

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

# AROUND these HILLS

FALL 2021



## Strategically FOCUSED

Looking ahead to envision our schools in 2027

2022-2027

**OH**  
**Strategic Plan**

A Community-Driven Project to  
Help Design the Future of Our Schools



### Inside this issue:

Curtain call: Alumni to lead theatrical shows

District, high school retain No. 1 rankings



**Ottawa Hills**  
Local Schools

Defined by excellence. Supported by tradition.

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Villagers gather for a backyard brainstorming session in September.

## DISTRICT LETTER

# It's all hands on deck for a new district Strategic Plan

When I interviewed for the position of OH superintendent, I read everything I could find about Ohio's No. 1 school system. Nothing helped me prepare better for my interviews—or excited me more about the prospects of being hired—than the district's Strategic Plan.

I know what you're thinking. How boring can I be?

As a school leader, you see and read a lot of these documents. Usually, they are too long and say too little. Worse, few capture the vision and culture of the organization.

However, the content of the 2017-2022 Ottawa Hills document offered detailed insight into the community and its hopes for making a great school system even better.

The current plan is not without shortcomings. In hindsight, little was written about student health and safety or online learning—two areas about which COVID-19 has taught us a lot. And the Ottawa Hills Schools Foundation, which in the last three years has become an essential partner in the district's success, was never mentioned.

Still, the document was largely spot-on about goals, strategies, and metrics. Now, it's time to do it all over again, but with a different approach this time.

As you will read in this issue's cover story, an OH Strategic Plan Community Committee is repeating the process but with significant differences. The new plan is being written *by* the community *for* the community. School employees (teachers, staff, administrators) are at the table, but mostly in the background. Parents and other Villagers are doing the driving, so to speak.

The committee already has collected input via an online survey and organized "backyard brainstorming" events throughout the fall. The new document will serve as a blueprint for the Board of Education in guiding the district forward from 2022-2027.

Think most strategic plans are too mushy and seldom referenced? Ask yourself this: Would you build a house without a blueprint? Of course not. Would you run a school system without a strategic plan? My advice is you'd better not try! We are truly excited about this process and hope to have our plan ready for school board approval by January.



*Adam Fineske*

Superintendent Dr. Adam Fineske  
afineske@ohschools.org



AdamFineske



fineskeadam



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### ALUMNI RETURN TO DIRECT UPCOMING STAGE PRODUCTIONS

When Grace Wipfli ('13) and Randall Johnson ('18) were invited for job interviews as theatrical directors, they certainly didn't need to ask for directions.



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### ALUMNA TAKES REINS OF OTTAWA HILLS SCHOOLS FOUNDATION

Jackie (Hylant) Berenzweig ('93), whose family has attended OH schools for three generations, is excited to lead the next phase of growth for the Ottawa Hills Schools Foundation.



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### CAMPAIGN STEAMING AHEAD WITH FOCUS ON STUDENT SUCCESS

Supporters of the Full STEAM Ahead Capital Campaign are transforming the future of academic and support services at the Junior/Senior High School and Elementary School.

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## AN AWARD-WINNING DISTRICT



Learn more about our awards at [ohschools.org/honors](https://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 three 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](mailto:info@ohschools.org).

### ADDRESS CHANGE REQUESTS:

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## On the cover

What should Ottawa Hills Local Schools look like in 2027? The district is gathering data as part of its Strategic Plan process, which relies heavily on community guidance. To create the new five-year plan, the committee leading the effort is collecting input from across the Village. A final report is expected early next year.

**See story on page 14.**



The 90-member Class of 2022 celebrated the start of their final year in school together with the traditional senior breakfast Aug. 19. Good luck, seniors!



For these seniors and their families, it won't seem long until they are lining up to receive diplomas at the June 2, 2022, Commencement ceremony.

## District, high school retain No. 1 rankings

For the third straight year, Ottawa Hills Local Schools is the No. 1 school district in the Toledo Area and Lucas County, according to research company Niche. In addition, Ottawa Hills High School repeated as the No. 1 high school in those same areas. The building received an overall grade of A+.

“On behalf of the district and Board of Education, I am so proud of our formula that creates success stories like this,” said Superintendent Dr. Adam Fineske. “We have parents who make education a top priority at home, top-notch educators, students who are motivated to learn, and a community that centers itself around the school district.”

**In rankings for both the Toledo Area and Lucas County, Ottawa Hills High School was ranked No. 1 overall, No. 1 for college prep, and No. 1 for STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math). At the state level, it ranked No. 6 overall, No. 7 for college prep, and No. 10 for STEM.**

“Our students and teachers strive every day to be the best they can be,” said Principal Ben McMurray. “These rankings are always celebrated, as they validate our commitment to learning and to each other.”

Niche calculated its 2022 “Best School” rankings using dozens of public data sets and millions of reviews. Factors used in its K-12 rankings include state test scores, college readiness, graduation rates, SAT/ACT scores, teacher quality, and public school district ratings. For high schools, it compared buildings that educated students in grades 9 through 12.

Nationally, Ottawa Hills Local Schools ranked No. 83 out of nearly 10,800 districts.



## National, State, and Local Rankings

### HIGH SCHOOL RANKINGS

#### National

- Best Public High School: No. 198 of 19,984
- Best Public High School Teachers: No. 228 of 19,722
- Best College Prep Public High School: No. 344 of 17,219
- Best High School for STEM: No. 593 of 8,246

#### Ohio

- Best Public High School: No. 6 of 816
- Best College Prep Public High School: No. 7 of 746
- Best High School for STEM: No. 10 of 212
- Best Public High School Teachers: No. 13 of 813
- Best High School for Athletes: No. 189 of 996
- Most Diverse Public High School: No. 276 of 895

#### Toledo Area

- **Best Public High School: No. 1 of 72**
- **Best College Prep Public High School: No. 1 of 63**
- **Best High School for STEM: No. 1 of 19**
- Best Public High School Teachers: No. 2 of 72
- Best High School for Athletes: No. 22 of 92
- Most Diverse Public High School: No. 31 of 81

#### Lucas County

- **Best Public High School: No. 1 of 24**
- **Best College Prep Public High School: No. 1 of 19**
- **Best High School for STEM: No. 1 of 11**
- Best Public High School Teachers: No. 2 of 24
- Best High School for Athletes: No. 9 of 34
- Most Diverse Public High School: No. 22 of 29

### SCHOOL DISTRICT RANKINGS

#### National

- Best School District: No. 83 of 10,772
- Safest District: No. 70 of 11,774
- Best Places to Teach: No. 172 of 11,252
- Best Teachers: No. 449 of 11,656

#### Ohio

- Best School District: No. 5 of 608
- Safest District: No. 10 of 608
- Best Places to Teach: No. 20 of 608
- Best Teachers: No. 38 of 608
- Best District for Athletes: 137 of 609

#### Toledo Area

- **Best School District: No. 1 of 50**
- Safest District: No. 2 of 50
- Best Places to Teach: No. 2 of 50
- Best Teachers: No. 3 of 50
- Best Districts for Athletes: No. 12 of 50

#### Lucas County

- **Best School District: No. 1 of 8**
- **Safest District: No. 1 of 8**
- Best Places to Teach: No. 2 of 8
- Best Teachers: No. 2 of 8
- Best Districts for Athletes: No. 4 of 8

# Welcome back, Bauer!

Just like that 1970s' hit show "Welcome Back, Kotter", Ottawa Hills welcomed back one of its former students to an education role this year. Dr. Jeremy Bauer ('93), who attended both the Elementary School and Junior/Senior High School, became the elementary principal Aug. 2. He has 16 years of elementary-level administrative experience.

But he isn't the only alumnus still walking the hallways. He joins Liz (Clement) Puskala ('99), the high school anatomy teacher; Jonathan Siebenaler ('05), a 6th Grade teacher; Erica (Gatchel) Silk ('89), director of development and alumni relations; and Julie (Pawlicki) Boesel ('85), administrative assistant for athletics and guidance.

To help introduce Dr. Bauer to the Village and alumni, he shared reflections of his time on campus.

## What's your fondest memory as a Green Bear?

The day I broke the high school bowling record in Miss O's (Sandy Osterman) class with a score of 214. I honestly don't know what happened that

day. My fellow Green Bears kept cheering me on so I kept throwing strikes. I also loved serving as the team trainer under Mr. (Chris) Hardman and Mr. (Norm) Niedermeier. Each summer, they sent me to trainers' camp at OSU and Michigan. In 1992, I won first place in OSU's ankle-taping contest with a time of 43 seconds! Don't believe me? Ask any high school alumnus from the classes of 1990-1993.

## What was your favorite subject to study?

I didn't have a favorite subject but I had favorite classroom experiences and projects. I loved working in Mr. (Roger) Burtchin's woodshop where I created several furniture items, including printer boxes for the high school computer lab. I loved playing guitar in Mrs. (Barbara) Wagner's English class for her annual "Propaganda & Persuasion"



project in the hopes I would earn an "A." I also enjoyed walking to the meadow with Mr. (Marv) Rotondo to study insects.

## What's the best part about your position?

Of course, the kids—from Kindergarten to 6th Grade. I have a lot of fun with my Green Bears but I also have high expectations for their conduct and character. When we see our students displaying positive character and doing kind things for others, they are recognized in my office with "The Principal's Penny" award. Most principals would say that having kids in their office is the worst part of their job because it often involves discipline. But for me, it's just the opposite. I see more kids in my office for positive behaviors than for anything else. Each day is a "Brand New Day" at OHES.

*(To learn more about Dr. Bauer and see his back-to-school video, visit [ohes.ohschools.org](http://ohes.ohschools.org).)*



## ART GALLERY

# Dot's how you do it!



Students at the Elementary School celebrated International Dot Day (Sept. 15) with a series of activities in classes from art and music to library. This year's big project: Students created their own dots and then affixed them to the main wall outside the school office. Each grade had its own color and the resulting montage was amazing. The building has been celebrating the day, designed to boost courage so students' creative potential is released, since 2014. The day is based on the 2003 book *The Dot* by Peter H. Reynolds.

# STEM Achievements Recognized

## Teachers, staff honored with Governor's Edison Award

Sixteen teachers and staff at the Junior/Senior High School again received The Governor's Thomas Edison Award for Excellence in STEM Education and Student Research. The Ohio Academy of Science, which runs the program, recognized 45 school districts and 491 teachers statewide in August for excellence during the 2020-2021 school year.

OH teachers and staff have received the Edison Award nine times in the past 10 years.

"This is a tremendous honor and recognizes the daily commitment made by these teachers and staff to our students," said Ben McMurray, principal of the Junior/Senior High School. "Their dedication to STEM initiatives, effective pedagogy, and student development goes beyond the classroom and helps define the high standards we have as a district."

"This really is a multi-departmental, building-wide recognition, and reflects

the contributions of members spanning across grade levels and content disciplines," said B. Tim Adkins, chair of the Science Department. "It really speaks to the value that our building, and the wider community that we serve, place on STEM education."

To be eligible, schools must conduct a local science fair with 12 or more students and have two or more of these students participate in the 2021 Virtual District Science Day; or have six or more students participate in the 2021 Virtual District Science Day when no local has been conducted. In addition, students must participate in at least one more youth science opportunity beyond the classroom.

Established in 1985, The Governor's Thomas Edison Awards recognize Ohio schools and teachers who stimulate scientific student research and technological design and extend opportunities beyond traditional classroom activities.

### Award recipients are:

- B. Tim Adkins**, math and science teacher
- Gerry Davis**, STEM teacher
- Patty Dowd**, STEM teacher
- Diane Drabek**, math teacher
- Dan Feuerstein**, math teacher
- Paul Genzman**, math and science teacher
- Mary Kate Hafemann**, science teacher
- Kristin Johnson**, art teacher
- Joan Keckler**, math teacher
- Michael Leeds**, instrumental music director
- Hannah Lehmann**, art teacher
- Jeremy Nixon**, science teacher
- Liz Puskala**, science teacher
- Nicole Silvers**, science teacher
- Brooks Spiess**, technology coordinator
- Anthony Torio**, math teacher

## Opening our borders

The district welcomed two international students to campus this fall, both of whom will complete their junior year at the Junior/Senior High School. The students are Anan Dabbah, a Palestinian from a village in northern Israel, and Arafa Ahmed from Bangladesh.

"I wanted to challenge myself to grow as much as I can, and I found out there is no better way to do that than being an exchange student," said Arafa. "I want to make as many memories as I can. I hope this year helps me become the best version of myself."

"I am so interested to meet American people and to learn about them. And I had always dreamed of living in the U.S.," said Anan. "I want to learn about new cultures—the great and lovely American culture—and about new lifestyles and traditions. I want to teach American people about my culture and our principles by showing them how kind and mature we are."

**Arafa Ahmed**  
Hosts: Cheema/  
Akbar family;  
her host sister is  
Zoe Cheema.

**Anan Dabbah**  
Hosts: Liza Halloran  
and John Wilmore;  
her host sister is  
Erin Wilmore.



### DATABANK

The district and Village this summer jointly funded a study to examine population and enrollment trends. FutureThink conducted the "Housing Impact on Student Enrollment Study" and came up with two projections: one if no housing development occurs on Village-owned land on Richards Road and another based on an 84-unit housing development.

#### Looking Ahead...

#### WITHOUT Proposed Development

	2020-2021	2025-2026	2030-2031
K-6	521	599	580
7-12	512	503	608
	1,033	1,102	1,188

#### WITH Proposed Development

	2020-2021	2025-2026	2030-2031
K-6	521	609	595
7-12	512	503	616
	1,033	1,112	1,211





### District welcomes new staff

The district welcomed 18 employees in August during the annual New Staff Orientation Day—the largest-ever group to join at one time. The new staff include custodians, teachers, and paraprofessionals—even a new principal. Several were filling newly created positions, while others were taking over from employees who retired. Others are occupying positions previously contracted but that are now district employees. Welcome, everyone, to Green Bear Nation!

## NEWSMAKERS

### 3 named National Merit Semifinalists

Three seniors have been named 2022 National Merit Scholarship Semifinalists. Congratulations to Bazil Frueh, Faith Seo, and Warren Goik. They and the other national Semifinalists represent less than 1 percent of U.S. high school seniors and include the highest-scoring entrants in every state.



### Back to School 5K raises nearly \$7,000

This year's Back to School 5K raised about \$7,000 to benefit After Prom. There were more than 200 registered walkers and runners. Thanks to senior Faith Seo for designing the T-shirt and to all the sponsors and volunteers.

### Picnic celebrates community

The community celebrated life in the Village and the start of the school year with the first-ever Community Picnic, held Aug. 29 at the Elementary School. The event included a dunk tank, entertainment, games, food, and an appearance by a fire truck from the Toledo Fire Department. It was organized by This Is OH and co-sponsored by the Village of Ottawa Hills and Ottawa Hills Local Schools.

### Young scientist honored

Congratulations to freshman Chinmay Khare, who was selected as one of 300 U.S. middle school students to be honored for achievements in STEM. The Top 300 MASTERS were selected from a pool of 1,841 applicants. Chinmay was selected for work he did in 8th Grade titled "A Step in the Fight Against Cancer: Using Fluorescence to Study the Use of Oxidants and Antioxidants." The award comes from the Society for Science and the Broadcom Foundation.

### Observance dates, holidays added

In partnership with school-support group This Is OH and the Board of Education's new Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee, the district has added more religious holidays and observance dates to its calendar. This collaborative effort was made to recognize the various beliefs and backgrounds in the Village. Details at [ohschools.org/calendar](https://ohschools.org/calendar)

### District celebrates service anniversaries

The district celebrated teacher and staff anniversary milestones in August. The Ottawa Hills Schools Parent Association (OHSPA) sponsors the annual awards. Recipients were acknowledged at the All-Staff Breakfast and received an engraved glass bowl with his or her name and years of service. Pictured below (left to right) with years of service in parentheses are: Jana Kammeyer, representing OHSPA; Nicole Silvers (10), Dr. William Miller (20), Steve Bobak (15), Karen Mayfield (20), John Docis (10), Emily Atherine (20), Brooks Spiess (10), Dr. Lauren Hurst (20), Kevin McKee (25), Cindy Bodziak (35), James Kinkaid (20), Kristin Johnson (20), Rebecca McLean (15), Matt Chappuies (20), and Amy Wolff (10). Retirees honored included Pickering Lee (11), Donna Wipfli (30), Mary Kate Hafemann (16 years), and Christine Dever (28).



Service anniversaries were acknowledged at the All-Staff Breakfast.



## BEAR NECESSITIES

# Dress to Impress

Two inspired innovations greeted Green Bear Nation this fall.



A Cub Cave store opened at the Elementary School featuring kid-friendly sizes and youth-oriented pride items (teddy bear, anyone?). Meanwhile, the Bear Cave at the Junior/Senior High School began selling throwback jerseys and related accessories to celebrate OH state championship teams.

The items feature the logos and jersey scripting worn by players back in the day. The fashion trend started this fall with the 1974 golf and 1986 baseball teams, and caught on quickly in the Village. Both stores are open 3-4 p.m. each Friday during the school year and on special occasions. Thanks to the OH Boosters for inaugurating this new tradition and giving everyone a reason to diversify their wardrobes.



THEN



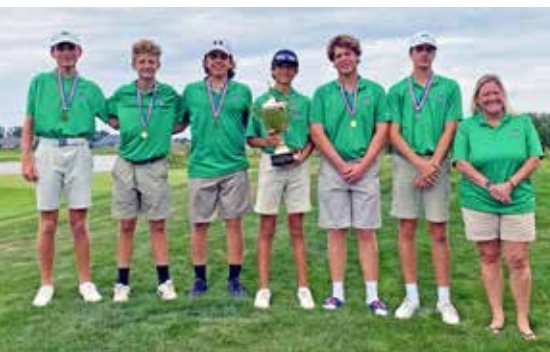
NOW



## SPORTSBRIEFS

### Lucky 13 for golfers

Congratulations to the boys' varsity golf team (and coach Tricia Fojtik) for winning its 13th consecutive title as champs of the Toledo Area Athletic Conference! All six OH golfers competing received honors. Named 1st Team TAAC were sophomore Will Swigart and juniors Anthony Adduci,



Eddie Griffin, and Charlie Merrill. Named 2nd Team was Anthony Packo IV. And receiving Honorable Mention was freshman Jack Jorgensen.

### Go Green Bears!

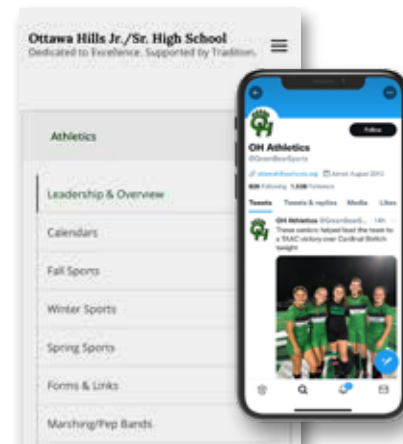
Fans at fall volleyball matches (and soon, winter basketball games) are seeing new inspiring signs in the gym. The new athletic Green Bear logo (above) now adorns the east wall of the Junior/Senior High School gym, while the fan section usually reserved for OH students has a new painted sign: Bleacher Creatures. Pass the green face paint!

### Action on the go

It's easier than ever to follow Green Bear teams. The district's new website



(ohschools.org/sports) improves access to sports schedules, team photos, and histories. And Twitter feeds from the OH Boosters and athletic department make it easy to follow the action. Stay connected by following @GreenBearSports and @OH\_Boosters.





# New field of dreams



The district unveiled its new synthetic turf (and running track) at Niedermeier Stadium during a ribbon-cutting ceremony Aug. 17. Thanks to the Ottawa Hills Schools Foundation, OH Boosters, and Ottawa Hills Schools Parent Association for contributing to the project, particularly for helping the district secure a one-of-a-kind Kelly Green color.

Ann and Patrick Hylant, lifelong Village residents who sent their children to OH schools, made a very generous gift in support of Green Bear athletics. The Foundation acknowledged that generosity by placing the Hylant name on the turf.

Left, middle: Three generations of Hylants celebrate the special day: Richard Hylant, junior Ella Berenzweig, and her mother (and niece to Richard) Jackie (Hylant) Berenzweig ('93).



## 100 GOALS for Greeley

Senior Meredith Greeley made history in September when she scored her 100th goal as a member of the girls' varsity soccer team. The achievement occurred at home in a 3-0 win Sept. 20 against Toledo Christian. Meredith's soccer talent is well known in the Toledo Area Athletic Conference, where she is the reigning "Player of the Year." "Green Bear Nation is so excited for Meredith on reaching the 100-goal milestone," said Tammy Talmage, athletic administrator. "She is the first OH female soccer player to reach this achievement and we are very proud of her."

*Photo courtesy of Yarko Kuk/Village Voice of Ottawa Hills*



## All-TAAC trophy stays in Village

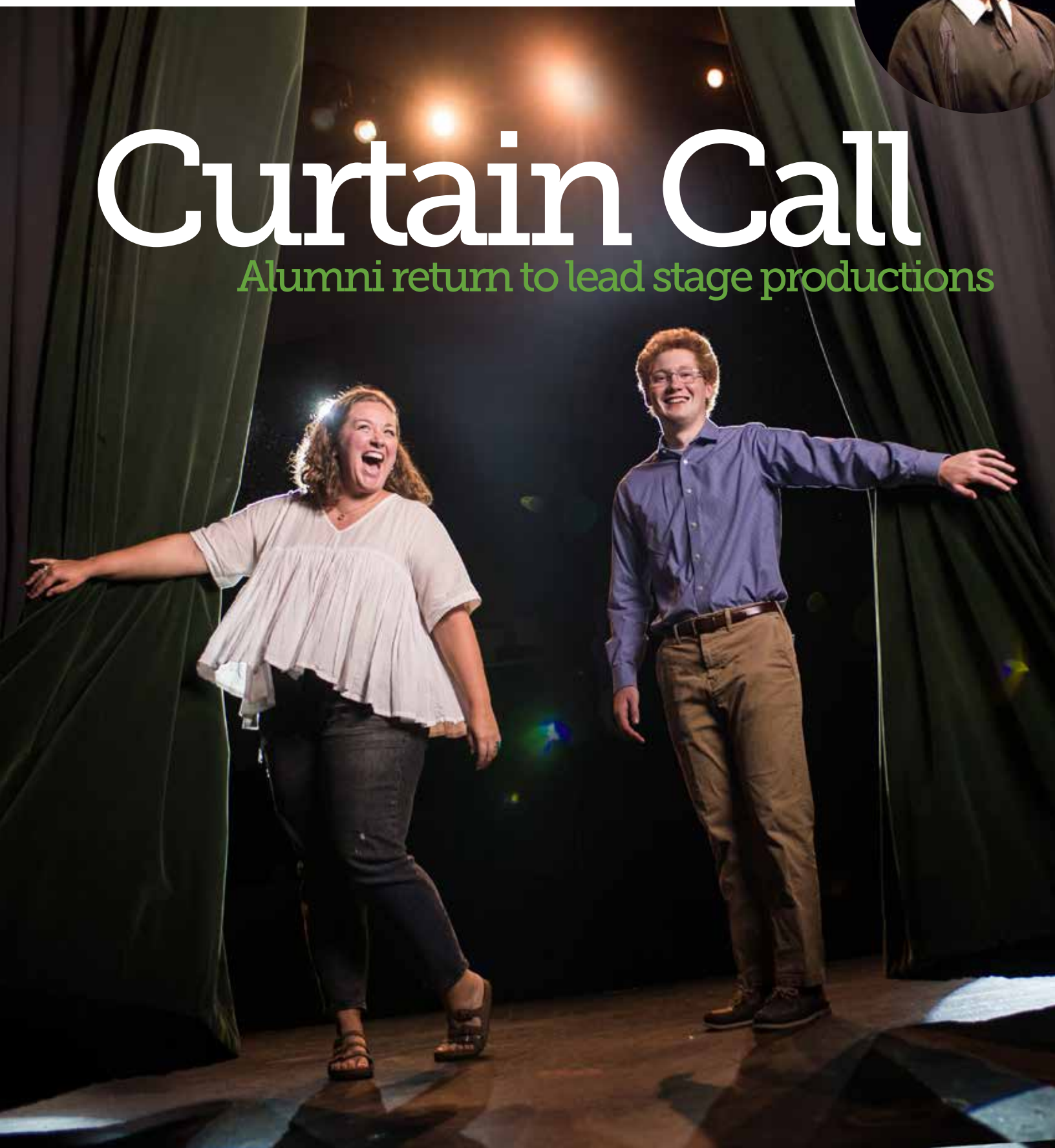
Green Bear teams made it four in a row by again winning the All-TAAC Trophy. The annual honor goes to the district whose varsity sports programs collectively performed the best during the year. For the 2020-2021 athletic season (August-June), our athletes captured the following Toledo Area Athletic Conference titles: boys' and girls' soccer, boys' and girls' cross-country, boys' golf, and boys' track and field. They also shared the title in volleyball and baseball. Congrats to all the athletes, coaches, and families. Way to represent!





# Curtain Call

Alumni return to lead stage productions



When Grace Wipfli and Randall Johnson were invited for job interviews as theatrical directors, they certainly didn't need to ask for directions.

The OH alumni were already familiar with the Junior/Senior High School auditorium, home of more than 100 productions over the decades.

Now the pair, who had roles or worked on nearly 20 productions in the past two decades, have the task of helping the next generation of student actors bring artistic works to life—and have fun doing so.

Clockwise from top: Grace Wipfli as Sister Aloysius in "Doubt: A Parable;" Randall Johnson in the ensemble of "Grease;" and Ms. Wipfli as Paulette in "Legally Blonde."



"What excited me was the opportunity to work with a group of students, and to take something from a black-and-white script and bring color and life to it," said Mr. Johnson ('18), a junior at the University of Toledo. "That growth and creation process really excites me." He has been hired to direct the fall musical ("The Hunchback of Notre Dame") and the spring Acting Out! Production ("Shrek Jr. The Musical").

Ms. Wipfli ('13) is the Soprano Resident Artist with The Toledo Opera. She appeared as Inez in the opera's production of "Il Trovatore" in early October and as Rosina in "The Stylist of Seville," the 2021-22 Opera on Wheels production.

"It hasn't quite hit me yet that it's real. I still remember, and will remember for the rest of my life, the moment I decided I wanted to be a singer and performer. It came in an audition for an Ottawa Hills' musical," said Ms. Wipfli. "There was a spark of inspiration that came from that moment and audition." She has been hired as the director of the to-be-announced spring musical.

Neither is flying solo in their new roles. There are many resources to draw upon, including the support of parent volunteers and guiding hand of Darrin Broadway. Mr. Broadway directed each of them during his decades-long tenure as the artistic director for OH Theatre.

"Grace and Randall represent two of the brightest lights ever to come out of the theater program," said Mr. Broadway, who no longer teaches English but is instead the district's dean of secondary teaching and learning. "We're all excited to have them back and to help them be successful."

## RANDALL JOHNSON

Mr. Johnson began his theater career as a freshman with an ensemble role in "Grease" and then appeared as a juror in "12 Angry Jurors." His largest role was as Inspector Javert in the spring 2018 production of "Les Misérables."

"Directing is something I've always wanted to do," said Mr. Johnson. "At one point, I was thinking about changing my major from math."

He rediscovered his passion for theater more than two years ago, when he began working on the spring 2019 production of "Newsies" while still in college. He would go on to serve as assistant director for "Noises Off" and "Aladdin Jr." and set designer for "Into the Woods" and "Proof." He also has assisted in the coaching of the district's Acting Out! actor training program for younger students.

"By working first on the props and then assisting directing, I started to learn more about what the creative process looks like," he said. "As an actor, the creative process looks very different because you are interfacing with the director. But it's the director who is bringing the script to life. There is less creation there for the actor."

## GRACE WIPFLI

Ms. Wipfli also began her OH acting career as a freshman. She later had several leads during her four years on stage, including as Maria in the fall 2012 production of "The Sound of Music." That role was her favorite as she shared the stage with her mother Donna Wipfli, who was then the music teacher at the Elementary School.



After graduation, Ms. Wipfli earned a bachelor of music degree (vocal performance) from Capital University and a master of music degree (voice and opera performance) from Northwestern University. A soprano, she has won numerous awards and competitions throughout her collegiate and into her burgeoning professional career.

“Any career in the arts needs to be as versatile as possible. You need to have a whole group of skills you can employ at any moment, and being able to understand the creative process from both sides is always an advantage,” she said of her decision to take the directing position. “I want to sing and tell stories for as long as I can. And if that leads me to the Metropolitan Opera in New York City, I’m certainly not going to say no! And if that means I get to tell stories as a director, that’s great, too.”

# SPOTLIGHT ON...

## Grace Wipfli and Randall Johnson

Sharing perspectives on a range of topics

### PAST ROLES

**RANDALL:** Ensemble in “Grease”; juror 10 in “12 Angry Jurors”; Inspector Javert in “Les Misérables”

**GRACE:** Paulette in “Legally Blonde”; Sister Aloysius in “Doubt: A Parable”; Maria in “The Sound of Music”; narrator in “Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat”; Audrey in “Little Shop of Horrors”; Chris Gorman in “Rumors”; a little stone in “Eurydice”; the Baker’s Wife in “Into the Woods”; and Grace Farrell in “Annie”

### BEST OH STAGE MOMENT

**RANDALL:** Performing “The Confrontation” song as Inspector Javert in “Les Misérables”

**GRACE:** Holding hands and singing “Climb Every Mountain” with mother Donna in “The Sound of Music”

### STRENGTHS THEY BRING TO DIRECTING ROLES

**RANDALL:** “It’s my recent investment in the program. I’ve been here for the past three years and I know the kids. I know the creative team that’s been assembled. I’ve worked with everyone on that team in different capacities.”

**GRACE:** “I’m a working professional. I’m in the business and I know what it looks like. I know what an audition looks like. I understand that not all the students I’ll be working with want to go in that direction and become a professional performer. But if they do, I’m right there.”

### STUDENT INVOLVEMENT

**RANDALL:** “There’s something spectacular about seeing the star of the basketball team as a lead, which we had when Lucas Janowicz played Warner Huntington II in “Legally Blonde” in April 2013.”

**GRACE:** “There is this amazing understanding throughout our district that Ottawa Hills’ students can and will do everything. It’s not just, ‘Oh, I’m a football player.’ No, no, no. You are a football player and sometimes you’re an actor and



Above: Grace Wipfli with her mother Donna in “The Sound of Music.”  
Right: Randall Johnson as Inspector Javert.



Johnson photo courtesy of Yarko Kuk/Village Voice of Ottawa Hills



sometimes you're in band and sometimes you're an artist."

**THEATER PROGRAM'S HISTORICAL SUCCESS**

**RANDALL:** "Theater attracts such a diverse group of students. And then add in that they don't want to fail. They are motivated to succeed. You look at the composition of our student body and ask, 'Wow. How did we do that?' I think it goes back to being that small community. Kids are getting their friends involved, and everyone's tied in, doing it together, and doing it well."

**GRACE:** "What I've noticed about our student population, and not necessarily while I was a student but looking back on my time here, is that they want to do well. There is a constant need for them to succeed. They put in as much and sometimes more time in order to create that final, marvelous product that people watch and say, 'How did they even do this?' They want what they are doing to be as good as possible. And nobody backs down from a challenge."

**Season of the OGRE**

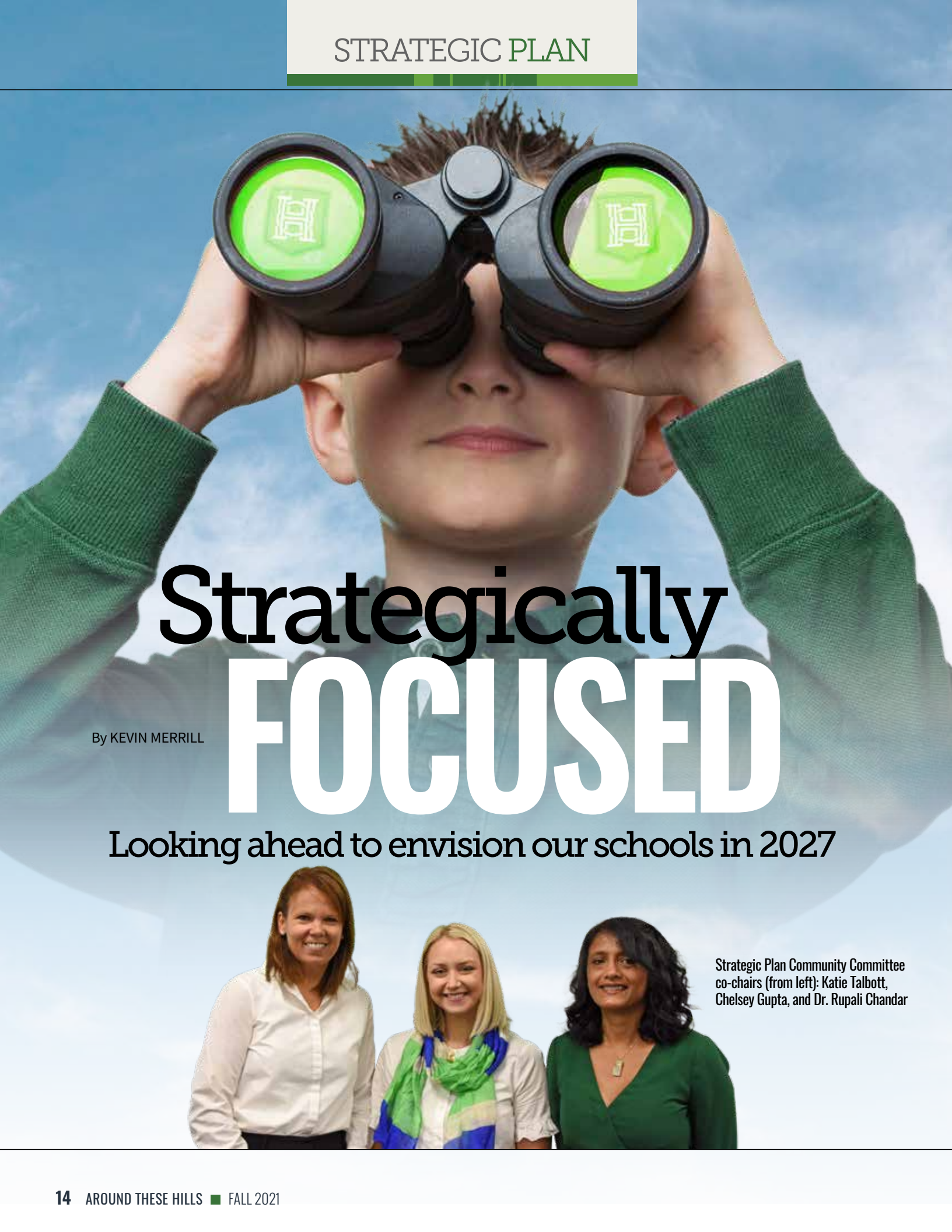
OH Theatre presents two productions in 2021-2022 featuring lovable and flawed characters. Here's how they stack up:



Real name	Shrek	Quasimodo
Best friend	Donkey	Monseigneur Claude Frolo
Love interest	Theona	Esmeralda
Home	Swamp	Cathedral
Print debut	"Shrek" by William Steig (1990)	"The Hunchback of Notre-Dame" by Victor Hugo (1833)
Movie debut	"Shrek" (2001)	"Esmeralda" (1905)
Hummable song	"I'm a Believer"	None!



Grace Wipfli as Chris Gorman in "Rumors" (left) and Audrey in "Little Shop of Horrors."



# Strategically FOCUSED

By KEVIN MERRILL

Looking ahead to envision our schools in 2027



Strategic Plan Community Committee  
co-chairs (from left): Katie Talbott,  
Chelsey Gupta, and Dr. Rupali Chandar

## What should Ottawa Hills Local Schools look like in 2027? Now is your chance to shape that future.

The district is in the data-gathering phase of its Strategic Plan process, which relies heavily on community input and guidance. The committee leading the effort is collecting input and ideas from across the community from parents and students to teachers and staff, as well as Villagers and alumni.

“Without input from parents, students, and other Villagers, the new plan will not have the universal support we are looking for as a committee,” said Katie Talbott, one of three co-chairs of the Strategic Plan Community Committee. Ms. Talbott is a local attorney, herself a graduate of the district (Class of 1989), and mother to a senior, junior, and 7th grader.

The district creates a strategic plan every five years; the current one covers 2017-2022. Like the current one, the new plan will be more of a blueprint and evaluation tool than a day-to-day manual for running the district. It’s likely the committee will keep with the five-year timeframe as doing so provides enough time to launch more ambitious initiatives and collect and analyze data on their success.

Many trends have emerged since 2016 when work started on the current plan. Enrollment is up 12 percent, from 933 to 1,045. In addition, voters approved two levies in November 2020 to add

2022-2027

OH

Strategic Plan

A Community-Driven Project to Help Design the Future of Our Schools



teachers and support services as well as build The Foundry at the Junior/Senior High School.

In addition, the district’s student population has grown more diverse. Finally, the past academic year demonstrated that the district is capable of deploying an array of technological and academic support avenues that previously were not fully used.

### Leading The Way

One of the committee’s co-chairs is Dr. Rupali Chandar. She is a co-founder of This Is OH, a community group created to bring awareness and constructive action to efforts that support diversity, equity, and inclusion in the Village.

“The district continues to make progress in so many areas,” said Dr. Chandar, a professor of astrophysics at the University of Toledo and mother/stepmother of two juniors, an 8th grader, and an alumna (’19). “We hope this Strategic Plan recognizes and builds upon those achievements.”

The third co-chair brings a young-parent perspective. Chelsey Gupta and her husband Sunny have four children: 1st and 2nd graders and two toddlers at home. (Dr. Gupta is a



Dr. Adam Fineske meets with Strategic Plan Community Committee co-chairs.

2001 graduate of Ottawa Hills High School.) “Like many parents, we moved to Ottawa Hills because of the strong reputation of the school system,” said Mrs. Gupta, a stay-at-home mom. “I’m honored to have a key role in shaping its future for the benefit of future generations.”

The co-chairs are the face of the process, but are quick to give credit to the many others helping informally behind the scenes and formally through membership on the Community Committee (see related story, page 17).

“We are so fortunate to have engaged and energetic parents in our community who are always willing to step up and help to lead our district to future success,” said Superintendent Dr. Adam Fineske, who made the co-chair appointments. “These parents are excellent communicators and organizers, and they are committed to creating the most forward-thinking document possible, involving everyone in our community in unique ways.”

Providing assistance to the co-chairs and committee is the Strategic Planning Division of ProMedica.

“ProMedica works with schools across our region in various capacities, and we are very excited to work with Ottawa Hills Local Schools to develop a five-year strategic plan,” said Brad LaClair, an associate vice president at the nonprofit organization. “We expect a naturally collaborative

partnership, as our organizations are aligned in our commitment to serving the community and helping people in the most fundamental ways.”

Many of the methods ProMedica uses to think strategically about its own future can easily be applied to the Ottawa Hills planning process, Mr. LaClair said. Those include conducting listening sessions to actively engage and collect input from parents, students, teachers, and community members.

“One of the major objectives of the strategic-planning process is to help Ottawa Hills Local Schools create an aligned vision of the future that is innovative, transformational, and exciting for everyone,” he said.

## Data-Collection Phase

Data plays a big role in shaping the plan, and a lot has already been collected since 2017. That data ranges from graduation rates and test scores to quality rankings from outside research organizations such as Niche.com, *U.S. News & World Report*, and the Ohio Department of Education. The district is the only one in Ohio to receive all A’s for five straight years on the state Local Report Card. There’s also data from experiences of the past year, when the district used remote instruction to serve all students while keeping doors open five days a week

for in-person teaching.

But the committee also wants to collect a different kind of data. The first data collection comes from an online survey sent Village-wide in August. (It’s open for submissions through Oct. 31). It seeks ideas and opinions in six areas:

- Overall satisfaction with the current state of the district;
- Top three priorities in regard to academic excellence (graduation rate, ACT/SAT score, etc.);
- Top three priorities over the next five years;
- Major strengths/largest sources of district pride;
- Main weaknesses/areas for future improvement; and
- Main opportunities for improvement and challenges ahead.

A second source of data is coming from the many Village and school-support groups. Each was asked to brainstorm among its members and then to submit that feedback to the committee. Those groups include This Is OH, OH Boosters, Ottawa Hills Schools Parent Association, OH21, Ottawa Hills Music & Theatre Association, Ottawa Hills Schools Foundation, The Foundry Design Team, Office of Village Life, Joint

## Data-Collection Outreach Activities: Get Involved!

1

The first outreach activity is an online survey sent Village-wide in August. (It’s open for submissions through Oct. 31.)

2

Village and school-support groups are being asked to brainstorm among members and submit feedback to the committee.

3

“Backyard brainstorming sessions” hosted by Villagers from mid-September to mid-October, including a virtual one scheduled Oct. 20. Plus feedback-collection sessions held with students in grades 7 through 12 and teachers and staff.







## Timeline

### September-October

- Collect written feedback and ideas through surveys targeted specifically to the community, alumni, teachers, and students
- Collect discussion-based feedback and ideas
- Five backyard brainstorming sessions open to the community
- Collaboration with multiple school-support and Village groups
- Virtual Community Brainstorming Session: Wednesday, Oct. 20, 7 p.m.
- Collaboration with multiple student-led groups at the Junior/Senior High School
- Engagement sessions at the Elementary School and Junior/Senior High School for faculty and staff

### November

- Planning committee refinement sessions

### December/Early January

- Draft the plan, begin to design the 2022-2027 Strategic Plan document
- Present Strategic Plan for Board of Education approval at its January meeting

## Strategic Plan Community Committee

Community Members: Bethany Dale, Rich Effler, Emery Geosits, Jason Huntley, Teanya Norwood-Ekwenna, Mona Parikh, John Roemer, Angie Schaal, Adrienne Shreve, Kalen Stanton, Elizabeth Weaver, and Sabrina Weaver

### School Board Representation

Kathy Lathrop and Adam Smidi

### District Representation

- Superintendent Dr. Adam Fineske
- Darrin Broadway, Dean of Secondary Teaching and Learning
- Ben McMurray, Junior/Senior High School Principal
- Kevin Merrill, Director of Communications
- Dr. Bill Miller, Director of Curriculum and Instruction
- Brooks Spiess, Assistant Director of Technology
- John Wenzlick, Village of Ottawa Hills Village Manager/Chief of Police

### Students

Olivia Bridges (9th Grade), Nina Clark (8th Grade), Abby Pommeranz (9th Grade), Nash Malczewski (10th Grade), and Elliot Schaal (8th Grade)

### Teachers & Staff

Joan Keckler, Steve Bobak, Nikki Tolliver, Jonathan Siebanaler, and Tori Norman



Recreation Board, the Village of Ottawa Hills, Decoding Dyslexia Ottawa Hills, Village Equity Alliance, and the International Student Exchange Association.

The third source of data is coming from “backyard brainstorming sessions” hosted by Villagers. About half a dozen took place from mid-September to mid-October, culminating with a virtual one scheduled Oct. 20. There also will be feedback-collection sessions with students in grades 7 through 12 and teachers and staff in both buildings.

In addition, the group emailed a survey to alumni of the past 10 years.

The data collection ends in early November and gives way to a synthesis period in partnership with ProMedica. At that point in the process, a handful of themes are expected to emerge. The committee will examine those themes as the next step toward developing goals and action steps for the coming five years.

The new strategic plan will not become a checklist. In many ways, both the current and future plans represent works

in progress. “We are always working on achieving our goals and our efforts never officially end,” Dr. Fineske said. “A plan is as much about a destination as it is about intent. So we’re always going to be striving.”

To learn more about the process and to read the current plan, visit [ohschools.org/strategicplan](https://ohschools.org/strategicplan). To contact the Strategic Plan Community Committee, email [ohstrategicplan@gmail.com](mailto:ohstrategicplan@gmail.com).



## Chicago reception planned March 4

Attention, OH alumni in the Chicago area: The party is coming to you! As part of the Choraliers' visit to the Windy City in March 2022, the Office of Alumni Relations will host an alumni reception Friday, March 4. The event will be at the home of Ted Souder ('89) from 6-9 p.m. and include a performance by the Choraliers. To RSVP, send an email to Erica Silk, director of development and alumni relations, at [esilk@ohschools.org](mailto:esilk@ohschools.org).

## Nominations open for 2022 awards

If you would like to nominate someone for either a Distinguished Alumni Award or Athletic Hall of Fame Award, complete the application at [ohschoolsfoundation.org](http://ohschoolsfoundation.org). The submission deadline for the 2022 awards is Feb. 1, 2022. Nominations will be reviewed by a committee of Ottawa Hills alumni, faculty, and district officials. Nominations also may be sent to Erica Silk at [esilk@ohschools.org](mailto:esilk@ohschools.org) or mailed to Erica Silk, Ottawa Hills Schools Foundation, 3600 Indian Rd., Ottawa Hills, OH 43606.

## Class of 2011 reunion set for Nov. 26

Attention members of the Class of 2011: Join classmates for a 10-year reunion Friday, Nov. 26, from 7-11:30 p.m. at M Osteria Bar & Lounge (611 Monroe St.) in downtown Toledo. For questions or to RSVP, contact Reed Silverman ([reedsilverman@gmail.com](mailto:reedsilverman@gmail.com)) or Lauren Abendroth ([abendrothlauren@gmail.com](mailto:abendrothlauren@gmail.com)) or find the event on Facebook or Instagram.



The bridal party of Sara (Day) Brown ('11) helped guest (and French teacher) Noreen Hanlon get off her feet (in a reenactment of a moment from Agora 2010) during the Catawba Island wedding Aug. 21. Lending a hand were (from left) Molly Veh, Marnie Hull, Sara, Maggie Reilly, Nicole Collins, and Liz Nugent—all members of the Class of 2011. Congratulations to Sara and husband Connor Brown. She is the daughter of alumnus John ('76) and Claudia Day. It was a great day for Green Bear Nation, as everyone in the group picture (above, right) were OH alumni!



## Soccer unites alumni

Soccer alumni returned Aug. 7 to get some kicks in with current players. The event included three sets of current student-alumni brothers squaring off. Showing brotherly love were (from left) junior Danny Assi and brother Joshua ('20); junior Liam Silk and brother Jack ('21); and senior Walker Kight and brother John ('20). "It's great to see Green Bears through the years playing against their own brothers. Not many teams can field an alumni game like we can," said coach Brian Hanudel.

## Red, White, Blue ... and Green

Green Bear pride was on full display Sept. 3 for Solheim Cup festivities. Serving as volunteers at Inverness Club were (from left) Betsy (Brown) Rumpf ('81), Mary (Lewis) Geiger ('79), Sharon (Young) Abendroth ('80), Debbie Jenks ('80), and Lori (Mitchell) Dixon ('78). Way to represent, ladies!



## MEMORIALS



**Elizabeth "Betsy" Durfee ('42)** passed away April 18. She graduated from Smith College in 1946. In 1949, she married Benjamin B. Durfee and together they had six children. She loved her family, tennis, classical music, the church she attended all of her life (Collingwood Presbyterian), and gave thanks for life every morning.



**Peter Hayden Bennett ('48)** passed away March 28. He was class president his senior year. He graduated in 1952 from the University of Toledo with a degree in electrical engineering. He then began service with the U.S. Army Signal Corps, eventually attaining the rank of lieutenant. After his return to civilian life, he began a career in telecommunications in 1955 at the North Electric Company in Galion, Ohio. He went on to take positions at ITT, RCA, and the Telecommunications Industry Association in Washington, D.C.

**Virginia "Jinny" Devilbiss Reichart ('52)** passed away July 24. She attended the College of William and Mary. She later obtained her real estate license and sold real estate for more than 15 years. "Jinny" had a love for all animals with dogs as one of her favorites. Later in life when she did not have a dog, she became the caregiver for many feral cats that lived in the woods near her apartment.

**Carl Richard Fassler ('59)** passed away March 15. He was the author of *Rainbow Kids: Hawaii's Gift to America*, which examined the state's mixed-race population. He was a graduate of both Kenyon College and Columbia University. Peace Corps in Thailand changed his life and brought him to Hawaii for training. He worked for the state of Hawaii for 30 years, where he made Hawaii a model for aquaculture



development and opened doors for pearl farming in the United States and The Pacific.

**John (Bobby) Roemer ('66)** passed away Aug. 26. He was the fifth of eight siblings. He proudly graduated from The Ohio State University in 1970 where he was a member of the Phi Delta Theta fraternity. He followed his father's entrepreneurial spirit by starting his own companies, beginning with Claims Administration Corporation, a cutting-edge employee benefits company, followed by La Jolla Beach Volleyball Club.



**Susan Carol Dwight ('67)** passed away Feb. 27. She was a lifelong native of the Toledo area. She studied pre-nursing at Defiance College and then attended The Ohio State University, where she was a member of the Kappa Delta sorority. For more than 40 years, she taught within various divisions of Toledo Public Schools. After retirement, she continued in her love of volunteering, tutoring, and mentoring children. Her passion was teaching.

**Anne French ('80)** passed away Aug. 21. She remained loyal to OH and consistently volunteered to lend her beautiful voice to sing the "National Anthem" at Green Bear sporting events. She was a regular performer when the girls' volleyball teams conducted their annual "Volley for the Cure" fundraiser, which as someone who was living with breast cancer, was an issue close to her heart.

**Dr. Gregory S. Orgel ('07)** passed away July 10. He attended medical school at Wright State University in Dayton and completed his emergency medicine residency at the University of Texas at Austin. He served on the front line of the COVID-19 pandemic in multiple high-volume hospitals in Las Vegas, even after learning of his diagnosis of cancer.



## Celebrating the life of Tyler Thompson



Current and former members of the Choraliers joined retired vocal music director Donna Wipfli July 25 for a performance dedicated to the life of Tyler Thompson ('07), who passed away unexpectedly in April. Proceeds from a free will offering were given to the Ottawa Hills Schools Foundation in tribute to Mr. Thompson, who as a student sang with the Choraliers for three years. The performance, at Epworth United Methodist Church, ended with "The Wish," a song performed at graduation for the last 25 years. Among the alumni participating were Priya Bhatt ('20), Sarah Boice ('20), Jillian Frye ('16), Alexander Frye ('14), Hank Griffin ('20), Robert Kanarowski ('20), George Mancy ('19), Nate Moynihan ('20), Rohit Mukherjee ('20), Nolan Paterwich ('19), Henry Seifreid ('19), and Darion Wimmers ('19).



Above: Judd Silverman ('74) honored the life of the late Jamie O'Hara ('68). Right: Judy Dye thanked everyone on behalf of her daughter Constance Hauman ('79), who was performing in New York.



## Community celebrates ALUMNI EXCELLENCE

Wonderful weather and cherished memories created the perfect backdrop Sept. 10 as the district celebrated 11 of its most accomplished alumni. Organized by the Ottawa Hills Schools Foundation, the annual event brings together notable graduates and their families for a night of reminiscing and recognition. Honored with the Distinguished Alumni Award were Barbara Barker ('79), Mary (Carson) Fedderke ('65), Constance Hauman ('79), Amul Thapar ('87), and Gary Woodbury ('58). Also honored (but not attending) were Dr. David Glow ('55) and Robert (Bob) Hinkle ('56), who was recognized posthumously. The Athletic Hall of Fame inductees were David Roadhouse ('62), Wendy (Roberts) Pavicic ('97), and Katherine (Jamieson) Folino ('10). Jamie O'Hara ('68) was honored posthumously.



Top: Introducing Gary Woodbury ('58) was grandson Peyton Woodbury. Above: The Roadhouse family proudly let everyone know who they were with at Niedermeier Stadium.



Inductees were introduced at halftime and received hearty applause from the crowd. Below, Tab Hinkle speaks for the Hinkle family in thanking the Foundation for honoring his father, the late Robert (Bob) Hinkle ('56). The Toledo Country Club was the picturesque venue for the event.



Wendy (Roberts) Pavicic ('97) and Amul Thapar ('87) share a laugh before the introductions.

## FOUNDATION LETTER

### Changing of the guard, but not of the mission

To grow and remain relevant, every organization needs a succession plan. One day, someone will move on or retire, and a new leader will be needed.

For the Ottawa Hills Schools Foundation, that transition came this summer when George Lathrop stepped down as president after an amazing period of stewardship. Not only was George involved in creating the Foundation, but he volunteered to serve as its first president. We are making a difference in students' and teachers' lives in large part because of George's vision and dedication.

Stepping into his shoes as president (he is staying on as a trustee) is someone with equal levels of commitment and resolve: Jackie (Hylant) Berenzweig. Jackie joined the board as a trustee in 2013. She and her family are no strangers to the Village. A 1993 graduate, she and husband Andrew "Bubba" Berenzweig now have the third generation of Hylant family members enrolled in the school system.

"I love the Foundation and enjoy serving as a trustee," Mrs. Berenzweig said. "So when I was approached about the president's role, I was really honored."

As president, she does more than recruit members, run meetings, and sign legal documents. She is our No. 1 advocate and the person who knocks on more doors and sends more thank-you's than anyone else. And if you know Jackie, who was captain of the field hockey team in 1992 when it won the state championship, you know she is equal parts agile and tenacious.

We are happy to share other board news, too. Judd Silverman ('74) will serve as the foundation's vice president. Judd will serve two years and then move into the president's role. And we welcome John Roemer ('99) as our newest board member. You'll find more about John on page 23.

Our board is a powerful force for good in Ottawa Hills. We thank its members for their service and selfless support of our mission.

*P.S. Experience the power of giving by donating today in support of Ottawa Hills students.*



**Jackie (Hylant) Berenzweig ('93)** is president of the Ottawa Hills Schools Foundation. **Erica (Gatchel) Silk ('89)** is the district's director of development and alumni relations.

### Foundation's new leader is Village's No. 1 fan

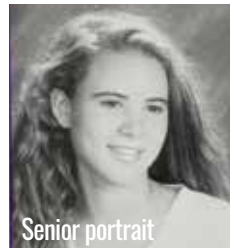
Supporting foundations in Ottawa Hills comes naturally to Jackie (Hylant) Berenzweig ('93). In high school, she was the student ambassador assigned to the Ottawa Hills Foundation, the community nonprofit formed in 1985 to enhance the quality of life in the Village. Among her duties: writing articles about its projects for *The Arrowhead*, the student newspaper at the Junior/Senior High School.

**Nearly 30 years later, she finds herself still working alongside foundations, this time as the new president of the Ottawa Hills Schools Foundation. "I love the Foundation and enjoy serving as a trustee," she said. "So when I was approached about the president's role, I was really honored."**

She replaces George Lathrop, who helped to found the nonprofit organization in 2013, organized its first board, and served as the first president. "The Foundation is in great hands with Jackie," said Mr. Lathrop, who remains on the board as a trustee. "She loves the Village and our schools and is the perfect leader for the Foundation's next phase of growth."

As president, her duties include recruiting and thanking donors, managing the logistics of the Foundation (running the meetings, signing legal documents), recruiting trustees, and promoting the Foundation as a force of positive change for the district. Helping with many of those tasks is a new supporting role: vice president. The trustees recently filled that position to help manage the workload and ensure smooth leadership transitions in the future. The first vice president is Judd Silverman ('74); both he and Mrs. Berenzweig are serving two-year terms.

Mrs. Berenzweig joined the Foundation as a trustee in 2013.



Senior portrait



Mrs. Berenzweig in the newly reorganized Bear Cave.



She played a key role as campaign chair in The Kadens Family Health & Wellness Capital Campaign, which raised \$1.5 million to renovate the varsity locker rooms and build The Kadens Family Fitness Center. She is now actively involved in the Foundation's \$2.2 million Full STEAM Ahead Capital Campaign, which is officially under way (see related story, page 24).

She also serves as a member of the OH Boosters' board. She recently helped create the vintage sportswear campaign celebrating past state championship teams and led the effort to open the Cub Cave spirit store at the Elementary School.

"Everything the Foundation does is to enhance the schools and help maintain its status as the top district in the state," she said. "We try to go above and beyond what the district can offer. We are focusing on helping all students in areas such as academics, athletics, arts, and extracurricular activities."

Over the past five years, that support has translated into nearly two dozen grants for a range of projects and ideas, from summer camps and art supplies to out-of-state trips. It has continued to be active during the pandemic, funding student requests that led to Prom being hosted outside and the creation of WinterFest.

Over the next year, the Foundation wants to place greater focus on alumni outreach and engagement, she said. Those plans were taking shape in early 2020 but were slowed significantly by COVID-19. They are regaining momentum, such as a planned Chicago-area alumni reception in March.

As you would expect, Mrs. Berenzweig has many favorite memories of her years as a Green Bear. She started in Ottawa Hills in the 5th Grade classroom of Kathy Senn. Thirty years later, her own daughter Ella was a student in Mrs. Senn's classroom.

In high school, she was a four-year member of the cheerleading squad and editor of *The Arrowhead*. She also was captain of the field hockey team, on which she scored the winning goal in the team's 1992 state championship win. She also participated twice in Agora, taking trips abroad to France and Italy.

"I love that so many of my experiences remain, and that tradition still matters so much," she said. "And academically, I was so well prepared for the University of Michigan. I already had a full semester of credits by the time I arrived." She graduated with a degree in economics in 1997.

It was there that she met future husband Andrew "Bubba" Berenzweig, who played hockey collegiately and in the National Hockey League. Today, he leads the Toledo office of Hylant Group Inc., a Toledo-based company among the largest privately held insurance and brokerage service firms in the United States. They have three children at the Junior/Senior High School: Ella (11th Grade), Lily (9th Grade), and Skylar (7th Grade).

## Building skills and team chemistry

A grant from the Ottawa Hills Schools Foundation made it possible for the girls' varsity soccer team to attend a three-day overnight camp this summer. About 20 OH students and coach Jessica Kozy participated in the event at Bowling Green State University. Participation gave the girls an opportunity to increase their soccer knowledge and skills and strengthen team chemistry on and off the field. Specifically, they played against other high school teams; worked together on strength and conditioning; and heard from experts about developing the right frame of mind to compete at a high level. Support came from the Mindel Family Athletic Fund.

## Choraliers to perform at Chicago museum

The Choraliers are taking their voices on the road to Chicago in March 2022 with financial assistance from the Ottawa Hills Schools Foundation. The Choraliers will perform at an OH alumni reception March 4 and then again March 5 for the general public at the Great Hall inside the Field Museum of Natural History. During their three-day trip, they will participate in two choral clinics: one at Bowling Green State University with Richard Schnipke, director of the BGSU Chorale and Men's Chorus; and at VanderCook College of Music under the direction of Dr. Robert Sinclair, director of choral activities at the college. The Choraliers' 39 members come from grades 9 through 12 and are led by Joshua Dufford, the vocal music director at the Junior/Senior High School. The students, Mr. Dufford, and parent chaperones also plan to have some fun together through group dinners and sightseeing activities (including two Broadway shows). Support came from the Eleanor Seifried Fund for the Performing Arts.



Back row: Ann Moore, Summer Hardman, Paula Wagoner, Mallory Blank, Jenny Cooper, Emily Casey, Brooke McCaffery, Cecily Straub, Courtney Westmeyer, Erika Newcomer, and Coach Jo Cooley. Front row: Tiffy DeBoer, Jo Ross, Julie Huber, Jackie Hylant, Kim Kos, Meredith Ciralsky, Megan Meinerding, and Melissa Munn

# Celebrating success

Foundation thanks donors for enhancing student lives



The Ottawa Hills Schools Foundation had much to be thankful for last year, and it shared that gratitude with 2020-2021 members of its Veni, Vidi, Vici Giving Society at a reception Sept. 29. During a remarkable year, the Foundation closed out its first-ever capital campaign (The Kadens Family Health & Wellness Capital Campaign) and began a second: The Full STEAM Ahead Capital Campaign.

The reception at the Inverness Club was a student-centric affair, with vocal performances by the Junior Chorale and Choraliers as well as speeches of thanks from students representing the arts, science, and athletics. In addition, outgoing Foundation President George Lathrop was recognized for his service with a gift of original art by former OH teacher Steven Wipfli.



# Foundation adds John Roemer as Trustee

Few families have local school roots as deep as the Roemers. Twelve family members have graduated from Ottawa Hills, including John Roemer ('99), the newest trustee to the Ottawa Hills Schools Foundation.

**"I am a firm believer in giving more than you receive. And to date, I have received more than my fair share out of the school system," said Mr. Roemer. "Giving to the Foundation is a great way to give back and to ensure that we are leaving the school system better than we found it."**

As a Green Bear, he played on four varsity sports (football, basketball, baseball, and hockey) as well as served on the French Club and as treasurer for his class. He returned to the Village in 2012, where he lives today with wife Sara (a senior account executive at Hart Inc.) and their four children: Grant (5th Grade), Nola (3rd Grade), Clay (Kindergarten), and preschooler Ruth.

"One of my fondest memories is playing under the Friday night lights, even though we were terrible and had few fans," he said of his varsity football career, where he played halfback and defensive back. "We had three coaches in four years and we won four games in four years. In my junior year, we had just over 20 players. However, we did win our last game in my senior year."

He also fondly remembers the baseball team's annual trips to Sarasota, Fla., during Spring Break.

"We are so lucky to have John as a trustee," said Jackie (Hylant) Berenzweig ('93), the Foundation's president. "His love of the Village and for our schools is unmatched."

His sister Sarah ('03) and brother Teddy ('95) also graduated from Ottawa Hills, as did his father Bobby ('66) and mother Margaret (Peggy) Gillan ('72). He also had numerous cousins and seven aunts and uncles who graduated: Wellington II Roemer ('55), Tom Roemer ('63), Susan Roemer ('64), Meredith Roemer ('70), Mary Gillan ('74), Sheila Gillan ('76), and Kenneth Roemer ('76).

His uncle Donald Scott Roemer died at age 13 in a boating accident, and the victory bell at Niedermeier Stadium—the one rung by Green Bear sports teams to signify a victory—was donated in his memory.

Mr. Roemer graduated from The Ohio State University in 2003 with a bachelor of science degree in business administration with majors in transportation and logistics and marketing. Today, he is vice president of supply chain management at Spartan Chemical Company, Inc.

Welcome aboard, Mr. Roemer.



# Campaign STEAMING FORWARD

Initiative to expand student success across the district



The fundraising campaign to reinvent academic and support services across district buildings is officially under way following the kick-off of the Full STEAM Ahead Capital Campaign.

“We are thrilled by the level of participation so far,” said Dr. Anjali Gupta (’99), who is co-chairing the campaign with husband Anil. “As people hear the story behind the campaign and see the possibilities, they are enthusiastically joining the rush.”

A June 2 ceremonial groundbreaking brought the campaign and its goals into the public eye. In subsequent months as demolition and construction began, the planning committee worked behind the scenes to ensure the \$2.2 million campaign succeeded. In the campaign’s “public” phase, more traditional donor outreach occurs. This is where fundraising focuses on gifts of any size as well as efforts by individuals working together as groups.

Past and future donations will make possible a range of enhancements, primarily at the Junior/Senior High School. Following the groundbreaking, the committee formally expanded the campaign’s scope to include the Elementary School. Projects there range from new equipment for the art room and 6th Grade science classroom to a new STEAM lab and expanded Makerspace.

“The Elementary School projects will create the perfect matching bookend to the Junior/Senior High School,” said Dr. Gupta. “We are creating a continuum that will enrich students in these subjects from Kindergarten through their senior year. That K-12 STEAM pathway will become a defining characteristic of what it means to receive an Ottawa Hills education.”

The STEAM in the campaign title refers to science, technology, engineering,

art, and math. According to the Ohio Department of Education, STEAM education “is an integrated approach to learning where rigorous academic concepts are learned through real-world, project-based experiences.”

Students use those subjects to make authentic connections between school, community, and work experiences. That is certainly the case at Ottawa Hills Local Schools, which regularly receives statewide and national recognition for STEAM achievements by students, teachers, and programs.

“Alumni are extremely proud of our school district, and are showing it through amazing gifts,” said Jackie (Hylant) Berenzweig (’93), president of the Ottawa Hills Schools Foundation. “Everyone understands the importance to this Village of sustaining excellence and supporting tradition.”

The public campaign starts nearly one year after Villagers approved a \$8.5 million bond levy. That levy made it possible to sell bonds to raise money to build The Foundry (originally known as the Learning Commons) and to make extensive upgrades

to existing STEAM classrooms. Some of the bond money raised will be used to install heating, cooling, and ventilation systems throughout the Junior/Senior High School, sections of which opened in 1939.

In addition to the physical changes, there are other visual signs of progress. Earlier this summer, signs went up announcing the campaign: one on the construction fencing along Kenwood Avenue and another on one of the temporary classrooms in the building’s parking lot. And a group of 36 parents and other Villagers working together as The Foundry Design Team are exploring projects and programs for the new space.

Since mid-summer, many visitors to the Junior/Senior High School have been able to see firsthand the campaign’s progress. Walls are gone and new spaces created, including the shell for what will become The Foundry. In addition, The Gupta Family Science & Research Corridor is up and running.

Construction will pick up intensity around January 2022 and proceed quickly into summer. Assuming all deadlines are met, the plan is for an August ribbon-cutting for the completed project before the start of the 2022-2023 academic year.

The campaign’s focus now includes enhancements in the library space at the Elementary School.





## Excitement is building!

Thank you to these individuals and organizations for helping to lay the foundation for the Full STEAM Ahead Capital Campaign.

Contributors as of Oct. 6

### LEADERSHIP (\$500,000 and up)

The Gupta Families  
ProMedica

### VALEDICTORIAN (\$100,000 and up)

Chris and Aparna Brown  
Jon and Niki Frankel  
Jackie ('93) and Bubba Berenzweig  
Pat and Ann ('67) Hylant  
John ('96) and Shanie Swigart  
Mickey and Steve ('66) Swigart  
James "Jim" F. White Jr. ('58) on behalf of Susan "Sue" White, James F. White III, and Carey White Gifford ('89)

### SUMMA CUM LAUDE (\$50,000 and up)

George and Kathy Lathrop

### MAGNA CUM LAUDE (\$25,000 and up)

Key Bank  
Meredith ('94) and Kevin Freidman  
James ('79) and Mary ('79) Geiger  
Wendy and Troy Greeley  
Elias ('99) and Joy Hajjar & Family  
Nadine Kassis and David Lewis  
Michael and Jamie O'Neill  
Steve and Mary Saddemi  
Signature Bank  
Marc Thompson and Alta Richter in memory of Tyler Thompson  
Waterford Bank  
The Zaidi Family

### DISTINGUISHED HONOR ROLL (\$10,000 and up)

The Estes Family  
Fifth Third Bank  
Steve and Neerja Jindal  
The Kadens Family Foundation  
Ian ('95) and Christina Katz

Kevin, Kathleen, Thomas ('21), and Charles ('23) Merrill  
Geof ('62) and Molly Meyers  
Bill and Laura Rudolph  
Rudolph Libbe Inc.  
The Staelin Family in memory of Tiffany E. Staelin ('91)  
Venture Capital, Craig and Amy Findley  
David ('67) and Heidi Waterman

### FOUNDERS (\$5,000 and up)

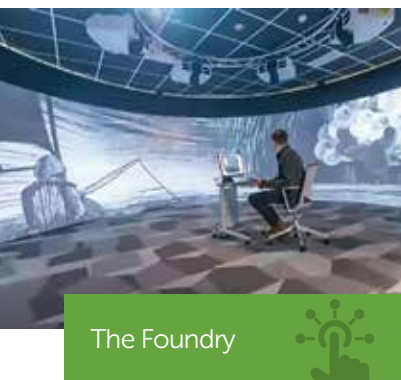
Kate ('77) and Tom Backoff  
Carol and Ed Bardi  
R. L. ('76) and Karen Berry  
Alap and Amy Choksey  
Adam and Kate Fineske  
Lauren and Josh Green  
Nancy and Tom ('62) Kabat  
Erica ('89) and Jim Silk  
Spengler Nathanson, Attorneys at Law  
Mark, Meredith, Mickey, and Taylor Wagoner

### FRIENDS OF THE FOUNDATION (\$1,000 and up)

The Ballard Family  
Class of 2007 in memory of Tyler Thompson  
Class of 2007 in memory of Greg Orgel  
Class of 2021  
Kristie Feeback and Family  
Maara Fink and Chris Hamilton and Family  
Ben McMurray and Noreen Hanlon  
Huntington Bank  
Sandeep Singh and Pravleen Kaur  
The Kidner Family  
The Naddaf Family: Mark and Erika, Samuel, Jonathan, and Emily  
Judd ('74) and Lisa Silverman  
Bob Shopneck ('68)  
Diane and Jim Snyder  
Glenn Rudy ('62)  
TDC Companies

### OTHER GIFTS

Adam and Rana Smidi  
Jennifer Griffin  
Dorothy and Rex Figy  
Austin Irving ('02)



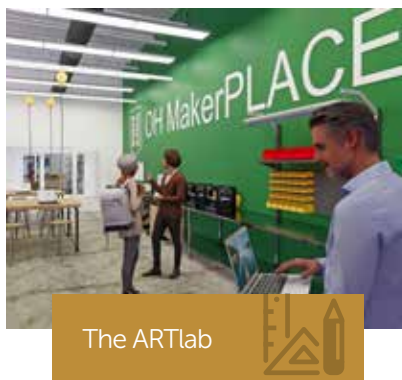
The Foundry

The Foundry, a name suggested and voted for by students, will become the academic heart of the Junior/Senior High School serving students in grades 7-12. It will be a research, technology, and intervention center by transforming the current open courtyard and adjacent interior classrooms. The result: 6,800 feet of unified educational space open to students 13 hours a day during the school year. It will be the center for collaborative work and serve as a learning laboratory where innovation, experimentation, and learning strategies are developed and action research is employed.



The Gupta Family Science & Research Corridor

These tech-centric spaces elevate research and education in four distinct and increasingly interconnected disciplines: biological and physical sciences, technology, rhetoric and composition, and mathematics. The Gupta Family Science & Research Corridor offers a collaborative interdisciplinary research culture with renowned researchers and educators from the University of Toledo and Bowling Green State University. Serving as the hub connecting these academic locations is a new Research Lab just for students, equipped with the computer and science equipment they need to pursue their own inquiries.



The ARTlab

Our ARTlab brings together interactive spaces designed to inspire students to experiment, play, and create as they explore the ideas, tools, and techniques of classical, modern, and contemporary art. It will transform the way our art classrooms interact with all disciplines of STEAM curriculum and connect students through exhibitions, studio art, and performance education.



The Foundry

This destination borrows the name from its older "sibling" at the Junior/Senior High School, but keeps everything lowercase just to be cooler! Located at the Elementary School, the foundry will include a dedicated STEAM lab, enhanced Makerspace, upgrades to the library's reading area and art classroom, and major upgrades to the 6th Grade science room. The goal: a seamless transition in these subjects between the elementary, junior high, and senior high curriculums built on similar instructional delivery platforms.

**FULL  
STEAM  
AHEAD**

For more on the campaign, visit [ohschools.org/fullsteam](https://ohschools.org/fullsteam)



Every year, donors are making possible numerous grants by the Foundation to support student activities and programs.



### Making possible WORLDS OF NEW OPPORTUNITIES

Through the generosity of OH families, alumni, and others, the Ottawa Hills Schools Foundation continues to make a positive impact on students' lives. The Foundation wants to honor those supporters for helping the organization pursue its mission. Those contributions during the 2020-2021 year are enriching the lives of students in every grade and making the district a positive force in their lives.

#### ARROWHEAD

(\$25,000 and above)

The Kadens Family Foundation  
John ('96) and Shanie Swigart  
Steve ('66) and Mickey Swigart

#### CUPOLA

(\$10,000 and above)

Meredith ('94) and Kevin Friedman  
Hylant and Berenzweig Families

#### MESASA

(\$5,000 and above)

Karen and R. L. ('76) Berry  
George and Kathy Lathrop  
Brian and Racquel Lorenzen  
Owens Corning  
Kay and Jim Silk  
Jim and Erica ('89) Silk

#### VENI, VIDI, VICI

(\$1,000 and above)

Annette Boice ('49)  
Tom and Kate ('77) Backoff  
Michael and Anna Bennett  
Sandy and Corey Hupp  
Toledo Community Foundation  
Bryan and Erica Kelm  
Mary Ellen Pisanelli  
Kate and David O'Connell  
Dr. Karl Borsody and Dr.  
Jaleh Eslami

Tom and Betsy ('64) Brady  
*(in honor of Mary Carson Fedderke ('65))*  
Sam Carson ('68)  
Barbara and Bob Gatchel  
John "Jay" Hart ('55)  
*(in memory of Chuck Racine ('55))*  
The Kelley Family  
Elizabeth Lang ('97)  
Larry Mindel ('55)  
Kate and Nelson Pixler  
Glenn Rudy ('62)  
Jessica and Michael Smith  
Spencer and Christy Stone  
Trust Company Family Offices

Among those events receiving support in 2020-2021 were OH Theatre's production of "Into the Woods" (left) and January's inaugural "WinterFest."



## Remembering Tyler Thompson

Many friends and family of Tyler Thompson ('07), who died unexpectedly in April, honored his memory by providing donations to the Ottawa Hills Schools Foundation. Those gifts were pooled with others made at a free will offering during a July concert in Mr. Thompson's honor

(see photo, story on page 19). His parents, Villagers Mark Thompson and Alta Richter, also made a generous gift in their son's memory. Combined, the support is funding a study booth in his name at The Foundry to ensure that his love of the district is remembered for decades to come.



### VICTORY BELL

(\$500 and above)

- Dewey Cole ('70)
- Paul and Anita Daverio
- John Hadley ('72)
- Austin Irving ('02)
- Tom and Nancy Kabat
- James ('62) and Heidi Klein  
*(in memory of Thomas Irwin Klein ('53) and Jamie O'Hara ('68))*
- Lucy Lambert ('66)
- Gordon ('52) and Marla Levine
- Stanley Linver ('70)
- The McMurray Hanlon Family
- Peter Williamson  
*(in honor of Daniel Williamson ('22))*
- Steven and Donna Wipfli

### GREEN BEAR

(\$100 and above)

- Judy and Ed Green
- Gretta Laskey ('63)
- Jay ('58) and Gloria McGiveran
- Stephen Northcraft ('70)
- Diane and Joe Stancati
- Catherine L. Webb, MD ('66)
- Mary Pat Gilsdorf
- David G. Morrison ('55)
- Jonathan and Carol Hangartner
- Tyler Thompson ('07)
- James ('51) and Diane Bailey
- Lawrence Bell ('62)
- Roger Bell ('65)  
*(in memory of Allan Timmerman)*
- Al and Sherry Bohl
- Timothy Bosserman ('10)
- Katherine Buckley-Reing
- Jean and Bill Buckley
- Nancie H. Entenmann Roberts ('52)

- Tom and Chris Frazier
- John A. Galbraith ('41)
- Amy Garber ('01)
- Wendy and Troy Greeley  
*(in memory of Anne Lathrop)*
- Jennifer and Jason Griffin
- Virginia Johnstone Gubbins  
*(in memory of James Jones Johnstone III ('59))*
- Daryn and Joel ('74) Hutton
- Carol Bower Johnson ('59)
- Paul Komisarek
- Deborah Murdock ('61)  
*(in memory of Rosanna Harrah)*
- Brad ('90) and Ariane Nicholson
- Mr. and Mrs. Michael Ramey (Kimberly ('77))
- Tom Seiple ('63)
- Carol Ellen Smith Taft ('57)
- Walter Thieman ('64)
- Duncan and Gretchen Thomas  
*(in memory of Bill and Anne Lathrop)*
- Richard and Patty Westmeyer  
*(in memory of Anne Lathrop)*
- Dick Wolff ('73)

### ADDITIONAL GIFTS

- Anonymous  
*(in memory of Mary Carson Fedderke ('65))*
- Ron Cooperman ('61)
- Kay Foster  
*(in memory Anne Lathrop)*
- Daniel Maloney
- Bev and Steve Newcomer
- Jamie ('68) and Lola O'Hara
- Jack and Sarah Puffenberger  
*(in memory of Ian Baird)*
- Jack and Sarah Puffenberger  
*(in memory of Rose Mary Kelleher)*
- Robert and Donna Repp
- Spencer ('55) and Prudy Stone  
*(in memory of Chuck Racine ('55))*
- Robert Burgie ('61)
- Rich Fassler ('59)  
*(in honor of Paul Schnitker ('59))*
- Ruth Ann Fleck
- Robert A Groh ('53)
- Rennie Loisel ('60)
- Joan and Maurice O'Connell



## Remembering James Petas

Established in 2020, the James Petas Memorial Girls' Lacrosse Scholarship is given to the senior lacrosse player who best exemplifies dedication, enthusiasm, diligent work ethic, self improvement, and an overall positive attitude on and off the field. Family and friends created the scholarship fund in his memory following his unexpected death in December 2020. He was the girls' lacrosse head coach from 2009-2019.

If you would like to contribute to the scholarship fund, please contact district treasurer Brad Browne at [bbrowne@ohschools.org](mailto:bbrowne@ohschools.org)



# Ottawa Hills Local Schools

3600 Indian Road  
Ottawa Hills, OH 43606

NONPROFIT  
ORGANIZATION  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
TOLEDO, OHIO  
PERMIT #311

## UPCOMING EVENTS



### November

Tuesday  
**2**

Election Day. No school for students; Professional Development Day for teachers

Friday  
**16-19**

9th Grade field trip to Washington, D.C. (a redo of the class's cancelled 8th Grade trip last spring)



Wed.-Fri.  
**24-26**

Thanksgiving Break (schools closed)



### December

Friday  
**3-5**

OH Theatre presents "The Hunchback of Notre Dame." Performance dates: Dec. 3: 7 p.m. Dec. 4: 2 and 7 p.m. Dec. 5: 2 p.m.



Saturday  
**8**

Winter Choir Concert (7 p.m.)

Saturday  
**12**

Winter Band Concert (7 p.m.)

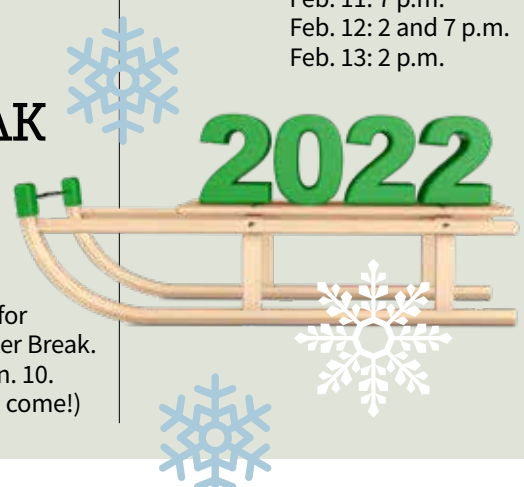
Saturday  
**21**

ABCs of December (9 a.m.)

### WINTER BREAK

December January  
**23 - 9**

District buildings will be closed for 17 days (Dec. 23-Jan. 9) for Winter Break. Classes will resume Monday, Jan. 10. Watch out sledding hill, here we come!



### January

Friday  
**17**

MLK Day (schools closed)

### February



Friday  
**11**

Acting Out! Production of "Shrek Jr. The Musical" Performance dates: Feb. 11: 7 p.m. Feb. 12: 2 and 7 p.m. Feb. 13: 2 p.m.