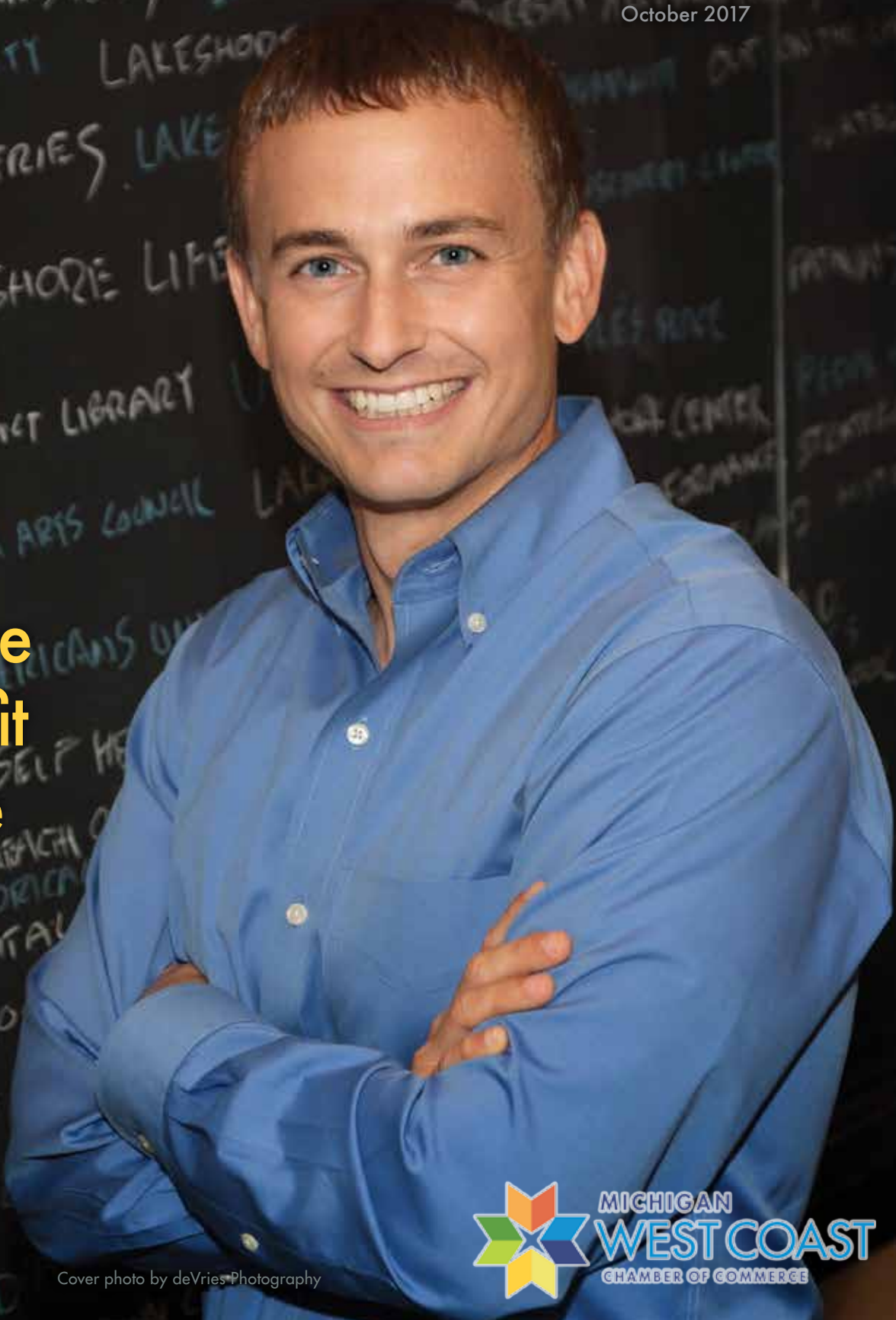


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October 2017



Feature:

Lakeshore Nonprofit Alliance

Pictured: Patrick Cisler



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Letter from Jane Clark

President, Michigan West Coast Chamber of Commerce



The end of summer is actually a beginning at the Chamber every year. It's the beginning of our new fiscal year, our new program year, and the roll out of new ideas to keep our members connected and in the know.

One change is in the leadership of our Board of Directors. As we welcome Kurt Wassink as our new Board Chair, we give our heartfelt thanks to outgoing Chair, Doug Vos, whose steady leadership helped us through the enormous job of renovating our Holland office building and making it an amazing home for us and our members.

This year we are also excited to take a big leap and make changes to our time-honored Early Bird Breakfast. We've challenged ourselves to think differently, to learn from innovative businesses near and far about the importance of taking chances and embracing new ideas as a means for growth and for staying relevant in our ever-changing business climate.

We listen to your feedback and we know you're ready to come along on this journey of innovation with us.

Best Regards,
Jane Clark



Vision:

Building successful businesses that lead to a thriving community.

Mission:

Connecting businesses to each other and the resources they need to grow and succeed.

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Feature:

Lakeshore Nonprofit Alliance

By Chelsea Hall



Lakeshore Nonprofit Alliance Director of Membership Robin Hendrick-Lane and Executive Director Patrick Cisler.

Photo credit: deVries Photography

Conception

The Lakeshore Nonprofit Alliance (LNA) formed in 2006, but the idea had taken root and been growing for two years. In 2004, a dozen Holland/Zeeland executive directors began holding regular meetings to seek support from one another and discuss the challenges of running nonprofit organizations. These informal meetings led to the establishment of the LNA, “a member-based organization that provides tools, resources, training, and consulting services to 120 nonprofit members in the greater Ottawa County area,” said Executive Director Patrick Cisler. “Our mission is to help other nonprofits successfully achieve their missions.”

Evolution

Having been led for many years by a volunteer board of directors (all local executive directors), LNA went through a major re-visioning process called Nonprofit Next in 2012. “This process leaned on multiple local stakeholders to help answer the question: ‘How can we better support our nonprofit community?’ which resulted in laser focus on collaboration, sharing resources and professional development for nonprofits,” said Patrick. “To carry out this vision, LNA hired its first staff in 2013, grew its membership (including becoming a countywide organization) and began the process of building out a robust offering of programs and services for the benefit of members.” Patrick proudly shared that when LNA membership ceased for a year while Nonprofit Next took place, there were 40 members. “Since re-launching we have tripled in size, serving 120 nonprofits today,” he said.

LNA continues to evolve and calibrate their approach to serving their members. One of the ways this is done is with Nonprofit Next. “This event creates space to update our members on achievements from the past year and highlight what to expect in the coming year,” Patrick said. “We also continue to build on our original re-visioning process in 2012 by continuing to engage our members in what is ‘Next for the Nonprofit Community.’” The event has also invited keynote speakers like John O’ Leary and Zingerman’s (Ann Arbor) to share their stories with members.



Nonprofit Next



Nonprofit Next

Patrick Cisler

Being appointed as the alliance’s first Executive Director in 2013 was a natural progression for Patrick, whose initial involvement with LNA was as one of the lead facilitators of the original Nonprofit Next Initiative. Like the emergence of the alliance, Patrick’s involvement with nonprofits had been growing for years. “My exposure to the nonprofit world began as a volunteer for the Holland Rescue Mission while working full-time in the financial services industry,” he recalled. “I began volunteering for one hour a week serving meals and after a few months was spending almost an entire work day volunteering alongside the men in the ministry center.” Realizing he had stumbled upon his passion, Patrick left his job to follow the call, without knowing what would come next. “I spent the subsequent few years working as an independent contractor on multiple nonprofit projects (including two and a half years for the Holland Rescue Mission) and consulting on Nonprofit Next.”

The LNA’s mission statement, *to strengthen the ability of nonprofit organizations to successfully accomplish their missions by working together*, also happens to be Patrick’s greatest inspiration. “We recognize the immense opportunity for nonprofits to collaborate better together for the sake of the community,” he said. “Before serving in my current role, I would see nonprofits working on the same block and not speaking to each other. What inspires me most is how far we have come in this regard. Not just with nonprofits but businesses, local and county government, churches and more, all coming together to solve community challenges.”

Services

LNA designs benefits and services based on member feedback, focus groups and one-on-one interviews. Below is a list of the current offerings.

Lunch N’ Learns are held monthly and provide members an easy way to sharpen their knowledge and skills by learning about topics that are of interest to them.

Learning Circles **bring nonprofits together to grow in a** particular skill-set by learning primarily from each other in a peer-to-peer format over a period of time.



Executive Director Patrick Cisler. Photo credit: deVries Photography

Workshops: A few times a year, LNA offers more intensive workshops that seek to go deeper on a particular topic and produce immediately applicable tools for an organization. Examples of previous workshops include:

- Marketing Boot Camp
- Nonprofit Board Certifications
- Building a Culture of Teamwork
- HR Essentials Series
- Appreciation Languages

Strategic Planning: LNA offers low-cost strategic planning services to member nonprofits.

Leadership Transition Guide Program provides member nonprofits with a “Transition Guide” to help the board of directors navigate the challenging process of an executive transition.

HR Resource Center: In order to respond to the growing Human Resource needs of member nonprofits, LNA has partnered with HR Collaborative (a Grand Rapids based firm) to deliver HR expertise on demand through the HR Resource Center.

Community Calendar

Nonprofit Job Posting Page

Results

Nonprofit work is often arduous and stressful, maybe taking years to see the fruits of one’s labor, but Patrick finds his role to be extremely rewarding. “Being a person of faith, it is a beautiful thing when you can merge what you sense is your life’s calling with your career,” he said. “I have felt from the moment I began

Continued on page 6

Feature: LAKESHORE NONPROFIT ALLIANCE

with LNA that this is clearly what I was meant to do.” While the rewards of working in nonprofit aren’t monetary and are seldom tangible, Patrick received the Community Matters Leadership Award from the Holland Young Professionals in 2016, which serves to affirm that he’s in the right place, doing the right work. Of course, positive feedback from members helps to stoke the fire as well.

“We appreciate all the work and effort the LNA has invested in our area. From the strength of their educational offerings to the streamlining of services that benefits all non-profit members, LNA is truly an asset to our whole community.”

– Community Relations Department, Holland Hospital

“If you’re looking for ways to keep learning as a professional, wondering how you can make your organization’s resources go farther, or wanting to be better connected with other nonprofits and collaborative local efforts – or all three – LNA is for you. The Community Foundation is proud to be a member and supporter of LNA. It helps us and our partners better serve our community.”

– The Community Foundation of the Holland/Zeeland Area

“With so many non-profits in our area, LNA does the important work of fostering partnership and collaboration among the different organizations. Our staff utilizes resources such as learning circles, the HR hotline, and strategic planning facilitation which provides networking opportunities and a fresh outlook on the work we do and the direction in which we are going.”

– Good Samaritan Ministries

Chamber Involvement

LNA and the West Coast Chamber enjoy a close relationship. “We have partnered in the past to host events or cross-promote events that have a mutual benefit for both our members,” Patrick said. “At the end of the day, nonprofits are businesses too, so the Chamber has a lot to offer our members.” In addition, LNA gets involved in West Coast Leadership as much as possible. “Both my colleague (Director of Membership Robin Lane) and I have been through the program and we heavily promote this among our members. The last couple of years we have presented on graduation day

and Robin has helped to lead certain leadership days in the past.” Patrick shared that currently, they have been meeting regularly with the Chamber to look for more opportunities that they might partner and benefit both their members (which naturally overlap). An example of this is looking for ways to better connect businesses and leaders into the nonprofit community (through board service, for example). “In addition, we are regular participants in all that the Chamber has to offer and are grateful for all that they provide!” he said.

“As I talk about often, collaboration is core to LNA’s identity and something we strive to foster in Ottawa County. The Chamber has been a fantastic resource for collaboration by creating space where businesses, nonprofits and government come together regularly. The Early Bird Breakfast in particular continues to be a great intersection for different industry sectors to meet. I would also point out how fantastic the West Coast Leadership program has been. I was heavily involved in the nonprofit world for a few years before I went through the program and it still opened my eyes up to parts of the community that I was clueless about. In addition, West Coast Leadership has also been instrumental by helping business leaders better understand the important role that nonprofits in this community play and help get them connected to us and others.”

–Patrick Cisler

Patrick expressed gratitude when asked if he had a message to share with his community. “We have some amazing nonprofits that do incredible work and that is only made possible through the generosity of our community’s time, talent and treasures,” he said. That generous spirit is not only the lifeblood of our community, but the reason Patrick loves his work. “I never wake up in the morning wondering why I am doing what I am doing,” he said. “We serve nonprofits that literally save lives, animals, homes, families and the environment. They give hope and respite, teach life skills and more, and we get to serve those organizations that do this amazing work. It is very rewarding know that we help these rock stars do their good work even better.”

Lakeshore Nonprofit Alliance is located at 96 W. 15th St. Suite 105 in Holland. Reach them by phone at 616-594-7133 or online by visiting www.lakeshorenonprofits.org.



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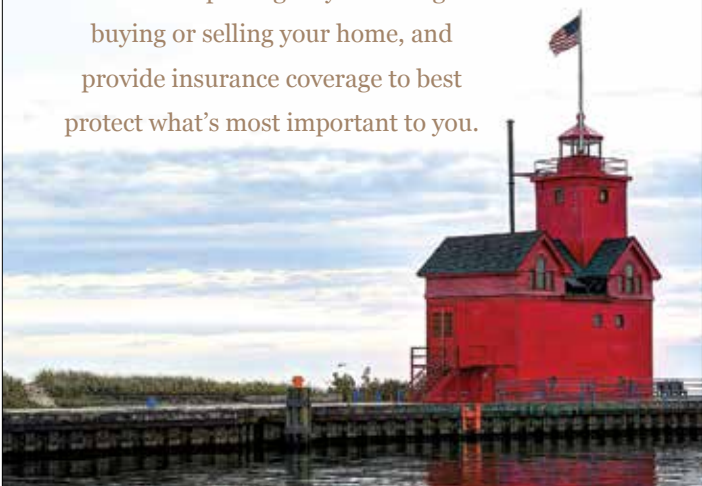
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A Case for Biometric Screening: A Local Company Shares the Benefits

Content Provided by Mercy Health

With rising costs and uncertainty about the future of health care, why would an employer hire a company to come on-site and conduct biometric screening for its employees—in addition to the health care benefits it already offers?

That's the question the leaders at JR Automation Technologies in Holland, Michigan, grappled with in 2015. "Our CEO, Bryan Jones, was a big supporter of this initiative for employees, so support for biometric screening came from the top down," said Danielle Herek, Director of Human Resources for JR Automation. Jones shared his perspective with his team about the potential benefits:

- Healthy employees are productive employees.
- It saves time to have people get biometric screening onsite rather than take time away from work for it.
- If a significant percentage of our younger workforce (average age is 33 years old) isn't going for an annual physical, then over time, those workers could be at greater risk for serious undetected health issues. As a self-insured employer, our organization's health care costs could rise, especially for serious, chronic conditions.

Employers often require their employees to get an annual physical, but the test results are not shared with the employer. *The anonymous cumulative data from a company's biometric screenings offer the only way for a company to get an aggregate report that identifies the health risk factors of its employee population as a whole.* That data can also be used to:

- Establish a baseline for measuring changes in the group's metrics over time.
- Structure a company's health benefit plans and incentives that take into account the aggregate results of its population's health risks.
- Improve a company's workplace environment by reducing identified health risks and encouraging behavior modification.



- Identify and communicate urgent risk factors so that participants follow up with their PCP.
- Spend time and resources on wellness activities and education customized to the needs of a company's workforce.
- Reduce a company's overall health care expenses over time.

Looking for a more efficient and convenient process for screening to be conducted by a respected vendor, JR Automation partnered with Mercy Health in 2016. Herek explained the reason for the change: "The personal relationships and follow-up that we experience with Business Health Solutions by Mercy Health is why we changed vendors in 2016. We look for partners that have our same business philosophy."

Screeners from Mercy Health went to the work sites and conducted quick, noninvasive finger pokes. The blood tests were processed immediately onsite and each employee received a printout with results showing blood glucose and various measures of blood cholesterol. Each person's heart rate, blood pressure, height, weight, and waist were also measured. If an employee's numbers were outside of normal standards, the employee was offered a free, immediate, private onsite medical consultation.

Screenings were scheduled during worktime and took place onsite at several JR locations. *The average screening took just 12 minutes to complete.* Individual employees received their protected, biometric testing results—by law private health information cannot be not shared with and employer. Approximately 30 days following the screening, Mercy

Health delivered and reviewed an aggregate report to JR Automation. Herek has received positive feedback from employees and their families about how happy and impressed they are that the company makes it easy and convenient for them to have onsite biometric screening.

In early 2017, the company started a wellness committee. "They have come up with positive culture changes," Herek said. Thus far, the committee has looked into providing healthier options in its vending machines, partnered with community supported agriculture to deliver fresh produce to the workplace, and turned corporate candy dishes into fresh fruit bowls.

"We plan to continue doing biometric screening each year," said Herek. "Every employee is strongly encouraged to participate. It's convenient, confidential, and effective" she said. "And it could save someone's life!"

To learn more about biometric screening and other business health solutions, contact Amy Huss at Amy.Huss@mercyhealth.com.

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Having kids has a way of putting things in perspective. That was certainly the case for Sam, who began to realize all his weight might cause him to miss out on. It wasn't as if he'd never tried to lose weight. He had. Many times. His options seemingly exhausted, Sam decided to attend one of Mercy Health's free bariatric seminars. There he learned that there was hope. Now, Sam has more than hope. He has the life with his daughter he's always wanted.



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Rob Stam

Strategic Sprinting

By Rob Stam, Navigate



Early in my entrepreneurship career I was taught the phrase, “Building a business is not a sprint—it’s a marathon.” In our society of instant gratification, which conditions us to want immediate results, the marathon perspective can be hard to maintain. Economic changes, technological advancements, political turmoil, and hundreds of other variables can throw any long-term plan into a tailspin.

Think back just 10 short years: Myspace was bigger than Google, George W. Bush was our president, the first iPhone was introduced, unemployment was rising, and the housing market was collapsing. Seems like ancient history, doesn’t it? Did you think back then that you’d end up where you are today?

Surveys show that 90% of business owners have no strategic plan. I believe many of us fail to plan because it’s just simply too overwhelming to look very far into the future. Even a year can seem daunting at times.

What we can do, however, is look just a few months ahead. Ten years ago might seem like a lifetime, but think back to June of this year. It seems like just yesterday, right? Chances are you’ve asked yourself, “Where did the summer go?”

We’re entering the fall season, and it’s a great time to create a short-term plan for yourself and your company. What can you accomplish between now and the end of 2017? There’s no better feeling around the holidays than to be able to take a breath and know that you finished the year strong. By creating a specific strategic plan, we accomplish three things:

- 1** First, we get the satisfaction of finishing what we set out to accomplish. And there are usually rewards for doing so—whether they be financial or just a reduction in stress.
- 2** Second, we establish a new precedent for ourselves. If you can tackle three months, start working on six months, then 12, and so on. By doing these smaller sprints, the exercise of creating the longer term “marathon plan” becomes more realistic.
- 3** Third, it becomes contagious. By doing one “strategic sprint” we’ve begun a new habit that can trickle down to our employees, co-workers, superiors, and even our families.

Creating your strategic sprint plan is not just about the finish line, it’s about the steps you take to get there. Start the process by painting a picture of what you’d like your life to look like by December 31. From there, reverse map a plan to make it a reality. Ask yourself what needs to be accomplished, what you can realistically accomplish, and how exactly you can accomplish it. Don’t just start with wishful thinking—write down a specific list with dates and assignments (for yourself and/or your team) so your strategic plan actually becomes a reality. Build in monthly, weekly, and daily check points that need to be passed to get to the ultimate finish line, and measure those regularly.

Seems simple enough, doesn’t it? It actually is, but that doesn’t mean it’s common. Multiple surveys show that roughly 3% of Americans set goals. But why not be the exception? Try it for a few months. It might just change your life and set a new standard for 2018.

Rob is the President of Navigate and author of The Entrepreneur’s Survival Guide. For more information and contact information visit www.robstam.com


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Good Samaritan Ministries

Content Provided by Good Samaritan Ministries



Good Samaritan Ministries (Good Sam) was born in 1969 out of a desire of the faith community to collaborate, knowing that we can better respond to the needs of our neighbors if we work collectively. Our mission is to end poverty and homelessness, and we do that by operating a variety of programs that further that mission. Housing is a large part of our work, focusing on how we can impact the national housing crisis locally. We provide intake and referral service for anyone facing a housing crisis in Ottawa County, short-term rental assistance, and supportive services so families are able to work their way out of the cycle of poverty.

One of these supportive services is Circles, a national, 22-month program that Good Sam operates in Ottawa County. Circles brings people of diverse incomes and backgrounds together in an effort to help low income families achieve their goals. Participants also work collaboratively to address the systemic barriers that keep families in poverty. Circles is a shift from a traditional helping model that engages whole communities in mutually supportive networks aimed at increasing financial stability. Circles includes a youth curriculum, Circles Youth, so the whole family is engaged in the work of setting and achieving goals.

Good Sam is a proud West Coast Chamber member and is pleased with the many offerings available, particularly the West Coast Leadership program. Talent and retention is a priority for us, so a part of our organizational culture is to invest in the development of our employees. West Coast Leadership is a great program to help our leaders grow professionally, gain a better understanding of the community, and make connections to build on our collaborative work.

For more information, visit www.goodsamministries.com.



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Holland Rescue Mission

Content Provided by Holland Rescue Mission

Every non-profit has their niche. Holland Rescue Mission (HRM) is no exception. Over 100 years old, they're still intently focused on one basic purpose: to move people out of their homelessness for good. HRM's Gateway Center is just one more way this organization is offering people in need a hand up in life. Integrating the real-life business operation of a 27,000-square-foot thrift store with a real-life work training and recovery program was no small feat. HRM's Gateway Center in its most simple form is a one-year recovery program for homeless men and women who struggle with life controlling issues, like addiction. This program integrates the reality of daily work with one-on-one counseling and career-training opportunities.

The mission's goal was to create a setting that was the most like real-life, so that when men and women graduated from the program, they were prepared for life going forward. At HRM's Gateway Center, program participants attend daily classes each morning where they learn about overcoming their addiction and the issues that led to their homelessness. They can also finish their high school education, take college courses online, attend schools like Michigan Tech and participate in lean manufacturing training. During the afternoon, participants work throughout the business operation, helping to accept and sort donations, price clothing, work the cash register, inventory product to be sold online and more. Each individual's talents are discovered and capitalized on to provide the best training experience possible. More importantly, men and women are given dignity through the process of their recovery.

To learn more about HRM's Gateway Center and the work Holland Rescue Mission is doing to solve homelessness in our community, visit www.hollandrescue.org



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Sarah Lewakowski

TCM Counseling (TCM) has been providing counseling services in the Grand Haven area for 40 years and has just opened a Holland office to serve the Holland/Zeeland area. **TCM's mission is to offer hope and healing for all by providing accessible and affordable professional counseling services.** TCM's unique model of very low overhead enables TCM to turn \$1 donated into almost \$3 back to the community in mental health services. TCM has a panel of 45 therapists who provide individual and group counseling. In addition, TCM offers a school outreach program where students in need see a TCM therapist for free at their school. TCM is providing this service currently at Holland High School and Jefferson Elementary. TCM also provides an employee assistance program (EAP) for businesses to offer mental health services for their employees, as well as free QPR (question persuade refer) suicide prevention training. According to Sarah Lewakowski, TCM Executive Director, "TCM's staff and board believe in removing *every* barrier for a person trying to access counseling. Counseling should not be a luxury. When a person calls TCM, they will not be turned away AND will be matched with a therapist based upon presenting issue and accessibility."

TCM collaborates with Jeff Elhart and Be Nice. TCM's Holland services are currently supported by The Greater Ottawa County United Way, The Community Foundation of the Holland/Zeeland Area, Holland 100 Women Who Care, and the Michigan Masonic Foundation.

More information about TCM can be found on their website: www.tcmcounseling.org or by calling 616-842-9160.



Latin Americans United for Progress (LAUP)



Mediation Services team



United Way's Kamille Massey and student volunteers counting and sorting donations from our Stuff the Bus backpack and school supply drive.



Here are some of the faces of the 45 ministries at City on a Hill, with representatives of Kids Hope USA, Bethany Christian Services Safe Families, Vertical Church, Harvest Stand Ministries, City on a Hill Café, Wings of Mercy, City on a Hill ATLAS, City on a Hill Health Clinic and Gary Ellens, director of City on a Hill.



Nestlings Diaper Bank team



Ready for School



Habitat Clive Rainey



Meet international speaker Clive Rainey at Habitat for Humanity's Inaugural Heart of Habitat Fall Gala Event

October Calendar of Events

Friday, September 29

West Coast Chamber Annual Meeting

@Yacht Basin Marina, 1862 Ottawa Beach Road, Holland

What's it like to take a bankrupt startup and eventually sell it to a Fortune 500 Company for almost a quarter billion dollars? And more importantly, what lessons can be conveyed from such an experience that will help you live the life you've imagined for yourself? Join us for our Annual Meeting and learn from best-selling author, Dave Zilko. At this high energy event, we will also present our Business Leadership Awards and network over lunch.
Time: 11:30am-1:30pm
Cost: \$45 per member / \$75 per non-member

Tuesday, October 3

Lakeshore ATHENA Award Program

@Trillium Catering & Events Center, 17246 Van Wagoner Rd, Spring Lake

The Lakeshore ATHENA Award is presented annually to recognize individuals who demonstrate excellence, creativity, and initiative in their business or profession, and actively assist women in realizing their full leadership potential and exhibit the spirit of regional collaboration.
Time: 11:30am-1:30 pm

Thursday, October 5

Workshop – Managing Millennial Employees

@West Coast Chamber Learning Lab, 272 E. 8th Street, Holland

There is a rapid generational shift that is occurring in many of today's businesses. Baby boomers are beginning to retire at higher rates and the percentage of millennials continues to quickly grow. This impacts organizations on many levels – economically, socially, structurally, and culturally. As such, many leaders are being challenged to reexamine their methods of management.
Time: 8:30-11 am
Cost: \$55 per Chamber member (\$35 per each additional attendee from the same company) / \$75 per non-member



Tuesday, October 10

Early Bird Breakfast

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

Are students prepared for the workplace? Join us for breakfast with Roger Curtis, Michigan's new Talent and Economic Development Leader, and hear his recommendations on how to help ensure our students are best prepared for their future careers.
Time: 7am pre-coffee / 7:30am breakfast / 8:30am morning mingle
Cost: \$20 per Chamber member (\$25 if registered after October 8) / \$35 per non-member

Friday, October 13

Public Policy Committee

@West Coast Chamber Learning Lab, 272 E. 8th Street, Holland

Interested in governmental and political issues? 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 (jane@westcoastchamber.org).
Time: 8-9:30am
Cost: Free

Monday, October 16

Governmental Affairs Breakfast

@Alpenrose Restaurant, 4 E. 8th Street, Holland

Join us for breakfast with our elected state and federal legislators. Ample time is provided for questions and answers. Arrive early for a brief networking session before the breakfast begins.
Time: 7:30am / networking starts at 7:15am
Cost: \$20 per Chamber member (\$25 if registered after October 13) / \$35 per non-member

Wednesday, October 18

Network @ Lunch

@New Holland Brewery Pub on 8th, 66 E. 8th Street, Holland

Get to know other business representatives by spending an hour with them over a relaxing business lunch. You will be assigned dining partners from other businesses at the event, giving you the opportunity to make new contacts and share about yourself and your business. Arrive at 11:45am for extra networking time before lunch.
Time: 12-1pm
Cost: \$20 per member / \$30 per non-member

Friday, October 20

Maximize Your Membership

@West Coast Chamber Learning Lab, 272 E. 8th Street, Holland

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 and have lunch!
Time: 11:30am-1 pm
Cost: Free, registration not required, but appreciated

Wednesday, October 25

Lakeshore Talent Forum

@Boatwerks Event Center, 216 Van Raalte Ave, Holland

We invite leaders seeking to add diverse talent to their organization to join us for a business to business forum. The keynote will be delivered by Randy Lewis, former Chief Supply Chain Officer of Walgreens. A panel discussion consisting of regional practice leaders will follow.
Time: 8-10:30am
Cost: \$20 per person (\$25 after pre-registration ends October 20)
No charge for LHRMA members - **promo code needed**

Thursday, October 26

Power Breakfast

@Boatwerks Event Center, 216 Van Raalte Ave, Holland

Take the work out of networking! At this popular and fun event, each participant will make at least 21 contacts just during the structured networking. Power Coaching will take your networking skills to the next level, and make your interactions more effective. Bring at least 60 business cards. You will need them!
Time: 7:45am - Open power networking with \$25 drawing for West Coast Cash!
8-9:30am - breakfast, structured networking and door prizes
Cost: \$20 members (\$25 if registered after October 24)
\$35 non-members
\$50 display table - includes your event registration (Chamber members only)

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

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The Chamber Welcomes Keegan to the Team



Keegan Ladwig

The Chamber would like to officially welcome our newest team member, Keegan Ladwig, Event and Engagement Coordinator. Keegan went to Grand Valley State University and studied hospitality and tourism management with an emphasis on event management. During college, Keegan had many different internships ranging in all different experiences- going to France, working at the International Wine, Beer & Food Festival, and being a campus representative for Victoria's Secret PINK. After graduation, she took an event internship with Lakeshore Advantage and got to know the Chamber pretty well and fell instantly in love! Never short of enthusiasm, Keegan said, "I never knew what my dream job was—I just knew I wanted to be in corporate events. Since starting at the West Coast Chamber I have found that *this* is my dream job!"



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Understand Hospice is a service of Hospice of Holland, whose mission is to provide end-of-life care to patients facing terminal illness and their caregivers. Contact us today at 616-396-2972 to learn how hospice can help.



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Jeremy Gonsior

Putting the ZIP and the ZAG in Zeeland



By Jeremy Gonsior

Laura Gentry has a look in her eyes, a distinct, confident, “this-is-my-place-and-I-know-what-I-am-doing” kind of look.

It’s acquired. Earned. The byproduct of good old-fashioned blood, sweat and tears, baby.

You see Laura and her husband, Nate, opened Zeeland’s first brewpub, Tripel Root, back in 2014. Not an easy task, especially in a community that was dry until 2006. Rewarding though? Absolutely.

“It’s a lot of hard work *and* a lot of fun,” she said.

Laura is relaxing in Tripel Root’s new event space, reflecting and sharing and dreaming about the future. A cool summer breeze invades the building, spreading the glorious smells of flatbreads, sandwiches, and beer. Outside, downtown parking is hard to come by. Shoppers are everywhere.

In other words, downtown Zeeland is alive and well, thanks to business owners just like the Gentry family.

But they aren’t satisfied or complacent or content.

Laura and her business colleagues said for Zeeland to truly thrive they must re-focus on the basics: getting to know their business neighbors.

Which is exactly why the Michigan West Coast Chamber of Commerce, in partnership with Zeeland business owners, created the Zeeland Affinity Group (ZAG). In a sense, it’s a smaller, more niche networking group, a compliment to the larger Chamber events like the Early Bird Breakfast. ZAG had its first meeting in August and sparked positive momentum.

“I think the Zeeland Affinity Group will make Zeeland much stronger,” Laura said. “Everyone there was like ‘yes, we need this.’

It was mind-blowing how many people were there and hadn’t connected.”

Nolan Kamer was one of them. After opening his Farm Bureau Insurance office downtown in July 2016, Kamer struggled to meet fellow business owners. He said the first ZAG meeting helped him connect and catch a “positive outlook on bringing downtown together, figuring out ways to bring the public into downtown and doing it as a team.”

“For an insurance agent, walking into other businesses to meet the owner is perceived as a ‘sales call’ rather than a get-to-know-your-neighbor situation, and I’m very sensitive to that perception,” he said. “I want to get to know my fellow business owners as a business owner, not to try to sell them something.”

As the Michigan West Coast Chamber of Commerce celebrates its fifth anniversary since merging the Holland and Zeeland chambers, its leadership recognizes investing in Zeeland members is more important than ever. The merger consolidated resources, and allowed the chamber to open a completely-renovated Holland office this spring to much fanfare.

Furthering its commitment to Zeeland, Michigan West Coast Chamber of Commerce also has new presence in downtown: ZIP. The studio space on Main Avenue is a satellite office with meeting space, conference call capabilities, a kitchen and a bathroom.

“The ZIP space is just a fabulous space for our members to use,” said Doug Vos, immediate past chair of the Michigan West Coast Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors and President of Don’s Flowers in downtown Zeeland. “Everyone has an occasional need to have an off-site meeting,

and this space is perfect for that. I hear from members every week that have used the space, and how great it worked out for them.”

Reserving the ZIP space is easy and free for chamber members - they just visit the chamber website and reserve it.

Those changes can remain difficult, though, for some longtime Zeeland members to accept.

“There are still longtime Zeeland members who say they miss being able to walk down the street and drop in on their main street Chamber office,” said Caroline Monahan, Marketing & Communications Manager for Michigan West Coast Chamber of Commerce.

The ZA Group, comprised of 34 leaders throughout the Zeeland business community, simply made sense. It’s empowering members to acknowledge, almost tap into, the memories of the old Zeeland chamber, not be trapped by them. Stuck. At a standstill.

“We want to make (Chamber membership) more meaningful for their businesses,” Monahan said. “This does seem to be a trend toward these smaller groups.”

Looking ahead, Monahan said Zeeland will remain an important focus of the Michigan West Coast Chamber of Commerce.

“Although the Holland and Zeeland Chambers merged and our physical presence in Zeeland has changed, our commitment to that community has not,” she said. “We continue to look for ways to support and engage the businesses in Zeeland in meaningful ways.”

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By Chelsea Hall

Guaranteed Rate started in 2000 in Chicago, Illinois with the mission of always putting the customer first, leveraging industry-leading technology and an innovative processing model to provide total transparency, effective communication and maximum efficiency to clients and to business partners. The company is now a top 10 retail mortgage lender in the United States, and is licensed to offer financing in all 50 states.

Steve Bensinger is Vice President of Mortgage Lending with Guaranteed Rate at the Holland office, located at 217 E 24th St, Suite 102 in the Baker Lofts commercial building. "I provide direct to consumer and brokered residential mortgage financing to clients for the purchase or refinancing of their primary, vacation or income-producing properties," Steve explained. "I've been a mortgage loan officer since 1993, after having managed a home equity loan department for a bank in the Chicago suburbs immediately after graduating college."

Steve said he has learned more than his fair share over the past 20-plus years in the business. "Perhaps the most important lesson is that it's critical to stay current and continue to learn about my trade," he said.

"There are always shifting sands in the mortgage industry, so buried heads will get exposed at some point."

Steve lives in Holland with his family, who he cites as his motivation to succeed. "My biggest inspiration are the people I love most—my family, especially my wife of 19 years, Lisa, and my three children: Lily (14), Elizabeth (12) and William (nine)," he said. "My business model gives me the most ideal combination of realistic goal-setting, day-to-day business management and creating the best work/life balance for me and my family." Having lived here since 2010, Steve has found it to be a great match both personally and professionally. "This market is great because of its diversity, from the houses to the residents," he explained. "The diverse nature of this community is a perfect match for the wide array of home loan programs we offer, including FHA, VA, USDA (rural development), conforming, jumbo, reverse mortgages and more. We have a product to fit virtually any borrowing need."

Managing his own business gives Steve total ownership and full accountability of his successes and occasionally missteps, which is what he finds rewarding about it. He went on to explain that he enjoys the variety. "My job is great because it's never boring!" he said. "No two days are the same, just as no two clients are the same. The fact that I can spend one day networking with potential business partners and the next day reviewing a 100-page tax return for a client, energizes me with variety and new challenges."



When he's not managing the Holland Guaranteed Rate office, Steve is a hands-on father and husband. "I enjoy coaching my kids' sports teams, including soccer, baseball, softball and basketball," he shared. "Helping kids learn the game, hone their skills, gain confidence in their ability, be a good and supportive teammate and have fun is something that gives me great pride. I love being involved in my kids' lives and hope that I can inspire them as much as they inspire me."

For more information, contact Steve Bensinger at steve.bensinger@rate.com or by phone 616-326-1105 (office) and 847-217-8088 (cell). Current clients can access useful information, explore loan products and programs, obtain current interest rates, and apply securely on-line at www.rate.com/stevebensinger.



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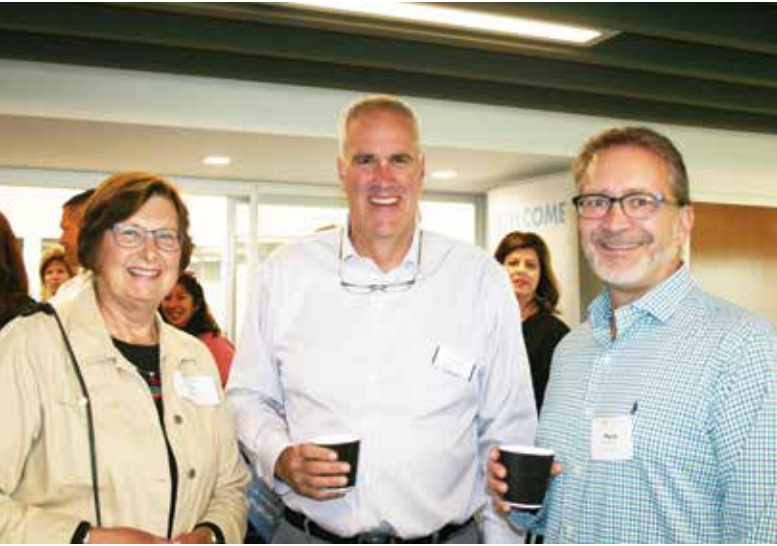
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Happenings at the Chamber



Chamber leaders connect to celebrate five years.



Fun at the Chamber's fifth birthday party.



Harbor Health Ribbon Cutting in new Washington Square location.



Just a few of the treats at The Oven Mitt.

A banner celebrating Holland Hospital's 100th anniversary. The banner features the text "1917 100 A NEW CENTURY OF CARING 2017" and "CELEBRATING 100 Years". Below the banner is the website "100.hollandhospital.org". To the right is a photograph of the Holland Hospital building at dusk, with the hospital's logo and name illuminated on the facade.



Ready for take-off at the Air Force Ribbon Cutting.



Ribbon Cutting at Brew Merchant's new event space.



Ribbon Cutting at The Oven Mitt.



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