

# PIONEER POST

East Grand Rapids Alumni Newsletter

## U.S Ambassador to Ukraine

### Bridget Brink to Be

### Honored with Distinguished

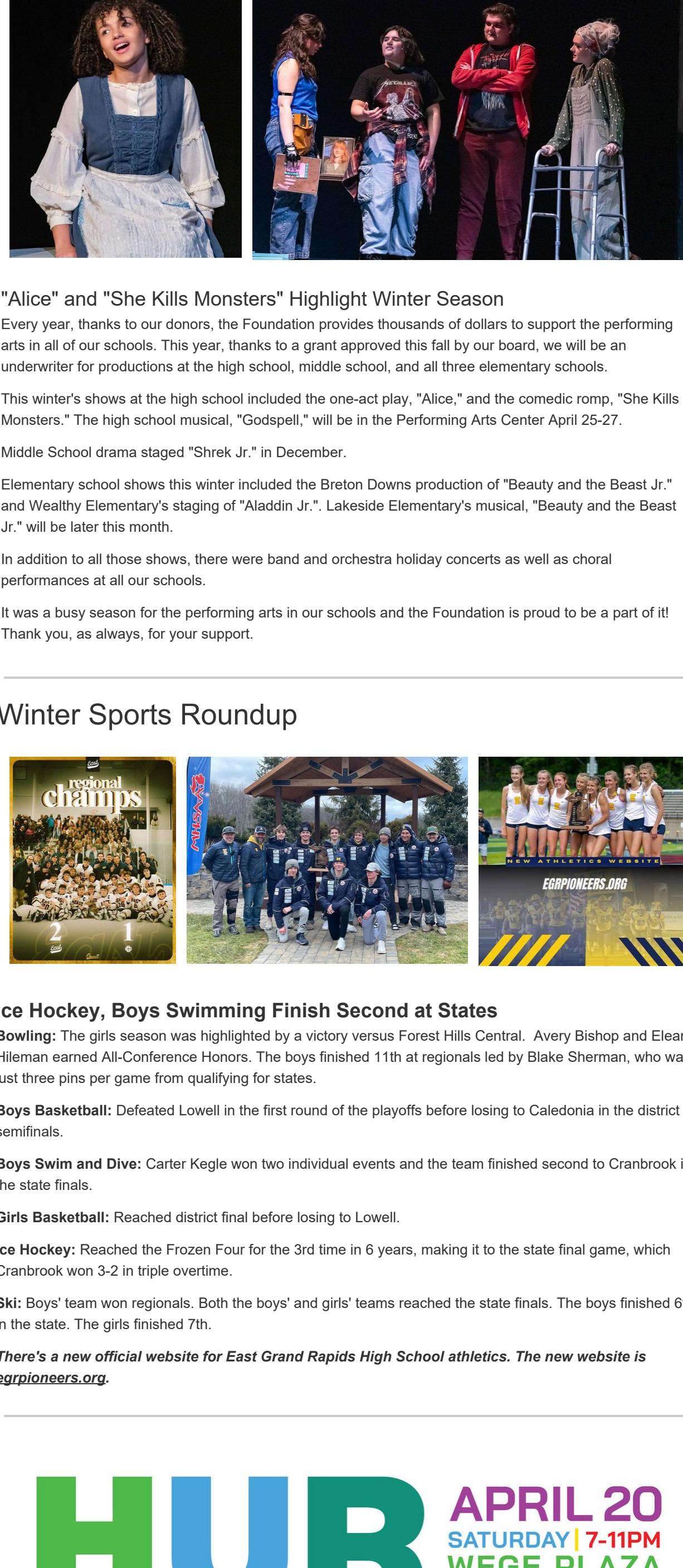
### Alumni Award This Fall

Save the date of October 16 for our Community Service and Distinguished Alumni Awards Dinner! This year's Distinguished Alumni honoree will be U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine Bridget Brink, who graduated from East Grand Rapids High School in 1987.



After graduating from East, Brink earned her bachelor of arts degree in political science from Kenyon College and a master's in international relations and political theory from the London School of Economics. She has worked for the U.S. Department of State since 1996, serving as U.S. Ambassador to Slovakia before becoming U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine in 2022. She took office during the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

The Community Service and Distinguished Alumni Awards Dinner will be held on Wednesday, October 16, 2024, at Watermark Country Club. Tickets and sponsorship information will be available soon on our website, [egrsf.org](http://egrsf.org).



## Florida Alumni Happy Hour Was Fun in the Sun

The weather was perfect. The venue was terrific. And, most important, we had a great turnout for our Alumni Happy Hour at Guanabana's in Jupiter, Florida, on Tuesday, March 5.

Pioneers came early and stayed late as everyone had a great time at our second Florida Alumni Happy Hour (the first one was in 2019). Classes represented ranged from the EGRHS class of 1952 all the way through 2008. Penny Edison '52 celebrated her 90th birthday at the event, along with her son, Paul Edison '80. The Florida alumni gathering was truly a hit!

We've now held alumni happy hour events in Florida and Chicago. Where should we go next? Share your thoughts with Alumni Relations Coordinator [Maria Allen](#).

## Reunions Scheduled This Summer and Fall

- Class of 1964 | August 23-24
- Class of 1969 | July 19-21
- Class of 1974 | September 14
- Class of 1984 | October 19
- Class of 1999 | Fall TBD
- Class of 2004 | September 28
- Class of 2009 | Fall TBD
- Class of 2014 | November 30

Find more reunion information on our [Events and Class News pages](#). If your class year is not listed (1949, 1954, 1959, 1979, 1989, 1994) please contact us to let us know your reunion plans. The Foundation provides reunion planning support for all East classes. Contact [Maria Allen](#), Alumni Relations Coordinator, for more information.

## Winter Performing Arts Roundup



### "Alice" and "She Kills Monsters" Highlight Winter Season

Every year, thanks to our donors, the Foundation provides thousands of dollars to support the performing arts in all of our schools. This year, thanks to a grant approved this fall by our board, we will be an underwriter for productions at the high school, middle school, and all three elementary schools.

This winter's shows at the high school included the one-act play, "Alice," and the comedic romp, "She Kills Monsters." The high school musical, "Godspell," will be in the Performing Arts Center April 25-27.

Middle School drama staged "Shrek Jr." in December.

Elementary school shows this winter included the Breton Downs production of "Beauty and the Beast Jr." and Wealthy Elementary's staging of "Aladdin Jr.". Lakeside Elementary's musical, "Beauty and the Beast Jr." will be later this month.

In addition to all those shows, there were band and orchestra holiday concerts as well as choral performances at all our schools.

It was a busy season for the performing arts in our schools and the Foundation is proud to be a part of it! Thank you, as always, for your support.

## Winter Sports Roundup



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A Virtual Cup of Coffee with Bill Dufek '74

Bill Dufek moved to East Grand Rapids from Ann Arbor after his sophomore year of high school when his father became the athletic director at Grand Valley State University. He was an All-American football player in 1979. After two years of

atmosphere, he was an NFL draft pick of the New York Jets in 1979. Despite spending only two years at

East, he has strong ties to the community.

You can only have one: Rose's caramel corn, an ice cream cone from Jersey Junction, or a Yesterdog. Which do you choose?

I would choose Rose's caramel corn.



Besides the great caramel corn, I would also be able to soak up the beautiful setting of Rose's overlooking Reeds Lake.

What was your path from East Grand Rapids to where you are now in life?

After graduating from EGR, I enrolled at the U of M in 1974 and attended Michigan on a football scholarship. After graduation, I was drafted by the New York Jets in 1979. After two years of their injured reserve, I decided to retire from football and go to work. I entered the insurance business in Ann Arbor and owned and operated my agency for 40 years. I retired in September, 2021 and now fill my time traveling with my wife of 44 years, Sheri, and helping with different charities in the Washtenaw County area.

What specific thing did you learn in East that has enabled you to be successful?

I learned how to meet new people in a new school and city and how networking with people from all walks of life can enhance your success.

What were you like in school?

I was an above average student and loved athletics and competing in my sports.

Did you have a favorite teacher or class?

My favorite teacher was probably George Barchesi who was also my football coach. He taught Marriage and Family and Government and made them both excellent classes.

If you had to choose one moment in one location to serve as the signature moment of your East school experience, what would it be?

Well, we were undefeated in football both the years I was there and I was also able to win a state championship in wrestling my senior year.

What do you know now that you wish you'd known then?

How fast life goes and how precious your friends and family are along the way.

Do you stay in touch with many people from East Grand Rapids?

Yes, quite a few. They are lifetime friendships that are very special to me and we are getting ready to come together for our 50th class reunion this coming September.

What advice do you have for young East alums who are just starting out?

Work hard, have fun and take care of your family. Keep all your options open and stay positive in all that you do and be thankful for all your blessings. Also, remember to try to help the less fortunate in your community.

Who else would you like us to have a virtual cup of coffee with?

Brian Caukin EGR class of 1974.

Bonus question: What are you glad we didn't ask you about?

Can't really think of anything right now.

To see more Virtual Cup of Coffee alumni interviews, visit the [Alumni Profiles page](#) on our website.

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SATURDAY | 7-11PM  
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