

TOWER NEWS



Withrow Alumni • Box 8186 • Cincinnati, OH 45208 • (513) 363-9085 • withrowalumni.org

Spring 2019

Happy 100th Birthday, Withrow!

A brief synopsis of 100 years at the most beautiful high school in Ohio

The Beginning

In 1913, the Board of Education purchased 27 acres at the junction of Erie and Madison Roads to develop East High School. Ground was broken in December 1915, but construction was delayed because of World War I and the building wasn't completed until 1919. The school presented an imposing appearance. The architecture was a departure from the customary school type—a combination of northern and southern colonial in a campus setting. The low red brick building with its pilloried

portico, lofty tower, and graceful bridge cost \$1,350,000 to build, and in September 1919, the school opened with an enrollment of 1,300 students and 65 teachers

When school reopened in September of 1920, several changes had taken place. The corridors had lockers instead of holes in the walls, two gyms and two swimming pools were ready for use, and the football stadium, with a capacity of 8,000, was ready. A magnificent pipe organ was donated by Mr. Richard K. LeBlond, whose company was located at Ed-

wards and Madison Roads. The *Tower News* was organized in 1921 as a biweekly paper supported entirely by subscriptions. In 1929 the tennis courts were installed.

In 1924, the Board of High Schools honored the retiring president of the Board of Education, Dr. John Withrow, by changing the name of East High School to Withrow High School. In 1925, Withrow had an enrollment of 2,100 and a faculty of 90. In 1927, the 7th and 8th grades were added to the school.

(Continued on page 4)

Celebrate at Centennial Weekend Events

Join us as we commemorate 100 years of excellence at the *Withrow Centennial Celebration Weekend*, held Friday, September 6–Sunday, September 8, 2019. The celebration encompasses a series of events that honor the rich and storied traditions of Tigertown, while raising funds to benefit current programs and scholarship opportunities at the school.

The celebration weekend kicks off with the *Centennial Golf Outing* on Friday, 10:00 a.m.-5:30 p.m. at

Reeves Golf Course at Lunken Airport. Featuring individual play and Foursome Team Entry, proceeds from this fun-filled afternoon will benefit the Major R. McNeil Scholarship Fund. Registration for the *Centennial Golf Outing* begins at 10:00 a.m. with tee-off times starting at 11:00 a.m. Individual entry fee is \$100 and Foursome Team entry fee is \$360. Fees also include lunch, drinks, and Centennial memorabilia. Moving into Saturday, festivities

continue to flow as we host the *Centennial Showdown Alumni Basketball Game*, featuring the Withrow Alumni All-Stars vs. crosstown rivals, the Woodward Bulldogs, from noon-3:00 p.m. in the Paw Pavilion (Withrow's gym). This once-in-a-lifetime basketball showdown features former Withrow All-Americans Yancy Gates, Chris Knight, Anthony McBride, Rozelle Nix, Devin Williams, Tiger Hoop Legend Rick

(Continued on page 5)

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Mark Anderson '72
John Apgar '68
Christy McTigue Backley '66
Stephanie Williams Ball '88
Dave Blocksom '68
Nikki Bolden '84
Sandra Dangerfield Butler '74
Darius Davis '08
Joe Dehner '66
Cecil Dewberry '59
Patty Hoskins Dilg '71
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Dominique Francisco '10
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BOARD OF TRUSTEES EMERITUS

Faithfully served 12 years or longer on the Board.

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Greetings from the Principal's Desk

by **JERRON GRAY**

As we embark upon our 100th Centennial Celebration year, it is with great honor and excitement that I am addressing you at such a time as this!

This being my first year as principal—leading almost 1,300 students—I see Withrow University High School positioned for greatness. We are forging a new era of culture and academic identity enhancing our fine arts, athletics, and academic programs.

It's inspiring to see Withrow alumni coming together to plan the various events during the Centennial year. We are seeking your support for all of these events. The *Withrow Sounds Again* performances on May 9–11 are an important first step in enhancing the music and theater opportunities available at Withrow. The events during the Centennial Weekend, September 6 – September 8, 2019, will benefit Withrow's athletics and the School of Business.

Strong athletic and music programs are important to student development, but it's especially important that Withrow have a strong academic identity. Therefore, we'll be enhancing our current Business Career Technical



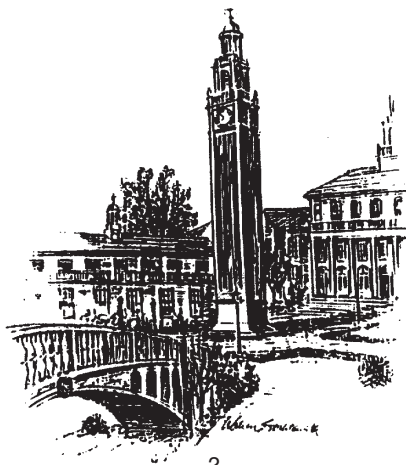
program to prepare our students for college and the workforce marketplace of the 21st Century.

Our aim is to develop, equip, and prepare gifted and talented students to thrive and excel in any arena they encounter—making Withrow University High School a premier high school program in the city, state, and country. We currently have a strong Business Management Pathway and will be adding a Business Logistics Pathway next year—both pathways culminating in opportunities for our students to be engaged in paid internships or apprenticeship programs within our local business community.

It is our hope that you will join us in continuing this 100-year legacy of excellence by supporting our students in any way that you can—enabling them to experience academically, artistically, and athletically what it truly means to be a Withrow Tiger.

I so look forward to meeting each of you during our Centennial Celebration Events. Please, make plans to be there: it will be a celebration that you will remember for a lifetime! Whatever support you can provide will be greatly appreciated!

Once a Tiger, Always a Tiger!!!
See you at the Centennial Events!





Legendary high school musical returns May 9–11

Mark your calendar for the revival of Withrow’s great musical revue! Established in 1930 as the *Withrow Minstrels* and continued as *The Sounds of Withrow*, the legendary musical performance was a high-level production, which featured grand sets, spectacular lighting, special effects, lavish costumes, a large orchestra playing popular and classical music, spectacular staging, and eye-popping dancing.

This year’s show, *Withrow Sounds Again*, will feature a blend of student and non-student performers who will entertain with classics from the past, as well as songs from the Broadway smash hit *Hamilton*. Coupled with comedic skits, dancers, and soloists, the program will also high-

light music that celebrates the diversity of Withrow’s population, such as Latin, gospel, sounds of love through the years, jazz, and favorite piano performances.

The prolific tradition of musical variety shows ran from 1930 to 1965 under the baton of George “Smittie” Smith. It continued from 1966 to 1984 under the direction of Gilbert Curtis, James W. Parke, Carolyn Mitchell, Jerome Johnson, and others. Except for attempts in the 1990s and early millennial years to revive a musical show, music and theater have been largely absent from Withrow’s auditorium for more than 35 years. Over the last 18 months, with the help of Cincinnati Public Schools, the Withrow Alumni Asso-

ciation, alumni volunteers, and others, much of the lighting and sound equipment and infrastructure have been restored. Other improvements have been made to the auditorium so that it is again suitable for producing large stage shows.

Performances for *Withrow Sounds Again* begin Thursday, May 9, at 7:30 p.m., complete with opening night festivities. The show runs Friday, May 10, and Saturday, May 11, at 8:00 p.m. Tickets are available at www.withrowsoundsagain.org or may be purchased at the school. Adults: \$20; Children \$12 and under: \$12.

All proceeds go to the development of the Withrow Fine Arts Program.



Singers and dancers prepare for *Withrow Sounds Again*.



**Withdraw
Class of 1969 50th Reunion
July 12-13, 2019**

Quality Hotel Blue Ash
5901 Pfeiffer Road,
Cincinnati, OH 45242

Friday, July 12

Happy Hour 6-9 p.m. –hotel lobby lounge

Saturday, July 13

Withdraw Tour, 10 a.m. – (meet at the gym)
Dinner Dance – 7 p.m. – 1 a.m., hotel

Optional:

Sunday, July 14

Brunch and farewell, 11 a.m., Town Square Atrium, hotel

Information: Withdraw.class69@gmail.com

Please note:

Many classes are holding reunions in conjunction
with Centennial Celebration events.

2018 WAI Spending

Academic total - \$8,768

Tiger Diner	2,007
Taiwan student trip	1,500
Cook Scholarship	1,500
Senior Awards Day food	20
Awards assembly	102
Senior Bridge Walk	524
ELL students	884
Chong Leadership Award	250
Reading Center	1,439
Senior Community Service lunch	321
PTSA scholarships	221

Sports and Arts total - \$9,398

Withdraw Hall of Fame	582
Boys basketball team meals	738
Band piano tuned	235
After school music instruction	1,200
Boys basketball camps	615
Soccer team	1,629
Football team meals	1,140
Gym displays	707
Girls basketball team meals	365
Clean band uniforms	284
Cheerleading camp	1,000
Drama production	903

School Staff Support total - \$9,420

Financial aid counselor	1,850
Administrator/teachers lunches	3,869
Teacher Appreciation week	1,104
Retired staff Centennial luncheon	2,597

Campus Maintenance total - \$8,070

Landscaping maintenance	3,292
Tower clock maintenance	630
Front American flag and stadium Ohio flag	291
Centennial banners	1,955
Alumni Center	170
Paint front flag poles	980
Auditorium up grades	752

Operations total - \$15,850

USPS	506
Tower News	9,171
Tax filing	2,085
Data base software	3,352
Supplies	735

Grand total: Total \$51,506

A brief synopsis of 100 years at the most beautiful high school in Ohio *(Continued from page 1)*

The Tower

While the campus and its buildings are impressive, it is the clock tower that symbolizes Withrow. Standing 114 feet high, it is the center of the entire school plan. Inside the tower are 110 steps leading to windows above the clock, where, on a clear day, one can see for miles.

The Bridge

Just as iconic as the tower is the “arching bridge” over the “shaded valley.” City engineers condemned the bridge as unsafe in 1980, but the Friends of Withrow coordinated the effort to raise \$150,000 for its restoration. The restored bridge was rededicated in 1982 in honor of Nora Mae Nolan, beloved former English teacher. These renovation efforts led to the establishment of the Friends of Withrow in 1985. (In 1995 that organization transitioned into Withrow Alumni, Inc.) A second restoration of the bridge was completed in 2011.



The Changes

The pools were closed in the 1990s because they did not meet required health standards and were filled in during the school year 2005–06. With the construction of Peoples Junior High (at the site that is now Clark Montessori High School), 1969–70 was the last year for the jun-

ior high. The outside appearance of Withrow changed very little over the years until the completion of the vocational building in 1974. Part of this renovation was the construction of a “bridge” building that connected the old junior high with the main building. In the fall and winter of 2006–07, the old junior high, the boiler room, and the vocational ed “bridge” building were removed to provide additional parking. That same year a \$43 million renovation of the entire school took place.

After the renovations, the cafeteria was moved to the old girls’ gym, and the kitchen was established in the old middle gym. In the old boys’ gym, the track and seating were removed and new seating was installed on one side. That gym is now used for gym classes and practices. The new gym was completed in 2006, with a capacity of 1,500, and Withrow held its first home basketball games on campus since 1976. A fitness center with state-of-the-art equipment and a

weight room were established off the old tunnel above what used to be the boys swimming pool.

The Band and the Fields

The alumni also support the band. Currently, Withrow has one of only two marching bands in all of CPS (the other is Walnut Hills). The synthetic football field was donated by the Cincinnati Bengals. There are a new score board, new lights (lights were first installed in the stadium in 1965), and a new track (also available for community use). A new synthetic football field was installed in 2015, again paid for by the Bengals. As part of the MLB All-Star game in Cincinnati in 2015, MLB and the Reds provided \$500,000 for the installation of a new baseball (boys') and softball (girls') field, each with their own scoreboard. The baseball field was dedicated to Withrow grad and Reds Hall of Fame player Ron Oester ('74).

Academics

In the school year 2002–03, Withrow opened with three schools: the University School as a college prepar-

atory school with 200 ninth graders; the International School (offering an International Baccalaureate degree—one of only three schools in Ohio offering IB at that time) for all four years; and the Traditional School for 10th through 12th grades. Each subsequent year, the University School added a class and the Traditional School lost a class. In the school year of 2011–12, the remaining two schools were combined and named Withrow University High School. After an absence of forty plus years, the 2013–14 school year once again saw the presence of 7th- and 8th-graders on the Withrow campus.

The Community

In 2013 a Health Clinic was opened in the school, not only to serve Withrow students, but also to serve other east side CPS schools and qualifying residents. It is operated and funded by the Cincinnati Health Department. In 2015 a Dental Clinic was opened in the old choir room to serve the same patients. It is also operated and funded by the Health Department.

Changes and Improvements Continue

WAI is committed to supporting our alma mater—its students, its programs, its State Historic Register status, and its legacy. We thank you for your donations. To read more about Withrow's history, and to see where your dollars are going, check out www.withrowalumni.org.

How to help with Centennial celebrations

Send an email to Withrowalum@gmail.com to volunteer for:

- Centennial Showdown Alumni Basketball Game
- Centennial Golf Outing
- Centennial Evening Dinner

To volunteer for *Withrow Sounds Again*, call Zach Riggins at 513-652-5080 or email Withrowalum@gmail.com.

**Once A Tiger,
Always A Tiger!**

Celebrate at Centennial Weekend Events *(Continued from page 1)*

Calloway, Coach George Jackson, and more. Additionally, the halftime showcase includes an epic slam-dunk contest, a 3-point shootout, plus performances from the Withrow Cheerleaders and Band! Tickets are \$5. **GET READY FOR THE SHOW!**

The weekend culminates in the *Centennial Gala* held in the Grand Ballroom/second floor of JACK Casino, beginning at 6:00 p.m. Hosted by our very own Tiger Alum and former WCPO anchor Jenell Walton, we will commemorate 100 years of prolific Withrow history, as well as honor a few Tigers who made

significant contributions along the journey. Doors open at 5:00 p.m. and dinner begins promptly at 6:15 p.m. Tickets are \$75.

Finally, we close out the epic weekend with the *Centennial Brunch Around the Tower* and *School Tours*, noon-3:00 p.m. We will offer a delectable brunch buffet in our beautiful front Tower courtyard coupled with tours around Withrow's illustrious campus. Tickets for the brunch are \$20.

Online ticket sales begin March 23 on the Withrow Alumni Association website <https://withrowalumni.org/>

and will run until July 1, 2019. For cash sales, the Tiger Ticket Committee will be available for ticket sales at the school on the following Saturdays: April 13, May 11, June 8, and June 29, from noon-4:00 p.m. If you are celebrating a milestone reunion year (full or half), please coordinate with your class representative for Gala seats.

Please continue to check the site and follow our Facebook page, [WithrowHSAlumni](https://www.facebook.com/WithrowHSAlumni), for ongoing information. If you have more questions, please feel free to email withrowcentennial@gmail.com.

The History of The Sounds of Withrow

by **ZACHERY DeCARLOS RIGGINS '72** Producer and Director of *Withrow Sounds Again*

The retirement of George G. “Smittie” Smith in 1965 brought the end of the golden age of 35 years of Withrow’s musical Minstrels. They were much beloved shows that helped to establish Withrow’s music program as “The nation’s original high school Musical Arts Program.” The challenge then became how to follow this long and well-established Withrow legacy.

Enter Elston F. Hurst, 1948 Withrow Alumni, who was a student performer and later stage director under Smittie’s reign for many years. Elston was the binding tie between the two shows. He, in the fall of 1965, along with newly hired music director, Gilbert Curtis, sought to refashion the show into a more modern “Broadway-style” event, while keeping with the established traditions of grand sets, spectacular lighting and special effects, lavish costumes, a large orchestra playing popular and classical music, spectacular staging, and eye-popping “glitzy” dancing. Thus was born *The Sounds of Withrow!*

Newer skit materials were created to keep the show lively. The show was reduced to three nights from the traditional five nights of previous years, and performances continued to be sold out every night!

In the fall of 1967, James W. Parke took over the reins as music director from Mr. Curtis. In the fall of 1969, Woodson W. Conway became Choral director at Withrow, replacing Ansel Martin who had held that position for many years. The two men elevated the show to even greater heights with brilliant orchestrations and choral works that were added to increase the show’s popularity.

Ironically, throughout it all, Smittie was never far from Withrow. His musical arrangements were occasionally used whenever a nostalgic moment



Joe Dehner played the piano forwards and backwards in the 1966 Sounds of Withrow.

was needed to enhance the shows’ performance.

This new musical tradition lasted from 1966 through 1984 — eighteen years.

After the retirement of both James Parke and Woodson Conway in 1979, Jerome Johnson ’66 and Carolyn Mitchell took over the reins in 1980. They kept the show going for another four years before it ended and became a smaller talent show. Most of the changes were due to budgets cuts, changing school schedules, relocation of families to newer suburbs, and changing priorities.

We miss *The Sounds of Withrow* and all those memories we have cherished for so many years . . . so, in our centennial year, and after a 35-year absence, we are reviving those magical moments by creating a new show, *Withrow Sounds Again*. However, after decades of skeletal music programs, the student resources for such a show are very limited. In the past, there were hundreds of students with experience and interest in music and theater.

Today, with no choral program in the school and limited band and string programs, there are only several dozen students available for the show. For the first time, the students in the band and string programs are rehearsing together in an orchestra setting. Further, local musicians, both

alumni and Friends of Withrow, have volunteered to fill out the orchestra and will mentor students. In addition, Withrow alumni have formed a choral group. With a part-time stage manager, choreographer, choral director, and music director funded by CPS and Withrow Alumni Inc., a variety show including music, dance, and skits is being produced.

Over the 60 years of student variety shows, Withrow’s auditorium had dozens of stage lights, light and sound control equipment, and other infrastructure required to produce large performances. There was also a separate band building with rehearsal rooms and storage for band equipment. Large spaces below the stage were available for dressing rooms and storage. During the restoration of Withrow in the early 2000s, the band building was torn down; the spaces below the stage were appropriated for heating and air conditioning units; and the stage lights and other equipment necessary for large stage productions were removed. Over the last 18 months, with the help of CPS, WAI, alumni volunteers, and others, much of the lighting and sound equipment and infrastructure have been restored. Other auditorium improvements have been made so that it is again suitable for producing large stage shows. However, there continue to be inadequate storage and no space for dressing rooms.

We hope that by producing Withrow Sounds Again, we can, over a period of years, reestablish the fine arts at Withrow University High School. It will take years to build a sufficient number of students to produce a show with only student performers. Just imagine . . . the choir, orchestra, concert band, jazz band, drama, and a new addition, media arts, once again at our Alma Mater.

Help Withrow with a spirit wear purchase

Sport Tek, Sport Wik Centennial Polo Shirt Cotton – \$35+\$7.65/Shirt Shipping

A comfortable, smooth, snag-resistant shirt with moisture-wicking micropique and color-block panels. Made from 3.8-ounce, 100% polyester with tricot snag-resistant, moisture-wicking and double-needle stitching throughout. Taped neck and 3-button placket with dyed-to-match rubber buttons. Colorblocking at side panels, sleeves and back collar. Set-in, open hem sleeves with side vents. This Centennial garment has the Logo embroidered on the right breast in four color stitching that will please the most fashionable Withrow supporter. Sizes range from Small to 4XL.



Centennial Short Sleeve T-Shirt - CORE Cotton –\$15 + \$7.65/Shirt Shipping

This exciting short sleeve Centennial T-shirt is orange with the Centennial spirit logo on the front. No insignia or writing is on the back. The shirt is made of CORE cotton and sizes range from Small to 4XL. Show your Withrow Centennial pride by wearing this T-shirt! (Mr. Gray is wearing this shirt in the photo accompanying his article.)

Long Sleeve Essential Centennial Tee Shirt Cotton – \$25 + \$7.65 Shipping

Nothing beats this traditional tee shirt in a comfort, versatility and casual style. Made from 6.1 ounce, 100% soft spun cotton. Enjoy celebrating the 100th year of Withrow with the Centennial logo on the front and the return of the famous variety show with the Withrow Sounds Again displayed on the back. Sizes range from Small to 4XL.

Full-Zip Hooded Centennial Sweatshirt Fleece – \$45 + \$14.35/Shirt Shipping

You'll cheer for this smooth-faced fleece in, 80/20 ring spun cotton/poly. Enjoy celebrating the 100th year of Withrow with the Centennial logo on the front and the return of a fa-



mous variety show Withrow Sounds Again displayed on the back. Sizes range from Small to 4XL.

Spirit Wear and Centennial shirts may be purchased online at the Withrow Alumni website Gift Mall or in the Withrow main hall every Friday from 11 am till 3 pm.

The Start of Withrow's Famous Musical Shows

by **RICH EBY '59**

Adapted from an entry in the 1948 Withrow Annual

Very few at Withrow know how the show got its start. In 1929, Mr. George G. Smith, a young, ambitious musician with generations of musical background and his inherited nickname—"Smittie," came to Withrow as a part-time band director and harmony teacher. In 1930, the Withrow alumni association wanted a little musical program for part of its entertainment. Mr. Nelson Walkie was the director, and Smittie had the job of handling the musical end of the program.

The first stage set was a very simple one; it was merely a backdrop of grey curtains with a painted wooden moon hung in the center of the stage above the orchestra. There were a few soloists, but the major part of the program was handled by the orchestra alone. That performance was such a

success that it was decided to repeat the show in order to make money for the band. With the contribution of a piccolo from Smittie and the orchestra set out to build up the show. The



Smittie and musicians in the 1936 Minstrels

Ponies were added, along with more soloists, and the entire program rounded out.

In 1932, the minstrels had no equipment, so they rented lights; and Mr. Paul Henkel joined them. Mr. Henkel was a master at set design and produced some beautiful, imaginative

backgrounds for the show. The first pony costumes were knee length and made of oilcloth. The show was a scintillating hit. Smittie and his Minstrelers did wonders for school spirit and school pride.

1932 was the "opportunity year" for the show. The Wurlitzer Music Company offered a prize—a trophy and a week at the RKO Albee in Cincinnati, plus an engagement in the RKO Keith's in Cleveland. The students begged, teased, tormented, and finally succeeded in persuading Smittie to enter the orchestra in the contest—it won the "opportunity review." That gave the show its great boost. For thirty-five years (1930-1965) the show grew and prospered, until Smittie's retirement in 1965; but it did so only through the tireless efforts of Mr. and Mrs. George G. Smith III, Withrow's beloved Smittie and Thelma.

**Withrow Alumni Inc.
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WAI benefits when you sign up for Kroger, Amazon rewards programs

Thank you to those Ohio alumni who have participated in the Kroger Community Rewards Program and have designated Withrow Alumni Inc. as their beneficiary. This program generated \$2,252 from 120 participants last year. If you haven't registered your Kroger Plus Card yet, please register online today at Krogercommunityrewards.com. It's fast, free, and easy. Kroger has not been able to give us a definitive answer as to whether you have to re-enroll in the program every year (despite calls to several sources). So, if you are already in the program, please re-enroll to be sure that WAI is your beneficiary. When enrolling, use our NPO # 30808, Withrow Alumni Inc.

Amazon has a similar program through their Amazon Smiles Foundation. Please use the Amazon Smiles website when making any Amazon purchases; you can sign up to have 0.5% of your purchase price donated to Withrow Alumni Inc. The Amazon Smiles website is the same as Amazon—same prices, selection and services (Prime). The donation is by Amazon and does not increase your purchase price at all. This is a nationwide program and not just confined to Ohio.

Please encourage your friends and relatives to do the same even if they're not Withrow grads.

Thanks again for your participation in these two programs.

