



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Japhet School Welcomes Two New Trustees; Bids Farewell to Longstanding Supporter

**June 28, 2011, Madison Heights, Michigan** - Japhet School, the award-winning school in Madison Heights, welcomed two new trustees to its board, Kent Commer of **Grosse Pointe** and Libby Palackdharry of **Royal Oak**. Pat Tibbetts of **Birmingham** and **Ann Arbor** has retired from the board after 26 years of service to the school. She leaves a legacy of helping to develop character education programs for schools in Michigan.

Kent Commer has been in the financial services industry since 1987 and heads Essex Financial Group, which focuses on personal financial, investment, insurance, and estate planning requirements. His four children all attended Japhet School in the past, and he has previously served on Japhet School's Board of Trustees and on the Development Committee. Commer grew up on Detroit's east side and attended Wayne State University where he earned a B.A. in Speech Communication in 1980. He has extensive experience with nonprofit groups as an active community volunteer through his church, the Lakeshore Optimist Club of Grosse Pointe, and as a municipal appointee to the Grosse Pointe Park Tax Increment Finance Authority.

Libby Palackdharry attended Japhet School from daycare through eighth grade, graduating Japhet in the class of 1997. She works at **Southwest Solutions in southwest Detroit**, as the Center for Working Families Coordinator. Her previous experience includes managing a Kumon Math and Reading Center, and serving as a community organizer for Detroit Public Schools. Libby is bilingual in English and Spanish. She is near completion of her Master's degree in Urban Planning from Wayne State University.

Julie Knaffla will continue as president, Cassandra Bing as vice-president, Jay Schmitt as treasurer, and Ann Nicholson as secretary. Judy Gettel, Susie Golbiw, Mike Hedge, Terry Helgesen, Jack McNaughton, and Natalie Wright complete the board. A brief biography of each trustee is on the school's website: [www.japhetschool.org](http://www.japhetschool.org).

Pat Tibbetts -- former Japhet trustee, Head of School, Japhet art and history teacher, and alumni parent -- has concluded her service to Japhet after 26 years. Japhet School staff are grateful for her commitment to Japhet and to the character education movement at large. She spearheaded Michigan's State Schools of Character program, and today there are 13 Michigan schools that are either State or National Schools of Character. "I have found the years working for Japhet among the most professionally rewarding and personally enjoyable," says Tibbetts. "Japhet's idea of education is spot on. The school's integration of character with academics is an important example to the field of education." Tibbetts, a long-standing resident of Birmingham, recently moved to Ann Arbor. She was particularly helpful in her hometown of Birmingham and was part of that school district's character education committee when the initiative was launched.

### About Japhet School:

Founded in 1973, Japhet School is an independent school, serving children the metropolitan Detroit area in preschool through eighth grade. Its mission is to nurture and prepare children for life by integrating character education with a strong academic program. The school provides small classes and teaches the whole and individual child. Japhet School teachers challenge students with academic material that is appropriate for their intellectual readiness, regardless of age or grade. Integrated with strong academics is Japhet School's national award-winning character education curriculum, which builds a peaceful community within the school and creates leaders with integrity. Japhet is a National School of Character, and was the first school in Michigan -- and the first independent school in the country -- to receive this award.