



Gathering Space

Design rendering by Gaines Group Architects

A “Family Room”

Our elementary school is thriving in our beautiful home. And yet, it is missing a “family room,” a space large enough for the whole school community to come together. The Gathering Space – an indoor/outdoor learning facility – will fill that need.

Gathering is the “heart” of EMES. Coming together is key to our curriculum and school philosophy. It nurtures cross-grade relationships, builds trust, creates leadership opportunities, and enables us to care for one another.

Thanks to a generous \$1 million challenge match from an alumni couple (met as of September 13!), we are closer to our \$2.5 million stretch goal including an endowed building fund. On September 20, we introduced the new addition

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formative developmental stage of middle schoolers. What sets my role apart is that I will still be teaching 50% of the time. This will allow me to connect with students on a more personal level and maintain a hands-on approach.

My goal for EMMS is to be a place where middle schoolers can connect with each other and find a sense of belonging. I share a passion with our teachers for project-based learning and developing a unique middle school identity. We plan to continue to take learning outside of the classroom to experience our wider community. The



WE GATHER
We recognize every student as a unique and gifted child of God with the opportunity to seek God and join in kingdom work.

to students, families, and some supporters. EMES parents invite all to join them as they strive to reach a goal of \$100,000 for finishes and furnishings. Planned gifts, such as gifts through wills and qualified charitable distribution from an IRA, can continue to be added to the endowed building fund.

For where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there among them. – Matthew 18:20 (NRSV)

EMMS teachers and administration have big goals for middle school this year! One goal is to help students further develop and practice these gifts of character: leadership, integrity, respect, empathy, and accountability. At EMMS, we don't do things alone. Our team of teachers and administrators work alongside amazing families to support student success.

We are thankful for Ms. Gascho's contributions as principal and eagerly anticipate the success of EMMS students under her guidance and alongside our gifted team of middle school teachers.



CALLING ALL VOLLEYBALL PLAYERS, COACHES, AND FANS!

Join us for an alumni volleyball match on Sat., Oct. 21, 2 p.m. Even years will take on odd years. All eras welcome!

Sign up to play, attend, or coach by registering at easternmennonite.org/homecoming

STOCK UP ON YOUR FLAMES WEAR TO SHOW YOUR SPIRIT!



Your order will be shipped directly to you.

easternmennonite.org/ems-logowear

Today is written by Trisha Blosser, director of advancement, and designed by Lindsey Kolb. Editorial support from Paul Leaman, head of school. Photos by EMS staff unless otherwise noted.

Send feedback to today@easternmennonite.org

Find past issues at easternmennonite.org/today

In admissions processes, Eastern Mennonite School does not discriminate on the basis of any race, color, handicap, national or ethnic origin, or religion, and admits students to all rights, privileges, programs and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school.

The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the school's non-discrimination policies, including its Title IX policy: Debbie Katz, high school counselor, 540-236-6022. For assistance related to Title IX or other civil rights laws, please contact OCR at OCR@ed.gov or 800-421-3481, TDD 800-877-8339.



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TODAY

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Fall 2023



Join us!

Oct. 12 & 24, 9-10 a.m. – Kindergarten Open House for parents

Oct. 20-21 – Homecoming
See back page

Nov. 3-4, 7 p.m. – High school theater, *24 Plays in 54 Minutes*, easternmennonite.org/tickets

Nov. 16, Jan. 16, Feb. 13, Mar. 28, Apr. 4, 8:15-9:45 a.m. – Visit dates for middle and high school prospective students. See easternmennonite.org/visit

Nov. 30, 7 p.m. – Selections from Handel's Messiah with Touring Choir, Concert Choir, and Middle School Chorale

Dec. 12, 7 p.m. – High school instrumental Christmas concert

Feb. 29 - March 3 – High school musical, *Fiddler on the Roof*

May 3 – Fore the Flames Alumni Golf Tournament

Flames athletics schedules and scores: easternmennonite.org/athletics

News at easternmennonite.org/news



Erika Gascho inspires students in the classroom, building relationships as a teacher and now a principal too!

Erika Gascho Named Middle School Principal

Gascho's appointment strengthens our supportive and nurturing environment for middle school students during a time of significant change and growth, both physically and emotionally. We recently caught up with Erika as she shared some of her educational philosophy.



never faded and only grew stronger as I majored in education in college, and then as a special education teacher. I discovered that my passion is to make school a place where students want to be by striving to address their needs. We try to meet students where they are.

But why middle school? During my first four years as a fifth-grade teacher at EMES, I learned that this age group is full of critical thinkers who ask hard questions and engage in deep conversations, while still enjoying recess and being fun-loving people. As the new principal at EMMS, I am thrilled to continue engaging with the

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JOIN US FOR HOMECOMING!

OCT. 20-21, 2023

Chapel, picnic, and homecoming concert on Friday
Breakfast, volleyball, soccer, and building tours on Saturday
Reunions for classes ending in 3 and 8 all weekend

Register at the link below to help us prepare!
easternmennonite.org/homecoming

FOLLOW US:



EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

FAITH COMMUNITY

THE ARTS

CELEBRATING ALUMNI STORIES

EMS celebrates alumni stories to hear each others' journeys since high school and to be inspired by lives of service, professional contributions, Christian commitment, and community engagement. These alumni will be recognized and celebrated as part of Homecoming 2023 activities, Oct. 20 and 21.



Hannah DePoy '13
for her accomplishments in the medical field, particularly service to address the opioid crisis



Dave Mumaw '58
an EMHS science teacher of over 40 years



Dan Steller, Peter Fairfield, and David Wingfield '98
for their work with the Rosetta Stone Ojibwe language preservation project

Hannah DePoy '13

ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL JOURNEY

As early as I can remember, I dreamed of being a doctor. After EMHS, my family's West Virginia roots drew me to WVU's Honors College where I pursued a degree in Biology and minor in Sociology. I then attended Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine (VCOM). Currently, I am second year family medicine resident at Fairfax Family Practice in Fairfax, VA.

My mom shares that at three years old, I began writing my dad "prescriptions" after a surgery. I also owe much to my mom and grandmother. Their careers as an occupational therapist and nurse, respectively, allowed me to witness the joy and fulfillment that can

come in caring for others. These experiences taught me the importance of holistic primary care at an early age and continue to inspire me daily.

My awareness of the opioid crisis ultimately started at home. My dad, who had experienced a college football injury that set off a series of surgeries, was no stranger to chronic pain. This coincided with a national surge in the treatment of pain with prescription opioids. Though my dad's health journey was incredibly complex, the addictive qualities of his pain medications ripple throughout our family's story.

The Opioid Crisis

During college at WVU, momentum was just building to counter the State's surge in opioid related

deaths and I attended as many related talks as possible. In WV, it seemed no one was unaffected by the prescription drug crisis. However, I found that fewer of my peers in medical school had encountered the consequences of narcotics. Simultaneously, I found that many had experienced substance use disorder (SUD) through loved ones. This opened conversations about combating the opioid epidemic, and how to reduce stigma and holistically care for individuals experiencing SUD.

Fortunately, the Student Osteopathic Medical Association had started an Overdose Prevention Task Force, and I was able to start a satellite group. We began an initiative that resulted in medical school classes becoming trained to use naloxone (a medication that counteracts opioid overdose)

David Mumaw '58

Mr. Mumaw taught Biology and other sciences at EMHS in 1962, and from 1965-2002. His teaching inspired countless students to pursue their interest in science, especially in biology and medicine.

I enjoyed my time at EMHS – excellent teachers, good friends, and a spiritual emphasis. Because of the high school-college connection, some of my teachers were college professors. Vivian Beachy and Grace Lafever stand out. A Latin course with college professor Dorothy Kemrner was beneficial to my work in biology, but extremely hard. I knew many of my good friends since elementary school, like John Stall. We found hawks, owls, and crows together. The spiritual emphasis included chapel, as well as some prayer in class.

In 1962, I started teaching at EMHS, and I promised president John R. Mumaw that I'd fill in one year before leaving for my masters. In that year, I discovered

that I loved teaching. I then went to Virginia Tech for my masters of science in Wildlife Management with a research focus (and later received my teaching license from James Madison University). My wife Eleanor Eby '58 Mumaw and I wanted to raise our family in the Shenandoah Valley. We appreciated the Christian atmosphere at EMHS, and turned down other offers so I could return to EMHS in 1965 as science teacher. In 1969, I started teaching driver's education.

Experiential outdoor learning has always been important to me. I lead many mini-terms [now e-terms] with students. We hiked the Appalachian Trail, climbed Pikes Peak three times, and snorkeled in the coral reefs in Florida. We took flying lessons at Shenandoah Regional Airport (I hold a pilot's license), conducted wildlife research on Shenandoah Mountain, and learned taxidermy. The opportunity for sabbaticals to explore other biological environ-



Pike's Peak experiential learning trip, 1980

ments appealed to me, and I was able to travel to Alaska, Australia, Peru, and Arizona.

I always enjoyed the biology of my environment. My father Homer Mumaw was a biologist, scientist, taxidermist, and mentor. We lived on a farm, and I took care of cows, sheep, horses, chickens, pigeons, rabbits, and even foxes, so I had first-hand experience with many different types of animals. College teachers like D. Ralph Hostetter and Kenton Brubaker also inspired me when I was a biology major, and I had the opportunity to assist them.

After retiring from EMS, Eleanor and I have traveled to Europe,

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"My greatest joy comes in spending time with my partner, Sam, our pups, June and Plum, and our family and friends."

Moreover, I hope that connections fostered at EMS be accompanied by deep, loving acceptance and celebration of the varied experiences that we each embody.

Dan Steller, Peter Fairfield, and David Wingfield '98

During high school, Dan Steller, David Wingfield, and Peter Fairfield were all in the same graduating class of '98. Now, the three "Bro's" are part of a team racing against time to help preserve the Ojibwe language.

The '98 grads' work is currently guided by members of the Mille Lacs Band of the Ojibwe Nation, a federally recognized American Indian tribal government whose members have lived for many generations in the east-central Minnesota region. Peter, Dan, and David are now part of a large group of people – both within Rosetta Stone and the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe – who are working hard to make this language initiative happen.

ENDANGERED LANGUAGE PROGRAM

In 2018 Ojibwe tribal leaders from the Mille Lacs Band, based in Minnesota, invited Rosetta

Stone to team up with the Aanjibi-maadizing Language Preservation Initiative. The Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe wanted to create an online Ojibwe Language Learning program that tribal members could access on their own time from anywhere. They wanted to record for posterity the knowledge and voices of their tribal elders who were native Ojibwe speakers while they still had the opportunity.

Anton Treuer, professor of Ojibwe at Bemidji (Minn.) State University says, "When you help to preserve a language, you help to



Dan Steller



Peter Fairfield



David Wingfield

preserve a culture. All told, when it's done, I think Rosetta Stone will be a historic tool... to go across time and space and preserve and teach. It's not a 'silver bullet,' but it will help to teach Ojibwe speakers for hundreds of years to come."

THE EMHS TRIO

In 1998, Peter, Dan, and David could not have imagined that 25 years after graduation they would still be in Harrisonburg, visiting with EMHS administrators outside the Rosetta Stone office building, reflecting on their shared professional endeavors.

Peter's father, John, helped to found Rosetta Stone (okay, maybe Peter could have imagined that future) — the language-learning software initially sold in CD-ROM format in big yellow boxes — in the early 1990s. Peter remembers his first paying job scrubbing toilets for the company. After earning a degree in Math from Goshen College in 2002, he returned to the company, and has been lead developer since 2007.

After University, David applied for a photo assistant job at Rosetta Stone. David didn't get that job, it went to fellow EMHS Alum Steve Witmer, but David was hired as an assistant to the new photo assistant Steve and over time moved into producer, photography, and management roles.

Dan joined the Rosetta Stone team as a contract photographer from L.A., where he was living after graduating from the Los Angeles Film Studies Center. Dan and Bridget eventually relocated to Harrisonburg in 2010 and continued raising possible future

EMS Alums. Dan has been a senior creative producer since 2013.

For Dan and Bridget, and also for Peter, it's surreal to find themselves as parents of current EMS kids. "Not to be cheugy, but this community is boots, no cap." says Dan, referring to the school and area. This hip expression means: "Sincerely, this community is awesome, no lie."



Dave Mumaw, Algonquin Provincial Park, 1989

Photo courtesy of Dave Mumaw

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the Panama Canal, and Arizona. I mowed the athletic fields for five years, and enjoyed watching grandchildren, Rebekah Hertzler '13 Stoner and Luke Hertzler '16, attend and graduate from EMHS.

Now, I mentor teenagers from families at church and work with Ukrainian refugees (finding housing, furniture, cars, jobs etc). I enjoy hunting, fishing, camping, and spending time with grandchildren.

I hope EMHS maintains a Christian atmosphere, including chapels with faculty and outside speakers. I would also like to see EMHS continue to honor academic excellence, and encourage hands-on subjects like shop and art.