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CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL FOUNDATION

Eagle News *May 2026*



This weekend, all living former principals of Omaha Central High School came together to celebrate. They gathered to celebrate Ms. Dionne Kirksey on her well-deserved retirement and to welcome Mr. Eric Behrens (CHS ’92) as he takes his place in the principal’s chair.
Pictured from left to right: Dr. Keith Bigsby, Mr. Greg Emmel, Mr. Jerry Bexten, Mr. Eric Behrens, CHS 1992, Ms. Dionne Kirksey, Dr. Ed Bennett, and Dr. Gary Thompson.

Dear Supporter,

As we wrap up another incredible school year, I want to take a moment to celebrate some very special milestones in our Central High School community.



Congratulations to the Class of 2026! To all our Eagles who will be receiving their diplomas this week – your story is just beginning. Spread your wings and continue to soar – you make us so proud! We can't wait to see where your next journey takes you.

We also extend our heartfelt congratulations and deepest gratitude to three outstanding Central High School staff members who are retiring this year: English Teacher Marcy Mahoney, Dean of Students Bill Canney, and Principal Dionne Kirksey. Your dedication and impact have shaped generations of students, and your legacy will live on in the halls of Central. Thank you for everything!

Join us for the 24th annual Golf Fore Eagles outing, proudly presented by Home Pride. This year, we are honored to recognize Rob Likes '91 and Steve Likes '89 for their unwavering support of Central High School. The silent auction will open on May 25th at 9am and it will close on June 8th at 4pm. Click here to view the silent auction.

Lastly, don't forget to mark your calendars for the Central High School Hall of Fame celebration on Thursday, October 8th. This special evening, presented by the Central High School Foundation, will honor our newest inductees, selected by the CHS Alumni Association Selection Committee. More details to come!

As always, thank you for helping perpetuate more than 167 years - and counting - of tradition and excellence.

Go Eagles!
Sincerely,
Michele Roberts
Michele Roberts, Executive Director

Senior Recognition Night



On Tuesday, May 12th, the Central High School Foundation proudly hosted the 2026 Senior Recognition Ceremony in the Central High School auditorium.

This year, the Central High School Foundation awarded 103 scholarships to Eagles who will attend colleges across the country, a testament to their dedication, perseverance, and academic excellence.

Two prestigious honors, the 2026 DeEmmett Bradshaw Zerbe (CHS 1943) and Mason Speltz Zerbe (CHS 1948) Central High School Student of the Year Scholarships, were awarded to Ximena Altuzar and Joshua Shapiro. In addition, Jeffery Mount was named the 2026 Teacher of the Year, recognizing his outstanding contributions to student success.

Congratulations to all of our scholarship recipients and honorees! Your hard work and achievements make the Central community proud.



Pictured: 2026 Recipients of the Henry Davis, CHS 1969, Scholarship

Learn More About CHSF Scholarships



At the end of Senior Recognition Night, CHS Alumni Association President Elect Alvin Samuels ‘06 and incoming CHS Principal Eric Behrens ‘92 bid a very special farewell to Principal Ms. Dionne Kirksey. They emphasized that, even though Ms. Kirksey did not attend CHS as a student, she is leaving Central as an alum, forever an Eagle. As they adorned her with her very own cap and gown and presented her with a diploma, Ms. Kirksey received a very emotional standing ovation - a testament to the impact she has made on our community. Thank you for everything, Ms. Kirksey!

Join the CHS Alumni Association

CHS Staff Retirement Tea



Earlier this month was the Retirement Tea for three amazing Central High School staff members. This year's retirees were Dean of Students Bill Canney (18 years), Principal Dionne Kirksey (26 years), and English teacher Marcy Mahoney (29 years). We are so grateful for these amazing members of the Central community, and for all they've done to help Eagles soar. CHS staff – from the bottom of our hearts, THANK YOU!

Submit a CHS Memory

Your Impact: Writing Workshop

FOUNDATION SUPPORT BRINGS TRANSFORMATIVE WRITING EXPERIENCE TO CENTRAL

YOUR IMPACT

60 STUDENTS IMPACTED

AMOUNT FUNDED: $750



Project Proposal

Funds from the Foundation allowed students to participate in a writing workshop lead by Paul Volponi, an author of over 20 books, who conducts writing workshops all over the United States that encourage students to start their own journeys as readers and writers.

Commitment to Closing the Opportunity Gap

In an effort to help students improve their literacy skills, Central High is actively trying to narrow these gaps through traditional methods such as offering intensive reading instruction during the school day; however, creative approaches, such as Volponi's visit, are also in play. Rather than lecturing, he guided students through a workshop. He got to know students' names, worked with them one-on-one, and gave them an opportunity to share their writing with the group.

Translation to College and Career Readiness

A single experience, a shift in thinking, an inspirational teacher, or a great story can shift the trajectory of a student's life. When Volponi spoke to students at CHS, he shared his own experiences as a student who hated reading and writing; he recounted his career as a journalist, a teacher, and a mentor. He spoke of his teaching experience at Riker's Island and a drug rehabilitation facility where he inspired the teens he worked with and showed them how to turn experience into literature, just as he had. While working with English classes at Central, he tailored his lesson on dynamic

characters to fit with what the students were learning in class, emphasizing how life and literature work together.

"Paul really impacted me because he showed me that a teacher can change a student's perspective on things and can light up their dreams. He hated to read and write, and his teacher showed him a movie from a book that inspired him. He switched on a light inside me to write a book of my own. I keep a notebook with some of my writings in it now."
Kortez Glover, Class of 2029

Opportunities like this one are thanks to YOU, Eagle Nation! To continue making an impact, join Generation "C" today!

Join Generation "C"

CHS Freshman Wins Coca-Cola Art Contest



Earlier this month, Chesterman Co. Coca-Cola proudly unveiled a new look on one of their truck trailers–featuring Vee Lachance's (CHS 2029) Cinco de Mayo artwork! Months and months of hard work were made manifest for this CHS freshman, and

they couldn't have been more thrilled! The decorated truck made its debut in Omaha's Cinco de Mayo parade the weekend of May 15th.

The most exciting part is that Vee's artwork will continue to brighten the streets of Omaha year-round, as the trailer is now part of Coca-Cola's regular delivery fleet in the area!

The Central High School Foundation is proud to partner with Chesterman Coca-Cola through the Adopt-a-School program.

Keep an eye out – you just might spot Vee's artwork rolling through your neighborhood!



Pictured: Vee Lachance with their family in front of the Coca-Cola truck, Vee in front of their signature on the truck

Register Now for Golf Fore Eagles



Golf Fore Eagles - Monday, June 8th, 2026

Players Club of Omaha - 10 AM shotgun start

2026 Honorees: Rob Likes ‘91 and Steve Likes ‘89

The cost is $175 per golfer and includes:

- 18 holes of golf, cart, and driving range
- Brunch and banquet dinner for all players
- Hole-in-One Challenge

The silent auction will open on May 25th at 9am and will close on June 8th at 4pm. Click here to view the silent auction.

All registration fees are due by May 29. Both women and men players are encouraged to participate! Golfers of all abilities are welcome. Sign up as a foursome, individual or a co-ed team. Click here to register now. If you have any questions, please contact Erika Buffington at 402-556-1996 or email events@chsfomaha.org.

Register for Golf Fore Eagles

Alumni Spotlight: Kane Adkisson, CHS 2011





This month, we are proud to shine the spotlight on Kane Adkisson, CHS 2011. Here is an update on his life in his own words:



“Since graduating from Central, I attended Metro for their Culinary Arts program. Upon graduation, I moved to Oslo, Norway to begin my career at Maaemo. I lived abroad for over a year and a half before relocating to San Francisco, where I continued refining my craft at Saison and Coi. It is during this time that I broke away and began kanō. Originally, kanō started as a pop up as a way to educate San

Francisco diners on Nebraska. After living in California for over three years, I felt the call to move abroad again. I moved to Tokyo, Japan where I helped open Croni and also spent time at Nihonryori RyuGin. I then finally returned home to Omaha, where I started kanō back up again. Today, we primarily serve as an in-home private dining dinner series where we bring a Michelin level tasting menu to our clients in the comfort of their own homes. We also still occasionally do pop ups around town! In 2023 we were a James Beard Semifinalist for "Emerging Chef," and in 2024, a James Beard Featured Chef. On a personal note, I've also met and married the love of my life since returning home. Overall, Central provided me with a strong foundation as I took on my career and "adult" life. It made me appreciate travel, culture, and the diversity all around us."



Thank you for sharing, Kane!

To nominate an alum for the spotlight, please email connect@chsfomaha.org

Nominate an Alum for the Spotlight

New Podcast Episodes

Chatting at the C is a CHSF-sponsored podcast series by CHS teachers Scott Wilson and Ben Boeckman, which focuses on highlighting the history of Central High School. In each episode, they interview past and present CHS staff to preserve their contribution to Omaha Central High School.



[Cathy Andrus]



[Ray Dewaele & Deron Larson]

Listen to Chatting at the C

2025-2026 Generation "C" Chairs



The Past: A Tradition Begins

Jennifer Johnson Taylor, Class of 1991, was the first in her family to attend Central, and in doing so, she began a proud family tradition. Growing up in Omaha's Dundee neighborhood, Jen followed the classic midtown path: Dundee Elementary, Lewis & Clark Middle, and finally, Central High School. The historic architecture of Central first drew her in, but it was the vibrant community and transformative experiences that made her a lifelong Eagle. After graduating, Jen pursued a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy at Hamilton College in New York, then returned to Omaha to earn her Juris Doctor from Creighton University School of Law. Her career has taken her from private practice to public service, and today she serves as Deputy City Attorney for the City of Omaha - working in an office with a view of downtown that reminds her of her days at Central. Jen's sisters, Kathryn Johnson Krueger, Class of 2004, and Molly Johnson, Class of 2014 also joined the Central family further

cementing the Johnson legacy at Central.

The Present: Soaring Higher

When she and her husband, Darin, started their family, Jen passed on her love for Central to the next generation. Her daughter, **Cecilia** Taylor, Class of 2026, is a four-year varsity swimmer and state qualifier, a varsity golfer, and an active member of HOSA and National Honor Society (serving as Activities Coordinator). She is also involved in several advanced academic programs outside of Central, including the Haddix STEM Corridor and the UNMC High School Alliance. Cecilia credits Central with connecting her to these incredible opportunities and inspiring her passion for science. She plans to major in Microbiology with a minor in Chemistry and is exploring undergraduate research programs at the University of Washington and the University of Pittsburgh.

The Future: The Legacy Continues

The Eagle spirit lives on in Charles **"Chuck"** Taylor, Class of 2032. Currently a student at Dundee Elementary School, Chuck is already preparing to follow in the footsteps of his mother, aunts, and sister. An avid golfer in the Nebraska Jr. PGA League, Chuck also enjoys basketball, football, swimming, baseball, and chess. His teachers note his love of history and enthusiasm for fun facts. With his boundless curiosity and love for learning, Chuck is ready to carry the family legacy forward at Central High School.

Join Generation "C"

Join the 1859 Society Today



Named for the year of Central's founding, the 1859 Society honors donors who have included The Central High School Foundation in their estate plans. By arranging for such deferred gifts, alumni, parents, and friends of CHS play a vital role in securing the future of Omaha's oldest educational institution. Combining financial planning, estate planning, and tax planning techniques, planned giving enables donors to make gifts of significance often with tax and financial rewards. If you're interested in joining the 1859 Society and making a planned gift, contact Michele Roberts at the CHSF Office at 402-556-1996 or michele@chsfomaha.org.

Join the 1859 Society

Upcoming Reunion Schedule



The class of 1965 at their reunion in 2025!

Class of 1961

August 21-23, 2026

Dick Zacharia - dickzacharia@gmail.com

Class of 1966

September 4-5, 2026

Cindy Hadsell – clhadsell@aol.com

Class Website

Class of 1976

September 11-13, 2026

Rosalyn Cotton - rosalyncotton56@gmail.com

Class Website

Class of 1981

Dates TBD

Scott Barker - sbarker@episcopal-ne.org

Bob Atherton - athertonrobert8@gmail.com

Class of 1986

October 2-3, 2026

Becky Reynolds Crowell – rebeccajane67@gmail.com

Bart Lovgren – bartlovgren@gmail.com

Class of 1996

October 9-10, 2026

Kelly Titus - kellytitus@me.com

Sally Reiser Christensen - sallyachristensen@gmail.com

Class of 2001

October 2-3, 2026

Jenny Storm – Jennifer.storm@ops.org

Abby Waller – Abigail.waller01@gmail.com

Class of 2006

October 2-3, 2026

Hannah Andahl-Newman - hannahandahl@gmail.com

Jim Hubbard - James.d.hubbard@gmail.com

Alvin Samuels - alvin.samuels1@gmail.com

If you are the reunion organizer for your class and haven't finalized a date for your class reunion or would like to look at postponing or cancelling it, please contact Erika Buffington at events@chsfomaha.org or call 402-556-1996.

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