



Ned Kirby has been named as the recipient of the Urbana Distinguished Alumni award.

Kirby was born in Columbus, Ohio and raised in Urbana, attending Central Ward Elementary School where, according to Ned, he spent "a substantial amount of time in the hallway, so as not to further disrupt the lessons being taught in the classroom."

He attended Urbana junior and senior high schools where he participated in music as a member of the UHS band and choir as well as the Castleaires Glee Club and the Castleaires Octet.

Kirby was also an athlete and was captain of the track team. He held the record for the low hurdles as well as school records for the half mile and mile relay teams. In addition to track, he played varsity football and says he was honored to play in the same backfield as George Scott. During his four years in high school,

Urbana lost only four games.

After graduation, Kirby attended The Ohio State University and graduated with a degree in Business Administration. While at OSU, he was a member and President of Phi Gamma Delta fraternity, a member of Ohio Staters, Inc., and awarded membership in the Honorary Military Society of Scabbard and Blade.

Kirby entered the U.S. Army as a Lieutenant, after graduating from OSU, and was stationed at Fort Benning, Georgia for eight weeks. At that point, he became a student at the School for Army Intelligence and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). The school was in Baltimore, Maryland, and was known as Fort Holabird. His Military Occupational Specialty was as an "Imagery Interpreter." After his training, he became a member of the teaching staff at Fort Holabird, also known then as the "Spook School."

Shortly thereafter, his father passed away unexpectedly, and he received a release from the military and returned to Urbana, where at 24, he became the owner and president of Kirby Hatcheries. During that time, he served as a member of the Board of Directors of the National Turkey Federation, as well as president of the Ohio Poultry Association. In addition, he became owner and manager of the Kirby family farm, purchased by his great-great-grandfather in 1862.

During the years in Urbana, he was a member of the Board of Directors of Champaign National Bank; a member of the Urbana Rotary Club, where he served as president; and a member of the Urbana City Board of Education, where he also served as president.

When Kirby moved to Indianapolis, he purchased a new Taco Bell restaurant in Noblesville, a suburb of Indianapolis. The family soon acquired five additional stores in northern Indiana and he expanded his Indiana division of Taco Bell restaurants to 25.

During that same period of time, Kirby was asked to develop an area in north central Florida, where only one store existed. He expanded that area of Florida to 17 locations, and a total of 42 Taco Bell restaurants. During those years, he served on the National Franchisee Board of Directors, and was its first president. He also served as a member of the Taco Bell Foundation Board of Directors.

In 2006, he sold the company. Kirby is retired and enjoying his free time, but says that it is less challenging than having a payroll of nearly 1,000 employees, where 90 percent of them are teenagers.