



A New Era for City Services: Public Services Center Nears Completion at 1500 Scribner



Dear Neighbors,
I'm thrilled to share an exciting update on a project that represents a bold step forward for our City: the near completion of the new Public Services Center at 1500 Scribner Avenue NW.

This transformative \$98.2 million community investment is more than just a new facility – it's a symbol of our commitment to delivering high-quality, efficient and sustainable services to the people of Grand Rapids. Thanks to your support, we are bringing together multiple departments under one roof, improving coordination and creating a modern, centralized hub for the essential work that keeps our City running.

When construction began in December 2023, we knew this would be one of the most complex capital projects in our city's

history. And it has been. Spread across 14 acres and totaling 330,000 square feet, the campus includes:

- A renovated 100-year-old office building
- An expanded garage
- A new fleet and refuse building
- A new fuel island, vehicle wash, and salt dome

This project is essentially seven major construction efforts happening at once – and I'm proud to say we're nearing the finish line.

The new center will be home to over 200 employees from departments including Public Works, Parks and Recreation, Forestry, Facilities, Our Community's Children and more. It will also house over 200 vehicles and pieces of equipment, with 50% more heated garage space than our previous facility

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Grand Rapids Opens Kendall Street Fire Station

Grand Rapids has officially opened its first new fire station in 37 years, marking a major milestone in public safety and neighborhood investment. The new Kendall Street Fire Station, located at 4044 Kalamazoo Ave. SE, is now fully operational and serving the growing needs of the city's Third Ward.

Station No. 12 is a modern, 12,600-square-foot, state-of-the-art facility designed with both functionality and community in mind. It includes private living quarters for firefighters, drive-through bays for fire trucks, a fitness room and a community meeting space. The station's design blends seamlessly into the

surrounding neighborhood, with green space and preserved oak trees enhancing the site.

One of those trees – a 140-year-old white oak – was thoughtfully repurposed into a handcrafted conference table and feature wall inside the station. This unique centerpiece now serves as a gathering place for meetings and symbolizes the station's deep connection to the community it serves.

"This new station is a big step forward for public safety and community connection," said Fire Chief Brad Brown. "This facility is a tribute to the community and will serve Grand Rapids for the next 75 to 100 years."

The \$8.1 million project was funded by a

State of Michigan grant and brought to life with the support of EV Construction and Integrated Architecture. Its location at the corner of Kalamazoo Avenue SE and Kendall Street SE was chosen to improve emergency response times and provide a safe, inclusive space for firefighters.

The Kendall Street Fire Station stands as a proud new chapter in the city's commitment to safety, service and thoughtful neighborhood development.

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at 201 Market, the new site of the Acrisure Amphitheater, nearing completion. This means more of our \$23 million fleet will be protected year-round, improving reliability and extending the life of our equipment. In addition to the essential services, many of the employees and vehicles in this location are part of and key to our emergency operations and winter snow removal efforts. Having all the employees and equipment centrally located in one place will improve these services.

Through August, more than 182,000 hours of labor have gone into this project, which includes 22,642 minority workforce hours and 14,728 micro local business workforce hours. That's a testament to the dedication of our contractors, engineers and City staff who have worked tirelessly to bring this vision to life.

This fall, we're beginning the phased move-in process. Public Works and Parks and Recreation staff have already settled into the main office building, and Parks is even hosting fitness classes in the new multipurpose rooms. Fleet and Refuse teams will move in by mid-November, with final outbuildings completed shortly after.

While we'll mark the project's completion with a small ribbon cutting in December, we're especially excited to welcome you to tour the facility during Public Service Appreciation Week in May 2026, when we'll host an open house to showcase the facility and the incredible work our teams do every day.

This project has been made possible through a combination of funding sources, including the Capital Improvement Fund, ARPA dollars, Capital Improvement Bonds, and grants from the State of Michigan. But most importantly, it's been made possible by you, our residents, who continue to support investments in the future of our city.

Thank you for your trust, your partnership and your belief in what we can accomplish together. I look forward to seeing you at the open house next spring!

With gratitude,



Mark Washington
City Manager
City of Grand Rapids



COMMUNITY OFFICERS

Look for more information this Fall!

Visit Our Website to get to know your Captain
<https://www.grandrapidsmi.gov/Government/Departments/Police-Department/Police-Neighborhood-Service-Areas>






Three Years Of Co-Response: A Culture Shift In Crisis Care and Policing In Grand Rapids

This summer, the Grand Rapids Police Department (GRPD) and Network180 marked the three-year anniversary of the mental health co-response program. In that time, the team averaged four responses per day and has been very successful in providing alternatives to arrest and/or emergency room care.

In its first three years, the co-response team has provided:

- Over 4,200 responses (including calls for service, court-mandated mental health pick-up orders, and follow-ups)
- 1,100 emergency room diversions
- 1,700 ambulance diversions
- 500 jail diversions

- 315 patient intakes/referrals at the Behavioral Health Crisis Center since it opened in June 2024

When the program started, there was one mental health clinician who worked with a dedicated officer. In August of 2023, the program changed to a roster of qualified patrol officers pairing up with the clinician. Over time, two additional clinicians were added to expand the availability of services.

"Not only have we increased the days and times of co-response availability, a significant result of expanding the clinicians is that patrol officers and detectives can now request co-response follow up after an initial contact," said Krissy Rutkauskas, who was the first clinician to join the team in 2022. Ms. Rutkauskas is both a licensed master

social worker (LMSW) and a qualified intellectual disability professional (QIDP).

"We're seeing a definite culture shift," said Sergeant Daryl Howard, the co-response team supervisor. "Officers are proactively recognizing when mental health concerns may be present and are requesting a social worker's involvement."

"This program has so many benefits. First and foremost, safer outcomes for individuals, officers and bystanders during a police contact," said Chief Eric Winstrom. "Police are often the first call for help in an emergency, but that doesn't mean they are the best resource for an individual in crisis. Our partnership with Network180 has resulted in better outcomes, better use of community resources and better policing."



Grand Rapids Breaks Ground on New \$19 Million Riverfront Park

Grand Rapids is getting a new park along the Grand River. On Thursday, Aug. 21, city, state and community leaders gathered to break ground on the East Riverfront Park. The \$19 million project will turn an old industrial site into a green space that everyone can enjoy.

The park will sit just west of the new Acrisure Amphitheater. It's the first major public park built on the south side of the Grand River in many years. When it opens in 2026, it will give people on the city's southwest side better access to the river. It will also become part of the 85-mile Grand River Greenway, a trail system that connects communities in Kent and Ottawa counties.

"This is more than just a park — it's a promise to future generations," said Mayor David LaGrand. "We're turning an old public works site into a beautiful space that brings people back to the Grand River. It reflects our shared vision of a River for All."

Mayor LaGrand also thanked local lawmakers for helping secure funding for the project.

City Manager Mark Washington said the park supports the city's goals for growth, equity and community. "We're grateful to our state partners, funders and City teams who made this possible," he said.

Tim Kelly, president and CEO of Downtown Grand Rapids Inc., said the park will be a welcoming space for nearby neighborhoods like Heartside, Black Hills

and Roosevelt Park. "This new stretch of riverfront will be a key part of the Grand River Greenway," he said. "We're excited to keep working with our partners and the community."

What's coming in Phase 1:

- 4.5 acres of new green space
- A half-mile trail for walking and biking along the river
- Seating areas with views of the Grand River
- Water access for kayaking and other activities
- Space for future public art
- A new entrance to the Acrisure Amphitheater
- Trees and native plants to support wildlife and manage stormwater

GRVOTES

News from the Office of the City Clerk

Upcoming Election

Tuesday, November 4, 2025 – special millage election for Kent Intermediate School District (KISD) and Godwin Heights Public Schools

On Tuesday, November 4, 2025, precincts will open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. Voters may also apply for an absentee ballot, find their voting location or see a sample ballot at <https://mvic.sos.state.mi.us/>.

For more information:

<https://www.kentisd.org/parents--community/enhancement-millage/>

Number of precincts and precinct lines approved by City Commission and Election Commission

There have been many changes to election laws in the State of Michigan over the last seven years. With those changes, voters have many options to cast their ballot including voting absentee at home, early in person at an early voting site or in person on Election Day at their local precinct. A majority of the voters are now voting before Election Day and it was prudent to review the number of precincts in Grand Rapids. The Election Commission and City Commission recently approved modifying precinct boundaries and reduced the number of precincts to 59. Registered voters were mailed a voter information card. To view the approved precinct boundaries and location go to <https://www.grandrapidsmi.gov/Residents/Elections/Precinct-Maps-and-Polling-Locations>. Voters may also go to <https://mvic.sos.state.mi.us/> to verify their voting information.

Joining a Citizen Board or Commission is a great way to get involved within the City.

There are many boards with various topics, and we are confident you'll find one that suits your interests!

Check out all the boards to learn more about what they do and how to apply: <https://www.grandrapidsmi.gov/Government/Boards-and-Commissions>

Need a passport or document notarized? We can help

Your City Clerk's Office offers passport and notary services. If you need to apply for a passport, simply make an appointment by calling 616.456.3010. If you need a document notarized, visit the second-floor City Clerk's Office at City Hall, 300 Monroe Ave. NW, between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. The fee for notarization is \$5 per signature. No appointment is needed. To learn more about these services and all that the Clerk's Office has to offer, visit grandrapidsmi.gov/clerk.

Lithium-ion Batteries in your home

The majority of electronic devices we use in our homes today are powered by lithium-ion batteries. In fact, most rechargeable devices depend on this type of battery.



Fire Safety Tips for Lithium-Ion Batteries

General Handling and Storage

- Buy only listed products. Look for a safety certification mark such as UL, ETL, or CSA
- Avoid storing batteries in extremely hot or cold environments.
- Store batteries in their original packaging or a battery case to prevent contact with metal objects.

Charging Safety

- Use only the charger and cable recommended by the device manufacturer.
- Do not overcharge batteries; unplug devices once fully charged.
- Avoid charging batteries overnight or unattended.
- Charge batteries on a hard, non-flammable surface, not on beds, couches, or carpets.

Usage Precautions

- Do not expose batteries to water or moisture.
- Avoid dropping, crushing, or puncturing batteries.
- Do not use batteries that show signs of swelling, leakage, or damage.

Disposal and Recycling

- Do not throw lithium-ion batteries in the trash or regular recycling bins.
- Recycle batteries at designated recycling centers or collection points. Visit call2recycle.org or KentCountymi.gov to find a recycling spot near you.
- Tape battery terminals before disposal to prevent short circuits.

Emergency Response

- If a battery overheats or smokes, keep it away from things that can burn—only if safe.
- Use a Class D fire extinguisher or sand to extinguish a lithium-ion battery fire. Do not use water.
- Evacuate the area and call emergency services if the fire cannot be controlled.

Additional Tips

- Regularly inspect devices and batteries for signs of wear or damage.
- Follow manufacturer's instructions for battery care and maintenance.
- Keep batteries out of reach of children and pets.

Following these safety tips can help prevent accidents and ensure the safe use of lithium-ion batteries.



This year's Fire Prevention Week™ is October 5-11,
"Charge into Fire Safety™: Lithium-Ion Batteries in Your Home"

For more information, visit nfpa.org/education



City breaks ground on \$9 million Oxford Trail project

City and neighborhood leaders came together recently to celebrate the start of the Oxford Trail project, a \$9 million effort to improve walking and biking paths on the city's southwest side.

The new trail will connect the Roosevelt Park and Black Hills neighborhoods to downtown Grand Rapids. The main entrance will be at 751 Oxford St. SW. The trail will run from Wealthy Street SW through the Black Hills neighborhood and extend to Hall Street SW. It will also link to the Grand River Greenway, a larger trail system that will eventually stretch from Lowell to Lake Michigan.

"This project is about more than just a trail," said Laura Cleypool, interim parks and recreation director. "It's about creating spaces that bring people together and support health, fun and community."

What's included in the project:

- New trail sections from Oxford Street SW to Hall Street SW and Godfrey Avenue SW
- Rebuilding the current trail from Wealthy Street SW to Oxford Street SW
- A new playground that's easy for everyone to use
- Outdoor fitness equipment and a workout area
- Community gathering spots with shelters and a small amphitheater
- A half-court basketball area under the Oxford Street bridge

The project is funded by the American Rescue Plan Act through the city's Parks and Recreation Department, along with a grant from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to Downtown Grand Rapids Inc. Partners on the project include Downtown Grand Rapids Inc., Erhardt Construction and Progressive Companies.

The Oxford Trail project supports goals from community plans like GR Forward and River For All, which focus on bringing neighborhoods together and improving access to the riverfront.

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SUBSCRIBE TODAY!

CELEBRATE BLACK HISTORY, CULTURE & INNOVATION IN GRAND RAPIDS



The City of Grand Rapids is partnering with the Grand Rapids African American Museum and Archives (GRAAMA) to launch the Third Ward Legacy Tour, a self-guided and interactive experience that honors the vibrant legacy of the city's African American community.



Meet Benjamin Rance, Our New Emergency Manager: Working Together for a Safer, More Prepared Grand Rapids



At the City of Grand Rapids, keeping our community safe and resilient is a team effort. We're excited to welcome a new leader who's ready to help guide that mission forward.

Benjamin Rance officially joined the City in August as our new Emergency Management Administrator, leading the Office of Emergency Management (OEM). With more than 10 years of experience in emergency management, disaster response, and community resilience, Benjamin brings a strong mix of hands-on expertise and a deep commitment to public service.

Before coming to the City of Grand Rapids, Benjamin served as a Program Manager with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), where he helped cities across the country prepare for emergencies and recover from disasters. His work included leading training sessions, coordinating with more than 100 local

emergency managers, and responding to major events such as Hurricane Helene in 2024. His background also includes service with the U.S. Peace Corps and work as a Spanish-language medical interpreter here in Michigan. He holds a master's degree in Natural Resources Management and Geography from the University of Alaska Fairbanks, along with a bachelor's degree in Environmental Studies and Spanish from Western Michigan University.

As Emergency Manager, Benjamin is focused on building strong partnerships, leading coordinated responses during emergencies, and guiding the city through long-term recovery efforts. He's also committed to ensuring every resident has access to the tools, resources, and information needed to stay safe—whether facing a severe storm, power outage, or any other unexpected event.

Creating a safer, more resilient Grand Rapids is a shared responsibility. This fall, we invite you to stay informed, get prepared, and take an active role in supporting a stronger community.

Follow us to learn how you can be better prepared:

- Facebook & Instagram:
@readygrandrapids
- Twitter/X: @readyCityGR

For more information or to contact OEM, visit: grandrapidsmi.gov and search Office of Emergency Management. Let's give a warm welcome to Benjamin



Motorcycle Safety Still a Priority as Fall Rolls In, Say Grand Rapids Police

As fall colors begin to brighten Grand Rapids, local law enforcement is reminding residents that motorcycle season isn't over yet – and safety remains a top concern.

"Just because summer is over doesn't mean riders are off the roads," said Sgt. Justin Ewald of the Grand Rapids Police Department. "Motorcyclists are still out there and they're more vulnerable in a crash. We all need to do our part to keep them safe."

From January through July, Kent County recorded at least nine motorcycle-related deaths and 30 serious injuries. Local police departments – including those in Grand Rapids, Kentwood, Walker and Wyoming – are urging both riders and drivers to stay alert and follow traffic laws.

Motorcyclists are encouraged to wear DOT-approved helmets, use reflective gear

and take safety courses to improve their skills. Riders must also have a valid motorcycle endorsement to operate legally in Michigan.

Drivers are reminded to check blind spots, especially when turning or merging and to be aware that motorcycles may slow down without using brake lights.

"Motorcycles are smaller and harder to see," said Lt. Michelle Robinson of the Michigan State Police. "It's easy for them to disappear in a blind spot."

Law enforcement also emphasized that rural roads don't guarantee safety. "Most of the fatal crashes we've responded to happened on less-traveled roads," said Sgt. Scott Dietrich of the Kent County Sheriff's Office.

The message is clear: whether you're behind the wheel or on two wheels, stay alert, share the road and always drive sober.



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**Schedule an Appointment**

**Our Community's
Children**

The T2C Studio is a project managed by Our Community's Children (OCC). OCC is a public/private partnership between the City of Grand Rapids, Grand Rapids Public Schools and community partners.



GR Outside Brings the Great Outdoors to Grand Rapids Area Youth

This summer, young people across Grand Rapids traded screens for streams, classrooms for campgrounds, and school desks for kayaks. Thanks to GR Outside, the outdoor recreation division of the Department of Parks and Recreation, over 4,000 local youth discovered the outdoors through hands-on activities designed to build confidence, connection, and community. Between May and August, GR Outside ran 531 hours of programming through 74 different events and outings.

The program's outings included everything from kayaking and canoeing on the Grand River to hiking, hammocking, biking, bird watching, camping, and even water quality sampling. For many of the youth involved, it was their very first time experiencing activities like paddling or exploring the outdoors.

"Outdoor recreation doesn't always have to look like mountaineering or long expeditions," said Sam Truby who leads GR Outside. "For some kids, a hammock in a city park or a short trail walk is just as powerful. Our goal is to create positive, safe first experiences that can grow into lifelong connections with nature."

A Youth-Centered Focus

At the end of the 2024 season, GR Outside made the decision to focus on partnering with youth-centered groups and organizations. That choice was deliberate.

"We saw a need in our community for outdoor education

tailored to kids. Adjusting our focus allowed us to fill the need and expand our programming to increase outdoor access," Truby explained. "Leaders and teachers already have relationships with their participants and communities, and those relationships and trust take a lot of work to build. That trust makes outdoor experiences safer, more equitable, and more inclusive."

The focus shift was well-received by the community. Between May and August, GR Outside ran 531 hours of programming through 74 different events and outings.

"GR Outside has been such a special part of our clients' hands-on education. They have learned so many skills thanks to the guidance of the GR Outside team members and the Gear Library," said Kate Horling of Bethany Christian Services. "From recreational activities like hammocking and playing disc golf to more guided activities like mountain biking and kayaking, it has been so fun to see our clients' faces light up due to the amazing work of GR Outside."

GR Outside ensures its programming reaches a wide range of young people, many of whom might not otherwise have access to outdoor recreation. Teachers and youth leaders act as bridges, helping tailor outings to their participants' needs while creating spaces where kids feel comfortable trying something new.

GR Outside supports partner organizations through gear lending, co-led outings, and camping trip planning – each designed to build confidence and capacity among youth leaders. Every outing is co-designed with partners to ensure

activities are meaningful, safe, and responsive to participants' needs. With a strong focus on physical, social, and emotional safety, GR Outside staff – certified in first aid, mental health support, and paddlesport leadership – collaborate closely with group leaders to create welcoming outdoor experiences. These outings not only introduce youth to nature but also promote wellbeing and help counteract health disparities. Ultimately, GR Outside empowers communities to lead their own outdoor programs long after the season ends.

Building Lifelong Connections to Nature

At its heart, GR Outside believes every young person deserves the chance to feel at home in the outdoors. Whether that looks like camping under the stars, biking along a local trail, or just swinging in a hammock with friends, these experiences can shape how youth see themselves and their city.

"Connecting to nature can have a healing effect," said Truby. "But it only happens if youth are given safe spaces, supportive leaders, and experiences that meet them where they are."

This summer's program showed just how powerful those connections can be. With continued partnerships and a focus on equity, GR Outside is helping open doors to the outdoors for Grand Rapids youth—one paddle stroke, one trail, and one hammock at a time.



Photos, clockwise starting on opposite page:

- After learning about campfire safety, kids enjoy roasting s'mores with GR Outside.
- GR Parks and Rec summer day camp participants learn how to set up a tent as part of their program.
- 5th graders from Harrison Elementary complete a stream study with GR Outside.
- Teens take off for a canoeing experiencing with a helpful boost from GR Outside staff.

- Photos: TuCompa Outdoors for GR Outside



From classes for kids to classes for ages 50+, GR Parks and Rec offers a variety of ways to stay active and have fun this fall! A new session starts November 10 and runs through December 21. Registration opens on October 6 and is available online at <https://grparks.info/recclasses>. Class information for ages 50+ is available at <https://grparks.info/50plusrecreation>.

Classes for Adults 18+ (registration required)

- | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| • Basic Yoga | • Restorative Fireside Yoga |
| • Power Yoga | • Gentle Yoga |
| • Fireside Yoga | • Vital Movement |
| • Water Aerobics | • Gentle Musical Movement |
| • Cycling | • Cycle & Strength |
| • Pound | • Strength, Core, & Balance |
| • Kettlebell AMPD | • Strength & Row Circuit |
| • Barre | • Strength & Power |
| • WERQ | • Human Reformer Pilates |
| • Zumba | • Pumped Up Strength |
| • High Low Fitness | • Pilates |
| • Line Dancing | |

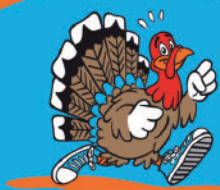
Youth Classes (registration required)

- Trampoline & Tumbling
- Variety of Dance Classes
- Swim Lessons

Classes designed for ages 50+, open to ages 18+ (No registration required)

- | | |
|---------------------|---------------------------|
| • Cardio & Strength | • Pilates |
| • Barre | • Pickleball Drop-In Play |
| • Stretch & Flex | • Zumba Gold |
| • Active Adults | • Senior Strength |

Photo: Members of Kettlebell AMPD in their new studio location at 1500 Scribner Ave NW.



GRAND RAPIDS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

TURKEY TROT



Blue Care
Network
of Michigan

Use your feet before you eat!

Thanksgiving Day

8:10 a.m. | LMCU Mini Trot

8:30 a.m. | 5k Run/Walk

Register at GRPS.org/Turkey-Trot



Scan the QR code to register TODAY!
Funds raised support GRPS athletics





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Houseman Field Ready To Shine With New Track, Turf & Lights

“From the field to the track to the lights, this is the type of complex that our scholar-athletes deserve to compete in,” said Board of Education Trustee Sara Melton during the ribbon cutting ceremony for the renovated Houseman Field. “To our community: thank you from the bottom of our hearts. None of this would have been possible without your support.”

The \$5.1 million renovation was funded by the Reimagine GRPS with Us! bond, which was passed overwhelmingly by voters in 2023.

“I am thrilled to share that our renovation of historic Houseman Field has finished on-time and within budget,” said Executive Director of Facilities and Operations Alex Smart.

“For generations, Houseman Field has been more than just a stadium, it’s a gathering place,”

— Superintendent Dr. Leadrine Roby

The upgrades include a new playing turf and running track, expanded parking, new field lighting, locker room acoustical improvements, and masonry restoration.

“We now have a top-notch facility where we can compete at our very best,” said Dariana Weaver, a scholar-athlete at Ottawa Hills. “Every time we step into this stadium,

it’s a reminder that our community believes in us.”

“On behalf of all of us who get to call this our home field, thank you for believing in us,” said Nate Mayfield, a scholar-athlete at Union High School.

Houseman Field was donated to GRPS in 1907 by Hattie Houseman Amberg in honor of her father Julius Houseman.

“For generations, Houseman Field has been more than just a stadium, it’s a gathering place, landmark, and a symbol of pride,” said Superintendent Dr. Leadrine Roby. “As we gather to support our scholars, let’s honor Houseman Field as a place where champions are made and dreams take flight.”

GRPS partnered with C2AE, Wolverine Construction, and Plante Moran Realpoint on the renovation project.

New Community Health Center Opens at Harrison Park

The new Catherine’s Health Center inside Harrison Park Academy is now open, ready to serve the community.

GRPS scholars and community members between the ages of 3 and 21 will have access to medical and behavioral health services at this location, regardless of their ability to pay. Parent or caregiver consent is required to receive services.

“Generations of children have walked through these doors to learn, be inspired, and grow,” Bradley Moore, Principal at Harrison Park Academy, said during the ribbon cutting ceremony. “Today, for the very first time, our community will also be able to walk through these doors to access quality health care.”

The health center offers well-child visits, sports physicals, immunizations, assessment and treatment for acute illness or injuries, and individual and group therapy for those needing mental health counseling services. It is supported by a grant from the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services’ Child and Adolescent Health Center program.

This is the first health center to open at GRPS in partnership with Catherine’s Health Center. Cherry Health has clinics at Innovation Central, Ottawa Hills, and Union high schools.

“Here at Harrison Park, one of our city’s legendary learning institutions, you see the power of partnerships,”

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New Community Health Center Opens at Harrison Park Academy

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said Dr. Leadriane Roby, Superintendent. "Different organizations, coming together, making a lasting impact."

"This health center is here for our scholars, their families, and our entire community," said Kimberley Williams, Board of Education Treasurer. "I encourage you to make an appointment, use this resource, and make it your own."

"Our district's vision is to become a world-class performing district that meets the differing academic, social, emotional, and physical needs of every scholar," said

Kirstyn Wade, GRPS Director of Health Services. "School-based health centers are a vital part of making that vision a reality."

During the ribbon cutting ceremony, Congresswoman Hillary Scholten presented a Congressional Certificate of Special Recognition, and State Representative Carol Glanville presented a Special Tribute from the State of Michigan.

"With this clinic, we are going to be removing critical barriers to students' learning," said Congresswoman Scholten. "I'm so encouraged to know that in this

clinic, we are also going to be treating students' health care needs the same above the neck as we do below the neck."

"I can't stress enough the importance of these on the education of our kids, not just because it helps keep them in school, but also they are being exposed to a career pathway," said Representative Glanville.

The health center includes medical exam rooms, a behavioral health office, a registration area, and lab. The renovation was completed by McGraw Construction and Architektura.

IMMIGRATION RESOURCES RECURSOS INMIGRATORIOS

Our district is unwavering in our commitment to creating a safe and welcoming environment for all scholars and their families. We recognize that changes in immigration enforcement are causing uncertainty and fear for some members of our community, and we want to assure you that we are here to support you.

Nuestro distrito es inquebrantable en su compromiso de crear un ambiente seguro y acogedor para todos los alumnos y sus familias. Reconocemos que los cambios en la aplicación de las leyes de inmigración están causando incertidumbre y miedo entre algunos miembros de nuestra comunidad y queremos asegurarles de que estamos aquí para apoyarlos.



SCAN TO VIEW RESOURCES
ESCANEE PARA ACCEDER A RECURSOS



Grand Rapids Public Schools

WE ARE GR

July 2025

Grand Rapids

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*Leadriane Roby, Ph.D.,
Superintendent of Schools*

Equal Opportunity Institution: Grand Rapids Public Schools, as an Equal Opportunity Institution, complies with federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and harassment, including Title IV and Title VII (with amendments) of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, Title IX of the Educational Amendment of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Veterans Readjustment Act of 1974 as amended 38 USC 20-12 and the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990. The District will not discriminate against any person based on race, sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity and expression, height, weight, color, religion, national origin, age, marital status, pregnancy, disability or veteran status. The District's Civil Rights Compliance Officer is Anya Lusk. Ms. Lusk may be contacted at 1331 Martin Luther King Jr. St SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49501, (616) 819-2030 or (616) 819-2028. The District's Title IX Coordinator is Kurt Johnson. Mr. Kurt Johnson may be contacted at 1331 Martin Luther King Jr. St SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49501 or (616) 819-6339 or titleix@grps.org.

Title IX Annual Athletics Compliance Report: Grand Rapids Public Schools is committed to securing athletic equity and provides annual Title IX reporting to the athletes and parents in an effort to bring increased attention and resources towards ensuring that gender equity as required by Title IX of the Education Amendments for 1972, Grand Rapids Public Schools annual report is available at www.grps.org.

To comply with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), parents may request information regarding the professional qualifications of the student's classroom teachers.

Please contact Christi Atwood, Director of Human Resources, in Human Resources via email atwoodc@grps.org or at (616) 819-2095.

WE ARE GR is published four times per year by GRPS Communications Office
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GRPS Child & Adolescent Health Centers

Grand Rapids Public Schools (GRPS) continues its commitment to student health and wellness with four Child and Adolescent Health Centers (CAHCs) operating within the district. These centers provide comprehensive medical, dental, and behavioral health services to students and community children between the ages of 3 and 21.

Three of the health centers, located at Ottawa Hills High School, Union High School, and Innovation Central High School, are operated in partnership with Cherry Health. The newest addition to the district's CAHC network, at Harrison Park Academy, is in collaboration with Catherine's Health Center and also offers a full range of medical and behavioral health services.

All services require parental consent for minors, and the CAHCs adhere strictly to Michigan laws regarding minor consent for specific health services.

By bringing healthcare directly into the schools, GRPS aims to reduce barriers to care and ensure all students have the opportunity to thrive both in and out of the classroom.

Why would I sign my child up for services in a school health center?

- A visit to the health center may reduce the time your child is out of class.
- May provide basic evaluation and medication to alleviate symptoms and get your child back in class (for example a headache may need a Tylenol).
- A visit to the health center may reduce the time you need to take off work.
- A visit to the health center helps students learn about management of chronic illness and health promotion.
- A healthy student is going to be more academically successful.

Who can utilize this service?

Anyone within the ages of 3-21 and up to age 26 for clients eligible for special education services.

What type of services does a child & adolescent health center offer?

- Well child visits
- Sports physicals
- Mental health services
- Immunizations
- Laboratory testing
- Referrals to specialists
- Dental care including cleanings, fillings and extractions
- Acute injury & illness evaluation and treatment

As a parent, do I need to be with my child at the time of the visit?

Parents/caregivers are always welcome, but a child may be seen without the parent if the parent/guardian has signed the specific health center consent form. Communication with parents/guardians is vital with all medical providers and visit types.

Is there a cost for services?

All services are available regardless of insurance status or ability to pay. While insurance will be billed when available, no child will be turned away due to lack of coverage or financial resources.

How can I contact the health centers?

- To schedule an appointment at Ottawa Hills Health Center, Innovation Central Health Center, or Union Health Center, call (616)-776-5110.
- To schedule an appointment at Harrison Park Health Center call (616)-315-2852
- If you have general questions about your child's health or the services provided at these locations, you can always contact your child's school nurse by calling your child's school directly.

ATTENTION GRPS PARENTS!

Did you know certain immunizations are REQUIRED for your child to attend public school in Michigan?

If you have an incoming preschooler, kindergartener, or 7th grader for the 2025-2026 school year, the summer is a perfect time to ensure they are caught up on their immunizations. If you need assistance finding an immunization location, or scheduling an appointment, you can contact the following:

- Your child's primary car physician
- GRPS Cherry Health School-Based Health Clinics: Clinics are located in Union High School, Ottawa Hills High School and Innovation Central High School. You can make an appointment at any of the locations by calling 616-776-5110.
- Catherine's Health Center Creston Community Health Clinic: You can make an appointment by calling 616-336-8800.
- Kent County Health Department: Clinics are available throughout Kent County. You can make an appointment for immunizations by calling (616) 632-7200.

If you have updated immunization records, please send them via email to Immunizations@grps.org.

PARENTS VACCINES REQUIRED FOR SCHOOL ENTRY IN MICHIGAN

Whenever children are brought into group settings, there is a chance for diseases to spread. Children must follow state vaccine laws to attend school. These laws are the minimum standard to help prevent disease outbreaks in school settings. The best way to protect your child from other serious diseases is to follow the recommended vaccination schedule at www.cdc.gov/vaccines. Talk to your health care provider to make sure your child is fully protected.

	All Kindergarteners and 4-6 year old transfer students	All 7th Graders and 7-18 year old transfer students
Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis (DTP, DTaP, Tdap)	4 doses DTP or DTaP 1 dose must be at or after 4 years of age	4 doses diphtheria and tetanus or 3 doses if 1st dose given at or after 1 year of age 1 dose Tdap at 11 years of age or older upon entry into 7th grade or higher
Polio	4 doses 3 doses if dose 3 was given at or after 4 years of age	
Measles, Mumps, Rubella (MMR)*	2 doses at or after 12 months of age	
Hepatitis B*	3 doses	
Meningococcal Conjugate (MenACWY)	None	1 dose at 11 years of age or older upon entry into 7th grade or higher
Varicella (Chickenpox)*	2 doses at or after 12 months of age or Current lab immunity or History of varicella disease	

During disease outbreaks, incompletely vaccinated students may be excluded from school. Parents and guardians choosing to decline vaccines must obtain a certified non-medical waiver from a local health department. Read more about waivers at www.Michigan.gov/immunize.
*If the child has not received these vaccines, documented immunity is required.
All doses of vaccines must be valid (correct spacing and ages) for school entry purposes.

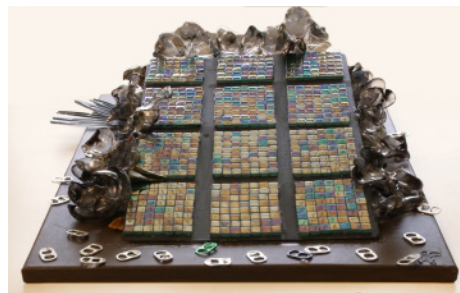




FIRST PLACE – Elliot Williamson, City High Middle School, 'Renewable Energy Will Make The World Bright'



THIRD PLACE – Samya Alford, Innovation Central High School, 'In Full Bloom'



RUNNER UP – Alivia Phillips, Southwest Middle High School Academia Bilingüe, 'XYZ'

Senior's Wooden Artwork Wins 2025 Smart Art Awards



GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (GRPS) – City High Middle School Senior Elliot Williamson was awarded first place in the 2025 SMART Art Awards during the ArtPrize Opening Celebration with artwork titled "Renewable Energy Will Make The World Bright."

The SMART Art (Students Making Art with a Renewable Theme) competition invites scholars to express their bold ideas about energy, the environment and the world they hope to create through their art.

The winner's artwork, along with the art from the top 20 finalists, will be on display on the first floor of Grand Rapids City Hall throughout ArtPrize.

Elliot won a \$2,000 scholarship and an Apple Laptop courtesy of Consumers Energy. Alivia Phillips from Southwest Middle High School Academia Bilingüe was named runner-up. Samya Alford from Innovation Central High School placed third. Each of the top ten finalists received monetary or technology prizes including Apple Laptops, iPads and/or Meijer gift cards.

"These students are not just creating art — they're sharing their vision for a better world," said Cathy Wilson, director of the Consumers Energy Foundation. "Their creativity, passion, and optimism are inspiring, and we're proud to support their journey as they imagine and shape the future."

"The SMART Art competition is a powerful example of how art can inspire action and awareness," said Dan Van Til, GRPS Fine Arts Director. "Our scholars are using their creativity to explore meaningful issues that matter to them, and the results are both thought-provoking and deeply moving."

Artwork from the finalists included mixed media, oil painting, yarn, digital, ink, plastic, and more. A panel of art professionals from Center for Community Transformation, Grand Rapids Community College and a local artist and community organizer selected the finalists from 41 entries.

Asbestos Notice

Asbestos is a general name for a group of naturally occurring minerals composed of small fibers. These fibers are very strong and resistant to heat and chemicals. The mere presence of asbestos in a building does not mean that the health of the building occupants is endangered. When left intact and undisturbed, asbestos-containing materials do not pose a health risk to

building occupants. There is, however, the potential for exposure when the material becomes damaged or disturbed. Because of these problems associated with asbestos exposure, the Asbestos Hazard Emergency Act, or AHERA emphasizes that asbestos in school buildings must appropriately be managed.

The Grand Rapids Public Schools has an asbestos management plan that

addresses contact persons, training, inspections, response actions, operation and maintenance activities, periodic surveillance, cleaning, disclosure efforts, and school building areas containing asbestos. Any person may review the management plan at the Grand Rapids Public School's Facilities Management Department, 900 Union, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503, during regular business hours (8:00 am to

4:00 pm). Alternatively, any person may request a copy of the plan by writing the Grand Rapids Public Schools Facilities Management Department, 900 Union, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503. There is a cost involved in reproducing the document of approximately 10 cents per page. The Grand Rapids Public Schools will send a copy out of the management plan within 5 business days of receiving the request.



Union's Freshman Field Day Builds Community, Spirit and Scholar Leadership

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (GRPS) -- Every fall, Union High School kicks off the school year with one of its most exciting and meaningful traditions: Freshman Field Day. Held annually since 2016, the event focuses on fostering a sense of unity and belonging among the entire 9th grade class—something Union staff believes is critical to long-term academic and personal success.

“Our scholars come from a variety of feeder programs throughout GRPS and other districts, so this is one of our first big events to bring them all together as a 9th grade team,” said Dana Bachelder, Assistant Principal at Union High School. “All nationwide data points to the fact that having a successful freshman year equates to success in the rest of your high school career.”

Red vs. Black: Friendly Competition

This year, the event was held on Friday, September 12. Before things kicked off, scholars were divided into red and black teams based on their first-hour classes. Then, throughout the day, they rotated through various activities that combined physical challenges, teambuilding, and friendly competition.

This year, stations included tire flipping, wiffleball throwing, plank walking, soccer target shooting, inflatable jousting, Kan Jam, and a dunk tank. At the end of the event, the red and black teams squared off in a tug-of-war competition, bringing the entire class together for one final, energetic showdown.

A Community Effort

Freshman Field Day wouldn't be possible without strong support from community partners. When asked about how Union's community partners contributed to the event, Bachelder was quick to offer praise.

“The National Guard comes every year and has some sort of blow-up fun activity,” she said. “First Covenant Church has

partnered with us for years and is always here to support. Grand Rapids Community Foundation is how it all started with funding assistance.”

Additionally, freshman teachers, the counseling department, and many support staff from Union help ensure the event runs smoothly every year.

Building Leadership Through Scholar Voice

One of the unique elements of Field Day is the involvement of Union's own scholars in leadership roles. Upperclassmen in the school's JROTC program helped run stations and support the logistics of the event.

“We have several opportunities for students to be in leadership roles,” said Bachelder. “We have found that if they have scholar voice, the buy-in is usually much better.”

By giving scholars ownership over the event, Union fosters participation and school pride, building a foundation of leadership that benefits individuals and the school as a whole.

More to Come

Freshman Field Day is just the beginning of a full calendar of signature events at Union High School. Throughout the semester, the school will continue to foster community building and scholar engagement through events like the Cultural Celebration, Homecoming, Thanksgiving Raffle, and Holiday Celebration—each offering scholars a chance to connect, lead, and celebrate together.

For more information about upcoming Union events, please reach out to Morgan Bills, Union's KSSN Coordinator, at billsm@grps.org.



Bright Future: New Scoreboards Unveiled at Ottawa Hills

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (GRPS) – The first electronic scoreboards are now lit up at the Ottawa Hills soccer field, Mickey Stanley Field (baseball), and Marti Beckering Field (softball).

The Ottawa Hills Athletic Boosters partnered with Meijer and Consumers Credit Union to make possible the purchase and installation of three new scoreboards at Ottawa Hills High School.

“Take a look around right now, this is what community looks like,” Superintendent Dr. Leadriane Roby said during the ribbon-cutting celebration. “Your investment tells our scholars that the hard work they put in on these fields truly matters.”

“We are thrilled to gather this morning to celebrate partnerships that will have a lasting impact on our scholar-athletes,” said Ottawa Hills Principal Dr. Timothy Mabin.

“Let's celebrate not just these three incredible scoreboards, but this momentous win for our students, for

our schools, for our coaches and our community,” said Missy Jackson from the Ottawa Hills Athletic Boosters. “Ottawa Hills Athletics is here ready to compete and ready to shine.”

Meijer contributed \$30,000 toward the purchase of the scoreboards, while Consumers Credit Union donated \$29,053 to cover installation costs.

“Congrats to everybody on these amazing scoreboards. They do represent lighting up points, pride and teamwork,” said Lynne Jarman-Johnson from Consumers Credit Union.

Several Ottawa Hills scholar-athletes attended the ribbon-cutting ceremony.

“This means more than just an upgrade in equipment, but rather symbolizes the years of growth in our program,” said Aracelle Chales-Jeronimo, a soccer athlete for the Bengals. “We want to be known as an inclusive community that gives back. We'll make the most of this opportunity and proudly represent what it means to be part of Ottawa Hills.”

ENROLL TODAY!

We proudly offer **No-Cost**,
High-Quality PreK for All



Enrollment for PreK for All is now open for the 2025-2026 school year.

APPLY NOW TO SECURE YOUR SPOT!

Open to children who will be 4 by December 1, 2025.

Thanks for Michigan's PreK for All program, PreK is available at **NO-COST** to ALL families in Grand Rapids Public Schools. Our GSRP Preschool Offers:

- **23 Safe, Convenient Locations** throughout Grand Rapids.
- **Full Day Programming & Half Day Montessori Options**
- **Highly Qualified, Culturally Diverse Teachers** who monitor each child's progress and partner with families to support at-home development
- **Inclusive Classroom Learning** that is supported by a research-based curriculum. Children interact in both large and small group activities, participate in open-ended learning centers, and experience outdoor exploration
- **Free, Nutritious Meals**
- **Family Engagement Events**
- **Transportation is Available in Some Areas**

Research shows participation in a quality PreK program improves a child's emotional, social and intellectual skills and helps ensure they are healthy and ready for kindergarten.¹



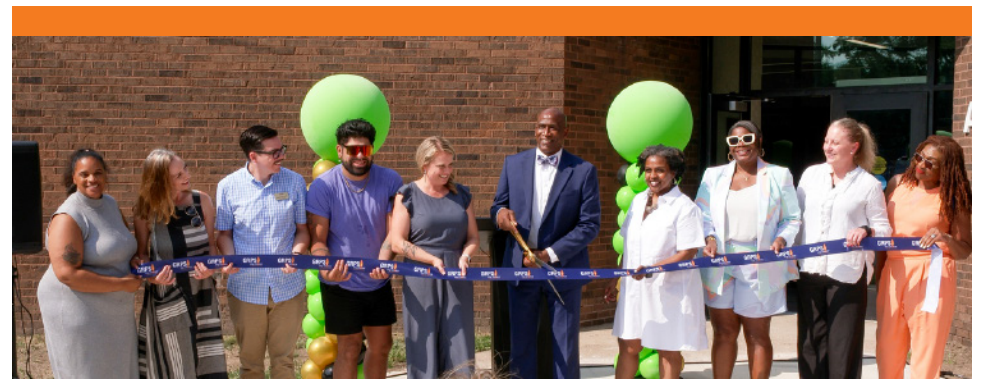
SCAN TO ENROLL

Visit preschool.kentisd.org or call (616) 819-2111 for more info.



These materials were developed under a grant from the State of Michigan's Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement and Potential.

1. Administration for Children and Families: Children's Learning and Development Benefits from High-Quality Early Care and Education: A Summary of the Evidence



A Bright New Chapter Begins for Southeast Career Pathways

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (GRPS) -- The largest project to date in the Reimagine GRPS initiative is ready to welcome scholars and staff for the first day of school on Monday, August 18.

A \$7 million renovation converted the former Sigsbee Elementary School into a vibrant high school environment as the new home of Southeast Career Pathways.

"This project finished on time and under budget," exclaimed Executive Director of Facilities and Operations Alex Smart during the ribbon-cutting ceremony. "We've added fresh colors, new LED lighting, and more than doubled the amount of natural light entering our learning spaces."

The project also includes a new safe and secure entrance, new flooring and paint, new HVAC system, roof repairs and a repaved parking lot.

"This project is exactly what we mean when we say 'Reimagine GRPS with Us,'" said Superintendent Dr. Leadriane Roby. "Our scholars and staff at Southeast Career Pathways deserve a learning environment that inspires excellence, and now they have one."

The project was funded by the zero-tax-rate-increase bond overwhelmingly passed by voters in 2023.

"To our community, thank you from the bottom of our hearts," said Board of Education President Kymberlie Buzcek. "Here in our city, even in uncertain times, our community has made it clear - we will not give up on our kids."

Partners on the project include Plante Moran Realpoint, Pure Architects, Moore and Bruggink, and Triangle Construction.

Ford Academic Center Teachers Get VIP classroom setup help

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (GRPS) -- Teachers at Gerald R. Ford Academic Center got a little extra help preparing for the new school year from some of the state's most recognizable leaders.

Governor Gretchen Whitmer, Congresswoman Hillary Scholten, Senate Majority Leader Winnie Brinks, and State Representative Kristian Grant rolled up their sleeves during a visit to the school. The group joined teachers Rachel Francisco, Chamonique Griffith, and Juanita Toronto to tackle back-to-school tasks like sharpening pencils, decorating bulletin

boards, and wiping down desks.

While working alongside educators, Governor Whitmer also took time to discuss the rising cost of school supplies, listening as teachers shared how the added expense impacts their classrooms and their scholars.

"I think people take for granted the amount of personal resources that teachers put in to make their classroom work for their students," Gov. Whitmer said. "Teachers like you make the big difference in all these little lives."





Grand Rapids Showcases Nature-Focused Learning to National Experts

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (GRPS) – National leaders visited Grand Rapids to see how green playscapes are benefiting GRPS scholars.

“Grand Rapids is ahead of the game, when you look at other communities around the country,” said David Beard from the Children and Nature Network.

The Cities Connecting Children & Nature Network Nature Everywhere initiative and the Grand Rapids Environmental Education Network initiative have been working collaboratively since 2015 to increase equitable access to nature for all Grand Rapids youth.

“We’re working with public agencies, school districts, community partners to help with the initiatives that are connecting kids to nature,” Beard explained. “It’s such a dynamic way to look at our public infrastructure in public settings, for the benefit of kids and their families.”

Grand Rapids is designated as a ‘Nature Everywhere Community,’ a result of a partnership between the Children and Nature Network, the City of Grand Rapids’ Parks and Recreation Department, and GRPS. Representatives toured multiple green schoolyard sites and the GR Outside Gear Library.

“We have several properties that are adjacent to park spaces,” explained GRPS Science Curriculum Supervisor Jessica Vander Ark. “Regular access to natural spaces like this actually increases performance when they do go back into the classroom.”

Research made available through the Children & Nature Network shows that access to nature makes kids happier, healthier, and even smarter.

“Nature is the greatest classroom,” Beard added. “We can learn about those things in real life, in real time, and not just in a book.”

GRPS Educators Honored by Davenport University

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (GRPS) -- Davenport University has selected North Park Montessori Principal Dan Morse and Ottawa Hills High School Social Studies Teacher Whitley Morse as the 2025 recipients of the College of Urban Education Alumni Award.

The award honors graduates of the Davenport University College of Urban Education who have shown outstanding professional accomplishments in a related field and who have demonstrated leadership in and dedication to the profession. The recipients are engaged in the vision and advancement of the College of Urban Education and its respective alumni community while exhibiting a commitment to public service.

Dan and Whitley represent a dynamic duo whose leadership and passion are making an impact every day at GRPS.

Dan, a proud GRPS graduate, began his career in the district as a teacher before moving into school leadership and eventually serving as principal of North Park Montessori.

Whitley also began her career teaching at GRPS, later gaining experience in school administration, before returning to the classroom at Ottawa Hills High School where she continues to inspire scholars every day. She was honored in 2024 as a GRPS Jean Hamilton Cope Teacher of the Year recipient.

“I am honored and grateful to accept



“I am thankful for the professional network I’ve built along the way, for colleagues who challenge and inspire me, and for the unwavering belief that all students deserve opportunities to thrive, no matter their circumstances.”

– Whitley Morse

the 2025 Davenport University Alumni of the Year award for the Urban Education program along with my forever partner,” Whitley said. “As a teacher leader at Ottawa Hills, this recognition is especially meaningful. Throughout this journey, I learned more than I could have imagined in that very first cohort - from taking classes alongside GRPS teachers in GRPS buildings! Davenport met us where we were and together we worked through curriculum which was tailor-made to support the work we were doing and continue to do every single day.”

“The experience not only strengthened my skills but also deepened my passion for creating meaningful learning experiences for our students,” she said. “I am thankful for the professional network I’ve built along the way, for colleagues who challenge and inspire me, and for the unwavering belief that all students deserve opportunities to thrive, no matter their circumstances.”

“I am honored to be among the 2025 Davenport University Alumni of the Year,” Dan added. “The College of Urban Education and the coursework that we completed helped to prepare me for

my role as Principal here at North Park Montessori and Grand Rapids Public Schools, emphasizing an individualized and caring approach that all children should experience, no matter their ZIP code.”

“I was able to build a strong professional network through my work at Davenport and GRPS, surrounding myself with colleagues who have helped to support me through challenges, modeled what it means to care for our scholars, and also pushed me to think in different and more inclusive ways,” he said.

Grand Rapids Promise Zone, Ferris State and GVSU Partner to Provide Funding Toward a Bachelor's Degree for Eligible GRCC Grads

Grand Rapids Promise Zone

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. – The Grand Rapids Promise Zone Authority, Ferris State University and Grand Valley State University announced a new partnership that will provide funding for Promise Zone students who graduate with an associate degree from Grand Rapids Community College to complete a bachelor's degree from either university.

Beginning in January 2026, Promise Zone students become eligible for up to \$7,000 per academic year at either Ferris State or Grand Valley after earning an associate degree from Grand Rapids Community College. This funding can be applied toward the cost of tuition, fees, and on-campus housing as they pursue a bachelor's degree.

In addition, each four-year institution will provide up to an additional \$7,000 per academic year if there is a gap in tuition and fees.

"We firmly believe that students at Grand Rapids Community College are positioned to not just be in school, but to flourish, succeed and graduate into the world of work or a four-year university," said Tom DeJonge, chair, Grand Rapids Promise Zone Authority. "We could not be more thrilled about this partnership with Ferris and Grand Valley as it opens the doors to more opportunities while reducing the financial stress that often comes with seeking degrees in higher education. This creates a clear path for students to shape their future at these highly respected institutions of higher learning."

Before any Promise Zone funds are applied at the four-year partner institution, students must first use all available state and federal need-based grants by completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), excluding student loans and work-study funding, as well as any merit-based aid from the four-year partner. Any Promise

Zone funding applied to the remaining cost of tuition, fees, or on-campus housing expenses will be paid directly to the four-year partner institution and will not be refundable to the student.

"Ferris State University has been a longtime partner with Grand Rapids Community College, so this partnership with GRCC and the Grand Rapids Promise Zone is a natural next step in a long relationship," Ferris State President Bill Pink said. "We believe in the transformative power of education to open doors, elevate communities, and change lives. The Grand Rapids Promise Scholarship creates an incredible opportunity for students who have earned their associate degree at GRCC to take the next step toward a bachelor's degree. We know that a Ferris State degree provides a great opportunity for our graduates to experience a living wage career path, as acknowledged by the Carnegie Foundation's 'Opportunity University' designation, and we look forward to our Promise Zone graduates participating in that experience."

This partnership underscores the shared commitment among Ferris State and GVSU to support student success after community college. By aligning with the Grand Rapids Promise Zone, both Ferris State and GVSU are helping create a more accessible and affordable pathway to a four-year degree, ensuring students have continued support as they pursue their educational and career goals.

"Today's agreement is part of GVSU's commitment to breaking down barriers to allow students to pursue their dreams," said Philomena V. Mantella, president of Grand Valley State University. "By investing in Promise Zone students, we impact not only the learners but also our community as a whole."

Students are eligible for funding toward a bachelor's degree at the four-year partner institution, as long as they use their scholarship within five years of high school graduation, upon earning an associate degree from GRCC. To access their funding, scholarship recipients must complete an intent to enroll form each semester and may be required to provide additional documents.

Additionally, students must maintain satisfactory academic progress and academic good standing, as defined by the partner institution, to remain eligible.

"The Grand Rapids Promise Zone has already opened doors for nearly 2,000 students to earn an associate degree at GRCC," said Dr. Steven Triezenberg, interim president of Grand Rapids Community College. "With this new partnership, those doors open even wider – making a bachelor's degree more affordable and achievable. For our students, it means more opportunities and greater confidence to reach their goals. And their success in achieving those goals is a win for our community as a whole."

Representing the first city-wide partnership between public, public charter, and private schools in Grand Rapids' history, the Grand Rapids Promise Zone Authority removes financial barriers to higher education for all Grand Rapids students by covering tuition, fees, textbooks, and more. The scholarship includes a \$500 credit per fall and winter semester at GRCC for on-campus expenses such as food, parking/transportation, printing, and more. It also provides additional staff to support student success on-campus and connect students with both on and off-campus resources.

To qualify for the Promise Zone scholarship, students must live in the city of Grand Rapids and graduate from one of the 25 eligible high schools in the city with continuous residency and high school

attendance since the start of 11th grade. Whether students plan to transfer to a four-year university or join the workforce, the support and funding from the Grand Rapids Promise Zone can help them achieve a GRCC degree, certificate or job training certificate program.

Since it launched in 2020, nearly 2,000 GRCC students have received support by the Grand Rapids Promise Zone Scholarship. The first class of eligible students in fall 2020 had 245 enrolled with support by the Grand Rapids Promise Zone. This fall, nearly 800 Promise Zone students are enrolled in classes.

The process to create the Grand Rapids Promise Zone Authority began in 2018, when the Grand Rapids Public Schools (GRPS) Board of Education adopted a resolution declaring its intention to establish a Promise Zone throughout the geographic boundary of GRPS pursuant to Michigan Promise Zone Authority Act (Act 549 of 2008). Late that year, the Michigan Department of Treasury confirmed Grand Rapids' designation as a Michigan Promise Zone.

In taking the next step toward establishing a Promise Zone Authority, the GRPS Board of Education appointed nine members to the Grand Rapids Promise Zone Authority Board. Two additional members were appointed by the Speaker of the Michigan House of Representatives and the Majority Leader of the Michigan Senate. In the fall of 2019, the Grand Rapids Promise Zone Authority Board held its first meeting, during which board members took the constitutional oath of office, elected a chairperson, and established the expiration dates for each member's term.

GRPS ATHLETICS

Focused and Ready: Ottawa Hills Boys Tennis Hits the Courts

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (GRPS) -- The Ottawa Hills boys tennis team is gearing up for an exciting season this fall. Competing in the OK White Division, the squad will face a challenging slate of opponents as they test their skills in a variety of formats throughout the season.

Head Coach Andre Posey continues to build on the program's foundation with a focus on discipline, development, and competitive spirit—qualities that are essential for success in the highly competitive OK White Division. Facing schools with deep and experienced lineups, Ottawa Hills enters the season ready to make an impact by blending returning talent with promising new players who embody this commitment to growth and resilience.

Last season, Ottawa Hills had one player



earn All-Conference honors, an achievement the team is proud of and eager to build on. That recognition has added motivation for this year's roster, as players aim to elevate their performance and contribute to a stronger overall showing in the conference standings.

This season's schedule features a mix of dual meets, tri-meets, and weekend invitationals, giving the team multiple opportunities to gain experience and refine their game against

diverse opponents. These events not only contribute to postseason preparation but also allow players to compete in a range of match formats and environments.

With strong leadership from Coach Posey and key players in both singles and doubles, the Ottawa Hills boys tennis team is poised to represent their school with pride and determination throughout the 2025 season.

Redhawk Pride on Full Display at Annual Homecoming Celebration

Grand Rapids, MICH (GRPS) --Union High School's Homecoming assembly brought scholars from all grade levels together for a lively afternoon filled with competition, music, and shared school spirit.

Before class competitions began, the Union drumline kicked things off with an energetic hallway performance. Then, inside the gym, fall sport teams were introduced to the crowd, giving all Redhawk scholar-athletes the recognition they deserve. The cheerleading squad remained on the floor for a special Homecoming performance, and the DJs kept the energy high with upbeat music throughout the event.

This year's Homecoming games featured an exciting lineup: a raft race, pizza box knockout, a dress-up basketball relay race, a scavenger hunt, a blindfolded donut-eating contest, and a fast-paced round of human-powered Hungry Hungry Hippos. Each class gave it their all, but it was the junior class that emerged victorious, earning the most wins across all competitions.



The energy didn't stop there, though. In a show of Redhawk pride, the classes went head-to-head in a call-and-response cheer competition. While the freshman class impressed with their enthusiasm, it was the Class of 2026 that ultimately claimed victory, proving that the senior class has the most school spirit.

To wrap up the assembly, the Homecoming Court was announced to the crowd. Members of the JROTC formed a ceremonial tunnel, giving the court a grand entrance as the school celebrated their peers' recognition on the court.



Union Redhawks Prepare for a New Era in Boys Soccer



GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (GRPS) -- With a talented mix of veterans and underclassmen from across the district, the Union Redhawks boys soccer team is entering the 2025 season determined to leave their mark.

Under the steady leadership of Head Coach Juan Zavala, who's passionate about both player development and team unity, the Redhawks are focused on developing cohesion, improving their attack, and turning a young squad into a playoff contender.

Our number one goal is to have a winning season," said Coach Zavala. "Second, I'm hoping to get the new generation of players to break the ice. We have a gap in the middle—upperclassmen and lowerclassmen—so it's going to be important to have the group bond and prepare to be the next group of, hopefully, district champions."

Building the Foundation

Union spent the offseason focusing on fundamentals and film, paying special attention to their on-field attack.

"We've been doing a lot of ball mastery, position-specific understanding, and trying to watch organized soccer to get a better idea of what each player's roles and responsibilities are," Zavala said. "We had a hard time finishing last year; we didn't capitalize on our opportunities [to score]."

This year, Zavala says the team has "a lot more attacking players coming in," making them stronger challengers for the conference title. He believes the mix of returning seniors and up-and-coming underclassmen gives the team defensive stability on the back line and exciting scoring potential up front.

High Press and Tactical Flexibility

Zavala plans to run a high-attack 4-3-3 formation to take advantage of his younger team's energy and pace. However, he's also realistic about adjustments.

"If I have to adjust to a bigger opponent, we'll go 4-5-1," he explained. "Our group is not known to be that big—we're typically mid-size without a lot of height—so we have to learn to defend with the ball in our possession."

Zavala believes his group is connected enough to make this style of play happen. Growing Together, On and Off the Field

Strong team chemistry is becoming a defining strength for the Redhawks, fueled by year-round training and the genuine friendships forming beyond the sidelines.

"We practice so much together, and we have fun together on and off the field," said senior Brody Carpenter. "I've been on the team all four years, and my experience has been very positive. I've improved my speed, endurance, skills, everything."

Sophomore Lazarus Dewit is optimistic about what this squad can achieve.

"Our biggest challenge is getting far in the playoffs and facing other opponents based on results from last season," he said. "But I feel like we have a good squad with a lot of talent. As long as we put in the work, I feel like we can perform."

Stepping Into Their Roles

Every Redhawk on the pitch knows their role, and they are embracing their responsibilities with pride and purpose.

"I play center back, so my job is to stop any counterattacks and help the goalkeeper

out as much as possible," said sophomore Issac Parra. "I'm just trying to give it my all."

Dewit, who plays center defensive mid, understands the mental side of the game. "The toughest part is being aware of your surroundings and maintaining your composure," he said. I like to stay calm and be smart about what I do. I try to make smart decisions based on the players around me and the situation I'm in."

Sophomore Joey Zhou, who also plays in the midfield, agreed. "The hardest parts are having composure and giving good distributions to my teammates. I try to have a good mentality and focus on playing my own game but also have intensity and remain focused with the ball."

Younger Players Are Forging Their Way

The future of Union soccer is already making its presence known, with underclassmen not only joining the roster but contributing immediately. Between the JV and varsity teams, many new faces will have an impact this season.

Freshman Espoir Mwenyi is embracing the challenge. "I hope to learn and to be good with the boys. I want to get used to the way the coach is going to play me, and I expect to score goals and do my job on the field. I'm going to play varsity this year, and it makes me feel good. As long as I learn more, I know I'm going to get better."

Another freshman, Jeffren Garcia-Lopez, is ready to prove himself at the high school level. "It's going to be a new challenge. I used to play

for club, and I want to test this new level in high school. I heard it's a quicker pace, less thinking and more doing. I'm going to have to rely on my natural instincts."

Eyes on Leadership and Legacy

For Parra, one of the biggest takeaways from last year is how important communication and team connection can be.

"I learned leadership, talking more, and being more open to my teammates' thoughts and ideas on the field," he said. "When we understand each other, we click more. Team chemistry is increasing, and I think that'll help the team."

With a reloaded roster, a fearless mindset, and a deep bench of rising soccer stars, the Redhawks are ready to step up and define their own legacy this season.





Bengals Cross Country Seeks Return Trip to State Finals

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (GRPS) – For the Ottawa Hills Bengals, the cross country program enters the 2025 season focused on one goal: making it back to the state finals.

“For boys, we have two who should have a chance to make all-conference and possibly qualify for the state meet,” said Head Coach Dan Ebright. “For girls, we would like to try to qualify for state again as a team.”

That goal feels within reach, thanks to a group of veteran runners who put in serious work over the summer.

“Kelton Hoover, Liam Bingman, Cece Wojciakowski, Gwen Aupperlee and others have put in some solid training this summer,” Ebright said. “I’m excited to see how that translates into racing in mid-October and November.”

Senior Liam Bingman is one of those athletes focused on improvement. “My goals are to get my PR down into the low 16s, qualify for the state meet, and be all-conference or honorable mention,” he said.

Bingman plans to accomplish this goal through steady effort all season long: “The big lesson I learned is that if I run consistently, I can actually get better and hit the times I’m looking for.”

Fellow senior Kelton Hoover echoed that mindset, but with an emphasis on holistic preparation. “I’ve put more effort into sleeping better, eating better, working out better, running with the end goal of the state meet in mind, and being in a good mood while doing so.”

That balanced approach shows up in Ottawa’s training routine, too. The team incorporates weight training and pool recovery alongside strategic mileage every week. According to Bingman, “for a typical practice, we show up and work out in the weight room, then we warm up and go for our run. Then we come back and aqua jog in the pool.”

Senior Jana Kalumbula also emphasized the

importance of balance and recovery. She shared, “I have improved my training in the off-season by including balance, finding good workout splits, prioritizing recovery and health, and cross training.”

While the focus is on physical readiness, mental strength remains just as important.

“Last year being injured and not being able to run taught me to enjoy running and appreciate feeling strong in my body,” said senior Corena Willink. “I also learned to be a good teammate when I couldn’t run myself.”

That gratitude carries over into their mental race strategies. “Mentally, racing is very hard,” Willink admitted, “but I pick a mantra to repeat throughout the race to keep going.”

Senior Enna Wainer agrees: “I repeat encouragements in my head over and over to keep myself going.”

The Bengals’ season will build toward three major meets: the OK White Championships, the Regional tournament, and, if all goes as planned, the State Finals at Michigan International Speedway.

“I’m hoping to make it to state again,” Wainer said.

With a clearly defined vision and balanced training program for every runner, both Bengals teams have a real shot at achieving that goal.



SAVE THE DATE

GRAND RAPIDS PUBLIC SCHOOLS
EXPO & INFORMATION FAIR

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 28
2026

GRPS EXPO

Ottawa Hills Ignites School Spirit at Homecoming Pep Assembly

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. – Ottawa Hills High School roared with spirit today as scholars and staff took part in the annual Homecoming Pep Assembly, setting the stage for an exciting weekend of Homecoming festivities.

The event kicked off with the powerful rhythm of the Ottawa Hills drumline. They greeted attendees as they entered the gym, setting the tone for an afternoon full of school pride and friendly competition.

One of the most anticipated events of the assembly was the classic tug-of-war showdown between the classes. In a fierce battle of strength, the junior class pulled their way to victory over the other grades—only to be challenged and ultimately defeated by a strong and determined group of Bengals staff. Not to be outdone, the senior class fought their way to redemption during the next competition: musical chairs.

After class games, the school paid tribute to the hard work and dedication of scholar-athletes with fall sports introductions, giving each team their moment to shine. Athletes from football, volleyball, cross country, cheer, boys soccer, boys tennis, and girls swim received loud applause as they were recognized for their efforts this season.

The Bengals cheerleaders kept the energy high with a spirited routine that included an OHHS chant before the assembly concluded with the introduction of the Homecoming Court, featuring representatives from every class.

Hosted by Ottawa Hills staff and the school’s student council, the OHHS Homecoming Pep Assembly was a huge success.

PRINCIPAL PROFILE

Leader Didn't Initially Plan On a Career in Education



GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (GRPS) – MLK Leadership Academy Principal Harvey Crawley has spent decades in education, but that wasn't initially his plan.

"I was doing something completely different," Crawley recalled. He was working third shift at a youth home in Detroit when he started to realize it might be time for a

change. "It started with one kid, 'Hey, I need some help with homework before the bus comes.' And then it was another kid and it was a third and fourth kid. That was the big seed."

Crawley started off as a teacher in Kalamazoo and Battle Creek before coming to Grand Rapids Public Schools.

"It's different every day - it's really different every hour," he said. "Knowing that the time that you're here, if it's just one staff and one student, that you make an impact on that particular day, then you've done your job."

Crawley believes it is important to be approachable and spend time with scholars.

"I try to be out as much as possible," he said. "We have to be the example, particularly for the younger ones, the best way to do that is to be out there, engage with them. Just as much as I'm teaching them, they're teaching me. There's a there's a pride in that."

PRINCIPAL PROFILE



Meet the Principal Who Started Teaching on her Porch as a Child

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (GRPS) – The first classroom Yamaka May led was on her front porch as a child. Her students may have been stuffed animals, but her passion for education was alive.

"I'd give them fake work, and I would teach and talk to them like they were real human beings," she explained. "That's kind of where it began. That's where fire began to burn in me."

She now serves as Principal at Campus Elementary School, fulfilling a lifelong passion for education that came from her parents, who worked in education and the church.

"I feel like I've been surrounded by education all of my life; it's embedded within me," she said.

May grew up at GRPS, attending Madison Park, Southeast Academic Center, Westwood, Iroquois, and graduating from Ottawa Hills High School. After college, she returned to GRPS as a teacher.

"Being able to come back and teach at a place where I grew up at is truly remarkable," she said.

"I love our people, I love GRPS - it's part of me. It's who I am. I'm GRPS strong."



Full Circle: GRPS Grad Inspires the Next Generation

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (GRPS) – At Gerald R. Ford Academic Center, 6th grade scholars are learning from a teacher who knows firsthand the power of a GRPS education. Mrs. Amber Kirksey, a proud graduate of GRPS, is now shaping the next generation with the same care and dedication that inspired her.

"I most enjoy the relationships I am able to build with students as we learn and grow together," Kirksey said. "It is a privilege and joy to watch them develop self-confidence, academic progress, and reach personal goals. We make each other better and that is priceless."

"It is so special to pour into my community and continue to be a part of the teaching and learning that is happening here," she shared.

Kirksey attended Shawnee Park Elementary, Iroquois Middle School, and Ottawa Hills High School, graduating with the Class of 2001. Returning to the district as a teacher is especially meaningful for her.

In her 6th grade classroom at Gerald R. Ford Academic Center, Kirksey strives to shape how scholars see themselves and their potential.

"I am able to impact how my students view themselves as learners not just in school but in the world," Kirksey explained. "What I say, do, and teach and how I say, do, and teach matters and I have the opportunity to empower them and give them access to a future with unlimited choices and chances to contribute to society in meaningful ways."

Kirksey's journey from GRPS student to GRPS teacher represents a full-circle story of giving back, showcasing her path as a true GRPS Champion.







THEME SCHOOL APPLICATION

OPENS JANUARY 5, 2026

**Main Library**

111 Library St NE
616.988.5400

Madison Square

1201 Madison Ave SE
616.988.5411

Ottawa Hills

1150 Giddings Ave SE
616.988.5412

Seymour

2350 Eastern Ave SE
616.988.5413

Van Belkum

1563 Plainfield Ave NE
616.988.5410

West Leonard

1017 Leonard St NW
616.988.5416

West Side

713 Bridge St NW
616.988.5414

Yankee Clipper

2025 Leonard St NE
616.988.5415

grpl.org

Storytimes

Baby & Me

Bring your baby and bounce along to fun stories, songs, and rhymes. Baby & Me is a 15-minute storytime followed by a relaxed playtime where you and baby will meet new friends. For ages 0–18 months.

*Tuesdays, October 14, 21, 28,
November 4, 11, 18*
10:30 am Main Library

*Thursdays, October 16, 23, 30,
November 6, 13, 20*
10:30 am Seymour Branch

*Fridays, October 17, 24, 31,
November 7, 14, 21*
10:30 am Van Belkum Branch

Toddler Time

Bring your toddlers to share fun stories, songs, and rhymes and learn together! Toddler Time is a 25-minute long storytime followed by a hands-on activity and playtime designed to help your child's brain grow. For ages 18 months–3 years.

*Tuesdays, October 14, 21, 28,
November 4, 11, 18*
10:30 am West Side

*Thursdays, October 16, 23, 30,
November 6, 13, 20*
10:30 am Yankee Clipper Branch

Family Storytime

These storytimes feature great books, songs, fingerplays, and hands-on fun. Classes end with an art activity and playtime designed to help your child's brain grow. For ages 0–5 years.

Mondays, October 20, 27, November 3, 10, 17
10:30 am Main Library

*Wednesdays, October 15, 22, 29,
November 5, 12*
10:30 am Seymour Branch

*Fridays, October 17, 24, 31,
November 7, 14, 21*
10:30 am Ottawa Hills Branch

Pajama Time

Get cozy in your pajamas, grab your favorite stuffed animals or blanket, and come to the library for a special bedtime event! Listen to stories, sing songs, and get those wiggles out before bed. Great for working parents and caregivers! For ages 0–5 years.

Mondays, October 20, 27, November 3, 10, 17
6:30 pm West Leonard Branch

Bilingual Storytime

Join us for a bilingual storytime filled with fun stories, movement, and music activities. The 30-minute English and Spanish storytime is followed by a hands-on activity and playtime. For families with children ages 0–5 years.

*Tuesdays, October 14, 21, 28,
November 4, 11, 18*
10:30 am Madison Square Branch

Dinovember Dance Party & Storytime

Dinovember is a fun-filled month dedicated to dinosaurs. Enjoy dinosaur-themed stories, songs, and crafts. For ages 0–11 years.

Wednesday, November 5
6:00 pm Ottawa Hills Branch

Thursday, November 6
6:00 pm Madison Square Branch

Monday, November 10
6:00 pm Seymour Branch

Wednesday, November 12
6:00 pm Van Belkum Branch

Wednesday, November 18
6:00 pm Yankee Clipper Branch

Computer Classes & Technology Support

Open Lab | Walk-in Technology Help

Need help with your computer, laptop, or smartphone? Have questions about email, the Internet, or the library's digital resources? Stop by during our drop-in sessions and library staff will help answer your basic technology questions.

Thursdays, September 11 – November 13
1:00 pm – 3:00 pm Main Library

Tuesdays, October 16, November 20, December 18
3:00 – 5:00 pm Seymour Branch

Tuesdays, November 4, December 9
3:00 – 5:00 pm Yankee Clipper Branch

Google Drive Basics: Google Docs

Cloud storage services like Google Drive allow you to store and edit documents online. These documents can be accessed or edited on any device with an Internet connection. In this class, we will discuss how to create, edit, and share word processing files.

Monday, October 20
11:30 am – 1:00 pm Main Library

Tuesday, November 4
7:00 pm – 8:30 pm Main Library

Google Drive Basics: Google Sheets

Cloud storage services like Google Drive allow you to store and edit documents online. These documents can be accessed or edited on any device with an Internet connection. In this class, we will learn how to create, edit, and share spreadsheets.

Monday, October 27
11:30 am – 1:00 pm Main Library

Tuesday, November 11
7:00 pm – 8:30 pm Main Library

Events for Everyone

FOR KIDS

LEGO Robotics

Kids can build and code their own robots using LEGO's Spike Prime sets. Local robotics teams will be on hand to help participants and to answer questions about robotics. Laptops will be provided, but attendees are encouraged to bring their own devices and use LEGO's free app to code. This is a self-guided, drop-in event. Space is limited and first come, first served. For ages 8 and up.

Saturdays, October 18, November 1, December 6

10:00 am – 12:00 pm Main Library



Tails & Tales | Read to Therapy Dogs

Kids are invited to practice reading to a licensed therapy dog from West Michigan Therapy Dogs Ruff Readers! Attendees will be able to read to a therapy dog for 10–15 minutes. While kids wait for their chance to read, the library will provide a small craft or activity. Reading spots with dogs are available on a first-come, first-served basis. For ages 6–13.

Mondays, October 13, November 10, December 8

6:00 – 7:00 pm Yankee Clipper Branch

Wednesday, October 22

6:00 – 7:00 pm Ottawa Hills Branch

Thursdays, October 16, November 20, December 18

6:00 – 7:00 pm Madison Square Branch

Happy Noon Year!

Celebrate the new year at the library (without staying up late)! Enjoy crafts, games, and a dance party when the clock strikes noon. Fancy dress or pajamas are encouraged, but not required. For ages 0–11.

Wednesday, December 31

11:30 am – 12:30 pm

Main Library, Madison Square, Seymour, West Leonard, West Side, & Yankee Clipper Branches

FOR TEENS



Teen Anime Club

Join Teen Anime Club to chat with other enthusiasts about your favorite anime and manga! Chat about what you're currently reading and watch anime episodes together! Snacks are provided and attendees can enter a drawing to win a prize. For teens ages 13–19.

Thursdays, October 23, November 6, 20, December 4

4:00 – 6:00 pm West Side Branch

Dungeons & Dragons for Teens

Want to try Dungeons & Dragons but don't know where to start? Already love D&D but don't have a party? Come to the library for monthly drop-in sessions, open to players of all skill levels.

You don't need to commit to multiple sessions. And like any good D&D session, we will have snacks. Bring your own character or get a premade one from us. Space is limited and first come, first served. For ages 11–18.

Thursdays, November 13, December 11

4:00 – 7:00 pm Main Library

FOR ALL AGES



Community Game Night

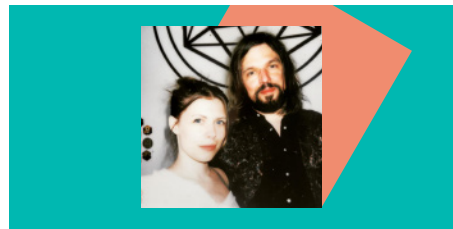
Wednesdays, October 15, November 26, December 17

6:00 – 7:30 pm Ottawa Hills Branch

Join us for a night of board game fun! The library will provide a variety of games for community members, families, and friends to play. Attendees are welcome to bring their own board games. Light snacks and refreshments will be provided. For all ages.

Music in the Stacks

Enjoy local music at the Grand Rapids Public Library! Featuring emerging and established talent, Music in the Stacks is a fun and lively event designed for all ages.

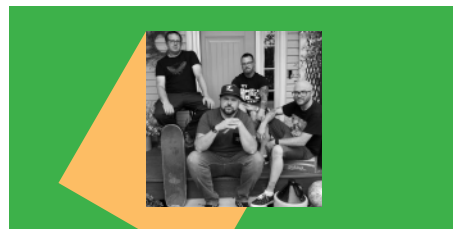


Gemini Moon

Thursday, October 16

6:00 – 7:00 pm West Side Branch

Gemini Moon performs original, guitar-driven songs with rich vocal harmonies, along with fresh takes on classic rock and pop covers. Influenced by '90s alternative, '60s and '70s classic rock, blues, pop, and folk from all eras, the group blends these styles into a warm, inviting sound.



Singing Lungs

Thursday, November 13

6:00 – 7:00 pm West Side Branch

Singing Lungs is a punk rock band from Grand Rapids and Lansing, Michigan, with a sound rooted in '90s influences.

Promotional support for GRPL's musical events is provided in part by 88.1 FM WYCE.

Native American Dancers |

Reg Pettibone & Family

Sunday, October 26

2:00 – 3:00 pm St. Cecilia Music Center
24 Ransom NE, 49503

Reg Pettibone, champion pow-wow dancer, and his family will perform traditional dances and songs as well as share stories to educate audiences about Native American culture. For all ages.

Special thanks to the Grand Rapids Public Library Foundation for their support of this program.

FOR ADULTS

Conversation Circle | English

Each week, join others who are practicing English through conversations centered around topics like music, food, sports, travel, and more! These casual and fun events are designed for adult English language learners.

*Wednesdays, October 15, 22, 29,
November 5, 12, 26, December 3, 10*
7:00 – 8:00 pm Main Library

Conversation Circle | Spanish

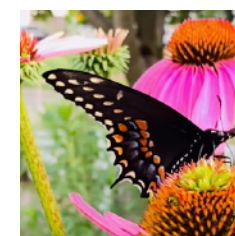
Each month, join others who are practicing Spanish through conversations centered around topics like music, food, sports, travel, and more! These casual and fun events are designed for adult Spanish language learners.

Saturdays, October 18, November 15
2:00 – 3:00 pm Main Library

Introduction to Speed Puzzling

Saturdays, October 18, November 15
12:00 – 2:00 pm Main Library

If you love jigsaw puzzles and want to take it to the next level, join us in a friendly competition of speed puzzling! Participants can attend as teams of 4 or we can help put individuals into teams. The team that completes the puzzle in the shortest amount of time will win a prize! This event is for adults. Space is limited and first come/first served.



Plants & Pollinators with Wild Ones River City

Monday, October 20

6:30 – 7:30 pm Main Library

Learn how native plants and pollinators work together to support healthy ecosystems, promote biodiversity, and sustain local wildlife. Presented by Wild Ones River City.

Events for Everyone

FOR ADULTS

To Die For: Conversations on Death

This is a welcoming, non-judgmental space to discuss death and dying. Deathworkers Tracey Walker and Sarah Sun will guide the conversation without a set agenda, allowing participants to explore whatever comes up in the moment. It's a chance for open, meaningful dialogue. Light refreshments will be provided. For teens and adults. Space is limited and first come, first served.

Tuesdays, October 21, November 11
6:00 – 7:30 pm Seymour Branch

Tracing the Steps | African American Women During the Progressive Era in Grand Rapids

Thursday, October 23
6:00 – 8:00 pm Main Library

Join Sophia Brewer, an academic librarian at Grand Rapids Community College, as she delves into her research on early African American women's clubs and the remarkable women who led these organizations right here in Grand Rapids.

Special thanks to the Grand Rapids Public Library Foundation for their support of this program.

Media Literacy Roundtable

Saturday, October 25
3:00 – 5:00 pm Main Library

Join us for a panel discussion to kick off Media Literacy Week, featuring experts, educators, and media professionals. Learn why media literacy matters in everyday life and civic engagement, and discover practical ways to strengthen your own media literacy skills. A Q&A session will follow.

Indigenous Fashion Presentation with Bead and Powwow Supply

Monday, November 10
6:00 – 7:00 pm Yankee Clipper

Join us for an Indigenous fashion presentation led by Bead & Powwow Supply, a small Indigenous-owned business dedicated to celebrating and uplifting Indigenous arts, crafts, and style. For adults. Space is limited and first come, first served.

Special thanks to the Grand Rapids Public Library Foundation for their support of this program.

Beadwork Workshop with Bead and Powwow Supply

Tuesday, November 11
6:00 – 7:00 pm Yankee Clipper

Space is limited and first come, first served. Join us for a hands-on beadwork workshop led by Bead & Powwow Supply, a small Indigenous-owned business dedicated to uplifting Indigenous arts, crafts, and fashion. For adults.

Special thanks to the Grand Rapids Public Library Foundation for their support of this program.

Support
library
events.

Donate today.

 Grand Rapids
Public Library
Foundation

www.grplfoundation.org

Book Clubs



Cozy Mystery Book Club

Wednesdays, November 5, December 3
6:00 – 7:00 pm Van Belkum Branch

Curl up with a good mystery and join us each month for a cozy book club. We'll read charming and suspenseful mystery titles that spark fun conversation and connection with fellow readers and library staff. This book club is designed for adults.

November 5: *Winter Counts*
by David Heska Wandbli Weiden
December 3: *How to Solve Your Own Murder*
by Kristen Perrin

Sci-Fi Book Club

Wednesdays, November 5, December 10
7:00 – 8:00 pm Main Library

Join other science-fiction readers for a book club led by GRPL staff. Participate in a discussion about each book with members of the community. This book club is designed for adults.

November 5: *Kindred* by Octavia Butler
December 10: *Orbital* by Samantha Harvey

Popular Pages Book Club

Join us for our monthly book club! Enjoy popular fiction and nonfiction titles selected by GRPL librarians and participate in a discussion about each reading with members of the community and library staff. These book clubs are designed for adults.

Popular Pages at West Leonard

Tuesdays, October 14, November 11, December 16
6:00 – 7:00 pm West Leonard Branch

October 14: *Monsters: A Fan's Dilemma*
by Claire Dederer
November 11: *Braiding Sweetgrass*
by Robin Wall Kimmerer
December 16: *Better Living Through Birding*
by Christian Cooper

Popular Pages at Yankee Clipper

Mondays, October 27, November 17, December 15
6:00 – 7:00 pm Yankee Clipper Branch

October 27: *North Woods* by Daniel Mason
November 17: *To Save the Man* by John Sayles
December 15: *Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead* by Olga Tokarczuk

Popular Pages at the Main Library

Saturdays, November 1, December 13
12:00 – 1:00 pm Main Library

November 1: *The Night Watchman*
by Louise Erdrich
December 13: *Hope in the Dark: Untold Histories, Wild Possibilities* by Rebecca Solnit

Small Business Resource Center Spotlight



Interview with Olivia Blomstrom | Business Solutions Manager at West Michigan Works!

Steven Assarian: Let's start with who you are, and your background.

Olivia Blomstrom: I'm Olivia Blomstrom. I'm the Business Solutions Manager at West Michigan Works. I oversee a team across all seven counties that we serve. We help businesses connect with and build the talent they need to succeed.

My background comes from healthcare. I made a move to West Michigan Works as a Business Solutions Representative serving Montcalm and Ionia Counties. I took a one year hiatus and went to work for the Right Place and did economic development for them for a year again, supporting the Montcalm area as the Executive Director of the Montcalm Economic Alliance. But I missed West Michigan Works, the work that we were doing, and was fortunate to come back. It's worked out really well. I never grew up thinking I'm going to go into workforce development, but I love the meaningful work and my team is amazing.

Steven: That's a good start to my next question: what exactly is workforce development? I think a lot of people understand jobseeking, finding work, but not a lot of people understand what workforce development is.

Olivia: To me, workforce development is taking what the current workforce is and identifying where the trends are, where the gaps are, where those needs are, and then working to fill in those gaps.

My team, for example, specifically works with employers throughout West Michigan, and we're working with them to identify their needs, their pain points, and talent gaps. And then I can understand what solutions I can bring to solve their needs. It could be that they have a recruitment need, or they're looking at layoffs, or they're trying

to understand the labor market. We can help any employer through any situation they find themselves in, in terms of talent.

On the jobseeker side, we help job seekers get the skills that are going to meet the demand of what these employers need and help them get into employment. In workforce development, you're bridging the gap from both sides.

Steven: Employers and entrepreneurs might not know what West Michigan Works offers on the employer side, and how you all engage with businesses. Walk us through that.

Olivia: We start with a very organic conversation, asking open ended questions to learn where a business owner wants to grow, where are their grunts and pain points. And learning those things, we start to bridge what we have in our resource bucket to the issues we're seeing. Do you need recruitment services? Upskilling? Entry level talent?

We have multiple ways to help a business find and develop talent. We can offer some wage reimbursement off-setting with some of our grant services, so that you can take somebody that maybe doesn't have all the skills that you need and bring them on-board and the grant offsets the wages while the new hire is in training, or help you set up an apprenticeship to train up employees while they earn.

Steven: What exactly is an apprenticeship?

Olivia: An apprenticeship program puts together classroom training as well as on-the-job training. The idea is that you're taking a new employee, training them, and giving them credentials and skills that they're going to have for their entire career, no matter where you're employed.

When an employee goes through an apprenticeship program, they become certified, and because it's a United States Department of Labor (USDOL) certified apprenticeship program, the State of Michigan will help soften some of those costs by providing West Michigan Works with funding to help offset what an apprenticeship program is going to cost an employer, because it is an investment in the employee.

When people think of apprenticeships, they usually think of the traditional skilled trades. But there's much more: there's

culinary apprenticeship programs; there's an MA for medical assistant programs. There's Early Child Care apprenticeship programs—that's a little bit newer.

We have an apprenticeship coordinator team. They're honestly rock stars. They work directly with the US Department of Labor (DOL) and employers. In coordinating those efforts on creating U.S. DOL registered apprenticeship programs coming up under our standards, we hold the standards for over 40 different apprenticeship programs. Then we also work closely with our community colleges in the area that have their own apprenticeship standards and programs and help employers manage their own standards.

Steven: What are the big successes of West Michigan Works?

Olivia: Oh goodness, our big successes. Personally, for our team, I'm very proud of the amount of funding we bring back to West Michigan when it comes to the Going Pro Talent Fund, because it's a competitive state grant. Of the \$55 million the state allocates to the Going Pro Talent Fund, West Michigan Works brought in \$15.2 million this past year. We're bringing in a big portion of those resources for West Michigan businesses to upskill their employees and hire new employees.

Steven: Where are West Michigan Works' aspirations right now?

Olivia: We're continuing to focus on apprenticeship development and maintaining our apprenticeship programs and helping those, not just employers, but also assisting with opportunities for pre-apprenticeship program development. Our apprenticeship team is really good at developing apprenticeship programs and standards with businesses that don't currently have an apprenticeship program, and then getting the program registered with the U.S. DOL.

We are fortunate the State of Michigan continues to invest in apprenticeship programs and provides apprenticeship expansion grant funding opportunities to support the expansion of apprenticeship programs. It's really an interesting time right now in workforce development. Additionally, we are

focusing on supporting businesses as they grow and expand with recruitment services, grant funding opportunities, as well as access to talent pipelines through our youth

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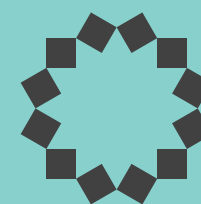
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program. *Steven: What are some parting words that you would have for an employer who wants to seek you out, and where can people find more information about you?*

Olivia: Our website is where businesses can find us. If you email business@westmichiganworks.org, those emails will go directly to me, and I can connect you to the right Business Solutions Representative in West Michigan Works. That way, instead of trying to sort through a lot of information that can feel like drinking from a fire hose, we can start with a conversation and get businesses connected with resources that fit their needs.

This interview is part of GRPL's quarterly Small Business Resource Center eNews. Sign up for the newsletter by visiting www.grpl.org/sbrc.

The Small Business Resource Center is funded thanks to a generous grant from the Grand Rapids Public Library Foundation—Titcher Family Fund.