

## EAST HIGH SCHOOL

# George Kelly: "Let them eat cake"

Retiring teacher gives Class of 2006 ingredients to a successful, happy life

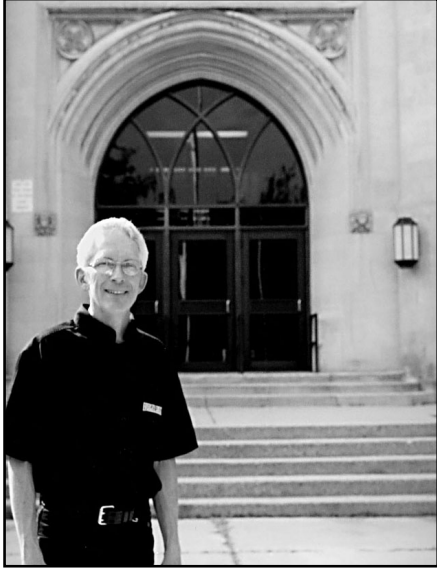


Photo by Carla Shedivy

Retiring teacher George Kelly at the doors of East High School.

By Carla Shedivy

George Kelly is retiring from the East High Faculty after 36 years of teaching. The beloved English teacher was asked by the Class of 2006 to be its commencement speaker at graduation held on June 9. Mr. Kelly served as the chair of the English Department, TAG Coordinator, Mock Trial advisor and Chess Club Advisor. He was formerly a golf coach and a tennis coach at East. He is known for his countless hours reading and evaluating TAG

essays submitted each spring by the incoming freshman class and his tireless work helping students fill out college applications and accompanying essays. He is a popular member of the staff and, until this year, had performed the role of emcee at the faculty end-of-year luncheon.

At the commencement ceremony, Mr. Kelly offered up two cakes for the graduates to feast on during their celebrations. One was frosted with the words "So What? Big Deal. Who Cares?" Its ingredients were: fear, anger, envy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, aggressiveness, and superiority.

The other cake was frosted with the words "Congratulations! We're Proud of You. Well Done!" and contained the ingredients: joy, peace, love, hope, sharing, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, friendship, empathy, generosity, truth, and compassion. He then gave his farewell to the graduates, telling them that if they use the ingredients in the second cake, they will be proud of a life well lived.

Mr. Kelly started at East when he was 21 years old and the mall was still open. He served East through the open campus era of the 70s and the School of Excellence years under Milt McPike. He has been an extremely popular teacher, and passing by his

room at the end of each school year, one always found many seniors saying their good-byes — although this year they were a bit more tearful. Mr. Kelly has also taught night school for the past few years to returning students trying to complete their high school degree. He plans to continue teaching night school this fall. It is with great admiration and gratitude that the students and families of East say good-

bye to Mr. Kelly. We thank him for sharing his humor and his wisdom and leaving us with the ingredients for a successful life. However, he may have left out one very important ingredient, which he demonstrated every day: hard work.

Thanks, Mr. Kelly, for 36 years of outstanding service to East High School.

## Parent involvement a high priority for Harris

By Jennifer Fetterly

The Northside News

Last June, newly-hired East High Principal Alan Harris wasted no time in getting down to business.

Before summer was over Harris had completed listening sessions with African-American, Hmong and Hispanic parents. His goal was simple: to increase minority student parent participation.

But while the goal is simple, the solution is more of a challenge.

Harris said Madison East has the highest population of minority students (41 percent of the 1,800 plus student population) out of the four Madison high schools, but participation of minority students' parents remains low.

"We learned that it will take time to build trust from members of our community that have not felt connected," Harris said of the listening sessions. "We also learned that people choose to come to East High because of its diversity and the value that brings. The importance of connecting with all parents is the fact that regardless of the age of their students, parent involvement and support is a critical aspect of student success."

He said the school is striving to get more parent involvement in two key groups: The Madison East Booster Club and East High United.

The challenge has been finding the location, time and venue to get the word out to minority parents. Harris said East staff has tried to connect with parents through community meetings, and even one-on-one with in-home

visits to try to find out how to get more parents involved.

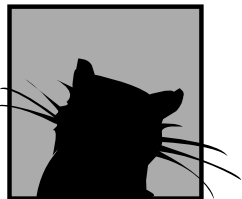
"If people have suggestions on how to better meet the needs of kids, we want to hear them," he said.

But parent involvement is just one of the goals that Harris is set to work on for the upcoming school year. He said last spring, parents, staff and the community met to talk about goals and priorities. The end result of the meetings was "Vision 2012." Harris said Vision 2012 created a goal for East that can be achieved by engaging students, staff, parents and the community.

The 2006-2007 school year will kick off with improving literacy and new academic intervention efforts. Students will also see a change in their schedule with a freshman-only closed campus lunch. Harris also said a renovation of the Margaret Williams Theatre will create a showpiece for the school.

After a year on the job, Harris said he has received positive feedback on the great things happening at East, but there is more to accomplish.

"Everyone has a vested interest in the success of students at East High, and we want them to be a part of establishing a vision that is more than words," Harris said. "That is the importance of Vision 2012, that we can confidently work toward a vision the community has established. In the end, we realized it is one of the priorities we must have. It will not be achieved in a month, but rather over time with a concerted effort to listen, learn, build trust and enhance our sense of community."



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