



# The Carillon

The Official Newsletter of the  
Caledonia Education Foundation

Fall 2012

## Kenneth Gackler Named 2012 CEF Honored Alumnus



The Caledonia Education Foundation is pleased to honor Ken Gackler, CHS Class of 1955, as its 2012 Honored Alumnus for his many years of teaching, working, and serving in the Caledonia Community and Schools. Ken will be honored on Sept. 28, 2012, at the Annual Foundation Fest Tailgate Party held before the Homecoming Game.

Ken's roots are firmly planted in Caledonia. His great grandfather owned the first village blacksmith shop soon after the railroad was built from Jackson to Grand Rapids. In 1875, the first family home and 40 acres of land was purchased by his great grandfather, George Geib Sr., and Ken's current home stands today on a piece of that land.

Ken admits he wasn't interested much in school until his 6th grade teacher, Mr. Jacob Alderink, made history classes come alive. It caught his attention and eventually led him to teaching. In high school and during the

summer months, he worked in his father's grocery store, Gackler's Spartan Store.

Ken became interested in electronics and earned degrees in both electrical engineering and business administration from Tri-State College in Indiana. He worked in the production control department of Lear Corporation and AMI/Rowe AC in the early 1960's before being approached by Ray Aley who was the current Superintendent of Caledonia Schools. Ken was a Scoutmaster of Caledonia Troop 202 and had Ray's sons in his troop. Ray noticed Ken's teaching ability and offered him a job teaching a 4th/5th combined class at Dutton Elementary. Ken went back to school and obtained his Master's in Education as well as his State of Michigan Teacher Certification.

Ken taught at Dutton for another 2 years before transferring over to Caledonia Elementary where he taught until 1982. During this time, the first Apple II personal computer came out and in the Spring of 1977, Ken bought one and was the first teacher to introduce it into the classroom for students to use to work math problems. The following year along with the help of the PTO, he helped purchase the first

PET computers for the district.

Ken's passion for serving led him to be a volunteer counselor at a summer camp, Camp Albright. He met Nolan Hudson, a Ferris State University Professor and the two of them started a math and computer camp for 4th through 8th graders. The camp evolved and lasted for 24 years.

Ken left teaching after 16 years in the district to pursue a dream of his to bring cable television to Caledonia and the surrounding areas. After meeting with companies that build small communities, seeking written ordinances and establishing the needed franchises, the local access channel was established and run right out of Ken's home. He would video tape school activities, musicals, and sports activities to broadcast. He hired local Michigan Bell employees to install cable television with 13 channels in people's homes. Ken grew the business by expanding the service to Alto, Cascade, Gaines Township and Green Lake. In 1990, he sold the company.

Ken not only ran a successful business but served the community in many other ways. He is a 4th generation member of the Leighton United Methodist Church where he serves as the church's historian. He joined the Boy Scouts at a young



Ken with his Silver Beaver Award

age, continued participation throughout his school years and then went on to mentor young boys for 20 years as the longest serving Scoutmaster of Caledonia Troop 202. As a Scoutmaster, he was honored with the Silver Beaver Award for excellence in service to scouts. Ken ran for public office and spent 12 years on the Caledonia Township Board. In addition, Ken helped start both the AMBUCS and Caledonia Kiwanis chapters and was instrumental in many service projects with both organizations.

Ken's love for history shows in his involvement with the Historical Commission that helped restore the Barber Schoolhouse and the Historical Society where he produced 20 historical newspapers over a 3 year period (copies of which are at the Caledonia library). Ken also helped to establish the history room in the library and can be frequently found reading and working there.

As if that was not enough, Ken served as treasurer for both the North Country Trails Association and the West Michigan Genealogy  
*see Gackler page 7*

## 2012 CEF Scholarships continued

### Congratulations to Andrea Pattison Recipient of the Millard and Eva Engle Scholarship



Andrea Pattison with Jessica Kohn

The Millard and Evan Engle Scholarship was established in 2010 by their children, Virginia Smith and James Engle, to honor the 43 years of service they contributed to the Caledonia Community Schools. The scholarship is presented annually to a graduating CHS Senior who will be pursuing a college degree in education.

Andrea has enrolled this fall at Grand Valley State University to pursue a major in elementary education with an emphasis on math and science. She hopes to teach children in Caledonia or another nearby district and positively impact them to help them reach their goals.

#### *Gackler-continued from page 1*

Society where he was honored with an award established in his name in 2002.

Ken was single for much of his life and accomplished many extraordinary things, but his face lights up as he talks about his wife, Joyce, whom he married in 1992 at age 55. They met working on a church planning committee together and found they had many things in common. They just celebrated their 20th anniversary this past August. Ken gained three step-daughters and has five grandchildren.

Joyce just retired as a Pastor serving Plainfield United Methodist Church and is hoping to pursue a doctorate degree this fall. Ken continues to serve with several of the organizations mentioned and doesn't plan on slowing down anytime soon.



Kenneth "Ken" Gackler  
CHS Class of 1955

Ken and Joyce enjoy spending their winters in Sedona, Arizona.

When Ken is not volunteering for one of the many organizations he enjoys, he spends time recording and watching classic movies and radio programs from the 40's and 50's. He

has seen technology change over the years but has fond memories of utilizing reel to reel recorders and basic cassette tapes.

Ken is grateful for Caledonia and is proud to be a 4th generation resident. He lived in Ada for a while but it did not feel like home to him. He stated, "All of these things I did, I wouldn't have done in another area." Caledonia is blessed to have such a kind, caring man who truly has a heart for others. He continues to encourage young people today. "Get as much education as you can and take on the opportunities that come your way." Ken did just that and has enriched many lives along his path. The Caledonia Education Foundation salutes Ken for his life-long dedication of service to the Caledonia Community and School District.



Ken (first row, third person) on a scouting trip in 1966 to Philmont Scout Ranch with members of his troop



Serving as Scoutmaster, Ken presented the Eagle Scout Award to troop 202 member Tom Gordon