

Big 50 for SME



SUN PUBLICATIONS

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Ben McCall/Sun Photo THE Shawnee Mission East 50th Anniversary Celebration Committee includes, front row from left, teacher Hannah Pence, Class of 1992; PTA President Sue Swanson; PTA member Susan Stolle, class of 1975; Peggy Miller; Board of Education President Donna Bysfield; Connie Zuck, class of 1959; Former PTA President Beth Fowler; back row, PTA member Laura Jones, staff member Cole Ogdon; staff member Nick Paris,

class of 1960; teacher James Lockard; Principal Karl Krawitz; and Athletic Director Jim Ricker. Shawnee Mission East High School's first graduating class may have only been there a year, but its influence has resonated for the last 50. Members of the class of '59 named the school's yearbook and newspaper publications the Hauberk and Harbinger, respectively. They called the school's athletic teams the Lancers, featuring school colors of Columbia blue, black and white. "That gave us ownership, excitement," **Bonnie Tanner Martin**, class of '59, said. "It made us feel like adults, like we were passing on something for the classes to come." Shawnee Mission East, 7500 Mission Road, Prairie Village, first opened its doors to students in fall 1958. The school celebrates 50 years Friday, Oct. 17, with a parade, pep rally, community open house and more. Martin and her fellow alumnae, **Connie Zuck** and **Ann Holmes Bontrager**, remember their senior year well. "What is memorable is that it was such a jolt we had to come (to East)," Bontrager said. "We went as sophomores to North, then called just Shawnee Mission High, and thought we would graduate from there. "But they announced our junior year that it was too crowded and told us we would go to East. We moaned and groaned and carried on. But some of us did things our senior year we never could have in a larger class." Zuck remembers the building itself as "open and fresh." "Well, it was brand new," she said. "The stairway with glass, there was just so much light in it. It was a cheerful place, uplifting to be in this wonderful new building. But we still felt ties to (North)." The women agreed things have changed in 50 years. "We couldn't show up dressed like they do today," Bontrager chuckled. "Also, if anyone was gay, we didn't know it ... we just didn't talk about that." Zuck and Martin said the worst

drug they heard of as students was alcohol. "It was a safe and secure time," Zuck said. National politics, which has now taken a prominent place in high school culture, played an important role even then, Martin said. "It was just as important," she said. "I can remember the conventions. There was a disparity between what my parents believed and what I was hearing at school, so I created my own position." Transferring to East marked an "exciting time," Zuck said. "We were all feeling a surge of independence, going off to a new school and starting new traditions," she said. "It was an exciting time to be part of the changes and growing as a person."

1958-59 Fast Facts

- 1,353 students and 56 teachers came to East for its first year.
- The first foreign exchange student to attend East, **Bodil Ahlgren** from Denmark, was present when the doors opened.
- A school flag and ring were designed and a school song written.
- In the National Merit Scholarship Program, East had 12 semifinalists.
- The Lancers beat Shawnee Mission North 14-13 in their first football game.

50 Years of Lancer Pride

The community is invited to join in celebrating 50 years at Shawnee Mission East, 7500 Mission Road, Prairie Village.

All events take place Friday, Oct. 17:

- 2 p.m. – Lancer Day Parade from East to the Prairie Village Shopping Center, 71st Street and Mission Road;
- 2:30 p.m. – Pep rally at Prairie Village Shopping Center;
- 3 to 5 p.m. – Community Open House in the East Library;
- 5 to 7 p.m. – Tailgate dinner before the homecoming football game at Shawnee Mission North district stadium, 7401 Johnson Drive; and
- 7 p.m. – Homecoming game vs. North.