

# G . R . E . A . T .



## Grand River Environmental Action Team

P.O. Box 223, Jackson, Michigan 49204

Website: [www.great-mi.org](http://www.great-mi.org) 517-416-4234 Volume 19 Number 2 June 2009

### GREAT Annual Meeting Brings Together Variety of River Enthusiasts

Several of those attending the eighteenth Annual GREAT meeting had already been out paddling the Grand River in early March, while others have never been out on the Grand, and likely never will, but each person sharing a meal in Darryl's third floor restaurant



*GREAT President Jim Seitz presents the first annual Make It Happen Award to Terri VanAlstine, who is joined by Steve Tomasick, her employee.*

facility had one thing in common—concern for the well-being of “our river.”

Growing attendance at previous annual meetings and a promising RSVP list for 2009 prompted restaurant owner Darryl Hoskins to move our function to his rarely seen third floor banquet hall. The facility provided a

### Alternative Driving Route Suggested for June 14<sup>th</sup> Paddle Outing (Map on page 3)

Recently we learned our 12 Noon June 14<sup>th</sup> (Sunday) paddle on the Wolf Lake chain in Lenawee County is unfortunately on the same day as Michigan International Speedway's NASCAR Sprint Cup Series Lifelock 400 race, which begins at 2 pm. Our put-in is at the DNR access site on Allen's Lake off US-12 two miles west of MIS. After consulting MIS, we have developed an alternative driving route to minimize the effects of the excessive traffic and US-12 which could become one way towards the track. If you wish you can join us for a car caravan that will leave Knight's Restaurant parking lot at 10:45 am (Ferguson Rd. at Horton and South Jackson roads intersection, behind Bob's Gas).

#### Annual Meeting, Continued

comfortable and roomy atmosphere for fifty-five attendees to review the past year's river activities, renew old acquaintances, and meet new members.

After enjoying a classic Darryl's buffet dinner, members heard GREAT president Jim Seitz review the organization's 2008 highlights which described increase public participation, growing membership, and a year-end budget in the black. Jim also commended GREAT's cooperation with other organizations as diverse as the Dahlem Conservancy, the Army ROTC, the Jackson County Conservation District, the Red Cross, Great Lakes Paddlers, and Jackson Audubon.

Among other highlights of the evening was the first Make-It-Happen Award presented to Terri Van Alstine for her notable effort over two-years to remove decades of accumulated trash along the Grand River within the

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# Latest Additions to GREAT Board Bring Valuable Experience and Knowledge

## Jackson High School Biology Teacher Joins GREAT Board



Emily Curry fills the last open seat on the GREAT Board. A 2005 graduate of Spring Arbor University, Emily has taught environmental science and biology at Northwest High School and currently teaches similar subjects at JHS. This summer she expects to complete a masters degree in

applied science education at Michigan Technological University. As a part of the applied science program, Emily spent three weeks in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, teaching about water quality to over three hundred Bolivian students, and working with civil engineering students from Michigan Tech. This past school year she was the recipient of the Michigan Water Environment Association's Dan Wolz Clean Water Education Grant. In this capacity Emily had the opportunity to promote the importance of the clean water industry and to share ideas with other educators integrating the topic into their classrooms.

Emily and her husband Chip reside in Horton where over the past two years they have built their own home. Both Emily and Chip enjoy fishing, hiking, working on their home, and spending time with their dog and extended families. In addition to being GREAT members for several years, Emily has completed the Master Gardeners' program, and they also enjoy activities with the Cascades Cycling Club.

As a GREAT board member, Emily is hoping to help bring hands-on educational opportunities between our members and area students, and to increase students' awareness of the environment and a sense of stewardship for the natural world.

## Lee Kettren holds Ph.D. in Resource Development



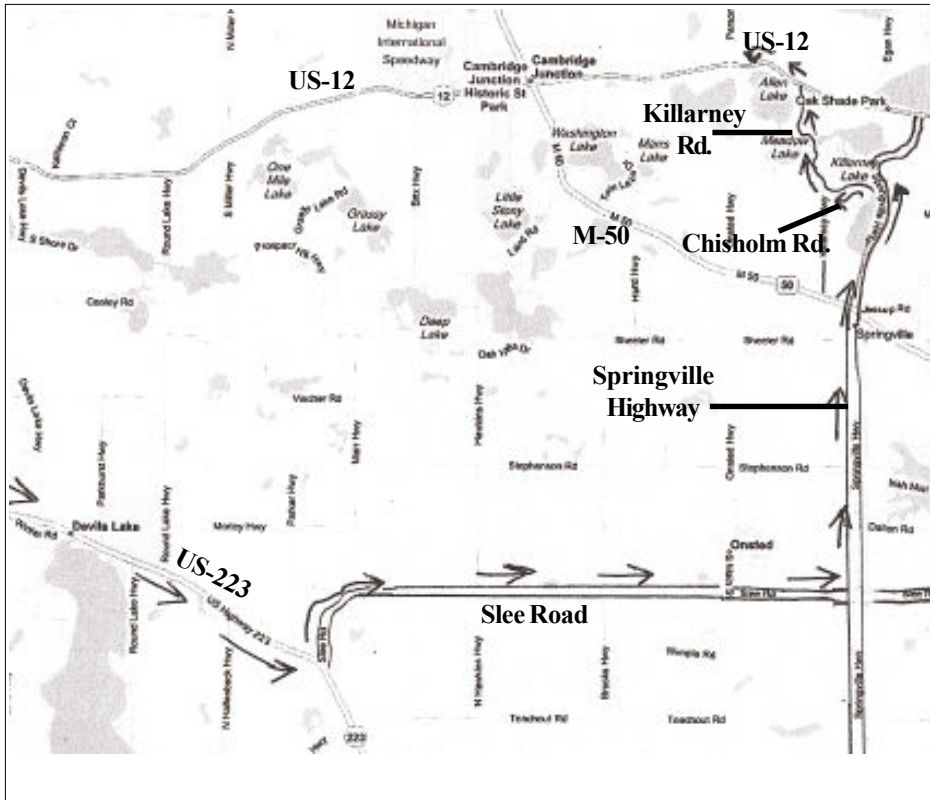
Dr. Lee Kettren has about as varied a background as any member of the GREAT board. Having spent twenty-seven years as a member of the U.S. Army, he decided to pursue a doctorate in resource management from Michigan State University

upon his retirement from the armed forces. Lee also holds masters and bachelors degrees from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and Kent State University in the field of geology. He is a licensed geologist in the states of Georgia and Pennsylvania. Lee has been involved in geological and hydrogeological projects as part of site selection and suitability studies, environmental impact assessments, contamination assessments and remediation projects throughout the Midwest.

Currently he is an instructor at Jackson Community College, Washtenaw Community College, and Central Michigan University. In addition he teaches on line courses in environmental geology for Central Texas College in Killeen, Texas. If that is not a full plate, Lee and his wife, Leslie, established an urban planning firm, Kettren and Associates, in 2003. Lee and Leslie reside in Milford, Michigan, but he says traveling to Jackson for board meetings and GREAT activities will not be a problem.

### Recycling News Flash

**Emmons Waste Disposal is still taking colored glass and plastics #1-7 at their recycling facility on Water St. near the Morrel St. Bridge**



## June 14 Directions

- South on Jackson Rd to Left on US 12
- US-12 east to Right on US 127 (Artesian Wells)
- US-127 south to US-223 south toward Adrian where road splits
- US-223 south to Left on Slee Rd (big curve to right)
- East on Slee Rd through the village of Onsted
- Left on Springville Hwy going north and will cross M-50
- Left on Chisholm Rd (west precede over bridge/dam)
- Right on Killarney Rd going north
- Left on US-12 west for about a half mile to Allen's Lake DNR Access on left

## Gloomy Weather Doesn't Dampen Earth Day Spirits

Though rain dampened Earth Day 2009, GREAT volunteers handled a steady stream of enthusiastic paddlers at the Cascades lagoons. According to data collected by GREAT President Jim Seitz 42 minors and 34 adults filled out waiver forms required to paddle a GREAT canoe or

kayak. Rivermaster Kathy Kulchinski and former board member Rick Berry, hardly had a breather from helping participants into GREAT's canoes and kayaks. Kathy said, "Participants had a child-like excitement and enthusiasm. Everyone that paddled was happy to do so!"



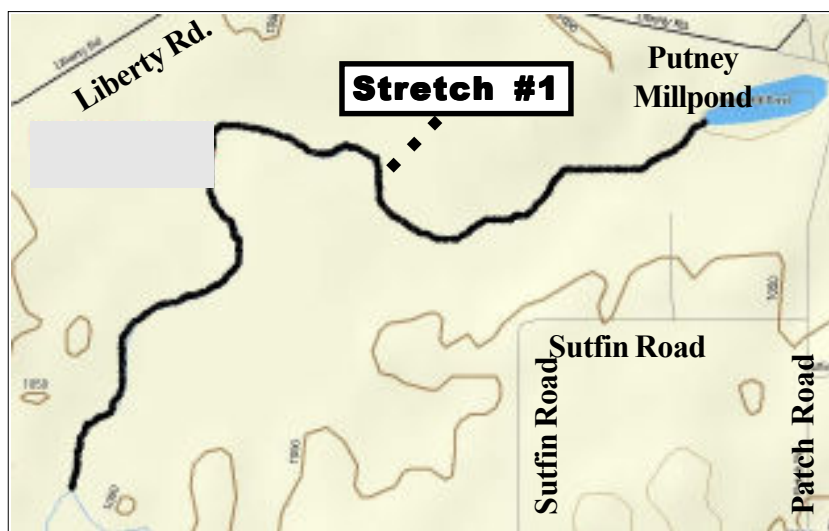
GREAT was one of 30 outdoor and environmental organizations which help sponsor Earth Day under the aegis of JAOC (Jackson Area Outdoor Coalition).

*Kathy Kulchinski and Rick Berry push a canoe off from the temporary dock on Cascades lagoon while in the background Seth Monroe guides a canoe in.*



# Long-term GREAT Members Name Their Favorite Stretches of the Grand River

*GREAT is nearing its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary. In recognition of that coming milestone, we have asked folks who have possibly paddled the entire length of the Grand River in Jackson County to share which stretch of the river is their favorite and to tell us why. We hope that these brief accounts of their relationship with the river may inspire you to go out and see for yourself what others have found in each location.*



## **Liberty Creek, Scott and Cindy Weaver, members since 2001 (#1)**

This section of the Grand, sometimes referred to as Liberty Creek, has many nice features. Waters run clear as the creek snakes its way through the prairie fen passing over the marl silted bottom. The character of the stream changes upon exiting the fen, vegetation along the banks changes from sedges to spicebush, dogwood species, and American hornbeam. Meandering through a short wooded stretch the stream bed becomes wider and darker and the flow turns lazy. Leaving this area, the waters enter the upper reaches of the Putney Mill Pond flooding. Waters pass through a broad heavily silted area dominated by cattails, beggar ticks and loostrife. Away from the watercourse prairie fen returns along both sides. Ecosystems that border the creek are prairie fens, remnant oak savanna and tamarack bogs. Many springs flow into the river in this stretch. Sandhill cranes signal the start of spring's return to the fen where they have nested for many years. Pileated woodpeckers now call

this section home. They join the barred owls, spotted turtles, massasaugas, minks, occasional beavers and all the other critters that inhabit this area of the Grand.

Sandy uplands once farmed, are being turned back into oak savanna and fen is being expanded with removal of buckthorn and prescribed burns.

We enjoy the return of summer with the many flowers and bird species. Coyotes can be quite noisy on summer nights. Cool clear mornings in fall are a favorite time. Mist rises off the fen and river, poison sumacs turn crimson while the fringed gentian bloom below. Dew

covered plants and spider webs await the sun and the camera's lens. In the winter we enjoy the wildlife that is attracted to the open water, even at -20 the springs never freeze. Snipe and rails occasionally spend the winter. I can get wordy about this section of the river so I'll stop here.

## **Jefferson Road and US 127 to Reed Road, Marge Hanselman, Founding Member and First President (#2)**

We canoed the river on our own every season except winter when we would walk or ski it. Where the river bordered our property on Reed Road, we really got to know our stretch. There was a big curve where the water was neck deep- that is where we all swam and played when it was hot. We all fished our stretch and caught many fierce carp and bullheads. It was a nature laboratory for our kids - frogs, toads, fish, salamanders. It was that stretch of the GRand River that turned me into an activist. Nancy Lapinski was my mentor and when we would get work of a wetland filling



### Loomis Road to Ayers Road, Dennis Whitehead, Member since 1991 (#3)

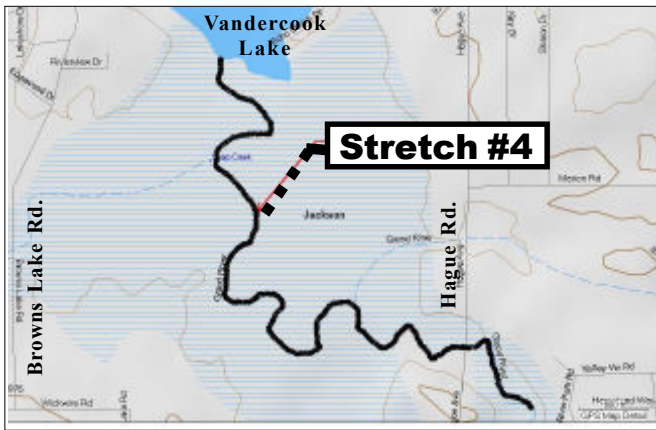
I first got involved with GREAT when it was formed in opposition to JCC's wish to have the county push an extension of Ayers Road through wetlands straight to the college. To see just what it was I was opposing, I drove out to where Ayers runs from US 127 east to Draper Rd., and where the Grand River crosses under Draper. Since then, I've canoed that section from Loomis Rd. to Draper a couple times and once helped clear it of deadfall and debris in preparation for a GREAT trip. The whole section is really nice. It begins in a marshy area beside the Loomis Rd. bridge, then travels through a few low hills covered in hardwoods before passing through a large marsh and turning west to cross the road. It is easy there to imagine you're many miles deep in the Canadian wilderness in this area of the river. To my mind, the spot at the Draper Road bridge is not only the best view of the *river* in the county, it's the best view of *any* place in the county. The river there is coming in from the east, having traveled generally north from where it rises at the Liberty millpond. Here it comes west to within a few feet of Draper Rd., swings back to the northeast just a little in another short bend, then passes under the bridge and heads west to cross under Hague Rd. and soon north to Vandercook Lake. I often take Ayers and Draper around to the college on my way to work and love the view of the early morning mist rising off the river and the marshlands as the sun comes up over the hills to the east. I sometimes get out of my car, stand for a few moments on the narrow shoulder between the river and the road, and soak in the setting. Since Draper Road has been widened and paved, there is more traffic and the opportunities for reveling in the tranquility are fewer, but I still stop there often.

or a development planned for the headwaters area. we would drive there and walk (sneak?) around seeing for ourselves. Then we would take ourselves to the DNR to report. We gave testimony at hearings and wrote letters to the editor. Our hardest test was a planned road to JCC through Grand River wetlands. GREAT made a lot of noise over that issue and it never did get approved. I remember David and I walking around the proposed area looking for gravestones (antiquities act). Nancy taught me the activist ropes and I went from GREAT to being the Conservation Chair of the Houston Sierra Club, representing 6000 local members. I never could have done that with my GREAT experiences and Nancy Lapinski.

### Ayers Road to Vandercook Lake, Barb Anderson, Member since 1991 (#4)

This stretch of the Grand River has many loops and turns but great beauty and serenity. In quite coves there are patches of water lily and pickerel weed. There are both shallow areas with gravelly bottoms and silty holes where the river has carved deep into the outside banks in flood stage. It is in the deep holes that huge spawning carp give bow paddlers a start when they bolt from under the canoe.





Most of the passage is through pristine wetlands of sedge grass seemingly far removed from human development, but where the banks rise slightly higher above the water, wild roses and iris turtleheads abound, also the despised but beautiful purple loosestrife. Along the grass banks one can see the nests of Canada geese, while in the woody shrubs there are occasional yellow warbler nests. Along one stretch I saw a doe cross the river with two fawns, the second of which had a hard time scrambling up the bank.

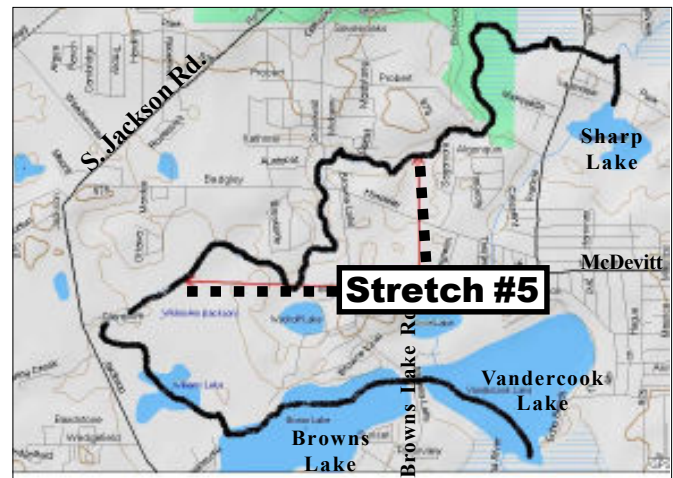
As you enter Vandercook Lake, a delta has developed over the years where the river current slows and the silt is dropped. Here you must paddle either to the extreme left or right, or you will bottom out and have to pole yourself free.

### **Vandercook Lake to Sharp Park, Jim Seitz, Member Since 1991 and Current President (#5)**

My favorite Jackson County paddle is to put in at the Vandercook Lake County Park on Floyd Avenue and do a leisurely 2 to 3 hour paddle to take out on Maplewood Dr. in Sharp Park. I like this trip because for the distance traveled, it offers such great variety: both large and small lakes, pristine wetlands, mid-growth woods, beautiful residential areas, and even some quick, safe rapids. Also, the car placement is very efficient because the paddle route is a “C” pattern, the driving route is just a short straight jaunt.

Beginning at Vandercook Lake, this lake offers a quick side trip to two very small lakes, for the adventurous. Look for channels on the North side, which will first take you to Cove and then Mud Lake. Back on Vandercook Lake, proceed west to find the small channel and bridge under Browns Lake Road. On Browns Lake enjoy viewing some of the finest lake home

properties in Jackson County. The outlet is in the Northwest section of the lake. This lovely channel winds through what some say reminds them of the everglades. Look down into the crystal clear water and observe its pristine white marl bottom. Soon the paddler comes into Williams Lake. Unlike the previous two lakes, this lake



is almost completely natural as there is only two homes on the lake. This is a good place to take a secluded break with a lunch and/or swim (South side). The lake is noted for large fresh water clams. The Grand River flows out of Williams Lake on northwest end. The ledges just prior to the river can offer some very productive Northern Pike and Smallmouth Bass fishing.

Soon the river shoots under the double culvert of Glenshire Dr. near the WKHM Radio towers. Next are wetlands with thousands of white and yellow lily pads, which in July can almost close the surface of the channel. Look for waterfowl. Soon river splits. Both have adequate water, but the left route is free of deadfalls. The environment changes on the right to woods often with running deer and to the left spacious backyards of Brown Lake Rd homes. A metal dam structure spans the river just before the Badgley St bridge. Check it first, but most kayaks and canoes paddlers can have some fun shooting over this with enough prior speed. After crossing Stonewall Rd., look for evidence of beaver gnawing on the trees. Eventually, the paddler will be in the historic Stone Village area off Probert Rd. Look on the right for a secluded pond from which some old buildings can be observed and soon after the old arched stone bridge. Next is a pump house (originally this supplied the former adjacent golf course). Now more fun. Scout first, but with enough water, paddlers can shoot over the old dam



and its short rapids with some good speed before entering into a pond in the backyard of the mansion built by oil wildcatter CEO and Indy Car team owner, Pat Patrick.

After Probert Road bridge, pull out around the corner at the boat ramp area on the small pond. Except during drought or excessively high early spring water this trip is very doable during most of the non-winter paddle season.

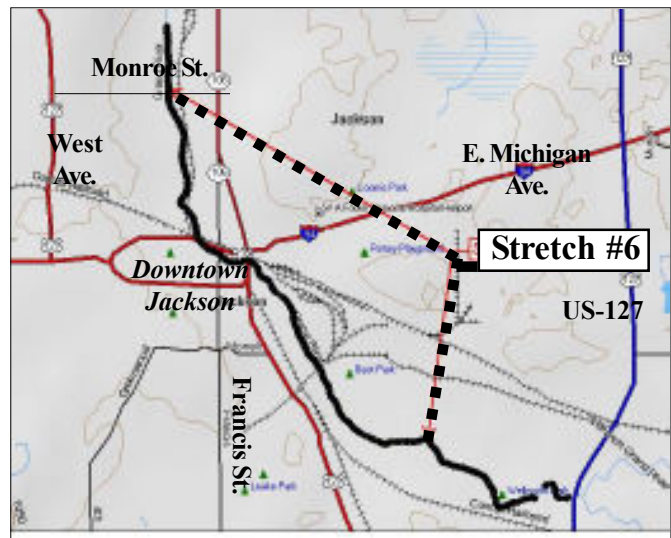
### **Downtown Jackson, Kathy Kulchinski, Current Rivermaster (#6)**

One of my favorite local sections of the Grand River is the stretch that runs right through Downtown Jackson. It is a pleasant surprise in so many ways.

Putting in at the east High Street bridge near Alro Steel and US 127 drops the paddler into an amazingly natural wetland area that wends its way through Micor Industrial Park. Shortly however, the river enters woodlands that, depending on the river height, often looks like a southern bayou with trees standing directly in the water.

The wooded cover continues until almost downtown and helps to camouflage the industry that abuts the stream. During the weekdays, one will undoubtedly hear the sounds of industry as well as smell its distinctive odors. But choose a sunny Sunday and one might forget she is in an industrial zone.

The exhilaration level increases with the current as a paddler approaches the concrete bedded area that was once covered by the infamous “cap” that masked the polluted river and protected the sensibilities of city folk. Now open and free flowing, the river narrows and increases in force to actually create ripples that my paddling partners refer to as “rapids.” These whisk one downstream past the new Consumers Energy building and close beside the canyon-like outer wall of the old Sheraton Hotel. Shortly thereafter is the Bell Tower



Market, then around a tight curve and under a trestle one enters the Toy House rapids. Paddlers should scout this trestle and another near Trail Street before putting in upstream to be sure there is clearance for passage underneath. In high water conditions the current is very swift, and portaging around the two trestles is difficult at best. Insufficient clearance under the trestles has led to instant induction into the Grand River Swim Team for at least one of my paddling partners.

From Trail Street to Monroe Street the river continues swiftly with several areas of ripples. The views include the Fairgrounds and the Armory Arts Village. The takeout point is just downstream of the Monroe Street bridge on river left. There is a relatively benign gravel embankment that leads up to a gated two-track that leads back to Monroe Street.

This quick trip (less than two hours) is unique in that while urban, the riparian land hosts many types of wildlife. I have personally seen deer, woodchuck, muskrat, fox, heron, ducks, geese, owls, turkeys, frogs, snakes and beaver. Come out and try it.



Would you like to wear the GREAT logo? Go to the [great-mi.org](http://great-mi.org) website home page. Click on GREAT Gear to view all the terrific products available.

# GREAT Board and Members Schooled in CPR

by Jonathan Hoover

“Be prepared.” The Boy Scout motto from my youth is still a good idea. Recently, for a group of GREAT trustees and members, the good idea was to be prepared in case a person that we encountered needed CPR.



*GREAT Board members Jon Hoover and Kathy Kulchinski practice CPR techniques during Red Cross Training session.*

We were there, this past April, to learn just how to give that help until professionals arrived. Among the topics covered: how to safely move a person, should they be in an unsafe area like a highway; how to see if a person is breathing; how to insure that there is an open airway for breathing; how to provide “rescue breathing;” how to help a choking victim; and, of course, how to safely administer CPR to a victim who has stopped breathing. These hypothetical situations, when they do materialize, call for steady nerves and the right training. This training needs to be repeated and reviewed on a regular basis, even for those with certification. Our hope is that we’ll never need to actually use it. But in the interest of safety on the river, GREAT leaders are better off prepared.



*Karen Mitchell walks her kayak through fast-moving opposing current for a short stretch during the April paddle outing on the headwaters of the Grand. Thirty-three paddlers took part in the trip.*

## Local Paddling Instructor Offers Free Outings for Big Brother, Big Sister Pairs

**B**ruce Clevenger owner of Quiet World Sports and a GREAT member, has run paddling instruction classes for over a decade in the Jackson area. This summer Bruce is adding a new wrinkle to his schedule of classes. He is providing two opportunities for Big Brother and Big Sister pairs to paddle kayaks. Bruce explains, “It’s my strong belief that investment in our children is the most important thing QWS should be doing with our charitable endeavors. There are more and more kids every day who could benefit from getting exposure to paddle sports. As they get older, despite how they fare economically, it’s likely that they will yearn to get out on the waters for the same reasons we all do.

The sessions will be July 12, 3:00 p.m. at Vandercook Lake County Park and August 1, 10:00 a.m. at Lime Lake County Park.

***BB/BS pairs must register with Bruce Clevenger at 517-750-3498***

Bruce will provide boats, paddles, and life vests. GREAT members will be there to assist.



# Former Jackson Mayor Weighs In on Recent GREAT Newsletter Article



*Phil Conley*

Long-time Jackson resident and former mayor, Phil Conley apparently read his March edition of the GREAT newsletter soon after it arrived in the mail. One article in particular drew his attention, and with his background of activism in community affairs, he felt compelled to contact newsletter editor, Bryon Ennis, with clarifying and enlightening information on the withdrawal of groundwater from the Jackson aquifer.

The article to which Mr. Conley reacted questioned whether Absopure Corporation should pay a royalty fee for water withdrawn from wells in Columbia Township. However, Phil was not so concerned with this particular issue. Instead, due perhaps to an eventful decision made during his tenure as mayor of Jackson, Mr. Conley was struck by a sentence in the article which stated, "None of us individually pays for ground water we pump." Phil was concerned the editor understand that area residents who are connected to the Jackson Municipal Water System did indeed pay for water pumped from the ground.

According to Mr. Conley, though few Jackson residents were aware of it at the time, in the early 1970's, the State of Michigan twice threatened to impose a "boil water" order on Jackson due to biological contaminants detected in the municipal water system. The Jackson

City Council felt strongly that steps needed to be taken to ensure the purity of the water supply. The result was that a 6.5 million dollar bond was floated to build a drinking water treatment facility to be paid for with customer service fees.

With the best of intentions and prudent foresight for potential growth, the Jackson water treatment facility was built with a capacity to treat 24 million gallons of water per day at a time when the daily use was only 14 million gallons per day. Unfortunately, shortly thereafter, major industrial customers of the Jackson Municipal Water System closed and left the area. In addition the city population has declined by nearly ten thousand inhabitants. The result is that today, daily water use has dropped to approximately 6 million gallons per day. One effect of the unanticipated reduction in water use is that fewer customers must now shoulder the fixed costs of the municipal water system, and they are doubtless aware of having to pay for water that is pumped from the ground.

The GREAT newsletter editor is appreciative of Mr. Conley's interest in this publication, and for his willingness to share additional information on a subject which is of concern to all citizens. Further, we value the historic perspective that Phil is able to provide. The editor encourages all readers to likewise share their knowledge and opinions on subjects covered in the GREAT newsletter.--Bryon Ennis, Editor

## **GREAT was First on the Grand River**

It was gratifying for several GREAT board members attending a meeting of Friends of the Middle Grand in Lansing recently, to learn that their organization was formed only within the past year. It was further mentioned at this meeting that groups promoting and protecting the river in the Grand Rapids area were also just getting organized. We are proud that visionaries such as Marge Hanselman, Betty Desbiens, and Nancy Lapinski, saw the importance of the Upper Grand River resource nearly twenty years ago and did something about it. Though there is still much to be done, GREAT has made many improvements in the status of the Upper Grand River.

## GREAT Welcomes These New Members

Lee & Leslie Kettren  
David Budda  
DeAnn & Seth Monroe  
Mike Bennett  
Jamie & Cathy Myles  
Tom Hodgson  
L. Tom McDonough

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boundaries of the Indian Village Mobile Home Community in Leoni Township. Before hearing from the evening's featured speaker, Cyndi Roper of Clean Water Action, president Jim Seitz asked one representative from each table to share an observation from one of the eight GREAT scrap books that Historian

Betty Desbiens has been compiling for nearly two decades.

After the official Annual Meeting, the GREAT board met briefly to elect officers, add new board members to various committees, and to begin promptly to organize the first activities of the 2009 paddle season.

***GREAT President Jim Seitz accepts a new We-no-nah canoe from donor Bill Cooke. Bill generously responded to an expressed need for more canoes following record participation in last year's outings. GREAT appreciates this welcome addition to its fleet of boats.***

