

CONNECT

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March 2019



Feature:

Gude Goodies Bakery

Expert Contributors

Featured in Connect

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Edify North

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Letter from Jane Clark

President, Michigan West Coast Chamber of Commerce



As the Chamber network grows, it provides us the opportunity to create new ways to help our members connect, and this month's issue highlights a unique networking experience. Our Affinity Group program has incredible momentum, giving more members more opportunities to learn from and network with peers that they find both relatable and inspirational. It is our pleasure to help our members curate and share the best practices and freshest ideas in their respective fields, and to be the conduit that sparks meaningful business connections.

There's nothing more rewarding than celebrating with a new business and helping the owners build important relationships. Every business needs the support of a network. Finding business resources, be they supplies, services, referrals or advice can seem overwhelming, but having a support system like the Chamber gives member businesses a source for the information they need. Membership provides access to the expertise of the Chamber staff and vast experiences of the Chamber Board Members and Ambassadors, all of whom are dedicated to working for the greater good of community by supporting a strong business base. But we're not doing it alone. Thank you for playing your part in supporting other businesses in our area by supporting the work of the Chamber.

Best Regards,
Jane Clark

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Feature:

Gude Goodies Bakery

By Caroline Monahan | Photography by Photo Op Studio



Fernando Barajas and Natali Lorenzo opened Gude Goodies Bakery in August of 2018. This family owned business combines deep roots in traditional Mexican cooking with classic French techniques and recipes, procured from the Cordon Bleu. Add the tenacity required to start a new business and the warmth of a genuinely welcoming family atmosphere, and you've got a recipe that's working.

Fernando Barajas was born in the United States but spent a lot of time in Mexico, visiting the family, absorbing both the heritage and culture, and the love of food. Now an experienced chef, one of Fernando's first memories of cooking in childhood was while visiting his grandmother. She lived in a remote village in Mexico, accessible only by riding two hours on a donkey. He remembers her killing a chicken with her hands and cooking it over a little fire with a makeshift stove and firewood. The combination of the wood fire and the fresh ingredients produced the best mole he's ever had.

His father planned these regular visits to Mexico in the hopes that his children would be grateful for the life they had in the US.

When visiting the villages, Fernando would see poverty, and see friends who were unable to read and write, and developed a genuine appreciation for the opportunities he had, including his access to education. This motivated Fernando and his siblings to be good students. Always reaching for the top, Fernando attended Marquette University, and many of his family members choose to study culinary arts at one of the finest cooking schools in the world.

That appreciation of education has stayed with Fernando, turning him into a lifelong learner whose curiosity compels him onward to explore new challenges and opportunities to develop businesses and to perfect his culinary crafts. After spending all of his career as a chef, he took a turn into baking mostly out of his drive to learn. "It's funny, the reason I got into baking was because someone wouldn't give me a recipe. That was about 13 years ago. I felt challenged and I started taking classes. Finally, I figured out the recipe and learned the techniques."

"Next I think I'll study molecular gastronomy."

When Natali Lorenzo was almost 15, she and her father moved in with Fernando and they started taking baking classes together. She remembers, "I was 14 when I moved in with my uncle, and baking was my passion at the time. He saw that it was my passion, and that I was looking for a challenge and he signed us up for the classes. He also took me to work with him a lot, so I could learn some techniques."

Soon after, Natali enrolled in Careerline Tech Center and took their Global Business and Entrepreneurship class, where she wrote her first business plan for opening her own bakery. Her further studies in entrepreneurship and business management gave her the confidence she needed to approach her uncle with the idea of making her dream a reality. She knew he had plans to open a bakery, and she proposed that they open it together, as partners. "At that point, I knew as much as a book could teach me, and now I just needed the experience."

It happens that one of Fernando's cousins had given him a prophecy that he would open a bakery, which he thought was funny and would never happen. With his back-



Photo credit: Emily Hostetler

ground in culinary arts, he always preferred the savory side of food to baking. Opening a bakery marked a major career change, which sent Fernando back to studying, a practice for which he has always had a passion. “I went through lots and lots of books. I knew I could do it.” When a former employer offered them some equipment for a kitchen, it was the sign he needed to confirm that the bakery should move forward.

Planning for opening a business takes time and determining how to allocate precious startup resources was a challenge. Fernando and Natali carefully researched sources for equipment purchases and invested countless hours in the rehab of the retail space that the bakery calls home. The previous tenant left them with damaged walls and severed electrical lines, which meant more hours repairing. Fortunately, a family member stepped up to work alongside them to finish the interior. Fernando’s brothers, Leo and Manny Barajas continue to provide enormous support to the business end of the bakery and suggested that Fernando and Natali join the Chamber of Commerce. They’ve encouraged Fernando and Natali to get out into the community, so that people will get to know the faces behind the pastries and become familiar with their brand.

Family members play a huge part in the success of Gude Goodies, named for Fernando’s mother and Natali’s grandmother Gudelia Barajas, who can be found crafting pastries in the kitchen at the bakery. She was the one who first introduced Natali to cooking when she was three years old, in

much the same way that Fernando learned – with the killing of a chicken. “It was Christmas and my grandmother wanted to teach us a recipe. After we learned how to make the sauce, she told us the next part wouldn’t be pretty. The she took out a knife and chopped off the chicken’s head. I freaked out.” She calmed Natali by telling her not to think of it as a chicken anymore, now that it didn’t have a head. They cleaned it together and then she sent Natali to play while it cooked. In the end, Natali finally agreed to try it, and had to admit it was delicious. As traumatizing as the experience was, Natali now looks back on that day as an important one and knows that her own young son will learn about cooking from his relatives as well. It’s a rite of passage.

More members of the next generation of the family, led by Natali, are carrying on the indomitable family spirit. Natali’s younger twin sisters are eager to learn and often come to help in the bakery to study the techniques. Her older sister is also an entrepreneur and is presently launching her own fashion line in China.

One of Fernando’s cousins, a graduate of the Cordon Bleu (who currently teaches pastry classes at GRCC) lends his expertise behind the scenes at the bakery. “Freddy is like a brother to me and is one of the best chefs I know. He and his brother and my brother all studied at the Cordon Bleu. It runs in the family.” They’ve helped me to expand my skills with French techniques.

It’s the techniques that make all the difference in baking. “My uncle always

reminds me that it’s a science.” Details such as the correct temperature for melting and combining ingredients are crucial to creating fine French pastries, and are the same details that set Gude Goodies creations apart. There’s also an insistence on perfection, which pushes them to experiment and try recipes over and over until they are just right. What most may not realize is the financial investment behind this trial and error process. The development of recipes is time consuming and costly. One of their recipes cost them \$4,000 in product while they were working to get it exactly the way they wanted it.

Today, customers can choose from a variety of cookies, mousse, breads, cupcakes, tiramisu and their famous cheesecake and carrot cake. Plans for new menu items continue to evolve at Gude Goodies, as they carefully study which items are popular and which aren’t as profitable and adjust. They are anticipating the arrival of a new oven which will allow them to expand their offerings of bread, French and otherwise, and plan to begin offering sandwiches soon. They are still working on developing just the right website, and for now the best way to keep up with what’s new at Gude Goodies is to visit their Facebook page. However, nothing is better than stopping into the bakery and trying a sample of the amazing creations.

While you’re there, snap a photo of your pastries and post it. Your friends will be jealous.

Gude Goodies is located at 587 E 8th Street in Holland. Reach them at 616-308-9823



How Brand + Corporate Culture = The Right Foot

By Sue Borgeson, Director of Marketing

A few years ago, I decided I needed a career refresh—check out a different industry, learn some new skills, meet some new people. It wasn't long before I had my first interview with a small company in an industry that I knew absolutely nothing about.

I was excited about the prospects, and, for the first time in my career, would experience the sheer volume of information available to job seekers—thanks to the exploding age of digital and social media in the corporate world. Oh. My. Gosh. Overwhelmed. Where to start? What to believe? Wow!

So as with most things, I began with the end in mind and scoured every inch of this company's website. I micro-studied LinkedIn—who worked there? What made this place tick? What made their team show up every day? Why would their clients continue doing business with them? Facebook wasn't corporate mainstream, yet. Glassdoor didn't exist nor did Google Review. Even LinkedIn had yet to reach the momentum it has today. I called people that knew people that knew people.

I was pumped! I couldn't wait to get to this interview!

The interview didn't go as well as I thought it would. I recall watching the building disappear in my rear view mirror as I drove away. I blew

it, and I knew it. I even knew the precise moment in time it all unraveled, and I don't even wear a watch.

Halfway through the interview, our conversation segued into a discussion about corporate culture. In that moment, the owner began an address on the notion that company culture, "really is nothing more than a cover for rehashing the previous night's episode of *American Idol* during the morning break with co-workers." "Clients love all the marketing smoke and mirrors" but he would never allow it to cloud the thinking of the people who worked for him. No. Not a chance.

I mentally reworked this company's website all the way home. How could they be okay with displaying the Mission Statement. Core values. Company culture ad nauseum? And, all above the fold before anyone even knew about the fold. I had this stuff memorized. Forward. Backwards. I felt tricked and let down.

I bounced back quickly from the experience but viewed his short-sightedness as a gift. I also made my way to another company. One that understands how corporate culture equates to brand and brand equates to corporate culture. That its more than a logo or a mission statement with core values on the front page of a website. That it's about engaging

and connecting an entire organization through a brand that stands for something. A brand where everyone on board knows what it is and why it matters. It's clear and consistent. It represents hard work. It takes time. And, yes, it can and will try your patience. But, at the end of the day, your brand, your culture is your promise. A promise to your team, to your clients, to your community that they can always count on you to start off on the right foot.

Lakewood Construction is located at 11253 James Street in Holland. Reach them via their website at www.lakewoodinc.com or calling 616-392-6923. Don't forget to follow them on Facebook; just search for Lakewood Construction in the search bar.



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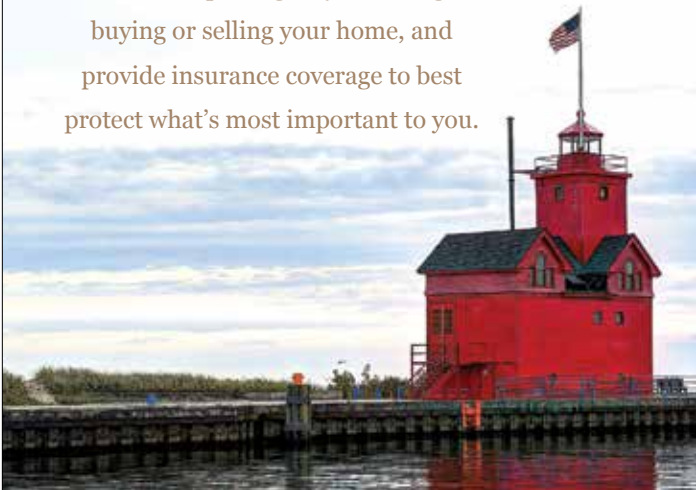
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For the full story, visit www.fnbmichigan.com/community "client focus stories"

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Employer to Provider Direct Contracting Inside the Hottest Healthcare Trend of 2019

By Lyn Carey, Corporate Health Strategist

There are a number of hot trends on the 2019 healthcare horizon—medical tourism, mail-order prescriptions, virtual care—and many employers are investigating more aggressive means to take control of their healthcare spend. Employers are turning towards direct contracting, or a fiduciary arrangement where the employer contracts directly with medical providers to provide care for employees and their families. To illustrate, Jeff Bilot, Operator at Edify North and Healthcare Consultant to Fortune 500 companies, describes direct contracting as, “a physician’s office that looks, acts, and feels like a regular [physician’s] office, but doesn’t necessarily go through an insurance provider. It’s a doctor’s office that is aligned and focused on your employees and family members only.”¹

Direct contracting is unique from many other healthcare cost reduction strategies because it brings fiduciary alignment to all parties in the agreement.¹ In short, the cost



savings do not “vanish” into the complex, ever-changing healthcare system. Typically, physician payment is based on some combination of a per employee per month fee, a negotiated flat fee that covers the total cost, and copayments paid by the employee.² By controlling the contract, the employer controls the flow of dollars.

There are a number of advantages to controlling the contract with the healthcare system. First, an employer can negotiate lower rates for services by leveraging their employee-group usage volume.³ Second, the employer can ensure that utilization management, disease case

management, and utilization review are actively curtailing costs over time through benchmarking internal data.¹ On the patient side, direct contracting offers unparalleled access to primary and specialty care, with the added bonus of case management guiding patients through a complicated and confusing system.⁴ Some direct contracting models, such as Mercy Health, offers prescription delivery to employees at work, boosting the convenience factor for employees and improving patient drug compliance rates.

While direct contracting is simple in concept, there are complications that employers

need to consider before changing their healthcare arrangements. First, the host hospital system (or primary care office) must have an electronic medical record system capable of quantifying results and benchmarking data.⁵ Second, direct contracting can be limited for fully-funded employers.⁴ Smaller employers can partner together to build a direct contracting agreement, but must be geographically close together enough to maintain feasible access.

As employers, consultants, and health systems across the U.S. embark on direct contracting journeys, each have a unique vision of the future. Kim Kelly, Regional Client Services Manager at Business Health Solutions by Mercy Health, sees direct contracting moving towards, “offering value or narrow networks that can contain costs.”⁴ Jeff Bilot sees employers of the future focusing on primary care and prevention, “an office that is aligned with a company to better the health of

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that company's population.²¹ Healthcare Finance indicates virtual visits will assist and fortify direct contracting to provide more robust services.⁶ Whether the focus is preventative health, networks focused on quality care, or using technology to boost access, the innovative processes coming from direct contracting make future of healthcare look promising.

Edify North, founded in 2009 and based in Holland, Michigan, is an employee benefits

consulting firm that focuses on the intersection between employers and employees. Edify North is dedicated to improving the physical, mental and organizational health of clients through providing clear and robust plan designs, engaging wellbeing programming and technological integrations. Edify North is proud to be recognized as one of the Best and Brightest in Wellness Winners of 2016, 2017, and 2018, as well as Michigan's Companies to Watch of 2016.

Sources:

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“He’ll Be More Comfortable with Hospice”

By Denise Stancill, Director of Business Development, Hospice of Holland, Inc.

Generally, most everyone wants the best for their spouse or loved ones. It is a commitment for many that is intuitive in the relationships we hold most dear. It is an obligation instilled in parents when children are born, a promise husbands and wives agree to when vows are exchanged, and also is evident across many circles of people who are strongly connected through deep friendships. This desire of helping each other have a good life continues throughout life, even when one approaches the sacred journey of end of life.

Most people are unprepared to provide end-of-life care. The role of caregiver for a terminally ill loved one is physically and emotionally demanding and often draining. Hospice understands this and provides a number of services to support the caregiver(s) during this most difficult time.

The hospice team helps patients and their caregivers find the best possible solutions for painful symptoms if they arise.



As a patient’s prognosis begins to decline, the hospice team walks alongside caregivers to teach them how to care for their loved one as they travel through their final days. The hospice physician, nurses, social workers and hospice aides explain signals the body gives that may indicate decline and then prepare families for what to expect in the final days.

With support from the hospice care team, caregivers have the best possible chance at ensuring loved ones remain comfortable at all times. When needed, the hospice team secures important equipment such as bed mattresses to provide adequate comfort when at rest,

portable equipment if needed for those who desire as much independence as possible when performing personal cares, and respite for times when caregivers themselves need to run errands, meet with friends, or would benefit from a few hours off to rest.

Caregivers who engage with hospice should not ever feel like they are giving up or giving in. Many people facing this journey feel overwhelmed and alone. Instead, caregivers should find comfort in knowing they care enough to enlist the additional support of hospice. By doing so, they are not only caring for their loved one but for themselves as well. Hospices

help remind caregivers that they are not alone. With encouragement from the hospice team, caregivers become equipped to take care of themselves while also being in the role of caregiver to their spouse, parent, child or other loved one in their circle.

Hospice helps everyone get the most out of life during this complicated period. Hospice providers ensure patients get the best care possible while giving caregivers the privilege of having quality time with their loved one as they go about their role as caregiver.

For more information about Hospice of Holland programs and services, to make a referral, or for answers to your questions about hospice care, please call 616-396-2972. View www.hollandhospice.org and hear from others why care from Hospice of Holland made a difference for their loved one.



He’ll be more comfortable with Hospice.

Which is why you’ll be glad that you called.

Some people think that asking for hospice care means giving up or that someone is very near the end of life. But the truth is that patients who have been struggling with pain or other difficult symptoms typically find great relief once they are admitted to our hospice program—and often wish they’d called us sooner.

That’s because our Hospice of Holland experts know how to provide the specific type of care that patients need at end of life, and we include support for families and caregivers as an important part of that process.



For more information, visit hollandhospice.org or call us at 616.396.2972.



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March Calendar of Events

Thursday, March 7, 2019

CONNECT Groups Social Event

@BAM! Entertainment Center – Private VIP Lounge / 478 E 16th St. Holland, MI

Join us at BAM for an afternoon of fun! All CONNECT group members are invited to this all groups social event to kick back, make connections and get your bowl on! We have rented the Private VIP Lounge which includes 6 lanes of bowling and shoes for all. Cost includes bowling, shoe rental, and light appetizers. A cash bar will be available for beverages.

Time: 4 – 6pm

Cost: \$10 per person



Friday, March 8, 2019

Advocacy in Action: Public Policy Committee

@West Coast Chamber, 272 E 8th St. Holland, MI

The West Coast Chamber serves as the region's advocate for business at the local, state and federal levels, representing the combined strength of our diverse industry sectors. Interested in governmental and political issues? The Public Policy Committee reviews issues of local and regional concern and makes position recommendations to the Board of Directors. Join us monthly for interesting and sometimes lively discussion about the issues that affect you and your business.

Time: 7:30am Coffee and Networking / 8:00 – 9:30am Meeting

Cost: There is no cost to attend.



Tuesday, March 12, 2019

Wake Up West Coast

@Haworth Inn and Conference Center / 225 College Ave. Holland, MI

The West Coast Leadership Program is celebrating 30 years of developing community stewards. Join us to hear from a panel of Leadership Alumni who will share their experiences with the program and how it helped identify their passions as community trustees.

Time: 7am Coffee and Networking / 7:30-8:30am Breakfast and Presentation

Cost: \$25 per Chamber member / \$40 per non-member

Sponsor: Smith Haughey Rice & Roegge



Wednesday, March 13, 2019

Community Connections

@Hope Network / 11172 Adams St. Holland, MI

This event offers an opportunity for local nonprofits to showcase the impactful services they provide and connect with young and seasoned professionals eager to learn about ways they can become more engaged in the Holland/Zeeland community. Attendees should come prepared to talk about long-term and short-term volunteer opportunities with local nonprofits including board and committee commitments. Light refreshments will be served.

Time: 4 – 6pm

Cost: This event has no cost, but registration is appreciated.

Sponsor: Chemical Bank

Monday, March 18, 2019

Advocacy in Action: Governmental Affairs Breakfast

@Alpenrose Restaurant / 4 E 8th St. Holland, MI

Join us for breakfast with our

elected state and federal legislators. An integral component of the Michigan West Coast Chamber of Commerce's mission is to communicate the views of the business community to our elected officials. Our monthly Governmental Affairs Breakfast gives our members the opportunity to dialog with our local elected state and federal legislators. After a brief update from the Public Policy Committee and each of the legislators, the floor is open for questions from, and discussions with, our members.

Time: 7:30 – 8:30am

Cost: \$25 per Chamber member / \$40 per non-member

Sponsor: Huntington Bank



Wednesday, March 20, 2019

EOS Users Group Meeting

@West Coast Chamber Learning Lab / 272 E 8th St. Holland, MI

The West Coast Chamber Traction EOS Users Group is for West Coast

Chamber members who follow the Traction Entrepreneurial Operating System (EOS) popularized by Gino Wickman's book, *Traction: Get a Grip on Your Business*. We hold quarterly gatherings to connect, ask



questions, and share insights.

Time: 12 – 1:30pm

Cost: \$15 per Chamber member / \$25 per non-member

Sponsor: Economic Development Foundation

Thursday, March 21, 2019

Power Breakfast

@Boatwerks Event Center / 216 Van Raalte Ave. Holland, MI

Arrive at 7:30am to grab coffee and be ready to start promptly at 7:45 am

for a Power Networking Session, created to make the most of the open networking time before breakfast. Browse display booths, make new contacts and win door prizes!

Time: 7:45 – 9:30am

Cost: \$25 per Chamber member / \$40 per non-member



Friday, March 22, 2019

Maximize your Membership

@West Coast Chamber Learning Lab / 272 E 8th St. Holland, MI

Join us for our Maximize Your Membership Orientation lunch to learn about the benefits of membership. Delivering remarkable

experiences is a core value of the West Coast Chamber, and our upbeat and interactive orientation is designed to help new, prospective, and existing members learn how to utilize their memberships for maximum effectiveness. We make it a fun day at the Chamber when we welcome you into our home to get acquainted! Complimentary lunch will be provided.

Time: 11:30am – 1pm

Cost: There is no cost to attend this event, but registration is greatly appreciated.

Sponsor: AccidentFund



Save the Date

Tuesday, July 23, 2019

Annual Golf Outing

@Macatawa Legends Golf and Country Club, 4600 Macatawa Legends Blvd, Holland, MI

Save the date in your calendar for an exciting event this summer!

For a full listing of events, visit www.westcoastchamber.org/events.



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Affinity Groups Provide Valuable Networks



By Caroline Monahan

Nobody builds a business alone, and no one understands this better than your Chamber. While you might often feel alone, be assured that there are other business owners and professionals experiencing the same issues that you are. Whether it's recruiting employees, searching for vendors, investors or suppliers, someone else is in the same boat. By joining the Chamber, you harness the power of an organization that is based on building relationships between businesses and offering opportunities for meaningful conversations and connections. Within our network of members exists the inspiration, education and advice that you need.

Over the last two years, the Chamber has seen a rise in requests for small, focused groups, specifically designed to serve as business support groups. We call them Affinity Groups. By homing in on the



Zeeland Affinity group members get together "Off the Clock."

qualities that certain businesses or professionals have in common, we're able to provide a place for owners and employees to share challenges, ideas, and successes with peers that have similar experiences. These networks are not intended to provide sales leads, and in fact, we carefully monitor registrants to Affinity Group events to be sure they actually fit the profile for that particular group.

A group that is in its first year is the Family Owned Business Affinity Group. More

than 65 Chamber member businesses are family owned, with more and more businesses discovering the network and attending events. This group of business owners and family member employees share about the unique challenges that come with running a business with multiple generations and addressing the issues that come with expansion and succession planning. The steering committee includes Mandi Brower, COO of Quality Carwash and the 4th generation

owner of the ever-expanding business. She's excited to share her family's experiences in the hopes of helping other multi-generation businesses.

The West Coast Chamber presently has ten Affinity Groups, based on everything from geographical location, to industry, to gender and job role. The Chamber's Event Manager, Colleen Schipsi coordinates all of the Affinity Groups, and develops more as the need arises. Here's the current list:

- Chamber Connect Groups**
- Family Owned Businesses**
- Lakeshore Latinas**
- Manufacturing**
- Marketing Communications**
- Traction EOS Users Group**
- West Coast Women Mentoring**
- Women Inspiring Women**
- West Coast Leadership Alumni**
- Zeeland Affinity Group**

Learn more about them by visiting our website www.westcoastchamber.org.



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Meet the 2018-2019 West Coast Leadership Class

By Caroline Monahan



The 2018-19 West Coast Leadership class has been in session since August. We've been helping you get to know them, and a little about why they enrolled in WCL. This month we bring you five more class members. Here you'll also see where these classmates work, which is an important thing to note. Their employers make both a financial and time commitment to support the leadership development of these individuals, which is critical to the success of the program. We appreciate the value that these businesses place on a West Coast Leadership education!



Allise Wilkerson

Talent Solutions Manager
West Michigan Works!

"One of the biggest takeaways for me so far is that this class has provided me with the opportunity to see that so many of the great things that have happened and continue to happen in our community have been started by people who have a passion, see a need and have a willingness to take action to truly serve and enhance the quality of life in our community. It isn't about recognition or praise, but about doing the right thing and being proud of the work that you do and the ways to serve others."



Patrick Avery

Division Manager / Publisher
Best Version Media

"One of the biggest takeaways for me so far is that this class has provided me with the opportunity to see that so many of the great things that have happened and continue to happen in our community have been started by people who have a passion, see a need and have a willingness to take action to truly serve and enhance the quality of life in our community. It isn't about recognition or praise, but about doing the right thing and being proud of the work that you do and the ways to serve others."



Michael Vos

Operations Manager
Don's Flowers & Gifts

"The West Coast Leadership Program has a unique way of enlightening students on our local community challenges and bright spots. I've been blown away by the programs and resources available to businesses & individuals for shelter, affordable housing and business resources (like talent acquisition and strategic partnerships). I'm thankful the team is making us aware of what makes our community great and the ways in which we can step in to ensure its continued success."



Karin Hutfilz-Amar

Production Training Coordinator
EBW Electronics

"My greatest takeaway so far from WCL has been realizing how passionate so many people are about finding opportunities and working towards solutions to strengthen our community for present and future generations."



Matt DenHerder

General Manager
Yacht Basin Marina

"My favorite part about WCL has been the relationships amongst other classmates that have started to develop, I have met a ton of great people. I also have enjoyed some of the eye opening experiences that I wouldn't generally get involved in."

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Big Lake Brewing

By Kara Wassink



The Chamber staff support small businesses like Big Lake Brewing.



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It has been over a year since Big Lake Brewing relocated to downtown Holland. The new space features a full kitchen and outdoor patio, along with an onsite brewery. Their move to Holland also included the addition of a production facility on 19th Street, increasing their production capabilities and maintaining the beer's excellent quality.

Founded in 2013, Big Lake is committed to being an owner-operated brewery; they are also proud to now be in Holland. They brew a variety of beers in the pub, and their mainstay products are also brewed and canned for distribution across the state of Michigan. Michigan and the local community are important to the company, and this is on display through many of the beer names and their exclusively statewide distribution. Some of these include Michigan Amber, Snow

Machine DIPA, and Local Love Pale Ale. And for every pint of Lake Beer poured, \$1 is donated to a local charity.

They offer lunch and dinner that complements their assortment of craft beers. Besides alcohol, the menu also features various starters, salads, entrees, pizzas, and desserts. Beer mac n cheese is a unique offering to pair with a drink for dinner.

With 20 taps, a rotating beer distribution, seasonal specials and more, there are a lot of drinks to choose from a Big Lake Brewing. Many nights, there is also an emphasis on live music, so stop in soon to check out the atmosphere!

What is West Coast Cash?

It's the community currency program designed to keep shopping local and support the businesses that form the fabric of our community. Certificates are conveniently purchased online at the West Coast Chamber website. Once ordered, purchasers simply print the certificates or email them to a recipient, and then it's time to shop. *Buy yours today at www.westcoastchamber.org.*

Wake Up West Coast Preview

West Coast Leadership Alums Deliver Remarkable Experiences

By Caroline Monahan



The first Leadership Class graduated in 1989.

The West Coast Leadership Program is celebrating 30 years of developing community stewards, and we've invited a panel of graduates to our March 12 Wake Up West Coast Breakfast to talk about how the experience made a significant difference in their community involvement. The goal of the program is to help professionals build a network that is more personal than a traditional networking experience, in order to open participants up to possibilities. While on their nine-month journey through the program, the class studies some very serious issues via first hand experiences, which inevitably bonds the classmates together. It also helps them to discover their passions for giving back to the community. Our March panelists have all left their stamp on our community in different ways and anticipate more on their horizons.

If you've ever considered applying to the West Coast Leadership Program, this is a great event to help you get a picture of what it's all about. If you are an employer looking for a leadership development program for your employees, you should come speak with other employers who have been investing in this program for many years. If you're involved with an organization that seeks volunteers with a heart for service, this is also a perfect opportunity to see how connecting with the West Coast Leadership Program can open doors for you.

Join us at Wake Up West Coast on Tuesday, March 12, at the Haworth Inn & Conference Center. Register at www.westcoastchamber.org.

Event sponsored by Smith Haughey Rice & Roegge.



Why Advocacy Matters: A Message for People Who Aren't into Politics

By Caroline Monahan

While at a recent meeting with Chamber members, one person remarked that in light of the current divisive political climate, they've started to tune out "politics" all together. But this same member, a manufacturer, also took advantage of an important Chamber opportunity to meet with a Federal legislator and other manufacturers to discuss tariffs and how they are impacting local businesses. Was this because of a spontaneous shift in that person's perception of our political climate? No. This is because Advocacy in Action is not about "politics", it's about getting our members' concerns and feedback to the people who've been elected to represent us in Lansing and Washington DC. It's not political, it's personal.

In January, we gave our members the opportunity to make connections with our newly elected state legislators at our Governmental Affairs Breakfast. For many in attendance, this was their first introduction to Senator Aric Nesbitt, and Representatives Luke Meerman and Brad Slagh. Existing legislators present were Roger Victory, who has moved from the House to the Senate, and Representatives Jim Lilly and Mary Whiteford.

As the panel discussion got going, we heard insights on what the passage of the recreational marijuana bill looks like from a government staffing and funding perspective, as well as from an agricultural perspective as it relates to the growing of hemp. There were also discussions on the Senate bill on auto insurance, an issue for which no reform has taken place in the state of Michigan since 1973. This is an issue the impacts businesses and individuals across the board, as Michigan residents pay the highest rates in the nation, and one in five drivers in the state is not insured. Finally, the panel talked with us about the current state of taxation on pensions, and

how that varies be they publicly funded, or private pensions, or 401K. Again, there are few who don't have a stake in what retirement looks like. After the panel wrapped up, many members took the opportunity to personally introduce themselves and have one-on-one conversations with the legislators. Whether you're into politics or not, it was an hour well spent.

It's no secret that trade tariffs are impacting manufacturers around the world, and recently we've seen news articles that highlight how our local business are feeling the impact. Recently, we invited our manufacturers to the Chamber offices to attend a roundtable discussion with Congressman Bill Huizenga, where they were encouraged to have a candid discussion on the financial implications, and to give specific examples of what their particular industries are experiencing. Our membership is composed of businesses that cross the

spectrum, and while some of their overall issues are similar, their specific pain points vary by business size and industry. Factors such as the obvious increased cost in steel imports, the inability to simply change suppliers to avoid those costs, the increase in the cost of domestic steel prices, the ineffective and understaff Exclusions process that only exists in certain industries, the fact that the increased costs often exceed the value add that our manufacturers put into the products before they pass them on, and the inability to participate/be competitive in certain global markets were among the many issues that were addressed. There was also discussion of how NAFTA, USMCA, trade deals with the EU, and other larger geopolitical issues come into play in policy decisions with China.

The room was alive with varying opinions, and all had the opportunity to detail those points, and give Congressman Huizenga

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a clear picture of the message he needs to deliver in Washington. A universal statement that came out of the roundtable discussion is that businesses need to continue to do business, regardless of the current political issues/agenda, and that however painful it is right now, there will be resolution to the issue at some point. In the meantime, these types of discussion opportunities are what's needed to bring specific issues to light so they can be relayed to Congress, along with recommendations on how to relieve some of the pressure on manufacturers.

These two events are clear examples of how Advocacy is about business more than it is

about politics. It's about making sure our community and its businesses have opportunities to thrive, grow, and remain competitive across the state and around the globe. It's also about giving every employee of every member business the opportunity to speak their mind on issues that matter, in forums where the message will be heard by the people we've elected to represent us.

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