

## Tiger Land

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**C**hris Bosh wrote Lincoln High School history in 2002 when he led teammates to a 20-point blowout in the state Class 4A Championship to cap off a 40-0 season. He'll write a new chapter in that history this month when he takes the court in Arlington for the NBA All Star Game.

Few probably remember Lincoln's dream season more clearly than Principal Earl Jones. "A team like this comes along once every hundred years, if you're lucky," he says. What he remembers that many may have forgotten, though, is that all 13 team members graduated and went on to college.

"The G.P.A.s for these young men were among the highest in their class," Jones says. "I looked to many of them to lead the way for all Lincoln students, and to teach and model through how they lived their lives."

"Our students that year provided the greatest example of what the words 'student athlete' really mean," says former DISD trustee Ron Price.

And Lincoln excelled far beyond the basketball court, notes Dr. Shirley Ison-Newsome, the Dallas ISD administrator who oversaw all South Dallas schools: "The school during that same period was named one of the best high schools in the country by a national magazine, established an exchange program with a school in Swaziland, the last kingdom on the continent in Africa, and continued to be one of the few high schools in Dallas that was moving the needle academically."

That's the kind of history Lincoln boosters are looking to commemorate this month as they kick off a drive to raise funds to build Tiger Land, a ceremonial gateway and garden celebrating the school's place in Dallas history. Built in 1939 to relieve overcrowding at Booker T. Washington, the city's first and only high school for African-American students, Lincoln educated many of North Texas' most prominent and successful black residents.

They include Dallas City Council member Dwaine Caraway, longtime DISD trustee Hollis Brashear, and former DART board member Joyce Foreman, pro football player Abner Haynes, Dr. Frederick Todd, Dr. Harold Lang, Sr., Dr. John Hopps, Dr. Leon Hayes, Dr. Herbie K. Johnson, and former Dallas City Council members Al Lipscomp, Charlotte Mayes and Maxine Thornton-Reese, to name just a few.

Bosh was a member of the National Honor Society and graduated with honors. Today, through his charitable foundation, he promotes the importance of reading as well as physical fitness for children. He will return to Lincoln on Feb. 13, the day before the All Star Game, to make a donation of computers for two Dallas community centers. Kevis Shipman, who played guard to Bosh's power forward, works today as security at Lincoln.

They and the other three starters – Jason Allen, William Langrum and Bryan Hopkins – began playing together in a Bidy Basketball League when they were just 7. “The boys loved the game of basketball since they were little,” says Charlie Robinson, the uncle of Bryan Hopkins and his brother Ryan, who also played on the team. “They used to play in the backyard with homemade basketball rims.”

In their junior year at Lincoln, the team went to the state championships. They lost, and according to Shipman, a lot of people doubted that they had the fortitude to come back and take the title the following year. Bosh and Co. didn't doubt it, though. Lincoln head coach Leonard Bishop still remembers Bryan Hopkins vowing to him: “Coach, we will be back!”

And they were – with even greater cohesiveness than before. On the eve of the climactic game, three starters, including Bosh, shaved their heads in honor of their coach, who is bald. The entire team took a break from training to hold a car wash to raise funds for the homeless. Nearly a decade later, most team members will be on hand to watch Bosh play in the All Star Game, and many participate each summer in the basketball camps run by his foundation.

“Every challenge presented to this team they met head-on with a special tact and determination that only a few can comprehend,” Jones says. “What made this team so special was not the great basketball skills they had, but how intelligent these young men were, and how the each one provided leadership, and understood their role.”

Tiger Land will transmit the lessons of such moments to generations of future Lincoln students. To make it a reality, the school district has purchased a vacant lot in front of the school, on the corner of Malcolm X Boulevard and Hatcher Street. Designs include a monument commemorating the school's eight principals and its contributions to the community, a tiger mascot statue, elaborate landscaping and a series of benches forming an outdoor classroom.

Jones calls the project an important piece of furthering Lincoln's central mission: “to create an environment where all students ... are afforded opportunities for academic excellence ... in an atmosphere where they are valued, accepted, challenged, motivated, and expected to learn.”

For more information about Tiger Land, including sponsorship opportunities, please visit [www.lincolntigerland.com](http://www.lincolntigerland.com).

*Jerry Chambers is Lincoln High School's historian and chairman of the Tiger Land effort.*