

# Alumni Newsletter

Issue No. 2 | Spring 2026

## Distinguished Hall of Honor, Class of 2026

The A+ Foundation for West Aurora Schools will honor its Distinguished Alumni Hall of Honor recipients during celebrations on April 17 and 18. This year's inductees are Brigadier General Matthew Brancato (Class of 1995), Captain William Laz (Class of 1965), and Phillip Edward Van Lear (Class of 1970). They will be formally recognized for their outstanding achievements and contributions.



*Brigadier General  
Matthew G. Brancato  
Class of 1995*

*Phillip Edward Van Lear  
Class of 1970*

*Captain William Laz, Ret.  
Class of 1965*

On Saturday, April 18, at 5:30 PM, the public is welcome to attend a banquet at **Two Brothers Roundhouse in Aurora**, where they will be celebrated alongside their families and friends.

Dinner tickets are \$85.00 per person. For further details about the banquet contact Randi Ochsenschlager at 630-897-6785 or via email: [rloxie@sbcglobal.net](mailto:rloxie@sbcglobal.net). Read the full bios here: <https://aplusfoundation.sd129.org/alumni/hall-of-honor>

**NOMINATE AN ALUMNI HERE:** <https://aplusfoundation.sd129.org/alumni/hall-of-honor>

The **5th Annual Tom-A-Hawk Turkey Trot** was truly one for the books! A record-breaking crowd filled downtown Aurora for another unforgettable 5K benefiting both the East and West Aurora school districts. With 1,200 runners, 30 generous sponsors, and \$50,000 raised, this event made a powerful impact for students on both sides of the river. This is what's possible when East and West come together in support of nearly 26,000 public school students. Thank you to our sponsors and participants for helping make the 5th Annual Turkey Trot such a tremendous success!



### Premier Level Sponsors (\$10,000)

- Dunham Foundation
- Organic Life

### Platinum Level Sponsor (\$5,000)

- Fox Valley Park District

### Gold Level Sponsors (\$2,500)

- Two Brothers Roundhouse
- Factor
- Aurora Hispanic Heritage Advisory Board

### Silver Level Sponsors (\$1,000)

- Old Second
- Parra's Bakery
- Mike Agruss Law
- Law Office of Emmanuel S. Llamas

### Silver Level Sponsors (Cont.)

- Alderman Keith Larson, City of Aurora

### Bronze Level Sponsors (\$500)

- West Aurora Blackhawk Sports Boosters
- Oxie Affordable Optical
- Bill J. Deligiannis, Realtor
- Fairview Dental
- Aurora Area Retired Teachers Association
- Waubensee Community College
- AEAW Teacher Union
- Jake's Machining and Rebuilding
- Aurora Fast Print
- Community Foundation of the Fox River Valley
- Alderman Jonathan Nunez, 4th Ward

### Bronze Level (cont.)

- Dicks Mini Donuts
- Arlene & Dick Hawks
- Alderman Michael B. Saville, 6th Ward
- Kevin Frank, Financial Advisor – Edward Jones

### Tom-A-Hawk Level Sponsors (\$250)

- KCT Credit Union
- Thomas Pump
- Alderman Ted Mesiacos, 3rd Ward
- Representative Barbara Hernandez
- Alderwoman Juany Garza, 2nd Ward

## Alumni All Class Reunion Friday, April 17, 2026, 6–9 pm



West Aurora alumni are invited to the All Alumni Reunion, hosted by the A+ Foundation Alumni Committee! Join us from 6:00 to 9:00 PM at Two Brothers Roundhouse in the Zephyr Room, for a casual evening celebrating Hall of Honor weekend. Enjoy light hors d'oeuvres, a cash bar, and the chance to reconnect with fellow West Aurora High School alumni.

*A+ Alumni Association can assist with:*

**\*REUNIONS \* TOURS \*  
WEBSITE ADVERTISEMENT\***

## A+ Foundation for West Aurora Schools Senior Celebration Fund

Make a donation to support West Aurora High School's Class of 2026!

Your generous contribution will help fund exciting end-of-year events like Prom, the Senior BBQ, and the Farewell Fireworks celebration.

Thank you for helping create lasting memories for our seniors!



<https://tinyurl.com/WASeniors>

*Connect with us if your class is planning a reunion.  
Fill this out:*

<https://tinyurl.com/WAHSReunions>



### The A Plus Foundation's Alumni Committee pursues several endeavors.

- **Facilitating Class Reunions.** The AC organizes and publicizes class reunions, providing location options, arranging school tours, and hosting end-zone gatherings during football homecoming events.
- **Organizing an Annual All-Class Reunion.** Every April, we reach out to as many alumni as possible to invite them to a three-hour social gathering, reconnecting classmates and fostering school spirit.
- **Identifying and Securing Speakers.** We work to identify relevant topics and secure speakers who address both the immediate and future concerns of high school students, ensuring valuable and impactful presentations.
- **Building an Alumni Database.** We are actively building a comprehensive alumni database, which will include addresses, phone numbers, and emails. We've already collected information for 3,000 alumni, with a goal of reaching 30,000.
- **Awarding Service Medallions.** We honor alumni who have served in the military by identifying and presenting service medallions. To date, we've located and awarded 350 Vietnam-era veterans. We have 150 more to find, after which we will focus on honoring those who served in more recent campaigns.

**Committee Members:** Tom Herget '68, Nancy Wyatt '87 (chair), Neal Ormond '58, Stan Rayford '91, Jill Brown Smith '89, Keith Johnson '88, Emma Wilson Parker '16 and Chrissy Ormond DeSwardt '02, Kyle Tyson '80. **New members are welcome.**



**CONNECT WITH US:**  
<https://aplusfoundation.sd129.org/>



@WA\_aplusfoundation



Members of the Class of 1995 pose for a picture from their reunion this past September



Class of 2005 held a reunion at Two Brothers



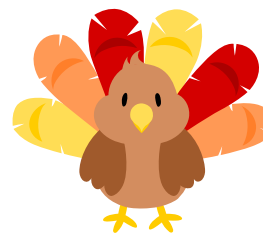
Members of the Class of 1995 gathered at the Homecoming Football Game



6th Annual Tom-A-Hawk Run/Walk 5K Turkey Trot

Saturday, November 21, 2026

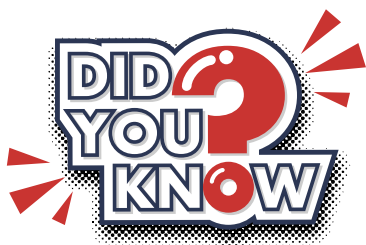
EARLY BIRD SPECIAL



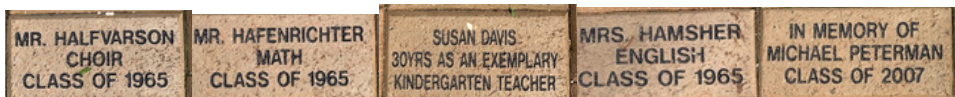
Registration Opens May 21, 2026 \$25 - 1 Day ONLY!

<https://runsignup.com/Race/IL/Aurora/TomAHawk5k>

Leave your mark at West Aurora High School by purchasing a brick on our *Pathway of Honor*, outside Door 22. Honor a loved one or commemorate a milestone with a personalized brick.



- 3 lines, 15 characters per line
- \$50 for 1, or 3 for \$129



[https://cfrv.formstack.com/forms/pathway\\_of\\_honor\\_brick](https://cfrv.formstack.com/forms/pathway_of_honor_brick)



## 2025–2026 Rising Star recipients:

Seeking nominations of recent graduates, 2005-2020, of West Aurora High School who are making a meaningful impact in their respective fields.

### NOMINATE HERE:

<https://tinyurl.com/WAHSRisingStar>

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Whitney Love</b> , <i>Class of 2007</i>         | <b>Marc Smith</b> , <i>Class of 2012</i>           |
| <b>Diana Magana Godinez</b> , <i>Class of 2008</i> | <b>Tiffany Thomas Darby</b> , <i>Class of 2012</i> |
| <b>Joe Riddle</b> , <i>Class of 2008</i>           | <b>Lisa Stone-Bury</b> , <i>Class of 2014</i>      |
| <b>Adrian Davenport</b> , <i>Class of 2009</i>     | <b>Stephany Vuelvas</b> , <i>Class of 2015</i>     |
| <b>Alma Lopez</b> , <i>Class of 2009</i>           | <b>Torie Linner</b> , <i>Class of 2016</i>         |
| <b>Morgan Tyler Murphy</b> , <i>Class of 2009</i>  | <b>EJ McLaren</b> , <i>Class of 2016</i>           |
| <b>Cierra Riley</b> , <i>Class of 2009</i>         | <b>Donny Yario</b> , <i>Class of 2016</i>          |
| <b>Traneil Holland</b> , <i>Class of 2010</i>      | <b>Camron Donatlan</b> , <i>Class of 2018</i>      |
| <b>Mike Neil</b> , <i>Class of 2010</i>            | <b>Kyle Melles</b> , <i>Class of 2018</i>          |
| <b>Nicholas Sargis</b> , <i>Class of 2011</i>      | <b>Callie Saperston</b> , <i>Class of 2019</i>     |
| <b>Bradley Burkhalter</b> , <i>Class of 2012</i>   | <b>Phoenix VanHooser</b> , <i>Class of 2020</i>    |

## An All-Alumni Night of Music Honoring the Meg Papadolias Endowment Fund

Banding Together 14 marked a year of exciting firsts. For the first time, the event took place on a cold, snowy January evening—and for the first time ever, every performer in every band was a proud West Aurora alumnus. The evening brought the community together for a night of live music, all in support of raising funds for music and fine arts education in School District 129.

The night kicked off in classic Banding Together fashion with a performance by guitarist **John Papadolias, Class of 1985**. A longtime tradition of the event, his performance once again set the tone for an unforgettable evening.

Next on the lineup was New Groove Revolution, featuring **Patrick Lovelace Jr. (Class of 2016)**, **TJ Jackson (Class of 2015)**, **Dimitri Davis (Class of 2017)**, **Roy Thurmond (Class of 2017)**, and **Dakota Rolfe (Class of 2015)**. Their funky, high-energy sound kept the crowd moving and the momentum building.

Headlining the night was the LeGrande Band, a familiar favorite within the A+ community and a returning Banding Together performer. Band members **Ken Ruffalo (Class of 1988)**, **Pat Roney (Class of 1988)**, **Chris Weaver (Class of 1997)**, **Brian Weaver (Class of 1999)**, and **Jake Kripelz (Class of 2000)** closed out the evening with a fun and engaging set.

Over the years, the event has become a meaningful and fun gathering for school families, alumni, and community members alike.

### BANDING TOGETHER 14



## W Proud to be a Blackhawk Week

A week-long celebration at West High, showcasing why **West Is Best!**

On Wednesday, January 28, West High proudly welcomed back 18 alumni who spent the day connecting with students. Our alumni shared their post-secondary journeys and career experiences, allowing students to ask questions, gain insight, and learn from those who once walked the same halls. A huge thank you to our alumni for returning to West and for sharing their time, stories, and valuable advice with the next generation of Blackhawks! **Interested in participating next year?**

→ [Join our LinkedIn - WAHS Alumni Group](#) ←



Wendy Andrade, Class of 2013



Diana Fuentes, Class of 2022 & Taylor Scott, Class of 2021



Kate Perez, Class of 2021



Carrick Coakley, Class of 2018



Sebastian Cosma, Class of 2019