



Is there a Doctor in the House?

Hundreds of Columbus Public Schools graduates have found rewarding careers in health care, and some have gone on to become doctors.



The Anchor

2004



"Columbus High School really was a great place to go to school and learn"

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2023

Linking the Past, Present and Future



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Past, Present, Future

On The Cover: (2004) Members of the Class of 1996 pose for a photo following their Alumni Basketball Tournament win. Teammates were front row from left: Dirk Bargen, Mike Hlava, Andy White, Troy Watchorn and Dan Kolder. Back row from left: Cory Hall, Jason Sutton, Erick McHugh, Seth Gutz and Nate Blessen.
(2023) U.S. Congressman Mike Flood takes questions from students in the Health Career Pathways program during a late August tour of Columbus High School.

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The Columbus Public Schools Alumni Association wants to help link the past, present and future alumni and students by keeping in touch. Check out our pages for an easy way to stay connected daily.



Athletic Hall of Fame to induct class of '24

Congratulations to the following Athletic Hall of Fame Nominees who will be inducted Fall 2024.

Coaches:

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Meritorious:

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 (this was prior to State Tournament)
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Is there a DOCTOR in the HOUSE?

Hundreds of Columbus Public Schools graduates have found rewarding careers in health care, and some have gone on to become doctors. Here's an update on some of those graduates – and what they're doing now.

Amy (Busteed) Blaser – CHS Class of 1988

RON ERNST, MD Class of 1974

Back in high school, Ernst loved participating in sports such as football, basketball and golf—but he also knew he was interested in the sciences. So, when a medical organization came to Columbus High School to talk to students about opportunities in health care and a general surgeon spoke, Ernst was mesmerized.



"I thought, this was what I was going to do," he said.

It was no wonder Ernst wanted to be a surgeon – his two favorite classes at CHS were chemistry with Mr. Dickson and calculus with Mr. Nitsche.

After high school, he followed the pre-med program at University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and attended medical school at University of Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha.

He kept in contact with that surgeon he met in high school, and there was never any doubt in his mind that he wanted to go into general surgery.

Ernst came back to Columbus and practiced general surgery here for 34 years before retiring in 2021.

Now, he loves spending time with his wife Anne and three of his grandchildren who live in town. "I love Columbus," he said. "I believe it's a great place to spend your life."

When he was a student at CHS, he says his most influential teacher was Cathy Kwapnioski, who taught Spanish and English.

"She was the first teacher who talked to me like I was an adult," he said. "We would joke back and forth. She was just an awesome presence at the school."

After high school, he attended Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska, where he felt very comfortable in classes with students who had received their educations at private schools. "Columbus High School really was a great place to go to school and learn," he said.

He says he ended up in California because he "drove west until there wasn't humidity or bugs."

He has two children – a sophomore in high school and an eighth-grader. "We've raised them in southern California on Midwest values," he said.

CHAD TRAVERS, MD Class of 1998

Although Chad Travers now works as a cardiologist at Bryan Heart in Lincoln,



Nebraska, he still gets the chance to interact with people from his hometown: He comes here for clinic once a week.

"I have friends and former teachers who are patients," he said. "That's quite special. They've known me for a while and they trust me – and that is quite an honor."

At Columbus High School, Travers played football and basketball and served as a class officer and president of the National Honor Society. Although he knew

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DAN KOLDER, MD Class of 1996

Kolder likes to joke that he "took all the nerd classes" when he was at CHS – geometry, calculus, and double periods in biology, chemistry and physics.



His diligence paid off – he is now a plastic surgeon with his own practice in Santa Barbara, California.



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4 ●●● “We had some great opportunities in Columbus,” – Chad Travers, '98

From Page 3

he wanted to go into health care when he was in high school, he wasn't quite sure of his direction.

“We had some great opportunities in Columbus,” he said. “My senior year, I

spent time in the hospital and got to shadow physicians in all different specialties in medicine. It was an opportunity provided to us that was unparalleled in the area.

“The doctors who took care of me growing up who have been a mainstay of

the community are now referring patients to me for their cardiovascular needs,” he added. “The medical community has had such great stability over the years, which has been a wonderful blessing for the community.”

Time to mark you calendars! Upcoming Reunions

1964 - 60th Class Reunion

The Class of 1964 is planning a 60th Class Reunion in 2024. Icebreaker on Friday, August 9, 2024 at Maximus. Dinner on Saturday, August 10, 2024 at VFW

1956 - Meets at 10 a.m. the first Wed. of every month at Stack & Steak for morning coffee. All classmates welcome.

1958 - Class lunch the first Wednesday of every month at noon at Maximus. All classmates and spouses welcome.

1959 - Meets the second Thursday quarterly (January, April, July and October) at Stack n' Steak at 11:30 a.m. for lunch and conversation. Classmates and spouses are welcome.

1966 - Meets the 2nd Wednesday of every other month (always on odd months) at the Pizza Ranch at 11:30 a.m.

Let us help you plan your reunion

Contact: Jen Augustin
402-563-7000 ext. 13033
AugustinJ@discoverers.org

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- Discount mailing rates
- Tours of CHS and CMS
- Tips on planning reunions

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Come celebrate in person!
Friday, December 1
5:00 - 7:00 p.m.

Drive-through Columbus High School's (3434 Discoverer Dr.) front entrance circle drive for an opportunity to see to Santa Claus and the colorful lighted anchor for the holiday season. Receive a complimentary gift as supplies last!

Strategic Planning and Winter Weather 5

A message to our CPS Alumni family from Superintendent Dr. Troy Loeffelholz

In the past month, the Columbus Public Schools Board of Education has approved CPS to go into contract with JNW Consultants out of Scottsbluff and Lincoln to help guide our school district in developing our next five year strategic plan. The district is long overdue in developing a new plan.

The past three years have been historical due to the pandemic.

There is urgency in getting our practices and procedures back to normal. You may ask yourself the question, does the district really rely on the strategic plan in decisions they make? The answer is, yes.

Some of the things that were accomplished but not limited to from our last strategic plan include counselors at each elementary school and at each grade level in the middle school and high school, social workers, instructional coaches,

Licensed Mental Health Practitioners, Kramer Early Childhood Center, air conditioning in our gymnasiums, STEM Academy, learning goals and proficiency scales, well managed classroom, and new locks on all doors in the district.

It is imperative that we continue to look to the future and continue to make decisions with our alumni as many of you are also parents, community leaders within our district.

We also plan on engaging students in our schools as to what our priorities need to be.

We will begin this conversation with the consultants on December 15th.

On January 3rd we will be asking our staff to take part in one of many discussions to brainstorm and think about what CPS looks like in the year 2030.

By the same token, we are counting on alumni, parents, and community members to be engaged in this process.

Our school district is a direct reflection of our community while still holding the traditions of past generations and graduating classes.



Community members visit Kramer Early Childhood Center during an open house earlier this year. (Below) Columbus High School teacher Ron Haefner discusses an autos project with a student.



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Columbus Public Schools superintendent Dr. Troy Loeffelholz sits with Riley Scott of KLIR radio in Comlumbus to discuss the 2023 bond issue earlier this year. "If you are asked to be part of this discussion please jump at the opportunity to participate and bring another alumnus of Columbus Public Schools to the table," Loeffelholz said.

'The most important thing we can do as a school district is listen'

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We are a small sample of our greater community with our diversity, poverty, and blue collar work ethic. The most important thing we can do as a school district is listen.

Our community of stakeholders are who we serve and we need to keep reminding ourselves that we work in their best interest.

If you are asked to be part of this discussion please jump at the opportunity to participate and bring another alumnus of Columbus Public Schools to the table.

I believe we can use the past, present, and future Discoverers to shape the direction of our school district for the future that lies ahead and want for our student body.

Sincerely,
Dr. Loeffelholz

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YOUNG CLASS OF '99



MEGAN (WEMHOFF)
GASTON CLASS OF '16



BRIDGET (DONOGHUE)
RUNQUIST CLASS OF '05

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JOIN US AND MEET ALUM WHO HAVE RETURNED TO CPS!