



# Columbus Public Schools

# Alumni News



Spring 2014

## Teachers of the Year

**Jessica Kuehler**  
CPS Foundation Director

## Employee of the Year

**Jessica Kuehler**  
CPS Foundation Director

Ron Haefner, automotive technology teacher at Columbus High School, is not a teacher who lives for 3:35, and it has paid off for his students in a big way. Described as one of the finest educators in the state, he is known throughout Nebraska for his knowledge and expertise.

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Shelly DeWispelare, special education resource para educator at Emerson Elementary School, wears many hats. During the day, she works with some of the most struggling learners.

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## Voters approve new high school

**Dr. Troy Loeffelholz**  
CPS Superintendent

On behalf of CPS, thank you to those who worked tirelessly on this bond campaign and the entire community for investing in our students, teachers and community well into the future. For more than two years, the district has been seeking voters' permission for what they would support. We have asked the community several times for a solution. The solution that was voted on is one that was supported by 60 percent of those who voted.

Now the work will begin. With the approval of the \$49.9 million bond issue, plans must be started on the design of the new high school at the Discoverer Addition located on 33<sup>rd</sup> Avenue between 38th Street and the Lost Creek Parkway. A timeline is being developed to hire a Construction Manager at Risk firm to carry out this project. We plan on having that group on board by the July board meeting. Other important dates for a projected timeline include:

- Schematic Design – June 1 – July 31  
School Board Review & Approval – August 1 - 14
- Design Development – August 15 – September 3  
School Board Review & Approval – October 1 - 15
- Construction Documents – October 16 – Jan. 28, 2015  
School Board Review & Approval – February 1 - 15
- Bidding – January 30 – February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2015
- Construction Begins – March 2015
- Construction Complete – Fall 2016

The goal of the project is to send out a bid package for site dirt work in August. The district would like to be moving dirt for a building pad by November if the project is to remain on its timetable. With a good fall and spring, our best hope is construction will begin in the spring of 2015. The new high school

could be open by the fall of 2016.

The school district has been given a guaranteed maximum price for constructing the building from the architect. The administration and board visited two high schools, Elkhorn South and Aberdeen High School in Aberdeen, SD. Next, teaching staff and administration will go to Ankeny, IA and to Elkhorn South to look at their facilities and programs to see how closely they match up to what CPS has to offer.

We are doing this as part of the project to reduce the cost of architectural fees. It is determined that the district could save up to \$1.5 million in those fees by using a site-adapt model of design.

Next comes the fun part for our staff. They get to have input and tweaking privileges with the design that works best for students. The building is anticipated to be 260,000 square feet, which will accommodate 1,400 students. Past enrollment numbers would indicate that this building will handle student growth for the next two to three decades. The design is enough for all teaching staff to have their own room with the flexibility of nine additional classrooms.

The new building will also allow for the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) program to be expanded. The district has been applying for grant dollars to help fund the creation of a STEM Academy. This program will focus on promoting careers in the science, technology, engineering and math fields through programs such as robotics, electronics and mechatronics, engineering, automotive, construction, and manufacturing.

We have been creating strong community partnerships that we hope will assist us in the design of the facility as well as help with procuring equipment for the students.

The new high school will include a 750 seat auditorium and

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# Percussion ensemble takes top prize

Talent, skill, perseverance and dedication describe the CHS Winter Percussion Ensemble.

The ensemble entered the Heartland Winter Arts Alliance Championship seeded third and finished in first place. CHS competes in the Scholastic Marching category with units from Thomas Jefferson High School, Creston, Glenwood, Sioux City West, Norris, Beatrice, Omaha South and Millard North.

"We ended up changing our entire uniform," CHS senior Sam Beisner said about the difference from the final performance and others throughout the year.

Senior Cameron Pospisil agreed.

"The uniform we had before didn't fit with our show," he said.

In four other performances, Creston High School in Creston IA took home first place but not this time.

Director Jeff Peabody said they learned from the other four years of competing at the competition that the show needs to make a connection with the audience.

"This year the show is about phobias," Peabody said. "The visual design we were doing didn't work. It took a long time to figure out how to communicate that to the audience."

By adding the shiny masks for the battery and morph mask, based on the character Slender, for the front of the ensemble the visual became clear.

The students have learned a lot from this year's competition.

"Although winning the championship felt great, these students learned more about cooperation and putting the needs of the group ahead of themselves," he said. "They have been true examples of the Discoverer Way as they strove to find something greater than themselves."

CHS started the Winter Percussion Ensemble four years ago. Peabody said the first year they had no idea what they were doing but, they did take first in the HWAA Championship.

Peabody said the percussion ensemble was started as a school enrichment program for band. He said in 2011, he had no intention of competing in the HWAA Championship.

He said the group was more like a club than a school activity, so there is no funding to compete. Peabody told the kids they would have to cover the cost to compete on their own and they did.

Next, they needed to find a tarp and some music to perform.

A person from Bellevue offered to help write the drill for the performance. Peabody also held practices at weird hours like early in the morning or late at night.



**WINNING PERFORMANCE** - The CHS Winter Percussion Ensemble competing at the Heartland Winter Arts Alliance Championship. Courtesy photo from George Gasper at Kelly Day Photos.

"I didn't want to do it that first year," he said. "I made it as difficult as possible."

Peabody said he is still not sure how they won that first year.

Several of the seniors were in the ensemble when they won in 2011.

"We just came in and gave it our best shot," senior Brynton Loeffelholz said about the first year. "Everyone has gotten a lot better (in the past three years)."

Students must audition for a spot every year, and many often change what they play.

Senior Brandon Perkins started off playing the trumpet in the band and switched to drums.

"I like the challenge," he said about the enjoyment he gets from playing the drums.

Since the ensemble is for those who want to participate, they give their all, Peabody said.

"They work very hard," he said. "We don't just go out there and bang around on the drums. They want to prove it takes talent and skills. A lot of people come in and say they play the drums, but they are not percussionists. These people are percussionists."

Senior Garrett Hahn said he tried out because he enjoys playing and being around his friends.

Pospisil agreed.

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# Meet the Frasers

## Mary Fraser Meints

**Year Graduated:** 1974

**Favorite Class/Teacher:** Spanish with Sandy Sypherd. Ms. Sypherd made learning the language and the culture, including the food, fun. Several years after graduation, I went, as an adult sponsor, to Mexico with Ms. Sypherd and her Spanish class.

### Most Memorable High School

**Experience:** I enjoyed being in marching band and concert band. We started practice at 7 a.m. or so and then continued to practice through first period. I was lucky we lived two blocks from school for those early practices! Unlike Jenny's band class, which went to the Holiday Bowl in San Diego, we went to Pershing Auditorium in Lincoln for state marching contests! Wearing wool uniforms in summer parades was fun! I enjoyed being in band with Jeff—he played drums, and I played the clarinet.

### What Would You Change If You Had To Do High School Over Again?

I would have been involved in student council and debate. As an adult, I am very involved in legislation and provoking systems changes.

### Where Do You Live Now? Omaha

### What Are You Doing (family,etc):

I am the Executive Director of Youth Emergency Services (YES) which empowers at-risk and homeless youth to become self-sufficient. On any given night, there are over 300 young people who don't have a place to live in Omaha. We have a variety of services, including housing; to help young people get back on track. I have worked with at-risk youth for most of my career. It provides me great satisfaction to make a difference.

I have been married to Ray Meints for 30 years. He is a Senior Videographer and Editor at Nebraska Educational Telecommunications. He is a great storyteller and volunteers to create videos, which share the stories of the youth my agency serves and raise awareness in the community.

Our parents moved to Omaha last year, so for the first time since 1963, there are no members of this Fraser family living in Columbus. It is wonderful to be able to spend more time with them. I am involved in two women's organizations and serve on the Church Council. I enjoy spending time with family and friends.

## Jeff Fraser

**Year Graduated:** 1975

**Favorite Class/Teacher:** Mr. Alan Griffiths for physics and Mr. Jack Young for biology although I know I drove Mr. Young to frustration.

### Most Memorable High School

### Experience:

Playing chess with Mike Volnek most every lunch period. He was so good that we got tired of playing the normal way and played a variation where you tried to have your pieces taken. Even in that I was defeated consistently.

### What Would You Change If You Had To Do High School Over Again?

I would have gone out for basketball.

### Where Do You Live Now? Lincoln

### What Are You Doing (family,etc):

I have been married to Anna since 1982. I am a family medicine doctor. Anna is a school nurse. We have 3 children. Michelle is an RN at the Medical Center in Omaha and her husband, Jake, is a medical and PhD student at the Medical Center in Omaha. They have a daughter Mikaela. Christina is married to Andrew and she works for Hudl, and they have a puppy named Emmy. Scott is a pre-med student and has a dog named Bear.

## Rodney Fraser

**Year Graduated:** 1977

**Favorite Class/Teacher:** History/ Gordon Steinbrook

### Most Memorable High

**School Experience:** In 1975 when I was at my locker at the end of the day my brother, Jeff, came up to me and told me that our grandpa had died.

**What would you change if you had to do high school all over again:** I would take Spanish.

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# CHS Percussion

## From Page 2

"It's nice being around people with a similar interest," he said.

Currently the ensemble is funded through a Superintendent's Grant, donations from the Band Boosters and by dues paid by the students. Peabody said he would like to do more competition on a higher level but funding is challenging.

If you would like to help the winter percussion ensemble to be able to go to competitions in Denver, Minneapolis, the national one in Dayton OH or other ones, please contact Jessica Kuehler at [kuehlerj@discoverers.org](mailto:kuehlerj@discoverers.org) or call 402-563-7000 ext. 1103

Peabody also wanted to thank Michael Klee, who helped direct the ensemble and Teresa Ghormley for composing the visual design.

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# New School

## From front page

1,800 seat gym that could be expanded to 2,500.

There will also be 1,000 parking spaces as well as a track and practices fields.

Once the new high school is finished, the middle school students will move into the current high school. Fifth grade students will also move up to the middle school once the configurations are in place for their attendance. Fifth and sixth grade middle school students will be housed on the first floor in small learning communities. The seventh and eighth will occupy classroom spaces on the second floor.

This transition will be a 3-year plan to make the high school more program ready for middle school education. There will not need to be any immediate remodeling done to the high school

in order for middle school students to move in. The district is currently working on a timetable of projects once the new high school is completed.

Along with the move of fifth graders to the middle school, the district will be freeing up 13-15 classrooms at the elementary level to help alleviate growing attendance issues.

The 1965-1989 additions of the current middle school will house the preschool program, which will also increase from four classrooms to eight and eventually, the administrative offices.

Thanks to the support of the patrons, CPS should be able to meet the needs of the students for many years to come. Please continue to access <http://growcps.com> to monitor the progress of our facility. We will periodically be placing updates on the website for the community

“

“We both love the strong community atmosphere of Columbus.” - Scott & Gessica A.

“

“Our decision to return home has been the most important decision we have made, and a decision we do not regret.” - John & Kristie B.

“

We both thoroughly enjoy being back in the community where we grew up and getting to spend more time with family.” - Adam & Nikki B.

Join the conversation... come home to Columbus!

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## Columbus Alumni Association

Please use this form for address corrections or changes, what's new information, or if you wish to pay dues.

First Name \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name \_\_\_\_\_ Class of \_\_\_\_\_  
(Please include maiden if applicable.)

Spouse \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name \_\_\_\_\_ Class of \_\_\_\_\_

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Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

What's New (job, degrees, comments, suggestions etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

**I/we would like to become an annual member(s) for the year 2014.**

\_\_\_\_\_ Annual Single \$10

\_\_\_\_\_ Annual Couple \$15

or

**I/we would like to become a lifetime member(s).**

\_\_\_\_\_ Lifetime Single \$200

\_\_\_\_\_ Lifetime Couple \$300

**Return to:** Columbus Alumni Association \* 2508 27 St. \* PO Box 947 \* Columbus, NE 68602-0947



# Fraser Family

From page 3

I could speak it to my wife who was a missionary kid in Latin America.

**Where do you live now?** Olathe, Kansas

**What are you doing (family, etc.)?** Working at Burns & McDonnell, watching my daughter Beth (13) play softball, listening to my son Luke (15) play the piano, and helping my wife get the kids to activities.

## Bryan Fraser

**Year Graduated:** 1979

**Favorite Class/Teacher:** I go back to Jr. High on this one. Mr. Duranski was my favorite teacher and coach. He taught me many life lessons in the classroom and on the court.

**Most Memorable High School Experience:** Playing basketball. It was my dream since I could remember. We were terrible, but I was with the best friends I could hope to be around, and despite how bad we were in basketball, we all became successful in life.

**What Would You Change If You Had To Do High School Over Again?** Work harder on the academics.

**Where Do You Live Now:** Elkhorn, NE

**What Are You Doing (family, etc.):** I am married to Julie (25 yrs in August), and we have 2 sons. Connor is a sophomore at Rockhurst University in KC, and Logan is a Plebe at the Naval Academy, in Annapolis, MD. I am a sales manager for CBSHOME Real Estate, and manage 50 agents in Bellevue, NE.

## Jenny Fraser Louis

**Year Graduated:** 1989

**Favorite Class/Teacher:** Jr. High – English/Ms. Haskell; Sr. High – English/Mr. Adams & Mr. Anderson.

**Most Memorable High School Experience:** There were so many! I guess if I had to choose one, it would be our band trip

to San Diego my senior year and being a part of the Holiday Bowl with so many amazing people! This was a trip filled with many great memories!

**What would you change if you had to do high school all over again?** I would take more time for my friends, and I would also apply myself more in certain classes I didn't really put much effort into.

**Where do you live now?** Omaha, Nebraska

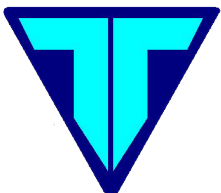
**What are you doing (family, etc.)?** I am a Legal Executive Assistant at Mutual of Omaha and am also a part-time Youth Ministries Director at Elkhorn Hills United Methodist Church. I love my job working with the youth. They inspire me and I feel very blessed to be a part of their faith journey. My significant other, Kip, and I are consolidating homes at the moment. I currently own a home in Midtown, and he's on a farm near Elkhorn. I love the peacefulness of the farmhouse, yet we're just a few blocks away from new schools, shopping, etc. The best of both worlds! I have a dog, Keely, whom I love to walk and spend time with. Kip and I enjoy going to the river at his family's cabin in Decatur, NE, going on fishing trips, going on mission trips with the youth, and spending time with family and friends.

## Columbus Alumni Association Board

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# Teacher of the Year

## From front page

Haefner was chosen as the 2014 Columbus Public Schools Educator of the Year.

Nominations praised his dedication to his students and his expertise in the field of automotives. "When you walk into his room, you find all of the students are engaged. He has taken students that have never performed maintenance on a vehicle and provided them with the tools for success."

In recognition of this honor, he received an engraved desk set from the Columbus Public Schools Foundation and \$1,000, sponsored by the Columbus United Federal Credit Union. Haefner will also be featured on the CPS Wall of Fame and will represent CPS in the contest for the Nebraska Department of Education's 2015 Teacher of the Year.

"He has single-handedly developed one of the best automotive programs in the nation, rivaled only by trade schools whose sole purpose is to teach automotives to their high school students." Year after year, CHS earns the right to compete in the state finals of the Ford AAA Student Auto Skills Challenge. They have won many championship titles and represented Nebraska at the national contest.

An employee with CPS since 1989, Haefner earned his Master's Degree in Industrial Education in 1991 from Fort Hays State University. His students' success has led to the local Ford dealership sponsoring a brand new car each year for the students to practice and earned him an invitation to the NASCAR Technical Institute twice. The reputation of the program he developed has also led to equipment donations including three wheel alignment systems. His students have had the opportunity to build a replica Cobra, which Shell Valley Classic Wheels took back when the students finished it, showing the company's trust in his abilities.



Haefner also incorporates life lessons into his classes. He has not only taught his students the basics of how vehicles work and how to perform basic maintenance, but has also taught them how to buy a vehicle and how dealerships and repair shops work. He teaches them how to diagnose and fix problems.

Haefner's talents go far beyond teaching. When looking for a replacement textbook for his consumer automotives class, he became impatient because of delays with a new book and started writing his own curriculum. He submitted a sample chapter and was offered a contract to write the new textbook. In total, he has written four books for automotive technology, one of which has been translated into Chinese and is being sold overseas. On top of this, he holds a patent for the Relay Puller, an automotive tool, and is working on a patent for a second tool used in the diagnosis of electrical wiring in an automobile.

Nominations were accepted from staff, administrators, parents, and students. Forty-two teachers in the district were considered for the award. Sherry Thompson, 2nd grade teacher at Lost Creek Elementary, was the runner-up and received \$500, also sponsored by the Columbus United Federal Credit Union.

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# Employee of the Year

## From Front Page

Holding students accountable for their learning, she accepts no excuses. She reteaches skills, helps students with guided practice, and helps apply strategies until the work is completed.

DeWispelare's commitment to the students led a committee of her peers to select her as the 2014 Columbus Public Schools Operations Employee of the Year. As the award recipient, DeWispelare received an engraved clock from the Columbus Public Schools Foundation and \$500, sponsored by Bob Markham (CHS Class of 1976) and his wife, Chris. She will also be featured on the CPS Wall of Fame in the district administration building.

An employee with CPS since 2005, DeWispelare also works as the director of the After School Program for her school. Referred to affectionately by the students as "Ms. D.", she is also passionate about teaching students the value of community service and learning about leadership and goal-setting. She brings special programs into the after school program and organizes a wide variety of community service projects for her students. This positive impact not only provides hands on learning for the students, but also exposes them to the benefits of being a good citizen, assisting others when they need help, and making the world a better place in which to live.

She has endless energy and does many extra things for the school. She is an active member of the Healthy Schools Commit-



tee; she decorates the school for special occasions, on her own time, with her own supplies; and she has helped the PTO with family activities, booths, carnivals, and by supervising children during their monthly meetings.

Nominations were accepted from CPS staff, administrators, parents, students, and the general public. Twenty-seven employees were considered for the award. Finalists also included Mike Olson, district supplies coordinator; and Sandy Krings, district accounts payable clerk.

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## ***Alumni Soccer***

CHS Alumni Soccer Tournament will be held Saturday, July 26th. There will be a men's and women's division. The cost is \$25 and includes a T-shirt. Please contact Heidi Field at [fieldh@discoverers.org](mailto:fieldh@discoverers.org) or [402-563-7050](tel:402-563-7050) with questions.

## ***Columbus Alumni Reunion Plans for 2014 & Beyond***

**1935** - Local class members meet every 4 months for lunch (Oct., Feb., Jun.). All '35 grads welcome.

**1937** - Meets 1st Wed., every 4 months (March, July, Nov.).

**1946** - '46 locals meet the first Friday of each month for lunch. All classmates welcome. Contact: Ruth Olson Babka, 402-564-5991 or Laura Eller Stuefer, 402-564-2057.

**1949** - Locals meet the first Monday of the month for breakfast at Picket Fence Cafe. All classmates welcome. Contact: Rosella (Blaser) Norris for info. 402-564-7498.

**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.

**1962** - Meets the first Friday of every month at 8:30 a.m. at Picket Fence. All classmates and spouses are welcome.

**1964** - 50th Class Reunion, Memorial weekend 2014. May 23 - ice-breaker at Husker Bar; May 24 - dinner at VFW; May 25- Picnic at V-ergutz Cabin. Notices will be sent. Contact Carloyn Hasek at [cf93924@windstream.net](mailto:cf93924@windstream.net).

**1965** -50th Class Reunion - Save the date. June 5-7, 2015. For more information or to make a suggestion, please look us up on Facebook at Columbus Nebraska High School Class of 1965. More information at a later date.

**1994** - 20th Class Reunion - July 18-20, 2014. July 18 - Whiskey Sands (Ramada Inn) open night if you are in town; July 19 - free day. 6:30 p.m. Maximus (need to RSVP); July 20- 11 a.m. high school tour. Contacts: Amy Modelski Rutsay at [Amymodelski@hotmail.com](mailto:Amymodelski@hotmail.com) or Janae Simard (Long) at [Janaelongs@yahoo.com](mailto:Janaelongs@yahoo.com).