

This past year, Grandview Heights Schools received a generous donation of \$400,000 from two alumni, Warren Klink (Class of '59) and his wife, Carolyn Guggenaster Wyman (Class of '60).

"We have always stayed connected to our midwestern roots and the community that supported us," Klink says. "Now, we want to show our gratitude and pay it forward to today's students."

### Hopes and visions

Now residing in the Beaux Arts Village of Washington state, Klink is an award-winning landscape architect in both the U.S. and Great Britain as well as a Navy Seabee veteran. Wyman is a professional musician. With Klink's life work in mind, the couple's original donation was meant to go solely towards the district's conservation program.

However, after the pair visited in 2024, Wyman identified a need for new instruments after speaking with the band director, and they decided to increase their donation funds to support the music program as well. "So many doors open to students through music. As a musician, I know that when a student finds joy and success in music class, it leads to better attendance, engagement and success in school," Wyman says.

The Grandview Heights Schools staff and administration are extremely grateful for the donation.

"It's very generous. It shows that Warren and Carolyn are very committed to the community of Grandview," Angie Ullum, chief academic officer at Grandview Heights Schools, says. "And of course, we're just humbled and thankful." Similarly, Jessica Fields, a 21st-century learning coach at Grandview Heights Schools, was ecstatic upon hearing the news. "I'm excited about it because we have very environmentally-minded teachers who have passions around (our conservation program). It's a great fit for us," Fields says. According to Ullum, the schools have some ideas set in place but precise plans for how and where the conservation donation funds will be allocated are still in the infancy stage. Right now, what is most important is making sure that the proper time is taken to research how the funds will be distributed and used. "We're trying to make sure that we are being intentional with the resources we want here at the schools," Fields says. "We're going to ensure the life of this by, first, spending time investigating to make the right choices." When it came to how the music program should spend its portion of the donation, the answer was a bit more straightforward. With the help of Wyman's and the band director's recommendation, much of the money was spent buying new instruments for the music department. According to Ullum, the funds have also allowed for the department to expand its strings program. "Giving the students the opportunity to learn and grow as musicians on new instruments is just an amazing gift," Fields says.

### Gaining momentum

One critical step the district is taking during this conservation project planning process is making sure to include the voices of multiple local resources and professionals in the discussion.

For example, the conservation program has been working closely with organizations such as the Franklin County Soil and Water Conservation District and the Solid Waste Authority of Central Ohio (SWACO).

Fields is also looking forward to elevating the donation's impact through consulting with Dr. Tim McDermott, an assistant professor and agriculture and natural resource educator at The Ohio State University's College of Food, Agriculture, and Environmental Sciences. McDermott will help guide the program by assisting with the design of new professional development strategies for teachers and bringing expertise to a new project the program will be implementing.

That project will consist of incorporating pollinator gardens into the school's curriculum and outdoor space. Currently, the district is working to identify the best spot in which to build them.

"One of Warren's goals is for this to be an inter-generational project, that there are students that are all grades K-12 working on this," Fields says.

Adhering to Klink's vision, the pollinator gardens will be a project taken on by both the high school's advanced placement (AP) environmental science class and the middle school's garden club. It will also serve as a great opportunity for older students to interact with, teach and provide enrichment to those in younger grade levels. As students work to design the gardens, Fields says that the goal is to help them become more aware of the role of pollinators and the importance of fostering native plants. Students will have the opportunity to visit a local plant nursery to learn more about native plants, specifically which ones pertain to the area. While Klink and Wyman's donation will be used to directly enhance the conservation and music programs, Ullum and Fields are certain that it will indirectly benefit the entire school district and community as a whole. A group of teachers is currently working on investigating district-wide science curricula to identify how to best integrate the new initiatives provided by the donation into all science-based classes. "We're hoping to bring (more) classes into the pollinator gardens to get hands-on experience," Fields says. Once established, the pollinator gardens will act as a lab setting for multiple science and environment-related classes, not just the AP Environmental class and middle school garden club. Students of all ages will get the chance to partake in garden experiments such as soil testing. In terms of the bigger picture, Ullum and Fields are hoping that students will be able to take some of what they learn in the pollinator gardens and translate it to benefit the environment using their gardens at home. "(This project) is going to be able to allow them to see the easy moves or shifts that they could make (at home and in real life) that could benefit the environment," Fields says. "The questions that students have and the authenticity of this really allows for students to have that connection to the outside world and the environment," Fields says. As the planning process continues and more specific goals are identified, the district is looking forward to the new and exciting learning opportunities that will come with it, and the ways in which those opportunities will benefit students of all ages and the community of Grandview Heights. "We're just very humbled by the donation and we're doing our best to make sure that we're investing the time and learning to make sure that we make the best choices," Ullum says. "To see Grandview alumni continuing to come back and be so generous and stay part of the community even when they live hundreds of miles away, I think that's a wonderful role model to show how to give back to the community."