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**Behind every great man:
Ruth Eleanor Claytor
Marsh**

COMMUNITY, PG 15

Saginaw AKA chapter celebrates moms, students, women entrepreneurs and 63 years of service



MEMBERS OF THE ALPHA KAPPA ALPHA SORORITY, INCORPORATED® ETA UPSILON OMEGA CHAPTER (COURTESY PHOTO)

BY ETA UPSILON OMEGA CHAPTER

SAGINAW — Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated® Eta Upsilon Omega Chapter is set to celebrate a huge milestone with our upcoming 41st Annual Hats Off to Mom Scholar-

ship luncheon. The theme is “Standing on Business Nurturing Dreams & Securing Futures...One Hat at a Time.”

“For sixty-three years Eta Upsilon Omega Chapter has been an impactful influence in Saginaw since our inception and chartering at the Bancroft Hotel on February 10, 1962,” says

Lisa Reed, President of Eta Upsilon Omega Chapter. “We strive to be a continuous source of dedication to our community through volunteering by helping those in need, positioning youth for success through scholar-

**CONTINUES ON PG 2,
SAGINAW AKA CHAPTER**



Saginaw Academy offers training to young braiders

YOUTH BANNER, COVER



MI Hispanic Chamber of Commerce to host economic forum

LATINO BANNER, COVER



Taste of Soul serves up flavor, history, and community at SVSU

COMMUNITY, PG 18

FEATURED STORY

The women who shaped Saginaw as mayors

COMMUNITY, PG 24-25



Cover story, Saginaw AKA Chapter

ships, mentoring and education, political and social justice, promoting women's health and nutrition and building our economic wealth. We are also a source of professional and leadership development for our members, some of whom will attend our Leadership Seminar in Anaheim, California, in July, 2025."

On May 3, 2025 at 11:00 a.m., it will be that dedication to the Saginaw community that takes center stage with this year's celebration. The chapter is pleased to host our annual signature event in a luncheon to commemorate forty-one-years of Hats Off to Mom. It will be held at the Horizons Conference Center, 6200 State Street. The chapter is proud of its legacy rooted in Sisterhood, Scholarship and Service. Highlights of the event include the awarding of college scholarships to Saginaw-area high school students, women entrepreneurs, and musical performances by vocalist Ms. Aniya Gray and Mr. Micah Dunn, violist, both of Saginaw, Michigan.

Our 2025 "Mother of The Year" and Eta Upsilon Omega's "Soror of The Year" prestigious award winners will be celebrated. A new award will be featured this year to honor a woman entrepreneur. Proceeds from sponsors, ticket and souvenir book advertisement sales will ensure the continuation of the chapter's efforts to provide scholarships to deserving students and to give back to the community through service projects.

"Our history illustrates we are women who lead as we were the first African American Greek Letter organization established in Saginaw, Michigan, following the unprecedented path pioneered by our illustrious national founders in 1908," Reed continues. "We proudly stand on the shoulders of our charter members, many of whom were the first women of color to attain positions in their professions in the city of Saginaw. Our char-

ALPHA KAPPA ALPHA SORORITY, INCORPORATED[®]
ETA UPSILON OMEGA CHAPTER

HATS OFF TO MOM SCHOLARSHIP LUNCHEON

Save the Date
SATURDAY, MAY 3, 2025
11AM

Standing on Business

Nurturing Dreams & Securing Futures,
One Hat at a Time

ter members (all deceased) are: Frances Elnora Moton Carter, Jacqueline M. Porterfield, Willett K.G. Johnson, Della Vaughn Smith, Margaret Griffin Brown, Lola A. Lothery Shelby, Nancy Haithco-Price, Bernadine Tivis Carter, Helen Joan Banks Turpin, Mildred Cambridge, Marie Waldon Claytor and Eva Wyche."

Our commitment and impact on improving the lives of others are demonstrated by our contributions of nearly \$250,000 in scholarships and community ser-

vice programs. We endeavor to continue this legacy in 2025 and beyond. I am appreciative of the privilege to serve as President of this outstanding, thriving sisterhood, with leaders who make a difference in the community by providing service to all mankind."

Tickets are \$65 and can be purchased, as well as souvenir book ads, by contacting any sorority member or online by scanning the QR code or visiting <https://akahyo1908.wildapricot.org/event-6092007>. For ques-

tions, please contact us at AKA-1908HYOmega@gmail.com.



MICHIGAN BANNER

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MISSION

The Michigan Banner, Latino Banner and Youth Banner operates and serves as a print and online media venue committed to educating, informing and enlightening our readership regarding events and news that directly and indirectly affect the communities regionally and globally. Furthermore, to serve as a catalyst and a link for cultivating young adults as entrepreneurial and business leaders for the future.

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Happy Women's History Month!

FROM THE MICHIGAN BANNER



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MICHIGAN YOUTH BANNER

VOLUME 7 • NUMBER 5



Saginaw Academy offers beginner and advanced training to young braiders



PHOTO CREDIT: THE BEAUTI N BRAID ACADEMY

BY MB STAFF

SAGINAW — The Beauti N Braid (BNB) Academy, in collaboration with the YMCA, is empowering local youth with hands-on hair braiding skills through two upcoming programs. Designed for students aged 8-16, these courses provide essential hair care education, technical braiding techniques, and career exploration opportunities.

The Youth Afterschool Braid Program, a six-week course, begins on January 6 and runs every Monday and Wednesday from 4:30 to 7:30 p.m. at the YMCA, located at 1915 Fordney St., Saginaw. The program focuses on infection control of natural hair, fundamental braiding techniques, and creative styling. Participants will receive a completion certificate upon finishing the course, making it an excellent entry point for

those new to hairstyling.

For students ready to take their skills to the next level, BNB Academy is also launching the Next Level Youth Braiding: Advanced Braiding program, starting March 6. This course offers in-depth training on advanced hair care, stitch braiding, feed-in techniques, and creative styling. Additionally, participants will explore potential career paths within the beauty industry. Classes will take place on Thursdays from 4 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. and Saturdays from 12 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. at the Saginaw YMCA.

Both programs aim to provide young learners with valuable technical skills while fostering creativity and discipline. Early registration for the advanced course offers a \$60 discount, encouraging interested families to sign up as soon as possible.

For more information or to register, visit www.bnbacademy.as.me or contact 989-207-3665.

the **Y** MCA

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Newimag3 youth program inspires creativity and confidence in Saginaw

BY MB STAFF

SAGINAW — Youth Empowering Services (Y.E.S.) is launching an exciting initiative aimed at inspiring creativity and self-expression among children aged 7-11. The Newimag3 Youth Program, themed “Dream It, Create It,” will run from March 3 to April 3 at the Butman-Fish Library, 1716 Hancock St., Saginaw, MI, meeting Mondays and Wednesdays from 3-6 p.m.

This dynamic program offers young participants hands-on experiences in fashion design, arts and crafts, videography, photography, music production, and artist development. By providing a structured yet imaginative space, Y.E.S. aims to equip children with the tools they need to transform their ideas into tangible creative works.

Founded on the belief that every child deserves the opportunity to thrive, Youth Empowering Services is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to fostering confidence and innovation among youth. The organization brings together experienced professionals and community leaders to create a supportive and inclusive environment where young minds can explore their passions.

The Newimag3 Youth Program encourages social engagement, collaboration, and personal growth. Participants will not only develop technical skills but also build confidence and problem-solving abilities that can benefit them in future creative endeavors.

For more information or to get involved, visit youthempoweringservices.org.



NEWIMAG3

YOUTH PROGRAM

“DREAM IT, CREATE IT”
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PHOTO CREDIT: YOUTH EMPOWERING SERVICES

4-H offers teens a leadership experience in Washington, D.C.

CITIZENSHIP WASHINGTON

FOCUS

Calling all future
change agents!



PHOTO CREDIT: SAGINAW COUNTY 4-H

BY MB STAFF

MICHIGAN — Michigan teens interested in history, government, and leadership will have a unique opportunity to experience the nation's capital through the Michigan 4-H Citizenship Washington Focus (CWF) program, scheduled for June 20-27, 2025. This immersive program offers youth ages 14-19 an in-depth look at American democracy, leadership, and civic engagement.

The weeklong experience will

begin with an overnight stay in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania (June 20-21), where participants will tour the historic battlefields, visit the Electric Map (Cyclorama) Orientation, and receive a guided tour from a licensed historian. This foundational stop will help teens understand the historical context of the U.S. government before heading to Washington, D.C. (June 21-27).

During their time in Washington, teens will join delegations from across the country to explore government institutions, engage in meaningful discus-

sions on civic responsibility, and develop leadership skills to make an impact in their communities. Participants will visit national memorials, monuments, and museums, gaining firsthand insight into how history and policy shape the nation's future.

The program cost is \$2,500, covering transportation, lodging, and activities, with participants responsible for six meals en route and on delegation day. Teens will travel by charter bus and stay at the Hyatt Regency in Bethesda, MD for the CWF portion and at the Quality Inn in Gettysburg

during the historical tour.

For scholarship opportunities, interested participants can contact gathstac@msu.edu at the Saginaw 4-H office. Additional program-specific questions can be directed to Liana Pepin at deisenro@msu.edu. More details can be found at the National 4-H website: <https://cwf2025.4-h.org>.

This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for young people eager to learn about history, government, and leadership while making lasting connections with peers from across the country.



Latino Banner

LIDER EN LA
DIVERSIDAD

VAMOS ADELANTE

Michigan Hispanic Chamber of Commerce to host 21st annual economic forum

BY MB STAFF

MICHIGAN — The Michigan Hispanic Chamber of Commerce (MHCC) will host its 21st Annual Economic Forum Breakfast on Friday, April 11, 2025, from 7:30 AM to 12:00 PM at One Campus Martius, 16th Floor, in Detroit. This event will bring together business professionals, policymakers, and industry experts to discuss key economic trends and developments affecting Michigan.

The forum will feature a keynote address from Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan, who will provide an overview of Detroit's economic progression, comparing past conditions to the present. Duggan, who has served as mayor since 2014, has focused on infrastructure, employment growth, and public-private collaboration throughout his tenure. His remarks will address the city's economic changes and ongoing business climate.

The Economic Forum Breakfast offers attendees the opportunity to hear insights from industry leaders, participate in discussions on economic policies and business strategies, and engage in networking with professionals across various sectors. The event aims to provide information on emerging market trends and economic opportunities relevant to Michigan businesses.

The venue at One Campus Martius provides a central location for the forum in downtown Detroit.

Registration is currently open, and attendees are encouraged to secure a spot by visiting <https://lnkd.in/eGgtTAe7>.

For additional details, contact Laura Geftos at lgeftos@mhcc.org.

MHCC Michigan Hispanic Chamber of Commerce

Economic Forum

21ST ANNUAL BREAKFAST

Friday, April 11th, 2025
🕒 7:30 a.m - 12:00 p.m

One Campus Martius 16th floor
Detroit, MI 48226

Keynote Speaker
Mike Duggan
Mayor of Detroit

Register Here:

All ticket purchases and sponsorships are non-refundable.
Please reach out to lgeftos@mhcc.org for more information.

THE LATINO BANNER IS PROUDLY SPONSORED BY GREAT LAKES BAY HEALTH CENTERS

Seen on the Scene: Delta's El Camino will help with admission and tuition

El Camino (The Way) is the title for Delta College to expand outreach and student recruitment among Latinos and their families. Recent sessions were hosted Feb. 27 at Union Civica Mexicana and earlier, Jan. 30, at the Mexican American Council. Staff is led by Monica Hernandez, assistant director of Delta's downtown campus; Christopher DeEulis, DEI director; Elsa Olvera, Educational Opportunities Center director; and Cynthia Reyes, student admissions representative. El Camino may be reached at (989) 752-7500.



PHOTO CREDIT: MONICA HERNANDEZ

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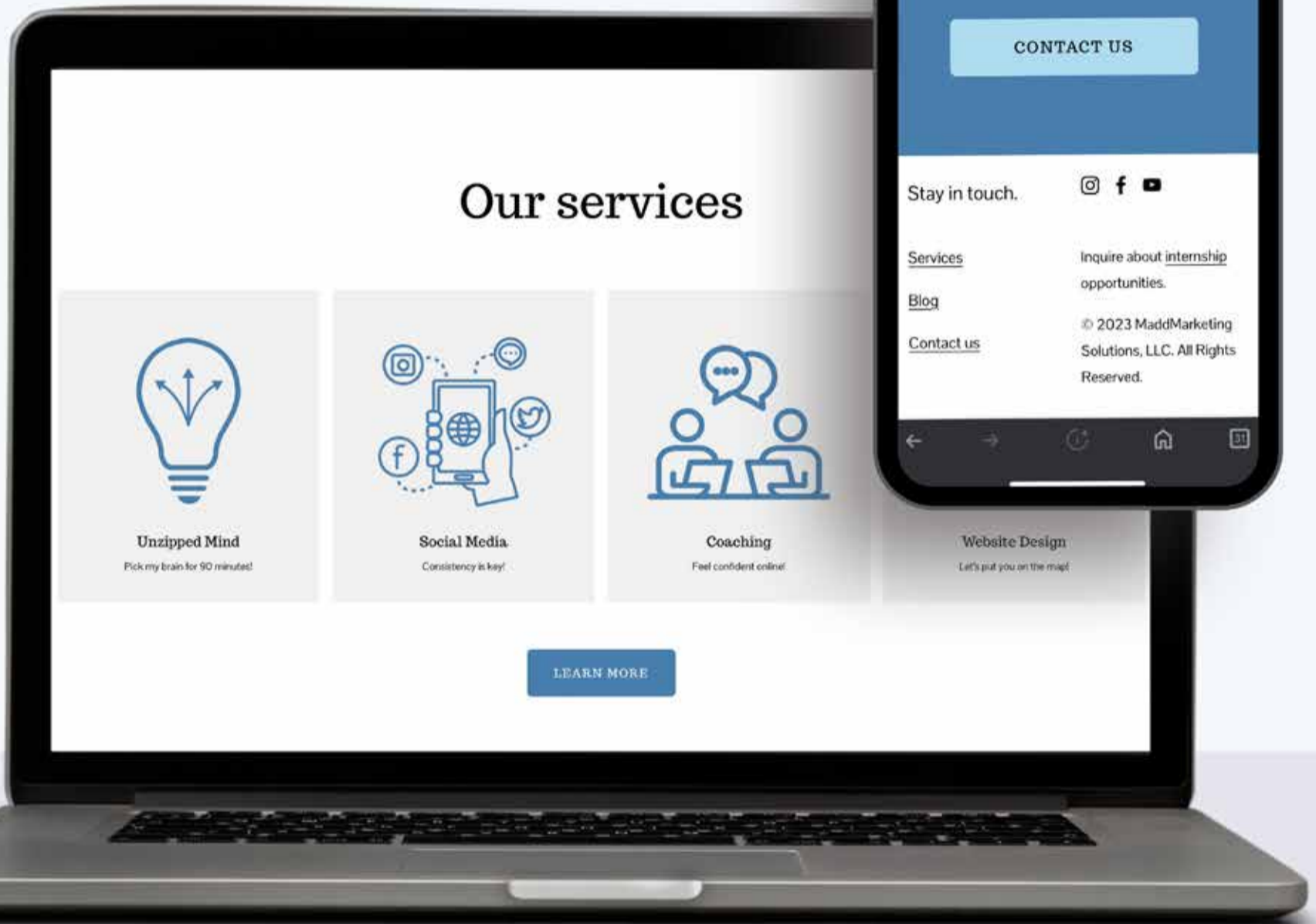
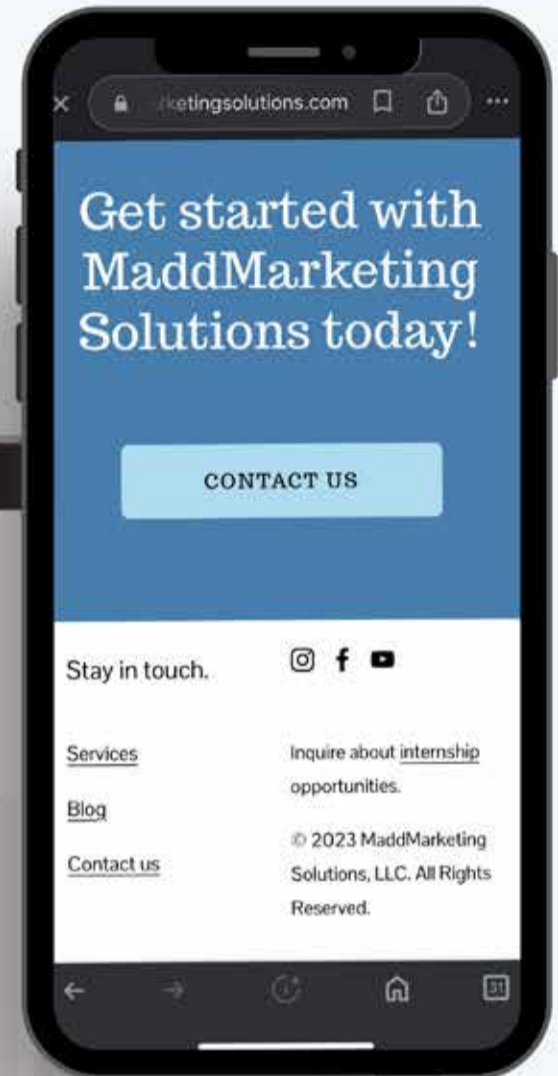
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COMMUNITY



Tea and Christina: Houghton-Jones celebrates a grassroots leader



CHRISTINA JONES

BY MIKE THOMPSON

SAGINAW — Organizers of the Christina Jones Women's Tea Brunch, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. on March 15 at downtown's SVRC Marketplace, figured she would fuss about it when she found out.

She's grateful, of course, and honored, especially with the Houghton-Jones Neighborhood Resource Center already named in her honor. But she's also known for speaking her mind.

"Forty dollars a ticket?" she mused, as she scanned the invitation. "Two-hundred sixty for a table of eight? Seems maybe a little pricey."

Of course, that reaction is based on her 90th birthday last Christmas Day. If the event was taking place at half her current age, which would place the year at 1980, the inflation-adjusted price would be ten dollars. And that makes the pair or twenties sound more reasonable to her, especially as a fund-raiser for Houghton-Jones youth and women's programs in her neighborhood east of downtown.

The Christina Jones Tea Brunch will "celebrate wom-

en's resilience and achievements" in SVRC's second-floor ballroom. The theme is "Her Strength & Spirit." Along with the honors, the program will feature a tea and brunch buffet, inspirational speakers, networking and fellowship. Registration is through the Houghton-Jones Neighborhood Association.

It was during the 1980s that

Christina, in midlife, first became involved with the Houghton-Jones Neighborhood Task Force. She was wrapping up her career at downtown's Michigan Bell offices and her six children were grown. She still had plenty of time to enjoy with her husband, Fred Jones, who she married as a teen-ager and who passed away only a few years ago.

"I didn't want to become a couch potato," she explains.

One of her first experiences was a neighborhood gardening project that was threatened by gathering clouds, and so she joined volunteers -- including former Board of Education member Hazel Wilson and current trustee Joyce Seals -- who cut holes in garbage bags and donned them as raincoats. Christina's yard and flowers on South 12th, and on the lot across the street from her front porch, remain beautifully maintained with the help of Angie, daughter and caretaker who has emerged as a neighborhood leader in her own right.

The Houghton-Jones Association (named for the now-closed schools, not for her) originally tackled housing and crime issues, similar to many citizens groups

in other parts of town.

However, especially near the turn of the millennium, the emphasis shifted to social needs, anything from neighborhood activities to AA and NA meetings. Foremost, Houghton-Jones became one of Saginaw's top providers of youth activities, including an "All Around the Neighborhood" summer program that has featured a pair of gardens near Johnson and North 11th streets

"Everyone wants to maintain a peaceful, serene, eye-appealing community," Christina explained, "but in our case, we have so many issues with children that

we have to focus on them..When we see some of them reach the point where they are carrying guns, then we are at risk of a lost generation."

On the local sports side, Christina Jones is on a legacy list of top bowlers, and she still swings a golf club on occasion.

Along with her own honor, she aims to share the March 15 spotlight as she continues to review the invitation.

"Community recognition awards," Christina reads aloud. "That's good. There will be other people besides myself."

COMMUNITY

Saginaw Council: To challenge Trump on deportation, more harm than good



CARLY ROSE HAMMOND (FILE PHOTO)

BY MIKE THOMPSON

SAGINAW — A proposed City Council resolution to resist President Trump's immigration crackdown won support only from the originator, Carly Rose Hammond, at the City Council's Feb. 24 meeting.

Foes in the 7-1 vote expressed concerns that Trump and his enforcement team might respond with reprisals, including cuts in Saginaw's shares of federal funding and possible legal action.

Discussion and the ensuing vote begin on the YouTube video at the 1:17.25 mark.

Hammond said she toned down her original Feb. 10 proposal to address concerns that Trump and his MAGA minions might pursue revenge, but she received the same chilly response as two weeks ago. Her lone council peer to express possible support on Feb. 10, Heidi Wiggins, did not attend on Feb. 24.

"We don't want to put ourselves in a pickle," said Michael Balls, summing up the opposition.

City Manager Tim Morales said questions about potential deportations may be addressed by ALPACT, Saginaw's branch

of Advocates and Leaders for Police And Community Trust, organized through the Michigan Department of Civil Rights, with the local Mexican American Council as an ongoing participant. Gilberto Guevara, MAC immigration coordinator, has said individuals and families without citizenship papers are scattered across mid-Michigan, some full-year, others as seasonal farm workers. No specific count in on record for people without papers in the Great Lakes Bay Region.

Saginaw's former Human Relations Commission, organized in 1958 by Henry Marsh before he became a councilman and mayor, dissolved after the millennium's turn because of lack of member participation. A Citizens Police Advisory Commission was formed following a nationwide outcry after George Floyd's death in 2020, but it has not established a public presence.

Hammond's proposal is not for Trump's main bane, sanctuary cities like Chicago that openly resist ICE operations and raids, and council foes say an updated vision statement from their mid-winter planning session should be enough to cover the issue. The revised language states: "Sagi-

naw, through collaboration and public/private ventures, will be a welcoming community that promotes neighborhood growth; stimulates business development and innovation; and fosters entertainment."

Hammond responds that the "welcoming" statement is aimed at promoting community development, not at preventing deportations. Following is the text of her resolution that was defeated:

"WHEREAS, the City of Saginaw is a diverse and inclusive community that values the contributions of all residents, regardless of their national origin, perceived immigration status, race, ethnicity, or background;

"and WHEREAS, fostering trust between local government, law enforcement, and all members of the community is essential to ensuring public safety and effective community engagement;

"and WHEREAS, the City of Saginaw recognizes that all populations contribute to the cultural, economic, and social vitality of the city, and that an environment of fear and uncertainty can have a detrimental effect on these contributions;

"and WHEREAS, local government resources should be prioritized to support and protect all residents, ensuring access to city services, educational opportunities, housing, health-care, and public safety without discrimination;

"and WHEREAS, it is in the best interests of public safety that all residents feel comfortable reporting crimes, seeking emergency assistance, and participating in civic life without fear of retaliation;

"and WHEREAS, the City of Saginaw upholds constitutional protections, including due process and equal protection under

the law, for all individuals within its jurisdiction, regardless of actual or perceived immigration status.

"NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

"1. Commitment to Inclusion and Public Safety. The City of Saginaw affirms its commitment to being a welcoming and inclusive community for all residents, regardless of immigration status or perceived immigration status.

"2. Access to City Services Without Discrimination. No resident shall be denied access to any city services, including but not limited to housing assistance, emergency services, community health programs, or public safety resources, based on their immigration status or perceived immigration status.

"3. Public Awareness and Implementation. The City of Saginaw shall continue to promote policies and programs that support the integration and well-being of all residents, including language access, workforce development, and community outreach initiatives.

"4. Distribution of This Resolution. The City Clerk is directed to transmit copies of this resolution to the Saginaw Police Chief, all law enforcement personnel, and other pertinent city officials and departments to ensure awareness, adherence, and enforcement of this resolution."

Meanwhile, Bay City Commissioner Chris Rudberg says he will introduce a welcoming community resolution on March 3. Rudberg's focus is on not using local taxpayer money for police to assist the feds, describing it as an "unfunded mandate."

COMMUNITY

Behind every great man: Ruth Eleanor Claytor Marsh



BY MB STAFF

SAGINAW — As Women's History Month celebrates the contributions of remarkable women, it is only fitting to recognize Ruth Eleanor Claytor Marsh, a woman whose strength, intellect, and determination played an instrumental role in shaping both her family and her community. Ruth, the wife of Saginaw's first Black mayor, Henry G. Marsh, was much more than a political spouse. She was a force in her own right—one whose life story reflects the struggles, resilience, and triumphs of Black Americans throughout the 20th century.

Ruth Marsh passed away on Feb. 22, 2022, at the age of 94, leaving behind a legacy of service, dedication, and unshakable perseverance. She was born on Oct. 13, 1927, in Roanoke, Virginia, to John and Roberta Claytor, a family that valued education, hard work, and community service. Her father, a respected physician, provided his children with opportunities while shielding them from the harsh realities of segregation as best he could. However, despite their economic stability, the Claytor family was not immune to the racism that plagued Black Americans at the time. From cross burnings by the Ku Klux Klan to discrimination in professional organizations, Ruth's early experiences instilled in her a resilience that she carried throughout her life.

Ruth's upbringing was filled with experiences that defied societal expectations. She was the first girl to enroll in an auto mechanics class at her high school,



RUTH E. MARSH

and she worked at the family-owned service station during World War II when labor was scarce. Ruth's role at the station included not only pumping gas but also repairing flat tires and changing oil, all while juggling schoolwork. Her determination and skill were evident even then, as she tackled challenges head-on without hesitation.

After graduating high school in 1944 at just 16 years old, Ruth attended Knoxville College, a historically Black college, where she met Henry Marsh upon his return from military service in 1946. Their courtship was interrupted when Ruth fell ill and had to leave school. However, her sister Bernice, who had moved to Detroit, encouraged her to continue her education at Wayne State University. The bond between Ruth and Henry remained strong, and on September 1, 1948, they married in Roanoke before returning to Detroit to continue their studies.

Ruth's steadfast support and encouragement were instrumental in Henry's legal and political career. When he considered relocating his law practice, it was Ruth who suggested Saginaw, a decision that would have lasting implications for the community. Henry Marsh went on to become Saginaw's first Black mayor, serving from 1967 to 1969. His leadership broke barriers, but behind his success stood Ruth—his confidante, advisor, and partner.

While Henry took on the public role, Ruth remained deeply engaged in the community. She was a lifelong member of Warren Avenue Presbyterian Church and later joined Countryside Trinity Church. She was also an integral part of a close-knit group of friends known as the Widow's Club, with whom she shared laughter, wisdom, and companionship. Her dedication to family was unwavering, as she raised her children—Michael, Walter, and Terésa—with the same values of resilience and commitment that had shaped her own life.

Ruth also took pride in documenting her family's history. In 1996, she co-authored *Virginia Kaleidoscope* with her sister Margaret, chronicling the experiences of the Claytor family and their journey through the struggles of segregation and triumphs of perseverance. The book captures stories of courage, including how Ruth once maneuvered a truck out of a dangerous hydroplane situation by instinctively stomping on the gas instead of the brakes—a testament to her quick thinking and fearless nature.

Her life was a testament to

the saying, "Behind every great man is a great woman." Ruth Marsh was not simply behind Henry Marsh; she stood beside him, offering unwavering support, insight, and strength. Her influence was felt in every corner of the community, from the halls of government to the pews of her church and the homes of those she touched with her kindness and wisdom.

Ruth Marsh's story is one of quiet power and resilience. She navigated a world of challenges with grace, and her legacy lives on in the lives of those she influenced. As we celebrate Women's History Month, we honor Ruth Marsh—not just as the wife of a history-making mayor, but as a woman whose own story is one of determination, intellect, and unwavering commitment to her family and community. Without her, Saginaw's history—and indeed, Henry Marsh's legacy—would have been very different.



HENRY AND RUTH MARSH

COMMUNITY

Ojibway Island to reopen for limited vehicle traffic



OJIBWAY ISLAND (FILE PHOTO)

BY MIKE THOMPSON

SAGINAW — After a four-year shutdown, limited vehicle traffic is on track to return to Ojibway Island, even on some days when there are not special events like Country Fest or Gospel Fest.

Longtime City Councilman Michael Balls on Feb. 24 added his voice to sentiment first expressed by newcomer Eric Braddock at the Jan. 31 annual planning review.

Balls doesn't buy the premise that Ojibway actually is better, more peaceful, when restricted to foot and bicycle traffic. He asserted, "We have a gem sitting there and it's not being used."

Incidents of misbehavior led City Manager Tim Morales in April 2021 to order the barricades on Ojibway's oval drive. Council members at the time — including Balls, Mayor Brenda Moore and Bill Ostash — did not officially vote, but they stood behind the city manager's authority as CEO of daily operations.

Only Monique Lamar Silvia and former member Michael Flores raised questions, but they did not pursue them.

Morales has offered encouragement for restoring some life to the island. He notes that ARPA funds are restoring the bandshell and preserving the shoreline, making the park even more attractive. A top challenge that remains will be the asphalt pavement, not designed for today's cars and trucks to cruise all day long.

Speaking of the number of

days, that number is to be determined by the level of community support. Braddock, a volunteer youth sports coach, and Balls, a Big Brothers mentor, both say the key is to find volunteers for organized oversight that was lacking in the past. At the same time, Morales and his team would explore any funding options that may remain, public or private.

On the YouTube video of the Feb. 24 council meet, the brief Ojibway discussion begins at 59:35.



THE SAGINAW COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE PRESENTS

BUSINESS AFTER HOURS



March 13, 2025 | 5 - 7 p.m.



Saginaw STEM at the SVRC Marketplace



203 S. Washington Avenue, 2nd Floor, Saginaw, MI 48607



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COMMUNITY

Taste of Soul serves up flavor, history, and community at SVSU

BY MB STAFF

SAGINAW — The aroma of fried catfish, savory greens, and baked mac-n-cheese filled the air as attendees wrapped around the Marketplace at Doan on Saginaw Valley State University's (SVSU) campus, eagerly anticipating a celebration of soulful flavors and culture.

To close out Black History Month, SVSU hosted its beloved annual event, "A Taste of Soul," on Thursday, Feb. 27, offering a feast that nourished both the body and the spirit.

Organized by SVSU's Office of Diversity Programs, the event transformed the campus dining hall into a space honoring African-American heritage, where students, faculty, staff, and community members from across the Great Lakes Bay Region gathered. The atmosphere carried the warmth of a family gathering, with Jordan Edwards on the keyboard setting the tone through Motown hits and beloved Black family reunion classics.

The menu featured a selection of traditional African-American soul food prepared by Men of Bethel/Sons of Allen from Bethel A.M.E. Church alongside SVSU's culinary team, led by Executive Chef Brian Gries. Guests enjoyed dishes such as black-eyed peas, collard greens, yams, fried okra, and cornbread, all deeply rooted in African-American culinary traditions.

Soul food has origins dating back to enslaved Africans in the southern United States, who, despite limited resources, created flavorful meals that have evolved into the dishes cherished today.

For dessert, Southern-style peach cobbler and classic sweet potato pie were available, along



2025 SVSU'S TASTE OF SOUL (PHOTO CREDIT: SVSU)

with Saginaw Mayor Brenda Moore's signature vanilla cake and traditional Southern tea cakes, offering a sweet, nostalgic touch.

Tea cakes, a simple yet meaningful treat, hold a special place in African-American culinary history. During slavery, enslaved people were occasionally permitted to prepare certain recipes during Christmastime, and tea cakes were among them. Since reading and writing were forbidden, these recipes were passed down orally, with no formal measurements—only a "pinch of this" and a "handful of that". These

soft, buttery cookies, believed to be an adaptation of European tea cakes, symbolize the ingenuity and resourcefulness that define soul food.

Saginaw City Councilman Eric Braddock, who attended the event, praised its impact. "Events like 'A Taste of Soul' not only highlight the incredible culinary traditions of African-American culture but also bring us together to learn, celebrate, and build lasting connections," Braddock said. "It's a beautiful reminder of how food and fellowship can unite us all."

Priced at just \$13 or a single

meal swipe, "A Taste of Soul" was more than just a meal—it was an educational and cultural experience. As attendees departed, many reflected on the event's significance.

"As a first-year student, I didn't know what to expect, but the food tasted like home," said Kelcei Schultz, a Saginaw native and SVSU freshman. "It was such a nice break from the dining hall food. My roommate, who had never had soul food, raved about the mac-n-cheese. This is something I'll definitely be looking forward to next year."

CAP hosts a nightcapper

BY MIKE THOMPSON

SAGINAW — Community Action for the People, CAP, is best known for forums that advocate for social justice in everything from education to employment, to public housing and health, and so forth.

But there's still time for fun. Mardi Gras Sneaker Ball begins at 6 p.m. March 8 at Andersen Enrichment Center.

Sneaks with suits have become fashionable for men, but what about the women? A CAP leader, Sweater Gawd (a.k.a. Rosemary Dugan), breaks it down:

"Ladies: Don't over think the Sneaker part. You can wear sneakers you already have because if you're stressing about a sneaker, yours are most likely in good shape. There is sneaker jewelry on Amazon to jazz them up. Change the laces to lace or flat ribbon or bling laces. You can also do bling or patterned stockings or fishnets with a dress or a junk sock. We torture ourselves sometimes with the footwear, so enjoy an event where you don't have to be on stilts.

"Fellas: Don't dwell on the Ball. Anything that you would consider dressing up for YOU is okay. If you wanna do slacks, a dress shirt, and a tie? Cool. A nice sweater? Fine. A blazer? Okay. A dinner jacket? Bet. A tux? Come through!!

"We want y'all to come out and have a funky good time. Dassit. Dassall."

Tickets are \$50 at saginawcap.org, including a buffet and entertainment with a cash bar.

SAGINAW CAP PRESENTS

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COMMUNITY

Student government day: No more pot shops day?

BY MIKE THOMPSON

SAGINAW — Joyce Seals says the timing is perfect.

March 10 is the City Council's annual Student Government Day, with an audience of teens for the meeting at noon instead of 6:30, and that's when she aims for a vote to freeze the number of cannabis dispensaries at a dozen.

As a current Board of Education trustee and former mayor, now coordinator of the county's new Health Equity Council, Seals has organized individual meetings with each of the nine City Council members. She says

she has received assurances that the vote did not transpire on Feb. 24 only because center stage was filled by discussions on how to respond to the nation's wave of deportations.

Under restricted state legalization, Saginaw is among slightly more than 100 communities that have allowed the marijuana shops, Saginaw's count of twelve -- eight West Side, four East Side -- has held steady for the past year.

The high schoolers may have a chance to discuss their own views during a mock meeting earlier in their daylong visit, when they fill the roles of council members and administrators.



PREMIER CANNABIS, 910 E. GENESEE AVE., SAGINAW, MI. (FILE PHOTO)

Temporary closures scheduled for utility work on I-75

BY MB STAFF

SAGINAW — Motorists traveling through Saginaw County should prepare for temporary lane closures and traffic slowdowns as utility work is set to take place on I-75 at Crane Road. The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) has issued a permit for the project, which is scheduled to begin on Wednesday, March 5, 2025, and conclude by Thursday, March 6, 2025.

During the work period, rolling slowdowns and full closures will occur in approximately 15-minute intervals from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.. The Michigan State Police (MSP) will manage traffic control to ensure safety for both motorists and utility workers. Drivers should anticipate potential delays and are encouraged to seek alternative routes when possible.

The affected stretch of I-75 serves Saginaw and Zilwaukee, two communities that rely on the corridor for daily travel and commerce. MDOT officials emphasize that while short-term



MOTORISTS TRAVELING ON I-75 IN SAGINAW COUNTY SHOULD PREPARE FOR TEMPORARY CLOSURES AND ROLLING SLOWDOWNS AS MDOT CONDUCTS UTILITY WORK NEAR CRANE ROAD.

disruptions are necessary, these measures are essential for safely installing utility lines over the roadway.

Additional utility work is ex-

pected along I-75 and I-675, with future closures to be announced as scheduling details become available.

For real-time traffic updates

and information on road conditions, motorists can visit Michigan.gov/Drive or follow MDOT on social media.

COMMUNITY

Jobs fair aims at hiring disparities

BY MIKE THOMPSON

SAGINAW — A March 12 city-sponsored construction jobs fair at Andersen Enrichment Center begins to answer repeated questions from Councilman Michael Balls.

Through the years since first being elected in 2013, Balls has asked why he sees so few minority workers on construction projects, whether through the city, the county, the school system or private employers. Other council members, past and current, generally have shifted to other concerns rather than pursuing a solution.

"(Civil rights) history shows that we need to raise these issues more than one time," says Balls, a retired autoworker and local UAW leader.

The jobs fair is open to all, and Balls is aiming to achieve an ethnic balance that he has failed to see in everything from building construction to the annual rounds of roadwork during orange-cone summers.

He views March 12 as a transitional event when people need to show up instead of merely talking about the disparity. He already has started to spread the word with handbill handouts at the East Side Soup Kitchen.

Employers who have signed up so far include:

- American Excavating LTD
- Carpenters Union Local 706
- City of Saginaw
- Fahrner Asphalt Sealers LLC
- Garpiel Group
- IBEW Local 557
- IBEW Local 876
- Ironworkers Local 25 LMEC
- Rhode Bros. Excavating



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MARCH 12th

TIME: 8:30 AM - 2:30 PM
Andersen Enrichment Center
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Saginaw MI. 48601

- Meet Local Employers and Union Organizations
- High School Outreach
- Community Engagement

Whether you're looking for your next career opportunity, exploring the construction field, or planning for the future after graduation, this job fair is the perfect place to start. Bring extra resumes, dress professionally, and aim to leave a lasting impression.

PREMIER CANNABIS, 910 E. GENESEE AVE., SAGINAW, MI. (FILE PHOTO)

- Inc.
- Saginaw County Road Commission
- Spence Brothers

• Spicer Group
The event is open to all ages, with emphasis on city-based teens and young adults. Admis-

sion is free. Anyone with questions may contact Grace DeLeon, human resources director, (989) 759-1570, or email humanresources@saginaw-mi.com.

COMMUNITY

Teach a child how to teach young siblings



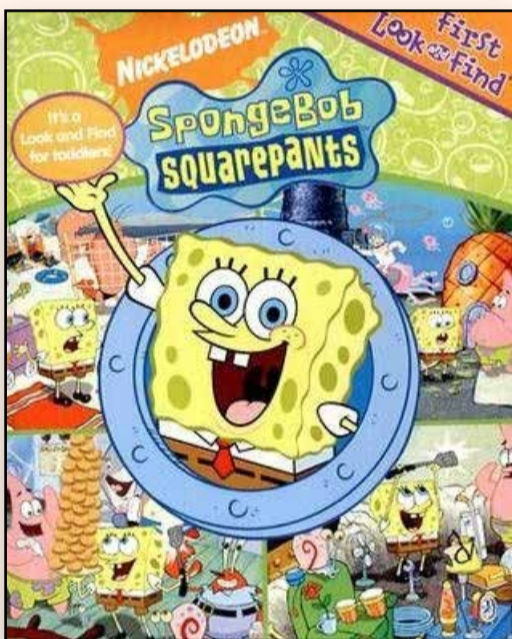
(As the Michigan Banner focuses on literacy, we will offer suggestions for children's books.)

An elementary child who you are tutoring always can benefit from one more reason to take an interest in reading. If they share their home with a younger sibling, a simple source of inspiration is as plain as the snout on Curious George's red face. Your student is a teacher also, part of being a good older sister or brother by helping them learn.

How can this be possible? The child you are seeing for a half-hour once a week, minimum, already is struggling on their own.

Answer: "Look and find" books are remedial for the older youngster, while providing early development for the preschooler or toddler. (Yes, read to the baby also!)

Parents, caregivers and tutors still need to keep close watch, of course, even if in the kitchen preparing a snack to reward the kids for working together.



Nickelodeon SpongeBob Squarepants: Look and Find

Nickelodeon's SpongeBob Squarepants Look and Find is big and colorful, like buying your kids a coffee table book, so you may wish to sit the children high at a table, with Jane or Johnny guiding their "littles" in searches for all the junk items that have fallen from the overloaded closet, everything from a spoon to a saxophone to a sombrero. A neat aspect of a board book is that washable markers and crayons may be engaged.



Disney's Pixar Cars 2 Memory Game

Disney's Pixar Cars 2 Edition Memory Game isn't a book, or even a board game. In fact, next to "preschool" the box says "no reading required." These are 48 cardboard cars, featuring 24 pairs of vehicles that can do wheelies whenever they want. Put 'em all out for a longer match game, or cut the count for shorter. So what if you don't read for a while! Learning still is taking place. For example, what car is the older child's fave? Maybe have them research and write a short report.



Disney Tsum Tsum Look and Find

Disney's Tsum, Tsum Look and Find is a smaller-scale search format, not designed for mark-and-wipe. It could be a keepsake in which the children autograph their names and ages, along with the date on their drawings and puzzles. Stickers are a pro/con issue because they can make a book quickly take a tawdry look, and there are none here. Also look for answer keys and other tutoring guidance; this edition contains five good pages at the rear, where stickers often would be stuck.

To volunteer as a READ Association tutor, see their website or call (989) 755-8402.

COMMUNITY

The women who shaped Saginaw as mayors



BY MB STAFF

SAGINAW — Throughout its history, Saginaw, Michigan has seen 33 mayors serve under its current city charter, adopted in 1936. Among them, four women have held the city's highest office, each bringing a distinct vision, leadership, and commitment to public service. These trailblazers—Wilmer Jones Ham McZee, Carol Cottrell, Joyce J. Seals, and Brenda Moore—have left lasting impacts on the community, shaping policies, programs, and civic engagement in Saginaw.

Wilmer Jones Ham McZee (2001-2005) Breaking barriers

When Wilmer Jones Ham McZee was sworn in on November 12, 2001, she made history as Saginaw's first female mayor and the first African-American woman to hold the position. A long-time educator and community advocate, she had already served on the Saginaw City Council since 1994 before stepping into the mayor's office for two terms.

Beyond her role in government, Ham McZee has been deeply involved in education and the arts. A Saginaw Public Schools teacher for over two decades, she also holds degrees from Delta College and Saginaw Valley State University. Her community impact extends beyond politics, as the founder of multiple youth and mentorship programs, including Saginaw Soul Children, the Mayor's Ball and



Scholarship Foundation, and the 100 Voice Boys Choir.

As a civic leader, she served on numerous boards, including the Boys & Girls Club, Downtown Development Authority, and the MBS International Airport board. A lifelong advocate for equity and education, Ham McZee's leadership helped pave the way for future women in Saginaw's political sphere.

Carol Cottrell (2005-2007) A champion for community development

Following Ham McZee's tenure, Carol Cottrell took office on



FROM LEFT, WILMER JONES HAM MCZEE, CAROL COTTRELL

November 14, 2005, after serving on the City Council since 1995. While her two-year mayoral term was significant, Cottrell often reflects on her broader contributions to the city, both before and after her time in office.

Cottrell spent 31 years in the Saginaw School District, primarily as a speech pathologist and administrator for early childhood education programs. Her leadership extended to healthcare advocacy, where she later became the director of the Covenant HealthCare Foundation, raising funds for cutting-edge medical technology and patient support programs.

Cottrell was instrumental in

shaping Saginaw's riverfront redevelopment, playing a key role in revitalization efforts along South Washington, stretching from the city's waterworks to the Dow Event Center. Additionally, she helped elevate Saginaw's Fourth of July fireworks into one of the premier shows in Michigan and beyond. Even after leaving office, her civic engagement continued, particularly through the Henry G. Marsh Institute for Public Policy at SVSU, which trains future community leaders.

CONTINUES ON PG 25,
SAGINAW MAYORS

COMMUNITY

From pg 24, Saginaw Mayors



FROM LEFT, JOYCE J. SEALS AND BRENDA MOORE

Joyce J. Seals (2007-2009)

An advocate for education and equality

A dedicated public servant, educator, and faith leader, Joyce J. Seals became Saginaw's third female mayor on November 12, 2007, after 12 years on the City Council. Her professional career centered on statewide education initiatives, serving as an education analyst with the Michigan Department of Education. In this role, she supervised statewide college access programs, worked as Title IX Coordinator, and served as an ombudsman for post-secondary education and athletics.

Seals' leadership extended well beyond City Hall. She has

been a champion for youth development, co-founding a free summer enrichment program for children aged 5-14, which has been running successfully for nearly two decades. She has also been actively involved in the Boy Scouts of America, Saginaw Promise, and the Ezekiel Project.

A licensed missionary and co-pastor, Seals has used her faith and leadership to uplift the community. Her dedication to social justice and education has earned her numerous awards, including lifetime recognition from the YWCA and NAACP.

Brenda Moore (2020-Present)

A voice for the people

Currently serving as Sagi-

naw's mayor, Brenda Moore was elected in 2020 after serving on the City Council since 2013. A lifelong Saginaw resident and graduate of Saginaw High School, Moore's leadership is fueled by her passion for community engagement and policy reform.

Since joining the council, Moore has been an active participant in the Michigan Municipal League, serving as President of the Board of Trustees and playing a key role in municipal finance and governance. She has also held leadership positions in the Michigan Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials and the Elected Officials Academy.

Moore is known for her hands-on approach, frequently engaging with community members and participating in city-

wide events, such as Jazz on the Jefferson, Light Up the City, and Friday Night Live. Her dedication to public service and advocacy for underrepresented communities continues to shape her tenure as mayor.

A Legacy of Leadership

From Wilmer Jones Ham McZee's historic breakthrough to Brenda Moore's ongoing leadership, these four women have helped shape Saginaw's political landscape. Their impact on education, economic development, community engagement, and social justice has left a lasting legacy, inspiring future generations of women leaders in Saginaw and beyond.



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HEALTH

MDHHS seeks public input to enhance behavioral health care access in Michigan



FILE PHOTO

BY MB STAFF

LANSING — The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) has launched a new initiative aimed at improving access, quality, and consumer choice in behavioral health care services across the state. As part of this effort, MDHHS is inviting public input through an online survey to guide the department's upcoming competitive procurement process for Pre-Paid Inpatient Health Plan (PIHP) contracts.

PIHPs play a critical role in Michigan's behavioral health system by managing Medicaid-funded services for individuals with serious mental illness, sub-

stance use disorders, intellectual and developmental disabilities, and children with serious emotional disturbances. Through this initiative, MDHHS aims to strengthen accountability, expand provider options, and enhance the quality of care while maintaining the support offered by Community Mental Health Services Programs (CMHSPs).

"Michigan Medicaid beneficiaries deserve access to behavioral health care services when and where they need them," said Elizabeth Hertel, MDHHS director. "This effort brings together the investment, creativity, and commitment of the department and its partners—including community mental health organi-

zations, health care providers, and the individuals we serve—to build a system that is more accessible and person-centered."

The initiative comes as part of Michigan's broader efforts to refine its specialty behavioral health system, which currently provides care for approximately 300,000 residents. The state's goal is to increase consumer choice and improve service delivery by integrating feedback from Medicaid beneficiaries, advocacy groups, community-based organizations, federally recognized tribal governments, and behavioral health care providers.

"The specialty behavioral health system needs to be more accountable and responsive to

the needs of the people it serves," said Sherri Boyd, executive director of The Arc Michigan. "It's time for a change."

The online survey aims to identify opportunities for innovation and improvement, focusing on key areas such as:

- Expanding access to providers
- Strengthening person-centered care
- Ensuring conflict-free access and service planning
- Enhancing behavioral health plan and provider choice
- Improving quality and outcome tracking through data-driven approaches

Survey responses will directly inform MDHHS's planning and decision-making ahead of the next phase of PIHP behavioral health plan contracts. Additionally, advocacy organizations such as The Arc Michigan and The Mental Health Association in Michigan are working to ensure individuals without internet access or those with alternative communication needs can participate in the feedback process.

Residents and stakeholders interested in contributing to the discussion must submit their survey responses by 5 p.m. on Monday, March 31. For additional details, visit Michigan.gov/BehavioralHealth. Procurement-related questions can be directed to MDHHS-BHSurvey@michigan.gov.

This initiative marks a significant step in Michigan's ongoing commitment to improving behavioral health services and ensuring that every resident has access to the care they need.

HEALTH

Staying healthy in Michigan's unpredictable March weather

BY MB STAFF

SAGINAW — March in Michigan can be a mix of winter's chill and early signs of spring, making it essential to stay prepared for fluctuating temperatures and shifting conditions. Here are a few health tips to navigate the season safely:



FILE PHOTO

1. Dress in Layers – Morning frost can give way to afternoon sunshine, so wear breathable layers that you can adjust throughout the day. A moisture-wicking base layer, insulating middle layer, and waterproof outer layer will help keep you

comfortable.
2. Stay Hydrated – Cold weather can be deceptively dehydrating, especially with dry indoor heating. Drinking enough water helps

maintain energy levels and supports immune function.
3. Protect Against Seasonal Allergies – As snow melts and plants begin to bud, allergens like mold and

pollen start to rise. If you're prone to allergies, keep an eye on pollen forecasts and consider using air purifiers indoors.
4. Maintain a Strong Immune System – Fluctuating weather can make people more susceptible to colds and flu. Prioritize a balanced diet, regular exercise, and adequate sleep to keep your immune system strong.

By staying mindful of Michigan's unpredictable March weather, you can enjoy the transition to spring while keeping your health in check.

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YMCA of Saginaw

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POLITICS

Curtis Hertel Jr. elected Michigan Democratic Party Chair

BY MB STAFF

DETROIT — At its annual state convention in downtown Detroit, the Michigan Democratic Party elected former State Senator Curtis Hertel Jr. as its new chair, setting the stage for his leadership ahead of the crucial 2026 elections. With races for governor, attorney general, secretary of state, all 110 Michigan House seats, all 38 Michigan Senate seats, and one U.S. Senate seat on the ballot, the upcoming election cycle will shape the future of Michigan's political landscape.

Hertel's election was uncontested after his only opponent, activist Al Williams, withdrew due to failing to gather the required signatures to trigger a vote at the Renaissance Center convention. The event drew several high-profile Democratic leaders, including current members of Congress, signaling the importance of this leadership transition.

The 47-year-old former lawmaker emerged as the frontrunner after securing the endorsement of Governor Gretchen Whitmer. He succeeds Lavora Barnes, who opted not to seek re-election following major Democratic setbacks in 2024. The losses included Democrats relinquishing control of the Michigan House of Representatives and Donald Trump flipping Michigan in the presidential race.

Hertel's political roots run deep in Michigan. His late father, Curtis Hertel Sr., served as speaker of the Michigan House from 1993 to 1994, and his brother, Kevin Hertel, is a current state senator. Hertel himself served in the Michigan Senate from 2015 to 2023, representing Lansing, before joining Whitmer's admin-



PHOTO CREDIT: CURTIS HERTEL JR. (FACEBOOK)

istration as her chief lobbyist. Last year, he made an unsuccessful bid for Michigan's Seventh Congressional District, losing to Republican Tom Barrett. Despite that defeat, Whitmer backed him for party leadership, citing his experience and the high stakes of the 2026 elections, where term limits will prevent her, Attorney General Dana Nessel, and Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson from seeking re-election.

As chair, Hertel will guide the party's strategy in a cycle that will determine the state's next leadership. Democratic and Republican voters will select their gubernatorial candidates in the August 2026 primaries, while convention delegates will nominate candidates for lieutenant governor, attorney general, and secretary of state.

In his victory speech, Hertel called for party unity and a renewed focus on working-class voters. He emphasized the importance of winning back the Michigan House of Representatives, defending the Democratic majority in the Senate, and retaining the governor's office. His overarching goal is to restore full Democratic control of state government, a balance he referred to as the "governing troika."

"I want to win the governor's race, and we're going to invest a lot of time there," Hertel said. "But winning the governor's race without winning the House and the Senate is like standing in the goal just playing defense. I want to go on offense and get things done for people. And the only way to do that is to restore the troika."

Hertel also defined his vision for the Democratic Party, stressing the importance of economic and social justice policies. "If we are not the party of fair wages, if we are not the party of affordable housing, if we are not the party of equal access to housing, if we are not the party of equal access to the ballot box... then we will cease to exist as a party in this country," he said.

He also took aim at past election strategies, criticizing the party's focus on high-profile races at the expense of local contests. "I believe the party has been too focused on the top of the ballot," he said, underscoring the need for stronger grassroots engagement. "We either stand up for working families, or we won't win elections again."

Hertel's leadership team includes First Vice Chair Portia

Roberson, a Detroit political figure and civil rights advocate who serves as president and CEO of Focus: HOPE, a social justice nonprofit, and Second Vice Chair Dr. Shahin Nazmul Hassan, a Bangladeshi American political organizer.

The convention also revisited lessons from the 2024 election, including the party's outreach efforts to key voting blocs. One of the most controversial moments of the previous cycle was the exclusion of Palestinian American civil rights lawyer Huwaida Arraf from the race for a seat on the University of Michigan Board of Regents. Critics described the Democratic Party's handling of the selection process at the August 2024 convention as non-transparent, sparking frustration within Michigan's Arab American community.

At Saturday's convention, Arraf urged Arab American delegates to remain engaged in the party despite their frustrations. She revealed that both Hertel and Williams admitted that the party had "wronged our community" by ignoring Arab and Muslim demands to end U.S. support for Israel's war in Gaza.

Hertel directly addressed these tensions, condemning the party's previous approach to pro-Palestinian voices at the convention. "I'm tired of people blaming the 'Uncommitted' movement for the 2024 losses," he said, referring to the grassroots protest vote that significantly impacted Democratic performance in Michigan.

"If we are going to be the biggest party that we claim to be, and if we want to unite this party, then when people show up at the convention to make their voices heard—we need to welcome them," he added.

POLITICS

McDonald Rivet introduces bill to restore pensions for Delphi retirees

BY MB STAFF

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Congresswoman Kristen McDonald Rivet (MI-08) has introduced the Susan Muffley Act of 2025, a bipartisan bill aimed at restoring pensions for more than 21,000 Delphi salaried retirees, including over 5,800 retirees in Michigan. The legislation seeks to correct a long-standing financial hardship that began in 2009 when Delphi employees saw their pensions drastically reduced or eliminated amid the auto industry's financial crisis.

"When you contribute to a pension with every single paycheck, you count on it being there when you retire," said Congresswoman McDonald Rivet. "Thousands of Delphi retirees have been robbed of the retirement they earned. It is unacceptable. I will continue the longstanding fight to restore for Delphi employees the retirement they earned with Republicans and Democrats."

The Delphi Salaried Retirees Association (DSRA), which has advocated for pension restoration for more than 15 years, welcomed the legislation as a step toward righting a financial injustice. Ron Beeber, DSRA Board Treasurer, emphasized the impact on retirees, many of whom have been forced to work well beyond their planned retirement years.

"Since 2009, the Delphi Salaried Retirees Association has fought to get our members the benefits they were robbed of," said Beeber. "Today, many Delphi salaried retirees work well into their retirement years just to pay family medical and other bills, and keep a roof over their heads. I applaud Congresswoman McDonald Rivet for introduc-



KRISTEN MCDONALD RIVET

ing legislation to support workers and correct a series of terrible decisions made by the federal government."

For former Delphi employees like Al Gerwin of Saginaw Township, the financial toll has been deeply personal.

"Working as hard as I did for as long as I did, sometimes going weeks without a day off, I should have the retirement so many working Michiganders dream

of. But because my pension was cut by over 30% and my benefits were ripped away, things are much harder than they should be," said Gerwin. "At this point, I just want to be able to leave something for my kids. I can't explain how much it means to know Congresswoman McDonald Rivet supports retirees like me, and we can count on her as an ally in this fight."

The pension reductions date back to the Great Recession of 2009, when Delphi, a major car parts manufacturer, faced bankruptcy. The company was later acquired by General Motors, but as part of GM's federal bailout, the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation (PBGC) took control of Delphi employees' pensions. Unlike unionized hourly workers, 21,000 salaried employees saw their benefits slashed, with some losing as much as 70% of their vested pensions.

The bill is named after Susan Muffley, a Delphi retiree advocate who was part of the DSRA

leadership team. Financial hardships following the pension cuts prevented her from seeking early medical care, and she passed away in 2012 due to complications from cancer.

Under the proposed legislation, retirees would receive a lump sum payment covering the pension benefits they were owed over the past 15 years, with 6 percent interest added to account for the delay. Moving forward, the bill would fully restore their pensions, ensuring retirees receive the payments they were originally promised as if the disruption had never occurred.

With bipartisan support, the Susan Muffley Act of 2025 represents the latest attempt to resolve a long-standing financial crisis for thousands of retirees who have spent more than a decade fighting to reclaim their earned benefits. As the bill moves through Congress, its fate will determine whether these retirees can finally receive the financial security they were promised.



DELPHI TECHNOLOGIES (FILE PHOTO)

Governor Whitmer outlines vision for Michigan in 2025 State of the State Address



GOVERNOR GRETCHEN WHITMER DELIVERS 2025 STATE OF THE STATE ADDRESS

BY MB STAFF

LANSING — On Feb. 26, Governor Gretchen Whitmer delivered her 2025 State of the State Address before a joint session of the Michigan Legislature, emphasizing bipartisan collaboration to lower costs, create jobs, and protect Michigan's economy. Her speech built on her Road Ahead Address, delivered before President Trump's inauguration, and followed a recent meeting with the president where she advocated for Michigan's manufacturing industry and military families.

"In 2025, I'm excited to keep working across the aisle to lower costs, create jobs, and continue delivering results that make a real difference in people's lives," she said. "Right now, families

and businesses are facing high costs and uncertainty from tariffs, and our national politics are divided. Michiganders are tired of the games and want strong, bipartisan leadership."

Lieutenant Governor Garlin Gilchrist II echoed the administration's commitment to a government that listens and delivers. Legislative leaders praised the governor's message, with Senate Majority Leader Winnie Brinks highlighting Democratic progress on tax relief, education, and civil rights, and House Democratic Leader Ranjeev Puri emphasizing the need for state-level stability amid federal uncertainty.

A key focus of Whitmer's address was lowering costs for Michigan families. She warned that proposed 25% tariffs could raise household expenses by

\$1,200 per year and slow auto and housing development. To counter these pressures, she outlined plans to cut taxes for seniors and working families, expand affordable child care, and invest \$2 billion in housing development. She also proposed reducing medical debt, which impacts 700,000 Michiganders, and expanding the Michigan Energy Assistance Program to help 335,000 families save on utility bills.

Workforce development remained a priority, with Whitmer announcing an executive directive to boost young men's enrollment in tuition-free career and education programs. She also reaffirmed her commitment to Selfridge Air National Guard Base, advocating for a new fighter mission to protect military jobs.

Whitmer called for streamlin-

ing state government, proposing licensing and permitting reforms to speed up construction and job creation. She pushed for stronger literacy programs, school transparency, and commonsense phone restrictions in classrooms, citing evidence that limiting phone use improves learning and reduces bullying.

She also urged lawmakers to tax vapes like cigarettes, closing a loophole that allows them to be sold at a lower cost. "Thirty-two states—red and blue—already do the same, including all of our neighbors. In 2025, let's get it done to protect our kids," she said.

Legislative and local leaders praised Whitmer's priorities, particularly her focus on medical debt relief, education, and infrastructure.

EDUCATION

Michigan graduation rate reaches record high



FILE PHOTO

BY MB STAFF

LANSING — Michigan's four-year high school graduation rate has reached its highest level since the state adopted federal calculation methods in 2008, according to new data released by the Michigan Center for Educational Performance and Information (CEPI). The 2024 graduation rate climbed to 82.8%, up from 81.8% in 2023, marking a significant step forward in the state's ongoing efforts to improve student success.

State education leaders credit the increase to expanded participation in rigorous secondary school programs, including Career and Technical Education (CTE), dual enrollment, Early Middle College, Advanced Place-

ment (AP), and International Baccalaureate (IB). These programs provide students with advanced learning opportunities and hands-on career training, helping to better prepare them for college and the workforce.

"I'm proud of the hard work of Michigan students, educators, support staff, families, and communities to increase the percentage of students who are graduating from high school," said State Superintendent Dr. Michael F. Rice. "High school graduation opens the door to postsecondary credential attainment at two- and four-year institutions as well as in training programs that lead to industry credentials. Postsecondary degrees and credentials help Michiganders earn a good living, support a family, and achieve their career dreams."

Gov. Gretchen Whitmer praised the progress and highlighted her administration's bipartisan investments in education as a driving force behind the improvement. "As a mom of two high school graduates, I know how many soccer games, flashcards, and ACT prep courses go into getting your child across the stage to receive their diploma," Whitmer said. "That's why I'm so proud that Michigan's graduation rate has reached an all-time high. Since I took office, we've made record, bipartisan investments into our children's education, and I'm committed to working with anyone to make sure Michigan parents and students have the support they need to make it to the finish line."

Enrollment in Career and Technical Education programs

has grown steadily over the past three years, reaching 112,156 students in 2023-24, an increase of over 9,000 students since 2020-21. The number of students completing full CTE programs also saw a 19% increase, reaching 52,625—the highest level in Michigan history. The State Board of Education and the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) continue to advocate for additional funding to expand these programs, with Whitmer including increased support in her fiscal year 2026 budget proposal.

Graduation rates improved across 14 of 17 student subgroups, with American Indian or Alaskan Native students, multi-racial students, and English language learners seeing the most significant gains. State Board of Education President Dr. Pamela Pugh emphasized the importance of continued collaboration to maintain this momentum. "The board will continue to support all learners and emphasize the importance of stakeholders working together toward these common education goals," she said.

Dr. Rice acknowledged the progress while noting that work remains to be done. "While Michigan is showing noteworthy improvement, we still have room for growth," he said. "Local school districts, intermediate school districts, and the department will redouble efforts to improve graduation rates, particularly in schools that need more support to close these gaps."

As Michigan celebrates its highest graduation rate on record, state officials remain focused on expanding access to high-quality education and workforce training programs, ensuring that all students graduate prepared for success in college, careers, and beyond.

EDUCATION

Delta College appoints Karry Kiste-Toner as Dean of Student Success



KARRY KISTE-TONER

BY MB STAFF

UNIVERSITY CENTER — Delta College has announced Karry Kiste-Toner as its new dean of Student Success, a role in which she will oversee initiatives aimed at enhancing student support services and academic achievement.

With nearly 14 years of experience in higher education, Kiste-Toner has built a career centered on student success and well-being. Before joining Delta College in 2021 as dean of Retention, she spent a decade at Mid Michigan College, where she advanced from academic advisor to assistant vice president of Student Success.

Her leadership has already contributed to significant changes in student advising at Delta College. Under her guidance, the school has restructured its advising services, separating counselors from student success advisors to better address the growing demand for mental health support. The number of student success

advisors has expanded from 12 to 18, allowing for a lower student-to-advisor ratio and more personalized guidance. Additionally, advisors are now assigned to students based on their academic programs rather than geographic location, fostering deeper connections between students, faculty, and advisors.

“I think in terms of growing ripples in the water,” Kiste-Toner said. “What can I do to take what I’ve learned in each position and broaden the impact that it has for students?”

A first-generation college graduate, Kiste-Toner earned her bachelor’s degree in 2006 and a master’s from Central Michigan University in 2011, all while balancing the demands of raising two young children. She has been a licensed professional counselor since 2017, a qualification she believes strengthens her ability to support students both academically and personally.

Delta College’s vice president of Student Empowerment and Success, Shelly Raube, praised Kiste-Toner’s commitment to student achievement and inclusive leadership. “Karry brings an equitable mindset, a strategic vision, and a deep understanding of the vital role community colleges play in transforming lives,” Raube said.

In her new role, Kiste-Toner plans to build on existing initiatives while exploring new ways to enhance student engagement, retention, and success. “I feel confident in the direction the college is moving,” she said. “I’m excited to support transformational services at the college, thinking about each student as an individual and providing them with what they need to be successful through a holistic approach.”

SVSU president appointed to Michigan Workforce Development Board



GEORGE GRANT JR (PHOTO CREDIT: SVSU)

BY MB STAFF

SAGINAW — Saginaw Valley State University President George Grant Jr. has been appointed to the Michigan Workforce Development Board, where he will help shape policies aimed at expanding career opportunities for Michigan residents. Governor Gretchen Whitmer announced the appointment on Thursday, Feb. 27, with Grant’s role taking effect immediately.

“I am honored to serve the people of Michigan and to represent SVSU in this role,” Grant said. “I believe education, in all its forms, can be a positive force for change and

advancing human potential, and I know that Michigan’s employers are looking for leadership to meet their talent needs. I also would like to thank Gov. Whitmer for extending this opportunity.”

The Michigan Workforce Development Board is tasked with overseeing and improving the state’s workforce development system, ensuring that Michigan businesses have access to a skilled labor force while residents gain opportunities for career advancement.

Grant will serve on the board through May 29, 2027, filling the seat vacated by Bob Davies, who previously resigned.

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EDUCATION

When hope is present, dreams and goals flourish

The Saginaw Promise believes in the power of postsecondary education to be a “change agent” to impact Saginaw’s future and that of its students

BY MB STAFF

SAGINAW — The Saginaw Promise is working to impact Saginaw’s future, its economy and quality of life by eliminating barriers to higher education through information, programming and a scholarship. Since 2012, the Saginaw Promise has awarded \$1,350,713 in scholarships to 745 students and has seen graduation rates increase, and dropout rates decrease. The Saginaw Promise provides information and resources to assist students and parents navigate and finance postsecondary education. To that end, the Saginaw Promise’s mission is to provide scholarships to assist Saginaw’s “high school graduates” to earn a program certificate or degree from a technical/trade school, community college or university. Since forming, the Saginaw Promise has seen graduation rates increase and dropout rates decrease.

The Saginaw Promise Scholarship is a benefit for students who reside in, attend schools and graduate from a high school within the Saginaw Promise Zone (which includes the cities of Saginaw, Zilwaukee, Kochville and that area of Buena Vista designated to the Saginaw Public School District). The scholarship also serves as an incentive to stabilize and grow Saginaw’s population to affect the overall economic environment for current businesses and attract new businesses with an educated workforce.

Students meeting the residency, school attendance and graduation requirements are required to complete the Saginaw Community Foundation (SCF) Scholarship Application (online)



FILE PHOTO

and FAFSA to receive the scholarship. The Saginaw Promise scholarship is available up to two years and does not consider parental income or GPA; students must maintain the standards of the institution they enroll with. Scholars have up to six years from high school graduation to use their Saginaw Promise Scholarship. For more information, visit the Saginaw Promise website at www.saginawpromise.org or for questions telephone Deborah Sanchez at (989) 607-3428 or email dsanchez@saginawpromise.org.

Investing in Saginaw and its students today for the Saginaw we want tomorrow!

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EDUCATION

Former Jerome Elementary undergoing renovations to become high quality, state of the art green STEM preschool model



COURTESY PHOTOS

SAGINAW – Jerome was established as a Kindergarten through 5th grade elementary school in 1976 by the Saginaw Public School District. In 2013, due to low student capacity as well as district wide financial challenges. Dr. Ericka Taylor was the principal assigned to Jerome that year and understood first hand why the school was being offlined, especially in consideration of the many structural needs of the building and grounds.

However, when Dr. Taylor joined the Saginaw Intermediate School District in 2017 as the Director of Early Childhood, she was surprised to learn that Jerome was a preschool site that was being rented and utilized (in the very same condition) to provide early childhood services which include preschool classes, home visiting teachers and maternal infant support for the families of children birth through 5 years of age. This was an immediate reminder of the reasons why

Jerome was originally offlined, but it also spurred a deeper desire and vision to give our children and families in Saginaw County not only what they need, but what they deserve, which is the very best learning environment that we can possibly imagine and provide, despite their economic status and/or zip code!

A groundbreaking ceremony was held this past May and renovations are currently underway transforming the former Jerome elementary school into the new Jerome Preschool servicing students ages birth to 4 years old! These renovations will include a new roof, awning, heating/cooling system, parking lot and greenhouse. There will be designated space for onsite medical services for children and families, shared community space for partnerships with local colleges/universities, and community organizations. All classrooms and hallways will be updated with new lighting, paint and flooring. The former gymnasium will now be a multipurpose space for staff

professional development opportunities as well as community activities and events.

These renovations will not only enhance and beautify the local community, but will also give our youngest learners the academic, social and emotional foundation they need and deserve to begin their K-12 endeavors and beyond by providing them with a high quality, state of the art building focused on Green STEM. Our vision is that this preschool site will provide an early childhood model that we can replicate not only in Saginaw, but across the state of Michigan and beyond.

A huge thank you to Saginaw ISD Superintendent Dr. Jeffrey Collier for allowing us to dream big for the children and families in our community! We welcome any questions you may have to be sent to Dr. Ericka Taylor, Executive Director of Early Childhood, at etaylor@sisd.cc.

SPONSORED CONTENT





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Join us for the Saginaw Arts & Sciences Academy Information Night and explore why SASA is Michigan's premier academy for gifted and talented students.

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Time: 5:30 PM

Location: 3115 Mackinaw St., Saginaw, MI 48602

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Sabrina Beeman-Jackson

Saginaw ISD Head Start/Early Head Start
Program Director

About Saginaw ISD HE/EHS

Established in 1965, Head Start promotes school readiness for children, ages three to five, in low-income families by offering educational, nutritional, health, social and other services.

Head Start programs promote school readiness by enhancing the social and cognitive development of children through the provision of educational, health, nutritional, social and other services to enrolled children and families.

Early Head Start, launched in 1995, provides support to low-income infants, toddlers,

pregnant women and their families.

EHS programs enhance children's physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development; assist pregnant women to access comprehensive prenatal and postpartum care; support parents' efforts to fulfill their parental roles; and help parents move toward self-sufficiency.

Together Head Start and Early Head Start have served tens of millions of children and their families.

At Saginaw ISD Head Start our attentive staff is available Monday through Friday to answer all your questions and make every effort to ensure you are 100 percent satisfied.

Saginaw ISD Head Start
Claytor Administrative
Building
3200 Perkins Street
Saginaw, MI 48601
Phone 989.752.2193
Fax 989.921.7146

Office Hours

Monday: 8 AM - 4:30 PM
Tuesday: 8 AM - 4:30 PM
Wednesday: 8 AM - 4:30 PM
Thursday: 8 AM - 4:30 PM
Friday: 8 AM - 4:30 PM
Saturday: 8 AM - 4:30 PM
Sunday: 8 AM - 4:30 PM

For additional information concerning
Saginaw ISD Head Start visit:
www.saginawheadstart.org

Source: www.saginawheadstart.org

“Head Start graduates are more likely to graduate from high school and less likely to need special education, repeat a grade, or commit crimes in adolescence.”

Joe Baca, former Dem. California Congressman

***“Our mission is to provide high quality services, developing school readiness and family empowerment for prenatal to age five children and families by working in partnership with parents and the community.”
-Saginaw ISD HE/EHS***

BUSINESS + FINANCE

Flint & Genesee Economic Alliance expands small business grant program



MOVING FLINT FORWARD ALUMNI BELLA'S CONCESSIONS AND CATERING AT LOCAL EVENT IN FLINT (FLINT & GENESEE ECONOMIC ALLIANCE)

BY MB STAFF

FLINT — The Flint & Genesee Economic Alliance has launched a new round of the Moving Flint Forward grant program, aimed at supporting small businesses in Flint. Thanks to a \$270,000 grant from General Motors (GM), the program will provide funding to 16 new businesses and 10 previous grant recipients, helping them expand operations and strengthen their foundations.

New grantees will be eligi-

ble for grants of up to \$10,000, while returning participants can receive up to \$5,000. The funds, awarded on a competitive basis, can be used for essential business improvements such as building upgrades, equipment purchases, inventory, raw materials, licensing, marketing, and training programs. However, the grants cannot be used for payroll, rent, staffing, mortgage payments, or tax debt repayment.

This latest investment brings GM's total contribution to Flint's small business community

through Moving Flint Forward to \$1.43 million. Since its launch in 2019, the program has helped more than 80 small businesses, not only with financial assistance but also by providing access to workshops, networking opportunities, and long-term business development resources.

"The growth of our small business community is critical to the growth of our region," said Tyler Rossmassler, executive director of the Flint & Genesee Economic Alliance. "When we have thriving small businesses, we see

our community become a place where people want to live, work, and play. GM's investment shows their commitment to small businesses and the region's growth."

The program is open to small business owners operating within the city of Flint, provided they have fewer than 20 employees and are not part of a franchise. Applications must be submitted online by March 21 at 5 p.m., and a committee of representatives from GM, the City of Flint, local grant-making organizations, and community members will review submissions. Selected businesses will be notified in April.

To assist applicants, the Economic Alliance will offer technical support throughout the process, including guidance on application submission, grant implementation, and compliance tracking. An informational webinar will take place on March 3 from noon to 1 p.m. at Berston Field House (3300 Saginaw St., Flint), where attendees can learn about eligibility requirements and fund usage.

For those needing further assistance, the Economic Alliance team will be available to answer questions until March 20. Additionally, in-person open office hours will be held at Berston Field House on March 10 and March 17 from noon to 3 p.m.

Applications can be submitted online at DevelopFlintandGenesee.org/Moving-Flint-Forward. For more information, applicants can contact Tracy Joseph, business support manager at the Flint & Genesee Economic Alliance, at TJoseph@FlintandGenesee.org.

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BUSINESS + FINANCE

Governor Whitmer signs legislation revising Michigan's minimum wage and paid sick leave standards



FILE PHOTO

BY MB STAFF

LANSING — Governor Gretchen Whitmer has signed Senate Bill 8 and House Bill 4002, bringing immediate changes to Michigan's minimum wage, tipped wage, and paid sick leave policies. The legislation, signed on Feb. 21, revises standards that employers had expected to take effect that day following a Michigan Supreme Court ruling in July 2024.

The new laws maintain the minimum wage increase to \$12.48 per hour, which took effect on Feb. 21, but shift the timeline for future increases. Instead of adjusting in February each year, the minimum wage will now rise on Jan. 1 beginning in 2026. The law sets Michigan's mini-

mum wage at \$13.73 in 2026 and \$15.00 in 2027, with annual inflation-based adjustments starting in 2028.

The tip credit, a major concern for restaurant and hospital-ity employers, remains in place but will gradually decrease over several years. Employers must now pay tipped workers 38% of the minimum wage in 2025, with that percentage increasing to 50% by 2031. The legislation also introduces a fine of up to \$2,500 for violations of tipped wage requirements.

Changes to paid sick leave are more complex. While most employers must comply with new standards immediately, small businesses with 10 or fewer employees will have until Oct. 1, 2025. New businesses that had no employees before Feb.21,

2022, will have three years from their first hire date to comply. The law also exempts nonprofits and certain types of workers, including unpaid interns, trainees, and minors under 18.

Unionized workforces under existing collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) will follow the new law once their CBAs expire. Employers must now provide written notice of paid leave policies to employees within 30 days of February 21 or upon hiring. The law sets a waiting period of up to 120 days before new employees can use paid leave, an increase from the previous 90-day waiting period.

For employers using a front-loading method for paid sick leave, small businesses must provide 40 hours of leave per year, while larger businesses

must provide 72 hours. Employers using an accrual-based system must allow workers to carry over unused leave—capped at 40 hours for small businesses and 72 hours for others.


The new law removes employees' ability to sue for violations and instead requires complaints to be filed with the state labor department, which can now issue fines of up to eight times an employee's hourly wage for noncompliance.

With these changes now in effect, Michigan employers are adapting policies and pay structures to comply with the new laws. The state labor department has updated its guidance and will provide further clarifications as businesses adjust to the revised requirements.

BUSINESS + FINANCE



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SPORTS

Saginaw Township Community Schools appoint new athletic directors

BY MB STAFF

SAGINAW — Saginaw Township Community Schools (STCS) has announced the appointments of Tony Premo as District Athletic Director and Bill Chaltraw as High School Athletic Director, ushering in a new era of leadership for the district's athletic programs.

Premo, a lifelong member of the Saginaw Township community, has a long history with STCS, having attended the district from kindergarten through graduation. His coaching background spans football, wrestling, and track & field in the Saginaw Valley League Conference, and



SAGINAW TOWNSHIP COMMUNITY SCHOOLS (FILE PHOTO)

he has served in multiple roles within STCS over the past 15 years, including coach, teacher, Dean of Students, Assistant Principal, and Interim District Ath-

letic Director.

Chaltraw, a longtime Heritage High School educator, brings a strong passion for student success and athletics to his

new role. His leadership and experience in the classroom make him well-suited to guide the high school's athletic program. He succeeds Jim Noble, who will remain with the program as a mentor and trainer.

"As we look ahead, we are confident that Tony and Bill's leadership will strengthen our programs, inspire our athletes, and build a culture of teamwork, discipline, and pride," said Superintendent Jamie Kraatz.

Saginaw Township Community Schools serves approximately 4,700 students across eight schools, offering a range of alternative and advanced programs.

Great Lakes Loons announce coaching staff for 2025 season

BY MB STAFF

MIDLAND — The Great Lakes Loons, in partnership with the Los Angeles Dodgers, have unveiled their 2025 coaching staff, featuring a mix of returning leadership and new additions. Jair Fernandez will return for his second season as Loons manager, joined by pitching coaches Sean Coyne and Eduardo Dominguez, hitting coach Kevin LaChance, and bench coach Joe Thon.

Sean Coyne joins the Loons after two successful seasons as pitching coach for the Rancho Cucamonga Quakes, where he helped guide the team to a California League South Division championship in 2023. Under his leadership, the Quakes' 2024 pitching staff recorded 1,282

strikeouts, ranking third in the league despite throwing the fewest innings. Coyne began his coaching career with the Dodgers' Arizona Complex League (ACL) team in 2022 before moving to Rancho Cucamonga.

Eduardo Dominguez will share pitching coach duties with Coyne after spending the past two seasons as one of four pitching coaches in the Dodgers' Dominican Summer League program. Originally signed as an international prospect by the Dodgers in 2019, the Madrid, Spain native transitions into a developmental role at the High-A level.

Kevin LaChance returns for his second year in the Dodgers organization after serving as hitting coach for the 2024 ACL Dodgers, who went on to win the

Arizona Complex League championship. A former 10th-round draft pick by the Dodgers in 2016, LaChance played two seasons of Minor League Baseball, including a 2017 championship run with the Ogden Raptors in the Pioneer League.

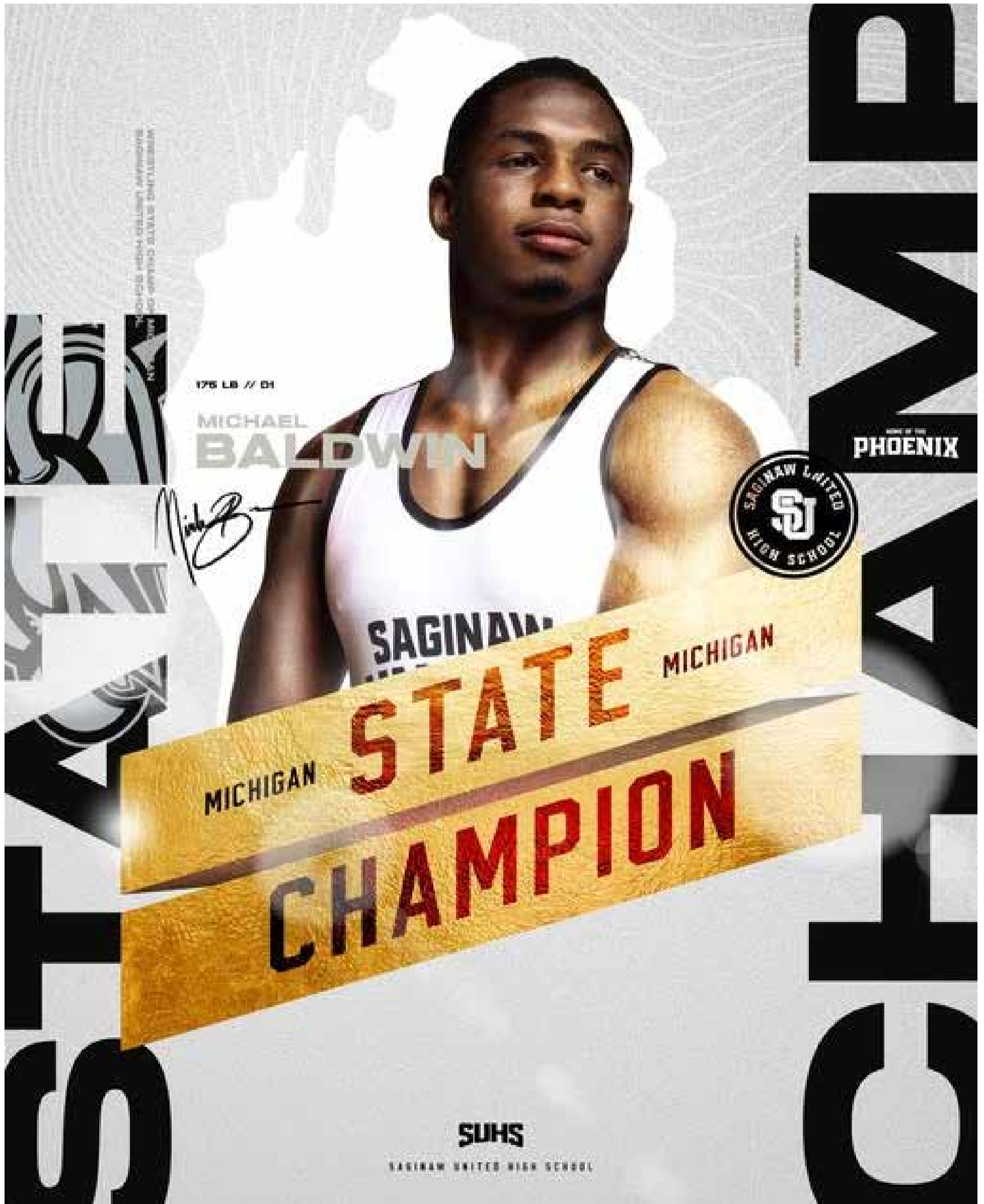
Joe Thon will serve as bench coach, bringing managerial experience from the Houston Astros organization, where he led the Corpus Christi Hooks (Double-A) for two seasons. A former fifth-round pick of the Toronto Blue Jays in 2010, Thon spent six seasons as a player, including 118 games with the Lansing Lugnuts between 2014 and 2015.

The Loons' staff will also feature Gage Crosgrove (Performance Coach), Alec Schulte (Affiliate Development Associate),

Braelin Hence (Development Coach), Akinori Maeda (Athletic Trainer), and Ezra Lacina (Bullpen Catcher). Crosgrove returns after previously holding the performance coach role for the Loons in 2019.

The 2025 season kicks off on Friday, April 4, when the Loons take the field at Dow Diamond against the Lake County Captains.





FAITH IN FOCUS



MINISTRY WITHOUT WALLS - 3783 MANNION RD, SAGINAW, MI 48603

Ministry Without Walls expands vision with community-focused mission

BY PASTOR JOHN DUNN

Ministry Without Walls has recently returned to its location at 3783 Mannion Road with a renewed vision, shaped by recent global events and the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Seeking divine guidance, the organization has embraced a broader mission: to make the church an integral part of the community.

The new direction for Ministry Without Walls is centered around the theme of "Breaking Down Walls." This initiative aims to bridge gaps between spiritual life and community service, uniting church members, volunteers, and local professionals in a shared mission.

The organization's vision includes several key objectives:



PASTOR JOHN DUNN

- Creating a space where the spirit, soul, and body can achieve wholeness.
- Providing resources to those in need.
- Fostering collaboration

between the church, volunteers, and community professionals.

- Ensuring a welcoming environment where love prevails and judgment is absent.
- Maintaining privacy and prioritizing safety.
- Emphasizing the importance of the whole person.

Ministry Without Walls will continue to offer various teachings and seminars on topics such as outreach, spiritual growth, mental health, healthy living, finding purpose, financial management, entrepreneurship, and more. These programs are designed to address diverse needs and support personal development.

Recognizing that the mission field is close to home, not far

away, the organization is committed to a collaborative approach, knowing that achieving this vision will require the collective effort of many. Ministry Without Walls is dedicating its resources, talents, and connections to dismantle barriers and connect with the community more deeply.

Those interested in learning more or getting involved are encouraged to visit the church on Sundays at 11:00 AM. This offers an opportunity to meet Pastor John Dunn, ask questions, and experience the ministry's mission firsthand.

For more information, visit Ministry Without Walls at 3783 Mannion Road, Saginaw, MI 48603.

SPONSORED CONTENT

FAITH IN FOCUS



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Prophetess Linda J. Kemp Revis, Pastor

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Apostle James Glenn

The New Christ Community Church
Dr. Eugene & Joyce Seals, Pastors
Audrey Parker Ministry of Love, Pastor Audrey Parker



FAITH IN FOCUS

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Proverbs 4:23 (NIV)



BY DR. CAROLYN CARTER
TOWNSEL

The Book of Proverbs has several individuals as authors of its varying chapters. However, the first chapters of Proverbs were written by King Solomon, Son of David, King of Israel, and the wis-

est man who ever lived. In Proverbs chapter 4, Solomon presents Divine principles, words of wisdom, and godly instructions that if applied men will live godly, purposed, and effective lives. However, one must remember as the King offers his river of words they are flowing from a heart of love - these are the words of a father to his son, from a teacher to his student.

King Solomon is positioning the apprentice, his son, to possess wisdom for living. Therefore, he instructs him to pursue wisdom, to be devoted and faithful, love God and his neighbor. He provides instructions regarding wisdom, character, astuteness, and sound judgement. He shares with his son to become committed, persistent, obedient, and dis-

ciplined. Although, these instructions, provisions, and sharing is to his son, it is for us as well. even the warning - But above all else, guard your heart.

The Hebrew term “guard” is to protect. As Christians, Solomon is instructing us to guard our hearts - How then do we guard the heart? By listening, reading, meditating on, and living the Word of God. Proverbs 4:21 tells us, **“Let them not depart from thine eyes, Keep them in the midst of your heart. For they are life unto those who find them, and health to all their flesh”** (ASV). Psalm 119:11 declares, **“Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against you”** (NKJV). Subsequently, it is the Word of God that we must

use to guard our hearts, for it is our fortress and defense.

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for “heart” is lev or levav and is used more than 800 times, but more than 200 times dealing with the mind, thought life, will, and feelings that motivates, shapes, and molds us - As a result our heart is the control center of our lives. Consequently, Believers must truly understand the value of their hearts and know it is the entrance, the doorway through which things get in and out of the heart. For that reason, it is crucial that we keep the Word of God in the midst of our hearts, because then the Word of God becomes our weapon for the ungodly and unrighteous thoughts, actions, will, and feelings.

Respectively, it is imperative that we know, believe, and speak the Word of God toward any and all things that are contrary to the will of God concerning our lives. By way of illustration, if an ungodly thought presents itself to your mind such as, “There is no way you can do that” God’s Word that would render that thought powerless is, **“I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me”** (Philippians 4:13).

King Solomon makes it vividly clear that the heart is the source of everything we do - regardless of what we say, do, or think it flows from the heart. Therefore, if the heart is poison, the flow becomes poison. We have an adversary whose inclination is our destruction. He not only opposes God, but he opposes everything that is aligned with Him - including us. Therefore, Beloved **“Guard Your Heart.”**

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SAGINAW VALLEY CONGRESS OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION
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Austin Lecture
2025

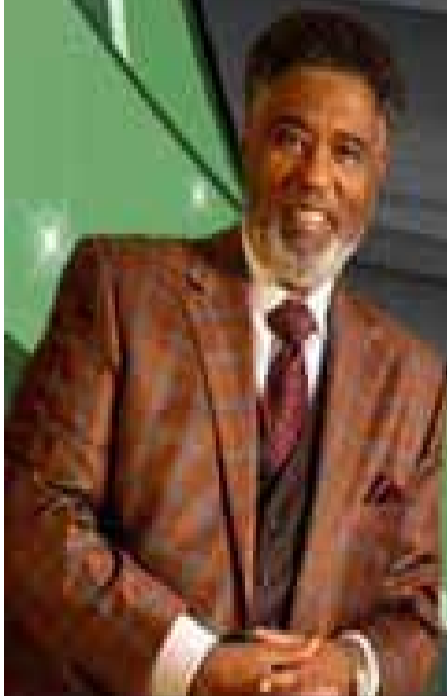
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FUNDRAISING GOOD TIMES

Reflections on the dismantling of DEI Initiatives



BY MEL AND PEARL SHAW

As an 87-year-old person of color who has witnessed the long arc of America's struggle with racial equality, I find myself compelled to respond to the growing number of pundits and corporate leaders who are praising Trump's elimination of DEI programs. From the very beginning, I've observed with growing concern how the acronym "DEI" has often functioned more like "DIE" for meaningful progress in racial equity.

The ending of long-standing programs, firing of DEI executives and staff, and the scrubbing of any reference to anything that hints of equality... fundamentally misses the deeper implications of this policy shift and ignores the pervasive inequality that invades and disrupts the lives of non-white Americans.

Trump's executive order has provided organizations with what many businesses are viewing as an excuse to dismantle their investments in their diversity initiatives. Programs that were, only weeks ago, prominently featured in corporate messaging in the media, advertising and in-house publications have vanished with stunning speed, revealing perhaps their half-hearted sponsorship ... all along.

The three elements of DEI deserve individual examination:

Diversity represents an immutable demographic reality. America is becoming increasingly multiracial, and organizations will eventually have no choice but to embrace this reality if they wish to remain viable. The pressing question now is how compa-



FILE PHOTO

nies will navigate talent acquisition if an appreciation of the differences in the make-up of our population is ignored.

Equity presents a more complex challenge, as its measurement inherently involves subjective judgments. Consider the revealing example from Bloomberg BusinessWeek about auto insurance rates being heavily influenced by credit scores - a practice that disproportionately, and negatively, impacts communities of color and the economically disadvantaged, while not correlating with a driver's safe driving experience. This single example illuminates how inequality permeates every aspect of American life impacting equal treatment, in ways that are obvious and subtle, intentional and unintentional. While the complete eradication of inequity may be unrealistic, meaningful remediation must be at least an aspirational goal.

Inclusion presents a fascinating paradox. While the absence of inclusion for people of

color, women, and the economically disadvantaged remains painfully evident, true inclusion could potentially dilute the distinct cultural characteristics that have enriched our communities and our nation. Consider the historical significance of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) such as Morehouse, Spelman, Hampton and 96 others. These institutions have provided crucial, safe spaces for cultural preservation and academic excellence. "Perfect inclusion" would likely diminish the unique role these institutions have played, and continue to play, in nurturing Black excellence and leadership. Their doors have always been open to all - students,

faculty, staff, and administrators - despite being founded in response to the almost total exclusion of Black students at what are now referenced as "predominantly white institutions."

Having crossed the threshold of 80 years, I find myself increasingly unwilling to accept comfortable rationalizations or remain silent in the face of misinformation. My years have granted me both perspective and the freedom to question more vigorously, push harder against accepted narratives, and challenge the complacency that too often surrounds discussions of racial progress.

The dismantling of DEI initiatives cannot be met with misguided approbation or resigned acceptance or the fatalistic shrug of "it is what it is." The stakes are too high, and the potential for backsliding too real. We must remain vigilant in monitoring the consequences of these kinds of policy changes while continuing to advocate for meaningful progress toward a truly equitable, inclusive society.

The path forward requires neither blind acceptance nor despair, but rather clear-eyed assessment and sustained commitment to addressing the underlying inequities that make DEI initiatives necessary in the first place.



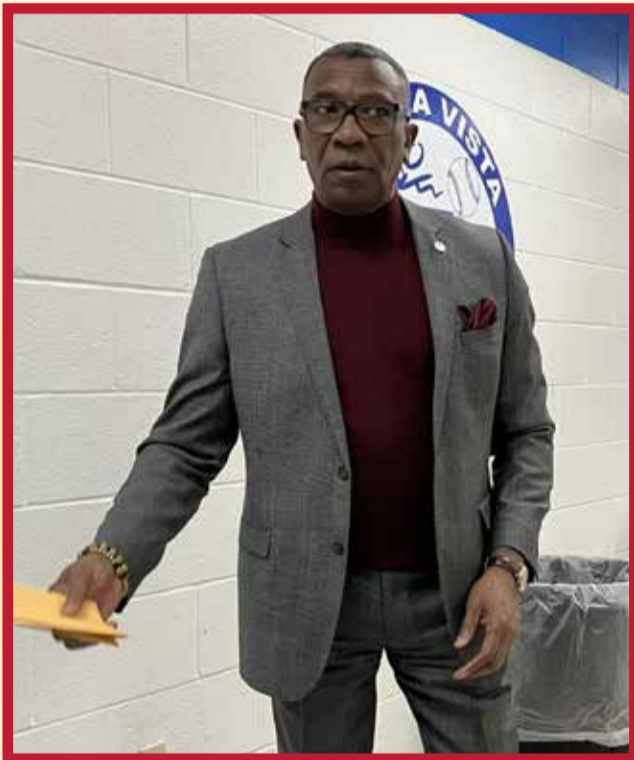
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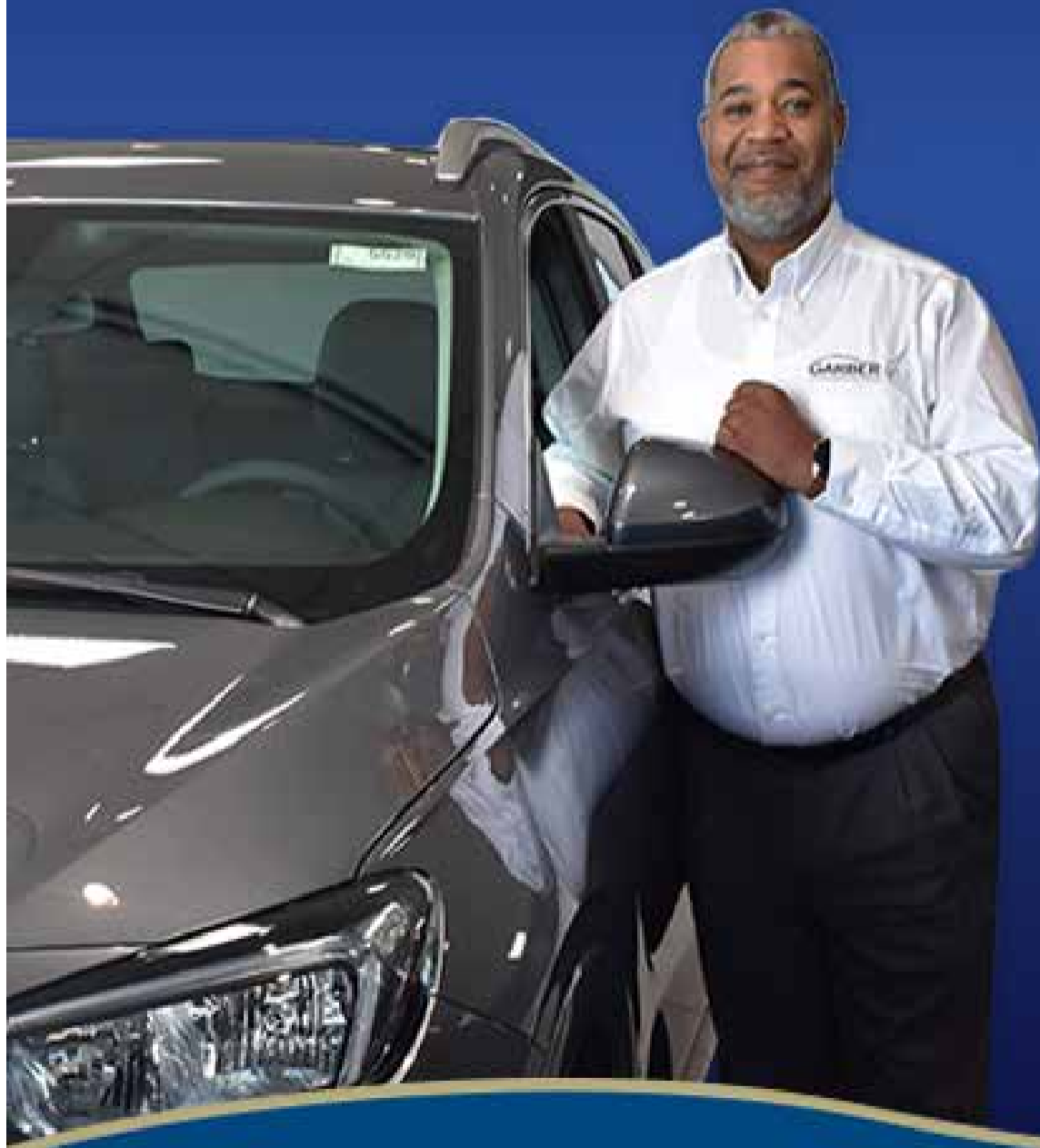
PICS OF THE WEEK

On February 28, 2025, State Representative Amos O'Neal and his office, along with Governor Gretchen Whitmer's staff, hosted a community engagement event at the Buena Vista Community Center in Saginaw. Running from 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., the event provided an opportunity for local residents to voice concerns, ask questions, and receive information about resources and programs available to them. Attendees had the chance to connect directly with state officials in an effort to address community needs and foster open communication between residents and their representatives.



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Brittany Saunders is ready to pay it forward. The Chicago native enrolled at SVSU with ambitions to pursue a teaching career. Brittany was encouraged and invigorated by other passionate educators who worked closely with her to ensure she would accomplish her goals. And she is. Even before she was set to graduate, Brittany could boast a résumé with a paid internship in a school district along with K-12 classroom experience. **Now she can't wait to begin a professional career, inspiring students with the same kind of one-on-one attention she received from her professors at SVSU.**



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