

## *In This Issue*

Spicer Group Celebrates  
80th Anniversary

LRCC Releases 2024 Midyear  
Advocacy in Action Update

Five Local Businesses Receive  
Going PRO Talent Fund Grant to  
Enhance Employee Leadership Skills

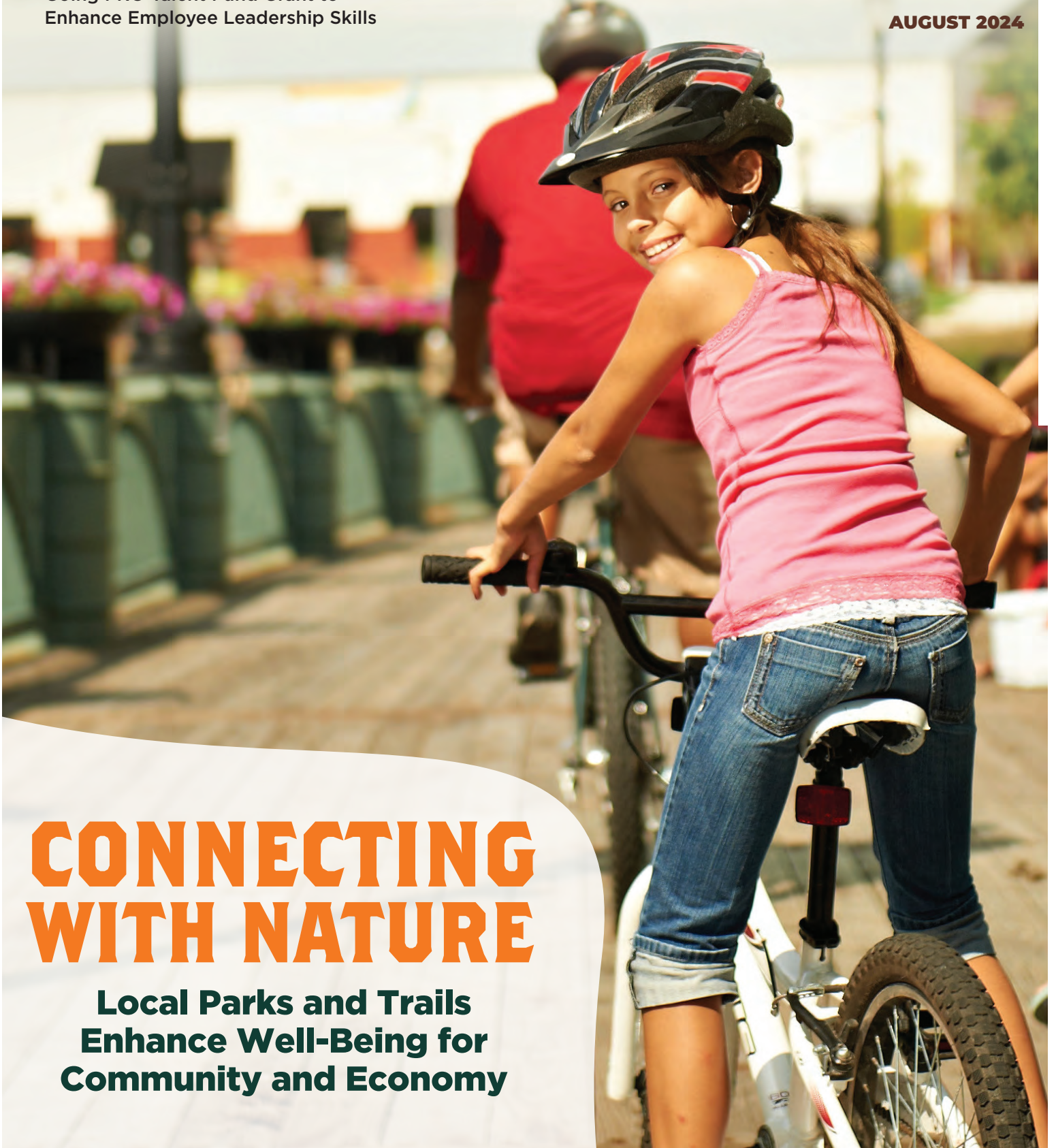
# FOCUS

THE MONTHLY BUSINESS NEWS MAGAZINE OF THE  
LANSING REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

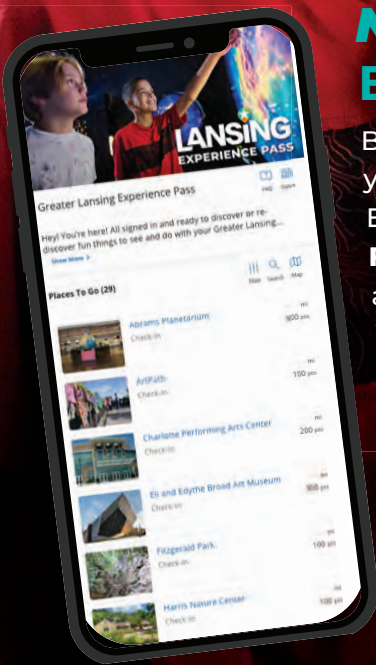
**AUGUST 2024**

## **CONNECTING WITH NATURE**

**Local Parks and Trails  
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Community and Economy**



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LANSING **REGIONAL** CHAMBER  
**CONTENTS**



Tom Genarra

*on the cover*

**CONNECTING WITH NATURE:  
LOCAL PARKS AND TRAILS  
ENHANCE WELL-BEING FOR  
COMMUNITY AND ECONOMY**

**MEMBER NEWS**

**09** Spicer Group Celebrates 80 Years

**FOCUS ON TALENT**

**10** Grant Targets the Leadership Skills Gap

**DIVERSITY & INCLUSION**

**11** Learning is a Journey

**ATHENA WIN**

**16** Empowering Tomorrow's Leaders: The Role of Mentorship in a Multigenerational Workforce

**17** ATHENA WIN Launches New Aspiring Leaders Program to Empower Local Women in Leadership

**ADVOCACY**

**18** State Lawmakers Approve Funding for Key Projects in the Greater Lansing Region

**18** LRCC Releases 2024 Midyear Advocacy in Action Update

*monthly features*

**05** Message from the Chamber

**06** Thank You Renewing Members

**06** Chamber Milestones

**06** Welcome New Members

**07** Calendar of Events

**19** Chamber in Action

**20** Members on the Move

## 2024 Board of Directors

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**Feature Writer**

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**Cover Photography**

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[x.com/LansingChamber](https://x.com/LansingChamber)

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[@LansingRegionalChamber](https://www.instagram.com/LansingRegionalChamber)

[Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce](https://www.linkedin.com/company/LansingRegionalChamberofCommerce)

## Chamber Checks Its Midyear Progress on Advocacy Issues

**A**s we're just past the midway point for 2024, it's a good time for the Lansing Regional Chamber to assess its advocacy progress so far and focus on key objectives for the remainder of the year.

The Chamber continues to advocate for regional funding priorities at the state level. As the Michigan State Legislature focuses on the fiscal year 2025 state budget, the Chamber and its regional partners continue to seek funding for revitalization projects in Lansing and the broader region. As of mid-2024, we've successfully secured an additional \$90 million in state funding for essential urban renewal projects, transportation infrastructure improvements, and community development initiatives.

Public Private partnerships are crucial to the Lansing region's future economic growth and quality of life.

Another important benchmark of the Chamber's work this year is its efforts toward talent and workforce development. We continue to support workforce initiatives such as the Going PRO Talent Fund, the TREK Small Business Support Hub, and Lansing 5:01. We also recently launched the Talent Resource Navigator on our Chamber website, a dynamic tool that provides individuals and employers with a wealth of resources, connections, and opportunities to enhance workforce development and talent acquisition in the region.

We're looking forward to a strong second half of 2024, particularly as this is an important election cycle at the local and state levels. The Lansing Regional Chamber-Political Action Committee (LRC-PAC) works to elect local officials who align with LRCC members' priorities.

For instance, the LRC-PAC was active in helping candidates run for the Lansing City Charter Commission. This Commission of nine individuals is set to review and possibly rewrite the city's charter. Of the nine elected, six were endorsed by the LRC-PAC.

Downtown Lansing is at the core of our region's economic vitality. In collaboration with area businesses, labor partners, regional organizations, and local residents, the Chamber continues to advocate for a revitalized capital city. We need more housing, entertainment venues, retail, and a new Lansing City Hall. The Lansing City Council knows this, too; they recently agreed to accept state funding toward the \$230 million New Vision Lansing mixed-use project which could help us reach some of these goals.

The Chamber is always focused on supporting policies and initiatives that will continue to grow our economy for years to come. As 2024 proceeds, we will continue to target critical issues facing the Lansing region on behalf of regional businesses. ●



**TIM DAMAN**  
PRESIDENT AND CEO  
LANSING REGIONAL  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



**Public Private partnerships are crucial to the Lansing region's future economic growth and quality of life."**

## Thank You Renewing Members

Arts Council of Greater Lansing  
 Burcham Hills, A Life Plan Community  
 Capital Area Transportation Authority (CATA)  
 Capitol Harley-Davidson, Inc.  
 Chase Creative  
 Day Family Dental  
 Eaton Regional Education Service Agency  
 Greenlee Consulting  
 IGT  
 InVerve Marketing Inc.  
 Jungle Jane Promotions  
 LaFontaine Ford of Lansing  
 Lansing Entertainment & Public Facilities Authority (LEPFA)  
 Lansing Mosaic  
 Martin Commercial Properties  
 McLaren Greater Lansing  
 Mental Health Association in Michigan  
 Michigan Humanities  
 Mike Bowler - Keller Williams Realty - Lansing  
 Netvantage Marketing  
 NTH Consultants, Ltd.  
 Ozone's Brewhouse  
 Personnel World, Inc.  
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 Principal Financial Group - Benjamin Eichler  
 R. E. OLDS Foundation  
 Rehmann  
 Rieth-Riley Construction Co., Inc.  
 The Shyft Group  
 U.S. Army Recruiting Battalion  
 Wickens Group  
 Willows at East Lansing

## Chamber Milestones

### GM - General Motors Lansing Operations

70 Years

### Moore Trosper Construction Co.

40 Years

### Young Chevrolet Cadillac

25 Years

### Care Free Medical, Inc.

5 Years

### High Caliber Karting & Entertainment

5 Years

### Reed Insurance Agency

5 Years

### Rosier Consultants LLC

5 Years

*We'd like to offer a special salute to these great organizations who reached milestone anniversaries as Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce members this month. Thank you for your continued support throughout the years!*

## Welcome New Members

### ALG Group

(517) 714-4965

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

1451 East Lansing Drive, Suite 222  
 East Lansing, MI 48823

### Bitely Communications

(517) 256-0665

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

425 N Jenison Ave.  
 Lansing, MI 48915

### Clinton Transit

(989) 224-8127

[www.mybluebus.com/about](http://www.mybluebus.com/about)

215 North Scott Rd.  
 St. Johns, MI 48879

### Elevator Service Inc.

(517) 575-8991

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

4150 Hunsaker Dr.  
 East Lansing, MI 48823

### Great Lakes Engineering Group, LLC

(517) 363-4400

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

934 Clark St.  
 Lansing, MI 48906

### Ks Precious Care Learning Center, Inc.

(517) 706-9480

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

6920 S. Cedar St., Suite 5  
 Lansing, MI 48911

### Reno's Sports Bar North

(517) 487-8686

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

16460 Old U.S. 27  
 Lansing, MI 48906

### Weinstein Safety Consultants

(517) 230-1722

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

8505 Ember Glen Pass  
 Lansing, MI 48917

LRCC members have unparalleled access to company and staff profiles on the LRCC website. To access and update this information at any point, visit [lansingchamber.org](http://lansingchamber.org) and enter your username and password. If you have not yet signed into the site, please follow the simple password reset instructions.

**Call (517) 487-6340 with any questions.**

## August 2024

8/6

### DEI SERIES: FOSTERING AN INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE FOR NEURODIVERGENT PROFESSIONALS

**Tuesday, Aug. 6, from 10 to 11:30 a.m.**  
**Lansing Regional Chamber,**  
**500 E. Michigan Avenue, Suite 200**

Join MSUFCU's Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Manager, Taylor Moberg (she/her), for an enlightening session where we will delve into proactive strategies aimed at fostering an inclusive work environment for neurodiversity. From evaluating hiring practices to accommodating needs, we will explore actionable steps to not only welcome but celebrate the unique skills and experiences of neurodivergent individuals.

**Cost:** This event is offered at no cost for LRCC members and \$25 for future LRCC members.

8/20

### AUGUST MEMBER MIXER

**Tuesday, Aug. 20, 4:30 to 6:30 p.m.**  
**Stage One at Sycamore Creek Eastwood,**  
**2200 Lake Lansing Road, Lansing**

Join us for an exciting evening of networking at the August Member Mixer hosted at Stage One at Sycamore Creek Eastwood on Tuesday, Aug. 20 from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m.! This is the perfect opportunity to build your professional network and make new connections.

**Cost:** This event is offered at no cost.

8/27

### SUCCESSION PLANNING: TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

**Date & Time: Tuesday, Aug. 27,**  
**from 3:30 to 5 p.m.**  
**Lansing Regional Chamber,**

**500 E. Michigan Avenue, Suite 200**

Succession Planning is an integral part of the business life cycle and long-term organizational success. The goal of Succession Planning: Technical Assistance Program is to offer practical educational programming to assist business owners in creating and implementing succession plans.

**Cost:** This event is offered at no cost.

8/28

### BUSINESS EDUCATION SERIES: FOCUSING ON THE RIGHT MARKETING AND PUBLIC RELATION STRATEGIES TO STAY AHEAD

**Wednesday, Aug. 28, from 10 to 11:30 a.m.**  
**Lansing Regional Chamber,**  
**500 E. Michigan Avenue, Suite 200**

The 2024 Edelman Trust Barometer reveals that business, as an institution, is more trusted than

NGOs, government and media. Trust is local, with "my employer" being the most trusted institution among respondents to this annual survey. And nearly two-thirds expect CEOs to manage changes happening in society. What does all this mean for deploying effective marketing and public relations strategies now and moving forward?

Rose Tantraphol, CEO of Moonsail North, will discuss trends related to storytelling, AI adoption, digital platforms, resource management, messaging development, PR transparency and crisis communications.

**Cost:** This event is offered at no cost for LRCC members and \$25 for future LRCC members.

## September 2024

9/24

### LANSING ECONOMIC CLUB

**Tuesday, Sept. 24, from 11:30 a.m.**  
**to 1:30 p.m.**  
**Kellogg Hotel & Conference Center,**  
**219 S. Harrison Road, East Lansing**

The Lansing Economic Club will welcome Jon Decker, White House Correspondent and Senior National Editor for Gray Television on Tuesday, Sept. 24. Decker will provide an overview of the 2024 presidential election.

**Cost:** This event is offered at no cost for Lansing Economic Club members, \$55 for LRCC members and \$75 for future LRCC members. A table of eight is \$425.

9/25

### DEI SERIES: FROM BYSTANDER TO UPSTANDER: WHEN AND HOW TO RESPOND TO INCIDENTS OF BIAS

**Wednesday, Sept. 25, from 10 to 11:30 a.m.**

**Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce, 500 E. Michigan Avenue, Suite 200, Lansing**

Have you ever overheard comments or observed behavior that you considered inappropriate in your organization? Did you respond, if so what and how? If not, why not? Most people avoid responding in such situations because they do not know how to respond. This session discusses the bystander effect and provides tips on how we can go from being mere bystanders to active bystanders or upstanders.

**Cost:** This event is offered at no cost for LRCC members and \$25 for future LRCC members.



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## Spicer Group Celebrates 80 Years

**S**picer Group has reached its “oak” anniversary: 80 years of serving the region’s engineering, surveying, and community planning needs.

Spicer Group is celebrating its eight decades of construction work with activities for employees and clients. For employees, Spicer Group has provided swag boxes, in-house games, and giveaways such as a digital scavenger hunt, team jerseys with each employee’s name, and four baseball nights at Michigan minor league ballparks. Spicer Group is also honoring its anniversary by sponsoring events held by clients in the community.

Spicer Group Inc. began in 1944 as a civil engineering and land surveying firm but has since expanded its core services to include community planning and architectural services.



Clifford Spicer

Founder Clifford Spicer launched the firm with two part-time surveying employees from a spare room in his house. Today, Spicer Group employs more than 350 people in 10 offices, including its headquarters in Saginaw, Michigan.

“Being in business for 80 years helps reinforce that we are making successful choices and keeping our clients satisfied,” said Spicer Group’s marketing director Aaron Bedford. “A significant amount of our business is from repeat clients, and we respect and appreciate their continued trust in us to provide quality services.”

Bedford said Spicer Group’s founder always credited his employees with the company’s growth and success, and that holds true today.

“Our growth was not easy, and we continue to learn new technologies and adjust procedures accordingly,” Bedford said. “Many years ago, when asked to describe the recipe for his success, (Spicer) noted that it wasn’t due to just his efforts, but to the employees that work here and their drive to always give good service and do good work.”



Clifford Spicer and original Spicer employees in front of Spicer’s first official office building in downtown Saginaw.



Spicer Group surveying equipment near the Saginaw River in the 1990s.

Spicer Group’s projects include jobs that need to be done quickly and others that require long-term planning. For instance, recent local flooding related to Hurricane Beryl required Spicer Group to switch to emergency response mode for several clients, said Lansing principal and professional engineer Timothy Inman.

Other notable recent projects include the Bauer Drain relocation. Spicer Group designed a project to relocate the county drain around an economically valuable oil and gas terminal, while protecting the water from contamination. The project required extensive collaboration between public and private entities.

The Bauer Drain relocation project earned a 2024 Engineering Honorable Conceptor Award from the American Council of Engineering Companies of Michigan. ●

## Grant Targets the Leadership Skills Gap

A consortium of local businesses has received \$500,000 in grant money through the Going PRO Talent Fund from the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity. The talent fund — made available through the Michigan Works! network — awards grants to employers to train, develop, and retain current and newly hired employees.

“You have to have a purposeful mindset that contributes to attracting and retaining your talent,” said Julie Mann, chief human resources officer at Neogen Corp., the biotechnology company directing the local consortium. “If you’re going to be passive about it and not develop good managers, it’s going to hamper your growth. I mean, we’ve all worked for a bad manager at some point in time.”

The companies participating in the partnership represent a range of local industries. While Neogen Corp. specializes in food and animal safety testing, the collaboration includes air suspension manufacturer Air Lift Co., electrical services company Consolidated Electrical Contractors, automotive components manufacturer DENSO, beauty and wellness business Douglas J, pharmaceutical manufacturer Niowave Inc., and IT firm Providence Consulting.

Each company in the funding request attested that retaining and attracting employees is inextricably linked to their need for highly trained and well-prepared supervisors, team leads, and managers.

“Leading people in any industry – it doesn’t matter if you’re making chairs or making food safety testing kids – you still have to lead a team and manage employees,” Mann said. “Leadership skills are inherent to any organization’s success.”

The companies will offer their employees on-the-job leadership training and inter-industry training sessions within the year. The group hopes to develop strong and effective leaders for their individual companies while also bettering the mid-Michigan regional economy.

“To have that many companies come together and have an opportunity for leadership development training together is kind of unique,” Mann said. “It’s a step forward for the region, for the state, and for the companies that always struggle to find funds to develop people. So I think this is a really kind of iconic moment.”

Since 2014, the Going PRO Talent Fund has awarded



7,480 training grants, averaging almost \$40,000 each. Most awardees have fewer than 100 employees.

Mann said the local employer-led collaboration intends to harness the power of each company’s unique talents and efforts. Essentially, the sum is greater than its parts.

“We can build skills together,” Mann said. “We’ve got seven companies that said, ‘We can do better, and we can accomplish more by coming together so that we can develop more of our people.’ That out-of-the-box thinking is how you develop your workforce.” ●

 The banner has a white top section with the "LANSING REGIONAL CHAMBER LEADERSHIP LANSING" logo, which includes a green outline of Michigan. Below this is a large green section with the text "APPLY TO BE A PART OF THE 10TH LEADERSHIP LANSING COHORT" in white. Underneath is a white section with "Application Deadline: Friday, Sept. 13" in black. At the bottom are two buttons: a green "Apply Today" button and a white button with a black border containing the text "Lansingchamber.org".
 

Leadership Lansing is now accepting applications for its 10th cohort! This talent initiative is designed to develop a new generation of community leaders in the Lansing region and seeks established and emerging leaders who have the capacity to make a positive impact in the community. Apply at [lansingchamber.org](https://lansingchamber.org).

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Courtesy

## Learning is a Journey

By Tazkira Amin, MSUFCU's Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Intern

Diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) is a strategy MSUFCU and other businesses use to foster inclusivity for all by removing barriers and addressing biases in the workplace and the community.

According to McKinsey & Co., organizations that value diversity outperform their peers in profitability by as much as 25% and have a 6.8% higher stock price. Meanwhile, not promoting DEIB in the workplace can have a negative impact: Employees who said their companies do not value diversity are less engaged and 3.3 times more likely to leave in a year, according to Culture Amp.

One way MSUFCU champions DEIB is through our DEIB Learning Journey employee education and training initiative. It's a way for all employees to engage in MSUFCU's core value of cultivating diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging by learning about DEIB-related topics and taking action. The educational component includes eLearnings, instructor-led trainings, and self-discovered media. Employees also are encouraged to take action by participating in community events and internal credit union-led initiatives such as our affinity groups. MSUFCU knows people learn in a variety of spaces and offers opportunities for employees to engage with the community while being exposed to diverse perspectives.

By investing in DEIB initiatives, MSUFCU strives to create an environment where all are treated equitably, provided opportunities, feel valued, and are encouraged to bring their full, authentic selves to the Credit Union. Through these efforts, employees feel their identities are supported and are empowered to participate in increasingly diverse experiences, while our members can be confident they will be served by people who are committed to providing superior service to all. It's all part of building a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive community for all. ●

(Sources: Culture Amp 2024 DEI report; McKinsey 2020 How Inclusion Matters report)

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# CONNECTING WITH NATURE

## Local Parks and Trails Enhance Well-Being for Community and Economy

By *JENNIFER McENTEE*

**A**s an avid runner and cyclist, Kevin Shaw has long enjoyed exploring the region's many trails and parks. He appreciated his scenic bike ride to work so much that one day he wrote a thank-you note to the then-mayor of Lansing, Virgil Bernero.

"I just remember thinking these trails are so awesome, but who owns this? Where do they come from? It was just a sheer act of gratitude," explained Shaw, who is partner and vice president of marketing for construction firm Wieland.

His thank-you note led to a meeting with Bernero, who thought the local trail system could use a "friends of" society. So in 2014, Shaw and a group of like-minded trail users formed the nonprofit Friends of the Lansing Regional Trails, or FLRT. With funding from sources including the Ingham County Parks and Trails Millage and support from local municipalities, FLRT was able to begin the work of improving and expanding the Lansing River Trail to its current 30 miles.

"It was kind of a dumb luck situation: we got formed, and all of a sudden this millage was on the ballot," Shaw said. "The good people of Ingham County approved it and the rest is history, as they say."

Shaw's still involved with FLRT as its Trail Town 5k/10k race committee chair. This year's race, held June 29th, had over 400 runners and raised \$13,000 in registrations and



corporate sponsorships for trail system improvements. Both routes follow a section of the Lansing River Trail, beginning and ending at Potter Park with a turnaround just south of the historic Turner-Dodge House.

"Staging our 5k and 10k entirely on the Lansing River Trail is just one way we can promote the vibrancy of our region," said Shaw, who dreams of making the race a bigger destination event to draw athletes from across Michigan.

Volunteers, civic leaders, business owners, residents, and taxpayers all seem to understand the inherent value of the Lansing region's recreational spaces. A paved

pathway along a kayak-ready river is good for getting locals outside and active, but it also draws tourism and commerce to surrounding businesses. Beautiful places to live and play boost local property values while helping companies attract and retain top talent.

Governor Gretchen Whitmer often says Michigan's parks are critical to the state's economy and has invested more than \$780 million in parks and outdoor recreation facilities since taking office in 2019.

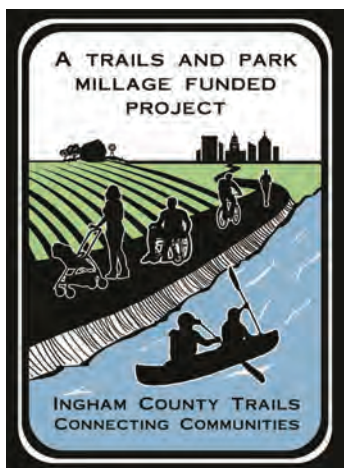
According to state estimates, Michigan's \$12.36 billion outdoor recreation industry supports nearly 119,000 jobs and drives \$4.1 billion to local retailers.

In recent years, the call to improve and connect more of the region's trails has gotten louder. Regional leaders and locals want more picnic sites, playgrounds, accessibility, and signage to make Lansing's green spaces safer and more attractive.

Shaw said getting people invested in improving the Lansing region's trails and parks is easy.

"Who doesn't love the Lansing River Trail, right? You might wish it looked better, or you might wish that it was longer or went to different places, but universally, people love their river trail," Shaw said. "It's exciting to think about what one little kernel of optimism can do. And we've shown that it can do pretty awesome things."

## MAKING IT HAPPEN



The Ingham County Trails & Parks Millage — a .5 mill levy estimated to raise \$4 million yearly — was first approved by voters in 2014 and renewed in March 2020. The millage is up for renewal again in 2026.

The available funding has spurred a boom of countywide trail and park development, according to Natalie Trotter,

Ingham County Trails & Parks' millage coordinator since November 2023.

There are currently 115 levy-related projects regionally, estimated to cost \$44.9 million over 12 years of the millage.

“  
**STAGING OUR 5K  
AND 10K ENTIRELY  
ON THE LANSING  
RIVER TRAIL IS  
JUST ONE WAY WE  
CAN PROMOTE THE  
VIBRANCY OF OUR  
REGION.**

- KEVIN SHAW, TRAIL TOWN  
5K/10K RACE COMMITTEE CHAIR

If voters approve another millage renewal in 2026, an additional 18 trail and park projects could begin, including two playground remodels, Trotter said.

Millage grants are active in 19 communities, from large efforts in the city of Lansing and the Meridian Charter Township, to smaller stretches of improvements in the villages of Dansville and Stockbridge and the townships of Leslie and Alameda.

Some millage-enabled projects will be obvious to park and trail users, like improved bridges, ADA-accessible boat launches, new shade shelters and benches, and freshly paved walkways. Others are just as vital but less noticeable to the uninitiated, like riverbank stabilization and behind-the-scenes planning and program coordination.

"One unique part of our millage program is that we let the communities decide. So if the communities apply for a grant through us, they create their project," said Ingham County Deputy Controller Jared Cypher. "We are there to assist with the project, but it's locally driven. That's important. They have the opportunity to have input on what their residents are asking for."

Cypher said the first few rounds of Ingham County Trails & Parks funding focused on rehabilitating and repairing outdoor recreation sites, while recent and future rounds will further the regional goal of connecting trails and neighborhoods.

"As the focus has turned to the idea of connectivity with new trails, the initial focus is Michigan State University to Lake Lansing, and Holt to Mason," Cypher said.

The Tri-County Regional Planning Commission is in the process of developing a blueprint for connecting more than 75 miles of trails within Clinton, Eaton, and Ingham counties to major trails throughout the state. The ambitious connectivity effort would ultimately give mid-Michigan trail users convenient access to regional assets like parks, city services, workplaces, and tourist attractions.

Again, collaboration is key: Tri-County has hired Livonia, Mich.-based OHM Advisors to help develop the feasibility study, with an advisory committee of representatives from Ingham County Parks, Clinton County Parks and Greenspace, Eaton County Parks, the city of Lansing, the Michigan Dept. of Transportation, U.S. National Park Service, and the Tri-County Bicycling Association.



Tom Genarra

## ENCOURAGING PARK AND TRAIL USAGE

Jason Denovich, president of the St. Johns Area Chamber of Commerce and owner of New Look Computer and Data, said Clinton County's parks are a "hidden gem" and one more way to draw people to the region.

"As a chamber, our number one absolute goal is always going to be to promote business in St. Johns," Denovich said. "So when we're advertising a cool event, whether it's the Mint Festival or a night hike, there's one more reason to get people to come to our town."

This past winter, St. Johns Chamber hosted a series of night hikes on a one-mile loop in Francis Motz County Park. An MSU astronomer gave a night-sky presentation about midway along the hike route. The full moon and long lines of tealights illuminated the pathway. As many as 300 people showed up for each hike, many from outside the area, Denovich said.

"It's in the middle of the winter, and there's otherwise nothing going on, but we've encouraged people to take a stroll through St. Johns. And then, hopefully, after a walk in the cold, you've got to drive through town to get back to where you're going, and you stop at a local restaurant to have a bite to eat," he said.

Eaton County communications director Logan Bailey said promoting the year-round use of well-maintained, accessible parks and trails draws visitors and commerce.

"We'd love to see folks that live in neighboring counties, neighboring cities, that aren't necessarily from Eaton County come to Crystal Lake to kayak or fish. We want to see them visit Ledges Trail," Bailey said. "We want them to utilize the small businesses and restaurants around those parks."

"If they're visiting here, the hope is that they're spending their hard-earned money on our businesses. That will

help with economic growth and economic development. That visitor spending can't be ignored," Bailey said.

Eaton County likewise has a park millage, passed by voters in November 2022. The millage is being used to make strategic plans for four parks: Crandell Park in Charlotte, Fitzgerald Park and Lincoln Brick in Grand Ledge, and Fox Memorial in Potterville.

As part of the millage, local communities can apply for an Eaton County Parks Community Grant of up to \$400,000 in the 2024/2025 grant cycle for park and open space development.

"We're giving our communities the opportunity to apply for this grant to really bolster their parks and open spaces so that they're retaining residents who want to live in the community," Bailey said. "Maybe you're in Delta Township, and you're seeing big businesses come in. Well, why would they want to live in Eaton County? Well, look at our beautiful parks, look at the recreation options. We know that there's a great value there."

Delta Township Manager Brian Reed said he appreciates that the region's elected leaders have always prioritized quality of life and that municipal planners have the foresight to anticipate when a bridge repair or a new water main might make a new trail connection possible.

"I think from a strategic standpoint, it's quality of life for our residents so that we're a good place to live, work, play, and raise families," Reed said. "We have a diversity of parks. We have parks that are dedicated to youth sports, passive parks, canoe launches, parks with really unique playground equipment, pickleball courts, and a cricket field. Our parks have a lot to offer."

## PROMOTING TO A LARGER AUDIENCE

The Lansing region's parks and trails are increasingly recognized for their unique natural elements and urban

connections. In April of this year, Lansing was awarded the 2024 Pure Michigan Trail Towns designation by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Pure Michigan.

In honoring the Capital City at the 2024 Pure Michigan Governor's Conference on Tourism, Lansing's trail system was lauded for providing residents and visitors with a safe means of recreation and transportation.

Julie Pingston, president and CEO of Choose Lansing, said collaboration among the local municipalities has made the Lansing River Trail an unparalleled attraction in the state.

"You think of riding or walking trails, but you wouldn't necessarily think of an urban destination for that," Pingston said. "The way the trails and the trail coordinators have all come together has really made it a unique opportunity to showcase a little bit of everything: it follows the rivers but goes in through the Potter Park Zoo area, into our smaller communities, and through downtown Lansing."

“  
**AS THE FOCUS  
HAS TURNED  
TO THE IDEA OF  
CONNECTIVITY WITH  
NEW TRAILS, THE  
INITIAL FOCUS IS  
MICHIGAN STATE  
UNIVERSITY TO  
LAKE LANSING, AND  
HOLT TO MASON.**

- INGHAM COUNTY DEPUTY  
CONTROLLER **JARED CYPHER**

Pingston said the new Lansing Shuffle riverfront food hall adjacent to Rotary Park is a perfect example of blending urban and outdoor experiences for locals and visitors.

"Lansing Shuffle spills right out onto the river trail itself," Pingston explained. "So in downtown Lansing, you can be riding your bike five miles, then stop and have lunch or play shuffleboard, then continue on your way."

Choose Lansing worked with parks and recreation officials to apply for the 2024 Pure Michigan Trail Towns

designation to better promote the region.

"It was nice for the Lansing area to be recognized as one of the only Trail Town designees that's an urban destination," Pingston said. "It's just a big elevation in terms of how people looking for information about trails find us. There's a lot that we as a destination marketing organization can do to promote the great variety of trails that we have in our region." ●

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# Empowering Tomorrow's Leaders: The Role of Mentorship in a Multigenerational Workforce

By Amy McNamara, ATHENA WIN Board Vice Chair & Vice President, Lansing Commercial Banker, Mercantile Bank

**N**ow, more than ever, employers must consider the changing dynamics of their workforce. In addition to rapid technological innovation and the related challenges of adaptation, managers also find themselves tested by the presence of five unique generations of staff. These groups all approach work with different attitudes, outlooks, and preferences for achieving professional goals and aspirations.



McNamara

Mentoring has become a crucial strategy for nurturing talent and achieving career success. In my role as the Vice President of the Board of ATHENA Women's Interest Network (WIN), I was thrilled to contribute to the creation of the Aspiring Leaders Program, which was launched in June 2024.

Do you remember your first real job, especially in a professional environment? For me, it was a time to experience firsthand how the business world actually worked. Impromptu interactions often generated the most creative ideas and assisted in problem-solving. Though collaboration still effectively occurs remotely, I found that impromptu conversations were vital to my success – especially when coupled with in-person networking. For me, face-to-face interactions certainly taught some of the most impactful lessons as I grew in my career.

My three daughters will be entering the beginning stages of their careers over the next ten years. I often think about their networking skills as more social interactions occur virtually. Pause and consider how those of us more tenured ensure the next generations have our same opportunities to connect.

I'm encouraged that commitment with our young professionals is supported by my employer, Mercantile Bank. One of our initiatives is a partnership with Grand Valley State University to develop our Mentoring, Aspiring, Preparing program. We also have a dedicated Merc Young Professionals initiative, led by a team of engaged individuals.



I am especially fortunate that Mercantile Bank has an employee resource group focused on supporting and empowering women in business. As part of that steering committee, I was involved in a roundtable discussion where our four female Mercantile Board of Director Members came to our bank to discuss their personal career paths, how they found professional success, and their advice for being a thriving woman leader. This event was inspiring to not only aspiring leaders, but established professionals like me. The optimism and energy from our employees in the room was tangible!

Mercantile Bank, which was founded in 1997 and is the largest bank headquartered in Michigan, has 650 employees and nearly 50 banking locations supporting commercial, business, governmental, nonprofit, treasury, and personal banking needs. ●



## ATHENA WIN Launches New Aspiring Leaders Program to Empower Local Women in Leadership

**A**THENA Women's Interest Network (WIN), the professional development and networking division of ATHENA Lansing, is thrilled to announce the launch of its brand-new program, Aspiring Leaders. Set to debut this September, the program aims to cultivate leadership qualities through a structured, professionally facilitated framework and foster mentor-mentor relationships to support the next generation of women leaders in business and the community.

This initiative welcomes established women leaders eager to share their wisdom and experience, as well as aspiring leaders in the early stages of their careers. Interested candidates can visit [lansingchamber.org/athenawin](https://lansingchamber.org/athenawin) to submit an application for more information.

Mentees Aspiring Leaders program are required to have an ATHENA WIN membership. The six-month program will commence in September 2024 and conclude in March 2025, with a break in December.

"Staying true to our mission means responding to the ever-evolving needs of our membership. We have identified an opportunity in our programming to reach a group we see as emerging leaders. These are women in the early stages of their career with a desire to grow into leadership positions," said Leslie Batchelor, Board Chair of ATHENA WIN.

"In response, we created the Aspiring Leaders program. This program contains two essential components — developing leadership competencies through a professionally facilitated framework, and mentorship — pairing an aspiring leader with an established leader for support and guidance along the way. We are excited to launch this program as a way to both grow and give back to the women leaders in our community." ●



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## State Lawmakers Approve Funding for Key Projects in the Greater Lansing Region

The Greater Lansing region secured a major victory in the recently approved state budget as lawmakers approved funding for critical infrastructure and community revitalization projects supported by more than a dozen local organizations including the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce (LRCC). Several projects approved by state lawmakers were part of the Capital Region Improvement Support Package (CRISP) #2 that was developed by regional partners. More than \$90 million have been secured in this budget cycle. Among local projects and funding amounts approved by the legislature were:

- \$15 million to Ingham County for direct financing for housing programs, such as down payment assistance, affordable or workforce housing development and foreclosure prevention programs with up to \$5 million for affordable or workforce housing programs in Lansing
- \$10 million to Ingham County for Potter Park Zoo
- \$5 million for Lansing Board of Water & Light for a steam conversion project
- \$5 million for the Eaton County Intercounty Drain Project
- \$4 million for a Capital Region International Airport Road project
- \$3 million for an economic development organization in Lansing to support mixed-use housing
- \$2.4 million for street repairs in East Lansing
- \$2 million for Michigan State University's Child Development Lab
- \$1 million toward Bingham Township watermain extension project
- \$1 million for Lansing City Rescue Mission
- \$1 million for Cristo Rey Community Center health grant

"We are elated to have received funding for these projects that combined will continue to bolster the ongoing revitalization efforts, building upon the successes achieved through last year's budget allocations," said Tim Daman, president & CEO, LRCC. "We owe a debt of gratitude to our local lawmakers in the Capitol Caucus who once again worked in a bipartisan fashion to fight for and win approval for these critical infrastructure investments, community revitalization projects, and housing development."

The Capital Region Improvement Support Package (CRISP) #2 document represents a strategic roadmap for further enhancing the development of Lansing's central city and the broader region. CRISP #2 laid out a series of regional priority requests to the state, emphasizing proactive measures to drive economic growth, improve infrastructure, and enhance the overall quality of life throughout the region.

These initiatives include vital urban renewal projects, transportation infrastructure enhancements, and community development initiatives, all aimed at fostering sustainable progress and prosperity for Lansing and its neighboring areas. By combining these proposed projects and services, CRISP #2 demonstrates a steadfast commitment to ensuring that Lansing's central city and the surrounding region continue to evolve into vibrant and thriving hubs, capable of meeting the demands of the future while honoring the legacy of the past. It underscores the community's dedication to building a brighter, more prosperous future for all its residents and stakeholders. ●

## LRCC Releases 2024 Midyear Advocacy in Action Update

Midway through 2024, the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce (LRCC) public affairs department, the Lansing Regional Chamber-Political Action Committee (LRC-PAC) and the Advance Greater Lansing initiative have been working to address the critical issues facing the Greater Lansing region on behalf of employers and small businesses.

That includes advocating for the Rebuild Lansing Agenda, where more than 150 businesses, labor partners, regional organizations, and residents

successfully advocated for major housing developments, entertainment venues, and a new city hall in downtown Lansing.

The LRCC invites you to explore the 2024 Advocacy in Action Update, which highlights the Chamber's top engagement areas and explains the actions already taken during the first six months of the year.

Visit [lansingchamber.org/advocacy-update](https://lansingchamber.org/advocacy-update) to learn more. ●



Congratulations to **Spare Time Entertainment Center** as they celebrated the grand opening of their miniature golf course with a ribbon-cutting ceremony! The event was a great opportunity for local officials and guests to putt for charity and explore all the fun Spare Time Entertainment has to offer!



**Hidden Grove Estate** celebrated their grand opening with a ribbon-cutting ceremony! Hidden Grove Estate is one of Michigan's best bed-and-breakfast events venue. As you step onto their grounds, you'll see a reflection of mid-century modern design with accents of vintage elegance and modern amenities.



Congratulations to **Reed Insurance Agency** and the Lofts at 110 for their ribbon cutting and open house! Reed Insurance Agency provides affordable coverage and policies. From home, auto, life and business insurance the independent agency in DeWitt is committed to customize insurance coverage to work with your needs, risks and budget.

## A healthier take on health care coverage



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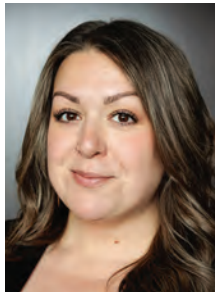
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NEW HIRES



Theisen



Periard



Schmidt

to its property management team. The brokerage team also welcomed **Tanner Schmidt** as an associate.

The **Martin Commercial Properties Inc.** team continues to grow with the recent addition of property manager **Michael Theisen** and assistant property manager **Hillary Periard**



Covello

Environmental consulting firm **Triterra** has added **Chase Covello** to its team in the Lansing location. As an environmental technician, he will conduct on-site air monitoring during asbestos abatement jobs to ensure that rules and regulations are followed. Covello recently graduated from Eaton Rapids High School. He was dual-enrolled with Lansing Community College and expects to earn his associate's degree in Spring 2025.

Commercial construction firm **Wieland** has added three professionals to its business development team in Lansing: **Dan Montes** as senior business development manager, **Mitch DeHaan** as business development



Montes



DeHaan



Kinnas

manager, and **Trent Kinnas** as business marketing specialist. Montes brings extensive career experience in finance and sales, having worked as vice president for two local banks. Montes will focus on boosting Wieland's higher education portfolio in his new role. DeHaan joins Wieland after six years of experience as a business development and

manager, and **Trent Kinnas** as business marketing specialist. Montes brings extensive career experience in finance and sales, having worked as vice president for

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marketing manager in construction-related industries. His new role will include expanding Wieland's market presence in industrial-related projects in Michigan and the Midwest. Kinnas joins the Wieland team after recently graduating from Grand Valley State University with a degree in business administration. Kinnas has prior experience with Wieland as a summer intern in 2023. He will be involved in marketing and sales efforts.

**APPOINTMENTS**



Nodarse

**Cheryl Nodarse** was elected as the next board president for the National Association of Legal Assistants, the nation's leading professional association for paralegals. Nodarse is an advanced certified paralegal with **Vlahakis Cole Law Firm** in East Lansing. The firm specializes in representing drain and water resources commissioners throughout the state. Nodarse has been a NALA-certified paralegal for 34 years, previously served on the State Bar of Michigan Paralegal/Legal Assistant Section, and is a member of the LCC's Paralegal Program Advisory Committee. She is also a licensed Realtor with Vlahakis Companies in East Lansing.

**AWARDS**

**Colleen Dick**, the unit assistant on 9 West at **McLaren Greater Lansing**, received the first Extraordinary Employee of the Season award. Her nominator for the award stated: "Colleen has been one of the backbone workers on 9W and here at MGL for years. She trains all the UA/NA staff for our floor, and she is the go-to-trainer for the float UA/NA crew as well. I have never once heard her say that something is not her job or that a patient isn't hers to help take care of. I could be short-staffed, but if she is my unit assistant for the shift, I know



that we will not only still have a good shift, but the patients will get the best of care. She is the most reliable aide I have ever worked with in the 12-plus years here at MGL."

**Mayberry Homes** has been recognized nationally for its outstanding homebuyer satisfaction ratings. Mayberry Homes received a 21st Annual Avid Award from Avid Ratings, which honors top-performing builders who provide outstanding customer experiences in the United States. This year, 462 qualifying builders participated in the program, which analyzed homebuyer data from January to December 2023. To receive an Avid Award, each winning builder must score within or above the top 25th percentile across their U.S.-based counterparts. Every region is eligible for one award each for production, custom, and small-volume builder categories. Mayberry Homes was recognized in the production category for the North Central region.



Gallagher

**Fraser Trebilcock** shareholder **Sean P. Gallagher** has been recognized by *Michigan Lawyers Weekly* as a "Michigan Go-To Lawyer" in 2024 for cannabis law. Gallagher is chair of the firm's administrative and regulatory department. His experience includes serving as an advisor, advocate, counselor, and strategist, focusing on areas of law including energy regulation, procurement matters

for industrial businesses, hazardous materials pipeline regulation, telecommunications, cannabis and industrial hemp, and municipal public employee pension funds. Michigan Lawyers Weekly's Go-To Lawyer program honors leading lawyers in a particular field of law as nominated by their peers.



Allen

Sales associate **Mark Allen** of **Mayberry Homes** was individually recognized with the Avid Service Gold Award in the North Central region for the production category at the 21st Annual Avid Service Awards. The accolade acknowledges his exemplary customer satisfaction scores, placing him among the top 5 percent of homebuilding professionals nationwide. The winners are determined based on the AvidCX platform, which gathers feedback from thousands of customers who have recently closed on new homes. To qualify, employees must have a representative sample of more than 12 completed surveys over a 12-month period, with surveys collected from customers who closed on homes between January and December.

**COMPANY NEWS**



**McLaren Greater Lansing**, part of statewide McLaren Health Care, has officially broke ground on the nearly \$40 million project that will result in a freestanding emergency department and multispecialty medical office building, providing readily available access to commonly used healthcare services in Grand Ledge/Delta

## MEMBERS ON THE MOVE

Township. Located along Saginaw Highway, just west of Nixon Road, the groundbreaking of McLaren Grand Ledge was marked with a ceremony on June 12th attended by representatives from McLaren Greater Lansing, McLaren Health Care, and local officials, including Delta Township Supervisor Kenneth Fletcher, Grand Ledge Mayor Keith Mulder, and Michigan State Representative Angela Witwer. Construction is expected to take a year, with the first patient to be treated in Fall 2025.



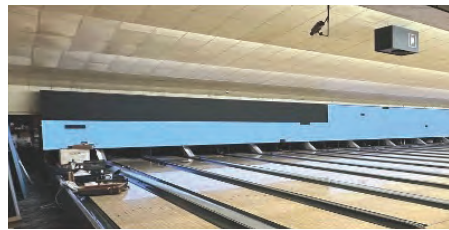
**Lansing Community College** has officially renamed its Arts & Sciences Building to the Brent M. Knight Arts & Sciences Building. Brent Knight served as LCC's president from 2008 to 2020, retiring after 12 years at the helm. The renaming of the Arts & Sciences Building is the latest honor bestowed on Knight. He was previously granted the designation of president emeritus in 2020, making him the first LCC president to receive the title.

**Downtown Lansing Inc.** will accept applications for its new Tenant Improvement Grant through Sept. 30. With a total of \$1 million in grant funds, DLI will match 50 percent of eligible rehab investments with a cap of \$50,000 per project. Over the past year, DLI has awarded over \$1.8 million in grants exclusively to downtown businesses. The Tenant Improvement Grant program is a new resource available to downtown properties and businesses, prioritizing rehabbing and revitalizing historic buildings within downtown Lansing. Grants are only available to for-profit, non-tax-exempt businesses. For application information and a

full overview of the program, visit [DowntownLansing.org/do-business/tools-and-programs/tenant-improvement](https://DowntownLansing.org/do-business/tools-and-programs/tenant-improvement). Questions about the grant program can be directed to [julie@downtownlansing.org](mailto:julie@downtownlansing.org).



Born in Lansing in 2024, **MIpreneur** is committed to fostering a vibrant and inclusive community for entrepreneurs, small business owners, and professionals across Michigan. MIpreneur is a social learning and networking community where members can explore, connect, and thrive together. MIpreneur hosts bi-monthly events on topics related to the entire experience of building a brand or business in Michigan. The volunteer-based organization is supported through sponsors, partners, and donations.



Lansing's **Royal Scot Golf & Bowl** has installed a 5,600-square-foot digital screen at the end of their 60 bowling lanes, replacing the existing masking units. The innovative screen can show dynamic animations, live TV broadcasts, corporate advertisements, concerts, personalized birthday greetings, and a variety of other content. The screen can display a singular expansive image or multiple distinct visuals. The bowling facility intends to promote the products and services of local businesses and nonprofits, along with various activities and events within the Greater Lansing Area. The recent installation makes Lansing home to the largest LED screen in a Bowling Center worldwide, surpassing the record previously held by McHenry Bowl in Modesto, Calif., since late 2022. ●



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