

MHS CLASS OF '63 PROJECT: The BIG FIVE OH!

WHY PARTICIPATE?

There are several reasons why any particular class member might choose to participate in the Class project. Just a few are outlined below.

My way of saying "thank you"

Each of us in the Class of '63 had our lives shaped in many ways by our experience in the Middletown educational system. The support, challenges, and guidance of our teachers made available the opportunity to prepare for lifelong learning. We continually work to cope with all of the challenges in the world around us, and our ability to do so is grounded in a very basic way in the education we received. Just thinking of all of those changes (from Xerox machines to GPS) in technology and in the way we communicate makes your head spin. Another important aspect of our educational experience was our interaction with each other. That's where our interests and our basic value systems were developed, and each of us could develop his or her own personality through our own special mixture of experiences and interactions. We should also recall that we were able to share this environment without the existence of metal detectors and other security monitoring devices. To all of those who gave us this opportunity and to each other, a "thank you" seems most appropriate.

I can only "pay forward"

In a graduation speech by Ohio State Woody Hayes, he observed that it is often impossible for us to repay the favors we have received from others. Our only alternative for expressing our gratitude is to provide similar favors to others in the future. This was his concept of "paying forward". That's the situation in which members of Class of '63 find themselves. Our education was the result of the support of the citizens of Middletown for the school system, our teachers and staff, our parents, and many others. Although we might like to, we just can't repay them. We do, however, see a current situation in Middletown where the opportunity for many of today's students is far less certain. The realization of their potential is far from assured. The simple fact is that members of the Class of '63, both individually and collectively, can make a difference. Shouldn't we?

Let's make a difference.

As we reach the Big Five OH, it's sobering to think of our classmates who are no longer with us. The inevitable fact is that this process of losing classmates is only going to accelerate over the next few years. We can't do much about that. We don't, however, have to just disappear like footprints in the sand. When we went through the school system, we were told that our class was special, and many of us believed that. Now we have the chance to create a lasting memorial to our class. The best part is that it's not just a plaque on a wall or a stone marker, but it's a living memorial that will exist in the futures of all those helped by our class project.

It's not only a memorial to our class, but it's a living memorial that will make valuable and lasting differences in the community.

Include and Honor the memory of our friends

A look through the "In Memorium" list for the Class of '63 will bring sad surprise and trigger many memories of those no longer alive. Whether or not we have stayed in touch over the years, we can recall the activities and experiences we shared with them and realize that a part of who each of us is today is shaped by those interactions. Sadly, we can't reminisce with them any longer, and we can't invite them to join this project, even though we know they would have. What we can do, however, is include them through a memorial gift to the project. They were active members of our class, and we can make it possible for their names to be included in this effort.

A sense of satisfaction

The simple fact is that it feels really good to help someone else. For that feeling to be honest and true, several factors must be in place. First, the need must be there, so that the assistance we give really **can** make a difference. Second, the form of assistance must be well suited to addressing the need so that the gift really **will** make a difference. Third, we should be assured that our assistance will be managed properly and distributed effectively into the future. The structure for the MHS Class of '63 has all of these features. The city and school system leaders have explained the struggling status of the Middletown schools. They have also identified support of pre-school programs as the most effective and efficient means of directly addressing student preparation. The Middletown Foundation has indicated their willingness to work with us to provide responsible and efficient financial oversight while allowing a team of classmates to oversee the use of funds. All of the key elements for donor satisfaction are in place. It's an important set of community needs and we can do something to address them. Each of us should feel really good about participating!

The key elements for a highly successful class project are in place. Our only limitation is our own willingness to participate. There is no target amount for the project because the need is simply too great. Every dollar we contribute is needed and will be used effectively. The more each of us contributes, then the more we can achieve. Irrespective of dollar amount, however, it will be important for us to have a very broad base of participation. This effort is not targeted to any particular set of classmates or to any particular set of academic programs. It is a broad effort to address the most fundamental challenges faced by the Middletown school system today, and broad participation will assure that it is truly a CLASS project.