



**Kerri Vizena joyfully anticipates taking the helm as our new Head of School. Cathy Mohan, after 30 years of service, is retiring in June.**

Kerri underwent several interviews with the Head Search Committee and visited Japhet School in December before being offered the position. She met with students, parents, faculty, staff, and school friends. We invited her to introduce herself to the wider Japhet community with this Q & A.

**To what do you most look forward as Japhet's Head of School?**

It's all about the students! I have always enjoyed working with children and helping to promote each student's path to success and excellence. I look forward to being part of the Japhet team that inspires and nurtures students — and to be inspired by students as well!

**What are your expectations of the transition period for you and Cathy?**

Cathy and I have a lovely history of mutual respect as fellow faculty members, friends, and also in the roles of teacher and parent. She once taught my child, and I hers. We share a goal to have a seamless and consistent transition — which has already begun — so that students, faculty, parents, and the Board of Trustees feel assured that the mission continues to be the focus. I have great admiration and respect for Cathy's accomplishments at Japhet, and I look forward to continuing that path.

**What specific qualities do you bring to the position?**

I certainly believe that I try my best to express our character qualities, knowing that there's always room for improvement. When Cathy asked me to speak at InSPO on obedience, one of the choices was the Golden Rule. I

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## Welcome, Mrs. Vizena!

In early March the Board of Trustees announced that Kerri G. Vizena has been named Japhet School's next Head of School. Her term officially begins July 1.

The decision to hire Kerri was unanimous among board members. "We believe Kerri is an outstanding fit for Japhet and has the right skills to lead the school into the future," wrote Frank Edwards, board president. "She has a strong history of excellence in the field of education, with experience in charter, public, and private independent schools. Her years at Japhet give her a deep understanding of our special school of character, and her recent tenure on the Board of Trustees

gives her an understanding of the current challenges and opportunities we face as a school."

Kerri was once Japhet's early childhood director and physical education teacher, and her three children attended Japhet School. She also served as a Gifted and Talented Coordinator and Building Manager (Assistant Principal) in the Lapeer Public Schools system.

She has owned her own business for several years, served on Japhet's board, and is a member of the Assistance League of Southeast Michigan and chairperson of its signature fundraiser.

### UPCOMING EVENTS

<b>MAY 16 1:30 PM</b> Spring Sharing	<b>MAY 17 7:30 PM</b> Spring Sharing	<b>MAY 18 6:00 PM</b> Spring Sharing Gala	<b>JUNE 8 11 AM</b> Graduation	<b>JUNE 16 1-5 PM</b> Open House Picnic for Cathy & Joe Mohan	<b>JUNE 25 12 PM</b> Fore the Kids Golf Outing at Western Golf & Country Club	<b>JUNE 25 6:00 PM</b> Fore the Kids Golf Outing Dinner & Silent Auction
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See our full calendar online at [japhetschool.org](http://japhetschool.org)

was grateful that was a choice, because that's how I choose to live my life — by treating others the way I want to be treated. I believe gratitude is a wonderful quality that blesses everyone — and I'm very grateful for opportunities and relationships. Specifically, I'm an enthusiastic and joyful person and enjoy finding solutions to challenges. In these situations, it's most important to listen carefully and be respectful during discussions, review opinions, and communicate effectively. I'm hopeful and optimistic that there's always a satisfactory answer. I enjoy encouraging students and staff to be the very best they can be. I have a personal motto to “never settle for less than my best.” Doing one's best takes hard work, effort, and dedication. I love to be creative and artistic and this is expressed through my skills in floral design, gardening, and interior design. My professional experiences are broad, yet have a common thread of customer service. I'm excited about bringing my specific skills and qualities to the Japhet experience and seeing how they bless the Japhet School community!

### **Looking back on your past years at Japhet, what most impresses you about how Japhet has grown and changed?**

I'm always grateful to the founders of Japhet School for their commitment to meet the needs of the whole child through solid academics paired with character education. I'm excited to see how this has continued and how it is now expressed in a more global manner. I'm grateful that the Japhet School experience is available to all children. Acquiring our own building was a monumental step for Japhet School — one that was necessary for our success.

### **What is the essence of Japhet that will continue under your headship?**

Life is about being a team player, and not just in a school setting. It's about developing meaningful relationships — building trust, respect, and admiration for one another — and about communicating effectively. Since childhood, I've enjoyed participating in sports. I learned the greatest lessons as a team member — striving together to reach a common goal. Each individual brings unique talents and strengths, and is valuable to the team's success. I'm proud to be a member of Japhet's team and to lead in a manner that will honor Cathy's legacy, all former Heads of School, and Japhet's mission. I'm excited for the future of Japhet and for

# Message from the Head of School

As Head of School, I have had the honor of helping 8th-graders prepare their 25-minute keynote presentations about Japhet's character qualities for InSPO. Each student brought something different to the table — literally, my office round table — and there I've listened to them read children's books, chuckled at their skits, previewed videos, and read their own words of how they see character in action in the world around them.

In March, an 8th-grader taught us about negative loops and positive loops as she led InSPO focused on respect for self. Reflecting on my Head of School tenure, sure ... I can identify some negative loops. When a dilemma presents, sometimes the right choice is not the popular one nor the easy one. Yet I can say with peace that I have approached all important decisions by listening, considering, consulting, and moving forward with my own 'personal best' expression of good judgment. To help me, I've had the benefit of an outstanding faculty and staff.

The positive loops have uplifted me greatly — all 13 years as Head of School, and 17 years as a teacher. What began as a pregnancy two months into my brand-new job grew into a joyful child, capable Japhet alumnus, talented engineer, and an encouraging new father. What began as a facility emergency concluded in a beautiful building of our very own — a dream fulfilled.

Japhet students are our most promising 'positive loop.' They begin as children who are new to the language of character, and leave with an important duty: to teach and to lead by their own example.

I know they are ready. I have the privilege to be among our students every day. I hear them speak words of self-respect. I watch them express initiative to help others without being asked. I witness them employ new strategies to learn — and even more inspiring, adopt a growth mindset.

Take a walk with me into our classrooms. These engaged students — and those of the past, and those of the future — will continue to be the heart of Japhet School. Always.

With gratitude,

**Cathy Mohan**  
Head of School

the relevant ways that our students will have an impact on the world.

### **Which statements of Japhet's teaching philosophy are most important to you?**

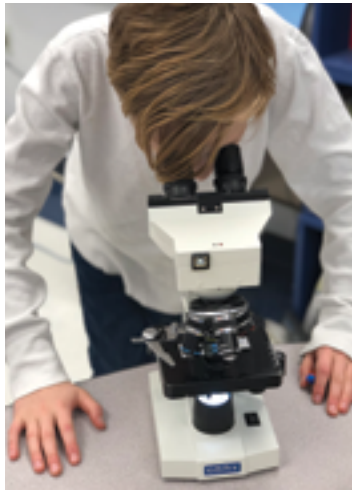
The first statement says, “A school should educate the whole child, establishing a strong basis for academic, physical, moral, social, and spiritual development.” And the last says, “Children express innate purity, goodness, and health,” which beautifully defines exactly whom we are serving. These two statements lay the foundation for individual student growth and success. To recognize that every student is inherently good is paramount to honoring the abilities and nature of the whole child. I'm an advocate for education that supports different learning styles in a creative and enthusiastic manner. It is essential that we recognize that the education of children is shared within a

team — the school, family, and community. I'm certainly committed to honoring the entire Japhet Philosophy and am eager to witness it in action.

### **How have you seen Japhet's mission in action during your recent visits?**

My husband Mark and I attended Invention Fair and were thoroughly impressed with students' abilities to speak clearly and effectively about their projects. It was evident they were prepared and they genuinely enjoyed the hands-on learning that comes with such a project. It was awesome to observe students feeling comfortable as orators. In every instance and in every program, I saw faculty members' expression of character qualities and commitment to strong academics. I particularly value the sense of self-respect, respect and kindness toward others, and joy for learning that was so visible.

# CLASSROOM WINDOWS



“Take a walk with me into our classrooms. These engaged students — and those of the past, and those of the future — will continue to be the heart of Japhet School. Always.”

— Cathy Mohan



# Giving Stories Alumni Give to Honor Cathy & Joe Mohan

**Joe Mohan and the Board of Trustees have cooperatively launched the Cathy & Joe Mohan Legacy Campaign with one primary goal: to free Japhet School of a mortgage by June 30, 2018. Once this goal is met, a scholarship fund will be set up in their names for future students.**

As part of this campaign, Joe has been reaching out via phone, email, and even Facebook Messenger to Japhet's alumni to invite them to join him in honoring Cathy with a donation to the Legacy Campaign. In Cathy's 30-year span, she taught many of them, or she presided over their growth as Head of School.

"It is truly a joy to see alumni giving to this campaign. It is a great way to give back to the school," Joe says. "Just as Japhet was here for them, now our alumni ensure Japhet is here for future generations by helping pay off the mortgage. We have already received many donations from alumni — including two \$1000 donations. That's a very generous gift from young adults, but gifts of any amount all add up and convey a message of gratitude, joy, initiative, patriotism, and peace."

**Alumni who have pledged to donate have also shared a note explaining Japhet School's impact on them. Here are just a few:**

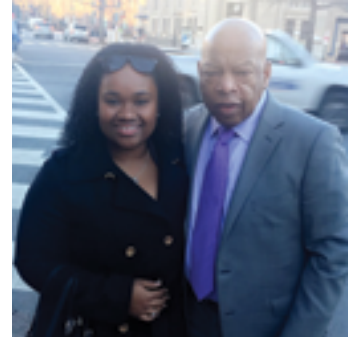
**CAROLYN COMMER, PhD J'99  
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH, VIRGINIA TECH**

"Mrs. Mohan taught me geometry. I remember how she brought in a small, tabletop billiard ball table to demonstrate how to measure angles and calculate the perfect winning shot. I was so excited when I figured out how to measure the angles myself! She encouraged me to teach others what I had learned, so I carried that billiard ball table, along with rulers and markers, to the younger classes. That had a profound effect on me. When I look back on that experience, I see how she inspired in me a sense of wonder and confidence in my ability to learn.

I am forever grateful for how much she shaped my education at a young age and how she continues to inspire my work as a teacher today."

**CARIS BING J'10  
LOYOLA UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO, '18**

"At Japhet, a character based education is fostered with a sense of community that I've carried with me throughout the years. It has instilled in me the value of taking initiative, striving for excellence, and establishing relationships with others. And as I've grown older, building relationships with teachers has translated into doing this with managers and other professional figures, which can be intimidating. Without this skill, however, I would not have the courage to pursue many of the opportunities that have crossed my path. Japhet helped me find my voice — this is the Japhet legacy in action. I hope that, one day, my children can call this school home as well. In support of Mr. and Mrs. Mohan's Legacy Campaign, I'm giving so that more children can become part of the Japhet family."



**CARIS BING, J'10, meets U.S. Representative and civil rights activist John Lewis on a recent trip to Washington DC.**

**MOLLY DANNER J'96  
PROGRAM DIRECTOR,  
NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC EXPEDITIONS**

"I have wonderful memories from the time when Cathy was my Middle Class teacher. My formative years were fun and foundational. Exploring the meaning and expression of character qualities helped me develop teamwork and leadership skills. I felt supported by Cathy, Joe, and the larger Japhet family as I learned to be an independent and creative thinker. I felt trusted to make decisions. As a result of going to Japhet, I was well prepared academically, but more than anything, I left Japhet

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CUT AND RETURN TO: JAPHET SCHOOL, 839 S. CROOKS RD., CLAWSON, MI 48017



## The JAPHET SCHOOL Annual Giving Fund

Please accept my gift of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to the Annual Giving Fund  
 Please accept my gift of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to the Cathy & Joe Mohan Legacy Campaign  
 TOTAL: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ amount enclosed, OR  
 divide into \_\_\_\_\_ monthly payments of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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- My employer will match my gift. (Please obtain a form from your HR office and include it with your contribution.)
- Please do not publish my name as a donor.

**"Our love of Japhet encouraged us to start this campaign so Japhet can prosper and grow forever."  
— Joe Mohan**

Major gifts are a great help, but donations of all sizes are greatly appreciated. Japhet School is a 501(c)(3) organization, and your gift is tax-deductible. Thank you!

feeling inspired about learning. Japhet empowered me to be an intellectual explorer, to learn how to distinguish priorities, problem-solve, present ideas, and communicate effectively. These are the skills that I have found most helpful going forward in life's transitions. Cathy and Joe Mohan, through decades of devotion, helped to shape numerous lives like mine, and will continue to do so through the Legacy Campaign."

**JOSEPH POSPISIL J'03  
COMMUNITY HOUSING NETWORK  
MBA STUDENT, WALSH COLLEGE  
AND**

**ANDREW POSPISIL J'06  
MBA STUDENT, WALSH COLLEGE**

"We choose to regularly contribute because Japhet's mission benefits not only students, but people throughout our community and the world. It is the home of many of our dearest childhood moments, and it played an important role in forming who we are today. When we look back at our time at Japhet, we share fond memories of Middle Class with Mrs. Mohan. In the five years between the two of us spent in her class, we had a teacher who pushed us to be the best we could be, often through fun and creative means such as her legendary games of around-the-world and overnight trips to the I-5 Museum in Lansing. Now as adults, we notice how both Joe and Cathy continue to serve the school with the same love that was shown in Middle Class. Living locally, both of us enjoy volunteering in Japhet's new home. We're grateful to have had the opportunity to have the Mohans as teachers, and as dear, dear friends as we became adults."

**SARAH DEWEY XJ'00  
OWNER AND BAKER, COASTAL COOKIES**

"I can still remember the butterflies I had in my stomach while walking into Middle Class for the first time. Once I met Mrs. Mohan though, I knew I was in good hands. It was such a cozy classroom and I truly felt at home. Mrs. Mohan helped guide me that first year as I learned about character qualities. My two favorite classes were always PE with Mr. Mohan (floor hockey!) and Life Skills class. Baking has become a huge part of my life, and that was a skillset first nurtured at Japhet. Thank you, Joe and Cathy, for your wonderful dedication to Japhet School."



**MOLLY DANNER, J'96**, is a Program Director for National Geographic Expeditions in the Washington, D.C. area.



**JOSEPH POSPISIL, J'03**, works for local non-profit, the Community Housing Network.



**ANDREW POSPISIL, J'06**, is working on his MBA at Walsh College.



**SARAH DEWEY, XJ'00**, is the owner and baker at Coastal Cookies in Destin, FL. At left: see her beautiful sugar cookies.

**ALUMNI!** Please update your information: Go to [japhetschool.org](http://japhetschool.org), click "Alumni," then "Update Your Information."

# Alumni Update Locally Honored

**LIBBY (SAMANEN) PALACKDHARRY J'97** was recently honored as one of Crain's Detroit 40 Under 40 recognizing her leadership in urban planning and leveling the playing field for those looking to purchase a home in Detroit. Libby, who is the Senior Director of Financial Stability Programs and Operations for Southwest Solutions, oversees their Home Buyers Program. It's a course that teaches clients the do's and don'ts of financing their initial home purchase.



Libby attended Michigan State University and then received her Masters in Urban Planning from Wayne State University. She and her husband Steve live in Royal Oak and enjoy gardening, travel, hiking and playing board games like Settlers of Catan. Libby is dedicated to serving her community, and among her recent volunteer efforts was a 6-year membership on Japhet School's Board of Trustees and a current leadership role on the Alumni Committee.

Libby is also a life-long musician who plays a mean bass guitar. She currently performs regularly with two bands: Zosette and the Groove and Wizard the Girl. You can catch both of these acts around Metro Detroit and sometimes on a sunny summer lunch break at Campus Martius. Libby's quote to live by: "The world needs new pathways. Don't allow yourself to be hijacked by common rhetoric, or false beliefs and illusions about how life should be lived. Strive to create new actions both musically and with the pathway of your life. Never conform." — Wayne Shorter and Herbie Hancock's Open Letter to the Next Generation of Artists



# JAPHET SCHOOL

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## FORE THE KIDS!

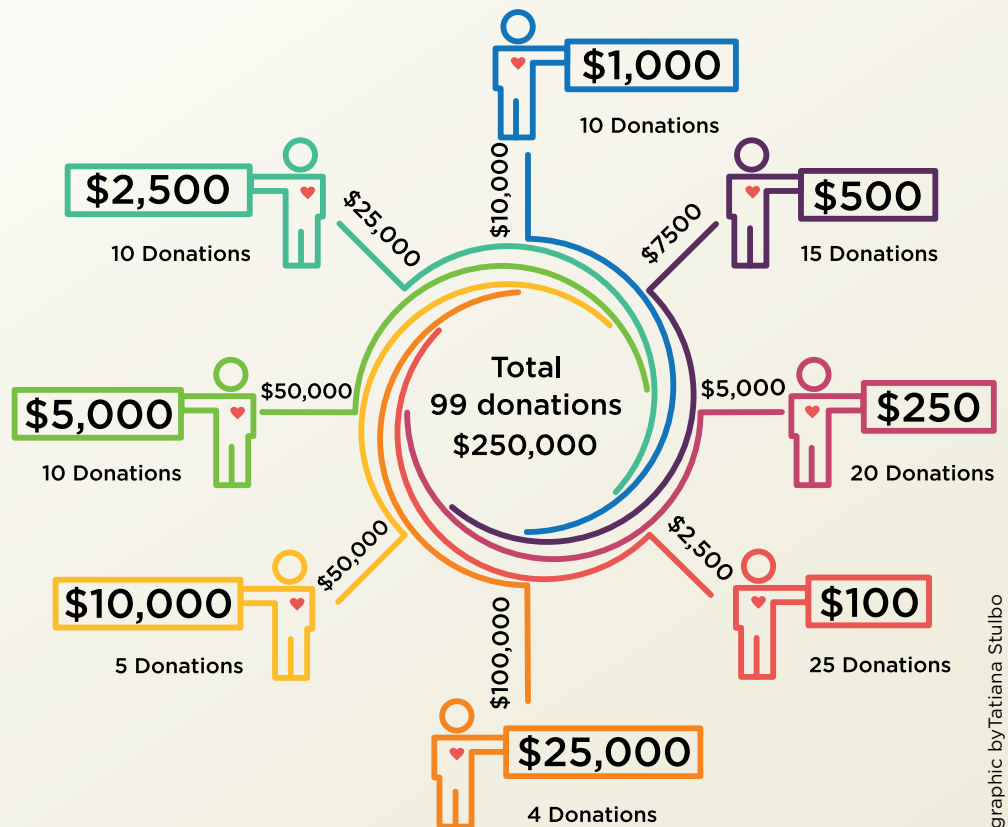
Our annual Fore the Kids Golf Outing takes place Monday, June 25, at Western Golf & Country Club in Redford, Michigan. Registration begins at 12 PM and includes 18 holes, lunch, dinner with awards, and silent auction. To sign up a foursome, attend just the dinner and auction, or support the event as a sponsor, call 248-585-9150, email [betsy.stecker@japhetschool.org](mailto:betsy.stecker@japhetschool.org), or visit <http://japhetschool.org/fore-the-kids-golf-outing/>.

## THANK YOU, GJS+

The Grandparents of Japhet School 'Plus' hosted their popular fundraising event, Dance for Japhet in February! They raised over \$4,000, of which \$1,000 funded two scholarships. \$2,000 was given to the Legacy Campaign, \$200 went toward operating, and the remainder is being used to purchase items for classrooms. Thank you, GJS! Remember, the 'Plus' stands for friends. **Members need not be grandparents!**

## What Does It Take?

There's just **\$250,000** left to raise to pay off our mortgage by **June 30**. We can get there, but only with the help of the Japhet community. The impact of being debt-free, especially as a non-profit, is significant, as it will allow us to direct funds to meet the goals outlined in our Strategic Plan, keep tuition affordable, reduce the amount of fundraising needed, and continue to maintain our facility. **To donate, see the bottom of page 4.**



Infographic by Tatiana Stulbo

## SHARE WITH US!

Do You Have Alumni News to Share? Contact Robin Pospisil, Admissions Director at [robin.pospisil@japhetschool.org](mailto:robin.pospisil@japhetschool.org). Also connect on [f](#) and [in](#) !