



THE

# RED & WHITE

DECEMBER 2023

## A LETTER FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

### Dear Vicksburg Schools Families,

I'm finding it hard to believe we have entered the final month of 2023. This holiday season I hope we all take a moment to reflect on the great things that have happened here in Vicksburg over the past year. It is my greatest gift to get to lead our wonderful school district. And I feel very thankful for the teachers and staff who give so much to our students each and every day.

Over the past month, our students have been giving back

to our community in so many ways. In this month's Red and White you'll read about the ways they are making a difference, even at a young age.

We have lots to celebrate at every school building, and you'll read about the honors achieved by many of our schools. We also have a calendar with our school holiday performances listed so you won't miss any of their holiday cheer.

My wish for all our families is the opportunity to slow down and enjoy the holiday season with family and friends.

I hope you have a joyous holiday season and a safe and restful break.



Regards,  
**Keevin O'Neill, SUPERINTENDENT**

### VCS Honored by U.S. News & World Report

The 2024 U.S. News and World Report Best Elementary Schools and Best Middle Schools rankings are out and Vicksburg Community Schools has 3 schools among the best in the state!

Indian Lake and Tobey Elementary along with Vicksburg Middle School all place among the top 40-percent of schools in the state.

Indian Lake Elementary School is ranked 188th in Michigan Elementary Schools, or the top 15-percent in the state. Schools are ranked on their performance on state-required tests, graduation, and how well they prepare their students for high school.

Tobey Elementary School is ranked 313th. Both schools scored well on tests in reading and math proficiency.

Meanwhile, Vicksburg Middle School is ranked 238th in Michigan Middle Schools. Middle

schools are also ranked on their performance on state-required tests, graduation, and how well they prepare their students for high school.

In addition to those honors, Vicksburg High School also earned a place on the AP School Honor Roll for the 2022-23 school year! The AP School Honor Roll recognizes schools that have done outstanding work to welcome more students into AP courses and support them on the path to college success. VHS offers 18 AP classes along with the AP Capstone Diploma.

We are so of all our schools and know they are providing high quality education for our students.

Congratulations Indian Lake, Tobey, VMS and VHS!

**Congratulations**  
**Indian Lake & Tobey Elementary Schools,**  
**Vicksburg Middle School & Vicksburg High School**



**BRONZE**  
AP 2023 School Honor Roll  
Vicksburg Community High School



## Apprenticeship Week for CTE Students

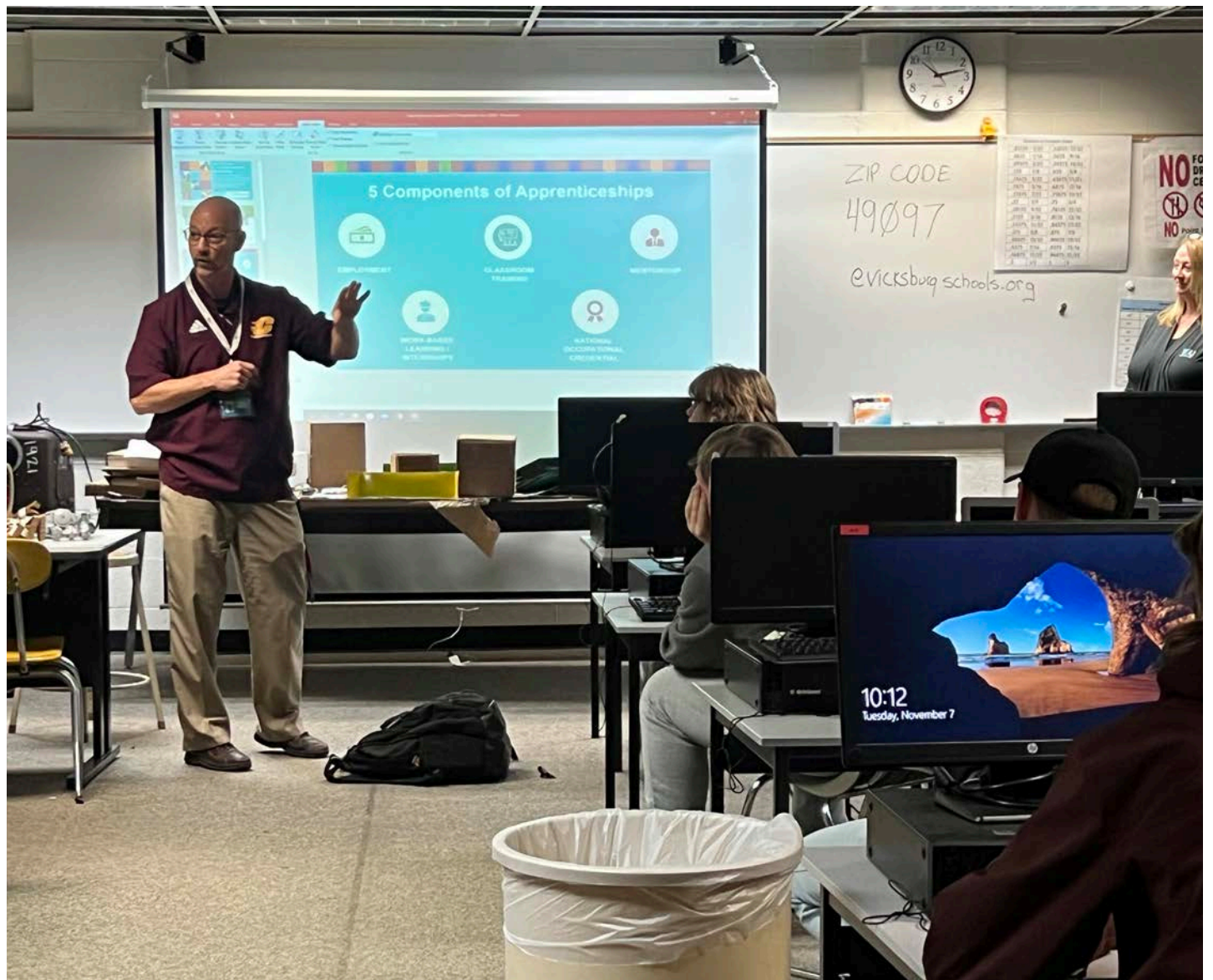
Many of our Career and Technical Education Classes (CTE) recently celebrated National Apprenticeship week.

It's a nationwide celebration where employers, industry associations, labor organizations, community-based organizations, workforce partners, education providers, and government leaders host events to showcase the successes and value of Registered Apprenticeship.

KRESA Career Awareness & Exploration advisors kicked it off by visiting our CTE classes in Vicksburg to talk about the options available to our students for both apprenticeship programs and work based learning.

They explained that many VCS students have gotten well-paying jobs right out of school after taking part in these programs.

Students interested in learning more about apprenticeships in our area can visit Apprenticeship.gov.



## Socktober Event Benefits the Homeless



A big shoutout to Indian Lake Elementary! They had another very successful Socktober, where they collected 2,290 pairs of new socks!

The socks were donated to groups that help the homeless. Access to dry, warm and clean socks can be a huge issue for many in Kalamazoo County and

these donations will be very helpful.

Socktober is a nation-wide effort to provide new socks to those in

need.

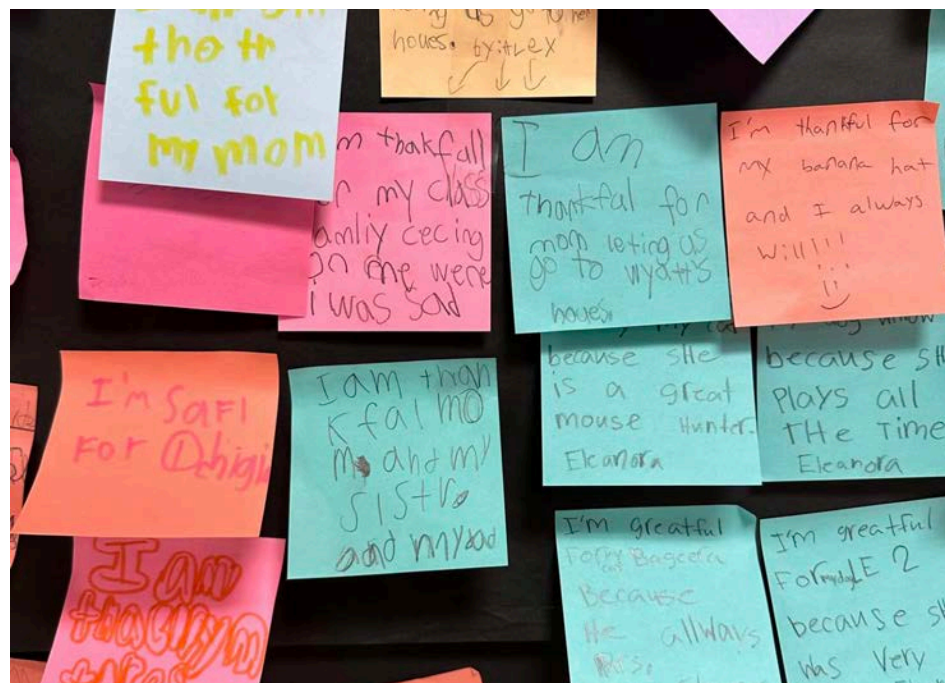
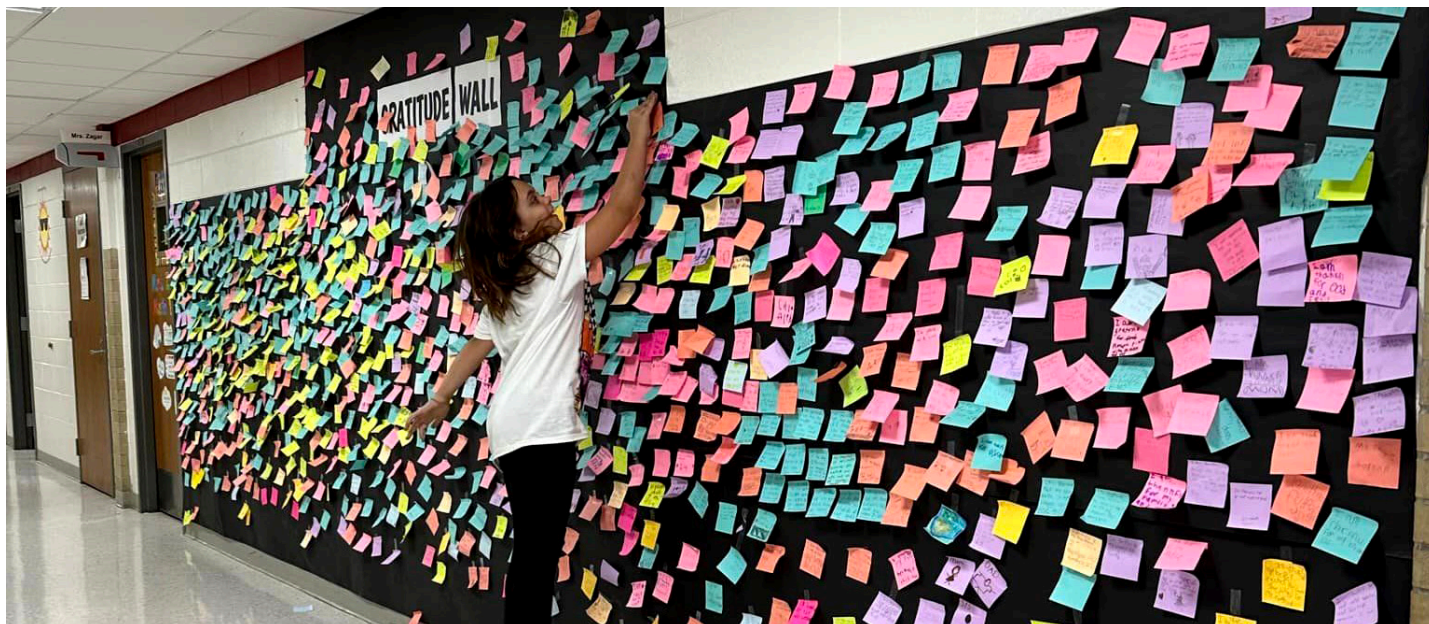
Congratulations and thank you to all those who donated!

# Learning About Gratitude

In an effort to uplift their community, Sunset Lake Elementary ran a 7 day Gratitude Campaign, kicked off by their student lighthouse team.

Each day, students had the opportunity to write what they're thankful for and filled the halls with notes of thankfulness!

To help students transform their gratitude into kindness, teachers and students also passed out "Kindness Stickers" whenever they saw the good in someone.



# Fourth Graders Clean Up Leaves

4th graders in Michael Schimp's class at Sunset Lake Elementary took one of their lessons and put it into action.

They spent an afternoon helping one of their neighbors clean up the leaves in her yard.

The students practiced their acts of kindness, something they've been focusing on in school this year.



## Winter Concert Lineup

Please mark your calendars for the following events at the Performing Arts Center:

Tobey 2nd & 3rd Grade Winter Concert -- Tuesday, November 28 at 7pm

Indian Lake 2nd & 3rd Grade Winter Concert -- Thursday, November 30 at 7pm

Sunset Lake 4th & 5th Grade Winter Concert-- Thursday, December 7 at 7pm

VMS Holiday Band Concert-- Tuesday, December 12 at 7pm

VHS Holiday Band Concert-- Thursday, December 14 at 7pm

VCS Holiday Choir Concert-- Tuesday, December 19 at 7pm



## Youth Soloist Competition Winner Named

A big congratulations to Vicksburg High School freshman, Isaac Sandelin!

Isaac won the 2023-24 Jane Rooks Ross & Barry Ross Youth Soloist Competition in Miller Auditorium.

He competed against 10 other musicians, performing the third movement of Edvard Grieg's Piano Concerto in A minor.

Isaac plays jazz piano for the VHS jazz ensemble, as well as tenor drums in the marching band, and percussion for the wind ensemble.

We are so proud of his accomplishments!

As part of his award, he will perform with the Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra on March 5th at the orchestra's Magical Melodies concert.



## Tobey Kindergarten Class Learns Farm Science

Tobey Kindergarteners in Mrs. Boal's class got a special visit to help explain one of their unit lessons.

They are learning about Farming Then and Now and how farming has changed over the years. Vicksburg grad, and current Tobey parent, Randy Richardson came to explain the operations on his own farm.

Richardson explained the evolution of farming equipment and how he uses technology to yield more crops.

He also told the students about the diversity of the crops grown here in Michigan and how the Great Lakes help make that possible.

Thanks for bringing the lessons to life for our students!



## Even More Farm Learning at Tobey

Tobey Kindergarteners in Mrs. Boal's class got a special visit to help explain one of their unit lessons.

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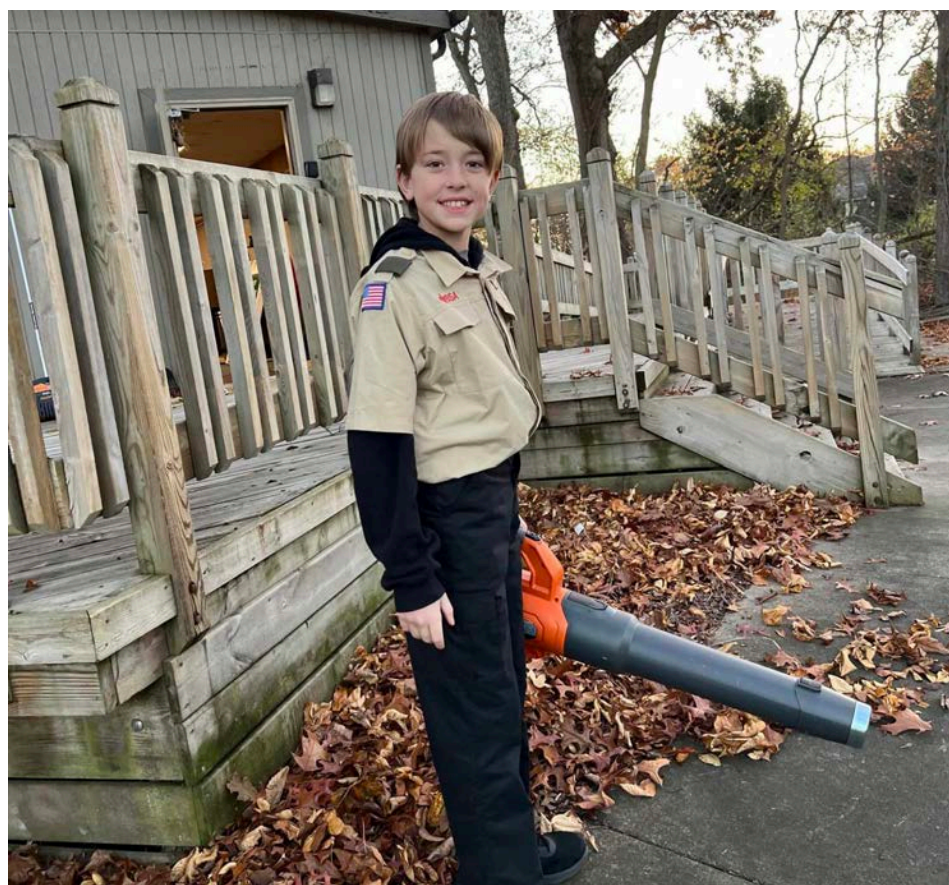


## Boy Scouts Clean Up Fall Leaves

A big thanks to Boy Scout Troop 251!

They spent a lot of time at the Outdoor Education Center for a leaf clean up.

They did a fantastic job and moved a LOT of leaves! We appreciate them so much!



## Indian Lake Gratitude Tree



Indian Lake Elementary built a gratitude tree to celebrate what they are thankful for.

and added them to their tree throughout the month of November.

Classrooms received an envelope full of leaves along with a note for each class to read, teaching them about gratitude.

Each morning the student council shared 3 leaves over the announcements.

Students wrote on the leaves

## Middle School Food Drive

A big shout out to Vicksburg Middle School! They collected 1,116 items in their annual food drive!

South County Community Services came to pick up the items today and ran out of room in their truck!

Top class winners for each grade were:

6th Grade - Ms. Tutt's class: 244

7th Grade - Mrs. Barnhart's class: 140

8th Grade - Mrs. Koning's class: 118

Great job everyone!



## VMS Community Circle Classes

Students at Vicksburg Middle School have been working on being present and in the moment this school year.

They're practicing that in their Community Circle classes. Ashley Mann's class has been using board games as a way to connect and enjoy each other's company.

They demonstrated this by playing games together, following rules, being aware of other participants and having fun. The exercise encourages them to stay off technology and find ways to unplug and connect with classmates and friends in person.



## Food Drive at Vicksburg High School

Vicksburg High School National Honor Society in partnership with DECA collected more than 3,000 food and personal care items during their drive to support South County Community Services.

It's a friendly competition between 1st hour classes to see which class can bring in the highest percentage of needed items.

Once again the students of Vicksburg High School came through, filling dozens of boxes.

Great job to everyone involved!



# Superintendent's Student Advisory Board

Superintendent O'Neill launched the first ever Vicksburg Community Schools Superintendent's Student Advisory Board (SSAB) this school year.

The goal is to hear directly from the students regarding their experiences at VCS. This year, the advisory board has a group of 16 students from 9th through 11th grades. Those students will serve on the board until graduation.

At their first meeting of the year, the group did some exercises to get to know each other and began sharing with Superintendent O'Neill what is most important to them in their time in Vicksburg Community

Schools.

The SSAB will be meeting monthly through the end of the school year. Next year, applications will be open for additional high school students to join.

The following students are members of the 2023-2024 SSAB: Adelynn Beery, Daniel Best, Riley Blamer, Hannah DeVries, Daniel Dinea, Ashley Gerber, Emelyn Germay, Maya Grossman, Norah Hossink, Elise Howard, Lauren Lyle, Leah Standish, Shelby Stoughton, Caden Town, Taylor VanDam, and Gabriella Yost.

We look forward to the positive impact this group will have on the district.

