

Index - Oakridge High School - 125 Letters of Support

Bob Wood - August & September 2013

When the knowledge of my minimally effective evaluation was made public in the Summer of 2013, several students and parents in the Oakridge School District, worried that I might be fired or transferred, came to my defense. The following 125 individuals wrote letters of support regarding their experience with me as a student or a parent. You may contact any of the said individuals at their noted email address or Facebook listing concerning their published letter.

by Bob Wood 1/19/2014

1	Angel (Adams) Dean	1994	aaronandangel@mac.com
2	Kaitlyn Anderson	2013	kaitlynanderson310@gmail.com
3	Amanda (Billings) Snyder	2002	friendofp13@gmail.com
4	Isaac Bourne	2003	isaac.bourne88@gmail.com
5	Jordan Bourne	2008	mrjordanbourne@gmail.com
6	Melissa (Brackenrich) Black	2000	mblackmer311@gmail.com
7	Katherine Braspeninx	2008	kbraspen@gmail.com
8	Aaron Brown	2007	aaronbrownwmu@gmail.com
9	Krystina Calkins	2007	trackstar207@hotmail.com
10	Shelby (Cardinal) Dreyer	2010	dreyersh@mail.gvsu.edu
<hr/>			
11	Adam Carlson	2000	agcarlson1@gmail.com
12	Kelly (Morse) Carlson	2001	kellycarlson55@comcast.net
13	Tyler Carr	2013	huntingislife18@gmail.com
14	Zachary Carson	2006	zachary_carson@rocketmail.com
15	Danita Cook	2005	danita.cook@gmail.com
16	Stephanie (Craine) Maue	2009	stephanie.maue@yahoo.com
17	Devyn Crane	2010	cheer1992@verizon.net

18	Angelyne Cruz	2009	robertlee1991.ac@gmail.com
19	Thomas Dalum	2013	tjdalum@gmail.com
20	Tina Esparza	parent	tina@wilkandson.com

21	Torrey Esparza	2010	Tesparza3030@comcast.net
22	Amber (Evans) Ponce	2002	ponce.amber@gmail.com
23	Nikki Foster	2007	arsenic_wishes@yahoo.com
24	Sammantha Fox	2012	samantha.rae.fox@gmail.com
25	Thomas J. Frazier	2004	frazie95@mail.msu.edu
26	Stacy Galdeen	2009	stacygaldeen@gmail.com
27	Alberto Garza	2013	thealbertogarza@gmail.com
28	Brittany Gee	2007	brittany2337@gmail.com
29	Branden Gemzer	1999	gemzerb@yahoo.com
30	Eric Gemzer	2013	ericjgemzer@gmail.com

31	Maranda (Gemzer) Thompson	2003	mgemzer1010@gmail.com
32	Lyndsey (Gibson) Bensel	2005	gibsonl6@students.wwu.edu
33	Jared & Chevonne Grimm	2001	facebook (jared grimm)
34	Rebecca Hall	2009	horserunner09@hotmail.com
35	Kassandra (Hanchera) Dean	2009	hanchera@msu.edu
36	Sierra Hanchera	2013	hanchesl@mail.gvsu.edu
37	Jennifer Hardenburg	2007	jlh1718@gmail.com
38	Brent Hartman	2007	hartman4oakridge@aol.com
39	Heather Havermans	2001	heather.havermans@yahoo.co.uk
40	Mike Haynes	1999	mikehaynes21@gmail.com

41	Amanda Hentsch	2010	hentscam@mail.gvsu.edu
42	Jordan Holter	2007	holterj@mail.gvsu.edu
43	Anastasia Huber	1999	vera.vague@yahoo.com
44	Meagan Humphrey	2002	meaganhumphrey@yahoo.com
45	Alexandra (Ickes) Norris	2009	lexi.ickes@hotmail.com
46	Shellie (James) Kamminga	1998	facebook (shellie kamminga)
47	Zachary Jenkins	2013	zacharyjenkins1@gmail.com
48	Lea Jensen	2000	lea_m_jensen@yahoo.com S
49	Alex Johnston	2013	alexanderjohnston16@gmail.com
50	Kaci (McDonald) Kamaloski	2000	kkamaloski@filercu.com

51	Steve Kowalkowski	1999	bigskeeto1@yahoo.com
52	Elizabeth (Kepner) Pierce	2001	elizabeth@ldspierce.net
53	Haley Knight	2013	hknight7464@gmail.com
54	Hunter Koster	2012	facebook (hunter koster)
55	Elizabeth LaRue	2006	elarue@purdue.edu
56	Sarah LaRue	2009	Sarah.Nursing.2014@msn.com
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60	Chad Lazarock	2013	clazarock@gmail.com

61	Amanda Grace Lewis	2013	facebook (grace lewis)
62	Kaylie Locke	2009	Klocke09@gmail.com
63	Katie MacPherson	1999	katie@wohlanderlaw.com

64 Jason McVoy - Principal at Oakridge High School (February 28, 2013)

65	Almanda Molter	2013	almandaterese@gmail.com
66	Christine Moore	parent	christine.moore73@yahoo.com
67	Emily Morgan	2013	emiannmo@gmail.com
68	Angelina Mosher	2009	am0913@icloud.com
69	Gladys Mosher	parent	openwindows05@aol.com
70	Bonnie Musser	parent	bonmus23@yahoo.com

71	Sara Musser	2013	smusser38@gmail.com
72	Kimberly (Adams) Nguyen	2000	kimberlyn1212@gmail.com
73	Laura Ogren	community	Laura.ogren@hotmail.com
74	Chaz Ondrejka	2013	chazondrejka@gmail.com
75	Dawn Parks	parent	(231) 788-3333
76	Kaily Parks	2007	parkskai@msu.edu
77	Megan Parks	2003	mparks@daymarkrecovery.org
78	Jillian Pastoor	2000	jillian.pastoor@gmail.com
79	Brittney Patino	2011	b.patino3709@gmail.com
80	Sarah Pennell	2013	sarahmarie.penell@gmail.com

81	Sharron Pennell	parent	(231) 215-9882
82	Laura Petäjistö	2009	laura.petajisto@hotmail.com
83	Sarah Powell	2007	facebook (Sarah Powell)
84	Aaron Ponce	2006	pulpfaction06@gmail.com
85	Laura Prescott	2005	cheeringurl05@yahoo.com
86	Mike Roomsburg	2003	mroomsburg@joco911.org
87	Kristin (Rodgers) Dooley	2000	kdooley314@gmail.com
88	Justin Rosema	1995	jrosema42@frontier.com
89	Amber (Tompkins) Schaner	2004	aschaner1424@gmail.com
90	Meghan Scott	2002	meg_s22@hotmail.com

91	Michelle Shafer	2011	shafermi@mail.gvsu.edu
92	Kyle Short	2008	shortk23@gmail.com
93	April Shunk	2008	april.j.shunk@wmich.edu
94	Gary Simmons	2011	facebook (Gary Simmons)
95	Sammantha Smith	2009	samanthakay0124@aim.com
96	Rachel Stewart	2010	rachelemestewart@comcast.net
97	Autumn Storm	2009	autumn.storm@muskegoncc.edu
98	Corey Swanson	2009	corswans@nmu.edu
99	Nyssa Swanson	2010	oakridgesweetheart@yahoo.com
100	Jake Tardani	2004	jtardani@yahoo.com

101	Kimburley Timlin	2004	kimburleytimlin@gmail.com
102	Cassie Jo Vandermolen	2005	jovandermolen@rocketmail.com
103	Angela (Vitto) Swanson	2004	angela_vitto@ben.edu

104	Steve Vitto	parent	vittosteve@yahoo.com
105	Celeste Wackerly	2009	Celeste.wackerle@muskegoncc.edu
106	Nick Waldo	2004	pilotwaldo@aol.com
107	Jennifer Way	1997	jenway80@hotmail.com
108	Ashley Weaver	2013	aweaver30soccer@gmail.com
109	Savannah Weaver	2009	weaverz5@yahoo.com
110	Lyanne Wesley	2006	Misslyanne1@hotmail.com

111	Terrance (T.J.) Williams	2003	terrence@thewvfoundation.org
112	Amber Wilson	2006	awilson313@hotmail.com
113	Jule Wolf	2012	julika.wolf@yfu-deutschland.de
114	Autumn Woods	2010	fireflies2010@aol.com
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118	Alecia Hostetler	2011	alicia.hostetler@gmail.com
119	Jamie Russell	1996	jrehko01@baker.edu
120	Kerstin Boomba	2009	kerstinbomba@web.de

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122	Alex Wharton	2013	pwharton@live.com
123	Peter Wharton	grandfather	pwharton@live.com
124	Haley North	2013	miko.raizo.omechi@gmail.com
125	Sascha Sale	2013	saschi.se@googlemail.com

#1 - Angel Adams c/o 1994

August 30, 2013

Dear concerned,

I am a graduate of Oakridge Public Schools (1994), and attended my entire school career. I am a teacher now myself and have been employed as a high school English teacher with Grand Haven Area Public Schools for the last eight years. I have a strong reputation with both students and staff, have received several awards, and am advisor for the National Honor Society. I teach both struggling at-risk learners and accelerated honors students. I teach primarily core classes and several electives.

I was raised in what many would call "poverty". I received free and reduced lunch, my mother and father both working in blue collar jobs to put themselves through college as my sister and I grew up. I am the first person in my family to graduate from college before having children and only the third person after my own parents. My upbringing was not easy, but I felt love at home and was surrounded by literature and nature and a strong work ethic was instilled in me from the beginning. But parents alone cannot give their kids all the resources they need to break through barriers of poverty, gender, geography, and other limitations. This is where teachers come in.

Every day I teach my students to look within themselves for strength, to believe in themselves, and to trust me to help. I teach students with the same barriers I faced every day. Do you know how I know to do this? Teachers such as Bob Wood. I can tick off on my fingers those teachers who showed me what it means to believe in myself, to be strong, to not be a quitter, and to see beyond my immediate situation and have hope for the future. Bob Wood was one of them. Not only did he, and a handful of others at Oakridge give me this gift, they also gave me the tools to be successful in my continuing education. I was hungry for knowledge and a different future than others in my family or in my class. I succeeded in large part due to my educators like Mr. Wood at OHS.

I was a different kid. I didn't really fit in to the Oakridge paradigm. I had a tight-knit group of friends at the time, but overall felt relatively misunderstood, "different," and overlooked a lot of the time. I looked to my teachers for direction and support and received mixed responses (or no response at all). However, there were several who did respond. Mr. Wood was one of these. He saw things differently - saw me differently - and pushed me. I didn't feel that I had to agree with him, but I learned the important lesson of supporting my position and respecting others' rights to their opinions. He encouraged discussion and debate, curiosity, and diligence to the task. These qualities are so important to life and very few classes at that time did this! I continue the legacy of my good teachers at OPS by choosing this field myself and teaching from a similar standpoint. It's a hard job, getting more difficult even as I type this, but luckily I have an administration that supports me even as they probably don't always understand my approach. We have many "rogue" teachers at our high school, but we reach kids. We teach curriculum, certainly, but we are also independent thinkers who encourage independent thinking. In my experience, Mr. Wood was such a teacher himself. We can only teach this way with support.

Please understand that I speak highly of Oakridge to my students and their families. It is a close-knit community, fierce and loyal and protective of its own. This does not mean to protect only

those who fit in, who maintain the status quo, however. I speak of teachers Mr. Wood, Mrs. Hartsema (1st grade), Mrs. Frantz/Gregg, Mrs. Klinger (5th grade) and Mr. Weller with great fondness, and often tears, when I speak of individuals who helped me see that I was special, not "different," and had something to offer, and who also upheld standards of rigor and excellence. I had many more teachers who did not, unfortunately. I use them as examples also. I see Mr. Wood's kids writing into The Chronicle, taking positions on issues that matter, whether or not we might agree with them. I remember understanding the war in the middle east, which I use to help instruct my students in my Honors World Literature courses now. I cared about my education because someone cared about me. It is a gift to have teachers who care about the fringe kid and who are passionate about creating lifelong learners and responsible, caring citizens.

Thank you for your time in reading this letter. It is not often we take the opportunity to say thank you to those who have made an impact on our lives.

Regards,
Angel Dean (Adams)
Grand Haven High School
616/850.6251 (w)
616/405.4321 (c)
Aaron and Angel aaronandangel@mac.com

#2 - Kaitlyn Anderson c/o 2013

August 23, 2013

Dear Oakridge Administrative Board,

My name is Kaitlyn Anderson and I am a graduate of the class of 2013. I had the privilege to have Mr. Wood as a teacher my junior year of high school. I had him for government and economics. I personally enjoyed government better than economics only because it was so much more interesting. I did things I never did before and probably never would have done if it wasn't for Mr. Wood. We had an assignment that lasted all semester. I was in a group with two other girls. We had to come up with an issue we felt strongly about. My group and I protested in the middle of winter for our issue. Mr. Wood joined us as well. I never would have went out and protested if it wasn't for our group project but I enjoyed it because it was fun making signs and helping other people be aware of our issue.

Mr. Wood not only helped me with my education. He also helped me with my personal life. Unfortunately, I got kicked out of my house my junior year of high school as well. I moved in with one of my close friends but I was getting to the point where I did not even want to come to school because I felt like, "what is the point?". Mr. Wood noticed that I was not acting how I normally did in class. He kept me after one day and asked me what was going on. I then began to tell him what was wrong and he gave me some good advice. He checked on me continuously throughout the year making sure I was OK. I feel as though Mr. Wood is one of few teachers that really care about the students and not their paychecks. I mean he put together a protest to help with the teachers of Oakridge. Why would you want to get rid of someone who truly has a great heart and only wants the best for his students?

Some of my classmates did not get along with him but honestly they just did not want to put out the hard work in that Mr. Wood wanted out of us. He wanted us to succeed in high school and go on to college. Not only succeed at school but also in life. I remember the one thing he used to say to us everyday., "Stay Awake!" At first I did not really understand what he meant by this phrase but as the year went on I understood perfectly. I knew that people in other countries were not as fortunate as we are in the United States but I never knew how bad it really was. He made me be awake about the rest of the world.

Mr. Wood may not be a typical teacher that writes his assignments out everyday on the board and has to have a plan about how everything has to go but that's what makes him the great teacher he is. It makes his class so much more interesting and not boring like the rest. You never knew what you were going to be doing in his class. He may not be the most normal teacher but I believe he truly does care. He cares about the world, his students and their futures and his fellow coworkers. He also made me more aware about college and how to go about doing things. If it wasn't for his economics class I would have no idea what an unsubsidized loan or subsidized loan is. Or how to go about planning for college and what college is going to best fit me. He helped me with many more things other than just teaching me things out of a government or economic book.

He taught me about real life. What I was going to run into in the future. He is a great teacher and also a great human being that just generally cares about everyone around him. I am thankful I had the chance to have Mr. Wood as my teacher and I am sure many other students will be thankful as well.

Thank you,

Kaitlyn Anderson (OHS c/o 2013)
kaitlynanderson310@gmail.com

#3 - Amanda (Billings) Snyder c/o 2002

Oakridge Public Schools
Attn: High School Administration
275 S. Wolf Lake Road
Muskegon, MI 49442

August 29, 2013

To whom it may concern:

I am writing today in support of Bob Wood, an outstanding and remarkable educator at Oakridge High School. As alumni of Oakridge, I had the good fortune of having Mr. Wood as a teacher. Not only did he lessons and encouragement have a tremendous impact on my high school education, I continue to carry them with me throughout adulthood.

In my four years at Oakridge, Mr. Wood, by far, had the most impact on my education. He is an incredibly effective educator. He strives, in everything he does, to ensure that his students work hard, earning every achievement that is handed to them. He doesn't let a single student skate by; he makes sure you sit up and pay attention – whether you want to or not. Mr. Wood truly looks out for his students by caring about their education in the moments they don't. He taught me and my classmates that nothing in life, academic, personal, and professional, comes easy or free – you have to earn it. I remembered this throughout college, constantly reminding myself to keep pushing towards my goals, even in the moments of exhaustion when I couldn't see the light at the end of the tunnel.

Mr. Wood is sincerely invested in the success and future of his students. Not only does he encourage students to pursue a high education, he does everything he can to make that pursuit attainable. From taking students for campus visits to creating a scholarship, he demonstrates how possible a college education is, even when that dream feels out of reach. I truly believe without Mr. Wood at Oakridge, our school would see fewer students off to college post-graduation. I can personally say he sent me off to Western Michigan University for an excitement about education and a drive that kept me reaching for more.

Mr. Wood's class lessons also had a significant influence in the course of study I followed at Western. In class, he taught a large segment covering the three major monotheistic religions of the world. In all of the lessons, the section on Islam had the impact. I remember the enthusiasm and thought that he put into the lectures. I remember hearing the deep appreciation for such a beautifully complex religion in his voice while explaining its aspects. This made me sit up and really listen, focusing in on something so foreign and different; something I may have never paid attention to without his class. This moment was the spark that lit the fire that drove me to obtain a Bachelor of Arts in Comparative Religion. Because of Mr. Wood, I was driven to attain a deeper and broader knowledge of the world's most complex cultures. I feel that this has made me a very thoughtful and open person. Having an extensive education in different cultures and beliefs has created a more compassionate and understanding person, someone respectful of the differences in people, cultures, and beliefs. I would not be that person without the sincere appreciation and interest Mr. Wood puts into his teachings.

One of the most significant lessons Mr. Wood taught me was that there is so much more outside my front door; that there is a beautiful and incredible world outside of Egelston Township, and it is right at our fingertips. Mr. Wood showed us the world in his classroom and encourage us to explore it. He had us plan trips across Europe, choosing real places to stay, eat, and visit, showing us every step of the way how real the possibility was. Few teachers have such a broad outlook as Mr. Wood – he lets his students see outside of the classroom and into a future of infinite adventures, opportunities, and possibilities. His teachings have personally driven me to explore my world; traveling, taking adventures, and seizing every occasion.

I could write pages of stories and reasons as to why Bob Wood is an invaluable asset to the Oakridge Public Schools system. He is an amazing educator, one who is truly invested in his students success in the most selfless and sincere way. Without Mr. Wood, the current and future students of Oakridge would be at a tremendous disadvantage. Not only would they lose an educator who puts his heart and soul into his teachings, they would is all of the invaluable lessons he has to offer.

Should you have any questions regarding my above statements, I am happy to discuss them further. Nothing would delight me more than to continue to sing the praises of Bob Wood.

Sincerely,

Amanda J. Snyder
formally Amanda Billings
Oakridge High School Class of 2002
930 Osborne Street #1
Kalamazoo, MI 49001
friendofp13@gmail.com
(269) 873-2146

#4 - Isaac Bourne c/o 2003

August 29, 2013

To Whom it may concern,

I am writing this letter to endorse Mr. Robert Edward Wood not only as a highly effective instructor, but as one of the most influential persons in my education and adult life. As a graduate of Oakridge High School class of 2003, I had the honored privilege like many others over the past 25 years, to have Mr. Wood as an instructor for American History and Senior Current Issues. In the years of 2000-2003 my classmates and I covered the 2000 Presidential Election, The September 11th 2001 Terrorist Attacks, and the following conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq. These school years were turbulent, scary, and brought about great uncertainty for the future stability of this nation, and young minds like ours needed the guidance and education to eventually step into this tragic post 9/11 world in which we still live in today.

I was a Sophomore in the fall of 2000 and can still remember my first day in Mr. Wood's American History class. I sat at my desk looking around at all the posters of American and Worldly representations of Culture, Government, Religions, Art, and the random quotations from great minds like Albert Einstein, Mark Twain, and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. I didn't know what to expect, I was very curious, nervous, and was mostly just happy that I wasn't in 1st period Algebra. The time bell rang as Mr. Wood came out from behind his desk and began to speak and tell us how important our Nation's history is, and how one day we may be an integral part of American History. Mr. Woods class was very unique, unlike any other that I have ever been in, it demanded hard work, research, and most of all universal participation. Mr. Wood ensured that not one of his students ever got left behind. Just a few of our many rewarding class assignments included mapping out the all of the U.S. States and Capitals, reliving the thoughts of an immigrant arriving in New York harbor to see Statue of Liberty for the first time, and conducting an interview with a survivor of World War 2. Mr. Wood's class was without a doubt one of the most enlightening educational experiences for me and I am certain that all students of this course will have a greater appreciation for American History and take what they've learned with them for the rest of their lives.

The day of September 11th 2001 will forever be burned into my memory and forever be apart of my life. Just as my parents remembered where they were, who they were with, and what they were doing, the day President Kennedy was shot, I remember everything about September 11th. I was in my Junior year sitting in Mr. Barry's Government class taking notes from his lecture when the door was opened abruptly by Mr. Wood, with a pale face saying only the words; "are you watching this!?!...we're under attack!". Mr. Barry immediately turned on the TV, it slowly faded on to life showing the LIVE images of Towers 1 and 2 of the World Trade Center burning from the 2 hijacked planes which had recently crashed into them. We were all speechless, we were all confused, and we felt so vulnerable. I can attest that my life and career was influenced greatly by that day and the days following 9/11.

During my Senior year at Oakridge High, I was again a student of Mr. Wood, enrolled in his Senior Current Issues Class. This class was again very unique like his American History class, but we were now covering and reporting the current events which would make history. There

was so much going on at that time, the U.S and its allies had began to engage the Taliban in Afghanistan, and President Bush was now calling for an invasion of Iraq. It all felt so surreal because now some of our former classmates from classes ahead of us were already in the military being deployed overseas. Our final year in high School was marked with crucial moments now in history and Mr. Wood was therewith us, helping us to understand, telling us to open our eyes and to see the bigger picture of everything unfolding before us. That last year went by fast, between my EMT training classes at the local community college and working part time at the local Pizzeria, I'm surprised I was able to keep my shoelaces tied. Before I knew it, I was walking across that football field outside the school and receiving my Diploma, Mr. Wood was there and I will always remember what he told me afterwards; "Isaac, your not done! This is NOT the End, this is ONLY the beginning for you! Time for you to make history, and do great things!"

Following Graduation from High School I became a Firefighter Paramedic, working and living in various places all over the country. In August 2005 I was deployed to the Gulf States along with other Rescuers from across the U.S. to help Hurricane Katrina victims, and it was at this time that I knew I had to dedicate the rest of my life to the service of helping and protecting those less fortunate than me no matter the circumstance. I had never been to New Orleans before Katrina, and I have never been back since. It is difficult for me to talk about my experiences there but I can say that had Mr. Wood been there with us, I know for certain that many more people including myself and my team would have benefited greatly from the compassion and the big heart this man carries with him.

I have served in many places in the last 10 years of my adult life, and most recently in the U.S. Coast Guard in Southern Florida, and have worked with many individuals from different backgrounds, and I strongly feel that I have become a good judge of moral character. We all carry a moral compass with us, and depending on who we've had in our lives as an influence upon us, that moral compass will guide us in the right direction. Teachers like Mr. Wood are crucial to ensuring that future generations continue to have their moral compasses pointing them in the direction of true north but these teachers will also help guide us and walk with us in that journey safely thru the dangers and uncertain winding terrain that lie before our destination.

It is my pleasure to recommend Mr. Wood for continued service at Oakridge High School for as long as there will always be students willing to open their minds to great knowledge, he will be there to help them achieve greatness.

Regards,
Isaac T. Bourne ENS. NREMT. USCG 7th District.
Oakridge High School Alumni. Class of 2003

Isaac Bourne isaac.bourne88@gmail.com

#5 - Jordan Bourne c/o 2008

September 2, 2013 Mr. Bob Wood Oakridge High School 5493 Hall Rd
Muskegon, MI 49442

Dear Mr. Wood,

As summer ends and another school year begins, it's hard to believe that it's been eight years since I've been in your classroom as a student. As Bob Dylan said, "The times, they are a-changin'," and I imagine that you can feel the change with each new group of students that comes in. I hope that they appreciate the rare privilege they have to have you as a teacher.

You have a way of seeing a person's full potential, and helping people realize that in themselves. You helped me, and others to become good citizens of this planet by realizing that we all can and do make a difference every day, and that we can make this world a better place if we want to by understanding how to get involved and to "become the change we wish to see in the world."

Your classroom was a place of open-mindedness. We all got to express our ideas fairly. If anyone wanted to disrupt that environment, they were not welcome. You didn't show favoritism. Nobody was exempt from your expectations. You expected more out of us than most teachers. And in not being able to understand this concept, some kids would complain about you not being fair. I expect those students have a hard time adjusting when they have to face the real world.

Now, eight years later, I am 25 years old. I still have a lot to learn in life. I've done a lot, and I still have a lot of things that I want to do. And I can honestly say that if I hadn't had you as an influence in my younger and more formative years, that I wouldn't be the same. You dared us all to seek truth, not to tolerate injustice, and to stand up for our beliefs. These are all principles that I hope to uphold every day.

Sometimes I feel like I know quite a lot already and that there isn't much anyone else can teach me. And then someone like you comes along and teaches us to constantly question things we are told, so we can be certain that we aren't being duped. You help students realize that this world is composed of people with different ideas, and that we can all learn from each other.

Most people forget a lot of the specific things that they learned in school. But one thing that they will remember is the way a teacher cared about his students and the subject he taught. Everybody can agree that you love teaching. You want your students to feel the same about what they are learning. When a student walks out of your class at the end of the year, I guarantee that they are better people than they were at the beginning of the year. I know I was.

I hope that this next school year goes well for you. I'm glad my sister gets to be in your class. (It's that Bourne Identity.) One thing I wish I had done after graduating was to continue writing in a journal like we did in your class. I feel like my writing skills have gotten worse than a 4th grader's.

Anyway, I only will be in this country for another few months. By the end of this year, I should be in Costa Rica, and then from there, I'm not sure where I'll go. I hope to keep traveling on and seeing what else is out there. Maybe we can grab a beer sometime before then. I'm sure we will meet again. I'll leave my phone number and other contact info at the bottom of this letter so you can reach me.

Sincerely yours,

Jordan Bourne 505-916-7073

twitter: @mrjordanbourne mrjordanbourne@gmail.com

#6 - Melissa (Brackenrich) Black c/o 2000

August 26, 2013

Oakridge School Board 5492 Hall Road
Muskegon, MI 49442

To Whom It May Concern:

I'm writing this letter on the behalf of Mr. Wood. It has been brought to my attention that his future at Oakridge High School is being questioned. I attended Oakridge High School from 1997 – 2000. I had the privilege of having Mr. Wood as a teacher and as a basketball coach. When I look back at my high school career he is among the few people that were huge influences in my academics, sports, and as well as life. For that I am forever grateful.

Mr. Wood is known for being passionate about life and education. He loves to push students academically and challenge them to their limits. He wants them to walk away with a new outlook on life and most importantly to succeed. I think that it is refreshing that someone is challenging young minds to think outside the box because, the world outside the walls of Oakridge High School can be scary if you are not well prepared.

Mr. Wood has the experience, knowledge and education that would be an asset to any school. I am thankful for his guidance in my high school career and for offering such a unique learning experience. I hope that future Oakridge students will have the same opportunity.

Sincerely,

Melissa Blackmer (Brackenrich)

Melissa Blackmer (Brackenrich)
Oakridge High School Graduate Class of 2000

#7 - Katherine Braspenninx c/o 2008

August 18, 2013

To whom it may concern:

My name is Katherine Braspenninx, a 2008 graduate of Oakridge High School in Muskegon, MI. While I attended high school at this institution, I was fortunate enough to be an American History student in Mr. Wood's classroom during my junior year. Recently it has come to my attention that Mr. Wood's teaching style has been graded as "minimally effective," and he was the only educator graded as such within the high school system.

I can say, with certainty, that Mr. Wood is far from ineffective. Teaching is Mr. Wood's passion, this is evident through the dedication he has shown not only to me but to all of his students who want to do more and be more. His emphasis on higher education and willingness to let his students explore the unfamiliar (such a trip we took to Washington D.C. in 2006) allowed me to confidently apply to and attend Michigan State University in the fall of 2008.

Not only is Mr. Wood passionate about the material he teaches to the students within the walls of his classroom, he provides many opportunities for his students to get involved with their community and communities outside of Muskegon, MI.

The "Building a Better World" scholarship, created by Mr. Wood, provides educational funding to those students who pursue higher education. He has received numerous awards as a teacher, and continued to better himself as an educator by receiving his Master's degree and traveling the world. Mr. Wood's teaching styles are eclectic, his attire is interesting, but his passion is unfaltering. It truly disappoints me that he was graded as "minimally effective" educator, when I know that couldn't be further from the truth. If I were to make comparisons between the educators at Oakridge, Mr. Wood was far more effective in the classroom than many of the teachers I had at Oakridge. It saddens me that an individual, such as Mr. Wood, who has dedicated himself to 10+ years at a school system, would be on the receiving end on such a ridiculous accusation.

This "ineffective" grading has the potential to end Mr. Wood's career at Oakridge High School, and I believe this was intended by the administrators at Oakridge to do such a thing. It truly saddens me to have graduated from an institution that would turn its back on such an educator as Mr. Wood. It would be a tremendous loss to the students of Oakridge if he were to leave or lose his teaching job.

He is a creative, passionate, unapologetic, and unique individual who has encouraged so many of Oakridge's students to be more, to strive for greatness, and to get an education – regardless of the socioeconomic struggles that hold so many students back from experiencing a world outside of Muskegon, Michigan. He has my support, and the support of his many students (many who have graduated and have pursued higher degrees). Mr. Wood is a wonderful and dedicated educator; he deserves to be respected as such and to continue to educate the students at Oakridge High School.

Sincerely, Katherine Braspenninx (OHS c/o 2008)

#8 - Aaron Brown c/o 2007

Aaron Brown
4905 Hall Rd.
Muskegon, MI

August 4, 2013

To Whom It May Concern,

I am a certified secondary teacher with highly qualified credentials in Social Studies (RX) and History (CC). I graduated from Oakridge High School in ---- During my studies at Western Michigan University, I was exposed to the qualities that make a teacher effective in the classroom. Those qualities include having students college ready, incorporating technology in the classroom, and remaining a life-long learner. Mr. Wood exemplifies all of these qualities.

If you were to walk into his classroom you would witness many examples of cooperative learning. Students complete their work according to deadlines described to them by Mr. Wood. This is crucial to student development since this is the format they will be exposed to in college. Beyond class structure, students experience an assignment where they are to research potential careers and colleges they are interested in. After their choices are cemented they are to research methods on how to pay for college. To many high school students this is the first time they have had to crunch the numbers on their future. Since most are junior year status it allows them time to apply for colleges and learn about potential scholarships.

Technology has become a necessity in education. Mr. Wood's classroom is no exception. Students are constantly on the computer browsing databases and respected newspapers for information regarding topics they are learning in class. He puts the majority of his lessons on his classroom blog if students are absent or want to study at home for an upcoming assessment. The blog continues to become an important part of his class since students have a central location to hand in projects, papers, have discussions, ask questions, and reminders for future deadlines.

A teacher has the responsibility to be a life-long learner. One must stay current in their subject in terms of learning strategies and content. Mr. Wood has traveled to places such as South Africa and Morocco through Fulbright Hays scholarships and other programs to bring a worldwide view back to his classroom. He has brought students on trips to "Close Up" in Washington D.C. to gain a firsthand experience in how our democracy works. He has also brought students to Selma, Alabama where they live and breathe the Civil Rights Movement.

Mr. Wood is passionate about his profession. Students are expected to show up every day ready to learn. With his class structure and guidance, students walk out of Oakridge High School ready to take on the next step of their lives.

Sincerely,

Aaron Brown (OHS C/O 2007)
aaronbrownwmu@gmail.com

August 15, 2013

To whom it may concern,

I was a student of Bob Wood's in my junior year. I was required to take a government class. Going into this class, I had no expectations. I just thought it was another class. I was wrong. I was blown away by his teaching strategies. Although they were different and unorthodox, I was intrigued and compelled to take his class again my senior year. When I was 16, government was the last thing I was interested in and by the end of my class with Mr. Wood, I couldn't get enough. Because of Bob Wood's teachings, I now have different outlook on government. Now, I see all the ins and outs of the world and the places where I can use my voice and issues I can speak on. I was a part of the senior current issues class of 2007. I have never loved a class the way I loved those classes.

I've never had a teacher like Mr. Wood. He's extremely passionate and ignites passion in his students. He made me stand up and care about things I never knew I had an interest in. He made me open my eyes to the world. I had no idea about the things going on in the world, nor did I care to take a second to listen and learn about it. There is so much more going on in the world than what's before our eyes. If you never take the time to learn, you're sincerely missing out. Mr. Wood is someone who delivers the curriculum in a way that I understood. I felt like a person in his class, not a student, a real person, with real opinions and a real say in what I wanted and how I felt. I felt the want and the need to stand up and fight for things I believe in. I wanted to help people and make a difference. Isn't that what teachers are supposed to do? Aren't they supposed to make you want to make a difference? I would have no idea about the government or anything going on in our government if it weren't for him. He showed me I had a voice and he showed me ways to use it. He opened so many doors and made me view the world differently.

Oakridge is lucky to have Mr. Wood as a teacher. I wish there were more teachers like him. He's truly inspiring. He inspires students to be the change they wish to see in the world, and that is priceless. He genuinely cares for his students. He is an amazing person and an amazing teacher. I know my life would be different had I never taken his class. He has forever left an impression on my life, on my views, and on my thoughts. Please consider this as we enter into another school year. The students who take his class are in for an experience like no other. Even now, 6 years after I've graduated, having 2 young daughters, I still look back and use the things I learned in his class. I am awake, and I have Bob Wood to thank for that.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Krystina M. Calkins (OHS c/o 2007)

Krystina Calkins <trackstar207@hotmail.com>

#10 - Shelby (Cardinal) Dreyer c/o 2010

An Ideal Person to Inspire Students

What does it take to inspire a high school student? What does it take to create a spark and drive in a young person? What does it take to pass on an understanding of not only what is going on in your backyard; who it affects and how you can influence it, but what is going on around the world? You should know what kind of person is needed to do all of these things, because you are looking for educators who can do precisely this.

It takes a person coming into the classroom with passion, purpose, and dedication day after day and year after year. It takes a person staying hours past the bell has rung to be active among student groups, and sometimes just to listen to a student's frustrations. It takes a person who is willing to take their own vacation time and part of their salary, and spend it with a group of students who are aching to make a difference. It takes a person who volunteers to be the leader, fundraiser, and organizer of groups that benefit the students of that school when no one else is up to the job. It takes all of these things done so often so that these things; passion, purpose, and dedication cannot be defined without using examples from that said person.

Most students go their whole high school career without ever having a teacher make such an imprint on their life. Most students go around thinking school is nothing but a joke. Most students are dumbfounded when they get into college, if they get into college, because high school hasn't prepared them at all. Most students know nothing about applying for scholarships, or getting involved with the government to make sure the scholarships and grants you want and need will still be available upon graduation, and most students don't have someone who is willing to push them into information.

I am a product of an educator that epitomizes everything that has been stated, and then some. I am someone who beat the odds because of a teacher who motivated me, believed in me, and put in extra time to help me. This person did all of these things when I needed it most, but more importantly when it wasn't expected and he didn't need to. Bob Wood is a big reason why I am where I am today, and I know that there are many other students that have been impacted from the dedication and work he has put into Oakridge High School.

My junior year of high school I was pregnant. There were whispers by other teachers, accusations by my peers, and no help or hope from counselors; an assumed fate. When I told Mr. Wood, he didn't whisper about me or make any assumptions. While everyone else was throwing statistics my way (33% of teen mothers graduate from high school, and <2% earn a degree) he was immersing me in information, helping me fill out scholarships, introducing me to new groups, and pushing me to make a plan.

My junior and senior year I filled out and won many scholarships with the help of Mr. Wood. One of the scholarships I won was the Building a Better World Scholarship.

This scholarship is only available to Oakridge students, and was started and is still run by Mr. Wood. He works year round getting donations, maintaining relations, and going through the essay submissions for Oakridge students JUST because he cares.

I joined a group at Oakridge that petitioned for the promise scholarship. Our group worked our tails off getting signatures; we went to the capital to speak with representatives, senators, and news crews in order to get our message out. This group would not have ever happened if Mr. Wood would not have inspired us, helped us plan, or put in the time and money he did.

Our school's Help Heal Haiti group that would not have been possible without the hours after school Mr. Wood met with us or the reliable connections he searched for in Haiti so that we could actually see what our hard work would turn into. We were able to help people in the devastation that took place in Haiti because one teacher was willing to stand by our desire to help.

There is not a single person in the whole faculty of Oakridge that would willingly do this just because of the passion and love of the students and their futures. When rereading the first few paragraphs of what an educator needs to be in order to fully inspire and ignite action in a high school student, it is clear why so many students go without ever having such a teacher. I, among the many students at Oakridge High School, am so fortunate to be touched and influenced by Mr. Wood.

As I finish up my senior year at GVSU early, while I participate in Sigma Alpha Lambda, when I'm volunteering my time at the Food Fight Against Hunger, when I'm educating young parents about their rights as students through the Student-Parent Club, and when I'm pointing out countries on a map to my three year old son, I will always attribute part of where I am to Mr. Wood. Reason being when you are fortunate enough to have a mentor that is passionate and dedicated in a way that he is, some of their dedication and drive is bound to rub off on you.

Shelby Cardinal Dryer (OHS c/o 2010)

dreyersh@mail.gvsu.edu

August 8, 2013

To Whom It May Concern:

In the educational life of a child a select few teachers will leave a deep and lasting impact on the formation of character and intellectual curiosity. When a student is inspired by a learned adult, guided to great heights of achievement, and pushed to reach for successes theretofore thought unattainable an irreversible change occurs. This change affects not only the child's academic path but indeed their entire life. I am thankful for the efforts of such educators in my life and count Bob Wood among them.

It is with the deepest of conviction that I write this letter of endorsement. The skills that Bob Wood possesses as an educator far surpass those of numerous others in the field of education today. His passion and commitment to his students, his content, and his school community are of the highest possible value.

Bob's students are his first and last concern. He crafts lessons that are engaging and meaningful, coordinates field learning experiences, and has set up scholarship funds to provide a positive environment for students to make actionable steps in achieving their academic and personal goals. Without the encouragement and support of Bob Wood many Oakridge alumni may not have met their true potential. The Oakridge Public Schools system and Egelston Township are fortunate to have a teacher such a Bob Wood, whose energies and passion are at work every day of the year for the betterment of his students.

Bob's classroom is a place for deep thought and challenging questions- for this is the heart of learning. Bob is deeply invested in his content and has a remarkable ability to relate the importance of social studies in the lives of his students. His travels, extensive study, and openness to explore new concepts with his class foster an environment rich with understanding and debate. Bob facilitates the exploration of fresh ideas and challenges his students to back up their opinions and assumptions about social studies topics with well researched data. This assures that Bob students are prepared to move forward as valuable assets within their colleges and/or places of employment.

The Oakridge Public Schools community is one that Bob has dedicated his working life to improving. This endeavor has lead Bob to various roles with in the school, coaching and advising being of note. But it is Bob's unwavering dedication to broadening the cultural horizons of his students that he is best known for throughout the district. Bob has made the Oakridge Community stronger by offering learning opportunities outside of his paid work day. History and government based trips along with discussion, dialogue, and debate strengthens the fabric of the Oakridge community and inspires Oakridge students to impact their world for the better.

Oakridge Public Schools and indeed a vast numbers of Oakridge alumni owe a great deal of their successes to the efforts of this one man's passion and commitment. Bob Wood's influence in my life has made me a deeper thinker, a more compassionate soul, and has placed me on a path of life-long learning. It is for these reasons that I endorse the skills and abilities of Bob Wood as a highly effective educator.

Respectfully,

Adam G. Carlson (OHS c/o 2000)
agcarlson1@gmail.com

#12 - Kelly (Morse) Carlson c/o 2001

August 19, 2013

To Whom It May Concern:

I have been fortunate to know Bob Wood for fifteen years. My relationship with Bob has grown and changed many times over the years. I first came to know Bob when I was a sophomore in high school. He was my American History teacher at Oakridge High School. I still vividly remember his class; it is one of the few classes in my education that I can say that about. I was always a good student. I've enjoyed learning from the first, but not every class was a challenge. Bob knew how to challenge his students. He challenged the strongest and the weakest students. We were all part of the discussion, and we were all part of the education. His was not a class that you would sit back in and wait for the information to be "given" to you. We drove the instruction and we drove the discussion. It was amazing. I had always liked History, but in Bob's class I learned to love history. We wrote in journals, we talked, we watched movies, we talked, we did projects and took tests, and we talked. We discussed everything. History truly came alive for me in that class.

My senior year I was able to take another class with Mr. Wood. Senior Current Issues was in its second year at the time. It was still a new class with a new curriculum. We explored subjects that were relevant and interesting to us. It was so cool helping to decide what we would learn about next. I had never been in a class where everyone was so engaged. Each of us brought something different to the discussion, and though our ideas were challenged, we were valued. We weren't allowed to just have a viewpoint; we had to explore that viewpoint and defend it. Ignorance was not an excuse in Bob's classroom, just as it is not an excuse in life. I felt confident discussing my views with those who agreed with me and those who disagreed because I actually understood them. I didn't blindly believe in a point of view. I wasn't allowed to. I was challenged; I explored my own beliefs, and I learned more about who I was. That is not an easy thing to do when you're in high school because even though you think you've got it all figured out, you don't really know who you are yet. Lucky for me, I was challenged in a safe environment. I was challenged by a teacher and peers that valued. Many in life don't have that luxury.

After graduation I kept in contact with Bob. He was a mentor for me throughout my college education. He always had time to talk, and he was always honest with his advice. Bob never told me what I wanted to hear. He told me what I needed to hear. He showed me that there were doors out there that I didn't even know existed. He didn't make me open them, though. That was up to me.

I am now entering into my eighth year of teaching at Oakridge. I am blessed to be able to teach for the community that taught, and continues to teach, me. Bob continues to be a mentor and friend to me. Working with Bob gave me a new perspective on who he is as a person and a teacher. He still inspires me. I think of his class, and I wonder how I can engage my students as he engaged me. I look at the relationships he has formed with his students, and I strive to build those long lasting relationships with my students. I walk by his class, and though the faces have changed, the expressions on them have not. Some students will always be fearful of the questions and challenges that Bob puts out there, and some eagerly await them. Like any class, some students will excel, and some will fail. I can guarantee, though, that all of them will learn.

Sincerely,

Kelly Carlson (OHS c/o 2001)

#13 - Tyler Carr c/o 2013

August 28, 2013

To whom it may concern,

This is a letter of recommendation concerning Bob Wood. I am one of his past students, and I feel like he was one of the best teachers I have ever had. I went into his class with an attitude of not caring what happened in there and Mr. Wood could see that. So in the beginning we had a rough start, but we were quick to change that and get a solid connection. He was always there if you had a question or didn't understand something. His class was never boring and he always knows the answer to your question, but if he doesn't he will come back when he did know and tell you the answer. He is by far one of the most intelligent teachers in the Oakridge school district.

Mr. Wood always had a way to get your attention with a boring subject. If you would actually sit and listen to what he was saying it would amaze you. This is because he always had a connection to it. If he hasn't been to that exact place he had been somewhere that was very close to it. This made it so he never had to read out of a history book. He could stand there and tell you "I've been there and this is what it was really like" It was great to have a teacher that had been to and done the things you're learning about. It would really help you connect with the subject.

These are just some of the things that make Mr. Wood a great teacher. I could sit here all day and tell you why he is so good at his job, but I have a full time job which is helping me pay for my college. I would have never known about a company paying for my college if it wasn't for him. He taught me more about college than anyone else ever had, and thanks to him I can succeed in life and go farther than what most people could. I hope you take this into consideration.

Thank you for your time.

Tyler Carr

Class Of 2013

huntingislife18@gmail.com

#14 - Zachary Carson c/o 2006

From: Zachary C. Carson, Naval Aircrewman (E5), USN
To: Bob Wood

Subject: LETTER OF APPRECIATION

To Whom It May Concern,

I'm writing this letter in effort to express my gratitude in Mr. Bob Wood, who was my 10th grade history teacher and an excellent mentor throughout my wonderful years at Oakridge High School. I do not know the details for which I am writing, but I believe that will enrich this letter because it will produce zero bias on the topic at hand.

As a sophomore at Oakridge, I walked into my 2nd hour class with anticipation from stories that I had heard of Mr. Wood. Some of these stories were good, some were great, and others were just plain bad. However, I like to take things at first hand and develop my own opinions prior to making any judgment. Mr. Wood implemented strict classroom policy that was not to be desired by the "average" student, but he always kept you on your toes regardless. It took a while to really embrace his classroom because of his "no talking" policy and random "attention grabber" tactics, but within the first semester I had already grasped an idea of how to approach his class. Not everything always went as scheduled while attending, but there was certainly never a dull moment. I strived to learn history when I walked into his classroom and he fed off my interest of the subject. I still recall meeting Mr. Wood, along with some classmates, in Grand Haven (mid-winter) to protest and picket air pollution on a Saturday morning! It was all part of our A.C.T. semester that encourages students to do just that, act upon a passionate subject. To this day I have my 2nd hour history journal with my weekly entries. In all my efforts and passions, I was rewarded with the "Thomas Jefferson Award" that is given out yearly to a select number of students that go above and beyond in their History experiences. I continue to utilize these memories as a push forward in my job and life experiences.

Mr. Wood is BY FAR the most passionate teacher I have ever encountered. He is passionate about his teachings, he is passionate about his students, and above all he enjoys learning just as much or more than the people around him. He takes every opportunity to make his students better and he is ever relentless. When he knows he can get more out of someone, he will. I have never met a teacher who has "lived" his teachings as much as Bob Wood. He takes several trips every year, with student opportunity, to enrich the learning experience of his subjects. I have never had a peer go to D.C. with Mr. Wood and come back having had a bad experience. I have never had a peer come to me saying they didn't learn something from this man. Many people love him and others hate him, but one thing remains constant, and that is that they LEARN from him. I know I'm a better person because of him and I can't imagine anyone else hasn't taken away positives from his teachings. Whatever the subject may be, Bob Wood deserves his position. If he isn't granted it, the only thing being taken away is the experience of the students. High school is all about learning and experience, don't constrict it.

Zachary C. Carson
C/O 2006 - AWS2, United States Navy

#15 - Danita Cook c/o 2005

August 31, 2013

To whom it may concern,

I had the privilege of having Mr. Wood as a teacher while attending Oakridge High School. He truly is an action teacher in every sense of the word. He takes time outside of normal classroom hours to impart into students the importance of understanding how government works. He believes in Oakridge students and instills in them a great sense of empowerment through knowing their value within the political process.

Mr. Wood is a true advocate for Oakridge students, which is evident in the scholarship he created solely for them. He allows students to be active participants in the U.S. government. He assists students with writing letters to their congressman and protests side-by-side to support them in exercising their first amendment rights. He also organized opportunities for Oakridge students to participate in trips to Washington, DC to give them a first-hand experience of government operations. I was able to attend the first trip he organized to Selma, Alabama, commemorating the civil rights movement. This trip gave me a deeper understanding of the civil rights movement and allowed me to grasp the historical importance of past government decisions.

Regardless of one's political standing, Mr. Wood strives to assist students in becoming aware of why they have certain beliefs and the ability to debate their political beliefs with facts. He challenges students to think for themselves. Even though Mr. Wood and I have always had different political views, he never once made me feel as though my views were wrong or inferior to his. He supports students having various viewpoints regarding government policy. He gives students the facts regarding government and allows them to decide for themselves what position they want to take.

While I was his student, he highly stressed the significance of knowing the U.S. Bill of Rights. Each student was required to memorize and fully explain the first 10 amendments. As an assignment, each student went around their neighborhood interviewing neighbors to see if they knew their Bill of Rights. This was an eye opening experience for me, because as a high school student, I could thoroughly explain the first 10 amendments while a majority of my neighbors could only partially explain a few.

Mr. Wood believes that it is crucial for young people to know their rights as citizens and the paths they can take to make a real difference within society. Most young people leave high school without a clear understanding of the U.S. government. Many college graduates and working adults do not comprehend U.S. government policies or more importantly, their bill of rights. Mr. Wood strives to cultivate students in reaching their full potential. Regardless if a student plans on attending college or joining the workforce after graduation, it is essential for all American students to know how their government operates and understand their rights as American citizens.

His teaching methods greatly prepared me for the real world. Because of what I learned in his class, I was a step ahead of many of my classmates while pursuing my Bachelor's degree in Political Science. Although Mr. Wood recognizes the importance of theory in his teaching practices, he also incorporates his experiences, which gives students a practical understanding. His first-hand experience of traveling throughout the world allows him to convey a deeper understanding of the government process. Because of the personal experiences he brings to the classroom, Mr. Wood has inspired several students including myself to travel outside the United States in an effort to better understand the world we live in.

Mr. Wood's students leave his classroom knowing they have the power to change their community and truly make a difference within the world. Looking back at my high school years, I can honestly say that Mr. Wood was the most influential teacher and his courses were crucial in shaping my educational and career path. After graduating with my second master's degree and now working with JP Morgan, I have come to realize how blessed I was during high school to have Mr. Wood as a teacher. His teaching methods are unparalleled to what one could learn solely from a textbook. He encourages students to reach their full potential and shares in their happiness when they reach their goals. Mr. Wood stands out among all my previous teachers and professors as being a true advocate for students. He truly cares about his students and wants them to succeed. Since graduating in 2005, I make a conscious effort to visit Mr. Wood on a yearly basis, because I see the positive impact his teaching has on me. Oakridge students are very fortunate to have Mr. Wood as a teacher.

Sincerely,

Danita Cook - danita.cook@gmail.com

#16 - Stephanie (Craine) Maue c/o 2009

September 6, 2013

To whom it may concern,

My name is Stephanie Maue (Crain) and I am a former student of Oakridge High School. I graduated in 2009. I had the great opportunity to have Mr. Wood as my teacher in 11th grade for government and economics.

Mr. Wood taught us how to make a difference in the world. He had us writing to governors and picketing for what we believed in. Mr. Wood brought that world's problems to our attention, and showed us what we could do to help fix them. His class was my absolute favorite class, because we learned so much about current real world issues. Mr. Wood taught us to step out of our comfort box of our own lives and make a difference in other peoples lives.

Mr. Wood is one of the most dedicated teachers I have ever seen. He was always there after school for hours and was will to help with all our questions.

Even if he didn't agree with our opinions he always showed his support by coming to our protest. He showed us how to see other peoples opinions without judging them.

Mr. Wood really cares about his students and shows it. Oakridge is lucky to have him as a teacher.

Stephanie Maue

#17 - Devyn Crane c/o 2010

August 27, 2013

To Whom it may concern,

As an Alumnus of Oakridge High School, I had the privilege of having Mr. Wood as a teacher. Now as a senior attending Grand Valley State University I can look back at the time I spent in high school and evaluate what makes a great teacher and how they helped me prepare for life after high school.

The first thing that comes to mind is passion. I have never met another high school teacher who has so much passion for the subject that he teaches than Mr. Wood. Not only does he so strongly believe in what he is teaching, he also wants the students to do well and grasp the concepts he is teaching. The discussions that he leads allow the students to continuously develop their critical thinking skills, and Mr. Wood pushes his students harder than any other teacher at OHS. When I first had a class with Mr. Wood, I was intimidated by his high expectations for students and the passion that he displays when speaking about the course material. However, after a time I realized that his class, as much work as it was, was truly preparing me for college. All of the teachers in the Oakridge School system are fantastic, but Mr. Wood is exceptional. Out of all the courses I took at Oakridge, with all other teachers, I feel that his class is the one that really gave me a taste of what higher education would entail, and for that I feel that his class helped me prepare the most.

However, not only is he an excellent teacher, he is also a mentor to the students. Although I did not have the opportunity to take Senior Current Issues with him, I did have the opportunity to attend the Close Up Program with Mr. Wood as the faculty advisor. By participating in this program, I understood why so many students valued his opinion and looked to him for advice and guidance regarding the path they would take after high school.

Not only is he incredibly passionate about teaching, he also truly cares about the success of the students. Mr. Wood not only wants the students in his class to do well, he encourages them to prepare for college or whichever career they choose after graduating. No other teacher at Oakridge can match the passion he has for wanting the students to be successful in life. Many teachers focus on short term goals for the students, but Mr. Wood sees beyond that and not only is tremendously helpful in class, but also with anything in regards to life after high school. He truly is the best educator Oakridge has to offer. Yes, the other teachers are passionate and love their jobs. However, out of all my years in the education system, Mr. Wood was the teacher that had the biggest impact on the students. The way he teaches and with his passion he has changed the way many students perceive the world and the opportunities that college has to offer.

Out of all the educators at Oakridge, in my opinion, Mr. Wood is the teacher that has prepared and encouraged the students most. Life really begins after high school, and Mr. Wood is the one teacher that has most helped that transition. I hope that the School Board can see that and understand what an incredible teacher he is.

Sincerely,

Devyn Crane - OHS class of 2010 - cheer1992@verizon.net

#18 - Angelyne Cruz c/o 2009

8/20/13

To whom it may concern,

It's my pleasure to write a letter of support on behalf of my old high school teacher Mr. Wood. Mr. Wood was a great teacher back when I was in high school. The two classes that I took with Mr. Wood were government and economics.

There were two things that I had learned from Mr. Wood. The first one was never be afraid to ask for help even if you are unsure about something. Second thing I learned from Mr. Wood was never to be scared about traveling to different places around the world.

His inspiration about traveling inspired me back in 2006. In 2006 I was in a youth group for church. I had the opportunity to raise money to travel to Gulfport Mississippi to help others who were in desperate need of help after the tragic accident with Hurricane Katrina. Once I went and took that opportunity to go explore it changed my life around for the better. I was not only able to travel to a different part of the state but I had that opportunity to go help them people that were less fortunate than I was.

I think Mr. Wood is not only a good old high school teacher but also an inspired person. He taught me to never be afraid to ask for help rather it be a question, an answer, or you just need help on a topic you don't understand all the way. Mr. Wood taught me these things when I was in high school and if I didn't take these opportunities I wouldn't be the person I 'am today thanks to him.

In conclusion, Mr. Wood is a good teacher and a good leader to inspire students that you only live once so why not take the opportunities while you can and live it. Whatever the circumstances are I think you should keep Mr. Wood as a teacher. Let him enjoy helping students if needed and inspire them to do whatever they set their mind to.

Sincerely,

Angelyne Cruz

Angelyne Cruz <robertlee1991.ac@gmail.com>

#19 - Thomas Dalum c/o 2013

August 25, 2013

Thomas Dalum
40 N Bock Rd
Muskegon, 49442
tjdalum@gmail.com

To Whom it may concern,

Going through high school changed a lot about the person I am, and the person I want to strive be. I changed from being a hopeless, careless, and arrogant student, to a student who is prepared for the future path in front of me. I owe Mr.Wood a lot of credit when comes to my confidence. I'm prepared and am ready to dive right into college.

I had Mr.Wood's classes during my junior and senior year. Economics and Senior Current Issues forced me to work and dedicate my time to studying. I honestly remember thinking his classes were agonizing and pointless. As I started to mature I started actually listening to what he was saying. He taught me a lot of important information regarding Financial Aid. I've seen college expenses drive friends and family members to tears. I've seen other students who have no knowledge of Loans or Grants. College debt is a major issue in our country, and will probably continue to rise. I can use my knowledge to avoid getting in over my head.

Sometimes I skated by in my classes because they possessed no challenge and required little dedication. Not all classes were like that, and Mr.Wood's class is an exception because he demanded that I focus. I've never had a teacher like him. He teaches in an odd, but very effect manner. He makes being involved a priority. He honestly cares about his students, but makes his students give an effort or promises them that their grade be hindered. Some students don't like his style of teaching. He has a lot of experiences, and bases his teaching on opening his students' eyes, thus awaking them to the unknown world around all of us.

Sincerely,

Thomas Dalum (OHS c/o 2013)

#20 - Tina Esparza (parent)

8-26-13

To Whom It May Concern,

I would like to take a moment to recognize a longtime teacher of Oakridge Public Schools. Mr. Bob Wood has been in the district for many years and I have had 2 children that have had the pleasure of having him as a teacher as well as a travel companion to Washington DC and Selma for programs that have enriched their lives and opened their eyes to things they may not have otherwise had an opportunity. Most recently my daughter went to Washington DC and I was able to provide transportation to and from for her and her fellow Students. We stopped different times and I was able to sit down and talk to him and man he definitely is a man of knowledge and has a sincere love for his job and public education. I as a parent had the opportunity to meet him through conferences and was given the chance to view his blogs which he makes public through his school site and I too have learned a great deal about him, government and the world around us. I hope that for years to come he will still be teaching the young adults from the Oakridge Community as he has definitely been an asset to our community whether it be teaching, bringing in public officials, or fighting for our rights in Lansing! I hope you will always consider him as an asset to our school district.

Sincerely,

Tina Esparza

Parent of Torrey & Brianna Esparza

#21 - Torrey Esparza c/o 2010

8-27-13

I would like to acknowledge my most influential high school teacher, Mr. Wood. He is very knowledgeable in his field of study and probably one of a very few high school teachers with a Masters Degree. He uses modern day issues along with historical issues to broaden students learning in preparation for college as well as everyday life in general. I could always depend on him to be at school before and after the start and end of the day in the event he was needed for any reason. He never favors students as his philosophy in my eyes was students have an equal chance to learn and excel. He is the type of teacher that doesn't tell you what to think or how but encourages you to think and be vocal with your thoughts. In closing I had the pleasure of accompanying him on a trip of a lifetime to Selma Alabama to learn and march over the Edmund Pettus Bridge recognizing the Civil Rights Movement which continues to have an impact on my life. I hope he continues to be a teacher in the Oakridge School District and have the opportunity to influence other lives as he has mine.

Sincerely,

Torrey Esparza

Class of 2010 Graduate

Tesparza3030@comcast.net

September 3, 2013

To whom it may concern,

It has come to my attention that one of the most influential people – not just teacher – in my high school career has been deemed minimally effective at his job. This means that someone some place seems to believe he does not influence his students, does not apply himself in his work, and has a general lack of indifference to the people around him. This all seems rather strange to me as none of these characterize the Mr. Wood that I knew in my Senior Current Issues class back in 2005-2006. It certainly doesn't sound like the Mr. Wood I had heard of in the three years leading up to having a class with him, or the Mr. Wood that I heard about from the underclassmen who came after me. He's been accused of being a difficult teacher, in the fact that his projects pushed his students to apply themselves not just in their textbooks but out of the classroom as well, but never ineffective.

Throughout high school up until that final year of mine I had heard varying stories about him from my classmates, and some were negative, but despite all that I still decided to make the personal choice in taking his current issues class regardless. It was a gamble, solely because I heard he was difficult and passionate – as if passionate were a negative thing. To my great relief on that first day he had my undivided attention, unlike most educators throughout my entirety of schooling – both prior to and after this – Mr. Wood seemed to care about what he was saying. This was refreshing. It wasn't a lecture it was a town square style meeting. He didn't let us sit there and nod off, and if we did he would gather our attention again and attempt to engage us in a dialogue, not just with him but each other. Those class discussions were unlike anything I have experienced, and he let us voice our opinions, and he'd let us argue, but then he'd challenge our views. These were challenges not to simply disagree with us, but to make us find a *why* to our arguments.

One of the most rewarding experiences of the class was discovering that I had a voice and that I wasn't going to be chastised for voicing an opinion. He would argue with us, and some would mistake this for him being bias, but that would be selling Mr. Wood short. A man who loves travel, a man who has actually bore witness to different facets of the world. It's such a rewarding experience having a teacher who delved into the subjects he discussed. This inspired me to examine internally my thought processes and how I viewed the world. The person I was when I walked into that classroom was not the person who walked out of it, and that was for the better.

In the wake of Hurricane Katrina we as a class were challenged to come up with a way to do our part in helping the victims of the tragedy, and collectively we organized a raffle. This didn't only entail making posters or selling the tickets, but he also pushed us to reach out to local

businesses to acquire coupons, products, or services that they would be willing to donate to us to help. He didn't hold our hands through this process, but was always a watchful guide in that he pushed us and gave us advice on who to talk, what to say, where to look, but we were expected to do the work. Then there was the volunteering project, as all of us were expected to log in a certain number of hours volunteering at locations of our choice. He made a point in emphasizing how important this was to some of the colleges we would be applying to in the future, and till that point, there were not many other teachers who really challenged us to volunteer. We were of course graded on our hours logged but it was a personally rewarding experience to participate in it.

I may not have had him for any of the other classes he had but his senior only class is one of the most important classes at Oakridge in readying the students for the "real world." While some of us were prone to slacking off Mr. Wood always treated the class like it was of the utmost importance to our future. This wasn't going to be a class you were just going to blow off. Even if the projects lacked a students utmost attention, the classroom discussions caused us to think more than we were prepared to do. They made us think about how important college really was, how high school wasn't the end of something but the beginning. No one pushed home the idea that we as individuals mattered more than Bob Wood, that we as individuals had a voice, could cause positive changes into our world. Everything he was involved in was for his students to feel they mattered and to help them realize their goals. From his Building a Better World scholarship that he awarded, to his involvement with the Close-up groups over the years, *everything* he has done is for his students.

Losing Bob Wood would be one of the biggest mistakes that Oakridge High School could make. Dismissing a man who has put his heart and soul into his job would be a tragedy. That he planted himself for over twenty-five years in the same location when he would have easily gone anywhere, is a testament to him. More than school dances, more than football games, more than the interactions I had with my classmates, I have more lasting impressions and memories from taking part in his class. His class was difficult, and I'll be the first to admit to my senior slacking but I grew more as a human being for knowing him and listening to him than I had the previous three years in school.

Sincerely,

Aaron Ponce Class of 2006
pulpfaction06@gmail.com

#23 - Nikki Foster c/o 2007

Nikki Foster

5906 Crystal Lake Rd.

Holton, MI 49425

231-736-6072

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this to state one simple fact, that Bob Wood is an amazing teacher. In my sophomore year at Oakridge High School I looked at my class schedule to find I was taking American History with Bob Wood. I had heard through the grape vine that he was a tough teacher but great. I was intimidated, I will admit that; when I walk into his classroom for the first time I was surprised to say the least.

What I found made my fears disappear. There were posters everywhere with inspirational quotes. I am sure whom ever is reading this has been in his classroom and seen the collage of Mr. Wood. I do not know what you think when you walk in there but I can tell you what it made me think and feel. I looked around and felt comfortable. Here was a teacher that was down to earth and wanted us to think. You can tell that by the quotes he has everywhere. Mr. Wood is the most passionate and inspirational teacher I have ever had and I have been a student for a long time.

I will tell you the most important fact about Mr. Wood. He saved me. I was a destructive teenager. I felt that no one cared about me. I was just another face in the crowd. Although, I stuck out to say the least, with my blue and purple hair, black clothes and hard as nails scowl. I was fed up with the school system and ready to give up but he changed all of that. He took one look at me and saw what was hiding under that mask. He saw me and more importantly, saw my potential.

To me that is a mark of a great teacher. That should be the goal of any teacher, to look at their students and see their potential and inspire them to use it. He saw that potential and through that first year he reached in and lit a fire under it. I knew by the end of that first semester I wanted to take every class I could with Mr. Wood and I did. I rode my bike to school a month before school started every year, to talk to Mr. Patton, who was the guidance councilor, to move my schedule around so I would have Mr. Wood for Government and Senior Current Issues. I even fought for a spot to be his teacher's aid my senior year.

I remember what got me. Those journal assignments in American History. My favorite was the one we had to write when we were learning about The Great Depression. He gave us a copy of the photograph called Migrant Mother and told us to write an entry as that woman. I put my soul into that journal entry, I could feel her thoughts through the expression on her face. There were many more journal entries that I could elaborate on but this one was it.

I think it was this entry that let Mr. Wood see that I could write and that I had passion for it as well. He took that and ran with it. In Government class I think he specifically gave me assignments to make me think and write. I think he saw that rebellion in me and gave it an outlet. He put politics in front of me and told me it was okay to challenge them. That, the power of one person can ignite a flame that can burn through this world and change something. All it takes is passion and drive.

He made me love school again. I looked forward to going to class just to see what he was going to teach next. To just listen to the lesson he had for the day. I have never seen a teacher enjoy teaching as much as Mr. Wood. He has such passion for his job. I think that is what catches students, what pulls them in, that passion. If you don't have passion for what you are teaching, how can you expect the students to even listen to you about it, let alone learn it.

I could go on for hours reminiscing about the things I have learned from Mr. Wood. About the crazy journal entries and creative assignments. About the special interest groups he helps every student create. How he allows his students the freedom to think and say their opinions without judgment but, at the same time, challenge those opinions to make them think even more about them. I can give you a thousand examples of his teaching skills but what I think is the most impressive is this right here.

I graduated in 2007 and I haven't lost touch with Mr. Wood. I cannot say that about any other teacher I had at Oakridge or at Muskegon Community College. I am taking the time out of my life, which is rather busy with moving to Chicago, to write this on his behalf. To come to his defense when he is being questioned. I think that screams volumes about the quality of his teaching. He made a lasting impression on me. He taught me how to face this life without bending and breaking the person I am. He taught me how to hang onto my beliefs and stand up for what I think is right. He gave me the tools to be an adult in this world.

Of all the teachers you have in that High School he is the best because that is just who he is. He is an inspiration to his students and he gives them the greatest gift in this world; knowledge. He teaches you what it is to be a good human being. He teaches you how to care about this world and gives you the knowledge on how to change it. There are many quotes from his classroom that have stuck with me but one stands out to me right now. "Blind belief in authority is the greatest enemy of truth." — Albert Einstein. The most important thing I learned from Mr. Wood, is to question everything.

Sincerely,

Nikki Foster (OHS c/o 2007)

Nikki Foster <arsenic_wishes@yahoo.com>

#24 - Sammantha Fox c/o 2012

August 26, 2013

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Samantha Fox, and I am a 2012 graduate of Oakridge High School. I have attended Oakridge my entire life, so I know how everything works. Over the years, I learned all of the “dos” and “don’ts”, as well as the “ins” and “outs” of the school. I was a dual-enrolled student who actually cared about my education and my future. My experience at Oakridge Public Schools was great.

Being a small school, Oakridge could not offer as many opportunities as other larger schools in the area. However, the school made up for that in other ways, such as the tight-knit community, small class sizes, and safe campus. The best part of Oakridge is the staff. I haven’t met one teacher there who wasn’t knowledgeable, caring, and happy to teach. They all know their students on a personal level and I know they try their best to make sure each student succeeds. One teacher in particular comes to mind when I think about the staff at Oakridge High School, and his name is Mr. Wood.

My senior year was the most important year of my high school career, and it was also my most enjoyable. Every day I started my morning with my favorite class: Senior Current Issues. Mr. Wood is the most encouraging and caring person at Oakridge, and he helped guide me to become awake to the world in one short school year. His class was fun, interesting, helpful, and I honestly learned more than I had expected to. He inspired me to work harder for what I wanted. Mr. Wood is always involved in something bigger than himself, and everything I have seen him do was an attempt to try and better the school, community, or the world.

It really was a privilege to be able to take his class my senior year. Oakridge is a great school, and Mr. Wood makes it even better. I would strongly recommend any student to take his class. Mr. Wood truly is an exceptional person, and the best teacher I have had.

Sincerely,

Samantha Fox (OHS c/o 2012)
samantha.rae.fox@gmail.com

#25 - Thomas J. Frazier c/o 2004

Thomas James Frazier
1946 S. Wolf Lake Road
Muskegon, Mi. 49442
August 27, 2013

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Thomas James Frazier. I am a former student of the Oakridge Public School system, Class of 2004. I attended preschool through 12th grade at Oakridge and during that time I was able to benefit from the experience and interest of many fine educators. However, one in particular played a crucial role in my education and life and that teacher's name is Bob Wood.

I was lucky enough to have Mr. Wood for two years in high school. He taught my American History class in the 2001-2002 school year and my Senior Current Issues class in the 2003-2004 school year. While I already had a nascent interest in politics and public policy that some adults encouraged, Mr. Wood did something far better than that: he challenged me. He would not let me or any of the other students rest on political catchphrases or tired dogmas but asked us all to defend and question our beliefs about public life and the kind of society we wanted to live in. I was in Mr. Wood's class on September 11th and we were all horrified by the sounds and images of that day. The next week, Mr. Wood let us know that we would be doing a six week module on the events leading up to that day. Some questioned what this had to do with a history course but he explained that rarely do we get to be the first reviewers of huge historical events like this and that what had happened that day would have an effect on the history of this country and the world, for a long time to come.

Mr. Wood has always believed that one of the primary goals of public schools is to create well-informed, active, and thoughtful citizens. Every year in his American History class he gave out a Thomas Jefferson award to those students who had excelled not only academically but also in the realm of questioning the decisions, activities and motivations of leaders of the past and present. In Senior Current Issues he had us all create our own political action groups and motivated us to work to create the changes we wanted to see in the world. He encouraged and assisted these groups ecumenically without an eye to whether they were right-wing or left-wing. The important thing he believed was to get students active in politics, not to get them to agree with him on issues.

He has also done everything in his power to get students to continue their education by taking groups every year to different college campuses across the state and making sure that they fill out their FAFSA and get their applications in on time. It is because of his pushing and assistance that I have a B.S. in Public and Nonprofit Administration from Grand Valley State University and am currently working on a Masters in Public Policy at Michigan State University.

His travels abroad, his education, his experience and his dedication to students have made him an irreplaceable asset and institution at Oakridge High School. I am proud to call myself a former student of Mr. Wood's. I speak for myself and my parents, Joy and Tom Frazier, when I say that Mr. Wood has my wholehearted support and endorsement as a teacher, leader, and friend.

Sincerely,

Thomas James Frazier

#26 - Stacey Galdeen c/o 2009

August 7, 2013

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing this letter today to offer my utmost recommendation for a great teacher, friend, and coach; Mr. Wood.

I was fortunate enough to have Mr. Wood as a teacher during both my junior and senior years of high school. I cannot imagine what college would be like if I did not get that opportunity. His senior current issues class not only taught me the importance of opening your eyes to the world around you, but also prepared me for college more than I knew at the time being. During this class, we filled out as many scholarship applications as we could find, inquired with schools that we were interested in, and much, much more. I can't imagine what my freshman year at Ferris would have been like without the preparation Mr. Wood provided me and my classmates with. In my eyes, Mr. Wood's senior current issues class was the one I valued most in both a life and educational aspects at Oakridge High School.

Not only is Mr. Wood a great teacher, he is just an all around great person. He is so compassionate about what he does it truly inspired me to be a better person. His door was and is always open to his students. Numerous times I reached out to Mr. Wood not only about school or homework questions, but personal issues as well. He was always there to lend a hand. Mr. Wood was and still is someone I know I can contact today and he would be there to help in a heartbeat.

I guess the reason I am writing this letter is because I only hope that future Oakridge students get the same opportunity that I was given by having Mr. Wood as a teacher. I am so thankful for the life lessons that he taught me that I can carry along and hopefully have the same impact on those around me as well.

Sincerely,

Stacy Galdeen
2010 Oakridge Graduate

#27 - Alberto Garza c/o 2013

August 25, 2013

To Whom it may concern,

My name is Jose Alberto Garza. I am a proud graduate of the class of 2013 of Oakridge High School, and a current student at Grand Rapids Community College. I am writing this letter to let you know the impact Mr.Wood has had on my life.

In my junior year of high school, I had Mr.Wood as a teacher for my Economics class. While in the class, I did not take classwork seriously and would instead go of off to impress my "friends." Mr.Wood heavily stressed to me that it was hurting my future and that my so-called friends didn't care too much if I succeeded in life. Through his and others' advice, I was able to make education my top priority and steer away from that group of friends (who would happen to get kicked out of high school or not graduate on time) and befriend those who aided me in doing well.

I had Mr.Wood once again my senior year for Senior Current Issues; this time taking class seriously and putting forth effort. In this class we dealt with preparation for college. This really helped me because I became more experienced dealing with scholarships and financial aid, and made it so much easier when enrolling in college. We also focused on the 2012 Presidential election. Before I would side with whichever candidate my mother voted for, but now I can make my own decision based on the candidate's position on various issues that I now have an understanding of.

Mr.Wood also had us research the many issues within the continent of Africa. I really had no clue the continent is facing besides famine and poverty, like pirating, genocides, and tyrant leaders. In all honesty, SCI was my favorite and in my opinion, most helpful class. You also get to have fun yet beneficial experiences such as college visits and working on presidential campaigns. His classes also make students have to pay attention and know what their talking about to do well, rather than just copying text from a book.

In conclusion, Mr.Wood makes an impact on many students lives, and any student could benefit from having any of his classes.

Sincerely,

Jose Alberto Garza (OHS c/o 2013)
thealbertogarza@gmail.com

#28 - Brittany Gee c/o 2007

Brittany L. Gee
6503 Crossbow
Grand Rapids MI, 49548

To whom it may concern:

As a former Oakridge Graduate, class of 2007 and a former student of Mr. Bob Wood I would like to commend Mr. Wood on being what I think is the most dedicated and inspiring teacher at Oakridge High School. Things I noticed about Mr. Wood compared to other teachers I've had at previous schools is his extreme enthusiasm and passion for the subjects, kids, and future of America. He was always looking for ways to better our community and trying to get people more deeply involved. He makes sure we know how important our voice is and to always speak up for what we believe in. I think it would be detrimental to Oakridge to not have such an asset as Mr. Wood as my life would not be the same without his influence.

His teaching strategies and techniques are so different from any other instructor and whatever he does works. Things he had taught my peers and I have stuck with us for years, and helped shaped us into the individuals we have become. Most of my happy 'remember when' moments from high school classes were involving Mr. Wood and some of the things we did such as protesting, volunteering for political parties, going to Washington DC, and Selma Alabama. With Mr. Wood we never knew what to expect he was very unpredictable which taught us what to expect in actual every day life. One day he might come in dressed like an African tribe member and the next like he's from the Middle East. He was very cultural and I believe that is such a valuable asset to Oakridge because it's not a very diverse community and students need to learn about other cultures.

Sincerely,

Brittany L. Gee

August 9, 2013

#29 - Brandon Gemzer c/o 1999

August 28, 2013

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to attest that Bob Wood is a high quality teacher. Mr. Wood cares more than almost any teacher I have ever come across. I say this as a person who has not only attended secondary school and college, but has worked to extend greater educational opportunities to a variety of student populations. I have spent time with teachers fighting to turn around failing inner city schools as well as those at elite institutions. I would put Mr. Wood's level of dedication up there with any of them.

Further, I have observed Mr. Wood make lasting positive impacts on the lives of students and the community. His method of doing this is by engaging students in the political and geographic issue relevant to their own lives. As I prepared to write this letter I spoke to many other former students who could still recall what they learned in one of his classes. In an age where short term learning is epidemic, remembering lessons from over a decade past is a pedagogical marvel.

My personal story relates to my time in the U.S. Marines. As we prepared for middle eastern deployment in 2003, my unit was working to become up to speed on Iraqi language and customs. Having learned a great deal in Mr. Wood's geography class about middle eastern culture, including a phraseological understanding of very basic Arabic, I was chosen to be our unit middle eastern "guru". Using the info imparted to me by Mr. Wood, and military provided sources, I educated our Marines on basic customs and expectations that helped us as we interacted with Iraqi, Kuwaiti, Turkish, and Egyptian nationals. Mr. Wood exposed us to foreign societies in a way that made them more real and more interesting than many other social studies. He leaves his students with a desire to know more about the places they are studying and encourages them to experience it for themselves!

The important thing I learned from Bob Wood was not just the raw info of middle eastern cultures, but how to learn about and engage with people of all different cultures. I have utilized this skill to make friends and connections all over the globe.

I appreciate this opportunity to share what a wonderful impact Mr. Wood has made on me as a teacher. I am available to respond to any questions or comments concerning Mr. Wood and his achievements.

Sincerely,

Brandon Gemzer
(231) 903-3838
Gemzerb2@gmail.com

#30 - Eric Gemzer c/o 2013

August 24, 2013

To whomever concerned,

Mr.Wood is in essence, a perfect example of what a teacher should be, but he is not just a teacher, he is a world traveler, a thinker, a writer, and a man of true values.

Africa, Europe, America, name any where and Mr.Wood has probably been there, that is part of what makes Mr.Wood an effective teacher, travel opens your eyes to the world. I know this from first hand experience, how? i took the trip to Selma Alabama with Mr.Wood in the 2012-2013 school year. That trip opened my eyes to the fact that the world is much bigger than what you see. That trip also let me learn more about Mr.Wood as a person.

Some of my fondest memories in high school were on that trip, I remember sitting in a pizza hut in Selma Alabama, with Mr.Wood, Wyatt Sabitino, and one of the German exchange students, Sacha Sale. We sat at that restaurant for several hours, discussing Europe, America, politics, religion, and whatever else came up. Unless you have sat down and discussed such things so openly you may never understand.

Speaking of open discussion, that was one of the greatest features of his class, if the topic was relevant, no matter what it was, it would be discussed. From politics to race relations in other nations, from the rain forest in Brazil to the Windmills in the Netherlands (for Maria Vasconcoles and Mitchell Vanderkolk) those discussions really got me thinking, really made my mind come to life, really taught me more than any text book ever could.

So to say that Mr.Wood is ineffective as a teacher, is absurd. To truly understand a man as complex as him, you need to take some time out of your busy schedule and just sit and talk with him about whatever comes to mind, even if you think you know it all, you will learn something.

Sincerely,

Eric J. Gemzer (OHS c/o 2013)

ericjgemzer@gmail.com

#31 - Maranda (Gemzer) Thompson c/o 2003

August 9, 2013

To whom it may concern,

As a former Oakridge alumni and student of Bob Wood, I feel compelled to express my deep gratitude for him as a teacher, coach, and mentor.

Bob not only pushed me daily on the basketball court, but he pushed me to become a better student and steward for those around me.

I recall expressing my interest in studying abroad to Bob and it was he, that pushed me to follow my desire. After returning from my study abroad in Italy, I was fortunate to take his class as a senior. I was quite impressed to say the least. Bob challenged us to debate on world issues, reach out to those in need, and most importantly to have an opinion.

Ten years after graduating, I am still intrigued when I see Bob reaching out and working with our community. In many cases, he is devoting his time outside the classroom working directly with and for Oakridge past and future students. These genuine acts of kindness and devotion are rare.

Bob is a fundamental part of our district both inside and outside of the classroom. He is constantly pushing, inspiring and leading for a better tomorrow. That sort of motivator is priceless. I feel honored to have him apart of Oakridge Public Schools.

Sincerely,

Marandah Thompson (OHS c/o 2003)

Maranda Gemzer <mgemzer1010@gmail.com>

#32 - Lyndsey (Gibson) Bensel c/o 2005

To Whom It May Concern:

It has recently come to my attention that Bob Wood was rated below average during the recent evaluation of teachers at Oakridge High School. I was shocked to hear that such an effective and inspirational educator was not being recognized for his hard work and dedication.

During the time I spent in Mr. Wood's class, I considered him to be an excellent teacher who was always striving to inspire and motivate his students. Mr. Wood gave me an experience in his classroom that extended beyond academics and standardized testing. He brought in former graduates who had gone on to be successful in college and their careers and gave us the opportunity to talk with them. He helped his students and their families, mine included, navigate through the FAFSA, scholarship applications, and college admissions essays. He pushed his students to set ambitious goals for themselves and then supported us in achieving those goals.

More importantly, Mr. Wood allowed me to speak my mind in his classroom. Mr. Wood's approach to instruction and the atmosphere he created in his classroom sent me an important message: your voice matters here. I started to feel that what I had to say was important. Through classroom discussions, I began thinking more critically about the material and was able to make connections to the new information in a more meaningful way. Participating in class discussions in Mr. Wood's class directly prepared me for the type of learning I would experience in college instruction.

Another pivotal moment I experienced in high school also took place in Mr. Wood's classroom. I was a freshman at Oakridge on September 11, 2001. Mr. Wood was the only teacher I had at the time who stopped the regular schedule in the classroom to explain what had happened to our country and why. Mr. Wood continued to teach us about our country's political history with the Middle East and also introduced us to other conflicts in the region's history. I was able to make sense of the turmoil our country was experiencing because of Mr. Wood.

Mr. Wood is not just a great teacher; he is the teacher Oakridge students need. Growing up in Oakridge is hard. It isn't hard in the sense that it is dangerous or extremely impoverished, but the gravity of this place drags kids down and fools them into believing that their opportunities in life extend only as far as Muskegon County. Some of the things that make this community wonderful, like close families, old friends, and a sense of belonging, are also the features that can be suffocating for young students. Oakridge students *need* to see what the world can offer them. Mr. Wood offers this kind of

exposure to his students. In doing so, he gives his students at Oakridge the strength and confidence necessary to break out from under the weight of this insular community.

I can honestly say that Mr. Wood's classroom changed my life. Mr. Wood helped me develop the confidence I needed to believe that I could not only succeed at OHS, but also go on to succeed in a college classroom. He pushed me to reevaluate my potential as a student and as a citizen. Many of the decisions I made regarding my future, such as attending college in Washington, D.C., applying to and accepting a position with Teach for America, and my decision recently to become a teacher were inspired directly by the lessons I learned in Mr. Wood's classroom.

The recent evaluation of Mr. Wood is inaccurate and does a disservice to Oakridge High School, Oakridge students, and the community as a whole. I would strongly encourage you to consider the message you are sending to your staff, and by extension, your students through your actions.

Sincerely,

Lyndsey BenseL (OHS c/o 2005)

Post-Baccalaureate Student
Western Washington University
Bellingham, Washington

#33 - Jared and Chevonne Grimm c/o 2001

August 29, 2013

To Whom it May Concern,

My name is Jared Grimm. My wife Chevonne and I, both graduates of Oakridge High School in 2001, would like to take a short time to express the positive impact Mr. Wood made in our lives. We can safely say that during our 4 years at OHS, no other teacher was as insightful, engaging, and effective as Mr. Wood. Not to say that there aren't other fine teachers at OHS, just that he was the most vital to our education.

Not much about the way his classroom operated was "by the book," his curriculum was largely selfmade, whether it was: not just labeling blank geography maps, but hand drawing them first; a stock market simulation competition designed to have students research stocks and trends and figure out when to buy or sell; yet another writing assignment that ranged from writing from the point of view of General Sherman or Oskar Schindler or FDR; spending not just a conversation or an hour, but weeks at a time discussing and planning and writing about your future beyond high school. The aforementioned assignments, coupled with spontaneous hour long thought evoking class discussions that, when the bell rang, left you dwelling the rest of the day on that discussion instead of glad you missed out on a quiz or new writing assignment, were integral to our learning experience.

He always encouraged us to try and look at things through a different lens, to understand an opposing point of view, embrace and welcome differences, approach discussion informed and openminded and he had a knack for trying to squeeze out every bit of potential possible, all the while ingraining the importance of trying to maximize that potential for yourself in any future pursuit or endeavor. For these things we are indescribably grateful. These things do not come from a book, they come from a passionate and dedicated individual whose value as a teacher is profound and immeasurable and we would consider our own children extremely lucky and blessed to have the chance to experience such a teacher.

Sincerely,

Jared and Chevonne Grimm
Oakridge class of 2001
Facebook (jared grimm)

#34 - Rebecca Hall c/o 2009

August 26, 2013

To Whom it May Concern:

My name is Rebecca Hall, and I graduated from Oakridge High School in 2009. I've spent 14 years of my life in the company of some outstanding teachers, and of course some have stood out more than others. When I was a junior, I had the pleasure of being in Bob Wood's American History class. History classes are historically (no pun intended) boring, and as an honor student I planned on having an easy semester. It didn't take for me to realize that I wasn't in any ordinary history class. Mr. Wood's approach, enthusiasm and passion for what he taught was immediately evident, and as a student there couldn't have been anything more refreshing.

I've since continued my education and studied under a few other great teachers, but to this day Mr. Wood's lectures still ring in my head. Whether it be civil rights, women's rights or the holocaust, Mr. Wood truly cared that his students understood the depth of what happened, and put more emotion and energy into his lectures than any teacher I've ever had. He had high expectations for each and every person in his class, and was able to instill a confidence in his students that would last a lifetime.

When I was a senior, I was in Mr. Wood's Senior Current Issues class. My home life wasn't good, and my academic performance was affected. Mr. Wood immediately noticed that something was off, and encouraged me to focus on my studies to better myself and my future. He was the only teacher that year to notice that I wasn't myself, and I can honestly say that had it not been for Mr. Wood's encouragement and high expectations, I may not have graduated.

High School is a difficult time for teenagers, personally and academically. They're faced with so many changes, and in some cases like mine they don't have the support they need on the home front. The difference between success and failure can be as simple as one person believing in another, and I owe a great deal of my success to Mr. Wood. He was the only teacher to have his door open hours after every other teacher in the building had gone home, and was more than willing to listen and offer advice when needed. This in my opinion is the very definition of excellence, and Oakridge Public Schools should be honored to have such a dedicated educator on staff.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Hall (OHS c/o 2009)
horserunner09@hotmail.com

#35 - Kassandra (Hanchera) Dean c/o 2009

Kassandra Dean
549 E Edgewood Blv Apt 602
Lansing MI, 48911
Hanchera@msu.edu

Oakridge Public High School
5493 Hall Rd
Muskegon, MI 49442

To whom it may concern,

I am writing on the behalf of Mr. Bob Wood as it has come to my attention that his position and role at Oakridge High School had come into question. I am an Alumni of Oakridge Public Schools and during my time there I took a few of Bob's classes as well as participated in outside educational activities he has hosted. From this time I have spent learning with him I have gotten to know him well and can vouch for his character and abilities.

Bob has an eccentric mode of teaching that gets students into academic categories that they would normally have no interest in. He understands how the students of Oakridge view the world, and he puts great effort into opening their eyes and mixing what we learn in our textbooks into current day events and activities so that we may have a hand in what will be our country's history. No teacher at Oakridge has had quite as big of an impact on my success at college as Bob has and I attribute that to his passion for enlightening young minds and preparing them for the real world.

Bob offers something that cannot be taught in any teaching program and that's passion, for what he teaches, and a desire for his students to succeed and go on to bigger and better things. He is in my eyes an asset to Oakridge High School, his travels in the world alone makes him much more qualified and valuable to a small school and community like Oakridge and it disappoints me to think that his talents could be squandered away. His understandings of the world and love for his students are just something Oakridge can't afford to lose and I have confidence once all of this information has been brought to light the proper decision will be made. If you have any more questions or concerns feel free to contact me at the addresses above.

Best,
Kassandra Dean (OHS c/o 2009)

#36 - Sierra Hanchera c/o 2013

August 13th, 2013

To Whom it May Concern,

As I approach August 21 I become more and more nervous. A brand new chapter of my life is about to begin. College. As scary as this may be, I know that no matter what happens I have at least one person I can always call if I need some advice. I had the privilege of having Mr. Wood as a teacher for two years, in which I spent many hours outside of the classroom traveling, picketing, and learning with him. In those two years I learned more about the world around me than in my entire life.

He taught each and everyone of us to be awake and always stand up for what we believe in. He is one of the very few teachers I have had that not only cares how I do in the classroom, but how I do in the real world. Almost every successful Oakridge graduate I have spoken to over the years has either asked me how he is, or tells me how much they appreciate having him as a teacher. I couldn't agree more. Without his class I would have walked into college completely blind.

Mr. Wood does what every teacher claims they are doing. Prepare us students for college and life after college. Learning isn't always about following by the book. Its about experiencing new things, and embracing them. He provides everyone with the opportunity to try new things. Just look at all of the trips he offers the students to participate going on. I've gone to Chicago, went picketing, and been on a college tour, all thanks to Mr. Wood. Not to mention Selma and Close-up. Two trips I personally didn't attend, but I know many that did and couldn't talk enough about how much fun they had and how much they had learned.

Both my sister and I couldn't tell anyone enough what Mr. Wood has taught us, and couldn't thank him enough. He is the best teacher I've ever had and I hope every student attending Oakridge has the opportunity to have him as a teacher. I don't believe any teacher at Oakridge deserves their job more than he does. He cares about each and every student that walks through that door, and expects only the best from all of us.

Thank you for your time,

Sierra Hanchera (c/o 2013)
hanches@mail.gvsu.edu

#37 - Jennifer Hardenburg c/o 2007

August 16, 2013

To those whom it may concern:

I was a student at Oakridge High School seven years ago. I was fortunate enough to have Bob Wood as a teacher twice during my time as a student.

He was one of the best teachers I've ever had.

Mr. Wood is a knowledgeable man, both about the subjects he teaches and the world in which we live, and he passes that wisdom on to his students. He shows his students that history and government are more than just requirements to graduate. They are changing subjects with tangible affects and far reaching repercussions.

Mr. Wood encourages a thirst for knowledge in his students and emphasizes that we need to look at things as a whole, even if it means doing a little extra research. He instills a sense of responsibility for the society in which we live; a desire to build a better world, starting with ourselves. He fosters the belief that anything is possible with enough hard work.

Mr. Wood is a wonderful teacher who genuinely cares about the students he teaches. He might be a little unconventional at times, but he manages to bring his subjects to life and make them relatable.

I am very glad to have been a student of his.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter and allowing me to relate my thoughts on the matter.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Hardenburgh
jlh1718@gmail.com

08/25/2013

Re: Bob Wood

During the last 24 Years that Bob Wood has taught at Oakridge, he has had the opportunity to touch many lives and affect the educational outcome of his students. Over the term of his career, Bob has centered his life and focus around his Oakridge family and he is to be commended for his steadfast efforts.

Looking back to 7th Grade, year 2000, we were told we could pick any country we wanted to learn more about for the travel fair and do a research presentation. I asked if I could do my presentation on Iran, my teacher said No. I then asked if I could do it on Iraq, frustrated my teacher said No. Finally I settled for Norway. To this day couldn't tell you much about it, really didn't have any interest in it, but to this day I can remember my teacher telling me no. Fast forward to 2006, sitting in Bob's class I was again given an opportunity to pick a country that I wanted to learn more about. I thought to myself when given the assignment, "this is my chance" When I approached Bob with the idea of researching Iran he didn't tell me no, instead, he encouraged me to pursue my interests. This is the kind of educator we need at Oakridge. Those that encourage our students to thrive, not fall short.

As the third sibling of my family to have Bob as a teacher, I was excited for the opportunity to sit before a teacher who had written not one but two, published, non fiction novels of his journey into exploring both the worlds of Baseball and Football. Lessons contained within these novels outline Bob's firsthand account of what his dreams were and how he started on a journey and was able to finish it successfully. More importantly than him completing his dream was his ability to document and share his successes with others to guide them in being successful in following whatever it is they strive for. One of the most important lessons being at least try and never give up.

As I drive by late at night and see Bob's car parked in the back lot, I know Bob isn't in it for the money, he isn't in it for the popularity, he is in it because he wants our generation to be successful to be aware of the problems in the 21st Century. Bob has proven over the years that his life comes second hand to his life and students at Oakridge. When his brother fell ill in my sophomore year, Bob did not walk out on us, he worked around his schedule at Oakridge to make sure we understood the lesson for the day. Even through losing his Mother last year, he still managed to take our students to Washington, Selma, and Chicago. Despite other ongoing issues, he still traveled to Africa to bring back another life lesson to share with his students. Lessons that he hopes to instill in our students so they are conscious to the issues out there in world we live in. He has let nothing stand in his way in the name of providing our students with real life knowledge, knowledge that will be useful in the 21st Century world of work.

From Coach, to Activist, and from Teacher to Mentor, Bob has proven to me as a former student that if you work hard and believe in yourself and believe in your dreams you can do whatever it is you want to do in life. As a student in Bob's classroom, I could see that his teaching methods weren't just an ordinary lecture of mandated curriculum but moreover the reality of life itself. As a student, I could see Bob had a passion. A passion that he wanted to share with all of his students. A passion that reached far beyond the confined halls of Oakridge. A passion of Success. Success that was both measurable and attainable. A passion that he shared with each student encouraging them to do incredibly well, and achieve educational excellence. Looking back, he wanted nothing more than for every student that sat in his room to do their very best, be successful, and follow their dreams.

In addition, I believe Bob should be recognized and would like to commend his efforts for starting and continuing to grow the Building A Better World Scholarship. Bob understands the hardship the cost of higher education poses to our students and has stood unwavering in the name of helping our students get the money they need to be able to go to college or study abroad to help them be contributing members of society. Through his guided and relentless efforts our students have been able to do anything from flying solo across the country to studying overseas. Last year alone, 4 students were able to receive a \$1,000 scholarship based on an essay they wrote about something they were passionate about and believe in.

In closing, I would like to extend a thank you to Bob for everything his courses shared to help me become as successful as I am today. Bob has inspired and touched the lives of many through his wisdom and life experiences. Bob has proven time and time again, setting your mind to something is important, but following through makes all the difference.

Brent Hartman
Former Student
Class of 2007
hartman4oakridge@aol.com

#39 - Heather Havermans c/o 2001

"Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbour. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover."

-Mark Twain

This quote sits on my desk, at Holy Trinity Pewley Down School, in Guildford, England, where I now teach fifth grade. It is the quote I chose for my 10th grade writing journal in Bob Wood's History class more than ten years ago, and it will forever remind me of where I have come from, the troubles I faced, and how Bob helped me to see past those struggles and embrace a future Awake to the world.

In high school, my life was turbulent. I rarely saw my mother, who lived in Manistee, and I didn't get along well with my father. Several times I left home and moved in with different families; it was an unstable and unsettling time for me. Luckily, I had a teacher who was able to inspire me and help me to see past my issues. He taught me about perspective, integrity and resilience. Building a relationship with me based on trust and respect, he became the constant, driving force in my life, pushing me to achieve my full potential.

Were it not for Bob Wood's determination to make a difference in my life, I can whole-heartedly say I would not have graduated high school. If I didn't show up for a lesson, Bob would call my house and tell me I needed to be there. If I was upset, he would help me work through problems and come up with solutions. He pushed me to go to University. He made contact with a social worker when I found myself without a place to live. He supported my decision to move to England when nobody else did. He helped me 'throw off the bowlines and sail away from the safe harbour'. I know that Bob has been just as supportive to hundreds of other students at Oakridge High School, and his ability to connect with pupils and teach them the skills they need to become engaged members of society should be appreciated and celebrated.

Bob Wood was the most effective and inspirational teacher I had. His lessons were exciting and taught me important life skills such as letter writing and participating in the political process. He taught me to think for myself and to challenge conventional beliefs. His passion and knowledge combined make him an unstoppable force for good in the Oakridge community. I know there are many others, just like me, who contribute their success to his influence and direction.

Throughout life we meet people who challenge us and change our course for the better. Sometimes it feels as if these individuals were put on our path just at the right time for the right purpose. It isn't often, but when it does happen, it's important to be thankful and to cherish the friendship that was allowed to develop. The impact Bob has had on my life cannot be condensed down to a one-page letter. I still draw inspiration from what I learnt more than ten years ago in his class, and the ideas, advice and passion he gave, continues to challenge and transform the person I am today.

Sincerely,

Heather Havermans - Oakridge class of 2001
September 1, 2013

#40 - Mike Haynes c/o 1999

August 20, 2013

To whom it may concern,

Every person that has been able to achieve some piece of the American dream can trace their upward mobility to a teacher that pushed them outside of their comfort zone and redefine what they thought possible, allowing them to grow into a success story. For me this teacher was Bob Wood.

I, like most other Oakridge students, was raised in a lower middle class home. This upbringing came with all of the trials and limitations one would expect. Education took a back seat to dealing with family struggle. These struggles eroded my desire to achieve academically. I was blessed with a natural ability to learn which allowed me to coast through with average grades until I had social studies with Mr. Wood as a freshman in high school.

Bob quickly realized that I could do much better than average if I just applied myself. Bob showed me that natural talent is a nice thing to have but in the real world I would have to work hard to be successful. I can say unequivocally that this has been the most valuable lesson any teacher has instilled in me. Working my way through college as well as my career this work ethic and thirst for learning is what has led to my success.

Bob has a way of reaching students that no other educator can. He has a boundless passion for his students beyond the grade they earn. Bob understands that education is more than getting an A it about learning to think, evaluate, and apply these skills. Education is about the transition from adolescence to adulthood. He refuses to see his students as an aggregate of test scores. He sees them for what they are, individuals. These individuals come to him with their own talents as well as struggles and he is able to use both to push his student toward growth.

Bob's impact on me, along with countless other students, can't be measured with a Scantron. He pushed me to be the first person in my family to finish college. This has resonated through my family leading several others to follow in my footsteps. Bob singlehandedly broke the continual cycle of poverty in my family. His impact will last generations. This is something precious few can claim. This makes Bob an invaluable asset to the students of Oakridge and the Oakridge community as a whole.

It is for these reasons that I am honored to be able to say that Bob Wood is one of those once in a lifetime teachers that I was fortunate enough to study under. His tireless commitment to the success of his students is the sole reason I was able to achieve more for myself than I otherwise thought possible. Without the influence of Bob Wood I wouldn't be able to wake up every morning and feel like a success.

Sincerely,

Mike Haynes (OHS c/o 1999)
Sales and Marketing Facilitator
LiveRoof and LiveWall

What it Means to be an Educator

Choosing a career is one of the hardest decisions a person will make in their lifetime. Although the choice to teach is made frequently by many American's, it is a choice made frivolously without much thought as to what it exactly means to be an educator. Most teachers may at one point feel that they love their jobs but over time lose interest in anything other than receiving a paycheck and meeting standards. It is a rarity to find someone who over time remains passionate about their work and their students. Even rarer to find such a person working in a high school environment with teens who are likely to push against what they are saying, criticize them, and are in one of the most transitional times of their lives. Being an educator is about being truly passionate in your work as well as your students and not only meeting standards in tests but exceeding them in the students in the classroom.

Bob Wood is the definition of a first class educator. In all my years at Oakridge I have never came across another teacher who is more passionate about their job and who cares as much for their students as him. He not only takes an interest in how well his students do in his classroom but is concerned for their well being and their progress after high school. Whereas most teachers work with their students just in the classroom, Bob Wood goes beyond this. He participates in afterschool functions/groups, meets with his students on demand as needed, stays late almost every day, and encourages students to think about life after high school. Many graduates attribute their success in college to his teachings, motivation, and encouragement; I am fortunate to be one of them.

Upon entering Oakridge High School I was a troubled individual who had so many feelings of self doubt. Mr. Wood was one of the only teachers who believed in me and supported me in these times. He was the encouraging force in my life that pushed me to be a better person and that was willing to look past my flaws to see the person I really was. The motivation he supplied me with in the classroom boosted my confidence in myself and made it possible for me to work even harder in all my other classes.

Not only did we work together in the classroom but Mr. Wood also encouraged his students to continue the fight for both our education and our world outside of class, saying that the fight would never end and it didn't have to. Myself and other classmates worked side by side with Mr. Wood on various projects including the Green Team, the Fight for the Michigan Promise Scholarship, Help Heal Haiti, and the Die in For Darfur. All of these events and groups helped further my knowledge of the world, open my mind to problems that affected others, as well as improved my chances of getting into a good college. These groups could not have happened without Mr. Wood's inspirations, time, and effort. He made it possible for a group of high school students to join together to make a difference.

Looking back at my years at Oakridge High School I can say with all honesty that the most influential times I had were under the teachings of one of the best educators I have met, Bob Wood. He is more than a teacher; he is a true educator that guides students throughout one of the most difficult times in their lives. He was the encouragement I needed to change my life and to better my future. Because of all of his hard work and eye opening experiences I was able to graduate at the top of my class and was accepted into Grand Valley State University.

After attending college for a year and a half I was able to declare my major in Public and Nonprofit Administration with an emphasis in Community Health and a minor in Women and Gender Studies. Looking back I am proud to say that it was an easy decision because Mr. Wood encouraged us to pursue a career that would not only better ourselves but make a difference in the world. After completing my internship with The American Red Cross of Greater Grand Rapids I have recently become a committee member for the 2014 Hometown Heroes Celebration. I will be graduating April 2014 with my BS with honors from Sigma Alpha Lambda and will be pursuing my masters in Public Administration.

My future is bright and I know what I want from life and I owe it to the motivational teachings of Bob Wood.

Sincerely,

Amanda Hentsch

OHS class of 2010

Amanda Hentsch <hentscam@mail.gvsu.edu>

#42 - Jordan Holter c/o 2007

Jordan Holter
1199 Drent Rd.
Muskegon, MI 49442
(231) 327-2575

August 12, 2013

To Whom It May Concern,

I have known Bob Wood for the past nine years. He encouraged me to not only become a better student, but a better overall person. I currently have my Bachelor of Science degree in Health Science from Grand Valley State University and am in the process of applying for graduate school to earn my Master of Public Administration.

In the spring of 2005, I participated in Close-Up Washington D.C. This was my first experience with Bob Wood, who was the advisor for the program at Oakridge High School. Close-Up, the national program that allows students to experience the U.S. government first-hand, was my first independent trip out of Michigan. That experience is the exact point in my life where I decided travel was one of my major goals. It completely inspired me to travel and I am currently in the process of planning a trip to Costa Rica.

I was fortunate enough to take two classes (Government and Senior Current Issues) with Bob Wood during the 2005/2006 and 2006/2007 school year at Oakridge. The government class encouraged me to become more politically active. Bob did not care what specific stance each student had on a political issue, just as long as they had one. Students were encouraged to vote, as well, and told that every voice and vote counts. I can sincerely say that without Senior Current Issues I may not have been able to attend college. I had no idea how to apply to school, find scholarships, or apply for financial aid. I earned enough scholarships and received enough financial aid through that I could pay for college at Grand Valley State University. Throughout the class, I was able to navigate through the daunting task of applying for scholarships and FAFSA, while receiving encouragement and support with the entire college process from Bob. Senior Current Issues allowed me to become more aware of the world, as well. I had very little perspective or global awareness before the class. We were required to study both an African country and a Middle Eastern country. During my first semester at Grand Valley State University, I took a required World History class. On the very first day, our professor asked us if anyone could label a map of Africa, as most of his students previously could not. Because Bob's class required students to label maps of Africa and the Middle East, I was able to completely impress my professor and obtained an A in the class.

The Building a Better World scholarship, started and maintained by Bob Wood, was still in its infancy when I graduated from Oakridge in 2007. I was a winner for the Global Awareness category. This scholarship was another contribution towards funding my continued education. Winning this scholarship inspired me to help with several of the responsibilities needed to

continue the Building a Better World scholarship. I was given the privilege of assisting with acquiring funds and helping choose recipients and have been doing so for the past few years.

Through my experiences with Bob Wood, I also became able to speak to Oakridge students about my experiences applying to and attending college. Returning the support that I received while in Senior Current Issues has been extremely rewarding. Although I was a student who had always known that I would be attending college, some students feel like they do not have that option. In an economy where an individual has a difficult time making a living without a college education, classes like Senior Current Issues and teachers like Bob Wood are essential.

Bob Wood is the kind of teacher that truly goes above and beyond the required duties. He not only taught me the required material in high school but went above and beyond in ways such as staying late after school to assist students. Bob gave me the extra push when learning how to apply to and find funds for college. He also encouraged me to become more politically active, globally aware, to travel, and believe I could do whatever I set my mind to. What parent or student would not want a teacher who does this for their students?

Sincerely,

Jordan Holter (OHS c/o 2007)

holterj@mail.gvsu.edu

#43 - Anastasia Huber c/o 1999

August 20, 2013

To Whom it May Concern-

My name is Anastasia Huber, and I am an Oakridge High School alumni from the class of 1999. During my time in attendance, I was not fortunate enough to have Mr. Bob Wood as a teacher, but what I do have are clear memories of Mr. Wood standing in the doorway of his classroom in between classes chatting with students, and I was struck by the personal and positive relationship he seemed to have with each one of them. My perception of his commitment as mentor to his students was not incorrect, as I was to learn nearly 15 years later.

This past summer, the summer of 2013, my sister Ambrosia Huber graduated as valedictorian of her class from O.H.S., and while she excelled academically in school, she struggled in other, more personal ways. Mr. Wood took notice of her struggles and by his own volition contacted me; we met together in person and he voiced his concerns for the well-being of one of his students, my sister. Bob Wood has selflessly and voluntarily stepped in to assist my sister whenever possible and when no one else did, without being asked to do so by anyone, and without incentive for any kind of reward in return. His empathy and compassion is not limited to his role a teacher, either; in the case of Ambrosia, he was also a surrogate parent, taking on tasks to help her when her own parents did not.

Oakridge High School and the students who attend it *need* teachers like Mr. Wood, teachers who go the extra mile and take their responsibility as an educator and a mentor seriously. The district, its students, parents and indeed the entire community as a whole benefits from having Mr. Wood in it, and would most certainly be the worse without him. The students he educates today will be the adults who shape the world tomorrow; I'm positive that his caring attitude and basic human compassion also stand as an example to the other faculty he works with.

It would be a tragedy for everyone if he were somehow unable to continue his important work as an influential public figure, and would be a shameful black eye for the community.

Sincerely,

Anastasia Huber (OHS c/o 1999)

vera.vague@yahoo.com

#44 - Meagan Humphrey c/o 2002

To whom it may concern,

I just wanted to take some time to write a few words about a teacher at Oakridge High School, Mr. Bob Wood. I graduated from Oakridge in 2002 and had the privilege to have him as my teacher. During my time in high school I also participated in Close-up, which Mr. Wood was in charge of. I still remember how enjoyable his class was, hard yes, but enjoyable. He made what we were learning more exciting and he definitely knew his stuff. Not just from books, professors and internet but from experience. I know he is still traveling around the world to learn other cultures and how the human society lives other than in our hometown. I just read on his trip to Africa which sounded absolutely amazing and I am sure it helped to improve his teaching skills.

Mr. Wood doesn't just teach a class at Oakridge for a pay check; he teaching something that he is passionate about. He not only taught us about the government and its history but he would have the students put themselves in the shoes of those we learned about. This made the class more interesting and easier to learn about. Unlike most teachers I know, he takes his teaching to the next level by experiencing what he teaches and helping the students to experience it as well. I learned a lot in his class and in the short time I went to Close-up with him, not just what was in D.C. and what he taught us, but also from the people from around the world that were there.

Believe it or not I still remember stories of people Mr. Wood met from his trips around the world and how their cultures live compared to ours. He is such an interesting teacher who cares so much about his students education. I don't know if he has ever been bored with his job or if it's ever been about the paycheck for him. All I know is Oakridge is lucky to have a teacher that is as passionate about his work and students as he is.

Sincerely,

Meagan Humphrey - meaganhumphrey@yahoo.com

Class of 2002 graduate

#45 - Alexandra (Ickes) Norris c/o 2009

August 13, 2013

To whom it may concern,

My name is Lexi Ickes I was a student of Mr. Woods for my junior and senior year. I even liked him so much I had to take the same subject two years in a row just kidding, I missed a lot of school. Although high school was not my cup of tea Mr. Wood made going to school purposeful, I enjoyed his class and I'm not saying I got straight As, but I cared about what I was learning most projects we did I put a lot of thought and effort into them. Unlike math, English, and science, economic and government taught me about things outside of Oakridge, outside of my home real world stuff.

Mr. Wood had so many of us thinking farther than the next coming year, and he was able to wake so many young people up. When I look back in my past and my high school career, if I pull out things I kept to look back on it is a pack from the 2008 election, I worked after school made calls, went house to house, informed people about what was going on with the election. I cared about something bigger than me, and the party I was going to that weekend. I went to school and worked on the campaign not because it was an assignment but because I love being involved. My family is full of athletes in the news paper for football, basketball, and baseball, that was not me but I did make the news paper for being involved in something that mattered to me.

I learned about Kiva loans high school kids and young adults being able to help third world countries by loaning money so other people could use it and build small businesses. The mortgage crisis which was awesome because I was able to inform adults much older than I, what happened and what went on, details. I knew things that they did not, and to this day I see the effect of the mortgage crisis. But that project took a lot of time we all had a lot of question and our assignment wasn't a small pack easy for Bob to grade. He took his time he went through everyone's packets he answered question and commented to help better explain, that is commitment and dedication to his student.

Some teacher won't go through the trouble or take the time. Mr. Wood really cares about his student and if you let him, he is able to impact your life in so many ways. So many of us went picketing for causes we felt passionate about, and Mr. Wood supported our cause listened to what we had to say and encouraged us to look at it things from both sides.

What I am trying to get across is Bob Wood is an asset to Oakridge, he is a great guy with knowledge about more than sports although he even has books on base ball he is a jack of all trades, and if he is no longer at Oakridge schools, it is our future teens missing out on some really great life lessons that will be used over the course of their life. I don't believe there are many teachers out there today that would be able to fill the shoes of Bob Wood, and yes you may find someone who keeps quiet and does not involve a lot of calls from parents or rowdy kids trying to show out, but I promise those kids will miss out on an eye opening experience.

Thank you for taking the time to read this and I hope it will be taken into consideration.

Sincerely

Alexandra J, Norris OHS class of 2009 / Alexandra Ickes <lexi.ickes@hotmail.com>

#46 - Shelly (James) Kamminga c/o 1998

August 27, 2013

To Whom It May Concern:

I graduated from Oakridge High School in 1998. When I reminisce about the four years I spent there, one teacher comes to mind and that is Mr. Wood. I had the opportunity to interact with him in many capacities. I had him as a freshmen basketball coach, teacher (two years) and mentor (I was his aide for a semester). Without a doubt, he is the best teacher that I had. He inspired me to become involved in the world around me and to become a teacher myself. He held high expectations for all of us and I am proud to say that I always earned his A+. He was innovative and made history come to life.

As a classroom teacher, I can only hope to have the same impact on my students that Mr. Wood had on me. His love of history came through in his teaching but more importantly his love of kids came through! He made connections with us that will last a lifetime. We need more great teachers like Mr. Wood.

Sincerely,

Shellie Kamminga (James)
Oakridge High School class of 1998

August 27, 2013

To whom it may concern:

Are you awake? Mr.Wood spent so much time with students trying to make them aware of what is happening around the world and in this country. In his class you never walked away without being knowledgeable unless you chose not to learn.

Mr.Wood has been dedicated to serving Oakridge for 25 years, and yet he faces the possibility of being pressured to leave. I went into my junior year of high school thinking that I would absolutely dislike Mr.Wood and his classes. I was wrong. Mr.Wood actually became my favorite teacher and I loved his classes. I learned so many things that will help me deal with the real world. I learned how to write and speak to my elected officials so that they may know what I think is best. I learned my passion for politics in Government/Economics not because of the class itself, but because of the instructor.

Mr.Wood lit a fire under me to come out of my shell and speak. As soon as I started speaking I learned that I loved what I was talking about. Without Mr.Wood as my teacher chances are very low that I would want to be in politics and run for President of the United States.

Not only is Mr.Wood a great teacher that Oakridge is lucky to have he is an even greater friend that I am glad to know. He constantly talked to me about instead of straight up enlisting in the United States Marine Corps for me to go to college and become an officer out of High School. He not only believes that I can do great things, but he believes in a successful future for all students so long as they are willing to work for it.

Mr.Wood fought for education in this state. He fought so that the teachers don't have to face being fired with the Governor decided to cut education spending by \$1 million. When Michigan became a Right to Work state Mr.Wood was out there protesting to help keep the Unions up and running. This is a man who has continuously proven that he is willing to fight for the education system.

I grew up thinking and I still think that education is the only safeguard for a country. I support Mr.Wood 100% in keeping his job as an educator at Oakridge. I truly hope the right decision is made in the end. Semper Fi.

Sincerely,

Zachary James Robert Jenkins – zacharyjenkins1@gmail.com
Oakridge High School class of 2013

#48 - Lea (Horney) Jensen c/o 2000

August 22, 2013

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Lea Jensen, and I am writing to inform you of what an amazing educator Mr. Wood is.

I had the privilege of having Mr. Wood for a teacher in both my junior and senior years when I was in high school. I have never had another teacher that was as honest, sincere, concerned, and involved as Mr. Wood. He takes a genuine interest in the education and futures of his student. Mr. Wood holds his students to high but reachable standards, and opens their eyes to the world and possibilities that lie beyond Egelston Township.

Mr. Wood not only educates his students on academics in the classroom, but he discusses present day real world events that are affecting people and countries around the world. He is teaching his students to truly live and not to just merely exist as human beings on this planet. When I was in those critical stages in my life of eleventh and twelfth grade there was no other teacher there except Mr. Wood asking me what comes next, and what am I going to do with my life. Mr. Wood encourages his students to work hard and to pursue their dreams, and that's exactly what he did for me.

Mr. Wood is a terrific teacher and an even better person. I consider myself lucky to have had his guidance when I needed it most, and to have been lucky enough to be a student in his class.

Please feel free to contact me if you have further questions.

Sincerely,

Lea Jensen
lea_m_jensen@yahoo.com

#49 - Alex Johnston c/o 2013

Alexander M. Johnston
Former Student of Mr. Bob Wood
alexanderjohnston16@gmail.com

To Whomever It May Concern,

I do not need to write this. Nor do I want to. However, if any of my former teachers were to have any problem that I could help them with, I am one hundred percent willing to do what I need to assist them. I owe it to my teachers to help them with any problems they have based on principle. They were willing to help me whenever I had a problem, so I had better help them in their time of need.

Now, concerning the issues with Mr. Wood, I have to explain exactly what I think of him as a teacher at Oakridge High School. When I first stepped into his classroom, I was actually pretty skeptical. I thought that all of his propaganda on the walls and hanging from the ceiling was to make it look like he cared. To put on a show. But there's one problem with that theory: Bob Wood is one of the most compassionate and driven individuals I've ever encountered in my life. That is NOT an understatement.

Second of all, this man cares about us, the students, not just the topic itself. He somehow, through his shouting and scribbling on the board, makes us care. That is extremely hard to do while working in a public school. Honestly, I didn't care about politics or the economy past the point of complaining about gas prices before taking his required class. Now I am a registered voter.

In conclusion, I give my full recommendation to Mr. Bob Wood to continue being a wonderful teacher, mentor, and friend. There is no other person that could be half as qualified as this man to teach the fundamentals of government and economy than the one I am writing this letter for.

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Johnston (OHS c/o 2013)

#50 - Kaci (McDonald) Kamaloski c/o 2000

Oakridge High School
275 South WolfLake Rd.
Muskegon, MI 49442

To Whom It may Concern:

Mr. Wood was instrumental in my high school career. I will always remember him and appreciate him. He is one of very few teachers that I still remember topics from his class. To this day, I still have my entire binder from Senior Current Issues class. I think about the book he had us review called, "Who Moved my Cheese" quite often. And I appreciate the time he had us interview someone that fought in War and I was able to find out some interesting things about my grandfather.

I admire his dedication and passion for what he teaches and for his students. Mr. Wood was a very effective teacher and helped me succeed in the classroom as well as in my personal life.

Sincerely,

Kaci (McDonald) Kamaloski CFO, Filer Credit Union
1594 Olson Rd. Manistee, MI 49660 Email: kkamaloski@filercu.com Phone: (231) 510-4039

#51 - Steve Kowalkowski c/o 1999

August 28, 2013

School Board Members
Oakridge Public Schools
Muskegon, MI 49442

To the Board Members and Whomever Else it may Concern,

“Minimally Effective”

To the average person, this use of words can mean a lot of things. However, to a Teacher, this statement on their record can mean the end of their career is in their sights.

In the case of Mr. Robert Wood, these words should have never been used, and I will explain just a few reasons in this following letter.

As a freshman at Oakridge High School, I was on a bad track. I had no drive, no fuel for success and no need in my mind to be there. I spent my time hanging with friends and ignoring the grades that I needed to succeed in school and later in life. I was headed down the wrong road, and doing it quickly and gracefully.

Before the end of the school year, Mr. Wood took the time to intervene and show me the light. He sat me down with a close friend of mine (who was also on the wrong track), and he let us have it. He told us the truth about who we were, and where we were going to end up if we continued on the paths that we were traveling. But, he didn't only tell us what we were doing wrong, he also expressed to us the right path and how to get back on it.

The rest of my High School career was rough. I had to be at the school an hour early every day to help as a teacher's aide, or to take a class for the credits required. Then I spent all day working hard in all of my classes to earn more credits that I required to graduate. And then again, to top it all off, during both my junior and senior years, I had to work to make extra credits to make even more credits toward graduation requirements. And not to speak of myself, but more of Mr. Wood, he was the real champion in all of my struggles. Regardless of what I went thru and every time I wanted to give up, Mr. Wood was always there. He would always find time out of his busy day to find me or stop me in the hallway and ask how things were going. I was always regarded to with respect as “Mr. Kowalkowski”. He truly cared. He was a great rock and helped me get thru those tough times in High School.

And that isn't even the end of what he has helped me thru, because his teachings continued after High School thru e-mail correspondence.

I left Muskegon as a kid in October of 2000. I left on an adventure that left me guessing where I would be and where I would go. I enlisted in the Army as a Wheeled Vehicle Mechanic. Not only did I leave Michigan, but I left the United States, I was set to be stationed in Germany. Going to Europe was a dream I had ever since completing “Travels in Europe” as a semester requirement in Mr. Wood's Geography Class my sophomore year. So I used the information I learned and the dream that I had, and I started that chapter of my life. I contacted Mr. Wood on multiple occasions to let him know what I had experienced and how his teachings in school had helped during different times during my travels. And finally after spending 8 years stationed in Germany, I had traveled to 18 different countries, I had tasted

the food, drank the local beverages and experienced the cultures and I had a great time doing all of this. All of my experiences overseas can be attributed to a dream that I was given by Mr. Wood, and I am very grateful for that. He instilled something in me during his classes and all thru school that lasted well after school and into my adult life.

On my many visits back to Oakridge High School to see the old teachers, hall monitors, counselors and secretaries, I always made it a point to stop and see Mr. Wood. If not to tell his class at the time a story about my travels, then to just say "Hey" and chat for a bit. I have always felt welcome and been welcomed with open arms to come back and visit. Mr. Wood would tell me stories about his classes going to Washington D.C. and other places in the United States. He would explain the political reasoning behind taking his classes to D.C. and how he was trying to instill a sense of Government into his students. He would tell me about the scholarship fund that he supported and how it would help the students to "go somewhere and do something to benefit themselves". He would tell me about his blog that he writes about his summer travels to Africa, how he went to college for a sabbatical, and how he stayed in contact with all of his students whom were interested in staying "AWAKE" after they leave High School.

Mr. Wood is a true hero in my life and the lives of many other students whom have been blessed to meet him and have him as a teacher at Oakridge High School and wherever else they might have met him. To hear the news that I have heard lately, is truly saddening. I came upon the news that Mr. Wood has been graded as "minimally effective" as a teacher at Oakridge High School. It took a lot of thinking and editing to get this letter to its current form, and to possibly enlighten whomever reads it to the fact that Mr. Wood is not a "minimally effective" teacher. If anything, I would consider him a "stellar and above all others" teacher. I hope that I have showed all who reads this letter the truth as well.

In closing, I would like to thank whomever has read this letter. And I hope that all of you as well as the School Board become "Awake" to the school district around you, and how they deserve a teacher like Mr. Wood to instill dreams and aspirations into the children that he meets and teaches for years to come at Oakridge High School. He is a great Teacher, great man and a true inspiration and I hope my children have him as a life-guide as they go thru School.

Cordially Yours,
Mr. Steven Kowalkowski OHS class of 1999
U.S. Army (Retired)
bigskeeto1@yahoo.com

August 24, 2013

Dear Mr. Wood,

I just wanted to send you a letter to tell you thank you for helping me become who I am today. Although high school seems like another lifetime ago, I still remember some of the unconventional ways you helped me learn. My freshman year we drew maps over and over and over. I hated every moment of it: especially when you handed us a blank piece of paper for the exam and expected perfection on the map in that region of the world. When I watch the news, or take care of a patient from Bosnia or Somalia or elsewhere, I know exactly where those place are in the world. I also was fortunate enough to go to Europe right in the middle of our exploring Europe project.. When does that ever happen? I think you were just as excited about me going as I was (if not more so). By the time we got to Paris, my parents let me, their fourteen year old daughter, lead them around the city for two days. They knew that I knew where I was going as far as the sights and knew far better than they did on how to navigate the metro. I actually planned out at least half, if not more, of our two week vacation.

Having you for US History my sophomore year was enough to make me want to become a history teacher myself. You made history come alive and made it fascinating. I thought that history itself was just that interesting until I took it at the collegiate level and realized that I couldn't sit through four years listening to professors drone on to the past. Something about jumping on top the desk during class could have been the difference. Or possibly having a teacher that cared more about engaging students than simply teaching facts and having them pass tests.

My junior year I was lucky enough to have you as a Close--Up advisor to Washington DC. All you were required to do was to travel with us and keep us safe. Instead you held several meetings, had us learn as much as we could about the city, and even gave us the opportunity to visit places that weren't part of the actual program. My favorite part of this trip was going to the National Mall at night. There is something spiritual about being at the memorials all lit up with very few people around.

I was ecstatic when I found out that I would be able to finish out high school with having you as a teacher once again. My senior year you developed a new and innovative class: Senior Current Issues. We not only learned about current world and national issues, we also gained valuable life skills that many people never master. We learned how to do our taxes, wrote letters to corporations, and wrote resumes. We also researched different careers and job shadowed someone in a career we were interested in. This is how you come up the most in my life. People ask me when I decided to become a nurse. I tell them, "I was trying to cop out of an assignment in high school." What I thought I wanted to be at the time was an actuary. Unfortunately I didn't know any actuaries, but I did know a nurse anesthetist: my sister. When I told you who I would be shadowing you tried not to let me, knowing that I really didn't want to become a nurse. Being the sassy teenager that I was at the time said, "You can't prove that." I remember coming back from that job shadow and telling you that I thought that maybe I really did want to become a nurse. I think we were both a little surprised by that. Had I not been

forced to do a job shadow, I never would have realized my true passion.

My life and identity have now been shaped around helping others as a nurse. I have saved lives, cared for the sick and helped newborns come into the world. All because one assignment made me realize that blood from other people didn't bother me nearly as much as the sight of my own blood.

Next week I start my path to becoming a Family Nurse Practitioner. I am excited to start my graduate studies, but even more excited to know that when I am done I can help others by providing increased access to primary care.

Mr. Wood, you will always hold a special place in my heart. As a student I always knew that you cared about me. You truly wanted me to succeed in life. To you, it wasn't about the grade you gave a student, but helping that student achieve their true potential. There were times you were disappointed in me because you knew that I wasn't reaching my potential. I got the A, but I could have done more. You taught me that life isn't about the grade it is about the journey. It is about the things that you learn along the way and the person that you become because of those things.

Thank you for all that you did and all that you continue to do. Sincerely

Elizabeth Pierce (formerly Elizabeth Kepner)
elizabeth@ldspierce.net

#53 - Haley Knight c/o 2013

Haley Knight
237 Magers Hall
Marquette, MI 49855

September 1, 2013

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing on behalf of Bob Wood regarding his effectiveness at Oakridge High School. Mr. Wood and I have known each other since the second semester of my junior year of high school in 2012. He was first my Econ teacher and then he was also my Senior Current Issues teacher throughout my senior year. During that time, I have gotten to know Mr. Wood quite well and I can thoroughly vouch for his ability to teach and be effective.

In that short year and a half I feel like he has had the most impact on me and my future. For example, right now I am writing to you from Northern Michigan University and honestly I would not be here if it weren't for the help of Mr. Wood. NMU was on my radar, but Mr. Wood was first to encourage college visits and so here I am. I wouldn't have chosen this college if it weren't for the visit here last fall.

In my honest opinion, I think that Senior Current Issues is the most valuable class at Oakridge. I not only learned what to expect in the coming year, but we also covered all kinds of topics. If it weren't for that class and Mr. Wood I wouldn't have the confidence in myself to go for my dreams. I never thought that I would be here in Marquette, in the most beautiful place in the world, at the start of my junior year in high school. One of the main reasons why I never thought I would be here is because of the money. My family and I are not rich enough to pay for college, but we aren't poor enough to receive financial aid for college. I knew all along I was going to have to work hard during my senior year. Being in Senior Current Issues gave me the much needed time to work on scholarships. My part-time job wasn't going to pay for college by itself, so I spent a lot of my free time writing essays and filling out applications.

I went to Honduras in April of 2013. It was an opportunity offered to me by the Rotary Club of Muskegon and I knew I had to take it. Mr. Wood always encouraged international travel and so I knew he would support me through it. Not all of my teachers understood the value of travel, so they didn't understand why I was missing school to go. I believe the trip has entirely shaped my future career because I know now that I want to do something internationally. Even though I am currently undecided on my major, I am positive that I am going to minor in Spanish. It has been hard for me to pinpoint something, but I keep going back to that trip to Honduras because it was a game changer for me, just like Mr. Wood said it would be.

The most admiring thing about Mr. Wood is that he isn't just a really good teacher, he is also a really good friend. He is always there for students in and outside of class. I know I can email or call him at any time of the day and he would be there to help and answer my questions. He is a person I know I will be in contact with for a very long time. There aren't many other teachers who can say that former students still come to them to catch up after being graduated for years. To me, that is more important than just learning from the book handed to students at the beginning of the year.

Sincerely,

Haley Knight

Feel free to call or email me with any further questions or concerns at 231-571-7520 or hknight7464@gmail.com.

#54 - Hunter Koster c/o 2012

August 6, 2013

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter in regards to a person who is the epitome of a teacher, Mr. Bob Wood. I graduated from Oakridge High School in 2012. Before I met him, I was rather hesitant in meeting him due to stories I heard in my first two years of high school. Then, when it came to me having him as a teacher for Economics in 11th grade, I was unable to, for he was absent for a year. However, when the time came for my senior year, I was finally able to meet him, but I did not have the honor in having him as a teacher. After school I would stay after to help teachers grade papers, this is when I finally met him. My first impression was that he was a little eccentric, and I could see what students saw in him. However, those students were also known to not be the most exemplary, to put it nicely, nor did they try to truly know him.

The more I heard him and his other colleagues discuss situations in how to better their classroom, or elaborate on how to deal with certain students, I learned the true Mr. Wood. At a first glance, it seems like he solely wished to make the class as difficult as possible. However, this thought was partially true, but it was not because he wanted people to perform poorly. For probably the first time in all of high school, students were realizing the hardships needed to prepare them for a college education (especially the students who always tried to take the easy way out). I believe, it was a form of what people call tough love. He made his students realize that they can't take the easy way out anymore, realize how much life has given them, and how much they take for granted. His classes just aren't about learning material and making sure one receives a good letter grade. He makes sure his students sense that they are unable to float on by anymore, make them better people, and more globally aware. He attempts to make students realize that they can't solely think about themselves, for a society who only cares for itself goes nowhere.

His teaching allows students to have the resources to grow as an individual and prepares them to leave high school with a sense of a purpose. So, once they leave, life doesn't come right away and knock them down. For example, I have friends who took his Senior Current Issues course, and they stated multiple times that if it wasn't for that class they would've been lost their first year of college or never would've been awarded the amount of scholarships that they did.

Overall, Mr. Wood is an outstanding teacher. He is one of the few teachers who doesn't put up with student's lack of respect, which is why I personally think he receives so much criticism. His way of teaching, for those who took it whole-heartedly, has changed people's outlooks on life so much that they feel confident leaving high school to pursue their goals in life along with the tools and skills they need to succeed. I hope this allows you to receive a better vision of who Mr. Wood truly is.

Sincerely,

Hunter Koster (OHS c/o 2012)

#55 - Elizabeth LaRue c/o 2006

August 27, 2013

To whom it may concern,

I would like to take a moment to describe the excellent learning experience that I had in Mr. Wood's American History class during my high school career at Oakridge Public Schools. Mr. Wood provided a creative, thought provoking, and academically sound course in American History. He not only required students to learn the class material thoroughly, but he brought in creative teaching methods. My favorite exercise was the creative writing assignments. He had the students put themselves in the shoes of different people throughout the history of the United States. For example, we had to write about what an immigrant going through Ellis Island would have been thinking in the 1800s. He also encouraged students to become active citizens in their community. During the 2004 Presidential election, students were required to volunteer for 10 hours for the Democratic or Republican Party. These creative teaching methods show the passion that Mr. Wood has for educating high school students at Oakridge.

I graduated in 2006 and have since used my experiences from Oakridge Public Schools to help me to successfully earn an Associate's, Bachelor's, and Master's degree. I am currently working on a doctorate of philosophy at Purdue University. Mr. Wood was one of the few instructors at Oakridge High School that sought to make the students aware of the world outside of Egelston Township. The encouragement from Mr. Wood and other teachers with a passion for education like him were instrumental in opening my eyes to the importance of working hard to make yourself and the world a better place. I can honestly say that the influence Mr. Wood had on me during my time in his classroom was a positive one that contributed to my academic and professional success. Mr. Wood is a successful high school teacher, because he has helped many students to realize and achieve their goals, including myself.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Respectfully,

Elizabeth A. LaRue PhD Student Purdue University Biological Sciences 915 W. State Street
G-365 Lilly Hall
West Lafayette, IN 47906 elarue@purdue.edu

August 25, 2013

To whom it may concern,

My name is Sarah LaRue, I am a 2009 Oakridge graduate, and I am writing on behalf of Mr. Bob Wood.

I had Mr. Wood as a history and government teacher and he was the number one teacher that I had throughout high school. He was the only teacher that challenged his students to think beyond themselves, and think about the world and the people in it. He taught his students how to write better, which prepared me for my college courses. Also by teaching students how to write better he also taught us how important it is to get involved in the US government; that we have a voice and that we should use it. Mr. Wood taught us to do this by requiring us to write letters to the state government on important political issues. In order for the government to continue to be a democracy, the people have to care and be willing to do something about it. "Be the change you want to see", is what he taught.

Mr. Wood encouraged his students to think beyond themselves and opened our eyes to people in other countries. Life isn't just about getting everything you want and living for pleasure. You need to give something back; help others when they are in need. Mr. Wood introduced us to Kiva loans, which is helping people in third world countries to survive.

I am a student nurse and only have one more year left in the program until I graduate with my RN. After I graduate I am going to go overseas and work for a few years through international aid in countries like Haiti, where they desperately need medical personnel. If it weren't for Mr. Wood opening my eyes about people in other countries, I don't think I would have even given working through international aid a second thought. But because of Mr. Wood my main purpose in life is to serve those that are less fortunate than me.

Mr. Wood is an excellent teacher who prepares his students for college as well as for the real world. I hope Mr. Wood has the opportunity to positively affect many more students at Oakridge High school for many more years.

Sincerely,

Sarah R. LaRue (OHS c/o 2009)
Sarah.Nursing.2014@msn.com

#57 - Hannah Lauser / Foreign Exchange Student from Germany - 2013

August 17, 2013

To Whom It May Concern,

I am a former student of Oakridge High School and had the privilege to call Mr. Wood my Government teacher. Sadly I could only attend Oakridge for one year due to the fact that I am a foreign exchange student from Germany. Although I didn't have Mr. Wood for long I got very convinced about his competence. He is a good teacher. He wants the best for his students. He wants to educate them not only by giving them facts about the American government and economy but he wants to make them ready for their grown-up life.

I'm convinced that Mr. Wood is a necessary component at Oakridge High School, because of his open-minded attitude to the world and its politics. Something I think is very important is that he shows the students a bit of the world in his lessons. He gives his students a new perspective, making them realize there is a world out there to explore. He is willing to invest his free time and energy on his students, no doubt about that. Mr. Wood just enjoys teaching. He likes to see students evolve. He does not care in what direction only that they do.

Mr. Wood helped Oakridge also through establishing the college fund to give out scholarships to graduating students. These wonderful things he does for Oakridge are very important to Mr. Wood and he invests his own time to drive them forward. I have to say I am very impressed by this teacher and I counted him to my favorite teachers in my short time at Oakridge. He enlightened my day through his sharp wit and understanding of how the American government ran and still runs but he was also that intrigued himself, it enthralls you too.

Because of all the things that assembles Mr. Wood as a person and teacher I would highly recommend him as a educator.

Sincerely,

Hannah Lauser (OHS c/o 2013)
Im Gaizen 50
70469 Stuttgart
Germany hannah.sandoe.lauser@gmail

#58 - Randy Lavassuer Jr. c/o 2013

August 25, 2013

To whom it may concern,

Hello, my name is Randy Charles Lavassuer Jr. I was recently informed of Mr. Woods latest evaluation as regards to his "relationship" with students. I attended Oakridge High school as class of 2013. To my belief, Mr. Woods is one of Muskegon's, maybe even Michigan's, best teachers.

Mr. Wood has taught me so much and treats me with as much respect as I treat him, just as he does to any other student in his presence, and I wouldn't blame him. Kids and Teenagers today are getting rotten and I used to be one of those Teenagers. I never tried in his class simply because at first I just slept in his class and hardly paid attention, because it "looked" boring to me, but after the second time around taking his class, after Mr. Woods pushing me to try harder every time, pushing me to get involved, pushing me to not make up excuses as he did to me the first time through his class. I picked myself up and quit being that student who messed around in class.

Mr. Woods class was my hardest class but to my own surprise, Mr. Woods class is where I achieved my highest grade in school and where I really excelled in my work. But I was glad he gave me that push. I felt pride and felt good to achieve good grades in his classroom. Not because Mr. Woods gave me an easy assignment, not because he cut me some slack. Because Mr. Woods gave me the push I needed & the tools I needed to make it happen myself and taught me that in the real world outside of school, that's how it's going to be and I have to take responsibility and take action if I'm ever going to improve and do better in the world.

He is a very active teacher, who creates websites and blogs for students to use at any given time for class work, and helps students inside and outside of the classroom so that he can watch his students take responsibility for their efforts to be successful. Mr. Woods does everything to help his students get involved in "higher thinking" methods. Most teachers today don't do that with their students, and I would in fact call Mr. Woods a role model for teachers today to get involved and actually take their job seriously. Mr. Woods has always told us students, "You are the future of our country, the future relies on what you do, and it's up to you to step up and make the change for the better" and I believe him 100 percent of the way.

It's not Mr. Woods job to "take it easy" on students if they're slacking around in his class, his job is to make sure that his students have everything they need to be successful and to give them the amount of respect that they give him, and he does that while trying to give them that push they need. Mr. Woods sees so much potential in his students and never gives up on them. He may have kicked students out of his class, but I would too if I where him. Students cussed at him, talked during class constantly, and even showed up late all the time unprepared!

My greatest thoughts about Mr. Woods would be that, he doesn't give students what they WANT, Mr. Woods gives students what they NEED!

Sincerely,

Randy C. Lavassuer Jr. (OHS c/o 2013)
randyjr54@gmail.com

#59 - Racheal (Lawrence) Novak c/o 1996

James M. Rose Rachael M. Novak
Rachael M. Novak

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jmrose@roseattorney.com
rmnovak@roseattorney.com

Oakridge Administration
275 S. Wolf Lake Road
Muskegon, MI 49442

Re: Mr. Bob Wood

Dear Oakridge Administration,

I would like to take this opportunity to set forth my appreciation and admiration of a man who was one of the best teachers I had while at Oakridge. I was born and raised in Egelston. I went to and graduated from Oakridge in 1996 with honors (I achieved above a 4.0 GPA). I had the privilege of having Mr. Wood as my teacher.

I had Mr. Wood while a freshman at Oakridge High School. When I started his class, admittedly, he rubbed me the wrong way. In my freshman opinion, he had way too much homework. His assignments were way too complicated. He was way too excited to teach. I got in trouble in his class. I talked too much, and/or did not pay attention. He went so far as to call my parents -and boy did I get in trouble!

Well, the year progressed and his assignments proved to be challenging -but beneficial. To this day I remember drawing the world map from memory -THE WORLD MAP. If it wasn't for him, I probably wouldn't have a clue where half of the countries in the world are located. I can intelligently talk about Europe, South America and the Middle East - and I attribute a lot of that to Mr. Wood.

He would also hold quiz bowls and have trivia contests (in front of a giant wall of a world map, which was covered during test time, but I digress). Mr. Wood made learning fun. He made it memorable. He made it worthwhile. I grew as a person during that year. I aced his class and I actually took something from it. Along with what I had learned via textbook, I learned self-discipline and perseverance. I learned dedication and the satisfaction of true hard work.

In addition to his teaching, Mr. Wood put together campaigning projects. I actually was able to campaign for Paul Baade. It was extra credit for Mr. Wood's class. Little did I know -it was going to be one of the most inspiring projects I had embarked upon. It

taught me about politics. It taught me about how things worked. I wasn't just someone staring at the television -I was out there working, campaigning, LEARNING. Without knowing it, I was becoming more well-rounded and figuring out the world and how things worked.

All Mr. Wood wanted was us (and by us, I mean his students) to succeed in the world. He wanted us to see the world. He adored traveling. He even talked about backpacking through Europe. He has written books. He wanted us to know that there was so much the world had to offer.

And you know what else he did? He actually scheduled trips to college campuses ON HIS TIME - rented buses even -and bused us to campuses so we could see for ourselves the beginning of the world offerings. He did this on the weekends. He scheduled everything. He took care of everything. Anyone who wanted to go, could go. That is one of the reasons I even went to college -because of him. He talked about scholarships. He got me thinking about where I wanted my life to go. And it worked.

So it began. I started talking to the high school counselor about scholarships (there was no way my parents could ever afford to send me away to college -that was nothing more than a dream beyond my reach, or so I thought). We worked together on getting me there. I wanted to see the world. I wanted to do so much more. And I can thank Mr. Wood for sticking that in my mind.

I did it. I left Oakridge. I went on to the University of Michigan -at 17 years old. I didn't even understand, at that time, it was such a prestigious university. I only understood that I would get out owing the least amount in student loans because of scholarships and grants. I kept that determination and hard work attitude all through college. I can proudly say that I double majored, held down 2 jobs at one time to pay for expenses -and I did it in 4 years. I graduated with distinct honors. I even managed to graduate in the top 3.5% of the entire school.

But I wasn't done. I wasn't satisfied with that. I needed more. So I pressed on. Some wise teacher told me once that I would make a good lawyer, so I went to law school. Michigan State University - Detroit College of Law was where I ended up. After experiencing college for 4 years, and traveling while doing it (meeting friends who lived all over the world was a great plus for being able to travel), and being accepted to some of the best law schools in the country, I knew Michigan was where my heart belonged. After 3 years of law school and internships during the summer, I graduated -again with honors. Cum Laude to be exact. And now I have the privilege of working in Muskegon - my home town.

I am not telling you this to toot my own horn. I'm telling you this because Mr. Wood made it happen. He put amazing ideas into my head. From drawing out the world, to getting me involved in campaigning, to visiting college campuses. It taught me my inner desire to get out there and do something: "Don't just stay here and make excuses (no money, etc.). YOU can do it." He ingrained that in me.

Yes, I can honestly say that Mr. Wood was one of the finest, most educated and gung-ho teachers I had the privilege of having. Oakridge was and is a better place because of him. There aren't many people with his experience and his true passion and desire to teach. It isn't just a job to him. It's a commitment. He went far beyond his "duty" as a teacher. One of the reasons I am here today, doing what I do, is because of him. I support Mr. Wood. You should too.

Sincerely,
Rachael M. Novak

cc: Mr. Bob Wood

#61 - Amanda Grace Lewis c/o 2013

Oakridge High School

To whom it may concern,

Bob Wood was my 11th grade Economics teacher. It has come to my attention that his job may be under certain scrutiny. I believe that a student's view on the matter would be valuable. Mr. Wood brought a different aspect to the classroom, making his students more tech-savvy, globally aware and current issue conscious. Not only did we learn the criteria for the class, we learned how to step up and get active to make a difference in the world.

Numerous projects forced my peers and I to do online research and then present our findings, having guidelines that really made us think and allowed freedom to actually find things out for ourselves. Too often do teachers endlessly stick printed articles that everyone couldn't care less about into our faces, hoping to get a miniscule point across. Then students blindly answer a page of ten to twenty questions, turn it in and absolutely absorb nothing. When I stepped into Mr. Wood's classroom, I knew that his passion for getting his students to embrace new ideas would truly rub off on me.

Sitting in the classroom with Bob Wood in front of me, I knew that I was going to learn and it was going to stick with me. The most impactful of lessons was the one that tied directly into my life. Learning about the logistics of college debt-spending and saving-prepared me for my senior year and all of the confusion that comes with paying for such an expensive form of education. I cannot express enough how helpful Mr. Wood was in aiding me on my journey towards college.

Mr. Wood brings an energy to the classroom that is unparalleled to many other teachers I had during my four years at Oakridge High School. The fact that I had a teacher that actually cared if we truly knew the concept of Econ and understood the underlying effects of various economies throughout the world was a great benefit to me. His excited outlook on the class gave us the jolt we needed to care about such a boring subject. You can pay anyone to drone on and on about capitalism and what have you, but you can't always find a teacher that can spark such an interest in current issues within the world. Young minds cannot afford to be wasted on teachers that are neither passionate, nor as animated as Bob Wood.

As a teacher, Mr. Wood showed me what it was to find a passion and understand how to really commit to it. Each lesson on Econ would touch on underlying issues as well. Such a versatile class is what he really lives for. He has the drive needed to motivate kids to learn and become active in any way possible. It is definitely a mistake to even suggest putting the man's job under such inspection. It is my belief that this job is the perfect fit, teaching strategies with such positive outcomes are rare. Bob Wood is a phenomenal teacher.

Thank you for your time.

Respectfully yours,

Amanda Grace Lewis (OHS c/o 2013)

#62 - Kaylie Locke c/o 2009

August 27, 2013

Dear Oakridge Administration,

Mr. Wood was by far one of my favorite teachers in my entire educational tenor. I attended Oakridge from K-12, and I know the ins and outs and I know many of the teachers there. Mr. Wood was one of the only teachers that still has a fire in his belly to get the students excited about learning. As hard hitting as he can be, I know he cares about each and every kid that he teaches. There are so many teachers there now that just go through the motions and go by the books just to cram the material into you so that they can say they followed the curriculum. Mr. Wood has passion, he has spunk. He teaches his subjects with such charisma. He gets into it, and really pumps up the students. He gets them thinking, and gets them motivated with current events.

Economy and government were originally two of my most dreaded subjects in school; not with Mr. Wood. I couldn't wait for his class. The journals he had us write, and the protests he had us participate in, those are some of the things I remember most about high school. He got us involved. He got us out there and woke us up so that we were aware of the world we were living in.

Yeah, Mr. Wood is different, but Oakridge NEEDS different. No student wants to go through school just being pushed through so the school can say they 'taught them what they needed'. If our teachers don't have the fire, then the students won't have the fire either. They are going to go through school with hatred from the drones you turn them into.

Mr. Wood was made to be a teacher! His manor needs to be used to its full extent, so that your students continue to grow and learn, and be taught that they can amount to anything they want. So, for these reasons, and many more, I say again that Mr. Wood was by far my favorite teacher, and if you take him out, it would be a sort of injustice to the future students of Oakridge Schools.

Sincerely,

Kaylie Locke

The Law Offices of Katherine L. MacPherson, P.L.L.C.

200 N. Division Avenue • Grand Rapids, MI 49503 • pl: 616-321-7955 • fx: 616-734-5941 • e: klmawoffices@lavabit.com

September 3, 2013

Re: Letter of Support

To Whom It May Concern:

The following letter is written for purposes of explaining why Bob Wood is absolutely one of the best teachers, (and human beings in general), that I have ever had or been lucky enough to be acquainted with.

Mr. Wood was my Social Studies and Geography teacher in 1995. Even back then, he took an actual interest in the lives and futures of his students, not just in whether they earned a passing grade in his class or not. Although many teachers care in general and want to see their students succeed, very few would give up an entire Saturday or Sunday and take groups of them on tours of various college campuses, some located hours away, whose parents could not otherwise provide that exposure, just to make sure those students had an opportunity to see what college life could be like.

Even fewer would make it one of their primary missions in life to continually educate themselves on international politics and world culture so as to be able to provide a knowledgeable resource for their students, and out of a genuine curiosity and intense desire to learn new things.

Fewer still would actually travel the world, including to various third- world countries, to actually experience those cultures and political climates for themselves.

And almost *none* of them would devote hours upon hours of their time, including their entire Spring Break vacation, establishing, funding, and administering a scholarship, just to make sure that at least a few of their students had a chance to experience some of those destinations and countries for themselves.

He actually cares, both about expanding his own mind, and expanding the minds of his students. Which is easy to say. Few teachers actually do. That is *incredibly rare* these days.

I became re-acquainted with Mr. Wood in April of 2013, after a former high school classmate mentioned his scholarship to me. I wanted to contribute the instant I heard about it. Mainly, because I am one of only a small handful of women out of my entire graduating class that actually made it to college at all, let alone graduated, and his scholarship is desperately needed at Oakridge.

Since that time, he has become one of my favorite people, a lot of which has to do with the character trait referenced above: he truly cares about life. He is neither mentally complacent, nor politically apathetic, nor is he content to sit back and let life happen *to* him, which is almost unheard of in today's society. He makes a point of keeping himself informed, keeping his students informed, and every time I see him, I learn something new.

Which is the hallmark of a truly fantastic educator.

Sincerely,

Katherine MacPherson
Attorney at Law



February 28, 2013

To Whom It May Concern:

I have known Bob Wood for the past year since moving into my current role as the Principal of Oakridge High School. During this time, he has served as the Economics, Government, and World Issues teacher. What I have found is that I have come to hold Bob in the highest regard for the passion, energy, and depth of knowledge that he brings to his students on a daily basis.

You would be extremely hard pressed to find a teacher that goes to the lengths Mr. Wood does to “bring alive” the social and political issues that he teaches in his classes. I have no question that if Mr. Wood were granted the opportunity for further studies in South Africa, the students at Oakridge High School would be the biggest benefactor. I have no question that Mr. Wood would bring this rich experience and knowledge directly back to his students who often have no other outlet for this type of knowledge and understanding of other cultures.

Mr. Wood has dedicated himself to educating our students about social injustice and world issues with special emphasis on Africa. He has focused the efforts of his Senior World Issues class on the continent on Africa, as well as, the social justice issues that take place around the world. For example, Mr. Wood has coordinated for the last few years a trip for his students to take part in the Bridge Crossing Jubilee in Selma, Alabama to recognize and learn more about the civil rights struggle in the United States.

All in all, I can’t think of a more deserving or better prepared teacher to take part in such a wonderful opportunity as the Institute in South Africa. I urge you to please give Bob Wood your full consideration.

Sincerely,

Jason McVoy
Principal,
Oakridge High School

#65 - Almanda Molter / Foreign Exchange Student from Denmark - 2013

Almanda Terese Molter
Jutemarken 10
Solrød Strand 2680
almandaterese@gmail.com

R E: Bob Wood

To whom it may concern,

It is of great honor to write this letter of recommendation for Bob Wood. I had the outstanding opportunity to be a foreign exchange student at Oakridge high school 2012-13 where I was enrolled as a junior for the school year. I had the pleasure of taking one of Mr. Wood's classes the first semester and then two the second semester. Even though I only had the chance to have Mr. Wood as a teacher for one school year, I can truly say that he made a huge impact on the student I have become and on the outlook I have on the world.

Bob Wood has been a great support throughout the year: making me feel welcome at a school where I knew nobody, helping me through tough situations where I needed someone to talk to, and to give advice.

Bob Wood did not only teach me about the life as a student at an American high school and the tough situations regarding college funding, but he also opened my eyes to more important facts in life; he has given me the courage to explore more of the world and to make a change. Also has he pushed me to do the very best of my ability in every assignment, and I believe he has made me a more open-minded student in the classroom as well.

Mr. Wood understands how to make the courses he teaches more interesting, to push students into creating their own thoughts and points of views, and to have the entire classroom be active in a discussion. I am sure that I am not only speaking on my own behalf when I say that Mr. Wood is one of the best teachers; he surely has been one of the best teachers I have ever had.

Please feel free to contact me for any further discussion regarding Mr. Bob Wood.

Sincerely,

Almanda Terese Molter
School Student

#66 - Christine Moore (parent)

June 6, 2013

Dear Mr. Wood,

Thank you sooo much for your confidence in, and encouragement you have given Chelsea! You have sparked something in her she did not realize she had! You are obviously a "teacher" in every sense of the word! I am so glad you did not overlook my child, as others have found it hard to penetrate her shyness. Bless you for answering your true calling and living everyday to exceed the ordinary and make a difference in the world, one child a time. I hope this note will convey to you, truly, how thankful I am!!!

With true and heartfelt thanks,

Christine Moore

Christine.moore73@yahoo.com

August 24, 2013

Dear Oakridge Administrative Office,

I am writing on behalf of Mr. Robert Wood and his affiliation with Oakridge High School. Mr. Wood was a past teacher of mine for two years and each year he taught me something new and important. He not only affected my life, but the lives of other students as well in a positive manner. Qualities that make him a good role model are: he is honest, he is passionate, and he is willing to fight for what he believes in.

Honesty is a rare quality these days, and when it comes to the truth some people cannot handle it. I know of some students who dislike Mr. Wood because he isn't afraid to be honest, which leads to misinformed parents. Most of those students are the ones that don't particularly do well and need someone to blame. I will admit that at first I did not appreciate the honesty, but as the year went on I began to grow accompanied to the truth.

If I could describe Mr. Wood with one word it would be passionate. He is passionate about his students and their needs. He is passionate about economics and politics, and he is passionate about being aware. These particular passions drive my passion to succeed and to do better. Sometimes he makes me laugh at how over the top he is on subjects that he cares about so much.

Finally his willingness to fight for what is right and what he believes in. When I was taking his Government course he had us students chose groups and make a cause. Mine was S.O.F.T.A (Students of Oakridge for the Fair Treatment of Animals), and with the help of Mr. Wood I protested, I wrote letters, I called representatives, and I fought for what I believed in just like Mr. Wood taught me. He ended up making a cause for the teachers of Oakridge to fight back against the oppression of rising problems. He wasn't scared to fight because he might get in trouble, instead he fought and so many others joined him because it was right.

I don't know the plan you have for Mr. Wood's future, but please believe this: he is needed in this school's program for its future success.

Thank you for your time,

Emily Morgan – Oakridge alumni 2013
emiannmo@gmail.com
(231) 670-3582

#68 - Angelina Mosher c/o 2009

August 24, 2013

Angelina Mosher
Choueifat International School
City of Six October, Egypt
Monday 26th of August 2013

To whom it may concern,

My name is Angelina Mosher and I am writing this letter from Cairo, Egypt where I am working as a teacher in a private international school. I recently graduated from Michigan State University with a double degree in Arabic and Comparative Cultures and Politics. I also received a double specialization in Muslim Studies and Peace and Justice Studies. I graduated Oakridge High School first in my class in 2009. I was Senior Class President, Captain of the Girls Soccer Team, First Chair Flute in band, and the Oakridge representative and President of the Muskegon Community Foundation.

I am proud to say that I am a product of the Oakridge Public School system. In the 13 years I spent at Oakridge my peers and I were fortunate enough to have many wonderful teachers and staff who truly cared about Oakridge students. However, there are few teachers in the world who invest so much passion and energy into the success of their students. Oakridge is fortunate enough to have one of these educators. Let me introduce you to Mr. Wood.

I was a Sophomore the first time I walked into Mr. Woods classroom. I learned two things on the first day: 1) you don't talk out of turn and 2) you don't say shut up in class. Mr. Wood ran a tight ship. You didn't dare text or sleep in class. But, this discipline facilitated an environment in which everyone was involved; we shared our ideas and opinions about the world. We felt free to express ourselves and contribute to the classroom discussion. In class we were forced to think critically and form opinions about real world issues.

My sophomore year I didn't just learn about U.S. History by memorizing a set of facts. My learning expanded beyond the classroom walls at Oakridge High School. Thanks to Mr. Wood, my colleagues and I had the opportunity to travel to Washington D.C. and participate in the Closeup Program which Mr. Wood has been actively participating in for years. I cannot over emphasize how important it is for Oakridge students to travel. Many of my peers had never left the city of Muskegon let alone the state of Michigan and Closeup was an opportunity for us to meet other high school students from around the country. We learned more about our government by visiting Capital Hill and speaking with an elected representative. More importantly, we also learned more about our country by listening to issues that faced other high school students from around the U.S. Kids from inner city schools in Chicago voiced their concerns about gentrification and how its affecting their community, while kids in Alaska spoke of the importance of protecting natural resources of their precious state. My classmates were also taken off program to participate in volunteer work in an underprivileged area of D.C. Mr. Wood was always pushing us, encouraging us, to be better citizens and not just of our community, or our country, but of our globe.

"The buddah came down from the mountain the wise men asked are you a man or a god? The buddah replied, I am awake. Sophomore year with the Closeup experience was the first time I started to become awake to the issues of my community and country. It sparked a critical analysis

of the world around me and the problems that my generation faces. Over the next two years I made sure to take Mr. Wood's class. Whatever the subject matter, whether it was Economics or Sr. Current Issues, Mr. Wood was passionate and brought exciting material and lesson plans to engage his students. He would never fail to remind us to stay awake to what is going on in our world and remember our responsibility as global citizens. The guidance of Mr. Wood also inspired action. Mr. Wood taught us how to organize, how to petition, how to work with each other to try to make this world a better place. As part of our formal curriculum we formed political action groups advocating different issues. We wrote the paper and many of my classmates were published in letters to the editor. We protested and handed out flyers, but our activism did not end there. We would go on to form one of the most energetic grassroots organizations in the history of Oakridge. Together with other teachers, students, and the help of Mr. Wood, we formed Students Against Super Delegates.

Our activism took us to Lansing to participate in an event called Kidspeak where we delivered speeches in front of our elected state representatives. We also attracted media attention and went out into the community door to door to collect thousands of petitions. Mr. Wood was at the foundation of this group. He didn't orchestrate every detail but he certainly gave us the tools and then let my peers and I run with it. He was our leader and support when we didn't know how to move on. And I think it is this compassion that makes Mr. Wood such a unique and exceptional teacher. He far surpasses the minimum expectations of his job. You will find him after school as late as 5 or 6 in the evening. Mr. Wood's door is always open for a student facing a hard time. Mr. Wood is not just a teacher at Oakridge High School he is a mentor, a friend, and a role model who has changed the lives of many students.

Mr. Wood is one of the most supportive forces at Oakridge who is trying to make college a reality for Seniors. He started a grassroots scholarship for students at Oakridge called Building a Better World. Strictly through voluntary donations and fundraising Mr. Wood has been able to sustain four annual essay based scholarships- all started by the initiative of one teacher. I know that Mr. Wood has changed the lives of many of his students because he changed mine. He was undoubtedly the most significant person in my transition from high school to university. He encouraged me all throughout high school to attend a Big Ten university, to apply for a challenging and rigorous program, and not to sell myself short but have confidence to pursue an education in a four year institution. Many times it is the lack of confidence or support at home that holds recent Oakridge graduates back from their full potential and pursuing a university degree. Mr. Wood also started a podcast series available on iTunes, that is devoted to hearing the stories of former Oakridge students who are in college. The podcasts provide tips from the former students and tell the story of their experience in university. Mr. Wood also has graduates come in and share their stories to his class where students can ask questions and have an honest dialogue with someone who has been there in the same position.

Now it has come to my attention that there was an issue regarding Carla Kevern and myself and I think here is the appropriate time to address this. For many years Mr. Wood has been helping Oakridge students make connections with former Oakridge graduates who are currently attending or who have graduated from university. This provides a great opportunity for Oakridge students to visit the campus and get a feel of the ambiance of a school that they might potentially apply for. Half of the battle getting into college is having a vision for what you are going to study and where. I myself was put into connection with Kaily Parks an outstanding graduate of Oakridge. At the time I was a Junior in high school and Kaily was a Sophomore at Michigan State University. I had the great opportunity to stay with Kaily in her dorm over the weekend while attending a formal university tour of the campus. It was on a visit like this that I formally decided I wanted to attend Michigan State.

So at the time of the incident regarding Carla and myself I was in my Senior year at Michigan State and as always I am more than happy to be of any assistance to Oakridge students.

Former Oakridge students had been so wonderful as a guide and a rich source of information for me that I can only hope to be of the same help. Mr. Wood sent me an email asking if I would be willing to host or be of any assistance to Carla. After assurance that I would love to have Carla for a stay at Michigan state no matter how long or short, Mr. Wood sent an email to both Carla and I introducing us to each other. Carla is a sweet and bright girl and I know that she has many great things in her future. Unfortunately, about a week after our initial introduction Carla informed me that she wouldn't be able to make it to Michigan State because her mom was not okay with it, asked if we could meet up in Muskegon when I was back in town. I responded to Carla that I would love to have coffee sometime. From what I understand the situation escalated further leading to Mr. Wood receiving a discipline write up. I don't know what the basis for this reprimand was or what arbitrary claims are being waged against him. I can only speak of my experience that in this situation Mr. Wood acted completely professional. He has always acted professional. Carla and I met up later at Buffalo Wild Wings in Muskegon. I had a great time telling her about my experience at Michigan State. I just let her know that my door was always open incase she ever needed something in the future.

I know that Mr. Wood has changed the lives of his students because he changed mine. He is more than a teacher to me. He has become a mentor and a friend. He has provided words of encouragement in hard times and advice in times of difficult decisions. Only an educator who has become involved and dedicated to the success of his students can have the tremendous impact that Mr. Wood has had on his students. A person like this should have the full support of his administration. A person who goes beyond what is asked of them, puts in extra hours, and is there for the students and not for the 'job' is what is an exemplary role model for teachers and educators and even students. I am more than willing to provide any further information or clarification, so feel free to contact me as needed.

Sincerely,

Angelina Mosher
moshera3@msu.edu
01144440991

#69 - Gladys Mosher (parent)

August 19, 2013

To whom it may concern,

I have known Mr. Wood for eight years, through my daughter Angelina Mosher who graduated from Oakridge High School in 2009. He was her teacher for United States History (10th), Government and Economics (11th), and Senior Current Issues (12th). And I can only say positive things about him. He not only has had a great influence on my daughter, but I know he has influenced so many kids in the Oakridge School District.

For example - the first job that my daughter ever had was a paid assistant in Mr. Wood's classroom. She was fifteen years old; she stayed after school and she checked papers, organized his books, cleaned his classroom, for \$8 an hour. I remember her coming home and being so excited about the job, and also coming home and being reprimanded by Mr. Wood for trying to leave too early for soccer practice. He always expected a lot from Angelina. And so did I. I remember stopping by the school often to make sure that she was doing her job and earning her wage.

Another thing - Angelina traveled with Mr. Wood to Washington D.C. for the Close Up Program in her tenth grade year. And that was just the beginning for a great experience for traveling all over the world. When she was in Washington D.C. she met students from all over the country. She became friends with students from Europe and China as well. It was an eye opening experience for her. And going to Washington D.C. wasn't easy for people in the Oakridge District. It was very expensive. I remember how much work it was to raise all of that money and then to get all of those kids to Detroit to fly out to Washington. It was because Mr. Wood who put so much time into organizing the trip so that these kids could go, that it worked. Without his effort we never could have done it.. And it was a life changing experience.

The traveling with Mr. Wood was not only a one time thing. Angelina went to Selma, Alabama with Mr. Wood and twenty of her fellow classmates in 2009. Mr. Wood sponsored all sorts of fundraisers so that any student who wanted to go could go...because Mr Wood wanted all of these kids to have this opportunity. He wanted to be sure that all Oakridge students could have opportunities to see more about the world than only Wolf Lake. And he took her and her friends to Chicago on a number of occasions as well. These trips all helped to make Angelina the confident young woman she is today.

Mr. Wood was an inspiration for Angelina to continue her education; he was instrumental in opening doors for her to reach for a higher education. He made sure that she was comfortable at Michigan State and hooked her up with another Oakridge graduate - Kaily Parks. He made connections for many Oakridge students to stay at colleges with other Oakridge graduates so that they could feel safe. He made it possible for Angelina to feel good about going to Michigan State. He made sure that she would spend time with Kaily, go to class with Kaily, go to the cafeteria with Kaily - he made sure that Angelina knew what things would be like before she made the decision to go there. That was so important for her in order for to be successful at

Michigan State. And he provided this opportunity, not just for Angelina, but any Oakridge student at all sorts of different colleges!

Mr. Wood has also been a great supporter of the kids participating in sports. He supported Angelina at her soccer games, but always reminded her that academics were number one!

Through the years Mr. Wood has continued to support Angelina in college. He visited with the family through football games, and went with myself and my boyfriend Jeff to listen to Angelina's thesis presentation upon her graduation from the James Madison College. Mr Wood helped Angelina as a mentor on her Thesis. And as she traveled in the summers between her studies at Michigan State he kept in touch with her through her journals in Turkey, South Africa, Lebanon, Egypt, Palestine, and Israel. He has been a great mentor for my daughter.

Unfortunately in our school district the way the situation in the world is going around, with the loss of jobs, and people unemployed so many times two parents have to work. Students stay at home without the supervision of a parent, Mr. Wood has been a mentor and a father figure for so many kids in the District. Our community and our School District has been blessed; we owe Mr. Wood for being such a great mentor and good parent that has been their for our children, when they don't have somebody to go to. His doors were always open for anybody either parents and students in the community; I never felt the door was closed for any of us in the community. And many of my friends feel that same way.

Finally, Mr. Wood doesn't stop teaching and learning at the end of the school year. He goes all over the world and he studies and he learns and he takes all of that experience and injects into his students to inspire them. It is then up to them to go on and use that experience in their lives and become a productive citizen.

Today August 19, 2013 my daughter is in Egypt teaching at an International School thanks in large part to this wonderful teacher and mentor. Our community should be thankful for having Mr. Wood in our school district. He pours out his heart to our children; he has invested all this time and energy into our kids and us.

If you have any questions or want to know more about Mr. Wood you can contact me at openwindows05@aol.com.

Sincerely,

Gladys Mosher
5792 White Road
Muskegon, MI 49442
(231) 766-1807

#70 - Bonnie Musser (parent)

September 9, 2013

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to clear up any discrepancies concerning myself and Mr. Wood. I have never at any time called the school or notified any school official to say I had a problem with Mr. Wood or his teacher/student relationship with my daughter, Sara Musser. I am beyond pleased with his performance as a teacher. He has inspired my daughter to be a better person and a global citizen. His style of teaching promotes students to think for themselves and consider the world around them. He gives the students all the tools available to better themselves through education and by encouraging them to go out into the world and change it for the better! As a parent, I can tell you that trying to get a teenager to think beyond their own needs is a difficult task. As a teacher, Mr. Wood has made my job easier by pushing my child to think outside the box.

Sara has participated in many community events, including volunteering in the last election and organizing her group of "girls on the run" to participate in the showing of "Girl Rising" this past spring. She has also decided to study at Ferris State University, partly due to Mr. Wood's encouragement. Sara was extremely anxious about stepping outside her comfort zone to attend a larger college, but Mr. Wood helped her realize her goal of furthering her education by showing her all the ways in which to do so. He helped her with scholarship applications and where to seek other opportunities as well. He has been extremely instrumental in this process. He always had encouraging words for Sara when she had doubts.

Sara informed me of an incident with Mr. Wood in which she couldn't do a taped interview for her scholarship because she was not properly dressed. I am well aware of everything that transpired and Mr. Wood was able to rectify the situation in a very satisfactory way. I, however, never got involved, because Sara handled the situation all on her own. As a new adult, I thought that she should handle her own affairs, so I never called the school to add my "two cents." Sara also invited Mr. Wood to her graduation party. She thought enough of him as a teacher and mentor to want him to celebrate her accomplishments with our family. I was in total agreement with her. It wasn't until after the party that we found out Mr. Wood had been warned not to attend our celebration based on lies. I have never banned Mr. Wood from my home or contact with my

daughter. He is an amazing educator and I am profoundly sorry he was misled into believing that our family harbored any ill feelings toward him.

If at anytime Mr. Wood needs a letter of recommendation, or any other support of any kind, I will be fighting for first place in line with my daughter for that honor. If you need to contact me with further questions or confirmation, please contact me @ 231-578-7581, or through my e-mail, bonmus23@yahoo.com.

Respectfully yours,

Bonnie J. Musser 495 N. Broton Rd. Muskegon, MI 49442

#71 - Sara Musser c/o 2013

If you were to ask a random student what they think about Mr. Wood you may not get the same answer as you would from another random student. This is because like most teachers, not everyone likes Mr. Wood. You ask why? My answer is because Mr. Wood forces you to work for your grade. He makes you look at the big picture and think critically. In Mr. Wood's class you will not simply work out of a text book and write down the answers from the text to pass the class, but you will learn things that a text book could never teach you.

I met Mr. Wood for the first time during my junior year at Oakridge High School. I was scheduled to have him for economics during my first semester. Going into the class I was nervous because I had heard good things about him, but also things that made me a little unsure. However, one week in Mr. Wood's economics class determined the following thoughts: he's a teacher that is going to make me work for my grade, he's a little scatterbrained, he seems to know a lot about the world, and this is going to be a good year.

Throughout the year I learned a lot about current issues that tied into economics. We would do analysis papers of news articles about interesting economic topics. He did this to show us what economics is really like with real world issues. What made it the most interesting is we were able to pick the article off of a topic he gave us. Along with the articles we learned about basic economics, needs, wants, and other vocab terms from our book, but we didn't just read over them and take a multiple choice quiz or test to show we knew the material. Instead, Mr.

Wood would talk about the terms in a way that made them understandable and then we would take quizzes over our knowledge of the terms. The quiz consisted of a notebook sheet of paper, a blue or black pen, and your brain. You would be given two vocab terms and you would have to explain them in your own words as much as you could. Examples from our discussion could be used to help you explain and it really made you pay attention to what he was saying in class. If you didn't understand the term while he was explaining it in class he would go over it again until everyone understood it. Mr. Wood always asked the whole class if we were ready to move on before doing so.

After economics class the first semester I decided I really liked Mr. Wood as a teacher. In just one semester I was opened up to a whole new world of learning. This led me to have him again second semester for government class. While most high school students look at economics and government as two of the most boring subjects in their curriculum, I would say that most of Oakridge High School students who have had Mr. Wood would not say that. In fact, in government class we picked groups that had similar views on a topic that meant something to them. I knew I wanted to focus on same-sex marriage because my aunt is gay, so I found some other girls in my class that also wanted to work on this topic. This particular project focused on getting more information about your issue, presenting it to the rest of the students in the class, and doing something about your issue. I learned so much from this project by researching and learning from my other classmates. While presenting this project I would bring in my own personal stories about my aunt. I was so comfortable in Mr. Wood's class that I was able to do this. I knew he wouldn't judge me and he would probably enjoy hearing about my own experience with my issue because his class is all about real world experiences.

So, after having a great junior year in Mr. Wood's class it was time to schedule for senior year. I was in the advanced math class in my junior year so it only seemed fit that I would be in advanced math my senior year, so I signed up for calculus. I also signed up for a class called Senior Current Issues, taught by Mr. Wood. I knew that I wanted to continue learning what Mr. Wood had to share and I was eager to get a head start on applying for college and looking for scholarships. When I received my senior schedule in the mail it did not have senior current issues on it, but it did have calculus. I went to my school counselor and asked if either of the classes was given at a different time and they said no, that both of the classes were during first period only. I had really wanted to be in Mr. Wood's class and calculus, but I knew I would benefit much more from Mr. Wood's class than calculus, so I decided to switch into a much lower level of math called Consumers Math so that I was able to take Senior Current Issues. I wouldn't trade that decision for anything! I learned so much about college and scholarships. We worked on the election. I learned about Africa and what it's really like there, and so much more! Not only did Mr. Wood teach us how to apply for college and scholarships, but he helped us make a plan to achieve what we needed to before going off to college.

In the spring of 2013, I applied for the building a better world scholarship. I did so because it is a local scholarship and I thought I would have a really good chance of getting it because of my experiences with community involvement. Also, Mr. Wood had taught us about what scholarship donors are looking for in an essay. I was so thrilled when I learned that I had been chosen for the scholarship as well as many others. All my hard work had paid off and it was because Mr. Wood had provided me with the tools I needed.

After learning that I had received the scholarship Mr. Wood told all the winners of the scholarship that he wanted to do a video interview with us, so we all scheduled a time to go to the school to do it. When I arrived at the school on my day of the interview I was dressed in a pair of sweat pants and an under armor sweatshirt. I hadn't thought anything of it, but Mr. Wood saw me and told me that I was doing a video interview and that my outfit was not appropriate.

He said it looked terrible and to come back another time.

Upon hearing this I was shocked, mad, embarrassed, and hurt, so I went home and I was upset about it. I was worried that if I didn't do the video interview that I wouldn't be able to get the money for my scholarship, so I went into the office to ask about it one day. My friend Lauren was also in the office with me that day and she also was a recipient of the scholarship. She did not come in to do her interview because I told her what had happened with me and she was also upset about the incident. We talked to the principal, Mr. McVoy, about what had happened that day and I asked him if we would still be able to get our scholarship money without doing the interview. We didn't know if it was a requirement of the scholarship or not. He said absolutely not, that the office would take care of it and we would still get the money sent to our school.

Lauren and I thought that was the end of the meeting with Mr. McVoy, but he continued asking us questions. The first was "does Mr. Wood normally talk to his students this way?" and I said no, that was the reason I was so shocked and hurt by his behavior that day. He continued to ask us questions that were not related to the issue, like questions about Mr. Wood's class and if we

thought he was a good teacher or not while he was writing our thoughts on a piece of notebook paper.

Lauren and I never said anything bad about Mr. Wood's class or what he was teaching us. It was only about how disappointed I was that he said what he said to me that day in the hallway. We said that he makes you work to earn your grade and his class is not easy, but we also said that we both learned a lot from his class and were glad that we chose to take it. Lauren and I left Mr. McVoy's office feeling like we had been interrogated and we just went in there to ask if the video interview was a requirement for the scholarship.

Not too long after this meeting, Mr. Wood sent me a very long message on Facebook explaining how sorry he was and that he was having a horrible day. He said he was having issues with Mr. McVoy already and he wasn't in the right mind frame at that time. He said it was no excuse for what he said to me, but he hoped I would forgive him. I did forgive him because his message was so meaningful and I felt bad that I overreacted and told Mr. McVoy all about it when he asked. I did not know that Mr. McVoy was going to use that against Mr. Wood.

Mr. Wood and I met for coffee a week before I left for college this fall and we talked about the incident. Mr. Wood said that Mr. McVoy told him not to come to my home and apologize because my mother forbid it and she was so disappointed with Mr. Wood and how he acted towards me. In reality, my mother had NOTHING to do with the situation. My mother was not present that day and she has never called the school in regard to Mr. Wood. I thought that it was odd that Mr. McVoy would say something like that to Mr. Wood when it never even happened. So Mr. Wood told me some of the other things that Mr. McVoy said about him and I was appalled. If a professional is presenting cases against another professional they should be creditable and reliable. I know of at least one case where the information was faulty and that is the one about me. Mr. McVoy used my words against Mr. Wood and then put in his own words to degrade Mr. Wood as a teacher. This is extremely unprofessional and I'm sure it is against some kind of rule.

Although I do not know all of the details of the meeting with Mr. Wood and Mr. McVoy about Mr. Wood's review, I do know that Mr. Wood is a great teacher and I am happy that I was able to be taught by him. His teaching method has made me open up my eyes to the world and think not only about myself and my problems, but about the world's problems and what we can do to face them. Along the way he helped me apply for college and allowed me to share my personal story when it played into my college future so greatly. Not only is Mr. Wood a good teacher, but he is also a great friend. This incident with him will not affect our relationship as teacher and student. He will always have great worldly advice and meaningful teachings. The Buddha came down from the mountain and the man said "are you a god or are you a man?" the Buddha said "I Am Awake."

Sara Musser
Ferris State University Student smusser38@gmail.com
231-638-3445

#72 - Kimberly (Adams) Nguyen c/o 2000

August 20, 2013

To Whom It May Concern:

I have had the pleasure of knowing Mr. Wood for the past 15 years now. During those years of our acquaintance, I have known Mr. Wood in many capacities. He was my teacher, coach, leader and advisor. As I look back his responsibilities in those capacities, I see a mentor, who helped set forth a safe and stable ground for myself and other students to walk on after high school. He was preparing us for "life".

As I look back at my high school days at Oakridge, I only remember the teachers that stood out from the pack and made a difference in my life. Mr. Wood being one of them. His consistent motivation and drive gave me the confidence to grow in all aspects of life then and now.

Mr. Wood is an intelligent, capable, dedicated and personable teacher. His dedication and willingness to Oakridge Public Schools is an example all teachers should follow. I feel very confident in saying that he is capable of handling any situation level headed with thoughtfulness and maturity.

Should you feel the need to speak to me directly about the qualities and capabilities of Mr. Wood, please feel free to contact me directly.

Thank you,

Kimberly Nguyen (Adams)
231-327-0285

#73 - Laura Ogren (community member)

August 15, 2013

Dear Oakridge High School Administration Team,

I am writing this letter in support of my friend and former colleague, Bob Wood. I have known Bob for five years now and he is one of the most determined, hard-working, and motivated people I have ever met. When Bob has an idea, he does not quit until it has been fulfilled 110%. He has inspired me to stay informed and involved with politics, both local and national, which he has done for so many students and colleagues over the years. Bob has very strong beliefs and opinions, which he does not hesitate to discuss with you if you ask, and sometimes even if you don't ask. These are all things that make up his character, and also make him someone I am proud to know. I have never been an outspoken person, and Bob has taught me that being silent does not solve anything. This is why I now speak out in support of Bob Wood, who has been a dedicated employee of Oakridge Public Schools for 25 years.

Nobody can deny that Bob Wood's students learn a great deal of information, as well as develop a sense of pride in their own beliefs and values while taking his classes. Bob's teaching style not only focuses on student achievement in the classroom, but on many invaluable life lessons as well. His students become more aware of current events, politics, how to form an educated opinion about controversial topics, and most importantly they experience firsthand some different ways to make their voices heard. I have spoken with many students who have fought for what they believe in after learning how to go about it in Bob's class.

Bob is also one of the most compassionate people I know, with an immense thirst for knowledge and experience. He has traveled the world, learning about other cultures and meeting new people everywhere, which he brings back with him and incorporates into his teaching. What an amazing way to motivate your students to experience the world outside of Egelston Township, something many of these students wouldn't even have thought about before taking Bob's class. Now, several of his former students are out there changing the world one step at a time and I believe it has a lot to do with Bob's influence on them as high school students.

Although I don't have any children of my own yet, as a resident of the Oakridge School District, Bob would be one of the teachers I would make sure my own children could have before they graduate. The life lessons he incorporates into his teaching are priceless and his dedication to education, specifically in the Oakridge School District, is beyond compare.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Laura M. Ogren
(231) 206-9278
Laura.ogren@hotmail.com

#74 - Chaz Ondrejka c/o 2013

September 10, 2013

To whom it may concern,

Mr. Wood. Yes I know that some people don't care for him and I was one of those people at first. Now looking back, I realized how much he does for the students and the school. Mr. Wood gives students an opportunity to go places, not just to go places but to learn and understand how events change the world. He takes his own time to research and reteach things over and over. I never took that opportunity, but it gives some students a chance to go somewhere and learn about it instead of reading a textbook, that some kids might never get. He tells students to do something for themselves in their life. He tells students to take a chance and never give up when you want something. He pushes college, which is a good thing.

One thing that Mr. Wood did was that he took the time to talk to me about why I was so nervous about doing my own injections. We talked and it was time for lunch and he wouldn't let me go unless I calmed down and did my injection. If it wasn't for him not letting me go to lunch I never would be doing my own injections. That was a big step right there, and I am thankful that he helped me.

Mr. Wood is very good at standing up at what he believes in. He stands up for what he thinks would make the school better and gives ideas. That's all you can do sometimes.

Sincerely,

Chaz Ondrejka
Oakridge Class of 2013
chazondrejka@gmail.com

#75 - Dawn Parks (parent)

Dawn M. Parks

4425 E. Laketon Ave.
Muskegon, MI 49442

Home Phone 231/788-3333
Cell Phone 231/750-6030

August 5, 2013

When I met Bob Wood, he was not one of my favorite people. I had heard a number of stories about him and I was very quick to form my own negative opinion of him.

Through the interest of both of my daughters, it became necessary for me to interact with Bob and these interactions were not always pleasant. But as time went on, I got to know him and realized the drive he had to make the students at Oakridge become productive members of society. Both of my daughters participated in Close-Up, they each were taught in the classroom by him, and each participated in after school activities with him. I can say that once I took the time to really get to know him I felt he was one of the most interesting teachers my girls ever encountered.

Both daughters graduated from Oakridge HS as one of the top ten students. Both went on to Michigan State University where they each graduated and are now working in fields of their choice.

With that said, I would like to say – thank you Bob Wood for all the time and effort you put into teaching and the after school activities you organize.

Sincerely,

Dawn M. Parks

#76 - Kaily Parks c/o 2007

August 28, 2013

To whom it may concern,

My name is Kaily Parks and I am an Oakridge alumni from the class of 2007 and also a Michigan State University alumni with a degree in Genomics and Molecular Genetics. I can honestly say that I am currently in the happiest place in my life and that I owe a lot of that to Bob Wood.

Like many teenagers, high school was not a wonderful experience for me. It was not because I did not do well (I graduated 7th in my class), it was not because I did not have friends (I had many), and it was not because I did not participate in school activities (I played soccer for 4 years). In my eyes, no one at Oakridge High school saw the “big picture” to life, except Bob. He was the only teacher that ever pushed me in the classroom. When he saw that I was trying to take the easy road, he would pull me aside and tell me that I could do better and that is what he expected of me. I appreciated being held to that higher standard. While many of my classmates were worried about the Friday night football game or how to hide their pregnant bellies, I focused my time on working hard in the classroom to strive for more in life than living in the “Oakridge bubble”

Throughout my teenage years, I was lucky enough to take many trips with Mr. Wood to Chicago and even participated in the Close Up Washington D.C. program. These eye opening journeys helped me see the nation from a young prospective. I still remember my mother dropping me off for college. After she helped me unpack and we said our goodbyes, she drove off and for a split second I thought “I’m FREE!”. Then I began to cry hysterically and for some reason called Bob. “Parksie, what is the matter? You are at college! You made it!” he said. I replied with a teary “I’m scared. I’m all alone and have no friends”. “This was the thing that you have been waiting for. You have your whole life ahead and today is the beginning! Go have fun Parksie”.

Although I could write for days about all the things Bob Wood has done for me, I will try to keep it brief. Most importantly, I have learned to stand up for what I believe in, I have learned that 1 vote always counts (even if you stand in line for 2 hours) and I have learned that education never stops. Even if your face is not glued to a textbook, you can always learn. Whether it be from new people you need, taking a trip to a new city or simply trying new food, always have the thirst to learn. I am a 24 year old college graduate, living in Charlotte, North Carolina and working full time as a flooring production coordinator for a major flooring industry in the southern United States. I truly believe that without the help and guidance of Bob Wood, I would not be here today!

Thank you for all that you do Mr. Wood. I hope you can continue to change lives like you have mine!

Kaily Parks
Oakridge High School –class of 2007
Michigan State University – class of 2012
parkskai@msu.edu

#77 - Megan Parks c/o 2003

August 6, 2013

To whom it may concern,

I am writing this letter today to offer my full support for Bob Wood as a continuing educator at Oakridge High School. I have known Mr. Wood for over 10 years and had the privilege of learning from him not only in the classroom but on the basketball court as well. Mr. Wood was my teacher and my coach. Mr. Wood remains my advisor, and cheerleader. I have kept in touch with Mr. Wood over the years and continue to seek his advice and share with him my successes. This is not a relationship I have maintained with any other of my former teachers. I value Mr. Wood's opinion, and his character has earned my respect. I have come to expect not only encouragement but honesty as well from him. It is his willingness to 'give it to me straight', as is said, that I find most helpful and sincere when seeking his guidance. His penchant for hard work and refusal to sacrifice his integrity even when he's going against the grain continue to hold him in my highest esteem.

I had the pleasure of taking Mr. Wood's Senior Current Issues class in my final year at Oakridge High. This class quickly became a particular favorite of mine as I felt I was receiving real world, hands on knowledge that was targeted at helping me develop my own future. I believe the most important lesson I learned in this course was problem solving. It helped me to break down goals, doubts, and conflicts in my everyday life and in preparing for my future. Mr. Wood's instruction helped me develop confidence at a time in our lives when confidence is a very fragile thing. Through senior current issues I had the opportunity to travel to Washington D. C. – something I never would have imagined for myself at the start of my high school career. Through Mr. Wood's guidance my class was prepared to navigate the city assertively and safely on our own providing me personally with an immeasurable amount of self assurance as I was preparing to leave home for college in the fall.

In short I have most positively felt the effects of Mr. Wood's dedication to his profession. He has a unique gift to not only instruct his students, but to help develop them into prepared, informed, and confident young adults. I respect and appreciate the work he did with me. I am excited for the students of tomorrow and the opportunities I know he will afford them. I would highly recommend Bob Wood remain an integral part of your faculty.

Sincerely,

Megan M. Parks (OHS c/o
5411 Strawberry Hill Drive Apt B.
Charlotte, NC 28211
mparks@daymarkrecovery.org

#78 - Jillian Pastoor c/o 2000

Jillian Pastoor
Community Relations Coordinator
EVE (End Violent Encounters)
P.O. Box 14149
Lansing, MI 48901

To Whom it May Concern,

As a former student and basketball player at Oakridge High School, I highly recommend Mr. Robert Wood as a teacher, mentor and coach. Mr. Wood started out as my junior varsity basketball coach in ninth and tenth grade and became my teacher and mentor as I pursued opportunities for higher education during my junior and senior years at Oakridge High School.

Mr. Wood is an excellent coach. He encouraged me to refine my basketball skills through focus, determination and practice. He also taught me to become more confident in myself as I struggled to execute plays and trust my instincts on the court. He utilized a variety of teaching methods such as videos, conditioning exercises and practice drills to improve techniques. He also taught team-building skills that could be used on and off the court. I learned how to be both a positive team leader and a dedicated team player. I still use these team-building skills in my work with the community including volunteer groups and students in middle and high school.

As a teacher, Mr. Wood encouraged all of his students, including me, to reach our highest potential. He made learning fun by providing challenging assignments that allowed us to think critically and understand the issues from a variety of perspectives. He paired newer teaching methods with traditional methods to provide a well-rounded learning experience for all of his students. His ability to think outside-the-box heightened my interest in learning and better prepared me for pursuing a Bachelor of Arts degree from Michigan State University.

Mr. Wood's teachings continue to have an effect on me as I am developing a career in social services. In my position as Community Relations Coordinator at EVE, a domestic violence shelter in Ingham County, I provide training and education about the importance of healthy relationships to students, parents, teachers, police officers, judges, healthcare professionals, military victim advocates, service providers and community groups. I would not be successful in my job if it weren't for the encouragement of Mr. Wood. He was and is an integral force in my ability to be confident and successful as a career professional.

My experience with Mr. Wood has always been positive and professional. I highly recommend him for any teaching, coaching or mentorship position. Please feel free to contact me at the information listed below if you have any further questions regarding Mr. Wood.

Sincerely,

Jillian Pastoor Jillian Pastoor <jillian.pastoor@gmail.com>
Oakridge High School
Class of 2000

August 10, 2013

To Whom It May Concern,

When we enter the world we have a clean slate and an open mind. As we grow we get told what to do, how to dress, what to learn, and how to live. Being a young adult we turn to people around us to guide us and help us along the way; to become the best person that we can be. Our educational providers chose those people that we will be surrounded with during our preparation years. Those people don't truly realize what kind of an impact they have on our futures. Having an influential person is crucial to put young adults on the right path to the brightest future possible. It is common to have an educational provider that students are fond of, but it is uncommon to find one that a student would say was influential. Mr. Bob Wood is by far one of those teachers. I strongly believe that if it wasn't for his guidance not only as a teacher, but as a mentor certain Oakridge High School graduates wouldn't be where they're today.

Personally, Mr. Wood taught me that there is life outside the classroom and that if you sit in a desk all day at school you will not truly be prepared for the world beyond high school. He taught me that being yourself is the best thing that you could do to ensure a great future. That your dreams no matter how big are obtainable by fighting for whatever it is that you want. He showed that beyond this beautiful country, that we call home, there are people less fortunate that need our help so that their futures can be ensured as well. Mr. Wood is able to show his students the big picture and make them think outside the box. Isn't that what is asked of educational providers, to get their students ready for the next step in life? Think about what you're doing you're trying to take away the man who helps all of his seniors with getting to that next step; by choosing a college, applying for scholarships, and providing them with anything they need to become accepted to further their education.

Mr. Wood goes above and beyond for each and every one of his students who are willing to learn. I have a child of my own now, and the only reason why I was ever thinking of sending him to Oakridge Public Schools was because of Mr. Wood. They don't make teachers like him everywhere and finding one is rare, especially in a public school system. Since I have graduated

from Oakridge I have heard nothing but negativity from teachers and students alike. Although, when I was up at the school during a baseball game I ran into Mr. Wood. I asked him his thoughts on this year's graduates and where Oakridge is going as a whole. He told me that we have a lot of work to do, but he was going to keep fighting because there are still kids that want to fight with him. That there are still students that want to move on to the next level and do well for themselves. He said he was going to help them get there regardless of the school's situations. To me that sounds like a man who puts Oakridge's students first.

I can almost bet on it that Mr. Wood has still not stopped helping those kids just like he has never stopped helping me. I know that I will only be one of countless letters because Mr. Wood is an inspiring man, and many students who have went on to become something have him to thank. If you let go of Mr. Wood you're not only letting go of a brilliant instructor, but you're telling all of the previous graduates that everything he did for them was worth nothing and meant nothing. That his ways to mold minds is not accepted amongst any board that would be above them. You're teaching new students and aspiring teachers that chasing their dreams and providing education is frowned upon. If you take away Mr. Wood you take away much more than a teacher. He teaches all of his students to not only fight for what they want but for what they believe is right. So today I am writing you this letter because I am fighting for what I and so many others believe is right. By keeping him you're putting the past, the present, and the future students of Oakridge Public Schools first and after all that is Oakridge's motto.

Thank You,

Brittney Patino

b.patino3709@gmail.com

OHS c/o 2011

#80 - Sarah (Pennell) Tuffelmire c/o 2013

September 1, 2013

I never questioned anything throughout high school. I guess you could have considered me a zombie. I woke up, ate, went to school, slept, went home.... When my parents asked me what I learned that day, i'd shrug my shoulders because I didn't really learn much at all. School was just school and life just sucked. My junior year I had Mr. Wood's government and economics class. I slammed my books on the desk and leaned back in my chair preparing for another year of nonsense. Another year of copying definitions out of a book and taking vocabulary tests on the bill of rights or founding fathers this or that. My attitude of not caring was written all over my face and my body language.

He started off the class with the quote on the board, "The buddha came down from the mountain... The wise man asked, "Are you a God?" "Are you a man?" The buddha said, "I am Awake." It got me thinking..... I soon realized this wasn't an ordinary stick to the book guidelines class it was more than that. This man was born to be a teacher, he was born to make us think. There were posters plastered around his room about social issues all around the world. Issues that I never have even heard about or to be honest I never even cared to know about...

He gave us homework.. but not any ordinary do the 10 questions at the end of the chapter homework... He gave us homework that made us actually use the big fatty mass inside our heads. He would make us read articles on going green, articles on women in third world countries, articles on how to improve your local government. He showed us how to have a voice regardless of being seventeen years old in a little wolf lake town. He showed us all how to become somebody. He gave extra credit to anyone who needed it. He always stayed after school to help anyone.

Failing his class was impossible. You would have to try and fail.

His tests weren't just memorizing pointless historical events out of dusty old textbooks, his tests were made by him and they weren't just easily answered with A, B, C ,D or all of the above. You have to write. You had to sit down in your seat pick up a pen and WRITE what you LEARNED.

He pushed people to become the person he knew they could be! The shy kid, the rebel kid, the jock kid, the handicap kid, they were all treated the same. I know for a fact he changed Nicole Kary's life. He didn't just look at her like someone who went around in an electric wheelchair sitting through a class. He made her talk, he made her laugh, he made her do the assignments like the rest of us. He made her feel like the REAL person who deserves to be treated

like. The assignment wasn't cut in half, she wasn't babied either. She became a social butterfly in his class. She wasn't nervous behind all the rows of teenagers anymore. She would freely talk to us on her computer and ask more questions then we did.

Questions.... that word reminds me of Mr.Wood more than any other word. Questions. Without a doubt I know that I would not be where I am at today in my life without this guy as my teacher. He completely changed my life. I smoked, I partied, I hung out with the wrong people, I didn't care about anybody but myself until he made me QUESTION who I was as a PERSON. He treated us not like another name on the attendance sheet but a real person. I quit partying and started hitting the text books. I was achieving one of the highest grades in the class room because I felt ACCEPTED. For once in my teenage life, I was pushed to be myself and pushed to the limit where my brain wanted to explode. He didn't make it easy and that's what made me love his classes. You had to be physically and emotionally awake in his class. & that's how every teacher should teach.

I left Oakridge the end of my junior year for online school due to stress at home. I felt stupid, I barely passed my online classes and google and yahoo answers was how I got by day by day. I felt so bad that I called up Mrs. Clausen and Mr. Patton and had them reenroll me for my senior year. I picked Mr. Wood's class Senior Current Issues. I never learned so much in my whole entire life then I did out of this one class. We picketed so our school didn't get privatized and so that they wouldn't cut our teacher's salary. We picketed outside in the freezing cold snow.... for what? For a grade? No. For Our school! For once a teacher made us care about SCHOOL. about OUR FUTURE. about our TEACHERS. If one cannot see how amazing that is then their vision and priorities are clouded by nonsense. We went to Western Michigan College on a tour and questioned professors and walked around the campus. I got to meet a sociology professor that I've always wanted to meet. No other teacher gave us that opportunity. I volunteered at the Obama administration for over ten hours and I wasn't even legal to vote but he made us want to be apart of a great movement in history. He made us realize even if we couldn't have a voice on the ballot we could have a voice behind the scenes. I was up there everyday making calls, filling out paper work and helping my community. For what? a grade? No. For myself. I never felt more important in my life. I stayed up all night watching the re election. What kind of teenager does that? One that copies off other peoples papers? No. One that just memorizes vocabulary words? No. Its one who finally found their voice that they never knew they had its one who learned to care about their country. Its one who realized without the voice of our generation our whole country would crumble. Its one who finally began to think on her own. One who wanted to learn because a teacher gave them a chance.

I never thought a Muskegon kid had a chance. We all thought we were just another nobody until Mr.Wood touched our lives in the most amazing but

simple way possible. If more teachers were like him more teens would go to school, more teens would care and society wouldn't be as messed up as it is. I care! For once in my life the cold hearted chick who didn't give a damn about anything stopped all the crazy stuff in her life to care about her country, care about her grades, and care about herself. Because of one teacher.

In society, teens aren't even supposed to like their teachers. Probably because they are teaching wrong. & need to sit down and take a word of advice from Mr. Wood. I question the media, I question the president, I question everything. I'm not a brain washed zombie teen who sleeps through every class. I'm a graduate of Oakridge High School who's life has been touched by the best teacher around Muskegon County. Currently, I live in Washington State. I moved across the country because I believed in myself and I believed I could make it. I believe because I had a teacher who believed in me. I think that every teen needs a teacher who can believe in them cause nobody seems to believe in our generation anymore.

Sincerely, Sarah Pennell aka someone who cares about Oakridge High School.

<sarahmarie.penell@gmail.com> Oakridge graduating class of 2013

#81 - Sharon Pennell (parent)

September 5, 2013

Dear Mr. Wood,

I am writing you this WAY overdue letter to you, to thank you for being such a great teacher.

I first want to apologize for taking so long to write you this letter. I wanted to write you this letter before Sarah changed to WayPoint school and then to OHS Alternative. Time went by so fast. So I am so sorry that it took me so long to write this. I wanted to write you this letter while Sarah was still at Oakridge Public schools.

I think you are an extraordinary teacher that you are! Not only just being a remarkable teacher, but you are also a mentor to students. I was so happy that you attended my daughters graduation. I know that you made Sarah's day. Yes, Sarah was happy that her Mom, Dad, Grandparents and Aunt was there...but we took a backseat when she saw you there and I could tell how her face lit up!

As I write this letter, I am crying, because you believed in my daughter. You believed she had the potential and ability to do great things and do whatever she dreamed of doing. (I have told Sarah this, but coming from a Mom, I think many times I fell on deaf ears). You made Sarah's day and so glad that I captured that in a picture that I will attached for you. (again, I should have sent you this picture a long time ago...I am a procrastinator - sorry)

I hope that the Oakridge School Board and the OHS system realizes what a true and amazing teacher that they have. They have an asset when they hired you!

I, myself, was a Oakridge student (and yes, a proud Wolf Laker!!) I , too, like Sarah, had a teacher that impacted my life, not only throughout my grade school days, but still today into my adulthood and beyond! My mentor of a teacher that touched my life is JoAnn Klinger. She was my 4th grade teacher. She believed in me and encouraged me when it seemed like no- one else did. I came from a single parent home (my parents divorced when I was 4) and my living arrangements growing up were not good, and I had a hard life that no child should have ever have to go through). I will not go into details, but it was horrible. Yet, this teacher made me feel like I was somebody...I was somebody special. If it wasn't for her, I don't think I would have done as well as what I did in school. She actually cared about me! A teacher who cares...WOW!! There's a concept!! That does not happen very often! And now...what Mrs. Klinger was for me, is what you are for Sarah! You have touched her life. Sarah had it tough too growing up, I divorced her dad, we lost our home and had to move away from the only home she knew and grew up in.

Mrs. Klinger went out of the "norm" for teaching which set her above the rest of the teachers. She taught us how to save money and get good grades. We would earn "tickets" when we got good grades. If we have up a hundred points from the tickets, she would take us to Village Inn for pizza!! WOW!! To a poor little girl, that was awesome!! She taught us that if you work hard, that it paid off! And as a mother of two, her teachings carried over into my adulthood and I praise her to this very day! She was a positive female role that I had in my life, just like you are for Sarah!

You provided my daughter with a positive male role model...the only positive male role model that she had in her life. The majority of teachers get a job at the school and come summer

time they are done with their students come September...but not you, you are a teacher all year round! AND, that is what a TRUE CARING teacher is...a teacher ALL throughout the year, NOT just seasonal.

I can bet you that if you ask any of the teachers that Sarah had at Oakridge, NOT ONE could tell you anything about Sarah. Why? Because they don't care. I put Sarah at Oakridge because that is where I attended and thought it was a great school system. It was for the most part...I wasn't a fan of Karen the secretary, not only was rude to me, but rude and mean to students. It just gets me how people who don't like children get a job working with children! I don't get it.

Anyway, I just wanted to say, I know you and I hit a small bump in the road with each other, but we only had one interest in mind, and that was my daughter Sarah. As you know she had some issues going on, and you stood beside her, encouraged her when it seems everyone else didn't. I did not have one single teacher follow up with Sarah...NOT ONE!! NOT ONE teacher from Oakridge, including the principal, encourage Sarah and helped her graduate. No one cared. All they knew was...she changed school and out of their hair. I feel that this was wrong. As a teacher, you are a teacher for life, all year around, you are suppose to be a mentor, a positive role model...not only through September to June!

I believe with all of my heart, if it wasn't for you being such a positive role model in my daughters life, she may not have graduated. There was a time that Sarah told me that she just wanted to die...she wanted to kill herself. School was getting tough on her and so were the people at Oakridge. I think you saved my daughter's life. I honestly and truly do. And for that, I will always be forever grateful to you. I wouldn't know what to do if I did not have my baby girl in my life. I would die without her. So, I can honestly say that you saved Sarah and I both! Thank you, Mr. Wood, for going above and beyond your "normal" teaching criteria. This is what makes you an awesome, great and irreplaceable teacher!

I hope you continue to be in my daughter's life, just like Mrs. Klinger STILL is in my life. We are facebook friends and she has been in my life since I was in 4th grade and I am a 1986 graduate of OHS! How cool is that?? I hope OHS principal and school board realizes that they have 2 great teachers that they have and had at OHS, and they should be very proud of that.

I hope I can return your priceless favor someday. Keep doing what you are doing, because I know my daughter thinks the world of you, and so do I...she praises you all the time. You will forever be a part of her life, and for that, I am forever grateful.

Please stay in touch!

I remember growing up, that I was in grade school and my brothers were in high school and my brothers coming home and telling me that one of Oakridge's school teachers were having an affair with one of the students! (I know who that teacher was), and I had him in high school later on. The school was aware of it and did nothing about it...he ended up marrying her after she graduated. AND I know for a fact there is another teacher that is employed at Oakridge AND the principal and school is aware of him having an affair with his student. He also sends flirty texts to them! So if anyone says that your teaching methods are out of the guidelines, that you go above and beyond what is expected out of you, I will tell anyone differently.

I know the school makes excuses that benefits them. I heard the reason that the teacher didn't get into trouble for sending flirty texts to a student was because she was 18 years old...but she still was a student! This wasn't the first student he became friendly with, and the school was aware and allows it. The teacher is young, but not held accountable for his actions.

And here you are, a wonderful, caring teacher, and people don't know how to react to a teacher who is not only a mentor, but a friend. Don't let the world change who you are...you are awesome and deserve a raise! And I will be in your corner if you ever need me!

Sincerely, Sharron Pennell 231-215-9882

P.S. Attached is a copy of you and Sarah at graduation! This is a wonderful picture and thank you again for attending her graduation, it meant the world to her! (and to me too!) - A teacher that cares is a rare thing...don't ever stop how you are teaching, I hope more teachers follow you and do what you are doing! You could be a role mentor to other teachers too!

But I know, you are a rare gem, just like Mrs. Klinger!

September 1, 2013

To whom it may concern,

I was always a good student as in the meaning of having good grades. Good grades don't always mean enormous enthusiasm to the subject. As many other students also I just memorized the books before having a test. I always forgot everything once I was done with the palm sweating moment called an exam.

Mr. Wood makes students work for the knowledge not for the grades. I never had him as a teacher of mine and still he managed to have an impact on me. I would even say that he is the only teacher in Oakridge High School that I actually know. Some might think it isn't that relevant; that students know their teachers. But when you know your teacher it's easier to give out your opinions for debate and become well aware of every layer of the issue. Mr. Wood knows how to face students, all kinds of them.

I'm lucky enough to have an education system in my native country that I don't need to pay for. When you have privileges such as that, you don't always remember to appreciate those. More importantly you don't remember to think how could you improve things, how could things be even more by your values. The better the things are the less you think about them. Mr. Woods way to pinpoint problems is contagious. He knows how to address the issue.

Traditionally Mr. Wood makes it possible for student to take part to two different trips every spring. I went to the one that is called Close Up Washington D.C. As the web site of Close Up says the purpose is to give an inside look at students 'and educators' democracy in action. The point is to make you more politically aware, kind of translate the news into something more understandable. As an exchange student from Finland I especially enjoyed having a chance to see how the locals view the political system. Close Up contains lots of discussion, students get a chance to bring up things like what they would do about the health care system or environmental issues. That's how Mr. Wood is too, he gives students a chance. He treats students as a friend as someone who listens if you have a problem but does not pity or let you by too easy. Learning of him isn't only passive listening. He is a wonderful and inspiring teacher that actually cares about his students.

Laura Petäjistö Helsinki, Finland 1.9.2013

August 26, 2013

To whom it may concern,

Bob Wood was my 11th and 12th grade teacher. He was the most upbeat, positive, caring teacher I've ever had.

His teaching was always a little out of the ordinary it was always fun and always exciting. The first day I had him made me want more. I wasn't sure what I wanted more of, but I wanted it. I had interest, I participated, I saw kids participate in Mr. Wood's class and have the same kids in different classes and never hear a peep from them. There was just something about Mr. Wood that put a drive, ambition, courage and a sheer want to learn inside of me. I have protested on issues that I feel so strong for. I didn't just feel like another student that another teacher was teaching. I felt strong, I felt bold, I felt like my opinion and my actions mattered. And I had never felt that in a classroom before.

Now I am a 25 year old single mother. I still have the same goals, morals, hopes and dreams I've always had since high school. Being a full time working mother makes it hard for me to find time for myself but I always work hard and my family never goes without.

I am writing today because Mr. Wood is a great teacher and he is the only teacher that put a fire inside my heart and soul. The fire that tells me I can do anything. I can be anything. I can do anything I put my mind to. And with that fire that Mr. Wood had me find when I was a student sticks with me. Everywhere and everyday. I am going to instill goals, morals, hopes and dream into my daughter and her friends. The future leaders of America and I hope and pray that my daughter has a teacher like Mr. Wood to believe in her like he believed in myself and my friends and my classmates.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Sarah Powell (c/o 2007)

#84 - Aaron Ponce c/o 2006

September 3, 2013

To whom it may concern,

It has come to my attention that one of the most influential people – not just teacher – in my high school career has been deemed minimally effective at his job. This means that someone some place seems to believe he does not influence his students, does not apply himself in his work, and has a general lack of indifference to the people around him. This all seems rather strange to me as none of these characterize the Mr. Wood that I knew in my Senior Current Issues class back in 2005-2006. It certainly doesn't sound like the Mr. Wood I had heard of in the three years leading up to having a class with him, or the Mr. Wood that I heard about from the underclassmen who came after me. He's been accused of being a difficult teacher, in the fact that his projects pushed his students to apply themselves not just in their textbooks but out of the classroom as well, but never ineffective.

Throughout high school up until that final year of mine I had heard varying stories about him from my classmates, and some were negative, but despite all that I still decided to make the personal choice in taking his current issues class regardless. It was a gamble, solely because I heard he was difficult and passionate – as if passionate were a negative thing. To my great relief on that first day he had my undivided attention, unlike most educators throughout my entirety of schooling – both prior to and after this – Mr. Wood seemed to care about what he was saying. This was refreshing. It wasn't a lecture it was a town square style meeting. He didn't let us sit there and nod off, and if we did he would gather our attention again and attempt to engage us in a dialogue, not just with him but each other. Those class discussions were unlike anything I have experienced, and he let us voice our opinions, and he'd let us argue, but then he'd challenge our views. These were challenges not to simply disagree with us, but to make us find a *why* to our arguments.

One of the most rewarding experiences of the class was discovering that I had a voice and that I wasn't going to be chastised for voicing an opinion. He would argue with us, and some would mistake this for him being bias, but that would be selling Mr. Wood short. A man who loves travel, a man who has actually bore witness to different facets of the world. It's such a rewarding experience having a teacher who delved into the subjects he discussed. This inspired me to examine internally my thought processes and how I viewed the world. The person I was when I walked into that classroom was not the person who walked out of it, and that was for the better.

In the wake of Hurricane Katrina we as a class were challenged to come up with a way to do our part in helping the victims of the tragedy, and collectively we organized a raffle. This didn't only entail making posters or selling the tickets, but he also pushed us to reach out to local businesses to acquire coupons, products, or services that they would be willing to donate to us to help. He

didn't hold our hands through this process, but was always a watchful guide in that he pushed us and gave us advice on who to talk, what to say, where to look, but we were expected to do the work. Then there was the volunteering project, as all of us were expected to log in a certain number of hours volunteering at locations of our choice. He made a point in emphasizing how important this was to some of the colleges we would be applying to in the future, and till that point, there were not many other teachers who really challenged us to volunteer. We were of course graded on our hours logged but it was a personally rewarding experience to participate in it.

I may not have had him for any of the other classes he had but his senior only class is one of the most important classes at Oakridge in readying the students for the "real world." While some of us were prone to slacking off Mr. Wood always treated the class like it was of the utmost importance to our future. This wasn't going to be a class you were just going to blow off. Even if the projects lacked a students utmost attention, the classroom discussions caused us to think more than we were prepared to do. They made us think about how important college really was, how high school wasn't the end of something but the beginning. No one pushed home the idea that we as individuals mattered more than Bob Wood, that we as individuals had a voice, could cause positive changes into our world. Everything he was involved in was for his students to feel they mattered and to help them realize their goals. From his Building a Better World scholarship that he awarded, to his involvement with the Close-up groups over the years, *everything* he has done is for his students.

Losing Bob Wood would be one of the biggest mistakes that Oakridge High School could make. Dismissing a man who has put his heart and soul into his job would be a tragedy. That he planted himself for over twenty-five years in the same location when he would have easily gone anywhere, is a testament to him. More than school dances, more than football games, more than the interactions I had with my classmates, I have more lasting impressions and memories from taking part in his class. His class was difficult, and I'll be the first to admit to my senior slacking but I grew more as a human being for knowing him and listening to him than I had the previous three years in school.

Sincerely,

Aaron Ponce Class of 2006
pulpfaction06@gmail.com

#85 - Laura Prescott c/o 2005

September 3, 2013

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Laurelle Prescott. I am a graduate of Oakridge High School, Class of 2005. I have spent most of my childhood and all of my adolescence in this school district. I have had the privilege to be one of many great teachers' student; Mrs. Peterson and Mr. Schillaci in 4th grade, Mrs. LaPointe in 5th grade, Mrs. Lindstrom who came and totally turned around a classroom that had had a rough year, to say the least. My 6th grade class had a teacher that was exhausted and had given up mid-way through the year, then we had the privilege to have one of the best long-term substitute teachers that I have ever had! His name, I can not remember. Then comes Mrs. Lindstrom. She did an incredible job encouraging, motivating, and inspiring many of us in that class that year. I went from an A-student before the start of the year, to failing when the original teacher retired, to being an A-student to end the year!

Now, this letter is not about my favorite teachers that I have had the privilege to educate me, but there is one teacher that has and will forever stick out in my mind- Mr. Bob Wood.

It was the beginning of my junior year and this was the year I had to take Government and Economics. To be honest, I was not thrilled. I am not an analytical person. I am more of a creative, carefree person. Economics that year was rough, to say the least. I actually almost failed. Just barely passed with a C-. Government, I wasn't sure was going to be much better. I just knew that the less time I had to try to figure out Supply and Demand and mess with numbers, the better!

Mr. Bob Wood was my teacher for Government. From the moment I stepped in to his classroom I knew my year was about to change. We dove right in! As most classrooms, but not all, do, we were given assignments and an agenda of the semester. There were posters covering almost every inch of those cold brick walls. I remember a poster of Martin Luther King Jr. and an inspirational quote.

In just about every class, there is some kind of project or final. The best project I have ever had in my four years at Oakridge High School was the Social Awareness Organization that we, as groups, had to decide, commit, and act on. My group was called S.O.D.A. Cute, right? It stood for Students of Oakridge Discrimination Association. We targeted Abercrombie & Fitch because of their racy ads and obvious profiling. Our group met with another organization in Fremont that was Christian based and they too were writing, protesting, and educating area people of open discrimination. We continued to volunteer with the organization and then actively went to an Abercrombie & Fitch store to protest. We had t-shirts made to create a buzz and handed out info on A&F's ads and information on the Constitution and our rights to be screened fairly for employment.

One other experience that I will absolutely never forget is the Close-Up trip I was blessed with being able to take. That trip to Washington, D.C. would be my third, but the most exciting! I was immersed in a culture I have never experienced before. We went down to some area where there was an indoor farmers market with a selection of foreign foods. Georgetown was great! The history and the shopping centers, not to mention the architecture and cobbled roads.

Mr. Wood also gave us the opportunity to earn time on our own if we were on a committee and fulfilled certain requirements. These requirements consisted of meeting weekly for about 6 weeks or so and each week learn about a new monument, its meaning to history, or learn about other surrounding important landmarks and its history to America. In return for completing these tasks, we received one day on our own with a buddy. This was the most freeing experience I've ever had. Imagine the excitement and thrill of going to new places, meeting new people, and trying new things in a new place and at such an impressionable age. This is the time where dreams come alive and independence grows!

Mr. Wood demanded our attention and our respect. Of course, this is to be expected, but he was not going to let a disruptive student steal the attention of 20 other students that were ready to learn. In my opinion Mr. Wood was just as fair of a teacher, if not in some cases more so, than any other great teacher that Oakridge High School has to offer the area students. He inspired me to be involved and proactive in society and government big or small.

Stay Awake! Is his new anthem and I completely agree. I am a naturally intuitive person. I see what is going on in the world and how blind so many of us are. I'll admit it; I turn them on quite often. It is easier to ignore a problem and be naïve than it is to stand up, be aware, and do something to change it! This spark that I have with in me was so small, so young, so fragile before I stepped in to Mr. Wood's class that junior year.

Mr. Bob Wood is a caring, charismatic, inspirational, realistic, fair and just teacher. Because of his dedication to his students and passion for knowledge and action, Oakridge High School would not have some of the more successful graduates that they have had.

Sincerely,

Laurelle Prescott
Graduate C/O 2005

18 August 2013

To whom it may concern,

My name is Michael Ray Roomsburg and I am a former student of Bob Wood. I have previously served over 8 years as a military police officer with the United States Air Force, which included 4 deployments to obscure locations in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. I am currently a 911 dispatcher at Johnson County Central Dispatch in Missouri, providing emergency Police/Fire/EMS services to a population of over 52,000 residents. In addition, I am a volunteer firefighter with the Johnson County Fire Protection District.

I had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Wood my freshman year at Oakridge High School. Initially I had no clue as to the impact that Mr. Wood would have upon my life. Over my four years of high school I had classes with Mr. Wood in World/US History and Senior Current Issues. As a freshman I was initially intimidated by Mr. Wood. My intimidation was based purely on the degree of understanding and knowledge that Mr. Wood possessed of the subjects he was teaching. Until that point I had not had a teacher that I felt knew so much about the subjects they were teaching. I learned very quickly that he would not tolerate a student to just come to class and not actively participate. He effectively challenged and inspired me and the rest of the students to want to learn more and become involved.

Through the time that I spent as a student with Mr. Wood I developed not only as a student but as a person. Some of the assignments that I was given by Mr. Wood still continue to have an impact on my life today. For example, I remember a world history assignment for which we were required to interview someone who was alive during WWI or WWII. I had the privilege of interviewing a man who was among the soldiers who stormed the beaches of Normandy on "D-Day". I remember vividly the man and his accounts of the campaign. His story and emotions will forever be etched in my memory. It was assignments like that which have made me the person I am today.

Another example of thought-provoking and invaluable assignments was one involving political campaigns. We were asked to find an organization relating to local political campaigns and become involved in some capacity. I volunteered with the campaign for a state representative candidate. I logged many hours with the campaign manager and learned the ins and outs of all the aspects involved. The time I volunteered also afforded me the opportunity to go out into the community and speak with many residents regarding their political views and concerns for our community.

I cannot leave out an assignment in which we were asked to write a letter to ourselves. The assignment required us to think about what, who and where we would want to be in 5 and then 10 years after high school. The letters would then be archived by Mr. Wood and sent to the students after the 10 year mark. It gave students the inspiration and motivation to accomplish the things which we thought were possible within our own minds. It also portrayed a tangible interest in our futures by Mr. Wood, something that was rare among other faculty I encountered during my time in school.

I also traveled with the Close-Up Program to Washington, DC, which was organized by Mr. Wood. In addition to the planned itinerary Mr. Wood organized a stop in New York City. The stop in NYC included visits to Ellis Island and Ground Zero of the World Trade Center. The trip was scheduled not long after the

events of September 11th, 2001. Due to obvious concerns for the safety and well-being of the students, Mr. Wood held a meeting with the parents and students to discuss openly their concerns. Mr. Wood did not suggest what decision should be made but rather left it up to the parents and students. He advised that he would arrange a refund of any students who no longer wished to participate. The trip went off without any issues and provided me and the other students with the opportunity of a lifetime to witness history in the making and see a side of NYC and our nation's capital many never experience.

While I have attempted to highlight just a few of the assignments and school-related activities that impacted my character, Mr. Wood was also involved in activities outside of the classroom as well. There were countless times Mr. Wood would be in his classroom well into the evening and never turned away a student who needed to talk. On his personal time he organized semiannual trips to Chicago, Illinois to offer students the chance to travel outside of a school organized trip. As a student it was refreshing to have a teacher whose style of instruction was unlike any other and who seemed to take a vested interest in our futures. He truly embodied a deep dedication to the district but moreover to the students of Oakridge High.

There is no doubt that I could go on page after page regarding the amount of influence Mr. Wood had and continues to have on the person who I am today. His vast amount of knowledge across an array of subjects is unparalleled. Being a world traveler, published author, accomplished teacher and mentor, Mr. Wood brings an unmatched degree of experience and intelligence to the students which he instructs. He proved to be one of the most motivating, engaging, inspiring, dedicated and passionate instructors or person that I have ever encountered.

In closing, words are not enough to express the greatness of a teacher's role in their students' lives; however this is merely my attempt. I am grateful that I had Mr. Wood as a teacher and honored to continue to call him my friend.

If you would like to speak directly as to the kind of teacher, mentor, counselor or person Mr. Wood is, or have any questions or concerns please contact me at michael.roomsburg@gmail.com or (231)730-3038

Very Respectfully,

Michael R. Roomsburg
mroomsburg@joco911.org

"What we have done for ourselves alone dies with us; what we have done for others and the world remains and is immortal." - Albert Pike

September 9, 2013

Kristin Dooley 1465 Windward Way
Muskegon, MI 49444

To Whom it may concern,

Subject: Mr. Bob Wood

When I look back at my high school years, one person stands out over any other teacher I ever had. Mr. Wood taught me not only what was required for the class, but also life lessons that I have carried with me into my adult life. He taught me to fight for what I felt was important, and stand up for what I believe in. The reason I am writing this letter is because I believe in Mr. Wood. I think that he is an asset to Oakridge High School and its students. Mr. Wood has a great deal of life experiences that I feel the students of Oakridge would benefit from. Not only has he traveled across the country, he has been to multiple foreign countries. I honestly cannot think of another teacher at Oakridge that has the knowledge and experience Mr. Wood has regarding foreign countries and their policies.

I also had the opportunity to travel to Washington D.C with Mr. Wood during my junior year. That is one trip that I will never forget for the rest of my life. The reason that trip meant so much to me was because Mr. Wood gave me and my fellow Close-Up group the opportunity to explore the Capital on our own. We had to learn the transportation system and had to create a detailed plan for the day. At the age of 17, I traveled the city of Washington D.C with three other Close-Up members and saw sites that will forever remain in my heart. Mr. Wood gave me memories that will last a lifetime. Since my Close-Up trip, I have visited Washington D.C. four additional times. Each time, I have used the skills that I was taught by Mr. Wood, to explore every inch of that city. It remains my favorite vacation destination.

The qualities that I have brought to light are just scratching the surface. I cannot say enough good things about Mr. Wood. It is important that Mr. Wood is able to maintain his career at Oakridge. He has forever changed my life in so many ways and I know that he has continued to do so for students who came after me. Please consider my words and the words of other past students before making any decisions.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Kristin Dooley

#88 - Justin Rosema c/o 1995

To Oakridge Public School Administration

Who so is Bob Wood to me? Bob Wood has been a teacher, mentor, and friend. He has played those roles for many students in his time at Oakridge High School.

As a freshmen I had Mr. Wood for P.E. and Study Hall, and then as a sophomore for P.E. and Health. In most schools and with some P.E. teachers you may say we enjoyed having him as a teacher because P.E. is easy. Mr. Wood though challenges his students, and I loved it. We need to learn the skills and show him that we perform them. Health class was truly the area where I learned he cared for his students learning. He didn't just give us the worksheets that came out of the other health classes. He had us research the topics and teach them, thus in a class where a lot of students check out, we were engaged in each lesson. I know now to run a room like that takes amazing classroom management and trust in your students.

His time as a mentor started for me as a junior in high school. He was no longer my teacher, but he took the time to talk with me, as he could see my frustration over my playing time in basketball. His words to me, although simple, made me realize my time would come. Instead of having it start to affect everything around me, I was able to relax, and get on with life. I know many other who have stories of just like mine with Mr. Wood.

A few years later I returned to Oakridge, to be a volunteer assistant coach for girls basketball. Mr. Wood was serving as the JV girls coach. Before I worked with him I thought some of his coaching methods were strange. I did not see the importance of goals, or team building. After working with Coach Wood I began to understand. By setting goals for themselves the girls worked hard despite lacking overall skill. What could have been some frustrating seasons allowed for growth in each athlete, not just the stars of the team. I have taken the ideas of goals setting from him and applied them to my teaching and coaching.

As a teacher he has also served as mentor. It is funny to me a lot of the new ideas in education are techniques I saw Mr. Wood use in observations of his teaching. He has some of the best classroom management I have ever seen. The students are engaged and on task. So he must be standing in front of the room lecturing? Not Mr. Wood, he has the students engaged in conversation not just with him. The actually talk about real world problems with each other, and Mr. Wood serves as moderator. This so unlike any other teacher, he lets his students discussions lead to learning. Every time I would observe one of his Social Studies classes I wished I would have had Mr. Wood for those classes in High School.

I know in the halls of Oakridge the name Schugars is greatly respected for all that he has done for the kids and the school. It is well deserved, but I ask you to look closely at how Bob Wood has affected the lives of the students of OHS to earn the same respect. He challenges them in ways that develop them for the rest of their life. Mr. Wood makes them see a world that is larger than the corner of Hall and Wolf Lake. His students set goals, and the students rise to the occasion. Should those students fail though Bob Wood is there to lift them up again, as he has done for me.

Justin Rosema, OHS 1995, Science Teacher, Decatur Middle School

jrosema42@frontier.com

#89 - Amber (Tompkins) Schaner c/o 2004

August 15, 2013

To Whom it May Concern,

I first met Mr. Wood the summer of 2000 at basketball open gym. I was getting ready to begin the wonderful adventure of high school and I was taking it on both academically and athletically. Basketball per se was not my best sport out of the others I intended to play later in the year, but all my friends played so why not? Let's just say when you walk onto the court and Mr. Wood is your coach you best be ready to give 100% no matter how good you are and whether you are there to play or be with friends. After two seasons of basketball and a year of U.S. history with Mr. Wood I discovered his standards on the court were mediocre compared to those in his classroom.

The time spent with Mr. Wood as a coach and teacher helped me to develop a number of characteristics that have been very beneficial to my success today. Mr. Wood is a teacher that does not just walk into his classroom and follow the basic itinerary who you know can not wait for the bell to ring along with the students. He walks in each day with a passion for not only teaching students, but more importantly puts in the time to build life skills. One life skill I know I learned thanks to Mr. Wood is accountability. Two others which go hand in hand are leadership and self-confidence. As a both a coach and teacher he knew that the star athlete was not necessarily always the one who set the best example for others on the team. He is someone who provides students willing to put forth the needed effort to better themselves the extra support needed.

Mr. Wood's resume I am sure speaks for itself as far as what he brings to the table next to his comrades but there are not many teachers at Oakridge that can say they connect with their students and actually stay in touch with them. He has also worked hard over the years to create the Building a Better World Scholarship to provide students at Oakridge one more thing to achieve academically. That in itself demonstrates the passion he has for teaching and an effort to provide students with as many attainable resources before they leave the safe haven of high school.

In conclusion Mr. Wood may not always be reaching out to the students that stand out socially but helps those that need it to be noticed. He brings diversity to the Oakridge scene that opens the eyes to a number of students and most definitely turns others away. He has however proven to be a great asset to both Oakridge and the community by working to develop students that leave his classroom with more than an education, he develops students with life skills to actually be able to survive the real world not just the next class on their schedule.

Sincerely,

Amber Schaner (OHS c/o 2004)
aschaner1424@gmail.com

#90 - Meghan Scott c/o 2002

August 23, 2013

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Meghan Scott and I am writing you today in hopes of sharing how Mr. Wood made a positive impact on my life. I am a 2002 graduate of Oakridge High School, 2007 graduate of Grand Valley State University and just recently graduated with my Masters from Grand Valley.

The information that follows is just a quick account of my experiences as a student with Mr. Wood between the years of 1998-2002.

As a teacher, Mr. Wood set high expectations, was consistent and provided a classroom setting where I could learn. Mr. Wood expected me to be great and made sure to communicate that. He made me set higher expectations for myself. He always knew when I slacked on an assignment, which wasn't often. He made me believe that I could apply to universities and attend college. He helped me to explore those options. I went home and discussed these options with my Mom and we went on a summer trip before senior year to explore these universities. I went away to college at MSU because he made me believe it was possible.

Mr. Wood made me believe that I could travel the world. I went on my first Chicago trip with a group of students and Mr. Wood. I studied abroad in Mexico and took my own students to Costa Rica. I felt comfortable beginning the process because he gave me the tools to help me make it happen.

He was consistent with his expectations and didn't lower them when students whined about those expectations. He was tough, and when kids didn't get their own way, they cried and whined hoping that somebody would listen to their plight. It made me happy to know that I was expected to do the work and that I was going to be graded accordingly. If I didn't do it, I knew what to expect for a grade. Period. Because he set his expectations high and didn't listen to the whining population, I had the opportunity to learn so much from his class. Time wasn't wasted on those students. A few of the things that I remember learning about in his class were:

Maps: even though the usefulness of this seems to be debatable these days, I still am very knowledgeable about the geography of the world because of those quizzes. I was reminded of that when one of my own students asked me to help them draw a country for them and I was still able to do so.

Writing, writing, writing

History: not just names and dates, but the implications of those events and how they connect to us today

Cultural awareness: Chicago, amongst the many assignments/projects we did in class

Future Plans

Stocks/Bonds
Planning a trip abroad

As a coach, he recruited me to play basketball for his JV team. He sat us down and had individual meetings to discuss our individual and team goals. He was a tough coach, but it made me better.

Mr. Wood was a little kooky, but I looked up to him as a positive role model. He was strong minded, hard working, and believed in what he was doing. He wasn't going to back down when he believed in something. Mr. Wood put in a lot of time. He was very dedicated to his work.

I hope that you will consider the fact that Mr. Wood was and still is a great teacher. His lessons are still with me today.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Meghan Scott (OHS c/o 2002)
meg_s22@hotmail.com

August 20, 2013

To whom it may concern,

My name is Michelle Shafer, and I graduated from Oakridge High School in 2011. My friends and I were typical teenagers. We worried about whom we were going to the football game with on Fridays, keeping our grades up, and the all-important question of “what are we going to do with our lives?” At that point in my life, I always figured that my life plan would include going to college, acquiring a career field, buying a house, then marriage and children would follow.

When I first entered Mr. Wood’s class, I was not sure what to think of him because it was quite evident that he is not the average teacher. There were so many instances where I went to school and learned how to find the area of a cube, what wars our country fought in, and the proper uses for commas. Although those items all helped me for other classes and even some I have taken in college, they did not teach me much about myself. Mr. Wood taught us the materials required, but he did it in a way that I have never come across before. He teaches in a way that opens his students up to the world. I have peacefully protested with him and my friends. What other high school teacher protests with their students? Other than him, I have never met any. He gave us the materials and knowledge needed for us to contact our state representatives on issues that we care about, and some of us, including myself, actually did contact some of our representatives. He gave us opportunities to travel with him to places like Washington D.C. He opened our eyes to helping people in other areas of the world. He even helped us set up our “Help heal Haiti” project. I haven’t met any other teachers who have done half of those items. He is truly one-of-a-kind!

I recently went back to my high school and visited some of my teachers, including him. Perhaps one of the most prominent memories that I have from Mr. Wood’s class is the knowledge that he provided us with about college. He was always a proponent of us bettering our futures. He encouraged us to go on tours of multiple colleges, do an ample amount of research on every college imaginable, and do as many scholarships as time allowed us to do. When I went back and saw him, he was just as curious as ever to see how I was doing in college and what other plans I had for my life. I have family members who are not even that concerned about my life plans. Mr. Wood, on the other hand, was very curious as to how I was doing. My parents were even surprised at how interested he was.

Although my life plans have not changed much throughout my life, I have added a few things to my life’s to-do list. Traveling to other countries in the world is now on the list, thanks to Mr. Wood, and the list of places I want to travel keeps growing. I have taken many life lessons from this man that I would not want to trade for anything. I am very grateful for the experiences that I have had to be one of his former students, and now a life-long friend.

Sincerely,

Michelle Shafer ohs 2011
shafermi@mail.gvsu.edu

#92 - Kyle Short c/o 2008

August 6, 2013

To whom it may concern,

My name is Kyle Short. I graduated from Oakridge High School in 2008. I am writing in support of Bob Wood. Mr. Wood has been a significant influence in my educational experience. I will graduate with a B.A. in History/Arabic from Western Michigan University and few have been more influential to my educational endeavors. His passion and vision as an educator has inspired my career pursuit to involve a conscious effort to help others in need. My global awareness enlightened by Mr. Wood has provoked compassion, empathy, and integrity.

I fear the educational community at Oakridge High School is at a critical juncture. Students are increasingly narcissistic, nihilistic, and lack motivation or a sense of purpose. I believe Mr. Wood's unconventional methodology for teaching is perfect antidote to this problem. I would describe his interaction with students as passionate and subjective. I believe his realistic, passive-aggressive, even pessimistic approaches are effective motivators and an important perspective for students to be exposed to. He promotes action and stimulates intellect beyond a classroom.

Mr. Wood has versatile travel experience and offers unique insight and perspective to students. This wisdom would allow him to work in other job sectors, but his true passion is educating future generations to preserve the founding principles of our country. I believe he is an extraordinary educator whose impact cannot be measured solely by a standardized evaluation based on left-brain logic. In a world seemingly with increasing problems, his methodology foremost provokes contemplation and dissent. In order for my generation to resolve problems of uncertainty in the future, the lessons taught and principles instilled by Mr. Wood will be vital to the solutions.

Sincerely,

Kyle Short (OHS c/o 2008)

shortk23@gmail.com

#93 - April Shunk c/o 2008

August 16, 2013

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is April Shunk and I am a graduate of Oakridge High School. I thoroughly enjoyed my time at Oakridge and connected easily with many of my teachers. However, one of my teachers from my freshman year stands out in my mind, Mr. Wood. I am grateful for his teaching methods, sincere involvement with his students, and the various topics I learned about that are useful to me at the university level. In this letter I am going to explain to you in detail, the impressive impact Mr. Wood has made on me, and his other students, through his instruction.

The way that Mr. Wood teaches is unparalleled. Much of the information he gives to students is from first-hand experience. It is not a watered-down version of history from a textbook that is spat out to students by rote memory. For a continuing education class, Mr. Wood did an independent study class and made a picture portfolio. The portfolio included iconic black and white photos of civil rights events. Mr. Wood went down south to stand in the places where these photos were taken in order to photograph the scene in the modern day. These photos displayed how much, or how little, things and places have changed since the civil rights movement. In order to complete this project, Mr. Wood made connections with people down south and learned about people and events that led to civil rights for black Americans. Everything he learned was brought into the classroom and a whole unit was dedicated to Black History and the Civil Rights Movement. Mr. Wood seems to do this with other experiences he's had. He travels far and wide and stays informed on current events so that he can bring his relevant knowledge into the classroom and engage the students at Oakridge High School.

I have learned that Mr. Wood teaches things that should be taught at all schools, but are not. I recently saw a movie with some of my peers here at Western Michigan University that documented black history and civil rights events. My peers were very moved and disgusted by events like Bloody Sunday in Selma, Alabama and the Freedom Riders. They had no previous knowledge of these events! The Civil Rights Movement made such a huge impact on American history and they knew nothing about it.

Mr. Wood encourages his students to go out and see the world. He encourages them not to be afraid to get out of our small town to learn and explore. He dedicates time to personally escort students around the country to places like Selma, Alabama, Washington D.C., and Chicago. Travelling enriches lives! I know that travelling has had a huge impact on my life and Mr. Wood was an influence. After my freshman year of high school, over the next three years I travelled to Honduras, India, Switzerland, France, and England. I was inspired to "Be awake."

Mr. Wood prompts his students to be creative, think critically, dig deeper, and be mindful of their surroundings. He frequently quotes Buddha's "I am awake" story. Through this quote, Mr. Wood teaches his students to be knowledgeable and enlightened about the world. All of these values are imperative to earning a college education. Standardized tests and textbook knowledge are not the key to being successful. In-depth discussion and the creation of ideas will allow a person to thrive at the university level and beyond. In my opinion, Mr. Wood is a valuable asset at Oakridge High School. He is equipping students with skills, values, and knowledge that will truly prepare students for later life beyond the walls of Oakridge Public Schools.

Sincerely,

April Shunk, Class of 2008 - april.j.shunk@wmich.edu

August 27, 2013

To Whom it May Concern,

I believe that Mr. Wood should still be a teacher at Oakridge High School, because I believe that his teaching style is something that Oakridge needs.

Mr. Wood is very passionate about the subject that he teaches, and that this is something that students need in a teacher. I am Gary Simmons, and I had him for Economics in the 2009–2010 school year, as well as a participant in Close Up Washington, D.C in 2009. In the years that I had him as a teacher, I felt that I had gained a better understanding of the world around me because of him.

In 2009, I went to Washington, D.C. with him as part of the Close Up program, where we learned about our government, and how it works. On this trip, we visited the monuments, met our state's representatives, went to two foreign embassies, and even had a chance to debate on national television. I felt that I got a lot out of this experience. This was the first time I experienced dorm life, first time I appeared on a national TV program, and the first time I met with our government officials. It was a very enlightening experience, to me.

Because of experiences like this, I feel that Mr. Wood is a very valuable teacher for Oakridge students, and that everyone would benefit if he stayed with the school district.

Sincerely,

Gary Simmons (OHS c/o 2011)

August 28, 2013

To whom it may concern:

In life we fail to see the other persons point of view while trying to state our case for what is right and wrong. Not everyone gets the chance to have someone or something so influential to teach you a way to see both perspectives. My time at the Oakridge Public Schools did not always seem like the best for my future, but there were those moments of hope that someday this school would learn what real life education is. Those rare but amazing moments were mostly experienced in Mr. Woods class. I grew up knowing after two siblings going through Oakridge before me that I would love the chance to have Mr. Wood as a teacher.

As someone chasing their own dream slowly of becoming a teacher and having Mr. Wood be there at every moment when i'm wondering if its okay that I am behind because of finding my true belonging through college, he has always been encouraging and helpful. Teachers seem to find the best for themselves rather than the students; but never for one moment did I feel Mr. Wood was giving us any less education then he himself would want. Mr. Wood taught generations of my family, my parents are now and always have been grateful for his awareness of the world and making us feel our self-worth through the worlds eyes. Instead of getting the "you guys are the worst generation" from 75% of my teachers, we got "I can see the big things you are going to do" in Mr. Woods Class.

If we are just solely talking about Mr. Woods general character it would be caring, gracious, passionate, encouraging, highly educated, hopeful, and motivating. My sister, brother, and parents would both agree highly with me on these views. He has world experience, gives his students world experience, he is highly educated, and keeps his students highly educated.

For one moment if you think that losing Mr. Wood is a good idea I think you don't really know him for the true him. Don't be blinded by politics like the whole world is, teach with your heart like he does, don't follow the nasty path the world is taking. Mr. Wood, was and always will be one of the best teachers at Oakridge. No doubt in my mind his devotion will not waver.

Don't give up on a truly incredible teacher and mentor!

Samantha Smith
Oakridge Class of 2009
samanthakay0124@aim.com

August 2013

To Whom It May Concern:

It is my pleasure to write on behalf of Mr. Wood's exceptional abilities to teach, however, it is somewhat unbelievable to me that this seems necessary.

I graduated from Oakridge High School having been in the district my entire educational career in 2010. I was pleased to begin my academics with Mr. Wood my junior year, yet I knew of his reputation to inspire long before that. I believe that as an educator, inspiring your students to learn and succeed may be one of the biggest challenges faced in the classroom. Mr. Wood does not fail to do this and surpasses all expectations in doing so. He transformed what could have easily been a very dry, economics course into a real life applicable class, while still providing the necessary information to his students. I was motivated to complete my assignments, presentations and blog posts to perfection. When I was finished I still went back to make corrections.

It was no surprise that his classes required time outside the classroom in order to be successful. What seemed like much time then now looks like a drop in the bucket compared to undergraduate homework. However, his course prepared me for college in becoming organized and turning in higher--level material. The newly adopted School Board Mission claims to seek preparing students at Oakridge to continue their education after high school. I know this cannot be done properly without Mr. Wood and without more educators like him that demand their students to perform at a higher level.

Academics aside, Mr. Wood was also able to teach all of us to be active citizens of the world. This is a lesson that a handful of educators at Oakridge do not fail to impress on all of their students and I truly believe it is the most valuable lesson I walked away from Oakridge with. It is a huge world we live in with thousands of different people, but that does not mean that I am a nobody, that I cannot have an influence on my society and make a difference.

I graduated determined to take on this world and its injustices. When it seems hard to stay motivated and keep the fire going, there's Mr. Wood when you least expect it cheering you on to keep going and reminding you why you're out to do it in the first place.

Do not take away the opportunities to inspire away from future students and please do not take this man's vessel to deliver such inspiration to the future leaders of our community. It would be a great disservice to the public and a completely disrespectful and unbelievable way to treat such a respected man in our community.

Please feel free to contact me for any further discussion. Regards,
Rachel E. Stewart
c/o 2010 rachelemestewart@comcast.net

August 16, 2013

To whom it may concern:

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing you to give you an insight into one of the most influential men and teachers in my life, Mr. Bob Wood. My name is Autumn Storm. I graduated thirteenth in my class from Oakridge High School, class of 2010. I am a proud Oakridge alumnus and a productive member of the Oakridge community. My success has much to do with the great staff and caring teachers of Oakridge Public Schools. As a proud member of this community I would like you to know that I am outraged that one of the most caring, motivational, and inspirational teachers at Oakridge High School has been rated 'ineffective' in his teaching skills.

Junior year I received my class schedule and saw I was in Mr. Wood's government class, I was terrified. Like many students before me I had heard numerous horror stories about this man, and immediately demanded I be switched out of his class, much to my objection, my mother refused. For her refusal, I am so thankful. Little did I know that this man would have such a huge impact on my life.

Bob Wood is one of the most inspirational people I have ever met. He teaches with such an intense passion, in which I have failed to see in even the best of my college professors. He is extremely knowledgeable, not only in his subjects of Government and Economics, but also in worldly matters, politics, and current events. His experiences from his travels around the world bring a sense of diversity to his classroom, allowing his students to live vicariously through his experiences. He gladly takes students under his wing on trips like Selma, Washington D.C., and Chicago, and pushes them to learn outside of their comfort zones, this alone makes him one-of-a-kind. He is willing to bring students down to historical Selma, Alabama, to get a first-hand look at where the heart of the Civil Rights Movement occurred. He pushes his students to be 'awake' in the world and to raise their voices for what is just and what they are passionate about. After all, isn't that what this democracy was built on, of the people, for the people, by the people?

I was one of the fortunate students that were able to travel with Mr. Wood, as well as twenty other students, in the spring of 2009 to Selma. We saw where every piece of history we have ever learned about the Civil Rights Movement took place. We visited Montgomery, and

stood in the exact same places where Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. stood just decades before. Trips like these are moments that create memories for a lifetime, build relationships, and broaden ones knowledge and awareness. If you ask me that is more rewarding than any boring history lecture by the ‘greatest’ teacher.

Bob Wood cares immensely about teaching and his students. He is so passionate in everything he does. For the motivated student it is truly an experience sitting and learning in his classroom. For the lazy, unmotivated, disrespectful student it may not be the greatest experience, but it will be an experience nonetheless. Back when I was a student in Mr. Wood’s government class and Senior Current Issues class those were the students who had a problem with him; the unmotivated students who didn’t want to learn or be responsible. Those students had issues with Mr. Wood because he would not allow them to infringe on or take away any other students right to learn.

Mr. Bob Wood is by far one of the most passionate teachers I have ever had. He brings a worldly point of view into his classroom as well as the important national events. He opens doors for his students by taking life changing trips, and pushes them out of their comfort zone to learn and be all they can be. He is insightful to preparing for college, finding scholarships, and sponsoring scholarships. He is always willing to help his students, past and present, with whatever it is they may need. If you can’t see that he cares passionately about the students at Oakridge High School, then there is something really wrong. To me, all that he does is more than most teachers do in the entire district. So before he is rated ‘ineffective’, I suggest you look around at what other ‘teachers’ are doing, and open up your eyes to the big picture here.

Thank you,

Autumn Storm (OHS c/o 2009) - autumn.storm@muskegoncc.edu

August 23, 2013

To Whom it May Concern,

Hello. My name is Corey Swanson and I am a graduate of Oakridge, class of 2009. Though the current principal (Mr. McVoy, I believe) will not know me, I am sure that most of the teaching staff and much of the administration might recall my final two years at OHS. I was involved in drama extensively, served as the senior class president, was a member of NHS, served as student representative on the School Board, was Drum Major, and graduated in the top ten of my class.

I am not one to boast of my achievements, but I think any rational person can see that I had an excellent and productive career at Oakridge, an experience that served me well as part of Northern Michigan University's honors program and eventually prompted me to pursue a career as a teacher. Before my junior year, I was an introverted student who participated in very little, but something during the last semester of my sophomore year and the first semester of my Junior year changed all of that. That something was Mr. Bob Wood.

I was blessed by an excellent network of supportive and enthusiastic teachers, but the only teacher who stayed in his classroom well into the evening, the only teacher who made efforts to immerse me in history through trips like Selma and Close-Up, the only teacher who issued me an open challenge to go above and beyond my potential, and the only teacher with whom I keep in close contact is Mr. Wood.

Mr. Wood would be an asset to any school of any caliber. He brings so very much to the table. He's traveled the world extensively (giving him much more knowledge about what he teaches) and he genuinely connects to problem students in ways I have never seen before or since. Mr. Wood's lessons (especially the ACT unit) are revolutionary and engaging and his classroom environment is one of the healthiest I've ever been a part of.

The moment one steps into his classroom, the difference in atmosphere, not just from other classrooms, but from Oakridge as a whole, is evident. Students are relaxed, but it is not from a lack of rigor, it is from a genuine feeling of importance and safety in Mr. Wood's classroom. Music plays softly in the background and it is not uncommon to find some extraordinary new experience there (for me, it was tasting Turkish coffee while listening to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. give one of his riveting speeches). Mr. Wood's classroom is a learning environment so vibrant and rare that any school—even the most esteemed private institutions—would be proud to have it.

In the end, what I'm trying to convey in this letter is that Mr. Wood is a true educator and an element so rare that seeing him buried in the detritus of bureaucracy is nothing short of a crime. In addition to myself, the other students writing letters for Mr. Wood are among the best Oakridge has ever seen or graduated. I will also assert that, while I dearly love the other teachers at Oakridge High School, they would find difficulty marshaling the support from past students that Mr. Wood can. He is special, he is unique, and he is exceptional. Oakridge needs him.

In closing, I wanted to make two points with this letter. The first is that Mr. Wood is an incredibly, unbelievably unique and gifted teacher. The second is that the very best best students in Oakridge gravitate to Mr. Wood *because* of his unique nature, not in spite of it. He may be a case of a round peg in the administration's square hole, but his assets are so great, his impact so lasting and massive, that I would encourage whomever is in charge of such things to craft a round hole for Mr. Wood.

Sincerely,

Corey Swanson
corswans@nmu.edu

#99 - Nyssa Swanson c/o 2010

Nyssa Swanson
19500 14 Mile Rd. Apt I15
Big Rapids, Mi. 49442
810-569-3811

August 3, 2013

To Whom It May Concern:

Oakridge has many great educators, but there is only a handful that I had the privilege to be inspired by during my high school years. At the top of that list would be Mr. Bob Wood. When you stop by Oakridge High School fifteen minutes after the final bell has rang, you will find that many of the teachers have already gone or are passing you in the parking lot on your way in. Not Mr. Wood. This man has dedicated his life not just to teaching young minds, but to empowering them to reach farther than they thought they could to explore the world around them.

When there was a fundraiser going on in the cafeteria during lunch you always had two main options on who was behind it. If it wasn't the Student Council then it was probably Mr. Wood's Senior Current Issues class working on their latest project to raise awareness. He gives his students the opportunity to see inside a world that is far less fortunate than this bubble that we call the Wolf Lake community. Mr. Wood gives his students knowledge that can be applied to the real world, and his class is the only one that truly prepared me for college.

Mr. Wood's hard work and dedication allowed me to be apart of the Washington DC Close Up trip my sophomore year and the Selma trip my junior year. If it wasn't for his constant reminders and motivation, I would not have been able to participate on these wonderful education opportunities. During time in his class I was also able to be involved in many trips to Chicago and Lansing. Mr. Wood showed us how to be involved in our government and gave us the opportunity to let our voices be heard, which is more than anyone could ask for from a high school teacher.

Many awards and grants have been presented to Mr. Bob Wood throughout his career as an educator. His opportunities to go on these great journeys only solidify the fact that his dedication to education stands out among the rest. Any student would be privileged to be apart of his class. Teaching isn't just a job to Mr. Wood, it is his passion, it is his life.

I could write many pages filled with how Mr. Bob Wood has personally influenced me to be the person that I am today. He single handedly empowered me to persevere through some of my biggest personal challenges in high school and in life. I am honored to write this letter of recommendation as Mr. Wood is a great educator at Oakridge Public Schools.

Sincerely,

Nyssa Swanson - oakridgesweetheart@yahoo.com
Oakridge Alumni
Class of 2010

#100 - Jake Tardani c/o 2004

School has always come easy. That I rarely had to apply much effort in high school meant that more of my focus was spent with friends, chasing girls and hanging with the “wrong crowd”. Western Michigan University presented little challenge as well and graduating Cum Laude in the class of 2008 seemed like no real accomplishment at all. Very little has challenged me in a way that felt like accomplishing the task at hand was impossible, that I might not succeed at what I was attempting, that I might fail. Some might call it luck, some would call it ‘divine intervention’ and others might attribute it to the positive role models that I had as a kid. Whereas ‘luck’ might be how I would best define it, there is some truth in the latter justification as well.

From grades 9 through 12, I can name a dozen or so teachers from Oakridge Public Schools that taught to me. From these, one teacher only one actually spoke to me as a person, saw far more in me than I could’ve ever seen in myself at the time. Bob Wood has a style of teaching that is rarely found in teachers in this day and age. He has a way of seeing his students in a light of what they can accomplish years from now – and he can convey that to them with a passion matched only by that of a parent.

Every one of my teachers could vouch for the fact that I was smart as a student; Bob spoke to me with the insight that I was a smart *person*. In retrospect, it feels as though no other teacher saw me for more than as student, my grades and assignments or my classroom behavior. While he saw all of those things, Bob could also see the potential “future me”. He would occasionally take me aside, and speak to me with authority that commanded my attention. I vividly recall a conversation between us about how “I’ve got too much potential to be wasting it” on the foolish activities that I was at the time. As necessary as this was and with as many times as I’ve reflected on these conversations between Bob & I, not a single other teacher took the time to help me see in me what I could eventually be.

My life now is very different from the one I had sitting in Bob Wood’s classroom 12 years ago. I’m a father to two beautiful, intelligent, healthy daughters. I’ve an amazing career that provides me more satisfaction than any job I could envision. My travels have taken me to multiple continents, I speak 3 languages and am a strong proponent to helping others change their lives the way I have, through continuous personal and professional development, dedication, and perseverance. It would be impossible to know whether Bob Wood was the catalyst that enabled me to get where I am in life today, but I feel he deserves a significant amount of the credit for being the only one during my younger years that cared enough to show me that he believed in me, even if I didn’t care enough to believe in myself.

Jake Tardani Class of ‘04 8/25/13

#101 - Kimburley Sue Timlin c/o 2004

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to you today about an amazing educator at your high school. Wait. Let me rephrase that. I am writing to you today about the best educator I have ever had throughout my time in school thus far (and, yes, I am including college educators when I choose to label him “the best”).

Mr. Bob Wood taught me formally from the years of 2001 to 2004 when I graduated from Oakridge High School (Magna Cum Laude, member of National Honors Society, member of S.A.D.D., athlete and class officer all four years). Though I had many great teachers at your school, I genuinely believe and openly attest to the fact that Mr. Wood is truly the most dedicated, honest, hard-working, open-minded, motivational and passionate of them all. Oftentimes I would be leaving volleyball practice late in the evening to find him still sitting in his classroom working on new lesson plans, grading papers or mentoring his students (current and former). In the times that I have visited the school since graduation, it was almost always to stop in and say hi to my favorite teacher, Mr. Wood. It was in those visits that he would be so excited to hear of my recent accomplishments, encourage me to stay the course and motivate me to do better when I spoke of discouragement. He genuinely cares how I am doing even though I may no longer be a student at Oakridge High School.

In 2003 I traveled to Washington D.C. and New York City with Mr. Wood and my fellow classmates who were a part of “Close-Up”. One of my best friends at the time and I made a plan to follow Mr. Wood around like little puppies so we could learn as much as we possibly could about everything we saw because we knew that Mr. Wood knows his stuff. I'm not passionate about politics or government and yet, all throughout my time at your school, Mr. Wood's classes were consistently my favorites because *he* is passionate and when I sat in his class, even on my most tired days, I *wanted* to learn. His excitement for what he was teaching was contagious. He taught us using picture slideshows, he taught us using music, he taught us using journals, he taught us using art, he taught us using textbooks, he taught us using guest-speakers, he taught us using videos and audio, he taught us from his own personal experiences and he taught us from his heart. I have retained more information from his classes than most any other class I have ever taken because everything I learned was presented to me with conviction and in ways I could relate to.

When we learned about the Civil Rights Movement and the Holocaust, there were days I would be wiping away tears during class because he brought the lesson to life. It was no longer a section in a textbook with keywords to memorize for a test. It was no longer a synopsis of dates and locations that felt so far back in time I couldn't possibly relate. It was history. It was an experience that real people really had and he helped me to realize that and to treasure it.

I have been most lucky and extremely blessed to have been taught by such a strong leader as Mr. Bob Wood and your school should consider itself just as lucky to have been blessed with such a fine educator who lives and breathes what he teaches and pours his heart and soul into making sure his students walk away with a top-notch education and a deeper understanding about life.

Sincerely,
Kimburley S. Timlin (Carlson)

#102 - Cassie Jo Vandermolen c/o 2005

August 15, 2013

To whom it my concern: this letter is in regards to Mr. Bob Wood.

My name is Cassie Vandermolen I graduated from Oakridge High School in 2005, and had the experience of having Mr. Wood as a teacher freshman thru senior year. In that time I had probably called him every name in the book, but thinking back eight years later there is only one word that I could really use to describe him, caring. I truly believe that Mr. Wood cares about every student who steps foot in his classroom. He wants them all to have a cause, something they care about as much as he cares about teaching. He knows that not every student he teaches will pass, I was one that failed my freshman year, but I went back and had him thru the rest of high school and I'm glad I did! Mr. Woods teaching methods may be a little unorthodox but he does what needs to be done to reach his students and to prepare them for their future as human beings.

Mr. Woods caring doesn't stop on a student, school, or community level, he's out there trying to change the world and help every person he can! I couldn't think of a better role model for me or any student to have in high school. Weather it was Mr. Wood telling us about his adventures having beer and hotdogs around the country at every ball park or telling us about his European adventures. he didn't just teach where all the rivers and states and countries and capitals where on a map he taught us to go and see them for ourselves to go explore the world for what it is. And as a graduate I have explored a little I went to France and England I did volunteer work in South America, there is so much more that I will do. But I don't believe I would have fully understood the importance of doing what I've done if it wasn't for one teacher who cared enough about our well being as human beings to tell us this is important and you have to make an Impact!

I have been out of high school 8 years if you asked me today what I learned in high school I would tell you "It only takes one person to change the world" and most people would look at me confused by this but this is the best lesson a person can leave high school with. And yes I learned some math, science, English, psychology, but the biggest impact any lesson had on me was that it only takes one person. In the world most people feel small like "I'm only one person" but the truth as taught to me by Mr. Wood is that "YOU ARE ONE PERSON", and even though sometimes you may need help, as ONE person you can change anything! Rosa Parks was only One person, Martin Luther King Jr. was only ONE person, and yet they both played a huge part in change! The lesson really underlies that you must do what you believe should be done. It doesn't matter what you believe in or what you want out of life it only takes you as ONE person to do to achieve your desired result! And as ONE person There is nothing I would love more than to have my child enter Mr. Wood class room and read the stickers on his podium the best one being "Be the change you wish to see in the world" by Ghandi.

There is no teacher who ever challenged me in my own beliefs and in what I thought I knew like Mr. Wood did. He is not just a teacher he is an inspiration! I now teach 5th graders at my church and if they even sort of remember what I have taught them come next year I will be surprised but if they remember eight years after I last teach them I would be honored. Any teacher who reaches, I mean really reaches the students like Mr. Wood does should never have to question his job!

Sincerely,

Cassie Jo Vandermolen (OHS c/o 2005)

Cassie VanderMolen <c.jovandermolen@rocketmail.com>

August 8, 2013

To Whom It May Concern:

It has been almost ten years since I attended Oakridge High School. I had a wonderful high school experience with many great teachers. One teacher, Mr. Wood, really stands out in my mind and had a positive impact on my life and on who I am today!

My first experience with Mr. Wood was when I played on Oakridge's freshman girls' basketball team. Mr. Wood taught me how to "box out!" But besides the fundamentals of basketball, he taught me that hard work and perseverance would pay off. He taught me the importance of being part of a team, and always encouraged us to support one another. He encouraged me to always strive to become better! Throughout my basketball career at Oakridge, Mr. Wood always showed interest and always cared about his students. He was someone to talk to in the hallways. He wanted to know what was going on!

My senior year of High School I had Mr. Wood for *Senior Current Issues*. This was one of my favorite classes I had at Oakridge. Before this class, I wasn't in tune to what was going on in the world around me. Mr. Wood helped me look at my community and beyond and think about what I could do to make a difference.

Many students graduate from college with outstanding loans and debt. As part of his class, we were encouraged to look at scholarship opportunities. Mr. Wood taught me how to search for college scholarships. I received two of the three scholarships that I applied for as an assignment in his class for a total of \$13,000. I was also a beneficiary of the Build a Better World scholarship that he started for Oakridge students. His class helped me realize there were endless possibilities of where I could go for college. It was one of the most rewarding classes in High School.

Mr. Wood is one of the most passionate teachers I know. He shows students there is more out there to explore in this world. He opened my eyes to the importance of traveling and the importance of being a lifelong learner. He opened my eyes to the importance of knowing what's going on in the world around me. He made me believe that a single person can make a big difference in the world. He leads by example. He is one of the most well traveled people I know. His experiences around the world make him an even better teacher!

After High School, I went on to attend Benedictine University in Lisle, IL. Mr. Wood is one of the only teachers from Oakridge that I have kept in contact with. He continues to show an interest in how I'm doing and what's going on in my life 10 years after graduation. I think that's awesome!

Angela (Vitto) Swanson (OHS c/o 2004) - angela_vitto@ben.edu

August 5th, 2013

To Whom It May Concern,

This letter is to formally express our support and gratitude for Bob Wood, a teacher at Oakridge High School. All three of our children are Oakridge graduates, two of whom went on to become teachers themselves, the other, a graphic designer. My wife and I are both educators who had the opportunity to work in Oakridge schools as well. When we look back on our children's education at Oakridge we are extremely proud and grateful for their rich well-rounded educational experience. Bob Wood stands out as a teacher who inspired them to question, to investigate, to explore and travel, to learn how our government works and how to become involved in political change, to advocate, and to make a difference for others. But Bob's strongest influence was teaching them to think for themselves and not to believe everything that they read. Even though they might not have always agreed with Mr. Wood, they knew he would want them to formulate their own ideas and defend them. In small communities like Oakridge, there is always a risk of developing a unilateral way of viewing things. And although Bob might have shaken things up from time to time, he brought a sense of balance and diversity to our children's thought process and to our community. And, it wasn't just rhetoric. Bob modeled for them the importance of fighting for what one believes in, even when the opposition is louder and more powerful. These are lessons that have helped our children excel in college and out in the real world, lessons that were learned in the Oakridge community. Change is part of the world we live in. Bob taught our children that they can be a part of that change, their ideas have value, and that one person can make a difference. As Oakridge parents, we will always have a sense of gratitude to Bob Wood for the gift he gave our children.

Thanks for your attention,

Steven Vitto, M.A., Behavior Consultant,

State of Michigan PBIS MIBLSI Teacher Trainer

Adjunct Professor, MCC, GVSU

Judy Vitto, Retired Fruitport Community Schools Teacher

July 31, 2013

Oakridge Public School District
275 S. Wolf Lake Rd.
Muskegon MI 49442

To whom it may concern,

It is with the greatest pleasure that I write on behalf of Mr. Bob Wood. I have known him since 2009, and for the past 4 years he has been nothing but an inspiration to me. It has been nothing but his teaching alone that taught me the shocking horror in apartheid, the intricate framework of our government, the beauty in developing culture, and the true power of citizenship. I write not as a person, but as a group; as a representation of the entire graduating class of 2010 from Oakridge High School, a group that was made stronger because of Mr. Wood.

Without the blessing of Mr. Wood as a teacher, my graduating class of 2010 would never have thought to organize a fundraiser for the people of Haiti, and we could not have risen over \$3,000 for relief efforts without his drive and encouragement.

As important as it is to help others, Mr. Wood also taught us to help ourselves. He devoted an entire semester to preparing our class for college. Without the time that I had in his class to writing scholarship essays, I would not have been given as much funding for college as I needed. Even though we might not have believed him at the time, Mr. Wood did his absolute best to show us how the world would really be after we graduated. He never softened any of the hardships of reality with fantasies that faith would heal all; it would take everything we had and we would hit rock bottom before we could ever make it to the top.

We graduated as children, and in many ways we still are children, and it was Mr. Wood that demonstrated how much that it truly does take a village to raise a child; and what a better village than a school. A school filled with intelligent, caring, strong teachers like Mr. Wood and many others. There are many children without parents to instill them with the knowledge of life, and many of those children now have children of their own, and without Mr. Wood to offer them the wisdom and encouragement they needed, they would be lacking very important information and skills that they can carry with them for the rest of their lives.

It would be an injustice to any school to lose a teacher as unique, genuine, and passionate as Mr. Wood. I sincerely hope he is given the opportunity to do what he loves to do, and to do what many others love him for doing; raising our children in the village that is Oakridge Public Schools. I am confident that he will succeed in anything he chooses to do, and it is nothing short of a blessing that he chose to teach our youth for so long and hopefully for many years to come.

Thank you for your time,

Celeste Wackerle Celeste.wackerle@muskegoncc.edu -

[Oakridge High School Graduate](#)

Class of 2010

19 August 2013

Oakridge High School

5493 Hall Rd.

Muskegon, Mi 49442

Dear

I was fortunate to have the opportunity to attend Oakridge Public Schools for my K-12 education. The education I received at Oakridge prepared me for the subsequent steps in my life. Oakridge, as you already know, offers an education that prepares students to take on the world. Oakridge alumnae are all over the world attending college, serving the military, and being productive members of society. We all have one thing in common and that is an Oakridge education as our foundation. Behind that education are the teachers that provide the framework and perform the day-by-day operation of “molding” students into responsible and knowledgeable adults.

Among my many teachers at Oakridge, one teacher specifically had a positive influence on me. For tenth grade American history, I had Bob Wood. I also participated in Washington Close-up during my sophomore and junior years supervised by Mr. Wood. His philosophy on the world and his encouragement to be proactive in the world are two influences that have made a lasting impact in my life.

Before my sophomore year, I was an average Oakridge student with big dreams. My world existed between Apple Ave. and Hall Rd. I didn't know nor did I care about the world that existed beyond those boundaries. Then, as my American History teacher and Close-up advisor, Mr. Wood unveiled the world and made me aware of what was really going on in the world. Not only did he open my eyes to our world, he also informed me of the power I have as a citizen of the world and how I can create change.

During my time as a student in Mr. Wood's American History class, the world experienced a massive change. In the beginning of the school year, the devastating attacks of September 11th took place. While still focusing on the required curriculum of American History, Mr. Wood shifted his entire focus to educating the class on the history unfolding in the world and all the events leading up to the attacks of September 11, 2001.

In 2010-2011, I was deployed to the Middle East in support of Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation New Dawn. I saw firsthand the events unfolding in the world with the war in Afghanistan and the beginning of the Arab Spring. The basic knowledge I learned in Mr. Wood's class set the foundation that I built on from my life's experiences. Without those foundations set in high school, I wouldn't have been able to recognize what was going on around me. Now as I continue my career as a naval officer, I use that knowledge to educate my junior sailors and interact with our allies from various regions of the world.

In May of 2001, I travelled to Washington, D.C. with the Washington Close-up program, supervised by Mr. Wood. This trip was a pivotal moment in my life. It took me out of my comfort zone and into a city and a culture that was not familiar. The experience changed my outlook on the world and it gave me a further thirst for travel. . In planning for our Washington trip, Mr. Wood not only made our trip an educational experience, he changed our outlook on travel. He pushed us to squeeze every last drop of experience out

of our journey to Washington. As a student, I adopted his outlook on travel and to this day, I still aim to embrace the full experience of everywhere I've travelled.

To educate students and to prepare them for success and lifelong learning, Oakridge needs teachers that will push the envelope of knowledge and will influence students to open their minds to the vibrant world beyond the community. Without its teachers, an Oakridge education wouldn't have the success and reputation for preparing and educating worldly adults. Mr. Wood is one of those teachers that go beyond teaching students. Mr. Wood helps prepare students for the unpredictable and fast pace world we live in. It would be a shame to deprive future Oakridge graduates the opportunity to be educated by the irreplaceable Mr. Wood.

Thank you for your time and please feel free to contact me at 616-843-6202.

Sincerely,

Ensign Nicholas James Waldo, USN (OHS c/o 2004)

Primary Training Squadron Two

Naval Air Station Whiting Field

7480 USS Enterprise St.

Milton, FL 32570

Nick Waldo <pilotwaldo@aol.com>

#107 - Jennifer Way c/o 1997

August 17, 2013

Oakridge School Board 5492 Hall Road
Muskegon, MI 49442

To Whom It May Concern:

I wanted to take the time to write a letter on behalf of Mr. Wood because even though it has been a few years since I graduated, I still vividly remember Mr. Wood and his passion for education. The intent of this letter is to inform the board that Mr. Wood leaves a lasting impression on his students and that passionate teachers can have a lifelong impact on their students.

As you know, Mr. Wood is passionate about life and education. Mr. Wood is strict and pushes his students because he cares - and he wants his students to care. He strives to push students beyond their comfort zones and grow as a person, while teaching respect and outside of the box thinking. Mr. Wood forces students to think outside of the walls of Oakridge High School and think about their future.

If you talk to anyone that has had a class with Mr. Wood they will have a definite opinion about him because he works differently than other teachers, and that's a good thing. We need people to push us in high school to see things differently so we will have a taste of the real world and the varied and challenging situations it throws at us. I am grateful for such a unique learning experience and I hope that future students will have the same opportunity.

I would like to thank Mr. Wood and all of the other wonderful teachers that taught during my tenure at OHS for providing me with a great education and truly caring about their students.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Way

Jennifer Way
OHS Graduate 1997

#108 - Ashley Weaver c/o 2013

August 24, 2013

To Whom It May Concern,

Mr. Wood, a teacher at Oakridge High School who has impacted many more lives than you would think. He lives life awake, passionate, and involved. He makes a difference in his community and in the world. Traveling during the summers to Africa, as he has done in the past, has opened up his mind to many more opportunities.

Education at Oakridge is not taken seriously, and maybe that is why Mr. Wood doesn't fit in. He by far is the only teacher at Oakridge who cares. The other teachers are there for either football or the summer vacations. The other teachers are scared for their jobs, but not Mr. Wood. He knows that if he keeps his students awake and in control of their lives they won't have to worry about it in the future.

He understands that we all have a responsibility—to get involved, and he takes on that challenge every day. Just because others around him are not involved and awake does not mean that it affects him. As a high school teacher, he keeps the students involved and in control of themselves for the future. I am starting college at Muskegon Community College this fall, and I don't know where I would be without Mr. Wood. He is the one who helps all of us students get the motivation to get scholarships, and to be ready and awake for when we are hit by the huge storm heading our way. After graduating from Oakridge, and after taking his classes, I was no longer scared for my future or nervous to what was coming next.

Now, Mr. Wood a teacher who has his masters, who has traveled the world, and a person who is always looking for bigger and better things to do, is now at a questionable state of employment because he actually makes students work. That is school, and I hate to see what is going to happen to future students when they actually have to grow up. Mr. Wood has made a huge impact in not only mine, but many other students lives as well. I would not be headed down the path that I am today, or even be the person I am today if it wasn't for him. I was so thankful I got to have him as not only a teacher, but a role model to steer me in the right direction! This is the kind of teachers that Oakridge NEEDS!

Sincerely,

Ashley Nicole Weaver (OHS c/o 2013)
aweaver30soccer@gmail.com

#109 - Savannah Weaver c/o 2009

August 12, 2013

Dear Mr. Wood,

I'm very sorry to hear that you are in a position where you have to fight to keep a job. Most people have not seen the difference you and other former teachers I have had did for me, but I will state that I am nothing but proud of where I came from and how I was taught to survive in my journey through life.

No I didn't make it into a big high class college or small community college. I went into a training center for professional massage that only took 7-1/2 months. I started with a minimum wage job just to get back and forth to work, school, and pay for my phone. I graduated with an outstanding student award in my department (over 500 students) and GPA of 3.5.

I'm also happy to say I juggled three jobs in my time.

I am now lead professional massage therapist at Beyond Beaute in Deer Park, TX. I make enough to get by. I have also picked up dancing Latin salsa. Have my own place and vehicle. I would say I love my life.

Anyways it all goes back to my teacher or "my support team". They of all people know my situation of my father and my older brothers. I still moved on knowing what Mr. Wood has taught me in economic class and learning how the government works so I can cast a vote. I would like to think that I am "awake" to see what this country is turning into, but whatever Mr. Wood or other teachers are going through, has opened my eyes more. To steal the education from the next group of students is stealing their key to survive this world. They need the hands on work, the push, the knowledge and experience, and most of all the opportunity that Mr. Wood can provide.

His talent, in addition with the other teachers, can secure a great future for any student that chooses walk a successful path and make a difference in their life.

Sincerely,

Savannah Weaver OHS (c/o 2009) weaverz5@yahoo.com
4601 NASA Pkwy #227A

Seabrook, TX 77586

#110 - Lyanne Wesley c/o 2006

August 14, 2013

To Whom it May Concern,

My name is Lyanne Wesley. I am a former student and graduate of Oakridge Public Schools, c/o 2006. I doubt very many people remember me there, though. I was a sad, shy and quite girl. I wonder the halls trying to avoid my bullies and tried to stay home as much as possible. For quite a while I was sure that no one cared about me. I would go to teachers with my problems and they would some how make me feel like it was my fault for not being like everyone else. I only did enough homework to pass barely pass, because school was the worst place on earth for me to be.

I felt alone for so long, then I met a couple of incredible teachers who decided it was time I care about my future, and refused to allow me to do anything less then my best. Absolutely refused. Where all the other teachers made no attempt to figure out what the problem was or help me do better (even saying that it didn't matter if I passed or not, that was on me) there were finally teachers who cared. One in particular made me take responsibility for my life, and that teacher is Mr. Wood. He pulled me out of a downward sloping path and forced me to see my potential and work harder to get where I needed to be.

Mr. Wood made me see that it wasn't good enough to just pass the classes. I had to hear and absorb what was being taught to me. I had to really know it and take it with me. Then, when I learned it, I had to go out and learn more. And keep learning. Never stop. AND DO, AND GO AND LEARN. Never stop, never give up and always care. That I had to have passion in life, for what I do and for my fellow human beings. In my mind, Mr. Wood is someone who saved me. When everyone else could watch me miserably struggle through, he pulled me aside and encouraged me. "You know this," "You can do better," "I won't let you do less then your potential." I can't quote any other teacher in that whole school, because they didn't speak to me. The spoke at the class and let what would be, be.

Mr. Wood is THE finest teacher that Oakridge High School has. He cares about his students. He cares enough to tell them what they don't want to hear. He cares enough to tell the truth where everyone consents with silence. If every teacher in that school cared as much as he does, then I'm sure no student would slip through the cracks. Teachers are there to hand out work and go play on the computer. Teacher aren't there to be the students friend. Teachers are there to encourage learning, curiosity and individuality. That's what Mr. Wood does, and he's the best teacher anyone could ever hope to have.

Of four children, I am the only of my siblings who's never had any drug or alcohol problems. I'm the only one who is living independently. I'm the only of my siblings who makes a decent wage and a very good job that I love. In all, I am the only of my siblings that is happy, fully functional and independent. And, no, Mr. Wood is not responsible for all the good decisions I've made in my life, but he is the spark. The small spark I needed to see that I was good enough, intelligent enough and that I had just as much potential as the other students.

That's what Mr. Wood is. That is how he effects his students. He encourages interest, curiosity, passion. He makes them try harder, dig deeper, push further and never give up. He doesn't choose favorites. He tries with everyone. He wants his students to be enlightened. He injects them with wonder and potential. Then he sends them out in the world with the knowledge that they have a duty to themselves to be the best possible person they can be. And he checks up on them years after they've graduated to make sure they still know that they can do and be anything they want. And Oakridge High School should count it's blessings to have such and amazing, caring person nurturing their students into good people.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Lyanne Wesley (OHS c/o 2006)
Activities Coordinator
Sensations Memory Care Residents
Misslyanne1@hotmail.com
517-213-9323

#111 - Terrance (T.J.) Williams c/o 2003

To Whom It may concern:

I am a proud 2003 graduate of Oakridge High School and am very thankful for the education and overall experience I was able to receive during my 4 years at OHS. A very unique and appreciated part of that experience was the teaching style of Bob Wood. While Mr. Wood was very unconventional at times and did not always fall in line with the prototypical style of most high school teachers, I believe it is that very quality that showed his students that it is ok to be yourself, even if that means not conforming to the ideas or ideals of everyone else around you. He showed us through his unique teaching style, trips to Washington D.C., trips to Chicago, Senior Current Issues curriculum and general conversations that diversity is not something to be feared or rejected, but rather that exploring diversities will make us stronger and more understanding. Throughout the years I have kept in touch with many of my teachers from high school, and while Mr. Wood and I do not agree on every issue that's going on in the world, he is one of my favorite people to discuss world issues with. Mr. Wood unapologetically challenges his students to take responsibility for their lives. He does not accept laziness or lack luster effort from those he knows have more to offer, he expects greatness. I appreciate the conventional teaching styles of many of the teachers I have had the privilege of learning under, but I equally appreciate the unconventional style employed by Mr. Wood and believe that it has made me a more well-rounded and better person. I am of the belief that to change or stifle Mr. Wood's ability to educate in his unique style would be a disservice to the students of OHS.

Best Regards,

Terrence (TJ) Williams, Esq.

OHS Class of '03

#112 - Amber Wilson c/o 2006

August 28, 2013

To whom it may concern,

Bob Wood is one of the most honest and intelligent teachers I have ever met. Not only is he that type of education provider but he is also that type of person. One of the best things about Mr. Wood is that he never sugarcoats anything. Another great thing about him is that he pushes everyone he meets to push themselves. As an example, I will tell you his class was NEVER an easy 'A'.

Now we all know that Oakridge Public Schools is not very diverse but the reality is, is America is the most cultured and diverse country there is. Mr. Wood provides students with a wealth of information about different cultures. He goes in depth about the Civil Rights Movement and even takes students to Alabama to experience the history in person. As someone who left small town Michigan the knowledge he gave to me has helped me adapt easier to different types of people. He has taught me that it is okay to like and get to know people from different backgrounds. As a junior in high school I can tell you that I never cared much about politics or the government. Bob Wood makes you care. He makes a very good point too. As young adults our voices are heard and will be heard for many more years. He always gives the option to have your own beliefs; fighting for gay equality, fighting to stop genocide, or fighting for stronger animal abuse laws. Whatever you choose, he supports you. He is so compassionate about the subjects he teaches. His positive attitude when he teaches the Bill of Rights is contagious. His personality makes people want to learn.

If it weren't for Bob Wood supporting and encouraging me to join Close Up I don't know where or what I would be doing with my life today. I know that sounds cliché but it's true. I knew my family could not afford to send me to Close Up but I asked anyway. They supported me in every way they could and I fundraised day and night. The whole time it seemed I never had enough money. Mr. Wood kept encouraging me and told me to keep asking. So I did. Not only did I get to go to Washington D. C. that year but I went to Hawaii the next year too! If I never had those chances I would have never realized how much I love to travel and experience new cultures. Since I did have the opportunity to learn that about myself, I joined the Navy. I have lived in Japan, San Diego, and Italy. I have visited Korea, Vietnam, Germany, Australia, Singapore, Hong Kong, and many others all because of Mr. Wood.

I guess what I am trying to say here is Mr. Wood inspires students to have dreams and then he pushes them towards chasing those dreams. He wants people to know about the government and what they can do to make a change in America. He wants people to get out and travel and experience new things. He wants people to become better people. He definitely wants people to STAY AWAKE!!!

Former Student

Amber Wilson
Class of 2006
Amber Wilson awilson313@hotmail.com

#113 - Jule Wolf / Foreign Exchange Student from Germany - 2012

August 17, 2013

To the Administration of Oakridge High School,

My name is Jule Wolf, I am 17 years old and I live in Germany. I got to know Mr. Bob Wood as a teacher at Oakridge High School, which I attended during my exchange year in Michigan.

I learned a lot living in the US. About the US, about school, but most importantly about American people. One of the things that impressed me the most were the questions I was asked. “Did you come to the US by car or by plane?” and “What, you’re from Europe? I thought you were from Germany!?” are just two of many (similar) questions. The impressive thing about those questions was that they were serious. I wasn’t asked just like that, but because people were really interested in the answers.

But how come those people didn’t know the answers themselves? Why do Americans don’t know things like that if they’re so curious and open to people from other countries?

After a year of observation and experiencing many similar situations, I believe to know the answer: People in America are curious and interested, but they don’t know about things outside the US. And how should they? If you look at an American school schedule, you’ll find that in twelve years the class “government” is taught half a year. That’s sad. And of course students don’t know what’s going on in the world when they’re never confronted with it in school.

The lucky thing at Oakridge High School is that they have Mr. Wood. I myself have never met a person like him before. One of Mr. Wood’s most important goals in his classes is to “wake up” his students. He wants them to fully understand the Declaration of Independence, the Bill of Rights, the history of the US, and everything else it takes to understand America the way it is. He also introduces them to different views, cultures, and ways of life and wants his students to open up to them, to make up their minds about them and to criticize them. In short: he wants to get his students out of that lazy, unknowing state that unfortunately has become typical for the US, the sensation I observed and found to be extremely bizarre.

Mr. Wood doesn’t just expect his students to “wake up”, though – he lives what he teaches. His passion for traveling has given him **insight** on very different views on life, which lets him sort out the important things in this world. He uses that knowledge to help his students proceed in their “waking up”-process. It also allows him – from time to time – to add new aspects to his classes. And it gives his way of teaching a special note; his enthusiasm about the things he sees when he travels is always present. This ability to be absolutely fascinated by things is something I still have in mind about Mr. Wood. It’s a characteristic that made his classes rather special. Whether it’s a biography about Martin Luther King or the story of a handicapped African singer – he **sees the exceptional** in those kinds of things and **demonstrates** it to his students. Another thing that makes

Mr. Wood's classes special is his sense of humor. He's not shy to make fun of things in order to criticize them. Whether it's the American way of doing politics or the students' believes that sports or homework are the most important things for them to worry about. He never takes things too seriously, which causes a comfortable working atmosphere, but can also lead to students taking offense. This is probably the only thing that could eventually cause problems. I myself have never found that what he said was inappropriate or tactless; it was more like the usual teacher – student **relationship** that is perfectly normal in the US.

Above all, Mr. Wood is one of those teachers who do a lot for their students, even things that don't have anything to do with their subjects. Whenever I had a question or needed help, or even just wanted to chat a little, Mr. Wood was always there. He also organizes several trips to Chicago and every other year he takes a few students to Washington D.C., which I think is quite a nice opportunity for students to travel a little. And he's very concerned about his students' futures; he helps where he can to get students to plan their furthering education and introduces them to several Colleges.

My point is a teacher like Mr. Wood cannot be found easily. A teacher who shows this much passion in doing what America really needs – “awaking” students – in an amusing, experienced manner is somebody you'd want to keep and appreciate at all times. He gives his students and Oakridge High School so much in so many ways that without him you would be missing a great deal of things at OHS.

I hope my letter will cause you to think about how lucky Oakridge is to have Mr. Wood. Please do take into consideration what's really important for American education. If you have any questions at all don't hesitate to contact me (julika.wolf@yfu-deutschland.de).

Yours sincerely,

Jule Wolf. (OSH c/o 2012)

#114 - Autumn Woods c/o 2010

September 03, 2013

To Whom It May Concern:

Mr. Bob Wood is one of the most inspiring, motivational, and intelligent people I have ever had the pleasure of knowing. I am a 2010 graduate of Oakridge High School who was fortunate enough to be a student in Mr. Wood's classroom for three years. The first course in 10th grade was U.S. History, the second was 11th grade Economics, and the third was Senior Current Issues in 12th grade. I can say with confidence that it was in these three classes alone that I learned more beneficial information than I have in almost any other of my high school or post-secondary courses.

When I began my first courses at Muskegon Community College I was surprised to see the level which other students were at when it came to being an accomplished student. In regards to skills necessary for success in college such as note taking techniques, accurately extracting information from lectures, and test preparation many of the other students seemed lacking greatly. For this reason, many of my peers were extremely overwhelmed and stressed with the transition from high school to college or were unsuccessful altogether. It was at this point that I realized the extent to which Mr. Wood had prepared me for my post secondary education without me even realizing the effect he was having. Mr. Wood not only is able to interject important skills for success in the learning process while teaching the required course material, but also was always sure to present a workload that was comparable to that of a college course. In a world where a college degree is necessary for success it is extremely important to be prepared for college level coursework before entering the post-secondary arena, and prepare his students is exactly what Bob Wood does.

Mr. Wood also has a repertoire of travel experience that allows him to teach his students from first hand experiences. Perhaps even more important than his travel experiences that he brings to his classroom is the fact that he allows the opportunity for his students to travel, which for many of them is the first time that has happened. I was one of those students. It was with Mr. Wood that I first traveled to Chicago, Lansing, and Selma, Alabama. These experiences gave me a learning opportunity that I had never experienced before, and they have inspired me to continue with my hopes of becoming a traveling nurse.

Mr. Bob Wood, my former teacher, exhibits qualities that every educator should possess. He teaches course material in a way that makes it interesting, prepares students for higher education, and inspires them to move forward with their own futures. He also supports students with their outside endeavors and is always available to provide insight that many students would not have otherwise.

I can say with assurance that I would not be the person I am today, who is building on success and reaching my aspirations, without the influence of Bob Wood. Please call me at 231.747.4351 or email me at autumn.woods@muskegoncc.edu with any questions.

Sincerely,

Autumn Woods
Oakridge High School Alumni 985 Compass
Street Apt. A Muskegon, MI 49441

#115 - Katherine MacPherson c/o 1999

The Law Offices of Katherine L. MacPherson, P.L.L.C.

200 N. Division Avenue • Grand Rapids, MI 49503 • ph: 616-321-7955 • fx: 616-321-5941 • e: klmawoffices@lavabit.com

September 3, 2013

Re: Letter of Support

To Whom It May Concern:

The following letter is written for purposes of explaining why Bob Wood is absolutely one of the best teachers, (and human beings in general), that I have ever had or been lucky enough to be acquainted with.

Mr. Wood was my Social Studies and Geography teacher in 1995. Even back then, he took an actual interest in the lives and futures of his students, not just in whether they earned a passing grade in his class or not. Although many teachers care in general and want to see their students succeed, very few would give up an entire Saturday or Sunday and take groups of them on tours of various college campuses, some located hours away, whose parents could not otherwise provide that exposure, just to make sure those students had an opportunity to see what college life could be like.

Even fewer would make it one of their primary missions in life to continually educate themselves on international politics and world culture so as to be able to provide a knowledgeable resource for their students, and out of a genuine curiosity and intense desire to learn new things.

Fewer still would actually travel the world, including to various third- world countries, to actually experience those cultures and political climates for themselves.

And almost *none* of them would devote hours upon hours of their time, including their entire Spring Break vacation, establishing, funding, and administering a scholarship, just to make sure that at least a few of their students had a chance to experience some of those destinations and countries for themselves.

He actually cares, both about expanding his own mind, and expanding the minds of his students. Which is easy to say. Few teachers actually do. That is *incredibly rare* these days.

I became re-acquainted with Mr. Wood in April of 2013, after a former high school classmate mentioned his scholarship to me. I wanted to contribute the instant I heard about it. Mainly, because I am one of only a small handful of women out of my entire graduating class that actually made it to college at all, let alone graduated, and his scholarship is desperately needed at Oakridge.

Since that time, he has become one of my favorite people, a lot of which has to do with the character trait referenced above: he truly cares about life. He is neither mentally complacent, nor politically apathetic, nor is he content to sit back and let life happen *to* him, which is almost unheard of in today's society. He makes a point of keeping himself informed, keeping his students informed, and every time I see him, I learn something new.

Which is the hallmark of a truly fantastic educator.

Sincerely,

Katherine MacPherson
Attorney at Law

#116 - Mikaela Mason c/o 2013

September 26, 2013

Dear Superintendent Livezey,

My name is Mikaela Mason I am a recent graduate of Oakridge High School. I graduated in the top ten of Class of 2013. I currently attend Ferris State University and I am doing quite well. But as Alumni of Oakridge High School there are some concerns that I would like to address.

First of all, I believe graduating students of Oakridge High School need to be better prepared to go on to further their education after high school. Not only do they need to know the standardized bull crap designed by the State of Michigan, but they need to be able to think deeper and work harder to actually learn and understand new concepts. One of the very few teachers at Oakridge High School that prepared me in this way was Mr. Wood.

I feel that Mr. Wood is a great asset to the teaching staff of Oakridge High School. Although, at the time, when sitting in class, many students don't realize that the hard work Mr. Wood is making them do and giving them is actually preparing them for their future. I really feel that Mr. Wood cares about his students – all of them. From those passing with A's to those students who fall asleep in class and decide to fail so they can "take the easy way out" by taking credit recovery.

I know by personal experience that Mr. Wood cares for his students even those failing and those who hate him, because I used to be one of those students. My junior year I was the kind of student who slept in his class every day, who complained about all the work, who filed a complaint in the office for stupid reason (now that I look back on it), all this just so I could get out of his class. I was forced to return to his class and start all over again my senior year, this time in a different environment. I was actually one of the best students in the class, there was a few great others, some in-between, and some students that flat out didn't care. The conversations and discussion that Mr. Wood's class brought out of all the students made a better learning environment for everyone. I found myself helping those that didn't understand and those students evoking ideas and knowledge from me as well.

Mr. Wood prepared me for college and still to this day I thank him for every moment I sat in his classroom. Although many students may complain, or he may not teach the standard perfect way, he gets you ready for college. College and future education is one of the most important aspects of life after high school for everyone, especially in the world today where if you don't have a degree of some sort you will be left working at fast food restaurants for the rest of your life and no one wants that.

Below is a letter I personally wrote to Mr. Wood, informing him of my life in college, how I have become successful and thanking him for the big impact he has had on that.

As you can see from this letter, when it comes to preparing students for college and their future education, Mr. Wood is one of the best teachers Oakridge has.

Thanks for your time and I am expecting to hear back from you.

Mikaela Mason
Masonm12@ferris.edu
[\(231\)-220-6108](tel:(231)-220-6108)

Pickell Hall 124
202 South St.
Big Rapids, MI 49307

Hey Mr. Wood,

This is Mikaela Mason. So I always remember you telling me that I was going to at some point curl up into the fetal position and cry because I didn't know what to do with my life in college. I am happy to say that this has not yet occurred. I just wanted to send you an update of my college life because when it came to my senior year you were one of those kinds of teachers that inspired me to push forward with my dreams and goals and do all I can to achieve them. Who would have thought that you out of all people, especially after the occurrence my junior year and our "great experience",hahaha. Thanks, for all you have done.

My experience here at Ferris has been great so far. I love it and I can't say any less. I am so glad I went away to college. As I sit here and think there is no way I would have ever survived staying home and going to community college. So far this is one of the greatest experiences ever!! I have met tons of new people and meet more every day. I am taking 16 credits this semester including biology, chemistry, public speaking, psychology and my honors FSU seminar class. The classes are very challenging, but I kind of like that I actually have to use my brain and evoke knowledge or learn something new. It has been a big transition getting used to thinking in a different way and figuring out what teachers want from you, but it's all part of the wonderful process.

Who cares about school though, what I am most excited to tell you about is how I have become involved. As an honors student I am required to join an RSO (registered student organization). I have joined a few. By far the best and my favorite is DEBATE!! I joined the debate team and it is awesome. It opens my eyes to all the current event issues that are going on in the world around us, I get a free New York Times newspaper every day (I never would have thought I would be reading a stinking newspaper for gods sake), and I will get the opportunity to travel (no cost to me) all around the U.S for tournaments and we get to explore the cities. I get to go south to Louisiana and Alabama and to the East Coast. Debate is such an amazing thing and it is sooooooooooooo me. I have been arguing every word out of someone's mouth since I was little and now I get to put some structure to it and use it for my own good.

The fact that your class of government and economics and the way you taught it started my interest in current events, and is now inspiring me to be more involved in my college really has made a difference. And I am grateful for that. Thanks for kicking my butt to do scholarship because it helped SOOOO much! high school students don't even realize how much those tedious scholarship applications will impact in their future or even federal grants such as TIP and Pell. I remind myself how thankful I am because I am putting myself through at least undergraduate school with no debt at all so far.

I have also joined the RSO of Pre-PharmD club because it will look good on Pharmacy school applications. And a couple more that I want to join but is the first week so I haven't gone to them yet. So I am definitely keeping myself busy.

Hope all is well at Oakridge. Thanks for inspiring my education.

Mikaela Mason

August 24, 2013

Dear Fellow Education Advocate,

When I reflect on educators that impact students' lives, there are many characteristics that come to mind...dedication, passion, teamwork and knowledge are just a few. Thinking back to my high school experience at Oakridge, there were certainly teachers who fit that description. Bob Wood was one of those teachers.

I first met Mr. Wood in my freshman physical education class. I will never forget the first day of class when Mr. Wood set the bar high by expecting exemplary character and behavior both in and out of class. There wasn't a day when Mr. Wood didn't encourage all his students to represent Oakridge in a positive way. This continued throughout the year and eventually transferred to the basketball court where Mr. Wood went above and beyond once again. As a basketball player, I set a goal to improve the use of my left hand. Every week, Mr. Wood would meet me in the gym at 6:00 a.m. to work with me on shooting, dribbling, and conditioning. At the time, I thought this was to improve my skills as a basketball player. What it really did, however, was to teach me the value of hard work and dedication; skills that I would use for the rest of my life.

As you can see, Mr. Wood made a tremendous impact during my time at Oakridge. For me, however, Mr. Wood's greatest gift came after I graduated from Oakridge. Throughout my senior year of high school, he encouraged me to go to college. In the fall of 1995, I nervously ventured to Central Michigan University and had a great experience. After my freshman year at CMU, however, the financial aspect of it was just too much. When Mr. Wood heard that I might not be able to continue my experience at Central, he worked by writing letters and contacting essential people to help me stay at CMU. It is from his efforts that I was able to stay at Central and graduate with honors.

You see, Mr. Wood wasn't just one of those teachers that showed up when the morning bell rang and left when at the afternoon bell. He was there hours before school and hours after school. You could find Mr. Wood at numerous extra-curricular activities. Whether it be an athletic event, honor society induction, or a concert, he was there encouraging all his students. He pushed students to challenge ideas, think for themselves, and get out into the world to make a difference. Isn't that what we would hope for all our students? The skills Mr. Wood taught me aren't measurable on any standardized test. They are only measurable in the hearts and minds of students that had the privilege of working with Mr. Wood. I, for one, am grateful for all that Mr. Wood did for me and the rest of Oakridge students.

Warm Regards,

Jennifer (Johnson) Schultz - 1995

Jenn11schultz@gmail.com [231-719-0563](tel:231-719-0563)

September 19, 2013

To whom it may concern,

As an alumnus of Oakridge High School I have had the pleasure to learn from many exceptional teachers who are passionate about their careers and helping students succeed. One of the most influential teachers that I have had the chance to learn from is Bob Wood. Mr. Wood's teaching style is not only effective, but also memorable and one of the most enriching learning opportunities that I encountered in my four year academic experience at Oakridge.

Although my only class with Mr. Wood was in my senior year, the impact that he has made on my life and the knowledge that he helped me obtain has put me at an advantage in my experience at college. The compassion he shows to his students is impeccable. If a student is willing to learn and is trying their best in his class, he will go out of his way to help them grow.

Bob Wood believes in the work that he does; his assignments are not just "busy work". The class curriculum and learning plans that he creates for the students not only teaches them the information that they are required to know, but helps foster the writing, reading, and communication skills that are expected by professors at the college level.

In addition to all of the qualities mentioned above, Mr. Wood changes the perspectives of his students in a way that shapes attitudes of empathy, compassion, and gratefulness. Quite honestly the world needs more people with those values and Bob Wood is a major contributor to the positive paradigm shift that is desperately needed.

I support and endorse Mr. Wood with the most sincerity because he has changed my life.

Sincerely,

Alicia J. Hostetler c/o 2011

#119 - Jamie Russell c/o 1996 (parent)

September 24, 2013

To whom it may concern,

This is a letter of support for Mr. Wood. Its been many years since I was a student at Oakridge High School and to this day I feel Mr.Wood had the best influence on me during my four years there.

Mr. Wood and I always did not see eye to eye. I saw high school as just something that I had to show up too, until I had Mr. Wood. He seen me struggling and rebelling against being there and doing my best. He pushed me when I needed to be pushed and rewarded me when I did good.

I was involved in a accident that prevented me from starting school at the beginning of the school year. I had to have a teacher come to my house to home school me, Mr. Wood volunteered. He coordinated with my other teachers and brought my work to my house. He did not just drop it off and go. He stayed with me and made sure that I understood all of it and helped me with what I did not. I will always be grateful for him being there for me at such a tragic time in my life.

Mr. Wood saw the good in me and pushed me to do great things. My grades were not always the best and I was not always a perfect student. He looked passed that and inspired me to do my best and to care about what was happening in school and the world around me. I am forever grateful for having him as a teacher and a mentor in high school. If it was not for him I sometimes wonder if I would have even graduated.

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter of support of Mr. Wood.

Sincerely,

Jamie Russell
Class of 1996
jrehko01@baker.edu

#120 - Kerstin Boomba / Foreign Exchange Student from Germany - 2009

Dear Sir or Madam

My name is Kerstin Bomba, 2008/09 I was an exchange student from Germany at Oakridge High.

Also I am aware that there is an issue between Mr. Wood and the School District, I don't know the exact problems, however I can tell you about my experience at Oakridge High and especially my experience with Mr. Wood. I hope this helps to solve the problem.

As part of my education, I participated Economics in the class of Mr. Wood. But not only that, I also went with him to Washington D.C. as a part of the Close-up program as well as to Selma, Alabama, where we participated in the anniversary of the civil rights movement in this particular city.

As a teacher he really cares about his students and encourages people to look over the tea cup. The world doesn't center around Muskegon, MI, it doesn't even have a center so you have to look at various parts of the world and understand them.

When we prepared to go to Selma, Mr. Wood made a folder for us, with all the information that is important for the journey. He prepared us as good as you could; furthermore as Martin Luther King is an important person especially in the aspect of the Civil rights movement, he gave us his biography to read. He believed in us, even when we only were a small group of people, but he really thought we could change the world. Mr. Wood respected us and encouraged us to become whatever we wanted to and believed that we could.

In D.C. he made it even possible for us to meet U.S. representative John Lewis, who is an active civil rights movement. We were allowed to talk to him about various issues.

For me personally, when I think about my time at Oakridge the one teacher I always remember is Mr. Wood, as he didn't see the "job teacher" as a job but as his life's work. He tried to help me, especially in the beginning where it was hard for me to adapt to the life in America. Mr. Wood showed me a part of America, I would have otherwise never seen. Not only have I seen D.C. but I also visited Alabama. It was a total different experience for me as it is not common to see many African-American people in Germany. The Civil rights movement also was not really a big issue at school, so I really learned a lot at that time.

I strongly believe that Mr. Wood is an excellent teacher that helps students find their way in life, whatever it may be.

Yours sincerely

Kerstin Bomba

August 24, 2013

To whom this letter may concern,

My name is Alex Parker and I am currently a 22 year old student attending Grand Valley State University. I am gaining my Bachelor's Degree in Group Social Studies and Education with a minor in History in the winter of 2014. My goal is to eventually become a history teacher on the secondary level and continue to share my knowledge with future generations of students.

The reason why I am writing this letter is to talk about the most significant influence for my education, my former high school teacher, Mr. Robert Wood. I joined his Government classroom in my sophomore year of high school in 2007. I was immediately struck by his unique teaching style and his vast array of knowledge on American History and Government. Instead of relying on a textbook for the majority of class content, Mr. Wood had the class work in many different activities and situations. We studied primary sources of documents, wrote arguments on specific topics, created debate groups. He really pushed us to think outside of the box.

The fondest memory I have of Mr. Wood is actually outside of the classroom. During the 2007-08 school year, the 2008 Presidential Campaign was happening. Mr. Wood modified his schedule so that we could have time to work with the different campaigns that were occurring. What was most important is that we could work with any campaign of our choice. Not only did he encourage this, he even went to the various campaign offices where some of the class were helping and checked their progress on the weekends leading up to the November election.

To summarize, my point is that Mr. Wood is the ideal example of what any teacher should strive to be. He is very organized and flexible in scheduling. He teaches in such a way so that students actually remember knowledge, skills, and memories from his class that they can actually use down the road in their own futures. He cares so deeply for all of his students that he even takes time out of his own personal life to do activities for and with them and encourage them to strive for success.

In our society, we need to move out of this world of standardized testing and take a more complex approach that accommodates the needs of each and every individual student. Mr. Wood has clearly proven that to me many times over. What is more important – test scores for one year of the entire lives of our future generations beyond schooling? Thank you for reading.

Sincerely,

Alex Parker

September 22, 2013

I am writing this letter of support for Mr. Wood because of the positive influence he had on my success at Oakridge High School. Thanks to him I not only passed his class but was able to succeed in my other classes and other areas of my school experience. He personally helped me understand how to achieve and succeed in my studies and personal life. I would not have graduated without his guidance and support. I always felt he was there for me. I really appreciated his willingness to be there for me. I will always remember his encouragement and support. I am currently in the United States Army pursuing additional education and training. I know if it wasn't for Mr. Wood I wouldn't be in such a favorable situation as I am now. Please know how much I appreciate and respect Mr. wood.

Sincerely,

Alex Wharton,
Class of 2013

#123 - Peter Wharton - (grandparent)

September 22, 2013

To Whom It May Concern:

I am pleased to write a letter of support for Mr. Bob Wood. During my forty year career as an educator I have had the opportunity to work with many exceptional individuals. My experience as a teacher in the K-12 system, college level, and principal and Superintendent provides me a perspective on essential traits of effective instructors. Mr. Wood is one of those rare and unique teachers who exemplifies the qualities of an individual who makes decisions on what is in the best interest of their students. His keen interest and deep concern for young people sets him apart from others.

This past school year I had the honor and pleasure to work with Mr. Wood . He was responsible for helping my grandson Alex Wharton graduate from Oakridge High School. He personally went above and beyond to arrange a communication plan, motivational strategies, and support systems to help Alex successfully succeed in his class. It is my firm belief that Alex would not have passed Mr. Wood's class without his guidance. Mr. Wood took a personal interest in Alex and helped him understand what was necessary for him to achieve. He also played a key role in helping Alex's Dad and me become involved and how we could assist.

Mr. Wood has earned a very favorable reputation in the Oakridge School District. This was obvious to me when I observed him interact with students, parents, and community members at graduation. Alex was so fortunate to have Mr. wood as one of his teachers. He not only inspired and motivated Alex in his class but helped Alex be successful in other areas of his school experience and personal life.

Please feel free to contact me at 605-341-3023 or 605-390-3680 if you would like additional information regarding my high regards and appreciation for Mr. Bob Wood.

Sincerely,

Peter M. Wharton,Ph.D.

#124 - Haley North c/o 2013

To whom it may concern,

This is a letter of support in regards to Bob Wood. Mr. Wood was my Economics teacher at Oakridge high school for my senior year. Bob has given me a lot of guidance, support, and encouragement throughout my senior year. Unfortunately he was my teacher for only a semester; regardless we connected and he made his class room an excellent learning place for me. The highlight of my school day was going to 6th hour Econ. It was a very knowledgeable class. I learned so much from his class, and it helped prepare me for college even more so. The reason for that was because he went at a good pace and had us learn a ton of information in a short time; he did not let other people disturb the class or the ability for others to learn. He also gave his 100% attention where it needed to be. I cannot count how many times he has given up his afternoon to stay at Oakridge High School to give those students that need extra help, the help they needed. He has been very encouraging to me in my career path as well; he really connects with his student for the better of them. Granted his class is hard, but that is another way he helped prepare me for college. As a graduate student from Oakridge, and a freshman to MCC I realize how little the High Schools do to actually prepare you for college, so far I have had homework every night, many quizzes, and I have not been able to turn in late work, no excesses. I cannot count how many students have just blown assessments off and then still got an A on their work, when it was late, this is just not acceptable in college, and should not be accepted in High School. Mr. Wood makes it clear that he does not accept late work, in an effort to help you get the feel for what college will be like. Many students complain that he gives a lot of work and a quiz every Friday, well I thank him for it! As I have already stated in college I have had homework almost every night and many quizzes, Mr. Wood is one of the few teachers that have gave students this type of feel, it has helped me a lot because now that I am in college I was a little more use to all the quizzes and work they hand out due to MR. Woods teachings and rules. His class also takes a whole marking period learning about college loans, scholarships, grants, ECT. And how to apply for each of them. This was one of the most helpful lessons in my high school career. It prepared me to be confident in how I can pay for college and how to be successful in earning my degree. Let's put preparing for college aside though. Mr. Wood has also given us some life lessons on how to appreciate the country we live in. We do a whole lesson on 3rd world countries and the differences between 3rd world and 1st world countries. He has many stories about Africa when he traveled there it is a real eye opener to what we really have here in America and how fortunate we are to be in a 1st world country where we have freedom to make our own choice, and to be glad that we can eat whenever and whatever we want. I know I would not have made the choices I have if I would not have talked to Mr. Wood first, with my college, and I can thank him for it. I also admire his honesty. Most teachers when you ask about college they will reply, "Oh it is a lot easier than people make it out to be." Or "you will fly through it and have a blast, it is easy." Well, when you ask Bob Wood about college, he is straight up with you, his reply "it is hard and there are days you will be in the corner in the fetal position crying because of how hard it can be, but you will learn to get back up and continue on." As I am in college I can definitely say, Bob's reply would be the most accurate. I can 100% honestly say that his economics class was my favorite, and my favorite teacher taught it.

Sincerely,

Haley North class of 2013

#125 - Sascha Sale / Foreign Exchange Student from Germany - 2013

Hey Mr. Wood,

it's me, the lazy German kid. How are you doing? Is everything going well in Oakridge? How are your classes? Well anyways I have a lot to talk about with you, because today was election in Germany. Oh and by the way, I would love to skype with you and your SCI or government class this week. Talking about the election! :)

Today was election in Germany. The campaign wasn't as interesting and spectacular as the American one, but it was alright... Okay it's a lie. It was boring as hell. I am serious right now. All those fricking parties were talking about the same stuff. A lot of people thought that way. You had to do some serious research to find out, which party stands for what. The clarify the point of view of each issue from each party, you had to read a lot of news articles, because they were just talking about the same issues and about the same solutions.

I have to thank you Mr. Wood. I have to thank you for every single thing you did in my exchange year. You didn't just teach me that politics is a important thing for our society and for my future, you didn't just teach me that being awake and knowing about your (my) issues is a important thing. You woke me up. I wasn't interested in politics at all. I didn't like it. Well I didn't really care. You woke me up, and that's why I am thanking you so much. I am awake. I care for a lot of issues. I am thinking about my future as a German citizen. It's about my life, my education, my future at the work, my future in Germany. It's my future in Europe. I vote for the left party. There are several reasons for that. It's kinda complicated, because there aren't just two parties. They have the possibility to build a coalition. So I was going to vote for the Social Democratic Party, but I thought that a lot of people (25,8%) are voting for them. So if I support the left party, they are getting more percent, so they can do a coalition with the SPD Party (although the SPD party said they don't wanna do a coalition with the left party).

There are 7 parties, which had the possibility to get in the German parliament. As a party you have to reach 5% of the votes, to get into the Bundestag. There were 7 parties. The CDU (Christian Democratic Union), the SPD (Social Democratic Party of Germany), the Grüne Party (The green party), the Linke Party (The left party), the FDP party (the liberal party) and the AfD party (Alternative for Germany). There are other parties, but they won't never get 5 or more percent, so that's why I am not talking about those parties.

The exit polls are showing that the CDU got 41,8%, the SPD got 25,8%, the left party got about 8,4% and the Green party got 8,0%. The liberal party got 4,5%, so that's why they won't get into the German parliament (It's the first time ever since the second world war was over that the liberal party isn't going to be in our parliament). The AfD (which was build in April 2013!!!!!!) got 4,8%-4,9%... The only reason for that is, that they don't want the euro as a currency anymore... A lot of Germans don't like the euro anymore and that's why they got so many votes. I am really happy that they won't (hopefully won't) get into the parliament, because they are more at the right side than the CDU. So they are against immigrants. Immigration is important to me, because I am in this country, just because my parents

came 25 years ago to Germany to give my siblings and me a better opportunity.

It looks like the CDU isn't getting the absolute majority, so that's actually a good thing. The SPD could build a coalition with the CDU, but they don't wanna do that, because there point of views are to different. The SPD could work with the left and the green party together, but they said that they don't want to work together with the left party. CDU could build a coalition with the green party, but I and a lot of other people don't think that it's gonna happen. I personally hope that the left, green and SPD party will work together, but it isn't clear yet. Unfortunately there is a possibility for the CDU to be the absolute majority, because they just counted 50 of 299 election areas (election circles = Wahlkreise). So I seriously hope that it's not gonna be the CDU. There are a lot of reasons for that. The most important reason to me though, is that

Angela Merkel said the following thing:

"Oh well I am not quite sure about gay adoption. I don't think it's a right thing to do."... Well excuse me and fu Merkel. I might not want some kids but EXCUSE ME? There isn't a stupid single reason in the world that a same sex couple is less suitable than a hetero sexual couple for a child. Sure there are some people how shouldn't adopt a kid, but who guarantees that hetero sexual couples are a better fit for a child. If there are two girls or to guys, who seriously love each other, why shouldn't they get the opportunity to adopt a kid. ... Well there is and will be anger in me, but I am gonna keep the anger and I am going to find a way to push this issue to the right way. I am seriously mad about her (Angela Merkel's) "opinion".

There are a lot of things to change in a better way, but with the CDU party nothing is gonna change in a better way. Companies will get more possibilities to earn more money (especially the energy companies) and we "normal" middle class people have to stick with the governmental health care, while the richer people have the possibility to go into the private health care.... I don't like this two class health care system at all. It's not gonna help the Germans in a long term. Well but at least I have "free" (sometimes we have to pay for medicine) health care. So I shouldn't complain that much. ...

There is a lot to talk about and I can't wait to get to school tomorrow to talk with people about it. This election might suck, if the CDU gets the absolute majority.

So I seriously wanna thank you again for the great opportunity I had in your class. You are a awesome person with an awesome inspirational personality. And I seriously mean it that way. There was not another person I can think of, who had such an great impact in my life. You might have done the most important thing somebody has ever done to me. ... You woke me up. ... Thank you Mr. Wood....

I am awake!

Greetings from Germany,

Sascha