



THE

RED & WHITE

OCTOBER 2020

A Letter From Your Superintendent

Members of the Vicksburg Community,

First and foremost, I can't thank our families, our entire VCS staff and our amazing students enough for the fantastic start to the 2020-2021 school year. It goes without saying this school year will look and feel different than any other. VCS appreciates the tremendous effort and commitment of our families to ensure the safety and health of our school community, as well as the effort of all our families who are supporting their children who are learning virtually. We truly recognize that home is the "first teacher", so thanks to all for supporting the education of your children.

Vicksburg Community Schools remains committed to supporting all our staff through high-quality training, instructional coaching, and professional development to optimize teaching and operations. Every employee of our school system has a role to ensure every Vicksburg Community Schools student meets his or her potential and grows to become an active and productive citizen in the future. Our mission is clear: To maximize the success and potential of each student.

In this issue of the Red and White, we are delighted to introduce the new staff members that have joined the Vicksburg Community Schools family. We look forward to the positive impact they will have in our school system and in the Vicksburg community.

I wish to thank you all for supporting the students and staff of Vicksburg Schools. Despite the challenges that we may face during the upcoming school year, I am confident we will have a successful year of learning and growth. Enjoy meeting our new staff! **#BulldogsUnited**

Best regards,

Keevin O'Neill
Superintendent

Grants Fund Innovations in Teaching & Learning

VCSF has been busy delivering Bardeen Grant items awarded last spring. Shown here are Sunset Lake teachers Tiffany Sadowski and Rachel Bernhardt receiving recycling bins for their school-wide recycling initiative. Each classroom now has a recycling container, with the larger bins situated throughout the building. Way to be your **#bulldogbest** educating our students to protect the environment by implementing the "Three R's": Reduce, Reuse and Recycle.

Student grant opportunities are also available through our **Curiosity Grant program!** Grants range in the amounts of \$50 to \$250. To apply for a special grant that supports innovation, visit vicksburgschools.org/vcs-foundation/grants-for-students/



Vicksburg Community Schools
Foundation

THE RED & WHITE

Meet Our New Teachers & Staff



HUGH THIEL
Vicksburg Middle School
Math Teacher/Math
Interventionist

I enjoy reading, playing cards or games with friends, and hammocking in the woods. My favorite food is a nice, medium-rare steak.



LISA BREWER
Indian Lake Elementary
Paraprofessional/
Intervention support

Lisa grew up in Portage, Michigan and currently lives in Vicksburg with her husband of 4 years. They have a dog named Sam, and two cats named Ivy and Marley. Lisa loves working with children, teaching them the tools they need to learn, grow, and develop into individuals. Her favorite part about teaching is watching students reach their goals and seeing them have an "ah-ha" moment. Lisa's one goal is to be a positive and inspiring teacher and to leave a lasting impact in children's lives.



BRENDA PETERS
Vicksburg Middle School
Office Paraprofessional

I love to read, and my favorite food is any baked dessert.



ANJA BARNARD
Vicksburg Middle School
Paraprofessional/
Intervention Support

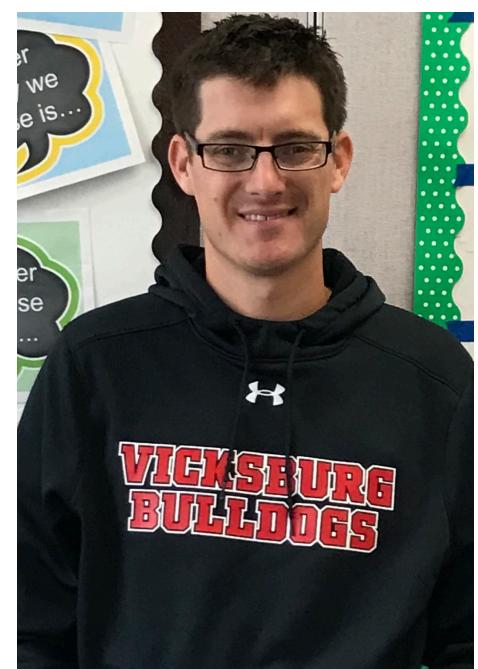
I enjoy hiking, reading, and traveling. My favorite foods are German or Italian.



RAY VANDEWALKER
Vicksburg Middle School
Long Term Substitute/In-School
Suspension Coordinator

I coach Track and Field at Portage Central High School (I am a USA Track & Field Association Level 2 Coach in Jumps.) I have also coached wrestling. I enjoy camping and teaching Boy Scout merit badges. My wife got me into doing triathlons last year, and I have been working on that.

I like barbecue, so I go to "Dicky's" in Kalamazoo or "Barrett's" in Portage. I also like sub sandwiches, and Mancino's is my place of choice there.



RON MARKEL
Vicksburg High School
Advanced Geometry and Algebra I

Ron graduated from Bangor High School. He is also a Western Michigan University grad where he earned his BA and MA Degrees. He taught at Bangor High School for 10 years and Cleveland Middle School in Tennessee for two years.

Ron has two daughters that are in 1st and 3rd grade at Indian Prairie Elementary in Kalamazoo.

He enjoys running and keeping physically active. He also enjoys reading organizational health and mental health toward employees' literature.

Welcome, New Faces in Food Service



BROOKE VANCLEAVE
Vicksburg High School

Brooke is a VHS grad. She has three children: Taylor (a 2018 grad), Doniven (8th grade), and Gage (5th grade at Sunset Lake Elementary). Brooke is also a dog mom to two lab mixes.

In her spare time she enjoys art, gardening and spending time in the Michigan outdoors.



JOANNA MINER
Vicksburg High School

Joanna hails from Indiana. She and her husband Jason have four daughters in grades 1st, 3rd, 6th and 8th. They attend Heritage Christian. Her hobbies include running and knitting.

VICKI DECAMP
Vicksburg Middle School

I like to hang out with my husband and my dog, Tucker. I also love to read and teach Sunday School. My favorite food is anything chocolate!



Left to right: Koti Post, Lorrie Wiessner, Kelly Christenson, Claire Town, Lynn Buell.

KOTI POST
Tobey Elementary School
Administrative Assistant

I have three wonderful kids: Zac, a freshman at VHS, Wes, a seventh grader at VMS, and Bre, a third grader at Woodsedge Elementary. We love to explore and go on adventures. We also love camping, kayaking and downhill skiing. We love taco nights and ice cream for dessert! I'm so excited to join the Tobey family and can't wait to connect and inspire these amazing VCS students. Go Bulldogs!

LORRIE WIESSNER
Tobey Elementary School
Office Assistant

Married to husband, Chris, (1992 Vicksburg Grad) for 17 years, we have two children: Kyle, a Freshman at VHS, and Riley Kay, a 7th grader at VMS. In my spare time, you can usually find me at an ice rink following my travel hockey son. (Yes, I'm a CRAZY hockey mom.) I also enjoy baking with my daughter or floating with her in our pool. I am super excited to be a part of this wonderful school and to be

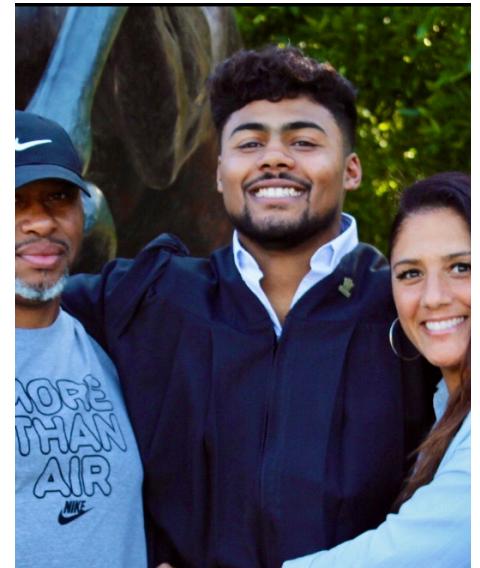
working with such great people.

KELLY CHRISTIANSEN
Tobey Elementary School
Math Interventionist

My husband, John, and I have two kids: a senior and an eighth grader attending VCS, and one mutt named Bandit. I like to read, spend time with my family, travel, ski, ride my bike, and I love the mountains!

LYNNE BUELL
Tobey Elementary School
First Grade Virtual Teacher

I am so excited to be working directly with students after four years of working in the district as an Instructional Coach. I have been married to my husband, Steve, for twenty-seven years and we have two adult children. We have a ten-year-old cat and a six-month-old puppy who keeps us very busy. In my free time, I like to read, go for hikes with the puppy, travel to all sorts of different locations, and spend time with friends and family. I love this community and feel blessed to be able to work with my incredible students!



From top to bottom: Samantha Leitz, Adam Wallace. Nikko Payton on the right.

CLAIRE TOWN
Tobey Elementary School
Preschool Associate Teacher

I moved to Tobey this year to work in bulldog beginnings. My husband, Jeremy, and I live in Vicksburg with our 3 children. We are lucky enough to be spread throughout the district in the high school, middle school and at Tobey. We love spending time outside and most of that is done watching soccer games right now. I love vacations and I will always pick a warm sunny spot!

SAMANTHA LEITZ
Sunset Lake Elementary

I moved to Kalamazoo in 2011 to attend WMU. While out here I met my husband, Andrew. We have one daughter, Olivia, who is in kindergarten. In my free time I sell jewelry and read as much as I can! We love to go camping and enjoy going on adventures.

ADAM WALLACE
Sunset Lake Elementary
Tech Support

I am a Vicksburg class of 2014 alumnus and have returned for the 2020 school year as the new

Tech Support at Sunset Lake Elementary. I graduated from WMU in 2019 with a Bachelor's degree in Organizational Communications and a minor in Behavioral Psychology. I enjoy making music, writing stories, playing video games, and being with friends. I have been actively involved with the arts in South-West Michigan where I spend my summers working on musicals as well as other activities that support the arts in Michigan.

NIKKO PAYTON
Sunset Lake Elementary

Hello. My name is Nikko Payton and I am a senior student at Western Michigan University. I am going to be graduating with a focus in political science and sociology. I was born and raised in Kalamazoo, Michigan. Something interesting about myself is that I was very fortunate enough to receive the Kalamazoo Promise and go to college for free! In my free time I enjoy watching sports, playing sports, watching movies and listening to music. I am very laid back and excited to be a part of the bulldog family.

2020-2021: A New & Different School Year

Students, Staff and Safety FIRST! We'll Get Through This Challenging Time *Together*.



Mr. Greg Mills, teacher of Computerized Manufacturing and Mechatronics, decided he needed to create a desk divider to be placed between his student's desks. Shown in the pictures are the different parts he designed and cut out of foam board to create this personal safety device.



Lorrie Jancarz, who works with Greg, came up with a ticket that is laminated to be placed on each student's desk. At the end of class, the student is to turn the ticket over so that the classroom teachers know to sanitize that specific area.

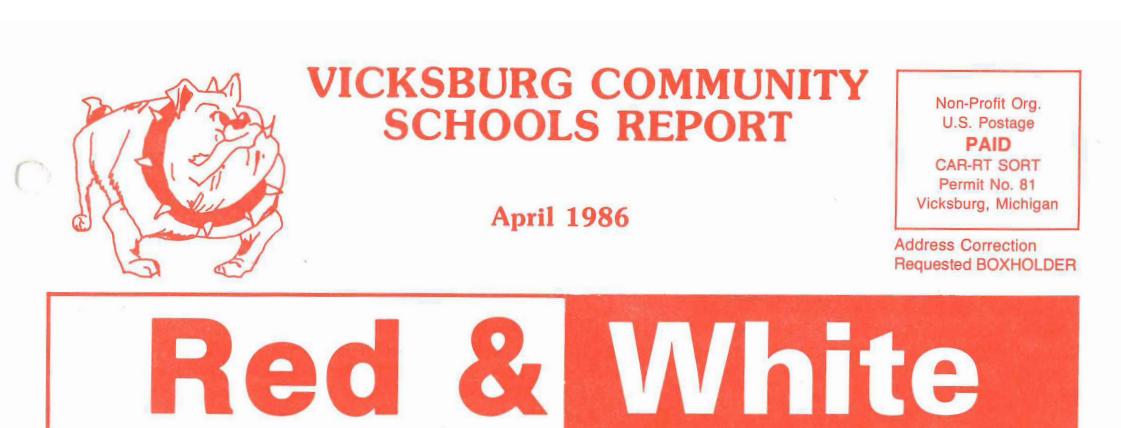
It's that time again for the school bells to begin ringing. This year is going to look so much different for students, their families, teachers and support staff, in and outside the classroom.

You will be met with teachers wearing masks, plexi-glass partitions in front of their desks and multiple hand sanitizing areas.

Teachers must sanitize each desk and seat after each class meeting. To allow for adequate sanitation, there will be seven minutes for passing between classes.

Eating lunch will also be a new experience—you will be escorted to your lunch area.

Thanks For 50 Years of Unwavering Service



Most of us can recall the hustle of making it to the bus-on-time, and the sense of comfort as the school bus driver rolled up to your assigned stop, and the audible sigh of the air brakes indicating the start of your school day. Throughout the past five decades, this sound has been the norm to Mrs. Gorsline, or back in the day, "Mrs. G."

Jerri Gorsline started her working career as a surgical nurse. Yet as life and family happens, she found herself behind the wheel of a school bus back in February of 1971, a sensible fit for a mother of four. She hasn't looked back since. Her love of "routine, kids and driving" have kept her on VCS's payroll for 50 years! Some changes have occurred throughout

the past five decades; like manual to automatic transmissions and upgrades to school bus safety. Other than that, safety of students has stayed consistent, a regimen she emphatically drills into her passengers, especially the students who cross the road: wait in front of the bus until you are given the "go-ahead nod".

Sadly, drivers every day still disregard the flashing indicators warning them to stop, and Jerri has had her share of near mishaps. According to Transportation Director, Karen McKinstry, her "watchful eye and sharpness is still impeccable." Just last year, her alertness and quick reactions saved a potential accident from happening.

Back in 1986, Jerri was recognized for a

Vicksburg Bus Driver's Alertness Pays Off



Paul Fleckenstein and daughter Cindy thank bus driver Gerri Gorsline.

Vicksburg Community Schools Report; April, 1986. recognized Jerri for averting a near tragedy through strict guidance and keen readiness.

Paul Fleckenstein is a very happy and grateful parent, and recently expressed his thanks for the safety of his Kindergarten daughter to bus driver Gerri Gorsline. "If Mrs. Gorsline hadn't been paying attention, we wouldn't have Cindy today."

One recent icy afternoon, Cindy got off the bus and prepared to cross the street to her house when a speeding car came up behind the bus. It started to skid and then sped up, shooting past the bus. Mrs. Gorsline and Cindy were prepared, however, as the children on the bus had been taught never to cross without getting an ok from the driver. Mrs. Gorsline signalled for Cindy to wait, and tragedy was averted.

"In the fall Mrs. Gorsline worked hard to make sure the children followed directions," commented Cindy's mom, Evin. "She's very conscientious to be strict enough to demand attention from the children. We called about it because those drivers don't get enough recognition."

It's a difficult job, but Vicksburg's safety record proves that the districts skilled drivers care.

similar heroic act when she assessed a driver disregarding the bus at a student stop. She quickly alerted the student with a beep of the horn and gesture to stay put as the car careened by the school bus, student and cars stopped in the opposite direction.

Thank you for your unwavering years of service Jerri, as well as your dedication, and remarkable blend of passion and austerity, ensuring VCS passengers are safe. Not many of us can claim 50 years in one profession, but as Jerri says, "just love what you do."