

# Press Release

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## Monica Verplank Honored as 2022 Chamber Spirit of Community Award Recipient

**Grand Haven, MI** - The Chamber of Commerce Grand Haven, Spring Lake, Ferrysburg Spirit of Community Award was presented to Monica Verplank at the Annual Chamber Celebration held at Spring Lake Country Club. The award honoring the community spirit of the late Daryl DuBridge was presented by Megan Doss, Chamber of Commerce Board Member and 2012 Spirit of Community Award Recipient. The Spirit of Community Award acknowledges individuals that provide valuable service by devoting time and energy to improve the quality of life for others in the community and who demonstrate leadership and initiative in the development of volunteer projects.

As a quiet, most times behind the scenes community leader, Monica is always aware of the world around us and focuses her leadership skills on helping people understand how they can improve not only the community's quality of life, but their own as well. A graduate of Spring Lake High School, she earned her B.A. in Education from the University of Arizona and holds her M.A. from Northern Arizona University in Multicultural Education and a B.A. from the University of Arizona in Elementary Education. She is a certified instructor of meditation and yoga through the Chopra Center for Wellbeing as well as certification from several other wellness organizations.

Monica has been an educator extraordinaire since beginning as an elementary school teacher and over the next 12 years touching many students lives as the Assistant Superintendent of Instructional Services in the Grand Haven Area Public School System. Leaving education to focus on family, Monica found ways to apply her leadership training and love of lifelong learning in new directions. As a trustee of the Grand Haven Area Community Foundation, she was integrally involved in the formation of Tri-Cities College Access Network guiding committee members in development and implementation of programs that increase real world experiences in classroom learning and assisting students and parents in focusing on continuing education post high school.

With a growing family, Monica applied her wellness training with her career in education and leadership development teaching classes for hospice staff workers, helping them find balance and reduce stress in the important roles they have serving patients. She provided hours of mindfulness training to hundreds of community members and students and leads guided meditation classes throughout the years. Knowing there had to be a way to reach more people, Monica gathered a group of community leaders representing business, medical, philanthropic and wellness sectors to form the North Ottawa Wellness Foundation. This coalition and Monica's vision led to publishing "In The MOMENT" a beautifully illustrated book to help readers learn to embrace and respond to everyday stressful moments, a guide about Real Food & Nutrition along with resources for healthy living is available for download on the Wellness Foundations website.

Monica is an avid supporter of Ottawa County Parks and co-chairs the Grand River Greenway Capital Campaign. She has served on many local boards including the North Bank Communities Fund, Grand Haven Area Community Foundation and the OAISD Education Fund. She is currently working with Momentum Center on Mindfulness and Pathfinders of Muskegon providing mentorship for program development.

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