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JUNE 2020

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## ADVERTISING INDEX

Accident Fund Insurance.....6	Kristine Kay Interiors.....7
Andy Spears Farm Bureau Insurance.....9	Lakewood Construction.....12
Boer's Transfer and Storage.....9	Lighthouse Insurance Group.....13
Bosch's Landscape.....13	Ottawa Area Intermediate School District... 9
Burch Partners.....12	Photo Op Studio.....23
Edify North.....10	Quality Car Wash.....13
Egl Tech.....24	Schreur Printing.....8
Engineering Supply & Imaging.....15	Smith, Haughey Rice & Roegge.....15
First National Bank.....9	Spectrum Health Zeeland Hospital.....11
Gill Staffing.....15	Town & Country Group.....15
Gordon Water Systems.....24	Troxel Custom Homes.....22
Holland Eats.....23	United Federal Credit Union.....6
Holland Hospital.....15	Urban Plank.....16
Holland Litho Printing Services.....24	Yacht Basin Marina.....17
Horizon Bank.....13	Zeeland Lumber.....13
Hospice of Holland.....14	

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Feature: Chamber Leaders on the Future of Business.....4
“School Is Not Closed—Just the Buildings Are”.....7
Expert Contributor: Schreur Printing.....8
Expert Contributor: Edify North.....10
Expert Contributor: Lakewood Construction..12
Expert Contributor: Hospice of Holland.....14
Chamber Champions Small Businesses with Downtown Relief Fund.....16
Introducing EV Construction.....17
West Coast Cash Corporate Buying Supports Small Businesses.....18
Holland/Zeland Young Professionals Recognizes Young Professional of the Year.....19
New Members.....19
Women Focus on Leading Through Change...20
Chamber Happenings.....23



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# Letter from Jane Clark

President, Michigan West Coast Chamber of Commerce

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During the current crisis, businesses have worked faster and better than they dreamed possible just a few months ago. The pandemic has put us all on an accelerated track of adaptation and innovation, and we are still just at the beginning of our journey toward the new way of doing business. While the first weeks and months were characterized by responding to constant change and information, we are now looking forward. We are moving from Reacting to Recovering, to Rebuilding, and to Rethinking.



As you take a moment to regroup for moving forward, pause and take stock of how far you've come. Take a moment to consider the relationships that have sprung up out of the covid chaos, and how this community has come together to support local businesses and the people who put their hearts into building them. We are stronger when we are connected, and the Chamber will continue to seek out new ways to build relationships as we look to the future of business. This community has always been one of great vision. Imagine the possibilities.

Best Regards,  
Jane Clark

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# Chamber Leaders on Recovering, Rebuilding and Reimagining Business as We Know It

By Caroline Monahan



## Where We Started: Jane Clark Takes the Lead on Focusing the Role of the Chamber

In times of uncertainty, what matters becomes very clear. People matter. Businesses Matter. Information Matters. The West Coast Chamber's Core Values revolve around putting members and the business community at the forefront of all decision making, and that has never been more evident than in the times we are living in right now. In the midst of a global crisis, Chamber President Jane Clark pulled everything back to the basics of listening to our members and delivering exactly what they needed, and then innovated and gave them more.

In the first two weeks of Governor Whitmer's "Stay Home, Stay Safe" Executive Order, the Chamber launched the West Coast Way Outreach Initiative. The team spent hours each day reaching out to members, calling each business one by one to check in and assess their needs. These 1,200+ conversations spotlighted the questions that swirled around the state and federal programs and policies that had been issued in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the team responded quickly and decisively. The Chamber's essential role as

Catalyst, Convener and Champion for this community rings true now more than ever.

This phase one of the Chamber's outreach also included the deliberate inclusion of services for all community businesses, Chamber member or not. All communication and resources were made available at no charge as we continually evaluated and anticipated the needs of businesses. The website's Coronavirus Business Toolkit was developed with essential information on executive orders, financial aid, cash flow, employment, public and mental health, and received over 5,500 visits in the first two weeks.

A central piece of the Toolkit is the restaurant Takeout Takeover page, which supports local restaurants offering takeout and delivery options. As these businesses pivoted to keep customers coming to their doors, we came alongside to spread the word. This initiative was also supported with emails and a robust social media campaign, and the website page received almost 1,000 visitors in phase one. It's not slowing down anytime soon, and is now joined by a Retail Restart Initiative, created to help the evolution of retail shopping as we move into the reopening of our economy.

At times of crisis we see innovation flourish, and we stretched ourselves to adapt to the new communications realities. Although we had not been in the business of virtual programming, we immediately launched a series of webinars that tapped into experts on information so vital to the health of our local businesses and their owners, and saw people going back and watching the recordings and sharing them with their teams. At a time when information was difficult to decipher, we made every effort to clarify and deliver content aimed at making life a little easier for everyone in the midst of chaos.

## Where We're Going: Chamber Executive Committee Leaders on the Role of the Chamber

The Chamber's Board of Directors continue to provide leadership and inspiration as we move through phases of restart and recovery and begin reimagining the future of business in West Michigan. The members of the Executive Committee shared their thoughts on where we are going and how the Chamber's role will be especially important as we rebuild.



Jennifer Remondino  
(Chamber Board Chair 2019-20)  
Executive Partner  
Warner, Norcross + Judd



Jon Lanning  
President  
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Kelly Springer  
President & CEO  
Metal Flow Corporation

### The Chamber as a Champion

Warner supports the West Coast Chamber because we believe in what the Chamber has done, and is continuing to do, to ensure Lakeshore businesses thrive. There's no roadmap for the crisis we are currently navigating, but the Chamber has again stepped up to provide calm, steady leadership to businesses large and small. They believe, as do we, that this storm will pass, and they have pivoted their usual programming to convene critical conversations, to provide accurate and timely information and to lift us up collectively.

We are truly all in this together—and we appreciate the Chamber's role to convene and to encourage all of us who live, work and love our Lakeshore community.

### The Chamber as Convener

COVID has been really hard on West Michigan businesses. That is especially true here because of how many local companies truly care for team members. In the end business is about people. It's been great to see how the West Coast Chamber sprang to action. Working to advocate for the businesses and lives impacted. Holding webinars and education to help us change how we work together and do it safely. Being a listening ear to businesses and then sharing concerns with the government leaders. Jane called me a few weeks ago to see how I was doing and check in. That is so cool!

We have had calls with Fred Upton, Senator Huizinga, and Governor Whitmer. In talking with business leaders outside of the west MI area its notable how they don't feel like their voices are being heard. We have all shared concerns and frustrations though this process, but with the Chamber we know that our voices are heard. I am thankful for that.

This may be a strange thing to say, but in many ways the Chamber is helping us as a business community through the 7 stages of grief. Shock, denial, anger, bargaining, depression, testing and acceptance. Bringing business leaders and our community together through this process. Thank you for the work that you are doing, and I look forward to the acceptance and moving on stage together.

### The Chamber as a Catalyst for Business Growth

As we continue to navigate unprecedented business conditions, we must acknowledge the impact the Coronavirus has had on all of us...our families, our community, and our way of life in many instances. We find ourselves in circumstances we could not have predicted and that continue to change. In these times we also see the best in human spirit and leadership.

As a business community we are managing the impact on our own organizations but also have concern for the greater business community. This is where West Coast Cash becomes a way to pay it forward. By purchasing West Coast Cash as an employee incentive, you can also have a positive financial impact on the organization that needs the support. Just another example of how the Chamber is leaning into the 3Cs with West Coast Cash checking off all three.



 Continued on page 6



Mike Dykstra  
CEO  
Zeeland Lumber and Supply



Mike Novakoski  
President & CEO  
EV Construction

### The Chamber Connecting Communities

Like our businesses, the Chamber has experienced much change and uncertainty during these unprecedented times. The leadership role of the Chamber has been evident during this time by remaining calm, positive, visible, and offering support in different and exciting ways. To be a catalyst, convener and champion of our business community has shown up in the Zeeland community in several ways recently and we are thankful for the Chamber's leadership.

Recently, the Chamber held ZAG (Zeeland Affinity Group) meetings, all virtual, featuring Ron Lewis from Spectrum Zeeland, and the City of Zeeland staff. Furthermore, the connection with our local state representatives through the "Capitol Connections" format has given many business leaders information and access to our state government officials. Lastly, the organization and communication of all the various government programs and being the repository of all that information to the business community has been incredibly valuable. There are countless reasons how the Chamber has stepped up during this time of uncertainty with leadership serving the Zeeland business community, and we are grateful for the steady leadership hand during these uncertain times.

### The Chamber as Visionary

It's times like these when the business community leans on each other for strength. We receive encouragement to lean into our challenges. It's comforting to know that "together we can do what we could never do alone"! The West Coast Chamber manages the platform that makes all of this possible; in fact, they do this better than any other chamber in our fine state as a top award winner.

We are facing massive challenges today. Out of crisis comes change. I recall the pain we endured during the great recession and admit that we became a stronger company because of it. Today, we're challenged to reset our business strategy, to honestly evaluate and reinforce our value proposition/ competitive advantage and to be extremely agile. We will pivot in ways we had not expected only a couple of short months ago. The WCC was not exempt from this process.

As quickly as businesses began to shift, WCC was in lockstep and at times, ahead of many. The chamber has over 1,000 diverse businesses to draw information from. They've seen, heard collected, formatted and shared progressive thoughts, concepts and programs gained from these incredible relationships more quickly than any other partner of mine has been able to. Our Chamber staff has stepped up to do so much more than most would appreciate. They are quietly, thoughtfully and intensely serving the needs of its members so that we will all look back 10 years from now and acknowledge this crisis, managed together, made us a stronger community!

This is a time we will always remember as being pivotal in our history. We will refer to a "before" COVID and "after," just like with other events in history that have fundamentally shifted how we live and work. The Chamber is embracing the unknown by throwing normal out the window and focusing on thinking outside the box. By reimagining everything, we will come back stronger and even more united as a community. After all, we know what really matters.



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# “School Is Not Closed— Just the Buildings Are”

By Chelsea Scott



Ottawa Area Intermediate School  
District Superintendent Peter Haines.

Executive Order 2020-35 issued by Governor Whitmer suspended in-person K-12 instruction in Michigan for the balance of the school year, meaning schools across the state quickly had to shift to remote instruction for all students. Among those pivoting is Ottawa Area Intermediate School District (Ottawa Area ISD), whose vast number of programs and services span two West Michigan counties. “The multitude of services our district provides hasn’t changed,” said Superintendent Peter Haines. “The way they are delivered, however, has changed dramatically.”

## Staff Response

New procedures, additional collaboration across educational groups and of course, depending more on technology than ever before is just the tip of the iceberg. “Our instructional staff is prepared to deliver remote instruction and successfully engaging students in learning,” Haines reported. “Our district instructional leaders quickly convened a task force to develop a framework for remote learning that has been implemented, and subsequently adopted by many—if not all—of our local school districts.” Resources have been collected and redistributed to staff, local schools and school families. As education and support needs change, staff has been reassigned to ensure all student needs are met. Teachers are scheduling remote classes outside normal hours. Whatever it takes. “Our staff has been incredible,” Haines said. “From the first day of school closure, our team was ready and willing to do whatever was needed for our students.”

## Creative Changes

With home visits on hold, the Early Childhood Education Parents as Teachers program instructors are now connecting with students and families virtually and dropping off learning packets at their doors to do together online. “Early Childhood staff is also delivering diapers and formula to families in need—a very appreciated service as you can imagine!” Haines said. “This quick thinking has allowed them to maintain relationships with families and continue their work.”

Adult career programming through Thompson M-TEC has maintained

momentum by providing remote services to adults seeking to obtain a GED, career training classes, and career coaching services with local agencies. Starting in July, the now online career coaching services will adapt even further allowing career interest and skills assessments and help with resumes and interview skills to be made available to anyone seeking employment. “We anticipate the need will be significant,” said Haines.

Even career and technical education is being delivered remotely. “Careerline Tech instructors are posting demonstrations on YouTube and other online sites for students to watch and then video themselves doing the work on their own,” Haines explained. “They have been incredibly creative in their instructional methods, allowing students to fulfill CTE requirements and prepare for professional certification exams.”

## Beyond Education

As an intermediate school district, Ottawa Area ISD has been given many responsibilities that relate to the welfare of their students. To respond, they have coordinated with local resources, other ISDs and area leaders to provide resources such as food, child care and mental health services. “Student wellbeing is critical as it’s an important foundation for them being ready to learn,” said Haines.

## Community Support

Ottawa Area ISD is grateful for the way in which the community has rallied, especially the West Coast Chamber, which hasn’t missed a beat. “The Chamber has done a great job supporting the community,” Haines shared. “I recently participated in a virtual “In the Know” interview with Jane Clark ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=XFzHhdcXt1Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XFzHhdcXt1Y)) to talk about the state of education today and was extremely pleased with the thoughtful questions our business leaders posed during the chat. Businesses responded quickly with ways they could provide support and resources to our schools. There are, and will continue to be, many ways we need to support our students and families so the Chamber’s assistance in getting information to the business community is appreciated and invaluable.”

## Successes

Our area can be proud of Ottawa Area ISD’s swift and comprehensive response to Executive Order 2020-35. In the face of uncertainty and hardship, Ottawa Area ISD has continued to be at the forefront of innovative learning and is looked to as an educational leader by districts in and out of the state. “Through our futurePREP’d programming, we are training teachers throughout the region in Project Based Learning with a goal of creating more dynamic classrooms where students learn by doing as they work through real-world challenges and problems,” said Haines. “We are also home to the Delta Math Response to Intervention program which was developed by our staff and implemented by schools around the state. It’s designed to help teachers identify students struggling with math and provide them the individualized support they need to succeed.”

## Doing More. Together.

At the heart of Ottawa Area ISD is a goal to deliver innovative and personalized education and that beat can be felt throughout every layer of what Haines and his team does. “To my knowledge, we are the only region in the state, and possibly nation, that has a partnership initiative that includes traditional public schools, public school academies, and faith-based schools setting aside competition to work collaboratively, and with our business community and local agencies, to offer students more innovative learning opportunities,” he explained. “That partnership initiative, which is managed by Ottawa Area ISD, is called Doing More. Together. and that name speaks very well, in my opinion, to what makes this region so unique.”

The hallways of schools everywhere are empty, that is true. But school is very much still in session. “We are living, working, and educating during a highly unusual time in our lives,” said Haines. “Here at Ottawa Area ISD, we are working diligently for our students of all ages—birth to adult—right now, and for their future.”

For more information about Ottawa Area ISD, visit [www.oaisd.org](http://www.oaisd.org).



# Preparing for a Safe Landing

By Mary Jane Schreur

*“Ladies and gentlemen, we have begun our descent. In preparation for landing, be certain your seat back is straight up and your seat belt is fastened. Please secure your carry-on items, stow your tray table, and pass any remaining service items and unwanted reading materials to the flight attendants. Thank you.”*

Each time we fly, we hear these instructions to help us land safely. We all wonder, “Will it really matter if my seat is upright versus one-inch back?”

In the midst of COVID-19, we do not have instructions to follow, so how do we prepare to reopen? What are the safety steps? Over the past few months many articles and ideas have been written on how to make ourselves better, how to survive, how to use best practices and improve our leadership skills.

As we make our landing after this long, unscheduled trip, we will arrive with our own stories, and we will be different.

The biggest preparation we can give ourselves is acceptance. Accept where we are physically, emotionally, and financially. We must allow ourselves the acceptance not to complete the Standard Operating Procedure, not to finish the book or not to write the article. We must accept the losses we have all experienced.

In the last few months, we have been in survival mode. As we reopen, we move into allowing our minds to reflect and take the opportunity to grieve. The grief is more than losing a loved one; it is the loss of experience—the



loss of our plans, the sales goal, the weddings, the graduations, the celebrations together.

Another step in our preparation for reopening, is to develop a sense of calm. Pulling your team together and listening to the concerns of each person identifies how to make team members and clients feel comfortable and safe. Creating a known and comfortable experience reduces people’s anxiety. The heightened anxiety we have experienced over the past few months must be acknowledged. Communicate what everyone can expect to create a safe space for both staff and clients. Share what steps have been taken for safety and sustainability through signage, emails, letters and website post.

The final preparation, yet the most important, is human connections. Take time to connect and let people know you care and are thinking of them. Give an extra measure of grace to people’s need for security and safety. Each experience is personal. Create a safe space for each person to share his or her needs. Take time to write a letter or give a call to ask how a person is doing or what they need.

*giving an extra measure of grace to allow people to know you care. Thank you.”*

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# Coronavirus Policy Preparedness

By Lyn Carter, Corporate Health Strategist

In the wake of Covid-19, many companies have furloughed their employees. Some companies transitioned to teleworking. A few companies remained operational as they were deemed “essential.” In all three scenarios, the future of our workplace will present new challenges, new protocols, and new norms. We advise employers to make some permanent changes to their existing policies to ensure preparedness should we face anything similar to the Coronavirus in the future.

For example, your sick policy written back in 1994 may not cut it going forward. While return to work recommendations previously cited “24 hours after a fever,” you may want to consider updating to the 14 day quarantine period. In future years, it may be difficult to decipher between common influenza symptoms and coronavirus infections. Additionally, develop a clear procedure to address workplace sanitation if an employee tests positive.

You may want to consider modifying your time off policy to address employees who must stay home to take care of children when schools are closed. A modified time off policy may double in addressing snowdays, another common problem in the northern states. The Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) expanded FMLA to cover employees caring for children out of schools; however, the expanded FMLA clause only applies to employers with more than 50 employees. Regardless of your employee count, you can reduce confusion



during a time of emergency by presenting a policy in advance.

It may be beneficial to add a section in your benefits resource to address how benefits will be handled during layoff. By communicating in advance, there won't be a need for HR fielding hundreds of confused employee phone calls. Not sure that you'd like to commit to a specific layoff benefits policy yet? Outline how you will communicate benefits information to employees, should the need arise again.

Lastly, strategize physical environment policies to reduce the risk of disease transmission. Examples could include: adding physical distance between work spaces, changing door formats to be “no touch”/push only, propping open common entry/exit doors for less touches, modifying lunch schedules to reduce total employees in lunchroom at one time, increasing the building air exchange rate in your HVAC system, and offering masks to concerned employees. Each working environment is


different and will pose unique challenges. Aren't sure about your commonly touched areas? Try a product like GloGerm: once applied to employee hands, it will show under blacklight which items are frequently touched. As an added bonus, residue will remain on hands unless they are washed with full CDC recommendations (20 seconds, soap, warm water, under fingernails, etc).

While not a policy, rebuilding a safe workplace culture will be key as your employees return to work. As frequently as possible, remind employees of the policies in place to protect their health. Schedule small, but social gatherings to encourage employees to reform their connections with one another. Take active steps towards developing a better “new normal.”


*Edify North, founded in 2009 and based in Holland, Michigan, is an employee benefits consulting firm that focuses on the intersection between employers and employees. Edify North is dedicated to improving the physical, mental and organizational health of clients through providing clear and robust plan designs, engaging wellbeing programming and technological integrations. Edify North is proud to be recognized as one of the Best and Brightest in Wellness Winners of 2016, 2017, and 2018, as well as Michigan's Companies to Watch of 2016.*

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# Giving Back to the Community as a Business

By Tabatha Ash | Marketing Manager



I think it's safe to say that 2020 doesn't look quite like we thought it would. Our world has drastically changed over the last few months and will continue to do so as we find our new normal. But even in the midst of uncertainty, we have seen so many great people and businesses come together to support our community during this time of need.

There are many reasons it is important for us as businesses to give back. We have the ability, and obligation, to help strengthen the community around us. No matter how big or small, each of us can work together to make a big impact. All it takes is one to start a ripple effect in taking the steps to make sure that our community stays strong and is taken care of.

Whether through donations, volunteering, going the extra mile, or supporting local restaurants, there are so many ways to give back to the community as a business.

- Looking for gift ideas for clients or employees? Shop local! There are numerous local businesses that have many great corporate gifting options.
- Work with local non-profits for employee volunteer days. You can always find a place that is looking for volunteers, this is a great way to come together as a company while supporting the needs of the community.

- Share local non-profits/ businesses that you work with on social media.
- Donate! We know this looks different for everyone, but this is essential to keeping many of these places up and running in order to take care of the people in our community.

Especially during times like these, places like Community Action House, Kid's Food Basket, Community Foundation of Holland/Zeeland Area, Lakeshore Advantage, and everyone that works at the hospitals, are vital to making sure our community stays safe, healthy, and intact. They are working around the clock to make sure our people and businesses get the resources that they need. These places need our support, to ensure that they can continue to support the growing need.

To all of the essential workers and to everyone working hard to help support this great place we call home, thank you! We are proud to be a part of such a great community.

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





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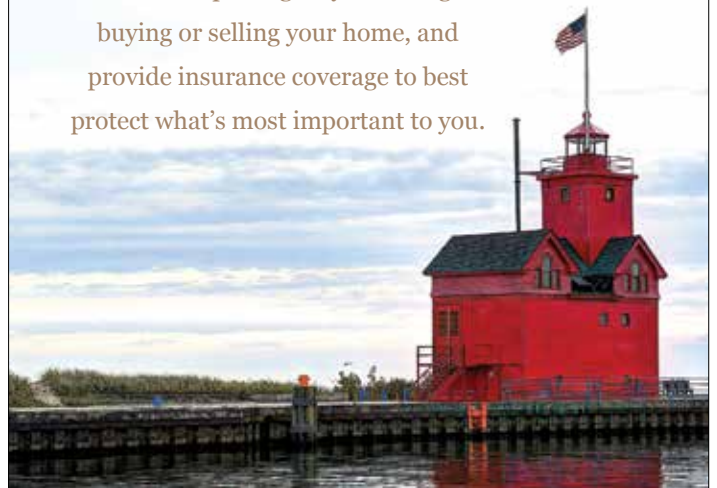
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# Making Each Day Special, Even in Difficult Times

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

These last several weeks have proven to be a challenge for all of us on many fronts. With the onset of this unexpected need for such significant change to our daily lives, it is ever more challenging to find ways to make the most of each day when so many options to do so feel quite limited. It requires the willingness to be open to viewing life and each passing moment differently—somewhat similar to the feeling of loss that a hospice patient may experience—soon after learning their prognosis includes a terminal diagnosis.

These times are overwhelming, complicated and sometimes distressing for sure but together, we will get through it all. Even during this difficult time, Hospice can help individuals facing end-of-life make the most of life. Adding more life to every day is our calling. Being there to help patients and their families make each day special is what hospice care is all about. Many of our patients become like friends and many of the moments shared during the end-of-life journey are the most significant.

The hospice care team works to ease the burden of caregivers by providing emotional support as they care for someone who is dear to them. The entire hospice team of providers, nurses, social workers, hospice aides, chaplains and volunteers all work



together to ensure they achieve patient comfort and quality of life, especially during the final days. Grief counseling and support is available to family members and the bereaved for 13 months following the loss of a loved one. Bereavement Counselors assist survivors of hospice patients to be able to transition through their grief, moving forward and finding hope.

The end-of-life period can be a cherished time—a time of peaceful reflection and comfort. Although this stage of life can be confusing, hospices exist to help. We guide patients and their loved ones each day as they face their final days and provide assistance and support to ensure each day is lived to its fullest. Together, hospice providers and their patients and family members get through it all.

As we continue to maneuver through the challenges of trying to stay healthy and well during this time of uncertainty while attempting to find the meaning of what quality of life now means for us each day, one thing remains constant. As a Hospice provider, we desire to bring care and comfort to those who need it. We remain passionate about honoring the sacredness of human life. And, while we may need to temporarily alter our methods as to how we deliver care, we will continue to be a comforting presence even in difficult times.

*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.*



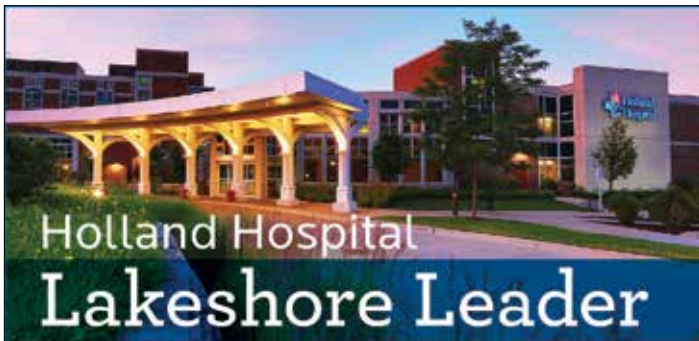
## Make Today Special



Adding more life to every day is our mission, our calling. Being there to help patients and their families make each day special is what it's all about. Many of our patients become like friends, and many of the memories shared during the end-of-life journey are the most significant. Make every day special in your life.

*For more information, visit [hollandhospice.org](http://hollandhospice.org) or call us at 616.396.2972.*





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# Chamber Champions Small Businesses with Downtown Relief Fund

The Michigan West Coast Chamber of Commerce announced the creation of the Holland-Zeeland Downtown Relief Fund. Announced on Friday, May 6, 2020, the fund was established by the Michigan West Coast Chamber of Commerce Foundation in partnership with the Now for the Next Fund of the Community Foundation of the Holland Zeeland Area. The fund was created to combat community deterioration by assisting small restaurants and retailers in Downtown Holland and Downtown Zeeland that have experienced a financial hardship and lack of resources to operate as a result of COVID-19.

“Through the years, our downtown businesses have been there for us. They are part of what makes our area unique and special. This is one way that we are attempting to help them weather this storm and maintain the health and vibrancy of our downtown districts,” said West Coast Chamber President Jane Clark.



The Downtown Relief Fund was made possible by the generous contributions of individuals, companies, foundations, and others. The fund was established with \$150,000 available to grant to businesses in need. Grant requests were required to be for \$10,000 or less, and the Chamber worked with local business leaders to carefully vet the applications. Funds were limited, so not all applicants were awarded a grant.

“Talent attraction and retention is a priority of the Now for the Next Fund and our

vibrant downtown is essential to recruiting individuals and families who want to learn, work, start a business, and raise a family in Holland and Zeeland,” said Bret Docter, Chair of the Now for the Next Advisory Committee. “Our downtown businesses are severely impacted by the halt of the economy, and the Downtown Relief Fund is a way to offer some support to help our restaurants and retailers during this challenging time.”

Grants are intended to help companies needing working

capital to support payroll, expenses, rent, mortgage payments, utility expenses or similar expenses that occur in its ordinary course of business. Grant funding is not to be used for payment for expenses otherwise paid for by insurance or other reimbursements, or income replacement payments, such as payments of lost wages, lost business income, or unemployment compensation.

**Applicants were required to meet the following criteria:**

- Must have experienced a financial hardship and currently be in financial need as a result of COVID-19
- Must have been in business at least three years
- Must be a restaurant or retailer located in the Holland DDA District or Zeeland SARB area

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# Introducing EV Construction

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**E**lzinga & Volkers Construction Professionals, a long-standing, Holland-based construction management firm, announced its rebrand to EV Construction, with the new tag line “Built Around People.” The change in nomenclature reflects the rich history EV Construction has among industry professionals and is intended to increase brand recognition for the company regionally and nationally. The change took effect on March 31, 2020.

The decision to shorten the company name, update their logo and refresh brand collateral was made in an effort to catch the brand up with the growth and accomplishments the company has achieved, specifically over the past 10 years. The changes will support brand recognition, consistency and continue to support the company’s growth and expansion into new markets outside of Michigan.

The rebranding is the culmination of a decade of growth, transformation and human effort. EV Construction wanted to celebrate that despite the current global crisis. The spirit that will be communicated by the new brand will remain unaffected by the current challenges resulting from the spread of COVID-19. EV Construction is positive about the future and eager to come out of this crisis healthy and with a fresh look and feel.

The tag line “Built Around People” was intentionally chosen to reflect the company’s vision and mission. First and foremost, EV Construction is more than a construction manager. They are builders. They have over 100 skilled craftspeople in eight high-performing trade divisions.

It’s also no secret, based on many awards and accolades received by the company, that EV has a “people first” approach to running their business. People are the lifeblood of the company and the safety of everyone is their top priority. An



employee-centric culture is at the core of EV’s approach.

Lastly, the new company tag line emphasizes the important role partners play in the company’s success. ‘People’ not only refers to EV Construction employees, but also the trade partners, project owners, businesses and community members that are tied to the company. The goal is that the processes and delivery of each project are built around the needs of the whole project team, not only on the bottom line.

“We have a ‘people first’ approach to running our business, and always have,” said Mike Novakoski, president and CEO of EV Construction. “We are eager to continue our success across Michigan and the U.S. and wouldn’t be where we are today without the employees and relationships that have allowed us to be successful in the industry.”

“Through this rebrand, it’s important for the industry to know that EV Construction will remain focused on leading the way in construction safety and quality,” continued Novakoski. “Our commitment to our people and industry partners has not

changed. We know a good brand is only as good as the team behind it and we’re proud of the team that stands behind ours.”

Visit [www.ev.construction](http://www.ev.construction) for more information.

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# West Coast Cash Corporate Buying Supports Small Businesses

By Caroline Monahan

In a typical week, people make just over 550 visits to the Takeout Takeover page on our website. This has been consistent since the restaurant support campaign began in mid-March, proving without a doubt that our community is rallying to support small businesses in our area. People have been ordering takeout, buying gift cards, and shopping online for West Coast Cash, all in an effort to keep our favorite eateries open for business.

While Takeout Takeover has been focused on keeping the ovens on at local restaurants, we know there are small businesses from every sector of our economy that are in need of assistance. In response, the Chamber has been working with larger employers in our area to help make an impact for our smaller neighbors in a big way via the West Coast Cash program. It's taking off and we're looking for more companies to join our Corporate Buying Program initiative to help stimulate our local economy.

"We launched a similar initiative following 911 and our community really got behind it. We're hearing from members that they want to help, and this is a way they can recognize their own teams while also supporting the small businesses," said Chamber President Jane Clark. "In September of 2019, the Chamber reached a milestone of one million dollars of West Coast Cash purchased by our community. That means one million dollars flowing into the small businesses in our area. And there's potential to do so much more."

Genex Corporation is an active corporate buyer and has been using West Coast Cash in its employee recognition programs for several years. The leadership at Genex understands that putting West Coast Cash into the pockets of their employees translates into pouring money into the local economy. This global company prioritizes building a strong community here at home and is a perfect example of stepping up to help inject resources where they are most needed right now.

The Chamber's Corporate Buying Program is particularly popular around the holidays but is available year-round. It offers a discount to businesses that buy West Coast Cash in bulk, and who pay in cash. Corporate buyers work directly with Chamber staff to ensure a smooth transaction and are able to receive their certificates within minutes of making the purchase. It's a "no-touch" transaction that's even easy to manage while working from home.



In May, Holland Public Schools contacted the Chamber to purchase quantities of West Coast Cash to recognize teachers on "Teacher Appreciation Week." This day would normally be marked with a celebration. In lieu of that, the school district pivoted and delivered gift certificates to the staff instead. When the time comes, they can enjoy spending those dollars, and local businesses will reap the benefits.

When a company gifts the certificates to team members, clients or volunteers, recipients can spend the certificates at over 90 participating merchants, ranging from salons to gift shops to car washes to Thai food. They can buy an ice cream or a beer, or get their car repaired or have food delivered, all using West Coast Cash.

While many doors are closed temporarily, they will re-open, and when they do, our community will be poised to shower them with purchases to help them recoup from the COVID-19 shutdown.

We all look forward to the return of a thriving economy in our area and are looking for ways to do our part to help. The West Coast Cash Corporate Buying Program offers a vehicle for large businesses to make a positive impact for the small ones, and all are invited to contact the Chamber to participate in this initiative to champion our community. Please join us. There's never been a better time than right now.

[www.westcoastchamber.org/west-coast-cash](http://www.westcoastchamber.org/west-coast-cash)

# Holland/Zeeland Young Professionals Recognizes Young Professional of the Year



By Caroline Monahan

The Holland/Zeeland Young Professional organization announced Rebekah Bakker as the recipient of the Young Professional of the Year for 2020.

*"It is an honor and very humbling to be awarded the 2020 Holland Young Professional of the Year. I am passionate about creating a more equitable and loving world and am grateful to be able to do so alongside such inspiring friends and colleagues in our community."  
- Rebekah Bakker*

Rebekah Bakker's background in Political Science and International relations and career path spent championing the needs of the underserved and vulnerable point to a person with a heart for compassion and community. A veteran of the nonprofit sector, Rebekah's experience includes work with the American Red Cross, the Holland Museum, Safe Haven Ministries and Greater Ottawa County United Way. Her training with United Way World Wide pointed her



Holland/Zeeland Young Professionals  
get involved. connect. be HYP.

work toward leveraging partnerships to amplify the work of service organizations, and matched perfectly with her next role as Director of Development and Diversity for the Children's Advocacy Center.

A natural at building relationships, Rebekah has now transitioned into a Business Development role with Custer, Inc. "After a rewarding career in the public sector, I decided to join the corporate world. I spent a number of months exploring different companies and knew that it had to be the right cultural fit for me to make the jump. I have found that great match with Custer. Custer empowers clients to dream up and build exceptional environments and I love being a part of their innovative team!"



Rebekah Bakker

Rebekah participated in the West Coast Leadership Program in 2017-18, which gives participants a deeper look into how our community operates and identifies areas where they can plug in. She also serves as Treasurer on the Board of Lighthouse Immigrant Advocates.

When asked how she is weathering the stay home order, working with two children at home, she answered, "My 4 year old loves to Zoom bomb, so depending on the calls we have scheduled for the day I may be hiding in a closet! The silver lining has been the gift of focused time. I hope that when the world opens back up we identify the things worth going back to and cut out a lot of the other noise. I also think this has been an opportunity to evaluate the systems that were broken before the pandemic and that when we get back to it we rebuild in a more humane way."

HYP was the first YP organization in West Michigan, sparking a trend that continues to grow and evolve. The organization was formed out of conversations between the former Holland Area Chamber of Commerce (now the Michigan West Coast Chamber of Commerce) and the City of Holland on how to make Holland "cool." The group held its first official event in 2003. The group has steadily grown since that time and now has a network of over 1,600 young professionals.

In addition to the Young Professional of the Year, HYP Recognizes several professionals each year with the following awards:

- Community Matters
- Development Matters
- Equity Matters
- Leadership Matters

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# Women Inspiring Teams

*A look at women motivating their teams and communities through change.* By Caroline Monahan

As we look into the covid-unknown that characterizes the months ahead, transformational leaders adept at adapting and thinking out of the box will help shape our businesses and our community. We took an intentional look at how women leaders are managing through change, and asked members of our Women Inspiring Women group to share how they are coping with massive disruption and leading their teams.

Women are relationship builders and collaborators and bring these traits into the ability to resolve conflicts. Women are also known to be multi-taskers, comfortably shifting between tasks and contexts, and simultaneously addressing the needs of individuals, organizations and communities. They are skilled at defining a strategy and at communicating a compelling vision of the future to those around them. Top these traits off with a natural inclination towards producing breakthrough results, and you can start to see how women are gifted at being transformational leaders.

**Abby deRoo**  
Marketing Director  
City of Zeeland

Abby has been on fire with brainstorming ways to keep the city of Zeeland inspired, and to help local businesses during the pandemic. Her focus has been a little less on Feeling the Zeel and more about Healing the Zeel. “One of our recent initiatives involved sending the Zeeland Police Department out to deliver Feel the



**Heal The Zeel**

Zeel kickballs to local families with the message ‘Zeeland Will Bounce Back. Heal the Zeel.’ We distributed them throughout the community so families would have a new and fun activity to do together while at home.”

That positive energy can be felt throughout the City of Zeeland team. While working from home has made this a season of “multi-tasking at its best,” the experience has encouraged more inter-departmental collaboration than ever before, and Abby feels it is making the team stronger. They also have some virtual fun to keep that Zeel going. “Thanks to the inspiration of Zeeland’s Library Director, Heather Wood-Gramza—Zeeland City Department Heads have celebrated surprise birthday parties and a pop-up costume party on our weekly video calls. These parties have helped us celebrate with one another even when we can’t be together, they also help put us at ease and remind us that it’s ok to have fun.”



**Abby deRoo, City of Zeeland**



**Angela Huesman, Jodi Owczarski, Jane Clark and Lakeshore Advantage team at the GRBJ 50 Most Influential Women event.**

## Amanda Telgenhof

Area Director  
Allegan County United Way

The United Way teams have been adapting to the constantly changing needs of both Ottawa and Allegan counties, working closely with community partners, to meet the most pressing issues in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Amanda has spent time working both on site, supervising a donation center at United Way's Allegan building to supply quarantined food items to local pantries, and at home.

While she may have been anxious about the possibility of infection while at work, she worked hard to keep her team positive and focused remotely. They've stayed connected using a variety of communications tools. "We have been doing fun activities and exercises at the start of staff meetings, as well as sharing informative and inspirational articles, texts, and social media posts with each other."

**Angela Huesman**  
Chief Operating Officer  
Lakeshore Advantage

Angela has found that her team adapted very quickly to Zoom meetings and chats as a way to stay connected, and that the virtual meeting is probably something that is here to stay. While working from home also includes homeschooling her kids, she's been able to find a rhythm that connects her with her team and allows her to enjoy her extra time with family.

She's found that staying positive is a driving force that is keeping her team energized. "Our team has focused on the bright spots during this crisis. It's allowed us to celebrate the way our community has responded in the midst of chaos and anxiety. We believe that staying positive is not about ignoring what's going on, it's about choosing

to see the good in the midst of the hard stuff."

**Mandi Brower**  
Chief Operating Officer  
Quality Car Wash

Mandi places an emphasis on team development and says that staying engaged with each member of the team is the number one priority. "Sometimes we would just put each other on the phone while we were researching or typing just to have conversation. "Like working meetings.""

For Mandi, regular Zoom calls are a positive start connecting in the morning. "Every week I have sent, gifts, gift cards, note cards, letters, etc. to our office team members. Just something fun to get out of the mailbox and be a light in their day."

Some of their retail locations closed for several weeks, but the employees were still paid to continue professional development and training from home via zoom meetings. Once they returned to work, they were each given a goodie box to give them appreciation and encouragement through that first week back. "Our office team each picked a manager who they will email and support through this while they are on the front lines. We're really being diligent and making conscious decisions to take care of our people even though we can't interact in the same way".

**Meagan Maas**  
Community Engagement Officer  
Community Action House

Meagan has been working on the Community Action House #stayhomefighthunger and Family Food Boxes efforts, and notes that so many families are finding themselves in a position of need for the first time. But the community has stepped up in a big way. Many families have committed to doing

a box or two a week, sometimes bringing their kids who helped build the box and make encouraging art work. "It has been amazing to see the community wrap their arms around the families—some that we have served before and also many families that have never been to Community Action House."

Meagan says that the campaign has felt very personal to her, and she also feels the personal investment coming from the community at large. "We're seeing notes included in food boxes that say "I love you," "We are with you," "You'll get through this." It's been amazing." She notes that this level of community support is a great stabilizing force that people need more than ever right now, and credits leaders like the Chamber, LNA and the HZCF for making sure the community knows that "this matters".



Meagan Maas (far R) collects donations for CAH at the Leadership Holiday Party.

 Continued on page 22



Continued from page 21

**Stacy Segrist Kamphuis**  
President  
The Insurance Group

The team at The insurance Group was just coming off of busy open enrollment season when the pandemic disruption hit, which turned out to be fortunate timing since the complexity of their business is not conducive to working remotely. Employment changes throughout businesses are keeping them extremely busy now, and they have adapted. This new pace of business has been an adjustment which they are finding invigorating. Stacy still emphasizes that her team take time to rejuvenate and spend time with their families.

While technology and zoom calls may have taken the business world by storm over the months, Stacy says that good old-fashioned phone calls are the way they are staying connected with their clients and the community. That said, they are missing the face-to-face experience that characterizes their business. "Our clients expect a friendly voice to answer the phone, not a machine. They have come to expect someone greeting them waiting for them. Not a locked door. We're ready to be back."



Stacy Kamphuis and her team at the Chamber's 2019 Annual Meeting.



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# Happenings at the Chamber

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