EVERGREEN PARK
Community High School

THE ALUMNI QUARTERLY

SUMMER 2026 THE ALUMNI QUARTERLY

Dear Evergreen Park Alumni,

We've completed **another extremely successful school year** at Evergreen Park Community High School, one filled with never-before reached academic milestones, once-in-a-lifetime experiences and benchmark victories.

Let's welcome the 229 new members of our alumni group who crossed the stage at our graduation ceremony on May 20. As you'll see below, the Class of 2026 is a group of **Mustangs who have impressed** not only in the classroom, but in extracurricular activities and athletics as well.

The 2025-2026 school year at EPCHS as a whole will be one to remember as well. Many of you participated in the first All-School Reunion held in nearly a decade when 115 Bourbon Street was **packed with Mustang Pride** on February 28. That momentum carried on to the current group of Mustang students, who broke school records, won championships and held first-of-its kind school events in the three months since.

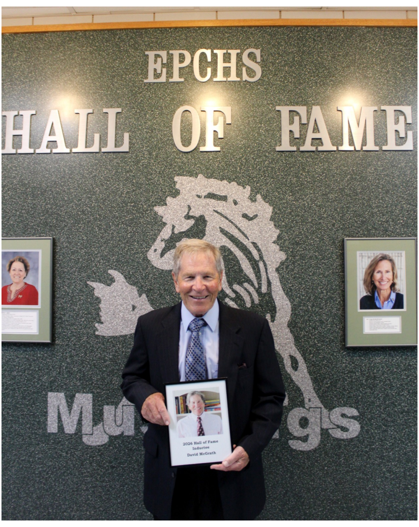
MUSTANG PRIDE THROUGH THE DECADES

EPCHS
All-Class Reunion
Feb. 28, 2026

Hundreds of Evergreen Park Mustang alums attended the 2026 All-Class Reunion, with all graduating classes from 1961 through 2018 represented.

It was a fun night for all at 115 Bourbon Street, where high school memories were shared and new ones were made. We saw alums from the 1960s connect with those from the 2010s, groups that may have little in common at first glance but share the strong commonality that comes with Mustang Pride.

DAVID MCGRATH '67: THE NEWEST EPCHS HALL OF FAMER



David McGrath, EPCHS Class of 1967, is the **newest member of the EPCHS Hall of Fame** after his May 4 induction ceremony during Honors Night. McGrath is an accomplished author and college professor who has brought fame to Evergreen Park with his many tales of growing up in our village.

McGrath wrote about his Hall of Fame induction - and how impressed he is with the current group of Mustang students - in a column published by the Chicago Sun-Times.

After his EPCHS graduation, McGrath continued his education by earning a B.S. in education and an M.A. in English (cum laude), both from Chicago State University. His teaching career included roles as a journalism/English teacher at Chicago Vocational School, professor of English and Native American Literature at the College of DuPage and writing processor at the University of South Alabama and Florida Southwestern State College.

He's the author of four books and more than 700 essays that have appeared in magazines and newspapers throughout the country, including the Washington Post, Chicago Tribune and Los Angeles Times. Books authored by McGrath are titled *Siege at Ojibawa*, *The Territory*, *South Siders* and *Far Enough Away.*

McGrath has helped put the village of **Evergreen Park on the map** through his heartwarming stories about growing up, going to school and later raising his own family in Evergreen Park and Chicago's South Side. These stories, which often highlight the values and sense of community that is unique to Evergreen Park, have circulated everywhere in the country - from California to New York - for the past 25 years.

These works have brought McGrath numerous awards including a finalist in the national EdPress awards in 1993, an award for best essay in American Educator Magazine in 199, an award citation in "Notable Essays and Literary Nonfiction" in Best American Essays in 2022 and an award citation for the Chicago Tribune's "Most Heartfelt Op-ed" in 2024 and 2025.

McGrath is currently a contributing editor for *Florida Sportsman Magazine*.

RECORD TURNOUT FOR EPCHS FOUNDATION GOLF OUTING

The Evergreen Park High School Foundation had a record high 130 golfers come out for their golf outing fundraiser! Thank you to all who came out to make this the most successful Foundation golf outing yet.

GRADUATION 2026

EPCHS is proud to welcome the **229 graduates from the Class of 2026** as our newest alums. This group of grads has brought tremendous pride to Mustang Nation, and we eagerly look forward to what they will accomplish in the next steps of their journey and beyond.

Our Top 10 percent have been particularly impressive, and will be continuing their education at many of the best colleges and universities across the United States such as the University of Illinois, University of Tennessee, Villanova University, University of Kentucky and Marquette University.

Scroll below to learn about a few of the graduating seniors and the impressive accolades they've already achieved.

VALEDICTORIAN/SALUTATORIAN: Grace Koziczkowski (below, left) is the valedictorian and Tess Lee (below, right) is the salutatorian from the EPCHS Class of 2026. Grace and Tess both delivered inspiring speeches during the Class of 2026 graduation ceremony.

In addition to **excelling academically**, both Koziczkowski and Lee have **exemplified the Evergreen Park Mustang spirit** through their involvement in athletics and extracurricular activities.

Koziczkowski has been a multi-sport athlete during her time at EPCHS having competed in volleyball, dance and cross country. She's also been a member of the Student Government, National Honor Society, Service Club and the Prom Committee.

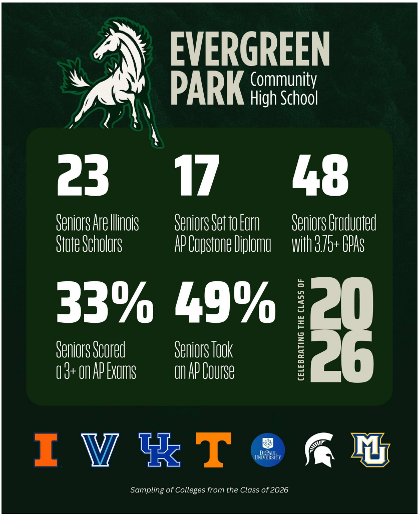
Lee has also been involved in numerous endeavors outside of the classroom at EPCHS, having competed on the regional champion varsity volleyball team and additional after-school involvement in Student Government, National Honor Society, Principal's Advisory, Advice Beyond the Classroom, Battle of the Books and the school's Future Business Leaders of America club.

Read more on the EPCHS Website

More Class of 2026 Highlights

- **NATIONAL QUALIFIER**: University of Illinois-bound Megan Klimowski has qualified for the Future Business Leaders of America national conference for the second year in a row in the computer problem solving category. Megan will major in computer science in hopes of becoming a software engineer.
- **SCIENCE MAJORS**: Three members of the Top 10 Percent of the EPCHS Class of 2026 will join Megan at the University of Illinois seeking degrees in science fields. Grace Koziczkowski and Elizabeth Adjayi will both major in biology at the state school while Louise Brady will go there to study atmospheric science.
- **PERFECT ATTENDANCE**: Ryan Arethas graduated without missing a single day of school throughout his four years at EPCHS. Ryan has shown his consistency in not only showing up for school every day, but through his dedication as a member of the school's cross country team and as the scorekeeper for the Mustang baseball team.
- **19** new names have been added to the Varsity Wall, which keeps track of all Mustang student-athletes who have earned five or more varsity athletic letters over the course of their high school careers. The new Varsity Wall additions are: Elizabeth Adjayi, Owen Brady, Fionn Doherty, Israel Fagbulu, Ciana Farmer, Connor Faulkner, Michelle Fernandez, Victor Flores, Yarim Garcia, Neve Hayes, Amiya Lane, Leniyah Lee, Joshua Matheny, Isaiah Matthews, Annie Olson, Chloe Plunkett, Londyn Robinson-Gwin, Alexandria Rodgers and Michael Visser.
- **6** student-athletes held college signing ceremonies to mark their commitments to **competing in athletics at the next level**. These students include Destinee Feliciano (cheerleading, Northern Illinois University), Brayden Mateja-Bates (wrestling, Joliet Junior College), Tatum Harris (basketball, Lake Forest College), Neve Hayes (volleyball, Augustana College), Joshua Matheny (football, Lake Forest College), Megan Doherty (softball, Joliet Junior College), Londyn Robinson-Gwin (cheerleading, Davenport University), Owen Velazquez (football, Saint Xavier University).

CLASS OF 2026: BY THE NUMBERS



STUDENT SUCCESS STORIES

- Students in EPCHS' new Intro to HVAC class designed the ductwork for the **new HVAC room** that recently opened adjacent to the Metals Shop. It was a terrific real-world opportunity for the students, more and more of whom are seeking to become involved in the trades upon graduation.
- Our Smash Bros. Ultimate **eSports team had a remarkable run** at the IHSA state finals, held here at EPCHS on May 2. Our Mustang Smash team compiled several impressive wins en route to a second place finish at state. It's the second time in three years that EPCHS finished among the state's top three in the event.
- We had **student representatives at the SkillsUSA Illinois competition** for the first time ever. Alberto Aranda Jr. and Sean Meierkort participated in the firefighting competition while Emilio Gonzalez, Megan Klimowski, Rihanna Martinez and Zackary Rosario competed in information technology services.
- Eva Sielhoff became a **2-time STEAM champion**, earning top honors in EPCHS STEAM competitions held in both the first and second terms of the school year.
- The **Forensic Science team** of Janisha Hubbard, Mace Hurley, Jasmine Ortiz, Aidan Shorts and Syniah Thomas took home first place at a competition held among local schools at Argo.
- Student Government leaders created a new springtime event called "Rolling Into Spring" in which the small gym was transformed into a **roller skating rink** for the night.

EP MUSIC TO DISNEY WORLD!

Members of the Evergreen Park Community High School Music Department are back from an **experience of a lifetime**, having spent much of their Spring Break touring Walt Disney World in Florida. The experience was **featured on ABC-7 Chicago's "Making Chicago Proud"** segment at the end of the news station's 10 p.m. newscast on April 9.

Sixty-eight student participants involved in the EPCHS band, choir and color guard made the trip to what's often referred to as "The Happiest Place on Earth" from April 6 to April 10. The trip was made possible when the band and choir were accepted to perform there through a submitted audition demonstrating ensemble excellence last spring.

Highlights of the trip included the band and color guard marching in the Festival of Fantasy Parade through Main Street USA in the Magic Kingdom with thousands of spectators and the choir performing a concert on the Waterside Stage at Disney Springs before hundreds of spectators. All groups also participated in Disney Imagination campus workshops under the direction of Disney's elite music educators and performing artists, in which they were offered a chance to spend one morning as honorary Disney cast members.

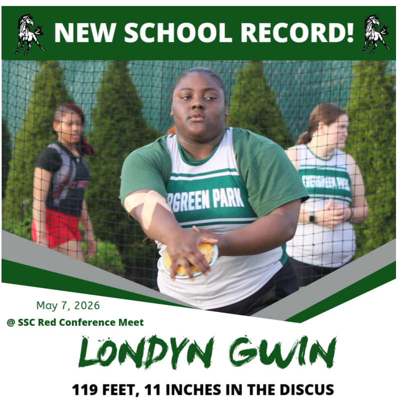
The trip was led by Band Director Colin Curatolo, Choir Director Logan Scalf and Color Guard instructor Ky Boksa. EPCHS partnered with the Bob Rogers Travel Company on the trip, with volunteer chaperones assisting as well.

"We took advantage of our time there to celebrate the success of our students and the EPCHS music department," Curatolo said.

All EPCHS music groups also spent time at Universal Studios, Disney's Hollywood Studios and EPCOT.

ATHLETIC HIGHLIGHTS

- Our baseball team **won the IHSA Regional Championship** for the first time since 2017, defeating Oak Forest, 6-3, for the historic win on May 30.
- The softball Mustangs also won the Regional Championship for the fifth year in a row. Star players Molly Goyke, Shelby Izzo and Maggie Troglia were all **named to the All-State Team** by the Illinois Coaches Association.
- Londyn Gwin (shown below) broke the school's **all-time record** in the girls track discus event. She first broke the record held for 20 years by Class of 2006 alum Kandace Arnold at the South Suburban Conference meet, then broke her own record at the state meet a few weeks later.
- Mustang athletic coaches George Shimko (girls basketball), Jason Fundukian (girls bowling) and Greg Geyer (girls track & field) all won South Suburban Conference **Coach of the Year** awards this year.



HAPPY RETIREMENT, MR. ESTES!

Longtime EPCHS paraprofessional and TMS supervisor Vernon Estes retired at the end of the 2025-2026 school year. Mr. Estes has been **a beloved figure on campus** for years, and has won the STamPede booster club's Support Staff Member of the Year award four of the last five years the award has been handed out.

Mr. Estes was greeted with thunderous applause and a cake made in his honor during the final staff/faculty Institute Day of this past school year.

Congratulations on Your Retirement Vern

STAFF SERVICE AWARDS

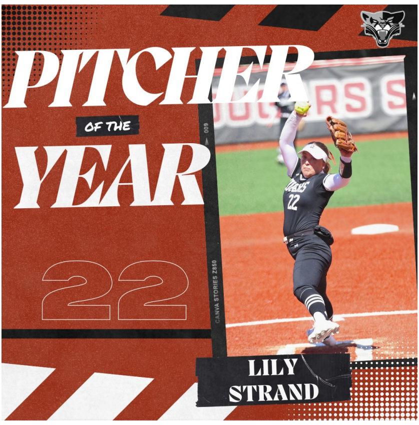
Also recognized during the final Institute Day of the year were EPCHS staff members who reached milestone years of service upon the conclusion of the school year. They were:

- **25 Years**: Ree McDonald, Anna Papasideris, Mark Smyth
- **20 Years**: Bridget Hennan, Karen Hewitt, Chris Mikulskis
- **10 Years**: Nick Codiamat, Jason Fundukian, Michelle Kueltzo, Mike Strubin, Jerry Verde, Ron Zimmerman

ALUMS IN THE SPOTLIGHT

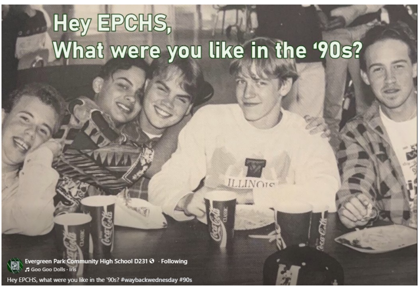
- **Michael Ferchau**, **'70**, reflects on his memories as an EPCHS student learning from his legendary father, longtime EPCHS football coach Don Ferchau, and a distinguished teaching career he has compiled himself.
- **Dr. Ricardo Fernandez**, **'84**, is among the newest Hall of Famers at Moraine Valley Community College amid a tremendous career in physical therapy and ample philanthropic work with many of the nation's most beloved charities such as Habitat for Humanity and Honor Flight Chicago.
- **Rhiannon Buehne**, **'03**, said many of the qualities she learned as a student EPCHS helped her form a dynamic career in marketing.
- **Dana Kahn**, **'18**, took her passion for performing in the talent shows at EPCHS into a venture as a performer for charity events across the country. She's also recently been named the assistant planner for the Village of Homer Glen.
- **Brooke Scanlon**, **'20**, recently completed an internship with NASA and is now an intelligent operations engineer with the Pella Corporation following her graduation from the University of Iowa.

- **Lily Strand**, '23, (shown below) was named the Chicagoland Collegiate Athletic Conference Softball Pitcher of the Year for the second year in a row as a member of the Saint Xavier University softball team.
- **Sofie Panatera**, '25, is a member of the Loras College Softball team that qualified for the NCAA Division III World Series for the first time in program history.



Graphic courtesy of Saint Xavier University Athletics

REMEMBER THE 90s? You may recognize a few familiar faces at EPCHS in this video.


Hey EPCHS,
What were you like in the '90s?
Evergreen Park Community High School D231 · Following
Goo Goo Dolls · Iris

Hey EPCHS, what were you like in the '90s? #waybackwednesday #90s

👀**A LOOK AHEAD** 👀

Homecoming Week 2026 will be from **September 21-25**.

The EPCHS Class of 1976 will hold its **50-year reunion** on **Saturday, October 3** from 6-10:30 p.m. at the American Legion Hall, 9701 S. Kedzie Avenue in Evergreen Park. Please send $65 per person, payable to Marcia Zintak, 9241 South Ridgeway Avenue Evergreen Park, IL 60805.

- Check out our Class Reunions Hub on the EPCHS website for information of specific class reunions.

SPREAD THE NEWS

✍️**SHARE WITH YOUR CLASSMATES**: If you're reading this, it's likely that you are already included in the EPCHS Alumni Directory. We truly appreciate having you as one of our most engaged alums!

There's also a good chance that you keep in touch with classmates who aren't yet included in the directory and could be missing out on all this great news. Share this form with them so they can fill it out and enjoy our next edition of EP Alumni Quarterly scheduled to come out shortly after the next school year starts. ✍️

EPCHS is always happy to highlight the accomplishments of Mustang Nation. New job? Big move? Marriage? Milestone? New addition to the family? We'd love to celebrate you and share your update with Mustang Nation—from our earliest classes to our newest grads.

Send your update:
Email Tim Moran at tmoran@evergreenpark.org

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