



Highlander Insider

“Alone, we can do so little. Together, we can do so much.” – Helen Keller

A Message from the Superintendent



Dear Highlander Community,

I head home every night thinking back over the small and large successes of a single day at Oak Hills Local Schools. We are a big district with big opportunities and a big impact on our region. But we are also a place of deep relationships and true community.

You'll see that in the stories you're about to read — of students who earn national service awards and use their

voice to help shape the future of this district.

Of staff members who set incredibly high goals for themselves and then help each other accomplish them. Of coaches who come in at the crack of dawn and work late into the evening to shape not only young people's sports

seasons, but their lives. Of alumni who connect with each other in interesting spots all over the world — even the White House — and find a way to support each other.

This is what it means to be a Highlander. This is why all of us invest so much — our children, time, expertise, energy, tax dollars, and heart — into this special school district.

What I see, as one calendar year closes and another begins, is that even better days lie ahead for us. The strategic planning that we kicked off this fall is doing exactly what we hoped,

using staff, student, and community input to establish a vision for our future. But it's had an unexpected side benefit. As literally hundreds of people gather to talk about teaching and learning in OHLS, they have renewed our awareness of who we are, of all the hard work from past generations that has brought us here, and of why this special district is worth protecting, supporting, and improving. In early 2020, every community member will have a chance to be part of the process through an online survey. Watch your mailboxes for information on how to take part.

Thank you for being part of the Oak Hills story. May you have a wonderful holiday season and a well-deserved family break. Meet you back here in 2020, and we'll start the next chapter.

Sincerely,
Jeff Brandt, Superintendent

Not to Miss!

- Jan. 2.....Classes resume after Winter Break
- Jan. 20.....Martin Luther King Jr. Day, No School
- Jan. 21.....OHHS vs. Elder Boys Basketball Game, 7:00 pm at OHHS
- Jan. 21 – 23.....Everybody Counts, C.O. Harrison Elementary School
- Jan. 24 – 29.....C.O. Harrison Book Fair
- Jan. 27 – 31.....Oakdale Book Fair during school hours
- Jan. 31.....Dads' Drive-In Movie Night, 6:30 pm at J.F. Dulles Elementary School



AP Biology teacher Beth Ludwig discusses an assignment with senior Alyssa Johnson.

The relevance of biochemistry may be lost on many high school students, but not Oak Hills senior Alyssa Johnson. Field studies in her AP Biology class include tracking her food consumption, analyzing the fats and carbs in a fast-food sandwich, and testing bacteria levels in the high school drinking fountains.

No state standard requires Alyssa to know the macromolecular makeup of her chicken sandwich, but her teacher, Beth Ludwig, does. That's because Mrs. Ludwig knows that students not only learn more from lessons that are relevant to their daily lives, but remember them longer.

Student relevance is so important to Mrs. Ludwig that she made it her Personalized Professional Learning goal for the year. That means she can devote half of each of her five professional learning days to the topic, as well as collaborate with other teachers in and outside her department who share her goal.

In its second year at OHHS and its first year in the middle and elementary schools, PPL is giving teachers more voice, choice, and responsibility for their professional development.

They choose their annual goals and help organize their training activities.

They find their own resources and research.

They partner with colleagues who are working toward similar goals, then help motivate and monitor each other.

Many OHLSD educators say it's a big reason teaching and learning at Oak Hills are continually improving.

"We were used to going to all these meetings that, half the time, didn't apply to us. We'd go to these meetings where people had their papers out, doing their grading," Mrs. Ludwig says. Now instead of all-staff training, teachers may meet with their departments, or sometimes with other departments that don't initially seem to have much in common but find relevance together.

For example, "We had the science department with art," she says. "We got into smaller groups, and we were told not to sit with people you meet with every week. Then we shared goals, what was going well, what wasn't, and brain-stormed what could be better."

"With PPL," she says, "everything is focused on how it affects the students — how can I help my students be better?"

The district had longed to improve its professional training for years. The opportunity came when the state changed the instructional time requirement from days to hours, which allowed Oak Hills to devote five days to professional learning. Meaning training didn't cluster at the beginning of the year, and teachers weren't pulled from their classrooms for it.

Simultaneously, the district invited parents, teachers, and administrators to develop a vision for what a productive learning environment looked like, and then formed a steering committee to revamp professional development around it.

"The things that trumped everything else were, first, the importance of choice in staff members' own learning," says Assistant Superintendent Tim Cybulski. "Then, that it was job-embedded — really connected to their jobs. And third, that it was peer-to-peer. Administrators learn best from other administrators, teachers from other teachers."

Reading over the bank of staff members' goals is a study in passion, creativity, and professionalism. For OHHS physical education teacher Jason Lewis, setting his PPL goal was the chance to support some of his most vulnerable students. "I wanted to do something special, not just do the easy thing or fill my mind with needless activity," he says. "I knew that some of our students with special needs are involved in Special Olympics swimming and love the pool. So I set out to use our pool with our special needs students so they could use their limbs independently and work on speech in an aquatic environment."

When the school pool proved too cold and deep, Mr. Lewis contacted Bayley Wellness Center. Now his students go there monthly to work on movement and getting comfortable in the pool. Soon the opportunity will extend to students in wheelchairs, who rarely have that chance in other districts.

"PPL has afforded me a way to learn things specifically for my classes. It lets me be independent in my own learning — and I feel that, for many teachers, that's not always the case," he says. "And when I see my students light up, it lets me know why I'm here, and it gives me the sense that I'm doing something right."

All the elements of Jason Lewis's PPL experience — trying something innovative, reaching out to the community, going beyond state standards, or district requirements — are proof of the power of Personalized Professional Learning to 9 – 12 Curriculum, Instruction & Innovation Director Bridgette Smiley.

"Now teachers are curators of their own learning," she says. "Teachers [own] the process, the conversations, the collaboration. And empowering teacher voice and choice in what and how they learn will transcend into empowering students to have voice and choice in their learning as well."

OHHS Football

Coach Justin Roden Looking for Hard Work and Hustle



Justin Roden's coaching style is high-energy, intense, and player-focused.

Justin Roden knows that the Oak Hills community is curious about what it will see next fall when the veteran football coach — with an Indiana state championship under his belt — takes charge of the Highlanders.

But first, he wants people to know what they won't see.

They won't see players walking onto or off the field. "You run onto the field and off the field — you don't walk," he says.

They won't see players walking onto the field, helmet in hand. "It's really important to me that players treat football with a lot of respect, so you go onto the field with your helmet on," he says.

And they won't see a sea of red jerseys at school on Fridays. "Fridays are workdays. We wear a shirt and tie. When you see kids dressed up that day, it means they have an important event that night. We put on the ties because we're ready to go to work."

Just as he believes football is a game of inches, Mr. Roden also believes it is a game of daily discipline and mental habits. "For us to have any chance for success, we have to outwork people," he says. "That attitude begins in the weight room and carries onto the field. They're lining up, they keep their helmets buckled while on the field, and they run on and off. That leads to a certain mindset. If we hustle on and off the field, that's the way we're going to play between the whistles."

With 19 years of coaching experience, Justin Roden has taken the time to form a personal philosophy about the sport he loves and the job for which he seems born. His references (he listed nine on his Oak Hills application) include a current NFL assistant coach, a former New York Jets player, and a host of local head coaches. His experience spans five high schools and Mount St. Joseph University (he says he has no aspirations to coach beyond the high school level). He was a five-time Coach of the Year for the Eastern Indiana Athletic Conference, and the 2017 Indiana Football Coaches Association 4A Coach of the Year.

Looking back on it all, Mr. Roden says what he values most is the relationships, and what he learned from each one. From former Colerain High School head coach and current Tennessee Titans secondary coach Kerry Coombs — for whom Mr. Roden played in high school and later worked as an assistant — he learned "how to work — there were a lot of demands, a lot of expectations — he was a real role model." From Lakota East coach Rick Haynes, he learned to coach with intensity. "I am loud. I am yelling. But I always go back and put my arm around a kid and tell them what they're doing right and that I care," he says. "I want them to know I'm doing this because I like to teach and coach, not to get to the NFL. I'm doing the work I was blessed to have someone do for me."

One of the most significant stops on Mr. Roden's career path was the three years he spent as defensive coordinator at Oak Hills High School, from 2006 to 2008. He says he learned a great deal from then-head coach

Kurry Commins and a tight circle of assistants that included Bob Klotz. "We were a blend of young, ambitious coaches trying to figure things out," he says. A lesson he carried on to 2017 when he won the Indiana 4A State Championship: "To let our coaches coach — to be successful, it had to be much bigger than myself. I needed to be at the head of the car, but to let people coach."

On a personal level, West Side traditions and values were a perfect fit for the Roden family. Justin and Jennifer Roden's wedding reception took place at the Meadows. Their first house was on Jane Avenue in Cheviot. They set out chairs for the Harvest Home parade "year after year after year." Jennifer Roden is excited to resume her Friday night Highlander games.

"Oak Hills checks the box where I'm comfortable," Mr. Roden says. "It's a wonderful community."

As he prepares to join the Oak Hills High School staff on December 20, Mr. Roden has scheduled meetings, he says, "with everyone — I'm going to make sure people know that Justin Roden cares about everything, not just what happens on Friday nights." A top priority

is working closely with youth football programs and the middle-school programs, as well as the Boosters, the athletic department, the teaching staff, and players' families — "an army of people who contribute to the development of our kids."

"Develop" is a word Justin Roden uses often. He wants to develop relationships, develop trust, develop a program, develop as a coach, and, most of all, develop players. "I'll talk to them a hundred times about being a good husband, and being a good father, and being a good person," he says. "At Oak Hills, we want to work hard, to make the community proud. Excellence is going to be how we do everything."



The Roden Family

DMS Eighth Grader Liz Savage Helps Guide Strategic Planning

It's probably true that some school districts include students in their strategic planning process mostly as a courtesy. Not at Oak Hills. Aside from four focus groups made up entirely of students, six students serve on the strategic planning stakeholders group that leads the process. And no stakeholder takes the role more seriously than Delhi Middle School eighth-grader Liz Savage.

Liz keeps everything real. She blasts past theories to get to how things truly work in the classroom. She makes sure every discussion includes the student's perspective. And when the topic turns to planning a yet-unclear future, Liz adds a sense of excitement and urgency — Oak Hills' future is her future, and her friends' future, and it's coming quickly.

We can't fully capture Liz in action in just the printed word, but we had to give her a chance to share some thoughts:

So, Liz, what's your impression of the strategic planning process at Oak Hills?

It feels like something where a lot of members of the community have come together to communicate what the future of Oak Hills will look like.

From what you've seen from the strategic planning process thus far, what does the future look like for Oak Hills?

I see Oak Hills growing more as a family than as a school district, and not just teaching people math and language and the curriculum, but things like helping students with mental health issues, like depression or anxiety, because there has been growth in those areas. I've seen growth in helping students with those issues, but I expect to see more.

If you had to explain strategic planning to the community, what would you say?

Going out and trying to improve what the world could look like when future generations walk into Oak Hills and prepping students for the future.

If you could make three changes to the district, what would they be?

I wish we offered more learning opportunities, like other languages — Latin,

Mandarin — because that could lead to better job opportunities. And I'd want more technology advances, like coding classes. I also wish we had more after-school activities to help the community. We have the Key Club and National Junior Honor Society, but I wish we had a full guide of volunteer opportunities. Like, they'd post a giant board with them — 'Here are community volunteer opportunities' — and you'd sign your name.

And I also want a process in our schools that can help us get prepared if we have issues in our lives emotionally — more support for mental health issues. If we had an outlet, like having two days a month where we bring in service animals for people who have stress or anxiety issues, people wouldn't feel they had to hide those issues.

You have shown real leadership in the strategic planning stakeholders' group — you speak up and often volunteer to present on behalf of your group. Overall, do you feel that Oak Hills gives students enough voice?



Delhi Middle School eighth-grader Liz Savage listens as Board of Education member Scott Bischoff explains a point during a strategic planning session.

I do. I feel we give students a lot of voice, but sometimes I wish we had other ways of showing a child's voice — like having a day where all the students can demonstrate the skills they're good at, to show who they truly are and what they truly believe in. A day to show what you can do. I have friends who can write poetry in a heartbeat, and nobody knows that.

What three words would describe your educational experience here at Oak Hills so far?

Collaborative. Thorough. Variety.

Some of us who have seen you at work in the strategic planning sessions think you could be the first female U.S. president.

I've been told that. My main goal in life is just to be happy.

But I have been looking at ROTC classes. I want to join the military, and then go on to a graphic arts education.

So whose job do you want?

A family friend of ours. She went through an ROTC program to pay for her college to be a graphic artist. Now she works at Google.

What advice would you give young people about finding or using their voice?

I would tell them not to be scared. Some people worry about what other people think of them. Truly, the people who care about you and love you, they won't treat you differently, no matter how you use your voice or what you believe in.

I'd also want to remind them that everyone starts at a different place in life and has their own strengths and weaknesses, and some people just haven't found their voice yet.

They will, but they can't be scared to fail.

So what does Liz tell Liz?

There are your goals in life, and this is what you want to achieve. What are the steps you have to take to get there? I do like to listen to myself. Sometimes in a conversation, I'll put my phone down and press record to listen to what I'm saying. My brain is constantly working.

If you were describing Liz, you'd say...

Talented, intelligent, and probably forgiving.



Liz Savage

I see Oak Hills growing more as a family than as a school district..."
— Liz Savage
Delhi Middle School,
Eighth Grade

A Golden Opportunity

Senior Caroline Eichhorn Explores the World of Medicine



The TAP MD program has given OHHS senior Caroline Eichhorn an inside look at a career in medicine.

It's fair to say that Caroline Eichhorn's memories of high school will look far different from those of the typical American high school student. Interspersed with the rigor of multiple AP classes and the rush of competing in tennis and swimming, the Oak Hills senior will carry with her the awe of watching a live kidney transplant, the thrill of waiting on the UC Medical Center helipad for a medical flight to land, and the challenge of trying to "save" simulation mannequins from a variety of ailments in the intensive-care unit at UCMC.

The honor student is part of an elite corps of high school students from across the Tri-state who spend a year learning about the real-life work of a physician, the training it takes to become one, and the areas in which they could specialize.

The Health Collaborative offers the program, called TAP MD, to recruit top-tier high-school students into the medical profession, choosing just 50 students each year.

For Caroline Eichhorn, it's been an eye-opening, and potentially life-changing, experience.

"It's been one of the greatest experiences I've ever had — you have so many experiences that people my age never get to have," she says. "I've known from an early age that I wanted to be a doctor because I wanted to help people. I always thought I wanted to be an OB/GYN, but this has opened my eyes to everything."

Caroline goes to a different medical facility each month for a carefully prepared educational experience. At the Lincoln Heights Health Center, she saw a one-stop facility offering wrap-around services to families in need. On "Trauma Day," she met a female surgeon who worked with Doctors without Borders, in areas of the world with few medical facilities. At High Point Health in Indiana, she learned the functions of MRIs, CTs, PET scans, and cardiac cath labs, and the roles of staff who oversee them. "We saw what the techs' daily lives looked like, and we saw a little glimpse of what a radiologist's life is like," she says.

To say Caroline has had a hands-on experience would hardly be an exaggeration. At Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, she experienced infant simulators that could perform more than 20 real-life functions and learned how to use an IV to draw blood. She also donned goggles for a virtual examination of the human heart. "You can lift it with your hands and see the size of the heart, where it's located and individual differences among hearts, which are replicated on slides," she says.

In a medical innovation lab at Northern Kentucky University, patient simulators taught TAP MD students how to treat a wide variety of conditions. In UC Medical Center's military training program, she watched a simulation of an operation taking place in flight — with the medical crew operating on their knees and using improvised instruments — and then worked with five other students to save a "patient."

Back at Oak Hills High School, Caroline put the relationships she's formed through TAP MD to good use.

"My AP Research project requires that I have a mentor in my area of study, and my mentor is Dr. Tayyab Diwan, the University of Cincinnati Medical Center's chief of transplants," Caroline says. "I got to meet him after the kidney transplant surgery we observed, and emailed him about being my mentor. I shadowed him and took part in rounds, as well as watched a liver surgery."

While many students struggle to identify a topic for their AP Research project — which focuses on solving a problem in their area of study — Caroline found hers directly in front of her, as she observed the kidney transplant at UCMC. "Being in TAP MD helped me think of it — how to decrease the shortage of kidney donors," she says. "Dr. Diwan told us there are 100,000 people nationwide who need a kidney transplant."

With a single semester of high school to complete, Caroline knows she'll face two "senior questions" over and over: Where are you going to college, and what are you going to major in?

The first one's tough. "I have a lot of options — Clemson, Auburn, UK, UC, OSU, the University of Tennessee, Georgia, North Carolina, Vanderbilt. Growing up, I've always known I wanted to go south, from family vacations at Hilton Head," she says with a smile.

But TAP MD made the second question easier. "Being a doctor — that's my passion, my dream, my goal. I'm incredibly grateful for this opportunity."

5 Questions for Mike Price



Mike Price

In basketball, you have to know when to pivot. Highlanders head coach Mike Price executed a providential pivot 38 years ago when he left his downtown accounting job to begin teaching and coaching full time at Oak Hills High School. He'd already been a volunteer assistant coach for three years. He knew it was time to take his shot.

The rest is basketball history. Coach Price is known for having an eye for talent, a passion for basketball, and, most of all, a heart for kids. He is revered across the region and beloved across this district.

After trying very hard to divert this interview to someone else, he finally — and graciously — agreed to answer five questions.

So, Coach, how do you know a really good player when you see one?

From our program standpoint, I don't look at the person as just an athlete but as a well-rounded person. As a student, work ethic is probably one of the most important things. Without the work ethic, they'll never develop as a great player. You have to look at their character. If they're a multi-sport athlete, I'll look at them in baseball — are they going to compete? Are they coachable? Are they a good teammate? Right now, it's as much about competing as anything else — are they really going to battle because we don't really have the size.

Are they really going to really fight, if they're 5 foot 10 and going up against a player who's 6 foot 5?

You're known for teaching young people about more than basketball. What are the life lessons you teach?

We teach them to deal with adversity, to have perseverance. To be on time, committed, responsible. To be a good teammate, to always be trying their best. To understand that you're going to fail sometimes, but it's how you handle that failure.

I don't think kids are intentionally more selfish, but what's admired in today's sport is the dunking, it's the offensive stats and the "look at me" generation. To some extent, social media such as Twitter and Facebook are "look at me" resources. I think about Ben Zahneis, a player who was first in his class, had a job at O'Charley's. He'd come in and shoot shots at six in the morning. He didn't get a lot of playing time, but it didn't affect who he was. We used Ben as an example at camp. He'd come up with these cheers on the bench — the bench mob. He's currently very successful at UC, in the Lindner Business Program, still working part-time jobs, volunteering for community service, and earning great grades. There's no doubt that he's going to be very successful in life.

Over the years, has coaching changed?

A lot. We spend more time not only with our high school players but with our youth and middle-school programs. On a typical day in the fall, I'm going to be in at 6 am because we have kids coming in that early to shoot. We have skill workouts, open gym, and strength training every weekday after school. Then in the evening, I'm back here from 7 to 8:30 to work with the youth such as our seventh- and eighth-graders. We spend a lot of time with those programs. But it's fun. It doesn't seem like work at all. The kids want to be here. The 6 am shooting is all voluntary. The high school players just come in. I think I'm more proud of that than anything else — shooting and working on their game from 6 to 7:15 am, then getting showered up, then I have breakfast for them. The kids have bought into that work ethic. We talk about it all the time — being good is really hard, and most people aren't willing to do what it takes to be good.

Have you changed as a coach?

I've become more patient in coaching. There's a difference in how I talk to the players. I'm more aware of kids' needs and how they should be coached than I used to be. I used to think this is how it's going to be. Now I'm more supportive, more patient. We demonstrate much more than we used to do in practice. We encourage our players to communicate more and to coach each other. Kids are under more pressure now, from their other coaches and other adults, and there's a feeling that they're going to fall behind. I've adjusted a lot. I probably watched 30 baseball games this summer. I go to support our players, and I want them to understand that I want them to play baseball or football or soccer. We want them to do something besides basketball. That multi-sport idea allows them a break from one sport, the opportunity to cross-train, and to compete and be coached in a different way.

So what should we expect from the Highlanders this season?

I'm excited about this team. We have kids who have put in a lot of effort. Our three seniors — Cam Brandt, Kelen Dietrich, Tanner Murphy — have earned their opportunities. They have great personalities, a tremendous work ethic, and high expectations of themselves. We have a really difficult schedule in our league, then Elder, LaSalle, a Newark, Ohio Christmas tourney, and a prep school from South Carolina that has had 35 D1 players in the last seven years. We had a team meeting the other day, and half our team was at the National Honor Society. Having all those smart people on our team delays practice. (He smiles.) But they have that balance — being great students, practicing hard, having friends, having a social life. Their time-management skills are remarkable. Barring injury, that translates into a very good year. I can't tell you the number of wins, but I do have a number in mind. Realistically, the number doesn't matter as much as the process of earning those wins. The journey is much more important.

A Sampling of Recent Honors & Special Events

#OHBetterTogether

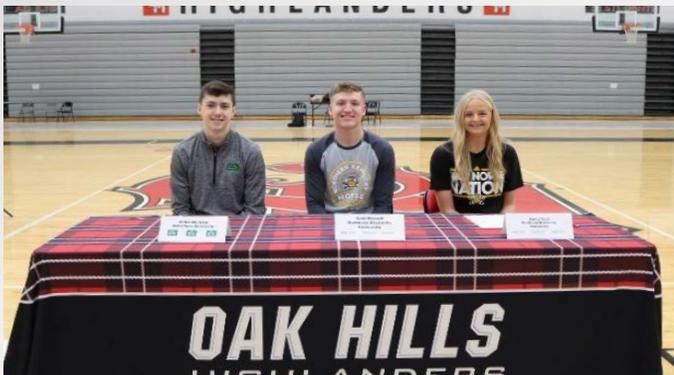


Mount St. Joseph University's "Selections 2019" Scholarship winner, OHHS junior Kylie Cornelius.

United Nations Association's National Community Service Award winners, Sophia Elchynski, Luke Miceli, Zachary Gault, Anna Applegate, Andy Au, and (not pictured) Camryn Anderson and Sarah Slattery.



Springmyer Elementary's Annual Pumpkin Drive for St. Joseph Orphanage (400 pumpkins)!



National College Signing Day for student-athletes: Kelen Dietrich (basketball at Delta State University), Cam Brandt (baseball at Northern Kentucky University), and Emily Tirey (soccer at Northern Kentucky University).



2019 Veterans Day at Oak Hills High School, with 300+ veterans attending.



J.F. Dulles' Third-Grade Concert, "America, Of Thee I Sing."



The Highlander Connection

Generations of Americans have viewed them on TV — the lighting of the National Christmas Tree, the Easter egg roll, and the Presidential Inauguration. Oak Hills High School graduate Anthony Cappel sees them close up.

Anthony works in the design and construction division of the President's Park, better known as the White House. It's a highly coveted venue for Park Service employees. The 2012 OHHS graduate arrived there based on strong skills, hard work, and the support and guidance of an exceptionally empathetic mentor.

That was veteran Park Service superintendent — and 1975 Oak Hills graduate — Kevin Brandt.

The two met at an employee meeting at the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal National Park in Maryland, where Anthony was an entry-level employee, and Kevin — the superintendent — was the boss. A casual conversation led first to their mutual Ohio roots, then to their Cincinnati, West Side, and finally Oak Hills connections.

"I worked for the Park Service for 40 years, all over the country, and I don't think I had ever worked with someone even from the West Side," Kevin says. "It was a real delight to meet him and to talk about Oak Hills."

For Anthony — whom Kevin calls TJ — it was an invaluable connection.

"It's hard to get your foot in the door," Anthony says. "Most people first do five to seven years of seasonal work, and then you have to get lucky that there's an opening. Kevin helped me most with networking, letting me go to training I wouldn't have gotten to go to, and introducing me to other superintendents."

On Kevin's recommendation, Anthony took a short-term detail in Washington, D.C., which eventually included projects at the White House. When a permanent job opened up, Anthony applied and got it.

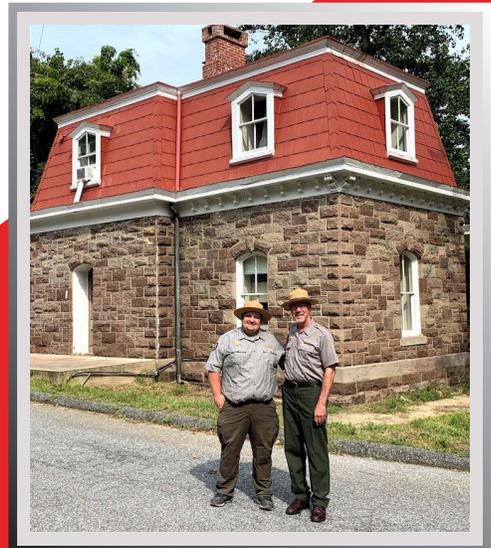
"He's a real gem and has great prospects in the Park Service," Kevin says. "It's very hard to be selected for the White House."

"When I think about what I see in TJ that inspired me, it's things he probably got from his parents, but also were continually inspired by Oak Hills — a curiosity, an asking, 'Why is this done this way?'"

For now, Anthony is relishing his role and the window it provides on U.S. history. But Cincinnati, the West Side, and Oak Hills is always calling. "My ultimate goal would be to be superintendent of the William Howard Taft House in Cincinnati," he says, "and to get back home."



Anthony Cappel



Filling an Essential Need

Everyone knows that grants from the Oak Hills Alumni & Educational Foundation enhance students' lives. Now it's clear that one special grant could save lives.

Last year, the Foundation funded the purchase of more than 450 Stop the Bleed bags and staff training to accompany them. Earlier this fall, in a school shooting in Santa Clarita, CA, a teacher used a Stop the Bleed bag to save a student's life.

The bags contain tourniquets, gauze, shears, and other supplies to help a bystander apply pressure to a wound and control bleeding until emergency responders arrive on the scene. The approach grew out of the school shooting in Sandy Hook, CT, but health officials say the bags are more likely to be used after bus accidents, weather events, or accidents at school.

The bags are in place in all 450 Oak Hills classrooms and common areas such as lobbies, cafeterias, gymnasiums, and media centers. More than 700 staff members are trained to use them.

"OHLSD is always looking for ways to improve the safety of each student and staff member," says Dr. Joni Vest, president of the Foundation. "A big 'thank you' goes to our alumni for providing the funds to equip each room with a Stop the Bleed kit, which can help save lives if the unthinkable should happen."

The bags align with current emergency-medical planning that says it may be the person next to a victim — not an emergency responder — who has the best chance to save the victim's life.

"In any disaster situation, the most crucial thing to do is to stop bleeding quickly. Police get there very quickly, but people can bleed to death in a matter of moments, and response time can take that long," said OHLSD safety and security adviser Bart West. "We think the community will benefit from the number of people trained through this grant — they could come across an automobile accident or other emergency and know what to do."



Distinguished Alumni Nominations

The Oak Hills Alumni & Educational Foundation presents annual awards for alumni and staff who have achieved outstanding career, vocational, and volunteer accomplishments and have performed exemplary service in the classroom, school, community, and nation. The awards, which are the highest honors bestowed on a graduate or district staff member, will be presented at the Oak Hills Alumni & Educational Foundation Dinner on May 6, 2020.

To nominate, visit

OakHillsAlumniFoundation.org/Distinguished-Highlanders

The deadline is January 24.



A Conversation with C.O. Harrison Elementary Principal Brian Connors

Don't let Brian Connors' placid demeanor fool you. He is always on the hunt for improvement. When he moved from being an assistant principal at Harrison High School to being principal of a junior-senior building, and then to — simultaneously — leading two elementary schools, he spent hours sitting in classrooms, talking to teachers, and pouring over the curriculum.



The day his current school, C.O. Harrison Elementary found out it had earned a rare “A” rating on the Ohio School Report Card, Mr. Connors and his first-grade team were coming out of a meeting centered on how to improve scores. “We take personally everything that affects our students,” he says. “It’s a very big team effort every day of the week here.”

Married to Kari Connors, he is the father of Nathan, 14, and Ryan, 12, and step-father of Brady, 13, and Sean, 11. He graduated from Northern Kentucky University with degrees in special education and social studies, earned a master’s degree in educational

administration, and holds a superintendent’s certificate that he says he will probably never use.

“I don’t know that I could ever not be in a school building with teachers and kids.”

Recently, he gave us this glimpse into his life:

What you wanted to be when you were a kid:
A football coach.

Favorite mascot:
I’m an LSU Tiger through and through. I have no idea why. I’ve loved them since I was 8 years old. And somehow — in the 1980s before the Internet — my parents came up with LSU spirit wear.

Favorite hobby:
I don’t have any. (Continues thinking.) I like to read. I read non-fiction, usually books written by coaches. Usually, I read books by people I don’t like. Usually, I end up liking them. *The Fred Factor* is my favorite book — a life-changing book.

Your life dream:
It’s a very small dream. To turn my kitchen and dining room into one room so I have space for a 10-seater table so that when my sons have significant others, all of them and my wife and I can have dinner together.

The best thing you cook:
Jambalaya. But my wife is really the cook. I come home every day, and dinner’s ready, and it’s delicious.

Best stress-reliever:
Listening to music. To heavy-metal — Iron Maiden. My wife says I listen to my music too loud.

Something about you that would surprise us:
That I love Hallmark Christmas movies: I set a reminder for them and DVR them if I’m not home.

Where we’d find you on a Friday night:
At a sporting event for one of my four kids, or carpooling them to some event. My wife and I are foodies, and we try not to go to the same restaurant twice.

Favorite place in the world:
Maybe Jamaica. We went there on our honeymoon — did cliff-diving, catamarans.

Favorite possession:
Both of my grandfathers’ dog tags from World War II.

Something you say all the time:
It’s always sunny on Neeb Road.

Best advice you’ve ever received:
My best advice is my favorite quote: Comparison is the thief of joy.

Role model:
My dad, for sure. He’s the most patient person I’ve ever met and the most disciplined person I’ve ever met. And Susan Thomas, who was an assistant principal at Oak Hills High School and principal at Harrison High School.

Three words to describe you:
I don’t know (he goes to his office door and invites in school secretaries, Debbie Ellis and Debbie Blome. They choose the words). Conscientious. Flexible. Understanding.

The best part of your job:
Being with the kids. There’s nothing I want to do other than being around teachers and kids. I love doing carpool duty. I serve in the cafeteria line some days. It’s great.

What do you value most in life?
My wife and my kids, by far.