

# TOWER NEWS



Withrow Alumni • Box 8186 • Cincinnati, OH 45208 • 513-363-9085

Spring 2023

## “Seeds have been planted” for continued fine arts growth

by Christy McTigue Backley '66

The Fine Arts program at Withrow keeps on growing, thanks to generous alumni, dedicated staff, and talented and motivated young Tigers. New activities since the last *Tower News* was published include a holiday show in which all groups — band, orchestra and choir — performed; a live show (recorded and re-aired on Star 64) shot at Washington Park with Music Hall in the background and Withrow as a featured choir; and, standalone performances of *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* (a radio drama) and *A Christmas Carol*, acted, produced, and directed by the drama department headed by teacher Diane Roland with technical assistance from alumnus Zach Riggins '72 and his crew of 11. Spring activities include a spring concert (again featuring all music groups) and participation in the High School Shakespeare Festival, with Withrow students performing *Hamlet*.

Helping to keep the momentum going were a generous donation from Susan and Bill Schermer of timpani, bringing the total to four sets, and \$50 thousand worth of fire-resistant stage curtains and curtain materials from River City Scenic, a company that builds lighting and sets for cruise lines.

All music classes are now housed on the newly-renovated third-floor former study hall. Joining Ms. Roland and Mr. John Beasley, strings teacher, on the staff are two new teachers full of fresh energy and ideas.

### **Vocal music and choir**

The day Zach Sutton decided to leave rural northwest Georgia for Cincinnati was a good day for Withrow. The new full-time music teacher/choir director has spent the first part of the year establishing routines and teaching students to read music and to “hold their own voice” so they are not all singing the same note. Everyday Zach teaches three classes of 7<sup>th</sup> grade general

music and music theory, and two classes of choir. The ages of students in those two choirs range from 11 to 19. “A combined choir of 7<sup>th</sup>- through 12<sup>th</sup>-graders can be a challenge,” says Zach. “But the last few weeks have seen the choir come together as a family. The seniors have stepped up to mentor the younger students. This has been a good leadership opportunity for them, and it’s good for the younger students to see what’s ahead for them.”

One of the lessons Zach strives to impart to his students is that they can be whoever they choose to be. It looks as though many young singers have chosen to improve their craft. Twenty-two seventh graders have already signed up for choir next year. There will be a junior high choir of at least 40 members, and a separate senior high choir of at least 30. All will have a year of

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## President's Message:

# What your donations have done

*by Dave Blocksom '68*

### Sports

Withrow football is back. In his fourth season at the helm, Coach Kali Jones has taken the Tigers to the playoffs for the second year in a row. For the first time since the State playoff system was established in 1972, the Tigers made it to the district second round where they fell to Kings. Two seniors received DI college offers and four received DII offers. All told, our players were offered \$12.1 million in college scholarships.

### Academics

We are proud to announce that two of our seniors have received prestigious Marian Spencer Scholarships to UC. Jamiah Mixon and Jaylen Green will receive fully paid room, board and tuition, plus an all-expense paid study abroad, as well as enhanced advisor support. The scholarships are typically offered to one senior at each CPS high school, but we were honored this year with two recipients.

### Experiences

Through your generous donations we have been able to provide additional support and experiences for our students and staff this year. In March we funded a field trip to Kentucky State University for 80 of our students. The trip was led by Withrow Resource Coordinator James Robertson '99, who is a

member of our Alumni Board of Trustees. The students were able to tour the campus, enjoy a lunch in the school cafeteria, and watch the KSU-Central State basketball game. It was an eye-opening experience for our students to see an historic black university. We are also funding an April trip to Howard University so that our rugby team can participate in the HBCU Rugby Festival. As Coach Nathan Myers stated, "this will enable our players to experience a rugby community where there's a greater sense of shared culture and experiences" than they experience locally.

### The Arts

We continue to support our growing fine arts program as explained in Christy Backley's article in this edition. Specifically, we are now providing percussion, woodwind, and brass tutors for all of our band classes, as well as partnering with the Carlson-Berne Scholarship Fund, which provides tutors for our string classes.

### Healthy Living

Through our Feed Our Tigers program we continue to provide game day team meals for over 400 of our student athletes.

The mental health of students, teachers, and staff has

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been in the headlines ever since the Covid outbreak. Again, thanks to generous donations, we are providing mental health support to our Tiger family. Currently 80 students are receiving weekly mental health treatments, and we are funding weekly treatments for six students who do not have health insurance for mental health treatments. We have provided several catered lunches for our teachers and staff to show them our appreciation for the tough work they are doing.

### Technology

We have hired a website developer to update and completely redo our aging website. This work will be completed this summer, so please check it out in August ([withrowalumni.org](http://withrowalumni.org)).

### Thanks

In closing, I want to thank all our donors who make all this possible for our students and staff. Your dollars really are transformative. Just a reminder to those of you who are 73 or older and are required to take a Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) from your taxable retirement account: You can make a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) to Withrow Alumni Inc (WAI) in lieu of your RMD and you won't have to pay income taxes on the distribution. You can do this even if you take the federal standard deduction and don't itemize on your tax return. Of course, all other donations to WAI are tax deductible. Thank you for your support.

## 2022 WITHROW SPECIAL TIGERS

Gary Berlinger, Friend  
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**You become a Special Tiger when you make a one-time gift of \$1,000 or more. This donation significantly impacts our ability to support academic and extracurricular programs and conserve our campus and facility.**

## Update on Cincinnati Tennis Foundation

*by Nikki Cioffi, CTF*

Cincinnati Tennis Foundation (CTF) is a non-profit organization that promotes tennis as a lifelong sport for everyone, regardless of their socio-economic background, age, or ability. After resurfacing the Withrow courts in 2021 we were excited to begin rebuilding tennis in this community. In 2022, over 1700 Cincinnati area youth played tennis on the courts at Withrow participating in various tennis and educational programs. This past fall, CTF, in partnership with CPS, introduced a Junior High Girls club team at Withrow,

and it was a great success. Withrow alumnus Jerry Howard served as coach for the girls team. CTF is excited to kick off the boys' season during the week of April 15. In addition, CTF is launching the first Jr. High and High School pickleball league and is actively recruiting players from the Withrow community. In addition to the commitment to rebuild tennis programs at Withrow and other CPS schools, CTF works to maintain the courts with several new tennis and pickleball nets each year. We offer a variety

of tennis programs, summer camps, after-school programs, and tournaments throughout the year. By providing access to sports programs and education, CTF helps young people develop important life skills, such as teamwork, communication, and leadership.

For more information about how to support tennis at Withrow including our upcoming golf outing on May 12, find us at [www.cincinnati-tennis-foundation.org](http://www.cincinnati-tennis-foundation.org).

## Withrow – The first fifty years: GAA-The Founder and The Advisers

by Bob Linnenberg '63

Much has been written about the athletic prowess of the boys football, basketball and baseball teams at Withrow during the first fifty years. Little mention has been made of girls athletics. When the new East High opened in 1919 the athletic field may not have been finished and the middle gym open to the elements, but that did not curtail the physical education department from implementing a full program for both boys and girls. In the 1920s boys may have participated in interscholastic competition, but to a limited degree, so did the girls. Field hockey and swimming teams competed with other high schools and the freshman girls team from the University of Cincinnati. However, for reasons unknown, the girls swim team was abolished in 1926 and from that point on girls participated only in intramural competition.

Since its founding, the Girls Athletic Association (GAA) was always one of the largest clubs at Withrow. It was created to encourage girls to exercise and to develop an interest in physical pursuits that, hopefully, would last a lifetime. Sportsmanship and camaraderie were expressed goals of the organization. At first, competition was by class, with the senior girls playing against the sophomore girls, etc. There was also the occasional *PlayDay* with games with girl

groups from other schools. The girls and their advisers set up hockey, volleyball, basketball and softball teams for intramural play. Tennis, badminton, ping-pong, shuffleboard and horseshoes were popular sports along with archery, bowling, hiking and gymnastics. In the 1940s there was even a horseback riding club within the GAA. To raise money for all these activities, the girls sold the programs at varsity games along with many other items over the years. GAA also sponsored a school dance.

Participants in GAA activities were awarded points in each sport. The more their team, or the individual won, the more the points. Tallied at the end of the year, the girls with the most points would be honored at a banquet for all GAA members. Beginning in 1928 the senior who was judged to be the best all-around member would be selected as the Honor Girl for that year.

Withrow's GAA was founded in 1927 by physical education teacher Helen Holbrook Taylor. Miss Taylor, a graduate of the Sargent School of Physical Education in Cambridge, Massachusetts (since 1929 part of Boston University) was a native New Englander, born in New Hampshire and raised in Massachusetts. She came to Cincinnati to attend UC and was one of the original 1919 cohort of teachers at Withrow. Miss Taylor

headed the Physical Education department until 1935 when she was succeeded by Miss Dorothy Sachs. Miss Taylor had switched from teaching physical education to academics, teaching English, health and physiology. She remained as an adviser to GAA until she retired in 1963.

At her retirement, Miss Taylor returned to Massachusetts, where she had spent summers throughout her teaching career, to be close to her family.

A native Cincinnati and graduate of Woodward High School and the University of Cincinnati, Miss Sachs came to Withrow in the fall of 1927. At the time she took over the gym department in 1935, Miss Sachs had a "deep, dark secret" that she did not reveal until 1939. The secret was that Miss Sachs and Arthur Lally had eloped to Brookville, Indiana—in 1934. She was finally to be known as Mrs. Lally. They had eloped so that a marriage license application would not be published in the local newspapers. The Board of Education was leery about renewing teaching contracts of married female teachers of childbearing years. Miss Sachs met Mr. Lally on the Avon Fields golf course; another common bond was that Mr. Lally's sister, Miss Ella Lally, taught social studies at Withrow Junior High.

Known for yelling, "Hey, you!" at recalcitrant girls in gym class, Mrs. Lally remained head

of the girls physical education department until her retirement, also in 1963.

Dorothy Sachs Lally remained in Cincinnati after her retirement. By then a widow, she died in November of 1995, at the age of 94. She is buried in the Beth Hamedrash Hogodal Cemetery in Covedale.

Miss Taylor and Mrs. Lally were instrumental in moving GAA forward in the first 44 years, sponsoring and advising on many activities. One of the earliest of the activities consisted of Saturday morning hikes of five to fifteen miles. Popular from the early 1930s well into the 1950s, participants in these morning rambles also got GAA points for every mile they walked. While Mrs. Lally stayed in her gym, Miss Taylor found time to direct the pony chorus in the Minstrels and to be an adviser to Literatas, the literary club for freshman and sophomore girls. Miss Taylor also founded the Dance Club in 1920,

which lasted all the way through the first 50 years.

With Miss Taylor moving from physical education to English in 1935, Withrow welcomed Miss Grace Blasberg. A Hughes High School graduate, Miss Blasberg went to Ohio State, but transferred to and graduated from the University of Cincinnati in 1930. In her youth she had been very active in the Girl Scouts, attaining the rank of Golden Eaglet. She began her teaching career at Hartwell High School before moving to Withrow to teach physical education, health and first aid. She also advised the Bowling Club and managed the spring archery competitions. Not one for those morning hikes, her greatest joy was sleeping late on Saturday. In 1955 she stated that her secret ambition was "to live in Florida when I retire." Miss Blasberg did exactly that, retiring in 1966. She died in Miami in July 1998 at age 91.

During her career, Miss Blasberg was active in the Cincinnati Health and Physical Education Association. Writing on nutrition, she was published in *The Journal of School Health*. Her tenure at Withrow was not continuous as she took off two years, and returned to Withrow in September 1947.

Mabel Joyce Robinson was born in Hanna, Indiana, but considered Urbana, Ohio, as her hometown. A graduate of Wittenberg University, she came to Withrow in the fall of 1945 from Deer Park High School. Also qualified to teach English, Latin and biology, she stayed with physical education throughout her career, primarily in the Junior High. Also a GAA adviser, Miss Robinson was the faculty adviser to Dolphin Club and Junior Dolphin Club for many years. She also taught swimming and lifesaving after school and

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*Left: Miss Leslie, Mrs. Lally, Miss Taylor, Miss Blasberg.*

*Below: Miss Robinson*



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group singing experience under their belts.

Zach's plans include taking the choirs to competitions sponsored by the Ohio Music Educators Association (OMEA). At these adjudicated events, students receive valuable feedback and direction. He sees the potential for students to participate in an honor choir on district and even state levels. He plans to take the choirs to Kings Island in the spring for a multi-district Festival of Music. All these valuable experiences come at a price: for example, it costs approximately \$375 per student to cover hotels and meals at the state level. He'd also like to be able to buy T-shirts, stickers, and awards, which will help grow student interest in the program.

### **Instrumental music**

New band director Brandon Carter appreciated the warm welcome he received when he joined the staff after earning his degree in music education from Xavier University. But he needed no introduction to Withrow and no introduction to what it takes to build a band from the ground up. He was a member of the re-emerging Dater/West High band and helped with band programs during his student teaching.

"The previous director set us up well," he says. "My plan now is to keep establishing roots with the concert band because that is the basis for all the rest. Everybody needs the same foundation before they move on to jazz or marching band."

The entire band program

in 2022-23 comprises 70 students—a senior high band and two beginning bands.

Brandon hopes to have an intermediate band next year.

Some successes that he and his students have experienced this year include having the band and orchestra perform the alma mater along with the the choir. Three band students were nominated to perform this year with the Xavier University honor band. Unfortunately, two students became ill, so only one was able to finish — and perform with the best high school players in the city.

Like private lessons offered to the strings players through the Carlson Berne scholarship, private lessons, paid for by Withrow alumni, are offered to students learning woodwind, brass, and percussion instruments. Brandon says this is especially important for certain instruments — the oboe, for example— that are more difficult to learn. Withrow's oboe player receives extra private instruction to get her to performance level.

Continuity is one of Brandon's goals; he's anticipating progress next year. This year there were only three seniors in the band. All the 7<sup>th</sup> through 10<sup>th</sup> graders who participated will return.

Challenges he faces include those of a physical nature. All the instruments are on the third floor; percussion instruments, stand racks, and chairs can't fit into the elevators. "More hands aren't necessarily

better," Brandon says. "There's a certain way to move a piano that doesn't depend on the number of people available to help." Ideally, there would be safe storage in the tunnel and enough equipment to have a class set on the third floor where the classrooms are as well as a set stored in the tunnel.

Brandon's primary goal is to grow a marching band by increasing the number of players in the concert band. "We start with a drumline and then add a significant element each year. I am well aware of Withrow's music tradition, and I look forward to continuing that tradition. The seeds have been planted."

Alumnus Zach Riggins '72, the force behind the renaissance of fine arts at Withrow, concurs. "Things are moving in the right direction. Progress is slow, but that's alright as long as we keep moving."

### **Wish list**

- storage space
- acoustical paneling and carpet
- costumes
- props
- lighting

# In Memoriam: Frances Wilson Canty

by Bob Linnenberg '63



Withrow lost a loyal alumna on November 21, 2022, when Ohio Civil Rights Hall of Fame honoree Frances Lee Wilson Canty, a member of the Withrow class of 1957, passed away. While a student at Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial State University in Nashville, Frances took part in lunch counter and movie house sit-ins protesting the segregation imposed by governments in the southern United States.

She became active in the civil rights movement and took part in voter registration drives. In May 1961 a bus carrying Freedom Riders had been attacked in Anniston, Alabama, by a mob led by members of the Ku Klux Klan. The bus

was firebombed. On Mother's Day a second bus containing Freedom Riders was attacked in Birmingham, Alabama. Because of this and the earlier assault, Frances and nine other students left Nashville for Jackson, Mississippi, to continue the struggle. Frances had become a Freedom Rider herself.

The Freedom Riders were primarily student activists, both white and Black, who rode buses to protest segregation on interstate buses and bus stations in the south. Freedom Rides were initially organized by the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) because the segregation of interstate transportation facilities had been declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court, but was not being enforced in the southern states.

In Mississippi, Frances and the other Freedom Riders were soon arrested and jailed for 60 days for attempting to integrate the "Whites Only" bus station waiting room. Due to overcrowding in the Jackson jail, they were transferred to the notorious Parchman Penitentiary where the Freedom Riders were housed on Death Row.

After her release on bail, she returned to Nashville where she found that because of her involvement in the civil rights movement, she had been expelled from Tennessee A & I, a predominately Black institution. Frances then returned to Cincinnati, married, and raised five children while having a long career at the Internal Revenue Service.

In 2011 Frances was honored with an honorary degree from Tennessee State University, the successor to Tennessee A & I. In 2014 she was inducted into the Ohio Civil Rights Hall of Fame.

Also in 2011, President Barak Obama issued a proclamation honoring the 50th anniversary of the non-violent integration efforts of the Freedom Riders. Frances was able to meet the president and soon after was invited to appear on the Oprah Winfrey show where the Freedom Riders were honored for their part in the civil rights movement. There is now a Freedom Riders National Monument in Anniston, Alabama.

Withrow is justly proud of Frances Wilson Canty and honored by her role in making our nation a better place.

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in summer sessions at Withrow. She retired from teaching in 1971 and died in September 1996 at age 84. She is buried in Woodsfield, Ohio.

In her senior year at Miami University, Elizabeth Leslie served as a "cadet" gym teacher at Withrow during the 1953-54 school year. After graduation,

she began her full-time job at Withrow in September 1954. She was also a swimming and lifesaving instructor and an advisor to Dolphin Club. In 1955 she claimed that her secret ambition was "to swim the English Channel not only over but back too." Like Mrs. Lally, Miss Leslie loved to play golf and bowl

in her spare time. Miss Leslie was also the faculty advisor to the cheerleaders and a GAA advisor.

After 30 years at Withrow, Miss Leslie retired in 1984. She died in August 1995 at age 63 and is buried in her native Zanesville, Ohio.

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# Class of '73 Living Golden Reunion

*Friday, September 15*

Meet & Greet • 7-10 • Delta Hotel by Marriott • 11320 Chester Rd

*Saturday, September 16*

Withrow Tour 10-12

Reunion Dinner Dance • 6:30-10 • Delta Hotel

*Sunday, September 17*

Farewell Gathering • 11-3 • Third Eye Brewery • 11276 Chester Rd

\$85/person

For more information: [1973classofwithrow@gmail.com](mailto:1973classofwithrow@gmail.com)

<https://withrowalumni.org/events/class-of-1973-50th-reunion-fri-sat-sun-sept-1516-17-2023/>