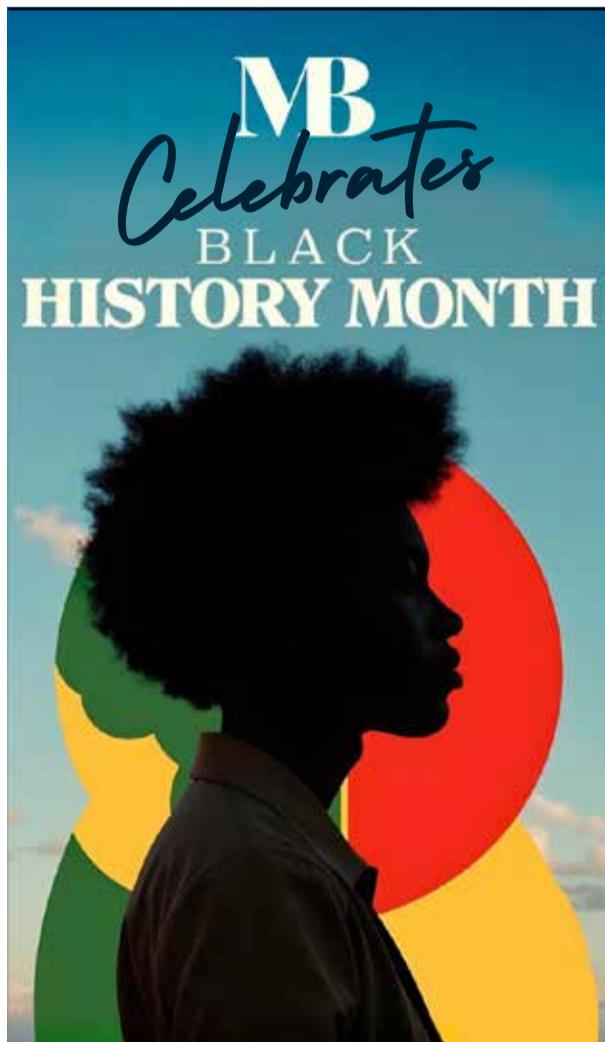




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SVSU's "Taste of Soul" celebrates culture through food

SVSU'S A TASTE OF SOUL

pared by SVSU faculty and staff, local chefs and community culinary guests, including the Men of Bethel from Bethel A.M.E. Church in Saginaw. The menu traditionally features soul food staples such as catfish, black-eyed peas, macaroni and cheese, fried okra, peach cobbler and sweet potato pie.

The event is part of SVSU's broader Black History Month programming and is intended to create opportunities for cultural engagement through shared experiences centered around food and community.

"Food offers an opportunity to connect with friends and family," said Dr. Mamie Thorns, associate vice president and chief diversity officer for diversity, equity and inclusion. "We invite the community to join us in fellowship for a delicious meal."

The event has become a recurring campus tradition, drawing participants from across the Great Lakes Bay Region and serving as a gathering space where cultural traditions are shared and celebrated. SVSU students, faculty and staff may use meal swipes, while community members may attend for a \$13 admission fee.

For more information, the Office of Diversity Programs can be reached at (989) 964-4068.



LLEAD-MAC joint education program seeks part-time site coordinators, tutors for school-based support

LATINO BANNER, COVER



From tap to tango: A lifelong dance journey

COMMUNITY, PAGE 15

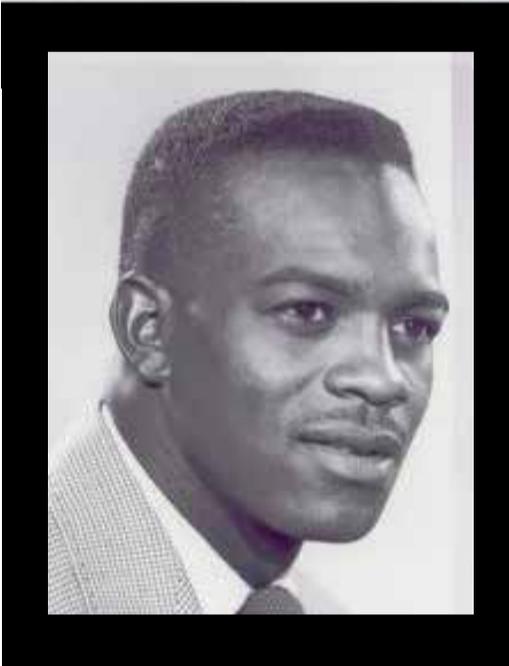
BY MB STAFF

SAGINAW, Mich. — Saginaw Valley State University will continue a long-standing Black History Month tradition later this month with the return of "A Taste of Soul," an annual event highlighting African American culture through food, fellowship and community engagement.

Hosted by SVSU's Office of Diversity Programs in collaboration with The Marketplace at Doan and Dining Services, the event is scheduled for Wednesday, Feb. 26, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at The Marketplace at Doan on SVSU's campus. The event is open to students, faculty, staff and members of the public.

The annual gathering brings together recipes pre-

Did you know:
*Local Black
History Month*
Edition! 



JIMMY ELLIS

Jimmy Ellis was the first Black College All-American athlete and professional athlete from Saginaw. He transferred to Saginaw High School as a junior in 1947 from Chicago and graduated from Saginaw High in 1948 where he played football and ran track for the Saginaw High Trojans. Ellis was named to the Class A all-state football team in 1947 and won the state title in the 400.

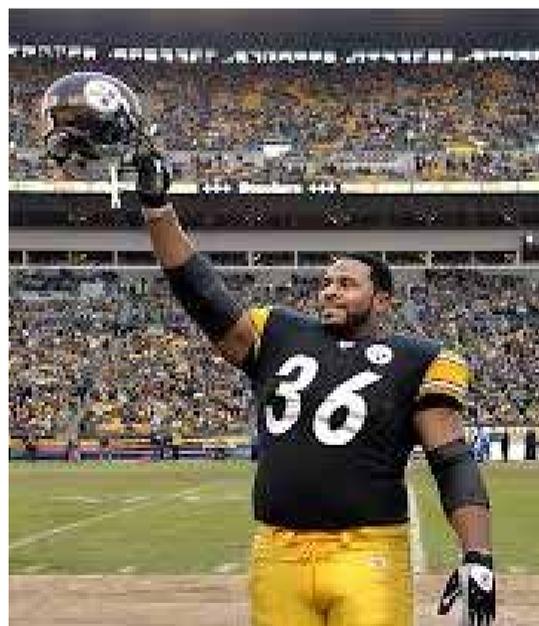
He attended Michigan State University where he became the first Spartan to receive All-America honors in consecutive years (1951-52), becoming captain of the 1953 Big Ten and 1954 Rose Bowl Championship team. He currently ranks among MSU's all time and season leaders in punt return yards.

After his college career Ellis went into the military for two years and then returned to have a short stint with the Cleveland Browns. He then pursued a career in Canada to play in the Canadian Football League for two years with the Toronto Argonauts.



FEBRUARY 16, 1972

On February 16, 1972, American Pro Football HOF running back Jerome Bettis was born in Detroit, MI. Bettis played in the National Football League for 13 seasons, primarily with the Pittsburgh Steelers. Nicknamed "the Bus" due to his large size and forceful running style, he is regarded as one of the greatest power runners of all time and ranks eighth in NFL rushing yards.



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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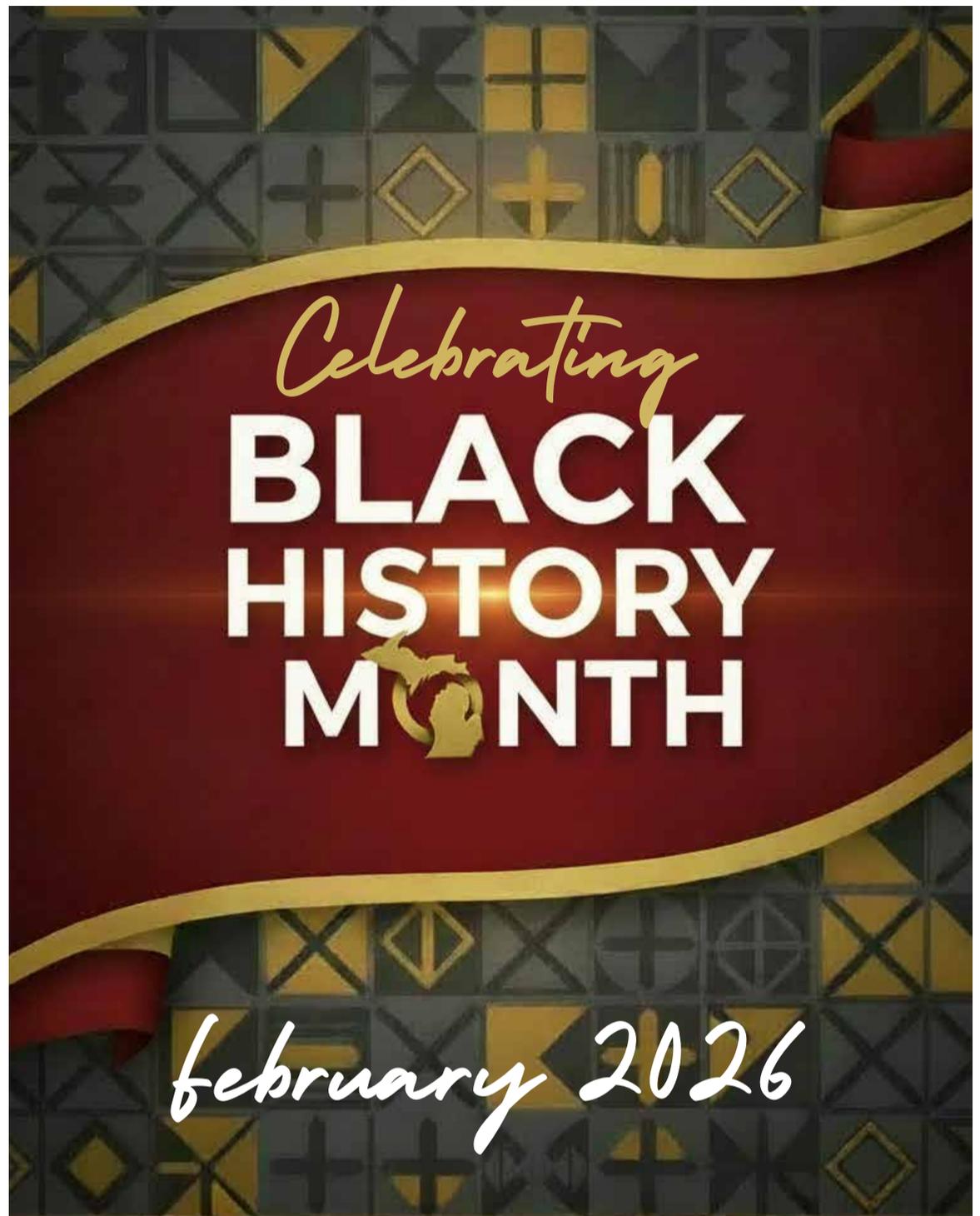
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MICHIGAN YOUTH BANNER

VOLUME 8 • NUMBER 4



Saginaw's Larry West III named to state collegiate voter engagement task force

BY MB STAFF

SAGINAW, Mich. — Larry West III, a Central Michigan University student from Saginaw, has been appointed to the Michigan Collegiate Student Advisory Task Force, a group that advises the Michigan Department of State on how to strengthen voter education and engagement on college campuses ahead of the 2026 election cycle.

Jocelyn Benson announced Jan. 23 that 23 students from 19 Michigan community colleges, colleges and universities were selected for the task force, which is described as nonpartisan and runs through December 2026.



LARRY WEST III

According to the state, task force members are expected to serve as liaisons between the department, their campuses and peers, and to help identify barriers student voters face — then develop and implement recommendations to address them.

State officials also pointed to previous work by the task force, including a 2024 “I Voted” sticker design contest, and noted that Michigan ranked third nationally for youth voter turnout in 2024

among 18- to 29-year-olds, with 58% casting ballots, based on data from Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) at Tufts University.

The task force is an initiative of the Department of State in partnership with Campus Vote Project, a project of the Fair Elections Center.

West's appointment adds a Great Lakes Bay Region voice to the statewide group at a time

when officials are leaning on students not only as participants, but as organizers — a continuation of a task force first established by Benson in 2019, the state said.

In an interview West gave to CanvasRebel, he described an early start in entrepreneurship and financial literacy that he said shaped his approach to adulthood. He said his mother formed an LLC in his name when he turned 18, and his father helped him begin building credit by adding him as an authorized user on credit accounts.

West also outlined academic and career goals centered on accounting and what he described as “fiduciary” work — emphasizing trust, responsibility and ethical management in business. He said he is pursuing an undergraduate accounting degree and plans to continue his education with an MBA and additional graduate study.

He also described an experience he said tested his persistence after transferring into an undergraduate institution, when 17 previously earned credits were not accepted — a decision he said represented a financial loss and led him to pursue appeals through internal processes and civil rights channels.

The Department of State said reports from previous task force cohorts are available through the state's CSATF webpage.



LARRY WEST III

SEEN ON THE SCENE: On Monday, Feb.9, the City of Saginaw Fire Department hosted the Saginaw Youth Council meeting where the students learned about Public Safety. The Saginaw Police Department and City of Saginaw Code Enforcement also participated in the event, providing valuable insights into their roles and responsibilities in maintaining community safety. By the end of the meeting, the students left with a deeper understanding of the vital work performed by these dedicated professionals and a newfound appreciation for their community's safety efforts.



Mott Foundation invites Flint youth to apply for \$1,926 “Youth Choice” grants



TEEN FRIENDS (FILE PHOTO)

BY MB STAFF

FLINT, Mich. — Charles Stewart Mott Foundation is marking its 100th anniversary by inviting Flint-area students to compete for — and help award — 100 community project grants worth \$1,926 each through a new program called the Mott Foundation Youth Choice Awards.

The program is open to K-12 students who attend a school within Flint city limits, attend a school in the Flint Center for Educational Excellence Network for School Excellence, or participate

in an eligible Flint-based community program with at least 10 actively enrolled students, according to the foundation. Participating community-based organizations must have 501(c)(3) status.

An adult advisor or teacher must submit each project application. The foundation set two deadlines — Feb. 20, 2026, and Oct. 9, 2026 — with up to 50 projects expected to be selected in each application pool.

“Flint kids are changemakers and future entrepreneurs,” said Ridgway White, the foundation’s president and CEO. “I’m excit-

ed to see how they want to help their community and what projects they’ll propose.”

The awards will be distributed as “relay grants,” an approach intended to involve young people directly in decision-making. Foundation staff will select the first five projects to receive grants, then those participants will choose the next five projects, and the process will repeat until all 100 grants are awarded, the foundation said.

“Incorporating a relay element to this program was important to us,” said Kimberly Roberson, Flint Area program director.

“It not only invites our young people to develop and propose a new idea, but it also empowers them to choose another project to support in their community.”

Students applying are asked to describe how they would use the funds to benefit others in their schools, youth organizations or neighborhoods. The \$1,926 amount is a nod to the year the foundation was established, officials said.

Applications and program details are posted on the foundation’s Youth Choice Awards webpage, www.mott.org/youth-choice-awards.



Did you know?



BY ESTHER VAUGHN

Hi, my name is Esther Vaughn and I'm 12 years old. I think it's really important for young people to learn and understand our history as African Americans, because if we don't know where we come from, we won't really know who we are, or how smart and strong we can be.

Black History month is important because we once were slaves and now we are free. We are free to vote, free to sit wherever we want, we are free to go to whatever school we want among many other freedoms not listed. In honor of Black History Month I would like to write about a women who was strong, courageous, blessed and faithful. She has impacted the lives of African Americans people across the world. Her name is Harriett Tubman!



BOY LOOKING AT PAINTING OF HARRIETT TUBMAN (FILE PHOTO)

Did you know Harriett Tubman was born a slave in 1822?

Did you know she escaped slavery and became a free women?

Did you know Harriett Tubman is known as the conduct of the underground railroad and her nickname was Moses because she freed seventy of

her friends and family from slavery? Harriett Tubman dedicated her life to abolishing slavery!

Did you know in 1863 Harriett Tubman was the first women in US history to plan and lead a United States military raid? During

this raid she freed seven hundred slaves.

Did you know after the civil war Harriett Tubman became a humanitarian?

Did you know she worked for Women Suffrage and established home

for the aged and indigenous Negroes?

Did you know Harriett Tubman died March 10, 1913?

I keep asking did you know because at one time I didn't know my ancestors were slaves . Now I know if it had not been for my ancestors fighting for us we would still be slaves.



Latino Banner

LIDER EN LA
DIVERSIDAD

VAMOS ADELANTE

LLEAD-MAC joint education program seeks part-time site coordinators, tutors for school-based support



WOMAN TUTORING A STUDENT (FILE PHOTO)

BY MB STAFF

SAGINAW, Mich. — The LLEAD/MAC Joint Education Program is hiring part-time staff for positions aimed at supporting students through tutoring, homework help and enrichment activities at participating school or program sites.

Open roles include site coordinators and tutors, according to recruitment materials released by the program.

Site coordinators are listed at \$25 per hour with a minimum of five hours per week. The role serves as the primary contact at

each assigned location and is responsible for coordinating delivery of services, supervising tutors and working with school leadership and teachers on student participation. Duties also include scheduling student and tutor sessions — listed as two hours per session, two sessions per week — tracking and submitting weekly staff sheets, and elevating issues as needed.

Minimum qualifications for site coordinators include a high school diploma (with an associate degree preferred), strong math and reading skills, and effective communication skills. Experience with art and/or music

is preferred, and a background check is required for work in schools.

Tutor positions are listed at \$20 per hour with a minimum of five hours per week. Tutors, working under the site coordinator and alongside designated school staff, provide educational support including tutoring and homework assistance to selected students. Tutors are also expected to maintain accurate records of work hours and submit weekly time sheets, and may be assigned additional duties supporting recreation and enrichment activities.

Minimum qualifications for

tutors include a high school diploma (with college credits preferred), strong math and reading ability, and strong written and oral communication skills. Organizers list science or technology expertise as an advantage and note that experience with music and/or art is preferred. A background check is required.

Applicants are asked to send a resume and cover letter to johnrayala@aol.com. The recruitment notice describes the positions as part-time and encourages prospective candidates to apply.

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Proceeds benefit Latino Leaders for Equity Advocacy & Development (LLEAD) Saginaw Chapter

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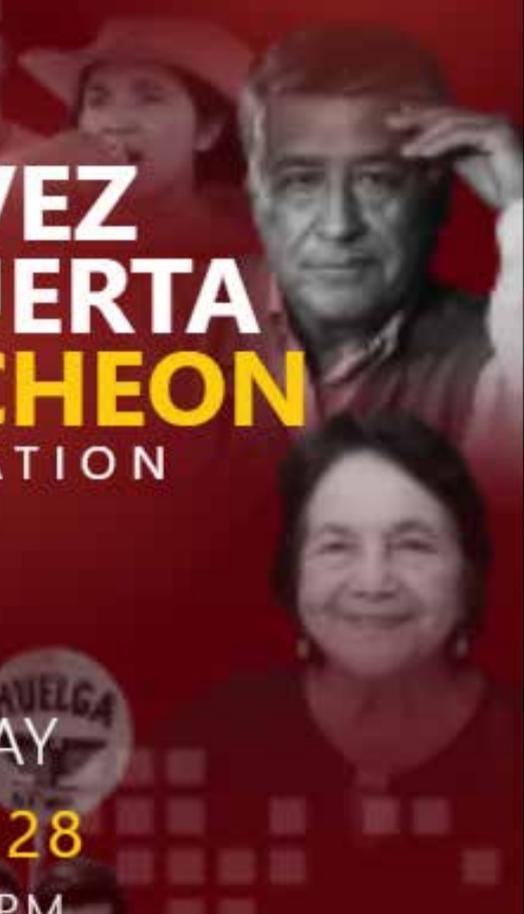
Thurs. February 19th - 7:05PM
@ the Dow Event Center
303 Johnson St, Saginaw, MI 48607

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Es necesario registrarse

Para más información contacte a Erandi Arredondo: earredondo@mhcc.org



SAVE THE DATE

4TH ANNUAL K?ONDA!

Cinco de Mayo CELEBRATION

TUESDAY, MAY 5TH 2026

SYRC MARKETPLACE OUTDOOR PAVILION
203 S. WASHINGTON AVE., SAGINAW, MICHIGAN

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

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT MIGUEL: 989-332-1107
VENDOR SETUP AT 3:00 PM

MDHHS will host webinar honoring the Latine story

BY MB STAFF

LANSING, Mich. — The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services' Farmworker Outreach Services Division and the Michigan Interagency Migrant Services Committee Outreach & Education Subcommittee are scheduled to host a Lunch and Learn webinar Feb. 18 focused on "Context Matters: Honoring Pain, Strength, and the Latine Story."

The virtual session, set for noon to 1:30 p.m., will feature presenter Maricela Alcala, chief executive officer of Gryphon Place, a Southwest Michigan organization that connects residents to support through services including 988 crisis response and 211 information and referral.

Organizers said the webinar is part of ongoing training and resource-sharing aimed at strengthening how outreach workers and service providers support migrant and seasonal farmworkers and their families across Michigan.

While the event title signals a focus on the "Latine story," the broader goal is to equip participants with practical perspective—how culture, language, immigration experiences, work conditions and family dynamics can shape a person's needs, and how service systems can respond more effectively when that context is understood.

Registration is available by scanning the QR code on the event flyer. Questions can be directed to 1-833-SIAYUDA (1-833-742-9832) or MDHHS-Farmworker-Services@michigan.gov.

Register Now!

LUNCH AND LEARN WEBINAR

**CONTEXT MATTERS:
HONORING PAIN, STRENGTH,
AND THE LATINE STORY**

PRESENTER
MARICELA ALCALA
(she/her/hers)
CEO FOR GRYPHON PLACE

February 18, 2026
12:00 p.m.-1:30 p.m.

To register, scan the QR code

For questions, contact:
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Great Lakes Loons set three “Copa” nights honoring Hispanic farmworker history

BY MB STAFF

MIDLAND, Mich. — The Great Lakes Loons will hold three “Copa de la Diversión” nights during the 2026 season at Dow Diamond, rebranding as “Los Pepinillos Picantes del Norte” for games that the team says recognize Hispanic migrant farmers and their role in the region’s agricultural history.

The team’s promotional schedule lists three Copa dates:

- Friday, May 22
- Friday, June 19
- Friday, July 31

The Loons said the Copa nights include special uniforms and themed elements, with additional in-game entertainment and food promotions tied to the event theme.

The promotions are part of a broader 2026 schedule that includes theme nights, giveaways and other community events tied to home games.



K?Onda’s 14th Annual Premios Awards set March 21 at Horizons Conference Center

K?Onda! Presents
14th Annual
Premios Awards

Monica Hernandez
Education

Philip & Tina Ortega
Faith

Melissa Gonzales
Business

David Garcia Sr.
Music

Lola Aguilar
Culture

La Mision
Community

Santa's Elves
Appreciation

From 5PM - 11PM
Sat March 21, 2026
Horizons Conference Center
6200 State St.
Saginaw, Mi 48603
Tickets \$50
For more information Miguel Torres 989-332-1107

K?ONDA 14TH ANNUAL PREMIOS AWARDS

BY MB STAFF

SAGINAW, Mich. — K?Onda Publication will host its 14th Annual Premios Awards on Saturday, March 21, 2026, at the Horizons Conference Center, recognizing individuals and organizations for contributions in education, faith, business, music, culture and community service.

The event is scheduled for 5 p.m. to 11 p.m. at the conference center, 6200 State St., Saginaw, with tickets listed at

\$50, according to information released by organizers.

This year’s honorees, as listed by K?Onda, include:

- Monica Hernandez — Education
- Philip Ortega and Tina Ortega — Faith
- Melissa Gonzales — Business
- David Garcia Sr. — Music
- Lola Aguilar — Culture
- La Mision — Community
- Santa's Elves

— Appreciation

For more information, organizers list Miguel Torres as a contact at 989-332-1107.

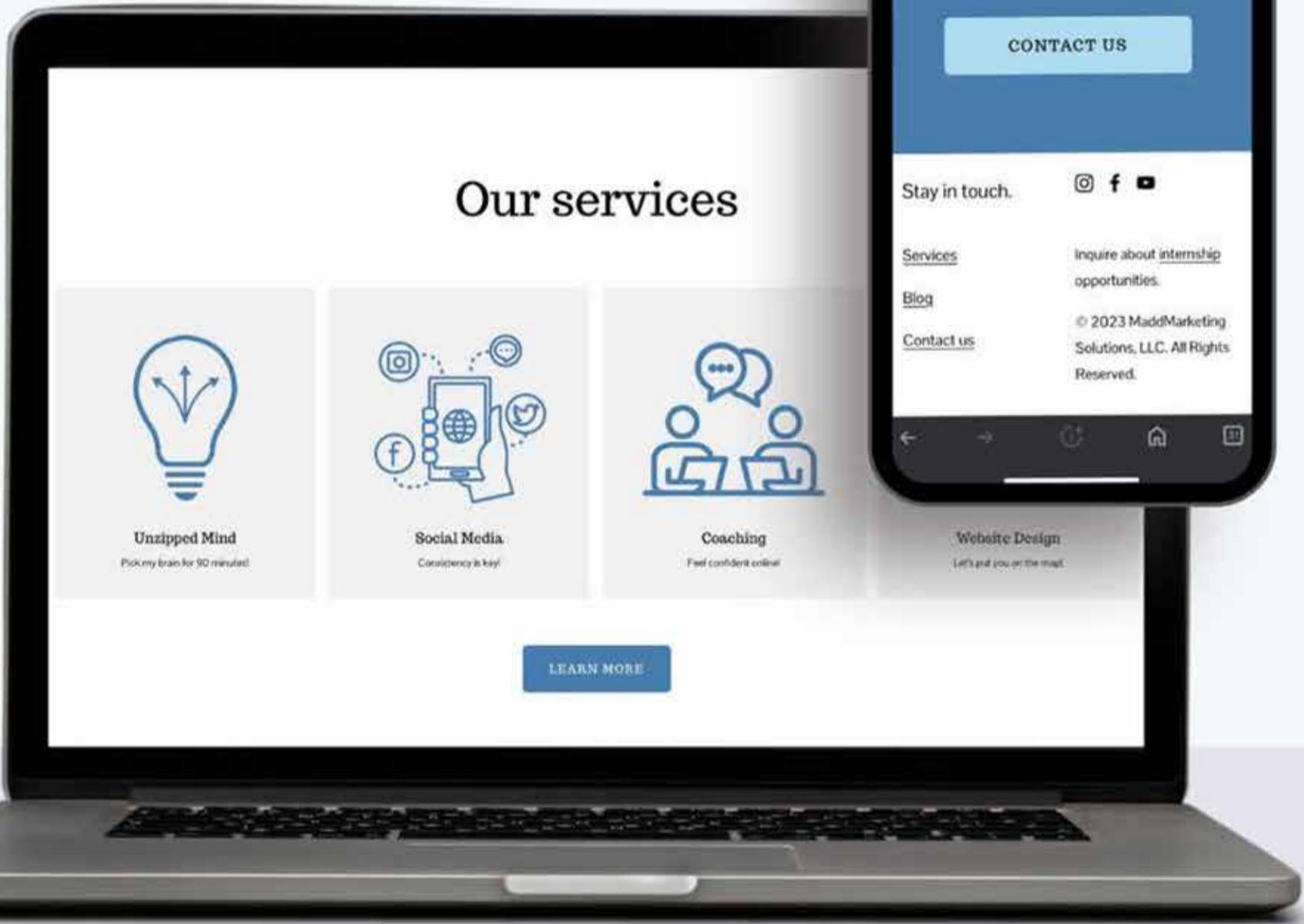
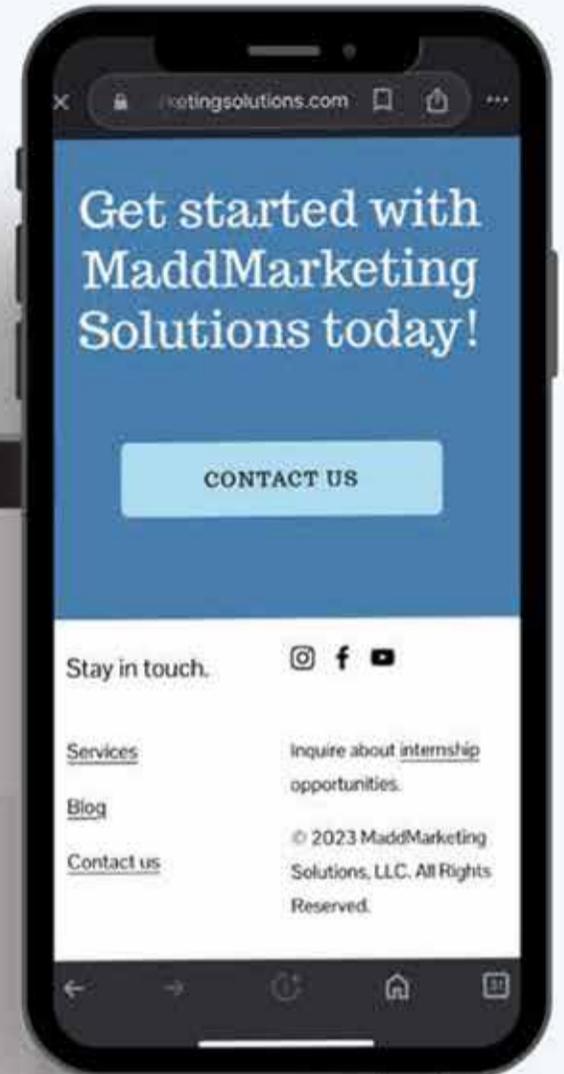
Another upcoming event

K?Onda has also announced plans for its annual Cinco de Mayo celebration on Tuesday, May 5, 2026, at the SVRC Marketplace outdoor pavilion in downtown Saginaw, with vendors expected to begin at 3 p.m.



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COMMUNITY

BHM

From tap to tango: A lifelong dance journey

BY LISA B. HALL

Tap was my first dance love, the place where movement and music finally made sense. My parents put me in tap dance class at my local studio in Anderson Indiana when I was three years old and I continue to tap more than fifty years later. Before I understood choreography or technique, I understood the rhythm of tap. Tap dance is usually the first exposure to dance for most kids because it develops essential rhythm, musicality, and coordination, making it an ideal foundation for other dance styles. The ability to hear the sounds of the metal taps attached to the feet as they rhythmically glide on the wooden floor encourages self-expression and boosts self-esteem. My dance journey continued throughout my formative years adding ballet, jazz, lyrical, gymnastics, Scottish and I was a majorette. Through all this training, a “disciplined lady” was beginning to form.

That first love — the crisp, playful rhythm of tap — never left me. Instead, it grew with me, urging me to explore new ways of moving through the world. Now, as an adult, dance has become both my compass and my passport. I travel to learn from master instructors, chasing the nuances of Detroit-style Ballroom and the intimate storytelling of Argentine Tango. I am a member of groups that highlight these forms, stepping into competitions that challenge me to stretch, refine, and rediscover myself again and again.

Dance did not just shape my childhood; it continues to shape my body and mind. Every class,



LISA B. HALL

rehearsal, and performance keeps me young at heart, sharpening my focus and waking up muscles and memories that have become imprints for my very

being.

Traveling to learn from instructors across the country challenges me in the best ways and allow the chance to socialize

and develop relationships with like-minded people. I am proud to be part of World Class Dance Production (W.C.D.P), founded by H. Demetrius Jones, Sr. in Detroit, MI. The W.C.D.P. dance team performs across the country including an annual event, Ballroom Xplosion, whose mission is to spread awareness of ALL styles of urban ballroom dance and to create spaces where dancers can connect, learn and celebrate together. I am also proud to partner with many Argentine Tango experts in Southeast Michigan and other states and countries, and dance with partners who enjoy the Tango as much as I do. Argentine Tango is an intimate art form often described as a three-minute love affair, where the music serves as the heartbeat and the “embrace” is the soul of the dance. Unlike other ballroom styles, Tango is built on a profound connection between two people; it is a silent, improvised conversation held within a close, heart-to-heart frame. Detroit-style ballroom and Argentine Tango demand precision, stamina, and a kind of mental quickness that feels like exercise for my body and my brain. Science says movement keeps the mind sharp, but I have always felt that truth in my bones. Dance is my favorite kind of exercise, the kind that strengthens my body while giving my imagination room to breathe. Showcasing what I do is important to me because I look at it to invite audiences to feel the joy I feel in my heart and soul. I am absorbing a culture of elegance and social connection that mirrors the discipline of my youth, and it all started with that first tap dance class.

COMMUNITY

Pit & Balcony stages “For Colored Girls” for two-night After Dark run in Saginaw

BY MB STAFF

SAGINAW, Mich. — Pit & Balcony Community Theatre will present “For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide / When the Rainbow Is Enuf” for two performances in February as part of its After Dark Series, a limited-run program that includes mature themes and is intended for adult audiences.

The production, written by Ntozake Shange, is scheduled for 8:30 p.m. Friday, Feb. 20, 2026, and 8:30 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 21, 2026, at the theater, 805 N. Hamilton St. in Saginaw.

Pit & Balcony said the show contains mature material and encouraged patrons to review the advisory when considering attendance, noting it may not be suitable for younger audiences.

Often described as a choreopoem, “For Colored Girls” combines poetry, music and dance to portray the lives of contemporary Black women. In the piece, characters are identified by color rather than by name.

The Saginaw production is directed by Danyelle Hillman, with a cast that includes:

- Lady in Red — Melony Lamar

- Lady in Blue — Ekia Thomas
- Lady in Brown — Imani Clark
- Lady in Yellow — Hudson Holm
- Lady in Orange — Renee Henry
- Lady in Purple — Yolandie Hamilton
- Lady in Green — Jayda Davis

The dance ensemble includes Kamaya Harris and Shatarea Simms.

In addition to the performances, the theater said the evenings will include a live lobby DJ experience as patrons arrive. Jaeci, owner of Flower Power Productions, is scheduled to spin an all-

Black female playlist featuring iconic and contemporary artists.

Tickets are available through the theater’s website or by calling the box office at 989-754-6587.






▶ **Since 2012**, Saginaw Promise has provided over **\$1,405,747** in scholarships.

▶ **Big News!!!--Saginaw Promise has amended its Development Plan to broaden scholarship funding options, to fund “costs of attendance”,** in addition to tuition/mandatory fees, funding can now be applied to housing, books, supplies, meal programs, transportation etc. **More support for scholars and greater impact for Saginaw!**

▶ **Return on Investment:** (Source: 2024 National Clearinghouse Report) Saginaw Promise Scholar persistence and attainment...

National Student Clearinghouse Report (2024)
Saginaw Promise Scholars attainment--2012-2024.

*Persistence of Saginaw Promise Scholars to second year of postsecondary education: 49%

Program Certificates:	13
Associate degrees:	56
Bachelor’s degrees:	152
Master’s degrees:	33
Doctoral Candidates:	3
Juris Doctor:	1

*Additional Degrees earned but report did not specify degree level: 65

Total Number of program certificates and degrees earned: 323.



SAGINAW PROMISE · 1 TUSCOLA ST., SUITE 200. SAGINAW, MI 48607 · (989) 607-3428 · SAGINAWPROMISE.ORG

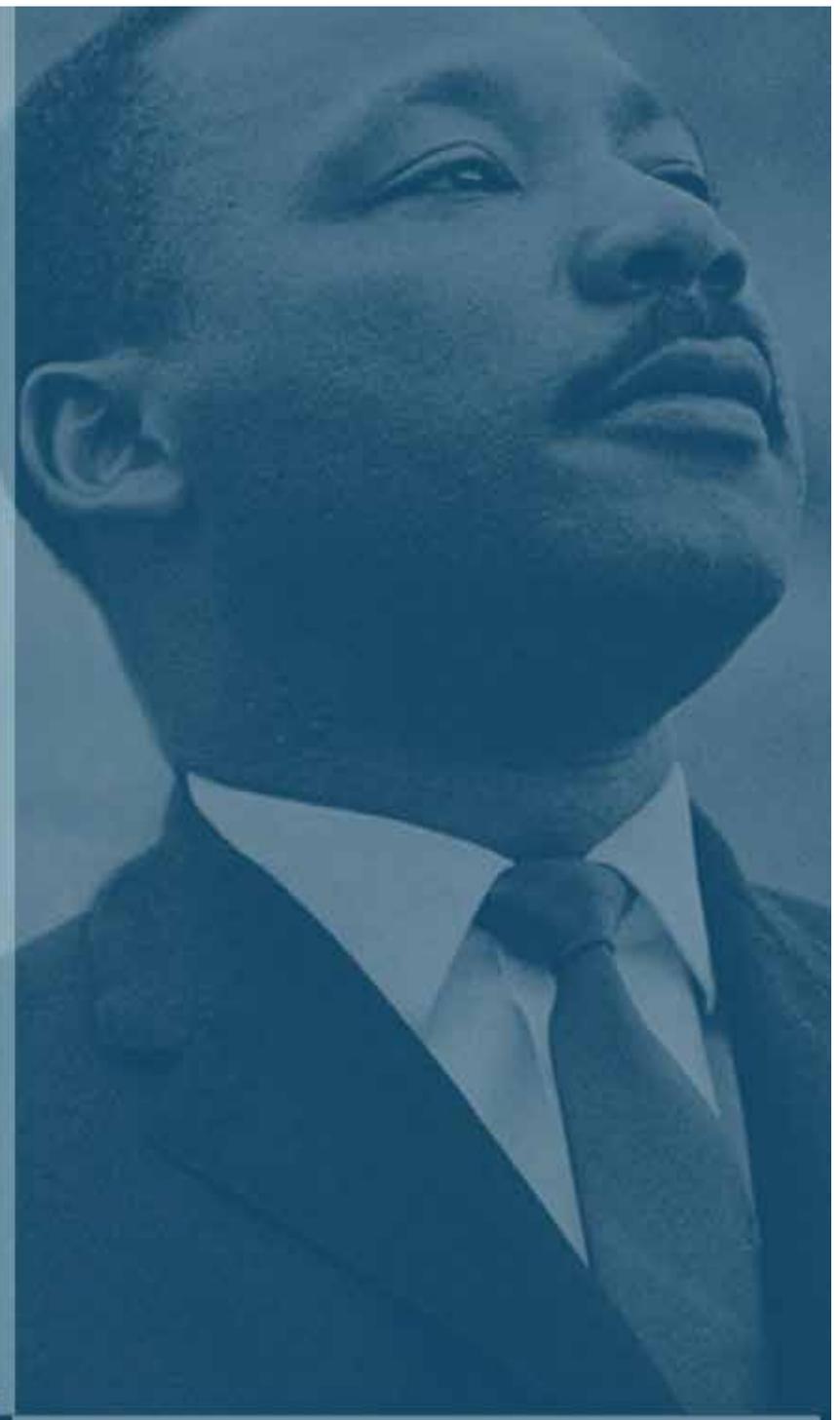


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COMMUNITY



Flint's Black Community Newspapers collection preserves local voices and history



THE BRONZE REPORTER, VOLUME: 1, ISSUE: 1

library and the Genesee Historical Collections Center. Archivists and librarians worked to preserve materials that were at risk of being lost due to the fragile nature of newsprint and the limited archival resources historically available to smaller publications.

The newspapers document a wide range of topics, from social events, education and business development to housing discrimination, segregation and public policy debates. Historians say these publications offer an important counterpoint to mainstream reporting of the time by capturing perspectives and experiences that were often underrepresented in larger regional newspapers.

According to the project's organizers, making the collection publicly accessible allows readers to better understand the social, political and economic realities faced by Black residents in mid-20th century Flint. The archive includes coverage of community celebrations and everyday milestones alongside reporting on systemic challenges such as redlining and discrimi-

nation, providing a more complete picture of local history.

The collection also reflects the role of community newspapers as connectors within neighborhoods, highlighting church activities, youth achievements and civic organizations while documenting how residents responded to broader national issues at the local level. These publications, written for a specific audience, functioned as both news sources and community records during Flint's industrial growth and demographic change.

During Black History Month, the archive underscores the importance of preserving primary sources that reflect diverse experiences. By making these newspapers searchable and freely available online, organizers say the project helps ensure that Flint's Black history remains accessible for future generations and continues to inform conversations about the city's past and present.

View the collection at <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/b/blackcommunitynews>.

BY MB STAFF

FLINT, Mich. — A growing digital archive of historic Black newspapers is helping preserve a fuller account of Flint's past, offering researchers, students and residents access to stories that documented daily life, civic engagement and social change within the city's African American community.

The Black Community Newspapers collection, available through the University of Michigan's digital collections,

includes publications such as *The Bronze Reporter*, *The Flint-Brownsville News* and *The Flint Spokesman*, newspapers that chronicled Flint's Black community from the late 1930s through the Civil Rights era and beyond. The collection provides insight into a period spanning the end of World War II through major social and political transitions in the United States.

The effort to digitize and share the newspapers grew out of a partnership involving the University of Michigan-Flint, the Gloria Coles Flint Public Li-



FLINT SPOKESMAN, VOLUME: 1, ISSUE: 1

COMMUNITY

BHM

Jeannine Gant reflects on being the first Black child born in Midland and first Black Dow High graduate

BY MB STAFF

MIDLAND, Mich. — Jeannine Gant holds a unique place in Midland's history as the first Black child born in the city in 1966, the daughter of George and Ruth Gant, who moved to the area after George Gant was recruited by Dow.

At the time of her birth, hospital records did not include a designation that accurately reflected her race, requiring her parents to request a correction so she would be properly identified as African American. The experience reflected the limited pres-

ence of Black families in Midland during that period, as the community began to slowly diversify.

Gant later became the first Black student to graduate from Dow High School, where she participated in school activities and athletics while navigating experiences that highlighted the challenges of being one of few Black students in the district. She has recalled instances such as being asked by a teacher to speak on behalf of all Black people during classroom discussions about slavery, moments that underscored the expectations sometimes placed on minority students.

Despite those experiences, Gant remembers her upbringing as largely positive, describing a childhood shaped by friendships, family support and active participation in school and community life. Her memories include Friday night football games, social gatherings and the everyday experiences that defined growing up in Midland during the late 1960s and 1970s.

Today, her story reflects both the barriers faced by early Black families in the region and the gradual changes that followed as communities across mid-Michigan became more diverse.



JEANNINE GANT

Talent Horizon Summit to focus on retaining next-generation workers in Flint

BY MB STAFF

FLINT, Mich. — Employers, human resources leaders and education partners from across Genesee County are set to gather Feb. 26 for the second annual Talent Horizon Summit, an event focused on how businesses can attract, develop and retain the next generation of workers as workforce expectations shift.

The half-day summit is scheduled for Thursday, Feb. 26, 2026, from 8:30 a.m. to noon at the Genesee Career Institute Conference Center, 5081 Torrey Road, Flint. Registration begins at 8:30 a.m. with networking and breakfast, followed by programming starting at 9:20 a.m., according to event organizers.

The summit is hosted by Flint

& Genesee Education & Talent with partners including GST Michigan Works!, Mott Community College, the Shiawassee Economic Development Partnership, and the University of Michigan-Flint, organizers said.

"This year's theme is Personalizing Strategies for Growing Companies and Communities — a powerful focus on human-centered talent attraction, retention, and community growth," said Brianna Mosier, executive director of Flint & Genesee Education & Talent. "The half-day conference will explore how personal invitation, the science of mattering, and data-driven workforce trends can help employers build cultures that people want to be a part of."

Event materials describe the summit as aimed at giving em-

ployers and talent-development professionals tools to respond to changing business needs in 2026, including workforce retention and training strategies and stronger coordination between employers and community partners.

Agenda highlights

A keynote session, "Personalized Strategies for Growing Companies and Communities," is scheduled to be led by Rebecca Udem and Winona Dimeo-Ediger of Growing Small Towns, according to the event listing. The session description emphasizes human-centered recruitment and retention, noting that decisions about where to work and live are not only analytical.

Two breakout sessions are

listed:

- "Data and Workforce Trends Every Leader Should Know," focused on workforce trends and leadership approaches for newer generations entering the workforce.
- "Powering the Talent Pipeline Through Partnership," facilitated by GST Michigan Works!, focused on how employers can use available resources and partnerships to strengthen recruitment, retention and workforce development.

Registration is listed at \$25 through Jan. 13, 2026, and \$30 after Jan. 13.

PLENARY SPEAKER

Justin Jones-Fosu

Internationally recognized speaker and bestselling author of Your WHY Matters NOW and The Inclusive Mindset



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POLITICS

BHM

Black Mayors of Michigan endorse Benson for governor; Saginaw's Brenda Moore among members backing bid



FROM LEFT, SAGINAW MAYOR BRENDA MOORE AND JOCELYN BENSON

BY MB STAFF

SAGINAW, Mich. — A state-wide coalition of Black municipal leaders that includes Saginaw Mayor Brenda Moore has endorsed Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson in Michigan's 2026 race for governor, adding a Great Lakes Bay Region voice to a growing list of local officials lining up behind the Democratic candidate.

The Black Mayors of Michigan, which describes itself as a nonpartisan coalition focused on leadership development and collaboration among cities, announced its endorsement this week. The group's president, Marcus Muhammad, said Ben-

son has prioritized public safety and resources for communities across the state.

"Jocelyn Benson has shown time and again that she will always protect Michiganders and fight to ensure we have the resources we need to thrive," Muhammad said in a statement. "As a student of the civil rights movement, she knows economic prosperity and equity go hand in hand. We look forward to collaborating with her as governor to continue the work of building a more affordable, equitable, and fair society."

Benson, in her own statement, said the endorsement aligns with her campaign's focus on affordability and economic

opportunity.

"I am honored to have the support and endorsement of the Black Mayors of Michigan to be the next governor of Michigan," Benson said. "At the heart of our people-powered campaign is a vision to build a Michigan that everyone can afford and where anyone can thrive ... I look forward to working with all of our mayors to drive that work and make the promise of prosperity real for every Michigander."

Moore is the only mayor from the Great Lakes Bay Region listed among the coalition's members endorsing Benson. Other members named in the announcement include mayors Raylon Leaks-May, Valerie Kindle, Glen-

da McDonald, Byron Nolen, Daniel Mahoney, Bret Scott, William Campbell, Nicole Brown and Kelly Garrett, along with Bonnie McGohtlin.

Benson launched her bid to succeed term-limited Gov. Gretchen Whitmer in 2026 in January 2025. The contest has drawn a crowded field, including John James on the Republican side and Mike Duggan running as an independent, according to recent reporting.

The Benson campaign also pointed to endorsements from organizations including the Michigan Association of Justice, the Michigan Democratic Party Black Caucus, EMILYs List and End Citizens United.

POLITICS

Mayor Moore's State of the City frames Saginaw's 2026 goals around safety, ARPA spending and health hub



SAGINAW MAYOR BRENDA MOORE DELIVERS STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS

BY MB STAFF

SAGINAW, Mich. — Mayor Brenda F. Moore used her State of the City address Thursday to point to declining violent crime, major federal relief spending and a reshaping of downtown around a planned health and education corridor as she laid out Saginaw's agenda for 2026.

Moore delivered the annual speech during a morning event hosted by the Saginaw County Chamber of Commerce at Dow Event Center. The city announced the appearance the day before, saying Moore would review 2025 accomplishments and outline 2026 goals.

In her remarks, Moore placed public safety at the top of that list, reporting that Saginaw recorded

an 11% reduction in Serious Part 1 crime in 2025 and a 43% reduction in homicides.

The mayor also used the speech to give residents a detailed accounting of how the city has deployed its allocation of American Rescue Plan Act funding, a pot of one-time federal dollars that has underwritten everything from infrastructure to youth programming and housing repairs.

"With just a little over 10 months left this year, approximately \$45 million of the \$52 million in ARPA funding has been spent and is in compliance with U.S. Treasury federal guidelines," Moore said in her prepared text. Federal rules require the money be spent by Dec. 31, 2026, she said.

Moore said the city directed

more than \$10 million of that funding toward youth development and workforce development, with 26 organizations receiving support to expand or strengthen programming. She also said ARPA dollars were used to address food insecurity and mental health, including continued work on the Saginaw Community Food Club and an integrated behavioral health clinic project tied to a regional provider.

A separate portion of ARPA "revenue replacement" funding — more than \$19 million, Moore said — has been allocated toward major city infrastructure projects, with work continuing through 2025. Moore highlighted planned improvements to Ojibway Island, including a renovated stage intended to bring

back large outdoor concerts and festivals, along with other public works projects.

Housing was another centerpiece. Moore said the city's ARPA Home Rehabilitation Program has allocated more than \$8 million since 2022 for furnace, roof and window replacements for more than 800 homes, framing the repairs as both neighborhood stabilization and a strategy to protect homeownership.

Budget pressure and a long-running tax cap

Moore's speech also returned to a familiar constraint on city finances: a property tax cap she said dates to 1979 and limits the city's property tax revenue to 7.5 mills — about \$3.8 million — a figure she described as effectively locking the city into 1979-era purchasing power. She urged residents to consider how the cap affects service levels and long-term investment.

The mayor said the city's most recent fiscal year audit found no material weaknesses and that Saginaw reported an increase in general fund revenues, while maintaining a balanced budget for fiscal year 2026.

Roads, water and city facilities

On infrastructure, Moore said Saginaw improved more than eight lane miles of roads in 2025, including reconstruction work on portions of Hess Avenue, Cass Street and Wheeler Street and resurfacing on sections of South Mason, Mackinaw, Court and Harrison streets. She also said the city completed rehabilitation and preventive maintenance work on the Court Street Bridge.

Moore cited improvements

See SAGINAW STATE OF THE CITY, Page 24

POLITICS

SAGINAW STATE OF THE CITY, from page 23



EUGENE SEALS, JR., PRESIDENT AND CEO OF THE SAGINAW COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

in the city's PASER road-condition ratings — a standard used by transportation agencies — while arguing that Saginaw still needs more state resources to address neighborhood streets.

She also highlighted ongoing work on a new elevated water storage tank project visible from major corridors, describing it as a reliability upgrade for the city's system. In her prepared remarks, Moore said the new tower will be about 160 feet tall, hold 3 million gallons of water and add an estimated three to six hours of back-up pressure in an emergency. A ribbon-cutting is planned for later this spring, she said.

Moore pointed to renovation work continuing at city hall — funded largely through ARPA dollars, she said — including HVAC replacement and other building upgrades.

The Medical Diamond and a downtown redevelopment bet

A major portion of Moore's

address focused on what she described as a "once in a generation" redevelopment push: the Medical Diamond project, centered around a new downtown health-science campus and expanded medical education footprint.



CROWD AT THE 2026 STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS

Moore's prepared speech said Central Michigan University emphasized a commitment to relocate all four years of its College of Medicine to Saginaw — a move she called an important vote of confidence in the city as a regional hub for medical education and clinical care.

In her speech text, Moore said the development is expected to span three blocks along Washington Avenue and aims to increase health care access while driving economic development. She also pointed to major local partners, including Covenant HealthCare and Great Lakes Bay Health Centers, describing the planned campus as a "walkable, connected and vibrant health-science" corridor.

Moore said the project's scale and direction were a central focus of a January strategic planning session that brought together multiple stakeholders, including health and higher-education partners and transportation officials.

Local television coverage of the address also highlighted Moore's focus on the Medical Diamond and her framing of it as a long-term, downtown transformation effort.

Parks, youth programming and workforce pipeline

Beyond bricks-and-mortar projects, Moore's prepared remarks highlighted park planning and youth-focused programming as quality-of-life strategies tied to public safety and long-term population stability.

Moore said the city began updating its Parks and Recreation Plan in 2025 and launched "Park Play Date" events during the summer that introduced youth to sports such as track and field, tennis, baseball and skateboarding. She credited city staff and regional partners for the program and said additional events are planned for 2026.

She also pointed to workforce development efforts, including a job fair that drew more than 160 applicants and included participation from about 250 students from the Saginaw Career Complex, according to her prepared remarks.

In her prepared speech, Moore cast 2025 as a year of forward movement while acknowledging persistent challenges, urging residents to focus on measurable progress and continued collaboration.

Greene, Tunney win nominations in Michigan Senate District 35 special primary



FROM LEFT, DEMOCRAT CANDIDATES CHEDRICK GREENE AND REPUBLICAN CANDIDATE, JASON TUNNEY

BY MB STAFF

SAGINAW, Mich. — Voters in parts of Bay, Midland and Saginaw counties chose nominees in the special primary election on Tuesday, Feb. 3, 2026, to fill the vacant 35th District seat in the Michigan Senate.

On the Democratic side, Chedrick Greene won with 16,081 votes (60.4%), defeating five other candidates, according to unofficial results published by WNEM. Pamela Pugh finished second with 7,371 votes (27.7%), followed by Martin L. Blank (1,187; 4.5%), Serenity Hope Salak (712; 2.7%), Brandell Adams (674; 2.5%) and William

Morrone (599; 2.2%).

In the Republican primary, Jason Tunney won with 9,335 votes (51.2%), topping Christian Velasquez with 7,733 votes (42.4%). Chadwick Twillman received 689 (3.8%) and Andrew Carlos Wendt received 472 (2.6%).

Results remain unofficial until certified by election canvassers.

What's next

Greene and Tunney advance to the special general election on May 5, with the winner serving the remainder of the term that runs through Dec. 31, 2026.

The 35th District covers parts

of the Tri-Cities area, including communities around Bay City, Midland and Saginaw.

Why the race matters

The seat opened after Kristen McDonald Rivet left the Michigan Senate for Congress, triggering the special election schedule set by Gov. Gretchen Whitmer.

The contest has drawn statewide attention because of its potential effect on the closely divided Senate. Democrats currently hold a narrow majority, and the outcome of the May election could reshape how closely contested votes play out in Lansing, including whether the chamber

could be forced into more frequent tie-breaking scenarios involving Lt. Gov. Garlin Gilchrist II.

Greene told WNEM after the primary that his experience working as a district assistant helped shape his campaign. "Working as a district assistant in this office allowed me to hear a lot of what people have on the ground, so running for this elected leader seat here allows me to put those things in action," Greene said.

Voter turnout and margins in the Feb. 3 primary are also being watched as a measure of enthusiasm ahead of the May special election and Michigan's broader 2026 election cycle.

HEALTH

BHM

Dr. Archer A. Claytor remembered as pioneering Saginaw physician

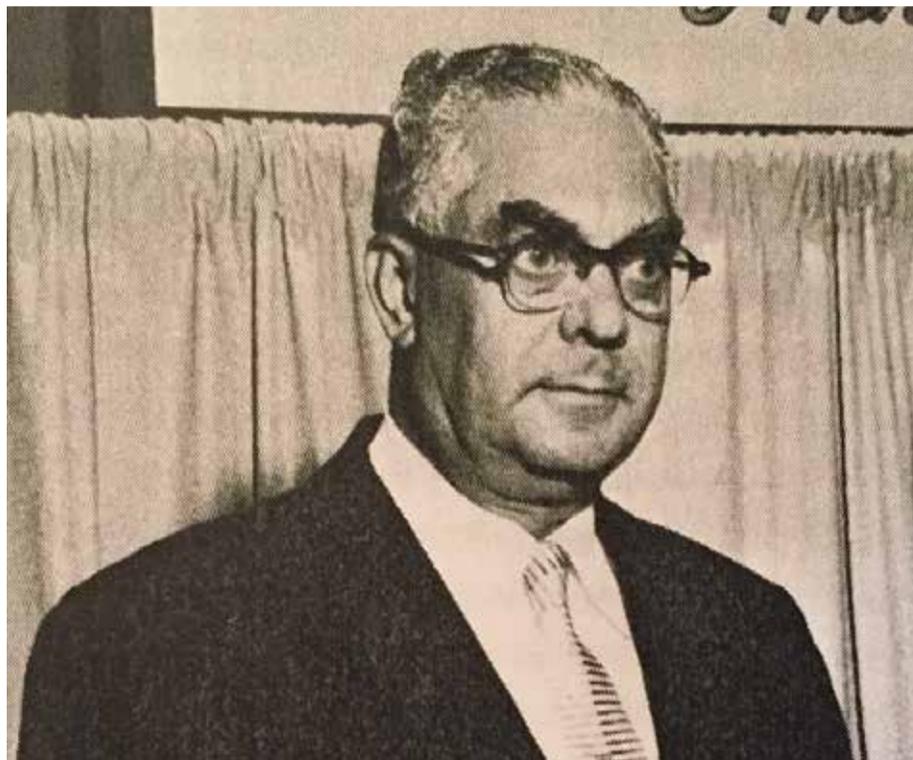
BY MB STAFF

SAGINAW, Mich. — Long before diversity in medicine became a national conversation, Dr. Archer A. Claytor built a medical practice and civic legacy in Saginaw that helped open doors for Black physicians and reshaped access to care across the community.

A family physician who practiced in Saginaw for more than three decades, Claytor became widely known not only for his medical skill but for his leadership, mentorship and willingness to serve patients across racial and economic lines during an era when opportunities for Black doctors were often limited by discrimination in medical schools and hospitals.

Born Dec. 2, 1893, in Cooper Hill, Virginia, Claytor was the son of parents who had been enslaved. He was one of 13 children, all of whom received an education despite limited resources. After serving overseas in World War I as an infantry private first class, Claytor earned a degree in pharmacy from Temple University in 1923 before pursuing medicine. He later attended Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tennessee, receiving his medical degree in 1934. He completed an internship at Provident Hospital in Chicago and a residency at Parkside Hospital in Detroit.

Claytor arrived in Saginaw in 1936, establishing a family practice that initially served the city's northeast side, where many Black families had relocated for foundry work during the region's industrial growth. Over time,



DR. ARCHER A. CLAYTOR

his reputation expanded city-wide, and patients from all backgrounds sought his care.

During his career, Claytor delivered more than 5,000 babies, many in home settings during a period when hospital access was limited for some families. He became one of Saginaw's busiest general practitioners and for several years maintained one of the largest patient lists at both Saginaw General Hospital and St. Mary's Hospital.

Colleagues and young physicians frequently sought his guidance, and Claytor became known for mentoring interns and residents entering the profession. At a time when many minority physicians faced barriers to internships and hospital privileges, his presence on hospital staffs throughout the city represented a significant breakthrough for

future generations of Black doctors seeking opportunities in the region.

In 1959, Claytor was named Michigan's Foremost Family Physician at the Michigan State Medical Society's annual convention — becoming the first Saginaw physician and the first Black physician to receive the honor since its creation in 1947. In remarks at the time, he spoke openly about the informal barriers that had historically limited minority admission to medical schools and residency programs, calling for greater equity in the profession.

Beyond medicine, Claytor played a central role in civic life. He served as a director and later president of the First Ward Community Center, where he worked with young people and supported programs focused on recreation,

education and mentorship. He also served on the Saginaw Housing Commission during a period of racial tension surrounding public housing and worked with the Saginaw Community Chest, helping guide community initiatives and charitable efforts.

His contributions reached beyond the local level when President Dwight D. Eisenhower appointed him in 1958 to a six-year term as a director of the Virgin Islands Corporation, an appointment recognized by civic leaders in Saginaw at the time.

Claytor's life ended tragically on Feb. 2, 1967, when he and his wife, Marie Virginia Walden Claytor, were murdered in their Buena Vista Township home. The killings shocked the community, where the couple was widely respected for their service and involvement.

In the years following his death, Saginaw continued to honor his legacy. A Buena Vista school was named in his honor in 1968, and he was inducted into the Saginaw Hall of Fame in 1970 as its first Black honoree. Claytor Park in Buena Vista Township and a branch of the Saginaw Public Libraries also bear his name.

During Black History Month, Claytor's story reflects a broader chapter of local history — one in which Black physicians not only provided medical care but also helped reshape professional opportunity and civic leadership. His career stands as an example of how perseverance and service helped create pathways for future generations of Black medical professionals in Saginaw and throughout Michigan.

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HEALTH

Health officials encourage preventive screenings during American Heart Month

BY MB STAFF

LANSING, Mich. — Health officials across Michigan are encouraging residents to prioritize heart health during February, recognized nationally as American Heart Month, as cardiovascular disease remains the leading cause of death in the state and nationwide.

Medical professionals say regular screenings for blood pressure, cholesterol and diabetes remain critical in reducing long-term risk. Lifestyle factors including physical activity, nutrition and smoking cessation continue to be

among the most effective prevention strategies.

Local health departments in the Great Lakes Bay Region have increased outreach efforts during the month, offering educational programming and screening opportunities aimed at helping residents identify risk factors earlier.

Health experts emphasize that heart disease often develops without obvious symptoms, making routine checkups an important part of preventive care, particularly for adults over 40 and individuals with family histories of cardiovascular disease.

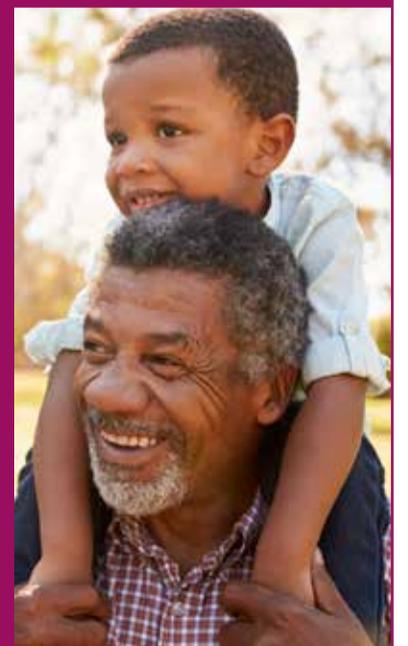


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EDUCATION

BHM

Dr. Gerald D. Dawkins broke barriers as Saginaw Public Schools' first Black superintendent



DR. GERALD D. DAWKINS

BY MB STAFF

SAGINAW, Mich. — When Dr. Gerald D. Dawkins took the helm of Saginaw Public Schools in 2001, the appointment marked a milestone for the district and the city's long fight for representation in public institutions: Dawkins became the first Black superintendent to lead the Saginaw district.

For Black History Month, education leaders and community historians point to Dawkins' tenure not only as a "first," but as an example of how local leadership positions — often less visible than state or national offices — can shape opportunity for students and influence who sees themselves reflected in decision-making.

Dawkins served as superintendent of Saginaw Public Schools for seven years, leading the district through the early 2000s and overseeing a system that, at the time, included about 18,000 students, according to his

published obituary.

The Saginaw NAACP's centennial publication listing "Saginaw Area African-American Historical Firsts" identifies Dawkins' superintendency — dated 2001 to 2008 — among educational milestones that helped define local progress, placing his service alongside earlier firsts in school leadership and governance.

A career built in Michigan schools

Dawkins' path to Saginaw ran through decades in public education. He began his career in Grand Rapids in the 1970s and rose through school and central-office administration, holding roles that included assistant superintendent and chief of staff, according to his obituary.

In Saginaw, he became a familiar figure in school policy discussions and district initiatives during a period of shifting enrollment patterns and growing competition for students

across Michigan's public school landscape.

After his time in Saginaw, Dawkins moved on to lead a larger district outside Michigan. In 2008, he was named superintendent of the Caddo Parish school system in Shreveport, Louisiana, a district described in his obituary as serving about 45,000 students.

The same obituary credits Dawkins' leadership with academic growth, graduation-rate improvements and financial stability in both Saginaw and Caddo Parish.

"First" as responsibility — and a signal to others

Being first in a role can carry added pressure: expectations from those who see the appointment as overdue progress, and scrutiny from those uneasy about change. In Saginaw, Dawkins' superintendency arrived in a city with deep civil rights history and a school district serving students across neighborhoods shaped by decades of economic change.

Local historians often describe breakthroughs like his as "door-opening" moments — not because they solve systemic inequities on their own, but because they expand what becomes normal and possible in public life. The NAACP's local list places Dawkins in that lineage of civic firsts in education, a category that includes trailblazing teachers, principals and board leaders.

That visibility has continued beyond his lifetime. In 2023, a new public charter school in Southeast Grand Rapids was

named Gerald Dawkins Academy. In reporting about the school's opening, WGTV described Dawkins as a lifelong educator who later became the first Black superintendent of Saginaw's school district.

Local legacy in a wider story

Dawkins' story also connects Saginaw to a broader statewide narrative: the uneven pace at which Black educators have gained access to top leadership roles, even in diverse districts.

For many families, a superintendent's name may only appear in budget updates, school board agendas, or policy letters sent home. But superintendents influence the day-to-day realities of schooling: staffing priorities, instructional investments, building decisions and the tone of public accountability. Dawkins' tenure in Saginaw is remembered by community record-keepers as part of the gradual, often contested expansion of who gets to lead — and who gets to be seen as a legitimate authority over major public systems.

Dawkins died in 2021, according to his obituary, after a career that spanned local Michigan schools, a major Louisiana district, and later work with a national education engagement firm.

In Saginaw, his name remains part of the public record of firsts — a reminder during Black History Month that local education history is not only about students in classrooms, but also about who has had the power to shape what happens inside them.

EDUCATION

BHM

Black History Month resources for parents



BY CRAIG DOUGLAS

February is Black History Month; where can parents go for resources they can share with their children?

A search of the worldwide web reveals many resources. Personally I favor local and free resources. It is vital that are

credible. There are many for consideration, and here are three that are free and readily available that I believe meet these expectations.

Digital toolkit from the Smithsonian

No need to travel to our nation's Capital when you can log onto the web and access materials digitally for no cost.

https://nmaahc.si.edu/explore/moments/black-history-month/digital-toolkit?utm_source=copilot.com

Public broadcasting (PBS) –

Michigan Learning Channel

A team of educators working for public broadcasting has updated the Michigan Learning Channel in commemoration of Black History month. Some of the material is accessible over traditional television that does not require the use of the internet. All are cost-free and current.

<https://www.michigan-learning.org/learning-hub/educational-videos/black-history/>

Your local library or school library

Few resources can beat the local library because librarians make being timely and current the highest of priorities. The variety of books, programs and offerings always impresses me.

<https://www.saginawlibrary.org/event/black-history-month-lecture-32513>

The importance of honoring African Americans has never been greater, and for parent & grandparents, good resources are valued. As Kareem Abdul Jabaar once said, "In a typical history book, Black Americans are mentioned in the context of slavery or civil rights.... there's so much more to the story."

Michigan Department of Education launches Office of Curriculum and Instruction

BY MB STAFF

LANSING, Mich. — The Michigan Department of Education has created a new Office of Curriculum and Instruction as part of a departmental reorganization aimed at strengthening support for teaching and learning across schools statewide.

The new office is intended to improve student outcomes, particularly in literacy, while also elevating curriculum and instructional support in mathematics and other core academic subjects. It is part of a broader restructuring within MDE's Division of Assessment, School Improvement, and Systems Support.

"Strong curriculum and instruction are the foundation of student success," said Dr. Sue C. Carnell, MDE's chief deputy superintendent. "By creating the Office of Curriculum and Instruc-

tion, we are better positioned to put Michigan Students First and support them with the tools they need to thrive in literacy, numeracy, and beyond."

The Office of Curriculum and Instruction brings together staff from the Literacy and Educational Experiences units, which were previously housed within the Office of Educational Supports. Department officials said the move is designed to create a unified team focused on evidence-based instructional practices and resources that directly affect student achievement. Dr. Jen Saylor, formerly assistant director of the Office of Educational Supports, has been named interim director.

The office includes consultants specializing in math, science, social studies, literacy and dyslexia. It also oversees areas such as high school graduation requirements, personal curricu-

lum plans, alternative education, dual enrollment and online learning, along with culturally relevant instructional practices. The team will also administer grant programs that support local education agencies.

State Superintendent Glenn Maleyko said the restructuring is intended to make curriculum resources more accessible to educators while supporting equitable learning opportunities across the state.

"This restructuring reflects MDE's commitment to making curriculum and instructional resources more accessible and visible," Maleyko said. "Our goal is to ensure every student has access to high-quality, equitable learning opportunities."

Among its key priorities, the new office will work with schools to implement Michigan's 2024 literacy and dyslexia laws, Public Act 146 and Public Act 147, pro-

vide guidance on academic standards and graduation requirements, and share evidence-based instructional strategies across subject areas. The office will also support professional learning opportunities for educators and promote innovative instructional approaches.

While MDE develops and recommends academic standards for adoption by the State Board of Education, local school boards retain authority over selecting curriculum and instructional materials that meet those standards, allowing districts to tailor instruction to local needs while maintaining statewide expectations.

Additional information about the Office of Curriculum and Instruction is available on the Michigan Department of Education's website.



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EDUCATION

Saginaw Township Schools appoint new board member, place \$94.2 million bond proposal on May ballot

BY MB STAFF

SAGINAW, Mich. — The Saginaw Township Community Schools Board of Education recently addressed two significant district matters, selecting a new board member to fill a vacancy and approving a revised bond proposal that will go before voters in May.



SHARON NORMAN

During a special meeting Thursday, Feb. 5, the board selected Sharon Norman to fill the seat vacated by trustee Arik Smith, who stepped down before the end of his term due to relocation. Under the Michigan School Code of 1976 and district Board of Education policy 1170, the district was required to fill the vacancy within 30 days. The board conducted interviews before making its selection.

Norman, originally from Grand Rapids, moved to Saginaw Township with her family in 2018, citing the school district as a key reason for relocating.

“We believed it was the very best place for our daughters,” Norman said. “This community has embraced our family in meaningful ways. We didn’t just choose a school district—we



SAGINAW TOWNSHIP COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

chose a village.”

Norman has been involved in district activities through volunteer work and community partnerships, including participation in Music Boosters and service on the State Foster Care Review Board. She said her professional experience in child abuse prevention and her involvement with families in the district shaped her decision to serve at a governance level.

“When compassionate, thoughtful individuals step forward, they bring perspective, balance, and hope into important conversations,” Norman said. “My experiences serving in Music Boosters and on the State Foster Care Review Board have shown me that a steady voice of care and accountability can influence outcomes in powerful ways. When community members engage, we move from simply reacting to challenges to intentionally build-

ing solutions together. Strong communities are built by people willing to show up.”

Norman is the parent of a Heritage High School graduate expected to graduate from Central Michigan University in May, as well as a current Heritage junior. She was sworn in and began her board service at the Feb. 9, 2026, Board of Education meeting.

Bond proposal set for May vote

In other district business, the Board of Education voted to place a \$94.2 million bond proposal on the May 5, 2026 ballot, following approval from the Michigan Department of Treasury.

If approved by voters, bond funds would be used to address facility improvements across the district, with a focus on safety, security, infrastructure and updat-

ed learning spaces. District officials said the proposal represents a scaled-back request compared to a bond proposal presented to voters in November 2025.

The revised plan focuses on essential needs and does not include new building construction or athletic projects. The proposal calls for a 1.00 mill tax increase, which district officials estimate would cost a homeowner with a home valued at \$120,000, with a taxable value of \$60,000, about \$60 annually, or approximately \$5 per month.

“We listened carefully to our community and reduced the scope of the bond to focus only on critical needs that keep students safe and provide updated learning environments,” Superintendent Craig Kraatz said. “This proposal reflects the voices we heard, including concerns about the impact on taxes. By taking a long-term, phased approach to meeting the district’s needs, we believe we have found a responsible solution that balances safety, learning, and affordability for our community.”

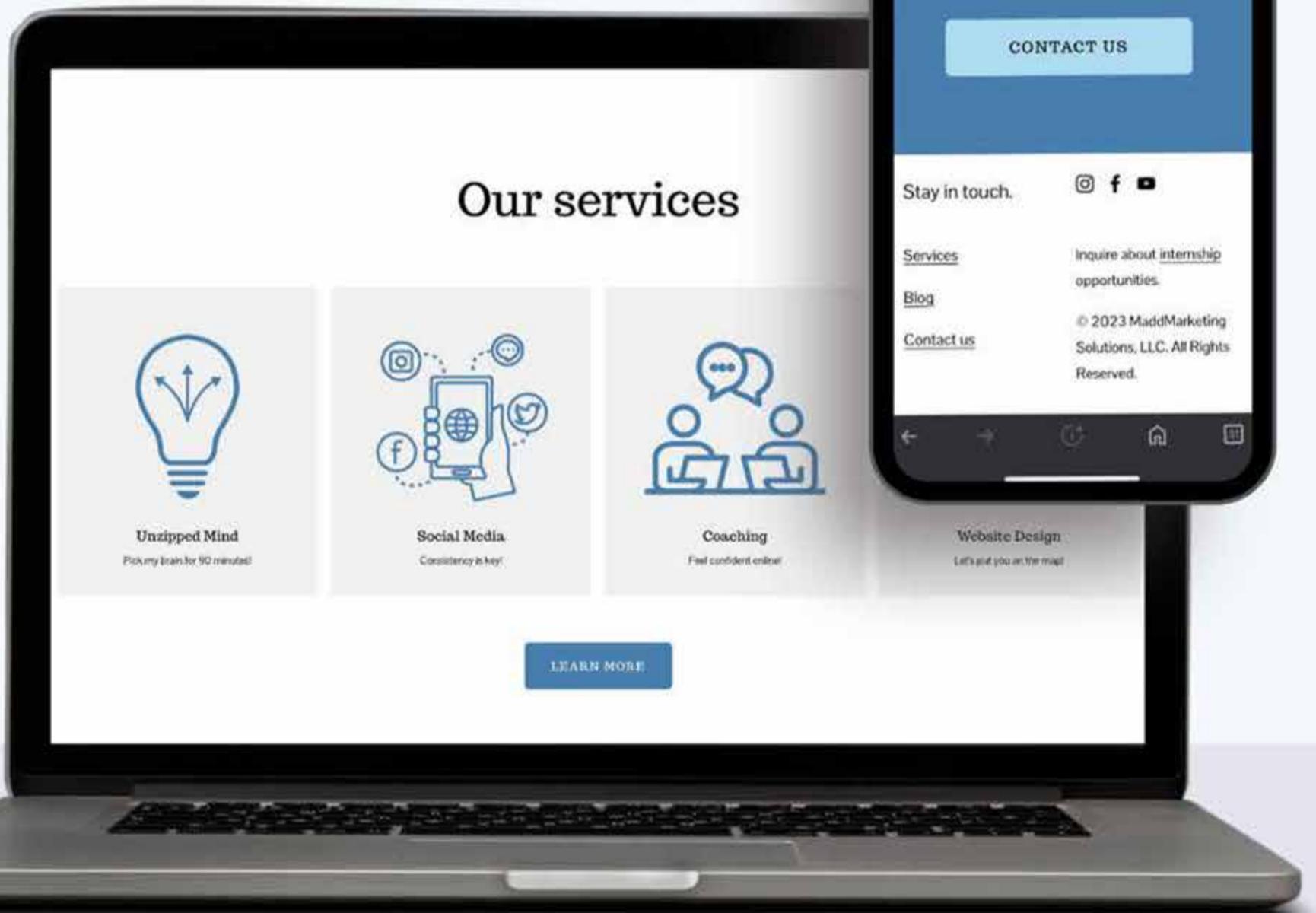
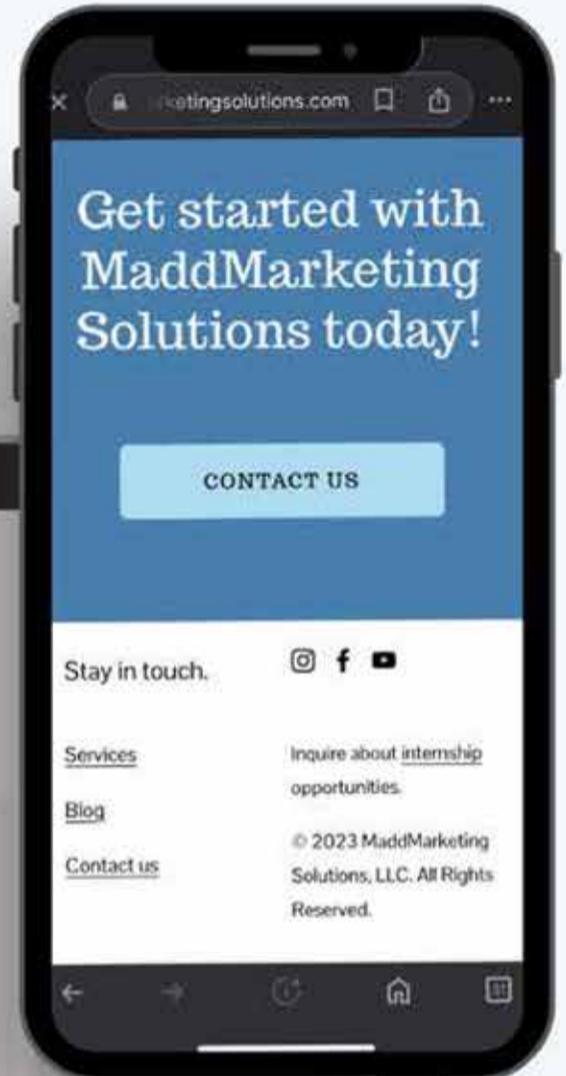
District officials said the bond proposal is designed as part of a phased approach to addressing facility needs, with future reviews dependent on building conditions, community input and fiscal capacity. Any future bond renewals or extensions would be considered with the goal of maintaining a stable millage rate.

Additional information, including a detailed breakdown of proposed improvements by building, is available on the district’s website at www.stcs.org. The district also plans to host an informational session for residents to learn more about the proposal and ask questions ahead of the May election.



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EMPLOYER REQUIREMENTS AND CONSIDERATIONS

- Offer the MI Tri-Share program to one or more employees with dependent children between 0-12 years old.
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MI Tri-Share Program Eligibility 2025

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3 People	\$53,300	\$106,600	7 People	\$97,300	\$194,600
4 People	\$64,300	\$128,600	8 People	\$108,300	\$216,600
5 People	\$75,300	\$150,600	9 People	\$119,300	\$238,600

200% - 400% Federal Poverty Level - Effective May 1, 2025

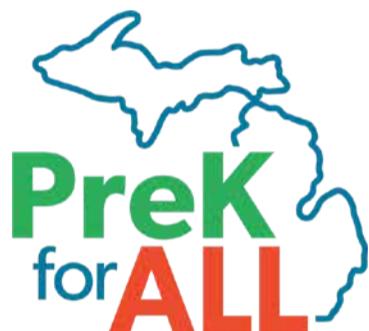
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989-752-2193 for more information and apply today!

BUSINESS + FINANCE

Zehnder's of Frankenmuth names Nick Shelton as new president



NICK SHELTON

BY MB STAFF

FRANKENMUTH, Mich. — Zehnder's of Frankenmuth has appointed Nick Shelton as its new president, marking a leadership transition within one of Michigan's longest-standing family-owned hospitality businesses.

Shelton represents the fourth generation of the Zehnder family involved in the company and assumes the role as the organization approaches its centennial. His

great-grandparents purchased the New Exchange Hotel in 1929 and reopened it as Zehnder's, establishing what would become one of the region's best-known hospitality destinations.

Shelton's experience with the company began at an early age, working in multiple areas of the business, including at the golf course and as the restaurant's mascot, Drumstick. Company officials said the experience provided him with a broad understanding of operations and the

guest-focused approach that has defined the business for decades.

The Zehnder's brand includes the flagship Zehnder's Restaurant, Splash Village Hotel & Waterpark, The Fortress championship golf course and Zehnder's Marketplace, which features a food store, bakery and gift shop, as well as an online retail operation. The company's newest project, The Mill at Zehnder Park, a boutique hotel, is scheduled to open later this spring.

Prior to his appointment as

president, Shelton served as director of golf operations for 12 years. During that time, the division experienced consistent year-over-year double-digit growth, according to the company.

"Zehnder's of Frankenmuth is a place where families have gathered to celebrate traditions and make memories for nearly 100 years," Shelton said. "This company is a symbol of hospitality that means so much to our guests, our community, and the generations of employees who make Zehnder's so special."

Shelton, who previously played Division I basketball at Valparaiso University and later served as a graduate assistant coach, said he brings a team-oriented leadership approach to the role.

"I appreciate the opportunity to coach and guide a team toward success," Shelton said. "The ability to create a game plan and execute on it together as a team—there is nothing better. I've applied that approach throughout my career and look forward to coaching our team in my new role as President of Zehnder's."

Shelton said his primary focus moving forward will be maintaining the guest experience that has made Zehnder's a regional destination while continuing to build on the company's tradition of hospitality.

For nearly a century, Zehnder's of Frankenmuth has remained a family-owned business known for its family-style chicken dinners and role as a major tourism and hospitality destination in mid-Michigan, drawing visitors from across the state and beyond.

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BUSINESS + FINANCE

Historic Flint building to be converted into Sit Down Taproom & Purveyor restaurant



703 GRAND TRAVERSE, FLINT, MI

BY MB STAFF

FLINT, Mich. — A vacant historic property on Flint's Grand Traverse Street is slated for redevelopment into a sit-down strike-themed restaurant and bar, backed by state funding and a local tax abatement aimed at reactivating underused buildings and strengthening downtown activity.

The property at 703 S. Grand Traverse St., most recently used as a law office, is planned to become the Sit Down Taproom & Purveyor, described as an American public house-style restaurant and bar that draws

inspiration from the 1936-37 Flint Sit-Down Strike.

The project is expected to receive a \$250,000 Build MI Community (BMC) grant and generate about \$834,500 in total capital investment, according to state and local announcements. The City of Flint has also approved support through a tax abatement under an Obsolete Property Rehabilitation District, with an estimated value of \$100,000.

"This will be the first development project for developer Feuersteyn Enterprises, LLC, comprised of Emily Feuerherm and Theodore Van Steyn," the

state said, adding that the developers are working with Gilmour Construction and architecture firm Sedgewick and Ferweda.

"We are so grateful for the support of the MEDC who is investing in and celebrating Flint's storied history through the development of this property," developer Emily Feuerherm said in the state announcement. "The 100+ year-old house will be renovated into a restaurant themed on Flint's historic 1936 Sit Down Strike, called Sit Down Taproom and Purveyor."

State and local officials tied the restaurant project to a broader package of Genesee County

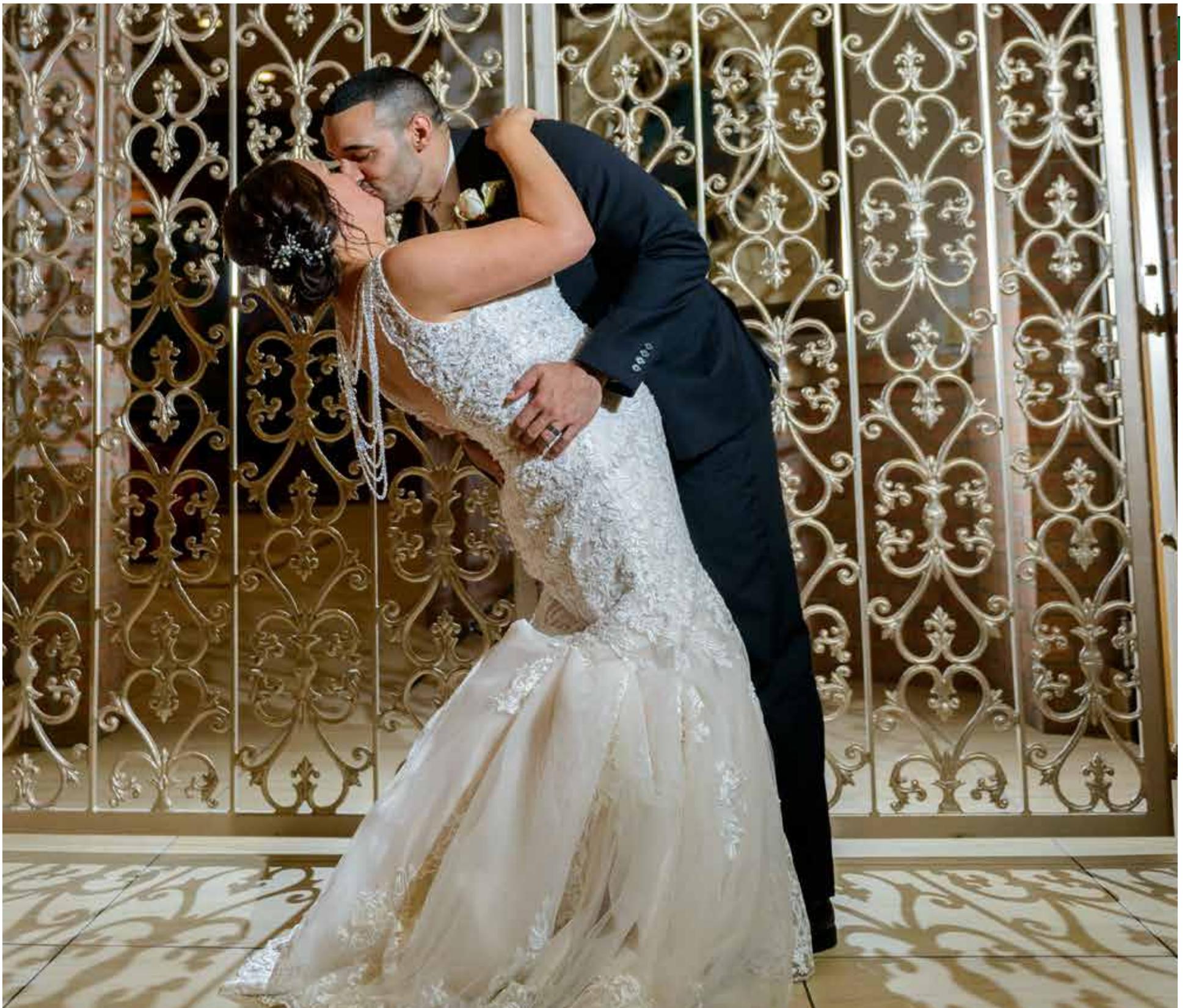
redevelopment initiatives supported through the bipartisan Revitalization and Placemaking program and the BMC grant initiative, which aim to help close financing gaps and encourage reuse of vacant structures.

Tyler Rossmassler, executive director of the Flint & Genesee Economic Alliance, said the project is intended to support downtown placemaking while honoring local history.

"It is inspiring to see a project that will both support the placemaking efforts in downtown Flint while honoring our city's great history, and we are thankful to the Michigan Economic Development Corporation for supporting these efforts," Rossmassler said. "The redevelopment of this 112-year-old vacant house will bring a new space for locals and visitors to gather and enjoy food, drinks, and community."

The planned reuse of the property arrives as Flint continues to pursue redevelopment strategies that blend historic preservation with new commercial activity, particularly in and around downtown corridors. The state announcement did not include an opening date for the restaurant, and developers have not publicly released a construction timeline in the materials provided.

The restaurant concept explicitly references the Flint Sit-Down Strike, the 1936-37 labor action that became a defining moment in the city's industrial and union history. Supporters of the project said the theme is intended to connect the building's next use to Flint's broader civic identity while creating a new gathering space for residents and visitors.



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SPORTS

BHM

From Saginaw to Silver City: A Michigan family legacy ignites the WNMU basketball spirit



BY EVA BOWEN

As a lifelong basketball enthusiast and a former college player from many years ago, the love for the game has long been a family tradition. After countless nights spent cheering from my living room, glued to the screen as my son played, I finally stepped into the electric atmosphere of a Western New Mexico University men's basketball game, traveling from hundreds of miles away in Mesa, Arizona.

As I took my seat in the small, cozy gym, an air of anticipation wrapped around me like a warm hug. It was my first time attending a game live, and while the gym may not have been large, the spirit within it was palpable.

I met a little boy named Caleb, who excitedly told me he was munching on hot Dorito nachos—uhhmm, yummy...not! I could see the joy in his eyes as I asked if he liked the team. His bubbly personality and barely contained excitement were infectious. When I mentioned that my son was Harris, #30, and offered to let him meet him after the game, his face lit up with pure joy.

I watched him leap from his seat, cheering on the Mustangs with every ounce of energy he had. Fans around us were chatting excitedly, sharing heartfelt



ANDRE HARRIS, A FORWARD ON THE WESTERN NEW MEXICO UNIVERSITY BOYS' BASKETBALL TEAM

stories and laughter, their voices mingling in a togetherness that even first-timers could feel. I heard that a WNMU professor told a family member that this team has rejuvenated the city—she hadn't seen this many people at games in a very long time.

I felt a deep sense of community when fans reassured me

during tense moments, telling me calmly, "Mom, he can handle it. He's strong." One fan mentioned that she comes to every game. That kind of belief speaks volumes.

Watching this unfold in real time was surreal. I realized I was witnessing something far bigger than one family, one player, or

even one season. Knowing how much work, sweat, and tears went into this moment makes it all the more meaningful. Head Coach Mark Bunker, Assistant Coach Jacobe Julien, and their staff have poured their souls into guiding this team, fostering a culture of resilience and excellence that inspires everyone around them.

My son's success story is rooted in a rich family legacy. His achievements echo the legacy of basketball greatness in our family. I was born in Saginaw, Michigan, and played Division I basketball at Arizona State University. My brother, John Bowen III, played Division I basketball at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire and had a professional basketball career overseas. My father, John L. Bowen Jr., was a legendary prep player in Saginaw, Michigan before the state's official "Mr. Basketball" award was created.

Our cousin, Jason Richardson, is a local hero and a 14-year NBA veteran, known as a two-time NBA All-Star and Slam Dunk Contest champion. Another cousin, Jason's son Jace Richardson, is currently with the Orlando Magic, while Brian Bowen II has played for the Indiana Pacers and other teams in the NBA. This lineage fuels our passion for the game and underscores the importance of community and perseverance.

As I experienced this firsthand, I felt a deep sense of com-

**See WNMU
BASKETBALL,
Page 42**

SPORTS

BHM

WNMU BASKETBALL, from page 41

munity when fans reassured me during tense moments, telling me calmly, "Mom, he can handle it. He's strong." One fan mentioned that she comes to every game. That kind of belief speaks volumes.

Watching this unfold in real time was surreal. I realized I was witnessing something far bigger than one family, one player, or even one season. Knowing how much work, sweat, and tears went into this moment makes it all the more meaningful. Head Coach Mark Bunker, Assistant Coach Jacobe Julien, and their staff have poured their souls into guiding this team, fostering a culture of resilience and excellence that inspires everyone around them.

And boy, are they having quite a year! The team recently made history by receiving nine votes in the NABC Division II National Coaches Poll, "for the first time in the Division II era" (1973). This recognition is not just a number; it's a beacon of hope that shines brightly for the community, highlighting their strong performance throughout the season. The Mustangs lead the Lone Star Conference in key defensive metrics, establishing dominance in both opponent shooting percentages and blocks. Their offensive prowess shines through at the free-throw line, transforming each game into a thrilling spectacle.

Yet, despite these achievements, the Mustangs remain humble, acknowledging that they must maintain focus and continue improving as the season progresses. While they have garnered national attention, the path to achieving their overarching goals remains challenging—a journey filled with grit and determination.

As I watched the Mustangs play, I could see the heart and

determination that reflected the spirit of the community. Each player executed their roles with precision, showcasing their individual talents while seamlessly operating as a unit. Isaiah Broady's athleticism dazzled the crowd, while my son, Andre Harris, often double and triple-teamed, was the engine that drove the team forward. Carson Kelly's amazing shots and acrobatic layups, Keylon Dorsey's dazzling personality and three-pointers, and the tenacity of freshman 'No No' Brown all contributed to a dynamic performance.

That night, the team's leading scorer, Cortaviaus Seales, took an elbow to his temple, got cut, and had to sit out almost the entire game; I knew how crucial he was to the team.

This painted a picture of a squad that truly believed in one another—a team that embodies hope. From the relentless defense of the bench players to the strategic plays orchestrated by the coaching staff, every member of the squad contributed to this remarkable journey. Together, they formed a cohesive unit that not only aimed for victory on the court but also uplifted the entire community with their passion and commitment.

This season marks a historic turning point for the Mustangs, as they currently boast a record of 17-5. This performance is not just a fluke; it's their best record in decades. In stark contrast to previous seasons—where they struggled significantly with records like 5-23 in 2024-25 and even 0-11 in 2020-21—this turnaround is nothing short of miraculous. The transformation is evident, and the excitement surrounding the team is palpable, filling the air with a sense of possibility.

The Mustangs have become more than just a college basket-



ANDRE HARRIS, A FORWARD ON THE WESTERN NEW MEXICO UNIVERSITY BOYS' BASKETBALL TEAM

ball team; they symbolize pride and inspiration for Silver City. Fans are coming together, united in their support for the team in ways that haven't been seen in years. It's as if the team's success has ignited a spark of hope that resonates throughout the small city, breathing new life into the community.

As a parent, witnessing my son grow alongside this team has been a profound and emotional journey. The values of hard work, dedication, and teamwork are being instilled not only in him but in all the young fans who look up to these players.

Oh, and about Caleb meeting my son—it happened! My son loves kids and took a picture with him, and his parents thanked me profusely.

In fact, after the game, the winners gathered for a team picture, turning to the crowd as if the conference championship trophy was already in the bag! That moment was a true testament to the incredible season they have already had, with even more exciting moments to come.

About the Author

Eva Bowen is an Emmy Award-winning public relations strategist and former TV producer based in Mesa, Arizona. A passionate basketball player, she played Division 1 basketball for Arizona State University in Tempe during the late 80s. She is also the proud mother of WNMU player Andre Harris.

SPORTS

Shields to defend undisputed heavyweight crown against Crews-Dezurn in Detroit rematch



CLARESSA SHIELDS WILL DEFEND HER UNDISPUTED HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP IN DETROIT ON 22 FEBRUARY

BY MB STAFF

DETROIT, Mich. — Claressa Shields will return to the ring in Detroit next week to defend her undisputed women's heavyweight championship in a rematch nearly a decade in the making against Franchon Crews-Dezurn.

Shields and Crews-Dezurn are scheduled to headline Sunday, Feb. 22, at Little Caesars Arena, with the fight set to stream on DAZN pay-per-view.

The bout revisits the first professional fight for both women in 2016, when Shields won a unanimous decision in a four-round contest. Since then, both have collected world titles in multiple

divisions, turning what began as a debut matchup into one of the more recognizable rivalries in women's boxing.

A home-state headliner for Shields

Shields, a Flint native and two-time Olympic gold medalist, enters the fight unbeaten as the reigning undisputed heavyweight champion. Her Feb. 22 defense is scheduled as the first bout in what has been described as a landmark, multi-fight deal with Salita Promotions and co-promoter Wynn Records.

The Detroit card continues Shields' pattern of headlining in Michigan, where her biggest events have drawn strong crowds and built a regional following that extends beyond the boxing base.

Event organizers have promoted the rematch as a return engagement with a familiar opponent, but at a higher stake: four major world heavyweight belts.

Crews-Dezurn moves up for a second shot

Crews-Dezurn, who lists her hometown as Baltimore and was born in Virginia, is best known for her accomplishments at super middleweight, including a stretch as undisputed champion at 168 pounds. The Feb. 22 bout brings her into heavyweight territory for a title opportunity against a fighter who has moved through multiple weight classes during her pro career.

A win would make Crews-Dezurn one of the few fighters to claim major championships

across widely separated divisions and would hand Shields her first professional loss. For Shields, the matchup offers a chance to close the loop on an early-career opponent — and do it at home, in a title fight promoted as a marquee women's boxing event.

Card and viewing details

DAZN and event listings identify the start time as 8 p.m. ET, with main-event ring walks expected later in the evening depending on the length of the undercard.

Undercard bouts announced for the Detroit event include matchups featuring Atif Oberlton vs. Joseph George and other title and showcase fights listed by boxing outlets and the broadcast platform.

Tickets and event details have been posted through the arena's event listing and Michigan tourism channels, with the bout billed as Shields' return to Detroit for another major headliner.

For Michigan sports fans, Shields remains one of the state's most prominent combat-sports champions, with her biggest nights increasingly staged in Detroit and anchored by national broadcast distribution. The rematch also underscores the way women's boxing has grown in visibility, with undisputed-title fights now more regularly positioned as headliners in major arenas.

For the Great Lakes Bay Region and Flint readers, the storyline is straightforward: a Flint-born champion defending the sport's top heavyweight status in Detroit, against the opponent who shared her first professional steps — now both returning as established champions with a decade of history behind them.

FAITH IN FOCUS



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

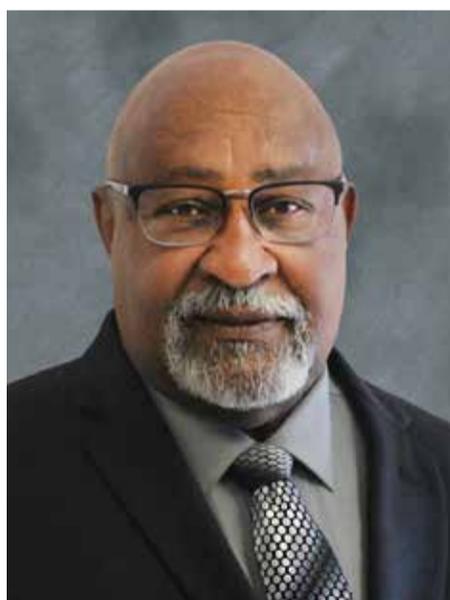
Ministry Without Walls expands vision with community-focused mission

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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"For the vision is yet for an appointed time, though it tarries, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me"

Habakkuk 2:3 (NKJV)



BY MINISTER CAROLYN
CARTER TOWNSEL



Just because it hasn't happened yet doesn't mean God said no. It means Heaven is still working the details. God is not slow, distracted, or behind. He is intentional. He moves on appointment, not impatience.

Delay is not punishment - it's preparation. It is the sacred space where faith is stretched, character is refined, and endurance is strengthened. Waiting seasons are uncomfortable because they require trust without timelines and obedience without guarantees.

Our Scripture reminds us that the vision is set for an appointed time. That means your promise already has a date, even if you don't have the details. What feels like silence is often God working quietly, arranging what you cannot see and protecting you from what you don't yet understand.

What you call "late" God calls on time. What you call "taking too long" God calls alignment. He is positioning people, shifting circumstances, and strengthening you, so when the blessing arrives, you can sustain it without losing yourself.

Delay also teaches discernment. It shows you who can walk with you into the next season and who was only meant for the waiting room. God is not just preparing the promise - He is preparing you-the person.

So, don't rush the process. Don't question the promise. And don't downplay the delay. If God spoke it, it is still scheduled and on time. Heaven has not forgotten you.

Beloved, Delayed - but never denied.
Blessings to All,
Carolyn

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FUNDRAISING GOOD TIMES

What you need to know as a nonprofit board member in 2026



PART TWO OF A TWO-PART SERIES

BY MEL AND PEARL SHAW

No one knows what 2026 will bring. That uncertainty means nonprofit board members need to be more engaged in fund development and fundraising than ever before. You have to know the financial realities of the organization or institution you serve and take responsibility for ensuring its sustainability and growth. While many nonprofits – like businesses, small and large – will look to what can be cut, we recommend focusing on using resources in service of your mission and vision, developing creative partnerships, and building your fundraising program.

When it comes to nonprofit fundraising, all board members have to make a meaningful annual gift. You can't ask anyone for money and resources if the board isn't actively and consistently giving. The definition of a "meaningful gift" will differ from member to member and from organization to organization. What's important is that all board members demonstrate their financial support. Those who are experienced with fundraising can confirm that many donors and foundations look for giving by all



BOARD MEETING (FILE PHOTO)

board members, often explicitly asking about it.

There are specific roles that board members need to take on in terms of fundraising. One of those is asking the right questions of the executive director or CEO and working with that person to ensure the organization has the resources and relationships it needs. You want to sustain a healthy working relationship with the executive director. You want to initiate conversation and not interrogate. You want to ask if the right staff, volunteers, data, and strategies are in place. Ask to see the fundraising plan and ask how you and your fellow board members can play an active role. Bring up the subject of major donors and ask if you can assist with cultivation and solicitation activities. Gently question who is responsible for taking care of each relationship. Sometimes there may be a board member – or other community member – who might be an ideal fit for keeping a specific donor

informed and engaged. Talk with fellow board members and draft a schedule for board-led activities. These can include hosting tours of your organization or institution, participating in a podcast or townhall, and being active on social media, sharing the good news of your nonprofit and helping to dispel any "non-truths" before they take root.

Dedicate time during board meetings for discussion related to fundraising and fund development. Make time for more than a staff report. Ask board members to share their updates, personal fundraising goals, and any chal-

lenges they may be facing. Talk about the progress or challenges of annual fundraising and ask staff about their work in identifying and cultivating new and prospective donors. These can be measured and reported upon, so long as information is recorded using data management/ customer relationship management tools. If the subject of a special campaign comes up, open discussion on the potential impact this could have on annual fundraising. Take an interest and always be prepared to be part of the solution. Our nonprofits are worthy of your full engagement.



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Mel and Pearl Shaw are authors of four books on fundraising available on Amazon.com. For help growing your fundraising visit www.saadandshaw.com or call (901) 522-8727.



PICS OF THE WEEK

Saginaw Mayor Brenda Moore delivered her State of the City address on Thursday, Feb. 12 during a morning event hosted by the Saginaw County Chamber of Commerce at Dow Event Center.



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



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