



# Highlander Insider

*"We are all in this story together." – Sally Atkins, poet*

## A Message from the Superintendent

Dear Highlander Community,

As we move deeper into the 2019-20 school year, I want to thank our parents, staff, and community for supporting the work we do here in Oak Hills Local Schools and for investing in our students. Successful school districts always have a positive community behind them, and thriving communities always include good schools. Our fate is and always will be intertwined.

Excellent communication is the cornerstone of our relationship, which is the reason you're receiving our new district newsletter. It's part of a series of initiatives we're launching this year – beginning with building the district's vision through our strategic planning process – to strengthen our bond with our community and help you understand more about who we are and what we do daily.

Everyone who signs up for the newsletter – business owners, realtors, elected officials, senior citizens, prospective residents, along with OHLSD families and staff – will get an inside look at our operations, curriculum, finances, and successes and struggles.

You'll also meet the people who truly make us Oak Hills.

Many of you already understand how vitally connected a community is to its school system. You entrust us with your children each day, you're a proud alumnus, and you know that the quality of our schools greatly impacts your home values. Others may not feel such a strong connection. Maybe your children graduated long ago. Maybe your family has a strong tradition of attending parochial schools. Perhaps you only think about the schools when your tax bill comes, or a levy is on the ballot.

Here's our message to all of you: In a world shaken by violence, economic insecurity, and political division, every community has to understand who its allies are. It has to figure out what it can get its arms around, and what it can protect.

We'll do all we can to be an excellent partner to you. You can count on us to build the skills and values of this community, one day – and one child – at a time.

Please stay in touch. Let us know how we're doing. And help us get the word out about the newsletter by encouraging your friends, family, and neighbors to sign up. They can send their email address to our director of public relations and communication, Krista Ramsey, at [ramsey\\_k@ohlsd.org](mailto:ramsey_k@ohlsd.org) or call her at (513) 598-2682.

Enjoy the first edition, and we'll talk soon.

Jeff Brandt  
Superintendent



# Strategic Planning

## A New Vision for Oak Hills Local Schools



On Sept. 25, a group of 35 community members, students, and staff kicked off an exciting year of strategic planning that will shape Oak Hills Local Schools for years to come.

At its essence, strategic planning is about two things: voice and vision. It’s about a diverse group of people coming together to share their thoughts on where a school district is and where it can go, and to examine the culture that permeates it, the processes that guide it, and the values that define it.

It’s been 24 years since the Oak Hills Local Schools last undertook strategic

planning. On September 25, the creation of a new plan began with the first meeting of the strategic planning stakeholders team – more than 35 community leaders, parents, students, residents, elected officials, and Oak Hills staff members who will oversee the planning process.

Hundreds of additional community residents, staff members, and students will be involved in at least 11 different focus groups, which began October 14 and will end in mid-December. Early in 2020, all community members will be invited to share their thoughts via a community survey.

“The whole thing is about voice – about the importance of sharing your view of the future of this district,” says Assistant Superintendent Tim Cybulski.

“It’s the idea of building consensus around

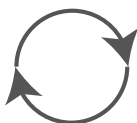
ideas, not necessarily about getting full agreement. In our society, we’re blessed to have a diversity of opinions. We use that to work toward the principle of the common good – how will our work lead to the use of community resources to support the common good? And what kind of a legacy and a future will we provide for our students?”

The district is using the services of Hamilton County Educational Services Center consultants, Bill Sears and Brad Lovell to guide the process. The stakeholders team is expected to complete its work in late May, and the Oak Hills Board of Education to review it in June. Recommendations from the plan could be put in place as early as next fall.

### Keeping Up with Strategic Planning



Visit the OHLSD Strategic Planning web site at [bit.ly/OHLSDStrategicPlanning](http://bit.ly/OHLSDStrategicPlanning). You’ll find timelines, committee lists, and notes from monthly planning sessions.



Watch for updates every month in the district newsletter.



Take part in the community survey. Details will be sent to every Oak Hills household in early 2020.



Share your questions by contacting Assistant Superintendent Tim Cybulski at (513) 574-3200.

### Not to Miss!

- Nov. 3.....OHHS Open House for Prospective Students, 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm
- Nov. 5.....Professional Learning Day, No School for Students
- Nov. 7 & 8.....DMS, Seussical the Musical, Jr., 6:30 pm Performance
- Nov. 8.....C.O. Harrison, Veterans Day Program, Breakfast at 8:00 am; Program at 9:10 am
- Nov. 11.....Veterans Day, No School
- Nov. 12.....Oakdale, Veterans Day Programs, 9:00 am and 6:00 pm
- Nov. 25 & 26.....Conference Exchange Days, No School
- Nov. 27-29.....Thanksgiving Break, No School



*C.O. Harrison third-grader, Emerson Zinser conferences with her teacher, Heidi Brown, on her narrative writing.*

Emerson Zinser remembers the first time she realized she was a writer. It was a piece she wrote about her first time on a water slide – and she wrote it in first grade.

“It feels good to be a writer,” the third-grader says, a smile stealing across her face. “I get to write about moments I’ve been in and share them with other people. In my class, we have Writers Wednesday, where we write opinion writing. I kind of like opinion writing, but I like writing ‘Small Moments’ and fiction a lot more.”

Emerson – who is known as the description expert in her class, and consults with classmates and her first-grade writing partner on their work – is part of a writing wave sweeping through Oak Hills classrooms. As early as the primary grades, students are learning to write narratives and use dialogue to weave in transition words and offer constructive advice to other writers.

To some extent, the district is bucking a statewide trend. In 2008, when the Ohio Department of Education discontinued the fourth-grade and seventh-grade state writing tests, the focus quickly shifted away from writing. That loss of emphasis worries many education experts, who see strong writing skills as fundamental to achievement, and to all career paths.

As early as 2003, a report by the National Commission on Writing for America’s Families, Schools, and Colleges warned, “American education will never realize its potential as an engine of opportunity and economic growth until a writing revolution puts the power of language and communication in their proper place in the classroom.”

A chief factor in Oak Hills’ building momentum: Writing Workshop, a method of instruction that coaches students to write for various audiences and purposes, to write from their own lives, and to write constantly.

“We started with a heavy dose of what the research says about how students learn to read and write,” says Corey Kessler, director of curriculum & instruction (PK-8). “We believe that to become a good writer, you have to write – and write a lot. Schedules may change, and teachers may change, but what has to stay sacred is that students need to write.”

**“ There’s a paradigm shift where students no longer see writing as laborious, and their reluctance to write has dramatically decreased because students look at themselves as writers and as having a story to tell. ”**

**– Corey Kessler,  
Director of Curriculum  
& Instruction (PK-8)**

In her C.O. Harrison classroom, third-grade teacher, Shannon Brown has students writing about 180 minutes a week, using the Writing Workshop model. It revolves around a 10-12 minute mini-lesson, in which students learn writing techniques or study an author’s style. It’s followed by 30 to 40 minutes of work time, during which students are writing or conferencing with their teacher individually or in small groups. Each workshop session ends with share time,

in which students get used to sharing their work with an audience and hearing responses.

“Seeing where the students are at the beginning of the year to where they are as writers at the end of the year is just amazing,” Ms. Brown says. “I used to focus on conventions – like punctuation and grammar – but now I focus on content. I’ve had to step back, and say, ‘Can you get your thoughts out on paper?’”

And students – even initially reluctant writers – are learning that they can.

Teachers say they are seeing more “writing stamina” – the ability to write longer pieces and to write for longer periods of time – more enthusiasm for writing, more confidence in their writing, and more writing tools. “We see huge growth in vocabulary,” says C.O.Harrison teacher, Heidi Brown. “We tell them, ‘Don’t worry if you can’t spell the word enormous – don’t fall back on ‘big.’ They’re using much richer vocabulary.”

The biggest win, however, may be the identity shift that leads students like Emerson Zinser to confide, “I’m the writer in my family.”

“The part that hit us in the face is that our students’ perception of themselves as writers has changed because of this work,” Mr. Kessler says. “The teachers refer to them as writers. There’s a paradigm shift where students no longer see writing as laborious, and their reluctance to write has dramatically decreased because students look at themselves as writers and as having a story to tell.”

Emerson Zinser feels fairly sure she has at least one or two books in her future – although first, she may pursue a career as a makeup artist, fashion designer, or a veterinarian.

“Writing makes me feel good, inspired, and that I want to inspire other people,” she says.





## Understanding the “Why” Behind Childhood Trauma

*Delshire Principal, Tara Willig, right, arranged for Dr. Ruby Payne, author of A Framework for Understanding Poverty, to speak to OHLSD staff in September.*

*Trauma. It's a word no one wants to associate with childhood, but a growing body of research links childhood trauma to poor school performance, poor social skills, and even poor adult health.*

*As in many schools, Delshire Elementary School Principal Tara Willig and her staff see students who have gone through trauma. Now they're reshaping their school climate to strengthen and support those children. Here, Mrs. Willig shares her thoughts:*

### **What do we mean by childhood trauma?**

Trauma doesn't have boundaries in terms of socioeconomic status, age, background, or gender. Everyone experiences trauma – it's just how we process it. Childhood trauma may involve abuse, neglect, family substance abuse, or poverty, to name a few causes. The way an adult responds to a child can help that child regulate himself and his behavior, or not.

### **What characteristics do we see in children who have experienced trauma?**

They're likely to exhibit symptoms that look like ADHD. They often act out or else internalize their stress and do self-harm. There's no one picture. We all have that response to a stressful situation where our heartbeat increases, where it's fight or flight. But if that heightened response is what you experience day after day, we can see how harmful it can be. The kids who have not learned coping skills and how to calm themselves are the kids we see who blow up over small things.

### **How is your approach to these children different from what schools used to do?**

Our approach is collaborative, supportive, and compassionate.

The traditional educational approach was punitive. They were suspended or expelled, which led to higher numbers of absences. But schools weren't seeing a change in behavior from those consequences. They were seeing children removed from an educational setting or dropping out. We, as adults, have two choices. If the kids' behavior is escalated, we can help de-escalate it. Or we can push and push until they explode.

### **What's the philosophy behind what you do?**

We're trying to build a sense of community around them – in student groups, between students and staff. Then we're teaching them the skills they need to regulate themselves, to accept responsibility for their own behavior, and to right the wrongs they've caused. If the message is, “You did this, now this will happen to you,” and there's no conversation about their behavior, it means they don't learn from their behavior. When we talk about their behavior, we talk about what they felt, how they think they made others feel, and how they can fix it – that's the most important part of what we do.

### **Are there common traits in people who rise above trauma?**

We've seen kids who have gone through some very difficult things. But the kids doing well had a support system that's always there – a parent, a grandparent, an aunt. We also teach them to understand their body – what their body feels like when it's calm and when it's not calm. The successful people you know are people who know how to calm themselves. They've learned strategies to control their impulses and reactions. But when have we ever taught those things to kids?

### **Is there one key to this work?**

You're always looking for the “why” – why did they exhibit this behavior? Let's face it; the situations they deal with here are the situations they'll deal with in life. Without these skills, they'll always revert to conflict.

### **What lessons have you and your staff learned from this work?**

These kids have learned coping skills to deal with their situation. We need to be not so black and white about those skills. Maybe a student wears headphones in class because they're used to having to block other things out. Maybe there are 12 or 13 people in their house, and it's never quiet, and quiet feels really uncomfortable. You have to open the lens up to what they've experienced and how it could be affecting their current situation.

### **Do you see a change in your school climate?**

We're interacting with kids way more – for positive reasons – rather than just punishing them. We talk more about how we hurt others than we do about the wrong or the rule. We focus on the harm you do to others and the relationship.

### **What's your hope for these students?**

How lucky are we that we get to intervene at this age. It's so important that we do the work with the little ones. We hope that in three or four years, our middle school teachers will say, “These kids are different” – because we've taught them something rather than just punished them.

It's a mind shift.

# Just For Grandparents

Come for lunch and a session on holiday gift ideas for your grandchildren!

Here at Oak Hills, we never underestimate the power or importance of grandparents. So we've been trying to think of how we could give something back.

If you're a grandparent – whether your grandchildren are here or across the country – you're invited to a series of free lunches that will give you a chance to socialize, and also to learn more about issues that affect your grandchildren. (If you're a parent, please pass this invitation on to grandparents!)

First up is a fun Holiday Gift Ideas lunch on Thursday, November 21, noon, at Oak Hills Local Schools District Office. Enjoy a delicious meal prepared by the Oak Hills Food Service Department, then sit back as staff members share great gifts they've bought for their own kids or favorite books and games they use in their classrooms.

Are you tired of giving gift cards or money? There will be gift ideas for all ages and interests – cool art supplies, sports-related gifts, teen and 'tween gifts, brainy games, suggestions for that future engineer or techie in your family.

No charge, but reservations are needed. Sign up for yourself or for a family member who's a grandparent. Email Krista Ramsey at [ramsey\\_k@ohlsd.org](mailto:ramsey_k@ohlsd.org) or call her at (513) 598-2682. The deadline is November 12.



## How to Be Successful at School – From an Expert



Alaina Broughton

*Each year roughly 1.5 million high school juniors take the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Qualifying Exam. Just 1 percent go on to earn National Merit Semifinalist status. Oak Hills High School is proud to announce that senior Alaina Broughton has earned that prestigious designation.*

*Before she heads off to Taylor University, Cedarville University, or the University of Cincinnati next fall to major in graphic design, we asked Alaina to share her tips for academic achievement:*

First, do the work. A lot of students push it – “How much homework can I get away without doing?” Just do the work and pay attention in class, and that’s the biggest thing that will get you good grades.

Second, stay organized. Plan out your time and activities, and write out your homework, so you don’t forget it. Organize your time, so you’re working on projects before they’re due. And do the little things like – at home – setting out the materials you’ll need for the next day.

Third, communicate. I know many students hesitate to ask for help or to ask questions in front of the class. If you’re having a problem, contact the teacher right away. Even if you’re behind, a lot of times the teacher can work out something to help you catch up.



# Charlie Russell

## Never Too Young to Be a Hero

Tuesday, September 10, should have been an ordinary day for Springmyer Elementary School third-grader, Charlie Russell. He expected his morning to unfold as it usually did with a little video-watching on his dad's cell phone, followed by breakfast, and then his dad, Tim, taking him to school. His little brother, Max, was still in his crib. His mom, Molly, was off to her teaching job in Northern Kentucky.

Then the eight-year-old's day took a turn no one is prepared for – an event that would shake the confidence and test the decision-making skills of any adult. Charlie found his dad lying on the bathroom floor unresponsive, and quickly made a series of courageous decisions that would leave his dad a hero and help save the lives of at least five people.

Knowing his mom was miles away at school and that his grandma, "Onday" – a former nurse – had medical knowledge, Charlie unlocked his dad's phone and, because he knew how to text but not call, typed, "ONDAY HELP." His grandma called back immediately. "Daddy's not waking up," Charlie told her.

His grandma called 911 and gave Charlie instructions, which he carried out perfectly. "She suggested I go to my neighbor's house, and then my job was to go to the door and wait for 911," Charlie says. He got his little brother up, took him to the neighbor's, who initially wasn't home, then went back across the street with Max. "I told Max to sit on the porch, and I sat with him. I kept Max in mind because I wanted to tell him what had happened."

Charlie's neighbor returned quickly, and the two were at the door when the EMTs arrived. Charlie – whom his mom says has always been "a good observer and a natural leader" – shared what he knew with the safety workers.

Then comes the point in Charlie Russell's story where the hardest – and sometimes most lasting – lessons of life come into play. Despite everyone's efforts – and despite Charlie's sequence of exquisitely good decisions – Tim Russell's life couldn't be saved. He passed away the next day.

But this is not where his story ends.

A helper by nature – "he just was, his entire life," his wife says – Mr. Russell lived long enough to donate five major organs. It was his young son's actions that helped buy the family the time – and opportunity – to make the decision for organ donation.



*Springmyer Elementary third-grader, Charlie Russell holds the medal given to his family in honor of his father, Tim, who was an organ donor.*

"I want Charlie to understand that our story had this outcome that is hard, but as I told him, 'You are the difference between Daddy being able to be an organ donor or dying in our home,'" Molly Russell says. "We talked about how it was Daddy's last way to help people."

Now Charlie wants to follow in his family's tradition of helping. "My mom donated blood," he says, "and my dad donated... love."

When he grows up, Charlie wants to sign up to be an organ donor. For now, he hopes his story can help other kids. "I told him, 'You're going to help other kids to know not only what to do, but that they can do it,'" his mother says.

Charlie's first piece of advice:

"If you're ever in an emergency, remember that you always have a resource – a phone," he says. "And if there's someone you know nearby, go to that neighbor, and if they're not there, try another neighbor." Charlie says kids should use the skills they have – like texting – and learn new ones, like how to call 911.

On a warm fall day at his home, Charlie Russell thinks about the difference his father's life is making right now for other families. For a guest, he takes out the medal that his father earned by being an organ donor. "In Honor of a Hero of Donation," it reads. "Sharing Gifts of Life."

"Are you a hero?" the guest asks Charlie. "Not really," he says. "I'm a normal person. I think of myself as half-hero, half-normal person."

Then he smiles. "I think my dad thought I was really smart making those decisions."



**“My mom donated blood and my dad donated... love.”**

**– Charlie Russell,  
Springmyer Elementary,  
Third Grade**

A close-up portrait of Eliot Sloan, a Black man with a mustache, smiling slightly and looking towards the camera. He is wearing a dark blue shirt.

## 5 Questions for Eliot Sloan

Eliot Sloan is an Oak Hills parent, a member of the WATCH D.O.G.S. fathers group at Delshire Elementary, and a recording artist with the Cincinnati-based, world-known band, *Blessid Union of Souls*. A modest, positive person with deep thoughts about life, Mr. Sloan shared some insights on growing up, growing wiser, and continuing to grow:

### You've had such huge career success. To what do you attribute it?

*I always take it back to when I was a kid. My mother just put us into piano lessons – there was no question. “Oh, by the way, tomorrow you’re going to start piano lessons.” I was eight. When I’m on stage, I say the only way I’m up here is because my mother put me in piano lessons, and I did not want to go. But really, number one, I attribute it to God. Everything goes back to God and having a loving heart for people.*

### Was there a particular class, teacher, or activity that had an impact on you in school?

*Yes, especially in junior high. My elementary school was great, and then junior high school – I was really scared. You don’t know anybody. In eighth grade, I failed algebra. I just didn’t understand it. My mother got me a tutor – Mr. Lorand, a math genius. He took the time, slowly, to show me algebra. In ninth-grade algebra, I got straight A’s. My teacher, Ms. Brown, demanded respect. She wasn’t mean, but she was stern. I kind of liked her matter-of-fact personality. As she taught math, I understood it.*

### We all have lessons to learn. What was your most important life lesson?

*Again, when you’re a kid who’s not doing well in school, your confidence level is not very high. But when someone takes the time with you, you get it. It taught me that we are all capable of being amazing. We are capable of learning and of being better versions of ourselves – which never ends. For all of our kids, the possibilities are endless. It’s still true for me – I’m still a naive kid who thinks I can get a song on the radio. I still think it’s all possible.*

### What advice do you give your children?

*What I tell my son all the time is that whatever he puts his mind to, he makes happen. And I tell my children that the main thing is never to give up, but to keep trying. It’s going to be hard – anything you accomplish of any significance will be – but if you stay on the course, you will get there.*

### You’ve had a lot of dreams come true. Which ones are you still dreaming?

*I like movies and some television shows, and I’m working on a movie right now – we’re writing the script. I still think about making the right decisions, and this movie is about that and about kids getting through difficult times. So, I still want my songs on the radio. I still want to sing on stage. And I like acting – I want to be in this movie.*

# A Message from the Treasurer

## Our Strong Return on Your Investment

A fundamental point every school district should understand is that community residents don't give funding to their local school district – they invest in it. Local stakeholders provide resources that pay for instruction, staffing, facilities, student services, and transportation. In return, they expect a high level of student achievement, staff involvement, and responsible fiscal management.

As the chief financial officer for Oak Hills Local Schools, I am pleased to report that our district is meeting each of the above expectations, and is offering a very strong return on our community's mindful investment.

As the chart below shows, Oak Hills ranks academically in the upper echelon of Hamilton County's 23 school districts. Financially, our district ranks among the lowest in per-pupil spending, and our residents enjoy one of the lowest tax rates in Southwestern Ohio. Seventy-two cents of each dollar is allocated to the student, with the remaining funds going to

such foundational needs as the maintenance of our nine schools and upkeep of our transportation fleet. On average, school districts across the state allocate 68 cents per dollar to student instruction. Nearly nine out of every ten school districts in Hamilton County spend more on administrative expenditures than does Oak Hills.

Delivering a high-quality education at a low cost is an expectation embedded in our westside culture.

Our district understands this culture, and we have worked diligently to deliver a return on investment that is as strong as any school district in the Southwestern Ohio area.

As treasurer, I am also personally committed to open and consistent communication about our district's fiscal health. Our communication has included live community "town hall" phone calls, social media and web site postings, press coverage, financial updates at public Board of

Education meetings (occurring twice a month), annual mailings, community presentations, and individual discussions. Recently, the district has introduced the Transparency Tracker ([www.ohlsd.us](http://www.ohlsd.us)), which provides stakeholders with a clear picture of past and present initiatives to stretch each dollar. Our district's fiscal practices have earned the prestigious Auditor of State Award of Distinction for Financial Reporting, which recognizes internal-control policies and clean reporting.

Again, I am very pleased to share our encouraging picture of academic success and sound fiscal management. I appreciate your interest, and if you have any questions, I encourage you to contact me at (513) 574-3200 or at [bain\\_s@ohlsd.org](mailto:bain_s@ohlsd.org) and to visit our website at [www.ohlsd.us](http://www.ohlsd.us).

Sincerely,

Steven R. Bain  
Treasurer

## Report Card & Financial Data

### Hamilton County – Fiscal Year 2019

School District	Expenditure Per Pupil	Report Card Grade	% Spent in Classroom	Taxes Per \$100k Home
Indian Hill CSD	\$15,686	A	71%	\$727
Mariemont CSD	\$12,786	A	71%	\$1,959
Sycamore LSD	\$12,015	B	73%	\$1,111
Wyoming CSD	\$11,989	A	77%	* \$1,628
Madeira CSD	\$11,573	A	74%	\$1,602
Norwood CSD	\$10,994	D	74%	\$1,456
Loveland CSD	\$10,689	B	72%	\$1,386
Princeton CSD	\$10,603	D	67%	\$1,144
Cincinnati CSD	\$10,491	D	62%	\$1,638
Deer Park CSD	\$10,247	B	68%	\$1,618
Winton Woods LSD	\$10,218	D	70%	\$1,838
Forest Hills LSD	\$10,194	B	73%	\$1,194
Finneytown LSD	\$9,813	D	73%	\$1,897
<b>State Average</b>	<b>\$9,721</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>N/A</b>
St. Bernard CSD	\$9,641	D	68%	\$2,000
Milford CSD	\$9,434	C	68%	\$1,246
Mt. Healthy CSD	\$9,146	D	69%	\$1,498
Reading CSD	\$8,959	C	75%	\$1,459
<b>OAK HILLS LSD</b>	<b>\$8,820</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>\$1,100</b>
Southwest LSD	\$8,806	C	74%	* \$841
Three Rivers LSD	\$8,796	C	67%	\$1,081
Lockland CSD	\$8,773	D	65%	\$1,193
Northwest LSD	\$8,335	C	70%	\$1,085
North College Hill SD	\$7,963	D	72%	\$1,265

\*Chart sorted by Expenditure Per Pupil. Wyoming Southwest assess an income tax not included in the data. Source: Ohio Department of Education; Hamilton County Auditor



# A Sampling of Recent Honors



*National Merit Commended Students, Zachary Gault and Rebecca Gilligan, and National Merit Semifinalist, Alaina Broughton.*



*Ohio Art Education Association's Southwest Region Outstanding Art Teacher Award winner, Mary Sala.*



*Warm 98 Teacher of the Month, Michelle Gratz.*



*Day of the Girl Exhibit honorees, Maiya Taft, Alaina Broughton, and Mayson Reperowitz.*

*GMC Leadership Summit. Back row: Charlie Marshall, Stuart Bick, Michael Doherty, Will Berra, Jessie Ludwig, Kendyl Smith, Jake Stochinsky, Nate Vickery, Assistant Principal Dan Boles. Front row: Student Council Adviser Dennis Martin, Tanner Murphy, Speaker Alan Stein, Principal Travis Hunt, Karis Pitchford.*



*GMC Cross Country 8th Grade Girls Champion, Ady McDonald.*



*GMC Tennis 1st Singles Champion, Morgan Lint.*



*\$5,000 check from Dunkin' to Feed A Highlander program OHHS Principal Travis Hunt, Program Coordinator Meghan Sullivan, Dunkin' Franchisee Michael Benhase, Brian Benhase, Superintendent Jeff Brandt, and Dunkin' Manager, Rob Dearwester.*

**#OHBetterTogether**



# Oak Hills Alumni & Educational Foundation Grant-ing Wishes



One of the fan favorites at the gorgeous and amazing BLINK parade in downtown Cincinnati was the gorgeous and amazing Nessie – Oak Hills High School’s 30-foot-long, illuminated, human-powered float. Everyone who saw the mesmerizing sea creature wanted to know who had made her, and who moved her.

The easy answer was that OHHS National Art Honor Society members and students in the Advanced AutoCAD class had made Nessie, and dozens of students, staff members, and community members had moved her through the downtown streets.

But there is actually a second answer.

Nessie wouldn’t have been possible without a \$600 grant from the Oak Hills Alumni & Educational Foundation. Those funds paid for the

Ripstop nylon fabric to create Nessie’s sleek blue body, for the hula hoops that turned into her spine, and for the LED lights that illuminated Nessie along with the Highlander mascot. The grant also provided the tissue paper and supplies for the 60+ eyeball lanterns that lit Nessie’s way at the parade and caught everyone’s eye.

Nessie may be the most visible example of the good that comes from OHAEF grants, but she is far from the only example. The grants enrich teaching and learning across the district every day. They open the door for creativity, pave the way for initiatives, and provide a level of support that’s rarely found in public schools.

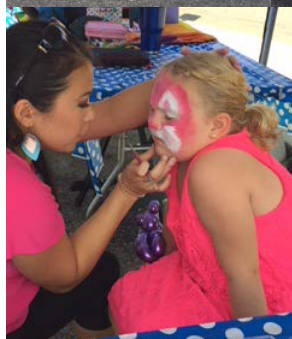
Thank you – even a 30-foot-long, glowing thank you – hardly seems enough.

## An Instant Tradition – The Highlander Food Truck Frenzy

The Oak Hills Alumni & Educational Foundation may act as a sort of fairy godmother to Oak Hills classrooms, but the only magic behind OHAEF grants is a lot of good planning and hard work.

That was the secret behind this year’s new fundraising effort, the wildly successful Highlander Food Truck Frenzy, held at Oak Hills High School. Families lined up for food from 12 different food trucks, then stayed around for an inflatable play area, face-painting, stilt walkers, conversation, and the Sullivan Janszen band.

The event raised more than \$25,000 and provided a night of fun and connection for the Oak Hills community. It was an automatic repeat – mark your calendars for Saturday, September 19, 2020, for the next Frenzy.





# Inside Oak Hills

## A Conversation with Holly Reilly



Holly Reilly and her granddaughter, Evie Rose.



Holly Reilly has one of the most essential roles in Oak Hills Local Schools, and one of the busiest. As a district nurse who oversees five schools,

she promotes the well-being of 5,400 students

and 500 staff. One minute she's conducting vision screenings for first-graders, the next she's checking in with high school students with chronic illnesses.

Married to OHHS alumnus Gene Reilly, mother of alumna Dannielle Reilly-Shoup, and grandmother of Evie Rose, Mrs. Reilly is a 24-year veteran of OHLSD and graduate of Mount St. Joseph University and Ashland University. Recently, she gave us a glimpse into her life:

### **Favorite place in the world:**

*Being at home, in my garden.*

### **How you manage stress:**

*I do yoga, gardening, and hanging out with friends. I love yoga, and I do a lot online.*

### **Friday nights find you:**

*Mine are always at home with my husband.*

*With the dog or with the grandchild, Evie Rose, who begs to spend the night.*

### **Favorite possession:**

*Probably a leopard-skin comforter that my husband bought me. It sits on my guest-room bed because my dog won't stay off it. And it's beautiful.*

### **Favorite Oak Hills tradition:**

*At the high school, Fridays are fun because of the drumline. It's also cute to watch the 100th Day for elementary students. They get so excited.*

### **A local restaurant where we'd most likely find you:**

*Currently, Quaker Steak & Lube because my husband loves it, or El Rancho Grande on Harrison Avenue.*

### **What you're obsessed with:**

*I don't know that I'm obsessed with anything, but I do like my home to be pretty clean.*

### **The last thing you did that surprised you:**

*I'm planning to do hatchet-throwing with a handful of nurses here at Oak Hills. Am I crazy to do that? Maybe my yard skills will come out – all that digging and trimming.*

### **If you had a whole day to yourself, what would you do?**

*(Answers instantly.) Go to the spa – a full massage, pedicure, facial, the whole bit. Then lunch with friends.*

### **Favorite movie ever:**

*Stuart Saves His Family. There's a line that's an inside joke with my family: "Is there any way you can get yourself to a pound cake?"*

### **Best advice you've ever been given:**

*"The world is run by C-average people." A very wise nurse told me that once.*

### **Three words to describe you:**

*Honest. Straight shooter. Hard worker.*

### **What do you value most in life?**

*Family.*

