

# FOCUS

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

OCTOBER 2026

## MICHIGAN'S NEXT ERA

BUILDING AN ECONOMIC STRATEGY THAT LASTS

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Celebrating the 20th Annual  
10 Over the Next Ten Awards

LRCC Urges No Vote on  
Proposal 1

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**TIM DAMAN**  
PRESIDENT AND CEO  
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**Michigan has too often swung between priorities, and that inconsistency has been a competitive disadvantage for decades. Other states have shown a better way.**

## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAMBER

# A More Competitive Michigan Starts Here

**M**ichigan will elect a new governor this November, and the stakes reach well beyond who sits in the governor's office. Business Leaders For Michigan's *Michigan in a New Era* report lays out what it will take to make our state more competitive, and much of that work has to happen right here in our capital city. The report's starting point should get every voter's attention. Over the past 25 years, Michigan ranks 50th in the nation in household income growth.

The average Michigan household now earns about \$5,000 less than the average state and \$18,000 less than households in the top 10 states. High-wage professional service jobs, which pay roughly 20% more than average, have grown 35% nationally but stayed flat in Michigan for more than two decades. The states pulling ahead share similar traits: they are consistent, competitive and comprehensive.

Since 1998, Michigan has fallen from 16th to 44th in fourth-grade reading, and one in four students is chronically absent. We cannot compete for high-wage jobs unless we prepare students for them and help adults reskill along the way. Education attainment matters in Michigan. An associate degree boosts median wages by 66% over a high school diploma, and a bachelor's degree more than doubles them. Our state's goal of 60% of working-age adults holding a postsecondary credential by 2030 is one every candidate should commit to.

Our research universities are another piece of the equation. Michigan universities conduct \$3.5 billion in research annually. We need an economic development strategy that focuses on commercialization, start-up creation, venture capital and a climate that supports growth here. Talent is where this system succeeds or fails. Only 46% of STEM graduates from Michigan's universities remain in the state, and Michigan ranks second to last in the share of residents born somewhere else. Reversing that trend takes strong career opportunities, vibrant communities, neighborhoods, attainable housing and telling our story with confidence.

None of this works if it resets with every new administration. Michigan has too often swung between priorities, and that inconsistency has been a competitive disadvantage for decades. Other states have shown a better way, including neighboring state Ohio. JobsOhio's funding is secured through 2053, shielding its strategy from budget fights and election cycles. The real test for Michigan's next governor and Legislature is whether they create a long-term strategy on education, talent, innovation and economic development, and build it to outlast any single administration.

The Lansing region is well positioned to lead in this new era. We are home to state government, a world-class research university, a nationally respected community college, a strong manufacturing base and growing strengths in innovation, insurance and health care. As a state and region, we have all the assets and ability to reverse these trends and more. This is the work the Lansing Regional Chamber is proud to help lead. ♦



# HEALTH CARE IS PERSONAL. SO ARE ITS COSTS.

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It's also expensive. Your ability to afford health care is essential — and affordable health insurance is a big part of that. As prices for medical services and prescription drugs continue to rise, so does the pressure on health insurance affordability. 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



## Manufacturing in Michigan. Powered by our people.

**M**ichigan's rich manufacturing heritage is a source of pride. Driven forward through the years by innovation, advancing technology, and a skilled workforce that powers Michigan's status as a longstanding leader in the manufacturing industry. Playing an essential role in the state's economy.

Drew Jones, Government Affairs Manager at Lake Trust, offers insights on approaching Michigan's future in manufacturing with strategic thinking that focuses on investing in local businesses, and building a skilled workforce.

"Global market volatility and rising input costs have challenged manufacturers, but they have also created a powerful incentive to bring operations closer to home. Sourcing domestically and reshoring supply chains allows Michigan businesses to build resilience while keeping economic value right here in our communities."

"To fully capitalize on this momentum, we have to invest just as aggressively in our people. When we remove barriers to higher education and technical training through partnerships like ours with Cleary University, we build a skilled, adaptable workforce that ensures Michigan manufacturing remains competitive, innovative, and positioned for long-term growth," says Jones.

The annual scholarship programs at Lake Trust are a commitment to investing in Michiganders. Each year, the Michigan Impact Scholarship in partnership with Cleary University offers up to four years of full tuition at Cleary University. Removing barriers and opening doors for applicants who plan to contribute to the local economy after graduation.

In addition, the New Beginnings Scholarship at Lake Trust supports Michiganders who are interested in pursuing a skilled trade or technical career. The funds they're awarded can be used for tuition, tools for the trade, professional fees, or dues.



These scholarship programs help support the development of a workforce with the skills to sustain themselves and their families. While building the future of Michigan's local economy.

Through continued investment in businesses, workers, and education, Michigan can continue building on its long history as a manufacturing leader. Learn more about Lake Trust's continued commitment to investing in the businesses and the people of Michigan.

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## Chamber Milestones

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 25 years

**Lansing Urgent Care**  
 20 years

**Meridian Company, The**  
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**Michigan Certified Development Corporation (MCDC)**  
 15 years

**Lansing Promise Foundation**  
 5 years

**Michigan Institute for Contemporary Art (MICA)**  
 5 years

**Pure Options - PG Manufacturing, LLC**  
 5 years

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

# Celebrating the 20th Annual 10 Over the Next Ten Awards

By Liz Reno-Hayes



**O**n September 15, 2026, the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce (LRCC) and Lansing 5:01 gathered honorees, alumni, business leaders, and community partners at the University Club of MSU to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the **10 Over the Next Ten Awards**. As employers across the region compete to attract and retain skilled professionals, the program has spent two decades recognizing emerging leaders who choose to build their careers and invest their talents here. With the 2026 class, 200 young professionals have now been honored for their professional accomplishments, leadership potential, and community involvement.

“Reaching the 20th anniversary of 10 Over the Next

Ten is an incredible opportunity to celebrate not only this year’s honorees, but two decades of talented people who have chosen to build their careers, serve their communities and make a difference here in the Lansing Region,” says Sarah Bakken, Talent Development Manager at LRCC.

This year’s event was made possible thanks to our presenting sponsor, Independent Bank; the University Club of MSU, serving as the venue host; and Michigan Premier Events, serving as the event managing partner.

## Meet the 2026 Honorees



### AMANDA DERNOV SHEK

Amanda Dernovshek, Shareholder at Foster Swift, came to East Lansing for law school in 2015 and has since built her career at the firm, helping companies implement employee stock ownership plans and preserve their legacies through employee ownership. Dernovshek is involved with the Junior League of Lansing and Girls on the Run Mid-Michigan.



### HARRISON LEFFEL-JONES

After building a career spanning Lansing, Chicago, and London, Harrison Leffel-Jones chose to return to the Lansing Region. As Vice President of Small Business and Innovation at LEAP, he has deployed more than \$1 million to regional small businesses and co-founded 517 Entrepreneurship & Innovation Week. Leffel-Jones holds the Certified Economic Developer designation and has served as Public Board Chair of the Lansing Regional SmartZone since 2022.



### BRIDGETTE BAUER

As Director of Public Affairs at Bellwether Public Relations, Bridgette Bauer combines earned media, advocacy, and policy strategy to help organizations advance issues important to Michigan. Invested in empowering the next generation, Bauer serves on the boards of the Share the Music Foundation and YMCA Michigan Youth in Government.



### KAHLEEA WASHINGTON

An Illinois native, entrepreneur, and urban sociologist, Kahleea Washington moved to Michigan in 2023 for a Community Development Fellowship with CEDAM and MEDC. As Community Development Specialist at the Lansing Economic Development Corporation, she manages corridor programs, small business support, grants, and placemaking initiatives. Washington also owns Sweet Lee’s Teas and serves on the Mid-Michigan Junior Achievement Associate Board.



### DEVON PUNG

Devon Pung, Mechanical Engineering Project Manager at Matrix Consulting Engineers, is an engineer, third-generation farmer, and parent whose work reflects a commitment to problem solving, stewardship, and service. Pung has also served for four years as a volunteer firefighter and medical first responder.



Courtesy Photo: AA Studios



### KRISTEN FILLMORE

Kristen Fillmore has advanced through multiple roles at Plante Moran and now serves as Relationship Manager in the wealth management practice of Plante Moran Financial Advisors. A Certified Financial Planner and Certified Private Wealth Advisor, Fillmore serves on the Board of Trustees for the Capital Region Community Foundation.



### TRAVIS HARRIS

As Investment Advisor at PNC Bank, Travis Harris helps individuals and families make confident financial decisions and build lasting legacies, with an emphasis on trust, relationships, and lifelong learning. Harris is also a founding board member of the OurSpace Foundation.



### MONIQUE HUDSON

A Lansing native and Everett High School graduate, Monique Hudson serves as Program and Relationship Owner for the Strategic Support Program at Jackson Financial. She holds bachelor's and master's degrees from Central Michigan University. Passionate about developing the next generation, Hudson coaches youth and has volunteered with CASA for Kids since 2022.



### QUINN O'DONNELL

Quinn O'Donnell, Program Manager of Volunteer, In Kind Donations, and Donor Database at Child and Family Charities, coordinates volunteers, in-kind donations, and the donor database for the organization's development department. O'Donnell chairs the Capital District Libraries Board of Trustees and belongs to the Kiwanis Club of Lansing, and enjoys reading, writing, and playing D&D with friends.



### JAZMIN ANDERSON

As Director of Small Business and Equity Programs at LEAP, Jazmin Anderson leads entrepreneurship programs including SCALE, One & All, and Business Made Simple. A former elected commissioner on the City of Lansing Charter Commission, Anderson is also co-owner of Stay Rooted and organizes community art meetups that create culturally grounded spaces.



Lansing 5:01 also continued its tradition of honoring community leaders with the **Chris Sell Award**. Named for Chris Sell, founder of Lansing 5:01, the award recognizes exceptional contributions to innovation, economic development, and community growth across the Lansing Region. Sell was named the inaugural recipient in 2025. This year, Erin Brains of the Lansing

Foodies Facebook Community received the award for her role in building community connection and engagement across the region. ♦

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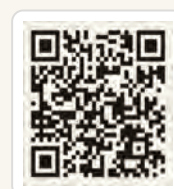
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# LRCC Urges No Vote on Proposal 1

*Constitutional convention would create unnecessary uncertainty for Michigan*

The Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce is urging voters to vote NO on Proposal 1 on the November 3 ballot, opposing the creation of a constitutional convention that could open Michigan's entire Constitution to revision.



Under the Michigan Constitution, voters are asked every 16 years whether a convention should be called. Proposal 1 asks voters whether elected delegates should convene in 2027 to draft a general revision of the Constitution, which would ultimately be presented to Michigan voters for approval or rejection.

LRCC believes Michigan's business community needs stability and predictability, particularly at a time when employers are navigating significant economic and policy uncertainty.

A constitutional convention could create years of uncertainty surrounding Michigan's governing framework. The coalition opposing Proposal 1 has also raised concerns about the rules governing convention delegate elections, including the lack of contribution limits, disclosure requirements and other campaign finance guardrails.

Michigan already provides voters with a process to amend the Constitution without reopening the entire document. That process allows specific reforms to be considered individually and ultimately decided by voters.

LRCC is part of a broad coalition of organizations opposing Proposal 1 and working to educate Michiganders about the potential consequences of convening a constitutional convention.

**On November 3, LRCC encourages members and voters across the Lansing Region to vote NO on Proposal 1. ♦**

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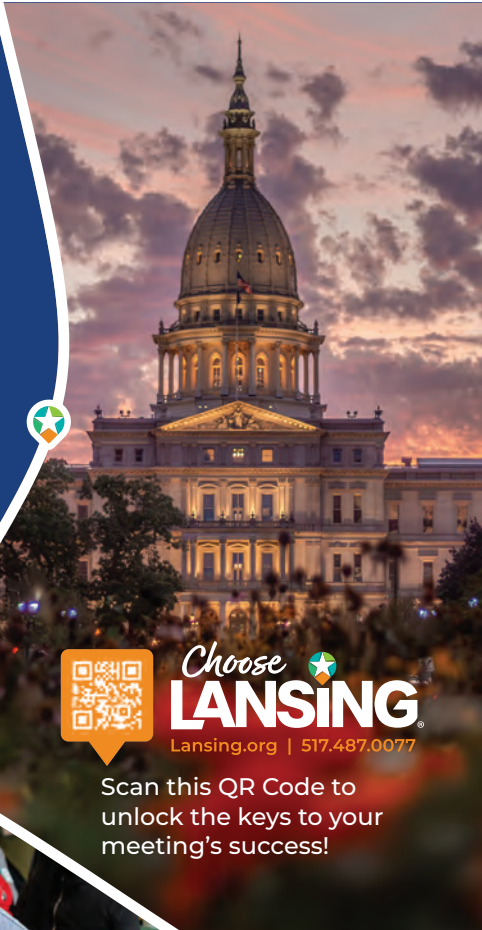


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# LRCC Continues Call for Smart, Stable Trade Policy

*Michigan employers need certainty to compete, invest and grow*

Courtesy Photos

**A**s Michigan businesses continue navigating an uncertain global trade environment, the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce continues its work as part of the [Michigan Smart Trade Alliance](#), advocating alongside business organizations across the state for a more consistent and predictable approach to trade policy.

Michigan's economy is deeply connected to international trade. Manufacturers and suppliers rely on integrated supply chains that cross borders, particularly throughout North America. When tariffs and trade policies change rapidly, businesses face increased costs and greater difficulty making long-term decisions about hiring, investment and growth.

The impact is being felt by Michigan employers. Mary Buchzeiger, CEO of Lucerne International, recently shared through the Alliance how escalating trade tensions and unpredictable tariffs are affecting her automotive supply business and creating uncertainty for future investment and jobs.

For LRCC, supporting smart trade policy does not mean opposing every tariff or trade enforcement action. The United States must be able to respond to unfair trade practices and protect American businesses and workers. At the same time, employers need clarity, consistency and predictability to compete.

LRCC will continue working through the Michigan Smart Trade Alliance to advocate for policies that strengthen Michigan businesses, protect critical supply chains and preserve strong North American trading relationships.

A competitive Michigan depends on businesses having the confidence to invest here. Escalating trade wars and constantly changing rules make that increasingly difficult.

Read more from the [Michigan Smart Trade Alliance](#) ♦

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# Passing the Torch: ATHENA WIN's Evening of Empowerment Celebrates a Legacy of Giving

By Sarah Bakken

**O**n Thursday, September 24, ATHENA Women's Interest Network (WIN) members and community leaders filled the Crowne Plaza Lansing for the annual Evening of Empowerment. The evening featured a fireside chat with mother and daughter Lupe Izzo and Raquel Izzo-McDonald of The Izzo Legacy, and it showed how one family's commitment to service has grown into a movement that lifts up communities across Michigan.

Former WLNS TV-6 anchor Chivon Kloefer emceed the evening, which centered on a question that runs through ATHENA WIN's mission: what does it mean to lead with purpose?

Lupe Izzo knows something about building things. An East Lansing native and Michigan State graduate, she ran the Rain Soft Water Treatment Systems dealership of Lansing for more than 20 years and earned the 1990 Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award. In 2019, she founded The Izzo Legacy, which has since given more than \$2 million to Michigan charities and received the 2022 Governor's Service Philanthropist Award.

Lupe spoke about the people and experiences that inspired the foundation, and about her belief that good fortune comes with a responsibility to help others. She

also explained the difference between writing a check and making a real impact: being intentional about making sure dollars reach the people and communities who need them most.

Raquel Izzo-McDonald, co-founder and board member of The Izzo Legacy, shared what it was like to grow up watching her mother serve. She talked about the moment she realized those values were not just her mom's, but her own. Now a member of the Governor's Service Commission, appointed in 2025, Raquel is finding her own voice while carrying her mother's example into the next generation.

The conversation closed on the idea that legacy is not only what we leave behind, but what we choose to pass forward. Both women credited the family members, board, nonprofit partners, sponsors and volunteers who make The Izzo Legacy possible, a reminder that meaningful impact is always a shared effort.

Their story reflects the values at the heart of ATHENA WIN: giving back, fostering collaboration and acting courageously. ATHENA WIN thanks our speakers, sponsors and everyone who joined us for a night of inspiration and connection. ♦



Courtesy Photos: AA Studios



**The** 2026 election will determine Michigan's next governor. The bigger question is whether the state can build an economic strategy that lasts.

Michigan stands at an important crossroads.

On November 3, voters will elect the state's first new governor in eight years. Democrat Jocelyn Benson and Republican John James are the major-party nominees in a race that will help determine Michigan's direction on economic development, education, talent, infrastructure and the business climate.

But for Michigan's business community, the conversation about the state's future extends beyond a single election or administration.

**"Michigan's economic future cannot be built around two-year or four-year political cycles."**

Tim Daman, President and CEO of the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce

How does Michigan become more competitive? How do we grow population and incomes, attract and retain talent, make it easier to build and invest, and create an economic development strategy that can survive changes in political leadership?

Those questions are at the heart of *Michigan in a New Era*<sup>1</sup>, a report from Business Leaders For Michigan (BLM) that offers a long-term blueprint for improving the state's competitiveness.

The report delivers a sobering assessment. Michigan ranks 50th in household income growth over the past 25 years. Real median household income ranks 35th nationally, as do educational attainment levels, while per capita GDP ranks 36th. Michigan's economy has also grown at roughly one-third the national pace over the past two decades.

Yet the report is not simply about where Michigan has fallen behind. It asks what the state can do differently moving forward.

And one of its central messages is clear: Michigan needs consistency.

"Michigan has struggled to set long term goals and carry strategies forward across terms of office, through crisis and change," said Jeff Donofrio, President and CEO of Business Leaders For Michigan. "We call it the 'Michigan 180.' States making steady progress, like Ohio and Virginia, have found ways to focus on outcomes and keep strategies going from governor to governor regardless of political party. Arizona offers another example: its push to make state government faster and more responsive has lasted through three governors of both parties."

"It's critical Michigan adopts that same consistency mindset: stay committed to the destination while flexible about the route," Donofrio said.

# MICHIGAN'S NEXT ERA

## BUILDING AN ECONOMIC STRATEGY THAT LASTS

BY LIZ RENO-HAYES

### Consistency Beyond Election Cycles

Michigan's political landscape regularly shifts. Governors change. Legislative majorities turn over. Priorities and programs shift right along with them.

The economic data suggests that this inconsistency has made it difficult to sustain momentum. The report describes decades of slow population growth, industrial disruption, talent outmigration and policy inconsistency as part of that pattern.

That message takes on additional significance during a gubernatorial election.

A recent commentary by KC Crain, President and CEO of Crain Communications, similarly challenged Michigan's next governor and the business community to confront the state's competitiveness challenges, pointing specifically to education, talent attraction and retention, development and the overall business environment.

The question for Michigan is therefore larger than what changes in January 2027. It is whether the state can establish an economic strategy with enough bipartisan, business and community support to continue producing results well beyond one administration.

"Michigan's economic future cannot be built around two-year or four-year political cycles," said Tim Daman, President and CEO of the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce. "We need a long-term strategy that gives employers, communities and families confidence about where our state is headed. That means identifying the things that work, staying committed to them and empowering regions like ours to compete for talent, investment and jobs."

### Three Priorities for Michigan's Future

BLM's blueprint focuses on three areas it believes can significantly change Michigan's trajectory: transforming education, making Michigan the easiest state to build and grow, and activating the state's economic potential.

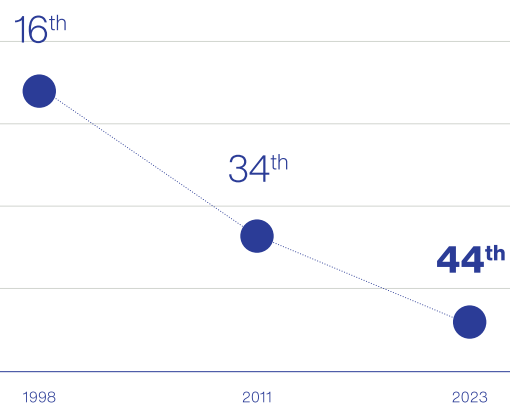
#### Transform Education as Michigan's Defining Mission

The report makes a direct connection between educational outcomes and economic competitiveness.

Michigan has fallen from 16th to 44th nationally in fourth-grade reading since 1998 and from 10th to 34th in fourth-grade math since 2000. BLM calls for sustained attention to early literacy, chronic absenteeism, stronger high school standards and better connections between students and apprenticeships, skilled trades, colleges and careers.

#### Michigan ranks 44<sup>th</sup> in 4<sup>th</sup> grade reading proficiency

Source: The Nation's Report Card



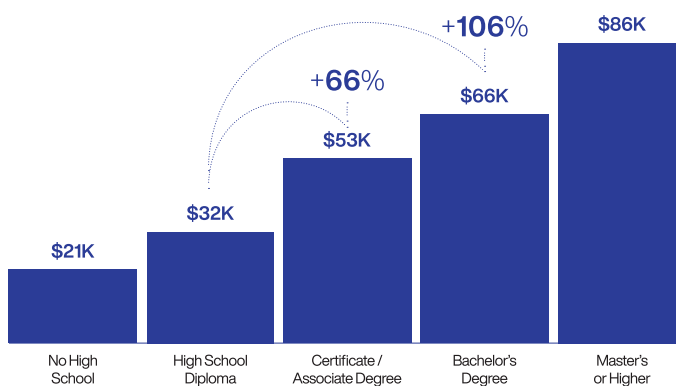
Courtesy of Michigan in a New Era

# MICHIGAN'S NEXT ERA: BUILDING AN ECONOMIC STRATEGY THAT LASTS

## MICHIGAN BY THE NUMBERS

Data from Business Leaders For Michigan's *Michigan in a New Era* report highlights key trends shaping Michigan's competitiveness.

Median Annual Wages in MI after Five Years (2024)



## MEDIAN ANNUAL WAGES IN MICHIGAN

Higher levels of education and training are associated with significantly higher earnings in Michigan, reinforcing the connection between educational attainment and economic opportunity.

For employers, those issues ultimately become workforce issues. A competitive Michigan requires a pipeline of people equipped with the skills needed for an economy increasingly shaped by technology, automation and innovation.

"First, education," Donofrio said. "Education reform is a marathon, not a sprint." Michigan has begun making real progress with efforts like its recent literacy reforms. The work now is to make sure all the necessary interventions and ingredients are in place. States like Mississippi and Maryland, one red and one blue, show what is possible with sustained commitment: Mississippi's rise from the bottom of national reading rankings to the Top 10 took more than a decade."

### Make Michigan the Easiest State to Build and Grow

Economic competitiveness also depends on whether businesses and communities can turn ideas into investment.

BLM calls for faster and more predictable approvals, simpler processes, better customer service and greater consistency across state and local government. Its premise is not that standards should disappear, but that we should all have clear rules and timely answers.

The report points to examples in Pennsylvania and Arizona where permitting and government process reforms have endured and produced measurable improvements across administrations.

For communities competing for housing, infrastructure

and private investment, time and predictability matter.

"There's a growing national conversation about why it's become so hard to build," Donofrio said. "Being the easiest state to build and grow isn't about lowering standards."

That conversation spans housing, infrastructure and the businesses that power local economies. When systems are confusing or fail to keep pace, people feel it, and it erodes trust in institutions.

"Sustaining reform is genuinely hard work for any government," Donofrio continued. "Rules pile up over decades, teams are stretched thin, and process improvement rarely makes headlines. It takes focused leadership and a shared commitment to outcomes to keep it going," Donofrio said, adding that the payoff is lower costs for families, more small businesses opening their doors, and affordable homes and strengthened communities.

### Activate Michigan's Economic Potential

Perhaps nowhere is the need for consistency more evident than economic development.

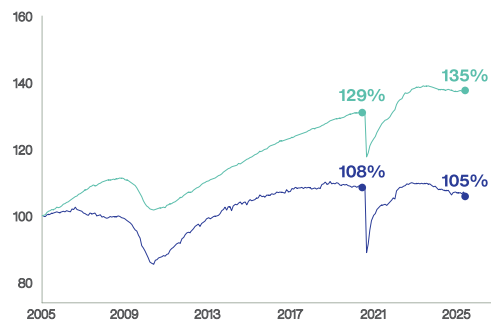
BLM argues that Michigan's approach has too often been reactive and vulnerable to changes in political priorities and funding. Instead, the organization calls for a shared statewide vision, stronger and empowered regional partners, predictable long-term resources, transparency and clear measures of success.

Michigan does not lack assets. The report highlights

### Professional services employment is growing in the US, but not in Michigan

Employment in Professional and Business Services

● US ● Michigan

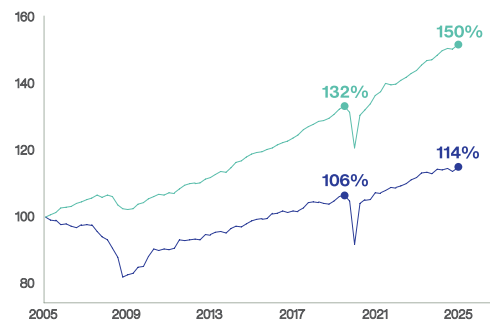


Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics

### US real GDP grew 3x faster than Michigan's over the last 20 years

Real GDP

● US ● Michigan



## PROFESSIONAL SERVICES EMPLOYMENT & GDP GROWTH

Michigan trails national growth in both professional and business services employment and real GDP, illustrating the economic competitiveness gap the report identifies.

more than \$25 billion in annual corporate research and development and \$3.5 billion in university-driven research, along with strengths in advanced manufacturing, engineering, mobility, healthcare innovation, agriculture, international trade and quality of life.

The challenge is turning those assets into sustained economic growth. Donofrio named modernizing the state's economic development system as one of his top priorities for the next governor.

"Leaders in both parties agree it's time for a fresh approach," he said. "Getting it right is essential to growing incomes, changing our trajectory and competing in a global economy."

**"Standing still isn't a neutral choice; it's a decision to fall behind. Michigan's challenges are bigger than any one governor, legislature or political party."**

Jeff Donofrio, President and CEO of Business Leaders For Michigan.

## The Lansing Region's Role

The statewide conversation also creates an opportunity for the Lansing Region.

Economic growth ultimately happens in regions and communities. BLM's report recognizes that regional

organizations understand local assets, workforce needs and relationships among employers, educational institutions, utilities and local governments.

That philosophy closely aligns with the Lansing Regional Chamber's ongoing work to think beyond individual projects and toward a long-term regional growth strategy.

"As Michigan prepares for its next administration, the Lansing Region needs to be ready with a clear vision of our own," Daman said. "We know our assets. We know our opportunities. Our responsibility is to bring regional partners together around priorities that can create jobs, attract investment, retain talent and strengthen our communities for decades to come."

The Lansing Region brings considerable assets to that conversation: Michigan State University and its research enterprise, state government, major employers, manufacturing, healthcare, energy infrastructure, transportation corridors and a growing entrepreneurial and innovation economy.

Donofrio pointed to that same foundation, and suggested looking to Columbus, another capital city built around a major university, for lessons on what has worked there. "Building on Lansing's unique regional assets takes a pragmatic, data-backed plan built with local governments, employers, educators and residents, and a clear story about what growth will mean for the community. Then, the state's job is to be a strong partner, with clear roles rather than more layers," Donofrio said.

# MICHIGAN'S NEXT ERA: BUILDING AN ECONOMIC STRATEGY THAT LASTS

"All trust is local, and trust and growth go hand in hand," he continued. "When residents and local leaders can see how a project connects to their priorities and their future, growth gains support. When they can't, even transformational opportunities stall."

## A New Administration. A Long-Term Opportunity.

Michigan's next governor will inherit significant challenges. The new administration will also inherit tremendous assets and an opportunity to establish a clearer direction for the state's economic future.

"This is a wake-up call, not a verdict," Donofrio said. "Standing still isn't a neutral choice; it's a decision to fall behind. Michigan's challenges are bigger than any one governor, legislature or political party. They reflect a 30- to 40-year slide. Leaders of both parties have made real progress, but other states are moving faster."

The work ahead, Donofrio predicted, is to build reforms, and the partnerships behind them, durable enough to last through the next election, the next governor and the next decades.

BLM summarizes the traits of successful states in three words: consistent, competitive, and comprehensive. Top-performing states sustain strategies long enough to produce results, create environments where businesses and talent can succeed, and address underlying challenges rather than relying solely on short-term solutions.

The November election will determine who occupies the governor's office.

What happens afterward will help determine whether Michigan can turn this moment of transition into something larger: a durable strategy for growth that extends beyond any one election, administration or political party.

For Michigan, that could define the next era. ♦

To view the complete *Michigan in a New Era* report, visit [www.businessleadersformichigan.com](http://www.businessleadersformichigan.com)

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 **APPLE VACATIONS.**

# Growing the Power of Work: 50 Years of Opportunity Takes Root in Agriculture

For 50 years, Peckham has demonstrated a simple but powerful belief: when barriers to employment are removed, people and communities thrive.

Since 1976, that belief has shaped an organization dedicated to creating meaningful employment and career opportunities for people with disabilities and other barriers to employment. Over five decades, Peckham has continually sought new industries where people can develop skills, build careers, and experience the independence and purpose that come with meaningful work.

That journey has taken Peckham from manufacturing and custodial services to supply chain and fulfillment, contact center solutions, and, most recently, agriculture.

In 2025, Peckham expanded its agricultural presence through the acquisition of Revolution Farms, a 3.5-acre hydroponic indoor lettuce farm in Caledonia, Michigan. Combined with Peckham's existing Lansing farming operation, Revolution Farms by Peckham represents an important new chapter in the organization's mission: bringing disability inclusion and workforce development to one of Michigan's most important industries.

Today, Revolution Farms operates more than 231,000 square feet of growing space across two Michigan locations, producing lettuce and salad greens, strawberries, tomatoes, herbs, flowers, and other fresh produce. Its Caledonia operation alone produces over 1 million pounds of lettuce and salad greens annually.

But what Revolution Farms grows extends far beyond produce.

Approximately 30 team members, along with student workers, are gaining hands-on experience and building skills through modern, accessible agriculture. Their work also contributes to Michigan's agricultural economy, bringing locally grown produce to consumers through retailers including Meijer and other Michigan grocers.

As National Disability Employment Awareness Month is recognized this October, that work offers a timely example of how expanding access to employment can create new opportunities for people with disabilities while strengthening local industries and communities.

The evolution of the various lines of business reflects a

pattern woven throughout Peckham's history—and one that continues to guide the organization today.

“

“The industries have changed, technologies have advanced, and the organization has grown, **but the mission has remained constant: identify where opportunity exists, remove barriers that prevent access, and create environments where individuals of all abilities can contribute and succeed,**” says Harry Pianko, Peckham's CEO.



As Peckham celebrates 50 Years of the power of work, Revolution Farms provides a glimpse of what the next 50 years can look like.

In agriculture, Peckham is expanding the definition of who can participate while demonstrating that innovation and inclusion can grow together.

For five decades, Peckham has planted seeds of opportunity.

Today, some of them are quite literally taking root. ♦

# Kalamazoo Street Construction Update

Construction on Kalamazoo Street from Pennsylvania Avenue to Mifflin Avenue is expected to continue through mid-November.

Improvements include pavement replacement, sewer repairs, curb and gutter work, upgraded sidewalk ramps and traffic signal upgrades.

Kalamazoo Street serves as another important regional gateway, connecting Michigan State University, East Lansing, Lansing Township and the City of Lansing.

Local traffic and business access will be maintained, with a detour provided for through traffic.

**Timeline:** September – Mid-November 2026 ♦



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# Executive Welcome Introduces New Regional Leadership

By Liz Reno-Hayes

**T**he Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce (LRCC) welcomed three executives now leading some of the region's most vital institutions during its Executive Welcome program at the Crowne Plaza, marking the program's first evening event. The event brought together LRCC's business community for an evening of networking, introductions and conversation with the newest members of the region's executive leadership.

Each leader shared their career journey and the vision they bring in shaping what's next for the Lansing region, underscoring the caliber of talent choosing to invest their careers in mid-Michigan.

Guests heard from Dean Mazzoni, President and CEO of McLaren Greater Lansing. Mazzoni brings decades of executive healthcare leadership to the role, including ten years with Franciscan Alliance, a 12-hospital Midwest health system, where he most recently served as President and CEO of the Michigan City Division. During his tenure there, he led the design and launch of a new hospital facility and oversight of a major market consolidation across a billion-dollar regional health network.

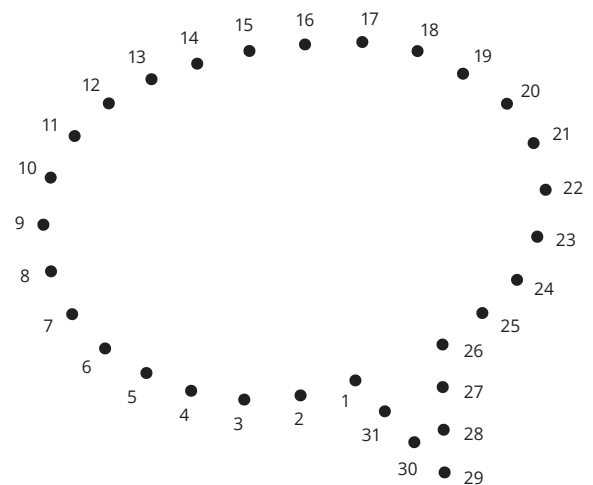
Ann Marie Creed, President of U of M Health-Sparrow Lansing since May 2025, joined the lineup of speakers. She previously held multiple executive positions with Henry Ford Health, including vice president roles in system capacity, operations and surgical services, and served as interim president of Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit. U of M Health-Sparrow Lansing is a Level 1 trauma center serving mid-Michigan, and Creed now leads an institution central to the region's healthcare infrastructure.

Katie John, Vice President for Government Relations at Michigan State University, closed out the introductions. John represents MSU in advocacy before federal, state and local governments, regulatory agencies and key policymakers. She brings more than 20 years of legislative experience focused on higher education funding and policy, including prior service as Associate Vice President of Government Affairs at Western Michigan University.

LRCC thanks presenting sponsor Martin Commercial Properties for its support of the event. LRCC also thanks managing partner Michigan Premier Events and venue host Crowne Plaza for helping bring the region's business community together to welcome this new class of leaders. ♦



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## Presidents & Chairs of the Lansing Chamber and its Predecessors

*Presidents / Chair of Board of Lansing Chamber of Commerce - The title changed from President to Chairman of the Board in 1988.*



### Norman L. Cloutier – 1986

*Cloutier retired as a captain from the U.S. Navy. He was born March 1, 1925 in Hartford. He moved to the Lansing area in 1974. Cloutier was dean of Lansing Community College's Division of Business from 1976 to 1984 and executive director of the college's Business*

*and Industry Institute from 1984 to 1986. He was a graduate of Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY, the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA and the Armed Forces Industrial College, Washington, DC. Cloutier died November 9, 1996 at the age of 71.*



### Ralph S. Gregory – 1987

*Gregory was president of Grand River Equities. After leaving Lansing he moved to Boulder, Colorado and in 1994, founded The Virtual Office Inc. which, in 1995, changed its name to Intelligent Office, a franchise*

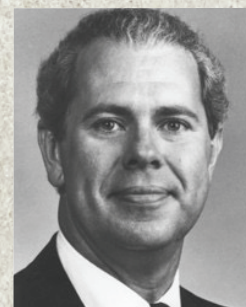
*operation that provides office space and staff to handle client needs. Gregory became active in the Boulder Chamber of Commerce and also hosts a television show on Channel 8 in Boulder, which covers business issues.*



### Patrick D. Hanes – 1988

*Hanes graduated from Michigan State University and was in the first graduating class of Cooley Law School. He started practicing commercial law in 1976 and continues to do so today. In addition to years of service on the chamber board, Hanes was the founding chair of the Lansing Economic Club, a founding director of the ATHENA Foundation and was the first male recipient of*

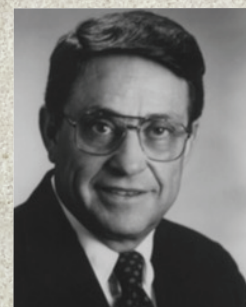
*the ATHENA Award in the nation in 1992. Hanes served 11 years on the Williamston School Board, three years as president. He also was president of the Ingham County Bar Association, is recognized by Martindale-Hubbell as a "Pre-eminent" Michigan attorney and served as president of and on the board of directors of numerous other volunteer organizations and business associations.*



### Charles W. Brown – 1989

*He graduated from Marshall University in West Virginia and obtained a master's degree from Gonzaga University in Spokane, Washington. He once worked on the Ohio River on a coal barge. Brown was employed by Motor Wheel Corporation and was part of the management group in 1987 that purchased Motor Wheel from Goodyear Corporation, which had acquired the company*

*in 1964. Motor Wheel Corporation's roots trace back to Prudden Wheel Company, which constructed a factory on East Saginaw in 1916, parts of which still stand. In 1920, Prudden Wheel merged with two other companies and became known as Motor Wheel Corporation. Lansing served as the world headquarters for Motor Wheel, owned by Brown and the rest of the management group.*



### Judson M. Werbelow – 1990

*Werbelow graduated from the University of Arizona in 1952 and from the University of Michigan Law School in 1954. He practiced law in Lansing with the Sinas, Dramis and the Dickinson Wright law firms until his retirement in 1996. He was a co-recipient, with his wife, Louise, of the chamber's Community Service Award. Werbelow also served as chairman of the Ingham County Social*

*Services Board, president of the Ingham County Bar Association, member of the Michigan Civil Service Commission, commissioner of the Lansing Board of Water and Light and the boards of other community service organizations. In 1992, he received the Ingham County Bar Association Distinguished Volunteer Award.*



### **Joseph Jr. Pandy – 1991**

*Pandy was hired as director of the Lansing Board of Water and Light in 1984 and was named general manager in*

*1992, a position he held until 2002. He was active in many community organizations including Lansing Rotary.*



### **Linda J. Cook – 1992**

*Cook was in senior management with the Oldsmobile Division of GM. During more than 20 years at GM, she concentrated efforts in marketing, communications, industry-government relations and strategic business planning. Her GM duties included director of business planning - GM Commercial Trucks, and director of public affairs for GM's North American Operations. She*

*gave Athena a prominent place in GM. Following her GM career, Cook developed a freelance communications business, consulting clients in the automotive, healthcare, hospitality, and trade association sectors. Most recently she is vice president of Compass International located in Buena Park, California.*



### **Robert K. Kinning – 1993**

*Kinning moved to Lansing in 1986 when he was named president and CEO of First of America Bank-Central and describes his Lansing experience as a career highlight. Kinning served as chairman of Sparrow Hospital, was heavily involved with the Capital Choice economic development program and received the Distinguished Citizens Award from the Boy Scouts. Prior to Lansing,*

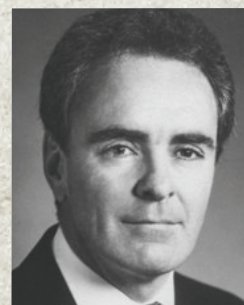
*Kinning was involved in community services in the Muskegon area serving as president of the North Muskegon School Board, chairman of United Way and president of Rotary. In 1994, Kinning left for Chicago to become chairman and CEO of First of America Bank-Illinois. He now lives in Williamsburg Virginia and spends his summers at Gun Lake.*



### **Richard L. Arnett – 1994**

*Arnett was born in Sidney, Ohio on October 16, 1946, attended and graduated Wittenberg University, Springfield, Ohio in June 1968. Arnett joined Ernst & Young in Columbus, Ohio and transferred to Lansing in January 1983, where he served as managing partner in 1993 and 1994. He also worked in the Detroit office of Ernst & Young until January 1997, when he transferred to*

*Dallas, Texas. Arnett retired in 2006 and lives in Bonita Springs, Florida and South Haven, Michigan. Arnett was United Way-Fund Allocation Chair 1992, East Lansing Rotary president 1993 Health Council of Michigan Treasurer and Dallas Rotary Club Community Outreach chair.*



### **Joseph D. Reid – 1995**

*Reid was a well-known and highly regarded and successful attorney in private practice for many years and was an adjunct law professor at Cooley Law School before creating Capitol Bancorp Limited. Capitol Bancorp is a publicly traded, multi-billion dollar national community banking company with a network of separately chartered banks throughout the United*

*States of which Reid is CEO. Founded in 1988, Capitol Bancorp Limited was built on a set of core values where customers, shareholders and employees are the priority. The company currently has banking locations throughout the continental United States with executive offices in Lansing and Phoenix, Arizona. Reid has chaired numerous boards and community organizations.*

# Construction Begins on The Howard in Downtown East Lansing

LRCC-backed development will bring new investment and Michigan's first mass timber high-rise to the region

Construction is underway on The Howard, a 12-story mixed-use development at the former Student Book Store site at 401 E. Grand River Ave. in downtown East Lansing.

Approved by the East Lansing City Council in July, The Howard represents a significant new investment in the downtown and will be the city's first mass timber structure. Mass timber uses large-format engineered wood materials as structural building components, offering an innovative approach to constructing large commercial and residential buildings.

The Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce strongly supported The Howard throughout the approval process. More than 70 East Lansing businesses directly expressed support for the project, demonstrating broad business-community backing for continued investment, additional housing and increased economic activity in downtown East Lansing.

The project also represents the type of development LRCC continues to advocate for throughout the Lansing Region: projects that transform underutilized properties, increase housing options, strengthen commercial districts and grow the local tax base.

Construction activity began in late August, with demolition of the former Student Book Store beginning in September. During construction, motorists should expect temporary lane and street closures near Grand River Avenue and Charles Street.

Importantly, neighboring businesses remain open and accessible throughout construction. LRCC encourages residents, students and visitors to continue supporting downtown East Lansing businesses as this transformational project moves forward. For construction updates, please visit: [www.cityofeastlansing.com/2675/The-Howard-Construction-Updates](http://www.cityofeastlansing.com/2675/The-Howard-Construction-Updates) ♦



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## Chamber in Action



The Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce joined Origami Rehabilitation and Child and Family Charities for the ribbon cutting on **Hugh's Happy Place**, a new playground at the Nonprofit Hub on West Greenlawn Avenue. The playground, named for a nephew of Tom Izzo, gives children a place to play while their families receive services. The project was funded by a grant from The Izzo Legacy.



The Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce congratulates **MetroEHS Pediatric Therapy** on its ribbon cutting at 3495 Coolidge Rd. in East Lansing. The clinic provides ABA, speech, occupational, physical and feeding therapy for children from infancy through age 12.



The Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce congratulates **UnoDeuce Multimedia** on 25 years of video storytelling. Founded in 2001 by Paul J. Schmidt, the Lansing firm has helped area nonprofits raise nearly \$8 million.

# Members on the Move

## NEW HIRES



Montag



Myers



Willis

**Eyde Development** has welcomed three professionals to its team. **David Montag** joins as Director of Property Management. He brings

leadership experience across commercial, student housing, multifamily and mixed-use real estate, with strengths in portfolio management, team development and relationships with tenants, owners and partners. Montag oversees daily management of the company's portfolio, working with onsite teams to improve the tenant experience, increase efficiency and support capital projects. His approach reflects Eyde Development's commitment to quality and tenant service. **Bobbi Myers** joins as Director of Finance and serves on the executive leadership team. Her background includes financial planning, budgeting, compliance, reporting and fiscal management. Myers oversees the organization's financial operations, ensuring responsible stewardship of resources while supporting strategic initiatives that position Eyde Development for sustainable growth. **Jennifer Willis** joins as Human Resource Manager. Her expertise spans talent acquisition, employee relations, benefits management, professional development and policy

administration. Willis is committed to helping employees feel supported, valued and empowered to succeed. By attracting talent, strengthening employee engagement and promoting a culture of collaboration and communication, she will play a key role in helping the organization achieve its mission and long-term goals.



Pacheco

**Grandhaven Senior Living** has welcomed **Henry Pacheco** as Life Enrichment Director. Pacheco brings experience in education and healthcare

operations, along with an MBA. He oversees programming designed to enhance residents' quality of life, drawing on a background that connects operational management with compassionate care. As a member of the leadership team, Pacheco guides Grandhaven's efforts to create an engaging and vibrant environment for the residents it serves.



TenBrink

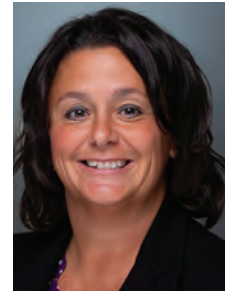
**Jackson National Life Insurance Company** has welcomed **Trevor TenBrink** as Assistant Vice President of State Government Relations.

TenBrink leads the company's government relations efforts in Michigan, directing activities and initiatives related to public policy and regulatory requirements. He manages relationships with business stakeholders and with elected and executive officials at the local, state and federal levels. TenBrink previously served as Government and Community

Affairs Manager at Lake Michigan Credit Union and as District Director for U.S. Rep. Bill Huizenga, representing Michigan's 4th Congressional District. He holds a bachelor's degree in political science and business from Grand Valley State University.



Walker



May

**LAFCU** has hired **LaTora Walker** as Senior Vice President of Human Resources and **Terri May** as Director of Corporate Improvement. Walker brings

more than 20 years of human resources leadership experience and oversees LAFCU's human resources operations, including talent acquisition, employee relations, benefits administration, compliance and union relations. She most recently served as Human Resources Manager at Bridgewater Interiors in Lansing, where she supported more than 700 employees. Walker holds degrees from Davenport University and a SHRM-SCP certification. May oversees enterprise risk management, governance, policy management and operational service delivery. She brings nearly 30 years of banking and operational leadership experience, most recently as Vice President and Regional Operations Manager at Comerica Bank, where she led a team supporting 70 banking centers in west and central Michigan. She previously spent nearly 20 years with Fifth Third Bank in Lansing and holds a bachelor's degree and an MBA from Northwood University.



Wagler

**County National Bank** has promoted **Neil Wagler** to Regional Vice President and Lansing Market Executive.

Wagler brings 16 years of banking experience, with

expertise in real estate financing, business acquisitions and SBA and MEDC credit enhancement programs. He holds a business administration degree in accounting from Central Michigan University.

## APPOINTMENTS



Rathbun Hawks

**Carrie Rathbun Hawks, APR** has joined the **ATHENA International Board of Directors**. Her appointment reflects the kind of leadership ATHENA

champions: values-centered, service-driven and impact-focused for leaders and the communities they serve.



Neumann

**McLaren Greater Lansing** has named **Marc'L Neumann, MSA, BSN, RN**, Chief Nursing Officer, effective Sept. 14. Neumann brings more than two decades of nursing

leadership experience across a range of care settings. She most recently served as Vice President and Chief Nursing Officer for McLaren Thumb Region and McLaren Caro Region, where she advanced quality and safety processes, led the successful implementation of the Cerner electronic medical record system at both hospitals and oversaw care that exceeded organizational targets.

## AWARDS



**Yeo & Yeo Technology**, a leading provider of managed IT and cybersecurity services, has been named to the 2026 Channel Partners MSP 501, earning recognition among the world's top-performing managed service providers (MSPs).



Target: Stroke Honor Roll Elite Plus and Target: Type 2 Diabetes Honor Roll recognition. The honors reflect the hospital's commitment to providing the Greater Lansing community with advanced technology and expert diagnosticians in stroke care.

**McLaren Greater Lansing** has received the American Heart Association's 2026 Get With The Guidelines Stroke Gold Plus award, along with



Luke

**La Fille Gallery**, owned by **Tiffany Luke**, has received a Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) Match on Main grant, bringing new

investment to one of downtown Lansing's growing retail destinations. The funding will support the gallery's expanded fashion merchandise line, enhance the customer experience and strengthen its lasting presence in the downtown business district. The award recognizes Luke's entrepreneurial leadership and the gallery's role in building a walkable,

active downtown. Since its launch in 2019, the Match on Main program has helped hundreds of Michigan small businesses expand, create jobs and attract private investment while strengthening downtowns across the state.



Trotochaud

**Eric Trotochaud**, Director of Hospitality Transformation for **Grandhaven Senior Living** through Superior Hospitality Partners (SHP), has

earned the Certified Customer Experience Professional (CCXP) designation, the globally recognized credential for customer experience leaders. The certification reflects Trotochaud's commitment to advancing the customer experience profession and supports SHP's mission of helping organizations create experiences rooted in hospitality that strengthen customer loyalty, employee engagement and business performance. Drawing on decades of hospitality leadership and customer experience strategy, Trotochaud partners with organizations across multiple industries to turn everyday interactions into lasting impressions.



Qualls

**Patricia Qualls**, a member of the environmental services department at **McLaren Greater Lansing**, has received the hospital's Extraordinary Employee of

the Season Award. The award recognizes an employee for exceptional work. "Pat treats everyone with compassion and respect, and her presence creates a warm, happier environment for both patients and employees," her nomination says.



**Maner Costerisan** has been recognized as a 2026 Best Place to Work in Michigan by Crain's Detroit Business, marking the firm's fifth consecutive year on the annual list. The recognition highlights employers that foster strong workplace cultures and employee engagement, with selection based in part on employee feedback. Maner Costerisan also recently earned the No. 5 spot on Crain's Grand Rapids Business' 2026 Best Places to Work in West Michigan list.

## COMPANY NEWS



Festivalgoers helped paint one of LAFCU's giant letters during Phil Denny's Armory Smooth Jazz Fete presented by LAFCU on Aug. 8 at the Lansing Armory. The six foot tall letters, which spell LAFCU, have appeared at community events across mid-Michigan since 2015. Attendees added color to the letter "F" through a paint by number activity, while local artists created original designs on the remaining letters. LAFCU has supported the festival for eight years.

**Cooley Law School** saw a nearly 40% increase in enrollment this fall, welcoming its largest incoming class in recent years. The growth builds on last year's class, which was already the school's largest in seven years. Students at the Lansing campus began their law school careers during orientation in August, where Ingham County Probate Judge Richard Garcia administered the professionalism oath and students committed to the school's Honor Code. The new class, which includes students from across the country and around the world, began classes Sept. 8. ♦



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