



### Join WAA Today

The Wildcat Alumni Association is the official alumni association affiliated with Oakland High School.

Membership fees are:

- \$ 35 for one year
- \$ 450 for a lifetime membership

To join, go to our website:

[oaklandhighalumni.org](http://oaklandhighalumni.org)

or send your application with a check to:

Wildcat Alumni Association,  
P.O. Box 11436,  
Oakland, CA 94611

**eScrip**  
**3 Easy Ways to Earn for Our Group**

1. Sign Up/Add Cards
2. eScrip Online Mall
3. eScrip Dining by Rewards Network

### Remember reading the Aegis newspaper in class?

Check out the latest issue of Oakland High's online student newspaper at [oaklandaegis.com](http://oaklandaegis.com)

### This is a challenging time for everyone.

We hope that you and your families are well and continue to be safe. Your Wildcat Alumni Association Board is continuing its work to keep alumni connected to each other and to support future alumni of Oakland High, who are now attending classes online. The Board is meeting via ZOOM online and will continue to maintain our website and newsletter to keep you informed on upcoming projects, opportunities to connect, and hopefully at some point in the future to meet again in person and celebrate at class reunions.

Here is the latest WAA news and upcoming "events."

### WAA BOARD WELCOMES NEW MEMBER AND PRESIDENT

The Wildcats Alumni Association is happy to welcome new Board member **Masaaki Yamato, '69**. Masaaki has also agreed to serve as the new WAA President, succeeding Stephen Johnson, '58.



Masaaki brings a diverse and rich experience to the Board. After graduating from OHS and USAF Academy, his varied career path included being a case officer for the US Intelligence, computer operations supervisor, bank officer for a Japanese bank, and an administrator for an astrophysics research group. He retired a few years ago, and has been traveling, pursuing astronomy as a hobby, spending time with family, and volunteering as a docent at the Chabot Space Science Center.

Masaaki most recently volunteered on the OHS class of '69 50th reunion committee. After the reunion, at the OHS 150th Anniversary Celebration, the committee on behalf of the Centennial Class of '69, extended good wishes of support to the OHS student's hopes, dreams, and aspirations, and donated its excess fund of \$2,500 to OHS for the benefit of students. When asked about his aspiration as a new member of the Wildcats Alumni Association team, Masaaki replied, "to strive to be a source of helpful positive energy for the OHS alumni and students, young and old, for all of us from all walks of life, and to celebrate diversity, which I believe is a strength unique to OHS of past and present."

### END OF AN ERA: PRESIDENT STEPHEN JOHNSON "RETIRES"

**Stephen Johnson, '58**, is stepping down as WAA Board President after 10 years of service. Steve has worked tirelessly and admirably for the past 10 years, overseeing many WAA projects including the establishment of the OHS Hall of Fame, the 150th Anniversary Celebration, the annual Career Days, and on-going support for the athletic and music programs at OHS. An added benefit to WAA is that Steve, as the OHS leadership teacher and student government advisor for 14 years prior to his retirement from teaching in 2004, was in the unique position of having an inside knowledge of the needs and workings of the school.

Steve has dedicated his life to supporting teaching in Oakland. Prior to teaching at his OHS alma mater, Steve taught social studies at Hoover Jr. High (1968-1973), at Havenscourt Jr. High (1973-1979), and at Bret Harte Jr. High (1979-1991) and served for many years as treasurer of the teacher's union OFT 771.

Stephen will continue as a member of the Board, but will now have a little more time to spend with family and to relax and read, and pursue hobbies of photography and philately. He quips, "Of course, whether or not I can go photograph depends upon what happens with the coronavirus."

**A GREAT LOSS: GENE ZAHAS LONG TIME  
WAA BOARD MEMBER**

The WAA is saddened by the death of long-time board member **Eugene Zahas, OHS class of 1958**, who passed away at age 78 on April 7, 2020 of Covid-19. His service to education extended beyond Oakland High through many school bond campaigns and as a board member of the Marcus Foster Education Fund. As the owner and operator of five branches of Johnstone Supply Company, Gene was involved with the Rotary Club of Oakland, Marcus Foster Education Fund, Salvation Army's Advisory Board, served on Oakland's budget advisory committee, and allowed the use of his warehouse as a campaign center for local bond measure drives.



Gene was an outstanding and irreplaceable Board member who served many years as Board treasurer and was instrumental in carrying out many WAA projects, from the establishment of the Mike Marcoulis baseball field signs to the creation of a trophy case for Oakland High School Theater lobby. He was generous with his time and always ready to step forward when help was needed, whether in reading scholarship applications, offering his home for meetings, or his business space to house cases of Wildcat tee shirts and hats. As a member of the scholarship selection committee, he more than once donated an extra scholarship when it was clear that there was one more deserving applicant than we had funds to support.

In his memory and honor, the WAA has established a scholarship, designated as "The Gene Zahas Remembrance Scholarship", to be awarded to a deserving 2020 graduating OHS senior. The scholarship was made possible by a kind donation of \$3,000 from Frank Kao, who has served on the Board with Gene since the late 1990s. Other donations to the Zahas Scholarship are welcomed and can be made on our website <https://www.oaklandhighalumni.org/donations>.

A public memorial will be held later this year when it is safe to gather to celebrate Gene's life.

See full obituary at  
<https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/eastbaytimes/obituary.aspx?n=eugene-james-zahas&pid=195942524&fhid=17782>

## WAA TO OFFER TWO SCHOLARSHIPS TO 2020 GRADUATES

This year WAA will be awarding two scholarships to graduating seniors, the annual **Alden McElrath Scholarship** and the newly created **Gene Zahas Remembrance Scholarship**, each a \$3000 award. Scholarships are based on need, and the student's essay explaining how the Oakland High experience has influenced the applicant's personal growth and professional goals. Applicants must have a GPA of 2.5 or higher and be graduating in June 2020. The deadline for applying is May 15, 2020, and instead of the usual reading of essays and eating of pizza, the WAA scholarship committee will be meeting online to determine the award-ees. The scholarship recipients will be notified in writing and, as always, will receive the awards upon proof of enrollment in a qualified institution.

**Ways to Donate:** Money for our annual scholarships is dependent upon donations from alumni, and we know that the need for financial support to continue their education beyond OHS is great for our graduates. Oakland High has graduated over 150,000 students since 1950, and if we each donated \$10, we would have one and one-half million dollars for scholarships. It would only take \$10 from 300 of us to fund one of our scholarships for next year. If you can donate any amount toward the McElrath or Zahas Scholarships, please visit our website and make your donation for the scholarship project.

<https://www.oaklandhighalumni.org/donations>

## JEDI VILCHIS, '99, MAKES A DIFFERENCE FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Always a self-starter at Oakland High, **Jedi Vilchis, '99**, has taken on many tech projects since graduating, including working with several Oakland high schools to develop technology programs to interest Oakland students in working in high tech jobs. But most recently during the Corona virus pandemic, he has put his talents and ingenuity toward helping health care workers.

Largely self-taught on 3D printing and laser cutting, he has used his skills and creative powers to design protective face shields. He experimented using his 3D printer, but realized it was too slow. After making several prototypes using laser cutting, Jedi designed his own protective face shield. He has produced 50 reuseable face shields for Kaiser nurses and hopes to expand his output to provide shields for frontline workers in nursing homes and other care facilities.

Read more about Jedi's work at [https://oaklandvoices.us/2020/05/05/oakland-teacher-jedi-vilchis-produces-face-shields-for-essential-workers-with-3d-printer/?fbclid=IwAR0Y-Wf7ysFPsKVHnhsamRHpDneYaSYAlvpmayakSmC\\_N2u3johqqfh52Jk](https://oaklandvoices.us/2020/05/05/oakland-teacher-jedi-vilchis-produces-face-shields-for-essential-workers-with-3d-printer/?fbclid=IwAR0Y-Wf7ysFPsKVHnhsamRHpDneYaSYAlvpmayakSmC_N2u3johqqfh52Jk)

## CLASS REUNIONS

### **CLASS of 1965:**

**55th reunion planned for Saturday, October 02, 2021—** due to uncertainties of Covid-19 reopenings. Contact Barbara Gee or Gordon Baranco, 510-569-9466, [gordon.baranco@gmail.com](mailto:gordon.baranco@gmail.com), [bgee2224@gmail.com](mailto:bgee2224@gmail.com), [moombali@aol.com](mailto:moombali@aol.com)

### **CLASS of 1970:**

#### **50th reunion—from the reunion committee -**

"We have postponed the OHS '70 50th Reunion for one year, until September 2021, due to the Covid-19 virus. Please stay in touch with us on Facebook and Classmates.com. Pass this announcement to other alumni who you are in touch with and find 3 more Alumni friends! Ted, Todd, Paul, Bert, Cindy, Linda, Gareth, Jonathan, Chris, Jim & Josh."

## WAA TROPHY CASE PROJECT

WAA was able to donate the central section of a trophy case to Oakland High several years ago. It was designed to have two other trophy cases attached, one on either side of the central case. We have the plans, now we need to raise the money. The projected cost is about \$10,500. This is one of the projects where Gene Zahas was able to connect with workmen and companies to manufacture the cases, and we wish to raise this money and produce the cases to go into the building after it is again open. The work that needs to be done now is to raise the money.

If this is a project you would like to help fund, visit the "Donations" section of the WAA website and earmark your donation for the trophy case project.

<https://www.oaklandhighalumni.org/donations>

## MIRIAM LASKA SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHER

Students and colleagues were saddened to lose **ELD social studies teacher Miriam Laska** January 15, 2020 after a long battle with cancer. Her February 29 memorial was attended by many of her colleagues and former elementary and high school students, who spoke warmly of their memories of her.

After helping to found The Renaissance School (the Arts School), Ms. Laska joined the Oakland High School Bilingual Department as a social studies teacher in 1980 and later served as department head for many years before her 2002 retirement. Working with students new to the United States who spoke little or no English, Ms. Laska continued to find creative ways to communicate the intricacies of US history and government to her students. She was also instrumental in taking students to Washington, DC to observe their government as part of the Close-Up project. Her interest in her students' cultural backgrounds and care for their well-being fostered many long relationships with them after they graduated.



See full obituary at

<https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/eastbaytimes/obituary.aspx?n=miriam-laska&pid=195535944>

## FUTURE ALUMNI: OHS SCHOOL LIFE SPRING 2020

It is probably cold comfort now, but the class of 2020 will have something unique to remember about their senior year—no ball, no graduation parties, no final rally, no good-by hugs. So how is school even continuing and how are students able to graduate at all? I asked a few former colleagues to explain how OHS life continues during the Corona virus school shutdown.

**Journalism and English teacher Lara Trale** answered my questions about how teachers are working with students remotely and how the school district is handling grades during this shelter in place.

Ms. Trale: "I'm teaching most of my classes twice a week via Zoom or Google Hangouts. Our OHS distance-learning schedule reserves one block per week for each subject, but through some exchanging within my pathway [Environmental Science Academy], we've managed to double our chances for student contact.

"It's true that we've gone to Credit/No Credit for the last two grade reports of the year, including the Semester 2 grade. This, I mostly love. It's extremely satisfying to see students work hard because they want to learn and to show their learning, not because they're pushing for the A.

"We've got all our ESA sophomores in a shared Discord server--a chat platform originally developed for gamers--and I enjoy having this new connection and insight into their thinking and out-of-school actions.

Leadership and English teacher Jennifer Howard explained how Oakland High has been able to

support students who do not have family computers or internet access at home.

Ms. Howard: "We [OUSD] have been providing all technology (chromebooks) to students who don't have access at home. In terms of Internet, teachers have been working with those in need to get temporary services through Xfinity or AT&T. It has been mostly successful. I would say right now that most seniors have both technology and Internet access. Because [seniors] are still responsible for their senior project papers, we made it a priority to get technology in their hands."

The Wildcat Alumni Association commends all teachers for their dedication and ingenuity in dealing with an unprecedented situation.

**And congratulations to all the 2020 graduates who are our new OHS alumni!**

## Donald K. Tamaki, '69 Honored

Congratulations to **Donald K. Tamaki, '69** for being honored with the American Bar Association (ABA) Spirit of Excellence Award. Below is the video of Don Tamaki's remarks accepting the award at the 2020 ABA Midyear Meeting in Austin, Texas, on February 15.

"...If we fail to stand up and demand accountability to the Rule of Law, our democratic institutions can end up hollowed out from within to the point that we will no longer be able to recognize them...."

[https://www.minamitamaki.com/2020/02/donald-tamaki-honored--with-aba-spirit-of-excellence-award/?fbclid=IwAR3ii5p94aThaLewG77BsKv0\\_oj2ZOScKVYRp\\_PJWgmM7a4\\_WR42Sd8m0FM](https://www.minamitamaki.com/2020/02/donald-tamaki-honored--with-aba-spirit-of-excellence-award/?fbclid=IwAR3ii5p94aThaLewG77BsKv0_oj2ZOScKVYRp_PJWgmM7a4_WR42Sd8m0FM)