

NEWS RELEASE



GRAND VALLEY METROPOLITAN COUNCIL
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GRAND RAPIDS, MI 49503

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| Contact: Gayle McCrath – GVMC Director of Human Resources and Administration 776-7613 | For Immediate Release March, 2004 |
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Grand Valley Metropolitan Council Offers Services to Area Schools to Help Educate Students in Local Government, Land Use, and Regional Issues.

GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN – The Grand Valley Metropolitan Council announced its partnership with West Michigan schools; as well as regional, state and national organizations, to help educate children in the areas of local government, land use, and regional issues. The Metro Council is promoting two curriculum programs: the Local Government Curriculum and “This Land is Your Land” land use curriculum. Additionally, GVMC will act as a clearing house to put educators in touch with local officials and experts on regional issues willing to speak in their classrooms.

The Local Government program was developed in a cooperative effort by the Michigan Local Government Management Association, Michigan Municipal League, and the Michigan Civics Institute. The program includes 13 lessons and is available to schools at no cost through the Michigan Civics Institutes web site at www.civicsinstitute.com. An in-service DVD is being produced to guide educators through the program and will be available by the Summer of 2004.

The curriculum has been designed specifically to augment current lesson plans by targeting social studies topic areas covered in the MEAP test. It was piloted in 32 schools this fall, with the goal of having the curriculum in 100 classrooms by the end of the 2003-04 school years.

The “This Land is Your Land” land use curriculum was developed by the MSU Extension and targets 3rd – 5th graders. The program is available free of charge to teachers through the MSU Extension.

Additionally, the Metro Council has established a database through which it can connect teachers with speakers representing a variety of local entities and regional issues.

GVMC believes that educating and engaging youth is critical in increasing the effectiveness of local government and bringing a higher quality of life to the area. GVMC’s services to area schools include the following:

- **Local Government Curriculum** - GVMC has partnered with the Civics Institute, MML, MTA, and MAC to offer a turn-key curriculum package and in-service program for teachers on local government. The program has been designed specifically to target knowledge areas covered in the MEAP test. The curriculum is available free of charge through the Civics Institute at www.civicsinstitute.com . An in-service program is currently being developed in a DVD format so that instructors can access it at their convenience. The in-service DVD is anticipated to be available by Fall of 2004.
- **Speakers – Elected Officials** - GVMC also works to pair schools and local officials who can speak from experience and offer first hand knowledge in local government administration and issues. To request a speaker – Contact Gayle McCrath at mccrathg@gvmc.org or 776.7613.
- **Speakers – Regional Issues** – GVMC is becoming this areas source for a great variety of information on the important issues facing our metropolitan region. Staff expertise covers subject areas such land use planning, demographics, transportation planning, data management and more. If you would like a presentation on any of these topics - Contact Gayle McCrath at mccrathg@gvmc.org or 776.7613
- **“This Land is Your Land,” Land Use Curriculum - MSU Extension.** The Kent MSU extension has developed a land use curriculum targeted at 3rd – 5th grades titled “This Land is Your Land.” The program is available to teachers free of charge from the Kent MSU Extension at <http://web4.msue.msu.edu/msuewc/kent/yourland/> .
- **Ozone Action** – GVMC and the West Michigan Clean Air Coalition are very active in the education of ground-level ozone and its effects on our health and the environment. Partnerships have been developed with businesses, educational institutions, government and non-profit groups to work together to achieve cleaner in the region through education and the promotion of voluntary emission reduction activities. Educational lesson plans have been developed for grades K-5, 6-8 and 9-12. To find the lesson plans or more about ground-level ozone, go to <http://www.wmcac.org>. To schedule a presentation to your class, scout troop, social organization, etc. contact Gayle McCrath at mccrathg@gvmc.org or 776.7613.
- **Amtrak / Westrain** – As a member of the Westrain Coalition, GVMC actively supports and promotes usage of Amtrak lines. Westrain is a passenger rail collaborative that promotes the Amtrak - Pere Marquette line in West Michigan. The train runs daily from Grand Rapids to Chicago while making stops along the way at Holland, St. Joseph/Benton Harbor, Bangor, and New Buffalo. To find out more about WESTRAIN go to <http://www.gvmc.org/transportation/Westrain.shtml> . To schedule a speaker on the benefits of Amtrak and/or Westrain, contact Gayle McCrath at mccrathg@gvmc.org or 776.7613.

For more information on GVMC and its services, go to www.gvmc.org.

GVMC Members – Please also distribute this news release to your elected officials.

The Grand Valley Metro Council (GVMC) is a regional organization dedicated to promoting cooperation and coordination among local governments in the metropolitan Grand Rapids area. Created in 1990, its membership now includes 32 local governments, representing nearly 665,000 people.

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