



THE GRAND RAPIDS PRESS

Charter students go shopping at high school open house

Tuesday, January 27, 2009

By **Beth Loechler**

The Grand Rapids Press

WALKER -- Fifteen high schools took to the gym Monday at Walker Charter Academy for a hearty competition -- but not the kind that involves scoreboards, uniforms or cheerleaders.

This contest was about recruiting students. Hundreds of charter school students showed up to learn first-hand what area high schools have to offer.

"I heard someone say it didn't used to be this hard because there were no choices," said Diane Granda, of Grand Rapids, whose son, Joshua, is a seventh-grader at Walker Charter.

In addition to several public high schools in Grand Rapids, Joshua could attend a charter high school or perhaps gain entrance to a suburban high school through Kent County's schools-of-choice program.

"It's a big decision," said Sparta High guidance counselor Adam Pfeffer, who was there to make sure students knew about Sparta's 1-year-old high school. "We've got a good product up there and it really isn't that far from Grand Rapids," he said.

Grand Rapids Public Schools had several tables at the "High School Extravaganza," including a display from the engineering school within Creston High. Students Olivia Vander Hoff and Mary Jones showed off the robotic cars they built in their ninth-grade physics class.

"We've got a bit of a traveling road show," district spokesman John Helmholdt said. "This is part of our innovation. We aren't just a table with brochures anymore."

Helmholdt lauded Walker Charter and other National Heritage Academy charter schools for organizing the high school fair. It demonstrates a new level of cooperation among charter and traditional public schools, he said.

Private schools were represented, too. NorthPointe Christian, Catholic Schools of Grand Rapids and Plymouth Christian were among those passing out brochures and discussing options with the students and their parents.

Barbara Linquist, principal at Chandler Woods Charter Academy, said parents at her K-8 school were pleased to have representatives from several high schools all in one place. She was thrilled to watch as the gym filled with middle school students and their parents.

"I always say that after Christmas, you've gotta start school shopping," she said.

Send e-mail to the author: bloechler@grpress.com

©2009

© 2009 Michigan Live. All Rights Reserved.