

December 14, 2024

# COMMUNIQUE

Monthly

FOR TO US A CHILD IS BORN, TO US A  
SON IS GIVEN, AND THE GOVERNMENT  
WILL BE ON HIS SHOULDERS.



ISAIAH 9:6

AND HE WILL BE CALLED  
WONDERFUL COUNSELOR, MIGHTY GOD,  
EVERLASTING FATHER, PRINCE OF PEACE.

@Romeo'sScenicViews



*"Inspiring students to impact the world for Jesus Christ through an excellent educational experience from a Biblical worldview."*

## COVER LETTER TO “STATE OF THE SCHOOL”

Have you ever wanted to hear “The whole truth and nothing but the truth”? Well, that’s what I’ve prepared for you today. Often times we do not get uncut honesty from people because those with the truth are thinking “You can’t handle the truth!” Most of the communication you receive about what is going on in the school is highly edited and lightened to make it palatable because want you to still like us when you’re done reading.

I liken this to what we saw in the Presidential Election this year. Kamala Harris would do an interview with network TV. They would have an hour and a half of interview footage and they would edit and splice it into 10-15 minutes for production. This is short form media. When you get the complex evening news topics like the war in Ukraine or the border they’ve been condensed down into sound bites. During this election cycle a very different form of media that has been growing demonstrated to be more powerful in influence than network media. This is the long form podcast. Donald Trump and his Vice President J.D. Vance went on the Joe Rogan Podcast separately. They each interviewed for 3 hours in an unedited format. It is harder to hide who you are or what you think during a 3-hour discussion.

What has been prepared for you is not an article in the Communiqué. There is a separate attachment titled *State of the School*. As we consider the coming school year (25-26) we need to make some decisions about our future. I do not believe we can continue operating as we have. A lot of time and energy is spent in discussion about where the next dollar is coming from. I would love to redirect that energy in communication/marketing and networking and efficiencies and how we can expand our offerings and experiences.

The attached letter is 8 pages single spaced with widened margins. I understand that most will not read all of it. There is a table of contents to help you find areas of the school you want to know more about. I’ve highlighted in yellow the sections of the letter that are most pertinent to decision making and encourage you to read those.

I intend to have a series of videos that would explain different sections of the letter. Math in paragraph form is difficult.

The goal of this communication is to invite our supporters and those who care about the school to see behind the curtains; to give you the things you need to know if you’re going to make a good decision. Also, I am happy to talk with you and answer questions. I’m actually hoping to learn from the vast array of experience that exists in our Association. I do not have the answer. I am sharing what the problems are. In short: Education is expensive and we are not able to charge enough and fundraise enough to cover the expenses. If we think Christian education is important to have in our community, then we who believe that need to come up with a way to cover the remaining expenses.

Thank-you for taking the time to read. We do have a God who is able to do far more than we can think or ask (Ephesians 3:20). Please do not insult the Almighty with a little prayer for our school.

Pray big!



Benjamin Williamson

GCS Administrator



# Thanksgiving Page

- ♦ A donation of \$30,000 was given to the school for the purchase of 3 new furnaces.
- ♦ Efforts made by students, staff and guests working together to set up and tear down for the Christmas concert were a huge blessing!
- ♦ GCS received \$1,234 in grant money from the 2024 Nonpublic School Reimbursement Section 152b state grant.
- ♦ GCS has been awarded the Filter First grant for \$10, 298 that will help us meet new state water filtering and testing requirements.
- ♦ The Chapel sent a work group that painted the elementary hallway.
- ♦ Patriots-In-Action raised \$10,871 for our school
- ♦ In October, we were able to hire a PE teacher with Watervliet through the Shared Time\* program.
- ♦ \$4,000 (half of the amount needed) was donated toward replacement gym doors. The \$4,000 given was intended to inspire a matching gift. Would you consider helping us get this significant need met?
- ♦ Title money was obtained to enable our teachers to benefit from professional development training last week at the Michigan Association of Christian Schools (MACS) Conference.
- ♦ An anonymous donor covered the fee for GCS student athletes to participate in Twin City Sharks football.
- ♦ In August, we were able to contract two teachers with Watervliet through the Shared Time\* program.
- ♦ Heart of Cook Grant \$5,000 for the purchase of a new commercial refrigerator.
- ♦ Anonymous donor gave \$2,000 toward student sponsorship.
- ♦ Mr. Clean's Cleaning and Restoration cleaned our carpets to prepare for the school year.
- ♦ Thank you to those who have brought in school supplies, paper, pencils, facial tissue and cleaning supplies for classrooms.
- ♦ School furniture was donated by a St. Joseph business man.
- ♦ The thrift store hit their first anniversary on August 12th and in this first year contributed about \$53,000 to the school scholarship fund.
- ♦ We received a \$15,000 gift to put toward student scholarships last year. This year we have many other sponsors who have picked families to support. Sponsorship for the 2024-25 school year is complete.
- ♦ Roy's Computer Repair and the Nuismer family for their generosity in helping to update our network infrastructure.
- ♦ Many hands came together to help get the building and grounds ready for students.



\* Watervliet is covering the salaries of these teachers through an elective program with the State.

Basketball season is in full swing at GCS! For details, be sure to check out our [Athletic Calendar](#) on the GCS website regularly as changes occur often.



### SIGN UP



Basketball season has begun and as with all home games, we will need volunteers to take money at the gate, run the concession stand, write down stats for the official scoring book and run the score clock. Sign up at <https://signup.com/go/KwKcOyD> today! Want to volunteer but need some training? Mr. Bradshaw is happy to help! Just send an email to him at [bbradshaw@gcspatriots.com](mailto:bbradshaw@gcspatriots.com).

### CONCESSIONS AT HOME GAMES



Hot food is available at GCS home games! Come hungry and support our high school classes as they prepare and serve hot foods from the kitchen service window. Items include hot dogs, popcorn, nachos and cookies!



### SPRING SPORTS

#### Middle School:

- ⇒ Wrestling: January & February. Students will need wrestling shoes and headgear. Contact Josh Gabrielse with questions: [Joshua.k.gabrielse@gmail.com](mailto:Joshua.k.gabrielse@gmail.com)
- ⇒ Track: April & May. GCS is setting up a co-op with Watervliet

#### High School:

- ⇒ Girls Soccer Co-op with Our Lady of the Lake: Students will need soccer cleats and shin guards.
- ⇒ Boys Baseball Co-op with Howardsville Christian



# MUSIC



### ACSI MUSIC FESTIVAL

The GCS 7th - 11th grade band members are planning to attend the ACSI music festival on March 7-8th.

Deposits are due as follows:

**January 10** - \$60 per student

**February 3** - \$60 per student

**February 28** - \$50 per student

### ELEMENTARY SPRING MUSICAL

Mrs. McBride is looking for a set crew and drama coaches for the upcoming elementary spring musical. Whether you have experience with this, or just an interest in helping, please reach out to Mrs. McBride at [rmcbride@gcspatriots.com](mailto:rmcbride@gcspatriots.com) to let her know!





## STAFF CHRISTMAS TREE

Students and parents, you may have noticed the Christmas Tree in the front entrance. Please UNDECORATE it! Take a tag off the tree, purchase the requested gift for the staff member listed, and return the wrapped gift beneath the tree, along with the tag. You are welcome to look for specific staff members, or just pick one at random! The goal is to have all these "wishes" granted before break.



## LIBRARY CHRISTMAS STORE

The Library Christmas Store is now open for students to shop for their family members. Most items cost \$3 each, with a few items priced at \$1. Students will be able to come in to shop during their library time and anytime that the "OPEN" sign near the library door is visible.

For younger students, please send money in an envelope with a note for whom they are buying. This will allow teachers to see who has shopping to do and allows Mrs. Corwin to help them shop for their specific people. If you have any questions or donations, please feel free to email [bcorwin@gcspatriots.com](mailto:bcorwin@gcspatriots.com).

OPEN



### NEED A GIFT IDEA?

We have 5' x 6' super soft GCS blankets for only \$30/ea.  
Get yours today!



## GCS THEME T-SHIRTS



This week, GCS received the long awaited order of theme t-shirts for staff and students. If your child has not yet brought one home, they will soon! There will be times students are asked to wear this shirt for special occasions, so please do your best to keep them nice for the remainder of the year. We pray that this message will be a source of hope to you and all who read these words!

## IMPORTANT SAFETY REMINDER

GCS takes school security and safety very seriously. We have recently seen instances where one of our guests has, out of politeness, opened the front exterior door for another guest. We ask for that not to happen. In fact, part of our door policy says,

### "Visitors/Guests"

Visitors will not open any exterior door that would allow entry of another visitor."



It is vital for school safety that the appropriate staff identify and allow visitors to enter our buildings. Rather than opening a door for someone, please ask them to push the button beside the front entrance so that our protocols can be properly followed. We appreciate your attention to this matter. Thank you!

## FALL MIDDLE SCHOOL HOUSE WINNERS



### Standout Student

*(earned the most House points)*

**September: ZARA ROSE**

**October: DYLAN PHILLIPS**

### Teacher on Fire

*(for awarding the most House points)*

**September: MISS ERICKSON**

**October: MRS. MCBRIDE**



SEPTEMBER



## STUDENTS OF THE MONTH

SEPTEMBER & OCTOBER

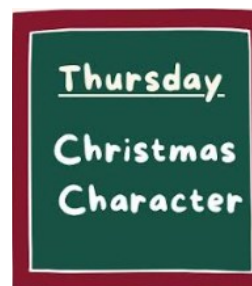
**ANNA WILLIAMSON**  
**MASON GREEN**



OCTOBER

## CHRISTMAS DRESS UP DAY

Since there was a snow day on Thursday, students and staff are invited to make up the lost dress up day on Monday. Dress up as a Christmas Character to earn more Christmas Spirit Week points for your team!



## AMAZON WISH LISTS

If you are looking for ways to bless our staff, check out the links below:

[Mrs. Colford, Principal](#)

[Miss Erickson, Middle School](#)

[Mrs. Corwin, Preschool](#)

[Mrs. Tavernier, 2nd](#)

[Miss Newell, Kindergarten](#)

[Mrs. McBride, Music](#)

[Mrs. Wilkerson, 3rd](#)

[Mrs. Grey, 4th](#)



# MIDTERM EXAM SCHEDULE

(6TH- 11TH GRADES)

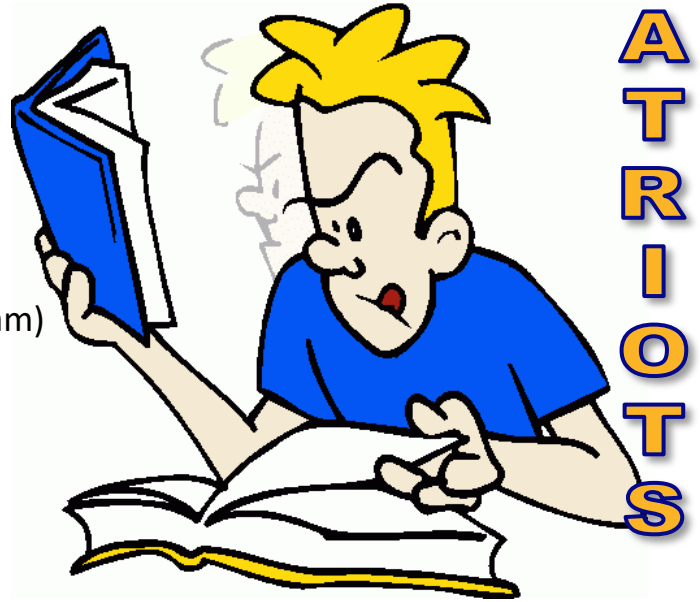
GO PATRIOTS

**Tuesday, December 17, 2024**

Constructed Response Portion of Midterms – math classes

**Wednesday, December 18, 2024**

8:00-9:10 1<sup>st</sup> hour exam  
 9:10-9:25 Break  
 9:25-10:35 2<sup>nd</sup> hour exam  
 10:35-10:50 Break  
 10:50-12:00 3<sup>rd</sup> hour exam (Science 6 Exam)  
 12:00 Dismissal\*



**Thursday, December 19, 2024**

8:00-9:10 4<sup>th</sup> hour exam  
 9:10-9:25 Break  
 9:25-10:35 5<sup>th</sup> hour exam  
 10:35-10:50 Break  
 10:50-12:00 STUCO led Reindeer Games in Gym  
 12:00 Dismissal\*

**YOU CAN DO IT!**  
**STUDY!**

\*Please be prepared to pick up your secondary students promptly at noon

## THE THRIFT STORE NEEDS YOU!

Thank you to those that have been working at the thrift store! Your hours of service are invaluable to the store, as well as our school. Some of our scholarship families have fallen behind on hours. Please contact the store to schedule your service hours at this time. The store also needs more volunteers. You do not have to be in the scholarship program to help. We are thankful for those who help in this way.

### Reclaimed By Grace

Tuesday - Saturday, 10-5  
 7053 Red Arrow Hwy. in Coloma

Sunday - Monday, Closed  
[RCBGrace@gmail.com](mailto:RCBGrace@gmail.com)

(269)285-3888

JANUARY 2025 GCS MENU				
MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
30	31	1	2	3
		NO SCHOOL, CHRISTMAS BREAK	NO SCHOOL, CHRISTMAS BREAK	NO SCHOOL, CHRISTMAS BREAK
6	7	8	9	10
NO SCHOOL, CHRISTMAS BREAK	Brief Tacos, Salad Bar (secondary and 1 <sup>st</sup> grade)	Chicken & Dumplings, Salad Bar (secondary and 1 <sup>st</sup> grade)	Lentil Baked Potatoes, Salad Bar (secondary and 1 <sup>st</sup> grade)	Pasta & Eggs, Salad Bar (secondary and 1 <sup>st</sup> grade)
13	14	15	16	17

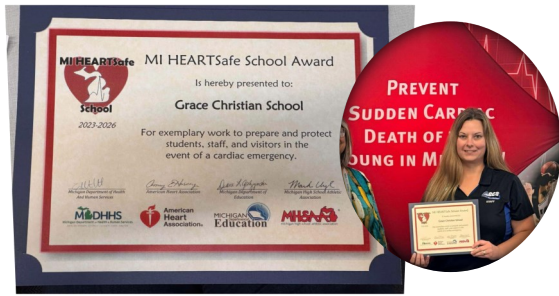
## JANUARY MENU

The January menu is now available on our [website](https://www.rcbgcspatriots.com). Please email one completed menu for each child to [info@rcbgcspatriots.com](mailto:info@rcbgcspatriots.com) at your earliest convenience.

**MENUS ARE DUE DECEMBER 17.**

# MDHHS AWARDS 312 SCHOOLS MI HEARTSAFE DESIGNATION

November 07, 2024



LANSING, Mich. – For more than a decade, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS), Michigan Department of Education (MDE), American Heart Association, Michigan High School Athletic Association (MHSAA) and Michigan Alliance for Prevention of Sudden Cardiac Death of the Young (MAP-SCDY) have awarded the MI HEARTSafe designation to schools that have taken the appropriate steps to prepare for cardiac emergencies.

Since the program began in 2013, 994 schools have earned this honor. This year, a record-breaking 312 schools are being recognized for their work during the 2023-2024 school year, with 158 schools receiving the award for the first time. These are the most designations in the program’s history. A total of 761 schools are actively designated as MI HEARTSafe.

“Being prepared to respond to a cardiac emergency can help decrease incidences of sudden cardiac death among Michigan youth,” said Elizabeth Hertel, MDHHS director. “As new laws seek to enhance the ability of Michigan schools to respond to cardiac emergencies, the safety and health of our students continues to be a priority across the state.”

House Bills [5527](#) and [5528](#), which were passed and signed into law this year, establish comprehensive safety requirements for schools that include cardiac emergency response plans.

To receive a MI HEARTSafe School designation, schools must have:

- A written cardiac emergency response plan and team that can respond to an emergency during school hours and after-school activities and sports
- Current CPR/AED certification of at least 10% of staff and 50% of coaches, including 100% of head coaches and physical education staff.
- Accessible, properly maintained and inspected AEDs with signs identifying locations.
- Annual cardiac emergency response drills.
- Pre-participation sports screening of all student athletes using the current physical and history form endorsed by MHSAA.

“Improving the health, safety, and wellness of all learners is one of the goals in [Michigan’s Top 10 Strategic Education Plan](#),” said State Superintendent Dr. Michael F. Rice. “We are proud to support Michigan’s HEARTSafe schools. Children are safer as a result of a record number of Michigan schools preparing for a cardiac emergency.”

Achieving and maintaining the HEARTSafe designation continues to be vital for maintaining a safe environment for Michigan schools. A list of [participating schools is available online](#).

For more information about the MI HEARTSafe Schools program, visit [Migrc.org/miheartsafe](https://migrc.org/miheartsafe) or email [mdhhs-mi-heartsafe@michigan.gov](mailto:mdhhs-mi-heartsafe@michigan.gov).



# Holiday Bake Sale!!!

**Wed & Thur December 18<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup>**

**Noon - 3:30pm**

**Purchase in the commons**



- cookies 2/\$1
- bread \$5/loaf
- brownies \$5
- pies \$15

*All proceeds go to fund new GCS kitchen oven.*

## 2024-25 Business & Industry Partners

If you are interested in partnering with Grace Christian School's Business & Industry Program, please contact [info@gcspatriots.com](mailto:info@gcspatriots.com) for details.



Signs  
&  
Custom  
Graphics



**COLOSSIANS 2:3**  
*"In Christ are hidden all the treasures of  
wisdom and knowledge."*

November 15, 2024

Dear Friends of Grace Christian School,

Scripture teaches, "Those who are rich in this present world are instructed to do good, to be rich in good works, and to be generous and ready to share." Those who do so will store up for themselves treasure for the future (1 Timothy 6:17-19).

What does it mean to be rich? Even the poorest among us who have found Christ have been blessed with every spiritual blessing and have a home where the streets are paved with gold. Despite any present trials, our heavenly citizenship reminds us that the things of Earth are temporary and transitory. The eternal perspective makes the stewardship model much more palatable.

As stewards we want to manage the resources of God well. Is Grace Christian a worthy ministry for these resources? For over 50 years GCS has been and will remain committed to Christian Education. From preschool through high school, our staff actively teach a biblical worldview through daily Bible lessons which are reinforced in every subject area across our curriculum.

That being said, Grace Christian has always struggled with the tensions of paying our teachers an adequate wage and setting affordable tuition levels. Each year we reach out to those who can help alleviate that tension.

As you consider sharing what God has blessed you with, would you consider investing in the lives of our local young people at Grace Christian School?

Here are specific areas of need:

- Fixing the broken tile around the gym floor: \$3,500
- Replacing our second set of exterior gym doors: \$5,000
- Student Sponsorship for the 2025-26 school year: \$75,000
- Reducing debt of prepaid tuition used: \$125,000

In the last couple years, God has directed us to local resources, such as shared-time programs and Title II & IV funds. These are perennial benefits that have helped us work toward a balanced budget. Since opening August of 2023, our thrift store, *Reclaimed by Grace*, has contributed \$64,000 to our school through the Thrift Store Scholarship. We know that God continues to walk with us and we see Him work through His people to provide for our needs just as He has these past 50 years.

Thank you for considering a financial gift to Grace Christian School. Your support makes a difference.

In Christ,

Benjamin Williamson  
Administrator, Grace Christian School  
Pastor, Hartford Bible Church

This is the 2024 Year End  
Giving letter that was mailed  
out on November 15th.

## SAVE THE DATE

Mark your calendars and circle it in red! The GCS Annual Benefit Auction is scheduled for Saturday, March 22<sup>nd</sup> this year.

This will be an afternoon filled with fun, including a silent auction, live auction, delicious food and fun in a family-friendly environment.

Tell your friends and families! Get the word out to the community!

As we get closer to the date, you will be able to see all the items available at the auction using [this link!](#) You can also use the QR code on the poster or text G1347 to receive a link to sign up on your mobile device!

Many volunteers are needed to make this a successful fundraising event, so please contact Rebecca Dill today to find out how you can "Spring into Auction" with us!

[rdill@gcspatriots.com](mailto:rdill@gcspatriots.com)

More information will be coming soon, so be on the lookout for updates!



# ANNUAL BENEFIT AUCTION

## Saturday, March 22, 2025

### DOORS OPEN 2:30 P.M.

**SILENT AUCTION  
BEGINS  
4:00 P.M.**

**LIVE AUCTION  
BEGINS  
5:30 P.M.**

**REGISTER TODAY!**  
[www.silentauctionpro.com](http://www.silentauctionpro.com)



**SPRING  
into  
AUCTION**

TEXT G1347 TO 8889909876 TO RECEIVE A LINK TO SIGN UP ON YOUR MOBILE DEVICE.

**BBQ pulled pork, chips, a pickle, a cookie and a drink available for purchase at just \$8.50!**

Grace Christian School  
325 N. M-140  
Watervliet, MI 49098

## GYM DOOR REPLACEMENT NEED

We are so grateful for the gift of \$4,000 (half of the amount needed) that was recently donated toward replacing the gym doors. One set of doors was replaced early this week (left). Would you consider matching this gift to replace the second set of doors (right image)?





# GRACE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

## 2024-2025 School Year\*

### AUGUST

- 12 Secondary Info Night, 6:00 pm
- 22 Back to School Night, 5:30-7:30 pm
- 26 **First Day of School**  
Quarter 1 Begins
- 30 **NO SCHOOL - Labor Day Wknd.**

### SEPTEMBER

- 2 **NO SCHOOL - Labor Day Wknd.**
- 4-6 SEW Retreat (Grades 9-12)
- 20 Picture Day

### OCTOBER

- 2 **HALF DAY**
- 3-4 **NO SCHOOL - Teacher Conference**
- 9 NMSQT Testing (Grades 10-11)
- 16 **Patriots-In-Action Day**
- 18 **Grandparents Day, Half Day,**  
**No Aftercare**  
End of Quarter 1
- 21 **NO SCHOOL - Teacher Record Day**
- 22 Quarter 2 Begins

### NOVEMBER

- 5 **NO SCHOOL -Parent/Teacher**  
**Conferences, 12:00 - 7:00pm**
- 14 Picture Retakes
- 16 Apple Pie Making Day
- 27-29 **NO SCHOOL - Thanksgiving Break**

### DECEMBER

- 6 Christmas Concert, 7:00 pm
- 18-19 **Exams/HALF DAY (Grades 6-12)**
- 19 End of Quarter 2
- 20-1/5 **NO SCHOOL - Christmas Break**

### JANUARY

- 6 **NO SCHOOL - Teacher Record Day**
- 7 Quarter 3 Begins
- 20 **NO SCHOOL- MLK Jr. Day**

### FEBRUARY

- 14-17 **NO SCHOOL - Mid-Winter Break**
- 18 **NO SCHOOL Teacher In-Service**
- 21 Homecoming/Alumni Game

### MARCH

- 7 Kindergarten Program/Round Up
- 7-8 ACSI Music Festival  
History Fair
- 8 Open House, 10:00 am - 1:00 pm
- 13 End of Quarter 3
- 14 **NO SCHOOL - Teacher In-Service**
- 17 Quarter 4 Begins
- 22 Annual Benefit Auction
- 31-4/4 **NO SCHOOL - Spring Break**

### APRIL

- 7 M-Step Testing Begins
- 15 GCEA Meeting, 6:30pm
- 18 **NO SCHOOL- Good Friday**
- 21 **NO SCHOOL - Easter Monday**
- 24 Spring Concert, 7:00 pm
- 25 Jr/Sr Banquet

### MAY

- 2 Elementary Musical
- 8 Secondary Awards Night
- 15 Elementary Field Day
- 23-26 **NO SCHOOL, Memorial Day**
- 28-29 **Final Exams/HALF DAY**  
**(6th-12th only)**
- 30 Moving Up Ceremony  
(TK-5th), **HALF DAY,**  
**NO AFTERCARE**  
End of Quarter 4  
Cruise-In, 5:00-8:00 pm
- 31 Golf Outing, tee-off 8:30 am

<b>EARLY CARE</b>	7:00 - 7:30 am
<b>PLEDGES/PRAYER</b>	7:50 am
<b>SCHOOL DAY</b>	8:00 - 3:00 pm
<b>AFTER CARE</b>	3:15 - 5:30 pm
<b>HALF DAYS</b>	Dismissal: 12:00 pm

**OFFICE HOURS** 7:30-3:30 pm



\*This calendar is subject to change. Please visit [GCSPatriots.org](http://GCSPatriots.org) for current calendar.

## BUSINESS BOOSTERS

When you buy from or use the services of one of these businesses, they give a portion of your purchase as a gift to GCS (but only if the receipt is turned into the GCS office).

### *Featured Boosters of the Month:*



#### **Colbert/Ball Tax Service (10%)**

Jerry & Tashama Brown  
Orchards Mall  
1800 Pipestone Rd., Benton Harbor  
269.927.8888 or 269.927.8886



#### **Wil-O-Paw Animal Hospital (10%)**

Veterinary services and products.  
Drs. Alan and Christy Stockdale  
4809 Paw Paw Lake Road, Coloma  
269.468.7297



#### **Parable Christian Bookstore (10%)**

Bibles, Christian books, music, gifts and church supplies  
2913 Niles Avenue, St. Joseph  
269.983.7889

**THE NEXT GCEA BOARD MEETING WILL TAKE PLACE ON  
MONDAY, DECEMBER 16 AT 6:30 PM.**

### **2024-25 GCEA SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS:**

Mrs. Whitney Tinker, *President*  
Mr. Joel Layman, *Vice President*  
Mr. Trevor Meachum, *Treasurer*  
Mrs. Holly Crouch, *Secretary*  
Mrs. Shirl Bontrager

Mr. Marshall Downs  
Mrs. Laraine Fox  
Mr. Nathan Hutchins  
Mrs. Ruth Malaka