

MILTON
HERSHEY
SCHOOL®

FOUNDED 1909

ALUM

SUMMER 2026

THY *Traditions* DEAR

MILTON HERSHEY SCHOOL® ALUMNI MAGAZINE



Congratulations, Class of 2026!

A Note

from the MHS President



Dear alumni brothers and sisters,

Many of you have likely seen the official trailer for the **HERSHEY** movie, which will hit theaters this Thanksgiving. The film tells a remarkable story—but it is not the whole story. The whole story continues to unfold every day at Milton Hershey School.

For more than 116 years, Milton and Catherine Hershey's vision has lived on through the lives of the students who have called this School home. It lives on through more than 12,000 graduates who have transformed the opportunity they received into lives of purpose, character, leadership, and service. And it continues to grow with every new generation of Spartans who walk through our doors. Throughout the 2025-26 school year, we added another meaningful chapter to that story.

We launched our GIFT Strategic Framework to guide the future of our School and announced the Milton Hershey School Center for Entrepreneurial & Career Excellence (CE)², anchored at 14 East in downtown Hershey. Inspired by Mr. Hershey's entrepreneurial spirit, this innovative center will help prepare students and graduates for lifelong success by connecting education, career exploration, and workforce opportunity in entirely new ways.

Perhaps no accomplishment better reflects the strength of our mission than the success of the Class of 2026. During our 92nd Commencement Ceremony, we proudly celebrated 219 graduates who embody what is possible when opportunity is matched with determination, perseverance, and purpose.

MHS has been laser-focused on ensuring our students succeed in our Career and Technical Education program, which prepares them to pursue paths that reflect their passions, talents, and future goals through tailored instruction and hands-on learning.

The Class of 2026 is the results of those efforts:

- **100%** earned at least one state or nationally recognized certification
- **83%** achieved two or more nationally recognized certifications
- **50** entered the National Technical Honor Society
- **207** completed an authentic work experience
- **194** completed one or more internships
- **4** completed a co-op work experience

These accomplishments are more than impressive statistics. They represent young men and women prepared to lead meaningful lives, strengthen their communities, and carry forward the vision our Founders first imagined more than a century ago. None of this happens in isolation.

Our alumni community remains one of Milton Hershey School's greatest strengths. Whether you mentor a student, offer career guidance, return to campus, support our programs, or simply share your Milton Hershey School story, you help ensure that today's students benefit from the same life-changing opportunity that shaped generations before them. Thank you for your continued commitment to our School and to one another.

As we look ahead to the 2026-27 school year, I invite you to remain engaged in the life of Milton Hershey School. I especially hope you'll join us for Homecoming Weekend, September 17-20, as we celebrate our shared legacy and the extraordinary future we are building together. The **HERSHEY** film may tell the story of how our founders' dream began, but together we have the privilege—and the responsibility—to ensure that story continues for generations to come.

Sincerely,

Peter G. Gurt '85
MHS President

THY Traditions DEAR

The mission of *Thy Traditions Dear* is to share the stories of the Milton Hershey School family with our alumni, students, staff, and retirees in honor and celebration of our founders, Milton and Catherine Hershey.

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ABOUT THE COVER

Zaira Postell '26 celebrates receiving her Milton Hershey School diploma during the Commencement Ceremony on June 14 at GIANT Center. Postell enrolled at MHS in the fifth grade and was one of 219 students to become alums this year.

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SENIOR
SUCCESS

Story

From Resilience to Radiance



When Maame Afia Asante crossed the stage as a member of the Milton Hershey School Class of 2026, she carried more than a diploma. She carried a story of resilience, growth, and transformation that began with uncertainty and blossomed into a future filled with possibility.

Asante's commitment to keeping her standards high earned her two of the Class of 2026's most prestigious awards—Valedictorian and Most Nearly Ideal Senior.

Asante's journey to MHS began after Hurricane Ida displaced her family in New Jersey in 2021. For months, she and her family moved between homes and temporary housing. During that time, a relative introduced MHS as an option—one that would ultimately change her life.

She arrived at MHS on Aug. 1, 2022, at 14 years old, unsure of what to expect. While she initially worried about fitting in, those fears quickly gave way to a strong sense of belonging. Early memories—from orientation in Founders Hall to the energy of her first Opening of School Assembly—helped her realize she was part of something special.

Asante first lived in student home Clearview, where her houseparents provided the care and mentorship that anchored her early experience.



“Mrs. (Deepa) and Mr. (Brian) Black never failed to make me feel like their own. They mentored me and gave me advice almost every day, with prayers that I thrive in and out of MHS,” Asante recalled. “Their selflessness is something I look up to each and every day, and I will never forget how much they poured into the foundational days of my MHS journey.”

Over time, Asante transitioned to student home Maizeland and eventually into Transitional Living, building independence along the way while forming lifelong friendships.

Her time at MHS was defined by involvement. A leader in both academics and activities, Asante served in honor societies, held leadership roles, and became deeply engaged in the performing arts. Dance, music, and theater became central to her high school journey, providing a powerful outlet for creativity and connection.

"MHS gave me an array of opportunities that I would not have seen at home. The absence of cost or tuition has allowed me to explore without bounds," she said.

Mentors across campus played a critical role in her development. Teachers and directors pushed her to grow academically and artistically while offering encouragement and support when she needed it most. Their belief in her helped her build confidence and resilience.

Over time, Asante evolved into a self-assured, driven student. She learned to advocate for herself, manage her time, and take ownership of her responsibilities—skills that will serve her well in the future.

This fall, Asante will take the next step in her journey at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where she plans to study electrical engineering. Her interest in the field was sparked during a hands-on engineering project that combined circuitry and coding.

As she prepares for college, Asante remains grounded in her values—faith, family, and a desire for stability and growth. She credits her mother as her biggest inspiration and carries forward the lessons learned at MHS into this next chapter.

Looking Ahead—and Giving Back

Even as she begins her journey as a student at MIT, Asante already looks forward to returning to MHS. She plans to attend performances, reconnect with her community, and eventually speak to students, offering the same encouragement she once received.

To Asante, giving back is a simple but powerful idea: pouring into what first poured into you. It's a philosophy she plans to carry with her wherever she goes.

Her advice to future students is clear—take advantage of opportunities, step out of your comfort zone, and act with purpose. These are the lessons that shaped her success and will guide her moving forward.

As she reflects on her journey, Asante describes MHS in four words:

opportunity, hope, community, and possibility.
For her, those words are more than reflections—they are filled with promise. 🌟





1,000 Voices
CHALLENGE

MHS Community Reflects on the Power of Our Pledge



For a century, the MHS School Pledge has been more than words—it is a living commitment to character, unity, and service. Throughout the school year, students, staff, and alumni have brought Our Pledge to life, culminating in the traditions and milestones that define our MHS experience.

MHS kicked off the 100 Years, 1,000 Voices Challenge to honor 100 years of Our Pledge. Thanks to an outpouring of shared stories from across our community, we surpassed our original goal of 1,000 voices and raised our new goal to 2,026 voices for the graduating class. At Commencement, President Peter G. Gurt '85 announced that 3,213 voices were represented through a collection of videos that will forever live in our School Archives. 🎥



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“When I reflect on the MHS School Pledge, I reflect on how significant each line is. I can't even pull out exactly which line means more to me than the others because every line has meaning. I feel that The Pledge is how we should be living our lives. It's not just something we pledge when we are at Milton Hershey School. It's something that lives beyond the school and it's how we as alumni, as students, as administration, as teachers, as houseparents, as support staff, every person should be thinking about The Pledge, how it affects our lives, and those of the students we are here to serve.”

Maria Trinh Kraus '89, 2026 Alumna of the Year, Chairman of the MHS Board of Managers



“My favorite line of the MHS School Pledge is living by the Golden Rule and speaking the truth at all times. If we all treated others as we wish to be treated, the world would be a far better place.”

Chris Cook '81, 2021 Alumna of the Year and MHS Retiree



“The phrase physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight remains just as relevant today as it did when I was a student. To me, it means showing up fully, being resilient, thinking critically, and leading with integrity. Today, as a manager in the Enrollment Management department, I see these values shaping our culture every day through how our students support one another, from how our staff challenge our students to grow to why our families choose MHS for more than just academics, but for character development as well.”

Terry Donaher, '98, MHS Manager of Student Recruitment & Marketing



“Our Pledge is all about community and the Golden Rule. When I was a student, teachers and houseparents committed so much energy into me. I honor them daily by following their lead, being a community ally, and serving others.”

Michele Y. Smith '90



“The part of Our Pledge that resonates with me the most is ‘I will always live by the Golden Rule.’ Growing up, I was always taught that respect and kindness matters the most. It is important to remember that everybody is going through their own things in life so choosing empathy matters.”

Princess Tommy '26





MHS Celebrates 2026 Commencement

Anticipation and celebration filled GIANT Center on Sunday, June 14, for the 92nd Milton Hershey School Commencement Ceremony. Student speaker Layla Wright reflected on a childhood shaped by hardship, instability, and loss, and the ways those experiences forced her to grow up quickly and rely on her own strength.

“Survival is not the end of the story, but the beginning of who we choose to become,” Wright said.

MHS Alumna of the Year Maria Trinh Kraus '89 offered the Class of 2026 a new perspective on the inheritance they received from our founders, Milton and Catherine Hershey.

“The inheritance they left behind was never about the money,” Kraus said. “It was about possibility. That is why this inheritance is unlike any other. Most inheritances get smaller over time. This one grows.”

In her moving address, student speaker Princess Tommy reflected on her life before and during MHS, using the steady ticking of a clock to describe the invisible weight she endured during some of the hardest moments of her life.

“Today is not the end of an era,” Tommy said. “It is the coming of a renaissance. The clock is still ticking, not as a countdown but as a reminder that our time is *precious, purposeful, and powerful*.”

As the graduates turned their tassels, it marked a promise that the values of Our Pledge would continue far beyond the Center stage. They would carry them forward as part of the enduring legacy of our founders, embracing the responsibility to live those values out. In the choices they make, the lives they touch, and the ways they strive to create change, those principles will continue to lead their stories—now and for years to come. 🎓



Milton Hershey School Celebrates End of **Our Pledge** Year

Students and staff at Milton Hershey School celebrated the end of the 2025-26 school year through many community celebrations to acknowledge how far they have come and anticipate what the future will bring. 🎉



The Best Last Day Ever



On Wednesday, June 10, seniors celebrated their final day of classes with encouragement from MHS students, staff, and Hershey Entertainment & Resorts staff on their final walk to school.



Celebrating Our Annual Lifers



On Tuesday, June 2, MHS honored a special group of seniors from the Class of 2026 during its annual lifer celebration. The event recognized 32 students who began their MHS journey in pre-K, kindergarten, or first grade and have spent 12 or more years growing within the school community. Held in Memorial Hall—the very place where each lifer started their MHS experience—the evening served as a meaningful reflection on their shared history and lasting bonds.





Emotion Fills the Campus

On the final day of the school year, the MHS campus was filled with pride and happiness. Elementary and Middle Divisions celebrated with Fourth and Eighth Grade Promotion Ceremonies, while seniors had a memorable prom in Founders Hall inspired by the F. Scott Fitzgerald classic novel, "The Great Gatsby."



Recognizing All Our Greats

On Saturday, June 13, the Class of 2026, along with their parents/sponsors and Middle and Senior Division students, gathered for the Senior Awards Ceremony. Over 90 seniors received awards recognizing their academic achievements, extracurricular participation, and dedication to their community.



A Life Built on Gratitude: Ken Palovitz '50 Loves to Share the Hersheys' Story

Guests stepping into the Milton Hershey School Founders Hall Visitor Center are often greeted by a man who doesn't just represent the School—he embodies its history.

At 94 years old, Ken Palovitz '50 is often referred to as the Visitor Center's living exhibit. He's the first to greet visitors, offering a handshake, a smile, and a story that spans 81 years. His presence is a living reminder of the mission Milton and Catherine Hershey set in motion—and the lives that have been forever changed because of it.

"I was a lucky one," Palovitz says, with the humility of someone who knows exactly how different life could have been.

Born in the coal region outside Scranton, Pennsylvania, Palovitz's early years were marked by hardship. His father was killed in a mining accident when Palovitz was just 1 year and 10 months old, leaving his mother to raise two sons on her own. His older brother, 10 years his senior, would later survive Pearl Harbor and return home to help support the family.

Opportunity came unexpectedly.

A local landlord introduced Palovitz's mother to MHS through a brochure. At 13 years old, Palovitz was given a choice to leave behind the only life he knew and take a chance on something new.

"I saw woods and trees," he recalls of his first impressions of Hershey. "And I liked that. So I said, OK."

On Oct. 15, 1945, Palovitz enrolled at MHS—just two days after Milton Hershey's death. He would even attend the founder's funeral shortly after arriving, though at the time, he admits, he didn't fully understand the significance.

What he did understand was that life was about to change.

"You evolved into a way of life you weren't used to," he says.

That life was demanding. Students rose at 5:30 each morning, often heading straight to the barn. Winters were harsh, with boys working outdoors in thin clothing, milking cows and completing chores before breakfast. From there, the day continued with school, more work, and a constant rotation of clothing—barn clothes, school clothes, house clothes—sometimes changing outfits eight or nine times daily.

"It didn't make a lot of sense," he laughs today, "but that's what we did."



Ken Palovitz '50 says his Hershey Industrial School (now MHS) experience prepared him for a successful career in the Navy.



Discipline was a defining part of the experience. Palovitz lived in a student home with 24 boys, ranging from sixth grade through seniors, under the care of strict Mennonite houseparents. Older students set the tone, and expectations were clear: work hard, follow the rules, and learn responsibility.

But amid the structure and long days, something deeper took root—camaraderie.

“We were a band of brothers,” Palovitz says. “We were a family.”

Some of his fondest memories are simple ones: playing baseball, tending fields with mules named Pat, Mike, Fenny, and Rose, and finding warmth in the company of others. Those shared experiences built bonds that lasted a lifetime.

Outside the classroom, Palovitz found his place in activities like Boy Scouts and Glee Club. He jokes that he was “too clumsy” for varsity sports, but seizing opportunities in music and scouting would shape interests he carried well beyond graduation.

When Palovitz graduated in 1950, he left with a trunk of clothes and a strong foundation.

His trade was carpentry, and through the school's job placement program, he was connected with a contractor in nearby Palmyra.

The discipline, work ethic, and practical skills he gained at MHS carried him forward—from carpentry to a career that eventually included drafting work and professional advancement.

Moments like that defined his career—but Palovitz is quick to note where it all began.

“I have a soft spot in my heart for Milton Hershey,” he says. “He gave me a life I never would’ve had.”

Palovitz's wife Nancy, an administrative secretary in the Office of Communications and Marketing, knows that if she leaves her husband alone when they are traveling, she will likely find him talking to a stranger about MHS. His message to those new friends is simple.



“I tell them to be on the lookout for a child who can benefit from the School. It could save their life,” he said.

Today, that gratitude fuels his continued connection to the school.

As a Visitor Center host, Palovitz meets families at the beginning of their own journeys—many unsure, emotional, and facing difficult decisions. He sees reflections of his own story in theirs.

“When I see the mothers,” he says, “I hope those are tears of joy—knowing what they’re doing for their child.”

For Palovitz, every handshake is personal. Every story matters. And every visitor represents the possibility of a life changed—just like his was more than 80 years ago.

His message is simple, but powerful: take full advantage of every opportunity.

Because if there's one thing Palovitz knows, it's that a single decision made at 13 years old—can shape an entire lifetime. 🙏





Milton Hershey: A Lifetime of Patriotism

Milton S. Hershey's life closely paralleled the growth of the United States and demonstrated a deep and enduring patriotism. From his childhood experiences during the Civil War to his support of American soldiers in two world wars, Hershey's actions reflected a commitment to his country and its people.

One instance that many people may not be familiar with is that Mr. Hershey's life intersected with a major milestone in American history. In 1876, the nation celebrated its Centennial with a World's Fair style celebration in Philadelphia, marking 100 years of independence. That same year, Mr. Hershey launched his first confectionary store in the city. Although the business ultimately failed, the Centennial Exhibition exposed him to innovations, cultures, and ideas from around the world. For the first time Americans at the centennial were introduced to an exotic fruit called bananas, that had previously not been widespread, and Alexander Graham Bell displayed his first telephone. Mr. Hershey even used one of the buildings created for the Centennial on his business card reinforcing his ties to this momentous occasion.

During World War I, Mr. Hershey's patriotism was evident in his community leadership. Like many Americans, he supported government calls for conservation and self-sufficiency. The Hershey Press encouraged residents to plant "victory gardens" and adopt meatless and wheatless meals to support the war

effort. Community garden plots were established and residents were encouraged to grow their own food at home.

The significance of the war was not forgotten after peace was declared. Armistice Day, marking the end of World War I, became an important occasion in the Hershey community. Students at the Hershey Industrial School, now Milton Hershey School, commemorated the day of victory with special assemblies, as described in William Finnie's '42 letters home.



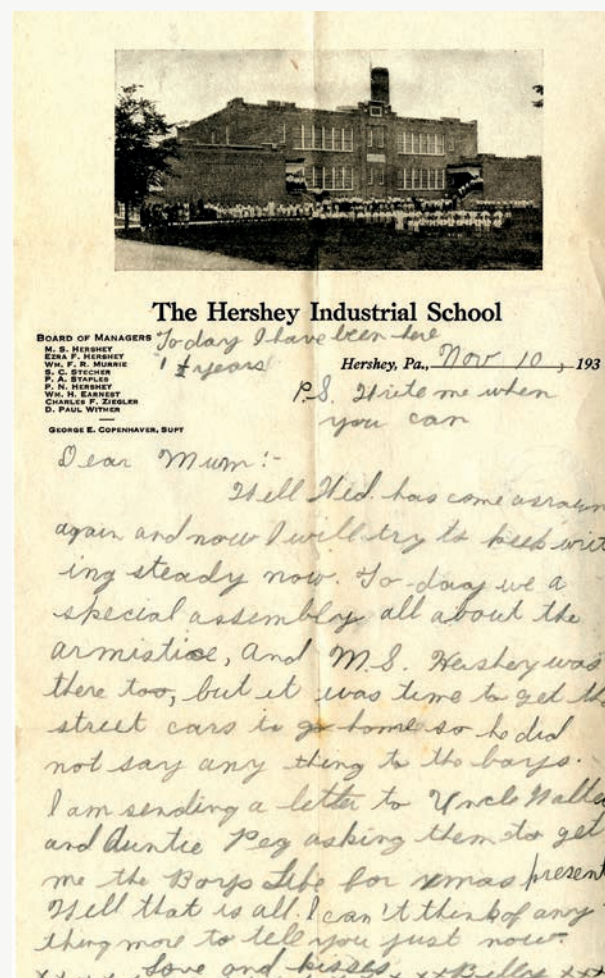


“If only people would live by the Golden Rule and the Ten Commandments, we would have no war.” –Milton S. Hershey

By 1926, as the United States marked its 150th anniversary, Milton Hershey continued to celebrate our nation by inviting famed composer John Philip Sousa to Hershey to perform. Sousa wrote an original composition to mark the occasion titled *Sesqui-Centennial* and showcased a new song titled *Fun at the Fair* composed by John Powell specifically for the occasion.

Not long after the nation's 150th anniversary, we found ourselves at war again and this time Mr. Hershey made what is often remembered as his greatest contribution during wartime when he partnered with the U.S. military to develop the Ration D bar, a specially designed chocolate bar intended for soldiers in the field. Unlike ordinary chocolate, the Ration D bar was formulated to be heat-resistant and nutritionally dense. Hershey's work in producing these bars and other chocolate products supported American troops around the globe and earned the company recognition for its wartime service.

His service continued back at home as well with the addition of the Golden Rule and the Ten Commandments in each student home. His life is a powerful reminder that dedication to one's country can take many forms and we are sure if he were with us today, he would continue his legacy of service to his nation in celebration of *America 250*. 🇺🇸



From Asylum to Achievement: An MHS Journey Shaped by Opportunity and Purpose



Milton Hershey School is in many ways a reflection of the American dream: a place where opportunity can change the course of a life. For Essa Bangura '01 and his family, seeking asylum in the United States meant leaving behind everything familiar in Liberia as civil war tore through their homeland. They arrived in search of what so many have in America—safety, stability, and the promise of a better tomorrow. But what awaited them in the United States was much more than distance from conflict. MHS became the place where Bangura's hope took shape, opening doors to opportunity and a future once confined solely to his imagination.

"My parents worked incredibly hard to provide for our family, often balancing multiple responsibilities while adjusting to life in a new country," Bangura shared.

When Bangura arrived at MHS in 1994 at the age of 12, he saw it as a place where he could access the kind of resources and support that would help create a brighter path forward. He was eager to receive a quality education, make new friends, and take advantage of opportunities that could help him succeed. Even so, those first days brought a mix of excitement, nervousness, and curiosity. He remembers being struck by the beauty of the campus and the size of the student homes, while also wondering what daily life would look like in this entirely new environment.

"I remember meeting other students from diverse backgrounds and realizing that many of us shared similar stories and challenges," he said. "That helped ease the nervousness about being away from my family."

During middle school, Bangura lived in student home Shawnee with houseparents Neal and Laurie Hauser, who helped him adjust and created a caring, supportive home environment. In high school, he moved to Crest Lane, where houseparents Butch and Carole Miller had a lasting impact on his development. Some of his favorite memories came from the simple moments that made life feel familiar and connected him with others, such as watching the TV show "Home Improvement," going bowling, taking camping trips, and spending hours playing basketball and football.

Athletics became one of the defining parts of Bangura's MHS experience. Competing on the varsity basketball, soccer, and track teams gave him the chance not only to grow as an athlete, but also to develop qualities that would be influential to the rest of his life: discipline, teamwork, commitment, and perseverance. Just as important were the mentors who challenged him to grow. Looking back, Bangura credits MHS with giving him both the foundation and the confidence to dream bigger. It was there that he began building the habits and relationships that would guide him in college, in his career, and in the life he would go on to create.

"MHS showed me that my circumstances did not have to define my future," Bangura said.

After graduating from MHS in 2001, he went on to attend Penn State University, where he earned a bachelor's degree in finance with minors in African and African American studies. He also graduated with honors from the Schreyer Honors College. From there, he moved to New Jersey and spent more than 15 years building a career in the financial services industry, working for various Fortune 500 companies and achieving many of the professional goals he had once set for himself.

But over time, Bangura felt called in a different direction—one rooted not only in ambition, but in service. Today, he is the co-owner of A Place At Home, an in-home care agency serving older adults and families in Monmouth County, New Jersey. The agency provides



“MHS showed me that my circumstances did not have to define my future.”

- Essa Bangura

non-medical home care services, including companionship and personal care support for seniors who need assistance with daily living. For Bangura, the work is deeply personal. His parents, after immigrating from Liberia, worked as aides in group homes and nursing facilities, and their caregiving jobs helped lay the foundation for his family's new life in America. Later, his family's experience caring for his grandmother after she suffered a stroke deepened his understanding of how essential compassionate, reliable care can be—not only for the person receiving it, but for the entire family surrounding them.

That full-circle connection between his past and present continues to impact the way Bangura leads today. In addition to running his business, he works as a community liaison, helping raise awareness about issues affecting older adults, including dementia, social isolation, and chronic health conditions. He sees his current role as an opportunity to make a direct impact—helping people remain safe and comfortable in their homes while supporting better outcomes for families in need. Looking ahead, he hopes to establish a nonprofit dedicated to stroke awareness, recovery, and caregiving support, including free home care services for families who might otherwise not be able to access them.



“In many ways, the values I learned at MHS continue to shape how I lead, serve others, and make decisions today,” Bangura said.

Although Bangura's career has taken him beyond campus, his connection to MHS has remained strong. He regularly returns for events such as Alumni Fellowship Weekend, Homecoming, and



Essa Bangura '01, center, reunites with his classmates Jonathan Mendez, Wellington Hall, Allen Bradford, and Daniel Aleshinloye during an MHS Homecoming event.

Commencement Ceremonies, and he especially values opportunities to speak with students during Career Days. For him, coming back is about investing in current students who are now taking the steps he once took. Each visit offers a chance to reconnect with former classmates, relive meaningful memories, and encourage the next generation as they begin thinking about their own futures.

“If my experiences can inspire someone else to believe in their potential and pursue their goals, then I feel I am honoring the investment that others made in me,” he said.

To graduating seniors, Bangura encourages them to set personal and professional goals, commit to consistent effort, and not leave outcomes to chance. He has learned that success is rarely linear. There will be setbacks, unexpected turns, and moments when plans need to change, and that is okay. What matters most is having the courage to adapt, the discipline to keep moving forward, and the wisdom to lean on mentors and trusted support systems along the way.

Bangura's story is a powerful example of what seizing every opportunity looks like. That little boy from Liberia, who was once searching for a future he could believe in, is now creating that for others—setting in motion a ripple effect of change that reaches far beyond himself. 🌊

ALUMNI News

A Note from the Director of Alumni Relations



Dear family,

It is an honor to stand among those who carry Milton Hershey's legacy—not just in memory, but in action. Each of you reflects the strength of this community and the life-changing impact of an MHS education.

This year reminded us why that legacy matters. As we celebrated 100 years of the School Pledge, we were called back to its meaning: a mirror to hold us accountable, a window to see and serve others, and a door that invites us to step boldly into our purpose.

We saw that promise come to life in the Class of 2026—219 graduates stepped forward, grounded in the 65 words that continue to guide us all.

We also witnessed the power of lives lived through Our Pledge in our 2025 Alumni of the Year, James E. Hanawalt '65 and John B. Hanawalt '70, who will now be joined by our 2026 Alumna of the Year, Maria Trinh Kraus '89. Each of their stories embodies what it means to lead in service of a greater mission, with honor and compassion, and to lift up those around them. I look forward to engaging with Maria and sharing her inspiring story with all of you.

I am excited to help you to reflect on how the values instilled in you during your time at the School help you open your window in service to our current students. When you return to campus, when you engage, mentor, and show up for our community, you bring our founders' vision to life. You remind our kids of what is possible. Your presence matters. Your story matters. And your continued love strengthens this entire campus in ways that cannot be measured.

So, I invite you—come back. Join us for the Cocoa Bean Game, Homecoming Weekend and other Career Focused Education programs on campus. Be part of something powerful as we continue to open doors of opportunity while building this legacy together for the next generation of Spartans.

I can't wait to see you back home!

With Spartan Pride,

Trachanda Garcia '02
Director of Alumni Relations

2025-26 Alumni Calendar

Please join Trachanda and your fellow alumni at these upcoming alumni events:

COCOA BEAN TAILGATE AND GAME

Aug. 28

Milton Hershey School and Hershey High School will face off for the 83rd Cocoa Bean Game. This year's competition is a home game so join us at Henry Hershey Field as we cheer on the Spartans to victory.

HOMECOMING WEEKEND

Sept. 17-20

If your class year ends in 1 or 6, it's your time to shine—reunion celebrations are happening this year! Get ready to reconnect, reminisce, and relive the memories with your fellow Milts.

FOUNDERS WEEK

Nov. 8-14

Celebrate the 117th anniversary of the founding of your Home and School with special activities. More information will be shared soon!

REGIONAL EVENTS

Regional events are being scheduled for the 2026-27 School Year. More information will be shared soon!



Scan the QR code to update your information.



Seniors and Alumni Celebrate Alumni Fellowship Weekend 2026

Milts from several generations returned to their Home and School April 24-26 for Alumni Fellowship Weekend, hosted by Milton Hershey School and the MHS Alumni Association.

Over three days, alumni engaged with current students through interactive campus experiences and career presentations.

The Alumni-Senior Brunch was a highlight, as always, bringing generations together by honoring both outstanding alumni and graduating seniors.

Events such as Alumni Fellowship Weekend give Milts an opportunity to pause and reflect on their own personal journeys.

The weekend also serves as an opportunity to express appreciation for those who helped you succeed.

Alumni are always welcome back to their Home and School. The next opportunity to gather as a community of Milts is Homecoming Weekend, Sept. 17-20. 📅



“Receiving this award means so much because it connects me back to the place and the people who helped shape who I am today.”

Tonji Grissinger '17, Academic Excellence Award Recipient



“When the world told me my story was a limitation, I used it as my credential. Where you come from doesn’t determine where you go—it determines how deep your roots grow.”

Brandon McCoy '08, Career Accomplishment Award Recipient



“Student home Englewood and the Bertrands instilled in a closed-minded kid a list of endless possibilities I never really saw in myself.”

Justin Torres '17, Community Service Award Recipient

Seizing Opportunities

Nicholas Ruggiero '73

In the days leading up to graduation, Nicholas Ruggiero '73 sat with his classmates on the hill in front of Senior Hall—now Catherine Hall—gazing out at the Hersheypark skyline and wondering what lay ahead. Milton Hershey School had already changed the course of his life, giving him lifelong friends, valuable life skills, and a sense of safety and stability after years of foster care placements.

When graduation night came, Ruggiero left MHS with what graduates were given at the time: a suitcase of clothes and \$100 in his pocket.

The future felt uncertain, but what awaited him was far from an ending. Instead, that moment marked the beginning of a life he would build with purpose—and one for which he remains deeply grateful.

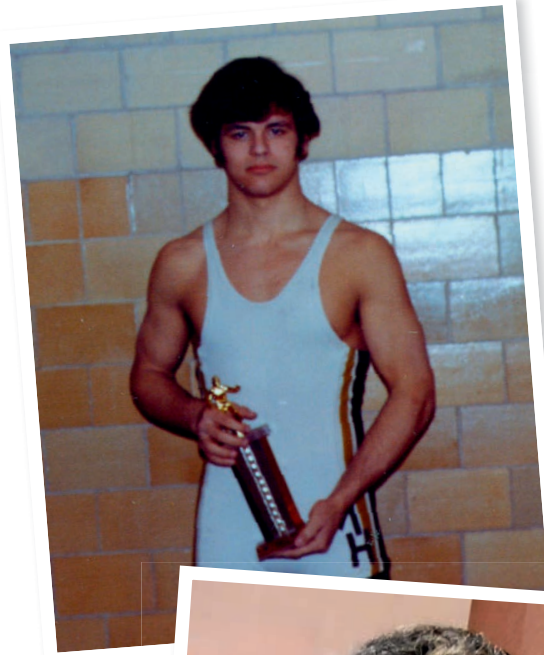
At MHS, Ruggiero found outlets that helped shape who he was becoming. Through swimming, wrestling, and Glee Club, he built discipline, confidence, and connection beyond the classroom. At the same time, MHS sparked his love for numbers and problem-solving through hands-on experiences like running the student bank and interning at the Founders Hall Computer Center. Those early lessons in precision, accountability, and organization stayed with him, guiding a career that would span accounting, IT, and insurance.

Today, as managing member and owner of Spartan General LLC and Spartan Health Plans, Ruggiero finds meaning in helping clients navigate complex insurance and financial decisions with the same thoughtfulness and care that took root at MHS.

“The foundation I built at MHS made it easier to adapt to new tools and apply them throughout my professional life,” Ruggiero said.

Years later, Ruggiero understands his time at MHS in a way he could not when he first graduated: it was the place that gave him not only an education, but also a unique community that helped him open his eyes to what was possible.

Today, he counts his daughter, Gia, as his biggest influence—someone who is always cheering him on and looking out for her dad. That sense of support echoes the foundation MHS instilled in him: to trust the people guiding you, stay humble, work hard, and make the most of what is within reach. 🙌



“The foundation I built at MHS made it easier to adapt to new skills and apply them throughout my professional life.”

Celebrating Alumni Success

Lori Livingston '92

Lori Livingston '92 didn't always believe in opportunity. When she first arrived at Milton Hershey School in the fall of 1986, just 11 years old and only a short drive from Harrisburg, it felt like a world away. She didn't understand what her mother had given her. All she knew was that she wanted to go home. For her entire first year, Livingston resisted—quietly at times, rebelliously at others—searching for a way out of a place she didn't yet appreciate.

Then something shifted.

It didn't happen all at once. It came in moments—a teacher placing a clarinet in her hands and telling her she could play, a choir rehearsal, a cheerleading practice. It came in the encouragement of adults who saw potential she couldn't yet see in herself. And it came in one unforgettable event: a student competition in the water. Livingston, terrified of swimming, stepped forward anyway. When she won, the applause echoed louder than anything she had known before.

That was the moment she began to understand.

Milton Hershey School wasn't holding her back—it was offering her everything. The school's mission had always been to give students the resources and confidence to shape their futures, but Livingston had to decide to accept it. Once she did, she immersed herself in every opportunity she could find. Band. Choir. Activities. Growth.

For the first time, she believed in herself.

That mindset followed her beyond graduation in 1992. At Penn State, she stumbled into an unexpected moment when someone suggested she try modeling. It sounded strange—maybe even uncomfortable—but Livingston remembered what she had learned. Try it. Step forward. Say yes.

That decision changed everything.

Her career didn't come easily. Opportunities were limited, and setbacks were real. But Livingston understood something many people miss: opportunities are not guaranteed. They appear quietly, sometimes painfully, and often only once. Missing one can mean losing a path forever.

She learned that lesson in the most profound way when a friend lost her life in a car accident Livingston was supposed to be in. In the wake of that tragedy, Livingston stepped into her friend's place, continuing her work. She carried that responsibility forward, building her career not just for herself, but in honor of someone who no longer could.

Years later, Livingston returns to MHS, not just as a success story, but

as a messenger. She seeks out the students who feel the way she once did—the ones who want to leave, who don't yet see the value of where they are.

And she tells them the truth:

"You don't have to understand every opportunity. You just have to take it. Because one day, those moments—big or small—become the difference between waiting for life to happen and truly living it". 📸



"You don't have to understand every opportunity. You just have to take it!"

Seizing Opportunities



"Take advantage of everything. You're surrounded by opportunities and people who want to see you succeed. The more you lean into that, the more it can shape your future."

Chelsey Hall '09

Chelsey Hall '09 is turning opportunity into impact as the Founder and Owner of The Parent Hub, a company designed to help working families navigate the realities of modern childcare. Through a model that blends flexible childcare, co-working space, and technology, Hall is tackling a challenge she experienced firsthand as a parent—creating solutions that allow families to better balance work and home life.

Her work is rooted in a deep sense of purpose. Before launching The Parent Hub, Hall built a career dedicated to service, helping raise millions of dollars for cancer research and founding a nationwide animal rescue nonprofit. Across every chapter, one theme remains consistent: a drive to solve problems and improve lives.

That mindset was shaped during her time at Milton Hershey School.

Arriving on campus in 2005 after experiencing instability in foster care, Hall found more than support—she found belief. Surrounded by mentors like her houseparents, Daniel and Amber Weiss, and her choir teacher, Mrs. Sheaffer, Hall developed the resilience, confidence, and leadership skills that now define her work.

"MHS showed me what was possible," she said. "It gave me the foundation to dream bigger and the confidence to go after it."

Through activities like theater, choir, and cheerleading, Hall learned to communicate, take risks, and step outside her comfort zone—skills she now uses daily as a business leader, strategist, and public speaker. What once felt like small opportunities became the building blocks for her future.

Hall credits MHS with not only changing her trajectory but also shaping how she leads today. The values of service, adaptability, and community are woven into her approach—whether she's building teams, supporting families, or growing her company.

Most importantly, her experience instilled a belief that access to opportunity can change everything.

That belief now fuels her work—and her advice to students.

"Take advantage of everything," Hall said. "You're surrounded by opportunities and people who want to see you succeed. The more you lean into that, the more it can shape your future."

For Hall, MHS was the launch pad. Today, she's building one for others. 🐘

Celebrating Alumni Success

*Take initiative, remain open to growth, and fully embrace the resources around you.

Shatik Medina '26

Shatik Medina '26 has always understood that opportunities are only valuable if you choose to act on them. After enrolling at Milton Hershey School during his sophomore year, Medina immediately set out to make the most of his time, especially in the Construction/Carpentry Career and Technical Education program. He recognized early on that every class, project, and interaction could serve as a steppingstone toward his future. He leaned into each experience, embracing challenges and seeking out ways to grow both personally and professionally. **His mindset was simple but powerful: opportunities are everywhere, but success depends on the willingness to seize them.**

Medina's success didn't happen by chance—it was the result of intentionally using every resource around him. He sought out mentors who could guide him, specifically those within the CTE program, where teachers connected him to real-world experiences, industry professionals, and valuable certifications.

Rather than limiting himself to one path, Medina expanded his learning by taking courses in two additional CTE program areas—Engineering and Business—building a broader skill set that aligned with his evolving career interests.

At the same time, he immersed himself in campus life—joining Future Business Leaders of America, participating in SkillsUSA, serving as student body president and a student ambassador, while also helping transform his wrestling team into one of the program's most successful in recent years.



Most importantly, he transformed what was once out of reach into a clear path to the future.

Before enrolling at MHS, college was never a tangible goal—but through the mentorship, exposure, and experiences he gained, it became not only possible but achievable.

In the fall, he will attend Drexel University to study construction management, a career fully aligned with what he's learned at MHS.

For Medina, each opportunity he had built on the last—networking connections led to internships, internships led to mentorship, and mentorship opened new doors—creating a powerful, compounding effect. His journey is a testament to what happens when students take initiative, remain open to growth, and fully embrace the resources around them. 🧡

A Note from the MHS Alumni Association President

Fellow Milts,

As another school year comes to a close, it is a time of celebration, reflection, and anticipation throughout the Milton Hershey School community.

On behalf of the Milton Hershey School Alumni Association, I extend our heartfelt congratulations to the Class of 2026. Graduation marks the end of one chapter and the beginning of another.

Whether your next step is college, the workforce, military service, or another path, remember that you are joining a lifelong network of Spartans ready to support you.

This year, we were honored to welcome our graduating seniors into the MHSAA family as Lifetime Members. **Your connection to Milton Hershey School does not end when you cross the stage—it continues for a lifetime. We encourage you to stay connected, get involved, and take advantage of the incredible alumni network that spans generations and reaches across the globe.**

As we celebrate our newest alumni, we are also looking ahead to one of the most anticipated events of the year—Homecoming 2026. Taking place September 17–20, Homecoming is an opportunity to reconnect with classmates, celebrate our shared heritage, and strengthen the bonds that make our community so special. Whether you return every year or have not been back in decades, I encourage you to make plans to attend.

As your Alumni Association continues its work, we remain focused on supporting alumni through programs such as Helping Hands, Cancer Care, scholarships, chapter engagement, and meaningful opportunities to connect. None of this would be possible without the dedication of our volunteers, chapter leaders, donors, and alumni who give their time and talents throughout the year.

Congratulations again to the Class of 2026. We are proud of you, excited for your future, and look forward to welcoming you into our alumni community.

Until we meet again at Homecoming—Go Spartans!



Mary Pratt-Lauchle '96
President
Milton Hershey School Alumni Association



MORE THAN A MOVIE, A LIVING LEGACY

This Thanksgiving, as audiences discover the true story behind the **HERSHEY** movie, MHS alumni have a unique opportunity to reconnect with the legacy that helped shape their own journey.

At HersheyLegacy.org, you'll find the stories of Milton and Catherine Hershey, the history of our School and town they built, and the enduring mission that continues to open doors for young people today.

Explore historical archives, photos, and resources that celebrate the people, places, and values that connect generations of Milton Hershey School graduates and discover how that legacy continues to grow.



**MILTON
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CLASS Notes



Maria Trinh Kraus '89 Alumna of the Year

Milton Hershey School has named Maria Trinh Kraus '89 as its 2026 Alumna of the Year, the highest honor bestowed upon a graduate in recognition of outstanding professional achievement, leadership, and service to the school and its students.

Kraus, a nationally respected business leader and chief financial officer of Wedgewood Pharmacy, is being recognized for her exceptional strategic leadership, deep commitment to the MHS mission, and lasting impact on generations of students.

Her influence extends far beyond the corporate world. Since 2018, Kraus has served on the boards of MHS, Hershey Trust Company, The Hershey Company, and The M.S. Hershey Foundation.

She is pictured with her sister, Dr. Mary Trinh Pentel '86, who was named the first female MHS Alumna of the Year in 2009. 🏆

1960s

Raymond Winward '60, of Waldport, Oregon, is presently recovering from two cancers, which are both in remission. He and his wife live on the Oregon Coast and are enjoying their retirement years. He adds "I am forever indebted to MHS for the foundation of life they honored me with, back in the 1950s."

Stanley Hyman '61, of Charlotte, North Carolina, retired from a 45-year radio and TV broadcasting career during which he became the first morning TV news anchor in Philadelphia history, debuting '3-Today' on KYW-TV in 1980. He also anchored the news at CBS Miami. Post-retirement, Stanley acquired a real estate license and began a second career investing in ocean resort properties. He has been married to Irene for 60 years. They have two children and three grandchildren.

Paul Schoolik '69, of Burlington, New Jersey, is enjoying not having to get up at 5:30 in the morning!

1970s

Rick Staniszewski '72, of San Diego, California, is enjoying his time daily with his wife and his two Akitas. He will turn 72 in July—time passes quickly! He wishes enjoyment and good health to all of his fellow alumni.

Nick Ruggiero '73, moved to Las Vegas, Nevada, in 1994 and has enjoyed his life there since. He became an appointed agent with Humana, United Healthcare and Aetna for their Medicare products, and became appointed with various Life Insurance companies to now offer life and annuity products. Recent accidental injuries have severely limited his mobility.

1980s

John Foley '83, of Hershey, Pennsylvania, recently opened the Hillside Wellness Center, a residential treatment facility in Fallsington, Pennsylvania.

Patty Norman '83, of Georgetown, Texas, started a new position as Front Desk Supervisor-Fairfield Inn at MC Hospitality Group.

Justin Wayns '86, of Westminster, California, is looking forward to his daughter graduating this May from Boise State University with a bachelor's in communications and marketing, and also getting married this October and making a home for herself in the Boise, Idaho area.

Stacie Gordon '87, of Ellington, Connecticut, accepted the role of Vice President of Sales, Northern Link with The Link Companies, and is grateful to work alongside an exceptionally talented team.

Bobby Carr '88, of Fort Mill, South Carolina, started a new position as Postmaster with the United States Postal Service.



President Peter G. Gurt '85 visited alumni living in the Las Vegas area on May 23 and hosted a special event, *Our Pledge Continues: Alumni Reception*, at The Bellagio Hotel & Casino. The opportunity brought a little of the Sweetest Place on Earth® to the bright lights and big energy of the Strip.

Vern Robinson '89, of Triangle, Virginia, started a new position as a Licensed Associate Real Estate Broker at Samson Properties.

Kyle Stromberg '89, of Middletown, Delaware, is happy to share that he will be joining VES LLC as a Technical Sales Manager.

1990s

Adam Bryson '90, of Stuttgart, Germany, retired on April 1, 2025 as a Colonel (O6) with 33 years of service in the Marine Corps. He moved to Stuttgart, Germany in August 2025.

Amy Powell '90, of Ephrata, Pennsylvania, is currently pursuing her Master of Arts in Law from Regent University School of Law.



Alumni Share Our Pledge Lessons

During Commencement Weekend, alumni joined student homes and houseparents to bring Compass Project lessons to life. Through meaningful conversations and reflections on Celebrating Yourself and Review & Reflect, they encouraged personal growth, connection, and self-discovery by linking social skills and healthy relationships to the school-year theme, Our Pledge. 📖

Michele Smith '90, of Seattle, Washington, was honored to be named to the 2026 Impact Icons list by Parkes Philanthropy.

Deanna Slamans '91, of Hummelstown, Pennsylvania, published her book "The Trademark Blitz" about securing the trademark for her apparel brand, Tush Push.

Deesha Dyer '95, of Bethesda, Maryland, received the EmpowerHER Award from the Giving Foundation for Women & Children.

Monica Williams '98, of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, is the first female of any race to serve as the Deputy Chief Assessor for Philadelphia's Assessment Office.

2000s

Rita Maldonado '01, of Moab, Utah, had her life and work honored by the Smithsonian Museum of American History through the inclusion of her battle-damaged Army backpack and water bottle.

Joe Hotagua '02, of Brooklyn, New York, is happy to share that he is starting a position as Vice President Strategic Partnerships at Ionic Studios.

Mai-Linh Tran '04, of Charleston, South Carolina, got married on April 12, 2026.



In March, alumni inspired Elementary Division students at Go R.E.D. (Read Every Day) Family Reading Night—an event that helps to promote literacy in elementary-aged students. MHS alumni returned to campus to read books that showcase their career path.

Cassie Razzi '05, of Jenkintown, Pennsylvania, is excited and honored to be appointed to the 2026 Destinations International Social Impact Committee.

Melissa Goodfriend '07, of Bothell, Washington, celebrated three years with The Pokémon Company International and became Esports Manager this year.

Hector Rivera '07, of New Castle, Delaware, shared, "MHS has made a lasting impact in my life, and I am forever grateful for the connections I've made at MHS."

2010s

Alan Zunun '11, of Newark, Delaware, started a new position as Sr. Business Control Specialist at Bank of America.

Kennae McCollum '16, of Tampa, Florida, loves traveling, going for walks, cooking, reading, going to the cinema, and being a girly girl. She wanted to share, "I miss you guys!"

Devyn Morrison '16, of Austin, Texas, is excited to start a new role as Regional Director – Franchise Openings with IHG.

Alexander Radetsky '16, of Asbury Park, New Jersey, completed his MICS program at the UC Berkeley School of Information.

Gabby Elliott '17, of Washington, DC, was promoted to Sr. Associate, Program Manager at JPMorgan Chase, and is proud to be a part of the firm's Market Leadership Team program.

Alyssa Morris '17, of Sunbury, Pennsylvania, wants to share that she feels like she finally got her life on track.

Xavier Oliver '18, of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, works as a family success advocate for Catherine Hershey Schools for Early Learning. In addition, he was given the opportunity to be a seasonal coach for MHS football. He relocated to Central Pennsylvania from Philadelphia a little over a year ago.

2020s

Michael Shorlo '20, of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, graduated Summa Cum Laude from Shippensburg University with a bachelor's in finance and a minor in sociology.

Kenny Casey '21, of Bally, Pennsylvania, is proud and grateful to return to Milton Hershey School as an AEE Land Support / Agriculturalist.

Celeste de la Rosa Guerrero '21, of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, is honored and excited to be joining the Host City Management Team for the 2026 FIFA World Cup in Atlanta, Georgia.

Elijah Espailat '21, of Palmyra, Pennsylvania, is excited to be returning to The Hershey Company this summer for his second internship, this time with Talent Acquisition.



MHS Alumni recently gathered in Chester County, Pennsylvania, to reconnect with fellow alumni, hear updates from campus, and spend time together as an MHS community. Check mhsalum.org for future opportunities.

Ediany Gonzalez '23, of Pottstown, Pennsylvania, graduated from Dickinson College with a bachelor's in history and Spanish. She is also proud to say that she will be switching from National Guard status to Active-Duty US Army status.

Tyler Reichert '23, of Elizabethville, Pennsylvania, enjoys music, photography, and playing and teaching soccer, and plans to join the military at the end of the year.



MHS Honors the Fallen on Memorial Day

On Friday, May 22, Founders Hall once again welcomed the Milton Hershey School community within its walls to honor the men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice in service to the nation.

Keynote Speaker, MHS Media Relations Manager Dave Vagnoni, painted a deeply personal picture, drawing the audience into a childhood memory at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., where he stood beside his father—a veteran who rarely spoke about his experience but whose quiet search for familiar names at the time revealed the lasting weight of service and sacrifice.

The assembly also honored the life of Gold Star Alumnus Victor Kuhns, who was drafted into the U.S. Army and served as a cook in Vietnam. He died in 1966 at just 21 years old. 🕯️

Deaths

Robert Keller '47, of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, April 22, 2026

Albert Huebner '51, of Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, February 28, 2026

Dennis A. Krause '62, of Titusville, Pennsylvania, April 13, 2026

Keith A. Horning '65, of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, December 20, 2025

Kerry Schoolik '65, of Orlando, Florida, February 25, 2026

Allen Dove '65, of Mount Wolf, Pennsylvania, January 15, 2026

Charles Spicknall '68, of Hagerstown, Maryland, March 26, 2026

Mark Frey '73, of Berwick, Pennsylvania, December 25, 2025

Joseph Senser '74, of Edina, Minnesota, May 7, 2026

Nidair Collier '12 of York, Pennsylvania, May 1, 2026

Kevin Rogers '15 of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, January 27, 2026

Staff and Retiree Deaths

Judith Bubb passed away on March 13, 2026. She was a houseparent from February 1988 through April 1998 and again from January 2009 through May 2010. She is survived by her husband, Hobart "Butch" Bubb.

Eugene Hoffman passed away on May 24, 2026. He was a houseparent along with his wife Joyce for many years. Eugene was 100 years old.

Jean D. Lammondo Evans passed away on April 10, 2026. She was employed from August 1990 through July 2004 as a dental clinic staff administrative assistant.

Sandra L. Shellenhamer passed away on April 22, 2026. She served as a dining room worker and a cook from August 1980 through July 2011.

Arlene Yingst passed away on March 3, 2026. She started at MHS in February 1987 as an administrative assistant and retired in October 1995. She returned to serve MHS part-time as a relief receptionist and host in Admissions and the Founders Hall Visitors Center until August 2020.

Edwin D. Fisher passed away on June 7, 2026. He began working at MHS in August 1972 as a houseparent alongside his wife, Marlene, and served until his retirement in September 1999. A memorial service was held on June 13, 2026, at Heath-Anderson Funeral Home.

**Stay
Connected
with Your
MHS Family**

Whether you've moved, changed jobs, earned a new degree, or you'd like to share a Class Note, updating your information makes a big difference.



Scan the QR code or visit mhsalum.org/update to update your information.



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Calendar

August

28 Cocoa Bean Game,
Henry Hershey Field

November

8-14 Founders Week

All dates are tentative.
Please refer to **mhsalum.org**
and Spartan Minute for updates.

September

13 Milton Hershey's Birthday

17-20 Homecoming Weekend

*If your class year ends in 1 or 6, it's your time
to shine—reunion celebrations are happening
this year!*

December

31 Nomination deadline for the
2027 Spartan Hall of Fame

October

1 Nomination deadline for 2027
Alumni Achievement and
Alumni of the Year Awards

Spartans, stay in the loop and strengthen the network—scan the QR code now to
update your information or visit mhsalum.org/update.

