

HARPER CREEK SCHOOLS *Newsletter*



EDUCATE • EMPOWER • EQUIP
Students for Life

SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

- Beau Bess, *President*
- Lisa Hubbard, *Vice President*
- Tina Kyger, *Secretary*
- Don Myers, *Treasurer*
- Dr. Dale Borders, *Trustee*
- Tim Martin, *Trustee*
- Jason Smith, *Trustee*

ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

- Rob Ridgeway, *Superintendent*
- Laura Williams, *Asst. Superintendent of Instruction*
- Dennis Anthony, *High School*
- Kim Thayer, *Middle School*
- Nneka Daniels, *Beadle Lake Elementary*
- Shalen King-Short, *Sonoma Elementary*
- Brent Swan, *Wattles Park Elementary*
- Gail Braman, *Schools of Choice*
- Tammy Chapman, *Human Resources*
- Carol Davis, *Finance*
- Ed Greenman, *Athletics*
- Stacy Hendon, *Transportation*
- Jim Maynard, *Technology*
- Jim Robinson, *Facilities*
- Rebecca Schneider, *Communications*

SCHOOL DISTRICT CONTACT INFORMATION

7454 B Drive North
Battle Creek, MI 49014
Telephone: 269.441.6550
Fax: 269.962.6034
Website: www.harpercreek.net
Facebook: Harper Creek Schools
Twitter: Harper Creek Schools

NEWSLETTER CONTACT INFORMATION

Rebecca Schneider
schneiderr@harpercreek.net

In This Issue...

- Message from the Superintendent . . . 1
- Author Among Us . . . 1
- 2019 Harper Creek District Calendar . . 1
- For the Love of Reading . . . 2
- The Superpower of Reading . . . 2
- Sonoma's March is Reading Month . . . 2
- #Classroombookaday . . . 2
- A Community of Readers . . . 3
- Third Grade Reading Law . . . 3
- HCMS Mock Caldecott . . . 3
- The Power in Reading Picture Books . . 3
- HCCS 2019-2020 District Calendar . . . 3
- Student Technology Update . . . 4
- HCHS March Newsletter . . . 4

Message from the Superintendent



For many reasons, March is one of my favorite months containing the promise of spring, March Madness, and most importantly, March is Reading Month. Reading is the key to learning and March is a month-long fun celebration of reading. Reading opens the world. If you do not enjoy reading, it is likely that you haven't connected with the right authors and books!

Yes, March is dedicated as National Reading Month, but at Harper Creek Community Schools, we have a laser-focus on reading every month. Our schools, from elementary to secondary, champion literacy in positive and unique ways. As a district, we are committed partners with Willard Library, Battle Creek's outstanding public library and proud of our latest joint initiative to get library cards in the hands of every student, so they have access to comprehensive print and electronic resources and services beyond the scope of the district.

Our buildings all have traditional school libraries, as well as free lending libraries. Our high school librarian and library paraprofessionals around the district are uniting to bring Little Free Libraries to some of our district neighborhoods. In addition, classrooms have their own libraries. Reading experts agree classroom libraries are paramount to literacy and recommend 1,500 books per classroom.

Fifteen hundred books per classroom multiplied by every classroom in the district may seem like an unattainable goal, but here is where you, our community, can help. We are looking for donations of gently used books of all genres and reading levels, from infant to emergent and middle readers, to young adult and adult, to achieve the goal of 1,500 books per classroom library. A collection center is located at the Harper Creek Administration Office located at 7454 B Drive North, where we happily accept book donations, large and small. There is no greater gift you can give to a child than literacy and a love of reading. Please read, share and donate good books.

Happy Reading!
Rob Ridgeway
Superintendent

EDUCATE • EMPOWER • EQUIP
STUDENTS FOR LIFE



Author Among Us

By Nikki Elder, English Language Teacher/Coordinator

Cassie Crull, interventionist at Wattles Park, and author of *The Stone Doorway*, has some great advice for young authors. She encourages students who want to be writers to just keep writing. She writes down every idea that she has and keeps it safe in a trunk to explore later. She suggests that students explore and expand on their ideas and if they have a hard time writing it all down, draw it.

Ms. Crull first wrote *The Stone Doorway*, a young adult fantasy novel, when she was in third grade. It took an entire composition notebook from cover to cover. While the main character was originally spunky, feisty and hot-headed, like her third grade self, she later developed the character to be more of a recovering victim, a survivor, someone with a lesson to give and a story to tell.

Through a connection from language arts camp that she attended in her youth, Ms. Crull was contacted by a friend who is now a publisher to make her work into a book, which was published in 2017. Though it was not originally part of the plan, per readers' requests, she is now working on a sequel to *The Stone Doorway*.

We are excited to have her on staff at Harper Creek Community Schools and share her love of reading and writing with students!

Community Connections Spring Luncheon

(Formerly Harper Creek Senior Citizens Luncheon)

Please mark your calendar

The next Community Connections Spring Luncheon is Tuesday, May 7, 2019.

Questions?

Contact Sharon Zebell at zebells@harpercreek.net or 269.441.6555

• 2019 HARPER CREEK DISTRICT CALENDAR •

3/18	BL Parent Teacher Conferences	3:45 PM - 7:30 PM
3/18	SO Parent Teacher Conferences	4:30 PM - 8:30 PM
3/19	BL Parent Teacher Conferences	3:45 PM - 7:30 PM
3/19	SO Parent Teacher Conferences	4:30 PM - 8:30 PM
3/21	MS Ice Cream Social	4:30 PM - 7:30 PM
3/22	HS Spring Musical - The Adams Family	7:00 PM HS Auditorium
3/23 - 25	HS Student Council State Conference	
3/23	HS Spring Musical - The Adams Family	7:00 PM HS Auditorium
3/24	HS Spring Musical - The Adams Family	2:00 AM HS Auditorium
3/28	NHS Induction	1:30 PM HS Auditorium
3/25 - 3/28	MS Book Fair	All Day - Library
3/26	MS Conferences	3:30 PM - 7:00 PM
3/27	MS Conferences	3:30 PM - 7:00 PM
3/28	MS Band Concert	7:00 PM HS Auditorium
3/29	No School	
4/1 - 4/5	Spring Break	
4/8	Board of Education Meeting	7:00 PM Board Room, HC Administration Building
4/9	HS Junior SAT Testing; PSAT 9th & 10th grades	
4/10	HS Junior ACT WorkKeys	
4/11	HS MSTEP	
4/12	MS Follies	7:00 PM HS Auditorium
4/12 - 13	HS Treble Choir Festival	
4/17	Countdown to Kindergarten All elementaries	
4/19	No School	
4/25 - 27	HS Honors Choir Festival	
4/25	SO 1st & 2nd grades music program	7:00 PM High School Auditorium
4/26	HS Blood Drive	8:00 AM - 2:00 PM High School
4/26 - 5/1	HS DECA International Competition	
5/2	American Legion Awards -6th grade	5:30 W. K. Kellogg Auditorium
5/6 - 16	HS AP Exams	
5/7	Senior Citizen Luncheon	11:30 AM RSVP- Sharon Zebell 441-6555
5/11	Prom	
5/13	Board of Education Meeting	7:00 PM Board Room, HC Administration Building
5/17	Girls on the Run	4:30 PM Football Stadium
5/20	HS Spring Band Concert	7:00 PM HS Auditorium
5/22 - 23	HS Senior Exams	
5/23	Countdown to Kindergarten All elementaries	
5/23	HS Spring Choir Concert	7:00 PM HS Auditorium
5/24	HS Senior Awards Breakfast	8:00 AM HS Auditorium
5/24	HS Senior Walk and Video	10:00 AM High School
5/27	No School	
5/31	High School Commencement	6:00 PM Football Stadium (HS Gym if raining)
6/10	Board of Education Meeting	7:00 PM Board Room, HC Administration Building
6/11	Half Day for Students	
6/12	Last Day of School, half day for students	

Please refer to our district calendar at www.harpercreek.net for more events and information.



FOR THE LOVE OF READING ♥

By Nneka Daniels, Principal Beadle Lake Elementary

To celebrate the love and joy of reading, Beadle Lake is immersed in a school wide reading focus. Our theme is "Reading Take Us Places." The ultimate goal is to develop readers who love reading, and have the skills that are necessary to use reading as a tool in their everyday lives. We have intentionally selected a monthly read aloud where each classroom reads the same book. We are in the process of reviewing the books, and celebrating the things that we are learning from them. The goal is to have our hallways lined with all things reading. The picture books that we selected can be found in your local library. Check one out, and enjoy it at home with your family. Let us know what you think.

Beadle Lake Elementary Read Alouds:

- I Walk With Vanessa
- Not Quite Narwhal
- Enemy Pie
- The Day You Begin
- After The Fall
- Strictly No Elephants
- Hula-Hoopin' Queen
- There Might Be Lobsters

The reading emphasis extends from the students to the teachers. Teachers are participating in professional development around read alouds, independent reading, and small group reading instruction. We are engaging in building walk-throughs centered on reading where we look at our strengths, areas of growth, and plan for next steps. On March 5th, a small group of teachers participated in the West Michigan Early Literacy Leadership Symposium where we had the opportunity to learn from experts about the impact of reading on peoples' lives. My most important take away from the conference was the following, "Reading allows us to do things that you wouldn't otherwise be able to do." It is imperative that we help our young people understand this.

We are gradually incorporating our reading theme into everything that we do. On March 1st we kicked off National Read across America Day or Dr. Seuss Day by participating in an all school read from 8:50-9:00. We will continue this practice for the next two weeks, and wrap up the month with a 20 minute "Stop, Drop, and Read" celebration. We have also incorporated reading into our family fun nights. At each family event there is an aspect of reading involved. We will continue this practice next year as well. The more that we promote the love of reading...the more our kids will love to read.

Parent Teacher Conferences are March 18th and March 20th. We look forward to seeing you. Students, and parents will have an opportunity to visit the table in the front lobby, choose a heart, and write down a favorite book or a story that they love. I can't wait to see how we can fill our hallways with the names of books that are special to us. Recently, we added a Reading Tree to our wall in the front lobby. It displays pictures of our students blooming as readers. Remember, "READING GIVES US SOMEPLACE TO GO WHEN WE HAVE TO STAY WHERE WE ARE."

The Superpower of Reading at Wattles Park Elementary

By Brent Swan, Principal

March is an exciting month at Wattles Park Elementary as we put our yearlong focus on reading into high gear. "Reading is My Superpower" is our theme for this school year. Our students have broken school records in the percentage of students completing and turning in their monthly reading calendars. We kicked off the month with a Reading is Magic assembly on March 4th.

We held another assembly on March 15th to celebrate Dawn Vaive Day at Wattles Park. Dawn was a reading interventionist at Wattles Park Elementary who passed away unexpectedly in March 2018. We celebrated her life with a dedication assembly. Dawn's family was with us to help celebrate her passion for teaching kids to read. Our kindergarten-2nd grade bookroom was dedicated in her name and the students were treated to her favorite candy. Students and staff will continue to honor Dawn's legacy by dressing up as their favorite book character on March 18th.



Sonoma's March is Reading Month

By Shalen King-Short, Principal

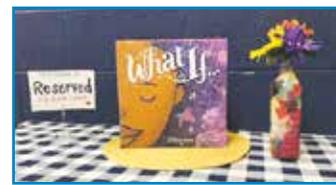
We are excited to try some new reading activities, along with some of our old favorites! Our goal with these activities is to enhance a deeper level of enjoyment for reading and books - ultimately developing life-long readers!

One Book, One School...Back by Popular Demand!

Once again, all classrooms at Sonoma read the same book, at the same time, during the month of March! This platform provides continuity in discussion and activities, as well as an overall feeling of a reading community and togetherness. We selected the chapter book, The War With Grandpa by Robert Kimmel Smith. Teachers were given a copy of the book to read aloud to their classes. Each week, comprehension conversation starters, vocabulary from the book, and reading questions were on the morning announcements. Students were given an opportunity to share their thoughts in writing. Each week a few of these responses were selected and read on the announcements.

Guest Readers – Leah Peet, Sonoma's library aide, invited community members to visit Sonoma each day during the entire month of March. The readers read during scheduled library times and in classrooms. Thank you, Leah, for coordinating this tremendous task for the benefit of Sonoma's students.

Book Tastings - Each week, each class selected a book to be featured as their book recommendation for Sonoma readers. The books were displayed outside each classroom on a small table or desk for others to see. A brief description of the book, along with the genre, was included in the display. Teachers, at their leisure, would then take their students on a "book tasting tour" to check out all of the book recommendations. Students generated a list of books they might like to read in the future. Books were changed out each week. The students had fun making their selections to recommend, as well as checking out new reads!



#Classroombookaday — By Rebecca Schneider

Classroom Book a Day was a goal set by Jillian Heise, who at the time was a seventh and eighth grade teacher in Wisconsin. Five years later, Heise has inspired many teachers throughout the country to join her challenge. This past summer several teachers from Harper Creek Community Schools attended nErD Camp, an annual literacy event for teachers, where they learned about Classroom Book a Day and decided to take on the challenge.

The second grade team at Wattles Park Elementary has worked together to make Classroom Book a Day a success. They decide what books will be read and who will make a copy of the books' covers to display. One key element of the challenge is to have a visual reminder of the books that have been read. The WPE team has their books prominently displayed in their hall. Sonoma has a couple of teachers working together on the Classroom Book a Day challenge too. Two sixth grade teachers have also taken on the challenge. Sometimes it can be an added challenge to get in a book with only 1 hour per class, but the students enjoy hearing the daily story. Students are even getting on board by sharing picture books they have or that are connected to other books read in class.

While Classroom Book a Day's goal is joy, sharing a book a day means over 170 shared experiences. It is these shared joyful experiences that as educators, we hope will educate, empower, and equip our young people to carry with them through life.





BUILDING A COMMUNITY OF READERS

By Laura Williams, Assistant Superintendent

Imagine access to books in locations everywhere you go. . . school, home, family car, neighborhood, bank, tire store, doctor's office and more. I am inviting you to partner with us to make this happen. One of our major goals is to develop, and maintain a true community of readers, which will require all of us to intentionally reflect on where can we have access to a plethora of high quality books for our youth. We would like to invite community businesses to create a space for new or gently used books. Community partnerships and parental involvement are instrumental. As a community we depend on each other and need to use the strengths of all involved to come together and do something great.

Our team is committed to develop passionate readers who can easily have access to books that excite and inform them. In order to do this we need your help! In our community we have slowly developed some pockets of places where our community members and those visiting have access to books. Many of you may have seen Little Lending Libraries in other communities or local businesses.

"Little Free Libraries is a 501 nonprofit organization that aims to inspire a love of reading, building a community, and spark creativity by fostering neighborhood book exchanges around the world. More than 75,000 public book exchanges are registered with the organization and branded as Little Free Libraries."

source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Little_Free_Library

Let's join together to start the movement in our community. The goal is to have access to high quality books everywhere in our Harper Creek Community!

How can you help? As you go through your children's books please consider donating books in good condition that are no longer used. If you don't have children's books but you are eager to help our youth become passionate readers, then buy some books that speak to your heart and donate them. You can bring them to Harper Creek Administration Office. We hope to be able to confirm the locations of up to eight new Lending Libraries by June 2019. If you own a local business, please consider setting up a library in your place of business and registering it <https://littlefreelibrary.org/>. Questions call 269-441-6564.



The Power in Reading Picture Books

Picture books in middle school? Yes! Picture books still have the power to improve reading - and writing - in 5th through 8th grades. Read alouds, using picture books, is a research proven tool in upper elementary and middle school classrooms. And, the students love it.

Picture books provide students with rich vocabulary, mentor good fluency, standards content, character education, exploration into different kinds of writing, grammar study, and so much more. This year at Harper Creek Middle School, we have purposely increased our use of picture books.

Teachers have been using picture books as mentor texts. Mentor texts are used to inspire students and provide a shared classroom experience that introduces key vocabulary and showcase good writing. During a whole-group mini lesson, teachers read the mentor text to the class. Then, the students can use the book and the discussion about the book to help them understand their daily work.



Third Grade Reading Law effective 2019-2020 school year

In 2016 the Michigan Legislature passed the "3rd Grade Reading Law" (Public Act 306). The purpose is to ensure that all students in Michigan exiting 3rd grade are at or above grade level proficiency and provide extra support for students who are not meeting benchmark. Next school year 2019-2020 this law is scheduled to go into effect.

In accordance with PA306 districts are required to administer state approved reading assessments. In 2018-2019 our district started using Northwest Evaluation Association/Measure of Academic Progress (NWEA/MAP) as an additional resource to identify next learning steps for our students. In addition individual reading plans for students are created in collaboration with parents and interventionists to target specific learning targets and strategies that best support the reader. Beginning in the 2019-2020 school year, the Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress (M-Step) will be used for third graders to determine promotion to 4th grade. Students who score a year or more below grade level proficiency on the 3rd grade state assessment will be informed in writing and further action may be necessary, including possible retention per the law. At Harper Creek we are committed to working collaboratively with our students parents and guardians to develop passionate and proficient readers who use written language to grow and develop.

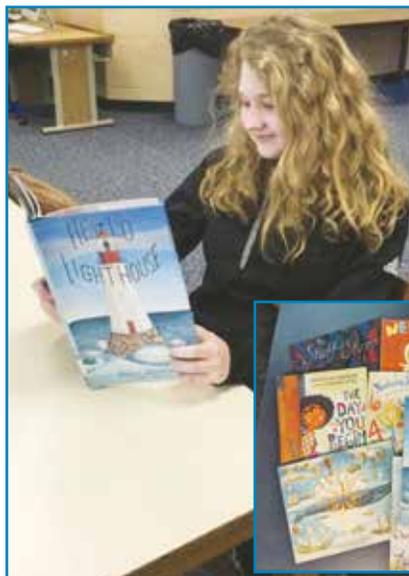
- Here are some strategies that can parents help to grow strong passionate readers and writers:
- Have books throughout your home and read with them daily for at least 20 minutes.
- Read the environment around you: signs, labels on food wrappers, magazines, newspapers, instructional manuals.
- Let your child see you reading daily.
- Write letters to relatives or friends and mail them.
- Make connections about what you read to your family's own actions. Discuss what in the book might influence your own actions, what did you learn together?
- Collaborate with your child's teacher to support what reading strategies they are learning in school.

Harper Creek Middle School Mock Caldecott

To increase our library of quality picture books AND to have a little fun, the English teachers at Harper Creek Middle School participated in our very first "Mock Caldecott".

Every year, the Association of Library Services to Children, a division of the American Library Association, awards the Caldecott Medal to the artist(s) of the most distinguished American children's picture book. We decided to participate our own "Mock Caldecott" election. A set of books were chosen by a teacher committee and were the nominees for our "election".

After all the votes were counted, the students at Harper Creek Middle School chose the same book that actually won the Caldecott Medal - Hello Lighthouse by Sophie Blackall!



Harper Creek Community Schools 2019-2020 DISTRICT CALENDAR

August 19	Teacher Professional Development Day
August 20	Breakfast, Welcome Back HCEA and Staff
August 21	First School Day
August 30	No School
September 2	No School
November 15	½ Day Students; ½ Day Teacher: PD - MS & HS, Records - Elementary
November 27	½ Day Students and Teachers
November 28 & 29	No School
December 19	½ Day Students; ½ Day Teacher PD
December 20	½ Day students; ½ Day Teacher: Records - MS & HS, PD - Elementary
Dec. 23 – Jan. 3	No School
January 20	No School Students; Teacher PD
February 14	No School Students; Teacher PD
February 17	No School; Comp Day - Contingent on State requirements met
March 13	No School Students; Teacher PD
April 3	No School – Comp Day - Contingent on State requirements met
April 6 – April 10	No School
May 25	No School
June 1	½ Day Students; ½ Day Teacher Records
June 2	½ Day Students; Last Day of School

Please refer to our district calendar at www.harpercreek.net for more events and information.



Student Technology Update



By Jim Maynard,
Director of Technology

The high school deployment took place over two days, where we distributed over 400 computers to the 9th and 10th-grade classes. We refined the process as we went and got it moving fairly quickly. One of the biggest challenges was having two different grades, as we have the machines sorted for each. In subsequent years, this won't be an issue with a single grade receiving devices.

The devices include a filter that works wherever the computer is and is actually blocking more than it should for now. We'll be adjusting this as well as dealing with any issues that arise as the teachers incorporate the devices into their instruction.



Now that the devices are out, we'll be refining procedures for repair and warranty claims. We had one device that arrived with issues already. We'll be utilizing the mail-in repair service that came with the devices.

The state bidding process is underway, and the new pricing should arrive in the spring. With the shorter summer, we'd like to get moving on the second round of devices early. By the beginning of the 2019-2020 school year we will have deployed over 1,800 devices at the cost of approximately \$500,000.

HCHS March Newsletter

By Dennis Anthony, with contributions from ELA teacher, Amber Rutan and Librarian, Sam Roslund

Integrating and encouraging reading is a year-long commitment at Harper Creek High School. Recently, efforts have been made to advance our reading efforts with our work for a more culturally comprehensive curriculum with regards to equitable perspectives.

Last year, several teachers participated in bi-monthly equity meetings where we discussed what equity is, how to encourage equity in the classroom, and especially how to include equity through literature. For the 2018-2019 school year, the English department has been exploring new texts that promote equitable thinking and discussion. Our English IV has just added the play *Fences* by August Wilson to the curriculum; the text will open up discussions of equity, history, personal belief and relationships. Literature & Composition II piloted *Homegoing* by Yaa Gyasi, and *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker to be taught as a new literature circle unit focused on equity, empathy, and community alongside our original course texts of *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, by Zora Neale Hurston and *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe. Lastly, a powerful assortment of choice books, written by diverse authors and social issue topics, were ordered this year, including titles such as *The Hate You Give* by Angie Thomas, *American Born Chinese* by Gene Luen Yang, *I am not your Perfect Mexican Daughter* by Ericka L. Sanchez, and several works by Jason Reynolds.

In addition to works embedded within the curriculum, the library has dedicated much of its book budget to purchasing titles that revolve around equity and diverse experiences. Choosing books that are written by authors of color, that portray characters with under-encountered perspectives, and that exhibit plots and themes that encourage personal understanding has been a high priority in the library for the past few years. Specific attention has been paid to underrepresented populations and marginalized

groups. We've introduced an LGBT+ genre sticker in the fiction section to identify those books with elements depicted from that community and to make them more accessible to patrons. As a result, the library has truly become an inclusive space for all students in our building, and as one could hope, the library has maintained a high rate of traffic.

To really celebrate reading, the HCHS Student Council visited elementary students this month to share and spread their love of reading. High School students read *NO David!*, by David Shannon, to 1st graders throughout the district. And, for the 2nd year in a row, each 1st grader received a free copy of the book as well.

Reading can be contagious at any age! Even at the high school level, consider engaging with your student about what you are reading and what they are reading. Read aloud an interesting news article, story, or book excerpt, and ask your student their thoughts. Encourage students to share with you a part (or all!) of what they are reading. Read aloud things you see in all media forms (tv, print, on-line) to spark the conversation and build a life-long love of reading.



Harper Creek Community Schools

NOW HIRING

We are hiring passionate individuals who have a desire to work with children and seek a flexible schedule.

Open positions include:

- *Bus Drivers
- Substitute Classroom Assistants
- Substitute Lunch/Recess Supervisors
- Substitute Teachers



*\$500 signing bonus

www.harpercreek.net or 269.441.6567 for more details

Countdown to Kindergarten

Countdown to Kindergarten is a one hour monthly evening program for children who will be attending kindergarten in the fall of 2019 and their parents or guardians.

Wednesday, April 17

Thursday, May 23

Children must be 5 years old on or before September 1, 2019 in order to attend kindergarten in the fall.

For more information and to register, please call one of these schools:

Beadle Lake Elementary **Wattles Park Elementary** **Sonoma Elementary**

441-3250

441-5850

441-7800



Stop the Silence. Help End the Violence.

All of us can be the eyes and ears of the community and ensure that our children are safe. Everyone—students, staff, parents, and community members—is encouraged to report potentially harmful or criminal acts using OK2SAY.

To submit a confidential tip:

- Call 855-565-2729
- Text 652729 (OK2SAY)
- Email ok2say@mi.gov
- Download the Mobile App search OK2SAY
- Visit the OK2SAY website at www.ok2say.com



Harper Creek Educational Foundation

Give • Grow • Achieve

www.bccfoundation.org/fund/hccsef

The Harper Creek Educational Foundation's sole purpose is to generate and distribute resources to Harper Creek Community Schools for scholarships, enrichment programs, and other projects aimed at enhancing the quality of education. If you would like to donate to this philanthropic organization, learn more about its mission and goals, or join the movement by volunteering, call 269.441.6555.