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February 2018



Feature:

Housing Next

*Pictured: Housing Next
Director Ryan Kilpatrick*

Expert Contributors

featured in Connect



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Letter from Jane Clark

President, Michigan West Coast
Chamber of Commerce



It's like preaching to the choir to tell you that West Michigan is a remarkable place to live, work and play, and some of the statistics that we often share are our robust economy and low unemployment rate. As our businesses grow, that low rate requires more extensive recruiting of talent from outside our area, which is a daily challenge for employers, and is a topic that we often emphasize in Chamber programs and services. How can the Chamber help connect employers with the talent that they need to grow?

A piece of that puzzle lies in looking at the barriers to bringing in and retaining talent, and one that has quickly risen to the top of the list is the lack of affordable housing. Our community has amazing organizations that are tackling this issue head on. In this month's issue, you will read more about the partners rallying to address the challenge, and the new leader focusing our efforts. The Chamber is proud to be part of this collaboration, and to engage our members in seeking solutions that will help their businesses thrive.

Best Regards,
Jane Clark

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Feature:

Housing Next

By Chelsea Scott

Affordable Housing Statistics



31% of home owners and 43% of renters in Ottawa County are currently paying more than 35% of their gross annual income on housing. As these families and individuals continue to spend a greater share of their total income on housing, they are less capable of fully participating in the regional economy—meaning they have significantly less expendable income to save for college tuition, cover major car repairs or even spend at local businesses.

Ottawa County finds itself in the advantageous position of being the fastest growing county in Michigan while also maintaining the lowest unemployment rate. This combination, however, has resulted in an affordable housing shortage. “The United Way estimates that there is a need for at least 15,000 additional housing units at an affordable price in 2017,” said Housing Next Director Ryan Kilpatrick. “This number is expected to grow year after year as the housing market continues to improve. While wages in the region are also rising, they have not tended to rise nearly as fast as the cost of housing.”

Housing Next is a cross-sector collaborative initiative involving nonprofit, government, and business partners that have strived to create and promote a strong economic case for additional workforce housing units in the greater Ottawa County region. Their mission is to unlock market-driven solutions to make housing affordable for all.

The organization intends to address the affordable housing shortage crisis by increasing the number of affordable units and working with local municipalities on policy that supports affordable housing. Specifically, they will work to:

- Increase the number of affordable units.
- Partner with developers to seek out financing solutions to support more development.
- Create a policy/regulatory environment that supports affordable housing.
- Apply leverage to support programs that offset non-housing costs to allow more income to go toward housing.
- Pursue support for nonprofit partners who are enhancing sustainability of affordable housing.

Housing Next is endeavoring to help what they refer to as the ALICE households of Ottawa County. An acronym for Asset-Limited, Income-Constrained, Employed, ALICE represents those among us who are working—often at more than one job—yet still falling behind. Factory workers, single parents, school teachers, retired seniors and disabled adults may all fall into this category. The fact is that the cost of living in Ottawa County is above what many jobs can support, and while minimum wages are rising, they aren’t climbing at the same rate that housing costs are. Housing Next estimates that 36% of households in Ottawa County are struggling, and their goal is to positively impact that figure.

“Housing Next is newly created and began its work in earnest on January 15th, 2018,” said Ryan. “We share offices in Holland and Grand Haven with existing non-profits, but we’re designed to serve the entire region as needs arise.”

For the past 12 years Ryan has worked in community and economic development, with the last four years being dedicated to working with private developers to revitalize downtown communities across West Michigan. “As a part of this work I became very familiar with the systemic barriers that limit the availability of housing,” he explained. “As West Michigan continues to enjoy a very favorable economic climate, we have an opportunity to use regional market forces to build more sustainable and economically vibrant communities while focusing on market-based and equitable solutions.” He went on to say that this community has a unique blend of intellectual prowess, talent, faith and dedication. “I’m excited to work alongside our private sector and non-profit partners on a such an important issue,” he said.

The Leadership Council of Housing Next includes the Grand Haven Area Community Foundation, the Community Foundation of the Holland/Zeeland Area, West Coast Chamber, Chamber of Grand Haven, Spring Lake and Ferrysburg, Greater Ottawa County United Way, Ottawa County, Lakeshore Advantage, and Community SPOKE.

Ryan feels strongly that the work of Housing Next is a collaborative effort and said they will be looking to the community for input as they begin their work. “We will be doing a lot of work to better understand the needs in the community and to make connections wherever possible,” he said. “Part of our work will involve a fair amount of exploration among public and private sector financing opportunities as well as building collaborative work groups to explore more vertical integration in the housing sector.

For more information on Housing Next, visit www.ottawaunitedway.org/ottawa-housing-next.



(From left to right) Housing Next Leadership Council members Mike Goorhouse (Holland Zeeland Community Foundation), Jennifer Owens (Lakeshore Advantage) and Jane Clark (West Coast Chamber). Photo provided by deVries Photography

Housing Next Leadership Council:

- Mike Goorhouse (Co-Chair)**, President of Community Foundation of the Holland/Zeeland Area
- Holly Johnson (Co-Chair)**, President of Grand Haven Area Community Foundation
- Patrick Cisler**, Executive Director of Community SPOKE
- Jane Clark**, President of the Michigan West Coast Chamber of Commerce
- Joy Gaasch**, President of the Chamber of Grand Haven, Spring Lake and Ferrysburg
- Patrick Moran**, President of United Way of Ottawa and Allegan Counties
- Jennifer Owens**, President of Lakeshore Advantage
- Al Vanderberg**, Ottawa County Administrator



Tackling the Affordable Housing Issue Head On

By Jeremy Gonsior

Affordable housing is such an important issue in West Michigan right now that Mike Goorhouse will take a phone call when he doesn't really have time, in the middle of the busy holiday season, en route to another important meeting, to ensure the message gets out.

Solving this community dilemma has gained mainstream momentum in the last two years and Goorhouse knows it. As co-chair of the newly-formed Housing Next Leadership Council, an initiative focusing on housing solutions for all income levels in our community, he has been in the strategic meetings.

You can hear it in his voice, an undertone of excitement and urgency and, most of all, conviction. In other words, it's time for all the housing talk to become *housing action*.

How did the greater Holland area get here? Well, it's 10 years since the last recession, and West Michigan housing prices have rebounded. Building costs are on the rise. Unemployment is low. All good news—on the surface.

Wages in the region, however, have not experienced the same growth rate. So those same housing cost increases have forced Lakeshore residents to spend a higher percentage of their income on housing. In

fact, some spend more than 40 percent of their income on housing, Goorhouse said.

And this squeeze creates extra stress among lower-income residents and, a surprise to many, even middle-class residents.

"Families, when they are not financially stable ... bad things happen," said Goorhouse, president of the Community Foundation of the Holland/Zeeland Area. "Housing costs going up has been a huge reason why."

Hurting employers

Affordable housing also impacts the West Michigan business community. Significantly. Zeeland-based Lakeshore Advantage interviews more than 100 employers each year to understand their current struggles. Jennifer Owens, the economic development organization's president, said employers are citing housing issues are trending as an obstacle to growth.

Simply put, the demand for workforce housing is outpacing the supply. West Michigan is a great place to live, work, play, and learn, Owens said, so people want to be here, and so do the employers.

"A shortage in affordable, or workforce housing, means young professionals,

entry-level workers, families that have daycare needs (which can be expensive) and workers at lower-paying jobs or jobs that require fewer skills are struggling with finding an affordable living solution that they desire in our community," Owens said. "Without tackling this issue head on, it can lead to a skills gap in our community, as those people may find employment elsewhere, or they could choose to not enter the workforce, and it impedes the growth of our primary employers who may not be able to find employees at those levels."

Jane Clark, president of the Michigan West Coast Chamber of Commerce, agreed with Owens' assessment and stressed the Chamber, along with many local business owners, are focused on changing the situation.

"We're happy to have a seat at the table to work on solutions to the problem of affordable housing. It affects our community on so many levels, ranging from health and human services issues to attracting and retaining talent to our area, and we want to help affect change across the board," Clark said. "Unfortunately, there is no one specific solution to the problem, since it crosses the line between

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business, non-profits and public policy, and that is why leaders in our community have made the commitment to hiring a Director for Housing Next to coordinate the pieces of this puzzle.”

Affordable housing solutions

Enter Ryan Kilpatrick.

Call him the new guy. Or expert help. Better yet, let's go with Director of Housing Next, his actual title.

Kilpatrick, who started in January, will “provide strategic direction to the Council, advocating for greater housing choice and affordability across the region,” according to a statement from Housing Next.

His first major project: work with cities and townships to update their zoning law, Goorhouse said. This means allowing space for more innovative housing projects. Modern policy that reflects today's world, not yesterday's world.

The projects worth pursuing? Goorhouse said higher density, mixed-income projects—not just lower-income projects. Smaller housing units in walkable neighborhoods with retail and employment opportunities embedded within those neighborhoods, according to Kilpatrick. Close to reliable public transportation.

“Collectively, we have made policy decisions that undermine the ability for builders and



developers to be innovative and responsive to market demands,” Kilpatrick said. “Unfortunately, there just aren't enough places where public policy has allowed for all of those things to occur in one place and have a financially viable business model for a developer or a builder. Whether it's overly burdensome parking requirements or restrictions on unit size and density, the housing market isn't able to keep pace with demand for a number of reasons.”


That's the second major component of his job, securing enough financing to get the projects off the ground.

“The private markets don't drive (affordable housing),” Goorhouse said. “We need other dollars—public and philanthropic dollars—to come alongside so the developer has an incentive to build.”

Kilpatrick has a background in community planning, development finance, and public engagement, previously working for the Michigan Economic Development Corporation. He is more than ready for this new affordable housing challenge.

“I spent a lot of time crafting my career around a central question, ‘How can we make communities more resilient and more enriching for everyone?’” Kilpatrick said. “At this particular moment in West Michigan, housing is a core issue that is undermining the resilience of our regional economy and quality of life...I'm excited to dig into these issues on a deeper level with local communities, developers and our non-profit partners to find ways of bridging the gaps in the market while still retaining everything we all love about living in West Michigan.”

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Ensuring You Have a Happy 2018!

By Andy Spears, Farm Bureau Insurance

According to a recent survey*, today's consumers are most concerned about financial health, identity theft, and personal safety. As we begin the New Year, there are some important steps you can take regarding your insurance policies to ensure you enjoy a safer 2018 and have the appropriate protection for whatever comes your way in the next 12 months.

Before getting started, the first thing you should do is take note of whether any significant changes took place over the last year that your policies may not reflect. For example, did you get married and have a child? Or did your child start college? Hopefully you've already updated your auto and home policies with the new status, as well as any other policies. Significant changes in marital status, moving, new dependents, etc. are all going to be taken into consideration when it comes time for your policy to renew. Make note of any changes or any changes that may be coming up and let your insurance agent know so that they can remember to call you around that time and make any updates at that point.

Read Your Policies: Unfortunately, most policy holders don't read their insurance policies until they actually need to use the coverage. But it's always a good idea. If you only read the policy when you have a claim, well—by then it's too late to see what your deductible is, that your auto policy doesn't cover towing or the cost of a loaner car for more than a few days, or that your policy pays the actual cash value (the depreciated amount of an item) instead of the actual replacement cost for items damaged in a flood or fire.

For homeowners suffering a loss, knowing what type of reconstruction budget you have to work with can be the difference between using builder grade, or having additional living expenses covered.

Additional Coverage: Some insurance policies must be purchased separately from existing auto or homeowners' policies. Flood insurance and cyber insurance are just a few examples. Flood insurance must be purchased at least 30 days before the policy becomes effective (meaning you can't purchase it a few days before a torrential rain is supposed to hit your area).

Is Your Inventory Accurate? This could also be a good time to consider updating your home inventory, so you have accurate coverage for your belongings and an accurate list of items like works of art, collectibles (e.g., stamps, automobiles, firearms, paintings, etc.), jewelry and antiques. Take photos of each room and save them to your cloud for easy access in case of a loss.

Compare Prices: In today's marketplace, computers, smartphones and apps make it easy to compare prices for coverage. Ask your insurer about multi-policy discounts, possible discounts for a clean driving record or other ways you can save money on a policy. When comparing insurance policies, make sure they offer the same levels of coverage. In this way, you're making an "apples-to-apples" comparison.

Checking on your insurance health and well-being is a worthwhile resolution that can benefit you for the entire year. It takes a little time and research, but identifying your risks early can help manage them before you suffer a loss.

Talk to your insurer: I'm an insurance agent so you knew that I might mention this, but there's good reason to regularly check in with your insurer. Despite what you might think, an insurance review doesn't have to be an involved, time-consuming endeavor. A single conversation or a visit with your agent can help make sure that you're knowledgeable about your coverage and comfortable that your limits are meeting your current needs.

* <https://www.travelers.com/iw-documents/resources/risk-index/2017-report.pdf>

Andy Spears owns a local insurance agency in the Holland area. His passion is to serve, and provide protection and peace of mind to his clients. Andy can be reached at 616-396-3333, aspears@fbinsmi.com, or through his website – www.InsureWestMichigan.com.

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A Tale from a Former System Builder

By Mark Kolean, Shoreline Technology Solutions

When I got my start in the technology business, I worked for a little computer business named T&D Software. I was 14 years old helping with the mail order part of the business that sold freeware software to owners of the TRS-80 personal computers that were popular in the late '70s and '80s. Since the year was 1990 and this computer had been released almost 13 years ago, this mail order business was all but dead. This opportunity to create cassette tapes and mail them around the country led me to my second job as the first employee of a new business venture called Computers and More. Here we spent our time building "IBM Compatible" computers from parts that we ordered around the country, to assemble full computers. The concept of ordering a box load of Windows 3.1 licenses and computer main boards seemed like magic to me at the time. The work of screwing in those mainboards to 12 different cases and making sure the spacers fit just right so one didn't short out the parts, certainly took a lot of time. Back then a new desktop computer sold for over \$2000 for a shiny new beige 80386 (386 for short). For each computer, we needed to assemble the parts in the case, plug in all the cables, mount the hard drives, floppy disks, CD drive, and finally install the Windows operating system and install drivers for the random devices in this new computer we created.

Of course, while it seemed magical when it worked, that seldom ever happened. Most of the time once a computer was assembled, it just beeped because some part wasn't plugged in tight enough or another part had failed. The quality control of all those parts was a major obstacle in building all those computers. Parts either failed, or by the time a new set of parts was found, a new version was created and not compatible with the old set of parts that was in all the current computers.

My job in high school and some of college was keeping track of all the parts that



failed as well as help in the assembly of these dozens of computers we created at a time. As time went on, the quality of the parts we chose as a business became more suspect and the job became overwhelming. I watched our little company grow over time by building more and more systems from the ground up.

So, after I left Computers and More and did some freelance work through college I decided to start my own business and try my hand at being a system builder myself. What I didn't understand was that now in the early 2000s when I started my business, the average computer price had come down to under \$1000. The time it took to research all the parts, order them, return them, book keep them and make sure your employees didn't steal them, was massive. While it seemed the profit from each machine was good, we didn't truly consider the number of human hours, loss from inventory shrinkage, and repair of product to cover our costs. There was one major factor in all this that also became clear in time as the lesson to be learned; no matter how good of a deal you give someone people expect the

same level of support on a cheap product as they do on a good product. In those early years, I lost many good accounts because the products didn't hold up as well as the customers expected them to.

In time, I stopped assembling PCs and downsized my staff. We focused on areas in the business environment where we could add value such as developing networks and fixing problems. Turning screws just to keep people busy was not only burning me out but losing my business both money and customers. If we fast forward to 2018 when the beige computer of yesterday is now the iPhone in your pocket or the Droid tablet in your car dash. I am glad to see computers become a simple commodity and they usually now just work. However, thinking back to the early days of having a table with 12 computers all being set up and installed at the same time, reminds me of the magic of how it used to be.

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Chick-fil-A Opens in Holland

By Caroline Monahan

Construction has been underway for months on the new Chick-fil-A restaurant opening in Holland. The grand opening is scheduled for February 8, and the West Coast Chamber is on board to help celebrate. Formerly the site of Perkins restaurant on North Park Drive, Chick-fil-A constructed an entirely new building from the ground up, and the iconic red sign is clearly recognizable from US 31.

Restaurant owner, Shaun Page, is excited to open here in Holland. "It's been my dream to open a Chick-fil-A since I was 6 years old, so I am literally living my dream." First introduced to the restaurant on a Christmas visit to his grandparents' home in South Carolina, he fell in love and has been determined ever since.

His path to ownership began shortly after he graduated from Spring Arbor University. He applied to be an owner, and wasn't selected the first time around. "It's very competitive to be an owner/operator for Chick-fil-A. Every year there are about 45,000 applications received, and 90 are selected." Shaun was instead offered a position in the management training program. This two-year long program involves working at four different restaurants around the country, which meant Shaun's young family was on the move a lot. "There's no guarantee of being approved for ownership after you complete the training. My wife, Meg



Shaun Page and Britt Delo

and I took a leap of faith that this would all work out." They were, in fact, approved, and have been operating a Chick-fil-A in Iowa. Opening in Holland was always the hope, as Meg is originally from the area and they knew that ultimately, they wanted to live in the lakeshore community. So now the dream continues to come true, and they have settled here with their three sons.

Shaun speaks passionately about the qualities that drew him to Chick-fil-A, from the freshness of the food and the emphasis

on great service, to the ability to impact people's lives in a positive way. They are in the process of hiring, with the intention of bringing in 110 employees at all levels. He plans to hire five general managers, and is looking for people with leadership qualities, who are eager to learn the ways of Chick-fil-A, and to deliver quality fresh food to the guests who are eagerly awaiting opening day.

Chick-fil-A is located at 2332 North Park Drive, in Holland.

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What the Big Brands Know

By Caroline Monahan

Marketing guru Gerry O’Brion travels the country sharing insight on how to change the course of a business, and this fall he spoke at the Michigan Association of Chamber Professions (MACP) conference attended by several West Coast Chamber staff and Ambassadors. Gerry spent his career growing big brands such as Procter & Gamble, Coors Light, Quiznos, and Red Robin. Now, he translates strategies from billion-dollar brands into techniques that any company can use, regardless of their budget. Below are some words of wisdom on how to set your business apart from your competitors and turn customers into raving fans.



wanted, having due dates with penalty charges, having to rewind, etc. What did Netflix do that Blockbuster did not? They tackled all those barriers to customer satisfaction. They had a seemingly limitless library of movies and offered to mail videos to you so you didn’t have to go out, and let you return them the same way. Blockbuster built more buildings, but people didn’t want

to go there, and they ended up filing for bankruptcy. Netflix has continued to evolve, and now you can stream their videos from just about any device. Clearly, adapting and being responsive has led to great success for Netflix.

Communicate Your Brand with Clarity

Where is your brand built? Is it built in your marketing department? No. It’s built on the front lines of where you interact with your customers. Your brand exists in the mind of your customers, and they determine the value of that brand by their interactions with you and your workforce. What are your customers experiencing when they buy from you? Is their experience reflective of your organization’s core values? If it’s not, it’s time to look at your sales model to align your core expectations with the product and service that your team delivers. Organizations that do well have clarity about what they do and what they deliver, and all their representatives share the same message.

Give Them More of What They Want

It’s this perception of your business in the minds of customers that determines how much your company thrives, so listen to them. Find out if you are giving them things that they do not want, and make changes to give them more of what they do want. One of Gerry’s examples is the comparison of Blockbuster and Netflix. What didn’t people like about Blockbuster? Having to drive there, driving there to find Blockbuster didn’t have the movie they

What is your BECAUSE?

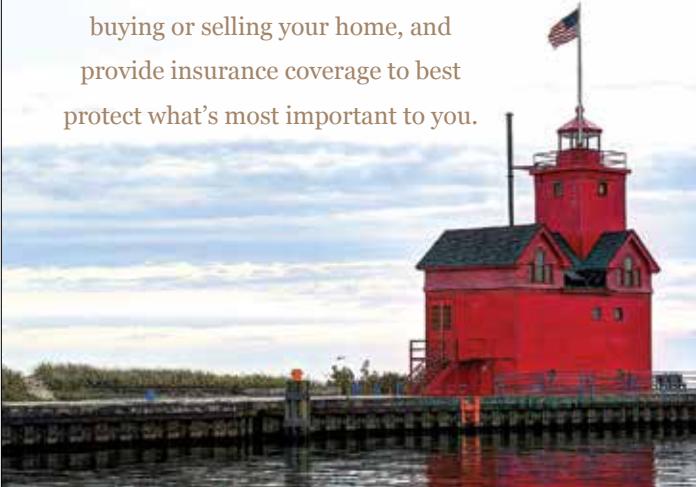
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Ultimately your brand is what builds the relationship with the customer. Understanding their expectations and needs and delivering on your BECAUSE builds their trust and loyalty to your business or organization. It’s the reason they will share your BECAUSE with their colleagues and friends. Turn them into raving fans and they will sing the praises of your brand and make your business successful.



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February Calendar of Events

Thursday, February 1, 2018

Professional Lakeshore Latinas Meeting

@West Coast Chamber of Commerce Learning Lab, 272 E 8th Street, Holland MI, 49423

The Professional Lakeshore Latinas' mission is fostering relationships and empowering Latinas through advocacy, service, and professional development. Please join us at our next meeting for networking and the opportunity to have authentic conversations facilitated by Reyna Masko and Vanessa Gutierrez. Beverages and light hors d'oeuvres will be provided.

Time: 5:30-7:30pm

Cost: Free, but registration is required

Tuesday, February 6, 2018

Chamber CONNECT Groups Quarterly Gathering

@West Coast Chamber of Commerce Learning Lab, 272 E 8th Street, Holland MI, 49423

All Chamber CONNECT group members are invited to attend the upcoming quarterly CONNECT Group Gathering on Tuesday, September 19th from 8:00 am - 9:30 am. At this upcoming event, you will have the chance to network with other CONNECT group members, hear an update from the Chamber and have the chance to hear from a presenter on a relevant topic.

Time: 8-9:30 am

Cost: Free, but registration is appreciated

Friday, February 9, 2018

Public Policy Committee Meeting

@West Coast Chamber of Commerce Learning Lab, 272 E 8th Street, Holland MI, 49423

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. If interested in more information please email Jane Clark.

Time: 8-9:30am

Cost: Free, but registration is appreciated

Tuesday, February 13, 2018

Wake Up West Coast

@Haworth Inn & Conference Center, 225 College Ave, Holland

Please join us at our monthly Wake Up West Coast event, where you will have the opportunity to hear from a great guest speaker and network with other Chamber members while enjoying a delicious breakfast! This month



we welcome Wade Hoag, Hope College student who will share his inspiring story on turning obstacles into opportunities. Stay after breakfast to continue networking and meet the presenter! As always, come early for pre-coffee networking.

Time: 7-8:30 am

Cost: \$20 per Chamber member (\$25 if registered after February 11) / \$35 per non-member

Monday, February 19, 2018

Governmental Affairs Breakfast

@Alpenrose Restaurant, 4 E 8th Street, Holland MI, 49423

Join us for breakfast with our elected state and federal legislators. Ample time is provided for questions and answers. Arrive at 7:15 am for a brief networking session before the breakfast begins.

Time: 7:30-8:30am

Cost: \$20 per Chamber member / \$25 if registered after February 16 / \$35 per non-member



Wednesday, February 21, 2018

Leading Edge: Marketing Strategically

@West Coast Chamber of Commerce Learning Lab, 272 E 8th Street, Holland MI, 49423

Time: 8:30-11 am

Cost: \$55 per member / \$35 for each additional attendee from the same company / \$75 per non-member / Pre-registration discount

Thursday, February 22, 2018

ZAG: Off the Clock

@Tripleroor, 146 E Main Ave, Zeeland MI, 49464

Step out of your office and into Tripelroot, and get to know other Zeeland area business representatives. It's a great way to unwind and make connections, all while trying to out some great drinks and complimentary snacks in a cool new venue. Registration is suggested, but not necessary.

Time: 4-5pm

Cost: Free, but registration is appreciated.

Tuesday, February 27, 2018

Ambassador Team Meeting

@TBD

Team members of the West Coast Chamber turn ideas into action. Working with the Chamber's professional staff, our volunteers help facilitate the programs and services that enhance the success of our members and the greater business community. Chamber teams and committees are made up of members who volunteer their time and efforts to make our organization stronger. Participation is a great way to network, share ideas, and build lasting professional relationships.

Time: 7:45-9am

Cost: Free

Wednesday, February 28, 2018

Network @ Lunch

@Russ' Restaurant Southtown, 1060 S Lincoln Ave, Holland MI, 49423

You have to eat, right? Get to know other business representatives by spending an hour with them over a relaxing business lunch. You will also be randomly assigned with other dining partners at the event, giving you the opportunity to make new contacts and share about yourself and your business. What could be easier?

Time: 12-1pm

Cost: \$20 per Chamber member / \$30 per non-member

Cancellations not received 48 hours prior to event will be charged.

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



How a Life Changing Obstacle Became an Opportunity: Lessons from Wade Hoag

By Caroline Monahan

The Chamber has been hard at work promoting the February 2018 Wake Up West Coast Breakfast, and the fact that the presenter is a Hope College student. While we know that Wade Hoag has a powerful message to share, you may not be familiar with his story, and we're hoping that you will take our advice, and claim your seat for this event.

Meet a young man who is wise and driven, well beyond his years. Wade Hoag is a college student, but no ordinary college student. Immediately after high school, at age 19, he suffered a devastating blow that would have sidelined most of us. But not Wade. This athlete, who suddenly found himself without the ability to use his legs, continued to move forward with college, despite the major plot twist in his life.

He started school, he started a real estate business with Hope Alum, Jay Williams, and then he started a second business in restaurant equipment. He became the "Czar of Toughness and Fun" for the Hope College Lacrosse team (which he had intended to join before his accident, and is still considered a member of the team), and won the Karen Page Courage Award, which recognizes student-athletes who demonstrate courage in their lives. All of this is amazing, but what has impressed us even more is the way this young man has taken this obstacle and turned it into an opportunity to inspire and coach others on making the most of their lives.

Wade shared these thoughts:

"What I love the most about sharing my story is that it's never over. Every time I am talking to someone (really talking to them), I am healing. When I am vulnerable with people they want to open up to me and we heal each other. It's like, 'I am not there yet but I am working on it.'



Working on it is the fun part. I'll never fully grasp what happened to me. I have dreams that I am running or playing lacrosse again and they are so real and I wake up to the reality of not being able to walk and it knocks the wind out of me. My life would be a whole lot easier if I weren't in a wheelchair but then again, it wouldn't be my life and then I wouldn't be me.

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My biggest break through has been learning that everyone has a wheelchair and we are all held back by something. We all have obstacles, right? For me it is my wheelchair that keeps me from taking a step forward, but for someone else it could be depression, anxiety, trouble at work or at home, (the list goes on). Everyone has a wheelchair and it isn't always so obvious like mine is. If I can use my wheelchair as a medium to express that part of life to people, then I am doing something with what's been done to me, and I am adopting a new way to give myself to the world around me, growing into this role in life that I honestly never wanted but couldn't imagine living without. Just because something is uncomfortable doesn't mean value can't be created. Everybody has obstacles, everybody has a wheelchair, but on the other side of that I have found grace, admiration and companionship. What we can't forget, though, is that it's painful and it's really hard, but I think that's where the opportunity lives, in the hard stuff and in the pain. Life doesn't happen despite suffering, it happens inside of it.

Every hard day is offering me something, but I won't find out what that is if I don't keep going. It's like this whole situation I found myself in as a 19-year-old kid was really just asking me the question, 'What's it all mean?' and how I act/live out my life is my answer."

There's much more to Wade Hoag, and we invite you to join us on February 13 to learn more from this inspirational person. Wade will be joined at the event by his "mentor," Hope professor, Rob Pocock. It will be a conversation that you won't want to miss.

"When I am done with school, I will hopefully get into something really unique. I feel fortunate to be able to be choosey when it comes to that. So many kids my age feel the need to "make it" by a certain age, and I felt that a lot too, but I've learned not to compare my start to anyone else's middle. For the next two years I just want to focus on living well and loving my family and friends and finding a true vocation in between."

Registration is open now on our website, www.westcoastchamber.org.



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Is Myopolis™ Changing the Face of Social Media?

In the wake of frustration that many people have with social media, Myopolis™ could be changing the face of social media. A well-publicized study released last April (Harvard Business Review April 10, 2017) concluded that depression may be linked to social media usage. According to a recent article from CNBC, Facebook admitted usage could be bad for you. The harm stems from reading posts versus interacting with others, which can positively impact your mood.

Anyone who used social media during the last election can attest to the tiring intensity of the political posts. It becomes very uncomfortable when you face the choice of either "unfriending" your relatives and co-workers or building frustration by reading their divisive opinions.

Myopolis™ cracked that code by adding filters to each topic. This allows you to keep your family and co-workers while dumping their politics (or cat videos for that matter). There are twenty-some filters, including topics such as sports, news, fashion, real estate, and so forth. Additionally, Myopolis™ gives local influencers a powerful platform by ranking the top leaders in each of the categories. The category leaders can increase their influence beyond their own towns and into the state and national levels.

The map view allows users to see Pings (posts) from their own Private Citizens (friends) and the people who they have Citizenships with (people they follow). If you've ever wanted to be known as the leader in sports, fashion, real estate or news, now's your chance.

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PROMOTING A HEALTHY WORKPLACE

BY DENIS F. DOWNEY

Healthy workers make a healthy workplace.

That may sound corny, but when you think about it, the wellbeing of your workplace is often contingent on the wellbeing of its workers.

With that in mind, here are some ways to help promote healthy habits within your workforce:



VENDING MACHINE OPTIONS

Offering healthy vending machine alternatives like fruit, nuts, low-calorie or low sugar items and baked snacks and chips is an easy, and often cost-free, way for employers to promote healthy eating habits in the workplace. The same goes for liquid refreshments, including natural fruit juices, water and water-based alternatives. Many vending machine contractors have already caught on to the healthy-option trend and may have information on such a program available, as might local health-care providers. You can also make your employees feel they have a stake in this by allowing them a say in the healthy options. A word of caution, however, as with any change there may be resistance: don't forget those who may have no interest in the healthy alternatives, especially if it means their favorite sweet snacks, sodas or power drinks may lose their spots in the vending machines. You don't want what is intended as a positive step to become an "us-against-them" situation.



GROUP ACTIVITIES

Notice that some of your employees use their lunch hour to squeeze in a quick jog or walk through the neighboring park? Why not suggest forming a jogging or walking club? Are you or one of your employees a yoga or exercise instructor? Why not find out if they would like to share their expertise in short sessions with their co-workers? These types of group activities may not only aid the wellbeing of the individuals involved, but also the wellbeing of the workplace by boosting camaraderie.

ACTIVITY-TRACKING PROGRAM

I purposely avoided the words "Contest" or "Competition" in titling this section because I have seen one such event become so competitive it was unhealthy to the workplace. The most common type of this program involves participants using pedometers, or other step or activity-monitoring devices, over a period of time (say, 10 weeks) and recording their progress. The goal is to get you up and moving. The only person you should be competing against is yourself as you try to increase your activity throughout the duration of the event while, hopefully, starting a healthy routine that will continue once the program has ended.



As an incentive to participate, and to track participation, prizes can be awarded—provided such prizes are in keeping with the goal of the program. Headphones that can easily be incorporated into an employee's activity routine are probably a better reward than a free dozen donuts. You should also consider awarding the prizes on an arbitrary basis, such as a blind drawing from the names of those who recorded their activity each week. Yes, it is good to acknowledge the top performers each week, but it can be deflating to others when the marathon-running marketing

director—or, as in the case of a program in which I participated, the reporter who was deployed with the National Guard in Iraq and averaged 23,000 steps a day—takes home the top prize each week.



HEALTHY POT LUCKS/RECIPE EXCHANGES

Pot-luck lunches are usually a healthy way to build morale in a workplace. Why not also make them a way to also improve the participants' health? If your firm has regularly scheduled pot lucks, or even if you don't, why not schedule one as an opportunity for employees to not only share their favorite healthy appetizers, entrées, and desserts, but also the recipes? Who knows, you may find a dish you want to take home and try out on your family.



FITNESS CLUB DISCOUNTS

Recently, there seems to have been an explosion in the fitness club market, which just might make it the right time to enquire about the availability of discounts for your employees. With all the competition, you may find a club might offer reduced monthly fees, or maybe waive its initial membership fee, for your employees. You will never know if you don't ask. It could be a win-win situation both for the health of your employees and your firm, and for the health of the fitness organization.



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Happenings at the Chamber



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