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SVSU to host 'Hidden Brain' creator Shankar Vedantam for April lecture

EDUCATION, PG 31



VCD to host Empowerment Expo offering expungement assistance, job opportunities and youth programming

COMMUNITY, PG 14



Saginaw ISD names new executive directors for finance, early childhood

EDUCATION, PG 30

CMU Medical Education Partners appoints Dr. Delicia Pruitt interim executive director



DR. DELICIA PRUITT

BY MB STAFF

SAGINAW, Mich. — CMU Medical Education Partners has appointed Dr. Delicia Pruitt as interim executive director, effective March 26, 2026.

In the role, Pruitt will

work with the organization's executive committee, leadership team, and clinical and community partners to advance its mission. Her priorities include developing and implementing an action plan focused on strengthening operational alignment, enhancing organizational struc-

ture and refining strategic priorities across the CMEP enterprise.

"I am grateful for the opportunity to lead CMEP and excited to partner with our teams to drive meaningful impact in education, care, and community health," Pruitt said.

Pruitt has been with CMU Health since 2016, serving as a family medicine physician. She will continue her clinical work with the Saginaw County Health Department while assuming her new leadership responsibilities.

She succeeds Dr. Samuel Shaheen, who led the organization since 2013. During his tenure, CMEP expanded its residency and fellowship programs and contributed to the development of Saginaw's Riverfront Medical Diamond.

"Dr. Pruitt brings a strong commitment to public health, clinical education, and community partnership," said Dr. Tina Thompson, interim dean of the Covenant Health-Care College of Medicine at Central Michigan University. "Her experience and perspective will be invaluable as we continue to advance CMEP's clinical training mission and improve the health of the communities we serve."

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in the
Park**
EVENT 2026 SERIES

SCHEDULE

Streetball Hockey Day
Saturday, March 21 • 11:30 AM – 2 PM
First Ward Community Center
1420 N. 12th St.
for Ages 5-18
Giveaway: Hockey Stick & Water Bottle

Welcome to Summer! Field Day
Saturday, May 16 • 1PM – 4 PM
Fordney Park
1300 Chestnut St.
for Ages 5-18
Giveaway: Jump Ropes & Hula Hoops

Swimming Day
Saturday, May 31 • 10:30 AM - 1 PM
Saginaw YMCA
1915 Fordney St.
for Ages 5-17
Giveaway: Life Jackets

Fishing Day
Sunday, June 07 • 11 AM - 1:30 PM
Old Town Docks
222 N. Niagara St.
for Ages 5-18
Giveaway: Fishing Poles

Home Garden & Planting Day
Saturday, June 13 • 11 AM - 1:30 PM
Houghton-Jones Community Center
1708 Johnson St.
for Ages 5-18
Giveaway: Garden Planter Kit

Tennis & Pickleball Day
Saturday, August 15 • 11 AM - 1:30 PM
Garber Courts
1760 Fordney St.
for Ages 5-18
Giveaway: Tennis Racquets

Skateboarding Day
Sunday, August 23 • 10:45 AM-1:30 PM
Celebration Skate Park
1830 Fordney St.
for Ages 7-18
Giveaway: Skateboards & Helmets

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playdatesinthepark@saginaw-mi.com

THIS DAY IN

MICHIGAN HISTORY

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On April 1, 1906, the Michigan State Telephone Company issued Michigan's first yellow-pages directory in Detroit. This milestone marked the introduction of classified business advertising in the state's telephone directory system, with the 1906 publication serving as a foundational moment for local business advertising.

APRIL 1906 DETROIT YELLOW PAGES MICHIGAN BELL TELEPHONE COMPANY DIRECTORY

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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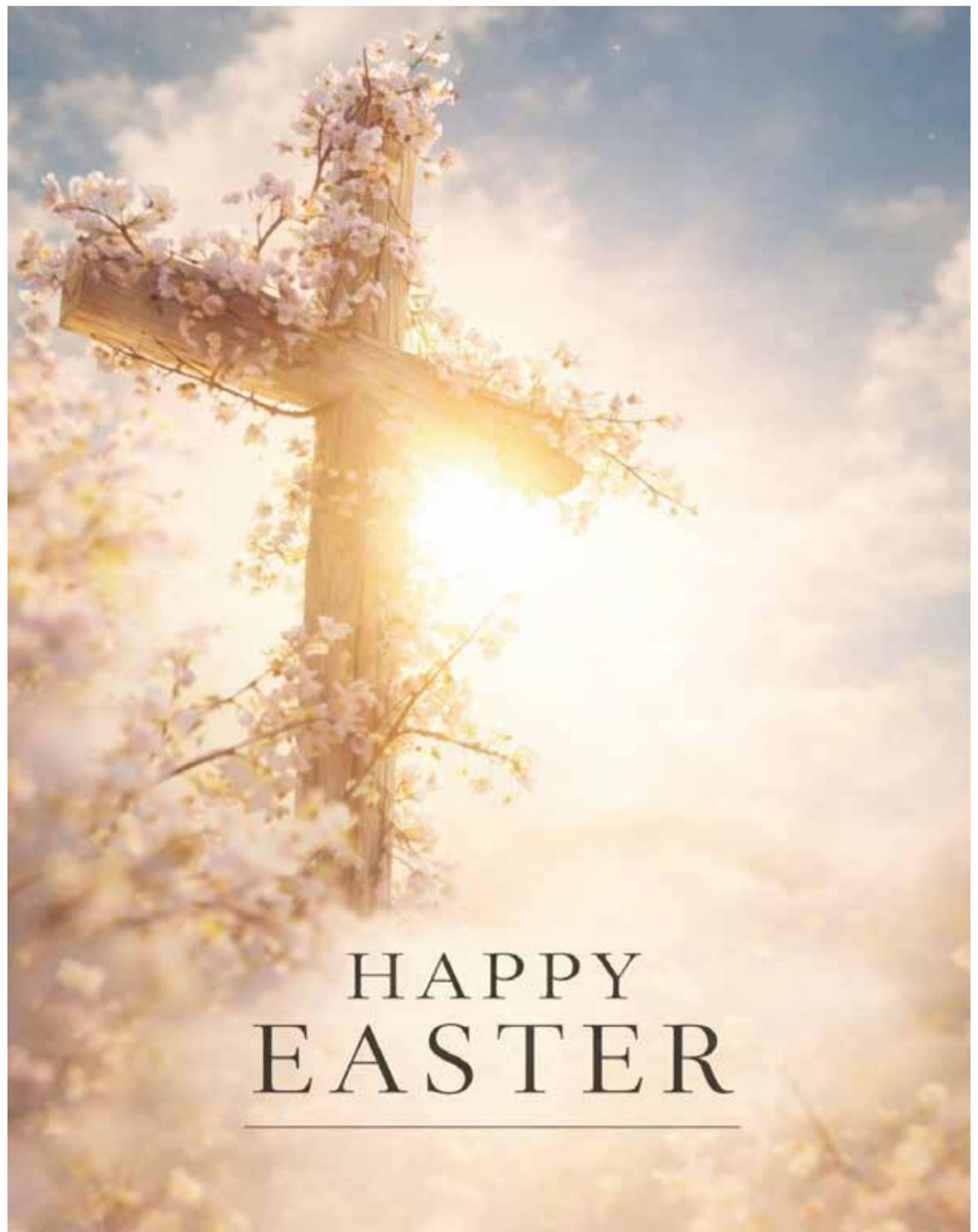
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MICHIGAN YOUTH BANNER

VOLUME 8 • NUMBER 7



Hemlock schools to host Next Gen STEM Festival with hands-on learning experiences



STUDENTS ENGAGE IN A HANDS-ON SCIENCE DEMONSTRATION DURING THE NEXT GEN STEM FESTIVAL IN PARTNERSHIP WITH MICHIGAN TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY'S MIND TREKKERS PROGRAM. (PHOTO COURTESY OF HEMLOCK PUBLIC SCHOOLS)

BY MB STAFF

HEMLOCK, Mich. — The Hemlock Public School District will host the Next Gen STEM Festival on Saturday, April 11, bringing interactive science and technology experiences to students and families across the region.

The free event, scheduled from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Hemlock High School, is being held in partnership with Michigan Technological University's Mind Trekkers program.

Organizers say the festival will feature more than 50 hands-

on activity stations designed to engage participants of all ages. Activities will range from interactive demonstrations to challenges aimed at helping attendees explore science, technology, engineering and mathematics concepts through direct experience.

"This event is about access and opportunity," said Laura Trombley, director of the Lockwood STEM Center. "When students can see it, touch it, and try it themselves, something shifts. They begin to believe that STEM is not just something you study. It is something you can become a

part of. That is powerful."

The Mind Trekkers program, known for its traveling STEM demonstrations, brings university-led programming into local communities, offering students exposure to real-world applications of science and technology.

Hemlock school leaders say the event reflects a broader effort to connect classroom learning with future career pathways and expand access to STEM opportunities in smaller communities.

"At Hemlock, we believe in creating opportunities that open doors," said Board of Education

President Matt Wesener. "Events like the Next Gen STEM Festival show our students what is possible. They connect learning to real futures, and they remind our community that investing in education is investing in everything that comes next."

District officials say the festival is intended to encourage curiosity and inspire students by allowing them to actively participate in scientific exploration rather than observe it passively.

The event is open to the public. More information is available at bit.ly/NGSHem26.

Michigan lawmakers advance 'Kids Over Clicks' package aimed at social media, AI safety for minors

BY MB STAFF

LANSING, Mich. — Michigan lawmakers are moving a new package of online-safety bills aimed at limiting addictive social media features, tightening privacy defaults for minors and restricting children's access to certain AI chatbot systems. The four-bill package, known as "Kids Over Clicks," was heard by the Senate Finance, Insurance and Consumer Protection Committee on March 4 and advanced out of committee March 24.

The legislation consists of Senate Bills 757 through 760. Senate Bill 757, called the Stop Addictive Feeds Exploitation, or SAFE, for Kids Act, would prohibit social media platforms from giving minors addictive, personal data-driven feeds unless a parent consents. Senate Bills 758 and 759, known as the Kids Code Act, would require stricter privacy and safety settings by default for minors and give parents more control over children's online accounts. Senate Bill 760, the Leading Ethical AI Development, or LEAD, for Kids Act, would make dangerous AI companion chatbots inaccessible to children, including chatbots capable of encouraging self-harm, illegal activity or sexually explicit interactions.

Supporters say the package responds to a digital landscape in which children are increasingly exposed to algorithm-driven content, aggressive data collection and new forms of AI interaction that were largely unregulated when many existing consumer-protection laws were written. Committee Chair Mary Cavanagh said the committee had made it a priority to adapt to changing technologies and address "the new threats that come with them."

Sen. Darrin Camilleri, who



GIRL USING LAPTOP (FILE PHOTO)

sponsors SB 757, said the package is designed to curb what he described as exploitative algorithmic practices. "For far too long, big tech has profited off of our children and exposed them to harmful content," Camilleri said after the March 4 hearing. After the bills advanced on March 24, he said the package addresses "Big Tech's exploitative and addictive algorithms that trap kids in an endless cycle of harmful content."

Sen. Kevin Hertel said the measures are aimed at giving parents more power over how children experience online platforms. "As a parent, I'm focused on giving my kids a childhood where they can play outside, run around with friends, and enjoy

just being a kid," Hertel said. "This legislation will equip parents with the power and tools they need to keep their kids safe online and protect their childhoods." Sen. Dayna Polehanki said her bill creates guardrails around AI companion chatbots because "protecting children is not optional."

The committee hearings also featured testimony from parents, youth advocates, lawyers and health professionals. Senate Democrats said witnesses argued that online products now pose risks ranging from compulsive use to privacy harms and dangerous chatbot interactions.

The package has not yet become law. It still must clear the full Senate, move through

the House and be signed by the governor. But its advancement marks one of Michigan's most significant recent attempts to regulate how minors encounter social media and AI-powered digital tools. If enacted, the bills would place Michigan among the states taking a more active role in shaping online protections for children.

For young people and parents alike, the debate reaches beyond screen time. The issue is whether platforms built to maximize attention should be allowed to use the same design tactics on children that they use on adults — and how much responsibility government should place on tech companies to design safer digital spaces in the first place.

"Senioritis"



BY CRAIG DOUGLAS

"Senioritis" can become a challenge for teachers and parents of a 12th grade student. We know it when we see it, body language changes. Procrastination creeps in.

Senioritis or "senior slide" is not unusual nor is it terribly alarming. A graduating senior sees the "end-of-the-line" ahead and decides to take it easy.

Senioritis can be minimized with a few simple strategies.

- **Focus on short-term goals** instead of the entire remainder of the year—weekly or daily targets feel more achievable.
- **Keep your purpose in mind**, as final grades can still affect scholarships, college placement, or job opportunities.
- **Aim for consistency** over intensity by maintaining steady effort rather than giving up or pushing too hard.
- **Stay involved in activities** or help others to remain engaged and motivated.
- **Build in small rewards** to keep things balanced and something to look forward to.
- **Finally, rely on routines** like completing assignments on time and staying organized.

Finishing strong is less about perfection and more about staying focused enough to end well. Angela Duckworth calls this trait, "Grit." We have heard about the Detroit Lions and their grit. Our 12th grade seniors need to reach down and show some grit, as well, this time of the school year.

Resource:

<https://angeladuckworth.com/grit-book/>



Michigan student free speech case ends in settlement after Gaza protest at school

BY MB STAFF

PLYMOUTH, Mich. — A free speech dispute involving a Michigan middle school student ended in a settlement this week, closing a case that drew state-wide attention to student protest rights, school discipline and the limits of authority in the classroom. The case involved Danielle Khalaf, a 14-year-old student in Plymouth-Canton Community Schools, who remained seated and silent during the Pledge of Allegiance in January 2025 to protest U.S. support for Israel's war in Gaza.

The settlement, announced March 26, requires the district to provide diversity, sensitivity and First Amendment training to leadership and staff. It also bars the district from disciplining Khalaf for the protest, requires school officials to remove anything in her file suggesting she acted improperly, and provides counseling if needed. A court filing also includes a \$10,000 payment by an insurance company on behalf of the teacher. The district did not admit liability.

According to the lawsuit, Khalaf declined to stand for the pledge over three school days in January 2025. She said a teacher reprimanded her and told her she was being disrespectful. The lawsuit further alleged the teacher told her, "Since you live in this country and enjoy its freedom, if you don't like it, you should go back to your country." Khalaf's family said the incident caused emotional harm, including nightmares and strained friendships.

The legal challenge was brought by the ACLU of Michigan and the Arab American Civil Rights League, which argued Khalaf's actions were protected by the First Amendment. In announcing the settlement, the



DANIELLE KHALAF

ACLU said the case centered on a student's constitutional right to engage in peaceful, silent protest at school.

"It was terrifying at times, scary to face a teacher and overwhelming with the attention that came with the publicity. But it taught me the importance of speaking up for what I believe is right," Khalaf said in a statement released through the ACLU and ACRL. Her father, Jacob Khalaf, said her actions "should inspire us all." Superintendent Monica Merritt said the district's mission

is to foster "a school environment that is safe, respectful and welcoming for all," and praised Danielle for "showing courage and speaking up about the incident."

The case resonated beyond one school district. Michigan is home to more than 300,000 residents of Middle Eastern or North African descent, the second-largest such population in the nation behind California, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. That demographic reality gave the dispute broader visibility, especially as schools across the coun-

try continue to navigate student speech tied to world events.

The settlement does not create new law, but it serves as a reminder that students do not lose their core speech rights at schoolhouse doors. For Michigan students, the case may stand as one of the clearest recent examples of how a quiet act of protest can trigger a larger debate about civil liberties, school climate and whose voices are protected when controversy enters the classroom.



Latino Banner

LIDER EN LA DIVERSIDAD

VAMOS ADELANTE

Latino Legislative Advocacy Day set for April 30 at Michigan Capitol



ATTENDEES OF THE 2025 LATINO LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY DAY POSE FOR A GROUP PHOTO. (PHOTO COURTESY OF MI PODER)

BY MB STAFF

LANSING, Mich. — Advocates and community members from across the state will gather April 30 at the Michigan State Capitol for Latino Legislative Advocacy Day, an annual event focused on civic engagement and policy priorities impacting Latino communities.

The event will take place from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Michigan State Capitol, 510 W. Ottawa St. in Lansing.

Organized in partnership with groups including the Michigan Hispanic/Latino Commission, MI Poder and Somos Votantes, the day is designed to bring residents directly into the legislative process by connecting them with elected officials and amplifying community voices on key issues. Activities will include opportuni-

ties for participants to engage with lawmakers, attend briefings and advocate for policy changes affecting Latino communities across Michigan. Organizers say the event is intended to highlight issues such as education, economic opportunity, health care access and broader community needs.

Latino Legislative Advocacy Day also serves as a statewide platform to encourage civic participation and strengthen representation at the Capitol, with attendees expected from multiple regions.

Registration is available online at bit.ly/LLAD2026.

Limited bus transportation will be available from Saginaw. Organizers say seats are limited and must be reserved in advance. To secure a seat, contact Angel Gomez, Latino Caucus Chair, at (989) 484-4740.

LATINO LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY DAY



APRIL 30 | 9 AM

LANSING

REGISTRATION:



[BIT.LY/LLAD2026](https://bit.ly/LLAD2026)



510 W Ottawa St,
Lansing, MI 48933







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4TH ANNUAL K?ONDA!

Cinco de Mayo CELEBRATION

TUESDAY, MAY 5TH 2026

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203 S. WASHINGTON AVE., SAGINAW, MICHIGAN

ENTERTAINMENT STARTING AT
5:30 PM UNTIL 9:00 PM

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VENDOR SETUP AT 3:00 PM

MORE INFORMATION COMING SOON!

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Michigan, Romulus file lawsuit to block proposed ICE detention center near Detroit airport



PROPOSED ICE DETENTION CENTER IN ROMULUS, MI.

BY MB STAFF

LANSING, Mich. — The State of Michigan and the city of Romulus have filed a federal lawsuit seeking to stop the development of a proposed U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement detention facility near Detroit Metropolitan Airport, escalating a growing conflict between state and federal officials over immigration enforcement plans.

The lawsuit, filed in late March, challenges efforts by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement to convert a warehouse at 7525 Cogswell St. into a detention center that could hold up to 500 individuals.

State officials argue the federal government moved forward with the project without sufficient coordination with Michi-

gan or local authorities and failed to adequately consider alternatives or assess impacts on the surrounding community.

The legal challenge follows weeks of opposition from local and state leaders. Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel had previously demanded that ICE halt plans for the facility and filed public records requests seeking details about the purchase, proposed use and potential impacts of the site.

In court filings, the state and city raise concerns about the suitability of the warehouse for detention use, including infrastructure limitations and its proximity to residential areas and schools. The complaint also cites environmental concerns tied to the site's location near wetlands and flood-prone areas.

Romulus officials have said they were not meaningfully consulted during the planning pro-

cess and warned that a detention center could place additional strain on local police, fire and public services.

The proposed facility is part of a broader national effort by federal officials to expand immigration detention capacity, including converting warehouses into detention centers near major transportation hubs. Federal officials have indicated that proximity to Detroit Metropolitan Airport would support deportation operations and improve logistical efficiency.

The dispute is now before a federal judge, though the filing of the lawsuit does not automatically halt the project. Any delay or injunction would require court intervention.

Legal experts say the case is likely to center on whether federal agencies followed required procedures in selecting and developing the site, rather than on

immigration policy itself.

The outcome could have broader implications for how much authority states and municipalities have to challenge federal immigration infrastructure projects, particularly as similar proposals emerge across the country.

Meanwhile, opposition to the Romulus facility continues at the local level. The Romulus City Council has passed a resolution opposing the project, and protests have drawn residents and advocates concerned about its potential impact on the community.

As the legal battle moves forward, the future of the proposed detention center remains uncertain, with both sides preparing for a potentially significant court decision that could shape immigration enforcement efforts in Michigan and beyond.



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Allegations against César Chávez spark national reckoning over civil rights icon's legacy



DOLORES HUERTA NEXT TO CESAR CHAVEZ AT THE 1973 UNITED FARM WORKERS UNION FOUNDING CONVENTION IN FRESNO, CA. (BOB FITCH PHOTOGRAPHY ARCHIVE, DEPARTMENT OF SPECIAL COLLECTIONS, STANFORD UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES)

BY MB STAFF

LANSING, Mich. — New sexual abuse allegations against late labor leader Cesar Chavez are prompting a nationwide reassessment of one of the most recognized figures in American civil rights history, raising complex questions about legacy, accountability and how movements are remembered.

The allegations surfaced in March 2026 following a yearslong investigation that included interviews with dozens of former associates and review of historical records. Multiple women have accused Chávez, who died in 1993, of sexual abuse and misconduct during his leadership of the United Farm Workers in the 1960s through the 1980s.

Among the most prominent claims are allegations that

Chávez abused adolescent girls connected to the farmworker movement, with reports indicating some victims were as young as 12 or 13 at the time the alleged abuse began. Additional accounts describe a broader pattern of inappropriate behavior toward women, including allegations from longtime colleague Dolores Huerta, who stated Chávez assaulted her during their time working together.

The revelations have led to swift and widespread fallout.

Across the country, organizations and government entities have begun distancing themselves from Chávez. The United Farm Workers and the César Chávez Foundation canceled or stepped back from annual César Chávez Day celebrations following the allegations.

Several states and cities have also moved to rename holidays, schools and public landmarks

that previously honored Chávez. California recently renamed César Chávez Day to “Farmworkers Day,” shifting focus toward the broader labor movement rather than a single individual. Other municipalities have begun reviewing or removing Chávez’s name from streets, buildings and public spaces.

The allegations have also sparked reflection within communities historically tied to the farmworker movement. Filipino American leaders, whose contributions to the 1965 Delano grape strike helped launch the modern labor movement, have called for broader recognition of collective leadership and previously overlooked figures.

For decades, Chávez was widely celebrated as a champion of farmworkers’ rights and Latino civil rights, helping organize laborers and advocate for better wages and working condi-

tions. His legacy earned national recognition, including a federal commemorative holiday and the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Now, that legacy is being reexamined.

Historians and advocates say the moment reflects a broader shift in how society evaluates influential figures, particularly those once elevated as singular leaders of major social movements. Some argue the focus is moving away from “hero-centered” narratives toward a more collective understanding of movements shaped by many voices.

At the same time, others caution against erasing the historical impact of the farmworker movement itself, emphasizing that Chávez’s role, while significant, was part of a larger network of organizers, activists and workers who drove change.

The allegations remain part of an ongoing public reckoning rather than a legal case, as Chávez is deceased and cannot respond to the claims. Some have also raised concerns about the difficulty of verifying decades-old allegations, while others emphasize that delayed reporting is common in cases involving powerful figures.

The unfolding debate highlights a tension playing out nationwide: how to reconcile major historical contributions with serious allegations of personal misconduct — and how communities choose to remember figures whose legacies are no longer viewed in a single light.

As institutions, educators and communities continue to respond, the conversation surrounding Chávez is evolving beyond the individual, toward a broader examination of power, accountability and the full history of the movements he helped shape.

COMMUNITY

Saginaw County CAC to celebrate 60 years with Diamond Anniversary event

BY MB STAFF

SAGINAW, Mich. — The Saginaw County Community Action Committee will mark six decades of service with its 60th Anniversary Diamond Celebration on May 16.

The event will be held at the Horizons Conference Center, where community leaders, residents, partners and supporters are expected to gather for an evening recognizing the organization's longstanding impact across Saginaw County.

Founded during the national War on Poverty through the Community Action movement, the organization has focused on addressing systemic barriers and expanding opportunities for families through programs centered on housing stability, education, workforce development and family support services.

"For sixty years, neighbors have come together through this organization to uplift one another, strengthen families, and create pathways to opportunity," said Hurley J. Coleman III, executive director of the organization. "As we celebrate our legacy,

we also renew our commitment to building a future where every family in Saginaw County can thrive."

The Diamond Anniversary banquet will include remarks, recognitions and storytelling re-

flecting the organization's history and its role in supporting thousands of households throughout the region.

Organizers say the event is intended to both celebrate past accomplishments and highlight

a continued commitment to community-driven solutions and long-term impact.

Additional details, including program highlights, ticket information and sponsorship opportunities, are expected to be announced in the coming weeks. Community members and partners are encouraged to save the date for the milestone celebration.

For more event information visit <https://bit.ly/60cacgala>.

The Saginaw County Community Action Committee is a community-based organization that provides services aimed at promoting economic stability, education, housing support and overall community well-being.

CELEBRATING
60
YEARS
OF
Service
CELEBRATION GALA

SAVE THE DATE
Saturday, May 16, 2026
Six O' Clock PM

Horizons Conference Center
6200 STATE STREET
SAGINAW, MI 48603

TICKETS AVAILABLE SOON!

SAGINAW COUNTY Community Action Center
CAC
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60
Community Action
60 Years

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DINNER BEGINS AT 6:00PM

SAGINAW CAC EVENT FLYER



SAGINAW COUNTY COMMUNITY ACTION COMMITTEE, 2824 PERKINS ST, SAGINAW, MI

COMMUNITY

VCD to host Empowerment Expo offering expungement assistance, job opportunities and youth programming



FILE PHOTO

BY MB STAFF

SAGINAW, Mich. — Victorious Community Development will bring together legal resources, employment opportunities and youth-focused programming during its Community Empowerment Expo on Wednesday, April 15, at Victorious Believers Ministries.

The free event will take place from 4 to 8 p.m. at 624 S. Outer Drive and is designed to connect residents with services that support career advancement, education and personal development. Organizers are encouraging attendees to bring resumes as part

of the evening's workforce-focused offerings.

Programming will begin at 4 p.m. with community stakeholder meetings including an expungement session led by Saginaw County Clerk Vanessa Guerra and criminal defense attorney Jeremy L. Tatum. A youth empowerment session featuring Dr. Marvin Cotton Jr. will also take place during the opening hour. At 5 p.m., the event transitions into a career and resources fair, offering direct access to local employers and organizations providing employment, education and support services. A second community empower-

ment session featuring Cotton is scheduled for 6:30 p.m.

The expungement focus reflects ongoing statewide efforts to expand access to record-clearing through Michigan's Clean Slate law. Since the launch of automatic expungement in April 2023, qualifying convictions have been cleared for more than 1 million residents, including approximately 400,000 individuals who became conviction-free. While the automated system continues to process eligible cases, many individuals must still navigate the application process through the courts.

Access to expungement has

been linked to improved economic outcomes. Research and court data show individuals who have their records set aside are more likely to secure employment and experience income growth within a year, underscoring the role of expungement in long-term stability.

Guerra, who has served as Saginaw County clerk since 2021, oversees vital records, elections and legal documentation. Tatum, a Saginaw-based criminal defense attorney and former public defender, focuses on criminal law and legal advocacy.

Cotton, who will lead both empowerment sessions, is the founder and CEO of Better Not Broken LLC, a Detroit-based organization centered on mentorship, advocacy and personal development, with an emphasis on justice reform and community impact. Cotton was wrongfully convicted and spent nearly two decades in prison before being exonerated, an experience that now informs his work supporting individuals navigating reentry, personal growth and second chances.

A range of regional partners will be represented at the event, including Michigan Works! Great Lakes Bay Region, Saginaw Police Department, UAW, Michigan Department of Corrections, City of Saginaw, Covenant HealthCare, Delta College, Solutions Behavioral Health and Saginaw Valley State University.

The expo aims to provide a centralized space where residents can access resources, build connections and explore opportunities — addressing barriers related to employment, education and the justice system while strengthening pathways for long-term success in the community.

WED
APRIL 15
2026
4 - 8 PM



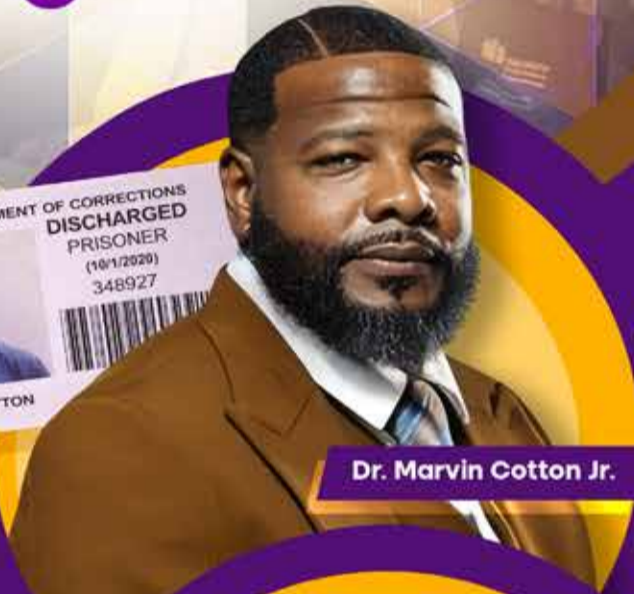
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COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT EXPO

EXPUNGEMENT SESSION

NEW JOBS

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS



Dr. Marvin Cotton Jr.

EXPO SCHEDULE

**4:00 PM COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS
THE EXPUNGEMENT PROCESS**
Featuring **Vanessa Guerra**, County Clerk, and **Jeremy L. Tatum**, Criminal Defense Attorney

YOUTH EMPOWERMENT SESSIONS
Featuring **Dr. Marvin Cotton Jr.**, Founder & CEO of Better Not Broken, LLC, Detroit, MI

5:00 PM CAREER AND RESOURCES FAIR
Connect with local organizations offering **Employment, Education, and Support Services.**

6:30 PM COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT SESSION
Featuring **Dr. Marvin Cotton Jr.**



Jeremy L. Tatum

Vanessa Guerra

EVENT SPONSORS & PARTNERS



LOCATION : Victorious Believers Ministries (624 S Outer Dr, Saginaw, MI)

COMMUNITY

Last day to apply for Saginaw SOUP business pitch competition

BY MB STAFF

SAGINAW, Mich. — Applications are open for the 2026 Saginaw SOUP Pitch Competition, a city-backed small business initiative that offers entrepreneurs business assistance, workshops and a chance to compete for cash prizes. Applications are due by 11:59 p.m. Wednesday, April 1.

The 2026 program officially begins April 20 and will include a series of workshops aimed at helping participants build their pitch decks, connect with resources and strengthen their businesses before the competition finale. Finalists are expected to be announced by Friday, June 12, and the final pitch event is scheduled for Thursday, June 25, at CMURC on the second floor of the SVRC Marketplace, 203 S. Washington Ave.

According to the City of Saginaw, five entrepreneurs will compete for a total of \$7,750 in prize money. The top award is \$3,500, followed by \$2,000 for second place, \$1,000 for third, \$750 for fourth and \$500 for fifth.

The program is a collaborative effort involving the Michigan Small Business Development Center, CMURC, Saginaw Future, the City of Saginaw and the Saginaw Economic Development Corporation. City officials say the 2026 program has expanded its offerings to provide more in-depth business assistance and broader support for participants.

To qualify, applicants must be part of an early-stage, for-profit company based in Saginaw County or with its principal location there. Eligible businesses also must have received less than \$1 million in private-sector

SAGINAW SOUP

Saginaw Soup is a collective of individuals representing organizations throughout Saginaw County who work with small businesses and entrepreneurs.

The Soup process ultimately leads to a pitch competition, which is a contest where entrepreneurs present their business concepts to a panel in the hope of winning a cash prize or investment capital.

What makes Saginaw Soup unique from other pitch competitions is the programming provided leading up to the competition.

Our committee provides in-depth personalized training opportunities to all participants in the hope that they will compete in the pitch competition but also that their business will be successful and grow right here in Saginaw.

We do not disqualify a business from the Saginaw Soup process but rather, utilize the programming to work with the individual and build relationships with the entrepreneur to ensure long-lasting success of their business.













SAGINAW SOUP FLYER

investment and generated less than \$2.5 million in revenue in the last 12 months. Participants must be at least 18 years old and agree to complete the program and follow its timeline.

“Saginaw SOUP represents a vital investment in our local entrepreneurs, providing them with the resources and support

they need to thrive,” Cassi Zimmerman, the city’s director of planning and economic development, said in a press release. “Every business that participates will gain financial support and become a part of a collaborative network that encourages creativity and resilience. Our expanded program reaffirms our commit-

ment to fostering innovation and economic growth within our community.”

More information, eligibility details and the application are available on the City of Saginaw’s Saginaw SOUP page at <https://www.saginaw-mi.com/616/Saginaw-SOUP>.

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COMMUNITY

AKA Eta Upsilon Omega to mark 64 years with annual Hats Off to Mom scholarship luncheon



(FROM LEFT) "MOTHER OF THE YEAR" ARSHEN BALDWIN; "ENTREPRENEUR OF THE YEAR" SHORTORAH CARTER; AND "SOROR OF THE YEAR" PATRICIA VAUGHN-BADY. (COURTESY PHOTOS)

BY MB STAFF

SAGINAW, Mich. — The Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated Eta Upsilon Omega Chapter will celebrate 64 years of service in Saginaw during its 42nd Annual Hats Off to Mom Scholarship Luncheon on May 2.

The event, themed "Sisterhood in Full Bloom: Celebrating Moms & Empowering Scholars," is scheduled for 11 a.m. at the Horizons Conference Center, 6200 State St. Organizers say the luncheon will highlight the chapter's longstanding commitment to scholarship, service and community impact.

"For sixty-four 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," said Lisa Reed, president of the 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 scholarships, mentoring and education, politi-

cal 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 Biennial Boule Conference in Las Vegas, Nevada in July, 2026."

The annual luncheon serves as the chapter's signature event and will include the awarding of college scholarships to Saginaw-area high school students, recognition of women entrepreneurs and featured entertainment.

This year's honorees include "Mother of the Year" Arshen Baldwin, assistant principal at Saginaw United High School; "Entrepreneur of the Year" Shortorah Carter; and "Soror of the Year" Patricia Vaughn-Bady.

Proceeds from sponsorships, ticket sales and souvenir book advertisements will support scholarships and community service initiatives led by the chapter.

"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 said. "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."

The chapter's charter members include 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.

Chapter officials report nearly \$265,000 has been contributed through scholarships and community service programs, reflecting decades of local impact.

Tickets are \$65 and may be purchased through chapter members or online. For more information, contact AKA-1908HYOmega@gmail.com.



COMMUNITY

Dr. Sam Shaheen to keynote 7th annual Heart of the City Awards Banquet

BY MB STAFF

SAGINAW, Mich. — The Michigan Banner will host its 7th Annual Heart of the City Awards Banquet on Thursday, June 4, at the Horizons Conference Center, honoring individuals and organizations whose service continues to strengthen communities across the Great Lakes Bay Region.

Doors will open at 5 p.m., with the program beginning at 6 p.m.

The annual event, one of the publication's signature community gatherings, recognizes leaders, advocates and organizations whose dedication to volunteerism and service has created lasting impact throughout the region. The banquet also marks The Michigan Banner's 24th anniversary, reflecting more than two decades of community-centered journalism and engagement.

"The Heart of the City Awards are one of the most meaningful events we host each year," said Jerome Buckley, founder of The Michigan Banner. "We are continually inspired by the extraordinary people who dedicate their time and talents to improving our community. This evening allows us to celebrate their work and encourage others to follow their example."

This year's keynote address will be delivered by Dr. Sam Shaheen, president and CEO of Shaheen Development, who will speak on the theme "Our Community & The Medical Diamond: Saginaw and the Great Lakes Bay Region." His remarks will focus on the role of collaboration among health care, education and community leadership in shaping the region's future.

Shaheen has played a central role in regional develop-



DR. SAM SHAHEEN, PRESIDENT AND CEO OF SHAHEEN DEVELOPMENT (COURTESY PHOTO)

ment through his leadership of Shaheen Development, a family-owned real estate company focused on creating spaces for living, working, leisure and health care. Projects such as the Saginaw Riverfront, Uptown Bay City and the H Residence in Midland

reflect the company's impact across the region.

He most recently served as president and CEO of Central Michigan University Medical Education Partners, where he oversaw graduate medical education and helped lead partnerships be-

tween CMU and Saginaw's major hospital systems, Covenant HealthCare and MyMichigan-Saginaw. He previously served as professor of surgery and chair of surgical disciplines for CMU's College of Medicine.

Shaheen remains active in numerous leadership roles, including service on the TempleArts Foundation Board, the Children's Foundation Board of Trustees and the Medical Diamond Steering Committee, among others. A Saginaw native, he is a graduate of Albion College and the University of Michigan Medical School and completed his surgical training at Northwestern University.

The evening will feature a plated dinner, open bar, live entertainment and recognition of honorees whose work continues to uplift the community.

Tickets are \$100 per person or \$640 for a reserved table and are available online at michiganbanner.org/hoc.

The Heart of the City Awards Banquet brings together community leaders, business professionals, nonprofits and residents to celebrate those whose contributions continue to shape and strengthen the Great Lakes Bay Region.



RENDERING OF THE MEDICAL DIAMOND PROJECT IN SAGINAW

COMMUNITY

The Pulse of the Pavement: Keeping Detroit Ballroom Alive in Flint



FLINT TOWN URBAN BALLROOMERS (COURTESY PHOTO)

BY LISA B. HALL

FLINT, Mich. — The elegance and spirit of the Greystone Ballroom—the legendary Jazz and Social Club that defined Detroit's culture from 1922 to 1972—did not die when the wrecking ball swung in 1980. While the physical bricks are gone, the "Greystone Style" refused to stay buried in the rubble. Today, that legacy is a living, breathing tradition fueled by a Black dance community determined to honor its history by passing the rhythm to the next generation.

That heartbeat is felt strongly 68 miles north of Detroit, in Flint, Michigan. At the center of this movement is Amber Gamble, a student-turned-teacher who has

spent 22 years immersed in the culture. For Amber, dancing is more than a hobby; it is a lifelong passion sparked by a mother

who ensured she had access to the arts, and sustained by Amber's own tireless work ethic and "epistemic curiosity."

From Observation to the "Big Time"

Amber's journey began in 2004, at a time when the weight of life's transitions began to press down on her spirit. Dancing became her sanctuary—a place to relax and find community. Under the stern but excellent instruction of Tina Wright and Robert Hinton at the Vets Club in Flint, she mastered the basics. But the pull of Detroit was magnetic.

Initially, Amber would drive down I-75 just to watch. She was too nervous to step onto the floor, hoping to blend into the shadows. Eventually, her quiet dedication got her noticed. She began taking classes in Detroit with the well-respected Ed Anderson, who saw her latent ability and took her under his wing. Anderson didn't just sharpen her mechanics; he taught her the "politics" and ethics of the dance community. He gave her the advice that would define her career: "You need to dance with dancers who are better than you. It's the only way you get better."

Soon, the Detroit community began to recognize "the girl from Flint" who braved icy Michigan winters just to be on the floor. Her breakthrough came at Club Ignite inside the MGM Grand. In a ser-

endipitous "VIP" moment, Amber spent an evening chatting with a kind woman, even offering to lend her a fan to cool down. It wasn't until the music faded that Amber realized her new friend was the legendary Martha Reeves of Martha Reeves and the Vandellas. It was a divine nod of approval; as the hosts told her later, "Be cool, celebrities come in here often."

A Vision for Flint

Eventually, the student became the master. After a period of soul-searching, Amber realized she had a unique gift for teaching. She drew on her upbringing

**Continues on pg 21,
Detroit Ballroom**

COMMUNITY

From Pg 20, Detroit Ballroom



FLINT TOWN URBAN BALLROOMERS (COURTESY PHOTO)

to provide the patience required to break down complex patterns into small, mastered increments.

However, 2020 brought a sudden silence. COVID-19 shuttered

venues and the dance community suffered. But ballroom dancers are resilient. As the "unmasked smiles" began to return to the dance floor, Amber knew it was

time to "make the call" to grow the Flint community.

She reached out to H. Demetrius Jones, Sr., a choreographer and performer whose reputation spans the country. As the Founder and CEO of World Class Dance Production (W.C.D.P.) and co-founder of the national Ballroom Xplosion movement, Jones treats the dance not just as recreation, but as a vital cultural legacy. Since 2010, he has worked to position Detroit as the "mecca" of urban dance—a vision Amber wanted to transplant into the heart of Flint.

The Flint Town Urban Ballroomers

Flint is home to the Flint Town Urban Ballroomers. Amber's vision was different from those who came before; she wanted a "Grand Evening"—a showcase where students could prove their knowledge through choreography and performance.

After months of intense rehearsals under Demetrius's innovative and encouraging leadership—where his mantra was always, "If you're not having fun, what's the point?"—the group debuted at the St. George Banquet

Hall. More than 200 guests from across the region flooded in to see the culmination of their work. It was an overwhelming success.

A Continuing Legacy

Today, the mission continues to ripple outward, drawing in dancers from across Mid-Michigan. Sheilda Braddock of Saginaw is a prime example of the community's regional draw. A "returning" ballroom dancer, Sheilda spent years prioritizing career and family before finding her way back to the floor in retirement. Now, she bridges the miles between Saginaw, Flint, and Detroit, dedicating her time to classes that sharpen her skills and expand her social circle.

With weekly classes led by Kermit Reeves, the Flint Town Urban Ballroomers are already preparing for their second showcase in October 2026. They remain a bridge between cities, frequently attending Detroit events like Ballroom Xplosion XVI: The Motor City Homecoming (May 14-16).

The mission of Ballroom Xplosion mirrors Amber's own: to spread awareness of all styles—from Latin Hustle to Graystone and Swing Out—reminding the world that dance is a family and a celebration that connects us all.

For the dancers in Flint, Saginaw, and Detroit, the floor is still the one place where you can "Dress to Kill," socialize with legends, and keep a century of rhythm alive.

Connect with the Movement

Follow: [CLICK HERE](#) to join the community and see class schedules on the Flint Town Urban Ballroomers Facebook Page.

Contact: For more information, contact Amber Gamble at 810-422-4048.

National Events: Visit Ballroom Xplosion to learn about the upcoming Motor City Homecoming.



FLINT TOWN URBAN BALLROOMERS (COURTESY PHOTO)

HEALTHFORMATION 4 U

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POLITICS

Midland rally draws large crowd, reveals evolving patterns in civic engagement

BY MB STAFF

MIDLAND, Mich. — About 1,800 people gathered March 28 at the Central Park Bandshell for Midland's third "No Kings" rally, part of a coordinated national day of protest activity that brought similar demonstrations to communities across Michigan and the country.

The event, organized by the Midland County Democratic Party and Women of Michigan Action Network, began at noon at 410 E. Nelson St. and included a march to South Saginaw Road. Speakers included Lt. Gov. Garlin Gilchrist II, Terry Pruitt, state Senate candidate Chedrick Greene, Audra Wilson and Jennifer Austin.

While turnout was strong, the crowd reflected a pattern increasingly seen in similar demonstrations: participants appeared to be largely middle-aged and older adults, with limited visible racial diversity.

That composition carries particular significance in Midland County, a community with longstanding Republican voting patterns. Over the past two decades, Republican presidential candidates have consistently earned roughly mid-50% to low-60% of the vote locally, with little overall change in recent election cycles. While Democratic support increased modestly after 2016, it has largely leveled off, underscoring the county's political stability.

In that context, the rally does not necessarily signal a shift in partisan alignment, but rather a change in how some residents are choosing to engage publicly.

The demographic makeup of



CROWD AT THE "NO KINGS" RALLY IN MIDLAND, MI ON MARCH 28.

the crowd also reflects broader differences in civic participation. Large-scale protests in the United States have historically drawn more diverse participation when tied to specific, urgent issues — particularly those directly affecting communities, such as civil rights or policing. Demonstrations following the killing of George Floyd, for example, mobilized widespread, cross-community turnout.

By contrast, broader political demonstrations centered on general national concerns have not always generated the same level of engagement across all groups. In many cases, Black and Hispanic residents engage through other avenues, including faith-based organizing, grassroots networks and issue-specific advocacy efforts.

Economic realities, access

and representation can also influence participation. Work schedules, transportation and whether individuals feel directly connected to an event's message all play a role in who shows up — particularly in smaller, less diverse communities.

That perspective is also reflected in public reaction online. One social media user described the contrast by noting that while some demonstrators are protesting the direction of an entire administration, others have long navigated frustration with government systems and may not respond to broader political calls in the same way — viewing such moments less as a trigger for protest and more as a continuation of longstanding experiences.

At the same time, the rally reflects a notable shift in civic behavior. Demonstrations in subur-

ban and mid-sized communities are increasingly drawing participants who are older and more established — individuals who have traditionally expressed political views through voting rather than public protest.

In Midland, the size and visibility of the March 28 gathering underscore that evolution. Even in a community with stable voting patterns, public demonstrations are becoming a more common form of civic expression.

The rally highlights two parallel trends shaping civic engagement: participation is expanding in terms of age and geography, while differences remain in how various communities engage — raising ongoing questions not just about how many people show up, but who is represented and how their voices are heard.

POLITICS

Greene, Tunney clash on budgets, gun laws and affordability in SVSU forum

BY MB STAFF

UNIVERSITY CENTER, Mich. — The two leading candidates in Michigan's 35th State Senate special election offered sharply different visions on taxes, public spending, gun laws and economic policy during a March 24 forum at Saginaw Valley State University.

Democrat Chedrick Greene and Republican Jason Tunney met at the Malcolm Field Theatre for Performing Arts in what marked their first public forum together ahead of the May 5 special election. The seat has been vacant since January 2025, when former Sen. Kristen McDonald Rivet left for Congress.

The race, which includes Libertarian candidate Ali Sledz, is being closely watched as a test of political momentum in the Great Lakes Bay Region and could influence control of the Michigan Senate.

Sharp divide on budgets and taxes

Budget priorities and economic policy were central to the discussion, with both candidates outlining contrasting approaches to affordability and state spending.

Greene, a Saginaw firefighter and Marine veteran, emphasized the role of the state budget in supporting working families, education and community programs. He said the Legislature's most immediate impact would come through the budgeting process, including both the state and school aid budgets.

Tunney, a Saginaw attorney and businessman, focused on reducing taxes and limiting government spending, arguing that Michigan must become



REPUBLICAN JASON TUNNEY (LEFT) AND DEMOCRAT CHEDRICK GREENE (RIGHT) ON STAGE AT THE CANDIDATE FORUM FOR MICHIGAN'S 35TH SENATE DISTRICT AT SAGINAW VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY.

more business-friendly to attract investment and jobs. He opposed raising minimum wages, warning that doing so would increase costs for businesses and consumers.

The candidates also differed on how to address affordability concerns. Greene supported policies aimed at increasing wages and boosting consumer spending power, while Tunney advocated for reducing regulatory burdens and taxes to stimulate economic growth.

Gun laws highlight philosophical differences

Gun policy emerged as another key point of contrast.

Greene voiced support for what he described as "common sense" gun measures, including safe storage requirements and red flag laws that allow courts to temporarily remove firearms from individuals deemed a threat.

Tunney opposed those measures, arguing they infringe on constitutional rights and raise concerns about privacy and government overreach.

The exchange underscored broader ideological differences between the candidates on the role of government in regulating individual behavior and public safety.

Broader policy differences on education, economy

Education and workforce development also surfaced as major themes.

Tunney called for policies that prioritize business growth and reduce barriers to employment, including easing licensing requirements and limiting government intervention.

Greene emphasized expanding skilled trades opportunities and investing in education systems to better prepare students for careers, particularly for those

not pursuing traditional college pathways.

The candidates also addressed how to handle a projected state budget shortfall. Greene said using Michigan's rainy-day fund could be appropriate to stabilize finances, while Tunney argued for spending cuts and prioritizing core services such as education, infrastructure and public safety.

Election stakes and next steps

The May 5 election will determine who fills the remainder of the term through 2026, with the winner expected to run again in the November general election for a full term.

With control of the state Senate narrowly divided, the outcome could have broader implications for legislative priorities, including budget negotiations, tax policy and public safety measures.

HEALTH

Health policy bills advance in Lansing as Michigan affordability debate reaches hospitals, patients

BY MB STAFF

LANSING, Mich. — A cluster of health policy bills moving through the Michigan Legislature is putting new focus on one of the state's most persistent concerns: the cost of care, the burden of medical debt and how far lawmakers should go in reshaping the rules around hospitals, billing and access. In recent weeks, lawmakers advanced bills on medical debt collection, hospital financial assistance, organ donation incentives and workforce shortages, signaling that healthcare affordability remains a central issue in the 2026 legislative session.

The most significant recent movement came March 11, when the Michigan Senate approved Senate Bills 449, 450 and 451, a package aimed at hospital financial assistance and medical debt reporting, along with Senate Bills 701 and 702, a separate bipartisan package focused on debt collection practices. The Michigan Health & Hospital Association reported the Senate action in its March 16 update after earlier committee movement the week of March 2.

The hospital financial assistance package centers on Senate Bill 449, which would create a Hospital Financial Assistance Act requiring hospitals to develop and implement financial assistance programs. A Senate Fiscal Agency summary says the bill would require hospitals to have those programs in place by Jan. 1, 2027. Related bills in the package would address implementation and credit reporting tied to medical debt.

The companion medical debt



FILE PHOTO

protection package, Senate Bills 701 and 702, would go further into collection practices. Legislative summaries and physician advocacy materials say the bills would cap annual interest or late fees on medical debt at 3%, restrict the sale of medical debt, prohibit some aggressive collection tools such as wage garnishment and foreclosure for medical debt, and require refunds when a patient paid more than was owed after financial assistance is applied. The bills cleared the Senate unanimously and now await House consideration.

The debt measures are moving at a time when affordability has become a bipartisan talking point, though not always for the same reasons. Supporters have framed the bills as patient protections for households hit by unexpected bills and collection pressure. Hospital groups have said they remain engaged as the bills move, emphasizing both afford-

ability concerns and the financial pressures hospitals themselves face.

Other healthcare bills have advanced alongside that debate. On March 4, the Senate Health Policy Committee unanimously advanced Senate Bill 301, which would create a tax credit for employers who provide paid leave to workers serving as living organ donors. A Senate bill analysis says the credit would cover 100% of wages paid during eligible leave, up to 12 weeks.

Lawmakers are also weighing workforce-focused proposals. House Bill 4832, heard in the House Health Policy Committee on March 4, would establish a state licensure process for anesthesiologist assistants in Michigan. Supporters say the measure is intended to expand access to anesthesia services while maintaining physician supervision and could help address healthcare workforce shortages, espe-

cially as hospitals continue to report staffing strain.

Taken together, the bills show how the affordability conversation in Lansing has expanded beyond insurance premiums and prescription prices to include what happens after a patient receives care: whether bills are understandable, whether financial help is consistently available and how debt is collected. That broader policy push also extends to prescription drug affordability efforts already circulating in the Legislature, including legislation tied to a proposed Prescription Drug Affordability Board.

The outcome of the current packages could have a direct effect on hospitals, patients and healthcare workers across Michigan. For patients, the proposals could mean more formal financial assistance standards and fewer severe collection practices. For hospitals and providers, they could mean new compliance duties, new billing requirements and continued debate over how to balance patient protections with the economics of running healthcare systems.

For now, much of the action has shifted to the House, where lawmakers will decide how far to carry the Senate-passed medical debt bills and whether workforce and access measures such as House Bill 4832 gain enough support to move toward a floor vote. What is already clear is that healthcare affordability is no longer being discussed only in terms of cost at the point of service, but also in terms of what happens to Michigan families after the bill arrives.

HEALTH

Michigan DNR warns of seasonal fish kills as temperatures rise, urges public awareness



SEASONAL FISH KILLS (PHOTO COURTESY OF MNDNR)

BY MB STAFF

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources is warning residents across the state, including the Great Lakes Bay Region, to expect seasonal fish kills as water temperatures rise and environmental conditions shift heading into late spring.

Officials say the phenomenon, while often alarming to the public, is typically a natural occurrence linked to changing water quality, oxygen levels and seasonal transitions in lakes, rivers and ponds.

Fish kills most commonly occur when warmer temperatures reduce dissolved oxygen in the water, creating stressful or fatal conditions for fish. The issue can be compounded by

runoff, decaying vegetation and algae growth, all of which can further deplete oxygen levels.

In some cases, fish kills are also tied to winter conditions. Fish that were already weakened by low oxygen levels under ice during colder months may not survive as temperatures rise, leading to visible die-offs in the spring.

The DNR says species such as bass, bluegill and pike are often among those affected, though the scale and impact can vary widely depending on local conditions.

In the Great Lakes Bay Region — including Saginaw, Bay and Midland counties — residents may notice fish kills in smaller inland lakes, drainage systems and slow-moving waterways, particularly following rapid temperature changes or heavy rainfall.

Runoff from urban and agricultural areas can carry nutrients into waterways, fueling algae blooms that further reduce oxygen levels. Officials say this is one reason the region's mix of rivers, wetlands and agricultural land can make certain areas more susceptible during seasonal transitions.

While most fish kills are considered natural and not a threat to human health, the DNR encourages residents to report large or unusual die-offs, especially those involving a single species or occurring outside typical seasonal patterns.

Such reports can help officials determine whether a fish kill is environmentally driven or potentially linked to pollution or contamination.

Fish kills can also have broad-

er ecological effects, temporarily disrupting local food chains and aquatic ecosystems. However, in many cases, fish populations recover naturally over time as environmental conditions stabilize.

The DNR is also urging the public to take preventative steps where possible, including reducing fertilizer use, properly disposing of yard waste and minimizing runoff into storm drains and waterways.

Officials say increased public awareness is key, particularly in regions like the Great Lakes Bay area where waterways play a central role in recreation, tourism and environmental health.

Residents can report fish kills or learn more through the Michigan Department of Natural Resources website.

HEALTH

Michigan releases new sickle cell strategic plan focused on expanding care, reducing barriers

BY MB STAFF

LANSING, Mich. — The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services has released a new five-year strategic plan aimed at improving care and outcomes for individuals living with sickle cell disease, with a stronger focus on reducing barriers for adults.

The 2026–2030 Sickle Cell Disease Strategic Plan builds on the state's first plan launched in 2015 and is guided by community input. Officials said it emphasizes expanding access to care, strengthening public health data and increasing awareness.

"MDHHS is committed to

improving care, support, education and health outcomes for individuals living with sickle cell disease," said Elizabeth Hertel, MDHHS director. "This strategic plan reflects the voices of the sickle cell community and outlines actions to expand access to care, strengthen data and continue advancing support for those impacted across Michigan."

Sickle cell disease is an inherited blood disorder that can block blood flow and lead to complications such as pain crises, infections, strokes and organ damage. About 4,000 people in Michigan are living with the condition.

The plan outlines six key goals, including improving ac-

cess to high-quality treatment and support services, increasing education and awareness, strengthening standards of care, improving use of disease-modifying therapies and expanding data-driven decision-making.


"For years, addressing the needs of adults with SCD has been a major challenge," said Sarah Lyon-Callo, state epidemiologist and senior deputy director of MDHHS' Public Health Administration. "Through our partnership in expanding Children's Special Health Care Services age eligibility for people with sickle cell disease across their lifespan, innovative efforts are underway to enhance the ca-

capacity of the health care system to better serve this community."

The plan will be led by MDHHS' Lifecourse Epidemiology and Genomics Division, with ongoing collaboration from partners and a strategy team that will meet regularly to track progress.

"Data is vital to closing gaps, improving outcomes and supporting individuals with sickle cell disease throughout their lives," said Dr. Sarah Reeves, principal investigator of the Michigan Sickle Cell Data Collection Program.

More information is available at Michigan.gov/SickleCell.



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EDUCATION

Frankenmuth Credit Union awards more than \$20K in educator grants across mid-Michigan



FRANKENMUTH CREDIT UNION CEO VICKIE SCHMITZER, JOINED BY THIS YEAR'S AWARD RECIPIENTS DURING THE EDUCATOR GRANT RECEPTION AT UPTOWN NORTH MAIN IN FRANKENMUTH. (PHOTO COURTESY OF FRANKENMUTH CREDIT UNION)

BY MB STAFF

FRANKENMUTH, Mich. — Frankenmuth Credit Union awarded more than \$20,000 to local educators during its annual Mini Educator Grant Reception, recognizing efforts to enhance classroom learning across the region.

The reception, held March 19, celebrated 47 educators from 41 schools who collectively received \$20,367.17 through the program. The Mini Educator Grant initiative provides funding of up to \$500 annually to help offset out-of-pocket costs for class-

room materials and educational projects.

This year's funded initiatives covered a wide range of hands-on and experiential learning opportunities. Projects included supplies for student-led service learning efforts such as assembling blessing bags for community distribution, raised garden beds for science education, and musical instruments and repair materials for school music programs. Other grants supported roller skating clinics in physical education classes, math manipulatives, sensory room enhancements, robotics and drone kits for STEM learning, playground

equipment and expanded classroom library collections focused on topics including financial literacy.

"Educators are instrumental in shaping the future of our communities. Through our Mini Educator Grant program, we proudly support their creativity, dedication, and unwavering commitment to delivering impactful learning experiences for students. By investing in education, we strengthen our communities and demonstrate that we truly are better together," said Vickie Schmitzer, CEO of Frankenmuth Credit Union.

Frankenkmath Credit Union

was founded in 1964 by employees of the Carling Brewery and Star of the West Milling Company to serve workers in the Frankenmuth area. The organization has since expanded to serve more than 77,000 members across Michigan, with branch locations in Bay, Genesee, Huron, Midland, Ogemaw, Saginaw, Sanilac, Shiawassee and Tuscola counties.

In addition to traditional financial services, the credit union offers insurance, trust and investment solutions for both individuals and businesses.

EDUCATION

Delta College names 3 finalists in national search for next president



(FROM LEFT) MICHELLE ALLMENDINGER, PH.D., ADAM CLOUTIER, ED.D., REVA CURRY, PH.D. (COURTESY OF DELTA COLLEGE)

BY MB STAFF

UNIVERSITY CENTER, Mich. — Delta College has named three finalists in its national search for the school's next president, advancing Dr. Michelle Allmendinger, Dr. Adam Cloutier and Dr. Reva Curry to the final round of a months-long process to select the institution's sixth president.

The finalists will visit Delta the week of April 6-10 for a full day of interviews and meetings with campus stakeholders. Each candidate will also take part in a public forum on the main campus at 1961 Delta Road in University Center, where faculty, staff, students and community members will have an opportunity to hear a presentation and ask questions. Attendees will be asked to complete feedback forms for the Board of Trustees to consider before making its final decision.

According to Delta's published search timeline, the open forums will be held in the Lecture Theater, Room G160, from 10:45 a.m. to noon on each finalist visit day. The candidates also

will meet separately with faculty and staff groups later in the afternoon. Delta's timeline lists July 1 as the tentative start date for the next president.

The search began after former President Dr. Michael Gavin announced his resignation. Interim President Andrea Ursuy has led the college since January. The Board of Trustees launched the search in November 2025, hired the Association of Community College Trustees to assist, and received 63 applications by the Feb. 9 target deadline. Fourteen applicants were screened out for not meeting minimum qualifications before the field was narrowed to semifinalists and then finalists.

Delta said it is seeking a visionary, collaborative and inclusive leader focused on student success, community partnerships, innovation and fiscal stability. The presidential profile also calls for a candidate with higher education leadership experience, community college experience and classroom teaching experience.

Allmendinger is vice presi-

dent of student affairs at Southeastern Community College in Iowa. Delta said she has more than 20 years of higher education experience and has led admissions, advising, financial aid, accessibility services, TRIO and other student support areas. Her background also includes teaching, academic affairs work and efforts focused on retention, completion and support for first-generation and adult students. She holds a doctorate in higher education administration from Michigan State University.

Cloutier is vice president of academics at Glen Oaks Community College in Michigan and a 2002 Delta College graduate. Delta said he has more than 19 years of higher education leadership experience, including roles as faculty member, director, dean and senior administrator. His work has included academic leadership, workforce development, accreditation, transfer partnerships, grant-funded initiatives and dual enrollment expansion. He holds a doctorate in community college leadership from Ferris State University.

Curry is Delta's vice president of instruction and learning services and has served in that role for the past 12 years. She oversees five academic divisions, including workforce strategies and academic support services. Delta said student enrollment has exceeded projections by 6% to 11% in fall and winter semesters over the past three years, and spring 2026 enrollment is currently running 33% above projections. Curry, whose academic background is in health sciences, previously served as a full-time faculty member for more than 15 years and helped establish Delta's Open Educational Resources Committee, which the college said has saved students more than \$3.5 million in textbook costs over the past decade.

The Board of Trustees is expected to choose the next president at a special meeting scheduled for April 14, ahead of the board's regular meeting that evening. More information about the search, candidate biographies and public forums is available through Delta College's presidential search page.

EDUCATION

Saginaw ISD names new executive directors for finance, early childhood

BY MB STAFF

SAGINAW, Mich. — The Saginaw Intermediate School District has appointed two new executive leaders to oversee key areas of operations and instruction, naming Felipe Monasi as executive director of finance and Melissa Johnson as executive director of early childhood.

Monasi assumed his role March 23, while Johnson is set to begin April 6. Both selections followed comprehensive search processes that included multiple rounds of interviews and stakeholder engagement.

Superintendent Dr. Jeffrey Collier said Monasi's selection reflects the district's focus on fiscal leadership and long-term planning.

"Felipe Monasi stood out in a highly competitive search because of his ability to connect financial strategy to organizational impact," Collier said. "He understands that strong financial systems are the foundation for delivering high-quality services to our students, families, and local districts. His commitment to transparency, accountability, and data-informed decision-making, coupled with his extensive national work experience, will help ensure we continue to lead forward with both purpose and responsibility."

Monasi brings experience across corporate, nonprofit and public-sector finance, most recently serving as vice president of finance for a private holding company with an international presence. He will oversee budgeting, forecasting, compliance and financial reporting, while supporting strategic decision-making across the district.

Saginaw ISD manages a budget exceeding \$120 million an-



FELIPE MONASI (LEFT) AND MELISSA JOHNSON (RIGHT) HAVE BEEN APPOINTED TO LEADERSHIP ROLES AT SAGINAW INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL DISTRICT, SERVING AS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF EARLY CHILDHOOD. (PHOTOS COURTESY OF SAGINAW ISD)

nually and provides financial services to school districts and academies across the county, including payroll, accounting support and grant oversight.

"I am thrilled to step into this opportunity to serve as Saginaw ISD's next Executive Director of Finance," Monasi said. "I feel honored to bring my experience in financial leadership to support the students and families of Saginaw County. Through strong partnerships and a commitment to fiscal stewardship, I look forward to helping ensure the district continues to operate with transparency, accountability, and long-term sustainability."

Johnson's appointment comes as the district continues to expand early childhood services across the region, serving more than 2,000 preschool students through programs such as Early Head Start, Head Start and the Great Start Readiness Program.

Collier said Johnson's leadership will help strengthen early learning systems and support long-term student success.

"Melissa Johnson stood out in a highly competitive national search not only because of her credentials, but because of her

clear commitment to servant leadership," Collier said. "She understands that strong systems create strong outcomes for children. I look forward to partnering with her as we continue building sustainable systems that support our educators, empower families, and ensure every preschool student in Saginaw County has access to an exceptional early learning experience."

Deputy Superintendent Dr. Erin Senkowski said Johnson's background in instruction and program development will be key as the district continues to grow its early childhood offerings.

"Melissa brings an exceptional blend of classroom experience, educator coaching, family engagement, and STEM-focused research to Saginaw ISD," Senkowski said. "Her background in strengthening instructional practice, designing professional learning systems, and supporting comprehensive early childhood programming will be invaluable."

Johnson most recently served as director of City Seats at Agenda for Children in New Orleans, where she worked to expand access to high-quality

early learning and support instructional systems. She is also a doctoral candidate at Louisiana State University, focusing her research on STEM engagement in early childhood settings.

"I'm truly excited to join the Saginaw ISD team," Johnson said. "I look forward to bringing my experience and passion for early childhood education to support children, educators, and families as they grow and thrive together. Early Childhood Education is deeply relational and foundational to lifelong learning, and I am honored to serve alongside a team that is so clearly committed to that mission."

As executive director of early childhood, Johnson will oversee one of the district's largest departments, guiding instructional strategy, program implementation and partnerships aimed at expanding access to preschool education.

District officials said both appointments reflect Saginaw ISD's continued effort to strengthen leadership and deliver high-quality educational services across the Great Lakes Bay Region.

SVSU to host 'Hidden Brain' creator Shankar Vedantam for April lecture



SHANKAR VEDANTAM, CREATOR, EXECUTIVE EDITOR AND HOST OF HIDDEN BRAIN.

BY MB STAFF

SAGINAW, Mich. — Saginaw Valley State University will welcome Shankar Vedantam, creator and host of the NPR program “Hidden Brain,” as part of the university’s 2025–26 Lecture Season.

Vedantam will present “The Challenge of Change” at 6 p.m. Wednesday, April 8, in SVSU’s Rhea Miller Recital Hall. The event is free and open to the public, though tickets are required.

During the lecture, Vedantam

will examine why people often struggle to change behaviors, habits and systems even when change is necessary for success. Drawing on research in neuroscience and psychology, the presentation will explore how unconscious thinking influences decision-making and how individuals and organizations can overcome resistance to change.

The talk will also address common questions surrounding human behavior, including why individuals hesitate to leave their comfort zones, why organizations find it difficult to adapt

to new opportunities and why leaders frequently repeat mistakes when implementing new initiatives.

Vedantam’s work focuses on human behavior. He is the creator, host and executive editor of “Hidden Brain,” a podcast launched in 2015 that has become one of the most downloaded programs of its kind globally. The “Hidden Brain” radio show debuted in 2017 and is carried on more than 400 public radio stations across the United States.

He is also the author of two nonfiction books, “The Hidden

Brain: How Our Unconscious Minds Elect Presidents, Control Markets, Wage Wars, and Save Our Lives” and “Useful Delusions: The Power and Paradox of the Self-Deceiving Brain.”

The lecture is supported by the Field/Spicer Endowment in Science and Engineering and the Dow Visiting Scholars and Artists Program.

More information about the University Lecture Season is available at svsu.edu/publiclectures.



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**For those that qualify through Tri-Share*

Saginaw Promise Changing Funding Options to Increase support to Scholars!



HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES (COURTESY PHOTO)

Saginaw Promise, an economic initiative working to impact the future of Saginaw, its economy, and the lives of its students through information and scholarships for post-secondary education. Since 2012, the Saginaw Promise has awarded \$1,515,062 in scholarships to 804 scholars! Saginaw Promise Scholarship Applicants number 232 for the 2026/2027 academic year!

In 2026, the Saginaw Promise is increasing support to scholars as it can now fund “costs of attendance”, in addition to tuition and mandatory fees, the Saginaw Promise scholarship can now fund housing, books, sup-

plies, food, transportation etc. Funding “costs of attendance” will increase support and assistance to scholars as they pursue their educational goals and increase persistence and attainment rates.

Who is eligible for the Saginaw Promise scholarship? The Saginaw Promise Scholarship is a benefit and an incentive for children of families who live in and graduate from a high school in the Saginaw Promise Zone (comprised of the cities of Saginaw, Zilwaukee, Kochville and that area of Buena Vista designated to the Saginaw Public School District). The organization’s goal is to impact the future of Saginaw by provid-

ing information and scholarships for postsecondary education to assist scholars to earn a program certificate or degree from a technical/trade school, community college, or university. The benefit of a postsecondary education will help retain and grow Saginaw’s population, which will support current businesses and attract new businesses with an educated workforce.

For Saginaw Promise Information or Questions: Visit www.saginawpromise.org or email dsanchez@saginawpromise.org or telephone (989) 607-3428.

SPONSORED CONTENT

Support the Saginaw Promise 2026 Special events:

“Swinging for the Promise” Golf Event

Saginaw Country Club
Thursday, August 13, 2026
10 AM

“Power of a Promise” Luncheon

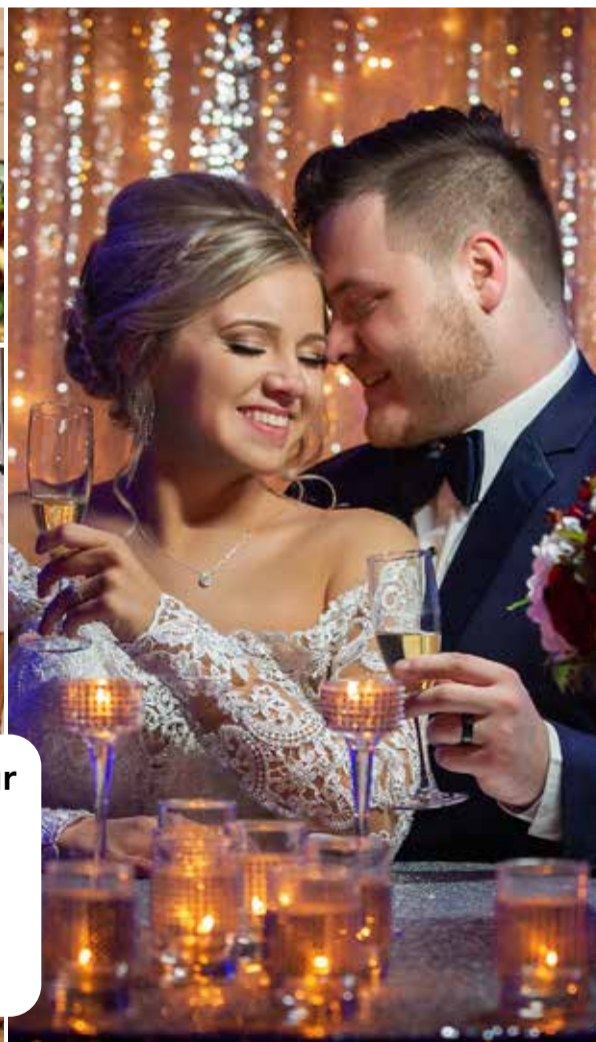
Horizons Conference Center
Thursday, October 29, 2026
11:30 AM

**Event details regarding golf registration, event tickets and sponsorship opportunities will soon be available for both events and included on the Saginaw Promise website.*

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2.1.26

LEARN MORE

Erin Senkowski
Saginaw ISD
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MI Tri-Share Program Eligibility 2026

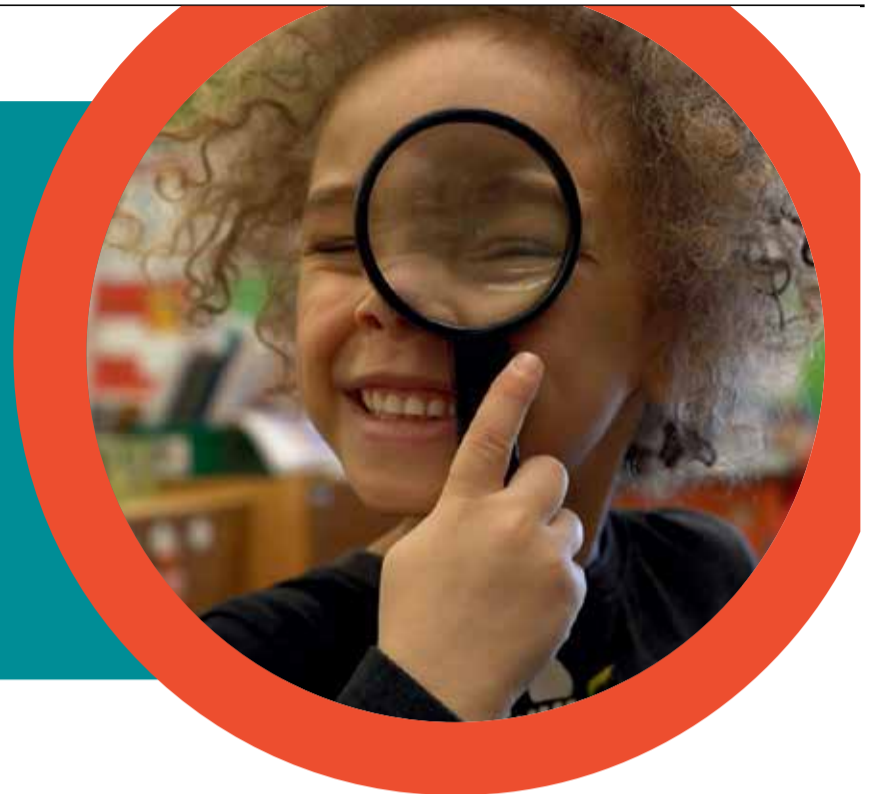
Household Size	Minimum	Maximum Income	Household Size	Minimum	Maximum Income
2 People	\$43,280	\$ 86,560	6 People	\$ 88,720	\$177,440
3 People	\$54,640	\$109,280	7 People	\$100,080	\$200,160
4 People	\$66,000	\$132,000	8 People	\$111,440	\$222,880
5 People	\$77,360	\$154,720	9 People	\$122,800	\$245,600

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**Administration for Children and Families: Children's Learning and Development Benefits from High-Quality Early Care and Education: A Summary of Evidence*



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BUSINESS + FINANCE

Cannabis industry files lawsuit challenging Michigan's 24% wholesale marijuana tax



JARS CANNABIS, 2301 N MICHIGAN AVE, SAGINAW, MI

BY MB STAFF

LANSING, Mich. — A coalition of cannabis businesses has filed a lawsuit challenging Michigan's newly enacted 24% wholesale marijuana tax, arguing the policy threatens the stability of the state's regulated cannabis market.

The lawsuit was filed in late March 2026 in the Michigan Court of Claims against the State of Michigan and the Michigan Department of Treasury, seeking to block implementation of the tax.

The legal challenge targets legislation approved earlier this year that imposes a 24% tax on

wholesale cannabis transactions, adding to Michigan's existing 10% excise tax and 6% sales tax on adult-use marijuana.

Plaintiffs argue the new tax structure creates an excessive financial burden on licensed operators and risks driving up prices for consumers. Industry representatives say the added cost at the wholesale level will likely be passed through the supply chain, affecting retailers and ultimately customers.

The lawsuit also contends the tax could undermine Michigan's legal cannabis market by making regulated products less competitive with illicit alternatives, a concern that has been raised by in-

dustry groups since legalization.

Michigan legalized adult-use marijuana through voter approval in 2018, and the market has since grown into one of the largest in the Midwest, generating billions in annual sales and supporting a wide range of licensed growers, processors and retailers.

Opponents of the wholesale tax say the additional burden could disproportionately impact smaller businesses, including independent cultivators and retailers that may have less capacity to absorb increased costs. They argue the policy could lead to market consolidation, favoring larger, vertically integrated

companies.

State officials have defended the tax as part of broader efforts to generate revenue and support public services, though details on how the funds will be allocated have been part of ongoing legislative discussions.

The lawsuit asks the court to declare the tax invalid and prevent its enforcement. A timeline for court proceedings has not yet been announced.

The outcome of the case could shape the future of cannabis taxation in Michigan and influence how the state balances revenue generation with maintaining a competitive and sustainable legal market.

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BUSINESS + FINANCE

Freeland's R1SE lands 'Shark Tank' deal, plans Frankenmuth center as model for future growth



TREVOR AND HEATHER SZAFRANSKI, THE FOUNDERS OF R1SE ON SHARK TANK.

BY MB STAFF

FREELAND, Mich. — R1SE, a Mid-Michigan after-school business that blends academic support, mentorship and recreation for students, has gained national attention after securing a deal on ABC's "Shark Tank" while moving ahead with a new center in Frankenmuth that its founders say will serve as a prototype for future expansion.

Trevor and Heather Szafranski, the founders of R1SE: Education and Recreation, received a \$300,000 investment from Barbara Corcoran in exchange for 15% equity during an episode of "Shark Tank" that aired March 28, 2026. The company had entered the pitch seeking a \$3 million valuation, and its appearance gave the business a major boost in visibility as it

continues to grow from its Mid-Michigan base.

R1SE began seven years ago after Trevor Szafranski left a 15-year career in education to build a student-centered program aimed at helping children and working families navigate the hours before and after the school day. The company now operates in Freeland and Midland, where it serves about 120 students a day through before-school, after-school and summer programming.

The model is designed to stand apart from a traditional tutoring center. R1SE combines academic help with recreational spaces and activities intended to keep students engaged after homework is finished. The company's Frankenmuth concept includes features such as a movie theater, gym space, video

game lounge, hands-on game room and interactive play areas.

That next phase of growth is already taking shape in Frankenmuth, where R1SE is developing a third location in the Uptown North Main District. The center is expected to open by Aug. 1, in time for the 2026-27 school year, and is being built on two acres as the company's most ambitious site yet.

The Frankenmuth location is expected to combine features

from the Freeland and Midland centers while creating a more standardized model for expansion. Planned amenities include outdoor sports fields, interactive learning spaces, a movie theater, game lounges and a café, in addition to indoor academic and recreational areas.

The founders have described the national television appearance as both validation and a catalyst for growth. Since the episode aired, the company has seen increased interest from outside Michigan, with inquiries about expanding the concept into other markets.

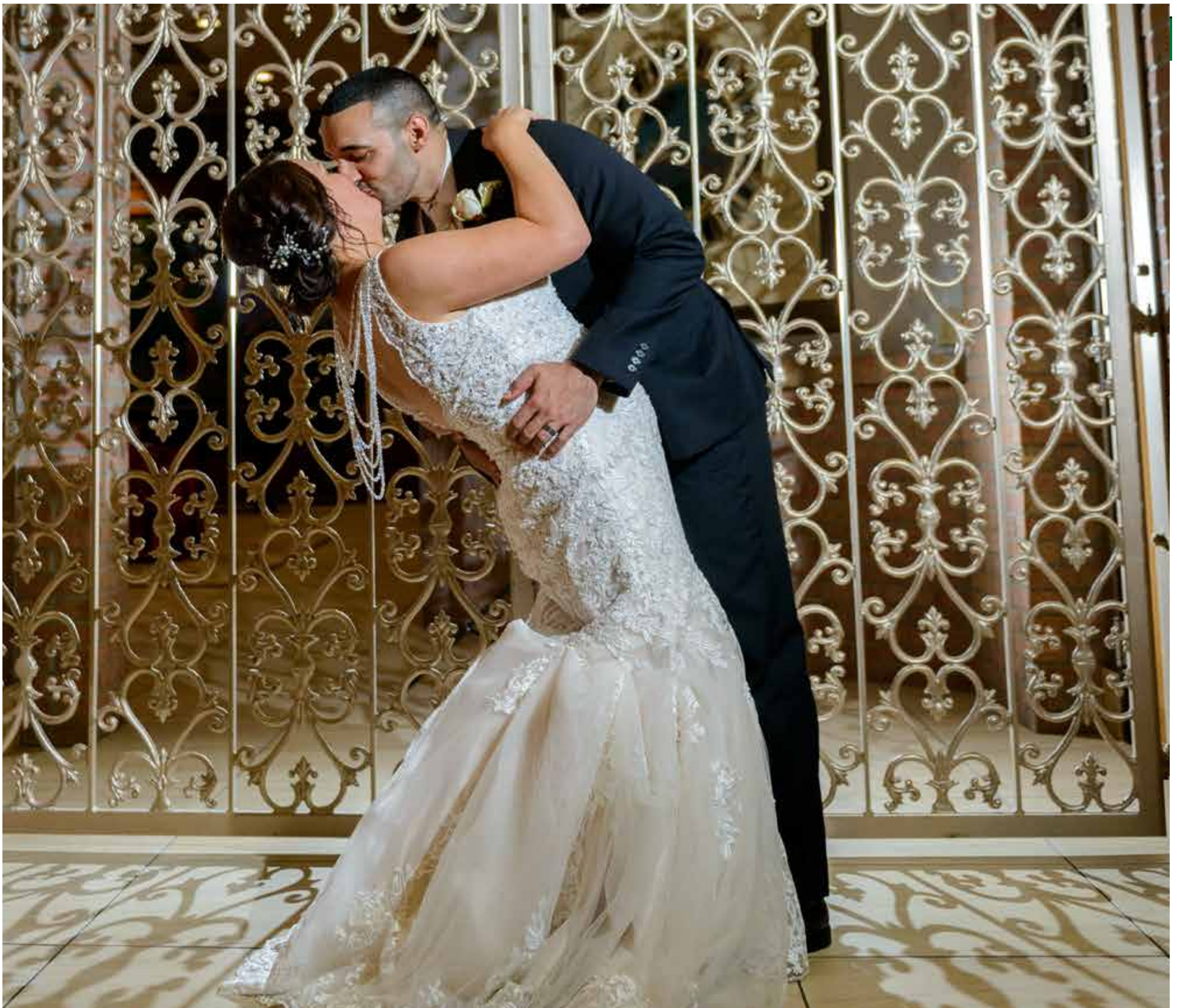
R1SE's business model has also demonstrated strong early performance. Each location generates roughly \$600,000 in revenue with net margins of about 21%, according to reporting tied to the company's pitch.

The expansion into Frankenmuth follows interest from local business leaders and community partners, with the program designed to complement traditional education by providing structured, engaging environments for students outside school hours.

The national exposure underscores a broader challenge facing families across the country — the need for safe, productive after-school options — and highlights how a locally developed program is positioning itself for wider growth.



A RENDERING DEPICTS THE FUTURE R1SE: EDUCATION & RECREATION CENTER UNDER CONSTRUCTION IN FRANKENMUTH, WITH THE NEW FACILITY EXPECTED TO OPEN IN AUGUST AHEAD OF THE UPCOMING SCHOOL YEAR.



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SPORTS

Saginaw's Jermaine Franklin stopped by rising heavyweight Moses Itauma in Manchester



ITAUMA-FRANKLIN WEIGH IN

BY MB STAFF

SAGINAW, Mich. — Saginaw native Jermaine Franklin Jr. saw his latest comeback halted Saturday night when unbeaten British heavyweight Moses Itauma scored a fifth-round knockout in Manchester, England. The bout took place March 28 at Co-op Live and ended with Franklin suffering the first stoppage loss of his professional career.

The loss was a significant one for Franklin, a 32-year-old heavyweight known in boxing circles as the “989 Assassin,” a nod to his mid-Michigan roots. Before facing Itauma, Franklin had built a 24-2 record and had won three straight fights since his April 2023 decision loss to Anthony Joshua.

Saturday's result also underscored the challenge Franklin accepted against one of boxing's fastest-rising young

heavyweights. Itauma, 21, entered the fight as an undefeated prospect and left with a 14-0 record and 12 knockouts after overwhelming Franklin with speed, pressure and power. ESPN reported that Itauma dropped Franklin in the third round, then finished the bout in the fifth with a left uppercut and follow-up right hand that sent the Saginaw boxer to the canvas.

For Franklin, the defeat was especially notable because du-

rability had become one of his calling cards. He had previously gone the distance with Joshua and Dillian Whyte, and AP reported that Itauma became the first fighter to stop him. That detail gives the loss added weight, not only for Franklin's record but for how the performance is likely to be viewed across the heavyweight division.

Franklin's story has long resonated in Saginaw because he rose from the city's amateur boxing scene to become one of the area's most recognizable fighters on the international stage. He turned pro in 2015, fought his way into the heavyweight rankings, and later earned high-profile opportunities against established names in London. His hometown ties have remained central to his identity; multiple boxing profiles list Saginaw as his birthplace and hometown.

The matchup with Itauma was viewed as a measuring-stick fight for the British prospect, but it also represented another important opportunity for Franklin to reassert himself in a division where a single win can quickly reshape the conversation. Instead, the bout became another step forward for Itauma, whose promoter and national boxing media are already discussing possible title implications after the victory.

Even with the setback, Franklin remains one of the most accomplished professional boxers to come out of Saginaw in recent years. His loss in Manchester drops him to 24-3, but it came against a surging contender many analysts view as one of the sport's top young heavyweights.

SPORTS

Great Lakes Loons unveil 2026 opening day roster ahead of home opener



PROMO PHOTO COURTESY OF GREAT ALKES LOONS

BY MB STAFF

MIDLAND, Mich. — In conjunction with the Los Angeles Dodgers, the Great Lakes Loons have announced their 2026 Opening Day roster as the High-A affiliate prepares to begin its 19th season at Dow Diamond.

The roster is expected to be finalized prior to the Loons' home opener Friday, when they host the Fort Wayne TinCaps,

a San Diego Padres affiliate, at 6:05 p.m. at Dow Diamond.

The 28-player roster includes 16 pitchers, two catchers, six infielders and four outfielders, highlighting a mix of returning players and emerging prospects within the Dodgers' farm system.

Among the pitchers are Myles Caba, Justin Chambers, Davis Chastain, Nicolas Cruz, Dilan Figueredo, Aidan Foeller, Jacob Frost, Joseilyn Gonzalez, Alex Makarewich, Cody Morse, Ster-

ling Patick, Zach Root, Logan Tabeling, Jakob Wright, Reynaldo Yean and Christian Zazueta. Catchers include Jesus Galiz and Victor Rodrigues, while the infield group features Cameron Decker, Eduardo Guerrero, Jose Izarra, Jose Meza, Nico Perez and Logan Wagner. The outfield includes Charles Davalan, Samuel Munoz, Eduardo Quintero and Mike Sirota.

Six players on the roster — Quintero, Sirota, Davalan, Za-

zueta, Root and Patick — are ranked among MLB.com's Top 30 Dodgers prospects, underscoring the depth of talent expected in Midland this season. The pitching staff also includes four of the top strikeout leaders from Low-A Rancho Cucamonga in 2025: Foeller (127 strikeouts), Patick (100), Tabeling (88) and Zazueta (80).

The roster reflects continuity, with 16 of the 28 players having previously appeared with the Loons during the 2024 or 2025 seasons. That matches the highest number of returning players on an Opening Day roster since 2023.

International talent remains a significant component, with 14 players born outside the United States, including eight from Venezuela and three from the Dominican Republic.

The team's average age is 21.9 years old. Logan Tabeling and Myles Caba are the oldest players at 24, while Eduardo Quintero is the youngest at 20.

Manager Jair Fernandez returns for his third season leading the club, joined by hitting coach Kevin LaChance and pitching coach Richard De Los Santos. Brad Tunney enters his 11th season in the broadcast booth alongside John Vicari, with all 132 games available on Sports Radio 100.9 The Mitt and streamed digitally.

The Loons, who have been affiliated with the Dodgers since 2007, play their home games at Dow Diamond in Midland.

The Opening Day roster announcement comes as the team looks to build on a 72–58 record in 2025 and continue developing talent within one of Major League Baseball's most successful farm systems.

SPORTS

Flint City Bucks to host Detroit City FC in U.S. Open Cup second-round matchup

2026 LAMAR HUNT U.S. OPEN CUP
SECOND ROUND

FLINT CITY BUCKS VS DETROIT CITY FC

Wednesday, April 1, 2026
7:30 PM Kickoff | 6:30 PM Gates Open
DON BATCHELOR STADIUM
11920 S. Saginaw Street | Grand Blanc, MI 48439

2026 LAMAR HUNT US OOPEN CUP

BY MB STAFF

GRAND BLANC, Mich. — The Flint City Bucks will host Detroit City FC in a second-round matchup of the 2026 Lamar Hunt U.S. Open Cup on Wednesday, April 1, at Don Batchelor Field.

U.S. Soccer announced the pairing, which is scheduled for a 7:30 p.m. kickoff at the 6,000-seat venue located on the Grand

Blanc High School campus. Tickets are available through the Bucks' ticketing site and are included with all Flint City season ticket packages.

The matchup pits the fourth-tier USL League Two Bucks against Detroit City FC, which competes in the USL Championship, the second tier of professional soccer in the United States.

Flint City enters the match after a 2-0 victory over Forward

Madison FC of USL League One in the first round, marking the club's return to Open Cup play after an eight-year absence. Detroit City FC opened its tournament run with a 5-1 win over Michigan Rangers FC and also began its league season with a 3-0 victory over Brooklyn FC.

The winner of Wednesday's match will advance to the Round of 32, where it will face a Major League Soccer opponent on April

14 or 15.

The Bucks are among eight remaining non-professional teams still competing in the tournament. The Open Division team that advances the furthest will earn an automatic berth in the 2027 U.S. Open Cup.

Flint City and Detroit City have a history in the competition. Their most recent Open Cup meeting came in 2018, when Detroit City advanced on penalty kicks following a 1-1 draw. The clubs also met in earlier editions of the tournament in 2015 and 2016. Flint City won a 2019 friendly between the teams at Atwood Stadium.

The Bucks remain one of the most successful semi-professional clubs in the tournament's modern era, with 16 appearances, 31 matches and 16 wins, including two victories over Major League Soccer teams.

The club has applied to host additional tournament matches, with later-round games potentially returning to its primary home venue at Atwood Stadium in Flint.

Founded in 1996, the Flint City Bucks compete in USL League Two and have never recorded a losing season. The club has made 26 playoff appearances, won four national titles and captured multiple conference and division championships.

The Lamar Hunt U.S. Open Cup, now in its 111th edition, is the oldest national soccer competition in the United States. The single-elimination tournament features teams from all levels of the sport, with the winner earning a berth in the Concacaf Champions Cup and its name engraved on the Dewar Challenge Trophy.

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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.

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SERMONETTE SERIES

I Didn't Just Come Out - I Came Out With Power

Nay in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.

Romans 8:37 KJV



BY MINISTER CAROLYN
CARTER TOWNSEL



In a world where survival is often celebrated as the ultimate badge of honor, a deeper, more powerful truth is rising to the surface - we were never called just to survive. We were called to conquer. The declaration found in Romans 8:37 boldly states: "*Nay in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.*" This is not a quiet whisper. This is a heavenly verdict.

For many, life has delivered blows, loss, betrayal, disappointment, and delays. The narrative has often been, "just make it through." But according to Scripture, that narrative is incomplete.

More than conquerors means:

- You didn't just endure the storm - you gained strength in it
- You didn't just face the battle - you grew because of it
- You didn't just survive the attack - you came out with authority.

This is not recovery. This is dominion. A conqueror wins, but one who is more than a conqueror, is one who wins be-

fore the battle is even over, gains peace in the middle of chaos, and walks in confidence after being counted out. Through Christ, victory is not something you chase, it's something you walk in.

The Scripture makes one thing clear, this victory is not earned by human effort alone. It is "*through Him that loved us.*" Victory flows from love, not just labor. From grace, not just grind. As a Believer you are not fighting for victory, you are operating from it.

So Beloved, let it be known - You are not what you went through. You are not what tried to defeat you. You are not what was stolen from you.

You are MORE -
More powerful
More resilient
More anointed.

More than a conqueror. And because you are more than a conqueror, you didn't just come out, you came out with power.

Blessings To All,
Carolyn

When it looked finished: The enduring lesson of Easter



FILE PHOTO

BY MB STAFF

Easter does not begin with celebration.

It begins with silence, confusion and what appeared to be a final ending. For those who followed Jesus, the crucifixion was not symbolic — it was devastating. The one they believed in had been beaten, crucified and buried. Hope, in that moment, seemed lost.

Scripture does not soften that reality. In Luke 23, the account is direct. Jesus is placed in a tomb, and a stone is rolled into place. The story appears complete. But Easter is the reminder that what looks finished is not always final.

“Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen” (Luke 24:5–6).

That truth is what has carried the message of Easter across generations. It is not simply a celebration of resurrection — it is a lesson in perspective, endurance and faith during seasons that do not make sense.

Before the resurrection, there was surrender. In the Garden of Gethsemane, facing what was to come, Jesus prayed: “Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done” (Luke 22:42). That moment reflects a familiar tension — the space between what we want and what we must endure.

For many adults, that space is not theoretical. It shows up in unanswered prayers, unexpected loss, financial strain, health challenges or seasons of uncertainty where direction is unclear. Easter does not promise the absence of those moments. It shows what can hap-

pen through them.

The crucifixion was not the end of the story — it was part of the process. As Romans 5:3–4 states: “Tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope.”

Easter is also a lesson in timing. To those witnessing the events, the delay between the crucifixion and resurrection likely felt like finality. But what felt like delay was, in fact, divine timing. Psalm 30:5 offers a simple but enduring reminder: “Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.” Easter is that morning.

The message is not only about Christ rising, but about what that resurrection represents for those who believe. It speaks to renewal. To restoration. To the possibility that even after loss, something new can emerge. “I am the resurrection, and the life” (John 11:25). That declaration reframes the story entirely — from one of defeat to one of victory.

In communities like Saginaw and throughout the Great Lakes Bay Region, Easter continues to be observed in churches filled with worship, reflection and gratitude. But beyond tradition, it remains deeply personal. It is a reminder for those carrying burdens that the present moment is not the final chapter, that what appears to be an ending may, in time, reveal itself as a beginning.

Easter does not ignore the weight of Friday. It acknowledges it — fully. But it also points to Sunday.

And in that shift, it offers one of the most enduring lessons of all: even when it looks finished, God is still working.

CHURCH DIRECTORY



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Prophetess Linda J. Kemp Revis
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Ministry Without Walls

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New Beginnings Ministries

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FUNDRAISING GOOD TIMES

Life without nonprofits



BY MEL AND PEARL SHAW

We have had hard times before, and we are having them again. Will it get better? We believe it will. But in the meantime, it's time to help each other. And it's time to support the value and dignity that nonprofit organizations and institutions provide each and every day. These nonprofits are us – the best of us.

Gas prices are up. Groceries cost more. Wages are frozen. Some government employees are not being paid. Major employers are “restructuring,” laying people off at an alarming rate. Funding from government agencies is changing and too often disappearing from our communities. Too many of our neighbors are hiding in their own homes for fear of being swept off the street and deported. Jewish institutions are targeted for hate and violence. What is going on? And who can help?

One answer: nonprofits, big and small. They have always sought to fill the void, and they continue to do so. They may not be visible, but they are everywhere. They are feeding and pro-



FILE PHOTO

viding meals to the working poor, those who have lost their jobs, and those who are not currently receiving wages while working. They operate clinics that provide health care and mental health services to those who can no longer afford health insurance. They are offering spiritual assistance as people turn to faith organizations for emotional, mental, and spiritual support and health care. They help the growing number of people experiencing intimate partner violence. They are our nonprofits, and they are serving us.

Nonprofits are organizing and informing us about what we can do within our democracy to stop the cruel exertion of power against “the people” instead of the considered use of power “for the people.” They are rescuing animals that people can no longer afford to care for. They are opening their arms to homeless and exploited children and

teenagers, and not turning away those who are LGBTQ. They are innovating education, helping to ensure all of us have access to an education and the skills to earn a livable wage. They are teaching English to those who are new to our country and communities. They are helping people transition to life in the USA, sharing information about their legal rights and how to navigate the system. They research cures for cancers and other illnesses that literally steal life from us. They are our nonprofits, and they are serving us.

They are not just serving us, they are us. They represent the best of who we are and who we can be. As we can, we have to step up to support these organizations financially and with our time and resources. They need our support more than ever, and we need them more than ever. Let us support those who have been standing in the void and are equipped to do so. Let us ask, how can we be of service? Better times are coming, and we can prepare for them by caring for each other. We are all in this together.



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PICS OF THE WEEK

Student Government Day 2026 – March 23

Students from Saginaw United High School and Valley Lutheran High School spent the day exploring how the City of Saginaw operates, participating in presentations and tours of key departments, including the Water Treatment Plant, Fire Station and a Police K-9 demonstration. The experience concluded with students attending the City Council meeting.



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