

GREAT 2008 Annual Report

GREAT has experienced a second year of membership, participation, and event growth. Our membership grew from 125 to 135. We averaged 46 participants on monthly paddle trips with a high of 69 at the August Lime Lake "Peddle and Paddle" event. In spite of poor weather, the clean-up had a record 90 show up, boosted by 50 enthusiastic and hard working teenagers from the ISD Career Center Junior Army ROTC unit.

The GREAT board is now a full board for the first time in some years with all 12 seats filled. Board members through a special login are now able to access at GREAT's web site, board related documents both current and archived. After two years of work, the board has completed a first ever policy and procedures manual which will bring consistency and continuity to GREAT's operations. Several GREAT board members have participated in The Nonprofit Network training sessions. The board did water rescue training and is planning a CPR session. Two board members conducted a water safety session for the Red Cross summer youth camp.

The organization has continued to expand use of the web. GREAT memberships can now be paid through GREAT's web site (Membership button) using a PayPal account or common credit cards. GREAT gear (shirts, t-shirts, bags, stickers, hats) is now available on-line through CafePress (link on GREAT's home page) of which GREAT receives some of the purchase price. Almost half paying 2009 memberships have opted for the new choice to receive GREAT's Newsletter as a PDF via e-mail, which both reduces costs and is more carbon friendly. At the beginning of the year, we are now pre-identifying themes for each quarterly newsletter.

The goal is to have membership revenues fund operations while only using savings for equipment purchases and repairs. However, GREAT's 2008 budget had a small surplus even though a deficit was projected because of equipment costs. Membership growth, Grand River Painting Auction, and sale of GREAT's landlocked property in Summit Township helped bridge the gap. The auction winner, Betty Desbiens, donated the beautiful painting, which was hung in the Jackson County Commissioner chambers, to be enjoyed by the public for generations. Cost reductions have been realized by inserting membership renewal notices and the event calendar within the Newsletter, thus reducing mailing and brochures needs. GREAT is converting its accounting to QuickBooks. Computer analysis of GREAT's finances shows greater efficiency of spending revenues than our peers (other small non-profit environmental groups), because of our exceptionally low administrative overhead.

A complete inventory was done of all GREAT equipment which has been consolidated to two storage locations: boats at Dahlem and other equipment in a board member's basement. The proposed Blackman Township land swap with the State of Michigan, initiated over ten years ago, passed the Michigan legislature and was signed by the Governor in December. It now awaits a check by the Attorney General before creating a deed. GREAT, a partner in the Upper Grand River Implementation Project (UGRIP) did a Portage River clean-up, a much polluted tributary to the Grand and helped with river monitoring by collecting and identifying bugs. The grant match enabled us to buy UGRIP/GREAT bags to give away with environmental educational materials.

The GREAT board has set the 2009 goals as:

- 1.) Develop a plan for our Blackman Township land. We are looking at possible restoration of the river to correct the straitening that was done several decades ago.
- 2.) Develop a strategy for the equipment replacement and purchases. We recently received a donation for a new canoe, needed for increased trip participation. New youth and child PFD's have been purchased.
- 3.) Improve the navigability of the Grand River in Jackson County. Each year we remove debris in different sections of the river to increase local paddling opportunities.

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Seitz
President