

# Teaching Social Justice

In the middle of our school year, **MetroParent** — the area’s highly read and respected monthly magazine and website geared toward parents — called upon Japhet School as an expert institution on the topic of diversity. The magazine titled the resulting article “Talking with Kids About Race,” and two primary sources were quoted: Harvard educator Alvin Poussaint and our own Susan Butler, Upper Class teacher.

The writer said she was asked to contact Japhet due to our award-winning character program and accepting social environment. Rather than calling such matters race- or diversity-related, Mrs. Butler focused on the heart of her classroom conversations, which is social justice.

“Social justice in an educational environment is giving students the tools to bring about positive change in the world,” she said in her interview. “That change is what promotes fairness and equality. And at Japhet we teach fairness within the framework of our character curriculum — such qualities include respect for others, courage, justice, and humility.”

**MetroParent** also asked for strategies that would be useful for other educators and parents. “Students are given a platform to share their voice and begin a conversation that is honest and safe, one that will clear up misconceptions,” she said. “I never claim to be an expert. Topics surrounding race are difficult and

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Artwork: Intermediate Class student

“More important than having the answers is being willing to have the discussions.” — Susan Butler, Upper Class teacher

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**SEPTEMBER 9**

First Day of School

**OCTOBER 19**

AIMS Conference

**OCTOBER 29**

18 Reasons for Hope Luncheon

**NOVEMBER 3**

Google for Educators Conference

**NOVEMBER 25**

Gratitude Service

**DECEMBER 16 & 17**

Holiday Giving Concert

See our full calendar online at [www.japhetschool.org](http://www.japhetschool.org)

Last August, I assigned a quiet but powerful theme to our second year in Clawson: to thrive. After a challenging final year in Madison Heights and a transition-filled first year in Clawson, I was determined to thrive this past year as we truly settled into our home. And with the dedication of our teachers, administrators, trustees, and community members ... **thrive** we did.

Our facility is showing more signs of being cherished by its new owners — the Japhet community — each passing month. From large-scale improvements, such as a new parking lot we're planning, to small ones, like carpet runners for students' comfort in the library hallway, our building reflects an investment in not only its structural integrity but also in its soul.

Even after 25 years of working with children, I am still inspired by students' ingenuity and creativity. Japhet has a lovely grassy play area with sun and shade, and the path to it features a number of large pines. Students have created a most amazing play space among the pines that they call Pioneer Village. This child-driven idea



**A Primary Class student plays with raffia to create an element for her "homestead" in the Pioneer Village.**

has students collaborating as they build and share "homes," mercantiles, and other town elements that spring from their imaginations. They have designated sweepers (who use pine boughs) and landscape architects (who move rocks). Their ideas are bolstered by the support of recess supervisor Robin Pospisil, who has been awestruck by the initiative and cleverness of

children who thrive in nature.

As the school year concluded, we embarked on an important project that will enable us to continue to thrive: a new 8-year Strategic Plan. We surveyed community members, held meetings to discuss ideas, and formed teams to support four main strategies. They are to strengthen financial stability, attract and retain exceptional teachers and staff, attract and retain students, and strengthen and enhance curriculum.

It has been a year of thriving, and we will continue to let our light shine as we begin a new school year in September.

**Cathy Mohan**  
Head of School



## Welcome, New Trustees

**Denise Deane, Cheryl Haithco, Victoria Lehman, Esther Dusenberry, and Dr. John White** have been elected to serve for three school years beginning with 2015/2016.

**Denise Deane** is a seasoned educator who strongly supports the work and culture of independent schools. Her experience includes 15 years as Associate Director of Admissions at University Liggett School. She earned her bachelor's and master's degrees at Michigan State University in speech and language pathology. Denise is an active volunteer and spokesperson for Gleaners Community Food Bank.

**Cheryl Haithco** is a fundraising professional who is best known in the Japhet community as our development director from 2010-2014, but whose development experience reaches well beyond her time with Japhet. Cheryl's past appointments include development for Old Redford Academy, Think Detroit PAL Development Officer, and the YMCA's Director of Development. She currently is Vice President of Development at Big Brothers Big Sisters of Metropolitan Detroit.

**Victoria Lehman** is Associate Attorney at Giarmarco, Mullins, and Horton, P.C. She manages litigation as trial counsel for the defense of hospitals and healthcare providers. She also has expertise in corporate legal and risk management consulting. Victoria received her juris doctorate from Wayne State University Law School and bachelor's

degree from the University of Michigan. Victoria is bilingual in English and Spanish.

**Esther Dusenberry** is a Japhet School alumni parent. She graduated from Michigan State University with a degree in communication arts. She and her late husband Kirk Dusenberry raised two sons and worked and traveled throughout the world. Today Esther is a caregiver and is married to Jim Stevens, a retired kindergarten teacher and landscaper. They reside in Troy and enjoy traveling and working at their church.

**Dr. John White** has had a lengthy connection with Japhet, as he previously served as the Assistant Superintendent of Lamphere Schools while we occupied the building in Madison Heights. He is currently an Adjunct Professor at Oakland University. At the time of this publication he is on an extended teaching assignment in California which may interrupt his Board work with Japhet. We look forward to his return and hope to have his participation with the Board at that time.

Moving forward, **Martha Moyer** is board president, **Frank Edwards** is the new vice-president, **Jay Schmitt** will continue as treasurer, and **Kent Commer** has been appointed secretary. **Erik Golbiw, Libby Palackdharry, Don Button, Sheila Chaps, Bruce Kasl, and Dotty O'Ryan** complete the Board of Trustees for 2015/2016. A brief biography of each trustee is on our website.

The Japhet community joins the board in extending sincere gratitude to **Julie Knaffla** and **Janet Rathburg** who have stepped down from the Japhet School board.

# Congratulations to the Class of 2015

Japhet School's Class of 2015 is a class of helpful, intelligent, effervescent, and humorous young people! Join us in congratulating **Graham Hoops, James Bieneman, Vanessa Baker, and Casey Golbiw** who have completed their Japhet School educational careers.

## Graham Hoops

Graham's classmates and teachers describe him as helpful, kind, capable, polite, tech-savvy, and highly competent in the kitchen. His parents say he stands out in how he expresses courage, thrift, and gratitude. Graham joined Japhet as a 5-year-old, and he is considerate to people of all ages. For instance, you can see him escorting an older person to the car with care, holding doors open for others, and joyfully interacting with younger students at recess. Graham is very patriotic, as evidenced in his InSPO when he honored our troops and expressed compassion for the nation's homeless. He would like to see improvement in the way we help those who live in poverty. Graham's plans for high school are still unfolding.

## James Bieneman

James visited Japhet School on our first day of school, and he had a great first and final year at Japhet. He is described by teachers and friends as quiet, witty, observant, discerning, and philosophical. His parents add that he is smart, caring, inquisitive, and truth-loving. He is a skilled writer and plans to start a blog with reviews of parenting books. James plays piano and violin, and he likes classical music. James delivered his InSPO about peace, and he says that the primary barriers to peace are prejudice and selfishness. He and his family are grateful for his time at Japhet and a year of confidence building. James and his parents are still deciding on a high school, and look forward to sending him to his college of choice: St. John's College.

## Vanessa Baker

Vanessa radiates joy. Her smile, her speech, and her whole being exude happiness. She joined Japhet in 6th grade. She is described as outgoing, inclusive, confident, and goal-driven. Her parents say she is also spiritual and courageous in stepping outside her comfort zone. Vanessa delivered her InSPO related to the topic procrastination. She says that people slack off when they are scared ... scared of a bad grade, or scared that they won't live up to expectations. Vanessa, however, consistently exceeds expectations, and this trait served to earn her an outstanding scholarship to George School in Newtown, Pennsylvania, where she will attend high school in the fall. She is looking forward to the boarding experience as a way learn with students from 54 different countries.

## Casey Golbiw

Casey is known for his charisma, competitiveness, determination, funny demeanor, and love of his family. His parents say his most outstanding qualities are joy, industry, and courage. Casey has a strong stage presence and thinks well on his feet as evidenced with his impromptu conversations with audience members during school plays. Casey is passionate about baseball. He is known for being an enthusiastic player who bolsters the team with his positive energy and leadership. Casey chose to speak about humility for his InSPO, a quality he's the first to admit is challenging. Casey's family is still deciding where he will head next year. He hopes to play baseball where he lands.

Congratulations to the class of 2015! As alumni speaker **Scott Knaffla, J'02**, said in his comments in June, "You have the ability to create the life you want for yourself ... in the most unselfish way. By helping yourself, and coming from that place of joy, we will begin to see the many great ways you begin to help those around you."

**L-R: Graham Hoops, Vanessa Baker, Casey Golbiw, and James Bieneman.**



# Giving Stories

What inspires you to give?



The Anderson family: Marie, Gavin, and Dave.

## Little Hands of Hope

Dave and Marie Anderson joined Japhet's roster of Preschool parents in fall of 2013. Each day they enter the building with as much joy and exuberance as their little one, Gavin. What's more, Dave and Marie stepped up to become Hands of Hope donors within months of joining our community. "We believe that our collective future resides in the hands of our younger generation, including our own children," says Dave. "Our hope is that Japhet continues to grow, to educate young minds and to remain a lasting cornerstone institution in our community."

## A Gift of Joy

Planned gifts, or bequests, are a wonderful way to give, and Japhet School has received many bequests from loving donors. Addison and Arlene Brown, longtime friends of the school through an

original founder, recently decided to provide Japhet with both a planned bequest in the future and a legacy gift today. "Japhet radiates joy," Addison says. "I'm doing what I can do today, so that you can continue to do what you do best: provide children with a foundation for a good life."

*"I'm doing what I can do today, so that you can continue to do what you do best: provide children with a foundation for a good life."*

— Addison Brown

## Character Contender

Erik Golbiw, current parent and trustee, is also a triathlete. As an active competitor, he fundraises for causes that are important to him and he represents those causes as he races. The name of his "team" is The House That Character Built, and he had a custom helmet made that announces his dedication to Japhet School. "Former students are proof positive that the schooling lessons learned at Japhet pay off," says Erik. "By putting Japhet front and center of my racing, I hope to draw attention so Japhet can continue to grow. I've supported 'bigger' causes — but none more important than the children who will lead this country."



Erik Golbiw's custom bike helmet.

To contribute to Japhet School, send your donation with the form below. Your donation will make a world of difference. Thank you!

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.

I'd like to give an additional \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to the Capital Campaign.

TOTAL: \$ \_\_\_\_\_  total amount enclosed, OR

divide into \_\_\_\_\_ monthly payments of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

I'll give by:  Check  Visa  AmEx  Mastercard

\_\_\_\_\_ card #

\_\_\_\_\_ expiration \_\_\_\_\_ security code

\_\_\_\_\_ signature

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

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.

Please consider an additional gift to our Capital Campaign.

"The rung of a ladder was never meant to rest upon, but only to hold a foot long enough to enable the next to go higher."

— Thomas Huxley

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!

# Alumni News

## **CAMILLE PRIMEAU, XJ'10**

Camille attended Japhet School from Pre-kindergarten through 4th grade. Camille graduated from Royal Oak High School in 2014 and is currently attending the University of Michigan School of Music, Theatre, and Dance as a voice performance major. Camille's accomplishments while in high school were numerous including achieving Cum Laude, NHS, and Phi Beta Kappa status. She was awarded several major U of M scholarships for both her performance work as well as for her academics. Camille also received scholarships from several Royal Oak organizations and performed the National Anthem at her graduation ceremony; you can find it on YouTube!

Camille and her parents say that she first began to find her stage voice and confidence in Spring Sharing performances at Japhet and truly found her extraordinary singing voice in high school. Camille hopes to assist in the preparations for Spring Sharing in years to come.

## **SCOTT MAZURKIEWICZ, J'04**

After graduating from Japhet, Scott attended DeLaSalle Collegiate where he played football at the varsity level. Scott then enrolled at Michigan State University graduating in 2012 with a BS in Criminal Justice with a specialization in security management. The School of Criminal Justice at MSU is the oldest in the U.S. and offers great opportunities for job placement through internships and the program's reputation. Scott then worked for the company for which he had interned as a private investigator for two years before moving on to his current position as an Auto Damage Adjuster for an insurance company in Chicago. Scott is enjoying life in the big city (except for the parking) and is taking advantage of all of the new places to go and things to do.

Scott says that one of Japhet's greatest lessons for him was the importance of integrity. He has worked in positions that have little or no direct supervision and feels that being honest and doing his best at all times is what has gotten him to where he is today. Scott plans to utilize the tuition reimbursement program offered by his company to begin taking some additional business classes.

## High School Graduations to Celebrate

**ISABEL CARLEY, XJ'11** Wiley Groves HS (NHS, Phi Kappa Beta). Michigan State University, Biology.

**GILLIAN DEMETER, J'11** Eton Academy. Schoolcraft College, Environmental Science.

**CHASE DOBBS, J'11** University of Detroit Jesuit HS (Academic Honors - 4 yrs, Junior Statesman of America - 2 yrs., Wrestling). Michigan State University, Biology or Zoology.

**MEGAN MOORE, XJ'11** Oakdale Academy (National Merit Scholar, Pillar Award, High Honor Roll). Calvin College (John M. Perkins Leadership Fellow), Chemistry and Latin.

**DAVID STECKER, J'11** Royal Oak HS (Oakland Schools Technical Campus/ Engineering, Lacrosse). Macomb Community College, Applied Technology Advanced Processes.

## College Graduations to Celebrate

**GRANT DEMETER, J'07** University of Michigan (BA Organizational Studies/BA Spanish - both with honors, Sigma Chi). Consultant with Deloitte.

**HANNAH HILZINGER, J'07** Principia College (BA Environmental Studies, minor in Studio Art), Student Manager Dining Services, Choir, Theatre Crew, Yearbook.

**CASE IVES, J'03** Central Michigan University (BS/BA Business Administration and Human Resources). Loan officer with Quicken Loans.

## Marriages

**VICTORIA (TORI) ELLITHORPE, J'04** to Zachary Barrette - June 2014. Now residing in Middleton, CT.

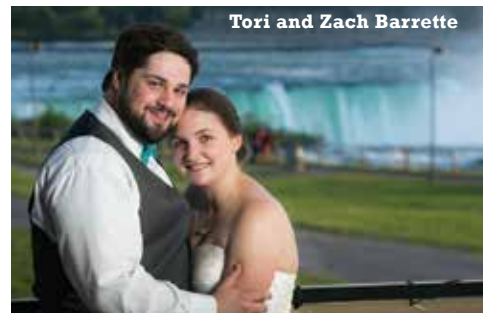
**JAKE MOHAN, J'03** to Shé Walker - August 2014. Now residing in Grand Rapids, MI.

**TUCKER BLAKE, J'05** to Allie Paige - April 2015. Currently stationed in Okinawa with the U.S. Marine Corps.

**KIERSTEN ANDERSEN, J'05** to Christopher Marston - June 2015. Now residing in St. Peter, MO.

## SHARE WITH US!

Do You Have Alumni News to Share?  
Please send news and photographs to Robin Pospisil at [robin.pospisil@japhetschool.org](mailto:robin.pospisil@japhetschool.org)



Tori and Zach Barrette



Shé and Jake Mohan



Allie and Tucker Blake



Kiersten and Chris Marston



## >> SOCIAL JUSTICE CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

complex, and the best way I feel that I can assist my students is to listen, and to give them a safe environment in which to explore their ideas and challenge the ideas of others.”

When asked for examples, Mrs. Butler had plenty. “When children are young, we ask them to distinguish between right and wrong, but then the waters get muddy. They have difficult questions that they want answers to. How could a Founding Father who stood for liberty also own slaves? How did an educated population accept Apartheid and put Mandela in jail? To avoid the dialogue because we feel awkward is the wrong approach. More important than having the answers is being willing to have the discussions.”

Recent units in her class that had a theme of social justice and positive change include the empowerment of women entrepreneurs in Africa and the revitalization of major urban centers such as Detroit. “These topics serve as a platform to explore the issues of social justice such as fairness, poverty, the need for education, and gender equality,” she said.

“The most important thing you can do — within a class or at home — is to have that dialogue,” Mrs. Butler said. “Who wrote the story? What is their experience? And why is one person’s telling of it different from another’s? When reading to a young child you might ask, what is missing in this illustration? Helping students identify these context clues leads them to become critical thinking adults.”

## Join Us in Thanking Our Sponsors

The 2015 Fore the Kids Golf Outing at Western Golf and Country Club was a great success. We had 70 golfers and a host of extra guests who joined us for dinner and the auction. We are very thankful to this year’s sponsors: **PVS Chemicals Inc.**, the **Cranbrook Art Museum**, **Straightline**, and **DENSO**. We also are grateful for the 50+ individuals and local businesses who donated items for the gift bags and auction.

One highlight of this year’s event was the biggest-ever turnout of alumni! Pictured above are R-L: Kelly Mazurkiewicz, Scott Mazurkiewicz, Graham Ives, Case Ives, Katy Robinson, Dan Commer, Jake Mohan, and Joseph Pospisil.

Next year’s golf outing is already booked at the same venue for **Monday, June 27, 2016. Save the date!**



Susan Butler guided Upper Class students through a panel discussion relating to the revitalization of urban centers. While most discussions take place in class, this was a special public presentation of their research and views that took place during Social Studies Fair.