



SPARTA AREA SCHOOLS

November 2022

BELL RINGER

Home of the Michigan Blue Ribbon Exemplary School

www.spartaschools.org

The Power of WE!

Welcome to a new school year! We are excited and hopeful for a truly normal year. We look forward to field trips, classroom helpers, visiting readers and all those educational experiences that we used to take for granted. The school, home and community partnership has always been a strength and foundation of Sparta Area Schools. We are eager to continue those partnerships.

Teachers have been partnering to serve our families for a very long time. It is a foundational tenet of our profession. We have worked to share our knowledge, share our experiences and remain constant learners of new and better practice.

We are organized in professional learning teams that work shoulder to shoulder striving to meet the needs of all learners. Collaborating is in our blood, per se.

This school year we have renewed our commitment to the tenet of partnership. We are committed to assisting each other to be better at our craft. We are committed to being there for each other at all times of need. We are committed to being there for all kids. Our theme is "We Will". Whenever something is needed and the question is asked, Who will?, our intent is to respond in action with "We Will". Meeting the needs of our collective community is a hearty task. We can

never meet that challenge alone. It is only possible if we attack the challenge together. As Helen Keller is quoted as saying, "Alone, we can do so little; together we can do so much."

The Power of WE! includes all stakeholders in our work. Our Board of Education is committed to serving our families, students and staff whenever needed. The staff, as mentioned, is working every day to collectively meet the varied needs in our classrooms. The Sports Boosters, Band Boosters, PTC, Sparta Education Foundation, the local business partners of the Downtown Development Authority, and so many others, are

contributing in significant ways. This is truly a very special place.

If you are not yet contributing in small, medium or big (and significant) ways, we invite you to join us. We would love to have you at our athletic events and drama performances. We invite you to join one of the organizations whose mission is to make Sparta's schools better every day. We invite you to join us and strengthen the Power of WE! that is improving the future of our Spartans. Together, WE Will!

With Spartan Pride,

Joel Stoner
Interim Superintendent

THANK YOU!!

Sparta Area Schools would like to say a huge thank you to The Tesa Tape Plant located in Sparta for paying off all negative food accounts for the 2021-22 school year. Tesa's generous donation paid off 281 student's negative balances. Once again thank you so much for your donation and we look forward to your continued support.



Apples, Apples, Apples

DK and Kindergarten have been spending time learning all about apples. Many classes have looked at the apple life cycle as well as parts of an apple. All of this learning got our students very excited to attend a field trip to Schwaller's Country Basket. The kids had a wonderful time enjoying donuts and cider. Also, they each got to pick an apple and pumpkin to bring home!





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SMS gets Visitors from New York City..with a Very Important Message!

The Vital Dance Crew from New York City gave an amazing performance, complete with live music and dancing. More importantly, they delivered a powerful, personal message about the importance of respecting yourself and those around you. James, the lead vocalist and head of the Vital Dance Crew, shared his own personal life journey with our students. He talked about the important lessons he learned and how we went from being a student who was bullied everyday at school to a successful young man who gets to do what he loves for a living. Vital Dance Crew performs all around the country. We hope to have them back at SMS soon!

Legendary Sparta Teacher of 46 Years Leads the Homecoming Festivities at SMS...and Celebrates Her 70th Birthday!

Friday, October 7th, was a great day at SMS. It was the Friday of Homecoming and Mar Higgins, SMS teacher for the past 46 years and teacher leader of SMS Student Government, once again came through in

flying colors. Mrs. Higgins and her Student Government members organized a great day of activities for all our students as part of our annual "Sparty Cup" grade level competitions. This was also a special day

because Mrs. Higgins was also celebrating her 70th birthday. It was a very special moment for our entire staff and student body to come together and sing "Happy Birthday" to a Sparta legend.



It is a crisp, cool morning as I write this, and fall is definitely in the air! The orchards are buzzing with activity, and the trees lining the road seem to have turned vibrant colors overnight. Week-ends will soon be filled with hayrides and corn mazes and trips to the pumpkin patch.



However, by the time this is published, people will be turning their thoughts away from fun fall activities and begin to focus on the season of thankfulness. As an organization, Sparta Education Foundation has much for which to be thankful. We have community business partners who sponsor activities, host fundraisers, and provide goods and services. There are families and individuals who provide financial gifts in honor of loved ones. The many teachers and staff who take the time to apply for grants in order to provide unique educational experiences for the students of Sparta, and those who consistently support SEF by payroll deduction. And, of course, our community members who show their support by participating in our many fundraisers.

Not only is November the perfect time to express our gratitude, it is a busy time for the Sparta Education Foundation (SEF) to live out our mission. We are looking forward to our fall round of grant proposals from the talented staff of Sparta Area Schools. Since our beginning in 1991, we have provided over \$500,000. in grants and scholarships, and we are eager to see how we can partner with teachers and staff to provide the Extras for Education this fall. In addition, one of our fall fundraisers, Angela's Spaghetti Night, is Tuesday, November 8 from 4:30-7:30. You can take the night off from cooking, feed the family a delicious meal, and support SEF all at the same time!

The Sparta Education Foundation's mission is to help provide creative, progressive, and innovative educational opportunities for our students and staff, which are beyond the normal operating budget of the school district. As the year draws to a close many are looking for ways to make tax deductible charitable contributions. I hope you will consider SEF. We are a 501(c) 3 non-profit organization, and we are entirely funded by people like you! There are many ways to give. Just go to our website www.spartaschools.org/sef and click on the link marked CONTRIBUTIONS for details.

The Sparta Education Foundation is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors and operated independently from the Sparta Board of Education under an established set of bylaws. We are happy to welcome Sarah Richmond to the Board. As a member of the community and the parent of past and present Sparta students, we look forward to the unique perspective and contributions she will bring to the organization. If you have a heart for supporting students and some time to lend a hand, we would love to hear from you. Reach out and send us an email at sef@spartaschools.org.

LeAnn Kitson,
SEF Board President



Hoffmaster Field Trip

Mrs. Hurley's third grade class had the opportunity to visit Hoffmaster State Park on the shore of Lake Michigan. Students learned about the importance of preserving the beautiful Great Lakes and the precious sand dunes that line much of their shores. From climbing large sand dunes to seeing native animal species, students were able to connect their science and social studies learning to this great experience!





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Summer Reading Nights (Ridgeview)

The amount of time a child spends reading is directly connected to preventing summer learning loss and promoting long-term success. In an effort to stop the summer academic slide the Title I Staff hosted 3 book check out nights. Students had the opportunity to check out 20 books each night. Over 70 students participated which means over 4,000 books were read this summer! Thanks to all of the parents who took advantage of the program and to all of the Ridgeview teachers who volunteered their time.



Celebrating Constitution Day

It was so fun celebrating Constitution Day in Mrs. Lambert's class. Students learned that it is celebrated on September 17th. The Constitution became a law in 1787 and it lets Americans know the rights they have, and what laws to follow. It is a very important document. The class ended the day making their Uncle Sam hats to wear home.



October is National Fire Prevention Month

Ridgeview students had the opportunity to meet "real life" firefighters! We learned about fire safety and saw what firefighters wear and the tools they use! Thank

Kids Food Basket Challenge



Sparta rallied together, Pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade, to decorate bags for Kids' Food Basket for the Fox 17 Blitz Game of the Week Challenge! Fox 17 partnered with 8 school districts, including Sparta, for which district could decorate the most paper bags. These bags would later be filled with healthy food and delivered to schools in Grand Rapids, Holland and Muskegon to feed thousands of children every night. The art on the bags communicates that we care, filling their hearts, while Kids' Food Basket, brings physical nourishment. Out of over 8,300 bags decorated, Sparta decorated 4,200 bags! Way to go Sparta!



Positive Behavior Program

During the first week of school, our new Assistant Principal at Ridgeview Elementary, Mrs. VanVliet, helped share with students how they can stay safe, be kind, be respectful and responsible on the playground!

It is all part of our positive behavior program- Sparta Kids Really Rock!



Meet Bean!

This school year we welcomed a furry friend to our staff! Bean is in training to become a comfort animal

in our school. The Sparta Education Foundation awarded a grant to fund Bean's housing, food, and other necessities. Hannah Vanderwall, our building social worker is Bean's handler and is often seen wearing a special backpack with Bean inside.

The last few weeks Bean has been doing "meet and greets" with the children. Hannah introduces Bean and talks with the children about the expectations and rules about visiting with her.



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Ordinary Heroes

During the week prior to September 11, 2022, Fourth graders at Appleview Elementary, learned about that tragic day 21 years ago. They not only learned about tragedy and loss, but they learned about the everyday, ordinary heroes that stepped up in a time of need. They were firefighters, police officers, EMTs, doctors, nurses, office workers, and more. We read a book, *The Man in The Red Bandana*, that tells of Welles Crowther who saved 12 people in the World Trade Center that day. He gave up his life to save others. We honored him by wearing red bandanas. We discussed ways that we can be ordinary heroes; that you don't have to give up your life to be a hero. We can give up our time, money, and resources to help others. Sacrificing for another is a true hero. The fourth graders made cards thanking the Sparta Fire Department for their service to our community. We can learn from those who made the ultimate sacrifice on 9/11 and be heroes to those around us.



Artist Creating Together

Mrs. Geers' friends traveled to the Artist Creating Together (ACT) studio for some artist adventures! The students enjoyed exploring the rooftop garden filled with mini pumpkins, fruits, vegetables, and flowers. They also participated in painting projects including a forest scene and decorating a pumpkin! To wrap up our adventures, we used herbs from the garden to make homemade pesto to enjoy with crackers! A big shout out and thank you to ACT for hosting an awesome adventure, packed with learning experiences!! Tons of fun was shared by all!!



Art Prize Field Trip

Fifth grade students went on a double-dip field trip at the end of September. Students were able to experience both the Grand Rapids Public Museum and Art Prize on one day! The security guard complimented our Spartans on their exemplary behavior inside the museum. Way to show Spartan Pride, fifth

graders! Art Prize venues welcomed our students with interactive portraiture, photo opportunities with installations, and awe-inspiring works to amaze and inspire. Funding for our buses was raised by the Sparta Spirit Walk and the PNC Bank Bus Scholarship. We are fortunate to be the beneficiaries of both!

