



# OEF News

Fall 2014

A publication of the Okemos Education Foundation [www.oefsite.org](http://www.oefsite.org)

## APPLE Awards Bring Smiles to Okemos Staff Families have a new way to say "thank you!"

The Okemos Education Foundation launched the OEF APPLE Award program last spring, giving families a new way to say "thank you!" to staff while also supporting the Foundation. An OEF APPLE Award recognizes an *Amazing Performance in Promoting Learning and Excellence* in Okemos Public Schools. For a \$20 donation to the OEF, families can send a personalized color certificate which lists the specific reason they wish to honor the teacher or staff member. "I love this idea! As a parapro, I would love to receive one of these as recognition. As a parent, I think this is a great way to support the OEF and support teachers and staff for all of their hard work," said Kris Lee, Okemos parent and district employee. Lots of parents agreed with Lee. Since May, 86 awards have been sent to teachers and staff members in all seven schools in the Okemos School District, delivering many smiles to staff.



*Cornell P.E. teacher Joy Chase is honored by Alex Z.*

Some of the many reasons families noted on their awards include "for being an amazing teacher and caring for her students even beyond their academic endeavors," "for making me a better person," "for being an outstanding and inspiring teacher," and "for being the best teacher I ever had."

In thanking a student who gave him an APPLE award, Chippewa teacher Brian Guggemos wrote, "The kind words you said really meant a lot to me. I'm certain that this is the coolest present I've ever received from a student!"

Not only does this award program add revenue to the OEF's general fund to use for future classroom grants, it also gives a much-deserved show of appreciation to Okemos faculty and staff. **APPLE awards are available year-round. To order, visit our website at [oefsite.org](http://oefsite.org).**



*Hiawatha 1st grade teacher Stacy Cook is thanked by Xianyong W.*



*Cornell 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teacher Ashley Andersen is honored by Sam G., Rayna K., and Kaylee H.*

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## Okemos Education Foundation

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*Ex-Officio*

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\*\*\* Board of Education Representative

We would like to extend our appreciation to **Christena Simila** who has stepped down from the OEF Board and wish her well as she continues the outstanding work she does in her 4th grade classroom at Cornell.

We'd also like to thank **Dean Bolton** for the 6 years he led the OEF as its chair. Dean's knowledge, involvement, and passion for excellence in Okemos schools made him a transformative leader. We are grateful he has agreed to continue serving as an OEF trustee.

**Ways You Can Support OEF****Make a financial contribution.**

We exist because of support from people like you! Use the enclosed envelope or make an on-line donation at oefsite.org. Thank you!!!

**Attend the Awards Banquet** on Nov. 20 (tickets on sale at every school office)

**Purchase an APPLE award** to honor a staff member (oefsite.org)

**Volunteer your time** -- publicity, web design, and marketing help needed (contact Martha Hentz, chair@oefsite.org)

Thank you for supporting the OEF!

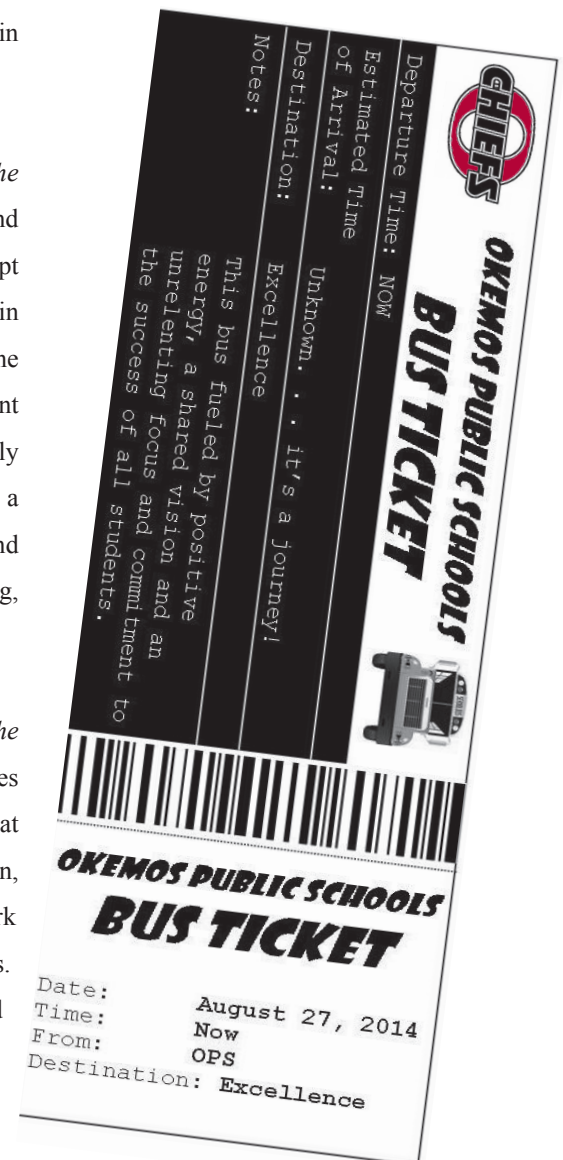
**Message from Our Superintendent**

As the superintendent of a high achieving school district, I am often asked, "What sets Okemos Public Schools apart? What would you say is the reason for your exceptional achievement?" As I reflected on all the possible reasons for our success, I came to the conclusion that it's our culture! It seems we are all on the same bus, including staff, parents/guardians, students and community...together! We are all committed to "educating with excellence" and accept responsibility for our role in pursuing our mission.

In their book, *Shaping School Culture: The Heart of Leadership*, Terrence E. Deal and Kent D. Peterson (1999) support the concept that culture is a critical component in successful organizations. They state, "The culture of an enterprise plays the dominant role in exemplary performance. Highly respected organizations have evolved a shared system of informal folkways and traditions that infuse work with meaning, passion and purpose" (pg. 1).

In a bit less of an academic discussion, *The Energy Bus*, Jon Gordon (2007), utilizes the analogy of a bus to emphasize that positive people, positive communication, positive interactions and positive work and team cultures produce positive results. Obviously, I thought a "school" bus would be most appropriate for us!

*"As I reflected on all the possible reasons for our success, I came to the conclusion that it's our culture!"*



## It's Our Culture!

### The Rules of the Energy Bus:



*Dr. Catherine J. Ash,  
Superintendent of  
Schools*

**1. We are the drivers of our bus!** While we work together to promote the success of all students, each of us takes responsibility for our role in educating with excellence. We take responsibility for our continuous improvement so we can reach our destination.

**2. Desire, vision and focus move our bus in the right direction!** Embedded in our culture is a clear, shared mission focused on student learning and supported by high expectations for all students and for ourselves. Our shared commitment, vision and focus move our bus in the right direction along our journey and closer to our destination of excellence.

**3. Our bus is fueled with positive energy!** For most of us, we recognize that we may not always be able to control events, but we can certainly control how we perceive and respond to them. We see challenges as opportunities to reflect, to learn and to create future successes. Those on our bus assume good intentions, possessing high levels of trust, faith, enthusiasm, purpose and joy as we inspire and support others to perform at their best. We remain true to our core set of beliefs and values, not allowing others to dictate our path or hijack our bus!

**4. We invite others on our bus who share our vision for the road ahead!** We are a collaborative group that recognizes and values the essential components of our high achieving district. Promoting and sustaining a culture of collaboration and excellence, truly benefits our students, our families and our employees. We encourage others who share our vision and focus to join us on the journey.

**5. We cannot waste our energy on those who don't want to get on the bus!** We accept that we can't control the perceptions of others or the direction of their bus. Therefore, we continue to give our energy to those who are on our bus! Our energy will go to those who have positive beliefs and assumptions about the potential of students and staff.

**6. No energy vampires are allowed on our bus!** Being reflective for the purpose of problem solving and improvement is an essential component of our success. However, negativity drains the energy out of an organization, detracting from our vision and our focus and resulting in decreased motivation and commitment of other passengers. Our positive energy and vision continues to be greater than anyone's and everyone's negativity.

**7. Our enthusiasm attracts more passengers and energizes them during the ride!** We are enthusiastic and passionate about the Okemos Public Schools, our rich sense of history, our tradition of excellence, our shared purpose, our collaborative relationships and our partnerships with home. Our enthusiasm and commitment to excellence attracts both families and staff to be part of our school community.

**8. We love and care about our passengers!** We establish genuinely caring and respectful relationships with each other. We make every effort to bring out the best in our students and in each other, discovering and utilizing strengths and recognizing everyone's value.

**9. We drive with purpose!** We have a strong, shared purpose for our journey: "Together, educating with excellence and inspiring learners for life." Our focus

and purpose is to serve all of our children well, recognizing their individuality and promoting their success!

**10. We are enjoying the ride!** We will continue to celebrate our successes, each other, and the culture we have sustained throughout the Okemos Public Schools. We remain committed to continuous improvement, recognizing that we have not arrived at our destination, but we are certainly enjoying the journey.

Deal and Peterson (1999) validate the link of a strong, positive culture to "educating with excellence". In fact, Deal and Peterson confirm that organizations with strong cultures that implement evidence based practices will outperform their counterparts. In other words, high performing schools have a positive, focused culture.

That's us! So, it's our culture that sets us apart from other schools. We have created and maintained a positive, collaborative culture with high expectations of ourselves and of others, with a shared vision and unrelenting focus and commitment to the success of all students. We are on the same bus and I am so grateful to be on this bus with you! As you know, our destination is excellence with an "unknown" estimated time of arrival, after all it is a journey! Our departure time is now, so let's continue to enjoy the ride!

#### *References*

*Deal, T.E. and Peterson, K.D. Shaping School Culture: The Heart of Leadership. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997.*

*Gordon, Jon. The Energy Bus. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. 2007.*



*Bennett Woods teacher Ivy Schmidt is honored by Aswath K.*



*Jenna G. honors Cornell Art Teacher Heather McNeilly*



*Logan L. thanks Kinawa's Justin Turner*



## 2013-2014 APPLE Award Recipients

The following Okemos staff members received APPLE awards last year... several were given more than one!

Ashley Andersen	Sheri Gunns	Amanda McCristal
Lee Ballor	Lisa Hall	Heather McNeilly
Jim Banas	Allison Hamlin	Julie Mittan
Christine Batora	Sally Heisler	Susan Mlaker
Julie Bellinger	Jennifer Hendrix	Alana Pignataro
Susie Black	Paul Hinze	Vicki Pursley
Deb Borton-McDonough	Jennifer Holcomb	Cathy Richter
Karen Canestraight	Lisa Holcomb	Laura Ross
Joy Chase	Sheryl Hudler	Gloria Rozeboom
Bob Clark	Lauri Johnson	Ivy Schmidt
Laura Cook	Lorri King	Mary Schnepf
Stacy Cook	Donna Kregelka	Andy Sheufelt
Kevin Culling	Missy LaMarre	Susan Soper
Minda Derby	Sally Langley	Cathy Staudt
Jennifer Eddy	Kathy Lanzetta	Kristen Terreri
Cindy Erickson	Mary Ann Latta	Justin Turner
Kathleen Eyia	Jean Lee	Jessica Warren
Trish Finnerty	Phil Magsig	Theresa Weber
Molly Francis	Jocelyn Mankowski	Amanda Wenzel
Carolina Giraldo	Niki Mann	Jenny Woodruff
Brian Guggemos	Breanne Mason	Linda Yaske

## 2013-2014 APPLE Award Donors

Thank you to the following donors who purchased APPLE awards to honor an Okemos staff member:

Sadie Adams	Chris & Joy Magyar
The Aichele Family	Madhurima Makherjee
David Annis & Andrea Bozoki	Abby & Chris Maluchnik
Jana Barham	Tamara Marques
Nancy & Mark Bennett	Matteo & Gianna Mazzola
Steven & Wendy Bloembergen	Ava Nowlin
Dean Bolton & Helen Taylor	Yuktha Padamati
The Buck/Hentz Family	The Pincheira Family
Dianna L. Cavalier	Madhvi Richards
The DeGross Family	Mitchell Robinson & Catherine Fox
The Deppong Family	Poomathi Sadhishkumar
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Basak Elmas	Byron & Laura Thompson
The Geyer Family	Tina Timm & Adrian Blow
The Gould Family	The VanderKlok Family
The Gutting Family	Xianyong Wang
Carter Haremski Family	The Wendt Family
The Hirschert-Walton family	Mary Werkman & Clarke Anderson
Michael & Jennifer Holcomb	Pam & Bill Williams
John & Georsine Hyden	Marin Zegarac
Dr. Ann Kronrod	Dongbo Zhang
Hyeonseung & Hyeonsu Lee	Peng Zhang & Hui Liu
Amy Lothamer	Anonymous

## Using Your Donations to Enhance the Education of Okemos Students 2013-2014 Grants and Awards

### OEF Grants and Micro-Grants

- Books for special reading needs - Bennett Woods, Cornell, Hiawatha, OPM at Central, Kinawa
- Geometry Learning Materials - OPM at Central
- Sensory Items to Support Struggling Students - Bennett Woods
- Yoga Materials - Chippewa
- Chippewa Greenhouse Project
- Safety Patrol Walkie-Talkies - Cornell
- Raz-Kids 1st grade on-line reading program - Hiawatha
- SmartMusic Software - OHS and Chippewa
- Big Zoo Lesson Supplies - OPM at Central
- eBooks - OHS
- LINKS Program games - OHS
- Home Wiring Project - OHS
- Music Program Lighting - Hiawatha
- Story Champs Intervention Kit - Bennett Woods/Hiawatha
- Artwork Frames - OHS
- Chieftain Champs Mentoring Program Transportation - Bennett Woods, Cornell, Hiawatha, Kinawa
- ACT Workshops - OHS



Cornell 4th graders Ben T. and Dray C. explore plants (and dirt!) during an MSU Seeds of Science field trip. Every Okemos 4th grader enjoyed this experience last year.

### Lee Gerard Professional Development Fellowships

- Writing with Common Core State Standards - OPM at Central
- Think Through Math Training - Chippewa

### Commitment to Excellence Awards

- Lee Ballor - Chippewa
- Nichole Berridge - Cornell
- Karen Canestraight - OHS

### Clubs and Student Organizations

◆ Safety Patrol (Bennett Woods, OPM at Central, Cornell, Hiawatha) ◆ Student Gov't. (Bennett Woods, OPM at Central, Cornell, Hiawatha, Chippewa, OHS) ◆ Chieftain Champs (Bennett Woods, Cornell, Hiawatha) ◆ Culinary Club (OPM at Central) ◆ Archery Club (Kinawa) ◆ Cross Country Club (Kinawa) ◆ Knowledge Master Open (Kinawa, Chippewa) ◆ Yearbook Advisor (Chippewa) ◆ Art Club (Chippewa) ◆ Homework Club (Chippewa) ◆ At Okemos High School: ◆ ACTION ◆ Class Advisors ◆ Yearbook ◆ Asian Club ◆ Connect ◆ Drama Club ◆ Earth Club ◆ Gay/Straight Alliance ◆ SADD ◆ World Language Club ◆ Quiz Bowl



OHS students Michael R. and Scott M. in Laura Richter's class show off their home wiring project which they made with materials purchased with an OEF grant.

### Connie Osborn Deits Science Enrichment Grants

- MSU Seeds of Science Field Trip - 4th Grade districtwide
- Respirometers - AP Biology, OHS
- Bennett Woods Hands-On Family Science Night
- Kinawa Science Night
- OHS Robotics Club materials
- OHS Science Olympiad materials
- Okemos Summer Playground Program Science Field Trip to Impression 5



### 2014 Visiting Author

Co-Sponsored by Horizon Bank  
Robbyn Smith-vanFrankenhuyzen visited all 4 elementary schools during "March is Reading Month"

### Over \$103,000 in OEF Grants to Okemos Schools in 2013-2014.

We'd like to give the same amount this year...but we need your help. Please donate generously!

Visit [www.oefsite.org](http://www.oefsite.org) for on-line giving or use the enclosed envelope.

Thank you for supporting Okemos students!!

## 2014 OEF Award Recipients

Part of the OEF's mission is to recognize excellence within Okemos Public Schools. Each fall we host a banquet to celebrate those who have made significant contributions to our school community. Award recipients are chosen from nominations made by students, parents, community members, support staff, teachers, and/or administrators. It is always a difficult task for the OEF to select the few individuals who will win that year's awards.

### Congratulations to the following 2014 recipients and nominees!

#### Commitment to Excellence Award

The criteria for this award includes the ability to inspire and motivate students, implement innovative and/or creative ideas, promote the welfare of students, and provide leadership within the school community. Winners receive a \$1,000 grant from the OEF to support their continued contributions

to Okemos Public Schools. The 2014 Commitment to Excellence Award recipients are:

**Melissa Allis**,  
3rd Grade Teacher at Bennett Woods

**Chad DeKatch**,  
Drama Director and Teacher at Okemos High School

**Jocelyn "J" Mankowski**,  
5th Grade Teacher at Kinawa

**Renee Maniaci**,  
Resource Teacher at Okemos High School

**Andy Moore**,  
Chemistry and Science Research Seminar Teacher at Okemos High School

This year's nominees also included Chippewa Language Arts teacher **Kelly Cesar** and Hiawatha Basic Classroom teacher **Briana Fankhauser**.

#### Special Recognition Award

This award is presented to support staff who demonstrate a passion for excellence and whose work elevates

Okemos Public Schools. Our 2014 Special Recognition Award recipients are **Derm Clarkin**, Student Supervisor and Athletic Event Supervisor at Okemos High School and **Brian Ugorowski**, Technical Director at Okemos High School. Also nominated for the award was **Debbie Doss** who runs the OPS Print Shop.

#### Volunteer Service Award

Okemos parent **Elizabeth Clifford** who has chaired numerous events and who coordinates the Summer Playground Program receives this year's Volunteer Service Award. Her tireless dedication to our schools truly exemplifies the definition of this award.

Award recipients will be honored during the annual OEF Awards Banquet on Thursday, November 20, at the Country Club of Lansing. Tickets are available through November 12 at each Okemos school office. Tickets are \$35 for adults and \$15 for children.

## Meet the School Board Candidates

The November 4th election will give voters an opportunity to fill three seats on the Okemos School Board, each with a 4-year term expiring December 31, 2018.

Each candidate submitted the following biographies. **Statements from each of the candidates can be found at [www.okemosschools.net/election](http://www.okemosschools.net/election).**

### Dean Bolton

moved to Michigan in 1999 and chose to live in Okemos solely

based on the outstanding reputation of its public schools. He has volunteered in Okemos schools for 14 years, and for the last six, Dean led the Okemos Education



Foundation as its chair. Some of his other volunteer positions have included Central Elementary PTO Vice President, Chippewa Parent Group President, and Okemos Parent Council Representative. Dean served on the Okemos Citizens Millage Committee for the last 4 campaigns and co-chaired the 2011 Building/Site Sinking Fund and 2013 Technology/Security/Transportation campaigns.

Before being a stay-at-home dad, the best job he has ever had, Dean, a native of Houston, Texas, graduated from Northwestern University. With a degree in the arts, he worked for 12 years in Chicago as a theatre stage manager and lighting technician. Dean owned a Wild Birds Unlimited franchise in suburban Chicago for 7 years, and for the past year and a half, Dean has worked for Okemos Food and Nutrition Services at Okemos High School.

Dean has two sons. Lowell (OHS '13) attends Whitman College in Washington State and Miles is a sophomore at OHS. Dean's wife, Helen Taylor is The Nature Conservancy's Michigan State Director. For more information visit [www.boltonforokemosschools.com](http://www.boltonforokemosschools.com)

### Amy Crites

Ever since her oldest child started Kindergarten in 1996, Amy has been involved with Okemos schools. First, a parent helper in the classroom, then becoming a member of the Central Elementary PTO. After several years as treasurer, she



## Meet the School Board Candidates *continued...*

moved into the role as President where she enjoyed working with parents, staff and students in building programs and activities for the Central School community. Later she became the Chippewa School Parent Council representative, gaining her first glimpse at the school district as a K-12 community. She appreciated that the superintendent made it a priority to share information about his projects and priorities with the parent group as well listen to what was happening within each of the schools from a parent's perspective and be sincerely interested in the feedback that was shared. She also served as co-chair to the Deputy Superintendent's Configuration Committee in 2004 and parent representative on the Superintendent Search team in both 2004 and 2007.

In 2006, Amy won her first election to become an Okemos School Board trustee. She has served as Parliamentarian, Treasurer, Vice-President, and for the past four years, has been elected by her fellow board members to serve as President. Since becoming a Board member, Amy has taken advantage of the Michigan Association of School Boards continuing education offerings, earning the Certified Board Member status and was recently recognized by the MASB as a Distinguished Board Member. Although her children have all graduated from Okemos High School, she still enjoys attending and volunteering at sporting events, attending concerts and other Fine Arts performances, and keeping apprised of goings on throughout the schools and community.

Amy and her husband, Dan, an Okemos native and OHS graduate, have lived in Okemos for over 25 years. They have 3 children who are all graduates of Okemos High School. She is self-employed, running 2 direct sales companies, loves to play tennis and golf, and is a winter sport enthusiast.

### **Vincent Lyon-Callo**

was elected to the school board in 2011. He currently serves as the treasurer of the board. He and his wife, Sarah, have two children. Their son is in 8th grade at Chippewa and their daughter is in 5th grade at Kinawa. They have lived in Okemos since 2002. Vin is a professor of anthropology at Western Michigan University where his teaching and research focus on contemporary social movements, critical social theory, and community responses to homelessness, poverty, racial disparities, and related social inequalities. He has coached both boys and girls rec soccer in Okemos and is a frequent volunteer at school trips and events.



### **Samer Naser**

has lived in the Okemos School District since 1998. He is married to Nanette Naser and they have four children. One is working after graduating from MSU, one is a senior at St. Mary's College after graduating from Okemos High School, and the other two are still attending the Okemos Schools.

Samer received his B.Sc. in Engineering from Washington University in St. Louis, and his M.Sc. and Ph.D. in Engineering from the University of Toledo. Samer has authored several case studies used in Engineering education as well as lead students in the development of educational software at the University of Michigan. He has served as an Adjunct Faculty in Computer Science at both Baker College, and Davenport University. Samer



has consulted in the systems and software area for many years for companies such as Jackson National as well as for the State of Michigan and the Veterans Administration. He is currently working in the Healthcare Information Technology arena.

Both Samer and Nanette are active in the community with Nanette volunteering at Bennett Woods Elementary, girl scouts, and Junior League; and Samer having served several years as a member and a president of the board of the Keystone neighborhood association. Samer also coaches Soccer, both boys and girls, in Meridian Township.

### **Robert (Bob) Tucker**

is a 26 year resident of Okemos happily wedded to Linda for 46 years, the father of two boys, a daughter and having been blessed with five grandchildren.



Bob is a graduate of Pacific Lutheran University located in Tacoma Washington. He was honorably discharged from the military. His service was a field medic attached to the 82nd Airborne and then the 1st Infantry Divisions while in Vietnam. On leaving the service he began his insurance career holding various titles retiring in 2012 after 24 years with Jackson National Life Insurance as Vice President, Regional Information Technology and National Business Continuity Management. During his time with Jackson he spent 24 months in Japan and Korea as part of teams transitioning acquired businesses.

Bob has been involved in children life's throughout his life by coaching baseball, basketball, and soccer while in Washington. This involvement continues by being a current board member and former Chairman, Big Brothers Big Sisters Lansing Capital Region.

# OEF News

**Okemos Education Foundation**  
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## POSTAL CUSTOMER



*Robin Hartnett and son Michael enjoy the MSU v Nebraska game with tickets won after pledging the top donation to the OEF on our Facebook page. Thank you to Okemos parent Barbara Robinson-Dunn for donating the tickets to the OEF. This was a fun and creative way to support the OEF – thank you Barbara and Robin! Follow the OEF on Facebook for more news and photos.*

**Be our Partner in Education!**  
Your support makes a difference for Okemos students,  
*now more than ever!*

### **Seeking Mentors for OEF Web Team**

The OEF has formed a team of MSU students to help with web design and social media marketing and is now seeking community volunteers willing to help mentor these students. If you are interested, please contact Clarke Anderson at [jca@ajboggs.com](mailto:jca@ajboggs.com) for more information.

*Help us honor the  
**2014 OEF Award Recipients**  
at the annual OEF Awards Banquet  
Nov. 20 at the Country Club of Lansing  
Tickets can be purchased at every  
school office until Nov. 12*

The OEF thanks Allegra of Lansing (Brad and Shirley Naghtin, owners) for their generosity in helping defray the printing costs of this newsletter.

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