

# CONNECT

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September 2017



Feature:

Kurt Wassink,  
Gentex Corporation



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Cover photo by deVries Photography



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Content submissions and new business sponsors must be received by the 5th of each month for the next month's publication.

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# Letter from Jane Clark

President, Michigan West Coast Chamber of Commerce



This month's cover features Kurt Wassink, our incoming West Coast Chamber Board Chair. Kurt has been a member of the Board and of the Executive Committee for a number of years, sharing the Chamber's passion for supporting businesses. As Vice President of Human Resources at Gentex Corporation, he brings with him the perspective of a manufacturer on a global scale, but still deeply rooted in West Michigan, and we are excited to have his leadership for the coming year.

Gentex is one of five Gold level sponsors of the Chamber, and this issue also looks at why businesses choose to sponsor the Chamber. We are blessed here in West Michigan with a strong spirit of philanthropy, and we find that the businesses who choose to support the Chamber at sponsorship levels are doing so with the intention of affirming the role of the Chamber as the voice for business and the source of resources for success.

Strong businesses provide jobs and encourage the growth of more business in our area, and the Chamber takes its role as the hub of business activity very seriously. We envision a bold future for our community and appreciate your trust in our leadership.

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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**Jennifer Remondino**, Warner Norcross & Judd LLP, At-Large Exec Committee  
**Michael Hill**, Past Chair  
**Jane Clark**, Michigan West Coast Chamber of Commerce, President

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## SILVER SPONSORS



Feature:

# Kurt Wassink, Gentex Corporation

By Chelsea Hall



*Gentex Vice President of Human Resources and incoming Chairman of the West Coast Chamber Board, Kurt Wassink. Photo credit: deVries Photography*

## Yesterday & Today

Gentex Corporation (Gentex) began in 1974 as a manufacturer of high-quality fire protection products. The company was founded by Fred Bauer who today serves as Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer. “Fred revolutionized the industry with the world’s first dual-sensor photoelectric smoke detector—a device less prone to false alarms yet quick to detect slow, smoldering fires,” said Vice President of Human Resources Kurt Wassink. Today, Gentex has sold millions of smoke detectors and signaling devices to hospitals, hotels, office buildings and other commercial applications throughout North America. In addition, Gentex has long been a supplier of electro-optical products for the global automotive industry. “We supply nearly every major automaker with advanced electronic features that optimize driver vision and enhance driving safety,” Kurt said. “In short, we specialize in a broad spectrum of technologies and processes to deliver high quality products to the automotive, aerospace and fire protection industries.”

## Pioneer

Respected as an industry leader, Gentex is known for managing the evolution of the rearview mirror, introducing the world’s first electromechanical auto-dimming mirror and refining a chemical process known as electrochromics. These advancements, paired with their production know-how, means Gentex has made nighttime driving safer for millions of drivers around the globe by providing the global automotive industry with mirrors that detect and eliminate dangerous rearview mirror glare. Quality is the highest priority, and the industry has taken notice. “Gentex is a seven-time winner of the Automotive News PACE Award, and the recipient of numerous quality, excellence and sustainability awards,” Kurt said.

## Kurt Wassink

Kurt has been part of the Gentex team for over 22 years. “I pursued the human resources area of business out of a passion I found with helping solve problems within the workforce,” he said. “Working at Gentex has been rewarding because I have the chance to work alongside talented individuals at a highly successful, caring company in a phenomenal community.”

Kurt described the unique challenges that come along with a company experiencing rapid growth. “When I first joined Gentex the entrepreneurial spirit was invigorating, but the fast growth was daunting. We would often ask ‘How we will ever fill this new building?’ or ‘How will we ever hire enough

people?” he said. We have still maintained that entrepreneurial mindset. With the recent opening of the new campus on Riley Street, we will find ourselves asking those same questions.”

Since recruiting falls into Kurt’s list of responsibilities, it’s up to him to continually staff the growing company, a task that is sometimes challenging, with valuable lessons to learn along the way. “Investing in the right people in the right roles has significant potential to impact the success of a business,” Kurt said. “At times, it is too easy to focus on the needs of today that we could end up missing out on developing someone we will need in the future.” Kurt added that witnessing the professional development of team members is one of the most inspiring aspects of his job. “I love to see many college graduates who are new to business flourish over the years into successful business leaders,” he said. “Meeting with our spring class of fresh college graduates entering their first post-degree career role is my favorite part of the job. The excitement and anticipation they show toward their future is energizing.”

## Community

Gentex is a rare breed of company that is large in scale as well as heart. They proudly sponsor many local organizations, teams and events with volunteer or financial support. “We are also very proud of our Gentex Community Share fundraising program, where employees and the company donate funds and time to support local charities,” Kurt said. “In addition, many employees serve the community by sitting on boards or volunteering at local nonprofits.” The attitude of service and strengthening community isn’t just focused outward, but inward as well. “Our employees participate in many different Gentex sponsored teams or community events,” Kurt said. “We continue to value our employees’ families with an annual company picnic including this year’s event at Michigan’s Adventure.”

## West Coast Chamber

Kurt is the incoming Chairman of the West Coast Chamber Board and has functioned in other capacities in the past. “I have served as a board member and executive team member as well as other subcommittees,” Kurt said. “I also valued my participation in the Chamber’s leadership program.” When asked how it felt to be elected as Chairman, Kurt said, “I am honored and humbled to be part of leading such a great community organization alongside Jane Clark.” There is also plenty to be excited about in the coming year. “I look forward to seeing how the Chamber is able to leverage its new space to improve service and programing to its members,” he said. “I also am excited for the new initiative to define and deliver the Chamber’s value proposition to different member profiles who may have different unique needs.”

## Future

Kurt relishes being part of a successful global company in a great community and looks to the future with enthusiasm. “The goal has always been to provide our customers high-value safety, quality and technology products that make the world a safer, simpler and smarter place,” Kurt said. “We look forward to finding new ways to bring additional value to our customers and provide in-demand features and functions for consumers.”

For more information, visit [www.gentex.com](http://www.gentex.com).

## Truck Parade 2017

Monday, September 4, 2017 at 9:15am

Starts in Zeeland, Ends in Holland



Make some noise for the businesses and workers of West Michigan! Bring the family, earplugs, and an appetite for big trucks, ice cream and giveaways! Give a few hours of your Labor Day to honor and celebrate our local workforce which has built one of the best places to live in the entire country!

The Labor Day Truck Parade and Ice Cream Social began in 2006 and has evolved into a highly anticipated community event. This annual event was created to honor and celebrate the products and employees of the Holland and Zeeland area businesses.

In 2011 the Holland/Zeeland Community Labor Day Truck Parade Foundation was created. The non-profit 501 (c)3 foundation was developed to ground the event in the very community in which it serves. The foundation board is dedicated to ensuring the ongoing success of the Labor Day event and plans to make certain the parade remains true to its initial spirit and purpose.

We hope you’ll join us this year to celebrate the community in which so many people enjoy working, living and playing.



# “I Wish I Would Have Called Hospice Sooner”

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

I have worked in healthcare for nearly 14 years and never fully understood the complexity of it until I had loved ones close to me become very ill. It was not until I sat at the bedside during many months of their illness and recovery, when I fully realized the toll serious illness can take on both patient and caregiver.

This is true for many who have never seen significant illness, either as a patient or a caregiver. Having limited exposure to challenging symptoms from difficult diseases, and the need to maneuver through the healthcare arena, make seeing the need for hospice services difficult because it is just not something you think about. Then when faced with the reality of a terminal diagnosis, the complexities of end of life get factored in and make life overwhelming.

The reason hospices exist is to help people and their loved ones overcome feeling overwhelmed. Hospice brings emotional, physical and spiritual peace to a complicated time. The relief that hospice brings makes the phrase “I wish I would have called hospice sooner” commonly heard by hospice providers following care of a hospice patient.



## Why do families continually say, “I wish I would have called hospice sooner?”

- Not everyone interprets information the same. Family dynamics bring varying degrees of complexity to a hospice scenario. Often it isn't out of lack of love for a person, but differing opinions on how a loved one's end of life wishes should be carried out, that heightens the emotional response to what is occurring during this sensitive time of life.
- People who are terminally ill or suffer from advanced illness are very sick. Because of their condition they may experience painful days and nights due to symptoms associated with their disease.
- The stigma associated with the word hospice makes individuals reluctant to accept care.

- It's difficult to know what to expect during those final days. Fear of the unknown makes it difficult to find peace as changes in condition occur.
- People grieve differently. Some find solace in spending time alone and others heal while in the company of others. Learning how to travel through grief individually and as a family is often a new experience for many.

Calling hospice early on helps prepare patients and their loved ones. Hospice caregivers work around the clock to ensure everyone understands the signs and symptoms of approaching death in preparation for those final moments; all while delivering comfort, care and dignity during care.

*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](http://www.hollandhospice.org) and hear from others why care from Hospice of Holland made a difference for their loved one.*



## When the time comes I know my options.

Knowing your options for end-of-life care can help your family or caregiver fulfill your wishes. Take the time now to Understand Hospice, so that you and your family may live each day to its fullest.



[hollandhospice.org](http://hollandhospice.org)  
[understandhospice.org](http://understandhospice.org)

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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# Sponsorship. What's in it for Me?

By Caroline Monahan



Corporate sponsorship is not a new idea. In recent years, corporate sponsorship has become the fastest growing type of marketing in the United States. But what is it that a corporation is seeking when entering into a sponsorship partnership? Is it brand visibility, corporate reputation, or access to key decision makers? Is it recognition? The reason behind many of the West Coast Chamber's Premier Partner Sponsors' decisions to partner is focused more on stewardship of our business community. Simply put, they choose to sponsor the Chamber because they believe the Chamber is a strong voice for the business community and provides the impetus for business and economic growth.

The obvious benefit of sponsorship is brand visibility. Sponsor benefits can include prominent display of the company's logo on print materials, signage and website, recognition on marketing materials, both print and digital, and mentions on social media and in press releases. Sponsors receive preferred seating and, depending on the event, have the opportunity to address event attendees and meet presenters. There is expansive value attached to this visibility, as it gives wide exposure to the representatives of the 1,300 Chamber member businesses and the business community at large.

But what's beyond the banners and the media mentions? There's a benefit that leaves an even larger footprint with long

lasting results. A strong Chamber is a collective benefit for the entire business community. It unifies businesses large and small, and serves as both a source of information and a voice for advocacy. The comments of our sponsors tell the story. Sandy Ham of West Coast Chamber's Platinum Sponsor Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Michigan said, "The West Coast Chamber of Commerce provides a forum for interaction and discussion of health care issues. With the ever-changing health care landscape, we have partnered with Chambers to discuss challenges and solutions for health care issues." (Read more sponsor perspectives below.)

The blend of community business stewardship and marketing benefits makes Chamber sponsorship attractive for businesses of all sizes. Opportunities to be an annual gold or silver sponsor, to sponsor single events, event series or special programs provide access at various levels of financial investment. These are investments in growing not only one sponsor's business, but in supporting a united voice for the companies that grow in the same garden. Partnering with the West Coast Chamber means partnering with the entire business community to keep it thriving for generations to come.

For more information on sponsorships, visit [www.westcoastchamber.org](http://www.westcoastchamber.org) or call Norm Campbell at 616-392-9719.

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# Sponsor Perspectives

“



**Mark A. Wilson, SVP**  
Community President -  
Lakeshore  
Huntington Bank

One of the many unique characteristics and strengths of our community is a spirit of collaboration. True collaboration can only occur when we take the time to invest in relationships. The Chamber is at the heart of both community cornerstones. Our sponsorships and partnership with the Chamber are invaluable to Huntington, our clients and our associates. Our partnership is intentional and focuses on bringing our government, business and community leaders together in an environment which fosters the building of relationships as well as constructive dialogue about what is important to all of us, our community.

The Holland/Zeeland community has been investing in Huntington and the Chamber for generations. It remains our shared responsibility to ensure that our relationship and collaboration continue for generations to come and I know that it will.



**Sandra M. Ham, RN**  
Blue Cross Blue Shield and  
Blue Care Network of MI  
Regional Sales Manager,  
West Shore

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan has been a long-time, proud partner of the West Coast Chamber of Commerce. Across the state of Michigan, we have worked with the Chamber network to help start, grow and expand businesses. Chamber involvement offers a unique opportunity to connect with our customers, learn their wants and needs, and strengthen the local economy. It also provides an avenue to meet potential new customers and learn of their needs.

For Blue Cross, it is about the health of the community. Good health means a healthier bottom line. As we work with employers to offer innovative benefit solutions to their employees, it helps the entire community. We want to embrace the Chamber's values – learn, innovate and share. We have enjoyed our collaborative relationship with Jane and the entire team.

”

“



**Nolan Kamer**  
Nolan Kamer Agency;  
Farm Bureau Insurance

The Nolan Kamer Agency has been a member of the West Coast Chamber since 2010, although it wasn't until last spring that our involvement began to take root in the business community. We didn't realize the untapped benefits of truly engaging with the chamber until we started participating in the various events. The more engaged I got, the more I felt the urge to get to know the business community on a personal level. I became a Gold Sponsor to support the efforts in building relationships between likeminded, local business owners like myself. These are the relationships that ultimately allow a healthy community to thrive and grow, which I am proud to support and be part of.



**Jennifer Remondino**  
Executive Partner, Holland  
office of Warner Norcross  
Executive Committee,  
Board Member, West Coast  
Chamber

Warner Norcross & Judd strives to play an active role in the communities where we live and work. The West Coast Chamber provides exceptional programs and services to our Lakeshore community, and we are very pleased to support the good work it does. The Chamber takes an active leadership role in addressing major issues that impact our business community, giving member organizations a solid voice in regional, state and national discussions. The Chamber allows me and other members of our firm to connect in meaningful ways with other community, business and nonprofit decision makers on the Lakeshore, fostering a spirit of collaboration that serves us all very well.

”

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# Turning Salsa into Success: Meet Dave Zilko at our Annual Meeting!



A true success story, Dave Zilko turned a small salsa business, which began in the back of a bankrupt restaurant outside of Detroit, into nearly a quarter of a billion-dollar profit, selling the number one selling salsa to Campbells. From humble beginnings, Zilko had the passion to take his dreams and make them into a reality bigger than he ever thought possible. Zilko now shares his journey with audiences to inspire and educate through his humorous real-life experiences. Dave's story is a testament you can live the life you want if you know what steps to take.

In early 2016, Dave published a book via Wiley & Sons, detailing his experiences as an

entrepreneur in general and his experiences with Garden Fresh in particular. Titled *Irrational Persistence: Seven Secrets That Turned a Bankrupt Startup Into a \$231,000,000 Business*, the book became an instant national bestseller.

Dave is an operating partner at Huron Capital, a Detroit-based private equity firm with over \$1 billion under management. Come hear his thoughts on business and entrepreneurship and enjoy a great lunch on the shore of Lake Macatawa. The West Coast Chamber Annual Meeting is Fri., September 29 at Yacht Basin Marina in Holland.

Register online at [www.westcoastchamber.org](http://www.westcoastchamber.org).

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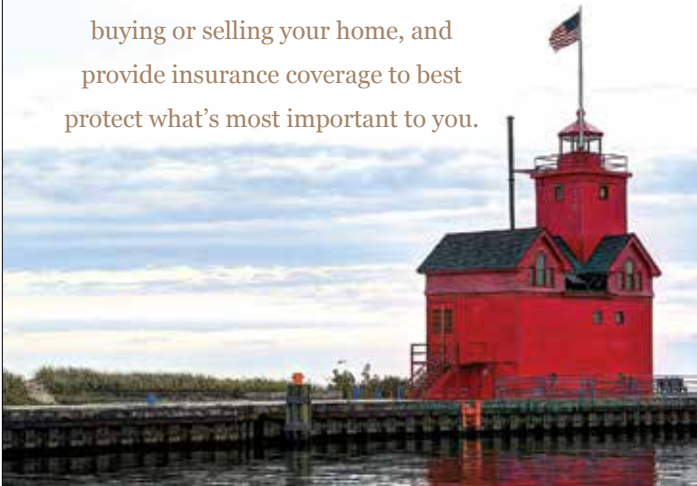


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# The Day We Didn't Golf at All



The forecast was bleak, but we were optimistic and excited about all the fun things we had prepared for our members and sponsors for the 49th annual West Coast Chamber Golf Outing. Food was prepared, kegs were ready to be tapped, goodie bags were filled, sponsors were armed with treats and activities, prizes were ready to be handed out to happy golfers and the team from Tournament Sponsor Beacon Sotheby's International Realty was ready to greet guests as they walked in the door.

And then it poured and thunder roared and worst of all lightning struck. For the first time in 49 years, the Chamber Golf Outing had to call off the golfing. But the party was still ready for guests, so we invited all golfers and sponsors to join us for lunch and prizes and networking. Our members love their Chamber, because 175 out of our 200 registered golfers came and packed The Ravines clubhouse for lunch and fun. Take a look...



## Tournament Sponsor *Beacon Sotheby's International Realty*

*Beacon Sotheby's International Realty is, by design, a boutique real estate firm comprised of real estate professionals servicing the Lake Michigan area. We first affiliated with the Sotheby's International Realty® brand in December 2016. While our office had been located in downtown Holland for some time, right on 8th Street, the name Beacon Sotheby's International Realty was new to the community. We knew we wanted to be involved with the West Coast Chamber of Commerce in some way, in order to really immerse ourselves in the lakeshore community. In partnering with the Chamber, we have not only seen community support for our business, but have been able to make strides in supporting other Holland businesses as well.*



*The Chamber has been a considerable help in welcoming our brand to the area, especially with sponsorships. Each event Beacon Sotheby's International Realty sponsors grants a new way to meet other business owners and celebrate the community, all the while having a fantastic time. In the last eight months of being members with the West Coast Chamber, we have been able to broaden our reach and support the city of Holland, and there is nothing more worthwhile than that.*



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# September Calendar of Events

Tuesday, September 12

## Early Bird Breakfast

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

Get an inside look at what employers are saying at this Early Bird Breakfast, with analysis provided by Lakeshore Advantage in partnership with Muskegon Area First, West Coast Chamber, The Chamber of Grand Haven, Spring Lake and Ferrysburg, Allegan County and Talent 2025.

### Sponsored by Macatawa Bank

Time: 7:30am / pre-coffee networking starts at 7am

Cost: \$20 per Chamber member (\$25 if registered after Sept. 10) / \$35 per non-member

Monday, September 18

## 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 at 7:15am 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 Sep 15) / \$35 per non-member

Thursday, September 21

## Business Matters Networking

@West Michigan Office Interiors, 300 E. 40th Street, Holland

This open house formatted event offers a great opportunity to network with others, gain entrance into, and learn about an interesting business! Come have fun and enjoy light appetizers and refreshments at the newly renovated West Michigan Office Interiors!

### Sponsored by West Michigan Office Interiors

Time: 4-5:30pm

Cost: Free

Wednesday, September 27

## Network @ Lunch

@Village Inn Pizza & Sports Grille, 934 Washington Avenue, Holland

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

Time: 12-1pm

Cost: \$15 per member inclusive of tax and gratuity / \$25 per non-member inclusive of tax and gratuity

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

## Your HR update

2017 is expected to bring a lot of changes to Human Resource rules. Are you ready?

Pembleton HR Consulting has just launched the **The HR Hotline**. For only \$99/mo you can participate on a 1 hour per week call with Steve Pembleton to ask all of the HR questions that you have been thinking about. This an easy and inexpensive way to keep up to date

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[Steve@PembletonHRConsulting.com](mailto:Steve@PembletonHRConsulting.com)

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For a full listing of events, visit [www.westcoastchamber.org/events](http://www.westcoastchamber.org/events).



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# Please welcome vascular surgeon Joshua Greenberg to Holland.



Joshua  
Greenberg, MD

Dr. Greenberg is a vascular surgeon at the Mercy Health Physician Partners Vascular Surgery practice and is now seeing patients in our Holland North office. He is board certified and experienced in complex and advanced surgical and endovascular therapy.

Mercy Health Physician Partners Vascular Surgery provides comprehensive vascular diagnostic and treatment services, including open and minimally invasive surgeries, cosmetic and therapeutic vein care, as well as diagnostic services accredited by the Intersocietal Accreditation Commission (IAC).



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## **Brewery 4 Two 4** **Dave Miller**

616-377-7773

[dave@brewery4two4.com](mailto:dave@brewery4two4.com)

[www.brewery4two4.com](http://www.brewery4two4.com)

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616-334-8686

[Andrew.Midgley@CaliberHomeLoans.com](mailto:Andrew.Midgley@CaliberHomeLoans.com)

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## **Capitol One** **J.T. Inman**

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## **Coral Gables Yachts** **Josh Van Howe**

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[josh@cg yacht.com](mailto:josh@cg yacht.com)

[www.coralgablesyachts.com](http://www.coralgablesyachts.com)

*Coral Gables Yachts is an independent yacht brokerage located in Holland, Michigan. We pride ourselves on knowledgeable and forthright representation of every yacht we discuss. We list boats locally and sell internationally with an excellent track record of repeat business from our clients. We also offer premium indoor heated storage and full Yacht Management Services.*

## **Distinctive Machining** **Ray Blackburn**

616-953-8999

[rblackburn@distinctivemfg.co](mailto:rblackburn@distinctivemfg.co)

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[sherryvanderelst@gmail.com](mailto:sherryvanderelst@gmail.com)

[www.mobilecookingsschool.com](http://www.mobilecookingsschool.com)

*Classically-trained chef, culinary arts educator and culinary nutrition instructor. Culinary specialty: artisan bread making. Sherry combines an insatiable love for cooking and baking with a desire to share this passion through mentoring and teaching.*

## **Greenridge Realty Relocation** **Rebecca Burgenmeyer**

616-717-2507

[rburgenmeyer@greenridge.com](mailto:rburgenmeyer@greenridge.com)

[www.greenridge.com/relocation](http://www.greenridge.com/relocation)

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## **Heritage Homes, Inc.** **Dawn Noordijk**

616-395-9311

[dawn.noordijk@heritagehomesinc.org](mailto:dawn.noordijk@heritagehomesinc.org)

[heritagehomesinc.org/index.html](http://heritagehomesinc.org/index.html)

*Heritage Homes, Inc. is a 501(c)3 non-profit agency incorporated in 1971 by parents, advocates and clergy in the Holland / Zeeland area to serve the housing needs of adults with developmental disabilities. The organization which began with one adult foster care home has grown to regularly serve individuals residing in Allegan, Barry, Kent, Muskegon and Ottawa Counties.*

## **Inside Leadership** **Abbey Johnston**

616-990-3601

[info@InsideLeadership.org](mailto:info@InsideLeadership.org)

[www.INSIDELeadership.org](http://www.INSIDELeadership.org)

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616-710-2112

[jkoop@kraftbusiness.com](mailto:jkoop@kraftbusiness.com)

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# Happenings at the Chamber



Ribbon Cutting at the Fitness Studio



Menchie's Frozen Yogurt Ribbon Cutting



Worksighted interns at the Golf Outing



Ribbon Cutting at Koops



Ribbon Cutting for Max Bus in Park Township

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Lunch at the Golf Outing



Ribbon Cutting at deVries Photography



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Tamara Milobinski, CFP  
Vice President,  
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Jennifer Nemescek, CFP  
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