



AUTOGRAPH

THE OFFICIAL INDIAN HILL SCHOOL DISTRICT ALUMNI MAGAZINE

SPRING
2025

McDONALD'S
CEO &
INDIAN HILL
ALUM
CHRIS
KEMPCZINSKI

INDIAN HILL
HIGH SCHOOL
STUDENT
MIA SULFSTED

THREE
QUESTIONS

THEIR DREAM
OUR IH
PROMISE
"C" SUITE
LESSONS ON
LEADERSHIP



A MESSAGE FROM CEO/SUPERINTENDENT KIRK KOENNECKE

WELCOME HOME



An autograph is a mark of distinction. It's profoundly unique and incredibly personal. As alumni of the Indian Hill School District, you have left your own signature mark on our community. Whether you contributed to phenomenal academic feats, broke records as an athlete, or serve our community today, you have built a strong foundation for our students and help them achieve their dreams.

Welcome to the first issue of AUTOGRAPH—our debut of a new way to celebrate you, our alumni, and share your story with our community.

You're accomplished, generous, and outstanding role models for our children (and incredibly easy to celebrate, might I add). You're trailblazers in your lines of work and in partnership with our district as we develop unparalleled opportunities for our students.

Welcome Home.

In service to our children,

Kirk Koennecke
CEO/Superintendent
Indian Hill School District

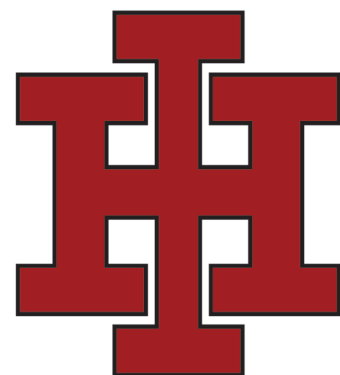


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OFFICE HOURS: BEN COOK

Pianist, professor credits Indian Hill teachers and arts programs for the life and career he has today



Around the age of five, Ben Cook began playing the piano. His grandmother, a renowned composer of Jewish children’s music, was the one who taught him to play.

With this firm foundation beneath him, Cook was able to flourish in music courses at Indian Hill under exemplary teachers like Joe Gaudio and Steve Strider.

“Mr. Gaudio, who was a renowned jazz tenor saxophonist, was a great inspiration for me and fostered my development, eventually exposing me

to the world of jazz, mostly on the piano. I continued in the band program through middle school and joined the middle school jazz ensemble as pianist in sixth or seventh grade. It was there that I first began to develop the skills to play piano professionally.”

In high school concert band, Gaudio and Strider continued challenging Cook to grow and provided him with opportunities to learn jazz.

At the end of his senior year in 1988, Cook had his first professional gig playing in a show band at Kings Island.

Over the years, Cook has traveled across the United States and Japan performing as a pianist with the Boston Pops Orchestra.

Now, he’s is an associate professor at Berklee College of Music, carrying on the gift of teaching that he received from his grandmother and Indian Hill faculty.

“Without the dedication of those Indian Hill teachers and the arts programs they created, I would certainly not have the life and career I have today,” Cook said.

CANDID CONVERSATION WITH ANNA PODOJIL

Four-time All-American sits down with IHHS Student Athlete Connor Wilkes



In 2017, Anna Podojil led her Braves soccer team to their first Ohio Division II state title, scoring 38 of what would become a record breaking 112 career goals.

When Podojil graduated in 2019, it was clear that her soccer career was just getting started.

She went on to play for the University of Arkansas, where she was SEC Freshman of the Year (2019), SEC Forward of the Year (2020), and a Four-time All American.

In January 2024, she was the 35th overall pick in the National Women’s Soccer League draft, selected by Washington Spirit.

Podojil came back to The Hill for a quick Q&A with Connor Wilkes, IHHS ’25, to talk what being a Brave and leadership means to her.

Wilkes is also an All-American who led the Indian Hill mens soccer team through an undefeated season as senior captain.

He has an incredibly promising future ahead of him—in January, Wilkes committed to furthering his academic and soccer career at Johns Hopkins University.

Connor Wilkes (CW): What does leadership mean to you?

Anna Podojil (AP): Being a good leader is just showing up every day, being yourself and just being a good teammate. You’re going to gain so much respect ... being respectful to your coaches, all of your friends, and then showing those same skills off the field and in the classroom.

CW: What does being a Brave mean to you?

AP: I feel so proud to be a Brave. Obviously now coming back, we have all these new facilities. I’m just super proud of how much they pour into this school, all of the students, all of the athletes... we have a great community... I think I’ve created such long lasting relationships at this school which I think is really special.



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A LIFE FULL OF GIVING

IHHS 1974 grad Dr. Carter Randolph gives to the community that shaped him



In addition to being President, Chief Investment Officer at The Randolph Company, a wealth management firm, Dr. Carter Randolph is extremely involved with the community.

He serves on multiple boards, including the Greenacres Foundation, an education-based non-profit located within Indian Hill.

The Greenacres Foundation and the Indian Hill School District partnered in the 2017-2018 school year.

That's when two students produced a documentary on a Greenacres farm restoration project that went up for two awards.

The foundation was so impressed by what the students created that Dr. Randolph, on behalf of the foundation, personally delivered a PTZ Robotic Camera and accessories for students involved with

the Indian Hill Television Network (IHTN) to use.

It's clear that giving back is important for Dr. Randolph, and so is living each day like it's your last.

Unfortunately, there were students who passed away during Mr. Randolph's time at IHHS. Early on this gave him the perspective that each day is valuable and has a little sense of urgency.

Randolph notes that his time at Indian Hill as a student also taught him dissent and to challenge things you're told.

"The earth was flat and for 1,200 years and anyone who said otherwise was killed. This led me to never accept anything," Dr. Randolph said. "This was the greatest lesson of education—dissent to find the truth because today's truth is based on today's rose colored glasses and the shade of rose changes every day."

“ This was the greatest lesson of education—dissent to find the truth ”



PASSION TO PROFESSION

Alex Trott, IHHS '08, turned high school extracurriculars into a remarkable career

It's no secret that Alex Trott, Director, Insights at 84.51, is impacting the business world in extraordinary ways. The key thought leader and spokesperson was named a 2024 Woman of Excellence by the Path to Purchase Institute and was honored with the 2025 Young Brave Award from The Indian Hill Foundation.

The story of her success today starts with the opportunities she had as a student at Indian Hill.



Trott invested time in trying new experiences at IHHS. She took marketing classes and was involved with clubs like Mock Trial and DECA—all of which were eye opening opportunities, as both of her parents were healthcare professionals.

When Trott graduated and stepped onto campus at Miami University, she was asked to join its entrepreneurship program. She recalled liking DECA as an IHHS student, and because of that experience decided to pursue an entrepreneurship pathway.

Professors along the way turned into mentors, one of which encouraged her to apply for a job at the company she still works at today.

Ultimately Trott recognizes the value of mentors, and the impact they can have on your life personally and professionally. "You have to seek [mentors] out and earn their

respect," Trott said. "Once you do, once you find those valuable mentors ... they're kind of life long friends even when you do 'grow up.'"

Trott encourages students to take advantage of all the state-of-the-art opportunities Indian Hill has to offer, like the Indian Hill Entrepreneurs' Center that opened in September 2024. The Center allows students K-12 to gain hands-on business experience and have access to mentorship opportunities from business leaders.

"Think about what a career in business could look like because that could help you take next steps to define your college experience," Trott said.

“ You have to seek [mentors] and earn their respect... ”

SCAN HERE FOR ALEX'S INTERVIEW ON THE EDUHERO PODCAST



THREE QUESTIONS WITH CHRIS KEMPCZINSKI

The “Golden Arches” are iconic for a reason: 69 million people fed daily; 43,000 restaurants in over 100 countries; one CEO in charge. Meet Chris Kempczinski, the chief executive officer of McDonald’s Corporation *and* proud Indian Hill High School graduate (shout out to the Class of 1987).

Despite his business commitments, Kempczinski continues to carve out time for investing in the lives of students and the district.

In 2020, Kempczinski surprised the IHHS graduating class with a recorded video message. He expressed how proud he was of the senior class, shared life lessons related to optimism and resiliency, and acknowledged that graduates “should really feel confident and grateful for the foundation that [they’ve] gotten from Indian Hill.”

In 2022, Kempczinski was awarded the Distinguished Alumni Award from the Indian Hill Foundation. The award honors and recognizes the alumni legacy of commitment, integrity, and achievement. Kempczinski and all recipients of the award are an inspiration and exemplify what it means to ‘be Brave’ in the years beyond high school.

Most recently, Kempczinski sat down with Mia Sulfsted, IHHS ’26, to share about his path to successful leadership. Kempczinski and Sulfsted also had time to enjoy a delicious McDonald’s lunch.

We know you’re wondering—what does Kempczinski order from McDonald’s?

He keeps it simple with a McChicken (no mayo, add cheese), a small order of McDonald’s World Famous Fries (with ketchup, of course) and a Sprite Zero to drink.



IHHS STUDENT ASKS McDONALD’S CEO ABOUT HIS CAREER, LEADERSHIP, & ADVICE

1. **Mia Sulfsted (MS):** What was the most important feedback you got in your career and how did it shape you as a leader?

Chris Kempczinski (CK): I’ve gotten a lot of feedback in my career. One of the things I got early on... the person I was working for said ... the most important brand you are ever going to manage is the Chris Kempczinski brand. That struck home for me because when you think about it, your reputation is much like a brand.

How others perceive you, how you manage your brand, that, in my career, I found that to be a great piece of advice.

2. **MS:** If you were able to talk to your high school self, what advice would you give yourself?

CK: If I could talk to my high school self I would probably say two things. One, don’t think you can plan everything out. I remember when I was in high school it was OK where am I going to go to college, what am I going to major in, it was sort of like every step along the way I felt I needed to have it planned out and the reality is that’s not how life works. There are lots of things and twists and turns that you can’t plan. The other thing that I would advise my younger self is stop being in a hurry. ... I didn’t always enjoy as much of what I was in because I was always thinking about ‘what’s the next thing.’

3. **MS:** Did you have any specific moments or an epiphany that made you a leader yourself?

CK: Not really, part of it is it just happens over time. ... The biggest thing I’ve had to learn about being a leader is it’s all about how you work through other people. ... Most of what I do is I try to do it through other people. Learning how to get results and drive things through other people is what a leader ends up being all about.

“Your reputation is much like a brand.”

... I assumed early on when I was a leader that everyone was like me. So the same things that motivated me would motivate them. What you learn over time is people are motivated by different things. ... Part of being a leader is to find what are those things that actually matter most to other people and how you connect the work you need to do to what matters to them. ...



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1970s



Rusty Myers, IHHS '74, was recently honored by the UC Lindner College of Business with the Carl. H. Lindner Award for Outstanding Business Achievement.

Eppa Rixey, IHHS '72, was inducted into the Indian Hill Athletic Hall of Fame in 2022 for his accomplishments as a basketball and track star. He served as Mayor for the Village of Indian Hill from 2007 - 2009.



1980s

Vera Lyn McVicker, IHHS '85, retired in May, 2025 after 34 years teaching at her alma mater.

1990s

Missy Tannen (Tullis), IHHS '95, is a founder of Boll & Branch, based in Madison, NJ.

Judson Oswald, IHHS '98, is a Senior Partner at Sr. Partner at Kirkland & Ellis Law Firm, NY, NY.



2000s



Whitney (Groth) Jones, IHHS '04, (below) and **Sam (Sayer) Frodge, IHHS '04**, (above) were in the same second grade class and have been friends ever since. Sam is a Latin teacher at Indian Hill Middle School.



2010s

Katie Aichholz, IHHS '13, works for a late-stage tech startup in the cybersecurity and AI space (Vectra AI) to help lead their design team as their UX Design Senior Manager. She resides in Austin, Texas.



Mrinal Singh, IHHS '17, is the CEO/Co-Founder at Bolto, an AI company through YCombinator backed by VCs in San Francisco.

2020s

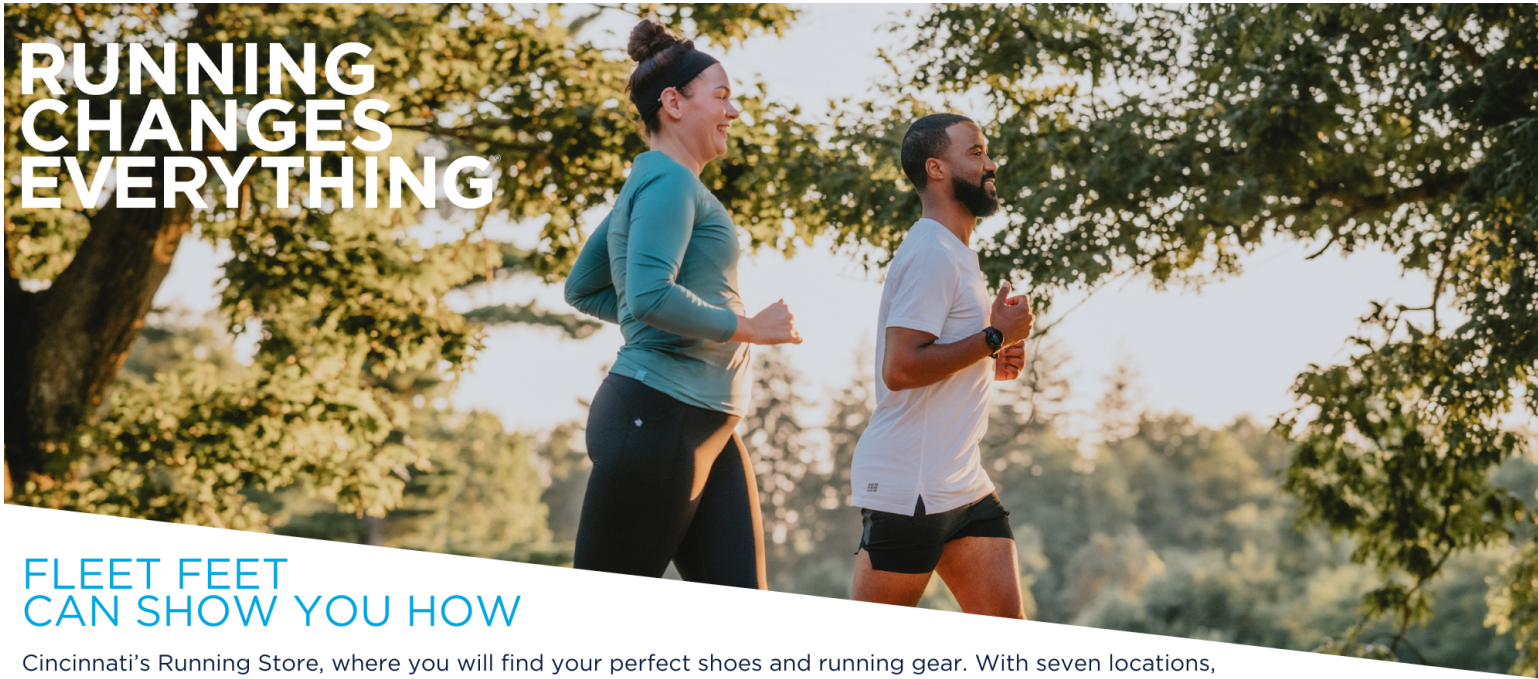
Matt Davis, IHHS '20, recently retired from active service with the United States Marines with a rank of Lance Corporal, E3. He is currently a Logistics Specialist with TireHub in Cincinnati, Ohio.



Ethan Marx, IHHS '21, is graduating from the University of Virginia this spring. Last year, he won the collegiate mock trial national championship—an achievement he has been working towards since his freshman year when he joined Indian Hill Mock Trial.



Lucia Barrett, IHHS '22, is a third-year student studying International Business and Spanish at The Ohio State University. She recently landed a summer internship/job position as a law clerk at Wagner & Bloch, LLC Family Law Center in Cincinnati, Ohio.



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INSIDE THE IH FOUNDATION

A CONVERSATION WITH MEREDITH DUCEY



Meredith Ducey, executive director of the Indian Hill Foundation, sheds insight into the Foundation’s priorities and how you can make a lasting impact. To get involved with the Foundation, email Meredith directly at: meredith.ducey@ihsd.us.

What is the Mission of the IH Foundation?

The mission of the IH Foundation is to support and enhance the student and educator experience in the Indian Hill School District by connecting resources, funding innovative programs, and fostering strong partnerships within the broader Brave community. Additionally, the Foundation serves as a resource for nearly 12,000 Brave alumni across the country.

How Can Brave Alumni Support the District?

Brave alumni have countless ways to give back—each one meaningful and aligned with the Foundation’s mission. Whether it’s sharing career or community expertise in the classroom, volunteering for alumni-focused initiatives like the Distinguished Alumni Awards, or making a financial gift to support innovation in the classroom.

You can also take the lead in organizing class reunions or lend your time and talents by serving on Foundation committees such as Grants or the Speakers Bureau. No matter how you choose to engage, your continued connection strengthens the Brave community and helps ensure a bright future for the next generation of Braves.

What Are Some Key Initiatives the Foundation is Focused On?

The Foundation is committed to expanding its impact—starting with **funding more classroom and district grants**, which requires increased fundraising efforts. We are equally committed to **fiscal responsibility**, ensuring donor contributions are used efficiently and meaningfully to support students and educators.

Beyond our general mission, donors also have opportunities to fund **specific projects** that align with their passions. We’re also working to **increase volunteer involvement** across all levels of the Foundation, including new committee roles, event participation, and community outreach efforts.

WHAT’S NEXT FOR THE FOUNDATION?

We’re always looking ahead—asking What If, What’s Next, and What’s Possible? That spirit of curiosity and innovation drives everything we do.

BIG PITCH

As a founding and funding partner of the Big Pitch program, the Foundation continues to champion innovative, student-driven ideas. We proudly support the growth of current initiatives and look forward to the next wave of bold, impactful projects.

DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARDS

We are proud to celebrate the accomplishments of our graduates through the Distinguished Alumni Awards—honoring those who exemplify excellence, leadership, and the enduring spirit of the Braves community.

FUNDING INNOVATION

We remain dedicated to funding creative classroom and district-wide grants that support educators, spark student curiosity, and enhance learning across all grade levels. As we continue to dream big and act boldly, we invite you to be part of what’s next—and help shape what’s possible.



HOME SWEET HOME

Why Jeff Gibson, IHHS ‘86, came back to the Village after living around the globe

Jeff Gibson, CFO/CTO of ProtectEd, has lived around the word, ranging from Indiana for college to New York City, Europe, and Mexico for work.

Ultimately, the IHHS ‘86 graduate discovered by moving out of the Indian Hill area just how special it was to him and others.

“My experiences in 45243 were tremendously relevant as a motivator to develop professionally, establish deep relationships with people who have various experiences, and eventually return to a place that I knew would enable me to thrive professionally, personally, and welcome investing to keep the community thriving and generally ‘paying it forward,’” Gibson said.



Gibson recalls the support he received for his entrepreneurial mindset as a student—like Assistant Middle School Principal Tony Brunneman helping him map out his grass cutting schedule, and high school guidance counselor Doug Hammond supporting his snow plowing service when delays didn’t occur and Gibson was still out plowing.

“As someone who is entrepreneurially minded, I was supported by many at IH to work hard and accelerate whatever I was doing,” Gibson said.

Today, Gibson is a year and a half into proudly serving on Village Council and continues to see abundant opportunities to continue the multi-decade partnership between the Village and the district.

“I was supported by many at IH to work hard and accelerate whatever I was doing.”



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Indian Hill Hall of Fame welcomed three new members

All were invited to induction ceremony on January 17, 2025

All Braves were invited to attend an induction ceremony on Friday, January 17, 2025, as the Indian Hill Athletic Hall of Fame welcomed three new members. Cristy Freese (1976), Branden Miller (2005), and Colin Shaw (2018) were honored at halftime of the varsity boys basketball game.



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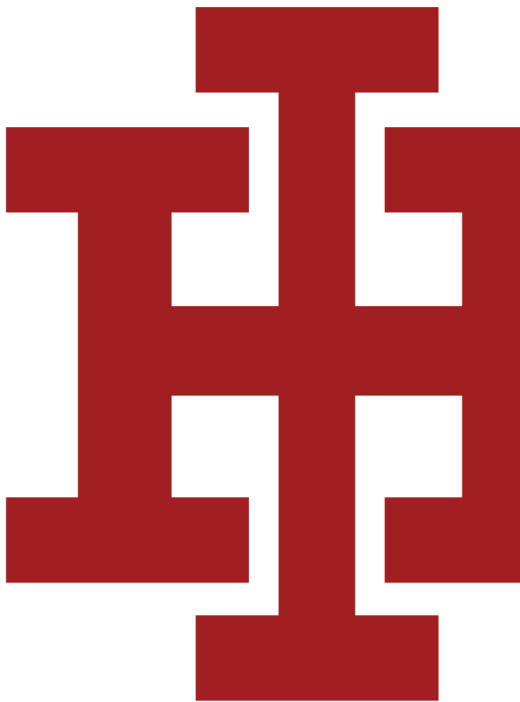
SIGNATURE EVENTS

K-12 DISTRICT STEM NIGHT	SEPTEMBER 19, 2025
FEBRUARY 24, 2026	
MARCH 24, 2026	
APRIL 25, 2025	

Brave Day of Giving 2025



INDIAN HILL



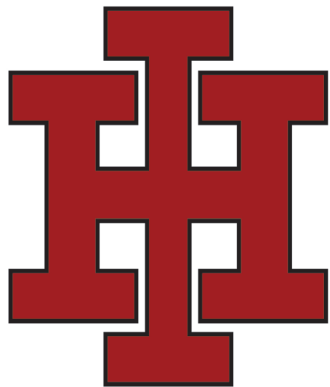
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