

# FOCUS

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

MARCH 2025



LRCC ANNUAL DINNER HONORS

## *Business Standouts*

IN THIS ISSUE

ATHENA WIN Board Chair Shares Vision for 2025 | Meet the LRCC's New Team Members & Public Affairs Intern  
Lansing-Area Catholic Organizations Merge to Strengthen Regional Impact



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



Our Annual Dinner lets us reflect on the incredible achievements of the past year and to honor businesses and community leaders that are moving our region forward with their innovation and dedication.

## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAMBER

# Lansing Regional Chamber Annual Dinner Celebrates Local Growth and Progress

**T**hank you to all who joined us on Feb. 27th at the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce (LRCC) Annual Dinner at the Lansing Center. This year's February date marks a return to the traditional timing of our Annual Dinner. This signature event is always a great time to catch up with old friends, make new connections, and celebrate how far we've come as a Chamber, a region, and a business community.

This was our 113th Annual Dinner, a cause for celebration in and of itself.

Congratulations again to our four major award recipients: **Güd Marketing** as Outstanding Small Business, **Ashley Smith** of Oasis Realty with the Community Service Award, **Socialight Society** with the Diversity Star Award presented in partnership with the Lansing Economic Area Partnership (LEAP), and **General Motors** with the Legacy Award.

Our Annual Dinner lets us reflect on the incredible achievements of the past year and to honor businesses and community leaders that are moving our region forward with their innovation and dedication.

It is also an opportunity to reaffirm our shared commitment to creating a future for Lansing that is rich with growth and opportunity.

We were thrilled to once again host the Annual Dinner in downtown Lansing, where more than \$300 million in transformative investments are fueling growth in residential, entertainment, manufacturing, and more. There's a unique energy in being downtown, surrounded by a renewed vision, vibrant momentum, and exciting economic progress.

I value the positive energy we create by celebrating the great work of the Chamber, our team, and the LRCC membership. Let's make this another great year for the Lansing business community. ●

### Stay connected and grow with the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce!



Our event calendar is packed with opportunities to network, learn, and elevate your business. From professional development workshops to community gatherings, there's something for everyone.

Explore the full calendar and get involved today at [lansingchamber.org](http://lansingchamber.org).



# Thank You Renewing Members

Absolute Solar	Jessica Artibee Agency - Farm Bureau Insurance
Acuitas	Keller Williams Realty Lansing
Adna Technologies	Kincaid Building Group, Inc.
Anderson Economic Group	L.D. Clark Companies
AT&T	La Fille Gallery
Audiology & Hearing Aid Center	LAFUCU
BRD Printing, Inc.	Lansing Ice & Fuel Company
CAMPGROUNDS-R-US	Lehman, Wesley & Associates, Inc.
Capital Region Community Foundation	Leon's Transmission Repair, Inc.
Capitol Fundraising Associates	Madeira Networks
Capitol National Bank	Maner Costerisan, CPA, PC
Cin-Lan, Inc.	Maurer's Textile
Comcast	Meridian Charter Township
Comerica Bank	MessageMakers
Conquest Fitness	Michigan Health Council
Consumers Credit Union	Michigan High School Athletic Association
Coolidge Place Townhomes	Michigan Optometric Association
Cypress Home Care, Inc.	New Leaf Landscaping Company
Dart Container	Payne-Rosso Company
Davenport University	Petra Flowers
David Chapman Agency, Inc.	Plante Moran, CPAs
Delhi Charter Township	Pleune Service Company
Doty Mechanical, Inc.	Preuss Pets
Duckett Brothers Distributing	Publicom
Eaton Community Bank	Quality Dairy Company
Educational Tours, Inc.	Reid Machinery, Inc.
Elieff Brothers Roofing & Exteriors	Shaheen Chevrolet, Inc.
Extend Your Reach	Shaklee
Fahey Schultz Burzych Rhodes PLC	Shrontz Trucking LLC
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Financial Technology, Inc.	Stifel Financial
First National Bank of Michigan	Student Book Store, Inc.
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Gillespie Group	Timber Lake Apartments
Governmental Consultant Services Inc.	Transnation Title Agency of Michigan
Güd Marketing	United Hospitality Group East Lansing, LLC
HAP - Health Alliance Plan	Waggoner Financial Group
Highfields, Inc.	Watertown Charter Township
Impact Solutions	Williamston
Independent Bank	Compassionate Care
Ingham Intermediate School District (Ingham ISD)	Yeo & Yeo CPAs & Advisors

## Chamber Milestones

<b>DBI We Do Office</b> 40 Years	<b>Crime Stoppers of Mid-Michigan</b> 5 Years
<b>Farm Bureau Insurance Company</b> 30 Years	<b>Feyer Marketing</b> 5 Years
<b>Great Lakes Christian College</b> 30 Years	<b>Gongwer News Service Michigan</b> 5 Years
<b>Liskey's Auto &amp; Truck Service</b> 30 Years	<b>Impression 5 Science Center</b> 5 Years
<b>Palmer Construction</b> 10 Years	
<b>Brightwell Behavioral Health</b> 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!*



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[eatatstate.com/easterbrunch2025](http://eatatstate.com/easterbrunch2025)



# Welcome New Members

## **Asahi Kasei Plastics**

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[www.asahi-kasei-plastics.com/en](http://www.asahi-kasei-plastics.com/en)  
810 E. Van Riper Rd.  
Fowlerville, MI 48836

## **Capitol Research Services, Inc.**

(517) 333-3388  
[www.capitolresearchservices.com](http://www.capitolresearchservices.com)  
2940 East Lake Lansing Rd.  
East Lansing, MI 48823

## **CarePatrol of Western Michigan - Capital Region**

(517) 275-4848  
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5960 Tahoe St. SE, Suite 200B  
Grand Rapids, MI 49546

## **Consumers Credit Union - East Lansing**

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2763 Grand River Ave.  
East Lansing, MI 48823

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[www.consumerscu.org](http://www.consumerscu.org)  
2305 Lake Lansing Rd.  
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## **Courtyard at Delta**

(517) 459-9225  
[www.thecourtyardatdelta.com](http://www.thecourtyardatdelta.com)  
350 S Marketplace Blvd.  
Lansing, MI 48917

## **Handyman Connection of Lansing**

(517) 927-6955  
[www.handymanconnection.com](http://www.handymanconnection.com)  
3721 W. Michigan Ave., Suite 202  
Lansing, MI 48917

## **Liberty Tax of Lansing**

(517) 324-7040  
[www.libertytax.com/income-tax-preparation-locations/michigan/lansing/10890](http://www.libertytax.com/income-tax-preparation-locations/michigan/lansing/10890)  
401 N. Clippert St.  
Lansing, MI 48912

## **Maid To Clean**

(517) 281-2887  
[www.maid2cleanmi.com](http://www.maid2cleanmi.com)  
4298 W. Jason Rd.  
Dewitt, MI 48820

## **The Dinner Detective**

(269) 779-9312  
[www.thedinnerdetective.com/lansing/murder-mystery-tickets-showtimes](http://www.thedinnerdetective.com/lansing/murder-mystery-tickets-showtimes)  
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# Lansing-Area Catholic Organizations Merge



**T**he newly formed Catholic Charities of Ingham, Eaton, and Clinton Counties is expanding its programming to have a more significant impact on the Greater Lansing region.

Cristo Rey Community Center and St. Vincent Catholic Charities merged their operations in March 2024 to create Catholic Charities of Ingham, Eaton, and Clinton Counties. Joe Garcia, who previously served as Cristo Rey's CEO, is now the CEO of Catholic Charities.

Isabella Gardner, Catholic Charities public relations coordinator, said the combined entity can better address the evolving physical, mental, and spiritual needs of the tri-county region.

"Most of our programs already served the surrounding community, outside of the areas that each campus is based in," Gardner said.

Cristo Rey Community Center and St. Vincent Catholic Charities are both part of the Catholic Diocese but have each held their own unique role in the Greater Lansing community. Cristo Rey was established in 1968 with the mission of caring for people while promoting self-sufficiency. St. Vincent was founded in 1948 with a focus on children, with programs including adoption and foster care, refugee resettlement services, and an immigration law clinic.

By combining resources and consolidating administrative tasks, Catholic Charities hopes to better serve the community with expanded dental and medical care, substance use counseling, and foster care and adoption services. Catholic Charities also intends to do more advocacy work for policies that support marginalized populations.



*Joe Garcia is the CEO of Catholic Charities of Ingham, Eaton, and Clinton Counties. He previously served as CEO of Cristo Rey Community Center. (Courtesy/CCIEC)*

The merger has allowed for the expansion of the Cristo Rey Family Health Center, the construction of the Cristo Rey Dental Center, and plans for a Children's Home that will house 36 high-risk youth. Gardner said that Catholic Charities of Ingham, Eaton, and Clinton Counties is still in the process of obtaining licensing for the proposed Children's Home.

Catholic Charities' programs are supported by a number of local and national organizations, including Chicago-based Delta Dental, Lansing-based Jackson National Life, University of Michigan Health-Sparrow, and the University of Michigan's School of Dentistry. Gardner said the partnerships help Catholic Charities better reach underserved people, including children and U.S. veterans.

"We're very excited for all the opportunities that this merger has created for us and we definitely invite the Chamber and the community to get involved," Gardner said. "There's plenty of ways to get involved. We are always in need of volunteers. It's not just monetary donations. Our CEO always says we need 'time, talent, and treasure.' Whatever you have to give to support us, we would absolutely accept anything that the community could provide." ♦

lansingchamber.org'."/>

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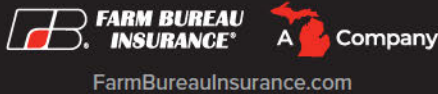
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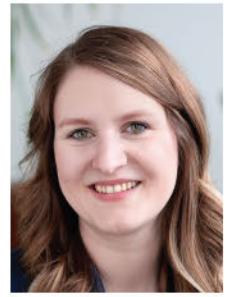
FarmBureauInsurance.com



Haddad



Lewis



McNutt

## Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce Welcomes Three New Team Members

The Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce (LRCC) is excited to announce the addition of three talented professionals to its team. Dawn Haddad and Sara Lewis have joined the team as Business Development Managers, while Renee McNutt joined as Vice President of Finance. These strategic hires reflect LRCC's commitment to strengthening its organizational structure to better support its members and the business community.

"We are thrilled to welcome Dawn, Sara and Renee to the LRCC team," said Tim Daman, president and CEO. "Their diverse expertise and passion for serving businesses will enhance our ability to provide valuable resources, foster connections, and drive economic growth in the Lansing region."

Haddad brings together a wide range of skills and interests, having had careers in radio, education and the nonprofit sector. She is a proud Certified Tourism Ambassador who loves all that the Lansing Region has to offer and recently completed a Being ATHENA leadership cohort.

Lewis brings over 20 years of experience in marketing and paid media and a unique blend of expertise in community impact, business operations, and media management, having worked with non-profits and business leaders to execute campaigns ranging from grassroots initiatives to multi-million-dollar investments.

McNutt brings over six years in public accounting where she specialized in working with nonprofit organizations, providing financial expertise to help them achieve their financial goals and meet grant reporting requirements.

The addition of the new team members reflects the Chamber's ongoing commitment to strengthening our organization and enhancing the support we provide to our members, the business community, and Lansing region. ♦

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# Advocacy in Action: Key Policy Developments Impacting Greater Lansing Businesses

**S**taying informed on key policy developments is essential for businesses navigating today's evolving economic and regulatory landscape. The Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce (LRCC) remains committed to advocating for policies that drive growth, strengthen our local economy, and support businesses at the local, state, and federal levels.

These updates highlight the latest legislative actions and advocacy efforts shaping the future of our region's business community. For the most up-to-date policy news visit [lansingchamber.org](https://lansingchamber.org).

## LOCAL

### Michigan Strategic Fund Approves of New Vision Lansing

The LRCC is pleased with the approval of the *New Vision Lansing Transformational Brownfield Plan* by the Michigan Strategic Fund. This \$202 million investment over 30 years marks a pivotal step in revitalizing downtown Lansing by creating much-needed housing and mixed-use spaces, fostering economic growth, and enhancing sustainability. The LRCC strongly supported this initiative, recognizing its potential to drive long-term prosperity in Michigan's capital city and will continue engaging with business leaders and stakeholders to ensure this transformative project meets the needs of our growing community.

## STATE

### LRCC, Choose Lansing calls for consistent State of Michigan return-to-office policy to support Downtown Revitalization

The LRCC and Choose Lansing called on Governor Whitmer to implement a strategic return-to-office policy for state employees. Downtown Lansing's economic health is closely tied to the presence of a robust workforce, and ongoing remote work policies continue to impact small businesses that rely on steady foot traffic.

With significant state investments—including the *New Vision Lansing* housing project, the new Lansing City Hall, and the Michigan Avenue rebuild—bringing state employees back in person is essential to



*Design renderings of New Vision Lansing development on Walnut St. (Courtesy New Vision Lansing LLC)*

maximizing these developments and strengthening Lansing's economy.

### Competing Michigan Road Funding Plans

The LRCC is closely monitoring the competing road funding plans introduced by Governor Whitmer and House Republicans. Both proposals seek to address

Michigan's \$3.9 billion annual road funding gap but take different approaches.

- **Governor Whitmer's \$3 billion "MI Road Ahead" Plan** includes tax increases on corporations, digital services, and marijuana sales to generate new revenue.
- **House Republicans' \$3.145 billion plan** redirects existing corporate tax revenue and gas station sales tax without imposing new taxes.

## FEDERAL

### LRCC Joins U.S. Chamber in Supporting Extension of the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act

The LRCC has joined the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and other organizations in urging Congress to extend key provisions of the *2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA)*. These pro-growth tax policies have raised wages, supported job creation, and helped families navigate inflation. Making the TCJA permanent would prevent a \$4 trillion tax increase on American businesses and families while ensuring economic stability and long-term investment.

### LRCC Joins U.S. Chamber in Supporting H.R. 736 to Protect Small Businesses

The LRCC joins the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in urging support for H.R. 736, the Protect Small Business from Excessive Paperwork Act of 2025. This bipartisan bill would provide a one-year delay in the enforcement of the Corporate Transparency Act (CTA), giving small business owners much-needed relief from unclear regulatory requirements and potential penalties. With many businesses unaware of their reporting obligations, this delay ensures they can focus on growth rather than bureaucratic confusion. ♦





# LRCC ANNUAL DINNER HONORS

# Business Standouts

BY JENNIFER McENTEE

**E**ach year, the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce (LRCC) seeks to honor professionals and businesses that have gone above and beyond for the Greater Lansing region. These standouts invest their time and expertise to strengthen the community, boost the regional economy, and develop the local workforce.

While their trades may differ – a Realtor, a bookstore owner, a marketing guru, and an auto manufacturer – each of this year’s LRCC Annual Dinner honorees have put in the extra work to help our local business community thrive.

LRCC, along with more than 500 community leaders and business professionals, honored the newest awardees at its Annual Dinner on February 27 at the Lansing Center. They are:

- **Community Service Award:** Ashley Smith of Oasis Realty
- **Outstanding Small Business Award:** GÜD Marketing
- **Diversity Star Award:** Socialight Society
- **Legacy Award:** General Motors

In addition to the Annual Award Dinner award recipients, LRCC also lauded the winners of other awards from the past year, such as Ten Over the Next Ten, Celebration

of Regional Growth, ATHENA Leadership and ATHENA PowerLink Awards, and the LRCC Ambassador of the Year. Local talk show personality Bob Hoffman served as the event emcee.

## COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD

As co-owner and an associate broker of Oasis Realty LLC in Lansing, Community Service Award winner Ashley Smith said her volunteer contributions to local organizations developed from a desire to better the community where she lives and works.



Smith

“I just really wanted to focus on helping make the community strong,” Smith explained. “As a Realtor, I’m always asking people to live here, and I wanted to make sure that I’m helping make this a strong, positive place where people want to live.”

Smith volunteers as a trustee for the Capital Area District Library Board, is president of the Ingham County Animal Shelter Fund, a board member of the Everett Alumni Association and Transcendence Performing Arts Center, is a member of Lansing Junior





Her real estate work allows for some flexibility in her schedule.

"I can take that time and help build the community, which I feel like is part of being a good Realtor anyway and is going to help make my job easier in the long run," Smith said.

Smith said she's grateful to receive the Community Service Award, and encourages other Chamber members to find causes that spur their volunteerism.

"I think it's so important to be intentional with what you do. Our time is valuable," Smith said. "Find something that really matters to you, reach out, and say, what can I do to help?"

## OUTSTANDING SMALL BUSINESS

Lansing-based marketing and communications agency GÜD Marketing received this year's Outstanding Small Business Award for its work to impact communities for the greater good. Or, greater GÜD.



The Outstanding Small Business Award highlights a local small business that's shown stability, innovation, diversity, perseverance, and a commitment to the community.

"We are truly trying to build awareness for community programs that help people or connect people with the services they need to overcome barriers to get a job or to save for their child's education," said Deborah Horak, GÜD Marketing principal and president. "We're really focused on mission-driven work. What do

we want the future to look like for our community, and who are the people we need to connect?"

Founded in 1978, GÜD Marketing began as Pace & Partners with a business-to-business focus on advertising for manufacturing clients. Its first partnership was with the former Oldsmobile car line from General Motors, creating vehicle owner's manuals.

As time went on, Horak and her business partner Jill Holden saw an opportunity to reposition the firm with a shift into cause-based marketing.

"When we rebranded to GÜD Marketing, we decided to solely focus on work that inspires a positive change," Horak said. "We kind of put a stake in the ground and

League and the Care Free Medical events committee, and sits on the board of the Women's Council of Realtors of Lansing.

Smith said her realty clients often ask about the school districts in the area, so she felt particularly drawn to boosting her alma mater, Everett High School, within the Lansing School District. The school and district sometimes undeservedly get a bad rap, she said.

"I graduated from there. I have a master's degree. I used to go to geometry class with Senator Sarah Anthony. So you can be a productive, awesome, amazing person going to Everett," she said. "For me, it was like, I need to do something to help highlight the amazing things at Everett, but also to help improve some of the things that aren't always that great."

Smith is a county appointee on the Capital Area District Libraries board. She dedicates her time to the library system because she appreciates its array of community resources, from language acquisition classes to U.S. citizenship test preparation.

"There are just a lot of different elements to the libraries, not just books, that I think really help make people feel welcome in this community," Smith said.

**"WHEN WE  
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INSPIRES A POSITIVE  
CHANGE."**

**DEBORAH HORAK,  
GÜD MARKETING  
PRINCIPAL AND  
PRESIDENT**



## FEATURE: LRCC ANNUAL DINNER HONORS BUSINESS STANDOUTS

said, that's our brand. That's the type of work we're going to go after."

Over the past decade, GÜD Marketing and its 50-person staff have helped clientele within government and nonprofit organizations connect with the public on topics such as housing, education, environmental sustainability, and community wellness in the Midwest and beyond.

Notable among GÜD Marketing's multimedia campaigns was the "Recycling Raccoon Squad," developed for the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy to promote greater recycling efforts among Michigan residents.

GÜD Marketing is also working on campaigns to encourage working adults to go back to school for certifications and credentials, and helping students and their parents fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to determine if they qualify for scholarships, loans, or federal grants.

"We're trying to connect people with all the services they need to be stronger individuals and really help their families thrive," Holden said.

Horak's community contributions have included serving on the governing body of ATHENA PowerLink, a mentoring program that helps women develop as leaders and business owners.

"It's very personal and my passion," Horak said. "I've learned a lot over my 30-some years of working. There's definitely been a lot of change, and all for the better. That's what this is all about: together we learn, together we grow."

### DIVERSITY STAR AWARD

The Diversity Star Award is presented by LRCC in partnership with the Lansing Economic Area Partnership. The distinction honors entities that demonstrate a commitment to advancing equity and creating inclusive environments.

This year's Diversity Star Award honoree is entrepreneur Nyshell Lawrence, owner of the independent bookstore Socialight Society.

"From day one, it has been about community,"



Horak



Holden



Laicee Thill Photography

Lawrence said. "My idea for starting Socialight Society was because I visited a bookstore, I went to the section that was labeled women of color, and I was disappointed with the offerings that were there. From that, I started dreaming of this space that I could create where women — specifically Black women — would have the opportunity to frequent a place that was intentionally built with them in mind."



Lawrence

Layah Lauchie

In addition to a varied gift and book selection that reflects diverse voices and experiences, Socialight Society is a venue for storytelling, poetry readings, workshops, book donation drives, and other community-led events.

"One of my favorite things about Socialight Society is our story time that we host for children. We asked influential Black women from the community to come in as guest readers," Lawrence said, noting the special guests have included politicians, journalists, doctors, and entrepreneurs. "They read stories for the children, but they're also able to tell them about their careers, which is very important because it gives our children dreams and ideas to aspire towards."

Socialight Society was launched in 2021 and moved into its current space in the Lansing Mall in early 2022.

"I felt like it was important to have social permanence here in the city. People are looking for that 'third place,'" Lawrence explained, describing a public space away





from work and home for relaxing and socializing. “Folks walk in and one of the first things that I hear is, ‘All of this feels like home.’ ‘This reminds me of when I would visit my grandma.’ People come in and they feel that belonging. That is really important to us.”

Lawrence credits some of her success to the education and mentorship she’s received in the Greater Lansing community, including through LEAP’s “One and All” and “Influence Lansing” programs.

“Just a few years ago, Socialight Society was just a dream in my notebook,” Lawrence said. “With the support of this community over the past 3 to 4 years, we’ve been able to achieve and accomplish so much.”

## LEGACY AWARD

The Legacy Award is bestowed upon organizations that have been stalwarts in the Greater Lansing region’s business community. They’ve been long-standing LRCC members, but have also made a long-term investment in the region’s economic growth.



Detroit-based General Motors was recognized with this year’s Legacy Award for its 70 years as an LRCC member and investor. GM has continuously operated in the Lansing region since the automotive manufacturer’s founding in 1908.

“So to be recognized for the 70-year partnership with the Chamber is really significant,” said Troy Comiskey, the plant director at Lansing Grand River Assembly. “It’s just a great honor to be recognized as such a long-term contributor to the area and to the economy in the area.”

Today, GM operates two assembly plants, two stamping plants, and a distribution center in the Lansing region, employing about 5,000 people locally. GM models include Buick, Cadillac, Chevrolet, and GMC, and comprise gas-powered and electric vehicles.

Over the last decade, GM has invested more than \$2 billion in its Lansing plants, with plans for continued investments in facilities and technology, according to Comiskey.

GM’s involvement in the local community also extends to supporting a significant



local supplier base, employee volunteerism, charitable donations, and internship opportunities.

“We have such a large footprint in the area — the largest footprint in the country with two assembly plants and two stamping plants,” Comiskey said. “GM is committed to the area, and we’re committed to it for the long term. We just look forward to another hopefully century of building great vehicles in this area.”



Comiskey

Comiskey said GM’s involvement in the Chamber helps it cultivate a local workforce while having a say in regional matters.

“The Chamber actually helps us get the employees that we need to build the great vehicles that we’ve been doing in these plants for all these years. The Chamber can open those doors,” Comiskey said, noting he’s been able to connect with other large employers in the region through his LRCC involvement. “It’s important that we have a voice when decisions are made about the Lansing region.” ♦

“GM IS COMMITTED TO THE AREA, AND WE’RE COMMITTED TO IT FOR THE LONG TERM.”

TROY COMISKEY,  
PLANT DIRECTOR AT  
GM’S LANSING  
GRAND RIVER  
ASSEMBLY



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# Empowering Women to Lead: A Vision for ATHENA WIN in 2025

By Amy McNamara, 2025 ATHENA WIN Board Chair & Vice President | Lansing Commercial Banker, Mercantile Bank

**A**s the newly appointed Chair of ATHENA Women's Interest Network (WIN), I am brimming with enthusiasm as I step into this leadership role for 2025. As a long-time advocate for empowering women in leadership, I bring a fresh perspective and unwavering commitment to our mission of supporting, developing, and honoring women leaders in the Greater Lansing area.



McNamara

It's an incredible honor to lead an organization that champions the success of women at every stage of their careers. ATHENA WIN has a rich history of fostering connections, providing professional development opportunities, and celebrating the accomplishments of women in our community. I'm excited to build on this legacy and take it to new heights.

**“ATHENA WIN has a rich history of fostering connections, providing professional development opportunities, and celebrating the accomplishments of women in our community. I'm excited to build on this legacy and take it to new heights.”**

My vision for 2025 centers on creating more opportunities for women to connect, grow, and thrive. I aim to enhance the success of ATHENA WIN's programming by continuing to grow engagement within our membership and community.

One of my key goals is to increase engagement and inclusivity within ATHENA WIN's membership. I want every woman in our community to see themselves as part of ATHENA WIN. Whether you're a young professional just starting out, a seasoned executive, or someone transitioning into a new career, this is a space where you can find support, inspiration, and a network that truly wants to see you succeed.

Looking ahead, I am particularly excited about the 2025 ATHENA WIN Aspiring Leaders Program, which launched last year under the leadership of now past-chair, Leslie Batchelor. The six-month program is designed to equip women with the tools they need to lead with confidence and purpose, as well as offering an opportunity for

established female leaders in our community to mentor these rising stars. I am also passionate about strengthening partnerships with local businesses and organizations to create pathways for more women to step into leadership roles.

2025 is going to be a transformative year for ATHENA WIN. Together, we're going to inspire and empower women to reach new levels of success, and in doing so, we'll elevate our entire community.

With this incredible opportunity to lead, I look forward to shaping a brighter future for ATHENA WIN and the women we serve. ♦

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# Maximilian Hornung Joins the Lansing Regional Chamber as Public Affairs Intern

The Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce is excited to welcome Maximilian Hornung as its new public affairs intern. A junior at Michigan State University, Maximilian is pursuing a major in Political Science Pre-Law with double minors in Justice, Law, and Public Policy, as well as Business. His academic background has provided him with a strong foundation in government structures, policymaking, and public-private sector relations, making him well-prepared for his role at the Chamber.



Hornung

and execution. Additionally, he is enthusiastic about the Chamber's efforts to support a state worker in-person work mandate, which could help revitalize downtown Lansing and boost local businesses.

Beyond specific projects, Maximilian values the opportunity to connect with business and political leaders. He believes that fostering relationships with policymakers and industry professionals is critical to understanding how government and commerce intersect.

Looking ahead, Maximilian envisions a career where he can integrate public affairs with law, working with government agencies, multinational corporations, or international organizations. He hopes his time at the Chamber will provide him with valuable insights and skills that will help him navigate the complexities of law, policy, and global affairs.

With his enthusiasm and dedication, Maximilian is ready to contribute meaningfully to the Lansing Regional Chamber and gain hands-on experience that will shape his future career. ♦

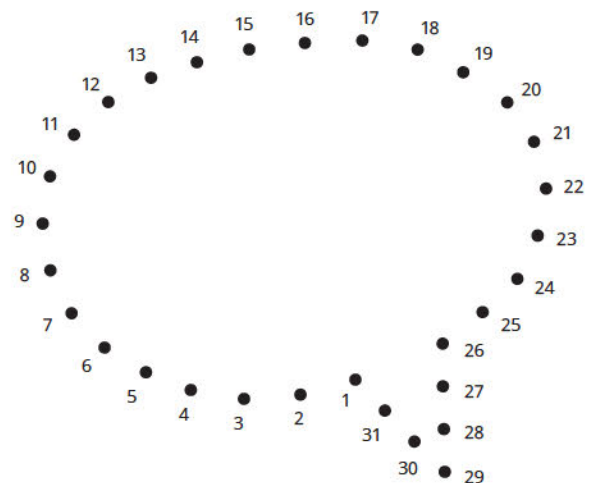
“Maximilian envisions a career where he can integrate public affairs with law, working with government agencies, multinational corporations, or international organizations.”

Maximilian's passion for public affairs and government relations stems from his diverse upbringing. Having lived in multiple countries and becoming fluent in German, Russian, and English, he developed a deep appreciation for global affairs and policy discussions. His long-term goal is to pursue a law degree with a focus on international law, and he sees his experience in public affairs as an essential stepping stone toward that path. By engaging in local government and economic development initiatives, he hopes to gain crucial insight into the decision-making processes that shape communities.

One of Maximilian's key interests is economic development, particularly in Lansing. He is eager to explore how government policies impact business growth and urban development. Through his internship, he hopes to analyze how decisions made in Washington, D.C., directly influence local economies and business strategies. His role at the Chamber offers him a unique opportunity to bridge the gap between national policymaking and local implementation.

During his internship, Maximilian is most excited to work on New Vision Lansing, a major initiative aimed at revitalizing the city through strategic investments and policy decisions. He is also looking forward to contributing to Lansing's road construction project, gaining firsthand experience in infrastructure planning

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## Leadership Lansing Participants Receive Certified Tourism Ambassador Credential

One of the missions of the Leadership Lansing program is to help develop and equip the next generation of community leaders in the Lansing region. In recent years, Leadership Lansing has partnered with Choose Lansing to provide Certified Tourism Ambassador (CTA) training to program participants. This year's cohort received the training as part of the February workshop.

The fun and engaging program was expertly led by certified CTA facilitators Melissa Nay of Choose Lansing and Jeff Magnuson from the James B. Henry Center for Executive Development at Michigan State University. The big takeaway: there is lots to do in Greater Lansing! At the end of the training, each participant took and passed the exam and qualified to receive their CTA credential.

Leadership Lansing's Lunch with a Leader speaker was Ashlee Willis, entrepreneur and founder and CEO of Michigan Premier Events. Her topic was "Expanding Your Leadership Impact Through Diverse Networks."

Willis spoke about how having a diverse network helps individuals build a stronger influence, creates opportunities and positive outcomes.

The afternoon featured what has become an annual favorite, a visit to Peckham, a nonprofit vocation rehabilitation organization that provides job training opportunities for persons with significant disabilities and other barriers to employment. Since 1976, Peckham has grown to be one of the largest vocational community rehabilitation programs in the state of Michigan. Peckham offers more than 30 different rehabilitation and human services programs from art to career planning, pre-employment screening to facility-based training, youth programs to organizational employment and residential services. Leadership Lansing would like to thank its hosts including Peckham's Director of Vocational Services Emily McElmurry Calley Green, Peckham's Director of Employee Experience and Engagement and Tony Bechtol, Assistant Vice President of Finance—all Leadership Lansing alums. ♦



# Members on the Move

## NEW HIRES



*Carter*

**LAFCU** has added **Tamera Carter** as its vice president of membership growth and development. In her new role, Carter will lead efforts to expand the credit union's membership and collaborate with multi-departmental teams. With more than 17 years in the financial industry, Carter has experience managing branch operations, driving sales performance, ensuring compliance, and supporting financial wellness for individuals and businesses. She has worked closely with community partners to deliver impactful financial education programs that promote growth and empowerment. Carter is involved in the Greater Lansing community, including as vice president of the Lansing City Council.



*Fitzgerald*

**Resch Strategies** has hired **Sean Fitzgerald** as the firm's public affairs coordinator. Fitzgerald will play a key role in moving the firm's public affairs portfolio

forward, assisting with issue advocacy, earned media, digital media strategy, and placement. Fitzgerald previously held the role of social media strategist at Brogan & Partners, an advertising agency in Southeast Michigan, where he orchestrated paid digital campaigns for clients on a state and national level, including state of Michigan departments. Fitzgerald is making his return to Lansing, where he began his career with an internship in Governor Rick Snyder's executive office.



*Angst*



*Carpenter*



*Franquist*



*Williamson*

**Angst** joins Maner Costerisan as an accounting manager. **Scott Ebert** has rejoined the firm as an audit manager. The firm has also hired six additional associates: **Christopher Carpenter** as IT support specialist, **Lindsey Darby** as tax associate, **Melissa Franquist** as accounting manager, **Sunny Lee** as an audit associate, **Hunter White** as a tax associate, and **Ayanna Williamson** as receptionist. The firm has also added several college interns in various departments. In the tax department are **Marlene**



*Ebert*



*Darby*



*Lee*

Public accounting and business consulting firm **Maner Costerisan** has expanded its professional team with a number of new hires. **Mary**

**Bond** and **Abdul Gabayre** of Lansing Community College and Northwood University, **Nicolle Diaz** and **Antonia Drake** of Grand Valley State University, **Austin Kepsel** and **Erich Schroeder** of Michigan State University, and **Caroline Huffman** of the University of Michigan Flint. Interns in the accounting department are **Mercedez Boyer** of Lansing Community College and **Ethan Park** of Western Michigan University. Interning in the audit department are **Aaron West** of Concordia University and **Ayden Rutan** and **Julia Saboya** of Grand Valley State University.



*McLean*

industry knowledge and a real estate license. His duties include guiding entrepreneurs through successful business sales.



*Otten*

and scheduling, Otten ensures coordination between clients, subcontractors, and the team throughout the remodeling process.

**Transworld Business Advisors of Grand Rapids | Lansing** has welcomed **Drew McLean** to its team as a business broker. McLean has extensive

**Custom Built Design & Remodeling** has added **Tyler Otten** to its production team as a production assistant. As the central representative for communication

## PROMOTIONS

Lansing-based **Personnel World, Inc.** has promoted **Jennifer Raines** to office operations manager and **Megan Maxwell** to staffing and office specialist. Additionally, **Krista**



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**Abdul-Hameed** now serves as the front desk coordinator.



*Wright*

The **Lansing Entertainment & Public Facilities Authority** has promoted **Tristan Wright** to president and chief executive officer. With more than 20 years of experience with LEFPA, Wright has held roles of increasing responsibility, most recently as interim president and CEO, executive vice president, and vice president of operations. An active member of the Lansing community, Wright serves on the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Commission of Mid-Michigan as vice chair, is on the Greater Lansing Area Sports Hall of Fame board of directors, and is a past member of Choose Lansing's diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion committee.



*Shawa*

**Heather Shawa** was named assistant general manager of the **Lansing Board of Water & Light** in November 2024. She has been with BWL since 2015, previously serving as the utility's chief financial officer. Shawa led the bond offering for the \$500 million Delta Energy Park that replaced BWL's coal-fired power station and served as executive sponsor for the \$70 million BSmart corporate technology program, which added advanced metering, customer information system, GIS, and advanced distribution/outage management system. Before joining BWL, Shawa served as the CFO and vice president of operations for Demmer Corp., a privately held manufacturing company that serves the defense, automotive, and aerospace industries.

## APPOINTMENTS



*Cermak*



*Dernovshek*



*Roragen*



*Schumacher*

The shareholders of **Foster Swift Collins & Smith, P.C.** elected four of its attorneys as shareholders as the firm enters 2025: **Bryan Cermak, Amanda Dernovshek, Kevin Roragen, and Brandon Schumacher.** Cermak practices in the firm's Southfield office as a trial lawyer and is a former general counsel for an international, publicly traded company. Dernovshek is an employee benefits attorney in the firm's business and tax practice group. Roragen is a litigator in Foster Swift's Lansing office and has represented numerous public and private clients in the areas of employment defense, constitutional law, municipal and governmental liability issues, zoning and municipal land use regulation, construction disputes, general commercial and business litigation, as well as tax and other real estate litigation matters. Schumacher is a litigator representing individuals, companies, financial institutions, and municipalities.

The law firm of **Foster Swift Collins & Smith, PC** elected officers to serve on its executive committee for 2025 including **Anne Seuryneck**, President; **Ray Littleton**, Vice President, Southfield; **Warren Krueger**, Vice President, Lansing; **Andrew Vredenburg**, Vice



President, Grand Rapids; **Anna Gibson**, Secretary and **Nicholas Oertel**, Treasurer. Seuryneck will continue to serve as the firm's president. This is her sixth year as president; she is the first woman elected to this role in the firm's history. Littleton and Krueger are newly elected to the executive committee. Oertel will continue to serve as the firm's treasurer.

## AWARDS



Rios-Smith

**Gina Rios-Smith**, instructor of Educational Careers at the **Wilson Talent Center**, was recently named the 2024 Michigan Association of Career &

Technical Education "Teacher Educator of the Year." The award honors outstanding individuals and organizations that demonstrate excellence in advancing Career & Technical Education in Michigan. Rios-Smith received her award on Jan. 28th at the Michigan Career Education Conference in Grand Rapids. The Wilson Talent Center is operated by the Ingham Intermediate School District.

## COMPANY NEWS



Pictured, from left to right, are **John Knickerbocker** of PFCU, and **Lethia Arditto** and **Susan Ayers** of Hannah's House.

**PFCU Credit Union** employees raised \$7,809.77 for **Hannah's House of Lansing** through the credit union's Jean Day program. The ongoing, quarterly initiative allows staff members to donate voluntarily in exchange for the

opportunity to wear jeans during the workweek. Each quarter, the funds raised are donated to a local charity. PFCU Credit Union employees chose Hannah's House as the donation recipient for the fourth quarter of 2024. Hannah's House provides a safe and supportive environment for women and children facing crises. The nonprofit offers temporary housing, life skills training, and resources to help individuals overcome personal challenges and gain long-term stability.

**McLaren Greater Lansing**, part of statewide McLaren Health Care and a provider of comprehensive emergency care, has earned re-verification as a Level III Trauma Center by the American College of Surgeons Committee on Trauma through December 2026. This credential requires regular re-verification. It's achieved after a thorough onsite evaluation of the hospital's processes, staff credentials, patient outcomes, and compliance with trauma standards by the ASC.

**LAFCU** has reduced its overdraft and non-sufficient funds fee from \$32 to 99 cents. The new policy, which took effect on Jan. 27th, is an effort by LAFCU to make financial services more accessible and affordable for its members, including those from underserved communities. LAFCU continues to offer its "Pathways to Financial Transformation" course, which helps participants work toward financial literacy and independence.

**Peckham, Inc.** has been awarded a \$2 million grant from the U.S. Department of Labor. The grant will be dispersed over the next 42 months to continue the Growth Opportunities (GO) Program. The GO Program prepares corrections-involved youth and young adults for employment while also mitigating violence in high-poverty, high-crime communities of Lansing and Flint. Since its launch last year, more than 140 young people have participated in the GO

Program, with a recidivism rate of less than 5 percent. The program is designed to help participants identify career interests and match them with educational opportunities, training, credential attainment, mentorship, and paid work experiences. Peckham is a nonprofit vocational rehabilitation organization that provides paid job training opportunities for people with disabilities and other barriers to employment.

Lansing-based **Kramer Management Group (KMG)**, specializing in independent third-party owner representation, opened a new Detroit office at 6001 Cass Ave., Suite 03-151. The new office is located within the TechTown area. The move underscores KMG's commitment to supporting Detroit's growth, providing strategic support for projects that align with the city's evolving landscape. KMG vice president **Brian Deming** will lead the Detroit office. With a background in structural engineering, design, and construction management, Deming brings experience in designing complex facilities including more than 17 years in construction management.



With the help of local donations and community partners, the **McLaren Greater Lansing Foundation** has installed new book nooks and child-friendly furniture for families to use while waiting for care. An official ribbon-cutting of the book nook installations was held on Jan. 23rd at the McLaren Greater Lansing Multi-Specialty Clinic. There are plans to provide additional book nooks to more McLaren primary care facilities, including the McLaren Greater Lansing Women's Health in DeWitt. ♦



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# Chamber in Action



Congratulations to **AA Studios LLC** on their ribbon-cutting ceremony to celebrate becoming an LRCC member! Whether you need professional headshots or want to share an epic story with the world, they are equipped to make a difference. Based in Lansing, Michigan, they travel across the U.S. and beyond to capture photography and video for various events, including weddings, engagements, parties, real estate, dance, and video production.



The Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce, along with city and public officials, congratulated **The Courtyard at Delta** on their grand opening at 350 S. Marketplace Blvd in Lansing. The event featured a special ribbon-cutting ceremony and a tour, allowing guests to explore the assisted living and memory care center.



The Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce team and Ambassadors celebrated the grand opening of **One North Kitchen & Bar East Lansing** with a special ribbon-cutting event, marking the beginning of new memories! Located at 1310 Abbot Road in East Lansing, this restaurant provides a flexible space for a variety of special occasions. Their thoughtfully crafted menu, born from a scratch kitchen, aims to satisfy every palate.



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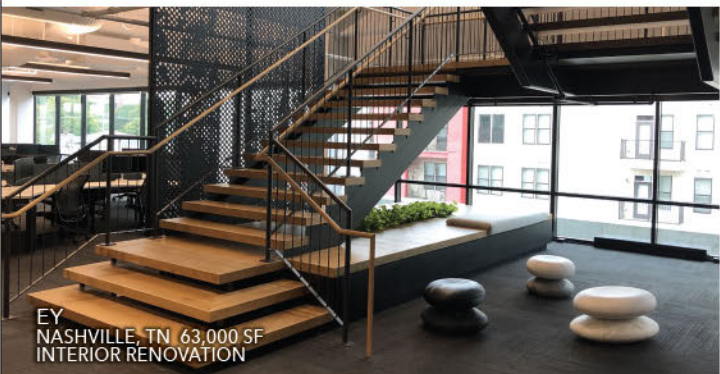
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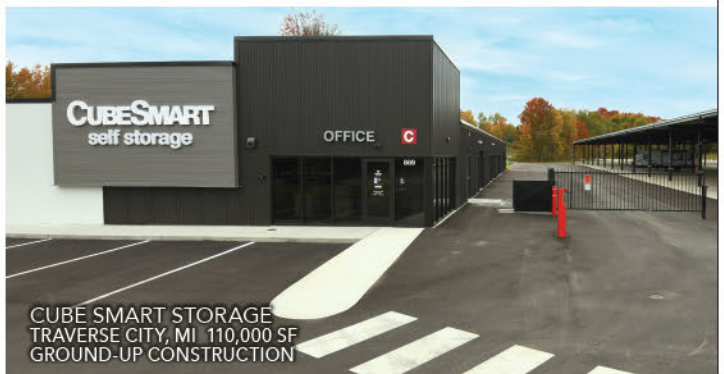
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