

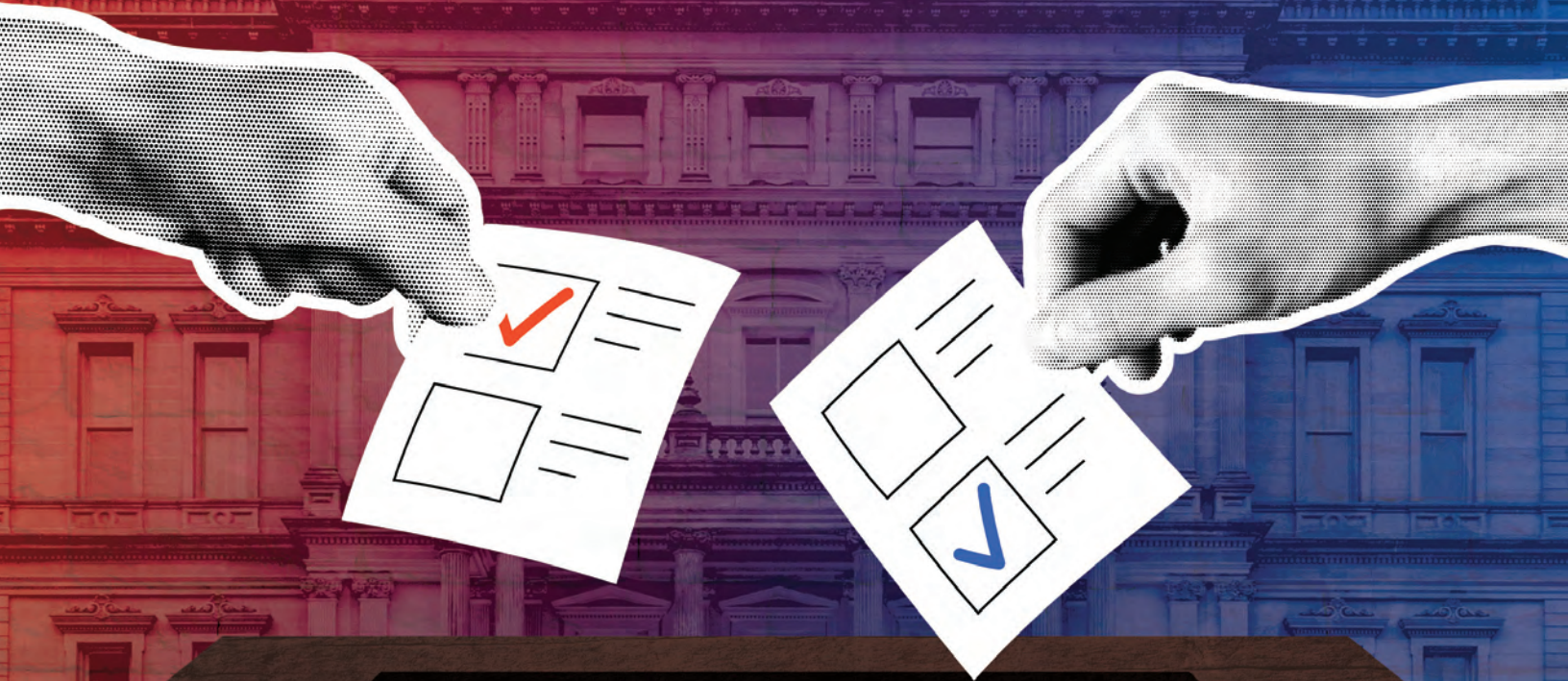
FOCUS

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

SEPTEMBER 2026

EVERYTHING RUNS THROUGH LANSING

MICHIGAN'S 2026 ELECTION



IN THIS ISSUE

Making Progress on Healthcare Affordability for Michigan Employers
Forward Thinking Your Employee Benefits | Helping Others Find Their Stride: Playmakers
Marks 45 Years of Community First

A bridge to your business goals.

Commercial lending. Local experts.

Grow your business with a commercial lending team who knows Lansing. Offering local decisions, a true partnership through the lending process, and the expertise to help you reach your business goals.

From purchasing essential equipment. To breaking ground on a new commercial property. Connect with the team to get started.

LAKE TRUSTSM

THE POWER IN ALL OF US

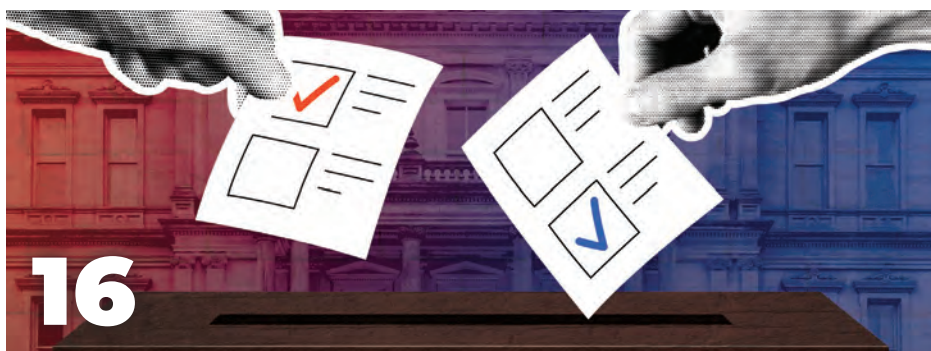


Scan the QR code or visit
laketrust.org/CommercialLoans





CONTENTS



feature

EVERYTHING RUNS THROUGH LANSING: MICHIGAN'S 2026 ELECTION

- 07** Transportation Secretary Duffy Tours Capital Region
- 09** **Ask the Expert:** Making Progress on Healthcare Affordability for Michigan Employers
- 10** Speaker Johnson, Secretary Burgum Visit Lansing Region
- 11** LG Energy Solution Celebrates Grand Opening of Lansing Facility
- 13** Twenty Years of LEAP: A Partnership Built for Growth
- 14** Thank You for Making the 2026 Lansing Open a Success

- 15** **Sponsored:** Forward Thinking Your Employee Benefits
- 20** Celebrating 20 Years of the 10 Over the Next Ten Award
- 22** Helping Others Find Their Stride: Playmakers Marks 45 Years of Community First
- 23** **ATHENA WIN:** Back to School, Back to Balance
- 24** Where Are They Now: Former LRCC Interns Reflect on Their Start
- 26** Presidents & Chairs of the Lansing Chamber and its Predecessors



monthly features

- 05** Message from the Chamber
- 06** Chamber Milestones
- New Members
- Renewing Members
- 27** Chamber in Action
- 29** Members on the Move

2026 Board of Directors

Officers

Board Chair

Kelly Preston / Capital Steel & Wire Inc.

Past Chair

Amy Partin / The Empowerment Institute of Michigan

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

Division Directors

Marketing Communications
Lisa Ellen Smith / InVerve Marketing

Government Relations
Kwafo Adarkwa / Kelley Cawthorne

Member Engagement
Sara Dolan / MSUFCU

At-Large

Paul Anderson / Granger Waste Services

Robyn Howell / LAFUC

Carlie Beatty / Playmakers

Keri Kittmann / AF Group

Amy Casciotti / TechSmith

Jordan Leaming / Delta Dental

Troy Comiskey / General Motors

Eric Musser / Auto-Owners Insurance Co.

Ann Marie Creed / University of Michigan Health - Sparrow

Beth Pellerito / Granger Construction Company

Greg Farhat / Jackson

Lisa Webb Sharpe / Peckham

Jim Farrell / Dart Container

Heather Shawa / Lansing Board of Water & Light

Christopher Fultz / Consumers Energy

Todd Surline / Hiring Solutions

Roger Graff / Farm Bureau Insurance Co.

Greg Walthorn / Plante Moran

FOCUS

Editor
Liz Reno-Hayes

Design
Coda Studios

Print and Mailing Services
BRD Printing Incorporated

Feature Writer
Liz Reno-Hayes

Cover Design
Emily Rice



Stay Connected. Stay Social.

facebook.com/LansingChamber

x.com/LansingChamber

Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce

@LansingRegionalChamber

Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce



TIM DAMAN
PRESIDENT AND CEO
LANSING REGIONAL
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



Our focus will still be growth in our region, growth in our state, growth in our population, and growth in our workforce.

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAMBER

Growth Is the Real Ballot Question

This November, Michigan voters will decide who leads our state and our region. Voters will choose a new governor, a new U.S. senator, and a new secretary of state and attorney general. They'll decide whether Michigan's 7th Congressional District sends a new voice to Washington D.C. or returns the incumbent for a second term, and they'll determine which party controls both chambers of the state Legislature. It is, by any measure, one of the most consequential election years Michigan has seen in a generation.

But regardless of who wins in November, the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce's focus will not change. Our focus will still be growth in our region, growth in our state, growth in our population, and growth in our workforce. These are not talking points. They are the lens through which we evaluate every candidate, every issue, and every proposal on the ballot this year.

That's why the Lansing Regional Chamber – Political Action Committee (LRC-PAC) endorsement process asks a simple question first: will this candidate help our region grow? The question isn't whether a candidate checks every box on a partisan platform, but whether they understand what it takes to attract employers, retain talent, build housing, and invest in the infrastructure a growing region needs. Growth doesn't have a party.

That standard matters more this year than most. Michigan's population growth has lagged the rest of the country for years, and our region cannot afford elected officials, at any level, who treat that as someone else's problem. We need leaders in the governor's office, in Congress, in the state Legislature, and local municipalities who see population growth, workforce development, and economic competitiveness as the defining issues. That means getting the basics right: good roads, accessible child care, a skilled and available workforce, and a tax and regulatory climate that lets businesses plan with confidence. These are the issues LRC-PAC has engaged on all year, and they are the issues we will keep raising with whoever is elected in November.

I'd encourage every LRCC member to do two things between now and Election Day. First, get informed. Our 2026 Regional Election Guide, available at lansingchamber.org, lays out what's on your ballot and where LRC-PAC has weighed in. Second, vote with growth in mind. Ask candidates directly what they'll do to grow our region's population, our workforce, and our economy, and let their answer tell you most of what you need to know.

Michigan is one of the most pivotal states in the country this election cycle. Let's make sure the outcome is a region built to grow. ♦

Thank You Renewing Members

Amayesing Graze
American Board of Emergency
Medicine
Armond Dalton Publishers, Inc.
Athletico Physical Therapy - East
Lansing
Athletico Physical Therapy -
Lansing Delta
Brian Songer Agency - Farm
Bureau Insurance
Buffalo Wild Wings
Capitol View Apartments
Centered Care of Michigan
Cherry Republic
Clark Schaefer Hackett
D&K Truck Co.
Elevator Service Inc

Empire Motors of Lansing
Enbridge (U.S.) Inc.
F.D. Hayes Electric
Girl Scouts Heart of Michigan
Greg Coyne
Johnson Sign Company
Klug Law Firm
L&H Vending LLC
Lally Group, PC
Michigan Automobile Dealers
Association (MADA)
Michigan Polymer Reclaim, Inc.
Michigan Premier Events
Moore Trosper Construction Co.
Morse Moving & Storage
New York Life Insurance Company
Peculiar Coffee Co.

Rathbun Public Relations
REO Town Apartments
Ritter Painting Contractors, LLC
Royal Scot Golf and Bowl
Sky Zone Lansing
SM Saputo LLC
Success Virtual Learning Center -
Lansing South/Berrien Springs
Public Schools
The Plant Professionals
Thrivent Financial
Tim Barry Agency - Farm Bureau
Insurance
Todd Martin Youth Leadership
Underground Printing
Wellness Institute of Michigan
Young Chevrolet Cadillac

Welcome New Members

Capitol Macintosh
(517) 351-9339
www.capitolmacintosh.com
1915 E. Michigan Ave.
Lansing, MI 48912

Carhartt
(517) 336-3008
www.carhartt.com
2917 Preyde Blvd. Unit #013
Lansing, MI 48912

Doc's Automotive
(517) 324-5487
www.docsautomotiverepair.com
2939 Jolly Road
Okemos MI, 48864

Grandhaven Senior Living
(517) 485-5966
grandhavensenioreliving.com
3145 W. Mt. Hope Ave.
Lansing MI, 48911

How to Handyma'am
(517) 858-9611
howtohandymaam.com
Lansing, MI

**Michigan Cannabis Industry
Association**
micia.org
216 N Chestnut St
Lansing MI, 48933

**The Empowerment Institute
for Michigan**
(561) 635-8121
[www.
empowermentinstitute.org/Michigan](http://www.empowermentinstitute.org/Michigan)

2121 East Grand River Avenue
Lansing, MI 48912

Total Spectrum
(844) 263-1613
[totalspectrumcare.com/
locations/lansing](http://totalspectrumcare.com/locations/lansing)
111 W Edgewood Blvd.,
Suite 14
Lansing, MI 48911

VendHubb
(517) 944-2392
2109 Hamilton Rd. ste.219
Okemos, MI 48864

Williamston Theatre
(517) 655-7469
www.williamstontheatre.org
122 S Putnam St
Williamston, MI 48895



Chamber Milestones

A. Dean Watkins - East, Inc.
70 years

C2AE
40 years

Manitou Pontoon Boats
20 years

Chase Creative
15 years

Spicer Group, Inc. - Lansing Area
15 years

**Allegra Marketing
Print Mail - Okemos**
10 years

**Michigan Association
of School Boards**
10 years

The Reserve at Falcon Pointe
10 years

East Lansing Public Library
5 years

OUTFRONT Media
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!*

Photos courtesy of Congressman Tom Barrett's Office, Capital Region International Airport and Dean Transportation.

Transportation Secretary Duffy Tours Lansing Region

U.S. Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy visited the Lansing region Aug. 13, joining Congressman Tom Barrett for stops highlighting transportation infrastructure and the people who keep our region moving. Secretary Duffy toured Capital Region International Airport, where he joined Congressman Barrett and Steve Japinga, Senior Vice President of Public Affairs at the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce, to learn more about airport improvements and ongoing infrastructure work, including the \$7.8 million federal investment secured by Congressman Barrett to replace the airport's aging passenger boarding bridges.

Secretary Duffy also visited Dean Transportation, where he toured the company's headquarters and spoke with staff about their work transporting students and providing bus and shuttle services throughout Michigan. The visit



provided an opportunity to highlight the important role transportation providers and their employees play in keeping students and communities safe and connected.

The visit showcased the Lansing region's transportation assets, workforce and continued infrastructure needs while highlighting the importance of strong federal partnerships in supporting future investment, safety and growth. ♦



Compressed air leak? *That's despicable!*

BWL's Hometown Energy Savers® program offers incentives for auditing, repairing and upgrading your business's compressed air system.

Midwest Press took advantage of incentives to upgrade their compressed air system, including a new storage tank they've outfitted as one of Universal's *Despicable Me* Minion characters.

Other Rebates Available: Lighting • Refrigeration • HVAC • Food Service • Indoor Agriculture

Scan the QR code above or contact us to learn more:

(800) 573-3503 • hometown@slipstreaminc.org • lbwl.com/energysavers





HEALTH CARE IS PERSONAL. SO ARE ITS COSTS.

Perhaps no part of the economy affects each of us as personally as health care. It brings new life into the world. It cures diseases. It saves lives.

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.

We want you to be engaged. Informed. Involved in the conversation. Because health care is personal — and we need to make it work for everyone.

Affordability matters.

Start here — MIBlueDaily.com/Affordability



MICHIGAN





Making Progress on Healthcare Affordability for Michigan Employers

By: Tricia A. Keith, President and CEO, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan



Keith

WHY IS HEALTHCARE AFFORDABILITY SUCH A PRESSING ISSUE FOR MICHIGAN EMPLOYERS?

Business owners expect to make tough decisions. But, healthcare costs are forcing tradeoffs they never anticipated. A recent Small Business Association of Michigan survey shows the stakes: 42% of employers said

they may drop health benefits within the next one to three years, while 75% said employee coverage costs are delaying hiring.

WHAT PROGRESS IS BLUE CROSS BLUE SHIELD OF MICHIGAN MAKING ON AFFORDABILITY?

No organization can solve affordability alone, but Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan is taking steps that are producing measurable results.

In 2025, we paid \$1.02 in claims for every dollar we collected in premiums, down from \$1.04 the year before. One cent of that improvement came from reducing our administrative costs, including \$420 million through business transformation efforts. The other cent came from work to lower pharmacy costs for our customers, members and company.

HOW IS BCBSM HELPING LOWER PHARMACY COSTS?

We helped shift several high-cost biologic medications to biosimilars, saving customers and members \$80 million in 2025, with 99% of members staying on therapy. Across 2024 and 2025, Blue Cross pharmacy initiatives generated \$400 million in savings for customers and members.

WHAT ROLE DO PARTNERSHIPS WITH PROVIDERS PLAY IN MAKING CARE MORE AFFORDABLE?

Since 2025, Blue Cross has reached value-based care agreements with 10 hospital systems, moving payment away from volume and toward outcomes, quality and accountability. These agreements help align incentives and keep affordability at the center of the conversation. We're partnering with hospitals and providers because we know the system works best when we work together.

HOW ARE YOUR PRODUCTS HELPING EMPLOYERS MANAGE COSTS?

We submitted our 2027 rate filings for the Individual and Small Group Affordable Care Act markets, and our proposed increases are lower than those approved for 2026.

Through tailored options like Blue Care Network's PCP Focus, we're also helping employers manage costs while maintaining access to care. PCP Focus connects members with a network of primary care physicians selected for their quality and efficiency.

WHAT SHOULD EMPLOYERS TAKE AWAY FROM THIS PROGRESS?

Improving affordability will require action across the healthcare system.

At Blue Cross, we are acting where we can make a difference and helping employers manage costs in ways they can sustain.

The challenge is significant, but we are proving progress is possible. ♦

Speaker Johnson, Secretary Burgum Visit Lansing Region

U.S. House Speaker Mike Johnson visited Lansing Aug. 18, joining Congressman Tom Barrett for a tour highlighting research, manufacturing and construction across Greater Lansing. U.S. Secretary of the Interior Doug Burgum also joined Barrett earlier in the day.

Barrett and Burgum toured Michigan State University's Facility for Rare Isotope Beams (FRIB), which is receiving \$125 million in federal investment secured by Barrett earlier this year, and participated in the grand opening of LG Energy Solution in Lansing. Barrett and Johnson then toured the ongoing Tower on Grand construction, a mixed-use skyscraper development that will add housing and commercial space downtown.

Barrett highlighted the visit as a showcase of continued momentum across the region, pointing to the rare isotope research underway at FRIB alongside downtown development that is expected to expand housing options and support downtown revitalization. Johnson echoed that sentiment, noting the New Vision Lansing development as a sign of new investment and housing growth in the city. ♦



The New Vision Lansing development will bring new housing and investment to downtown Lansing.



Michigan State University's Facility for Rare Isotope Beams (FRIB) is receiving \$125 million in federal investment to support its rare isotope research.

Courtesy Photos

DEAN

TRAILWAYS

TRAVEL WITH DEAN TRAILWAYS

Since 1994, Dean Trailways has provided luxury transportation for groups of all sizes.

Arrive in style and leave the driving to us!



DeanTrailways.com | (800) 282-3326



LG Energy Solution Celebrates Grand Opening of Lansing Facility

By Liz Reno-Hayes



The Lansing region marked a defining moment on August 18 as LG Energy Solution Michigan, Inc. held its grand opening ceremony for the company's new battery manufacturing facility in Lansing and Delta Township, another significant step forward for advanced manufacturing in Michigan.

The 226-acre facility represents more than \$2 billion in investment since 2022 and is projected to reach an annual production capacity exceeding 35 gigawatt-hours at full scale. The plant currently employs approximately 900 workers, a number expected to grow to 1,700 as production ramps up. It manufactures lithium iron phosphate cells for energy storage systems, along with nickel-manganese-cobalt cells for electric vehicles, giving the site a dual role in both the grid storage and EV supply chains. With Lansing now online, LG Energy Solution operates two facilities in Michigan, alongside its Holland plant, and has invested more than \$5 billion in the state since 2010.

"Michigan has always built what moves the world forward, and the Lansing region continues to play an important role in that story," said Tim Daman, President and CEO of the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce. "Investments like this strengthen our position in advanced manufacturing, create opportunities for our workforce and demonstrate what our region can accomplish when we work together. Projects of this magnitude do not happen without tremendous partnership."

The Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce (LRCC) extends its appreciation to Governor Gretchen Whitmer, U.S. Secretary of the Interior Doug Burgum, U.S. Senator Elissa Slotkin, State Senator Sarah Anthony, State Representative Angela Witwer, Lansing Mayor Andy Schor and Delta Township Supervisor Fonda Brewer, along with the staffs of



Photos courtesy of LG Energy Solution

Delta Township and the City of Lansing. The LRCC also recognizes economic development partners at the Lansing Economic Area Partnership and the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, and the many other local, state and federal leaders who helped make the investment possible. Congratulations to the entire LG Energy Solution team and the employees bringing the facility to life. ♦



From financial security
to a helping hand, the
**EXPERIENCE
MATTERS.**

Find a local agent who can
protect what matters to you.



**FARM BUREAU
INSURANCE**



A Company

FarmBureauInsurance.com



EXCITING NEW PARTNERSHIP!



Official Catering Partner of Spartan Athletics



We are extremely proud and excited to welcome a local family-owned partner into the MSU Athletics family. Peter and his team provided excellent service and top-quality food to the Spartan community prior to our partnership. We strive to align with partners who share the same values and aligning with Ohana Sushi & Bar, the Tangy Crab and Fuel'd Stir Fry and Salad aligns perfectly. We look forward to growing together!

~ Otis Wiley
General Manager of MSU Sports Properties

Let us cater your event, party or get together!

CALL ON US FOR HOLIDAY EVENTS • WEDDINGS • FAMILY GATHERINGS



OHANA

SUSHI
AND BAR



FUEL'D

STIR FRY
SALAD
POKE



(517) 993-9988
ILOVEOHANA.com

\$200 OFF your catering order*



*\$999 pre-tax minimum applies. Must present coupon. Cannot be combined with other offers. Limit one coupon per purchase.
Expires 12/31/2026

Twenty Years of LEAP: A Partnership Built for Growth

By Liz Reno-Hayes

In 2026, the Lansing Economic Area Partnership (LEAP) marks 20 years of driving economic growth across the region. Founded in 2006, LEAP serves as the economic development organization for the tri-county area of Clinton, Eaton and Ingham counties, working in partnership with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation to help entrepreneurs launch businesses, existing companies expand, and new employers choose Michigan's Capital Region.

LEAP has helped drive more than \$7.3B in investment across the region, supporting 187 projects that have created 10,861 jobs and launched 432 companies. Those numbers reflect two decades of steady, deliberate work building a stronger regional economy.



"Twenty years ago, this region chose collaboration over internal competition, and that choice has paid off many times over," said Bob Trezise, President & CEO of the Lansing Economic Area Partnership. "Every business we've helped launch and every job we've

helped create has been the result of partners across this region pulling in the same direction especially and including the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce."

The Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce has worked alongside LEAP for many years as the region has grown. Both organizations serve many of the same employers and communities across Greater Lansing.

The impact is visible across the region. In Delta Township, LEAP helped bring LG Energy Solution's \$2.6B battery plant to Michigan, bringing partners together, and later securing \$66.1M in infrastructure funding. In downtown East Lansing, LEAP helped negotiate the \$132M Center City District project, transforming a surface parking lot into the walkable, vibrant district now anchored by new housing, retail and one of only two urban-style Target stores in Michigan.

That same partnership helps businesses start and scale, too. LEAP's small business support hub guides entrepreneurs from go to grow, offering coaching, mentorship and connections, while the Lansing Regional SmartZone helps local startups secure capital and reach the market faster. In Holt, that support helped

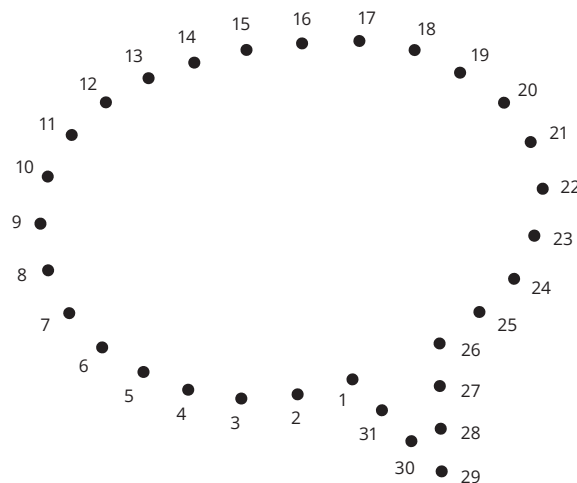
Mr. Leslie's Cheesecake's grow from an incubator kitchen into their very own production and distribution facility.



Twenty years in, LEAP's work has proven that regional collaboration is what drives real growth," says Tim Daman, President & CEO, Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce. **"As we look to the future, the Chamber is proud to keep building on that foundation together."**

The Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce congratulates LEAP on two decades of driving smart growth across the Lansing region and looks forward to continuing a partnership that will help drive the next generation of growth. ♦

Does your community feel scattered?



Connect the dots with strategic storytelling

LET'S TELL YOUR STORY.

Community-Building Creative MessageMakers.com

Thank You for Making the 2026 Lansing Open a Success

By Liz Reno-Hayes



The Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce hosted this year's Lansing Open and Lansing Mini Open on August 11, bringing golfers from across the region together for a day of friendly competition, good food and even better company. Between rounds, attendees fueled up on coffee from Peculiar Coffee and sushi from Ohana Sushi, along with a lineup of other local food and beverage vendors that kept the day rolling from tee to trophy.

Congratulations to BRD Printing, this year's winning team, and to all of our other contest and prize winners. Thank you as well to the organizations that generously donated prizes for both events.

None of it comes together without our sponsors. Thank you to RC Contractors, presenting sponsor of the Lansing Open, and to Metronet Business, presenting sponsor of the Lansing Mini Open, along with every sponsor who supported the day. The Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce is grateful for their continued partnership and for helping make this year's outing one to remember.

Thank you to AA Studios LLC for photographing the day. You can find the full photo album on our Facebook page. ♦



Photos courtesy of AA Studios LLC

Forward Thinking Your Employee Benefits

By Timothy Durso, President of Centennial Group

For many employers, employee benefits have become one of the largest and fastest-growing expenses in the organization. While healthcare costs have always been a concern, the long-term trend is becoming increasingly difficult to ignore.

Consider the numbers. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation's (KFF) Employer Health Benefits Survey, the average annual premium for employer-sponsored family health coverage was \$10,880 in 2005. By 2025, that number had climbed to \$26,993 - an increase of approximately 148% in 20 years. In 2025 alone, family premiums increased 6%, following increases of 7% in each of the previous two years.

Now look forward just 10 years. If a \$26,993 family premium were to increase by an average of 7% annually, it would reach approximately \$53,200 by 2035. No one can predict exactly what healthcare costs will be a decade from now, but this illustrates the financial challenge employers face if current trends continue.

And the challenge isn't limited to premiums. KFF reports that the average general annual deductible for single coverage, when averaged across all covered workers, reached \$1,663 in 2025 - 54% higher than in 2015. Thirty-four percent of covered workers are now in plans with a deductible of at least \$2,000.



Durso

These employees can have very different healthcare needs, financial circumstances and expectations. One employee may value comprehensive coverage and predictable out-of-pocket costs, while another may place greater value on an HSA, lower premiums or greater flexibility.

So how does an employer build a benefits program that is financially sustainable for the company while remaining valuable to a workforce with very different needs?

That is why employers need to begin forward-thinking their employee benefits strategy.

Forward thinking does not simply mean shopping the market every year and choosing the lowest renewal. It means taking a longer-term view of plan design, employee engagement, financing arrangements and risk.

Employers should be asking: Are we financing our plan in the most efficient way? Is our plan design encouraging employees to make informed healthcare decisions? Are we taking advantage of opportunities such as Health Savings Accounts, employer contributions, alternative funding arrangements or self-funded strategies? Most importantly, are we looking at where our healthcare dollars are actually being spent?

There is no single solution for every employer. The right strategy depends on workforce demographics, claims experience, cash flow, risk tolerance and long-term business objectives.

The important point is to start thinking ahead rather than simply reacting to the renewal. Your employee benefits program should be viewed as a long-term financial strategy - one that deserves the same forward thinking and planning as any other major investment in your business. ♦



Adding another layer of complexity, today's workforce can span five generations - from Traditionalists and Baby Boomers to Generation X, Millennials and Generation Z.

EVERYTHING RUNS THROUGH LANSING

MICHIGAN'S 2026 ELECTION

By Liz Reno-Hayes

Policy, politics and commerce all converge in Lansing this November — and the region is right in the middle of it. Michigan has not seen an election year quite like this one.

The governor's office is open. The U.S. Senate seat is open. The secretary of state's office is open. The attorney general's office is open. All 110 seats in the Michigan House and all 38 seats in the Michigan Senate are on the ballot. Two Michigan Supreme Court seats are in play. And in the middle of it all sits Michigan's 7th Congressional District, centered on Lansing, widely regarded as one of the most competitive U.S. House races in the country.

Michigan is one of the nation's most closely watched swing states. This year, that distinction runs directly through the capital city. Every one of these races touches policy that gets written, debated and signed a few blocks from the Chamber's front door. As the Lansing region's business community prepares to vote, the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce and its political action committee, LRC-PAC, want members to understand what's on the ballot, why it matters for the region's economy, and how to make an informed decision on Nov. 3.

The Statewide Races



John James (R)

Jocelyn Benson (D)

With Gov. Gretchen Whitmer term-limited, Michigan's governorship is open for the first time since 2018. Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson, a Democrat, will face U.S. Rep. John James, a Republican, in the general election. Benson defeated Genesee County Sheriff Chris Swanson in the Democratic primary, while James won a contested Republican primary.



U.S. Rep Mike Rogers (R)

Abdul El-Sayed (D)

Michigan's U.S. Senate seat is also open, with Sen. Gary Peters declining to seek a third term. Former CIA analyst and public health official Abdul El-Sayed won a competitive Democratic primary over U.S. Rep. Haley Stevens, and will face former U.S. Rep. Mike Rogers, a Republican, in November.



Doug Lloyd (R)

Eli Savit (D)

The attorney general and secretary of state offices are open as well, with Nessel and Benson each term-limited out of their current roles. Those races were settled by party conventions rather than the primary: Washtenaw County Prosecutor Eli Savit (D) faces Eaton County Prosecutor Doug Lloyd (R) for attorney general, and Lt. Gov. Garlin Gilchrist (D) faces Macomb County Clerk Anthony Forlini (R) for secretary of state. Two Michigan Supreme Court seats are also on the ballot, with incumbent Justices Megan Cavanagh and Noah Hood facing challengers Michael Warren and Casandra Morse-Bills.

The Race Closest to Home

For Lansing-area voters, no race is closer to home than Michigan's 7th Congressional District, which covers Ingham, Livingston, Clinton, and Shiawassee counties along with parts of Eaton, Oakland, and Genesee counties.



Tom Barrett (R)

William Lawrence (D)

Incumbent Republican Tom Barrett of Charlotte, a former Army helicopter pilot who has represented mid-Michigan in Congress since 2024, is seeking a second term. He'll face Lansing-area political organizer William Lawrence, who won a three-way Democratic primary in August over former U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine Bridget Brink and retired Navy SEAL Matt Maasdam.

The 7th District has flipped between the parties in three of the last four elections, and both parties consider it one of the most competitive House seats in the country heading into November.

Control of the Legislature Is Also on the Ballot

Beyond the marquee races, every seat in both chambers of the Michigan Legislature is up this year. Democrats currently hold a narrow majority in the state Senate, while Republicans hold a narrow majority in the state House. Whichever party wins full control of Lansing's statehouse will shape the state budget, business regulation, and infrastructure investment for years to come.

"Every election matters, but we're at a moment when Michigan needs elected officials who can lead, work across party lines to find real solutions, and follow through on them," said Steve Japinga, Senior Vice President of Public Affairs for the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce. "Our state is at a fork in the road right now, and we need to focus on working together to reach the solutions that will benefit all of us."

What Should Business Leaders Be Watching Between Now and November?

With the governor's race, U.S. Senate race, and MI-7 all rated as competitive, a handful of counties will likely tell the story on election night, long before full results are in.

Statewide, Oakland and Macomb counties are the ones to watch. Oakland is the state's largest suburban county

and has trended Democratic in recent cycles; Macomb is a traditional bellwether that swung hard toward Donald Trump in 2024. Mike Rogers came within roughly 19,000 votes of winning his 2024 Senate race despite that same suburban-versus-blue-collar-suburban split, which is part of why both the governor's race and the Senate race are considered close enough to go either way.

Locally, Ingham and Livingston counties will do the same job for MI-7. In 2024, Democrat Curtis Hertel won Ingham County by more than 40,000 votes and still lost the district, because Livingston County alone gave Barrett an advantage of nearly 34,000 votes, with Clinton and the Eaton County portion adding a few thousand more. Whether Lawrence can meaningfully cut into Barrett's Livingston County margin, not just run up the score in Ingham, is likely to be the single biggest factor in the race. "At the end of the day, this is going to come down to turnout for both parties," Japinga said.



No matter who holds power in Lansing, the Chamber and our partners across the state will keep advocating for policies that grow our economy, create jobs, and strengthen our workforce.

STEVE JAPINGA, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS
FOR THE LANSING REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

What Happens in Lansing If Control Flips

Michigan currently has divided government: a Democratic governor, a Democratic Senate, and a Republican House. That split hasn't only produced gridlock — it also forced some genuine bipartisan compromise, including last year's deal on paid sick leave and minimum wage, which passed with votes from both parties under a tight court-ordered deadline. This November's results could extend that kind of dealmaking, or hand one party the votes to move on its own.

If Republicans win the governor's race and hold the House while also flipping the Senate, the state would have full Republican control for the first time since 2018. If Democrats win the governor's race and take back the House while holding the Senate, the state would swing to a full Democratic trifecta. Either outcome would let the winning party move its agenda through the budget process and legislation without needing votes from across the aisle. A continued split would mean more of the negotiation the state saw on sick leave and minimum wage, for better or worse depending on the issue.

"No matter who holds power in Lansing, the Chamber and our partners across the state will keep advocating for policies that grow our economy, create jobs, and strengthen our workforce," Japinga said. "We've been doing that for 125 years, and that won't change based on any election result."

LRC-PAC'S 2026 ENDORSEMENTS

Lansing Regional Chamber – Political Action Committee (LRC-PAC) has endorsed candidates in several of the region's most closely watched races this cycle. LRC-PAC evaluates candidates through a process that can include their record, relationships and engagement with the business community, candidate questionnaires, interviews and the Chamber's Meet the Candidates series.

- ✓ **TOM BARRETT** — Michigan's 7th Congressional District
- ✓ **MIKE ROGERS** — U.S. Senate
- ✓ **DOUG LLOYD** — Michigan Attorney General
- ✓ **SARAH ANTHONY** — 21st District State Senate seat
- ✓ **ANGELA WITWER** — 76th District State House seat
- ✓ **HAROLD POPE** — 74th District State House seat

"These endorsements reflect our commitment to supporting leaders who understand that Michigan needs to be focused on economic growth, competitiveness and creating an environment where businesses can invest, expand and create jobs," said Steve Japinga, Senior Vice President of Public Affairs for the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce. "Our 2026 endorsements demonstrate that this is not about political party. It is about who understands our region, who will engage with the business community and who is prepared to advance policies that will help Greater Lansing and Michigan grow."

The list reflects LRC-PAC's long-standing, bipartisan approach: endorsements go to candidates from both parties who demonstrate a commitment to growing the regional economy, not to a single party's slate. LRC-PAC will continue to announce additional endorsements throughout the fall.

What's on the Ballot Beyond the Candidates

In addition to the races above, Michigan voters will decide at least one, and possibly two, statewide ballot questions this November, along with a full slate of local proposals across the Lansing region.

A note on timing: the state's deadline for finalizing ballot wording on constitutional amendments and legislative referendums is Sept. 4, 2026 — after this issue goes to print. That means some statewide or local proposals may be added to, or clarified on, the November ballot after this article is finalized. Readers should check lansingchamber.org and the Chamber's newsletters, along with their county clerk's office, for the most current list before Election Day.

Michigan Constitutional Convention Question. Every 16 years, the Michigan Constitution requires that voters be asked whether to hold a convention to rewrite the state's governing document. This automatic question has appeared on the ballot three times since 1963 (1978, 1994, and 2010), and voters have rejected it by wide margins each time. It will appear again on the Nov. 3 ballot.

Michiganders for Money Out of Politics (MMOP). The Board of State Canvassers certified this citizen-initiated proposal for the November ballot on July 24 after the campaign submitted more than 560,000 signatures. The measure would bar regulated utilities and companies holding state or local government contracts worth more than \$250,000 annually from contributing to campaigns for the officeholders who regulate or contract with them, and would require new disclosure for so-called dark money political ads. Protect MI Free Speech, a ballot question committee that includes the Michigan Chamber, has sued in the Michigan Supreme Court seeking to overturn the certification, arguing the signature review fell short of the required threshold; the court was asked to rule by Aug. 20. The proposal's final status should be confirmed closer to press time.

Possible proof-of-citizenship voting measure. A separate proposal from Americans for Citizen Voting, which would require documented proof of citizenship to register to vote, remains under Board of State Canvassers review, with a sufficiency hearing scheduled for late August. Its status was not yet finalized as of this writing.

Several other citizen-initiated proposals that circulated earlier this year, including a ranked-choice voting amendment, an income tax surcharge on high earners (Invest in MI Kids), and a referendum to repeal the state's 2025 minimum wage law, were suspended by their organizers this spring after falling short of the signatures needed to qualify. None of those will appear on the November ballot.

Regional and Local Ballot Proposals

Beyond the statewide questions, voters across the Lansing region will also weigh in on a number of local charter, millage, and bond proposals. Based on proposal language available as of press time:

In total, the region's ballot includes 20 distinct local proposals: 11 millage measures and three school bond proposals together representing approximately \$349.8 million in combined new/renewed annual revenue and bond authorization, plus six charter or governance measures with no direct tax impact.

★ NEW ✓ RENEWAL

CLINTON COUNTY — 10 PROPOSALS IDENTIFIED, INCLUDING:

- ★ **City of DeWitt Charter Revision** (general revision of the city charter)
- ★ **East Lansing Charter Amendment: City Council Meetings** (aligns charter with state public-meeting and records law; East Lansing spans Ingham and Clinton counties)
- ★ **East Lansing Charter Amendment: City Clerk** (permits the Clerk to appoint a meeting designee; spans Ingham and Clinton counties)
- ★ **East Lansing Charter Amendment: City Contracts** (allows designees to approve contracts when officials are unavailable; spans Ingham and Clinton counties)
- ★ **East Lansing Petition-Initiated Charter Amendment: Citizens' Advisory Healthcare Action Committee** (spans Ingham and Clinton counties)
- ★ **East Lansing Citizen-Initiated Charter Amendment: Even-Year City Elections** (would shift city elections to even years; spans Ingham and Clinton counties)
- ★ **Bath Charter Township General Operating Millage Increase** (1.00 mill increase)
- ★ **DeWitt Public Schools Bond Proposal** (up to \$157 million)
- ★ **St. Johns Public Schools Bond Proposal** (up to \$40 million; district spans Clinton and Gratiot counties)
- ★ **Grand Ledge Public Schools Bond Proposal** (also appears in Eaton County; spans Eaton, Clinton, and Ionia counties)

EATON COUNTY — 4 PROPOSALS IDENTIFIED, INCLUDING:

- ★ **Eaton County Local Roads and Streets Preservation and Improvement Millage Proposal** (up to 1.5 mills)
- ✓ **Eaton County Transportation Authority (EATRAN) Millage Renewal**
- ★ **Grand Ledge Public Schools Bond Proposal** (up to \$123.5 million; spans Eaton, Clinton, and Ionia counties)
- ✓ **Holt Public Schools Operating Millage Renewal** (also appears in Ingham County; district spans both)

INGHAM COUNTY — 8 PROPOSALS IDENTIFIED, INCLUDING:

- ✓ **City of Lansing Essential Services Millage Restoration Proposal** (restores charter millage from 19.2214 to 20 mills, for police, fire, and road/sidewalk maintenance)
- ★ **City of Leslie Street Improvement Millage Proposal** (up to 5.0 mills)
- ✓ **Delhi Charter Township Fire Protection and EMS Millage Renewal**
- ✓ **Delhi Charter Township Law Enforcement Services Millage Renewal**
- ✓ **Meridian Charter Township Police and Fire Protection Millage Renewal**
- ✓ **Meridian Charter Township Park Millage Renewal**
- ✓ **Dansville Schools Operating Millage Renewal**
- ✓ **Holt Public Schools Operating Millage Renewal** (also appears in Eaton County; district spans both)

This regional guide reflects proposal language available as of Aug. 24, 2026, including Clinton County's unofficial proposal list. Because school and municipal boundaries can cross county lines, some proposals (East Lansing's charter amendments, the Grand Ledge and Holt bond/millage proposals) appear in more than one county and should not be double-counted in a regional total. Final county ballot listings, along with any statewide proposals finalized after the state's Sept. 4 certification deadline, should be checked at lansingchamber.org before publication and again before Election Day.

Make an Informed Decision

Nov. 3, 2026: General Election

The LRC-PAC's 2026 Regional Election Guide is available now at lansingchamber.org, with details on registration, absentee voting, early voting, and ballot proposals across Clinton, Eaton, and Ingham counties. The guide will be updated throughout the fall as LRC-PAC finalizes additional candidate endorsements and as remaining ballot proposals are certified. ♦

Celebrating 20 Years of the 10 Over the Next Ten Award



Priscilla Bordayo - Crime Survivors Speak & Remarkable

Since receiving the Ten Over the Next Ten Award, Priscilla Bordayo has continued expanding her impact through advocacy, leadership, and community transformation. A recipient of the 2022 Governor's Award, 2023 Neighborhood Impact Award, 2025 Latina of the Year Award, and 2026 SheLeads Michigan Award, she currently serves as Partnerships Manager for Crime Survivors Speak (CSS). Priscilla and her team are helping develop Trauma Recovery Centers across Michigan through the Michigan Safer Act. She is also an ambassador for Prison Fellowship and NOVA. In addition, she leads Remarkable Adults and recently launched Remarkable Kids Edition,

continuing her mission of healing, hope, and safety for communities nationwide.

What is a piece of advice you would give to young professionals in our region today?

Always put God first and never be afraid to elevate your voice, even when the room feels intimidating. Your story, leadership, and purpose matter. Be willing to serve, learn, and work as a team player because lasting impact is never built alone. Stay humble, stay courageous, and remember that the doors meant for you will open when you continue walking in purpose and faith.



Ryan Doom - Web Ascender

On the professional front, I've stayed focused on growing my digital marketing and development agency, Web Ascender. We've had fun consulting over the years and also diversifying in the subscription product space with platforms like Boast.io and AccessibleMetrics.com, which allow us to make an international impact. Over the years, we've acted as a force multiplier for hundreds of local businesses and non-profits, helping them bridge the gap between their big-picture vision and the daily execution of their sales and communication. While I'm not serving on any formal boards at the moment, I'm still regularly consulting with leadership and board members to help local organizations succeed.

What is a piece of advice you would give to young professionals in our region today?

Lansing is incredibly welcoming. My advice is to find a few social or professional groups that meet in person, attend regularly, and just start talking. When I was starting out as a young professional, these groups were where I made many of my lifelong friends. If you want to make an impact, I'd bet any past "10 Over the Next Ten" recipient would answer your email or call. Find someone further along the path you're interested in and reach out - people here truly want to see you succeed.



Julie Holton Smith - mConnexions

Since earning this honor, Julie launched and scaled mConnexions into a strategic marketing agency helping businesses and nonprofits succeed through branding, digital marketing, content, PR, web design, and AI strategy. Her work has earned significant community recognition, and she's proud of the relationships and impact created along the way. She hosted a TV show and now produces the Expert Connexions podcast. As Startup Grind Lansing Director, she earned the Gladiator Award and has taken the global stage four consecutive years. Julie and her husband co-founded an AI consultancy and launched Lansing's first monthly AI meetups.

She serves on multiple nonprofit boards and remains deeply committed to giving back to the Lansing community.

What is a piece of advice you would give to young professionals in our region today?

Build real relationships. Not just LinkedIn connections, but genuine advocates who will push you, champion you, and tell you the hard truths. That human network will never become obsolete. And here's what I've learned in 2026 that I couldn't have predicted in 2017: pair those relationships with AI skills, and you become unstoppable.



Ben Rathbun – Rathbun Insurance

Since receiving the 10 Over the Next Ten Award in 2016, I became CEO of Rathbun Insurance following my father's passing in 2021 and founded the For Good Foundation. I've served on boards including LEAP, the Broad Art Museum, Ele's Place, Insuring MI Future, Old Town Commercial Association, and Habitat Young Professionals, while also serving on the SBAM Leadership Council, Michigan Young Agents Council, and supporting NAAIA Detroit. Honors include National Young Agent of the Year, Insurance Business America Rising Star, the Lansing Chamber Outstanding Small Business Award, and Rough Notes' inaugural Walt J. Gdowski Award.

What is a piece of advice you would give to young professionals in our region today?

Success in Greater Lansing comes from showing up consistently and being involved before there's something in it for you. One of the biggest lessons I've learned is that being there matters most — for your clients, coworkers, friends, and community. Say yes to opportunities that challenge you, build genuine relationships, and invest in causes bigger than yourself. In a region like ours, your reputation and willingness to show up for others matters.



Jacob Toomey – Michigan Laborers District Council

In 2024, I won re-election in the most competitive County Commissioner race in Eaton County. Shortly after receiving the award, I transitioned from my role as a Legislative Director in the Michigan House of Representatives to Deputy Director of Government Affairs at the Michigan Laborers District Council (MI LiUNA), and was recently promoted to Interim Director of Government Affairs at Michigan LiUNA. In this role, I represent more than 15,000 union construction workers at the state and local levels. I'm proud to have helped secure a \$1.8 billion increase in state road funding supporting more than 10,000 jobs statewide, and have advanced

several "Best Value" procurement policies that strengthen accountability and incentivize local hiring.

What is a piece of advice you would give to young professionals in our region today?

Always ask yourself, "How can this be improved?" Long-term success is usually the result of small, consistent improvements made every day. Approach every task with intention and pride, regardless of how big or small it may seem. And don't forget to have fun along the way!



Dr. Matea Caluk – Michigan State University

Dr. Matea Čaluk is the Chief of Staff for Residence Education and Housing Services at MSU, where she leads strategy, collaboration, and organizational change. In 2025, she completed her Doctor of Educational Leadership degree and was appointed Trustee for Holt Public Schools. She's joined the Communities in Schools-Michigan Board and the Ingham County Racial Equity Task Force. She is a published scholar on women's leadership and decision-making. In 2023, along with two colleagues, she founded a consulting firm, 3KIND Perspective, LLC and has collaborated with regional organizations. Outside of work, she's enjoying family life with her husband and children, recently coaching

4th grade volleyball to a championship!

What is a piece of advice you would give to young professionals in our region today?

I would encourage young professionals in the region to lead with curiosity, stay open to learning, try new things, and step into opportunities that stretch your comfort level to allow for growth. Invest in relationships by being present, reliable, and intentional. Define success in a way that feels true to you, guided by your values and purpose. Most importantly, stay rooted in community! Get involved, give your time, and invest locally. This region grows when we show up for it together.

Helping Others Find Their Stride: Playmakers Marks 45 Years of Community First

By Liz Reno-Hayes



For 45 years, Playmakers has been more than a place to buy running shoes. The Okemos-based specialty retailer has grown into a gathering place for Mid-Michigan residents at every stage of their fitness journey, and its leadership says that sense of community has never been an accident.

"Our philosophy and mission at Playmakers has always been rather simple," says Carlie Beatty, co-owner of Playmakers. "Our original owner, Curt Munson, believed strongly that if you pour into your community and do what is right for the people you have the opportunity to serve, the business will take care of itself."

That mission has outlasted a single owner or generation. Playmakers is now led by its third generation of owners, all longtime employees who started on the sales floor before stepping into leadership. Beatty says staying locally owned has shaped both the company's growth and its priorities.

"Being locally owned gives us the flexibility to make decisions based on what is best for our community rather than following a corporate model," Beatty says. "It allows us to invest more deeply in local partnerships, events, and programs that reflect the unique needs and interests of residents across the region."

That people-first approach is part of what has landed Playmakers among the top running stores in the country year after year. "We combine our footwear knowledge and expertise with personalized service and a genuine commitment to making meaningful connections with our guests," Beatty explains. "Whether someone is training for a race or taking a walk around the block, we want them to feel welcome, supported and inspired."

Playmakers is helping to build a culture of wellness within our region. Its weekly Community and Team Playmakers runs and walks have designed routes and paces so no one feels shut out. "Movement shouldn't feel intimidating, it should feel accessible," Beatty says. Additionally, that spirit carries over into the Playmakers Holiday Classic, an annual event that has become a tradition for families across the region. "The Holiday Classic is one of our favorite events because it brings together people from all walks of life



around a fun shared experience," Beatty notes. "Maybe more importantly, it's an opportunity for people to connect and make memories."

This year, Playmakers is marking its 45th anniversary with its 45 Forward Initiative, a commitment to give \$45,000 back to the community that has supported the business since 1981. Each month, the initiative directs a \$4,500 donation to a local organization doing meaningful work in Greater Lansing, alongside an employee matching program that adds up to \$450 per team member gift. "Supporting other local organizations is one way we can reinvest in the community that supports us," Beatty says. "Giving back isn't separate from our mission, it's an essential part of it."

Looking ahead, Beatty says the need for connection, not just fitness, will keep driving Playmakers' role in the region. "People are looking for meaningful connections just as much as they are looking for opportunities to move," she says. "We will continue to create spaces, programs, and events that bring people together and help them live healthier, more connected lives."

Playmakers' vision for the next chapter is summed up in the same four words that have guided its first 45 years: helping others find their stride. ♦

Back to School, Back to Balance

By Sarah Bakken

September brings a familiar rhythm to Greater Lansing: new backpacks, packed lunches, and calendars suddenly crowded with early pickups, late buses, and the occasional "no school" day nobody remembers scheduling. For the women of ATHENA Women's Interest Network (WIN), back-to-school season is also a reminder of something we talk about often, that balancing career and caregiving isn't a solo project. It's a community one.

Ask around at any ATHENA WIN event this time of year, and you'll hear the same themes. Give yourself grace during the transition weeks; the first few are always the hardest, and they do get easier. Loop in your team early, a quick heads-up to a manager or colleague about a shifted schedule beats a scramble later. Lean on your village, whether that's a carpool with another working parent, a trusted after-school program, or simply a friend who can grab your kid in a pinch. And build in small anchors for yourself, even ten quiet minutes with coffee before the chaos starts, so you're showing up for your

team and your family from a full tank rather than an empty one.

Childcare and school logistics remain one of the biggest pressures on our region's workforce, and it's exactly the kind of challenge ATHENA WIN was built to talk about openly. Our members are proof that leadership and caregiving aren't competing priorities, they're both part of showing up fully, in whatever season you're in.

If back-to-school season has you looking for a network that gets it, ATHENA WIN welcomes you. Connect with us to find your people, share your own tips, and remember: you don't have to carry the calendar alone. Visit lansingchamber.org/athenawin/ for more information and upcoming events. ♦



Evening of Empowerment

**LEGACY OF LEADERSHIP:
PASSING THE TORCH FROM GENERATION
TO GENERATION**



SPEAKER
LUPE IZZO
THE IZZO LEGACY FOUNDER
& PRESIDENT



SPEAKER
RAQUEL IZZO - MCDONALD
THE IZZO LEGACY
BOARD MEMBER



MODERATOR
CHIVON KLOEFFER
FORMER NEWS ANCHOR,
WLNS TV-6

THURSDAY,
SEPT. 24

5:00 P.M. TO 8:00 P.M.

CROWNE PLAZA
925 S. CREYTS ROAD, LANSING

Register Today:
[Lansingchamber.org/evening-empowerment](https://lansingchamber.org/evening-empowerment)



Kellogg's
75th ANNIVERSARY
Celebration

KELLOGG HOTEL &
CONFERENCE CENTER
1951 75 YEARS 2026

Kellogg Hotel & Conference Center

Saturday, Sept. 19
5-8 p.m.

Kellogg Hotel & Conference Center

SCAN QR CODE TO GET
YOUR TICKETS!



Where Are They Now: Former LRCC Interns Reflect on Their Start

For nearly two decades, the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce (LRCC) has given college students a first real seat at the table, drafting member communications, sitting in on advocacy meetings, and helping run events that shape the region's business community. FOCUS caught up with three former interns now building careers in public relations, government affairs, and wealth management to ask what that experience meant, and how it has followed them since.



Laura Biehl
Director of Public Affairs and Events, Resch Strategies

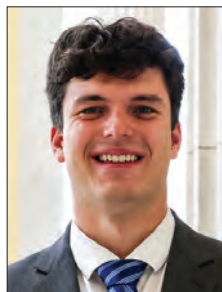
Laura Biehl interned at the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce in 2007 and 2008, where she helped prepare member communications, wrote for FOCUS Magazine, and supported LRCC event planning.

Nearly two decades later, she leads the event planning team at Resch Strategies and provides public relations, public affairs, and communications counsel to clients, work that draws heavily on writing, editing, and attention to detail.

Biehl said her internship gave her the chance to put what she was learning at Michigan State University into practice for the first time, and to see the results in published articles and successful events. That experience, she said, confirmed she had chosen the right career path and gave her the confidence to put her skills to work.

The mentorship she received at the LRCC has stayed with her throughout her career. She now makes a point of giving interns and young professionals the same kind of real-world assignments and investment that shaped her own start, calling it a way of paying forward what she was given nearly 20 years ago.

"I truly believe I would not have entered my career with the same level of preparation and confidence without the experience I gained at the Lansing Regional Chamber and the people who invested in me," Biehl said.



Maximilian Hornung
Washington, D.C.

Maximilian Hornung's internship with the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce gave him his first real exposure to advocacy, sparking an interest in public policy and the legislative process that has shaped every stage of his

career since.

During the internship with LRCC, Steve Japinga, Senior Vice President of Public Affairs at the LRCC, connected him with Kevin Courtois, Vice President of Government Relations for the Great Lakes Region at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. A conversation with Courtois planted the idea of pursuing a career in Washington, D.C. From there, Hornung built toward that goal deliberately, with an internship at the Pontiac Regional Chamber of Commerce, work with Senator Roger Victory, a stint in Congressman Tom Barrett's district office, and an internship with Congresswoman Lisa McClain's office, where he focused on health care, economic development, and national security policy. Each step, he said, offered a different view of how government works and prepared him for the next.

Hornung has since moved to Washington D.C., where he is pursuing opportunities in federal public policy and government affairs, drawn as much by the city's history and institutions as by the professional opportunities.

He credits his time at the LRCC, and Japinga's leadership in particular, with teaching him how to communicate across different backgrounds in politics and business, skills he said made him more confident and comfortable putting himself forward. The LRCC's fast-paced environment, from roundtables to policy memos to direct work with business and community leaders, taught him to adapt quickly and take initiative, lessons he said carried directly into his work on Capitol Hill.

"The Lansing Regional Chamber instilled in me the value of having a good attitude and being willing to work hard," Hornung said. "Those are lessons that have stayed with me throughout every step of my career."



Andrew "Drew" Pence
*Assistant Vice President,
Financial Advisor, Ammon Pence
Group at Merrill*

Andrew Pence is an Assistant Vice President, Financial Advisor, with the Ammon Pence Group at Merrill, where he and his team help families build customized wealth management strategies and financial plans. He works closely with clients to develop personalized investment strategies aimed at their long-term goals.

Pence's internship with the LRCC launched his career in financial services, sharpening his professional skills and giving him early exposure to the local business community. After several years in the industry, he joined Merrill, where he continues to help clients plan for their financial futures.

What has stayed with him most, he said, is an appreciation for the LRCC's role as an advocate for local businesses.

"I was fortunate to see firsthand the impact that Tim and the Lansing Regional Chamber team have on fostering business growth and community engagement," Pence said. "That experience shaped my appreciation for the broader impact our work can have. Today, as I help families work toward their financial goals, I recognize that strengthening individual financial well-being also contributes to stronger communities and a healthier economy." ♦



Where Local Businesses Go to Grow

Paula has been serving the Lansing community since 1997 with Kidtime Child Development Center.

But she had a vision to do even more.

With support from CASE Credit Union's business services team, Paula expanded Kidtime to a new, larger facility, increasing access to quality early childhood education for Lansing families.



casecu.org/business-services

Insured by NCUA.

BRD YOUR ONE-STOP SHOP FOR MAILING, BINDERY, DESIGN, DIGITAL PRINT, PROMOTIONAL PRODUCTS, OFFSET PRINT, AND MORE!

LET BRD'S IMPRESSIVE TEAM TACKLE YOUR HARDEST JOBS!

BRDPrinting.com

TEL 517.372.0268 | FAX 517.372.4922
912 W. SAINT JOSEPH | LANSING, MI 48915



CHECK OUT THE LANSING JOB BOARD!

It's a one-stop shop for job opportunities in the Lansing region and allows LRCC members with the ability to post their job openings.

Learn more at lansingchamber.org



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.



Ernest C. Browne – 1982

Browne graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in biology from Wayne State University. He came to Lansing after serving eight years on the Detroit City Council. In his last year on the council, he ran for mayor in an unsuccessful race against Coleman Young. He served as vice president

of Community and Civic Affairs for Michigan National Bank, chairman of the Chief Okemos and the Detroit Council of American Boy Scouts, president of the Greater Lansing Historical Council, and chairman of the board of the Greater Lansing Urban League. Browne died February 2, 2005.



J. Michael Hofmann – 1983

Hofmann graduated from MSU and the Stonier Graduate School of Banking at Rutgers and served as a captain in the U.S. Army. He served as president of American Bank & Trust and other banks; and Pulte Corporation's Houston, Texas banking operation. During 1998 he formed Woodward Financial, Inc., which provides management advisory services to financial institutions and expert witness testimony on various banking matters. He served as president

of the Colonial Village Kiwanis Club; director of the Lansing Symphony Orchestra; campaign director of the Capital Area United Way; organizer of the R. E. Olds Museum; board member of the Delta Township EDC and the Economic Club of Detroit; and was founding president of the Houston Credit Coalition. During 2009 he received the FDIC Alliance for Economic Inclusion Pioneer Award.



Francis J. "Jack" Roost – 1984

Roost worked on the chamber's continuing education program and as a member of the board of directors for several years before becoming president. He graduated from MSU in 1957 with a bachelor's degree in accounting, became a CPA and a partner at Plante & Moran until 1993 when he joined AIS Equipment and later, O'Leary Paint

and Maplegrove Property Management. He has been active at South Baptist Church as a teacher of an adult Sunday School class and as a member of the board of deacons and the board of trustees.



Martha Mertz – 1985

Mertz is a successful real estate entrepreneur and is president and owner of Mayhood/Mertz Investment Inc. She was a founding partner in several development/management partnerships in the Lansing area. She is best known as the founder of ATHENA which is a non-profit organization that seeks to support, develop and honor women leaders, inspire women to reach their full potential, and create balance in leadership worldwide. She has received

numerous awards including induction into Enterprising Women's Hall of Fame, 2006; the Visionary Award from Office Depot, 2004; the Vassilissa Award in Moscow, Russia; and the Lansing ATHENA Award. She was named one of the top 25 Women Business Owners in Michigan by NAWBO and selected as Michigan Women-In-Business Advocate by the U.S. Small Business Administration. She currently lives in Arizona.

Chamber in Action



The Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce congratulates Ryan Jankovic and Mike Maddox, EOS Implementers with [EOS Worldwide](#), on the opening of their new office at 2900 West Road, Suite 222, in East Lansing. EOS, the Entrepreneurial Operating System, is a proven operating system for entrepreneurial businesses. As companies grow, so does complexity, and EOS helps leadership teams clarify their vision, gain traction and alignment, and build a healthy, cohesive team.



Congratulations to [Elite Home Selling](#) on the ribbon cutting for their newly renovated office at 1493 Haslett Road. The Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce and its Ambassadors were excited to celebrate this milestone with a team dedicated to providing outstanding service and professionalism throughout every step of the home buying and selling process.



The Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce congratulates [Capitol Macintosh](#) on 20 years of service on Michigan Avenue in Lansing. For two decades, this locally-operated, female-owned business in Lansing's Eastside neighborhood, is a trusted name in Apple and PC repair and sales. As the official repair partner of Michigan State University, Capitol Macintosh has built a reputation on expertise, reliability, and genuine care for the community.



The Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce, along with our Ambassadors and City of Lansing Mayor Andy Schor, congratulated [Grip & Go Tire Co.](#) on its grand opening. Located at 3712 S Cedar St, Grip & Go Tire Company is a full-service tire dealer and repair shop offering tires, wheel alignments, brake service, suspension work, and general automotive repairs. With extensive equipment and ample workspace, their team is well-equipped to handle a wide range of vehicle service needs.

Groundbreakings Across the Lansing Region



Courtesy Photo

UM Health-Sparrow Breaks Ground on Janice M. Granger Behavioral Health Building

University of Michigan Health-Sparrow broke ground August 5 on the Janice M. Granger Behavioral Health Building, an \$83 million, 64-bed facility at 320 N. Pennsylvania Ave. in Lansing. It will be the region's first psychiatric facility with inpatient beds dedicated to children and adolescents, with a 2028 opening expected. The investment will help address a long-standing need for specialized behavioral health care, expanding access to critical services for young people and families across mid-Michigan. The project was made possible by a landmark gift from Alton L. and the late Janice M. Granger, the largest in UM Health-Sparrow history.



Courtesy Photo

Groundbreaking Celebrates New Behavioral Health Facility in Watertown Township

A groundbreaking ceremony in July marked the start of construction on a new 48-bed inpatient behavioral health facility in Watertown Township. The event drew community partners, staff, representatives from Kasco Construction, local leaders and neighbors who turned out to celebrate the milestone. Lansing Mayor Andy Schor and representatives from Watertown Township also joined the celebration. Construction is expected to be completed in spring 2027, with approximately 100 new jobs created. The new facility will expand access to mental healthcare for both adolescents and adults in the Lansing region, reflecting a continued commitment to providing hope, healing and greater access to care for individuals and families who need it most.

Your Business Deserves Better Banking

Explore Solutions



Federally Insured by NCUA

Plan On Something **Greater**



LANSiNG

MICHIGAN

Need to coordinate your organization's next meeting or conference?
Work with the experts at Choose Lansing. They will help you find the
perfect venue, book hotel room blocks and increase attendance.
Choose Lansing and plan on something Greater.



Choose
LANSiNG
Lansing.org | 517.487.0077

Scan this QR Code to
unlock the keys to your
meeting's success!

Members on the Move

NEW HIRES



Powers

Horizon Bank has welcomed **Jeff Powers** as Vice President, Senior Commercial Loan Officer, based in East Lansing. Powers brings over 25 years of

banking experience and partners with businesses across mid-Michigan to structure lending and deposit solutions built for growth. He is active in the Lansing region, currently serving on the endowment board of the Junior League of Lansing. Powers has also volunteered with Ele's Place Capital Region and previously served as president of the East Lansing Educational Foundation.



Tidwell

LAFCU has hired **Chris Tidwell** as a technology specialist, strengthening the credit union's technology team with an experienced professional who previously

supported LAFCU as a contractor. In his new role, Tidwell provides technical guidance and support across the department. Tidwell is ITIL certified and brings experience in information technology and software development. Most recently, he served as a service desk technician at a bank in East Lansing and previously worked as a business application developer at a mortgage lender and servicer in Ann Arbor. Tidwell also served in the U.S. Marine Corps, achieving the rank of sergeant.

UnoDeuce Multimedia has hired **Zac Crute** as Studio and Events Wizard. Crute was a video production intern from Lansing



Crute

Community College in 2024 and, following the internship, became a regular freelance professional for UnoDeuce on outside event productions.

In his new role, Crute focuses on production for multi-camera events, as well as managing in-studio podcasting and video needs. He has helped develop four new podcasts that launched this past spring, as well as the new show "Hope in Action" with Sheri Jones.

APPOINTMENTS

The Lally Group is proud to announce the continued growth



Fiero



Palmer

of our leadership team. **Matt Fiero** has been promoted to Partner in recognition of his exceptional professional accomplishments and leadership within the independent telephone company and non-profit sectors. **Sean Palmer** has been promoted to Manager, recognized for his expertise in serving family-owned businesses, manufacturers and non-profit organizations. Palmer's tailored approach to client solutions makes him a valuable asset to the firm.

Brianna Arnold, owner of **Clean Team USA**, has joined the Board of Directors for **EVE, Inc.** Arnold hopes to support the organization's continued growth. EVE's mission is to support survivors of domestic and sexual abuse on their journey of healing



Arnold

through compassionate services and resources, while empowering the community through education, advocacy and awareness to foster a culture of safety and respect.

Downtown Lansing Inc. welcomes **Ozay Moore** to its Board of



Moore

Directors. As the Founder and Executive Director of ALL OF THE ABOVE HIP HOP ACADEMY, Moore is a dedicated and passionate member of the downtown community.

AWARDS

In honor of Nurses Week, **McLaren Greater Lansing** recognized



Loniewski

Michael Loniewski, RN, clinical manager of endoscopy services, as this year's winner of the Margaret McLaren Nursing Leadership Award. This

honor is named after Margaret McLaren, a true pioneer in the field and the first nurse to ever have a hospital named after them. Michael was nominated by an employee who shared: "Mike is an excellent nursing leader because he genuinely cares about both patients and staff. He leads the department in a way that recognizes patients as a priority while also remembering to value the staff as individuals."



Montag

Louise Montag of Montag Forward Solutions LLC

has been named the Certified Prevention Consultant (CPC) Credential Holder of the Year by the Michigan Certification

Board for Addiction Professionals (MCBAP). This prestigious award honors exceptional professionals who demonstrate outstanding commitment and innovation in the field of substance misuse prevention.



Glasscoe

Lansing Community College

is proud to announce that **Dr. Toni Glasscoe** received the Distinguished Woman in Higher Education Leadership Award from the MI-

ACE Women's Network at its annual conference, held at the Kellogg Conference Center. Since 2001, the MI-ACE Women's Network has presented the Distinguished Woman in Higher Education Leadership Award. It recognizes individuals who, beyond their official responsibilities, serve as mentors, encouragers, promoters, and celebrators of women, actively making a positive difference beyond their campuses.



Maner Wealth, the wealth management and registered investment

advisory division of **Maner Costerisan**, has been named to Accounting Today's 2026 Wealth Magnets list for the third consecutive year. The annual national list recognizes top CPA-affiliated wealth management firms based on assets under management. Launched in 2020, Maner Wealth provides integrated financial planning services alongside Maner Costerisan's tax, accounting and consulting teams, offering investment, retirement, estate, succession and

risk management planning, as well as employer-sponsored retirement plans.



Blander

Martin Commercial Properties

announces that **Emily Blander**, Facilities Manager, has earned the Facility Management Professional

designation through the International Facility Management Association. The FMP credential recognizes professionals who have demonstrated expertise in operations and maintenance, project management, finance and leadership, the core disciplines of effective facility management.

COMPANY NEWS



Aqua Body Lab has rebranded as **Aqua Aesthetics & Wellness** and moved into a new, expanded location in

East Lansing. The new space is over 6,000 square feet and allows the business to offer patients a wider range of aesthetic and wellness services in a modern environment. Aqua Aesthetics & Wellness continues to specialize in hormone therapy, advanced skin rejuvenation, injectables and body contouring, while expanding its focus on whole-body wellness and personalized care.



Dymaxion Development and the **Lansing Economic Area Partnership** announced the completed renovation of a 65,000-square-foot industrial facility at 3366 Remy Drive in Lansing, with ABC Supply Co. signed as tenant. The project received a \$125,000 grant from LEAP's Lansing Regional Site

Readiness Program, funded by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation. Dymaxion acquired the property in October 2024 and upgraded the building with new HVAC, LED lighting, concrete work, signage and exterior improvements. ABC Supply will retain its 12 associates and expects to add 10 to 15 positions over the next three to five years, while sister company ABC Interiors will fill its former location, creating 10 to 12 immediate jobs.



Cherry Republic of Lansing is now accepting donation requests from registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit

organizations with upcoming events, fundraisers, community programs or charitable initiatives. Organizations interested in inquiring about a donation can stop by the store and speak with an associate. ♦



MICHIGAN PREMIER EVENTS

CORPORATE, ASSOCIATION & COMMUNITY EVENT MANAGEMENT COMPANY

www.MichiganPremierEvents.com
517.220.4628

**SAME NAME.
SAME SERVICES.
NEW LOCATION.**

114 West Allegan Street Lansing, Michigan 48933
(Downtown Lansing)








HONORING 25 Years of Justice

Since 2001, the Innocence Project has fought for the wrongfully convicted — screening thousands of cases and securing 10 exonerations as Michigan's only post-conviction DNA innocence organization. Join us as we celebrate 25 years of justice realized, and justice yet to come.

The Cooley Innocence Project's 25th Anniversary Gala

Event Details:

Sept. 19, 2026
6 p.m to 10 p.m.

Grewal Hall
224 S. Washington Square
Lansing, MI 48933

Guest Speakers:



Dan Slepian

Dateline NBC Producer
& Pulitzer Prize Finalist



Jon-Adrian "JJ" Velazquez

Justice Reform Advocate



Purchase tickets at
cooley.edu/innocence25



The Stadium District

500 East Michigan Ave., Suite 200 | Lansing, MI 48912

517.487.6340 | lansingchamber.org

PRSRT STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
LANSING, MI
PERMIT NO. 689



NATIONALS SPORTS DOME | 137,000 SF
GENERAL CONTRACTING

Building Excellence for over 4 decades

Construction Services



GENERAL
CONTRACTING



PRECONSTRUCTION



DESIGN
BUILD



CONSTRUCTION
MANAGEMENT



DEVELOPMENT

martincommercial.com | East Lansing | Grand Rapids | Tampa


Martin