



Highfields
Changing Lives,
Strengthening Communities

Annual Report 2025-2026



You're building brighter futures!



2026–2027 Highfields Leadership

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*Deceased

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Fund Development Director

Becky Gardner, LMSW
Quality and Education Director
Mindfulness and Meditation
Coordinator

Shelly Glead, LPC, NCC
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Director

Jimmie Harris, BS
Juvenile Justice Alternative
Programs Director

Tyler Jones, MPA
Residential Director

Ed St. John, MBA
Finance Director

Cover photo: Reaching Higher student at Lake Lansing



Dear Friends and Supporters,

Thank you for your continued support of Highfields' work throughout mid-Michigan.

As I begin my 21st year serving Highfields, I continue to be grateful to all of you who represent the Highfields' family. This includes staff, the leadership team, board members, donors, foundations, community leaders, and supporters who believe so strongly in our mission. Thanks to you, we can positively impact children and families throughout mid-Michigan.

This annual report highlights the amazing work of our staff and programs. Please know that your continued partnership with Highfields to stabilize, strengthen, and empower children and families is appreciated.

Because of your partnership, children in foster care are now safely back home with their families; youth who were once involved in the juvenile justice system are now high school graduates and working; and children who were heavily with behavioral health concern are now stable and able to function well in home and school.

I look forward to another year of leading Highfields and serving the mid-Michigan community. Thank you for traveling this journey with us.

Sincerely,

Brian D. Philson, LMSW, ACSW
President & CEO
Highfields, Inc.



Our mission is to provide opportunities to children, youth and families to become more responsible for their own lives and to strengthen their relationships with others.





Elijah

Thanks to your support

Building a brighter future: Elijah's journey

When **Elijah** arrived at Highfields nine months ago, he was facing challenges related to his behavior and decision-making. Today, at 17 years old, Elijah is preparing for an exciting future filled with opportunity, purpose, and ambition.

During his time at Highfields, Elijah committed himself to personal growth and positive change. Through the support of staff, structured programming, and his own determination, he learned valuable skills to better manage frustration, strengthen his relationships with others, and make thoughtful choices about his future.

Elijah's accomplishments over the past year have been remarkable. He graduated from high school, earned a perfect score of 100% on his SERV Safe certification exam, gained acceptance into a culinary arts program, and secured employment after his departure from Highfields. These milestones reflect not only his hard work and perseverance but also his commitment to creating a successful future for himself. Inspired by his experiences and growing confidence, Elijah has set ambitious goals for the years ahead. He hopes to become an entrepreneur and eventually own his own business. His vision includes providing services such as car washing, lawn care, cooking, and hair cutting, allowing him to use his skills and talents while making a positive impact in his community.

Reflecting on his journey, Elijah credits Highfields with helping him discover his potential and equipping him with the tools needed to succeed. The guidance, support, and opportunities he received have helped him become a more responsible, motivated, and future-focused young man.

As Elijah moves forward, he carries with him the lessons learned at Highfields and a belief that his future is full of possibilities. His story is a powerful example of how encouragement, opportunity, and determination can help young people transform challenges into achievements and build a foundation for lifelong success.

“ They helped me discover my potential. ”
—Elijah

*Highfields' Residential Treatment Program serves young men
ages 11–17 with behavioral problems.*





Charity's son

Thanks to your support

A supportive partner every step of the way

When the Rivera-Barriga family learned of their son's autism diagnosis, they faced the uncertainty and challenges that many families experience at the start of a new journey. In Highfields, they found a trusted partner to help guide the way.

From the very beginning, Highfields made the transition into services smooth and reassuring, ensuring the family felt informed, supported, and connected to the resources they needed. Questions were answered promptly, concerns were addressed with care, and for the first time, mom Charity felt truly heard and understood.

Over the course of four rewarding, challenging, and transformative years, her case manager became far more than a professional support. She became a trusted advocate and an extension of the family, celebrating milestones, offering encouragement during difficult moments, and helping them focus on progress rather than obstacles.

When her son graduated from the program in June, Charity felt prepared to embrace the next chapter with confidence. Through Highfields' guidance, resources, and expertise, she gained the knowledge and tools needed to continue supporting her son's growth and development.

Today, her son continues to thrive, and she enthusiastically recommends Highfields' case management services to other families facing similar challenges.

"Highfields gave me all the resources, knowledge, and support I needed," she said. "The experience has been truly amazing, and I will continue encouraging other families to seek the same support that helped ours succeed."

“My experience with Highfields has been one of the best I could have asked for while navigating my son's diagnosis.**”**

—Charity

Our mission in Autism Case Management is to assist children with autism in reaching their maximum potential. This program provides intensive support for children aged 18 months to 17 years who have been diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

The program focuses on results, employing tests and assessments to track each child's progress during their participation.



Empower



Alex

Thanks to your support From participant to staff member: Alex's story

Alex's journey with Reaching Higher began in the summer of 2019 as a fifth-grade student. He remained involved throughout middle school, gaining experiences and support that would have a lasting impact on his life.

When Alex entered high school, he chose to return as a mentor. Through that role, he developed valuable skills in technology, responsibility, leadership, and serving others. Just as importantly, Reaching Higher helped him grow personally. While he enjoyed being around people, building strong social connections did not always come naturally. The program provided an environment where he formed meaningful friendships, strengthened his communication skills, and built trusting relationships with staff members who encouraged him along the way.

After graduating from high school in 2026, Alex joined the Reaching Higher team as a staff member. Wanting a career focused on helping others, he knew there was no better place to make a difference than the program that had helped shape his own future.

Today, Alex is committed to supporting students who may feel alone or uncertain. He hopes every participant understands that there is always someone who cares and that they have the ability to become that source of support for someone else. His journey from student to mentor to staff member reflects the lasting impact Reaching Higher has on the young people it serves.

“Reaching Higher helped me grow.”

—Alex

Reaching Higher is an out-of-school time learning program that provides elementary and middle school students with a learning environment that reinforces academics and teaches social skills.





Claudia Remenar

Donor

A lifetime connection to Highfields

For nearly 50 years, Highfields has been woven into my professional and personal life. My connection began in 1977 while working for Bethany Christian Services, where I first met Highfields President and CEO Carl Latona through a statewide child welfare initiative. Over the years, my appreciation for the organization deepened through various roles in Michigan's human services community, eventually leading me to join Highfields as Director of Fund Development in 2001.

One of the greatest privileges of my time at Highfields was getting to know the dedicated donors, volunteers, and visionaries who helped shape the organization. Their generosity, leadership, and commitment to children and families laid the foundation for Highfields' lasting impact. I was also fortunate to know founder Bob Drake and his wife, Jane, whose vision continues to guide the organization today.

One of my favorite memories was in 2005 when Highfields hosted a large outdoor dinner where supporters gathered under the new pavilion. Bob Drake's jazz band performed, and they welcomed a Highfields student to join them on drums, capturing the spirit of opportunity and community.

Highfields captured my heart long ago. Highfields is a true original, homegrown, and it has helped tens of thousands of children and families. Just like those early founders, I hope that I too can live to see Highfields carry out its mission for decades to come.

“Highfields captured my heart long ago.”
—Claudia Remenar

Your gift makes a difference to children and families.

To make a donation to Highfields or include Highfields in your will, please visit www.highfields.org/get-involved or contact Ashley Crosser at 517-628-2287 x373 or acrosser@highfields.org.

Highlights of 2025–2026

We couldn't do it without you!

Putt for a Purpose



On June 2, 2025, we proudly hosted our **45th Annual Golf Outing** at Forest Akers West. Thanks to the extraordinary generosity and dedication of our title sponsor, **Lyman & Sheets Insurance Agency** (now Acrisure), as well as our many corporate sponsors, community partners, and golfers, the event raised nearly \$80,000 to help provide vital resources and support for the children and families we serve. We are sincerely grateful to everyone whose contributions and participation made this milestone event such a tremendous success.

Strengthening Families Breakfast



Our annual **Strengthening Families Breakfast** was held on October 8, 2025, at Eagle Eye Golf and Banquet Center. Through the remarkable generosity of our sponsors, donors, and supporters, we raised over **\$225,000** in support of our mission. This investment will have a lasting impact on the children and families who benefit from our programs and services. Thank you for helping us strengthen families and create brighter futures. Special thanks to our matching gift sponsors, **John George Jr. Student Trust Fund** and **Joe D. Pentecost Foundation**.

Making an Impact

We also extend our sincere appreciation to the **Lansing Rotary Club**, **Queen of the Miraculous Medal Parish**, **Jackson Community Foundation Youth Impact**

Grant, and the **Ingham County Bar Foundation**. Their generous support helps provide warm clothing, nutritious meals, and other everyday essentials that empower children and families to overcome challenges and thrive. Together, these community partners are making a lasting difference in the lives of those we serve.



We are grateful to **Jackson National** for its generous grant supporting our Family Preservation Program. This funding plays a critical role in helping families facing emergency situations by providing essential resources and meaningful support when it is needed most. Through this investment, families receive the assistance necessary to remain safe, stable, and connected while working toward long-term success.

Support for Residential

Thanks to the generous multi-year support of the **James and Kimberly Currie Foundation**, we were able to expand and strengthen our Residential Music Program. This funding provided students with meaningful opportunities to express themselves through music, supporting their emotional growth, and enhancing the therapeutic benefits of their treatment. Through music, students gained a creative outlet to build confidence, process emotions, and engage more fully in their healing journey.



We are grateful to the **W.B. and Candace Thoman Foundation** for their generous grant supporting art workshops through REACH Art Studio for the youth we serve. This funding provides valuable opportunities for creative expression, encourages imagination and self-discovery, and helps students develop confidence through the arts. Thanks to their

support, we are able to enrich the lives of young people and create meaningful experiences that foster growth, healing, and personal success.



This past holiday season, the **517 Professionals Networking Group** and **NuWave Technology Partners** demonstrated the true spirit of giving by adopting the residential students and making sure each one felt remembered and celebrated during the holidays. The group purchased and wrapped gifts tailored to the students' wish lists and interests. From clothing and personal items to games and special treats, each gift was chosen to bring joy and excitement to the students during the festive season. The members of **CHUMS, Inc. Greater Lansing Chapter** helped make the holidays even more special by donating funds to go toward a pizza party and games and books for the house.

Agency Support

We are grateful to the **Granger Foundation** for awarding us a generous multi-year grant

in support of capital improvements. This investment will help enhance our facilities, create safer and more functional spaces, and strengthen the environment where children and families receive services. Through their ongoing support, we are building a stronger foundation for the future of our programs and expanding our ability to make a lasting impact on those we serve.

Toy Drive



Our annual toy drive, conducted in partnership with **WLNS** and **Mid-Michigan Ford Dealers**, brought in more than 2,000 toy donations from community members, helping make the holiday season brighter for children in our programs.

Giving Tuesday

Our **Giving Tuesday** campaign raised over \$5,000 thanks to our generous donors, making it possible for every teen in our Community Services programs to receive a \$25 gift card during the holiday season.

Scholarship and award recipients

Thank you for supporting our mission!



2026 Aldinger Scholarship Recipients:

Amber VanDusen
Elyse Weck
Joanna Flores
Kenric Robinson
Lillian Bieszke
Mary Jo Cox
Monique Jackman



2026 Robert L. Drake Citizenship Award was presented to **Claudia Remenar**, pictured here with her husband Charles.



2026 Highfields Partnership Award recipient **Miller Canfield** accepted by **Scott Eldridge** (L) and **Brian Gallagher** (R)

Community impact

During 2025–2026, Highfields...

SERVED **4,397** children and families



Highfields Residential students helped clean up Onondaga's Baldwin Park.

EMPLOYED **224** staff



Lillian Thomson is the 2026 recipient of the *Carl J. Latona Distinguished Service Award*

AND CHANGED LIVES **1** family at a time



Reaching Higher students visited Lake Lansing.

PROVIDED SAFETY NET SERVICES THROUGHOUT **10** counties OPERATING FROM **4** regional offices

Community services

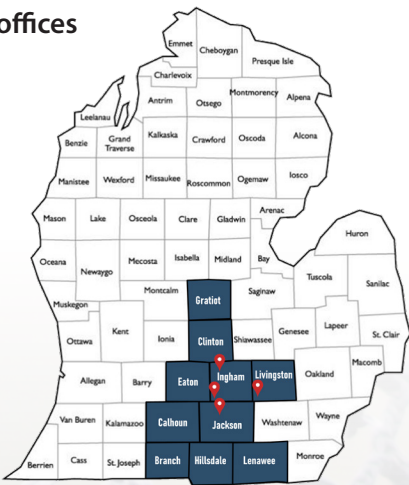
- Family violence counseling
- Intervention programs helping boys and girls overcome social and educational struggles
- Early intervention programs confronting child abuse and neglect
- Counseling for families with children returning from out-of-home placements
- Intensive counseling programs for children struggling with a mental health disorder
- On-site counseling at hospitals to redirect behavior for families
- Programs for families of teens with severe emotional disability or anti-social behavior

Residential services

- Full-time residential treatment for young men ages 11–17 with behavioral problems

Educational services

- **Reaching Higher:** Hands-on out-of-school time learning program
- **Ingham Academy:** Day treatment program that is operated by Highfields, Ingham County Circuit Court, Ingham Intermediate School District, and Peckham, Inc.
- **Horizon:** Evening reporting program for youth involved in family court



You can learn more about our programs that help children and families by visiting www.highfields.org.

You changed lives!



"I know what it feels like to be young and lost, just needing someone to care. Without Highfields stepping in when I was 13, I honestly don't know where I'd be today. They believed in me before I believed in myself. And if my story can reach even one person and help them see that it's never too late to change, then it's all worth it."

—Louis, former Residential student

Thanks to generous donations to our Campership Fund, children were able to enjoy unforgettable moments at camp, including playing football with friends and cheering each other on from the sidelines. The laughter, teamwork, and excitement shared on the field highlighted the positive impact your support has on creating meaningful camp experiences.

"I loved playing football with my friends and hearing everyone cheer for us. Camp was the best part of my summer!"



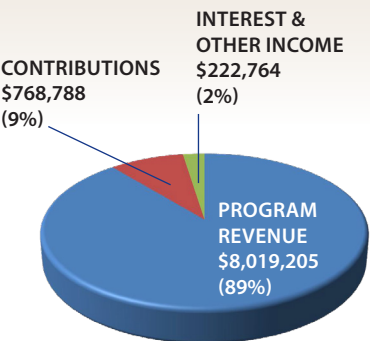
"The Onondaga Homecoming Parade gives our residential students an opportunity to be part of the community in a positive and meaningful way. Through teamwork and participation, they learn the value of civic pride, responsibility, and representing themselves with confidence. They came away with a first-place trophy for their parade float. We are incredibly proud of how they represented our program and the community."

— Tyler Jones, Residential Director

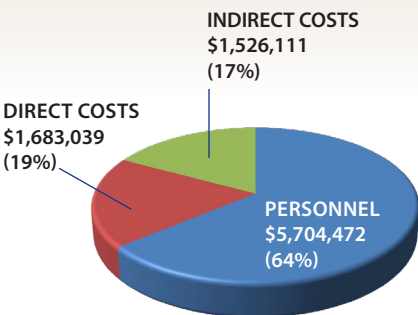
Financial overview

During 2025–2026, Highfields...

GENERATED TOTAL REVENUE OF
\$9,010,757



AND SPENT A TOTAL OF
\$8,913,622



Thank you to our generous donors

We are grateful to the following supporters who made financial contributions to Highfields from May 1, 2025, through April 30, 2026.

STRENGTHENING FAMILIES GIVING SOCIETY – Individuals and businesses who have a current multi-year commitment of \$1,000 or more per year for five or more years:

Dr. Carol Beals
Sara and Jared Bennett
Jenny Bond*
Elizabeth D. Boyd
Patricia A. Brown and Arnie
Greenfield
Melanie Dart and David Howland
Dean Transportation
Amanda Denney
John L. Drake
Robert and Talitha Easterly
Brandie and Wayne Ekren
Michael and Trish Foster
Kenneth Frankland
Brian and Kelly Gallagher
Carol Giacometto
John and Tammie Gingas
Rob Gruesbeck
Kurt and Barbara Guter
Bart and Karen Hawley
Josh and Jenn Jelenek
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Capt Anthony Stewart
Joe and Laurie Tearpock
Randy and Leigh Ann Thayer
Dan and Hope Thelen
Mark and Nicole Tithof
Peter and Erika Tratt
Mike and Nancy Zamiara

ROBERT DRAKE SOCIETY – Those who have included Highfields in their estate planning:

Anonymous
John H. Aldinger Irrevocable
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Sara and Jared Bennett
Albert Biergans*
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Pauline Glassbrook*
Ted and Joanne Hacker*
Donald* and Paulette Hodney
Richard and Margaret Howard
In Memory of Virgilene M. Hunt*
Tom and Lisa Jelenek
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Lucille Keller*
Roger and Meredith Kennedy
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Mary La Selle*
Shirley E. Lacchia*
Carl J. and Joan E.* Latona Trust
Richard and Mickey Martin
Phillip J. May*
Jane McFadden*
Kris McVicar
Daniel and Lizzie Mills
Louis Nigg and Michele Eaddy
James D. Noble Trust*
Guilford R. Northrup Trust*
Lawrence and Candy Parker
John and Marcy Peiffer
Brian and Bonnie Philson
Claudia Remenar

Shirley Richards*
Armin Sage Roe Fund*
Grant* and Sandra Santimore
Earl W. Schuon*
Ruth E. Struble*
Janette Trachsel*
Elsie Trachsel*
Wayne Yanz*

*Deceased

BUSINESSES/ORGANIZATIONS \$1,000 OR MORE:

Acrisure (Lyman & Sheets)
AF Group
Auto Owners Insurance
Board of Water and Light
Colliers Engineering & Design
Dart Bank
Dean Transportation
Driven Collision
Easterly Law
Fahey Schultz Burzych Rhodes,
PLC
Financial Technology, Inc.
Fraser, Trebilcock, Davis & Dunlap,
PC
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Matrix Consulting Engineers
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LLC
MSU Federal Credit Union
Mutual of Omaha
NuWave Technology Partners
Plante Moran
Roman Capital Strategies
Stifel Financial Corporation
TRUE Community Credit Union
Vivid Ink
Wells Fargo Advisors
Wieland

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Bank of America Charitable Foundation
Capital Region Community Foundation
DAF Giving 360
Granger Foundation
Ingham County Bar Foundation
Jackson Community Foundation
Jackson National Life Insurance Company
Joe D. Pentecost Foundation
John George, Jr. Student Loan Fund
Lincoln Financial Foundation

Queen of the Miraculous Medal Parish
Rotary Club of Lansing Foundation
The Blackbaud Giving Fund
The James and Kimberly Currie Foundation
W.B. and Candace Thoman Foundation

TRIBUTE GIFTS IN MEMORY OF:

Fran Carr
Robert L. Drake
Joan Latona
Rita Neustifter



Brenda Cotton (second from left), **Elissa Slotkin** (left center), other Out-of-School Program directors

**BUSINESSES/ORGANIZATIONS
\$1 TO \$999:**

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LeRoy's Classic Bar & Grill
Mayotte Group Architects
Michigan Education Association
Mount Hope Community Church
Ministries
Nothing Bundt Cakes
Okemos-Saint Martha Council
No.10006
Paradise Motor Sales, Inc.
Serra Auto Campus
THA Architects Engineers
USAA
Williams Autoworld

INDIVIDUALS \$1,000+:

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Marilyn Baird
John Holmstrom and Theresa
Barnes-Holmstrom
Dr. Carol Beals
Sara and Jared Bennett
Jenny Bond
Elizabeth D. Boyd
David Brogan
Patricia A. Brown and Arnie
Greenfield
Rob Buffington
Cynthia Carr
The Carter Family
Gary Climes and Theresa
McKenna-Climes
Melanie Dart and David Howland
Amanda Denney
Robert and Sandy Detrisac
Nancy Drake Hurst
John L. Drake
Lisa Drake and Robert Brumbaugh
Robert and Talitha Easterly
Brandie and Wayne Ekren
Troy and Patricia Elliott
Mark and Brenda Emmert
James and Stacy Ensign
John and Cindy Evans
Michael and Trish Foster

Kenneth Frankland
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Alton Granger
Jerry Granger Gift Fund
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Bart and Karen Hawley
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Tom and Lisa Jelenek
Matt and Ashley Jex
Chad and Brooklyn Karsten
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Brian and Bonnie Philson
Drew and Claire Philson
Gregory and Debby Pincumbe
Elaine Putvin
Ronald and Melinda Risher
Chris Robinson
Jeffrey and Brooke Roman
David and Nancy Roush
Jacob and Elizabeth Sabins
Gerald Sambaer
Kevin and Shawna Shaw
Mary Ellen Sheets and Tom Amiss
Michael Sheets
Edward and Kendra St. John
Capt. Anthony Stewart
Joe Tearpock
Randy and Leigh Ann Thayer
Dennis and LuAnn Theis
Dan and Hope Thelen
Jeoffrey and Cheryl Thorrez
Mark and Nicole Tithof
David and Amanda Toy
Peter and Erika Tratt
Joel and Cheryl Walter
Jerrold and Sue Weiss
Mike and Nancy Zamiara
Stephen and Debra Zynda

INDIVIDUALS \$1 TO \$999:

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Kevin Acton
Amy Adamy
Gary Anderson
Michael and Carol Anderson
Rebecca Armstrong
Denise Arnesen
Jayne Asbury
Randy and Peg Asmus
Kelly Babcock
Paul Bajorek
Irene Baker
Ben Bakken
Brandi Bauer
Wayne and Claudia Beyea
Jennifer Binkley-Power
Justin Blake
Sherrie Blankenship
Gwendolyn Block
John Blosssey
Lisa Boone
Jacqueline Borszich
Tony Brandau
Melanie Brender
Mark and Kimberly Breukink
Anethia O. Brewer
Kelly Bristle
Peter C. Brown
Nicole Bryant
Robert Burgee
Donald Burnau
Renee Bush
Maxine Hankins Cain
Mari Calton
Honorable Clinton Canady III and
Rita Canady
Michael and Ruthanne Cantor
Danielle Cardinal
David and Leslie Carleton
Michelle Carpenter
A. R. Carter
Patricia Carter
Stella Cash
Kevin Chall
Michael and Kellee Christensen
Alfred Christian
Bill and Rosie Clark
Margherita Clark
James and Barbara Cleland
Justin and Erica Clement
David and Reva Coats
Paul and Tracy Collins
Eric Conn
Jennifer and Steven Crichton
Vickie Crouch





L-R: President/CEO Brian Philson, new Board members Fran Loose, Amanda Matelonek, Jeff Hicks, and Matt Getchell, and 2025 Board Chair Robert Saxton

Kristie Cutler
Khadija Dahir
Douglas and Luanne Dancer
Denise Daniel
Mike and Wendy Danko
Steven and Tracy Darnell
Sam Davis
Susan and Jack Davis Charitable
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Jason Hawkins
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Gregory Heckman
Margo Heiden
Elizabeth Henderson
Anthony Heriford
C. Richard Herrold
Jeff and Elizabeth Hertrich
Jeffrey Hicks

Ashley Higginson and Liam
Boylan-Pett
James and Jill Holden
Rose Homa
Timothy Homberg
Richard and Margaret Howard
Paul and Kelly Hudak
Cindy Hughey
Robert Hume
James and Krista Hunsanger
Christy Ishraidi
Steve Japinga
David and Laura Johnson
Timothy Johnson
Brent Johnston
Calvin Jones
Laura and Chris Jurasek
Roger and Meredith Kennedy
Richard and Claudia Kerbawy
Hari Kern
Catherine Kerwin
Louis and Joyce Kitchenmaster
Roni Klungle
Daniel and Therese Korson
Laura Kotasek
Anastasia Kreiner
Demphna Krikorian
Matt Kuschel
Steve Laird
Erin Lampani
Marilyn Latterman
Devin and Christi Lavengood
Carly Laverdiere
Gary Laverick
Adam Lesperance
Judith Lewandowski
Sara Lewis
Barbara Lezotte, Lezotte Miller,
Inc.
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Melodee Mabbitt
Angela Mabie
Wallace and Linda Markham
Emily Marsh
Olivia Martin and Jerry Muskat-
Martin
Sarah Martin-Fanone
Amanda Matelonek
Herb Mattis
Mark and Bonnie Matus
Teddi McAttee
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Applebee's
Art's Pub
BJ's Restaurant and Brewhouse



Highfields staff showing their college pride. L-R: Matt Rau, Darryl Scott, Tyler Jones, Ashley Crosser, Jimmie Harris



Highfields Building & Sites Committee stopped by to visit campus. L-R: Tom Reder, Brian Philson, Dan Korte, Robert Saxton, Ed St. John, Butch Dashner, Matt Getchell

Black Bear Golf Course
Boston's Pizza Restaurant and Sports Bar
Brookshire Inn and Golf Club
City Limits Bowling Center
Coffee Barrel
Cooper's Hawk Winery and Restaurant
Corey's Lounge
Crunchy's
Dagwood's
Detroit Tigers
Dollar General
Douglas J Aveda Institute
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Dusty's Cellar
Edru Skate-a-Rama
Eldorado Golf Course
Elemental Acupuncture
Fiesta Charra
Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park
Graze Craze
High Caliber Karting and Entertainment
Rose Homa
HopCat
Joe's on Jolly

John Ball Zoo
Doug Koons
Lansing Lugnuts
Leading Edge Golf
LeRoy's Classic Bar & Grill
Lucky's Steakhouse
Mabel Grey
MAC Legends
Meridian Sun Golf Club
Midtown Brewing
Morton's Catering
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Nuthouse
One North Kitchen & Bar
P.F. Changs
Peanut Barrel
People's Kitchen
Pizza House
Playmakers
Potter Park Zoo
Showroom Shine
Soup Spoon Café
Steakhouse Philly Bar and Grill
Sweet Encounter
The Purple Rose Theatre Company
Xgolf
ZapZone
Zynda's Restaurant



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so that we can correct it. Thank you.

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