \$12
- 3 OH headband (Pretty Bands by Marla) | \$12
- 4 50 x 60-inch Premium Flannel Blanket (Boxercraft) | \$40

BRIEFLY

- ▶ Community Wait Night raised \$7,575 for the Ottawa Hills Music & Theatre Association and the Ottawa Hills Schools Parent Association. After fees, each group received just over \$3,700.
- ▶ The “Lucky You, It’s a No-Show Auction” raised \$10,001; after expenses and fees, the event returned \$8,900 to OH Boosters for support of Green Bear athletics.
- ▶ Eighth-grader Razzi Masroor placed first in Ohio at the March 7 MathCounts competition, earning a trip to the national finals. He and his OH MathCounts teammates finished third as a team.
- ▶ Biology teacher Jeremy Nixon received the 2020 George F. Leist Distinguished Teacher Award. It is presented annually at the Ohio Junior Science and Humanities Symposium to a teacher for outstanding help and inspiration to students.
- ▶ Junior Ella Langenderfer’s video about product safety and labeling won the National Poison Prevention Week video contest for her age group. Senior Yale Miller won Sun Federal Credit Union’s annual video contest, which asked participants to imagine they were running a credit union and needed to promote member benefits.



ABOVE: Drew Cochran (4th grade) and his interpretation of Caravaggio’s “The Cardsharps.”
BELOW: Maya Estrada (4th grade) and her interpretation of Frida Kahlo’s “Self-Portrait with Thorn Necklace and Hummingbird.”

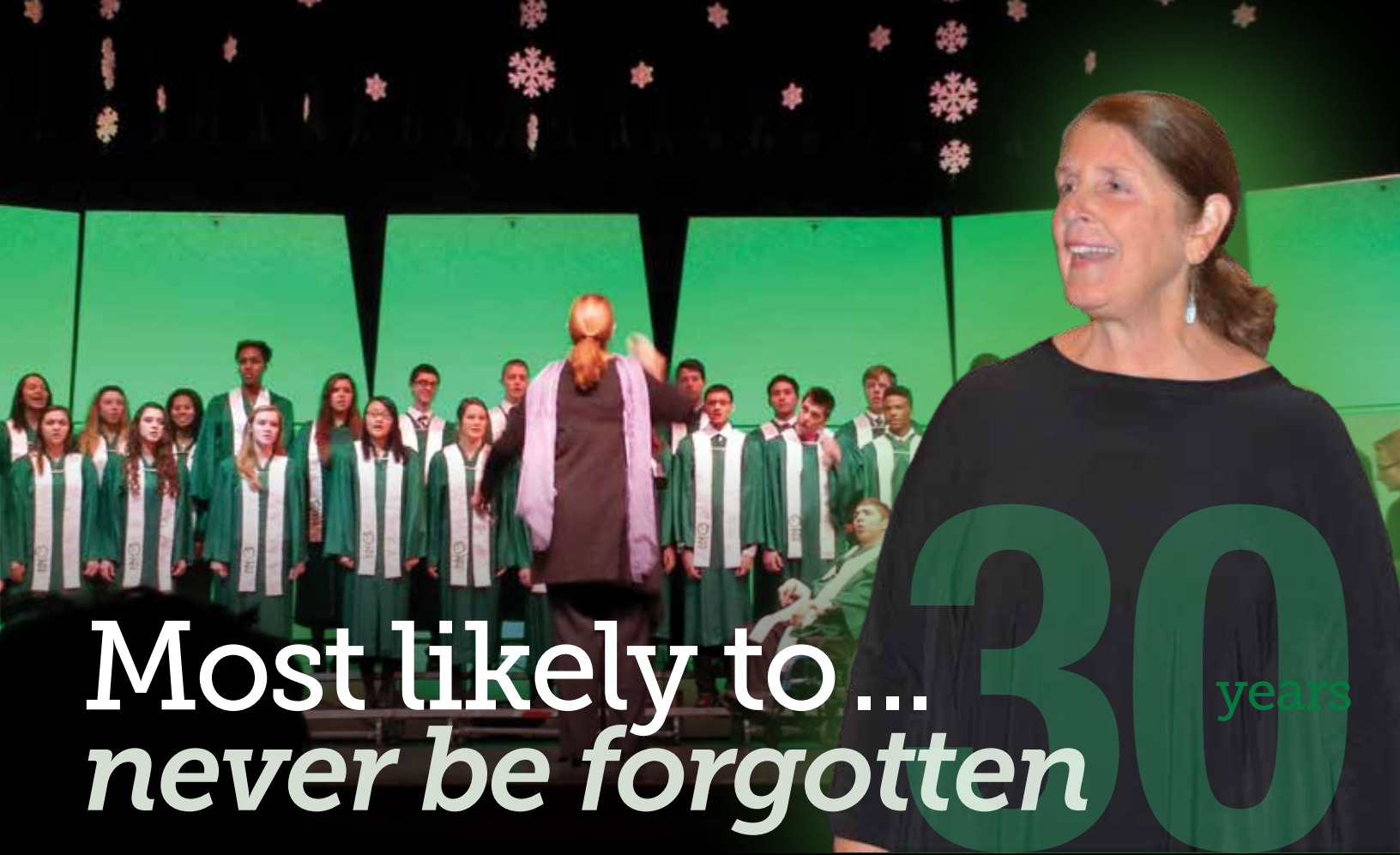
ART GALLERY

Copying usually is a big no-no in school. But for the Villagewide “Masterpiece Challenge” this spring, it was strongly encouraged. These entries caught our eyes. (See more entries on district’s Facebook page)



TREASURE HUNT ANSWERS

- 1 A section of the “Cynthia O’Connell Reading Patio” to the east of the Indian Road entrance of the Elementary School. It was dedicated in 2009 with funds raised by her former colleagues at the school.
- 2 A section of the “Student Reading” statue in the courtyard at the Junior/Senior High School. It was created by Joe Ann Cousino, who was an artist-in-residence. Many families contributed to the work, which was dedicated in November 2001.



Most likely to... *never be forgotten* 30 years

Donna Wipfli retires after 30 melodic years

BY KEVIN MERRILL

From her first days in 9th grade, Donna Wipfli knew she wanted to sing and lead a choir. Inspired by teacher-mentors and a mother who taught elementary school music, Mrs. Wipfli spent the following decades performing and teaching vocal music to others.

For 30 of the past 39 years, she has achieved those dreams in Ottawa Hills. She has taught general music and voice performance to thousands of OH students. And she has led them at more than 100 public concerts, from the Brown Bag Chorus to the Choraliers, and more than a dozen musicals.

But in late May, the curtain closed on that legacy of teaching and inspiring others. Sadly, the anticipated boisterous farewells and joyous communions were quieted by COVID-19. “As much as I love what I do, I’ve learned that time does indeed go quickly,” Mrs. Wipfli said. “It’s been a long and wonderful road. The time now is for me and my family.”



“Donna is an incredible educator,” said Ben McMurray, principal of the Junior/Senior High School, where Mrs. Wipfli has taught since 2013. “Her legacy lives on in every note, word, song, and concert she has been a part of at Ottawa Hills.” (For 23 years prior, she was the Elementary School music teacher.)

MUSICAL BEGINNINGS

Donna Tozer was born in Tappan, N.Y., about 30 miles north of New York City. Like Ottawa Hills, it had a single elementary and combination junior/senior high school. Her love of music – choral performance in particular – was nurtured by her mother (Betty) and two lifelong mentors: Jim Hughes at Tappan Zee High School and Professor Joe Huszti at Boston University.

When Professor Huszti moved from Boston University to California to start a master’s program in choral conducting at the University of California, Irvine, Ms. Tozer followed. “After graduating from Boston University, I got in my baby blue Volkswagen Fastback and, at 23 years old, drove across the country,” she said. “When I settled in some place for the night, I talked to my mom and dad.”

At UC Irvine, she earned a master of fine arts degree with a concentration in choral conducting and voice. While a student, she



GOING OUT IN STYLE: Under Mrs. Wipfli, the Choraliers' final public performance was with a chorale ensemble March 8 at New York City's Carnegie Hall.

performed numerous solos with the university's Concert Choir, including Handel's "Messiah." She also performed in the Chamber Singers, Women's Chamber Ensemble, and Freshman Chorus. Choir tours took her to Wales, Great Britain, Japan, and Taiwan.

"She's really a talented artist in her own right," said friend and OH parent Allison Johnson. For the past six years, Mrs. Johnson has served as the Ottawa Hills Music & Theatre Association's parent liaison to the Choraliers, giving her a front-row seat to Mrs. Wipfli's abilities.

"She creatively combines her passion for music with her love of education," Mrs. Johnson added. "She has taught students at all grade levels that music is a universal language and that it connects people."

Following UC Irvine, Mrs. Wipfli spent three years as the choral/vocal music teacher at Rubidoux High School in Riverside, Calif. Eager to return to the East Coast, she saw an ad for the choral music director position at Greenwich High School in Connecticut in the Sunday edition of *The New York Times* (the subscription was a Christmas gift from her father, Eliot). She applied and was hired, and then spent the next six years leading choirs at the district's junior/senior high school.

In the summers, she pursued her performance career and appeared in choirs from New Mexico to Michigan to France. In the summer of 1988 while part of the Sante Fe Desert Chorale, she was introduced at lunch to the group's new bass section leader. His name was Steven Wipfli. A romance bloomed, and by Christmas they were engaged. They were married in the summer of 1989 and then came the biggest decision of their young lives together: to make a home in northwest Ohio (Steven's home) or the East Coast.

The couple now shared summer musical adventures, including singing with the legendary choral conductor, Robert Shaw, in the south of France. The Robert Shaw Festival Singers recorded several choral CDs, including "Evolution of the Spirit,"

which was nominated for a Grammy in 1995.

ARRIVING IN OTTAWA HILLS

She spent her first year in northwest Ohio as a substitute teacher. When Helen Iossi retired in 1990 as the Elementary School music teacher, she selected the candidate backed out at the last minute. Mr. Wipfli, then the vocal music teacher at Ottawa Hills Junior/Senior High School, was asked if he knew of any elementary school music teachers. Why, yes, he did!

Ottawa Hills hired Mrs. Wipfli and for the next 23 years, she taught students to sing and play instruments; directed the Brown Bag Chorus; and worked with teaching colleagues to increase music's role in the curriculum.



A TEACHER FOR ALL OCCASIONS: Mrs. Wipfli with seven seniors from the class of 2019 whom she taught for 13 straight years. From left: Lauren Rownd, Amy Sun, Darion Wimmers, Nora Ayad, Mrs. Wipfli, Nolan Paterwich, George Mancy, and Henry Seifried. **RIGHT:** One of her many costume selections from the Elementary School Halloween parade.



“There are brilliant teachers in our two schools and they have this capacity for creativity that inspired me every day,” she said. “It just blows me away what happens in our classrooms.”

The Wipflis were music department colleagues in the district for many years, until he took a position as a Junior/Senior High art teacher to spend more time at home with daughter, Grace. (She graduated from Ottawa Hills in 2013; Mr. Wipfli retired in 2015.)

“Steven and I both know teaching vocal music requires a lot of time outside of school. There are rehearsals and performances for each choir, and then there are the musicals,” she said. “The Choraliers alone do 20 holiday-themed performances in December and then another full day on Valentine’s Day.”

When Mitch Tyson, the vocal music director at the Junior/Senior High School, retired in 2013, Mrs. Wipfli saw it as a chance to again work with the “big kids.” She was hired as his replacement and for the past seven years, has taught music classes and guided multiple choirs, including the Concert Choir, Junior High Choir, Choraliers, and Junior Chorale.

In addition, she was the music director (teaching the cast all the solos and ensemble songs) on many of the district’s most memorable musicals, including “You’re a Good Man, Charlie Brown,” “High School Musical,” “Les Misérables,” “The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee,” “Next to Normal,” “Oliver,” “Newsies,” and “Young Frankenstein.”

Reflecting on her impact, she is most proud of teaching students to sing from memory and introducing them to a wide variety of musical literature, from Gregorian chants and pop music to musical theater and everything in between. For example, at the March 15 choir concert canceled because of COVID-19, students were going to perform songs by Mozart, romantic French composer Gabriel Fauré, Leonard Cohen, and guitarist Charlie Puth.



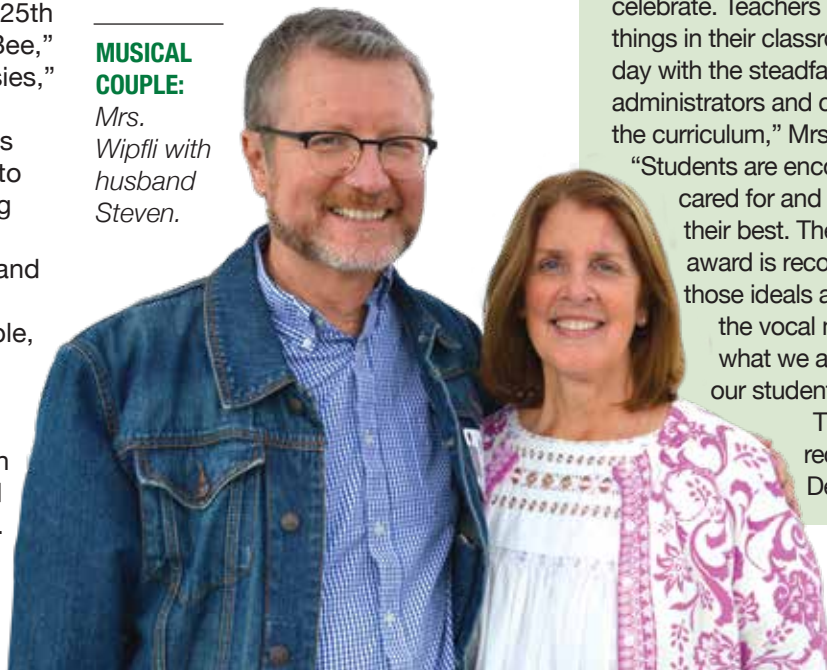
“I love that arc, the variety in repertoire,” she said. “My job is not to give the kids more of what they know and love. My job is to introduce them to the very wide world of choral music.”

She also has introduced them to the world beyond their classrooms by organizing performance trips to Chicago and Columbus, and three trips to New York (twice to perform at Carnegie Hall). “Whatever you can give students outside the classroom is extraordinary, and does nothing but broaden their awareness beyond what we do in the classroom,” she added.

In retirement, she plans to spend more time traveling and in the garden, volunteering at hospice, and with her husband witnessing firsthand the performance career of Grace. “It has been my extraordinary privilege to work with this faculty and to make music with these beautiful students,” she said. “I am honored and grateful.”

MUSICAL COUPLE:

Mrs. Wipfli with husband Steven.



OHMTA scholarship honors beloved teacher

TO CELEBRATE HER MANY ACADEMIC

and community contributions, the Ottawa Hills Music & Theatre Association (OHMTA) has created a scholarship to honor Donna Wipfli.

“**The Donna Tozer Wipfli Choralier Award**” will honor a graduating Choralier who aspires to the passions and artistic goals shared by Mrs. Wipfli. OHMTA members, students, and other community members surprised Mrs. Wipfli with the honor May 8.

Gathered safely apart on her Village lawn, students sang one of their favorite Valentine’s songs and held homemade signs that read “Most Likely To ...” followed by a personal message to their teacher. The notes pay homage to Mrs. Wipfli, who ended every school year by sharing a handwritten “Most Likely To ...” message with each student.

The event caught her by surprise, as did the formal presentation of the award plaque by Ben McMurray, principal of the Junior/Senior High School.

“Our schools have so much to celebrate. Teachers do incredible things in their classrooms every day with the steadfast support of administrators and colleagues across the curriculum,” Mrs. Wipfli said later.

“Students are encouraged and cared for and nudged to be their best. The creation of this award is recognition of how those ideals are embraced in the vocal music area. It is what we all aspire to give our students.”

The inaugural recipient is Rhi DeMilt (’20).



IN A CLASS BY THEMSELVES

COVID-tested senior class walk-up song: "My Way"

Not even a global pandemic could stop the Class of 2020 from upholding a longstanding tradition: walking across a graduation stage. But these Green Bears added a twist May 28 that likely won't be imitated: They did so into the arms of mom and dad.

Those moments were fitting for the Ottawa Hills' families of seniors who held tight through three months of upheaval. And for a class that lost out on being part of so many other OH traditions, it was appropriate for them to create a couple just for themselves: an outdoor ceremony (encircled by cars and devoid of crowds) and a joyous parade through Village streets.

Their academic lives became "virtual" and "socially distanced" because of COVID-19. But they persevered with support from each other and their teachers. Their resilience and courage inspired our community. In the end, the district presented a Commencement that shared a quality with the 61 graduates: incomparable.

ONE FOR THE AGES: In what is likely to be the first and last Commencement of its kind, students and their families drove vehicles into Niedermeier Stadium. Graduates and their parents then made their way to the platform at the 50-yard line. Top right: Members of the class gather Aug. 20 for their traditional Senior Breakfast to begin the school year. (Drone photo courtesy of Trey Souder and Petar Isailovic)

CLASS OF 2020: BY THE NUMBERS	
2	National Merit Commended Scholars
3	National Merit Finalists
6	Summa Cum Laude graduates (4.30 or above weighted GPA)
7	Magna Cum Laude graduates (4.1 to 4.299 weighted GPA)
8	Cum Laude graduates (3.9 to 4.099 weighted GPA)
23	National Honor Society members
34	Recipients of the President's Award for Educational Excellence
38	Graduates who earned Honors Diplomas
61	New alumni! 100% graduation rate



College destinations for the Class of 2020

Ibraheem Anjum	Madison Area Technical College	Michael Lohmeyer	Michigan State University
Joshua Assi	Brown University	William Lohmeyer	Arizona State University
Ben Berschback	Bowling Green State University	Abdul Maaieh	University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Priya Bhatt	Vanderbilt University	Isaac Machon	Cleveland State University
Sarah Boice	Southern Methodist University	Vikram Madhira	The University of Toledo
Ben Brancatto	Miami University	Nikko Martinez	The Ohio State University
Riley Brandt	University of Alabama	Charlotte Mayer-Heckathorn	The Ohio State University
Donavan Bridges	Johns Hopkins University	Taylor McCaleb	The University of Toledo
Anna Brown	University of South Carolina	Alexander McCullough	University of Michigan
Catherine Byrne	The Ohio State University	Henry McQueen	Georgetown University
John Craun	The University of Toledo	Yale Miller	University of Cincinnati
Sarah Davis	University of Kentucky	Nathan Moynihan	Miami University
Scott Davis	The University of Tennessee	Rohit Mukherjee	Purdue University
Rhiannon DeMilt	Macalester College	Seth Niemann	Earlham College
Claire Denk	The Ohio State University	Jack O'Brien	Texas Christian University
Daniel Durst	California Polytechnic State University	Conor O'Loughlin	Miami University
Will Estes	University of Kentucky	Deepta Paramasamy	The Ohio State University
Amelia Fruh	Miami University	Andrew Radlinski	The University of Toledo
Ignacio Garcia-Mata	The Ohio State University	Autumn Richard	The Savannah College of Art and Design
Hank Griffin	Miami University	Emily Shawaker	University of Cincinnati
Olivia Hartung	The University of Toledo	Owen Smith	The Ohio State University
Dante Hendricks	The University of Toledo	Kylee Stiriz	The University of Toledo
Brynn Hesse	Auburn University	Ramya Talla	The University of Toledo
Drew Hoffman	Vanderbilt University	Graham Tunis	Elon University
Thomas Howard	The Ohio State University	Hayes Unrein	The Ohio State University
Erin Kadrovach	University of Dayton	Yarden Wallace	The University of Toledo
Robert Kanarowski	The Ohio State University	Kaija Wallin	University of Denver
Danielle Keil	The Ohio State University	Tina Xie	The University of Toledo
Josiah Kidd	Arizona State University	Sean Yalcinkaya	The University of Melbourne
John Kight	Indiana University	Daniel Yang	Bowling Green State University
Jonathan Lohmeyer	The Ohio State University		



A Recognition of Excellence

Every spring, Ottawa Hills High School celebrates student achievement at an Honors Assembly. With input from faculty and administrators, deserving students are recognized for their accomplishments in the classroom, in the community, and on athletic fields.

Many of these awards and scholarships were created to honor **alumni, Village residents, and remarkable teachers**. To honor the individuals and groups who established these honors, *Around These Hills* presents the 2020 recipients of those awards and scholarships.

Sara Devenow Abrams Photography Award

Awarded to a senior to recognize passion, dedication, and accomplishment in the world of visual arts.

AVERY JOHNSON

James Casper I Dare You Leadership Award

Established in 1941 by William H. Danforth, founder of the Ralston Purina Co. He believed a balanced life of mental, physical, social, and spiritual development was the backbone of leadership. Presented to two juniors who exhibit personal integrity, balanced living, and potential for leadership.

**ZAKARIA MAAIEH &
SOPHIA STONE**

Connections Award

Named for the "Connections Window" above the high school front entrance, a gift of the Class of 1959. The art tribute synthesizes their experiences: high expectations; the richness of the curriculum; the close-knit, supportive community; and the connections they have made to the world since graduating.

YALE MILLER

Jon S. Davis Striving to Achieve Scholarship

Established in honor of class president Jon S. Davis ('61). Award recognizes, nurtures, and encourages hard work, perseverance, sound judgment, and a strong moral compass among students.

BEN BERSCHBACK

Tom Docis Phenomenal Physics Award

Established to honor Tom Docis, former chemistry and physics teacher, for his service, practical wisdom, and wry humor. Recipient approached the study of physics as Mr. Docis did: with wonder and enthusiasm.

SETH NIEMANN

Nanci Kay Effler Memorial Scholarship

Established in 2008 in memory of Nanci Kay Effler, mother of seven OH graduates, a tireless volunteer for Ottawa Hills Local Schools, and an accomplished artist.

Awarded to the senior who demonstrates passion and achievement in visual arts.

**CHARLOTTE
MAYER-HECKATHORN**

Don Fontaine French Award

Awarded to an advanced French student who has demonstrated outstanding proficiency in the languages and knowledge about the French-speaking people.

CARLY MCQUEEN

Kristjan Gislason Award

Established by Kristjan's father for the family's deep appreciation for the school's friendship to his son when he was an AFS student from Iceland in 1973-74. Awarded to the senior who has given unselfishly of his or her time and talents and who possesses a positive attitude for the benefit of the high school.

AMELIA FRUEH

Steve Gordon Memorial Scholarship

Established in memory of Steve Gordon ('57). Awarded to a senior who possesses oral and written acuity, eclectic and intense exploration of the literary genre, stylistic sophistication, and intellectual curiosity.

ALEXANDER MCCULLOUGH

Brian Nicholas Hoeflinger Memorial Scholarship Award

Established in 2019 in the memory of Brian Hoeflinger ('13). Awarded to a senior who best exemplifies his characteristics of strong work ethic, academic excellence, optimism, kindness, and quirky sense of humor.

Recipient leads by example rather than by recognition, is well liked and respected by peers, and strives to achieve academic excellence.

HENRY MCQUEEN

Nancy and Tom Kabat Scholarship Award

Established in 2003 by Nancy and Tom Kabat. Awarded to a senior who is uplifting, makes a positive contribution, and is well respected by classmates.

Also demonstrates leadership, a good work ethic, academic achievement, and volunteer service.

DREW HOFFMAN & JOHN KIGHT

Karen Klein Music Award

Established to honor Karen Klein ('58), a talented soprano who died shortly after a choir rehearsal preparing for the annual spring concert. She is remembered for her leadership, character, and musicianship.

CATHERINE BYRNE

Fred Kreutzfeld CheMystery Magic Award

Established in memory of Fred Kreutzfeld, former chemistry teacher and high school principal. He worked a special magic on the lives he touched. Recipient is a chemistry student who, though not necessarily at the top of the class, most clearly understands the "mystery" in chemistry and rejoices in the magic that understanding brings.

RAHMA ANJUM

David M. Larabee Memorial Scholarship

Established in 2008 in memory of David M. Larabee, math and science teacher. Awarded to a senior who demonstrates a passion for learning and talent in mathematics, science, and/or conservation-related fields. Special consideration goes to those with an interest in the fine arts and qualities of being a "Renaissance" person.

PRIYA BHATT

Chad Layne Foreign Language Award

Awarded to the senior who has an appreciation of foreign language study and excelled in French and Spanish.

Recipient demonstrates curiosity, enthusiasm, and diligence for the languages.

RHIANNON DEMILT

Liberty Memorial Award

Presented to a junior who best demonstrates academic achievement in civics, social studies, government, history, and a demonstrated commitment to service in pursuit of a more productive and naturally sustainable world.

ZAKARIA MAAIEH

Phillip W. Longenecker Science Award

Established to honor Phillip W. Longenecker ('47).

Selected by the science department and presented to a senior excelling in science.

PRIYA BHATT

Michigan Honor Trophy

Awarded to a senior for outstanding achievement in scholarship, athletics, and leadership. Determined by the athletic director and guidance director and presented by the University of Michigan Club of Toledo.

JOSHUA ASSI

Principal's Choice Award

Awarded to a senior for academic achievement and effort; profoundly impacting the school climate; and being a good citizen and respected and appreciated by peers and teachers.

PRIYA BHATT & ANNA BROWN

Dion Raftopoulos Award

Awarded to a senior who most represents the lofty ideals of musical accomplishment, scholarly attainment, and moral integrity as exemplified by Dion Raftopoulos.

PRIYA BHATT

Robert Repp Social Studies Scholarship Award

Established to honor Robert Repp. Awarded to a senior who understands the qualities of a good citizen, excelled over four years in social studies, and plans to continue those studies at college.

Recipient shows the potential to actively pursue leadership roles in society. (Members of the social studies department provide this financial award.)

CHARLOTTE MAYER-HECKATHORN

Lindy Redmann Sports Award

Established in memory of Linda Beth Redmann ('74). Presented to a junior field hockey player who exemplifies Ms. Redmann's characteristics: a love of all sports, fair play, and team competition; a quiet, persuasive leader; modest and determined; loyal to family and friends; an independent thinker; and a keen sense of humor.

MEGHAN ROWND

Kathryn H. Saxby Memorial Scholarship

Awarded to a senior based on academic excellence, GPA, class rank, SAT/ACT scores, a demonstrated interest in music, involvement in school activities, and community and school volunteer service.

HANK GRIFFIN

John Phillip Sousa Band Award

Awarded to the outstanding senior band student (chosen by the instrumental music teacher).

DANIEL YANG

Peggy Thomas Memorial Scholarship Award

Awarded to the senior who best exemplifies the characteristics of Mrs. Thomas: affability, happiness, enthusiasm for life, and putting forth a determined effort toward school.

ANNA BROWN

Ross Treuhaft Memorial Scholarship

Established in 2012 with contributions from the Treuhaft family in memory of Ross Treuhaft. Awarded to a senior who welcomes diversity; understands and has compassion toward students with special needs or who are different from the norm; has an interest in special education; demonstrates a desire to include others different from themselves; and possesses kindness and joy.

NATHAN MOYNIHAN

Lori Warner Levy Memorial Award

Established in 1999 in memory of Lori Warner Levy, an intensely creative businesswoman and mother, an accomplished musician, and promising artist. Awarded to a senior for outstanding creativity in the fine and performing arts.

SARAH BOICE

Donna Tozer Wipfli Choralier Award

Established in 2020 in honor of vocal music teacher Donna Tozer Wipfli, who taught from 1990-2020 at the Elementary School and Junior/Senior High School. Awarded annually to a senior member of the Choraliers who aspires to the passions and artistic goals of Mrs. Wipfli: Believing in the enduring value of singing together with purpose.

RHIANNON DEMILT

Mayor Jean Youngen Leadership Award

Established in honor of Jean Youngen, former mayor of Ottawa Hills. Recipient has acted to improve the quality of life in the community; engages with a cross section of society; and advances points of view that may not always be widely accepted and has done so with positive energy, tact, and enthusiasm.

PRIYA BHATT

It takes a VILLAGE

Alumni respond to pandemic

The COVID-19 crisis has shaken the world. But it hasn't defeated the resolve of people to step into action for others. From providing care and creating new technologies to reporting on the issue and raising money, Ottawa Hills alumni are making contributions. In doing so, they are helping others through the pandemic. Here are the stories of six such individuals.

Megan Fenton ('13)

The ultimate first responder:

On the front lines in Utah

Few alumni are more on the COVID-19 front lines than Megan Fenton ('13). As a firefighter and emergency medical technician in Utah, she not only works to protect others every day but she must constantly protect herself against a new danger.

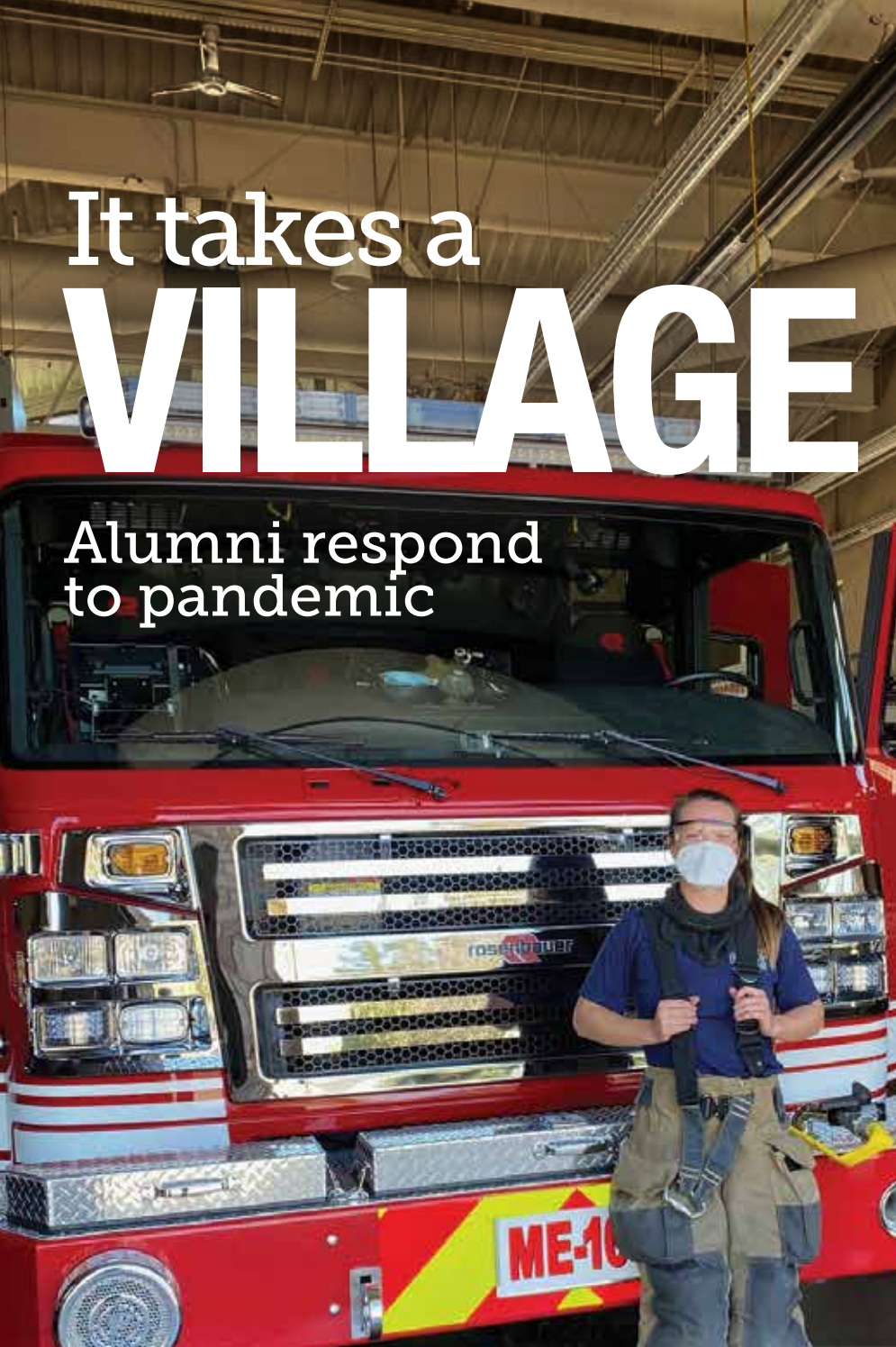
"Coronavirus has been keeping us busy and eager to continuously serve our communities," she said. "Our main priority is trying to keep everyone safe during this time of uncertainty and anxiety."

She works for the Unified Fire Authority, which serves 400,000 people in 15 communities around Salt Lake City. She joined the department just last spring; it's the largest fire department in her state and provides fire protection, emergency medical services, and other emergency responses.

"If you call for 9-1-1, you can always expect us to be dressed in a mask, protective goggles, and gloves in addition to being professional and safe," she said. "This job is my passion and I love educating people on what it entails and what we are doing during this time."

The strenuous nature of the job is something she can handle. She played four years of field hockey at both Ottawa Hills and Michigan State University.

She works 48 hours on and 96 hours off. "So I work at the fire station for two days straight and then I have four days off," she said. "It truly is the best job."



Photos courtesy of Unified Fire Authority

James Schwann ('19)

Making a difference in a hot spot

Since beginning his freshman year at Columbia University, James Schwann ('19) has become a New Yorker. So when COVID-19 took aim at the Big Apple – more than 204,000 cases and nearly 16,400 deaths – he and a few classmates took action.

Along with fellow freshmen Kuangye Wang and Claire Lempert, they looked for ways to help the city and identified convalescent plasma (CP) therapy as the way to make a difference. They started a fundraising site for the New York Blood Center, one of the largest providers of CP therapy in the nation.

“Currently, it is the only legitimate ‘treatment’ that has shown to help



Visit the GoFundMe page:
gofundme.com/ff/NYBloodCenterFund

critically ill COVID-19 patients,” said Mr. Schwann, who is studying both financial economics and political science

To further aid the region, he also started a student-led tutoring service.

“I want to connect students from my community and at Columbia to individuals who have been negatively impacted by the crisis and who are not receiving the education they need as a result,” he said.

Sarah (Monoky) Bloomquist ('90)

Journalist's front-row seat...from her living room

By Sarah (Monoky) Bloomquist ('90)

I started working from home on Monday, March 23. Initially, I did live reports using my phone, Bluetooth headphones, and a Ring camera. But after a week, my news director decided it was time for a more permanent setup.

Engineers arrived at my condo in Center City, Philadelphia, with a teleprompter, a high-quality camera, studio lights, and a unit that allows the station to power me up remotely to be live on the air. Now each day, I co-anchor the noon show from my living room while my husband does his job in health care remotely and home schools our 8-year-old daughter.

In the afternoons, I do interviews using Zoom and write a story from those interviews. I co-anchor the 4 p.m. newscast and present the story I spent the afternoon putting together.

I also anchor a nightly segment where we feature photos and videos our viewers have created during their time in quarantine. We've had

everything from dancing medical professionals to a woman who creates art using Oreo cookies – even a pizza-eating groundhog. The segment has proven so popular that we started a new show I now host on Sunday nights featuring our viewer content.

This is my 25th year working for ABC and I feel like I have been preparing my entire life to cover this crisis. I was the co-editor of *The Arrowhead* at Ottawa Hills, wrote for the newspaper at Miami University, and received my master's from the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University. My first job was at WTVG in Toledo in 1995, and I covered everything from Columbine to 9/11 in New York.

Here in Philadelphia where I've worked since 2002, I've covered hurricanes and papal visits and traveled the globe from Egypt to Kenya to Rome

covering major news stories.

All of that prepared me for this. But this is like nothing else we've ever covered. Viewers are turning to local news in very big numbers. I am proud to be one of the many hardworking journalists working to bring those viewers the factual information they need to stay healthy and safe during the COVID-19 crisis.



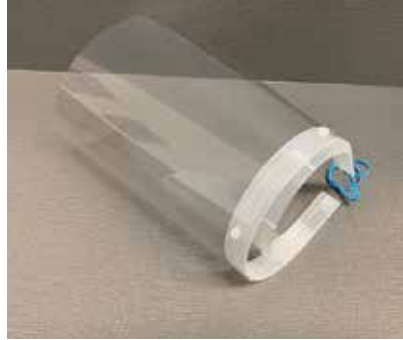
Betsy (Carson) Brady ('64)

Local firm creates protective face shield from scratch

Plastic Technologies Inc. (PTI) became a global company by helping customers make better packages to hold beverage and consumer products. The expertise that helped brands like Coca-Cola and Colgate-Palmolive is now aiding local health care companies with a homegrown product: a plastic face shield designed and manufactured in northwest Ohio.

"At the onset of the pandemic, our management's first response was to determine how we can contribute to those that need it the most," said Betsy (Carson) Brady ('64), chairman of the Holland, Ohio-based company. "Since the need for personal protective equipment was far exceeding demand, our knowledge in prototyping and injection molding was applied to rapidly accelerate production of protective face shields."

In two weeks, the company designed, simulated, 3-D prototyped, and started to produce the shields. It quickly manufactured over 5,000 shields that were donated to multiple area health care companies, including ProMedica, Mercy Health, St. Luke's Hospital, and the University of Toledo Medical Center.



In essence, PTI became its own customer. Its designers, engineers, and material scientists applied the company's package-development process – the same one used with Fortune 100 companies – to the challenge of quickly creating a high-quality shield. Leading the effort was Sumit Mukherjee, the company's Chief Technology Officer and a Village resident.

PTI is now selling complete shields and face shield frames from its website. The articles are donated free to companies in the health care field; when purchased by companies in other industries, every purchase is matched and an equal number of shields are donated to an organization in the medical field.

"We have longtime customers who have requested shields to protect their employees," said Mr. Mukherjee. "So we are able to supply them while matching each purchase with a donation to continue aiding the local health care community."

Learn more about the masks at plastictechnologies.com.



Dr. Catherine Webb ('66)

COVID shines light on telemedicine benefits

For most consumers of health care, telemedicine was rarely an option for seeking medical care. Then came COVID-19.

Dr. Catherine Webb ('66) is a leading researcher on the topic, having been an author of more than 50 scientific journal articles over the past 21 years. Pediatric cardiology has been on the forefront of telemedicine, and the technology has been routinely used by pediatric cardiologists for a number of years. But the current pandemic has been the push needed to bring the platform to mainstream medicine.

"COVID has really boosted telemedicine. Video visits have exploded in the past six weeks," said Dr. Webb in early May. She is on the faculty at the University of Michigan Congenital Heart Center, where she works as an outreach pediatric cardiologist in northern Michigan.

"Many doctors are now using videoconferences to interact with their patients. You can't give a vaccination over the Internet, but you can certainly talk to a family and look at the patient and make some decisions just from that data," she added. "It's very useful for things that don't require a detailed physical exam."

After graduating from the Medical College of Ohio and doing her residency in pediatrics and fellowship in pediatric cardiology at the University of Michigan Medical Center, Dr. Webb joined the faculty at Children's Memorial Hospital at Northwestern University. During her 21-year career there, she began her research into telemedicine; specifically, the connection between patient health





and diagnoses made more quickly through the electronic exchange of echocardiogram data.

“When I finished that important study, we showed that the cardiac diagnosis was made more quickly and the children fared better if we used telemedicine to share images,” she said. The care provider in one location would use the transducer to capture images of the child’s heart; those images were sent via a secure Internet connection to the pediatric cardiologist.

Using that experience, she led an effort to deploy telemedicine technology throughout the pediatric department at the University of Michigan Hospital when she arrived in Ann Arbor.

It’s a form of health care she continues to deploy from her laptop using its data-protection software.

“I’m a peripatetic doctor and I ‘ride the circuit’ in northern Michigan,” she said. “A few things in my area of expertise don’t lend themselves to telemedicine, but many things do. We are lucky that we live in an age when the Internet can provide new advances and improvements to patient care.”

Dr. Binesh Patel ('91)

In COVID-like crises, the best medicine is always **PREVENTION**

Like many health care workers on the front lines, Dr. Binesh Patel ('91) can remember the day and time (and even where he was standing) when COVID-19 entered his world.

“I know that day very well. It was February 25 and Chief Nursing Officer Jim Williams and I had just returned from our monthly senior medical staff meeting,” said Dr. Patel, the chief medical officer (CMO) at McLaren Flint. It is the flagship hospital of McLaren Health Care, a \$6 billion health care organization based in Michigan.

By that morning, Indiana had reported cases. Hospital leadership knew the Flint area would not be spared.

“Jim and I were in the hallway outside of our offices with President and CEO Chad Grant, discussing options for dealing with the coronavirus,” Dr. Patel said. “Chad turned to us and said, ‘Figure out a plan,’ and that was it.”

Within 48 hours, he led a buildingwide effort that created a five-phase plan to handle a potential patient surge. It was modified on Friday after the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) made national recommendations. “The plan was nimble enough that when we saw the new CDC guidelines, we incorporated them and hit the ground running that afternoon,” Dr. Patel said.

As CMO, he leads the team that delivers care in the

378-bed hospital, which employs about 2,500. His facility saw its first COVID-19 patients in early March. A month later, as cases increased, the hospital reached phase four of the plan. Thankfully, the surge slowed, and the hospital never reached phase five; it’s currently operating at phase two.

“Sometimes, my most important job is reassurance and making sure the hospital staff have what they need,” he said. To convey that sense of calm during the crisis, he appeared in several weekly virtual town halls. And even for those in health care, town hall topics included best practices related to handwashing, social distancing, and personal protective equipment.

“It took an instant vision that afternoon on the 25th to say we needed a plan and then craft and execute it,” Dr. Patel said. “Whenever you’re dealing with stressful situations like this, you don’t have to be perfect. You have to get to the execution phase. If you wallow in the process, sitting around talking about it, that’s when you get in trouble. COVID-19 has spooked the world. We’re not going to get back to normal behavior whether it’s in the community or in the hospitals for an unknown time. Everything has changed, and a lot of changes are going to stick.”

About Dr. Patel: He joined McLaren Flint in June 2017 after serving four years as CMO at hospitals operated by the Detroit Medical Center (DMC). It was at DMC’s Detroit Receiving Hospital that he completed his residency and earned the “Resident of the Year Award.” After Ottawa Hills, he attended and graduated from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and then earned his medical degree from the Medical College of Ohio. His parents, both doctors, still live in the Village. Brother Rakesh ('98) and sister Deepali ('95) also are OH graduates.

Photo courtesy of McLaren Health Care



alumninews

ALUMNI NEWS & MEMORIALS



Congratulations to **Kyle Lindsay ('03)** and the Adrian College men's basketball team. Coach Lindsay guided the

Bulldogs to a Michigan Intercollegiate Athletics Association Tournament title and its first-ever appearance in the NCAA Division III Tournament.

In Memoriam

Jeffrey Jenks ('75) died April 14.

Anne (Alexander) Lathrop ('59) died April 6.

Jonathan Rodriguez ('13) died April 18.

Coming Up: Honoring Alumni



In the fall issue of *Around These Hills*, we profile the 2020 recipients of the **Distinguished Alumni Award** and the 2020 inductees into the **Ottawa Hills High School Athletic Hall of Fame**. These individuals will be honored Friday, Oct. 2, at a combined ceremony preceding a home football game. The Ottawa Hills Schools Foundation will host its annual donor appreciation event Thursday, Oct. 1. Congratulations to our honorees! (Note: Dates and times are subject to change due to COVID-19.) **To view past recipients, visit ohschools.org/alumni**

VIRTUAL CONNECTIONS

Alumni offer career advice

NEARLY 20 ALUMNI OFFERED STUDENTS insights into their professions and advice on finding the right career in a series of online chats in April and May. The Alumni Video Career Series program was a response to COVID-19 and the inability to hold in-person career talks, a longtime tradition at the Junior/Senior High School.

Because of the overwhelming offers of assistance from alumni, more video chats are planned for summer and fall. The Office of Alumni Relations is now working to schedule these sessions, which take place via Google Meet. The district thanks the following alumni for sharing their time and inspiring messages:

- **Sarah (Monoky) Bloomquist ('90):** Anchor and reporter for ABC-Channel 6 in Philadelphia
- **Christine Brennan ('76):** Sports columnist for *USA Today* and CNN and ABC commentator

- **Beth DeGroft ('87):** Leukemia and lymphoma social worker in the Cancer & Blood Diseases Institute at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center
- **Matt Dewire ('09):** Co-founder of Valhalla Tickets, a secondary ticket company
- **Emily Finkel ('00):** Toledo-based stained glass artist with a focus on restoration and repair
- **Todd Friedmar ('85):** Senior systems engineer in the Mobile Device Management division at Recreational Equipment, Inc. in Seattle.
- **Dr. Jim Geiger ('79):** Professor at the University of Michigan specializing in pediatric surgery
- **Yasmine Gore ('12):** Medical student at The University of Toledo
- **Jim Ketcham ('75):** Former finance and management executive and now athletic director at San Francisco University High School

- **Phil Mattingly ('05):** Congressional correspondent for CNN based in Washington, D.C.
- **Dr. David Monoky ('93):** Neuro-radiologist practicing in the New York/New Jersey area
- **Dr. Binesh Patel ('91):** Chief medical officer at McLaren Flint Hospital
- **Colman Ragan ('92):** Vice president and general counsel for North America IP Litigation at Teva Pharmaceuticals
- **Mickey Schwab ('08):** Senior site reliability engineer at Indeed.com
- **Dr. Joelle Sacks Suarez ('05):** Postdoctoral research fellow at the University of Hawaii Cancer Center
- **Ted Souder ('89):** 12-year veteran of Google Inc. where he serves as head of industry – retail
- **Dan Steinberg ('76):** Financial advisor with Vantage Financial Group
- **Kristin Strobel ('03):** Principal at BGR Governmental Affairs for the BGR Group in Washington, D.C.
 - **Amul Roger Thapar ('87):** U.S. circuit judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit

Manhattan MASTERPIECE

Dozens of alumni gathered in New York City March 6 to celebrate our district, each other, and the Choraliers as they prepared to perform at Carnegie Hall March 8. The Ottawa Hills Schools Foundation organized the reception, which featured alumni from six decades.

Sharing memories were (from left) Board of Education President Rob Gnepper ('91), Julie (Vicinus) Fowler ('89), Erica (Gatchel) Silk ('89), Kelly (Wilson) Baraf ('88), and Stacy (Wilson) McCann ('87).



James Schwann ('19) with Dewey Cole ('70). James is a freshman at Columbia University; Dewey is a graduate of Columbia.



The Petas and Bhatt sisters made the event a family affair. From left: junior Claire Petas, Isabella Petas ('13), Priya Bhatt ('20), and Shivani Bhatt ('13).



Having fun were (from left) Bill Skutch ('84), retired OH teacher Steven Wipfli, and Grace Wipfli ('13).

Lindsey (Pelger) Choudhry ('00) and French teacher Noreen Hanlon. Lindsey and husband Modassir graciously hosted the event.



Choraliers on stage as part of a chorale ensemble performing at Carnegie Hall.
(Photo © 2020 Manhattan Concert Productions)



STOP THE PRESSES!

Sports journalism honors Brennan

Christine Brennan ('76) has written seven books, covered 18 Olympics, and won numerous national honors. This spring, she added the most prestigious award in sports journalism to her resume. Members of the Associated Press Sports Editors bestowed upon her the 2020 Red Smith Award. It is given annually to a person who has made "major contributions to sports journalism."

While a high school student, Ms. Brennan was the co-editor of the student newspaper *The Arrowhead*, a six-sport athlete, and salutatorian. She also was in the inaugural class of Distinguished Alumni Award recipients organized by the Ottawa Hills Schools Foundation. Putting on its best imitation of a reporter, *Around These Hills* asked the *USA Today* columnist and CNN and ABC commentator these five questions:

Q: THE 2020 TOKYO OLYMPIC GAMES HAVE BEEN POSTPONED UNTIL 2021. WHAT WERE THE KEY STORIES GOING TO BE?

Christine Brennan: The biggest story going into an Olympics is often how ready that city is to host the Games. Ironically, other than the typical budget overruns, Tokyo looked to be in great shape unlike other recent host cities. Sochi (2014), Rio (2016), and PyeongChang (2018) all were controversial because of concerns ranging from terrorism and health issues to international politics. But then it's Tokyo that ends up suffering the first postponement in Olympic history. The biggest sports-related story I was following was how gymnast Simone Biles and swimmer Katie Ledecky would fare as the biggest American names. Could they continue the mastery of their respective sports and become the stars of the 2020 Games as they were in Rio in 2016?

Q: DOES ONE MOMENT STAND OUT IN YOUR OLYMPIC COVERAGE?

Brennan: I've been very fortunate to cover amazing athletes and historic performances at the Olympic Games, but there was nothing quite like the Tonya-Nancy saga that began in Detroit on Jan. 6, 1994, with the attack on figure skater Nancy Kerrigan and continued through to the end of February at the 1994 Winter Olympics in Norway. I covered every minute of it for *The Washington Post* and various TV networks. It was bizarre and fascinating, dominating the network news and front pages for seven consecutive weeks. When Tonya (Harding) and Nancy finally skated in the women's short program, the TV audience was huge. It remains the sixth highest-rated show in television history. (The story is covered in Brennan's best-seller, *Inside Edge*, published in 1996.)



Q: WHAT WILL THE WORLD OF PROFESSIONAL SPORTS LOOK LIKE AFTER COVID-19?

Brennan: Just as we have become familiar with the terms "social distancing" and "flattening the curve," we now have another phrase with us: "spectator-less sports." Until there is a vaccine or treatment, it's logical to expect pro sports without fans or, at the very least, significant social distancing for fans and workers in stadiums and other venues. I think people watching at home will adjust to this quickly; for most fans, pro sports are a TV show anyway.

Q: YOU WERE A GREAT OH ATHLETE. WHICH SPORTS DO YOU STILL PLAY?

Brennan: I'll still play almost anything. I love to kayak on the Potomac River and bicycle along the trails by the river. I enjoy hiking and walking in Rock Creek Park, which is Washington's Central Park. I try to work out or swim a couple of times a week. I also play golf in a few charity events every year. (Brennan (center) playing field hockey as a Green Bear in the fall of 1975)



Q: WHAT IS YOUR ADVICE TO STUDENTS PURSUING CAREERS IN SPORTS JOURNALISM?

Brennan: This is a difficult time for many professions, journalism included. Ironically, we as a society care about and need news and information more than ever, so I'm optimistic that over time, we'll figure out a business model to help news organizations thrive and continue to encourage talented young people to pursue careers in the news media. Sports journalism is the adventure of a lifetime. You get to meet new people all the time, go to new places, ask questions, and dig for answers.

If you find something you love and do that for your career, you'll never really work a day in your life. That's certainly been the case for me.

I tell students that they can have that, too. The secret to success is that there is no secret to success: be willing to work harder than everyone else around you, double-check everything you do, be polite and kind, and never let anyone tell you that you can't do something.

foundationnews

FOUNDATION LETTER

Supported by tradition: Now more than ever

When the COVID-19 crisis entered our world, everyone made instinctive decisions: to protect their families, to serve their communities, and to reflect on the needs of the many who needed help. (You can read about how our alumni answered that call starting on page 18.)

Those same instinctive actions to help also have been directed toward our school district. With support of alumni and other financial supporters, the Ottawa Hills Schools Foundation has made two big investments in our students during these unsettled times.

The first investment was creation of the **Alumni Video Career Series**. The idea started as a response to the pandemic. We couldn't bring the alumni into the Junior/Senior High School as normally occurs in late spring. Instead, we brought our students to them virtually. Through the end of May, nearly 20 alumni had participated in nine such talks held via Google Meet.

Without COVID-19, the Office of Alumni Relations would not have attempted a program of this scale. Now, as we transition into the next phase of adapting to the virus, these encounters will become a reoccurring program. The Alumni Video Career Series now joins our Distinguished Alumni Awards and Ottawa Hills High School Athletic Hall of Fame induction ceremonies.

The second investment was financial support to launch the **Summer Learning Plan**. The plan gives



George Lathrop is president of the Ottawa Hills Schools Foundation.



Erica (Gatchel) Silk ('89) is the district's director of development and alumni relations.

students entering grades K-12 an online tool organized by grade and subject. Participation is optional, but district teachers and staff behind the plan expect it to be well received and an exciting way to get ready for the next school year. And to make it work, the district is allowing students in those grades to keep their Chromebooks and Mac laptops all summer without paying the customary summer take-home fee.

The Foundation's ability to support students through services and grants will become even more important as the State of Ohio considers cuts to K-12 funding. Already this year, the state reduced funding to Ottawa Hills Local Schools by \$192,000.

On behalf of the Foundation and its Trustees, we thank you for helping our students during this crisis. With your continued support, we will help all students achieve their full potential. **Please support them and our mission by making a donation to the Foundation today.**



CARES Act

Tax code changes aid charities

In response to the COVID-19 crisis, Congress passed new laws that help donors support their favorite causes. Inside the **Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES Act)** enacted March 27 is a temporary universal provision (for 2020 only) that allows up to \$300 in cash charitable contributions

to be made as an above-the-line deduction. That means the deduction applies to all taxpayers and can be claimed without itemization.

The Ottawa Hills Schools Foundation is deeply appreciative of your commitment to Ottawa Hills Local Schools during these unprecedented times.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE BENNETT FAMILY



The Bennetts: Michael, Savannah, Stevie, and Anna.

PAYING IT FORWARD

Family gift supports special ed

AN OTTAWA HILLS FAMILY IS CELEBRATING its first year in the Village of Ottawa Hills with a donation to the district’s special education department. Michael and Anna Bennett arrived last year from Georgia, where special education services for their son Stevie were lacking. (Stevie is autistic and non-verbal).

The search for a new home and

the services needed for Stevie ended in Ottawa Hills.

“The flexibility of my work allows us to live anywhere,” Mr. Bennett said. “Ottawa Hills’ schools, paired with the autism resources around town, led us to make our journey north and make the Village our home.”

“When we decided to settle here, we did so knowing that it

was a close-knit community,” Mrs. Bennett added. “The community, as we all know, centers around our schools, and more importantly, the kids that attend them.” (Stevie starts kindergarten this fall; his twin sister Savannah will be in first grade.)

The district will use the gift to improve equipment in the Sensory Room at the Elementary School, which is used by students with special learning needs. The family’s \$1,000 gift is being matched by Mr. Bennett’s employer.

“We sincerely believe that we did not make a donation, but rather furthered our investment in the community, the schools, and ultimately our kids,” Mr. Bennett added. “We are happy to have found a school of voices that are willing to advocate for him. What we found here is truly special, and certainly worth investing in.”

“Donations like this are so special because they come from the heart,” said Erica (Gatchel) Silk (’89), director of development and alumni relations for the school district. “Their kindness is another example of the powerful impact our schools have on this Village.”

RECENT FOUNDATION GRANTS



HELPING FAMILIES WITH SUMMER LEARNING

To help support OH families this summer, the Foundation is pleased to support the district’s new **Summer Learning Plan**. The support will come from the Foundation’s newly established Annual Impact Fund.

OH teachers developed the plan for OH students, no matter a child’s learning level. It offers grade-specific exercises for students entering grades K-12. Teams developed the plan as a result of COVID-19 and the disruption to the second half of the school year. Participation is voluntary and funded by private sponsors. The plan begins June 15 and goes through Aug. 7.



Through its Mindel Family Athletic Fund, the Foundation is supporting the **girls’ soccer team** and its attendance at the BGSU Team Camp in July. About 20 Green Bears are expected to attend. They will compete against area teams and attend sessions on strength, conditioning, and sports psychology.



Through its Athletic Fund and the Talmage Family General Fund, the Foundation is assisting the co-ed **cross-country team** attend a summer camp. As many as 40 Green Bears are expected to participate to learn the latest training techniques and build team chemistry heading into the fall season.

Through its Talmage Family General Fund, the Foundation supported **After Prom**, the parent-chaperoned event for juniors and seniors. (The event was virtual this year.)



MARK WAGONER PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE WAGONER FAMILY



Coach Wagoner provides instruction to members of an OH youth soccer team. Below: Working the chains at an OH football game.

REMEMBERING ‘COACH WAGS’ Family honors father with fund

TO CELEBRATE THEIR FATHER’S LOVE OF local sports and coaching, the family of Mark “Mick” Wagoner, Sr. has established an athletic fund in his name for junior high athletes through the Ottawa Hills Schools Foundation. (Mr. Wagoner, 76, died March 18.)

An athlete in high school and at Ohio Northern University, Mr. Wagoner, Sr., brought his love of sports to Ottawa Hills when he moved his family here in 1976. His commitment to local athletics manifested in many ways, from coaching football, baseball, and soccer teams to serving as president of the OH Boosters Association and the Ottawa Hills Youth Soccer Association.

“Dad loved the competition aspect of sports. But more than anything, I believe he did it so that he could be involved in our lives,

develop special relationships with our friends and classmates, and to give back,” said son Mark Wagoner, Jr. (‘90).

“Dad also loved the character-building and social aspects of sports, and how they can bring a community together,” added his daughter, Paula Conway (‘94).

Mr. Wagoner, Sr. so loved his memories as a multisport athlete in Shelby (Ohio) that he named every OH youth soccer team he later coached after the school’s mascot: the Whippets.

“That’s what he grew up with in Shelby, where the community rallied around the sports’ teams, and it’s one of the things he loved most about Ottawa Hills,” Mrs.



Wagoner said of her husband. “He firmly believed that strong and well-supported athletic teams make the entire community stronger.”

He coached youth soccer in the 1980s and junior high baseball in the late 1980s. He also coached junior high football in the early 2000s, during which his teams won several Toledo Area Athletic Conference titles. His impact was so great on those athletes that when it was time to find a varsity banquet speaker, they extended the honor to “Coach Wags.”

“Mick was a wonderful human being. He was generous with his time and knowledge of football with our junior high teams,” said Chris Hardman, longtime OH teacher and coach. “His positive attitude was infectious and he was a ‘Green Bear’ at his core!”

The Wagoners graduated three children from Ottawa Hills: Mark, Greg (‘93), and Paula. The sons still live in Ottawa Hills; Paula and her family are in California. All were varsity OH athletes; Paula was a key part of the field hockey team’s two state championships (1992-93) and was named a high school All-American in her senior year. (She later was named a collegiate All-American at Providence College.)

During football games (both sons played), Mr. Wagoner, Sr. cheered them on as he marched the sidelines. While watching Paula, his voice could be heard yelling “Shoot the ball!” even if the Green Bears were 40 yards from the goal. “Simply put, he enjoyed every moment watching his kids play,” said Greg Wagoner.

Mr. Wagoner, Sr. continued watching his children play sports at Providence, Boston University, and Georgetown University, sometimes driving as many as 14 hours.

LEGACY: Gifts to “The Mick Wagoner Athletic Fund” can be made through the Ottawa Hills Schools Foundation. Go to ohschoolsfoundation.org/givetoday and make a gift online. (Put “Mick Wagoner Fund” in the comments section)



Ottawa Hills Local Schools

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LEAD AN *EVENTFUL* LIFE

As Ohio and the nation slowly reopen, Ottawa Hills Local Schools will adjust its calendar of events accordingly. We will share the dates of art, music, athletic, and academic events as soon as we can. The fastest way to receive those updates is through our social media and electronic news platforms. Downloading, subscribing, and following these sources will make sure you receive calendar details as soon as they are available.

CARRY US AROUND

Download the OH app from Google Play or Apple's App Store. (Our app is part of the "Stay Connected" platform from SchoolPointe, our Web content partner. After downloading the app, search for Ottawa Hills Local Schools to see our website feeds.)

BE SOCIAL WITH US

Facebook: [ohschools](#)
Twitter: [@ohschools](#)

IT'S IN THE MAIL!

Subscribe to *OH Connections*, a communitywide email service within the Village of Ottawa Hills. General school district and building-specific emails are sent regularly from it.

The service is also used by the Office of Village Life and these parent-support groups: Ottawa Hills Music & Theatre Association, OH21, and OH Boosters. Subscribe to them all!

