



# SPRING LAKE

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## PUBLIC SCHOOLS

NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2024

[www.springlakeschools.org](http://www.springlakeschools.org)

### MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

*Dem M Fulton*

Dear Spring Lake Parents and Community Members,

False spring has officially arrived and the stretch run of the school year has begun. What's on the docket for SLPS?

**Strategic planning:** SLPS is in the process of preparing a 3- to 5-year strategic plan. Input from all stakeholder groups was collected at the beginning of February. That input will now go to the District's Steering Committee who will do the work of writing a dynamic guide that includes clear, measurable metrics to help us track our progress over the next several years. Look for more information this spring.

**Bond work:** Construction will begin on the fieldhouse and administrative offices in late May. Anticipation is high for this work and we look forward to keeping you informed of our progress over the next 18 months.

**Transitions:** Members of the class of 2024 are already counting the days until graduation, all the while hoping for one more snow day. This group of graduates has left their mark and will be missed. At the same time, SLPS has already begun to prepare for resident and non-resident enrollment for 2024-25. For more information, go to the District's website → District → Enrollment or scan the QR code below.

So much of the work we do this time of year is future focused and that may be more true this year than ever before. As always, we couldn't do this important work without the support of our generous community--thank you!

Wishing you a warm spring!



# BOND UPDATE

We are happy to report that construction of the Laker Athletic Center has begun! We are thrilled by the improvements that will be made to our facilities and what that means to our students of all types.

Of course, with construction comes noise and traffic. As we make these significant and important additions, upgrades, and renovations, there will be a notable increase in traffic to the surrounding areas. We will do our very best to minimize disruption, but it will be impossible to eliminate it.

We ask for your patience and support as you begin to experience what may, at times, be inconvenient.

Let all of our eyes be on the prize: outstanding new facilities which will keep Spring Lake Public Schools at the forefront of education in Michigan.

Some dates to keep in mind:

- Site Preparations: February 26th – March 22nd
- New Athletic Field House: May 20th, 2024 with an expected completion in Fall of 2025
- New Safe & Secure Front Offices: May 20th, 2024 with an expected completion in Fall of 2025



# FINANCIAL UPDATE

In this edition, we want to share with you how the bond vote to enhance our facilities is also an enhancement to the classroom experience.

## **DID YOU KNOW?**

The State of Michigan is one of only a few states that does not provide facility-specific school funding.

Why is this important? It means schools have, in essence, two ways to fund facilities:

1. Through the general fund and fund balance accumulated over years
2. Through debt-financing--including bond votes like May 2023

Because of your “yes” vote to our \$49.8 million capital improvements last spring, we can now keep that money in our general operations to directly support the most treasured aspect of our district: the students. Through staff salaries, classroom materials, curricular upgrades, or the vote-supported facilities, our focus is on inspiring students to be their best selves.

Ultimately, supporting our operations is the very definition of supporting our students.

Thank you!

## From The Curriculum Director **Kate Drake**

A strong educational program offers diagnostic performance checks at three key points in a school year: fall, winter and spring. These markers provide opportunities to determine baselines, celebrate growth and dial in supports. Having completed midyear January assessments, Kindergarten through 8th graders benefit overall from this diagnostic testing.

We are fortunate to have one of those data components in the online assessment tool, iReady. This data is cross referenced with additional assessments, thus allowing educators to make truly informed decisions about what's next for students. iReady provides a path to proficiency and growth measurements in reading and mathematics--two core areas which directly impact children's learning in additional content focuses.

Parent reports also accompany these three mid-year diagnostic times, as we desire to continue walking in partnership with our families. May your experiences with iReady also create opportunity to celebrate.



## Maranda Visits Holmes Elementary

This Valentine's Day, Maranda from WoodTV wanted to see the love--and the important work--happening between our K-8 SXI (Severely Multiply Impaired) classroom and Ms. Almer's Holmes Elementary art room. Together, with Miss Weaver's 1st Grade students, they created a construction canvas. Through projects like this, all students come together. It's the Laker Way!



Read and see the story by scanning the QR code here.



## Staff Basketball v. Rollin' Drive

Spring Lake Middle School watched the Grand Rapids Rollin' Drive (a wheelchair basketball team sponsored by Mary Free Bed Hospital) take on their beloved teachers. The Rollin' Drive let the teachers stay close but defeated them by the end of the game.

By having these interactive assemblies, students can be witness to both the challenges of wheelchair basketball as their teachers struggled to move in coordination as well as the incredible abilities of those who do it well.



# School Building Highlights Winter 2024

## High School

- In February, 24 students passed the STAMP Spanish Language Proficiency Test. The STAMP test is used to measure real-world language proficiency and earned these students a Seal of Biliteracy--a powerful tool to potentially earn college credit, apply for a scholarship or study abroad programs, access greater career opportunities, and stand out on college applications

## Alternative Education

- The Alternative Education building has graduated five students already and will be graduating seven more this spring

## Middle School

- The Middle School received a kindness presentation from renowned speaker, Brian Williams, who initiated a 15-day kindness challenge, and the students stepped up in big ways

## Intermediate School

- The Intermediate School is including its 6th Grade students in Middle School Athletics for the first time ever via Middle School Wrestling & Track

## Holmes

- Holmes students earned so many HEART SMART tickets, they earned an all-school dance "glow" party

## Jeffers Elementary

- On March 14th, Natasha Tripplett will visit with the students and share her delightful book, *The Blue Pickup*, to celebrate March is Reading Month



**Kendra Elder**

# From the Voice of a Teacher Mrs. Elder

As we come to a close on our second trimester, I thought of a few words that might describe what it looks and feels like: The Meat and Potatoes, Digging Deep into Learning, Chaotic, Energetic, High Expectations, Snow Days, Snow Gear, Exhaustion, Interventions, Maturity, Testing, and so much more.

Whew! That is a lot! Second trimester, some would call it the meat and potatoes of the school year. Of course, every part of the year is full of learning and growing, but this particular time of year, well, it's...INTENSE! It's actually my favorite part of the school year. Crazy, I know! But here's the thing: routines are established, classroom culture is built, trust is earned, and expectations are engrained. Things aren't perfect and some days are challenging but it's time to dig deep into learning. From Christmas parties to winter testing to Valentine's and conferences. That's a lot!

I cannot believe that this is my 24th year of teaching and all of my 24 years have been here in this amazing district of Spring Lake! I cannot believe that this year all of my own kids will be closing a big chapter in their lives: a senior graduating from SLHS, an 8th grader moving on to high school and my last one graduates from elementary school. What I can believe now more than ever is that time flies, and it only goes faster the older your kiddos get.

Every time I start a new school year, it seems like a long way to the end of the year, but before you know it, you're nearing the end of the winter trimester, looking at the last part of the school year wondering what just happened.

Maybe some new words we can throw on that list describing our winter months could be: Relaxation, Mindfulness, Contentment, Game Night, Family Time--

Stop and Smell the Roses a Little.

## SPRING LAKE SCHOOLS HIRES MIDDLE SCHOOL ATHLETIC DIRECTOR

Spring Lake has hired 2004 graduate, Felicia Nietering, to lead its Middle School Athletics Department and act as an Assistant Athletic Director for the district as a whole.

After working two years in transportation and maintenance, Nietering says, "...this was just the challenge I was looking for. I am invested in the school and its success now and in the future."

Nietering is ready for the challenges of this position. At a recent game, Nietering notes there was a health issue, but her education in criminal justice allowed her to know exactly what needed to be done to keep people calm.

She, however, does not take credit alone for the positive outcome: "I was able to see coaches keep athletes calm and spectators quick to assist."

Nietering notes an excitement to work with staff, students, and families to make a positive impact--not only on the playing surface but also in the classroom.



## Top 5 Athletic Highlights Winter 2023-2024

1. Wrestler, Braelyn Flemming, finishes 2nd in the state for Girls Wrestling
2. Six athletes earn all-state honors in Boys Swimming with the 200 Free Relay finishing 2nd in the state
3. Boys Basketball beats undefeated Whitehall in route to the district championship
4. The Varsity Dance team finishes 2nd place at the Detroit Pistons Cup
5. The Girls Basketball team wins the district championship and, at the time of publication, is still playing in the tournament

Honorable Mention: Club Bowling completes its first season with Girls Bowling finishing 4th in the regional tournament



## FROM THE ARTS DEPARTMENT

### High School

- Eight individual choir students performed in Solo and Ensemble, each receiving top ratings
- A cast of 59 students are working hard to bring the Riverbank and Wild Wood to life for the spring production of *The Wind in the Willows*. The show is April 25-27
- All the bands combine on March 17 for the annual FUNdJam! fundraising and celebration concert that culminates with a 375-piece band
- The Design 1 class is working collaboratively with a DK class at Jeffers Elementary to design personalized alphabet books
- The jazz band received 2nd runner-up in Class B for Outstanding Band at the CMU Jazz Festival

### Middle School

- The Vocal Music Department presented "Musica del Mundo" on February 28th. Over 200 singers in grades 3-12 performed for family and friends in this annual concert
- Middle & High Schools continued their streak of receiving all FIRST DIVISION ratings and A's at band festival
- The middle school put on a fabulous production of *Finding Nemo, Jr.*
- The middle school wrapped up two sections of ceramics with students able to send home some projects

### Intermediate School

- Fifth Grade Band had a successful debut concert in February

### Jeffers Elementary

- Jeffers students were "glowing" with excitement while they created art that glows under a black light!

### Holmes Elementary

- The students worked collaboratively to portray what construction looks like using coloring, painting, and more



## IN MEMORIAM VICKI GEYER



We remember Vicki Geyer as a master teacher--one who dedicated 29 years to education and was still working with a passion to enrich her students' lives.

Vicki loved her colleagues--playing golf and bunko with them regularly.

More than anything, Vicki loved her daughters, all of whom are in high school and are being surrounded with support from family and community.

# CLASS NOTES

## 1970s

- **JUDY ARBOGAST (YONKER) '76** is retired
- **VICTORIA GARDNER '76** is a Community Based Instructor for UNR-NV; has lived in Las Vegas, NV for 23 years
- **PAM PLAMANN (MULDER) '79** is retired

## 1980s

- **MOLLY WELSH (WOODHOUSE) '82** married **BEN WELSH '80** in 1984
- **LORI DIRKSE (HANEY) '88** is a 31-year veteran teacher at Orchard View Middle School

## 1990s

- **LISA RAGSDALE (MAZUREK) '96** is an EPMO & Process Excellence Leader at Meijer Corporation; lives in Spring Lake; married to York Ragsdale; one child, Bailey (born in 2009)
- **KARLI BALDUS (POHLMAN) '97** is a mental health therapist at the new group practice she created in Muskegon called The Healing Village

## 2000s

- **REBEKAH PLACE (POTTER) '04** is a Judicial Secretary at Muskegon County Circuit Court; lives in Coopersville, MI; married Greg Place in 2007; has two children, Cheyenne (born in 2009) and Madelyn (born in 2015)
- **JENNA POPE '04** is a local realtor for Jenna Pope Realty of Coldwell Banker, Grand Haven; lives in Spring Lake; married Jason Bergman in 2015; has two children, Elias (5) and Archer (3)
- **MITCHEL TENNYSON '05** works at Orchard Market in Spring Lake and volunteers at Knights of Columbus & St. Mary's Church; lives in Grand Haven
- **JACOB LEE '06** owns Winding River Campground in Benzonia, MI on the Betsie river with friend **KYLE REYNOLDS '06** and is a CPA, real estate and early stage investor and works in senior living; recently moved to Anchor Bay Area after having lived in Rockford for several years; married Kelly Mackenzie in 2016; has three children, including Carson Wayne (5), Alaina Therese (3), and Hudson Lee (1)
- **BRENT MARSHALL '06** has one child, Henry (born in 2023)
- **SHAWN HOLMES '07** is a Volunteer Firefighter and Correctional Deputy for Van Buren County Sheriff; lives in Decatur, MI; married **AUTUMN LEWIS '08** in 2013; three children named Devin (born in 2008), Joshua (born in 2013) and Jaxon (born in 2021)
- **AMANDA DOUGLAS '08** is a buyer at Symbotic; lives in Brooksville, FL
- **AUTUMN LEWIS '08** is a teacher; lives in Decatur, MI; married to **SHAWN HOLMES '07** in 2013; two children named Joshua (born in 2013) and Jaxon (born in 2021)

# 2010s

- **SHELBY SHAFER '10** is a special education teacher at Grand River Preparatory High School
- **MOLLY MOORE '11** is a Veterinary Assistant at Harborfront Hospital for Animals & Veterinary Dental Solutions; married to **ERIK ERHORN '11**; one child, James (born in 2021)
- **HOLLEIGH URBANIK (SWANSON) '11** is a Licensed Client Service Liaison with the Melissa Myers Group; married Todd Urbanik in 2022
- **NICK ZACEK '12** is a teacher at Spring Lake Middle School and the Aquatics Director at Spring Lake Country Club; Nick and his fiancée will pursue higher degrees soon; Nick will be married in 2025; Nick is enjoying being a first-time uncle
- **ELLEN BOEZAART '14** is a general merchandise retail clerk at Meijer
- **AUDRA BIALIK '18** is an environmental engineer at Arcadis Inc; lives in Portland, OR
- **MADISON MILLER '18** is a medical student at Central Michigan University College of Medicine; lives in Mount Pleasant, MI; Madison is engaged to marry **CONNOR BURKE '18**
- **ELLISE HIGGS '19** is attending law school at Gonzaga University; lives in Spokane, WA
- **EMILY TURNBOW (HARVEY) '19** is a Vet Tech (Animal Care Specialist) in the United States Army; lives in Texas since 2022 after having moved from Washington; married Joshua Turnbow in 2021

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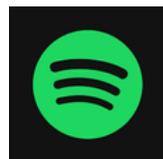


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