



News Release

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Watkins Leads By Example Donates Entire Salary Increase To Children's Organization, Gives \$1,000 to Inkster High School Graduate

Michigan Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Watkins announced today that he will give his entire annual salary increase to an Inkster-based children's charitable organization.

Even though Watkins will not receive his salary increase for some time, he has already donated \$1,000 to Inkster High School graduate Anthony Cheatham. Cheatham, who begins his studies at Grambling University this fall, received the check from Watkins during the press conference.

"Anthony is really symbolic of all of the kids I've seen over my career," Watkins said. "There are many students out there like him - he inspires me by succeeding in the face of great odds. It is imperative that we reach out to positively influence all of our children."

Almost a week ago, the State Board of Education gave Watkins a "B+" job evaluation and announced that he would receive the average salary raise of all State of Michigan Department Directors, effective October 1, 2002.

"I think it is extremely important to follow through and support what you truly believe in your heart is the right thing to do," Watkins said. "We need to make a concerted effort to galvanize communities and support all of our children, and one way we accomplish that is through individual donations of time and money."

Watkins began his professional career with Youth Living Services, Inc. (Youth Living Services, Inc. has grown into Starfish Family Services) in 1976, where he founded Counterpoint, a shelter that provided emergency housing for troubled youth and counseling for their families.

"Tom has taken our Starfish parable - making a difference in the life of one child or one family- and put it into action through his gift. Each person has the capacity to change the world by his/her actions, as Tom has done," said Dr. Ouida Cash, Executive Director of Starfish Family Services. "If each of you will use Tom's example, you too can make a tremendous positive change in the world. At Starfish, we're ready to join with you to make that wonderful difference for our children, our families and our community."

In a popular parable from which Starfish Family Services derives its name, a boy throws one starfish at a time from a beach of thousands back into the ocean. When asked by an adult why, he replies, "It made a difference for that one starfish."

During the press conference, Watkins also challenged corporate executives and others in positions of power across the nation to charitably give salary increases to worthy causes, especially those that benefit children.

"I encourage all corporate and government leaders to follow suit and donate to causes that they believe are worthwhile," Watkins said. "If we truly believe that children in our classrooms today are the leaders of tomorrow, we all need to give them our best effort. I encourage leaders to go into their communities and meet these children as I have done to understand their needs and put a face on these crucial issues."

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