



MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Dem M Fulton

Dear Spring Lake Parents and Community Members,

I've heard it said that, "the days are long, but the years are short" and the truth of that statement is resonating with me now more than ever.

My youngest graduates from Spring Lake High School this year and I'm stunned at how quickly time has passed, despite the countless long days that have filled the space between walking her to Kim Taylor's kindergarten classroom and today. She doesn't see it, of course. Like most high school seniors, she remains far more focused on what's next as opposed to what's coming to an end. As her dad, I just want a few more *Harry Potter* movie marathons and other such moments that allow time to stand still. To our kindergarten parents, it will be over before you know it!

As we head into the middle third of the school year, there is much to celebrate. This newsletter is intended to keep you updated on important happenings within the District and, we hope, to connect you to some of the stories we want to share. You'll find updates on our bond planning and curriculum, buildings and departments, some words of wisdom from Jeffers teacher Mike Prins, alumni updates and more. Enjoy!

It has been a truly great school year with the potential to get even better.

Wishing all of you a wonderful Holiday Season!



BOND UPDATE

We cannot thank your community enough for supporting our work at Spring Lake Public Schools by supporting the May 2023 bond! We want to be clear that the images below are renderings--not finalized images. Those will be coming in February/March of 2024, but we wanted to share the early images with you now to show our pride in the progress.

Some facts about the major projects:

- Construction is set to begin in June 2024 with opening doors in Fall 2025
- The high school office and secure entry is a two-story concept featuring a main-level welcome center, offices, meeting spaces, and storage space. The second floor will house the counseling offices and meeting spaces. The total square footage is 7,503.
- The fieldhouse's main level will feature a 70-yard turf field, a weight room, the trainer's room, restrooms, mechanical necessities, an elevator, storage space, three lanes of straight track surface with high jump capabilities, and a 70-foot ball wall for lacrosse. The fieldhouse's mezzanine level will have dedicated space for wrestling and cheerleading overlooking the main level. The total square footage is 71,905.



FINANCIAL UPDATE

Our financial transparency is important to us and to our families and community. To that point, we will share a bit of information in each newsletter to help you understand what is happening in our district presently--and over time.

2023
Revenue -- \$37,201,051
Expenditures -- \$35,773,988
Fund Balance -- \$6,620,705

What these numbers, by themselves, do not show is that this is the fourth straight year in which the fund balance increased.

2020	2021	2022	2023
\$2,695,923	\$3,544,676	\$5,193,642	\$6,620,705

These numbers indicate that Spring Lake Public Schools is in a healthy financial space heading into the new year.

From The Curriculum Director **Kate Drake**

Learning continues for both students and staff this 23-24 school year. One highlight involves multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) for grades 5-8 around positive behaviors. By ensuring all students know, are trained in and acknowledged for expected behaviors throughout our campus, we are enhancing culture and shaping a path for strong academics. A key ingredient is consistency -- which benefits our children.

Guided via a team of intermediate/middle school educators and resources, we have come together to craft this effort. Additionally, processes of identification and intervention for those who may need differentiated behavior support are next steps. Research-based best practices around behavior are points of ongoing learning and the team is grateful for a partnership with our county intermediate school district to help grow us.



Fundraising Success

All fall, Spring Lake Public Schools has taken on a lot of fundraising efforts and it has paid off. In total, the number nears \$150,000.

Fundraising supports several missions: reducing the cost of student experiences, providing unexpected kindness to the staff, donations to local charities, and more. In addition, it's a great experience for our students to get out and share their school experience while asking for funds.

We couldn't do this without our families and the community-at-large. Thank you!

Retiree Breakfast

Each fall, nearly 70 Spring Lake Public School retirees get together at Terra Verde Golf Course on the first day of school.

They gather, eat, tell stories from their time at Spring Lake--and raise money! Oftentimes, that money raised goes to a current staff member in need--whether it's medical support or a family emergency.

This continued retiree kindness just goes to prove that Spring Lake Public Schools staff never stops caring about its own people.



School Building Highlights Fall 2023

District-Wide

- *US News & World Reports* ranks each of our schools highly in their annual review

High School

- Successful integration of 40-minute Seminar twice each week and competing at the State level in Band, Boys Cross Country, Girls Cross Country, Girls Golf, and Girls Swim & Dive

Alternative Education

- Focusing on future plans by meeting with individuals in business and higher education to make those plans happen

Middle School

- Many staff members from the middle and intermediate schools are working hard to prepare and launch a campus-wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) system. It will surely enhance our climate and culture

Intermediate School

- Raised over \$45,000 in their Walkathon fundraiser to support student experiences

Holmes & Jeffers Elementary

- The elementary schools collaborated on a successful Color Jam fundraiser. The outpouring of support, creativity, and excitement over this event was phenomenal. We are thankful and appreciative of this group for providing unique and fun experiences for our students



From the Voice of Mr. Prins

Psssss! The air brakes hiss as the buses pull up to the elementary school for the start of 2023-2024 school year. Go ahead, take a look in the windows of those buses. What do you see? Happy faces, sleepy faces, excited faces, scared faces, worried faces, silly faces, new faces and familiar faces. You can see so many different emotions. But the best thing of all is when the bus driver opens the door and the kids run—not walk or trot but run—to get inside of their school. The wild thing is it's not even raining; it's a beautiful, sunny morning. They simply can't wait to get their new school year started.

This is my thirty-third year teaching Second Grade at Jeffers Elementary School. Every year it's the same but it never gets old: our students are truly excited to come to school! You might not realize what a special thing we have here in Spring Lake. I talk with a lot of teachers from other districts all around the country. Their jaws are on the ground when I tell them 95% - 100% of my students are represented at Parent/Teacher Conferences both fall and spring, year after year. They gasp when they hear my students are respectful and kind. They wish they could teach in my building when I tell them we are supported by students, parents, community and administration. Spring Lake Public Schools is truly a special place.

If you want to see pure, true joy, watch the Spring Lake Elementary students get off those big yellow buses. You can't help but smile to yourself. Can you imagine what our world would be like if adults reacted the same way about their jobs as our kids do about their school? We can learn a lot from our Spring Lake Public School students! They are the best!



A FAMILY THAT COACHES TOGETHER: BOYS CROSS COUNTRY

Meet the Mitchells. Todd has been teaching and coaching Boys Cross Country at Spring Lake Public Schools for six years now in the math department.

Each of those six years, his wife, Anna, has been by his side--directly at his side as the assistant coach. It's not only Todd and Anna but their three young children as well.

The Mitchells note the unique and wonderful challenges it brings: "It is fantastic watching the high school athletes interact with our kids and to see the joy that the kids and the athletes can bring to each other's lives. However, parenting and keeping the kids from being a distraction while also coaching requires a lot of patience!"

Going to a meet, though, you'll find that the Spring Lake students and parents admire what the Mitchells are doing. They see the Mitchells as models of health and connection.

Todd understands the power of what is happening as well: "It is rewarding to see the kids and the athletes developing relationships together."

Who knows if the Mitchell children will grow up to be runners? Their parents simply want them to follow their passions. However, their young children are certainly learning the benefits of health, happiness, and family from their coaching parents.



Top 5 Athletic Highlights Fall 2023

1. The Girls Varsity Golf Team finished 4th in the state thanks to a stellar showing by junior, Zoe Dull, who was the state runner-up in individual scoring
2. Hannah Brown set a new school record in the 50-freestyle swim with a time of 24.60 seconds. That was good enough for 6th in the state.
3. The Girls Varsity Cross Country Team was seeded 8th going into the state meet. They left finishing 4th overall. Kyla Meyers was awarded All-State even though this was her first year in the sport.
4. The Girls Varsity Volleyball Team had an outstanding post-season run earning the right to call themselves District Champions.
5. The Varsity Football Team hosted its first playoff game at Grabinski Stadium in years.

Honorable mention: This fall marked the inaugural season for the successful field hockey team. The team got great participation numbers and was competitive on the field.



FROM THE ARTS DEPARTMENT

High School

- Bronze Medal in Flight IV at the State Finals held at Ford Field in Detroit
- The Theatre Department gave out 140 free student tickets for the fall play, *Game of Tiaras*

Middle School

- Middle School Art has incorporated iPads into the Graphic Design program

Intermediate School

- The 5th and 6th grade Honors Choir sang the National Anthem at the November 10th Muskegon Lumberjacks Hockey game

Holmes Elementary

- Over 70 3rd and 4th grade students meet each Friday morning before school for Honors Choir.

Jeffers Elementary

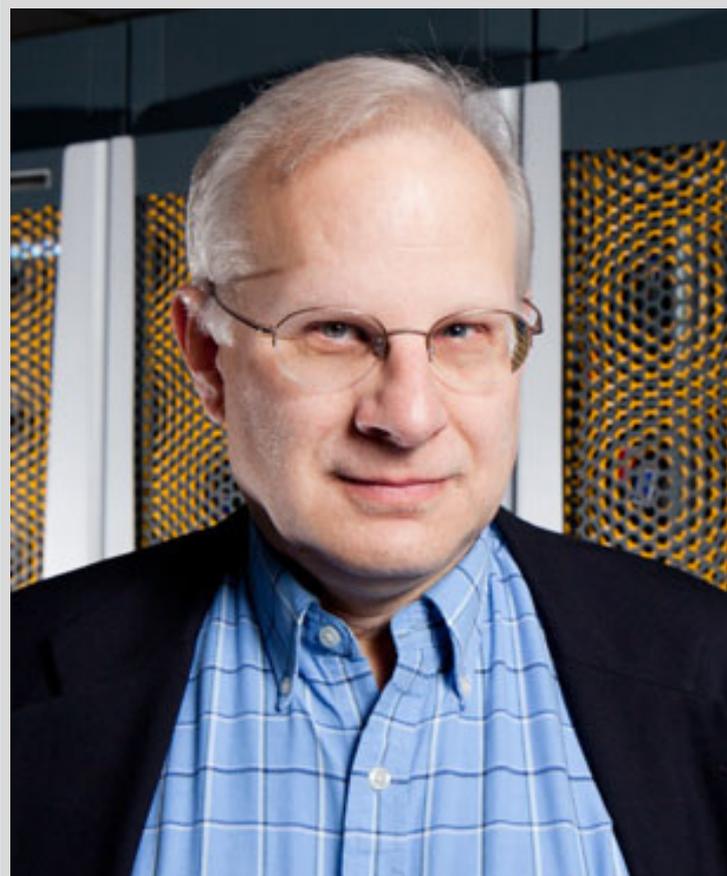
- Raised over \$750 for Folds of Honor at their Veterans Day Concert
- Every student, DK-4th grade, at Jeffers learned a new printmaking technique in the first trimester and spent lots of time creating art in the woods

SPECIAL ALUMNI PROFILE LEO DONNER

Leo Donner is a 1974 Spring Lake High School graduate and was just named one of the “Best Scientists in the World” according to [Research.com](#). (See the article [here](#).)

Donner is a physical scientist who focuses his work on developing climate models by researching clouds and convection in the climate system. Donner works at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Geophysical Fluid Dynamics Laboratory (GFDL) in Princeton, New Jersey (1991-) and as a lecturer in the Department of Geosciences at Princeton University (1993-). He received his B.S. (Atmospheric Science) from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor (1978) and M.S. and Ph.D. (Geophysical Sciences) from the University of Chicago (1981, 1983).

Leo is an inspiration to what our students can become with their dedication and hard work.



CLASS NOTES

1960s

- **GEORGIA BRAGINTON (YONKER) '66** has been retired since 2008 and has been living in Grand Haven Township since 2012

1970s

- **DENISE CASEMIER (DONSELAR) '72** is retired and has been married to William Casemier since 1973
- **PATTI BERNARD (LEMKE) '78** married **MIKE BERNARD '74**; four children (Kari, Katie, Hannah, and Michael); Mike Bernard passed away in 2004
- **SHANNA BRIGGS (TEUNIS) '78** works in Food Service at Spring Lake High School; lives in her grandmother's house in Spring Lake; married to Craig

1980s

- **MARK PEARSON '83** is nearing retirement and lives in Waxhaw, North Carolina

1990s

- **MELISSA GEORGE (BERNIA) '90** has worked for Spring Lake Public Schools since 1994 as Director of Community Child Care; newly married; two children, ages 27 & 22
- **JASON FOGEL '91** is a school counselor at Allendale High School; lives in Spring Lake; married to Bridget Fogel; four children (Drew, Marley, Alyssa & Calleigh)
- **MAUREEN PAWLAK (ALLEN) '92** works as a bookkeeper/transaction coordinator at the Vis Realty Group; lives in Spring Lake now, after 21 years in Chicago; married to Gary Pawlak; three children (Calvin, Caden & Nathan)
- **LISA HARRIS (BONTRAGER) '94** is a residential house cleaner at Miss Lisa's Cleaning; lives in Muskegon
- **MISTY DEGARMO '98** is Director at St. Matthew Christian Child Care; three children (Jamison, 20; Alexa, 18 & Brooklyn, 13)
- **DEVON HAMM '98** owns his own business at DH Marine Service; married Kara (Hazlett) in 2003; three children (Devon Jr, Melody & Mollee)
- **HILLARY EDDY VANDERLAAN '98** is on the clerical staff at Holland Pediatrics; lives in Jenison, Michigan; recently married to Lee Vanderlaan
- **JENNIFER BOTBYL (HILL) '99** is an Early Childhood Specialist at Muskegon Area ISD; three children (Hayden, 17; Alexandra, 15 & Carson, 14)

2000s

- **KATIE BATOR (CHRISTENSON) '00** is a 6th Grade teacher at Spring Lake Intermediate School; married to **BEN BATOR '94**
- **JAY BLANCHARD '01** is self-employed at Jay Wire Solutions where the company wires performance street cars and drag race cars; lives across from Holmes Elementary; married to Ann Haruki; two children (Elliott & Natalie)
- **STEFANIE HERDER (VIPOND) '02** is the Marketing Coordinator at EV Construction; married to **JOSH HERDER '02** since 2009
- **BETH MONAWECK (HOLSTROM) '02** is a teacher at Reeths-Puffer Schools; one child (Mabel)
- **SARA ROYER (DYKEHOUSE) '02** is the Finance Director at Kannapolis Middle School; lives in Kannapolis, NC; married to John Royer; one child (Mason)
- **STEVE SPINNER '02** is a Special Education Director at Bath Community Schools; lives in Saint Johns, Michigan; married to Elisabeth since 2010; two children (Avery, 8 & Eliana, 5)
- **KRIS TYLER (KENNEDY) '02** is the owner at Rock Your Mind Therapy and co-owner with Sara Wolcott at Awaken
- **KAREN BARBU (BASTEK) '03** is a veterinarian at Fruitport Animal Hospital; lives in Spring Lake; married to Nick Barbu since 2012; two children (Laila & Addie)
- **DALEN MENDIOLA '03** is the Director of Business Growth, the Grand Rapids Chamber
- **MELISSA VANDERSTELT (KOLE) '04** is a Kindergarten and Young Five's teacher at Grand Haven Area Public Schools; lives in Grand Haven; married to Stephen since 2012; two children (Breanna & Kamden)
- **JUSTIN MILLER '05** is the Director of Music at Croydon Minster and Whitgift School in London, UK
- **RYAN NYSTUEN '05** is a Vice and Narcotics Detective at Fort Wayne Police Department; lives in Fort Wayne, Indiana; married to Nicole
- **EMILY FIRST (MANTING), MS ED. '06** serves as the Assistant Dean of Students at Grand Valley State University; moved back to Spring Lake in 2019; married **CAMERON FIRST '08** in 2012; two children (Clara & Elliot), both attending Spring Lake Public Schools
- **KATIE MORIARTY (COALTER) '07** and her husband are the owners of Bedz Furniture in Muskegon, MI; moving to Spring Lake in November; married to Ian; three children (Kyla, Cohen & Camden)
- **STEFANIE PICKFORD (PELLEGROM) '08** is a high school counselor at Adrian High School and a collegiate volleyball coach for the men's and women's teams at Adrian College; one child (Colton) with a second on the way in May 2024
- **MOLLY EVANS (MARKOVICZ) '09** is a Laboratory Manager at The Cancer and Hematology Centers; lives in Spring Lake; married to Joey; two children (Norah & Luella)

2010s

- **KRISTIN ADKINS (HULET) '12** is a Materials Manager at Gentex Corporation; lives in Spring Lake; married **LANDEN ADKINS '11** in 2018
- **ROSEMARY BONO (MCCOLLOM) '13** is the Event Coordinator at the Grand Rapids Comic Con; lives in North Muskegon
- **ASHLEY KEENA '14** is the middle school counselor at Orchard View Middle School; recently moved to Norton Shores after having lived in Detroit for five years
- **ELENA WEBSTER '14** is the Environmental Educator at the Chicago Academy of Sciences / Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum; lives in Chicago

- **KAYTLIN MEADLEY (GEORGE) '15** is the Talent Acquisition Specialist at AMP Residential, LLC; lives in Muskegon but travels the United States for work; married Nicholas Meadley in 2023; expecting their first child in May 2024
- **ALEXANDRA WEBSTER '17** is a teacher at a school in Spain; lives in Madrid, Spain
- **VERONICA RUSSELL '18** is the Varsity Girls Diving Coach at Spring Lake High School
- **ASHLEY GEMMEN (KNOLLINGER) '19** is a teacher at a Homeschool Co-Op and also the Children's Ministry Director at Christian Community Church; lives in Homer, Alaska; married Nolan Gemmen in 2023

2020s

- **GRANT KIEFT '20** is a student at Michigan State University; lives in East Lansing
- **ISABELLA JEAN DONALDSON '21** is an Office Assistant at MusicEveryday and does respite work for Community Mental Health; lives in Allendale at Grand Valley State University
- **ELLY VANDERHOEK '21** is working at Sweet Temptations and is the Middle School Competitive Cheer Coach at Spring Lake; lives in Spring Lake

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