

WEST HIGH ALUMNI ASSOCIATION PANTHER PRINTS



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"ONCE A PANTHER, ALWAYS A PANTHER"

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENTS

On Behalf of the Alumni Association, Greetings to all our former students,

It is our pleasure to welcome you to the West High School Alumni Association. The association exists, wholly and solely, to help our alumni and, by extension, the school itself, succeed.

The world gets more complicated with every passing day. We get involved with our families and work and suddenly we've lost touch with those outside that close circle. The Alumni Association can help you stay connected to those friends and to the vast resources available here. From the faculty that taught and guided you to our libraries, web sites, social media and an extraordinary variety of programs with you in mind, they are all designed to support you as you pursue your post-academic life and career.

The West alumni family is huge. The alumni events, on-campus activities and sporting events can keep you connected to West. After all, your success is our success.

We are thankful that we can continue to support our scholars who are moving on to further their futures by attending college. We presented 14 scholarships this year for a total of \$24,000 and were amazed by the applications. We are also involved with the U of U and BYU designated West High graduates with the Union Scholarships.

The West High Alumni Association also participated in the Senior breakfast, several reunions, the 40th Anniversary of the West High International Baccalaureate and extended Learning Program, Teacher Appreciation Week and Homecoming.

We challenge you to think of ways you can give back to West High to whatever degree you are comfortable. We do not mean just monetarily, though that is, of course, always welcome. There are many ways to give back, from career and academic mentoring to volunteering time at on- and off-campus events to simply attending academic and social events. And let's not forget athletics. Rooting for the Panthers in whatever sports appeal to you is always a fun and exciting time and a great way to connect and reconnect with old friends. As you will find, giving back has another benefit: it feels good.

So thank you for visiting with us today, and please come back often. We encourage you to explore all that we have to offer to stay connected and make yourself and West High School stronger.

With warmest regard,

Denise Brems, Co-President (1971)

Laurie West, Co-President (1971)

Gaylyn Larsen, Co-President (1976)

HOMECOMING SCHEDULE

HOMECOMING ASSEMBLY

WHEN: Thursday, Sept 11
G. Ray Hale Fieldhouse

HOMECOMING FOOTBALL GAME VS. KEARNS HIGH COUGARS

WHEN: Friday, Sept 12
7:00 p.m. Gean Plaga Stadium

ALUMNI AWARDS CEREMONY

WHEN: Friday, Sept 12
Football game half-time
Gean Plaga Stadium

HOMECOMING DANCE

WHEN: Saturday, Sept 13
West High football field



Join us on campus to show your Panther pride and celebrate 120+ years of scholars and champions. Celebrations will include recognition of the 2025 West High Alumni Award winners during Friday's football game half-time.

Be sure to stop by the WHAA Hall of Fame located in the hall just west of the Linda Hale Alumni Room (Rm 215).

Visit our WHAA booth at the game to purchase your Panther game wear and merchandise.



2025 WEST HIGH ALUMNI ASSOCIATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Denise Brems ('71)
Co-president

Jan Green ('73)
Secretary

Robin Harden ('56)

Gaylyn Larsen ('76)
Co-president

Anna Pardee ('08)
Treasurer

Glen Steenblik ('67)

Laurie West ('71)
Co-president

Joshua Carson ('98)
Webmaster

Rouett Abouzelof ('75)

Joseph B.V. Arrington ('05)
Past President

Mary Snow ('82)

WHAA HAS A NEW WEBSITE!

Our new website is up and running, www.westhighalumni.org.

If you haven't yet visited, we encourage you to check it out. You can read about West High's history, order your Alumni gear, update your contact information, nominate your favorite Panther, contact us, and also make a donation in a much easier, secure way.

SPECIAL THANKS

Thanks to Lauren Smart for her artistry and fresh, professional compilation of our new Panther Prints newsletter.

BURNING THE “W”

- by Jeff Larsen (Class of '86)

Traditions serve to unite people and to preserve the feeling of a common bond and purpose. Traditions can be used to celebrate and make special the events in our lives we want to remember. One tradition for high school is the graduation ceremony each year. For any high school, graduation is one of the biggest events of each year and for the students graduating, it can be one of the most important days of their young lives.

For many years at West High, graduation was celebrated by a tradition where the junior class would pack up wood and make their way to a trench on the city-facing side of Ensign Peak. The wood was placed in the trench and lit on fire to celebrate the senior class graduating from West by burning the “W”. The burning symbol could be seen around the valley and strike pride into the hearts of not only the graduates, but to any Panther watching.



Located on Ensign Peak, the “W” was just above West and accessible. Sue Clifford Maxwell (Class '67) reported that “in the early 1940’s there was a “V” on Ensign Peak that stood for Victory.” She stated that this had been reported in the Salt Lake newspapers and that her husband, who graduated from West in 1960, remembered that the “W” was burned on Ensign Peak when he was in school. Finally, she ended by saying, “I found one article in about 1964 where the city council gave them the okay to burn it.” She was attending West at that time.

Doug Larsen (Class '80 and my brother) once told me that he and his classmates had raised money to make a permanent cement “W”, but could never get permission from the city to do so. While disappointing, it is understandable that many in the city would have been hesitant to allow us as Panthers to claim Ensign Peak permanently for ourselves, given its important history for the pioneers that founded Salt Lake City and the whole State of Utah. He stated that the permanent “W” was meant to alleviate fears from residents living close to Ensign Peak who were uncomfortable with the tradition of setting the “W” on fire every year.

Tom Brooks (Class of '85) reported, “It was hard work! It wasn’t just scrap wood but pallets and heavy railroad ties.” Robin Hardin (Class of '56) agreed, explaining that it took more than one night to prepare the site. Waist-high weeds had to be cleared and debris like burnt wood and nails from the previous year had to be cleaned out of the trench. She continued, “The pallets came from a Coca-Cola plant and a pallet company on 6th West”, and that the pallets were laid in the trench first and then the railroad ties were placed on top, since they burned the longest.

In addition to graduation, when the Panthers won the state championship, often the “W” was burned in celebration. Tom Brooks also remembered that in 1980 when West beat Viewmont for the State Championship in football, some traveled up to the “V” on the hill above Viewmont and turned the “V” into a “W” for a short time. When West won the State Championship in basketball in 2009, one of my first thoughts had been to see if the “W” would burn. Sadly, those days were over. The tradition of burning the “W” continued until 1990, according to Robin Hardin. She stated, “In the final years, the firefighters let the students know that the city was being pressured to revoke the permit.” Housing continued to be built closer and closer to where the “W” was located, and it became too much of a risk to continue burning it.

It is not uncommon for traditions to fade away and for new traditions to take their place. It is not clear that some other tradition has directly taken the place of burning the “W”, but Panthers are creative and resilient and proud. Even though this celebration has been extinguished, new traditions will arise at West, as the Panthers continue into the future. All Panthers can be proud of our traditions, our great history, and the excellent students and community that make the saying, “Once a Panther, always a Panther” such a statement of pride. I encourage any Panther who can remember the burning of the “W” to contribute to the West High Alumni Association. Help us preserve our history that was made such fun memories like these, and support the current and future classes of Panthers so that our West High family can continue to be great into the future.



2024-2025 SCHOLARSHIP REPORT

The WHAA reviewed over 50 applications and awarded 14 \$2,000 scholarships this year. These scholarships are possible thanks to the donations of our WHS Alumni who have been very generous over the years in growing our scholarship fund.

WHAA Scholarships

Souzan Alroubaid	Abril Silva Tule	Iqro Hirev
Justine Madilem	Beyah Delfin	Juliet Reyes-Tapia
Taralynn Bui	Aurora Steed	Sophia Adams
Alina Gonzales	Natalie Godoy	Daisy Geraldo
Angie Alvarez Frias	Huguette Uwase	

National Merit

Joshua A. Joseph	Milo M. Shaw	Cooper S. Goff
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Sterling Scholars

Natalie Roberts – Social Sciences	David Zhang – Computer Technology
Asker Lucas – Business & Marketing	Beyah Delfin – World Languages
Angel Zhou – Skilled & Technical Science	Mingchaun Cheng – Mathematics
Elizabeth Harges – Vocal Performance	Sonia Pardyjak – Dance
Milo Shaw – Speech, Debate and Theater	Krishman Goel – Science
Cooper Goff – Instrumental Music	Roisin Khor-Brogan – Visual Arts
Carson Leys – English	

Rebuilding of West High School

The Salt Lake City School District has initiated the first steps toward a massive overhaul of its high schools. Following a vote and issuance of \$730 million in bonds approved by Salt Lake residents in the 2024 election, plans are now moving forward to rebuild West and Highland High Schools.

The \$300 million rebuild of West High is expected to take five to seven years to complete. The new West High will be safer for students and provide better educational access, with much improved technological connectivity, larger classrooms, more light, labs and learning spaces. As other new high schools have been built/rebuilt around the Salt Lake valley, the district wants the best for West High students indicating the “need is now and urgent” (per Salt Lake Tribune and Deseret News reports). Of the four options proposed to the district and following multiple open (and sometimes passionate) public meetings, with long and careful review, the proposal was chosen that they will build the new main school campus on the east side of 300 West, directly across from the current school. There will be a connecting bridge across 300 West to additional campus facilities and buildings. A small section of the original 1922 facade, including the clock tower above the current main entry, will be preserved. The existing buildings west of 300 West will be demolished. Architectural planning is currently underway and construction is scheduled to begin in the spring of 2026. Please visit the Salt Lake District website to see a more complete picture of preliminary planning design plans and descriptions. (slcschools.org)

2025-26 CLASS REUNIONS

Class of 1960

65-yr Reunion
Monday, Sep 15, 3-7:00 Gathering Place at Gardner Village
Social/musical program/dinner
Contact: Larry or Jean Geisler, 801-390-3359, larryjeangeisler@msn.com
Dale Longman, 801-903-8949, dale.longman@hotmail.com

Class of 1965

60-yr Reunion
Wednesday, Sep 17, 2025, 9:00
Golf, Glendale Golf Course
Cost: \$54/pp
Contact: Dean Gillam, 720-937-0745, dca80123@yahoo.com

Thursday, Sep 18, 5-9:00, Old Farm (Social Center)
Dinner/social \$10/pp
RSVP by Sep 10
Contact for information:
Claudia Kranendonk Gillam, 435-645-9024
Sue Dickerson Larsen, 385-602-2384, sue.larsen415@gmail.com
Margaret Day Peterson, 801-560-8860, margaretleeday@yahoo.com

Class of 1970

55-yr Reunion
Sep 19, 2025, 4:00-10:00 Murray Park, Pavilion #2

Class of 1971

55-yr Reunion
TBA Sep, 2026
Contact: Laurie West, punzeltoo@earthlink.net

SUBMIT A REUNION

Let the West High Alumni Association help you with promoting your reunion!

Share your reunion information with us any time by submitting through:

Website, westhighalumni.org
Email: info@westhighalumni.org
Call: Laurie West (801) 546-3923

Deadline submission for publication in the 2026 Panther Prints is June 1, 2026

Class of 1975

50-yr Reunion
Friday, Aug 8, 2025, 9-11:00, Service project at West High School
Friday, Aug 8, 2025, 1-3:00 Pickleball (check their site)
Saturday, Aug 9, 2025, 4-9:00, Washington Park (Parley's Canyon) Cost \$35/pp
www.westhighclassof1975.com
Contact: Rouett Harden Abouzelof, rouett@gmail.com

Golf Tournament - open to all West Alumni
Saturday, Aug 9, 8:00 a.m. Shotgun
Rose Park Golf Course, \$55/pp
Contact: Victor Germain, vgermain@icloud.com - Subject: Class of 1975 Golf

Class of 1976

50-yr Reunion
Saturday, June 27, 2026, This Is The Place Heritage Park
Facebook: West High Class of 1976 50-year Reunion
Contact: Spence Christensen, spence.christensen@gmail.com

Class of 1980

45-yr Reunion
Saturday, Sep 13, 2025, 6:30-9:00
West High School Commons
Cost \$10/pp
Contact: Lisa Dickerson Poore, 541-350-0121 Lisap0615@aol.com

Class of 2005

Friday, Sep 12, Pregame at West High
Saturday, Sep 13, morning - Service Project
Saturday, Sep 13, evening - Dinner
Details will be posted on Facebook,
West High Class of 2005 SLC, UT
Contact: Adam Smart, 801-981-9935 adamsmart@gmail.com



2024-25 ATHLETIC TEAMS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

West High continues its legacy of scholars and champions in the 2024-25 sports season. This year also sees a tradition of WHS alumni leading the teams they were once on: Brittaney Brooks ('05) Drill/Oestanas Team, Brandon Dansie ('95) Boys' Wrestling team, and Joseph Arrington ('05) Girls' Wrestling team. Coaches Dansie and Arrington both ranked among Don Holtry's "All West Wrestlers" (1988-2005), as well as both having wrestled in college.

Both wrestling teams secured winning dual meet records and won their All-City Dual trophies, noting the Girls having their first independent season. The Boys took 8 talented wrestlers to the state tournament while the Girls took 7 of theirs (along with a Region Champion!). Boys' Team Captain, Ian Nielsen, placed a hard-fought 2nd place in State. Girls' Team Captains, Mary Katoa and Audrey Kamerath (daughter of another All West Wrestlers, Joe Kamerath), also placed in State 4th and 3rd, respectively. Coach Arrington wishes the Panthers luck in their upcoming season, as he has stepped down to focus on running the Utah Collegiate Wrestling Foundation and help coach the newly re-established University of Utah Wrestling Team.

The Lady Panthers had a phenomenal season on the basketball court! They went undefeated for the season and made it to the State Championship. They only lost their final game, becoming the 5A State Runners-up with a 24-1 record. Congratulations to these talented players and their coaches!



Eleven football players will play college football next year, and four of them will play at FBS schools (Division 1).

Over the years, the Athletics department and teams at West have grown significantly. Currently we have the following: Newly formed ELP tennis and basketballs teams, Football, Track & Field, Boys & Girls Tennis, Boys & Girls Soccer, Boys & Girls Volleyball, Boys & Girls Golf, Boys & Girls Basketball, Cheer Squad, Oestanas/Drill, Boys & Girls Swim, Boys & Girls Wrestling, Girls Softball, Boys Baseball, Boys & Girls Lacrosse, Boys Ultimate Frisbee, Co-ed Mountain Biking, and Co-ed Cross-Country Skiing.

West High's teams all make us proud... make sure to take time to visit the campus and take part in their wins!

Remember... Once a Panther, Always a Panther!



2025 ALUMNI AWARDS HONOREES

ALUMNI OF THE YEAR



Becky Suazo

To be a Panther is a badge of honor. For so many of us, West High wasn't just a school, it was where friendships were formed and where mentors shaped our paths. But for some Panthers, life had other plans. Becky is one of those individuals who didn't get to walk across the stage with her graduating class, not because of a lack of determination, but because life threw her more curveballs than most could ever imagine. And somehow, remarkably she learned not just to dodge them, but to turn them into purpose.

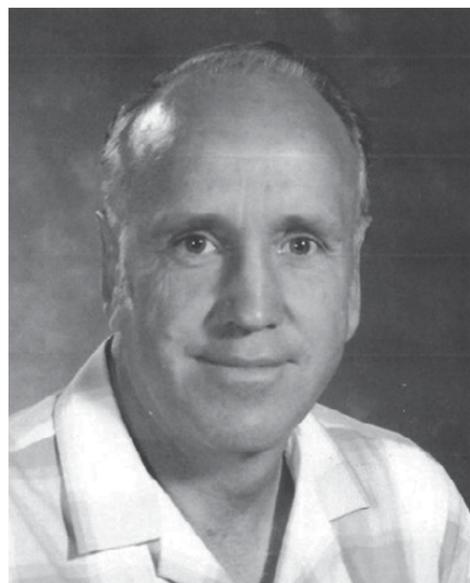
Her path to education may have taken a less traditional route, but her accomplishments speak volumes. She earned her high school diploma, followed by an Associate's Degree in Minority Human Services from Salt Lake Community College, and ultimately her Bachelor's in Sociology with a minor in Women's Studies from the University of Utah.

Becky's strength doesn't stop at survival; it radiates through service. A lifelong resident and champion of Salt Lake's west side, she has helped to build nonprofits from the ground up, educated youth on critical issues like HIV/AIDS, gang prevention, drug abuse, teen pregnancy, voting rights, housing access, diversity, and more. Her work has shaped generations and empowered voices too often overlooked.

For over 30 years, Becky has also served as a volunteer with USA Boxing, working alongside her late brother, Senator Pete Suazo. In that role, she became Utah's first female Latina boxing referee, a volunteer position she carries with immense pride. As a survivor of domestic violence herself, her fight in the ring has always mirrored the strength she brings to real-life battles.

Thank you, Becky Suazo, and the Alumni Association is proud to award you our Alumni of the Year Award!

ATHLETIC HALL OF FAME



Edward S. Thomas

The Athletic Hall of Fame award is presented posthumously to Coach Ed Thomas. Ed graduated from West High School in 1955, where he played baseball and football. He received a full-ride scholarship to Utah State University and played football and baseball there.

He was a teacher and coach at West High School starting in 1968, teaching biology and driver's ed. He was also an assistant sophomore football coach; he coached sophomore, JV, and was an assistant varsity basketball coach for 13 years, winning the State Championship in 1975. He coached the golf team for 13 years and won a State Championship. He coached the tennis team for 25 years, winning three State titles. Ed was honored as Coach of the Year by the State High School Activities Association in 1995.

Not only did Coach Thomas contribute greatly to the students and excellence of West High, but he was also a generous man and always willing to support others. He was a loving husband and a champion to his children. He is survived by his wife, Janet Ann Thomas, five children, 17 grandchildren, and 8 great-grandchildren.

Thank you, Coach Thomas, for all your years at West High. Our school is better because of you.

HONORARY ALUMNI



Ronnie Johnson

Ronnie has worked at West High School for more than 14 years on the custodial staff, working his way up to Head Custodian with a staff of 15 employees. He has helped the West High staff and community with all their needs. He is always willing to keep the school looking clean and ready to go at all times.

Ronnie has spent many days and evenings making sure that class reunions held at West High have access to the entire school and responds to all requests, including conducting tours. He always has a huge smile to boot! His "over and above" approach and help have not gone unnoticed, especially by the Alumni Association.

Thank you so much, Ronnie. Not only is he a graduate of the West Class of 1993, but he now holds the title of Honorary Alumni.

PANTHER IN THE COMMUNITY



Carlton Christensen

The West High Alumni Association is proud to honor Carlton Christensen, Class of 1984, with this year's Panther in the Community Award.

A lifelong resident of Rose Park and a dedicated public servant, Carlton has made a lasting impact on Salt Lake City through many years of civic leadership. After graduating from West, he served a mission for his church in Japan and then attended and graduated from the University of Utah. Early on in his life, he became involved in the community as a member of the Rose Park Community Council, Planning Commission, and in fundraising for the Day-Riverside Library. In 1997, he was elected to the Salt Lake City Council, dedicating 16 years to public service. Today, he is the current Chair of the Board of Trustees for the Utah Transit Authority, a full-time appointment from the Governor. Active on several community boards with his current role as the Vice-Chair of the Utah Foundation, Carlton has championed initiatives that improve accessibility, equity, and quality of life for our West High community.

Beyond his public service, Carlton is known as a devoted husband, father, church leader, and an exceptional neighbor who is always generous with his time and heart. Carlton currently supports his faith as an Area Seventy in the Utah Area for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. He and wife, Cathleen Nielsen Christensen, have two daughters, Jessica and Sarah. Carlton is a proud alumnus where he continues to embody the spirit of leadership and community that defines West High School.

The WHAA is happy to recognize Carlton Christensen as this year's Panther in the Community Award recipient and extends heartfelt thanks for his many contributions to our community.

LETTER FROM THE PRINCIPAL



Dear West High Alumni,

Greetings from 241 North 300 West! Whether you graduated recently or long ago, you're part of a legacy that began in 1890—and one that continues to shape the heart of our school today. West High has always stood for academic excellence, pride, and community, and we are proud to carry that forward into the 2025–2026 school year.

This year, we're focusing on key priorities that ensure every student is known, supported, and set up to succeed. These include strengthening school safety and student discipline, expanding attendance and academic interventions, deepening our instructional coaching and feedback, and tracking graduation progress through strong counseling collaboration. At the core of our work is a commitment to high-quality, inclusive instruction and the belief that every student deserves access to opportunity.

We're also proud to honor and celebrate the incredible diversity of our student body. With over 40 languages spoken and students from every corner of the world, West's strength is its people—and we're building a culture where every student feels seen, respected, and empowered to thrive.

Looking ahead, we're excited to share that the West High rebuild begins next spring. This historic project will preserve our iconic tower while creating a modern campus that supports innovation, collaboration, and community pride for generations to come.

Thank you for being part of our story—and for continuing to represent what makes West so special. Once a Panther, always a Panther!

*With pride,
Wayne Culley
Principal, West High School*

West High Circa 1922/1923



THANK YOU TO OUR MAJOR ALUMNI ASSOCIATION DONORS

7/2024 - 6/2025

The Alumni Association greatly appreciates the generous contributions received from its community to help fund scholarships for deserving West High students. At all levels, these donations help build and maintain a lasting legacy of support amongst West High alumni.

PRESIDENT'S CLUB \$1,000 +

Beesley Family Foundation
Danuel Stanger
Tracy Maxwell

Carl Tippets
Judd Werner
Van Otten Family

Craig Peterson
Philip Jankovich

RED AND BLACK CLUB \$200-\$999

Art Barton
Jerry Fenstermaker
Steenblik Family

Harden Family
Ken Dillon
Thomas Endo

James Webb
Slingerland Family
Wayne Savage

CENTENNIAL 100 CLUB \$100-\$199

Barbara Walker Murdock
Kim Eichers
Powell Family
Bob Lyman

Larry Hawkins
Ruth Moesser
David Ashton
Larry Stephenson

Dennis Gunn
Laurie West

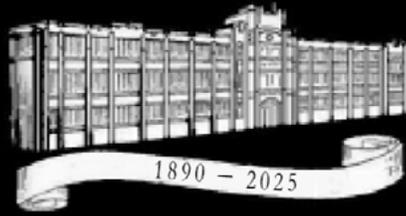


Donate now to help fund scholarships for future graduating West High seniors! Your contribution is tax deductible.

Check donations can be addressed and mailed to:
*West High Alumni Association
PO Box 520454
Salt Lake City, UT 84152*

Donations by credit card can be made by visiting our secure website: www.westhighalumni.org or by scanning this QR code.

West High Alumni Association
PO Box 520454
Salt Lake City, UT 84152



WEST HIGH ALUMNI ASSOCIATION
PANTHER PRINTS

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED:

The West High Alumni Association (WHAA) is run by volunteers generously donating their time to the West High community. We are looking for additional alumni to serve on our Board of Directors. We currently meet the second Tuesday of every month, 5:00-6:00 p.m. at West High School.

If you are interested in joining us, please contact president@westhighalumni.org.