



# JAPHET SCHOOL

Award-winning National School of Character

SUMMER 2010

Japhet School nurtures and prepares each child for life by integrating character education with a strong academic program.

“The board embraces the idea that a school should educate the whole child. We have enthusiasm for education, we work hard, and Japhet’s mission is ingrained in each board member. We are highly motivated to see that every student benefits from a Japhet education, and our vision is to be able to offer this education to many more children.”

—Julie Knaffla  
President, Board of Trustees

## Upcoming Events:

Open House  
August 15

FORE! the Kids Golf Outing  
August 30

First Day of School  
September 8

## Rouge Rescue!

### BEST-PRACTICE ACADEMICS IN ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Fifth- through eighth-grade students were a part of an area-wide effort this past spring to improve the health of the Rouge River watershed. With thorough science class preparation, practice lab work, and hands-on water testing in the field, Japhet School’s middle school students experienced best-practice science learning.

“The ultimate goal was to understand the concept of watersheds globally and their significance to the health of all living things,” says Japhet’s Intermediate Class teacher and middle school science teacher Brenda Gaunt. “We are doing our part to understand our impact on the watershed with authentic lab work on-site. It’s global stewardship and scientific exploration, combined.”

At a Rouge River site in Farmington Hills, students conducted several tests. They did biological testing to examine the macroinvertebrate population; chemical testing to determine pH levels, oxygen levels, and bacteria levels; and physical testing to determine the velocity of the Rouge current, the condition of the riverbanks, and the amount of pollution. Japhet students’ findings were added to a report that included data from other schools.



Three middle school students closely examine water samples from the Rouge River for insect larvae.

“There was the all-important character component, as well,” says Mrs. Gaunt. “Our students took their responsibilities seriously and used industry in completing their tasks. They worked peacefully in cooperative groups to gather all the information they needed. Students expressed obedience when in the field – not only for their safety, but also to ensure quality test results.”

The Rouge Rescue project was made possible by a \$1,000 grant from General Motors, and Mrs. Gaunt hopes to repeat the Rouge watershed unit each year with continued financial support.

## NEW LEADERSHIP FOR THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Julie Knaffla, former board vice-president, has been elected as president of Japhet School’s Board of Trustees for the 2010/2011 school year. Cassandra Bing has moved into the vice-president position. Jay Schmitt will continue to serve as treasurer, and Ann Nicholson will serve as secretary.

Pat Tibbetts, former president, will remain on the board. Other continuing board members are Judy Gettel, Susie Golbiw, Mike Hedge, Terry Helgesen, Jack McNaughton, Nancy Thayer, and Natalie Wright. A brief biography of each trustee is given on our web site.

Trustees Dave Holt and Ted Balowski are concluding their service to Japhet as board members. We thank them for their service to the school and look forward to seeing them at Japhet events.



## Character in Action

### JAPHET STUDENT SETS UP STAND TO BENEFIT AUDUBON SOCIETY

After watching President Obama's speech in June regarding the Gulf devastation caused by the oil spill, Middle Class student Grant Partridge set up a lawn stand with a hand-drawn poster pleading for donations to the Audubon Society to help clean the oil-stricken birds.

As the word spread to Japhet School, the school's Board of Trustees became involved and immediately issued a declaration that it would match Grant's collection. "We are so lucky to have Grant at a school like Japhet where children's natural willingness to help is supported and fostered, so it becomes a part of who they are," says Grant's father.

"Watching the President talk about the oil spill, I felt sad," Grant says. "I decided I needed to do something to help."

Fox2News, *The Oakland Press*, and *The Daily Tribune* learned about Grant's initiative and featured his story as positive news throughout Metro Detroit. "His expression of initiative and desire to remedy a wrong-doing is pure character in action," says Cathy Mohan, Head of School. "He was motivated to help, had the confidence in knowing he could make a difference, and set up camp on his front lawn with hope and courage. Grant sets an example for us all."



Grant Partridge was so concerned about the Gulf devastation that he initiated his own grassroots drive to help the Audubon Society.

Our FORE! the Kids Golf Outing is on Monday, August 30. We are looking forward to returning to the prestigious Red Run Golf Club in Royal Oak, and you are invited to participate!

- Admission of \$150 per golfer includes:
- Driving range
  - Continental breakfast
  - Shotgun start at 8:20 AM
  - 18 holes of golf at Red Run (host of the second-oldest Invitational in Michigan and three PGA tournaments)
  - Luncheon
  - Golf prizes
  - Silent auction featuring Red Wings tickets
  - Plus, a lunch-only option for non-golfing guests for \$40

To join in, please use the flier link on our web site homepage: [www.japhetschool.org](http://www.japhetschool.org). See you at Red Run!



## MESSAGE FROM THE HEAD OF SCHOOL

"Best-practice" is quickly becoming the new buzzword as a way to describe the most current approaches in any given discipline – from engineering to education. In the classroom, it means engaging the whole child in the learning process, rather than asking him to stay seated at a desk for hour-long stretches. It means recognizing the unique strengths and weaknesses in a student, and giving her the opportunity – and the responsibility – to use her unique talents to rise to the challenge.

How can this be done? Experts agree: small classes, allowing teachers to truly get to know their students and respond to their individual needs. Every Japhet School classroom has fewer than 20 students, complemented by a teaching philosophy that states all children possess intelligence, talents, and gifts.

Japhet's small setting is ideal for best-practice teaching. It has been a joyous year, witnessing the launch of *Writer's Workshop* in language arts, *Wikispaces* in integrated technology, the interactive *History Alive!* curriculum in social studies, and our middle school *Rouge Rescue* unit. Hands-on activities and cooperative teams make learning fun at Japhet School!

Cathy Mohan  
Head of School  
[cathy.mohan@japhetschool.org](mailto:cathy.mohan@japhetschool.org)

## Fabulous Send-off for Five

On June 11, the Japhet School community sent five special people off to their next educational adventure during our Graduation ceremony.

Michelle McCurties, former Japhet Middle Class teacher and Japhet alumna, was our keynote presenter. Michelle focused on the idea of being a host. "There are opportunities for hosting every day," she said. "Are we treating our classmates, our teachers, our parents, and our friends as treasured guests? We need to give people in our lives a mental hug and make them feel welcome in our presence!" She encouraged the graduates to think about their futures and how they can bless others. Michelle currently resides in St. Louis where she teaches Spanish to elementary students at The Principia.

Will Butler, who attended Japhet in elementary school, was our alumnus speaker. He spoke to the foundation Japhet gave him, yet also about how Japhet is "a community for the present. When you are a part of Japhet, you join a community, and that support system will always be with you." Will currently attends the University of Michigan, where he is pursuing dual majors in Political Science and in Screen Arts and Culture.

As a Graduation tradition, Cathy Mohan shared the unique strengths of each student prior to presenting diplomas.

**Sebastian Chick** enjoys playing card games, football, and basketball. Sebastian's classmates describe him as clever, funny, and humble. He is a person of few words, but he is known for a well thought out answer to a puzzling question. Sebastian is a talented creative writer, having found his voice in his poetry. This year he also authored a thought-provoking piece on the homeless. When asked how he would describe Japhet, Sebastian said that students make good friendships here. Sebastian's mom credits Japhet with helping him make friends who have persuaded him through positive peer pressure to work hard. Sebastian plans to attend Bishop Foley in the fall, and he hopes to play football and basketball.

**Reilly Ankers** is a friend to all. His classmates describe him as reliable, forgiving, friendly, and adventurous. His hobbies include hockey, basketball, and hunting. Reilly is especially good with younger children, listening to their stories and interacting not just as a polite listener, but as a true friend would. Reilly can think on his feet – especially if he's in front of an audience. Reilly is a skilled speaker, actor, and creative writer. He chooses to weave many of his hunting experiences into his stories. One descriptive story entitled "The Perfect Hunt" told a tale of a young hunter's successful pursuit, juxtaposed with a deft examination of his moral questioning. Reilly plans to attend Shrine High School in the fall.

**Caris Bing** demonstrates leadership in and outside of the classroom. Her classmates describe her as caring, respectful, peaceful, and industrious. Some of Caris's accomplishments include opening Sesame Street Live at the Fox Theatre as part of the Detroit mayoral inaugural events, and becoming a Kumon North America Advanced Honor Roll Student in both Math and Reading. Without prideful display, Caris has written about several of her real-life experiences with an authentic voice. Caris is an immaculate listener and very in-tune with the moods of those around her, offering a gentle hand if someone may not be feeling right. A bright and industrious student, Caris's instinct is to share and enable others to achieve high results. With these qualities, Caris's next school, college, and ultimately the work place will be fortunate to have her. Caris will attend Marian High School next year.



Will Butler (far left) and Michelle McCurties (far right) joined the entire Japhet community in giving a heartfelt congratulations to the Japhet Class of 2010 (students, left to right): Joey White, Reilly Ankers, Emily Strub, Caris Bing, and Sebastian Chick.

**Joey White** loves science and is full of ideas and questions. He is environmentally conscientious and sets a positive example for others. Joey's classmates describe him as artistic, calm, reliable, and friendly. His parents share that he can always see something in objects that isn't apparent to others at first glance. In a world of rushing and quick fixes, Joey takes his time and does things the right way. During Graduation, Joey's collection of tape – especially the "ever-useful, irreplaceable, super-gigantic roll of duct tape" – was brought to light with humor, as he has a gift for manufacturing all things duct-tape: wallets, swords ... even a pair of gloves. Joey stands for justice and works out issues with his words. Joey has a sense of adventure, whether he's at Camp Leelanau or trying out a new sport, such as lacrosse. Joey will attend Royal Oak High School in the fall.

**Emily Strub** shows enthusiasm for life that is evident in her art, in her song, and in her written expression. Emily sets the bar high for herself, and she likes to be properly prepared for every adventure. She is exceptionally organized and expresses personal habits, industry, and punctuality. Emily's classmates describe her as joyful, bouncy, artistic, intelligent, and someone who is focused on her goals. She enjoys spending her free time cleaning, singing, knitting, acting, writing, drawing, and taking both voice and piano lessons. Emily's vocal talents have graced Japhet's musical productions with several solo performances. Emily describes Japhet School as a family atmosphere, where she always feels welcome and at home. Emily would like to attend International Academy next fall and is currently on a waiting list.

The one-of-a-kind experience of a Japhet School Graduation was best summed up by alumnus Will Butler. He contrasted it to a typical graduation elsewhere, where students are recognized in blocks, standing up in sections of club participants. "How different here today," said Will, "where each student is known and recognized, special in his or her own right, and valued as an individual."



# Alumni News

## KELLY MAZURKIEWICZ, J'02

Congratulations to Kelly who just graduated with a BA in Advertising from Michigan State University. Kelly loves being a Spartan so much that she has stayed in Lansing. She is currently working for Motion Marketing and Media, a firm she interned with last summer and during her senior year. Kelly's position includes design work, commercial production, and creating branding plans. Kelly is thankful for her years at Japhet. When she was hired, her boss told her that it was her initiative that made her stand out from the other interns – a valuable quality to express in an advertising agency. Kelly also volunteers at a women's center in Lansing and produces its newsletter, and she serves on Japhet's Marketing and Technology committees. We congratulate Kelly and thank her for her continuing support!

## BLAKE KNAFFLA, J'06

Blake is taking his dedication to the sport of hockey to a higher level. This spring he was recruited by Harrington College in Montreal, Quebec. This hockey-specialized college requires students to study hard in the morning in intensive academic classes and then practice and train for six hours each afternoon and evening, seven days a week. During the hockey season, the weekend practices will be replaced by travel to play other junior hockey teams across Canada and in the U.S. We wish Blake success and know he will make the most of an outstanding opportunity.

## PERRY JANES, J'03

Perry was well known for his writing abilities as a Japhet student. This year as a junior at the University of Michigan, his work has received recognition from the prestigious Hopwood Program for literature. Perry was awarded top honors and prizes in four different categories including poetry and non-fiction. Well done, Perry!

## HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATIONS TO CELEBRATE

**Hania Bigoszewska, J'06**, International Academy, University of Michigan

**Mark James Daniels, XJ'06**, Troy High School, U.S. Marine Corps

**Blake Knaffla, J'06**, DeLaSalle Collegiate, Harrington College, Montreal, Quebec

**Collin Laske, J'06**, Troy Athens, college undecided

**Sarah Poche, XJ'06**, Troy Athens (Magna Cum Laude), Mercy College Accelerated Dental Program

**Andrew Pospisil, J'06**, DeLaSalle Collegiate (NHS, Summa Cum Laude), Oakland University

**Leanne Raymond, J'06**, University Liggett School (Ruth Frank Art Award), Eastern Michigan University

**Elliot Zirulnik, J'06**, Berkley High School (Magna Cum Laude, Service Award), Michigan State University

## COLLEGE GRADUATIONS TO CELEBRATE

**Scott Knaffla, J'02**, University of Michigan

**Kelly Mazurkiewicz, J'02**, Michigan State University

**Do you have alumni news to share?**

Please send news and photos to Robin Pospisil, Admissions Director at [robin.pospisil@japhetschool.org](mailto:robin.pospisil@japhetschool.org).



Initiated by a Japhet alumnus, the return of the Japhet Alumni Picnic was fun for this group of alumni and their families.



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of Japhet School

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