

# IN THE NEWS

February 2021 Newsletter



Alumni Association



Taylor School District



## LET'S GET TO KNOW OUR LEADERS *OUR NEW SUPERINTENDENT - GRIFF MILLS*

Hello, my name is Griff Mills, and I am the new Superintendent of Taylor Schools. I am honored to be a part of the Taylor School District and continue to be more and more impressed with the opportunities and support that are available to our students.

My background of 15 years as a college basketball coach and 18 years as a high school administrator have served

me well in preparing for this opportunity to lead Taylor Schools. I received my undergraduate degree in economics from DePauw University, my master's degree in education from East Carolina University and my Educational Specialist Degree in administrative leadership from Oakland University. I graduated from the Michigan Leadership Institute's Superintendent's Academy in November of 2019. My wife and oldest daughter are both teachers and my father-in-law is a former superintendent as well. As you can see, I have been around education in some capacity my entire life while trying to develop

winning environments for all my students and players.

Since starting in this position in November, it has been a different experience with the pandemic slowing down a lot of plans. As we focus on getting our students back into the classroom, I will be able to be out and about meeting all the wonderful people that are here in Taylor. I look forward to doing my very best to make a positive impact on Taylor Schools. Thank you again for this opportunity to serve the district.

Taylor Alumni Association  
11501 Beech Daly Road,  
Taylor MI 48180  
[tayloralumni.org](http://tayloralumni.org)

*Enhance the educational atmosphere of the Taylor School District for both the graduates and the school district.*



## A HISTORY OF TRUMAN HIGH SCHOOL

AS SEEN THROUGH THE EYES OF GALE MITCHELL

Truman school complex opened in 1973. It was a combination school with Truman High and Truman Junior.

The two schools were on different bell schedules, but shared the commons area for lunch, the gym, art and music rooms. It was a new building design with enclosed classrooms only for the subjects that had equipment such as band and chemistry. Other classes did not have walls between rooms. A survey was administered to students to see what they thought of the building. The results showed concerns about the looks of the grounds

outside of the building. Noting the student parking lot was unpaved, the lights at the athletic complex were not working and general landscaping was missing.

A program called “Project Facelift” began the transformation of the Truman building and grounds. A committee of students, staff, citizens, city officials and local landscapers was on hand for the planting of the first tree in front of HST High. “Project Facelift” became an on-going landscaping program on Saturdays with cheerleaders serving free hot dogs and sodas to all the workers. The city of Taylor’s Mayor and the Down River Rotary Club donated

services and landscaping materials. The current landscaping around the building-- including berms, huge graffiti rocks, fenced-in student parking and concession stands--is the result of the “Project Facelift” program.

The State of Michigan presented a Beautification Award to HST High School for an outstanding community effort to beautify a public property. “Project Facelift” celebrated its joint accomplishments by having a bonfire prior to the first “night” Homecoming football game. *continued on page 3*



## **TRANSFORMATION WITHIN 1988 - 1998**

In 1988, the first walls were erected in the classroom areas.

From 1992-95, many other changes were made within the building such as: Cafeteria A was created so students did not have to eat lunch standing or sitting on the floor.

In 1995, Taylor Center High School was closed, and the students were transferred to Truman, Cafeteria B was created, lockers were installed in the main hall, and additional bleachers were added in the gym to accommodate the additional students.

## **ACADEMIC AND PROGRAM TRANSFORMATION**

During the 90's, several Truman teachers developed many unique programs such as Jr ROTC, Robotics, Quiz Bowl, and Deca.

Truman was the first district high school to earn Outcomes-Based Accreditation (with an A+ score). The staff developed a MEAP (state test) strategy that significantly raised Truman test scores—the highest in the district.

The Taylor School District has come full circle and once again has only one COMMUNITY high school.

Gale Mitchell, retired, teacher, and administrator, had a long career in the Taylor School District. Was a teacher at HST starting in 1973 and an administrator there in 1988-89. More of her career and life will be included in the next edition of the Taylor Alumni Newsletter.

### **GOOD THINGS ARE HAPPENING IN TAYLOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

#### ***TAYLOR DECA CLUB***

Congratulations for competing in the district competition and bringing home 60 medals! Thirty students are moving on to the State of Michigan competition in March.

The Taylor Alumni Association is so very proud of teacher Carly Lundgren-Barnard and the Taylor Deca Club Students.

## Welding Students Practice Their Craft While Getting into the Holiday Spirit



In November, students in the Welding I and II classes had the opportunity to put their newly acquired welding skills to the test while spreading some holiday cheer at Taylor Career and Technical Center.

Under the guidance of interim welding instructor, Eula Grooms, and program technician, Joseph Horth, the students created a Christmas tree made entirely from recycled metals.

***If you have not joined yet, why not?*** It's so easy. Just make out a check for \$25, include the school and year you graduated, and mail it to:

**Taylor Alumni Association**

**11501 Beech Daly**

**Taylor, MI 48180**

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**WE HEARD FROM** *Coach Tom Bluhm*

The 1989 Taylor Center baseball team won 29 straight games before losing in the Regional Finals. They were League and District Champions. The outstanding team was led by Billy Kostick, who signed a major league contract with the Seattle Mariners.

An update regarding Coach Tom Bluhm, who also won awards in the '80s; He coached Little League Teams in Taylor for 20 years. His 13-15-year-old team won the State Championship in 1980. His 16-

18-year-old teams went to the State Finals 7 times between 1981 and 1991. Tom was named Baseball Coach of the Year in 1989.

The Taylor Alumni Association congratulates Mr. Bluhm for his outstanding career.

***We also heard from Chuck Bonner***, our Social Media Director, who reported over 80 comments on the Roger Bechtol article. Those comments were all sent to Roger and Carol Bechtol.

**THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH**

*The best times in our lives were not about what we had, but who we were*

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

***TC FOOTBALL ALUMNI***

Due to COVID-19 concerns, we are going to postpone the get-together until 2022. More information when things settle down.

*Alumni Association*



**Taylor School District**



## OBITUARIES

*The Alumni Association members would like to extend their deepest sympathy to the family and friends of the former classmates mentioned below. You will forever be in our thoughts and prayers.*

Please Note: If we receive deaths from the past that are not listed in our newsletter, they will be posted on the "In Memoriam" section on our website. If you know of a deceased graduate that is not listed in the Memoriam section of our website please let us know the name, school, graduating class and date of passing.

### JOHN F KENNEDY HIGH

- ✚ *Denise Parker, Class of 1970 (passed December 30, 2020)*
- ✚ *Cheryl Adams Celeskey, Class of 1978 (passed October 21, 2020)*
- ✚ *Wanda Chapman Pongracz, Class of 1967 (passed February 27, 2020)*

### TAYLOR CENTER HIGH

- ✚ *Robert Schmoekel, Class of 1965 (passed December 10, 2020)*

### HARRY S TRUMAN HIGH

- ✚ *Colin MacArthur, Class of 1976 (passed December 15, 2020)*
- ✚ *Jo Ann Paluszewski-Foce, Class of 1977 (passed December 18, 2020)*

### STAFF

- ✚ *Roberta "Bobbie" Sobieraj, Retired Secretary (passed December 20, 2020)*
- ✚ *James Schultz, Teacher/Principal (Deceased January 8, 2021)*

For more information about the deceased and their families, please visit the alumni website [tayloralumni.org](http://tayloralumni.org) and click on "In Memoriam".

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