

FOCUS

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

JANUARY 2026

Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce

LANSING, MICHIGAN

125 YEARS

January 2026

125 YEARS OF LEADERSHIP

HOW THE LANSING REGIONAL CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE SHAPED OUR REGION



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2026 Board of Directors

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Member Engagement
Sara Dolan / MSUFCU

Government Relations
Kwafo Adarkwa /
Kelley Cawthorne

At-Large

Paul Anderson /
Granger Waste Services

Carlie Beatty / Playmakers

Amy Casciotti / TechSmith

Troy Comiskey /
General Motors

Ann Marie Creed /
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Health - Sparrow

Greg Farhat / Jackson

Jim Farrell / Dart Container

Christopher Fultz /
Consumers Energy

Roger Graff /
Farm Bureau Insurance Co.

Robyn Howell / LAFCU

Keri Kittman / AF Group

Jordan Leaming / Delta
Dental

Eric Musser / Auto-Owners
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Beth Pellerito / Granger
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Chamber Milestones

Maloney Carpet Company

65 years

Communities In Schools Michigan (CIS Michigan)

5 years

Courtyard by Marriott Lansing Downtown

5 years

Feyer Marketing

5 years

Metro Place Apartments (KMG Prestige)

5 years

One North Kitchen and Bar

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!



KELLY PRESTON
2026 BOARD CHAIR



This year is especially significant as we celebrate the Chamber's 125th anniversary, a milestone made possible by generations of visionary business leaders, thriving businesses, and committed community partners who have shaped the growth and prosperity of our region."

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAMBER

125 Years of Progress—And the Future Ahead

It is with great excitement and a deep sense of responsibility that I step into my role as Chair of the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce (LRCC) Board of Directors. This year is especially significant as we celebrate the Chamber's 125th anniversary, a milestone made possible by generations of visionary business leaders, thriving businesses, and committed community partners who have shaped the growth and prosperity of our region.

At a recent Board Breakfast, I was inspired by the passion and commitment of past Board Chairs and the role the Chamber has played in shaping the Lansing region. Throughout its history, the Chamber has been involved in numerous key initiatives, from the construction of Michigan Avenue to connecting Olds Motor Works to Lansing and making efforts to retain General Motors. More recently, the Chamber has supported vital investments in local K-12 education, acted as a trusted resource for businesses navigating the challenges of COVID, and has helped shape an exciting future for downtown Lansing through public-private partnerships that have led to new housing, entertainment, and infrastructure developments.

Building on this legacy, we are proud to be in the second year of our refreshed strategic plan, which is already having measurable impact on our members, in both business value and engagement. We are excited to carry this momentum into the new year.

Looking ahead, one of our most significant Business Value initiatives in the coming year is the launch of Connect. Grow. Thrive. This will be an integrated small business resource hub designed to support leadership, education, professional development, and connectivity for entrepreneurs, employers and their workforce throughout the Lansing region. This effort reflects our commitment to strengthening the economic foundation of our region and ensuring businesses of all sizes have the tools they need to succeed.

Our advocacy work remains a cornerstone of our mission. With pivotal elections on the horizon—including Michigan's first-ever simultaneous open gubernatorial and U.S. Senate races. Our role in shaping a pro-business policy environment is more important than ever. To guide this key regional policy agenda, we will leverage valuable insights from the State of the Region Benchmarking Report, as well as a new population demographic study, which projects population trends through 2050.

As we commemorate 125 years of leadership and service, we invite you to join us at the Annual Dinner Gala, the Lansing region's longest running and most prestigious business celebration. Together, we will honor the past, celebrate the present, and inspire the future.

On behalf of the LRCC Board of Directors, thank you for your continued support and commitment to making our Capital Region a vibrant place to live, work, and thrive. Let's make this anniversary year one of bold action, meaningful progress, and shared success! ♦



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We want you to better understand why this is happening. We want you to know everything we are doing about it, including our efforts to lower the costs of running our company by \$600 million while we maintain the quality services our members expect.

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MICHIGAN



2025 Policy & Advocacy Successes

As part of the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce's (LRCC) Strategic Plan, the Public Affairs Department measures its effectiveness against a clear benchmark: achieving positive outcomes on at least 80% of its annual legislative and policy agenda. This target, central to the Strategic Plan's Policy Influence pillar, underscores LRCC's commitment to advancing policies that promote economic growth, competitiveness, and regional prosperity.

In 2025, LRCC evaluated progress across 11 high-level policy indicators spanning federal, state, and local issues. Of those, 9 resulted in positive outcomes, producing an overall success rate of 82% meeting and exceeding the Chamber's strategic goal for the year.

Key successes included championing compromise legislation on earned sick time and minimum wage, retaining and extending critical components of the 2017

Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, and securing unanimous local approval for the LG Energy tax credit transfer in both the City of Lansing and Delta Township. LRCC also played a pivotal role in defeating a proposed single waste hauler mandate in Lansing, advancing major infrastructure investments such as the \$14 million Michigan Avenue reconstruction and the US-127/I-496 rebuild, supporting voter approval of the Lansing City Charter proposal, and strengthening regional competitiveness through participation in the Business for Federal Research Coalition by advocating for sustained federal research funding critical to innovation, talent development, and long-term economic growth.

While not every effort resulted in success, including the defeat of the Eaton County Public Safety Millage and Delta Township Transportation Millage, 2025 demonstrated LRCC's continued effectiveness as a trusted, results-driven advocate for the Greater Lansing business community. ♦

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The Community Service Award: A Tradition of Impact

COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD RECIPIENTS

1948	Clarence C. Carlton	1971	Claud Erickson	1989	Kenneth Patenge	2011	Bob Hoffman
1949	J. Gottleib Reutter	1972	Joseph Alexanian	1990	James L. Reutter	2012	Dr. Joseph Hess
1950	Earle W. Goodnow	1973	Albert C. Boyd	1991	Donald A. Hines	2013	Deborah L. & Michael G. Harrison
1951	Hugo B. Lundberg	1974	Phillip J. Gannon	1992	Richard A. Letts	2014	Pat McPharlin & Tim Staudt
1952	F.N. Arbaugh	1975	Albert F. Schmidt	1993	Louis E. Legg	2015	Mark Hooper
1953	C. W. Otto	1976	Lucille Belen	1994	Wayne Williams	2016	Paula Cunningham
1954	Paul A. Martin	1977	Dr. Theodore Bauer	1995	Albert A. White	2017	Jim Robinson
1955	M. J. Maynard	1978	Dr. Edgar Harden	1996	J. Christopher Holman	2018	Amy Stephenson
1956	Dwight H. Rich	1979	William J. Porter	1997	Jud & Louise Werbelow	2019	Kelli Ellsworth Etchison
1957	Jack F. Wolfram	1980	Walter W. Neller	1998	Edward Souders	2020	Joan Nelson
1958	Fred Wohlert	1981	Monsignor Jerome MacEachin	1999	John Demmer	2021	Carmen Turner
1959	Joseph R. Gwinn	1982	Robert Fisher	2000	Duane Vernon	2022	James Herbert
1960	Howard J. Stoddard	1983	Fritz Bennetts	2001	Everett Beemer	2023	Phil and Barb Tripp
1961	Talbert Adams	1984	Charles A. Davis, Francis J. Carr, Ransom E. Olds, George Washington Peck, W.K. Prudden, Ted Sontag	2002	Jack Davis	2024	Ashley Smith
1962	Edward G. Hacker	1985	Jack Breslin	2003	James W. Butler III	2025	Mark McDaniel
1963	William C. Searle	1986	Ed Vogt	2004	Kellie P. Dean		
1964	William R. Carlyon	1987	Robert Clark	2005	James Epolito		
1965	John A. Hannah	1988	Edward B. McRee	2006	Dorothy Maxwell		
1966	Rabbi Phillip Frankel			2007	David Marvin		
1967	Walter F. Patenge			2008	Kelly Rossman-McKinney		
1968	Floyd Estes			2009	Jeffrey C. Hicks		
1969	Howard Grimes			2010	Lupe Izzo		
1970	Hugo Lundberg						



For 125 years, the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce has served as a cornerstone of leadership, advocacy, and community connection in the Lansing region. Throughout this history, one constant has remained: the belief that communities are strengthened not only by economic progress, but by individuals who give selflessly of their time, talent, and expertise to serve others.

That belief is embodied in the Chamber's Community Service Award, one of the organization's longest standing and most respected honors.

First presented in 1948, the Community Service Award was established to recognize an individual whose volunteer service has made a meaningful and lasting impact on the Lansing region. More than a recognition of professional achievement, the award celebrates those who step beyond their own field of endeavor to lead through service, generosity, and civic commitment.

For more than seven decades, recipients of the Community Service Award have reflected the very best

of the region: leaders who demonstrate excellence, creativity, and initiative, and who understand that true leadership extends beyond titles or job descriptions. These individuals invest their time and energy into strengthening nonprofits, mentoring future leaders, advancing civic causes, and improving quality of life for others, often with little expectation of recognition.

Within the broader 125-year history of the Chamber, the Community Service Award stands as a powerful enduring tradition. It tells the story of a region shaped not only by institutions and industry, but by people who quietly and consistently answer the call to serve. Each honoree represents a moment in time, yet together they form a legacy of community minded leadership that spans generations.

As the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce reflects on 125 years of progress and partnership, the Community Service Award remains a reminder that the heart of the Chamber's mission has always been, and will continue to be, people who lead with purpose, give without hesitation, and leave their community better than they found it. ♦

Hormone Health in 2026: What Every Woman (and Man) Should Know About Energy, Mood, and Aging Well

By Hollie Town, PA-C – Owner, Aqua Aesthetics & Wellness



For many women, the most disruptive changes to their energy, mood, and overall well-being don't happen suddenly at menopause—they begin years earlier. In their mid-30s and 40s, many women start noticing symptoms that feel confusing or unrelated: fatigue, disrupted sleep, anxiety, weight changes, brain

fog, irregular cycles, or a noticeable drop in libido. These experiences are common, but they are not something women should feel pressured to simply tolerate.

Much of this shift is driven by perimenopause, the transitional period before menopause that can last several years. During this time, estrogen, progesterone, and testosterone levels fluctuate unpredictably, influencing everything from metabolism and cognition to emotional regulation and sexual health. Despite how common these symptoms are, many women are told they are "just stressed" or "getting older," when hormones are often an important part of the story.

In 2025, we're seeing a significant shift in how hormone health is understood. One notable change is the FDA's recent removal of certain long-standing warnings on estrogen therapy. For many clinicians, this reinforces what years of research have already shown: when appropriately prescribed and monitored, hormone therapy can be safe and life-enhancing for many women. This update is encouraging more women to ask questions, advocate for themselves, and seek a deeper understanding of their bodies.

While women experience the most dramatic hormonal transitions, men also encounter gradual age-related shifts—particularly in testosterone—that can affect energy, motivation, sleep, and mood. Though typically more subtle, these changes are becoming better recognized and more openly discussed.

Still, hormone therapy is only one piece of the wellness puzzle. Sleep, stress levels, strength training, nutrition, and alcohol intake all play major roles in how people feel day to day. Many individuals are now taking a more comprehensive approach to aging—blending traditional medical care with wellness coaching, prevention-focused strategies, and supportive services often found in modern aesthetics and wellness practices.



The broader message is empowering: aging well no longer means accepting declining energy or diminished quality of life. Women and men today are seeking clarity, science-backed guidance, and holistic support. With the right information and a team who listens, it's possible to move through midlife with more confidence, vitality, and control than ever before. ♦

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Chamber welcomes Kelly Preston, President & CEO Capital Steel and Wire as 2026 Board Chair

**TOM RUIS, PNC BANK SERVES
AS CHAIR ELECT**



The Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce (LRCC) is entering 2026 with a new board leader. **Kelly Preston, President & CEO Capital Steel and Wire** will lead the LRCC Board of Directors replacing Amy Partin, The Christman Company who will move to Past Chair, and **Tom Ruis, PNC Bank** will serve as **Chair Elect**, positioned to chair the Chamber board in 2027. Luke Terry, Rehmann remains as Treasurer, Mark Burzych, Fahey Shultz Burzych Rhodes PLC continues as Legal Counsel and Tim Daman who will continue to serve as LRCC's President and CEO. The remainder of the Executive Board includes Kwafo Adarkwa, Kelley Cawthorne as Government Relations Division Director and three new Executive Board members elevated from the Full Board:

- **Sara Dolan**, MSUFCU – Member Engagement Division Director
- **Rebecca DeVooght**, Michigan State University – Regional Leadership Division Director
- **Lisa Ellen Smith**, InVerve Marketing – Marketing Communications Division Director

The full LRCC Board of Directors includes nine new members, including Christopher Fultz, Consumers Energy; Keri Kittman, AF Group; Heather Shawa, Lansing Board of Water and Light; Jordan Leaming, Delta Dental; Greg Farhat, Jackson; Amy Casciotti, TechSmith; Greg Walthorn, Plante Moran; Carlie Beatty, Playmakers; Ann Marie Creed, University of Michigan Health - Sparrow. The full slate of LRCC Board of Directors can be found below.

OFFICERS (One-Year Appointment)

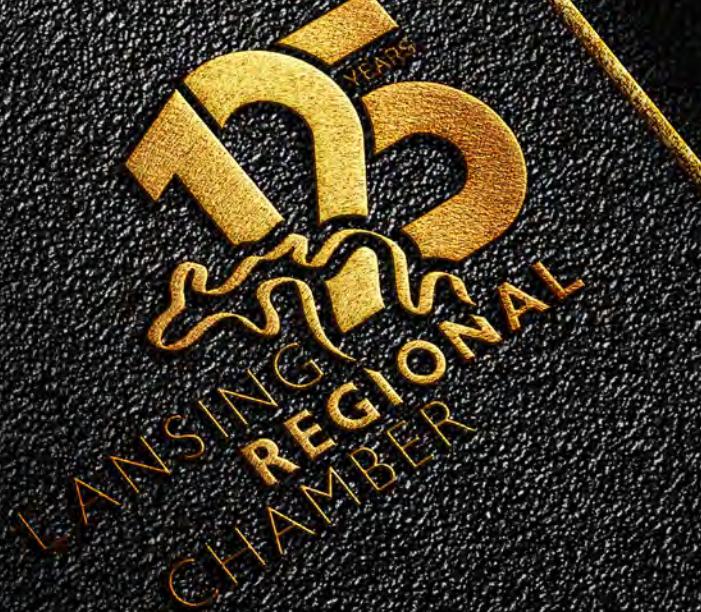
Chair of the Board:	Kelly Preston Capital Steel & Wire Inc.
Past Chair:	Amy Partin The Christman Company
Chair Elect:	Tom Ruis PNC Bank
Legal Counsel:	Mark Burzych Fahey Shultz Burzych Rhodes PLC
Treasurer:	Luke Terry Rehmann
President:	Tim Daman Lansing Regional Chamber Of Commerce

AT-LARGE

Paul Anderson /Granger Waste Services
Carlie Beatty /Playmakers
Amy Casciotti /TechSmith
Troy Comiskey /General Motors
Ann Marie Creed /University of Michigan Health - Sparrow
Greg Farhat /Jackson
Jim Farrell /Dart Container
Christopher Fultz /Consumers Energy
Roger Graff /Farm Bureau Insurance Co.
Robyn Howell /LAFCU
Keri Kittman /AF Group
Jordan Leaming /Delta Dental
Eric Musser /Auto-Owners Insurance Co.
Beth Pellerito /Granger Construction Company
Lisa Webb Sharpe /Peckham
Heather Shawa /Lansing Board of Water & Light
Todd Surline /Hiring Solutions
Greg Walthorn /Plante Moran

DIVISION DIRECTORS (One-Year Appointment)

Marketing Communications:	Lisa Ellen Smith InVerve Marketing
Regional Leadership:	Rebecca DeVooght Michigan State University
Member Engagement:	Sara Dolan MSUFCU
Government Relations:	Kwafo Adarkwa Kelley Cawthorne



A Night to Mark the Moment: The Chamber's 125th Anniversary Gala

In February 2026, the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce (LRCC) will mark a rare milestone. The 125th Anniversary Gala represents more than a single evening—it is a moment to recognize leadership, strengthen connections, and affirm a shared commitment to the region's future. Set for February 25, 2026, at the Lansing Center, the Gala will serve as the Chamber's premier signature event of the year. Attire for the evening is black tie optional.

Designed as both a celebration and a gathering of leaders, the 125th Anniversary Gala replaces the Chamber's traditional Annual Dinner and reflects the organization's evolution alongside the region it serves. The evening will bring together leaders from across sectors to recognize excellence, reflect on shared progress, and reinforce the relationships that continue to move Greater Lansing forward.

The LRCC will present its signature awards: these include the Community Service Award, recognizing individuals whose commitment and generosity make a meaningful difference in the community; the Outstanding Small Business Award, honoring local businesses that demonstrate innovation, stability, and civic leadership; and the Diversity Star Award (in partnership with LEAP), celebrating organizations that advance equity and inclusion across the region.

In addition, the 125th Anniversary Gala will formally recognize the prior year's honorees from the 10 Over the Next Ten, Celebration of Regional Growth, ATHENA Leadership, and ATHENA PowerLink® programs, as well as the LRCC Ambassador of the Year, highlighting leadership at every stage and level of impact.

Tickets for the 125th Anniversary Gala are now available, and sponsorship opportunities are currently open. In recognition of the Chamber's milestone year, several new sponsorship options were created

exclusively for the 125th Anniversary Gala, offering elevated visibility and engagement opportunities. With only a limited number of sponsorships remaining, organizations are encouraged to secure their participation early.

For ticket information or to learn more about remaining sponsorship opportunities, contact Ashlee Willis at michiganpremierevents@lansingchamber.org ♦

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Meet the New Lansing Regional Chamber Board Members

The Lansing Regional Chamber is pleased to introduce nine new board members to its 2026 board of directors. Learn more about each of them below.



Carlie Beatty
Playmakers

Carlie Beatty is a co-owner at Playmakers, a locally owned specialty running store that has served the Greater Lansing community for more than 40 years. She brings a people-first approach to leadership, with a focus on culture, connection and using business as a force for positive community impact. She is also a wife and mom to two incredible kids. Carlie's work at Playmakers centers around helping people find their stride - both on the run and in life.



Jordan Leaming
Delta Dental

Jordan Leaming is Senior Vice President, Strategic Planning and Chief of Staff for Delta Dental of Michigan, Ohio, and Indiana. A Michigan licensed attorney for over 12 years, Jordan is active in the community having served on several nonprofit and municipal boards. Jordan enjoys golfing in his spare time. He resides in Lansing with wife, Lori, and their two young sons.



Heather Shawa
Lansing Board of Water & Light

Heather Shawa has been with the Lansing Board of Water & Light (BWL) since 2015 and currently serves as the utility's Assistant General Manager. Before being appointed to the Assistant General Manager, she served as the utility's Chief Financial Officer (CFO). She is responsible for overseeing the company's supply chain, information technology, customer operations, business development, public relations, accounting, finance, and planning functions.



Christopher Fultz
Consumers Energy

Christopher Fultz is vice president of low voltage distribution for Consumers Energy. He was named to this position in 2025. As part of the company's electric distribution business unit, Fultz is responsible for planning, designing, constructing, operating and maintaining the company's 90,000 miles of low voltage electric distribution infrastructure that provides safe, reliable energy service to 1.9 million electric customers.



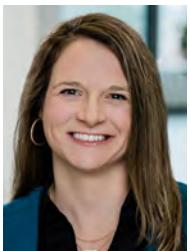
Ann Marie Creed
University of Michigan Health Sparrow

Ann Marie Creed is the President of UM Health-Sparrow Lansing starting in May 2025. Sparrow Lansing is a 573 bed Level 1 trauma center serving the mid-Michigan region. Prior to joining UM Health-Sparrow Lansing, Ann Marie was an executive with Henry Ford Health. At Henry Ford Health she held multiple positions including VP System Capacity, VP Operations and VP Surgical Services, and several others. She also served as interim president of Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit, as vice president of Henry Ford's Wyandotte hospital and in administrative roles with the Henry Ford Medical Group and the Wayne State Health Physician Group.



Greg Walthorn
Plante Moran

Greg Walthorn is the Office Managing Partner for Plante Moran's East Lansing office, personally specializing in the Wealth Management Industry. While serving as his clients' personal CFO, he assists high-net-worth individuals and families in growing their wealth, reducing income and estate taxes, and planning for business succession and future generations.



Amy Casciotti
TechSmith

Amy Casciotti is the Vice President of Human Resources at TechSmith Corporation, a software company dedicated to empowering people to create remarkable videos and images that facilitate sharing knowledge and information. Since joining TechSmith in 1995, Amy has held various roles across the company, earning her a comprehensive understanding of its operations and culture. As a business leader in the human resources, workforce, and talent space, Amy is focused on advocating for both the company and its employees to ensure they possess the skills needed for continued growth and employee engagement.



Gregory Farhat
Jackson National Life
Insurance Company

Gregory R. Farhat, raised in Lansing, is the Assistant Vice President of Corporate Real Estate at Jackson National Life Insurance Company, where he oversees a national real estate portfolio exceeding 1 million square feet across the country. With over 15 years of expertise in strategic real estate development, construction management, and financial oversight, Greg has successfully led \$300M+ in projects across multiple markets. A licensed Real Estate Broker and LEED Accredited Professional, Greg is committed to sustainable growth and community engagement, recently serving on several local boards and committees, including Allen Neighborhood Center, Boys & Girls Club and Ele's Place.



Keri Kittman
AF Group

Keri Kittman serves as senior vice president, Business Performance, Strategy for AF Group. In this role, she leads the Strategic Planning and Business Performance Management teams that develop and execute long-term strategic plans. She is also chief of staff to the president and CEO of AF Group, responsible for corporate communications, community relations, facilities and government affairs functions. ♦

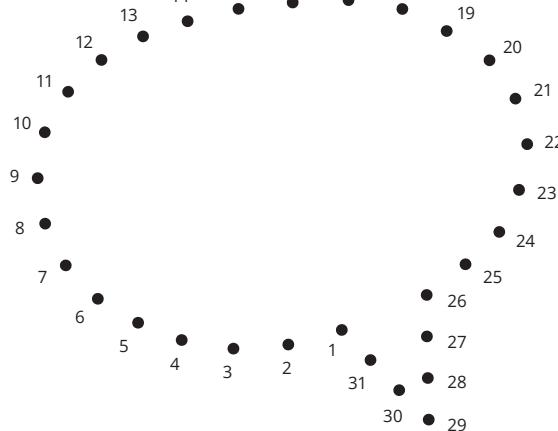


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125 YEARS OF LEADERSHIP

How the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce Shaped Our Region



Downtown Lansing taken between 1905-1920.

Courtesy Photo: Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division/Lansing State Journal.com



Downtown Lansing (current day)

Courtesy Photo: iStock

Anchoring Lansing's Industrial Legacy for Over a Century

By Liz Reno-Hayes

WHAT IS A CHAMBER OF COMMERCE?

A chamber of commerce is more than a business network. It is the voice of business, a catalyst for economic growth, and a gathering point for leaders working to shape a city's future. For 125 years, the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce (LRCC) has embodied this mission, championing innovation, advocating for businesses, and fostering a vibrant regional economy.

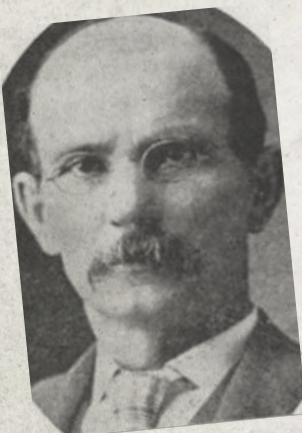
A LEGACY OF BOLD ACTION

The Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce has its roots in the Lansing Business Mens Association (LBMA), founded on January 4, 1901, by 12 local businessmen determined to

strengthen Lansing's economy. These leaders, including Frederick Thoman, E.S. Porter, and J. Edward Roe, recognized that Lansing's potential as an industrial center required organized advocacy, bold action, and strategic investments.

One of the LBMA's first major initiatives was to bring Ransom E. Olds' Oldsmobile operations back to Lansing, a move that cemented the city's role in automotive history.

The LBMA continued to shape Lansing's growth by attracting major industries such as the Keokuk Canning Company, Pere Marquette Railroad, Peninsular Manufacturing Company, and Reliance Motor Car Company. It invested in critical infrastructure, including Lansing's first hard surfaced road connecting the city

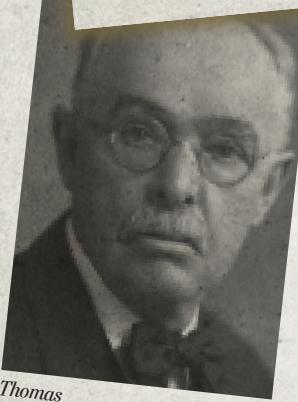


Thoman

Fred Thoman - 1901

Conflicting reports indicate that in 1857 or 1868, Frederick Thoman built the Oriental Mill in downtown Lansing, later named the Thoman Milling Company. The gristmill was a center of community life but also furnished steam and water for many local businesses. In 1882, a state-of-the-art Corliss engine was installed in the mill, providing a tie to the nearby Michigan Agricultural College (now

MSU), attracting engineering students who came to the mill to study the work-horse. The mill remained a model of the Industrial Revolution until it was destroyed in 1957. At the first meeting of the LBMA, held at the Grand River Boat Club, Thoman was elected president and the new association voted to purchase the fairgrounds to secure a site for the Olds Motor Works.



Thomas

Harris E. Thomas - 1902

Thomas graduated from Michigan Agricultural College in 1885 and then "read" the law with the firm of Cahill and Ostrander, both of whom became Michigan Supreme Court Justices. Thomas was admitted to the bar in 1889. He was the managing partner of the law firm of Thomas, Shields & Silsbee. He founded and incorporated the Michigan Knitting Company in 1891. He joined Frank Clark and Arthur C. Stebbins in 1902 to

form the short-lived Clarkmobile Company. Thomas incorporated countless companies, including the New Way Motor Company, the Prudden Company and REO Motor Car Company for Mr. Olds. Thomas was active in politics as an alternate delegate to the Democratic National Convention in 1912. He was treasurer of the Michigan Democratic Party in 1915 and a candidate for Michigan state senate for the 14th District in 1930.

Presidents



Baird

James Baird - 1903 & 1904

Baird was the owner of Baird's Opera House, at the corner of Washington Avenue and Ionia Street, which presented much more than just operas. His productions included melodramas, "rollicking Irish comedy" and blackface minstrel shows. Baird's also hosted local events, such as the

high school's commencement exercises and plays performed by students from the Boys Industrial School to raise money for band instruments and other needs. Baird's Opera House could seat 1,500 people. Baird also served as president of City National Bank.

to the Michigan Agricultural College, and facilitated mergers and consolidations among local manufacturers to strengthen the city's industrial base.

By 1912, the LBMA had accomplished so much that its members decided to modernize the organization, following models emerging in cities across the United

States. On January 15, 1912, the LBMA officially changed its name to the Lansing Chamber of Commerce, with James Henry Moores as elected president. This change symbolized the handoff from the LBMA to the Chamber and marked the beginning of a forward looking mission to guide Lansing's growth.

125 YEARS OF LEADERSHIP

How the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce Shaped Our Region

Key Milestones and Impact

Over its 125-year history, the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce has spearheaded countless transformative projects that have left a lasting mark on the region:

Airport Development

In the 1920s, the Chamber led the creation of Lansing's airport, providing a crucial gateway for business and commerce and positioning the city as a regional hub.

Automotive Legacy

In the 1900's Chamber leaders were instrumental in bringing Oldsmobile to Lansing and, decades later, in retaining General Motors operations, sustaining thousands of jobs and reinforcing the city's automotive foundation.

Leadership and Recognition

In 1982, the Lansing Regional Chamber, through the efforts of Martha Mertz, created the ATHENA Award and the ATHENA Foundation, which remains the only international program established by a city's chamber of commerce. Along with hosting events such as the LPGA Oldsmobile Classic, these initiatives showcase the Chamber's commitment to leadership, inclusion, and community engagement, highlighting its role beyond traditional business advocacy.

Economic Diversification

Over its history, the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce helped expand the region's economic base beyond manufacturing by supporting growth in healthcare, higher education, and finance.

- **Healthcare:** During the Chamber's second 50 years (1950s-1970s), Lansing saw substantial growth in hospitals and healthcare institutions, with the Chamber facilitating partnerships and infrastructure development to support the expanding sector.
- **Higher Education:** The Chamber worked closely with institutions such as Michigan State University and local vocational schools to foster workforce development and community programs, supporting a knowledge based economic expansion beyond industry.
- **Finance and Insurance:** As Lansing's economy matured, the Chamber played a role in bringing and sustaining insurance and banking operations, including through advocacy, networking, and infrastructure support, helping diversify the city's economic profile.
- **Transportation and Connectivity:** In 1905, the Chamber played a pivotal role in advancing regional connectivity with the paving of Michigan Avenue, linking downtown Lansing to Michigan Agricultural College. This critical infrastructure investment strengthened ties between the city and the state's leading agricultural and educational institution, improved the movement of people and goods, and supported Lansing's emergence as a regional economic center.

New State Capitol, Lansing, Mich.

The Chamber carried forward the LBMA's legacy of advocacy and economic development while expanding into initiatives such as airport creation in the 1920s, wartime industrial mobilization, and the retention of General Motors decades later, preserving thousands of jobs.

VOICES FROM HISTORY: PATRICK HANES

"The Lansing Business Mens Association was the blueprint for modern business advocacy in Lansing. Its members did not just talk about growth, they built it," remarked Patrick Hanes, former President of the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce.

Fondly referred to as the Chamber Historian, Patrick Hanes

is the reason so much of the LRCC's rich history has been preserved. The majority of the Chamber's historical records, including biographies of past presidents, were compiled by Hanes, drawing from Chamber archives, print publications, and online sources.

As Chamber President in 1988, Hanes formed a committee to gather photographs and information on all past presidents. This monumental project culminated in a reception honoring these leaders for their dedication to Lansing's business community, ensuring their contributions would be remembered for generations. Asked to identify the Chamber's single most significant accomplishment over 125 years, Hanes answered without hesitation: securing Oldsmobile's arrival in Lansing and keeping General Motors firmly rooted in the community.

Presidents of the Lansing Business Men's Association



Piatt

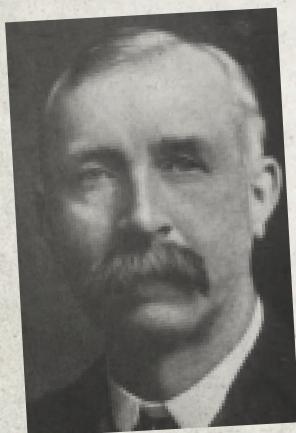
A.A. Piatt - 1905

Piatt was the founder and long-time owner of A.A. Piatt and Bros., which was a hardware manufacturing plant. The plant was located on the old capitol grounds in Lansing. Piatt was also the founder and president of Howell Manufacturing Co. which, by the late 1890s, was making two million

spokes a year. The company also furnished electrical power for streetcar companies. Its 500 horsepower compound condensing engine furnished power for the electric railroad company. Piatt also served as the fuel administrator for the State of Michigan.

EST. JANUARY 4, 1901

Presidents of the Lansing Business Men's Association



Price

Lawrence Price - 1906

Price was a Civil War veteran who arrived in Lansing in 1883 and started buying and shipping livestock, as well as going into the lumber business. He was instrumental in promoting the Capital Lumber Company and became one of the pioneers in Lansing's automobile industry. He was president of the Lansing Brewing Company for a number of years. Price founded the Auto Body Works in 1901 and was president at the

time of his death. He was credited, to a large degree, for the success of the company. Price was a director and one of the organizers of both the Gier Pressed Steel and Auto Wheel companies; president of the Riker Lumber Company, where Mill Supply Corp. currently stands; one of the original stockholders in the Reo Motor Car Company and a director of the City National Bank.

BRINGING OLDSMOBILE TO LANSING

Ransom E. Olds founded the Olds Motor Vehicle Company in Lansing in 1897, establishing the city as an early center of automotive innovation. Later, he moved the company temporarily after taking in financial backers who gained control, creating uncertainty about Lansing's role in the automotive industry.

Recognizing the transformative potential of Oldsmobile for the region, the Lansing Business Mens Association (LBMA), and later the Chamber, took decisive action to bring the company back to Lansing. At a July 1901 meeting, the organization purchased land at the fairgrounds and secured investors to guarantee payment if Olds built his plant there. Within two years, Olds Motor Works Plant

Number 1 was established, cementing Lansing's role in automotive history and anchoring the automotive industry in the city. This move catalyzed a wave of related manufacturing and firmly established Lansing as a center of industrial innovation.

The return of Oldsmobile fundamentally reshaped Lansing's economy, creating thousands of jobs and attracting suppliers, entrepreneurs, and skilled labor to the city. It also strengthened Lansing's national reputation, showcasing the Chamber's ability to strategically guide the region's economic development.

KEEPING GENERAL MOTORS HERE

Decades later, the Chamber again demonstrated its

125 YEARS OF LEADERSHIP

How the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce Shaped Our Region

Presidents of the Lansing Business Men's Association

EST. JANUARY 4, 1901



Porter

Edgar S. Porter - 1907 & 1908

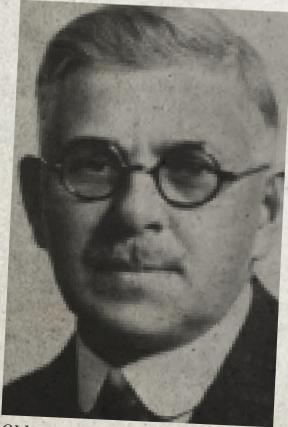
During Porter's years as president, the LBMA agreed to donate land it owned to the Reliance Motor Car Company of Detroit if the company agreed to locate in Lansing. Porter was a founder and general manager of Lansing Spoke Company, which was formed in 1891.

Within 10 years the company was handling five million feet of lumber per year in its production of spokes. The company employed 75 workers at that time and was known for using the most modern machinery. Porter later served as president of Auto Wheel Company.

Pr

Presidents of the Lansing Business Men's Association

EST. JANUARY 4, 1901



Olds

Eli Ransom Olds - 1911

Olds founded the Olds Motor Vehicle Company in Lansing, Michigan, on August 21, 1897. The company was bought by a copper and lumber magnate named Samuel L. Smith in 1899 and renamed Olds Motor Works. The new company was moved from Lansing to Detroit and Smith became president while Olds became vice president and general manager. The Detroit plant burned to the ground on March 9, 1901. On August 12, 1901, Olds Motor Company agreed to move its plant and business to Lansing on the property known as the old state fairgrounds, buying the property from the Lansing Business Men's Association for \$5,118. In addition, the Lansing Business Men's Association offered to erect a building on the site sufficient to

accommodate the Oldsmobile Motor Works and offered the use of the building for one year rent free, provided that Olds Motor Works would pay the taxes, insurance and maintenance on the building. The building was built on the banks of the Grand River and added to repeatedly over the years. It could be seen easily while traveling on Martin Luther King Blvd/Logan Street, where it passed over the Grand River. After leaving Olds Motor works, Olds went on to form REO Motor Company in Lansing as well as forming or participating in the formation of several other companies, many of which were automotive related and served to provide a stable and reliable source of parts first for Olds Motor Company and later, REO Motor Company.

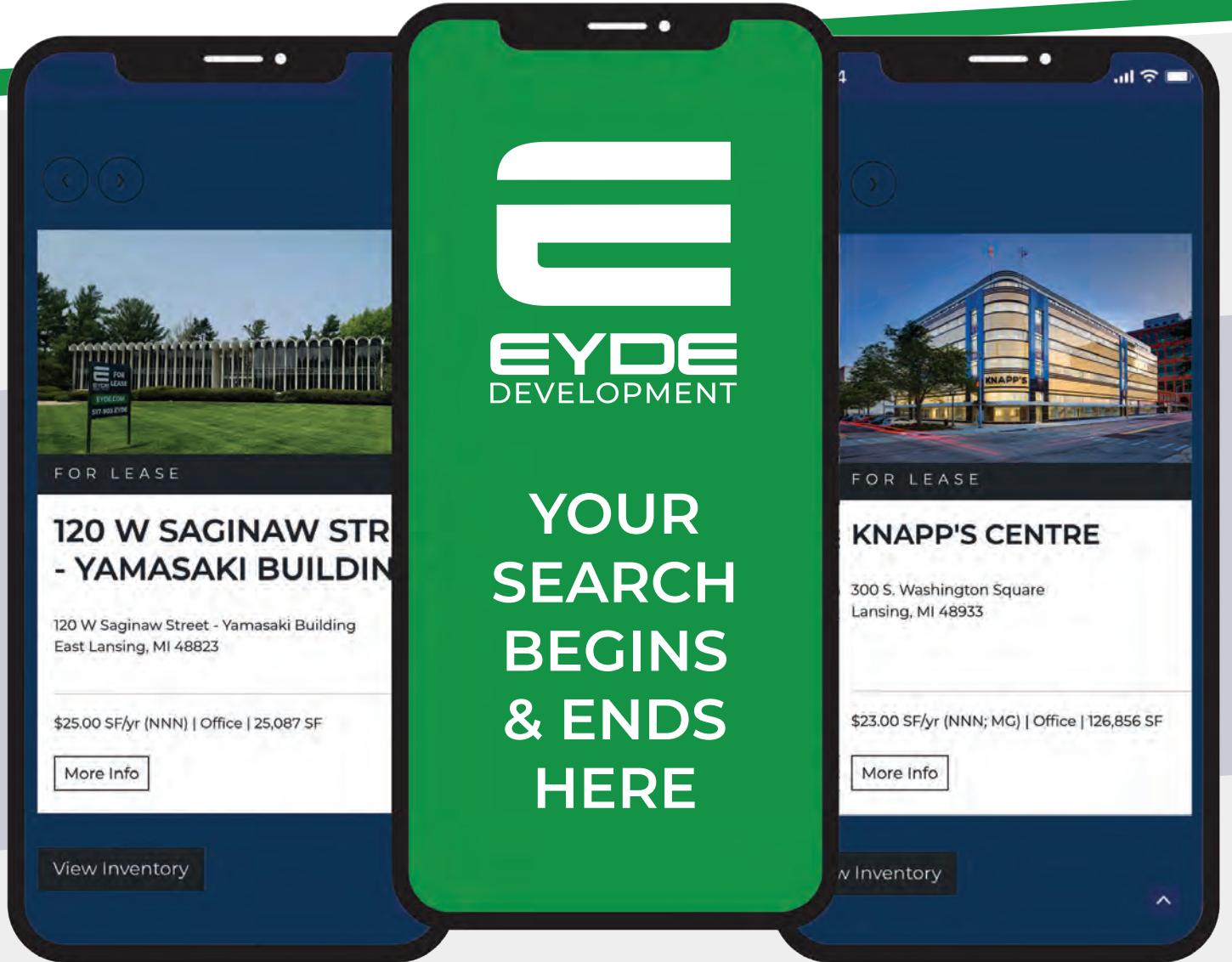
strategic importance when efforts were made to retain General Motors (GM) operations in the Lansing area. Recognizing that GM was not just a major employer but a cornerstone of the local economy, Chamber leaders engaged in sustained advocacy, negotiation, and community coordination to ensure GM remained invested in the region.

The successful retention of GM preserved thousands of jobs and maintained Lansing's status as an automotive hub. Beyond economic impact, it reinforced the Chamber's credibility as a guardian of the city's industrial future, proving that thoughtful leadership and persistent advocacy could safeguard Lansing's prosperity for generations.

LOOKING TOWARD THE NEXT CENTURY

Over its 125-year history, the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce has spearheaded countless transformative projects that have left a lasting mark on the region. Today, the Chamber continues the Lansing Business Mens Association's mission of strengthening businesses, connecting leaders, and enriching the Lansing community. With a foundation built on bold action and visionary leadership, the Chamber is poised to guide the region through the challenges and opportunities of the twenty-first century. ♦

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Chamber in Action



The Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce, along with its Ambassadors, Delta Township, and State Representative Angela Witwer, joined together to celebrate the opening of **Anna's House** in Grand Ledge.



The Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce, along with its Ambassadors, congratulated **MediLodge of Lansing** on the grand opening of their new in-house hemodialysis program.



The LRCC celebrated **Peculiar Coffee Co.** with a ribbon-cutting during our 2025 Year-End Business Roundtable, bringing together leaders from Delta Township-Eaton County, Lansing-Delhi Township, East Lansing-Meridian Township, and Clinton County.



The Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce, with its Ambassadors, welcomed **Tony Waldron, Agent with New York Life Insurance** as a new member with an official ribbon-cutting.



The Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce, its Ambassadors, and Mayor Andy Schor joined in celebrating the **Boys & Girls Club of Lansing - Northside Extension** for its collaborative work with the Lansing Housing Commission, marked by a ribbon-cutting ceremony.



The Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce, along with its Ambassadors and Delta Township, proudly congratulates **Adventure Credit Union** on their exciting merger with Astera Credit Union.

An Afternoon of Inspiration: Highlights from the 2025 ATHENA Lansing Celebration



There's something energizing about being in a room filled with leaders who believe in lifting others as they climb. That spirit was on full display on December 16, when the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce welcomed business and community leaders to the Lansing Center for the 2025 ATHENA Lansing Celebration.

The annual luncheon brought together supporters of women's leadership from across the region to celebrate impact, mentorship, and the ripple effects of strong leadership. Emceed by Sheri Jones, former WLNS-TV6 news anchor and 2006 ATHENA Award recipient, the program blended reflection, recognition, and inspiration, all grounded in ATHENA's long-standing mission to advance women leaders.

At the heart of the celebration was the presentation of the 2025 ATHENA Leadership Award to Rebecca Bahar-Cook, CEO of Capitol Fundraising Associates. Bahar-Cook was recognized not only for her professional success, but for the way she consistently invests in others, mentoring emerging leaders and strengthening the broader community. Ahead of the luncheon, her plaque was unveiled as the 44th addition to the ATHENA Hall of Fame at the Lansing Center, joining a distinguished group of women (and one man) whose leadership has shaped the Greater Lansing region.

As LRCC President and CEO Tim Daman noted during the program, the ATHENA Leadership Award honors women who achieve excellence while opening doors for others. Bahar-Cook's career and commitment exemplify exactly that kind of leadership: purpose-driven, inclusive, and community-focused.

The celebration also highlighted the ATHENA PowerLink® Award, a national mentoring initiative designed to support women business owners through structured, strategic advisory panels. Jacqueline Taylor, owner of Little Dreamers Early Learning Center, was recognized as the 2025 ATHENA PowerLink® Award recipient. Taylor shared how the insight and guidance from her advisory panel helped her navigate growth and strengthen her business, an example of how mentorship can translate into real-world impact.

Looking ahead, LRCC announced Lillian Werbin, CEO and Co-Owner of Elderly Instruments, as the 2026 ATHENA PowerLink® Award recipient. Werbin will work closely with her advisory panel throughout the year and will be formally recognized at next year's celebration.

More than a luncheon, the 2025 ATHENA Lansing Celebration was a reminder of what's possible when leadership is paired with mentorship, and when a community comes together to celebrate women who lead with intention. ♦

Leadership Program Spotlight



Empowering Leaders. Transforming Cultures.

Inclusive leadership is essential to organizational success. That belief is at the heart of the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce's Inclusive Leadership Program, an immersive six-month professional development experience designed to equip leaders at all levels with the mindset, skills, and strategies needed to build thriving, inclusive workplaces.



The program is led by Dr. Tonya Bailey, a visionary executive with more than 25 years of experience driving transformation in higher education, corporate environments, and community engagement. Through engaging workshops, guided reflection, and hands-on application, participants move beyond theory to develop leadership competencies they can immediately apply within their organizations.

BUILDING THE FOUNDATION

Launched in October, the program opened with a deep dive into the Foundations of Inclusive Leadership. Participants explored the core principles of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) and examined why inclusive leadership is vital to organizational performance. Leaders were challenged to define what inclusion means in their own contexts, clarify their personal leadership values, and identify areas for growth.

DEVELOPING SELF AWARENESS

In November, the cohort focused on Self Awareness and Unconscious Bias, a critical step in becoming an effective inclusive leader. Participants examined how bias and

privilege influence decision making, communication, and workplace culture. Through self-assessments and guided reflection, leaders learned strategies to interrupt bias and lead with greater awareness and intentionality.

STRENGTHENING INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION

December's session centered on Inclusive Communication and Collaboration, emphasizing the interpersonal skills necessary to build trust and belonging. Leaders practiced inclusive communication techniques, active listening, and conflict resolution strategies designed to strengthen team dynamics and foster collaboration across differences.

MEANINGFUL OUTCOMES

Organizations that invest in the Inclusive Leadership Program report measurable gains in team morale, innovation, and employee retention. By the end of the six-month program, participants will have mastered six core competencies of inclusive leadership, gained practical tools to build equitable workplace systems, and developed the confidence to lead effectively across differences. Graduates also earn a Certificate of Inclusive Leadership from TCB Consulting LLC, reinforcing their ability to build stronger, more engaged, and high performing teams.

As workplaces continue to evolve, programs like the Inclusive Leadership Program are preparing leaders to meet complexity with clarity, compassion, and courage while transforming organizational cultures from the inside out.

For more information visit www.lansingchamber.org/empowering-inclusive-leaders or email Ashlee Willis michiganpremierevents@lansingchamber.org ♦

Inclusive Leadership Program

Lansing 2025/2026 Cohort



Cathy Zell

Lansing Community College



Sydney Lerma

City of Lansing - Fire Department



Dawn Haddad

Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce



Taylor Moberg-Gose

MSUFCU



Lori Gray

Lansing Board of Water & Light



Kate Litwin

Downtown Lansing Inc.



Amirika Richardson

Capital Area Michigan Works!



Jamell Williams

LAFCU



Sydeon Harvey

Lansing Community Mental Health

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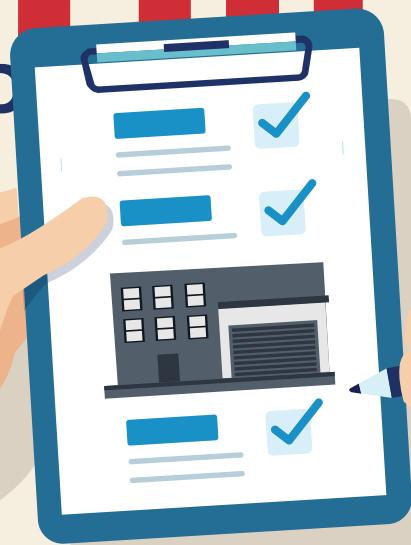
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Members on the Move

NEW HIRES



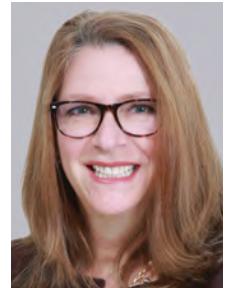
Lenon

James Lenon, owner of Lenon James Photography, has been named Executive Director of the **Old Town Commercial Association**. Lenon brings extensive

management and administrative experience from his career with the Michigan State Senate, as well as a creative sensibility and community focus. Beyond his professional work, Lenon is an active volunteer and advocate for outdoor spaces as President of the Mid-Michigan Mountain Bike Association and trail coordinator at Anderson Nature Park in Delta Township.



Shaw



Gmazel

Lansing-based commercial contractor **WIELAND** has announced several key leadership changes. **Kevin Shaw** has been promoted from VP of Marketing

to Chief Growth Officer, where he will continue to take over **WIELAND**'s business development activities and also provide leadership in strategic planning. In a corresponding move, **Kelly Gmazel** has joined **WIELAND** as Senior Director of Marketing. Gmazel will direct all creative initiatives and support the company's proposal process. **WIELAND** also named

Chris Rudolph as a Project Director, from his previous role as Senior Project Manager.



Rueff

Union Bank is pleased to announce the addition of **Scott Rueff** as Vice President, Commercial Banker. Focusing exclusively on agribusiness, Rueff will support Michigan's makers, builders, and growers with tailored financial solutions that strengthen farm operations, processing, and distribution. With more than 27 years of experience serving the agricultural community in West Michigan, Rueff brings seasoned leadership and a personalized approach to helping customers achieve their financial goals. He will be based at Union Bank's Loan Production Office in Portage, Michigan.



King

Jayme A. King has been named Executive Director of **Lansing Promise**. An Everett High School alumna, King brings more than 20 years of experience in strategic planning, fundraising, and community partnership building, along with a background in education and financial services. She previously served as AVP of eBranch and marketing at CASE Credit Union and program manager for Lansing SAVE, and has been active in mentoring and local school initiatives, reflecting her commitment to helping Lansing students succeed on their path to postsecondary completion.



Hannah

Risk Strategies is pleased to welcome **Eric Hannah** as Vice President, Employee Benefits. With more than 20 years of experience across multiple facets

of the healthcare industry, Hannah currently serves as a Registered Employee Benefits Consultant, helping employers optimize and strengthen their benefits strategies as part of the Brown & Brown team. In addition to his professional role, Hannah joined the board of directors for Hospice of Lansing & Stoneleigh Residence in September 2025.



Haralson



Harris



Reynolds

LAFCU has strengthened its information technology team with the addition of **Jayson Haralson, De'Jon Harris**, and the promotion of **Dana Reynolds**. Haralson joins

as security engineer, returning to LAFCU to manage and secure the credit union's network infrastructure. He holds a bachelor's degree in management information systems from Northwood University and a master's degree in science from Eastern Michigan University. Harris comes on as technology specialist, providing technical guidance and help desk support, and holds CompTIA A+ and Security+ certifications, multiple IBM IT and cybersecurity certifications,

and completed the School of Engineering and Management at the Air Force Institute of Technology. Reynolds was promoted to program and technical support specialist, ensuring the efficient operation of software systems. Reynolds holds a bachelor's degree in mathematics from Michigan State University.



Bersuder

Liberty Title is proud to welcome back **Courtney Bersuder** as Account Manager. Bersuder, who originally joined Liberty Title in 2005, brings two decades of experience in banking, title, and real estate, including roles at TCF Bank and as a licensed real estate agent with Reinhart Realtors. In her role, she focuses on building relationships with agents, loan officers, and clients while ensuring seamless closings, and providing education and resources to help customers navigate today's real estate market.

APPOINTMENTS



Bitely

campaign, highlighting her leadership and growing influence in Michigan's communications and political landscape.



Gillespie

Andrea Bitely, founder and principal of **Bitely Communications**, has been appointed Chief Communications Officer for Mike Duggan's independent gubernatorial

campaign, highlighting her leadership and growing influence in Michigan's communications and political landscape.

Dart Bank is pleased to announce the election of **Patrick Gillespie**, founder, CEO, and Chief Visionary of Gillespie Group, to its Board of Directors.

Recognized as Ernst & Young's Entrepreneur of the Year for Michigan and Northwest Ohio in 2025, Gillespie brings decades of experience in commercial and residential real estate development, strategic leadership, and business growth. His expertise in driving innovation and growth in business will provide valuable perspective to the board, as Dart Bank expands services and strengthens its commitment to supporting Michigan communities.



Adams



Bruggink



Burnell



Doyle



Ghena



McCarthy

Junior Achievement of Mid Michigan (JAMM) recently welcomed new board members: **J. Nathan Adams** (Barton Malow), **Brent Bruggink** (CG Financial Services), **Carmen Burnell** (Delta Dental), **Dewey Doyle** (Tri Star Trust), **Josh Ghena** (Cinnaire), and **Connor McCarthy** (Mercantile Bank). The new board members bring expertise spanning construction, finance, corporate citizenship, and nonprofit leadership, reflecting JAMM's commitment to supporting student success and community engagement in the Greater Lansing area.

AWARDS



MSU Federal Credit Union has been named a

2025 Child Care Champion, recognized for its leadership in expanding access to childcare for employees and the broader community. MSUFCU was nominated by the Capital Area Child Care Coalition, housed at LEAP in partnership with United Way and Capital Area Michigan Works!. The honor was unveiled by the Early Childhood Investment Corporation in partnership with Pulse at the W.E. Upjohn Institute and the Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential, highlighting business leaders setting the standard for childcare support across Michigan.



LAFCU has been named one of the

2025 Best Places to Work for Women by Best Companies Group. Based on employee feedback, the recognition highlights LAFCU's commitment to supporting, empowering, and advancing women in the workplace. Women represent more than 70% of LAFCU's workforce and 67% of its executive leadership team, with survey results showing high satisfaction, strong benefits, and a culture rooted in diversity and inclusion.



Photo: Crain's Detroit Business

Andrea Bitely has been recognized on Crain's Detroit Business 2025 40 Under 40, a prestigious annual recognition that honors 40 rising leaders under the age of 40 whose achievements and leadership are shaping the future of Michigan's business and civic landscape.



Origami Rehabilitation has been named Michigan's first CARF-accredited

concussion rehabilitation program for children and adults, and the fifth in the United States. The accreditation, granted by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF), recognizes Origami's commitment to quality, safety, and outcomes in concussion care, giving Michigan residents access to world-class, accredited rehabilitation close to home.



Warner Norcross + Judd

Warner Norcross + Judd LLP has been recognized as one of the 2026 "Best Law

Firms" by Best Lawyers®. For the second consecutive year, the firm earned accolades for its litigation work in environmental law and regulatory enforcement, with six offices receiving top-tier ratings across multiple practice areas. Offices in Detroit, Kalamazoo, Lansing, Midland, and Macomb County were highlighted for excellence in areas including commercial litigation, corporate law, health care, bankruptcy, construction, government relations, and trusts and estates, reflecting the firm's expertise, client service, and commitment to legal excellence.



The U.S. News and World Report listed **McLaren**

Greater Lansing as a best hospital for maternity care for 2026. U.S. News evaluates how well hospitals perform in childbirth using C-section rates, newborn severe complication rates, routine vaginal birth after cesarean delivery (VBAC) rates, episiotomy rates, best practices to support breast milk feeding, whether a hospital meets federal criteria for "birthing-friendly" practices, and whether a hospital tracked and reported

disparities in outcomes. U.S. News recognized McLaren Greater Lansing for providing high-quality labor and delivery services for uncomplicated pregnancies.

COMPANY NEWS



representatives recently appeared before the House Economic Competitiveness Subcommittee to discuss digital asset legislation, clarifying the distinctions between Bitcoin and other digital assets and offering guidance on regulation that balances innovation with consumer protection. Founded to advance education, outreach, and advocacy around Bitcoin, the Michigan Bitcoin Trade Council helps individuals and businesses navigate the digital era of money while positioning Michigan as a hub for Bitcoin innovation.



ADVENTURE CREDIT UNION

Astera Credit Union has recently completed their merger into **Adventure Credit Union**. The combined credit union, now operating under the Adventure name, serves more than 43,000 members across 10 branch locations. Adventure serves both individual and business members at every stage of life. Membership is open to anyone who lives in Michigan, and only a \$5 deposit is required to establish an account. Learn more at Adventurecu.org or visit one of their four Lansing area locations.



Lansing School District
Student Development Program

Program, led by Jon Horford, received a \$1.2 million state budget allocation to renovate the Don Johnson Fieldhouse. The funding will support upgrades including classrooms, a basketball court, and a commercial kitchen, enhancing the program's ability to provide safe and positive afterschool and summer activities for Lansing



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youth.

PreK for All is accepting enrollments for four-year-olds for the 2025-26 school year, with

multiple community childcare centers and school district classrooms offering immediate openings in the Lansing area. The program, open to all families with no income requirement, provides a play-based learning environment that supports social, emotional, and academic growth at no cost. PreK for All helps families access high-quality preschool close to home while supporting school readiness and daily routines. Families can learn more and apply at www.inghampreschool.org.

Choose Lansing® has earned reaccreditation through the Destination Marketing Accreditation Program (DMAP) from Destinations International. DMAP recognizes destination organizations that meet rigorous standards for excellence, performance, and accountability. Choose Lansing®, the first destination marketing organization in Michigan to earn DMAP accreditation in 2007, continues to meet the highest standards in the industry as it supports partners, drives economic impact, and showcases the best of Michigan's Capital Region. It joins more than 200 global organizations demonstrating excellence. ♦



The Stadium District

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