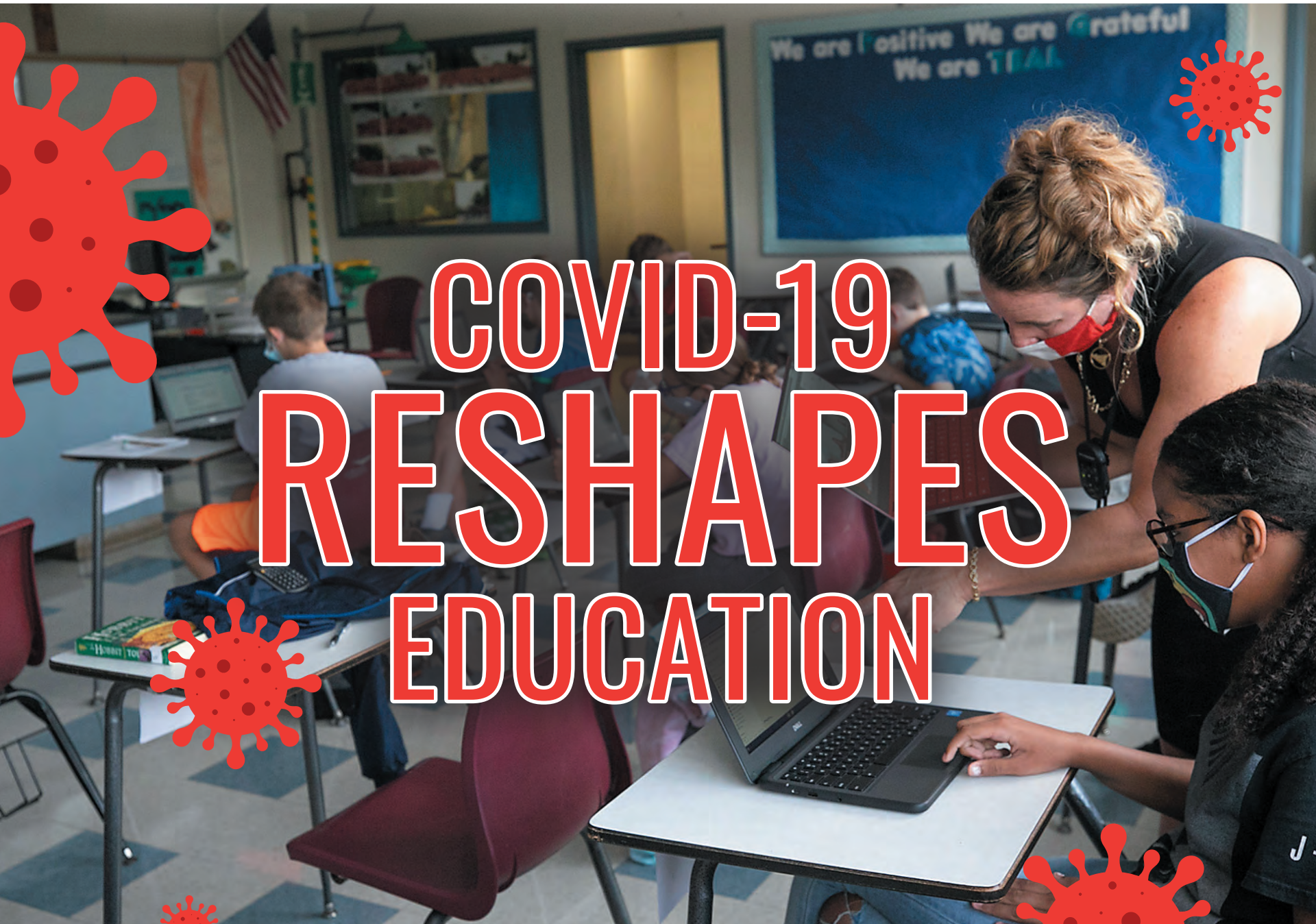


# FOCUS

THE MONTHLY BUSINESS NEWS MAGAZINE OF THE LANSING REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE • AUGUST 2021



## COVID-19 RESHAPES EDUCATION

### IN THIS ISSUE

MSU FOOTBALL COACH TALKS LEADERSHIP WITH ECONOMIC CLUB  
TECHSMITH BREAKS GROUND ON NEW CORPORATE HEADQUARTERS  
TIME FOR ATHENA NOMINATIONS



**TIM DAMAN**  
*President and CEO*  
*Lansing Regional*  
*Chamber of Commerce*



# Leveraging Community Partnerships for Today's Students and Tomorrow's Workforce

The new school year in K-12 and higher education marks the beginning of a new era. The fall reopening marks the return to in-person classes for the region's largest K-12 district, Lansing schools, Michigan State University (MSU) and Lansing Community College (LCC). Though we are still feeling the challenges of COVID-19, educators, parents, staff and students will begin to experience an education system that the forces of the pandemic have forever changed.

There have been many lessons learned in education as a result of the pandemic. The successful rapid shift to virtual technology has shown that not only can it be done but that virtual education will play a role in delivering instruction. Though we know that the in-classroom experience is the best for most students, virtual learning is an important option that can and will be utilized going forward.

Earlier this year, I had the privilege of co-authoring an article for the Lansing State Journal with Jason Mellema, superintendent of the Ingham Intermediate School District. We wrote about several important developments during the COVID-19 pandemic that can serve us well as a region as we work together to build a better education system going forward. First, the pandemic brought a much higher level of community engagement which we need to continue in the future.

The need for community engagement must also include the business community. The Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce (LRCC) was proud to convene a business-education meeting earlier this year. Both educators and business leaders expressed a desire to better understand each other and work together to provide more opportunities for students, in terms of mentorships, internships and job opportunities. We all recognize that today's students are tomorrow's workforce and have a mutual stake in educational outcomes. The LRCC has committed to convening our business-education task force on at least a quarterly basis going forward.

The other important understanding for education that has come out of COVID-19 is that it is time to reassess how we do education. For example, the State of Michigan requires 180 in-person classroom days and 1,098 hours per year for each student for traditional schools. The school calendar is one example of a long-held education tradition that should be reviewed; technology and access to the internet are others.

Our region is fortunate to have many outstanding educational leaders. That group is joined by new superintendents Ben Shuldiner in Lansing, Marcus Davenport in Grand Ledge, and Shanna Spickard in Dewitt. We are happy to welcome them to the region and wish them well. It is also worth noting that MSU President Samuel Stanley and LCC President Steve Robinson have spent much of their brief tenures working under the constraints imposed by COVID-19. We know they are looking forward to serving their great institutions under more "normal" circumstances.

Our region has always been fortunate to have great leaders who rise to the challenges that have come before us. Let's bring our education and business leaders together to determine the best approaches that work for today's students and our workforce of tomorrow. ■



**Our region has always been fortunate to have great leaders who rise to the challenges that have come before us. Let's bring our education and business leaders together to determine the best approaches that work for today's students and our workforce of tomorrow.**


**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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Dr. Alane Laws-Barker / Sparrow

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**Cover Design**

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**Grub Crawl 2021**  
**THURSDAY, OCT. 7 • 5-8PM**  
 DOWNTOWN LANSING  
 Register at [lansingchamber.org](http://lansingchamber.org)

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH: DOWNTOWN LANSING INC.  
 PRESENTED BY: B.W.L. Hometown People. Hometown Power.  
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The Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce (LRCC) hosts numerous events monthly, from Member Mixers to Lansing Economic Club programs. The events and programming provide valuable content and information and give members unique opportunities to connect and network. The LRCC also continues to host weekly roundtables virtually 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 upcoming educational offerings and networking opportunities.

*Registration is available on the LRCC website.*

### AUGUST MEMBER MIXER

**Date/Time:** Tuesday, Aug. 10 from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m.

**Location:** WLNS-TV 6 – 2820 E. Saginaw St., Lansing, MI 48912

**Description:** Hosted by WLNS-TV 6, the August Member Mixer will be held in-person from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. Join us for this free, fun event, and engage with fellow LRCC members and business professionals to connect and build new relationships.

### EXECUTIVE WELCOME

**Date/Time:** Wednesday, Sept. 8 from 8 to 9:30 a.m.

**Location:** MSU Federal Credit Union Headquarters Community Room – 3777 West Road, East Lansing, MI 48823

**Description:** Presented by Delta Dental, the Executive Welcome will recognize six regional female leaders who are new to their positions since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Leaders being recognized include Helen Johnson (Sparrow Eaton Hospital), Cindy Kangas (Capital Area Manufacturing Council), Michelle Lantz (Greater Lansing Food Bank), Julie Pingston (Greater Lansing Convention & Visitors Bureau), Carrie Rosingana (Capital Area Michigan Works!) and Nicole Noll-Williams (Capital Region Airport Authority).

### Grub Crawl

**Date/Time:** Thursday, Oct. 7 from 5 to 8 p.m.

**Location:** Washington Square - Downtown Lansing

**Description:** Presented by the Lansing Board of Water & Light, the LRCC's Grub Crawl is back and taking over downtown Lansing! Downtown Lansing restaurants will be serving up great grub and drink specials. This celebration of food and drink is an excellent opportunity to support our local community and grow awareness of the restaurants in the Greater Lansing area. Use this event to get together with friends, enjoy a night out or provide a bonding opportunity for your corporate team.

### 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, Aug. 4 from 9 to 10 a.m.
- **Lansing - Delhi Township:** Wednesday, Aug. 11 from 9 to 10 a.m.
- **East Lansing - Meridian Township:** Wednesday, Aug. 18 from 9 to 10 a.m.

### STAY CONNECTED. STAY SOCIAL.

 [facebook.com/LansingChamber](https://facebook.com/LansingChamber)

 [twitter.com/LansingChamber](https://twitter.com/LansingChamber)

 [@LansingRegionalChamber](https://www.instagram.com/LansingRegionalChamber)

 [Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce](https://www.linkedin.com/company/LansingRegionalChamber)

- |   |   |                                   |
|---|---|-----------------------------------|
| Best One Fleet Service                  | Hilton Garden Inn<br>Lansing West                         | MetroNet                          |
| Bornor Restoration, Inc.                | Hope Sports Complex                                       | MH Specialist, Inc.               |
| Buildtech, Ltd.                         | Kositchek's   | Michigan State<br>University      |
| Capital Asphalt, LLC                    | KTM Industries, Inc.                                      | Michigan Supply &<br>Provisions   |
| CG Financial Services                   | LaFontaine Ford of<br>Lansing                             | Michigrain Distillery             |
| Contract Supply, Inc.                   | Lakeside Party Store                                      | Mulder Company                    |
| Dean Transportation,<br>Inc.            | Lansing Courtyard by<br>Marriott                          | Myers Plumbing &<br>Heating, Inc. |
| Delhi Stratford<br>Apartments           | Lansing Entertainment<br>& Public Facilities<br>Authority | Netvantage Marketing              |
| Disability Network<br>Capital Area      | Lansing Housing<br>Commission                             | NTH Consultants, Ltd.             |
| Eaton Rapids Medical<br>Center          | La-Z-Boy Furniture<br>Gallery                             | Okemos Marathon                   |
| Ellis Cleaning Company                  | Lebuda-Totte-Bray<br>Agency                               | Personnel World, Inc.             |
| Equanimity Wealth<br>Management         | Lyman & Sheets<br>Insurance Agency                        | Pratt & Whitney<br>AutoAir, Inc.  |
| Eric's Refuse, LLC                      | Mark Spagnuolo  | PTS Contracting                   |
| Executive Living, Inc.                  | Mayberry Homes  | Redwood Delta<br>Township         |
| Fairview Realty Co.                     | McCardel Restoration,<br>LLC                              | Reed Insurance Agency             |
| Gabriels Community<br>Credit Union      | Medler Electric<br>Company                                | Rosier Consultants, LLC           |
| Greenlee Consulting                     | Merrill Lynch   | Shotwell Rutter Baer              |
| Hanes & Associates,<br>PLLC             |   | SM Saputo, LLC                    |
| High Caliber Karting &<br>Entertainment |   | TGG Solutions                     |
|   |   | The Willows at Okemos             |
|   |   | Woodbridge Commons<br>Cooperative |

**WELCOME NEW MEMBERS**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <p><b>Allied Universal Security Services</b><br/>(248) 663-2000<br/><i>aus.com</i><br/>1000 Town Center<br/>Suite 2430<br/>Southfield, MI 48075</p> <p><b>Cafecito Caliente</b><br/>(517) 303-7001<br/><i>cafecitocaliente.com</i><br/>P.O.Box 735<br/>East Lansing, MI 48826</p> <p><b>Capital Area Health Alliance</b><br/>(517) 347-3377<br/><i>capitalarehealthalliance.org</i><br/>2123 University Park Drive, Suite 105<br/>Okemos, MI 48864</p> <p><b>Doberman Technologies, LLC</b><br/>(517) 978-8324<br/><i>doberman.net</i><br/>205 Mason St.<br/>Mason, MI 48854</p> <p><b>East Lansing Public Library</b><br/>(517) 351-2420<br/><i>elpl.org</i><br/>950 Abbot Road<br/>East Lansing, MI 48823</p> <p><b>Lansing Pharaohs</b><br/>(810) 459-4745<br/><i>lansingpharaohs.com</i><br/>31 N. Saginaw St.<br/>Pontiac, MI 48342</p> | <p><b>M&amp;M Moving of Lansing</b><br/>(517) 977-8859<br/><i>mmmovingandstorage.com</i><br/>800 E. St. Joseph St.<br/>Lansing, MI 48912</p> <p><b>Q-Pid's Love Scrubs and More</b><br/>(517) 862-7650<br/>1637 Park Ave.<br/>Lansing, MI 48910</p> <p><b>Redwood Dewitt</b><br/>(833) 899-2917<br/><i>byredwood.com/apartments/mi/dewitt/redwood-dewitt</i><br/>1320 Clarion Road #1<br/>Dewitt, MI 48820</p> <p><b>Sweet Encounter Bakery &amp; Cafe</b><br/>(240) 620-5930<br/><i>sweetencounterkids.com</i><br/>228 S. Washington Square, Suite #100<br/>Lansing, MI 48933</p> <p><b>Victor Solutions LLC</b><br/><i>victorsolves.com</i><br/>P.O. Box 1542<br/>Okemos, MI 48805</p> |
|--|--|

**Saving the Family Cottage**



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**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!

- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <p><b>Principal Financial Group - Benjamin Eichler</b><br/>45 Years</p> <p><b>WLNS TV 6</b><br/>45 Years</p> <p><b>Capital Area Humane Society</b><br/>30 Years</p> <p><b>Eagle Eye Golf &amp; Banquet Center</b><br/>25 Years</p> <p><b>Nuthouse Sports Grill</b><br/>25 Years</p> | <p><b>Central Michigan University East Lansing Center</b><br/>15 Years</p> <p><b>Townsquare Media</b><br/>15 Years</p> <p><b>Triton Industries Inc.-Manitou Pontoon Boats</b><br/>15 Years</p> <p><b>Association for Child Development</b><br/>10 Years</p> <p><b>Chase Creative</b><br/>10 Years</p> | <p><b>Troppo/Tavern and Tap</b><br/>10 Years</p> <p><b>Exit Realty Home Partners</b><br/>5 Years</p> <p><b>Hubbell Roth &amp; Clark, Inc.</b><br/>5 Years</p> <p><b>Peak Performance Physical Therapy</b><br/>5 Years</p> <p><b>Personnel World - Holt</b><br/>5 Years</p> |
|---|---|--|

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](http://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.



## Nominations Open for ATHENA Leadership Award

The ATHENA Leadership Award was created in 1982 by Martha Mertz, former president of the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce (LRCC).

The award honors individuals who strive towards the highest levels of professional accomplishment, excel in their chosen field, have devoted time and energy to their community, and pave paths for other women to follow. It also celebrates the potential of all women as leaders of the community and recognizes those who support them. Nominations are due by Friday, Sept. 17. The nomination form and award criteria can be accessed at: [bit.ly/ATHENA-Nominations](http://bit.ly/ATHENA-Nominations). ■

## Leadership Lansing Applications Being Accepted for 2021-22 Cohort

Applications are being accepted for participating in the 2021-22 Leadership Lansing cohort. This year's cohort will run from October to May with one meeting each month except for December.



Leadership Lansing is a program offered by the LRCC and is designed to help develop and equip the next generation of community leaders. The program features full-day workshops, including speakers, panel discussions, field trips, individual leadership skill development and networking with other leaders from around the region. In the past six years, 227 outstanding leaders have completed the Leadership Lansing program.

Applications for this year's Leadership Lansing cohort are available at [lansingchamber.org/leadership-lansing](http://lansingchamber.org/leadership-lansing). Deadline for submission is Friday, Sept. 17. ■

## Recover, Relearn, and Return to Life

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# Governor Whitmer Breaks Ground at High-Tech Software Company TechSmith's New International Headquarters in East Lansing

**G**overnor Gretchen Whitmer broke ground on TechSmith's new headquarters in East Lansing, a leading software development company that will create up to 50 jobs and retain 275 jobs. The event was held on Tuesday, June 29. Governor Whitmer was joined by Dr. Samuel L. Stanley, Jr., M.D., president of Michigan State University (MSU) and Wendy Hamilton, CEO of TechSmith.

"TechSmith's investment in East Lansing proves once again that Michigan is a world leader in innovation and further cements the Lansing region as a tech and professional services hub in the state," said Governor Whitmer. "This new headquarters facility will create up to 50 new good-paying, high-tech jobs for Michigan workers and underscores the strength of Michigan's tech talent. As we jumpstart Michigan's economy, today's groundbreaking is helping to build the path for economic growth and recovery right here in mid-Michigan."

**TechSmith** is a high-tech software development company focusing on capturing screen content for better communication. Its software is used as an aide for training, tutorials, scholastic lessons, and everyday communication. The company consolidates five existing facilities into one new headquarters building near the former Spartan Village in East Lansing. The greenspace will need infrastructure investment to connect utilities, water drainage, fiber optics, and road improvements. The MSU Foundation has agreed to cover most infrastructure improvements with an estimated investment of about \$2 million.

"We're pleased to welcome TechSmith to a location closer to our campus," said Stanley. "They have been a great collaborator with the university for over a decade, and this move will facilitate opportunities to further build upon our relationship."

The project is expected to generate a total capital investment of \$15 million with the support of a \$250,000 **Jobs Ready Michigan performance-based grant** from the Michigan Strategic Fund, awarded in December. Michigan was chosen over competing sites in Florida, Texas, and Maryland.

"In a growing tech company, it's all about attracting and enabling the right talent," said Hamilton. "We look forward to providing a world-class tech facility to our amazing team that reinforces our culture, creativity, and collaboration. We are also committed to supporting Michigan State University and the Lansing region as community stakeholders. We would like to thank so many partners that have helped get us to this partnership off the ground, including MSU, the MSU Foundation, the City of East Lansing, the Lansing Economic Area Partnership, the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, and other partners."

The Lansing Economic Area Partnership (LEAP) assisted TechSmith in identifying and evaluating locations throughout the region. Additionally, LEAP has been vital to partnering and packaging TechSmith's project with key governmental agencies and local business partners.



"This project will create and retain good, high paying jobs in a booming industry and at an internationally known local company – precisely the high-value targeted jobs people want and the type of jobs we need in the region," said Bob Trezise, president and CEO of LEAP.

Since its founding, TechSmith has focused on embracing an employee-centric mindset and prides itself on offering compensation packages that exceed industry standards, along with providing professional pathways for every employee. To find and attract talent, TechSmith also has an extensive internship program that brings interns to the Lansing area each summer from many different universities and colleges, and provides year-round internships to local students from MSU and Lansing Community College.

The company expects the new building to be a recruiting tool that will include modern design, open work areas, and employee comforts mimicking accommodations found at software companies based in Silicon Valley.

The project builds on economic prosperity efforts led by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) by supporting a business in the target industries of tech and professional and corporate services and fostering high-wage job growth.

"The Lansing area continues to establish itself as a growing tech and professional services hub in the state and this investment by TechSmith further underscores the competitive advantages our state has to offer growing tech businesses – from the strength of our business climate to our talented workforce. Michigan is grateful for the TechSmith team's continued vote of confidence in Michiganders," said Josh Hundt, chief business development officer and executive vice president of MEDC. "We're proud to work with LEAP, the MSU Foundation and other local partners as we send the message that Michigan's economy is recovering, and we are going to keep this momentum going." ■

# Wharton Center Executive Director, Mike Brand, Announces Retirement

**A**fter 17 years as Executive Director of the Wharton Center Mike Brand has announced his plans to retire by June 2022.

“MSU’s Wharton Center provides world-class performing arts opportunities for the campus community, Greater Lansing region, and beyond,” said Michigan State University (MSU) Provost Teresa K. Woodruff, Ph.D. “Mr. Brand has been at the center of those contributions for 17 years, ensuring the high quality and rich diversity of Wharton Center’s programming while advancing the arts as a vital component of Michigan State University’s mission and values.”



Brand

Wharton Center has experienced significant growth under Mike Brand’s leadership, expanding from an annual operating budget of \$5 million in 2003 to \$16 million in 2019. Brand’s guidance has continued through the pandemic, with the 2021-22 season signaling Wharton Center’s return to the stage with a lineup of programming, including Leslie Odom, Jr., Itzhak Perlman, and the return of Hamilton.

“Throughout my time at Wharton Center, my goal has been to make it a place where the community comes together to experience the best of live performing arts. This season reflects that work,” said Brand.

Among Brand’s many accomplishments was integrating the work of Wharton Center into MSU colleges and units. He recognized the vital role the arts play in the academic and student life experience on campus. Brand also fostered a partnership with the MSU Federal Credit Union, resulting in the creation of the Institute for Arts and Creativity, which provides accessible art education programs to nearly 30,000 learners across the state of Michigan each season.

Brand’s work with the Broadway League, the national trade association for the Broadway industry, spans more than 40 years. He is a member of the League’s Board of Governors, currently serving on his second three-year term, is a member of the National High School Musical Awards Advisory Board, and formerly



served as the League’s Audience Engagement Committee co-chair. In addition, he has been a Tony Award® voter for 32 years.

“I’d like to thank all involved with Wharton Center over these past 17 years,” said Brand. “The MSU administration, Wharton Center’s donors and patrons, and the Center’s staff for making all this possible. A special thanks to the members of the Wharton Center’s Advisory Council and Inner Circle.”

Before joining Wharton Center, Brand worked in the performing arts industry as a performer, teacher, and presenter. He was a Regional Vice President for Clear Channel Entertainment, where he initiated the rebirth of the Baltimore Center for Performing Arts and played a significant role in creating the Fox Cities Performing Arts Center in Appleton, Wisconsin. Brand also served as Executive Director of Jujamcyn Productions in Minneapolis and served as the first Vice President for Programming and Marketing at the Ordway Music Theater in St. Paul, Minn.

As a performer, Brand spent 16 seasons performing trumpet with the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, and the Minnesota Orchestra and the Minnesota Opera Orchestra. ■

# Construction of a New Five-Story Patient Tower Planned at Sparrow Hospital

**T**he Sparrow Health System Board of Directors has unanimously approved an \$800 million capital plan, which includes \$350 million toward building a new, five-story North Tower at E.W. Sparrow Hospital (EWSH) campus, infrastructure improvements at the Central Utility Plant, and investments in their community hospitals, among other investments.

“The proposed \$800 million capital improvement plan reflects our long-standing commitment as the region’s only community-owned, community-based, community-governed health system, inspired by the community we serve,” said James Dover, CEO, Sparrow Health System. “We are working towards a bold vision to be nationally



recognized as a quality and patient experience leader for decades to come. The capital plan also demonstrates Sparrow’s commitment to all our caregivers and our region’s economy. As mid-Michigan’s largest private employer, with nearly 9,000 caregivers, this new investment will keep jobs in our region and promote future employment growth.”

This major addition to the EWSH campus will add 72 new medical beds and a 40-bed observation unit, creating 112 new private rooms. It will also add 16 new labor and delivery rooms. The new inpatient space is needed to meet current patient demand, provide all-private rooms, renovate existing semi-private rooms, and expand the Central Utility Plant. ■

# Businesses Working Together to Lift Up Community

One of the most uplifting developments during the COVID-19 pandemic was the determination of small businesses throughout the region to reach out and help those in need. Many of those businesses were enduring their challenges but set aside their struggles to lift the community.

The Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce’s (LRCC) Voice of Small Business campaign continues to recognize the tremendous ability of our region’s small businesses to overcome the many obstacles created by the COVID-19 pandemic. The campaign has been generously underwritten by Blue Cross Blue Shield and Blue Care Network of Michigan.

This month, we feature nine organizations that have used the face of the COVID-19 pandemic to support the community: **mConnexions, Lansing Art Gallery and Education Center, Michigan Premier Events, Goodfellas Bagel Deli, MessageMakers, Mother and Earth Baby Boutique, ThrdGeneration, Communities in Schools in Michigan** and **Everything is Cheescake**.



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 LRCC Voice of Small Business campaign.

## mConnexions

At mConnexions, building connections is at the heart of what they do. With strategic branding, digital marketing, and content creation at their core, the mConnexions team builds, implements, and manages custom marketing strategies to help their clients grow.



Before the statewide shutdown started in Michigan, the team at mConnexions launched a series of daily Facebook Live interviews called “Expert Connexions”. mConnexions owner Julie Holton found her background as an executive producer in television news to be most beneficial.

“Even though I own a marketing agency, I started to feel like a business or life consultant more than a marketing consultant -- because we were all trying to figure out what to do,” said Holton. “I was having so many calls with clients and community members who could help each other -- so the series was designed to connect business leaders to the answers they needed.”

In all, the mConnexions team interviewed around 60 people who shared their guidance freely.

“I think we provided a powerful way for people to connect,” said Holton. “We had more than 35,000 people watch our video series. Some have told me that they found the information invaluable - others loved the consistency of having a way to connect while feeling stuck at home during a scary time.”

The segment has been so successful that Expert Connexions has turned into a TV show. It airs every Monday at 9 a.m. on WLAJ, right after Good Morning America. Regular contributors include experts from Foster Swift (Legal Connexions), SuperWebPros, UnoDeuce Multimedia, and Symposia Labs (Marketing Connexions), Shari Pash of Strategic Solutions for Growth (Sales Connexions), and She Leads Michigan (Heart & Soul Connexions). In addition, they also have three Style Connexions partners: Polka Dots Boutique, The Standard Spa, and Beauty by Wilder.

For more information about mConnexions, visit: [mconnexions.com](http://mconnexions.com).

## Lansing Art Gallery & Education Center



Serving as one of Michigan’s key cultural resources, the Lansing Art Gallery & Education Center inspires and ignites a passion for the visual arts, providing a forum for self-expression and community engagement. Founded in 1965, the Lansing Art Gallery and Education Center provides public awareness, education, and enjoyment of the visual arts by promoting the works of Michigan artists. As a non-profit organization, they offer free and accessible opportunities to experience the visual arts through exhibitions, educational programming, and a gallery featuring Michigan artists.

Community support kept the Lansing Art Gallery alive despite the pandemic.

“We need the arts more than ever, and our team has risen to the challenge,” said Barb Whitney, executive director, Lansing Art Gallery & Education Center. “As we navigated a changing landscape and produced online and outdoor programming, our staff, and board turned to the artists as well as the Community Foundation, donors and sponsors.”

Despite the pandemic, Whitney says the team has been able to increase access to the arts. Once the weather allowed, the team produced outdoor public art, created a series of outdoor masked artist talks, and began popping up safe, outdoor art fair shops in front of the gallery.

“The arts shine in times of crisis,” said Whitney. “Innovation has been vital in our organization’s journey. Ultimately, we are still here because our community believes in the power of the arts. Our board and staff share a steadfast commitment that the visual arts are very important in our community.”

Located in downtown Lansing, the Lansing Art Gallery & Education Center has provided more than 500 free art exhibitions and granted over \$110,000 in awards for students. They are building a legacy through engaging programs, a permanent cultural facility, and public art projects outside the gallery walls. For more information, visit: [lansingartgallery.org](http://lansingartgallery.org).



## Michigan Premier Events

Michigan Premier Events is a full-service award-winning association, corporate and government event management company, delivering superior results for corporations, government, and associations across Michigan, statewide and nationally.



The pandemic presented Michigan Premier Events with the opportunity to be a strategic partner with companies that faced the challenge of converting from in-person to virtual events.

“We have a team of experts who are in that realm of live streaming, managing event financials, speaker sourcing and working with other vendors,” Ashlee R. Willis, CEO and founder, Michigan Premier Events. “We encouraged people to keep going, knowing that events would look and feel different.”

Michigan Premier Events also assisted with several community events that had to be put on pause. The company helped shifting in-person events to virtual and broadcast television. Michigan Premier Events also transitioned community events to be safe.

“Last year, we started a campaign to help showcase small businesses,” said

Willis. “Michigan Premier Events and Downtown Lansing, Inc. got together and developed a campaign calling it, “Lift Up Local,” where we give exposure to small businesses and encourage the community to shop local.”

The campaign also had Lift Up Local ambassadors create a focus of furthering Lift Up Local social media presence with their involvement in Lansing’s art, entrepreneurial, food, non-profit, recreational, and retail scenes through their own social media networks. Michigan Premier Events and other corporate partners funded Lift Up Local gift cards for the ambassadors to help encourage the community to support small businesses.

“We want to keep the momentum going because we know this is important,” said Willis.

Whether your organization needs assistance managing board meetings and events or strategizing and hosting excellent programs, seminars, conferences, and special events, Michigan Premier Events alleviates the guesswork, time, and effort so you can focus on serving your stakeholders. For more information, visit: [MichiganPremierEvents.com](http://MichiganPremierEvents.com).

## Goodfellas Bagel Deli

Composed of two Lansing natives and close friends comes the birth of Goodfellas Bagel Deli. When the idea came to Adrian Joseph and Nathan Parisian, they knew they had one focus above all, sourcing and supporting local ingredients while at the same time crafting creations that embody the foods we love to eat. Tons of research and development went into their menu.

Interacting with customers is what the food industry relies upon for

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# Businesses Working Together to Lift Up Community



business. When the pandemic broke, Goodfellas moved to change how those interactions took place.

“Especially for us because we opened in February, which is when everything hit the fan,” Adrian Joseph, owner, Goodfellas Bagel Deli. “We determined that we would remain resilient.”

Goodfellas also moved quickly to take advantage of their social media platforms. That allowed Goodfellas to interact with customers without them physically being in their space.

“We just made sure we responded to people and kept the public updated on our policies during the pandemic,” said Joseph. “The community was great. Everyone understood we had one goal in mind, and it was a great effort on everyone’s part.”

Goodfellas was also grateful for the support of a number of community organizations that reached out in the interest of stimulating business in downtown. Through it all, Goodfellas was steadfast in sticking to its mission.

“Providing great service and products was our primary emphasis from the beginning,” said Joseph. “As long as you stick to your mission statement you set out with you have a structure and a code. You should be able to make it just fine.”

Located conveniently in the Stadium District in downtown Lansing, Goodfellas is close to all state and local office buildings and deliver in-house. For more information, visit: [goodfellasbageldeli.com](http://goodfellasbageldeli.com).



MessageMakers produced the 2021 Michigan Celebrates Small Business Awards Gala as a hybrid event at the Breslin Center.

## MessageMakers

For more than 40 years, MessageMakers has delivered quality marketing and communications services for a globally diverse clientele nationally and in more than thirty international markets. They design, develop, and produce award-winning programs that connect organizations and audiences, working toward powerful and measurable results.

The stories that MessageMakers tell come to life through video, events, design, and increasingly live streaming virtual event production. Tom Lietz, chief creative officer for MessageMakers says that despite the COVID-19 pandemic’s challenges, the firm has been able to help clients stay connected through virtual events. “This has, of course, been a time of tremendous change and challenge,” said Lietz. “But the fundamental need for all of us to connect has been a consistent through-line. I’m grateful that we’ve had the opportunity to help so many of our clients to bring their events and live communications online. And it’s amazing now that we’re going to be able to help so many with the pivot to hybrid event production.”

In the past year, MessageMakers live production has supported virtual events ranging from Lansing Economic Clubs, to Census town halls, statewide vaccination press events, online award programs, annual meetings, non-profit fundraisers, and even international conferences.

“In many cases, people have been growing their communities as they make their programming more accessible online,” said Lietz. “And that growth is a big part of why I think so many are considering hybrid events as a big part of their communications strategy moving forward.”

MessageMakers has been hosting a series of free workshops on hybrid event production this summer. The third event in the series will be live on Aug.

10 at 10 a.m. EDT, and available for replay. Registration is now open at [crowdcast.io/e/howtobuildcommunity](https://crowdcast.io/e/howtobuildcommunity).

For more information about MessageMakers, visit: [messagemakers.com](https://messagemakers.com).

## Mother and Earth Baby Boutique

The journey of Mother & Earth began when owner Lynn Ross was pregnant with her first son. To save money after losing her job, she started researching cloth diapering- only to learn there weren't many options to shop locally around the Lansing area. Lynn began to pay attention to the products she used in her home and around her family and their impact on the environment. In July of 2011, this sparked an idea of the beginnings of Mother & Earth Baby Boutique. From the beginning, the mission of Mother & Earth was to provide natural, sustainable, and practical products for growing families. Though their product lines have expanded, they still pride themselves on choosing products and brands that are socially and environmentally ethical, sustainable as possible, and most of all: safe.



After closing the store early during the early stages of the pandemic, Mother & Earth launched a curbside pick-up service. To reach customers, Lynn also started to go live on Facebook several times a day.

“We weren't always selling things. Sometimes we were just being positive, reading a bedtime story or showing the new toys we got in,” said Ross. “I

knew being a parent during that time was very scary, so I wanted to be that light in the darkness for them.”

Mother & Earth has been able to grow during the pandemic and move into a larger space.

“I'm not sure that would have happened without the pandemic,” said Ross. “We've had some record months. We've found new ways to reach customers and upgrade our website, so it is very shoppable.”

Mother and Earth Baby Boutique is located on the corner of Cesar E. Chavez and Washington Avenue in the vibrant Old Town neighborhood. For more information, visit: [motherandearth.com](https://motherandearth.com).

## Communities In Schools of Michigan

The mission of Communities In Schools (CIS) of Michigan is to surround students with a community of support, empowering them to stay in school and achieve in life. CIS of Michigan works to ensure every student, regardless of race, zip code, or socioeconomic background, has what they need to realize their potential in school and beyond. Working directly inside schools across the state, CIS of Michigan connects students to caring adults and community resources that help them see, confront, and overcome the barriers that stand between them and a brighter future.

CIS of Michigan is a statewide non-profit and has been focused on their local work with the amount of effort and sustainability they would need to ensure students received the support they needed.

“Schools shut down on March 13, and on March 16, we were there connecting with kids, providing them food and providing them with weekend survival kits,” said Mallory DePrekel, CEO, Communities in Schools of Michigan. “We set up our case management services virtually. We did read buddies online and provided turkeys to families during the holidays.”

CIS of Michigan used all that was going on in the world the past year and turned it into how they were going to be able to serve youth in Michigan.

“It is 23,000 kids statewide, and all of those kids come from diverse backgrounds, so it is essential for us as an organization to reflect what they

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# Businesses Working Together to Lift Up Community

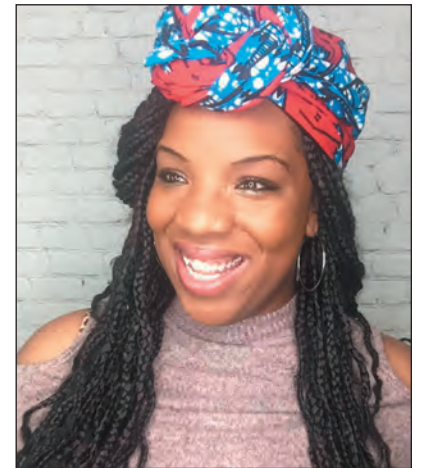


need,” said DePrekel. “We cannot support students with the basic needs if we are not digging into the major issues.”

Among those major issues are health equity, racial equity, and social equity are all part of the work at CIS. They have been at the forefront of all of that and more during the pandemic. For more information about CIS of Michigan, visit: [cismichigan.org](http://cismichigan.org).

## Thrd Generation

Thrd Generation specializes in creating and providing African-inspired pieces. They make anything from hats, bows, and now masks. They have recently moved into carrying authentic clothing, artifacts, and instruments. Owner Bianca McCastle started the company to pay homage to those who went before her, particularly her great grandmother, grandmother, and mother.



“It’s been my way to say thank you for the sacrifices they have made,” said McCastle. “I am thankful for the time and energy they put into their artistry as designers, as a seamstress and as artists.”

McCastle says it has been a rollercoaster of experiences as an entrepreneur, let alone having a business during the pandemic.

“It has taught me what it means to serve the community,” said McCastle. “Once the pandemic started and the call was out for all seamstresses to come to the table. For us it was an opportunity to create masks that people would be willing to wear. Something breathable, light and fitting.”

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There were ups and downs and lots of learning curves along the way, but it has turned into a worthwhile experience.

“We’ve actually grown from where we were three years ago,” said McCastle. “I know that is specifically, from serving the community.”

McCastle says the past year has taken Thrd Generation to the next level and shifted the company’s perspective in terms of business and what they want to do going forward.

“We are asking ourselves how best can we serve the community and the country on a larger scale” said McCastle. “Thrd Generation has not only shifted in that regard, we have excelled. I believe that is how we have been able to survive.”

## Everything is Cheesecake

Everything is Cheesecake is a bakery specializing in customizable cheesecakes. Owner DeAnna Brown has been making cheesecakes since she was in high school. She eventually decided to turn her passion at which all her friends said she excelled into a business.

The past year’s challenges meant lots of obstacles and, in many ways, forced Everything is Cheesecake to become more innovative and go beyond personal limitations. “COVID-19 definitely took a financial toll on our business,” said Brown. “However, I looked beyond the numbers and began to focus on how I could be of help to the community.”

Everything is Cheesecake set out to make a difference in the community,

first by providing three weeks of free lunches for children and displaced workers.

“It was one of the most rewarding things I have ever done,” said Brown. “It was such a great feeling.”

In 2021, Brown says that to truly recover from the pandemic successfully, we must all do our part collectively.

“You have to be able to serve the community not just create a need for your services,” said Brown.

Customers of Everything is Cheesecake will tell you it is the best cheesecake in town.

- “Hands down the best cheesecake anywhere,” said Kathy M.
- “Amazing and unique cheesecakes,” said Tim K.
- “Umm wow! Just go get it! and consider yourself lucky if you grab a slice. Best cheesecake in town and great service,” said Lynn B.

Everything Cheesecake is located at 5443 S. Cedar St., Lansing. For more information, visit: [everything-is-cheesecake.business.site](http://everything-is-cheesecake.business.site). ■



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**T**he COVID-19 pandemic forced dramatic upheaval in education. Teachers and staff received a crash course in virtual learning. Parents and students had to quickly adjust to the new reality of learning from their home computers. Remote learning worked well for some and not others. Glaring inequities became evident in the lack of access to high-speed broadband.

Most people agree that students do best when in a classroom environment with a teacher and other students in the room. Most schools in the Greater Lansing region were able to return to in-person instruction in the second semester of the last school year. For the Lansing Schools, the region's largest K-12 district, the new school year marks the first for in-person instruction since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The same is true in higher education at Michigan State University (MSU).

The return to in-person classes this year is not without questions and concerns. There are still the unknowns around whether students lost a significant amount of learning during the past year. There are widespread uncertainties around the spread of new COVID-19 variants and what will happen should a new outbreak occur. Guidance on mask protocols from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and State of Michigan is also a moving target for educators. There are also concerns about the lack of vaccines for younger students.

Many educators we have spoken to in recent weeks also see the return to classes as a new beginning and an opportunity to take lessons learned during the pandemic and build a better education system. This includes leveraging advances in technology in ways that meet the individual needs of diverse groups of students, one that promotes equal access for all students and perhaps a system that breaks down long-held assumptions that may no longer be valid.

### **Schools Return to (Almost) Normal**

When Lansing schools open on Aug. 30, it will mark the return to in-person classes under the leadership of a new superintendent, Ben Shuldiner, who officially began his duties on July 1. Shuldiner is spending the summer months reaching out to families to re-enroll as many students as possible.

“We know that many people have disengaged from the school system and the pillars of the community,” said Shuldiner. “We know it is in our best interest and the interest of the community to reach back out to families and tell them we miss them. We look forward to them coming back. We are going to make it easy to enroll, and they should feel safe and secure to come back to face-to-face instruction.”

Shuldiner says parents and students can expect a vibrancy and vitality that will permeate throughout the classrooms when school reopens.

“The community can expect schools back to almost normal,” said Shuldiner. “We are still waiting on CDC recommendations for schools in the fall. In general, school will be back. We will have art, music, theater, and all the wonderful projects and programs the Lansing School District has to offer.”

Shuldiner is also excited that Lansing schools will be expanding its pre-K program and recently announced free pre-K to all students living within the district boundaries beginning at age four, regardless of family income.

Other than Lansing, most area districts returned children to the classroom in the second half of the last school year, if not earlier. That experience should make the fall opening of schools a less challenging transition; still, some anxiety remains. Students 12 and older have been able to get vaccinated if they choose. However, vaccinations are not yet available for students under 12, raising concerns about masking for younger students. Great uncertainty exists about the potential for a resurgence in COVID-19 cases due to new variants making their way around the country.

What policies will be in place will vary from district to district and will continue to evolve based on shifting guidance from local health officials, the State of Michigan, and the CDC.

“First and foremost, we care about the kids. We want everyone to stay safe and healthy,” said Jason Mellema, superintendent, Ingham Intermediate School District. “All of us want to get back to normal, but the reality is we are still trying to balance what that means when vaccinations aren’t available for certain populations yet.”

In the Holt public schools, the pandemic underscored the importance of the district’s focus on equity, access, and inclusion. For several years, the district has talked about becoming a “one-to-one” district or one computer screen for each student. Holt Superintendent David Hornak says making one-to-one permanent should accelerate learning for all.

**“  
Uncertainties and anxieties  
will remain the norm for  
the foreseeable future. The past  
year and a half have proven  
that we possess the resiliency,  
courage, and determination  
to adjust and adapt to rapid  
changes thrust upon us.”**

“We should be able to use this piece of technology in the students’ hands and blend that with in-person instruction,” said Hornak. “When kids may or may not need an extension, we should be able to provide that using technology.”

East Lansing Superintendent Dori Leyko says the physical set-up of the classroom will be a bit different from this past spring because East Lansing will not offer remote learning for grades 7-12, which means one difference will be more students in each classroom. Leyko says the district is also working on hiring more staff to assist with wellness issues. All staff members will be involved in that area, and the district is adding social workers to the staff to facilitate services.

“There will be a lot more intentional strategies to allow students to ask to connect with a trusted adult,” said Leyko. “I think bringing students back after being out for so long will make reconnecting them to school will be very important.”

### **Anxieties and Concerns Remain**

There remains significant uncertainty about the new COVID-19 variants, future outbreaks, and the potential needs for personal protective equipment. Educators say they are taking their guidance from their local health departments and the CDC. The new Grand Ledge Superintendent, Marcus

Davenport says that regular communication with everyone involved is key to staying on top of the ever-evolving nature of the continuing pandemic.

“We have to be flexible. We have to be agile and able to adapt,” said Davenport. “Proper planning and being very creative to try to get ahead of the trends are our job.”

Another concern being expressed by many parents involves how much learning students may have lost during the past year. Though the concerns have a great deal of validity, Holt’s Hornak also notes that there have been many positive learning experiences for students coming out of the pandemic.

“They learned they could navigate multiple worlds simultaneously,” said Hornak. “They demonstrated they can jump between the physical world and the digital world with ease. They learned how to schedule. They learned to communicate with the adults in their world using multiple methods. They also learned time management and about deadlines.”

Leyko says that East Lansing schools is focusing on maximizing learning going forward, especially over the next three to five years. East Lansing is considering an accelerated learning model from the Michigan Department of Education.

“It’s not going back and trying to teach them every skill they may have missed the year before but identifying those skills they need to be successful in the next grade or next course and focusing on those skills and standards,” said Leyko.

Shuldiner says that the overriding comments he is hearing from Lansing parents, teachers, and staff are excited that in-person classes are finally back. Everyone involved wants to ensure that schools are reopened safely.

“They understand that COVID-19 is still here,” said Shuldiner. “We have to be thoughtful and supportive of our community to make sure that if there are outbreaks that we handle them in an appropriate manner.”

### **Questions about the Virtual Learning Landscape**

There is no question that access to technology saved the day for education during the pandemic. The ability to shift quickly and effectively to virtual learning was a difference-maker during a most challenging year.

“We believe a school district should be of service to the community,” said Shuldiner. “If some parents want to send their children to an online school, we will provide that. We want to make sure that opportunity exists and is of incredibly high quality.”



Shuldiner



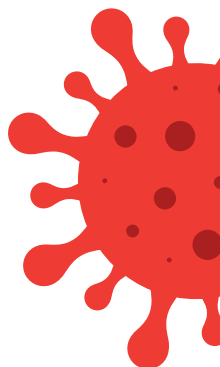
Mellema



Hornak



Leyko





# COVID-19 Reshapes Education

All Lansing families that choose to have students learn online at Capital Area K-12 Online will be eligible for sports, music arts, and after-school programs. They will also qualify for the Lansing Promise college scholarship.

The State of Michigan provided much-needed flexibility for the virtual learning environment by loosening requirements on what virtual teaching was considered acceptable. In the future, virtual learning must meet more strict requirements.

“These restrictions on online learning are a much heavier lift. It is discouraging many districts from doing this because they don’t have the staff to do virtual learning the way the state requires,” said Mellema. “If you have a high school, you will essentially have to set up a separate school to meet the current state requirements.”

Holt schools have always had virtual options, but most students and families seem to favor in-person instruction going forward.

“Many students seem ready to come back in person, and we are preparing for in-person delivery,” said Hornak. “With that, we will work on an individual basis with our families if students feel like they need to take any number of virtual classes.”

## The Higher Education Picture

On July 30, MSU President Samuel L. Stanley Jr., M.D., announced all individuals will be required to wear masks indoors in all campus buildings and other MSU facilities in East Lansing and throughout the state. This

requirement will be in place for at least the first weeks of the fall semester. Stanley also announced that all students, faculty and staff are required to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 with an FDA-authorized or WHO-approved vaccine by Aug. 31.

Limited exemptions for medical or religious reasons will be provided.

“We are all in this battle against COVID-19 and its variants together and I firmly believe the actions we are taking are necessary measures,” said Samuel L. Stanley Jr., M.D., president, MSU. “As we have throughout the pandemic, we will continue to monitor the situation and will adjust as needed. I appreciate the commitment of our students, faculty, staff and others to protect our Spartan Community.

MSU Athletics is planning for fall events with spectators. The Wharton Center and Broad Art Museum are planning events this fall, and community-based activities will be permitted in alignment with local and state requirements and guidelines.

COVID-19 did not prevent Lansing Community College (LCC) from having in-person classes in applied technology, first responder training, aviation maintenance, and health professions. LCC also offered some hybrid programs during the pandemic. What will change this fall is the return of face-to-face instruction in more traditional programs. LCC President Steve Robinson, PhD, says students and teachers will return to an in-person experience that will be very similar to pre-pandemic classes. LCC had been in the virtual arena for many years before COVID-19. Early fall registration is pointing to a desire among many students to keep virtual learning in the mix.

“While so many students are anxious to move back from remote learning to face-to-face, several students have decided they like remote or hybrid learning,” said Robinson. “We will probably see an uptick in the percentage in remote and hybrid classes after the pandemic.”





Stanley

Robinson sees that we all went into the pandemic simultaneously, but that we are all coming back differently. He notes that not everyone has the same feeling of safety and security.

“Our transition back from the pandemic is going to be more gradual,” said Robinson. “I think we are going to have to extend some grace and understanding that not everybody is going to be coming back the same way.”

### A COVID-19 Learning Experience. We Can Do This.



Robinson

According to Jason Mellema, one of the key lessons learned during the pandemic has been that disruptions can be opportunities. Education has been significantly impacted because the disruption forced educators to find new ways to make connections and educate students virtually. Mellema says educators have learned that technology can supplement the great things that happen in classrooms.

“For most kids, it is a much higher quality experience when they are inside the classroom with their peers and a teacher,” said Mellema. “But, for certain kids and certain families who have the support and resources, we’ve learned they can do some of this from home.”



Davenport

One of the learning lessons in Holt was discovering new ways to increase parent and guardian engagement, which superintendent Hornak says he is excited to engage families at a deeper level going forward. Holt Schools also plans to offer more educational offerings to students during regular breaks in the school calendar.

“There are some students that only need 150 days and some that need 180, which is what we offer,” said Hornak. “There are also students that need 220 days. We can use school breaks to provide real-time remediation and enrichment.”

East Lansing’s Leyko says a positive outcome from the pandemic has been in some of the partnerships that have been established.

“I met weekly with people from Michigan State University, City of East Lansing, and the Ingham County Health Department,” said Leyko. “We shared communications, aligned our activities, and supported one another’s goals and initiatives. I think those will carry on.”

Marcus Davenport says the pandemic has highlighted the importance of open dialogue with all stakeholders. In addition to regular staff meetings, Davenport has met weekly with different parents to hear concerns and receive input.

“There are some things that are beyond our control,” said Davenport. “Parents must understand our actions every step of the way, so they are allowed to make the proper decisions for what they feel is best for their students.”

According to Shuldiner, COVID-19 has underscored the importance of being more thoughtful about cleanliness, safety, and security and paying closer attention to physical and mental health.

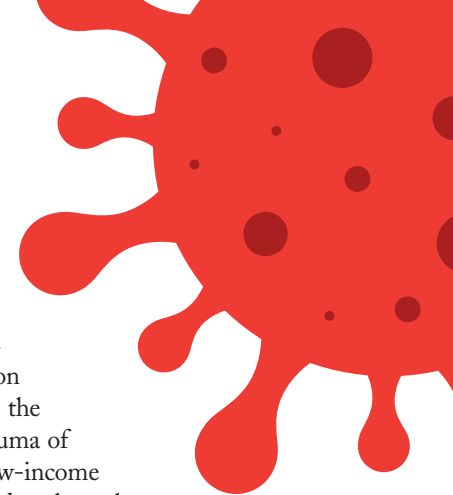
“Schools can be a real guide for these types of health issues,” said Shuldiner.

“They can be a place that provides vaccines and health services. We’ve learned a lot about how to handle these things in the future and support our communities with their health.”

Robinson echoes the sentiment that a stronger focus on mental health is critical. Several LCC employees have dealt with feelings of isolation and suffering economic problems during the pandemic. Many have also experienced the trauma of losing loved ones to COVID-19, which hit low-income people and communities of color much harder than the general population. Robinson says LCC is placing an intentional focus on work-life balance and self-care.

“We learned how to make it okay to talk about those things,” said Robinson. “Folks don’t often like to talk about those issues because they worry, they will be perceived as weak or ineffective. We acknowledge this is a tough thing that everyone went through.”

Uncertainties and anxieties will remain the norm for the foreseeable future. The past year and a half has proven that we possess the resiliency, courage, and determination to adjust and adapt to rapid changes thrust upon us. We’ve also seen how the challenges we have endured in education have opened doorways to new opportunities, new ways of looking at old traditions, and the importance of being willing to shift our paradigms to build a better system that offers a brighter future. ■



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# Michigan State University Football Coach Mel Tucker: You Win with People

**M**el Tucker's first day on the job as head football coach at Michigan State University was Feb. 12, 2020. As he walked into the football room, he was greeted by a standing ovation from the players. He says his work as a leader began at that moment. He immediately laid out his vision for his players.

"I believe you cannot lead unless people know where you stand," said Tucker. "They have to know what you are all about. They have to know what the expectations are."

Tucker talked about leadership as a head football coach and how those skills translate to the business world during remarks made to the Lansing Economic Club on July 20. Tucker says his approach is to connect with people in plain speak.

"Once you do that, you connect with your organization day one in a real authentic way," said Tucker. "Now, you're off to the races."

Tucker told the group that 'you win with people.' When it came to assembling a staff, Tucker says his emphasis is not centered on how well each person can handle the "x's and o's." Instead, Tucker says the focus is on the quality of their character.

"I need great men and women who are going to be role models," said Tucker. "I need leaders that care, who believe in the team, people who are loyal and people I can trust."



Tucker's second order of business was to shift the culture, which is built on a foundation of accountability, attention to detail, teamwork, sense of urgency, hard work and empathy. He also believes in adopting a common language and a commitment to be relentless in everything he does.

Tucker says he believes in what he calls neutral language, which he says involves taking the judgement and emotion out of our behaviors and focusing on the facts and next steps required. Shortly after assuming his position, the COVID pandemic forced everyone associated with the program away from campus and the cancellation of spring football. Tucker said his team had to immediately learn how to adapt to new technology and start having team meetings via Zoom within a matter of days.

"We said on Friday you have to be up to speed by Monday," said Tucker. "When we go to do that, there are no excuses, no explanations. It's not like we are going to ease into it and see how it goes. No. We are hitting the ground running at the highest level."

Tucker told the Lansing Economic Club that leaders need to lead from the front, cannot be afraid of failure, and be willing to be vulnerable around their team. He emphasizes focus on facts and what needs to be done next. ■



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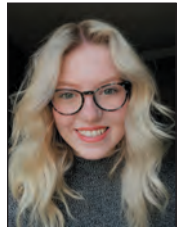
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### New Hires

**Martin Waymire**, a Lansing-based, full-service public relations and digital marketing firm focusing on public policy, announced the hiring of **Adam Bitely** as a senior account executive. Bitely joins Martin Waymire after six years with the Michigan Senate, where he served as digital media director for the Senate Republicans.



Higgins

**Amber Higgins**, a senior at Michigan State University, joined **Lezotte Miller (LM) Public Relations Inc.** as a project assistant intern for the summer term. She will assist the LM staff with communication projects for clients and social media outreach for the firm.

A former state legislative leader with roots in southwest Michigan is **Michigan State University's Michigan Political Leadership Program's (MPLP)** new co-director. **Tonya Schuitmaker**, who served in Michigan's House of Representatives and the Michigan Senate, will step into MPLP's GOP co-director position in 2022. Veteran statewide and Republican Party leader **Susy Avery** will retire from the post at the end of 2021.

**Alando Chappell** started as the Grand Haven Charter Township public services director on Monday, July 12. Chappell worked at the **Lansing Board of Water and Light** for over 18 years, with his last nine years as the water, steam, and chilled water distribution manager.

### Awards

The Central Michigan Chapter of the Public

Relations Society of America recognized **Piper & Gold (P&G) Public Relations** at the 35th annual PACE Awards ceremony with 11 PACE Awards. The agency received five Pinnacle-level PACE Awards, the highest designation, and six PACE Awards of Excellence in the campaign and tactic award categories. Of note in its equity work was P&G's support of the National Association of Social Workers – Michigan and Capital Area Michigan Works! on op-eds focusing on racial disparities, the agency's work with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services and MPHI to promote mental health resources to underrepresented communities in response to the pandemic and supporting media relations for the Michigan College Access Network's launch of a program to help undocumented youth in attending college.



**Sparrow Clinton Hospital** recently honored a nurse and nursing team with DAISY Awards for their compassionate care, outstanding nursing skills, and always putting patients first. Surgical nurse **Melanie Kotowicz, BSN, RN, CEN**, was named DAISY Award honoree based on a patient letter that identified her as a "star caregiver who was very patient and caring." Kotowicz was one of seven Sparrow Clinton nurses nominated for the award. Individual DAISY Award nominees included **Robert Beals, RN; Britney Burton, RN; Lisa Cook, RN, CMSRN; Brittany Hagerman,**

**BSN, RN; Lily Mendez, BSN, RN; and Angie Stebbins, BSN, RN.**

**WKAR Public Media** staff were honored with three regional Emmy® Awards by the Michigan chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences. WKAR is a PBS affiliate serving Michigan's capital region. Emmy Award winners from WKAR include the Public Service Announcement – Single Spot: Masks: Display it, don't spray it!; News – **Carol Yancho**; Children/Youth (12 and under), Non-news – Curious About Careers – Meteorologist, **Carol Yancho**; and Audio – Program, BackStage Pass: **Tunde Olaniran, Drew Hill.**



Phelps



Hall

**McLaren Greater Lansing** nurses **Dominique Phelps** and **Jeanette Hall** were honored with the DAISY Award for Extraordinary Nurses. The award is part of the DAISY Foundation's program to recognize the exceptional care nurses provide daily. The nomination was submitted by a patient who applauded the nurses for their role in assisting in their baby's challenging labor and delivery. The couple also wanted to thank their post-care nurse, who helped them prepare to take the baby home. Phelps and Hall were both rewarded by hospital leadership and co-workers and received a certificate commending her for being an "Extraordinary Nurse" and a sculpture called "A Healer's Touch," hand-carved by artists of the Shona Tribe in Africa.

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Seven talented local entrepreneurs pitched at the **Lansing Economic Area Partnership's (LEAP)** June 10 virtual Hatching event, the quarterly pitch competition's second event of 2021. June's pitch lineup included an innovative take on business cards and networking, a picnic-focused event service, a community event, and social media consulting startup, a downtown bakery and sweet shop, a business focused on supporting aspiring home plant owners, and an adult-focused dance studio offering a variety of ways to "exercise on accident" through dance. The top prize went to current LEAP One and All participant **Yolanda Pope's** The Dignified Aging Project. This startup hopes to improve social determinants of racial and ethnic health inequities through community education and evidence-based interventions for the aging population.



**Sparrow** clinical leaders bestowed a special trophy to **Michigan State University** men's basketball coach, **Tom Izzo** to thank him for his motivational support during the depths of the pandemic. The leaders delivered a mock NCAA championship trophy, created by the daughter of a Sparrow caregiver, for the 2020 tournament that Michigan State University would have won had the tourney not been cancelled due to the COVID-19 virus. The Sparrow group also thanked Coach Izzo for taking time to give pep talks to caregivers during the depths of the pandemic, bolstering their spirits during a difficult period that no one anticipated.

**Equanimity Wealth Management (EWM)** of Okemos was recently recognized as an inaugural 2021 Impact Award winner from dozens of Carson Group partner firms based on its 2020 charitable contributions and community support. EWM team members were able to select a charity of their choice to receive a special donation in their honor, including Mid-Michigan Recovery Services, Hospice of Lansing Stoneleigh Residence, Spartan Marching Band Jacket Fund, New Hope Rescue, and Laingsburg Educational Advancement Foundation.

Small businesses positively impact Michigan communities and bolster the state's economy, and **Edge Partnerships** contributes to this impact every day. In recognition of the importance of small business, the **Small Business Association of Michigan** recently awarded the Lansing-based public relations and marketing agency its Small

Business Certified designation. Edge provides professional services for local, state, and nationwide clients.



Hufnagel

**Sparrow Clinton Hospital** recently recognized **Angie Hufnagel, BSN, RN, CEN**, as its Nurse of the Year. Hufnagel embarked on her nursing career as a St. Johns Regional Educational Service Agency student, moving to a patient access clerk, and entering the emergency department as a patient care technician. After completing her licensed practical nurse and advancing to registered nurse, she began working in the Sparrow Clinton emergency services department.

**CASE Credit Union** was named an Outstanding Credit Union of the Year by the Michigan Credit Union League. The award was announced during the 2021 joint awards ceremony with the Michigan Credit Union Foundation. The Outstanding Credit Union of the Year recognizes a credit union for outstanding contributions with member services and community engagement. CASE Credit Union took top honors for a medium-sized asset.



Sparrow Hospital nurse, Catherine Velaquez (center) displays her DAISY Award for Extraordinary Nurses. She's joined by Unit Manager, Leslie Rush (left) and Chief Nursing Officer, Amy Brown (right).

**Sparrow Hospital's Catherine Velaquez, RN**, was honored with the prestigious DAISY Award for the extraordinary care she provided to a patient facing the end of his life and wanted to be baptized. Velaquez took the time to honor this patient's last request and arranged his baptism with Sparrow's pastoral care assistance. She then spent time with the patient reading letters written by family members. Catherine has been a Sparrow Hospital nurse for four years, having spent the past year delivering exceptional care in Sparrow's Medical Stepdown Unit.

**Sparrow** has received major national recognition as one of the top hospitals for treating heart attack patients. Sparrow has been given the American College of Cardiology's NCDR Chest Pain - MI Registry Gold Performance Achievement Award. It's one of only 60 hospitals nationwide to receive the honor. The award recognizes Sparrow's commitment and success in implementing a higher standard

of care for heart attack patients and signifies that Sparrow has reached an aggressive goal of treating these patients to the levels of care outlined by the American College of Cardiology/American Heart Association.



Ten community development entities (CDEs) that made qualified low-income community investments (QLICs) into five businesses are the Novogradac Journal of Tax Credit QLICs of the Year Awards winners. The awards honor CDEs who strive for excellence in community development. **Cinnaire** received the Metro QLICI of the Year Award for its investment in Paul's Place-Groundwork Kitchen in Baltimore, Md.



**Sparrow Ionia Hospital** has honored surgical nurse, **Justin Thomas** with the DAISY Award in recognition of his patient-centered approach to care. Thomas has been a fixture and leader in Sparrow Ionia's surgical service department, able to handle the daily responsibilities of the department while mentoring new caregivers.

**Sparrow Clinton Hospital** awarded 10 Clinton County students pursuing healthcare careers with \$2,000 each in scholarship assistance. The 2021 Whyman Scholarship winners include **Alyssa Benit** of St. Johns, entering Saginaw Valley State University for nursing; **Mary Billips** of St. Johns, attending Grand Valley State University Kirkhof College for Nursing; **Rebecca Bovee** of DeWitt, attending Ferris State University for pharmacy; Sparrow Clinton caregiver **Kelly Cerny** of St. Johns, attending Baker College for radiology technology; **Brooke Gnegy** of St. Johns, attending Saginaw Valley State University for nursing; **Adysen Koenigsknecht** of Fowler, entering Lansing Community College for dental hygiene; **Jada Palmer** of St. Johns, attending Grand Valley State University for physician assistant program; **Abigail Sjoberg** of DeWitt, entering Loyola University, Chicago for neuroscience; **Emily**

**Thelen** of St. Johns, attending Central Michigan University for speech-language pathology; and **Lecann Wilkins** of St. Johns, attending Lansing Community College for nursing.

### Distinctions



Pickens

**Sparrow Clinton Hospital** recently recognized **Teresa Pickens, RN, CEN**, for 42 years of compassionate care, making her the longest-tenured nurse at the hospital. The Laingsburg resident stepped onto her career path at a young age. Pickens says her most significant achievements over the past four decades are keeping her compassion alive and the role she played in securing the Sparrow Clinton emergency services department's Level IV Trauma Designation.

### Board of Directors



Bill Clark



Paul Clark

**Ele's Place Capital Region** is pleased to announce a new community board member **Bill Clark**, an estimator for **Clark Construction Company's** preconstruction department. Bill is stepping in to fill the position of **Paul Clark**, project manager at Clark Construction, who served Ele's Place for six years.



Celentino



Hutson

**McLaren Greater Lansing** is delighted to welcome **Victor Celentino** and **Andre Hutson** as the newest members of its board of trustees. Celentino is in his 11th term representing District 1 on the Ingham County Board of Commissioners and has been a special education teacher in the Lansing School District since 1992. Hutson is a former Michigan State University men's basketball standout who is owner and founder of Conquest Fitness and Hutson Contracting.

### Promotions

**WILX-TV 10** announced that longtime Lansing sports reporter, **Fred Heumann** assumed the role of co-sports director with the WILX sports team on Aug. 1. Heumann will play a pivotal role in the

day-to-day operations of the sports department. On Monday, Aug. 9, following the Summer Olympics broadcast on WILX, News 10 will re-launch a nightly sportscast in its 11 p.m. newscasts. Heumann will anchor the 11 p.m. sportscasts Tuesday through Friday. **Kellan Buddy** will anchor the 11 p.m. sportscasts Saturday through Monday. Heumann and Buddy will co-anchor the Friday night Sports Blitz. **Natalie Kerwin** will be dedicated to covering sports stories, supporting all WILX on-air and digital sports platforms.



Kerbuski



Minicuci

**Martin Waymire** announced **Andrea Kerbuski** and **Angela Minicuci, APR**, to vice president. Kerbuski has pioneered Martin Waymire's successful social media influencer program, most notably for the "I Vaccinate" campaign, which boosts childhood immunization rates in Michigan and recently won Martin Waymire its fifth Silver Anvil — the public relations industry equivalent to the Pulitzer Prize. Minicuci helped launch Michigan's award-winning "I Vaccinate" campaign while in her role as communications manager for the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. She has continued to lead the project while at Martin Waymire, extending this work into a project focused specifically on supporting healthcare providers.



Watkins



Barbier

**DBI** announced two promotions within its team. Senior interior designer, **Sydney Watkins**, was named director of strategic relationships, and **Kylie Barbier** is the new interior design manager. Watkins brings six years of corporate interior design experience, product knowledge, and a network of industry partners to find solutions to bring clients' furniture vision to life. Barbier's new position will allow her to develop and implement successful design strategies, outlining how the design team will create deliverables and implement them for the project.

### Company News

**Sparrow Occupational Health** has opened a new satellite clinic in the Sparrow Eaton Urgent Care located at 616 Meijer St., Charlotte, to provide the best care for local employees and employers close to home and work. The clinic will offer work-related physicals, immunizations, respirator evaluations,

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mask fitting, follow-up injury care, and Department of Transportation (DOT) physicals and drug testing. Walk-in services include initial injury care and instant drug screens. Walk-in injury care and drug testing services are available at the Sparrow Eaton Urgent Care from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday, and from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. on weekends. All other occupational health services are by appointment only.



LAFCU partnered with **Abrams Planetarium**, **Impression 5 Science Center**, and **Briggs District Library** to explore the wondrous intersection of space

and science for its June reading event for Michigan kids on Wednesday, June 30. Budding young astronauts, star-catchers, space-travelers, and others virtually visited Abrams Planetarium at Michigan State University to learn about the summer sky in Michigan. Impression 5 Science Center presented a science demonstration about space travel and the effects of space's atmosphere.

**General Motors** announced plans to increase its electric vehicle and autonomous vehicle investments from 2020 through 2025 to \$35 billion, representing a 75% increase from GM's initial commitment announced before the pandemic. This increased investment will further accelerate GM's EV, AV, and battery and fuel cell leadership and their ability to bring these technologies to market at scale. In addition, GM announced plans to pull ahead construction of two new Ultium battery cell plants in the U.S., in addition to plants in Ohio and Tennessee.



**MSU Federal Credit Union** employees helped plant 10 trees on Glenburne Boulevard in Lansing on May 21, as part of Arbor Day Tree Planting. The event was sponsored by the Michigan Arbor Day Alliance, a coalition of organizations and agencies dedicated to promoting and celebrating Arbor Day throughout Michigan. Its dedication comes from the belief in the importance of trees and their role in community health and well-being.

The U.S. Department of Treasury has awarded \$1.25 billion in COVID-19 relief funds to 863 community development financial institutions (CDFIs) through CDFI Rapid Response Program. The grants will be used to provide CDFIs with the capital needed to respond to the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in distressed communities.

**Cinnaire** received a \$1.8 million award to support disadvantaged communities that struggle to receive investments from traditional lending sources.

The **Peckham Community Partnership Foundation's** 27th annual golf outing took place on Tuesday, June 8 at Hawk Hollow and Eagle Eye golf courses. Golfers enjoyed a great day of fellowship, fun, and golf while supporting services and programs for individuals with disabilities and other barriers to employment. Peckham is grateful for the nearly 400 sponsors, partners, and friends who support our mission and contributed to the golf outing's success this year. The event raised more than \$182,000.

**The Michigan Princess Riverboat**, a Victorian-style entertainment charter boat on the Grand River, celebrates its 30th anniversary this year. The riverboat offers a unique and timeless way to experience the scenic attractions on Lansing's historic Grand River. Over 15,000 passengers embark on the Michigan Princess each year and are offered a one-of-a-kind sightseeing tour that includes live entertainment, hand-poured cocktails, and fine dining onboard. Michigan Princess' parent company, Princess Riverboats, has been owned and operated by the Chamberlain family and has grown as an iconic mainstay and cultural staple of the greater Lansing area.

Sparrow has unveiled a brand-new, multi-million-dollar family practice site for **Sparrow Medical Group (SMG) Portland**, reflecting a continuing commitment to improving access and quality care in the region and investing in the community. SMG Portland will continue to provide pediatric and family medicine care and will add three new providers to increase primary care access for patients living in Portland and surrounding communities. These additions will result in a more significant number of appointments available and more convenient services in Portland. In addition, the new facility will offer walk-in X-ray and laboratory service. At about 11,000 square feet, the new site is more than three times the size of the current SMG Portland location. The number of patient rooms will more than triple.

Despite the pandemic, Greater Lansing's entrepreneurial ecosystem continues to thrive in 2021, especially among the **LEAP's** high-tech clients served through Michigan's Business Accelerator Fund (BAF) program. Access to the BAF program occurs through LEAP as the region's Gateway for high-tech startups. LEAP recently celebrated the seventh consecutive year as the region's designated Gateway Representative on behalf of the Lansing Regional SmartZone and Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC). Support for the Gateway Representative program is made possible by the MEDC's 21st Century Jobs Trust Fund.

As part of its community outreach and giving efforts, **CASE Credit Union** recently presented The Firecracker Foundation with a check for \$5,158.

Credit union employees raised the funds throughout the first quarter of 2021. The Firecracker Foundation provides holistic healing services to youth and families impacted by sexual violence throughout the Greater Lansing region by offering high-quality, trauma-informed mental health services facilitated by trained professionals.

**Martin Commercial Properties**, a leading privately-owned real estate services and development company, facilitated the sale of a free-standing office building at 2400 Lake Lansing Road in Lansing. Oak Hill Professional Park sits across the popular Eastwood Towne Center, with immediate access to the US-127 interchange. The building is 75% full of two long-term tenants leased through Martin, with one 3,209-square-foot suite available that will be occupied by Waggoner Financial Group, making the building 100% full. Martin's office team of senior vice president, office advisor **Eric Rosekrans, CCIM, CPM**, and senior associate, office advisor **Thomas Jamieson** represented the seller **Jeffrey Baker** of B&B Ventures in the sale of the property to Waggoner Financial Group.



Breast cancer is now easier to detect at **McLaren Greater Lansing Grand Ledge Radiology**, as a new 3D mammography system was recently installed there.

Funded by a grant of nearly \$382,000 from the McLaren Greater Lansing Foundation, the Hologic Genius 3D model replaced a 2D system that had been in use for several years. The advanced technology in the 3D system enables physicians to look at multiple layers of the breast rather than just the surface view that occurs with a 2D system. This results in spotting invasive cancers more frequently and revealing cancer in women who have dense breast tissue. The density often makes it difficult to see evidence of cancer using a 2D system.



**MSU Federal Credit Union (MSUFCU)** donated \$20,000 to the Children's Miracle Network May is for the Miracles fundraising event, which raised \$145,902 to support Sparrow Children's Center. MSUFCU was the presenting sponsor for this year's event, which surpassed its fundraising goal of \$125,000. Sparrow Children's Center has been a Children's Miracle Network hospital since 1988. ■





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A huge thank you to the **StoneBriar at Burcham Hills** team for hosting the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce (LRCC) Member Mixer on Tuesday, July 13. The event was our first in-person networking event in more than six months! It was wonderful to see the new facility, located at 834 Lenna Keith Circle, East Lansing, and network with more than 100 business and community leaders. The StoneBriar property features new amenities, dining venues, and a fresh take on senior living to inspire residents every day.



The LRCC joined **Origami Rehabilitation** as they celebrated their new satellite location, Origami West, with a ribbon-cutting on Tuesday, July 20. The new facility, which features a state-of-the-art therapy gym, driver rehabilitation vehicles, and a designated pediatrics space equipped with a rock wall, is located at 137 S. Marketplace Blvd. Lansing, MI 48917. Origami provides comprehensive rehabilitation for children, adolescents, and adults with neurological, developmental, mental health, and orthopedic conditions through their residential and outpatient programs. Origami West offers the same outpatient services available at their Mason location, such as physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech-language pathology, psychiatry, psychology, drivers rehab, and more.



**MSU Federal Credit Union (MSUFCU)** broke ground on its new building on July 13. The building is located at 311 Abbot Road in downtown East Lansing. Michelle Rahl, vice president of member engagement, spoke at the event, which was attended by the MSUFCU Board of Directors, community members, special guests, and April Clobes, president and CEO of MSUFCU.

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