

East High United Newsletter



Volume 1, Issue 1

November 5, 2006

Welcome to the first issue of the East High United Newsletter! East High United is a group for parents and other supporters of Madison's east side high school. One of the group's goals is to enhance communications to parents and other supporters about what's going on at East. Hence this newsletter. This newsletter is not an official publication of the Madison Metropolitan School District or Madison East High School and the views expressed in the articles in this newsletter are solely those of whatever East High United volunteer wrote the piece.

UW Honors East's Mary Klecker

On October 26, Mary Klecker – who has taught agricultural classes at East for the past 29 years – was feted as one of the three recipients of Honorary Recognition Awards from the University of Wisconsin – Madison College of Agricultural and Life Sciences. Honorary Recognition is the highest honor bestowed by the college and is awarded to individuals who have made outstanding contributions toward the development of agriculture, protection of natural resources and improvement of rural living.

Ms. Klecker said that the award and accompanying celebration, which included a reception at the D.C. Smith Greenhouse on campus, followed by a reception, dinner and awards presentation at Memorial Union's Great Hall, came as a complete surprise.

A group of educators and others familiar with Ms. Klecker's accomplishments nominated her for the award. One of the group members was former East

principal and current UW Regent Milton McPike, who had plenty of first-hand exposure to Ms. Klecker's classroom skills and extracurricular accomplishments. In nominating Ms. Klecker, Mr. McPike wrote, "Although Wisconsin has produced thousands of outstanding educators, Mary Klecker stands out as the number-one educator in the field of agriculture."

While it may not be too surprising to have a "number one educator" at East, it might seem unusual that East offers classes in agriculture. There's nary a farm in the East attendance area. So how did East come to have an agricultural department headed by an award-winning teacher?

Today's awards are built on years of accomplishments. The agriculture department has a long and proud tradition at East. Ms. Klecker has the unique distinction of being the only person hired to teach agriculture at East during the last half-century. Her immediate predecessor, Irv

Gerhardt, started teaching agriculture at East in 1948, when there might well have been farm kids enrolled. Mr. Gerhardt retired in 1976 and Ms. Klecker, then known as Ms. Jenkins, assumed the reins in 1977. She's been at East ever since.

While the traditions of the past are important, the agriculture courses offered at East have consistently evolved to meet the needs of today's students. Indeed, East's Agriculture Science and Natural Resources department provides courses that go well beyond what many of us city dwellers think of as "agriculture." The department's offerings include courses in Animal Science, Forestry-Wildlife-Environmental Science, Horticulture Science, as well as an introduction to agriculture class known as Leadership Skills, and Connections.

Ms. Klecker's courses can provide a springboard for students with a broad range of career



Mary Klecker

UW Honors Mary Klecker con't.

goals. Some students have gone on to earn advanced degrees in genetics and botany. For other students, interests piqued during their classes at East have carried over into two-year associate degrees from MATC in fields such as veterinary technician and farm business and production management. Since about a third of all the jobs in Dane County are related in some way to agriculture, animals and land use, there may be no better classes to take for an introduction to a broad range of future employment options. And for Madison students, the classes are only available at East. Students from the other three city high schools interested in these classes have to come to East to take them.

Students in Ms. Klecker's classes combine classroom learning with hands-on experience and volunteer activities. Horticulture classes, for example, are scheduled for fourth hour so that students can combine their lunch periods and their class hour to go out to the school's five-acre land lab near Kennedy Elementary School. The plot includes a prairie, an arboretum, and vegetable gardens tended by the students. When the weather prevents outdoor gardening, the students can turn to the school's greenhouse.

All agriculture students are enrolled in the National FFA Organization

(formerly known as Future Farmers of America). FFA provides a range of activities throughout the year that students can sample. Students are also kept busy during the World Dairy Expo in Madison during the fall. Some students help lead tours of the exhibition for area fourth grade students. Others help sell rib eye and steak sandwiches at the Expo for Wisconsin Cattlemen, or help serve ice cream for Surge Dairy. Environmental studies students assist on the event clean-up, helping to ensure that plastics and other non-biodegradable trash are kept out of the used bedding and other materials that make it back to area farms.

As Mr. McPike summed up in his nomination, Ms. Klecker "plans activities that open her students' world to the outdoor classrooms of the fields, greenhouses, zoos, stables and farms. She exposes urban youth to experiences they never dreamed of, and with expectations to get their hands and minds involved. She expands the traditional view of agriculture through scientific study, business education and technology." Decades of East students have been among the beneficiaries of the accomplishments for which she was honored and so it is fitting for the entire East community to join in congratulating Ms. Klecker on a well-deserved award.

"Although Wisconsin has produced thousands of outstanding educators, Mary Klecker stands out as the number-one educator in the field of agriculture."

Here's something interesting. A long-term study of the Chicago school system has identified five essential characteristics of good schools. They are:

- 1. Leadership, conceptualized broadly as being inclusive, with a focus on instruction and strategic orientation.*
- 2. Strong parent-community ties.*
- 3. Strong professional capacity of the faculty and staff*
- 4. A student-centered learning environment that presses toward academic achievement while displaying deep personal concern for students.*
- 5. Ambitious instruction in a curriculum that is aligned across classrooms. The quality of instruction is the single most direct factor that affects student learning.*

Learn more at http://ccsr.uchicago.edu/content/publications.php?pub_id=86

The Tower Times: Kind of like this, but written by students

Check out the new and improved Tower Times, East's student newspaper. The current issue is available on the East website.

Each monthly issue includes school news, sports, events, student opinions, reviews of shows/movies/businesses, and an in-depth section that takes a provocative look at a school issue. Past in-depths have brought an East student perspective to racism, a lack of student leadership, and relationships between East and other high schools. The Oc-

tober issue focused on the school district's new wellness policy. Among other dimensions of the issue, the paper explored what prohibiting the French Club's sales of Seroogy's chocolate bars says about the school district's respect for the decision-making skills of its high school students. The November issue reports on the recent lock-down at East and explores violence in schools.

The layout and publishing of the paper is now the responsibility of Mr.

Bremer's Yearbook/Publications II class. The content is produced by an ambitious and energetic editorial staff led by editor-in-chief Sam Livingston, and guided by advisor Ms. Torri-son. East High parent and local media maven Andy Moore has helped put the paper staff in touch with an impressive list of professional journalists in the Madison area who have generously offered assistance to the staff. Capital Times reporter Lee Sensenbrenner helped out with the October issue.

"The paper explored what prohibiting the French Club's sales of Seroogy's chocolate bars says about the school district's respect for the decision-making skills of its high school students."



Contraband

Like What You're Reading about East? Help Us Out

Did you see the article about East's Serigne Sarr that was recently in the Capital Times sports section? Serigne is a senior on the varsity soccer team and a practicing Muslim. The article focused on how Serigne dealt with fasting from sunup to sunrise during Ramadan while playing soccer, including three games on one day during a tournament in Appleton. It was a terrific article and highlighted one of East's many impressive student-athletes.

In response to an email thanking him for the article, Capital Times sports writer Dennis Semrau wrote, "The inspiration for the story came from a long-time reader of the Capital Times, who is the parent of a high school student-athlete. It was a great example of a cooperative effort between our readership and staff and what we can accomplish when we work together."

The parent in question is Alan Crossley. A few years ago, when East was going through a bit of a rough patch, Alan and a small group of other East parents got together to try to get the word out to the media about good things happening at East. They're still at it, and the article about Serigne is one example of how their efforts have paid off.

As Alan and the other members of their good news group know, working on better communications about and for East is not a passive exercise. But effective communication is one of the hallmarks of a good school. The newsletter you're reading is part of this effort. We're trying to use this newsletter to share more information about East with parents and other interested community members.

You can help. There's a lot going on at East, and many of the interesting stories don't get the attention they deserve. If you learn about an unusual achievement by a student or an underappreciated dimension of the school, let us know about it. We're particularly interested in activities and accomplishments that highlight the richness and diversity of the school and its students. Send us an email at easthighnews@yahoo.com and tell us what more people should know about East. We'll do our best to follow up and get the word out.

By the Numbers

Both the Madison Metropolitan School District and Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction websites include a wealth of statistics about city and state schools. The following tables break down the student bodies of the four Madison high schools by different demographic characteristics

MMSD High School Enrollment Information - 3rd Friday Counts for School Year 06-07
 (from MMSD Website - "District Statistics")

By Grade					
	9th	10th	11th	12th	Total
Memorial	538	542	511	496	2087
West	526	517	528	448	2019
East	409	472	472	452	1805
LaFollette	459	466	407	366	1698
	1932	1997	1918	1762	7609

By Special Education					
	Count		Percentage		Total
	Not Spec Ed	Spec Ed	Not Spec Ed	Spec Ed	
East	1373	432	76%	24%	1805
LaFollette	1311	387	77%	23%	1698
Memorial	1687	400	81%	19%	2087
West	1724	295	85%	15%	2019
	6095	1514	80%	20%	7609

By Income					
	Count		Percentage		Total
	Not Low Income	Low Income	Not Low Income	Low Income	
East	1020	785	57%	43%	1805
LaFollette	1074	624	63%	37%	1698
Memorial	1485	602	71%	29%	2087
West	1473	546	73%	27%	2019
	5052	2557	66%	34%	7609

By ELL					
	Count		Percentage		Total
	Not ELL	ELL	Not ELL	ELL	
East	1566	239	87%	13%	1805
West	1773	246	88%	12%	2019
Memorial	1874	213	90%	10%	2087
LaFollette	1526	172	90%	10%	1698
	6739	870	89%	11%	7609

By Ethnicity-Race											
	Count					Percentage					Total
	African American	Asian	Hispanic	Native American	White	African American	Asian	Hispanic	Native American	White	
East	404	206	166	13	1016	22%	11%	9%	1%	56%	1805
LaFollette	353	98	182	9	1056	21%	6%	11%	1%	62%	1698
Memorial	362	253	188	9	1275	17%	12%	9%	0%	61%	2087
West	285	242	220	12	1260	14%	12%	11%	1%	62%	2019
	1404	799	756	43	4607	18%	11%	10%	1%	61%	7609

East High United October Meeting Summary

East High United's second meeting of the school year took place on Thursday evening, October 12, in the LMC. About 25 parents joined Alan Harris, Bea Bonet, David Krause, and Richard Scott, to discuss how East might do a better job of reaching out to students and their families who may be new to the community and live in unsettled circumstances, or who may not have felt welcome at East in the past.

9th grade principal Bea Bonet briefly discussed her experience with a Hispanic parent group. Minority Services Coordinator Richard Scott talked about feedback he has received after meeting with the families of African-American students. The group discussed ideas for forging stronger connections and better communications with parents who may not have had positive prior experiences at East. There was a general sense that trust needed to be earned and that developing stronger relationships is a long-term and gradual undertaking that requires a sense of modesty and receptiveness on the part of those associated with the school.

When the meeting moved to a general discussion of school issues, the focus of attention turned to – surprise! – the school's new lunch policy. The change in the lunch schedule was designed in large part to reduce the level of

truancy among freshmen, a problem in recent years. The idea is to keep freshmen together and on the school grounds during the first lunch. This leaves the other lunch for the older three classes. Most of the questions were variations on the theme that second lunch was too crowded and students were unable to make it through lines with enough time left to eat. Mr. Harris acknowledged that many concerns have been raised about the change, and that he is trying to pin down the extent to which the school is serving more meals during second lunch this year than last year. He also mentioned some ideas for easing the congestion that were under consideration. Several questions and comments noted that the introduction of the school district's wellness policy – which for some reason mandates the unplugging of all beverage-dispensing vending machines during the school day – contributes to the longer cafeteria lines

Jill Jokela, who would be the president of EHU if the organization had such offices, provided some background information to the attendees on comparative demographics for East and the other three MMSD high schools. school by grade. The data is reproduced on page 5 of this newsletter.

Of the four Madison high schools, East has the

highest percentage of special ed students (24%), low income students (43%) and ELL students (13%). There was some discussion of the high percentage of special ed students. The category spans a range of disabilities, from students who need to be fed to those who only need some testing accommodations for their coursework. No study has explored the reasons for the relatively high numbers at East, but reasons suggested included the higher number of group homes in the East attendance area and the magnet effect that Madison schools in general have for parents with autistic children, given the quality of services that is available in the Madison area. Mr. Harris also mentioned that African-American students tend to be over-represented in Special Ed and that efforts were underway to explore and address the reasons for this disparity.

The meeting concluded with some more general observations on how the school year seemed to be going at East. There were comments that the physical improvements in the school

seem to be reflected in students' more positive attitude toward the school. The school appears to be an orderly place. Mr. Krause, Curriculum and Student Activities Principal, reported that there were varying degrees of involvement in Homecoming activities, but the events transpired with no fights or any obvious gang-related activities. (The meeting was held less than a week before the school lockdown on October 16. For more information on the lockdown, see the East High United website.) For what its worth, the Madison police officer assigned to the Homecoming dance complimented the school on the students' appearance and deportment.

The next EHU meeting is scheduled for Thursday, November 9 at 7 pm in the LMC. Recent events have prompted a change in topic to school safety. Consideration of high expectations and accountability for all students, the original topic for the meeting, has been bumped to next month.

How to Ace the ACTs



Claire Lynch at cross-country sectionals

45,000 Wisconsin students took the ACT college entrance exams last April and June. Eleven of them received a perfect score of 36. East senior Claire Lynch was one of the six Madison students in this elite company.

We talked to Claire about the test and East. Based on what she said, we've distilled her experience into seven tips for success. Following these rules does not guarantee the results that Claire achieved, but they should point East students in that direction.

Seven Rules for Success on the ACT:

1) **Take challenging courses.** Claire thought that she had a great string of teachers in her academic courses, beginning with Ms. Hotz and Mr. DuVair freshman year. Ms. Hotz inspired a love of history and Mr. DuVair was Mr. DuVair. Among the other memorable teachers she mentioned were Mr. Hoaglin in sophomore English and Ms. Chin last year in Calculus AB. The message here is that East can provide a curriculum that even the most talented students will find challenging – so sign up and

dig in. Claire also touted the benefits of East's diversity, which helps turn out well-rounded students who have been exposed to a broad range of perspectives.

2) **Read a lot.** Read, read, and read some more. There's probably no better preparation for standardized test-taking than tackling an ambitious list of quality books. Here are some of the books Claire read last summer: Ray Bradbury's [Fahrenheit 451](#), Kurt Vonnegut's [Slaughterhouse 5](#), Margaret Atwood's [Blind Assassin](#), Jeffrey Eugenides' [Middlesex](#), Geraldine Brooks' [March](#), J.M. Coetzee's [Disgrace](#), and Mistry Rohinton's [A Fine Balance](#).

3) **There's nothing wrong with a little television.** Claire is a loyal and devoted fan of *Survivor* and has also taken an interest in *Lost*. It's all a part of cultural literacy. You can't spend all your time reading quality literature – trashy TV has its place as well.

4) **Test preparation? Well, it can't hurt.** East offers classes in speed-reading and in taking standardized tests. Both can help students' performance on the ACTs and SATs. Claire made do without them. Other than taking the ACT one time previously, she did nothing special to prepare for the test.

5) **Take advantage of your opportunities.**

Claire did not know what she was going to do last summer before Guidance Advisor Kim Gary gave her an application form for the UW Medical School Research Apprentice Program. She applied and was one of about 35 students admitted. Claire attended the intensive seven-week program where she was mentored by Dr. Tracey Weigel, the chief of thoracic surgery at the UW Hospital. The program kindled Claire's interest both in attending the UW and in medical school.

6. **Join the cross-country team.** Claire has been a devoted member of the girls' cross-country team at East and has run varsity for the past 2 years. She's not alone. Of the five other Madison students who aced the ACT, two are on their school's cross-country team this year and a third previously competed. Does running make you smarter or is it just that smart kids like to run? Whatever, running on a team is a great way to foster discipline, stay in shape, relieve stress, clear the head, and enjoy the company of teammates. If running is out of the question, Claire also recommends the math-modeling club.

7. **Be real smart.** Claire didn't mention this one, but we're pretty sure it figures into her success.

Next EHU Meeting:

Thursday

November 9

7 p.m.

East L.M.C.

Topic:

School Safety

Pictures we like

After East's Tyrone Creech scored what turned out to be the game-winner in East's 1-0 victory over Monona Grove in a soccer sectional game on October 26, he celebrated with a Breese Stevens Leap. Wisconsin State Journal photographer Steve Apps caught the moment and his picture appeared in the State Journal the following morning. The State Journal has graciously granted us permission to reprint the picture here.



Upcoming events

Wednesday, November 8 – End of First Quarter

Wednesday, November 8 – Winter Sports Night – Margaret Williams Theatre (MWT) at 6:30

Thursday, November 9 – School gets out at 12:30

Thursday, November 9 – East High United meeting at 7:00 in LMC

Thursday, November 16 – School gets out at 12:30; Parent/Teacher Conferences in afternoon

Friday, November 17 – No School; Parent/Teacher Conferences all day

Friday, November 17 – Eastside Players present “Rehearsal for Murder” in MWT at 7:30

Saturday, November 18 – Performances of “Rehearsal for Murder” at 2:00 and 7:30

Monday, November 20 – Booster Club Meeting at 7:00 in LMC

Monday, December 4 – Band Concert at 7:30 in MWT