

2017-2018 ANNUAL REPORT

# IMPACT





“Never underestimate the power of dreams and the influence of the human spirit. We are all the same in this notion: The potential for greatness lives within each of us.”

— WILMA RUDOLPH

## INSPIRING HEARTS & MINDS

### FRIENDS & COLLEAGUES:

Olympic sprint champion and world-record holder Wilma Rudolph is a testament to the power of dreams. Known as the fastest woman in the world, Wilma had to overcome pneumonia, scarlet fever and polio as a child.

Polio had weakened her left leg and foot so much that she had to wear a leg brace. After years of therapy, Wilma learned to walk without the brace. She is famously quoted as saying, **“My doctor told me I would never walk again. My mother told me I would. I believed my mother.”**

Wilma’s story exemplifies why we are so passionate about inspiring hearts and minds. Like Wilma, we believe “greatness lives within each of us.”

This is why our team at the National Charter Schools Institute thrives on empowering people to grow and achieve more than they think possible. It’s also why we are so committed to our mission of inspiring, equipping and supporting people and organizations to achieve breakthrough performance.

We love what we do at the Institute and hope our annual report puts a smile in your heart. Please know our team is ever grateful for your support and encouragement. Together, we are making a difference for our kids and our country!

With best wishes,

W. Sidney (“Sid”) Smith  
Board Chair

James N. Goenner, Ph.D.  
President & CEO



“Life’s most persistent  
and urgent question is,  
‘What are YOU  
doing for **OTHERS**?’”

— MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

## OUR NATIONAL IMPACT

THE NATIONAL CHARTER SCHOOLS INSTITUTE is a mission-driven 501(c)3 non-profit organization whose core purpose is to inspire and democratize excellence in education.

We have a long history with the charter schools movement. Originally founded in 1995 as the Michigan Resource Center for Charter Schools at Central Michigan University, we transitioned into the Institute in 2001, after receiving \$1 million from the United States Congress to expand our programs and services nationally.

Today, we work across the country inspiring, equipping and supporting people and organizations to achieve breakthrough performance. Our hands-on coaching and consulting work, along with our speaking engagements, places us on the front lines with the thinkers and doers who are giving their all to improve the lives of students.



LEARN  
LEAD  
EDUCATE  
EQUIP  
INSPIRE  
**IMPACT**

Educating and reminding people that “chartering” is fundamentally about reimagining and redesigning public education so it works better for our kids and our country is core to our mission.

This is why we are so committed to advancing ideas and convening thought leaders. And it’s why we are leading the establishment of the National Charter Schools Research Library. By collecting the early charter pioneers’ original documents and oral histories, we aim to preserve history and share the lessons that will inform and impact the work of future generations.

Through Epicenter, our cloud-based performance management system, we are partnering with authorizers throughout the nation to strengthen oversight and accountability. Even better, Epicenter is saving valuable time and energy so authorizers, boards and schools can focus on what truly matters – preparing students to succeed in college, work and life.



# THE NATIONAL CHARTER SCHOOLS RESEARCH LIBRARY

Each state has a unique story as to how charters came to be. The goal of the National Charter Schools Research Library (“Library”) is to capture these stories, preserve them and make them digitally available to those interested in learning more about the movement’s important history.

Launched in partnership with Ember Reichgott Junge, the Minnesota State Senator who sponsored the nation’s first charter school law in 1991, the Library is becoming the home for primary source materials from around the country, documenting the origins and growth of chartering.

## TED KOLDERIE: IDEAS MATTER

One of the nation’s earliest and most influential thinkers and writers on the idea of chartering is Minnesota’s Ted Kolderie. Ted’s ideas have been embraced and diffused across the country. He’s shown countless policy and influence makers how chartering can be used to “challenge the givens” and transform public education into a “self-improving system.”

Proudly, we can report that Ted generously donated his treasure trove of documents – personal notes, letters, papers, and more – to the Library. He also allowed us to record his oral history, where he shared his recollections about people, policies, and events, along with his reflections and projections on the future of education and the necessity of empowering teachers to fully engage students and personalize learning.

Ted’s wisdom, ideas, and historical documents are priceless. Now through the Library, they are preserved and digitally accessible for the benefit of both current and future generations at [www.CharterInstitute.org/Library](http://www.CharterInstitute.org/Library).



Ted Kolderie



Ember Reichgott Junge



“A man may die, nations may rise and fall, but an idea lives on.”

— PRESIDENT JOHN F. KENNEDY

## SHARING A LEGACY

We began recording oral histories this year, with five completed and many more in progress. Through a partnership with Grand Valley State University in Michigan, oral histories from former GVSU Presidents Arend Lubbers, who launched GVSU’s chartering initiatives in 1995, and Mark Murray, who expanded this legacy, were recorded. Both exemplify the critical role that a university president can have in advancing and better connecting K-12 and higher education.



GVSU Records Oral Histories



Arend Lubbers



Mark Murray

## HELP ADVANCE THE LIBRARY

Three primary ways you can help advance the library:

1. Identify and connect us to early charter pioneers;
2. Share primary source materials and other historical records; and
3. Make a tax-deductible gift to advance the work of Library.

To get involved, contact [Library@CharterInstitute.org](mailto:Library@CharterInstitute.org)



## MAKING LEADERSHIP A VERB:

# leadership

verb | lead·er·ship | /lēdərSHĭp/

(1) The act of influencing people  
to achieve a common goal

(2) The art of aligning  
authorizers, boards, and  
schools to win for kids

## INSPIRING BOARDS

### RESOURCES AND EXPERTISE

Serving on the board of a charter school is an important public service. Board members volunteer their time and talents. They also have a fiduciary duty to ensure their school fulfills the terms of its charter contract and complies with applicable law.

Because we want everyone serving on a charter school board to have a rewarding and meaningful experience, our team is focused on equipping board members with the information and tools they need to govern for greatness.



Governing for greatness begins with a mindset. It's an attitude and outlook that we encourage all board members to embrace. We promote and equip boards to adopt Good to Great leadership author Jim Collins' definition of a great organization: "one that delivers superior performance and makes a distinctive impact over a long period of time."

Through our books and presentations, our consulting and coaching services, and our board policies service, we have the experience and expertise boards can count on to deliver results.

To order a copy of our newest book, Governing for Greatness, visit [www.CharterInstitute.org/books-publications](http://www.CharterInstitute.org/books-publications).





# EQUIPPING AUTHORIZERS

## STRATEGIES AND TOOLS

The charter strategy is fundamentally about improving public education by transforming it into a system of self-improving schools. Authorizers – the agencies authorized by state law with the power to grant charter contracts – play an instrumental role in how well the strategy gets implemented.

Great authorizers are catalysts for change and forces for quality. They understand authorizing is both an art and a science and requires professional judgement. It's challenging work and it's essential that it is done well for the long-term success and sustainability of the charter movement.

That's why our team is so energized about the work we do with authorizers around the country. Through our coaching and consulting services, we provide authorizers with the strategies and support they need to courageously challenge the givens and encourage innovation. And with our digital platform, Epicenter, we equip authorizers to streamline the regulatory reporting process so they, and the schools they charter, can focus on what truly matters – preparing students for success in college, work and life.



## ADVANCING GREAT AUTHORIZING

The U.S. Department of Education awarded the Institute a three-year federal grant for \$2.2 million to strengthen authorizing, encourage innovation, and promote rigorous and personalized performance measures.

The grant is called the “A-Game” – Advancing Great Authorizing & Modeling Excellence. It has a special focus on developing holistic performance measures that authorizers can use to oversee and evaluate schools that predominately serve alternative student populations.

Guided by a National Authorizer Leadership Team composed of experienced charter school authorizers, this grant will have national significance because of its groundbreaking work on mission-related performance measures and its focus on helping authorizers become performance-based agents of change and catalysts for excellence.



## FORCES FOR QUALITY

Willing to challenge the givens, these experienced authorizers compose the grant's National Authorizer Leadership Team:



California



Minnesota



Ohio



Illinois



Michigan



District of Columbia



Michigan



Florida



Nevada



New York



New York



“Serving as the project director for this grant provides a powerful opportunity to shape the future on how to best measure student and school performance. We will be relentless about developing and sharing solutions that are best in class as we work with these leading authorizers and our partners at Momentum Strategy and Research.”

— **CHERI SHANNON**  
Chief Strategy Officer  
National Charter Schools  
Institute



“This grant will help all charter public schools and their authorizers build smart and strong practices for children. The resources will impact our abilities to serve hundreds of thousands of students through robust and authentic sharing of what successful charter teachers and students are achieving every day.”

— **SUSIE MILLER CARELLO**  
Executive Director at SUNY Charter Schools Institute

# POWERING PERFORMANCE & PRODUCTIVITY

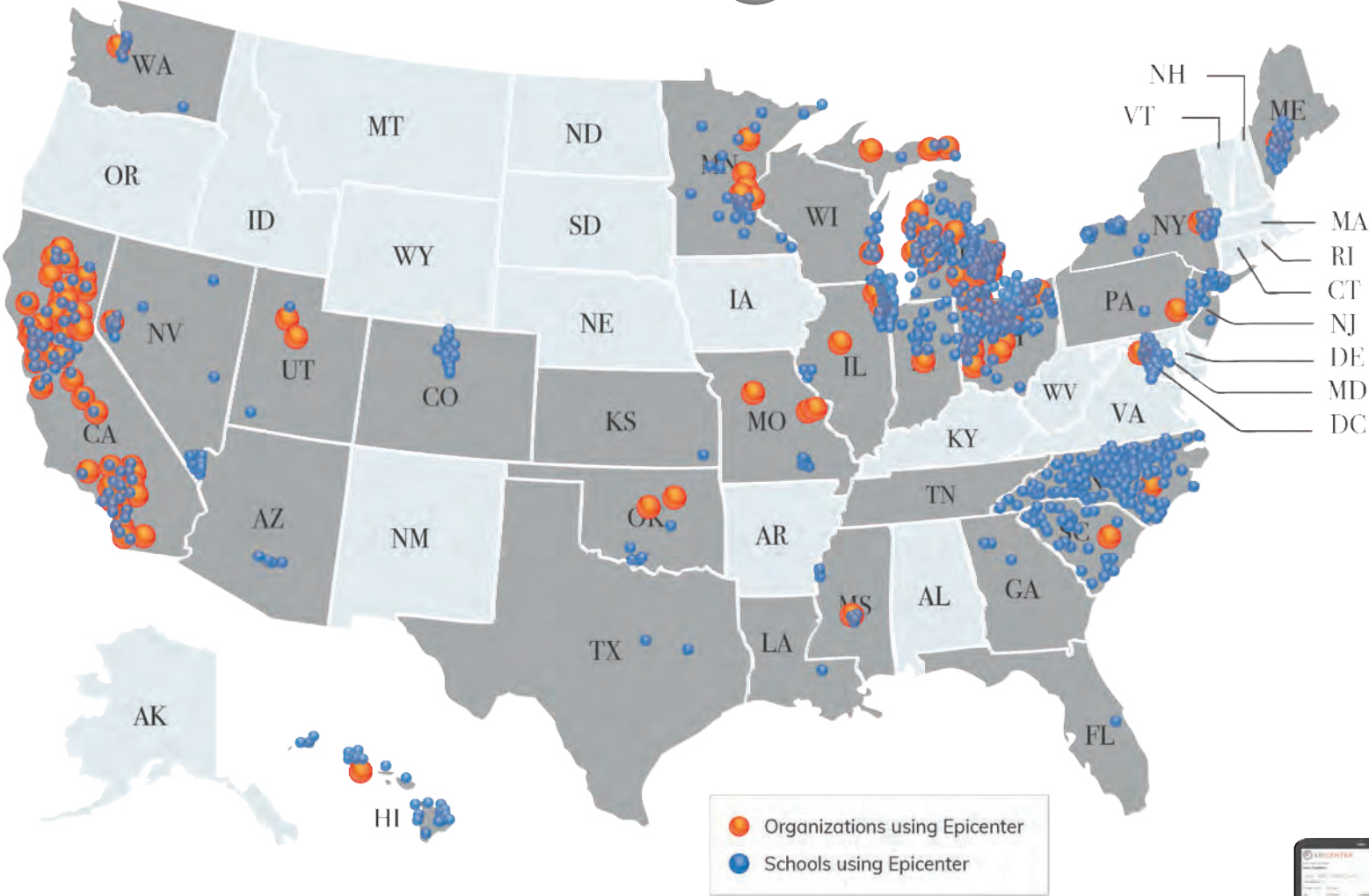
## EMPOWERING PEOPLE AND ORGANIZATIONS

We are passionate about equipping people and organizations with the tools they need to succeed. Through Epicenter – our cloud-based performance management system – we are able to do so at scale.

Deployed from Hawaii to Washington, D.C., organizations across the country are using Epicenter to streamline and automate the regulatory reporting process for boards, schools and management organizations. Currently, about 2,000 charter schools, serving about 750,000 students are using Epicenter to fulfill their accountability obligations and free up valuable time and energy to focus on the things that truly matter.

To us, Epicenter is really about empowering people to take ownership of their responsibilities. It builds organizational capacity and provides the peace of mind that comes with knowing you can demonstrate performance.

With Epicenter’s new Scorecard, organizations are able to ensure their process for setting standards and measuring performance is clear, customized, and transparent. And because we keep developing new features and functionalities, rest assured the best is yet to come. To learn more, visit [www.EpicenterNow.org](http://www.EpicenterNow.org).



“Epicenter transforms the authorizer-board-school relationship. It clarifies expectations, improves communications, and ends the paper chase. With the time that’s saved, OCCS can better fulfill our mission of being a student centered organization advocating excellence in education through strategic partnerships.”

— LENNY SCHAFER  
Executive Director  
Ohio Council of Community Schools





# SUPPORTING SCHOOLS



“Old Mission Peninsula School can be described in one word—community. We are proud to authorize this school and support those who lead it so families on the peninsula have a great educational option for their children in the community they love. With the Institute’s start-up support and ongoing coaching, the school opened strong and is a point of pride for the community.”

— ROBERT T. KIMBALL, ED.D.  
Associate Vice President  
for Charter Schools  
Grand Valley State University



## THE “NEW” OLD MISSION PENINSULA SCHOOL

The spirit of America is local citizens coming together, sharing their time and resources, and doing things that will benefit their community.

The Old Mission Peninsula School (“Old Mission”) exemplifies this community spirit. Nestled within orchards and vineyards in northwest Michigan, records show education has been a priority for those living and working on the peninsula dating back to the 1850s when they established their first school.

When the local school district decided to close the school because its small size was a budget drain, the community was distraught. In response, a diverse group of concerned citizens came together and began to take action to save their school. They created a foundation – Old Mission Peninsula Education Foundation – and started raising money to buy the building. They knew they were also going to need a charter and that’s when they connected with the Institute.

Engaging with and supporting Old Mission’s founding team through the charter application process, board formation, facility preparations, student and teacher recruitment and start-up challenges was an honor. Tears of joy and accomplishment were shared when the “new” Old Mission school welcomed its inaugural class of 130 elementary students.

As the illustrious quote says, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.” To learn more, visit [www.OMPSchool.org](http://www.OMPSchool.org).



“For more than two years, the Institute’s team helped us prepare to apply for a charter from Central Michigan University. They’re experts at navigating Michigan’s charter landscape and were invaluable in facilitating introductions for us at the state and local levels.”

— VALERIE J. CHASE | VP School Development at Learn4Life



## FLEX HIGH SCHOOL OF MICHIGAN

Charter schools exist to provide options for students and families. And for some of our most challenged students, they need a school that is truly flexible and willing to help them learn and earn a diploma, while also navigating difficult and challenging lives.

That’s why we were so excited about the opportunity to support the establishment of Flex High in Flint, Michigan. Chartered by Central Michigan University, it promises to be a difference maker by providing hope and opportunity for its students.

Serving teens and young adults who have dropped out, been expelled, or are experiencing other hardships, Flex High is designed to offer

them hope, encouragement, and a learning environment that allows them to change their story and their future.

Using a unique dropout recovery model developed by Learn4Life, a non-profit organization serving tens of thousands of students in California, Flex High makes it possible for students to earn a high school diploma in a personalized program suited to their unique circumstances.

Guided by caring teachers and mentors, students get to move at their own pace and are carefully monitored to ensure they have the tools and support they need to earn their diploma and pursue their dreams.

To learn more, visit [www.FlexHighMichigan.org](http://www.FlexHighMichigan.org).







Photos by Central Michigan University

## PRESIDENT GEORGE ROSS

### THE POWER OF EDUCATION

Education transforms lives. He's said it. He's also lived it.

Institute Board member and recently retired president of Central Michigan University, Dr. George E. Ross is a living testament to the transformative power of education. George spent much of his childhood in Flint, moving to the city at the age of 13. George's family was on public assistance and didn't have much. His father drove a city bus and none of his older siblings graduated from high school.

One of 12 children, George considered dropping out as well. But at the advice, or more fittingly the demand, of his high school math teacher that he not only graduate but continue his education after high school, George buckled down. He went on to graduate from Flint Northern High School and then earned bachelor's and master's degrees in business administration from Michigan State University and a Ph.D. in higher education administration from the University of Alabama.

Prior to being named CMU's 14th president in 2010, George served as president of Alcorn State University in Mississippi, which was founded in 1871 as the first black land-grant college in the United States.

"The ability to learn and keep asking questions is the key to success," George says. **"I tell students, 'We owe you two things: knowledge and character.' It's not only what you learn in class, it's what you find in yourself."**

George and his wife Elizabeth welcomed their first grandchild into the world last December. "I suspect my mind was made up to retire the moment he wrapped his tiny fingers around mine."

The Institute will forever be grateful for George and Elizabeth's service, friendship, grace and wisdom.

*Partially adapted from Centralight Summer 2018:  
<https://www.cmich.edu/news/article/Pages/President-Ross-profile.aspx>*



"George Ross is a true leader. He

has a heart for kids, is a man of character, and a steadfast champion for excellence in education. We are grateful for his service on the Institute's Board."

— W. SIDNEY SMITH  
Chair, National Charter Schools  
Institute & Former Chair of the  
Central Michigan University Board of  
Trustees



# ENCOURAGING STUDENTS

At the Institute, we strive to encourage kids to dream big and succeed in life. To achieve this, we sponsor a series of contests to give charter school students a chance to share their stories and start thinking about their futures. Over the past three years, we’ve been impressed with the creativity and ambition these students have shown us! See the complete collection of winning artwork and essays at [www.CharterInstitute.org/ArtContest](http://www.CharterInstitute.org/ArtContest) and [www.CharterInstitute.org/EssayContest](http://www.CharterInstitute.org/EssayContest).



2017 Art Contest judging



2017 Art Contest "school-wide" winners from The Midland Academy of Advanced and Creative Studies



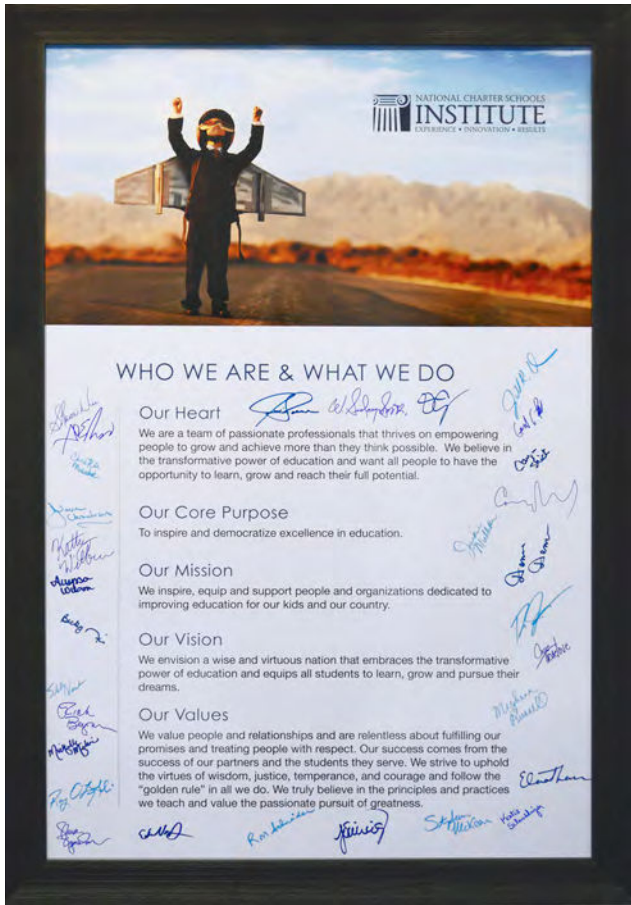
2017 Art Contest 1st, 2nd and 3rd place winners

1 **Zachary Haigler**  
Chandler Woods Charter Academy | 4<sup>th</sup> Grade

2 **Ria Bakshi**  
Cambridge Lakes Charter School | 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade

3 **Leonardo Navarro**  
Academy for Global Citizenship | 5<sup>th</sup> Grade





# A HEART FOR PEOPLE

## LIVING "OUR VALUES"

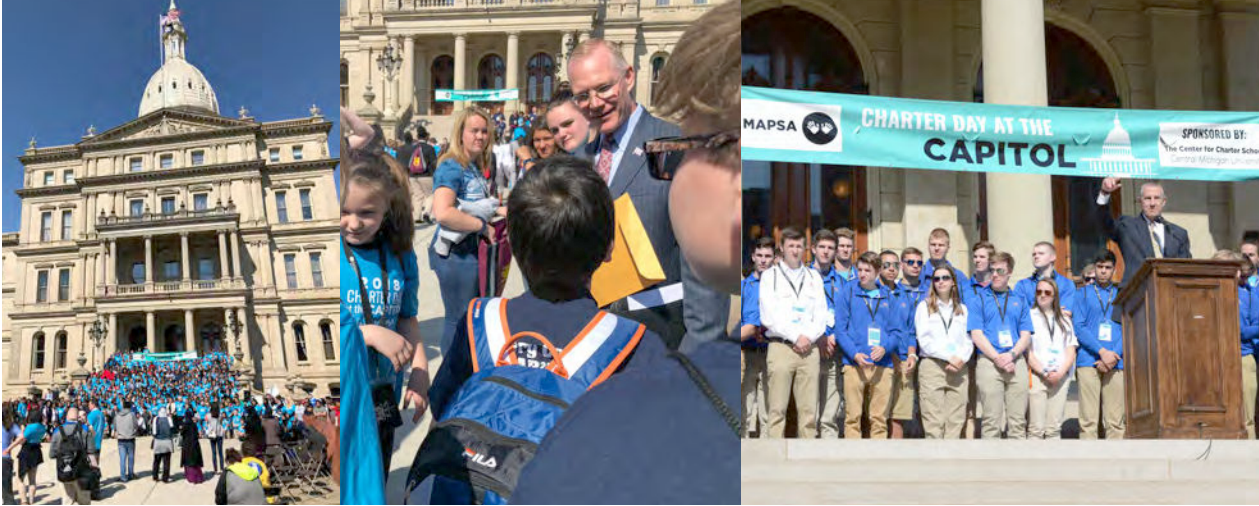
At the National Charter Schools Institute, we continuously aspire to live up to our mission and values. We take these seriously and use them to guide our behaviors and actions. That's why when new board and team members join us, they sign their name to our declaration of **who we are and what we do** that is displayed prominently on our wall.

Each year our team participates in several community outreaches. This year we were honored to help with the Holiday Outreach of Isabella County, Special Olympics Michigan and National Charter Schools Day at Michigan's Capitol, to name a few.

"People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care."

— PRESIDENT THEODORE ROOSEVELT

Charter Day at the Capitol



Special Olympics Michigan. Hosted at Central Michigan University



Holiday Outreach of Isabella County





# OUR BOARD & LEADERSHIP

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George E. Ross, Ph.D.



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# OUR TEAM

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Becky Nix  
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Authorizer Support



Kim Wells  
Academic Performance





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711 WEST PICKARD STREET, SUITE M, MOUNT PLEASANT, MICHIGAN 48858  
(989) 317-3510 | [WWW.CHARTERINSTITUTE.ORG](http://WWW.CHARTERINSTITUTE.ORG)