



*A message from the candidate...*

Welcome to my website! I am so glad that you have logged on to check out my campaign and hopefully learn a little bit more about me.

I was born Joan Yasenchak in Dearborn, Michigan, to blue-collar, Roman Catholic, Polish/Slovak parents who were second-generation Americans. My parents taught me what they believed; they believed in strong family values, the power of the human spirit, the importance of education and acceptance of all people....values I still believe in today. I also know that it is my responsibility as an individual to contribute to my community. I acquired my strong work ethic from my father, my spirit and determination from my mother.

From the first day of Kindergarten with Mrs. Shane, I knew that I wanted to be a teacher. In order to achieve that goal, I went to Eastern Michigan University to receive my Bachelor of Arts Degree in Elementary Education in 1971, and a few years later my

Master of Arts Degree in Educational Leadership. I continued my education by taking my doctoral classes at Wayne State University.

During that time in 1972 I married my college sweetheart Fred Gebhardt. I also was hired into my first teaching position in the Taylor School District. Teaching positions were as scarce as they are now, but I was determined to teach and be an advocate for children.

After 10 years teaching in various elementary grade levels, I was appointed an elementary principal in 1979 and had the distinction of being the youngest female principal in the history of the Taylor School District. Soon afterward my children, Steven and Jennifer, were born in 1981 and 1984, respectfully.

Near the end of my career in Taylor, I was elected the President of the Taylor Principals Association as the first woman to ever serve in that role. I had always been involved in union activities as a teacher, serving on various committees including the political action committee. I worked on several successful school board members and millage election campaigns. I was also appointed as the District Coordinator for a bond issue.

My last year was spent in Armada Area Schools working with my true love – the little ones. I was appointed the Early Elementary Principal in a K-2 elementary school and was the Director of the Child Care and Pre-School Programs. I then retired after 31 rewarding years in public education.

I immediately volunteered for the *Granholm for Governor* campaign and was able to help elect the first female Governor in Michigan's history. The following year I worked for the *Michigan John Kerry for President* campaign. As the office manager/volunteer coordinator in the Southfield Michigan office I

had an important part in helping John Kerry be victorious in the Michigan Primary.

That same fall I also became an Adjunct Professor at Madonna University where I taught “teaching methods” classes to pre-student teachers. I was a student teacher supervisor the following semester. I liked being able to use my education skills to help students become great teachers.

After the Presidential primary, I volunteered for *Marilyn Kelly for the Supreme Court* campaign working as her part-time scheduler and driver. While working on these three successful campaigns, I realized that I would like to have the opportunity to contribute to my community in a more direct manner. As a result I became interested in personally serving in the political arena. Thus, I started on my quest to become the 19<sup>th</sup> District State Representative from Livonia. With your help, we can make a difference.

Sincerely,

**Joan Gebhardt**