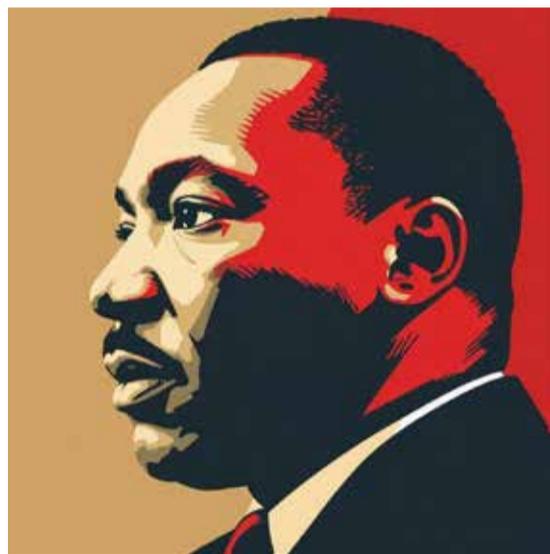




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Flint marks MLK Day with service projects, community programs and youth-focused events

COMMUNITY, PG 16

Saginaw Alphas to mark 30th MLK Unity Celebration with march



BY MB STAFF

SAGINAW, Mich. — Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc.'s Iota Chi Lambda Chapter, in partnership with Delta College Black Faculty and Staff, will host its 30th annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Unity Birthday Celebration on Monday, Jan. 19, with a Unity March downtown followed by an in-person luncheon and awards program at The Dow Event Center.

Organizers said the Unity March will begin at 10 a.m., with participants gathering shortly beforehand near the intersection of Hayden and Franklin streets before taking the nearly one-mile route to the Dow Event Center, 303 Johnson St.

The Unity Luncheon is

scheduled to start at 11 a.m. and is expected to draw nearly 300 patrons, according to the fraternity. Individual tickets are priced at \$60 per adult and \$25 for children ages 12 and under.

This year's keynote speaker will be the Rev. André Spivey, executive minister of Oak Grove A.M.E. Church in Detroit, who will speak on the theme: "Mission Possible: Protecting Freedom, Justice, and Democracy in the Spirit of Nonviolence." Organizers said Spivey earned a bachelor's degree from Morehouse College, a Master of Divinity from Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School, and is pursuing a Juris Doctorate at Wayne State University Law School.

As part of the annual



REV. ANDRÉ L. SPIVEY, JD

program, the fraternity will present its community service awards recognizing local service and leadership. This year, the fraternity's highest community honor, the Dr. MLK Jr. Unity Award, will

See MLK ALPHAS, Page 2



Latino representation reaches historic milestone on Lansing City Council

LATINO BANNER, COVER



Lt. Gov. Garlin Gilchrist II exits Michigan governor's race, launches bid for secretary of state

COMMUNITY, PAGE 24

MLK ALPHAS, from cover

be presented to the Dr. Eugene and Lady Joyce Seals Family Foundation. The Delta College Black Faculty and Staff Association's "Spirit of Dr. King Award" will go to Darrin Johnson, associate director of recruitment and employee development in human resources, organizers said.

The chapter will also recognize Sharmon Noel, vice president of Iota Chi Lambda, as the fraternity's 2025 James "Pete" Gaddis Service Awardee. The program will include introductions of the 2025 High School Scholarship Dr. MLK Jr. awardees during the Unity Luncheon, according to the fraternity.

"We are excited about this 30th commemorative event to recognize and celebrate the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr!" Damon Brown, president of the Iota Chi Lambda chapter, said in a statement. Brown said organizers expect about 100 marchers, including students and staff from middle school through college, along with local elected officials, clergy and civic leaders.

Alpha Phi Alpha, founded in 1906 at Cornell University, describes itself as the first intercollegiate Greek-letter fraternity established for African American men and says its motto is "First of all, Servants of All, We Shall Transcend All."

The celebration is held in recognition of King, the civil rights leader who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964 for his nonviolent campaign against racism and was assassinated in 1968.

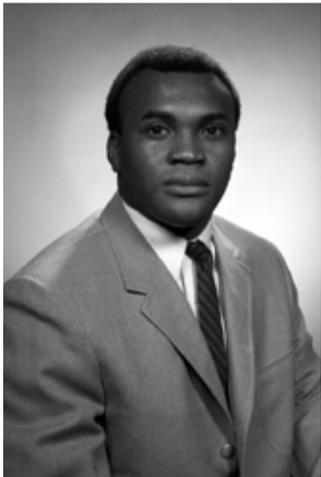
For more information or interview requests, organizers listed the following contacts: Larry Jones at (989) 714-0709; Eddie Foxx at (989) 860-4146; or Smallwood Holoman at (989) 859-2602.



**THIS DAY IN
MICHIGAN
HISTORY**

JANUARY 16, 1937

On January 16, 1937, Dr. Blanche Martin was born. Martin, an academic all-American MSU football running back from 1956 to 1959 went on to become the first African American elected to the Michigan State University Board of Trustees in 1969. He chaired the Board from 1974 to 1976, and served on the board until 1984. Dr. Martin also made great strides in improving conditions for minorities at Michigan State, increasing minority hiring and enrollment and co-founding the College of Urban Development at Michigan State University.




MSU Board of Trustees, 1969. (standing L to R) Don Stevens, Frank Hartman, Warren Huff, Frank Thompson (sitting L to R) Stephen Nisbet, Blanche Martin, C. Allen Harlan, Frank Merriman (Photo courtesy of Michigan State University)

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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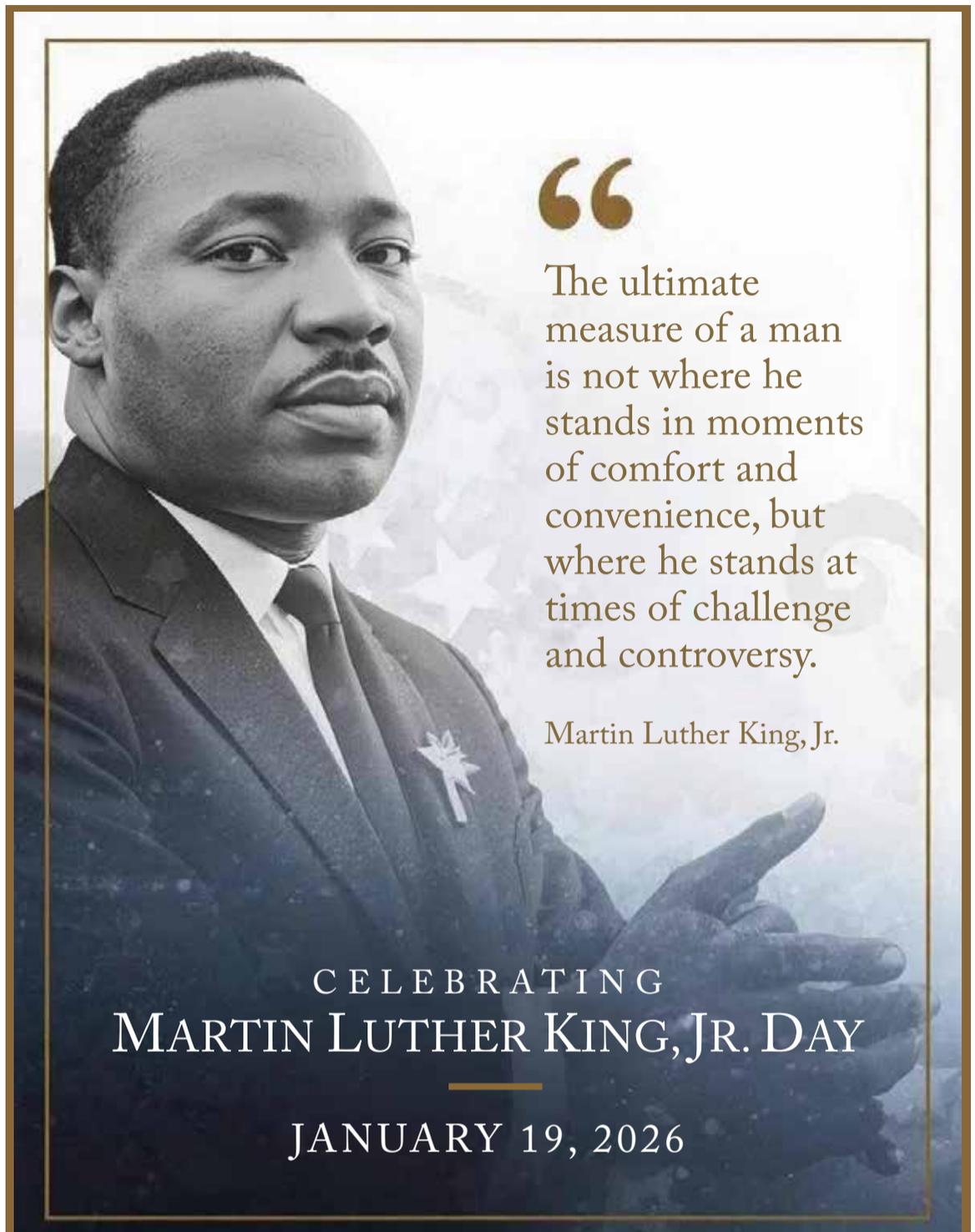
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CELEBRATING
MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY

JANUARY 19, 2026

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MLK DAY

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR REGIONAL CELEBRATION

Thursday, January 22, 2026

7:00 p.m. — Malcolm Field Theatre

Located in Curtiss Hall

THIS EVENT IS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.



Inspiring conversation with **Cynthia "Cynt" Marshall**

*President & CEO, Marshalling Resources
Former CEO, Dallas Mavericks*

Cynt Marshall has been a dynamic force in business for over four decades, establishing a reputation as a champion for achieving business results through inclusion and a relentless focus on people and operational excellence.

Following a 36-year career at AT&T, Marshall established Marshalling Resources, a consulting firm specializing in leadership development, culture transformation and optimization of people resources. In 1987, she broke new ground when she was named CEO of the Dallas Mavericks, the first Black woman to hold the CEO title for any NBA team.

As senior vice president, human resources and chief diversity officer at AT&T, Marshall led the team that created a world class culture and also spearheaded the work that placed AT&T on Fortune's 100 Best Companies to Work For list in 2017, the first time in the company's history. She's had similar results with her clients at Marshalling Resources.

Marshall's first book, "You've Been Chosen," was released in September 2022 and nominated for an NAACP Image Award.

Widely recognized for her visionary leadership, Marshall has received numerous accolades, including the 2022 Dallas Holocaust and Human Rights Museum Hope for Humanity award. In 2021, Forbes named Marshall one of 15 of the world's most inspiring female leaders, and in 2024, she was recognized as a Junior Achievement Dallas Business Hall of Fame Laureate. In 2025, Marshall was named Cal Alumni of the Year.

Marshall holds degrees in business administration and human resources management from the University of California at Berkeley. She has also been granted five honorary doctorate degrees.

She serves on four corporate boards and on several non-profit boards.

Celebrate the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. This event will feature:

- Keynote Address — Cynthia "Cynt" Marshall
- Presentation of the MLK Regional Scholarship Awards
- Presentation of the MLK Regional Drum Major Awards for Community Service
- The Dr. Mamie T. Thorns and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Leadership Award

For more information, please visit svsu.edu/mlk or contact the Office of Diversity Programs at **989-964-4068**

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**SAGINAW VALLEY
STATE UNIVERSITY**

MICHIGAN YOUTH BANNER

VOLUME 8 • NUMBER 2



Saginaw MLK Day event invites youth to talk safety, solutions amid gun-violence toll

BY MB STAFF

SAGINAW, Mich. — On a day set aside to honor the life and legacy of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., a Saginaw-based community group is putting the microphone where it says it belongs: in the hands of young people.

Victorious Community Development will host “Pizza & Chat about Community Violence”

from 4 to 7 p.m. Monday, Jan. 19, at Victorious Believers Ministries, 624 S. Outer Drive. The event is geared toward ages 12 to 25 and will include free pizza and activities such as games and basketball, along with a structured discussion on public safety and youth-driven solutions.

The conversation is unfolding against a backdrop of persistent gun violence locally and statewide. Saginaw County re-



FILE PHOTO

VICTORIOUS COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PRESENTS

PIZZA & CHAT

ABOUT COMMUNITY VIOLENCE

Monday, January 19 | 4-7 pm

Victorious Believers Ministries
624 S Outer Dr, Saginaw, MI 48601

TOPICS

- What programs and/or services can make our City safer?
- What can young people do to make the City safer?
- What events do young people want to see happen in the City?

ATTENTION AGES 12-25:
Celebrate Martin Luther King Jr. Day and make your voice heard on issues that affect you!
Plus, enjoy free pizza, games, basketball, and more!

To register (by 1/16, please) or for more information contact dnewsome@govcd.org

VICTORIOUS Community DEVELOPMENT | **SAGINAW POLICE** | **FAMILY & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

corded Michigan’s highest rate of gun-related deaths in 2024, at 25.0 deaths per 100,000 people, according to an analysis of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data. State health officials have also identified Saginaw among the counties with the highest firearm-related mortality rates in Michigan.

Nationally, the CDC notes that firearm homicide rates are highest among teens and young adults ages 15 to 34. Locally, Saginaw-area organizations have called for increased youth violence-prevention efforts following shootings involving teenagers, as reported in 2024 coverage.

Organizers of the Jan. 19 event say the discussion will center on questions such as what programs and services could make the city safer, what young people can do to help reduce violence, and what kinds of events youth want to see happen in Saginaw.

Partners listed for the event include the Michigan Commission on Law Enforcement Standards, the Saginaw Police Department, and the School District of the City of Saginaw’s Family & Community Engagement.

Registration is requested by Jan. 16. More information is available at dnewsome@govcd.org.



Saginaw Promise Scholarship: Application Deadline February 13, 2026

BY MB STAFF

SAGINAW, Mich. — Saginaw Promise is investing in the future of Saginaw, its economy, and its students with postsecondary education scholarships. The scholarships are both an incentive and benefit for high school graduates who live in and graduate from a high school within the Saginaw Promise Zone, which includes the cities of Saginaw, Zilwaukee, Kocville and that area of Buena Vista designated to the Saginaw Public School District).

How to apply: Students are required to complete the online Saginaw Community Foundation scholarship application at [Saginawfoundation.org/site/scholarships/](https://saginawfoundation.org/site/scholarships/) and FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) at <https://fasa.ed.gov/>.

Since 2012, Saginaw Promise has awarded \$1,405,747 in scholarships to 774 scholars, and those scholars have earned 323 program certificates and degrees to-date! The following 2024 National Student Clearinghouse Report provides persistence and attainment numbers for Saginaw Promise scholars and represents a return on investment.

National Student Clearinghouse Report (2024)

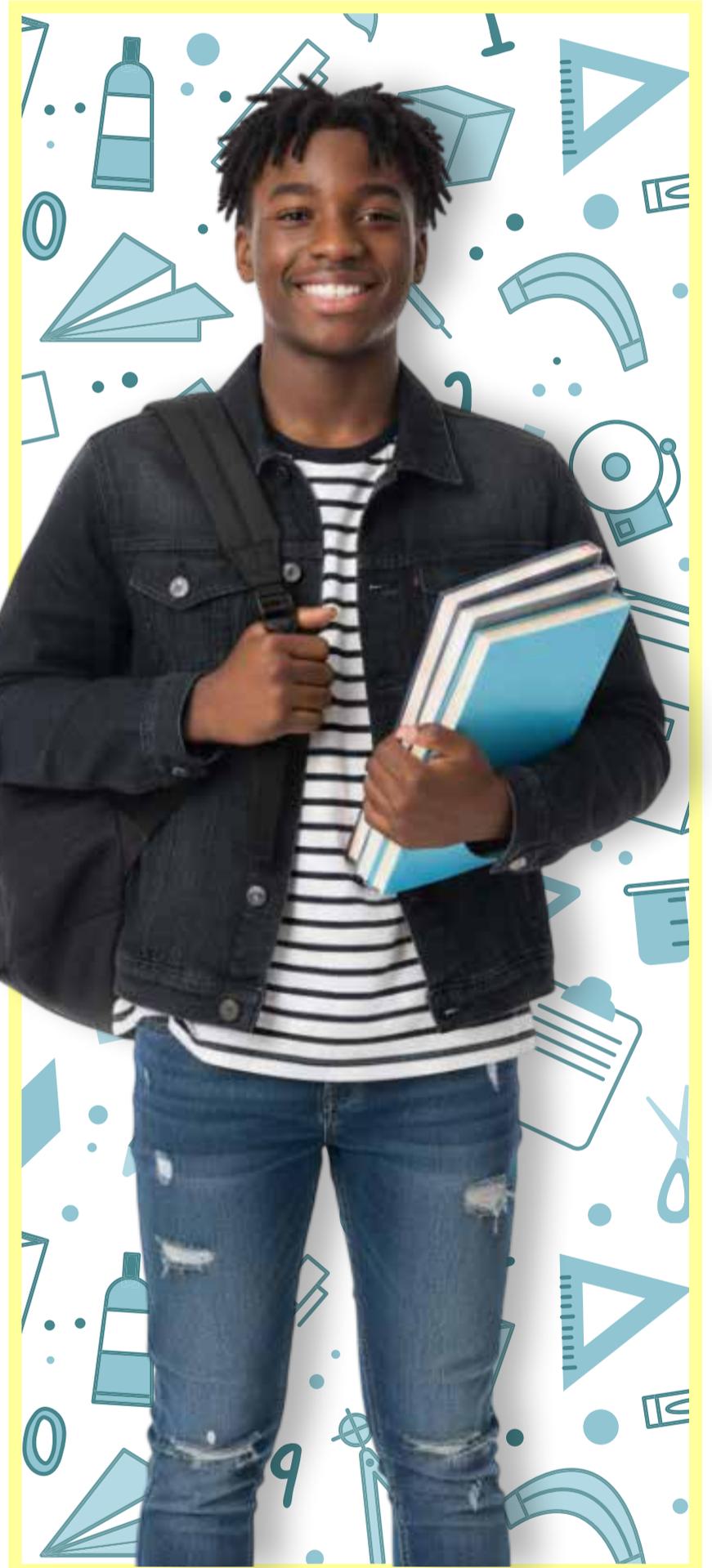
Saginaw Promise Scholars attainment -- 2012-2024.

*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

The Saginaw Promise believes in the power of postsecondary education to be a “change agent” to affect positive change in Saginaw, its economy, quality of life and the lives of its students through a “residence based” scholarship for the children of families who live in the Saginaw Promise Zone to earn a program certificate or degree from technical/trade school, community college or university. For questions or information about the Saginaw Promise, programming or scholarship, visit www.saginawpromise.org or telephone (989) 607-3428.



FILE PHOTO

SPONSORED CONTENT

Michigan Tech, Hemlock Semiconductor to offer full-ride engineering camp scholarships for Great Lakes Bay teens



STUDENTS ATTEND SUMMER YOUTH CAMP AT MICHIGAN TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY

BY MB STAFF

HOUGHTON, Mich. — Michigan Technological University's Summer Youth Programs office is again partnering with Hemlock Semiconductor to provide full-ride scholarships for high school students from Midland, Gratiot, Bay and Saginaw counties to attend a weeklong engineering summer camp at no cost, including transportation.

The scholarships support participation in Michigan Tech's Engineering Scholars Program, scheduled for June 21–26, 2026. The program is

described as a weeklong exploration of engineering careers featuring special-topic presentations, interactive group projects and lab tours.

During the week, students will hear from role models working in engineering fields, learn about different types of engineering and work with Michigan Tech faculty, staff and graduate students, according to program information.

The scholarship opportunity is open to students in grades 9–11 who live in Midland, Gratiot, Bay or Saginaw County. Applications are due March 1, 2026, with rolling decisions. Students can apply at bit.ly/HSCscholars.

Questions can be directed to Michigan Tech's Summer Youth Programs office at syp@mtu.edu.

Michigan Tech's Summer Youth Programs are part of its Pathway Programs, which bring together students for selective, career-focused learning experiences that emphasize collaboration, skill-building and engagement with university and industry professionals.

In a testimonial included with program materials, one Summer Youth Programs participant credited scholarship support with making attendance possible, saying the experience offered an opportunity

they "wouldn't have been able to do anywhere else," and describing it as a chance to learn more about a specific field.

Michigan Tech also lists other scholarship and assistance options for some youth programs and encourages students seeking additional support to check with school counselors and local businesses or community organizations. Program materials note that discounts and awards generally cannot be combined with each other, and some discounts are not applicable to scholarship programs.

Saginaw neighborhood group hiring youth for paid “Fight the Blight” cleanup program

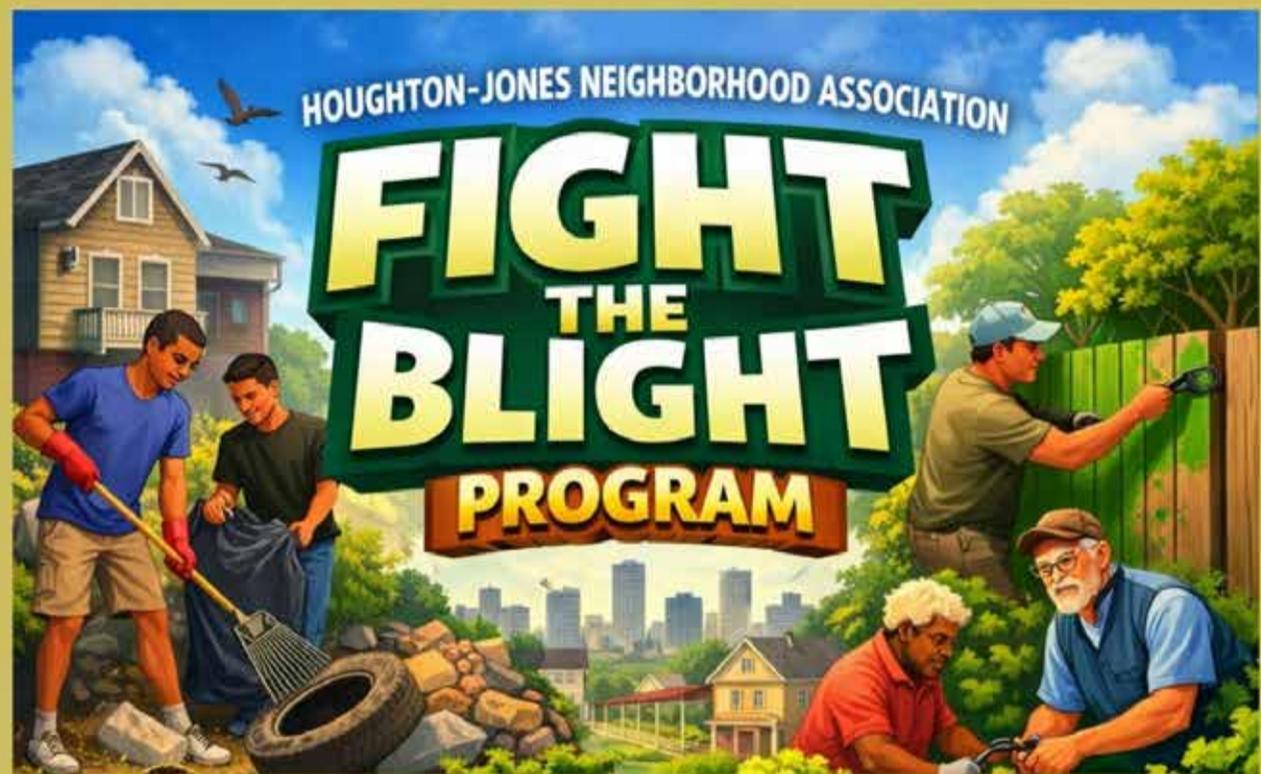
BY MB STAFF

SAGINAW, Mich. — The Houghton-Jones Neighborhood Association is recruiting youth workers for its “Fight the Blight” program, a paid effort aimed at cleaning up vacant lots, supporting community gardens and improving neighborhood appearance across Saginaw.

The program is an opportunity for young people to get paid while doing hands-on outdoor work in the community. Participants are expected to gain paid work experience, teamwork and leadership skills, community service hours and outdoor job training, according to program information.

The association said the program is open to youth interested in working outdoors and ready to learn as part of a team. Applications are open now through March 2, 2026, with the program scheduled to begin in mid-April.

Those interested can apply online at forms.gle/6VVzoWk1CHgrEujP9 or by scanning the QR code on the informational flyer.



NOW HIRING YOUTH WORKERS

Get paid while making a difference in your community!
The Fight the Blight Program is hiring youth to help clean up lots, work in community gardens, and beautify neighborhoods across Saginaw.

Youth will gain:

- Paid work experience
- Teamwork & leadership skills
- Community service hours
- Hands-on outdoor experience

Who Can Apply:

- ✓ Youth interested in working outdoors
- ✓ Youth ready to learn and be part of a team
- 📅 Applications Open: **Now** until March 2nd 2026
- 📍 Program Starts: Mid-April
- 📄 Apply Here: <https://forms.gle/6VVzoWk1CHgrEujP9> or scan the QR Code



Hosted by Houghton-Jones Neighborhood Association

Read this before you shrug off “it won’t happen to me.”

BY KAYLA SMITH

I’m not writing this to scare you. I’m writing it because something happened in Saginaw that should not be normal to us — and if we act like it’s normal, it keeps happening.

Prosecutors say a 17-year-old, Korvareon R. Smith, is accused of turning a gas station into a shootout on New Year’s Eve and that a pregnant 19-year-old, Kendall L. Berrington, was killed along with her unborn baby.

**This is not “drama.”
This is not “beef.”
This is life ending in minutes.**

Here’s what officials say happened: Surveillance cameras recorded Berrington and a 22-year-old man walking into the Marathon gas station at 1411 Court St. around 1:30 a.m. Prosecutors say cameras also recorded Smith entering around the same time. They allege that “immediately upon entering,” he drew a pistol and got into a shootout with another person inside the store.

Prosecutors say Smith fired the first shots. They say the 22-year-old man was critically injured and that Berrington was shot. They also say a store employee and a woman with her 7-year-old child were inside — and that the woman and child were inches from Berrington when she was shot.

Read that again: a 7-year-old was right there.

Smith surrendered to Saginaw police on Jan. 13, accompanied by a parent, according to officials. He appeared in court Jan. 14 for arraignment on charges including open murder, assault with intent to murder, homicide-willful killing of an unborn quick child,



FILE PHOTO

discharging a firearm in or at a building and multiple felony firearm counts. He’s being held in the Saginaw County Juvenile Detention Center without bond and is scheduled for a probable cause conference on Jan. 21.

And then there’s this detail that hits like a brick: Berrington was due to deliver a son named Roman on Jan. 14 — the same day the case went to court. Roman would have been her first child. She would have turned 20 just days earlier.

So here’s what I want you to take from this — not the court charges, not the headlines — but the part that could keep somebody alive:

- If you hear someone brought a gun, leave. Not later. Not after you “see what happens.” Leave.
- If your friends are

walking into a situation that feels off, don’t follow to prove you’re loyal.

- If it’s 1:30 a.m. and you don’t have to be out, especially at public spots like gas stations, parking lots, or corner stores — don’t be there. Late-night “quick stops” are where random situations, random people and random decisions collide fast. Getting home earlier is a real safety move, not being “scared.”
- If you’re angry enough to do something you can’t take back, pause and get away from people. Even one minute can change the whole outcome.
- If someone you know

is carrying, talking reckless, or escalating, tell a trusted adult. That’s not snitching... that’s preventing funerals.

Nobody wins a shootout. Not the person who gets hit. Not the person who pulls the trigger. Not the people standing nearby who didn’t even know they were about to be in danger.

This happened at a place people walk into for snacks and gas. It could’ve been anyone’s night. Anyone’s family. Anyone’s future.

Don’t let it be yours.

Our hearts are with Kendall L. Berrington’s loved ones as they grieve her death, and we extend sympathy to everyone mourning the loss of her unborn son, Roman.



Latino Banner

LIDER EN LA
DIVERSIDAD

VAMOS ADELANTE

Latino representation reaches historic milestone on Lansing City Council

BY MB STAFF

LANSING, Mich. — History was made at Lansing City Hall this month as two newly elected council members were sworn in, giving the city what is believed to be the first majority-Latino city council in Michigan.

Clara Martinez and Deyanira Nevarez Martinez took their oaths during a Jan. 1 inauguration ceremony at the Impression 5 Science Center, joining sitting council members Trini Pehlivanoglu and Jeremy Garza. With four of the eight council seats now held by Latinos, Lansing reached a representation milestone that reflects both the city's changing demographics and years of organizing within the Latino community.

According to Café con Caliente, a mid-Michigan Hispanic and Latino-focused news outlet, Lansing is the first city in the state to have a Latino-majority city council.

The swearing-in coincided with the start of Mayor Andy Schor's third term. Schor used the ceremony to highlight what he described as \$4 billion in investment in Lansing over the past eight years, pointing to visible changes in the skyline and ongoing development. He pledged to continue prioritizing housing and job growth as the city moves forward.

Alongside the new council members, returning councilors Garza and Peter Spadafore were



Clara Martinez



Trini Lopez-Pehlivanoglu



Deyanira Nevarez Martinez



Jeremy Garza

also sworn in after shifting seats. Garza moved from Ward 2 to an at-large position, while Spadafore transitioned from an at-large seat to represent Ward 4. City Clerk Chris Swope also renewed his oath of office.

A council reflecting Lansing's diversity

Beyond the historic Latino majority, the new council also reflects a strong presence of educators. Half of the council's members are affiliated with the Michigan Education Association, including Martinez and Adam Hussain, both high school teachers. Martinez teaches at Everett High School, while Hussain teaches at Waverly High School.

At least a dozen of Martinez's students attended the ceremony, gathering around her as she took the oath of office. Martinez later said she intends to keep students and their futures at the center of her decision-making as a council member, emphasizing the long-term impact of policy decisions.

Nevarez Martinez, an assistant professor of urban planning

at Michigan State University, brings academic expertise to the council, particularly in housing and development. She previously served on the Lansing School Board, which is now in the process of filling her vacated seat. The city council does not oversee the Lansing School District, which has a separate governing board.

Spadafore, executive director of the Michigan Alliance for Student Opportunity, said the makeup of the council better mirrors the city it serves.

"It's a diverse council that reflects the city," Spadafore said, noting that housing and homelessness are expected to be key priorities in the coming year.

Community impact and next steps

Garza, now serving at-large, said he plans to continue advocating for a community center in Ward 2 and expressed optimism about working with the new council members.

"We have a good new freshman class coming in," Garza said.

"They're hungry, they're committed to the city, and they showed it during the campaign."

Mayor Schor said he is looking forward to working with the reconstituted council as Lansing builds on what he described as strong momentum.

For many community members, the Latino majority on council represents more than a symbolic achievement. Advocates say it demonstrates the impact of civic engagement, coalition-building and sustained voter participation within the Latino community, and signals opportunities for broader inclusion in city leadership.

Nevarez Martinez said she plans to focus immediately on homelessness and housing stability, drawing on her planning background to help translate policy into practical solutions.

As Lansing enters a new council term, the historic makeup of its governing body underscores how representation can evolve when communities organize, support one another and participate consistently in local elections.

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Para más información contacte a Laura Gertos: lgestos@mhcc.org

When enforcement looks like war, the public pays the price

BY MB STAFF

MINNEAPOLIS — In the span of seconds on Jan. 7, a federal immigration operation in south Minneapolis ended with a U.S. citizen dead and with the country again arguing about what law enforcement is supposed to be.

Renée Good, 37, was fatally shot while in her vehicle during a confrontation with federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers. Federal officials and President Donald Trump quickly defended the shooting as self-defense, while state and local leaders disputed key elements of the federal account and demanded transparency. The divide has fueled protests and deepened mistrust.

What makes the killing of Good feel like a breaking point is not simply the tragedy of one death, but what the incident symbolizes. Many Americans are watching the steady normalization of a more militant posture in immigration enforcement, including tactical gear, aggressive approaches, and rapid escalation in the places where families live, commute, and drop children off at school.

Video of the moments before the shooting, reposted by the White House and verified by Reuters, captures Good sounding calm, telling the officer, “That’s fine, dude, I’m not mad at you,” moments before gunfire.

The officer involved has been identified through court records as Jonathan Ross, according to the Minnesota Star Tribune.

The broader policy dispute arrived almost immediately. Minnesota officials have said they were opening their own criminal investigation after state law enforcement officials said the FBI was refusing to cooperate with state investigators. Federal officials said the officer acted in self-defense and described Good’s actions as “an act of domestic



RENÉE GOOD

terrorism.”

Then came the Justice Department’s decision that sharpened the political fault lines. Deputy Attorney General Todd Blanche said there is “currently no basis for a criminal civil rights investigation,” a stance that critics argue undercuts the perception of neutrality at the very moment trust is most fragile.

That trust matters because law enforcement legitimacy is not built only on authority. It is built on restraint. Restraint is not an abstract ideal. It is an explicit expectation in modern use-of-force doctrine.

Federal use-of-force guidance emphasizes de-escalation and safe tactics. DHS policy language instructs officers to avoid “intentionally and unreasonably placing themselves in positions in which they have no alternative to using deadly force.”

That principle is taught in police academies in different forms. Avoid officer-created jeopardy. Maintain distance. Keep cover. Slow the encounter down when possible. Prioritize the safety of bystanders. It is also why many agencies discourage shooting into moving vehicles. The risks can expand instantly beyond the driver and the officer to everyone nearby.

The available videos have be-

come central because they are the closest thing the public has to a shared record. The Washington Post, citing its own analysis and interviews with former law enforcement officials, reported that Ross positioned himself in front of Good’s SUV, then moved out of the way and fired at least two of the shots from the side as the vehicle veered past him. The Post also reported that the videos it reviewed do not clearly show whether the SUV made contact.

Those details matter because they go to the question that so often sits at the heart of these cases. Not only whether an officer felt fear in the moment, but whether the situation had to reach a moment where deadly force felt like the only option.

That is where the public’s concern about a militant culture in enforcement takes hold. Militarization is not just equipment. It is mindset. It can treat neighborhoods as operational zones, residents as obstacles, and compliance as something to be forced rather than earned. When enforcement becomes showy and confrontational, the likelihood of flashpoint encounters rises, and the damage spreads far beyond the targeted individuals.

In the Reuters account of the newly surfaced video, other elements hint at how quickly confusion and conflict can compound. Ross circles the vehicle, films the license plate, and encounters Good’s wife in the street as other agents approach.

AP reported Good’s wife later said in a written statement, “We had whistles. They had guns,” a sentence that captures why this incident resonates far beyond Minneapolis.

The Trump administration argues this posture is necessary, saying officers face threats and assaults and that aggressive enforcement is required to carry out a sweeping deportation agenda.

But the cost is now visible in

the most human terms. When a citizen is killed in a chaotic encounter, when state investigators say they are blocked from evidence, and when federal officials defend the outcome before the investigation can answer basic questions, communities read the message clearly. The system will close ranks first, and explain later.

This is how a government hurts the community as a whole. It is not only the violence itself. It is the refusal to denounce avoidable violence and the unwillingness to submit to independent scrutiny that can lower public anger and rebuild legitimacy. When leaders insist they already know the truth, they strip the investigation and the public of oxygen.

The policy argument is not a debate about whether immigration laws exist. It is a debate about the methods used to enforce them. Even in hard situations, de-escalation is supposed to be the default, not the exception. It is supposed to be what separates policing from punishment and enforcement from vengeance.

In the coming weeks, investigators may answer legal questions about whether the shooting meets the high bar for criminal charges. But the civic question is already on the table. If immigration enforcement is increasingly conducted like a tactical mission, how many more ordinary moments will turn into scenes where guns are drawn at close range and lives are decided in less than a second?

If law enforcement training is meant to preserve life whenever possible, then leadership, especially national leadership, should treat that as more than a slogan. It should be the standard it is willing to enforce on itself.

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Zoe Saldana becomes highest-grossing actor, marking milestone for Afro-Latina representation



ZOE SALDANA

BY MB STAFF

LOS ANGELES — Zoe Saldana has reached a historic milestone in Hollywood, becoming the highest-grossing actor of all time based on total worldwide box office revenue, a distinction driven largely by her roles in some of the most commercially successful film franchises in history.

Saldana's films, including the *Avatar* series, *Avengers: Endgame*, *Avengers: Infinity War* and *Guardians of the Galaxy*, have collectively generated tens of billions of dollars at the global box office. Industry tracking places her above long-established box office leaders, underscoring both the scale of her career and the enduring popularity of the franchises she has helped anchor.

The achievement is notable not only for its financial magnitude but also for its cultural significance. Saldana is an Afro-Latina woman in an industry where leading roles and box office power have historically skewed heavily toward white male actors. Born in New Jersey and raised in part in the Dominican Republic, Saldana has consistently identified as Afro-Latina, a background

that has shaped her public identity and advocacy around representation.

Throughout her career, Saldana has portrayed characters that are often central to blockbuster narratives rather than peripheral roles, even when those characters are rendered through heavy visual effects or motion capture. Her performances as Neytiri in *Avatar* and Gamora in the Marvel Cinematic Universe placed her at the center of two of the most lucrative franchises in film history, challenging long-held assumptions about who can carry global box office success.

Film analysts note that Saldana's record reflects a broader shift in audience demand and studio decision-making, as studios increasingly invest in diverse casts for tentpole projects aimed at international audiences. At the same time, the milestone has sparked renewed discussion about visibility, particularly for Afro-Latina performers who have often been underrepresented or misclassified within Hollywood's racial and ethnic categories.

Saldana's rise to the top of the box office rankings arrives amid ongoing conversations about equity and inclusion in the film industry, from casting and storytelling to executive leadership. While her success does not erase structural barriers that persist for many performers of color, it stands as a high-profile example of how representation at the highest levels of commercial filmmaking can expand perceptions of who belongs at the center of global pop culture.

What to know if you encounter ICE

BY MB STAFF

Encounters with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, commonly known as ICE, can be stressful and confusing. Immigration attorneys and civil rights groups say knowing basic rights ahead of time can help people respond calmly and lawfully if agents approach them at home, at work or in public.

You have the right to remain silent

Everyone in the United States, regardless of immigration status, has the right to remain silent. You are not required to answer questions about where you were born, your immigration status or how you entered the country. You may state that you choose to remain silent and wish to speak with a lawyer.

Advocates caution against providing false information, which can carry legal consequences. Choosing not to answer questions is a lawful option.

You do not have to open the door without a warrant

ICE agents may knock on a door and ask to enter, but residents are not required to let them in unless agents have a valid warrant signed by a judge. Administrative warrants issued by ICE itself do not authorize forced entry into a private home.

People can ask agents to slide the warrant under the door or hold it up to a window. A judicial warrant will typically list the correct name and address and be signed by a judge.

Ask if you are being detained

If approached in public, you may ask whether you are free to leave. If the answer is yes, you may walk away calmly. If agents say you are being detained, you have the right to ask the basis for the detention and to remain silent.

You have the right to an attorney

If detained or arrested, you have the right to speak with a lawyer. While the government does not automatically provide free legal counsel in immigration cases, you can request time to contact an attorney and decline to answer questions until one is present.

You also have the right to make a phone call. Legal advocates recommend memorizing the phone number of a trusted family member or lawyer.

Do not sign documents you do not understand

ICE may ask individuals to sign paperwork. Legal experts advise not signing any documents without first speaking to a lawyer, particularly forms that could waive rights or agree to voluntary departure.

You may document the encounter

In public spaces, it is generally legal to observe and record law enforcement activity as long as you do not interfere. Witnesses are advised to keep a safe distance and remain calm.

Know where to find help

Community organizations, legal aid groups and immigration attorneys often provide "know your rights" resources and hotlines. Carrying a rights card or having emergency contact information accessible can be helpful.

Stay calm and prioritize safety

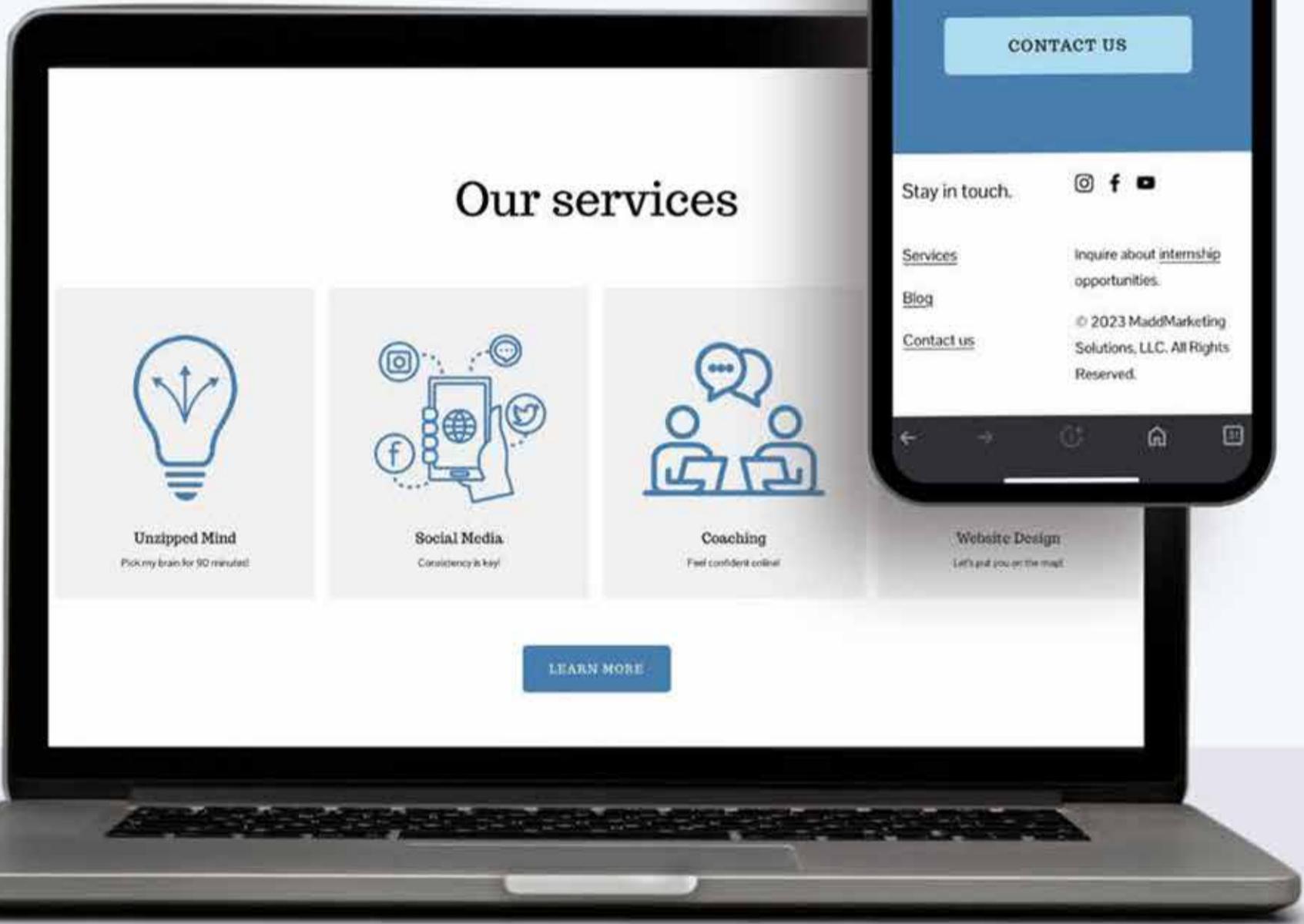
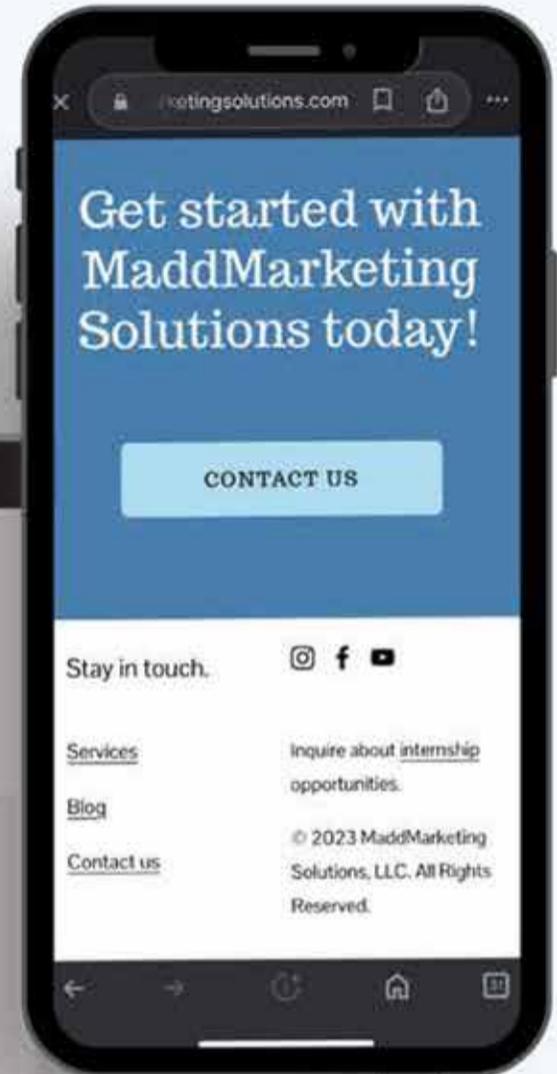
Advocates emphasize remaining calm, avoiding physical resistance and focusing on safety. Arguments or sudden movements can escalate tense situations.

Understanding basic legal rights does not guarantee a specific outcome, but attorneys say it can help people navigate encounters with ICE more safely and make informed decisions during a highly stressful moment.



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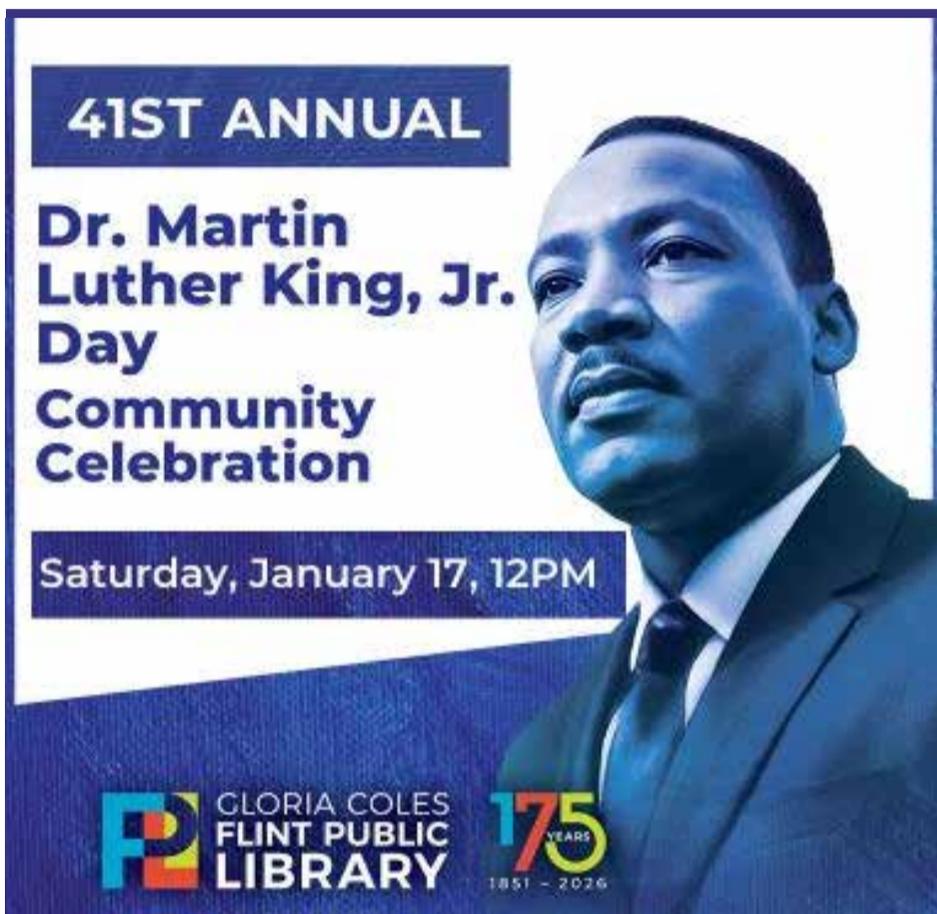


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COMMUNITY

Flint marks MLK Day with service projects, community programs and youth-focused events



THE GLORIA COLES FLINT PUBLIC LIBRARY GLORIA COLES FLINT PUBLIC LIBRARY WILL HOLD ITS 41ST ANNUAL COMMUNITY CELEBRATION

BY MB STAFF

FLINT, Mich. — In Flint, Martin Luther King Jr. Day will be observed with a mix of volunteer work, community gatherings and family programming, as local organizations schedule events across the holiday weekend aimed at service, reflection and civic engagement.

On Saturday, Jan. 17, the Gloria Coles Flint Public Library will hold its 41st annual community celebration at noon in the C.S. Mott Foundation Community Room, 1026 E. Kearsley St. The library said the program will feature music, youth engagement and a keynote by Carma Lewis, president of Flint Neighborhoods United, built around the theme “Mission Possible II:

Building Community, Uniting a Nation the Nonviolent Way.” The event will include American Sign Language interpretation and live Spanish translation, and refreshments provided by The Local Grocer and served by the Friends of the Gloria Coles Flint Public Library.

On Monday, Jan. 19, the University of Michigan-Flint will open the day with an MLK keynote breakfast from 8:30 to 10 a.m. in the Harding Mott University Center’s Michigan Rooms, featuring UM-Flint alumna Dawn Demps. The university also scheduled multiple service options that day, including meal packaging with United Way from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., no-sew blanket making from 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., volunteer work with Cross-over Downtown Outreach Minis-

try from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., and a blood drive from 10:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Also on Jan. 19, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Flint and Genesee County will host its 20th annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Mentoring Inspiration Breakfast at St. Michael’s Conference Center, 609 E. Fifth Ave. Registration is scheduled for 8:30 to 9 a.m., with the program beginning at 9 a.m. The organization said James Avery, a Genesee County commissioner and CEO of Berston Field House, will serve as master of ceremonies, with retired U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Derrick Britton as keynote speaker.

United Way’s MLK Day of Service in Flint will center on food prep and distribution work at the Dort Federal Event Center, 3501 Lapeer Road. The listing describes it as a family-friendly, wheelchair-accessible project open to volunteers ages 5 to 101, with registration requested by Jan. 16. The event page lists Dort Financial Credit Union, Randy Wise Automotive Group, Huntington Bank and McLaren Flint

among event sponsors, along with other local supporters.

For families looking for daytime programming on the holiday, the Flint Children’s Museum will be open Monday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. for a “We’re Better Together” craft and additional hands-on activities focused on collaboration, kindness and inclusion, with MSU Extension scheduled to provide additional crafts and learning experiences.

Events extend into Tuesday, Jan. 20, with “Healing Together: Our Shared Future in Genesee County,” a National Day of Racial Healing gathering from 9 to 11 a.m. at the Genesee County Building, 324 S. Saginaw St. Organizers said the free program will include performances, mindfulness activities and opportunities for dialogue, presented by the Community Foundation of Greater Flint’s Truth, Racial Healing and Transformation work, the Genesee County Board of Commissioners and the county’s Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Commission.

BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS OF FLINT AND GENESEE COUNTY 20TH ANNUAL MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY INSPIRATION BREAKFAST

Delta College Black Faculty and Staff Association present:

2026 Spirit of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Award

*Presented to a Delta College individual who exemplifies
Dr. King's work at the college and in the community.*



Darrin Johnson

Values-driven leadership.

Darrin Johnson embraces the Spirit of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. through organizational culture and equity.

From providing essential mentorship to colleagues to supporting college-wide initiatives, such as the implementation of the Belonging, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (BEDI) Department, Darrin engages in a quiet, yet methodical approach that embodies his personal values of integrity and respect.

Past Award Recipients

- 2025 Angela Guy-Lee
- 2024 Dorian Rouse-Phelps
- 2023 Joseph Hernandez
- 2022 Lula Woodard
- 2021 Beth Kelch
- 2020 Carlos McMath
- 2019 John Neal
- 2018 Veronica Bond
- 2017 Monica Hernandez-Alaniz
- 2016 Rosemary Reeves
- 2015 Dr. Linda Holoman
- 2014 Dr. Charissa Urbano
- 2013 Carl Ruth
- 2012 Beverly Westbrook
- 2011 Mary Beth Looby
- 2010 Dr. Jean Goodnow
- 2009 William E. Ketchum, Jr.
- 2008 Teresa Stitt
- 2007 Katrina Nichols
- 2006 Joan Sabourin

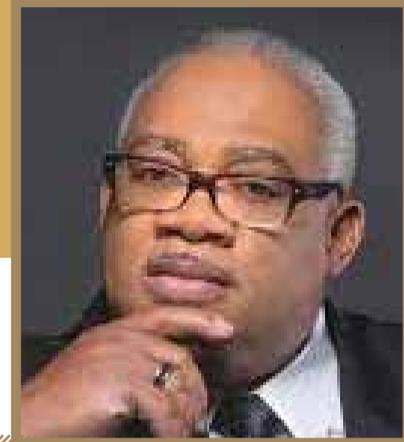
I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal.



COMMUNITY

I'M JUST THINKING.....

By **BISHOP HURLEY J. COLEMAN, JR.**
WORLD OUTREACH CAMPUS CHURCH



The Conundrum of Unity in America



There is a word that I use from time to time that describes a question that creates another question. It suggests that there are things that don't have clear answers, but promote more questions than answers. The word is conundrum.

When I consider the present state of affairs in this country, it is a conundrum. I remember sitting in my elementary class at Morley school learning songs like The Battle Hymn of The Republic, Yankee Doodle, O Beautiful, and God Bless America. We said the Pledge of Allegiance every day. As a patrol boy I was selected to raise the flag.

We learned the history of the "discovery" of America, the Revolutionary War, the westward move that took land from the indigenous peoples, the industrial revolution, and the Emancipation Proclamation. We learned about the great heroes; George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and Teddy Roosevelt.

I was sitting in my fifth grade classroom when the teacher came in crying and told us that President Kennedy had been assassinated. We all mourned that loss. I was in junior high school when Martin Luther King was assassinated. By then, the Civil Rights and Voting Rights bills had passed.

The conundrum is how little had changed in society. We were working in factories, buying homes, and even going to college. But little changed in society, in our world. We were still segregated, the last hired and first fired. We were excluded from the mainstream of the economy, and in many places still under the tyranny of persecution.

This was, and is, the home of the brave, the land of the free, the great melting pot. The conundrum of "one nation, under God, with liberty and justice for all." This powerful vision has not been fulfilled, and today it seems that whatever progress toward that dream is under attack, threatened to be reversed.

We have the potential to pursue that vision if we can ever truly become united in purpose, will, and action. It is a conundrum. Can we do it? The story in the Bible, the book of Genesis, chapter 11 presents a conundrum. The people decided to build a tower to h Avenue and make a name for themselves. They had one language, and one vision. They found unity. Scripture says "and nothing which they imagined would be withheld from them."

Hmmm.....Unity. Just the thought of it.....what a conundrum.



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EXAMPLE	YOU PLAY	LOTTERY DRAWS	YOU WIN! \$100/\$50
	6-4-2	2-4-6	

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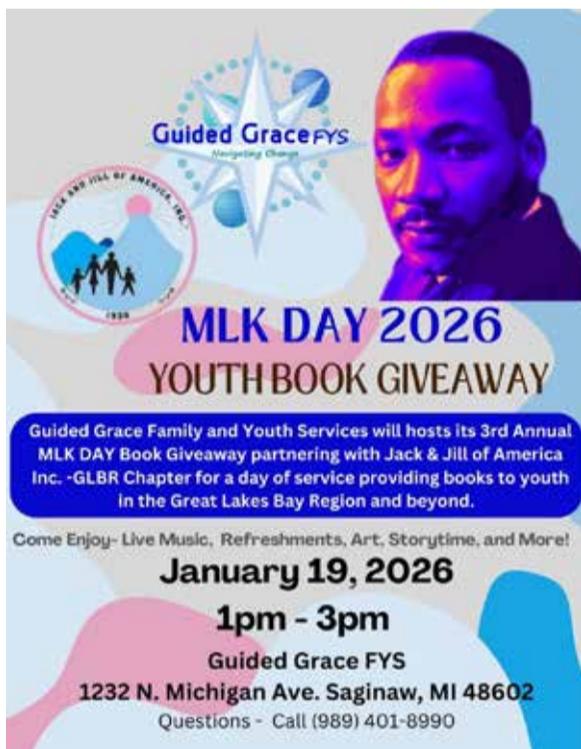


2-WAY, BOXED AND 1-OFF BETS NOT ELIGIBLE. WHEEL BET WINNERS WILL BE PAID THE STRAIGHT PRIZE ONLY AND ARE NOT ELIGIBLE FOR THE REVERSE PRIZE. Daily 3 odds: Straight Back Bonus: 1 in 1,010; Straight: 1 in 1,000; 3-Way Box: 1 in 333; 6-Way Box: 1 in 167; 1-Off Straight: 1 in 1,000; 1-Off One Digit: 1 in 167. Daily 4 odds: Straight Back Bonus: 1 in 10,101; Straight: 1 in 10,000; 4-Way Box: 1 in 2,500; 6-Way Box: 1 in 1,666; 12-Way Box: 1 in 833; 24-Way Box: 1 in 416; 1-Off Straight: 1 in 10,000; 1-Off One Digit: 1 in 1,250. Knowing your limits is always the best bet. Call 1-800-GAMBLER for confidential help.



COMMUNITY

Great Lakes Bay region to mark MLK Day with marches, teach-in and regional awards program



BY MB STAFF

SAGINAW, Mich. — Residents across the Great Lakes Bay Region will observe Martin Luther King Jr. Day with a mix of civic reflection and community gathering, from a downtown Unity March and luncheon in Saginaw to a regionwide celebration at Saginaw Valley State University recognizing service leaders and student scholarship winners.

Saginaw Unity March and Unity Luncheon

In Saginaw, the Iota Chi Lambda Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc., in partnership with Delta College Black Faculty and Staff, will host its 30th annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Unity Birthday Celebration on Monday, Jan. 19, anchored by a Unity March and an 11 a.m. luncheon at The Dow Event Center.

The Unity March will begin at 10 a.m. from downtown Saginaw, with participants gathering near Hayden and Franklin streets

beforehand. The luncheon will feature a keynote address by the Rev. Andr'e Spivey, executive minister of Oak Grove A.M.E. Church in Detroit, speaking on the theme, "Mission Possible: Protecting Freedom, Justice, and Democracy in the Spirit of Nonviolence." Tickets are \$60 per adult and \$25 for children 12 and under.

Castle Museum MLK Day Teach-In

Also on Jan. 19, the Castle Museum of Saginaw County History will hold its third annual Martin Luther King Jr. Day Teach-In from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., offering rotating learning stations for all ages and a commemorative keepsake button for participants who complete three stations. A 2 p.m. keynote is planned by Erin Patrice, founder of The Breaking Bread Village, with a talk titled "We Need Each Other?" tied to this year's theme from the King Center, "Building Community, Uniting a Nation the Nonviolent Way."

Guided Grace MLK Day Youth Book Giveaway

Also in Saginaw, Guided Grace Family and Youth Services will host its third annual MLK Day Youth Book Giveaway from 1 to 3 p.m. Monday, Jan. 19, at 1232 N. Michigan Ave. The event is being held in partnership with Jack & Jill of America Inc., Great Lakes Bay Region Chapter, and is billed as a day of service providing books to youth in the Great Lakes Bay Region and beyond.

Organizers said the giveaway will include live music, refresh-

ments, art, storytime and more. Questions can be directed to (989) 401-8990.

'The State of Black Saginaw' Community Forum

Later that evening, a community forum titled "The State of Black Saginaw" is scheduled for 6 p.m. Monday, Jan. 19, at the Saginaw CAC, 2824 Perkins St. The forum is to be moderated by Dr. Dawn Hinton, Ph.D., and will focus on Black health, Black politics and Black unity. Dinner will be served.

SVSU Regional MLK Celebration and Awards

As the week continues, the region's annual Great Lakes Bay Region Martin Luther King Jr. Regional Celebration will be held Thursday, Jan. 22, at 7 p.m. in the Malcolm Field Theatre inside Curtiss Hall at SVSU. The event is open to the public and will feature a keynote by Cynthia "Cynt" Marshall, a former CEO of the Dallas Mavericks and president and CEO of Marshalling Resources.

SVSU said the evening will include Drum Major Awards

recognizing community service, with 2026 recipients representing Bay, Midland and Saginaw counties: Nicole Luczak, Jennifer Vannette, and Jack and Janet Nash. The program will also recognize 15 Great Lakes Bay Region high school seniors with 2026 Martin Luther King Jr. Regional Scholarships for their commitment to advancing racial harmony and social equity.

SVSU said the regional celebration is presented in partnership with the Bay Area Community Foundation, Midland Area Community Foundation, Saginaw Community Foundation and Delta College.

Holiday Closures and City Services

In addition to public events, local governments in the region are also observing the federal holiday with modified schedules. Midland city offices and services, including the Grace A. Dow Memorial Library, will be closed Monday, with refuse and recycling collection shifted to Tuesday. Bay City offices will also be closed Monday, with sanitation pickup not delayed.



Observing MLK Day



FILE PHOTO



BY CRAIG DOUGLAS

Next Monday is set aside as a day of service in honor of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (MLK Day). It is a day when many governmental, banking, and businesses closed in honor of Dr. King's legacy. This includes many schools.

That being the case, what can students do to observe a day away from school? In other words, what should students do to honor Dr. King's legacy?

There is a long list of possibilities for students of all ages.

Here are three ideas that I offer for consideration.

Go on a virtual field trip

With the internet, there is no limit here. Students of all ages can view one or more of Dr. King's speeches. They can visit Atlanta, Georgia and his "hometown." Using the worldwide web, students who never knew much about Dr. King can see, hear, and learn about him by taking a virtual field trip.

Read about Dr. King

This seems obvious, perhaps; there are terrific books and articles written about Dr. King. With technology we overlook "old school" books and articles. These written pieces are offered to students at a variety of ages and reading abilities.

Analyze a speech

Beyond "hearing" one of Dr. King's speeches, students can be further channeled by analyzing one. Questions may lead the analysis, such as...

- How is his speech relevant to today?
- If he were still alive today, what do you think would be his topic. Would be for his next speech?
- Dr King practiced nonviolence; do you think he would still be nonviolent today?

These types of questions could lead to deep thinking about one of his speeches from back in time.

Dr. King was a man of service, and I believe he would appreciate young minds being en-

gaged in current topics that are important. King once said, "The function of education is to teach one to think intensely and to think critically."

If we remember the spirit Dr. King possessed, it is likely that we will send students in the right direction to honor him.

Resources:

<https://nationaltoday.com/martin-luther-king-day/>
<https://www.gpb.org/blogs/education-matters/2025/01/15/5-ways-celebrate-martin-luther-king-jr-in-the-classroom>
<https://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mlkihadream.htm>
<https://www.nps.gov/articles/king-site.htm>
https://www.azquotes.com/author/8044-Martin_Luther_King_Jr/tag/education#google_vignette

POLITICS

Michigan House passes bill to ban cellphones in classrooms



FILE PHOTO

BY MB STAFF

LANSING, Mich. — The Michigan House of Representatives approved legislation this week that would require public school districts and charter schools to ban cellphones during instructional time, sending the measure to the state Senate for further consideration.

On Jan. 15, lawmakers passed House Bill 4141 by a 99-10 vote, following its earlier defeat in July 2025. The bill, sponsored by Rep. Mark Tisdell, R-Rochester Hills,

would amend the Michigan Revised School Code to mandate that all public K-12 districts and public school academies adopt policies prohibiting the use of wireless communication devices by students while class is in session.

Under the proposed law, students could use cellphones between classes and during lunch periods, but wireless devices would be barred during instructional time. School boards would be required to post their cellphone policies, including en-

forcement procedures, on district websites.

The bill includes exemptions allowing cellphone use in emergency situations and for medically necessary devices, as well as district-owned devices designated for instructional purposes. Boards may also impose stricter restrictions than those set by the state law.

House Bill 4141 now advances to the state Senate. If approved there, it would head to Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's desk for consideration before poten-

tially becoming law.

Supporters of the measure have cited concerns that personal devices distract students and disrupt classroom instruction, while opponents have raised questions about local control and how phones could be used in legitimate situations.

If enacted, the policy would establish a statewide standard for the use of cellphones in Michigan classrooms, a topic that has drawn attention from educators and policymakers in recent years.

POLITICS

OPINION

In the 35th Senate race, character gets lost in the noise



BY JIMMY E. GREENE
VICE PRESIDENT OF MARKETING
AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS
SAGINAW SPIRIT

Here we are again in yet another election cycle and kicking it off and a preview of things to come is the Special election for the 35th district Senate seat. Voters are constantly inundated with the back and forth mudslinging between candidates of the two major parties and this one is no different. The rhetoric on the campaign trail, on the airwaves and on social media in particular has spiraled down to dangerously toxic levels, and things are only getting worse, almost Trumpian. Let me tip my hat to Mr Trump who uses his own voice no matter the viciousness of it to insult his opponents. There's something to be said for that. At least he owns it. What's most interesting is that it's not the candidates showering us with vile ads and slanderous comments; it's the "campaigns" the "supporters".

And in the middle of that now stands the people who want to be the 35th's next state senator. And weirdly any political and policy differences between them is lost in the messiness but I wonder if that's the intent. Campaign strategies are now "Don't look at my lack of qualifications. I'm just not him/her" or "you think I'm bad, look at him/her". And even worse, we're somehow being led to believe that this is the best representation we send to Lansing where now that "character" is protected by the other wolves running their own packs (I could

use PACs here too) using the same smear tactics because let's face it we've enabled it. We truly get the people we deserve in office.

In 2020 something strange happened that I wish would happen here and it happened in Utah between those candidates running for governor. Republican Lt. Governor Spencer Cox and his Democratic rival, law professor Chris Peterson, took time during the campaign to collaborate on an advertisement pleading for civility in the 2020 election — and another encouraging the peaceful transition of power. "We can debate issues without degrading each other's character," says Cox,

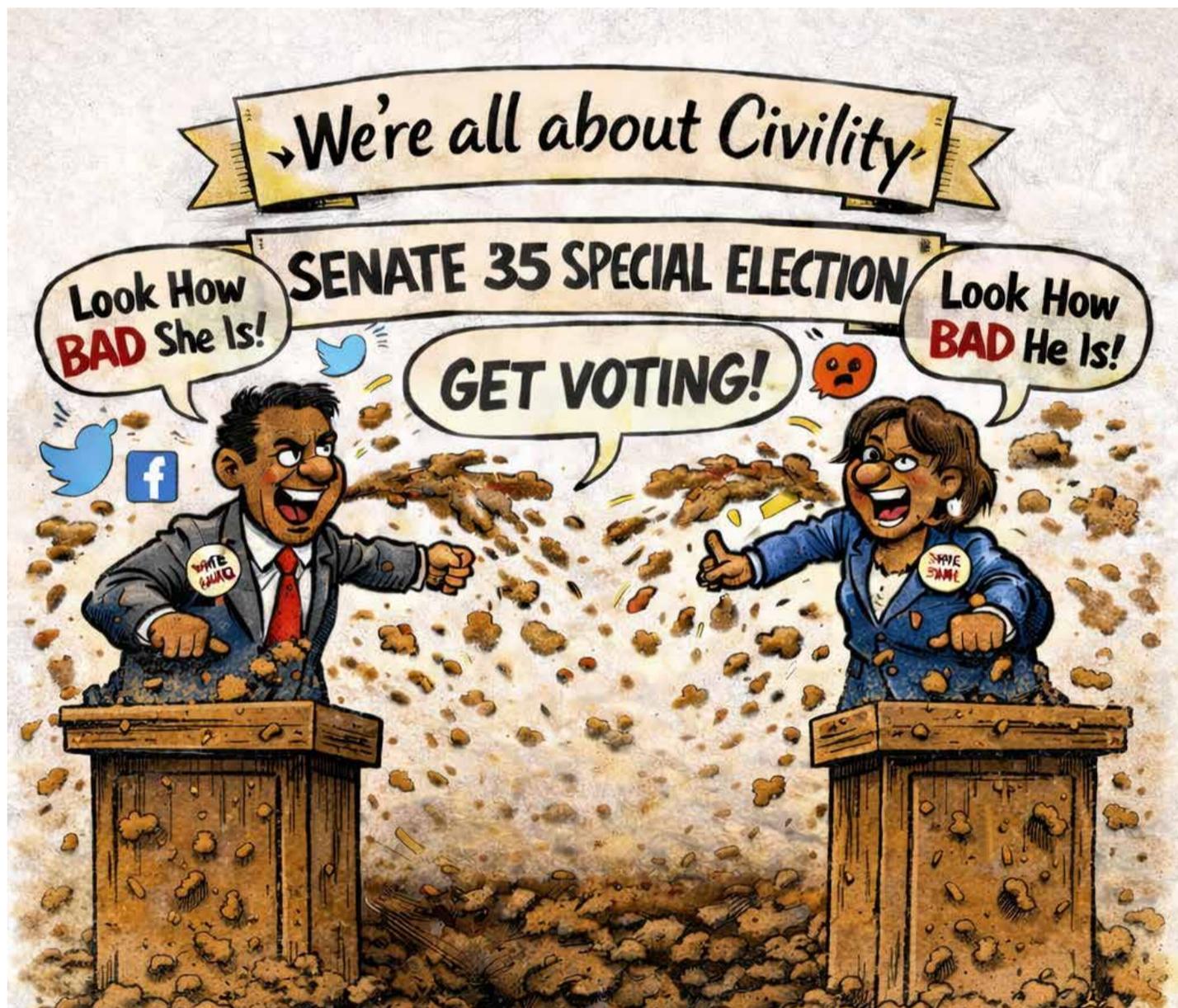
who's the heavy favorite in one of the nation's most conservative states. "We can disagree without hating each other," adds Peterson, who's making his first bid for office.

They further expressed that no matter who wins, they will work together, and together they can set the right example for the rest of the country. It was a refreshing sentiment as tensions rose just a dozen days from Election Day. And Cox won. And Peterson did exactly what he said he would do. Character won that election. That's what we don't vote on because it's not what we look for any longer... CHARACTER. Not us... we judge you by

your WORSE moment and THAT is the campaign waged against you. Not your MOMENTS... your MOMENT.

And you know what else happened? They set the tone for their CAMPAIGN and their FOLLOWERS. Because the campaign and the followers were a REFLECTION OF THE CANDIDATES CHARACTER. So to the Candidates...what is the CHARACTER of your campaign?

But CHARACTER be damned because YOU the VOTER allow it. So when we hit bottom ask yourself this; did you provide the shovel??



FILE PHOTO

POLITICS

Lt. Gov. Garlin Gilchrist II exits Michigan governor's race, launches bid for secretary of state

BY MB STAFF

LANSING, Mich. — Michigan Lt. Gov. Garlin Gilchrist II announced Monday that he is withdrawing from the 2026 gubernatorial race and instead launching a campaign for secretary of state, reshaping two of the state's top political contests as candidates prepare for a closely watched election year.

Gilchrist, a Democrat from Detroit and the first African American to serve as Michigan's lieutenant governor, made the shift public in a video announcing his new bid for the statewide election post. In his announcement, Gilchrist did not cite a single specific reason for the transition, but he said he is "not finished being a public servant" and described the secretary of state's office as critical to protecting electoral integrity in a politically polarized environment.

With Gov. Gretchen Whitmer ineligible to seek a third term because of constitutional term limits, the Democratic primary for governor had featured several contenders, including current Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson and Genesee County Sheriff Chris Swanson. Gilchrist's departure from that race effectively narrows the Democratic field and is seen as strengthening Benson's position as the front-runner for the party nomination.

The secretary of state post oversees elections and motor vehicle services in Michigan, a role that has gained heightened attention since the 2020 presidential election. Gilchrist's entry into that race adds a high-profile candidate to a crowded Democratic contest that already includes Ingham County Clerk Barbara Byrum, Deputy Secretary of State Aghogho Edevbie, former Michigan Lottery Commissioner Su-



LT. GOV. GARLIN GILCHRIST II

zanna Shkreli and former state senator Adam Hollier.

Gilchrist had struggled to gain traction in the governor's contest, including in fundraising and statewide name recognition, trailing Benson in both areas during the campaign, according to campaign finance reports. As of October, Gilchrist reported holding around \$378,000 in campaign funds compared with Benson's nearly \$3 million.

In a state where the secretary of state nomination is decided

not by a primary vote but by delegates at party conventions, Gilchrist's statewide experience as lieutenant governor could prove significant as he competes for the Democratic endorsement during the April 19 convention.

On the Republican side, candidates expected to vie for the secretary of state nomination include Macomb County Clerk Anthony Forlini and Oakland County executive Monica Yatooma. That convention is scheduled for March 28.

Michigan voters will select a new governor, secretary of state, attorney general and U.S. senator in the November general election. Former Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan is running for governor as an independent, adding another dynamic to the fall races.

Gilchrist's pivot underscores the strategic importance of the secretary of state's office in Michigan politics and reflects the shifting priorities of candidates as the 2026 election cycle takes shape.

HEALTH

Flu season surges in Michigan, hospitalizations climb as illness spreads statewide



FILE PHOTO

BY MB STAFF

LANSING, Mich. — Michigan is experiencing a significant rise in influenza activity this winter, with health officials reporting widespread flu cases, increasing hospitalizations and higher illness levels than in recent seasons.

Statewide data show that influenza activity has reached “very high” levels on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s scale for the week ending Dec. 27, driven in part by a potent influenza A strain, H3N2. Michigan is reporting a roughly 40% increase in flu-related hos-

pitalizations compared with this point last year, according to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services.

The state has recorded more than 2,100 influenza-related hospitalizations so far this season, including hundreds involving children ages 4 and under, underscoring the virus’s impact across age groups. Pediatric facilities across Michigan have reported a sharp influx of patients with severe flu symptoms, with some children requiring intensive care support.

Flu activity is not limited to one area of the state. Health of-

officials said influenza-like illness has been high in both upper and lower regions of Michigan, with outpatient visits for respiratory sickness markedly above the national baseline. Michigan remains among a group of states that the CDC classifies as having very high flu activity.

In Wayne County and the Metro Detroit area, the Wayne County Department of Public Health issued warnings that influenza and other seasonal respiratory infections are increasing sharply, with officials urging residents to get vaccinated and to practice preventive measures

such as frequent handwashing and staying home when sick.

Across the state, flu season has come on earlier and more aggressively than in recent years, pushing emergency departments to handle higher volumes of patients with influenza and other respiratory conditions such as COVID-19 and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV).

Health officials emphasize that vaccination remains the most effective tool to reduce flu severity, hospitalizations and deaths. However, data indicate that only about one-quarter of Michigan residents have received a seasonal flu vaccine so far, below levels public health experts say would help reduce community spread.

The state’s chief medical executive and other experts have noted that while this season’s intensity is notable, it is not yet clear how high the flu activity will peak. Last year’s season did not reach its highest levels until mid-to-late February, and similar patterns could occur this year.

Health departments continue to monitor virus activity through laboratory surveillance and hospital reporting, combining state and federal data to inform public guidance. Officials recommend vaccination for anyone 6 months and older who has not yet received their annual flu shot, along with common hygienic practices such as covering coughs and cleaning commonly touched surfaces.

As the flu season progresses, residents and caregivers are encouraged to stay informed about local flu activity and to seek medical care promptly if severe symptoms develop.

HEALTH

Michigan licenses first dental therapist, expands workforce to improve access to care

BY MB STAFF

LANSING, Mich. — Michigan has licensed its first dental therapist and is moving to expand training for the profession as part of an effort to improve access to oral health care, particularly in underserved areas.

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services and the Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs announced that the state's first licensed dental therapist is now practicing in the Upper Peninsula. Dental therapists provide routine services such as exams, cleanings and fillings under a dentist's supervision and complete training in three to six

years, compared with about eight years for dental school.

"Licensing Michigan's first dental therapist is an important step in expanding access to care in underserved areas where there are limited providers," said MDHHS Director Elizabeth Hertel.

Dana Obey, the state's first licensed dental therapist, said the role allows her to help improve access to oral health care while creating welcoming spaces for patients.

More than 1.5 million Michigan residents live in federally designated dental shortage areas, despite the state averaging about 59 dentists per 100,000 residents. Dental therapists can work in private practices, schools,

mobile clinics and community health centers to help reduce wait times and ease pressure on existing providers.

Michigan established a licensure pathway for dental therapists in 2021, but has lacked in-state training programs. Ferris State University is now developing Michigan's first dental therapy program, with support from MDHHS through a federal grant that includes \$85,000 for curriculum development and accreditation.



FILE PHOTO

State officials say expanding the dental therapy workforce is part of a broader strategy to strengthen oral health care, which plays a critical role in overall health and well-being.

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Rx Kids now open in Saginaw County, expanding direct cash support for families



FILE PHOTO

BY MB STAFF

SAGINAW, Mich. — The Rx Kids program is now open in Saginaw County, expanding direct financial support to pregnant people and families with infants in three local communities as part of a growing statewide effort to improve early childhood and maternal health.

As of this week, eligible residents in the city of Saginaw, Bridgeport Township and Buena Vista Township can apply for the program, which provides a one-time \$1,500 payment during pregnancy followed by \$500 per month for six months after a child is born. The assistance is available to individuals who are

at least 16 weeks pregnant or who have an infant born on or after Jan. 1, 2026.

Rx Kids is a community-wide cash support initiative administered by Michigan State University in partnership with GiveDirectly and local organizations. The program provides unrestricted cash payments, allowing families to decide how best to use the funds to meet their needs during pregnancy and a child's earliest months.

The launch in Saginaw County builds on earlier implementations of Rx Kids in other Michigan communities, including Flint, where the program first debuted. State and local leaders have described the expansion as

a tool to reduce financial stress during a critical period for families, particularly in communities facing higher rates of child poverty and health disparities.

Public health researchers associated with the program have said early findings from pilot sites suggest the payments can contribute to improved maternal well-being, stronger household stability and healthier birth outcomes, including reductions in low birth weight and preterm births.

Local partners, including the Saginaw County Health Department and BWell Saginaw, are assisting with outreach and enrollment efforts across the three participating municipalities.

There are no income requirements for the program, and the funds are not restricted to specific expenses.

Rx Kids officials have said the initiative is intended to complement, not replace, existing public benefits by giving families flexible resources at a time when costs related to housing, transportation, food and infant care are often highest.

Enrollment for the Saginaw County program is currently open, and eligible residents can apply online through the Rx Kids website. Additional Michigan communities are expected to be considered for future expansions as the program continues to scale statewide.

EDUCATION

Saginaw school board member Kevin Rooker dies at 67



KEVIN M. ROOKER

In 2024, the couple hosted former President Joe Biden during a private event at their Saginaw home when Biden visited the city to thank supporters.

Born Oct. 14, 1958, in Saginaw, Rooker graduated from Douglas MacArthur High School in 1977. He earned a bachelor's degree in geography and conservation science and environmental education from Michigan State University in 1994 and later obtained a master's degree in teaching from Marygrove College in 2002.

Beyond his role on the school board, Rooker was active in numerous civic and preservation efforts. He served on boards and committees including Saginaw Depot Preservation, the Saginaw Economic Development Com-

mittee and the city's Historic District Commission. He was also known for his work in the Cathedral District, where he personally installed more than a dozen historic markers.

Family members said Rooker was deeply committed to Saginaw and worked consistently to improve the city through education, historic preservation and volunteer service. In recent days, members of the community gathered at Weadock Park to honor his life and contributions.

City officials said the Saginaw City Council plans to consider renaming Weadock Park as Kevin Mark Rooker Memorial Park in recognition of his impact on the community.

BY MB STAFF

SAGINAW, Mich. — Kevin Rooker, a member of the Saginaw Public Schools Board of Education and a longtime educator and community advocate, has died. He was 67.

Rooker, a retired teacher from Carrollton Public Schools, joined the Saginaw school board in 2023. According to information released by the district and family, he underwent surgery Wednesday and became ill at his home Thursday night. He later died.

Rooker is the second Saginaw school board member to die while in office in recent months. Mattie Thompson, who served on the board for 20 years, died in November. The board appointed Vera Williams to fill the remainder of Thompson's term.

Rooker was married to Saginaw City Councilman Bill Ostash.



BILL OSTASH, SPOUSE OF THE LATE SAGINAW PUBLIC SCHOOLS BOARD SECRETARY KEVIN M. ROOKER, IS PRESENTED WITH A RESOLUTION FROM THE SAGINAW PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT ON WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 14 (FACEBOOK.COM/SAGINAWPUBLICSCHOOLS)

EDUCATION

Saginaw Township school board member Arik Smith to step down; district begins search for replacement

BY MB STAFF

SAGINAW TOWNSHIP, Mich. — Saginaw Township Community Schools Board of Education member Arik Smith has announced he will step down from the board before the end of his term in 2028 due to relocation, prompting the district to begin the process of filling the upcoming vacancy.

Under the Michigan School Code of 1976 and Saginaw Township Community Schools Board of Education policy, the district is required to fill the open seat within 30 days of the vacancy occurring. The board will seek applicants from the public and ap-



ARIK SMITH

point a replacement through a majority vote of the remaining board members.

The district is required to publicly announce the vacancy

and hold a public meeting during which selected candidates will respond to questions from board members. Applications for the trustee position will be available beginning Jan. 13 on the district's website at www.stcs.org.

Completed applications must be submitted by 4 p.m. Jan. 26 by mail or delivered to the district's board office at 3465 N. Center Road. The board will screen applications on Jan. 26, and candidates are encouraged to keep the evening of Feb. 2 available for interviews.

The board plans to conduct interviews and appoint a new trustee during a special meeting scheduled for Feb. 2. The individual selected will be sworn in

and begin serving at the board's Feb. 9 meeting. The appointment will run through the 2026 election, with the seat expiring Dec. 31, 2026.

District officials said that if the vacancy is not filled within 30 days, the intermediate school district board would be required to make the appointment.

Saginaw Township Community Schools serves nearly 4,600 students across eight elementary, middle and high schools in Saginaw Township. The district's stated mission is to educate, guide and challenge students to develop lifelong learning skills needed to succeed in a rapidly changing global society.

Freeland, SASA students among teams competing for Nickless Innovation Awards

BY MB STAFF

SAGINAW, Mich. — High school students from Bay, Midland and Saginaw counties are developing solutions to real-world problems as part of the 13th annual A.H. Nickless Innovation Award, a regional STEM competition that will award up to \$77,500 in student scholarships and school grants this spring.

Twenty teams from five schools are participating in the 2025–26 competition, presented by the Nickless Family Charitable Foundation. Project reports are due in late March, with live presentations scheduled for April at Saginaw Valley State University.

The A.H. Nickless Innovation Award is open to students ages 13 to 18 in Bay, Midland, Saginaw and Tuscola counties and is designed to encourage teamwork, innovation and applied learning in science, technology, engineer-

ing and mathematics. Student teams are challenged to identify problems and develop practical solutions, often focusing on areas such as healthcare, environmental sustainability, transportation and emerging technologies.

Among the participating schools are Freeland High School, which has three teams competing, and Saginaw Arts and Sciences Academy, which is represented by 13 teams. Herbert Henry Dow High School and Midland High School in Midland Public Schools, along with John Glenn High School in Bay City, also have teams in the competition.

Projects range from biodegradable materials for medical and food packaging to sensors designed to detect PFAS in private wells, carbon monoxide exposure, black ice on roadways and early signs of stroke. Other teams are developing assistive tools for people with disabilities, environmentally friendly alternatives to single-use medi-

cal equipment, reusable animal-tracking devices and technology aimed at reducing microplastics in waterways.

During the first phase of the competition in September and October, each team submitted a two-page abstract outlining its proposed solution. Teams that advanced to Phase Two received \$1,000 grants to support research and development between November and March.

Phase Two project reports are due by 4 p.m. March 31. Teams will then present their work during a public, daylong event April 25 in the Alan W. Ott Auditorium in SVSU's Gilbertson Hall. Each team will deliver a 10-minute presentation before a panel of judges. Admission to the event is free and open to the public.

At the conclusion of the presentations, scholarships and grants will be awarded to the top three teams. First-place teams will receive up to five \$5,000 student

scholarships and a \$20,000 STEM education grant for their school. Second-place teams will earn up to five \$2,500 scholarships and a \$10,000 school grant, while third-place teams will receive up to five \$1,000 scholarships and a \$5,000 grant.

Now in its 13th year, the A.H. Nickless Innovation Award has distributed more than \$760,000 since its launch in 2013–14, including nearly \$380,000 in student scholarships and \$385,000 in STEM education grants. More than 550 students have participated in Phase Two projects during the competition's first 12 years.

The competition honors the legacy of Arthur H. Nickless, a local innovator and former owner of Wolverine Telephone Company. Additional details about the April presentations will be announced closer to the event at ahinnovationaward.com.



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EDUCATION

Nominations encouraged for Michigan Lottery's Excellence in Education Awards to honor outstanding educators



FILE PHOTO

BY MB STAFF

Parents, students, school staff members, and others are encouraged to nominate outstanding public-school educators for the Michigan Lottery's 2025-26 Excellence In Education awards.

All public-school employees may be nominated for the Excellence In Education awards, which recognize educators who go "above and beyond" to make a difference in the lives of children. To nominate a public school educator, go to <https://www.michiganlottery.com/excellence-in-education>.

The Michigan Lottery established the Excellence in Education awards in 2014 to recognize outstanding public-school educators across the state during the school year.

One outstanding educator will be selected each week and will receive a \$2,000 cash prize. At the end of the school year, one of these weekly award winners will be selected to receive the Lottery's Educator of the Year

award and will receive a \$10,000 cash prize.

The winner of the 2025 Educator of the Year award was Kelly Herberholz, a science teacher and administrative intern with Dakota High School in Macomb.

Hundreds of educators were nominated during the 2024-25 school year, which was the 11th year of the Excellence in Education awards program. Thirty-four of these nominees, including Herberholz, were selected to win a weekly award.

Previous winners of the Educator of the Year award:

- 2024 – Samantha TwoCrow, the director of the Indigenous Education Program for Suttons Bay Public Schools in Suttons Bay.
- 2023 – Kathryn Kluzak, a kindergarten teacher with Robert L. Green Elementary in East Lansing.
- 2022 – Spencer Vanderheide, a high school teacher with Kenowa Hills High School in Grand Rapids.
- 2021 – Janice Smith, a school social worker at Fisher Magnet Lower Academy in Detroit.
- 2020 – Megan Sidge, an Autism Spectrum Disorder teacher at Hickory Woods Elementary in Walled Lake.
- 2019 – Stewart Kieliszewski, an Earth science, biology, mechatronics, and media teacher for eighth through 12 graders at the Ubly Community Schools.
- 2018 – Kerri Moccio, a first-grade literacy intervention specialist at Bedford Elementary School in Dearborn Heights.
- 2017 – Linda Holzwarth, a social studies teacher at Portage West Middle School in Portage.
- 2016 – Daniel Carr, a Spanish and sports marketing teacher at

Waverly High School in Lansing.

- 2015 – Michael Craig, a special education teacher at the Charles Drew Transition Center in Detroit.

Excellence In Education award nominees should demonstrate the following qualities:

- Excellence – Their work consistently helps students and/or their schools or school districts advance to higher levels of academic achievement.
- Dedication – They consistently go above and beyond expectations to help students succeed.
- Inspiration – Their work inspires others around them to exceed expectations either academically or professionally.
- Leadership – They demonstrate clear leadership skills in their positions with their school or school districts.
- Effectiveness – The nominee's work has clear and positive results on the educational advancement of students within the school or school district.

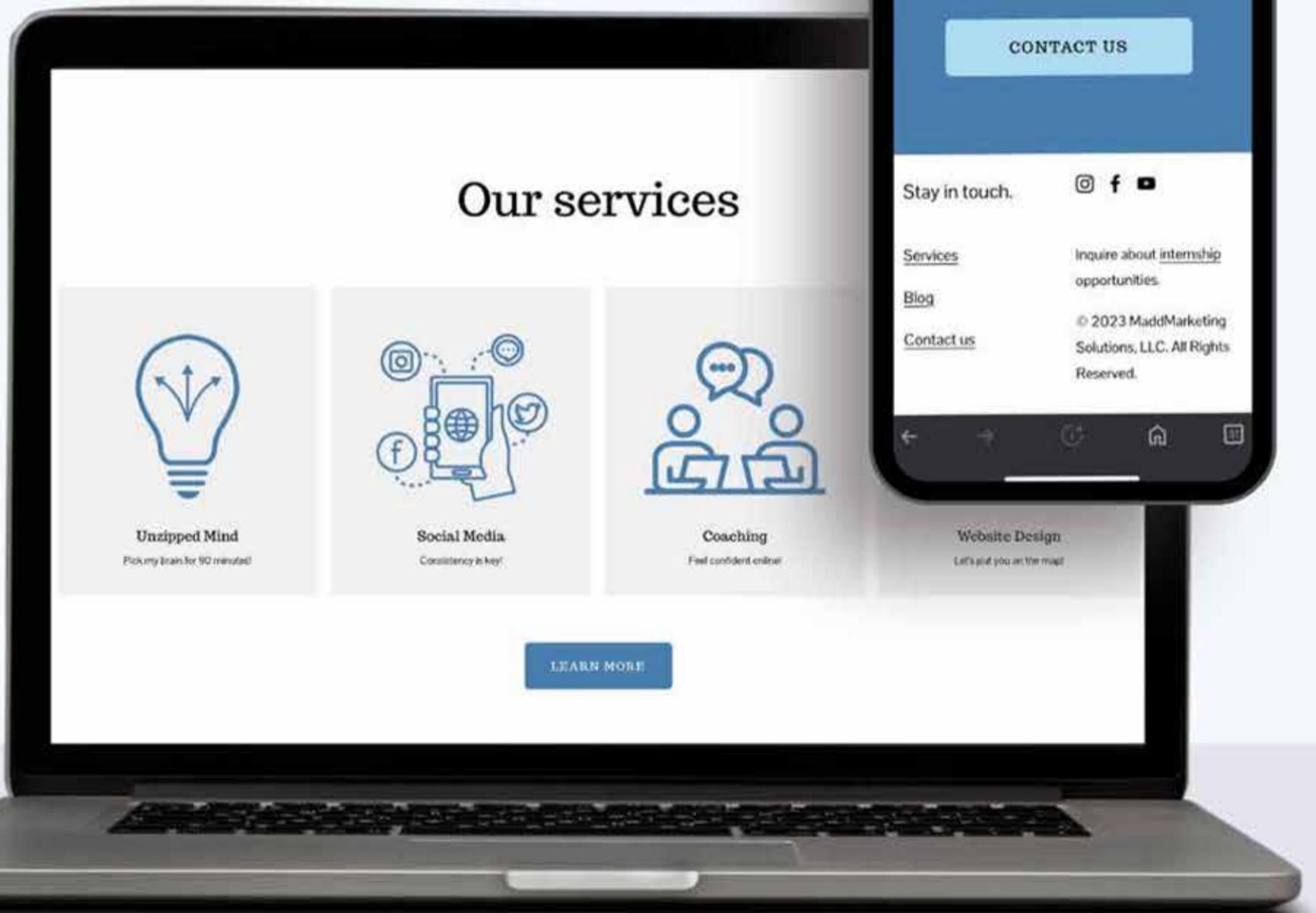
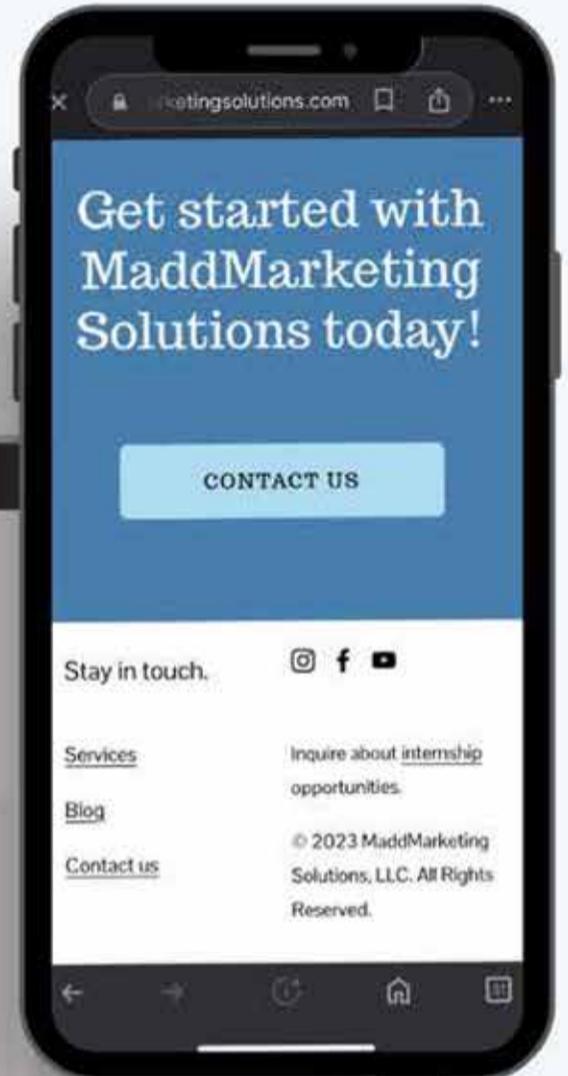
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4 People	\$64,300	\$128,600	8 People	\$108,300	\$216,600
5 People	\$75,300	\$150,600	9 People	\$119,300	\$238,600

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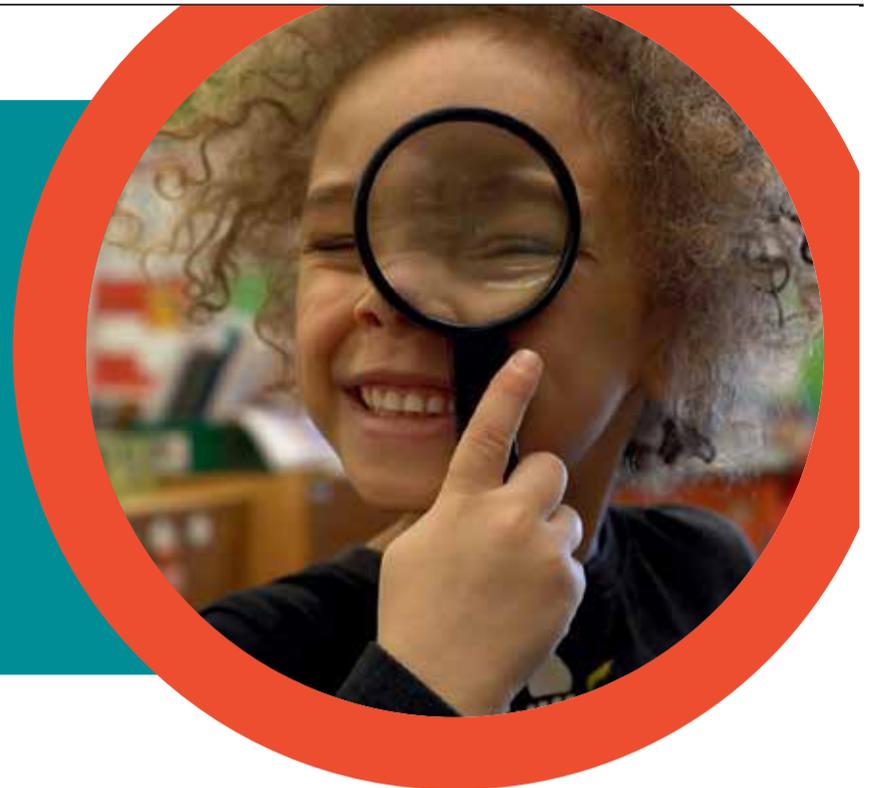
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BUSINESS + FINANCE

Value City Furniture going out of business, including Saginaw and Flint locations



VALUE CITY FURNITURE SAGINAW LOCATION, 2780 TITTABAWASSEE ROAD

BY MB STAFF

SAGINAW, Mich. — Value City Furniture, a long-established home furnishings retailer, is closing all of its stores nationwide, including its Saginaw and Flint locations, after the parent company's bankruptcy restructuring failed to attract a buyer.

The closures are part of a liquidation approved in early January by a bankruptcy court, affecting all 79 Value City Furniture stores across 13 states and 10 American Signature Furniture locations operated by parent company American Signature Inc. The company filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection in November 2025 and had initially planned to sell assets and continue operations, but no buyer emerged.

Liquidation sales have begun at remaining stores, with discounts of up to 50% off original prices on a range of home furnishings, including living room, dining room and bedroom collections, décor, lighting, mattresses and rugs. It remains unclear when the final closing dates will be set for individual locations.

Among the Michigan stores slated to close are sites in Saginaw at 2780 Tittabawassee Road and in Flint at 4577 Miller Road. Nine Michigan Value City Furniture stores, including those in Midland, Taylor and Sterling Heights, were identified as part of the chain's planned shutdown.

American Signature Inc., based in Columbus, Ohio, has operated the Value City Furniture brand for decades, selling home furnishings and accesso-

ries in the Midwest and beyond. The Chapter 11 filing was intended to allow the company to reorganize and sell parts of the business, but after the sale process failed, the court authorized a full liquidation.

The ongoing liquidation sales are being managed by a joint venture involving SB360 Capital Partners, Hilco Global and Gordon Brothers, which will oversee the process as inventory is sold off. Shoppers are being advised that inventory is limited, with deep discounts offered while merchandise lasts.

The closures mark the end of operations for Value City Furniture, which, through its parent company, had been in business for nearly 80 years. Customers holding gift cards are being warned that stores may no lon-

ger accept them, and returns or exchanges are not being honored as part of the liquidation process.

The Saginaw and Flint stores are among the last remaining Michigan locations impacted as the company winds down operations. Community members and shoppers have been visiting the stores amid the liquidation sales, which are expected to continue until inventory is depleted and final closing dates are announced.

Retail analysts say the collapse reflects broader challenges in the home furnishings sector, including declining sales and economic pressures that intensified over recent years, contributing to the retailer's financial struggles and eventual shutdown.

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BUSINESS + FINANCE

Midland City Council approves drive-through for Leo's Coney Island

BY MB STAFF

MIDLAND, Mich. — The Midland City Council has approved plans allowing a Leo's Coney Island restaurant to add a drive-through, clearing the way for the business to move forward with the project.

Council members voted to OK the request during a recent meeting after reviewing the proposal and considering its compatibility with surrounding development and traffic flow. The approval allows the restaurant to operate a drive-through service in addition to dine-in seating.

City officials said the re-



LEO'S CONEY ISLAND BIRCH RUN

quest required council action under local zoning and site plan regulations, which govern traf-

fic circulation, access points and impacts on nearby properties. No changes to the restaurant's

use were proposed beyond the addition of the drive-through component.

Leo's Coney Island is part of a Michigan-based restaurant chain known for breakfast items, coney dogs and casual dining. Drive-through service has become an increasingly common feature for restaurants as customer demand for convenience has grown.

The council's action finalizes the local approval process, allowing the project to proceed to permitting and construction phases as required by the city. Timing for completion of the drive-through will depend on permitting and construction schedules.

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SPORTS

SVSU names Michael Engle head football coach



SAGINAW VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY HEAD FOOTBALL COACH MICHAEL ENGLE, LEFT, POSES WITH VICE PRESIDENT FOR INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS JOHN LEWANDOWSKI AFTER ENGLE'S INTRODUCTION AS THE CARDINALS' NEW HEAD COACH DURING A PRESS CONFERENCE AT SVSU IN UNIVERSITY CENTER, MICH.

BY MB STAFF

UNIVERSITY CENTER, Mich. — Saginaw Valley State University has selected veteran offensive coordinator Michael Engle as the next head football coach, the university announced Monday, Jan. 5.

Engle, 36, becomes the eighth head coach in SVSU football history after spending the past four seasons at the University of Indianapolis. He will be formally introduced at a public press conference scheduled for Wednesday,

Jan. 7, at 2 p.m. in Curtiss Hall on the SVSU campus.

Vice President for Intercollegiate Athletics John Lewandowski said Engle distinguished himself during a competitive national search.

“Throughout the search process, Michael Engle began to create separation from our extremely competitive pool of highly qualified candidates,” Lewandowski said. He cited Engle’s offensive background, leadership experience and vision for the program’s culture and long-term success.

Engle arrives at SVSU follow-

ing a highly successful tenure at UIndy, where he served as pass game coordinator and quarterbacks coach before being promoted to offensive coordinator and later assistant head coach. During his four seasons with the Greyhounds, the program compiled a 39-8 record, won four consecutive Great Lakes Valley Conference championships and made four straight NCAA Division II playoff appearances.

Under Engle’s leadership, UIndy developed one of the most productive offenses in Division II football. In 2025, the Greyhounds

led the nation in red-zone scores and ranked among the national leaders in points per game, total offense and passing production. Engle was named one of five finalists for Division II Coordinator of the Year.

He also coached quarterback Gavin Sukup, the 2025 Harlon Hill Trophy runner-up and a First-Team All-American, who set multiple program passing records during Engle’s tenure.

“It is an honor and a privilege to be named the head football coach at Saginaw Valley State University,” Engle said in a statement. He said he is eager to build on the program’s tradition and emphasized accountability, player development and competitive excellence both on and off the field.

Before joining UIndy, Engle served as offensive coordinator at DePauw University, his alma mater, helping the program capture its first North Coast Athletic Conference championship and playoff victory. His coaching career also includes stops at Florida Tech, West Virginia Wesleyan and Bryant University.

A native of Terre Haute, Indiana, Engle was a standout quarterback at DePauw, where he set multiple school records and led the Tigers to a conference title and playoff appearance in 2010. He earned a bachelor’s degree in political science from DePauw in 2011.

SVSU officials said Engle shares the university’s goal of building a perennial Top 25 program capable of competing for GLIAC championships and sustained postseason success while preparing student-athletes for leadership beyond football.

SPORTS

Jair Fernandez returns as Loons manager for 2026 season

BY MB STAFF

MIDLAND, Mich. — Jair Fernandez will return as manager of the Great Lakes Loons for the 2026 season, the team announced in conjunction with the Los Angeles Dodgers.

Fernandez, 38, will lead the Loons for a third consecutive season, becoming just the second manager in the franchise's 18-year history to return for a third year. Juan Bustabad previously managed the club from 2008 to 2010. Fernandez is the 11th manager in Loons history and will enter his 10th season as a coach within the Dodgers organization.

The Loons have posted a 141-119 record under Fernandez over the past two seasons. In 2025, Great Lakes recorded its sixth straight winning season, finishing 72-58. The team led the Midwest League in walks with 688, highlighting an emphasis on plate discipline, while Loons pitchers combined for a league-best 1,232 strikeouts for the fourth consecutive year.

Fernandez previously served as the Loons' hitting coach in 2017 and 2018, when the team hit a combined .240 and totaled 192 home runs over two seasons.

A Colombian-born catcher,



JAIR FERNANDEZ

Fernandez began his professional baseball career in 2007 at age 18 in the Seattle Mariners organization. He spent nine seasons in the minor leagues, including two stints at the Triple-A level, and played in four organizations. His Midwest League experience included 52 games with the Wisconsin Timber Rattlers in 2007

and an All-Star season in 2008 with the Beloit Snappers, then a Minnesota Twins affiliate.

The Loons will open the 2026 season Friday, April 3, at Dow Diamond against the Fort Wayne TinCaps. First pitch is scheduled for 6:05 p.m.

The Great Lakes Loons have been affiliated with the Los An-

geles Dodgers since the franchise's inception in 2007. Dow Diamond serves as the team's home and also houses the Michigan Baseball Foundation, a non-profit public charity, and Sports Radio 100.9 The Mitt. Tickets and additional information are available at Loons.com or by calling 989-837-BALL.

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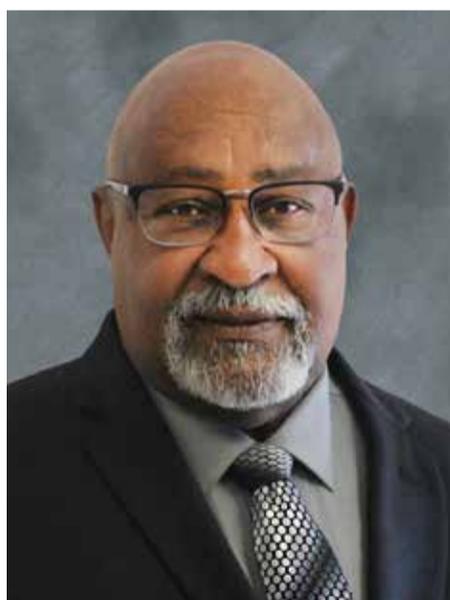
Ministry Without Walls expands vision with community-focused mission

BY PASTOR JOHN DUNN

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

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

The organization's vision includes several key objectives:



PASTOR JOHN DUNN

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

between the church, volunteers, and community professionals.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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SERMONETTE SERIES

Pressing with Purpose

"I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus"

Philippians 3:14



BY MINISTER CAROLYN
CARTER TOWNSEL



One must truly comprehend, pressing is not passive. Paul did not say I stroll. He did not say I wait. He said, "I PRESS." Pressing implies resistance. Pressing means there is weight. Pressing means something is trying to slow you down - but you refuse to stop. You don't press when it's easy. You press when your heart is tired. You press when disappointment whispers, "Quit." You press when yesterday still aches but tomorrow is calling.

Paul understood something powerful: You cannot move forward while staring backward - He let go of past failures. He released past successes. He refused to live chained to what was, when God was calling him into what is next.

As believers we must stay focused and remember that the mark is not behind you. The mark is ahead of you. The prize is not comfort - it's calling, and the calling is High. It's higher than betrayal, higher than the setback, and higher than the season that tried to break you.

But you must also remember this press will cost you: It will cost you your old mindsets, old patterns, and old permissions you gave fear and doubt. But what you gain is far greater than what it costs you. You gain - clarity, authority, and alignment with heaven's purpose.

Some days pressing looks like running, and other days look like crawling. But the movement still counts. God is not asking you to be perfect, He is asking you to be persistent. So press through the pain, press through the fear, and press through the delay. Because on the other side of your press is the version of you heaven has been waiting on.

Therefore, beloved keep pressing, keep rising, and keep becoming - the mark is calling your name.

Blessings to All,
Carolyn

African Americans and Spiritual Care

BY MINISTER CAROLYN CARTER
TOWNSEL

African Americans Spiritual Care is shaped by a unique historical, social, and theological journey that sets it apart in how care is given, received, and trusted. It was born in oppression, not privilege, and one must truly understand it did not emerge in hospitals - it emerged in cotton fields, tobacco plantations, chains, Hush harbors, jail cells, and at gravesites.

African American spirituality was forged under enslavement, racial terror, segregation, and systemic exclusion. Therefore, faith was not optional - it was necessary for survival. Because of who they were and where they were, enslaved people relied on preachers, elders, family members, and community faith leaders for care and guidance and without a doubt their God.

The core of African American spiritual care is deeply communal, not primarily individualistic - We survived together, faith is shared through testimony, Call- and- response, collective prayer, and church as an extended family.

For generations, spiritual care was not provided by hospitals, the government, the medical system, academic institutions, or dominant religious structures. These systems often caused harm and exclusion, breeding deep distrust that began in slavery.

In terms of Spiritual Care within the system, as the years progressed forward there appeared to be major changes - The first African American Chaplains were commissioned in the Union Army 1862 - Henry McNeal Turner, and Jeremiah Asher who advocated for Black ministers to serve as chaplains and became one of the first, dying in service in 1865. Prior to the mid-20th century,



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most hospital chaplains in the U.S. were White. That changed in 1935 when the Rev. A.C. Garner was appointed the first Black chaplain at Harlem Hospital.

In 1941, the Tuskegee Airmen became the first African American military aviators. Their skill and courage challenged racist assumptions and helped pave the way for the desegregation of the U.S. armed forces. This accomplishment was met with pride, honor, and hope among African Americans.

However, that hope of change was quickly extinguished and reinforced by events such as the Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment. This event occurred in 1932 until 1972, the Tuskegee Syphilis Study began in the U.S. Public Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention conducted an experiment using 600 African American men, mostly poor sharecroppers, from Macon County, Alabama. The men were

already diagnosed with Syphilis, but deliberately were never given effective medicine - even after penicillin became available as a cure.

This experiment deeply damaged an already fragile trust among African Americans - eroding confidence in doctors, medical institutions, and treatments, and extending to anyone or anything connected to the healthcare system. That breach of trust did not end with the study itself: It was passed down through generations, shaping how African American communities approach medicine, hospitals, and systems of care to this day.

As African Americans gained access to doctors and hospitals, it did not automatically close the door of distrust, nor did it open the door of trust. Access did not equal safety, and presence did not guarantee care. Consequently, when the chaplain enters the African American's patients

room, there is often an unspoken wall already standing - not built from disrespect but from history. Conversation may be warm, polite, even cordial, yet it frequently remains guarded and surface-level, offering only what is necessary. Beneath the courtesy lies caution, shaped by generations of experiences where vulnerability was costly and trust was not protected.

So how does a chaplain of a different race truly care for an African American patient, especially caucasians? First, not by pretending history doesn't exist - and not by rushing toward pray shortcut to trust. Spiritual care is more than words spoken over someone: It is presence that stays, advocacy that speaks up, and the courage to acknowledge trauma without trying to fix it away. It recognizes past wounds, names them with reverence, and commits to supporting the whole person's healing - mind, body, and spirit.

This kind of care listens deeply to experiences of mistrust, whether they are openly shared or quietly implied. It affirms dignity in every care decision and honors the right to feel cautious. When a chaplain shows up consistently, listens without defense, and stands with the patient rather than over them, walls begin to soften. Trust may not come quickly, but healing begins the moment a person feels seen, listened to, safe, and respected. That is the sacred work of spiritual care - and it is how bridges are built where history once placed barriers.

Ultimately, the history of African American and Spiritual Care teaches us - Faith survived not because suffering ended, but because God was found in the middle of it.

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FUNDRAISING GOOD TIMES

A different approach for a New Year



BY MEL AND PEARL SHAW

Are you a nonprofit executive director or CEO who wants to change how you approach fundraising and your partnership with the board of directors? If the answer is yes, we have a few suggestions that will help build a stronger organization.

As the staff leader of your nonprofit, you are responsible for developing and sustaining an open and honest relationship with the board. As there are multiple board members and only one executive director, you will find your work becomes easier the more you engage with your board members and partner with them in the area of fundraising. That's suggestion number one: think of the time you spend with board members as a valuable investment in the growth, sustainability, and financial health of your organization or institution.

Take the time to meet individually with each board member on a regular basis. Let each member know your vision and goals for the organization, even if you think they know them. Share the fundraising goals and the progress being made towards these. Always ask for their assistance in taking on a fundraising or fund development task. This can include things such as hosting a small group of individuals at their home, office, or other location to share information about your organization and to request involvement or financial support.



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You can ask board members who they may know who could provide specific pro-bono services... the sky is the limit! What's most important is that you are consistently communicating with each board member and that each member is involved in some way with a fundraising-related activity.

Here's suggestion number two: when you are preparing to make a request of the board, or to present new information, talk with each member individually beforehand. Ask for their thoughts and perspectives. As appropriate, integrate these into your thinking. The goal is to share information with board members one-on-one, so they are not surprised by what you are presenting, and so you are not surprised by their response. You want to know in advance who supports you and what the objections might be. Your goal is to gain

support and engagement so that you and the board are moving forward together. Of course, they may have suggestions that could change your proposed course of action – don't take that as a negative. What's most important is that the board is deeply engaged in fundraising, not that your specific idea is the one always agreed to.

You are most successful when the board is actively engaged in fundraising and sometimes that requires a mindset. Don't think

of board members as "my board." Think instead of yourself as their facilitator, encouraging engagement, providing guidance, tools, and information and modeling accountability and transparency.

We have learned that too often the relationship between the board and the executive director can devolve into finger-pointing where each holds the other responsible for fundraising goals that are not being met. This doesn't have to happen. Try a new approach and see what happens.



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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.



PIC OF THE WEEK

On Sunday, Jan. 11, Women of Michigan Action Network and the Midland County Democratic Party held a candlelight vigil on the steps of the Midland County Courthouse to remember Renee Nicole Good and advocate for an end to ICE and Customs and Border Protection raids.



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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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