

FOCUS

THE MONTHLY BUSINESS NEWS MAGAZINE OF THE LANSING REGIONAL

• APRIL 2021

Elaine Hardy

2020 ATHENA
LEADERSHIP
AWARD
RECIPIENT

IN THIS ISSUE

VOICE OF SMALL BUSINESS: INNOVATION

BUSINESS AND EDUCATORS LOOK TO LIFE AFTER COVID

NEOGEN: WORLD-CLASS LEADER IN PUBLIC HEALTH





TIM DAMAN
President and CEO
Lansing Regional
Chamber of Commerce



ATHENA: A Global Brand Created in Lansing

One of the highlights every year is the presentation of the ATHENA Leadership Award. The 2020 ATHENA Leadership recipient, Elaine Hardy, is featured in this month's edition of FOCUS Magazine. Her story is certain to inspire you.

We are incredibly proud of our ATHENA history and its founding in 1982 at the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce (LRCC). The individuals honored with this award over the previous 39 years are truly a who's who of business, education and community leaders. The contributions to our region these award recipients have made have been and continue to be significant and impactful.

We are proud of the strong ATHENA alumni community. I know that each of our former recipients is as pleased as we are to welcome Elaine Hardy as the newest ATHENA recipient.

The LRCC continues to strategically focus on expanding and strengthening the ATHENA brand in the Lansing region with a focus on women business and community leaders with the ATHENA Leadership recognition, professional development, and networking opportunities through ATHENA WIN; supporting women entrepreneurs and small business owners with ATHENA PowerLink and the support of our young professional leaders and community-based businesses and organizations through the Lansing|East Lansing chapter of The Links Incorporated.

None of this would be possible without our volunteers' strong leadership who support each of these initiatives. These dedicated leaders are doing amazing work in continuing the development and recognition of women leaders in our region.

We are very proud of the impact of female business leaders to the LRCC's Board of Directors. Since 2012, we have had five women chair the chamber's board equaling the total number of female board chairs in our organization's 120-year history. This year, I am pleased to work alongside TechSmith CEO Wendy Hamilton, leading our board of directors.

Covid-19 meant we could not have our usual in-person luncheon recognition for our valued ATHENA recipient. However, thanks to WLNS-TV 6 and WLAJ-TV 53 we were able to televise the program, which turned out to be a blessing in that we were able to showcase the ATHENA brand to the entire Greater Lansing community!

I would also like to thank our presenting sponsor of the ATHENA program, Two Men and A Truck, whose founder, Mary Ellen Sheets is an ATHENA alumnus and one of our great community leaders. We appreciate the leadership that Two Men & A Truck provides to our community and equally pleased with their continued support of the ATHENA brand and principles.

When Martha Mertz started the ATHENA Award in 1982, she was the only woman on the LRCC's Board of Directors. It is a great source of community pride to witness the growth of ATHENA, now recognized in more than 500 countries around the world, and witness the increasing prominence of women in leadership in business, education, and government throughout the Lansing region. ■



The LRCC continues to strategically focus on expanding and strengthening the ATHENA brand in the Lansing region with a focus on women business and community leaders.



JOIN THE LEADERSHIP CIRCLE

Leadership Circle members are proven business and community leaders. We value their commitment and applaud their efforts to strengthen our region with their leadership and appreciate the important role they play in advancing our organization.

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JUNE 10
— DATE —

5:30-7PM
— TIME —

REGISTRATION IS AVAILABLE AT
LANSINGCHAMBER.ORG

NO. 2021

LANSING REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Annual Dinner
AT JACKSON FIELD

The Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce (LRCC) hosts numerous virtual events monthly, from Member Mixers to Lansing Economic Club programs. The digital events and programming provide valuable content and information and give members unique opportunities to connect and network. The LRCC also continues to host virtual weekly roundtables for business, community, and government leaders to provide updates and share what is going on in their community.

The LRCC encourages members to check their email, follow LRCC social media channels, and visit the LRCC website for the most updated information on additional educational offerings and networking opportunities as we move forward.

Registration is available on the LRCC website.

LANSING ECONOMIC CLUB: MARIJUANA INDUSTRY PANEL

Date: Tuesday, April 13 from 11 a.m. to noon

Description: Sponsored by Dart Bank, the April Lansing Economic Club will feature a marijuana industry panel that will discuss this emerging industry, including the new cannabis market in our region, distribution and retail opportunities, creation of a new workforce, transport, and testing. Our panel will include Ryan Basore, CEO, Redemption Cannabis, Michael Pedrosi, managing partner, Capital Transport, Ryan Ratzloff, president, Lion Labs, Brian Gruber, COO, The Botanical Co., Franklin Fields, Biobizz, Kevin Pybus, founder, Truu Cannabis. The panel will be moderated by Lisa Ellen Smith, president, InVerve Marketing and Web.

APRIL VIRTUAL MEMBER MIXER

Date: Tuesday, April 13 from 4 to 5:30 p.m.

Description: Join us with a beverage for this fun, free event, and engage with fellow LRCC members and business professionals! We will break into smaller, more intimate groups throughout the program to help network and build valuable relationships.

LANSING ECONOMIC CLUB: VOICES OF SMALL BUSINESS

Date: Thursday, May 6 from 11 a.m. to noon

Description: Sponsored by Consumer's Energy, the May Lansing Economic Club will feature a panel of small business owners will shine a much-needed light on the daily struggles the Greater Lansing business community has faced due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Panelists include Trista Parisian and Jenny Quinn, co-founders of FLEXcity Fitness; Desmond Ferguson, founder and CEO of Moneyball Sportswear; Kirbay Preuss, store manager of Preuss Pets and Matthew Gillet, co-owner of Saddleback BBQ. The event will be moderated by Ann Emmerich, anchor and reporter at WILX-TV.

VIRTUAL BUSINESS ROUNDTABLES

Virtual roundtables allow community and government leaders an opportunity to share what is going on in the community and determine ways to advise the tri-county region.

- **Delta Township** - Eaton County: Wednesday, April 7 from 9 to 10 a.m.
- **Lansing** - Delhi Township: Wednesday, April 14 from 9 to 10 a.m.
- **East Lansing** - Meridian Township: Wednesday, April 21 from 9 to 10 a.m.

STAY CONNECTED. STAY SOCIAL.

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 Lansing, MI 48911

CHAMBER MILESTONES

We'd like to offer a special salute to these great organizations who reached milestone anniversaries as Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce (LRCC) members this month. Thank you for your continued support throughout the years!

WILX

40 Years

Neogen Corporation

35 Years

Radisson Hotel Lansing

35 Years

Granger Waste Services

30 Years

Capital Area MICHIGAN WORKS!

25 Years

T. A. Forsberg, Inc.

25 Years

Michigan Optometric Association

15 Years

Publicom

15 Years

Enerco Corporation

10 Years

Helping Hands Respite Care

10 Years

Michigan Osteopathic Association

10 Years

Resch Strategies

10 Years

River Caddis Development

10 Years

Brookshire Townhomes (Abrico, Ltd)

5 Years

Cinnaire Corporation

5 Years

Patrick McPharlin

5 Years

Union Bank

5 Years

LRCC members have unparalleled access to company and staff profiles on the LRCC website. To access and update this information at any point, visit lansingchamber.org and enter your username and password. If you have not yet logged onto the site, please follow the simple password reset instructions. Call (517) 487-6340 with any questions.

Meet our Interns: Mark Blinn and Adi Singh

Mark Blinn

The Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce (LRCC) is most pleased to have Mark Blinn as its government affairs specialist. Mark is a senior at Michigan State University (MSU), majoring in political science. He was raised in the Lansing area and graduated from Grand Ledge High School. Before his academic career as a Spartan, Mark decided to join the Air Force in 2009. Mark says the Air Force experience gave him an opportunity to learn the importance of hard work and commitment which he says changed his outlook on life, and gave him a perspective to grow and learn that nothing good happens without sacrifice. He says there were a many great learning lessons from the Air Force experience.



Blinn

“Take pride in what you do, play the cards you are dealt, and know that the right answer is often the most unpopular,” said Blinn. “I learned the importance of never stop looking for self-improvement and remember that you are only as good as your last mistake.”

Enrolling at MSU was natural for Mark, who says he always wanted to be a Spartan and chose to follow his interest in political science as a major.

“I wanted to know more and be an informed citizen, understanding more about topics such as the electoral college, gerrymandering, and pork-barrel spending,” said Blinn. “I wanted to have ideas of my own. I wanted to make decisions from an informed perspective. MSU is a world-class institution with high-level professors, modern infrastructure, and a diverse student body.”

Mark says he was interested in the internship at the Chamber because he was intrigued by the LRCC mission.

“Building a prosperous business community through their advocacy, marketing, education, and connectivity,” said Blinn. “They have an award-winning public affairs department.”

Mark hopes to pursue a graduate degree and eventually work in leadership positions where his skills are needed and appreciated.

Adi Singh

The LRCC is excited to have Adi Singh as a membership intern. Adi is a native of Troy, Mich., where he grew up with his two sisters, enjoyed traveling with his family and attending sporting events in Detroit. Adi was always sure he would go to MSU, but admits he entertained thoughts of other places, including Indiana, but opted to stay closer to home.

“I don’t know what it would be like not to be a Spartan,” said Singh. “I have a lot of love for the university and am very glad I ended up choosing MSU among other schools.”

Adi considered initially marketing as a major, but after a couple of years, switched to advertising management, which he says is one of the best decisions he made during his MSU career.

“I was able to take classes that I actually liked,” said Singh. “Once I was taking classes I was interested in, things were so much easier for myself.”



Singh

Adi has also found great value in his minor in sales leadership, an area in which he has career aspirations. The coordinator of his minor, sales leadership, connected him to the opportunity with the LRCC. Adi says he did not know what a chamber of commerce does. He was looking for experience and was excited to learn how the LRCC connects to the community.

“When I found out how the Lansing Regional Chamber connects small businesses, but also advocates for every organization in the community to local and state governments, that was something I really admired,” said Singh.

Adi is interested in a career in either sales or market research. He has already secured a full-time sales job after graduation with Reckitt Benckiser, a consumer goods company. He will initially be involved in a three-year rotational program to experience work in field sales and corporate affairs. He also plans to pursue a master’s in market research—hopefully at MSU. ■

Small Business Innovation and Creativity Shine During Covid Pandemic

The Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce Voice of Small Business campaign shines a much-needed light on the Greater Lansing business community's daily struggles due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It celebrates the region's small businesses and their resiliency and innovation, while faced with tremendous adversity. Campaign themes include resiliency, teamwork, community, innovation, safety, and opportunity.

This month, we feature five organizations that demonstrated innovation and creativity in the face of the Covid pandemic; **Eleven 11 Events, Twiggies, UnoDeuce Multimedia, SuperNatural Hair Solutions** and **The Fledge**.



Nonprofit corporations and independent licensees of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association

Through their social mission, Blue Cross Blue Shield and Blue Care Network of Michigan (Blue Cross) works to increase access to affordable care, enhance the quality of care and improve the overall health of Michigan citizens and their communities. Blue Cross has generously underwritten the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce Voice of Small Business campaign.



Eleven 11 Events

"We are still here. Eleven 11 Events is still here," proudly proclaims company owner, Phebeit Ingram.

Eleven 11 Events, LLC is a full-service event design firm specializing in creating unforgettable experiences. The company, located at 610 Elmwood Road in Lansing, felt a major impact when the Covid-19 pandemic forced a shutdown.

"When Covid hit, the event industry came to a complete halt," said Ingram. "We had cancellations and postponements. Some people rescheduled, but a lot of people did not."

Ingram notes that despite the shutdown, they still 'had to pay the bills,' so they began to plan how to shift their thinking to a new model of event delivery. First, they could see a need to support graduating high school students who were being deprived of an opportunity to celebrate. Eleven 11 Events came up with the idea of curbside open houses.

"We would set-up beautiful backdrops on the curb of their home," said Ingram. "People would drive by and leave a gift, celebrate and take a photo. It was contact-free and safe. We created something beautiful for them right at their home."

Eleven 11 Events started implementing the same approach for birthday parties and anniversaries. They partnered with a tent company and began draping tents for weddings which meant the staff had to learn how to do custom draping.

Local to Lansing, Eleven 11 Events, LLC is a premier choice for corporate and wedding design and decor. They have the largest in-stock inventory of Chiavari Chairs, table linens and more. Eleven 11 Events is also one of few event companies that offers in-house graphic design and marketing services. They pride themselves on superior customer service, dynamic decor and space design, cutting-edge marketing and graphics creation.

In 2021, Ingram and the team are still looking for ways to hold gatherings safely with tents, igloos, and draping.

"We will be here thanks to the grant we received and our wonderful customers," said Ingram. "We know it is important to celebrate."

Twiggies

For Twiggies owner, Beth Herendeen, the Covid pandemic has been a combination of utter devastation for part of her business to amazing, awesome, and thriving to the other half of her business. As a traveling event production and design company, widely known throughout the state for event design. Covid hit this part of Beth's business hard.



"The devastating part has been that no events have been able to take place," said Herendeen. "A good portion of our business revolves around creating beautiful spaces for weddings, corporate events, proms, daddy-daughter dances, open houses, rental products, floral design, space design, lighting, lines, and backdrops. Everything you associate with a beautiful event—that's what we do."

Beth says she has no choice but to retool, rethink and repurpose. Though her store was shut down, Beth showed up to work every day.

Beth made the tough decision to relocate the retail boutique side of her business, leaving downtown Dewitt to a new location at 106 E. Cesar E Chavez Ave., in Lansing. Though it was hard to leave the town in which she lives and has done business for 23 years, Beth says the move was the saving grace for her business.

“It was critical to gain the needed foot traffic in the retail shop that Old Town provides and being part of a retail community instead of being a stand-alone shop which I was in DeWitt,” said Herendeen.

Beth also set out to create online platforms, including a new website. She leveraged her social media platforms. She found that people needed a connection. She helped fill that void through a series of videos she created. The videos Beth produced showing her working on paint projects, custom home projects, refurbishing furniture, making floral displays, or packaging up gift baskets. She found people wanted to see what she was working on daily. She found opportunity was there for her.

“Not only did I survive that first shutdown, but I also thrived,” said Herendeen.

Twiggies is that charming shop on the corner with something in every nook waiting for you to explore. For more information, visit their website twiggiesdewitt.yolasite.com.



UnoDeuce Multimedia

UnoDeuce Multimedia is a Lansing-based video production and storytelling agency that documents why organizations do what they do and how they make a positive impact on the community. Their mission is to tell the stories using video on why non-profit organizations and socially responsible businesses do what they do and how they positively impact their community.

When Covid hit, UnoDeuce decided to draw on owner Paul Schmidt’s television production experience to help local non-profit organizations who were struggling to figure out how to continue crucial fundraising and connect with their donors a pandemic.

“We were able to come up with the help they needed and the technical resources they appreciated, said Schmidt, UnoDeuce owner/creative video strategist. “We

were able to come up with the solutions they needed. A lot of folks needed to have things happen quickly, and we were able to do that.”

UnoDeuce Media provides video production services for small businesses and non-profits. In addition, they also offer remote, and hybrid live-streaming and other media services, including podcast production and development. The company has produced several impressive videos dealing with some of society’s most important issues, including Lansing 4 Black Lives, It’s a Breast Thing, Michigan Coalition Against Homelessness, Tri-County Office on Aging, and Elder Law of Michigan-Mid-America’s Pension Rights Program. Videos feature compelling stories through the eyes of people affected by each story.

As far as 2021, Schmidt is uncertain what to expect. One thing that encourages him is the local business community’s adaptability to adjust as circumstances require, especially being able to take the technology that has always been there and make it their own.

“They can use the technology to tell stories about the products and services they offer, and also making it easier for their customers and clients to tell their story,” said Schmidt. “They also have the potential to expand their reach and use the power of the internet to reach new audiences.”

More information about UnoDeuce media can be found at www.unodeuce.com.

SuperNatural Hair Solutions

Supernatural Hair Solutions goal is simple, yet arduous: to change what’s ‘in the head’ about what’s ‘on the head’. Owner April Perkins says her journey into the natural hair business began with a most unfortunate conversation she had with her tearful kindergartner after she came home from school one day expressing that she was not happy with her hair and wanted it changed. Her daughter recounted a miserable school day full of having to explain her “frizzy”, “messy”, and “ugly” hair.



“I was completely beside myself to hear this picture of perfection feeling embarrassed, hurt, and insecure about her God-given beauty,” said Perkins “It was that very day that I decided, “I must educate my daughter about her unique beauty and empower her to stand strong and educate others who don’t understand.”

After her switch into natural hair, April had to learn new techniques, new tools, new products, and new styles. April has been working exclusively in the natural hair industry for over 10 years. Today, SuperNatural Hair Solutions is a salon that caters to naturally curly and afro-textured hair. They make products, style, and cut hair, and offer free classes.

2020 presented a unique set of challenges for hair salons that had to close totally for several months due to the pandemic. April says the pandemic forced her team to make some changes that forced her company to grow and innovate. First, they cut costs by taking over maintenance of its website. SuperNatural Hair Solutions also ramped up its social media presence.

Small Business Innovation and Creativity Shine During Covid Pandemic

“We are offering free online tutorials to help clients who are now doing their hair at home,” said Perkins. “We want them to feel empowered and knowledgeable. We also want to be able to help them post-pandemic.”

April says that in addition to adding some new ‘novice friendly’ products to their line this past year, in response to the pandemic, they also worked to maintain a closer connection with clients by sending texts and emails to make sure their clients were well and inquire about needs beyond haircare.

SuperNatural Hair Solutions is located at 2160 Hamilton Rd. Suite C, in Okemos. You can shop with them online at www.supernaturalhairlife.com.

The Fledge

The Fledge is on a mission to create opportunities to pursue happiness and fight for liberty and justice for all. Operating out of a 12,000-square-foot repurposed church dedicated to welcoming the community around us to come and help build a future relevant to them. Jerry Norris, founder and CEO of The Fledge says the organization grew out of a promise to the community.

“We pledged to create opportunities to pursue happiness and ensure liberty and justice for all, said Norris.

The Fledge offers various services including free food from their gardens, an online idea pitch competition, 3-D printing, screen printing, coding clubs and business training.

The past year’s challenges caused Fledge and their supporters to ramp up their efforts to a new level.

“When the COVID-19 pandemic shut down everything around us, we realized that now was the time to fulfill our promise,” said Norris. “We needed to ensure that we were essential, safe, and able to stay open.”

Norris says they turned on their innovation that thrives as a result of the diversity in their crowd.



“We started to develop technology to understand air flows to test where air particulates were too high,” said Norris. “We started to grow food in the sanctuary with the grow room technology we have developed out of our coding clubs.”

Then Fledge also gave away their 3-D printers and sewing machines to start making masks and distributing them throughout the community. They also strengthened old and new relationships in the community.

“We became experts at handling food,” said Norris. “At the same time, it allowed us to figure out how to use our studios as private telecommunications areas so people could do telemedicine calls, arraignments or go to substance use disorder meetings.”

Norris says volunteers soon started coming in to help keep the community protected and safe.

“We stayed resilient and relevant,” said Norris. “We did what we were built to do.”

For more information about the Fledge, visit www.thefledge.com. ■

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For J.D. Power 2020 award information, visit jdpower.com/awards. Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and Blue Care Network are nonprofit corporations and independent licensees of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.

Calling in the Calling Out Culture

According to Professor Loretta J. Ross, activist, and fighter against hate crimes, it's time for a shift in our culture from calling people out to calling them in. Professor Ross of the Institute for Democratic Education and Culture made her remarks before the Lansing Economic Club on March 2.

Professor Ross told the audience she had been dismayed by how bitter people are towards each other because of our differences. She says we can do better.



Ross

"We all care about human rights even if we focus on different things," said Professor Ross. "That means we are all on the same team."

Professor Ross says that the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol on January 6 represents America's unfinished civil war. She says it's time to stop seeking to place blame on certain people and for all of us to accept responsibility for ending the civil war. She says we have to develop racial courage and stamp out white supremacy representing a grave threat to democracy.

"We have to be less judgmental, stop the blame and shame game, and calling

each other out," said Professor Ross. "We need to learn how to work together, and we need to learn how to have forgiveness for our mistakes."

Professor Ross has developed what she calls the "calling in continuum." Calling out others involves public shaming for what people believe, say, and do. It is not offering people a chance to do better because of a desire to humiliate them publicly and hold them accountable for the harm they have done. Calling in is when you are willing to seek accountability through love and respect instead of punishment and shaming.

"It is actually an opportunity for each of us to reflect on our behavior, to apologize for any harm we may have done, repay that harm and change our behavior," said Professor Ross. "A calling in is a callout done with love. You're still calling attention to the problem, but you use love and respect to achieve that accountability."

Professor Ross has written a book to take a deeper dive into this important topic. "Calling in the Calling Out Culture" will be out later this year. ■

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RELAUNCH Greater Lansing Task Force Initiates Comprehensive Covid Vaccination Communication Campaign

EMPLOYER TOOLKIT AND TRUSTED VOICES VIDEO SERIES TO ENCOURAGE VACCINATIONS TO REOPEN REGIONAL ECONOMY SAFELY

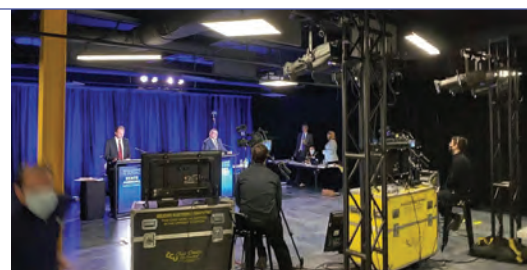
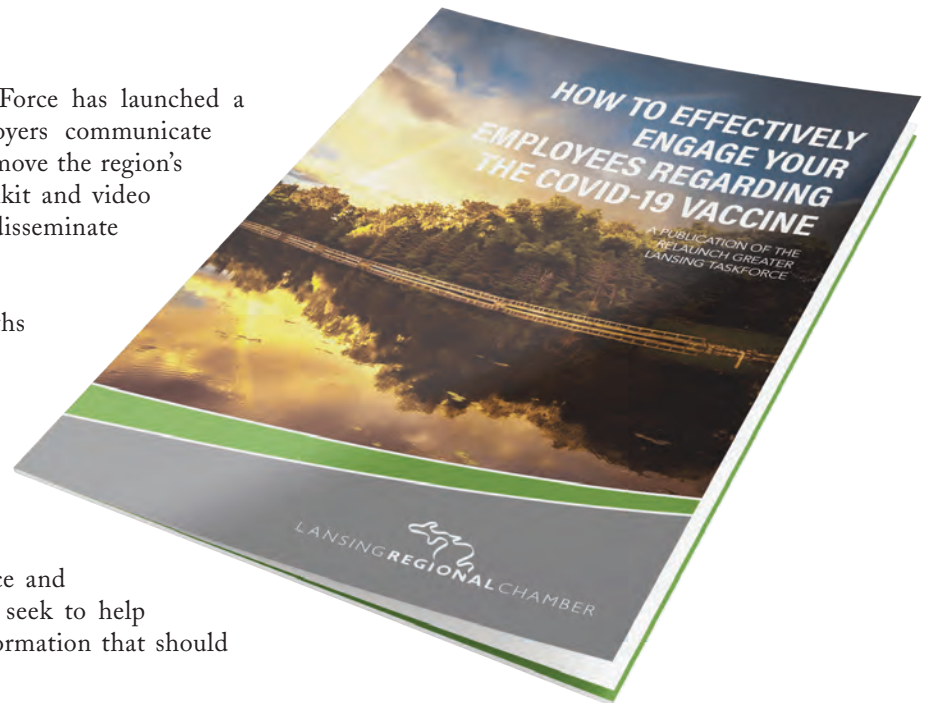
The RELAUNCH Greater Lansing: Economic Rehabilitation Task Force has launched a comprehensive communications campaign designed to help employers communicate with employees and encourage them to receive a COVID vaccine to move the region's economy closer to reopening safely. The campaign consists of a toolkit and video series that aims to provide trustworthy, science and medicine-based data to disseminate in multiple industry sectors.

The campaign will feature weekly videos produced over the next few months with trusted voices leaders in business, government, education, and healthcare. The interviews will seek to answer frequently asked questions about Covid vaccinations and dispel myths.

“While it is a testament to the public-private partners that have produced vaccines to end this pandemic in such a short period, the process has left some people with questions about the vaccines,” said Tim Daman, president & CEO, Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce and RELAUNCH Task Force member. “The Trusted Voices video series will seek to help employers fill the information void with timely, reliable, science-based information that should provide comfort to employees considering whether to get a vaccine.”

RELAUNCH Greater Lansing has also produced an employer vaccine guidebook that can serve as a road map for how employers can manage the process of communicating with employees and protecting their team members and stakeholders' safety and health. This helpful toolkit and online publication include a business preparedness checklist, FAQ's, vaccination preparation plan, sample employee survey, and more.

The RELAUNCH Greater Lansing: Economic Rehabilitation Task Force consists of prominent and trusted leaders in business, government, healthcare, and education dedicated to creating a successful regional relaunch strategy for Greater Lansing. Throughout the pandemic, the RELAUNCH Task Force has developed several tools to help organizations stay current with the latest information COVID-19 and changing regulatory requirements. More information can be found at the organization's website: [RELAUNCH Greater Lansing - Comprehensive Strategy to Reopen Business.](#)



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Business and Education Leaders Meet for Roundtable Discussion

On Wednesday, Feb. 24, leaders from business and education gathered for a roundtable discussion regarding the impact the pandemic has had on the local economy and our learners. The Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce (LRCC) and Ingham Intermediate School District (ISD) hosted the session which reflected on lessons learned and how to work more collaboratively in the future to positively impact our region.

“There is a natural connection between education and business. This is an exceptional region, filled with talent and opportunity and our business leaders recognize that schools play an important role in our economy. We hope to continue these round table meetings as we develop joint goals and objectives that make our region even stronger,” states Tim Daman, president, LRCC.

Superintendents from Ingham ISD service area as well as representatives from post-secondary, manufacturing, transportation, marketing, finance and others industries were in attendance. The discussion centered around the important takeaways from the pandemic, the need for flexibility and overcoming barriers for the future of education and business.

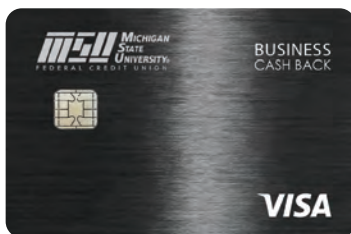
Jason Mellema, superintendent, Ingham ISD added, “The initial discussions with this group were really focused on working together and problem-solving. We hope to focus additional meetings on communication needs, collaboration and creating policy that supports our collective future.” ■



There is a natural connection between education and business. This is an exceptional region, filled with talent and opportunity and our business leaders recognize that schools play an important role in our economy.



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Elaine Hardy

2020 ATHENA LEADERSHIP AWARD RECIPIENT

Elaine Hardy, the City of East Lansing's first Diversity Equity Inclusion Administrator and Chair of the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Commission of Mid-Michigan, has been named the 2020 ATHENA Leadership Award recipient by the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce (LRCC). Elaine formally received the award during a special televised ATHENA Awards program on Thursday, March 25. When informed of her selection, Hardy said her first reaction was shocked.

"I am still a little bit shocked and blown away, grateful and honored that people would even consider me for such a recognition," said Hardy. "I can't believe I get to be in this elite group of people who have done amazing things in this community."

To those who have known and worked with Hardy throughout her career, her selection as an ATHENA recipient comes as no surprise.

"Elaine has been a consummate professional in her leadership positions with the City of East Lansing, and she is very deserving of the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce's ATHENA Award," said George Lahanas, city manager of East Lansing. "Her service to the East Lansing community spans almost two decades, including serving several years as the coordinator of the East Lansing Hannah Community Center and, more recently, stepping into an important, new role as the City's first diversity, equity and inclusion administrator. The ATHENA Award certainly reinforces the exceptional service and leadership that she has provided to our community and region."

Mark McDaniel, president & CEO of Cinnaire has worked with Elaine, serving as voluntary chair of the MLK Commission, said Elaine's selection would allow the community to know who she is and what she does for the community.

"She is one of the most selfless individuals I have ever come across," said McDaniel. "Everything she does is to help somebody else that is in need. She does it day-in and day-out. People don't even know most of what she does."



She is one of the most selfless individuals I have ever come across. Everything she does is to help somebody else that is in need. She does it day-in and day-out. People don't even know most of what she does."

"Elaine Hardy's dedication and commitment have been instrumental in advancing the cause of diversity, equity, and inclusion within the City of East Lansing and throughout the region," said Tim Daman, president & CEO, LRCC. "She has worked tirelessly through the years serving others, mentoring youth, and advancing the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. She epitomizes what the ATHENA Leadership Award is all about."

Tristan Wright serves as vice-chair of the MLK Commission and, in that capacity, has worked with Elaine for more than a decade. She says Elaine Hardy emulates the meaning behind the ATHENA award.

"She continues to demonstrate great passion and zeal in all her roles whether it is at the MLK Commission, the Hannah Community Center, and as diversity, equity and inclusion administrator for the city of East Lansing," said Wright. "She works heartedly and knows that in whatever she does, she is here to serve others and not be served."

"She is an outstanding human being, a woman of faith with great character and integrity," said Tony Baltimore, who serves with Elaine on the Dr. Martin Luther King Commission of Mid-Michigan and was one of the people who nominated Elaine for the award. "She is someone who not only leads from the front but also the back. The work she has done for the betterment of people and youth has been tremendous."

Elaine Hardy has been dedicated throughout her life to serving others, particularly at-risk teens. Her commitment to serving was shaped by several mentors starting with her mother, who raised eight children alone.

"After getting all the kids dressed and out of the house, my mother would go to work at a community center called the Neighborhood House," said Hardy. "She volunteered eight hours a day for ten years before they hired her as a full-time staff person. She worked as a ceramic's instructor, teaching sewing classes and running a soup kitchen. She instilled in all of her kids a sense of being a part of a community and being a force to give back to the community."

Hardy says she was also greatly influenced by Muhammed Ali and Congressman John Lewis's lives and lists a number of local mentors including Paula Cunningham and Kim Coleman.

Elaine began her professional career in Lansing in 1993 at the Downtown Lansing YMCA. While there, she piloted the development of one of the region's most successful teen development programs. She remained with the YMCA as the director of youth and family programs until 2001 when she went to the City of East Lansing as the coordinator of the City's newly established community center, then still under construction. She is still actively involved with the YMCA of Lansing. She serves as the Director of the YMCA of Lansing "Y" Achievers Program, a hugely popular and well-respected college readiness, leadership development, and mentoring program for teens.

Over the past two decades, Elaine has helped expose over 3,500 at-risk teens to historically black colleges, college programs, and professional careers during the annual Y-Achievers college immersion tour. She works tirelessly to encourage students to pursue college as "the next step," often reminding them that a college education should not be an optional life choice. Her work annually involves personally working with teens and their families, planning and coordinating one of the mid-Michigan region's most successful college tour programs, and speaking to groups about the importance of mentoring. Elaine says her desire to serve at-risk teens grew out of her own life as an at-risk teen.

"I grew up on public assistance with a single parent in a bad neighborhood, and I wasn't supposed to make it out of there," said Hardy. "It was part of who I am that makes me feel a privilege to be able to work with youth."

In 2008, Elaine was responsible for escorting twenty students to the historic Presidential Inauguration of America's first African American President-Elect Barack Obama. She says it was one of the proudest moments of her life.

"When I was born, there was no constitutional provision that protected my right to vote," said Hardy. "In my lifetime, I have had the privilege of going to vote for a Black man and a woman for president, and a Black woman for vice president. It wasn't lost on me that not that long ago, my mother and grandmother were barred by poll tax and Jim Crow from going to the polls."

When Barack Obama was elected, Hardy felt a sense of urgency to be there. Several students on the journey shared their pride in being part of what they recognized as a historic moment in the nation's history. Elaine believes the Obama presidency was transformative for the nation.

"What it has brought to the consciousness of America is the realization that we



Elaine Hardy and the MLK Commission Board with Myrlie Evers-Williams (seated) the widow of Medgar Evers, the slain civil rights activist from the 1950s. He was the national field director for the NAACP. She was the speaker at the 2017 MLK Day of Celebration.



Elaine is credited with leading efforts to turn Lansing's annual MLK Day of Celebration into one of the finest in the country.



Elaine Hardy with former Virginia Governor Douglas Wilder and Elaine's son Malcomb (l) and daughter-in-law Shaylen (r).



Elaine took a group of young people to Washington in 2009 for the historic inauguration of the nation's first Black president, Barack Obama.

never finished grappling with the Civil War," said Hardy. "We never answered the morality question around slavery. We never denounced it as a country in a way that we could put the notion of it to bed. I think we are now on the precipice of an emergent America can acknowledge the ugliness of slavery and be accountable for it, heal and move on."

Elaine is the current chairperson of the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Commission of Mid-Michigan, representing the City of East Lansing. Her passionate dedication to and belief in the legacy of Dr. King drives and motivates her to find ways to honor his legacy in her life by serving others. The MLK Commission is most well noted for his signature celebration on the third Monday in January. The group holds activities throughout the year, including a series of community conversations, supporting an annual college tour for middle and high school students, provide educational scholarship support for graduating high school seniors, host trips to historic civil rights events and landmarks.

"We also work hard at preserving Dr. King's legacy promoting the beloved community by encouraging our members and the community to be serving and not forget they can be a voice for someone who doesn't have a voice," said Hardy.

"What she has been able to do lead the MLK Holiday event and turn it into one of the best, largest events of its kind in the country are unbelievable," said McDaniel. "I went to a similar event in Atlanta and expected it to be much bigger than ours. Lansing was hands-down absolutely the best, well-coordinated, most meaningful, and impactful event."

Elaine's other community involvement includes serving as a lodging committee advisory board member to the Greater Lansing Area Convention and Visitors Bureau, Trustee of the Sigma Phi Beta Education Fund, and YMCA of Lansing.

"Elaine has service in her DNA," said Paula Cunningham, state director, AARP Michigan. "Whether it's working with the community to provide services, mentoring young college students, or being a foster parent, Elaine's heartbeat is fueled by service."

Elaine says she will never stop serving the young people she dearly loves. Her advice to young leaders seeking to make their mark in the world is to be authentic and go after their passion.

"You should be committed to hard work, and while you are doing all those things, you should always find time to give to someone or some organization," said Hardy.

Elaine has been a resident of East Lansing, Michigan, for the past 30 years. She is the mother of two adult children, Jasmine, 38; and Malcomb, 36; and two bonus sons, Ayden, 9; and Asher, 4. ■

Building a Better Region Through Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

What does it take to be a welcoming region? How can diversity, equity and Inclusion (DE&I) help Greater Lansing in its efforts to attract and retain talent? Ashlee Willis, founder and CEO of Michigan Premier Events and events management coordinator for the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce recently spoke with Delta Township Trustee Fonda Brewer about its importance DE&I in building a better community.



Willis

Ashlee Willis: How might embracing DE&I as a regional strategy benefit Greater Lansing?

Fonda Brewer: I am so excited that our community is smart enough to embrace it and see the value in DE&I. I always say we are smarter growing together. When we row together forward, we are unbreakable and unbeatable. I think that is what is happening in our region. I like to call it DEIA, Without access, it means nothing. We can't run from words that are uncomfortable like "white privilege" or "multi-cultural" or "racism". We have to embrace those words and become comfortable being uncomfortable to get us to a better place.

Ashlee Willis: How can DE&I improve our region attraction and retention efforts?

Fonda Brewer: Put words into action. I know many organizations have established a resolution or a mindset around DE&I. We can't just put words in a newsletter. Do the good work that is required to see DEIA in action. Continue to put people before profits. When it comes to this work, it could be costly, not only from a dollar standpoint, but also in terms of time required. It is worth every penny and every hour spent on it. Start where your group is so everyone can learn



Brewer

the principles along the way, and everyone can get there together.

Ashlee Willis: What needs to be done to better position Greater Lansing to be a world leader in diversity, equity and inclusion?

Fonda Brewer: We have to assess the implicit bias level within our organizations. We all have them and shouldn't be afraid to admit that. Give everyone the permission to be honest about this because it is important to establish a level of trust. Make sure your business represents how the community looks.

It is important to hire people representing your community where you are and the client base you seek. Consider non-traditional advertising methods. There are several minority and gender publications out there. You have to find them. You have to partner with those organizations to make sure your company mirrors the community. You have to be relentless. You can't stop. Be a mindful leader by creating a mindful environment.

Ashlee Willis: What are important steps individual leaders should take to make a difference in helping the region embrace DEIA?

Fonda Brewer: Engage with other leaders who are like-minded and interested in advancing their skills. That gives you a great networking channel. Leaders have to continually connect. You are not going to learn about other cultures unless you network. Having DE&I conversations is important to advance the cause of diversity. What has been going on in our nation makes this a great time to advance the cause. Have these conversations but be mindful about it and not punitive about it. ■

Lansing Man is National Leader in Autism Awareness

Xavier DeGroat has felt the stigma and pain associated with a lifelong battle with autism. As a young man, Xavier decided to take charge of his struggles and lead autism awareness and reforms at the state and national levels. He formed the Xavier DeGroat Foundation to promote opportunities for people with autism through advocacy, education, economic opportunities, and humanitarian efforts. Among his accomplishments, Xavier was instrumental in getting a three-bill package through the Michigan legislature and signed into law by Governor Gretchen Whitmer. Those bills allow for a special designation or code that people with autism will have on their license plates, driver's licenses, and state identification letting law enforcement know they are autistic.

April is Autism Awareness Month. Xavier says the most significant barriers persons with autism face are finding employment opportunities and becoming independent in life.

"So many times businesses question what a person with autism can't do rather



Xavier DeGroat sitting at Vice President's Mike Pence Desk at the White House while interning in November 2020.

than what they can do," said DeGroat. "Sometimes the greatest strength in autism is not seen at initially, and that is a communications impediment that persons with autism have. They can't always tell you what they can do. They have to show you what they can do."

In the fall of 2020, Xavier had the privilege of being the first autistic intern in White House history. In addition to meeting some of the highest government leaders, Xavier says the experience gave him more confidence and life skills.

"I am learning what a strong leader I am by myself," said DeGroat. "I am learning as I get older how strong

I am on my own. Only one person will make a difference for me, and I am learning how much I can get done on my own."

Xavier is in the process of finishing up his bachelor's degree in business at Northwood University. He hopes for a job in state government or a corporate communications position. ■

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General Motors Leading through COVID and Beyond

When COVID-19 forced the shutdown of its manufacturing facilities last year, General Motors (GM) stepped up in a big way to support the needs on the frontlines of the battle against COVID and the needs in the communities it serves. Darci Marcum, plant manager at the GM's Lansing Grand River Assembly plant, recently spoke with Tim Daman, president and CEO of the Lansing Regional Chamber, about GM's Covid commitment, returning to work safely and productively, GM's current, and future product outlook, and their presence in Lansing.



Marcum

Tim Daman: Tell us a little bit about where GM was last March, how you made it through the first couple of months, and your leadership supporting the battle against Covid.



Daman

Darci Marcum: Early in the year, we talked about the potential for challenges, but I don't think anyone really had an idea of what would happen as the year progressed. We have a fantastic medical director who helped guide us through. We developed a playbook not only for ourselves, but also provided to many of our suppliers. We put together everything from how to enter the facilities, what kind of PPE would be required, and the things we needed to do throughout the day to make sure everyone could be safe. That has been very successful. We've been able to keep the disease from spreading in our facilities. When you consider the number of people that come to work here every day, it is very impressive that we are not transmitting the disease from person to person.

My biggest learning from the past year is twofold. Nothing is impossible when you decide it is critical. Also, our teams respond very positively when we effectively explain what initiatives we are taking, why they are important, and what their role is in being successful overall.

From a GM perspective, we were able to produce over 30,000 ventilators distributed throughout the U.S. We made over 10 million face masks. In Lansing, we provided over 4,000 masks to Sparrow. We provided over \$65,000 to the Greater Lansing Food Bank and set up donation portals for team members who wanted to contribute funds from their paychecks.

Tim Daman: Late last year, GM announced that by 2035, it would be going to full production of zero-emission vehicles. That is very exciting. At the same time, there is a lot of that unknown – what does that mean for future jobs etc. What do you think that product line looks like over the next 15 years?

Darci Marcum: We plan to become carbon neutral by 2040. By mid-decade, we will have 30 all-electric models globally and 40% of our U.S. vehicles will be electric by the end of 2025. As far as jobs, GM is investing \$27 billion, which is up from the original pre-Covid projection of \$20 billion, including our battery facility, converting the former Detroit Hamtramck plant to build the all-electric Hummer as well as some other vehicles. Clearly, we see the future is electric. When you think about autonomous vehicles, we are a lot closer to that really happening. The Cadillac CT 4 and CT 5 produced at LGR now have super cruise where you can be hands-free driving.

Tim Daman: Tell us a little bit about the vehicles manufactured at LGR and Lansing Delta Township.



CADILLAC

Darci Marcum: We are very lucky here in Lansing. We are the only community in North America to have two major assembly plants and two stamping facilities. At Lansing Grand River, we build all versions of the Camaro, both coupe and convertible, as well as the Cadillac CT 4 and CT 5. We recently announced the launch of the Black Wing, which is a performance automobile. The CT 5 version has 668 horsepower and tops out at well over 200 mph. It's the only vehicle I am aware of that offers a manual shifter and a V-8 engine. At Lansing Delta Township, we produce the Chevrolet Traverse and Buick Enclave. We recently announced the GMC Acadia will be produced here a couple of years from now. This will all continue to drive jobs here in Lansing for the foreseeable future. ■

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Neogen Corporation: A Lansing Born, World-Class Leader in Public Health

BY MATTIE MILNE, KOLT COMMUNICATIONS

For most, the last year has revolved around something we can't see—an invisible pathogen consuming most conversations, impacting decisions and overtaking lives.

Neogen Corporation of Lansing, experts on public health, has been taking on hidden but powerful viruses and pathogens since 1982. From preventing outbreaks like salmonella or listeria and enhancing agricultural, genomics, and toxicology innovations, Neogen is a world leader, driven by solutions for food, animal, and healthcare/public health safety.

Born in Lansing and now spanning several industries throughout the world—the Food Safety Division located in Lansing, Animal Safety Division in Lexington, Ky., and Genomics Division in Lincoln, Neb. Neogen works with several companies and organizations in Michigan and across our country and world. In Michigan, Sparrow Health System, the University of Michigan, and Henry Ford Hospital use Neogen's cleaning verification and tracking system. Most recently, United Airlines is one of its newest customers.

Alice Alexander, sales territorial manager for Neogen Health Care and Public Health, was asked to assist with the implementation of the highly effective AccuPoint Advanced NG ATP Cleaning Verification and Tracking System, a device that rapidly measures the cleanliness of all surfaces, into the everyday use of United Airlines.



“Public health has become a bigger market for Neogen as many airlines, schools, hotels, offices, restaurants, and cruise ships are utilizing Neogen's ATP System,” said Alexander. “This product, made right here in Lansing can help reduce infections and will give the public confidence to attend school, travel, and work.”

After cleaning frequently used spaces like food and agriculture equipment, health facility patient rooms, educational institutions, and airports, high touch surfaces are swabbed by the ATP System to ensure nothing infectious or harmful was left behind. Results, shared within 10 seconds, prove highly beneficial in high-risk situations like the COVID-19 pandemic.

“This is the future. United Airlines, along with many other corporations and organizations, can track exactly how well its airplanes, gates, and personal spaces are cleaned,” said Alexander. “Neogen has always offered the ATP System but now more than ever, the strength of our product is critical. COVID has brought to the forefront why we need to clean effectively.”

With the device's robust software, auditing tools, and user-friendly capabilities, United Airlines can track, compare, and improve cleanliness measures at every hub across the world. The Neogen ATP System has already been applied at Chicago O'Hare and will shortly be used at Newark Liberty.

“We live in a mobile world, traveling by means of air, land, and water. We eat out, use public bathrooms, shop in trendy towns, and vacation in new locations while staying at hotels, resorts, cruise ships, and rentals,” said Alexander. “Before COVID, most people didn't worry about becoming sick from simply touching a doorknob, handle, armrest, or light switch. The uncertainty of whether a surface was thoroughly cleaned is now on all of our minds and Neogen's ATP system, along with many of our other products, is giving people confidence.”

If you'd like a more comprehensive view of AccuPoint Advanced ATP system, visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GoAIGgts10w&feature=youtu.be> or find Neogen online at www.neogen.com. ■

WHAT IS ATP AND WHY DO WE MEASURE IT?

Adenosine tri-phosphate (ATP) is a chemical produced in every living cell. Its presence on a surface tells us there is something on that surface or was recently alive. In a public health setting, something is usually going to be the remnants of blood or other bodily fluids, skin cells, food, and microbial organisms. This organic material can be the reservoir for environmental pathogens. An ATP test is, therefore, considered an indicator test for the possible presence of these pathogens.

WHAT IS AN ATP CLEANING VERIFICATION AND TRACKING SYSTEM?

It's a combination of an electronic instrument, surface sampling device, and software that businesses can use to ensure its employees, customers, students, and teachers are safe.

Clean Slate Law Offers Second Chances—Widening the Lansing Talent Pool

BY MATTIE MILNE, KOLT COMMUNICATIONS

Most people who committed a crime are not bad people or dangerous employees. They're people who went through a rough patch, overcame a substance disorder, or changed their ways. They deserve a second chance.

That's according to Dustyn Coontz of Coontz Law in Lansing, Mich., who speaks on the many benefits of the Clean Slate Law, signed into law in October by Governor Whitmer, taking effect April 11.

The law focuses on three main areas, including expansion, automation, and marijuana.

Expansion — The class of people eligible who can have their criminal record wiped clean will vastly expand. Currently, one can't have more than two misdemeanors or one felony on record. Additionally, traffic offenses can't be erased. The Clean Slate Law allows expungement for those with three felonies and unlimited misdemeanors. This goes into effect in April.

Automation — This portion allows a person with a criminal record to receive an expungement without applying for one. This will be ready in two years.

Marijuana — Misdemeanor marijuana convictions may be removed regardless of the rest of one's record. This went into effect Jan. 1.



Overall, the Clean Slate Law helps people eliminate or reduce past offenses, widening the talent pool in the community and offering new beginnings.

"Many with criminal records paid their debts to society and as far as the government is concerned, they're 'free'. However, employers run a background check and see a criminal history," Coontz said. "This can be a deterrent and even when it's not it can be a tie breaker between two candidates."

Beyond employment, these laws allow people the chance to apply for loans, student aid or licensing—all opportunities not possible with a criminal record.

Coontz implores anyone who has been told they can't get an expungement to take a deeper look. Business owners who have stellar employees that may have a record and are unable to receive a promotion or earn special licensing should reach out to a criminal defense attorney as well.

"If you're not in the criminal justice space or do not have a record yourself I can see the hesitation," Coontz says. "But these laws allow fresh starts and second chances—something we all have needed before—convictions or not."

In the future Coontz hopes to have the website micleanslate.com up and running. In the meantime, for further information, speak with a trusted attorney. ■

Slowing Climate Change Can Be Profitable

BY JOSEPH HESS, GREATER LANSING UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION

The Polar Vortex that brought the national deep freeze last February was another of many reminders that our world and its inhabitants are experiencing a crescendo of negative impacts from climate change. The urgency of accelerating global efforts to slow this dangerous trend was again emphasized in a recent United Nations report "Making Peace with Nature".

UN Secretary-General Guterres said that "without nature's help we will not thrive or even survive. For too long, we have been waging a senseless and suicidal war on nature. The result is three interlinked environmental crises." Lead report author Robert Watson warned, "Our children will inherit a world of extreme weather events, sea-level rise, drastic loss of plants and animals, food and water insecurity and increasing likelihood of future pandemics".

In response to these crises, the "Clean Energy Revolution" is finally gaining traction with national, state, and local governments. International businesses, non-profits and billionaire investors are also adopting "net zero" policies. They recognize the critical importance of slowing the rate



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of global warming before it becomes irreversible. They also understand that modern technology can facilitate the development of a wide array of new "green" businesses to help slow the process.

Will more in Greater Lansing recognize these opportunities and make the changes necessary to profit or lower expenses from them? They center around the production, utilization, conservation, and storage of clean energy, with safe disposal/recycling of byproducts.

The Lansing Regional Chamber, along with LEAP, MSU, and other partners, can play a leadership role in planning for future economic growth, with Climate Change Adaptation as a major focus. This emerging industry is loaded with profitable business opportunities. New funding sources will increasingly flow to those who are helping to create a more secure future for our planet and its inhabitants. ■

Joseph Hess is a member of the Greater Lansing United Nations Association. For more information about the Lansing chapter visit gluna.org and the national organization, visit unusa.org.

Tandem Studios: Communicating Creatively for 10 Years

Founded by Stephen Plumbley, an agency veteran of over 20 years, Tandem Studios launched in 2011 with one client and a single goal: provide the highest quality design and marketing support to their clients at the highest value. Today, Tandem Studios works for dozens of organizations, large and small, across mid-Michigan and the United States. The company specializes in graphic design, integrated marketing, video, logo design, website design and development, social media, copywriting, and branding. Owner Stephen Plumbley attributes part of its success to listening to clients, understanding their needs, and developing solutions that work for the client.

“Sometimes it’s being willing to try new things and work in new media to meet a client’s needs, and as a result, really great things happen,” said Plumbley. “It’s that flexibility that has allowed us to be successful, grow, and do lots of great work for a really diverse set of clients over the last decade.”

One of the differentiators that set Tandem apart is producing quality products in a short period, while still being respectful of the client’s budget. Plumbley attributes that he has worked on both sides of the equation and understands the client’s perspective.

“We’re living in a fluid, evolving world, and we all have to have the flexibility to react, and do so quickly,” said Plumbley “Because of that, if one of our partners comes to us with a request for something to be turned quickly, we’re going to do our best to make it happen, while still producing a quality product that respects their budget.”

Members of the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce (LRCC) are familiar with Tandem’s high-quality work as the firm has had a long relationship with the LRCC, designing FOCUS Magazine, annual report, and many special projects, including designing collateral and developing the website for RELAUNCH Greater Lansing. RELAUNCH has played a large role in helping safely reopen the business community during the COVID pandemic. Plumbley loves working with the LRCC team and the passion they bring to work daily.



Plumbley

“Working with the Chamber has allowed me to see behind the curtain, so to speak, to get into the nuts and bolts of what a chamber of commerce does for local businesses, which in turn benefits the community at large,” said Plumbley. “The LRCC staff is an amazing, friendly, brilliant bunch who are truly dedicated to the region.”

Stephen Plumbley looks forward to continued growth in the next few years. He sees the need to continue to be flexible and adapt to new trends. He also wants to play a role in helping build social equality in our community.

“As business owners and entrepreneurs, I think we all have that drive to make a profit, but I also want to use my skills and abilities to help effect positive, meaningful change in our community,” said Plumbley. “Along with providing friendly, quality design and marketing support, that’s ultimately what I’d like Tandem’s legacy to be.”

You can find Tandem online at www.gotandem.biz. ■



TANDEM
STUDIOS

RELAUNCH. REOPEN. RE-ENGAGE.

The RELAUNCH Greater Lansing: Economic Rehabilitation Task Force has created a website and resource guide to provide the latest information to assist businesses as they continue to adjust to new realities brought forth by the COVID-19 pandemic.

THE RESOURCES INCLUDE:

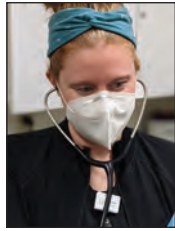
- ✓ How to protect employees by screening
- ✓ How to create workplace distancing
- ✓ Proper cleaning & sanitation
- ✓ What to do when an employee might be sick with COVID-19

To learn more, visit www.relaunchgreaterlansing.com

New Hires



Kruger



McDowell

Sparrow Eaton Hospital is pleased to welcome two nurse practitioners to the Sparrow Medical

Group Potterville office, adding to the quality patient care provided by **Todd Otten, M.D.** **Devon Kruger** and **Elizabeth McDowell** are Michigan natives excited about being part of the community and providing care close to home for local residents. SMG Potterville is located at 133 Lansing Road, Potterville. Kruger, a Saranac native, began practicing at SMG Potterville after completing her studies at Chamberlain College for Nursing, following her undergraduate from Michigan State University. Following her undergraduate from Michigan State University, McDowell, an East Lansing native, began practicing at SMG Potterville upon completion of the FNP program at University of Michigan-Flint.



Wooden

Mason Public Schools has announced the recent hiring of **Tracey Wooden** as chief finance officer. Ms. Wooden most recently served as the business manager and transportation director for Stockbridge Community Schools.

Additionally, she has served in similar roles for Litchfield Community Schools and Athens Area Schools and professional roles with Kunitzer & Associates, P.C. and Norman & Paulsen, P.C. accounting firms.

Dewpoint, a leading technology consulting and implementation solution provider, is pleased to welcome two new professionals to Lansing: **Silas Olson**, business development representative and **David Kosonog**, business analyst.

Awards

Superior Services R.S.H., a premier commercial roofing company serving Michigan, was recently awarded the Duro-Last 2020 Sustainability Project Award for their roof replacement job at Bishop Elementary in Ypsilanti, MI. For this project, the school had a bid requirement to recycle the old roof materials. Superior removed the previous roof membrane materials and sent them to Duro-Last as a part of the Duro-Last Recycle Your Roof program. These recycled roof membrane components are then manufactured for products such as flooring, walkway pads versus going into a landfill.



When it comes to outstanding patient care, teamwork matters. That's why **McLaren Greater Lansing** presents the White Glove Award for excellence in cleanliness standards for environmental services and unit staff. The

White Glove Award is an honor for both environmental services technicians and staff who work alongside every day to maintain a clean and safe area for patients. The inaugural award was recently presented to 6 North and environmental technician **Tina Olmstead** for being the highest-scoring unit for patient satisfaction on the cleanliness of their bathrooms.



Malovrh

Sparrow Pharmacy leader **Margaret A. (Peggy) Malovrh** has received the Michigan Pharmacists Association (MPA) prestigious Pharmacist of the Year Award. The Pharmacist of the Year Award, given during the association's recent virtual convention, is presented annually to a Michigan Pharmacists Association member as the highest honor in Michigan pharmacy. Malovrh is the clinical supervisor and residency program director at Sparrow Hospital in Lansing and has been integral as the pharmacy has led COVID-19 vaccination efforts in Mid-Michigan. She has been a Sparrow caregiver for 18 years.

And the award goes to ... **Edge!** The public relations and advertising agency took home three Addy Awards this year. The Mid-Michigan Creative Alliance, an affiliate of the American Advertising Federation, presents the awards program annually. Edge received the awards on behalf of the following clients: Ingham County Health Department, Weed Facts; Barry-Eaton District Health Department Flu Prevention and Farm Bureau Insurance of Michigan, Adulging.

Robert Barrett, a science teacher at Kent Intermediate School District in Grand Rapids,

FLEXIBILITY AND NECESSITY

How the pandemic will reshape downtown spaces

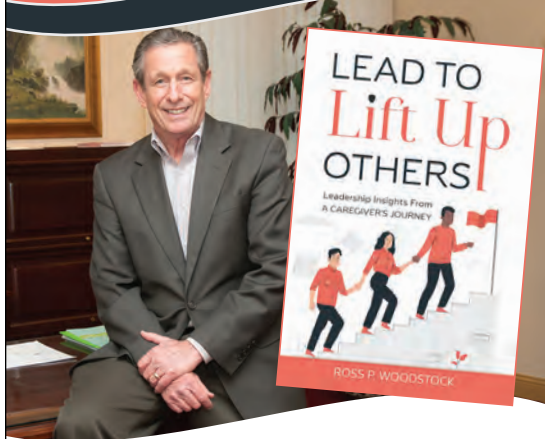
At NAI Mid-Michigan, we're always thinking a step ahead for our community. We know our cities can rise above and thrive in a post-pandemic world.

Read more from our conversation with Cathleen Edgerly at Downtown Lansing, Inc. at naimidmichigan.com/news.

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Author: Ross Woodstock

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Mich., has received an MIDream grant through a partnership with **MSU Federal Credit Union** and the Michigan Education Association Financial Services (MEA FS). The grant, designed to support MEA members, includes \$250 for the recipient to use in their classroom or on a school project, and \$250 donated to the charity of their choice.

Sparrow has received national recognition for joint replacement, pulmonary care, and stroke care in the 2021 Specialty Excellence Awards sponsored by Healthgrades. Sparrow was named among America's best 100 hospitals in joint replacement and was recognized for excellence in pulmonary care and stroke care. Healthgrades awards tell you which hospitals deliver superior quality care based on evaluating hospital performance and quality measures, such as clinical outcomes, patient safety, and patient experience. Healthgrades evaluates more than 45 million Medicare medical claims records for the most recent three-year period for nearly 4,500 hospitals nationwide.

MSUFUCU has received the 2020 National Best and Brightest in Wellness® award for the sixth consecutive year. The award recognizes organizations that make their workplaces, their employees, and the communities they serve healthier places to live and work. The National Association for Business Resources has conducted Best and Brightest competitions for more than 20 years, identifying numerous best practices and providing benchmarks for companies that continue to be leaders in employment standards.

Distinctions



Spyke

LAFUCU CEO Patrick Spyke has been named a 2021 Most Valuable Professional (MVP) by Corp! Magazine. The statewide business publication's MVP award program recognizes individuals making Michigan a better place to live and work by creating job opportunities, driving economic growth, nurturing community advancement or leading successful companies.

Haworth leadership announced that **DBI** had been awarded 2021 Best in Class status. This distinction is based on exceptional performance in market development, sales, customer satisfaction, operational excellence, and enterprise development. DBI is a 10-year honoree and is one of only five elite dealers who have earned the Best in Class distinction each year since the program's inception in 2012.

The Phi Theta Kappa (PTK) chapter at **LCC** has been named a 2021 REACH Chapter by Phi Theta



Kappa Honor Society. The award celebrates the LCC PTK chapter for its ability to excel in membership development and bring the life-changing benefits and opportunities of PTK membership to students on LCC's campus. The PTK mission focuses on recognizing college students' academic achievement and providing opportunities for them to grow as scholars and leaders.

Board of Directors



Ross



Baumer

Elé's Place Capital Region is pleased to announce new community board member **Chad Ross**,

controller, The Christman Company. Chad is stepping in to fill the position of vice president of Christman, **Amy Baumer**, who served Elé's Place for six years.



Priebe-Wiles


Community leader **Carol Priebe-Wiles** has been named chair of the **Sparrow Carson Hospital** Board of Directors. Priebe-Wiles has served on the Sparrow Carson Hospital Board since 2016, and community involvement is one of her passions. Priebe-Wiles spent her career in various teaching positions in the Carson City-Crystal Area School District, including a special education instructor and first-grade teacher at Hubbardston Elementary and principal at Carson City-Crystal Lower Elementary.

Foster Swift Collins & Smith, PC has elected officers to serve on its executive committee for 2021. The officers are: **Anne M. Seuryneck** (president), **Joel C. Farrar** (secretary), **Julie I. Fershtman** (vice president), **Todd W. Hoppe** (treasurer), **David R. Russell** (co-vice president), and **Brent A. Titus** (co-vice president). In addition to its executive committee members, Foster Swift announced the firm's practice



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group leaders for 2021: Business & Tax – **Mindi M. Johnson**, Grand Rapids & **Nicholas M. Oertel**, Lansing; Employer Services: **Brian G. Goodenough**, Lansing; Finance, Real Estate & Bankruptcy – **Patricia J. Scott**, Lansing; General & Commercial Litigation – **Paul J. Millenbach**, Southfield and **Andrew C. Vredenburg**, Grand Rapids; Health Care – **Jennifer B. Van Regenmorter**, Holland; Municipal & Public Entity – **Michael D. Homier**, Grand Rapids and Trusts & Estates – **Douglas A. Mielock**, Lansing.

People



French

Police Chief **Bill French** retired from **Lansing Community College** at the end of February after 40 years. Chief French came up through the ranks, working as a patrol officer, sergeant, and lieutenant assistant chief before assuming the role of police chief nearly 12 years ago. French has been in the workforce since the age of 12, when he began as the neighborhood paperboy. He then became a student intern with the State of Michigan, worked for a construction equipment company in the parts department, and sold antiques. He moonlighted as a state inspector for athletics, overseeing pro boxing, amateur boxing, and pro wrestling.

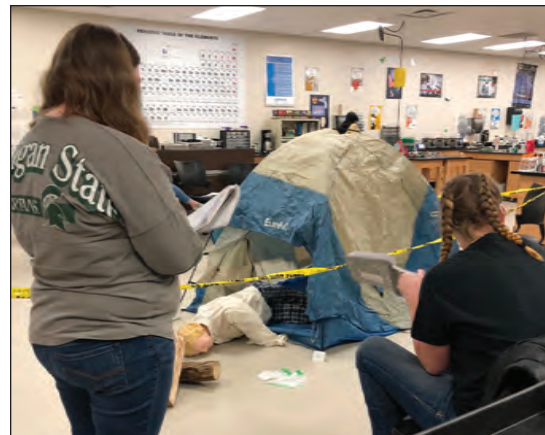
Company News



EXIT Realty Home Partners is one of those companies stepping up to impact the Lansing community. Through the Spirit of EXIT Dollar-for-Dollar Matching Program, EXIT Realty offices and associates can raise money for local charities and apply to have those funds matched from the company's pledged pool of funds. The giving spirit flows down to the local level and **REALTORS® Jonathan Lum**, the Broker Owner of EXIT Realty Home Partners, and chairman

of the board for Allen Neighborhood Center took full advantage of the matching program and challenged his friends through Facebook to donate to the Center, instead of giving a gift to him for his birthday. In three weeks, he raised a total of \$5,000 for the organization with the matching funds.

Martin Commercial Properties, a leading privately-owned real estate services and development company, has facilitated a sale at 2233 Grand River Ave. in Okemos, Michigan. The 4,486-square foot property was previously home to Okemos Studio Photography. The purchaser of the property is All Grand Events. Martin Commercial Properties represented the seller in the transaction facilitated by Martin's **Thomas Jamieson**, senior associate and office advisor, and **Carson Patten**, sales associate.



Each year during February, the Association for Career & Technical Education (ACTE) celebrates the importance of Career & Technical Education (CTE) and the opportunities it provides to students across the country through a public awareness campaign called CTE Month. **Ingham Intermediate School District** is proud to offer 19 CTE courses to students in various career pathways at the Wilson Talent Center (WTC), located in Mason, Michigan.

Following a statewide announcement from the **Michigan Economic Development Corporation**, the **Lansing Economic Area Partnership** announced 194 small businesses and nonprofits from across Clinton, Eaton, and Ingham counties received \$15,000 survival grants to alleviate impacts from the state Health Department December 2020 Gatherings and Mask Order. From the 1,045 eligible applications in the Lansing region, our region received only enough funding to support approximately 18% of the applicants.

You can now take mid-Michigan's sports leader with you wherever you go! On the **WILX News 10 Sports Blitz Podcasts** hear from coaches, players, and sports legend and News 10 sports director, **Tim Staudt** on the teams that matter

to you. Joining him is the **WILX Sports** team of **Fred Heumann**, **Kellan Buddy**, **Natalie Kerwin**, and executive producer **John Gustin**. Each week they breakdown the latest developments with area high school athletics, the pros, and of course, the Michigan State Spartans.



Sparrow Eaton Hospital's AL!VE health park is now offering a deep-tissue massage to help get the kinks out of athletes, fitness enthusiasts, or others coping with everyday pain. The Graston technique utilizes six different stainless-steel

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Baltimore Contract Manufacturing, owned and operated by Charlotte-based **The Shyft Group** (NASDAQ: SHYF), North America's leader in specialty vehicle manufacturing, assembly, and ecommerce-driven parcel delivery, as well as the broader commercial, retail, and service specialty vehicle markets, announced it will produce additional options in the F- and N-series lineups for Isuzu Commercial Truck, including the 2022 F-Series cab-over chassis, featuring the new Cummins B6.7 diesel engine, as well as the new-in-class N-Series GVWR Class 5 gasoline-powered chassis. Assembly of the Class 5 N-Series gasoline-powered chassis will begin immediately, with production on the 2022 F-Series featuring the Cummins B6.7 engine and a new Class 7 offering to commence later this year at Shyft's Charlotte facility.

MSU Federal Credit Union's (MSUFCU's) Annual Gala looked different this year as have many events since the COVID-19 pandemic began over a year ago. The Credit Union usually

celebrates the prior year's accomplishments with hors d'oeuvres, service awards, and a night out with coworkers. For the first time, the Annual Gala was held virtually on Feb. 20. Throughout the challenges of the pandemic, MSUFCU has continued to live its Mission and Core Values of: Demonstrate Integrity and Honesty; Give Back to the Community; Provide Superior Service; Encourage, Embrace, and Drive Change; Pursue Growth and Development; Build a Positive Environment; Be Passionate and Determined; and Cultivate Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.



Harris Nature Center Foundation is inviting artists of all ages and skill levels to a virtual fundraiser,

Painting Nature: Tyco the Turtle. Registrants can paint alongside a professional artist from Paint Your Poison via an interactive Zoom event, 4-6 p.m., Saturday, April 24, or receive a link to the recorded session to paint when convenient. Each \$40 painting kit provides \$15 to the foundation supporting the Harris Nature Center in Meridian Township. The foundation funds programs, exhibits, and capital improvements to enrich HNC visitor experience.

With approval from the Michigan Strategic Fund (MSF) Board Tuesday, Feb. 23, the **Lansing Economic Area Partnership (LEAP)** will receive \$100,000 in Gateway Representative support from the **Michigan Economic Development Corporation** for the seventh consecutive year. This high-tech startup program has been vital in strengthening LEAP's and the region's capacity to help lead and evolve the regional entrepreneurial ecosystem into a top 25 startup community.

Holt Public Schools will ask taxpayers to vote on a \$148 million Bond proposal on Tuesday, May 4. The proposal would include improvements in the four key areas of critical infrastructure, safety and security, learning environments, and innovation over the next eight years. Taxpayers will be asked to vote on a projected tax decrease of 1.77 mils

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compared to the previous year's tax rate. The Holt Board of Education voted to put the proposal on the ballot at the February meeting.

The **City of East Lansing** has partnered with **NAI Mid-Michigan** to offer 26.83 acres of commercial land in East Lansing's Northern Tier. The property is located at Coleman and West Roads along the southern border of Clinton and Ingham counties. This is the center of what is referred to as the "Northern Tier" – north of Lake Lansing Road – where the majority of East Lansing's vacant land is located. Following years of planning and partnerships with surrounding jurisdictions, land in this area is now ready for gateway development. Each March, the **Arts Council of Greater Lansing** celebrates Youth Art Month with its Young Creatives Billboard Project. In 2015, the Arts Council of Greater Lansing launched its "Support Young Creatives" Billboard Project and advocacy campaign, which invites area teachers to submit student art for the annual competition, which provides digital billboard space throughout the region. This year, the work of six Lansing-area youth artists will be featured on Adams Outdoor Advertising digital billboards throughout the Greater Lansing region through

March. The 2021 Young Creative billboards feature the art of the following youth artists: **Naomi Eckford**, Marble Elementary, East Lansing School District, kindergarten—teacher, Karolyn Sung; **Benjamin Eyke**, Williamston High School, Williamston Community Schools, twelfth grade—teacher, Meagan Kubu; **Zoe Jansen**, Waverly High School, Waverly Community Schools, Senior—teacher, Lisa Lam-Wilson; **Emma J. Li**, Chippewa Middle School, Okemos School District, eighth grade—teacher, Vivian Dwyer; and **Mario Mares**, Cole Academy East, Cole Academy, third grade—teacher, Samantha Davis.

Lansing-based web agency Gravity Works Design & Development has joined the **Michigan Farm Bureau** Family of Companies as part of a business acquisition. The move will give Farm Bureau full access to a dedicated team of web professionals, while also helping Gravity Works expand as an independent agency. The acquisition was completed last month. In January 2020, Farm Bureau contracted Gravity Works to redesign their public web presence, including the main website for Farm Bureau Insurance of Michigan and Michigan Farm Bureau. That product is slated to launch later this year.

LAFCU is partnering with East Lansing Public Library to present LAFCU Listen & Learn Butterflies & Bees, Wednesday, April 28, 7 p.m. It's a free, virtual, interactive event for children up to age 12 to encourage reading through fun, interesting and informative ways. It features fun reports from Michigan 4-H Children's Garden at MSU and a Grand Rapids beekeeping business, as well as music and art by young students. Lansing-area author Elaine Hardy will read her book, "Teachers Smell Like Butterflies." Register at www.lafcu.com/read. ■



If your organization has news to share, whether it's a recent promotion, award, distinction or new hire, please send your news releases or a short paragraph highlighting the good news to Ashley Sandborn, director of marketing and communications, LRCC, at asandborn@lansingchamber.org.

CHAMBER IN ACTION



Our March Member Mixer was a celebration of passions and purpose. We were pleased to welcome **Kathy Valentine** from **The Plant Professionals** as our event sponsor and **Erik Larson** from **Impression Five Science Center** as our gift card recipient. It was wonderful to hear from both businesses and how they support and impact the community and responded to the COVID pandemic. Thank you to all who attended and added their voices to the conversation. A special congratulations to the winners of our \$20 gift cards to Impression Five: **Gianni Massaro, Ryan Peterson, Rebecca Bahar-Cook, Jon Kolbasa, and Amy Wilczek.**

Advocacy in Action!

The Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce (LRCC) works with business leaders, community members, and officials from every government level to collaboratively influence and support initiatives, legislation, and regional investment – creating positive change and strengthening the Lansing region.

Our advocacy has been extremely active already in 2021 on your behalf. Make sure to check out the Advocacy tab on *the LRCC website* to stay up to date on all the information happening here in the capital city, state government, and Washington D.C. ■

LSJ OP-ED: *Greater Lansing must work together as a region to help businesses recover from COVID-19*

Bridge Michigan: *Opinion | School leaders to Whitmer: invest in early childhood education now*

WLNS: *Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce announces campaign to highlight small businesses*

MI Business Network: *Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce Announces Support for Michigan Reconnect*

LSJ OP-ED: *It's time for Michigan to return to in-person schooling, get economy back on track.*

WLNS: *Lansing Regional Chamber joins call for National Infrastructure Package*

MI Business Network: *Lansing Chamber Joins Call To Extended PPP Application Deadline*

LSJ OP-ED: *Education and business partnership: A Path Forward for Greater Lansing*

MLIVE: *Business leaders to Whitmer: It's time to let employees work in offices again*

Crain's Detroit: *Business groups start push to ease restrictions on office work*

Crain's Detroit: *Michigan business groups to Whitmer: Time to ease office-work restrictions*

Crain's Detroit: *Whitmer administration 'very likely' to extend ban on in-person office work beyond April 14*

Michigan Advance: *Lawmaker renews fight to ban discrimination based on hair*

517: *Lansing Chamber urges Governor, Lawmakers to Authorize Reopening of Meeting/Event Venues*

Bridge: *Michigan work went remote. Businesses now weigh whether they need offices.*

MLIVE: *Extending office ban 6 months would be bad for Michigan, business leaders say*



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