

# FOCUS

THE MONTHLY BUSINESS NEWS MAGAZINE OF THE  
LANSING REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

APRIL 2023

## NAME IMAGE AND LIKENESS

THE CHANGING WORLD  
OF COLLEGE ATHLETICS

*MSU at the Competitive  
Forefront of NIL*

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THE BUSINESS CASE FOR DEI

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## 2023 Board of Directors

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**Bob Trezise** / LEAP, Inc.

*ATHENA WIN*

**Deb Horak** / GÜD Marketing

*Lansing 5:01*

**Chris Sell** / Michigan State University

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**Dr. Alane Laws-Barker** / Sparrow

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Leadership Circle investors 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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[twitter.com/LansingChamber](https://twitter.com/LansingChamber)

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

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

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



LANSING REGIONAL CHAMBER  
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Courtesy Michigan State University

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# Elevating the ATHENA Lansing Brand

The Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce (LRCC) takes great pride in our connection to the ATHENA legacy, which started in our community in 1982. Under the leadership of Martha Mertz, our region became home to the first ATHENA Leadership Award. Over the past four decades, not only have we been able to recognize outstanding leaders in our own region, but we have seen ATHENA grow into a globally recognized brand.

Through the years, LRCC has sought to strengthen the ATHENA brand in numerous ways. We created a standalone annual program to recognize each well-deserving ATHENA award recipient. We have also worked with the ATHENA PowerLink Governing Body to identify outstanding women business owners and entrepreneurs who could benefit from working with an advisory panel to help them achieve strategic goals in growing their businesses. We are also proud of the women leaders who have served on the LRCC Board of Directors over the years, including several who have served as the board chair.

LRCC has also actively supported the ATHENA Women’s Interest Network (WIN), a dynamic group of professional women determined to equip other women in mid-Michigan with the tools, information, and connections they need to succeed in their careers. ATHENA WIN has done a terrific job in recent years of helping women leaders connect through professional growth and development, networking events such as Girls’ Night Out, Executive Connections, and the annual Evening of Empowerment.

LRCC is very pleased to announce a new partnership with ATHENA WIN which will enhance the organization’s programming and provide more opportunities for women leaders in the region. Under the new partnership, LRCC will provide management support and program services to ATHENA WIN. The administrative and operational support provided by LRCC will allow ATHENA WIN to be impactful in executing strategies and expanding its reach.

To further strengthen our commitment to ATHENA WIN and all of our talent initiatives, LRCC created a new position: talent development manager. We are very pleased to have Sarah Bakken join our team to lead these efforts. Bakken will provide overall departmental support to all our talent initiatives, including the ATHENA Leadership, ATHENA PowerLink, ATHENA WIN, Leadership Lansing, and DEI strategies.

We have made the focus on talent a priority as we understand the critical importance of our business community in attracting and retaining talent. The talent initiatives with which we are involved provide great platforms for organizations to provide growth opportunities to their people. Research shows that one of the most important characteristics that employees want in the organization for which they work is knowing they will have an opportunity to develop their potential. Programs like ATHENA WIN offer that growth potential in a very powerful way, as hundreds of professionals are experiencing real growth through their connections with other leaders and the learning that results from those experiences.

The ATHENA WIN partnership is the latest example of the commitment we at LRCC have to continuing to build on the ATHENA Lansing brand and also to help all our members connect to talent development opportunities that can strengthen their business and our region. ●



**TIM DAMAN**  
PRESIDENT AND CEO  
LANSING REGIONAL  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



## ATHENA PowerLink Governing Body

Amber Clark	Carol Giacoletto	Lisa Smith
Thomas Hamp	John Roy Castillo	Marcy Rzepka
Jill Marlan	Dorothy Maxwell	Sara Majeske
Jane Mitchell	Lisa Fischer	Kim Barber
Danielle McNeilly	Deborah Horak	Katie Krick
Kathy Valentine		Marcus Martin
		Tim Daman

## ATHENA WIN Board of Directors

Leslie Batchelor	Jessica Fleet	Brenda Geoghegan
Joy Wagner	Amy McNamara	Joy Meade
Deborah Horak	Cathy Zell	Ashlee Willis
	Breina Pugh	Michelle Rahl

## April 2023

4/4

### POLICY & REGULATORY SERIES: THE FUTURE OF BUSINESS AND A.I.

**Tues., April 4 from 9 to 10:30 a.m.**  
**Lansing Regional Chamber, 500 E. Michigan Ave., Suite 200, Lansing**

Artificial Intelligence isn't a thing of the future anymore. More and more companies are using AI either for automation or to allow their employees to achieve more complex goals. Learn more at the Policy & Regulatory Education Series led by Emily Wisniewski and Taylor Gast, attorneys at Foster Swift Collins & Smith, PC.

**Cost:** The program is offered at no cost for Lansing Regional Chamber members and \$25 for future members.

4/6

### LANSING ECONOMIC CLUB

**Thurs., April 6 from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.**  
**Kellogg Hotel & Conference Center, 219 South Harrison Road, East Lansing**

Learn more about the goals of the MSU Athletics Department and the current state of MSU Athletics from Alan Haller, vice president and director of athletics at Michigan State University during the Lansing Economic Club on Thursday, April 6. The conversation will be moderated by Audrey Dahlgren, sports director, WLNS.

**Cost:** Tickets are offered at no cost for Lansing Economic Club members, \$55 for Lansing Regional Chamber members and \$75 for future members. A table of eight is \$425.

4/11

### BUSINESS EDUCATION SERIES: CREATING AN ASYNC-FIRST WORKPLACE CULTURE IN 2023

**Tuesday, April 11 from 10 to 11:30 a.m.**  
**Lansing Regional Chamber, 500 E. Michigan Ave., Suite 200, Lansing**

Synchronous meetings are complicated to coordinate; schedules are hard to align, and bouncing from call to conference room to task time can be disruptive to teams. As a global leader of communication solutions, TechSmith wondered how they could create a new internal strategy of having "fewer, better meetings" for everyone? So, TechSmith conducted a month-long asynchronous-first experiment with two primary objectives: to better understand async workflows and communication, and to reboot TechSmith's own meeting culture and communication. In this session, Emmie Musser will share what we learned and best practices to positively impact employee satisfaction, job attitude, productivity, and innovation. Not all meetings can or should be replaced, but identifying which ones can and how to replace them will offer your organization greater flexibility and productivity and more dedicated "think" time.

**Cost:** The program is offered at no cost for Lansing Regional Chamber members and \$25 for future members.

4/11

### MEMBER MIXER

**Tuesday, April 11 from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m.**  
**Consumers Credit Union, 6935 South Cedar Street, Lansing**

Consumers Credit Union is pleased to invite you to raise a glass and cut the ribbon at our first office in Lansing a 4:30 p.m.! Join the Consumer's team for afternoon of networking, refreshments, tours and a showcase of the latest in banking technology.

**Cost:** The program is offered at no cost for Lansing Regional Chamber members and \$25 for future members.

4/20

### ATHENA WIN PROFESSIONAL GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT: HOLISTIC APPROACH TO WELLNESS

**Thursday, April 20 from 8 to 9 a.m.**  
**Lansing Board of Water & Light REO Town Depot, 1201 South Washington Ave, Lansing**

Please join us for the ATHENA WIN Professional Growth & Development event, focusing on taking a holistic approach to wellness. Featured presenter, Joy Wagner, human resources manager at Granger Waste Services, will lead a discussion on meeting mental, physical and spiritual goals, to help reach a place of better self-care. She will also discuss wellness in the workplace, including easy ways to jump start a program for your organization.

**Cost:** The program is offered at no cost for ATHENA WIN members and \$25 for future members.

4/26

### DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION SERIES: EVERYDAY PRACTICES FOR CREATING A CULTURE OF INCLUSION & BELONGING

**Wednesday, April 26 from 10 to 11:30 a.m.**  
**Lansing Regional Chamber, 500 E. Michigan Ave., Suite 200, Lansing**

During the program, Dr. Vernon A Woodley, P.h.D, diversity, equity and inclusion specialist at Lansing Board of Water and Light, will define what we mean by diversity, equity and inclusion. Next, Dr. Woodley will articulate why DEI matters to every organization. Finally, Dr. Woodley will identify 12 everyday actions that every employee can take to help create a culture of inclusion in their workplace.

**Cost:** The program is offered at no cost for Lansing Regional Chamber members and \$25 for future members.

# Thank You Renewing Members

517 Living	Douglas Steel Fabricating Corporation	Meijer Inc.
A/C Electric	Dumparoo	Michigan Chamber of Commerce
Acuitas	Ele's Place	Michigan State University Foundation
Adelante Forward	Empower Lansing	Moonsail North
ALDI	Enerco Corporation	Neogen Corporation
Arts Council of Greater Lansing	Flooring America - Carpet Studio	Northwestern Mutual of East Lansing
ASAP Printing	Gillespie Company, LLC	Oasis Senior Advisors of Mid-Michigan
Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Tomie Raines Realtors	Globetrotter Travel	On Target Living
BMC-Business Machines Company	The Graduate East Lansing	Opportunity Resource Fund
Builders Hardware Co	Great Lakes Reality Labs/Haptix Studio	Orthopaedic Rehab Specialists, P.C.
Burcham Hills A Life Plan Community	Great Lakes State Agency	Publicom
Capital Region International Airport	Guy Hurley Insurance & Surety Services	River Caddis Development
Capitol Fundraising Associates	The Hidden Gem Event Venue	Ronald McDonald House of Mid-Michigan
Capitol Harley-Davidson, Inc.	Huntington National Bank	Saddleback BBQ
CBRE, Inc.	Infusion Associates	Storage Sense - North Aurelius Road
Cinnaire Corporation	The Investment Center	T.A. Forsberg, Inc.
Consumers Credit Union	K&P McClure Leasing Inc	Tandem Studios
Consumers Energy	Kincaid Building Group, Inc.	The Shyft Group
Cron Management, LLC	Liskey's Auto & Truck Service	WILX
Cypress Home Care, Inc.	Martin Waymire	
DeWitt Charter Township	Matrix Consulting Engineers, Inc.	
Doggy Daycare and Spa		

## Welcome New Members

### Bright Spark Strategies

(517) 819-2841  
[www.brightsparkstrategies.com](http://www.brightsparkstrategies.com)  
 106 W. Allegan St., Suite 200  
 Lansing, MI 48933

### Century 21 Looking Glass - Mark Holcomb

(517) 614-7369  
[c21affiliated.com/directory/agents/mark-holcomb-1](http://c21affiliated.com/directory/agents/mark-holcomb-1)

### Compass Insurance Agency

(616) 965-0694  
[www.cia-bc.com](http://www.cia-bc.com)  
 8535 Byron Center Dr. SW, Suite B  
 Byron Center, MI 49315

### Consumers Credit Union - Delta Township

(800) 991-2221  
[www.consumerscu.org](http://www.consumerscu.org)  
 809 N. Marketplace Blvd.  
 Lansing, MI 48917

### Full Circle Financial Planning

(517) 316-5333  
[www.fullcirclefp.com](http://www.fullcirclefp.com)  
 4112 S. Cedar St.  
 Lansing, MI 48910

### Gumseat Productions

(517) 742-7001  
[www.gumseat.com/gumseat\\_productions/shop/home](http://www.gumseat.com/gumseat_productions/shop/home)  
 4291 Veterans Dr., Ste B  
 Holt, MI 48842

### Hungry Howie's Pizza - E. Lake Lansing Rd.

(517) 332-1020  
[www.hungryhowies.com](http://www.hungryhowies.com)  
 3499 E. Lake Lansing Rd.  
 East Lansing, MI 48823

### MARK Advocacy Group

(517) 719-6552  
[www.markadvocacygroup.org](http://www.markadvocacygroup.org)  
 Lansing, MI 48915

### Mid-Michigan Land Conservancy

(517) 213-8164  
[www.midmilandcons.org](http://www.midmilandcons.org)

### Success Virtual Learning Center - Lansing South

(517) 977-1745  
[www.successvlc.com/lansing-south](http://www.successvlc.com/lansing-south)  
 2501 S. Cedar St.  
 Lansing, MI 48910

### Total Connect

(517) 281-7676  
[www.totalconnectllc.com](http://www.totalconnectllc.com)

### Vredevoogd

(616) 550-5767  
[www.vredevoogd.com](http://www.vredevoogd.com)  
 3047 Sangra Ave. SW  
 Grandville, MI 49418

# Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce Announces Hiring of Amanda Matelonek as Multimedia Specialist

The Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce (LRCC) is pleased to announce the hiring of Amanda Matelonek as Multimedia Specialist. In her role, Matelonek will be responsible for managing and updating website content, creating graphics, and assisting with executing marketing and communication strategies. She began her position on February 20.

"I am very excited to join the dynamic team at the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce," said Matelonek. "The Chamber has done a wonderful job of growing its digital platforms in recent years and I am looking forward to utilizing my skills to help the Chamber enhance its ability to serve its members and grow our presence through our digital communications."

"The Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce has worked extremely hard for several years to be leaders



Matelonek

in digital communications and stay on top of rapidly changing developments in digital and social media," said Michelle Rahl, vice president membership & marketing, LRCC. "We are excited to have Amanda join our team to strengthen our growth and messaging in the digital arena."

Before joining LRCC, Matelonek worked at the Michigan House of Representatives for five years. She earned a master's degree in advertising from Michigan State University and a bachelor's degree in advertising and marketing from Northwood University. ●

## Business Roundtables

For more than 30 years, we have led monthly roundtable meetings for business, community and government leaders to share what is going on in our community and collaborate on ways to advance our region. We're proud to now offer our business roundtable series in Delta Township, East Lansing/Meridian Township and Lansing. Together, our business community and local elected officials can shape the future of our region and leave a lasting impact on our regional prosperity. We would love to see you at our upcoming business roundtables.

### Delta Township — Eaton County

Wednesday, April 5, from 9 to 10 a.m.  
One North Kitchen & Bar, 5001 West Saginaw Highway, Lansing

### Lansing — Delhi Township

Wednesday, April 12, from 9 to 10 a.m.  
LaFontaine Chrysler Dodge Jeep Ram Fiat, 6131 South Pennsylvania Avenue, Lansing

### East Lansing — Meridian Township

Wednesday, April 19, from 9 to 10 a.m.  
Foster Coffee Company, 196 Albert Street, East Lansing

## Chamber Milestones

### Western Michigan University Cooley Law School (WMU)

50 Years

### DeLau Fire & Safety, Inc.

40 Years

### Delta Township

40 Years

### Cohl, Stoker & Toskey, P.C.

35 Years

### Columbia Sussex Corp

35 Years

### Air Lift Company

15 Years

### Applied Imaging

5 Years

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

# The Ever-Changing Role of Capital Area District Libraries

By: Hailey Kenward, Kolt Communications, Inc.

**C**apital Area District Libraries (CADL) has been a staple in the Lansing community since 1998. This year they celebrate their 25th anniversary. Events to commemorate this momentous occasion will be held throughout 2023. Visit [www.cadl.org/25](http://www.cadl.org/25) to learn about CADL's celebratory events.

Since 1998, CADL had to adapt to many technological and societal changes, not only concerning their role in the community but also with the kinds of goods and services they provide to the capital area community. Their ability to adapt has helped CADL become one of the top-performing library districts in the state by circulation.

"It helped us, being a young district library, because we are willing to take risks to adapt to the changing needs," said Scott Duimstra, Executive Director of CADL. "We started making changes to digital platforms early, which has since proven to be a positive change. Our public averages over two million digital and in-person check-outs annually."

Despite having a large digital presence, an offering that began in 2005, the library still circulates over a million print books. Their commitment to a digital library was incredibly beneficial when the COVID-19 pandemic hit. During 2020 when the physical library was closed, CADL had the ability to promote the digital resources they already had available, which allowed them to continue to thrive during the pandemic.

CADL hopes to continue to expand the ways the library assists the community. For example, CADL provides local businesses a library card with access to LinkedIn Learning, which offers thousands of high-quality online courses to help people learn in-demand skills, including business skills.

Additionally, CADL's Student Success Initiative (SSI), which has been in the district since 2018, has provided 10,000 students in the district with free library cards. After noticing a student attendance gap, CADL wanted to help students reconnect and ensure they had access to library services.

New this year, the library system is offering an SSI Scholarship to two graduating high school seniors with an SSI account. The recipients will receive \$1,000 each to use towards any college-related expenses. Learn more about the SSI and SSI Scholarship at [www.cadl.org/success](http://www.cadl.org/success).



"We want to continue to evolve. However, it is important to allow libraries to serve their traditional purpose," said Duimstra. "Having a quiet, accessible space will always be something people need from libraries. Our goal, regardless of us adapting, is to always be that for those around us."

For more information, visit [www.cadl.org](http://www.cadl.org).

## Five Businesses Named Among America's Best Large Employers

**F**ive businesses with deep ties to the Greater Lansing region have been named to the 2023 *Forbes* America's Best Large Employers list. *Forbes* partnered with the market research firm Statista to compile the list of America's best large employers. The ranking is based on a survey of about 45,000 workers at American companies and institutions with 5,000 or more employees. Congratulations to these outstanding organizations named to the prestigious *Forbes* listing:

- DTE Energy
- Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan
- Auto-Owners Insurance
- General Motors
- Meijer ●



We had a wonderful time at our Member Mixer on Tuesday, March 14, hosted by Shaheen Cadillac of Lansing. Guests of the event enjoyed a delightful spread of food provided by Amayesing Graze and the beauty of the newly renovated showroom. Congratulations to the winners of the three giveaways at the event: \$100 gas card: Tara Peplowski, Wharton Center; Quick Lube voucher, Tom Almazan: Flooring America; Cadillac camp chair: Mike Coyne, Dewpoint. Join us at the April Member Mixer at Consumers Credit Union on Tuesday, April 11.



A talented panel of women leaders inspired the audience at the Lansing Economic Club forum on Thursday, March 9. The distinguished panel of women leaders included Jill Marlan, founder and CEO, Peak Performance Physical Therapy; Re'Shane L. Lonzo, co-founder and CEO, DRM International Learning Center; Jo Sinah, chief executive and inclusion officer, Peckham Inc., and State Senator Sarah Anthony (D-Lansing). The forum was moderated by Jessica Tramontana, community affairs specialist, Consumers Energy.



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# Diamond Baseball Holdings to Purchase Lansing Lugnuts

**D**iamond Baseball Holdings (DBH), an organization that owns and operates select minor league clubs affiliated with Major League Baseball (MLB), has entered into an agreement to purchase the Lansing Lugnuts from Take Me Out to the Ballgame, L.L.C. (TMO), the Lugnuts recently announced. It is the franchise's first ownership change since TMO purchased the Waterloo Diamonds in 1994 and brought the Lugnuts to Lansing in 1996.



Augusta GreenJackets and San Jose Giants in being operated by DBH.

"The Lugnuts have been one of the great joys in my life. It is a bittersweet decision to sell the team," said TMO managing partner Tom Dickson. "But I can promise you that DBH's Peter Freund and Pat Battle are terrific people who

love baseball, and I am confident that the Lugnuts and the City of Lansing are in good hands with them."

The Lugnuts will continue to be directed by the current front office staff, led by general manager Zac Clark. The franchise will remain in Lansing as the High-A affiliate of the Oakland Athletics.

"We are thrilled to have the opportunity to own such an iconic franchise as the Lugnuts, built by one of the best owner/operators in the game in **Tom Dickson**," said Peter Freund, CEO of DBH. "We could not imagine a better city, ballpark, or management team, and we look forward to being part of the Lansing community for years to come."

Executive Chairman **Pat Battle** and CEO **Peter Freund** oversee DBH, each a lifetime baseball fan and owner and operator within Minor League Baseball (MiLB) before joining DBH in December 2021. The Lugnuts will join Triple-A's Iowa Cubs, Memphis Redbirds, Scranton/Wilkes-Barre RailRiders and Gwinnett Stripers; Double-A's Midland RockHounds, Mississippi Braves, Portland Sea Dogs and Wichita Wind Surge; High-A's Hudson Valley Renegades and Rome Braves; and Single-A's

The transaction will be completed subject to TMO obtaining all necessary league and City of Lansing approvals. With the purchase, DBH will assume the Lugnuts' lease upon the finalization of the transfer. The current rights to Jackson® Field™ extend through 2034; the intention by all parties is to keep the Lugnuts in Lansing far longer than that. ●

## A healthier take on health care coverage



You want your employees to get the care they need — and so do we. At Blue Cross, we work hard to provide the best coverage in Michigan. With more plan options, more efficient, higher quality care, and access to no-cost programs such as Coordinated Care Core, a Blue Cross plan adds up to smarter care and better coverage for you and your employees, so you can attract the best talent, and keep it too.

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W007955

# Logan Square – Down But Not Out

By: Cionne Casanova, Kolt Communications, Inc.

Logan Square, located in southwest Lansing, has been around for more than 60 years as an economic center for people to shop, eat, and patronize the businesses it houses. Over the years, the venue has seen better days as the shopping center's buildings have deteriorated, and the area has been subject to rising safety concerns. Adam Hussain, 3rd Ward representative of the Lansing City Council, and Tamera Carter, a Southside resident and liaison to the Larry Mitchel Trice Sr. Community Outreach Services, sat in on a standing-room-only forum recently to discuss the future of Logan Square.



Hussain



Carter



get involved in something like this and roll up their sleeves to provide input," said Hussain. "That's because this is such a critical property in southwest Lansing."

The forum came to a successful close with high hopes that the community could work together to prevent the square from falling into disarray again.

"By revitalizing this critical site on Lansing's southside, it not only will bolster economic opportunity for southsiders but enhance the economy for Lansing as a whole," said Carter. "Reimagining and outlining a plan of action for Logan Square is a step in the right direction for economic development in South Lansing that I believe will ultimately have a great impact on the entire City of Lansing. I would love to see more economic stability and community engagement in the process of bringing about that stability. I believe this will strengthen the fabric of our community."

With these big plans on the way, the Logan Square revitalization effort also hopes to help others in the community see the area in a better light.

"Unfairly, southwest Lansing, in terms of our neighborhoods and people, has been characterized and painted as something of a reflection of our corridors, and that's simply not who we are. Tucked behind those corridors are some really fantastic communities that are diverse and vibrant and proud," said Hussain. "This meeting was a reflection of that. We know we deserve better, and we're not giving up on this community. We'll do whatever we need to do to accomplish that." ●

"I was so invested in the area because of how close it is to me and how much it's evolved over the years. A lot of Lansing locals gravitated there, but over the years, vacancies accumulated and led to more undesirable activities. Over the years, we've been trying to figure out how we as residents can speak up and grow not just the local community but Lansing as a whole," said Carter.

Carter wasn't the only one to share this concern during the forum filled with residents, businesses, and community leaders, all wanting to voice their ideas for the area and what should happen next. The people of the district provided ideas like micro-retail spaces, smaller business education units, credit unions, and even a play area suggested by an 11-year-old boy. Hussain also gave some heartfelt insight into Logan Square as it stands right now.

"There should be zero reason outside of owner neglect that the property should be in that condition," said Hussain. "We now have new owners as of 2019, and that, combined with our \$100,000 study, gives us hope that we can have a comprehensive redevelopment strategy by June."

This effort being made by the community gives Logan Square a potentially better future. The square also is a redevelopment-ready community tabbed by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, which could allocate a slew of resources to help protect its good assets from the economic downturn it has seen over the years.

"We have rarely seen this many people in the community

## February Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Series Focuses on Building Inclusive and Accessible Workspaces



**D**uring the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Series on Feb. 22, the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce was joined by a panel of experts to learn more about how to build inclusive and accessible workspaces. The panel discussion was hosted at Peckham Inc. Panelists included Justin Caine, visionary and co-founder, Good Fruit Video; Meegan Winters, co-founder and CEO, AbleVu; Sarah George, director of mission initiatives, Peckham Inc., and our discussion moderator Anna Warbach, MA, CRC, business relations consultant, Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity.

Important highlights from the panel discussion include:

- Disability is diversity and should be a key component of workplace diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA).
- Some employers have reservations related to the costs of needed job accommodations. However, these concerns are largely unfounded. Research conducted by the Job Accommodation Network (JAN) reveals that the majority of workplace accommodations cost nothing. Of those that do incur a cost, the typical expense is \$500. Moreover, many accommodations improve the workplace for all employees.
- Sourcing qualified candidates with disabilities doesn't have to be challenging, thanks to the many organizations and resources supporting disability employment. Michigan Rehabilitation Services and non-profit organizations specializing in disability employment are two examples of available partners that can help employers hire qualified candidates with disabilities and that can also provide disability awareness training and other workplace support. ●



## Celebrating ONE YEAR

The McLaren Health Care Campus includes a 240-bed acute care hospital, trauma level III stroke center and emergency department, Karmanos Cancer Institute, outpatient care center, and Health and Wellness Pavilion.

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Kirk Ray, President and CEO  
McLaren Greater Lansing



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# The Business Case for DEI

Organizations of all shapes and sizes have fully committed to advancing the cause of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Leaders have come to understand that their organization's culture is much stronger when DEI is a central part of their mission. The Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce has sponsored a DEI Roundtable over the past year in which a number of executives in the region have participated. Two of the participants, Wendy Hamilton, CEO, TechSmith, and Kelli Ellsworth Etchison, chief marketing officer and chief diversity officer, LAFCU, developed a presentation for the group on "The Business Case for DEI." The presentation lays out a clear case that organizations that don't embrace DEI are "leaving money on the table."

DEI makes it easier to attract and retain the best talent. Consider these findings from the 2022 Edelman Trust Barometer; Glassdoor; BCG; Deloitte; HBR; People Management:

- 74 percent of millennials believe their organization is more innovative when it has a culture of inclusion;
- 70 percent believe diverse companies are more likely to capture new markets;
- 42 percent of people believe businesses are not doing enough to address systemic injustices; and
- 2 out of 3 job candidates seek companies that have diverse workforces.

Ellsworth Etchison notes that an inclusive workforce leads to more employee engagement, particularly for smaller businesses learning how to scale up and figure out how to bring their products to the marketplace.

"We are attracted to people that look and think like us. We don't invite diversity of thought," said Ellsworth Etchison. "Just being able to bring a different perspective is important."

A report from Accenture shows that U.S. companies are leaving \$1.05 trillion on the table by not being more inclusive. Analysts found that companies where employees felt more engaged were more likely to demonstrate higher profit growth. Closing the gap by 50 percent, or making employees feel more included, led to a 33 percent increase in global profit growth.

## Did you know?

Millennials believe their organization is more innovative when it has a culture of inclusion

74%

42% People believe businesses are not doing enough to address systemic injustices



Diverse Companies are

70%

more likely to capture new markets

2 out of 3 job candidates seek companies that have diverse workforces

Sources: 2022 Edelman Trust Barometer; Glassdoor; BCG; Deloitte; HBR; People

## It just makes Dollars & Sense

U.S. Companies are leaving **\$1.05 Trillion** on the table by not being more inclusive according to a report by Accenture.

Analysts found that companies where many employees felt **engaged** were more likely to demonstrate **higher profit** growth. Closing the gap by 50%, or making employees feel more **included**, pointed to a **33%** increase in global profit growth for businesses.



ARE YOU LEAVING MONEY ON THE TABLE?

Lack of Diversity and Inclusion at Work Is Costing Companies Billions (businessinsider.com)

A recent 2022 study from the Talent Management Institute found that 87 percent of Gen Z said that workplace DEI strategies were crucial, and 86 percent of Gen Z workers would be keen to contribute to an organization's DEI strategy. Ellsworth Etchison says those numbers are significant because the workforce is shifting. Older generations were more motivated by getting jobs with good, solid pay and benefits.

"This generation that has come into the workforce and will be taking over in the next few years wants to do meaningful work in organizations that have inclusive workplaces," said Ellsworth Etchison. "They want to be part of being transformative. They don't want to work for a company that just says they are doing DEI and simply places a DEI statement on a website. That is very different from actually transforming policies and practices around DEI." ●

## East Lansing Mayor Bacon Meets with LRCC DEI Committee

**E**ast Lansing Mayor Ron Bacon spoke to the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce DEI Committee about the city's efforts towards Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI).



Bacon

Mayor Bacon began his remarks by emphasizing the importance of DEI in building a strong and resilient community. He acknowledged that achieving true equity requires a commitment from all members of the community, including government, businesses, and residents. Mayor Bacon highlighted several initiatives that the City of East Lansing has undertaken to promote DEI, including the creation of an Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

Additionally, Mayor Bacon spoke about the importance of economic development in promoting DEI. He noted that the city has prioritized equitable economic development by providing resources and support for small businesses owned by underrepresented groups, as well as encouraging the development of affordable housing.

Throughout his remarks, Mayor Bacon emphasized the need for continued collaboration and engagement among all stakeholders in the community to ensure that DEI efforts are effective and sustainable. He encouraged businesses to actively promote DEI by adopting inclusive hiring practices, offering training and professional development opportunities, and engaging in community outreach.

Mayor Bacon's remarks underscored the City of East Lansing's commitment to promoting DEI and its recognition that this work requires ongoing effort and collaboration. By working together, the city and its partners can build a more equitable and inclusive community for all.

The LRCC will host a Business Roundtable with Mayor Bacon on Tuesday, April 18 from 9 to 10 a.m. at MSUFCU HQ2, 3899 Coolidge Road, East Lansing. Registration is available at [lansingchamber.org](https://lansingchamber.org). ●



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MSU women's gymnastics team recently won its first ever Big Ten Title. Prior to that, all 19 members of the 2022-2023 women's gymnastics team at Michigan State University received name, image and likeness (NIL) contracts from Charitable Gifts America.

In just under two years, the term “Name, Image, and Likeness,” otherwise known as NIL, has become widely recognized as the new frontier in college athletics. It was in July 2021 when the NCAA changed its rules and allowed student-athletes to profit from their NIL. For the first time, players can now accept compensation from businesses in exchange for using them in products or advertisements. They can also promote themselves or other companies in public appearances.

In many respects, the new world of NIL is something akin to the Wild West. The potential ramifications for college athletics and student-athletes were obviously significant. Any university hoping to recruit the best student-athletes and continue to compete at the highest level must become national leaders in NIL programs that provide maximum opportunities for its athletes.

“NIL has opened up a whole new door for student-athletes for branding, entrepreneurship, and innovation,” said Elliott Daniels, senior associate athletic director/student-athlete engagement, MSU. “Student-athletes can now not only see themselves as a student and an athlete, but also as a business person.”



Daniels

Most national publicity regarding NIL has centered around recruiting wars involving football and men’s basketball. Some of the reported NIL deals around the country are staggering, with many “name” athletes landing deals north of a million dollars. Not surprisingly, football and men’s basketball at MSU are faring very well in terms of NIL deals, thanks largely to the strong network of alumni support. Shortly after the NCAA cleared the way for NIL, United Wholesale Mortgage (UWM) put together a deal with the football and men’s basketball teams. One year later, UWM added a deal to cover the MSU women’s volleyball team.

“The NIL deals we made with MSU’s men’s basketball and football players were one of the first and largest deals at the time. We wanted to get our feet wet and test it out, and we’re happy we did as the success has been more than expected,” said Mat Ishbia, president and CEO of UWM and former MSU men’s basketball player. “We were excited to expand this opportunity to all of the athletes on the volleyball teams and are eager to see the influence they have on educating consumers about career opportunities at UWM and the benefits of working with an independent mortgage broker.”



Ishbia

## WOMEN’S ATHLETICS ENJOYING NIL BREAKTHROUGHS

Women’s athletics are growing in the NIL arena as well. Women’s basketball ranks third nationally in NIL deals. There are a growing number of companies signing NIL deals with female athletes. According to a report from NIL marketplace company Opendorse, women’s sports comprise six of the top 10 highest-earning sports in NIL compensations through the first year-and-a-half of the NIL era.

# NAME IMAGE AND LIKENESS

## THE CHANGING WORLD OF COLLEGE ATHLETICS

### MSU at the Competitive Forefront of NIL

## MICHIGAN STATE EXCHANGE

Michigan State Exchange is a platform to link Spartan student-athletes with businesses specifically interested in partnering with them. It is a free service, providing a customized portal where businesses and student-athletes can communicate, negotiate and enter NIL transactions. For more info, visit: [bit.ly/3LQugMa](https://bit.ly/3LQugMa)

## NIL BUSINESS SUMMIT

Michigan State University is hosting a NIL Business Summit on April 13. The event, to be held from 6 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at the MSU Broad School of Business Minskoff Pavilion, will provide networking and education for businesses interested in exploring opportunities in the NIL world.

For more information about the NIL Business Summit, contact Ashton Henderson at [ahenderson@ath.msu.edu](mailto:ahenderson@ath.msu.edu).

Michigan State University Federal Credit Union (MSUFCU) has been a sponsor of MSU athletics for more than 13 years and became the presenting partner of MSU Women's Basketball in 2019 as part of its multiyear athletics sponsorship agreement. MSUFCU is now in its second year of a NIL deal with the MSU women's basketball team. MSUFCU's Chief Community Impact Officer Susi Elkins said the credit union originally entered into the agreement because they were impressed with how the women apply themselves and what incredible role models they are for young women.

"We felt their approach aligns with our values. Often, female athletes aren't championed the way other athletes are," said Elkins. "The MSU women's basketball team is such an incredible inspiration, and our goal through the partnership is to empower women to grow and succeed."



Elkins

The basketball players regularly share messages about MSUFCU on their social media platforms and join the Credit Union at various events, including a launch event for the second year of the program. The team interacted with several credit union members, including many young people. Team members played basketball with people attending, shook hands, and signed autographs. Elkins feels the partnership also benefits the players by providing them with supplemental income.

"It benefits them to have a little more focus time for school work and practice and games," said Elkins. "It also brings the team together, so when they come to our events, they come as a team and support each other in that way. It is a fun, unique opportunity for them to build a bond even further than they already have."

The newly crowned Big Ten champion women's

gymnastics team has also enjoyed the fruits of the NIL era. In a historic move, all 19 members of the 2022-2023 MSU women's gymnastics team received NIL contracts with an emphasis on charitable giving. This marks the first time in NCAA history that an entire women's gymnastics team received NIL contracts of this kind and is one of the few teamwide agreements in the nation. The contracts were awarded through This is Sparta!, a collective organized by Charitable Gift America, a 501(c)(3) charitable organization. Similar deals were put together with the women's soccer, men's and women's golf, men's and women's tennis, football, and baseball teams. This is Sparta! has also entered into individual agreements with Spartan football and baseball players.

Dr. Thomas Dieters, board president of Charitable Gift America and a proud Spartan, said that each student-athlete will choose a nonprofit organization to support, giving them the opportunity to advance the mission of charitable organizations around the country and the world.

"Spartans never settle — every day, they strive to achieve greatness and lift up those around them while making the world a better place," said Dr. Dieters. "This is Sparta! gives individuals a unique opportunity to support MSU Athletics and well-vetted charitable causes at the same time. It's a game-changer that will make a difference on and off the field."



Dieters

"Our women's teams are crushing it right now," said Ashton Henderson, deputy athletic director/championship resources, MSU. "Nationally, 34 percent of the NIL collectives you see are supporting women. At Michigan State, a significantly higher percentage of the funds that we have accrued through various appearances and other NIL deals are related to women's sports."

## HELPING ALL ATHLETES REALIZE THEIR NIL POTENTIAL

MSU launched a pair of programs designed to help all of its athletes maximize their NIL potential. The EverGreen Program is designed to help student-athletes develop and leverage their individual brand. The university has also developed a partnership with software company INFLCR, which has launched Michigan State Exchange, a platform to link Spartan student-athletes with businesses specifically interested in partnering with them.



Henderson

Michigan State Exchange, a free service to both student-athletes and businesses, provides a customized portal where businesses and student-athletes can communicate, negotiate and enter NIL transactions.

“As Name, Image, and Likeness evolves, we are continually looking for ways to help our student-athletes maximize their opportunities,” said Alan Haller, MSU vice president and director of athletics, upon the exchange’s launch. “We’ve provided education and branding tools through the EverGreen program since the inception of NIL, and Michigan State Exchange is an innovative way to offer an additional level of support by providing a platform for our student-athletes to connect directly with interested businesses in a manner which is both transparent and compliant. Simply put, NIL opportunities will now be at the fingertips of our student-athletes.”



Haller

MSU has also created a partnership with the Eli Broad College of Business and student-athletes who are working collaboratively with various groups on campus.

“One of our student-athletes is working on a mental health educational seminar that they will bring to market very soon,” said Henderson. “Part of our whole structure with the NIL/EverGreen model is to educate, innovate and empower and make sure that is in the forefront with our student-athletes.”

Michigan State has garnered national recognition thanks to the EverGreen and Michigan State Exchange initiatives. MSU athletics ranked in the Top 3 among Power 5 schools that have businesses logged into the INFLCR Exchange program. Spartan athletics ranks in the Top 5 among Power 5 programs in reported transactions, thanks to the Michigan State Exchange.

“When it comes to the word ‘education,’ and in talking to certain schools, I realized who was just going to manage NIL and who was going to be a champion in the space,” said Bruce Wimbish, vice president of Anomaly Sports Group. “Michigan State from the onset has been a champion in the space because they understood that they wanted to be innovative, they wanted to provide education, but most importantly, they didn’t want to give student-athletes a partial education. Michigan State wanted to make sure student-athletes understood contracts, taxes, and how to vet advisors.”



Wimbish

## CONNECTING STUDENT ATHLETES AND THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY

The new NIL world has opened up a myriad of possibilities for student-athletes seeking opportunities to leverage their brand and for businesses that are identifying unique new ways to market their products and services. NIL deals come in all shapes. In many cases, the arrangements do not involve cash. Student-athletes can “trade” promotion by committing a certain number of social media posts about their NIL partner in exchange for products such as food or clothes.

“The terms could be that the student-athletes promote that business on their social media channels, and they would receive a certain allotment of product or services from the business,” said Daniels. “We’ve seen a number of deals like that. As we educate the student-athletes and the businesses about the terms, you can really start to think outside the box as to what compensation would look like.”

Local restaurants have jumped on the NIL bandwagon. HopCat in East Lansing has added a “Payton Thorne Burger” to its menu as part of its deal with the Spartan football player of the same name. The Jolly Pumpkin Café & Brewery in East Lansing has become the official sponsor of the MSU offensive line and long snappers. Jolly Pumpkin hosts the group periodically, where guests can interact and take photos with the football players.

“The guys up front gotta’ eat! These guys do so much hard work, and they often don’t get recognized. It’s important to us as a brand to recognize their commitment and hard work.” says Tony Grant, CEO of Jolly Pumpkin, alumnus of MSU and former offensive lineman and long snapper with the football team. “Football was, and is, still a huge part of my life, and I’m honored to be helping this generation with these significant changes in college sports.”

## META / INSTAGRAM AND WWE

The potential of NIL has not been lost on major corporations, as well. The social media giant Meta/Instagram has recognized the potential of student-athletes and business customers using their platforms to promote their respective brands as part of the emerging NIL universe. The corporation plans to help student-athletes and local businesses better understand they can use social media marketing power in ways that best meet their respective interests. Meta/Instagram is expected on the MSU campus in April.

“Following a national NIL conference we attended, we began to talk about how can we connect with some of these powerhouse brands and work with them to align with what we are doing,” said Henderson. “As soon as we approached them about being a part of what we are trying to do, they felt it was a no-brainer to get involved.”

The popular wrestling and sports entertainment company WWE is another organization seeking to connect with the NIL landscape. WWE is coming to MSU on April 12 as part of its national “Campus Rush” tour. Student-athletes will learn about WWE’s “Next In Line” (NIL) program and the resources they can utilize, including brand building, social media, fan engagement, and media training. Each tour stop will include a lively competition featuring student-athletes facing off on the microphone to cut the best WWE-style promo. One current and one former Spartan athlete have already landed WWE contracts. Football player Maliq Carr and former Spartan Gymnast Lea Mitchell have new deals and could be the next WWE superstars.

## CELEBRATING NIL SUCCESS

MSU is believed to have become the first Power 5 school to recognize and celebrate the Name, Image, and Likeness achievements of its student-athletes in November when the inaugural EverGreen NIL Celebration was presented by MSUFCU inside the Tom Izzo Basketball Hall of History at the Breslin Student Events Center.

“We are proud of how our student-athletes have leaned into NIL opportunities,” said Haller in his welcoming remarks. “Michigan State has quickly become a leader in the NIL space, and we will continue to grow together.”

Several Spartans were honored for their innovative efforts in NIL, including:

- Men’s basketball’s Malik Hall was awarded the Spartan Success award, presented to a Spartan who has seen immense success in their NIL endeavors;
- Earning the EverGreen Efficiency award for their work with MSUFCU was women’s basketball and head coach Suzy Merchant. The EverGreen Efficiency award is given to the Spartan who has best utilized the program to use the marketplace, log transactions and continue with best practices;
- The EverGreen Innovation award was presented to



The EverGreen Innovation award was presented to football's Maliq Carr for his partnership with the WWE Next In Line program. Carr best exemplified creativity through innovative use of name, image and likeness to generate value for himself and his partners

football’s Maliq Carr for his partnership with the WWE Next In Line program. Carr best exemplified creativity through innovative use of NIL to generate value for himself and his partners, and

- Wrestling’s Chase Saldate took home the EverGreen Ambassador award, presented to the Spartan who best represented and promoted use of the program.

## NIL BUSINESS SUMMIT ON APRIL 13

MSU hopes to take another step forward in connecting its student-athletes and businesses at an upcoming NIL Business Summit on April 13. The event, to be held from 6 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at the MSU Broad School of Business Minskoff Pavilion, will provide networking and education for businesses interested in exploring opportunities in the NIL world.

Business owners interested in potentially getting involved in NIL are encouraged to attend the NIL Business Summit. Daniels says NIL presents businesses with a unique opportunity to elevate their marketing program by connecting to the powerful brand that MSU student-athletes possess.

“Businesses should approach this by asking the question, ‘what do we want to accomplish and what advantages will connecting with student-athletes do for our business,’” said Daniels. “There are lots of opportunities for student-athletes to leverage their interests in a way that helps a business to grow by connecting to a different audience.”

“This is an opportunity for businesses interested in NIL to learn more through the lens of the student-athletes,” said Henderson. “What have they learned in the past year-and-a-half, and how they view the opportunities that exist throughout the community.”

For more information on MSU’s NIL program, visit: [msuspartans.com/sports/2021/7/1/michigan-state-university-name-image-and-likeness-activities-policy](https://msuspartans.com/sports/2021/7/1/michigan-state-university-name-image-and-likeness-activities-policy). ●

# \$3.9 Billion More Needed to Fix MI Roads

The Michigan Infrastructure and Transportation Association (MITA) released a report projecting a \$3.9 billion yearly funding shortfall to fix roads and bridges in Michigan. There were five solutions proposed include different formulas for increases in the fuel tax and sales tax as well as a tax on miles traveled.

a sales tax increase. A constitutional amendment would be needed to allow local units of government to levy this tax.

1. The first proposed funding option would increase the motor fuel tax somewhere between 39 cents and 74 cents per gallon.
2. Option two would also increase the motor fuel tax but would instead increase it on a per dollar basis rather than a per gallon basis.
3. The third option would increase the sales tax by 2 to 3 percentage points and be solely dedicated to transportation funding.
4. Similarly, the fourth option also increases sales tax, but would allow local communities to pursue
5. The fifth option would be a tax per miles driven, taxing anywhere from 3 cents to 5 cents per mile. This option was also suggested by the Coalition on Electric Vehicles and Transportation Revenues.

Infrastructure is one of the policy priority areas for the Chamber. The Chamber’s Policy Committee will be reviewing the proposed solutions. Adequate and efficient infrastructure will help create a more conducive environment for economic growth, attract investment, and improve the quality of life for residents, workers, and visitors. ●

## What’s on the May Ballot?

The first elections in 2023 will be on Tuesday, May 2nd. Here is what is on the ballot in our region:

### CLINTON COUNTY

Fulton Schools Sinking Fund Millage Proposal  
[bit.ly/3lz6J84](https://bit.ly/3lz6J84)

Laingsburg Community Schools Operating Millage Renewal Proposal  
[bit.ly/3n4QXlz](https://bit.ly/3n4QXlz)

Pewamo-Westphalia Schools Bond Proposal  
[bit.ly/3TuKDA5](https://bit.ly/3TuKDA5)

### EATON COUNTY

Delta Charter Township Public Safety Facility & Storage Building Bond Proposal  
[bit.ly/3yRctZ7](https://bit.ly/3yRctZ7)

Jackson ISD Special Education Millage Renewal Proposal  
[bit.ly/3JWTR4P](https://bit.ly/3JWTR4P)

Vermontville Township Fire Department Millage Proposal  
[bit.ly/408pCxl](https://bit.ly/408pCxl)

Vermontville Township Library Millage Proposal  
[bit.ly/42tHmFa](https://bit.ly/42tHmFa)

Windsor Charter Township Library Millage Proposal  
[bit.ly/3JGFAIq](https://bit.ly/3JGFAIq)

### INGHAM COUNTY

Jackson ISD Special Education Millage Renewal Proposal  
[bit.ly/3TxUxko](https://bit.ly/3TxUxko)

Webberville Community Schools Sinking Fund Millage Proposal  
[bit.ly/402Og2L](https://bit.ly/402Og2L) ●

## LRCC State and Federal Business Roundtable Recap



House Appropriations Chair Angela Witwer (D-Delta Township) spoke at the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce's federal and state business roundtable event on March 2 to provide updates on legislative fiscal matters.



Michigan State Budget Director Christopher Harkins spoke at the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce's federal and state business roundtable event on March 16 to discuss the Fiscal Year 2024 proposed state budget focusing on education, workforce development, public safety, and infrastructure.



House Republican Leader Matt Hall (R-Richland Township) gave a legislative update on core issues important to the business community at the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce's federal and state business roundtable event on March 20.

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## LRCC Joins U.S. Chamber to Oppose FTC Ban on Noncompete Agreements

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) proposed a rule to ban noncompete agreements for all employees and independent contractors, with no exceptions except in cases between a buyer and seller of a business. The LRCC has joined the U.S. Chamber along with several business and chambers of commerce from across the nation opposing the FTC's proposed rule to impose a nationwide ban on almost all noncompete clauses. The FTC lacks the constitutional or statutory authority to issue such a rule and, in attempting to do so, the agency is improperly usurping the role of Congress. Read the letter on this issue under 'Current Issues' at [www.lansingchamber.org/advocacy-priorities](http://www.lansingchamber.org/advocacy-priorities).

This aligns with the LRCC policy priority focus area of taxation and regulations.

## LRCC Signs on to Permitting Reform Effort

The LRCC has joined the U.S. Chamber supporting a permitting reform call on Congress to Permit America to Build by enacting meaningful, durable legislation to modernize America's permitting processes before the end of the summer.

**Why it matters:** Public and private sector infrastructure projects will improve our economy and the lives of millions of Americans. Investing in highways, bridges, transit systems, and ports will move people and goods more quickly and efficiently. But America cannot accomplish any of this if the outdated, inefficient, and unpredictable permitting process is not improved. Read the letter on this issue under 'Current Issues' at [www.lansingchamber.org/advocacy-priorities](http://www.lansingchamber.org/advocacy-priorities).

This aligns with the LRCC policy priority focus area of taxation and regulations. ●

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# Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce Announces New Partnership in Support of ATHENA WIN

By: Jocelyn Bellhorn, Kolt Communications, Inc.



Bakken



Batchelor



Clark



Costa



Daman



Horak



Mertz

**T**he Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce (LRCC) is pleased to announce it has entered into a new partnership under which LRCC will provide management support and program services for ATHENA Women's Interest Network (ATHENA WIN).

"We are proud to continue to support and provide leadership in advancing the ATHENA legacy which began at the Lansing Regional Chamber in 1982," said Tim Daman, president and CEO, LRCC. "Our partnership with ATHENA WIN should enable that organization to take the impressive work they have been doing in supporting the growth of women leaders in the region to an exciting new level."

"I think it is an incredible partnership and a smart move by the Lansing Regional Chamber and ATHENA WIN," said Traci Costa, president and CEO, ATHENA International. "It is going to help both lean into each other's strengths. The Chamber connections will increase exposure for ATHENA WIN. The leadership trainings that our international organization can provide to women in Lansing through ATHENA WIN will reach a broader audience of women leaders throughout the region."

ATHENA WIN has developed a track record as a dynamic group of professional women determined to equip other women in mid-Michigan with the tools, information and connections they need to success in their careers. They provide education and training services, networking opportunities and executive development for professional women in the region.

ATHENA was originally envisioned in 1982 by Martha Mertz, an accomplished businessperson who sought to offer more for women's progression. Mertz called the LRCC/ATHENA WIN partnership 'a wonderful innovation'.

"I really love this idea," said Mertz. "It is something the Chamber should track by a statistical analysis, because it is something that could be exported to a lot of

communities around the country who are exploring this idea but haven't gone down this path."

Leslie Batchelor, chair of ATHENA WIN, prioritizes increasing opportunities for women leaders to connect, socialize and grow personally and professionally. She focuses on widely communicating these opportunities in a consistent manner. She assures to follow the eight ATHENA principles — live authentically, learn constantly, build relationships, foster collaboration, advocate fiercely, act courageously, give back and celebrate.

LRCC is also pleased to announce that it has created a new position of Talent Development Manager to support all of its talent initiatives including ATHENA WIN. Sarah Bakken has been appointed to that position. The Chamber and ATHENA WIN partnership will be mutually beneficial. ATHENA WIN board members are all volunteers, so creating the Talent Development Manager position provides extra support for the organization. The Chamber is also recognized for its dedication to developing women leaders.

Bakken prioritizes realigning and coordinating communication. She determines how the information is distributed while also restructuring the ATHENA WIN website. This goal is to show what the organization is and how it supports professional women at any level. Bakken works with subcommittee members for event planning.

"I am able to work with the board of successful and passionate women leaders in our region," said Bakken. "With having a staff member at the Chamber working with them, I will be playing that key role in maintaining the structure between ATHENA WIN and the Chamber. I can help provide women in our region with the opportunity to connect, learn and grow."

Opportunities to come with this partnership include working with "Emerging Leaders." According to Batchelor, these leaders are women in the early stages of their career

track and will be the future of the organization and the region. She also sees potential in their Professional Growth and Development series. Bakken envisions a future connection to K12 leaders and to coordinate with local colleges and universities. The goal is to align with different businesses and organizations, with or without college experience, to keep the talent blossoming in Lansing.

“Let’s face it: talent is the new currency of the 21st century,” said Deb Horak, principal of Lansing-based GÜD Marketing and who served as the 2021-22 ATHENA WIN chair. “Good, high-paying jobs are going unfilled – not just in Greater Lansing – but across Michigan and the entire United States. That’s simply because employers can’t find the skilled, educated talent they need during a time of record-low unemployment. This new partnership between LRCC and ATHENA is critical because Greater Lansing is competing against the rest of the country to win the war for talent.”

“The Chamber’s membership team is being strategic with membership offerings so that organizations have the opportunity to take advantage of both memberships — Chamber and ATHENA WIN — simultaneously,” said Batchelor. “We believe that our future growth and success is directly tied to that of the Lansing Regional Chamber, so we will continue to align with their efforts and leverage those strengths.”



Coming later in the year, more Girls Night Out Meet-Ups will be rolling out to focus on social connections. These are casual networking events, so there is no formal program or agenda. Also, the next Professional Growth and Development topic — Holistic Wellness — will be featured in April.

“ATHENA WIN is the empowerment and social connectivity portion of all the ATHENA opportunities, and it is proudly woman focused,” said Amber Clark, chair of the ATHENAPowerlink governing body. “It is a huge benefit for a growing business to say to employees that ‘we are connected to the Chamber and ATHENA WIN and this a great group for you to join that will empower you and help build your skills.’” ●



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## NEW HIRES



Gilde

**Sparrow Medical Group** Orthopedics and Sports Medicine St. Johns is pleased to welcome highly skilled orthopedic surgeon **Alex Gilde, M.D.**, to its practice at

901 S. Oakland, St. Johns. Dr. Gilde specializes in total joint hip and knee replacements and partners with his patients to determine the best course of treatment for them. Dr. Gilde is accepting new patients and joins orthopedic hand surgeon **Erich Hornbach, M.D.**, to service the St. Johns-area community.



Danko

**Maner Costerisan** is pleased to announce the addition of **Jennifer Danko, CPA**, as a principal in the award-winning public accounting firm's tax department.

Danko will work with Maner Wealth, the firm's wealth management division, which was named a 2022 Rising Star in "Accounting Today"'s annual rankings of the Top 150 Firms by Assets Under Management.

The **IBC/MSU-CIBER** team is delighted to announce they recently welcomed four new team members. **Bernice Davenport**, **Ieva Kule**, and **Katherina Ehni** will be supporting the AIB. They have also added **Hannah Pszenica**, assistant director of international trade, to the team as an outreach specialist.

## AWARDS

**Sparrow Carson Hospital** has recognized a medical-surgical nurse for her compassionate care. **Samantha Hall, RN**, was nominated by a patient's family, who described



her as "a fresh breath of air." Hall joined Sparrow Carson in 2020 and quickly became an integral part of growing the medical-surgical unit by providing highly skilled, compassionate care and advocating for her patients.

The **Williamston Area Chamber of Commerce** was proud to honor several community leaders and organizations at the 2023 Community Awards Dinner held on Feb. 23. Honorees included: Business of the Year, **In Kind Bakery**; New Business of the Year, **Michigan Home Sale/Howard Hanna Real Estate Executives**; Restaurant of the Year, **Williamston Community Schools/Food Service Department**; Educator of the Year, **Robert Duffey**; Volunteer of the Year, **Dave Ferguson**; Public Safety/First Responder of the Year, **Officer Bob Stump/Dewitt Township Police**; Distinguished Veteran of the Year, **Lt. Col. Steven Hay, USAF** and Hometown Hero, **Dawn Marie Joseph**.



An **E.W. Sparrow Hospital** caregiver was recently recognized for creating a book to help communicate with a non-verbal patient with autism. **Tara Bell**, a patient care technician, used her personal time to make the book, which included pictures of simple instructions, objects, and feelings.

The book allowed the patient to point at an image to successfully communicate her needs.

**Rehmann** has won ClearlyRated's Best of Accounting 5-Year Diamond Award for providing superior service to its clients for at least five consecutive years. Diamond winners have proven to be industry leaders in service quality based entirely on ratings provided by their clients.



**LAFCU** has been recognized as a diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) education leader and awarded the 2022 Brandon Hall Group HCN Excellence Bronze Award in the Best Learning Program that Supports and Promotes Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion category. The Excellence Awards honor the top organizations worldwide that have successfully implemented programs, strategies, systems, and tools that produced measurable results.



An **E.W. Sparrow Hospital** intensive care manager has been recognized with the hospital's DAISY Leader Award for her compassion and dedication to helping their sickest patients. **Christine Wilson**, who works in the Neuro-Trauma Intensive Care Unit, holds herself and others accountable and leads by example. Whether collecting money for

someone who lost a loved one, putting together a gift basket for a patient who had surgery, or spending holidays on the unit, Wilson is always the first to step up to offer a helping hand.



**Edge Partnerships**, a strategic public relations, marketing, and advertising firm, recently won two local advertising awards for campaigns with the Ingham County Health Department and First Thursdays Art Tour in Marquette. Edge received

the awards from the Mid-Michigan Creative Alliance, the local chapter of the American Advertising Federation. The projects earning silver awards are a branded logo for the First Thursdays Art Tour in Marquette, and a multimedia campaign titled "Your Shot" for the Ingham County Health Department focused on vaccine uptakes, especially among marginalized populations.

**LAFCU** has won four national awards in the 20th Annual Service Industry Advertising Awards competition, with three entries receiving top honors in their respective categories. A public relations campaign promoting the credit union's comprehensive personal finance course, an internal communications campaign promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion, and the 12-week Shields Up! Campaign, which educated LAFCU employees about the dangers of cyber threats, were recognized with Gold Award distinctions.

## DISTINCTIONS



MSUFCU presents a check for \$50,000 at the PBS KIDS Day with WKAR celebration on Jan. 28, 2023. April Clobes and Susi Elkins of MSUFCU (back row left and right) and Shawn Turner and Julie Sochay of WKAR (back row center and front row right) pose with just a few of the hundreds of children attending the event.

*Credit: Emily Dickerson/WKAR-MSU*

**WKAR Public Media** was awarded \$50,000 from **Michigan State University Federal Credit Union** to support the station's community-wide educational initiatives. The donation was presented at WKAR's annual PBS KIDS Day event on Jan. 28, 2023, where hundreds of families gathered

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to participate in educational activities hosted by partners from communities throughout mid-Michigan.

**Dickinson Wright** is pleased to announce that **Kester So** has been named to "Michigan Lawyers Weekly"'s 2023 Hall of Fame, which recognizes Michigan legal leaders over the age of 60 or who have practiced for 30 years or more for their successful careers and valuable contributions to the community. The Class of 2023 Hall of Fame will be profiled in a special section of the April 21st issue of "Michigan Lawyers Weekly."



Rathbun

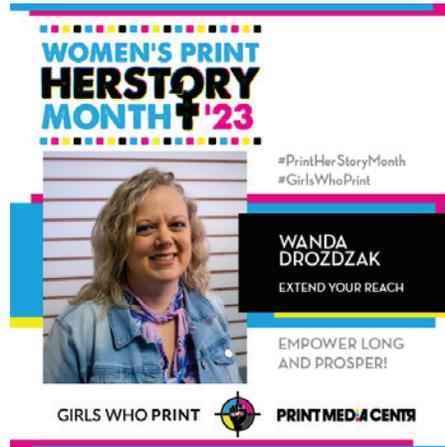
**Ben Rathbun**, president of **The Rathbun Agency**, was named one of the Insurance Journal's Top 25 Agents of 2022. Twenty-five independent agents were named to the list for having achieved impressive success in sales and demonstrated laudable business intelligence and entrepreneurial skills. They also have shown they have a passion for what they do and a commitment to professionalism and, in many cases, specialization.

## PEOPLE NEWS



**LAFCU** announced **Jeffrey Reeves** of Lansing, a fourth-generation automobile industry worker and longtime LAFCU member, as the winner of its contest celebrating the newly renovated lobby of its West Lansing headquarters and

branch. Reeves was awarded \$1,936, an homage to the credit union's founding in 1936. He plans to donate the money to Flight Angels, an organization based in Puerto Rico that takes in abandoned animals, rehabilitates them, and then relocates them to the mainland.



**Wanda Drozdak**, client account manager for **Extend Your Reach**, was proudly featured in the Girls Who Print #PrintHERStoryMonth 2023 spotlight. With her 20-plus years of print experience, Drozdak has seen many trends and gained much knowledge by asking questions.



A **Sparrow** caregiver who wanted to show her daughters that "women can do cool things" is one of three Midwesterners to have their art featured on a special collection of products at Meijer in celebration of Women's History Month. **Misty Gunter Russian**, who works in Sparrow's Finance Department, said she finds it "surreal" that her artwork is now depicted on everything from makeup bags

to sticky notes and is available throughout Meijer supercenters across the Midwest.

## PROMOTIONS



Branum

**Extend Your Reach** is pleased to announce that **Maranda Branum** has been appointed marketing and digital content manager. Branum has been with EYR

as an assistant for the past year and has proven herself ready for this new role. Branum is responsible for managing all aspects of their marketing efforts and digital content strategy, including brand awareness, developing mail and social media campaigns, and more.



**Maner Costerisan**, a leading regional business consulting and public accounting firm headquartered in Lansing, has promoted seven team members to senior-level positions, including: **Tyler Baker, CPA**, was promoted to senior manager; **Tim Bograkos** was promoted to director of business development; **Jon Ringlein, CPA**, was promoted to senior manager; **Kasey Roth, CPA**, was promoted to senior manager in the firm's audit department; **Wes Salisbury, CMA**, was also promoted to senior manager; **Monica Terry, CPA**, was promoted to senior manager in the firm's audit department; and **Bethany Verble, CPA, CFE**, was promoted to senior manager in the consulting division of the firm's accounting and outsourced solutions department.



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## MEMBERS ON THE MOVE

### BOARDS OF DIRECTORS

A host of community leaders have also joined the board of the **Sparrow Foundation**. New members include **Colin Cronin**, vice president and co-owner, DTN Management Company; **Patrick Dean**, vice president of business development, Dean Transportation; **Price Dobernick**, business manager and financial secretary, United Association of Plumbers and Pipefitters, Local 333; **Deb Ginsburg**, past president, Sparrow Women's Board of Managers; and **Amy Scoby**, senior vice president of Marketing and Business Development, The Christman Company.



The **Old Town Commercial Association** is pleased to announce the election of its new board of directors at its annual meeting on Feb. 7, 2023. **Lynn Ross** of Mother & Earth Baby and Toy Boutique will lead the board of directors. **Beth Herendeen** of Twiggies will support the president in driving the organization's strategic initiatives. The board's other officers include **Samantha Benson** of Gillespie Group as secretary, **Daniel Rials** of the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce as treasurer, **Grace Braatz-Opper** of Modern Woodmen of America in Old Town as at-large, **Lillian Werbin** of Elderly Instruments, **Jacob Horner** of PK Companies, **Katheren Palmer** of Loyalty Barbershop, **Chad Jordan** of Cravings Popcorn, and **Amanda Hadley** of Full Circle Financial Planning.

**Junior Achievement of Mid-Michigan** welcomes **Vernon Woodley, Ph.D., CHR**, to its Board of Directors. Vernon is the diversity, equity, and inclusion specialist at the Lansing Board of Water & Light (BWL) and has a Ph.D. in sociology from the University of Iowa.

Before joining the BWL, Woodley worked as a sociology professor at Eastern Illinois University (EIU), including the last two years as the chair of the Department of Sociology, Anthropology & Criminology.



Gilmore



Wilcox

**El's Place Capital Region** is pleased to announce the appointment of **Mike Gilmore**, president and CEO of The 4100 Group, as board chair of the El's Place Capital Region Community Board. **Luke Wilcox, D.O.**, Sparrow Health System, has accepted the role of vice chair. El's Place provides weekly, free, peer-to-peer grief support groups for children, teens, and young adults. They also partner with local middle and high schools to hold grief support groups on school campuses.

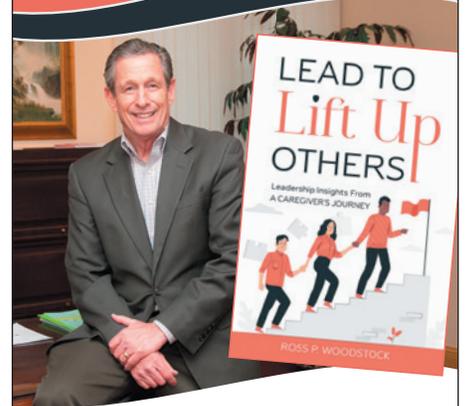


Noll-Williams

**Nicole Noll-Williams**, president and CEO of the **Capital Region International Airport**, has been appointed to the U.S. Policy Council by the Airports Council International – North America. ACI-NA is the voice of North American airports, representing local, regional, and state governing bodies that own and operate commercial airports in the United States and Canada.

**Sparrow Specialty Hospital's** board has added: **Lindsay Peters**, senior director, field engagement, Michigan Health and Hospital Association, and **Jennifer Pope**, senior neuroscience specialist, Janssen Pharmaceuticals, Inc. The board of Sparrow Community

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**COMPANY NEWS**



**Indian Trails, Inc.**, which operates one of the largest fleets of deluxe

motorcoaches in Michigan, launched the new national bus-ticketing system developed by Transcor Data Services (TDS). Called the Multi-Modal Cloud Platform, or MMC for short, the TDS system enables Indian Trails to expand connections with almost 80 independent interlining bus companies nationwide. Interlining gives travelers the ability to buy one ticket online or from an agent for a trip that includes two or more carriers in the national transportation network.



**McLaren Greater Lansing** staff and ten other first responders, 911 dispatch workers, and good Samaritans were honored on Tuesday, Feb. 7, at the Michigan State University men's basketball game against Maryland

for saving retired MSU Coach **Mike Garland's** life. Garland left Michigan State's basketball program last June after 22 seasons as Tom Izzo's assistant coach. On Aug. 27, 2022, Garland's heart stopped. He was running some errands with his wife when his car left the road and hit a tree. His wife immediately got out of the car, called 911, and flagged down two people who performed CPR until EMS arrived. Once EMS was on the scene, they transferred Garland to McLaren Greater Lansing for what would be a long road to recovery and a second chance at life.

**New Hope Community Center** held a Homeless No More event on Thursday, Mar. 2, to support New Hope's efforts to provide emergency shelter, nourishment, and resources to families, children, and veterans. The New Hope Community Center is the only low-barrier shelter in Ingham County, and Holy Cross Services is one of the largest child welfare providers in the state of Michigan. The community

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kitchen provides meals to anyone in need. In 2022 New Hope served over 69,000 meals, provided 15,449 bed nights for individuals and families, and had a 98 percent positive exit rate for their veteran's service program.



Children and their families gather in WKAR Studio A to partake in the interactive Curious Crew activities on stage. Credit: Emily Dickerson/WKAR-MSU

Families from across mid-Michigan came together on a Saturday in late January to celebrate PBS KIDS Day with **WKAR** 2023. The annual event drew more than 900 attendees of all ages. PBS KIDS Day with WKAR took place at WKAR television studios on the campus of Michigan State University on Jan. 28, 2023. It was the

first in-person celebration of PBS KIDS Day since 2020.



The **Arts Council of Greater Lansing's** "Support Young Creatives" Billboard Project allows the region's student creatives to have their artwork featured on area digital billboards. The program shows them how valued art is in the community and the impact it can have. The selected works were then displayed on Adams Outdoor Advertising's digital billboard space

throughout the Greater Lansing region during the month of March.

The Michigan-based **Kelley Cawthorne** lobbying firm announced its merger with Thomas P. Pappas & Associates, a Columbus-based lobbying firm with a major presence at the Ohio Statehouse, creating the leading Midwest-based multistate advocacy firm. While both firms will continue to operate under their current names in each market, the merger provides Pappas & Associates' clients with an additional network of representation in Michigan. It represents Kelley Cawthorne's formal entry into the Ohio market after increasing activity in Columbus over the last several years.

An initiative to give residents greater access to some of its most prestigious parks led **Ingham County's Parks Department** to partner with **CATA** on a year-round, fare-free transportation program. Under the new program, the

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Ingham County Parks Department earmarked funding to purchase curb-to-curb transportation service to the four parks it manages: Lake Lansing Park North and South, Burchfield Park, and Hawk Island Park. Transportation will be provided by CATA Redi-Ride, Rural, and Spec-Tran services.



**Lansing Community College** continues to stand with our community at **Michigan State University** as we travel through this time of grief and healing. The members of the LCC Concert Choir are showing their support with a public music video of "The

Lighthouse" by Andy Beck. The song's lyrics of strength and care embody our thoughts for the students, employees, and community of MSU. LCC continues to offer free counseling services to its students and employees.



**Graze Craze** is now open in Okemos and will specialize in artfully designed, hand-crafted charcuterie boards and boxes featuring high-quality, fresh foods arranged for nibbling or hearty graze-style meals. The store will offer pick-up and free delivery to the Greater Lansing area. **Silas** and **Lindsey Coffelt** chose to open a Graze Craze because they loved the

company's "celebrate everything" philosophy and wanted to bring this unique, creative concept to the Greater Lansing area.

The **Arts Council Greater Lansing** announces the FY2023 Michigan Arts and Culture Council (MACC) round-two grant funding totaling \$9,320 to be distributed to area artists and arts and culture organizations in the Greater Lansing region. This funding support is made available through MACC's Minigrant Program and provides support for professional development, programming, and projects. MACC professional or organizational development mini-grant funding totaling \$5,320 for 2023 was awarded to the following recipients: **Chen-Yu Huang; Lansing Symphony Orchestra; Michigan Institute for Contemporary Art; Amanda Ward**, and MACC Arts Project Minigrants funding totaling \$4,000 was awarded to **Capitol Harp Ensemble.** ●

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